



SOLIHULL

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat
Communities

April 2020 Newsletter

*With great power the apostles continued to testify to the
resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so
powerfully at work in them all*

Acts 4:33



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.

Dear Friend,

The Government have made significant announcements regarding the actions that society should be taking to protect itself as much as possible from the effects of coronavirus. In consequence, and in line with guidance issued by the central office of the United Reformed Church, Solihull United Reformed Church will be closed for Sunday worship for the foreseeable future. The letter from Reverend John Proctor, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church is available to view on the central church's website www.urc.org.uk

This is sad as many people, particularly those living alone, welcome the social aspects of coming to church in addition to the spiritual aspects. However we recognise that many of those living alone are in the age groups that are vulnerable to the virus and who are being asked to practice social distancing. We have therefore put in place a telephone service whereby everyone will be contacted by either an elder, non-serving elder or other volunteer to enable prayer requests, pastoral news and the need for practical help to be passed on. This, we think, should be the most inclusive way of communicating as it accommodates those who are not able and confident in using a computer.

A number of United Reformed churches are either streaming their Sunday services or they are recorded for viewing or listening to at a later date. This is a link to the churches that are offering this facility is <https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3385-coronavirus-worshipping-digitally>. In addition the BBC offer a number of religious broadcasts; most notable would be the television programme "Songs of Praise" but Radio 4 and a number of local radio stations also offer live streaming of religious services.

Finally, a prayer:

Lord Jesus, In the midst of a storm, You said, 'Peace be still.' bid our anxious fears subside, sustain your church in faith, hope and love.

Bring our nation through this tumult. Grant wisdom to those with heavy responsibilities, And healing and hope to those who are infected.

Amen.

Keep safe, best wishes.

Gordon Justham

Church Secretary, Solihull United Reformed Church

DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

During this difficult time when the church is suspended for Sunday Worship you may like to access some other resource to help you in your life of faith. I use the "Roots" material when preparing worship as it is aligned with the Revised Common Lectionary. Roots have prepared some free material for everyone to access. The United Reformed Church also provide free access to its Daily Devotions material as well as now providing access to a Sunday service. The BBC also provide a variety of religious programmes. Some additional detail is given below.

It is appreciated that the material from Roots and the URC (and catch up on BBC programmes via their iplayer) is accessed via computer, tablet or smartphone and that this may be an issue if you do not have access to one of these items. Please let Gordon Justham know if you would like to have a photocopy of the weekly material produced by Roots or the URC or both.

www.rootsontheweb.com

On home page you will see a section entitled "Worship at Home". Click on the "Free Resources" button in this section and you will be taken to a page that has a number of free resources. Scroll down the page and

you will find a sheet entitled “Live Your Faith”. Click on this to then open up the Live your faith detail.

www.urch.org.uk

The central office of the URC are also providing daily devotions material and a weekly service. Please go to devotions.urch.org.uk to access the material. There is a link at the top of the page for subscribing for daily devotions. There is no charge for subscribing. In addition there is also a page with links to other URCs that will be either streaming their service or recording it for later access.

www.bbc.co.uk

The BBC have announced that they will broadcast a Sunday morning service during this period. I do not have any further detail at present but this is likely to be on Radio 4. This is in addition to Songs of Praise which is typically broadcast on BBC 1 and a number of church services broadcast by local radio stations.

Gordon Justham

GIVING

Please can I ask for you to remember that the church relies on your giving to enable our corporate ministry and witness to go on. Whilst we are not meeting, we are obviously not receiving offerings in our services. Please can I ask you to put aside a generous and meaningful amount to support the work of the church which you can give once we can meet again. If you are a part of the envelope scheme please keep using those. Alternatively, if you have the facility you can give by bank transfer to us at:

Bank: Lloyds Bank, Solihull

Account name: Solihull United Reformed Church

Sort code: 30-97-78

Account number: 00257130

Please let us know at Solihullurc@gmail.com that your giving is for the offertory so that we can place it in the right field in the accounts.

**LECTIONARY BIBLE READINGS FOR REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY
YEAR A ARE GIVEN BELOW. (Gospel readings in bold)**

Palm Sunday (5 April 2020)

Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 118.1-2, 9-29; Philippians 2.5-11; **Matthew 21.1-11**

Easter Day (12 April 2020)

Jeremiah 31.1-6; Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24; Acts 10.34-43; **Matthew 28.1-10**;

Easter 2 (19 April 2020)

Acts 2.14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1.3-9; **John 20.19-31**

Easter 3 (26 April 2020)

Acts 2.14a, 36-41; Psalm 116.1-4,12-19; 1 Peter 1.17-23; **Luke 24.13-35**

WORDS OF COMFORT

Lord, you knew what it was to be left alone when family and friends were gone. Yet you could say you were not alone, for your Father was with you. Help us to feel your presence with us always.

As I grow older, Lord, I pray, not for more wisdom, gold or power, but that I may know each passing hour, a stronger faith if skies grow grey.

St Paul when he was in prison wrote:

“I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.”

“I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” *Philippians 4v11 &13*

EASTER DAY WORSHIP

For some people personal relationship in worship is very important. By this I mean that it matters to some people that worship be led by someone they know as it is an important factor helping them meet with God. Others worship best through the sharing in the socialising time after the formal service.

We can't do anything about the socialising, though we have in place a phone pastoral scheme for everyone who worships regularly with us and we encourage you to phone each other as well.

To help in a small way for the other problem we are looking into an Easter Day live-streaming communion service of our own led by Steve Faber. I know this doesn't help those of you without a computer and I am sorry.

If you are on the church email list you will be sent instructions a few days before Easter to help you work out how to access the service when it is broadcast and to give you a test run.

If you have gained access to a computer in this crisis, that we don't already know about, please let us have your email address so we can keep in touch better. Email me at solihullurc.org.uk and I will automatically receive your email address.

As it will be a communion service on Easter Day you might like to think about what you want to use for bread and wine. There is no need to worry about trying to get wine or grape juice especially with shopping being so difficult. If you don't have either of these, remember the important thing is focussing on the presence of Jesus.

Linda Faber

Another Tomorrow

There's always another tomorrow

However hard the day

There's always an end to sorrow;

Time wipes our tears away.

There's always a reason for living,

Though sad your heart may be. Amen

Lord Jesus, help me to accept willingly whatever suffering I am called to bear in my life. Show me how to shoulder my burdens as you did, purely and simply for love, and grant me the gift of patience.

Chris & Trixie Harman

**COACH TRIPPERS UNITED
TRENTHAM GARDENS. STAFFORDSHIRE
Thursday 16th April**



Sadly this event is cancelled.

David Argall 704 4006

LEPROSY MISSION

Many thanks to everyone who supported the Leprosy Mission, we raised a wonderful £473.36.

A special mention of Anne Lamb (who sadly passed away recently) but was, along with her family and friends, over many years an ardent supporter of the Leprosy Mission.

A big thank you once again. **Sue Plant**

ANNE LAVERY (17/2/31 – 27/2/20)

Anne's family held a committal service for Anne at Robin Hood Crematorium on Thursday 10 March. The family were grateful that Ian Carnell was able to lead the service. Due to the current situation with the Coronavirus epidemic the family took the difficult decision to postpone the planned Service of Thanksgiving for Anne that was to be held at the church.

Anne was an active member of Solihull URC for almost 50 years and during that time had made many friends within the congregation and other groups connected with the church. The family are conscious that many of these friends would have wanted to attend a service for Anne and so a Service of Thanksgiving will be held later in the year, when hopefully some level of normality returns to enable people to attend.

The family would like to thank the care given to Anne whilst she was in Birchmere House Care Home and everyone from the church for their support and prayers over the past few months, which have been a great comfort to them.

NEW GRANDPARENTS

Ailsa and Alec Betts became grandparents for the first time when their son Gregory and his wife, Lowri gave birth to a baby girl called Olwen on 26 February. The new parents are doing well, albeit they are a little tired. Although Anne didn't meet her second great grandchild she was very happy to learn of her arrival and did see a photo of Olwen.

**Cancellation of
Christian Aid
Coffee Morning
2020**



Given the current unprecedented circumstances it will come as no surprise to you that the Christian Aid Coffee Morning on May 9th will NOT be taking place.

Likewise, Christian Aid have said that house to house collections will not go ahead in Christian Aid week .

In due course we will have to see if something can be arranged which allows us to get together and at least raise some funding for Christian Aid.

Thank you for the donations of paperback books already received. These will be stored and sold at a later date in aid of the charity.

Thank you.

Myles Ensor

LIVING AS EASTER PEOPLE

Spring is in the air!

Do we feel like Zebedee? Those of us who are old enough will remember Zebedee in the Magic Roundabout that exciting children's TV programme.

Yes, Spring is in the air we only have to look around us – clumps of snowdrops in gardens, the real harbingers of spring, in woods, by the roadside, bulbs appearing with arrays of daffodils and blossom is opening on the trees. Everything is re-awakening – it is nearly Easter when we remember one of the greatest events of history -the Resurrection.

A little boy in India was playing football when he made a splendid kick. "Parum, Yesuswami, Parum" "Look, Lord Jesus, Look". When I read this it made me think – is that how we think about Jesus? That he is around and about us in our daily life - he is there as a living person interested in our lives. Sometimes I think not and Easter Sunday is there to tell us about it. Remember the empty tomb and the words "He is not here he has been raised" Jesus was alive bringing his risen life to the disciples. The presence of the risen Christ was with them and in them - every path led to God – everything was associated with him – a lamp, a garment, the sower in the field, breadmaking, searching for lost coins, wine in bottles. We too have our associations we take bread and we take wine but we need to enlarge these symbols and see God in everything around us – in nature, sunrise, sunset, stars, hills, valleys, the sea, our neighbours, the poor, the underprivileged, the hungry. With this inner presence the disciples and the early church proclaimed the Risen Christ transforming and changing the world and society. This is now our role as Easter people. D. H. Lawrence reminds us how important this is. He says that we preach Christ born at Christmas, Christ crucified which is Good Friday and Christ risen which is Easter but after that till November and All Saint's the year belongs to the Risen Lord – all the summer and all the autumn belong to Christ,

We sometimes we forget this and focus on Christ crucified but the resurrection is to life not death we should walk this earth with gladness because Jesus is alive and the Holy Spirit is working in us and calling us not to live for ourselves but to take up our crosses and follow Jesus into a new world, his kingdom and go out into this broken, hurting, sin-filled world and bring people into God's kingdom, God's banquet, God's everlasting glory.

LET'S LIVE AS EASTER PEOPLE!

Irene Bound

TWO HORSES IN A FIELD

Have you heard about the two horses in a nearby field? If you stand by the gate and watch them, you will notice something strange. The one horse is blind, but has been kept and has a good home.

If you listen you will hear the sound of a bell and if you look around you will see that the sound comes from the smaller horse that lives there too. Attached to her head collar is a small bell. It lets the blind horse know where she is, so that he can follow her.

Watching these two friends, you will see that she is always checking on him and that he listens for her bell and then slowly follows her. He trusts her, that she will not lead him astray.

In the same way, God does not throw us away because we are not perfect or because we have challenges or problems. He watches over us and sends others to help us when we are in need.

Sometimes we are the blind horse, guided by God and people who He sends into our lives. Sometimes we are like the guide horse, helping others to see God. **Chris & Trixie Harman**

TWENTY 20'S FOR 2020 – April Latest

In February, in church, I introduced a prayer scheme designed to encourage more prayer for our town than we managed last year. 20 people signed up. One house-group undertook to use it too.

The scheme asks people to pray for our town for twenty minutes, twenty times through the year. Each prayer time is allocated a different topic and I am supplying material to help with filling the prayer time.

The next booklets are now available. (I had only issued the first 4 at the launch.) Those of you who signed up will be receiving these next booklets by post. If you would like to join the scheme it is not too late. I can post them all to you or I will be putting them on the church website for you to download for yourself in the next week or two.

Linda Faber



THE WALL

You may be aware of the project to build a national landmark of hope called The Wall. It will be on our 'patch' in the West Midlands. It is an ambitious project calling attention to the millions of ways that God answers prayers. The planning application has been submitted and the latest requests for prayer are as follows:

- We are thrilled that our planning application has been submitted and the review is well underway. Please pray that this process continues to go smoothly, without significant obstacles or issues.
- We are so thankful for our current monthly donors. However, we need more in order to meet our increasing outgoings - please pray that God will meet our monthly needs.
- We are grateful to be receiving invites and opportunities to speak at churches and conferences throughout 2020. Please pray for us to secure opportunities that will lead to amazing connections and fruitful support.



BREAKFAST CLUB FOR THE HOMELESS – April Latest

With the latest situation of not being able to organise meetings you will not be surprised that there is not being any progress made on the launch of the breakfast club that we were getting very excited about. Everything is currently 'on hold' as we watch and wait over how the next few months will work themselves out.

The breakfast Club is for the homeless, and near homeless, of Solihull. We will be hosting the project that SIAS (Solihull Integrated Addiction Service) and the council will run.

Information about the plans for the Breakfast Club were in the March issue of this magazine.

Linda Faber

EDUCAID AFRICA VISIT TO KENYA 2020

On Thursday 6 February I set off for Kenya along with Jenni, our treasurer. We travelled to Heathrow where we each booked in 2 x 23kg cases. One contained gifts for the pupils and the other personal belongings (+ 5 deflated footballs in my case for the schools!!). We flew through the night on Kenyan Airways arriving at Nairobi at 5am. After passing through immigration etc we caught the flight to Mombasa where we were met by a taxi which took us to our hotel. We arrived just before breakfast had finished being served so enjoyed a hearty breakfast!



Eventually we were shown to our respective rooms which were next to each other and each had a balcony overlooking one of the swimming pools and, beyond that, the sea! I have to tell you that we personally met the cost of flights and hotel and none of these expenses were paid for by our charity.

Meanwhile I unpacked and began acclimatising to the heat and relaxing in the pleasant surroundings of the Voyager Beach Hotel, our regular base here now. Owned by the family of Jomo Kenyatta, it is Kenyan run and the many employees, all local, are delightful. We were welcomed back by the staff like old friends as if we were here every week!

Saturday 8 February

During the morning we met up with our EducAid Africa representatives in Mombasa, Stephen and Jonah Arome along with their wives. These two brothers organise everything for us here in Kenya. We looked at our itinerary for the week, and caught up with our old friends. We enjoyed chatting with them all, enjoying a cool drink and then treated them to their lunch in the dining area. After they departed, we sat in the shade and had a dip in the pool to cool down – enjoying the heat - whilst at home you were enjoying floods and storms!!?

Sunday 9 February

We enjoyed a quiet day, preparing the itinerary and sorting out the gifts that we had brought - along with sitting in the shade and another dip in the swimming pool.

Monday 10 February

Jenni and I finally set off from the hotel in Stephen's car as the hired vehicle they had arranged did not work out. Unfortunately, this meant we were rather later setting off.

We were heading for Mazeras School which has Methodist church

connections. We have just two sponsored pupils at this boys' school, Stephen and Safari, and they had just finished a Biology practical exam when we arrived. Safari had been taken on a couple of years ago as another sponsored student when Jenni last visited. This was because he was about to be sent home due to there being no one to pay his fees. Both young men are hardworking and we hope they will do well in their final exams in November. It was good to be able to present them with revision books to help them study. We have had several donations of money and a recent fundraiser that helped to fund this purchase.

After Mazeras School we returned along the dirt track, passing a group of solo motorbikes carrying construction materials- lengths of timber and metal roofing, We re-joined the main Nairobi road briefly before turning right on the road to Kaloleni. Three years ago, the countryside had been brown and parched with even the palm trees dying because of the lack of rains. This year there was more than ample rain in November so the countryside is green.

This is a poor rural area in that many of the population are dependent on their small plots of land to produce food for the year for the family. Any income is from the excess that can be sold. Some of the dwellings are constructed of stone and cement, but many are still of mud on a timber frame with palm leaf roofing. We were able to have a brief stop for lunch, not far from the Methodist church at Ribe, where our late president and former missionary, Rev. Harry Mills married his wife Joan, ...most of the contents of our packed lunch from the hotel going to our Kenyan friends while we survive, from preference, on a banana and some cereal bars, and sharing what water we had between us.

We then arrived at Ribe Girls School. We have just four sponsored pupils here at the moment and they were pleased to join us: Two in year 2 and two in year 3. They were pleased to share their aspirations with us and seemed happy at the school. One told us that her aunt had

been sponsored by EducAid Africa many years before. The girls at Ribe were pleased to receive sets of revision books and various other gifts of pens, maths sets and toiletries.

While there we met a previous pupil, Fatuma who had been sponsored by Lyndon School at Ribe and left last year. She is hoping to find a place on a nursing training course and may be looking for further sponsorship for that.

It was then time to drive the short distance to Ribe Boys' School where we now sponsor 7 boys, having taken on 4 new boys there this January. Ribe Boys' School became a prestigious National School a few years ago and the fees became too high for us, but it has now been regulated by the government so the fees are once more manageable.

Last time we were here there were many planned improvements that had not yet come to pass. However, this time, we could see new buildings, including a teaching block, a library and IT suite (still awaiting most of the computers) and a new dormitory with bathrooms indoors.

We had to wait here to meet the boys as they were all in exams, so we spent some time in conversation with the Principal and the Chaplain. We were able to meet with all the boys except one Form 1 pupil who could not be found. He turned up at the last minute when we were about to leave and, as it was time for him to go and eat, there was only time for him to receive a few gifts and for us to take a photo, but sadly no chat.

I spent some time talking to the others and we provided the older pupils with the revision books they had requested. Meanwhile we heard of the case of a young man in Form 4, Jonathan, who has potential to do well but had no way of paying the fees. We were able to give him the chance he needed to complete his studies. He was very happy. It was late when we left, and almost dark when we arrived back

at the hotel, just in time to change for dinner. A long day but a good one. Stephen must have been tired too as he was the one driving!

Tuesday 11 February

A day of rest for us all as there is a Public Holiday for the funeral of Daniel Moi, Kenya's second President, who had reached the fine old age of 103.

Wednesday 12 February

Today our itinerary was to visit St John's School for Girls, St Luke's Hospital in Kaloleni, then St George's School for Boys a little beyond and finally to call on one of our past students who had not been well. We left the hotel around 9.15am to head out through Mombasa again, once more in Stephen's car with the four of us and a boot full of revision books and some other gifts for the students. There were the usual traffic issues through Mombasa, especially where they are excavating deep holes to improve the Nairobi road out towards the airport. Once on the new section we could pick up some speed, then turned right at Mazeras towards Kaloleni. Once again, we saw many more tuk-tuks in town and increasing numbers of motorbikes, particularly used as taxis. The maximum number of people we spotted on one bike was 5 - this did include children. (Not one wearing a crash helmet!)

Kaloleni itself has expanded with a larger population as it becomes a more important administration centre. St John's School also has signs of expansion with new buildings on site. It also has a population of large birds living in the trees on site, something of a pest as they are very noisy.

Here we met up with Beatrice who is now in Form 4 and doing very well. It was good to chat to her and learn of her aspirations. We handed over some revision books and gifts. This young lady had received a visit from her sponsors barely 2 weeks ago as they had been

over on holiday in Kenya. We hope she will do well in her KCSE exams in November.

We then moved on to St Luke's Hospital - around the corner where we have visited many times before. Traditionally we have provided medicines for St Luke's Day in October when people come for free treatment, but this did not happen last year. The whole place is run down and only operating a skeleton outpatient service. The buildings are needing upgrading and basic repair. Such a shame as the local population need a source of medical care on their doorstep, the alternative is some distance away.

After leaving St Luke's hospital, we drove out of Kaloleni and off the tarmac road along the rutted dirt track up to St George's School, another former missionary school built on a hill for a cooling breeze. Unfortunately, the cooling breeze was absent! Stephen found us somewhere where we could stop to share our packed lunch, but there was little shade. In fact, because we had heard that the boys there were having exams too, we had a brief window of opportunity to speak to them between their lunch and afternoon exams.

We met in the Deputy Principal's office which was rather small once it was filled with 4 visitors and 6 grown teenage boys! In the event it was really rather rushed. We had only 10 to 15 minutes to chat, give them their gifts, take photos. The boys were very pleasant and cheerful and I spoke with them while Jenni took some photos. They were delighted to receive their revision books and gifts. One of the boys also had a special gift from his sponsor. One of our sponsored pupils was having to repeat a year, which rarely happens, but the sponsor was prepared to give him another chance. So we were able to give him some encouragement to work hard. The boys would have liked to hang on to the footballs but had to return to class to do more exams, so they were handed to the teacher along with the pump and markers.

We then had time to visit Beatrice, formerly sponsored as a pupil and then on a nurses' training course. She has been working as a nurse for quite a few years now. We knew she had been ill and was unable to meet us in Mombasa on Saturday. She said she lived near St George's so we set out to find her house. It turned out that 2 to 3 kilometres was actually 7 kilometres - and along a very rough dirt road. However, we eventually found her home and she was expecting us. Her sister was there to help look after the house and care for her 2-year-old daughter. Her husband Anthony teaches at a Primary School - literally just down the road and he walked down to meet us.

It was lovely to meet up again but we were sorry to hear about Beatrice's sudden illness that had left her very weak. Fortunately, her walking is progressing and we are hopeful she will make a full recovery. She would have given us a meal but we needed to return to Mombasa before the traffic got too bad. Another long but very interesting day!

Thursday 13 February

This was our day to visit M'bungoni Nursery and Malau School and Nursery. We left the hotel around 9.30am and made our way across Mombasa through the traffic and roadworks to the Nairobi Road. As it was in Stephen's car, we had a few challenges on the rough tracks. Once through the construction area where the Chinese are building a new motorway, near the terminus of the new railway line to Nairobi which is now open, the journey was much speedier.

We arrived at M'bungoni Nursery as the children were having their daily Ugi, which is funded by Educaid Africa. This is a maize porridge with extra nutritional ingredients that helps those children who have little food at home. We discovered that their plastic mugs are much in need of replacement (due to bites into the rims by rats) and also needed a cupboard to keep them and other items away from the



vermin. It immediately went on the list of small things we can do to help them. They were also practising for some local fun races where even small children run

races carrying jars of sand on their heads. This is part of a tradition which prepares them for collecting water in large containers and carrying them often long distances. It still happens in the rural areas where this school is set.

The nursery is divided into two classrooms and currently has two teachers for 50 children aged from 3 to 6. This particular nursery is linked to the local Methodist church and now has its own building. The children then sang us some action songs in English, which is how they begin to learn the language, required for all their education from Primary School upwards. I then launched into my favourite Lion Hunt which always is a hit and has the children later following me round shouting "Hello!" in exactly the same intonation as I have used.... it also teaches them to say "mud" with a very Yorkshire accent!

When it was nearly lunchtime, we were able to provide them all with a knitted teddy bear in a bag provided by another charity linked to one of our Trustees, and some knitted puppets. These were very happily received and this time the children had more idea what to do with the

glove puppets as we had provided some last time we came. Having caused considerable mayhem, we had to leave them in order to move on to Malau Primary School and Nursery.

After leaving M'bungoni Nursery, which is right next door to M'bungoni School, a primary school that we have supported in the past, we drove a very short distance to the village of Bondora where we support Malau School. This had started out as a small nursery and, through the hard work of the locals and some funding by St Margaret's Church in Olton, Solihull, they have built new classrooms and the school has grown into a good-sized primary school.

We had to take a different route into the village from previous occasions as the dirt road was in need of repair. If the way we went was better, I can guarantee, the other way must have really been in need of big repair! Stephen, who was driving his own car, said he had been there on Tuesday with five people so he knew he could get through. We did offer to get out and walk, but it wasn't necessary in the end.

As we arrived, the children were out of class. They too had been doing end of term tests but were just finishing. We met the new Headteacher who had only started in January. She introduced herself as Madame Joyce and our own recently sponsored student, Joyce, is still there teaching the nursery children. Our Joyce got married last year. She was pleased to see us and she seems so much a part of the running of the school these days.

Once we had met the Head, and signed the visitors' book, they gathered the children together for a presentation of poems and dancing. This was done outside, unfortunately they really don't have an obvious place to meet as a whole school in the shade. However it worked. The Head introduced her staff. I did two things... the Mighty Mighty Malau chant (Everywhere we go) and the Lion Hunt. Both went

well. The Head girl gave a speech of thanks and, after the dancing, we presented books and footballs.

By then the children had to go home for lunch and we could chat to staff and wander round the school and take photos. They certainly have need of a new toilet block as their numbers have increased. Also they are introducing a feeding programme, which in essence are school dinners. It was started as a trial with Forms 7 and 8 to avoid wasted time so they have shorter lunch time and children leading up to Primary exam have more time in school. They want to roll this out for more children but need the parents on board and more facilities for cooking.

The fencing we provided is in need of repair too. There are always needs. The teachers were over the moon with the sets of new books provided by Streetsbrook School in Solihull to support the curriculum. We could see they were genuinely pleased. Several people had provided or made it possible to supply pencils, pens and crayons and they were being shared around the classes. The footballs were well received of course - though when we went into the nursery class we saw they too are in need of balls because theirs are makeshift ones of rags and string.

They are very resourceful with limited means. But hopefully we can find a way to provide for some of their most pressing needs.

Friday 14 February

We travelled a different route, up the coast road to the Kibarani School for the Deaf. We were visiting Frederick who is at the school for the deaf but started into education very late. He was first kept at home by his family then had a very difficult experience at a normal primary school. He has a profound loss for which they choose not to give hearing aids. Instead he is taught sign language which is his main form of communication.

When we arrived and had signed the visitors' book, we were taken to the Audiology department where we learned that they have the ability to diagnose hearing loss and to reprogram digital aids. The teacher/audiologist was pleased to receive recycled hearing aids, and donated unused batteries, which he says can be used....less it seems for the children in the school for the deaf and more for members of the local community and other children with a milder loss for whom they perform a service. They have the means to make their own moulds. We met up with Frederick who was a bit shy and Jenni, who used to work at a centre for deaf children in Solihull, tried to communicate by sign language (BSL signs) but came a bit unstuck as she discovered that many Kenyan signs are different. So his teacher had to act as interpreter. Although already 13, he will stay in Primary for two more years before formal assessment for secondary school. He seems happy and settled and is making progress. He has a role as a helper in the care of the younger children out of school hours.

After touring some of the classrooms and meeting some teachers, we left to make our way back down the coast. The children were preparing to go home for the half term break.

Saturday 15 February

This was to be our last appointment of the trip - meeting up with students and past students. Traditionally this is an opportunity, always on a Saturday, for those living or studying at a distance to come and meet up at one of the churches at Mombasa. Jonah had booked a room at the Wesley church, where sometimes we have worshipped in the past and where we have formerly supported craft classes in woodwork, sewing and catering.

On this day our students were arriving in ones and twos according to how their transport served them. Some were local and others came from a great distance. One of our previously sponsored pupils, Felix, is

now working in Naivasha for the water company there and travelled overnight by bus just to be with us. In all we had 15 young people at different stages of study and work. Some of the older ones who are working are taking on a leadership role and have formed their own committee led by Felix to see how they can now in some way help others. They are gathering as many as possible of our many sponsored students since 1990s to join a WhatsApp group to enable a feeling of family and mutual support for those who wish to do so. Some we have lost contact with.

All present completed a form to let us know what they are now doing and gave us their contact details and we were able to chat to them all individually. Then Felix addressed them telling his own story and encouraging all of the importance of communication. I also spoke and thanked Stephen and Jonah for all they do and gave words of encouragement. Jenni also had an opportunity to reinforce Felix's emphasis on communication and that there is no shame in going through some difficult times, that we can only help one another by staying in touch and sharing. We reminded them that people will more readily help those who show they are prepared to work hard themselves and we commended those present on all they had achieved so far. Three of the young people stood up to tell their stories and share their appreciation. We then took photos of them outside and out came the mobile phones for lots of selfies with different people. Some who had not met before made new connections with one another. It was a very good start to what we hope is a new phase. After some light refreshment I concluded with a prayer.

Sunday 16 February

We have made this a day of rest having been on the road virtually every day last week. Today we made the most of the warmth and the sunshine and hoping that the storms back home are not wreaking too much havoc.

Monday 17 February

We had our second meeting with Jonah and Stephen with their wives Agnes and Janet. It was a useful opportunity to share the experiences of the week and decide on any action points to take us forward. As ever we are so indebted to Stephen and Jonah for all they do at the grass roots for ensuring that the money raised in the UK is put to work in supporting our students and projects in Kenya. On Tuesday, in the early hours, we headed back to England, after a very successful and enjoyable trip.

I hope that this account has shed some light on what EducAid Africa does in its small way to give educational opportunities to those who have greater need.

Thank you to all of you who have supported this very worthy cause and, if you want to learn more or to donate or to be sent our regular newsletters please let me know at info@educaid-africa.org.

Ian D. Carnell MBE

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Moments

Mondays 10am—12 noon@ Central Solihull

MAY NEWSLETTER

Material for the May edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

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by Sunday 19th April please.