

The Rector would appreciate it if anyone knowing of illness or any other trouble in the Parish would notify him as soon as possible so that he or a member of the Church can call without delay.

Rector's Surgery: If you have an enquiry about baptism, marriage or another service, or if there is something else you would like to discuss with Napo John, please make an appointment, through the Church Office (8462 1373), to come and see him during Surgery hours - Monday mornings (except Bank Holidays) 10.30 am – 12 noon and Tuesday evenings, 7 – 9 pm.

NEW BEGINNINGS!

Many of us were looking forward to seeing the back of the year 2020. It is now over but, so far, what joy has the new year – 2021 – given to us? Most of us would agree that 2020 was one of the most extraordinary years in the history of this country. But many are wondering if the 21st year of the 21st century is going to be any better?

Last time when I wrote for the Hayes Herald (mid. December 2020) our area was in tier three. But as I write for February 2021 in mid-January we are in the third national lock down and more restrictions are coming. There are more people now in hospitals due to Coronavirus than there were at the peak in 2020. Our children are once again learning online and young parents are once again 'Jacks of all trades': teachers, PE instructors, mates, breadwinners and parents too. (I pray for all our young families daily.) The church building is once again closed for public worship and private prayers. My heart goes out to all my brothers and sisters for whom it is so important to sit in their beloved church and pour their heart out to God. In such times is it a wonder if some of us cry out, 'How long O Lord'?

But, is all really lost and is there no room for optimism? I believe in spite of all the pain our nation is going through at the moment there are reasons to have hope and even to celebrate. I thank God that we have now three government-approved vaccines and we are ahead of the world in vaccinating our nation (only Israel is ahead of us). I thank God for our NHS staff who are coping with a situation that no one living in this country has ever experienced before. It is by counting on the resilience of our doctors and nurses that the government can say that by the middle of February 2021 the most vulnerable in our society will get their first Covid 19 Jab. I thank God for thousands of volunteers who are giving their time to feed the people in need. I thank God for the generosity of

those who joyfully give financially so the needs of others can be met. I thank God for the generous taxpayers of this country that our government can pledge huge sums of money to keep the country going!

But is there any hope on the spiritual front when the doors of our church are shut? I have spent a long time praying, pondering and asking the same question. Time and again I have been reminded of one biblical event (for details please read 1 Kings chapter 18). It's a story of the prophet Elijah, one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. There was a severe drought in the land; the rain had failed for years, and people and their livestock were suffering terribly. One day at the prophet Elijah's request, the king called the nation of Israel to Mount Carmel. Once there, the prophet Elijah started to pray for rain. He battled in prayer for some time and at the end of his prayer session he sent a message to the king saying, "...Harness your chariot and go down before the rain stops you." (v44). We further read, "In a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind; there was heavy rain." (v45).

I too hear the sound of rain, the sound of refreshing spiritual rain from God. It is common knowledge that with the nation being vaccinated, the situation will turn around soon. But I am not talking about that, I am talking about the new beginnings in the spiritual life of the church in Hayes. Ministers have tried their best to keep the churches going, yet so much has been torn down in the last few months, some perhaps for good, but a lot with much pain. But I believe in only a matter of months the church will be dusting the old dreams (in our case some of these can be easily retraced in our PCC minutes). Soon the church will start to think about new beginnings, new starts and new ways to do the ministry. For me it is an exciting prospect that in spite of all the hardships there are new hopes and possibilities for the church. I am excited, but at the same time, having led the church through hard times, I do ask, 'Am I, a tired man now, really the right person to lead the faithful into new beginnings?' With or without me the Lord has good plans for Hayes and for the parish church. May God keep this beloved church safe and blessed. May the ministry here flourish in the days to come!

Always yours in Christ

Napo



Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Diocese of Rochester



This year holds great promise. Already we see the vaccine programme rolling out and things are looking good; from the highs in infection the R rate is coming down. How much difference a year makes. This time last year, vaccine programmes were for children and who knew what an R rate was!

Hopefully many of you have already had your first vaccination. My husband has had his and I am awaiting my call. Hopefully by the time I write my article for March most of us will have had at least our first vaccination.

I am writing this looking out over the valley and watching the snow falling. We must count ourselves lucky here in Hayes that we have not experienced the traumas of the heavy rainfall and weather that has been experienced in other parts of Britain. Our thoughts and prayers are for the many MU members who have had their lives disrupted by the severe weather.

Thank you to everyone for making our job easier in collecting in our subs for 2021, and it was great to be able to hand all the cheques over to our Diocese MU treasurer. What was good was that I could exchange a few words with everyone as I collected your cheques, and see that you were all well. I really look forward to the day when we can meet face to face again.

As the pandemic continues, we have so many people that we should be thankful to who enable us to stay safe.



God of health and healing,
we pray for those who work in the NHS,
and in health services across the world.
We ask for protection from the effects of the virus,
and a lifting of exhaustion as they continue to deal
with the ongoing challenges of this global pandemic.
May their efforts and sacrifices be valued by all,
whether a patient or a grateful community.
Amen



I feel that I should mention here all the teachers who have had so much to deal with and often at such short notice. Not only have they lessons to prepare for teaching the children of key workers, but they have to prepare and mark the work for the children schooling at home. Some I know have also had to phone round parents informing them that their child must isolate as there was a case of Covid in their class. At the moment I am awaiting a delivery from the supermarket – another area where people are working hard to keep us safe. Please remember them all in your prayers.

Introducing the Mothers' Union 5 C's Resources

Looking after our wellbeing is more important than ever. Fortunately, we are becoming increasingly aware of the value of taking care of our physical and mental health. However, with all the focus on different health and fitness practices it can be difficult to know what to prioritise. Similarly getting your head around all the different advice can be quite tricky.

Mothers' Union is building on the 5 Cs framework created and recommended by Dr Radha Modgil. [5 Cs approach of Dr Radha as seen on the BBC](#). Using this as a basis we are bringing you a whole new selection of resources to look after your body and mind.

So, what are the 5 Cs?

The first of the 5 Cs is **control**. This means identifying and acknowledging what things are in your zone of control and learning how to stop thinking about those things that are not. This is easier said than done at first, but over time, with practice, it is possible to limit distractions and fears.

The second of the 5 Cs is **care**. This relates to self-care such as exercise and taking daily action to look after our mental health. It is simple to start getting into good habits relating to exercise and it is ok to start slow. Even the most basic of stretching or movement routines done every day will produce benefits over time.

The third of the 5 Cs is **continuity**. This means creating a sense of routine and grounding yourself in certain activities. Just because the wider world is a lot different from how it was before the pandemic does not mean your daily life has to be. In fact, keeping to as near a normal life as possible is reassuring for your mind on a deeper level. As the saying goes, "Keep calm and carry on".

The fourth of the 5 Cs is **creativity**, which as you would expect relates to continuing with hobbies and interests, particularly those that you can get absorbed in. This could be anything really, but the idea is to carry out practices that take you away from your worries and concerns.

Finally, the last of the 5 Cs relates to **compassion**. It is a well-known Christian value to be kind to others and especially the most vulnerable. Research has shown that helping other people has benefits for your own psychological wellbeing.

How are Mothers' Union using this? Mothers' Union have produced a range of resources under these different headings, launching with a selection of each and adding to this over time. The hope is that you will find a range of resources to support you in keeping up your spirits, staying healthy and feeling connected to wider society.

Look for them on the Mothers' Union resources page on the internet. <https://www.mothersunion.org/resources>

God Bless and keep safe.

Avril Ashford

MOTHERS' UNION IN MYANMAR



Mothers' Union is a truly international movement. We are represented in 84 countries spread all around the world, practising our faith and doing God's work. Mothers' Union in the Asian country of Myanmar celebrated its centenary in 2014 and continues to grow and flourish with over 8,600 members today. A visitor to the Diocese of Toungoo writes about her experiences with the remarkable women who make up our fellow members overseas. [Read the full article here.](#)

THE GATE OF THE YEAR

My sister Avril Ashford and I were very fortunate that we were brought up in a loving, Christian home. Our family lived with our Grandmother who had a big influence on our lives. We both remember this card with the poem "The Gate of the Year".



“And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East. “

These inspiring words were written by Minnie Louise Haskins in December 1913.

On December 25th, in 1939, as Europe was poised on the brink of a terrifying war that would resonate and rebound throughout all parts of the globe, King George chose these words to encourage a fearful and apprehensive nation.

Now, eighty-one years later, our country is again in the grip of a national emergency. With politicians trying to stay ahead of a virus that changes and morphs like an invisible genie and scientists and researchers scrabbling to find the antidote, people are understandably bewildered and scared.

Once again, we seek solace and shelter under the wings of our creator God who promises to deliver us from pestilence and plague (Psalm 91). We thank God that incredible progress has been made and an effective vaccine has been developed that will protect and save lives all over the world. But we are once again stepping into the dark unknown. What better time to place our hands, once again, into the hand of God?

Jill Pauling

ST MARY'S CHURCH DIARY FEBRUARY 2020

As you will be aware, no public gatherings including public worship or events will take place in St Mary the Virgin, Hayes until further notice.

Sunday February 7th

8.00am Holy Communion Service BCP via Zoom

10.30am Morning Praise via YouTube

Sunday February 14th

8.00am Holy Communion Service BCP via Zoom

10.30am Parish Communion via YouTube

Wednesday February 17th – Ash Wednesday

8.00pm Holy Communion CW via YouTube

Sunday February 21st

8am Holy Communion Service BCP via Zoom

10.30am Morning Praise via YouTube

Sunday February 28th

8am Holy Communion Service BCP

10.30am Parish Communion CW

Follow the link below to the St Mary's YouTube channel where you will find our pre-recorded services.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo7KNHYfOiKm95VXyQdFg6g>

If you would like to join a Zoom service please email the church office at info@stmaryshayeskent.co.uk

A STRUGGLE WITH FAITH

This week I found myself revisiting the oldest question that has troubled Christians down the centuries.: 'Why does God not stop all the suffering in the world?' I went to bed last night and in my prayers I thought of the families of over 1000 people who died that day from Covid-19 disease. We believe that God is all powerful so surely he could modify this virus and stop the fatalities? It is so indiscriminate in its attacks on people. I began to feel angry with God and then I remembered the Psalmist who also raged against God with questions such as ' Why hast thou forgotten me?' Of course, the traditional answer to the question of suffering is that God created us with free will and, as a result, rarely intervenes, except through our prayers, because to do so would negate that freedom. This is not a bad answer where our suffering is self-induced but not so good when we are suffering through no fault of our own as in natural disasters or pandemics. I believe we have to live with this age-old mystery and so I turned my thoughts to other things.

I was reminded, as I pondered, that man's original and continuing sin has corrupted the whole of nature leading to its decay and bondage. St. Paul said that God allowed the world to continue in its damaged state in the hope that it would be set free from that decay and sin by the Son of God who would give his life on the cross to eradicate man's sin and ultimately cure the corruption and decay of the world. So, for now, sin carries on but as individuals we can be reborn through faith in Christ with the ability to overcome temptation and to look forward to the new heaven and earth that God has promised us through Christ, his only Son. I confess that I do not always claim the strength from Christ to overcome temptation and sin but it is always available. I am sure that God's heart aches with sadness when I fail. One thing I can do, however, is to see, in Christ, God's love for his damaged world and his love for me and try to understand the mystery of the whole creation 'groaning in travail' as we wait for the winding up of planet earth by the second coming of our Saviour. We need to continue to pray to God for our world, as the Psalmist kept returning to God in spite of his frustrations, and, in doing so, to find peace for our daily lives. We can discover afresh every day that God's love for us and his world is beyond our understanding and he hears, and wants to hear, every prayer and thought we share with him even though we are just one person from a world of almost 8 billion people, many of whom may be on their knees in despair.

David Langford

HAYES MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

February 2021 or March 2020? The current London Lockdown could leave one feeling confused that nearly a year has passed without improvement. Fortunately, we in HMF are able to remain optimistic, not least of course because of the increased availability of actual vaccines entering our members' arms, even as these words are being prepared in January 2021 ahead of publishing deadlines.

All our members should qualify on age and/or underlying health conditions for priority in early inoculation. Not surprising really given that a condition of joining our ranks is retirement or semi-retirement, these days nearer to 70.

If the Government's declared timetable for appointments is achieved HMF should soon be completely protected. That's a great prospect and a real basis for hope in resuming our "normal" activities without too much restriction in the months ahead. The rest of the population will surely benefit eventually.

In HMF, we are still dependent on the reopening of the OCS for our monthly meetings. Our intended visiting speakers remain eager to come to talk to us. The regular coach company, Premiere, will be more than ready to transport us each month as venues reopen for coach parties.

The holding of two major events will confirm our positivity. One is our Annual Lunch - usually held in January. It will take place just as soon as restaurants are allowed to reopen fully. An enticing menu has been agreed with Regans, the Banqueting Suite above the New Inn in Hayes. It will just need final confirmation from members of their provisional menu choices accompanied by their payment of £30. Really something to look forward to as we endure and survive the remaining restrictions.

Not so cheerful perhaps, but a cause for celebration, will be a Memorial Service for the number of members who passed without being able to be represented by HMF at their funerals during Covid-19 restrictions. Not all deaths were caused directly or indirectly by the virus, all remain missed and as yet without our opportunity to mourn and mark their passing collectively.

We include that event among a growing list of reasons to be cheerful. Yes, cheerful. The end is in sight. The next few months may be difficult and slow to achieve whatever our new normality proves to become.

Meanwhile, we have continued to publish our regular Newsletters every month – even in months when we did not normally

have one and they are hand delivered to local members through a sort of “buddy” scheme when they cannot receive them electronically. And, as “staying in touch” is important at this time we continue with our mid-month Coronavirus Extra to entertain, inform and uplift (we hope) our loyal members as we all await that better tomorrow. Highlights of the latest 18 page edition include:

- A selection of brainteasers and quizzes, including one looking back at 2020. That is the year we all want to forget, but we hope members still remember enough to answer the quiz!
- Twelve Cheerful Choices: 12 reasons for us to have hope as we look to the future
- A virtual Outing to the Chiltern Open Air Museum at a time when we cannot have real outings
- Suggestions for things people can do at home to keep them occupied during the lockdown.

We have managed as an organisation to survive and thrive for over fifty years. In 1970/71 we had just one outing, a coach tour of London, with three the following year – Courage’s Brewery, the Royal Naval College and Bowater’s Thames Mill. In recent years, we have become much more ambitious with ten outings in a normal year including our Annual Lunch and a boat trip. Some photos to remind us and you of our past are included here – though sadly our archive does not stretch right back to those earliest trips!

Our glass remains half-full and soon can be refilled in reality and raised to glorious survival. Let us utter a cautious but confident “Cheers” as we continue to stay at home, stay safe, careful and healthy in body, mind and spirit.

More next month and every month.

Graham Marsden and Allan Evison, HMF Secretarial Team
(Contact by e-mail: secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org)



RAF Shackleton, Gatwick Aviation Museum



Wembley Stadium



Jimmy's Farm, Ipswich

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES MINISTRY

Although, like many we had hoped to restart face-to-face sessions with our young people in January, we have been unable to do so safely. We do however continue to upload stories from the Bible (presented by different people from our children's ministry team) aimed at the Fresh Start families each month. Our monthly Illuminate Bible Studies are still going strong - please see below Becky's update on these sessions.

We have regularly been sending activity sheets to our families; these include prayers, songs, crafts and thoughts based on the Sunday readings and lectionary. In order to make these worksheets more interactive, fun and give the children a chance to see us and their friends again, we will be trying out a Blaze Session (Junior Church) this month with the view to running it every 4th Sunday of the month via Zoom.

If you have children and young people between the ages of 6-10 (for the Blaze Session) or 11-16 for Illuminate and would be interested in joining please contact me via email on:

info@stmaryshayeskent.co.uk.

Brenda

ILLUMINATE

In November and December sessions, we looked at the Return of Jesus and thought in particular about, 'Why hasn't Jesus returned yet?'. This gave us an opportunity to think about: Why should we be waiting for Jesus' return, what does the New Testament say about the Second Advent, Church doctrine/the Creed, confusion on the topic amongst Christians and how should we prepare for Jesus' return? You will probably agree that there are some big questions here and these brought about some very interesting and incredibly insightful discussions within the group.

In January and February, we are looking at an overview of the Bible and the journey of God's people and their relationship with Him.

Some thoughts from our young people about the sessions:

'I find it a good way to learn in depth about God, in a safe, fun, caring environment' – Illuminate member

'I always look forward to my Illuminate sessions. I love it because you can be honest and ask questions about God or anything to do with the Bible and everyone can discuss and share ideas. I think it is the best way to learn about the Christian faith for young people. Also, the topics of sessions are decided by what questions you want to ask or what you want to discover about Christianity. Sometimes we discuss the history of the faith, sometimes stories from the Bible. Sometimes we find answers to the deepest questions and everyone gets involved. Each session gives you something to take away. So far, my favourite thing we have done is when we tried to find answers to questions we wouldn't normally get to ask, such as when will Jesus return?' – Dominic

Becky



Items for the March magazine by 21st February please. Copy to the Editor – see below.

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While lockdown restrictions remain in force the Hayes Herald will not be printed and distributed in the usual (i.e. pre-2020) way. The March edition will be on the Church website.