



Please take a copy

Taunton United Reformed Church



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Magazine



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TAUNTON UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MAGAZINE

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From the Editor



At the time of writing the Covid-19 lockdown was being eased a little but with no real end in sight. We will certainly not be able to meet in the church building this month, and probably for a few months.

So this magazine is again aimed largely at those who are self-isolating or who seldom get out.

The colour centre pages were popular last month, so they are also a feature of this issue, thanks to our printers Brightsea.

We also have what I am calling some lightly-commissioned articles. Susan asked her grandchildren to write some prayers for us; see the response on page 18. I invited the congregation to offer their most significant thoughts about living in lockdown; a selection of these is on page 12.

While it is far too early to be engaging in church life as we once knew it, it is not too soon to be reflecting on our experience of 'doing church' differently. At the Christian Aid coffee morning (attended by 15 people using Zoom video-conferencing) Susan asked us to think about what we miss about (what we once considered) normal church life and what we do not miss about it. There are advantages and disadvantages to the ways we are being a Christian community at the moment, and we do not have to go back completely to the way things were.

The Synod Pastoral Committee, of which I am a member, has been meeting by online video link and may not return to having all of its meetings in Taunton. My colleague in Swindon has been saving time and energy, and saving the Church money, by not travelling; but we have not been able to share lunch together as we usually do.

For the July issue I am inviting you to dream of a time when lockdown is over and you have the freedom to invite people to a meal. My question is: if you could invite anyone in the world (dead or alive) which four people would you choose to invite to dinner. Answers to the editor's email address, please.

Peter Henderson

Image opposite: The Card Players by Paul Cezanne (with additions)

Cover picture: Mosaic in Monreale Cathedral in Palermo, Sicily, bearing the inscription (in Latin) "Abraham welcomed the angels and adored them, seeing the three as one." The angels are sometimes seen as prefiguring the concept of the Trinity.

Notable Dates

Sunday 31 May	The Feast of Pentecost
Sunday 7 June	Trinity Sunday
Sunday 14 June	Tax Justice Sunday see https://bit.ly/366OQRA
Monday 15 June	Magazine deadline
Mon 15 - Sun 21 June	Refugee Week (see https://refugeeweek.org.uk/)
Monday 29 June	Lawn Tennis Championships at Wimbledon do not begin
Sunday 5 July	F1 Grand Prix season due to begin in Austria



From your minister:



Dear friends,

Perhaps, like me, you've been spending time in 'lockdown' watching TV or reading books. But I recognise that I mustn't assume that you are the same as me. We are all different. And, naturally enough, our ways of handling the times we are living through are as different as we are different from each other.

One thing I've done is to watch the TV series (and then re-read the novel) of Sally Rooney's *Normal People*. I was struck by the way that one of the characters finds himself feeling somehow out of place when he goes to university. He is popular at his school, though eager to leave the small town he grows up in. But when he gets to university he feels out of place amongst the apparently confident, much wealthier, more middle class students. And then when he goes home in the holidays he feels out of place there too. I remember this feeling from my own life; coming from a home where nobody else had ever been to university before and then finding myself in an Oxford college in a room next to someone with the surname Money-Coutts... It was a shock to enter a world so different from the one I had known, a world in which I found it hard to fit in. But then when I went back home, I didn't feel I fitted in there either.

We think we are normal, or perhaps, even more often, we feel that everyone else is normal and we are not! And we can all have that experience of recognising how different we are from each other, and what a wonder it is when you do find someone who 'gets' you.

In *Normal People*, the two people at the heart of the story come to discover that they are understood (at least to some extent) by each other and this is a source of joy and healing to them both. I have long loved that moment in Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*, when a teacher puts into words what were undoubtedly Bennett's own thoughts and experience, that..

"The best moments in reading are when you come across something - a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things - which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours."

In navigating this strange time, I imagine that we have sometimes found it hard to make ourselves understood (if we can even understand ourselves!) or to understand why some people react or behave as they do. The reality is that few of us, if indeed any of us, have ever experienced a time quite like this before. Our 'ways of coping' will depend on many things; on some very practical things like our home situation, our physical or mental health, our own financial situation or that of our family, the obligations we have and tasks we have to do. But they will also depend on less easily identifiable things; our personalities, our past experience, those indefinable ways in which we are 'ourselves'. I've noticed how some people 'cope' by taking control of something (like the garden...). Some cope by being as active as they can. Some cope by taking life more slowly (Stephen Fry's advice to make everything last longer). I suspect that introverts are doing better on the whole than extroverts. I think my grand-daughter is coping better than my grand-son (who needs routine and repetition). Some people find it easier to adjust to change than others. We can only, I think, be generous with ourselves and others, give each other some slack and never forget that our own ways of coping are not everyone else's.

I've always loved that little verse from the Gospel about the sparrows. You will know the one:

'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father.' *Matthew 10:29*

I imagine this means not just that God can count to a high number, but that somehow God recognises (in this deeper sense of 'perceives...') each one. We may, any of us, feel overlooked, misunderstood, or judged as strange by others. But God, at least, does 'get us' and notices when we fall. It's wonderful of course when another human being somehow sees you too, and this too is a gift from God. I hope you will each have moments, through this time, and through any other time of your life, when you sense that 'a hand has come out and taken yours'. Those times when someone understands you, when someone simply lets you be you, are truly precious. I hope too, that our church community, can be a place where we can find those who 'get us', as signs of the God who gets us all, for, after all, God made us.

With prayers for all of you as we move through the coming weeks.

May God be very close.

Your minister

Susan

Praying through the week:

Here at the Manse we continue to pray each day at 7pm and we are finding this regular daily prayer a helpful anchor point in our days. I know that many of you are also praying, some of you also at that time. Each day I make a point of praying for everyone I've spoken to or thought about or been in touch with that day. We are reading through a Gospel, sometimes just a few verses each day. We say the words of the Lord's Prayer, those words that help us all to long for a world that will be more like the Kingdom of God. We also take some much needed time just to be silent, amidst all the news of the day. And sometimes, you won't be surprised to know, we sing!

Here is a brief suggested outline for evening prayer that you might find it helpful to use through the week. If you pray as a household just change 'I' to 'we'.

Begin with silence...

A prayer

O God, who has been beside me through this day,
I come now to my prayers, bringing all of my day before you.
I am glad to have shared this day with you, and with your people;
in my home, in the fresh air, in my doing and in my receiving,
in conversation and silence, in reaching out and in waiting.
Forgive me for my failings, help me with all that's been hard,
receive what I offer to others in your name, and bless those I love.

A passage or a verse from the Bible

Take a moment to hold the day's events up to the light of the verse or the passage.

Prayer: (in the second paragraph you might choose just one category each day of the week)

God of love,
as the light changes,
I pray for your light to fall,
the light of your love,
on those for whom I pray.

I pray this evening,
for your light to shine upon...
my family and my friends, especially....
my immediate neighbours where I live, especially....
your people in the church with whom I live my faith, especially...
health workers, care workers and other key workers, especially...
those who are ill; in body, mind or spirit, especially...
those who hold political or economic power, especially...
those who are vulnerable because they have so little power, and so few possessions, especially...
me, who needs you, and who longs to know you...

O God, for whom the darkness and the light are both alike,
give me comfort as the day fades and the evening comes.
Grant me peaceful rest after the concerns of the day,
and bless me with hope for tomorrow,
that I may rise with deepest joy
to greet the bright light of a new day. Amen.

Revised Common Lectionary for forthcoming Sundays

7 June Trinity Sunday	14 June	21 June
Genesis 1:1–2:4a Psalm 8 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 Matthew 28:16-20	Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7 Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19 Romans 5:1-8 Matthew 9:35–10:23	Genesis 21:8-21 Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17 Romans 6:1b-11 Matthew 10:24-39
28 June	5 July	12 July
Genesis 22:1-14 Psalm 13 Romans 6:12-23 Matthew 10:40-42	Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 Psalm 45:10-17 Romans 7:15-25a Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30	Genesis 25:19-34 Psalm 119:105-112 Romans 8:1-11 Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Church Family News

Elders

The Elders continue to meet on-line, and we are doing our best to continue to minister and to fulfil our responsibilities for worship and pastoral care and the mission of the church, as well as the stewardship of our resources.

We are beginning to think, as others are doing in all sorts of ways, about how we might take steps to resume some of what we do in the building, when the time is right. But, we are also thinking together about what we are learning from this time about what it means to be the church. There may be some things we will want to continue to do differently, and perhaps some things that we won't want simply to take up exactly where we left off.

It seems that we will have to learn to live with social distancing measures for some time and indeed some things may be permanently changed. Why not let your Elder know what you are appreciating about church in these times, and what you are missing among the things that we just can't do at the moment. Please do help the Elders to look ahead wisely, safely, faithfully and imaginatively!

Daily devotions



If you haven't already, do have a look at the Daily Devotions produced from the URC. There now also include regular posts of material for use on a Sunday morning. Here is the link: <https://devotions.urc.org.uk>

You will find that, from 10am each Sunday, there is material to read and follow (including readings, hymns, prayers, a sermon...) OR you can listen on-line to a recording and join in that way. These services have been led each week by a different URC minister, with different voices doing readings and prayers, and with a wonderful variety of hymns and music. Our own minister will be leading the service on Sunday June 28th.

Work-Wise



Work-Wise has now been closed, along with much else, for some weeks. Though we work with computers, we work often by helping those who find computers difficult, sitting beside them and mentoring them. So, it has proved impossible, at the moment, to work in the usual way. Our Manager, Bettina, has been working with people by phone and we are exploring and trying to imagine ways in which we will be able to help our members once 'lockdown' is lifted but while social distancing measures are in place.

We were, of course, about to extend our work into regular sessions in the church café at Westfield URC in Bridgwater - and that, for now, is delayed until conditions make it possible.

Please do pray for Work-Wise, and especially for our members, some of whom feel the isolation very much. Please remember the Trustees, Manager and Volunteers as we try to find ways to continue to support those looking for work (remembering that there will more people in this situation...).

Birthday Corner

Even in these strange times, there are those in our wider fellowship who still have a birthday in June, but for whom the opportunity for a wild party has been put on hold. May God bless you all ...

- | | |
|----|-----------------|
| 11 | Peter Henderson |
| 14 | Ann Gerhold |
| 30 | Amelia Hather |



Remembering Jan Cottrill

Jan Cottrill, the wife of Paul, died at the end of April. She and Paul had been staying with one of their daughters, Julie, in Galmington, for some weeks while Jan was so ill and frail. Jan died surrounded by the family that she loved, being well looked after by family and carers. This is a difficult time in the life of any family, but it was made more difficult because of the demands for isolation and distancing created by the pandemic.

Jan was born in 1943 in Nottingham. She had a sister, Rita and two brothers, Alan and Kevin. It was in Nottingham that she met Paul, at a dance, and they were married in their early twenties. (They were married for 58 years). They moved to Somerset where they brought up their family, living first in Wellington and then in Taunton. Jan worked for a while as a cashier in a garage, but her main focus and love was always her family. She and Paul had three children; Wendy, Julie and Anthony, and then eleven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Making sure that her family was happy was what mattered most to Jan and her happiest times were when all the family were together, especially for family holidays. Paul describes how simple and unostentatious she was, but how much she just wanted to be with family. She took pleasure in going to bingo and watching TV, but mostly she was always looking out for her family. She and Paul lived for a while in Taunton in a small flat near Vivary Park until they found a lovely, more spacious, flat, this time near Victoria Park.

Jan sometimes came to church social events, but many of us were aware of her growing illness and frailty in recent times. Paul gave her much loving care, as did her wider family. We pray for Paul as he begins a different kind of life.

Jan's funeral, a simply burial service, took place on Wednesday 13th May at Taunton Deane cemetery. We trust her into God's safe keeping and pray for Paul and for all of his family.



Christian Aid Week

As this issue went to print, Christian Aid Week was just finishing and the donations, given one way or another, totalled more than £1000.

Thanks from Eric Piper

We have received the following message, dictated by Eric over the telephone to his son Mark and then emailed to the editor:

I would like to thank our indefatigable minister, elders and congregation for the many messages, cards, and letters which I have received at this difficult time.

The Church has been particularly helpful in quite extraordinary circumstances and hopefully this bodes well for the future.

Sincerely,

Eric Piper

Donating food to



Significantly increased demand for food parcels is being met (see page 21)

but **Urgently needed** food items:

- Diabetic food (brown rice, low salt soups etc)
- Rice
- Tins of cold meat
- Custard sachets
- Rice pudding
- Tinned Fruit
- Instant mash

Not needed at the moment:

- Soap

If you can get out, there are food donation points at

Taunton

- Asda
- Co-op (all branches)
- Morrisons
- Sainsbury (both branches)
- Tesco

Wellington

- Co-op (all branches)
- One Stop in High Street
- Waitrose

Thoughts about lockdown

The editor invited members of the congregation to offer a sentence that describes an important element of their experience of lockdown. This is what they sent in.

It is a challenge to remain positive but, put another way, there is a fear of thinking negatively.

I have been overwhelmed by the thoughtfulness and kindness of my neighbours, some of whom I did not know very well but do now! I feel that we have gained a community that will last.

Cycling in the spring sunshine along deserted country lanes with birdsong for company and the beautiful Blackdowns bursting into life – thank you God for such joy.

Concentration and sleep have gone awol.

The slower pace has allowed me to experience deeper prayer, a deeper appreciation of the small joys of life, but also a deeper sense of missing people.

My usual shopping on a Friday morning to the village takes about 2 hrs, but now I have to think on Tuesday or Wednesday what shopping I need order it from 2 shops (pay over the phone) and an order for my volunteer for the other shops that only take cash, and this takes a whole morning!!

Time for reflection and appreciation of so many blessings normally taken for granted and gratitude for the wonderful support of neighbours, family and friends.

I'm missing the camaraderie of friends watching Somerset play cricket

Art in Isolation

"This morning I've finished a painting for a local 'Art in Isolation' exhibition. An interpretation of the view from my window. 8x8" acrylic on canvas. At the end of the exhibition all the work will be auctioned off to raise money for charity." So wrote Norman Steel on Facebook on 27th April. Norman has generously given permission for publication of this copy of his painting.



The 'Art in Isolation' exhibition can be viewed at <https://art-in-isolation.co.uk/gallery>

Scenes around Taunton...



The 75th anniversary of VE Day on Friday 8th May brought out flags, bunting and carefully socially-distanced street parties.

Left: outside a house in Gatchell Oaks

Below: Dawn and Mike Wright at a street party on the grass verges of their road



Left: East Street in Taunton in the middle of a Wednesday afternoon

Opposite top left: mint moth

Opposite top right: coronavirus sculpture, front garden, 31 Parkfield Road

...and in the verges



Worship over Zoom

On Sunday 10th May, 30 people gathered online as Susan led a service for the beginning of Christian Aid week.



By the miracle of technology (and some video downloaded by Ruth) the guest preacher was Dr Rowan Williams.



Right: what having a Zoom used to mean to some of us



The Song of Kingdom Come

First used by Christian Aid Week in 2018 and heartily sung by our congregation this year, here are the words to the song written by Martin John Nicholls and Paul Field (© 2015 the authors).

Chorus: I have a voice
You have a voice
We have a voice and when we sing together
A line is drawn; and hope reborn
This is the song, the song of Kingdom Come. (repeat)

We heard the cries / of distant neighbours
The dispossessed / the refugee
And God's command to feed the hungry
And set them free / and set them free
We heard the Word / the New Commandment
And we reclaimed / the prophet's call
To love the world without condition
God's love for all / God's love for all

Chorus

A reckless love / that knows no borders
That speaks the truth / to those in power
That shines a light on cruel indifference
This is God's hour / this is God's hour
When we will stand / against injustice
With all who live / against the grain
Until their poverty is over
And love shall reign / and love shall reign

Chorus

We won't stand by / while sisters suffer
Or turn blind eyes / to ruthless wrong
Our psalm of praise will be compassion
This Kingdom Song / this Kingdom song
A song of love / and liberation
Of healing hope / and lasting peace
A taste of life in all its fullness
God's masterpiece / God's masterpiece.

Chorus (x 2) repeat last line

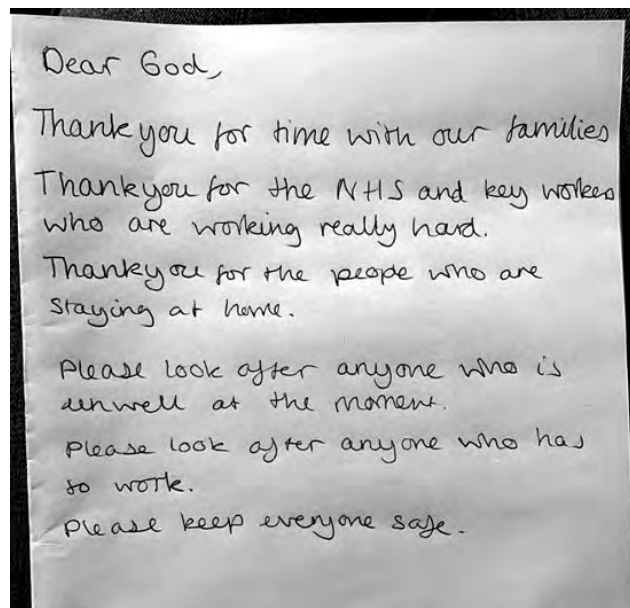
Prayers from the wider Durber family

Our minister, Susan asked her grandchildren whether they might write some prayers for us to say. They did; and her daughter also contributed.

Jonah

Dear god.
Please help all in need
And please help save the NHS
And Thank you for the people who work for the NHS
Please look after the families that some of whom may have died.
Thank you for helping the teachers teach us.
From, Jonah

Rose



Grace

Loving God,

thank you for being constantly loving during a time that is so turbulent.

Thank you for those doing essential jobs to keep our world going; for bin collectors, cleaners, shop workers, emergency service providers, teachers, those working in prisons and all those in other essential roles.

Thank you for medical and care workers, putting themselves at particular risk, in order to provide comfort for the rest of us.

Thank you for our families, and our homes- for the things that make us feel safe.

Please be with those who are lonely or who are separated from their loved ones. Bring them comfort and help them to know that they are loved.

Please give hope to those who are finding the situation difficult to bear. Help them to know that this will pass.

Please bring comfort to those who have lost loved ones and who are grieving. Hold their hand, when no one else can.

Please give strength to those who are working in essential roles. Let them know that they are appreciated and that we are grateful.

Please give reassurance to those who have lost jobs, or are suffering financially. Help them to see new paths ahead.

Please guide our leaders as they shoulder the burden of huge responsibility. Help them to make wise choices and to lead with care.

Please help all of us to be kind to each other, and to know that you are with us.

Amen

MAGAZINE DEADLINE

Contributions for the July 2020 magazine should be with the Editor
Peter Henderson - 14 Somerset Avenue, Taunton, TA1 5HU
Telephone: 01823 254668 - e-mail: tauntonurc.mag@gmail.com
by MONDAY 15th JUNE 2020 (or earlier) please.

News from Taunton churches

Listening Chaplaincy Phoneline

Representatives of the different faith communities within the Avon and Somerset police area have set up a dedicated phoneline offering 1-2-1 chaplaincy.

The Faith Communities Major Emergencies Team for Avon and Somerset, established more than 30 years ago to provide faith-based face-to-face pastoral and spiritual support to people of all faiths and none in times of emergency, has been adapted to become a direct dial phoneline for people affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

This service is especially for anyone facing end of life issues, bereavement or who is anxious about someone in hospital, residential care or isolated at home. Their concern could be for a family member, friend, colleague or neighbour, or someone they have been caring for through their work.

We can also offer a listening ear to:

- those who are anxious about relatives who are seriously ill, especially if there is no option of visiting them in person;
- people unable to see the body of a loved one after death or unable to attend a funeral;
- key workers affected by work-related issues, perhaps overwhelmed by what they are facing or dealing with;
- the “worried well” and anyone else anxious about the effects of COVID-19 on their lives.

The phoneline serves callers from Bristol, Somerset and South Gloucestershire and is open to everyone - of all faiths and none.

To access this service, people can dial: **0330 229 1700** from 8am - 11pm, 7 days a week. It is entirely confidential but does not offer long-term bereavement care or counselling, though can give signposts to specialist help.

Taunton Foodbank

Please read the letter from the Chair of Trustees on the opposite page.

Taunton Foodbank
Unit 4, Belvedere Trading Estate
Albemarle Road
Taunton
Somerset TA1 1BH

Tel: 07761 624216

Email: info@taunton.foodbank.org.uk

Website: www.taunton.foodbank.org.uk

Chair of Trustees: Howard Mathers

Email: hmathers@btinternet.com



9 April 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I wanted to let you have a short message of encouragement and thanks from Taunton Foodbank.

Over the last few weeks, we have been threatened with food shortages as shelves were cleared in the stockpiling, with money shortages as people feared losing their income or savings, and with having to curtail our activity due to the social distancing restrictions.

I am pleased to say that none of these has come about. We have seen food supplies maintained, and money-wise we have even received new grants that have enabled us to strengthen the management team temporarily. We have had big specific answers to prayer, like the provision of a lorry with driver and assistant by Somerset West & Taunton Council, which has enabled us to change from a collection to home delivery system. This has allowed us to spread the load in the warehouse - fewer volunteers working further apart - and has meant that clients no longer have to travel and queue to collect their food boxes.

And we have had little answers to prayer. Foodbank Manager Sue Weightman shares one: “We had an email at the end of last week from an agency we are involved with that supports families that have been subject to violent domestic abuse. They usually visit all the stores in Taunton asking for donations of Easter eggs but of course because of limitations they did not have nearly enough for each child to receive an egg from them. They emailed us to ask if we had any to spare. They needed about 40. I said yes we could help them. Although we had had plenty come into the warehouse, and with our huge increase in foodboxes going out, I wasn't entirely sure if we would then have enough ourselves running up to what would be our busiest week before Easter. However I prayed if that was the case that God would sort it out for me! **Within half an hour** we had a second email come in from a group of brownies who had collected 60 Easter eggs for the Food bank.”

Please join us in thanking the Lord for providing in these ways. We are now seeing evidence of a significant rise in demand from clients. Please join us in continuing to pray that He will guide and provide as we face a very uncertain future.

With love,

Howard

Howard Mathers

Commitment for Life

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

Helping United Reformed Churches work for a fairer world and for peace with justice, recognising that change and response starts with each one of us.

Envelopes for your donations and Information Leaflets are available in the Dora Cox Room. Please feel free to put in what you can, when you can, no amount is too small.

Revd Dr Kevin Snyman - *Commitment for Life Programme Officer,*
Suzanne Pearson - *Commitment for Life Administrative Assistant*

Moving Stories

News from our Partners around the World

News from Bangladesh

COVID-19 in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is not immune from the grief caused by the pandemic. The government is being called on to care for some of the most marginalised communities, who are going hungry and may die without care.

There are a number of excluded and marginalised communities who need special care at this time of crisis. The disabled, Napit (barber), Dhopa (washer-man), Tati (weaver), Darji (tailor), Hajam (unqualified doctors for circumcision), Kasai (butcher), blacksmiths, and so on are among these affected communities

Of the nearly 100,000 female sex workers in Bangladesh, with only around 4,000 that are based in brothels, which have been quite literally been locked. The situation of 36,593 street-based sex workers, many of them lacking even basic accommodation, is appalling. There are also thousands of sex workers working from residences, 15,960 are hotel-based.

There are an estimated 10,000 Hijras or transgender individuals. Many are extremely vulnerable, and rely streets and bazaars as places to beg and collect alms. A big percentage of them are also sex workers.

Christian Aid works hard to create economic conditions that offer resilient livelihoods for vulnerable people, together with partners in Bangladesh.

This includes offering training and skills in order to diversify income generation, including floating gardens and hanging vegetables in

water logged areas, saline tolerant rice, maize and sunflower varieties and duck rearing in 'haor' (wet) areas.

Over 25 000 people have been assisted, so do continue to support ***Commitment for Life*** as we work in partnership in Bangladesh.

Zimbabwe

One of the most important aims of ***Commitment for Life***'s work in Zimbabwe is to strengthen the resilience of poor and marginalised women and men, helping them access to inclusive markets for their wellbeing. But the arrival of COVID-19 has deepened the challenges faced by workers in the informal economy.

Workers and their families are going hungry, as many are dependent on daily sales of their wares in order to survive. Also, food reserves have diminished significantly.

As the pandemic widens, there is an urgent need for the government to establish sustainable protection safety nets for informal workers. This net should be set up not only for the duration of COVID-19, but as a way to ensure that violence, harassment and insecurity are eliminated permanently.

The Zimbabwe government might want to examine Christian Aid's

carefully designed and constructed policies in this regard. Its 'Participatory Market Systems Development' (PMSD) approach is designed to help deliver inclusive markets programmes that reduce poverty on a large scale, while striving to protect the environment. The inclusive markets programme helps to bring systemic change and transformation for poor women and men.

The programme focuses on three selected value chains including horticulture, sorghum and organic herbs and spices.

Commitment for Life in partnership with Christian Aid is guided by the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). This standard has nine commitments to help organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response improve the effectiveness of their assistance. Christian Aid applies the CHS across their entire programme.

Central America

Christian Aid has released a comprehensive study examining the relationship between migration, gender and climate change in the Central American Dry Corridor (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua). [See map opposite.]

Women are particularly vulnerable to the unfolding environmental crisis in Central America, but are also taking the lead in mitigating some of the effects.

Women in the region of El Rodeo, Honduras, have created a co-operative, communal plot where they sow maize and beans. They also created a seed bank that is able to sell seeds at a significantly lower price than the market.

Women also report that they have found indigenous seeds to be far more resilient to drought, such as black corn, bejuco beans, barco, chajan etc. These varieties have a shorter life cycle, and are more resistant to pests.

Christian Aid's work in Central America is vital. **Commitment for Life** is pleased to be able to continue our support in the region at this time.

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine

The Revd Rowena Francis, the minister at Wells United Church, responded to the invitation shown here and was due to spend her sabbatical as an ecumenical accompanier.

This has been postponed till 2021. We hope to report on Rowena's reflections on that visit afterwards.



Prayer

Loving God, though we may be separated in body, we are one in spirit; set apart, but drawn together to magnify your name.

Thank you for your grace in Jesus, helping us to live in the fullness of life that you desire for all.

May your will be done on earth as in heaven, helping us to turn from fear; forgive all debt, and set the prisoner free.

In the light of Christ's name, we pray. AMEN

Stay and Pray

Further suggestions for prayer from the Joint Public Issues Team, a collaboration of the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed church.

COVID-19 has meant a lot of change. It is important now that we stay at home, to protect ourselves and others.



However, as we stay in our houses, it is easy for our horizons to narrow. There is a temptation for us to be distant from some of the wider issues faced by those around the world. Yet, more than ever, it is important that we lift our eyes beyond our own immediate situations, making sure that as we retreat to our homes, our prayer life doesn't retreat inwardly too.

This is why at JPIT we want to invite you to join us in praying for a different justice issue every day. Each day we will be pointing you towards different issues, local, national and global, that we want to invite you to pray for.

Why not build this prayer into your daily activities?

- Maybe you want to pray for 20-30 seconds every time you wash your hands?
- Maybe you could pray every time you are waiting your kettle to boil?
- Or maybe even every time you find yourselves scrolling through the news or social media?

We want to encourage you to find a rhythm of prayer that works for you.

You can follow our daily prayer prompts on

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PublicIssues> (or search @PublicIssues), and
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jointpublicissues>



The Buttercup

I am a buttercup, a member of the large Ranunculus family. Over the years there seems to have been fewer of us around. There are a number of reasons, such as climate, habitat loss and humans. In many ways you could say we've been persecuted. Gardeners don't want us in their grass, so every so often a machine comes along and chops our heads off - why did we spend all that time getting above ground level only to be cut off in our prime? Or there are the things that are sprinkled and sprayed over the ground, which seep into the soil and prevents us from germinating or growing!

It's not so common now, but the little people used to pick us and hold us under their chins to see if there was a yellow reflection, and if there was, they said that they liked butter! How can anyone believe that! - What a strange world.

But its not all doom and gloom this year, if you are able to get out, have a look at the grass in gardens, roadside verges and graveyards you will see that we have put on a wonderful display, though in some places we have had competition from the dandelions. The reason for a lot of us being around is simple, the grass has not been cut and we have had a chance to grow to maturity and put on a wonderful display.

So have a thought for the buttercup and other plants that get over-looked or cut down before their time, just so the area is neat and tidy. We all have a place in this world.

Interviewer: Sue Ingham



See also colour photo of page 15



OFFICE HOLDERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF TAUNTON UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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 Christian Aid Maralyn Bickham
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 Church Heating Church Administrator (see page 1)
 Church Secretary Sue Ingham (07818 637155)
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 FINANCE - Treasurer Eryl Harris
 FINANCE - Covenant Collections Paula Powell
 Flowers Pam Elliott, Sheila Woolvin
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 Prayer Handbook
 Property Stuart Trott
 Pulpit Supply Church Administrator (see page 1)
 Reform Magazine Pamela Bamber
 Social and Arts Group Janet Sowerbutts, Sheila Rudofsky (01823 617411)
 Sound Paul Cottrill
 Sunday Coffee Organiser Pamela Bamber
 Sunday News-Sheet the Minister or, if away, the Church Secretary
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Taunton United Reformed Church

Vision Statement

For the sake of the Gospel, we will be:

- ♦ a church that welcomes, whoever you are
- ♦ a church that cares and responds with action
- ♦ a church that works with others and plays its part in the community
- ♦ a church that knows and shares the love of God
- ♦ a church that is growing in faith and knowledge of God
- ♦ a church full of hope and joy