



SOLIHULL

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat
Communities

July 2020 Newsletter

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Matthew 6: 34



SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Based in the town centre, Solihull URC seeks to minister and witness to the local community, the wider town and the areas of Olton and Hobs Moat where we have formerly had a worshipping presence.

We share our mission with other Churches and are in partnership with others in the community. We invite you to join us as we seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

www.solihullurc.org.uk
www.centralsolihullchurches.org.uk

LEADERSHIP TEAM

VACANT - Minister

Gordon Justham - **Church Secretary & Elder**

Linda Faber - **Mission Enabler & Lettings Administration**

Maureen Butler - **Elder (worship & prayer, charities, social activities)**

Trixie Harman - **Elder (Youth & Children)**

Barrie Jones - **Elder (Property, Health & Safety)**

Elaine Jones - **Elder (Administration, Data protection, Catering)**

Jackie Justham - **Elder (charities, social activities)**

Gordon Laurie – **Elder**

Chris Harman - **Elder**

Liz Amos - **Treasurer**

Areas of special responsibility are listed in brackets.

All of our worship services, and other activities in our building, remain suspended until government restrictions on gatherings are lifted AND the Elders have appropriate safety measures in place.

PRIVATE PRAYER

We could now open this church building for private prayer – but we won't.

Why not? Because if you came here to pray we'd have to:

- make you wash or sanitise your hands at the door
- instruct you to wear a mask
- ask you if you have had Covid-19 symptoms, underlying health problems or got a flu jab (and turn you away if the answer to any of these was yes)
- tell you which seat you could sit in
- warn you not to sing
- make sure you left by a different door
- then clean and sanitise every surface you touched

Alternatively you could:

- sit in an armchair at home with a cup of tea, or
- sit in the park watching the birds, or
- walk along the country paths,

and talk to God just as easily. You don't need special words, a special place, special objects or special people to talk to God. He loves you and He's listening. So just do it.

The church building remains shut for the time being. The ears of heaven are not!

OPENING THE CHURCH

The Government have announced that churches can re-open for services from the 4th July. Churches do not have to open and those that do will have to comply with some strict conditions. At the time of writing it is still not known how detailed these restrictions will be nor do we know the views of the URC central secretariat and local synod. For the time being we will therefore keep the church closed. The Elders are keeping the situation under review and will announce appropriate changes when the guidance and regulations are clearer and if there is any change to the current situation.

Gordon Justham, Church Secretary.

The Lectionary readings for Sundays in July are as follows:

5 July Matthew 11.16-19, 25-30; Zechariah 9.9-12; Psalm 145.8-12;
Romans 7.15-25a

12 July Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23; Isaiah 55.10-13; Psalm 65.(1-8), 9-13;
Romans 8.1-11

19 July Matthew 13.24-30, 36-43; Isaiah 44. 6-8; Psalm 86. 11-17;
Romans 8.12-25

26 July Matthew 13.31-33, 44-52; 1 Kings 3.5-12; Psalm 119.129-136;
Romans 8.26-39

WHERE IS GOD?

Two little boys were known troublemakers, stealing everything they could get their hands on, even from the church. One day a priest stopped one of the boys and asked, "Where is God?" The boy shrugged and the priest repeated, "Where is God?" The boy ran out of the cathedral crying all the way back to his home where he hid in a wardrobe. Eventually his brother found him and asked, "What is wrong?" The crying boy replied, "We're in trouble now! God is missing and they think we took him!"

The first time I can remembering feeling totally isolated was when I was sent off to boarding school at the age of 11. I had to unpack my trunk containing all my belongings and lay everything out on the bed in inventory order with my name tapes showing, ready for inspection by my new House Mistress. I said a tearful goodbye to my mum, then I was alone. I had left behind my family and friends and I was surrounded by complete strangers. We were only allowed out for home at half term and for one weekend either side. The only communication we had from outside was when we were sent letters. I looked forward to all letters from family or friends and my mother would ensure that I had a minimum of a letter each week to look forward to and she wrote lovely chatty letters. In return every Sunday morning before chapel we were expected to write a letter home. After all it was only fair, but after a while I didn't want to have to say what the food was like, how Maths and French were going or what the score was in the latest hockey or lacrosse match. Basically, I wanted to be at home. We did not have the benefit of modern technology such as computers, mobile phones, etc. We were not even allowed to use the ordinary phone. I felt isolated even though I was not alone.

My generation has been fortunate to grow up with emerging technology and we regularly use mobile phones, computers or iPads to communicate when at home or on holiday by texting, email or Skype. However, during this period of lockdown we have downloaded Zoom

and Houseparty, resulting in much awaited and enjoyable face to face contact with friends as far away as Hong Kong and Greece but also allowing us to speak to lots of different people in different parts of this country and abroad simultaneously. More recently we were able to join in with a funeral service 'virtually' which was a totally different experience but those involved felt a togetherness which would not have been possible any other way. With us all still being at home far more than usual, it has allowed us to talk more by arrangement as, let's face it, we have far more flexible time, or at least should have. We are still really missing hugging our grandchildren but Facetime has become an alternative necessity for many grandparents like us although a few are at least now able to form a 'bubble' with another household. Ahead of the official answers being published, we went on Zoom as a family to share our answers for the Christian Aid TV programme quiz. My brother was victorious and the rest of us hopefully humble in defeat. All good fun. We know many people have been able to carry on with lessons from schools and colleges, to join in quizzes, watch amazing performances of choirs, dancers or funny clips on YouTube or enjoy church services streamed online which has been a real blessing to so many, including us. We have often commented that at least this pandemic has hit us now rather than before we had social media. We have been able to stay in touch. However, we realise not everyone has the opportunity or wants to engage with social media which means isolation is currently a very real feeling for quite a number of people. But as Steve Faber suggested physical isolation does not need to be social isolation as we can all pick up the phone, write a card or even a letter, all of which can make a huge difference to someone.

Whilst we were sitting outside in our garden in the unusually warm weather during April and May, it was very easy to feel God and praise him for the wonder of his creation all around us as we were able to watch the new life unfolding in the flowerbeds and comment on the occasional butterfly or solitary bee flying around. It was such a rare

opportunity to be outside so much and feel the warmth of the sun and observe the garden springing into life. Birds had made their nests and were busy making endless trips back and forth from the garden to their young hidden in neighbouring trees or shrubs. Since then we have been happy to see many young birds exploring the garden who have safely fledged after the hard work and devotion of their parents. It certainly lifted our spirits and we thanked God for the fact we had a garden to escape into. The wonderful weather has continued, encouraging the garden to flourish so we are now also able to praise God for the fruit and vegetables successfully growing in our garden and greenhouse. However, as soon as the weather outside changes it is easy to feel your own mood alter with it.

In his address during his communion service in May, Steve Faber told us that God is not unknown or unknowable. During this lengthening time of separation from our friends, family and our own church communities, Steve reminded us that God is very close and knowable to each one of us in person, not as a distant being.....

In Exodus 14, the Children of Israel found themselves in a crisis, trapped with nowhere to go, wondering where God was. Moses had persuaded them to head for the Promised Land but having set off with immense excitement and great expectation they found themselves surrounded by mountains with the Red Sea in front of them. Their feeling of hope quickly turned to the real fear of death in the wilderness. We must remember that the same God who delivered the Children of Israel out of Egypt will deliver us from any crisis we currently face. Fear can be paralysing, but when there is no fear, we can feel God close by. **Exodus 14:13** - Moses said to his people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today."

In a crisis we need to be strengthened in order to walk forward in faith. We need to know that God is very close to us. **Revelation 3:20** - "Here I

am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” How would you answer the question where is God? Some young children were asked this very same question and below are some of their replies:

- Up in heaven.
- In a city up in the sky.
- In a different dimension.
- He’s in the clouds.
- He walks along with me to school every day so I will be safe.
- God lives inside every living thing, so my doctor has seen God when he cuts people open.
- God doesn’t have a house. He doesn’t need one except on Sundays because that’s when he needs to rest.

So, during this current worldwide crisis do we personally know where God is? Communication by many different means is absolutely crucial. Maybe we are communicating with God more because we are unsettled and fearful of the unknown. I know it has made me more aware of my mortality and vulnerability and I am ever thankful for all those on the front line while we safely shield at home. Again, in the Pentecost service on 30th May, Linda challenged us by asking if we are taking the opportunity to read the scriptures more than we have ever done before and reminding us we have the opportunity to find many new ways in which to worship. We must take this increased level of communication forward once this current crisis is over, and we know with God’s help it will be. As Linda reminded us, ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’. Whether we are out enjoying what will be our new ‘normal’ lives, or during times of crisis, He is with us at all times, but we need to open the door and let Him in. Am I ready to listen, are we ready to listen? In times of crisis God is still here. We just need to stand still and listen.

Julia Ensor

SHOE BOXES

I hope you are all busy knitting teddies and dogs from the patterns that Linda has sent us (and being more successful at it than I am). If anyone would like the leaflet that tells us about what to put in the boxes I would gladly send you one if you give me your contact details.

You can ring me on 0121 707 4285 or email me at annecherry@talktalk.net

Keep knitting! **Anne Cherry**

EDUCAID AFRICA REQUEST

Dear Friends,

When Jenni and I travelled to Kenya in February, one of the schools that we visited was Malau Primary School. This is a school that we have supported since it was just a nursery school. We received donations towards the cost of its classrooms some years ago from one of the churches in Solihull that supports us and we have seen the school grow from strength to strength.

One problem that we noticed was that, despite it having a pupil population of 400 (210 boys and 190 girls), the toilet situation is very poor with just 2 toilets for staff, 2 toilets for boys and 4 toilets for girls. (These numbers are of individual toilets, not sets of toilets). It is obvious that they desperately need increased facilities.

We have asked them to get three quotes for extra toilets and the cheapest quote was in the region of £3500. We take for granted that there should be adequate toilet facilities in our schools at home but that is not so at this school.

At the present time they are not able to reopen their schools because of the Corvid 19 threat but, when they do return, they will need to be extra careful regarding sanitation etc. and it would be good if we could provide these much-needed extra facilities.

I am therefore asking if any of you could make donations, however small, towards this cost so that we can then send them the funds to build the extra toilets.

If you can help, please can you send a cheque made out to “EducAid Africa” to our treasurer – Jenni Kitson, 4 Sutton Lodge, Blossomfield Road, Solihull B91 1NB. If you wish to do it by bank transfer, please e-mail me for the details.

I hope that you all are keeping safe and healthy,

Every good wish,

Ian D. Carnell MBE

Chairman of the Trustees

EducAid Africa

WORDS

In these difficult times the words of W Edwards Deming ring true:

"In God we trust; all others bring data"

Gordon Laurie



COULD THIS BE A MESSAGE TO US ALL?

Imagine, if you will, that you work for a company whose president found it necessary to travel out of the country and spend an extended period of time abroad. So he says to you and the other trusted employees, "Look, I'm going to leave. And while I'm gone, I want you to pay close attention to the business. You manage things while I'm away. I will write to you regularly. When I do, I will instruct you in what you should do from now until I return from this trip." Everyone agrees.

He leaves and stays gone for a couple of years. During that time, he writes often, communicating his desires and concerns. Finally, he returns. He walks up to the front door of the company and immediately discovers everything is in a mess--weeds flourishing in the flower beds, windows broken across the front of the building, the girl at the front desk dozing, loud music roaring from several offices, two or three people engaged in horseplay in the back room. Instead of making a profit, the business has suffered a great loss. Without hesitation he calls everyone together and with a frown asks, "What happened? Didn't you get my letters?"

You say, "Oh, yeah, sure. We got all your letters. We've even bound them in a book. And some of us have memorized them. In fact, we have 'letter study' every Sunday. You know, those were really great letters." I think the president would then ask, "But what did you do about my instructions?" And, no doubt the employees would respond, "Do? Well, nothing. But we read every one!"

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal and a bottle of wine, they went to sleep. Sometime later, Holmes awoke and nudged his friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

"I see millions and millions of stars." "What does that tell you?"
"Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you?"

"Watson, you idiot. Someone has stolen our tent."

Sometimes we can observe a whole lot of things that God doesn't really care about, and miss the obvious thing that He's vitally interested in. See also Mat 23:24: "Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"

Ian Carnell

CHRISTIAN AID



Christian Aid Week was not what it has been in the past. Some people gave through the church bank account, which will be passed on, and a further £115.49 came via me which I have sent off on your behalf. Maybe some of you gave directly through the Christian Aid website – and it is not too late to do so, if you haven't given already.

VAL GREEN

We are sorry to hear the news that Val Green died at the weekend (21st June), we are yet to find out what brought her life to an end. She was a member at Hobs Moat before joining in with worship at the central Solihull premises and always missed the old 'building'. She has two sons and we remember them in our prayers at this time.

HALL

We had to wait a while longer than expected for the painting work to begin due to the decorator hurting his leg, but we are delighted that the Hall has been painted and the broken plaster work mended. It looks great and I have put up some refreshed, and new things, on the noticeboards and we are ready in there to give hospitality to groups when they are able to recommence. **Linda Faber**

CHURCHES TOGETHER

There has been a general request asking if there is anyone who would be willing and able to help staff other churches which decide to open their doors to private prayer.

TWENTY 20'S FOR 2020

The next set of prayer notes have now been sent through the post to those who signed up to the prayer scheme for this year. If you have been using the suggested timetable you will now be half way through the scheme.

NEWSLETTER SPECIAL EDITION



We are going to have an August Edition of this newsletter, which we don't usually. There may be news of plans to share in particular but it would be a shame if that were the only thing in there. Please write something to keep people cheered/informed etc. And can I just take the opportunity to publicly thank Stuart on behalf of us all for putting the newsletter together each month and being willing to sort out an extra edition. Those of you who have had the job before will know how he was probably looking forward to a month off.

EMERGING INTO THE "NEW NORMAL"

For those of you who wish to consider how church might look in the first months after lockdown, you might take a look at the document "Emerging into the 'new normal'" written by the Synod Moderators of the URC. If you have a computer you can find it on the URC website urc.org.uk where you should click on the pink/purple box on the left 'latest information guides'. Scroll down through the guides to 'Emerging into the "new normal"' which has a green and yellow cover.



IF GOD SHOULD GO ON STRIKE

How good it is that God above has never gone on strike,
Because He was not treated fair in things He didn't like.
If only once He'd given up and said, "That's it I'm through!
I've had enough of those on earth, so this is what I'll do.
"I'll give my orders to the sun – Cut off the heat supply!
And to the moon – Give no more light" and run the oceans dry.
Then just to make things really tough and put the pressure on,
Turn off the vital oxygen till every breath is gone."
You know He would be justified, if fairness was the game
For no one has been more abused or met with more disdain.
And yet he carries on, supplying you and me
With all the favours of his grace and everything for free.
Men say they want a better deal, and so on strike they go.
But what a deal we've given God, to whom all things we owe.
We don't care who we hurt to gain the things we like.
But what a mess we'd all be in, if God should go on strike.

Ian Carnell

KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

Minister

VACANT

Church Secretary

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gordonjustham@talktalk.net

Website

www.solihullurc.org.uk

Hall Lettings in Central Solihull – 07925 573259

Generations Project - enabling the Church in care homes

www.generationssolihull.org.uk generationssolihull@icloud.com

Moments

Mondays 10am—12 noon@ Central Solihull

AUGUST NEWSLETTER

Material for the August edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

stuartkmills@gmail.com

by Sunday 19th July please.