



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 October Harvest Moon, taken by Tim Rowland

FROM THE EDITOR

On 5th October 2025, the Sunday morning service at Downing Place URC was led by David Thompson. David began his sermon as follows:

“Members of the congregation will appreciate that I found it necessary to abandon what I had previously written on Thursday in the light of the events in Manchester that morning, which I discovered at the point I had completed what I had first written”.

Three days earlier, on Thursday 2nd October, during the Jewish observation of Yom Kippur, a vehicle-ramming and stabbing attack took place outside the Heaton Park Synagogue in Crumpsall, Manchester. Two worshippers were killed and three other people were seriously injured. Witnesses reported the attacker had been seen acting suspiciously outside the synagogue shortly before returning in the vehicle.

In his re-written sermon, taking Habakkuk 2:4 as his text (The righteous live by their faith), David offered his response, as a Christian minister and a church historian, to those events in Manchester. As I listened, I knew that I would want to ask David for permission to publish some of that sermon in this issue of Place Matters. My only regret is that it will be published over a month after those dreadful events. But that is the nature of a monthly magazine as opposed to a daily newspaper: at least the delay allows opportunity for careful reflection.

Following the lead of the Greater Manchester Police and Counter Terrorism Policing, the attack has been treated and reported as an antisemitic terrorist attack aimed at Jewish worshippers. But it is possible for believers of distinct faiths to respect and to learn from one another, even if they cannot agree on some fundamental tenets of their faith. Interfaith Connection Cambridge (ICC) “seeks to bring together people of faith in Cambridge so that we can learn about one another’s traditions, understand one another better, extend hospitality to one another, and become friends” (ICC website). David Tatem is a Downing Place URC representative on the ICC steering group, and I am grateful to him for providing the information that follows the extract from David Thompson’s sermon.

As for breaking news – as I write, the Israeli government has very recently approved the first phase of a ceasefire agreement with Hamas, aiming to halt hostilities, casualties and destruction in Gaza, with the immediate provision of humanitarian aid

and the return of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners and detainees. We give thanks, whilst recognising that this is the beginning of a very long, complex process.

This time, I am grateful to David Reynolds, convenor of our World Church and Public Issues Group, for responding to my request for the commentary that you will see later in this Place Matters issue.

This month's letter from the 'substitutes bench' comes from Zoë Bennett, Downing Place URC Elder, and author of 'Two into one will go', about the formation of Downing Place United Reformed Church – see her article in the April 2024 Place Matters. Many thanks, Zoë.

I send greetings and very best wishes to all readers -
Tim Rowland



All the darkness in the world cannot
extinguish the light of a single candle.

St Francis of Assisi

LETTER FROM A MEMBER - ZOË BENNETT

Editor: with Downing Place URC now '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 Zoe.

'You just can't get the dormice these days!'



This summer I was privileged to lead, at Penny Flynn's invitation, a series of four in-person 'relaxed house groups' at church. We called the series 'My Favourite Things', and each week we brought something important and special to us, and told each other why it was so precious, what the story was behind it: hymns and songs, poems and Bible verses, pictures and photographs, and finally food to share together with our tea and coffee. Hence the 'dormice'.

These little cakes made of butter, eggs and ground almonds, soaked in honey and sprinkled with poppy seeds – imitating how the Romans served edible dormice (glis glis) – were my offering on the final day, as I told the story of how, during lockdown when I was living on my own, it was a life-line to spend half an hour each weekday teaching my grandchildren (aged 4, 7 and 9) on Zoom. One day we had a socially distanced (by 100 miles) Roman feast, and I showed them a picture of an edible dormouse, which they were suitably thrilled and horrified to learn was a Roman delicacy.

It is a very special memory which I wanted to share. But, as the Editor of Place Matters himself commented, "you just can't get the dormice these days" – so I had to use cake mixture instead!

The idea for doing the summer house groups this way came from my experience of talking to people for the Two Into One project. To quote from my report: People would value more occasions where they can get to know each other in a relaxed, non-threatening way, such as small informal groups (not topic-focussed) or lunches after church. This creates the possibility of getting to know one another and listening to one another in the ‘gentler moments’ not just in business mode.

The expression ‘gentler moments’ made a deep impression on me, and I had thought for a while about ways in which ‘non-threatening’ ways of getting to know one another could be facilitated. It seemed to me that the absolutely key thing was that we should have subjects to talk about where there was a level playing field. Everyone would of course be the ‘expert’ on their own favourite things. And everyone would get a chance to share, at a level of their own choice, something that really mattered to them - to tell a story about themselves in their own way.

It was a wonderful way of getting to know each other. People whom I had only known as names or fleeting faces in the after-church coffee whirl came alive to me with joyful, poignant, creative, intriguing histories. Highlights for me included the whole group spontaneously singing together as one person shared their first taste of classical music, someone offering a poem they had just written that morning, and another person reading a poem so beautifully you could have heard a pin drop – and then so many pictures and photos through which we learnt of family stories and traditions and of much-loved places.

We all hoped we could do something like this again in the future, but it’s not just about repeating this exercise. It seems to me that this way of being together is ‘sacramental’ – a moment in time when we enacted something which we would want to carry into other aspects of the way we relate to each other and let it colour our communal life.

These are the questions I will go on asking myself: will I cherish and build on the friendships I made in this group? In informal situations like over coffee will I intentionally listen to others and be willing to share myself? Even in the ‘business’ moments will I remember that even though some may find it easier to

Speak in large groups it may be others who hold the wisdom – how do we listen to the ‘different voice’?

One lovely bit of these house group conversations bore unexpected fruit yesterday (Oct. 5th) in the morning service at Downing Place Church. Anthea Hayward had mentioned her poem *On Iona*, published in the October 2024 *Place Matters*, which she said wasn't yet set to music. Tim Rowland suggested she ask Mark Dawes if he might do that. Mark wrote a wonderful setting for Tim to sing, bringing out Anthea's words, and Tim's voice, so beautifully.

Wishing us all more and more of these ‘gentler’ moments,

Zoë Bennett



A Prayer for Remembrance

Ever-living God,
we remember those whom you have gathered
from the storm of war into the peace of your presence;
may that same peace calm our fear, bring justice to all peoples
and establish harmony among the nations,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

skegness-anglican.org.uk

ANTI-SEMITISM: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

Editor: I am grateful to David Thompson for permission to include the following extract from his October 5th Downing Place sermon. A related article from David Tatem follows it.

The righteous live by their faith (Habakkuk 2:4)

For two people to be murdered on their way to worship God on a Holy Day, for them the holiest day of the Jewish year, is horrifying, not least because it brings the horrors that some people in other parts of the world experience daily into the reality of our normally peaceful domestic lives in an inescapable way. Cambridge is a long way from Manchester, particularly by train, but we have our own extremists too. There were times in eighteenth-century Cambridge when Dissenting Meeting Houses (of which the Great Meeting latterly further along Downing Place, predecessor of Emmanuel was one and St Andrew's Street Baptist Church another) were mobbed or attacked, usually by university students. What is alarming today is that such incidents demonstrate that what happens in one part of the world can have consequences hundreds and thousands of miles away almost immediately. I remember my father saying to me many years ago that he believed that as long as the problem of Palestine remained unsolved there would never be peace in the world - and nothing has happened since then to make me think that he was wrong.

The underlying problem about the current situation in Gaza is that the only people who are in any position to bring about change are the Israeli government, and we, unlike President Trump, are utterly powerless to change that.

I was brought up to believe that it was one of the responsibilities of political leadership to make people aware of the truth. So I was always suspicious of anyone who tried to argue that it was dangerous for the public to know what the facts are, which includes being honest about the extent to which we can be certain about what we are told. This means that we always have to be cautious about alleged versions of the truth which happen to suit the interests of those who proclaim them. For professional historians, it is almost part of their stock in trade to be sceptical of received versions of any previous history.

By the late 19th century when Zionism emerged as a political movement, it had been centuries since Jews had had any significant say in how the colonial state of which

they were a part was governed. There had been some Jewish families who had lived in the country for centuries, but only a relatively small minority. After the Roman Empire in the East collapsed, the Middle East fell under Turkish control with the Ottoman Empire. From the time of Napoleon's invasion at the beginning of the 19th century, France and Britain had fought to gain maximum influence. It was European anti-semitism, ultimately based on Christianity rather than Islam, that made Zionism seem a plausible option; and it seems to have been what Lloyd George learned in his Churches of Christ Sunday School class that led him to espouse what was ultimately known as the Balfour Declaration of 1917, because Balfour was Lloyd George's Foreign Secretary in his Coalition Government during the First World War. But what the UK promised to different partners in the Middle East (which involved making incompatible promises to Jews and Arabs) led to an impossible political situation after 1945. From 1917 what had been promised was a Jewish state which preserved the rights of Palestinians - one reason why Israel was not originally envisaged as an exclusively Jewish state. This was accepted in the new, secular Israe of 1948; but Likud, the party Mr Netanyahu leads, has steadily moved to reject it. This illustrates, and possibly explains, the complex nature of the issues to be resolved.

But it also makes clear the total lack of justification for the deaths in Manchester last Thursday. Perhaps the most important piece of self-discipline we can take from this week's events is to make every effort to avoid speaking about people simply as part of a category (Jew, Christian, Muslim, immigrant, disabled etc.) and to remember that Scripture teaches that all people were created in the image of God. That is ultimately why murder is a sin, and a crime.



INTERFAITH CONNECTION CAMBRIDGE



One of the pieces of information that did not make the headlines following the attack at the Manchester Synagogue in September was that in Manchester a group called Faith Network for Manchester has been in existence since 2004. One of their stated aims is to work to combat misunderstandings that can arise between different faith groups. Like similar groups in other places, it works carefully and undramatically to build bridges, closer co-operation and make united action and statements possible.

Following the invasion of Ukraine a similar interfaith network was established in Cambridge. Called Interfaith Connection Cambridge (ICC) it is now run under the auspices of the Woolf Institute and meets 3 times a year in the place of worship of a different faith group each time. At these gatherings, which have taken place already in Downing Place, insight is given into the life and beliefs of the faiths represented. Slowly relationships are being established and understanding built which can serve to deal with misunderstanding and build trust.

As in Manchester work such as this is careful and undramatic, and it would be naive to believe that it could ever stop the kind of event that occurred in Manchester from taking place. It can, however, help to build resilience in the face of hatred and violence and provide a strong, united and articulate voice as a counter to the rhetoric of extremist and populist groups whose message is of fear and mistrust. Eventually, it is to be hoped, it may help to bring about the kind of cultural change needed if the divisions within communities are to be healed.

ICC is preparing to develop new initiatives of cooperation that will hopefully deepen the links that are developing, and which will hopefully draw in more participation from within the faith groups. Hopefully, too, it may eventually make the headlines in the best possible way. News of events is placed in our weekly notices.

The ICC webpage is within the Woolf Institute site

<https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/community-engagement/faith-communities>

Augur Pearce and David Tatem are DP's representatives on the steering group.

PEACE MATTERS

David Reynolds writes:

“This is not only the end of a war. This is the end of an age of terror and death, and the beginning of the age of faith and hope and of God”, President Donald J. Trump told the Israeli parliament on October 13. “It’s the start of a grand concord and lasting harmony for Israel and all the nations of what will soon be a truly magnificent region. I believe that so strongly. This is the historic dawn of a new Middle East.”

Writing this piece two days later, it’s far too early to offer any firm judgments on the situation in the Middle East. (Indeed, when has that ever been possible?) But some of the hype is starting to evaporate. What seems apparent is that this is a ceasefire – and as such a remarkable achievement – but we’ll have to see whether it sticks. Even if it does, a ceasefire is not the same as a lasting peace.

Credit where credit’s due. The ceasefire in Gaza, the return by the Hamas terrorists of the 20 remaining Israeli hostages, and the repatriation by Israel of nearly 2,000 Palestinian detainees would not have happened without the personal intervention of the U.S. President. Like him or not, said an insider, “once he decides to do something, he is a juggernaut”.

Trump put intense pressure on the Israeli premier, Benjamin Netanyahu, to stop what seemed an endless war in Gaza, especially after Israel bombed Qatar in the hope of eliminating Hamas negotiators. And he was also persuaded by his son-in-law Jared Kushner and former British premier Tony Blair to change his mind on two key issues. First, the Palestinians should not be driven out of Gaza – as in Trump’s earlier scenario for a “Gaza Riviera”. Second, there had to be a preliminary sketch of Gaza’s future in which it was clear that neither Israel nor Hamas would be in control. Otherwise, those two belligerents would not play ball. Hence the idea of an international Board of Peace, headed by Trump, to oversee the Gaza Strip for the moment. Growing European support for a Palestinian state – though gesture politics at present – has kept the idea of a two-state solution in play.

So – grounds for hope. But the uncertainties are legion. Will Hamas really disarm? Will Netanyahu hold back the Israel Defense Forces? Will food aid really get through? Will Trump maintain focus and momentum? Or will he get bored with the Board?

Even if the ceasefire does hold and all the hostages are returned alive or dead, they are just part of a 20-Point Peace Plan that Trump unveiled at the White House on September 29. Other huge issues to be resolved include disarmament and demobilization, humanitarian aid and economic development, law and order, and the rebuilding of homes, hospitals and infrastructure in an area of only 140 square miles (about the size of Peterborough). 90% of the residential and commercial buildings have been destroyed or damaged, and around 68,000 Palestinians killed.

In short, this is Gaza Stripped. In Britain we know that very clearly from our TV screens. But, according to Israeli journalists critical of their government, little of the horror had been shown to viewers in Israel. Conversely, they have been saturated in the full savagery of Hamas atrocities on October 7, 2023 – with images deemed too graphic by the BBC and other mainstream media here in Britain. But in Israel, such footage has engendered enduring anger and a determination on the political right to get rid of the Palestinians one way or another.

Meanwhile, in Gaza and the West Bank, hatred of the state of Israel, and of Jews, has become even more deeply ingrained. Although the IDF have killed most of the Hamas leadership, we can sadly assume that a new generation of young Palestinians is already being taught to avenge their fathers and grandfathers.

One of President Trump's 20 Points states: "An interfaith dialogue process will be established based on the values of tolerance and peaceful co-existence to try and change mindsets and narratives of Palestinians and Israelis by emphasizing the benefits that can be derived from peace."

This is Point 18. To be blunt, it should be less vague, much higher on the list and phrased as a categorical imperative. Otherwise there's little hope of turning a ceasefire into a lasting peace. As people of all faiths know, forgiveness is existentially hard. "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)

We are a long way from an era of "grand concord and lasting harmony", heralding the "dawn of a new Middle East."

David Reynolds is convenor of the Downing Place URC World Church and Public Issues Group

CHRISTIAN AID – MIDDLE EAST HUMANITARIAN APPEAL



Image Credit Christian Aid

Our thoughts and prayers are with Gaza and the Middle East at the moment, the dreadful conditions in Gaza are only too well known to us all. **Christian Aid** is right in there, working through partners on the ground.

In Gaza, CA works

- with **Palestine Medical Relief Societies**, providing basic health services
- with the **Women's Affairs Centre**, supporting widows and their children
- with the **Agricultural Development Association**, providing food and drinking water
- with the **Culture and Free Thought Association**, running community kitchens and family support.

Thanks to their heroic work in dangerous conditions:

800,00 people have received emergency aid

Over 1.3 million have been supported with food

More than 950,000 with water and sanitation.

Christian Aid has launched a **Middle East Humanitarian Appeal** to support its work in Gaza, and also in Lebanon, still suffering from the devastating effects of recent conflict. Please consider dipping into your pockets yet again to help the victims of violence in the Middle East.



How to donate:

Visit caid.org.uk/DECMiddleEastChurch

Call **08080 005 005** to donate by phone.

More details on the [Christian Aid](http://caid.org.uk) website

CHRISTIAN AID CAROL SINGING – DECEMBER 6TH

We have a great opportunity to show our support for Christian Aid by turning out to sing carols in Michaelhouse on the morning of Saturday 6th December. I hope this is in your diary, we need as many people as possible to make this go well.

Full details will be in the December Place Matters, but please save the date.



STAMPS FOR CHARITY

As always I am grateful to receive contributions of stamps of all kinds in the draw in the Hub.

My Church of Scotland contact has recently informed me that over £18000 has been raised from stamp sales from many sources - including ourselves at Downing Place.

Whatever you are able to give is very acceptable. Stamps of any age, from anywhere, mounted or not!

I would be very pleased to know who has recently sent bags and bags of UK stamps dated around 1950-60s?

Please keep them coming! The cause is worthwhile!

Ted Dennison



FROM OUR ECUMENICAL CORRESPONDENT

VIII : The Methodist Church



Exterior of Wesley Methodist Church Cambridge



John Wesley

The ‘people called Methodists’, youngest of England’s indigenous Christian denominations, date from the 18th century, when John Wesley experienced a call to evangelise which the rules of the Church of England would not let him fulfil in the way he thought best. It is often claimed that Wesley never left the Church of England; certainly he loved it, and Methodist worship has more in common with the Prayer Book than any other Christian liturgy. But under the law of his day, either one conformed to the entire structure of official religion or one dissented from it: and in that respect Wesley was a Dissenter.

As Wesleyan Methodism developed, it became known for three characteristics. It belonged within the broad evangelical tradition stressing the importance of religious experience and emotion. Personal ‘conversion’ mattered more than conventional Christian upbringing. It had this in common with ‘revivals’ across the English - and Welsh-speaking world, and by the ‘Pietism’ spreading through Germany from Halle. Simultaneously the movement encouraged a ‘methodical’ discipline of Christian living – holiness, prayer, good works, frequent Communion – reminiscent of the ‘Holy Club’ started by Wesley’s brother Charles at Oxford. The third characteristic distinguished Wesley’s from other movements labelled ‘Methodist’, for he believed all people capable of a saving faith in Christ, whereas Calvinist churches spoke of predestination to salvation or damnation. This ‘Arminianism’ contrasted with the message spreading from Howell Harris’s base in Trefeca (ancestor of the Cheshunt Foundation in modern Cambridge), and from George Whitefield’s mission in the Americas.

English ground was nevertheless ready for Wesley's planting. The Glorious Revolution brought a century of stability to England's public religion, whilst Toleration allowed the older Dissenting movements to consolidate. But some felt this led to stagnation: they feared Enlightenment rationalism or the rise of Unitarianism [see Part VII in the July Place Matters]. Migration to the towns, to which the ancient parish structure was ill-adapted, was severing families from the Christian education and spirituality they had known in the villages.

Methodist structures date from the 1740s. Meeting rooms were secured and funds raised; preachers organised into 'circuits' and summoned to an annual 'Conference'. Trusts governing the new chapels required new preachers to be appointed by this Conference. The housegroup or 'class meeting' became a feature of Methodist life. Further weighty steps were taken in the 1780s: one hundred 'core' members of the Conference became the Methodist people's final authority, ready to take over Wesley's own leadership at his death. Wesley ordained preachers as 'presbyters' (the standard term now for Methodist clergy), a clear departure from the law requiring episcopal ordination for presidency at the sacraments. Finally and reluctantly, he advised the trustees of all the Connexion's chapels to register them for Dissenting worship.

Wesley's own mission entailed tireless travel to preach around the country (including in several Cambridgeshire villages). He continued, with his brother, the congregational hymn-writing of Isaac Watts a generation earlier. He retained firm central control over his movement: this remained a stronger characteristic of Methodism than in any other protestant tradition. When he died in 1791 the Connexion was expanding, but lacked agreed answers to questions facing an effectively separate church. Conference disagreement caused early 19th century splits, whilst societies in other parts of the world set up their own Conferences. The largest overseas descendant is now the United Methodist Church with nearly 10 million members, and the arrival in England of believers nurtured in Methodist churches overseas contributes to the wide cultural diversity now seen in the church here.

Some English breakaway bodies remain separate to this day (the Salvation Army amongst them), but reunions a century later began to bring mainstream Methodism back together. By seeking Parliament's assistance to cut through otherwise

incompatible trusts, the Methodists pointed the way later taken by the predecessor churches of the URC.



During the time of division, in 1805 Cambridge's first Methodist society hired a room in the yard of the 'Brazen George' - a pub on St Andrew's Street, close to Christ's College gate. This remained in the Wesleyan mainstream, whilst Primitive Methodists converted a cottage on Castle Hill. A series of new buildings and locations culminated in the 1913 opening of Wesley Church on Christ's Pieces. Since 1875 the Leys School has offered independent

education in the Methodist tradition, and in 1921 Wesley House opened to extend the benefits of Cambridge study to Methodist ministerial candidates. 1932 saw Methodist reunion completed, and Cambridge churches all served by ministers and local preachers on the same Circuit.

Old Dissent and New Dissent (Methodism) experienced the same postwar falling numbers and resources. The closure of Hills Road Methodist Church in 1972 swelled ranks not only at Wesley, but also in the local parish church and in what was becoming Cherry Hinton Road URC. In 1990, however, Wesley Church dedicated its present layout after a significant refurbishment programme. It was there that I delivered ecumenical greetings at the new Superintendent Minister's induction this October.

Like the URC, the Methodist Church in Great Britain publishes a Worship Book on which service leaders draw as they wish. The latest edition from 1999 complements the 2011 denominational hymnal *Singing the Faith*. All editions of the Worship Book include the distinctive Covenant Service, by which Methodists renew their personal covenant with God early in each new year. Though Methodists do not possess an ordained Eldership, their Deacons exercise a 'ministry of service and witness' alongside their Presbyters' ministry of Word and Sacrament. Every local church also elects Stewards who combine pastoral care with practical duties and collaborative leadership.

English Methodism takes ecumenism seriously. The question is often asked why it does not return to the Church of England from which it sprang. The belief in many Church of England circles that ministry requires episcopal ordination dashed hopes of those who expected a reunion in 1972. The priesthood's restriction to men was equally offputting to many Methodists, but is less of an obstacle now. A new Covenant affirming the churches' willingness to co-operate was signed in 2003 and survived the Conference decision in 2021 to allow local churches to host same sex marriage.

Augur Pearce



Interior of Wesley Methodist Church Cambridge

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IT TAKES A CITY SAY 'THANKYOU!'



Lis Silver, CEO of **It Takes A City (ITAC)** has written to say 'an enormous thankyou' to us, for the donations that were collected on Harvest Sunday, 21 September. They will be used to stock the cupboards of **The Haven**, their safe space for vulnerable and homeless women in Cambridge city centre, and their winter emergency accommodation project, **Crossways** (open November to March).

INSIGHTS INTO OUR RECENT JUNIOR CHURCH SESSIONS

At the end of September, though small in numbers, we enjoyed a happy session thinking about personal treasures and things that are important to us, trying to decide what makes something valuable and irreplaceable, regardless of its monetary value. We shared the wonders of wooden objects, conkers, a beloved teddybear, favourite toys and photographs of those we love. Behind all these things we recognised the generosity that people show towards others within our families and our church. We welcomed Ailsa, who kindly played the keyboard for us as we sang, I love the Sun, Magic Penny and This Little Light of Mine, before enjoying a play time making treasure chests, sharing books and looking after our dolls. We tried to understand that we could find lasting treasure by being generous to others through our gifts of time, words and action (1 Timothy 6.6-19).



A few weeks later, we were thinking about Paul, chained up in prison, when he wrote his second letter to Timothy. We thought about all sizes of chains and their diverse uses. The younger group then made a paper chain the length of the Junior Church room. We then wrapped it round the group of children and helpers, who on the count of 3...all broke loose.

At half term nearly everyone was away.

We made cards for encouragement to know that someone is always with you.



Earlier we had paired hidden figures to support each other. We remembered how Paul had told Timothy how God had supported him.

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.

THE CHERRY HINTON ROAD TUESDAY FELLOWSHIP REPORT

Since the last report for *Place Matters* in May, the CHR Tuesday Fellowship has continued to meet weekly, apart from the month of August when we had a garden party by popular request on August 12th at my house. In June we had two outings, the first to the Orchard at Grantchester, and the second to the Arthur Rank Hospice. Both outings were extremely enjoyable. We also had a meeting where we talked about our memories of holidays. On June 24th, we had our last service with Nigel Uden. This was a very special service because it also commemorated Nigel's



forty years of service as a Minister. The service started in the 1970s with a reading from Jeremiah 1:4- 8 and then onto the 1980s with the hymn “ Be still” followed by the 1990s, then 2000s with the hymn “Give thanks”, and 2010s with a reading from Isaiah 1:5-7, then the 2020s, finishing with the hymn “Now thank we all our God”. Although it was a sad occasion because this was the last time Nigel would lead worship for the Fellowship, the message from the service was not to dwell on the past, but to “be strong and courageous” Joshua 1:5-7, and obey the law so that

“you may be successful wherever you go.”.

Since the last service at which Nigel was present, we had another inspiring talk by Richard Lewney, a quiz organised by Robin Simpkins, and the delightful presence of the Capriole Dancers where we were all encouraged to join in. In September we were invited to share memories of our recent holidays, and Wendy talked about Holiday Forum which she and her family attend every year. Holiday Forum is described as a mixture of faith, fun and fellowship and which was originally started by the United Reformed Church: it is a week long, for URC members, their friends and Christians of other denominations. We also had a session on Autumn, which was particularly apt in view of the wonderful colours of the leaves on the trees this year. Several members produced beautiful poems for the fellowship to enjoy. We met as well for the “Word Together” and discussed how it may go forward. Wendy, who is the new facilitator now that Nigel has left, thought we might look at the Christmas Story in the months before Christmas, and then possibly continue to explore the origin of hymns.



Although we continue to meet together, many of our members are struggling. Two of our members are in Care Homes and two couples are housebound. We continue to keep in touch with them by delivering our newsletter. Despite this, we are so pleased that we now have a new member, Jonathan Davies, who lives across the road from St Athanasios Hall. We are also pleased that Wendy has completed her chemotherapy and her radiotherapy. We thank God for her recovery and pray for all our members who are having health issues at present.

Penny Milsom



DOWNING PLACE NEWCOMER'S LUNCH



If you're new to Downing Place URC - including students - we'd love to invite you to our Newcomer's Lunch at 12.30pm on Sunday 23 November. It's a great chance to meet others & feel more at home in our church community. We'll be serving a simple meal of soup, bread and cheese (free-from options available). No need to sign up, just come along. We'd also like a few church members to come along to help give a warm welcome. If you'd like to do this, please sign up at the Office.

SPECIAL CAUSE FOR NOVEMBER: AMOS TRUST'S CLIMATE FELLOWSHIP



The Amos Trust Climate Fellowship is a year-long programme that trains, funds and mentors young women land defenders and climate justice activists from Mexico and Central America to design and implement community-led climate and gender projects. The Fellowship centres feminist approaches to climate resilience, emphasises the rights of rural and indigenous women, and supports grassroots strategies that protect land, biodiversity and livelihoods.

Who it is for

The programme targets women aged roughly 18–35 who are already active in local communities across Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico. Selection favours applicants who are engaged in land defence, agroecology, community organisation or projects that reduce women's vulnerability to climate impacts.

Core components

- Online training modules on project design, monitoring, budgeting and gender-responsive climate practice.
- Mentoring from experienced activists and practitioners.
- Small grants to implement locally led pilot projects that strengthen women's leadership and ecosystem protection.
- Peer learning, storytelling and platforms to amplify participants' work internationally.

Duration timing and commitment

The Fellowship runs approximately 10–12 months and combines virtual workshops with ongoing mentoring and implementation support. Fellows are expected to participate in training sessions, refine project plans and manage small grants for activities in their communities.

The Fellowship aims to increase women's leadership in climate action, safeguard threatened habitats and land, and build sustainable, locally owned solutions that address both ecological and social vulnerabilities. Projects funded through the programme typically focus on agroecological practices, community water management, reforestation, legal defence of land rights and building economic resilience for women-led households.

WAYS OF GIVING TO OUR SPECIAL CAUSE

- Monthly Retiring Collection on Sunday 16 November (cash, cheque or card)
- Monday and 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



AMOS TRUST CLIMATE FELLOWSHIP – MEXICO AND GUATEMALA

The charity originally put forward for the Downing Place URC November Special Cause was CEPAD, a climate mitigation NGO working amongst remote communities in Nicaragua, which Amos Trust had supported for many years. The authoritarian government of Nicaragua forced this and 1500 NGOs to cease operating in mid-2024.

Amos Trust's Climate Fellowship supports young women land defenders and climate activists across Mexico and Central America. Every year, 12-14 participants join a programme of training, community, solidarity and funding towards a project to tackle climate and gender injustice in their particular territory. Many participants are Indigenous young women, reflecting the central role played by indigenous women in protecting the land and preserving the knowledge of their ancestors in the face of man-made climate change, exploitation and overconsumption.

Chris Wright, the 'sponsor' for our November Special Cause, has been corresponding with an Amos contact, who reports that two of her colleagues are visiting the Climate Fellowship in Mexico and Guatemala right now: she has sent Chris the following up-to-date news for Place Matters.

Fabiola, an indigenous Guatemalan leader from Quetzaltenango – a rural region surrounded by mountains and four volcanoes – runs a project working with communities on topics such as reforestation, medicinal plants and helping women get their products to market. Her current Amos Climate Fellowship project supports women to run 8 community gardens to cultivate medicinal plants, vegetables and fruit trees, and provides training about the uses of these plants.



Fabiola is leading a series of projects that help to mitigate the effects of climate change. She reports: “With the manual, even after the training, they can remember the uses of the plants and use them for health and healing”.

Chahim, another current Amos Climate Fellow from Guatemala, used her grant to organise safe gatherings for women’s rights and land defenders in her region, where it is very dangerous to be an activist for the land or for marginalised communities, including indigenous and trans women. These groups had become divided due to the huge challenges facing them, and Chahim wanted to heal the divisions and bring people together. She writes:

“These were very important meetings; it is hard to create these spaces and often the NGOs take over. But I am from here, I know the land, I know the communities and our struggle - we don’t want to be told by people from the West what is best. We need these moments to learn from our ancestors. It was a moment to cross paths and make alliances. This is not only for the peoples of Guatemala but for the peoples of the world, because we live on the same Earth. The day the rivers in Guatemala disappear, the world will end. The day the communities stop defending them, the clock of life will stop ticking”.

www.amostrust.org



The Therapeutic Ceilidh Society PRESENTS

the first official Wellbeing Ceilidh!

Where? Downing Place United Reformed Church, Cambridge

When? Friday 14th November 2025

suggested donation
of £15 per ticket

What time? Arrive at 7 for dancing at 7.15pm, finish 9.45pm

get your tickets here

Please note that this will be an alcohol-free event.
Soft drinks and cakes included in the interval



***Come alone or with a partner, all are welcome,
newcomers encouraged!***

KNIT ONE

GIVE ONE



**CHRISTMAS
SALE**

**Knitted items & bric-a-brac
sold in aid of Arthur Rank Hospice,
Sallymay International Preschool in
Sierra Leone & Downing Place URC**

**19th & 20th November, 10.30am - 2.30pm
The Hub, Downing Place URC**



THE GIBSON CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT



**The Park
Restaurant**

**The Gibson Lunch team invite you
to enjoy a Christmas Lunch at
Cambridge Regional College's
The Park Restaurant on
Friday 5th December at 12.30pm**

£20 per person

(original price of £24 subsidised to £20)



To book, please contact the
Office at Downing Place URC,
letting them know what your meal choices
are (menu on the next page) and how
it is best for you to pay; cash or card.

Christmas Lunch

3 Courses

Starters

Pulled Ham Hock Terrine, Piccalilli (GF)

Celeriac and Truffle Velouté, Artichoke Crisps (GF) (V) (VGO)

Prawn and Crayfish Cocktail,
Charred Cucumber, Radicchio Salad (GF)

Mains

Roast Turkey, Served with Traditional Christmas Trimmings (GF)

Braised Beef, Horseradish Champ Potatoes, Buttered Savoy Cabbage,
Charred Carrots, Crispy Shallot Rings (GFO)

Pan Fried Bream, Bercy Fish Reduction,
Potato Terrine, Buttered Fine Beans

Beetroot Raviolo, Sage, Burnt Butter,
Swede Puree, Toasted Seeds (V) (GFO)

Roasted Vegetable and Grilled Polenta
Galette, Straw Potatoes (VG) (GF)

Desserts

Traditional Christmas Pudding (GF)

Nutmeg and Cinnamon Bread Pudding (GFO)

Warm Chocolate Almond Sponge,
Whipped Orange Cream (N)

Flavoured Sorbets (VG)

thepark-cambridge.co.uk

Dietary Requirements

(V) = vegetarian (VG) = vegan (GF) = gluten free
(VO) = vegetarian option (VGO) = vegan option (GFO) = gluten free option (N) = contains nuts

Please specify the option when ordering

All our food is sourced locally & freshly prepared on-site daily. Please bear with us in busy periods. Please do inform us if you have any allergies or special dietary requirements to enable us to accommodate your needs

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Date	Event	Time	Location
Sun-2-Nov	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun-2-Nov	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Deborah McVey	11:00	Main Church
Mon-3-Nov	Monday Lunchtime Concert – Ian de Massini (organ)	13 :00	Main Church
Tue-4-Nov	Autumn House Groups (Penny Flynn)	14:00	Rooms 1&2
Tue-4-Nov	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church (Cherry Hinton Road)
Tue-4-Nov	Finance Group	19:00	Room 3
Tue-4-Nov	Worship, Discipleship & Spirituality Group	19:30	Online
Wed-5-Nov	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Ian de Massini (organ) & Jane Bower (live illustration and narration)	13:00	Main Church
Wed-5-Nov	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thu-6-Nov	Midweek Worship led by Dr Janet Bottoms	11:00	Main Church
Thu-6-Nov	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Thu-6-Nov	Autumn House Groups (Penny Flynn) Zoom	19:30	Online
Sun-9-Nov	Remembrance Sunday	All Day	-
Sun-9-Nov	Choir Rehearsal	09:50	Main Church
Sun-9-Nov	Sunday Worship led by Dr Simone Maghenzani	10:50	Main Church
Sun-9-Nov	Solidarity Hub	14:00	The Hub
Mon-10-Nov	Officers' Meeting	10:15	Room 3
Mon-10-Nov	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Symphonia Academica Duo	13:00	Main Church
Mon-10-Nov	World Church & Public Issues Group	19:15	Online
Tue-11-Nov	Autumn House Groups (Penny Flynn)	14:00	Rooms 1&2
Tue-11-Nov	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church (Cherry Hinton Road)

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Wed-12-Nov	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Emilija Karaliute (kanklės, the national instrument of Lithuania)	13:00	Main Church
Wed-12-Nov	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thu-13-Nov	Prayer Meeting	10:15	St Columba's Chapel
Thu-13-Nov	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Professor David Thompson	11:00	Main Church
Thu-13-Nov	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Thu-13-Nov	Autumn House Groups (Penny Flynn) Zoom	19:30	
Sun-16-Nov	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun-16-Nov	Sunday Worship led by Revd Dr David Cornick	11:00	Main Church
Sun-16-Nov	Retiring collection for our monthly Special Cause	12:00	Main Church
Sun-16-Nov	Church Meeting	12:30	Main Church
Sun-16-Nov	Open Table Cambridge Service	19:00	Main Church
Mon-17-Nov	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Charlotte Brett & Titika Maragoula (sopranos)	13:00	Main Church
Tue-18-Nov	Autumn House Groups (Penny Flynn)	14:00	Rooms 1&2
Tue-18-Nov	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church (Cherry Hinton Road)
Wed-19-Nov	Knit One Give One Christmas Table Top Sale	10:30	The Hub
Wed-19-Nov	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Veta Velikhova (piano)	13:00	Main Church
Wed-19-Nov	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thu-20-Nov	Knit One Give One Christmas Table Top Sale	10:30	The Hub
Thu-20-Nov	Midweek Worship led by Penny Flynn	11:00	Main Church
Thu-20-Nov	Gibson Lunch	12:30	Gibson Hall
Thu-20-Nov	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Thu-20-Nov	Autumn House Groups (Penny Flynn) Zoom	19:30	Online

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Sun-23-Nov	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun-23-Nov	Sunday Worship led by the Revd Norman Setchell	11:00	Main Church
Sun-23-Nov	Newcomer's Lunch	12:30	Gibson Hall
Mon-24-Nov	Monday Lunchtime Concert – Ryan Sheng (piano)	13:00	Main Church
Tues-25-Nov	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church (Cherry Hinton Road)
Wed-26-Nov	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Lips Quintet	13:00	Main Church
Wed-26-Nov	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	16:00	The Hub
Thu-27-Nov	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Thu-27-Nov	Elders' Meeting	19:30	Online
Sun-30-Nov	Advent Sunday	All Day	-
Sun-30-Nov	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun-30-Nov	Advent Sunday Worship led by the Revd John Proctor	11:00	Main Church
Sun-30-Nov	Solidarity Hub	19:00	The Hub
Mon-1-Dec	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Armando Sabbarese (piano)	13:00	Main Church
Tue-2-Dec	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	14:30	St Athanasios' Church (Cherry Hinton Road)
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
Thu-4-Dec	Midweek Worship led by Dr Augur Pearce	11:00	Main Church
Thu-4-Dec	Knit One Give One	13:30	The Hub
Thu-4-Dec	CU Michaelmas Full-term ends	All Day	-
Fri-5-Dec	Gibson Christmas Lunch	12:30	The Park, Cambridge Regional College
Sun-6-Dec	Choir Rehearsal	10:00	Main Church
Sun-6-Dec	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Dr Janet Tollington	11:00	Main Church

LUNCHTIME CONCERTS IN NOVEMBER



Image by StillVision Photography

Monday 3 November

Ian de Massini (organ)

Wednesday 5 November

Ian de Massini (organ) & Jane Bower (live illustration and narration)

Monday 10 November

Symphonia Academica Duo

Wednesday 12 November

Emilija Karaliute (Kanklės - the national instrument of Lithuania)

Monday 17 November

Charlotte Brett & Titika Maragoula (sopranos)

Wednesday 19 November

Veta Velikhova (piano)

Monday 24 November

Ryan Sheng (piano)

Wednesday 26 November

Lips Quintet

Monday 1 December

Armando Sabbarese (piano)

Wednesday 3 December

Brenda Dykes (flute) & Christopher Moore (piano)

MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE IN NOVEMBER



2 November

Janet Tollington, Melbourn URC

Chris Baker, St Ives URC

9 November

Chris Baker, Christchurch, Newmarket

11 November, 10.45am

Deborah McVey, Remembrance Day at
Histon Road Cemetery, the Dissenters Ceremony

16 November

David Tatem, Melbourn URC

Janet Tollington, Bassingbourn URC

Chris Baker, Christchurch, Newmarket

23 November

Lis Caswell, Stetchworth & Cheveley URC

Janet Tollington, Whiting Stret, Bury St Edmund's

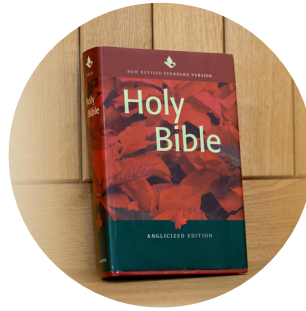
Chris Baker, Haddenham Methodist

30 November

David Thompson, Bromley URC

Janet Tollington, Buntingford URC

LECTIONARY FOR NOVEMBER



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.

November 2 2025.

IV Sunday before Advent

Isaiah 1:10-18

Psalms 32:1-7

2 Thessalonians

1:1-4,(5-10),11-12

Luke 19:1-10

November 23 2025.

Christ the King

Sunday before Advent

Jeremiah 23:1-16

Psalms 46

Colossians 1:11-20

Luke 23:33-43.

November 9 2025.

III Sunday before Advent

Job 19:23-27a

Psalms 17:1-9

2 Thessalonians

2:1-5,13-17

Luke 20:27-38

November 30 2025.

Advent I

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalms 122

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:36-44

November 16 2025.

II Sunday before Advent

Malachi 4:1-2a

Psalms 98

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Luke 21:5-19

December 7 2025.

Advent II

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalms 72:1-7,18-19

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12



Front Cover - 'The Tower Remembers' at the Tower of London, taken by Tim Rowland

Back Cover - Photo 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

Please send items to be included in the November edition no later
than November 18th

