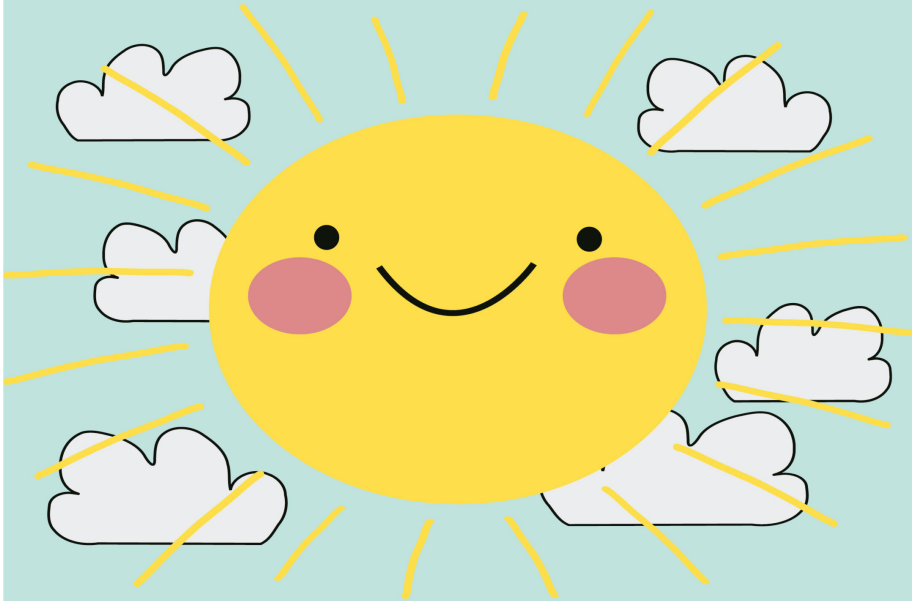


OH HAPPY DAY!



THIS IS THE DAY
THAT THE LORD HAS MADE
PSALM 118:24

©Original image

WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE

June 2021

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I hope that we are well and keeping safe. I also hope that the current easing has enabled us to see some friends and family albeit still socially distancing. I'm sure that many of us are looking forward to the 21 June when we can return to what is now known as the 'new normal' whatever that might mean!!

As a fellowship though, this may mean that we are finally able to worship together again in our sanctuary with no restrictions, a complete change to how things have been in the last year - masks, air hugs, elbow hugs and many other ways we've adapted to life, although some of us will still exercise caution!

Reflecting on the past year, we've all been through so much change in one way or another, in every sphere of our lives... for example, everything has turned virtual - online services, online shopping, online meetings, working from home, online medical appointments, Sunday Zoom coffee meetings and the list goes on. A completely different way of doing things, who would have thought we would be able to adapt so quickly and well, in many cases, in a very short space of time. A regular and interesting one for our family is that whilst Tunde enjoys working from home, he has become parcel collector (many times during the day) as a result of the children's affinity with Amazon and ASOS!

Also as a fellowship, we have adapted fairly well to the changes to our worship as a result of the pandemic. However, we have so much more change ahead of us, even as the 'Body of Christ' - I say this because the change ahead is bigger than just the Witham URC.

While we hear about churches in decline all over the country, we are so blessed that we have a great and diverse congregation that is currently stable. As a church, we are currently seeking God's direction on our mission. We all know that we need a different approach to grow God's kingdom, and change isn't always comfortable but we can work through this by working together and trusting in God's direction...

“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.” Isaiah 43:19

As the body of Christ we share a common purpose. We collectively and individually matter to Christ, no one person or group has priority over another, so let us all come together as ‘One’ in the love and unity of Christ, to progress the work of the kingdom in our community that He has called us to, so we can grow even more, more than in the early churches 😊

We know from Jesus' words in Matthew 12 that ‘A house divided against itself will not stand’ so brothers and sisters let us stand together, embrace the change ahead and focus on God's will for us.

Psalms 133:1-3 TPT

“How truly wonderful and delightful it is to see brothers and sisters living together in sweet unity! It's as precious as the sacred scented oil flowing from the head of the high priest Aaron, dripping down upon his beard and running all the way down to the hem of his priestly robes. This harmony can be compared to the dew dripping from Mount Hermon, which flows down upon the hills of Zion. Indeed, that is where Yahweh has decreed his blessings will be found, the promise of life forevermore!”

God has been faithful to us as a fellowship, and He also has great plans for us and our church. Let's walk by faith, not by sight. Let's walk and work in oneness. Let's embrace and progress the change ahead in love, joy and unity.

Have a blessed, safe and fruitful June and look forward to seeing many of you soon, in person.

In His Service
Sarah

Prayer workshops Lorna

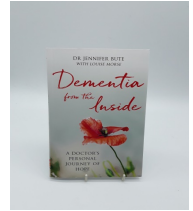
We are really excited that we have a series of Prayer workshops in June because prayer is the foundation of everything we do. These will be held on Saturday mornings 10am to 11.30am.

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.

Book Review - Ruth Blackett

Dementia from the inside by Dr Jennifer Bute with Louise Morse (quotes are from the book above ISBN 978-0-281-08069-4)



I really wanted to share this book which I have recently read with you; it gives insight about dementia, practical help and hope to those who read it.

I came to read it after being told about it by my 95 year old mother in law, Doris. She had been given a copy to read by a friend. Doris has a connection with the lady who wrote the book in that Jennifer's husband Stan was a close friend of Doris and Jack (Doris's husband) and became a Christian at the same Church they went to in East London called 'The Castle' a long time ago now!

Jennifer worked in Africa as a missionary and then later was a GP and medical student trainer in the Southampton working in a large practice. It was whilst working as a GP that she began to notice signs of dementia, in 2004 she was finally diagnosed with dementia in 2009. In this book she shares her journey but more importantly her Christian faith she passionately believes more can be done to improve both the present and the future for those with dementia. She explains how we can all help by how we interact with those affected by dementia. Even now she still speaks at events and has been interviewed on radio and television.

This is by no means a book of gloom and despair it is a book that is easy to read and gives practical help for those living with dementia and those who are with them on their dementia journey. It is a book about how our faith and trust in God help us if the difficult times.

Jennifer finishes her book by quoting Matt 7 v 12

Jesus says, ‘ so in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets’ (NIV) This principle she says is central to the care of people with dementia. Think how you would like people to be towards you, if you had dementia. Don’t disable us – Enable us, with understanding and kindness.

Not the Usual Christian Aid Week! Ian Hardie



Somewhat belatedly, I suggested getting some of the new style Christian Aid envelopes which needed to be distributed, but were then returned to a drop-off point. Thinking I might end up delivering them all myself, the order was limited to 1,250 envelopes. In fact, however, I had so many volunteers to deliver that we could have distributed far more than was available. Thanks to all of you who got in in time to take some and also to those of you who offered but found the stock already gone.

The drop-off idea was only a limited success. We have had fewer envelopes returned than might have been hoped but, as I write, a small trickle is still arriving each day. So far we have raised £867 which we will pass on to Christian Aid. We also received three cheques totalling £100 which were made out to Christian Aid and these together with Gift Aid declarations worth another £76 will also be passed on. That makes £1,043 raised so far through traditional envelope giving.

In addition, 14 donations were made using the e-envelope system with another £1,015 going to Christian Aid directly from the Witham URC page. Thanks to all of you who have donated money by either means. It all helps improve the life-chances of needy people throughout the world.

The Mitchell 3 (soon to be 4)

Dear friends, we have some exciting news to share!!!

In September the Mitchell 3 will become the Mitchell 4. Aiden has been bursting to share the news and is looking forward to being a big brother. Please hold us in your prayers for a peaceful pregnancy and safe delivery.

Love and best wishes,

Keith, Fleur, Aiden & Bump xxxx



Born Again - Peter Howard

Did you see the newcomer
with the knowing smile?
Bright as a button
thinking all the while.

He was down in the pit
just for a bit
But he's found a new direction
now his lamps have been lit.

But there ain't no crutches
in this new life?
You'll get your fair share of tears
and times of strife.

The cross on the hill
didn't get there on its own.
It was dragged all the way
Raking on his bones.

So stay close by
take what you're given
And get your feet under the table
of the Prince who's risen.

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.

Praise the Lord - Sarah Biyi

‘When we Praise’

“In everything give thanks” (1Thessalonians 5) and “rejoice in the Lord always, I say again rejoice” (Philippians 4)... ring any bells?

Growing up, I regularly heard these scriptures. I couldn't quite understand why my parents would always remind of us of them, even when we were going through challenges of life.

The past year has been difficult for most and like many, we've had our fair share of challenges as a family. But it's only by God's grace that we have found the strength to praise Him. Whilst it's not always easy to praise during challenging times, we all know the importance of praising God because He is worthy and takes pleasure in our praises.

I've been reflecting on a few role models from the Bible who embraced this attitude of praise despite their hardship.

1. David

He didn't have an easy ride, with relationship breakdowns and times where he felt lost and even feared for his life. But during those times he still wrote these words: “I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvellous things you have done.” (Psalms 9:1)

I love the Psalms, full of praises and thanksgiving to our Almighty Father! David was a man after God's heart, having written majority of the 150 psalms.

2. Paul and Silas

I always remember these two! As reported in the book of Acts, they were imprisoned for speaking out about Jesus. Despite the situation they were in, bound in chains, they decided to praise God, so much so that there was an

earthquake that shook the whole prison to its foundations; the chains of every prisoner - not just theirs - fell off!

The beauty of it all was that the jailer received Christ. When praises go up, amazing things happen. They clearly believed that "all things work together for good for those who love God" (Romans 8).

A few other things of note that come to mind when I think of these great men are that:

They praised God for the 'who' not the 'what'
They praised God before any provision was made
They praised God and then He showed up

There is so much to praise God for, even when we don't feel like it. A well known song tells us to count our blessings and name them one by one and it will surprise us what the Lord has done.

I am still learning to trust and praise God in all circumstances, even though it's sometimes difficult. Praising God can be good therapy, taking the focus away from the challenging situation and our emotions. Our God really delights in our praises, and Proverbs 17 tells us "a joyful cheerful heart brings healing to both body and soul"!

Here is a poem of praise based on Psalm 46. I love the words and hope they speak to you too.

Praise Him No Matter What **by Deborah Ann**

Lord, I'll praise You in the quietness,
when my soul is at perfect rest
I'll praise You in the peaceful times
when I am feeling oh, so blessed.
I'll praise You while in the valley,
when my spirit is feeling low
I'll praise You in the darker times
when I'm not sure which way to go.
I'll praise You from the mountain top,
when my heart with You is right
I'll praise You in each shining victory
when I'm soaking in Your light.
I'll praise You in the storms that blow,
when my soul is tossed about
I'll praise You in the billowing waves
when I am struggling with self-doubt.
Lord, I'll praise You in the quietness,
when my soul is oh, so blessed
I'll praise You in the strongest gusts
for I know You'll give me perfect rest!

We are the light of the world, we were created to praise. If we stay silent, won't the rocks will cry out in praise?! (Luke 19).

Our Heavenly Father commands us to praise him in the highs and lows. I believe that we are better for finding reasons to praise Him, and want to use this opportunity to encourage us all to reflect on even those 'small' things that God has done in our lives in the last year, month, week or day, listing what comes to mind.

For me I think of the gift of life, the recent development and distribution of the Covid vaccine, the medical and care industry / key workers who have been so dedicated over the last year....

Let's continue to praise the Lord of Heaven and Earth, from whom all blessings flow.

Smile Lines 😊

Neighbourhood Watch

In one small rural village the local vet also led the local Neighbourhood Watch group. Late one night the phone rang, and his wife answered. An agitated voice inquired, "Is your husband there?"

"He is, but tell me, do you need him as the vet or the Neighbourhood Watch?" the wife asked.

"Both!" was the reply. "We can't get our dog's mouth open, and there's a burglar in it!"

Thankful

A minister said to a precocious six-year-old boy, "So your mother says a prayer over you each night? That's very commendable. What does she say?"

The little boy replied, "Thank God he's in bed!"

Ground

Long ago when men cursed and beat the ground with sticks, it was called witchcraft.

Today, it's called golf.

Fellowship Profiles

This month we are delighted that Christine and Bill Huggett have shared their story.

Meet the Huggetts - Christine Huggett

Bob twisted our arms to write this article and bless him, he delivers us the magazine every month, so we couldn't refuse. So here goes.

We met on a blind date. He was early and I was late because I didn't want to go - but sixteen months later we were married, by my ex-boyfriend, but that's another story!: we have recently celebrated our Golden wedding.

I had been at Kelvedon Congregational Church since a baby. At sixteen I was their youngest ever church member and at 21 an Elder, choir member and later Church Secretary.

After our marriage we were both Elders, full time creche and Junior Church Leaders, etc.

It was a small church with a small Eldership. Eventually after 30 years, it became impossible for us, as a trio of Elders always voted as one. Older members were not being listened to and we realised we have to leave for our sake and our children.

The week after we came to Witham URC, over 40 years ago, my parents joined us and were very happy here worshipping until illness and old age prevented them. Between us I think that we've done most of the roles in the church, Meeting Point, the shop, Friday Fellowship, JFC, minibus, etc. Bill has been an Elder but I chose not to.

We enjoyed the experience of rebuilding the Sanctuary, with Bill spending many hours, with dear Alistair Campbell, under the floorboards re-wiring the church.

When I suffered a major breakdown it was our church family who immediately came to our help. They gave us financial and physical support until Bill was able to return to work and then created a rota of carers for me until I recovered.

The children were two and six when we came and loved it from the start.

Later Ben volunteered for Fellowship Afloat where he met his wife, Jenny, a veterinary nurse. He has his own business now as a Marine Surveyor. They are active members of Meadgate Chelmsford.

Sarah loved all the children's and youth activities of the church, especially the FURY group.

She met her husband, Roger at uni and they married here. Roger was a teacher and is now a full time church worker for Vineyard Southend and Sarah is a Senior Community Palliative Care O.T.

Both were christened, there being no alternative at the time, but have since received adult baptism and Rachel, our eldest grandchild, was baptised in the sea at Southend. We are blessed that our grandchildren Rachel (20), Jonathan (17), Heath (7) (our next is due in August) have been brought up in the Christian faith.

Witham URC has always been seen as very much a family church and as such there is a widespread of age groups, all of which are welcome.

We have always loved the mixture of traditional hymns and modern songs and I find I can worship more through music than prayer and meditation.

Our faith is the central part of our lives and we are missing our church family so much.

Not being on line or owning smart 'phones and not being silver surfers, we have felt very cut off during lockdown. We've had no means of taking part in the major decisions being made at the moment.

We pray for the day when we all will be together again, and as a family of all ages, gaining wisdom, growth, challenge and respect for each other in our walk with God.



Sunflowers and Comfrey fertiliser - Julie Harris

These will both be ready both for collection from 10th June: please ring me on 01376 517623 and we can discuss a convenient time for collection as delivery is no longer an option for me.

LICC - Wisdom for Life
Peter S Heslam
Peter is director of Faith in
Business, Cambridge.



JOB 16:9

God assails me and tears me in his anger and gnashes his teeth at me.

In December last year, Channel Four broadcast the documentary *Surviving Covid*. It follows the stories of four coronavirus sufferers. One of them is a pastor called Tobi, who is treasured by his family, congregation, and community for his vivacious personality, strong faith, and personal warmth.

But the film shows him in hospital writhing with discomfort under a mass of tubes and wires. He has had several strokes and his kidneys have failed. When eventually he returns home, he has severe physical and mental disabilities that mean he can hardly speak or lift his head. Most traumatic of all for his loved ones, his ready smile has vanished and gleaming eyes have dimmed.

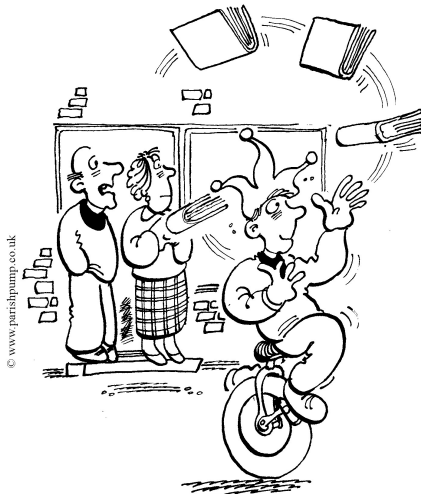
Tobi's story evokes that of Job. In both cases, a righteous, God-fearing man suffers the loss of almost all the things that constitute his quality of life. Both thereby raise the age-old question: why do bad things happen to good people?

On this question, as this series has shown, Proverbs teaches that, when people do good, good things will eventually follow; and Ecclesiastes that it is a mystery why this does not always happen. But the book of Job holds out the prospect of addressing this question head on. Indeed, it records conversations on this matter not only between Job and his friends but also between God and Job, and even between God and Satan.

Ultimately, however, this book does not solve the puzzle of why the righteous suffer. When Job eventually challenges God to account for his suffering, God delivers a poem in which he gives Job a tour of the universe and poses to Job the rhetorical question: ‘where were you’ when all this was created?

The poem suggests that the world is good, beautiful, and under God’s ultimate control, but also that it is wild, unsafe, and imperfect. As such, it is an arena for the complex and unpredictable interplay between flourishing and suffering. For a mere mortal like Job to question God’s justice is, therefore, to make the same mistake as Job’s friends of simplifying God. A simplification is needed – but only of trust.

How will simple trust in God’s goodness be demonstrated this week as we grapple with the complexities and uncertainties on our frontlines?



...I think I must have missed that module when I was at theological college!

Door Stewards Rota - David Goodwin

It is hoped that normal services will start again in July. With this in mind, I am now preparing the rota for July to December 2021 and volunteers of all ages are needed for this very important role in assisting the Duty Elders to greet people as they arrive for our Sunday morning service. It is envisaged that from July onwards one of the two Door Stewards will greet people at the gate as they enter the church grounds.

Your duties will also include handing out the song books, bibles and service sheets, collecting them and any disused service sheets up after the service and taking one of the plates at the Offertory (only if you want to).

I hope enough volunteers come forward so you only have to undertake the role once in the period, although you are more than welcome to put your name down more than once if you wish to.

Please add your name to your chosen date/s on the rota in Church Suite if you can. If this isn't possible then please either email me with your chosen date/s or call me – details below.

Email: davidgoodwin2009@hotmail.co.uk

Tel: 01376 515203

Mob: 07932 198352

Thank you

We are on our way - Well done The ECO Team



This is to certify that

Witham United Reformed Church

has won a Bronze Eco Church Award in recognition of their efforts to care for God's earth in each of the following areas (as applicable):

- Worship and Teaching
- Management of Buildings and Land
- Community and Global Engagement
- Lifestyle

Signed Andy Atkin Date 17th May 2021
CEO, A Rocha UK



ecochurch.arocha.org.uk
arocha.org.uk

Plastic Free July - Be Part of the Solution The ECO Team

Plastic Free July® is a global movement that helps millions of people be part of the solution to plastic pollution – so we can have cleaner streets, oceans, and beautiful communities. Will you be part of Plastic Free July by choosing to refuse single-use plastics?



Even if you do not think you can do the whole month of July perhaps choose one day a week or just one day.

Here are some tips as to what we can do

Bulk Food Shopping

Choose to refuse groceries that use single-use plastic packaging.

Take your own containers to an ECO shop (there is one in Maldon, Tiptree, Colchester and Chelmsford) where they can be filled up with practically anything that can be bought in a supermarket, but without the plastic and sometimes cheaper, i.e. all dry goods such as flour, cereals, washing up liquid, washing powder, the list is long.

Takeaway Coffee Cups

You can easily avoid takeaway coffee cups by bringing your own reusable alternative. There are many reusable coffee cups on the market, just keep it in your bag or at work.

Soap

Choose to refuse plastic-packaged bathroom supplies, including shower gel.

Switching from shower gel to bars of soap is an easy way to reduce single use plastics. Bar soaps come in differing blends to suit body washing, face wash, shampoo and shaving.

Safety Razors

Refuse to use disposable razors, plastic cartridge heads and shaving creams packed in plastic.

Switch to safety razors which are generally made of stainless steel and replaceable blades. They may be more expensive to start with, but can save money in the long run.

Toothbrushes

More and more people are choosing toothbrushes are made from sustainable, compostable materials, such as bamboo. Be aware though, bristles are usually still made from plastic, so you'll need to cut them off before composting or reusing your bamboo toothbrush handle.

Purchasing a toothbrush with a replaceable head can eliminate the need to continually purchase a new plastic brush every few months, too. When it comes to toothpaste, many health and organic stores sell plastic-free alternatives. There are also recipes available online for making your own.

Go to link below for more information as to what can be done.

[Plastic Free July – Be Part of the Solution](#)

YOU ARE INVITED

TO

WITHAM URC's



POP UP COFFEE SHOP



EVERY THURSDAY

10am - MIDDAY

Witham URC's forecourt



Enjoy a drink and chat
with friendly faces



Everyone Welcome

Witham URC, Newland Street

Tel: 01376 500958

E-mail: info@withamurc.org.uk

www.withamurc.org.uk



Breaking news reopening of the Church and Centre

It is currently expected that the Government will lift all covid restrictions with effect from 21st June 2021, if not this date due to concerns over covid variants then the Government will lift covid restrictions on another day, hopefully not too distant.

At the Church meeting held on 25th May 2021 the following was agreed.

Witham URC will restart normal In-Person worship without social distancing and compulsory mask wearing, and resume congregational singing with effect from the first Sunday following the lifting of Government covid restrictions;

Meeting Point, Church Groups and Third Party Lets be resumed with effect from the first day of the lifting of Government covid restrictions, provided that in respect of Meeting Point there exist sufficient volunteers available to enable Meeting Point to safely open.

TUESDAY PRAISE : June 2021

Date	Led by
June 1	Christine Newmarch
8	Marina Price
15	Will Abbott
22	Michael Child
29	Richard Wearmouth

Minister	Revd	Mark Ambrose	791197
Associate Minister	Revd	Lorna Bantock	571757
Admin Assistant to Rev. Mark Ambrose	Mrs	Deborah Robinson	07564 168342 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	
Church Treasurer	Mr	Ian Hardie	
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