

Interim Newsletter May 2020

Dean Row Chapel, Wilmslow SK9 2BX

Dean Row Chapel website: www.deanrowchapel.co.uk



Sadly both Chapels are closed because of the Covid19 virus. We hope that we shall be able to open our doors again soon

Hale Chapel, Hale Barns, WA15 0AQ

Hale Chapel website: www.halechapel.co.uk



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LETTER FROM THE MINISTER

In response to the shared experience of 'lockdown' that we find ourselves living through, each of us is likely to place it into some frame of reference that will enable us to progress through each day mindfully and productively. For many members of our congregations the memories of living through the Second World War will still be vivid. Six consecutive years of personal sacrifice, fear and uncertainty were compensated with a wealth of national pride and a renewed sense of community spirit. My own survival of the HIV/AIDS crisis in its initial period of outbreak and response in San Francisco in the 1980s inspires me to remember how communities of faith and local citizens' groups provided spiritual and practical support, at a time when often the very people and institutions one was most closely-aligned with distanced themselves from those in need. It was heart-warming to work alongside total strangers who put their own perceived safety at risk in order to deliver meals, offer a badly needed hug or simply listen to the tales of loss and illness. It took several years for scientists to identify the means of transmission of the virus, and many more to create pharmaceuticals that could prolong a person's life who was living with the virus. Even today, no 'cure' exists, but someone who contracts the virus in a developed country with generous healthcare is able to lead a relatively normal and long life.

As the inheritors of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, we have an event in both history and in faith that can help us to process what we are at present coping with on a daily basis. The Babylonian Exile of the Jews lasted from 587 BCE until 538 BCE. It was an enforced removal of thousands of people from their homeland to a strange and peculiar setting. In response to their sense of loss, the Jews in exile reflected prolifically by documenting their feelings and their experiences. Much of what we have today in the Old Testament books of the Bible (the Hebrew Scriptures) was either written in this period or was edited from the works of previous generations. There was no

knowledge of if or when the period of exile would end, and the Jewish people learned to adapt the practices of their faith in the absence and destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish people and the Jewish religion would never again be as they had been before the Exile, but they would continue, enhanced by the collective experience they had known in that time. It was Cyrus, the King of Persia, who eventually conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 BCE and encouraged the Jews to return to their homes, providing money and supplies in order to re-build both their Temple and their communities. A new era then began for a national sense of identity and faithfulness.

As we live through this challenging time, let us offer the following prayer,

O Holy and Gentle God, we lift our minds and hearts to you in thanksgiving for all the blessings you have bestowed upon us. Confident of your love, we dare to ask for another blessing. We pray for healing of all that needs healing, whether the wounds be in the body, mind or spirit. Please guide all of us to the healing we seek.

Believing that somewhere in this world researchers are close to discovering a vaccine to the Coronavirus, we ask that you light their path. Give them the perseverance, the resources and the wisdom they need to complete the task.

While we wait, O God, please pour your grace out to us so that we might be strong and maintain hope. Help us to cast aside our fears and enjoy the blessing of each and every day. Draw us into your peace. For all our days may we be mindful of your steadfast love for us and may we express our love to you and to one another.

Amen.

If you or anyone you know would benefit from having their grocery shopping and/or their medications collected and

delivered to their home, please do let me know, as I would be pleased to do that for anyone within a fifteen mile radius of Wilmslow, where I live. Let us hope that we will soon be able to meet in person and celebrate the strength of our fellowship in our two chapels.

JEFF

PRIVATE DEVOTIONS FOR THIS TIME

There are two sources of material that could be used for private spiritual devotions that are available free of charge, online. The congregations of both Hale and Dean Row Chapels are members of the Unitarian Christian Association, which has placed on its website the entire text of its book, 'Daybreak and Eventide', which was written by two Unitarian ministers, viz. Andrew Brown and John Morgan. In addition to set services of worship that can be used by individuals for personal, private devotions, there are biblical readings and prayers for both morning and evening for every day of the month. The website for the UCA is

www.unitarianchristian.org.uk.

The Meditation Group that normally meets in the Dean Row Chapel vestry on Wednesdays from 12.30 until 1 pm is part of the World Community for Christian Meditation, which offers resources, free of charge, on its website: www.christianmeditation.org.uk. There, one can find daily and weekly readings, teachings and prayers. In a spirit of ecumenical and inter-faith breadth, the resources are not limited to any one tradition or religion, so are therefore accessible to Unitarian Free Christians.

Dean Row Chairman's Chat

Dear friends, I am missing you all so much and our time together both in Chapel and our social gatherings.

Although we are probably all hating the 'lockdown' scenario, it is better to be safe than sorry. I think I must be the only mother in the world whose son, for her Mothering Sunday present, gave her a face mask, a box of 100 disposable gloves and a bottle of disinfectant that has to be diluted 1 to 30 if you don't want to burn your hands off. All of which is not much use to me as I am not allowed out! Still my Derek is making use of them when he goes shopping.

Now, I am sure that you are all longing to hear about my tomato babies. I spent a couple of days potting on 125 of them this year, but no Chapel to give them to. The local Woodsmoor Allotment Society have kindly adopted 95 of them and are sending a donation to Smile Train, the Women's League charity last year. I think it will be quite substantial as the going rate is on average £1.50 per plant. Good news that my babies have not gone to waste.

I know that we could all use this spare time that we now have in a productive, useful way, but it is a good time to catch up on our reading and just lolling about. But how to get to the Library? It is of course closed. However, if you have a library card you can access talking books and a whole heap of current magazines free of charge. If you have your library card number and pin, you can access the RDdigital app and just follow the instructions. Just takes a few minutes to get started AND IT IS FREE IF YOU ARE A LIBRARY MEMBER! But please remember that your local bookshops are taking orders and posting books out if you can't get out to them.

If you like doing jigsaws, you might like to try Jigsaw Explorer - jigsawexplorer.com. It has hundreds of jigsaws you can do

online FREE OF CHARGE and no adverts!

I hope you enjoy this interim Newsletter. If you would like more of the same just let me know.

Love to you all, keep safe and hope that it is not too long before we are together again.

Chrissie

Hale Chairman's Interim Newsletter – May

Hello everyone!

Can I first express the wish that all members of our congregations at Hale and at Dean Row are safe and well? I appreciate that most members of the two congregations are more at risk than the general community and there will be greater need to take all sensible precautions. So far as I am aware there have been no serious issues and let us hope and pray that remains the case.

I am writing this note some five weeks into full lockdown and lockdown life has become the new normal. It is getting to the point that it is getting increasingly hard to imagine getting back to how things used to be. Have any of you seen “Groundhog Day”? – this is an excellent film in which the main character is condemned to live the same day over and over again. He must have been in that situation for a great many years because by the end he has taught himself to play the piano to a professional standard. Well I don't know about you, but I really do feel that my life has become very like “Groundhog Day”! Every day has much the same routine and structure but I find that oddly comforting and the decision as to “what to do today” is largely redundant.

A great comfort has been the weather which has been frankly amazing since lockdown began and as I type this newsletter the

sun is blazing down outside. Two beneficiaries of the lockdown have been our two miniature dachshunds, Harriet and Betty. We live very close to Warrington Golf Club which is of course currently closed to golfers. It is however crossed by public footpaths, so our dogs enjoy fabulous daily walks over the golf course with no danger of being hit by stray golf balls. And the views are amazing – the Welsh mountains to the west, and right across to the Pennines to the east. Every cloud as they say has a silver lining..... And who needs petrol??

It is of course a worrying time and I do very much appreciate that. But many people I have spoken to and met (at a safe distance!) have said that there are lots of positives to take from the situation and indeed the old “war time spirit” has been mentioned. There is I think a real sense of communities pulling together and support for individuals in need of help. Captain (now Colonel) Tom has been the shining example but there are so many others up and down the country. I do think that when this nation is put to the test, that it brings out the best in us, and we rise as of old to the challenge.

I do very much look forward to the day when we can meet up again at our respective chapels on Sunday morning. Right now that seems a distant prospect, but the situation will improve, and normality will one day return.

So in the words of Vera Lynn (happily still with us) “We’ll meet again, don’t know when, don’t know how, but we’ll meet again one sunny day!”

Stay safe and well

Best Wishes Alastair

What's Happening To Me During Lockdown – submitted by Anne Gemmell

Hello all my chapel family. Hope you're all doing ok during this time of madness called Lockdown! I am more fortunate than a lot of people at this time, so I really am counting my blessings.

I am used to being on my own – that doesn't bother me too much – but, like everyone else I would love to be able to give hugs and kisses to all my family and friends.

I am self isolating (all these new terms we are now including in our vocabulary) as I am one of the 'elderly people' who the Government tell us, are more vulnerable to Covid-19. So instead of being able to jump in the car and go off to potter round the shops for a bit of retail therapy and join family and friends for many coffees, I am living in the cleanest, tidiest apartment in my block, spending my days washing, ironing, baking (when I can get flour and sugar) and soup making. Thank goodness for all the different soup recipes I picked up during the Lent Lunches last year!!

Into all the above, a bit of light relief comes when my daughter and grandson's, who only live a short distance away, decide to walk the dog past my apartment to either a) pick up my shopping list, b) bring me my shopping, c) drop off little 'treats', or d) just come to see how I am doing and have a chat.

I am on the first floor with French windows and a Juliet balcony overlooking the driveway, so I usually get a call on my mobile to tell me they are outside and I open my window and stand looking over my balcony (feeling quiet like Juliet I might add) whilst I communicate with them. Unfortunately I can't sing!!!

They sometimes tell me that they have been up to my apartment and left a 'little treat' outside my door. Last night it was a Chinese Takeaway – absolute bliss and sooo yummy and I didn't

have to cook – and the day before my youngest grandson brought me some biscuits he had made in the shape of hearts, with the message 'Love you Gma'. Enjoy! Occasionally my biggest treat of all arrives – a cup of Costa coffee – which my daughter has been managing to pick up from the coffee machine in Tesco in Cheadle – until last Saturday when the machine sadly broke down! By the time it arrives of course, it is slightly cold, needs decanting and putting in the microwave, but nothing can take away the wonderful taste of a Costa cappuccino!

A couple of weeks ago, my basketball playing grandson decided he was going to practice one of his perfect 'throws' through my window! However, instead of it being a basketball – thank goodness - he had chosen to bring me two packets of Midget Gems and a Fry's Turkish Delight, which he had put inside a black 'doggy poo' bag (clean I might add)! He tied the top and then hurtled this through my open window! It landed perfectly in the middle of my lounge. I only hope nobody was passing and wondered what a six foot one, good looking lad was doing throwing a doggy poo bag through my window!!

Looking on the positive side of lockdown, I am reading more, going out once a day for a nice quiet walk, have learnt how to get onto Zoom so I can enjoy being part of a Unitarian Sunday morning service., I listen to daily devotions on YouTube given by Danny Crosby from Altrincham and Urmston chapels, communicate with my daughters on FaceTime and have become part of a Group Chat!! Again, so many new words in my vocabulary - Zoom, FaceTime, YouTube, Group Chat!! We are never too old to learn new things as I'm finding out!!

Take care everyone, keep safe and well until we can all get back together again!



The ‘Story’ Behind the Picture

Sunday afternoon. Just had my lunch and was settling down with the newspaper. My mobile phone rings. Youngest grandson telling me that they are all outside and that Suzanne (daughter) has just brought me a ‘treat’ and has left it outside my apartment door. Go to the door and there on the doormat is a take-away cup of coffee!

Pick it up, go back inside and open my window, cup of coffee in my hand and a big smile on my face. At this point Suzanne takes the photo!

On the way back from their walk they had passed the Church Inn, just around the corner from me, who had set up their coffee making machine on the car park! Doing a roaring trade!! It wasn’t quite the Costa I am addicted to, but it was indeed a very special ‘treat’ for a Sunday afternoon, and I enjoyed every sip I took of it!

Dear friends,

I sincerely hope you and your loved ones are keeping safe and well during this difficult time. I am sure you have constant pressures on your finances as well. However, the Chapel still has most of its costs ongoing. We have to pay our salaries, insurances and utilities. We are saving as much as we can, but fully expect that our investment income will fall heavily during the year. There are no weddings nor baptisms and so no donations at those services. Our Sunday collections have ceased and envelope subscribers cannot leave their donations.

You will know that the shares we hold generate a large part of our income. Their value has fallen quite a bit since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and now would be the worst time to sell some of them to bolster our income. If any of you feel able to send some money to make up for our loss of collections it would be really helpful. You can send a cheque to me at home – 2 Chesham Road, Wilmslow, SK9 6HA, made out to Dean Row Chapel or, better still, pay directly into our bank account at Sort Code 20-53-77 Account 80326143.

I hate having to write to you such a begging letter, but our lovely chapel and chapel family will then be there for us as strong as ever once the virus has passed.

**My love to you all,
Peter**

This witty poem about Covid-19 is by **Jan Beaumont** from the **Starts at 60** Community in New Zealand.

I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.

You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.

They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.

We may seem sweet old ladies
Who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s –
If you only knew the truth!

There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied
And were quite outrageous flirts.

Then we settled down, got married
And turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then nana,
Who on earth did we become?

We didn't mind the change of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're dead
Is like red rag to a bull!

So here you find me stuck inside
For 4 weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the door!

It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no bloody flour!

Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.

At least I've got a stash of booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whiskey, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!

So let's all drink to lockdown
To recovery and health
And hope this bloody virus
Doesn't decimate our wealth.

We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates!

My favourite poetry - you can tell how cultured I am!
From Peter Shaw

I am a sundial
And I make a botch
Of what is done far better
By a watch.

AND

Here lies John Bunn
He was killed with a gun
His name was not Bunn, but Wood
But Wood would not rhyme with gun
But Bunn would.

Classy hey?

+++++

This is the Time to be Slow
By John O'Donohue

This is the time to be slow,
Lie low to the wall
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let
The wire brush of doubt
Scrape from your heart
All sense of yourself
And your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,
Time will come good;
And you will find your feet
Again on fresh pastures of promise,
When the air will be kind
And blushed with beginning.

From Jeff

From Cathy Fozard Wilmslow and Handforth Christian Aid organiser. – Please visit the Just Giving page

The Wilmslow and Handforth Christian Aid supporters group usually organises collections and sponsored events during Christian Aid Week (which in 2020 is from 10 to 16 May). The Covid-19 situation means that our usual events and street collections cannot be held, but this year the work Christian Aid does to help the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalised communities is even more necessary.

So this year, if you would like to support Christian Aid, please use 'JustGiving' as a means of donating during Christian Aid Week 2020. Last year the communities of Wilmslow and Handforth raised nearly £14,000. Please show the same generosity this year and don't forget to gift aid if you are able.

For over 70 years, Christian Aid has been alongside the poorest of our neighbours, with people of all faiths and none, to stand up for dignity, equality and justice. Coronavirus impacts us all, but love unites us, so let's now stand together with our neighbours near and far.

Thank you for taking the time to visit our JustGiving page and, hopefully, it has prompted you to give to Christian Aid.

It has been suggested that in order for people who are not online to donate, please send cheques to my address. We can then add these donations to the JustGiving total. Cheques should be made payable to Christian Aid. It is possible to gift aid a donation . The donor needs to indicate they wish to gift aid and include their name , address and postcode. I will then complete the relevant form on their behalf and send it to Christian Aid as I would have done with the gift aid slips on the envelopes.

**If you wish to do this please send your cheques to -
Mrs Catherine Fozard,
20 Handforth Road,
Wilmslow, SK9 2LU**

Treacle Bread – Submitted by Anne Gemmell (supplied by Chris Butler)

Ingredients

For the treacle bread

Butter, for greasing

225g/8oz plain flour, plus extra for dusting

225g/8oz self-raising flour (or use 225g/8oz plain flour and 1 tbsp baking powder)

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

2 tbsp black treacle (or use maple syrup, honey, pomegranate molasses, or golden syrup)

50g/1 ¾ oz porridge oats, plus 1 tbsp for sprinkling (these are to add texture – can be left out if none available)

475ml/17fl oz milk

1 tsp sea salt.

Method

- 1 To make the treacle bread, preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6, and grease a baking tray with butter.
- 2 Mix all of the bread ingredients together in a large bowl until a soft, sticky dough is formed. Place the dough on a lightly floured surface, and form into a round. Sprinkle the remaining oats on top (if using), and transfer to the baking tray. Bake for around 35-40 minutes, or until golden—brown and the bread sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom. Place on a wire rack to cool.

This bread is good served with pate and beetroot pickle. This can be garnished with parsley and dizzled with oil to finish.

From Beryl Booth - ETERNAL FUDGE

To equal quantities of generosity and thought for others add a few dozen smiles, followed by the same number of kind words. Sprinkle freely with fun and merriment, flavour with wit and mix thoroughly with the spirit of love. Warm with looks and serve immediately. Specially desired at Christmas, but seasonable at any time.

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Beryl and Ian's daily walk – where sheep may safely graze – we've seen them born and flourish.

**Submitted by Jenny Williams - Written by Nikki Banas.
IMPACT**

"You never really know the true impact you have on those around you. You never know how much someone needed that smile you gave them. You never know how much your kindness turned someone's entire life around. You never know how much someone needed that long hug or deep talk. So don't wait to be kind. Don't wait for someone else to be kind first. Don't wait for better circumstances or for someone to change. Just be kind, because you never know how much someone needs it."

The Book Club

Reading recommendations from our congregation

From Hilary Shaw -

I have not been reading anything brilliant recently but one or two have stuck in my mind over the last couple of years.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. By Marta Ann Schaffer and Annie Barrows. 2008 but very good.

The Keeper of Lost Things by Ruth Hogan

Raven Black by Ann Cleeves.

From Jeff -

Albert Camus', 'The Plague', or Thomas Mann's 'The Magic Mountain'.

If escapism is what is desired, then anything by Barbara Pym would be superb for a celebration of a Britain that once was.

From Bridget Wenham

Can recommend a good novel and topical - A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles published by Windmill. Is about Russian aristocrat under hotel arrest in Moscow for years from the twenties. A lovely book, easy to read , thoughtful but uplifting and funny.

From Chrissie Wilkie

Love Robert Fulghum books, easy to read pieces from his life as a UU Minister and a teacher. Now reading 'It was on fire when I lay down on it'.

Theodore Zeldin 'The Hidden Pleasures of Life': A New Way of Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future.

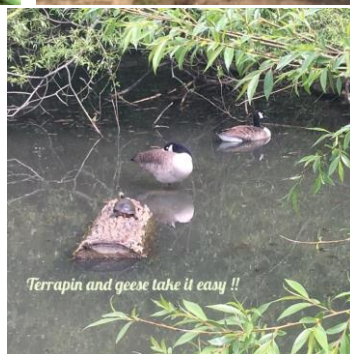
Ann Cleeves 'White Nights'

Mark Billingham's Tom Thorne crime novels

From Nicki Aspeotis

Apart from probably spending too much time on Facebook and watching Netflix, plus trying to, finally, set up an online business (more of that in a future Newsletter), I've been spending my daily exercise breaks by taking a relaxed walk on Heaton Mersey Common. I'm usually accompanied by Liam and sometimes Steve; both know it much better than I do as Liam used to traverse the various paths on his way to both primary and high school – much quicker than by car.

Literally five minutes walk from where I live takes me away from a run of the mill 80's housing estate into the wilds of the common. Formally a brick works until the 1970's, Stockport Council decided to keep the open spaces, fill in the pits, and let nature take over. It stretches up and across from Heaton Mersey into Heaton Moor and is a fabulous place to take a daily stroll in the fresh air. I've included some pictures below.



IT Support (announced in uni-news 6/5/2020)

With technology being such a lifeline for communication at the moment, we are conscious of those who are less confident in using the internet and taking part in videocalls. We are delighted to announce that Netserve Ltd, an IT support company, is stepping in to offer us some help.

Will Bellows, Netserve's founder says "We are offering telephone advice to the Unitarian community who are currently on lockdown and want to stay connected with their friends, family and the Unitarian community via video calls. Please contact our dedicated helpdesk on 02037288415 or [email](#) and we will be happy to help." Will has also confirmed that his team will be happy to help those who are working out how to livestream services and create other online opportunities for connection.

Please do pass on the contact information to those in your congregation who may need help in getting set-up and confident – Netserve are ready to help with any tech challenges, large or small!

Benediction from Anne Gemmell –

Yesterday is already a dream
and tomorrow is only a vision.
But today, well lived,
makes very yesterday a dream of
happiness,
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Submitted by Margaret Taylor

Gentle Creed

In your laughter let there be happiness,
in your tears, renewal. In your quiet
moments, contentment. In your dreams
a future promise.

Let there be peace in your time alone
and friendship in a crowd. Let your
knowledge of your Self bring you to a
greater understanding of what you can
achieve.

Do not place too great a value on the
material world, but take time to listen
to the ballad of the birds in green valleys.

Hurry not from one workload to another
without taking time to be aware of your own
needs and the needs of others, and do not
underestimate the importance of being fulfilled,
for if you are not whole in your satisfaction
you can not wholly give it to others.

Step forward to another day, taking with you
The best of the last and the lessons learned.
But remember, even when we are dissatisfied
with ourselves there is One who knows us
completely and will not desert us.

Take courage to live at a slower pace and
to listen to the Self you have yet to discover.

Lynn New.

PRAYER IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC from Jeff

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 paying their rent.
May we 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 nowhere to go.
May we who settle in for a
quarantine at home
remember those
who have no home.
During this time
when we cannot physically wrap
our arms around each other,
let us find ways to be the loving
embrace of God to our
neighbours.

AMEN.

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