



ONWARD



Newsletter of Hallfold United Reformed Church

www.hallfoldurc.org.uk

February 2021

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Greetings to all members and friends of Hallfold URC.

February finds us still in lockdown but the vaccination programme is well on its way and, hopefully, the end is in sight when we can look forward to the church building being open again.

Since Christmas we have sadly seen the death of Jessie Nuttall, a faithful Hallfold member for many, many years. Our thoughts are with Donald and family. January also saw the death of Harry Holt who at one time attended Hallfold. On a happier note Elaine Dyson has become a grandma welcoming her granddaughter Sophie Rose into the world. Bill Greenwood had a "big" birthday last month reaching the grand age of 90 and John Harris reaches the same birthday this month.

One of our ex ministers David Wilkinson is quite poorly in hospital. His wife, Pauline, sends her best wishes to all who remember her from their days at Hallfold.

Hopefully all members and friends are bearing up and enjoying reasonable health both physically and mentally. The situation we find ourselves in is not great and can get everyone down at some stage, but perhaps we should think of a quote by the American novelist Elizabeth Gilbert - *"Embrace the glorious mess you are in."*

Below is an article by our minister Daniel exploring spiritual and mental well being. For all the people who are able to join the internet services, morning worship on 14th February will be lead by Daniel.

From Our Minister

Spiritual Health

I would like to explore this simple question: When life gets you down, what special something can lift our spirits?

I want to examine this by looking at Jesus' healing of a disabled woman at a religious gathering, and a few parables he told. He encountered this disabled woman at a synagogue and got into an argument with the leaders about whether he was allowed to heal her on the Sabbath. Jesus disagreed with the rule prohibiting medical assistance and immediately healed her. He then told two parables explaining what the Kingdom of God is like. (Luke 13.10-21).

Smallness is a theme running through all three accounts. The disabled woman had a small posture due to the debilitating effects of her condition; we can assume that she was psychologically suffering too. The parables mention a mustard seed, the size of a grain of said, and yeast – a minor ingredient in the recipe for making bread.

However, the sense of smallness changes. The woman is healed, enabling her to reach full posture. The story of her healing probably had wide-reaching consequences in her village; we can safely assume that she started punching above her weight. The seed grew into an impossibly large tree. The yeast caused the bread to rise enabling the cook to feed a family. God can grow amazing things from the small, ordinary and utilitarian things in life.

All three accounts are illustrations of the growth of God's kingdom. But growth is not a random thing. There is an "activating agent" which triggers the growth – as demonstrated by the parable of the yeast.

This activating agent is the seed of faith. Faith is the seed that grows, positively affecting our spiritual health, our mental wellbeing and the physical world around us. It is simply responding to Jesus Christ with the words "I trust you." If a person says to Jesus: "Who are you? I don't trust you" the Kingdom of God won't grow directly in their lives. However, if a person says: "I am having trouble trusting - *help me to believe*", then we are in business!

However, there are a number of factors that can inhibit spiritual growth. Luke's account says that the woman was suffering from satanic oppression. Jesus also encountered pig-headed religious rules which prohibited the woman's healing on a Sabbath day. I believe that spiritual and mental health are linked, although are distinct from each other. In the case of spiritual health, in particular, both natural and supernatural forces can be toxic to spiritual health.

The seed of faith is the simple ingredient that lifts our spirits. It is not a quick fix. If you take your faith seriously you might even invite trouble to come your way - as Jesus did when he broke the sabbath law. But I am firmly convinced that faith lays the foundations for long-term wellbeing.

Spiritual health is of the utmost importance. We need to nurture it, to stretch it, to test it, to wrestle with it, and to *live* it. We also need to be aware of forces which work against the growth of faith. These forces can be supernatural, or it could be simple as some obscure oppressive religious rule or practices. But faith in Jesus Christ gives us the resources to work through any trouble that comes our way, and it allows us to participate in the expansion of the influence of the God of love in our communities.

Soul Spark

Our soul is like an ember which needs to be nurtured, cared for, and fanned into life. Soul Spark is a short course which focuses our attention on our spiritual health – to dispose ourselves to the Spirit of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is a journey into exploring new and ancient ways of fostering our spiritual life. We hope you are able to join us.

The meetings will be held weekly each Monday at 1pm, beginning on February 22nd and running until 29th March.

Join Zoom Meeting: Meeting ID: 810 1326 9847 Passcode: 97590

Daniel Harris is a minister with the United Reformed Church. He is running the Soul Spark course, allowing people to explore and grow in their faith and spiritual health, during 2021. Email or call Daniel for more details!

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FROM OUR SECRETARY

The Church has left the building

As we approach the anniversary of the first lockdown it's important to reflect on just what we have done over the last year. The building may be closed and we haven't been able to share traditional worship with hymns followed by gossip, tea and biscuits but our little church is still very much alive. Because the building is not the church, we are. God's spirit is alive in each and every one of us. So, no matter how or where we meet, whether that's online, on the phone or on the doorstep, as long as we are carrying the spirit of fellowship within us, we are meeting as a church.

As it says in Hebrews 10: 23-25

So now wrap your heart tightly around the hope that lives within us, knowing that God always keeps his promises! Discover creative ways to encourage others and to motivate them toward acts of compassion, doing beautiful works as expressions of love. This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing. In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning.

And we have been creative. As a church we've gathered numerous new skills including video conferencing and video editing. We've become Youtubers! Which my children find hilarious. And we've talked. What would have been a quick five-minute chat after church has often turned into a lengthy conversation. In fact, we've spent literally hours online and on the phone, really talking and learning new things about people we've known for years. Sharing our fears and offering support, we've shown that it's not a building holding us together but the love and compassion we feel for each other. My hope is that when we can all meet together again; we are all the stronger for it.

Karen

The Knit and Natter group would like to thank everyone who bought a "Christmas Pudding". Thanks go to Dorothy Crowther who actually knitted and sold most of them!!! As a result of her sterling effort the sum of £100 was able to go into church funds.

As Easter is now approaching, thoughts turn to our annual production of Cadbury Egg filled Easter chicks. This year, because of lockdown, yellow wool is not as easily obtainable as usual. However, this is not going to stop the work of Knit and Natter. This year any colour of wool available will be used to produce our new line for 2021 - Rainbow Ducklings. (Very similar to Easter Chicks but not all yellow!!!)

Rather than knitting too many and being left with them, plus the fact we don't know when church will be open to sell them, could we ask you to let us know how many you require and we will knit as required. Mary Cawley, Dorothy Crowther, Eileen Garbutt or any other member of K and N will take your order.

Hallfold Family Book

Some of you may still be using a copy of the last Hallfold URC Family Book. If you look at the date of publication you will see it was 2014, so it is out of date in many respects.

You know this document as the Hallfold Family Book, the Elders know it as the Database of the Church Family, but now the Government see it as a document subject to GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations). So as part of the updating of our records we have to become compliant with GDPR which became law in 2018. This means we have to inform you of the data we hold about you and what we do with that data. You then have to agree in writing or electronically with this information.

Most of you will have been approached by an Elder asking to confirm the data the church currently holds on you, plus your willingness to have details published in the new Family Book. If you have returned this information by e mail, thank you. Job done. Otherwise, and you still have only agreed verbally, a letter will be posted or hand delivered for you to sign. Please do sign as it keeps us compliant with the law.

The good news is that the process is nearly complete and we hope to have a new version of the Hallfold Family Book ready for printing by Easter.

Jed

I have become a little older since I saw you last, and a few changes have come into my life since then. I am seeing three gentlemen every day. As soon as I wake up, Will Power helps me get out of bed. Then Arthur Ritis shows up and stays the rest of the day. He doesn't like to stay in one place very long, so he takes me from joint to joint. After such a busy day, I'm really tired and glad to go to bed with Earl Grey. The minister came to call the other day. He said at my age I should be thinking of the hereafter. I told him, "Oh, I do it all the time." No matter where I am, in the living room, upstairs, in the kitchen or down in the cellar, I ask myself, "Now, what am I here after?"