

CH URC NEWS

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The
United
Reformed
Church

APRIL 2024

Friends,

The Treasure of Easter!

It's amazing what treasure can be unearthed with metal detectors! In this season of Easter, let's rediscover the greatest unburied treasure of the Resurrection.

The Apostle Peter reminds us that God '*has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.*' (1 Peter 1: 3,4) What does he say about this treasure?

On the one hand, it is the *reason for hope*. Peter was writing to Christians in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) who faced persecution under the Emperor Nero. In an uncertain world we know that Jesus suffered, but by His resurrection has secured eternal life for us. This inheritance not only guarantees life now, but also for eternity, as it '*is kept in heaven for you*' (4). Do we share this confidence? D.L. Moody, the 19th Century American evangelist, spoke of the time when people would read his obituary: '*Don't believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now*'.

On the other hand, this treasure is a *source of joy*. This unburied treasure fills us '*with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*' (8,9). We face all kinds of trials in our lives, but God uses them to refine our faith and character, '*These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.*' (7).
more holy, obedient and loving.

'Christmas is the promise, and Easter is the proof!'

**Canon Paul Hardingham
Parish Pump**

NEWS AROUND THE FELLOWSHIP

We are thinking of those in our congregation and others known to us who have been in hospital or unwell at home for any reason. We particularly remember those who have recently been bereaved - Carole Davies and her family following the passing of her sister, Ruth; Bronwen Cameron after the loss of her husband, Don, and Morag and her family following the loss of her sister, Fiona.

In addition to Sandy, Morag and Bernie, our grateful thanks go to Linda Rayner on Mothering Sunday and Rev Kurauone Mutimwii on Palm Sunday, for leading services in March. At the time of going to press, we look forward to joining our friends from Bramhall at Heald Green on Easter Sunday when Pastor K will lead worship.

Tickets for the concert on Sat 11 May are now available (see page 5). They are free but will be limited due to the number of supporters of the 2 choirs. If you would like to reserve one, please sign the sheet at the back of Church..

Fellowship Circle will re-commence meeting at Mavis' from Wed 3 April from 1.00 - 2.30pm.

The Afternoon Tea, which was postponed early in March, will now be held on Sat 22 JUN, our Church Anniversary weekend.

We send best wishes to all those who will be celebrating a birthday or special anniversary in April. We hope you have a very happy time.

The News Team

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SUN 14 APR - CHURCH MEETING

SAT 11 MAY - David William's Memorial Concert

SAT 22 JUN - Anniversary Afternoon Tea

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CHURCH MEETING - Sun 14 APRIL

A copy of the minutes of the last Church meeting in January are enclosed for all members, together with a copy of the Agenda, which includes consideration of the following resolution:

At a Church meeting held on Sunday 14 April, it was resolved that a single signatory be authorised to update access to the Church's bank account online including payments by BACS (Banks Automated Clearing System).

Currently, the Church Financial Instructions specify that a cheque issued to pay bills must be signed by any two of the authorised signatories (Sandy, Don, Bernie). Because of this requirement for two signatures, we cannot use electronic banking. Many businesses now ask for payment via a BACS electronic transfer of funds and do not like cheques. To address this issue we propose that the Church financial instructions are amended to allow authorisation of an electronic payment by a single signatory with appropriate oversight.

Please do what you can to be at the meeting. Thank you.

Alison Stevens

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MISSIONAL PARTNERSHIP

This month's prayer is for our minister -

REVD KURAUONE MUTIMWII

We thank you that we are part of the Missional Partnership, where we can share in discernment, fellowship and resources.

We give grateful thanks for Rev Kurauone Mutimwii, for his experience, his pastoral skills, his dedication and his support to our congregation.

We ask you to help him lead us, find new ways to be Church and pray that you would be with him in every situation as he works together with us in building the Kingdom.

And we pray for his family, for their gifts and creativity, for their understanding and support and for their journey together at this time. May they feel welcome and loved in your Church community.

For all your blessings we ask this. *Amen*

The steering group have been concerning themselves with poverty, homelessness and the many areas of 'social justice'. Christians of necessity must work for and pray about these things, in the name of the Lord.

BUT, if this puts us at odds with the government, difficult choices are needed. The Lord answers us in our consciences, called 'dreams' in the bible.

Bernie

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CHEADLE HULME URC

An Evening of Song

~Poynton Male Voice Choir
~ The Laurence Singers

7.30 pm

Sat 11 May 2024

Free admission by ticket only
Interval refreshments
Donations to Church charities

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LINK TO HOPE SHOEBOX APPEAL

At the last Elders' meeting, concerns were shared regarding the small number of people who were being asked to donate to the Shoebox appeal as well as other charity giving. For the last couple of years, donations had been collected through the year but there was always a shortfall which had to be purchased.

After discussion, it was agreed to suggest that in 2024 we have a money box for a Link to Hope Shoebox Appeal into which people could donate money according to what they would have spent on buying gifts of toothpaste, crayons, etc, etc. We could also allocate Link to Hope to a Coffee Morning added to which could be the money taken for coffee the following Sunday. All these monetary donations could be topped up by a retiring collection and a donation from Church.

In order to hear people's views, this will be an Agenda item at the forthcoming Church meeting.

Bernie Stevens

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**SOUP, SWEET
& MEET**

noon Wed 17 APR

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Members, friends & neighbours

FILM MATINEE

Sat 27 APRIL

ST GEORGE, NOT ENGLISH

The English have a patron saint who isn't English, about whom little is known for sure, and who may not have existed at all. But that didn't stop St George being patriotically invoked in many battles, notably at Agincourt and the Crusades, and of course it is his cross that adorns the flags of English football fans.

It's most likely that St George was a soldier, a Christian martyred for his faith somewhere in Palestine, possibly at Lydda, early 4th century, and who served Christ as bravely and truly as he served his king & country.

The story of the dragon is of much later date though equally obscure. By the Middle Ages, when George was being honoured in stained glass, the dragon had become an invariable visual element, so for most people the two are inseparable. Pub signs have a lot to answer for here: 'The George and Dragon'.

The idea of the 'Christian soldier' was, of course, much loved by the Victorian hymn-writers - 'Onward, Christian soldiers!' The soldier needs discipline. In the end, the battle is won, the final reward of those who overcome evil.

St George's Day, 23 APR, presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to distance the message of his life from the military triumphalism that can attach to soldiers and fighting. The opportunity is to celebrate the ideal of the 'Christian soldier' - who submits to discipline, obeys God truly, does not avoid the battles with all that is unjust, wrong and hateful in our world, and marches alongside others fighting the same noble cause.

Discipline, obedience, courage, fellowship and loyalty - not the most popular virtues today, but still deserve our admiration.

Parish Pump

URC AT CROSSROADS

Pathways to flourishing Having described some of the key barriers and challenges faced by the URC, we explore a series of pathways to flourishing. The suggestions collected during the research are grouped around the themes of mission, leadership (including ministerial & lay training) and changes to the our structures.

Mission The URC will flourish at the local levels or not at all. As a local church leader said in an interview: *I think the church structures need reforming, but I don't think they will make a huge difference in the long term. I think the focus has got to be on supporting local churches in their mission. As a denomination, we need to be looking forward and looking outwards rather than just worrying about the internal mechanics.*

This was a representative sentiment in the research. 'Mission' is admittedly a broad concept, but multiple interviews with church leaders and synod staff revealed a desire to recover a holistic understanding of mission which includes the kind of vibrant community outreach described in the first chapter, but also culturally appropriate and imaginative forms of faith-sharing /evangelisation.

Commenting on the denomination's strengths, a local leader wryly: "We are quite good at outreach, we struggle with evangelism. We are happier talking about the football than talking about Jesus." Similarly, a survey respondent noted: "I think that wanting to serve the community is part of the URC DNA. I don't think we're always quite so good at evangelism."

Indeed, several interviewees intimated that without direct and concerted efforts to encourage faith-sharing evangelism as part of a holistic vision of mission, the future of the denomination is perilous and opportunities to stay true to the theological traditions that run through the URC, which include sharing the Good News, is missed.

To engage in, and sustain holistic mission, members of local congregations must be mature in their faith. We note in this regard that, on the one hand, discipleship is very low in the order of priority for URC churches. Only 15% of respondents to the survey we ran (62 /402) chose "Discipleship/Christian maturity" when asked for congregation's top 2 priorities? Where do you direct money, time, and energy?". On the other, when asked what growth they expected to see in their congregations in the future, 36% of

respondents (147 /402) indicated discipleship. This indicates an awareness of the need for growth in this area and highlights the opportunity for the church to meet this need.

A deepening of discipleship throughout the denomination will require, among other things, continuing to curate and produce appropriate discipleship resources that, among other things, equip members for holistic mission. It will also require distributing and deploying such resources throughout the denomination.

Several interviewees mentioned 'Stepwise', a "discipleship development programme from the URC", as an excellent existing tool. Investment should be made in training and deploying facilitators to assist churches in this effort, where local capacity is missing.

Despite many examples of outward/mission-focused churches we came across in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research, we were made aware there continue to exist churches that lack the energy or intent to seize missional opportunities and generally take a more mission-orientated approach to ministry. The question that exercised several interviewees was how to help such churches shift from looking inward, lamenting their losses, and feeling anxious about the future, to looking to their communities with missional imagination? **"There is too much focus on pastoral care, but a lot of pastoral needs would disappear if people focused on their discipleship, mission and their purpose of serving God,"** noted a local church leader. Look out, not in!

Key to this shift, as one leader noted, was to nurture "a culture of experimenting and risk-taking, trying new things... to reach different people". To this end, deploying mission enablers /workers /pioneers to help bring this change in local settings should be considered.

The challenge, will be to get congregations on board. Churches will need to acknowledge the need to change and be willingly. As one interviewee put it, "I think attitude is the thing. It's how to change the attitude to **can-do**." "If it's another directive from Synod, it's doomed to fail" the same interviewee added. The key is "finding the right person who will chime with the congregation and help them without doing it all themselves."

**Nathan Mladin
to be continued...**

SERVICES

Elders' wish to keep everyone safe, so please stay home if you are unwell. You may wear masks (perhaps for singing). Also, understand our plans may change with little notice. We may sometimes have a speaker and sometimes a simple in-house led service. Video conferencing continues and Leaders or readers may Zoom in or speak in church. **Duties** are performed by a small team on a rota. Please check the board for changes.

Date	7 APR	14 APR		21 APR	28 APR
Service	Morning Worship YouTube from Wilmslow URC	Morning Worship	MP Zoom Evening Service	Morning Worship	Morning Communion
Time	10.30 am	10.30 am	***6.30 pm***	10.30 am	10.30 am
Leader	Rev Fleur Houston	Elley Noden	Rev Kuraone Mutimwii	Alison Stevens / Glyn Elsdon	Bernie Stevens
Elder Duty	A Stevens	S Smith		D Phillips	P Oliver/ A Stevens
Door	J Hodson	C Davies		M Morton	M Smith
Reader					
Flowers	Silk	C Davies		Silk	H Elsdon
Coffee	S & M Smith	B & A Stevens		D Green	C Davies
Notes		CHURCH MEETING	Meeting ID: 817 9799 2059 Passcode 518433		HOLY COMMUNION

CHURCH REGISTERS - none



LECTIONARY for APRIL

7 APR: Acts 4.32-35; Psalm 133; 1 John 1.1-2.2; John 20.19-31

14 APR: Acts 3.12-19; Psalm 4; 1 John 3.1-7; Luke 24.36b-48

21 APR: Acts 4.5-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3.16-24; John 10.11-18

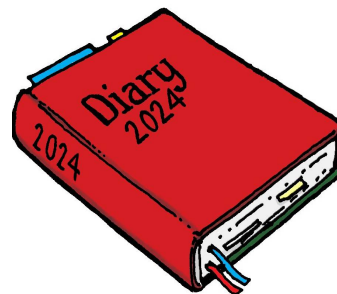
28 APR: Acts 8.26-40; Psalm 22.25-31; 1 John 4.7-21; John 15.1-8

WHAT AM I?

I'm not old. I woke up, I lifted my arms, I moved my knees, I turned my neck. Everything made the same noise: Crrrrraaaaacccccckkkk!

So I've come to the conclusion that I'm not old, I'm just crispy!

CALENDAR



.....to the best of the editor's knowledge, unless you know better...

APRIL

Mon 01			
Tues 02			
Wed 03	10.30am Elders' meeting	1 - 2.30 pm	Fellowship Circle
Thu 04		7.30 pm	MP Steering Group ~ Heald Green URC
Fri 05		2.00pm	Choir rehearsal
Sat 06	10.00~11.30am		Coffee Morning in aid of Suk Jai orphanage
Mon 08			
Tues 09			
Wed 10		1 - 2.30 pm	Fellowship Circle
Thu 11			
Fri 12	10.00am	Management meeting	2.00pm Choir rehearsal
Sat 13			
Mon 15			
Tues 16			
Wed 17		12~2pm	SOUP, SWEET & MEET
Thu 18			
Fri 19		2.00pm	Choir rehearsal
Sat 20			
Mon 22			
Tues 23			
Wed 24		1 - 2.30 pm	Fellowship Circle
			7.30 pm Worship Group ~ Zoom
Thu 25		7.00 pm	Jt Elders (Cheadle Hulme, Bramhall, Heald Green)
Fri 26		2.00pm	Choir rehearsal
Sat 27		2.30 pm	Film Matinee
Mon 29			
Tues 30			

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