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Taunton United Reformed Church



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Magazine



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From the Editor



With lockdown being eased slowly, and the risks for vulnerable people still uncertain, this magazine is once more aimed particularly with those who are self-isolating in mind.

So the centre pages are again in colour, thanks to our printers Brightsea, with an emphasis on the delights of the natural order of creation.

In the middle of June there were two discussion groups on the subject of church life under lockdown. What were members missing? What were they not missing? Was there anything new we were doing that would be worth continuing once a semblance of normality returns? I was chairing the discussions while Susan listened and took notes, so I didn't share much myself. One of the advantages of having visitors only via video conferencing is that no-one can see how housework has suffered by me spending so much time on Zoom! I am assuming that picture quality is not good enough for you to see the dust.

But, if working life is busy for me, spare a thought (and a regular prayer) for your minister - indeed, every minister - who is bombarded by many 'helpful' documents on how to address this or that issue of church life as and when freedom increases. One of the things we are learning is that a pandemic precipitates an administrative nightmare; just look at how the government is coping.

In the last issue I invited you to nominate imagined dinner party guests, and some readers did - see pages 18-19. (Some were sadly lost in transmission - please send all correspondence to the editor at the (email) address in the box on page 23.) I am hoping that these responses might elicit interesting conversations between readers, possibly at another, yet-to-be-arranged, online coffee morning.

While church life, and human society in general, remains constrained by measures to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, life in the natural world continues to flourish. There are examples on pages 13-15. Without a visit from my regular barber, I am rediscovering that my hair has a natural wave. I am wondering what you are discovering about yourself, and would be prepared to share in print. Answers on an e-postcard to the editor.

Peter Henderson

Cover picture: Fresco in the catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter in Rome - Noah looks forward to better times (see Genesis 8:1-11)

Notable Dates

- Sunday 5 July* Anniversary of the founding of the NHS - see p.26
F1 Grand Prix season begins with Austrian GP
- Wednesday 8 July* Test cricket resumes in England (behind closed gates)
- Fri 10 - Mon 13 July* URC General Assembly was due to meet at Aston University - details of a reduced meeting on p.23
- Monday 13 July* Magazine deadline
- 26 July - 10 August* Our minister is taking well-earned leave, so other members of the church will be leading our Sunday services either on Zoom or via the URC Daily Devotions (see page 8), as on...
- Sunday 26 July* We are invited to follow the service led by the Revd Ruth Whitehead on Daily Devotions

The Elders are currently meeting fortnightly

From the Salvation Army in Belfast:

**Just to be clear,
 the Church has not been closed,
 so it doesn't need to be re-opened.
 We have simply stopped worshipping
 in our buildings for a time
 to protect the health & well-being
 of our people & our communities.
 The Church does not require a building
 in order to be the Church.
 What is required is love, compassion,
 & the presence of God.**

From your minister:



Dear friends,

Some months ago, when life was very different, I was on a long flight and decided to abandon the papers on my laptop and to watch *Gone with the Wind* to pass some time. I had happy memories of Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh, of an epic story, inspiring music and glorious technicolour. I settled down with my headphones and snacks for a few hours of relaxation.

But, even the opening introductory words on the screen jolted me from my reverie. This was a story, they said, of a 'pretty world', a civilisation now 'gone with the wind', a world which included 'master and slave'. I quickly realised that, when I'd watched the film years ago, I had not taken in quite how it portrays the history of the American South. It is nostalgic for a 'gentle culture' of plantations and their owners, of balls and beaux, of hooped crinolines and romance. The black characters are all either comic characters or rather stupid, and they are portrayed as having no family ties of their own, only loyalty to their white owners. It's implied that slavery was not really so bad if only the white people treated their slaves well, and a character who is supposed to be one of the good ones refers to black slaves as 'darkies'. I was horrified that my memory of the film had not included these things. I think, if you'd pressed me, I would have said that it was a film of its time (1939), but I really had not remembered how utterly racist it is. I thought about some of my black friends (Glenroy – a Baptist minister from Jamaica – or Isabel, working at the WCC, from Malawi – or Dionne, the black British woman who was my line manager at Christian Aid) and realised just how painful such a film must be for them. I've begun to realise how different negotiating the world we live in must be for them than it is for me - simply because I am white.

It's not that we who are white are bad people, but the world that's shaped us has done so in a particular way. I can recognise in my own life how much my thinking and my awareness have now changed, and how much they still need to change. Over recent months, I've been trying deliberately to read more about racism and about what I might be able to do to change the world for the better. I've also been trying to read more

books (novels, poems, history) written by BAME writers. I've watched dramas and films on TV too (like the excellent, but very disturbing, *Sitting in Limbo*, about the Windrush scandal). And I've been trying to read more theology, more prayers and hymns, written by BAME Christians. There's a bigger, more diverse and more creative, world out there than the world I've always known and I find myself hungry to know it and understand it more fully.

I'm much aware, through my work with the World Council of Churches and through my knowledge of Christianity in the UK, that the growing churches are in the global South or include people whose origins are there. The world, and the church, is changing. And I thank God for some of the ways in which it is changing and for the great diversity of people that God has made. As much as I can, I want to be part of it in ways that welcome that diversity and that work to undo the privilege that white people like me have been given. I recognise that it can be frightening to see statues being brought down, to hear unfamiliar music on the radio, to hear different accents or voices on familiar streets. But I hope we can take away the fears that BAME people live with: of exclusion, of prejudice, of poverty, of hatred and violence. A world cleared of those fears will be a better one.

I am one of four trustees of a small trust that administers the legacy of a 17th century Dissenter called William Coward. He was a merchant, with a plantation in Jamaica and a small fleet of ships. At least three times, the Royal African Company (of Edward Colston fame) chartered ships from him to transport slaves from Guinea to Jamaica. We know this because he took the company to court for not paying him the proper fee (a fee calculated on the number of slaves delivered). I've written a discussion paper for our next meeting, in July, making some suggestions for what we should do now. We've already started offering scholarships to ministers in the Caribbean, alongside the grants we give to UK ministers for sabbaticals or training courses, but now I'm thinking we need to do more. The legacy of slavery has not yet 'gone with the wind' and we are all being challenged to let the Holy Spirit blow in our world to cleanse and renew it. Perhaps, at last, the kind of real change for which Martin Luther King marched, and for which the Bristol bus driver Paul Stephenson campaigned in 1963, will come. That would be good news.

Your minister

Susan

Praying through the week

Here is another suggested outline for prayer that you might find helpful.

If you pray as a household just change 'I' to 'us'.

A growing number of people are praying every day, or some days, at 7pm, so that we know we pray together. But the voice of prayer, as the hymn says, is never silent!

A candle is lit

A time of silence is kept

Prayer

For the changing of the seasons
and the beauty of creation,
thanks be to God.

For each day we live,
and every person we love,
thanks be to God.

For the presence of Jesus,
through the power of the Spirit,
thanks be to God.

A time of silence to give thanks for anything from today

A passage or a verse from the Bible is read

Reflection

Which word or phrase from the passage most strikes you today?
What will you carry into tomorrow?

Prayer

O God, who has given us your word in the Bible,
write your message on my heart today,
that I may grow in wisdom and in love.

Show me where change must come,
open my eyes to see a brighter truth,
and comfort me with your abiding love.

I bring with me into prayer
the pain and suffering of the world
and the cries of those in need.

I pray for those whose stories I have heard on the news,
and whose pain and need I can only imagine.

I pray for those to whom I am close,
and whose lives I know well.

I pray for those who have asked me to pray for them,
and those who would never ask but who are in need.

I pray for those whose stories are little known,
and whose suffering is often ignored.

I pray for those whose deepest needs
are known to you alone.

I come with a great multitude,
trusting in your infinite love,
confident that you will hear my prayers
and bless your people.

The Lord's Prayer

Closing prayer

May this time of prayer bless
my work with purpose,
my sleep with peace,
and my life with loving kindness,
this day and always,
Amen.

Revised Common Lectionary for forthcoming Sundays		
5 July	12 July	19 July
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	Genesis 28:10-19a Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 Romans 8:12-25 Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43
26 July	2 August	9 August
Genesis 29:15-28 Psalm 128 Romans 8:26-39 Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52	Genesis 32:22-31 Psalm 17:1-7, 15 Romans 9:1-5 Matthew 14:13-21	Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b Romans 10:5-15 Matthew 14:22-33



Daily devotions

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

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. Rev Ruth Whitehead will be leading the service in this way on Sunday July 26th. We hope that on that day many from Taunton URC will want to share in worship in this way.

Church Family News

Joy Grant

With great sadness we note that Joy died on the morning of 11th June, having been treated in hospital a number of times during the lockdown. A family committal service was held at Taunton Deane crematorium on Saturday 20th June. See the obituary overleaf. A memorial service for Joy will take place when gatherings in the church building are permitted.

Work-Wise

We are hoping that, perhaps at some point later in July, Work-Wise will be able to re-open, using more space within our church so that social distancing can be maintained and so that both members and volunteers can be kept safe. We will have a one-way system, and extra computer screens so that mentors and members can see the same thing but at a distance. There will be no refreshments, at least at first.

A lot of work has gone in to making it possible to work in new ways. As with so many other organisations, shops and businesses, Work-Wise has had to find ways to work in this new time. Please do pray for Work-Wise, which is a key part of our mission and work in the community.

Birthday Corner

Special greetings to those in our wider fellowship who have a birthday in July. May God bless you all ...

- 2 David Holmes
- 3 Helen Newman
- 16 Viv Henderson



- 17 Sarah Grigg
- 21 Ruth Whitehead
- 22 Bettina Hather

Joy Grant remembered

As a church community, along with her family and other friends, we mourn the loss of Joy Grant, who died on Thursday 11th June - and we celebrate her life and her faith. Joy was born on 10th November 1941 and she had two brothers, Michael and Keith. She went to Tonedale school and then to Courtfields school in Wellington. She started working life selling sweets at a shop in Tonedale, progressed to delivering food for County Stores in Taunton, and then found her vocation for working with numbers and started work for the Borough Treasurer in Taunton Deane. Finally, she became Company Director for the family building company. She was meticulous in her preparation of accounts for the company, searching all night if needed for that one penny out on the reconciliation of the VAT return, then all done by hand in ledgers.

But not one of us truly is measured by their CV. Joy knew love with her siblings and parents as she grew up. Then in 1965 she met Jim (Her Jim). They were married in 1968, had a son, James, in 1974, and enjoyed 32 years of marriage. She often talked about the times that they had enjoyed together. She loved music and enjoyed being spun around the dance floor, whether in a lively jive or an elegant waltz. She was heartbroken, and it was a terrible shock, when Jim died so suddenly. She always longed for Jim's company again.

In 2001 James married Jayne, and Joe also became part of the family. Joy continued to enjoy family life, always loving time with the family, in-laws included; Sunday lunches, dinner parties, or just being together and helping each other out. She loved playing games, on Christmas Day or other days too.. She was always up for going out in the car, watching Joe play rugby in the rain, going out for lunch to Chris and Mike's or a trip to



the seaside with Keith, visiting someone or being visited, as well as chatting endlessly on the phone. She accepted everyone into her family, in particular Joe and Milly, always keen to know what they were up to and how their work was going. Over the last 3 years the addition of two dogs, Gracie and Rufus, into the family gave Joy a new lease of life. And, house-proud as she was, she coped with their muddy paws on her sofa. The death of her brother Keith last year was a great shock and loss for her.

Joy had a wide circle of friends; and she spent much time chatting on the phone or (when she could) out with others. She had a real gift for friendship. She loved holidays: short breaks or adventures abroad, often sharing these with friends. She also had a strong Christian faith. She was part of the Bishop's Hull Chapel congregation until there was the union with Paul Street. Praying each day was natural to her and being part of the church was vital to her - she was an early adopter of lockdown Zoom services (by phone!). For Joy, faith was more than a club to belong to, it was the foundation of her life and God was close. She did not expect to be spared anything anyone else in this life suffers, but she trusted that, however hard things got, God was with her. She was a woman of faith and hope, but also most of all a person who lived out the love of God. She was delighted to receive love too from so family and friends. None of us will forget her affection and kindness.

On the last day of her life she was asked, "What's the one thing you have enjoyed the most in your life?". She replied, "The Boat... we had great times on the boat." Her son had thought that she hated the boat as he remembered the time she was laid on the bed with one foot on the boat ceiling with a Bible in one hand and a bottle of Scotch in the other as they battled across the English channel in a Force 7 gale; but she said, "I didn't like going out on it but I loved it when we got there... we had some great times."

She did have some great times. And some hard times too, not least the times of illness more recently, as yet another diagnosis kept coming. She had been fearful of what might befall her, in terms of sickness and pain, as any of us would be, but she was, when it came to it, really brave and gracious, still thinking of others and still able to laugh and be herself, even as the hope of a longer life slipped away.

Joy was capable and steely, kind and compassionate, generous and great fun. She was a beautiful person with a kind heart, a wicked sense of humour; she loved egg custard tarts, fresh strawberries and cream, and a glass of wine. She produced banquets in caravans, and feasts at the drop of a hat. Joy looked for the positive in people and was a great and wonderful friend to many.

There will be many things that will stir memories of Joy for all sorts of people. She was aptly named; joyful (as Joe always called her), even when life was very tough for her, a joy to be with, and always loved. She will be remembered with great love and thankfulness.

Susan Durber

Changes at Christian Aid

In the May magazine we were reminded of Christian Aid week 10 - 16 May. Our response as usual, exceeded £1000. As for many other charities, Christian Aid's income has been challenged and reduced. Amanda Khozi Mukwashi was appointed Chief Executive officer in 2018 for Christian Aid. It is the first time for a person with an African background to hold this position. In the June issue of *Reform* magazine Amanda (pictured here) is interviewed by the editor and we learn about her background and plans for Christian Aid. She describes herself as a 'global citizen but the UK and Zambia are home'. It was her international background and career of more than 20 years experience working with organisations to alleviate poverty, injustice and inequality that made her a suitable person for the position.



During the first 6 months in her new job she travelled widely around the UK meeting supporters like us and listening to their concerns. She joined in worship, connecting with people who care, give and pray for Christian Aid. As Chief Executive officer she worked at a process of consultation with colleagues and partners around the world planning strategy and taking decisions to reshape Christian Aid enabling the organisation to better serve the poor and live within financial constraints.

Restructuring in the UK means most regional offices will be closed with a support team to be set up to serve the country from Warrington. There is to be a new approach to their work around the world. In the Middle East and Asia the focus will be on peace-building. In Africa programmes will focus on economic justice, climate justice and gender justice. Over the next months Christian Aid will begin to leave several countries including Brazil, El Salvador, Ghana, Philippines and Zambia amongst others. They will continue to work in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, Nepal, Zimbabwe to name a few. They will work across 2 regional programmes spanning Latin America, Caribbean and the Middle East.

Amanda uses the Zulu word *ubuntu* in describing the work of Christian Aid. It is about touching each other's hearts with compassion. Let us continue to pray for the work of Christian Aid, for Amanda, her staff and for the partners worldwide.

Sheila Rudofsky

The world outside lockdown



The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

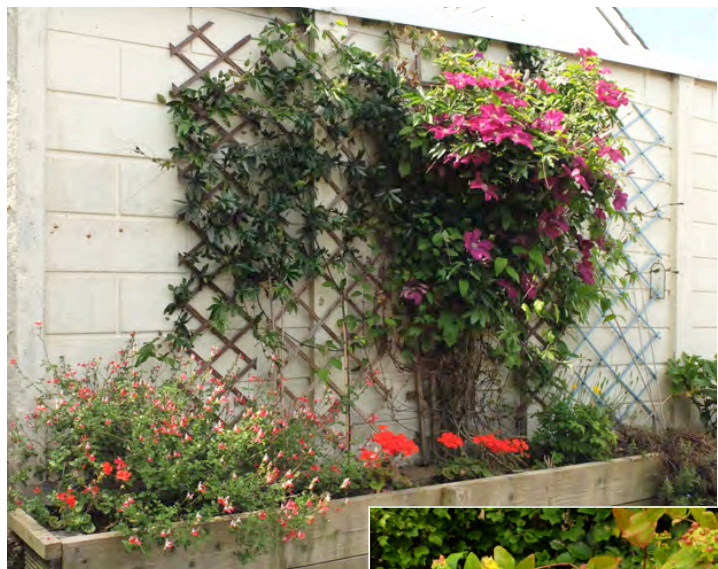
Psalms 24:1-2



Clockwise from the top:
 near Galmington Stream
 spider's webs on a hedge of escallonia
 River Tone downstream of Trenchard



... in Meg's garden and insect life

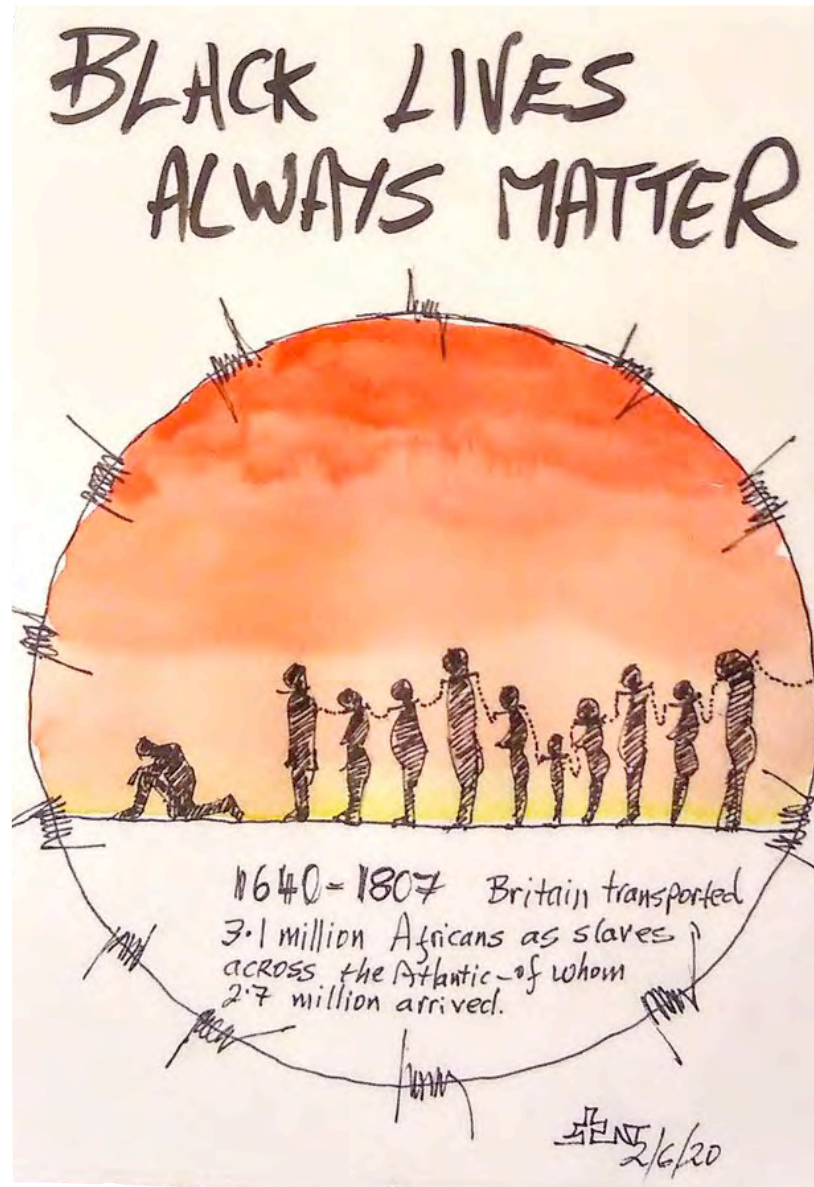


Clockwise from the top:
 clematis, salvia and geraniums
 St John's wort
 assorted annuals



Clockwise from top-left:
 A Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
 Mullein Moth caterpillar on buddleia
 Cinnabar Moth caterpillars on ragwort
 Proof there is cricket to watch!





Black lives matter too

The image opposite was painted by Neil Thorogood and posted on social media a week after a black man, George Floyd, died while being detained by police in Minneapolis. His alleged crime was that he had paid for cigarettes using a counterfeit \$20 note. Floyd's death provoked a resurgence in the 'Black Lives Matter' (BLM) movement, both in the United States and around the world.

Neil Thorogood is, at the time of writing, the Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, one of the Resource Centres for Learning of the United Reformed Church. In September he is due to be inducted as the Minister at Trinity-Henleaze URC in Bristol and Thornbury URC.

Five days after this was painted, the statue of Edward Colston, philanthropist and slave-trader, was torn down from its plinth in Bristol. Neil reissued his artwork with this note: "My move is to Bristol, a city that grew rich on slavery. Yes, the history matters, always."

It may take research to discover how we, personally, have benefited from the slave trade. The historical rewards of a pillaging, sea-faring nation have been reallocated many times, so it may seem immaterial to enquire; and the task risks being uncomfortable. But the history remains.

The Coward Trust, which Susan mentions on page 5, has been a regular financial contributor to the Minister's Spring Schools, so I have profited, indirectly at least, from the slavery mentioned in the painting. The local historian Roger Evans notes that deep in the Somerset countryside are the houses of wealthy families once built on the profits of slave plantations.

The equality of all people under God is asserted in the well-known verse of Paul's letter to the Galatians, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Yet the supposed inferiority of Africans was argued as justifying transatlantic slavery and is the root of much racism.

But history also tells us that, after the Battle of Sedgemoor in 1685, hundreds of Monmouth Rebels were transported from Somerset to the West Indies as slaves; many more than were executed. In part, it was the treatment of these *white* people as economic commodities that inspired the first petition, from the townspeople of Bridgwater 100 years later, to parliament calling for the abolition of the African slave trade.

Peter Henderson

Look who's coming to dinner!

The editor invited readers to to dream of a time when lockdown is over and there is the freedom to invite people to a meal. Which four people (dead or alive) would you choose to invite to dinner? Here are some of the responses.

Dining with Isobel Tosh-Robb

Julius Caesar as to why the Romans wishes to really conquer the world,

Samuel Pepys, who lived during the Commonwealth and the restoration of the Monarchy,

Keir Harris who first formed the Labour party and what would be his thoughts about it now.

Dining with Susan Durber would be the four Gospel writers, with the expectation of a lively exchange discussing the differences between them.

Dining with Sheila Rudofsky

Phillip Potter was born in Dominica, he was ordained a Methodist minister, with a wonderful smile and a great sense of fun. He had an international career and has been a valued voice in black history.

Mo Mowlam was born in England. She became a much admired politician especially for her break through contribution to the Good Friday agreement in Ireland. She had a tragic death.

Fred Kaan was enormous fun at any dinner party. Although born in the Netherlands he worked in the UK and globally. He and Phillip were great pals.

Tricia Hubbard was an artist. In some ways she would be an on looker but by the dessert course would be in full flow swing delighted with her new friends except for a long friendship with Fred. Tricia would suggest a walk after dinner, although I think the dinner party would last well into the evening unless they had other engagements!

Dining with Carole Dabbs from Wellington

Victoria Wood, her writing, drama and music give a perspective and incredible insight into "what makes people tick".

Martin Sheen, I absolutely love his character playing the USA President in the "West Wing". Listening to his life-story on "Desert Island Discs" was inspiring.

Tony Benn MP, my political 'hero' – a man of principle and love for all.

My Dad (Alfred Coram), my role model, he gave me an inheritance of love, an example to me and many others, of the true meaning of a Christian life.

Dining with Denis Newman

On the understanding that extended family would normally have taken pride of place

Dr, John Fisher, my continuing schoolboy friend who unobtrusively led me into Christian commitment.

Little Tubby Harland, an inspirational teacher of building whose eyes I accidentally blackened.

Frank Hazel, who taught me to lay bricks at speed and enjoyed his Three Nunns backy.

Principal Lesslie M'Caw, the Bird, a wise and questioning teacher of theology with a dry sense of humour.

Dining with Meg Cardy

My friend Jean (Lucy Cat's Mum who died just after I came to Creech)

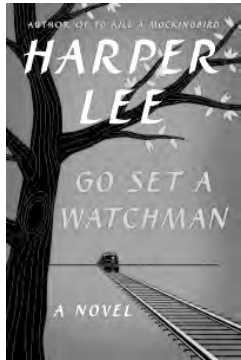
Chris Morgan (1957-1977) killed on active service with the British South Africa Police a month after his 20th birthday,

My beloved Daddy,

The late Dr Kieran Sweeney of St Leonard's Medical Practice.

Book review: Go Set a Watchman

During lockdown I've been getting round to reading some of the second-hand books I've acquired. *Go Set a Watchman* was published in 2015 - it features the heroine of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which I read at school. *Go Set a Watchman* is set 20 years later: in it the tomboy Scout returns from New York to her home town of Maycomb to stay with her father Atticus Finch. The book is full of reminiscences of her childhood, including church attendance and the family expectations that she will become her father's carer.



The title *Go Set a Watchman* comes from (the King James Version of) Isaiah 21:6: "For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth." Seeing people as they really are is a theme of the novel: Scout having lived away sees the attitudes of those she loves with fresh eyes and is appalled at the extent of prejudice. Even her father, Atticus Finch, as the moral compass ("watchman") of Maycomb is

embroiled in this. Atticus is associating with those against racial integration who argue that black people are genetically inferior to white people and that non-white races ought to be always under the leadership of whites. So her father appears to have abandoned his creed of 'equal rights for all, special privileges for none'. Scout's sweetheart, who is working with Atticus in the local law firm, tries to justify their actions. Her idealism is challenged by their pragmatism about how to change society for the better. She realises that her privileged upbringing has made her colour blind - she feels she no longer belongs. The novel delves into the complex relationship between father and daughter as well as tackling the racial tensions brewing in the American South in the 1950s.

Whilst I was reading *Watchman*, George Floyd died and it gave me greater insight into the roots of the continuing injustices that Black Lives Matter protests highlight. When the BLM movement say little has changed in attitude to coloured folk since Martin Luther King, they are probably right, although pastor Jim Wallis, the founder and editor of *Sojourners* magazine, has been encouraged by the multiracial complexions in the protestors, in his article on June 4th.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is mentioned in *Watchman* and is still active today. They have worked

"to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination" since 1909.

To Kill a Mockingbird (published 1960) is cited as a factor in the success of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, however, in that it "arrived at the right moment to help the South and the nation grapple with the racial tensions (of) the accelerating civil rights movement."



The mockingbird: a symbol of innocence

Alabama-born author Mark Childress compares *Mockingbird* to the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a book that is popularly implicated in starting the U.S. Civil War. Childress states the novel "gives white Southerners a way to understand the racism that they've been brought up with and to find another way. And most white people in the South were good people. Most white people in the South were not throwing bombs and causing havoc... I think the book really helped them come to understand what was wrong with the system in the way that any number of treatises could never do, because it was popular art, because it was told from a child's point of view."

However, the discrimination it highlighted unfortunately still persists. I wondered why Harper Lee had not published *Watchman* before, given the critical acclaim that *Mockingbird* had received. She wrote about this in 2015:

"In the mid-1950s, I completed a novel called *Go Set a Watchman*. It features the character known as Scout as an adult woman and I thought it a pretty decent effort. My editor, who was taken by the flashbacks to Scout's childhood, persuaded me to write a novel from the point of view of the young Scout. I was a first-time writer, so I did as I was told. I hadn't realized it [*Watchman*] had survived, so was surprised and delighted when my dear friend and lawyer Tonja Carter discovered it. After much thought and hesitation I shared it with a handful of people I trust and was pleased to hear that they considered it worthy of publication. I am humbled and amazed that this will now be published after all these years."

So *Watchman* may not have come to light but for the encouragement of Lee's friends which finally outweighed the rejection of the initial manuscript and its rewriting to become a best-seller. However I do wonder if the lack of progress on racial justice was another factor which guided her thinking.

Viv Henderson

(who is happy to lend the book out)

When this is over

When this is over,
 may we never again
 take for granted
 A handshake with a stranger
 Full shelves at the store
 Conversations with neighbours
 A crowded theatre
 Friday night out
 The taste of communion
 A routine checkup
 The school rush each morning
 Coffee with a friend
 The stadium roaring
 Each deep breath
 A boring Tuesday
 Life itself.

When this ends,
 may we find
 that we have become
 more like the people
 we wanted to be
 we were called to be
 we hoped to be
 and may we stay
 that way – better
 for each other
 because of the worst.

Laura Kelly Fanucci, US writer and speaker <http://laurakellyfanucci.com/>
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News of URC General Assembly

The United Reformed Church (URC) has announced the cancellation of its 2020 General Assembly, the first time the meeting has been cancelled since the URC was founded in 1972. Inductions and some business of the General Assembly will, however, be carried out online.

The ongoing threat of coronavirus and the health and safety of General Assembly representatives, the staff of the URC and its Synods, and the government restrictions on so much in public life, is the cause of the cancellation.

However, some parts of the General Assembly will go ahead digitally:

A full Book of Reports has been prepared, and is available on the URC's website. A lot of important work has taken place in the last two years, since the Assembly last met, and the Church needs to hear about that work and how the committees of the URC have contributed to the life and mission of the Church.

The officers of the General Assembly intend to convene the Mission Council, the executive body of the URC, for a few hours' business on Friday 10th July. This meeting is open to Synod representatives and their Moderators to attend as normal.

The officers are also arranging a meeting on the morning of Saturday 11th July. This will primarily be an act of worship to induct the new Moderators of the General Assembly, the Revd Clare Downing and Mr Peter Pay, and the new General Secretary, the Revd Dr John Bradbury, into office, and will be live streamed.

URC General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, said: "This is far short of what we originally wanted, especially following more than a year's careful work by the Officers of Assembly and others, but the health and welfare of all God's people is paramount in making this difficult decision."

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 13th JULY 2020 (or earlier) please.



Extracts from the Newsletter of the Listening Chaplaincy Phonenumber

(for which Viv Henderson is a volunteer)

Where are we now?

Our 90 volunteers have ensured that there are two pairs of listening ears available 15 hours a day, seven days a week. It's been a slow start however call numbers are beginning to rise. Most importantly, callers are receiving help and support. Similar schemes across the country report a very low take up of their services. Whenever appropriate, we're signposting our callers to specialist agencies.

Feedback

The Listening Chaplaincy Phonenumber was launched on Monday 27 April

Total calls to date: 22

Areas covered: Faith (8) Prayer (7) Bereavement (2) Relationships (6) Health (9) Work (9) Covid (2) Other (15)

Signposted to: Silverline, CAB, Open Doors, Arc Inspire [formerly Taunton Association for the Homeless], Somerset Mind, Cruse, Assist Trauma Care, local prayer group.

Those who have called 0330 229 1700 include:

- A number of calls which hung up.
- A housing agency ringing to test the line.
- A lady on a Minehead number who was lonely. She sounded brighter and happier at the end of the call which she brought to a natural end. The call-taker signposted her to Silverline.
- Someone wanting to donate items to the homeless in the Taunton area.
- A lady in Yeovil interested in the phonenumber and concerned that the Archbishop's 'Daily Hope' line could not be accessed.

- A 90-year old lady who was lonely, feeling 'caged in' and said she is a Christian.
- A lady in Bridgwater who asked for prayer for her son who is recovering from surgery in another part of the country.
- A withheld number which gave the impression that the caller was sobbing. The call was terminated by the caller after 30 seconds.
- Someone who spoke about Covid19 and other things and was signposted to the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- A lady with severe mental health issues who just wanted to have someone to talk with. She professes faith and outlined a list of complicated mental health diagnoses. She has absolutely no friends and lives alone. The call-taker explained that he is not a trained professional and could only speak on a "gut feeling" basis and had open discussions about God. He encouraged her to just take one thing (day) at a time as a Gift from Him. Prayer was offered and readily received.
- An elderly gentleman who doesn't have internet access, is lonely and missing his local church (they are in touch with him regularly, and they gave him our phone number, but it's still not the same as the real thing). The call-taker listened to him, prayed and suggested the 'Daily Hope' phone line.
- Someone in Staffordshire who, as a Christian, felt guilty for having mental health problems. She welcomed the call-taker's support which was prompted by verses listed in the helps section of a Gideons' New Testament and Psalms.

For prayer

- those who have lost loved ones;
- all who are anxious about close friends and relatives who are seriously ill, especially when it is not possible to be with them;
- those not able to see the body of a loved one after death or who are unable to attend a funeral;
- all who daily put their lives on the line in the service of others;
- all those overwhelmed by what they are facing or dealing with;
- all whose futures hang in the balance through loss of income, business or employment;
- those who suffer or who are at risk of domestic abuse;
- all children and especially those with special needs;
- the "worried and lonely well"

Anniversary of the NHS

Resources from the President of the College of Healthcare Chaplains for the 72nd anniversary of the National Health Service on 5th July

Robert Atwell, the Bishop of Exeter writes:

The National Health Service came into being on 5 July 1948. During post-war reconstruction, improving the healthcare of the nation was seen as crucial to the nation's recovery. Beveridge, the architect of the NHS, identified "five giants" that had to be slain: want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness. The cataclysm of war provided the stimulus for radical reform. It was a momentous achievement and, in spite of early professional resistance to some of the proposals, it was born of a national consensus: everybody wanted the new service to work.

The NHS was based on principles unlike anything that had gone before. It was financed almost entirely from central taxation. That the rich paid more than the poor for comparable benefits was regarded as a crucial part of the scheme. Everyone was eligible for care, even people temporarily resident or visiting the country. People could be referred to any hospital, local or more distant. Care was free at the point of use, although prescription and dental charges were subsequently introduced.

During the current pandemic, there has been immense national and local support for the NHS and its front line workers. The emergence of the Thursday 'Clap for Carers' was a significant experience in the lockdown. Thanksgiving binds communities together, turning 'I' into 'we'. The contribution of carers and key workers who have given of themselves sacrificially needs to be honoured. Sharing stories of people and events during the crisis is likely to form the kernel of any community celebration. Unsung heroes need to be applauded.

Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale

The seven critical-care Covid Hospitals have been named after Florence Nightingale, and a post-Covid rehabilitation facility named after Mary Seacole, both prominent figures in nursing history and role models in the NHS.

Mary Seacole was a pioneering nurse and heroine of the Crimean War, who as a woman of mixed race is today celebrated as an inspiration for the many BAME people who sustain our NHS. Born Mary Jane Grant in Kingston, Jamaica in 1805 to a Scottish soldier and Jamaican mother, Mary

learned her nursing skills from her mother who kept a boarding house for invalid soldiers. She was an inveterate traveller, and before her marriage to Edwin Seacole in 1836 visited other parts of the Caribbean, as well as Central America and Britain. On these trips, she complemented her knowledge of traditional medicine with European medical ideas. In 1854 Mary approached the War Office, asking to be sent as an army nurse to the Crimea. She was refused, but undaunted, funded her own trip to the Crimea where she established the 'British Hotel' near Balaclava for sick and convalescent officers. She also visited the battlefield, sometimes under fire, to nurse the wounded, and became known as 'Mother Seacole'.

Florence Nightingale was born in 1820 into a wealthy family. In the face of their opposition, she insisted that she wished to train in nursing. In 1853, she finally achieved her wish and headed her own private nursing institute in London. Her efforts at improving conditions for the wounded during the Crimean War won her great acclaim and she devoted the rest of her life to reforming nursing care. Her school at St Thomas's Hospital became significant in helping to elevate nursing into a profession.

Prayers for the NHS

God of healing and compassion,
we thank you for the establishment of the National Health Service,
and for the dedication of all who work in it:
give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who care for the sick,
and your wisdom to those engaged in medical research.
Strengthen all in their vocation through your Spirit,
that through their work many will be restored to health and strength;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Everlasting God,
at this time we lift to you
those from all nations and backgrounds
who work on the front line in healthcare.
Give them skill and wisdom in their work.
Be their strength and their shield
as they give of themselves in the care of others. Amen.

**OFFICE HOLDERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF
TAUNTON UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

Car-Park Jean Grigg
 Christian Aid Maralyn Bickham
 Church Cleaning Supervision
 Church Heating Church Administrator (see page 1)
 Church Secretary..... Sue Ingham (07818 637155)
 Commitment for Life Contact Sue Ingham
 FINANCE - Treasurer..... Eryl Harris
 FINANCE - Covenant Collections..... Paula Powell
 Flowers Pam Elliott, Sheila Woolvin
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 Property Stuart Trott
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 Reform Magazine Pamela Bamber
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 Sound..... Paul Cottrill
 Sunday Coffee Organiser Pamela Bamber
 Sunday News-Sheet..... the Minister or, if away, the Church Secretary
 Synod Representative Sue Ingham
 World Day of Prayer Maralyn Bickham

SERVING ELDERS

Sue Ingham <i>Secretary</i> 07818 637155	Meg Cardy 01823 443245	Stuart Trott 01823 281551
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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