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Taunton United Reformed Church



OCTOBER 2020
Magazine



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TAUNTON UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MAGAZINE

NO. 577

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From the Editor



The church magazine is back after a rather impromptu break in September. We often have a double issue over the summer, and therefore miss a month, but that is planned. In this case, I was pleased to be able to book a week away in August, but it was at the time when I would have been preparing the September issue of the magazine; and, to be honest, I could not face doing a rushed job on my return. So I hope you were not inconvenienced or disappointed by the gap.

This coincided with a period of change, and inevitable uncertainty, as Sunday worship was resumed at Paul Street and the experiment of simultaneously including online worshippers on Zoom was tried and succeeded.

With the gradual emergence of familiar activities, and the delivery of this issue during the latter part of Creationtide, there theme is re-creation. This encompasses many interpretations: recreation, the use of spare time to enrich body and soul; the rebuilding and renewal of what is good, even 'building back better'; and the hope for the renewal, not just of ourselves, but of the world.

At the time of writing the URC Daily Devotions have had a series of reflections on Bible passages referring to creation. I do commend these to you; they began on 14th September and should still be available at the link on page 8 (though you may need to print out the Creation booklet, double-sided if you can).

I particularly liked the Devotion on Saturday 19th in which Trevor Jamison pointed out the entanglement between our freedom and that of creation expressed by Paul in Romans chapter 8:21, the "hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

It could be that 'rewilding' is an aspect of this freedom. If so, then this hope is explored from the perspective of us humans by Susan in her letter (pages.4-5) and more widely on pages 16 and 17 and hinted at on page 22.

Peter Henderson

Cover picture: With the Paul Street part of the congregation on a Sunday now at least as large as the Zoom part, I have reverted to the old image of a gathered church. If you have been preferring the variety of a themed cover, let me know.

Forthcoming Church Services

Regular Sunday worship takes place at 10:30am.

Currently there are 'hybrid' services in that you can attend either - in person at the church in Paul Street - bring a face covering - or - via Zoom using an online or telephone connection.

To attend via Zoom you need an invitation from the Minister.

- 4 October Harvest worship led by the Revd Dr Susan Durber (includes The Lord's Supper)
- 11 October Morning worship led by the Revd Dr Susan Durber
- 18 October Morning worship led by the Revd Dr Susan Durber
NB. the scheduled Church Meeting is postponed
- 25 October Morning worship led by the Revd Dr Susan Durber
- 1 November Morning worship led by the Revd Dr Susan Durber (includes The Lord's Supper)

Weekly Activities

What, when & where	Notes
Midweek Worship on Tuesdays Most Tuesdays from 11:30am to 12 noon in the church	A face covering is required
Work-Wise in the URC Lecture Hall Wednesdays, 9:30am 12:30 & 1:30-4:00pm Offering support with all aspects of job seeking	Contact the manager (details on page 1) to volunteer or just turn up

Other Notable Dates

Monday 12 October Magazine deadline

Please note that the Minister will be taking some time off in the week beginning the 26th October.

From your minister:



Dear friends,

I was recently given a book called *Rewild Yourself: 23 spellbinding ways to make nature more visible*, by Simon Barnes. It has proved fascinating and I have been trying to put it into practice. It promises to make 'hidden wildlife appear before your eyes'. It's helped me to notice things on our regular walks and trips round the garden ('Is it foxes who have been

eating cherries and then leaving poo behind?'; 'What kind of butterfly is that?'; 'How about a walk at night and look at the bats?'). The book reveals that you don't have to go far to go on safari. Our walks round the estuary on holiday revealed many different seabirds – and never again will I call anything just 'a seagull'. And even if I venture no further than our back garden I can spot all sorts of creatures; 'Are they frogs or toads in the water butt?'; 'Is that one bat or two doing that strange circle-of-eight flight after dusk?'; and 'Was that an owl – and what kind of owl?'.

I am learning to notice things and to appreciate the created world. This slower and more local living gives me time to look more closely, to attend and even understand more. It was, of course, at first forced on me by lockdown, but I now find I want to continue this slower, more local, life, and to heighten and develop this sense of attention to what is before me and around me. I think this is actually a good way to live and I am enjoying it. Through spring and summer I've been able to watch the corn, wheat and barley grow in the surrounding fields. I've swum in the river, admired the local heron, watched for the occasional 'plop' of a fish. I've collected blackberries and sloes, a few windfall apples and enjoyed the walnuts that the other member of my household picked (from a public path) and pickled.



I love taking my grandchildren to the woodland and looking out for all sorts of things. Perhaps I am 'rewilding' myself, but maybe I don't need to call it that. Whatever it is, it's good for my soul. I find myself much calmer when I'm walking or resting by the river or watching the sunset. There's something about a sense of perspective, a sense of the place of human beings within the world, a sense of wonder and delight in the midst of creation.

The period between 1st September and the 4th October is a time that more and more Christians are calling 'Creationtide'. The 4th October is the feast of Saint Francis, known of course for his preaching to the birds and his rapport with animals. I can't say I do much preaching outdoors, but I am learning to let the great outdoors shape my faith and so preach to me. And I find that, the more I wonder at creation, the easier I find it to do some of the things that will help preserve it and keep it. To speak of being more 'green' now feels not at all like an earnest and killjoy campaign, but is actually a new and life-affirming way of thinking.

I know that many in our congregation love their gardens, love visiting gardens or bird sanctuaries or even golf courses. We are blessed to live in a place where the 'wild' is not so hard to find. Go to Kilve or the Quantocks or Steart Marshes... or even just look carefully at your garden or the local park. We all need a little more wild. And we may find there that sense of awe expressed by the Psalmist in Psalm 104 or by Saint Francis in his wonderful hymn that we sing as 'All creatures of our God and King'.

St Francis' day will coincide this year with our own Harvest Festival celebration. What could be more appropriate? At Harvest we celebrate the natural world of which we are a part, we express our thanksgiving and we commit ourselves to be good stewards. And even with a more modest display because of our present circumstances, the church will almost certainly smell amazing!

Your minister

Susan

Simon Barnes' book is featured on page 16

A simple order of service

Some people may now be worshipping back in church, others will joining us on Zoom on Sundays, and some may be remaining at home. In all these ways and places we can be close to God, for God comes close to us. Below is a short order of service that you may easily pick up and use; on a Sunday or on any day of the week, at any time. It particularly reflects on themes of creation.

Find a place to pray where you can see the natural world; a window view, a seat in the garden, a pot plant, or a single flower or leaf in your hand.

Spend some minutes of silence attending to creation...

Prayer

God, creator of all things,
I offer you thanks and praise for the world you have made;
for the skies and the clouds,
for sun and moon and stars,
for the depths of the oceans and the soaring hills,
for gentle levels and quiet paths.
I thank you for the animals and birds;
for the rare creatures I have never seen,
and for the living things that share my daily round.
I praise you for the human life that is mine,
and for the people in whom I see your image.
Give me grace and imagination
to deepen my sense of wonder,
and to know you more fully
in all that you create. Amen.

Psalm 24: 1-2

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

Add another Bible reading: from the lectionary perhaps?

To think about: *What do these readings reveal about God's creative power and love?*

Prayer:

Today, Creator God,
I pray for your creation to be sustained and cared for.
I think of places where climate change is having a real impact;
a place nearby and a place far away...
and I pray for a change of heart, a change of policy, a change of practice,
so that life can flourish.

Today, loving Saviour,
I pray for the people for whom you came and for whom you died.
I think of people who are suffering because the world is changing;
people who are becoming ill or hungry,
or losing their livelihood or their home.
I pray that they will find healing and hope,
as we all learn to live gently upon the earth.

Today, Holy Spirit,
I pray for the church that you call
to be a sign of your Kingdom in the world;
for a deeper sense in the church of the holiness of all creation
and for faith that values nature and flesh, creatures and plants.
As you brooded over creation at the beginning of it all,
come now and touch us with your bright wings.

In particular today, I pray for....

All these prayers, I offer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Blessing:

May the creativity of God continue to renew us.
May the love of Christ reassure and comfort us.
May the Holy Spirit inspire and empower us;
today, tonight and always, Amen.

Revised Common Lectionary for forthcoming Sundays		
4 October	11 October	18 October
Exodus 20:1-20 Psalm 19 Philippians 3:4b-14 Matthew 21:33-46	Exodus 32:1-14 Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23 Philippians 4:1-9 Matthew 22:1-14	Exodus 33:12-23 Psalm 99 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 Matthew 22:15-22
25 October	1 November	8 November
Deuteronomy 34:1-12 Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 Matthew 22:34-46	Joshua 3:7-17 Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13 Matthew 23:1-12	Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25 Psalm 78:1-7 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Matthew 25:1-13

Daily devotions

There are still regular posts of worship resources from the URC - through the Daily Devotions link: <https://devotions.urc.org.uk>

From 10am each Sunday (at least until the end of the year), 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.

MAGAZINE DEADLINE

Contributions for the November 2020 magazine should be with the Editor

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by MONDAY 12th OCTOBER 2020 (or earlier) please.

News from the Elders' Meeting

The Elders continue to reflect on our worship and mission and to care for all our members and friends.

It is good that we are able to offer worship in church now - and this is still possible within the government guidelines (at the time of writing). However, we are aware that social gathering cannot yet be part of those times when we gather for worship. So chatting before and afterwards has to be very limited. This is for all our safety. We do encourage you to read carefully the guidelines about worship that were distributed to everyone and are available every Sunday (and indeed on Tuesdays too for midweek worship). Please do keep 2 metres apart, wear a mask, touch only the chair that you are seated on and the order of service there. We all hope and pray that the infection rate can be brought back under control.

The Elders decided at our meeting in September that we would not seek to hold a church meeting in October as planned. We know that church meeting is an important part of our tradition as we seek the mind of Christ together. But we do not think it wise, unless there should be an urgent need, to extend the time we are together in church by calling a church meeting. However, we do want everyone to feel they can raise any concerns, or offer any ideas, as they feel called. So, we encourage you to be in touch with your Elder or with the Minister if you have anything that you might normally raise at a church meeting or anything that you would like to talk about. Meanwhile, the Elders continue to care for the finances and the property, to pray for us all and to think through ways in which our worship and witness continues. We know that the rhythm of our year has been disrupted, but for the moment, we carry on.

We have also begun thinking about how we can celebrate Christmas at church this year. There are things we can't do, but there may be things we can. There are some ideas bubbling away already!

The Elders met on September 10th and were thrilled to see the cross now raised on our wall. Stuart was there, very early in the morning, to see it go up and told us what a sight it was! [See photo on p.13 - ed] We hope that you will agree that it makes a real difference to the impact of the building and that it is a sign of hope for us all in difficult times.

We continue to think of all our members and friends, and particularly those who face challenges. We are held in prayer.

Susan

Remembering Gretel Cohen

Our friend and church member, Gretel, died on 12th August. Her funeral was on 4th September at Sedgemoor Crematorium, conducted by the Rev Steve Bennett, her son-in-law, with whom Gretel and John have been living. We are grateful to Steve for the (edited) eulogy which follows.

Claire Isis Gretel was born on the 24th August 1929 in Evington Road, Billesdon, Leicester to Clare (a tailoress) and Cedric Day (a chemist's assistant). Following a family tradition of calling people by their third name she was known as Gretel. Her mother Clare later re-married, Charles Palmer, and sister Glynne and brother Nigel were added to the family.

On leaving school, Gretel trained to be a nurse at Leicester Royal Infirmary. During this time she started attending church and felt called to work overseas. She had set her sights on Papua New Guinea to nurse Lepers with the London Missionary Society when she met her future husband John. They spent their days off courting on Lickey Hill and during a whirlwind romance they agreed that their life should be spent together. A missionary placement in the Pacific Island of Western Samoa became available and, after marrying at Abbots Road Congregational Church, Humberstone on Gretel's birthday in 1957, they spent their honeymoon on a six-week passage aboard the Mauritania bound for their new home. John remembers Gretel's first experience of Samoa as she reluctantly climbed up a rope ladder from a pau-pau (a local Samoan boat) to the quayside, that being the only way to disembark. On dry land things improved and Gretel became school nurse at the High School and Theological College.

They met Rosa, a girl from the School, who knocked on their door and announced that she would be their house-girl. There developed a life-long friendship and Rosa became part of the family, which grew during their time in Samoa. Gretel and John were blessed with 5 children Christopher, Elizabeth, twins Stephen and Paul and youngest Michael, Michael being the only one born in the UK while the family were home on furlough. Gretel now took on the role of tutor as she taught the elder children by correspondence course.

The family saw many changes in Samoan life, including Independence in 1962, arrival of electricity, decimalisation, and expansion of the School, but by the late 1960's the time was right to return to England. They lived briefly in Shoreham-by-Sea before moving to Derriford, Plymouth, and a

couple of years later to Okehampton in Devon. During this time Gretel continued to support John in his work as a church minister, kept the family together, and worked in hospitals. In Okehampton she also trained as a Health Visitor with the requirement to home study and attend classes in Plymouth.

After five busy years in Okehampton Gretel and John moved to Chinnor, South Oxfordshire where John became a teacher and Gretel a Health Visitor. Here they bought their first house, which was a happy haven for both them and their offspring, and they became grandparents for the first time. After a few years John took up a church appointment in Winchester and Gretel became a Bank Health Visitor for Doctor's Surgeries, where she was very popular in that role with the doctors. From there church appointments in Stafford, Tavistock, and Plymouth kept them on the move.

Wherever they went Gretel is still fondly remembered, whether for setting up groups (Trinity Tots), mass baking sessions (for coffee mornings and Goosey Fair) for her Health Visiting, or simply and most importantly for the deep care and friendship she always offered to others. Whilst in Tavistock they went on the first of their world tours, visiting friends and family around the world in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga and of course Samoa.

When John retired, they moved to Kingsway in Taunton. Here, after another world tour, Gretel was able to concentrate more on hobbies. She took up, or restarted interests in art, card making, sewing, and gardening. She loved visiting places of interest and natural beauty, delighting in the wonder of creation. She particularly loved woodland; it held a special attraction for her.

Her last eighteen months were spent here in Burnham on Sea. Gretel passed away peacefully with her family around her aged 90 (well almost 91), a grandmother to 12 and great-grandmother to 3.

Gretel loved and cared for all her family and would always help in times of need. She loved to play with children and encourage them to be themselves. She gave them her most generous gift, the gift of her time and attention. This caring nature extended to many who knew her.

You will all have your own memories, and I encourage you to share these together as you give thanks for the way knowing Gretel influenced and enhanced your life. Often sitting quietly in the background, rather than in the forefront of things, her care knowledge and insights were invaluable to many of us. A gift from God we have all had the opportunity to receive.

Zoom, zoom, zoom!

John Campbell, URC minister of High Cross Church in Tottenham and inveterate hymn-writer, offers us a song for our times written back in May.

In no time at all, after lock down, we found our worship services were on 'Zoom'. Here was a wee song to start a Zoom worship service.

The tune is: Three blind mice (traditional UK nursery rhyme).

Zoom, zoom, zoom,
zoom, zoom, zoom,
God's in the room,
God's in the room.
We may be scattered out home by home
and some of us may even live alone,
but God will gather us all into one,
by zoom, zoom, zoom.

Zoom, zoom, zoom,
zoom, zoom, zoom,
God's in the room,
just don't assume
that only those who can get on screen
are reached by the God who loves us, unseen,
let's pray for all as we now join and sing
by zoom, zoom, zoom.

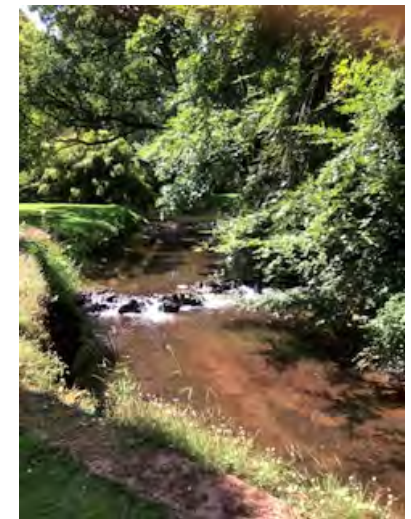
Zoom, zoom, zoom,
zoom, zoom, zoom,
God's in the room,
working the loom.
Yes, God is here as we try to share,
to weave us together in mutual care,
to make us strong for the problems out there,
so, boom, boom, boom!

Out and about...

... in Taunton, the sign of the cross that is the URC logo soon after its erection;
(photo: Peter Barnes)



... at Cothay Manor, a magnificent 15th century house standing on the banks of the river Tone not too far from Wellington;
(photos: Sheila Rudofsky)





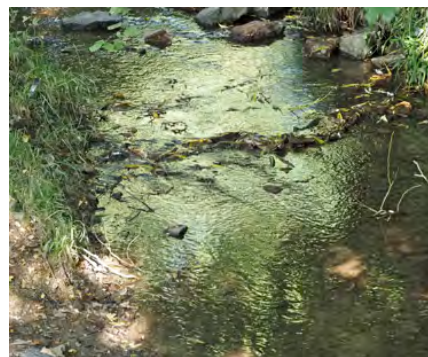
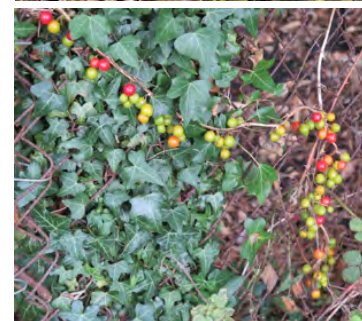
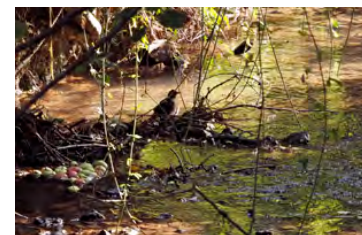
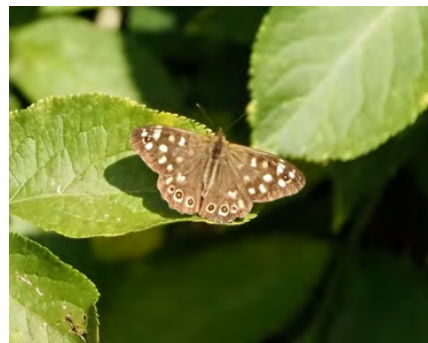
... at Dore Abbey (above, middle distance), once a Cistercian abbey now the parish church in the village of Abbey Dore in Herefordshire.

The east window contains one of the most flamboyant images of the risen Jesus giving new life in the Spirit, while the older frescoes warn those leaving of time running out and the need to *Memento Mori* - remember death (an example of carrot and stick evangelism, possibly?).

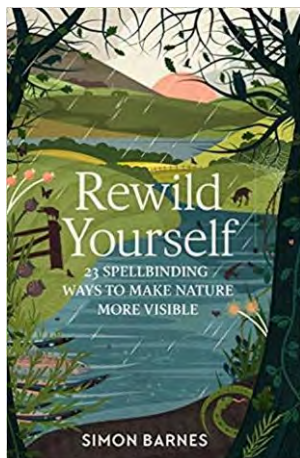


From a wilding walk

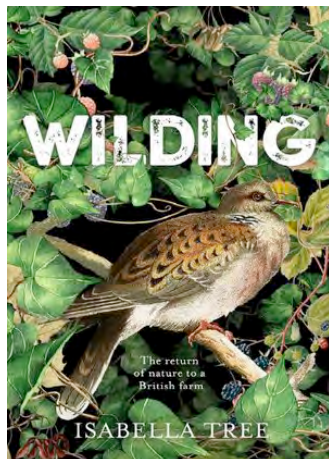
on which the editor continued his efforts at re-wilding himself on walks close to home, and recorded some of the sights.



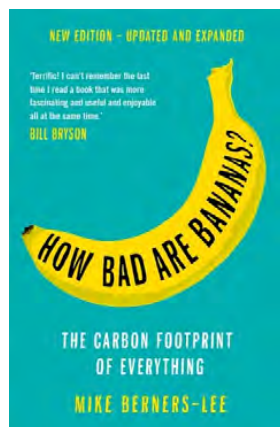
Books for re-creation



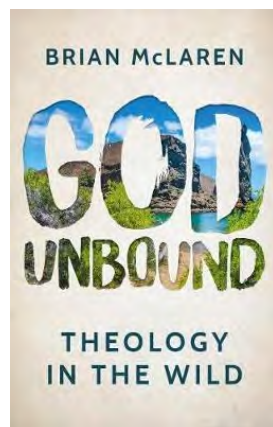
Rewild Yourself by Simon Barnes
published by Simon & Schuster
in 2020 - £8.99



Wilding by Isabella Tree
published by Pan Macmillan
in 2019 - £9.99



How Bad are Bananas? by Mike Berners-Lee
published by Profile Books
2020 - £9.99



God Unbound by Brin McLaren
published by Canterbury Press
2020 - £14.99

Susan reflects on **Rewild Yourself** in her Minister's letter on pages 4-5.

In **Wilding**, Isabella Tree tells the story of the sizeable farm in Sussex that her husband inherited, tried to run successfully as a business, and failed; and how, with various 'set aside' grants to promote environmental stewardship, most of it was turned over to nature to 'run wild'.

Reading the book I learned about the post-War debate about agricultural policy. Some wanted a return to mixed farming based on pasture and crop rotation to maintain soil fertility, but the prevailing view was to continue the 'Dig for Britain' which had aimed for food security by widespread ploughing of land for arable farming but hinged on government subsidies. These grants were used to buy fertilisers and pesticides, leading to the "misleadingly named" 'Green Revolution' with grain-fed livestock and, at its most intensive, 'zero grazing'.

The author asserts that, when farmers become dependent on government subsidies (British, then EU), bureaucrats determine what they do with their land. Of their own farm she writes, "Most years our sights were fixed so hard on improvements, always hoping the next year would bring greater returns, that failure seemed unimaginable." She writes about the problems of farming with the prospect of bankruptcy without "illogical EU farm subsidies". This gave me a new perspective on Brexit.

Their inspiration for much of the rewilding came from Dutch ecologist Frans Vera who advocates letting go of human control of the environment and "letting nature reveal herself" which made me wonder about humankind being given "dominion" over creation (Genesis 1:28-30). The big winner has been biodiversity. The neighbours have not been delighted; the author maintains that their fears are largely unfounded and driven by the view that the countryside should primarily be both tidy and beautiful.

Ten years ago, Mike Berners-Lee wrote **How Bad are Bananas?**, a detailed guide to the carbon footprint of many aspects of life. The second, updated edition was recently published. The book is a useful reference for responsible stewards of creation and also an entertaining read; though I think it is curiously organised, requiring much use of the index.

I wrote a series of articles for this magazine, starting in December 2014, summarising Brian McLaren's 2011 book, **Naked Spirituality**. The author's latest work, **God Unbound**, is the first in a series, part-travel guide, part-spiritual memoir, and part-ethical/theological reflection. "It explores what happens when the work of spirituality and theology... comes face to face with the wild, expansive world that flourishes beyond our walls." So says the back cover. Not an easy book, I'm guessing.

Peter Henderson

Remembering Derek Elliott

Pam Elliott's husband Derek died in July, and some of us gathered for his funeral at Taunton Deane Crematorium. We continue to pray for Pam as she grieves for him and to express our admiration of the care that she gave him, particularly in his final years. Some of the congregation will have met Derek. Here is a short tribute.

Derek had a life that, like many, had different chapters. He spent his childhood in Sussex, with his parents and his sister Pat, (now living in Australia). He was a bright young man and went to college - and then had a fine career; beginning as a mechanical engineer working for the GEC, then on oil rigs in the North Sea, and finally as a planning manager with the nuclear industry. He was married, first, to Maureen and their family life was lived mainly in Knutsford, where they had two sons, Keith and David. Life was good and busy and full. His work often took him away, and a vivid memory from Keith is of his father's return being marked by the appearance of a celebratory Matchbox car at the bottom of the bed in the morning. Derek was a father who played with his sons, and who worked in wood unique and wonderful toys for them. There was cricket, and days out, and family holidays to Cornwall squashed into an old Cortina.

Derek's sister-in-law, looking back to the time she first met him, remembers an easy going, kind, intelligent, thoughtful and generous man with a sense of humour; someone who got on with all whom he met and enjoyed good food and good wine. She remembers how much he loved cars and driving, how he moved from an old Singer to a Jaguar; green with leather seats. And how he would even take Maureen to the continent, and put the car on the plane.

Maureen's death so young was, naturally, a great blow, and for a while life was shaped mostly by grief. After a time, he was blessed to meet Pam through some mutual friends, and, with a re-marriage and retirement, a new life, in Newbury, began. He was good looking, smartly dressed, with a sports car - a lively and interesting companion. Together, he and Pam had some wonderful years of retirement; having fun, enjoying travelling the world, listening to wonderful music, sharing good food and fantastic holidays. Derek was interested in the world, an intelligent and eager retiree who loved life, food, the natural world, opera and always cars. A move to Taunton meant that he could be nearer his two sons and see them rather more.

Gradually, over time, Derek began to live with dementia. Pam cared for him at home, until more help was needed and he moved into Chelston Gardens Nursing Home, where he was cared for with dignity and grace. The last few years were hard for all involved.

Many people simply wanted to say after Derek's death, 'I'll miss him', but perhaps that is, after all, the best kind of tribute. He will be missed, by sister and sister-in-law, by sons, by friends and, of course, by Pam.

In the service we heard a reading from Isaiah which contains a line in which God says; 'Even when you turn grey I will carry you' (Isaiah 46:4). God says, I will stick with you, come what may. I will keep on carrying you. Through the death of a first wife, through a loving marriage to a second wife, through a long and successful career in engineering and through a good and exciting retirement, through boyhood and fatherhood, through years of living the high life, and through years too in a care home - I will carry you and I will bear it with you. And even when life ends, I will be with you.

Birthday Corner

Special greetings to those in our wider fellowship who have a birthday in October. Apologies to those with birthdays in September that we missed; you are not forgotten. May God bless you all ...

September

- 4 Christopher Cutting
- 24 Paul Cottrill
- 25 Joel Hather

October

- 18 Kathleen Copp
- 21 Maralyn Bickham
- 21 Pamela Elliott



Thanks from the URC Treasurers

In August Ian Hardie, Treasurer of the United Reformed Church, and John Piper, Deputy Treasurer, wrote "to the members and friends of all our 1,400 URC congregations" in these words:

'THANK YOU' for your unique and vital contribution to the life of the United Reformed Church, and for the work of the kingdom which we are able to do together in God's name.

We are living through an extraordinary and challenging time - a very anxious time for everyone; a difficult time for many; and a time of suffering and loss for some. Yet, the main purpose of this letter is to say 'thank you' to each of you for all that you have done for the Church in the past; for all that you continue to do even in these difficult times; and for what you will do in the future.

As we are treasurers, you will not be surprised that the focus of this letter is on finance. But we recognise that finance is only a means to the end which is our doing of God's work together.

'Thank you' for your giving to your local church. Financially, this giving is the lifeblood of your own church and of the whole United Reformed Church across England, Scotland and Wales. It is this personal giving that enables your local church treasurer to pay your church's bills. Typically, the largest of those 'bills' is the contribution your local church pays to the URC Ministry and Mission Fund. This Fund meets the central costs of the United Reformed Church. The total budget is around £20 million and is approved each year by Mission Council. Over 80% of this money is spent on ministers and church related community workers - their training, stipends and pensions. But the other 20% also achieves an enormous amount on behalf of us all. General Assembly 2020 was severely constrained because of the Covid-19 lockdown, but the reports written for General Assembly are available on the URC website, and they paint pictures of all the work that has been done in our name over the last two years and much of that work is ongoing.

'Thank you' for your giving and the giving of your local church last year. In 2019, over £19.4 million was given by local churches and synods to the Ministry and Mission Fund. The total contributions from local churches reduced very slightly but the average giving per member has, once again and remarkably, gone up by more than inflation.

'Thank you' for your continued giving this year. We fully understand that circumstances this year are difficult. Most local churches have been unable to meet for over five months. We have not had the usual opportunities to make our offerings for the work of the Church. But most of the costs of the local church and of the denomination have not reduced and some have increased as a consequence of the pandemic. We are also aware that some have lost income or work this year and are therefore in great financial difficulty. But there are others on fixed incomes who are actually better off than they might otherwise have been. So, please continue to give what you can in whatever way you can - or save it up until you can hand it over.

Any giving of ours is a response to the amazing generosity and love of God which we see in Jesus. Nevertheless, it is important for us to say 'thank you' to each and all of you.

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter then please speak to your church treasurer, who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ, Ian and John

Prayer available to visitors of Dore Abbey

Spirit, you pray within me when I am unable.
 When all seems empty, fill me.
 When all seems broken, hold me.
 When all seems far away, be near me.
 When I know you are not there, do not forget me.
 When I do not care if you are, forgive me.
 For I have nothing to offer except the ebb and flow of intention,
 nothing left over after this waiting and enduring.
 Take my face in your hands,
 worn and weary from life's path
 and stroke your blessing into my features,
 for you will never turn away a broken spirit.
 Amen.

Photos of and inside Dore Abbey are on page 14.

Conscientious shopping

'Extinction: The Facts' narrated by David Attenborough [BBC1, 13th Sept] highlighted the environmental impact of producing staple products we take for granted: the top five he named included coffee and cocoa. The clearance of natural vegetation for monoculture cash crops destroys the habitat that wildlife need and impacts the soils productive capacity rapidly. However, if you buy Fairtrade coffee and cocoa, you will be supporting small producers who care for the land more sustainably. You also assure them of higher incomes irrespective of the vagaries of the commodity market.

During lockdown **Traidcraft** was discovered by online shoppers unable to get what they needed at the local supermarkets. In response they have added selection boxes of vegan products, indulgent treats and household essentials to their range of hampers; these are ideal gifts for relatives setting up home or in need of an encouraging gift that doesn't harm the planet.

Traidcraft goods are delivered mainly by DPD: they are aiming to make their whole fleet zero carbon: they increasingly use electric vehicles to deliver goods from their Bridgwater hub.



The catalogue has more stories about the environmental principles guaranteed by use of the Fairtrade mark. See also their online shop [traidcraftshop.co.uk]. The range of organic and vegan products has increased - 'Extinction' reminded us of the hidden cost of the production of beef and chicken, and soya for animal feed, particularly from overseas.

Traidcraft are also working with suppliers which use fair trade palm oil or reduce plastic, such as shampoo bars and Bio-D award-winning eco-friendly household cleaning products. For example, by bulk buying I can refill a 500ml dispenser with Geranium Hand Wash for £2.

If you would like a copy of the latest catalogue, please get in touch. I can arrange home delivery of orders. Some craft lines and popular cards will sell out early, particularly in the pandemic, so please plan ahead. Any **Christmas related orders** should be with me by mid November at the latest.

Viv Henderson

Email: revive@plod.eclipse.co.uk

Telephone: 254668

News from Taunton churches



New Salvation Army officer

We offer a warm welcome to Major Lyndsey Toy, the new Salvation Army officer in Taunton.

Taunton Street Pastors Vacancy for Part-Time Administrator

Taunton Street Pastors operate on the streets - on Saturday nights in the town centre and during the day/evening in the Halcon and Priorswood estates. Street Pastors provide support for anyone and everyone they meet - caring, helping, and listening - giving practical support and a listening ear. Highly visible, their presence reduces crime and helps keep people safe. This is an exciting time for this award-winning group and a new partnership with Bridgwater has created the need for a part-time administrator to support its development.

- Up to 8 hours/week on a self-employed basis (flexible hours)
- Varied administrative duties including: volunteer rotas, social media activity, newsletters, data collection and liaison with stakeholders
- Up to £10.50/hour
- Home-based with some work at a town centre location



For a job description and application form please contact Adrian Prior-Sankey, scheme co-ordinator at Taunton@streetpastors.org.uk or telephone 07773 038 622

The deadline for applications is 5pm on Sunday 11 October 2020

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

Refugees Suffer under Lockdown

Nearly one million people live in the camps at Cox's Bazaar - one of the most densely populated places on earth - where social distancing very difficult. The Rohingya, who numbered about one million in Myanmar, are one of the many ethnic minorities in the country and have faced persecution for generations.

The latest exodus of Rohingya escaping to Bangladesh began in August 2017 after militants from a Rohingya insurgent group launched deadly attacks in Myanmar, it triggered one of the largest movements of people in recent history.



Picture: Theodore Goutas - Unsplash

Life in Cox's Bazaar is tough. Authorities in Bangladesh cut mobile internet access to the sprawling, teeming camps in the country's southeast a year ago, citing security concerns, sparking international condemnation.

Foreign Secretary Masud bin Momen said recently that the

spread of "baseless rumours and misinformation" could create panic and destabilise the camps. He has said that restrictions on 3G and 4G mobile networks, would be lifted very soon. The internet clampdown has disrupted communications between different camps, as well as with Rohingya still in Myanmar and elsewhere. It also complicated wire transfers of money from the Rohingya diaspora. Rights groups said the lack of internet access meant misinformation and rumours, particularly about the coronavirus, could spread unverified.

Some 750,000 Rohingya flooded across the border as they fled a military crackdown in Rakhine state in Myanmar in August 2017 that the UN has likened to ethnic cleansing, joining some 200,000 already in Bangladesh.

Your support for Commitment for Life may seem like a tiny droplet in a massive bucket of suffering, but for the refugees, your support is priceless. Our partner Christian Aid forms a vital part of the international support for Cox's Bazaar.

Central America

Institutional Violence Increases in Nicaragua

A recent report by Amnesty International has highlighted the government's strategy of repression, excessive use of force, extrajudicial executions and control of the media. Most recently, pro-government armed groups have been used to halt protests in the streets.

Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the western hemisphere after Haiti. It is one of the three countries in the world worst affected by weather catastrophes, and the UN has warned that storms here will only get worse. These emergencies push back the country's economic development.

Commitment for Life partners with Christian Aid in four countries in Central America - Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. We are working with around 30 partner organisations, from community-based groups to larger organisations operating across the region and beyond.

Our partners include indigenous communities, small farmers' associations, development organisations, research institutions and faith-based organisations.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Commitment for Life in support of global justice.

Climate Justice

The URC's very own Diana Paulding (pictured) is part of Christian Aid's Prophetic Activist Scheme. These young Christians are working for climate justice. The activists launched the Stop Fuelling the Fire Campaign, which is petitioning the UK government to end using UK Export Finance to fund fossil fuel projects overseas. Diana feels strongly about this issue, and with training from Christian Aid has, in collaboration with other activists, organised a petition to Boris Johnson. Please do sign their important petition at <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/p/SFTF>



Crazy Climate Children's Resources Download: Age: 7-11

If you are in search for climate resources for the children (*or you know someone who might be*), you may want to try <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/crazy-climate-all-resources-english>

Subject areas

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) / Global Citizenship
Geography/Environmental Studies
Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) / Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)
Religious Education (RE) / Religious Studies

The pack includes

- Activities
- Case studies
- Country profiles
- Climate facts
- A climate poster
- A presentation
- Teacher info
- Worksheets

Zimbabwe

Rebecca Kapaira, is from the village of Shamva in Zimbabwe. "Being a single mother, I have to work doubly hard," she says. "Our economy is so unstable it becomes difficult for us to survive."

Under lockdown, Rebecca fears not being able to put food on the table. Rebecca is a farmer, and like most Zimbabweans, she depends on just one, increasingly unreliable rainy season each year.

However, climate-induced droughts mean only one season in five has normal rainfall. Experts predict that the upcoming 2020 harvest will be even poorer than those preceding it. "For the past two years we haven't harvested anything," says Rebecca. "Our community hasn't been able to predict rainfall patterns. Our timing seems wrong every time. The crops never mature enough to make it to harvest."

Life has become harder each day for Rebecca and her children. Hyperinflation has sent food prices soaring. Rebecca is one of the over four million Zimbabweans experiencing emergency food insecurity.

"At the end of the day, women and girls are at the receiving end of the

coronavirus. It will affect us more than anyone else. Why? Because it's us women who do the household chores all the time."

"We are the ones who fetch firewood for cooking from the bush. We are the ones who fetch water from unprotected wells, and it needs two to three people to pump it. We cannot do social distancing. We are the most at risk."



Picture: Zach Vessels Unsplash

Commitment for life supports Christian Aid's phenomenal work in Zimbabwe, which includes implementing the Resilience Framework. This framework focusses on climate-resilient agriculture and natural resource management, in addition to the sustainable management of land, water, soils, forests, agriculture and agro-pastoralism that reduces poverty and hunger in the face of climate change.

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
 Keys
 Letting Secretary Church Administrator (see page 1)
 Magazine Distributor..... Dawn Wright (01823 331800)
 Magazine Editor..... Peter Henderson (01823 254668)
 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
 Synod Representative Sue Ingham
 World Day of Prayer Maralyn Bickham

SERVING ELDERS

Sue Ingham
Secretary
 07818 637155

Meg Cardy
 01823 443245

Stuart Trott
 01823 281551

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**