



Cheltenham United Reformed Church

'The Pew sheet without any Pews'

Bulletin No 8 / 03.05.20

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:

- Barry Steele
- Gwen Hewinson
- Geoff Harmsworth
- The families of Jean Williams and Helen Bell.
- For all those who are suffering from coronavirus, their families and friends; those who have died, and those who mourn the loss of loved ones.
- For those who are helping to keep the country going - from hospital staff to refuse collectors
- Those with birthdays this week

Helen Bell's funeral will be in Evesham on Thursday 7th May

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 2 v42-47

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2 v19-25

John 10 v1-10



Virtual Services

For a comprehensive list of virtual services, please visit <http://www.urchic.org.uk/news.aspx>. This Sunday's service from the URC Daily Devotions <https://devotions.urchic.org.uk/> is coming from St Paul's URC in Croydon led by Rev Martin Knight.

Services from Rodborough Tabernacle can be found on YouTube (search for Rodborough Tabernacle)

Message from Bob Alger, realger@sky.com

Bob Alger is inviting you to his Personal Meeting Room on Zoom on Sunday at 11.30am. To join in, just go to <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/6147530476>. Don't forget to bring your own coffee! **Bob**

ST ANDREW'S May charity is Christian Aid.

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2020

Please see the 3 CA attachments with this Bulletin

Obviously we are unable to hold street collections or any fundraising events for the foreseeable future to bolster the great work of Christian Aid, which last year raised £18,133 in Cheltenham alone. This shows what a drastic dent there will be to CA funds going forward.

Clearly, the impact of this on some of the world's poorest communities may be immense, and then there is climate change and the threat of Coronaviris as well. So, of course we are appealing to all our loyal supporters and anyone who is able, both in and beyond our church, to still remember, donate and pray for the needs of our Christian Aid partners. I would encourage everyone to look on the CA website on www.christianaid.org.uk to learn more about where and how our donations have made and can continue to make a difference to people in circumstances we can perhaps only imagine.

Alison Veal

Simon Helme to complete 300,000 steps in May for Christian Aid!



Simon has set himself the challenge of walking 10,000 steps each day to raise funds for Christian Aid Week (May 10-16), which will be badly affected by the movement restrictions this year. (

In Sierra Leone there is just one ICU bed. In Malawi there is one bed per one million residents. 40% of the world do not have access to soap and water in their homes and many millions cannot protect themselves with social distancing because of the cramped conditions in which they live.

You can donate through the Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/274878263912694/> or contact him directly at smhelme@gmail.com or 07443568242

PRESTBURY

Thank you to all those who 'attended' the virtual AGM. We shall try to distribute the final Minutes in the next few weeks

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.

Age Concern Have produced a useful guide to local help and services, shopping etc (not just for the elderly!) (attached)

REFLECTION FROM REV. DEE BRIERLEY-JONES

JOY IN THE TRIALS OF LIFE

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.—James 1:2-4

Joy and trials do not seem like words that go together very well!

When I think of joy, I think of spending time with my family, and church families, being with my dear friends, and celebrating life's moments with others.

Right now, most of us can't do any of these things because we are in quarantine. We are either alone, or with close family, and we can't see or be around other people.

It certainly doesn't feel very joyful. It feels difficult, frustrating and confusing, among many other emotions.

The Greek word for 'joy' used in this verse is '*chara*' which can be translated as cheerfulness, calm delight or gladness – and these are all emotions many of us wish we had right now!

But what James is exhorting is that we can take hold of these emotions, because trials test our faith and produce perseverance.

Some of you have heard me speak in my sermons, of the tree in the wind buffeted from above, and how it makes its roots grow deeper and therefore all the stronger!

As believers, we desire to be mature in our faith, we want to show others what a strong faith is, but that strength often comes through trials!

In addition, the word used for perseverance here can be translated to steadfastness, constancy, and endurance, and I long for this, and I am sure-

A change in perspective can allow us to see current trial of the coronavirus as an opportunity to strengthen our faith.

Consider it a workout for your faith, allow yourself to build your muscle of faith through exercising your strength and patience day in and day out.

Look around you and find the joy in the situation, deepen your roots!

I am really enjoying the quietness from the human noise, which is allowing me to hear birds singing their changing Spring territorial song, and watch Spring buds bursting into leaf, or flower, and seeing and hearing this, gives us a chance to grow closer to the Lord.

So, find the moments of thanksgiving and find the joy in the situation, and use this to draw near to the Lord as you recognize His goodness in the midst of this trial, but also to encourage others around you who can't seem to see past the difficult situation.

Let us continuously give thanksgiving and praise to the Lord! AMEN

Keep safe and well

Dee

We are still in the season of Easter

Easter continues to Pentecost and Trinity so we keep the Mystery of Resurrection in mind before we move to Testimony and Mission. The wonder of Easter Day and the Risen Christ transforms but does not rub out the damage and horrors of Good Friday. Thomas understands this when he demands evidence - "the Marks of the Nails". Christ's sufferings must be real and not a deception or delusion as some heresies would claim.

The Risen Christ requires His followers move to a new reality. It is not a return to the old way, to "business as usual". Mary may not cling to Him. This should speak to us in these desperate times. When we start to get beyond the lock down, it will not be back to "normal" but to a new situation with changes yet to be worked out and through.

Here in our own lock down at home, we have been using some of the time in the last few weeks in reading and streaming stuff from the Web. Some of our reading has involved two series of detective novels, one involving a nurse in WW1 and the other a Police Inspector in Cambridge in 1940. We have also been streaming opera from the Met in New York and one show we watched was "Dr Atomic" by the contemporary American composer John Adams. "Dr Atomic" deals with the first atomic bomb and its central character is J Robert Oppenheimer who led the Manhattan Project. The opera is set in Los Alamos in 1945 and starts the day before the first test. It shows the tensions the scientists and the military people feel both technical and moral. It ends with the explosion (Code name "Trinity") and the use of the bomb on Japan.

All this has reminded us that bad as things are now, this is not war. It is one thing to recall and celebrate community spirit, resilience and fortitude of our people during the two great wars of the last century, especially as we come to commemorate 75 years after VE Day on the May 8th, but this is not war.

We have tragic loss of life but not the casualties on the scale of the Somme or D-Day. We have pressures on civic life but our buildings, roads and railways are not being destroyed as in the Blitz. Our economic life is disrupted and extraordinary measures are in place but we are not pouring treasure into bullets, bombs, shells and weapons of destruction. After the period of panic buying, we

have food in our shops and merchant ships are not being sunk by U-boats. People are stuck in their homes but we are not digging people out from bombed buildings, watching helpless at a fire storm or sending little children away as evacuees to strangers. Our health and care services are under great pressure and there are already deaths and trauma of patients and staff but we do not have mass casualty stations in the mud of Flanders or on the beaches of Normandy. And it is certainly not Nuclear War with unimaginable destruction and suffering.

As WW2 came to a close, there was leadership which looked forward to rebuilding, to peace and the a new order. Political leaders – Roosevelt, Truman, Churchill, Atlee and thinkers like John Maynard Keynes formulated new approaches and institutions – the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Marshall Plan – which meant we avoided the errors of 1919 and the Peace of Vengeance. There was recovery, rebuilding and some element of peace and security despite the Cold War. However, international institutions have been undermined in recent years and currently there is a terrible silence in the international arena. We should be able to rebuild and to create a new more satisfactory world order after this event if there is vision, imagination and humility from our leaders. If we can influence or apply pressure, then we should. We must not talk ourselves into despair.

We as Christians, have a responsibility to project the Easter message of hope and new beginnings after terrible events. The followers of Jesus were transformed and set in action a process that in under three hundred years would engulf the Roman Empire. They started in their local patch and that's what we can do. We can consolidate those activities which have begun during this crisis and which will support individuals and communities as we re-build. We can encourage our leaders to lean lessons from what has happened, to embed any good developments and to take action where things have failed or gone wrong. We need to consider our own lives, what we can learn from the experience of the last few months and what we can, as individuals, change for the future.

Above all, we must offer a vision of hope and of love and of faith in a God who has suffered and come through. Our communities and individuals will need comfort and healing and it's up to us to be part of that. We have to be Easter people.



Tony Jeans
28th April 2020.

“May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and for evermore.”

Janet, Fiona and Brian