



CONNECT

**NAILSEA UNITED
REFORMED CHURCH
MAGAZINE
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*From the rising of the sun
to the place where it sets,
the name of the Lord
is to be praised.*

Psalm 113 v 3

Minister Revd John Gray - details on Contact Page
Church Secretary Mrs Sally Edmondson

Dear Friends,

On 20th June we are going to celebrate Father's Day. Every year we have this special holiday in our diaries to be saved for family gathering, BBQ, giving cards and gifts and socialising – this year with social distancing. We Christians put all this into the context of the Bible and think what we can learn from God our heavenly Father, what the features of his love, care and wisdom are that can be paralleled with the personalities and qualities of our early fathers which are worth celebrating. Let me mention just one of those qualities now that is essential in our Christian faith and in the social fabric of our church family and network: generosity.

Happy are the fathers who are remembered for their generosity, and happy are the children and grandchildren who have experienced the generosity of their father and grandfather in their lives! Nevertheless, it is not something that comes cheap in our relationships, can be forced out, coerced, demanded and taken lightly. I cannot say to you, for instance, give me a very significant amount of money which I need urgently, which I will not pay back to you, as I know you are a very generous person. Generosity should be demonstrated and received genuinely.

When I think of the Biblical context of a generous Father I think of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Can we think of a more generous father than the one in the story? Certainly not. The parable recorded in Luke 15:11-32 has been called “the greatest short story in the world” (Barclay). It could also be called the Parable of the Older Brother (about how not to behave at church), or, surprisingly, the Parable of “Prodigal Father”. The father's heart overflows with love and generosity. In the story the father represents God. He is the prodigal Father in the way He loves His children. He “squanders” and lavishes his love upon us, even if we don't deserve it. Yet He remains full of love for us. Let's learn from our Father's love and be extravagant in our love to others around us

Let's celebrate the generous love of our fathers, influential men too,

who protected, helped and sacrificed their time and other means so we might get on with life well, and let us be assured of the love of our children, grandchildren and those on whom we have an influence in life knowing that what we do for them is appreciated.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is a very moving and inspirational story for us to be generous and caring to everyone in the same way in our families, at church and in our hurting world ravaged by the pandemic and in need of selfless love.

Happy Father's Day and All the Best! John

A Father's Letter

Paul Brand is a brilliant medical doctor who did pioneering work in the treatment of leprosy. He has received the Albert Lasker Award, been made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire by the Queen, served as the only Westerner on the Mahatma Gandhi foundation, and had medical procedures named after him.

Brand grew up in India, where his parents were missionaries. At the age of nine he was sent to boarding school in England. Five years later, while a 14 year old student there, he received a telegram informing him that his beloved father had died of blackwater fever. Brand cherished fond memories of his father, a man who had a great love for people and a great love for the natural world around him.

A short time after he received news of his father's death Paul Brand received a letter from his father. It had been posted prior to his father's death but took some time to reach Brand as it came by ship. It's words impacted deeply upon the young son. Paul's father described the hills around their home and then finished with these words: “God means us to delight in his world. It isn't necessary to know botany or zoology or biology in order to enjoy the manifold life of nature. Just observe. And remember. And compare. And be always looking to God with thankfulness and worship for having placed you in such a delightful corner of the universe as the planet Earth.”

Commitment for Life Prayer

A Prayer for Fairtrade

Jesus, you prayed that we might forgive all debt:
not forgive debt once only, but forgive consistently and relentlessly.
That is hard.
We confess that we are trapped utterly by an economics of debt,
an economics of death.
We don't know how to operate differently.
We cry for your help: show us another way!
Nevertheless, we can subvert this economics of death
starting today through simple acts of reckless generosity.
We can buy Fairtrade. We can choose to pay more.
We can choose to place the needs of farmers and workers
above our wants and desires.
Yet even as we foster Fairtrade, we ask that you give us the wisdom
and willingness to discover an entirely new economics of life;
one that is no longer predicated on debt.
In Jesus' name we pray for the sake of all life on earth.
Amen

Kevin Snyman

There is a short devotional service on Sundays on Zoom for the Joint
Pastorate, if anyone is interested please contact the Minister for a
meeting ID and passcode nearer the time.

Alternatively, please provide your email address, if you haven't
already done so, so that the Minister may email you his weekly
Sunday Message.

If you are not on email, please contact the Church Secretary. Thank
you

Many thanks and God Bless, John

The URC daily devotions

The URC daily devotions can be accessed via devotions.unc.org.uk
These are approx 5 minutes long. The Sunday service can be
accessed from the same site.

From Jean Clavy

Believe in Angels

The more you believe in angels
the more you see them all around;
in friends, family and acquaintances.

It's amazing how much goodness
you can see if only you believe

Wherever you go, whatever you do
may God's angels watch over you.

"Church ladies with typewriters"

Those were the days! When typing was not checked!

"ladies don't forget rummage sale it's a chance to get rid of those
things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands"

"Weight Watchers will meet at 7pm at the first Presbyterian church.
Please use the large double door at the side entrance"

Here for You

Your elders and John do hope you are keeping safe and well but
please do not hesitate to call us should you wish, we are here to
listen and to have a chat.

Sally and elders with prayers and virtual hugs!
We will do so one day!

An events diary for April 2019

let us hope we can return to these happier times!

CHURCH EVENTS DIARY for 2019 April		
SATURDAY 6TH	EASTER TEA	2 – 4PM
SUNDAY 7TH	SUNDAY WORSHIP with Jeffery Ponsonby	11.00AM
TUESDAY 9TH	BRIGHT HOUR Celebrating a 95 th year	** 2.00PM
SUNDAY 14TH	PALM SUNDAY COMMUNION WORSHIP with Rev.d John Gray	11.00AM
TUESDAY 16TH	STITCHERS	2.00PM
WEDNESDAY 17TH	ELDERS	10.00AM
THURSDAY 18TH	TENNEBRAE	7.00PM
FRIDAY 19TH	GOOD FRIDAY JOINT SERVICE with the Methodist Church at URC	10.00AM
SUNDAY 21ST	SUNDAY WORSHIP with Our Worship Team	11.00AM
TUESDAY 23RD	FAITH EXPLORERS	10.30AM
SUNDAY 28TH	SUNDAY WORSHIP with Rev.d Sue Cossey	11.00AM
TUESDAY 30TH	STITCHERS	2.00PM
SUNDAY 5TH	SUNDAY WORSHIP with Mrs Stella Paterson	
** Please be aware of an early start for Bright Hour		

From: The United Reformed Church Finance Committee

To: All members and adherents of United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships

It would be fair to describe the year-and-a-bit since March 2020 as having been “different”, wouldn’t it? Lots of us have experienced loss of loved ones, loss of income and perhaps jobs. All have experienced periods of lockdown; periods without ‘non-essential’ shops; and continuous and extensive disruption to our ‘normal’ social interactions and relationships. The world we thought we understood and could take for granted has been utterly transformed. How many of us imagined at the start of 2020 that we could go months without a haircut or without people not in our ‘bubble’ entering our homes?

As members of United Reformed Church congregations ourselves, we understand much of what your church community has experienced since March 2020. The absence of what is now regularly labelled “in-person worship” for much (or all) of this time has compelled us to turn to other ways of being church. Buildings in which we used to praise God regularly have been shut, both to regular worshipers and others who might have sought solace within their walls during these desperate and troubling times. It has been hard to maintain close fellowship with people we only meet over Zoom (or the like) – if we are digitally enabled.

Financially, things have been extremely tough too. Plate offerings have collapsed; some regular givers have had to reduce or entirely stop giving to support God’s work; and those churches which hire out their premises have seen income from that source disappear.

At denominational level, we feared that these financial troubles would spell disaster for the URC’s Ministry and Mission (‘M&M’) fund through which the URC has always supported and developed our stipendiary ministers and Church Related Community Workers. It would have been all too easy for congregations to forget that for almost 49 years this fund (under various names) has provided stipends, pension contributions and training for all ministers throughout the three nations in which the URC operates: so that ministry reaches where synods judge it to be most needed and is paid for

according to each congregation's ability to contribute (though the ways of determining that vary from synod to synod). It was all very well to remind ourselves that the M&M fund is meant to be the first call on every congregation's resources if the undertaking to financially support our ministers is to be honoured. We feared that drastically reduced income would make that impossible and that, because the need was less visible than the other calls on your diminished resources, payments to the M&M fund would have stopped first.

We are sorry if we ever doubted you.

It quickly became apparent that, although some congregations had to reduce their pledged giving to the M&M fund, many more of you were continuing to meet the 2020 commitments you had made during better times, despite the struggles that required. At the start of that year we had been expecting churches and synods to contribute around £18.5 million to the fund. By the year end, all but half-a-million pounds of that had been received. Since Church House staff and committees managed to reduce their budgeted expenditure by almost £1 million, your money enabled us to meet the full costs of our Ministries, Education & Learning, Children's and Youth Work and Mission departments in 2020 as well as covering amounts spent on safeguarding, denominational governance and communications.

What is perhaps even more amazing is that, collectively, you have pledged to give £17.3 million during 2021 despite the financial problems caused by the pandemic being fully apparent well before your offers for this year were made.

We are always grateful for the financial support given each year to the M&M fund by all of you; but this past year has been phenomenal.

Thank you to those of you who have been able to maintain or increase financial support for your church congregation through this difficult time. That has enabled those responsible for your congregation's finances to keep more money flowing to the M&M fund than we expected.

Thank you for all your previous financial support to those of you who, after prayerful consideration, have had to reduce or stop giving in response to your changed financial circumstances.

Thank you for the pledges your congregation has made about contributing to the M&M fund during 2021 even though you were by then aware of the impact the pandemic was having on your local congregation's finances.

Thank you in anticipation for what you agree to offer to the M&M fund during 2022 to enable the denomination to deliver ministry, education and learning, children's work and mission activity on God's (and your) behalf.

We are aware that synods have played a significant part in encouraging and supporting many congregations with their contributions to the M&M fund. We have separately written to Synod Treasurers to express our thanks to them and their colleagues too.

Of course, our giving for God's work is in response to the amazing generosity and love of God which we see in Jesus. Nonetheless, it is important for us to thank every one of you for what you do for God, your congregation and its and our denominational finances.

Thank you!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Ian Hardie (Treasurer) and John Piper (Deputy Treasurer)

- On behalf of the whole United Reformed Church Finance Committee