



DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE

PLACE MATTERS



MONTHLY MAGAZINE – ISSUE 24
SEPTEMBER 2020

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CONTACTING THE CHURCH

BY TELEPHONE

01223 312814 is now our sole, permanent number and has been diverted to a mobile phone which either Ann and Elaine will have.

BY POST

There is a mailbox on the gate at Downing Place, which is checked regularly and post may be sent there., addressed to Downing Place United Reformed Church, 4 Downing Place, Cambridge CB2 3EL.

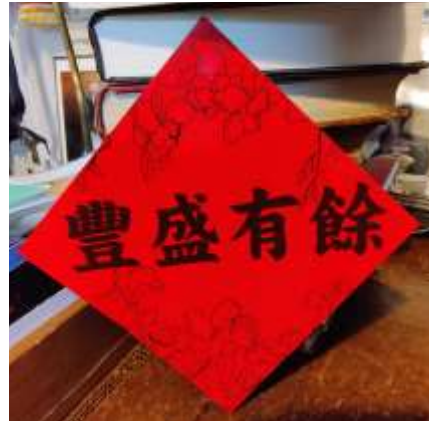
HOLIDAYS

Ann and Elaine are both taking annual leave in September, Ann will be unavailable between Saturday 5 September and Sunday 20 September. Elaine will be unavailable from Saturday 19 September (return date is to be decided)

MINISTER'S LETTER

‘You’ve done much; and there’s much to do.’

The Downing Place Church congregation has many members who come from, or have lived in, other parts of the world. Just as combining people of different working backgrounds and models of home life makes us all the more complete, so the experience of other cultures is enriching and essential to our wholeness as a community. So often, encountering the discipleship of Christians in other places can deepen ours in England.



One example comes from Korea. There’s a distinctive insight from that East Asian context; it’s called *minjung*. It sees mission as social change, but not change imposed by someone from outside the context. ‘Minjung’ literally means ‘ordinary people’ and the *minjung* understanding of mission focusses on overcoming the powerlessness that is too often imposed upon ordinary people by ruling, even controlling classes. I sense that *minjung*’s particular point for European Christians is how ordinary people are not those to whom mission should be done, as if others have some knowledge or money they need. Rather, mission is what we all do to enhance each other, and the communities in which we are set.

As we explore the future life and work of Downing Place Church, it is important for us to listen to the ‘*minjung*’ of our own context, so that the mission in which we engage is not what ‘we’ think ‘they’ need, but what we together discern will enable us all to be caught up more fruitfully with God’s reign in our midst. As I see it, we are not aspiring to be a church that saves our city but a church faithfully and sacrificially living out God’s saving love at the heart of our city.

This vital piece of listening is really what we have engaged the Community Development Worker to help us do. Eventually, Philip Wood, who starts amongst us on 1st October, is going to be in conversation with community organisations in order to read the needs of the part of Cambridge we occupy. In the first instance, though, he will speak with other faith communities, to see where there are gaps in what is already provided. The outcomes from Phil’s work will be a vital building block of the life and work of Downing Place Church, for which its renewed building will be a springboard.

Another insight from the church overseas came some years ago, when a group from a different East Asian country visited St Columba's. The wisdom they brought was so pithy that it's summed-up on the fridge magnet above! When they presented it, I was told it says, 'You've done much; and there's much to do.' How right that is for us. We have history that we value, with a today and tomorrow to which we are eager to apply ourselves, enjoying all the gifts and fruit that the Spirit of God allows. In all of that, getting right our reverence for the past and our relevance to the present is the key. As Brian Castle asks in his book about minjung: '... how can a church inherit the past, thereby drawing on it as a resource for the present and future, rather than be a slave to the past, thereby being weighed down by it?' *

That said, because I have no East Asian languages, I sought advice from those who do to check my understanding of the fridge magnet. The response was that it literally means 'more than abundant', and in Chinese translations of the Bible may refer to 'blessings received from Jesus'. As we survey the past of Emmanuel and St Columba's the blessings of God's grace have been more than abundant. They continue to be so, and that is surely the context in which we can be bold to embrace the opportunities and challenges of a future shaped by the pandemic and by the resource we have received in the extensive premises on Downing Place.

For these stirringly demanding times, may God abundantly bless us, even whilst making of us what God would have us be.

Nigel

* Brian Castle 2004: *Unofficial God? – voices from beyond the walls*. London: SPCK page 70



HOUSE GROUPS: DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The next series of house groups will take place in October and November:

Monday evenings:

October 12th and 19th; November 2nd and 9th, 7.00 – 8.30 pm.

Leader: Li Tang; technical support: Kelly O'Doherty.

Tuesday afternoons:

October 13th and 20th; November 3rd and 10th, 2.30 – 4.00 pm.

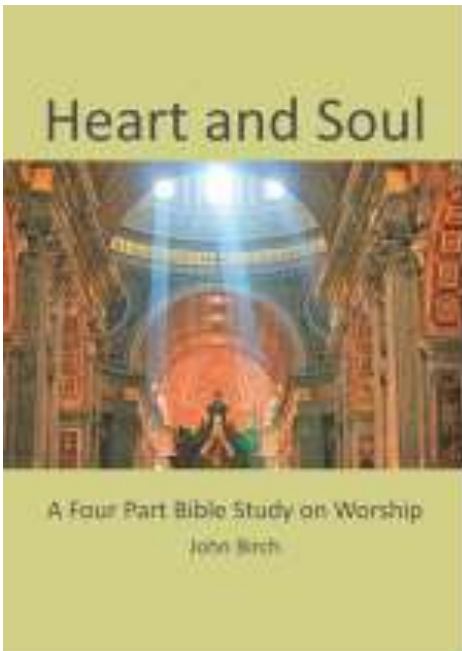
Leader: Janet Bottoms; technical support: Deborah McVey.

Both groups will use the same material, 'Heart and Soul', which looks at the theme of Christian worship. The restrictions and changes brought about by Covid-19 have raised questions about, for example, the nature of worship, and its importance to us as individuals and as a church community. As we look forward to worshipping and working together in our remodelled sanctuary, the material will help us to consider the importance of worship for our church's mission in the world. Copies of the material will be available through the church office. Please contact Ann to sign up, indicating which group you wish to take part in.

In view of the ongoing restrictions due to Covid-19, all of these meetings will take place online, via Zoom. We are aware that not all who wish to participate will be able to do so on-line. If you inform the church office of this by telephoning 01223 312814 we will seek alternative ways of enabling you to take part.

A free sample of the material can be viewed on the faithandworship.com website.

Elizabeth Whitehorn



Worship in September

We expect to worship in the Dining Hall at Westminster College from 13th September.

Detailed arrangements will be notified after Nigel returns, but please be aware that numbers will be limited.

DOWNING PLACE URC SERVICES IN SEPTEMBER

6th	Trinity 13	A service of Holy Communion led by Revd Nigel Uden
13th	Trinity 14	Morning Worship led by Revd Nigel Uden
20th	Trinity 15	Morning Worship led by Revd Nigel Uden
27th	Harvest	A Harvest Celebration service led by church members

INTRODUCING PHIL WOOD

What brought me to Cambridge and a new role as your community worker? It's a long story, but mostly to do with housing and homelessness. In particular it's to do with Jean, a young homeless person I met in Leicester Square in the 1980's, preaching at night under the bright lights to the sound of Peruvian bands and thousands of roosting Starlings. I remember taking her to a famous city centre church one Sunday. She lasted ten minutes. I don't know what happened to Jean. The life expectancy of a street based homeless person in London is just over 40. But I would like to think of her pushing a trolley around Tesco, doing ordinary things. I could tell her she changed my life. I was a hostel worker and trained volunteers for Leeds Nightstop, before moving on to the Churches National Housing Coalition and their successor, Housing Justice, writing material for Homeless Sunday. That's how I first came to Cambridge, supporting faith-based organisations working with homeless people.



Currently I'm living in London, but originally, I come from Bury near Manchester. My grandfather had a stainless-steel business. All the family were involved, but from a child's eye view, I rather enjoyed visiting hundreds of fish and chip shops. We installed the ranges. I don't think my grandfather was too pleased, when I chose theology over steel. My daughters are in their late 20's now and still live in Manchester. I'm missing them, with Greater Manchester under lockdown.

In the past several years I've been writing for a living, alongside community development and church support roles. I'm a Mennonite and former member of Wood Green Mennonite Church, in London. There's not too many of us around in the UK. There are historic connections to Baptists and Quakers. But, I've longstanding connections with the URC and was previously Mission Development Worker with the North Western Synod.

I'm sure none of us could have predicted 2020. The UK, churches and so many of us, have found this year overwhelmingly hard. At the same time, we face multiple challenges – political, environmental and spiritual. As a community worker, how do I approach a role where 'community' is unrecognisable from the

world before Covid-19? Although it's a month and a half before I take up my post on the 1st October, I'm already working hard on these questions. As I write I'm completing the paperwork for a house by the riverside in St. Ives and planning a walk around central Cambridge. Walking has been important and enjoyable for me, these past few years. I'm involved with a journeying Fresh Expression of Church called 'Walking Church'.

Part of the mission development I've been involved with for some years has included mission or community 'audits. I've worked closely with local churches and Christian organisations, running Vision Days and helping churches understand their local communities. I'm looking forward to finding out more about our communities and hearing the story of Downing Place URC in a time of unprecedented change. Some things stay the same. Christ is still present when two or three are gathered together, even if it is often by Zoom. I will be doing a great deal of listening and looking forward to the future of this congregation and community.

I don't want to finish before thanking you for offers of help with furniture. It's greatly appreciated. All being well I'll be moving to St. Ives on or near the 16th September. In view of the pandemic I'll be setting up a home office to run alongside a base in Cambridge. You're very welcome to contact me in the meantime on 07532 172 600. I'm very much looking forward to meeting all of you soon. We've quite a journey ahead!

LI TANG

Li Tang will be leading one of our House groups this autumn. She has agreed to tell us something about her studies and her career.

Born and raised in China, my school years saw the political upheavals of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, a period when intellectual life was despised and things related to the West were considered politically sensitive. The situation began to improve as China decided to carry out economic reforms in the early 1980s and re-opened its door to the outside world. I therefore had the opportunity to enter the university and studied for a bachelor



degree in Economics and English.

During my student years in China, I began to be interested in the teaching of the Bible and hoped to study theology one day. After graduation, I applied to study theology in the UK and became the first British Scholarship (Amphlett Scholarship) recipient from the People's Republic of China to study Christian theology and mission at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham. My three-year stay at Selly Oak helped me re-orientate my future studies and research towards the area of theology with a special interest in the history of Christianity in China. I joined the Weoley Castle United Reformed Church in Birmingham and had a term of internship there as a church-related community worker. Later on, I worked as a volunteer at the South Aston United Reformed Church in Birmingham for one year.

The end of my studies at Selly Oak also marked the beginning of my around-the-world study journey in the following years. I went on doing an MA in Religious Studies in the USA and after that returned to Europe to start a doctoral programme in Theology first at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and then at the Protestant Theological Faculty of the University of Tübingen, Germany. As my understanding of the subject was deepened, I became more fascinated about medieval Christian texts and inscriptions discovered in China and Central Asia, which were written in many languages such as Classical Chinese, Syriac, Old Turkic as well as some Iranian languages. I decided to transfer my doctoral programme to the department of Oriental Studies of the University of Tübingen and there, in 2002, I obtained my doctorate in the field of Languages & Civilizations of the Christian Orient.

After my PhD, I got a job as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Asia Research Institute of National University of Singapore in 2003. I moved to Singapore and carried out a research project on religion and globalisation in Asia. This research led me to conduct a series of fieldwork along the Chinese part of the Silk Road. In 2005, I returned to Europe again as I joined the theological faculty of the University of Salzburg in Austria where I have taught and researched since then.

I came to Cambridge in 2016 as a visiting fellow at the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Cambridge and at Clare Hall. Currently I am the Spalding Visiting Fellow in Comparative Religion at Clare Hall. My specialised area of research and teaching has been the encounter of Syriac Christianity with other Silk Road religions, such as Buddhism and Manichaeism in medieval China, Central Asia and along the Silk Road. My work is focused on the primary sources, such as inscriptions, epitaphs, manuscripts, medieval travelogues, letters, written records etc. Syriac Christianity was one of the ancient Christian traditions. It spread from Mesopotamia to China over the caravan as well as the maritime trade routes. An

intriguing part of my research is conducting fieldwork along the Silk Road, in desert areas in Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, in port cities in south-eastern China, India, Sri Lanka or in remote Christian villages in south-eastern Turkey. Whenever I travel along the ancient Silk Roads, seeing wonderful landscapes and meeting people from different cultures, I feel so much closer to God.

Li Tang

NEWS FROM DOWNING PLACE CHILDREN

CHARLOTTE and ELIZABETH – now 11, and getting ready for Secondary School.

Summer activities – blackberry picking, cooking – Elizabeth has made a butterscotch and coffee sponge. Other speciality - **millionaire's shortbread**.



Visiting and supporting Wimpole Shire horses.



Minecraft on computer.

Favourite postal package - popcorn

Holidays – not Austria and Italy as planned – Bath, and Wells next the Sea

Recommended reading – Mallory Towers, any Enid Blyton, and final book of A Murder Most Unladylike series – Death Sets Sail.

Suggested hymn for Harvest Sunday – One more step along the world I go.

JACOB – had a birthday in August – now 10

Summer activities – Computer programming, Minecraft. Cat, Archimedes, has an Instagram account. Making mint lemonade, cycling to Impington, games in Cambridge Deer Park [which has no deer!]

Card game: Wizard.

Favourite postal package - compass

Holidays – South Wales and Anglesey

Recommended reading – How to . . . [science stuff]

Suggested hymn for Harvest Sunday ‘Harvest Samba’.

SIONED and CATRIN – hair longer, legs longer!

Cooking – making pizza with Daddy.

Favourite postal package – Maltesers [which were shared]

Activities – Hunt the Gnome, feed the fish [which were hiding in the pond]

Picnic with friends.

Recommended reading – Sioned -David Walliams – Slime. Catrin - Mog

Holidays - Aberystwyth - **Irish Sea. Welsh grandma enjoyed Sioned’s prayer on 12th July.**

JULIA and THOMAS

‘Had a lovely week in South Devon. It was very nice to have a little break and to be away for a bit. We had nice weather and spend most of our time outside, which was brilliant after all the time we are spending at home at the moment. We are hoping to spend our holiday days in The Netherlands and France to finally see our parents again.’

Thomas is now 2 and celebrated his birthday by the sea. 🏖️

SAMUEL - has watched the service for 12th July all way through three times and really enjoys watching Ian, Mark and Nigel playing music together. Also says 'Amen' when he's ready to move onto the next part of the liturgy.

Holidays at home. Excited about moving up to pre-school in September.

Favourite packages - compass and mini cheddars

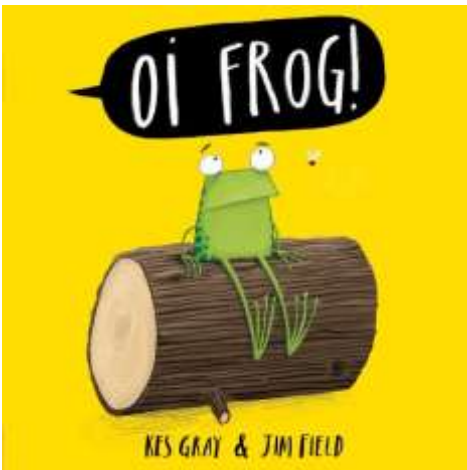
GEORGE - Has moved house

Has rolled over!

LILY - Scottish granny and Essex granny have visited Lily and seen 'He's got the whole world in his hands'

Is planning to move house

Smiling and 'chatting'



Recommended reading – Oi Frog!

PS The church birds have migrated to Impington countryside and plan to return to town next Spring.



MONTHLY CAUSE FOR SEPTEMBER - OPERATION NOAH

Operation Noah is a Christian charity working with the Church to inspire action on the climate crisis. It is inter-denominational, and aims to inspire all British Churches to put their weight behind the actions needed to combat climate change.



They are currently campaigning in two main areas. The first urges Churches to divest (i.e. withdraw their investments) from fossil fuels. This campaign, which goes under the name Bright Now, <https://brightnow.org.uk/> puts forward the Christian arguments for divestment. Firstly, Covenant – our God given responsibility for the world in which we live. Then Prophetic Voice – the Church’s role in preaching repentance for our wasteful lifestyle and urging change. Our “fiduciary duty”, our faithfulness to God’s purposes, compels us to support the development of a sustainable economy. So we must withdraw our support from fossil fuels and invest instead in clean energy “recognising that economic power can be used as a weapon, or it can be used for justice and peace”.

The second campaign is Climate Sunday, an initiative encouraging local churches to hold a local Climate Sunday at any time during the 12 months starting on 6 September 2020. Congregations are encouraged to make a commitment to greater action to address climate change in their own place of worship and community, and to raise their voice to urge bolder action by governments. The culmination of the campaign will be a national Climate Sunday event on Sunday 5 September 2021, to share church commitments and pray for bold action and courageous leadership at COP26, the Climate Change conference now scheduled for November 2021, hosted by the UK. Climate Sunday is organised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland with support from Operation Noah and other charities including Christian Aid.

There is lots more about Operation Noah on their website <https://operationnoah.org/>.

Details of how to donate on-line are on the website, or cheques should be made out to Operation Noah and sent to: Operation Noah, The Neighbourhood Office, 40 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3UD. Remember that our Church office cannot handle donations direct at the moment.

BUILDING WORKS PROGRESSING



With restrictions on access it has not been possible to visit the building site to take photos, so instead we have asked Coulson Building Group to let us make available their monthly video tour of the building works, which shows how much has been achieved so far. Many members have commented on how fascinating it is to see the project taking physical shape.

If you have a computer, tablet or smart phone you can access the video on YouTube via the DPURC website or directly at: <https://youtu.be/l258oxLDJAI>

If you can access YouTube on your television (Channel 198 on Virginmedia cable), go to the search screen on YouTube and enter “Downing Place URC”, click on Downing Place URC when it appears, and the tour should show up alongside the weekly services.

DOWNING PLACE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

BIBLE READINGS AND PRAYER TOPICS

SEPTEMBER 2020

Below are the Bible readings we may be following together as the Downing Place community during September. You are invited to read them each Sunday as you prepare for worship and this will help you to share in worship with all at Downing Place URC.

On the next two pages there are prayers for every day of the month, suggesting church and related matters, as well as wider concerns, and on the final page **there is a meditation by Bernard Thorogood reminding us of God's glorious gift of the natural world – and urging us to treasure it!**

September 6th: Ezekiel 33. 7-11; Romans 13. 8-14
Matthew 18. 15-20

September 13th: Genesis 50. 15-21; Romans 14. 1-12;
Matthew 18. 1-35.

September 20th: Jonah 3. 19.10 – 4.11; Philippians 1. 21-30;
Matthew 20. 1-16.

September 27th: Ezekiel 18. 1-4, 25-32; Philippians 2. 1-13;
(Harvest) Matthew 21. 23-32

The following readings will be used in the Harvest Service itself:
Psalm 65: 1-13; Deuteronomy 8:7-11.



ARROW PRAYERS FOR SEPTEMBER 2020

1. Pray for our Minister, Nigel, as he returns to Cambridge after two years as a URC Assembly Moderator during which he has travelled across Britain and beyond!! Thank God for all he has done – and pray that together we may build our church to the glory of God.
2. Pray for our city and villages as we learn to live and meet together in new ways in this time of continuing to live alongside Covid-19.
3. Pray for our Elders meeting on-line today, as they seek ways of building **the church's mission and worship, while keeping people safe.**
4. Pray for those who have suffered from Coronavirus – and especially their families and friends – that they may find healing and peace.
5. Pray for young people and teachers as the schools open up, that they may find ways of learning and living together safely.
6. Pray for the Open Table Discussion this evening – and for those who meet together regularly on-line, sharing meals and worship.
7. Pray for communities affected by climate change in many different ways and think of ways our personal choices must change.
8. Pray for the Arctic and Antarctic Regions, where the ice is melting and the sea-level is rising – and pray for the local Antarctic Survey scientists.
9. Pray for countries where desertification is increasing and nomadic peoples are forced to leave their traditional lands, such as Kenya.
10. Pray for countries where deforestation is changing the climate – such as Brazil – where many traditional farmers have lost their lands.
11. Pray for countries where the sea-level is rising and their land is disappearing such as the islands in the oceans - like Fiji and Tuvalu.
12. Pray for our own country – for organisations like Oxfam, Christian Aid and Justice Now – who can give us more information about how our lifestyle must change in response to the changing climate.
13. Pray for the first Downing Place service in Westminster College Hall, with social distancing in place, and thank God for all our worship!!
14. Pray for the Worship, Discipleship and Spirituality Group, which meets today, as they reflect and plan our prayer and worship for the future.
15. Pray for our former minister, John Bradbury, as he takes up his work as General Secretary of the URC – and at the URC Trust meeting today.
16. Pray for the City Council and the decisions they make in opening up shops and venues amid changing guidelines and social-distancing,

17. Pray for the County Council, and their responsibility for traffic and the development of community facilities with changing guidelines.
18. **Pray for the Downing Place Children’s Ministry team, meeting this evening,** under the guidance of their leader, Rosemary Johnston.
19. Pray for the Cambridge Colleges – their Principals, teaching and support staff, as they prepare for students to continue to study safely.
20. Pray for our Downing Place Church, and the Church Meeting on-line, which will follow both on-line worship - and that in Westminster Hall!
21. Pray for Ann and Elaine, who continue to support the congregation with regular updates, and contact with other organisations.
22. Pray for Coulson Builders, who continue the work to develop the **St Columba’s building into the new home for Downing Place URC.**
23. Pray for our Buildings Group, who liaise between the builders and the church, and thank God for all that has been achieved already.
24. Pray for people who are unwell, and thank God for the skill and support of medical staff, doctors, nurses and caring friends.
25. Pray for those in hospital and for the chaplains and church visitors who provide comfort and support for those away from home.
26. Pray for the chaplains in Addenbrookes and the Royal Papworth, and for the visitors in Arthur Rank House who bring comfort and peace.
27. Pray for our Harvest Festival Service, as we remember with thankful hearts those involved in bringing food to our tables throughout the year.
28. Pray for farmers in Britain, who have to adapt to the climate which is changing, bringing more extreme weather events.
29. Pray for families who have to help their children to adapt to family life that is changing more than usual as we all adapt to live with coronavirus.
30. **Thank God for family and friends and trust in God’s care for us all.**

A Prayer for the Season of Autumn

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see Your glory
 And to see the world as You see it;
 Unstop our ears to hear Your voice
 And to hear the cries of the world as You hear them;
 In joys and sorrows, warm our hearts with Your joy,
 That we may go out into the world in Your name,
And take Your love to all in need, For Your glory’s sake. Amen.
 From ‘Oceans of Prayer’



Great Trees

I don't know anything more splendid, Lord,
Than the great tree on the hillside,
Its roots grasping rock
Snaking across the path,
Its trunk a smooth column, rock solid,
And its crown up there scraping the clouds
Making me look upward.
It is as though you sowed a giant garden
Full of majesty and shade and quiet strength.

With a metallic scream
In an hour
All that lies dead
Sent on its way to the mill
And the hillside is bare, bereft.

Give us the mind of the maker
To treasure the work of your hands
Humanity as Giver not Taker
May share your creativity plans.

Bernard Thorogood 1927-2020



MAGAZINE EDITOR: Sheila Porrer

ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

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

ITEMS FOR MONTHLY

PRAYER DIARY: Maureen Kendall

WEB EDITOR: Alison Binney

Please send all items to be included in the October edition to both Sheila and Ann by the cut off date of Sunday 20 September 2020

Any items received after the deadline will not be included.

The September edition will be available during week ending Friday 2 October.