



# Link

**April 2024**

The Magazine of the United Reformed Church  
Stratford-upon-Avon



*Worship, Witness and love for others through Jesus Christ*

**The United Reformed Church  
Rother Street  
Stratford-upon-Avon**

**Website: [www.stratforduponavonurc.co.uk](http://www.stratforduponavonurc.co.uk)**

**Local Leader**

Dr Peter Horrocks

Roseleigh, Barton Road, Welford-on-Avon, CV37 8EY.

Tel: 01789 750971

Email: [peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk](mailto:peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk)

**Church Secretary**

Mairi Macdonald

**Treasurer**

Ashley Pettifer

**Elders**

Ileen Fisher

Ann Jones

Kirsty Knott

Mairi Macdonald

Ashley Pettifer

Sarah Salmon

Ann Walters

**Finance and Fabric Committee**

Rob Fradley

Peter Horrocks

Tom Purves

Sarah Salmon

Ann Jones

Iain Kelso

Ashley Pettifer

# Thoughts for April

## What is Happiness?

If you look at the dictionary definition of happiness, it can be divided into two categories: short term happiness, which is more to do with a pleasurable experience, such as listening to music, seeing the dawn or enjoying a rollercoaster (if you like that sort of thing!), and long term happiness, which is defined as a sense of well-being or contentment and fulfilment. It's the latter that I would like us to think about.



Aristotle said: "Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence..... Happiness depends on ourselves." To be honest, I'm not sure that I agree with the last part of his comment.

In fact, Aristotle described four levels of happiness:

1. **Laetus** – happiness from material objects or actions. There is a limit to the pleasure you can get from a new car, a holiday, a nice meal etc.
2. **Felix** – ego gratification. Happiness from self-comparison, being better, more admired than others. You might feel this happiness when, for example, you win at a sports event, or get promotion.
3. **Beatitudo** – the happiness that comes from doing good for others and making the world a better place. Here we move away from ourselves and focus on the well-being of others. This is more lasting, bringing a deeper feeling of meaning to our lives.
4. **Sublime Beatitudo** – perhaps the most difficult to describe – a search for fullness and perfection. It's a transcendence above the other levels. Some fulfil this desire through religion, some through philosophy, art, or scientific endeavours – trying to find the answers to the big questions of life and human existence.

I suppose it's my age, but whenever I think of happiness, I remember the Ken Dodd song: "Happiness, Happiness, the greatest gift that I possess...". There have been several other popular singers who have sung about the subject, but they don't seem to have had the same effect on my consciousness as Ken Dodd! I agree that

happiness is a great gift, but whether you possess it is another matter – you certainly experience it.

What does make us happy?

Well, it's certainly not money and material objects. Money does not ensure happiness. Just think about the disasters that have happened to big winners on the National Lottery! Marriages break up, the money is squandered on luxury houses and cars and some winners even occasionally commit suicide. It may well be that poverty is a cause of misery, but I don't think the opposite is true.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development, which started in 1938, has shown that more than money, I.Q, or social class, the depth and breadth of our relationships with family, friends, and spouses are the most important predictors of whether we'll age well and live a long and happy life. "Over and over in these 75 years, our study has shown that the people who fared the best were the people who leaned into relationships with family, with friends, and with community," said Dr. Robert Waldinger, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and the study's current director.

The authors of the Harvard study think that it is all to do with stress: "Relationships are a huge support when it comes to managing stress, which is something that we're all experiencing more and more. The Harvard study has shown, again and again, that relationships are the strongest resource we have. We turn to our friends, family, and partners to celebrate the ups and help us through the downs. Calling on that person, or people, helps us feel supported when we're navigating all that life throws at us. But a buffer for stress isn't the only benefit of relationships. Studies have also shown that socially connected people live longer and are more protected against depression and cognitive decline".



The Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life published a research paper in November 2023. They concluded that God is good for you - a verdict from the survey of 2000 people in Britain. It found those identifying as 'religious' and who attended church on a regular basis were on average 20 per cent happier and more satisfied with life than atheists or those who are less devout.

PewResearch (who knew there was such an organisation?) has found that actively religious people are more likely to report being “very happy”. There is some evidence that highly religious women might be happier than their secular and less religious counterparts.

But, that’s something that we, as Christians, already know. Our faith fulfils many of the criteria that have already been listed. In no particular order! .... firstly, we, hopefully, have pleasurable experiences when we meet together for our services - music and prayer elevate the spirit. Secondly, we have community to help us out, as mentioned in the Harvard research – that’s an important part of our Christian fellowship – we support each other. Thirdly, as Christians, not only do we have the support of our community, but we have a friend and supporter in Jesus, somebody who walks with us and gives us hope for the future – that is a crucial relationship. Fifthly, again as Christians, we have a duty to love and support our neighbours and indeed people who are not our friends. – part of Aristotle’s third level of happiness. Sixthly, our faith has a lot to say about the big questions of life, our purpose and our future, our knowledge of a better life after our death – the fourth level of Aristotle’s level of happiness.

My belief is that much of our Christian happiness is rooted in Easter – something that we are just about to celebrate again. There is the now famous saying by Pope John Paul II: “Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are an Easter people and Hallelujah is our song!”

Easter gives us joy and hope, a belief in the future, a belief in life after death. We have an example in Jesus Christ to follow – let us celebrate that with a smile on our face. Sometimes ‘church people’ are seen as ‘killjoys’ – but that is totally wrong – we should be a happy people and show it!!!

Oh, and Happy Easter!!



*Peter*

# Family News

Rob has had both cataracts successfully removed and is now able to drive again. Jill has undergone various tests and is awaiting the results.

It was good to see Diane back in church.

Katie has returned from an enjoyable holiday in Hungary.

Love and congratulations to Kirsty and Adrian who celebrate their Ruby Wedding Anniversary on 14th April.

## What's on at the Bear Pit

**“Art” : 23rd to 27th April at 7.30pm. Matinee on Sat 27th at 2.30pm**



A Bear Pit Theatre Company Production: ‘Art’ by Yasmina Reza translated from the French by Christopher Hampton and directed by Lynda Lewis

The long term friendship of Serge, Marc and Yvan is shaken to the core when Serge buys an expensive contemporary painting without discussing it with the other two men. Marc reacts viciously to what he considers to be an incomprehensible action by his old friend while Yvan trying to be the peacemaker, falls foul of both men, and all three outwardly mature, cultured men degenerate into scrapping boys, chucking insults and fists at each other.

Yasmina Reza thought she’d written a tragedy yet Art has won comedy awards. This deceptively simple play asks big questions. What is art – or “Art”? Are we who we think we are, or are we who others think we are? Can we still be friends if we hold radically different views, or if we grow in different directions? From laugh out loud funny to excruciating grimaces and the odd tear, the power struggle is intense and

the outcome – well, wait and see and talk about it afterwards.

**Tickets: £15 (concessions £12)**

**“The Great Escaper” : 28<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm**



**Bear Pit Community Cinema**, supported by Stratford Town Trust

Based on a true story that made national news about pensioner Bernard Jordan who in 2014, absconded from his care home in Hove, Sussex UK to attend an event in France marking the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings. After the local Police were notified the care home got a call that evening to say Mr Jordan had been found safe and well in France. Running time 96 mins.

**Tickets: £5 on the door or online.**

**Editors' note: in researching material for future editions of Link we came across a Website / Facebook page called 'Derek the Cleric' Some amusing material there - you might be seeing more in the future!**



©Andy Robb

# Lent Thoughts 2024

*Our Muslim friends prepare for Ramadan;  
Some serious fasting, lasting weeks; no game.  
Yet they delight in shedding off excesses,  
Moderation in each life's their wider aim.*

*Meanwhile, Christians, are half way through Lent,  
A time we once gave up our pleasurable deeds,  
Or vices-such as smoking, drinking, chocolates!  
Now these are just our healthy lifestyle needs.*

*This year we concentrate on other people's wants,  
As every day we look to find another Food Bank gift.  
When we were young our choices were not food or heat,  
So now we try to give some struggling lives a lift.*

*Lent prepares us for a death and resurrection,  
A huge sacrifice which our salvation bought,  
So, we in turn can live and love our neighbours,  
Make a difference, to the sad world sin has brought.*

**David Sampson**

## Reaction to Thoughts for the Month of March

How does Peter manage to write such interesting and thought-provoking articles for The Link each month? No-one ever talks about them.....well not to me anyway! But then I don't usually mention them to anyone either. This month it's different!

Death is a bit of a specialist subject of mine. For a start I lost 2 husbands before I reached the age of 50. The experience in each case was completely different. Suffice to say that when my second husband died after only 18 months of marriage I thought, I can get over this, I know, I've done it before. How wrong I was. I tried to get back to work, couldn't cope and ended up having 6 months off. Just to introduce a hint of that black humour which Peter recalled in the NHS: when I



subsequently met an Australian radiologist and visited him in Sydney, one of his colleagues said to him in my hearing, “Mate, watch yourself, it could be 3rd time unlucky.” We never married!

Recently a widowed friend said to me how she disliked people talking about someone “passing away” when she preferred to say straightforwardly that they had ‘died’. I must say I’m in the same camp as her but we’re all different and other peoples’ feelings, reactions and way of talking about things have to be respected. I have a close friend whose husband died 6 years ago and is still grieving, won’t go to places or attend events which remind her of him. Another friend in a similar situation displays entirely the opposite inclinations. Death provokes such different responses.

We, as Christians, and attendees of what I’m sure you’ll agree is a pretty special church, are very fortunate. We have every reason not to treat the subject of our own death as something to be feared and rarely mentioned. We are frequently reassured that God loves us and forgives our wrongdoing. This was the message of the service Peter led on March 17th.

When I was diagnosed with cancer and thought I might well not survive, I couldn’t have coped as well as I did if I had not held Christian beliefs and been a member of this church.

Not sure what was the main aim of expressing these random thoughts, except that I HAVE now talked about death. Maybe your turn next?

*Sue Cragoe-Jones*

## Children in care become adults – What happens then?

N had lived with his grandparents for most of his life. His grandfather tried to help him through his difficult times at secondary school. When he died, N became difficult, so grandmother was admitted to a Home and N admitted to Care.

A sad boy of fifteen arrived on the doorstep, accompanied by a Social Worker. He had finished school, so my extra brief was to teach him to read, so that he could cope in life. Like many lads of this age, he was into bikes and cars. He spent the first morning perusing the pictures in the appropriate magazine and managed to

decipher the descriptions underneath.

The house father took him into the garden and built on the skills he'd learned from grandfather, and he soon settled well with the other children. He was a nice boy. Problems started when the house father was taken into hospital with an eye infection. N reacted badly to his absence and, on my return from visiting one afternoon, I found an anxious member of staff trying to extinguish the small fires that N had started in the garden. The next day, the house father and I discussed the necessary strategy for keeping N secure. N was to accompany me to hospital where he was told that as the eldest in the house, he was needed to act as a responsible adult. He should keep the garden free of weeds, hear the children read when they came back from school and help the staff with the smaller children. This strategy worked.

As his reading improved, the window cleaner offered N a job. All went well at first, but eventually disaster fell. One morning our kind window cleaner knocked on the door and over coffee explained that he wasn't able to keep N. He had been asked to clean the windows of specific numbers in a road but had cleaned the windows of every house!

I hadn't realised that there was also a numeracy difficulty: he didn't recognise numbers after 20! Such a lovely boy, but with so many gaps it looked as though there would not be a place for him in the wider world.

But God was on his side.

At his case conference it was decided that he should move on to the newly opened Teenage Hostel in Kettering where he could be carefully supervised and prepared for the outside world.

There were many tears on the night before he left, and he promised the others he would return to see them in a few months. We all wrote to him at the weekends, and he returned a few weeks after I'd given birth to my daughter. He produced a tiny matinée coat that he'd bought with his wages as a trainee motor mechanic. The other house members were enthralled.

He had made it! (cf Luke15:8-10).

*Carole Sampson*

# Update from Just Small Change



Jill and Rob received the following update information from Just Small Change, one of our previous charities, firstly about all the women they have empowered to set up their own businesses and secondly about their Kid Goat project, which is more recent:

Attached are some pictures to celebrate the amazing strength and resilience that these women have accomplished with the opportunity that you (Just Small Change) have given them.

They represent 600+ women that are now empowered with hope and purpose to make a better life for themselves and families.

The goat picture shows 9 new goat beneficiaries in Lyama. They received their kid goats from the first beneficiaries of the local goat livelihood programme. Lyama was one of the early goat projects set up just over a year ago.

The project ensures that the 1st newborn female kid of the first /original beneficiary is returned to the project, nurtured and given to a new beneficiary within the community. So the project expands and creates a bigger impact. The first beneficiary keeps all further offsprings.



Let's celebrate their achievements !



*Submitted by Jill & Rob Fradley*

It finally happened!



**The cow jumped over the moon!**

Let's make the world  
a happier place!

Let's all:



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

Love abundantly

Laugh often

Work hard

Pay promptly

Speak gently

Pray earnestly

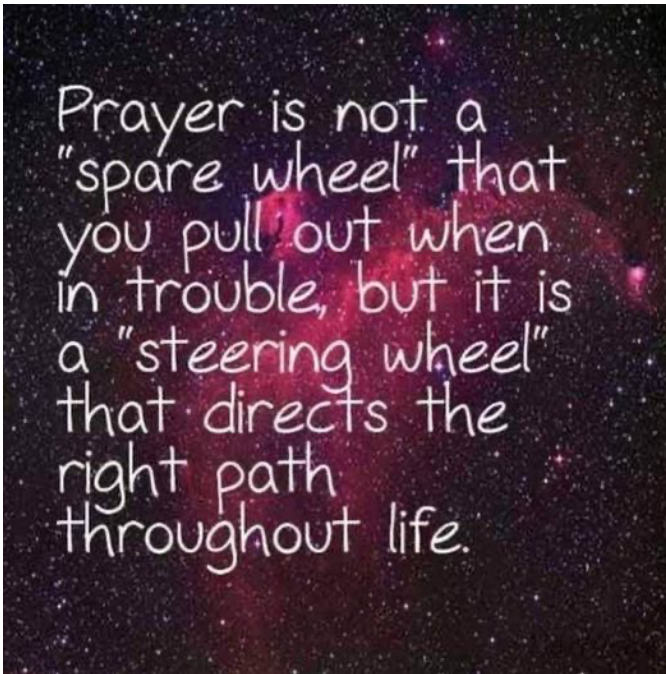
And, above all:

be kind and forgiving

# Don't forget!

On Sunday 21st April after our morning service we will be holding our AGM. Anyone can attend. Members are obliged to attend, whenever possible and can vote, but everyone else is welcome as observers and to learn about the current state of our church. We will be considering new members, electing Elders and choosing a Charity for the coming year.

Come - and hear all about it!



## Questions to contemplate:

Is there intelligent life on other planets?

Dunno - I'm still trying to figure out if there's intelligent life on this one!

Does old age bring contentment?

No! - rheumatism!

# Sunday Services at 9.30am

|            |                 |                    |
|------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 7th April  | Holy Communion  | Revd Kathryn Louch |
| 21st April | Morning Service | Sheila Brown       |
| 5th May    | Holy Communion  | Peter Horrocks     |

## F&F Rota April

Please report any problems with the buildings in April to:

Ann Jones 01789 266177 / 07580 557163

or

Tom Purves 01789 293013

## Flower Rota

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| 31st March | Ileen      |
| 7th April  | Marion     |
| 21st April | Sue        |
| 5th May    | Jill & Rob |

## Link

**Because of the way our Sunday services are now structured, the editors have decided that the physical copies of Link magazine will be available on the 1st Sunday of each month rather than the last Sunday of the month. The electronic version may well be available before then. When there are 5 Sundays in the month the Link will be available on that 5th Sunday.**

**The May edition of Link will be published on the 5th May 2024.**

The deadline for submission to the next edition is Monday 29th April 2024.

Please send us your articles, pictures, humour etc.

**Editors contact details:**

**Telephone: 01789 750971 Email: [peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk](mailto:peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk)**

Rother Street United Reformed Church

presents

# The Knitted Bible Exhibition



Marvel at the Golden Calf

Find the Ladybirds in Noah's Ark

Look at Jonah being swallowed by the whale!

Refreshments  
Available



The Knitted Bible, including 33 scenes from the Old & New Testaments, will be on display in April:

Wednesday 10th to Sunday 14th:  
10am - 3pm. Closed 15th & 16th.

Wednesday 17th: 10 - 3pm

Thursday 18th 3pm - 7.30pm

Friday 19th & Saturday 20th: 10am-3pm

Free entry - donations welcome for  
Shakespeare Hospice