



**DOWNING PLACE  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH  
CAMBRIDGE**

# **PLACE MATTERS**



**ISSUE 48  
FEBRUARY 2023**

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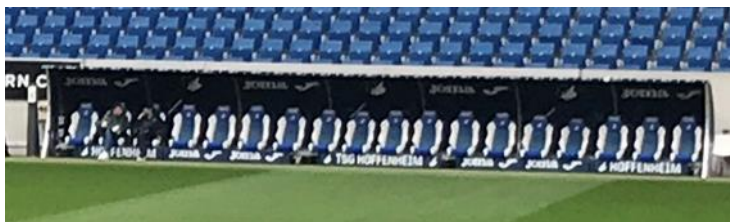
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*Photograph by Jess Uden*

*Cover photograph by Nigel Uden*



## FROM THE SUBSTITUTES' BENCH

Dear Friends,

Your editor thought I might say a few words this month about the parables of Jesus. These are the theme for our Lent housegroups in February and March. Details of the course – when, where and so on – are mentioned elsewhere in Place Matters. Here I want to tell you why this part of the Bible fascinates me, and has done so for decades.

Parables often seem quite straightforward – everyday stories of country folk (as the BBC used to subtitle *The Archers*). Sheep and sunshine, sowing and sewing, family and festivity, money and markets, bread and bridesmaids – a lot of ordinary life is there, and many of us will find that bits of it connect with our own experience.

Yet parables can be quirky too. Who would leave ninety-nine sheep to the mercy of passing predators to hunt for just one that had strayed? Or welcome a delinquent son, without thinking about possible impacts on others in the household? Or pay employees a day's wage for an hour's work? Or liken God to an unjust judge? Sometimes it's the unexpected or incongruous corner of the story that gives a parable energy. Like a piece of grit in an oyster, it rubs against our thinking, until we find that grit has become pearl and a really valuable insight has emerged from something that bothered us.

Some parables need a bit of background. The story of the road to Jericho only really works if you know that Jews and Samaritans disliked each other. Building on rock rather than sand makes even more sense when we learn about weather and landscape in the Holy Land. Perhaps the prodigal son can gain a new shade of meaning by picking up light from the Old Testament story of Jacob and Esau. What was a 'talent' anyway? What did stewards do for their employers, and what was 'unjust' about the steward Jesus introduces us to?

Yet it will not do to squeeze the life out of these stories by endless explanation. Stories often have an emotional quality, and this will sometimes stir us in ways that seem to bypass all explaining. Indeed the emotion may fix the story in our

mind, so that it travels with us for a while. Then, as with many of our human friendships, company leads to deeper acquaintance, and we start to see wisdom and challenge in the story that we had never noticed before. It speaks back to our experience and starts to inform our outlook on life.

So there is often a twofold process involved in dealing with the parables and in letting them deal with us. One is explanation, making sense of what we read. The second is emotional engagement, letting the story rub against our personal perspective on life.

With the first, expertise has a contribution to make. It does help to listen to people who know more about Jesus' land and times than we do. I have read plenty written by such people, and will try to share some of it compactly and constructively when we meet.

But personal experience helps more with the second aspect of the process. Our humanity gives us insight – our own joys and journeys, our sorrows and stresses, our years and our fears, our walk with God, and the friendships and frictions that connect us to other people. You will have some insights that I do not, and vice versa. That's a good thing.

A housegroup is a chance to learn together, to build one another up in faith and confidence, and to strengthen our life as a company of Christian disciples. Which might have been roughly the intention when Jesus told parables to his friends.

With warm greetings,

*John Proctor*



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

I prefer to write an 'editorial' for *Place Matters* only when I have something – hopefully helpful – to say about the content of the current issue. As I begin to write for the February issue, it's nearly the end of the season of 'Twixtmas' – those four days of the year betwixt Boxing Day and New Year's Eve. The period can be something of a relief, relatively free of pressure to meet and greet, to cook anything 'special', to be careful not to forget to do something. I've taken the opportunity to look ahead to the next issue of *Place Matters* – this one! I keep a file on my PC which lists the (intended) content of each issue. It helps me to remember to include something that I wasn't expecting, and to send reminders to contributors if necessary. Ann and I share an online space where most of this

material accumulates: as the deadline approaches, Ann rather miraculously compiles it to comprise the document that you hold in your hand, or view on your screen, month by month. I still have no idea how she makes everything fit together, in a helpful and pleasing way, to fill the ‘right number’ of pages!

As ever, I am grateful to those who contribute to every issue, or most, of our monthly magazine. They help to keep us up to date with what’s going on, at Downing Place and in the wider community. Information about groups and individual friends helps to build up and strengthen our fellowship and mutual support. With our minister on Sabbatical Leave until mid-April, this month’s ‘From the Minister’ pages might have been blank, but John Proctor kindly accepted my invitation to contribute his own reflections for our consideration: there, and elsewhere in this issue, you will find information about the upcoming Lent House Groups, which will focus on Jesus’ Parables. I am hoping that others will accept an invitation to contribute a message ‘From the Minister’ in the next two issues.

I am grateful to Jess Uden for suggesting a feature on Ukraine this month. That so-called ‘special military operation’ began one year ago, in February 2022. I am tempted to write more here, but will leave the commentary to those who have contributed to the feature in this issue. These include David Reynolds, Penny Milsom, Jess herself, and Lance Stone.

The Pastoral News in the December 2022 *Place Matters* included: “Daphne Shercliff’s death at the age of 93 ends an association with the congregation which began as a student at Homerton, and included office as church secretary at Emmanuel, 1988-94 ... a tribute to Daphne is scheduled to appear in the February 2023 *Place Matters*”. Judy Rowland was Daphne’s Elder, then pastoral visitor, for many years, until Daphne died. Before asking Judy if she would compile our tribute to Daphne, I paused to ask myself how a tribute might differ from an obituary. My response, in my role as editor, is that an obituary is essentially a record of a person’s life and death: their upbringing, education, occupation, relationships and achievements. While a tribute will include some of those ingredients, it is essentially an expression of admiration, love and gratitude for the life of a friend or colleague. All these aspects of thanksgiving shone through at Daphne’s funeral, led by Nigel, whose support and company Daphne herself had come to enjoy, especially in her last years. Please keep in mind that I would be pleased to consider including tributes to other departed friends in future issues of *Place Matters*.

Now – please read on! Offers of contributions to future issues of *Place Matters* are always welcome, as is any feedback about the contents of this one.

## SOME WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT ...

The Revd. Fiona Bennett currently serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the URC. She is the minister at Augustine United Church in Edinburgh, a congregation of the United Reformed Church [www.augustine.org.uk](http://www.augustine.org.uk).



*Fiona at Downing Place*

At [November 2022 | General Assembly Moderator's Blog \(urc.org.uk\)](#) we read: “In November, the Revd. Fiona Bennett will be attending the Remembrance Sunday service at the Cenotaph in London and the Assembly Executive at High Leigh, preaching at Downing Place URC in Cambridge and High Cross in Tottenham, meeting with Moderate Designate and colleagues from the Church of Scotland, and taking part in Open Table Cambridge”

And so it was that the Moderator participated in two acts of worship at Downing Place on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2022. A few days later she emailed our minister, with the following message:

*Dear Nigel,*

*Thank you very much for inviting me to Cambridge for Sunday. ... I was deeply inspired by the visit.*

*Downing Place feels a very alive and engaged congregation, which was enlivening to encounter.*

*I have been reflecting that perhaps we all need to pass through the coffee-fuelled forging of a union and new building to make us focus on what is possible and significant. And I am pondering how the story and community of Downing Place might offer support to the wider denomination.*

*I was deeply struck at the impact which OpenTable is having on the church ecumenically in your area and the oasis it is to many, as will the Ukrainian gathering be also. Such important ministries, incarnating good news. I am genuinely grateful to have experienced the tone of Downing Place.*

*Thank you for the invite, for the inspiration, for your hospitality, and please do pass on my thanks to the musicians for the lovely Scottish themed music.*

*Peace to you, Fiona*

Nigel forwarded the Moderator's message to us at *Place Matters*, with the comment: "This is a moving affirmation of various elements of the Downing Place adventure. She presented us with a pack of URC Golden Jubilee coffee in the morning service, and in accepting it I observed that one of the first things we realised Emmanuel and St Columba's had in common was a preference for decent coffee ..."



## UKRAINE ONE YEAR ON – SUPPORTING UKRAINIANS

I am grateful to Jess Uden for the foresight – three months ago – that set in train the key 'feature' in this month's *Place Matters*. Contributions to that feature now follow. Following Jess' vision, I wanted to include a brief but well-informed introduction, describing and explaining the historical context of the events in Ukraine that have troubled our minds and dominated our news channels in the last year. Here at Downing Place, we have tried to offer hospitality to some of those displaced by Vladimir Putin's invasion. I also requested accounts of Ukrainians in and near to Cambridge, and of what Downing Place URC members and friends are doing to support them. As an unexpected bonus, I found myself inviting a former minister of Emmanuel URC to enable all *Place Matters* readers to share in his own family's imaginative, creative support.

*Tim Rowland, Editor*

The basic details are familiar. On 24 February 2022, the largest country in Europe invaded the second largest. A year later, the war is still going on, as Ukraine – contrary to many expectations – fought back with great courage and at huge cost, gradually aided by weapons and supplies from the United States and its allies. Here at Downing Place, we have tried to offer hospitality to a few of those displaced by Vladimir Putin's invasion.

Ukraine's history indeed shows that "Place Matters." This area of Eastern Europe lacks natural frontiers, comparable to the Channel or the Pyrenees, and it has been fought over for centuries. At times a Ukrainian state existed, as with Kievan/Kyivan Rus' – one of the great powers of Europe in the 10th and 11th centuries – or the Cossack "Hetmanate" of the 17th and 18th centuries. But in other eras it has been swallowed up by aggressive neighbours, especially Poland and Russia. Attempts to rebuild an independent Ukrainian state after World War One were frustrated by Lenin's creation of the Soviet Union. Ukrainians were the prime victims of Stalin's agricultural collectivization in the 1930s and of Hitler's war against the Soviet Union in 1941-5 – in each case at terrible human cost.



Not until the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991 did Ukraine break free. On 24 August the Ukrainian parliament voted overwhelmingly for independence. On 1 December this was put to the people in a national referendum. 84% of the electorate turned out and 92% endorsed independence. Next day Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Republic, was one of the first foreign leaders to extend recognition to the new state. Today, it is recognised by nearly all the UN's 193 members.

But Putin, Yeltsin's successor since the year 2000, has been in denial. One of those leaders who yearns to make his country great again, he has spun a fake historical narrative, insisting that the "true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia" – meaning on Russian terms – and accusing "neo-Nazis" of trying to turn Ukraine into a client of the hostile West. A former KGB operative, who watched in impotent shock East Germany's freedom movement in 1989, he has been utterly brutal in his bid to rebuild the old Russian empire.

Putin's invasion of a sovereign member of the United Nations has dramatically reinforced the sense of Ukrainian identity. In other words, whatever happens, he has already failed.

*David Reynolds*



*Sunflowers for Ukraine on the windowsill of the Downing Place Hub*

*Photograph by Ann Auger*

## CAMBRIDGE4UKRAINE 'AT HOME' AT DOWNING PLACE URC

We had no idea what 2022 held. Along with the rest of the world, the UK was gradually emerging from the intensity of the lockdowns and vaccine rollouts that 2020 and 2021 had brought. The repercussions of BREXIT still hung in the air, pleasing some and worrying many, and immigration and people feeling the need to get to the UK in such dangerous circumstances were ever-present in the news. As Greta Thunberg continued her fight for action to mitigate against climate change, and the US reeled from the Capitol Riots, members and friends of Downing Place URC were continuing to wonder how we might be able to use our newly refurbished building for good - to live out our faith, and to support the needs of the community.

Little did we know that on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> February, via headlines and urgent communications, we would learn that Russia had invaded Ukraine. After a few weeks, those living in and around Cambridge started hearing of refugees arriving, seeing our city as their place of refuge, and of campaigns to support them. *Cambridge4Ukraine* [cambridge4ukraine.uk](https://cambridge4ukraine.uk) was set up by four Ukrainians living in the UK, who “decided to do everything and a little more to stop the war in Ukraine”. They started coordinating vigils and protests on King’s Parade, communicating with the city and county councils, holding cultural events and assisting the refugees from Ukraine who are seeking shelter here in the UK. Within a few months they were formally working out of



*Ukrainians in the Hub*

*Photograph by Jess Uden*

Downing Place URC, using two of the rooms on the mezzanine in the Hub, holding weekly ‘coffee and conversation’ meetings, and running events ranging from those that helped refugees prepare themselves to find work here, to Malanka Fest, held on 14<sup>th</sup> January this year, celebrating the Orthodox New

Year. The cultural events have given the Ukrainians the opportunity to celebrate, even though they are many miles away home, and to share their culture with us.

In the first 10 months since Russia's war against Ukraine began, around 1,200 – 1,500 Ukrainian refugees arrived in Cambridgeshire, one of the highest levels of hosting per capita in the UK, and *Cambridge4Ukraine* have found hosts for 160 families. The refugees who they are supporting have slowly adapted to life in the UK, finding jobs and making new friends, and the children are studying in local schools. However, because of the traumatic experience of war, it is not easy for all to adapt to a new life in another country, and that is where the support of local people, government and charities has gone some way to make the process easier. Finding accommodation after the end of the family-hosting period is a concern for all Ukrainian refugees: not all host families are willing or able to host for more than 6 months, so the issue of social housing is very important.



*Our minister Nigel Uden speaks to the gathering on King's Parade .*

*Photograph by Jess Uden*

Language has been an inevitable barrier too, with people struggling to find jobs and to settle, due to the time it takes to learn sufficient English to enable them to work.

Talking to those who spend time in Downing Place, those who are refugees and those who are working alongside them to support them, it is clear that Ukrainians are very grateful to the people of the UK for their support. It has clearly been important for them to feel safe, and supported, but also for them to feel that they can introduce us to the Ukrainian Culture. Having a group singing at the end of our Christmas Fair was a moving experience. But touchingly one of the

*Cambridge4Ukraine* team members writes ‘...the most important thing is that our people have peaceful sky and they feel safe’. Ukrainian refugees are trying to do everything in their power to be useful to the country that opened the doors for them.

I asked Andrii Smytsnyuk, and Antatolli Pavlovskiy, co-founders of *Cambridge4Ukraine*, to describe how has the partnership with Downing Place URC has enabled *Cambridge4Ukraine* to accomplish their vital work with refugees. Their replies assure us that we have done far more than giving them a space to store their welcome packs.

Andrii Smytsnyuk replied, “It is difficult to put in words our enormous gratitude to the Downing Place United Reformed Church, since your support has been essential to our activities and no word of gratitude would be enough. From the very beginning of *Cambridge4Ukraine's* existence, we struggled with finding an appropriate place where we could conduct our activities. I think it is fair to say that we were looking for a 'home' for our organisation and a 'home' to all those who had to flee their own country to seek refuge in the UK. I think that now it does feel like a second home to us and many of the Ukrainian refugees in Cambridge! This feeling matters to all of us! With DPURC's support, we are now able to organise regular meetings for Ukrainian refugees, where we distribute food, free SIM-cards, and welcome packs (groceries, toiletries, clothes). We are conducting workshops that help people find employment, social housing, open bank accounts and navigate their lives in the UK. We also have an opportunity to organise events that promote Ukrainian culture and help to raise money which we use to support charitable work in Ukraine or to support Ukrainian refugees in Cambridge. Most importantly, the partnership with Downing Place enables us to create opportunities for people to meet and form a new community. I would say that this is the most important aspect of our work as it is difficult to overestimate the importance of community for those who were taken out of their usual environment and placed in a country which might be still strange to them”.

And Anatolii Pavlovskiy: “Partnership with Downing Place was absolutely vital for us. From the first meeting with Nigel, we feel support and understanding for what we are doing. Having an office helps us a lot with coordinating our activities as well as with registering as a charity. We really appreciate the opportunity to support our refugees providing for them safe and friendly space to meet, share food, to contain the pain through sharing their feelings and concerns. We express our gratitude for the chance to see happy faces of children that came from Ukraine. Our weekly activities with them and all workshops and events organised in the church help kids to socialise, to feel included and connected with Ukrainian traditions, culture and spirit”.

*Jess Uden*



*Ukrainians perform at the Downing Place Christmas Fair. Photograph by Jess Uden*

## THE CAMBRIDGE4UKRAINE GROUP IN THE DOWNING PLACE HUB

Like so many people, I was appalled when I learnt of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It brought back memories for me of 1956, when the Soviet Union employed their troops to crush the Hungarians in their attempt to govern independently. My family was half Hungarian, and we were living in Cambridge, so we were keen to offer a home to Hungarian refugees, in addition to our Hungarian cousin. However, this time I also wanted to help Ukraine in any way I could, although I did not feel that I was in a position to host a family. So I was delighted to learn that Downing Place had offered the Cambridge Ukrainian Society a regular venue at the hub on Saturday mornings, where refugees could come and meet each other. I therefore offered to help by supporting the refugees with information about where they could get advice. I have previously been a volunteer at Citizen's Advice and knew it was important to signpost the Ukrainians with the correct phone numbers of contacts.

Although I have not been able to attend every session, I have found it very rewarding to talk to the refugees and some hosts. With one family whose children were turned down by the local schools, I was able to contact a county councillor who referred the family to a specialist team who found school places for their children. With others I have encouraged the Ukrainians to contact Citizen's Advice for information about benefits available to them. Some of the Ukrainians do not speak English, but members of the Ukrainian Society provide translators. However I have found it most rewarding just to talk to people about

their experiences. The children who enjoy the crayons and paper provided by Downing Place often speak English better than the adults. Many of the children are accompanied by their mothers and grandparents. One grandmother who had just arrived tried to talk to me using Google Translate, and her granddaughter assured me that she would teach her to speak English. I have found everyone to be extremely friendly. I always introduce myself as a member of Downing Place URC when I talk to them. I love to listen to their stories. One young woman had brought her dog all the way from Ukraine to England, and where she was living her host looked after the dog while she went out to work. More recently families have left Ukraine because cutting off their electricity has made living there almost impossible

I think the most telling thing that I have heard from a Ukrainian was when one woman said that although their bodies are here, their hearts are in Ukraine. Clearly even though they appreciate the safety of living in Cambridge, they have endured experiences which they may need to talk about, and they suffer from the separation from their husbands, sons and fathers who cannot leave Ukraine. The two prayer vigils organised by Downing Place for peace in Ukraine have been wonderful: I just pray that the war will end, so that people who want to go back will be able to do so in safety. But in the meantime, they are enriching our lives here in Cambridge..

*Penny Milsom*



*Candles burn at a prayer vigil for Ukraine held in October 2022, commemorating six months since the invasion.*

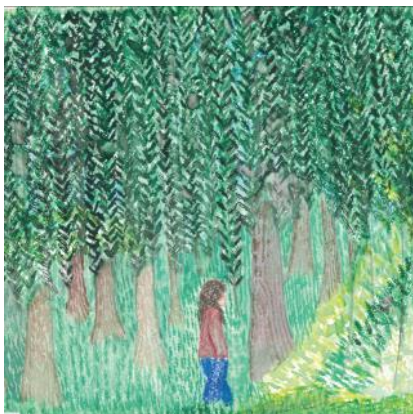
*Photograph by Jess Uden*



## FROM LANCE STONE – A STORYBOOK FOR UKRAINE

For the past three years, instead of sending Christmas cards, Sally and I have sent people an email that has included a link to a short all-age story that I have written and that has been illustrated, for two of those years, by our daughter Robyn. As well as being circulated as an e-book I have made hard copies available which have been sold in aid of a charity.

My career as a story-teller began out of necessity: when our kids were small it was the only way we could get them to come on long walks. And now, with the arrival of grandchildren, I find myself recalled to this task. So it was that a couple of years ago, on holiday on Deeside in Scotland and on a beautiful walk near Balmoral Castle, I found myself inventing a story for our then two year old grandson that reflected our surroundings.



That story resurfaced this year when I was pondering this year's Christmas offering. Previously I've done something based on the nativity, but this year I thought I would try to connect with the celebration of the Queen's reign which had rendered 2022 a 'Jubilee' year. I had been struck by the use (or misuse) of this term. In the Bible Jubilee denoted a subversive practice that was associated with radical redistribution of wealth, relief for those caught in financial hardship, and a profound challenge to imperial power (see Leviticus 25:1

-17). Jesus adopted it as the theme of his ministry (Luke 4:14-19). The irony was that this year, with countless people facing severe financial hardship, this term was being pressed into a celebration of the residue of faded imperial power, with no recognition of its original – and very relevant - connotations. It struck me that with a very little tweaking the story told to my grandson in the surroundings of Balmoral Castle could be nicely adapted as this year's story, giving a rather different perspective.

I was then faced with the choice as to this year's charity. A UNICEF appeal for children and families affected by the war in Ukraine seemed to fit well with the

story, and so we went for that (War in Ukraine: support for children and families – see [www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk)).

Tim and Judy Rowland happen to be on our Christmas card list and so they received the email and the link to the book, and Tim kindly asked me to write something for this feature on Ukraine in Place Matters.



If you would like to buy a copy of Lance's book, in support of the Ukraine Appeal, then email him on [pastor.l.stone@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.l.stone@gmail.com).

£10 for the book, plus £2 for postage. All £10 will go the Ukraine Appeal.

## DAAPHNE SHERCLIFFE, 26 APRIL 1929 – 29 OCTOBER 2022

Daphne had a long association with Emmanuel URC, originally via Homerton College and CongSoc. It was where she met her first husband, Arthur, and many years later, her second husband, Bob King. It was at Emmanuel that she worshipped, where her faith was nurtured, and where she developed a spirit of independence and a readiness to serve. Daphne's faith wasn't passive, and it led her at different times to become involved in the community, including working with the Girl Guides and as a Samaritan: she offered hospitality and hosted home groups. She believed faith must shape the way we live, and that it can actually be nourished and encouraged by being put into action.



Music was an important part of Daphne's life. She loved singing, and it was a great sorrow to her when in recent years she could no longer do so. She sang soprano in the church and other choirs, and played - and taught – the piano. Her standards and expectations were high. One church musician recalls playing something, as he acknowledges, badly, and Daphne complimenting him "as she



thought – or pretended to think! – that I was doing so deliberately, to entertain.” One feature in her sitting room was her pianola, which provided endless entertainment for younger members of her family - and no doubt for her pupils too!

Conversation with Daphne often included some probing question, and she might well continue probing the answers. It’s why she was keen on house groups – frequently “saying the unexpected with a twinkle in the eye”, as someone put it to Nigel. She was an elder and, somewhat reluctantly, Church Secretary from 1986 to 1994, telling church members when they elected her that she was afraid it might be a great mistake. People continue to speak of her both affectionately and appreciatively, with strong and abiding friendships more than apparent.

Daphne faced a real challenge as Emmanuel and St Columba’s discussed uniting. There was an undeniable obstacle for her, both in losing a beloved building and in tolerating the churches’ perceived difference of ethos. In her late eighties, she could have refused to join in. And she was not backwards in coming forwards in articulating her concerns and reluctance, as Nigel remembers in their first conversation. But conversation was the key. They talked candidly. And at considerable personal inconvenience, a Sunday or two later Daphne was there, in church.

I met Daphne more than forty years ago when we moved to Cambridge, but really got to know her about ten years ago when I became her elder. She always made me feel welcome, and it was a pleasure spending time with her.

Conversation was never dull, and we shared lots of laughs. It was clear how much she loved her garden, and until shortly before she finally moved into the Cambridgeshire Care Home last September she enjoyed sitting out there. Even when she was unable to get outside, she would sit by the window and watch the plants in her garden and beyond, the changing sky and seasons. She was fond of a silver birch in a neighbouring garden, impressively tall and slender, and there was a similar one outside her window in the care home. One carer told me that a week before she died he’d wheeled her out onto a balcony overlooking the garden, and from being unresponsive she had become animated and focused ...

So, Daphne loved her garden, cooking, music and family - from her sister, children and step-children down to great grandchildren; she saw many of them in her last few weeks, knew and loved them. The last time I visited, two days before she died, she was in bed - not alert, but her son, Hugh, had arranged for there to be music, mostly piano, playing on a loop in her room, so that her last sense might be of something that she loved.

*Judy Rowland, with thanks to Nigel Uden*

# BYRD SONGS CONCERT

to be given by *Cambridge Voices*

from 4 - 5pm, Sunday February 12<sup>th</sup> in Downing Place URC

(Free admission)



This year, 2023, marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of one of the greatest of England's composers; William Byrd (c. 1542- 1623). Accordingly, *Cambridge Voices* will be devoting their performances throughout the year to the presentation of William Byrd's sacred choral music in its correct liturgical context, just as the composer would have first heard it. Interestingly, nearly all of Byrd's most dramatic and virtuosic choral pieces are settings of Latin texts, which nowadays can create a barrier between the audience and their direct involvement in the vivid, pictorial imagery that Byrd's choral masterpieces try to portray. *Cambridge Voices'* Founder & Director, Ian de Massini, has been spending the past six months writing new, English texts to these brilliant, Latin choral works, always ensuring that the precise linguistic rhythms of the original Latin are mirrored exactly by his new vernacular lyrics. *Cambridge Voices* will give the world premiere of many of these 'Englished' works as part their concert in Downing Place United Reformed Church, Cambridge, on Sunday afternoon (4 - 5pm), February 12<sup>th</sup>. Admission will be free, followed by a voluntary retiring collection in aid of choir funds for the choir's forthcoming concert tour of France and the UK.

In between the works of William Byrd, the choir hope to present a menagerie of songs to do with birds, including composers' evocations of the Bluebird (Stanford), the Dove (Messiaen), the Robin (Cornyshe), the Silver Swan (Gibbons), the Falcon (Britten), the Turtle Dove (Vaughan Williams), three Birds of Paradise (Ravel), and a Nightingale (sang) in Berkeley Square!



This will be a very child-friendly concert, lasting a maximum of 60 minutes: musical entertainment for all the family!



*Cambridge Voices performing at Great Paxton Church in October 2022*



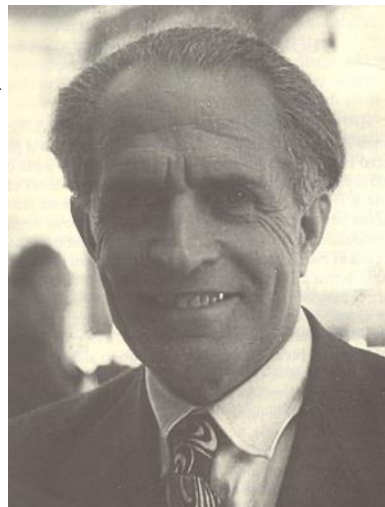
## ANSELMO AMMENTI: MY REMARKABLE GRANDFATHER

Editor: this article is the first part (of two) of an account of the life of a notable Italian Methodist Minister. I am grateful to Pippa Jones, and her two brothers, for sharing it with us.

*Pippa Jones writes:*

*My mother's father, Anselmo Ammenti, was a Methodist minister in Italy during the years leading up to, during and following World War II. He is remembered especially for his opposition to the treatment of minorities under Fascism and for the practical assistance he gave to Jewish people and other victims of the regime during the German occupation of Rome. This account of his life – compiled with my brothers Stephen and Gordon – is based mainly on a short biography written by my mother, augmented with material from a book on leading figures of Methodism in Italy [see Note 1]*

Anselmo Ammenti was born near Terni, in Italy, on 22 May 1887, the son of Angelo Ammenti and Adele Viale: Adele's father was French.



Angelo had a fireworks business, and one evening during a show there was a tragic accident. Angelo's brother was badly burned and blinded, and the young Anselmo lost his left hand. It is not clear whether Angelo died as a result of the accident, or whether he ran away to avoid prison. In any event, Anselmo's mother Adele was left alone to bring up a family of five children. She baked and sold bread, while the two older children, Elvira and Anselmo, went out to work.

Anselmo was very fond of music and played the cornet in the village band. He was also an independent thinker, and rejected the Catholic faith because he could not accept that his sins could be absolved by another man. He would walk 13 km to Terni to discuss moral questions with a philosopher.

This worried his mother, and when Anselmo was 20, she sent him to her sister in Rome, hoping that there, near the Vatican, he might be coaxed back to the fold. One Sunday evening, passing the Wesleyan Methodist Church (established forty years earlier in Italy), he was attracted by the sound of singing, and he went in. He liked the service and later became a church member. Eventually he enrolled in the Theological College in Florence and was ordained as a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

When the Swiss government set out to look for someone to minister to Italian workmen building a tunnel between Vallorbe and France, who became drunk and disorderly every Friday night, Anselmo volunteered for the job. His advertisement asking for an exchange of French-Italian lessons was answered by my grandmother, Rose Martin from Ballaigues, with whom Anselmo soon fell in love. By this time World War I had started, but because of his disability, Anselmo did not have to join the army; instead he looked after Italian prisoners of war. He was at this time the minister of the Italian Protestant church in Vevey, in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

The couple were married in 1916 and within three years four children were born: Lidia in 1917, my mother Cecilia in 1919, and twins Stefano and Fabiola, in 1920. Vevey was an easy church to look after and in 1921 Anselmo decided to return to Italy to work where he was needed more. He was sent to Sestri Ponente, near Genova. At the time the Protestant community had no proper place to meet, services being held in the minister's flat, and for a time also in a warehouse. Later a flat was found for the purpose, but neighbours made their opposition to the holding of services very clear.

Having heard that a large building was about to be erected, Anselmo went to the developer to obtain the purchase of the entire ground floor, to be divided into a chapel, social rooms and services. He gave a deposit with money he had collected by giving lectures in Switzerland on Italy, ancient Rome and Venice.

When the local priest heard of this, he offered the developer twice the price of the ground floor destined for the church to prevent the Methodists from



*This photograph from about 1921 shows Anselmo with camera, with my grandmother Rose, my aunt Lidia (aged 4, standing) and my mother Cecilia (aged 2, seated). As in nearly all photographs of Anselmo, the left forearm, with no hand, is not shown.*



having a proper place to meet. The developer was reluctant to go back on his agreement with Anselmo and told him that if he paid the balance due by a certain date, the contract was his. Worried that he would be unable to raise the money in time, Anselmo went to Sampierdarena to ask for a loan from an adherent of the Waldensian Church [Note 2], who had a butcher's business there. Absent-mindedly, he got off the coach too soon. He ran into a lady member of his church, who asked what had brought him to Conigliano.

"Am I not at Sampierdarena?" replied Anselmo.

"No, why are you so troubled?"

So Anselmo told her all about the deal and the lady asked how much was needed. When he replied "L120,000", she said "But, Pastor, I will lend that to you!" And so the contract was signed [Note 3].



*The Sunday School at Sestri Ponente in about 1925. My grandmother Rose is third from right in the back row, my mother in the centre of the photograph with what looks like a bow on her head, and my aunt Lidia cross-legged in the front row.*

The Sestri Ponente congregation soon swelled. The members were very enthusiastic, and several families were pillars of the church for many years. The "Tabita" sewing circle worked hard for the bazaar held every year; the young people prepared plays and looked after the Sunday school. When there was a holiday, practically every member joined in a walk to the country where games were organised and a picnic held. On the way there was singing. For several years the young people formed a procession through the town's streets, singing hymns and collecting money for the local hospital which at the time had no money to buy sheets; money was thrown from the pavements and from the windows. Later the church organised a "*Cura Marina*" (seaside cure) to allow the children of workers to enjoy the benefits of the seaside, being looked after by the young

people of the church, the minister and his wife [Note 4].

Anselmo's hobby was to make slides on Italian art for his lectures in Switzerland, which were given to raise funds for the Sestri church and the work of the Italian Methodist Episcopal Church. He had a small windowless room (his "dark room") specially fitted with a huge camera on a stand, and one to show the slides. In time he prepared slides of paintings which illustrated Dante's "Divine Comedy".

The Methodist Episcopal Church had been founded as a mission by the American Church in the second half of the 19th century. There were similar churches in other European cities and a bishop from the USA visited them regularly. In Italy there was a superintendent—at the time Carlo Maria Ferreri, whose son later married my mother's younger sister Fabiola—and a yearly synod was held in different cities. A rule of those churches was to transfer ministers every six years. When the time came for Pastor Ammenti to be transferred, he was sent to Venice.

In Venice there was a strong Waldensian congregation with a church near Ponte Cavagnis. The Methodist church was a chapel just behind St Mark's Square. The congregation was not very large, but there was a Methodist boarding school at Cannareggio, and the staff and pupils came to the services. Soon the new minister attracted sympathisers, some of whom joined the church, while others continued to attend activities without becoming members.

It seems that many young Venetians felt that the Catholic Church failed to satisfy their spiritual needs and found an answer in Pastor Ammenti's preaching. Anselmo was very keen to use the vacant flat above the chapel as a place for young people to meet during the week. The church elders' committee agreed and the church treasurer made plans for a hall, miniature theatre and small kitchen; the expenses were to be covered partly by local resources and partly by Anselmo's lectures in Switzerland on the history of the Reformation in Italy. The project was successfully completed in the autumn of 1930. A piano was bought and 50 chairs. Well-attended Wednesday lectures were held on various subjects, sometimes followed by discussions, and occasional concerts and plays. The Sunday evening service addressed moral and social questions and attracted a good congregation. Soon a group of amateur actors started performing morality plays, with great success.

During the summer, the minister's beach hut was open to church members. Often towards late afternoon a group of various young people, tired of playing games, would gather around the minister's wife, who told them stories from the Gospels. A Jesuit priest, concerned about the growing Protestant influence,

decided to hold a debate in a Venice church between himself and a pseudo-Protestant with the aim of discrediting Protestants. Naturally, many young men from the Methodist Church decided to attend. As could be expected, many of the answers given to the Jesuit priest's questions were false and the young Protestants began to get agitated. But when the priest suggested that Pastor Ammenti's wife used her charms to corrupt the young people, they could no longer restrain themselves and jumped up to protest. A scuffle followed, the young Protestants were pushed out, and the debate was ended. The next day the local paper, *Il Gazzettino di Venezia*, gave a distorted report of the event, but on the following day, another article was published in which the event was related as seen by the young Protestants.

Anselmo's ministry in Venice had begun in 1927. The Americans were talking of future space flights, and according to newspaper reports, some travel agencies were already taking bookings for trips to the moon! But reality intervened in the form of the Wall Street crash. The crisis quickly spread from the USA to the rest of the world, and soon the American Methodist Church had to cut its support of the European churches. The Italian Methodist administration was forced to sell its boarding colleges for boys and girls in Rome and in Venice, with the proceeds being used to support the larger churches. Those with small congregations closed and were put under the supervision of the nearest minister, while the larger churches were asked to increase their contributions. Several ministers left, feeling unable to accept the reduced stipend. Anselmo held a family council to decide on the future: everyone insisted that his work must continue and that sacrifices would be made. When the flat below, which had been rented, became vacant, Anselmo's wife (now known as Rosa rather than Rose) decided to use it as what we would today call a Bed & Breakfast. My mother and her siblings all helped to serve the paying guests, many of them tourists from Switzerland; often Pastor Ammenti was their guide and was given gifts and contributions for his church.

An insight into my grandfather's character is given by the following family story. On one occasion Anselmo was given an expensive new overcoat, perhaps by one of the Swiss paying guests. Some time later my grandmother asked why he was no longer wearing his fine coat. Anselmo's answer was a shrug. The truth was that he had given the article to someone whose need was greater than his.

## Notes

1 *Guardare al passato, pensare al futuro*, Valdo Benecchi. Claudiana, Turin. 2011. The chapter on Anselmo Ammenti is entitled "L'Uomo dell'Accoglienza", which could be translated as "The Welcoming Man".

2 The Waldensian Evangelical Church, which later (1975) merged with the



Methodist Evangelical Church. See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensians). During Anselmo Ammenti's ministry, the Waldensian and Methodist churches were close, although as will be seen, during the Fascist regime tensions arose in Venice surrounding the "Jewish question".

3 The church founded by Anselmo is still in use and is the subject of a short video published on YouTube in November 2022, narrated by the Waldensian minister of Genova, William Jourdan: <https://youtu.be/IWLeDNkKxas>

4 The *Cura marina* is also discussed by Pastor Jourdan in the above-mentioned video, with photographs.

*Editor: The remainder of this account will appear in a subsequent issue of Place Matters. It begins with fascist dictator Benito Mussolini's persecution of Protestants and Jews in Italy, and Anselmo's response.*

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

On the first Sunday in Advent we saw the first candle lit. We were getting ready to celebrate God sending Jesus to show us how to live. Jesus (Matthew 24 36-44) told his disciples to 'be ready' for his way being lived in the world. We practised the BSL sign for 'ready'. We practised our Christmas song to be ready to share it at the Carol Service. Then we began to make paper chains ready to be festive in the Hub. Some of us made chains longer than ourselves. Then they all joined to make a huge chain. We were excited - and nearly ready!



On the 2nd Sunday of Advent, with the children, we considered John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. The children dressed up in a rough smock with leather belt, found some honey hiding under a chair (although no locusts), a blue fabric 'river' and a scroll proclaiming the good news that Jesus was coming. There was also some serious practice of a song the children are preparing for later in the season and a brief craft activity.



On 11 December we had a very busy session with the younger children largely preparing for the all age Carol Service the following Sunday. Nine children were present and we had a lively time with Ailsa practising our carol and putting together some actions to accompany the singing. Within the confines of our Junior Church room the children 'raised the roof'

though became rather more subdued by the following week!

The following weeks were All Age services. On the first one, the Carol Service, we did sing and act 'here we come to Bethlehem' in front of the congregation. It was a bit scary to stand at the front and see so many people watching us, but we were also very proud that we could participate in the service. We also did help Nigel with putting all the elements and people of the Christmas story on the table, and coloured some Christmas scenes closely together on the floor.

On Christmas Day, all ages celebrated together again, and we loved welcoming visiting grandchildren. Some of us unwrapped and set up nativity figures while we listened. On 1<sup>st</sup> January there were little calendars for all of us. We can remember that God is with us every month.

On 8 January we welcomed the children back from the Christmas break and they excitedly shared their Christmas news with us. As a gathering activity, each child took a Christmas tree decoration from a bag. The items included an angel, a star, a sheep, a nativity scene and a church and we talked about how each item related to Jesus or the Christmas story. We thought about the gifts that Jesus received and were reminded that Simone, in his sharing together talk, had spoken of the greatest gift at Christmas being God's gift of his son Jesus to the world. Our Bible passage for the session was about the baptism of Jesus in preparation for starting his ministry to the people. As a craft activity we used white paper hand cut outs to make a dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit as a helper both to Jesus and ourselves in today's world. We concluded by sharing the chocolates Simone had given us in his Epiphany 'sock'!

## **A renewed initiative for our Youth Group: interview church members**

For our Youth Church sessions, we are planning to ask individual members of our congregation to join us once a month to talk about some aspects of their life, church activities, charities supported, life's high points and low points and how these all shaped their life and faith. Our youth group can then ask questions about the church member's experiences of church, faith and God, and any other questions they may like to ask. This approach has been used successfully in the past and was enjoyed by both the youth group and those members of our congregation who participated.

# MONTHLY CAUSE FOR FEBRUARY

## CHRISTIAN BLIND MISSION



### **Saving sight with Christian Blind Mission**

**Christian Blind Mission works in the world's poorest places to prevent blindness, improve health and transform the lives of people with disabilities.**

**We believe that no child should face a lifetime of blindness just because their family is poor.**

Allen's story

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**"I want to be able to see like others, I will go back to school to perform better than others. I want to become a nurse to treat the sick."** Nine year old Allen from Uganda, East Africa, was sent home from school by teachers as she couldn't read the blackboard. She lived needlessly blind with cataracts until she was nine years old as her mother, who works in a stone quarry, could not afford treatment to restore her sight. Thanks to our supporters, Christian Blind Mission funded surgery that removed her cataracts AND has transformed her life.

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Every year, up to half a million children, like Allen, living in the world's poorest places become blind. But most childhood blindness can be avoided by treating diseases early and by correcting conditions like cataracts.

In low-income countries, most children with disabilities do not go to school. With large classes, few specialist resources and little training for teachers in how to include children with visual impairment, children who can't see well are often ignored in the classroom – or even turned away by schools who can't provide the support they need.

For many families living in poverty, treatment for their child – even a pair of

glasses – is out of reach. Imagine trying to read the blackboard when the words are blurry, or being teased by the other children because you can't see the ball to play with.

Eye conditions such as cataracts are treatable. With your help, we can prevent blindness and restore sight for children like Allen, living in the world's poorest places, by improving access to sight-saving eye treatments, such as cataract surgery.

Every £95 we raise could pay for cataract surgery under general anaesthetic on one eye for a child. It can take as little as 45 minutes and transform their entire future.

**We are so very grateful for the support of Downing Place URC this February. Thank you for partnering with us to reach more children living with cataracts quickly, to prevent a lifetime of blindness. Together, we can build a world where nobody is needlessly blind.**

Three easy ways for you to support to CBM:

Call: 0800 567 7000

Online at: [www.cbmun.org.uk/donate](http://www.cbmun.org.uk/donate)

By cheque: Please make a cheque payable to CBM and address your donation to CBM UK, Munro House, 20 Mercers Row, Cambridge CB5 8HY



## RECENT DONATIONS



Our Special Cause for October, Commitment for Life, raised £10,800.15 this year for our chosen project, Bangladesh (corrected from the total stated in the Weekly Notices). This included £589.51 from our Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts and £640.75 at retiring collections on 16 and 23 October. We are awaiting official notification from Church House.



Our November Special Cause, Hope for Justice, raised £1510, including £318.64 from the Special Collection on Sunday 27 November and £773.41 from our Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts. Liam Durkan of Hope for Justice has written to us:

I hope you don't mind me emailing, but I just wanted to personally reach out and say a massive thank you for your recent donation of £1510

This truly is a life changing amount of money because with your support alone this year we could prevent the risk of 151 survivors being re-exploited.

Please know that this gift will change the lives of numerous people impacted by slavery- **THANK YOU!**

**I wanted to make you aware of the Christmas campaign we're running this year - #GiveThemHope**, focuses on reuniting people and bringing them home.

For our Christmas campaign this year we are matching all donations\* thanks to inspirational donors who have pledged £310,000.00 for our match funding pot. This means that your donation of £1510 will actually be worth £3020. We are so truly grateful that by working together we will be able to reunite more families and give them the hope that they deserve.

Once again, thank you so much for your incredibly kind support. I truly believe that we will be the generation to see an end to modern day slavery.



Our December Special Cause, Camfed, raised £1311, including £311.25 from the Special Collection on 18 December and £574.09 from our Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts. Ruby Dama of Camfed writes:

Dear Ann, and friends at Downing Place United Reformed Church

Thank you so much for investing in the next generation of game changers. It was so wonderful to read that CAMFED were your monthly special cause for December, well done on your fabulous fundraiser!

Girls educated with CAMFED's support are able to join the alumni network, who on average fund 3 more girls to go to school. CAMFED Association members like Aida are able to identify the most vulnerable girls, and step in to help them create the future they imagine: for themselves, for their communities, and for Africa.

**“Because of the CAMFED Association, I know we’re going to succeed.”**

You belong to a global community that’s making the world a better place through the education and leadership of young women in sub-Saharan Africa. Thank you for supporting the next generation of game changers.



Our Special Collection for Christian Aid on Christmas Day raised £420.10 for Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal.

An additional £143 was raised at our Epiphany Carol Service on Sunday 8 January, making a grand total of £563.10. Christian Aid writes:

Hi Ann,

Thank you for your special gift of £563.10 this Christmas.

Your gift of love could help mums like Fyness in Malawi to lift their families out of hunger. It could give maize seeds, fuel efficient-stoves and help families learn to farm in a way that help their crops survive times of drought.

‘I used to lack food, but now, I am able to feed my family. The produce gives me food security. Thank you very much.’ - Fyness

So thank you for sharing the greatest Christmas tradition of all – love.



## WHAT IS 'FAIRBITE'?



Thanks to the generosity of those who came and the organising skills of those who made it happen, £1,000 was raised from the DPURC Christmas Fair towards Cambridge City Foodbank's 'Fairbite Club'. But what is 'Fairbite'?

It is a form of 'social supermarket', where people who are struggling financially can be referred, enabling them to come and buy food to feed their families for just £2 per week. As Rowan Williams, past Archbishop of Canterbury and the Foodbank's Patron has said, **"it enables those who are anxious about feeding their families to access food in a way that gives them some choice and dignity; and it addresses the scandal of throwing away good food that could be put to good use."** At the moment we have two Fairbite shops, one run out of a shop in Arbury Court, Tuesdays to Thursdays and the other based in St George's Church, Chesterton on Tuesdays. In total we have about 150 members, some of whom have large families. **For more information go and look at our website at: <https://www.fairbite.org.uk>**

We have ambitions to substantially increase both the number of members we can accommodate and the number of shops we have across the City. These will not be instead of the existing distribution centres for our emergency three-day food parcels, but in addition. Very many people across our City are not just in need of a helping hand to get them through a short-term crisis, but are suffering longer term, chronic poverty. 'Fairbite' is a way of meeting this need.

However, we will not be able to realise our ambition unless we continue to receive generous financial gifts, such as the recent one from DPURC and unless people continue to donate food on a regular basis. A big thank you to those of you who do this already, by putting some groceries in the food collection bins each time you do your supermarket shopping. This remains the biggest source of supply for us. We also rely on an army of 180 volunteers across the activities of the Foodbank.

A quick look at our website will tell you what foodstuffs we are short of from time to time. For more information about the Foodbank in general go to: <https://cambridgecity.foodbank.org.uk>



Thank you for your support for this vital work.

*Stephen Thornton, Chair of Trustees, Cambridge City Foodbank*





## CHRISTIAN AID NEWS

### Carol singing

It seems a long time ago, but at the end of November, the day before Advent Sunday, Christian Aid supporters gathered in the Grand Arcade to raise funds by singing carols. Many thanks to all those who took part, and especially to the Downing Place people who generously gave their support.

We raised nearly £400, mostly in cash, but there were also some card donations via the GiveStar app. on a hand held terminal. We found ourselves placed right alongside the stall promoting guide dogs, complete with several live-ly dogs. We were taken aback at first, but it worked very well – people were attracted by the dogs and stayed to listen to the carols.



### Changemakers Conference

If you are interested in fundraising during Christian Aid week, which begins on May 14<sup>th</sup> this year, you might like to register for the “**Changemakers**” online day conference on **Saturday March 4<sup>th</sup>**. You can find details, and a button to register, if you go to the Christian Aid website ([www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)) and search for “Changemakers Conference 2023”.

### Prayer Vigil cancelled

Unfortunately the **Climate Justice Prayer Vigil** which was due to take place on the afternoon of Saturday January 28<sup>th</sup> at Great St. Mary’s, has been cancelled. It is hoped to hold it later in the year.

If you have any questions about Christian Aid, please get in touch with Sheila Porrer.

# STAMP DONATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LEPROSY MISSION: THE END OF AN ERA

For some time now, Ted Dennison has forwarded used stamps donated to the box near the church office to the Leprosy Mission. But in December 2022 we received the following message.

We want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has collected stamps to raise funds for people affected by leprosy. We know that so many of you have spent precious time collecting, cutting and trimming with great care. Over the years you have raised thousands of pounds and transformed lives across Africa and Asia – all with stamps! It's been a joy to receive bags and parcels at the office, all packed and posted with love.

Good stewardship of funds and resources is at the forefront of everything we do, so that we can send as much money as possible to help those with leprosy. In the last couple of years, the value of stamps has greatly reduced. Now that bar-coded stamps have been introduced, stamp value has been further decreased. Sadly, we have now reached the point where used stamps no longer raise the money they did in years gone by.

It is with regret that we have made the tough decision to stop taking donations of stamps and collectables

We'll continue to accept your collections until March 31 2023.

We know that this will be disappointing news for many and so we want to say again, with a grateful heart, how thankful we are for all that people collecting used stamps faithfully for many years have done for people affected by leprosy. We hope you understand that, this decision was not taken lightly and that it was taken for the right reasons

Ted Dennison adds:

**"I am grateful to all friends who have given stamps over the past years. Please do not send me any more after the end of February 2023".**



image by <a href="http://www.freemageslive.co.uk/free\_stock\_image/franked-letters-jpg" target="\_blank">freemageslive.co.uk - gratuit</a>

## THE CHERRY HINTON ROAD TUESDAY FELLOWSHIP

The Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship has now been meeting regularly in St Athanasios Hall at the Greek Orthodox Church in Cherry Hinton Road, as the church wanted us to move from the Chapel so that it could be used exclusively as a school room.



However we needed to repair the piano in the hall before we could move permanently. Fortunately we had sufficient funds to carry out the repair and place the piano on castors so that it could be moved easily. During the last three months we have been able to meet regularly and to welcome new members. Sadly, some members have not been able to attend because of illness, including Covid and mobility issues. However we have been very happy to welcome new members who have made their own contribution to the Fellowship. Thus we now have Chris and Elin who are Capriol dancers and former friends of Liz Russell and Bernadette Kelly, who gave us such an inspiring talk on hosting a Ukrainian refugee. We are also very fortunate to have Carole Scullion, the secretary and treasurer of Fulbourn URC join us, and she has regularly played the piano for us.

In September we had a bring and buy sale, raising £30 for our funds. We had another talk by Wendy Roe on her experiences at Scout Camp, and Nigel Uden took a harvest Festival Service. We raised another £30 for the Trussell Trust and provided non-perishable food for the food bank. The following week some of us gave our Christian testimonies, and it was inspiring to hear how people had experienced the love of God in difficult circumstances. We enjoyed for the first time a painting session which was led by Anne Disney and myself. In November we also enjoyed having Nigel give us a talk at one of our meetings. We managed to fill three boxes for the Shoe Box Appeal so that presents could be given to older people and families in countries in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine. We also had a quiz, led by Robin Simpkins, and a talk by Liz Caswell. In December we donated £100 to the Bible Society.

Some former members of Cherry Hinton Road URC joined us for our Christmas Dinner at the Robin Hood pub. We were delighted to have a beautiful carol service with communion which was also led by Nigel Uden. Our final pre-Christmas meeting was a Christmas tea party held at Pamela's house. We appreciate her hospitality very much, both in the summer months as well as in December.

We continue to be very happy to welcome anyone who would like to join us for worship, fellowship and fun.

*Penny Milsom*

# DOWNING PLACE URC HOUSE GROUPS, LENT 2023: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

A series looking at Jesus' Parables, led by John Proctor.



Image courtesy of [servicioskoinonia.org/cerezo](http://servicioskoinonia.org/cerezo)

The series will begin with a plenary session in the church: 'Stories of life - *Approaching the Parables*'. This session will be recorded, so that any who cannot attend in person may request a link for the recording, and watch in their own time.

The three following weeks will include study and discussion on selected parables.

The series will conclude with a final parable and further questions to ponder in the light of the studies.

Days and times:

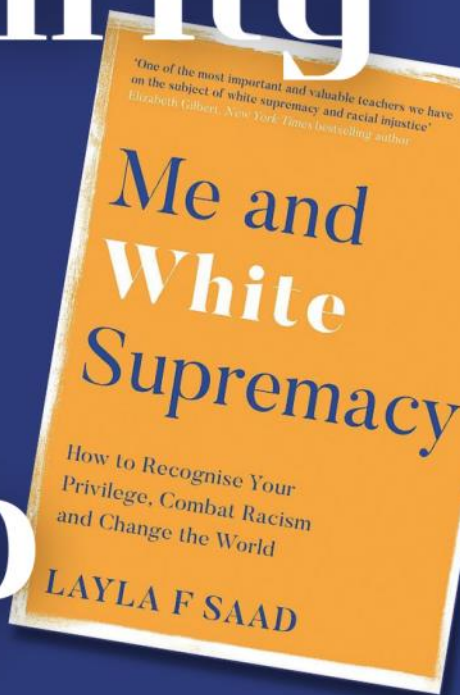
Week 1 Monday 20 February at 2.30pm in the church

Weeks 2-5 Mondays 27 February to 27 March at 2.30 at the church,  
and Tuesdays 28 February to 28 March at 7.30pm, on Zoom.

These dates allow for six meetings, and we are planning five. So one meeting in March will be missed, at a date to be agreed in good time.

Weekly material will be available, electronically or on paper from the church office.

# Solidarity Book Group



Starting at 4pm on the 29th of January  
in the Downing Place Church Hub.



SOLIDARITY HUB

The next meetings of the  
Solidarity Book Group will be  
on

Sunday 12 February &

Sunday 12 March

both at 4pm.

All welcome!

## 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!

1 February	Yoko Sakakura (piano)
8 February	Alex Clare-Young (clarsach)
15 February	Cambridge University Brass Ensemble
22 February	Stephen Armstrong & Friends

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

## *Interfaith Gathering*

*~ All are welcome ~*

- *Prayers & readings from different faiths*
- *Presentations from children and youth*
- *Brief talks from representatives of each faith*
- *Refreshments and socialising*

*Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> February  
2pm - 4pm  
Signal Box Community Centre  
82 Glenalmond Avenue  
Cambridge CB2 8DB*





# LGBTQ+

## SOLIDARITY QUILT

Paint, sew, knit, crochet, draw, collage, print, stamp or find a 10" square piece of fabric with a design that says 'LGBTQ+ Solidarity' to you and drop it off to Downing Place Church in February 2023.

You are also warmly invited to the launch of the quilt on Saturday the 11th of February at 2pm at Downing Place Church.

For more info, visit [tinyurl.com/qquilt](https://tinyurl.com/qquilt) or contact Alex at [alex@downingplaceurc.org](mailto:alex@downingplaceurc.org)



# Cost of Living Support Pop Up

Alongside the regular Hub Hospitality, with free hot drinks and refreshments!



All Welcome! Everyone that attends will get FREE entry into a prize draw to win a mini cooker!

**Downing Place United Reformed Church CB2 3EL**  
**Wednesday 15th February**  
**1 - 3pm**

## What support will be available?

- Bringing down your household bills
- Improving your home's energy efficiency
- Housing, health and financial advice
- Avoiding energy and cost of living related scams
- Checking you're receiving all the benefits, discounts and grants you're entitled to
- Saving money on pet care

**Citizens Advice Cambridge \* Woodgreen \* Cambridge Water**  
**Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency**  
**Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Scams**  
**Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council Officers**



Cambridgeshire  
County Council



Think  
Communities

MORE INFORMATION

[www.cambridge.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support-popups](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support-popups)







# ASH WEDNESDAY

February 22nd, 7.30pm

## Communion service & Imposition of Ashes

Downing Place United Reformed Church, Cambridge.

The service will be led by **Jane Leach**,  
with Renaissance choral music  
by **Byrd, Tomkins, and Weelkes**  
provided by **Cambridge Voices**.



# Come & Sing (or listen) for Ukraine!

FAURÉ'S REQUIEM & SILVESTROV'S PRAYER FOR UKRAINE  
PETER BRITTON, CONDUCTOR, & IAN DE MASSINI, ORGANIST



ON SUNDAY 26TH FEBRUARY  
AT DOWNING PLACE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE

1pm: Distribution of music

1:30pm: Rehearsal

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

4:00pm: performance



Voluntary participation fee of £10

All proceeds to  
**CAU**



## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2023 A WOMEN LED, GLOBAL, ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

### **“I HAVE HEARD ABOUT YOUR FAITH”**

Our sisters in Taiwan are sending us blessings with the service they have prepared for World Day of Prayer 2023. Taiwan is an island rich in natural resources and culturally diverse. The women of Taiwan share the issues faced geographically, politically and socially and also their hopes for the future. We join with them as we give thanks for the beautiful island and people of Taiwan and encourage one another in our faith just as Apostle Paul did in his letters.

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns and prayers. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and local groups make their plans.

Finally, **at Downing Place, Cambridge on Friday March 3 2023 at 10.30am** all are welcome to gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Taiwan.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 120 countries. It begins in Samoa, prayer in many languages travels throughout the world --- through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later.

Downing Place is hosting this service this year. For this to be warm and welcoming it will be good to have a number of people to welcome and help with a cup of coffee after the service.

**Please be in touch with Deborah McVey if you would like to help** or take part in the liturgy which the women in Taiwan have created. Look on the WDP website [www.wwdp.org.uk](http://www.wwdp.org.uk) to see some of the lovely artwork and background to the service as it would be good to make a creative focus for the service. All ideas welcome.

## DIARY

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Wed	01-Feb-23	LGBT History Month Starts		
Wed	01-Feb-23	Dementia Compass Exercise Group	11:00am	Gibson Hall & Emmanuel Rm
Wed	01-Feb-23	Lunchtime Concert - Yoko Sakakura (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Thu	02-Feb-23	Midweek Worship	11:00am	Church
Thu	02-Feb-23	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sat	04-Feb-23	Safeguarding Training for Elders	All day	Church
Sat	04-Feb-23	Nightlite	10:00pm - 4:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	05-Feb-23	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	05-Feb-23	Sunday Worship with Communion led by Rt Revd Cherry Vann, Bishop of Monmouth	11:00am	Church
Sun	05-Feb-23	Open Table Social Gathering	7:00pm	The Hub
Mon	06-Feb-23	Officers Meeting	4:00pm	Downing Place URC
Tue	07-Feb-23	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St. Athanasios Church
Wed	08-Feb-23	Dementia Compass Exercise Group	11:00am	Gibson Hall & Emmanuel Rm
Wed	08-Feb-23	Lunchtime Concert - Alex Clare-Young (clarsach)	1:00pm	Church
Thu	09-Feb-23	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Dr Janet Tollington	11:00am	Church
Thu	09-Feb-23	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sat	11-Feb-23	Drop In Action: LGBTQ+ History Month & Launch of Quilt (see p.39)	2:00pm	Church and Emmanuel Room
Sat	11-Feb-23	Nightlite	10:00pm - 4:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	12-Feb-23	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	12-Feb-23	Sunday Worship led by Janet Sutton	11:00am	Church
Sun	12-Feb-23	Solidarity Book Group: <i>Me &amp; White Supremacy</i> by Layla F. Saad (see p.37)	4:00pm	The Hub
Mon	13-Feb-23	DEADLINE for signing up for Gibson Lunch on Thursday		
Mon	13-Feb-23	Pioneer Minister Management Meeting	4:00pm	Rooms 1 & 2
Tue	14-Feb-23	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St. Athanasios Church
Wed	15 Feb-23	DEADLINE for submitting items for March's Place Matters		
Wed	15-Feb-23	Dementia Compass Exercise Group	11:00am	Gibson Hall & Emmanuel Rm
Wed	15_Feb-23	Cost of Living Pop-Up Event (see p.40)	1.00pm	Gibson Hall
Wed	15-Feb-23	Lunchtime Concert - Cambridge University Brass Ensemble	1:00pm	Church
Wed	15-Feb-23	Elders Meeting	7:30pm	Zoom
Thu	16-Feb-23	Gibson Lunch	12:30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	16-Feb-23	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	16-Feb-23	Midweek Worship led by the Revd Alex Clare-Young	6:00pm	St Columba's Chapel
Sat	18-Feb-23	Nightlite	10:00pm - 4:00am	Emmanuel Room

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	19-Feb-23	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	19-Feb-23	Sunday Worship led by Dr Augur Pearce	11:00am	Church
Sun	19-Feb-23	Open Table Communion Service	7:00pm	Church
Mon	20-Feb-23	Fairtrade Fortnight begins		
Tue	21-Feb-23	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St. Athanasios Church
Wed	22-Feb-23	Dementia Compass Exercise Group	11:00am	Gibson Hall & Emmanuel Rm
Wed	22-Feb-23	Lunchtime Concert - Stephen Armstrong and friends	1:00pm	Church
Wed	22-Feb-23	Ash Wednesday Service with Holy Communion led by the Revd Dr Jane Leach with Cambridge Voices (see p.41)	7:00pm	Church
Thu	23-Feb-23	Midweek Worship with Communion led by the Revd Alex Clare-Young	1:00pm	Church
Thu	23-Feb-23	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sat	25-Feb-23	Nightlite	10:00pm - 4:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	26-Feb-23	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	26-Feb-23	Sunday Worship led by the Revd Alex Clare-Young	11:00am	Church
Sun	26-Feb-23	Come and Sing for Ukraine (see p.41)	1:30pm	Church
Sun	26-Feb-23	Solidarity Scripture Meal (Lent)	7:00pm	Gibson Hall & Hub
Tue	28-Feb-23	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St. Athanasios Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Wed	01-Mar-23	Dementia Compass Exercise Group	11:00am	Gibson Hall & Emmanuel Rm
Wed	01-Mar-23	Lunchtime Concert - Ivan Hovorun (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Thu	02-Mar-23	Midweek Worship led by the Revd John Proctor	11:00am	Church
Thu	02-Mar-23	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	03-Mar-23	Women's World Day of Prayer (see p.42)	10:30am	Church
Sat	04-Mar-23	Nightlite	10:00pm - 4:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	05-Mar-23	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	05-Mar-23	Sunday Worship with Communion led by the Revd Dr David Cornick	11:00am	Church
Sun	05-Mar-23	Open Table Social Gathering	7:00pm	The Hub

## MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE

5 February	Liz Caswell Penny Flynn	Holy Trinity, Bottisham Bassingbourn
12 February	Liz Caswell Maureen Kendall John Proctor Janet Tollington	Fulbourn Castle Street Methodist (evening) High Cross URC, Tottenham Saffron Walden
19 February	Chris Baker Liz Caswell	Melbourn Stetchworth & Cheveley
26 February	Chris Baker Janet Bottoms Liz Caswell David Cornick John Proctor David Thompson Janet Tollington	Littleport Methodist Fulbourn Buntingford Bassingbourn Saffron Walden St Luke's, Cambridge Stansted

## LECTIONARY FOR FEBRUARY 2023

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.

### *5 February Epiphany 5*

Isaiah 58:1-9a, (9b-12)

Psalms 112:1-9, (10)

1 Corinthians 2:1-12, (13-16)

Matthew 5:13-20

### *12 February Epiphany 6*

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 or Sirach 15:15-20

Psalms 119:1-8

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Matthew 5:21-37

### *19 February Transfiguration*

Exodus 24:12-18

Psalms 2 or 99

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

### *26 February Lent 1*

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Psalms 32

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

### *5 March Lent 2*

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalms 121

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

John 3:1-17







*The first of our many bulbs in the Hub bloomed just before Christmas.*

*Photograph by Ian de Massini*

MAGAZINE EDITOR: Tim Rowland

ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

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

WEB EDITOR: Jess Uden

Please send all items to be included in the March edition to both Tim and Ann by the cut off date of **Wednesday 15 February**.

The March edition will be available from **Sunday 25 February**.