



DOWNING PLACE  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH,  
CAMBRIDGE

PLACE MATTERS



ISSUE 75  
DECEMBER 2025

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*Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of  
the Elders and Members of Downing Place United Reformed Church*

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*Place Matters: a correction*

The Editorial in the November 2025 Place Matters included “This month’s letter from the ‘substitutes bench’ comes from Zoë Bennett, Downing Place URC Elder, and author of “Two into one will go”” Zoë is a member of Downing Place URC, but not an Elder. Apologies for this error.



*Mistletoe, Eddington Footpath, taken by Tim Rowland*

## LETTER FROM A MINISTER

Dear Friends

Time fascinates physicists, philosophers and poets alike, for many different reasons. It is intimately related to the origins of the universe, to our experience of being human, and the ways in which we experience wisdom and emotion. It is hard to imagine life before wristwatches and diaries, yet humans have always lived their lives according to the rhythms of light and darkness and the seasons of the year. Ritual landscapes like Stonehenge (about 4700 years old) show just how skilled our ancestors were in measuring their passing.

Part of the extraordinary history of Christianity is the way in which, over roughly 400 years from the birth of Jesus, time became Christ-shaped. First came Sunday, then by the middle of the second century, Easter, and then the pattern of Lent and Holy Week that was created and fixed about 400.

The church in the early middle ages wasn't a monolith with its HQ in Rome directing what the distant outposts should do. It was rather a series of 'micro-Christendoms'. The Christmas cycle emerged in different forms in different places. Epiphany came first. In Alexandria in Egypt in the second century it commemorated Christ's baptism, and was a time to baptise new converts; but in Milan in the 370s and 380s it was linked to the journey of the magi. Already a dual focus, Epiphany was never going to be straightforward.

Christmas itself was a Roman invention, sometime before the 350s, probably an evangelical wheeze to point out to their pagan neighbours who celebrated December 25th as the birthday of the invincible Sun, that the true light of the world was Jesus and this was his birthday!

Advent (ironically) was the latecomer to the party. Its origins seem to be in a period of preparation for Epiphanytide baptisms in France and Spain. It was well established there by 490 but took a further century to become part of the Roman liturgy. The Roman church regarded their creation of Christmas to be the start of the Christian year, and because they read their Bibles continuously throughout the year, there was tendency for readings in December to be about the Last Things. That gave Advent its distinct flavour. It became a time of waiting for the return of Christ in glory, as well as a time of waiting for the birth at Bethlehem.



Slowly but surely, the pattern of the seasons took shape. First Epiphany, the journey from unbelief to faith in Jesus and baptism; then Christmas, that neat piece of evangelism, and finally Advent, which gives us a ‘whole Christ perspective’, concentrating not just on his life from manger to cross, but his role in God’s good purposes for the whole of creation, encompassing not just salvation but final triumph when all shall be caught up in glory unimaginable.

Advent is about that long perspective, a four Sunday journey which encompasses reflections on the timeless purposes of God and their working out in the history of Israel, becoming ever more focussed as the season progresses – first reflection on the End Times and judgement, then the life of John the Baptist and the prophetic tradition in Israel, and finally Mary’s extraordinary ‘Yes’ to God before on Christmas Day we kneel at the manger and adore, ‘Our God contracted to a span / Incomprehensibly made man.’ (Charles Wesley)

We need that long perspective to properly interpret the Christmas party which has been gathering momentum since September as shrewd marketeers attempt to part us from more and more of our cash. That party is great. I love it as much as anyone (although I do wish it didn’t start until Advent!). It is a time for celebration, for being together, for goodness and kindness – and lashings of that will be manifest. We need to celebrate that, not decry it – I write as the BBC’s ‘Children in Need’ fundraiser gets properly underway. People do care. That sort of goodness and kindness rejoices God’s heart.

Yet God’s Christmas purpose was salvation for all – most especially for the excluded, the poor, the rejected, the despised, the hurt, the sad, all those dealt a bad deal by life. All those for whom Christmas will be difficult and painful. A bidding prayer for Christmas Eve reminds us, ‘...and because this above all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember in Christ’s name all those who are in any kind of need this night...that the peace and light of the Christ-child may bring hope and healing to all the dark places of the world.’

May it be so.

Have a blessed and thoughtful Advent,  
and a happy Christmas

*David Cornick*

## PEACE MATTERS – SOME BOOKS TO AID OUR UNDERSTANDING



Many thanks to three David's for their contributions in November's Place Matters to our understanding of the complexities of the situation in Palestine and Israel and related issues. The following books, some recommended by Richard Lewney after his visit to Israel/Palestine with a URC group, would help us all to learn more.

*Chris Wright*

**The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, A Very Short Introduction**, Martin Bunton (IVP, 2013) does exactly what the title implies. It starts with the first Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland in 1897, when Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire, and includes a very useful timeline of events right up to 2012 and the UN General Assembly Resolution upgrading Palestine to a 'non-member state'.

Ben White's **Israeli Apartheid, A Beginner's Guide** (Pluto Press, 2009) also traces the history of the seemingly intractable problem from 1897. The final chapter, before a helpful glossary, is in the form of Frequently Asked Questions.

Colin Chapman spent 18 years as a CMS missionary in the Middle East and when not there, he was teaching and writing about Muslim, Jewish and Christian relations. In retirement he lives in Cambridge. Margaret Thompson has drawn my attention to **Whose Promised Land?** (SPCK), first published in 1983, but now, in a revised 2024 edition, it references some of the developments since 7 October 2023. It explains what has happened and is happening in the Middle East, (document based), and how the Bible has been used in relation to the conflicts.

**Justice and only Justice – A Palestinian Theology of Liberation** Naim Ateek (Orbis Books, 1989). Although nearly 40 years old, the issues addressed by Ateek as a Palestinian Christian and Canon of St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem, are still very relevant as he explores the biblical and theological issues as well as historical oppression and seeks to promote reconciliation.

Similar depth and challenge is found in **The Other Side of the Wall – a Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope** (IVP, 2020) by Lutheran Pastor and Academic Dean of the Bethlehem Bible College, Munther Isaac. He writes from the perspective of Palestinian Christians living on the other side of the separation wall, whose voices are hardly heard despite a Christian presence there since the earliest days of the Jesus movement.

For a fuller study of Christian Zionism, go to Stephen Sizer's **Christian Zionism – Road-map to Armageddon?** (IVP, 2004) Well researched and with very useful indices and glossary.

**We Are Not Numbers** was founded in 2014 to give voice to the youth of Gaza, and this year published a collection of many short pieces under this title (Hutchinson/Heinemann, 2025). Gaza as it truly is, written by those who live it every day.

And on the West Bank: **A Day in the Life of Abed Salama** Nathan Thrall (Penguin, 2023) and **Apeiogon**, Colum McCann (Bloomsbury, 2020). An amazing story of Israeli/Palestinian friendship born out of the grief of loss of their daughters.

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## TRADITIONAL CAROL SERVICE



There will be a Traditional Carol service held in the church  
on December 12th at 11am.

Coffee and mince pies will be served from 10.30am.

Traditional hymns, carols and readings to enjoy. The Reverend Elizabeth Caswell will  
be leading the service.

## ROYAL RUNYON



For many years, (and no-one whom I consulted can give an exact date), the flowers displayed on Remembrance Sunday have been arranged in a silver bowl. The inscription on it reads:

In Memoriam  
Lieutenant Royal A Runyon  
US Air Force  
Born 25th March 1921  
Killed on Active Service  
19th March 1945  
Nobis Meminisse Relictum

Who was Royal Arthur Runyon? The search took me to websites for the United States Army Air Force, the Battle Monuments Commission, then to a more specific one for the B17 Flying Fortress bomber, to a local newspaper, and to Madingley Cemetery. Royal was the son of Royal Sylvanus Runyon, and Eve Rebecca Simmons Graham, who were living in Keokuk County in Iowa at the time of his birth. When he enlisted in Carthage, Illinois, he was married to Dolores Patricia Nolden, known as Tiss, and they had one son, (Royal Nolden), born in 1944. Royal, with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant, was assigned to the 547th Bomber Squad (384 Bomber Group), joining the base at Grafton Underwood in Northamptonshire on 2nd February 1945. His 'plane, B17G 43-39035, (similar to the B17 "Sally B", preserved at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford), carried a crew of nine - he was the Navigator - and their first order to deploy was on 19th February.



By this stage of the Second World War, the RAF bombed targets in occupied Europe by night and the USAAF by day, all with the aim of disrupting German military supply chains. The Grafton contingent attacked coking plants, tank factories, rail-road marshalling yards, bridges across the Weser, oil plants, including the last one known to be producing synthetic oil, and even the German Army HQ at Zossen, south of Berlin. B17G was in action on fourteen days between 19th February and 19th March. The target on 19th March was an oil plant in Böhlen, near Leipzig, but the planes were ordered to the secondary target of Plauen on the German-Czech border. The return flight was described as being in poor weather, (low cloud, drizzle and wind were cited, with visibility poor above three hundred feet), and after the plane dropped out of formation, (as did others), the pilot is assumed to have clipped a tree and crashed at Colley Hill near Reigate. The ensuing fire was tackled quickly by the local Fire Brigade, but there were no survivors. It was only a year later, after censorship of the press had ended, that an account was given to the Surrey Mirror by observers on the ground who had become aware of a low flying plane, and the subsequent explosion. A watch recovered from the scene was found to have stopped at 5.42. The accident report by the American authorities is bleak, blaming pilot error. Fatigue may have been a factor, as this was the third sortie into Europe in four days. Today, the hill is managed by the National Trust, with a memorial sculpture by Roger Day, unveiled on the 70th anniversary of the crash:

[B17 wartime plane crash on Reigate Hill](#) | [National Trust](#) (A ceremony was also held on the same date earlier this year).

Runyon was honoured with the Air Medal, Oak Leaf Cluster and Purple Heart. As with many compatriots stationed in the UK, who did not go home, his headstone is to be found in the Cambridge American War Cemetery, its official name, on Madingley Hill, in plot A, row 6, grave 26. Three other crew members are also buried on the hill.

And now to the congregational connection, put together from conversations, but with no certainty as to accuracy. The story is likely to be found in past issues of the monthly magazine for St Columba's or the minutes of the Committee of Management, both deposited in the Cambridgeshire Archives in Ely, but where might one begin to seek the answer? The University of Cambridge gave the Madingley site for the Cemetery, and following its official opening in 1956, one of

Royal's relatives is known to have visited, possibly on a regular basis, and may have attended St Columba's. My surmise is that this was Royal's mother, who died in 1986. The bowl was a gift of appreciation, perhaps especially for hospitality and understanding from Ronald Speirs in ministry from 1961 to 1981, (although the link could have been through Albert Cooper initially). Ronald is known to have referred to service personnel who used to come to St Columba's during the war, Cambridge being a transit town, surrounded by many bases - perhaps Ronald recalled his own military service far from home in India. Therefore, exactly when the link was made remains unknown, and Buick Knox's history of St Columba's is silent. A second possibility is that Ernest Marvin, who had many US contacts, was instrumental in focussing on the Atlantic partnership. Direct Runyon family links are no longer in place, as son Royal, was killed in a motorbike accident as a student in 1966, and Dolores/Tiss, who remarried, died in 2014. Funeral notices, gleaned from the internet, mention Lutheran or Methodist services for them. Having discovered that the Cemetery authorities have limited visitor records, none of them digitised, I concluded that the search would have to end, only to receive a second email from the Interpretive Guide, who had already mentioned attendance at the 2025 memorial. She had checked her own paperwork to discover that four family members had visited in September 2023, (relatives of half siblings?), but without leaving their names. Royal's distinctive name may have been the spur for this follow-up. In turn, I have asked that she register the St Columba's connection together with the bowl's inscription. Eighty years after the ending of World War II, and in a new era of political uncertainty, it seemed appropriate to provide flowers on 9 November 2025 to remember Royal Arthur Runyon

*Nobis Meminisse Relictum*

Left behind as a memory for us

*Margaret Thompson*



*Cambridge American Cemetery where Runyon is buried*

## EASTERN SYNOD MEETING 11TH OCTOBER 2025

*Alan Rickard reports:*

The Eastern Province of the United Reformed Church met in Synod at Christ Church URC, Chelmsford on Saturday 11th October 2025 at 10.30 am.

The Meeting was duly constituted by the Synod Moderator Revd Lythan Nevard, the focus of the day's agenda being 'Inclusion and Diversity'. Opening worship was led by Revd David Coaker, Interim Moderator at Christ Church.

The Synod Moderator gave out notices of ministerial changes and other news. Revd Nigel Uden had now retired and thanks were given for his ministries in the URC and synod remembered him as he settled into retirement. Revd Canon David Thompson had stepped down as Trust Director for the URC Synod Trust and was thanked for his service. Minutes of the meeting held at Plume Avenue, Colchester, on 8th March were approved with no matters arising.

The meeting then received several presentations on the theme of Inclusion and Diversity introduced by Revd Andrew Dotchin, vicar in Kesgrave and new trustee of the Inclusive Church Network. Inclusion means ensuring no-one is excluded, be it on grounds of sexuality, neurodiversity, learning disability, mental and physical health disability, sex and gender, ethnicity and race or background. A video entitled 'Move us into Action', part of the 'Through the Roof' series, was shown. Richard Lewney talked on his experience of people displacement, citing migrant families accommodated in a hotel at Bar Hill; many were Iranians and some Christian. Alison Jiggins talked on the importance of the use of first-person language, avoiding adjectives such as 'homeless' being used as descriptive nouns. A video was shown of the work with the Dove Dementia Café at Diss, one of the 2025 Community Project Awards. Jo Robbins talked of her lived experience with young people given freedom, participation and grace in leading acts of worship to challenge and reveal; young disciples empowered to create disciples. A further video from Through the Roof featuring disabled people concluded the presentation.

Faith in Action awards were presented to The Hive at Southminster URC, the Community Hub at Haverhill Old Independent, and the community food bank and café at Wroxham and Hoveton URC. Congratulations were offered to the Dove Dementia Café for winning the National URC award. Notices were given out before lunch.

The meeting resumed at 2.00 pm with a series of updates followed by reports. The Clerk's report included volunteers being sought for General Assembly 2026, vacancies within the Synod, the most urgent being for a Synod Treasurer, and a staffing update.

The Pastoral Committee Report was given by the Moderator, who began by emphasising the amended Mission Partnership Call Guidelines re. expectations for a Preach-with-a-view weekend. She stated consultation with Pastoral Committee is necessary when exploring methods divergent from the guidelines. Mid-Cambridgeshire Mission Partnership had called Revd Alison Davis. Love's Farm Church had also called a minister. Monks Eleigh's Church Meeting had decided to close and a service of celebration would be arranged for Spring 2026. A consultation was carried out from Synod members present concerning Pastoral Consultants via the use of mentimeter on smart phones, scanning QR codes and sharing contributions on-screen. Synod were also consulted on Pioneer Ministry posts within the Eastern Region, and a video was shown of work done within the Diocese of Leicester.

Reports were also received from the Mission and Discipleship Committee and the Resources Committee. No accounts were presented at this meeting due to illness. Part of a video was shown as part of the Church Life Review. Andrew East spoke of the Synod's potential contribution to a Church Life Fund. The following (amended) Resolution 1 was carried unanimously:

The Trust, reflecting on all of the discussion and supporting material, agreed to an indicative budget for up to £400,000 per year, for the next ten years, to support this initiative and ratify at March Synod 2026. Noting that this will be reviewed following the outcome of the November 2025 General Assembly, and the planned 5-year decision-gate.

The meeting ended and a service of Communion was celebrated.

The next meeting of Eastern Synod will be held at Christ Church, Braintree, on 14th March 2026.





## THE REVEREND PETER DIGBY BALL



Friends will no doubt have heard by now that Revd Peter D. Ball died on Sunday 26th October following a diagnosis of cancer last May.

Peter spent his whole ministry in Eastern Synod serving Sawston (1994-2008); and Little Abington & St John's, Ipswich (2005-08); but Peter was known and loved throughout the URC as firstly the Training & Development Officer for Eastern Synod (2008-17) and then as Tutor and Director of Church Resource Development at Westminster College (2017-23) in which role he helped shape the ministry of ordained and lay alike.

He was a very good friend of Downing Place and will be greatly missed.

Please hold his wife, Revd Catherine Ball and their family in your prayers.

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### A CHRISTMAS POEM

Light looked down and saw the darkness

“I will go there” said light.

Peace looked down and saw war

“I will go there” said peace.

Love looked down and saw hatred

“I will go there” said love

So he, The Lord of Light,

The Prince of Peace,

The King of Love,

Came down and crept in beside us.

*John Bell 1745 - 1831*

# CHRISTIAN AID – MIDDLE EAST HUMANITARIAN APPEAL



**Carol Singing Saturday 6th December, 11.00am to 12.30pm in Michaelhouse**

Come and join us to sing carols in Michaelhouse to support **Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal**. Please turn up at 10.45 to get organised. Carol sheets provided, please bring water to lubricate the vocal cords! Queries to Sheila Porrer ([sheila.porrer@virginmedia.com](mailto:sheila.porrer@virginmedia.com)) – let me know if you can that you will be there, or just turn up. All welcome – bring your friends.

This year the Christmas Appeal focusses on mothers and children fleeing from violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We can be sure too that **Christian Aid** will be there to help in other conflicts, as recently in Sudan.

**Christian Aid** tells us: "As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, let's not forget communities affected by conflict.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been repeatedly devastated by centuries of violence, leaving homes destroyed, livelihoods lost and families displaced. Today, the DRC faces one of the largest global hunger crises, with over 27 million people in urgent need of food.

**Christian Aid** is working with trusted local partners to deliver a financial assistance programme, which offers immediate emergency aid to families who've fled their homes – supporting mothers to protect their children from hunger, malnutrition, disease and pain."

Chance is one of these refugees.

She was living peacefully, working with her husband in their shop and looking after their children. Then as violence came near to their village she had to flee with her children, carrying her baby who was wearing only a nappy. She does not know whether her husband is still alive.



*Christian Aid/ Esther Nsapu*



*Fetching water is a constant ordeal.  
Christian Aid/ Esther Nsapu*

She reached the refugee camp at Katashola after days travelling on foot, but now the family have nothing, and life is hard. Chance worries constantly about her children and struggles to keep them safe. While many of us share a joyful and peaceful Christmas in our homes and churches, we invite you to consider families like Chance's - facing unimaginable hardship after fleeing violence.

## **Please make a donation to the Appeal**

You can:

- give generously if you are in Church on Christmas Day
- go to the Christian Aid website [Christmas Appeal 2025 | Christian Aid](#) and click the Donate button
- call [020 7523 2269](tel:02075232269) to donate over the phone
- send postal donations (cheques) to: Christian Aid, 35-41 Lower Marsh, London, SE1 7RL

And if you can, don't forget to gift aid your donation.

And for January 2026 ..... Could your **New Year's Resolution** be to help to support Christian Aid?

As the world becomes less stable, and as rich nations tighten the purse strings of aid, **Christian Aid** has never been more needed for its work to give support to the victims of conflict, natural disasters and climate change. **Christian Aid** raises funds from Churches of different denominations throughout the British Isles.

## **How does **Christian Aid** work in Cambridge?**

The world has changed for **Christian Aid**, just as it has for many charities – and other organisations. Much of CA's work is carried out on-line now, the traditional house to house collection has become much rarer, and is often replaced by fundraising events. There is still a "Committee," in Cambridge, but now it is called a Supporters' Group, and formal titles – Chair, Treasurer, Secretary – are no longer used. The group's members come from different Churches around Cambridge.

The Group organises the ecumenical **Christian Aid Week** service, and a thank you tea for volunteers, and any other events throughout the year, such as the carol singing in December. It acts as a clearing house for information about events being planned throughout the Greater Cambridge area. A “round robin” e-mail goes out to supporters and Church Organisers regularly. The group meet, often by Zoom, about four times a year. The Supporters’ Group would love to have new members, especially if they bring digital expertise. But all are welcome.

Each of the participating Churches has an **Organiser** – a person from the congregation, occasionally the Minister/Vicar, who is responsible for keeping up with CA information, ordering materials for **Christian Aid Week** and other appeals, arranging events in their Church and keeping **Christian Aid** visible there, and paying in funds raised. The Supporters’ group liaise with the Organisers and support them when they can.

The Organiser for Downing Place is Sheila Porrer. She is supported by the WCPI group, and works alongside Commitment for Life, the URC’s own international aid charity, which also gives much of the funds it raises to **Christian Aid**. Sheila will not go on for ever .... and would be glad to know that someone is willing to take over in future. She is happy to hear from anyone who might be interested in working in support of CA and answer any questions.

So if you think you would be able to join the Supporters’ group, or represent Downing Place as Organiser, drop a line to Sheila ([sheila.porrer@virginmedia.com](mailto:sheila.porrer@virginmedia.com)), or to any of the Elders or Officers.

Thank you, and Happy New Year!

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## CHRISTMAS CARDS



As we have done in the past few years, there will be the opportunity for members and friends to bring greetings to all of Downing Place with one Christmas card, which will be displayed in the Hub.

Any money saved, by not sending multiple cards can,  
if you wish be donated to Christian Aid.



## INSIGHTS INTO OUR RECENT JUNIOR CHURCH SESSIONS

On Remembrance Sunday, our session began with a few rounds of the classic memory game, Kim's Game. The children memorised a collection of random objects and then raced to be the first to spot which one had been removed.

We then listened to a story about a Middle Eastern man whose neighbour used wisdom and cunning to settle a dispute over camels before it became unpleasant. For the craft activity, everyone made some excellent poppies. While we worked, we talked about how poppies came to be a symbol of remembrance, and the children discussed what they do in school on 11th November.



In the middle of November, inspired by Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, we explored why helping out and doing our share matters.

We learned that Paul was talking about those who choose not to work – not those who can't – and how communities flourish when everyone contributes what they can. We chatted about chores at home, acted out different tasks, and read Arnold Lobel's 'Tomorrow' from 'Days with Frog and Toad', which reminded us that putting jobs off often makes life harder, while getting things done brings a sense of relief and joy. Using the Usborne book 'Things People Do', we imagined future jobs and even made origami salt cellars to pick roles we'd enjoy. We learned that when we all do our part, life runs more smoothly, and we feel better too!



*Elza de Bruin, Lorraine Thornton and Jess Uden, with thanks to all the leaders and helpers for their contributions to the work of Junior Church.*

## SPECIAL CAUSE FOR DECEMBER: MOORFIELDS EYE CHARITY



NHS charities enable the NHS to do more than would otherwise be possible. Moorfields Eye Charity raises money for research breakthroughs, leading education, state-of-the-art equipment and innovative new approaches to service delivery which benefit patients with sight loss at Moorfields and worldwide.

[Moorfields Eye Charity | Funding world-leading eye research](#)

Current research projects include research into the prevention of sight loss due to diabetes -

Diabetic retinopathy occurs as a complication of diabetes when high blood sugar (glucose) levels cause damage to the retina. The retina is made up of layers of light-detecting cells at the back of the eye. If left untreated, diabetic retinopathy can result in blindness. However, it takes a long period of time for the stages of diabetic retinopathy to progress to a point where your vision is affected.

Other projects supported by Moorfields Eye Charity include:

- Increasing early diagnosis of glaucoma
- Identifying new ways of treating uveal melanoma
- Transforming specialist eye care
- Mental health support for young people

See [Research and innovation | Moorfields Eye Charity](#).



## SPECIAL CAUSE FOR JANUARY: LYN'S HOUSE



Lyn's House began in 2013, as a Cambridge experiment in shared hospitality inspired by the international movements L'Arche and Faith and Light, and it has grown into a Christian-inspired community that fosters life-enhancing friendships between people with and without learning disabilities. It seeks to build a place of hospitality and joy in which relationships across the spectrum of intellectual ability can be fostered and celebrated, and their transformational value proclaimed.

The name "Lyn's House" came from an early friend and supporter, and the project moved from informal hospitality in volunteers' homes to a dedicated Victorian house on De Freville Avenue as the idea matured. Its residents were postgraduate students and young professionals committed to the vision of inclusion and friendship, and with the help of a team of volunteers and other supporters they regularly opened their home to adults with intellectual disabilities who would visit, not to receive care or any other service, but simply to share meals and spend time together.





Though Lyn's House has subsequently moved to Grange Road, and passed through many cycles of residents, it continues to hold weekly dinner parties, monthly tea parties, and all manner of other events, outings, and celebrations. By sharing in the life of the community, adults with intellectual disabilities are able to participate in patterns of social life their peers without disabilities enjoy; residents and volunteers receive a contrasting experience from that of the often intensely competitive settings in which they work; and all involved are offered the possibility to have their lives enriched by lasting friendships. In all it does, Lyn's House strives to be a place in which the Christian message is made plain: that you are valuable not for what you achieve, but for who you are.

Lyn's House relies on volunteers from local colleges, churches, and neighbourhoods to host and support events, and it publishes news and updates about activities, volunteer needs, and fundraising on its website and news pages. **The emphasis remains on hospitality, mutuality, and simple, repeated opportunities to eat, talk, and spend time together.**

**Lyn's House in Cambridge is a registered UK charity.** Its official name is The Cambridge Friendship Trust, and it was granted charitable status in 2020. You can see a gallery of photos here <https://lynshouse.org/gallery/>



## **WAYS OF GIVING TO OUR SPECIAL CAUSES**

- Monthly Retiring Collection on the month's third Sunday (cash, cheque or card)
- Monday/Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts (cash or card)
- Direct to the church bank account (reference SPECIAL CAUSE)
- Via our website - the '**Donate**' button is on the homepage, just below the 'Welcome' section. Select **Special Donations** as the fund
- Directly to the charity website



# TAKE A BREATH



An Advent event for families

Take time to:

Listen - Wonder- Play - Create

An afternoon to share in an  
OutoftheBox story.

Make, play, sing and snack together.

*Suitable for families  
with children & young people of all ages*

Saturday 20 December, 3 - 4.30pm

Downing Place URC, CB2 3EL

For more information and to sign up:  
<https://tinyurl.com/advent-takeabreath>






# Longest Night



A space for those of us who find Christmas hard,  
where we can quietly reflect on messages  
of love, peace, and light.




**Sunday 21st December**  
**Downing Place URC**



Refreshments from 7pm,  
moving into a time of reflection from 7.30pm



You are very welcome at this gathering  
whatever your beliefs, identity, or age.



The gathering is co-facilitated by  
Downing Place United Reformed Church  
and Wesley Methodist Church





# lighten the darkness

Readings, music and reflections, led by  
Augur Pearce with Cambridge Voices

Downing Place  
United Reformed Church  
Sunday 11th January, 4pm

## DECEMBER & JANUARY CALENDAR

Tues 2 Dec	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14.30	Online
Wed 3 Dec	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Brenda Dykes (flute) & Christopher Moore (piano)	13:00	Main Church
Wed 3 Dec	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thur 4 Dec	Midweek Worship led by Dr Augur Pearce	11:00	Main Church
Thur 4 Dec	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Fri 5 Dec	CU Michaelmas Full-term ends	All Day	-
Fri 5 Dec	Gibson Christmas Lunch	12.30	Cambridge Regional College
Sun 7 Dec	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun 7 Dec	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Revd Dr. Janet Tollington	11:00	Main Church
Mon 8 Dec	Officers' Meeting	10:15	Room 3
Mon 8 Dec	Monday Lunchtime Concert – Tung Khng Chua (piano)	13:00	Main Church
Tues 9 Dec	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church
Wed 10 Dec	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert – Ian de Massini (organ)	13:00	Main Church
Wed 10 Dec	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thur 11 Dec	Prayer Meeting	10:15	St Columba's Chapel
Thur 11 Dec	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Professor David Thompson	11:00	Main Church
Thur 11 Dec	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Fri 12 Dec	Traditional Carol Service	10:30	Main Church
Sun 14 Dec	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun 14 Dec	Sunday Worship led by the Children's Ministry Team with Dr Janet Bottoms	11:00	Main Church



Sun 14 Dec	Solidarity Hub	14:00	t.b.c – contact Office
Mon 15 Dec	Monday Lunchtime Concert – Aliya Turetayeva (piano)	13:00	Main Church
Tues 16 Dec	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church
Wed 17 Dec	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Cambridge Voices Christmas Concert	13:00	Main Church
Wed 17 Dec	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thur 18 Dec	Midweek Worship led by Dr Alan Rickard	11:00	Main Church
Thur 18 Dec	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Sat 20 Dec	Take A Breath – Out of the Box Advent event	15:00	Gibson Hall
Sun 21 Dec	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun 21 Dec	Sunday Worship, led by Dr Augur Pearce	11:00	Main Church
Sun 21 Dec	Retiring collection for our monthly Special Cause	12:00	Main Church
Sun 21 Dec	Lunchtime Concert - Ian de Massini	12:45	Main Church
Sun 21 Dec	Open Table Cambridge Service – Longest Night	19:00	Main Church
Wed 24 Dec	Christmas Eve Holy Communion led by the Revd Professor David Thompson	19:30	Main Church
Thur 25 Dec	Christmas Day All Age Service led by Jane Bower	11:00	Main Church
Sun 28 Dec	Sunday Worship led by the Revd Elizabeth Caswell	11:00	Main Church
Sun 28 Dec	Solidarity Hub	19:00	The Hub
Sun 4 Jan	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun 4 Jan	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Rev. David Tatem	11:00	Main Church
Mon 5 Jan	Officers' Meeting	10:15	Room 3



Tue 6 Jan	Epiphany	All Day	-
Tue 6 Jan	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church
Wed 7 Jan	Lunchtime Concert - Trio Thalassa	13:00	Main Church
Wed 7 Jan	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Wed 7 Jan	Finance Committee meeting	19:00	Room 3
Wed 7 Jan	Property Group Meeting	19:00	Online
Thurs 8 Jan	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Reverend Prof. David Thompson	11:00	Main Church
Thur 8 Jan	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Sun 11 Jan	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun 11 Jan	Sunday Worship, led by Mrs Penny Flynn	11:00	Main Church
Sun 11 Jan	Solidarity Hub	14:00	t.b.c – contact Office
Sun 11 Jan	Worship for Epiphany, with Cambridge Voices. Led by Dr Augur Pearce	16:00	Main Church
Tue 13 Jan	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church
Tues 13 Jan	Worship, Discipleship & Spirituality Group Meeting	19:30	Online
Wed 14 Jan	Lunchtime Concert – Rishi Merchandani (piano)	13:00	Main Church
Wed 14 Jan	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thur 15 Jan	Midweek Worship, led by Simone Maghenzani	11:00	Main Church
Thur 15 Jan	Gibson Lunch	12:30	Gibson Hall
Thur 15 Jan	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Thur 15 Jan	Elders Meeting	19:30	Main Online
Sun 18 Jan	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity		
Sun 18 Jan	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun 18 Jan	Sunday Worship, led by Dr Augur Pearce with the Rev. Edward Green	11:00	Main Church

Sun 18 Jan	Retiring Collection for the Monthly Special Cause	12:00	Main Church
Sun 18 Jan	Open Table Cambridge Service	19:00	The Hub
Tue 20 Jan	University of Cambridge Lent Full Term begins	All Day	-
Tue 20 Jan	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church
Wed 21 Jan	Lunchtime Concert – Ryan Sheng (piano)	13:00	Main Church
Wed 21 Jan	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thur 22 Jan	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Reverend John Proctor	11:00	Main Church
Thur 22 Jan	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Sun 25 Jan	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun 25 Jan	Sunday Worship, led by the Rev. Dr Janet Tollington	11:00	Main Church
Sun 25 Jan	Solidarity Hub	19:00	The Hub
Tue 27 Jan	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church
Wed 28 Jan	Lunchtime Concert - The Rockingham Duo	13:00	Main Church
Wed 28 Jan	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thu 29 Jan	Midweek Worship, led by Jane Bower	11:00	Main Church
Thu 29 Jan	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Sun 1 Feb	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun 1 Feb	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Rev. Rose Westwood	11:00	Main Church
Sun 1 Feb	Open Table Cambridge social event	18:00	The Hub
Mon 2 Feb	Officers' Meeting	10:15	Room 3
Wed 4 Feb	Lunchtime Concert – Elmore String Quartet	13:00	Main Church
Wed 4 Feb	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub

## LUNCHTIME CONCERTS IN DECEMBER



*Image by StillVision Photography*

### DECEMBER

Wednesday 3 December

Brenda Dykes (flute)  
& Christopher Moore (piano)

Monday 8 December

Tung Khng Chua (piano)

Wednesday 10 December

Ian de Massini (organ)

Monday 15 December

Aliya Turetayeva (piano)

Wednesday 17 December

Cambridge Voices Christmas Concert

### JANUARY

Wednesday 7 January

Trio Thalassa

Wednesday 14 January

Rishi Merchandani (piano)

Wednesday 21 January

Ronojit Bhuyan (piano)

Wednesday 28 January

The Rockingham Duo

Wednesday 4 February

Elmore String Quartet

There will be no concert on Monday 22, Wednesday 24, Monday 29,  
Wednesday 31 December or Monday 5 January

All concerts are free of charge with a retiring collection which is split between our monthly cause and church funds. Refreshments are available after Wednesday concerts in the Hub, as part of our Hub Hospitality initiative.

## MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE IN DECEMBER



### 7th Dec

Chris Baker - Stetchworth & Cheveley URC  
Elizabeth Caswell – Fulbourn URC

### 14th Dec

Penny Flynn – Fulbourn URC  
Janet Tollington – Saffron Walden  
Simone Maghenzani – St Neots URC  
Elizabeth Caswell – Stetchworth & Cheveley URC  
David Tatem, Buntingford URC

### 21st Dec

Chris Baker - Wicken Methodist Church  
David Cornick – Clare URC

### 4th Jan

Janet Tollington – Saffron Walden URC  
Augur Pearce – Melbourn URC

### 11th Jan

Janet Tollington – Buntingford URC

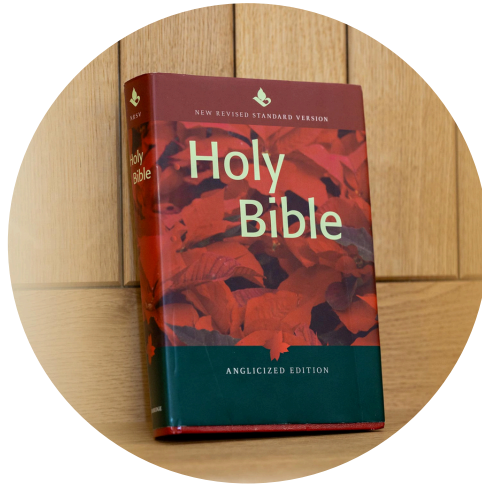
### 18th Jan

Chris Baker – Melbourn URC  
Janet Tollington – Bassingbourn  
Simone Maghenzani – Via Virle Free Church, Turin  
David Cornick – Clare URC

### 25th Jan

David Tatem – St Luke's, Victoria Road

## LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER



These are the readings suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary, as in ROOTS, the material used by our Children's Ministry team.

They may be altered if that is the preacher's wish.

7 December 2025

Advent 2

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

25 December

Christmas Day

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalms 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

14 December 2025

Advent 3

Isaiah 35:1-10

Luke 1:46b-55

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

28 December

Christmas 1

Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalms 148

Hebrews 2:10-18

Matthew 2:13-23

21 December 2025

Advent 4

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25





## LECTIONARY FOR JANUARY



These are the readings suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary, as in ROOTS, the material used by our Children's Ministry team.

They may be altered if that is the preacher's wish.

### 4 January 2026

#### Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 72

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

### 25 January 2026

#### Epiphany 3

Isaiah 9:1-4

Psalms 27:1,4-9 1

Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

### 11 January 2026

#### Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalms 29

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 3:13-17

### 1 February 2026

#### Epiphany 4

Micah 6:1-8

Psalms 15 1

Corinthians 1:18-31

Matthew 5:1-12

### 18 January 2026

#### Epiphany 2

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalms 40:1-11 1

Corinthians 1:1-9

John 1:29-42





*Front & Back cover photos - taken by Jess Uden*

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ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

Please send items to the Editor and Jess Uden - preferably by email  
(see above)

WEB EDITOR: Jess Uden [jess@downingplaceurc.org](mailto:jess@downingplaceurc.org)

Please send items to be included in the February edition no later than  
January 16th

