



KINDLE

**Newsletter of the Romford
United Reformed Church at
Western Road**

October 2024

Ministers' Letter

Dear Friends

Pondering what to write, I was reminded of a chapter in an interesting, challenging but fun little book entitled Pylon People. It is '40 days of Art and Meditation to empower your Spirit' by Cath Woolridge. 'Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.'
Romans 12.2 (New Living Translation)

How do I/we view and deal with the constant stream of 'bad news' and negativity in the press and adverts on T.V. and Radio etc?

Only this week there has been a horrendous escalation of the war in the Middle East with the bombings in Lebanon – the simultaneous detonations of pagers and walkie-talkies – Israel says 'it is a new phase in the war on terror'

This alone is bad enough but there is more on top of more gloom and doom! We then have the situations within our own lives that cause us concern and distress.

We seem to live in a world that peddles fear, what if this what if that

The poet Fredrick Langbridge wrote of two men who looked through the same prison bars. When asked what they saw one said 'mud' and the other said 'stars'. Both men had identical circumstances but entirely different perspectives.

In her book Cathy explains that Pylons have their feet in the mud but reach to the sky/stars – they stand tall. She likens Christians to pylons because 'they stand in a line and are linked together by powered lines' We as Christians stand together and are powered by God, by his Holy Spirit living in us.

We are an empowered people – empowered by God. Like the pylons we can stand tall and look up but still have our feet firmly on/in the ground.

She says pylons are often misunderstood not always liked by everyone and that is our calling – to stand up and stand out. Not everything we stand for is welcomed or liked.

We have a choice to look up or look down, 'set your mind on things above not things of the earth'
Colossians 3.2

So when we hear the news what do we do?

Feel hopeless

Do nothing

Pray then still worry

Or pray and trust God has got it and leave it with him?

Abba Father wants us to pray, He wants us to tell him what it is that concerns and worries us deeply **BUT** then He wants us to listen to His voice and let His words, His peace settle in our middles – the depths of soul.

‘I have this my child; the hurt is mine but also the victory is mine through my Son Jesus.

Don't try to understand it - JUST TRUST ME! Proverbs 3.5

What ifs = fear looking at the mud
Even ifs = faith looking at the stars

Trust Abba Father because he loves you and become a star gazer!!

Love and hugs

Ruth

Thank you Ruth for writing this month*s letter. Our thoughts and prayers are with our Minister Alison as she waits for news about her wrist.

New keyboard

On Suncat29th September the church dedicated a new keyboard for the church to the memory of Jacqueline and Alan Davis. We give thanks to Eleanor and Russell Davis for their kind gift.

A big thank you for all the harvest gifts for the Refuge including £300. It was lovely to see BB and their families in church.

A big thank you too, to all those who organised, provided for and cleared up after the harvest lunch. Well done. It was a happy relaxed time.

Thanks Fiona

August Services

This year it was decided that we would remain in church instead of transferring everything to the upstairs hall. I was sorry about this as I always enjoyed our Café Church. However, I need not have been sad. The Elders, and their assistants, produced refreshing services. We looked afresh at stories known since childhood. Considering the characters and situations in different ways made the stories seem fresh and we saw things differently. I enjoyed each one (regrettably missed one as I was away).

So, I would like to thank all those involved, even the placard carriers! The services were refreshing

and a delight to be part of. Well Done Everyone.

Thank you.

Olive

What's Happening

Christmas Tree Festival & Christmas Market

Saturday 30th November 2024

10.00am-3.00pm

I'm sure everyone is aware that the Christmas Tree Festival and Christmas Market is taking place on Saturday 30th November. This is an event for the whole church so we are hoping everyone will be either helping on the day or attending the event.



Lots of help is still needed. If you can help in anyway, either on the day or on the Friday helping to set up, please put your name on the sign-up form in the foyer of the church. Also, we need to be collecting items for the day. This is the chance for you to clear out and get rid of all your old bric a brac. If you no longer need it, it can go on the white elephant stall. We are also looking for teddies/cuddly toys, any other toys, books and don't forget to sign up to supply items for the raffle prizes.

Items for the Christmas Tombola e.g. Christmas cards, gift tags, Christmas sweets in fact any items as long as they have a Christmas theme. These items need to be in the church by Sunday 24th November. Most importantly, we need lots of cakes on the day. Now I know lots of you bake and people come to church fayres expecting to buy homemade cakes so please don't disappoint them. Let's start baking and fill our freezers with cakes so have a large cake stall. It will make lots of money for our charity and visitors will go home happy.

The last thing you can do is to tell your friends and families all about our Festival and encourage them to attend. If you know anyone with young children, please tell them about our fantastic Father Christmas. People from last year said it was cheaper, better and way more realistic than the Liberty!!



Last year's festival was so successful. Let's make this year's even better.

Christine Grant

Rainham Hall

First of all thank you very much to everyone who came to the open day at Rainham Hall on the 14th September. We all had a great day exploring the 'Layers of History exhibition' and finding out about a few people who lived at Rainham Hall in its 295 year history. We enjoyed refreshments in the café afterwards.

Events at Rainham Hall Oct-Dec 2024:

Apple and Harvest Festival Day – Saturday 12 Oct – 11-4:30

Ghostly Games – Wednesday 23rd-Sunday 27 October and Wednesday 30th October- Sunday 3rd November 11-4pm

Pumpkin Carving – Thursday 24th to Sun 27th October – 11-4pm

Christmas Art and Craft Fair- Saturday 7th & Sun 8th December 11-4pm

Link to events page:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/london/rainham-hall/events>

Any questions feel free to ask me. Hall is open Thursday to Saturday each week. Come and try the activities and explore the history of Rainham Hall.

Thanks Andrew.



Glimpses of glory

God of the high and holy places
where I catch a glimpse of your glory,
above the low levels of life,
above the evil and emptiness which drags me down,
beyond the limits of my senses and imagination,
YOU LIFT ME UP.

In the splendour of a sunset,
in the silence of the stars,
in the grandeur of the mountains,
in the vastness of the sea,
YOU LIFT ME UP.

In the majesty of music,
in the mystery of art,
in the freshness of the morning,
in the fragrance of a single flower,
YOU LIFT ME UP.

Awe-inspiring God,
when I am lost in wonder
and lost for words,
receive the homage of my silent worship
but do not let me be content to bear your beauty and be still.
Go with me to the places where I live and work.
Lift the veil of reticence behind which I hide.
Give me the courage to speak of the things which move me,
with simple and unselfconscious delight.
Help me to share my glimpses of glory
until others are drawn to your light.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE.

Make a list of the experiences which fill you with awe and wonder
at the splendour and mystery of life and thank God for them all.
Think about ways in which you might begin to share these with
others.

Found by Jill Hunt

There are 5.3 million Christians in Burkina Faso, from a total population of 22.7 million. Thanks to ongoing political instability, the impact of Islamic militant groups has remained steady over the last several years. There were two military coups in 2022, which contributed to civilian deaths, but the number of faith-related violent incidents decreased in 2023, though the danger has not truly subsided. The country has one of the world's most severe displacement crises – with many Christians among the displaced – and the military government has faced accusations of war crimes. With this backdrop, Christians attempting to follow Jesus in Burkina Faso must try to do so without any sense of security or safety, even in places where Islamic militants were previously unable to reach.

Burkina Faso used to be the epitome of religious cohesion, but Islamic militant influence has managed to erode much of the peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians. Now, in addition to facing violence and threats from Islamic extremists, Christian converts from Islam face increasing pressure and sometimes even threats from their families and communities, simply because they follow Jesus. These believers sometimes have become afraid to share their faith in public because they could be rejected by their families. They also know their communities could try to force them to renounce their faith in Christ.

Meet ‘Habiba’

“We were constantly surrounded by guns. They would kill you if you didn’t perform the Muslim prayers.”

Habiba was abducted by Islamic Extremists

Habiba* was only 13 years old when she was kidnapped by Islamic militants in Burkina Faso. “We started to hear motorbikes and gunshots coming towards our house. They told us to go inside the church so they could burn us alive. But some of them didn’t agree with the idea and they decided to kidnap us instead,” Habiba shares. Habiba, her younger sister, her mother Minata* and several other women were taken as prisoners deep into the forest.

“They divided us into groups,” she remembers. “Some of the other women who came with us were killed and some of us were left alive.” Habiba was separated from her mother and her sister and placed with some other women from her village. “I was just waiting for my death. All I could think of was the moment they would decide to kill me. I was really frightened.”

There, in the camp, Habiba secretly held on to God. “All the men were Muslim, so they didn’t allow us to pray to God. They would kill you if they saw you praying. If you were discovered singing or clapping your hands, you were dead. They forced us to perform the Muslim prayers and read the Quran. We were constantly surrounded by guns. They would kill you if you didn’t perform the Muslim prayers.”

The women lived in the camp for three years. They were forced to convert to Islam and suffered daily physical abuse, as well as being traumatised by witnessing the most unimaginably horrific acts of violence.

After a while, Habiba was forced to marry one of the militants and repeatedly raped. Habiba felt alone and hopeless. “I told myself that God had indeed abandoned me. I had totally lost all hope. I was just waiting for my turn to be killed.” But Habiba still spoke to God, even while in despair. “In my heart, I still talked to God when I performed the Muslim prayers. And even though I was forbidden to sing, I had many songs in my mind that wouldn’t leave me. I



remember one that says that in the lions' den God showed His power. That impacted me because we were in the lion's den."

Eventually, Habiba was reunited with her mother and sister and they decided to try to escape. "We left the camp at night when our guardians were already asleep," says Habiba. "We walked only during the dead of night and, in the daytime, we hid in the bushes. Finally, after five days, we reached a town called Déou. We got a van that took us to Ouagadougou. We couldn't believe it. We thought we would never get home safely."

It's been a few years since their courageous escape, but Habiba still suffers from the abuse she endured at the hands of the militants. "Sometimes I have nightmares and I can't sleep. I dream that I am still there and that they are chasing me and trying to kill me. Every time I hear a gunshot all the memories come back to me. It's not easy to forget."

Thanks to your help, Open Doors can journey with these women and many others to bring healing through trauma care, helping them to see God at work in their lives and bringing relief for their immediate needs.

**Name changed for security reasons*

Burkina Faso has risen several places on the World Watch List, and pressure is worsening in private, community and national spheres of life. The scope for religious freedom for Christians is contracting as jihadist ideologies gain traction and expand within the broader community. Violence remains very high in the country: at least 31 Christians were killed and many churches destroyed by the activities of jihadist groups. The situation in Burkina Faso is intricately connected to the broader jihadist movements across the expansive Sahel region.



*May your troubles be less
And your blessings be more.
And nothing but happiness
Come through your door.*

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