



Bunyan Meeting

News Letter/41

SUNDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2021

Oaks, Mountain Ash, Song Thrushes and Sparrows

In this week's Service Sheet, **Janet's** sermon is rooted in scripture and in the witness of 'The Bunyan Oak' that stood just outside Harlington. In the same way that a vase, made from part of the wood of The Bunyan Oak, bears the scars of the nearly 700 years of the oak's story, so we, too, are battered and bruised by the effects of almost a year of the coronavirus pandemic: the separation of family and friends; the loss of loved ones and familiar colleagues; not being able to hold and comfort those that mourn; and a huge sense of emptiness because we cannot, yet, worship together at Bunyan Meeting.

Chris, like an oak himself, has ministered lovingly to our Bunyan community and to others, during these challenging weeks and months - and this week is preparing and conducting the funerals of **Anne Legg, Allan Linger** and **Andy Graham**; as well as organising the affairs and funeral of a long-standing friend in Norfolk. The faithful support that he receives, in turn, from the Bunyan membership, his friends and fellow workers, means that responsibilities *are* shared and loads *are* lightened; and our prayers for him and for each other ensure that God is at the beating heart of our Christian witness. In a very busy week, Chris has asked me to write this introduction and welcome to our 41st News Letter.

I was moved by the words of **Amanda Gorman**, the young American Poet Laureate, at President Biden's Inauguration ...

*The new dawn looms as we free it,
For there was only light if we're brave enough to see it,
Only Light when we're brave enough to be it'*

... and I turned to our own Poet Laureate, **Simon Armitage**, and felt that a recent poem captured and held something of the reality of our lives at the moment, and may help us to feel at one with many who are sharing a similar sense of loss at this time.

David Walker

Jesus said: *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.
And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

Matthew 10: 29-31

Please keep sending your articles for our News Letter direct to the Minister at chrisdamp@mac.com or by post to the church office for his attention.

*Through the hospital window
she said to me
she'd forgotten the name
of her special tree,
and forgotten the name
of her favourite bird.
Through the hospital window
I mouthed the words:*

the song thrush and the mountain ash.

*Through the hospital window
she asked again
why I stood outside
in the wind and rain,
and said she didn't
understand
why I didn't want
to touch her hand.*

The song thrush and the mountain ash.

*She said she liked
the flowers I sent
but wondered why
they had no scent,
and why the food
had lost its taste,
and why the nurse
had covered her face?*

*And why the gates of the park were shut?
And why the shops were boarded up?
And why the swings were tied in knots?
And the music - why had the music stopped?*

*Through the hospital window
I called her name
and waited a while
but she never came,
then I saw reflected
in the glass
the song thrush
and the mountain ash.*

The song thrush and the mountain ash.

Simon Armitage 2020

Sunday Worship

Due to the current lockdown and the high level of Covid infections locally, Bunyan Meeting will now be closed for face to face worship until further notice. Our services will continue to be distributed by email and delivered to those without access to the internet.

Jean Goldsmith writes:

I thought I was reasonably fit and managing but coming round on the kitchen floor, my world was blown apart. You have no warning, just a blackout. As you subconsciously fall you do so much damage to your body. The NHS are certainly wonderful, I have had the best treatment ever. I am determined to get back to my old self. I thank you all for so much kindness and support. Like the NHS you, too, are amazing.

Jean



ALLAN LINGER

From Elstow Bunyan Christian Fellowship

We were so sorry to hear of the passing of Allan Linger.

Our last memory of Allan was taking our communion service by Zoom at the end of November. He was so relaxed and happy sitting in his own home. Members of the fellowship commented what a lovely service it was. We spoke to him afterwards about his holidays in his beloved Yorkshire and how much he was looking forward to going back. He will be greatly missed!

Pat

From Mike and Gunilla – in an email to the Bunyan Church Office

So sad to learn of Allan Linger's passing. He and his mother Doris were real stalwarts of the Kempston Church prior to its closure and their move to Mill Street.

Our dearest memory of him was on a Sunday morning at Mill Street in August, 1997 when he boldly announced to the congregation that Gunilla and I had been secretly married on the previous Friday. This drew a round of amused applause from all our friends at Bunyan but left us wondering how we were to tell our wider family when the news had broken first at Bunyan! I think that Allan heard a whisper from the then church caretaker who had spotted us having photos taken on the Embankment when out for a walk with his family.

What a hoot! RIP Allan.

The News Letter is so well done. Thank you for passing it on to us.

Michael and Gunilla

Bedford Foodbank writes:

Dear Bunyan Meeting,



The Board of Trustees and Management team would like to thank you for your support of Bedford Foodbank through 2020.

We are aware that you have been unable to have your normal collection boxes operating but are extremely grateful to all those at Bunyan Meeting who have continued to support us by donating when you are open, at the supermarket when shopping or financially.

The amount of donations collected from your collection site for 2020 is **32.83kg** and this has provided **78 meals**.

We would like to share this update on what has been happening at Bedford Foodbank in 2020.

The COVID-19 crisis has led to hardship for many, and so to an increase in the number of people needing the help of Bedford Foodbank. In 2019 we provided food for 7333 people, in 2020 we fed 8954 people. 3238 of these were children and it is sad to think that so many young lives have not only been disrupted by the lock-down, but that food poverty and the spectre of 'holiday hunger' have come to the fore. Fortunately, we have been able to make a difference to many and are regularly distributing between 8.5 and 14 tonnes of food each month.

Amongst all the difficulties and in spite of having to rethink many areas of how we work, together we have, by and large, overcome the problems and we can celebrate many achievements. Not least that we have had the privilege to work alongside other agencies and charities as never before. Bedford Kindness Facebook Group has helped to collect donations, and the Community Hub at All Nations Church, Food4 and the Red Cross have helped with delivering food to those unable to come and collect it.

Without your continued help it wouldn't be possible to provide this support to local people in crisis.

Thank You for Your Support

Bedford Foodbank <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk>



These are the items that the Foodbank require at the present time:

- Deodorant**
- Long Life Sponge Puddings**
- Toilet Rolls**
- 100g Jars of Coffee**
- 500g bags of Sugar**
- Small tins of Meat (upto 300g)**
- Liquid Hand Soap**
- Soap**

At the moment, donations cannot be brought to the church but can be placed in donation boxes at your local supermarket or dropped in at the Foodbank at 71 Murdock Road, Manton Industrial Estate, Bedford MK41 7PL

Kay Munro

Here is a link to the recording of Kay's funeral. We have had to mute the music at the end of the video (Rod Stewart's I am Sailing) because of copyright reasons.

<https://youtu.be/FWQe32P4wow>

Audrey Mehew writes:

Thank you for the log in details so that I could Zoom in and watch and listen to the Church Meeting last night. I always do it with trepidation and so relieved to see faces I recognise suddenly appear on my computer screen!

With receiving the weekly church service and News Letter on line it does not seem possible I have not actually been to Bunyan in person since March of last year. All your hard work to keep the congregation together is succeeding and much appreciated.

Volunteering

Why do I volunteer? Well let's be honest, first and foremost I do it for myself. Being retired, and living on my own it gives me something to get out of bed for. Once I have had breakfast, prepared my lunch and tidied the house, the day is my own. I once heard a barman say to a builder, "Are you busy?" His reply was "It's manic at the moment." I turned to him and said, "You're lucky, you know what you are going to do each day, I have to make a decision." I did it with tongue in cheek of course.



But there were other reasons. I have been blessed with good health as has also my family, so holding onto my wooden desk, I feel I ought to be willing to give something back to the community, in a way to say thank you. It also gives me a chance to meet new people, keep my brain active and try new things.

When I finalised the volunteer preliminaries at Bedford Hospital, the manager asked me what I would like to do. I said what I wouldn't like to do is do someone out of a job; for example portering; there are people employed to do that. In the end I worked for two mornings a week in a clinic where I filed all their paperwork. I gave about 8 hours a week so doing it in bulk I estimated that I probably saved the nurses in that department some thirty hours a week.

At the Bunyan Museum, apart from positions like the curator it has always been worked by volunteers, it has also reignited my love of history something I did not bother about during my working life. I found the atmosphere so friendly and I really looked forward to my shifts and as I became more knowledgeable about John Bunyan's life, had great pleasure advising visitors.

The U3A also is a fabulous way to meet people and to gain new interests. So that is what volunteering does for me, as another big difference is at work they tell you what to do, as a volunteer they ask. There is a difference.

Keep safe, **Ken Thomas**



Christian Aid

2020 has been a year like no other! We have faced challenges that we could not have expected and yet, there have been moments of hope, joy, and love. One such moment was the privilege of sending the pledged £12,000 to Christian Aid from our Syria appeal, raised by Congregational churches.

When we read Jesus' words: *'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness'* (Matt 5:6), we are reminded that as Christians there is a joy and blessing when we act and pray for a fairer world, and our partnership with Christian Aid gives us an opportunity to do just that.

Our 2021 appeal aims to improve the lives of orphans and vulnerable children in **Kenya** that have been impacted by HIV/AIDS. The project will enable these children and their families to access crucial antiretroviral drugs and provide them with economic support and educational opportunities they might not otherwise be able to get. Christian Aid have secured a match funding of 19 times what we raise so our £6,000 will mean £114,000.

A key phrase we have heard this year has been to 'build back better'. We have the opportunity through our giving, acting, and praying to be a part of making sure that happens for some of the world's poorest communities.

Thank you for your continued support and generosity! May God bless you

Yvonne Campbell

General Secretary, Congregational Federation.

Rebecca and her little sister Joy can now go to school as their school fees have been paid.



Donations should be made to the Congregational Federation so we can then send the whole amount to Christian Aid at the end of the year.

For more information visit congregational.org.uk

Donate today and help families to have a brighter future, bringing hope for generations to come.

£8 could pay for a child to attend a counselling session.

£39 could pay to enable a child to receive a HIV test.

From Mike and Gunilla Austin – in an email to the Bunyan Church Office

I enjoy those "pearls" that drift into the News Letter from **Ken Wells**.

When I was in the Bunyan Scouts, Mr Nye, the Church Secretary was also the District Commissioner of Scouts. At Church Parade, he would be dressed in scout uniform, (shorts and all) to receive our flags at the start of the morning service. On his retirement, Mr Nye was succeeded by our very own **Ken Wells** as District Commissioner.

Funny the things that we remember about Bunyan people who have really been part of our lives.

All the best,

Michael

Greetings from the website team.

Here are the recent updates to the website:



Worship

<https://www.bunyanmeeting.co.uk/copy-of-this-month-s-services>

- Pray for the NHS - this is a link to some pointers to prayer from The Baptist Union, written by a senior A&E nurse in a large teaching hospital. There is also a video interview with her.

News and activities

<https://www.bunyanmeeting.co.uk/copy-of-forthcoming-events>

- How did you do? Check out the answers to the Bunyan Christmas Quiz.

Mission

<https://www.bunyanmeeting.co.uk/mission-at-bunyan-meeting>

- Christian Aid Lent and Easter Appeal. See link to their website and to donate.

Coming soon

- Look out for another series of 'Bunyan Hidden Highlights' videos, as well as some Lent and Easter resources.

Thank you for your ideas for new web resources; they are always very welcome! We'd also love to receive any feedback you have about these web pages.

Ann Davies, Ian Rowlands, Lydia Saul, David Walker, Janet Wootton



Daily Hope - 0800 804 8044

Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

For Your Prayers

Please remember **Dilys and Roy Leeder; Jean Goldsmith; Chris Wootton's sister Judy and all her family.**



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