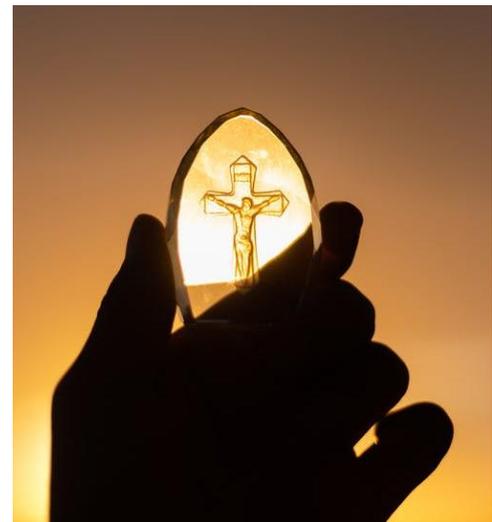
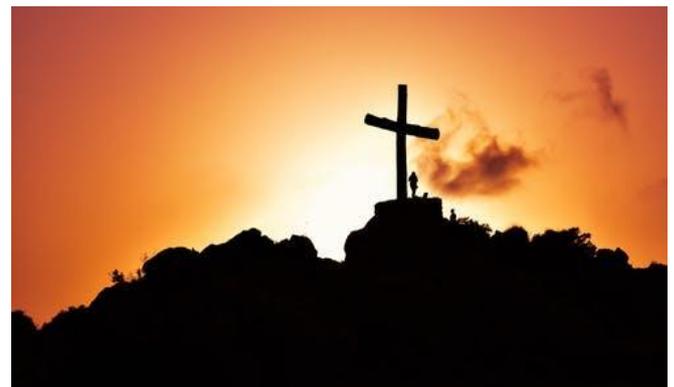
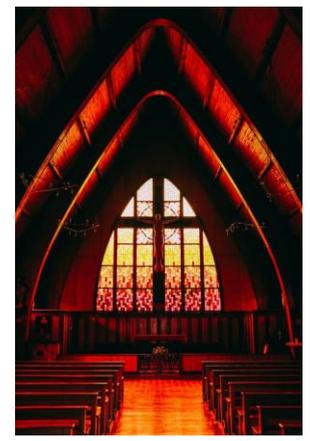


# OVERVIEW

Depicting the life and witness of the church.

March & April 2021



We are here to worship God as disciples  
of  
Jesus: to welcome, love and serve the  
community, and to share our faith in God.

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## Ministers Letter

### Light at the end of the darkness

Dear Friends, as I write this our Prime Minister has announced a 'roadmap' to the end of National COVID-19 restrictions in England.

The steps for the journey have been laid out, the first being March 8<sup>th</sup> which sees the return of children to school and being able to meet with another person in the open air for coffee. I imagine some of you may already be making plans for March 29 when outdoor gatherings of either six people or two households will be allowed. Who of you is desperate for April 12 when at last they will be able to visit a hairdresser???? If things go to plan, by June 21 we will see all legal limits on social contact removed (whatever that means). There is light at the end of the darkness.

The Christian Church is currently in the season of Lent – don't worry, I am not going to ask what you have given up – which is a roadmap to Easter.

Key steps on the map will be the entrance to Jerusalem when Jesus will ride a colt into Jerusalem amidst the joyful praise of the people declaring, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord'. Jesus will share a Passover meal with his



disciples when he takes the traditional story of the freeing of Israel and gives a new covenant in his body and blood. The final steps on the roadmap are the arrest, trial, and execution of Jesus. The roadmap Jesus is following appears only to lead into increasing darkness. The disciples saw it, but Jesus ignored their objections but even Jesus, in the darkness of the Garden of Gethsemane wonders if 'the cup could be taken away' just before he is arrested.

We too might seek to escape the darkness of Christ's Passion rushing towards the empty tomb of Easter Sunday declaring 'Christ is not dead, he is alive!' However, it is in the darkest moment of Christ's journey that the greatest act of love occurs. As physical darkness came over the whole land and Jesus breathed his last breath, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. (Hebrews 5:9) Christ is the

sacrifice that takes away our sins and the sins of all the world's people. (1 John 2:2) Christ's death is not just the end of the darkness but the beginning of the full revelation of Jesus, light of the world who stepped down into darkness. It seems to me that the roadmap of Easter offers us guidance not just as we seek to leave Covid restrictions, but for the whole of life.

Only you can know how difficult and dark the journey in the last year has been for you. There may have been times when the 'darkness' has been pitch-black, all-consuming, never-ending, and devoid of hope. Perhaps it has been in these dark times that you have witnessed love, offering hope? I believe that no matter how the Government's roadmap goes, that Jesus offers hope and life and love when we follow him. He points to the cross and the empty tomb and tells you not that the darkness will end (though it will) but that he is with you in the darkness, he is the light and will lead you into light. Jesus says, 'I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.' (John 12:46)

Let Jesus be the light at the end of all your darkness.

Have a blessed Easter.

Garry



**28 MARCH  
6.30PM**

  
spread some song across your heart

GET READY FOR  
**CAFE JAM  
EASTER**

Contact Rita for a Zoom code on  
[synodclerk@urcmerseysynod.org.uk](mailto:synodclerk@urcmerseysynod.org.uk)  
or tel 07838 103310

 United Reformed Church Mersey

## Hello to you all

I hope that you are all well right now.

The Café Jam Band would like to invite you to their **Easter Café Jam on Zoom on 28 March 6.30pm**

It will be similar to the Christmas one when the songs on the YouTube links will be interspersed with Easter thoughts and prayers.

Please do forward this invitation to as many folk as you like and ask them to contact me for the Zoom link. We pray that we will be back with you again physically from September and we have already had our first booking! Contact Rita for a Zoom code [synodclerk@urcmerseysynod.org.uk](mailto:synodclerk@urcmerseysynod.org.uk) or tel 07838 103310

Do get back in touch with me if you wish to book us from the Autumn onwards – if not, then I will be contacting those churches who had booked us but who missed out in 2020.

Stay safe and well.

All the best

Rita

Synod Clerk Mersey

## Prayers during the pandemic. February

O God, as we journey through these long Lenten days, give us both respite and food for the journey. Help us grieve with those who have lost loved ones to this plague. Help us support those who nurse and care for the critically ill. Help us to show love by keeping our distance. And help us, O God, to rejoice as the vaccine is rolled out, lives are saved, and our world starts slowly to spring to life again.

Amen.



## The Wonderful Present

Once upon a time a lady was given one hundred seeds. “What a wonderful present” she said, “but ONE HUNDRED? I will have to share them”.

So, she gave one to 5 year-old Jack. He planted the seed and watched it grow. He had great expectations as he hoped the seed would be exciting and grow taller than him! He had seen giant sunflowers and thought they were really great. He watched and watched as the plant grew and grew. Then it stopped growing. Oh dear! It wasn't a giant sunflower after all. It was a very healthy, very yellow sunflower but it was not taller than him.

**It was OK but did not live up to expectations.**

She gave a seed to Barrie and Mim. It made them smile.

**It was something to look forward to.**

She gave one seed to Gwen. She planted hers in a plant pot. It grew slowly, very slowly. It was very late in flowering – not until October – and the flower was barely as wide as a 50p piece.

**What a disappointment!**

She gave a seed to Ruth. She planted it and gave the young plant away so that someone else could be cheered by the bright flower.

**She spread the joy!**

She gave a seed to Frank. He planted it very carefully in his beautiful garden and waited and waited. But, oh dear! He couldn't remember where he had planted it.

**Perhaps it will come up next year?**

She planted some seeds herself. Some did nothing at all and did not even germinate.

**What can I say?**

She planted one in the garden and it started off really well but, oh dear, she went out one morning and a slug had eaten everything except the stalk!

**Beware of plant enemies!**

She planted one in a pot. It bloomed very well – about 4” in diameter – but did not bloom until late September.

**Plants need room to spread their roots and grow healthily.**

She gave a seed to Ros. She is a confident gardener and straight away she planted her seed into the good soil. It grew steadily and produced a bloom as big as a saucer!

**What a success!**

She gave a seed to David and he planted it straight away in his garden. He remembered to water it when the days were hot and sunny. His seed grew and grew, and it was the first one of the hundred seeds to bloom.

**Given the right soil and the right TLC seeds will flourish.**

Once upon a time Jesus said “The sower soweth the word .....” Mark chapter 4.

“The kingdom comes when the soil and the seed get together”. (The Message of Matthew by M Green).

PS ((I have just been told that the seeds were probably for eating, not planting!!))

## FROM THE SECRETARY



As I write this the Prime Minister has announced the plan for the way out of our third lockdown, but we have not received any comment from Synod yet. The URC has produced a couple of documents advising churches what they might like to consider as we seek a new “normal” living with Coronavirus, the most recent of which is entitled “New Reality, Same Mission”. Since there is little change in the release of the restrictions for March it is likely that we will continue to offer Sunday worship on Zoom rather than in person for the time being. The Elders will be discussing this at the March meeting. Whilst many in the congregation have received their first and, in some cases, their second COVID-19 vaccination, there are still people who have not been offered a vaccination yet so we must continue to be vigilant and work within the rules. As a result of the uncertainty there is no preaching plan or duty rota on the back page of this edition of Overview. This is because the preaching plan has changed on a number of occasions recently and we do not know when we will be needing door stewards and duty elders. It has been good to join with Middlewich URC for a joint Sunday morning Zoom service since the start of January. There are usually somewhere between 30 and 40 people at the service. David has taken the majority of the services, but we have also enjoyed worship led by Garry, Rev David Hamblin and Mr Michael Ridley.

The URC offers daily devotions, online or as a Podcast and as well as the daily scripture readings there are also Sunday morning services available online. They have recently also added “Prayers in a Pandemic”, to which a new prayer is added every Thursday. See <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/devotions/2021/02/25/prayers-in-a-pandemic/>

There are also a number of guides on the URC website advising on a variety of practices and technology which have emerged since the start of the pandemic, including guides to Zoom, and communications etc. They provide helpful advice for everyone, not just church officials.

You may remember that the Synod Moderator Rev Jacky Embrey, who had preached at our church in the past, has moved on and is now ministering in Bolton. The URC has recently announced that Rev Geoffrey Felton will be the new Moderator. Geoff was born on the Wirral and after studying and working in the oil industry was ordained and inducted to the Canterbury Pastorate in 2000 where he served for 10 years before moving to Plume Avenue URC, Colchester. It is hoped that he will take up the position sometime in the summer.

On **28<sup>th</sup> March** Synod are hosting a Café Jam online. Café Jam pre-pandemic offered worship in different churches, as they were invited, and included a selection of religious folk music, reflections, prayers, and readings. Since we cannot gather in person for such events Cafe Jam now offer occasional events online. Please contact Synod either by emailing [synodclerk@urcmerseysynod.org.uk](mailto:synodclerk@urcmerseysynod.org.uk) or telephone 07838 103310 for joining details. These events are an opportunity to share worship with people across the Synod. Everyone is invited. For our own local services, we have yet to decide how we will mark Good Friday and celebrate Easter Day whether it will be on Zoom or in person worship.



However, our plans develop, I wish everyone a joy filled Easter as we celebrate the risen Christ. At the end of the month on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April our AGM and Church Meeting will take place on Zoom. The minutes of the previous Church Meeting held in January were circulated to people who attended, however if you would like a copy of the minutes please email me. Joining details will be available nearer the time on Sunday Link.

Rosamund Ellison

## Churches Together in Cheshire

Major Gareth Dickens, Commanding Officer, Winsford Corps and Ecumenical Officer (SA) for Cheshire has forwarded an informative and uplifting film for circulation to churches within Churches Together in Cheshire. In his accompanying email, he says, "In a time when we see and hear so much bad news it's good to share stories of hope and the impact that Churches working together are making throughout our county".

To watch online use this

link: <https://vimeo.com/cdandpmedia/review/510232905/4f548969f1>

To download the video, use this

link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/epazcdo2f8vgt/Churches%20Together.mp4?dl=0>

I really do hope that you will be able to either watch online or download the video; it shows how the generous donations made by congregations like ours are vital to the help given to the poverty stricken in our county. I am sure you will find it ten minutes very well spent!!

God Bless.  
Stephanie

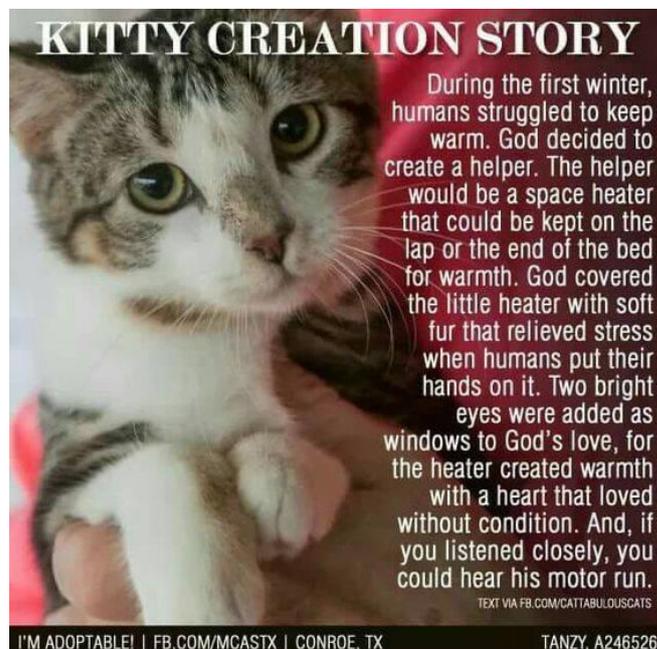
A New Year's Prayer

May God make your year a happy one!  
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,  
But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;  
Not by making your path easy,  
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;  
Not by taking hardships from you,  
But by taking fear from your heart;  
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,  
But by keeping your face bright,  
even in the shadows;  
Not by making your life always pleasant,  
But by showing you  
when people and their causes need you most,  
and by making you anxious to be there to help.  
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you  
for the year ahead.

~Anonymous

www.heartprintsogod.com

Thank you to Ruth for sharing this on Facebook. I thought that it would be nice to share it with the congregation.



Thank you to Mara for sharing this lovely picture and story.

## Prayers during the pandemic. March

**Weekly prayers from the United Reformed Church to help bring you comfort and spiritual support during the Coronavirus pandemic.**

Please use these devotions in your private prayers, prayer groups or sermons.

Dear and glorious God, we cry to you.

At the moment, love seems both deeply hidden and alive like never before.

Selfishness is alarmingly exposed, numbing us to the fear which feeds it.

Selflessness is gloriously and exhaustingly alive, restoring our faith in you and in humanity.

In this Lenten time, stir in us, waking your love, enriching us with grace to be gracious.

Comfort us to know that our small steps made well are your active, powerful love.

Amen.

**By the Revd Elizabeth Gray-King, URC Education & Learning**

**Programme Officer, and member of St Columba's URC**

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## Malawi Appeal

Below is an email from Revd Susan Flynn regarding a Scotland-Malawi Covid-19 Oxygen Appeal: Donate Now. Please consider carefully whether you are able to support this cause. If you feel you can, either use the 'Donate Now' button, or for people who use on-line/ phone banking, to make a donation to the church account and reference it as Malawi Donation. For those who don't, you could send a cheque, made payable to 'United Reformed Church Over' to Maurice at his home address and put a small note saying that it is a donation for Malawi.

God Bless.  
Stephanie

Dear David,

I hope you and everyone at Over Winsford and Middlewich churches are safe and well.

We live in extraordinary times and I appreciate that the churches may have had requests for help from other charities both home and abroad. However, as your churches in the past has been involved with visitors from Malawi during the time of the 11-year Synod Global Partnership with the Churches of Christ in Malawi and has supported other fund-raising initiatives for this 4<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world, I am sending you information about a Scotland Malawi Partnership Appeal to meet immediate oxygen needs in there. I have been helping the SMP task group here and support this Appeal 100%. See email below.

I leave it with you.

Wishing you well for the future

Susan Flynn (Revd)

Dear Susan Flynn,

As I'm sure you know, through January and February Malawi has been suffering a second wave of Covid-19 which has been far worse than the first.

On the [25<sup>th</sup> January](#) we heard from Malawi's Minister of Health and healthcare professionals across the country about the scale of the challenges, and specifically the urgent need for oxygen in hospitals. We quickly established an expert-led [Scotland-Malawi Oxygen Supply Coordination Group](#) which has been helping connect members, partners and those on the ground managing the Covid response.

**I write to ask your help.** Responding to the clear call from Malawi on the question of Oxygen, the Oxygen Supply Coordination Group has established an urgent, time-limited appeal. 100% of all donations will be used to support Oxygen supply in the crucial next month while Malawi waits for new equipment which has been donated to arrive from suppliers.

**If you can, we invite you to donate to this appeal, and help us share this appeal with your organisation and across social media**

Decision-making as to how best to offer urgent support for Malawi in this area has come from the expert-led [Scotland-Malawi Oxygen Supply Coordination Group](#), chaired by Mr Alberto Gregori MB ChB Glasgow, FRCS Ed, FRCS Eng, FRCS Ed (Orth), DFM Glasgow, a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon.

In the first instance, funds will be used to support **emergency assistance to help repair the numerous broken Oxygen Concentrators currently onsite in Malawian Hospitals.** This will be delivered by a Malawian organisation, "[Open O2](#)" which has already started work on this project, commencing in Lilongwe's Kamuzu Central Hospital, with Malawian engineers donating their time *pro bono*. Currently over 350 Oxygen Concentrators needing repair have been identified and experience so far has shown a relatively easy repair is possible for about half of these. Others will require spares that are already *en route* to Malawi. "Open O2" has repurposed a minibus and is using this as a mobile workshop, travelling the country to rehabilitate oxygen concentrators. Each planned hospital trip costs about US\$600 and is likely to result in the repair of some 30 oxygen concentrators (for comparison, 30 new concentrators would cost around US\$30,000, and take 4-6 weeks to arrive).

If donations allow, further funds will be used to **supply Oxygen Saturation Monitors across Malawi**. An essential part of the diagnosis and treatment of Covid-19 involves the ability to measure the amount of Oxygen in a patient's blood. This assessment, using a simple Oxygen Saturation Monitor, allows determination of the amount of Oxygen required to effectively treat the patient and monitor ongoing therapy. The same monitors are required as part of the normal safety monitoring of patients during surgery, childbirth and treatment of critical illness -they are in very short supply throughout Malawi. A medical grade Oxygen saturation monitor and probes costs £250 and lasts years. We have identified 250 units which are currently available in the UK for immediate delivery by airfreight. All packaging material around the units would be replaced with oxygen tubing and other cheap, soft essential medical supplies, to ensure no space is wasted in the airfreight.

Follow these links for further information about:

- [The context behind this appeal](#)
- [The Scotland Malawi Oxygen Supply Coordination Group](#)
- [How the SMP is responding to Covid-19](#)
- [The latest Covid-19 situation in Malawi](#)



Core funded by the Scottish Government

**David Hope-Jones OBE**  
Chief Executive

While working from home due to Covid-19:

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e: [david@scotland-malawipartnership.org](mailto:david@scotland-malawipartnership.org)

Scottish Charity (SC037048)  
Company Limited by Guarantee (SC294378)



For details on how the SMP is responding to Covid-19, see:  
[www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/covid-19](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/covid-19)

**Acknowledgements** for the photos featured in the newsletter. Front page- Praying man in a shaft of light by Paulo Marcio Dos Santos. Cross and Hand by Adrien Olichon. Gold cross and crowd by Felipe Balduino. Elsewhere - Three yellow chicks by Pixabay. Crocus by Dan Hamill All from [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com)

**Zoom Dates -28<sup>th</sup> March 6.30pm Easter Café Jam**

**21<sup>st</sup> April A.G.M + Church Meeting Joining details nearer the time on Sunday Link.**



**Creating art as prayer** to pray whilst creating is to find a colour medium you like; pens, pencils, chalks, paint, crayons, software on a smartphone or tablet. Find a support for the colour; paper, fabric, canvas,

cardboard, wood, glass, a smartphone or tablet. Before you become used to this kind of prayer, spend some time experiencing the colours and note, perhaps by creating a guide, which colours already mean something to you. What does red make you feel already? Blue? Is yellow a happy colour? Then start this quite open prayer. Breathe. Every time a word comes into your mind, replace it with colour and make any kind of shape with it. Watch the shapes grow and see what they may be showing you. Try not to do anything identifiable unless you absolutely need to for the prayer's sake. Stop occasionally, looking well at what has arrived. Keep moving into your prayer with more colours and shapes until you think and feel that you are finished. Then see what you have created. What does this say to you from God?

Praying with art Elizabeth Gray King © 2021, The United Reformed Church