

Oct-Nov
2020

St John's
United Reformed Church

Record

Somerset & Mowbray Roads, New Barnet, Herts, EN5 1RH

Are we being reminded that we *have to rely on God?*

In a recent United Reformed Church Daily Devotion, Gethin Rhys, of Churches Together in Wales asked if the current pandemic is returning us to what was the 'normal' situation of being exposed to forces beyond our control? He reflects that post-war baby boomers have lived through a most unusual period in human history when it appeared that governments in developed nations could offer security and stability. For many of citizens in developed nations, war was not an imminent threat, housing and transport provided the comfort and convenience that seemed to set humans apart from nature, advances in healthcare and medicine prolonged and improved life, and even crime rates were falling.

However, today we might ask ourselves: Have we been lulled into a false sense of security by what was, historically, an unusual coming-together of peace and prosperity? Was this period merely an exception to what was, and still is for most people, the 'real normal'? That is, most people, at least some of the time, are exposed to forces beyond their control. If we didn't wish to acknowledge this reality in the past it was only because some of us were the beneficiaries of a combination of security, wealth and technological advances. Yet, as we now know, even these undoubted benefits cannot—as yet, and perhaps not ever—completely insulate us from the effects of global heating and Covid-19. My fear is that the economic effects of the current pandemic will be cataclysmic for the poorest people; and that we may see levels of poverty and destitution never experienced in our lifetimes. If I seem to be using apocalyptic language; this is deliberate.

Apocalyptic theology is a seam of thought that runs through the Old Testament and comes to prominence in parts of the New Testament. Apocalyptic writing emphasises the revelation of God's

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'hidden' purpose in, often, cataclysmic events. For instance, the siege and sack of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple between 66-70 AD reverberates like a noise of a struck gong in the later New Testament writings. Its vibrations can still be discerned in Jewish worship and identity even today. Yet even this undoubted disaster was not without its own hidden message for those with ears to hear it.

The Gospel According to John, almost certainly written after the destruction of the Temple, weaves this post-Temple reality into the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the well: 'In days to come you will worship God neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem but in Spirit and in Truth.' (John 4:21-24)

In one of the Apostle Paul's early letters, he writes about the 'Day of the Lord' coming suddenly and unexpectedly. "When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!" (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

Even as recently as a few years ago, we may have assumed that this unlikely scenario might

apply to other people, but not to us. No longer. The suddenness of the arrival of the Covid-19 virus, its rapid reproduction-rate when left unchecked, and the restrictions imposed to varying degrees of success in order to try to check it: these are part of our 'new normal'. Even if an effective vaccine can be found, can we be sure that other new viruses will not arise and spread as a result of our failure to respect the dignity of other species? Can we be sure that floods and heatwaves and extreme weather will not affect us if we fail to curb our CO₂ emissions and cease our destruction of the natural environment?

Through all of this, are we being reminded that we *have* to rely on God? Are we being reminded that we, as creatures of God, are not apart from nature but *part of* nature? Perhaps God's hidden message, now being revealed to us, is that we are all interconnected creatures who have to rely on God our Creator. Selfishness and vested interests need not destroy us; rather, Jesus Christ reveals our true identities as covenant-partners bringing Creation back to balance and glory.

Julian Templeton

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Article Concerning Climate Change Issues

OCTOBER 2020

The issues arising from climate change are very much in the news at present.

It is encouraging that the United Reformed Church have passed a resolution recognising the Climate Emergency and has vowed to 'do everything possible to make URC events and activities eco-friendly.' The resolution was prepared by URC Youth and accepted by Mission Council when it met digitally on 10th July 2020.

A number of Churches observed 'Creation Time', a period of reflection on climate issues from 1st September to 4th October and took part in a special service for Climate Sunday which this year took place on 4th September.

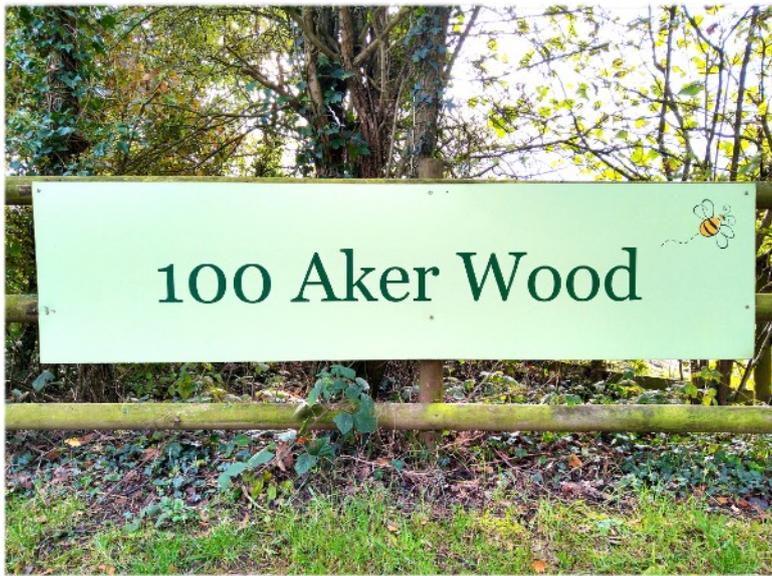
Tearfund, the Christian Charity which is inspired by God's love for creation and God's heart for Justice, have produced a set of new resources in relation to the climate emergency under the title 'Tearfund Reboot Campaign.'

On the subject of global greenhouse emissions Tearfund comment that 'the poorest 3.5 billion people are responsible for just ten per cent of emissions but the same people are already facing the worst impacts of climate change. Everyone has a part to play in tackling the huge and urgent challenge. We can build momentum for change by speaking up, inspiring others, living differently and crucially by praying. Further information can be obtained on the Tearfund website www.tearfund.org/reboot

For those who are members of Barnet U3A there is a new group which has recently started entitled Climate Change/Environment Group.

Please speak to **ANDREW MILLS** if you are interested in joining the Group.

Church Farm in Ardeley



Following Julian's message at Harvest Festival, when he considered how our spending often reveals what we value most, and compared the cost of food in this country with other countries, I thought I would share with you a supplier in Hertfordshire, Church Farm in Ardeley, which we came across during lockdown.

Church Farm is a community based, not-for-profit social farm, set up to create sustainable farming, including providing home grown vegetables, meat and poultry and fruit. Their website address is:-

<https://www.churchfarmardeley.co.uk/>

They also run a Rural Care and Education programme, providing training and work experience for people with learning difficulties and/or mental health issues, and for local schools and colleges.

Church Farm's weekly newsletters include many different topics, including highlighting the benefits of buying locally grown organic fruit and vegetables - grown without the use of pesticides or insecticides - and of the benefits of rearing farm animals with respect. In past articles they mention how pigs, cows and poultry are reared in some of our "Mega" farms in England, without much respect, it seems, for the animals themselves. In a more recent newsletter, Church Farm mentions

"advocates for factory farming tell us that 70% more food must be produced in order to feed a world population of 9.6 billion in 2050, and that intensive farming is the only way of achieving this. However, it has been calculated that all the cereals to be fed to intensively farmed livestock by 2050, could provide the necessary food energy to 3.5 billion people every year".

What's needed (they say) is a fairer distribution of food and curbing the demand for cheap meat and dairy.

Church Farm has also described, in some detail, how pigs, cows and chickens are currently reared in our large intensive "Mega" farms, and it seems to me the

welfare of animals in such places, is secondary to the business of making a profit. Intensive farming, where, for example, sows don't have space to even turn round in their farrowing crates, now accounts for 90% of pork sold in the UK, according to Compassion in World Farming.

I appreciate many have limited budgets, but I would add there are many additional environmental advantages of buying food carefully, and from our own personal experience, the products are noticeably tastier.

Although Church Farm is some distance from New Barnet, they do have lots of activities on-site, including forest trails and farm walks, a lovely teasop and a farm shop, and so this might be an excuse for a trip to the area for a walk in North Herts, perhaps with your children, or even grandchildren!

Church Farm deliver to EN post codes, and although there is a minimum charge, it may be possible to share deliveries with a friend or relative.

There is a "click and collect" service too from Aldenham Country Park (where we had a church picnic many years ago), which Church Farm also runs, and where there is a small farm shop, and a lovely walk in the "Hundred Aker Wood".

MALCOLM BOND

Stamps and Inkjet recycling

With Christmas fast approaching, over the coming months, you may receive more stamps than usual, so please continue to pass any used stamps and inkjet cartridges to me, or put them in my pigeonhole, or in the box downstairs.

Stamps: I've received a letter addressed to St John's from The Leprosy Mission, which I've put on the notice board, confirming they have been able to raise an amazing £64,780 in 2018 from donated stamps, postcards and coins.

"You have given a kind gift to our Stamps and Collectibles Bureau to help people who are the poorest of the poor, the most rejected, and the most unloved. But with your gift you have shown them love. I'd like to say a really big heart-felt thank you".

NICKY WARD

CRM Project Support Co-Ordinator"

Recycled inkjets: Again, please continue to pass these to me, or put them in my pigeonhole, or in the box downstairs. Money raised from recycling inkjets (via The Recycling Factory) is donated to the RSPB. Over £100 from St John's has been raised so far. Thank you for your support.

MALCOLM BOND



Computers for Barnet Refugee Service

During the pandemic Barnet Refugee Service (BRS) has continued to be available to refugees and asylum seekers. Obviously the services have had to be quickly adapted and it has become an online service rather than face to face. However, some workshops in small groups have occurred in the local park and on their allotment, and young people had outings around London during the summer. Food parcels are being delivered fortnightly to those in need.

The problem with much of the advice & guidance and zoom workshops being on-line, is that this way of communicating excludes many of those who need help, as they need a laptop to access the internet.

Has anyone any netbooks, pads or laptops (not desktops) which are no longer being used at home? Have you updated yours but have an old system which is still useable?

Hossein is willing to refurbish old ones (up to 10yrs old), so long as they do not require too much spending on them. A 5yr old laptop we had, Hossein got in working order, and it has gone to a Syrian family with four children. Farida Stanikzai (the operations manager), who spoke about the work of BRS in one of our services a few years ago, allocates the refurbished computer to families.

Please contact us if you can help.

Penny Trafford & Hossein Nejad

Email: ptrafford07@gmail.com

Recycling Spectacles

St. John's started collecting unwanted spectacles for the charity Vision Aid Overseas in 1995, and in the 25 years since then we have sent no less than 4,894 pairs of spectacles to them for reuse. Originally the spectacles were sent abroad and dispensed at eye camps by volunteer UK opticians, but after the rules were changed a few years ago the spectacles were recycled by recovering and selling the metal parts. Not surprisingly, this system ground to a halt during lockdown and we've now been informed by VAO that it will not be restarted as it is not now viable.

Consequently we are unable to accept more spectacles at St. John's, although we understand that Specsavers and some charity shops (e.g. Marie Curie) will accept them, and possibly spectacle cases. Please check first. We thank all who have contributed in the past; making a significant improvement to the lives of many in developing countries.

Our other recycling items (printer cartridges, foreign and UK stamps, and milk and fruit juice bottle tops) continue to be welcome. Fortunately, these items are small so until you can get to the reception points in the church building please accumulate them at home.

MALCOLM BOND AND HUGH MARTIN



SOCIAL GATHERING

The next **On Zoom** will be on
Wednesday 25 November between 8-9 pm.

This might be helpful in the event of a further restriction being announced, to help keep people in touch with each other, or if they just want a chat with others after a long day... Best Wishes

MALCOLM BOND

OTHER ZOOMS

Wed.18th Nov. 8pm

Fellowship Talk-Footsteps of the Famous in Finchley
 by Paul Baker-

* in Sanctuary and by zoom

* in sanctuary covid 19 restrictions permitting

Sat. 7th Nov. 10.30am

Zoom WDP (World day of prayer) Preparation Half
 day Conference for next year's Annual service, from
 10am. To get link code email your email address to
marjorie.oconnor@btinternet.com. (will be sent out
 in the previous week to Sat 7th Nov.)

Marjorie O'Connor

Wed 16th December TBA.

Fellowship AGM-Christmas celebration, probably 8pm and by Zoom.

"Eco Church Conference 2020"

- Aiming for Net Zero

This recent online event took place on Sat. 12th Oct. and was viewed by nearly 300 people from around the World. There were 8,000 video views plus also many "Zoom" viewers. Some of us from Green Christian Barnet Group joined-in via social media. The full day's programme was excellent with experts providing information, practical suggestions and news.

The presentations on a range of topics are being made available via Facebook on the page: "Eco Church Conference 2020".

We hope to be using some of the presentations in the future but to get a sample of the theme and to enjoy some good music, look and listen on Facebook for the final session which is a Closing Worship time.

The wonderful music's by: www.doxecology.com which is wonderful.(>>> spoiler: it includes some comments on the book of Revelation...inspirational & challenging!). enjoy! (Contact me for more details or if you do not have Facebook: phone: 07901 757960 or Email; ants98@yahoo.com)

TONY SHEPHERD

Famous Swan on Hampstead Heath



A friend has written and illustrated a book for families about a beautiful swan's lockdown love affair, 'There's Something About Wallace'. From heartbreak to fishing hooks, loneliness and to a chance meeting at The Swan Sanctuary, this story has it all! It also illustrates the history of the Heath .

If you are interested please visit her website www.deemclean.co.uk

LAURA TEMPLETON

URC Prayer Handbook 2021

Conversations

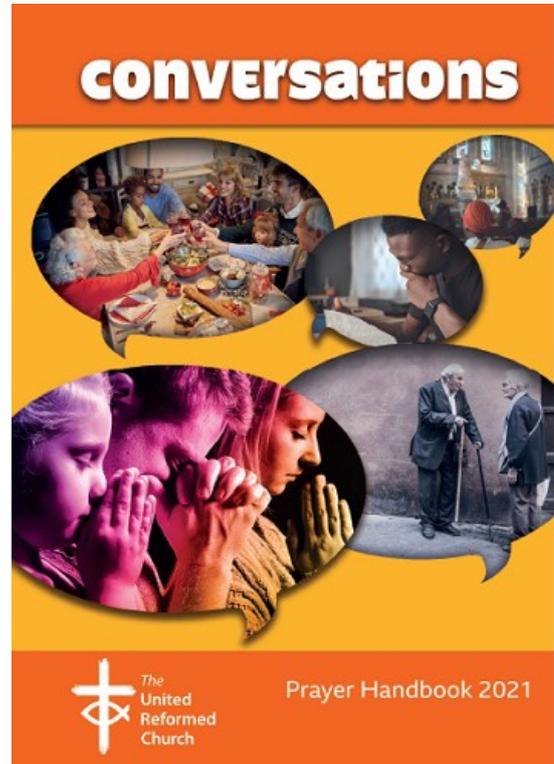
The next prayer handbook is edited once again by Karen Campbell and the Revd Ian Fosten.

Someone was once described as: “only ever on broadcast, never on receive”. That expression might describe how we often experience prayer. Prayers, particularly in church services, are spoken, offered, ‘broadcast’, often without a response being sought, or expected! We are certain, however, that prayer is meant to be rather more interactive than this. ‘Conversational’; us speaking with God.

We are seeking to express the deep truth that God, who is made known in Jesus, invites us into an active relationship. That relationship, like any other, is discovered and deepened when it is enriched through honest giving and receiving, speaking and listening.

This year’s Prayer Handbook comes in two sections. The first follows the pattern of linking a prayer to one or more of the set lectionary readings for particular days throughout the year.

For the second section, we invited contributions which arose out of the writers’ personal experiences of



conversing with God – the everyday and extraordinary situations in which we are moved to say ‘Sorry!’, ‘Help!’ or ‘Thank You!’, along with the issues which give rise to deep reflection, or to respond to God’s voice as heard through the scriptures and the world.

A copy costs just £4.99 – please let me know by as soon as possible if you would like me to order one for you.

ALISON BOND

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A TRIPLE WHAMMY FOR UGANDA: huge challenges from Covid-19, locusts and floods

Lake Victoria had record floods.

Ugandans think that Lake Victoria is the largest fresh water Lake in the world while the Americans think it is Lake Superior in their region.

Lake Victoria is regarded as Africa’s largest tropical lake and the second largest freshwater lake in the world. Located in East Africa, it is the source of the famous Nile River, bordered by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. There are 985 islands in the lake and it is a major tourist attraction offering exotic wildlife, flora and fauna. But tourism is no longer possible because of the pandemic plus also the locusts and flooding have prevented visitors from arriving.





In early May this year the lake flooded to a new record depth of 13.42 m. causing devastation in the surrounding areas. 32,000 people were displaced and six Ugandans died, plus livelihoods and buildings were destroyed. The floods, which covered over 600 sq. kms., are receding slowly leaving behind ruined houses, hotels, fisheries, beaches and luxury houses as well as the humble homes of local workers. Employees had to fight to save 3 large hydroelectric dams which produce most of the region's electricity removing debris from the generators. Fortunately, early warnings prevented more deaths. In addition, many people have malaria from stagnant flood water which harbours the mosquito which spreads malaria. Some experts are alleging that the floods were the result of climate change. Others say that although



Climate Change is at play, the main driver is climate variability being driven by the Indian Ocean's Dipole. It is reported that this year's Dipole has been the strongest since 2001 with surface temperature peaking up to +2.1 C degrees in mid October 2019, maybe the result of climate change?

Two further challenges – locusts and refugees.

Locusts have caused havoc twice this year devastating vital food crops despite valiant efforts by the army spraying with insecticides. When this food source has gone there is no other local alternatives, so the price of food increases, adding to the burden of many people. Aid has been available to the 13 refugee camps in the north of the country. Recently, the World Food Project has been reduced thus affecting the lives of nearly 500,000 refugees. They had fled from fighting in Sudan only to end up facing starvation, and this is the current situation this month.

Covid-19 adds to the problems.

The latest reports show that the number of people affected continues to rise with nearly 10,000 cases and the number dying is stated as being 86. It's estimated that up to 2.6 million Ugandans could fall into poverty as the economy is increasingly in decline. Domestic demand is greatly reduced and overseas trade is badly hit. Life is hard as a form of lockdown continues.

It is not all bad news:

Christian and other leaders have been working together to encourage people and provide information to try and reduce anxieties. All religions are now live streaming over the media and social media. These are aimed to keep followers in strong faith, with calls for renewed prayer and fasting. Several non-denominational radio and TV stations have offered air time to religious leaders to communicate their faith in different local languages. An increased sense of sharing of problems and hope for the future has occurred.

Rosemary Nakasiita, a "member-at a distance" - of our Green Christian group, supports her local Good Samaritan School for the Deaf. Some friends within our group have provided financial support recently to buy essential food plus health and safety resources. These are needed to enable more residential children to return as the lockdown has somewhat eased.

The triple whammy has resulted in further understanding about just how inter-dependant we are, in Uganda, the U K and everywhere. Let us pray for God's help to Uganda as they seek to recover from these three challenges.

(By Tony Shepherd, with Rosemary Nakasiita and Stephen Magezi in Uganda, (Stephen is the husband of Gertrude - who we met here last year.)

Calendar

October

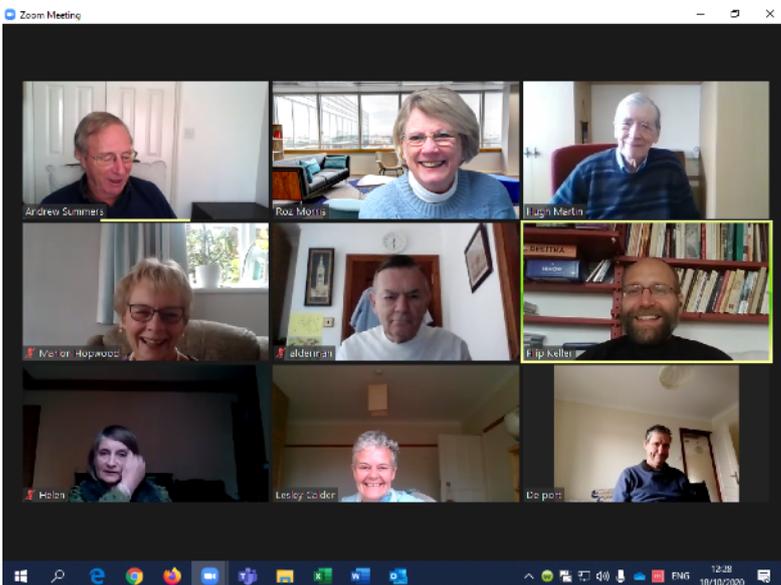
Wednesday 21	8:00 pm	Fellowship Tear Fund by Sarah Edwards in Sanctuary and via Zoom
Sunday 25	11:00 am	Worship led by David Paul and Richard Harvey in Sanctuary and via Zoom
Wednesday 28	8:00 pm	Social Gathering hosted by Malcolm Bond via Zoom

November

Sunday 1	11:00 am	All Saints Worship with Memorial and the Lord's Supper led by Julian Templeton in Sanctuary and via Zoom
Sunday 8	10:45 am	Worship for Remembrance Sunday led by Alison Bond in Sanctuary and via Zoom
Tuesday 10	7:45 pm	Elders' Meeting via Zoom
Wednesday 11	8:00 pm	Bible Discussion & Prayer via Zoom
Sunday 15	11:00 am	Worship led by Julian Templeton (10th Anniversary of JT's Induction) in Sanctuary and via Zoom
Tuesday 17	8:00 pm	Chipping Barnet Foodbank AGM via Zoom
Wednesday 18	8:00 pm	Fellowship in the footsteps of the famous in Finchley by Paul Baker, in Sanctuary and via Zoom
Sunday 22	11:00 am	Worship led by Valerie and Andrew Mills in Sanctuary and via Zoom
Wednesday 25	8:00 pm	Social Gathering hosted by Malcolm Bond via Zoom
Sunday 29	11:00 am	Advent 1 Worship led by Tony Alderman in Sanctuary and via Zoom

December

Sunday 6	11:00 am	Advent 2 Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Julian Templeton in Sanctuary and via Zoom
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Church Service 18 October

As well as those who gathered in the Sanctuary, it was great to see Filip Keller join us on Zoom from Svitavy. Some at home were able to chat with Filip after the service, and here is the screen grab.

We have had some sound and video quality challenges on Zoom, so we are grateful to Ron Mobbs who is working to improve this with boosted wifi and a new camera.