



Cheltenham United Reformed Church

'The Pew sheet without any Pews'

Bulletin No 25 /30.08.20

Dear Friends

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

Prayer Requests

- Joan and Ian Thomson
- Pat Brooks
- Joan Osmond and family
- All those involved in education as staff and students make arrangements for the autumn; and for UCAS as they help with finding university and college places.
- And for those who mourn the loss of loved ones and all suffering in body, mind or spirit that they might know Gods comfort surrounds them in their time of need

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.

Congratulations to Barbara and Douglas MacGregor for their Diamond Anniversary and all those with birthdays and anniversaries this week

Lectionary Readings

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

Exodus 3 v1-15

OR

Jeremiah 15 v15-21

Psalm 105 v1-6,23-26, 45c

OR

Psalm 26 v1-8

Matthew 16 v21-28

Romans 12 v9-21

Virtual Services

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

Coffee and Prayers

Please join Alison Stagg for the Zoom **Sunday 11.30 am Coffee Chat**

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72040188247?pwd=UHZtU1Fkd2RNaW05ZGxMbllUdkVDUT09>

Meeting ID: 720 4018 8247 Passcode: bZ9ze6

Please note that on the 6th September Coffee will start at 12 noon

Tony Jeans invites you to join him for **8.30pm Monday Prayers**.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77476228981?pwd=VXFRM3ViNzEyb0JrcTJVYyt4ek1kQT09>

Meeting ID: 774 7622 8981 Passcode: 4pFKY1

CURC News

20th September Rev Simon Helme will be leading worship at St Andrew's, which will include the Ordination/Induction of Elders from across CURC.

27th September Following the Interview of a prospective Ministerial candidate last March, we are now able to invite him to 'Preach with a View' This service will be at St Andrew's starting at 10.30am, followed immediately by the CURC Church Meeting.

More details in future Bulletins.

ST ANDREW'S

News from the Elders

We look forward to seeing you in church on **6th September**. As we return there are a few things to bear in mind, please:-

- Wear a face covering unless you have a valid reason not to.
- Don't arrive too early.
- Use the hand sanitizer upon entry and exit.
- Don't automatically sit in your usual seat, instead follow the Stewards' advice.
- Don't hold any long conversations in the building.
- Keep at least 1.5m social distance.
- Don't hang around by the door on the way out, this will cause an unsafe bottle-neck.
- Only use the toilet if absolutely needed, wiping it down after use.
- Enjoy being back at St. Andrew's
- Unfortunately...Singing is not yet allowed, but we will have other forms of music.
- There won't be any refreshments after the service.

Live streaming will be done through YouTube, as from 6th September **if we have volunteers to 'man the camera'**. Please contact Bob direct if this is something you could consider. Unfortunately these things are not totally automatic yet! It would be good to have a rota. Details of codes etc will be sent out later.

The Prayer Space at the rear of the sanctuary is in process of development. This will be open on Tuesday mornings starting in October – more in future bulletins.

THE CHURCH IN WARDEN HILL

Congregational services will resume at **10.30 on 6th September**, with the same caveats as St Andrew's. See the latest *Grapevine* for more details.



The new carpet has been laid on the dais in the sanctuary at St Andrew's,

Reading Group

I am sure it will not be too much of a surprise to say that I cancelled the Reading Group on 26th August because of the risk to everyone. I am putting in the diary the 18th November in the hope that the world will be a different place by then.

A reminder that we have been reading 'The Sixteen Trees of the Somme' by Lars Mytting and 'The Salt Path' by Raynor Winn. If anyone has read anything else which they would like to recommend then please let me know and I will let people know.

I hope that everyone is keeping well.

Mary Cummings

PRESTBURY - Traffic News

There are Roadworks in the Prestbury Area next week which will disrupt journeys to Winchcombe and Cheltenham

1-9 September

The B4632 up Cleeve Hill from the junction with Southam Lane will be closed at night from 7pm to 7am.

4-11 September

Prestbury Road from the double-mini roundabouts to the junction with Priors Road, and Priors Road to the junction with Pennine Road will be closed during the day from 9.30 am to 3.30pm (excluding weekends)

ST ANDREW'S - Our September Charity

In a time of increasing poverty, our local Food Bank helps people to put food on the table

In September, the traditional Harvest month, we are reaching out to those who live quite close to us, and who need our help to find sufficient food for them and their family.



When Church Meeting put together our list of charities for 2020, we were not to know that this year so many people in Cheltenham, including families with children, would need help. Data from our government shows that in the first few weeks of the lockdown as many as 7.7 million adults had eaten smaller meals, or had skipped meals. I talked to Pete, the manager of the Food Bank at Elim Church, as I prepared this appeal, and he told me of his gratitude to the people of Cheltenham for their generous giving in kind and in money to meet the needs of those who come for help. But he added, *'We can foresee that the end of the furlough scheme and the likely increasing unemployment rate will mean more people will come to us in the coming months. The demand is growing. We have already expanded from the two rooms we began with, and use a whole floor of the Elim church premises.'*

The applicants bring vouchers, which they get from Citizens Advice, or other referral partners such as a church or community centre. They receive a parcel of food to last their family for three days, to help out what they can afford from their benefits. The volunteer helpers used to include over 75s, but lockdown rules mean that it is mainly younger volunteers who staff the Bank at present. They welcome each applicant personally and will often have an informal chat with them over a cup of tea.



The Cheltenham Food Bank, like many others, is affiliated to the Trussell Trust, and receives expertise from them. However the Bank has to pay its own way. Money is needed to keep this large local concern running in its expanded premises, and to sort, store and parcel the donated food into balanced quantities for the receiving families.

Will you please help the bank to see that no-one goes hungry in our local area? This can be equally by money donation via the church this month, and/or by your ongoing regular donation of tinned and packaged food at your supermarket, or other collection point. The list of food and drink needed is available on the Cheltenham food bank website. Thank you.

Robin Derbyshire

Reflection from Rev Richard Atkins

Who are the most vulnerable in your church?

Who are the most vulnerable in your street or your community?

When have you felt vulnerable?

What does that vulnerability really feel like?

Our Gospel this morning came from Matthew 16: 21-28 when Jesus talks about taking up the Cross and following him.

But what a difference it is from the previous verses?

There we read about Peter's great moment of faith as he declares "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

But as soon as that statement is heard and as soon as the reader begins to celebrate with Peter in his moment of glory - a new picture emerges.

It's a picture that is very much at odds with what went before.

When a statement of faith is made it is a great and wonderful thing.

Anyone who has had the privilege to participate in adult Baptisms and Confirmation services will tell you that it is a great joy to be alongside people who come to a personal recognition of Jesus Christ.

But that is not the end of the journey; rather Baptism and Confirmation are the beginning.

"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God", exclaims Peter and so do we at those high points of our faith life.

We are on the mountain top, the sheer joy of faith fills us, and it's a wonderful moment of clarity.

But then having reached the top, we begin the ascent, now the journey of faith takes a different turn.

Note that it's only after Peter's acclamation of faith that Jesus announces the way in which he will be treated and hints at the Resurrection to come.

Of course Peter misses the resurrection; he just sees the pain and indignity of Jesus' demise.

Jesus could have scolded him for overlooking the resurrection, but instead he points out that his suffering is a foretaste of the suffering church, that all who follow will need to "take up their cross"

It seems that the journey of faith for Peter does not end with naming Jesus for who he is, that epiphany moment is not the end, it is, as I said earlier, simply the beginning of the journey of faith.

For Peter it is rather like a transition into experiencing at first hand the full cost of following Jesus.

When the rock-man fails to grasp the vulnerability of faith in the God-man it's as if the foundations of the Church are shaken.

For a statement of faith is simply not enough for the Church.

Saying what you believe is simply not enough.

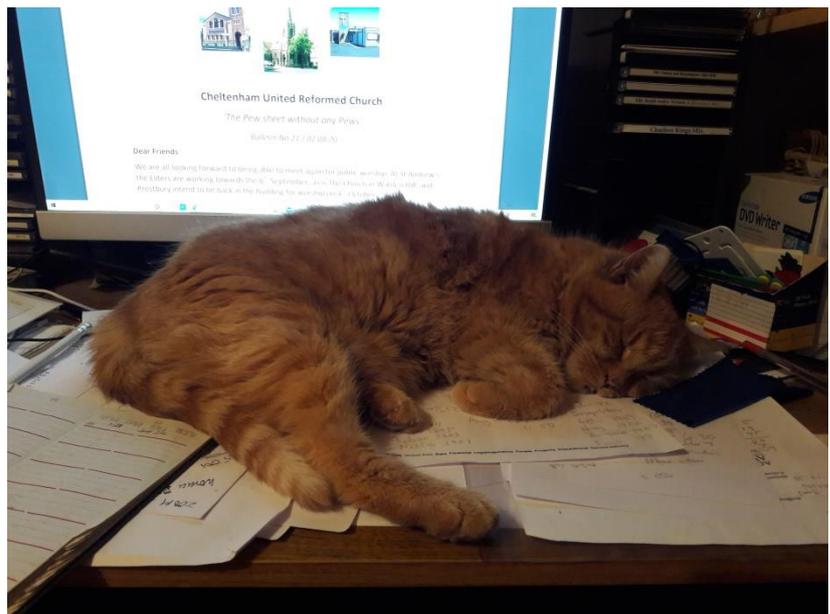
Living and exhibiting that vulnerable faith in the midst of this broken, damaged and unjust world is a requirement of the disciples of Jesus - that's you and I.

“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”, says Peter.

“Then up take your Cross and follow me” replies Jesus, to Calvary and beyond, to life after death, to light after darkness to joy after sorrow.

Richard Atkins

The New Assistant Editor hard at work



This letter is addressed to ALL Members and Friends of the URC



From: Ian Hardie, Treasurer of the United Reformed Church August 2020 and John Piper, Deputy Treasurer

To: The members and friends of all our 1,400 URC congregations

‘THANK YOU’ for your unique and vital contribution to the life of the United Reformed Church, and for the work of the kingdom which we are able to do together in God’s name

We are living through an extraordinary and challenging time – a very anxious time for everyone; a difficult time for many; and a time of suffering and loss for some. Yet, the main purpose of this letter is to say **‘thank you’** to each of you for all that you have done for the Church in the past; for all that you continue to do even in these difficult times; and for what you will do in the future.

As we are treasurers, you will not be surprised that the focus of this letter is on finance. But we recognise that finance is only a means to the end which is our doing of God’s work together.

‘Thank you’ for your giving to your local church. Financially, this giving is the lifeblood of your own church and of the whole United Reformed Church across England, Scotland and Wales. It is this personal giving that enables your local church treasurer to pay your church’s bills. Typically, the largest of those ‘bills’ is the contribution your local church pays to the URC Ministry and Mission Fund. This Fund meets the central costs of the United Reformed Church. The total budget is around £20 million and is approved each year by Mission Council. Over 80% of this money is spent on ministers and church related community workers – their training, stipends and pensions. But the other 20% also achieves an enormous amount on behalf of us all. General Assembly 2020 was severely constrained because of the Covid-19 lockdown, but the reports written for General Assembly are available on the URC website, and they paint pictures of all the work that has been done in our name over the last two years and much of that work is ongoing.

‘Thank you’ for your giving and the giving of your local church last year. In 2019, over **£19.4 million was given by local churches and synods to the Ministry and Mission Fund.** The total contributions from local churches reduced very slightly but the average giving per member has, once again and remarkably, gone up by more than inflation.

‘Thank you’ for your continued giving this year. We fully understand that circumstances this year are difficult. Most local churches have been unable to meet for over five months. We have not had the usual opportunities to make our offerings for the work of the Church. But most of the costs of the local church and of the denomination have not reduced and some have increased as a consequence of the pandemic. We are also aware that some have lost income or work this year and are therefore in great financial difficulty. But there are others on fixed incomes who are actually better off than they might otherwise have been. **So, please continue to give what you can in whatever way you can – or save it up until you can hand it over.**

Any giving of ours is a response to the amazing generosity and love of God which we see in Jesus. Nevertheless, **it is important for us to say ‘thank you’ to each and all of you.**

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter then please speak to your church treasurer, who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ, Ian and John

**“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible,
the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.
Amen.”**

1 Timothy 1 v17 (KJ)

Fiona, Janet and Brian