



Cheltenham United Reformed Church

'The Pew sheet without any Pews'

Bulletin No 18 / 12.07.20

Dear Friends

Please remember that although churches can now be open for collective worship, none of our churches will be until we can be sure that we can do so safely. The Elders are working hard on the practical arrangements needed to comply with the government guidelines.

This weekly bulletin has worship, news, prayer requests, information about virtual services, plus anything else that might be 'in the notices'.

Prayer Requests

- Geoffrey Harmsworth, Mhairi Turner, Sharon Williams, John Standring
- Steve and Joan Osmond, friends from Christchurch
- Those with birthdays and Anniversaries this week.
- The country as we start to slowly emerge from lockdown

If you know of anyone who would like to be added to the prayer list, please let us know and they will be included in the next bulletin.

Lectionary Readings

From June to November there is a wider variety of lectionary readings. ROOTS and the URC Handbook use different selections.

Genesis 25 v19-34

OR

Isaiah55 v10-13

Psalms 119 v105-112

OR

Psalms 65 v1-8, 9-13

Matthew13 v1-9, 18-23

Romans 8 v1-11

Virtual Services

For a list of virtual services, please visit <http://www.urch.org.uk/news.aspx>

Coffee and Prayers

Please join Bob Alger on Zoom for:

- The 11.30 am **Sunday morning Coffee Chat**
- The 8.30 pm **Monday Prayer Meeting**

The link is: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/6147530476> (Meeting ID: 614 753 0476/Password : 6Bcgye) Any problems please call Bob on 01242 512343 or email realger@sky.com

Questionnaire

Please support the questionnaire that is again sent with this Bulletin. It is important that the Elders understand how our congregations have been coping with not meeting together and what your hopes are for the future. Please return the completed survey by **Sunday 19th July** either as an email attachment sent to Fiona or Janet or in writing as a printed document, again sent to Fiona or Janet by post, or via your group Elder.

ST ANDREW'S

Our July Charity

Commitment for Life is the URC's channel for giving to, learning about, and praying for, areas where some of the world's poorest are struggling with the effects of poverty, climate change and injustice. The money raised goes via Christian Aid to its partner organisations in the chosen country, who devote it to meeting needs of the people. The partners work across all political and religious boundaries.

This year our money will go to a group of countries in Central America, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

In Guatemala Christian Aid works for a more equal and peaceful society



A cheerful picture from Guatemala City, where children happily display the art work they have created, under the guidance of a local partner organisation of Christian Aid.



This is a programme to teach peaceful creative teamwork, in place of the violence, which is unhappily the product of so much frustration and deprivation in their lives. Christian Aid's partner uses its skills to build up the youngsters' self-esteem, and counteract the prevailing macho culture. So much in this very unequal society excludes the underprivileged women and young people from their rights, such as their entitlement to even a small piece of land to grow food, and to good health care and education.

Last year St Andrew's contributed £1,234 to Commitment for Life. Please will you give generously to our July charity of the month to ensure that we reach or surpass our last year's total. If you do not already donate regularly to our monthly charity, in lieu of the retiring offertory plate please see the guidance sheet 'donations to the church during the closure' as sent out with the church accounts in April. Thank you.

Robin Derbyshire



Bee Orchid, photo by Sandra Jeans

Nature celebrates the joys of the creation with such beauty and respect for its fellow creatures.

Reflection from Rev Louis Ndekha

Sowing the Seed of the Gospel

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Isaiah 55: 10-13

St Francis of Assisi is famously attributed with the statement "preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words." Francis' statement, understood within his 12th-century era, represented a radical approach to preaching the gospel. It represented a significant shift in the understanding of the timing and method of making Christ known to the world. For Francis, preaching the gospel does not need to be confined to a season or an established process.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus offers a similarly radical approach to the preaching of the gospel. The different "soils" on which the seeds fell tell us about how the gospel is received in the world. However, the sower's broadcasting approach to planting (which was conventional at the time) offers an interesting angle to our conception of the way we go about spreading the gospel.

We are told that the sower broadcast his seeds indiscriminately onto the field. His role was singular: broadcasting the seeds. The results of his work did not depend on him. It is also exciting to note that even the soils where the seed did not do well (on the path, the rocky ground, the thorny place -vv. 4-8), an opportunity to receive the seed was accorded them.

Like the sower, we are all called both as church and individuals to make the love of God known to everyone regardless of our perception of their potential response. As sowers, our responsibility is to do what we are required to do — making the love of God known in our every situation, while letting the sovereignty of God determine the results.

Even then, we are assured by Isaiah (55:10:13) that our effort is never in vain. God's word never returns to him empty. It can turn the thorn bush into the evergreen juniper, the brier into the myrtle (v. 13). This guarantees us that the gospel or its expression in our life has the potential to transform even the most difficult circumstances into new possibilities. Yet this transformative power becomes possible when the love of God is made available to every individual in our local communities or beyond. Let us therefore broadcast the love of God "all the time, and if necessary, using words."

May we be comforted by the efficacy of God's word. May this understanding spur us to continue to sow the seed of the gospel in whatever way possible to whoever is available in our life.

Louis

A poem from Revd Dee.

I have heard many people grumble about what they consider to be the unsightly windmills we see around at the moment, so I may be in the minority but I think that they are joyful and elegant, and the fact that they catch the “rushing wind” - which is a term used frequently in the Bible - and then convert it into energy, seems a blessing.

It is an excellent reminder that the circle of life and love is continuous, and we reap our own life’s harvest.

May it please God that we shall all be together again soon to pray and praise together.

THE WINDMILL

Round and round
With no sound,
Round and round it goes.
Arms outstretched
Like our dear Lord
His never-ending love.
Light and soft
Like wings of dove
Round and round it goes.
Turning cartwheels
Like a child,
Happy and in joy.
Round and round
The wind will blow
We reap the harvest
That we sow.
It all comes round and round...

Dee

“We pray to you, Lord, to direct and guide us with your unfailing care, that we may be vigilant in times of quiet, and daring in times of trouble.”

Franciscan Breviary (Ald)

found in SPCK Book of Christian Prayer

Fiona, Janet and Brian