



virtual  
the **magazine**



**Park** united reformed church

**February 2021**

## **Inside the magazine this month...**

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The Minister's Letter.....	3
Family News.....	5
Ways to Contact Stephen.....	6
A Thank You from the Treasurer.....	7
Leprosy Mission – our International Charity .....	8
Centre Point – our National Charity .....	8
Royal Berks Charity – our Local Charity .....	8
70 years of Friendship Club .....	9
Premier Lifeline the National Christian Helpline.....	9
Christian Community Action .....	10
Help with Shopping or other Support .....	10
While You're Waiting .....	11
Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part I .....	12
Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part II .....	12
Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part III .....	13
Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part IV .....	14
Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part V .....	15
Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part VI .....	15
Readers Needed for Reform Magazine .....	16
Education Forum .....	16
Hope into Action .....	17
Prayers from Alan .....	18
Planting Your Spring Garden .....	21

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## **The Minister's Letter**

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Happy Happy New Year! ☐

This year praying that 2021 is a year of good health, happiness and prosperity.

Despite the inevitable challenges' life may bring

*The Lord is our Shepherd (Psalm 23:1)*

What I'm thinking now is I'm hungry.

What am I hungry for? Is the question.

- I'm hungry for peace.
- I'm hungry for justice.
- And I'm hungry to see a better world by the Grace of God.

2020 the year of vision? I am reminded that It is God's VISION not ours. Last year revealed so much of the injustice and challenge in the world.

We ALL saw, many different things that either filled our hearts with great joy or burdened our hearts to prayer. Like David in Psalm 13, I found myself asking:

*"How long, O Lord, how long?" [Psalm 13:1]*

Perhaps you have found yourself asking this same question in this season of lockdown.

Nicky Gumbel reminded me of the following four points from David's Psalm 13.

### **1. Keep Praying**

David cried out to God in prayer, "Look at me, O Lord my God, and answer me..." [Psalm 13:3] our strength is restored as we seek God's face in prayer.

Strength not only for today, but tomorrow also. Don't give up praying!



## 2. Keep Trusting

I am sure, I am not alone, in finding myself up against situations where you can only trust the author and finisher of our faith.

*"I rely/trust on your constant love; I will be glad because you will rescue me." [Psalm 13:5 GNB]*

No matter the circumstance, we have an anchor, a firm foundation in the God of Love. Trust in God!

## 3. Keep Rejoicing

The presence of the Holy Spirit at work within us gives us this assurance, that in Christ we ultimately have the Victory in a world of trouble, for Christ has overcome the world.

*"...my heart rejoices in your salvation" [Psalm 13:5 NIV]*

This is reason to rejoice, that we have been rescued by God (salvation). Like Mark Ritchie says: "... the light is not at the end of the tunnel, He is in our hearts."

## 4. Keep Worshipping God

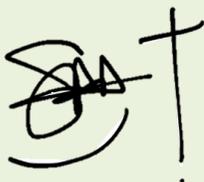
In spite of everything David went through, David is able to see the goodness of God:

*"I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me." [Psalm 13:6]*

It can be helpful sometimes to look back on your life and thank God for journeying with you through disappointment, struggle and happiness and joy. Let this thankfulness fill your heart with worship and joy for the King of Kings.

Can you remember all that God has done for you? Again, in 2021 - KEEP GOING! For the Lord your God is with you!

*"But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me." [Psalm 13:5-6 NIV]*

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'S' and 'T' intertwined, followed by a vertical line.

**Stephen & Tolu Ansa-Addo**

## Family News

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As we continue to pray for everyone affected in any way by the coronavirus outbreak, we remember particularly those who are worried about what the future may hold, and those struggling to come to terms with fear or anxiety.

We pray for families who have been forced to self-isolate; for pupils, teachers and others involved in education, forced to adapt to new patterns of learning; and for key workers and those working in the health service.

In particular, we have been asked to pray for the staff at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, where not only in Intensive Care but throughout the hospital, the pressures are being acutely felt.

We pray for those who mourn, remembering particularly the family of Betty Gomm, a former member of Park, who died at the age of 100 on December 23rd. Betty's funeral was held in Exeter, and we ask for God's blessing on her daughters Patsy and Hilary at this time.

We have also been asked to pray for the family of Vicky Ghost, who died recently when only in her 30's, after a battle with cancer. We pray for Vicky's husband Mike, parents Pauline and John, and brother Anthony.

We also pray for Martin and Jo Smith and their family; Martin, Jo and Daisy have all tested positive for Covid-19, as has Martin's father Chris, who, although admitted to hospital, was been discharged and is hopefully on the way to recovery. Daisy especially remains in our thoughts – she is home from hospital but has now been diagnosed with glandular fever.

We give thanks that Sylvia Wise and Ruth Clark have both received encouraging reports following hospital tests.

We give thanks that Samantha Oguna has recovered from her worrying eye condition.

We also give thanks that Tony Wilson's sister is making good progress.

We continue to pray for all who are affected by ill-health, recovering from, or receiving treatment, including Sylvia Wise, Ruth Clark, Renne and Bert Ewen, Linda Adkins, Bob and Andrea Dewing, Dave and Jenny Jones, Hilary Campbell, and Thelma Butler.

From Hungerford URC we continue to remember Barbara Barr, who, after many setbacks, is now at home and showing improvement; we pray that this will continue. Fiona also asks us to pray that, with different carers visiting the house, the whole family stays Covid-free.

We also hold in prayer Suzanne, who is suffering from a bad back; Maureen, Sarah & David Bull; Chris Cragg, Daphne Priestly, Yolande Hadden and Bill Gregory.

We have received greetings recently from Rev Sue Cossey, daughter of Les Dray. Sue is a URC minister in Bristol and has led services at Park on several occasions. She sends her love and hopes to visit us again sometime.

Lord, in your mercy .....Hear our Prayer

**Carrie**

## **Ways to Contact Stephen**

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Mobile: 07835 810424 (preferred)

Phone: 0118 996 4533

email: [minister@parkurc.org.uk](mailto:minister@parkurc.org.uk)  
[minister@parkandhungerfordurcs.org.uk](mailto:minister@parkandhungerfordurcs.org.uk)

## **A Thank You from the Treasurer**

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Dear Friends, Firstly, if it is not too late, let me wish you a very happy and healthy 2021.

It has been a tradition at Park for us to remember those less fortunate than ourselves at Christmas time by making a donation to three charities identified by Members at a church meeting. The three charities this year are;

- Leprosy Mission – (International)
- Centre Point – (National)
- Royal Berkshire Hospital charity – (Local).

Strangely, the money we usually donate is often about the same as the money raised at our Christmas Fair; but for obvious reasons we were unable to hold our usual Christmas Fair. So, members agreed that we would donate money to the charities that we would have normally spent at the Fair in previous years.

I am pleased to report that we have raised a significant amount (£1226 with Gift Aid) for the three charities and the Elders have agreed to add to this and donate £500 to each.

It was also agreed that our Christmas Day collection should be donated to another local charity. For this we raised £160 and this will be sent to JAC (Just around the Corner) a local charity which supports children with a range of difficulties and helps them to achieve their potential.

A big Thank You to all of you who supported these initiatives. I realise that this is a very challenging time for many of us, both financially and emotionally; so, it is particularly important that those of us who can manage to make a donation, large or small, continue to do so.

The charity sector has been also been struggling to offer their services and keep their funding going, so it is also a 'Thank You' on their behalf.

God Bless

**Yvette Gayford (Treasurer)**

## **Leprosy Mission – our International Charity**

Every two minutes, someone is diagnosed with leprosy. That's more than 200,000 new cases a year. Although it is curable, millions of people worldwide are living with the effects of the disease, from physical disability to mental health problems, poverty and discrimination.

We are a global Christian organisation leading the fight against leprosy. Following Jesus Christ, we seek to bring about transformation; breaking the chains of leprosy and empowering people to attain healing, dignity and life in all its fullness.

## **Centre Point – our National Charity**

Centrepoint provides housing and support for young people regionally in London, Manchester, Yorkshire and the North East and through partnerships all over the UK. We aim to give homeless young people a future and we want to end youth homelessness.

Centrepoint is not a 9-5! We run services seven days a week, every week of the year – even Christmas day. Our staff are dedicated to making sure we can help every homeless young person that comes through our door, from support workers, to fundraising, to finance and our board.

## **Royal Berks Charity – our Local Charity**

The Royal Berks Charity supports the work of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, raising money for projects that:

- Provide better facilities for patients and visitors
- Help to buy the most up to date equipment
- Support rebuilding and refurbishment projects
- Improve staff welfare and training

The Royal Berks Charity organises and supports fundraising events throughout the year. Your support of these events and your generous donations helps transform care across the Trust.

## **70 years of Friendship Club**

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On the first week in February 1951 Revd. David Davies started the Young Wives Club at Park Church.

The object of the Club was to bring mothers of children together in a spirit of Christian Friendship. There would be a crèche provided. The subs would be 6d. a week and no sewing or knitting would be allowed in the meeting.

That was the 1950's, we have moved on.

The Young Wives got older, the children went to University and it was decided to change the name to Park Friendship Club and even allow men to join us. No children now, subs are £12 a term but the friendship and belonging are still there.

The Queen will be celebrating her 70th Platinum Jubilee next year so I think we can call it our Platinum year too. Sadly we can't celebrate at the moment.

We remember gratefully Revd. Davies for starting the Tuesday Club, for the present members and for those now departed who, through their foresight, formed the club that has lasted so long. 2020 has certainly been a year like no other for us to remember.

**Joan Pearson**

## **Premier Lifeline the National Christian Helpline**

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"Within weeks of lockdown 50% more calls were made than before. People in their own homes, unable to socialise or have fellowship. Church and community activities closed. Friends and families unable to meet for a cup of tea and chat and many people feeling isolated and alone.

The Premier Lifeline offers a listening ear, someone to talk to, emotional and spiritual support from a Christian perspective along with prayer and signposting.

Open 9am to midnight every day of the year on 0300 111 0101 or [www.premierlifeline.org.uk](http://www.premierlifeline.org.uk)"

**Gaye Rees**

## **Christian Community Action**

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Christian Community Action have continued to provide support to those in need, and have adapted their response to meet ever-changing demands.

In the last three months, the number of self-referring clients has risen by 55% (122 clients) and referrals from agencies by 107% (280 clients). CCA have been providing furniture, white goods, kitchen and bedding packs and emergency food parcels to people fleeing domestic violence, those being discharged from hospitals, and other vulnerable people in the community.

We are working well alongside other agencies. . We are in need of: a new van circa £17k (as one of our two has died and we are having to hire one); two new trustees; donations of finance or goods (good quality bedding, kitchen utensils, pots, pans etc.); and prayers that we will continue to be and to do all that God asks of us, in his strength, bringing his love and hope to those in Reading who most need it.

To find out more contact Sasha East (CEO) on [sasha.east@CCAM.org.uk](mailto:sasha.east@CCAM.org.uk) or Penny Cuthbert (trustee) on [pennymadfriar@btinternet.com](mailto:pennymadfriar@btinternet.com)

## **Help with Shopping or other Support**

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Help with shopping or other support – please register with Reading Voluntary Action who are coordinating volunteers across the town. Please complete their online form <http://rva.org.uk/coronavirus-community-action/>

If anyone is aware of someone who needs help they can contact the One Reading Community Hub online, <https://www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirussupport> or by phone on 0118 937 3787 if it is an urgent welfare issue.

**Gaye Rees**

## **While You're Waiting**

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I came across this the other day. It was sent to me as words of encouragement from my friend Ellayne.

I don't know where it came from or if she wrote it, but I thought it was very apt with what is happening today with the virus and with us all on hold and waiting for the time when we can get back to 'normal' or as near as what our normal used to be.

### **While You're Waiting**

While you're waiting for tomorrow,  
get the best out of today.

While you're waiting for the sunshine  
don't complain at skies of grey.

While you wait for future pleasures  
don't forget the ones you've had.

Call to mind the things enjoyed,  
the happy times and not the sad.

While you're waiting for the granting  
of the wish you hold most dear,

Don't lose sight of all the joys  
that life can offer now and here.

Times of waiting can be fruitful  
and to you much good can bring.

Make the winter yield a blessing  
while you're waiting for the Spring.

Sadly, my friend has died so I can't ask her where it came from but feel she would like to share these words on with others through me.

God bless you, Ellayne, and may you rest in peace.

**Linda (F)**

## **Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part I**

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*2020 may have had more than its fair share of challenges, but here is some good news that did happen during the year:*

### **Climate leaders won in the US elections**

Friends of the Earth said Joe Biden's victory in the US presidential election in November "offers a glimmer of hope" for addressing the climate crisis.

"Campaigning on the strongest climate change platform in presidential history, president-elect Biden now has a mandate to take bold action on climate change," said the charity's Erich Pica. Biden's win means that the US – the world's second biggest CO2 emitter – is now set to rejoin the Paris agreement.

US climate leaders who were re-elected include Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – the youngest woman ever elected to the US Congress – and Senator Ed Markey.

Together, they introduced the 2019 resolution on a Green New Deal. With action needed like never before, many eyes will be watching what happens in the States in 2021.

## **Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part II**

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### **Deaths caused by terrorism fell for the fifth consecutive year**

The Global Terrorism Index reported that deaths from terrorism fell for the fifth consecutive year in 2020. The number of deaths caused by terrorism has now decreased by 59 per cent since 2014, to 13,826.

Researchers also found that the terrorism situation had improved in 103 countries – the highest number of nations to record a year-on-year improvement since the index began.

Terrorism remains a significant and serious threat in many countries, but the news was cautiously welcomed as a positive development. The largest decreases in deaths were in Afghanistan and Nigeria.

## **Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part III**

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### **There were a host of animal baby booms**

Kenya reported in August that its elephant population has more than doubled from 16,000 in 1989 to 34,000 today. The number of elephants being killed by poachers is also down significantly on previous years – just seven were reported in 2020, compared to 34 in 2019 and 80 in 2018.

The number of lions living in Kenya has increased by 25 per cent too, from 2,000 in 2010 to 2,489 in 2020.



Meanwhile, Uganda reported a gorilla baby boom. Mountain gorillas in the country have been breeding in “unprecedented” numbers, according to conservationists at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park.

They announced in September that seven infants had been born there to date in 2020 – more than double the number for all of 2019.

“This flourish of deliveries is unprecedented,” Simplicious Gessa, from the Uganda Wildlife Authority, told The Times. Mountain gorillas are found in only three countries – Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo – and have been the subject of prolonged conservation efforts, which saw the great apes moved off the critically endangered species list in 2018.

## **Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part IV**

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### **Africa was declared free of wild polio**

The World Health Organization's African Region was declared free from wild polio in August following decades of work by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, governments and partners. The announcement came as the virus was finally eliminated in Nigeria.

The Africa Regional Certification Commission, a task group appointed by the WHO to eradicate the disease, certified the continent free of wild polio in the summer, four years after the last recorded case.



Polio typically affects children under five and can lead to paralysis and sometimes even death. There is no cure, but the polio vaccine offers lifelong immunisation.

In 1996, an estimated 75,000 children in Africa were paralysed by wild polio, prompting a vaccination programme launched by Nelson Mandela. The virus, however, clung on in Nigeria, which less than a decade ago accounted for around half of all global polio deaths.

Speaking in 2020, the director general of the WHO, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, described the eradication of wild polio in Africa as a “public health triumph”.

## **Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part V**

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### **Saudi Arabia and Palestine banned child marriage**

Saudi Arabia banned child marriage in 2020, making 18 the minimum age to be married. In 2019, the government banned marriages for children under the age of 15.

Before that, there were no age limits on marriage for boys or girls. The new ban has a loophole: teenagers under the age of 18 can still get married if they are granted approval by a special court. But it is still seen as positive news in such conservative countries, both of which have deep historical, religious and cultural roots.

Palestine also banned child marriage in 2020, while Bangladesh reported progress on child marriage too.

The proportion of girls being married there before the age of 18 has dropped from 64 per cent in 2010 to just over 50 per cent today, according to research by Unicef. In actual numbers, that means 10 million girls in Bangladesh have been saved from child marriage in the past decade.

## **Six Reasons to be Cheerful from 2020 - part VI**

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### **UK smokers quit in their highest numbers in a decade**

More than one million people have given up smoking since the Covid-19 pandemic hit, a survey for charity Action on Smoking and Health (Ash) released in July suggested.

Just under half of people who had ditched the habit in the previous four months said the pandemic had played a role in their decision to stop. A range of factors were suggested, including health concerns, access to tobacco while isolating or no longer smoking socially.

Separately, University College London found more people quit smoking in the year to June 2020 than in any year since its survey began in 2007.

**Carrie**

## **Readers Needed for Reform Magazine**

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Galloways who prepare the URC audio Reform version for those with reduced sight or blind are looking for readers as they cannot use their normal studios.

Galloways is a charity that has produced audio versions of Reform for a long time.

You must be able to have equipment to record yourself at home. This audio version brings so much pleasure to those with reduced sight.

If you are able to volunteer please contact: James Coulton on 01772 744 148 or email [james.coulton@galloways.org.uk](mailto:james.coulton@galloways.org.uk)

**Gaye Rees**

## **Education Forum**

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Many parents have understandable concerns about their children's education.

This will be the opportunity to ask questions to Christian leaders:

- Dr Simon Uttley (head of Blessed Hugh Farringdon),
- Rev. Dr Chris Evans (Deputy Head of Reading School),
- Lisa Telling, Executive Head of Southfields and Katesgrove Primaries,
- and another primary head (waiting for confirmation).

The Zoom link for that meeting on 7.30-9.00 p.m. on Monday 8th February 2021 is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82425564816?pwd=TDdOeGp0UDNJSUJ3STdva0tuNDhxdz09>

## **Hope into Action**

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### **Enabling churches to house the homeless**

Hope into Action - A group of parishioners from St James, St William of York and English Martyrs have agreed to support a homeless project in Reading.

Hope into Action is a national charity that provides supported housing to the homeless by partnering with local churches.

The group of parishioners will provide friendship and support to residents alongside the professional support provided by Hope into Action.

The project will get underway early this year once a property has been purchased. Hope into Action already have 2 houses in Reading and this will be the third.

There will be an information session on Zoom for potential investors on Friday 22nd January 7.30-8.30pm. If you are interested in investing in such a property or getting involved in the project, please contact Mary Lewis on 07967 681020 or [mary.lewis@hopeintoaction.org.uk](mailto:mary.lewis@hopeintoaction.org.uk).

**Gaye Rees**

# Prayers from Alan

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Lord Jesus

We pray for those stuck in abuse in lockdown,  
And those who support them.

*Lord in your Mercy,  
Hear our prayer,  
Amen*



## A CYCLIST'S PRAYER

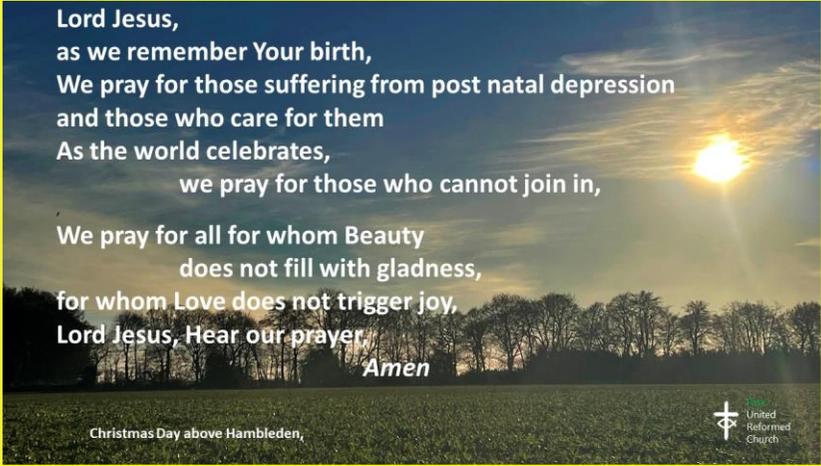
*WHEN I GO UPHILL  
PUSH ME LORD,*

*WHEN I HAVE A  
PUNCTURE IN THE RAIN  
STAY WITH ME LORD*

*WHEN I AM TIRED AND  
MILES FROM HOME BE  
WITH ME LORD,*

*THAT WHEN WE GOING  
DOWNHILL, WE MAY  
FREEWHEEL TOGETHER*

*AMEN*



Lord Jesus,  
as we remember Your birth,  
We pray for those suffering from post natal depression  
and those who care for them  
As the world celebrates,  
we pray for those who cannot join in,  
We pray for all for whom Beauty  
does not fill with gladness,  
for whom Love does not trigger joy,  
Lord Jesus, Hear our prayer.  
*Amen*

Christmas Day above Hambleden,



For good food provided,  
For good health to enjoy it,  
For good friends to share it,  
Thanks be to God.



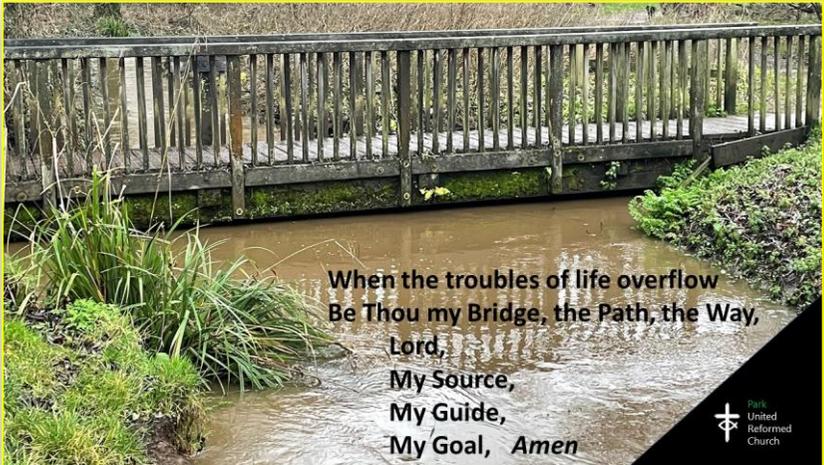
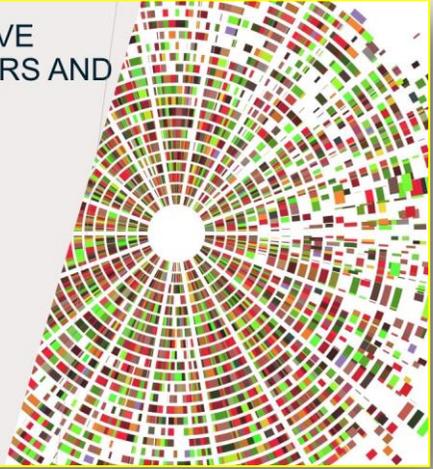
**“WE MUST LEARN TO LIVE  
TOGETHER AS BROTHERS AND  
SISTERS OR PERISH  
TOGETHER AS FOOLS.”**

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

LORD GOD,  
HEAL WE PRAY, THE  
DIVISIONS IN AND SOCIETY,  
BETWEEN COMMUNITIES,  
GENERATIONS  
BETWEEN THE POWERFUL  
AND THE POWERLESS  
BETWEEN RICH AND POOR



*AMEN*



**When the troubles of life overflow  
Be Thou my Bridge, the Path, the Way,  
Lord,  
My Source,  
My Guide,  
My Goal, Amen**



Lord, in your mercy .....Hear our Prayer

**Alan**

## **Planting Your Spring Garden**

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For the garden of your daily living . . .

Plant 3 rows of peas:

1. Peas of mind
2. Peas of heart
3. Peas of soul

Plant 4 rows of squash:

1. Squash gossip
2. Squash indifference
3. Squash grumbling
4. Squash selfishness

Plant 4 rows of lettuce:

1. Lettuce be faithful
2. Lettuce be kind
3. Lettuce be patient
4. Lettuce love one another

No garden is complete without turnips:

1. Turnip for meetings
2. Turnip for service
3. Turnip to help one another

To conclude our garden, we must have thyme:

1. Thyme for each other
2. Thyme for family
3. Thyme for friends

Water freely with patience and cultivate with love.

There is much fruit in your garden because you reap what you sow!

found by **Carrie**