



**WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE  
MAY 2021**

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

## **Pastoral Letter**

Dear Friends,

What's It all about? A question that has perplexed human beings since time in memorial. During this last year, our minds have been concentrated even more to make sense in seeking answers to the impact the Covid 19 pandemic and the bewilderment felt by many in everyday life, like never before.

People have sadly suffered much upheaval pain and tragedy this past year, as the consequences of this virus combined with fear and confusion has stopped our previously normal lives in its track.

Others have carried on oblivious to it all. A much more important question unanswered by the world is - Who is it all about? JESUS! The only answer to all our problems, doubts, fears, hopes, dreams, peace, joy and the future security we all long for - seemingly just out of our reach?

We live in a fast changing modern world with more of everything than ever before for some in society. More knowledge, science, technology, wealth and opportunities than ever before in the worlds history. Yet so many people are living lives of quiet desperation! This should not be so brothers and sisters, too many people are lost in their own understanding and looking to a fallen system for answers.

To have the mind of Christ is the only answer we should be seeking first and always.

Consider how blessed we all are right now? Even when our circumstances tell us otherwise, as born again Christians, we believe in the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who has saved us in every way possible unto eternal life with God our father, Alleluia and Praise God for his mercy a new every day to his children.

You are the apple of his eye, God delights in you! You put a smile on his face each morning you awake, because you belong to him. How amazing and wonderful you will feel to know the truth of how much God loves you and cares for you. Let's get so excited by the word of God and our salvation in Christ Jesus that we can't contain it, but have to respond with every fibre of our being to celebrate God and share the love of Christ with the next person we meet

We have been given the gift of faith, so let's respond faithfully in obedience to the word that has overcome the world and helps us to live successful happy lives in Gods purposes for his Kingdoms sake.

My prayer for each of us, is with The Holy Spirits help and revelation of God's word, we can be alert to every deception and distraction, be armed with the truth of the Gospel of Christ, faithfully fulfilling the great commission given us. Jesus is the only answer the world needs now, his love sweet love.

Your friend in Christ Jesus,

Doug.



Please see page 27 for Christian Aid activities

## **The origin and cost of our bible Light after Darkness. Part4. Keith Moscrop**

I am called by the Light  
to push out against darkness,  
reaching to the sky  
touched by the Source of all  
that makes me thrive.

Marylinne Robinson

In part 3 of the story of the bible, we discovered that the period of the late 1300's was the beginning of a time of significant change in our English history. This change was characterised by the final blending into one national life, the Saxon and Norman elements of society, and by the recognition of English as the national language. English literature was brought to life by Chaucer, Langland and others, at the same time as the development of new farming practices and democratic activities, which together influenced the whole of our subsequent history.

The lead up to the Renaissance and the Reformation that followed, however, was a dreadful, testing and dangerous time for bible scholars. It is truly wonderful that they had the strength and perseverance to build on each other's work to bring us our bible as we know it today.

In the early 1500's a Lollard revival began, the old Lollard and the new Protestant groups began to come together. The people who were called 'Lollards' were pioneers in the path of religious, social, and political reform and came from all classes and walks of life. All England owes them a debt of gratitude for the liberties which they purchased with their blood and tears. The Lollard tradition facilitated the spread of Protestantism and

predisposed opinion in favour of King Henry VIII's anticlerical legislation during the English Reformation.

In 1533 Henry VIII took matters into his own hands. He broke away from the Catholic Church, creating his own Church of England, naming himself the head. Henry's actions were revolutionary because they changed the identity of English religion. If it were not for Henry's desperate desire for a male heir, the reformation may never have happened, and English religion could have been very different today. Even so Henry openly opposed Martin Luther, a German professor, who helped break down support for the Catholic Church in Europe and whose beliefs helped create Protestantism. Henry's lawyer and principal adviser was Thomas Cromwell who worked for Henry from 1532-40. Thomas Cromwell was chiefly responsible for consolidating the Reformation in England, bringing about the dissolution of the monasteries, to strengthen the royal administration by providing funds for Henry's massive palace building programs and wars in Europe.

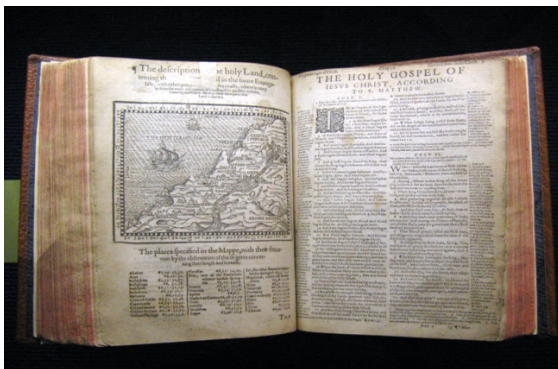
On Henry's death, his daughter Mary, a staunch Catholic, reigned for 5 years. She led a reign of terror, persecuting protestant religious dissenters, over 280 of whom were burned at the stake. During this terrible time a large number of Protestant scholars fled from England to Geneva in Switzerland. Mary died in 1558.

In 1558 Elizabeth 1, Mary's sister, succeeded the throne and called a "Commission of Lollardy," to give a report and early in 1559 the earlier acts against Lollardy were finally repealed. Sadly, an oath against it continued to be taken by magistrates till 1625. Elizabeth was a very capable and educated person, admired as a great ruler. As a woman in a man's world, she built a strong and stable and more tolerant society.

Religious reform in Northern Europe was led by many capable and dedicated scholars. The most well-known included Jan Huss in Prague and William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale who spent much of their time

between England and the continent, evading arrest. Also, Martin Luther, based in Germany, Erasmus a Dutch philosopher and Christian scholar in Holland, and John Calvin in Geneva, these were all working with many others and groups of followers, to continue the work of translating and promoting the new editions of the bible.

The Geneva Bible followed the Great Bible which was the authorised Bible of the Church of England. It became the primary Bible of 16th-century English Protestantism and was used by William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell, John Knox, John Donne, and John Bunyan, author of the pilgrim's progress (1678). It was one of the Bibles taken to America on the Mayflower and preceded the King James version by 51 years. The Geneva version of the Bible is significant because, for the first time, a mechanically printed, mass-produced Bible was made available directly to the general public. It came with a variety of scriptural study guides and aids. These included verse citations that allow the reader to cross-reference one verse with numerous relevant verses in the rest of the Bible. Introductions to each book of the Bible summarising all of the material of each book, maps, tables, woodcut illustrations and indices were also included.



*We human beings do real harm. History could make a stone weep.  
Marilynne Robinson—Gilead.*

## Fellowship Profiles

This month we are delighted that Philip and Denise and Yvonne have shared their stories. Thank you so much. You could be next.....



Just in case you do not recognise us, we are **Philip and Denise Vinton.**

We are both retired now and although we loved our working lives enjoy our retirement just as much. Philip was trained as an engineer, although spent most of his life managing large engineering and electronic companies and had a period when he worked from home.

I spent my work life in an office as a PA and administrator and we can honestly say that we have thoroughly enjoyed all the positions we held.

Philip had been living in Witham for a couple of years when we met, and I was living in Great Horkeley near Colchester. We had put both our homes up for sale and decided to stay in Witham when we married in 1994 and take our time in finding a more suitable property. We both had two children of similar ages, Clair and Simon and Clare and Simon. Strange you might say but it gets stranger as we both had a dog when we met called Poppy and sisters called Lynne and Lynn.

As we would be living in Witham we thought we would try out 'the Church in the High Street' one evening service before we were married. We both remember that evening very well. Irving Stinson gave us the most friendliest welcome. Ian Hardie was leading the service and we both felt at home immediately and continued to attend weekly. We were in fact the last couple to be married in the Church by Richard Church before the new

building addition was started. After we were married I moved to Philip's house in Witham and whilst both of our properties were up for sale our new home search was centred around Colchester and therefore decided we should not get too involved with Church life and the fellowship as we would be moving away. Needless to say God had his own plan for us. We could not sell either of our properties as the property market was in a slump so we decided that while we were in Witham we would attend a house group and get involved in junior church and, because we felt so comfortable and settled within the fellowship, in the end decided that there was no reason to move and all our previous plans got thrown out of the window.

We have been privileged to be part of Witham URC for 27 years now in a community that has been a blessing to us. There have been ups and downs just like in any family but we have been blessed with our involvement with Junior Church and seeing what were sometimes shy 5 year olds grow up and pass through Youth House Group which we host and grow into adults that we are so proud of.

One of Philip's projects involved he and Graham Bantock constructing the baptistery, some years ago now, and of course has seen a lot of use by our fellowship as well as others.

We are never bored with this retirement life. Philip always has something to do in his woodwork or metal workshops, enjoys researching what I think are very boring things on the computer, and is learning how to play the piano. We both enjoy our garden but are mainly fair weather gardeners so keep pretty busy at this time of year. I enjoy keeping up with friends and family, embroidery, reading, cooking, and the odd jigsaw puzzle in the not so good weather. When we are not in a pandemic we are privileged to own a property in Southern Spain which we can enjoy throughout the year other than July and August when it is far too hot for us.

The pandemic has changed everyone's life in various ways but the past year has shown us that we can adjust to a very different lifestyle but our relationship with God has not changed and he continues work with all of us through the ups and downs as long as we remind ourselves daily that He is



bigger than a pandemic, has more power than we could possibly imagine, unending patience and immeasurable love.

### **Always her - Peter Howard**

Oh well

I wish I could argue in Italian  
and talk French with a cockney twang.

I wish I could conquer my nerves  
every time with the band I sang.

I wish I could play guitar  
with an Eric Clapton like hand.

I wish I could swim like a seal  
but still wear my trainers on land.

I wish I could count my blessings  
and realise how many there were.

I wish I could love another  
but my thoughts always come back to her.

**A copy of Peter's book of poems is available from Denise and Philip Vinton, price £5, with proceeds going to Holdfast Credit Union and Mercy Ships.**



Hello....my name is **Yvonne Egbuna** and I was so glad to be asked to feature in this edition as a 'young' person 😊

If I had to write all about myself, it will probably turn into a whole book so I will try and keep it short and sweet.

Growing up in Nigeria was a mixed bag-there was freedom to run around fields and a lot of open space play areas. As children, we were creative and came up with different games to play with other children but what I loved most was the fact that we were very close to nature; the feel of the hot sandy ground beneath our bare feet was somehow very relaxing. We would run under trees for shade from the hot sun. We had beautiful beaches in Lagos with tall palm trees and coconut trees and I looked forward to horse riding along the beaches.

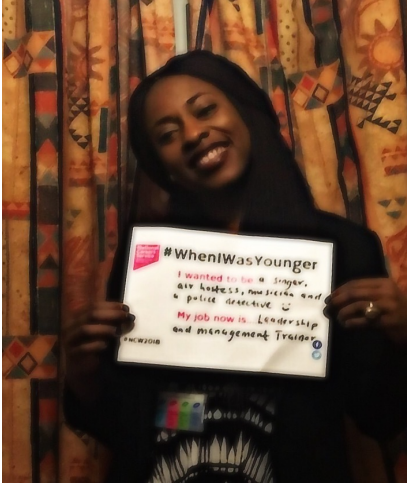
I remember there were different types of food and exotic, sweet, juicy fruits-I loved going to the local markets to look around and see what new fruit there was to discover. There was almost always one that I hadn't tried before. Cooking and eating food was like a whole ceremony and a sacred one at that. I remember my grandmother telling me many times to sit down and eat my meal slowly, because standing up to eat was disrespecting the food 😊. I also remember how much I enjoyed reading. I had so many books given to me by my parents and I would disappear into worlds I had never been in through the books. But I also remember my growing up years marked by a lot of instability in governments and many coup d'états by the military regimes we had at the time. Being ruled by dictators wasn't fun and

it sometimes meant that there was often an atmosphere of fear and silence which you felt, even as a child.

My first encounter with Christianity was at Sunday school in Nigeria. Our Sunday school teacher made an alter call for those who wanted to give their lives to Christ and I put up my little hands and went forward. I am not entirely sure I really knew what I was doing at the time as I was about 6 years old, but I know that for many years after that day, I had a real fear of God and always tried to do the right thing. In hindsight, I think this was a bit of playing by the rule book, but it helped me navigate those teenage years unscathed and relatively safely. I remember getting properly baptised and making a public declaration of my faith in Christ at age 24.

My adult life was a lot more boring and filled with studying and getting qualifications before settling down into starting a family. I studied for a degree in Economics but didn't quite know what I wanted to do with it at the time. When I was younger I wanted to be many things including a singer and an actress. Now I know I wasn't quite cut out for the glamorous life. But I always knew that whatever I did, I would end up working with people in some way, shape or form. This is exactly what I do as an organisational development practitioner in the NHS. I love my job because no day is the same and it affords me the opportunity to interact with a wide range of people on topics I love talking about like coaching, leadership, personal development, resilience and self-awareness amongst others. Last year during the first lockdown I also launched an online coaching practice which hasn't really taken off but I have run two free webinars on **how to overcome limiting beliefs** and **The Drama triangle**. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> webinar coming up in May will be on **career development** and is also free.

I would describe my Christian life journey as one of curiosity, awe and mystery. Sometimes I really feel the strong presence of God which fills me with awe and sometimes I feel that God is wrapped in a deep cloak of mystery. Other times, I have more questions than answers but through it all, my faith in a God has never really wavered.



We first came to Witham from Plymouth in 2013 and we spent some time looking for a good church. I recall seeing the WURC signboard and wondering what it would be like in there as we had never been in a United Reformed Church before. It was the amazing children's church that drew us in and the warmth, smiley faces and friendliness that permeated the church made us stay. I am so grateful for the friends we have made at the church that now feel like family to us. I miss singing at church.

I have a lot of personal stories to tell but for space and time. Right now I am enjoying watching my three lovely children grow up and navigate the world they have found themselves in their own individual, unique way. This past year has been tough on all of us and has tested my own reserves of resilience, but God has been faithful and held us close to Him. My mantra through life has always been 'one day at a time'.



## **A Sunny day at Tiptree Heath - Gil Heathcote**

We recently visited Tiptree Heath with our little 3 year old grandson and one year old granddaughter.

It was a glorious cold sunny day and we set off walking on the heath. It is divided into many small sections, I assume the reason being that they can control where the Exmoor ponies are grazing. However the ponies were not there at the time of this visit.

We had the company of two buzzards which had wandered over from Braxted Park and circled high in the sky. We saw blue tits, great tits, bullfinches and many more varieties of birds. The speckled wood butterflies were everywhere but we were too early in the season to see dragonflies and damselflies.



There were wooden sculptures in various locations to keep the children interested which had been made by local schools. We read that Tiptree Heath is known for three types of heath, Common ling, Bell heath and Cross-leaved heath and that the Heath itself dates back to 1401 and is the largest lowland heath in Essex. In 1777 it was possible to walk from Colchester to Maldon on the heath but there are only two hectares in Tiptree that remain. The Heath was ploughed during WW2.

As we wandered around, the highlight for our little grandson was the stream in which he paddled for about 30 minutes in his wellies. He also loved the many little bridges from which he could drop stones or twigs. The gorse was covered in yellow flowers with many bees collecting pollen. All in all, a lovely morning spent in the fresh air.

## **God Works in wondrous way: Egypt - Shirley Ratnage**



Throughout the pandemic we have seen how God has moved people and churches to ensure that His word continues to reach people and often people who in normal circumstances would not necessarily seek help from God.

I recently had news from the Bible Society about what has been happening in Egypt. There is a substantial Christian presence in Egypt through the Coptic church but they are in the minority. The Bible Society of Egypt has bookshops and produces literature/courses/ literacy classes in normal times but feared that the pandemic would put a stop to much of their work. However, they were able to increase their digital outreach and report that through one of their bookshops in the Nile Delta where there are few Christians, one minister has 1,900 people in WhatsApp groups who are receiving daily bible readings.

In January 2020 a new app was made available that guided users to read the whole bible in a year. By December 5.7 million chapters had been requested by 121,392 different users.

The Bible Society Egypt have great plans for the future. They are building a Digital Media Hub which will accommodate a huge indexed online library where users will find, not only the bible text but dramatized children's stories, colouring pages, quizzes, study notes etc. They hope to double their social media outreach in 2021. They say 'Here in Egypt, we see the glass as half full, not half empty and the part that's full contains opportunities stretching far into the future. 'In Egypt nearly 33% of the population live below the poverty line on just £1 per day. The Bible Society Egypt is supported by the generosity of Bible Society supporters throughout the world, which has enabled them to keep going financially when local funds dropped during lockdown. Let's praise God that out of darkness comes light.

## **Church leadership at Witham URC - Mark**

Over the years we have been very blessed by the commitment of a wonderful group of both lay and ordained leaders; ministers, pastors and elders. We work as a team, and endeavour to guide the Church as we navigate uncertain waters. Committed people have given of their very best to steer us on the right course over many years, and we should remember and celebrate the past as well as look forward to the future with faith and hope.

More recently we have begun to reorganise, we have cut the number of serving elders, and set up pastoral care and finance groups to work outside the elders meeting, but report into it. This has meant that elders have more time to consider the spiritual direction of the Church, which of course is the elders' primary duty. In a world that is changing so fast, we need to be relevant to the society we find ourselves in. The Gospel of Jesus Christ stays the same, but the way we communicate it must evolve.

**Sarah Biyi** is our Discipleship elder, and the thing that has come out of discussions is that Homegroups are just so important in this regard. We might hear sermons on a Sunday but it is only when they are discussed and worked out in day to day life that we begin to change into the likeness of Christ. We so need others to talk to about our faith, to encourage and support us. Thus we are going to encourage everyone to join a Homegroup of their choosing.

**Keith Meredith** is our Youth and Young families elder. He will be working alongside Viv and Tracy particularly to encourage younger families. In our discussions over the last few years we have recognised that this is an area that we need to nurture and strengthen.

**David Wellings** is our property elder, which is a daunting task. David works with a property group who ably undertake so much practical work on the Church buildings. We are blessed to have them.

**Sarah Campbell** is our Worship elder. This is a key role, as our weekly services are the hub of our fellowship together. Whilst we always try to maintain a relaxed ‘family’ atmosphere, we are looking for ways to make worship more accessible to younger people. Whilst many of us are comfortable with our present style of worship, God is always asking us to move on, that our worship might be both relevant and inclusive.

**Tony Deighton** is our Church Secretary. This is a huge role, and requires a very ordered mind and a willing spirit. Tony organises the Church and throughout the pandemic has ensured that we remain compliant with Government restrictions.

**Doug Sandles** has been involved with pastoral work for some time, and loves to talk to people about their faith. He is in the pastoral team and brings pastoral concerns into the elders meeting.

**Gavin McCall** is our Mission elder and has been heavily involved in ensuring that our Church services can be live-streamed into people’s homes. He has a passion for overseas mission and for reaching out to our town and the surrounding area.

Lorna, Viv, Tracy and I comprise the ministry team. We work closely together to meet the needs of an active Church. We preach and teach, and endeavour to work to the glory of God. Each of us have our own gifts and talents, and we have discovered that teamwork is essential.

I think at this point I should inform you about the situation in the wider United Reformed Church. The Eastern Synod, of which we are part, has just lost its Moderator, who has taken on a post in Scotland. Thus at the



moment Revd Paul Ellis and I, who lead the two main Synod committees, have had to take on more responsibilities until September 2021 when a new Moderator will be installed (Deo Volent - God Willing). At a recent meeting we were told that the number of stipendiary ministers in the Synod is to be reduced from 37 to 28, which is a cut of about 25%. It is therefore very likely that I will have to take on more ministry away from Witham URC. You will know that a few months ago I took on the Church at Great Totham, and from this month will take their Morning worship every fourth Sunday.

We live in challenging times, but we are truly blessed to have many members with wonderful gifts and talents; we will so need them as we continue to build the Kingdom to the glory of God. Every change can be seen as a problem or an opportunity and I choose to see them as the latter!

As an Eldership we have an agreed Vision statement; to 'Celebrate God and reach out with the love of Jesus'. We are now seeking God for the mission of the Church (the way the vision is reached). This will give us a firm direction for the next few years. It will influence both the way we do Church and the operation of the Centre, and reflect the new emphasis on reaching out to those on our 'frontline'. This is an exciting time for the Church and we all have a part to play. God has brought us all together for a reason, and we believe it is to build his Church for the next generation. Let us continue to give of our very best as we seek to glorify God.

Yours in Christ

**Closing date for articles  
for June Magazine  
is 21st May by email to  
[bjstibbards@gmail.com](mailto:bjstibbards@gmail.com)**

## **Prayer workshops Lorna**

We are really excited that we have a series of Prayer workshops in June because prayer is the foundation of everything we do. These will be held on Saturday mornings 10am to 11.30am.

We have planned four sessions, the first three of which will be on zoom but we hope the last one will be in the sanctuary and Meeting Point.

leading prayers of intercession  
praying with other people  
praying the scriptures  
creative prayer.

**Leading prayers of intercession:** during lockdown many of you have risen to the challenge of writing and delivering the prayers of intercession which has been great and some of you have said that you would like some help as you have a heart for intercessory prayer but no experience.

**Praying with other people:** it's not always easy to offer to pray for someone but it's even more difficult to offer to pray with someone then and there. Wouldn't it be great if we could, naturally and with confidence, offer to pray with random people that we encounter in the course of our daily life? This session will give us the tools to do just that.

**Praying the scriptures:** don't know what to pray or how to bless someone? Scripture is full of powerful prayers that we can use and this session will open up this joy to us. It can transform the way you read your Bible and your prayer life. You have been warned!

**Creative prayer:** we hope to hold this session in the church, possibly over the course of several hours. In the sanctuary we will have several stations with creative ideas for praying into our world which will help us use

everyday situations and things as springboards for prayer. Meeting Point will be set up in the same way for parents with children to explore different ways of engaging them in prayer.

We look forward to seeing you.

## **Sunflower plants and comfrey fertiliser - Julie Harris**



I am growing **sunflowers** and expect them to be ready in June / July the cost of which will be £1.50 per plant with all proceeds going to the WURC general fund. I will confirm delivery arrangements in the June magazine and in the meantime if you would like to reserve some plants please telephone me on [01376 517623](tel:01376517623).

PS. I would be grateful if anybody has any plastic gardening pots preferably a minimum of 9 cm and larger but anything would be gratefully accepted.

## **Comfrey fertiliser**

Hubby and I are very lucky to have a profusion of comfrey growing in our garden, one of our neighbours happened to mention that comfrey can make a very good fertiliser, in fact it is probably just as good as some of the commercially produced ones.

I am in the process of making comfrey fertiliser, if you would like some please contact me and bring along your own container, in return I would ask for a small donation to Mercy Ships to be put into my Pringles jar.



## May at Great Totham URC - Janet Davies

Hello Friends at Witham.

Our Church at Great Totham is open once again for Sunday morning worship, although no teas or coffees! It's just lovely to be together again, although social distancing and wearing face masks, AND no singing.

We do have our own named seats, but we do have room for visitors, so if there is no room at Witham and you fancy a drive out, you would be very welcome here. The Service begins at 10.30am and there is room to park.

### PREACHERS FOR MAY

- |       |                   |              |
|-------|-------------------|--------------|
| 2nd.  | Pat Goodall       | Great Totham |
| 9th.  | Cyril Clarke      | Maldon       |
| 16th. | Sarah Wilson      | Witham       |
| 23rd. | Rev. Mark Ambrose | (Communion)  |
| 30th  | At Witham ?       |              |

We look forward to meeting some of you.

For further Information please ring  
Janet Davies 01621 819419

## **The impact of cotton production on the environment**

### **Julie Harris**

As some of you may know we have a church Eco Committee and we are striving to be accredited to a high standard. This also involves learning about the environment and what we can do to become better stewards of God's beautiful earth, and to protect it for future generations.

I would like share with you one area which is the production of cotton and its impact on the environment of the world.

We all have cotton in our homes, whether it be household items such as sheets, pillowcases etc or clothing. I was quite horrified when looking into the production of cotton to find lots of facts that I was unaware of, for instance pesticides that are used in the growing of cotton. Did you know what a thirsty crop cotton is as it takes 2700 litres of water just to make one cotton T-shirt? Did you know that child labour is used in certain parts of the world to produce cotton?

The precise date that cotton first started to be used is not known but there are records of cotton being grown spun and woven as far back as 3000 years BC in Pakistan; and it may have been produced before then.

With the population of the world expanding so rapidly, I ask myself how much longer can the planet sustain the production of cotton.

There is one alternative to cotton which I have found is Hemp, which I discuss below. At the moment this product is not widely available and certainly not affordable by most people, so until it is more readily available at perhaps at a more reasonable price there are certain things that I am going to do. I am passionate about the planet and I certainly want to be a good steward of it for future generations. So I aim to make changes to my personal carbon footprint on this precious planet. I aim to buy cotton only

when completely necessary: I have enough clothes to last me years so I do not need to constantly buy new items . This is one change that I can make easily, I will reuse and recycle where I can.

Quite often we will discard items of clothing, which are still perfectly useable, so if I do have a cotton item I will be making it last a long time. It took so much resource to make, it would be wrong not to get optimum use from it.

Since I have been researching the subject I have realised the impact that cotton production has on the environment.

### **Hemp: a potential alternative.**

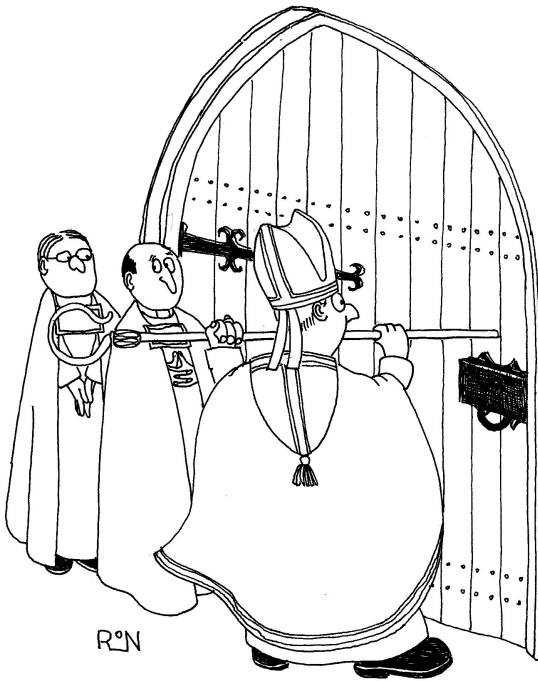
The production of hemp favours limited use of land in comparison to cotton; per acre hemp can produce crops three times the amount of cotton; hemp tends to have a faster growing time with an average of 90 to 100 days compared to 150 to 180 days for cotton.

So how does the growing of hemp compare with cotton? Hemp uses much less water than cotton to grow; hemp enriches the soil in which is grown, whereas cotton does not; hemp doesn't need any pesticides to grow, cotton needs lots; hemp is stronger and more durable than cotton; hemp is a breathable material, it does really well at moisture absorption and it would help the environment and the planet hugely.

I hope that one day in the not too distant future hemp will be readily available as an alternative to cotton thus helping the planet enormously.

In the meantime I'm going to be more aware when purchasing items and try to think ethically before I make that purchase.

We are all God's guests on this beautiful planet and we can each do our part to look after it, and be faithful stewards of it.

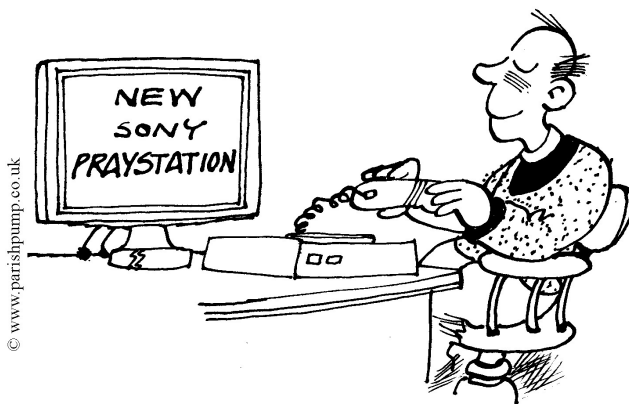


*There didn't seem to be anyone in*

## Planters - Peter Revell

With the planting season underway, Peter is making planters from his own supply of materials and he will be kindly donating all monies received from the sale of them to the two charities which the church is supporting this year, Holdfast Credit Union and Mercy Ships.

If you would like Peter to make one for you, please contact him, some examples are below.





## Another useless statistic - Bob Stibbards



When lockdown started at the end of March last year I somehow managed to do 100,000 steps in a week, about 45 miles. It started as something to do in lockdown and provide a focus for the day, help clear my mind and just admire the beautiful countryside over the seasons. For some reason it became a challenge to achieve this total every week since and OK it has become an obsession !

I have now clocked up around five and a half million steps about 2,500 miles since the start of lockdown, meanwhile Jo has read loads of books!

### A few incidents

**Call me Daddy:** Occasionally very young children, on seeing me, shout out Daddy and I move swiftly on. Perhaps it is just as well as Jo does not accompany me on long walks.

**Female stalker:** One evening early in lockdown an attractive young woman seemed to be taking the same route as me who said eventually, very politely, she was not following me and my response was something like that's a pity, strangely I never saw her again.

**Motorbike crash:** This seemed to happen in slow motion. A motorcyclist went in a straight line instead of negotiating a bend in the road crashing into a fence on the opposite side of the road, fortunately managing to dust himself down without major damage.

**Pack of dogs:** 6 Labrador puppies had escaped from a breeder, crossed in a pack on a busy main road. Luckily only one was slightly glanced but then ran off at speed with his buddies. I found out later that the owners managed to recover them.

**The natives are more friendly:** People on the whole have become much more friendly as time goes by, and a number have told me their life history in 15 minutes. One day I had to wait for Jo who had an appointment at Basildon and decided to take myself off for a walk. A big mistake, as my normal happy greetings were met with stoney silence by strangers.

**A grave event:** People of very mature years having a fitness class amongst the headstones in a churchyard.

**Out of context:** Mark was having a walking meeting in Great Totham and he was as surprised to see me as I was to see him.

**Horses:** One of my routes is along a footpath and to the edge of the field there is a small narrow wooden bridge across a ditch, and I stopped to allow 4 horses across but with only 3 riders. The riding instructor was struggling to get them across and asked me did I have any experience with horses to which my short answer was no. One of horses then kicked one of the young riders in the mouth and the instructor's helpful response to the young girl was she would not need botox now. At this point I was handed the reins of one of the horses and asked to look after it who then decided to walk around me as I nervously held on.

**Get a life Bob !** Will I keep going ? Probably yes, but I have introduced a bit of variety into exercising with a new bike, the future is electric. Do I feel any fitter probably, and it has certainly helped my weight.

**Christian Aid:** Lorna has introduced a challenge for the whole Church to do steps in May as a focus for Christian Aid details on the following page. Whilst I know a few of you are Fitbit addicts perhaps more will get hooked on this step thing as well!

PS Thank you Mo Webber for encouragement to write another article, or you can blame her for this.



Christian Aid will be the focus of our morning service on **Sunday 9th May** and although we still cannot run any of the other activities we planned for last year, we have some new ones for this year.

**Quiz Evening:** There will be a Christian Aid quiz on Friday 14th May at 7.30 - so please do join us for a fun evening hosted by Viv on zoom and make a donation to Christian Aid if you can.



**Step Challenge:** We are also using Christian Aid's step challenge idea with a twist. We would like to challenge ourselves, as a congregation, to walk 30 million steps in May. Thirty million. That's a lot of steps but we can do it.....between us! It's the equivalent of 100 people each walking 300,000 steps over the 31 days of May which is 9678 steps daily.



Obviously families will be able to contribute more steps than singles and those of you with dogs to walk will boost the number considerably, but every step counts, so please join us. You can use a Fitbit, a pedometer or a mobile phone to count and we will have a wall of fame - absolutely no shame involved! - on our website. You will be able to see our step count rise up to meet and, hopefully exceed, our goal of 30 million. You can get sponsorship from others for a personal challenge or make a donation if you are able, but please do join us.



There will also be a church Christian Aid e-envelope which means that anyone who has access to the internet can make a payment into it and at the end of the month we will know how much we have raised as a church. Of course if you prefer traditional means of payment such as cash or bank transfer then that is absolutely fine - please just make sure we know it is for Christian Aid not church funds.

Any questions, please contact Viv or Lorna

|                                      |      |                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|------|----------------------|--|
| Minister                             | Revd | Mark Ambrose         | 791197                                 |
| Associate Minister                   | Revd | Lorna Bantock        | 571757                                 |
| Admin Assistant to Rev. Mark Ambrose | Mrs  | Deborah Robinson     | 07564 168342<br>admin@withamurc.org.uk |
| Youth Pastor                         | Mrs  | Viv Solis            | 500958                                 |
| Assistant Youth Pastor               | Ms   | Tracey Eagling       | 500958                                 |
| Centre Managers                      | Mrs  | Rocio MacDonald      | 500958                                 |
|                                      | Mrs  | Ana Martin           | 500958                                 |
| Discipleship and Growth              | Mrs  | Sarah Biyi           |  |
| Worship and Music                    | Mrs  | Sarah Campbell       |  |
| Church Secretary                     | Mr   | Tony Deighton        | 518866                                 |
| Mission and Outreach                 | Mr   | Gavin McCall         |  |
| Children and Youth                   | Mr   | Keith Meredith       |  |
| Pastoral                             | Mr   | Doug Sandles         |  |
| Property                             | Mr   | David Wellings       |  |
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| Meeting Point 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                  |