



Link

September 2020

The Magazine of the United Reformed Church
Stratford-upon-Avon



Season of Creation

1st September to 4th October

Theme:

Jubilee for the Earth: New Rhythms, New Hope

Worship, Witness and love for others through Jesus Christ

**The United Reformed Church
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Thoughts for September

Costing the Earth



The month of September marks the start of two related initiatives:

For a number of years, we have had the ‘Season of Creation’. The season starts on 1st September, the day of prayer for creation, and ends on 4th October, the feast of St Francis of Assisi (the patron saint of ecology, beloved by many Christian denominations). The World Council of Churches was instrumental in marking this special time “as a season”. It began in 2015, when Pope Francis gave it a warm welcome, and now a whole raft of organisations as well as the World Council of Churches support the movement. We, in the URC, are represented by the World Communion of Reformed Churches. I attempted to support and advocate the Season in 2018 and 2019. It is hoped that during the month-long celebration, the world’s 2.2 billion Christians might come together to care for and pray for our common home. Many statements from the world’s religious leaders have encouraged the faithful to take care for creation in the celebration. The following is a quote from the Season of Creation website:

“This year, the theme for the season is “Jubilee for the Earth”. We are invited to consider the integral relationship between rest for the Earth and the ecological, economic, social and political ways of living. This particular year, the need for just and sustainable systems has been revealed by the far-reaching effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. We yearn for the moral imagination that accompanies the Jubilee.”

In addition, this year, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) have announced the initiative of Climate Sunday. Local Churches are encouraged to hold a local Climate Sunday any time during a one-year period starting on the 6th September (the first Sunday in the annual Season of Creation). During their Climate Change Sunday, CTBI encourages local churches to do one or more of three things:

1. **Climate Service.** Hold a climate focussed service, to explore the theological and scientific basis of creation care, to pray and to commit to action.
2. **Commit.** Make a commitment as a local church community to take long-term action to reduce its own greenhouse emissions.
3. **Call.** Join with other churches and wider society by adding its name to a common call for the UK government to take much bolder action on climate change in this country in advance of COP26, and to strengthen its credibility to lead the international community to adopt a step change in action at COP26. The culmination of the campaign will be a national Climate Sunday event on Sunday 5th September 2021, to share church commitments and pray for bold action and courageous leadership at COP26.

(N.B. COP26 is the 26th UN Climate Change Conference which will take place in November 2021 – postponed from 2020)

How often have you heard, or how often have you said, “That costs the Earth!” when confronted with the price of an article, or a service provided by a company or even a holiday. Well, the way that the human race is treating this world by creating Global Warming, by our throwaway mentality, by our wasteful usage of resources, by the way we are causing many species to become extinct and by our lack of respect for poorer nations and minority communities IS LITERALLY COSTING THE EARTH!

As you will see from the quotation on the back of the Link Magazine, taken from Psalm 24, this is not OUR planet: it was created by and belongs to God. We simply borrow it as a home and use its resources for a very short span. As the hymn says “God in his love for us lent us this planet...” If we don’t change our practices, our ways of life, our wastefulness, then the world as we know it won’t exist for future generations.

If one borrows an article, a tool or a piece of equipment from a friend, on the whole, the majority of us would look after it, repair it, if it stops working and replace it if it broke. It’s exactly the same with God’s world: we have to look after it, repair it if necessary and replace the components if we break them. That becomes very difficult, nay impossible, if we are talking about a whole species becoming extinct. To prevent the latter from happening we have to take action to prevent that damage (akin to oiling a pair of shears we have borrowed to prevent them from rusting up or not working). If we don’t take drastic action over time, the whole human race, which is also a gift from God, might become extinct.

It seems like a massive undertaking – what can we do in our little existence to stop

Global Warming? But as Kirsty and Mairi said recently in their service, it's all the 'Little Things' which, added up, combine to make a great effort and a large amount of change. Not only do we as a Church need to make sure our buildings don't waste energy – as much as we can, with an old building, but we as the community inside that church also need to change our individual lives to add to the communal effect. It is **everybody's** responsibility – not somebody else's. Let's not forget that one advantage of lockdown was that the air in our streets became less polluted. In addition, the amount of fuel consumed went down dramatically, and our wildlife thrived, so it **is** possible that change can happen!

During September we will be thinking about these issues, and we will be distributing advice on how to make a 'little' difference. As a Church we are pursuing the concept of Eco-Church. Our initial investigations suggest that we might already be eligible for Bronze Eco-status. But we do need to check all our facts.

If any individual has an idea how we can each make a difference – small or large - please write it on a card (which will be available on 6th September) and we'll display them on a board at our Harvest Festival service.

Let us **all** thank God for his creation, let us **all** marvel at the beauty of his creation, let us **all** take some responsibility for helping to preserve his creation. Let us encourage others to do the same and let us pray that Climate Action happens.

Peter

Family News

Sid has had a spell in hospital but thankfully will shortly be discharged back to Cedar Lawn where he now resides. He celebrated his 97th birthday on 31st July

Clive has also had a short spell in hospital and so is isolating again. He is still at the Limes.

Freida had a fall a couple of weeks ago and damaged her leg which needs dressing but she is at home and visited daily by Ann. We wish her a full recovery.

Jill and Rob are both in better form, Jill now having helpful physiotherapy to alleviate her condition, and Rob having had recent positive consultations.

Sue has experienced recent eye problems but has had a very helpful and confidence boosting visit to the Stratford Eye Hospital.

Sheila has undergone a successful hip operation at Warwick Hospital and is now home and recovering well. She would welcome contact between 10.30 and 12.30 or between 4 and 6pm.

Ann and Adrian celebrated their Ruby Wedding Anniversary on 24th July.
Congratulations and love.

Graham and Peter's brother Andrew are currently undergoing chemo and/or radiotherapy and suffering the unpleasant side effects. Please hold them particularly in your prayers.

Ileen Fisher

Church Re-Opening

At the August Elders' Meeting it was decided that Rother Street URC would re-open, as a trial, for three services in September and October.

The confidential survey of members and adherents revealed that 20 people would be prepared to attend church in the autumn if we re-opened. It was therefore decided that a formal trial of services would be undertaken. There will be a review in October of the success of the trial, any difficulties encountered, the current Coronavirus pandemic situation and any changes that might be necessary.

The whole pandemic situation is a constantly changing scene, so what follows is, as always, provisional.

The services will be as follows:

Sunday 6th September: 'Ordinary' service.

Sunday 20th September: Harvest Festival - Climate Sunday.

Sunday 4th October: Communion and Covenant Sunday.

Just to remind you of what was said in the last copy of Link:

All the necessary Government and Synod suggested safety precautions will be in place: members of the congregation will be required to wear a mask, social distancing will be in place, there will be a 'one-way' system of entry and exit, a record of attendance will be kept for 21 days, there will be no singing of hymns and the Offertory will be by placing your gifts in a plate at the back of church. If you wish to follow the readings, please bring your own Bible. There will be no coffee served after the service. In terms of Harvest Festival, rather than bringing gifts into church, each member is encouraged to make their own donations to Stratford Foodbank. On the Communion Sunday, each person may bring their own elements if they wish to do so. However, bread and wine will be prepared in a safe manner and distributed with a 'no touch' technique.

During the services there will be prayers, readings, a sermon and music to listen

to. It is highly likely that the services will be shorter than usual!

All three services will be conducted by Peter. If the trial is successful then it is envisaged that there will be two services a month from October to December. No formal decision has yet been taken about the possibility of the Carol Service. We haven't yet approached any of our visiting ministers to see if anyone is willing to travel and take services.

It **will** be a different experience! - but you will see your friends (without hugging or kissing them!)

International Friendship Day

International Friendship Day 2020



To my shame I had never heard of this before an old school friend and practising Christian recently showed me a 'Times' article entitled 'Don't take the treasure of friendship for granted'.

Good advice, and it referred to IFD being this year on Thursday 30th July. Hopefully we may be jogged into making, remembering, keeping, even using our friends, which can result in close mutual friendships. According to a recent YouGov survey more than 10% of us have no close friends and a further 10% have no friends at all.

A possible cause may be the rise in 'celebrity' friendships rather than true, established relationships. It is noted that friendship may be our most fundamental bond. In business or family troubles we often turn to friends for unconditional help. With a comical look at friendship, Margaret once received a birthday card which hangs in our downstairs loo and reads: "You'll always be my friend, you know too much about me"! The book of Proverbs describes a friend as a keeper of confidences, a sharer of wisdom and one who 'sharpens' another through caring critique. Monarchs have subjects, governments voters, employers staff, but Jesus

calls his followers, friends.

To quote: "To be a close friend is a high and privileged calling. Just ask the two in ten of us who long to have one!"

During the current pandemic, and all its difficulties, society has happily realised more the values of friendly actions, both for givers and receivers. Long may this be practised in the 'new norm'.

Geoff Reynolds

It's in the Genes!



Our family is scattered over the world. This isn't very unusual in 2020, given how easy travel has become, but what is more unusual is that it all started 4 generations ago. Colin Scott (my grandfather) went out to India with Standard Telephones and Cables in 1927. After their marriage in Scotland 5 years later, Jenny joined him and my father and one sister were born there. On Dad's birth certificate, his caste was marked as Presbyterian which caused no end of problems later when he applied for a British passport! Then in 1937, the family moved to Burma and lived in Rangoon. In December 1941, less than 2 months after the birth of their third child, Jenny and the children got on the last ship out of Burma heading for India before the Japanese invasion overran Rangoon, leaving my grandfather behind. In late 1944, Jenny and the children returned to Scotland on a troop ship full of soldiers going home. It was a long, fraught, dangerous journey, in convoy and they were glad to reach Scotland safely. Colin managed to walk out of Burma during the Japanese invasion, returning after the war to repair and re-establish telecommunications in that country. He was eventually reunited with the family in Scotland in 1947.

Meanwhile in Scotland, Norman Birnie (my other grandfather) agreed to take up a vacancy in the Church of Scotland in Georgetown, British Guyana. He set sail in November 1942 in convoy from Liverpool on a small ship which took just 10 passengers. Although they had originally planned to go out as a family, Félicité and the 2 little girls (my mum aged 4 and her sister 1) had to wait. Women and children were not permitted to travel as the number of ships being sunk in the Atlantic was too great. After bouts of engine trouble, and having to leave the convoy 3 times, Norman eventually made it to Georgetown British Guyana, 53 days later in January 1943. It wasn't until December of that same year, that my grandmother was able to arrange passage for her and the children and they sailed again in convoy. Their ship also developed engine trouble and had to leave the convoy. After being repaired in Bermuda, they made their way alone south and east through the Caribbean, with the passengers up on deck helping to keep a look out for submarines. This is one of my mum's earliest memories. Needless to say they did arrive safely in early 1944 and then spent 7 happy years there.

It seems very strange that both my parents had such similar but different adventures in their early childhood. It was also miraculous that they actually met each other so many years later. In the next generation, my parents lived in Switzerland for 4 years and Dad spent many years working in Europe.

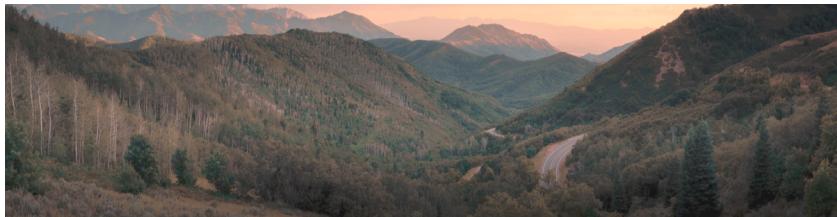
Adrian's parents also put down overseas' roots with his mother taking up a post in 1953 as a nursing sister in the Queen Elizabeth Overseas Colonial Nursing Service in Tanganyika, East Africa. She was among the first white nursing sisters to go out to East Africa. There she met his father who had gone out to Kenya during his National Service and then stayed on in East Africa to work for Unilever.

In our generation, we lived in Africa and then France / Switzerland . One of my brothers is in Bermuda and the other in Australia while my sister is the only one who has stayed in the UK. Adrian's dad and sister lived in Africa for many years and now all live in Australia.

Living abroad must be in the genes as our children have continued the trend and it really is not surprising that 2 out of our 3 daughters are living in far off lands!

Kirsty Knott

Hindsight and perspective



The path I walked had a slight incline, and the sun was low over the horizon. As I walked, I squinted more and more. I could only see a few feet in front of me. I was tempted to be annoyed.

To give my eyes a break, I turned around. The vista behind me was beautifully lit, and displayed by the same light I'd been complaining about.

To think I had walked through all that glory and never really appreciated it!

The walk towards the light isn't easy. Growing closer to God might be a bit of a struggle. But the nearer you get to him, the greater will be the understanding and appreciation of all that you've been through.

When you arrive at your destination, you will look back and see the journey was a glorious one.

From 'The Friendship Book' - submitted by Fran Maddy

POSSIBILITIES

Jesus	Disciples	Faith	What am I doing?
Peter	Sea of Galilee	Doubt	I'm sinking
Fishing boat	Stop	Listen	Help!

In retrospect we can often think: "If only I had" or "I wish I had". Usually it's too late, the opportunity's gone. But Saint Matthew tells us (Matt. 14: 22-33) that when you're dealing with Jesus it is very different!

Jesus was not himself, having just heard of John the Baptist's death so, the disciples took him out to the middle of the lake (Sea of Galilee) for some peace and quiet and a bit of fishing. Later on ashore, after more business, healing and feeding the crowd, Jesus sent them back out to catch more fish for their living. This large lake can suddenly become very stormy and in the middle of the night these tough

lads feared for their safety. Already terrified, they see a figure walking toward them! Then they see it's Jesus who says "It's me, don't be scared". But it was only bold Peter who calls out; "Lord tell me to walk out with you" "**Come**" says Jesus. So Peter (Simon not Horrocks! - or could be any one of us) steps out of a good, safe boat and walks towards Jesus!

Of course after a short time of ecstacy he suddenly realises what he's doing; (see above) Jesus does of course rescue him back into the boat. BUT he also whispers: "You of little faith, why did you doubt me?"



Peter, like all of us was 'only human' as Jesus knew, but he accepted Jesus' challenge. Do we? Can we? What were his thoughts after the experience? What would he have thought of himself if he (like most of us) had said "NO WAY"?

We are left perhaps with two challenges:

- 1.If we want to walk on water we've got to be prepared to get out of the boat!
- 2.If that safe boat is 'church' (not just the building!) are we prepared to do as Peter did?

I've penned this piece after listening to the URC on-line Sunday Service of 26th July, to help me re-run Matthews' record of this small incident in Jesus' ministry, and understand the questions it poses.

Geoff Reynolds

A Marvel of Creation

As you will have gathered, we are in the Season of Creation and so we thought that we would show you a mini-marvel of creation.

For the last five or six years we have had an orchid plant. It was a present from our daughter. It came with a single stem of several flowers. After the flowers died off the plant remained dormant with no leaf growth and no flowers. This year the situation has changed dramatically: it has grown two new leaves and a month ago a flower stem appeared which has developed to produce five flower buds.

Here are the latest pictures:



God's world often surprises us with its beauty and that beauty often comes right out of the blue!

Peter & Linda

Online Services...

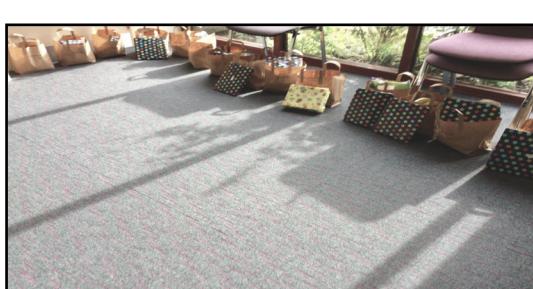


MakeLunch Summer Holidays



As you may know, this year, due to the impossibility of using the church premises, MakeLunch joined with the Foodbank to deliver food parcels for families with young children during the school holidays.

Every Tuesday saw a buzz of activity in the Methodist Centre as Ann and I distributed fruit, bread and some books and toys into bags ready for our drivers.



These bags, together with the supplies of dry goods, were loaded into the boots of our 10 drivers' cars to be distributed around the town. In this way we have helped about 30 families and around 70 children each week of the holidays.

Our aim was not only to provide some help with the food, but also to make friends with the families: MakeLunch is more about friendship and socialising than just eating, although of course, providing the food was a major part of the whole operation.

We have been delighted with the response we got: it is clear that there is great need in the town and many families are struggling to provide good healthy food for their children. It has been a two – way thing: each family was grateful for our help, and the drivers were very pleased to be assisting in this way. One of them spoke for all when she said: "It has been heart-warming to see the excited faces at the door each Tuesday morning and the gratitude shown by my 3 families when delivering each week".

Here are a few of the comments we have received:

"Hi, we would like to say a massive THANK YOU for our amazing parcel that was delivered today, we are overwhelmed with everything, we cannot thank you enough."

"Good afternoon, I just wanted to say thank you so much for the food parcels I have received. It's made such a big difference to us in these difficult times. My daughter loved her book with the first parcel we received. And the Sponge Bob Square Pants Meatballs! She loves Sponge Bob. Thanks again."

"Thank you so much for all your help and support for me and the children. We really appreciate it."

"We had our first delivery yesterday and just wanted to say thank you! It was amazing! Kids were super excited and it'll make such a difference. Really appreciate all the planning, kindness and effort that goes into making lunch club happen."

"I think it is amazing the great work you and your team are doing to help so many families - thank you."

"My daughter loved her gift from you and the children look forward to seeing what is in the parcels. Branded cereals are a real treat for them!"

"The deliveries have really helped me to budget over the holidays. We are all so grateful to you."

"I really have appreciated everything you have done for me and my children. I am so grateful; it has been a hard few months. If it wasn't for you and the school with food parcels and vouchers I wouldn't of been able to feed my children nor myself. I haven't struggled so much ever before. The children loved the toys and books you sent wrapped up as well. Thank you so much."



All in all, it has been a very worthwhile project, made possible by the generous donations from the Municipal Charities and a number of individual donors. We are so grateful to these people for helping us provide little extras for these deserving families

Linda and Ann

A barrowful of food for two families

My First Job

Since nobody was enamoured about writing a letter to their former self - we thought we might try something else! Linda has written some of her memories about her first job. How about adding to this next month?

September already! This is the month which brings both excitement and reluctance in the hearts of teachers and children. Excitement at the prospect of new beginnings and opportunities, a fresh start, but reluctance to knuckle down after the long summer holidays.

But I felt only the excitement that first September, some 50 years ago (good heavens!!) when I entered Heber Road Junior Mixed in East Dulwich on my first day of teaching. How naïve I was. How little I knew. How ill-prepared I was!!



I had spent the previous 4 years learning my “trade” at Homerton College in Cambridge – a rarefied, genteel sort of place, far removed from the hurly burly I was to encounter in the classroom! I had been on observations and teaching practice of course, but they were quite gentle experiences in village schools, where one teacher even had time to do her knitting during the lessons!! Academically, the college was fine: they were less expert in helping us to deal with practical classroom issues, which to my mind is far more important. Talk about learning on the job!

Heber Road was certainly mixed. The majority of children were second generation West Indian, whose culture was “Treat them rough. Make them obey.” I was even told to “beat him good when (not even ‘if’) he misbehave, Miss”!

And misbehave they did. I had no idea how to control a class of such lively children. The (to my mind) ancient teacher just next door had a class of little lambs compared to my wild animals, and I could feel her disdain coming through the walls. I even remember some of the names: Hyacinth was a sweetie, but Fitzroy, Ronnie and Euston were forces to be reckoned with! Strange to think they will be in their sixties now! I wonder how they turned out?

It was a baptism of fire. I had no help, no advice, nor any of the support that young teachers rightly have nowadays. I’m sure my experiences that first year made me a much better mentor later on in my career. However, I got through it somehow. Of

course, one always remembers the bad bits, but there were good times as well – it was just a learning curve that I hadn't expected to be so very steep!

Fortunately, the next year I spent in a 'unit' of some 100 children, all in a large space together, which was quite the thing then. It was staffed by 3 teachers, 2 of whom were more experienced than me, so I paddled into calmer waters!

Teaching was never as stressful again after that first year, and gradually I felt that I was getting a grip on the profession. There were many happy, funny and satisfying times over the 40 years that I was a teacher, so perhaps it was a good thing to have stuck it out that first year after all!

Linda

A Prayer for the Season of Creation

For the Beauty of Creation

Lord of all life,
thank you for the beauty of trees and flowers,
minerals and earth,
animals and birds.

Help me to become a wise steward of your
creation and a good tenant of your world;
so that, together with my neighbours in Christ
- present and future -
I will see nature as your gift
that I should plunder less and replenish more.

Amen

Kevin Fray

Harvest Poster

This poster was seen outside the church in the wonderfully named 'Beer', a small seaside town in South Devon, when we were on holiday in September last year



Jill & Rob Fradley

My Two Year Journey

A very sincere thanks to all my Church friends, particularly Peter, Linda, Kirsty and Ann (J), also including my two immediate neighbours, who provided much practical support over the past six months. Thanks also to other friends including the Choral Society for all the telephone calls, messages, cards, flowers and prayer support - everything is much appreciated.

I give thanks to the total care and dedication of Warwick Hospital, for the surgeon and his team of doctors and nurses to the ward Sister and her team of nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and clinical assistants. Now that I am home I would also like to thank the SWAT team of nurses, physios and OT's. I am making progress but must do things SLOWLY, and must be PATIENT, and

do as I am told !!!

Sheila Bligh

The Girls Come out of Lockdown!



Creation Story

God is talking to one of his angels and says, "Do you know what I have just done? I have just created a 24-hour period of alternating light and darkness on Earth. Isn't that good?"

The angel says, "Yes, but what will you do now?"

God says, "I think I'll call it a day."

(Sorry about that!)

Website

A reminder about our website - an important part of our life in the coronavirus era. You can find the Sunday Services there. In addition there are prayers and audio files to listen to. We have discovered that we have people in different parts of the country and abroad who login and watch / listen to our facilities.

www.stratforduponavonurc.co.uk

On the opening page there are several blue buttons for the various features. Click on the blue button labelled 'Online Services' and then click on the 'Play' icon in the video. If you wish to watch it full screen click on the little icon in the bottom right hand corner of the video window. - and turn up the volume for the hymns!

There are also buttons for prayers and episodes of 'Quiet Church' to listen to.

If you don't have access to the internet we can provide a DVD of the services - delivered to your door, and you can watch the services on your television. Please let us know if you would prefer that.

The next edition of Link will be published on 27th September 2020.

The deadline for submission to the next edition is Monday 21st September 2020

Please send us your articles, pictures, humour - If you have views about the future of the Church, please let us know. Don't forget to think about writing an article about your first job.

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Psalm 24:1

The earth is the
Lord's, and
everything in it. The
world and all its
people belong to him.