



DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
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CONTACT DETAILS – DOWNING PLACE URC

Address: Downing Place United Reformed Church
Downing Place
Cambridge
CB2 3EL

Telephone: 01223 756635

Website: www.downingplaceurc.org

Minister: Downing Place URC is In Vacancy

Children's Ministry Team Co-ordinator:
Elza de Bruin Lara
children@downingplaceurc.org
01223 362618

Open Table Co-ordinator:
Alison Binney
opentable@downingplaceurc.org
01223 294046

Facilities Officer Matthew Barker
matt@downingplaceurc.org

Marketing and Communications Officer Jess Uden
jess@downingplaceurc.org
01223 756635
07731 883697

Church Secretary: Pippa Jones
secretary@downingplaceurc.org
01223 425655

Clerk to the Elders' Meeting
Augur Pearce
clerk@downingplaceurc.org
01223 279517

Treasurer: William McVey
treasurer@downingplaceurc.org
01223 410332

Safeguarding: Carys Lee
safeguarding@downingplaceurc.org
c/o 01223 756635

Hospital and Hospice Visitor:
The Revd. Deborah McVey
hospitalvisitor@downingplaceurc.org
01223 410332

Directors of Music: Mark Dawes
mark@downingplaceurc.org
01954 212514

Ian de Massini
ian@downingplaceurc.org
07801 234343

Audio-visuals: av@downingplaceurc.org



Trent and Mersey Canal, photo by Tim Rowland

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

A note from the Editor – *Place Matters: what next?*

With astonishing (and unexpected!) foresight, my Editorial note in the previous edition of our Downing Place Church magazine began with a paragraph about the role of so-called ‘substitutes’ in FA football. Only three weeks later, the front pages of our newspapers celebrated two ‘super subs’: Michelle Agyemang and Chloe Kelly, who, time and time again, came to the rescue of the English team at the UEFA Women’s Euro 2025 tournament in Switzerland, with Kelly scoring the concluding penalty in the final at Basel, so that England retained the title.

With Downing Place URC now ‘in vacancy’, our first super-sub, Liz Caswell, gives us pause for thought, and for optimism, in her Letter from a Minister in this issue of *Place Matters*. I thank Liz, on behalf of all readers.

As for *Place Matters* itself; Ann Auger has worked alongside the Editor of our monthly journal since 2019, first with Sheila Porrer, then with myself – about 30 issues with each of us. On 31st August, a large gathering of Downing Place members and friends came for tea in the Gibson Hall, to thank Ann for her service to us, and her memorable contributions to those within and beyond our fellowship, as she moves on to her new position as a Finance Administrator in the Bursary of Newnham College. Seven hours before his retirement from stipendiary Christian ministry, an elegantly attired Nigel Uden, carefully-prepared notes in hand, thanked Ann on behalf of all of those present, and hundreds more. With reference to the creature that shares Ann and Dan’s home with them, and the eighteenth-century poet Christopher Smart, he began “For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry. For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving him”. At the conclusion of Nigel’s careful exposition of the poem, with reference to Ann, we enthusiastically applauded both Ann and Nigel.

In last month’s Editorial, I declared an ambition to publish a ‘Thank You, Ann’ article in the September *Place Matters*: not least, because it didn’t seem right to ask Ann to publish her own appreciation. With the help and support of Downing Place members, that ambition has been accomplished, and you will find the thanksgiving article in this issue.

As for ‘what’s next?’: as I write, I don’t yet know who will take up the reins, working with the Editor to compile and distribute this magazine. I can only say “Watch this space”.

So Dear Reader, please read on. Read carefully: and ‘Tread softly because you tread on my dreams’.¹

Tim Rowland, August 2025

¹ William Butler Yeats (1899) *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*

LETTER FROM A MINISTER

The seasons change and here we are in September, the beginning of autumn. And how confusing life is. Autumn is about the fading of the year, harvests gathered in and falling leaves; as the evenings draw in, we prepare for the ending of another year. Or do we? Really autumn feels more like the beginning of a *new* year, seeds fall into the ground, crops are planted in the newly ploughed fields, fallen leaves nourish the soil; and the human family scurries around ready for a new term, a new academic year. School and University beckon, and even the new Church year is not far over the horizon.

So is this the season of decline, gathering darkness, loss and decay? Or is it the time of celebrating the bounty of life, planting for the future and stepping out hopefully into whatever awaits us? Both, obviously. And for us, as a church, it is also both. No need to create an elephant in the room which we studiously ignore; **let's own up: we are sad, and it is right and proper and healthy to express our sadness, and talk to each other about how we are feeling.** Our minister of fifteen years has retired, and one very significant phase in our church's life has drawn to a close. **For many Nigel has been a friend as well as a minister, counsellor and example of Christian living.** For those whom he has married, supported through bereavement, whom he has baptised and nurtured in faith, this is a big moment. Next time we awake in hospital he will not be visiting us, and next Sunday he will not be leading worship. So, be sad.

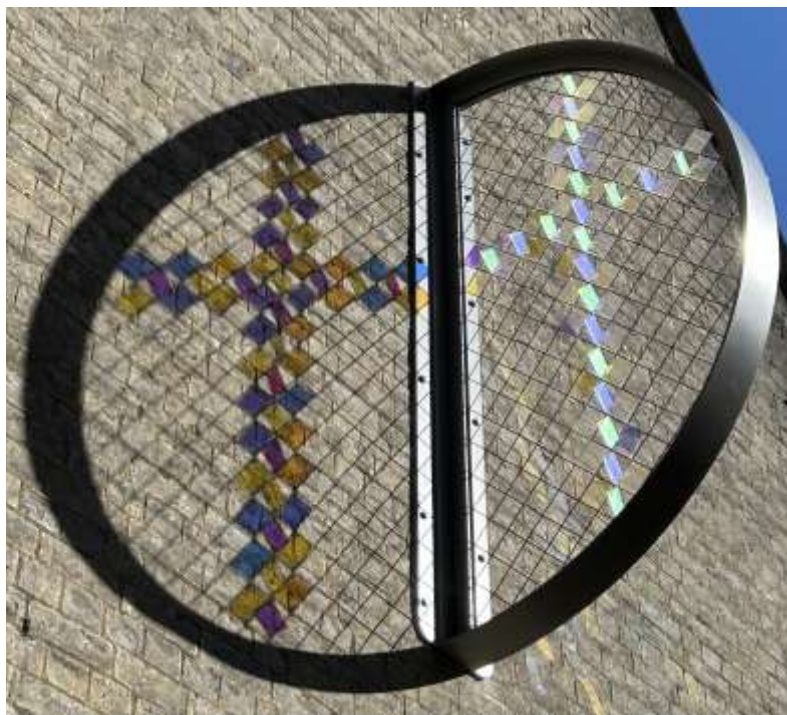
There are many forms of bereavement in a lifetime, and most are not connected to literal death. Nigel and Bethan, despite the excitement of a new beginning, new city, new home, and all the adventures of retirement will be **feeling bereaved ... the loss of the familiar and safe, old friends, and work which has been both demanding and fulfilling.** 'The retired' step into a strange world which can at first seem like a long holiday, but then raises questions **about purpose and meaning. Who am I when I'm not needed, not a leader, not consulted?** Every ending, of voluntary roles as well as employment, can feel like **a step nearer death.** Oh, sorry, we're not supposed to talk about that, are we? Even though we do believe that death is itself a new beginning in Christ.

And there we are again, endings as beginnings. Whether it is a death we mourn, or the collapse of a relationship, or moving house, or retirement, or life-changing illness, or – well, you complete the list: each one is a form of bereavement and we do well to admit that. Grieve, and then gather strength for what comes next. The seed falls into the ground and dies, it is autumn after all. But the seed is breaking open to its future, preparing to grow and bear fruit. Autumn and spring are such close allies.

Let's give ourselves some time to be sad, to notice who and what is missing in our shared life. That will give us the ability to move on, to evaluate the past and, listening carefully to the Spirit, to discern the way ahead. And let's be kind to each other: elders and officers and staff are also getting used to this new situation, and leading a church during a ministerial vacancy is hard work! It's a new phase, a new term. Nigel's ministry will bear fruit in our faithfulness, and we can welcome the future with hope as we trust in God, "source, guide and goal of all that is", as the apostle tells us (*Romans 11:36*).

In friendship
Elizabeth Caswell

PS Some time ago a few of us raised the possibility of forming an informal group for the widowed to offer mutual support. It may not be necessary as we already have the Going Places group to encourage shared outings, and 'Cruse' is a charity with a good track record in mutual help for the bereaved. However, if anyone would value a 'light touch' group for the widowed of Downing Place, then please contact me.



Dichroic glass cross in the yard, taken by Jess Uden

IN EVERY CORNER SING

John Courouble writes:

Early May took me to the glamorous surroundings of Coventry, and in particular their Methodist Central Hall, for an exhibition and collective celebration of the 35th anniversary of *Rejoice and Sing* (the finale of said performance featured one Revd. N. Uden on piano).

You can revisit the event at [Rejoice and Sing LIVE](#)

On returning from this, a discussion with Sorrel Eyres, then serving as an elder of St Columba's Oxford, but now as chaplaincy assistant at the ecumenical chapel of Keele University, revealed a curiosity about hymn tunes which are named for places in Britain – is there a pattern?

That shouldn't be too hard, I thought. Download the index, note which are places, get latitudes and longitudes, place on map. Seven hours later I gave up for the evening and went to bed. There was night and there was morning, a first day. Progress remained gradual.

Not the least of my early challenges, there was no public digital index of *Rejoice and Sing* in tabular format. I now have some approximation to it thanks to Gordon Woods who will be known to many of you, but in the interests of efficiency and ecumenical relationships, I grabbed what was available – *Singing the Faith*. So, a Methodist Map it is – I suspect the overlap is very large in hymns as it is in beliefs, though of course both only contain a fraction of the hymns and tunes which exist.

A combination of working by hand, Google, Wikipedia, and ChatGPT, eventually got me to approximately a 'good enough' identification of which hymn tunes are places, and where those places are (albeit with some choices to be made – are hymns named for individual churches, or schools, to be counted as places. Are counties places, and where is their centre point? "Norfolk" does not appear in this hymn book, sparing me the question whether it is named for the county or the dukes).

Generally, I erred on the side of inclusion and simplicity. Cwm Rhondda, yes. Northumbria, yes. Regent Square, yes. Westminster Abbey, yes. Some are missing, though. Duke Street, Falcon Street, time would be needed to identify which streets are in question. Garelochside could presumably be placed on the shore of Gare Loch, but for now has not been.

Finally, we have a map.



*(Map layers and backgrounds provided via Tableau under licence
- underlying copyright Mapbox and OpenStreetMap)*

There is then something of a bias to the south, though in particular against the East coast (the hymn tune “Norwich” does exist, but in only one hymn (perhaps unsurprisingly “Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth”, a poetic setting of Julian of Norwich’s works) and not in this hymnal (and often to a different tune where it does appear).

Within the vicinity of Downing Place, both Cambridge (“A Charge to Keep I Have”) and Coe Fen (“How shall I sing that majesty”) have tunes, though the most local high profile hymn is probably Saffron Walden, the setting for “Just As I Am”.



A larger dot implies more hymns using the same tune, and the online version of the map enables the user to click on the dot and see the hymns: https://public.tableau.com/views/HymnMap/Dashboard1?embed=y&display_count=no&render=true&showVizHome=no#1

There is more I would like to do, when energy and time allow (which I suspect may in reality mean “never”), in particular colour coding the dots based on the era of the tune (traditional, renaissance, early modern, Victorian, contemporary, etc), and allowing selection of a subset of the data by composer.

For now, I hope ‘the story so far’, if not quite wondrous (“Hyfrydol” – sounds like it could be a place in Wales, but isn’t) is of some interest.



ANN AUGER – with thanks

On 27th June 2025, many Downing Place URC members and friends found, in their email inboxes, an announcement from Nigel Uden. It read:

I can now share with you that Ann Auger has accepted an offer of employment and will start on 11 August 2025 working in the Bursary of Newnham College as a Finance Administrator, focusing on student finances. The 31 July 2025 will be her last day of employment with Downing Place Church. Ann has worked for Downing Place Church, and previously for Emmanuel Church, for almost 10 years, and has made a very significant contribution to our life and work during that period. On behalf of the Members of Downing Place Church, I would like to thank Ann for all that she has done, and to wish her every success in her new role.

This issue of our magazine would clearly be incomplete without the “thank you, Ann” article that follows. I am grateful to Margaret, Ian and Stephen for agreeing to contribute to it.

Margaret Thompson writes:

The July issue of *Place Matters* included my memory of my “brief encounter” with Nigel on a busy commuter station before his call to St Columba's. It is therefore with a sense of *déjà vu* that I recall how I first got to know Ann Auger. We corresponded when she worked at the County Register Office and I was a newly Authorised Person for marriages at Emmanuel URC - it was absolutely essential that I got things right, and Ann assisted remotely on a number of occasions, and with patience. We then met in the flesh, when she applied for the post of Centre Manager at the church in the autumn of 2015. I served on the interview panel, where there was no doubt at all of her ability. You might say that we bonded over the regular accounting of the Sunday offerings on Monday mornings! I have valued her friendship over the years, and know that others have found her approachable and committed to her work. At Trumpington Street Ann could turn her hand to things in the Fair Shares cafe as well as the office: I could only envy her skills at the computer in organising the standard circulations, together with extras generated by changes in personnel, or by increasing oversight of financial transactions. Like the rest of us, she

wondered exactly what the union of the Cambridge city centre URCs would bring. The fact is that she and Elaine Barker made an ideal team, despite describing themselves as chalk and cheese, as it worked out during the pandemic and thereafter until Elaine's retirement earlier this year.

Having become church secretary for a second time after Downing Place was created, I realised afresh how much of Ann's work happened beneath the radar. Although she was based on the mezzanine floor, out of sight for the most part, her varied tasks contributed to the smooth operation of the community, well beyond her financial acumen (where she had independently taken accountancy training to diploma level). During the redevelopment of the building, she and Ian Strachan masterminded the transfer of information and money between church and the Synod office at Whittlesford. Compliance requirements were identified for the submission of DBS checks, in partnership with the church secretaries, and GDPR with the safeguarding Coordinators. Ann was more than an assistant in producing *Place Matters* with the editors, and had a fine eye for detail while maintaining the Church Suite database. Her analytical problem solving, (from a Christ's College undergraduate degree), was invaluable over matters of copyright for hymns and performance pieces. Ede and Ravenscroft hirings for degree congregations, that she secured to the church's profit, might be said to illustrate her knowledge of gown as opposed to town aspects of Cambridge life. Ann's own musical interests ensured that contacts were built up and retained for the regular lunchtime concerts. I also instance pastoral care, where the bereaved would receive a personal message. Ann's commitment to her own congregation and the choir at Little St Mary's has shaped her, and from it we have benefited and been blessed. She wanted to stay at Downing Place, but it was not to be. We wish her God speed as she takes a new role at Newnham College.

Ian Strachan:

One of the most significant factors in my decision to accept appointment as Treasurer of Downing Place in 2018 was the knowledge that I would be working with, and be supported by, a reliable, experienced and knowledgeable-

ble member of staff. Throughout our time working together, I have particularly appreciated Ann's diligence in managing the day-to-day accounting transactions.

During the period post union, Ann was responsible for consolidating the accounts of the two predecessor churches into one system, continuous upgrading of the accounting packages, coping with the increasing complexity of the fund accounts, and reporting in accordance with charity requirements.

Over time, Ann's willingness to develop her technical skills by undertaking further study has continued to enhance the value that she was able to bring to the financial reporting. We no longer required Michelle, as external support and, at the same time, Ann took on the recording and processing of an additional £5m of transactions during the redevelopment, a noticeable increase in her workload, reflected in several extensive excel spreadsheets. Every year Ann has taken over more of the preparation of the year end reporting from the Independent Accountants.

This evident commitment to personal development, technical knowledge and willingness to accept additional tasks and responsibilities, is a testament to **Ann's contribution to Downing Place as our Finance Manager.** Personally, I could not have been Treasurer, 2018-23, without her support, and for that I am very grateful.

Stephen Thornton:

Sitting, as I frequently do, listening to performances at our regular lunchtime concerts, it rarely occurs to me to think what might have been involved, behind the scenes, to make these happen. Instead, I concentrate on the remarkably talented performers we now get at all these concerts.

On reflection, of course, it is clear that a hidden hand had been behind every one of these occasions and that hand belonged to Ann Auger. Consistently, cleverly, conscientiously and carefully, over the years, Ann has curated a concert series highly regarded by its many talented, young performers and by its increasingly large and loyal audiences. As it stands today, each week over 150 people come through the doors to listen to stunningly talented musicians play

a range of instruments: singers, pianists, clarinetists, organists, violinists, cellists and violists to name but a few.

This is an integral part of the church's outreach to the community. On Wednesdays it links perfectly with our Hub Hospitality Initiative where we offer simple Christian hospitality to all who come in through the doors. So, thank you Ann for all you have done to put Downing Place Church on the classical musical map of Cambridge.

Tim Rowland:

I must have got to know Ann when she was Centre Manager at Emmanuel, and I was secretary of the (then) Finance and Management Committee. Not long afterwards, late in 2018, I experienced the first of three annual stays in Addenbrookes, as an in-patient, and my face-to-face engagement with the world outside our house off Huntingdon Road was severely limited. In 2019, from time to time, Ann would call in to see me on her way home. Just to talk, and to see how I was getting on, over a cup of tea. I greatly valued the fact that our Centre Manager was paying me pastoral visits in her own time.

During the Covid 19 'lockdowns' in 2020, I was advised to stay at home at all times and strictly avoid face-to-face contact. Before long, I realised that I really needed to find something to do! I emailed Ann, to ask if there was any way that I could 'help' at Downing Place URC – from the keyboard and screen on my desk at home. Ann suggested that I might consider a few routine tasks such as uploading the Sunday sermons to the church website. Of course, I was not permitted to be in the same room with her while she showed me what to do, so Ann undertook some online Zoom 'coaching', while I watched her on-screen, asked questions, and took notes.

And then ... Sheila Porrer had edited the Downing Place URC monthly magazine since the union of Emmanuel and St Columba's in June 2018, and nearly four years later felt ready to hand on that responsibility to a new editor. One Elder quietly asked me whether this was something that might interest me. I had some experience of journal editing and I liked 'Sheila's' magazine (entitled *Place Matters* since January 2019), but how much time would it take, and how

would I get on? The June 2022 edition was my first as editor, under Sheila's generous supervision: and from the outset it has been very good to work alongside Ann in 'putting together' each issue of *Place Matters*. Ann knew and understood the character of our magazine, and its 'shape' and content, like the back of her hand. She also knew, as expert typesetter, how to make everything fit onto the pages, where best to position pictorial material – so that its content and appearance have made such a positive contribution to the identity of Downing Place URC, as it evolved, and as it continues to develop. Ann has acted as adviser, contributor, assembler, publisher and distributor of our house journal, month in and month out, for six years.

And so, to conclude:

Ann, we send heartfelt thanks, from the members and friends of Downing Place URC, and the community beyond it. We shall miss you, but it's *au revoir*, and we wish you an enjoyable and fulfilling experience in your new role at Newnham College.



Speakers at Ann's farewell tea party on 21st July 2025: and Liz Barrow's special cake!

PRACTICING HOSPITALITY

“Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality,” (Romans 12, 13)

The Chapel and the Hub at Downing Place are doors into the life of the church and community, literally and metaphorically, and they are open much of the time. Hospitality offered in the Hub has given many people the opportunity to meet, and to make new friends, while the Evangelism and Service Group has seen part of its purpose as to offer help or premises or both, to those offering support to a range of people in need of these. Equally the Chapel is open to individuals who feel drawn to stop, for a time, to rest or pray.

Sometimes, however, a concern has been expressed that many people coming into the Hub may not know that it is part of a church, or how to find out more about what we stand for and why we serve. Similarly there could be more that we could do for those who come into the Chapel. While being careful not to push anything down anyone’s throat, is there more we could do under the “Evangelism” heading as well another form of “Service”?

What books that highlight our mission and priorities, for example, are available for people to browse? We have a library, but how easily accessible is it? Could there be occasional displays, linked to the Church year, to the priorities of the church, or, for example, themes connected to the work of the URC Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)? Where might they go? Could there be Bibles for people to take away – or a more prominent place for prayer requests to be left? Could the Chapel be better organized for its purpose?

These are just a few questions for starters. and different church members might well view them differently, so it has been proposed that there could be small group to discuss and oversee the use of the Hub and the Chapel - reviewing what’s good and what needs thinking about in terms of safety, visitors, displays and the church’s mission. It has been suggested that, at least in the beginning, I might convene such a group, so I am now asking that anyone who feels they would like to take part in such a discussion, or has a particular skill or experience to offer, to please speak to me or get in touch with me about it – preferably as soon as possible so that we could get started.

Thank you.

Janet Bottoms. Email: janetfreda40@gmail.com

PLAY THE ORGAN!

Mark Dawes writes:

If you haven't ever played a church organ, how do you make a start?

Near the end of the summer term, the school where I teach had its annual Activities Week, and pupils aged 13 and 14 were able to sign up for a day of activities. **I offered one option: 'Play a church organ'.** As a result, I brought two groups of seven pupils to Downing Place early in July 2025. All the children who came have piano lessons, but none of them had previously played a church organ.

I explained how an organ is organised, how the different keyboards, the pedals and the stops work. We talked about the different pitches of pipes and the different types of sounds they can make, using the Schulze organ from the Church of St Bartholomew in Armley, Leeds, on our wonderful digital organ. The pupils then each had a couple of minutes to play a few notes and chords and to try out some different stops. They discovered how important it is to have good tummy muscles ("there's nowhere to rest your feet!") and I found out how many of them can play the first few phrases of Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*.

The pupils were then divided into three groups and for just under an hour each group rotated through: playing the organ, watching some organ-related videos and having a lunch break.

The videos included an explanation of how organs are built and maintained, and Anna Lapwood explaining how they work. During their playing time, some groups of pupils alternated between themselves, while others sat and played duets. I had some sheet music available and they had also been encouraged to bring piano music with them. Popular choices included music by Zimmer (themes from *Interstellar* and *Gladiator*), Einaudi (various!) and Vangelis (*Chariots of Fire*). They thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to play, and in particular to try out different types of sounds with music they were familiar with on the piano. I was impressed by how many of them played the pedals and remembered key features of the Armley organ.

At the end of the visit Ian played a brief (but brilliant!) recital for us. He played the extremely difficult Bach Trio Sonata number 6 and some of his arrangements of movements from *The Nutcracker*. One of the boys in the group had downloaded an organ arrangement of the *March of the Toy Soldiers* and spent a quarter of an hour figuring out how to play the seven-note pedal motif. He was then delighted when this was one of the pieces that Ian played, and his jaw was

on the floor when he saw Ian rattling through those notes. (Back at school at the end of the day I asked them for feedback: “More Ian” was the resounding decision!)

I was very pleased to be able to offer this activity, and to have given some potential future organists an opportunity to play. My grateful thanks go to my colleagues at Downing Place - Nigel, Matt, Jess, Greta and, of course, Ian - for supporting this important educational opportunity and for enabling it to happen.

The Royal College of Organists, supported by the Royal School of Church Music, has designated 2025 as Play the Organ Year. Later in 2025 there will be an opportunity for anyone who is interested to play different church organs, including our organ in Downing Place.

In addition to this, if any member of the Downing Place congregation would like to play the organ, then please talk to Mark or Ian. We would be happy to switch it on for you and to leave you to it, or to spend some time explaining how it works first.



Our Hauptwerk Organ—image taken by StillVision Photography

In February's issue, following her death, I wrote a tribute to Elisabeth Hewett, to whom, along with Peter, her husband of seventy years, I was friend, elder and neighbour for exactly half my life. Now Peter has rejoined her. The family and I have collated some memories of him here. We particularly remember his children and grandchildren, who have lost them both in such a short space of time.

Peter was born in Hounslow and the family moved to Harrow. He learnt the piano (possibly up to Grade 8), enjoyed cycling out into the countryside, fishing, and collecting bird's eggs. He also manufactured very simple fireworks in the shed at home, though they weren't always the safest!

The outbreak of war in 1939 meant that many teachers left to join the forces. Peter's education suffered as a result and his grades at the time were not good enough for University. Whilst working as a laboratory assistant at the Commonwealth Mycological Institute at Kew, he attended evening classes at Chelsea Polytechnic, and in 1947 was able to take up the offer of a place at Imperial College, London, and three years later was awarded a B.Sc. in Botany. Further laboratory work as a mycologist gave him experience in fungi and plant diseases. He was known for his thorough, meticulous and consistent approach to his work, and this was the way he tackled everything.

In 1953, he began work as a seed analyst in Poole, Dorset. He had already fallen in love with his future wife, Elisabeth, at Hindes Road Congregational Church in Harrow. They were married there in 1954, and moved into their first home in Poole, where Susan and Catherine were born.

A further move came in 1959 to the National Institute of Agricultural Botany on Huntingdon Road in Cambridge. The family moved to Windsor Road, and neighbour Val Livesley of Emmanuel URC introduced them to the church, where they were members until their deaths. Jonathan was born a few years after their move. Peter remained at NIAB until his retirement. His expertise and increasing knowledge of plant diseases meant travels as far afield as the Yemen, Brazil, the Philippines and New Zealand. He wrote many contributions for specialist journals.

Holidays, which always included walking, were much enjoyed. The family often went to Happisburgh on the Norfolk coast, and later to Trebarwith in North Cornwall. Peter loved the Lake District, and after recovering from serious illness would spend a week every year there, walking on his own. At his funeral, on his beautiful wicker coffin, swathed in yellow flowers, stood his familiar walking boots.

Peter had a wide range of interests, as his collection of books shows - natural history, politics, science, religion, geology and history. He never spoke much about these things, and remained a background supporter at Emmanuel, helping Elisabeth out in her many commitments, mainly the Nursery, and the Market Stall fund raising. He and Elisabeth were a great team when it came to creating their wonderful garden in Thornton Road.

Having started pottery classes when he was young, he took them up again in retirement, setting up a pottery shed with a wheel and a kiln. He approached this new hobby with scientific precision, careful record keeping and reading, producing some very skilful ceramic pieces. Ceramics being my art specialism for my degree, this was an area of shared interest for Peter and me. I still have a set of bowls he helped me to throw on his wheel, and a piece in my garden which he gave me, and for some years he allowed me to use his kiln to fire and glaze my classes' claywork which, while it was still moist, I would convey carefully in my car to his house and unload. He loved and appreciated good coffee, and an abiding memory for me was his elegant, butleresque entry to the lounge with a trolley, the ceramic cups and plates often chosen to be of particular interest to me.

Peter's love and loyalty to Elisabeth never wavered, and his care for her was particularly evident in later years. He took over many household tasks. He wanted the best for her always, and rarely complained. In older age he was so patient and gracious as his health and mobility declined. We would hold hands



when I visited, and I treasure one of our final conversations, when he talked with more openness and at much greater length than usual. He also, apparently, looked with fascination again at a photo I had sent him, of a Lucie Rie bowl. He was described as being 'curious to the end.' To Deborah McVey, who was with him near that end, he said that he had had 'a good life'. We give thanks to God for it.

Jane Bower



And a message from Sue McKenzie::

Sue, Catherine and Jonathan would like to thank you for the many condolences, cards and messages we received following the death of our dear Dad, Peter Hewett. We are also very grateful to Deborah McVey for leading his funeral so sensitively for us and for many from Downing Place who came along, and who wanted to remember and give thanks for the lives of both Mum (Elisabeth) and Dad.

OutoftheBox storytelling – the power of stories and play to open our imagination and awaken our soul

On the afternoon of the 21st June, 26 of us met together at Fulbourn United Reformed Church to reflect on the pastoral visiting that is offered out of Downing Place church. I am grateful to have been asked to facilitate the session, as it gave me an opportunity as a new Elder to meet people I hadn't met before and to have deeper conversations with those whom I had met.

I called it 'Being with' – this is a story developed from a children's storybook about how to be alongside someone in all of their emotions after something difficult has happened. OutoftheBox is a way of using stories and play to facilitate a search for wisdom and well-being. The aim of this approach is to help people talk and think in a way that brings new awareness and insight. I shared the story on sand and used figures and other objects to tell the story. I then allowed the whole group to enter into the story and to participate in the group discussion – what is known as 'community play'.



I found the community play section personally valuable as the group powerfully represented the many places and people's lives that are touched, both within and outside of Downing Place.

In the original story the person builds something important out of blocks and then this comes crashing down. In the community play, the group used these broken down blocks – perhaps representing experiences of failure, disappointments, grief – to create a cross which then stood at the heart of our play. A powerful representation of the redemption that Jesus offers.

Here is some feedback from one of the participants:

“The Outofthebox storytelling was amazing. It was a powerful tool for enabling discussion. It opened up possibilities for participation in the most gentle of ways. In setting the scene it enabled us to create and explore our own unique story, as a church body, in a relaxed and calm environment. Participation was expressed thoughtfully and unencumbered in a space that felt com-



fortable and safe. People who would find speaking in a group difficult, spoke. People listened and heard. Everyone’s thoughts and ideas were valued and consideration was given as to how to represent these ideas and thoughts with the choosing and placing of symbols. All this contributed to a collaborative, ever evolving story in which everyone felt a participant.”

OutoftheBox training

If you would like to learn more about the art of OutoftheBox, then join Helen at a two-day training at Downing Place URC, Cambridge, in October.

OutoftheBox is a powerful tool that is being used in a variety of settings, including: hospital chaplaincy, spiritual direction, therapy, Bible study groups, children's groups and all-age settings.



"OutoftheBox is profound. It enables people to find a language to discern and address what is most important."

– Ali Dorey, life coach, Sheffield UK –

TRAINING COURSES AVAILABLE TO BOOK NOW!

OutoftheBox

Wisdom • Wonder • Wellbeing

Learn the art of OutoftheBox by joining one of our upcoming training courses.

Online: six evening sessions

- Wednesdays at 7pm GMT, starting 17th September

In person: two whole-day sessions

- Friday 3rd - Saturday 4th October 2025 at Downing Place URC, Cambridge
- Friday 7th - Saturday 8th November 2025 at Burnopfield Methodist Church, County Durham
- Wednesday 6th - Thursday 7th May 2026 at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, near Oxford

For more information and to book your place, visit:
outofthebox.org/book-now

LUNCHTIME CONCERTS
MONDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS AT 1PM

Free Lunchtime Concerts with a retiring collection shared between Church funds and our monthly Special Cause. Booking is not necessary.

Monday 1 September
Neil Crossland (piano)

Wednesday 3 September
Mifune Tsuji Trio

Monday 8 September
Concert Cancelled

Wednesday 10 September
James Williams (piano)

Monday 15 September
Concert Cancelled

Wednesday 17 September
Olive Murray (soprano) & Christopher Foreman (piano)

Monday 22 September
Paul Gregory (classical guitar)

Wednesday 24 September
Alison Daniels (mezzo-soprano) & Edmund Aldhouse (piano)

Monday 29 September
Julian Hellaby (piano)

Wednesday 3 October
Hazel Keelan (violin) and Lucy Prichard (viola)

Refreshments are available before and after the Wednesday concerts.

Full information about each concert including the programme is available on our website

<https://downingplaceurc.org/lunchtime-concerts/>

THE 2025 'STAR SHINE' NIGHT WALK

In the June 2025 *Place Matters*, Hazel Sanderson wrote:

“I will to be taking part in the 'Star shine' night walk on Saturday 21st June to help raise money for the Arthur Rank Hospice charity. This is a yearly event, and a special way to remember and celebrate the lives of loved ones. I will be taking part and walking the 5 mile route under the stars”,

And now, an update from Hazel:

A huge thank you to all those who supported and sponsored me on my recent walk for Arthur Rank Hospice. Over £300 was raised via my MyGiving donation page. Overall, the event raised £63,000, which is absolutely brilliant.

The evening was extremely hot (32 degrees C) and sunny, but there was plenty of support along the route, with water stops and even a choir to sing us on our way. A one-minute silence preceded our walk, to remember all those who have passed away - always a poignant moment and a reminder of why we walk. So many known to us have been touched by the services of Arthur Rank, and now many more will benefit from this fundraising. So again, thank you very much!



Here's a photo of me and my cousin Wendy after completing the walk, excuse the headgear!

EVENT RECOGNISING THIRTY YEARS OF JIMMY'S IN CAMBRIDGE

Jimmy's opened in 1995 as Cambridge's first all year round night shelter, and it now offers a much wider range of support. It remains one of the most prominent organisations within the community supporting people who have been rough sleeping in the city.

On 2nd July 2025, an event was held in the Old Library in Emmanuel College, to celebrate Jimmy's thirtieth anniversary. The gathering included representatives from several sections of Cambridge society. It was very well organised, generously supplied with refreshments and raffle prizes from local businesses, and highlighted the established base Jimmy's has built up in Cambridge.

I didn't spot any other Church representatives, other than Penny Milsom representing Fulbourn. There were several local Councillors, and people from local businesses, such as Hills Builders and other construction firms and charities such as the Cyrenians.

There were four stalls – Jimmy's itself, the Cambridge Building Society, Mitffit, which offers fitness training for free to Jimmy's people, and those training for the Half Marathon on Jimmy's behalf, and Good Tech, which recycles old devices and makes them available to homeless people. We were encouraged to visit them all and get a stamp on a card to be entered in a raffle, with all our contact details.

After some networking time there were speeches, firstly from one of the Deputy Lieutenants of Cambridgeshire, Caroline Brewer, who commended the work done by Jimmy's. The CEO of Jimmy's, Natasha Davies, gave a very well received speech about homelessness, its causes and its implications and the work Jimmy's does and would like to develop, especially to put more accommodation in place, and to lessen the stigma of homelessness.

Elwyn Chan, one of the Trustees of Jimmy's, appealed to those in the audience with access to special skills, e.g. in housebuilding, planning, technology, to consider helping Jimmy's, not as charity, but as an investment in a better future for Cambridge as a whole. She cited the example of her own grandfather who had experienced homelessness in Hong Kong and gone on to found a business, using the profits to help other people from China to establish themselves in Hong Kong.

We saw a video of one of Jimmy's residents who spoke of the hope he now had for his future after the help he had received. Finally Cat Strawbridge, Jimmy's communications Manager, spoke briefly about next year's half marathon and an upcoming Gala dinner.

That was the end of the formal proceedings, allowing time for more conversation and networking.

The focus of the event was not so much fundraising or seeking volunteers, but raising awareness and encouraging those in the community who had skills to give to continue to use them for Jimmy's.

Sheila Porrer



'People can find themselves homeless for any number of reasons – whether it be losing a job, escaping domestic abuse, mental ill health or addiction. Jimmy's is here 24/7 for anyone who finds themselves homeless and in need of support. It is only due to the continued generosity of our supporters that we can provide vital, life-changing support to help people in their journey through homelessness.'

www.jimmyscambridge.org.uk

A ‘THANK YOU’ LETTER FROM BETHAN & NIGEL UDEN

History is an unrelenting sequence of chapters. Since 2010, Bethan and I have been privileged to be part of the most recent chapter of United Reformed Church life in central Cambridge, as we have in Fulbourn. It has been a season of significant development, and ‘time would fail me to tell of’ it all; and anyway, perhaps this is not the moment to do so. Suffice it to say at this point, I am confident that we will never forget our Cambridge years, nor lose our gratitude for all that they have offered to us.

So many people of Downing Place Church were both kind and generous in the words and gifts to mark my retirement and our departure. The financial gift was truly overwhelming, and will contribute towards various things that otherwise would not have been possible. All the other items – the books of Cambridge and Norfolk, the Book of Memories, the cake, the card, the ewer, the flowers, the Junior Church fruit of the Spirit, the stained glass, the Schubert piano music, the flowers, and so on - showed such thoughtfulness. Then there was the service, in which words and music were beautifully combined, as they were again on the final Sunday, followed by the tea, the meal, and the eclectic entertainment. Bethan, Jess, and I are truly grateful. We cannot name some people without unhelpfully omitting others, but by this note in Place Matters we would like to express our abundant and abiding appreciation to each and all.

Now there are more chapters to come, for you as Downing Place Church, and for the Uden family. As David Reynolds says in one of his books, *Mirrors of Greatness* (2023), ‘what’s past is prologue’. Although a great deal has been achieved during these fifteen years, little that we have shared in doing is complete. God is forever doing God’s new thing, which, by the grace revealed in Jesus Christ, will build upon the achievements and redeem the errors of that prologue.

With more thanksgiving than we can say for the provision of Dr Megaw's Charity, we look forward to life in Norwich and whatever the next chapter brings, praying God's blessing upon you all for the Church's tomorrow, too.

Bethan and Nigel



The beautiful, and delicious, cake Liz Barrow crafted for the leaving event on Saturday 12th July.

Image taken by Bethan Uden



From [Protect Rainforest | Fight The Climate Crisis | Join Cool Earth](#)

Cool Earth exists because the world is in a climate crisis.

The most effective way to fight back is to protect the best carbon-storing technology that already exists - rainforest.

And the best way to do that? Back, support, and listen to the indigenous peoples and local communities that have lived in balance with rainforest for thousands of years, and are the real rainforest experts. They are people who face extreme injustice whilst living on the front line of the climate crisis.

Cool Earth funds projects that tackle the root causes of deforestation and **protect vital carbon sinks**. **There's no formula to rainforest protection**, but we work in partnership with indigenous leaders and in-country NGOs. When cash is paired with traditional knowledge, it funds radical solutions – be it beehives, solar farms or satellites – it all protects rainforest.

WAYS OF GIVING TO OUR SPECIAL CAUSES

- Monthly Retiring Collections on Sunday 22 September (cash, cheque or card)
- Cash/cheques can be left any Sunday in a clearly marked envelope
- 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 under the large photo of the congregation. Select Special Donations as the fund

SEPTEMBER DIARY

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Mon	01-Sept	Officer's Meeting	10.15am	Minister's Office
Mon	01-Sept	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Neil Crossland (piano)	1pm	Church
Mon	01-Sept	Worship, Discipleship & Spirituality Group Meeting	7.30pm	Online - Zoom
Tues	02-Sept	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Tues	02-Sept	Finance Group Meeting	7pm	Room 3
Wed	03-Sept	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Mifune Tsuji Trio	1pm	Church
Thurs	04-Sept	Midweek Worship led by Dr Janet Bottoms	11am	Church
Thurs	04-Sept	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Sun	07-Sept	Choir Rehearsal	10am	Church
Sun	07-Sept	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Elizabeth Caswell	11am	Church
Mon	08-Sept	Monday Lunchtime Concert CANCELLED	1pm	Church
Tues	09-Sept	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Tues	09-Sept	Elders' Meeting	7.30pm	Gibson Hall
Wed	10-Sept	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - James Williams (piano)	1pm	Church
Thurs	11-Sept	Prayer Meeting	10.15am	St Columba's Chapel
Thurs	11-Sept	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Professor David Thompson	11am	Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Thurs	11-Sept	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Sun	14-Sept	Choir Rehearsal	10am	Church
Sun	14-Sept	Sunday Worship led by Richard Lewney	11am	Church
Sun	14-Sept	Church Meeting	12.30pm	Church
Sun	14-Sept	Solidarity Hub	2pm	TBC
Mon	15-Sept	Monday Lunchtime Concert CANCELLED	1pm	Church
Mon	15-Sept	Deadline for signing up for the Gibson Lunch	4pm	Office
Tues	16-Sept	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	17-Sept	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Olive Murray (soprano) & Christopher Foreman (piano)	1pm	Church
Thu	18-Sept	Midweek Worship led by Jane Bower	11am	Church
Thu	18-Sept	Gibson Lunch	12.30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	18-Sept	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Sun	21-Sept	Choir Rehearsal	10am	Church
Sun	21-Sept	Harvest Festival Worship led by the Revd Elizabeth Caswell	11am	Church
Sun	21-Sept	Open Table Communion Service	7pm	Church
Mon	22-Sept	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Paul Gregory (classical guitar)	11am	Church
Mon	22-Sept	World Church and Public Issues Group Meeting	7.15pm	Online
Tues	23-Sept	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Wed	24-Sept	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Alison Daniels (mezzo soprano) & Edmund Aldhouse	1pm	Church
Thu	25-Sept	Midweek Worship led by the Revd Dr. Janet Tollington	11am	Church
Thu	25-Sept	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Fri	26-Sept	Macmillian Coffee Morning	10.30am-12.30pm	Hub
Sun	28-Sept	Sunday Worship led by the Finance Group	11am	Church
Sun	28-Sept	Lunchtime Concert (Ian de Massini)	1.15pm	Church
Sun	28-Sept	Solidarity Hub	7pm	Hub
Mon	29-Sept	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Julian Hellaby (Piano)	1pm	Church
Tues	30-Sept	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	1-Oct	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Hazel Keelan (violin) & Lucy Prichard (viola)	10am	Church
Wed	1-Oct	Property Meeting	7pm	Online
Thu	2-Oct	Midweek Worship led by the Reverend Liz Caswell	11am	Church
Thu	2-Oct	Knit One Give One	1.30pm	The Hub
Sun	5-Oct	Choir Rehearsal	10am	Church
Sun	5-Oct	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Professor David Thompson	1pm	Church

MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE

7 September	Chris Baker	Fenstanton
14 September	Liz Caswell Penny Flynn Janet Tollington	Trinity, Burwell Fulbourn Saffron Walden
21 September	Chris Baker Janet Bottoms David Cornick Janet Tollington	Ely Methodist Fulbourn Melbourn Bassingbourn
28 September	Liz Caswell Janet Tollington Deborah McVey	Stetchworth and Cheveley Buntingford St Luke's LEP's 20 th anniversary



Image by StillVision Photography

LECTIONARY FOR SEPTEMBER

These are the readings suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary, as in **ROOTS**, the material used by our Children's Ministry team. They may be altered if that is the preacher's wish.

7 September (Trinity 12)

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalms 1

Philemon 1-21

Luke 14:25-33

28 September (Trinity 15)

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Psalms 146

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Luke 16:19-31

14 September (Trinity 13)

Exodus 32:7-14

Psalms 51:1-10

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-10

5 October (Trinity 16)

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Psalms 37:1-9

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Luke 17:5-10

21 September (Trinity 14)

Amos 8:4-7

Psalms 113

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13



Image by StillVision Photography



Front image: Rose in front yard

Back image: Rose in the courtyard garden

Photos by Jess Uden

MAGAZINE EDITOR:

Tim Rowland

tr202@cam.ac.uk

ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

Please send items to the Editor - by email (see above)

WEB EDITOR:

Jess Uden