

WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2020

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear friends,

Recently I have been on a quest to find silver linings. Yes, silver linings. Have I lost the plot? Well, possibly, but not when it comes to silver linings, definitely not.

Over the last few months we have seen lots of clouds, both physical and metaphorical. I'm not sure where the expression originates. Perhaps it is because when you look at the clouds from the earth you see only one side of them, what is not visible from that perspective is the silver lining which is the reflection of the light from above.

So why the quest for silver linings?

Recently I bought a book entitled Laugh Again published originally in 1992. I was drawn to it because just the title made me realise that I don't laugh nearly as much as I used to and I started to wonder why and when this change had happened.

Obviously I have far more responsibilities now than I used to, being a minister entails a lot of pastoral work to deal with and life always has its ups and downs. The same could be said for any of us because we are all called to minister to other people, we all take on more responsibility as we get older and we all have our ups and downs in life. I realised that this wasn't a good explanation and certainly not a valid excuse and came to realise that I had allowed my joy to be eroded or, worse, stolen.

Apparently someone once asked Mother Teresa what were the qualifications needed for anyone wishing to work alongside her in the streets of Calcutta, her immediate response was: the desire to work hard and a joyful attitude. I'm not work shy but I am fairly sure I would be

unable to maintain a joyful attitude in the face of all the things that Mother Teresa and her team of workers faced daily.

Mother Teresa hit the nail on the head.... the key to joy is attitude.

So far I've only read the first four chapters of the book but they have been really good fun to read as well as being inspirational. The fundamental premise of the book is that we can choose joy - indeed we *need* to choose joy. I know that is easier said than done at the best of times, let alone at the moment with the world in turmoil because of the virus, but it is not a matter of how we feel, it is a matter of choice. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells them of the many hardships he had endured because of his determination to spread the good news of Jesus and he adds 'the daily burden of my concern for all the churches' but none of this deterred him, nor did it rob him of his joy. His joy runs through all his letters, especially his letter to the Philippians where he mentions joy and rejoicing so much in that the whole letter is almost a study in joy. It is here we find his famous instruction: "Always be full of joy in the Lord". I say it again – rejoice!

My quest for silver linings is part of my quest for joy. It is a mindset, an attitude of positive thinking that I am trying to cultivate. Jesus in his prayer to for his disciples (John 17) said: "I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy".

Near the beginning of Luke's gospel we read that when the angel appeared to the shepherds in the field he said to them, "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people".

Jesus is the good news and it is he who brings us joy. It is a gift. One of his many gifts along with love, hope and peace. Joy, like peace, doesn't depend on what is going on in the world. Joy and peace are not meant to reflect the outside world because they are not temporary, superficial emotions that change. They are deep seated, well grounded emotions reflecting our inner

state, reflecting the person and personality of Jesus, the one who is within us. Without peace there can be no lasting joy but Jesus promises us his peace, his peace of heart and mind, peace that the world cannot give. The joy that Jesus gives us is not from the world, it comes only from experiencing his love and grace.

So I'm looking for silver linings, I'm choosing joy, I'm choosing an attitude of gratitude..... or at least that's my aim and I'm working on it. If you hear me moaning or complaining please remind me to change my perspective on the situation, to find the silver lining, to choose joy and gratitude. It's going to take a while for it to become second nature, realistically a long while, but I have to start somewhere so no time like the present.

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Bless you

Lorna

We will sing again - Rosemary Stinson

I am sure that most of us have had conversations about not being able to sing in church. For many singing praise to God is a major part of worship. It would be easier for me to tell the sun not to shine than to keep Irving quiet. He would almost certainly be asked to leave before the first verse was over!! At home we listen to CDs, watch DVDs and sing along. We have listened to many wonderful individuals and groups; also read a couple of books giving the stories of how some of the best loved hymns have been written. One of these stories referred to Charles Wesley's amazing hymn "And can it be". What a powerful message there is in the first verse.

"And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood
Did He for me who caused His pain
For me who Him to death pursued".

While I really enjoy some of the newer hymns and am blessed by some, let us not forget the great hymns of the past. They all have their place.

A few days ago I began thinking of hymns that refer to 'singing'. Please forgive my thoughts as I join two of them together.

"What singing there will be up there
What glory for the saints to share.
When face to face with Jesus we shall stand
And join the heavenly choir, in the better land.

But until then my heart will go on singing
Until then with joy I'll carry on
Until the day I reach that city
Until the day God calls me home".

What a choir that will be. I'll sing with all my christian friends from every church I've gone to along with Mahalia Jackson, Bec Shea, Mark Lowry, Andrea Crouch and The Gaither Vocal Band to name but a few. We'll be accompanied by so many talented musicians including Anthony Berger and our own Gerry Moscrop.

Forgive my use of American artists but these have truly blessed me.

I could go on but I urge you to sing when you can, be it in your head or heart and when at home aloud. Sometimes the line of a hymn can lift you when you feel down. One that has done that for me recently is:-

"God I look to you,
I won't be overwhelmed".

What an amazing thought: we can become overwhelmed in life, and especially in the current situation. But, if we look up to Him, we won't be.

I close with some words from two songs by Andrea Crouch:-

"To God be the glory
To God be the glory
To God be the glory
for the things He has done
With His love He has sought me
With His blood He has bought me
To God be the glory for the things He has done."

and a wonderful re-assurance:-

"Soon and very soon
We are going to see the King
No more crying there
We are going to see the King
No more dying there we are going to see the King
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, we're going to see the King
So friend sing on, aloud when you can
But in your heart when you have to be silent.

I wrote the following poem some years ago when I had just come out of hospital, could not sleep and felt very afraid. I know at the present time a number of you who live alone find the nights hard and I pray these words might help you.

I am so alone in the midst of the night
No-one can see the tears that I cry
I am afraid in the midst of the night
While the dark world outside passes by.

I need a hand to reach out to hold mine fast
But who could possibly be there?
I need, how I need a friend in the night
Someone to tell me they care.

Child you're not alone in the midst of the night
My strong arms will always be there
I watch over you, awake or asleep
And promise your cries I will hear.

Child don't be afraid in daylight or dark
My love can break down every fear
Trust me today, tomorrow, life through
Precious child I hold you so dear.

Rosemary, June 2009



Christmas Cards to our friends in Witham United Reformed Church

Unfortunately, this year it will not be possible to operate the internal collection and distribution of Christmas cards between our church friends as in previous years.

If, instead of posting and sending Christmas cards to our Church family, you would like to make a donation to our supported charities for 2020 - Holdfast Supporters and Mercy Ships - who have not been able to hold any fund raising events this year, this can be done in the following ways. (The monies received will be divided equally between the two causes.)

If you already make payments to the church electronically please use the same main account details with the reference Christmas Cards. Please e-mail ianzhardie@googlemail.com if you need any further clarification or if the donation can be gift aided.

Alternatively if you do not have access to on line banking a cheque can be made out to Witham United Reformed Church. Please send it to Ian Hardie or contact him on 01376 512513 if you would like him to collect a cheque/ money.

If you would like to let others know that you are intending to make a donation perhaps you could also let Ian know this, so he can pass your name(s) to Jo and Bob Stibbards to put into the December edition of the magazine.





The Second Wave Breaks

Connecting with Culture Issues & Trends

As the days get darker and shorter, people are finding the prospect of more restrictions for months to come even harder than when we first went into lockdown.

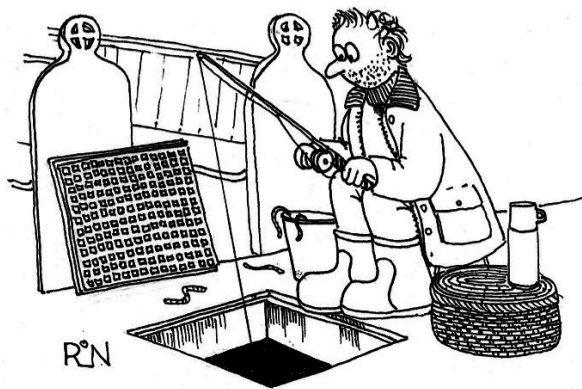
In the first pandemic wave many experienced loss in all sorts of ways. Now, after an emotionally draining six months, the second wave is here. Apart from the medical impact, we have more job losses, more uncertainty, a very real lack of fun, and the disappointing reality that this is going to go on for a long time. We are running out of steam. As Psalm 42 says, ‘all your waves and breakers have swept over me’. We need hope.

There is a strong parallel in all this with the ancient book of Job and his experience of loss and pain. Like Job we are discovering that we are not always entitled to health, wealth, and happiness; and like Job our suffering inexplicably goes on and on. Like the irritating moralising of Job’s comforters, the constant critique of the media only seems to make things worse. And, like Job, our minds are incapable of totally grasping the meaning of all this suffering. We need hope.

Job was deprived of everything, yet even in his despair he never lost his belief that God was there. Occasionally an indestructible hope burst forth like a ray of light in the darkness of his pain. ‘I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God’ (Job 19:26). But the truly transformative moment for Job came when, instead of seeing his situation in front of God, he finally saw God in front of his situation. Then, even in the intensity of his suffering, the greatness of the Almighty eclipsed the problem. That is the revelation we need.

In this sad and weary time lament is therapeutic, and we can be completely real with our Father in Heaven. Yet in our lament, the path to rekindling true hope lies in the possibility of focusing on the character and immensity of God. Greater is he that is in us than the pandemic that is in the world.

Join in with the ancient words of Psalm 42: 'Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.'



Quarantining in church had its drawbacks. Two days in, the biscuits were gone, and Rupert was hungry.



Remembrance honours those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life. We unite across faiths, cultures and backgrounds to

remember the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth. We will remember them.

- We remember the sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth.
- We pay tribute to the special contribution of families and of the emergency services.
- We acknowledge innocent civilians who have lost their lives in conflict and acts of terrorism.

Remembrance does not glorify war and its symbol, the red poppy, is a sign of both Remembrance and hope for a peaceful future.

Wearing a poppy is never compulsory but is greatly appreciated by those who it is intended to support.

When and how you choose to wear a poppy is a reflection of your individual experiences and personal memories.

Remembrance unites people of all faiths, cultures, and backgrounds but it is also deeply personal.

ANGEL PROJECT 2020

**Can all knitted Angels be passed on to me by 10th
November.**

My address is 11 Chelmer Road, Witham, CM8 2EY

Tel: 01376 515476 Mobile: 07971228305

I can collect if necessary just give me a ring.

Denise Vinton

Our dear friend, Shirley Ratnage moved from Wickham Bishops at the end of October to a flat in Moorfield Court. There is now enough members of Witham URC to start a small church, but do not worry Mark and Lorna we understand it is prohibited under the terms of their lease. We wish Shirley every happiness in her new surroundings.

LET'S STOP THE SPREAD

This information is brought to you by Essex County Council, Essex District, Borough and City Councils, Essex Police, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, the Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and NHS organisations in Essex.

Essex is at High local Covid alert level

Essex has moved to the High local Covid alert level because cases are rapidly rising across our county. This does not include the Southend and Thurrock council areas.

What's changed

You can no longer socialise indoors with people from a different household unless they are in your support or childcare bubble.

The Rule of Six (up to six people from different households meeting) applies outdoors, in both private and public spaces.

Work from home if you can. Take extra precautions if you work in other people's homes.

Aim to only make essential journeys.

Do not visit a care home except in exceptional circumstances.

What's stayed the same

Covid-secure businesses can keep operating and hospitality venues can stay open until 10pm.

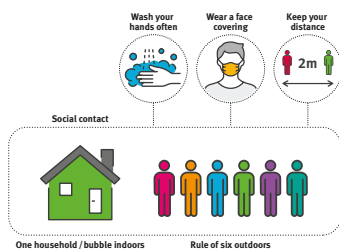
You can still go to school, university and places of worship.

Weddings and funerals can go ahead in the same way as before.

You can still use registered childcare settings, including childminders, after-school clubs and nannies.

You must follow these rules all the time, even if you are seeing friends or family who live in a Medium alert level area. The restrictions apply to you as an Essex resident.

If we all play our part, we can reduce the number of people who die or become seriously ill from Covid-19. By acting now, we hope to exit High alert level restrictions sooner rather than later.



For more information and to access a range of support, go to www.essex.gov.uk/coronavirus or www.gov.uk/coronavirus **#StaySafeEssex**

Our very own Fogger



Love the shoes Rocio



MERCY SHIPS ANNOUNCES THE GLOBAL MERCY, THE WORLD'S LARGEST CHARITY HOSPITAL SHIP

Over 18 million people die each year due to lack of surgical care; Mercy Ships builds a response to this world problem for the future

Mercy Ships announced a first look at the construction of the world's largest charity hospital ship which plans to sail to Africa in late 2021 under the name of *Global Mercy*. Mercy Ships, a faith-based global organisation powered by charitable donors and volunteers, has been providing world-class surgical care to those in need for more than 40 years, free of charge.

"The *Global Mercy* will be a true modern marvel— a fully custom-built hospital ship with customised instruments, state-of-the-art technology and highly-trained talent of a modern hospital," said Rosa Whitaker, President of Mercy Ships. "It also represents a unique call-to-action for anyone called to serve, and it presents the opportunity for people to use their skillset to positively impact global healthcare."

Each year, 18.6 million people die due to lack of access to surgical care, 93 per cent of whom stem from Africa. As COVID-19 threatens the stability of already fragile healthcare systems globally, the need to provide basic life-saving care is greater than ever, especially in low-to-middle income countries. The *Global Mercy* will deliver a safe and clean environment to various African nations, providing help and resources from some of the

most well-trained physicians in the world. Over the vessel's 50 year expected lifespan, it is estimated that more than 150,000 lives will be changed onboard through surgery alone.

In addition to providing surgeries, the *Global Mercy* will be outfitted with state-of-the-art training spaces including a simulation lab with virtual and augmented reality, mannequins and other training tools and simulated post-op care space, which allow trainers to simulate local conditions and limitations to teach best practices in low-resource environments.

The 174-meter, 37,000-ton ship will have six operating rooms and house over 600 volunteers from around the globe representing many disciplines including surgeons, maritime crew, cooks, teachers, electricians, the host staff and more. The ship will also feature a 682-seat auditorium, student academy, gymnasium, pool, café, shop and library - all of which have been designed to accommodate up to 950 crew onboard when docked in port.

The *Global Mercy* will join the current flagship *Africa Mercy*, more than doubling the impact of volunteers and services provided by the charity. For more information about Mercy Ships, updates on *Global Mercy* or how to volunteer or donate, please visit: www.mercyships.org.uk

**Deadline for items
for the December Magazine
to bjstibbards@gmail.com
by 22nd November**

The Great British Bake Off or rather the Great Totham Sourdough Challenge - Bob Stibbards

When I said to Jo that I was thinking of writing an article for the magazine she groaned but I still felt the need to share this with you.

This all began at the start of lockdown when our bread maker was brought out of retirement. This worked well but then Jo heard from a friend that they had started to make sourdough and it sounded like a good idea and the challenge began!

Challenge number 1. Flour.

At the start of lockdown flour disappeared from supermarket shelves much in the same way as toilet rolls! Then we were helpfully pointed in the direction of a store in Tiptree which sold it and where you take containers along to be filled. It sells a variety of goods in a similar and eco friendly way so if you would like the details let us know.

Challenge number 2. Recipes

The first to be tried was Bake with Jack which seemed to initially work but then made the mistake of looking at several others and in the process getting completely confused! I had to obtain guidance on the process but you start by making up the ingredients for the first loaf but leave some as a starter for the next time. This gets left in the fridge and on occasions it smells like something is badly fermenting. Once the starter has been taken from the fridge and been fired up for use, it is left in the kitchen to grow and bubble. The required amount is then mixed with water and then flour and left again in the kitchen for an hour and about 4 hours later after repeated turning and folding, it is left alone until it doubles in size and put into a banneton and put in the fridge overnight: that's the day gone. It then comes

out of the fridge to be baked the following day. Confused at the sequence of events well I am!

Challenge 3 Baking equipment.

A Dutch Oven, which on Jo's searching of the internet a Le Creuset casserole was what was needed, which Jo did not have. Well, Jo did have one for many years but put it into a forecourt sale as it was really heavy and on looking to buy another one found out that to replace it it would cost upwards of £200.

A friend loaned her one and all was well. After returning the casserole Jo then spent almost the same amount on various, cheaper cookpots of varying shapes and sizes that were not up to the job and ended up forking out a large sum on a Denby casserole but not quite as expensive as a Le Creuset. Spend money to save money springs to mind.

We now also have four bannetons and two razor sharp bits of kit to cut fancy patterns in to the top. Fortunately Jo has managed to keep blood off the dough on more than one occasion as she had cut herself instead.

Challenge 4 Is it edible.

Not always. On one occasion whilst the dough was in the final stages of rising it grew so much that it came over the top of the mixing bowl and over the counter top. A friend exclaimed that it sounds like a chemistry experiment gone badly wrong.

The sourdough can be under baked or sticky in the centre; one was so hard a knife would not cut through it, in fact it could easily be described as a lethal weapon. We made a loaf for a friend who told us she had broken a tooth eating it; well I blame her for not eating it on the same day, which leads me neatly into a story about hard bread.

Challenge 5 The communion bread.

On Mark's first Sunday at our church about 2 years ago I happened to be one of the communion Elders. One of the tasks is to buy the communion bread to include a roll which I duly did the day before and then on Sunday morning I placed and covered it up on the communion table not realising that it had become hard. Mark tried to break the bread but really struggled with it, I put it down to nerves on his first day but surely there must be a church rule somewhere instructing the Communion Elder to pre-cut the bread ! I said under my breath, " it's a test Mark" but this came out louder than I had thought and I am sure quite a few people must have heard it!

Afterwards I admitted to Mark that I had bought the bread and he was very gracious about it and then went on to tell me that several of his previous churches had continuously played practical jokes on him so I think this leaves us with plenty of scope for the future!

Challenge number 6 Patience!

It is perhaps just as well that we only have bread at the weekends. Jo has been very patient in her desire to achieve the perfect sourdough, which is just as well given the money that has been spent on bits of kit, but there was one time when it ended up on the floor when things were not going well, lets just say it was not the same shape afterwards and the floor survived.

Will our trusty bread maker make a comeback? Need I say more!!!



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Pastoral	Ms	Tracey Eageling	
Pastoral	Mrs	Maureen Barry	
Property	Mr	David Wellings	
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Children and Youth	Mr	Keith Meredith	
Prophetic	Mr	Keith Moscrop	
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