



**DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE**

PLACE MATTERS



**ISSUE 45
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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!

5 October	Chun-He Yun (piano)
12 October	Cambridge Chamber Ensemble
19 October	Agnes Pethers (mezzo-soprano) & Peter Britton (piano)
26 October	Timothy Peake (piano)

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

FROM THE MINISTER

This month, we mark fifty years since Congregationalists and Presbyterians covenanted together in October 1972 to create the United Reformed Church (URC). It has been a story of many things for which to be grateful, and yet in an era of significant church decline, from which the URC has been anything but exempt. I have been wondering what I might wish to say about it.



Baptised within the Church of England, it was as a teenager that I discovered the URC, and then became a Church member in its seventh year. Because several of my peers from school welcomed me to the local URC's 'Teens and Twenties' group, it was very much a case of belonging before believing. Or do I mean, coming to believe via belonging? Whatever, I have treasured the URC ever since. It has been

- a fellowship in which I have found countless companions on the Way, and not a few friends;
- a devotional community that has nourished me; and,
- the body that has entrusted to me the privilege of being a Minister of the Word and Sacraments.

Above all, though, it is through the URC that I have been on the adventure of Christian faith. I say 'adventure' because I have found that it can be a road of zig zags, diversions, and even car crashes. But ... within this rather small faith community I have been enabled to understand that no matter what I think of God, God thinks enough of me to love me. At the same time, the URC has been the primary instrument of arresting me with imperatives that take me and my thinking out of the inward-looking boxes that can be so comfortable, and of opening me to the implications of what God wills for creation. Fundamentally, this denomination helped me to understand

- that God is the 'Source, Guide and Goal of all that is';
- that God's intention is the reconciliation of everything to God, and of all things to each other; and,
- that The Church should be tireless in worshipping that God and striving for that reconciliation.

So, in a profound and irresistible way, the URC has been my life. I want to use this 50th anniversary to give thanks for it, even as the decline I mentioned above leaves me, with so many others, wondering what the future holds. Instead of just

giving in to that wondering, three ideas spur me on, and each from a different decade of the last half century.

The **first idea** is the words of ‘dedication and commitment’ said by the congregation at the *Service of Thanksgiving for the Inauguration of the United Reformed Church* in Westminster Abbey on 5th October 1972. In language redolent of its time, it reads:

God of our fathers,
God of our own time,
God of the hidden future:
we accept anew the gift of life from thee;
we pledge ourselves to one another in thy service;
we commit ourselves to seek unity with all Christian people;
and in all this we rely solely on thy grace.
Confirm and strengthen in us this resolve,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Here, as guidance for whatever the future offers and asks, I value

- the recognition of God as part of our past, present and ‘hidden future’;
- the trust that life is not our invention but God’s gift;
- the suggestion of that life as an expression of giving ourselves to God and to one another; and,
- the clear reliance upon God’s grace.

The **second idea** comes from nearly twenty years ago, when David Cornick was General Secretary and led us in some thinking entitled, ‘Catch the Vision’. It included the so-called *Catch the Vision Prayer*, which I continue to believe is amongst the finest sixty words the URC has ever produced.

May the Spirit of the Lord rest upon us,
may the call of God sustain us
as we seek to be Christ’s people,
transformed by the gospel,
announcing good news to the poor
proclaiming freedom for those in prisons of
wealth, poverty, disease and disorder
committed to making a difference
to the world’s kingdoms
as we live Christ’s kingdom.

For me, this prayer continues to encapsulate three key aspects of the church's life and work.

- As we 'seek to be Christ's people', we understand what our **identity** is. We are not simply a group of well-meaning people who coalesce around some worthy aphorisms. Rather we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, following whom we are offered 'life in all its fulness'.
- Knowing ourselves 'transformed by the Gospel', we are people of **hope**. We're no longer stuck in the past (however right it was for 'then') but are persistently migrated into God's future, which, by definition, is about 'making all things new.'
- Being 'committed to making a difference' gives us **purpose**. The life and words of Jesus beckon us to be partners with God in striving for a world that bears the hallmarks of God's reign – justice and peace, compassion and charity.

The **third idea** requires me to 'eat humble pie'. In my item for last month's *Place Matters*, I said I was citing something that John Bradbury quoted in his address to the Ministers' Gathering in May. Carelessly, I misattributed that quote – both because I was actually quoting David Cornick, and he was not quoting who I said he was! I should have said that it was from Tom Greggs *Dogmatic Ecclesiology: the priestly catholicity of the church*. I apologise for my errors. Anyway, the point to which I was wishing to draw attention in September, remains my point for October! David led into the Tom Greggs' quote like this:

'The church catholic is an event of the Holy Spirit in the contingencies of history,
so the being of the church rests
"...only on the faithful and constant acts of God the Holy Spirit.'"

As we ponder what God is calling us to be in the future, alongside the commitment from 1972, and the prayer from 2004, I profoundly believe that we are to allow ourselves to be caught up in what the Holy Spirit wishes to do in the here and now. The Spirit – 'enemy of apathy', as John Bell so pertinently describes her – is not just God for history, but for today. It is as we are pliable to the Holy Spirit' that God will remake us, renewing our identity, hope and purpose. I don't think this is easy stuff. Being the Church, the Body of Christ, in any generation is to be counter cultural, to swim against the tide. We do not achieve it simply by human ingenuity, goodwill, or niceness. In every generation, the wind of the Spirit needs to be a gust filling our sails with God's newness.

Such is my wish for the United Reformed Church, that this jubilee might be made golden by God's blessing.

N. P. Uden
October 2022

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Six months ago, looking ahead to future issues of the Downing Place URC monthly magazine, it seemed that the ‘theme’ of one of them required very little thought or discussion. We anticipated joyful celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Reformed Church in October 1972, and we certainly do mark and celebrate that Jubilee in this issue.

But back in April 2022, we could not have anticipated the events of one week in September 2022. On Monday 5th September, following a poll of members of the Conservative Party, it was announced that Liz Truss had become The United Kingdom’s fourth Prime Minister in six years. On Tuesday Ms Truss boarded a private aeroplane, flew to Aberdeen, en route to an audience with the Queen at Balmoral. Photographs show the Queen smiling, as she invited Ms Truss to form a new Administration, enabling her appointment as Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury. I was astonished to learn that Queen Elizabeth II’s fifteenth premier was born one hundred years after the first.

Then, only two days later, not long after noon, it was announced that “the Queen’s doctors are concerned for her health, and have recommended she remain under medical supervision. The Queen remains comfortable and at Balmoral”. The significance of this brief statement was not fully apparent until six hours later, in a statement from the Press Association News Agency: “The Queen has died, Buckingham Palace has announced”.

In the days and weeks that followed we learned, if ever we doubted, how much the late Queen was loved, admired and respected by people across every spectrum of society. We were reminded that the Supreme Governor of the Church of England had a strong commitment to the faith that she represented, and an increasing openness to others, encouraging members of all faiths to be present at occasions such as the annual Commonwealth Day service held at Westminster Abbey. At her Platinum Jubilee thanksgiving service at St. Paul’s Cathedral, in June, Buddhist and Jewish leaders were present alongside Anglicans and other Christians. Our Minister shares his reflections on our late Queen, and our present King, on the following pages.

I conclude with this statement from our friend and URC General Secretary, John Bradbury:

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II lived the most remarkable life of dedicated Christian service. As a devout Anglican and Presbyterian her faith shone from her words and deeds. Her contribution to the life of the nations, the commonwealth, and beyond will be remembered with gratitude for generations

to come. She inspired respect from across the political spectrum and from monarchists and republicans alike. The United Reformed Church has always been aware that as each General Assembly presents a loyal address to the throne, we have been addressing a fellow baptised sister in Christ. We give thanks for her life and uphold in prayer all who mourn for her. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Tim Rowland

HER LATE MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

When Queen Elizabeth II died on 8th September, the level of respect in which she is held was obvious. A great deal has been written about her, and I do not pretend to be able to add anything; I did not know her and am chary of writing as if I did. So, I am grateful for those whose more insightful narratives enable me to agree with the gratitude for this long life of dutiful service.

That said, I do not need to know her loved ones to feel for them; the humanity we share means that few are unable to understand what bereavement is like. Moreover, I imagine many of us have a particular sympathy for the King and his family, whose grief must be so unenviably public.

In the Bible – her guide and ours – there’s a consistent image for leadership: the Shepherd. Repeatedly, we are urged to recognise that good shepherds care for the sheep, and give themselves unreservedly for them. I see that in Her Majesty, and get what Lord Sacks meant when, as Chief Rabbi, he observed how people ‘value the Queen because they know she values them’. I wonder if that was ever more apparent than when she addressed the nation during the Covid pandemic, bearing the same social privations as us, even when mourning.

For King Charles III, in acceding to the throne, this shepherding image is equally rich. As The Church fulfils its responsibility to pray for those who lead us, we can seek for him the sustaining not only of his mother’s capacity to shepherd, but also of his own, which has been revealed through such things as The Prince’s Trust and his zeal for protection of the environment. In this febrile era, we will so need that from all those to whom we look for good governance, noble example, and real inspiration.

Andrew Marr, the journalist, once commented of the Queen that ‘for her it was not about her’. That’s a fine model for us all, monarchs, ministers, and citizens alike.

Nigel Uden



Faith – Hope – Love – Since 1972

WHERE WERE YOU IN '72?

This month, October 2022, at many local and national events, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Reformed Church in 1972.

Many, probably most, of us were in some ways ‘different’ people, in different places, all those years ago. At the request of the *Place Matters* Editor, Tony Spring invited a few Downing Place members to record what they recall of the year in which the URC came into being. He asked them, “Where were you in ’72?”

But first, Tony reminds us why, and how, this new Christian denomination came into being, and what it replaced.

The origins of the Ecumenical Movement amongst British Christians are traced usually to the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. The ‘scandal’ of Christian church divisions and schisms was felt most keenly in the mission fields around the world. The implications of competitive missionary activity reflected the divisions of the sending churches. So, if the gospel was to be shared credibly with those abroad, should not the sending churches seek to fulfil amongst themselves the prayer of Jesus for his followers in John’s Gospel, ‘that they may be one, as my Father and I are one’ (Jn 17 v 22)? In the complex life of Presbyterianism in Scotland, where many schisms have taken place, 1929 saw the union of the United Free Church with the Church of Scotland; 1956 saw the union of the Original Secession Church with the Church of Scotland. In 1932 the Methodist Church as we know it today was formed by the joining of three Methodist Connexions (Wesleyan, Primitive and United). These unions could be described as ‘a coalescence of the like-minded’ because they shared common historical and organisational roots.

In England there had been no union of national denominations since the

Reformation. Independency and Presbyterianism each shared roots in the European Reformation of the 16th century, each contributed to the political and democratic development of the nation in Parliament in the 17th century and each experienced the hostility of the Act of Uniformity of 1662, which resulted in the ejection of hundreds (the exact number is disputed) of ‘Dissenting’ or ‘Puritan’ ministers from their Church of England parishes. They shared so much, but they differed about the polity of church life. In the intervening centuries Independency spawned the Congregational churches, where each congregation was autonomous, county groups of churches formed for encouragement, the national body was the Congregational Union. Presbyterianism was conciliar in structure, ministers and elders sharing in decision-making for the whole church in a General Assembly. In contrast to both of these biblically-inspired ways of ordering the church, there are the episcopal models of both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.

Can a Church formation live by honouring the history, witness and polity of its predecessors even when they seem to be contradictory? That was the size of the task for the negotiators in the 1950s and 1960s. I can remember John Huxtable saying something like, “Be careful of what you deny when affirming something precious”. This was to correct a Congregational tendency to affirm the Holy Spirit’s guidance of the Church Meeting but to deny such guidance of another council of the church. The Scheme of Union fashioned a structure for the Church of the future, where congregational life and conciliar decision-making were honoured. We nearly managed to incorporate an episcopal model in 1980. One of the great schisms in the Church has been that between those who baptise believers and those who baptise infants. In the URC we have adopted the principle of honouring both traditions in our life together. On the 350th Anniversary of the Act of Uniformity (2012) a service of Reconciliation and the Healing of Memories was celebrated in Westminster Abbey between the Church of England and the URC. (<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/media/5597/coe-urc-reconciliation-service.pdf>) Penitence for our shared readiness to make false judgements and harbouring mistrust of one another is important, as well as a vision of what the church could and should be. We are reformed but always reforming, always seeking to follow Jesus, inspired by the Spirit, giving glory to God who makes us, loves us and fashions us to be his people.

And here are the replies of Pamela Cressey, David Cornick and Peter Peirce to that question - “Where were you in ’72?” - together with Tony’s own recollections.

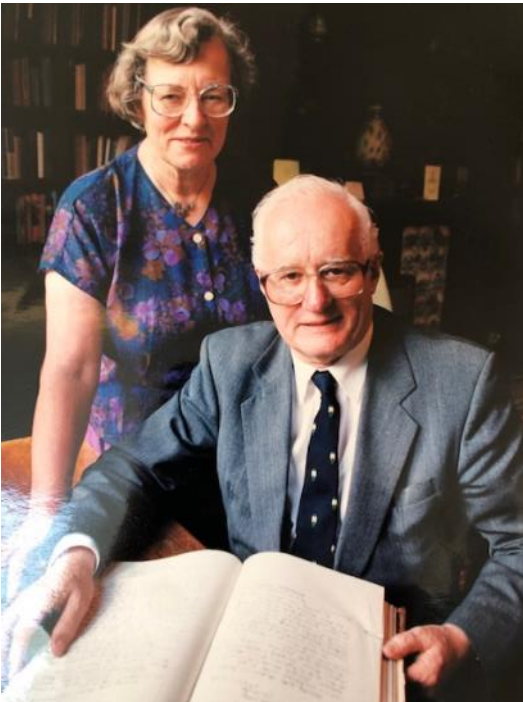
Pamela Cressey writes on behalf of herself, and her late husband, Martin Cressey.

On 5th October 1972 Martin and I were in Westminster Abbey for the celebration of the formation of the United Reformed Church. For me it was an exciting privilege, but for Martin it was also the culmination of years of hard work and concentrated negotiation. His ministry at St Columba's Presbyterian Church of England, Coventry, from 1959 till 1967, had given him much experience in Ecumenical Relationships even though he was newly ordained, as he represented the Presbyterian Church of England on Coventry Council of Churches and soon became Secretary for the Chapel of Unity at Coventry Cathedral. From there he became involved with the World Council of Churches, which gave him access to leaders of all denominations internationally.

Members of the Union negotiations included Arthur MacArthur, Alan Macleod, Lesslie Newbiggin, John Huxtable, George Caird, Norman Goodall, Kenneth Slack, Norman Pooler and an observer from the Churches of Christ, David Thompson. With these Church leaders, Martin was co-author of the Basis for Union, the definitive document following many editions, amendments, deletions, additions, and theological consultations with other denominations. The goal was to leave the door open for further unions. In 1972 the House of Commons finally approved the union and passed a bill accordingly. There was much

rejoicing and thanksgiving on October 5th, 1972, at Westminster Abbey, in an historic service hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

For my part the launch of the new church heralded the end of the small Presbyterian Church of England which had been my spiritual home since I joined the church, St Columba's Church, Oxford, in 1948. (It was there that I had met Martin.) The union was a very exciting step towards more Church Unity, which seemed a possible goal in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, but receded when the Methodists turned towards the Anglicans, and the Anglicans towards the Roman Catholic Church, for closer collaboration. Neither of these



potential unions came to fruition and the temperature cooled in the quest for visible unity of all denominations.

My contributions to the Basis of Union included making tea and cake for some of the meetings as an encouragement and suggesting that Martin introduce more full stops between long complicated sentences in the drafts of the constitution. I don't think I succeeded!

I was so proud to see Martin amongst the Church leaders in the processions on that memorable day, and I felt honoured to be present in the clergy stalls of Westminster Abbey with Boris Anderson's wife, Clare, and humbled to be witnessing a new chapter in the history of the Ecumenical Movement. There were, however, significant sacrifices for Martin and me and our church friends to make when the Presbyterian Church of England ceased to exist. That church was established at the Great Ejectment in 1662 and had gifts which were very important to us. It was based on the equality of members and ordained ministers according to the Book of Common Order, and orderly conduct of the affairs of the church nationally and locally. A Moderator of the General Assembly, an ordained minister, was elected each year to provide the leadership and pastoral care of the ministers in several courts. There were twelve Synods, each formed of District Councils which were formed by the Minister and Elders of each congregation in a structured way with central finances, rules of procedure and much support both spiritually and socially. Because it was a small denomination we knew many of the ministers and members in our districts and nationally. We missed all this when the Union took place in 1972, but now rejoice with the Congregational Union in that union, and later in unions with the Churches of Christ and Congregational Church of Scotland.

Now, as Downing Place URC, we all have new opportunities to fulfil our calling to worship God and work for God's Kingdom here in Cambridge and beyond. That is privilege indeed, and with it go responsibilities to serve God and each other. So, we give thanks that we have that commission. Amen.

David Cornick

On October 5th I slipped out of the prefects' common room in Gravesend Boys' Grammar School, crossed the school field and watched the uniting service on my aunt's TV. There was a sense of history being made, especially for an impressionable sixth former. I had by then been accepted as an ordination candidate by the Congregational Church in England and Wales and was taking my A levels. It was the term of Oxbridge exams and interviews, a time of huge intellectual excitement as I revelled in superb teaching in English, History and Religious Studies. Whole worlds of literature, people, ideas and beauty were

unfolding, all (it still seems to me) revealing something of the glory of God.



I was a child of the 1944 Butler Act and remain profoundly grateful for the opportunities it gave a kid from a two up two down house, whose remarkable widowed mother couldn't work because of ill health. The way successive governments have underfunded education and turned higher education into an engine of debt rather than enlightenment is simply shaming. Teaching remains a fine vocation.

Church was Old Road East Congregational Church (long gone) - a converted grand house, with a warm, cosy sanctuary, minister

and choir always fully robed. 'High' Congregationalism had a longer reach than we sometimes remember. Yet what wonderful people. Kindness and care abounded, frequently expressed in the most practical of ways. Here was discipleship not as a chore but a joy, lived out in friendship and community. It was the twilight years of that kind of nonconformity, but it nurtured me and gave me everything. Deep thanks.

We had a youth group, and there was a lovely blonde girl there, but she was a year ahead of me, off to train as a teacher in London. It took a further year before I plucked up the courage to ask her out! But that is another, and I'm delighted to say, ongoing story.

Edward Heath was Prime Minister. Industrial relations were terrible. Inflation was rampant. The Troubles were at their murderous height. Yet woven into the horror, in ordinary lives, there was goodness, and grace abundant.

Peter Peirce

In October 1972 I was a rooky husband, father, and Minister of Broxbourne Congregational Church, and then United Reformed Church!

'But how did I get there?' seems to be an important place to start. Four months before I was born in 1944, my parents and soon-to-be siblings moved from Middlesex to Wickford in Essex. My mother came from a staunchly Methodist family, my father Church of England. 'Free Church' seemed to come first, but the local Methodist Church didn't have much life in it, and the family went to the Congregational and found a happy spiritual base.

Such was the grounding I found there, in my late teens I began to realise that the nagging feelings of a Call to Ministry could not be put aside, and I was offered a place at Cheshunt College to train for the Congregational Ministry, which I took up in 1966 after taking a degree in Economics at the University of Newcastle. (Cheshunt College and Westminster College pre-empted the Union, merging in 1967!) I met Pat at Emmanuel in 1966, we married in August 1969, and I was Ordained and Inducted at Broxbourne in September 1969. Jo was born in May 1971, and our son, Jonathan was due in March 1973.



Jo and Boots

(a wedding present from Pat – his name is another whole story) c. 06/72

As a young Minister in a brand new Church building, I was committed to the ecumenical movement. I visited many churches in the area encouraging them to vote for the union with the Presbyterian Church of England. Broxbourne voted in favour, *nem con.* There was one abstention – a very imposing lady who had joined us from the Anglican tradition. It was a private vote, of course, but she wanted me to know that she was the abstention, worried about losing the independence of the Congregational Church! Interestingly, the congregation in Cheshunt (from

where the College moved), part of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, received a letter from their central offices saying that if they joined the URC, the central offices would control them, so they should vote against!!! They voted to join!!!!

I was very sad at the strong feelings expressed, on both sides, of what we were losing from our own traditions. What we were to gain was so much more!

Last but not least – Tony Spring

Domestic complaints about keeping every diary I have used since 1962 now have their answer. 1972? No problem. October 1972? We were on holiday. Now the memory begins to engage. It was two years into my ministry at West Bromwich Congregational Church, working in a team of three ministers. Holidays had to be negotiated. Our daughter was 13 months old and our son was expected in the following January, so Helen had given up her teacher's job. We could holiday in term-time.

The West Midlands Synod owned a caravan at Porthmadog on the North Wales coast, and my request for its availability was made late; all available weeks had been taken before it was closed-up for the end of September. The administrator was prepared to be flexible if I could take the first week in October. Agreed. This was very helpful to us as I was on a stipend of £860 that year.

The union of the Congregational Union of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England had been a long time in preparation. Discussions had been started in the '50s, I think. The Congregational "Union" had to become the Congregational "Church", which happened in 1966. The Emmanuel Minister, the Revd David Geddes, had been on a small planning committee, and the Revd Martin Cressey of Westminster College had played a major role in the Union. My student pastorate year at New College had been spent at Harrow, the minister being the Revd Ronald Bocking, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of public transport placed him on a sub-committee allocating all the churches voting to join the union into Provinces, later called Synods. My four years at theological college were dominated by the expectation that I would be ordained during the intended year of the Union, 1970.

Then the decision went to Parliament. [*Editor – see Margaret Thompson's article following this one*]. We might have expected that a non-conformist union of churches would not require reference to Parliament, since we believe that our church life is not subject to parliamentary control. But the Church owned property under trust and the changes proposed to those Trusts did need parliamentary consent. Delays mounted, particularly in the House of Lords, I think. So, Thursday, 5 October 1972 was the resultant date of Union.

And I was on holiday.



We had a small black-and-white TV in the caravan. The Uniting Service at Westminster Abbey was one of the news items that day. In procession were the architects of the Union, the Revd John Huxtable and the Revd Arthur Macarthur, General Secretaries of the two uniting churches, accompanied by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Michael Ramsey. The singing of the Processional hymn, 'Blessed City, Heavenly Salem' to the tune 'Westminster Abbey', was magnificent. I chose it for the next Sunday's service, but it wasn't sung so well in the Black Country. They said they sung it to the 'other' tune.

During that holiday our daughter took her first step unaided, outside the caravan.

LOOKING BACK: CELEBRATING THE URC 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

The URC came into being as a legal entity when the United Reformed Church Act was passed in the House of Commons on 21st June 1972. As John Bradbury recently remarked, "The irony of a church of the dissenting tradition having an Act of Parliament will not be lost on many of us". [URC debate anniversary marked at House of Lords - United Reformed Church](#) Here, Margaret Thompson shares her recent experience of a reception in the House of Lords on 30th June 2022, to mark the 50th Anniversary of that event.

Officially, the United Reformed Church will mark its fiftieth birthday on 1st October 2022, with a celebration at Central Hall Westminster, the venue for the uniting Assembly of 5th October 1972. It had been hoped that the much less publicised anniversary of the passing of the URC Act – to the relief of the Joint Committee of the Congregational Church of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England, since the Revd Ian Paisley had voiced his opposition in the debate – might be marked on 21st June within the parliamentary estate. In the event, due to industrial action on the railways, the celebration was postponed to the afternoon of 30th June.

The invitation was to a reception in the House of Lords, with instructions on dress code, likely waiting time for security checks of between thirty and forty five minutes, and the need for the usual dietary requirements. Since we had no idea who else might be present, confidentiality having been invoked, we could not even use our daughter-in-law's insider knowledge, since she works in the House of Commons' Library, to discover how to present photo IDs at Black Rod's

Garden Entrance! In fact, the procedure, despite the armed police being very much in evidence, was less time consuming than at airports. The waiting area was getting very cramped a full fifteen minutes before the meeting was scheduled to begin, so URC folk, some recognised, others we inferred to be of the company, along with a quite separate group, were ushered into a courtyard area outside. Fortunately, a folding seat was rustled up by a security guard for David, whose walking stick indicated a need. It was in this setting that most of our “catch up” conversations, (Covid experiences to the fore), took place.

At 3.30pm the groups went their separate ways, ours to the Atlee and Reid Rooms to be greeted by Lord Boateng as sponsoring host. Named lanyards around our necks, we were invited to collect a variety of thinly cut sandwiches, scones with or without cream, and cake to take to a table for consumption. Other seating around the edge allowed views of the Thames just below the windows. The gathering and its composition could now be deduced as being General Assembly officers, Church House staff, either current or past, and those who had a role in the Law and Polity Advisory Group. The last must have been the reason for the Thompson ticket. Also in attendance were Augur Pearce, and David and Mary Cornick, so Downing Place was well-represented.

There was a genuine sense of thankfulness that it had been able to go ahead. Lord Beith, who served as an elder when active in Northumberland politics, reiterated Lord Boateng’s comments, (from a Methodist perspective), on the need to recognise the contribution of churches to the common good. To complete the dissenting presence another MP, who attends a Baptist church, also offered good wishes. Michael Hopkins, John Bradbury, Morag McLintock and Clare Downing responded, and after a group photograph, we were out into sunshine at the end of what cannot be called anything other than a unique occasion.

Margaret Thompson



INTRODUCING CAMBRIDGE SOLIDARITY HUB



“When I feed the hungry, they call me a saint. When I ask why people are hungry, they call me a Communist” + Dom Helder Camara

“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in” +Desmond Tutu

As my pioneer adventure in Cambridge City Centre continues, I am increasingly being called, by God in both quiet prayer and by Christ in conversation with those I meet, to facilitate spaces for the tricky conversations,

the conversations about wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability that are already so central to the life of Downing Place Church.

To explore doing this in a new way, I am experimenting with a project called ‘Solidarity Hub: Listening for Change’.

In forming a hub of solidarity we will be:

- Co-operatively working towards the radical renewal of solidarity and hope. Organising across diversity for social justice and eco justice in the city of Cambridge.
- Networking across communities and individuals who care deeply about inclusion / affirmation, well-being, and sustainability.
- Dismantling binaries and stereotypes around tables and on city streets by holding space to share, to hear, to feel, together.
- Dancing into – and out of – spaces of leisure to co-curate gatherings of radical love and distinctive identity.
- Imagining a new world into being by living in the world we dream of actively today.

We will do this through talks – where we can listen to someone speaking about their lived experiences of these topics, drop ins – where we can display info, engage in activities, and facilitate conversations, actions – where we do something practical in response to all that we are hearing, vigils – where we mourn injustice and pray for justice and freedom, and scripture sessions – where

we explore topics of inclusion, wellbeing and sustainability in conversation, over a meal, about God's Word and God's world.

All are more than welcome to each of these events. Come expecting to listen, to be challenged, to be surprised, and to be excited by the potential within and around us.

Solidarity Scripture will meet on the following Sundays, gathering from 7pm for a 7.30 start, and will include a shared meal. The dates and topics this academic year are:

- Oct. 23rd – Death
- Nov. 27th – Gender
- Jan. 22nd – Love
- Feb. 26th – Lent
- Mar. 26th – Sex
- May 28th - Mental Health
- Jun. 25th - Pride.

The Solidarity Hub events in and around Downing Place this academic year are:

- 20 Nov. 6pm: Vigil: Trans Day of Remembrance
- 01 Dec. 7-8pm: Talk and Action: World AIDS Day
- 09 Dec. 2-6pm: Drop In Action: Write for Rights
- 11 Feb. 2-8pm: Drop In Action: LGBTQ+ History Month
- 22 Feb. tbc Drop In Action: Glitter and Ashes
- 08 Mar. 7pm: Talk and Action: International Women's Day
- 02 Apr. 2-5pm: Drop In Spaces: Sensory Space for Neurodiversity
- 22 Apr. 10am-5pm Drop In Action: Earth Day
- 13 May 2-5pm: Drop In: Talking about Health
- 17 Jun. 10am-9pm: Drop in Fayre: LGBTQ+ Pride Month

None of these events are for an exclusive group of people – they are for all! Please do come along! If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer to help out at any of the above events, please let me know at alex@downingplaceurc.org. I will keep you in the loop as the journey continues! Please do keep me, my management and support groups and everyone that I meet in your prayers.

Alex Clare-Young

DOWNING PLACE URC – AN ECO CHURCH

In May 2021, our church meeting voted to register Downing Place URC as an Eco Church. During the Sustainability Group service in July 2022 we learned that we had achieved the Bronze Eco Church award. Here you can see our certificate, which has now been formally received.

This is, of course, just a first step. We are not far off achieving the silver award for which a few other steps are necessary but – as we wrote in the September 2022 *Place Matters* - to take us further, towards the Gold Award, there are other challenges that we face both as a church, and as individuals. We will be looking in more detail at these steps and sharing thoughts and suggestions with the church soon.

In the meantime; Eco Church offers churches and members a number of resources and in the letter congratulating us on our award, they suggest a number of ways in which we might collectively and individually engage. They say:

“As you continue on your Eco Church journey, do consider the following:

- Pray with us. You can find our A Rocha UK **prayer diary** [here](#),
- Join us at one of our [Act for Nature](#) days:
 - 13 October at St Madoc’s in Wales, register [here](#).
 - 8 November at Hilfield Friary in Dorset, register [here](#).
- Explore the **new A Rocha UK website**, including our [Eco Church page](#), [here](#).
- Take a look at our Eco Church Resources to support, guide, and inspire you in the five key areas of church life that the Eco Church survey addresses, as well as resources for kids, youth, and in Welsh, available [here](#).
- Stay connected, and receive updates and inspiration from the Eco Church community, by signing up to Eco Church Connect, our regular newsletter. You can sign up [here](#).
- Check out all our upcoming online and in-person events [here](#).”

The sustainability group would also welcome new members to help in its work. There may be particular areas of interest or expertise that you can contribute or simply time and energy. Please do get in touch if you would like to be part of the group.

David Tatem
davetatem@gmail.com



Bronze Eco Church Award Certificate

This is to certify that
Downing Place
United Reformed Church

has won a Bronze Eco Church Award in recognition of their efforts to care for God's earth in each of the following areas (as applicable):

- Worship and Teaching
- Management of Buildings and Land
- Community and Global Engagement
- Lifestyle

Signed Andy Atkin

Date 9th September 2022

CEO, A Rocha UK



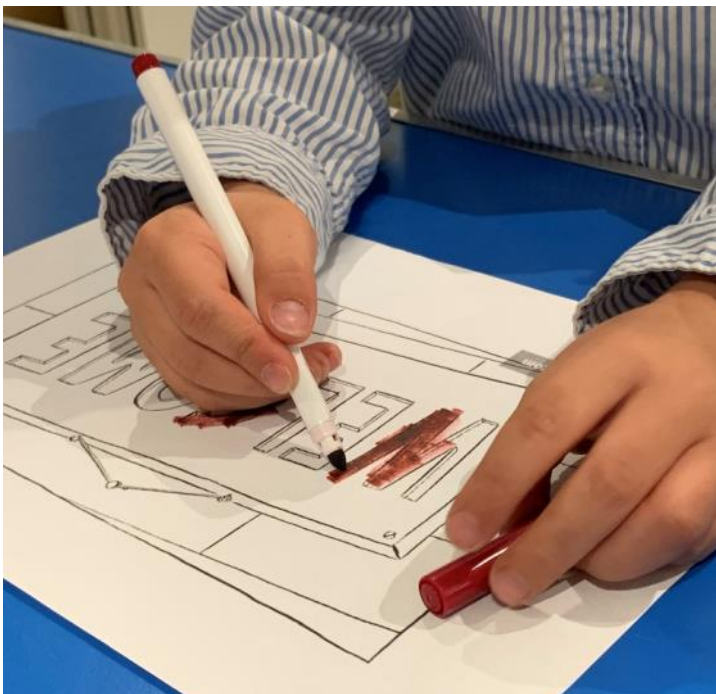
ecochurch.arocha.org.uk
arocha.org.uk



AN INSIGHT INTO OUR RECENT JUNIOR CHURCH SESSIONS WITH THE YOUNGER GROUP

On a very very hot summer Sunday in August we gathered in the shade in the courtyard and noticed how many ways we could tell that it was very very hot. In the cool of our room with a gentle fan we thought, using Jan Pienkowski's cheerful book, of how we know what weather might be coming and what we would need. It was funny to think of snow and mittens! Jesus reminded people that they are able to notice what weather is coming. Luke 12. 49-56. He said they should also be able to notice when God's world was not as it should be. It can be difficult to act on what we notice! Sometimes it takes courage to act. Sometimes other people might not like it. We remembered the story of Daniel and the Lion's Den we had shared a few weeks previously. We looked at stories from newspapers of people trying to make God's world better, even if it that was not easy to do: derelict land was reclaimed for wild life, a place without food for visitors started a cafe to make them feel less homesick, someone had started drawing attention to overlooked women composers, and someone set up a bus to take workers to rural jobs.

Jesus did a difficult thing in going bravely to Jerusalem. He encourages us when we do difficult things. We decorated hearts to keep to help us remember and act bravely.



On 28th of August, with only one child in Junior Church, we had a very enjoyable session exploring the passage from Luke 14. 7-14. In church, during 'Sharing Together', we had considered who we might invite to a party. We then discussed how it feels to be left out of things or be different from others in some way. Using a set of Playmobil toys we created a playground of activities and then introduced a collection of children and adult play people into the setting, placing them so that all were involved in some way and no one was excluded. We followed this by watching the story of One Snowy Night by Nick Butterworth, where Percy the Park Keeper welcomed all the animals to shelter in his house, making room for everyone. We then coloured a 'Welcome' sign and concluded that Percy had behaved just as Jesus would have wanted him to!

On the first Sunday in September, most of us were back from our summer holidays, happy to see each other again. We explored what it meant to follow Jesus, and that it comes with joy but also with challenges. We played a 'follow the leader' game in the Gibson Hall with one of us being the leader and walking around doing silly movements that the others had to follow. We all had a turn. Back in the room, we took one of our shoes and socks off and made an outline of our own foot, with the intention to write words about what we thought of earlier, what it would mean to follow Jesus, such as *kind*, *gentle*, *prayer*, and to decorate our footstep. Unfortunately, we were running out of time and therefore took it with us to finish our footstep decoration at home.

Elza de Bruin-Lara, Lorraine Thornton and Daphne Thomas with help from the JC team.

CAMBRIDGE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT CAMPAIGN JULY-AUGUST SPECIAL CAUSE

We raised a total of £2,000 for the CRRC during July and August, which included £400 from our York Street fund, £1464.14 from the Lunchtime Concerts and other donations.

We also raised £230.24 in a special retiring collection in July to be split between flood relief in Bangladesh and earthquake victims in Afghanistan. Added to £500 allocated to each from our York Street Emergency Fund, this resulted in a donation of £615.12 each, which was sent via Islamic Relief, a DEC member.

Ann Auger

DOWNING PLACE SPECIAL CAUSE FOR OCTOBER 2022

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE

Commitment for Life is the name of the United Reformed Church World Development Programme, whose brief includes political action, education, financial appeal and cooperation with Christian Aid and the World Development Movement. It supports activities in four parts of the world, and in 2019 Downing Place agreed to focus on Bangladesh as [our Commitment for Life partner](#).

Commitment for Life resources and information from Church House can be accessed from <https://urc.org.uk/cfl> These include 'Moving Stories' – brief updates from the four partner areas. You can read the current Bangladesh 'Moving Stories' page in this issue.

Please visit the Downing Place Commitment for Life website page at <https://downingplaceurc.org/commitment-for-life>, where you can use the 'donate' button to set up regular or one-off donations to Downing Place's 'Commitment for Life' appeal.

Alternatively, you can donate directly to the Church's bank account:

CAF Bank

Account name Downing Place URC

Sort code 40-52-40

Account number 00029711

Or cash/cheques can be left in the Special Cause envelopes available on Sundays.

There will be a special retiring collection on Sunday 16 October.

There are several other ways in which we can support people through Commitment for Life:

- Pray for our chosen region, Bangladesh
- Stand up for global justice through action and advocacy
- Consider committing 1% of our income to stand alongside others in our Downing Place community to support our brothers and sisters across the world; and to demonstrate that there is support for more generous levels of overseas aid across the country.

Tim Rowland

Committed to supporting | our global partners | **BANGLADESH**

AN EMERGING BANGLADESH DEBT CRISIS

Debt is strangling the poorest people in Bangladesh, and in any sane world would immediately be cancelled.

Debt servicing has become a rising concern for Bangladesh, its economy battered by Covid-19 and global economic instability due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Government revenues are slipping and its debt service to revenue ratio has rocketed to 81%, up from 56% pre COVID. There is less available for priority spending like health, education, and public investment. The IMF and World Bank encourages ‘restructuring’ or the privatisation of public assets to pay off debt, to the detriment of the poorest.

In fact, the global financial system beggars belief. Take the British foreign aid budget. The majority goes not to poor people but to a colonial-era investment firm called CDC that invests in luxury hotels, malls, and restaurant chains. In the end, only 3% of this aid goes to suppliers in the global south, with over 90% being paid to British firms. “This is the real scandal,” says economist Jason Hickel. “Aid money is taken from the pockets of British taxpayers and sent straight into the already-gilded coffers of the British business elite. It’s a shameful abuse of our most compassionate impulse,” he concludes.



Photo – Tonjiqu Barbhuiya - UnSplash

Together with Global Justice Now, Commitment for Life works to cancel the debt of the highly exploited nations like Bangladesh. Thank you for all you do to bring about justice in our world through effective debt cancellation.

Reflection on Jubilee

In October, the United Reformed Church celebrates its Jubilee year – 50 years since it came into being in 1972.

Jubilee came into being with the rise of the early City-State empires in ancient Mesopotamia. Their recently discovered debt-based credit system made shifting wealth from freshly conquered territories hugely efficient. But it came with problems. Ordinary people fell into debt way too easily, and the system gave rise of a class of oligarchs, whose newly acquired wealth and influence threatened the power of the kings. To cope with this threat, the kings used to declare a regular ‘amarga’ (lit. ‘return to the mother’) or Jubilee that reunited heavily indebted peasants to their lands and families.

It’s worth noting that Jubilee was originally implemented to protect the hierarchical system of Empire rather than as a redistributive mechanism. Jubilee was picked up in ancient Israel as a means of protecting the people against this debt system, but soon the powerful found ways of subverting Jubilee – and here we are today.

It may well be time for us to leave behind debt as a basis for our economy, given how destructive it is – as Jesus fully understood...

Prayer for Jubilee

God of Abundance, help us find alternatives to debt. Give us the wisdom, means, courage to forgive debt, thereby subverting empire’s economics for the sake of your kin-dom..

We pray for Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Israel and Palestine; all are caught up in a web of debt that suffocates everyone, even the planet.

Amen.



Ian de Massini performing at a Wednesday Lunchtime Concert
Photograph by Jess Uden

Midweek Worship

WITH REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE AFTER THE SERVICE

6th October

11AM: A SERVICE LED
BY JANET BOTTOMS

13th October

11AM: HOLY COMMUNION
LED BY REV'D NIGEL UDEN

20th October

5.30PM: A SERVICE LED
REV'D ALEX CLARE-YOUNG

27th October

1PM: HOLY COMMUNION
REV'D ELIZABETH CASWELL

LEN BOWER'S DIARIES PART 5

Editor: In this article, we have the fifth episode in a series that began in July 2021. Episode 4 appeared in last month's Place Matter. As I observed last month, Len Bower's sense of humour led to some interesting 'word-inventions' – and we have been faithful to his original text.

An occasional series of extracts from my father's diaries. As always, names/initials have been altered, and any views expressed are his own! Jane Bower

July. The Ns (former neighbours) are up again, S. says, supposed to arrive today....

Mrs. N. rang at 8.45, is it convenient to come and chat. Told her to come later. Mrs. N. came at 11, stayed; stayed; ate; left about 3pm.

August. Church a.m. I. S. preaching (..... on holiday) -good down to earth sermon (as Christ's were) which kept me listening, a strange experience. C. called at night and he and A. descended to the cellar, working at ideas no doubt. Nothing better than working out musical ideas, I miss it.

Postcard from S. 'Ottazell.'

Mother born 100 years ago today. Nice sunny morning, shopped than garden tidying, tree pruning etc, Jehovah's Witnesses addressing me whilst I was on top of the step ladder.

Wrote to F, including a sextet recit for moulting canaries (he said they moulted and stopped singing in August).

Cleaned out the far cellar (the kitchen range and clothes boiler one - the most Victorian-atmospheric place in the house).

Today is August Bank Holiday or something, I think, but I may be wrong. (Note: Wrong!) Decided to do my annual attack on the back garden ivy. Up with the big ladder and so on. I feel I'm getting a bit old for it. Finished at lunchtime and all the detritus bagged up. Gathered sweet peas galore in glorious varied technicolour.

Jane sent some little Monet's garden photos from her recent holiday. Sent her a big envelope full of her childhood drawings.

Didn't go to church (..... back today).

B. came p.m, cellared with Andrew. He brought his sax. Still makes only slow, mournful moans, suggestive, to me, only of misery. Can't imagine what A. thinks of it, prefer not to pursue it really.

September. Perfect summer day so I upped and towned and trained to Scarborough, 8.50 train. Walked until my feet soles and heels were very sore. Journeyed by foot from as far south as the sands go, via the castle and down to the North Bay corner café. Fish & chips of course. Painful walk back to the station. Horseshoes would have been better than my canvas sandals.

The electricians continued, cursing, hammering, drilling, pulling ancient entrails out of the hidden and secret chambers of this hallowed Victoriana, finding ancient nests of electrical vipers dating from the days of horses and carriages. Floors, unfloorboarded, look like the bilges of old sea boats with dirty and long-dead eels lying in the sludge. A sense of chaos pervades, but allied to a sense of security, as if an old body has been given new arteries.

Central heating clock playing games, seems to be going backwards! (Turn on the bath taps to empty the bath?) Rang the electricians.

Man in car came to collect the old blanket box, and rather strangely insisted on S. and me seeing his holiday photographs. Weather very cold and dull. Put my 9.5 duvet on the bed, put away the 4.5; I'm no fool.

Brother Roland would have been 79 today. H. rang to say 'don't come today' at 8a.m. As I was in the midst of ablutions, there was some collision of wind and water.

Church a.m. Bought medlar plant in aid of Bosnians after the service. Middle-aged trainee lay preacher gave sermon, introduced as 'my lay-preacher pupil' by, with amused little remarks about 'awarding him marks – all in poor taste I felt.

October. On the wet-leaved a slippery pavement in Burton Crescent I performed a Grand Arabesque comme une vache volante et heroique, with no damage apart from a muddy anorak and a 5mm graze on the right ankle.

Shopped a.m (synonym for my daily walking exercise). Helping S. with preps for her Christian Art talks series.

3pm start for S's talks series in church. Not a good time, I feel that evening talks might have been better – but might not, I dunno. Conservative Party Conference this week. All self-congratulatory as usual - nobody speaks against any motion, so no debate as in labour conference. Everyone there well-heeled in smart 1950s clothing. Today was about law and order – all about new punishments, nothing about causes of crime in society at all. All speakers clapped like mad, standing ovations the norm.

Church a.m. better this morning, not so bible-bound. Arguments for and against existence of God, rather blandly presented but a theme more up my

street.

Jane's car white with frost when I got up. Washed and hosed it later, in the oddly warm sunshine. Bought a (Oxfam) Mills and Boon vomel for Jane 's friend Fiona, gluing in a 'signed portrait' of the authoress.

S's talk at church went very well indeed, good response. Did personal Christmas card designs p.m.

.....'s sermon on abortion; S. was impressed, me not. His point, he said, was not to present pro and con arguments, nor to give his own 'deeply and strongly felt view.' Life given by God is inviolate, was his point. Being a Christian, he could therefore only subscribe to this opinion, so why not say so? Other Christians have a different point of view, and I'd like therefore to have heard his arguments against the opposite Christian stand. But he avoided this commitment.

November. Trying to clear leaves from front garden, which was hidden from view by a thick-piled, yellow carpet. The lawn was still there! Like an archaeologist discovering treasure.

Humidamp. Tonight social chit-chat inside a house, not a bonfire party as I'd imagined. These 'crush-parties', standing and eating and drinking and talking, have never appealed to me for some reason; I want to scream and get out fast! (Just like Andre Previn in an interview I once heard on radio!)

The last of the cherry tree leaves fell during the night, patterning the garden yet again, but not seriously. Made ratatouille (rain on a corrugated iron roof). S.R. rang. She can't find the big poster I did for the jumble sale to put outside, could I look for it and put it outside or do another and put that outside. Thank you S.

No more cherry leaves but Helen's acacia now has its annual dandruff. I did another poster 4ft x 3ft just in case my first one, which I put on the wall (inside) of the church hall, secure with Blu-Tack, had indeed disappeared. Went into church hall – not on wall. I opened the stage curtain – there it was. Tied it on the tree outside the church with string. Dumped the second poster. Having no noticeboard outside the church is hilarious, if one summons up one's sense of the ludicrous. No-one seems to be aware of this basic necessity, year after year after year.

Bought pedal bin for Jane (on her Christmas list). Got guillotine for S. and Vasari's Lives of the Painters.

I read Psalm 46 on Sunday. (Having read it, I decided to use the NEB version.) R.M. rang wanting visual aid for Sunday (2 foot circular card map of world on both sides, big word JESUS across one of the sides, glowing with inner light.

Thank you.)

To H's after three more phone calls (7.45, 8.20, 8.30) adding more items to his shopping list.

December – Carpet man with iron face laid A's new carpeting, needed special nails he didn't have. Thanks.

Trickle of Christmas cards. B (*brother-in law*) rang briefly at night asking meaning of 'cause célèbre'.

Dentist's 9.30 for 6 month check. Nothing to be done. (*This sounds worryingly ambiguous – Jane.*)

Took an inch off mi new trouser legs (as always). Pre-Christmas clean – pulled out the oven and did behind and below, then inside it with blessed Mr. Muscle cold oven cleaner. Glittered like Captain Flint's treasure. Made every-vegetable casserole, burning bottom of pan to taste.

This week saw the shops' Sunday opening bill passed by Parliament. Presumably this will come to mean the disappearing of the concept of 'the weekend' with all the days being the same; maybe they'll be labelled ABCDEFG. Eventually, this idea of seven days will disappear; and 'week' and 'month' too, days being numbered 1 to 365. We really must get rid of outdated concepts and eliminate the poison of tradition. Some things are ridiculously old hat. Trees for example. The future, I am sure, lies ahead, and today is yesterday's tomorrow....

M (*neighbour*) recently borrowed well-reviewed book (*Invisible man* by Ralph Ellison 1952) from A but can't read it (eyesight) so I offered to tape it bit by bit (I used to do this for blind students for some years at the Univ.) A's books are everywhere in the house. But he is far too busy on his studies – working day and night - I don't know how he keeps up with all the course pressure, a 14 day week. I got up at 5.30am and he was just going to bed.

Christmas Day. C, O and P plus budgie in cage arrived mid-afternoon. Splendid din as usual, then general collapse in front room.

Boxing Day. Bitterly cold. All stayed in, nibbling bits of food now and then.

Glasshouses. Long, perilous, icy, boggy walk over the tops of the dale escarpment at 1 mph for 3 hours, Jane bottoming the final glacier in style.

December 31st. Frenetic Activity Day, as usual. All day kitchen work. S preparing haute couture à la maison, and A and I busying ourselves under orders. People arrived from after 8pm. (*Mum invited the church elderly/ alone each year – Jane*) All left soon after midnight, got everything back to normal, all washed up etc. Bed about 1.30. Throat very sore.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

VOLUNTEERS FOR 'CONNECTED LIVES' CRECHE AT DOWNING PLACE

'Circle of Security Parenting© Groups are designed to give parents 'a map' for understanding and responding to their children's emotional needs. They help us focus on the most important thing of all - our relationship with our children' *Connected Lives Cambridge*

During May, June and July, Connected Lives facilitators Helen and Kate gathered at Downing Place, with a group of parents who were taking part in Connected Lives' Circle of Security parenting course. Given the very positive feedback they have received, they have asked if they could run another course from October to December.

This time they would, ideally, really like to offer a creche facility for the children of those attending the sessions. As part of exploring that, I am writing to see whether there might be any people from Downing Place who would like to support two volunteer creche workers from Connected Lives, in looking after the children (approx. six to eight children).

The volunteers would be here at Downing Place for two and a half hours on a Thursday morning, for eight weeks; the session itself is one and a half hours and there would be time needed to set up, and clear away toys either side of the session. Please don't feel you would have to commit to all eight weeks, we are looking at creating a rota for Connected Lives. You would never need to be in charge of the creche, and the Connected Lives team would make sure you had all the knowledge and support you would need to feel comfortable.

If you would be interested in finding out more or putting your name down, please let me know in person, by phone using the Office number or through email jess@downingplaceurc.org In part, this will help us see whether we will be able to work with Connected Lives to make this happen.

Jess

HUB HOSPITALITY VOLUNTEERS

It is a joy to work with our wonderful team of Hub Hospitality volunteers each week. For four hours on a Wednesday, the team work together to give a friendly welcome, and an offer of refreshment and companionship to those who come into the Hub. Although some who come in are concert goers, there are also others who purely come to enjoy time in the space, maybe after attending a group in one of the rooms around the building, or some have been directed our way by

other organisations and charities. We also have people who work from the Hub throughout the week; they would usually be working from home but prefer to get out of the house and spend their working day in our spaces.

The interactions that we see are all demonstrations that our community here at Downing Place is doing some good; many conversations are being had throughout the space, the numbers of people coming in are growing, and week by week we are supporting people through a whole range of life experiences (be they 'big' or 'small').

Our community is evolving, and now we feel Hub Hospitality needs to too.



We would now like to be able to offer Hub Hospitality on not only Wednesdays, but also Thursdays. However, to do that we could really do with more volunteers to make up the rota. Would you be interested in helping? On each day there are two shifts, 11-1pm and 1-3pm, and I aim to put two people on each shift: but sometimes people who are happy to do so, will cover a shift on their own, with Elaine or myself very much on hand to help and to support in any way needed. Please don't feel that you need to be able to run a marathon, literally or metaphorically, to be able to sign up to be a part of our team; it is a fun, supportive and fulfilling role that you can do in a way that works for you. We hope to organise termly support sessions for the team to come to together, and discuss our experiences and aims, and some of the things that we might come across in our Hospitality shifts.

If you would like to sign up or know more, please do let me know, either in person, by phone through the Office or via email jess@downingplaceurc.org.

Why not also speak to one of the volunteers who have been part of Hub Hospitality since it began, to hear about their own experience?

I'm really looking forward to hearing from you, and to welcoming our new volunteers into the team soon.

Jess



TRAIDCRAFT

We would like to thank everyone who supports Traidcraft and to update you on how the company is faring during these difficult economic times.



TRAIDCRAFT
Fighting poverty through trade

You may remember that back in 2018 Traidcraft was facing severe financial difficulties and by the end of that year was facing the threat of closure unless drastic action was taken. Due to a successful Christmas season that year, the company managed to survive but only by considerably downsizing and changing its business model. Over the next two years this got Traidcraft gradually back on its feet. The company then had to weather the pandemic lockdowns and

began looking more towards on-line trading.

However, it is now having to contend with rising transport and postage costs, fuel surcharges and an increasingly cautious buying public. Financial results this year have not been good, so yet more changes are required to maximise the chance of a profitable 2023. Fair traders such as ourselves remain a crucial element of Traidcraft's mission but the post-pandemic recovery in this area has been slower than hoped.

So, what does this mean for our situation here at Downing Place?

Since moving into the new church building, Traidcraft has been doing well, steadily rebuilding post-pandemic sales by reopening the stall on Sunday mornings and, since February, offering a stall every Wednesday during the period when the church is open for 'Hub Hospitality'. Concert goers have got used to Traidcraft goods being on sale and a new group of regular customers has started to emerge. This is really encouraging.

The impact that Traidcraft's current financial difficulties will have on us is that, sadly, the full range catalogues will no longer be produced. These are being replaced by a slimmed down brochure of new and seasonal items, beginning with an Autumn Gift Guide. While this will vastly reduce Traidcraft's costs, customers will have no choice but to view the full catalogue on-line. So, those of you who still have a Summer 2022 catalogue, please hold onto it for future reference. But remember, prices will inevitably change.

Also, Traidcraft will no longer be offering its 10% discount to Fair Traders for single food item purchases, although they are continuing to give this discount on bulk purchases. We have always tried to buy in bulk anyway and will continue to do so, enabling us to make a modest profit which, in turn, enables us to make an annual donation to Traidcraft's sister charity 'Traidcraft Exchange'. In the light of this news we would urge everyone to try to support the Traidcraft stall whenever possible.



Please, also look out for the Fairtrade symbol on products in the supermarkets as special offers and discounts are often available on these goods for short periods of time.

On a happier note, Traidcraft's charity Christmas cards are now available for order so bear in mind that these will be for sale on the stall in the coming weeks!

Lorraine and Stephen Thornton

AUTUMN EVENTS



What is God
asking of
YOU?



Ministry Enquirers' Event

to help you think about God's call to Stepwise, Worship Leading, Lay Preaching, Lay Pioneering, Ministry with children and young people, the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work.

Come and chat in person with those in ministry
and find out what God is calling you to!

Enquirers' Event

Saturday 1st October 2022

10am-1pm at Church House

Register your interest with ministries@urc.org.uk

AUTUMN HOUSEGROUPS

a series of 6 for October to November

The theme is: **'Family, friend, or foe ... Israel and her neighbours'**

They will be led by Revd Dr Janet Tollington, who writes:

‘The six sessions will explore the relationship between the people of Israel and other groups who lived around them, using Old Testament texts to discover how kinship ties, land issues, religion etc influenced the ways in which these were understood and developed. Relationships with Egypt and Syria remain a contemporary issue; but places such as Moab, Ammon and Edom (today's Jordan) and Philistia, Phoenicia, Canaan (today's Palestine, Lebanon and Israel) are also highly relevant in today's world. Each session will stand on its own and focus on a specific neighbouring group, although there will be a link between them.

The sessions are open to everyone and won't require any prior study. We will explore a selection of different Biblical texts each week, so bring a Bible with you. Each session will hopefully open up lots of issues for discussion about how we relate to those around us in our own land as well some of the bigger political issues of today.'

Starting **Monday 17th October** at 2pm at the church, and Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm on Zoom.

Mondays at 2pm - October 17th and 31st, November 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th at the church.

or Tuesdays October 18th, November 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th on Zoom

No meetings during half term week.

It would help to let *Penny Flynn House Group Coordinator* know if you hope to attend, especially for the evening group so you can be sent the Zoom link. You are welcome to attend any or all weeks, as you are able.

Penny Flynn
House Group Coordinator

Dear friends,

Just an update on my two next events/performances - all welcome!

FREE to attend, but booking essential - Thursday October 6th, 7.00 at the sumptuous new Fellows House Hotel, Gilbert Road - my illustrated talk on my acting experiences:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/orators-storytellers-ruth-joyce-maureen-me-a-play-tickets-400763132317?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

Saturday October 15th, St. Mark's Church, Newnham. My involvement with the Radius Drama Day has grown since my last notice!

I now perform one of my own monologues, play the vicar's wife in *Sphinx* by Annie Fox, and sit on a Q&A panel on drama and faith.

Book here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/exploring-the-mystery-a-festival-of-new-plays-tickets-326278877907>

It would be lovely to have your company and support!

Jane Bower

THE BIBLE SOCIETY

Several members of Downing Place help to plan a twice-yearly fund-raising event, held in Queen Edith's Chapel for ease of parking. The evening includes a meal of home-made soup and dessert, with a speaker to follow.

This month we have Rt Revd Dr Graham Kings, who will bring his 'Seven Poems on Women in the Bible', along with pictures and music that have been produced to accompany them.

Please let me know if you plan to attend in person, both for catering purposes, and on Zoom for the link. [penny.f.flynn@gmail.com].

For a change, an opportunity is also planned to gather and discuss the poems with Dr Kings, in Downing Place, Gibson Hall, on Tuesday 1st November at 10.30am.



Cambridge Bible Society Action Group invite you to an

Autumn Supper and Talk

‘Seven Poems on Women in the Bible’

Guest speaker: Dr Graham Kings, Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Ely and Research Associate in the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide

Friday 21st October 2022 at 6.45pm

Queen Edith Chapel, Wulfstan Way,
Cambridge CB1 8QN

The talk will be live-streamed at 7.45pm. No tickets required. Supper £7.00. Please email penny.flynn@gmail.com to reserve a supper place or for the live stream link.

Come & Sing (or listen) for Ukraine!

FAURÉ'S REQUIEM & SILVESTROV'S PRAYER FOR UKRAINE

PETER BRITTON, CONDUCTOR, & IAN DE MASSINI, ORGANIST

DOWNING PLACE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE

SATURDAY 12TH NOVEMBER

Optional
rehearsal
in same venue,
Sat 5th November,
2 - 4pm

1:30pm: distribution of music

2:00pm: rehearsal

3:30pm: doors open to the public
(free admission, retiring collection)

4:00pm - 5:00pm: performance

Voluntary participation fee of £10



DOWNING PLACE CHRISTMAS FAIR

'As the autumn colours well and truly become part of the palette of our daily lives, our collective minds are slowly beginning to turn to Advent and Christmas. The church diary is steadily filling with services and other fellowship opportunities, and each day we are taking new bookings for festive concerts and events organised by external hirers.

As you will probably be aware by now, Saturday 10th December, is when Downing Place URC will hold our Christmas Fair in the Church. We really hope that it will be a true community event, with all those who spend time in and around Downing Place throughout the week invited to contribute and join us.

Please put the date in your diary, and send ideas of what you might be able to bring, make or do, or would like to see, on the day to jess@downingplaceurc.org or elaine@downingplaceurc.org.

To those who make and create, please do get planning; we know there are many talented people in our midst, with delicious and beautiful creations (preserves, cakes, handcrafts....) regularly made and shared.

The money raised on the day will go to a charity, chosen from a shortlist which will come to the church meeting in September. More information will go into the Weekly News in the coming weeks, as more details are decided upon, and we incorporate ideas given to us.

We are very excited to see what we can organise as a community; here's to planning, making, having fun, and raising funds for our chosen charity and those they support.

VISITING PREACHERS

During October there are three services that I will lead, and at which we will welcome 'visiting' speakers.

SUNDAY 2nd OCTOBER

This is the day that we will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Reformed Church. It came into being through the union of the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England. Our fellow member, The Revd Professor David Thompson DD, was involved in the preparation for that significant event, being a representative of the Churches of Christ. He attended the Service of Thanksgiving in Westminster Abbey on 5th October 1972. It will be a rare privilege for Downing Place Church to have as preacher for the golden jubilee one so close to those inaugural days. At this service we will also welcome a party from the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate (EKP), who will have been in London the day before, attending, with some of us, the denominational service marking the jubilee. These guests will include Pf Manfred Sutter, President of the EKP, Dekan Volker Janke, of the Stiftskirche in Landau, and Pf Peter Busch, Principal of the EKP seminary, who will each bring greetings.

SUNDAY 16th OCTOBER

From 1997-2008, the minister of St Columba's URC was The Revd Keith Rigin. Whilst here he gained a PhD in 2008. Upon leaving Cambridge he was ordained into the priesthood of the Church of England, and is now Bishop of Argyll and The Isles in the Episcopal Church of Scotland. We look forward to this first visit to us since his episcopal ordination in St John's Cathedral, Oban on 1st May last year.

SUNDAY 23rd OCTOBER

Downing Place Church is involved with the URC's global justice programme, Commitment for Life. Each year we mark our involvement with a service to ponder its ideals and work, and to learn about a country that the programme supports. For some time, that country has been Bangladesh, and this year we welcome a Bangladeshi journalist to share his perspectives and help our understanding. He is Shafiur Rahman, a London based documentary maker, with a particular interest include human rights, migration, and poverty.

I believe we will be enriched by these people as they offer their diverse experience and insight. It is something of a privilege to receive them.

DIARY

Services are conducted by the Minister, except where shown

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sat	01-Oct-22	Luminatus—Sacred Music for Voices	7:30pm	Downing Place URC
Sun	02-Oct-22	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	02-Oct-22	Sunday Worship with Communion. Preacher: Revd Professor David Thompson	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	02-Oct-22	Open Table Social	7:00pm	Downing Place URC
Mon	03-Oct-22	Officers' Meeting	4:00pm	Downing Place URC
Tue	04-Oct-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Tue	04-Oct-22	Cambridge Bid Job Fair	9:00am—4:00pm	Downing Place URC
Wed	05-Oct-22	Lunchtime Concert - Chun-He Yun (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	06-Oct-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	06-Oct-22	Midweek Worship led by Janet Bottoms	11:00am	Church or Chapel
Sat	08-Oct-22	URC Eastern Synod	10:30am - 4:00pm	Christ Church, Braintree
Sat	08-Oct-22	Autumn Schubertiade—Lieder and Choral Music conducted by Ralph Woodward	7:30pm	Downing Place URC
Sun	09-Oct-22	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	09-Oct-22	Sunday Worship led by the Evangelism and Service Group	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Tue	11-Oct-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Tue	11-Oct-22	Elders' Meeting	7:30pm	
Wed	12-Oct-22	Lunchtime Concert - Cambridge Chamber Ensemble	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	13-Oct-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	13-Oct-22	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion	11:00am	Chapel or Church
Sat	15-Oct-22	New Cambridge Sinfonia Concert	7:30pm	Downing Place URC
Sun	16-Oct-22	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	16-Oct-22	Sunday Worship Preacher: Rt Revd Keith Riglin	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	16-Oct-22	Open Table Communion Service	7:00pm	Downing Place URC
Mon	17 Oct-22	DEADLINE for booking into the Gibson Lunch		
Mon	17-Oct-22	Autumn Housegroup (see p.38)	2:30pm	Rooms 1 and 2
Tue	18-Oct-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Tue	18-Oct-22	Autumn Housegroup		Zoom
Wed	19-Oct-22	DEADLINE for submitting items for 'Place Matters'		
Wed	19-Oct-22	Lunchtime Concert - Agnes Pethers (mezzo-soprano) & Peter Britton (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	20-Oct-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	20-Oct-22	Gibson Lunch	12:30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	20-Oct-22	Midweek Worship led by Revd Alex Clare-Young	5:30pm	St Columba's Chapel

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	23-Oct-22	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	23-Oct-22	Sunday Worship Preacher: Shafiur Rahman	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	23-Oct-22	Lucy Cavendish Singers Concert	6:00pm	Downing Place URC
Tue	25-Oct-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	26-Oct-22	Lunchtime Concert - Timothy Peake (piano)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	27-Oct-22	Midweek Worship with Communion led by Revd Elizabeth Caswell	1:00pm	St Columba's Chapel
Thu	27-Oct-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	30-Oct-22	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	30-Oct-22	Sunday Worship led by Dr Robert Pope	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Mon	31-Oct-22	Autumn Housegroup	2:30pm	Rooms 1 and 2
Tue	01-Nov-22	Bible Society Event with Rt Revd Graham Kings (see p.39)	10:30am	Gibson Hall
Tue	01-Nov-22	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios Church
Wed	02-Nov-22	Lunchtime Concert - Titika Maragoula (soprano) & Richard Carr (organ)	1:00pm	Downing Place URC
Thu	03-Nov-22	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	03-Nov-22	Midweek Worship led by Penny Flynn	11:00am	St Columba's Chapel
Thu	03-Nov-22	World Church & Public Issues Group	7:30pm	Zoom
Sat	05-Nov-22	Newcomers' Coffee Morning	10:00am	The Hub

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sat	05-Nov-22	Sing for Ukraine! (see p.41)	2:00pm	Downing Place URC
Sun	06-Nov-22	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	06-Nov-22	Sunday Worship with Communion	11:00am	Downing Place URC
Sun	06-Nov-22	Cambridge Early Music Concert	7.30pm	Downing Place URC
Sun	06-Nov-22	Open Table Social	7:00pm	Downing Place URC

MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE

1 October	David Cornick	URC 50th Anniversary Celebration Methodist Central Hall, London
2 October	Liz Caswell Deborah McVey Janet Tollington	Fowlmere (11am) Stetchworth & Cheveley (3pm) Sawston Free Church Bassingbourn
9 October	Chris Baker Liz Caswell Penny Flynn Maureen Kendall John Proctor Nigel Uden	Haddenham Methodist Stetchworth & Cheveley Bassingbourn Castle Street Methodist (evening) Saffron Walden URC Fulbourn
16 October	Chris Baker Janet Bottoms Janet Tollington	Fenstanton Melbourn St Neots
23 October	Liz Caswell Janet Tollington	Fulbourn Trinity, Burwell
30 October	Chris Baker John Proctor Janet Tollington Nigel Uden	Melbourn Stowmarket URC Fulbourn Water Lane URC, Bishop's Stortford

LECTIONARY FOR OCTOBER 2022

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.

2 October Trinity 16

Habakkuk 1.1-4; 2.1-4

Psalm 37.1-9

2 Timothy 1.1-14

Luke 17.5-10

9 October Trinity 17

2 Kings 5.1-3, 7-15c

Psalm 111

2 Timothy 2.8-15

Luke 17:11-19

16 October Trinity 18

Genesis 32.22-31

Psalm 121

2 Timothy 3.14-4.5

Luke 18.1-8

23 October Trinity 19

Jeremiah 14.7-10, 19-22

Psalm 84.1-7

2 Timothy 4.6-8, 16-18

Luke 18.9-14

30 October 4th before Advent

Isaiah 1.10-18

Psalm 32.1-7

2 Thessalonians 1.1-4, 11-12

Luke 19.1-10

6 November 3rd before Advent

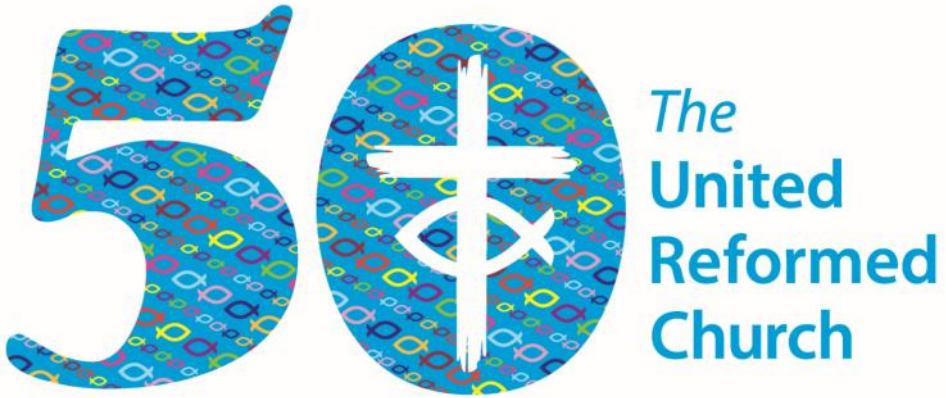
Job 19.23-27a

Psalm 17.1-9

2 Thessalonians 2.1-5, 13-17

Luke 20.27-38





Faith – Hope – Love – Since 1972

MAGAZINE EDITOR: Tim Rowland

ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

Please send items to both Tim Rowland and Ann Auger
(ann@downingplaceurc.org)

WEB EDITOR: Jess Uden

Please send all items to be included in the November edition to both Tim and Ann by the cut off date of **Wednesday 19 October**

The November edition will be available from **Sunday 30 October**.