

WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE
April 2022

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends,

Matthew 26 v. 69 – 75 Peter disowns Jesus.

You know the story. Three times Peter is confronted with people saying he is one of Jesus' friends and each time he denies knowing him. Then the cock crows, v. 75 "Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: " Before the cock crows you will disown me three times." 'And he went outside and wept bitterly.'

Poor Peter.....When I first started reading the bible I used to think, " How could he do that? He had spent 3 years with Jesus, talking, walking, living with Him. He had heard the teaching first hand, he had seen the miracles, how could he turn his back on Him like that?"

Now I think, I have spent over 60 years learning how to follow Jesus. I have read the teaching I have seen the answers to prayer, I know about the miracles that happen every day but while I may not actually disown Him, do I stand up for Him? Do I call out behaviour I know to be against his teaching? Do I follow his precepts of tolerance, forgiveness, loving my neighbour, being non-judgemental etc.? I do try..... but I fail a lot. Jesus gave a new commandment to his disciples, "that you love one another as I have loved you." What a tall order! But as his disciples that is what we are called to do.

Since the Centre re-opened we have made a point of starting the day with prayer for all those coming into the building that day, that they will find God's love there through the service and care of those working there. It is a joy to know that many people coming in have said they do experience a feeling of being loved and welcomed and the activities taking place are starting to bear fruit in terms of people coming into church. Relationships

are being formed and it is great to see church members being a part of what is a growing and loving community.

And how are we to show our love? 1 Corinthians v 4 – 7 and v. 13

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

With love,

Fenella

New Testament Reading - Lorna

The word is God is alive and active (Hebrews 4:12) which is great news as we will be reading through the New Testament on Maundy Thursday from 10am to 6pm and Good Friday from noon to 7pm in the sanctuary.

Most of us don't read Scripture in large chunks so please take this opportunity to really get immersed in it by coming along to listen at any time

If you would like to take part by reading for fifteen minutes during that time, there will be an opportunity to sign up online. If you would like to read but cannot access the Internet, then please contact me, Gavin or the office and we will sign you up at a time you choose. Please can you pray that reading and listening to God's word will be a life changing experience for everyone involved. More details to follow near the time..

Dear Friends - Mark Ambrose

Greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace to you all.

I am writing to thank you for your kind gifts and messages of support. You have been so generous. When I eventually get my own home and settle down, I will buy something to remind me of Witham URC.

Thank you also for making my last service so memorable. The worship was amazing and the very sense of God filled the Church. Those six saints who went through the waters in an act of devotion and obedience set the scene beautifully, and the excitement of the children as they watched was wonderful to see. I felt very privileged to be part of something so meaningful.

My hope is that post Covid, the Church is turning the corner, and the number of new faces in the congregation is testament to Gods blessing. The Centre has sprung to life, and midweek events are becoming a route for newcomers to start their faith journey into the Church. I pray that they will be welcomed and nurtured, and something of the warmth and hospitality that has always been so much a part of the Fellowship will help them feel at home, loved and appreciated for who they are.

A number of people have asked me about the book I have written about the extraordinary people I have met during my thirty years in ministry. I hope it will be out in the next few months, but when it is I promise I will let you know. A few of the chapters refer to my time in Witham.

It just leaves me to say a final thank you for all your support and encouragement over the last three and a half years. Ministers come and go, but you are the people who really make the Church what it is.

May God continue to abundantly bless you in the coming years, you will remain in my thoughts and prayers.

With every blessing.

Saturday Coffee at The Centre

Now we have our new coffee machine we would like to resume opening the Community Café on a Saturday morning. To do this we will need teams of two or three. One will have to be a key holder and one fully trained in the use of the new coffee machine (not difficult to use but setting up and cleaning must be done correctly).

A key holder must be present while the building is open to the public but need not necessarily serve in the café, as long as they are physically present in the building.

If you are willing to help, even if only two or three times a year, please contact Muriel Heppinstall or Fenella Hardie.

Life on the breadline: a Lent course for Today's Society **- Andy Blackett**

This years Lent course though not a traditional bible study has some much needed biblical application to the problems encountered by those in poverty, ethnic minorities, housing and social inequality. This was developed from 3 years of research of Life on the



Breadline, engaging church leaders, christian's and community groups across the UK, in conjunction with Coventry and Manchester universities. See: breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/churches/lent-course

From the first session I was challenged to think about our response to poverty as a church and as a christian.

We live in a country with an ever increasing population that is in deepening poverty. This is not because of the pandemic or spiralling energy cost or a war going on in Europe, as serious as these are, though these will likely have an additional impact on poverty. The gap between the have and have nots gets bigger even among those in work.

Poverty is not a simple matter and many factors play into its cause. A few measures may serve as indicators. Well before these world events, Britain was witnessing a growing proportion of it population in poverty. The Trussel Trust has seen an increase in Food bank usage by volume increase by 123% between 2015/16 to 2020/21. This excludes data for independent community groups, which also shows dramatic increases. Child poverty has also increased significantly over a similar period with some 4.3 million child living in poverty 2019/20 (cpag.org.uk)

If some of our media and politicians are to believed those on benefits have made a lifestyle choice, to quote George Osbourne “Where is the fairness,

we ask , for the shift worker, leaving home in the dark hours of the morning, looking up at the closed blinds of their next door neighbour sleeping off a life on benefits.” To portray this as a case for all those on benefits as making a lifestyle choice is incredibly misleading. This rhetoric has led to an ever increasing tightening of benefits, the loss of Sure Start centres to support families, the hollowing out of council resources to support low income families and society as a whole, along with much more. As of July 2021 40% benefits are paid to those in work, are these people making a benefits lifestyle choice as well?

The lent course has taken this head on, suggesting that our society's increasing poverty levels are more to do with the current political decisions taken over the last twelve years than to life style choices. The course also suggests that our personal response and that of the church is not to just provide food, clothing etc. (as important as these are), but to change the fundamental causes leading to poverty i.e the political choices made.

The third Lent session of the course was about the disproportionate poverty experienced by ethnic minorities in this country . The bible reading was Acts 3 vs 1-8 here Peter and John encounter the lame man. I had always just thought of it as one of the miracles. Many a passer by had given him money or food to help him survive, but Peter solves the fundamental cause the man had and enabled him to walk.

How often do we treat the problem and not the cause! As a church based in the centre of town we have responsibility to our community to not only support the poor in practical ways but to promote a more equitable society from our politicians.

WURC Men's Night 21st April - Graham Bantock

After a bit of a delay the 2019 WURC Men's Night is re-scheduled for 7.00 for 7.30 pm, Thursday 21st April 2022, at 16 Tiberius Gardens, Witham. Carriages at 10.30 pm. Please put it in your diaries now.

As usual we will spend the evening singing madrigals, playing 3 dimensional chess and poetry reading. That is what you can tell your partners anyway. In the past we have enjoyed baked potatoes, chilli con carne and Bolognese sauce for those who prefer something non-spicy. Wine and beer has been provided and many have brought their own preferred tipples. This time the venue is the home of Foster and Charlotte Asamani and this will, happily, affect the food although a Bolognese sauce is planned as usual.

It's an opportunity to get to know each other better than a quick chat after Sunday service provides. Those of you who are old hands, please make a positive step to encourage those who have been around WURC for a shorter time.

So that we can make plans for quantities, please indicate if you will come, giving any food allergies/preferences, and whether you can offer a lift to others or need a lift to get there (and back). RSVP to GrahamBantock or Tony Robinson.

We hope to see you there.

At trip to the theatre trip: To be or not to be - Bob Stibbards

One of the things that Jo and I have missed over the last couple of years are our theatre trips to London: there is something really special about live performances.

My theatre critic is responsible for booking the plays. A few weeks ago we saw the Mousetrap. This was really good. We were sworn at the end not to reveal who don-nit so of course I must maintain the secret. As good as it was it is difficult to understand how it has been running for over 70 years.

Our most recent visit was to see the Life of Pi. I am told that we have the book but have never read it and they made a film of it about 8 years ago again we did not see it .


Our trip to London was not straightforward and at various times we thought strongly about not continuing. It started when I got the car out of the garage only for the electronic handbrake to seize on. I recall this happening once before and the recovery man had the simple solution of revving the car as hard as he could but I remembered to have it in reverse otherwise it would crash into the garage!

Arriving at Witham station and after purchasing the tickets we found that there was a bus replacement service between Shenfield, must remember to check next time, and Newbury Park and then a tube connection to London. This all brought back the joys of travelling to London for work for over 30 years. We had allowed plenty of time for the journey but time kept slipping away as we waited at different points of the journey. We eventually got to the end of the tube journey just as the play started and resolved ourselves to see the second half of the play. Having got to the theatre we were taken to the bar where they had a small TV showing the play and when there was enough late comers they took you to your seat. We were not expecting that

but the stress of getting there meant that Lent promises went out of the windows with drinks from the bar and crisps, I know fine dining!

The play was brilliant. The basic thread of the story being that Pi is travelling to Canada with his family together with their zoo animals. Caught in a terrible storm the boat is sunk and Pi survives in a life boat with a zebra, ape and a bengal tiger. The tiger eats the zebra and ape leaving Pi and the bengal struggling for survival together with a turtle swimming around!

This sounds bizarre but the acting and effects were amazing.



Join us for

Afternoon Tea

Monday April 4th at 2.30pm

Sandwiches


Scones

with Tiptree jam & cream

Home-made Cakes

Price: £5.00

*Please let the office know
if you would like to come
01376 500958*



Why I shall be eating a sausage for Ash Wednesday 2022, and why you should too!

500 Years of Lenten Sausages... Article from URC Daily Devotions - provided by Muriel Heppinstall

Eating a sausage on Ash Wednesday 2022 marks the 500th anniversary of a very important event, and sausage is far more appropriate than an act of piety at home or in church! The Reformation began in Zurich on Ash Wednesday 1522 – 500 years ago this year – and it all started with a sausage, or rather several sausages.



Ulrich Zwingli was the Pastor of a church known as the Grossmünster in Zurich, Switzerland. This wasn't the first time Zwingli was in trouble – he had form from preaching along the same lines as Erasmus and Luther, but this was Zwingli's first rift with the established religious authorities. During the Lenten fast of 1522 Zwingli was invited to join a sausage supper that Christoph Froschauer, a printer in the city, served to his workers who were seemingly worn out from printing a new edition of The Epistles of Saint Paul. Various civic and church leaders were present, and the meal involved Swiss Fasnachtskiechli (a type of pancake) and some slices of sharp smoked hard sausage. The eating of meat during Lent was prohibited, and Froschauer was arrested.

Though Zwingli did not eat the sausages himself, he quickly defended Froschauer from allegations of heresy, giving a detailed defence of this call in a sermon called “Von Erkiesen und Freiheit der Speisen” (Regarding the Choice and Freedom of Foods), in which he used Martin Luther's teachings to show that “Christians are free to fast or not to fast because the Bible does not prohibit the eating of meat during Lent.”, that is to say that fasting should be entirely voluntary, not mandatory. Zwingli was setting out the

view of the Reformers that Lent was a matter for personal choice, rather than a rule for everyone.

Once news of this outrage broke, Hugo von Hohenlandenberg, the Bishop of Konstanz, was so wound up by Zwingli's preaching that he called for a rule banning the preaching of any of the Reformation doctrines in Switzerland. This was too little and too late, as Zwingli went on to be a revered figure in Swiss Protestantism.

The Zurich sausage affair was seen as a demonstration of Christian freedom and is generally accepted to be of similar importance for the Reformation in Switzerland as Martin Luther's 95 theses were for the German Reformation in Germany. Will you join me in remembering and celebrating this with a sausage?

Our new Coffee machine has arrived!

We are now able to serve freshly ground coffee as espressos, lattes, cappuccinos and Americanos during the week. (Sundays will still be filter coffee as the new machine cannot cope with large volumes). To reflect the investment we have made, there are price rises, though tea and instant coffee will still be available at the old prices.

April Fellowship Walk - Muriel Heppinstall



The third Saturday is Easter Saturday so we will walk the following week, April 23rd. It is bluebell time so we hope to walk Blakes Wood in Little Baddow. We will meet at the car park next to Old Riffams in Riffams Chase, Little Baddow, (OS reference 577528,206582) at 10.00am. The walk is about 2 miles. In March parts were muddy so you might need boots or wellies. A walking pole might be useful too. (Paper Mill Lock Tea Room is on the way home).

Please let Muriel Heppinstall know if you would like to come. We will try to arrange transport so we use the minimum number of cars.

Fairtrade Breakfast - Julie Harris

I really enjoyed helping out at the Fairtrade breakfast, which took place on 27th February, I arrived at about 8 am to find Muriel and Audrey well advanced in setting out of the tables, in a quiet efficient and no fuss manner. They make it look so easy. They had worked hard and did a brilliant job of laying out the tables. The selection of foods was amazing, from cereals to fruits to pancakes and bacon rolls. The food and beverages were Fairtrade where possible. About 40 people attended and over £100 raised.

After the delicious breakfast, hot food cooked by the amazing Heather who worked very hard, we headed into the Sanctuary for the service.

Lorna gave a talk on Fairtrade and quoted some startling facts.... food for thought.... every time we buy a bar of non Fairtrade chocolate, only 0.4 % gets to the farmer. Yet again the poor of the world suffer through the greed of unscrupulous food giants.....but we can make change happen.....by buying Fairtrade products, where we can.



FREE WORSHIP

• Praising • Sharing • Praying •

Fourth Sunday of each month
6:30pm at Witham URC



Refreshments served afterwards



Everyone Welcome

Tel: 01376 500958

E-mail: info@withamurc.org.uk

www.withamurc.org.uk



FreeWorship is an evening service held monthly on the fourth Sunday of each month (excluding August and December).

This is an hour of informal worship, when there is a time for prayer, for readings, for testimony and for singing led by our band. There will be quiet periods for listening to God and for meditation. There will be opportunity for sharing a word from God. And afterwards there is fellowship over light refreshments.

‘Celebrate God and share the love of Jesus’.

FreeWorship services for 2022 will be held on: 27 March, 24 April, 22 May, 26 June, 24 July, 25 September, 23 October, 27 November.

Mel

Love overcame - Julie Palmer

Emerging from a cold tomb

All the truth, majesty and creativity of a living God

Transforming a broken heart

Making a quiet return, in a still and sorrowful garden

The grave stone rolled away, to release redemptive love

Jesus resurrected and restored

Comforts a weeping woman

Speaks with travellers on a journey

Meets with his faithful friends

And they bow down before Christ alive

And acknowledged that the saviour has arrived

That the word of God has come alive

And that the extraordinary transformation of heaven and earth is complete.

**Excerpts from the March Party
Letter**

Rev. James Church



Dear Friends,

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" Romans
12:2

On Monday 28th February, the GEAR Committee met to pray and discuss how to forward our aims within the life of the URC in this 50th anniversary year.

In pastoral news, we discussed various challenges facing both individuals, churches and the denomination going forward.

- Individuals negatively impacted by fear in the later stages of this pandemic and in response to the news of conflict in Europe.
- Churches wanting to return to "normal" after the pandemic, whilst being called by God not to return to "nets" that we know, but to ministry with Jesus that we may not be quite so sure of.
- Opportunities presented through the "leading your Church in Growth" course amongst the five Northerly Synods and for dates to be found to take that forward.
- Synods, Moderators and Ministers grappling with a challenging deployment situation, and the impact of those decisions have on Local Churches.

Eve Murfitt writes:

Some years ago, thanks to George and Gwyn Pegram, we had visitors to our church, from Brazil. They had their young son with them and were looking for people to support children in Brazil. I started with support to a little girl called Yasmin. When she left school I agreed to continue with support that has helped others.

I used to get letters or cards Yasmin had made for me. Izaias and Ruth "Jonathan Clark Daniel de Assis", it has been very interesting and exciting to follow what they had been doing for God ,the church and local people.

There are three churches - Reruitaba - Carine and Bela Morizonte. God blessed them with a large area of land some years ago; they hold services on the land. They built 3 rooms for the wet season and are now building a community centre and will build a church. When they have completed that they will build houses for the poorer people.They are using eco-logical bricks similar to Lego instead of plaster. They bought a small machine to make bricks of good quality. but with all this effort can only produce 300 bricks a day.

They have been praying to be able to buy a bigger machine that can produce 2,500 bricks a day and they already have customers that would buy bricks at 2,000 a time. Please pray that they will be able to do this as this will pay for the church and housing.

Jonathan in the meantime decided to go to Hillsong to study in Australia. He has had a wonderful time and I get a newsletter twice a year from him and mum and dad.

I support them with prayer. He graduates in June this year, but because of covid had not seen mum and dad for over two years. He has worked very hard to support himself by working in a restaurant for three years. One of his student friends, Andrea became his girlfriend and after seeking God in prayer they are now engaged and planning to marry next year. I am looking forward to seeing God working through them as a couple. Andrea finished her three years at Hillsong last November.

Ruth and Izaias are hoping to come to England this May to visit some churches and then travel to Australia for Jonathan's graduation.

It has been amazing following this family and to see how God works through His children.

Andrea is discipling a group of girls and Jonathan's friend, Dennis has started a boys connect group discipling awesome guys that are hungry to learn more about Jesus.

Do I Care about Ukrainian Refugees?



Connecting with Culture Issues & Trends

How can I write about the people running from Ukraine? *Forget writing, I should do something!* But so far, I haven't.



Well, I signed a petition. And I plan to write to my MP. And I should look at those Instagram posts explaining where to donate. And then I should donate. And I have a spare room.

Chances are I'll do at least one of these things, eventually. But at times like this, Paul's on-the-nose confession from Romans 7:19 lands flatly in my mind: 'I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.'

Faced with the bald fact that 3 million people are so scared of being shot, blown up, or arrested that they've binned their lives and flung themselves on strangers' mercy, my monkey brain goes: 'Oh dear, oh dear. Oh dear.' And then opens another can of Coke Zero.
Do something! Yes! Of course! Yes. But... later.

And so I do not do the good I want to do. Which I clearly don't *want to do* all that much. Even *wanting to* is harder than it sounds.

I'm not telling you this to whip up self-centred melodrama or make you feel bad by association. I'm telling you because I was asked to write about Ukrainian refugees, and as I mulled over ideas while buying oat milk in Morrison's, I realised it would be fraud to say anything else. Because I often

need a mental (and quite possibly a literal) slap to put my money, time, and effort where my mouth is.

The same could be said of the UK government. I have a hunch it could be said of most of us, when we're not on our best days.

The point here is not that you and I must (or can) do everything for everyone. There are, for example, other legitimate claims on my spare room at the moment, and other war zones that demand our aid. But each of us *can* do something – or possibly lots of things. Praying for God's intervention. Giving to frontline charities. Donating clothes or essentials.

Even sponsoring a visa and giving somebody shelter from this storm.

Because the call of Romans 7 is not to despair at the 'law of sin', but to find hope in 'God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ'. He's the one who *does something* – often through us.

If we're willing to join in.

—

Josh Hinton

Marketing & Editorial Lead, LICC

I found these notes recently from a teaching course which I was doing at Cambridge College some years ago and felt I would like to share it with the Fellowship. - Carol Smith

Encountering Difficult Relationships

Relationships are difficult and at times relationships in the church can be especially difficult. We are given several principles for managing difficult relationships which hopefully can help us in our pastoral care work as we encounter difficulties.

The first of these is to ***Honour one another.***

In our society today we tend to honour those who have fame or money, position and power; we give honour for all the wrong reasons.

Honour has to do with recognising the value and worth of people. We can honour others in two ways. Firstly, by verbal expressions when we praise, applaud, compliment and acknowledge them. Secondly, by adopting attitudes whereby we respect, admire, appreciate, esteem, value, cherish and hold a high opinion of others. We honour people when we encourage them to do things for us and others.

To honour others is to make them feel valued and to make them the focus of attention rather than us. In Philippians 2 v3 we are told to consider others better than ourselves, and in Romans 12 v10 we are asked to honour others above ourselves.. It is not easy to put others before ourselves and their wants and wishes ahead of our own, but when we do so, we are recognising their worth and value and truly showing them honour.

The second principle is to ***Forgive one another***

All of us at some time or other in our lives have been hurt either intentionally or unintentionally. Most of us have experienced feelings of injustice, pain and outrage when others have said things to us or about us which have been hurtful or unfair. These hurts can damage and destroy relationships quicker than anything else.

At such times we have to remember that we are not responsible for what others may say about us or do to us. Their action is their responsibility and ours belongs to us. So very often others are not perhaps aware of the damage or the implications of what they say or do.

Forgiveness means that I release the other person from my personal judgement of his or her motives or actions, and when I release them whatever they do can no longer hurt or damage me.

Yet to forgive is never an easy thing to do. It can be very costly and often very misunderstood. The alternative however, is to choose not to forgive and unforgiveness can be so destructive in terms of our relationships. It leads to bitterness, anger and resentment and can destroy families, friends and congregations. We are called to forgive because God has forgiven us – Ephesians 4 v32.

“Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it” (Mark Twain)

Thirdly when we encounter difficult relationships, we are called to ***Encourage one another***

Encouragement means to put courage into. It fortifies us and builds us up, helps us to hang on when things are difficult, and reinforces that what we do is worthwhile.

The opposite of encouragement is to grumble and complain. Such attitudes can again be very destructive and lead to disillusionment, defeat and despair.

Encouragement plays an important part in the life of the Christian. There is always plenty to discourage us within ourselves or within the lives of those around us. So when relationships get difficult we need to encourage one another and build each other up.

Fourthly in our relationships we need to ***Accept one another***

We have already noted this in terms of the qualities required for pastoral care workers and it is no less true when encountering difficult relationships. As human beings, we often have great difficulty accepting those who are not like us. We feel threatened by those who are different and are much more happy being with people who think out and speak as we do. We can sometimes look down on the way other people do things and feel that our way of doing them is the only way. This can be particularly true within the church setting where we are quick to put labels on people such as liberal or charismatic.



Leviticus confirmed it - Rob's pullover
was an abomination

Three Little Js by Jacqui Hodgson and provided by Michael.

We were born at the end of the Second World War.

Hitler heard we were coming to add to the score.

And so bunkered off - "The Devil" said he.

I cannot cope with the terrible three, Janet, and Jill and little old me.

And so we grew up in those halcyon days of rations and bomb sites in three different ways.

Two in the north and one in the south.

But whenever we met we were not down in the mouth.

For birthdays and schooldays we gathered together

And laughed as we play and always the weather seemed to be blue skies and sunshine for Janet and Jill and little old me.

And as we've grown older and drifted apart deep down inside we are of one heart.

For that special bond stems from the days when we were all children, the "3 Little Jays".

TUESDAY PRAISE APRIL 2022

12.30 - 1.00pm

April 5th Dr. Jonathan Pritchard

12th Gretta Bray

19th Ian Hardie

26th Marina Price

February 2022 CENTRAL FUND UPDATE from the Revd Paul Neshangwe - Tony Deighton

Background: Eastern Synod has a long-time partnership with the Presbytery of Zimbabwe. We have good friends there involved in trying to make the Presbytery self-sufficient. They have roughly the same number of ministers as us, but much, much larger congregations. These congregations, however, can rarely afford to pay their minister's stipend, and so in recent years the Presbytery has established a Central Fund to try and support the churches to a) pay their ministers and b) support the mission of the church. They have established a number of businesses (farms: cattle, agriculture and chickens) in order to support the Fund. Inevitably these things need seed-funding to get them established, and for development and some damage-limitation when things go wrong. This is the most recent report to Synod from Revd Paul Neshangwe whose extraordinary commitment and energy has established and drives this Fund: as you will see he has identified the 3 current areas that currently need prayer and financial support. This article is intended to keep you updated on the work and concerns of our partners in Zimbabwe, and to keep them in your prayers. If your church was also interested in raising funds, you will see that they are all quite large sums: churches could work together to support a project, or have their own target to reach to contribute to a particular area.

Introduction

The Covid19 pandemic has given us some tough experiences. Some of the experiences involve losing some of the traditional methods of raising income for the church through the giving of tithes and offerings as people gather for worship in our church buildings. It has provided a tough practical test on how much we care for one another and the mission of God when lockdown restrictions prevent us from getting together.

The Central Fund has been a critical tool in the hands of the Presbytery of Zimbabwe in the endeavour to fight the harsh effects of the pandemic on the livelihood of families of Ministers and Evangelists, as well as the ability of some of our congregations to stay current in paying their bills. Through our Central Fund, there has been a good way of pooling together of our resources to ensure that all our Ministers and Evangelists get paid the minimum stipend that is stipulated by the Presbytery.

Central Fund Payments

In April and May 2020, our Presbytery carried out a survey to see how our congregations were managing financially in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic. The survey revealed that many of our congregations had lost their income because we were not able to meet for worship due to lockdown restrictions. We knew that this would worsen an already bad situation were some of our congregations had been unable to pay their minister's stipend even before the onset of the pandemic.

Presbytery took a tough decision to assist by paying stipends of Ministers and Evangelists whose congregations committed to work with Presbytery and other congregations through an agreed formula that has worked from July 2020 up to date. At this stage we have 27 Ministers, the Presbytery Secretary and 34 Evangelists who are all getting their stipend each month with the support of our Central Fund.

For the Ministers, each participating congregation pays 50% of the Stipend due to its Minister every month and for the Evangelists, each congregation pays 27% of the stipend. The Presbytery then contributes the other 50% for the Ministers and 73% for the Evangelists. The Evangelists' stipend is half of that of the Ministers and the Presbytery takes such a large percentage of the burden because our Evangelists are mainly working with new worshipping communities as we aspire to grow by planting new churches. *(The Evangelists work at preaching stations or new plants that don't have*

formal church status: we might think of them in the UK as pioneers. They often have large congregations and / or mission fields.)

In terms of our pressing needs, this remains a critical one because each month the Presbytery has to raise US\$4200 in 2022 in order to pay those under the Central Fund. Our plan had been to raise money in the whole of 2020 and implement the Central Fund system at the beginning of 2021, but the pandemic took away the luxury of first building a healthy deposit before implementation. What this has meant is that we are running the Central Fund on a hand to mouth basis. We are hoping that through support from Partners as well as improving of income from our businesses we will come out of that scenario by the middle of this year.

[?] 1st partner funding /prayer request: *any amount contributed towards this will help us get some breathing space to build a good balance, that will see us move from the hand-to-mouth scenario sooner. This will enable our businesses to become stable and it will ensure that our Central Fund remains viable and sustainable.*

Current Business Ventures

a)

Vimridge Farm

We continue to do greenhouse-based tomato production and other related horticulture producing beetroot, cucumber, onion as well as choumoellier. We also have two fishponds for the production of tilapia. We complement all this with breeding ‘roadrunner’ chickens as well.

Our open-field farming is also growing at Vimridge. This is largely because of the drip irrigation equipment that we got through donations invested from the Norfolk and Waveney Area Partnership congregations in the Eastern Synod.



An area of investment priority for now is in the expansion of our operations at Vimridge. We have just completed excavating a dam that will hold water that used to simply wash away to a nearby river or evaporate.

We are intending to plant canola seed in the winter of this year on 10 hectares of our land. A cooking oil company called ZimGold has agreed to enter into a contract with us where they will supply inputs and buy all our produce upon harvesting. We will need to provide the labour and do the land preparation ourselves.

[?] 2nd partner funding / prayer request: if there are congregations who prefer that their funds be invested in the agriculture business for ongoing

profits, rather than spend on paying stipends right away this is the area most in need. Preparing 10 hectares of land = US\$7500. 1 hectare of irrigation equipment = US\$1300.

[?] 3rd partner funding / prayer request: a truck to transport our inputs and produce we sometimes use the back seat of my personal vehicle to transport produce. We need a one and a half tonne truck to transport material. We have been advised that this would cost at least US\$8000.

b)

Gloag Ranch

We have over 2500 hectares of land. We are currently leasing the bulk of the farm to a neighbouring farmer such that we are only left with 630 hectares. Of that remaining land we are entering into Partnership with two companies in order to have Dairy farming as well as produce soya beans and canola seed for production of cooking oil.

It is our view that we will have companies that are committed to large scale investment for work on at least 200 hectares to develop Gloag with us, while we work with church Partners to develop Vimridge for medium scale farming.

Minister	Revd	Lorna Bantock	571757
Children and Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Sollis	500958
Associate Children and Youth Pastor	Ms	Tracey Eagling	500958
Centre Managers	Mrs	Rocio MacDonald and Ana Martin	500958
Children & Youth Elder	Mr	Keith Meredith	
Church Secretaries (also Elders)	Mr Mrs	Tony Deighton and Muriel Heppinstall	518866
Discipleship and Growth Elder	Mrs	Sarah Campbell	
Mission and Outreach Elder	Mr	Gavin McCall	
Property Elders	Mr Mrs	Billy Kennedy and Rocio MacDonald	
Church Treasurer (also Elder)	Mr	Ian Hardie	
Worship Elder	Mrs	Fenella Hardie	
Centre Director	Mrs	Fenella Hardie	
Kitchen Manager	Mrs	Heather March	500958
Community Cafe Pastoral co-ordinator	Mrs	Eve Murfitt	
Prayer Chain Co-ordinator	Mrs	Rosemary Stinson	516602
Pastoral Team Co-ordinator	Mrs	Ruth Blackett	07546 838825
Magazine Editors		Jo and Bob Stibbards	bjstibbards@gmail.com

Easter Services - Lorna

April 10th Palm Sunday - 10.30 Morning worship with mini church, kids and youth church.

Maundy Thursday 8pm Last Supper service in an upper room.

Good Friday:

10.30 service in the sanctuary followed by Hot Cross Buns

10.30 - 11.30 Messy Church for families with children. (Ticketed event - tickets free from website)

April 17 Easter Sunday:

6.30 am Sunrise service in the park followed by breakfast in the church café

9.15 - 10.15am Easter breakfast

10.30 All Age service of celebration



New Testament Reading

Maundy Thursday from 10am to 6pm and Good Friday noon to 7pm

Come along and listen at any time. If you would like to read, please let the office know.