



Cheltenham United Reformed Church

www.urcic.org.uk

Bulletin 16th May 2021

From our Minister: Rev Iain McLaren

[Jesus] unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." Luke 4 v17-18

One of the reasons Jews of the first century failed to recognise Jesus as the Messiah was because this descendant of King David was not born in a royal palace (as the Magi had expected). Instead, he was born in a stable, into the family of a carpenter. His associates were not princes, but fishermen. His ministry was mainly conducted amongst rural, country folk in the villages and small towns of Galilee and Judea, showing a particular concern for social outcasts and the marginalized: lepers, people with disabilities, widows and other unmarried women. In this sense, his ministry was 'good news to the poor'. There is an implicit bias here. To borrow a phrase from Liberation theology, the Gospel implies 'a preferential option for the poor'.



Christian Aid Week is an annual occasion for relatively wealthy (by global standards) Christians in this country to share their good fortune with poorer communities in the global South. These days climate change has made us very aware of the extent to which our fate is tied up with the fate of people elsewhere in the world. It has been observed that the worst effects of climate change are being experienced by people who have contributed least to creating climate change. The transfer of resources between developed and developing nations has become a matter of climate justice and the educational materials produced by Christian Aid reflect this. Christian Aid is seeking to be good news for poor people in less developed countries.

Poor people are not only found in poor countries. Even in wealthy nations, like our own, some people are struggling to get by: unemployed single parents waiting for their universal credit claim to be processed, asylum seekers denied the right to work for their living, people unable to work due to chronic ill health, parents of disabled children, people rendered destitute due to addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling. Without the focus provided by something like Christian Aid Week, there is a danger that churches neglect the needs of such people and become churches of the comfortably off, catering for the needs of the comfortably off. However, if the Church is to be 'good news to the poor', it needs to be good news for the 'have nots' more than the 'haves', both at home and abroad.

Yours in Christ,

Iain

Rev Iain McLaren can be contacted at:
01242-231602, or 07483118427
revdiain@urcic.org.uk .
Day off on Mondays.

Christian Aid Week 10th – 16th May



This week eight of us from St Andrews have been delivering Christian Aid envelopes in the parish of St Peters, Leckhampton, and Ann Lewis also in the vicinity of St Andrews. We are hoping this will remind people of the vital work of Christian Aid, and that some will still donate in spite of there being no collection. Christian Aid week ends this Sunday, with a service to unite us in support of our belief, that poverty can be ended, as a response to Christ's calling to us to care for all in need.

If you have not already given this year, then please take a Christian Aid envelope home and to return it to church when you next attend. If you are unable to make it to church, but would like to donate, maybe a church friend could take an extra envelope for you!

There are other ways to donate too:

Online:

<https://giving.tapsimple.org/online/christian-aid/cheltenham-christian-aid-week-d04b0>

Post: H Bartlett, 20 Withyholt Park, Cheltenham, GL53 9BP (Cheques to: Cheltenham Christian Aid)

BACS: Cheltenham Christian Aid 20-20-15 30239623
(To gift aid: notify hbartlett20@gmail.com)

Thank you

Alison Veal

News of Christian Aid's current work

This week's terrible news of the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Palestine, reminded me of Christian Aid's important role in providing humanitarian aid to people who have experienced sudden devastating loss, for a myriad of reasons. In Lebanon for example - last year a sudden explosion tore through Beirut, causing mass destruction and loss of life in some neighbourhoods. Christian Aid works there through a local partner- Basmeh and Zeitooneh, who rallied many volunteers to distribute emergency packages to affected households and provided cash assistance in some instances for the most vulnerable.



The coronavirus pandemic has affected us all, but India is perhaps foremost on our minds as the second wave of Covid is taking such a heavy toll on the most marginalised communities there. Christian Aid is working with local partners in India to help the most vulnerable to access social and financial security schemes, and to deliver vital messages around health, hygiene and sanitation. This is clearly an overwhelming situation - Christian aid and the many other charities and organisations need our prayers and ongoing support to target their work for the benefit of the greatest number possible.

More positive stories of emergency relief have reached us from Nepal where Christian Aid works through local partner, Bai Sewa Sama (BSS). Covid has caused a hike in prices and a shortage of food and everyday essentials. Many have lost their livelihoods and again the most vulnerable inevitably suffer the most. However Christian Aid's support has meant BSS



(Photos from Christian Aid website)

could respond quickly, to reach some of the worst affected people with food items and hygiene materials. The monthly food support was a huge relief to Lekhanath Bastola and his family. Lockdown meant he and his wife who are both disabled couldn't earn money. Their immense joy and gratefulness for their food and hygiene parcels is humbling to read about, and hopefully this support is also giving families like Lekhanath's hope.

Alison Veal

Say a Tea-Time Prayer in solidarity: Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

We are all distressed once again to hear of the outbreak of violent hostilities between Israel and Palestine. The underlying cause, which cannot be too often stated, is Israel's attempt gradually to take control of large tracts of the established homeland of Palestinians, including the intention to evacuate them from East Jerusalem, in order to move in Israeli settlers.

This prayer by Garth Hewitt expresses the search for God's justice, and for His mercy and healing on all who are caught up in this terrible conflict.

**May the justice of God
fall down like fire
And bring a home
for the Palestinians.
May the mercy of God
pour down like rain
And protect the Jewish people
And may the beautiful eyes
of a holy God
Who weeps for all his children
Bring the healing hope
for his wounded ones
For the Jew and the Palestinian.
So pray for the peace
pray for the peace
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.**



Robin Derbyshire

The Pulpit at Prestbury

All Sunday Services begin at 10.30am

23rd May Rev Iain McLaren (Communion)
6th June Rev Dee Brierley-Jones

The Pulpit at St Andrew's

All Sunday Services are 11.00am, broadcast on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0qso0uzwPJq-Onhf6fN2TA>

16th May Rev Iain McLaren **Special Service for Christian Aid Week**
23rd May Mrs Margaret Marshall
6th June Mr Geoff Tizzard-King
13th June Mr Bob Alger

- If you wish to attend Andrew's services please reserve your seat with Janet before noon on Saturday.
- St Andrew's Charity/Retiring Collections for May and June will be for Christian Aid.
- Hymn Books and Bibles are available to use during worship if you require.

The Pulpit at The Church in Warden Hill

Details of all Services can be found in 'Lantern', and 'Grapevine' both available at

<http://www.tciwh.org.uk>

13th June Rev Iain McLaren (URC Communion)

Lectionary Readings

Acts 1 v15-17,21-26

Psalm 1

1 John 5 v9-13

John 17 v6-19

Prayer Requests this week:

Mary Cummings, Tim Odell, Hanne Lambley, Eileen Attwood, John Standing



Appeal for Readers and Prayer Leaders

The word 'liturgy' originally meant 'the work of the people', but in some traditions it has been clericalised to become the words spoken by an ordained priest. Our own URC tradition, however, attaches great importance to the 'priesthood of all believers' and so lay participation in the liturgy is encouraged. In many URC's lay members of the congregation contribute to worship by reading from the Bible or leading prayers of intercession. This is not something everyone feels comfortable doing, but some people have a definite gift and calling in this direction. If this is something you would like to do (or would like to try out - after all, there's a first time for everything!), then please let me know. I can offer advice and training as required.

Rev Iain

Dates for your Diary

(Government restrictions permitting)

27th June will be the United Pastorate Service and CURC AGM 10.30am at St Andrew's.

The service will include celebrations for the 30th Anniversary of CURC and the Re-Induction of Elders. A Buffet lunch will be held after the service with the AGM between courses.

10th July will be a 'Welcome Garden Party' for Iain, 3.00- 6.00pm at St Andrew's

What's on this week?

Prayer Time on Tuesdays

St Andrew's will be open for Prayer on Tuesday from 11.00 till 12.00

WE WELCOME ALL

Teatime on Tuesday



Come and join us for an hour of excellent conversation.
3pm on Zoom. Bring your own cup of tea and join the party.

<https://zoom.us/j/95570544462?pwd=Q0VHQVVuWHB1QmpBd2ZDcEZJNlIXUT09>

ID 955 7054 4462,

Passcode 686988

Zoom Host: June

Study discussions on Wednesday's

We have embarked on a series of discussions based on the Emmaus Course. 8pm on zoom.

Week 5 The Holy Spirit'

EVERYONE WELCOME

<https://zoom.us/j/96204565714?pwd=Rm1iZ01ZWkpYmVvbXZScFJlSWgyUT09>

Meeting ID: 962 0456 5714 Passcode: 108557

Zoom Host: Rev Iain

Coming Soon

Repair Café at St Andrew's reopens 5th June, 10.00am

Footsloggers aim to restart in July – contact Jenny Evans for details nearer the time.

Qi Gong aims to reopen at St Andrew's in July



The swan (known as George) and seven cygnets on Pittville Lake. Note that there is always one who would rather hitch a ride than swim!!

Photo sent by Mary Cummings