



**DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE**

PLACE MATTERS



**ISSUE 38
FEBRUARY 2022**

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Yucca in the Hub

FROM THE MINISTER

I fear it is all too predictable that I would write this month about Desmond Tutu. His death on 26th December was notable enough, but few of you are unaware that spending time with the church in South Africa has significantly shaped my own understanding and practice. The Archbishop emeritus has almost inevitably influenced my personal evolution.

I could write at length about it because much has been said about him over many years. In keeping with the simplicity of his funeral, though, I sense he would not wish to be feted himself. Rather, if there are lessons to be learned from his example, I think he'd simply want us to give them serious consideration, for the glory of God. It can help us as we aspire to authentic Christian discipleship ourselves, and as we continue to develop the life and work of Downing Place Church.

First, and finally, Desmond Tutu was a man of *prayer*. He started and ended each day that way. I think it was about living in as close a connection to God as is possible. Whatever else it does, that is what prayer is about: opening ourselves to the God who in Jesus has made themselves completely open to us. It's not about saying the right words, but listening with an open mind.

Secondly, he was a *prophetic* man. If there was a 'word of the Lord' that he believed needed to be heard, by the church, by a person or by the community, he would say it, powerfully, biblically, humorously, passionately. It might be to call out why apartheid was wrong, its theory a heresy and its practice a sin. Equally, it might be to help an individual see the error of rejecting someone else for their race, theology or sexuality. Or it might be to highlight that fundamental of African spirituality, that God is God, and we are at our best in fellowship with God and with each other.

Thirdly, Dr Tutu was to his fingertips, a *pastor*. In particular, he was legendary for his post card ministry – a handwritten note to a priest and his family on the birth of a child, a compassionate word of faith, hope and love to someone bereaved, a thoughtful tip to a student facing one of life's choices. Incapable of standing on his dignity, he drew alongside us and we knew we mattered as he made real the embrace of God.



All of this was the living out of Desmond Tutu's *priesthood*. In short, he lived to point people to God.

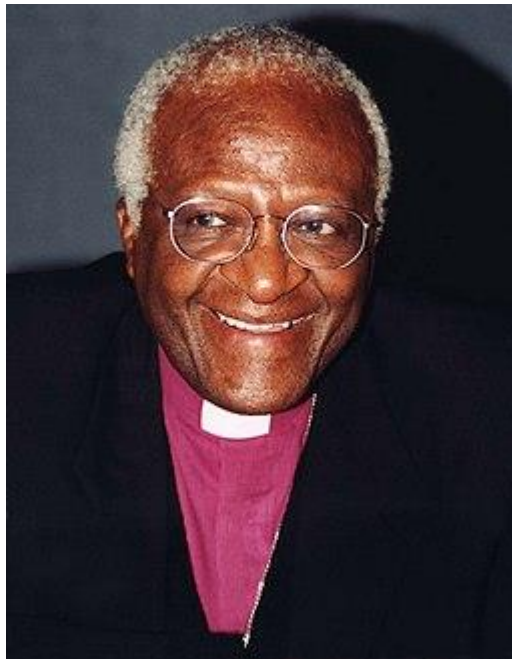
Maybe recalling him helps each of us to give thanks for the people who have been the prayers, prophets, pastors and priests in our own lives. Maybe it prods us actively to take our place in the church community so that others are as enriched by those four things as we have been. And maybe the Four Ps of Archbishop Tutu's life and work give us building blocks for what we are to be as a church in the centre of Cambridge.

Of course, in the end, he went the way of all flesh, as each of us will do. The day he died, I was touched to realise that he had treasured a prayer of St Augustine which, when everything else is said and done, says it all for me, too:

*This only do I ask of thy extreme kindness:
that thou convert me wholly to thee,
and thou allow nothing to prevent me
from wending my way to thee.*

May that be so for you, for me, and for all whose lives are reached by the tentacles of Downing Place Church's ministry. And to God alone be the glory.

Nigel Uden



HANNAH STEPHENSON - MY PROFILE

I was born and brought up in Beverley, East Yorkshire. Beverley is a historic town surrounded by common pasture. In 2010 I became a “pasture freeman” of Beverley. The Freeman elect the pasture masters who are responsible for looking after the commons surrounding the town. There are about 300 Freeman. I was able to become a Freeman because my father is a Freeman. The tradition goes back to medieval times and I have the right to graze one cow free of charge on the commons!



From a young age I went to Sunday School with my sister at Toll Gavel Methodist Church, where my father was a member. My mother too went to church as a member of Beverley Minster. However, we all would join together at either church when there was a special service.

During my time studying A Levels, the Methodist minister invited me to the Confirmation classes to become a member of the church in Beverley. I was delighted to become a member of the church.

I went to APU, Cambridge (now called ARU) and studied Music, which has been a great passion of mine throughout my life and this gave me the opportunity to study at Lebanon Valley College, Pennsylvania, America for 5 months, as part of my degree. It was there where my faith grew stronger. My best friend there was very much dedicated to the church and she introduced me to the church on campus and their Christian Union. Several Wednesday evenings at 10pm I would join my friends and attend the 30 minute service. It was a great place to meet new friends and to this day, 24 years later, I am still in touch with a small group of my friends in America! At the end of that term, I went on a Habitat for Humanity week to West Virginia, organised by the Christian Union. This was an amazing opportunity to see how others had lived in poor conditions. Our work involved preparing the ground in several locations, half way up mountains and in woods ready for houses to be built. It was a great feeling at the end of the week

when we reflected on the work everyone had achieved for Habitat for Humanity.

After graduating and a year in Canterbury, I returned to Cambridge to live, and after a few jobs in Cambridge and London, I eventually ended up with a job as School Administrator at Anglia Ruskin University, working in the Creative Arts School and still there, very much enjoying my role. It includes the music courses and I can continue my music by participating in the students' concerts.

In 2004, I decided it was time to find a church so one Sunday morning I went along to Emmanuel and the moment I walked through the door I remember being greeted by the friendly stewards and felt very welcome. I did know one person who was in the Young Adults Group and after the service I felt at ease meeting the other young people from the group. I knew after that first time this church was for me and so I decided to transfer my membership from Beverley to Emmanuel.

As well as my music interests and my working life, I also enjoy baking and spending time outdoors, walking, cycling and gardening.

In 2021, I was nominated and appointed as an Elder. I was delighted to become an Elder and very much look forward to becoming more involved in Downing Place. I do enjoy the pastoral care side of the role and after all the years I have received wonderful support from my Elders, I knew it was time for me to return this support to others within the church. I am also enjoying being part of the choir. Singing is an important part when worshipping in church, both through the congregational hymns, as well as performing smaller pieces in the choir.

I look forward to serving as an Elder at Downing Place and wish you a happy and healthy 2022!

Hannah Stephenson



Prayer Plant in the Hub

HOUSE GROUPS – BIBLE STUDY GROUPS – CHRISTIAN DISCUSSIONS - WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By the time you read this, the short series looking at Gideon, led by Augur Pearce, will be part way through, and I hope you were aware of it and enabled to take part; although it was on Zoom, so I realise it wasn't available to all.

The next series will take place during Lent, for which meeting details will be announced shortly. Janet Bottoms will lead us. Here is a brief summary of the content:

“On His Way” – a series of discussions focusing on an encounter with Jesus. Each will include close study of a passage from one of the gospels; personal responses; and the context of the reading within Jesus's ministry and in relation to our own day and world.

John the Baptist [Luke 3:1-20]

The Wedding at Cana. [John 2:1-12]

At Caesarea Philippi [Mark 8:27-38]

The Pharisees [Matthew 12:1-14]

The Transfiguration [Luke 9:28-37]

At Bethany [John 12:1-8]

The choice of passages is drawn from the Scottish Bible Society Lenten course.

With thanks to Augur, and to Janet for their leadership.

Penny Flynn, secretary to the House Group planning group

PASTORAL NEWS

Sympathy is extended to members who have suffered bereavements recently. The winter months are notorious for coughs and sneezes, but this year we have the added complication of Covid. Fortunately, everyone afflicted with viruses has recovered, (at the time of writing), although not without having had to re-organise diaries. Others have treatment in prospect, when NHS delays allow. Nigel has also been on hand for visiting in homes and hospitals, and did feel the benefit of his leave immediately after Christmas.

For those who remember Emanuel and Tabea Busch, Rosemary Johnston had news from them at Christmas of a move to Potsdam.



MONTHLY CAUSE FOR FEBRUARY

February's 'monthly cause', *Sing Inside*, is a charitable organisation running singing workshops in prisons and Young Offenders' Institutions. It began as a Cambridge initiative, though there are now branches all over the place, of which Cambridge is just one.

I have taken part in three or four visits myself. Their usual pattern is that, after a briefing the night before, a group of about eight people is collected by minibus from the Music Faculty at crack of dawn and driven to the prison concerned. Any number of inmates join us – typically perhaps twenty – and, after time for introductions, one of the group more skilled in coaching introduces around four songs. These can be songs from musicals, folk songs, spirituals, whatever: usually some the inmates know, and others new to all of us. The skill range can be very varied: from inmates who have never sung in a group before, to the likes of me (who sing only in church congregations), to lay clerks of King's College Choir. It's not unknown for a gifted and sufficiently self-confident inmate to offer a solo.

Anyhow, we learn the songs and sing them together, before giving a mid-afternoon concert for an audience composed of other prisoners, officers, welfare workers etc. If this goes well, it can be a boost to the self-confidence of all taking part. It offers a break from monotony of the custodial régime. And perhaps most importantly, it shows people 'on the out' are taking an interest, devoting time to address the situation of those inside, and relating to them as people regardless of the offences for which they may have been convicted. I can testify that this is appreciated.

Sing Inside is a secular charity. It doesn't have any particular faith agenda, nor does it usually sing hymns. I experienced an exception when a visit was organised by the prison chaplaincy in the run-up to Christmas. The concert that day became, in effect, the carol service, though with rather more references to chimneys and sleigh-bells than we normally hear at Downing Place. More commonly, the prison

education department is host and internal organiser. There are generally good relationships with staff, and the senior Governor of a prison I visited the day before the first lockdown voiced genuine regret that outside contacts such as ours would probably have to cease as a precaution against infection.

They are now, however, starting up again; and in the meantime there have been workshops via Zoom to which inmates were able to connect. Meanwhile the need for funding, predictably, continues. Financial support covers costs of administration and the website www.singinside.org , musical coach training, sheet music, minibus hire, and overnight accommodation which allows a group to spend time at a prison further from a 'hub' like Cambridge.

Cheques to 'Sing Out' can be sent to: International House, 12 Constance Street, London E16 2DQ. Donors with Internet access will find a link to 'Just Giving' at the top right of the page <https://www.singinside.org/donate> .

2021 SPECIAL CAUSES

Here are details of money sent to our Special Causes during October, November and December. The money consists of £400 from our York Street fund; the donations collected at our Wednesday lunchtime concerts and any other money sent to the office. Other donations were sent directly to the charities themselves (apart from Commitment for Life).

October	Commitment for Life	£7704.03 (including Gift Aid)
November	Blue Smile	£947.48
December	Cambridge Cyrenians	£1337.35

BUILDINGS AWARD

We were delighted to learn last week that we have been shortlisted for an award in the Greater Cambridge Design and Construction Awards 2022 .

Judging for the Building Awards covers all aspects of the building including, design, sustainability, engineering, workmanship, and construction.

Judges will be visiting the building on Thursday 3 February at 9am for a brief tour, joined by Jack Boyns, our Architect; our minister Nigel Uden and David Thomas.

The award-winners will be announced at a ceremony in March.

LOVE the PLANET

Downing Place United Reformed Church,
Cambridge
Saturday 12th February
4pm - 5pm

Ravishing choral music
from Japan, Norway,
Spain, Portugal,
France, Canada,
Scotland, & England

sung by
CAMBRIDGE VOICES,
directed by
Ian de Massini

Suitable for all
the **family**.
Free admission.

LOVE THE PLANET

A choral concert on Saturday afternoon, February 12th, in Downing Place Church.

To mark the beginning of their 35th anniversary year, Cambridge Voices, our resident, highly-acclaimed chamber choir, directed by its Founder, Ian de Massini, will be presenting a family-friendly concert, with free admission, on **Saturday, February 12th, from 4:00pm till 5:00pm**, packed full of beautifully engaging choral works from eight different nations around the globe. The choir, who perform in a large semicircle, without the need for a conductor, have created a unique programme of works that combines two central themes:

1. **Music upon the subject of 'Love':** Valentine's Day occurs two days later.
2. **Sustaining and nurturing our planet:** our church's Sustainability Group will be leading the service in our church the very next morning.

From **Canada** comes a contemporary, romantic setting of those famous words from the Old Testament book, The Song of Solomon: Set me as a seal upon your heart, composed by Eleanor Daley, a living composer championed recently by the combined Chapel Choir and Girls' Choir of Pembroke College, here in Cambridge, led by their dynamic Director of Music, Anna Lapwood.

From **Norway**, also comes a contemporary item, this time a setting of the timeless words, Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est ("Where there is love and charity, there you will also find God") by the very popular composer, Ola Gjeilo.

From **Japan** comes a brace of reflective works that examine the special reverence given to a particular tree in Japanese folklore, the Karachi Tree, a tree that gives forth its life-giving fruit of pure-white blossom, nestled amongst its many deadly crowns of thorn that grow upon its bark, making a fitting metaphor for Christ's Love and Passion. Here's a paraphrase of the Japanese poem:

*Behold, see how the Karatachi Trees are all in bloom!
But beware its deep-green thorns, which store such mortal pain.
The Karatachi Trees have made a close-knit hedge around a field,
along one side of which passes a road that I walk along, always at dawn.
See how the Karatachi Tree bears forth its pure-white flowers,
Soon transforming into earthly-round balls of life-giving fruit.
And as I stand there, beside those heavenly, flowering trees,
I reflect upon the kindness that so many people have shown me.
Yet see how my tears flow forth, unstopped;
For my heart has been pricked by those mortal thorns.*

*Everyone has been so kind to me, and yet I cannot quench my tears.
Behold, see how the Karatachi Trees are in full bloom!
Awash with the flowers of Paradise,
Nestled amidst such deadly crowns of thorn.*

From Renaissance **Spain** come two works. The first is a haunting meditation upon the tree whose timbers provided the wood for the Cross of Christ, with music attributed to King John IV of Portugal. This will be followed by an exuberant and entertaining musical arrangement of the Spanish love-song, La Morenica, full of theatrical passion and humour! From **France** comes a setting, composed by Ian de Massini, one of our Joint Directors of Music, of a French contemporary prayer asking for God's safeguarding of one's partner.

From **Scotland** comes a lovely setting of Robbie Burns' most famous poem, Oh, my love is like a red, red rose. And finally, from **England and U.S.A.** comes another work by Ian de Massini, this time his intensely powerful setting of an arrestingly pithy poem by the North American poet, Dr. Henry van Dyke that was read out so memorably at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, by her sister. It's worth quoting the whole poem in full:

*Time is
Too Slow for those who Wait,
Too Swift for those who Fear,
Too Long for those who Grieve,
Too Short for those who Rejoice;
But for those who Love,
Time is Eternity . .*

Admission is free, followed by a voluntary retiring collection in aid of the choir's forthcoming concerts in Paris later this year.

LUNCHTIME CONCERTS - WEDNESDAYS AT 1PM

Free Lunchtime Concerts with a retiring collection for our monthly Special Cause. Booking is not necessary. Come and bring friends!

2 February	Cambridge University Brass Ensemble
9 February	The Granta Trio (featuring Philippa Jones, cello)
16 February	Veronica Henderson (cello) & Elizabeth Mucha (piano)
23 February	Helen Farrar (piano)

See more on our website: <https://downingplaceurc.org/lunchtime->

KNIT ONE GIVE ONE

Congratulations to the Downing Place Knit One Give One group for their seventeenth “birthday” on February 10th this year.

The group continue to knit blue sweaters for the Sally May school in Sierra Leone which Downing Place supports. At Christmas they set up a colourful stall in the Hub full of knitted treats.



LEN BOWER'S DIARIES, CONTINUED.

The December/January edition of Place Matters included the first part of one year's diary entries by Jane Bower's father, Len, which Jane has edited for us. This is the second half, where again the focus is on the many commissions he received, mainly from his Church, which he completed to a high professional standard by hand and often at short notice and at high speed. Jane again reminds us that the views expressed are purely those of the diarist.

Church a.m. Stainer's Crucifixion. Organ now in use after long period of complete overhaul, £15,000. Collected so far, £3000. Did Jumble sale poster.

Freezing cold wind from Spitzbergen or Bear Island. Got book on Dostoyevsky for Andrew, one on the Beatles for Jane. Wrote a few simple musical phrases for Jane on clari, fingering problem.

Very cold, very wet, flurries of sleet, in fact revolting.

Letter from F with request for an information booklet cover for a new visitor centre at Gartree Prison at Market Harborough. Did it straight away, had various sized photocopies made and posted off to F. Cool, dark and drizzly dullth.

Sunshine, dirty clouds, drizzle, sunshine. Repeat ad lib. Bright and gunmetal grey alternately.

Rev. Caryl Micklem spoke about the new hymnbook (also composed and wrote the words for, if I remember, 247). Trimmed lawn edges. Masses of moss this year, gnash.

Went to North Lane Co-op eye dept to have new pair of glasses, reading only, as an alternative to my bi-focals (with which you can't look up and read anything, e.g. top shelf at library, or write at table without moving head up and down if doing a large poster etc. Shopped for peatless compost – found shop had two bags of it. Gottem both.

Nasty wet cold orrid day. Flumes of rain, then sunshine (another apprentice trying out a few weather experiments up there). Rain, wind, gale, sun, drizzle, gale. Changing colour squidlike.

Famine lunch after the Sunday Yorning Service. Onion soup with too much onion filling the cups.

Did a ton of sheets and clothes washing early and got it all out into the open air

oven. R.M. called wanting 21 notices.

Heavy rain. Washed clothes early, and down it came as I was about to put it outside. Thenkyou say match. Dad was born 100 years ago today xxxxx.

F. rang re design I did for Gartree Prison. He gave me the wrong address and telephone number, and could I redesign it to be horizontal format rather than vertical. Did the new job at night.

Made orange fruit custard invention: salivatory.

Shopped a.m. Got wet. Shopped p.m. Got wet. Came back having forgotten froz chicken breasts. Walked back to Safeway's. Got wetter.

---- ---- came. Wants big, rather complex notice, 5' 6" long, 4' deep, giving administrative structure of the church, including various drawings – a bible, a christening, holy sacrament, 'picture of the church', to include layout for 19 elders' photographs and lots of lettering. Worked on it till 9pm then packed it in; ate a complicated sandwich.

Flopped on deckchair p.m, baked, came in.

---- ---- came lunchtime with screed for a big lettered notice, about 120 words roughly, on church ethos. Very stiff and 'ecclesiastic' wording, presumably for Open Day. It wouldn't attract non-churchgoers. (Refers to the church service as 'Christians gather round an open bible, expecting God to speak to them'. Oh no.) F. rang late; could I do a big poster, say 4ft by 2 or something, re the Leicester prison charity walk on Saturday. Planned it before I went to bed.

Did F's poster early; then to annual coach trip. To Hull. Got a seat to myself so that I could muse on the landscape. Wandered round Hull, not fascinating. Humber and river Hull rather sewage sludge in character, but interesting, not photogenic. Otherwise Hull was new shopping centre, glass and brass of robotic personality, or rather anti-personality.

Father's Day card from Jane. I sent her a Daughter's Day card, in reply (drew it yesterday).



*Teaching art at Allerton Grange School,
Leeds, Nov. 1965*

Three further jobs re the summer fair, one to re-do the A4 design, reword to 'Open Day AND Summer Fair.' Grrrr.... Every silvery day has its cloud.

S. R. rang when I was out, wanting two posters for tomorrow morning (thank you for waiting until Sat lunchtime S). Fixed up the two posters in church.

Shopped heavily, mit trolley.

Church a.m. R.M.'s service, and a human sermon (i.e. not literary analysis).

First World War anniversary. The media doesn't seem to recall this, strangely enough.

Lots of rain and colder. More rain p.m. More rain after that. Night, rain.

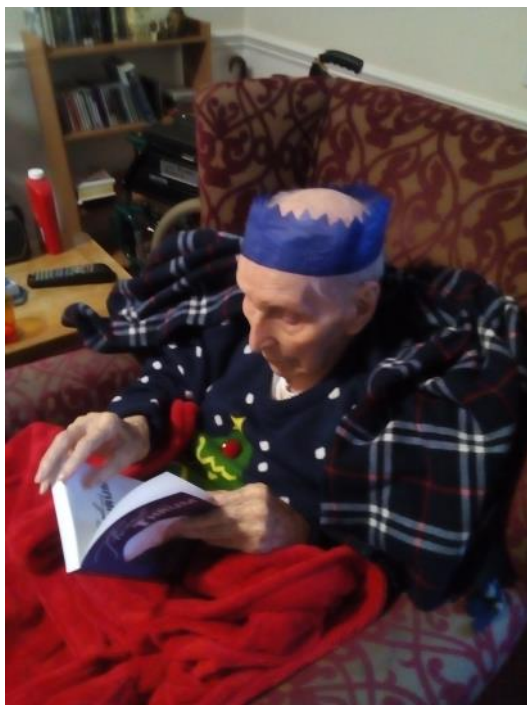
Rain. Church a.m. M. P. i/c, sticking rigidly to rambling about some biblical matters or other of some twenty centuries ago. Jane arrived bright and breezy and white and bright yellow at a quarter to 2. She has her story about the beads with her, getting me to do a few illustrations. Did a few. OK apparently.

Mother's birthday 99 years ago. Out with the 12 ft ladder and on with the ivy haircut. Then flopped in mi chair. Jane back teatime. She brought me a book! – for doing the drawings – about various regicides in the past.

Didn't go to church to hear M.P. for a second week. Made an Indiany ricy & sultanas & apples & tandoori hamburger & French beans type din. Tomorrow, Afghan wheelks.

Cleaned out the gas oven with good old Mr. Muscle aerosol, man's greatest invention since clothing. Made blackcurrant pie, a thing of beauty and a joy for 2 days.

Usual walk up to the garage shop to get the new paper *Yorkshire on Sunday*, non-political, non-smart, non-tabloid-gossip. A good paper at last, and refreshingly



Aged 100, Christmas Day 2020, holding the book he illustrated forty years before

regionally relevant. S. doesn't like it, aaak.

Went to Otley a.m., bought a frying pan, everything is cheaper in Otley. I see that sprouts are appearing in the greengrocers', my favourite veg (providing they're not undercooked, which I find have an earthy, unpleasant flavour. I'm sure our Dear Queen would agree).

Cold, warm, grey, sunny; whatever one wears, it's wrong half an hour later.

In charge of church stewards this morning. I was the only one out of the six on duty who turned up. Aak. Organised five others OK. S.M. wants another Jumble Sale poster, ---- coming over to present his ideas re Harvest Festival. Did the poster p.m.

---- came 10a.m. Wants seven foot tree in foliage with two large removable apples, ditto two pears, ditto two oranges, all dinner plate size, with significant 'religious' words on back.

---- called for his visual aids, plus another job for Wednesday morning – could I make a 14" cockerel weathercock and a 3 foot signpost saying 'ANYTOWN' on it. Did these things p.m.

Refurbished the last kitchen drawer, lining it, sandpapering, making it a thing of beauty at the sight of which one cannot but brush away a fugitive tear.

Bought book (Jesus by A. N. Wilson) and some fruity bath cream.

Went to H's. He wanted notices re smoking, and 'an artistic sort of label thing' for sister Barbara to put on the back of a piece of quilting (a quilt, in fact) at some craft fair or exhibition. Did them both when I got back.

Conservative conference this week on TV. Usual self-centred philosophy and self-congratulatory style, and anti-social rubbish, pro-British rather than pro-people or pro-world. Archbishop of Canterbury made a strong speech this week condemning the philosophy of individualism, personal success being the Ultimate Goal and so on. Hardly got a mention in the press of course, quite well-covered on radio and TV.

Town a.m. to get hardbacked notebook. Found them crazily priced (Boots about £5!! Mad) Woolworth's, none. Elsewhere not to be found!! Will try Otley next. Where are all the good old hardbacked notebooks? (such as this one!)

To Wednesday evening group; lady, talk on old Leeds. Not good, but tea and refreshments were.

In Otley got two hardbacked notebooks, 59p each.

Put on my rarely worn Marks and Spencer's fleecy long johns. Like walking with one's legs in a duvet. Very effective, turn the face red. Rained all day, orrid.

Got the usual cream buns being Saturday, i.e. exotic gungy gooey meringuey squashy creamy kind. Leaves of the cherry tree look brilliant chrome in the sunlight.

---- ---- is to ring me re jobs for Advent and Christmas this week sometime....

Wildly windy day, stripping trees of their leaves and piling them up in dunes. Driving rain accompaniment. Church of England voted for women vicars after years of dithering. Old diehards hate the idea. The anti-voters in the C of E are threatening, as it were, hell fire and damnation in all directions; some are leaving to become Roman catholic and so on. Amazing, all because of bigoted biblicism, maintaining women's role as reiterated several times by St. Paul (Corinthians I, Peter I, Titus, Timothy) but not by Christ. H. is very much against women's ordination. Strange. He says he'd refuse to take communion from a woman! Religion is no substitute for Christ-like behaviour.

Got details about 4 Advent visual aids, he'll tell me about 'Christmas jobs' later, apparently. 1. The Rod of Jesse (shoot growing from felled tree stump) 2. Keystone in archway 3. Key 4. Sunrise. All paintings about 4ft x 3ft.

Did the four big visuals. Now dark at 4 o'clock, yuk. Sent a note on dramatherapy to Jane.

Church a.m. The Rod of Jesse theme, my painting staring everyone in the face, but as a visual aid it was appropriate as it happened. (Many people said pleasant things after the service, it must have had some sort of effect for some reason.) Very nice Herbert Howells anthem O Spotless Rose, lovely scoring.

Rang H. as usual, talked about women priests. Unbelievable to me. It seems to me that to him, his view of 'biblical fundamentals', the creed of apostolic succession (and so on) is very much more important than living a Christian life; this is like church-worship, not God-worship. Made fishy meal for din.

Night S. went to the church Christmas Dinner. (I'd sooner the cost of all this went to Somalia.)

Nick Pepper (the joiner) called and left a pile of picture frame timber. Made a Christmas card for F. Ditto for Jane.

Nick Joiner (the pepper) came about 3.30 and brayed and drilled and thumped. Made curry meal with a confusion of vegetables.

To town early to get 2 litres white emulsion paint. Gave it up after trailing round

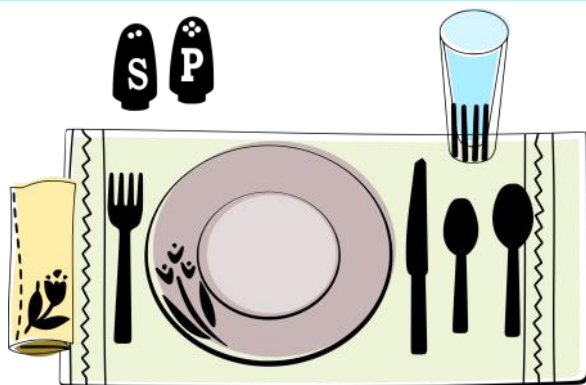
everywhere (only Brilliant White, which S. said didn't match the ceiling, or Barley White, Dove White, Apple White, you name it). Came back. She then decided on Brilliant White. Went back to get it.

Church a.m., sermon based round my arch/keystone job. S. started Christmas caking around 5p.m. First Christmas cards up in the hall – on the church table, after the service. I must take all ours next Sunday, could have taken them today but thought it would be too early. I was wrong – church tables loaded with addressed cards from everyone to everyone.

(A message of a fortnight ago about church Christmas visuals had not reached Dad.) What she wanted was a 7'6" x 6'6" card 'backcloth' of a night sky landscape. I did this p.m, made it all foldable. It's up to her how she supports it.

Cards arrive steadily, in fours or fives, to be blu-tacked up along the hall. Throat becoming very sore. Either beginnings of a stinking cold, or laryngitis.

Stayed in and kept warm with a cold, joints aching nicely.



GIBSON LUNCH

The next Gibson Lunch will be at 12.30pm on Thursday 17 February. Everyone is welcome to this friendly lunch - two excellent courses followed by coffee and cheese, all for the bargain price of £5!.

To assist with catering, it will be much appreciated if you will let the Church Office know by Monday 14 February if you're planning to come along.

NEWS FROM TIME FOR GOD FRIENDS

Christmas greetings were sent by email to former Time for God volunteers. We have some recent news. Quite a few have said they hope to visit this year.

Christopher (2000-2001) “Thank you kindly for reaching out. I hope all is well with you. I have always appreciated the annual holiday updates from Cambridge. I regret being unable to attend the last days of the Cafe. But I do understand that things change.

This past year has been one of change for us as well. My wife and I were appointed to new congregations and so had to move to Mount Vernon, Washington, USA. Our congregations are all struggling to manage COVID restrictions. But the work is worthwhile and we love living in this area. Our kids are growing really quickly. Anna is 11 and has begun Middle School. She is really into Harry Potter and reading. Ollie is 8 and in 3rd grade. He loves art and baseball.

Thanks finally for linking to the church webpage. I did take a look at the congregational photo to spot some faces I recognize.”

The link to the website of Chris’s Church is <https://www.mvfumc.org/>

Katrin (2007-07) She, Christian and their daughters [Joana 3 and Leonie now 6] have moved to Donaueschingen near the Black Forest. Katrin finished her PhD in electrical engineering/integrated circuits and now works for a company involved in ‘optical sensor interfaces for encoder’. “We quickly found connections to the church and to our neighbours”. Katrin is still in touch with Becci who was TfG in Saffron Walden.

Carsten (2009-10) is keen to visit and encourages us to take future TfG volunteers. He is now moved to Aalen and started at Zeiss and it “is going well”. “All the best and greetings to everyone who knows me! Much love from Germany”.

Sarah (2015-16) “This year (2021) I started my masters (master of education), which includes twelve weeks of practical training. That's why I was teaching French and Chemistry in secondary school from the beginning of September until the Christmas holidays. I enjoyed the interaction with the pupils and my colleagues and was pleased to be reassured in my career choice.”

Barbara (2026-17) “There was a lot going on in my year. I will finish my pharmacy studies in October 2022. After graduation, I have to gain one year of practical experience. I wrote some applications in the summer. I got a job at the pharmaceutical company Merck in Darmstadt, a city close to my home village. I

will start working there in November 2022.

A fortnight ago I had my last lab within my studies. I had a wonderful time with my friends in the lab and was also a bit sad that the practical work at university is already over.

'This summer, my family and I spent a short holiday at the Chiemsee in Bavaria. We had relatively good weather and had a few relaxing days.'



Barbara (2016-17) with her family at Chiemsee

Michael (2017-18) "Had 40cm snow in February! I miss travelling and I am looking forward to when the world is back to normal life.

At the moment I am writing my Bachelor thesis. I plan my Master's degree in another town in Germany. I do not know where yet but I look forward to exploring another city."

Carina (2018-19) "I have a déjà-vu at the moment. Corona is very bad in Germany again, we have to be very careful with meeting other people and all my courses in university are online again. It feels like we are back in winter 2020. Yesterday I got my booster. I feel a bit safer now.

My family had a very tough time this year. My father went from medication to medication. In October this year he had the big operation.

I saw some pictures from the new church. It looks fantastic and I can't wait to see it all in real. I'm sure lots of people will have a great time there. I'm sad I couldn't be there for your wonderful big church weekend in November. But I watched it on YouTube. It is such a fantastic idea to stream the services.

I will finish my exams for this semester at the end of February and then I will have some free time until the beginning of April. I plan to visit Cambridge in that time. So, if corona allows it, I assure you I come."

Texts edited by Rosemary Johnston. Full versions available from Rosemary if desired.

Commitment for Life

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

Commitment for Life brings us a story about Kamal Gazi in Bangladesh, and posters about two on-line events.

KAMAL GAZI'S STORY

Traidcraft has shared Kamal Gazi's story, a farmer living in Bangladesh. Kamal summarises the struggles of his community in just one sentence...

“Our children’s education is in peril; their books have been washed away.”

Just imagine a school in Norfolk or Tenby having all its books washed away in a flood... These books represent hope to people like Kamal – an education, the chance of a bright future for his children.

Not only climate disruption, but COVID has also impacted on communities like Kamal's. These hardships make ordinary life more difficult, and poverty less escapable. Kamal continues:

“Before, I used to work and earn a living only by farming but now I have to work as a day laborer in addition to my agricultural work. Climate change has turned a farmer into a day labourer.”

By supporting programmes like *Commitment for Life* and through your purchase of Traidcraft products, you can make a difference.





Workshop with Charlotte

Christian Aid's Church Relations Officer in the UK
Charlotte Scott updates us on
Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, &
Central America

Wed 9th February @ 2pm

Meeting ID 828 1061 2970



A Commitment for Life ZOOM EVENT

COFFEE WITH WILLIAM

JOIN US ON ZOOM TO HEAR
WILLIAM BELL SHARE
ON THE IMPACT OF THE 2021
CHRISTIAN AID REPORT
'WHERE IS PALESTINE?'



THURS 17th March 2022
11am-12.15pm GMT

ZOOM Meeting ID: 826 2918 7235



Women and Water

An online talk and discussion
with Sue Claydon

Tuesday 1 February // 7pm // Zoom

Sue Claydon has worked as a volunteer in a number of countries in Africa, including South Sudan. She has had an interest in the role of women, especially in rural areas, for many decades.

Having seen the way water affects the lives of women and girls mainly, she will share some observations and lead a discussion on the ways **Christian Aid** is working to improve the situation of access to clean water.



Email Alex Cassidy to sign up
acassidy@christian-aid.org



WOMEN AND WATER: AN ONLINE TALK AND DISCUSSION WITH SUE CLAYDON

A long-term Christian Aid supporter from Cambridgeshire—Sue Claydon—has kindly agreed to give a talk, reflecting on her several decades of experience volunteering in Africa. You may remember Sue from her talks at last year's Cambridge Christian Aid service and an earlier "thank you" party.

Tuesday 1 February 7pm on Zoom

Sue Claydon has worked as a volunteer in a number of countries in Africa, including South Sudan. She has had an interest in the role of women, especially in rural areas, for many decades. Having seen the way water affects the lives of women and girls mainly, she will share some observations and lead a discussion on the ways Christian Aid is working to improve the situation of access to clean water.

Please email Alex Cassidy, our local Christian Aid Church Engagement and Fundraising Officer (CEFO), to sign up: acassidy@christian-aid.org

COFFEE MORNING FOR THOSE WHO ARE NEW TO DOWNING PLACE CHURCH

The Pastoral Care group is organising a coffee morning to welcome those who have started coming to Downing Place Church in recent months.

Date and time – **Saturday February 26th from 10 am to 12 noon.**

Please come along if you are a 'newcomer'. If you are talking to someone new, please could you mention the coffee morning.

Contact the Church office (01223 756635) or Jenny Jacobsberg for more information.

Jenny Jacobsberg



CHANGEMAKERS CONFERENCE 2022

20th – 25th February

Christian Aid are holding their “Changemakers Conference” on Zoom from Sunday 20th until Friday 25th February to lay the foundations for this year’s Christian Aid week. All are welcome to log in, Christian Aid supporters of course, but anyone interested in helping the developing world and combatting climate change should find it interesting.

On Sunday 20th at 6.30 pm the new Chair of Trustees, the former Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, will be preaching at an on-line service based in Exmouth.

Our own regional meeting for supporters in East Anglia is on Tuesday 22nd at 7.30 pm, and on Wednesday 23rd there are sessions on cashless and on-line giving, as well as on climate campaigning beyond COP 26.

You can find the full programme with sign in details for all sessions on the Christian Aid website – click this link [Changemakers Conference Programme - Christian Aid](#) .



ASH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2ND

Ian de Massini writes: As Ash Wednesday will occur very early in March this year (Wednesday, March 2nd), I thought it might be useful to give you advance information of what's being planned on that day in Downing Place Church. As has been the tradition in the previous church of St Columba's URC, and was also the case in Emmanuel URC two years ago, our resident choir, *Cambridge Voices*, was invited to provide special choral music for an evening service of Holy Communion & Imposition of Ashes on Ash Wednesday, starting at 7:30pm, lasting 60 minutes.

For this occasion, the choir would, each year, sing a different setting of the Ordinary of the Communion service (the *Kyrie*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus*, and *Agnus Dei*). Two years ago, for the Ash Wednesday service in Emmanuel URC, the choir sang a very beautiful and sonic setting of the Communion service, scored for two choirs, composed by the British 20th-century composer, Kenneth Leighton. The choir were then planning to learn the remaining movement of that Communion setting (the *Gloria*) during the rest of that year, 2020, in order to then have the complete Communion service setting under their collective belts for taking to Paris in August. No-one could have envisaged COVID-19 beginning, which began in this country at the end of March 2020.

To make up for this very long hiatus, the choir will sing, once more, Leighton's Communion setting, for this year's Ash Wednesday service, here in Downing Place Church, on Wednesday March 2nd at 7.30pm. Then they'll get on learning the rest of the Communion service in time for a complete performance as part of the Ascension Day evening service in St Cyriac & St Julitta's Church, Swaffham Prior (May 26th), followed by a performance as part of the morning service in the Parisian church of St Etienne-du-Mont on August 15th, the choir's Founder's Day.

For an Ash Wednesday service, it's traditional to include a setting of Psalm 51, sometimes known as the *Miserere*, and most famously set to music by Gregorio Allegri some 400 years ago. This year, I'm going to write my own setting of the *Miserere*, specially tailored to the requirements of our own liturgy of that evening, and exploiting, to the full, both the spaciousness of our beautiful sanctuary and its great resonance. There'll also be some extraordinarily daring and *avant-garde* music by William Byrd, his setting of *O salutaris hostia* (O saving victim) in which three different voices sing along in exact canon with each other. During the Imposition of the Ashes, every year the choir sings Thomas Ravenscroft's hauntingly simple, but effective, setting of *Remember, O thou man,*

which I've adapted to fit one of the Funeral Sentences: *Remember, O thou man, that thou art dust, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

This year sees the bicentenary of the birth of the great 19th century composer, César Franck, a person oftentimes referred to as the Father of the French Romantic Tradition. For our Ash Wednesday service this year, Pippa Jones, a superb cellist and Elder of our church, will join the choir in the world premiere of a specially adapted version of Franck's famous *Panis Angelicus* (Bread of Angels), to be scored for solo cello, Organ, and four-part choir. On the subject of César Franck, during the whole of this year, 2022, Mark Dawes, Owen Saxton and I will be performing all of Franck's major organ works, as Preludes to our most important Sunday morning services. More details will follow in next month's *Place Matters*.

Lastly, the service will be framed by two organ works by Johann Sebastian Bach, both in the minor key. Ash Wednesday is, of course, the first day of Lent, and the playing of these two pieces of Bach will mark the beginning of an innovative music series that I've planned, called **Bach in Lent**, in which Owen, Mark and I will play, for every one of our church services in Lent (including Holy Week), organ works by Bach in the minor key. Again, more details of this exciting and innovative venture will appear in next month's *Place Matters*.



Congratulations to Jane Bower on no fewer than three recent successes.

In December Jane won the annual Jeremy Lewis Memorial prize, offered by The Oldie magazine, for an article about the past written in his journalistic style.

Secondly, three of the songs which Jane composed and recorded for our online services were entered in the UK Songwriting Contest for 2021. All three have been given a Commended award, with *What More Could I Want?* and *The Shepherd's Wife* being given four stars (out of a possible five) and *Waterwalker* being awarded five stars. Jane thanks Pippa and Tanya who accompanied her on cello and recorder, and David Flynn who managed the recordings.

Jane also heard that her children's novel, *Thread and Thrum*, was chosen as one of the three finalists in the Published Children's Book category of the Eyelands International Book Awards, based in Athens and open to authors worldwide. She was pipped at the post by Brenda Spalding from the US, a prolific and award winning children's writer, who won the holiday in Athens while Jane got a certificate!

You will remember that *Thread and Thrum* was featured in last February's Place Matters, and Jane's father Len mentions his illustrations for the book in the extract from his diaries in this issue (see p.17). If you didn't get a copy back in February, you can still order it through bookshops (ISBN 978-1-9997523-2-3), or from Amazon Smile (which donates to charity with every purchase) using this link https://smile.amazon.co.uk/Thread-Thrum-Jane-Bower/dp/1999752325/ref=sr_1_3?crid=3j57L2DDQWBRP&keywords=thread+and+thrum&qid=1641643137&sp_refix=thread+and+thrum%2Caps%2C111&sr=8-3 and following the link at the top to Amazon Smile.



PLANTS IN THE HUB

Ian de Massini writes: I thought you might like to be updated on the current floral state of The Church Hub. Having taken down all the Advent and Christmas decorations, we've now replaced them with a variety of new and old plants, many of which are now in flower, in locations all around The Hub, in order to make the place feel welcoming, and help us all look forward to a brighter future.

Of the old plants, we have two Cheese Plants (vegan, naturally) that have settled in nicely, and are competing with each other to see who will produce the greater number of new leaves. The Prayer Plant seems to enjoy being near the radiator, in front of the windows to The Garden, and it sits there quietly, and contentedly. The Poinsettia that had been generously donated by a church member for decorating the Sanctuary of the church over Christmas, a plant that's often tricky to cultivate, now looks very comfortable also by the windows facing the garden, and still looks full of life. The Peace Lily, a gift to the church following a wedding in our church last month, is also thriving, and sits beside the library in The Hub.



Peace Lily



Tulips in the Hub

Just before Christmas, Elaine, one of our church administrators, discovered an ailing Yucca plant that had been discarded and thrown into a tip located just around the corner from our church. Together, Elaine and I have been nursing it back to life, repotting it, cleaning all its leaves, feeding the roots, and generally spoiling it with daily TLC with a gentle stroke of its leaves and a little chat every morning: fingers crossed it's coming back to life.

All these plants are regularly fed with *Baby Bio*: other house plant foods are available. Our latest floral acquisitions to The Hub are ten individual pots of miniature, spring-flowering plants (crocuses, tulips, snowdrops, hyacinths, and daffodils), each one sitting in the middle of one

of our many square tables in The Hub. Even after just a week in place, several of these pots are now flowering, making the space so welcoming to everyone who enters The Hub.

In the garden, we've managed to sustain two pairs of Wagtails over the harsh cold of winter, regularly feeding them with a variety of seeds, including, on Sundays, two handfuls of (rather expensive) meal-worms, their favourite treat. We have one pair of Pied Wagtails, and one pair of Grey Wagtails, both pairs of which have been with us since the summer. We also have several pigeons, and a pure white dove, who've also been with us since we moved into our church last May.



Tulips in the Hub



Pied Wagtail



Grey Wagtail

Two pairs of blackbirds, each pair of which brought their fledglings to our church garden in order to feed during the past Summer, have not appeared over the Winter months, but I'm hoping they, or their offspring, might reappear later this year. Soon we'll install several bird-boxes, to be placed around the church garden in several different places, and then maybe we'll be able to entice new families of birds to make their permanent home with us.

Ian de Massini

25TH DECEMBER – AN EXCEPTIONAL DAY

There is something about 25th December that is unlike any other day. It's Christmas Day – unique amongst the 365 days of the year.

For some it's exceptional because, when most of us aren't, they are at work, often caring for people, keeping them safe, or entertaining them. Thanks be for them!

For some it's exceptional because it is one of the few times in the year to see friends and family. How great the joy when it is possible, and how profound the disappointment when it is not.

For some it's exceptional because it is the moment we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us. With the angels we sing, 'Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth!'

There are people for whom 25th December is exceptional because it's one of the only opportunities the year affords to shut the door on the world and enjoy their own company.

And for several of us, in a way that is not true of other days, Christmas Day is an endurance test of how to get through being on our own when the world's model for having a good Christmas seems to be all about spending time with others. And that endurance test is all the more intense if those with whom we used to enjoy the festive season are no longer part of our lives.

So ... Christmas Day is exceptional, in a whole range of ways. There is not a right way to mark it, nor a wrong way. But there are experiences of 25th December that can make it an exceptionally hard day for some of us. Might there be something that as a church we can do to bring companionship and pleasure to those who would appreciate it?

In particular, if we were to arrange a Christmas Day lunch following the morning service, would you like to be part of that? Some who are interested may relish the chance to come for the company. Some may want to be part of making it happen – preparing, table setting, cooking, serving, welcoming, entertaining. Or maybe it's both – the day becomes special as we make it special for one another.

If you warm to the idea of making this exceptional day particularly good with an event at church on 25th December 2022, please let me know. If there is energy for it, we'll do everything we can to go for it!

Nigel Uden

LGBT HISTORY MONTH

On 6th February our LGBT History Month service will be led by members of Open Table. We will be joined by Sing Out, Cambridge's LGBT+ Community Choir, and Reverend Carla Grosch-Miller who will be our preacher and will preside over communion alongside our minister, Reverend Nigel Uden. At the heart of the service will be the line from Paul's words to the Corinthians, 'by the grace of God I am what I am'.

In the lead up to the service many of our community, including members of Open Table and Sing Out, are working on items for a series of displays; pebbles are being painted, cranes are being folded and pictures are being coloured in bright rainbow colours. The eagerness of those involved has been infectious. Here are just some of the items that have been made so far. We are really looking forward to seeing the other creations soon.





DIARY

Services are conducted by the Minister, except where shown

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Tue	01-Feb-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Tue	01-Feb-22	Housegroup Bible Study - Gideon	2:30pm	Zoom
Wed	02-Feb-22	Hub Hospitality	10.00am-4.00pm	The Hub
Wed	02-Feb-22	Lunchtime Concert - Cambridge University Brass Ensemble	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	03-Feb-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	06-Feb-22	LGBT History Month Service with Communion, led by Revd Nigel Uden. Preacher: Carla Grosch-Miller	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	06-Feb-22	Open Table Social	7:00pm	The Hub
Mon	07-Feb-22	Housegroup Bible Study - Gideon	7:30pm	Zoom
Tue	08-Feb-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Tue	08-Feb-22	Housegroup Bible Study - Gideon	2:30pm	Zoom
Wed	09-Feb-22	Hub Hospitality	10.00am-4.00pm	The Hub
Wed	09-Feb-22	Lunchtime Concert - The Granta Trio	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	10-Feb-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	11-Feb-22	Meditation Group	5:30pm	St Columba's Chapel
Sat	12-Feb-22	'Love the Planet' - A Choral Concert by Cambridge Voices <i>See page 12</i>	4:00pm	Downing Place URC
Sun	13-Feb-22	Sunday worship led by members of the Sustainability Group	11:00am	Downing Place URC

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Tue	15-Feb-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	16-Feb-22	DEADLINE for submitting items for March's <i>Place Matters</i>		
Wed	16-Feb-22	Hub Hospitality	10.00am-4.00pm	The Hub
Wed	16-Feb-22	Lunchtime Concert - Veronica Henderson (cello) & Elizabeth Mucha (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	17-Feb-22	Gibson Lunch <i>Please let the Office know by Monday 14th if you'd like to come</i>	12.30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	17-Feb-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	20-Feb-22	Sunday worship led by Revd Nigel Uden, with Lord (Jim) Wallace, Moderator of the Church of Scotland	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	20-Feb-22	Open Table Communion Service	7:30pm	Downing Place URC
Tue	22-Feb-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	23-Feb-22	Hub Hospitality	10.00am-4.00pm	The Hub
Wed	23-Feb-22	Lunchtime Concert - Helen Farrar (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	24-Feb-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	25-Feb-22	Meditation Group	5:30pm	St Columba's Chapel
Sat	26-Feb-22	New to DPURC Coffee Morning <i>See page 26</i>	10:00am	The Hub

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	27-Feb-22	Sunday worship led by Revd Nigel	11:00am	Downing
Tue	01-Mar-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	02-Mar-22	Hub Hospitality	10.00am-4.00pm	The Hub
Wed	02-Mar-22	Lunchtime Concert - Adam Parrish (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Wed	02-Mar-22	Ash Wednesday Communion	7:30pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	03-Mar-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	04-Mar-22	Women's World Day of Prayer at St. Clements	10:30am	St Clement's Church
Sun	06-Mar-22	Sunday worship with Communion led by Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	06-Mar-22	Open Table Social	7:00pm	The Hub

MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE

6 February	Chris Baker Liz Caswell	Stetchworth and Cheveley Sawston
13 February	Chris Baker Janet Bottoms Nigel Uden	Haddenham Methodist Buntingford Fulbourn
20 February	Liz Caswell Janet Tollington	Stetchworth & Cheveley Bassingbourn
27 February	Chris Baker Janet Bottoms Liz Caswell David Cornick	Fenstanton Haverhill Fulbourn Clare

LECTIONARY

FEBRUARY 2022



The following are the readings for each Sunday according to ROOTS. For twenty years it has been supporting churches – including ours - in their exploration of the Bible’s message. It so often has something helpful to say, and not least to enable our children’s ministry. Its Bible selections are based upon the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), and most Sundays the RCL provides the Bible passages read in church.

Where the readings listed below are not those focussed upon by the preacher, readers will be advised a few days ahead of time.

February 6th Epiphany V
Isaiah 6.1-8 (9-13); Psalm 138; I Corinthians 15.1-11; Luke 5.1-11

February 13th Epiphany VI
Jeremiah 17.5-10; Psalm 1; I Corinthians 15.12-20; Luke 6.17-26

February 20th Epiphany VII – the 2nd Sunday before Lent begins
Genesis 45.3-11, 15; Psalm 37.1-11, 39-40; I Corinthians 15.35-38, 42-50;
Luke 6.27-38

February 27th Transfiguration – the Sunday before Lent begins
Exodus 34.29-35; Psalm 99; II Corinthians 3.12-4.2; Luke 9.28-36, 37-43

March 2nd Ash Wednesday
Joel 2.1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58.1-12; Psalm 51; II Corinthians 5.20b-6.10;
Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21

March 6th Lent I
Deuteronomy 26.1-11; Psalm 91.1-2, 9-16; Romans 10.8b-13; Luke 4.1-13



Poinsettia in the Hub

MAGAZINE EDITOR: Sheila Porrer

ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

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

WEB EDITOR: Ann Auger

Please send all items to be included in the March edition to both Sheila and Ann
by the cut off date of **Wednesday 16 February**

The March edition will be available from **Sunday 27 February**.