



**DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE**

PLACE MATTERS



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



The full 'Wolf Moon' in early January - taken by Tim Rowland

A LETTER FROM A MEMBER—JANET BOTTOMS

Editor: with Downing Place URC ‘in vacancy’, I am grateful to those church members, lay and ordained, who agreed to my request that they write something for readers in Place Matters, much as our Minister had until his recent retirement. This month it’s Janet.

Dear friends,

It seems a little late to be wishing you a “Happy New Year” in February, but it has always seemed to me to be a doorway month: what the new year brings is still to be explored but what we brought through from the old has yet to find its place or to be binned. For me, one image from 2025 still haunts me - a newspaper photograph of a man posed on a rocky peak. It reminded me of the picture that celebrated the first conquest of Mount Everest, many years ago, but what the man in this picture held triumphantly aloft was not a flag but a cross. Though the rock turned out to be the head of a lion in Trafalgar Square, what really startled me was the focus on the cross. It both shocked and challenged.

The shock lay in the cross being used as the symbol of “a new Christian revival in the UK – a moment to reclaim and celebrate our heritage, culture and Christian identity”, and the man holding it was “Tommy Robinson”. Before a crowd of more than 110,000 followers he explained that he had “looked deeply over the past few years about what we are fighting for” and discovered that “what made Britain” was Christianity. This would therefore be the driving force of his movement to Unite the Country in defence of “God, faith, family, homeland”. In his view the corollary was, of course, the need to expel all who were either not born into this homeland or had no place in it by reason of their colour, culture or religion since they could not be expected to understand “British values”.

Of course it is – in part - true that what “made Britain” was Christianity. Most of the Western nations do, or did, call themselves Christian and were influenced by Christian teaching, albeit within societies structured by inequalities in power and wealth. The gradual changes that have taken place over the course of our history also owe much to continual “reformations” within the understanding of Christianity in both the churches and the state. What startled and shocked me in that newspaper picture was the appropriation of the cross as a symbol for what is so fundamentally un-Christian as a rejection of the basic Christian commandment to “love your neighbour as yourself”. That is also why it presented a challenge.

The churches were the first to see this challenge and their response, at various levels, has been mixed. Some took the form of immediate rejection of

Robinson's words and a strong warning against right-wing "Christian nationalism". Some felt that if he had truly experienced a conversion in prison he should be respected and encouraged to explore it more deeply. In the immediate aftermath of the Trafalgar Square rally many local churches of all denominations were also surprised to find people turning up in them and unprepared for "what to do with" them or how to talk to them. As Steve Chalke, a Baptist minister and founder of the Oasis Trust said, Christian nationalism is like a cancer in the body and we should not ignore it, but we need also to "create community, belonging, hope. Britain is not only a post-Christian society, now it's post-secular. People are searching for meaning and purpose."

So the challenge is not just for church leaders and ministers: it is for all of us. How would we tell someone else what the cross means to us, personally? How would we respond if they replied that the answer they had been given by another Christian was different? How would we describe the "values" we share as followers of Christ? How would we . . . well, perhaps these are some of the questions to carry with us into 2026. As we do so we might turn to a hymn in Rejoice and Sing (no 422), an old one, but with new verses written by the Rev Dr Stephen Orchard, a former Principal of Westminster College and member of Emmanuel, and based on lines from the epistles of Paul.

Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim, till all the world adore his sacred name.

May it be so, and may you have a very blessed and joyful 2026.

Janet



Hand holding cross at sunset - Casiana Malaia via Canva Pro

SANDRA LUNT- A PROFILE

I was born in Bellshill, Scotland and lived for three years in Durham. In 1949 my father bought a dental practice in Galashiels in the Scottish Borders, and that became home. Nearly 80 years later we still have the house as a holiday home and now it is the grandchildren who sleep in my childhood bedroom.

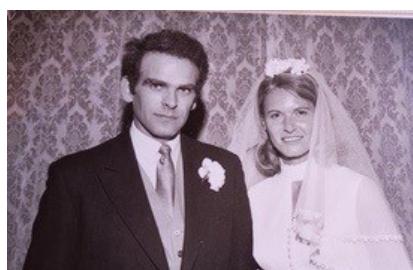
At Craigmount School, a boarding school in Minto Village, some 14 miles away, we had a daily Christian Union meeting and I joined the Church of Scotland in the parish church in Minto, feeling slightly disappointed that we wore our usual school coat and hat. Our Anglican cohort were confirmed in Hawick wearing white dresses!

After school I continued to study French and German at Strathclyde University and became a member of Shawlands Parish Church. I soon found a separate youth group, which was run by the local Congregational church, where the minister was Vera Kenmure, Scotland's first woman minister.

At the end of my second year at Strathclyde, I had a temporary summer vacation job with the translator at Pringle of Scotland, the knitwear company in Hawick. When she failed to return from holiday and messaged to say she had a new job in Brussels, the directors came to me and offered me the chance to swap study for a salary - and I agreed. My time there coincided with the arrival of a young lawyer who was looking to break into politics. I became one of his groupies and at the election in 1965, David Steele became MP for the local area and after a lengthy political career, he retired officially from the House of Lords in 2020.

I returned to Glasgow in 1966 when the new Glasgow Airport was opened for international traffic. As multilingual information assistants, we were chosen as ambassadors for Scottish tourism. A new range of words was added to my foreign vocabulary - 'operational difficulties', and 'delayed due to the late arrival of the incoming aircraft', joined my recently learned vocabulary of buttonholes and raglan sleeves.

After an introduction from a colleague and his delayed flight to Belfast, I met Morcom, a production engineering consultant, who first invited me for a coffee, and many other opportunities for meaningful chats. We were married in the summer of 1972 and settled in Morcom's house in Lenzie. After a change of jobs, we relocated to Ponteland, close to the headquarters of the company, a shipyard design



Sandra and Morcom in 1972

consultancy, and found ourselves commuting to Birkenhead where Morcom was advising Cammell Laird Shipbuilders. I started as a volunteer for the Family Planning Association and enjoyed exploring a new area. Our daughter Erica was born in Liverpool Maternity Hospital, and attending antenatal classes involved taking the ferry 'cross the Mersey', where a group of commuters would take their daily exercise walking round the deck.

A new job and our next move took us further south to Cuffley, close to Potters Bar, and our son Iain was born in 1977, a Jubilee Baby. We became members at Cuffley Free Church, which was affiliated to the Baptist Church. I learned later that Keith Riglin, as a teenager, had preached his first sermon in Cuffley. During this time I became involved with the National Eczema Society and eventually became a member of the executive committee. When Persil introduced their biological soap powder, the complaints flooded in from people affected by irritated skin. We were able to 'persuade' Persil to re-introduce their original soap

powder and in compensation they funded several of the leaflets that the Society was producing.

A move to Cambridge after 10 years brought new challenges with finding schools and then a church. My father visited from Scotland and returned triumphantly from exploring Cambridge to announce that he had found the Church of Scotland in St Columba's on Downing Street. That was nearly 40 years ago and we have benefited from involvement



The family with puppies

with the sound system, including sending recordings to a church in South Korea, Junior Church, Christian Aid and editing the church magazine. We were fortunate to have Pamela Cressey as our first elder and that brought us many happy connections. I remember hospitality at the Lodge, Westminster College, Pamela's medical practice in Over, the World Church Mission Committee and memorably, helping with clothing for refugees at Oakington where Pamela was one of the chaplains. We learned quickly to look after our own coats as they were in danger of being selected by the asylum seekers and disappearing before our eyes!

Settling in Cambridge enabled me to return to volunteering with the Family Planning Association until the decision was taken by headquarters to close all their branch offices.

I then went to work at Addenbrookes Hospital in the Oncology Bed Manager's department. This gave me an interesting insight into the pressures felt in an expanding busy department and a decision to stay on in Cambridge when retirement arrived. The fact that we have a bus at the end of the road which takes us to the station and on to the hospital, was a contributory factor there too.

With our son and family heading off to work abroad, we found ourselves travelling to places that hadn't appeared on our bucket list (if we had had one). Our travels took us to Tbilisi in Georgia, Kiev in Ukraine, Moscow and then, thankfully London. Granddaughter #1 was born in Kiev and #2 in Moscow. The sad reality for them is that it is probably unlikely that they will be able to visit in years to come, though we have happy memories of earlier visits. Our daughter produced our first grandson in London but before he was a year old, they left for Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, for a 2 year contract. Somehow this morphed into their staying there and having 3 more children, this time born locally. That involved us in several visits to a very different part of the world. We were intrigued to find that when the UAE was set up in 1971, Sheikh Zayed gave a piece of land to the people of other faiths. We have attended services at St Andrews, the Anglican Church there, though the family now attend an American Evangelical Church. There is also a Roman

Catholic Church and a synagogue.



The whole family 2025

Opportunities of being together as a family have been hampered by distance so we were delighted to have a family Christmas in December, not on the 25th but on the one day everyone could be in Cambridge.

Having spent our church life in Downing Place, first with Ernest Marvin, Sidney Evans, Keith Riglin and of course, Nigel Uden, we have enjoyed the fellowship and friendships developed there. With the

merging of Emmanuel and the creation of DPURC, I was grateful to Owen for his coffee morning break-out groups during Covid, to enable us to get to know some of the 'other' congregation - and with the welcome addition of names on the screen.

As we move into a new year, we are grateful to those who enable the church life to flow, and await with interest a new minister to lead us into the next phase of life in Downing Place church.

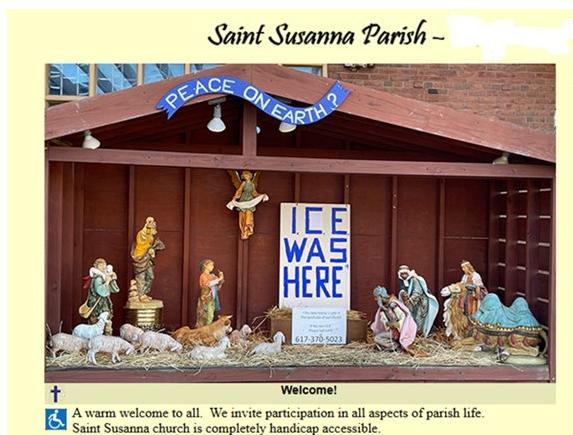
FROM GALILEE TO JUDAEA: THE IMMIGRANT

Editor: last December, David Thompson led the Christmas Eve communion service at Downing Place URC. The Christian church needs to be ready to speak into the ongoing debate about the topic addressed in it, and David has kindly agreed to the inclusion of the following extracts from his sermon in this issue of Place Matters. His theme reiterates, in a different national context, that of Janet Bottoms' letter (pp. 4-5), and forbodes the shooting of intensive care nurse Alex Petti by Border Patrol agents in Minneapolis on 24th January 2026.

Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

Much of what we say to one another at this time of year, now often simply dubbed 'the festive season', as though there was only one (how boring that would be) involves trying to discern what the 'true meaning of Christmas' really is. And here there are clear disagreements. Earlier in the month there was a story that caught my eye in the New York Times. Headlined 'Massachusetts Church Keeps Anti-ICE Nativity Scene, Defying Diocesan Leaders', it describes a Nativity display at St Susanna's Catholic Church in Dedham, Massachusetts. It includes the traditional shepherds, sheep and wise men gathered around a hay-filled manger. But Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus are missing, replaced by a sign reading 'ICE WAS HERE' in bold blue letters. 'The Holy Family is safe in the Sanctuary of our Church' adds a smaller note inside the Nativity scene, which is protected by a plastic shield. 'If you see ICE, please call LUCE' and adds a telephone number for LUCE, an immigrant advocacy group, which tracks the activity of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Massachusetts, the state where the immigration enforcement campaign in the Boston area began last September.

The parish priest told reporters outside the church that the display was intended to 'evoke dialogue', not cause a furore, and parish leaders would confer with leaders of the archdiocese before making a final decision on the display. But he added, 'that some do not agree with our display does not render it



From a slideshow at Saint Susanna Parish Home Page, with permission

sacrilegious'. Nevertheless, the diocesan authorities told the parish the following week to take down the sign in the display. I have not seen any subsequent reports that it did.

Members of the parish said that they were confused by the demand, because in November the U.S. Catholic bishops made a rare and nearly unanimous statement condemning the Trump administration's aggressive immigration enforcement campaign, the legality of which is itself in question. Apparently, St Susanna's, located in a busy street in a well-off suburb south of Boston, has developed a reputation for controversial Nativity displays in recent years, which have been noticed by Christians from other denominations. An Episcopalian who lives in the parish said that she and many of her neighbours looked forward to the displays every year, 'You might not agree with everything, but it makes you think,' she said.

The archdiocese in its condemnation said that 'churchgoers have the right to expect that they will encounter genuine opportunities for prayer and Catholic worship - not divisive political messaging.' Of course, everything depends on how you define 'divisive political messaging'. Others might say that to repeat the timeless stories of the birth of Jesus and ignore the contemporary realities of life in Bethlehem, surrounded by its border wall and only too familiar with the bitter realities of war, is itself to ignore the true meaning of Christmas. For at least the last decade the context of the birth of Jesus has been brought vividly to life in contemporary events: first, the birth in a stable reminded us of Jesus as a homeless person; then the story of Herod's revenge with the massacre of the innocents after the wise men failed to return, enabled us to see Jesus as a refugee; then we were alerted to the way in which those to whom the initial message came, the shepherds, were not highly regarded in their own society, and may represent the poor to whom good news is declared.

As a church, we have never exploited the possibilities of the Welcome Area as a place for a Christmas display. What, I wonder, would we choose to put in it, that actually represented anything from the nativity stories in the Gospels? Perhaps we might reflect on that some time. Since we do not have any eye-witness accounts of what happened on the night Jesus was born, we are dependent on the traditional tales that were included in the Gospels. What was revealed was a different understanding of the nature of God, which turned traditional understandings of power and glory upside down.

David Thompson



Downing Place URC

AN INSIGHT INTO OUR RECENT JUNIOR CHURCH SESSIONS

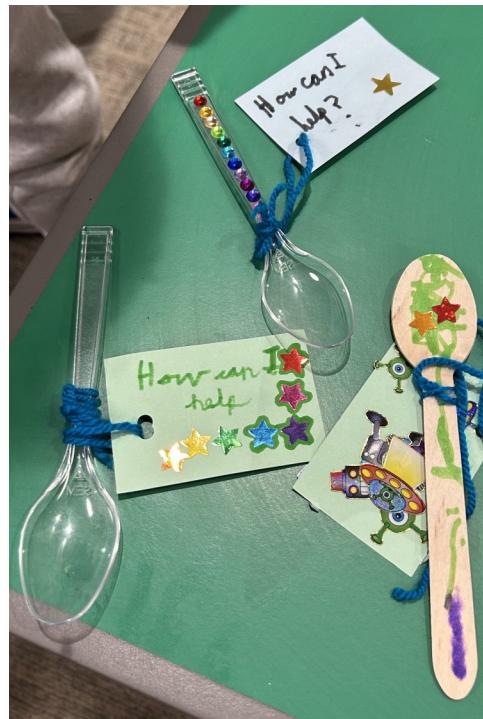


Throughout Advent we prepared to celebrate the birth of Jesus. On 14 December, we led the morning service with Dr Janet Bottoms. It was such a happy occasion. During the service, we created a nativity scene on the communion table. The angels and sheep the children had made over previous weeks joined buildings made by Andy Mackenzie and the knitted and crochet figures we have used in past years.

After the joy of Christmas, on Epiphany Sunday, David Tatem reminded us about the (possibly three!) wise men. In Junior Church we went on a hunt for them and reflected on how they followed the star to Jesus; ‘the light of the world’. We played a hiding-and-finding “the light” game and then made star calendars to remind us that Jesus is with us every day, and we can show his light through what we say and do.

The next weekend we were delighted to welcome a large group to Junior Church, with 13 children and young people attending. We began by talking about what time of year it was, with suggestions such as New Year, January and winter all correct. One of the young people also identified Epiphany, which led to a discussion about the church year. Together, the children sorted the seasons of the church year into the correct order using a pie-chart puzzle. The younger children heard the story of the baptism of Jesus and created pictures to illustrate the scene.

On Sunday 25 January, while the congregation took part in a service on the theme of stewardship, we had a busy morning thinking about how we as individuals and as a church can help others. The children collected items placed round the room representing basic needs of life, including warm clothing, food, drink, shelter, company, and healing. They recognised that money was also needed to provide many of these things. We then matched the items to how people would be feeling if they didn't have these basic comforts e.g. cold, hungry, thirsty, ill, lonely. We talked about seeing homeless people in Cambridge sleeping on the street, the work of Food Banks and the welcome and hospitality offered to people in the Hub before starting to think about what they could do in a small way to help others. Next up we enjoyed the story of Percy the Park Keeper, who gave the animals of the park a bed for the night on 'One Snowy Night' and then made a poster and decorated 'How can I help?' spoons as a reminder that anything they can do to help others is following in the steps of Jesus and helping Him 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.

CLIMATE CHANGE PROTESTERS ON TRIAL: CRIMINAL OR COURAGEOUS?



Climate change activists were deeply frustrated when the Government (Rishi Sunak) reversed policy and agreed it would allow new oil and gas licences in the UK. Repeatedly the papers showed protesters climbing up on gantries overhanging the M25. This was peaceful – but illegal.

Oil licenses and protest rights are very controversial. The recent trials of these “gantry action” protestors resulted in a confusing range of verdicts: from “not guilty” and “guilty,” with sentences ranging from a few months suspended to 5 years, as well as fines. Strategically, this same government had passed the new Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, which criminalised: ‘intentionally or recklessly causing a public nuisance,’ now defined as an act that ‘creates a risk of or causes serious harm to the public or a section of the public.’ Worryingly, the definition of ‘serious harm’ includes ‘serious annoyance or serious inconvenience’ ¹.

In fact, the 5-year sentence was reduced on appeal to 4 years ². Apparently the average sentence for home burglary is about 2.5 years in the UK.

Further trials of M25 gantry action protests on 19 March, 11 September and 2 October 2025 have inconsistently applied the following four judicial grounds:

1. European Convention for Human Rights (ECHR) Article 10 provides the right to freedom of expression; Article 11 provides the right to peaceful assembly.
2. Agreed Facts: In judicial terms, “Agreed facts exist precisely to establish the uncontested backdrop against which actions are judged.” ³ Agreed facts are a standard court procedure: “The statement of case should include a short statement of agreed facts and/or matters resolved, if any.” ⁴

3. Reasonable Excuse: “If the person has taken reasonable steps and still fails to meet their obligation due to the other person's failure, they may have a reasonable excuse.” [5](#)

4. The role of the jury in a Crown Court trial: “A judge can direct a jury to find a defendant not guilty (for example following a successful submission of no case to answer), but cannot direct a jury to find a defendant guilty under any circumstances.” [6](#)

On 2 October 2025, in the most recent trial for the same M25 gantry action (on 8 November 2022), at Southwark Crown Court, all six defendants were found guilty, charged with the statutory “intentionally or recklessly causing a public nuisance.” [7](#)

In this 2 October case “the prosecution refused to agree to any facts on the climate crisis to be included in evidence.” The Just Stop Oil website noted this as “a break from every previous Just Stop Oil trial for gantry actions on the M25.” In this trial, the judge also ruled out “all legal defences, including the statutory defence of ‘reasonable excuse’, as well as the defences of necessity, Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and implied consent.” In addition, the defendants’ actions were considered to involve “criminal trespass or criminal damage,” that “significantly weakened the protections afforded by Articles 10 and 11” of the ECHR.

One of the protesters on trial on 2 October was Andrew Dames, described as “63, a quaker, engineer and father of four from Cambridge.” After the “guilty” ruling Andrew Dames said: “We thank the jury, their hands were tied. Our government’s continued commitment to No New Oil, that we and the country asked for – that is all that matters”. [8](#)

After the Labour election victory on 4 July 2024 and “the new governments’ commitment to end new oil and gas licensing,” Just Stop Oil (JSO) reckoned it had successfully won its first demand of ‘no new oil and gas.’ Taking their inspiration from Suffragettes in the 1920s and Freedom Riders in the 1960s, JSO supporters posted on 10 July 2024: “Civil resistance works. In the past year we have seen victories in Sweden and the Netherlands and now the UK.” [9](#)

The Government subsequently stated, in a consultation paper on 5 March 2025, “... while we will manage existing oil and gas fields for their lifespan, the

government committed not to issue licences to explore new fields.” [10](#)

On March 27th 2025, Just Stop Oil announced an end to its campaign of action. [11](#) Recently, on 5 December, Andrew Dames was sentenced to serve 40% of 26 months and was required to pay £4380 in costs.

Afterwards he repeated his words spoken at the groups’ conviction, “Our government’s continued commitment to No New Oil, that we and the country asked for, that is all that matters”. [12](#)



Andrew was taken directly to Wandsworth Prison Friday 5 December in a secure van, and then transferred to Brixton Prison. His wife, Melinda Rigby, had her first permitted visit on 3 January.

Margaret Reynolds

1. <https://gardencourtchambers.co.uk/six-just-stop-oil-protestors-found-not-guilty-of-conspiring-to-commit-a-public-nuisance-on-the-m25/>
2. <https://juststopoil.org/2025/03/19/six-just-stop-oil-supporters-not-guilty-as-m25-conspiracy-trial-scrapes-the-evidence-barrel/>
3. <https://juststopoil.org/2025/10/02/six-just-stop-oil-supporters-found-guilty-after-judge-denies-all-legal-defences-and-cps-denies-climate-crisis/>
4. <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/appeals-reviews-and-tribunals-guidance/artg8395>
5. <https://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/technical-activities/uk-tech/in-practice-ezine-archive/In-Practice-archive-2025/February/Understanding-reasonable-excuses-late-tax-returns.html>
6. <https://www.defence-barrister.co.uk/crown-court-trial-jury>
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/nov/05/just-stop-oil-protesters-convicted-after-being-denied-right-to-state-climate-facts>
8. <https://juststopoil.org/2025/10/02/six-just-stop-oil-supporters-found-guilty-after-judge-denies-all-legal-defences-and-cps-denies-climate-crisis/>
9. <https://juststopoil.org/2024/07/10/paint-the-town-orange-just-stop-oil-wins-first-demand/>
10. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-the-north-seas-energy-future/building-the-north-seas-en>
11. <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/03/27/climate/just-stop-oil-ends-disruption-intl/>
12. <https://juststopoil.org/2025/12/05/four-just-stop-oil-supporters-jailed-for-up-to-30-months-for-m25-gantry-action-while-two-walk-free/>

OUR VISIT TO A 'REPAIR CAFÉ'

Judy and Tim Rowland write:

For some years, probably more than we care to remember, a brass finish floor lamp has stood in a corner of our living room. It was just what was needed when trying to read as the light faded, and it had a lot of use over many years. But – some time last year the bright, energy-efficient LED light bulb stopped working. We bought a new bulb, but that didn't work either. Our two sons, both with some experience of electrical repairs, tried to sort out the problem, but without success. Was it the switch, or was there a break somewhere in the cable? Various attempts at putting things right failed, and the lamp ended up languishing in a corner of our spare bedroom – folded in half with flex hanging out near the switch - but we couldn't quite bring ourselves to take it to a recycling centre ...

Looking online, there were many replacements on offer from as little as £20 and upwards into the hundreds of pounds. But none of them seemed quite right. Not as nice as our 'old' one. Now, we had heard about 'repair cafés', where kind, competent people take a look at things that need fixing. There's a website at [Cambridgeshire Repair Cafe Network - Cambridge Carbon Footprint](http://Cambridgeshire%20Repair%20Cafe%20Network%20-%20Cambridge%20Carbon%20Footprint) We explored some in the north of the city, but although they existed, there was no availability for repairing electrical items. Then...in a daily university bulletin that he receives, Tim spotted a notice about an upcoming repair café at Addenbrooke's Hospital – to be held in the School of Clinical Medicine. When we enquired, it seemed that someone there might take a look at our lamp.

When we arrived, we were directed to a large room – presumably a re-purposed lab of some kind – with large benches furnished with sockets. The room was crowded and noisy: the person who took our name said they were really busy, but that a guy called John would be dealing with us – we would have to wait for about ten minutes while he finished his current 'repair' ... There was just about space for us to sit down and wonder at all that was going on around us before John was free to take a look at the lamp. We were encouraged to stand alongside the bench to see what he was doing. It took him only 15 to



20 minutes to make the repair – although apart from pulling some loose cable through into the base and screwing the two halves of the lamp back together, he couldn't really say what he'd actually done to make it work! But it certainly did work: we were instructed to take it to another bench for Portable Appliance Testing, to make sure that it was safe to use.

All this for free! Later that day we made a voluntary contribution to Cambridge Carbon Footprint, and the lamp now brightly adorns the corner where it had stood before.

Now then – have you got something that needs fixing, but you just didn't know where to take it?

THE WEEKLY MUSIC NOTES



We are trying something new!

The weekly Sunday morning music notes will be available in printed form as usual but are also now accessible online.

The link [DPURC Weekly Music Notes - Google Docs](#) will be the same each week and the notes will be updated there on a Friday to reflect the coming Sunday's service.

The link is in the weekly church notices that Jess emails out, is available as a QR code (just scan it with your camera on your phone) in the welcome area and on the screen at the start of the service. It will also appear in the YouTube information that accompanies the video of each service.

*Mark Daves and Ian de Massini,
Joint Directors of Music
at Downing Place URC*



FROM OUR ECUMENICAL CORRESPONDENT

IX : The Church of England (again!)

We met the Church of England in Episode I of this ‘column’, but there is such a wide spectrum of practice – and even belief – in England’s parish churches today that it is worth a second visit to focus on one particular tradition that I know well.

The Oxford Movement was a concerted effort begun by Oxford-based clergy in 1833 to protect the national church from false teaching. Though they accepted the authority of the Bible, they were less ready than other protestants to allow individual believers to read God’s truth, relying merely on the Holy Spirit. They considered it important that the Christian community should expound Scripture, and saw this as the task of the first apostles, and the bishops whom they considered the apostles’ successors.

In some respects the early Tractarians – named after the pamphlet series disseminating their views – appeared to be rejecting important insights of the English Reformation. The weight they attributed to views of the clerical convocations reversed the Henrician principle that the King in Parliament, not the clergy, spoke for the Christian realm. Parliament, Tractarians felt, had become a purely ‘state’ body when both protestant and Roman Catholic dissenters obtained the right to vote; and the Book of Common Prayer and 39 Articles of Religion held authority in their eyes thanks to convocation, not parliamentary, approval.

This clergy-led church in which Tractarians believed had an important role in individual Christians’ life. Like Rome, they recognised seven sacraments and saw each as a channel of grace; but most required a priest or bishop to be effective or ‘valid’. Baptism, for example, conferred (and did not merely symbolise) ‘new birth’. Believers did not just share the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice in receiving Communion, but could see and taste and worship him in the consecrated Communion elements. However, since only a priest ordained by a bishop could preside at Communion, they viewed celebrations in non-episcopal churches very differently. Equally, only such a priest could, in their eyes, declare God’s forgiveness of sins (sometimes after private confession) or convey God’s blessing.

Ironically, much common ground remained between Tractarians (‘Anglo-Catholics’) and dissenters. Both made piety and holy living important goals. Both

produced memorable hymns. Both had a strong pastoral sense – some of the most-loved parsons in deprived urban areas were Anglo-Catholics. Both had a narrow vision of the Church of England, considering it one church amongst many and rejecting the ‘broad church’ approach surviving from Richard Hooker’s day, which saw every inhabitant as belonging in some sense to England’s national church. The Dissenting bodies which celebrated the Lord’s Supper quarterly or annually, and the Anglo-Catholics who approached it fasting, were each demonstrating reverence in different ways.

Suspicions were aroused, however, by more obvious common ground between Anglo-Catholics and Rome. The role assigned to clergy in Tractarian thought differed little from the Roman system. Roman bishops claimed the same descent from the Apostles as English ones: the teaching authority they claimed offered a similar safeguard against error. Anglo-Catholics had a mediæval concept of what the creeds meant by ‘catholic’: they placed more emphasis on Christ founding one church, and less on God establishing nations, kings and governments. This made them less inclined to accept that each nation’s church might be different, more inclined to expect similar characteristics everywhere.

Their worship, too, seemed ‘Roman’. The ‘real presence’ in consecrated elements reminded others of transsubstantiation. They felt the same need for intermediaries between the believer and God – especially Mary and the saints. When early leaders such as John Henry Newman ‘went over to Rome’, critics saw this as the Oxford Movement’s logical consequence. And when, later in the nineteenth century, Anglo-Catholic clergy encouraged visible expression of their beliefs in ceremonial worship, sung services, coloured vestments, candles on stone altars, unleavened wafers ‘reserved’ and venerated, and incense (representing prayer rising to the Almighty), opponents’ worst fears seemed confirmed. Priests were disciplined for breaches of liturgical law; Presbyterians dreamed of their own body replacing the fallen Church of England as the national church.

Yet some priests in this tradition became twentieth century bishops. As bishops generally abandoned attempts to enforce strict uniformity of worship, First World War chaplains reported symbolism could be as effective as words, and bereaved families welcomed prayers for the dead. William Temple, a doughty campaigner for the Tractarian concept of church government leavened by some lay participation, became an Archbishop. Though hostility continued, not least in Parliament, lay people flocked to the inter-war Anglo-Catholic Congresses. A nation reeling from the Second World War found it less important than

previously to cast every parish church in the same mould, and better transport allowed people to worship where it suited them. Gradually it became accepted that the Church of England had many faces, including Anglo-Catholic, evangelical and 'liberal'.

But Tractarian principles have not lost their influence over wider church life. The importance attached to the 'apostolic' succession of bishops and clergy partly explains the caution with which the Church of England accepted women's ministry, and continues to approach ecumenical relations. When ministers of different churches preside at Communion in one building, Church of England rules always insist the source of their ordination be made clear. That does not make Anglo-Catholics the only brake on development: it is on the evangelical, not the Anglo-Catholic, wing that the strongest opposition to same sex relationships is found.

Many factors determined whether a parish church adopted 'bells and smells'; its tradition might alter over time, in either direction. My Cambridge example is Little St Mary's, between Peterhouse and the old Emmanuel building, where I often worship on weekday festivals, and whose Anglo-Catholicism was well-established by my early years. Though brought up in that tradition, I later plotted my own



Little St Mary's, Cambridge

theological course, so there are a few things I wouldn't now do at LSM, words in which I don't join. But it is a very welcoming, easygoing and pastoral church; so if some people genuflect to the consecrated elements, bow as a priest passes them or use the language of 'Mass' and 'sacrifice' whilst others don't, nobody really worries. Gifted and engaging preachers, services dramatic yet sincere, appealing to all the senses (with a choir who are worshippers, not just singers), explain why the building is full to capacity at Christmas midnight, and well-supported even when St Bartholomew's Day falls on a wet Monday evening.

Augur Pearce

SAVE THE DATE! JANE BOWER BRINGS A 'LAND GIRL' BACK TO LIFE ON STAGE

Jane writes:

The Women's Land Army was a British civilian organization formed during both World Wars to recruit women into agricultural work, replacing men who had gone to fight. Its members, known as 'Land Girls', played a crucial role in keeping Britain fed.

It was November 2024. As we stood in the bookshop, both my partner Alan and I were drawn to the memoirs of a WWII Land Army girl, the more so when we found she had lived in a local Cambridgeshire village. We had never heard of the author - Land Army girl E.M. Barraud. Over the next few weeks we read the memoirs aloud. We wanted more. After reading her second, out-of-print book, we both knew what was to happen.



For forty years plus, I had been devising, writing and performing solo shows about the lives of remarkable individuals. After my retirement from drama and art teaching, I had said that was it. But Enid Barraud changed my mind – I had a new passion, and wanted to share it.

We drove one morning to her village, using the book to work out where she had lived, farmed, walked, run the library. We spoke to two locals, who had never heard of her. Yet there was a bench in her memory, denoting how she was missed by the villagers she had known.

Enid Barraud, 1904-1972, was an insurance clerk in central London, with a severe speech defect from a cleft palate. She lived with her female partner. Dressing as a man, and known as either John or Miss Barraud, she grew to be accepted, loved and admired by the 1930s residents of the small village, her personality and natural interest overriding any difficulties. While she had an uneasy relationship with organised religion, her writing speaks of a deep understanding and faith which found its true expression in working the land.

I began to make regular village visits, talking with 60-90 year olds, who remembered 'John' with great affection. After a tentative enquiry, I was invited into her former cottage by the friendly present owner. I traced family members, meeting a delightful third cousin in London. We met again when he spoke at Rochester's Huguenot Museum. The Barrauds are of Huguenot descent, and John's great

uncle Francis Barraud created the painting of Nipper, the mascot of 'His Master's Voice' fame, which the museum had just acquired. There I met fourteen more Barraud family members, and was invited to speak about my forthcoming show. I received permission from the University of Sussex to use John's captivating Mass Observation diary entries. A wonderful moment was the arrival of a parcel from Devon – a former neighbour of John's had sent me some of John's possessions, which will be centre stage. This has been a fascinating project, and I look forward to introducing this lively, gifted, intelligent and humorous writer to a wider audience.



Call Me John – words, sounds and images from the life of a WWII Land Girl will be performed at Eversden Village Hall, Cambridgeshire on July 1st 2026, and at Downing Place Church, Cambridge on July 9th, both at 7.30pm. Details, on www.janebower.com will be updated as time progresses.

NEWS FROM THE PASTORAL CARE GROUP

As you probably know, the Pastoral Care Group has prepared a "Newcomers lunch" once a year for the past few years. We want to continue inviting any visitors on a particular Sunday to join us, but would like to open it up to all members as well. We have planned 3 PCG lunches for 2026 and these will offer soup, bread and cheese which will be prepared before the service. However, we won't be doing it on our own. We need volunteers to offer help preparing and cooking the soup and others to clear away. There will be a sign up sheet a couple of weeks before to indicate whether you wish to come and an option to volunteer.

The dates are: March 8th, June 14th, October 11th

Downing Place URC's 'senior' member, **Mary Joslin**, died peacefully on 1st December, having suffered a stroke a few days earlier. Her family were with her. She had celebrated her 100th birthday on 26th October 2025, and a Mary Joslin Centenary Profile article was included in the October issue of Place Matters. Mary had lived life to the full, and the number of people who gathered at Downing Place to give thanks for Mary Joslin's life on 12th January was testament to the affection in which she was held by so many. These included friends from St Columba's; colleagues at Addenbrookes, working alongside her and Professor Roy Calne; choir members of Collegium Laureatum and many who re-

member her husband David, who died tragically only 19 months after their marriage. The courage and fortitude that Mary demonstrated was inspirational, and her guffaw, illustrating her great sense of humour was mentioned more than once by her nephews and nieces. Both this service and the one at the Crematorium were led by John Proctor.

At the beginning of this year, we were sad to hear that **Gitte Schwarze** had died in Germany, on 22nd December surrounded by her family, Hans, her husband and her 3 children, Peter, Philipp and Carolynne. Please remember them in your prayers. Former members of Emmanuel will remember Gitte and Hans well. They would come to the front of the church, with Gitte being pushed in her wheelchair by Hans. When in Cambridge, they lived in Newnham, but in recent years have returned full-time to Germany for health reasons.

Bob Blackburn died in Addenbrooke's on Friday 16th January. Bob was a long-time friend of Emmanuel and Downing Place. Many will remember his late wife, Dorothy who was a member of Emmanuel. Bob had been suffering ill health on and off for some years, but was visited faithfully by Jenny Massey. Please remember and pray for Helen his daughter, her husband Phil, daughter Megan and Bob's other granddaughter Nicole (who is the daughter of Bob's son who died a few years ago in Columbia). Bob's funeral will be held at Cambridge City Crematorium on Wednesday 18th February at 10.30am. Friends are invited to gather afterwards to meet the family at Coton Village Hall CB23 7PL, where light refreshments will be provided. Please let Jess (jess@downingplaceurc.org or 01223 756635) know if you are hoping to attend. For those unable to attend the service in person, you can watch it live via webcast on demand for 7 days. www.wesleymedia.co.uk/webcast-view Please use the login PIN 253-4150

Some of you will remember **Derek Redfearn**, whose death has been announced in Kettering. Derek served at Cherry Hinton Road and Fulbourn between 1995-2003. Derek was also involved in arranging holidays for children who had no opportunities for holidays because of their family circumstances. Please remember Derek's family and friends in your prayers. Derek's funeral will take place on Wednesday 4 February 2026 at 12.30pm in The Albert Munn Chapel at Kettering Warren Hill Crematorium, (Warren Hill, Kettering, NN16 8XE)

The following link can be used for anyone wishing to donate:

[Funeral Details - Jack Warwick Funeral Service](#)

Pippa Jones

Church Secretary and Convenor of the Pastoral Care Group

CHRISTIAN AID



Thanks to all those who came out to sing carols for Christian Aid in Michaelhouse back in December, and especially to Owen who accompanied us on the piano.

The Grand Arcade wasn't available this year, but Great St. Mary's offered us the chance to sing in Michaelhouse. It was a different kind of event, and we were very happy to sing in such a congenial spot, but on the other hand we made less contact with shoppers. But we still raised just under £200, and we did show that we are still working alongside people to improve their lives in a challenging world. Thank you too for the £125 you gave to Christian Aid in the Christmas Day offertory, and indeed for all your support.

Sheila Porrer, for the Cambridge Christian Aid Supporters' Group

TIME FOR GOD VOLUNTEER UPDATE - MELODY

Liz Barrow writes: I had a wonderful video call with Melody, a wonderful former TFG volunteer from South Korea. Melody was with us in 2005/6, twenty years ago! It was so good to see her. Melody asked after everyone who worked in the Emmanuel cafe and sends her love. She is now a teacher of children with learning disabilities.'

Upon seeing a preview of the photos below, John and Maureen Kendall, who hosted Melody during her time here in Cambridge write: 'We were very warmly welcomed by Melody's parents in 2007 when we visited South Korea. We really enjoyed being with the family and they took a great deal of effort to show us the country.'



Melody (far left), with her parents and sister's family



Melody's husband and sons

DOWNING PLACE LENT HOUSE GROUPS 2022

Six weeks, based upon the First letter of Paul to the Corinthians, prepared and led by Revd Chris Baker, who writes:

'We rejoice in the privilege of being a part of Christ's Church. Whether we have been members for many years or whether we are new to the faith, we are all explorers after truth. As the years go by our understanding of the faith will develop and change and sometimes we become so familiar with things as they are that we forget what they might be. Indeed we may become so familiar with our church life that we lose the sense of joy and wonder.'



In these few weeks we will look at familiar aspects of our Christian lives and ask ourselves what we really believe. Eternal truths need to be re-examined and refreshed every few years so this is what we will try to do by dipping into Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. To some questions there may be no right (or indeed wrong) answers to our questions, but we may all find our faith enriched and our church membership refreshed as we share insights.'

Starting Thursday February 19th and continuing for 6 consecutive Thursday afternoons and evenings: February 19th, 26th, March 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th

2.00-3.30pm at the church

7.30-9pm on Zoom

Any questions to Penny Flynn, who will provide the Zoom link on request.
penny.f.flynn@gmail.com

KNIT ONE GIVE ONE

The group started back on Thursday 8th February, with a good number in attendance. We will be celebrating 21 years since our first meeting in February 2005. Items and regular donations are given to The Sallymay International PreSchool in Sierra Leone which celebrates 10 years in September this year. Marian Koroma (founder) plans to go out in December to celebrate with the school. Building work is still being added, and a nursery and school library are planned to be opened up. A Tabletop Sale is planned in March for Easter. Knitted items and bric-à-brac will be on sale.

We thank you for your support and donations over the years.

Anne Disney

MONTHLY SPECIAL CAUSE FOR FEBRUARY 2026

CAMBRIDGE SAMARITANS



SAMARITANS

Cambridge Samaritans is an independent local charity, there for people when life feels overwhelming, offering a safe, confidential space to talk with volunteers who listen without judgement, any time of day or night. Their belief is simple: no one should have to face distress alone.

The charity is run entirely by volunteers from all walks of life — there's no “typical” Samaritan, just people who care about listening with kindness and respect. They work day and night from their building on Emmanuel Road, in the heart of Cambridge, answering calls from people who need support. They are also involved in the wider community, working with prisons, schools and colleges, and local suicide prevention groups. We will also see them at community events such as Cambridge Pride, or working with partners including Network Rail.

With over 150 volunteers and always welcoming new people, Cambridge Samaritans is a growing, supportive community. Whether working locally or as part of the wider Samaritans network across the UK and Ireland, their focus remains the same: being there to listen when it matters most.

In all that it does, Cambridge Samaritans stays true to the central purpose of the national Samaritans movement: **to listen without judgement and to stand alongside people at moments when being heard can make all the difference.**

WAYS OF GIVING TO OUR SPECIAL CAUSE

- Monthly Retiring Collection on Sunday 15 February (cash, cheque or card)
- 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 Cambridge Samaritans via their website

FEBRUARY DIARY

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	01-Feb-26	Choir Rehearsal	10.00am	Main Church
Sun	01-Feb-26	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion, led by The Rev. Rose Westwood	11:00am	Main Church
Sun	01-Feb-26	Open Table social event	6.00pm	The Hub
Mon	02-Feb-26	Officers	10:15am	Room 3
Tues	03-Feb-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	04-Feb-26	Lunchtime Concert - Elmore String Quartet	1:00pm	Church
Wed	04-Feb-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	05-Feb-26	Midweek Worship Led by Dr Janet Bottoms	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	05-Feb-26	Knit One Give One	13:30pm	The Hub
Sun	08-Feb-26	Choir Rehearsal	10.00am	Main Church
Sun	08-Feb-26	Sunday Worship, led by the Reverend Prof. David Thompson	11:00am	Main Church
Sun	08-Feb-26	Church Meeting	12:30pm	Main Church
Mon	09-Feb-26	Finance Group	7:00pm	Room 3
Tues	10-Feb-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Tue	10-Feb-26	Elders' Meeting	7:30pm	Online
Wed	11-Feb-26	Lunchtime Concert - Cambridge University Brass Ensemble	1:00pm	Main Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Wed	11-Feb-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	12-Feb-26	Prayer Meeting	10.15am	St Columba's Chapel
Thu	12-Feb-26	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Reverend Professor David Thompson	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	12-Feb-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	15-Feb-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church
Sun	15-Feb-26	Sunday Worship, led by The Rev. Dr Robert Pope	11:00am	Main Church
Sun	15-Feb-26	Retiring Collection for Monthly Cause	12:00pm	Main Church
Sun	15-Feb-26	Open Table Service	6:00pm	Main Church
Tue	17-Feb-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	18-Feb-26	Lunchtime Concert - Jill Crossland (piano)	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	18-Feb-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Wed	18-Feb-26	Ash Wednesday Holy Communion, led by The Rev. David Tatem	7:00pm	Main Church
Thu	19-Feb-26	Midweek Worship Led by the Reverend Dr Janet Tollington	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	19-Feb-26	Gibson's Lunch	12.30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	19-Feb-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	19-Feb-26	Lent House Groups	2:00pm	Rooms 1&2
Thu	19-Feb-26	Lent House Groups	7:30pm	Zoom
Sun	22-Feb-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	22-Feb-26	Sunday Worship, led by Dr Simone Maghenzani	11:00am	Main Church
Sun	22-Feb-26	Solidarity Hub	6:00pm	The Hub
Tue	24-Feb-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	25-Feb-26	Lunchtime Concert - Yohei Nakajima (viola) & Miho Sanou, (piano)	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	25-Feb-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	26-Feb-26	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Reverend Dr David Cornick	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	26-Feb-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	26-Feb-26	Lent House Groups	2:00pm	Rooms 1&2
Thu	26-Feb-26	Lent House Groups	7:30pm	Zoom
Sun	1-Mar-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church
Sun	1-Mar-26	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion, led by The Rev. Elizabeth Caswell	11:00am	Main Church
Mon	2-Mar-26	Officers' Meeting	10.15am	Room 3
Mon	2-Mar-26	World Church & Public Issues Group	7:30pm	Online
Tue	03-Mar-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	04-Mar-26	Lunchtime Concert - t.b.c	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	04-Mar-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Wed	04-Mar-26	Property Group	7:00pm	Online



MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE



1 February

Janet Tollington – Stetchworth & Cheveley URC
Penny Flynn – Bassingbourn URC
David Cornick – Melbourn URC

8 February

Janet Tollington – Fenstanton URC
Elizabeth Caswell – Fulbourn URC

15 February

Janet Tollington – Water Lane URC
Janet Bottoms – Fulbourn URC
Chris Baker – Stetchworth & Cheveley URC

22 February

Penny Flynn – Buntingford URC
Janet Tollington - Melbourn URC
Chris Baker – Ely Methodist Church
Elizabeth Caswell - Stetchworth & Cheveley URC

LECTIONARY FOR FEBRUARY

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.

1 February

(*Epiphany 4, Candlemas 2 Feb*)

Micah 6:1-8

Psalm 15

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Matthew 5:1-12

22 February

(*Lent 1*)

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Psalm 32

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

8 February

(*Epiphany 5*)

Isaiah 58:1-9a,(9b-12)

Psalm 112:1-9,(10)

1 Cor 2:1-12,(13-16)

Matthew 5:13-20

1 March

(*Lent 2*)

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalm 121

Romans 4:1-5,13-17

John 3:1-17

15 February

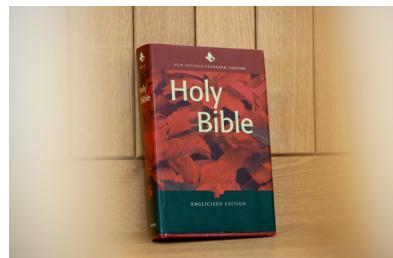
(*Transfiguration*)

Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm 2 or 99

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9



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photograph 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

Please send items to be included in the March edition

no later than **February 19th 2026**