



**WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE  
MARCH 2021**

*Our Vision: "To celebrate God and share the love of Jesus."*

## **Pastoral Letter**

Dear friends,

Here we are at the beginning of Lent which is a time for us to draw closer to God and his kingdom.

Recently I was chatting to someone with whom I pray regularly and they asked if I would pray that they would have a closer relationship with God. This, by the way, was someone who is a prayer warrior, someone who has the gift of intercessory prayer. Of course I knew that God would be delighted to hear this prayer and to grant this request.

As it says in Psalm 37: Take delight in the Lord and he will give you your heart's desires. (NLT) However before we prayed we talked a bit about coming to be closer to God, knowing that it doesn't just happen on its own or because we own a Bible or go to church for example, in the same way that getting fit doesn't happen by joining a gym nor losing weight by signing up to Slimming World / Weight Watchers. (I thought I'd better mention both so as not to be seen to be favouring one over the other!)

If we want to come closer to God, we have to play our part. We have to be intentional about it and identify then avoid or remove the distractions that hinder us. We all know what distracts us from spending time with God; that might be catching up with a television programme or cleaning the house or any one or more of a number of activities. Of course there is absolutely nothing wrong with doing the housework or even our leisure activities it's only a problem when they become the default position in order to postpone spending time with God. That's why it is so helpful and important to schedule time in for God, set aside time to be with him.

I was reminded of this in when reading about the Israelites in the wilderness. They were led out of Egypt specifically to worship the Lord but I wonder if they knew how? They had moved to Egypt with their ancestor Jacob in time of famine in Israel and four hundred years later when they were slaves perhaps they had totally forgotten about God? Initially in their comfortable prosperity perhaps they didn't see the need to worship God, perhaps they forgot him? Then, maybe in the time of slavery, they did not know how to worship him? However in the wilderness they had plenty of time and far fewer distractions and this is when they reconnected with God through the prophet Moses.

For many people this past year has been a time of wilderness or at least it might have felt a bit like that. Wandering around, a bit lost, with less purpose in our life than we might ordinarily have because we have less activity, less busyness in it. I appreciate that for some these last twelve months have been even more hectic, especially key workers and for those who are working and homeschooling at the same time.

However for others, time is weighing heavily on their hands as the saying goes. I know that many of you have been amazing, in fact making me feel quite inadequate! You've done loads of jobs you haven't previously had time for like tidying all the cupboards and sorting through your wardrobes, decorating and gardening. So let's view this enforced pause as, literally, a God given opportunity to take time to reflect, take stock and do a spiritual inventory.

Time spent with Jesus now will pay handsome dividends when life returns to normal or whatever becomes the 'new normal'. I'm sure we won't regret it.

This year we have the ideal opportunity to draw closer to God in the form of the Lent resource that was delivered to each household. Hopefully by the

time you read this you will have been engaging with it and tried some of the activities.

It's a way of drawing closer to God and to other people in the congregation. It is not selfish to spend time on your relationship with God, in fact it is quite the opposite, it helps our relationships with others. When Moses came down from the mountain having spent time with God, although he was totally unaware of it, his face was radiant to extent that he had to cover it. Gradually that radiance of God's glory faded..... until the next time he went up on the mountain to spend time with God when it was renewed.

I was reminded recently that each and everyone of us is a carrier of God's glory; we are called to seek out his heart and plan for the world around us so that we can be part of bringing His kingdom in, here on earth. It is not that God *needs* us but rather that he gives us the privilege of releasing him into every situation. Before we can release him, we need to be full of him which happens when we spend time with him.

As we continue your journey through Lent I pray that we will be drawing closer to God and to each other and that we will overflow with love, peace, hope and joy so that others see and experience God's kingdom in and through us.

I'd like to leave you with the apostle Paul's prayer for the believers in Rome: I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. \*

Yours in Christ,

Lorna

\* Romans 15:13 (NLT)

## **The origin and cost of our bible Light after Darkness. Keith Moscrop**

### **No. 2 The light of the Gospel comes to Britain**

'Make every effort to show.... kindness.' 2 Peter 1:5-7

The Christian Gospel spread rapidly from Palestine across Europe during the first century AD and Celtic missionaries arrived in Britain from Gaul, Spain and elsewhere in Europe bringing the Gospel. They were followed by Roman invaders bringing some Christians with them in their ranks.

The Celts quickly established communities, led by able and educated men and women. The leaders of the communities farmed the land efficiently and were good organisers, teaching people from the Greek and Latin versions of the bible.

They practiced living the way that Jesus taught and provided hospitality and support to the local inhabitants. They trained missionaries to go out into the community to share the Gospel and being dedicated to learning, they provided schools for community members and the local population. As time went by these communities prospered and they built magnificent churches and substantial monasteries from which they engaged with the local communities.



In 654 St Cedd came to Othona near Bradwell and part of the monastery still stands and now serves as a chapel. Many other communities, the well-known ones in Iona, Lindisfarne and Whitby were founded mostly in the north of Britain and in Ireland, where they retreated when the invading Romans pushed them north and west.

The book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospel are beautiful illustrated bibles from this time that have been preserved, and are worthy of further scrutiny.

The Romans were polytheistic, they worshiped many gods, but the Roman Christians left few clues to their spiritual life in Britain. A Greek philosopher, Aristides, wrote a long letter to the emperor Hadrian,(who built the wall in 122AD) writing: '*So this is how the early Christians lived, building a community of faith*' Aristides finished his letter by saying '*this is a new people, and there is something divine in the midst of them.*'

It is wonderful to know that the Gospel and Christianity was alive and well all through the period of the so-called dark ages which lasted for a few hundred years after the Romans left.

*If you have a computer there is a compelling article, about the Celts, by Rev. Paul Cullity, which is worth reading for more detail at:*

<https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/articles/monasticism-the-heart-of-celtic-christianity/>

*If you would like a paper copy please let me know.*

In my next article I will tell how the light of the gospel shone on through the years of invasions by Vikings, Saxons and others. Then in the year 1335 John Wycliffe began his translation of the bible into the English language.

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## **Thanksgiving for the life of Ian Lindsley**



Ian was a member of the church here for over 40 years, with his wife Ruth and daughter Yvonne. He was introduced to the Church when his father, the late Revd Herbert Lindsley was inducted to Witham URC as Minister, and Ian later served in the Eldership.

He was a quiet man, full of grace and joy, a true gentleman, and our hearts go out to Ruth and Yvonne as they grieve their loss. We commit him now to the Lord, may he rest in peace and may God have mercy on his soul.

## **A Family Reunion - Peter Howard**

It's a day I'll always remember  
A day I'll never forget  
The church ran out of hymn books  
The day the universal church met  
Some didn't believe it could happen  
Others had prayed for it for years  
The optimist glowed in anticipation  
While pessimist foresaw the river of tears  
It was a mixture of past and future  
With hope of things to come  
The universal church band seemed quite happy  
Especially the lady who played the drum  
The order of service had been sorted out  
And everyone would get their chance  
There were hymns you could sit down to  
And to others you could get up and dance  
Hands could be raised whoever you liked  
Hair could be worn long, short or spiked  
Suits next to jeans and young beside the old  
The nervous and the shy were helped by the bold  
And at the back a space had been made  
For differences to be stored  
As this was to be a family day  
Just to sing and be with the Lord  
We left behind all head knowledge  
And the Bible we used was the same  
The lady that I sat next to  
She smiled and offered me her name  
As the band struck up and the singing began  
Such feeling did overwhelm me  
For at last I felt I had come home  
The only real place to be  
It was only words that kept us apart  
And a difference in interpretation  
But now the church train is on the right track  
The body it shines and heaven's the destination.



## **Stewardship in a Pandemic - Ian Hardie (Your humbled Church Treasurer)**

Some years ago, the church decided to regard the nearest Sunday to the 9<sup>th</sup> of March as Stewardship Sunday. This year the date is Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> of March.

Normally I use the day to encourage everyone to reconsider the level and manner of their giving to the church. Of course, if anyone wants to talk to me this year about changing the amount they give (up or down) or about switching to electronic giving or using the Gift Aid scheme just ring, write or e-mail me (contact details in the directory, ChurchSuite or the weekly notices). But this year is different.

Over the 12 months since March last year the world has been in the grip of a pandemic with several periods of lockdown; many employees being furloughed or made redundant; businesses closing; and church buildings being shut or with only very restricted numbers able to worship in person.

Because of my role within our church fellowship, I am in the privileged position of seeing how people have reacted financially to the challenges of this time. I want to share with you in anonymised form some of the examples I have encountered over the past 12 months of people's Stewardship (their faithful and responsible use of the resources we are each entrusted with by God).

Many people normally give their offerings to the church electronically by bank standing order. Most, but not all, of that giving has carried on as before over the past 12 months: with one or two people even increasing the amount they give on a monthly basis to make up for the fact that some other people would no longer be able to give as much as before (or even at all).

Someone who only started coming to our church shortly before lockdown asked to be pointed in my direction so they might start giving by Gift Aided standing order during the pandemic.

Lots of people have historically preferred to give their offerings in person at worship services using our envelope giving system. When it became clear that this was unlikely to be possible for some time, a number of those people switched to giving by standing order or bank credit, increasing the amount given each month in this way by around £1,500. Others have regularly sent me cheques or asked me to call round to collect (in a socially distanced way) money they had put aside for God's work. There are many examples I could mention here; but one in particular comes to mind.

An individual had put aside their normal offering each week for many months and when I met that person in the street one day, they mentioned to me that they had several hundred pounds in their home. I expressed concern that this was highly risky and offered to collect and bank the money that day. The individual was reluctant to let me do this since they felt the right thing to do was to offer the money to God during an act of Christian worship. However, as time passed and the amount built up further with every sign that it would be a long time before that person would feel able to return to in-person worship, they changed their mind and let me collect and bank the money.

One newish recruit to our fellowship gave a significant one-off Gift Aided donation to the church's general funds while another longer-term member made a very substantial one-off donation to our Youth Pastor Fund – which meets the salaries of our Youth Pastor and Associate Youth Pastor and which, prior to that donation, was struggling a little.

Others 'normally' put money into the offering plate/bag. A couple of households which were doing this pre-lockdown have also switched to giving money electronically. One or two others have also asked me to collect money from them at intervals.

But many others in this category have not been able to maintain their giving to the church and as a result our 'plate offerings were down by around £10,000 in 2020. Some people have told me they felt guilty about this and I have had to assure them that God does not expect them to give out of what they no longer have.

One family carried on with their regular pattern of giving for many months despite little or no income coming into the house until they eventually let me know that they would have to reduce the amount they gave. I am sorry they did not feel able to approach me sooner. If anyone else is in this position, please do not struggle to maintain giving which is unsupportable going forward.

God wants everyone to be responsible with the money entrusted to them; but not to beat themselves up about the financial impact the pandemic has had on them which limits their ability to offer support for the work we continue to do as a church fellowship in Witham. *The Centre* may be closed, but the work of spreading the good news about Jesus and his love among our neighbours goes on.

I am convinced that is why so many people have gone that extra mile to keep supporting the church financially and why some have felt reluctant to accept that they are not able to continue that support at the same level as before.

Of course, there is much more to sharing God's love with others than simply giving money to the church or other charities. But, in purely financial terms, that financial lifeline has enabled us to carry on during 2020 with giving to almost 30 charities through The Pledge and your generosity has in addition raised surprising amounts in difficult circumstances for Christian Aid, Braintree Area Food bank, Prison Fellowship Chelmsford Angel Tree, Mercy Ships and Holdfast Supporters.

Whatever you have or have not been able to do with the money you are steward of on God's behalf I know that you all feel the need to respond to God's love in whatever way you can. So, thank you one and all on behalf of Witham URC, the charities we have supported and the One who loves us so much more than we deserve.

## Fellowship Profiles

Carrying on with this series this month we are delighted to feature Shirley and Keith. Thank you so much both of you. We would very much like to keep this going so it would be great to hear from you. You can decide if you wish to be the slightly younger of slightly older person !

### Shirley Ratnage



As a child and teenager I attended the Pentecostal church in Nottingham and it was here that I acquired my love and knowledge of the bible. Those were the days when you learned a memory verse each week and took Scripture Union bible exams! Sunday school was fun with loads of action choruses. I still sing the 'books of the bible' chorus in my head when looking for a particular book in the bible.

With encouragement from my Sunday School teacher, Marjorie Hoare, I committed my life to God at the age of 10 and He has watched over me ever since. (Marjorie moved on and we lost touch, so she has no idea of my walk with God but I praise Him for her & the many Christians along the way who have encouraged me in my walk with God.)

Like many people I wandered from the path but God always brought me back to him - the leaders of the youth group in Streatham, bibles study groups at lunchtime when working for Barclays Bank in the City, an amazing lunchtime service at St Helen's Undershaft in the City (they packed us in like sardines and if you arrived late, it was standing room only). It was at

St Margaret's, behind the Bank of England that I attended my first Alpha Course.

Alan and I moved to Wickham Bishops in 1978 when our daughter was almost a year old. (Our son was born 3 years later). I probably started worshipping at the Witham URC in 1979. I gradually became more involved in church life - Junior Church teacher, Bus project helper, Elder. I saw the refurbishment of the sanctuary and then the building of the Centre.

As the church was looking for a manager for the Centre, I was facing redundancy from the Bank. However the Bank were offering the opportunity to work for a charity on full pay for 2 years prior to early retirement.

I had no thoughts of putting myself forward for the Centre manager job but God had other ideas and that's what I did for a couple of years. It was a huge learning curve but church family supported me all the way. Afterwards I spent many happy years helping Friday Fellowship and 'dabbling' in pastoral care.

For many years I have supported the Bible Society with a small donation each month which goes towards providing bibles for others and translating the bible into native languages.

I marvel at how the bible has come down to us over the centuries, the number of versions and study aids we have to help us understand it better. Every time you read it new thoughts/understanding comes. It remains a 'best seller' and that is not surprising. I pray that in these difficult times more people have found solace and help in its teaching.

## Keith Meredith



I'm Keith, and I was most pleased when Bob asked me to be the "young person in this months Church Magazine.

I've been attending Witham URC since 2009 and came into membership about 3 or 4 years ago and in 2019 I had the privilege of being elected to serve as an Elder.

I'm a hugely proud husband and father to Sarah, Isaac (right) and George (left) and we've got a lunatic dog called Milo. I've got a lot of things I enjoy doing, and I'm obliged to say spending time with my family and friends is one of them, but if you ever want to get me talking, just mention Formula one or something to do with tinkering on cars, you won't be able to get away!

Now I'm never really sure where to start these types of things, but it makes sense to start when I was born, so settle in, I may get carried away and turn this into an autobiography.

I was born in Swaziland in 1988, where we lived till I was 4 years old. In 1992 we moved to Zimbabwe, where both my parents were born to be nearer the rest of our family and also because my parents wanted me in a "decent school"

I was fortunate to attend a private, Christian school and my parents were both involved in the church, so from as far back as I can remember, attending church was what people did on a Sunday.

It was at Bulawayo Presbyterian Church that I committed to Christ, when I was 8 years old. And since then, although regularly tested, I've held on to my faith. If for no other reason because I'm just too stubborn to change my mind.

My family and I moved to England when I was 12 years old and even before we'd arrived my mum had decided we would live in Witham, having made her decision because she liked a picture of the town hall in a brochure she'd seen.

We joined the Guithavon Valley Church, and I started at the John Bramston Penitentiary School. I also joined Boys Brigade around the same time (but I'll come back to that) I thoroughly enjoyed the social experience of secondary school but having come from a Christian junior school where children were made to choose which cane the deputy headmaster would whip you with for not doing their homework, the relative chaos of Bramston was a shock, and it didn't take long for my perfectly presented uniform and good manners to fly out the class room, closely followed by me, once I'd worked out that there was actually very little consequence for bunking off! Now obviously, my GCSE grades reflected my disdain for education.

I made a group of friends in school who weren't always the best influence, and still aren't! We'd all egg each other on and it didn't take much peer pressure for me to start smoking and drinking. How else were we supposed to impress the girls? 17 years after leaving school we've stayed close, its like having half a dozen brothers, and we still get ourselves into trouble when we get together.

I left school and went to work as a Labourer while I went to College (I managed to convince them to aggregate my 3 decent GCSEs with my less good grades to let me in), to study Construction Management. I worked in construction for 4 years until I got made redundant in 2008.

This gave me a year of hard work and struggle like I've never known it but brought me closer to God. (I went from a well paid job to being unemployed over night, and I'd just moved into a house share with some friends. Talk about having to grow up quickly.)

I was in church one evening, and I had £20 in my wallet which was supposed to pay for Diesel to get to and from work that week, and for some reason, I pulled it out and put it in the offertory, having decided I'd just ride my bike into work that week instead. On the way out of church that night, a friend of mine slipped an envelope into my hand. It had £250 in it and a letter explaining that the money was from God.

I spent a year doing agency work while I looked for another construction job, and then in 2009 took a job working in a care home for young adults with learning disabilities till I found a full time job in construction again, but I landed on my feet, I loved the job, made some good friends at work and the cream on top was one of my colleagues happened to be a very attractive young lady called Sarah. It didn't take her long to realise I was the man of her dreams and after 7 months we were engaged and married 2 years later. I've still not found that job in Construction, instead, 11 years on I'm now the Registered Manager of a care home.

In 2016, Sarah and I had our first child, Isaac, and he was joined in 2018 by his little brother George. I know everyone thinks they've got the cutest, funniest, best behaved and most intellegient children going, but we don't... they're a pair of rogue's who've turned our lives upside down, but we wouldn't change a thing. Isaac started at Cressing Primary School in September and George is like a shadow to his big brother. A shadow that constantly pinches and punches you and breaks your stuff!

And that brings us up to today, Sarah and I are living in Silver End and enjoying raising our family.



I hope you've enjoyed getting to know a bit about whats brought me to be a part of the Witham URC family, and I look forward to reading about some more of our members.



**FAITH IN YOUNG PEOPLE**

Now back to the bit where I joined Boys' Brigade.

Without doubt, had it not been for BB, I would have left Church in my teens and probably not come back. I didn't know it at the time, but Boys Brigade and the people who make it happen have been the single most important vehicle in my faith journey over the 20 years I've been a member.

Even when my friends used to give me a hard time for going to Boys' Brigade on a Friday night instead of drinking by the weir, I was stubborn enough to keep going. (I'd just join them afterwards!) Eventually drinking at the weir stopped happening, but I was still going to BB, and will continue to do so for some time yet. If you've got young children, I highly recommend that you send them along.

**Closing date for articles  
for April Magazine  
20th March 2021  
email to: [bjstibbards@gmail.com](mailto:bjstibbards@gmail.com)**

## Hello my Witham URC Family! - Emma King



I hope this finds you well. I have been thinking of you all over this past year, through all the changes, challenges and hardship we have all encountered in different ways. I believe God has been working even in those times, looking after us.

I wanted to update you on my journey so far. So many of you have been such a great support to me, even when I'm so far away! Whether that's ringing my mum, sending emails, and so much more. I have loved being able to still be a part of

the worship even from a far and thank you for all your encouragement in that, it's so precious to me! I have now in-fact moved from France and found another job in Switzerland just over the border.

As some of you know I was doing an internship in a church in Annemasse, France and I stayed there for two months, but I really felt God telling me it wasn't right and He called me on to the next thing.

Whilst being in France, it certainly was a good training ground... I lead worship every week in French and traveled far to get to the church, it was a hard two months, but I took a lot away from it. God gave me even more patience when He showed me that I was to move on to somewhere else, but I didn't know where he meant! He also showed me how to talk and raise my voice when I felt something wasn't quite right and know how to say this in a caring and constructive way.

I was quickly offered a Job in Lausanne, in Switzerland in a church called C3, which I am enjoying so much. The team are so welcoming, and I am

also doing an internship which includes being on the care team for the church (which involved sending of over 800 Christmas cards...it was crazy...it's a big church). I also have been translating videos for bible courses in the church and doing visuals for the Sunday mornings and I am soon to join the worship team when this corona allows more people together! In this time, I overall learnt that its ok to move on... it isn't a failure, God has a plan!

I stayed patient and tried my best to listen to what God wanted me to do and where he wanted me to be, and certainly the same sentence came up many times by many people, 'sometimes God leads you out of your comfort zone to then lead you to the place he wants you to be'. I found it a challenge mentally and physically to be where I was in France, but God showed me his never-ending closeness, love and strength in these times. The verse below is what I needed to be reminded of....

10 So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. - Isaiah 41v10 – NIV

I am now thoroughly enjoying my new roles in this church, it is also the church my boyfriend Lukas and his family attend. I am grateful for them as they have helped me so much in these times when I can't see my own family!

Thank you again for all your prayers and love and know I am praying for you all my church family and I cannot wait to see you all soon! Also, if anyone wants to contact me my email is [emmanicolinaking98@gmail.com](mailto:emmanicolinaking98@gmail.com)

## **Let God In... - Keith Mitchell**

Those who know me will know I became a Christian in 2014 and was baptised in 2015. On the day of my baptism I felt so alive and on a spiritual high as you can see in this photo. But my journey with faith has been up and down since then and I still consider myself a young Christian with new learning and insights each day.

During lockdown and not going to physical church I struggled with my faith, if I'm honest I sometimes felt like God had left me.

This all came to a head in November last year when I was on 6 weeks furlough from work, I felt very low in my faith and I could not see a way back to God.

That all changed in January this year when I started to pray again, I prayed for myself and asked God to save me and take away the sadness, anger and darkness that I had in me.

I'm pleased to say that my prayers were answered and I felt the love of God again, I now feel richer in faith than I have ever felt. I'm really enjoying the online services and I'm very grateful for the support of the house groups I'm part of.

I am writing this to encourage anyone who is struggling at the moment, please talk to God and let him into your heart.



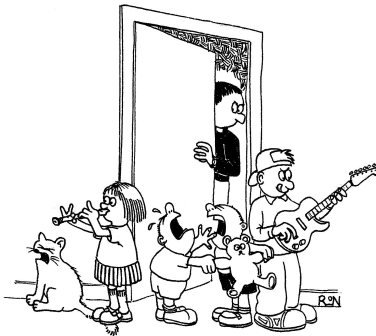
## Sinkholes- Dot Banks

There are times in all our lives when we feel as though we've been swallowed by a sinkhole.

Something shakes our world, and the ground beneath our feet falls away. Our sense of normality is disrupted and our foundation of security splits wide open, leaving us staring up from the bottom of a deep pit at the life we once knew.

We need to have a dependency on something – or Someone – larger and more powerful than ourselves to lift us out. In fact, the more independent we become, the more likely we are to stubbornly keep wallowing in our sinkholes.

*Taken from an out-of-date diary found when 'tidying' while serving in our own Church shop.*



*Kevin took himself off to his study to pray for peace*

## **The History of Witham URC - Muriel**



Looking for something useful to do in lockdown, I remembered the scrap-book I made some time ago on the history of our church which has gone missing. (Does anyone have any idea where it has gone?). Fortunately I have most of the text and photos on my computer so I am in the process of rewriting it. I have relied very heavily on M. L. Smith's booklet "The History of Witham Congregational Church" which he published in 1965. It is a very well researched and interesting booklet but heavy on statistics such as pew rents and financial accounts! Due to the limitations of publishing back then, there are no photos.

I am not a great wordsmith so though I am updating the story of our church, and hope to be able publish it later, I would be grateful for any input from the rest of the congregation. A huge amount has happened since 1965 so if anyone has any memories, photos or any contribution I would be most grateful. With modern technology, I can include photos as well. I have at home a copy of the booklet printed at the time of the rebuilding in 1985-6.

Also I have scanned and digitalised M. L. Smith's booklet and I'm happy to let anyone interested have a copy. It is a fascinating insight into the workings of the church in the 18th and 19th centuries and how the congregation has gone forward in faith through the generations.

## When God made Mums - with thanks to Dorothy Dames for forwarding this article



By the time the Lord made mothers, He was into His sixth day of working overtime.

An Angel appeared and said: "Why are you spending so much time on this one?"

And the Lord answered and said: "Have you seen the spec sheet on her? She has to be completely washable, but not plastic, have 200 moveable parts, all replaceable, run on black coffee and leftovers, have a lap that can hold three children at one time and that disappears when she stands up, have a kiss that can cure anything from a scraped knee to a broken heart, and have six pairs of hands."

The Angel was astounded at the requirements for the one. "Six pairs of hands! No way!" said the Angel.

The Lord replied: "Oh, it's not the hands that are the problem. It's the three pairs of eyes that mothers must have!"

"And that's just on the standard model?" the Angel asked.

The Lord nodded in agreement. Yes, one pair of eyes are to see through the closed door as she asks her children what they are doing even though she already knows. Another pair in the back of her head are to see what she needs to know even though no one thinks she can. And the third pair are here in the front of her head. They are for looking at an arrant child and saying that she understands and loves."

The Angels tried to stop the Lord. "This is too much work for one day. Wait until tomorrow to finish."

"But I can't!" the Lord protested. "I am so close to finishing this creation that is so close to my own heart. She already heals herself when she is sick AND can feed a family of six on a pound of hamburger and can get a nine year old to stand in the shower."

The Angel moved closer and touched the woman, "But you have made her so soft, Lord."

"She is soft", the Lord agreed, "but I have also made her tough. You have no idea what she can endure or accomplish."

"Will she be able to think?" asked the Angel.

The Lord replied, "Not only will she be able to think, she will be able to reason and negotiate."

The Angel then noticed something and reached out and touched the woman's cheek. "Oops, it looks like you have a leak with this model. I told you that you were trying to put too much into this one."

"That's not a leak." the Lord objected. "That's a tear?"

"What's the tear for?" the Angel asked.

The Lord said: "The tear is her way of expressing her joy, her sorrow, her disappointment, her pain, her loneliness, her grief, and her pride."

The Angel was impressed. "You are a genius, Lord, You thought of everything for WOMEN are truly amazing."

**Wishing all mothers and those who care for us  
a very happy Mothers' Day  
on 14th March**



## **Au Revoir but hopefully not Adieu - Judy Fishwick**



Sadly I won't be able to say farewell in person as I moved to pastures new on the 19th February. Covid and lockdown has been a strange time and made many people re-evaluate their lives and lifestyle - and that's exactly what happened to us.

After much thought we decided it was time to start new memories and so we put our house up for sale. It sold a lot quicker than we anticipated and before we had really decided where we wanted to go!

Maybe the Peak District - a part of England we go back to many times as we love walking amongst the hills and enjoy the lifestyle of the villages - but it is colder there.

Then there is Castle Cary near Glastonbury -another place we have stayed at many times, and I have lived and have family in Taunton which is nearby and it is a small market town which ticked our boxes, close to so many places that call to us - but it is wetter there.

Perhaps Stroud in the Cotswolds - a great small town with a fun vibe, not to mention the fantastic market on Saturdays and near to where my brother lives.

And so on and so on - there are so many other places we could and would love to move to.

However, we randomly have ended up buying a house in Eastbourne. A place which ticks hardly any of the criteria we had laid down. However, the house is 5 minutes walk from the sea, and Beachy Head, and Eastbourne has a station which is not far from where we are moving to with a direct line to London so that I can pop up to see Duncan and Fiona and get back again in one day.

I have no idea why we have decided on Eastbourne but I am sure there is a reason for it and one I am embracing.

I've been a member of Witham URC on and off since 1979. Peter Flint was the minister at the time and Judith his wife was rehearsal pianist for Witham Operatics which I belonged to (Janice Hawkes was also a member of the society too at the time).

I used to help with Anchor Boys when we had a Boys Brigade, taught in Junior Church, helped out with Sunday morning coffee together with Peter Howard helped with GAP, served in the Traidcraft shop when it was run out of the old back hall Sunday School Rooms before the re-development of the church.

I can remember church gatherings at Gimsons, now a subject of controversy in Witham, taken part in interchurch pantomimes which were performed at The Public Hall - in fact so many memories associated with this church - a church which has meant so much more than Sunday worship to me.

My children Duncan and Fiona Henderson grew up in the church and through Junior Church and Brigades and youth groups they made life-long friends.

Leaving Witham is exciting but also emotional, and leaving Witham URC is tinged with sadness. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you

and goodbye to everyone I know in the church and also to those I used to see every Sunday but never really got to know.

God bless.

***Judy Fishwick***

***Tel: 07752 103455***

The photograph is of Judy with her daughter, Fiona and son, Duncan taken at Duncan's wedding in Turkey last year

### **Pastoral Team - Ruth Blackett**

As promised last month I can now confirm the Pastoral Team to work alongside Doug (eldership), Rosemary (prayer chain) and home groups are:

Audrey Kennedy

Carolyn Joyce

Maureen Barry

Rocio MacDonald

Ruth Blackett (Co-ordinator)

Sarah Moon and Shirley Ratnage

Please do let us know if we can be of any help to you.

### **Contact Details**

Ruth Blackett and team 07546 838825

Church Office 01376 500958

Rosemary (prayer chain) 01376 516602

## Ana's boys enjoying the snow



## Fairtrade - Emmeila Van der Walt



Fairtrade Standards have helped workers and communities across the world, with considerable success in improving access to education, healthcare and opportunities for women. But the battle is far from won. Only a small proportion of global commodities are sold on Fairtrade terms, and challenges like climate change, market volatility and armed conflict pose an urgent threat to livelihoods

In reality, there has never been a silver bullet, a click-your-fingers magic trick for ending exploitation. Fairtrade is part of the long-term solution, but Fairtrade alone cannot solve deep-rooted supply chain problems that exploit the poorest. Even with Fairtrade certification, working on a banana plantation or a coffee farm is hard. There is no sunny side to trade injustice. So the fight goes on.

Of course, every brand and his dog likes to label themselves 'ethical', offering a quick-fire solution to complex problems. But while it's easy to make bold claims and hope consumers don't notice the lack of independent third party verification, Fairtrade is making real progress on the ground. Alongside well-known Fairtrade products like bananas, coffee and cocoa, Fairtrade gold mining certification now means miners can invest in making their operations safer, improve their business practices and sell their product at a fair price.

Looking ahead, Fairtrade will continue to develop new ways of working with businesses to bring positive change to farming communities. Thanks to efforts like these, a Fairtrade-commissioned study in 17 countries found

that six in ten consumers have seen the FAIRTRADE mark, and of those, nine in ten trust it.

Fairtrade might no longer be the new kid on the block, but the battle for trade justice has never been more relevant.'

Thanks for reading.

## **Life in the fast Lane - Bob Stibbards**

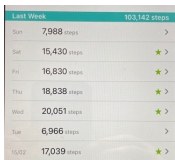
A day out means a trip to the Vet.

A night out means watching a complete new series on Netflix.

A cosy dinner for two, no we do not do date nights, means a home delivery from Cote brassiere.

A good daily read means receiving the Daily Telegraph, sorry all you Guardian and Daily Mail readers, on an iPad starting with the sports section.

A sad day means no amazon deliveries for Jo.



Last Week		103,182 steps
Sun	7,988 steps	>
Sat	15,430 steps	>
Fri	16,830 steps	>
Thu	18,838 steps	>
Wed	20,051 steps	>
Tue	6,966 steps	>
SUN	17,039 steps	>

A bad day, means when my Fitbit watch will not synch with my phone.

A strange event, means watching live football matches on TV without spectators, the new normal.

A result means getting our big ginger cat to answer to the name of Zoomy. Who said cats are stupid, it has only taken a year after his guest appearances at zoom communions.

## **Born on 25th December - Christine Barton**

### **PART TWO**

#### **Born again on 22nd May.**

I finished my last piece by questioning Psalm 139. It says a lot of very lovely things but does say that God even knew us when we were in our mothers' womb.

I can say this now years later but Psalm 139 is comforting. He may have known that my sister would be mentally handicapped, as it was, later in life I would come to know that theologians believe that such things are caused by sin. NOT my mother's sin but Original Sin, the sins of the world. Wendy was born with one extra chromosome, just one too many. The whole of the psalm tells of God's omnipresence, and includes the other omni's too. Here was my Emmanuel again.

So life continued, we got by and Wendy went to a day centre 2 or 3 times a week. We moved house a couple of times and I was very upset about leaving the seaside to go to Manchester as my father's job demanded. I missed the freedom of roller-skating along the Prom. I secretly still do! God was with me, I know He was.

In Manchester I went to Sunday School for a while with the boy across the road. We went in the afternoon which seems strange now. Still I felt God was with me and was told that God was with me always. Emmanuel. Nothing changed until I married and eventually settled in Hatfield Peverel. I had two children and thousands of unanswered questions about God and Jesus. I started to discuss them with another young Mum I had become friends with.

Then one day on the stairs at home doing the dusting I felt this overwhelming urge to do something about getting my queries about God answered. I tried to think who I could ask without appearing demented. In my inner being I felt an urge to phone the Parish Priest. It seemed the obvious thing to do. God was his job.

So there and then I phoned him and said “I think I want to become a Christian”. After he metaphorically picked himself up off the floor he told me about teaching sessions he held in church on Tuesday nights. They were actually confirmation classes.

So after quite a few sessions I knew I wanted to confirm my baptism vows made on my behalf. I was so excited. However when I told my friend she was very upset with me because I hadn't told her about the classes etc. She gave me a charming little gift after the event, a piece of stained glass with the words “Know that I am with you always.” I had not told her how important that was to me. The coincidence was not lost on me. It was Emmanuel again.

After that I grew like a seedling suddenly given sunlight and water. I took the Diocesan Course in Christian Studies for 2 years. Nearing the end we were asked to consider going on further into some kind of ministry. I didn't think it was for me. My husband was not a Christian and we had two boys showing no interest. But the class went for a quiet day at New Hall and part of that was a meditation on a piece of scripture which the tutor had adapted for us. In the silence I found I quite quickly got into the story. We were sitting around with Jesus just outside a cave. In my meditative state I heard her say that Jesus was asking us to go with Him but lots turned away. I was getting quite upset by this time. “I want to go with you but I can't” I was saying. Hanging back till I was almost the last to leave.

Then the moment came which I will never forget; Jesus held out his arms to encourage me back. “I will give you the words.” He said. I knew then that



God wanted me to go into some sort of ministry and that He would give me the words to preach and teach as a Lay Minister. So I was accepted for training and was inducted at Chelmsford Cathedral in 1996, ten years after I had been confirmed.

There were other special God moments along the way which have helped me to carry on. But the main things I know for sure are that God is always with me, and He will give me the words.

My family have always been supportive but resistant to my efforts to “convert” them! I pray for them.

When I was confirmed on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1976 I was born again, so I celebrate my birthday that day instead of Christmas Day, which my parents found hard to understand. I was actually being a bit selfish. I was fed up with Christmas cards with Happy Birthday written on, and one present to cover both occasions. When I was older I was the one who did the entertaining slaving away over the roast dinner. Nowhere was open on 25<sup>th</sup> December. Staying in bed wasn't an option. Now on 22<sup>nd</sup> May my spiritual birthday I can do all sorts of things.

I feel now that my time in the preaching and teaching ministry is over, but I will always be given the right words and God is with me; Just as He is with you. Always!



## Shopping List February/March 2021

Thank you for your continuing support during the Coronavirus crisis.

Foodbanks within the Trussell Trust network have seen unprecedented increases across our network and by continuing to support us with your donations you are continuing to support those most in need.

We are very thankful for any donations you can give.

### We currently need:

#### Food Items:

- UHT long life milk

#### Other Essentials:

- Hair conditioner
- Shampoo

Our food parcels are made up of specific food groups so that those in need have enough food for at least nine meals. **The list above shows what we are in need of as we currently have good stocks of pasta, pasta sauce, biscuits, rice, fish, soup, baby food and cereals.**

We also ask for small packs of food as larger packs do not fit in our parcels, making it difficult for our clients to carry home.

Thank you

*We are grateful for your donations to the Braintree Area foodbank. However, we can only accept donations of freshly-bought, unopened and undamaged goods which are still well within their "use by" date (no less than 6 months). We cannot use items which do not meet these requirements, and the donation is wasted.*



# Prayer Network Update



**Population:**  
5.1 million (July 2020 est.)

**Government Type:**  
Presidential republic

**Capital City:**  
Monrovia

**Language:**  
English 20% (official), some 20 ethnic group languages

**Religion:**  
Christian 85.6%, Muslim 12.2%, Traditional 0.6%, other 0.2%.

Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

- Matthew 21:22

In the 2019-20 season, Liberia received 98,726 gifts. The season was of course interrupted by the pandemic. It came after all trainings were completed and partners had distributed many of the gifts. Partners followed government guidance and were able to restart in July and complete the season by October 2021 (usually they would have completed by August in a normal year). We give thanks to God for this and that our 556 Liberia church partners are very motivated, and still managed to hold TGJ classes during a year of challenge. They report that 37,500 children participated in TGJ and 15,700 graduated! In Bomi county, ministry partner coordinator Rev Ruth Yarmo held an OCC outreach event in Domagbatina town, in an area that was mostly Muslim. The community welcomed the event, and were open to the gospel message. Parents also listened and following the outreach, parents asked to be taught more, and 16 of them came to faith, and a small church was born. Praise God for what he is doing in Liberia!

**Prayer requests for LIBERIA:**

- Smooth customs processes. This season they will receive 6 containers from the US and 2 from UK.
- Wisdom for the teams as they advise partners in how to carry out events while still respecting restrictions in place.
- For more children to take up the invitation to do The Greatest Journey, and for them to grow a deep and strong faith.
- For boldness for those partners reaching outlying areas to plant churches.

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Mission and Outreach	Mr	Gavin McCall	
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Pastoral	Mr	Doug Sandles	
Property	Mr	David Wellings	
Church Treasurer	Mr	Ian Hardie	
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