

NEWS & CHAT 19 MAY 2022

The online service is live-streamed every week from Christ Church, on the Christ Church Facebook page.

**The Elders (CC), on the advice of our Safety Advisor, have agreed that we will no longer strongly advise the wearing of masks at Sunday Worship. This includes for singing.
If you feel more comfortable wearing a mask, please continue to do so.**

We WILL continue to maintain as much ventilation as possible, and strongly advise the congregation to keep socially distant as much as possible.

SUNDAY 19 May, 10am, Robert Dart at Christ Church
10.30am, the Minister at BDC

SATURDAY, 21 May - The Christian Aid Garden Party - 10.00 am - 12.30 pm at the home of Mavis and Roy Headley. The address is 48 Orchard Avenue, Hockley, Essex, SS5 5BE.
There will be a bring & buy stall including books, plant stall, cake stall and a Raffle.

UPCOMING EVENTS for your diaries:

- **Sunday 29th May** will be café style, interactive worship led by Sandy.
- **Friday 3 June 'Jubilee' Messy Church** – Speak to Sandy for more details.
- **Saturday 4 June Jubilee ART CLUB 10am – 12pm** - Jubilee related creative activities
- **Sunday 5 June – Jubilee and Anniversaries Sunday.** We will be celebrating the Queen's Jubilee, the Church Anniversary, and all the 'big' wedding anniversaries of church members which were missed during 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. **A Jubilee Street Party-style bring and share lunch will follow – sign-up sheet is now at the back of the church.** And it's Pentecost too!
- **Sunday 12 June – Rayleigh Trinity Fair, 12-4pm.** The church will be open during the fair – a sign-up sheet is now at the back of the church.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

You may like to do this activity:

Loneliness can be one of the hardest parts of dealing with mental health difficulties. "**loneliness**" is the theme for the Spring #KindnessByPost exchange.

Help show someone that they're not alone in the world. Send a card or letter with a message of goodwill to your match and let them know that someone out there is thinking of them.
#KindnessByPost - Allow us to introduce ourselves!
#KindnessByPost is the UK's leading random acts of kindness exchange. You can sign up for free to send a card or letter to someone you don't know and have someone allocated to send a card to you!

Sign up here - <https://kindnessbypost.org/register>



A reminder – if you want to make a URC 'fish' or decorate a fish on the '50 Fish' poster please bring your fish to church or speak to Naomi. We hope to decorate the 50 fish at Art Club on 4 June (amongst other Jubilee related activities) – this is for the URC 50th anniversary (this year).

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 15-21 MAY

If you wish to donate to Christian Aid it is best done online - <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

Christ Church, Rayleigh (CC) and the Bridgwater Drive Church (BDC)

If you cannot give online, please speak to Robert or Wendy this Sunday about other options (we do not have envelopes for the chairs this year).



In Zimbabwe, the climate crisis is causing aching hunger for families like Jessica's.

The combined effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, conflict, and drought have robbed her of the power to provide for her children – it's unjust.

This Christian Aid Week:

- * We stand with the resilient women - like Jessica - who are determined to lift their families out of hunger
- * We raise our voices to call for climate justice
- * We pray that families will stay strong during times of drought

Together, we hope to restore justice to our world, and protect the future for our children and grandchildren.

A Christian Aid Prayer from 1958, sadly still relevant today:

Let us pray for grateful hearts; for sympathetic hearts;
for generous hearts and wills quick to help and persistent in effort.
That our nation and government may give generously for relief of refugees
and be ready to help them find new homes and new homelands.
That all nations may live free from fear and free from want. Amen.

TIPS & IDEAS

This week's creative theme is creativity and well-being, in particular related to nature. The forecast says it is going to be sunny all week, so why not try this:

Go for a wander, wherever your curiosity takes you. Try to see the beauty in everything - that's everything, even what doesn't seem beautiful at first. Take the word 'gratitude' and place it like colourful wallpaper at the back of your brain. Notice how that changes the way you see the present moment. Capture your wander through photos, words, or a sculpture from things you collect along the way.

RESOURCES

New reflections for May from St Paul's Cathedral, by Revd Sharon Prentis *Awakening a hope that inspires*
<https://mailchi.mp/403440e5ce31/coming-up-from-st-pauls-cathedral-8251330?e=e30a1f608a>

PRAYER CORNER

I invite all of you to set aside time daily to pray for our churches and members but also for the whole nation and world. This week we pray especially for Christian Aid Week and Zimbabwe.

This week's prayer theme (prepared by Gwyneth). **Youngsters.** Energy, enthusiasm, vitality, simple faith, insightful questions, curiosity about everything, joyfulness, laughter, fun. Thank the Lord for our youngsters. As we nurture them, may we never lose the childlikeness You have placed within each of us Lord, the simplicity of trust, exuberance, and gratitude You love so very much.

Particular prayer requests this week:

Gwyneth & Jeff
Doreen
Audrey
Terry W & James
Frank
Mark E
Martin & Janine

BDC:

Barbara
Cherry
Sandra
Gerry
Celia
Clive



Snippets from the URC Minister's Gathering Naomi attended last week:

(a more detailed account will be in the June Christ Church News)

The overall theme was Jubilee in this 50th anniversary year of the formation of the URC, and as part of daily worship we had Bible study on the biblical jubilee in Leviticus 25.

- Jubilee is a re-set, a return to factory settings. Should it be for the URC also?
- It was a programme of Social Justice – the land was given rest and returned to its original owners; slaves were freed...
- The Land is God's – we are only tenants, 'aliens' in it.

From **Revd David Cornick**, former General Secretary of the URC (2001-2008) and General Secretary of Churches Together in England (2008-2018):

- We are ministers of Word and Sacrament, yet we put most focus on Sacrament. We (as reformed people) place great importance on the Word and preaching is a sacrament, and yet we let anyone do it – often with little training or oversight of what people are saying when the minister is not there (not the case at Christ Church, I don't think/hope!)
- There is too much 'comfort' church, especially post-pandemic, too much giving people what they want – where is the challenge? Where is the discomfort present in the Gospel?
- Things to get rid of – smallness of mind/possessiveness – 'my' minister, 'my' church, the X donated in memory of 'my' family member.
- Reformed means always reforming, continually seeking change. We need to look to the future more than the past and that may be simply holding what we have so that a future generation can 'grow' the church.
- Church is the event of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God in the present, in the NOW.

We need to remember that the church, all denominations, in all of Western Europe has been in decline since after the First World War (with a slight spike in interest in the 50s), so we should not be discouraged if we see our membership as much lower now than the 'heyday' many remember in the 50s or 60s. We are not doing anything 'wrong' – it is the way the West is moving to a more secular society.

Other thoughts from workshops:

- **Growth is spiritual and missional, not only numerical.** Steps to grow a church:
 - Create a culture of growth through prayer and thinking of positives, not negatives – growth/change doesn't come from a negative (we can't do..., we've never done it that way...)
 - Become an inviting and welcoming church
 - Draw up a plan and implement it, even if you have to change it often
 - Have at least 4 'invitation' events a year to which you invite friends and family, building users, people on the fringes of the church (eg. Messy Church, Toddlers, yoga, Concord (non-members), Needles & Natter, etc) – e.g. something related to the community/nation – Queen's Jubilee service, Carol Singing, a concert, a memorial service, etc.
 - The best way to attract new people is a personal invitation from someone they know
- **Using the building for outreach and 'growth'**
 - Say 'yes' – have a positive outlook to partnerships and trying new things
 - Make partnerships with other organisations and charities – the church is unlikely to have the resources (financial or volunteers) to run certain activities, but we do have a building.
 - Look for opportunities, rather than to fix a problem (eg there is no provision in Rayleigh for those living with dementia – that is an opportunity we can do something about)
 - Listen, reflect, review, be prepared to re-assess goals.

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BREAKING NEWS!

The first drop-in, **Wednesday morning 'café'** took place on 18 May. About 20 people came – mostly church people, though there were a couple of people enticed in by conversations in the High Street – Dexter was a big help in this regard!

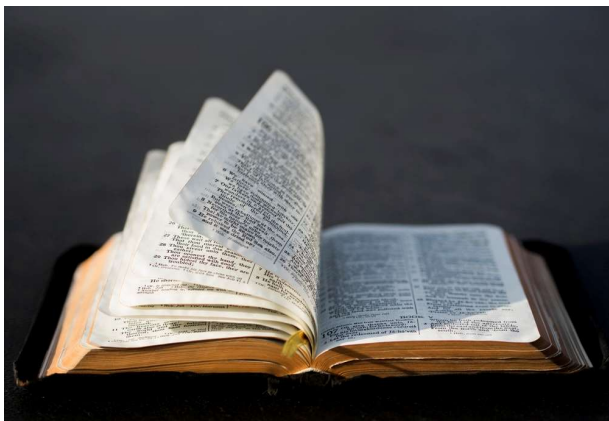
The weather was great, so many people sat at a table outside which made the church look open, lively, friendly and welcoming – just what we are aiming for. We also had free entertainment from the musicians who practice in our church on Wednesday mornings (Gerald and friends); and were able to help out a person in need – exactly what the church is for, isn't it?!

Thank you to everyone who supported this and who brought family with them.

Please don't make this a one-hit wonder! Do come along for a drink and a chat – especially now the weather is more summery, it's lovely sitting out in the sunshine!



The Elders were asked to consider whether we could **bring the Bible into church** at the start of Sunday worship. Pending us acquiring a suitable stand, we will start bringing the Bible into church as soon as possible. It will be placed open, in front of the communion table, facing the congregation at the start of worship and be taken to the back of church at the end of worship – the Word going out with us into the world.



This used to be done many years ago and is done in many, if not most URC and 'reformed' churches as our tradition holds the Word of God as found in the Bible, in high esteem and worship always includes reading of, and teaching on, biblical texts.

We plan to use one of the church Bibles, so it is actually the Bible we are reading from. If you have any questions about this, please speak to one of the elders.