



WITH  
*Easter*  
COMES **HOPE**



# United Alive

## Wotton United Church

Methodist & United Reformed  
Bradley Street, Wotton-under-Edge

**April 2020**

**Our church buildings may appear to be closed but our Church is very much open.**

### April 2020 - Keeping in touch

You should not be going out and all the usual meetings and Services will have been cancelled but we can still Worship, still share together

Here are some suggestions - but like everything else, things may well change.

Daily		Devotions from the URC - website <a href="https://urc.org.uk/">https://urc.org.uk/</a>
Daily	7.30pm	Evening Prayer from Taizé on Facebook
Sunday	8.10am	Sunday Worship on Radio 4
Sunday	10am	Worship at Home on Premier Radio (3 hours)
Sunday	10.15am	Sunday Worship - videos from Phil online or view it at any time
Sunday	10.30am	Sunday Worship from Wotton Baptist Church via Facebook or the WBC website
Sunday	1.15pm	Songs of Praise on BBC1 (Times may change)



As John Lennon sang, later in his career, 'Nobody told me there'd be days like these – Strange days indeed!'. And it's early days yet. Thank you for the way you have been looking after each other, through phone calls, social media and email. Please keep the contact and support going and if anyone is feeling isolated or 'left out' then can I encourage you to be brave, pick up the phone and call – who? Well, any one of us. In these strange days no one will mind receiving a call even if you just say – 'I don't

know why I rang, I just needed to speak to someone.' Jesus commands us to love one another; and love in action means phone calls for no other reason than for human contact.

Two things I've drawn from my involvement with the Northumbria Community. The first is a commitment to daily prayer. It has been good to pray and worship together at the same time, particularly Sunday morning or when candles were lit at 7pm on Sunday evening. However, what our social distancing and self isolation has done is to place the responsibility for worship on to each of us as individuals. I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing. It is good to gather for worship but often that simply means turning up and receiving what's on offer. In our current situation we must make an effort to construct times of worship on a day to day basis. When to pray? Where to pray? What to pray? The answers are no longer 10.15am, at church, and whatever the preacher says. We have before us an opportunity to develop our personal rhythms of prayer and worship throughout each day. In these 'strange days' a regular attention to prayer will calm our nerve, uplift our spirit, widen our horizons and keep us grounded in the love of God shown to us in Jesus.

From simply finding a quiet moment (or more) each day to read a hymn, to watching or listening to broadcast worship on TV and radio, to finding the various internet-based resources, there are ways of building patterns of prayer that suit. You could even use the worship book which gives basic outlines of morning and evening prayer.

The other thing I have been thinking about recently is a concept that is at the heart of Northumbria Community. The community is a dispersed group of people living across the UK and in other countries. We have taken a vow that commits ourselves to God and to community. But how to be community when we don't live together? We speak of being 'Alone Together'. In our separateness from each other we are deeply aware that we have committed ourselves to each other. I think the same is true (or can be true) of our churches. We do spend a good deal of time committing ourselves to God; now is the time to remind ourselves that through Jesus we are also committed to one another. When we sit alone, we can take heart that others of our fellowship are doing the same thing at the same time. We are alone together. When we pray, again alone, we are united by the Holy Spirit's presence with others of our

fellowship who also pray alone. We are alone together; in prayer. For me it's a very powerful concept. It requires each of us to be truly dedicated to each other, so that in our separateness we can realise the truth behind the images we use. We are one family, we are a community, we are a living building with open doors, we are one body and Christ is our head. We are Alone Together and nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Not affliction or hardship, hunger or danger. Nothing. Not even Covid-19.

Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Love,

*Phil.*

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## **50 - 50 - 50 - 50 - 50 PROJECT**

It was decided at the church meeting to make a banner for our 50th anniversary celebrations and as we cannot meet in groups we can all join in making the banner at home. If you would like to take part then please take a 30cm/12" square of fabric (preferably cotton) and mark out an inner square of 25cm/10" for the design to fit into. It is important to make the border for the joining up later. You can use any medium - embroidery, tapestry, patchwork, quilting, knitting (if it could be attached to a fabric background), weaving, silk painting, black work, felting – any fabric which could be mounted on to a calico backcloth.

The design can be anything you like – a Bible verse, an event from the last 50 years, an inspiring view or just something abstract. Look through magazines etc for design ideas. If you are short of materials get in touch because I have a house full of craft stuff which may well never get used! I have lots of cotton fabrics, embroidery silks, cross stitch cloth, wool and needles; you name it, it's probably here! I can leave it on your doorstep and run.

And for those who do not see themselves as embroiderers or stitchers or workers in fabric how about getting out the paints and creating a picture or two, pencil sketches, collage, marquetry, indeed any medium you like or have lurking in the drawer at home which has not been out for a while.

Writers – write us some poems, prayers, stories.

Let's create a positive memory from these coming weeks and plan to have a celebration service using all our creations later in the year!

*Sue Marsland*

## News from the United Reformed Church

At the URC Area Meeting on 27 February Richard Knott, new Synod Children & Youth Development officer was introduced and spoke about his role and was enthusiastic to get out and involved in Children & Youth activities in churches in the Synod: we pray his chance will soon come!

Margaret Marshall (Methodist Local Preacher) was there. She has not been on the plan for a while as she fell and broke a hip and she is still recovering. She wished to be remembered to all at WUC and said she will soon be back on the plan. Let's hope we will be able to have her back at WUC at the earliest opportunity.

*Brian Reeks.*

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### **They bake cakes; they make desserts – is there no end to their talents?**

The Men's Group met in February for a planning meeting, during which the Judge sampled and evaluated the eight very different puddings that had been entered in the competition. Ironic really that this particular judge never watches Bake Off or, or – well, any other of the cookery programmes on TV, and can't even name any. However, she has made – and eaten – a pudding or two in her time, and more importantly was impartial, not having a partner who was a contestant.



There were two milk puddings; three with meringue, and fruit ranging from apple through pomegranate and raspberry to rhubarb. Some tasted better than they looked but none looked better than they tasted. After careful consideration the decision was announced: second place jointly to Trevor's raspberry roulade and Richard's blackcurrant flan, with this year's winner a raspberry and rhubarb pavlova with salted sesame praline and a rhubarb sauce, made by Rob Carruthers.

Once judging was complete, the ladies whose kitchens had been taken-over for the making of these creations were invited to join the men and sample the dishes for themselves.

Thank you for inviting me to judge - very little evening meal was required in the Mills household.  
*Judy Mills*

## **Worshipping together alone**

The rule of the Iona Community that most members find difficult – and I am one of them – is daily prayer and Bible reading. I have always known I should have my “quiet time”, but once I had left home and my father was not enforcing it, it became mostly non-existent, with occasional bouts of conscience-stricken observance, some of which lasted for a whole week.

When I became an associate of the Iona Community and committed to this discipline as part of the Rule, it got easier as I have always worked best under some sort of external pressure. I still miss days and sometimes weeks, but it is a real encouragement to be aware that Community members and associates are all joining in our mutual prayers at some time on a particular day. Yes I am sitting alone in our conservatory reading and praying (if Alan is there, he is doing his own thing) but I am very conscious that in the Abbey on Iona and across the UK, several European countries and North America, hundreds of other people are praying for the same things and the same people. Yes, some of us will have skipped a day, but there is always that feeling of connection.

Thinking about this, now we cannot go to our church building for Sunday worship, I wondered whether we could all commit to worshipping at home in some way or other at 10.15 am every Sunday.

I don't think it matters much what each of us does. I believe that Phil and others are trying to see whether he can provide some form of service online, and the Methodist Church has a number of suggestions for other online services, but that does not work for all of us.

Our church prayer diary, which is distributed with United Alive, has the gospel reading and the psalm for each day, including Sunday, which we could read. If we don't use it daily, we could pray for the people, organisations and other matters mentioned in the previous or the next week. In the current prayer diary, the suggested prayers for each Sunday are for our worship and for those of us preaching elsewhere, which clearly is not happening now. Next month, I will suggest more general topics for prayer on Sundays.

Other things we might do are listen to music, go for a walk, watch a programme on TV that makes us feel thankful, write a poem or something in our diary, make something beautiful – anything which enables us at 10.15 each Sunday to rejoice in all that God has done for us.

Lots of good things are being shared on the internet and I would like to suggest this prayer as one which we could all use; it was written by Cameron Bellm, a young mother of two from Seattle – hence the slight Americanisms – who is interested in Ignatian spirituality and Catholic social teaching. It has

been shared widely on the internet – I saw it on Facebook. She has a blog under the name of Krug the Thinker, which says that she is happy for the prayer to be used by anyone who wants to in whatever manner they choose.

*Alison Jackson*

### Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced  
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors  
remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home  
remember those who must choose between preserving their  
health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when  
their schools close  
remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips  
remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the  
economic market  
remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home  
remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country  
let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms  
around each other

let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our  
neighbours.

Amen

Notice seen on the back of a van -  
'no toilet rolls kept in this van  
overnight.'



## **Pastoral Care during the Coronavirus Crisis**

As you are aware we have been asked to stay away from other people as much as we can at the moment. This means that your Pastoral Visitor will not be visiting you but will be making contact by email or telephone.

We are aware that many of you may be feeling isolated and concerned for yourselves or for others at this time. If you feel you'd like to talk to someone please pick up the phone and contact your pastoral visitor, Phil Summers our Minister, or myself. If you are not sure how to contact your pastoral visitor please contact me and I will give you the information. My telephone number and email address are on the back of this magazine as is Phil's and the Leadership team's.

If you need help with shopping, picking up prescriptions, odd jobs that need doing, please contact one of us and we'll try to find someone who can help you.

If you would like prayers said for yourself or for someone else, we have a prayer chain and we can pass on your request for prayer to all members of the prayer chain via email. If you would like us to do this please contact me or your pastoral visitor.

The United Alive magazine may be delivered by email, Royal Mail or dropped through your letter box by hand during this time of isolation.

Fortunately the weather is improving and we hope to be able to get out into our gardens in the sun and take our one allowed period of exercise a day and talk to others even if it is down a telephone line or at a distance!

Love to everyone and look after yourselves.

*Pauline*

### **Editor's Note**

In addition to Pauline's article above:

It has been very important to me to produce this edition of United Alive and get it circulated, especially to those of you without internet access. I hope you will have enough information, here and elsewhere, to get any help you may need, and from what I have seen, you, usually the older members of our Church, can teach the rest of us a lot about staying safe, staying cheerful and about self-sufficiency.

With things changing on a daily basis, I don't know when I will produce the next edition, but now and at all times, if you want anything, please,

**just pick up the phone and ask!**



## Mayflower 400: Rose and William Hickman and the Pilgrim Fathers.



In November 2017 I wrote an article about the Pilgrim Fathers landing in America in that month 1620. This year is the 400th anniversary of that event, and commemorations are taking place in the USA and also in various places around England, not least in north Lincolnshire and north Nottinghamshire from where many of the Puritan emigrants originated.

Visiting my native town of Gainsborough recently, I found it was making the most of the anniversary, no doubt in the hope of attracting tourists to a not particular attractive area. However, the town has one gem of a building, the Old Hall (*above*), one of the best-preserved medieval manor houses in England.

William Hickman, a London merchant who had bought the house in 1593, and his mother Rose, who came to live with him after the death of her second husband, were strong Protestants. They sympathised with the Puritans, who saw the Church of England as only half-reformed. Rose was a remarkable lady who wrote the story of her early life in her own hand at the age of 85, unfortunately dying before getting beyond 1558. Born Rose Locke in 1526 during Henry VIII's reign, she grew up a committed Protestant.

She married Anthony Hickman, a London based merchant adventurer, and during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary they sheltered Protestants from the authorities in London, including John Knox, the future founder of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Anthony was arrested and after being released escaped to Antwerp, where Rose joined him with their children, including William. They returned after Mary died.

By the 1590s worship outside the parish church was illegal, and separatists (extreme Puritans who separated from the Church of England) met secretly; there were several groups in north Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, and the Hickmans probably\* allowed up to seventy people to meet in the Old Hall led by John Smyth, an ordained minister who was locally-born and educated at a grammar school in the town. But, under increasing pressure from the government of James I and the Bishop of Lincoln, in 1607 or 1608 Smyth an about forty of his followers slipped out of the country to Amsterdam, as the Netherlands allowed greater freedom of worship. Some of another Puritan group meeting at Scrooby Hall, a few miles away across the River Trent in Nottinghamshire, also escaped to Amsterdam after suffering persecution.

Rose died in 1613 and her son in 1625, but the Hickman family continued to play a prominent role in the development of Gainsborough and many became local members of parliament. Sir Neville Hickman invited John Wesley to preach in the Hall several times in 1759, and in 1761 and 1764. In 1720 a new house was built at Thonock on the edge of the town and the Old Hall became unoccupied. It remained in the family and was used for a variety of purposes. It is now a National Trust property. In 1827 the Hall and Thonock estate passed to the Bacon family, which holds the premier baronetcy of England.

\*It has been disputed whether Rose and William had anything to do with the separatists in Gainsborough, as no documentary evidence has yet been found, but given their known religious views and standing in the area they may well have been able to protect the group for a time.

The historian Sue Allan has written *Tudor Rose*, a novel about Rose Hickman, and a biography *Lady Rose Hickman, her life and family* (both 2009).

*Philip Revill*

## Happy Easter

The supermarkets are full of Easter Eggs even if they have little of anything else, but then, we're not doing much shopping at the moment are we? In fact, we could almost forget it's Easter

The most important time in the Christian calendar.

More important than Coronavirus or the postponed Olympics

Good Friday is on 10 April - Easter Day is 12 April

Take time to reflect. Time is something most of us have a lot of right now.

Happy Easter



Good news that Della's treatment has been a success and she can move on to the next stage.

Also good news and congratulations to Luke and Clare on the safe arrival on 22 March of a baby boy. Luke is Jane Gunning's nephew which might seem a bit tenuous, but right now we need all the good news we can get.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with Alan and Babs as Alan's treatment continues.

Mary and Martin Summers send their love to everyone. They are as safe and well as the rest of us. They have good neighbours and for the last couple of warmer days they have all taken their lunches outside in the cul-de-sac and chatted at a safe distance.

*Below and overleaf I reproduce a letter sent by Jean Kelly. We still miss you Jean and Jim, and always will*

Dear Friends,

Since our move to Dursley five years ago, Jim & I always intended to continue our happy association with Wotton United Church.

However the past few years have seen our existing health issues continue whilst new problems have arisen for both of us.

That has prompted us to take stock and we have decided, reluctantly, to worship more locally here in Dursley.

I, in particular, will miss the intention I've held onto for 5 years, to return to worship at Wotton. Not least of all, for the happy memories and friendships made since we landed in Wotton in 1989.

Our first visitor, when we moved into Bradley Street, was Molly Tucker with a bunch of flowers from the church. She had been sent by Ron Hicks, who had been informed we were coming by our previous church in Basingstoke So it was sealed then that we would walk down the street on the following Sunday.

I hope that, when I recover sufficiently to attend worship, I may catch up with some of you. However as many of you know I've been isolated for months now here at home whilst my immune system is suppressed in a last ditch attempt to control my illness and the current world-wide situation means I will have to be

even more strict until the end of the year, when, hopefully, I'll be in remission. We send our greetings and thanks to you all for the many wonderful memories we have of being part of such an active church community for so many years. God bless you all.

*Jean & Jim Kelly*

## **Keeping Occupied**

*As we are 'confined to barracks' John Rees-Simkins has suggested the following diversions - with additions from the Editor*

Phone each other regularly to chat.

Indulge in hobbies either ones you are familiar with or new ones you can seek out. My granddaughter bought me a model kit last Christmas. Time to get stuck into it.

Write your life story. Your descendants would no doubt appreciate that. Or - Alan J says - what about that novel you always intended writing?

Get reacquainted with your cookery books.

Have a total spring clean and clear out stuff that you haven't used in ages.

Spring is coming so start enjoying your garden again.

Look up on line courses or send for some on DVD (Check out 'The Great Courses.' I've had a few from them.)

If and when you can, try to get out into an open space with grass underfoot, clear sky above and fresh air all around you. Then you'll clearly feel the presence of God.

Despite all that's going on we still live in a beautiful world and we're lucky enough to live one of those especially beautiful places in it.

### **Most of all stay positive**

Don't let the doom and gloom on the media get you down.

When the media is being particularly negative, switch it off and put on some music, another of God's gifts.

The TV is still working - though many of our favourite shows will have stopped making new episodes.

The internet is still working - amazing when you consider the demand at the moment

Make a list of all the things you need to do or want to do, and the people you intend phoning ... keep it in view so as soon as you start thinking 'what shall I do next?' (Or 'I'm bored!') You can glance up and see all those options

## The Basin and the Towel

I was dreaming that I was treading the streets of the Holy City, pottering about like a tourist. In my wandering I came upon the museum of that city of my dream. I went in and a courteous attendant conducted me around. There was some old armour, much bruised with battle. Many things were conspicuous by their absence. I saw nothing of Alexander's, nor of Napoleon's. There was no Pope's ring, nor even the ink bottle that Luther is said to have thrown at the devil, nor Wesley's seal and keys. I saw a widow's mite and the feather of a little bird. I saw some swaddling clothes, a hammer and three nails and a few thorns. I saw a bit of a fishing net and the broken oar of a boat. I saw a sponge that had once been dipped in vinegar and a small piece of silver. But I cannot enumerate all I saw, nor describe how I felt. Whilst turning over a common drinking cup which had an honourable place, I whispered to the attendant 'Have you not got a basin and a towel amongst your collection?' 'Oh no' he said, 'not here; you see they are in constant use.' Then I knew I was in heaven, in the Holy City. Knowing that he came from God and went to God.....Jesus took a towel and a basin.

A.E.Whitham

## Today's post brought me an unusual little package

My cousin Pam who is a Methodist Minister in Beccles sent me a tea-bag in a little envelope printed with a cup and saucer. With it came a letter.



*'Just dropping a line to say I am here for you at this time: if you are feeling isolated and would like a chat, do pick up the phone or email me. I am happy to chat at any time*

*We can't meet for a cuppa so I am sending one to you. If you're feeling alone, remember Jesus is always there for you, so make a cup of tea and sit down with a chair beside you, and just talk to Him as though he was there in person. He is listening to you - we are never isolated from Him. And perhaps pick up a hymn book and read your favourite hymn.*

*Do keep in touch: I am thinking of you and hold you in God's care.'*

What a lovely idea !

Judy Mills

## Spirit Lifter for April 2020

*“For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”* Jeremiah 29, v 11-13

*“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God.”* Isaiah 43, v 1-3

*Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.* Isaiah 40, v 31

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* Romans 15, v 13

“Hope unfulfilled makes the heart sick, whereas hope realised is like a tree of life. And I saw then that, despite all that counts against it, we must keep faith, trusting in the future – not just of our world but of ourselves, what life holds in store for *us*. For without hope there is no meaning, no life, no anything.

Though dreams are dashed and confidence shattered, we must still believe that life can change; that next time will be different. For as daffodils bloom afresh in the springtime and swallows return once more, so will hope rise again, refusing to be denied. And as the nightingale sings even in the darkness, so shall our soul sing even through the deepest night.

I saw also that a person without hope is like a flame starved of oxygen, that a people without hope is like a field starved of water, that a world without hope is like a life starved of breath.

And I understood that hope alone makes fulfilment possible, holding out the prospect of change and the inspiration to keep on striving. Not vainly clutching at straws, but rather daring to believe: a faith that in all the brokenness of humanity, all the aching heartbreak of this world, there is yet something precious, of infinite potential, that will somehow win through.

So then, however much you have been hurt, however often betrayed, however often disillusioned, nurture the seed of hope within you – the faith that good can come out of evil and joy out of sorrow – for only thus can we heal our broken world, turning its ugliness into a thing of beauty, its wilderness into a burgeoning of new life.”

Extracted from, “The Teacher”, by Rev Nick Fawcett

## Now wash your hands ....

You probably all remember the scratchy toilet paper, impregnated with Izal disinfectant and every sheet printed with the legend 'Now wash your hands'. But did you know it was at first given away to local authorities who bought bulk supplies of hygiene products, before being marketed as a commodity in its own right?

Both toilet paper and handwashing are much in the news, allowing our imagination to run riot if we have nothing better to do.

Wash your hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds we have been told. How do you know when 20 seconds has passed? Sing 'Happy Birthday' twice apparently.

Sue suggest substituting Happy Birthday for number 398 in Singing the Faith. She says: 'It needs bouncing along a bit but it does go to Happy Birthday:

There's a spirit in the air  
telling Christians everywhere:  
'Praise the love in Christ revealed,  
living working in our world'

and another verse is very apt

When a stranger's not alone,  
where the homeless find a home,  
praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working in our world'

Philip has penned another version to the same tune:

"There's a virus in the air,  
Quickly spreading everywhere.  
You can't see it wearing specs .  
Wash your hands for twenty secs."

Meanwhile, Janet & Alun found the below in the Ludlow Church Magazine. We all need something to smile about at the moment:

*Grandad was babysitting when he heard his little granddaughter muttering the alphabet over in hushed tones. "What are you doing?" He asked her. "I'm praying", she replied. "I can't think of the right words so I just say all the letters. God will put them together for me 'cos He knows what I'm thinking"*

## *From the Remembrance Book in April*



4 Adam Birdsey	2007	12 Sis Bleaken	2003
5 Kath 'Dot' Mundy	2018	14 Honor Savage	1998
6 Basil Venner	2006	17 Julia Wheeler	1996
6 Peter McGregor	2006	24 Edward (Ted) Farr	2016
9 Marjorie Sherratt	2005	26 Nigel Morley	2012
11 Ronald Heaven	2002	27 Tony Yeomans	2014
12 Dorothy Brown	1993	29 Brenda Tavinner	1981
12 Joyce Tait	2017		

*We give thanks for all who have lived and died in the faith of Christ*

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Items for May United Alive by **20 April** please to Judy or Ann & Philip