



Cheltenham United Reformed Church

'The Pew sheet without any Pews'

Bulletin No 10 / 17.05.20

Dear Friends

In company with all other organisations, the Church is following Government guidelines and not meeting for worship while the coronavirus emergency is on.

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

Prayer Requests

Please pray for:

- Families and friends of Helen Bell, Ann Grant, Gwen Hewinson
- Barry Steele, Geoff Harmsworth
- 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

Acts 17 v22-31

Psalm 66 v8-20

1 Peter 3 v13-22

John 14 v15-21



Virtual Services

For a comprehensive list of virtual services, please visit <http://www.urch.org.uk/news.aspx>.
If you know of any others, please let us know.

Message from Bob Alger, realger@sky.com

Bob Alger is having his usual Sunday Coffee Morning at 11.30am. To join in, just go to <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/6147530476>. Don't forget to bring your own coffee! **Bob**

Depending on your browser you should not need to give the meeting ID and password, but if you do then the Meeting ID is 614 753 0476 and the Password is 6Bcgyc

ST ANDREW'S May charity is Christian Aid.

Foodbank appeal for donations

It would be very helpful if you could, by whatever means you may have available, encourage those who are able to continue making donations to the foodbank.

Last year we helped feed, on average, 290 children and adults per month. The figure for March was 574 people and for April it was 872 people, an increase of 33%. This means we are having to dig into our reserves at an increasing rate.

People can help in several different ways. They can

- leave donated items at the foodbank donation point in their supermarket
- make a cash donation through the foodbank's website <https://cheltenham.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/>
- take donations directly to the foodbank - we have extended our hours for this purpose to Monday-Friday, 9.30 to 3.00
- organise a community collection - for example, organising neighbours or members of an organisation to make a group donation.

Please let me know if you have any query about either of these matters - and thank you for your continued support.

Hilary Scott

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Gloucestershire CC [Community Help Hub](#)

Cheltenham Borough Council Coronavirus – [Community Advice and Support](#)

The NHS reminds us that we should continue to call 999 and attend A&E Departments if we believe our or a loved one's health is at risk.

An emergency dental practice run by the Gloucestershire Health & Care Trust is now up and running in Cheltenham. You can apply for an emergency appointment via 111 or direct on 0300 421 6440, but please contact your own dentist in the first instance.

If you are feeling low [Glos NHS Trust](#) has information on local support that is available.

The latest **Age UK** useful guide to local help and services, shopping, takeaways etc (not just for the elderly!) is attached

Don't forget that the NHS Volunteer army is there for you. If you, or someone you know needs help while self-isolating, even if it is just someone to talk to, then ring 0808 196 3646 or visit nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk

The Long Table 'ready meals' page is: <https://www.thelongtableonline.com/ready-meals>
Tel: 01242 323693 or email Cheltenham@thelongtableonline.com

Reflection from Rev Louis Ndekha

A God who does not save? A reflection on Habakkuk 1: 1-4; 3:17-19; John 16:33

Our friend Habakkuk lived in challenging times during Judah's last years before the exile. He saw anarchy and lawlessness; he saw a good king Josiah die at the hands of a foreign force, his heir deposed and taken as a slave to Egypt (2Kg 23:31-35). He also saw the rule of law thrown to the wind. Lawlessness created winners and losers with the righteous as the worst victims. Habakkuk must have prayed for God's intervention. But despite his prayers, all that Habakkuk got was a deafening silence from above.

We can visualise Habakkuk throwing up his hands in frustration over God's seeming silence. He therefore decides not to take it anymore but interrogate God. He asks God 'how much prayer does it take for you to rescue your people?' The whole set up had challenged both his theology and experience. It put into question all that he had learnt and taught the faithful about God; that the Lord would never leave the righteous suffer but will always intervene on behalf of those who love him.

Interestingly Habakkuk's 'divine interrogation' has a happy ending. It results into a conversation that helps the prophet to understand that the ways of the Lord are not only unique but also, in many instances, beyond human comprehension. His confession of continued faith despite adversity in 3:17-19 demonstrates a 'wrestling' with God that enables him to embrace the limitations of human understanding in relation to God's sovereign will for the individual, nations and the world.

Understandably, Habakkuk's problems were unique to his time. But his struggles to understand God's ways are not only as old as humanity itself but also very relevant to our context today. Like everyone else, Christians are losing their lives or loved one to Coronavirus. Economies are shuddering under the impact of the lockdown. In this context it is tempting to ask 'why do you not intervene o Lord? How do we convince the world of a powerful, loving, God who saves his people?'

Perhaps our generation is theologically more advantaged than that of Habakkuk. We have access to God's progressive revelation and therefore (ideally) should be more rounded in our understanding of God's ways. Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus warned his disciples of the difficulties that lay ahead and the need to keep their heads up. In John 16: 33, he says to the disciples 'in the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world'. Jesus' statement envisaged situations when everyday reality would contradict faith in an almighty, loving God. Nonetheless Jesus' declaration of ultimate victory over the world, even if (sometimes) not apparent in our everyday reality is enough reason to sing along Habakkuk's confession in 3:17-19.

May the Holy Trinity continue to comfort us even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Louis Ndekha



'Spring'

Lord of All Hopefulness

1. Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares can destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

2. Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

3. Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

4. Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

*Traditional Irish Tune
Lyrics by Jan Struther, 1931*

Janet, Fiona and Brian