



WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE

June 2022

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." James 4:8

As I'm writing this month's pastoral letter, I'm having to squint because my computer screen is filled with reflection of the sun shining a glorious blue sky and the green of the grass... What a wonderful problem to have!

Lately it feels like we live in a world filled with problems. Mental health has taken a battering after 2 years of uncertainty, and just when it feels like we're getting our heads above the sand after the COVID pandemic, we're faced with the prospect of war with Russia, a cost of living and energy crisis which sees higher inflation than we've experienced in 40 years, news story upon news story of criminal acts and dishonesty by those entrusted to lead us, and record profits being made by fuel giants while we're paying record prices at the pumps.

Some of us are tightening our belts, others are afraid of what may be hiding around the corner, many of us are angry and the rest are just waiting for it to blow over. I know I've been all four at different times of different days.

A couple of months ago Fenella wrote about Peter denying that he knew Jesus, and weeping bitterly afterwards. Perhaps we aren't denying Jesus in the midst of what's happening around us, but are we seeking him? Are we trusting that although we face trials that God will see us through?

As we look around, it gets increasingly difficult to find God in any of what's happening, It would be wrong to compare our trials to the suffering of Job, but we can take inspiration from him. In the midst of his suffering, he never turned his back to God, but asked him why?

I've found encouragement in an old friend of mine. Last year I got an out of the blue text message from the last person I'd expect to ask for a Bible. This year I've regularly been tested and challenged by him as he asks me

questions about the scriptures and points out perspectives I've never seen or heard spoken.

“These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honour on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.” 1 Peter 1:7

Blessings

Keith Meredith

Life on the Breadline: A Way Forward - Andy Blackett

This is a follow up article to the one I previously wrote about the lent course, Life On the Breadline in April's WURC magazine. I know of one of our home groups has used the material as the bases of their study and would encourage others to do the same. It is a study into the Christian response to the effects of austerity, poverty, inequality, ethnic disparities and housing. See: breadlineresearch.coventry.au.uk/churches/lent-course
The final session set out an Anti-poverty charter, designed for the local church to sign up to. One of charter statements is to challenge the myths told about contemporary poverty. Another key theme from the course and discussion during each session was 'What can we do as a church'.

I want to encourage you to think about how you on a personal level respond to poverty as portrayed by our politicians and sections of the media. Would you choose to be poor as a life style? The poor are often looked down on, as if they choose to have their washing machine breakdown or the child's shoes need replacing at the same time or having to choose between eating or heating. The majority of working people and families are one pay packet from entering poverty and debt (they lack the savings). The majority of those receiving unemployment benefits or even in work benefits are keen to be off them. It's a strain just getting by when your housing or your job is insecure or you just lack the financial ability to put food on the table. Coping can sap the energy needed to seek ways out. Many do try, hence the multiple jobs of many of those on low income. But even that has consequences in a pro rata reduction of benefits, a catch 22 situation! What impact does that then have on family life especially the children? Or your time in trying to look for a job. Cutting benefits in order to increase job seeking has the paradoxical effect of making it harder. (See: Poverty by Ruth Lister. Ruth is a member of the House of Lords and Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, Loughborough University).

A number of ministers seem intent on putting the causes of poverty squarely on the shoulders of those in poverty! By saying they do not budget

properly, or don't work enough hours, or as Jacob Rees-Mog has said “the use of food banks is rather uplifting” Really!

Poverty is on the increase as unprecedented inflation impacts on more of our community, the Resolution Foundation estimates absolute poverty and material deprivation will rise by 1.3 million including 0.5 million children in 2022/23

Our choice is both to tackle some of the political causes and our attitude linked to those in poverty, along with what the church can do in helping them to develop the appropriate skills, without looking down on them, to make them feel valued and an important part of our community.

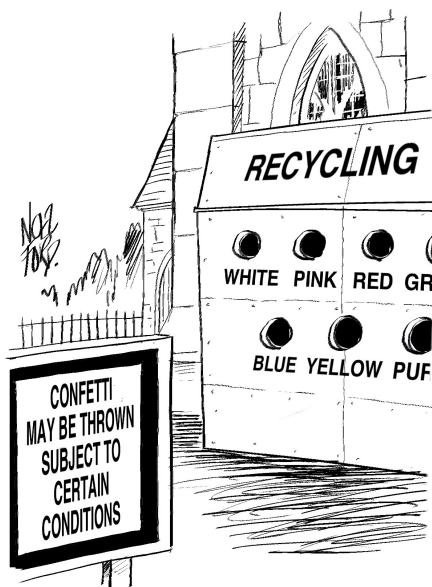
From my discussion with Fenella and Heather at the centre it became evident that for many struggling in poverty or on the brink, the lack of home skills is a stumbling block to enabling limited finance to go further. It's a choice of the ready cooked meal or highly processed food used to save time (not always nutritional and or expensive) or the belief that cooking using fresh ingredients is even more expensive and time consuming. Some of their plans include a family tea time once a week. Here all ages would work together to prepare, cook and eat a meal. Providing hands on experience of simple nutritional meals that are easy to cook and prepare with a few basic ingredients.

Small talk is providing a much needed outreach to enable parents to meet together, and they hope to make links with the group Next Chapter. (domestic violence) The Centre would like to link up some basic early years health care provision as well. Big Talk is also proving to be a success and again could link into providing cooking skills. At the other end of the age spectrum is Memories and More (dementia suffers and their carers) and the lunch club. The Centre is also a base for Holdfast Credit Union, providing financial help and support.

The Centre provides a golden opportunity to reach out to our community to show practical help, as Peter did in Acts chapter 3. The lame man walked,

so solving the cause. (Life on the breadline session 3) Our role is not to just give food but to enable the causes to be rectified by promoting a more equitable society through our politicians and pass on skills and support missing from current society.

We need to be an all inclusive church both on a Sunday and to the activities/service we provide mid week. But as always to do more requires helpers, could you help treat the cause. I would like to leave you with this comment said to Heather at the end of a Big Talk session “people like us are not welcome. We say as a church ” YOU MOST CERTAINLY ARE!



Human Trafficking - Eve Murfitt

An estimated 100,000 people are in some form of modern slavery here in the UK. The global figure is 40.3 million. Women, children and men are trafficked into prostitution, pornography, agriculture and building labour, manufacturing, domestic servitude, forced begging, benefit fraud, petty criminality and organ removal (care.org.uk).

A prayer

God of mercy, we ask that victims of modern slavery would not be unfairly impacted by the Nationality and Borders Bill. Rather, we ask that the Bill would result in increased support and security for individuals as they recover.

For Jesus' sake, Amen.

*Articles for the combined July and August magazine to
bjstibbards@gmail.com by 21st June. Thank you*

Great Totham URC - Jean Moody

Moving dedication in the sunshine .Great Totham URC.Lovely occasion.
Sarah Wilson led a moving dedication We sang the National Anthem.

Blessings Jean



**Some pictures from our Fellowship walk on May 21st from
Terling to Fairstead - Muriel Heppinstall**



June Fellowship Walk - Muriel Heppinstall



This month we intend to do a circular walk around Hatfield Peverel on Saturday June 18th, a distance of about 2 ½ miles. Meet in Hadfelda Square car park at 10am. We will pass the new Tea Room at the Wheatsheaf pub towards the end of the walk. 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.

Address: 01376 500958

Join us for a
Jubilee Afternoon Tea
Monday June 6th 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

Eco Church News

Great news! We have achieved a Silver Eco Church award! The committee have worked their socks off to make sure we have done as much as we can to improve the church's green credentials. We have almost finished fitting LED lights throughout the building; we buy green gas and electricity; we have several recycling bins (PLEASE only put paper, card and cans in them, our recycling company does not accept polythene bags in any shape or form); our garden is wild life friendly; we only use fair trade tea, coffee and sugar; caring for God's earth features in our services and children's work; we use recycled paper and we encourage outdoor activity with our monthly fellowship walks.

To get a Gold award we need a much bigger commitment from the congregation, - supporting green events, changing lifestyles; thinking about how we spend and invest money. So now it's up to YOU.

For starters here are some thoughts about both reducing our impact on the planet and reducing costs (yes sometimes going green can SAVE money).

SAVE THE PLANET BY WEARING T SHIRTS TWO DAYS IN A ROW!

The consumer magazine Which? gives guidance on how often to wash our clothes.

As a general rule:

Underwear one wear

Bra two to three wears

T-shirt one to two wears

Jeans six to ten wears

Skirts five to seven wears

Email from A Rocha UK Eco Church Team to the Witham United Reformed Church Eco Team.

Thank you for your application for a Silver Eco Church Award, and please do accept my apologies for the delay in reviewing your award application. We are receiving many award applications which is wonderful, but it is increasing the time it takes to review and process accordingly. We appreciate your patience at this exciting time for Eco Church.

I have checked your survey scores and am delighted to confirm your award. Well done.

Our overall aim of the Eco Church award scheme is to celebrate the ways that church communities have been engaging with caring for the earth as a key part of our Christian faith. As a silver awarded eco church, we encourage you to celebrate your award achievement and to share about your eco church journey on your website or social media pages. To do this you may like to add the attached website badge.

It was so encouraging to see you sharing about your eco church journey on your church's website alongside other helpful resources, and we encourage you to continue to share your story and your activities as an eco church in this great way.

It was also inspiring to hear about all you have achieved with your small rear garden. We would love to share your story further about all you have achieved here with a relatively small patch of land in order to inspire and encourage other churches to do the same.

Thank you very much for your generous donation of £125 which we have safely received. We are very grateful to your church for helping to support the costs of our Eco Church programme. By helping to support the running

costs of Eco Church, your church is enabling us to keep the scheme free to access for all churches, irrespective of size and denomination, and to improve the resources and advice we can make available. Thank you so much for partnering with us, and please do pass on our thanks to all concerned.

As you continue on your Eco Church journey, do consider the following:

- Take a look at our new Eco Church Resources to support, guide, and inspire you in the five key areas of church life that the Eco Church survey addresses, as well as resources for kids, youth, and in Welsh, available [here](#).
- Stay connected, and receive updates and inspiration from the Eco Church community, by signing up to Eco Church Connect, our regular newsletter. You can sign up [here](#).
- Take part in Churches Count on Nature (4-12 June 2022). Celebrate CCoN virtually by coming along to the [complementary series of online webinars](#) on a range of topics. Register to participate in CCoN [here](#).
- Join us at one of our 'Act for Nature' days at our [urban nature reserve in Southall](#) on 25 June or at our Partner in Action site [Hugh's Meadow in Northern Ireland](#) on 23 July. Save the dates for future events at Foxearth Meadows in North Essex on 3 September and at Hilfield Friary in Dorset on 12 November.
- Check out all our upcoming online and in-person events [here](#).
- Pray with us. You can find our A Rocha UK prayer diary [here](#).

Congratulations once again on receiving your Eco Church Award!

Warm regards,
Lissy
Eco Church Team
A Rocha UK

ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

Take action for nature today [here](#)



Follow us on social media:

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Twitter: [@ARochaUK](#)

Facebook: [@Arochaorguk](#)



Silver Eco Church Award Certificate

This is to certify that

Witham United Reformed Church

has won a Silver 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

Date

10th May 2022

CEO, A Rocha UK



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







Our current shopping list

Thank you for continuing support which is much appreciated by us and our clients. 5708 emergency food parcels were provided to people between April 2021 and March 2022, 2596 went to children.

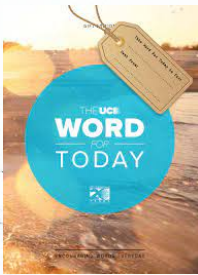
URGENT FOOD ITEMS

- LONG LIFE JUICE (1 LITRE MAXIMUM)
- INSTANT MASHED POTATO
- PACKET SOUP
- TINNED SPAGHETTI
- TEA BAGS (80 MAXIMUM)
- JAM
- TINNED COLD MEAT
- SPONGE PUDDING

OUR GENERAL SHOPPING LIST (TO MAINTAIN OUR STOCKS)

- TINNED TOMATOES
- TINNED VEGETABLES
- LONGLIFE MILK (1 LITRE, PLEASE)
- RICE PUDDING
- TINNED FRUIT
- SUGAR & COFFEE

We ask for small packs as larger packs do not fit in our boxes making it difficult for our clients to carry home. Also, we are unable (for hygiene reasons) to split large size or catering packs.



**‘GO INTO
ALL THE
WORLD
AND PREACH
THE GOSPEL
TO ALL
CREATION.’**

MARK 16:15 NIVUK

May 2022

We’ve been left with the best job in the world...

The weeks following Easter make me think of the disciples: how must they have felt after the emotional rollercoaster they’d just been on, watching the death, resurrection, AND ascension of their teacher? What a ride!

In many ways, we can probably relate to that feeling of going down, and up, and then back down again over the last few years. It’s only natural, after such a time as this, to find yourself thinking: ‘Now what?’ But just like Jesus’ disciples, we’ve been left with a job...

**To share the good news of Hope with the world, just like it says in Mark 16:
‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation’ (v 15).**

And before you think it, I am not preaching at you. Jesus has equipped each and every one of us with unique gifts and resources so that the gospel can be shared in all sorts of ways. Remember, our lives are the biggest billboard to spread the Good News – to all sorts of people!

**Each time we come together to help share the UCB Word For Today, we are in fact
spreading God’s Kingdom even further by welcoming people like Eileen with the
goodness of His Word:**

‘I get...the UCB Word For Today and have found on many occasions it inspires me, and God speaks through it. I became a Christian earlier this year and my friend referred me to it. The readings are really relevant and encouraging, and the way to start the day with the Lord.’

continued overleaf...





ROSS HENDRY
CEO of CARE

May 2022

DEAR FRIEND,

Thank you for your continued interest in and prayers for CARE.

Later this year, we'll be announcing our long-term plans for CARE's work. In the meantime, I wanted to briefly share with you how your support helps restrain harmful legislation and promote Government action that serve the peace and prosperity of our nation (Jeremiah 29:7).

Since joining CARE last year, I have been struck by how our work depends on the prayers, gifts and donations of many thousands of individual supporters. We are not funded by a few rich benefactors or large institutions. **Our work depends on regular faithful supporters whose generosity enables us to achieve remarkable results** and make a real difference in the lives of so many who need protecting.

Over the last twelve months, donations to CARE have led to breakthroughs in:

- greater protection for vulnerable women trafficked into the UK,
- changes in UK Government policy on age verification that will mean children are better protected from accessing pornography,
- stopping attempts to legalise assisted suicide from succeeding,
- proclaiming a compassionate gospel voice in the debates around conversion therapy and gender recognition; and
- providing churches with resources to be able to minister with grace and compassion to those facing unintended pregnancy or post-abortion concerns.

These changes alone would be a great return on the support we receive, but in God's economy, every penny makes a difference now and in the future. As in the parable of the sower, where gospel seeds are widely scattered, **we have been able to sow seeds that have born and will bear wonderful fruit far beyond the boundary of our own field.**

For example, our Leadership Programme, which started with just two young graduates, eager to deepen their understanding of God's word and how it applies to politics and public life. Almost 30 years later, the Programme now has more than 300 alumni. They have all benefited from a combination of bible teaching, guidance from experienced Christian leaders and internships in the Houses of Parliament.

Our graduates have gone on to become cabinet ministers and leading politicians across the UK, ambassadors, senior civil servants, charity chief executives, church leaders, and entrepreneurs. Indeed, one of those first two Leadership Programme interns now works across international conflict areas and was instrumental in rescuing many who had to flee the Taliban when they came to power in Afghanistan last year.

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
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