



DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE

PLACE MATTERS



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FROM THE MINISTER

Looking back, I am aware that Harvest Thanksgiving has been a special Sunday for me every Autumn throughout my life. Growing up in rural Surrey, it was inevitable, bringing to completion the annual sequence of fields-focussed events that rejoice in the sowing, growing and reaping that were so vital to the local economy. On that day, the church looked magnificent, and it even smelled different, with all the vegetables and flowers that were on display.

Over the years, the festival has evolved, and in some ways is rather different from in the past. Even what we sing has evolved. Whilst I don't suppose there's ever been a year when we didn't sing, *We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land*, nowadays we also delight in 'cauliflowers fluffy ... and broad beans ... sleepin' in a blankety bed',¹ and swing our hips to the Harvest Samba, too! No 21st century school harvest assembly is complete without that!

The familiarity, however, does not breed contempt for Harvest Thanksgiving any more than the yearly rehearsal doesn't desensitise me to the impact of Christmas, Passiontide and Easter, with their eternal themes of incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. Indeed, I would go as far as to say that today, celebrating Harvest has become more essential and intense than ever before in my lifetime. Of late, two themes have assumed an unprecedented profile.

First, the climate emergency has heightened our sense of this world as primary amongst God's gifts to us, for which an annual festival of thanksgiving is the least we can offer. But more than that, because there is no Planet B, Harvest Festival also serves to remind us that God not only gave the world, but also set us in it, not for us to dominate and exploit it but rather to steward and protect it. As Pope Francis passionately urges, "we must acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our action and our failure to act. We need to experience a conversion, a change of heart".² At its contemporary best, Harvest Festival is a vehicle for that transformation.

The second point that is increasingly pertinent to a modern Harvest Festival is recognising the need for pastoral care of farmers. There are many challenges facing today's farming community: the high age of active farmers, the impact of weather as climate change affects it, the cost of property rental, and of ever

¹ Elizabeth Florence Hardingham

² Pope Francis SJ 2015 *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home* London: Catholic Truth Society page 103, quoting Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference *A New Earth – the environmental challenge* (2012)

more sophisticated equipment, to mention but a few. *Farming Help* is a network of farming charities, devoted to supporting all who work in agriculture. The very fact that it needs to exist alerts us to how stressful the rural lifestyle is. On Harvest Festival, at least, we do well to stand in prayer with a sector of the working population upon whom we depend, whether we see them or not.

Harvest Festival, then, is no throw back to a romanticised image of Victorian Britain of which Thomas Hardy helps us read. It is utterly relevant to today. The churches, increasingly alert to this, have set Creationtide alongside Christmas, Holy Week and Easter as another valuable season of the liturgical year. The Church of England defines it like this:

This is the period of the annual church calendar, from 1st September to 4th October, dedicated to God as Creator and Sustainer of all life. Many churches choose to use this time of year to hold special services and events to give **thanks for God's gift of creation, and to renew their commitment to caring for our own planet home.**³

For the first time, in Autumn 2024 Downing Place Church is adopting Creationtide as an element of our services in September. I am struck that, in a **constantly evolving world and Church, this is something 'new' for us to embrace** even as, in various places, I conduct Harvest worship for the final time before retirement. Looking back should always be in service to looking ahead.

And finally, a few weeks ago, we marked the 350th anniversary of the birth of Isaac Watts. Noting that he was quite a polymath, we nevertheless focussed upon his hymns, and sang one that I feel is somewhat under used, *Nature with open volume stands*. It is about the ultimate power of the cross of Christ as the source of our salvation. That said, Watts is absolutely clear that as a source of revelation, the glories of creation come in as a close second to Calvary. He wrote:

Nature with open volume stands,
to spread her maker's praise abroad;
and every labour of his hands
shows something worthy of a God.

That is the reason for Creationtide, for Harvest Thanksgiving, and for a discipleship that sees commitment to the planet not as an optional extra, but as **central to God's redeeming work as are the cross and empty tomb.**

Looking back, let's look forward. *Nigel Uden*

³ Church of England website, available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/season-creation>; accessed 24th July 2024

DAVID WHITMORE – A PROFILE

I was born a Kentish lad rather than a Cantabrigian.

My two older sisters and I grew up in a small village not far from the Royal Naval Dockyards in Chatham. Jen is five years older than me, and Sue is three years older. My mother was a district nurse by profession, and my father an electronics engineer who also ‘tinkered’ with cars.

As a child, I was rather quiet and shy, and took life a bit too seriously, and was over-cautious. I had few friends, but the friends that I did have were extremely close and important to me. Although I wouldn’t have known what it meant at the time, looking back, I would definitely say that I was an introvert. Although I enjoyed football, I wasn’t otherwise very sporty as a child – something which I put down to glasses-wearing from an early age. Instead, my interests were mostly non-physical: Star Wars (original trilogy, obviously!), programming computers. It was at this point that I started to enjoy science-fiction and science-fantasy films and books, and also when I learned to play the piano.

From a young age, the Church of St. Philip and St. James (in Walderslade) was the centre of my family’s spiritual life. It’s where my sisters and I were baptised. And Dad was a regular on the audio mixing desk at church (which he built from scratch, with his best friend Keith).

Both of my sisters were enthusiastic participants in the youth ministry there. Sue, in particular, was part of the Greenbelt scene for a while. I, however, (being that bit younger) struggled to fit in with the junior church, and didn’t enjoy it very much.

After my second year at grammar school, Dad’s job necessitated that we uproot ourselves and move to Cambridge. I have to hand it to Mum and Dad – they timed it pretty well: Jen had just finished her A levels, and was applying to university; Sue was just about to start sixth form college. It wasn’t as disruptive as it might have been!

From the rolling chalk downs of Kent to the flatness of Cambridge. And from Pip and Jim’s to St. Andrew’s Street Baptist Church, Cambridge. Although I never really got very involved in the ‘youth’ scene at St. A’s, this was where I let myself be encouraged to join the ‘worship band’. We specialised in Songs of Fellowship. Although my piano-playing was rather rough-and-ready, I learned many valuable (but uncomfortable) life lessons, including: get comfortable in front of an audience; whatever you do, carry on (unless you’re in the wrong key!) This is also when I first met Hazel (my Beloved).

I hit my academic stride when I started at Hills Road Sixth Form College.

There, I made some of my strongest friendships, and learned to enjoy the academic life for the first time. This led me to follow in Sue's footsteps, and study at University. Warwick University to be precise – studying Computer Science.

CompSci was a standard three-year university course. It was a good match for my interest in programming, and (pragmatically) seemed like a safe basis for a future career. But more importantly, Warwick University was a lovely campus university, and I made some wonderful friends (many of whom I'm still in touch with).

After finishing university, it's been back to Cambridge, and programming jobs ever since. I've worked in some quite diverse areas of software: timetabling/scheduling systems, search engines, e-commerce, Internet of Things (IoT), and detection of financial fraud and money-laundering. And I've programmed in a few different languages too: LISP, JavaScript, Java, and Python. I'm currently line-managing a team of 4 at Featurespace (on the Science Park), writing software to “help make the World a safer place in which to transact [financially]”!

In the meantime: Jen got married, has a family now, and still lives in Cambridge. Sue also married, and lives near Bath. Dad died from cancer. Mum moved to York.

I returned to St. A's briefly. But soon found myself worshipping at Emmanuel URC, with Hazel and her boys. Hazel and I both joined in the worship group for a while, and later I followed in Dad's footsteps and joined the mixing desk rota! It was during this time that Hazel and I became ‘an item’.

Hazel and I have been together ever since – more than 20 years! We have lots in common: we both love hiking and reading; we both play the piano (though she plays better than me!); and we both enjoy folk music ‘gigs’. The three boys, Mark, Michael, and Peter are now



making their own way in life: Mark has married and has his own family; Michael also got married; and Peter's enjoying life in Manchester!

Then from Emmanuel to Downing Place URC. Hazel's an Elder. And you'll often find me on the AV desk – either recording and live-streaming the service, or mixing the sound!

I finally entered into membership at Downing Place URC on June 2nd after many years. I was very touched by the warm welcome that Junior Church gave me. Hazel and I have both been very happy at Emmanuel and Downing Place, and it felt like the right time to become an 'official' member. And, talking of making things 'official', Hazel and I are preparing for our wedding in September!

I want to conclude with some observations that might help you understand me better:

- Kindness, patience, generosity, and fairness are important to me.
- My sense of direction is awful. (I once managed to get lost for two hours driving around Leamington Spa)
- If you see me around and I don't acknowledge you - I apologise; this usually happens when my mind is elsewhere. (I've been known to accidentally 'blank' Hazel when I've cycled past her without noticing!)

Hope this gives you some idea of who I am, and where my roots lie. Please feel free to say 'hi' or give me a wave next time you see me!

David

GEORGE DEVINE: MY WORK IN JIROFF, THE GAMBIA

I have told the story of my travels in Africa before, in St Columba's; and now the Downing Place URC World Church and Public Issues (WC&PI) Group has asked me to revisit and update the story that I began to tell five years ago, in the September 2019 issue of *Place Matters*.

For many years I worked with the Ford Motor Company, in commercial vehicle sales. I enjoyed my job immensely, and – as you will see - it gave me the means to indulge my hobby, Scouting. I began Scouting at the age of eight in Edinburgh, and I have never really stopped. I took the occasional break as I moved around the country, but in most places I have joined the local Scouts.

Late in 1980 I moved to Hampshire, and this proved to mark a change in direction in my Scouting life. In 1983 I was invited to take part in a county community service expedition to Sri Lanka. I asked Ford if they would let me take time off, and much to my surprise they did. So began my relationship with international Scouting. In 1988 I was in Nepal working with New Zealand's High Commissioner Sir Edmund Hillary, as part of a national Scout Expedition. When we returned I was living back in Edinburgh, but I was asked if I would support Hampshire Scouts on a school building project in The Gambia, over Christmas and New Year 1989-90. It was this trip that was to become pivotal in my future travelling with Scouting.

We based ourselves in a small village, Jiroff. I was appointed base camp manager, which involved looking after the health and welfare of the team. Each day I would manage the team of Scouts who were the base camp volunteers for that day. We would cook meals using our best levels of imagination on how to serve a varied menu with a very limited supply of ingredients. I also ran a clinic, which became the centre for the entire village to come and discuss various health issues - some of them straightforward, others very challenging. Without realising it, Jiroff slowly took hold of my heart, and I would come to love that village in the four short weeks that we were there.

My Scouting career was also to start taking a turn to concentrate more on international projects. I became part of the UK-Africa fellowship, and eventually was invited to become its chair in 2005. This developed further, and in 2007-8 I became manager of the Global Support Team reporting to the UK International Commissioner. This involved promoting and developing international experiences for Scouts.

By this time I had retired from Ford, and I enjoyed this new role very much, as it gave me the opportunity to travel, concentrating mostly on Africa. I visited

Malawi, Ghana, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Kenya, but in all of this travel my thoughts never wandered far from The Gambia and Jiroff. So, in late 2008 I returned to my Jiroff: I wandered into the village with my good friend Lamin Kinteh. As we passed a group of women, one of them jumped up, pointed to me and started doing the camp fire version of ‘Singing in the Rain’ ... I was home!!

Following a meeting with the Al Kala, the village chief, we soon began to put together a plan to bring a team out to convert the now dilapidated classroom that we had built in 1989-90 into accommodation for teachers. I returned home, and within a short time I was recruiting a team to go out and undertake the project. I mentioned this at St Columba’s, and I was encouraged to apply for financial help towards the project. I made my appeal and was delighted to be offered £2000 towards the £6000 building costs. The Scouts taking part would then raise the balance. They did, and in 2009-10 we went out to The Gambia and completed the building.



Teachers' accommodation

Earlier this year I was in Jiroff again, one of my regular visits over the years. The teachers' accommodation, now 14 years on, is in need of some remedial work and some refurbishment. In 2020 the Downing Place Church Meeting had agreed to a WC&PI Group recommendation to allocate £2000 from York Street funds to support this work. Since building the accommodation we have added a small toilet block. This has made Jiroff a desirable posting for teachers, and other organisations have realised the benefit of supplying accommodation – rooms for teachers are being built in a number of schools



In need of repair



Toilet block

One of the most important things I have become aware of after my most recent visits is how badly the World Food Programme is working - when I visited the school they had not seen any support for almost a year. When I made further enquiries it became clear that £200 could give each of the 200 children a basic lunch for a whole month!! I allocated £200 for the purchase of rice, fish oil and some pulses.



Rice and fish oil for Jirroff primary school

At the end of 2025 I am hoping to lead a group of Scouts in The Gambia to carry out repairs to the teachers accommodation, and to look at reinstating the **women's garden which has fallen into disrepair.**

So, now you are up to date. I am sure that I have missed quite a bit, so, if you have any questions please feel free to corner me on a Sunday morning after the service, over coffee in the Gibson Hall.

George Devine

SOLIDARITY HUB NEWS

Alex Clare-Young writes:

The Pioneer Ministry Steering Group have been reflecting on how to communicate well and often with the whole ‘community of communities’ at **Downing Place Church** about my role and our pioneer project as a whole. That’s why, in this and upcoming issues of *Place Matters*, you will find a letter from me, an article from – or an interview with - a member of Solidarity Hub, Trumpington Gathering, or Acorn Community Union, a reminder of our upcoming events, and an infographic or two – information in picture form - which shows you something about one or two of the topics addressed in the written bits.

This month Jo is writing an article to update you on our latest Solidarity Hub meet, where we spoke about the overlaps between nature faiths and Celtic Christianity. Multiple Religious Belonging – belonging to more than one faith at once – is an increasing phenomenon and one that includes many of our community members, so I will share an infographic with you about the differences and similarities between Christian and Nature faiths, in terms of seasons and festivals. You may be surprised by how similar – and how different – we are.

In my work with Acorn, as I mentioned in the May 2024 *Place Matters*, we have been campaigning for bus franchising and better bus services across Cambridgeshire. The council has now started to set this in motion by launching a consultation about bus services, which you can see at <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation>. Please do fill it out, share it with family and friends, and let me know if there is anything I can do to support you to do so. I would be happy to sit at a computer with anyone to help with the technical bits! I believe improving local services where we live and worship is a central part of Christian discipleship, evangelism and mission.

With peace, *Alex*



Jona and I cooking for Solidarity Hub guests at Wicken



Visiting Beth at Northstowe to share learning & stories.



Setting up for the Trumpington Gathering at our new venue – Trumpington Pavilion.

Lines and Seasons – Jo Clare-Young

Solidarity Hub meets twice a month on a Sunday evening to talk about faith, justice and the world. One of our topics over the summer was nature religions. I wonder what that word brings to your mind ... Is it cauldrons and broomsticks or is it nature and creation? The question we were exploring was this: “Where is the line between Celtic Christianity – services and events like our forest church gatherings, or the things the Iona community runs - and worship of nature. After all, Christianity has at its heart a dynamic care for creation.

Personally, I feel closer to God in the countryside than in a church, even one as lovely as DPURC, just as my ancestors did. Our conversation ranged far and wide as it always does, we don't tend to stay precisely on topic!

We talked about the polytheistic (many gods) nature of some nature religions compared to our monotheistic (one God) one. We talked about the wheel of the year, the solstices and festivals that define the natural year, and how similar it is to our liturgical year. Yule/Christmas, Ostara/Easter, Samhain/All souls etc. We talked about how prayer might function, and how the act of lighting a candle as part of prayer/worship/intention setting crosses boundaries of many religious traditions, including some of the URC's predecessors, and yet is relatively common now. We marvelled at how spiritual fire can feel, and how it is still a part of our rituals when we meet at wilder times - Easter morning bonfires connect to something primal still present in our Christian faith. We considered why nature religions still have a bad reputation. You rarely find practitioners of nature religions involved in inter faith forums.

We looked at scripture and the passages that speak against witch-craft. Exodus 22:18 "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" seems to be talking about doing rituals that were unauthorized and painting that as evil. Nonconformist Christians would have been in trouble! Consider the ritual to cure leprosy in Leviticus 14. It requires two birds, one of those birds' blood, cedar, hyssop, and red thread. It was a perfectly normal and justified piece of ritual 'magic' when used officially by the Levite priests. We found that other passages we look at were generally also referring to the practices of other nations - othering the stranger, the foreigner - and we noted the 'far right' parallels of today. We didn't answer our question about where the line between nature faiths and Christianity is, I wonder where the line is for you?



An Infographic on Seasons



Trumpington Pavillion

4-6pm (activities from 4.30)

4th Saturday of each month



September Meets Downing Place Hub September 8th & 22nd - from 7pm

Each week we have a short time of prayer from 7pm followed by a member-led discussion with nibbles and drinks. In coming sessions we will explore diverse topics including our personal theological beliefs, Richard Rohr's ideas around 'Falling Upward', and the joy of life beyond binaries. Members are free to bring dinner or order take-out if they like.

solidarity hub



GREETINGS FROM JONA SCHMIDT!

In late August 2023, Jona came to Downing Place URC as a Time for God (TfG) volunteer – our first since 2019. [HOME | timeforgod](#) He introduced himself to us in the September 2023 Place Matters. 12 months later, he kindly agreed to review his year with us – now read on!

A warm hello to all of you from the north of Germany.

I was asked to write something about my year with you at Downing Place, and I'm now sitting in front of a blank piece of paper not knowing where to start. Even though it was only a year, it was one whole year and as I discovered, you can experience more than you ever expected in this time. I was told my gap year would be over in the blink of an eye. Although I didn't believe this in the beginning, it's definitely true. However, at the same time looking back it feels like a whole lifetime itself. I like it that some things (and I'm pretty sure some humans too) can be contradictory in themselves.

So maybe it's a good idea to start at the beginning:

For the last eleven months I've had the once-in-a-lifetime chance to be part of Downing Place as your volunteer. From the beginning you made me feel welcome, accepted me for who I am and cared for me. I was immediately given a place in your community, for which I'm very grateful. Over the months I've been engaged in a wide range of voluntary activities, all of which have given me great joy, the possibility of exploring many new perspectives and life experiences, and the opportunity to meet wonderful people. Because there were so many, I've decided to summarise them in a short list:

- I worked on the church's social media, screen advertising and décor related tasks
- Every Wednesday morning I volunteered at a playgroup with the charity Connected Lives, that works with young families
- I volunteered alongside church members at Hub Hospitality
- I volunteered during Sunday morning worship including for example in Junior Church
- I volunteered at Solidarity Hub and Open Table on Sunday evenings, including setting up, leadership, reading, refreshments and clearing up
- I was involved in planning, preparing and volunteering at the Trumpington Gathering
- I helped with preparation and clearing up for the Gibson Lunches and Community Networking Lunches
- I volunteered at NightLight (a drop-in safe space) during Saturday nights

Furthermore, I was able to take part in thought-provoking meetings, projects, events and training like the Christmas Fair and the national URC Youth Assembly. Of course these were official tasks, but they opened doors to so much more: having a chat in the Hub with everyone I volunteered alongside and everyone who came in on their own; going out for lunch with great company after Sunday morning worship; waving a hello across the room; the opportunity for many deep and personal conversations; my first (but certainly not last) beer; the opportunity to reflect on so many things; listening; my first attempts at learning how to crochet (I'm still trying to finish a granny square without making too many mistakes!); many smiles and laughs and so on.



Jona lights an Advent candle at an Open Table Communion service

Photograph by Stillvision Photography

And so far I haven't mentioned all the things I've experienced in my free time. Travelling to London several times, being invited to formal dinner at different colleges, going out for lunch with friends after Sunday morning worship, TfG conferences (including spending lots of time at train stations - "If you see something that doesn't look right, speak to staff or text British Transport Police 61016. We'll sort it. See it. Say it. Sorted". I can recite that in my sleep!), outdoor cinema, theatre, driving to the seaside, going on holiday to Scotland. Just to name a few. I still can't quite believe I experienced all of this and even more, and I'm incredibly grateful.

So if I'm being completely honest, it's a rather challenging task to sum up all my

experiences and the feelings connected with them in this article, or even in words at all. Because going to a foreign country right after graduating from school has pretty much turned my world upside down - in a good way, though.

Nevertheless, at this point, it's important for me to point out this year hasn't been easy. I had to face a new language and culture, loneliness as well as personal challenges. Don't get me wrong, they're all part of this experience, and have helped me learn to recognise boundaries and needs as well as to acknowledge my own company. So it wasn't all as simple as it might sound.

In any case, looking back I can say with certainty it was one of the best decisions I've made to find the courage (believe me, I needed a lot!) and time to spend a year abroad. I've had the great opportunity to get to know myself and explore my identity, to make friends for life, to grow personally into a more responsible and independent person, to explore my faith without judgment, to widen my horizons and to be with wonderful people. Without this time and having awesome humans on my side, I wouldn't be where I am now - and I don't want to miss any part of it!

Thank you to all who made this possible!

Jona

REVEREND TONY COATES: 1937 – 2024

Soon after the 2024 URC General Assembly at Swanwick, we learned that the Revd. Tony Coates had died, on 12th July. Tony was 87. Assembly had just celebrated the 60th anniversary of his ordained ministry. Many Downing Place folk will have fond memories of Tony as the minister of Emmanuel URC, Cambridge, from 1974 to 1982.

Anthony John Coates grew up in Ipswich, the son of active Congregational Church parents. They attended Crown Street Congregational Church, now Castle Hill URC. In 1958 Tony came to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, to read Modern Languages. Clyde Binfield, a Cambridge contemporary, recalls that Tony **was a member of the Burnaby Society** (“a high-powered discussion group run by the Dean, Howard Eugene Root”) and of the **Debating Society**. He was active in College Chapel, and in time was appointed President of the University Congregational Society.

Clyde had a strong sense that Tony knew that ministry was his vocation even as he arrived at Emmanuel College. Indeed, upon graduation he moved directly to Mansfield College, Oxford, and in 1964 he was ordained and inducted as Assistant Minister at the City Temple, London, with a flat on-site. Four years later he was appointed as Free Church Chaplain at Keele University, and it was in 1974 that Tony accepted the call to Emmanuel URC, Cambridge. On a personal note: Judy and I moved to Cambridge in 1979. Having reconciled our different denominational backgrounds in the Otley URC not many years earlier, our minister there suggested that we try Emmanuel. Suffice to say that having attended worship led by Tony Coates, I knew that I need look no further.

But then – Tony was an accomplished linguist, and in 1982 he was appointed to serve at the World Council of Churches translation service in Geneva. Beginning at **the WCC’s first Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948**, the WCC Language Service has made WCC material available in several languages.

In his WCC role in Geneva, Tony translated key texts from French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese into English.



A picnic in Geneva, 1983

In 1983, Judy and I travelled to Geneva with our two young boys, to visit Tony and Anthea. His ministry was always **supported and encouraged by Anthea’s enthusiastic collaboration.**

After three years in Geneva, Tony accepted a call to be minister at Redland Park URC, Bristol. Then in 1989 Tony was appointed Secretary of the URC World Church and Mission Department, at Tavistock Place in London, and seven years later he was called to his final pastorate at Hutton and Shenfield Union Church. In 2002 Tony and Anthea retired, settling by the seaside in North Devon. A Service of Thanksgiving was held at their 'local' URC, Christ Church Barnstaple on Thursday 29th August. You will see a tribute to Tony in the church magazine [Messenger-August-24-WEBSITE.pdf \(christ-church-barnstaple.org.uk\)](http://christ-church-barnstaple.org.uk/Messenger-August-24-WEBSITE.pdf)

It is fitting to conclude with some tributes from others who knew Tony well, beginning with two from within the WCC - [WCC mourns loss of linguist and United Reformed Church minister Rev. Tony Coates | World Council of Churches \(oikoumene.org\)](http://oikoumene.org/United-Reformed-Church-minister-Rev.-Tony-Coates-World-Council-of-Churches)

Rev. Dr Susan Durber, WCC president from Europe, writes “He was an energetic, charismatic person who possessed immense kindness and enthusiasm ... He was a skilled linguist and worked as a translator to bring the theological imagination of Latin America, for example, to the English-speaking world ... He was generous and helpful to those new to the ecumenical scene and even in his twilight years was always passionate about ecumenism and the world church”.

Rev. Jane Stranz, another linguist, was coordinator of the WCC Language Service from 2002 to 2011. She briefly coincided with Tony when she was a student in Cambridge – her first service at Emmanuel was Tony’s last. “Tony applied the same high standards to translating the fire regulations as to tackling tricky theological texts. He was a brilliant linguist and completely trustworthy. In the early 1980s he translated confidential witness statements being sent to the WCC by human rights lawyers working for justice in Latin American dictatorships. We came from the same URC, and at a more personal level I owe him a real debt of gratitude; he negotiated the agreement that allowed me to serve as a pastor in the French Reformed Church.”

I leave the last words to Sue and Lewis McKenzie, who grew up within “Emmanuel” families. They moved away from Cambridge in 2003, when – having completed ministerial training at Westminster College - Sue had been called to serve two churches in Barnet. They sent me these “personal memories” of Tony, and of Anthea.

The birth of YPSEG When Tony arrived to be minister of Emmanuel in 1974, we were already going out, and we were invited to the Manse one evening to discuss the setting up of a Youth group. Tony and Anthea offered the Manse as a venue for this group of young people, who had only met occasionally at church. It was a revelation, and the older junior church members and those on

the fringes instantly gelled with this relaxed format. One week was ‘serious’ and the next week was games. The fact that the age range went from Lewis’ younger brother Andy (by 7 yrs.) to Lewis (age 21), didn’t matter a bit. Tony’s quiet but constructive theological input inspired many to begin a lifelong Christian journey. But what to call this group? It met on a Sunday evening ... Young People’s Sunday Evening Group of course - YPSEG! Many of the present members of Downing Place helped over the years or had offspring involved. This significant part of church life continued for over 30 years and remains a tribute to both Tony and Anthea.*

Our Wedding As the 29th July 1978 approached, we were really pleased that it was Tony who would conduct our wedding in Emmanuel Church! Tony made us feel so at ease - we got rid of our giggles at saying the vows at the rehearsal, and it was a splendid day.

The Alternative Service and the Singing Group One of the more radical things that Tony introduced was the ‘Alternative Service’ which offered the opportunity occasionally to leave the main service and meet more informally to discuss, sing and pray. We think it was Mavis Hawkins who invited Sue to help lead one or two more modern songs as part of this service. The book we used was ‘Sound of Living Waters’ and gradually over several years, more musicians and singers joined in and this led to a group which met at our house every week for many years, contributing to the worship in Emmanuel and occasionally leading worship at Castle End Mission and some village churches. We were always simply called ‘The Singing Group’.

* *Editor:* you can see Andy McKenzie’s thanks to Tony and Anthea, and some great YPSEG photos, in the June 2023 *Place Matters*. And in October 2019, prior to Emmanuel URC closing its doors for the last time, 40 former YPSEG members met up for a reunion organised by Annette Stuart, Julia Wright and Simon Rowland. Simon writes “We met at 3pm for a Welcome drink, mingle and chat, whilst looking at photo displays and old YPSEG programmes. At 5pm we came together for a little reflection on the history of YPSEG and thanksgiving, all rounded off with a buffet meal and playing some old YPSEG games. Anthea attended and spoke quite emotionally about setting it up with Sue and Lewis”.

I’ll leave it there: so much to give thanks for; so much to celebrate.

The Reverend Anthony John Coates. 1937-2024: Requiescat in Pace.

Tim Rowland

AN INSIGHT INTO OUR RECENT JUNIOR CHURCH SESSIONS

As the summer holiday draws to a close, we are writing to update you on what we have been doing in Junior Church over the last few months.

Sunday 23rd June was a special day; we had a service for all ages giving thanks for the youngest member of Junior Church, and welcomed lots of young people. Origami hearts were folded and post-it notes written on for prayers, and we helped hand over the certificate, candle and cards.



Two weeks later we celebrated again as the two oldest members of Junior Church were baptised and received into church membership. When the younger children went into the Hub for a short period of time, we made cards using the symbolism of a dove and a cross, and chatted about the meaning behind them while we worked. Upon returning to the sanctuary for the baptisms we also handed over the cards!

The following Sunday we reached the point in the life story of King David when the new king wanted to celebrate and decided to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, creating a loud joyful procession in the streets. We talked about how we like to celebrate special occasions with friends and family, sometimes involving parties, singing and dancing, dressing up, sharing special foods and having fun. Having recognised that on some occasions it is important to celebrate and have fun in church by praising God in an extravagant way, we sang

praise songs, made simple shakers and decorated mini cupcakes to share with members of the congregation after the service.

Unlike the week before, Sunday 21st July was very quiet, with just one member of the Junior Church here. We had fun colouring musical drawings, thinking how **we might manage to fit 350 candles on hymn writer Issac Watts' birthday cake** (we would apparently need an 80 tier, very wide cake, if you were wondering!) and talking about which sports we were looking forward to watching during the Olympic Games.

On the last Sunday in July, some of us had already been away on holiday, and some still had adventures yet to come. We welcomed a Dutch family who were in Cambridge on holiday and were pleased to offer interpreters. After recalling our favourite family meals we gave thanks to God for fish and chips, pancakes and much more. The bible story we listened to told us about when Jesus gave thanks to God after 5000 people were fed from the five loaves and two fish that had **been offered by a child. We had fun helping prepare for Jona's farewell lunch**, not quite for 5,000, but for a hall full of joyful people. We hung bunting, put out **fishy napkins, prepared cutlery and added a basket with rolls and 'fish'**. We also made cards for Jona. Some were given to him immediately and others were secretly saved to post to Germany later, as a surprise before he heads to university in Mainz.

On 4th August, the group considered a story about King David and his remorse over wrongdoing. Having recently introduced several stories of David, we had a King David quiz. To continue the theme of games in the holiday period, we enjoyed some Bible Charades, featuring some highly successful interpretive actions and some more notable for their comedic value.

The second Sunday of August saw Janet reminding us of how essential bread is; how it is made and enjoyed, and that Jesus is the Bread of Life. With many away on holiday, one child worked hard to make Irish wheaten bread before having a tea party with the toy babies and sharing the freshly baked bread.



Elza de Bruin, Lorraine Thornton and Jess Uden, with thanks to all the leaders and helpers for their contributions to the work of Junior Church.

LUNCHTIME CONCERT, 24TH JULY: JANE BOWER AND IAN DE MASSINI

The Downing Place URC lunchtime concert on 24th July 2024 was ... a bit different. The Wednesday concerts always attract a good audience, but this time, as 1pm approached, 170 had already arrived and latecomers were searching for seats. To warm applause, the performers came on stage: Ian to the bench of the by-now renowned Downing Place *Hauptwerk* digital organ; while Jane stood alongside the console, ready to read poetry, and to demonstrate, with brushes and paints, artistic skills that she first learned as a child. A 'visualiser' lens enlarged and projected the images that Jane created from a horizontal surface onto the vertical screen behind her. Their programme was inspired by Prokofiev's 'Peter and the Wolf' and Saint-Saëns' 'The Carnival of the Animals'. For the Prokofiev, Jane's illustrations were largely pre-prepared; for the Saint Saëns, the images were created 'live' on-screen, one for each creature.

Jane sets the scene for us:

This was a particularly special concert for me, with a poignant edge; it was making use of the new Downing Place visualiser, given in memory of my parents, both of whom devoted their careers to visual art: and the concert was in aid of a charity working on visual problems. It involved stories and music to which those same parents had introduced me at a very young age, parents who first taught me the colour-mixing and painting skills I was now using, and it was strongly reminiscent of the hundreds of times I had used paints and equipment, indeed the actual same tools, in hundreds of primary schools all over the UK and beyond. I carried them to Downing Place URC in the same suitcase that I had used for countless school journeys, when I wheeled it down unknown streets and into many a Travelodge. So for me, the concert was really in



Jane in action during the concert

memory of my Mum and Dad, and perhaps also of our careers in art education. The strong, supportive team behind it who need to be thanked are Ian, who first invited me to narrate, and who transcribed the two orchestral works for our organ; Ann for her careful work on the programme; and Jess and David for their technical guidance and help.

I hope that this concert will be a stepping stone to two things in particular - bringing children, and maybe schools, to our building, and showing to what effects the visualiser might be used in events and services.



Ian and Jane at the end of the concert

Next -Stephen Thornton shares his response to the concert:

Over the last year or so I have had the pleasure of listening to very many of our **church's Wednesday lunchtime concerts**. All credit to **Ann Auger** and the networks she has developed within the classical music world, in and beyond Cambridge, for the way in which she has been able to attract so many remarkable and talented young musicians. It is a joy to be able to sit and listen to such delightful music-making, never more so than when our very own Ian de Massini and Jane Bower performed for us on the 24th July. For me, this was the standout concert of the season.

Ian played his own settings of Prokofiev's 'Peter and the Wolf' and Saint-Saëns' 'The Carnival of the Animals' on our remarkable *Hauptwerk* organ, able to replicate a full range of orchestral instrument sounds, while Jane created stunning illustrations live on screen as she told the two stories. The result was a remarkable multi-sensory experience, engendering rapt attention from the very many children and young people in the audience. With standing room only, there were over 170 of us in the audience, many new to Downing Place

concerts, but all highly appreciative of what we were experiencing.

I reflected afterwards on the amount of work that Ian and Jane had had to put **into making this performance so polished.** Ian's painstaking adaptation of orchestral music for our organ must have been a difficult and time-consuming task. Jane not only had to conceive of what her finished illustrations would look like, but practice repeatedly to ensure she could synchronise the gradual creation of the finished paintings as the music developed. As with so much live drama, timing was all, and they nailed it perfectly.

Let's hope that the audience showed their appreciation by generous donations to Moorfields Eye Charity and that many will return to Downing Place for future concerts. As for Ian and Jane, let's hope they have ideas for further concerts where they can showcase their talents, and where children and young people in particular can become so totally engaged. There is no better way to introduce children to classical music than live performances of this sort.

Later, a member of the audience sent the following message to the Downing Place URC office:

What a delight the animal concert was.
Full of humour, wit and imagination.
So great to see many children there.
As always I feel the warmth and welcome whenever
I visit. I am a non-believer, however the kindness and
Generosity of this church is a real testament to faith.

Thank You



URC MINISTRY AND MISSION

You will see on the facing page a letter of thanks to churches for their **contribution towards 2023's Ministry and Mission Fund.**

In 2023, Downing Place contributed £142,620 directly to the Ministry and Mission fund, and our minister and many members of the congregation also supported other churches by travelling to preach and chair meetings across a wide geographic area.

Our contribution for 2024 is £146,556, which equates to £12,213 every month, and your support is vital for us both in our work locally and for our contribution to the wider church. Thank you.

**To: All members and adherents of
United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships**

Dear Friends,

Firstly, thank you for all your contributions to your local church in 2023. This includes your financial contribution which plays an important part in the life of the whole church through the Ministries & Mission Fund.

As officers of the denomination, it's good for us to be rooted in a local URC (or LEP) congregation and to work out our faith in the local context, as well as across the entire United Reformed Church. On the other hand, it is good for you in local churches to know that those who serve you nationally understand the local church financial issues as well. And there have been some big issues over the last 12-18 months: inflation, a 'cost of living crisis' for many, with energy costs rising unprecedented levels etc. Churches and ministers have had the same challenges as so many others.

The M&M Fund of the URC pays for ministers' stipends, training, Assembly costs and all the central support functions for ministry in the URC across three nations. The M&M Fund's main income is contributions from the churches with some top-up from synods, together with investment income and grants etc.

In 2023 the churches continued to support the M&M Fund to a wonderful level, but there also was significant and generous synod support. Overall, the giving to M&M Fund was slightly ahead of budget at £16.3 million. It was also only 2% down on 2022's result. However, we should note that these figures include the synods' extra contributions this year which amounted to £1.9 million, an increased amount compared to 2022.

The full M&M account for 2023 in summary:

Income – £18.2m – of which 16.3m was from churches and synods contributions

Expenditure – £19.3m

Deficit – £1.1m

2024 is not going to be an easy year either and we are again budgeting for a deficit. We have a commitment from synods to continue their support on top of church contributions and a plan for balancing the M&M budget over the next 5-7 years, including budget reductions of central costs of 3 to 5% p.a.

So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2023 in full, and thank you to all those who, in adversity, continued to treat the M&M Fund as the first priority and paid what they could.

Stewardship of our resources, personally, as local churches and as a denomination is rarely easy, but it is one of the challenges we are called to in making our faith real. As the Spirit directs and as our means allow, can the churches once more continue to respond to the call of our gracious, loving and ever-generous God?
Again, thank you all!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Alan Yates (Treasurer)
Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer)



ERIC LIDDELL: OLYMPIC MEDALLIST, CONGREGATIONAL MISSIONARY

As we all know, in August the Olympic Games took place in Paris. You probably also know (because the point was often made!) that it was exactly 100 years ago, in 1924, that the Olympics had last been hosted by Paris.

The film, *Chariots of Fire*, released in 1981, portrays some of the events of Paris 1924. This is no ordinary film, because it won the Best Picture award at the Oscars in 1982, so it is not surprising that it was shown on television in the run-up to the recent Olympics. Wikipedia summarises the film as based on ‘the true story of two British athletes in the 1924 Olympics: Eric Liddell, a devout Scottish Christian who runs for the glory of God, and Harold Abrahams, an English Jew who runs to overcome prejudice’. Both were sprinters, but Liddell refused to compete in the 100 metres in Paris because the heats were held on a Sunday. Abrahams won gold in the 100 metres; Liddell ran instead in the 400 metres, which he won in a world record time.

I can still remember the moment that I found out about *Chariots of Fire*. In the summer of 1981, Janet and I, with our three children, were on a longboat holiday on the river Avon. We stopped at a small town, where there was a large poster advertising the film and explaining its main story. I was astonished. I had known

the ‘Eric Liddell 1924’ story for many years because I had attended the same school as Liddell, and he was by some distance our most famous ‘Old Boy’. But I had thought of this as ‘local knowledge’, and it had never occurred to me that the story would be of interest to a major film-maker.

Eric Liddell’s father was a missionary to China with the London Missionary Society (LMS), a Society with especially strong links to the then Congregational Union. It was common practice in those days for British missionaries to place their children in boarding schools in the UK, so Eric and his older brother Robert joined such a school in Blackheath, London in 1908, when Eric was aged just 6 years 8 months. The school, then called the School for the Sons of Missionaries, had been founded by the LMS in the 1840s and almost all of its pupils were sons of missionaries serving either with the LMS or with the Baptist Missionary Society. When Eric started there it was a small school, with only about 80 pupils, although it covered a full age range from 6 to 18. But big changes came in 1912, when it swapped its cramped conditions in Blackheath for the buildings and grounds of the recently closed Royal Naval School, near Eltham, and changed its name to Eltham College. The increased space allowed the school to accept dayboys and non-missionary boarders, so already by 1915 **there were 150 pupils, and missionaries’ sons constituted only just over half of them.** Not surprisingly, sports activities also flourished in this new context, and Eric Liddell featured strongly in them. In his final year, 1919, he set a school record for the 100 yards (10.2 seconds) that had still not been beaten when I left the school nearly forty years later.

Meanwhile, Eric had not neglected his studies, and he won a place at Edinburgh University to read for a B.Sc. During this four-year course (1920-24), he combined his studies with some serious sporting activity: in each of these years, he won both the 100 yards and the 220 yards events at the summer Games of the Scottish Amateur Athletic Association; and in 1922 and 1923 he won seven international caps for Scotland in rugby, playing as a wing three-quarter. His graduation ceremony for the B.Sc. occurred shortly after he had won gold at the Paris Games; after the ceremony, his fellow-students carried him shoulder-high to celebrate his achievement.

For dramatic effect, *Chariots of Fire* portrays Liddell as learning about the timing of the 100 metre heats on his journey to Paris. In fact, he had known about this, and had made the principled decision not to run, months beforehand. It must have been a turbulent time - final degree examinations, Olympic training, pressures to change his mind about the 100 metres – but it is clear that through it all Christian discipleship remained very much a part of his life.

As *Chariots of Fire*, to its credit, records, at the end of his degree studies Eric was

accepted by the LMS as a candidate for its China mission. He served initially (from 1925) as a teacher in the Anglo-Chinese College in Tientsin, but later he responded to a call seeking a worker in evangelistic mission, and in this post he was described as a **valuable colleague doing work ‘of remarkable promise’**. In line with this change, when he was on furlough in Britain in 1932, Eric was ordained as a minister by the Congregational Union of Scotland. Returning to China, in 1934 he married Florence Mackenzie, the daughter of a Canadian missionary to China, with whom he had three daughters.

The Japan-China war of 1937-1945 disrupted many aspects of normal life, and in 1941 the U.K. government advised all British citizens to leave China. Florence and the children left for Canada, but Eric remained behind. In 1943 he was placed in a Japanese internment camp for civilians in Weihsien, Shantung Province, where he was reportedly of great help to others in organising activities and keeping hope alive. He was still in the camp when, in February 1945, he died unexpectedly, at the age of 43, of an undiagnosed brain tumour.

This summer, both the institutions where Eric Liddell was educated have honoured him with special events. Edinburgh University took the unusual step of awarding him a posthumous honorary doctorate, which was received on his behalf by **Patricia Liddell Russell, Eric’s oldest daughter, now aged 88**.

Meanwhile, pupils at Eltham College organised a relay run from Paris to Scotland which raised over £20,000 for the work of three charities, including the Eric Liddell Community, an Edinburgh-based charity that among other things works with sufferers of dementia and their carers.

Finally – and remarkably - the Scottish Parliament mounted a special exhibition, *Eric Liddell: Legacy of an Olympic Legend*, which closes on September 12th. The **Parliament’s website comments that Liddell’s story reached ‘global audiences’ through *Chariots of Fire*, which ‘continues to influence and uplift people around the world’**. **There was much more to Liddell’s life of service than is depicted in *Chariots of Fire*, but we can be very grateful for the way in which the film has brought his Christian discipleship to such wide attention.**

Tony Bottoms

Editorial postscript: on Sunday 11th August 2024, the Radio 4 Sunday Service, entitled ‘On Eagles’ Wings’, marked the centenary of Eric Liddell’s Olympic gold. The service came from Morningside United Church, Edinburgh: you can re-visit it at [Sunday Worship - On Eagle’s Wings - BBC Sounds](#)

CHURCH FINANCES

Colin Christy reports on the Open Meeting which was held on 3rd August: and this is the first of what will be a series of regular items in Place Matters on the topic of finance to keep members informed. This month, in response to a request, we look at how our building is used and the impact this has on our income.

Approximately thirty people attended the informal meeting regarding church finances held on Saturday 3rd August. The meeting was held to inform and listen to members' views on church finances as part of the future review of life as Downing Place URC. While there were comments and questions on specific issues, some general targets and issues from that meeting are as follows.

- Achieve break-even;
- Provide more information to members in a more accessible way than figures;
- Give gentle reminders to members about personal giving.

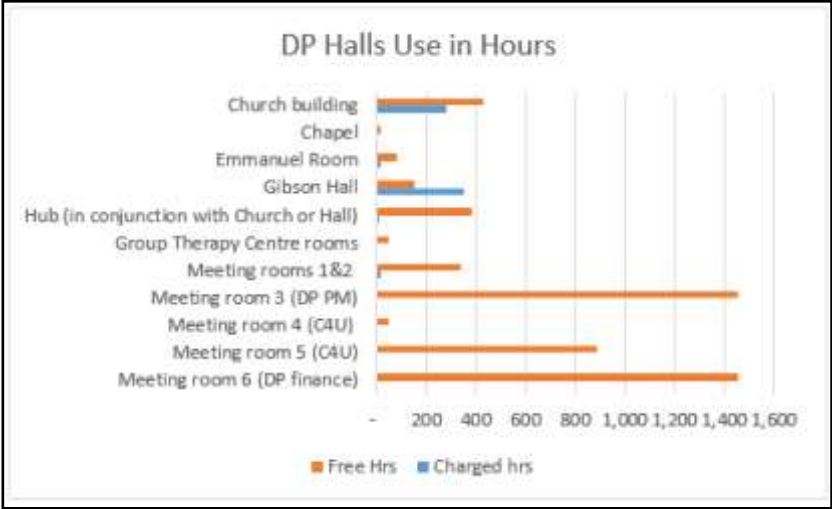
With this in mind, and as promised at the meeting, I include some information on occupancy of the church halls. Of course, some numbers are included ... Data on other aspects will follow in future issues of *Place Matters*.

Prior to our joining together, the combined halls letting income from Emmanuel and St Columba's was about £70k. This compares to a budgeted £68k in 2024 and actual income for the first half year of £28k.

DP Budgeted Income 2024



Chargeable use and free use of rooms over the last six months is shown below:



Apart from Downing Place’s own use, other organisations that are not charged for using the premises include: Group Therapy Centre, AA, Cambridge4Ukraine, Cambridge Voices, NightLite, SAA, NA, DISH, Cambridge Theological Federation, Meditation Group, Turtle Dove, URC, Rowan, Camsight, Bible Society, Dementia Support, Arts and Minds, Cornerstone.

Finally, for those who do like numbers, here is an extract from the occupancy report for the six months to June 2024.

Colin Christy

Occupancy		Hours	Ave Rate	Income	Free
Six months to June 2024	%	Charged			Hours
Church building	49%	280	£ 60.20	£ 16,857	429
Chapel	1%	0	-	£ -	13
Emmanuel Room	7%	18	£ 30.60	£ 551	82
Gibson Hall	35%	352	£ 29.93	£ 10,542	153
Hub (in conjunction with Church or Hall)	27%	5	£ 31.68	£ 158	387
Group Therapy Centre	3%	0	-	£ -	47
Meeting room 3 - DP - PM	101%	0	-	£ -	1456
Meeting room 4 - C4U	3%	0	-	£ -	45
Meeting room 5 - C4U	61%	0	-	£ -	888
Meeting room 6 - DP - Fin	101%	0	-	£ -	1456
Meeting rooms 1&2	24%	13	£ 29.23	£ 380	336
Totals		668	£ 42.63	£ 28,489	5290

CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY - THE DOWNING PLACE URC HUB

On 14th July 2024, morning worship at Downing Place URC was led by the church's Evangelism and Service Group, with several contributions from its members. The text of Stephen Thornton's presentation now follows.

Thanks to the foresight of John Bradbury, our former minister and now General Secretary of the URC, and the combined efforts of our architects and our own Building Group, we have The Hub, through this door here on my right, situated at the very heart of our redeveloped building. It is one of the very few spaces in the building, together with the garden, that can't be booked or ever used exclusively by any one group. That's deliberate. Instead, it's designed as a space where people can meet informally, sometimes by accident at other times by design. It is the nearest thing we have to a public space and it is a space ripe for evangelism.

What do I mean by that?

Well, I certainly don't mean it's a place where any of us should attempt to accost a stranger, pin them in a corner so we can tell them about God. No, instead, it's a place where what Nigel has referred to as the equivalent of “**chance encounters by the workplace water cooler**” can take place - where we can engage, befriend, listen to and empathise with such a stranger, gently - revealing the love of God in so doing. And where we can also offer Christian hospitality.



The word hospitality is a translation from the Greek word *phil-o-xenia*, which is a compound word meaning love (philo) of strangers (xenia). This love of strangers could be, of course, of anyone: a friend or even perhaps someone we don't particularly like, a widow or an orphan, someone who is street-homeless, a refugee

from Ukraine, a disabled person, someone with a drug or alcohol dependency, your next-door neighbour or indeed a fellow member of this church whom you **haven't had the chance to get to know as well as you would like.** In the Gospels, we read that Jesus daily practised hospitality. He showed compassion for the physically sick, the spiritually impoverished, the mentally ill, the blind, the disabled and the poor. He welcomed vulnerable mothers and blessed their babies.

So, The Hub is a place where we can offer this kind of Christian Hospitality. As one church member has written:

Christian hospitality in the church setting is important to me and I believe the Hub has become a place of welcome valued by members of the congregation and those using the premises for a range of concerts, meetings and a wide variety of support groups.



To formalise this somewhat, The Hub Hospitality Initiative was begun just over two years ago in February 2022, with church members volunteering to be on duty on Wednesdays, coinciding with our lunchtime concert series, providing free refreshments for all who come through the door, encouraging conversation and acting as a listening ear to anyone who feels the need to share. Thanks to the reliability and dedication of these 21 volunteers, since October 2022, we have been able to offer this service on Thursdays too, coinciding with the weekday services and the 'Knit One Give One' group.

As one Hub Hospitality volunteer has put it:

For me, Christian hospitality is about love, compassion and empathy. Sharing our lives with others and walking alongside people in both the joyful and difficult times.

And another has said:

Working in Hub Hospitality I have received many favourable comments and thanks for the provision of a place for work, to relax, socialise or take some time out of a busy day in such a friendly environment.

Or as Hebrew 13, verses 1 and 2 put it:

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Just how many angels, unbeknown to us, I wonder, might have passed through our Hub in the last two years?

Photograph by Stillvision Photography

NOTICES FROM OUR CHURCH SECRETARY

Dear friends,

Another request from me! Now that Ann has taken over compiling the rotas, I need to encourage more people to be on the rotas.

One such is the flower rota, where you can offer to produce the flowers for a **particular Sunday. It doesn't take too much time to arrange them. If you** do not wish to arrange them yourself, you can give some money and ask one of our flower arrangers to do it for you.

Another rota which could do with a few more volunteers is the Communion preparation rota. Usually 2 people come in at 10am to help me fill the little glasses with wine and put the cubes of bread on the plates.

Or could you help to welcome people from 10.30 on Sunday morning or **help serving refreshments after worship? I'm sure your offer won't be** turned down.

October 6th Frugal Lunch

October is the month where we give to Commitment for Life (CfL). We are encouraged to give generously to this very special cause. Alongside CfL we also remember Christian Aid, the object of 75% of CfL funds. Christian Aid works to improve lives of people who struggle to feed their families and survive many challenges every day. So a lunch of soup, bread and cheese will be available, where we can give what we would have spent on our lunch at home. Please do support this if you can.

Pippa Jones

MONTHLY SPECIAL CAUSE FOR SEPTEMBER



Our Special Cause for September is Romsey Mill, a local charity committed to overcoming disadvantage, challenging injustice and promoting social inclusion with young people, children and families. Each year, they work with over 2,000 individuals and families, from Cambridge city and across areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, including:

- young mothers and fathers - helping them fulfil their potential as parents and accompanying them on the journey from early pregnancy onwards
- young people on the margins of society who may be involved in risky or anti-social behaviour, nurturing relationships with each young person through shared experiences that the young person enjoys
- young people struggling to engage fully with education
- families with pre-school children
- young people with an autistic spectrum condition, reducing social isolation and improving their lives and well-being through youth clubs and support

Youth workers work in specific geographical areas where they become embedded in the local community. They work with participants to develop their skills and to enable their progress towards training, work and positive involvement in the community.

There will be a retiring collection on Sunday 15th September.

WAYS OF GIVING TO OUR SPECIAL CAUSES

- Monthly Retiring Collection (cash, cheque or card)
- Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts (cash or card)
- Direct to the church bank account (reference SPECIAL CAUSE)
- Via our website - the **'Donate' button is on the homepage under the large photo of the congregation.** Select Special Donations as the fund
- In many cases, by direct donation to the charity via their own website

PREVIOUS SPECIAL CAUSES

JUNE SPECIAL CAUSE - CONCRETE ROSE

working alongside local churches to provide supported lodgings for vulnerable young people (16-23) including care leavers, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young parents, who are at risk of becoming homeless and, today, are living in risky and unsuitable accommodation.



We sent £2,076.75 to Concrete Rose following our collections in June as follows:

Retiring Collection	£765.74
Concerts	£667.50
Other Donations	£76.60
Gift Aid	£316.91
York Street	£250.00



JULY SPECIAL CAUSE - MOORFIELDS EYE CHARITY



funding world-leading research, patient care and training at Moorfields and UCL to change the lives of people living with eye conditions.

We sent £3,363.55 to Moorfields Eye Charity following our collections throughout July as follows:

Retiring Collection	£300
Lunchtime Concerts	£1,778.88
Other Concerts	£381.96
Other Donations	£50
Gift Aid	£602.71
York Street	£250



Autumn House Groups

“Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth”

The Birth and Growth of the Early Church

(starting October)

Discussion groups based on studies in the first fifteen chapters of the *Acts of the Apostles* with some passages from the Gospels and Paul’s letters.



The groups will explore how the first followers of Jesus emerged from the shock of his crucifixion to become the basis of a new community which would grow and spread with remarkable speed to create other new communities in his name.

They would encounter opposition from without and disagreements within; physical dangers, imprisonment and persecution; and new questions requiring new ways of thinking. Through it all they felt themselves empowered and guided by the Spirit of Jesus to pursue the commission they had been given.

“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”.

Groups will be led by Janet Bottoms and begin in the first week of October,

- On Tuesday afternoons at a central venue in person;
- Monday evenings on Zoom;
- and by Penny Flynn on Thursday afternoons at a northern venue, also in person.

Further exact details to follow.

Penny Flynn

THE GIBSON LUNCH

Ann Auger writes: Have you ever been to a Gibson Lunch?

For me, it's a real highlight of the month, when I get to have lunch with church members; many of whom I don't see a lot of, otherwise.

Here are some 'live action' shots from the last Gibson Lunch in June for you to enjoy, and please sign up by Monday 16 September if you'd like to come along to the next lunch on Thursday 19 September. At only £5 for two courses and coffee it's great value as well as good fun!



Dixon welcomes us all and introduces the lunch at 12.30pm



Our cooks starting to dish up!



You can't go wrong with chips.



Or strawberries, in June.

LUNCHTIME CONCERTS - WEDNESDAYS AT 1PM

Free Lunchtime Concerts with a retiring collection for our monthly Special Cause. Booking is not necessary. Refreshments available before and after the concert. Come and bring friends!

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| 4 September | Anna Vienna Ho (piano) |
| 11 September | Aliya Turetayeva (piano) |
| 18 September | The Rockingham Duo (violin & piano) |
| 25 September | Ivan Hovorun (piano) |

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

MONDAY LUNCHTIME CONCERTS

And from the beginning of October.... An additional opportunity every week to hear wonderful music in our beautiful church, every Monday lunchtime at 1pm. The new Monday concerts will enable us to offer performance opportunities more widely to the many fine performers who approach us asking to come, and will also support Downing Place financially, following the Church Meeting agreement made in July to split the proceeds of both Monday and Wednesday concerts between the monthly Special Cause and church funds from this point on.

The first Monday concert will be on Monday 7 October and I'm delighted to say that Alex Clare-Young will be launching our Mondays with a recital of music played on the clarsach (Gaelic harp). There are many wonderful concerts to come between October and Christmas, and you can find a full list of these on our website

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



Ann Auger



HOLST'S PLANETS

in 30 minutes

Visit all 7 planets in half an hour!
Arranged for solo Organ by Ian de Massini.

Sunday 8th September
12.45 - 1.15pm, Downing Place URC

Free admission with retiring collection

SEPTEMBER DIARY

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	01-Sep-24	Choir Rehearsals Resume	10:00am	Church
Sun	01-Sep-24	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Sun	01-Sep-24	Open Table/Solidarity Social	7:30pm	The Hub
Tue	03-Sep-24	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	04-Sep-24	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Anna Vienna Ho (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Wed	04-Sep-24	Finance Committee Meeting	7:00pm	Room 4
Thu	05-Sep-24	Midweek Worship led by Dr Alan Rickard	11:00am	Church
Thu	05-Sep-24	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	05-Sep-24	Elders' Meeting	7:30pm	Zoom
Fri	06-Sep-24	Meditation Group	5:30pm	St Columba's Chapel
Sat	07-Sep-24	Nightlite	9:45pm - 3:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	08-Sep-24	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	08-Sep-24	Sunday Worship led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Sun	08-Sep-24	Repeat performance of Holst's <i>The Planets</i> arranged and performed by Ian de Massini on the Hauptwerk digital organ (see p.37)	12:45pm - 1:15pm	Church
Sun	08-Sep-24	Solidarity Hub	7:00pm	The Hub

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Tue	10-Sep-24	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	11-Sep-24	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Aliya Turetayeva (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Wed	11-Sep-24	Pioneer Minister's Steering Group	2:30pm	Rooms 1 & 2
Wed	11-Sep-24	Solidarity Hub - Acorn the Community Union	7:00pm	The Hub
Thu	12-Sep-24	Prayer Meeting	10:15am	St Columba's Chapel
Thu	12-Sep-24	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Thu	12-Sep-24	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sat	14-Sep-24	Nightlite	9:45pm - 3:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	15-Sep-24	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	15-Sep-24	Sunday Worship led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Sun	15-Sep-24	Church Meeting	12:30pm	Church
Sun	15-Sep-24	Open Table Communion Service	7:00pm	Church and Hub
<i>Mon</i>	<i>16-Sep-24</i>	<i>DEADLINE for booking and paying for the Gibson Lunch</i>	<i>4:00pm</i>	
Tue	17-Sep-24	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship join Fulbourn URC for 'The Word Together'	2:30pm	Fulbourn URC
<i>Wed</i>	<i>18-Sep-24</i>	<i>DEADLINE for submitting articles for October's 'Place Matters'</i>		

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Wed	18-Sep-24	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - The Rockingham Duo	1:00pm	Church
Thu	19-Sep-24	Midweek Worship led by the Revd Alex Clare-Young	11:00am	Church
Thu	19-Sep-24	Gibson Lunch	12:30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	19-Sep-24	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	20-Sep-24	Meditation Group	5:30pm	St Columba's Chapel
Sat	21-Sep-24	Nightlite	9:45pm - 3:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	22-Sep-24	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	22-Sep-24	Harvest Festival Worship led by the Revd Dr Alex Clare-Young	11:00am	Church
Sun	22-Sep-24	Solidarity Hub	7:00pm	The Hub
Mon	23-Sep-24	Property Management Group	7:00pm	Zoom
Mon	23-Sep-24	World Church & Public Issues Group	7:30pm	Zoom
Tue	24-Sep-24	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	25-Sep-24	Evangelism & Service Group	7:30pm	Zoom
Wed	25-Sep-24	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Ivan Hovorun (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Thu	26-Sep-24	Midweek Worship with Communion led by the Revd Deborah McVey	1:00pm	Church
Thu	26-Sep-24	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sat	28-Sep-24	Solidarity Hub Trumpington Gathering	4:00pm	Trumpington Pavilion

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sat	28-Sep-24	Nightlite	9:45pm - 3:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	29-Sep-24	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	29-Sep-24	Sunday Worship led by Dr Augur Pearce	11:00am	Church
Mon	30-Sep-24	Officers' Meeting	10:15am	Minister's Room
Tue	01-Oct-24	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	02-Oct-24	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Hazel Keelan (violin), John Richens (piano) & Simon Kelly (clarinet)	1:00pm	Church
Thu	03-Oct-24	Midweek Worship led by Jane Bower	11:00am	Church
Thu	03-Oct-24	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	04-Oct-24	Meditation Group	5:30pm	St Columba's Chapel
Sat	05-Oct-24	Solidarity Hub	4:00pm - 9:00pm	The Hub
Sat	05-Oct-24	Nightlite	9:45pm - 3:00am	Emmanuel Room
Sun	06-Oct-24	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	06-Oct-24	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Sun	06-Oct-24	Frugal Lunch (see p.31)	12:30pm	Gibson Hall
Sun	06-Oct-24	Open Table/Solidarity Social	7:30pm	The Hub

MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE

1 September	Chris Baker Penny Flynn Janet Tollington	St Ives Free Church Bassingbourn Stetchworth & Cheveley
8 September	Janet Bottoms David Tatem Janet Tollington	Fulbourn Buntingford Bassingbourn
15 September	Chris Baker Janet Tollington	Melbourn Lion Walk, Colchester
22 September	Deborah McVey Penny Flynn David Tatem Janet Tollington Nigel Uden	St Luke's (Harvest) Melbourn Bassingbourn Trinity, Burwell Fulbourn (Harvest Festival 10.30am) Fulbourn (Harvest Communion 6pm)
29 September	Liz Caswell David Cornick Janet Tollington Nigel Uden	Stetchworth & Cheveley Clare Buntingford Dorking (Harvest Festival)



CAMBRIDGE STREET PASTORS ANNOUNCEMENT

The AGM of Cambridge Street Pastors and NightLite takes place on Thursday 26th September in the Gibson Hall, Downing Place Church from 7pm to 9pm. Superintendent Paul Rogerson, Head of Partnerships and Prevention, Cambridgeshire Police will be the guest speaker after official business is completed. Everyone is welcome.

Also, Dorothy Peyton Jones will be stepping down as Chair of the Trustees at the AGM, therefore a new Chair is being sought, plus additional Trustees to oversee the coming years as they continue to develop their support of the Night Time Economy in Cambridge. Please email

director@cambridgestreetpastors.org.uk if you would like further information on becoming the Chair or a Trustee.

LECTIONARY FOR SEPTEMBER

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

1 September (Trinity 14)

Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-9

Psalms 15

James 1:17-27

Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

8 September (Trinity 15)

Isaiah 35:4-7a

Psalms 146

James 2:1-10,(11-13),14-17

Mark 7:24-37

15 September (Trinity 16)

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalms 116:1-9

James 3:1-12

Mark 8:27-38

22 September (Trinity 17)

Jeremiah 11:18-20

Psalms 54

James 3:13-4:3,7-8a

Mark 9:30-37

29 September (Trinity 18)

Esther 7:1-6,9-10; 9:20-22

Psalms 124

James 5:13-20

Mark 9:38-50

6 October (Trinity 19)

Job 1:1,2:1-10

Psalms 26

Hebrews 1:1-4;2:5-12

Mark 10:2-16



*Photograph by
Stillvision Photography*



Photograph by Jess Uden

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 October edition to both Tim and Ann by the cut off date of Wednesday 18 September.

The October edition will be available from Sunday 28 September