



**DOWNING PLACE  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH  
CAMBRIDGE**

# **PLACE MATTERS**



**ISSUE 36  
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## FROM THE MINISTER

The Re-dedication weekend was a blessing. We so enjoyed the return visit of John Bradbury, finishing, as it were, what he had so signally helped us to begin. There was the presence and ministry of the Moderator, Clare Downing, too, including her delight that we had named the church after her! There were many guests, including the Mayor of Cambridge and its MP, ecumenical partners, and people whose past part in our life we treasure. As we gave thanks and prayed God's blessing upon all that happens in the renewed premises, the Moderator led us in renewing our commitment to the church and its work in the name of Jesus Christ.



Coming so near the end of the Church year, that special weekend was rather well timed, even if it was not as much deliberate as delayed by the pandemic. I suggest the timing was good because as Advent Sunday arrives and we commence the Church's new year, I am grateful for a new emphasis in church life. For some years now, and involving considerable expenditure, we have been focussed upon the building. The results are admirable, and we are grateful to the many people who have given of themselves in extraordinary ways to get us to this point.

This new year for the Church, and not least its narratives of God coming amongst us in Jesus Christ, appropriately enables us to re-focus *away* from a building and onto that engagement with God's work in the world which might itself be understood as building. I don't mean to imply God eschews the buildings in which we are based. After all, St Luke's version of the birth stories has Jesus' parents take him to the Temple when barely a week old in order that he might be presented to the Lord. In a sense, though, that early identification with a formal religious place is more the exception than a rule in the life and work of Christ. We're frequently given images rather different from that. So, when he is born, we read of him being laid in a makeshift manger in an animal's cave; later we learn that while immersed in his history-defining ministry he has nowhere to lay his head. And even when the incarnation is being described to us, that awesome idea of the Word made flesh and dwelling amongst us is often depicted as God pitching the divine tent in our midst. All that implies for me not that we should disregard our buildings, but that we should treat them with a healthy sense that they are to serve us rather than to absorb the entirety of our

effort, energy and resources.

But I like the word ‘building’, as an image for everything to which we now turn our hand. St Paul speaks of ministry and mission as the task of ‘building up’.

There’s the fundamental of building up of one another in faith and in following of Jesus Christ. We do that through the offering consistently of both thoughtful and stimulating worship, and discussion groups, which open us to the presence of God breaking through into our daily lives, and which also break open the Word of God in Scripture. That sort of building work requires a large team of variously gifted people, pooling their skills with art, drama, music, stillness, teaching, technology, theology and words, to cite them in alphabetical order. How blessed we are to have so many in each of those categories.

There’s the unrelenting work of building a society that reflects the values of what some call God’s ‘kin-dom’, (*sic*) where mercy, truth, justice and hope are the pillars at the four corners of the edifice. One of the tools of such building work is a prophetic voice, whereby the Christian perspective is heard persuasively influencing the big questions and issues of the day. Another of the tools is the building we have equipped to be a flexible and useful resource.

There’s the building of a faith community that has the hallmarks of *interdependence*, where each can offer who they are to complement what others are, of *inclusivity* across the widest possible range of differences as we journey from infancy to the grave, of *accountability*, where we each inspire one another to a truly authentic and fruitful discipleship, and of *caring*, as by mutual support, we rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

There will be other uses of the building analogy that might characterise our next chapter. Maybe you would like to share them. It is, you see, a richly Biblical idea, of which I Peter 2.4-6 is so important an expression:

*Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and <sup>5</sup>like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>For it stands in scripture: ‘See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’*

Might that be the germ of a motto for us, as in this fourth year of our uniting, we build on building?

Bethan and Jess join me in wishing you the richest blessings of Christmas, as that ‘tent pitched amongst us’ is celebrated not just for a few festive days of December but throughout 2022.

# REDEDICATION WEEKEND

On the first weekend in November Downing Place URC celebrated its rededication weekend. We welcomed a number of distinguished guests from the local and national community who brought their good wishes for the future of the new Church.



*The national URC Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, who took part in the act of rededication and preached in the Sunday service.*



*The Moderator of Eastern Synod, the Revd. Lythan Nevard, who brought the good wishes of the Synod.*



*John Bradbury, recently Minister of Emmanuel and Downing Place,  
now General Secretary of the URC.*

*John preached at the rededication service.*

Greetings came from our MP, the Mayor, the Master of Pembroke, and the Vicar of Little St. Mary's, the close neighbour of Emmanuel.



*Daniel Zeichner, MP for Cambridge*





*Councillor Russ McPherson, Mayor of Cambridge*



*Lord Smith of Finsbury, Master of Pembroke College*





*The Revd. Dr. Robert Mackley, Vicar, Little St. Mary's Church*



*The Revd. Samantha White, Principal, Westminster College, at tea on Sunday afternoon*

You can see these images and many more on the Downing Place website.

<https://downingplaceurc.org/rededication-weekend/>

## PROFILE - HELEN AND COLIN CHRISTY

With apologies to those of you reading this who will recognise Helen and Colin, the two photos here will act as an aide memoire in identifying the subjects of this profile – possibly doing what each does best. Both currently serving elders, Helen is on the Evangelism and Service group and Colin is on the Finance Committee and Property Management group.



Having met at Southampton University in 1976/77, we pursued different paths upon leaving before getting married and moving to Cambridge seven years later in 1984. Initially Helen went to India to volunteer as a house mother for deaf children, then trained as a social worker at Exeter University, worked in London as a probation worker and then went to Jamaica to work in a children's home. Meanwhile Colin trained as an accountant in London. When Helen returned from Jamaica we decided to get married and then had to figure out where to work and live because neither of us wanted a life in London.



At this point Helen was almost 27 years of age and had lived in 26 different places called “home”, including having been born and brought up in Taiwan until the age of 11, whilst Colin had only ever lived in London or its suburbs. Cambridge was attractive to us because of family ties on Helen's side but also because it was the first place in which we both found employment.

We worshipped at a number of different churches for the first year or so but duly became members in 1985 or 1986 and really it was obvious we would become members at St Columba's primarily because of the pattern of worship rather than Helen's family connections with the church or indeed with Ernest Marvin. (Both Helen's grandparents had worshipped at St Columba's in the 1930's, her parents were married by Rev Cooper in 1954, she remembers attending junior church in Ronald Speirs' time and Ernest had known two of Helen's three brothers.)

We both had an interest in matters relating to developing countries so it was natural that we should join World Development Movement (now called Global Justice Now) - we remember meetings with Anne Wales in the manse at Hurst Park Avenue.

In 1988 we moved all of approximately 400 yards to our second home in Cambridge pending the arrival of Rachel, the first of four children. Emma and Elizabeth arrived in 1990 and Jonathan in 1992. In 1998 we moved to our current house in Courtney Way, almost half a mile distant.

Regarding working life, Colin moved out of the accounting profession to work at Thomas Cook headquarters in Peterborough and from there to an aviation group based at Stansted followed by a stint at Ryanair. Then in 2001, he left aviation to work in Cambridge for a small charity in the education sector and from there to Wellcome Trust and subsequently to Genome Research. Finally, he worked for Wintercomfort for the homeless before retiring last year. Over the years he has continued to carry out voluntary accounting work for small organisations. Helen worked initially for Cambridge County Council as a social worker and then moved to the City Council, working with communities in different parts of the city. In 2016 she continued community development but working for St Paul's church on Hills Road including taking young families camping and canoeing. She retired in 2020.

In 2001 we both started rowing at a local club, initially as participants and subsequently as volunteers and officers. We are less involved these days but we both still regularly scull, row or cox two or three times a week.

Our children are now aged between 33 and 29. Rachel is married to Chris and lives in Emsworth where she works as a counsellor for sixth formers. She gave birth this summer to a baby girl named Flora (after Flora McLean, Roddy's daughter). Emma lives in Stapleford and works at Cambridge University in the diversity and inclusion department. Lizzie lives in Sheffield and works on research projects for the Sports Industry Research Council. Jonny lives in London and works for Mills & Reeve as a solicitor in their corporate disputes team. The photo **overleaf** was taken in Brighton outside the Royal Sussex

Hospital when Flora was in an incubator (she is doing well now).



*From left to right: Lizzie, Rachel, Chris, Emma, Jonny, Colin, Helen*

## **CAROL SERVICE PARTICULARLY FOR THOSE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CARERS**

Friday December 10th at 10.30am

Everyone is, of course, welcome to this Carol Service. This year the Service will be held in Downing Place Church and will also be live streamed to our YouTube channel.

It will last about 40mins and consist of a few well-known carols and Christmas readings, woven skillfully together by Nigel. We will sit round tables, so that tea, coffee and mince pies can easily be served in the Sanctuary after the service.

Please come along, and invite your friends and neighbours.

We are sending information about the service to city centre churches, local care homes, and other organisations catering for those with dementia. As well as watching the livestream, people can watch it on YouTube later.

*Jenny Jacobsberg  
Convenor of the Pastoral Care Group*

FRIDAY 10TH DECEMBER 10.30AM

# Carol Service

DOWNING PLACE CHURCH,  
DOWNING PLACE, CAMBRIDGE

WITH  
WELL-KNOWN CAROLS

particularly for those living with dementia and their carers

EVERYONE IS OF COURSE WELCOME!

Join us for coffee and mince pies after the service  
for further information contact the Church office on 01223 756635

The service will also be live streamed to the Church's YouTube channel



## THE GROUP THERAPY CENTRE



The name of this newsletter, “Place Matters”, is very meaningful to our work as Group Psychotherapists. We believe that the therapeutic setting and context in which people’s psychotherapy takes place has profound effects on the process and outcome of their therapy. We are very privileged to be able to do our work in a unique and peaceful setting where we can provide consistency, stability, and a secure base for people who often do not have a sense of this in their lives. For the Group Therapy Centre, Downing Place has been integral in our work over the past 52 years in helping Cambridgeshire residents recover and heal from psychological difficulties. The Centre’s work has been life-changing for thousands of people and in some cases life-saving.

The Group Therapy Centre was originally established in 1969 with the support of both St. Columba’s Church and the Emmanuel United Reformed Church, who offered the use of their premises. From the 1980’s the Centre’s activities became based solely at St. Columba’s Church. It was originally, and continues to be, a collaboration between the local NHS mental health services and local church communities in Cambridge. The original founders, Revd. Ronald Spiers and Revd. Bill Lintott who had trained in Group Analysis, were committed to providing a supportive and therapeutic community setting for patients being discharged from Fulbourn psychiatric Hospital. They also used groupwork in their training of young Clergy. This pioneering work in the development of community mental health services was in collaboration with Dr Ross Mitchell a Consultant Psychiatrist at Fulbourn.

The Centre has gone through many configurations over the past 52 years, however the core of its work has always been and remains The Group, where people share space, share their difficult experiences and share in the work and process of each other’s healing and recovery journeys. We currently see



approximately 130 people per week with a wide range and complexity of psychological, emotional and relationship difficulties. We have a staff team of Psychotherapists and Group Analysts who are highly experienced, qualified and dedicated. We currently conduct 21 weekly groups, which include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy groups, long term Analytic Psychotherapy groups and Support groups. We also provide Reflective Practice Groups to a number of organisations, including NHS staff teams. We are hoping next year to initiate a training course in Group Analysis from the Centre.

The Centre is a not-for-profit organisation, operating under St. Columba's Charitable Foundation. We have benefitted a great deal over the years from the support and input of Clergy and congregation members on our Board of Trustees, and we are very grateful for this continued support. Our work is part-funded by local NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups. We have a long-standing culture of not allowing a person's financial situation to be a deciding factor in them receiving appropriate and effective psychological therapy which we provided free or at low-cost. Our mixed funding model of private fees and NHS funding is unique in the UK for the longer-term psychotherapy we provide. This model allows people to have the space and time they need in their groups to work through their difficulties, which are usually longstanding and complex.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented a challenge to the Centre and to working in groups everywhere. Within two weeks of the first lock-down, however, all of our therapy groups were converted for online access, which is testament to the commitment, adaptability and creativity of our staff team. In response to the pandemic, we initiated a programme of weekly "Alone – Together" support groups, to offer support to people whose mental health and wellbeing were being affected by the Pandemic. Due to current NHS social distancing guidelines, our clinical work is continuing on-line at present. Although there remains some uncertainty, we are hopeful that before too long, we will be returning to our home place at Downing Place.

Without the generosity and active support of both churches, the Group Therapy Centre would not be here today. With the recent coming together of the two church congregations of Emmanuel and St Columba's into the newly renovated Downing Place Church, there is a sense, from my perspective, of a piece of history coming full circle and a new, exciting chapter beginning in the history of the Group Therapy Centre. We feel very privileged, and the new rooms will provide a wonderful space for our work into the future.

*Andy Espey*

*Centre Director*

# JUNIOR CHURCH

The children are very happy to be back in church, and enjoy the junior church sessions with each other in the new room. It's so nice to see them interacting with each other, looking after each other, and together learn more about the gospel. Below is a short reflection of what the children have been doing over the last 4 weeks during their Junior Church sessions.

In the week of the story of Bartimaeus, we re-played the gospel story with pieces of card and tea towels acting as glove puppets - the children are always attentive for a short period of time. Then we did some activities, including a painting on the story and sight related games such as hunt the chocolate coin.

The following week, the children became familiar with Mark 12:30, otherwise known as the greatest commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." We repeated the verse with actions for heart, soul, mind and strength, we passed a toy round, saying the words together and we made a string of hearts from card, featuring each of the words. Thus, through listening and saying, acting and creating, the words of the verse became familiar.

At the re-dedication Sunday, the Junior Church members and visitors were delighted to have the opportunity to plant the very first bulbs in our new Church Garden during their session on 7th November. The children were all eager to make a contribution to this special part of Downing Place and wasted no time in getting down to work when they received a handful of crocus bulbs. Gentle



hands positioned and covered the bulbs carefully near the fronts of the borders and we anticipate eager eyes will be on the look out for the first shoots early in the new year.

At Remembrance Sunday, we watched *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen on the screen in the new room, and talked about the fact that we sometimes are scared or go through difficult times, but that God is always near us to guide us. We played a blindfolding activity where we had to guide the blindfolded person, and all children were eager to help. We finished with making our own big poppies, which went on display in the window next to the entrance of the Hub. The children were very proud to see their craft on display.

*Elza de Bruin-Lara, Lorraine Thornton and Daphne Thomas, with thanks for contributions from the JC leaders and helpers.*



## LEN BOWER'S DIARIES – EPISODE TWO

*Jane Bower writes: As for the last episode, any views expressed here are purely those of the diarist! I have focused on the many commissions he received, often at very short notice, for posters and church visual aids. Dad possessed no printer, computer or photocopier – all were done, to staggeringly high professional quality, by hand at lightning speed. Initials of people have been changed.*



T. P. rang; would I make a large black and white drawing of a church organ for people to colour in as they contributed to the organ fund. Did it later to take to church on Sunday.

Card from Jane (Gauguin painting, with the women speaking captions) requesting Irish Cheddar Cheese labels re a competition she's entering. Posted them with a Michelangelo Adam and God, God passing cheese labels to Adam. Did a bit of work on the church Advent candelabra.

Church group Christmas dinner at the Mansion, odd that they seem to be following the media/capitalist idea of Christmas being weeks before Dec 25 (why not see in the New Year on Dec 10?)

Virgin record shop. The young people there seem to patronise people unless they're of the same age group. 'I believe you sell wooden cases to hold 60 cassettes.' Answer: 'Yeh, look around till you find one somewhere.' I nearly walked out. I found one, and they didn't wrap it up. Said they had no carriers or wrapping paper.

Dec 26. Six of us piled into D's car, to Studley Park. Walked down Valley of Desolation. Back to pork and everything din. Stuffed with food, glad it's only once a year. I think 'social meals' aren't my scene really, making food a kind of focus of attention. A selection of sandwiches to pick at, sitting in armchairs with a cuppa in quiet chat, or with a good book, is more me. Not the general middle class scene I'm afraid; but one has to join in. I'm inclined to think about the starving and hungry, can't forget them. A conflict.

M. brought kitten, Spot. (Out, damned Spot.) Spot and S's cat were incompatible. This led to separate room and board and toilet facilities for the two animals and much care in human opening and closing of doors.

How lovely that the 'festive season' is all over; it's as if one has been on an army commando exercise over rough mountainous country for four weeks or so. (Christmas is fine, it's the Xmas side of it all that makes me punch drunk.) Had a bacon sarny. Sarny. What a strange word for sandwich. (Dictionary says sarnie or sarney. Sandy I could understand, or switch? Why shorten sandwich anyway?)

Church a.m. Mr. Dennett (the dentist) of --- URC was in charge. I always find him refreshing – colloquial language, a friendly conversational tone, sermons about daily living and not theological 'logic' about obscure bits of the Old Testament. I stayed awake!! I always feel he knows what Christian living is all about – I'm sure it isn't about scholarship, hah! And it isn't about professing to be a Christian, or even knowing whether or not you are one. It's just about living in ways of which Christ would have approved. Hence, I think, my Christian philosophy requires, I suppose, only the synoptic gospels. I'm not sure how the social organisation called the church necessarily fits in, except that an overall social organisation is needed to get certain things done. One can't be a Christian loner (loving only oneself?)

Oh how revolting is the traditional stinking cold. I don't think I slept all night, throat like hot sandpaper. One day, there'll be a vaccine against every form of common cold. Felt very weak as if muscles were made of cake mix. Ergh ergh, throaty hot, heady ache. Feeling like a sack of warm wet sand.

Political scene in the Commons is hotting up, pre-General Election. No questions are ever answered, Tories and Labour are like a cock fight. I certainly couldn't vote Tory, money is the priority in all their thinking, rather than people, hence they think the greatest carrot is to lower income tax, as if everybody (rich included) will see this as sheer heaven. A blatant appeal to greed. My view is to raise income tax above the minimum level at which people pay none, to have minimum wage standards in line with EEC practice, to build houses by the million and make teaching a top profession in civilised schools. People who are 'comfortably off' shouldn't expect more; if a person has all he needs, why would he ever want more? As I get older I get more left all the time. What's needed is a spirit of willing self-sacrifice on the part of the haves towards the guiltless have-nots, and a clear perception of the difference between needs and wants.

Had a very good night's sleep – only a brief surprise intermission about midnight with a touch of diarrhoea, to, as it were, change the subject and add that touch of variety which makes life such a unique and blessed experience. At 5 to 7 I

anointed my throat with tea. Later had a warm bath liberally strewn with Radox herbal gunge in which I luxuriated, feeling all the achey joints and muscles arguing about whether to stay or go.

Watched, on telly, a morning service from Cambridge, Newnham, St. Mark's. The vicar, Philip Spence, illustrated his talk to the children with cartoons, youth group played music on guitar, flute, violin, piano. Nice but for the flautist, who was uncomfortably sharp.

I seem to be able to make only 2mph. There's no air in my tyres. At night made my usual ape-like wrestler Valentine card to send to Jane. Put on my trusty long johns for first time, white, soft, snug, and faced the freezing world with chin held high, and hands, teeth and buttocks clenched.

Church. ----- droned away (importance of bible study leading each individual to 'know God', and subsequent enrichment of whole life and so on; in other words an intellectual appreciation through literature, rather than an intuitive sense, on being in this world, of the God-inspired essence of existence. I find it, always, difficult to reconcile my view of Christian morality with his).

Church duty a.m. (The yowling and miaowing of Sebastian Cat plays on the major nerves and I'll be glad when the premises are catless.)

V.H. (church) rang up, begging me to do seven large posters, something to do with a mission conference or something. R.M. called today. Could I do seven large posters, for our church and six other churches, to do with a three week churches' festival. Did all seven, before hearing what Vera has to say.

V.H. wants 8 posters. Worked on the posters, finished them by lunchtime (started 6.45).

S. late from staff meeting; roll on retirement. Bags of new admin, pages of infantile gush on duties and responsibilities of teachers as if they were 1<sup>st</sup> year students. New scheme of school supervision duties. Only 5 months to go.

The vacuum cleaner hose fitting cracked, a gale blowing between the fingers. Swept snow from front and back steps, the brush finally giving up the ghost. Got to work on defrosting the freezer. A finicky, icy and snowy and pools of water and baking tins of hot water job. At about 10 to 9 a.m. the grinning face of R. M. with arched, apologetic eyebrows at the back door warned me of impending children's address visual aids. Request:

Lettering notice: God is All- Powerful.

Lettering notice: God's Power is in Jesus.

Picture of miracle of raising of Jairus's daughter.



Picture of miracle of stilling the storm.

Wine into water.

Healing the blind.

Loaves and fishes.

Life-size front end of a wooden, simple fishing boat, free standing.

Finished the lot by 3.30pm and went shopping to Safeway's. This week on S's half term I am buying her a gooey bun a day. Today, a grotesque choux pastry coffee explosion.

To H's (care home) a.m. He asked me if I'd tune a zither which one of the lady residents brought in. Hopelessly out of tune, about 40 strings in a strange sequence. Tuned it. Sounded good!

S.W. wanted church poster. Did it. Did poster for N.C. Letter from F, wanting a drawing of male and female wearing funny hats, to do with some charity event. Note from Jane re a series of TV religious discussions from Wesley Meths Church in Cambridge, co-arranged with Jane's church (Emmanuel).

Letter from F, asked for larger poster with Leicester Prison Charity Walk details. Did it, posted it lunchtime.

Wet and orrid. Went to doc's for prescription, then chemist, Superdrug, Safeway's and Cowley's. What rich variety! Wild wind, driving rain. Went to Ged's Place for a haircut, performed by a lass who looked about 16, but she did it better than I could have done. At 11.45, up to the Methodist Church – Lenten lunch. About 160 there, long tables in the 'schoolroom'. The type of building interior, Victorian Methodist, made me feel completely at home. Hard work, masses of washing up, but about 17 helpers from our church. A Catholic priest gave a 20 minute soporific sermon after the famine lunch. This spoils the experience, a self-erasing address.

Church a.m. Holy Communion, which I'm afraid has never had the slightest significance to me, just a kind of folk ritual of unpleasant imagery. My folks never stayed in church for communion, maybe it stuck from those days. Rev. Leslie Weatherhead ("The Christian Agnostic") echoes my view. Young man from church here at night. Unemployed engineering graduate about 30 with problems.

Letter from the son of Peggy's sister, to regret that Peggy died last Tuesday, which, he wrote, was her 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Memories of her singing and the old band days came flooding back. Life is a puzzle, so fleeting. Scraped moss growth from stone paving in back garden.

Kirk a.m. The Hypnotist again. ('At my fourth word you will fall into a deep sleep. When you wake up you will have forgotten everything.')

Bought a tie. I can't remember ever having bought one before (except a Leeds College of Art tie, maybe when I was 18!) I think I bought a black tie for Dad's funeral, come to think of it, Jan 1956.

P.H. rang – wants big poster for church Christian Aid famine lunch. Bought the final copy of Punch magazine. Did big famine lunch poster – rather pleased with it. Stewed prunes later.

To town a.m, for a Laurie Lee book Jane would like for her birthday - omitting to take the title with me.

Made spaghetti Bolognese. Spaghetti Leodensis actually. Lovely warm sunny spring day again. Went up to the shops as usual and, seeing an Otley bus, boarded it and took some photos by the river.

*The second part of Len's diaries for one year will appear in the next issue of Place Matters.*

## FLOWER ROTA APPEAL

For many years, members of St Columba's and Emmanuel, (and Downing Place since 2018), have provided flowers for the church, a form of ministry, and something very much appreciated by those who receive them later at times of illness, bereavement or to mark a special birthday. The rota, organised by Kathleen McBrearty, is in need of some new recruits. Might you consider offering to take a Sunday (or two)? I want to emphasise that only ONE bunch of flowers for display is sought and NO special skills in arranging the flowers are assumed or required. Elaine is also on hand to advise about access to the church premises. Please get in touch with Margaret Thompson after worship any Sunday.



## PASTORAL NEWS

Pat Booth's death ends a commitment to the congregation which began nearly forty years ago at St Columba's. We give thanks for all Pat was and for all she contributed, and remember Tony and their family.

News of the death of George Thorpe, a former member of Emmanuel, has also been received.

## ADVENT LECTIO DIVINA

A new series of lectio divina is being held on Zoom especially for Advent. If you have not tried this before, why not dip a toe in? Enjoy a peaceful hour, in the comfort of home, although it might be challenging when God surprises us unexpectedly. This is a way of prayer and contemplation in company with friends. We have a short morning prayer liturgy then listen to the chosen scripture three times with silence in between; this 'sacred reading' of scripture fills 40 minutes. Then for the remaining 20 minutes we share insights concerning the chosen word or phrase that struck us afresh as we meditated upon the scripture.

When? Every Friday through Advent for the four weeks, 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th December.

Who has joined in? Friends from Downing Place, Little St. Mary's, Sawston Free Church and Chichester.

How? Email William McVey for the Zoom link unless he already knows you are hoping to join in, and he'll send this to you a day or so ahead of the 3rd.

Other questions? Please be in touch with Deborah McVey.



## MONTHLY CAUSE FOR DECEMBER

### CAMBRIDGE CYRENIANS

Operating since 1970, Cambridge Cyrenians are the longest standing homelessness charity within Cambridge City. The charity currently provides 23 properties across Cambridge offering a range of services to accommodate those facing homelessness. Since their initial 14 bed property, Cambridge Cyrenians have grown to support 105 residents in their 23 properties, as well as the capacity to provide ongoing support for their former residents. Throughout their properties, their aspiration to create “homes not hostels” remains apparent.

Alongside their accommodation, Cambridge Cyrenians provide a wide range of further support services which include their own Registered Mental Health Nurse, a thriving allotment community, a Meaningful Activity worker and an Older Homeless Service which provides support and independence for people in their own homes. The charity recognises that housing alone is often not the solution to homelessness and provides further opportunities for their residents to expand their skillsets helping to ensure their independence.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambridge Cyrenians were faced with many changes in a short period of time. Adapting to the ever-changing landscape, they opted for remote communications where possible and dispersed provisions between houses that needed to isolate. As lockdowns eased, it was important to them that services such as free counselling sessions continued in a safe setting, and with the support of the Wesley Methodist Church the counselling service did continue.

With many statutory services postponing face to face communications, Cambridge Cyrenians were able to continue this support to their most vulnerable clients, including those under the Older Homeless Service. They were also able to recruit another worker for the service, resulting in 48 people by June who were able to access assistance with tasks such as receiving medication, finding safe ways to shop and easing symptoms of loneliness.

With much thanks to the public, the local charity has been able to return to normality with some extras such as the option to receive counselling remotely for those who are unable or unwilling to attend in-person. They have also received some great news in that they have been successful in purchasing a new central office and will be able to redevelop their current office space into a further 3/4 bed spaces for older homeless residents to complement/adjoin their current seven bed property opposite Wesley Church.

Looking forward to 2022, Cambridge Cyrenians intend to remain a major provider for homelessness housing once the City and County Councils Streets to Homes tender process is complete. The charity hopes to continue expanding, meeting more of the demand for housing and support in Cambridge, recognised as the UK's most unequal city.

You can donate to the Cambridge Cyrenians by visiting their website <https://cambridgecyrenians.org.uk> and going to "Support us".

Or you can send a cheque made out to Cambridge Cyrenians Ltd. to Cambridge Cyrenians Ltd, 4, Short St., Cambridge. CB1 1LB.



*our project worker Katherine chatting to a resident*



*Lucine, one of our Older Homeless Service workers*

# MONTHLY CAUSE FOR JANUARY CHRISTIAN BLIND MISSION



## **Transforming lives with CBM**

*People living in poverty with disabilities are the world's forgotten people.*

*Every day, people in the poorest places of the world lose the ability to see, hear or walk because of conditions that could easily be treated or prevented.*

*Too many people face poverty, stigma and isolation, denied the chance to go to school or earn a living, just because they have a disability.*

*Together, we can build a world where nobody is left behind.*

Cambridge based, international development charity, CBM, is dedicated to creating an inclusive world, in which all people with disabilities can enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential.

This is a big vision, and in order to achieve it, we need your help. In the world's poorest, most isolated and forgotten communities, people's mental and physical health is being threatened. We will not ignore or dismiss them – together we must help.

By following Jesus' example of unconditional love, we deliver practical support, and improve policy and practice to make sure that the rights of disabled people are protected and upheld. We work with disabled people to break down barriers, and make sure their stories are heard.

With your help, we aim to have an even greater impact for people overlooked by others. We want to train and equip local personnel in key countries worldwide. We want to be at the forefront of emergency relief for disabled and critically at-risk people in times of disaster. And by joining in, you can help ensure that millions of people in the poorest communities can receive healthcare, receive an education, be equipped with the skills to earn a living, and have a voice in their communities.



## Get involved

Your support can help restore sight to someone who is blind, help a child walk without pain for the first time, or open up a world of opportunity by enabling a child with a disability to go to school.

In fact, just **£24** helps provide sight-restoring cataract surgery in one eye for an adult, enabling them to see clearly again, earn a living and care for their family. **£80** helps allow ten people with disabilities to come to an advocacy and awareness workshop, helping them challenge prejudice, speak out and create fairer communities that include everyone, and every **£95** gift made to CBM could pay for cataract surgery under general anaesthetic on one eye for a child, offering them a brighter future.

Three easy ways for you to donate to CBM:

Call: 01223 484700

Online at: [www.cbmun.org.uk/donate](http://www.cbmun.org.uk/donate)

By cheque: Please make a cheque payable to CBM and address your donation to CBM UK, Munro House, 20 Mercers Row, Cambridge CB5 8HY



Salome, a grandmother from Rwanda, was left unable to see for two years due to blinding cataracts. She couldn't cook, clean or even go to the toilet by herself. But, thanks to the help of CBM supporters, Salomé received sight-restoring surgery and can see again! One of her first sights? the precious face of her baby grandson Jean-Baptiste, whom she had never seen before.

## 2021 SPECIAL CAUSES

During 2021, we sent £400 to each of our Monthly Causes from the York Street Fund to supplement the donations sent directly to the charity during the month by our members.

From May onwards, the Lunchtime Concerts have raised further funds for the Special Causes. Here is a summary of the donations we have sent during 2021 so far; these include the £400 from York Street; concert donations after May and any donations sent via the office):

January	Blueprint for all	£425
February	Leprosy Mission	£410
March	Medaille Trust	£418
April	Camfed	£400
May	Cambridge Carbon Footprint	£597.02
June	CamCrag	£621.46
July/August	Homestart	£1592.54
September	Macmillan	£1171.35

October's collections were for Commitment for Life; and donations have continued to come in during November. The total will be reported in the next edition of Place Matters.

*Ann Auger*

### LUNCHTIME CONCERTS - WEDNESDAYS AT 1PM

Free Lunchtime Concerts with a retiring collection for our monthly Special Cause. Booking is not necessary. Come and bring friends!

1 December	Fumi Otsuki (violin) & Sarah Kershaw (piano)
8 December	Nigel Blomley (cello) & Olga Samusenko (piano)
15 December	Cambridge Voices Christmas Concert (followed by coffee and mince pies)
5 January	Matthew McLachlan (piano)
12 January	Jon Fistein (violin)
19 January	Matt Kelly (viola), Ros Hart (violin) & John Richens (piano)
26 January	Ian de Massini (piano)

## THE CHERRY HINTON ROAD TUESDAY FELLOWSHIP

After meeting outside in August and part of September, we have been so happy to meet again back in the chapel at St Athanasios. Nigel Uden led our Harvest Service, and we have also had some interesting talks, particularly by Margaret Cooper on the causeways, gateways and bridges that we see in the countryside and how they are the same structures in our lives as we journey through our life's pilgrimage. Richard Lewney spoke to us, so appropriately, about climate change. We have had a Bible Study and a quiz and meetings arranging Christmas posies and crafting 3D Christmas cards. We have been delighted to welcome members of Fulbourn URC to our meetings.

We are looking forward to a talk by Gill Godber on the work of the Christian Blind Mission, as well as a talk by Brian Mizon on the Second Coming. We are having our annual Christmas Dinner at the Rock Inn, Cherry Hinton Road on December 7th, and a Carol Service which will be led by Nigel Uden on December 14th.

Please contact me if you would like to come to any of our meetings as we would be so pleased to welcome people.

*Penny Milsom*





## CHRISTIAN AID CHRISTMAS APPEAL

This year's Christmas Appeal by Christian Aid is all about clean water, something we in the UK take for granted.

In South Sudan, mothers like Adut had no option but to give their families river water, although they knew it was polluted and could make their children ill.



Christian Aid partners installed a borehole in Adut's village, and now there is plenty of clean water – children are healthier, crops grow better, the community is thriving.



This is the sort of project your donations to Christian Aid will help to fund, something which can change the lives of families struggling to give their children a safe future, especially in this time of damaging climate change.

This Christmas there is a new way to give to Christian Aid on-line. This link will take you to a donation page set up by the charitable giving platform, Givestar.

<https://giving.give-star.com/online/christian-aid/cambridge-downing-place-urc-christmas-2021-no-more-impossible-choices>

It is unique to Downing Place, straightforward to use, and will let you add Giftaid, if you can, to increase the amount of your donation. Unlike more commercial giving platforms, Givestar do not take a fee – they do however offer the chance to increase your donation by a percentage the equivalent of what the fee would have been, but this is optional, and you can simply put in “0%”, and it will accept this.

Please do give generously this Christmas to Christian Aid – in the aftermath of COP 26 it is a simple way we in the developed world can help to make life easier for our brothers and sisters in parts of the world likely to suffer most from climate change.



## DIARY

Services are conducted by the Minister, except where shown

Day	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	28-Nov-21	Advent Sunday Worship	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Tue	30-Nov-21	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	01-Dec-21	Lunchtime Concert - Fumi Otsuki (violin) & Sarah Kershaw (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	02-Dec-21	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	03-Dec-21	Lectio Divina	8.30am	Zoom
Sun	05-Dec-21	Sunday Worship with Communion	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	05-Dec-21	Open Table Social	7:00pm	The Hub
Mon	06-Dec-21	Officers' Meeting	4:00pm	Downing Place URC
Tue	07-Dec-21	Gibsons Christmas Lunch	12:30pm	Cambridge Regional College
Tue	07-Dec-21	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship Christmas Lunch (see Penny Milsom)	12.00 noon	The Rock Inn, Cherry Hinton Road
Wed	08-Dec-21	Lunchtime Concert - Nigel Blomiley (cello) & Olga Samusenko (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	09-Dec-21	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	09-Dec-21	Festive Concert by the New Cambridge Singers	8.00pm	Downing Place URC
Fri	10-Dec-21	Lectio Divina	8.30am	Zoom



Day	Date	Name	Time	Location
Fri	10-Dec-21	Traditional Carol Service	10:30am	Downing Place URC
Fri	10-Dec-21	Meditation Group	5:30pm	St Columba's Chapel
Sat	11-Dec-21	Christmas Fair	10:30am - 3:00pm	Downing Place URC
Sun	12-Dec-21	A service for the third Sunday of Advent, led by members of the congregation	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	12-Dec-21	Church Christmas Lunch	12:30pm	Gibson Hall
Tue	14-Dec-21	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship Carol Service led by Revd Nigel Uden	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	15-Dec-21	Lunchtime Concert - Cambridge Voices Christmas Concert	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	16-Dec-21	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	17-Dec-21	Lectio Divina	8.30am	Zoom
Sat	18-Dec-21	Nightlite	10.00pm-4.00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	19-Dec-21	An All-ages service of Lessons with Carols	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	19-Dec-21	Open Table Carol Service	7:00pm	Downing Place URC
Tue	21-Dec-21	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Thu	23-Dec-21	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	24-Dec	Lectio Divina	8.30am	Zoom

Day	Date	Event	Time	Location
Fri	24-Dec-21	Holy Communion for Christmas Eve	8:00pm	Downing Place URC
Sat	25-Dec-21	All Ages Celebration of Christmas Day	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	26-Dec-21	An Alternative Carol Service	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Fri	31-Dec-21	NightLite	10.00pm -4.00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	02-Jan-22	Holy Communion for the New Year led by Dr Janet Bottoms and Revd Deborah McVey	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Tue	04-Jan-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	05-Jan-22	Lunchtime Concert - Matthew McLachlan (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	06-Jan-22	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Sun	09-Jan-22	Morning Worship led by Dr Simone Maghenzani	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	09-Jan-22	Epiphany Service with Cambridge Voices	4:00pm	Downing Place URC
Tue	11-Jan-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	12-Jan-22	Lunchtime Concert - Jon Fistein (violin)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	13-Jan-22	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Sun	16-Jan-22	Sunday worship led by Revd Nigel Uden with Revd Keith Riglin	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Tue	18-Jan-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios Church

Day	Date	Event	Time	Location
Wed	19-Jan-22	DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ITEMS FOR PLACE MATTERS		
Wed	19-Jan-22	Lunchtime Concert - Matt Kelly (viola), Ros Hart (violin) & John Richens (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	20-Jan-22	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Sun	23-Jan-22	Sunday Worship	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Tue	25-Jan-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	26-Jan-22	Lunchtime Concert: Ian de Massini (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	27-Jan-22	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Sun	30-Jan-22	Sunday Worship Led by the World Church and Public Issues group, with Karen Campbell	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Wed	02-Feb-22	Lunchtime Concert - Cambridge University Brass Ensemble	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Sun	06-Feb-22	Sunday Worship with Communion: Revd Nigel Uden with the Rev Dr Carla Grosch-Miller	11:00am	Downing Place URC



## VISITING WORSHIP LEADERS IN 2022

First, hearty thanks to Pippa Jones, who prepares the preaching plan for us year by year. It's a lot of work, and little of it is seen by most of us.

As in previous years, throughout 2022 she has filled every vacancy created by my holiday and by the Sundays I spend at Fulbourn. With two exceptions, these services will be led by members of Downing Place Church. That's eleven individuals who are lay preachers or Ministers of the Word & Sacraments, and an even larger group of church people who will take part in acts of worship led by our groups and teams: *Children's Ministry*, *Evangelism & Service*, *Sustainability*, *World Church & Public Issues*, and *Worship, Discipleship & Spirituality*.

The two who are visitors during my absences are Richard Lewney, a Lay Preacher from Bar Hill Church, and The Revd Dr Robert Pope, Tutor in Church History and Theology at Westminster College.

Additionally, through the year we will also welcome some visitors to preach at services I will lead, and I would like to give you advance notice for your diaries.

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, the preacher will be the Rt Revd Dr Keith Riglin, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles in the Scottish Episcopal Church, and formerly Minister of St Columba's URC from 1996-2008.

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, when we again mark LGBT History Month with Holy Communion at which the Sing Out Choir will provide some of the music. That morning the preacher will be The Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller, a URC minister in Northern Synod, with roots in the United Church of Christ in the United States of America. She was originally a human rights lawyer.

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, we welcome the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Lord Wallace of Tankerness. As Jim Wallace, he was an undergraduate at Downing College in the 1970s, and first took communion at Emmanuel URC having made profession of faith the previous Sunday upon reception into membership of St Columba's URC.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, we'll welcome the Revd Professor David Fergusson (*sic*), the new Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, and recently arrived from the University of Edinburgh. A Church of Scotland minister, in July 2019 the Queen appointed him as Dean of the Chapel Royal in Scotland and Dean of the Order of the Thistle.

And on December 4<sup>th</sup>, to preach at Communion we can look forward to hearing the Revd Lythan Nevard. Recently inducted as Moderator of Eastern Synod, she brought greetings to our rededication weekend, clearly urging us in our uniting and reforming.

## MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE

5 December	Chris Baker Liz Caswell David Cornick Janet Tollington	Stetchworth and Cheveley Bassingbourn Melbourn Saffron Walden
12 December	Penny Flynn Janet Tollington Nigel Uden	Fowlmere Stetchworth and Cheveley Fulbourn
19 December	Liz Caswell David Tatem Nigel Uden	Stetchworth and Cheveley Melbourn Fulbourn (3pm)
26 December	Liz Caswell	Stetchworth and Cheveley
2 January	Chris Baker	Ely Methodist
9 January	Janet Tollington Nigel Uden	Buntingford Fulbourn
16 January	Liz Caswell Penny Flynn Janet Tollington	Stetchworth and Cheveley Bassingbourn St Neots
23 January	Chris Baker Janet Bottoms Penny Flynn Janet Tollington	Melbourn Fulbourn Christchurch, Buntingford Bar Hill
30 January	Liz Caswell David Cornick Janet Tollington	Fowlmere Bassingbourn Stetchworth and Cheveley



# LECTIONARY

The following list offers the Bible passages suggested for each Sunday by the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), and by ROOTS, the material used in our work alongside young people. On 28<sup>th</sup> November, Advent Sunday, we commenced the RCL's Year C, where the dominant Gospel for a year will be St Luke. From time to time there will readings from other Gospels, most particularly St John, which does not have a year 'of its own' in the RCL.

On some of the Sundays in December and January, the morning service will depart from the RCL. Readers will be advised in advance if that is the case.

## **December 5**

Malachi 3.1-5; Luke 1.68-79 (the Benedictus, a canticle that replaces the Psalm);  
Philippians 1.3-11; Luke 3.1-6

## **December 12**

Zephaniah 3.14-20; Isaiah 12.2-6 (a canticle that replaces the Psalm);  
Philippians 4.4-7; Luke 3.7-18

## **December 19**

Micah 5.2-5a; Luke 1.46b-55 (the Magnificat, a canticle that replaces the Psalm);  
Hebrews 10.5-10; Luke 1.39-45 (46-55 if not sung)

## **December 25**

Isaiah 9.2-7; Luke 2.1-20

## **December 26**

I Samuel 2.18-20, 26; Luke 2.41-52

## **January 2**

Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12

## **January 9**

Isaiah 43.1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8.14-17; Luke 3.15-17, 21-22

## **January 16**

Isaiah 62.1-5; Psalm 36.5-10; I Corinthians 12.1-11; John 2.1-11

## **January 23**

Nehemiah 8.13, 5-6 and 8-10; Psalm 19; I Corinthians 12.12-31a; Luke 4.14-21

## **January 30**

Jeremiah 1.4-10; Psalm 71.1-6; I Corinthians 13.1-13; Luke 4.21-30

## **February 6**

Isaiah 6.1-8 (9-13); Psalm 138; I Corinthians 15.1-11; Luke 5.1-11

# **A PANDEMIC PRAYER FROM THE URC**

Parent God

We are living through a time when many things look the way they did before we lived through lockdowns, but many things look different. Remind us that you are our ever-present, unchanging, loving God.

The news continues to dwell on the worst aspects of life, it is easy to be pulled towards a negative viewpoint. Help us remember that we carry Your Hope in our souls; that our spirits bubble with a joy that cannot be extinguished.

Walk with us, guiding us on the days that we are the joy and light for others through the uncertainty. Comfort us during our dark and fearful days.

Call us to action when we despair that things are bad. Inspire us to think of the needs of others when self-pity is close at hand.

Catch us close to you always.

Amen





MAGAZINE EDITOR:

Sheila Porrer

ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

Please send items to both Sheila Porrer and Ann Auger  
([ann@downingplaceurc.org](mailto:ann@downingplaceurc.org))

WEB EDITOR:

Ann Auger

Please send all items to be included in the February edition to both Sheila and Ann by the cut off date of **Wednesday 19 January**

The December/January edition will be available from **Sunday 30 January**.