

Jan-Feb
2021

St John's Record

United Reformed Church

Somerset & Mowbray Roads, New Barnet, Herts, EN5 1RH

Contents

Catch a glimpse of God's light

The Rev'd Dr John Bradbury is the recently appointed General Secretary of the United Reformed Church. The following article was published on the URC website on 21 December. It has been slightly shortened.

As modern human beings, we love to feel in control. We have pushed death to the margins of life. Scientific endeavour leads us to believe there is a solution to every problem and a cure for every ill. We plan strategically and assess our risk. A tiny virus turned the world upside down. 2020 has been a dark year. We have mourned, lost loved ones, and been physically distanced from our own flesh and blood. For some, we have gone nowhere whilst being rushed off our feet. For others we have sat. And sat. And sat. And the doorbell has not rung.

Human ingenuity has flourished. Life, love and hope have moved online in ways we'd never imagined. Culture has found new outlets, and scientists have become celebrities. Yet we know we have been living a half-life. The wave and the smile at the camera are not a hug from a loved one. The hug some long for will never caress them again. We are boxed in. Shut up. And stare into a zoom lens wearing our 'this is normal really' expression.

The world is radically different from that in which Mary and Joseph trekked to Bethlehem. Radically the same, too. Viruses, and rulers, and powers and dominions beyond our imagining, wreak havoc upon our delusions of control. Into this world God came. Barriers and borders were broken down. Heaven and earth combined, and God and humanity were united in flesh and blood. God did not zoom in from afar, withholding physical presence to mitigate the risk. A certain risk that would lead to the cross.

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God did not come into our midst in flesh and blood to sit with us in the darkness. Though God does that. God came into the darkness to transform it. The other side of Christmas lies Easter. Death transformed. Life renewed. Human powers subverted. Light overwhelming darkness. The feast of Christmas celebrates the flesh and blood coming of God in our midst to effect that transformation. It catches us up into the life and light that is for all peoples. I pray that in this period of darkness you will catch a glimpse of that light, and bear that light, such that it might indeed be life and light for all.
<https://urc.org.uk>

A prayer for those at the sharp end of the current pandemic

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer:
protect health workers who place their own health at risk to heal those infected;
aid the efforts of those who produce, distribute and administer vaccines;
strengthen weary producers and delivery drivers and workers;
give patience to parents and carers coping with the challenges of lockdown;
and if, Lord, we can be the answer to someone else's prayer in the depths,
let us be ready and willing to offer comfort and kindness and hope,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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SOCIAL GATHERING



Social Meetings are continuing to be hosted by Malcolm Bond on Zoom as follows:-

- Monday 25 January 8-9pm
- Wednesday 24 February 8-9pm
- Wednesday 31 March 8-9pm

Everyone is welcome to keep in touch particularly during lockdown. It is very informal, and gives a chance to catch up, after a busy day or week, on anything topical, whether to do with St John's or not. Discussions and topics vary widely.

Hope to "see" you there!

MALCOLM BOND

Let's keep communicating

One member called me recently to make a suggestion out of concern for people who he thought were becoming increasingly fed up and isolated under our continuing Tier 4 regulations. Could we include a link to Premier Lifeline on our church website in case anyone who was desperate to speak to an anonymous Christian with a sympathetic ear? The Elders and I agreed that this was a good idea and have done so, see link:

<http://www.premierlifeline.org.uk/>

I also remind all members and adherents of St John's Church who may be feeling fed up and isolated that the serving Elders and I are available to listen and support you during this challenging time. Let's keep communicating.

JULIAN TEMPLETON

Chipping Barnet Foodbank During the Pandemic

Many of the St John's community are faithful supporters of Chipping Barnet foodbank, so may I offer a big "Thank You" on behalf of the trustees. I felt it appropriate to say something about the foodbank in my Morning Worship address on 10 January. In particular I wanted to say why, in my view, it offers a glimpse of the Kingdom of God. That is not just in doing God's work by distributing food to hungry families, but also in the way its volunteers work so well together; the camaraderie, the banter, the sense of purpose, commitment the satisfaction of having made a difference. It is one of the most convivial communities I have come across.

This piece draws on that Sunday morning talk, answering the question: "How did the foodbank cope during the pandemic?"

The short answer is "Remarkably well, due in no small part to the dedication and energy of Martine Whitaker, the manager and the amazing core team". (*The annual joke is that I tell Martine she deserves a 100% pay rise; to which she traditionally responds "100% of zero is still zero!"*) Martine has now stood down as manager to concentrate on her school leadership career. Two core group members have taken over; Harold Williams as Operations Manager and Josh Hancock as Development Manager.

On most days there is a team of people working industriously, and in harmony with each other. They are receiving food, sorting food and packing food parcels and then distributing food on two days a week, to needy local families who otherwise might well be going hungry

Inevitably the lockdowns and restrictions have put excessive strains on many household finances resulting, sadly, in a threefold increase in demand for food parcels since the March lockdown. To give some idea of scale of the operation, about 4000 people were fed during the twelve months to August 2020. The main reasons given for needing the food parcels were: Benefit Changes 15%; Benefit Delays 12% Low Income 45%



We started off 2020 with over 160 volunteers, then March and lockdown hit. We were

extremely fortunate to have over 60 volunteers who felt safe and well enough to help. We divided them into two 'bubble' teams, which were kept separate to be COVID-safe.

There are going on two hundred organisations who hold food vouchers for us. They are the agencies such as GP surgeries, schools, housing offices, who assess clients' needs and issue the vouchers to the clients to be redeemed for a parcel at the foodbank.

The charity's object is "the prevention or relief of poverty in Chipping Barnet and surrounding areas, in particular by providing emergency food supplies to individuals in need." The emphasis in previous years has inevitably been on the latter part, the emergency food supplies. However other measures for "the prevention or relief of poverty" have become increasingly important during the pandemic.

We were incredibly fortunate in having received some wonderful financial donations and this has ensured the foodbank's sustainability for some time to come. The trustees set up a working group to consider how best to use our increased funds, and their work has included, for the first time, some market research among clients and volunteers. Three key themes emerged from this research:

- the importance of fresh food, (which is not generally offered, due mainly to storage issues)
- an interest in practical non-food support
- use of transport to help with collections and deliveries

So a range of actions have resulted. They include issuing supermarket vouchers so that clients can buy fresh food of their choice, and the possibility of food boxes being delivered direct from a supermarket to a client's home.

During the pandemic volunteers have been delivering food parcels to housebound clients so consideration has been given to the possibility of renting or even buying a van for this purpose. As things stand this is not been considered to be a priority and we are currently looking into the possibility of teaming up with other organisations who could potentially make the deliveries on our behalf. On a different scale, we have invested in a number of shopping trolleys. These make the journey back home from the food bank that much easier for many clients. Food parcels are typically pretty heavy.

We work closely with many local schools and in some cases delivered parcels for the schools themselves to distribute. We were told that some children had the relevant devices but no Internet access so we bought a number of gadgets which provided Wi-Fi connection to enable children to access their online learning.

We have provided facemasks and recently fuel vouchers. We purchased 150 cookbooks which have been offered to clients since September 2020. A recent development has been offering vouchers for children's shoes.

December was particularly busy. In the week leading up to Christmas we fed over 250 people, and delivered Christmas cards, supermarket food vouchers, children's book tokens and gift tokens to about 200 people considered most in need.

Your continued support during what I'm sure will be a further worsening of the situation is much appreciated.

ANDREW SUMMERS
Chair of Trustees Chipping Barnet
Foodbank and Elder, St John's
URC New Barnet



anniversary with a public gathering, so I was very appreciative of the gift, card, and flowers (pictured) that Laura and I received from the Elders on behalf of the Church.

Each ministry, and each church, is different; but I can honestly say that I have never felt more supported and appreciated than I have at St John's Church. I have learned from some less-happy experiences of other friends in ministry that one

ought never to take for granted a harmonious church that pulls together, cares, and has vision and commitment for the work of God's kingdom. I hope and pray that we can harness these qualities as we adapt to what are likely to be challenging conditions for church life in the near future.

**JULIAN
TEMPLETON**

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Julian marks 10-year Anniversary of Ministry at St John's Church

Time has a habit of marching on regardless of one's perception of it, so no one was more surprised than me to discover that it was 20 November 2010 when I was inducted as Minister of St John's Church (see photo from the Induction Service taken by Derek Morley-Slinn). It was not possible to mark this 10-year





St John's URC Fellowship Program for 2021

St John's URC Fellowship welcomes everyone, irrespective of faith or beliefs.

We provide a friendly environment where people can meet and enjoy an interesting talk. This may be in church, when we are allowed or over Zoom – watch out for the email Zoom links

Our monthly talks cover wide variety of subjects, with many being inspirational personal stories. Meetings start at 8.00 pm

Date 2021	Subject of Talk	Speaker
20 Jan	Iceland – A Circular Tour	John Wallington & Anne Johnson
17 Feb	The Life and Times of Tony Hancock	Mick Dawson & Andy Clayden
17 Mar	Going Wild in Barnet	Heather Elsdon & Liz Rolls
21 Apr	Jubilee Sailing Trust	Julia Ladds
19 May	Barnet Hill Lifeboat Crew (RNLI) performing Sea Songs & Shanties	Mike Sparks & Co
16 Jun	Outing to De Havilland Aircraft Museum	
21 July	My Journey – Switzerland to Barnet	Alice Mujtaba
15 Aug	Fellowship Garden Party - 67 Belmont Ave	EN4 9JS 1.00 pm
15 Sep	The London of Charles Dickens	Diane Burstein
20 Oct	Desert Island Discs with Tony Alderman	Julian Templeton
17 Nov	Financial Planning in Retirement – Grey Matters	Caroline Romero
15 Dec	AGM - Christmas Celebration.	6.30 for 7.0 pm

For 2021 our membership and talks are free of charge for everyone, feel free to invite your friends to join us.

**St John's United Reformed Church, Mowbray/Somerset Road junction,
New Barnet, Herts. EN5 1RH**

To see all the activities at St John's - <https://www.stjohnsnewbarnet.org.uk>

Winter Shelter News January 2021



Together in Barnet
Shelter for homeless people



In normal years St. John's and St. Peter's would have been run the Winter Shelter on Saturday nights from the beginning of October to the beginning of January when we would hand over to the next venue. This year, **Together In Barnet** and **Homeless Action for Barnet** have not been able to run the shelter because of the Covid pandemic, but they have worked tirelessly to care for people despite the problems.

Currently, about 150 Barnet people (including many of last year's shelter guests) are being housed in temporary accommodation across 8 different boroughs and are supported with food packages made up at HAB and delivered by volunteers. However, the pandemic has put enormous strain on many people's economic and family situations and as a result the Rough Sleeping Team in Barnet are seeing new people on the streets every week.

To be able to offer safe accommodation for rough sleepers that complies with government guidelines for single occupancy rooms with access to bathrooms, TIB applied for and was awarded a grant. This has enabled them to obtain a venue to host guests until the end of March. It's a self-contained part of a hotel in Golders Green that has 16 en suite rooms. There are no kitchen facilities so the guests will require food to be delivered, and TIB have asked us to find volunteers to help with this. The idea is to cook meals at home, similar to the way we have done in past years, but then to divide them into individual portions in containers and then transport these to Golders Green.

I have approached our trusty volunteers and I'm glad to say many have stepped up to the challenge of providing pre-packaged meals for the guests. As yet, we are not sure the dates we will be asked to cover but we'll be ready when required.

In the future TIB hope to site 10 individual shelter 'pods' on land adjacent and belonging to Trinity Church North West, in Colindale. Each pod is a self-contained unit that has a bed, chair and table with a solar panel to provide electricity for a light and charging point for mobile phones etc. The idea would be to use these to offer shelter to guests along the same lines as our normal night shelter, but in a Covid safe way. Breakfast and evening meals would be provided by volunteers, and guests, referred by HAB would, be able to stay in their allocated pod from 7pm-8.30am. Currently, TIB is applying for planning permission from Barnet Council, and looking for funding resources for this project. Although we all hope the pandemic will be under control by next winter these pods will provide a more permanent solution for temporary night accommodation.

In the meantime, TIB wish to offer support to people who are eligible for welfare benefits to secure a tenancy with a private landlord, by providing financial assistance with the deposit required at the beginning of the tenancy, as this is often the stumbling block in securing accommodation through the private sector.

TIB are also hoping to initiate a mentoring and befriending project for guests that are supported through the night shelter. By gaining new skills and minimising loneliness, the aim of the project is to prevent guests returning to the streets. Loneliness can be a particular problem for those who have enjoyed the companionship of belonging within the night shelter once they are housed, and new skills are often required. Volunteers will be needed to meet regularly, maybe help with job applications, or chat over the challenges.

LESLEY CALDER

These are Happy youngsters – but they have a story to share!

The Good Samaritan School for Deaf Children in Kitengesa, Uganda, is trying to make the best of it during the present "C" crisis. But, they have an on-going problem. The girl pupils there need a new toilet block! The girls include both primary and secondary level, and this is their home for most of the year – but their loos are an embarrassment. They don't want anything too posh, such as flushing toilets since they don't have running water anyway...not even a school tap. No: all they are looking for at present is a decent new toilet block which keeps the rain out and allows for respectable doors to be provided for each cubicle. (The boys already have a reasonable set-up - there's a surprise!)



This new project had been fully costed and they need about £9,300 in order to give these young ladies some self-respect and a basic standard of African rural loo provision. The school depends completely on donations for most of its activities.

I am hoping for a live "link-up" during the morning service on Sun. 23rd January with Rosemary Nakasiita in Uganda. We already know her through the Green Christian Barnet group. She will briefly explain a little about this very special school and we will have the opportunity to donate towards this project.

If you need further information, please ask me. These girls need our support at this very basic human level and any donations, of any size, will be greatly appreciated. The smiles on the faces of these young girls will grow even larger – they always seem happy, despite their hearing loss! Thanks very much. Looking forward to seeing you at that service. Happy New Year!



TONY SHEPHERD

Rosemary using sign language with some of the School children at the school.

World Day of Prayer, Friday 5 March, 2:30 pm

This year the women of the Pacific Island Republic of Vanuatu have prepared the service with the theme 'Build on a Strong Foundation'. The New and East Barnet WDP service will be hosted on Zoom, and details will be emailed nearer the time.

Because of the infectiousness of the most recent variant of the coronavirus in Barnet, the Elders' Meeting has made the decision that in order to protect public health all worship services and church meetings will take place on Zoom only, and the Sanctuary of St John's Church will remain closed until further notice. The Elders' Meeting will review this decision monthly.

Calendar

January		
Sunday 17	11:00 am	Worship led by Julian Templeton
Monday 18	8:15 pm	Junior Church Leaders' meeting
Wednesday 20	8:00 pm	Fellowship 'Iceland – a circular tour' John Wallington & Anne Johnson
Thursday 20	4:00 pm	Finance and Management Committee
Sunday 24	11:00 am	Worship led by Tony Shepherd
Monday 25	8:00 pm	Social Gathering hosted by Malcolm Bond
Wednesday 27	8:00 pm	Bible Discussion and Prayer led by Tony Shepherd
Sunday 31	11:00 am	Worship led by Paul Elsdon
February		
Sunday 7	11:00 am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Julian Templeton
Tuesday 9	7:45 pm	Elders' Meeting
Wednesday 10	10:00 am	Pastoral Team
Sunday 14	11:00 am	Worship led by Alison Bond
Wednesday 17	8:00 pm	Fellowship 'The life and times of Tony Hancock' Mick Dawson and Andy Clayden
Sunday 21	11:00 am	Lent 1, Worship led by David Paul and Richard Harvey
Wednesday 24	8:00 pm	Social Gathering hosted by Malcom Bond
Sunday 28		Audio and Text URC Sunday Service emailed or delivered
March		
Friday 5	2:30 pm	World Day of Prayer (WDP) Annual Service (New and East Barnet) by ZOOM
Sunday 7	11:00 am	Lent 2, Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Julian Templeton

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 18 - 24 January. There will be a short *Taize Prayer for Christian Unity*, Wed 20 Jan, 6:00 pm, organised by All Hallows by the Tower (the Toc H Church). Access details will be emailed.