



**DOWNING PLACE  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH  
CAMBRIDGE**

# **PLACE MATTERS**



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*Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Elders and Members of  
Downing Place United Reformed Church*

## FROM THE MINISTER

### About prayer

Looking back, I am acutely aware that I have too rarely let the routines and rhythms of ministry make time for the focus upon prayer that has always been my aspiration.

At the start of 2023, during that deeply appreciated sabbatical, I went on Retreat in North Wales. I stayed at St Beuno's, a Jesuit house at the very end of Offa's Dyke Path, and made the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. This opportunity proved to be a real privilege and discipline during a month when I did not allow other things to crowd out prayer. I do hear those who tell me thirty days of silence is either unbearable or an indulgence. Speaking for myself, though, it was a blessing that alerted me to prayer as one of the specifically Christian things to which I hope to give more time when I have retired.

Over the years, I have grown in my understanding of prayer. Since my youth it has been shaped by the words of a hymn – *there's a surprise! It's by James Montgomery*, and I discovered it when belonging to a church that used the 1951 hymnbook *Congregational Praise*. Montgomery (1771-1854) was a Scot, raised by Moravian parents. His best-known hymns include *Angels from the realms of glory*. He also wrote a hymn about prayer, with several verses that commence with pithy definitions:

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,  
Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice.

Those epithets still inform my practice of prayer. Not least, for one who aims for eloquent and elegant English, another of Montgomery's verses helpfully reminds me that 'prayer is the simplest form of speech'.

Gradually, I have explored other elements of prayer: how?, where and when?, what? The retreat sharpened my ideas of those things, so that prayer can be more than something upon which to look back, and rather something to inhabit now, and to look forward to as I am taken into a future of freer space ... I hope.

Where and when might we pray? Some have a particular place and time to pray. Perhaps you have a space you have designed to encourage you in prayer and spiritual reading - an oratory; think of the Latin, *orare*, to pray. Your oratory could have a chair carefully located to help you look at something that draws you into a mode of prayer: a tree, a view, a sculpture, an icon. Having such a space can make it easier to set aside moments for prayer, so that it is not subsumed in

everything else that life expects. Equally, we might be a person who finds praying outdoors is helpful. Those walks along the northern stretches of Offa's Dyke Path awoke my sense of God's presence and glory, and so does early morning on the banks of the Cam between Baits Bite Lock and Bottisham. Although busyness gets in the way of praying, perhaps there are some activities that could also make the busyness itself a vehicle for prayer. Amongst the options might be the relative mindlessness of ironing the handkerchiefs, cutting the grass, or walking to work. Of course, there are the structured formal opportunities for prayer that are afforded by using set liturgies, and by attending public worship in church, but the where and when of our personal praying is likely to be as varied as our different personalities and circumstances suggest. Be yourself.



*Baits Bite Lock, a place for prayer*

*Image via Wikimedia Commons*

*Attribution: Elliott Simpson / Baits Bite Lock*

How to pray can be a similarly important question. I think one problem is that we can be lulled into thinking that others' praying is 'correct', and ours isn't. Well, that's true to some extent, because it's true of everything in life – whatever the activity, some are better at it than others. With prayer, though, I'm not really persuaded that there are right ways and wrong ways. As Montgomery suggests, 'prayer is the soul's sincere desire', and you will express it one way, whilst others will have a legion of other ways to pray. For me, the key to praying is to be liberated from thinking that it is about what I say to God. Yes, I can say to God whatever I want to, be it joy and gratitude, or lament, even anger – that is the privilege of God engaging with us whoever and wherever we are. Far more spiritually valuable on my journey, however, is *listening* for what God might want

me to hear. I tend not to flatter myself that God is going to be much affected by my insights about God, but what a difference can be made to me as I open myself to what can be discerned about God by pondering a cross from which the risen the Christ has been raised, or by observing a soaring eagle on whose wings God promises ‘to raise me up, and bear me on the breath of dawn’. Your life will have given you thoughts about how to pray. Mine has underlined the cruciality of listening more than I speak – at least in proportion to the number of ears I have compared with mouths.

And the essence of what we might hear? Well, that was the greatest of the gifts I received when making those Spiritual Exercises. The saint urges the retreatant to begin not with a sense of their own self, sinner to some degree or another, nor with the state of the world, grievous and glorious all at once as it is. Rather, he takes the spiritual exerciser into Ephesians 3.16-19:

*I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, <sup>17</sup>and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup>I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.’*

That trust in the love of God is where Ignatius believes prayer should begin and end. It spoke to him in his flawed humanity and spiritual wilderness, and it can speak to us in ours. Moreover, if we start and finish our praying by focussing upon the reliably resurrected love of God, in between we can afford in that faith to go to the places of lament and laughter, the situations of tragedy and triumph that litter life’s way.

Mindful that prayer is indeed the Christian’s vital breath, I am humbled and grateful by how my prayer, and others’ prayer for me, has sustained me through ministry. I am no less conscious of how pivotal its place is in the life of Downing Place Church as a new chapter beckons, just as it will for me.

O thou by whom we come to God,  
the Life, the Truth, the Way,  
the path of prayer thyself hast trod:  
Lord, teach us how to pray.

*James Montgomery*

*Nigel Uden*

## ELAINE – in retirement ...



*Editor:* Nobody at Downing Place URC can quite believe it, but Elaine Barker is retiring at the end of March, after 30 years at St Columba's/Downing Place. As a 'newcomer' to the Downing Place site, I've only come to know Elaine in the last few years, but very soon she became – for me – the 'face', first of St Columba's, then of Downing Place URC. More often than not she greeted me with a smile when I arrived, and a few words as I passed her on the way out. I wanted to include a 'thank you' of

some kind in this March issue of *Place Matters*, and two people who have known Elaine for all or most of her time in Downing Place agreed to contribute to it. The first piece below comes from David Thomas, a member at StC/DP for over 50 years, and a prominent contributor to its life, outreach and physical structure; and the second from our minister, Nigel Uden. Elaine herself graciously agreed to our request to record some of her own recollections of those 30 years.

*David Thomas writes:*

During the previous renovation at St Columba's in the 1990's, Frank and Marge Barker were the caretakers – they moved into the Cressey's house whilst the work took place. When they went on holiday, their daughter-in-law sometimes came to stay. This was Elaine. Marge had been a wonderful caretaker, so Elaine had a very good role model to follow, but Elaine met the challenge and continued in fostering good relationships with Church members, and users of the St Columba's Halls.

Later on, the Church employed Giles Waller as a part-time Administrator. When he moved on, Elaine took on his role. Her secretarial skills from her early life shone through. And when Nigel Uden, the St Columba's minister, became Chaplain to the Moderator, and then Moderator, she became his secretary. Office technology was becoming prevalent, and Elaine took it in her stride. During this time, she



*Where it all started - the original job advert!*

also had three children, who thrived in their city centre location.

She dealt with all the challenges of managing the various building works that went on, including the trauma of a new roof. But nothing had prepared her for what came next, when Emmanuel and St Columba's became Downing Place URC. Closing the Church and moving the contents either into storage, to Emmanuel, selling or skipping, then moving the contents of her home to Little St Mary's Lane for two years.

During this period COVID struck. We then saw another of her talents - as a photographer. Taking pictures of peaceful Cambridge in the early morning and using them in the service sheets and online. As the Church had not yet been completed, Elaine had to pack up again, moving into a cottage at Westminster College. Then after a few months she finally moved into her new flat.



*Trinity Street, deserted during lockdown. Photograph by Elaine Barker.*

During this time, she was involved with many others in helping at Emmanuel to vacate that building, putting more stuff into storage, as the new Church was not ready: 'Downing Place' church services took place at Westminster College and online. Finally, moving into the new building was challenging, with so much to learn about how everything worked.

Elaine has continued throughout to go the extra mile in helping people, and in making Downing Place Church such a welcoming building.



*And Nigel Uden:*

Whenever trying to sum up a person in a few words, there is a challenge about what to include and what to omit. Paying tribute to Elaine Barker's three decades at St Columba's Church and then Downing Place Church is a case in point: where to start, where to finish?

So, I have chosen just six key words, with the hope that it will give eloquent pointers to the so-much-more that could be said.

First, of course, as one of the public faces of the Church, she has been *everyone's friend*. So often, her welcome and inclusive acceptance ensured people knew there was a place for them, be they church people, premises users, or random visitors.

Secondly, she demonstrated that friendliness with a *loquacious* willingness to chat. She rarely left us feeling she had no time for us. There was a fund of stories – some of them poignant tales of days gone by, others, hilarious anecdotes. Conversation so often oils the wheels of church life, and Elaine has always shown that.

Then there is the benefit of her being in residence. She has always been *around*. Whenever one arrived, she was likely to appear round a corner, or be sitting at her desk with a greeting. Living on the site has not been without personal cost for Elaine or her family. Constant availability, unsocial hours, and significant responsibility for large premises are all demanding factors, but it has been a real blessing for the church that we could trust her and leave things in her hands. **The readiness of Dan, Katie, and Matt to 'fill in' has also not been unnoticed;** it is genuinely appreciated and we thank them, too.



Fourthly, Elaine has been supremely flexible. One might say *elastic*. That can be seen in her several changes of accommodation at St Columba's, at Little St Mary's Lane, at Westminster College, and at Downing Place Church. Few of us need to be reminded of the upheaval of such relocations. As she prepares for another, we acknowledge that elasticity gratefully. This flexibility was also invaluable as she gave such energy, leadership, and sheer hard slog when we effectively emptied two churches, waited for a pandemic-affected redevelopment, and then repopulated the Downing Place building. But she has been open to the rich variety of the job itself, too – no two days the same, no enquiry too surprising for her to cope with, no problem so great as to become a crisis, new colleagues to embrace and partner. Elasticity epitomised.

Fifthly, Elaine is highly *informed*. She is like an encyclopaedia, about the people and the premises, and about the city with all its qualities and quirks. I could ask her anything about anyone, and she was likely to know the answer, quite often preventing me putting my size ten in it!

And, of course, she is proudly, unchangingly *northern*, which has been to our great advantage. Don't try to get one past her! No, your bicycle will *not* be allowed in the yard. Your taking advantage of her kindness won't be tolerated as soon as it sniffs of taking the Micky. She might be short of stature but not of confidence and courage. And her dogged loyalty to the church has been real, as much in trying times as easy ones; tell it like it is, even when that is challenging, but then get over it. That's northern grit at its best – tenacious and resilient.



*Dogged Loyalty*

And so it has been for all but thirty years: everyone's friend, loquacious, around, informed, northern, elastic. That's our ELAINE. There are only six letters, so please forgive what has not been said, whilst hearing what has as but a token of our immense gratitude and appreciation.

Elaine, on behalf of us all - the church today and the church over these three decades, many of whom are now at peace – we say a heartfelt thank you, and may God bless you with contentment, happiness, and health in retirement.

## THE BARKERS IN ST. COLUMBA'S AND NOW DOWNING PLACE

*Elaine writes:*

I remember my in laws, Marge and Frank, telling me that they had decided to retire in 1996. At the time I had Dan (then 4) and Matt (then 18 months) and I was earning a living by childminding. Marge suggested that I apply for her job working as part time Caretaker at St. Columba's. With Dan ready to start school it seemed a good time to consider a move to Cambridge and so I applied. With my husband, Steve, we went for an interview with John Domone, Anne Syme and John Chaplin and so began the next episode in the Barker dynasty at St. Columba's. At the time Ernest Marvin had retired and the church was in vacancy so I was very much learning as I went along but the job fitted well with two small boys and school drop offs.



*Marge, Elaine's mother-in-law and predecessor, together with Elaine's Dad*



*Dan and Matt, taking to their new life as city centre boys*

I soon learned how varied and interesting the job actually was and how many different characters I had to deal with every day. It seems incredible now to think that the job was 25 hours a week and in that time I managed to do the cleaning, deal with the invoices that came in, take the bookings, look after the hirers, organise repairs to the building, ensure the heating was working correctly and be around on Sunday mornings to help make things run smoothly for the church service. I didn't have an office in those days so everything was done from home in the house at No. 4.

A couple of years later a new Minister was appointed and Keith Riglin arrived. Keith was bright and bubbly with a quirky sense of humour. He kept me on my toes as he was always asking for something different – a tea towel or dressing gown for the shepherd at nativity, an England flag which he could drape around his shoulders for the Sunday service and my rubber band ball which he bounced around the church in the Sunday morning service were just some of the things he asked for. He was messy and disorganised but he certainly livened up the church.



*Two former ministers of St Columba's - Keith Riglin and Ernest Marvin*

There were of course lots of characters in the congregation itself. Too many to mention but all were incredibly welcoming to me and my family for which I will be forever grateful. Along came Katie in 1997 and so, much to my amazement, Keith gave up part of his office so another bedroom could be created in the house. Not many employers would do that for a part time caretaker!

As well as the church members I have been really lucky to deal with some really lovely hirers, I remember bringing Katie home from hospital and several days

later the Cambridge Dancers were having an all night dance-a-thon for Children in Need. They were very thoughtful and kept the sound down in case it disturbed Katie! The following weekend I had the Students from the CU Islamic Society, and they were so taken with Katie that they wanted to take her round to show her to everyone. I thought I had lost her!

There have been so many classes here over the years. We have had all sorts of dancing, yoga, pilates, martial arts, ballet, keep fit, belly dancing, juggling to name but a few. We still have a huge mix of classes and many of the groups keep coming for years. I think we may have had pretty much every Anon group at one time or another. This building is much loved.

2010 came around and along came our new Minister, Nigel. It was an explosive start as at his induction the electrical system overloaded. Fortunately the church was not affected so nobody was aware there was a problem, and by the time everyone came out of church for refreshments I had managed to find enough candles to light up the halls and there were extension cables from the house and halls to allow us to make coffee. It was very atmospheric though by candlelight. We wouldn't forget when Nigel arrived!



I am lucky enough to have met the previous Ministers of St. Columba's and frequently Ronald Speirs, Ernest Marvin and Keith Riglin would come and visit so they must have enjoyed working here too.

My father used to come and visit us often and he was very much involved in tracing our family history. On one such visit I mentioned that I had met a couple of previous St. Columba's Caretakers and suggested that he could visit Shire Hall and try and trace back the previous caretakers for me. He got totally distracted when he discovered that there used to be a police station just along Downing Place so I never did get the information! Maybe I will look for myself when I retire.

It has been a pleasure to be involved in the joining together of Emmanuel and St. Columba's and see the bond of the two churches slowly grow. I thoroughly enjoyed being on the Buildings Group involved in the renovation of the building and seeing the changes happening. It was lovely to be over at No. 1 Little St Mary's Lane and working at Emmanuel for a short time. The lockdown was spent at No. 1 for my son Matt and I. Then I had Emmanuel to myself for

weeks so I came to love the building. I will never forget emptying two houses and two churches in a very short space of time!! My in laws were at St.

**Columba's when the last renovations were done to the building many years** before and during that time they stayed at Westminster College with Martin and Pamela Cressey so it seemed appropriate that before we could move into the flat here we had a few weeks staying at Westminster College, which we enjoyed very much.

Today the church is very different from how it was in so many ways but I am so glad I have had the chance to see the plans come to fruition and how much pleasure people express when they visit, about how welcoming and friendly everyone is and what a beautiful job has been done with the renovations. I will **miss this place and the people so much I can't tell you.** Working with Ann, Ian and Jess in the offices we have become a strong team with very different but complementary skills and personalities. I feel though that, with Nigel retiring in July, the time is right for me to retire: to let someone else bring in new ideas and experience such a special place.

*Jess writes:*

We are putting together a book of memories and thanks for Elaine Barker as she retires at the end of March.

Our hope is that the book will hold images and words.

If you would like to contribute, please:

write or draw on, or fill however you are inspired to, an A6 (half A5) piece of paper.

then post it to, or leave it for me in here in the office at Downing Place URC. A6 pieces of paper and envelopes will be available on the shelf outside the office if you need some. If you are at the church when the office isn't open, do drop it in the 'Out of Office Hours' postbox which is on the wall next to the office door.

If you have any photos but don't have them printed just let me know and I can get them ready to go into the book. Equally if it is just easier for you to tell me what words you would like on the paper, I can arrange that too.

It will be lovely to be able to hand Elaine a book brimming with messages from those who make up the community here at Downing Place URC.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions, and I will do my best to answer them.



## FROM THE PIONEER MINISTER

*Alex writes:*

Friends, I have some news to share with you. Now that I am three years into my post, I have been on a process of exploring how the parts of my calling fit together. I would like to share with you that that process has led to a new post, which means that I will be leaving Cambridge. I **can't share the details of that post in writing** yet as there is still some paperwork to sort out. However, I felt it was important to let the congregation know of my plans as soon as possible.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of both me personally and the ministry that I have been serving in. Pioneer ministry is never simple, and the last year in particular has been a complex one personally, and I have been so grateful for your companionship on the journey and your collegiality in ministry. I will continue to keep this special place of welcome in my prayers.

On Sunday the 16th of March, there will be a catered meal at 6pm (before the Open Table service that Jo, Izzie and I are leading) which will be an opportunity for people to say goodbye.

Please do get in touch with any questions or comments. Nigel also will be able to answer many questions.

*Solidarity Hub members write:*

**"Solidarity Hub has been my community and my "church" - long may it continue as a home for the deconstructionists and weird snack eaters of Cambridge."**

**"Solidarity Hub has grown into an amazing little community. We will miss Alex, of course, but the group is going to continue meeting, holding space for each other and being curious together."**

**"Solidarity Hub is the group of friends/fellow travellers through life that I didn't know I needed in this season of my life. In belonging I have felt blessed, nourished, creative, curious and inspired especially in creative projects. The best thing is I have not felt I needed to distort myself to belong and to participate. I wish I'd had the courage to queer home/life/small group before."**

"For me, Solidarity Hub has been a place of rest and authenticity. A place of belonging that does not come with the heavy cost of pretending to fit in."





## AN INSIGHT INTO OUR RECENT JUNIOR CHURCH SESSIONS

On World Church Sunday, 26th January, our theme was ‘spreading the good news’, so after sharing our own news, the younger group heard the story (read from a scroll) of Jesus returning from the wilderness to his hometown, announcing that he had come to fulfil the scriptures and bring good news to everyone. We created a gallery with portraits of ourselves and of others from the church (you may even spot the minister), which now sits in the Junior Church room window. The older group explored artefacts gathered from different parts of the world church. We discovered that the gospel is lived out with a different focus depending on place. God has made people wonderfully!



The following week we gathered to hear a story about Jesus delivering a challenging message to a crowd. He told them they needed to help outsiders, which wasn't well received by the crowd. In fact, they were rather angry! But it was a message they needed to hear. The story illustrates the concept of “tough love”. We discussed how we often receive instructions from parents, carers, teachers, and others in our lives – instructions like “eat your greens,” “do your

homework,” and the dreaded “tidy your room”. While we may not always like these messages, we recognised their importance for our well-being and growth. To reflect on the idea that love can be tough, we painted rocks with loving messages. This activity reminded us that even when things are hard, there is always love.

On 9th February we enjoyed a very lively Sharing Together session; as the children ran around the church collecting hidden paper fish and giving one to members of the congregation, they were introduced to the story of Jesus

choosing three fishermen as his first disciples. We later learned that there were 100 fish and every one of them was different, just as every one of us is unique and has something to offer in spreading the word of Jesus. When we moved into the Hub, we carried on the search, but this time for hidden footprints, which we turned into a trail for the children to play a game of 'Follow My Leader'.

Each had a turn as leader, with the others following in their footprints and copying their actions. When we split into our two groups, it was time to put the 'fishing' and the 'following' together in the light of our Bible story and explore what Jesus meant when he asked the fishermen to give up their fishing nets

and work with him to become 'fishers of people'. The younger children had fun decorating card fish with drawings of people on the back, to make a magnetic fishing game. The older ones compiled paper chains, linking themselves to people who have influenced them to follow Jesus and then extended the chain to name others who they might encourage to do the same. To spread the word, we realised that we all needed to answer Jesus' call to become 'fishers of people'!



In our next session we were considering the first Psalm, particularly how the people are encouraged to be 'like trees planted by streams of water'. The children shared which tree each would choose to be and why. We watched a timelapse video of a kidney bean germinating, putting down first a tap root, then roots that spread over a wide area providing stability and nutrients and discussed what can provide stability and growth for a Christian. A demonstration with rolled up kitchen paper, coloured water and rice showed how different shaped roots absorbed the water at different rates. Lastly the children drew roots onto a tree template and suggested how their faith could be nourished, helping their roots to grow.



*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.*

## SUE AND DAVID BUSH – A PROFILE

We met at the Ida Darwin Hospital in Fulbourn in 1980, when Sue was deputy manager of a day unit and David was a nursing student on placement there. Sue was intrigued by the quiet, academic Canadian and David was impressed by the fact that she, coming from a large family, could cook.

Sue writes: I was born in Norwich, the eldest of five children. My father served in the RAF and so we led a fairly nomadic existence. Travelling around the UK, we stopped for three years at the longest, sometimes only for six months. Despite this, I always felt that Norwich was home (both sets of grandparents lived on the same road in Costessey) and I returned there to train as a nurse, specialising in working with people with special needs.

Six years later I arrived in Cambridge, to take up a new job in a unit for adults showing challenging behaviour, which entailed less nursing and greater emphasis on teaching communication and self-help skills. Over the years I had become increasingly interested in educational approaches and indeed later studied English at university, and retrained as a teacher.

I had had been brought up in a Brethren church, and baptised as a teenager, but exploring other expressions of Christian faith, and on the recommendation of a friend, I began attending St Barnabas on Mill Road. I thought these were changes enough, but there were more to come.

David writes: I was born in 1952 in Chatham Naval Hospital. My father came from Kings Lynn and my mother from Nova Scotia. They met in Bermuda and then moved to Kent. Just before my second birthday we emigrated to Canada, living initially in Victoria B.C. and Montreal, before settling in Nova Scotia. My first school was a two-room wooden schoolhouse, after which my mother and I moved to Halifax. I studied history at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, after which I came to England and gained an M.A. in West African studies at the University of Birmingham. In September 1973 I arrived in Cambridge to begin a Ph.D. on the British colonization of Sierra Leone. Having submitted my thesis, I took a secondary PGCE course at Homerton College and taught history for two terms. But in the summer of 1971, I had spent three months at L'Arche (The Ark) community, founded by Canadian Jean Vanier as a refuge for adults who had previously lived in long stay hospitals. L'Arche had a profound effect on me and so, rather than history, I taught children with Special Educational Needs for nearly 30 years.

Throughout my years in Canada I attended my family's church, the United Church of Canada, a denomination not unlike the URC (and which celebrates its centenary this year). In Birmingham I joined a Methodist church, and in

Cambridge I went to Great St Marys for several years.

Sue and David: shortly after meeting we attended St Barnabas together, and we were married there in June 1982. In the following years we raised our four children – Daniel, Jonathan, Hannah and Miriam – with St Barnabas very much in the centre of family life. We learned a great deal there, and made close friends with whom we are still in contact. However, shortly after moving to East Barnwell in 1991, we felt we needed to support our local church – now Christ the Redeemer. It was here that we were first introduced to ecumenicism in action, as we worked closely with the local Methodist and Baptist churches. We also learned how the church could take a role in social action, striving to make a difference in the local community.



*Wedding Day*



*Our children*

Having moved to Bottisham in 1998 we transferred to the local Anglican church and then became involved in a local ecumenical project to establish a new church – ‘ReNew’ - blending Anglican and Baptist worshippers. Our time in ReNew introduced us to The Jungle in Calais: this proved to be life-changing for us, and led to our

involvement with RCK (Refugee Community Kitchen) which is still serving over a thousand meals daily, though staffed solely by volunteers. ReNew also taught us the complexity of becoming an inclusive church, and part of that was starting to come to Open Table. When, for various reasons, ReNew became too small to function as a church, it was those themes of inclusivity and social action – and

the blessing that Open Table had been to us – that eventually led us to Downing Place. Our journey has been interesting and at times not always straightforward but, looking back, we can see God’s hand in leading us to where we are now.



*With our latest grandchild*



## KNIT ONE GIVE ONE – A CELEBRATION!

I wonder whether when hymn writer and knitter, Anna Briggs, set up Knit One Give One in February 2005, she imagined the lasting impact the group would have? Twenty years on, the ever busy, ever-growing group continues to support countless people and remains a vital part of the church’s mission.

Starting in the café at Emmanuel URC, before moving to the newly redeveloped Downing Place URC in 2021, the knitting and crochet group has flourished, helping people locally and worldwide. Under the guidance of Anne Disney and her team, today’s members carry on the original mission: creating handmade items for those in need. Each week, members diligently craft a whole range of items, including twiddle muffs for those living with dementia, blankets for newborns, jumpers for students at Sallymay School in Sierra Leone, and hats for children in war-torn Ukraine, to name just a few. They are joined from afar by others who work on projects at home, or residential communities who gather where they live to get pieces ready to be sent off to their new owners.

At the Knit One Give One 20th-anniversary tea party on February 8th, Nigel Uden captured the spirit of the group: ‘there is lots of knitting, lots of nattering and lots of nurturing. Members of the group talk of feeling nurtured through



difficult times in their lives, they **nurture the work of the church...** and they nurture the lives of those who are benefiting from the work'.

The tea party was also a fundraiser for one such project, the Sallymay International Preschool in Sierra Leone, which was founded in 2016 by Marian Koroma, a former Sierra Leone resident now working at **Addenbrooke's Hospital**. A chance meeting with Anne Disney on a Cambridge bus led to a lasting partnership with Knit One Give One. Today members make pencil cases, bags, and **jumpers in the school's colours**, fundraise for building projects, and send essential supplies. The tea party and knitted goods sale raised £300.



*Marian, Anne and Nigel*



*Musicians at the tea party*

When Anna Briggs thought about the work that Knit One Give One would do, I wonder whether she could dare hope that it would reach its twentieth year, let alone that it would also be being celebrated with a new version of Lennon & McCartney's 'All You Need Is Love' ... the Flynn's 'All You Need Is Wool' which was sung by a fabulous group of Downing Place members who provided joy-filled entertainment throughout the tea party.

Knit, Knit, Knit  
Knit, Knit, Knit  
Knit, Knit, Knit

Join a group at Downing Place  
Find the hub a welcome space  
A cup of tea and **company** ... It's where you should be  
No polyester on the cheap  
But natural fibres from a sheep  
**There's nothing you can't knit if you don't try ... Go DIY**

All you need is wool  
All you need is wool  
All you need is wool, wool,  
Wool is all you need

Some things you make you give away  
To Sierra Leone with Sally May  
**Or Rosie babies to keep them warm ... A little stitch in time**

All you need is wool  
All you need is wool  
All you need is wool, wool,  
Wool is all you need

*To the tune of 'All you need is Love' (lyrics by D. Flynn, with apologies to Lennon & McCartney)*



Made for you  
by the  
Cambridge  
Knit Café

ELISABETH MARY HEWETT, 11 September 1929 – 15 January 2025

*Sunday October 15<sup>th</sup> 1989: the Waleses invited me for tea on Thursday, and Peter and Elisabeth Hewett to Sunday lunch next week. Oh! - that was nice.*

*Sunday October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1989: went to Peter and Elisabeth Hewett's for lunch – roast lamb, and extremely nice. Took my pots to show Peter.*

My diary jottings may lack adjectival variance, but **I remember Elisabeth's culinary skills to this day.** I had moved from Windermere to a Cambridge bedsit on September 1<sup>st</sup>, started my new job at Lode on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, and tried out Emmanuel URC on September 10<sup>th</sup>. The Sunday lunch was to be the first of many invitations from the Hewetts, **and Peter was to allow me to use his potter's wheel and his kiln on many an occasion.** I discussed ceramics with him, and books with Elisabeth, but faith, and feelings, were not comfortable topics for them – a fact that was **mentioned at Elisabeth's service of thanksgiving.** They were part of a generation which had endured and kept private their emotions, expressing their faith in practical action.



Elisabeth was motherly, kind, practical, capable and generous. In my day she was a key figure in Emmanuel URC, an efficient organiser of anything to do with catering, and a dedicated fundraiser for the huge refurbishment of the building which had just begun when I arrived. Week after week she baked with many others, and stood in Cambridge marketplace with Mavis Hawkins, selling the produce at a stall in aid of the building fund. She had also served for many years as a Junior Church leader, using her



teaching skills and training to the full, and also worked in Emmanuel's café.

The Hewetts provided me with all sorts of social invitations. 126 Thornton Road, with its lovingly tended garden, was the venue for countless delicious meals, wheeled in on her hostess trolley by Elisabeth; for games evenings where quizzes were pinned on the walls and we played the old parlour game of 'Legs', to which she introduced me; for large group events or where I was the only guest and we had conversations about Emmanuel, the past, and whatever we were reading at the time. Elisabeth had fine taste in novels, and was reading Elizabeth Jane Howard in her final days. The family placed a novel with her in the beautiful wicker coffin, which was threaded with yellow flowers. .

After escaping the bedsit on Elizabeth Way, and living in Chesterton for nine years, I moved to Girton, only a short drive from the Hewetts. As well as their friend, I was now their neighbour, and also became their elder and pastoral visitor, remaining so until today. I was just about to call on Elisabeth when I got the message to say that she had died peacefully.

A few weeks before, Elisabeth and I had talked of her past, and had browsed through several old photo albums, their pages giving me a fast-forward through her life – parents, siblings, a striking black and white wedding picture showing both bride and groom very tall and slim; children, grandchildren, and many of her with Peter, both in hiking gear, sitting in glorious landscapes - they were great walkers.



In his eulogy, their son Jonathan spoke of her memories of childhood in Harrow - air-raid shelters, rationing and doodlebugs – and of moving to St. Anne's in Lancashire, where she began the cloth displayed for us to see, on which friends wrote their signatures and she embroidered them (my own is amongst them). She went on to teach in Watford, then moved to Poole, where Sue and Catherine were born, and then to Cambridge, where she taught at Lady Adrian school. He recalled joyous family holidays in Happisburgh, Cornwall and Wales, the arrival of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and Elisabeth's capability with youngsters. Tim and Judy Rowland recall "She made a great impression on our son Simon; we had a junior church meeting at home just after he had moved from a cot to a bed, and he came downstairs in the middle of the meeting.

Elisabeth took him back upstairs, and told him (as Judy had done earlier) to stay in bed – and he did!”

Jonathan ended by promising to carry on his mother’s legacy of love. Our thanks go to Elisabeth, and our prayers are for Peter in his first absence from her in seventy years.

*Jane Bower*

*Elisabeth’s children have sent us the message which now follows:*

Dear Friends at Downing Place,

On behalf of Dad, (Peter Hewett), and the whole family, we would like to say thank you for all the cards, messages and kind words you have sent to us since Mum (Elisabeth Hewett) died. We are very grateful and appreciative of all of them. We shared many happy memories both at Mum’s funeral service and afterwards, and are glad that some of you were able to share in the service on line.

Sue McKenzie, Catherine Baron, Jonathan Hewett



## CLEAN POWER – PROGRESS AT FEBRUARY 2025

The Transition network is a global movement of community-led groups working for a low-carbon, resilient future for local towns and cities. In this article I share comments recently received from Bart Hommels, a friend in Transition Cambridge. Bart is a Cambridge University nano-physicist, and also a keen house eco-retrofitter. He writes:

“Happy New Year! Reading this I feel (uncharacteristically) cheerful: Often it feels as if the transition away from fossil fuels towards renewables is going at a snail's pace. And although it could (and should) go faster ... it is amazing to see the comparison between the figures from last year and those from a decade ago:”

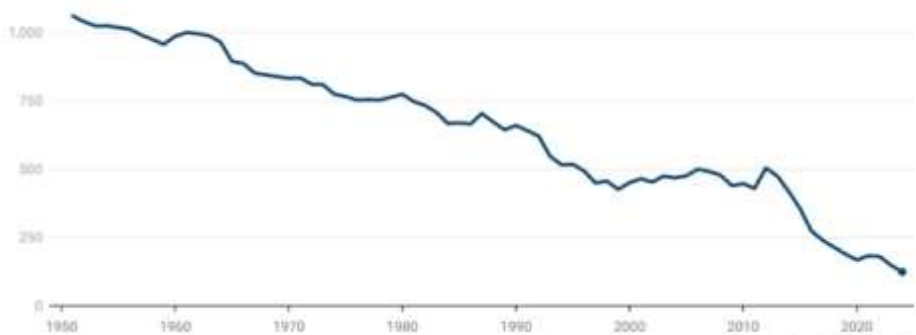
<https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-uks-electricity-was-cleanest-ever-in-2024/>

This *Carbon Brief* article shows that many efforts have gained substantial results, even though there is a great deal more to do to achieve CLEAN power by 2030:

Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions per unit of electricity have fallen by more than two-thirds in a decade.

### The UK's electricity was the cleanest ever in 2024, with emissions per unit down by two-thirds in a decade

Carbon intensity of electricity generation, gCO<sub>2</sub>/kWh



Source: DESNZ, NESO and Carbon Brief analysis

CarbonBrief  
LEADER IN CLIMATE COMMUNICATION

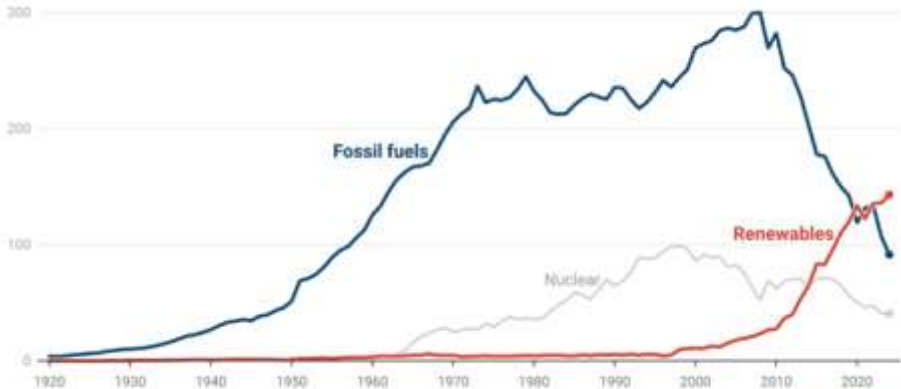
The UK has [phased out coal](#) and is now getting less than half as much electricity from burning fossil fuels as a decade ago

Renewable generation has more than doubled.

In total, fossil fuels made up just 29% of the UK's electricity in 2024 – the lowest level on record – while renewables reached a record-high 45% and nuclear was another 13%.

## The UK's electricity generation from fossil fuels has more than halved in a decade, while renewables have doubled

Electricity generation by source, TWh



Source: DESNZ, NESO and Carbon Brief analysis

CarbonBrief

- The emissions associated with UK electricity supplies has fallen from 150m tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> (MtCO<sub>2</sub>) in [the decade from] 2014 to below 40m tonnes in 2024, down 74%.
- The reduction in the carbon intensity of electricity means that an [electric vehicle](#) (EV) now has lifecycle CO<sub>2</sub> savings of 70% over a petrol car, up from only 50% in 2014.
- Similarly, a household using a [heat pump](#) instead of a gas boiler is now cutting its heat-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 84% per year, rather than only 45% in 2014.

However -

- Gas-fired power stations remained the UK's single-largest source of electricity in 2024, generating some 88TWh (28%), just ahead of wind at 84TWh (26%).
- Some 58% of electricity – or 64% excluding imports – came from clean sources, both records, but a long way off the government's target of at least 95% [clean power by 2030](#).

Historically, “These shifts culminated in the closure of the UK's last coal-fired power station, at Ratcliffe-on-Soar in Nottinghamshire, in September of 2024. This ended a 142-year era of burning the fuel for electricity, and made the UK the first country in the G7 to completely [phase out coal power](#). “

Future goals -

- The adoption of Clean Power by 2030 has been mapped out as “achievable...without increasing costs” by the National Energy System Operator [source: <https://www.neso.energy/publications/clean-power-2030>]

It adopted a definition with two parts.

- It said clean power should cover 100% of electricity demand by 2030, in a year with average weather conditions.
- In addition, it said at least 95% of the electricity generated within the **country’s borders should come from low-carbon sources**

All this is encouraging. But there are important things we can do as individuals for better stewardship of our Earth

- a) eat less red meat
- b) use 100% renewable electricity and consider installing a Heat Pump, and
- c) limit air travel.

From *Nature Climate Change* 12 Sept 2024 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-024-02130-y>

*Margaret Reynolds*

## STEWARDSHIP - THE LAUNCH OF A SERIES OF INITIATIVES

Saturday 22 March 2025 - 10.30 to 12.30, Gibson Hall

We will be outlining, and inviting discussion of, the responsibility we have for stewardship of the resources God has provided for humankind. There will be some emphasis on the global, but more particularly on our corporate, social and personal responses.

**We shall be exploring the idea that these are God’s resources with which we have been entrusted - not our resources.**

We expect to develop various strands of investigation and theological study - with practical implementation of ideas arising from that work.

Join us for this exploratory conversation.

*William McVey from the Stewardship Group and David Tatem from the Sustainability Group.*

## MONTHLY SPECIAL CAUSE FOR MARCH



March's Special Cause is Medical Aid for Palestinians, a charity supported by Downing Place Church in the past, and with the Gaza cease-fire holding, (at least at the time of writing), the urgency of the work has special relevance. MAP works for a future where all Palestinians can access healthcare, through the agency of partners on the ground in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon where many Palestinian refugees live, (across twelve camps).

### In 'normal' times, the charity

- has a particular concern for the health of women and children
- makes provision for complex hospital care
- supports psychological assessment within a community setting
- aims to give children and adults with disabilities the means to negotiate everyday challenges.

In emergencies, MAP responds as rapidly as it can with aid and assistance. Teams work to supply medicines, hygiene packs, tents for shelter, nutritional supplements, and organise vaccinations – see the website [Medical Aid for Palestinians](#) for up-to-date news.

Advocacy for Palestinian voices began in 1982, as a humanitarian response. Its founders wished to bear witness for the many individuals and families displaced from homes elsewhere in the land that Jews and Christians call “Holy”, and to ensure that all have rights to health and dignity. (Palestinians describe themselves as people of honour and dignity).

There will be a retiring collection on Sunday 16 March

### WAYS OF GIVING TO OUR SPECIAL CAUSE

- Monthly Retiring Collection on Sunday 16 March (cash, cheque or card)
- Monday and 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 AND DONATIONS

Our January Special Cause was the Oasis Trust and specifically its project to redevelop Ashburnham Lodge to provide a safe space for children and young people in the local community, whilst also providing support for parents and carers.

Total donations for this totalled	£1,654.57, as follows:
Lunchtime Concerts	£995.22
Retiring Collection	£505
York Street Contribution	£100
Gift Aid & Other Donations	£54.35



*Ashburnham Lodge*

Some of our church groups made other charitable donations recently - the Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship donated £100 to the Bible Society; and the Knit One Give One group sent £300 to the Sallymay International Preschool in Sierra Leone after their recent fundraising event.







## Christian Aid is 80 this year.

For the last eighty years CA has been delivering aid and development programmes where they are most needed. And our support for CA is more important than ever in this eightieth year.

Christian Aid Week 2025 begins on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May.

This year the focus is on Guatemala, where farming is threatened by climate change. We shall hear the story of Aurelia and how she set out to tackle this threat with the help of a Christian Aid partner.



Resources for Christian Aid Week 2025 are now on the CA website. These are mostly downloadable, and include a daily devotional as well as fundraising information.

Christian Aid events coming up soon:

*Changemakers' Conference – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May, 10-30 – 13.00.*

This is where you can find out all about CA Week, with lots about the appeal, and input from Christian Aid's leaders.



The event is live in London at St. John's Waterloo, but also livestreamed and recorded – all details and the link to register for the livestream are on the Christian Aid website.

*Christian Aid ecumenical service – Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May, at Great St. Mary's, at 2.30 p.m.*

This will be a very special service – Dr. Rowan Williams is preaching, and other members of the CA leadership team will be there. Please try to come – it follows on very neatly from our own Church meeting just down the road – and it would be lovely to have a full house to hear Dr. Williams. We hope to arrange refreshments afterwards.

*Our “thank you” tea is planned for the afternoon of Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July, venue tbc.*

## Changes to Christian Aid in Cambridge.

For many years Christian Aid has had a Cambridge Committee. It ordered materials (e.g. envelopes) on behalf of supporter Churches, oversaw their delivery, kept a record of moneys raised, and organised events such as the ecumenical service and the thank you tea.

Things have changed – now Churches order their own materials on-line and also pay in directly to Christian Aid, which means that those Committee functions are redundant. So we have decided to disband the formal Committee and replace it with a more flexible Supporters' Group for Cambridge.

This group will still organise events, keep in touch with supporters by e-mail, encourage Churches to put on fundraising events and support and publicise them. It will work with our regional CA rep, or CEFO (*Churches Engagement and Fundraising Officer*).

Do you feel you could help to support Christian Aid's work in Cambridge?

Would you like to join the Supporters' Group, either for the odd meeting, or on a regular basis? All supporters are welcome, and we want to hear new ideas for events and fundraising.

Our next meeting is planned for the morning of Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April, on Zoom. If you are interested in the work of Christian Aid, and would like to be involved in what is going on, we would love to see you there. More details in the next *Place Matters*, or for more information please contact the Downing Place Christian Aid Organiser, Sheila Porrer (sheila.porrer@virginmedia.com).

## HOLY WEEK AND EASTER 2025



*Photograph: Last year's Easter Garden made by Junior Church  
Photograph by Jess Uden*

*Except where stated otherwise, all events are at Downing Place Church and led by Nigel Uden.*

Palm Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2025

11.00am Morning Worship led by Penny Flynn

Holy Week

A sequence of recorded services will be available on the church's YouTube channel, one for every day from Monday 14<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> April. Each one will be a reflection upon a Passiontide movement from Part 2 of Handel's *Messiah*.

Maundy Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April

11.00am Holy Communion

7.30pm Holy Communion and Tenebrae at Fulbourn URC

Good Friday 18<sup>th</sup> April

10.00am Free Churches Joint Service – details to be confirmed

11.30am Ecumenical Act of Witness in the Market Square

2.00pm At the Foot of the Cross – a reflective hour at Fulbourn URC

4.00pm St Mark Passion by Charles Wood  
sung by *Cambridge Voices*

Easter Day 20<sup>th</sup> April

9.30am Holy Communion at Fulbourn URC

11.00am Holy Communion

7.30pm Open Table Easter Communion

## THE CHERRY HINTON ROAD TUESDAY FELLOWSHIP



Since the report for Place Matters in September the CHR Tuesday Fellowship has continued to meet weekly. On the third Tuesday of each month we join Fulbourn URC for the 'Word Together'. During the 'Word Together' meetings we have been studying the origin of different hymns, and particularly illuminating have been those closely based on the word of Scripture.

We have a number of people who are able to attend regularly, but others sadly are unable to attend because of health and mobility issues. We keep in touch with them by making sure they have a newsletter each month. Recently the bad weather has unfortunately also affected some of our members who have been unable to attend. . Fortunately, the parking restrictions caused by work on the Swiss Laundry have finished.

In September we welcomed again the Capriole Dancers. It is always a pleasure to join in with the medieval dances, which fortunately are so stately which suits our age group. We had as usual a wonderful Harvest Festival led by Nigel Uden where we raised £50 for the Trussell Trust.



*The Capriole Dancers visit the Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship*

In October, we had an inspiring talk about the work of the Red Balloon and we were able to give the charity £30. So many children suffer from school difficulties so serious that they have been unable to go to school because of fears of being bullied, and have been helped by this charity. Paul Nevitt gave us a Bible Study on the feeding of the five thousand and we ended the month by having a talk about Holiday Forum, which Wendy and her family attend every year.

In November we collected for the Shoe Box Appeal and we were so pleased to fill several boxes for families and older people in Eastern Europe which includes Ukraine and which is organized by the charity Link to Hope. At the end of **November we had a wonderful Christmas party at Pamela Cressey's house. We are so grateful for Pamela's hospitality.**

In December our Christmas dinner was held at Scotsdale Horningsea, and we also had a lovely carol service which was led by Nigel Uden. We raised £25.50 for **one of the Fulbourn Christmas charities, the East Anglian Children's Hospice.**

In January Paul Nevitt led us in another Bible Study based on Mary the Virgin, mother of Jesus. At our AGM, the following people were re-elected: Booking secretaries Penny Milsom and Wendy Roe; secretary and treasurer Penny; Minutes Secretary Anne Disney; link to Downing Place Anne and Penny; supplies of tea and coffee Penny and Cynthia Higginbotham; greeting cards, Wendy; Front of house-at the table Wendy and Robin Simpkins; Opening Prayer, Penny, Madeline Impey and Robin; Music, Sheila Simpkins, Carole Scullion and Penny; Newsletter Wendy; collections taken to Ann Auger, Finance and Compliance officer at Downing Place URC, Anne and Penny.

At the AGM we agreed to give the Bible Society £100 and we also raised £22 from a Bring and Buy Sale. In February we had a very enjoyable quiz led by **Robin Simpkins and a Member's Own on memories of Spring where members brought along poems and shared anecdotes of Springtime.**

**Finally we were very saddened to hear of Pat Heap's passing just before Christmas .** Pat had given the fellowship some wonderful talks; the last one she gave was about her time with Radio Cambridgeshire when she interviewed people who had encountered God in their lives. We will miss her so much as some of us have memories of her helping us personally.

We would be very pleased to welcome anyone who would like to join us either at our meetings at Fulbourn URC, and in addition at St Athanasios Hall.

*Penny Milsom*

## NOTICES

### ALEX CLARE-YOUNG

Dear friends, I think most of you will know by now that Alex Clare-Young, our Pioneer Minister, will be leaving us in March. They will be leading the Open Table service on March 16th, which is their last Sunday and there will be a catered supper to thank them at 6pm. Please sign up at the office if you intend to come to the meal.

Downing Place will be making a gift to Alex, but if you would like to add to this gift, please give contributions to Pippa in cash or cheque, or make a donation by **bank transfer please**. The bank details are “Downing Place URC” Sort code 40 52 40. Account no 00029711 Reference Alex Clare-Young. Please do not donate via the website or a card machine.

If you would like to write a message to Alex, it will be possible to do this on A6 coloured paper, found in the office. Messages will be mounted in a book with **pictures from Alex’s time with us**.

### ELAINE BARKER

**Thank you all for your contributions for Elaine’s leaving gift. As you know, the closing date for those is March 1st. There is an opportunity from this Sunday to write a personal message to Elaine and coloured A6 paper will be available in the office for you to do this. Jess will then mount them in a book with any photos or pictures you’d like to give to her.**

The coffee morning on 29th March will be an opportunity for you to come and thank Elaine in person and will run from 10.30am. Liz is providing one of her special cakes and drinks and other light refreshments will be provided as well. We do need help from 9.30am setting up the Gibson Hall, preparing drinks and laying out the cakes etc. Clearing up afterwards is another task. If you could help, please let Pippa know <[pippacello@talktalk.net](mailto:pippacello@talktalk.net)> or speak to her at church.

### NIGEL UDEN

You will know that the date for Nigel’s farewell service and gathering is on Saturday 12th July, starting at 2.30pm. I will write more about this in future *Place Matters*. **But from this month you can contribute to Nigel’s gift via bacs, using the same details that have been used for Elaine and Alex. It’s essential though, that you put Nigel’s name in the reference box. If you prefer you can pass cheques or cash to Pippa, or put them clearly marked in Ann’s tray in the office.**

*Pippa*



# WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

A world wide wave of prayer

*'I made you wonderful'*

[worlddayofprayer.net/cook-islands-2025](http://worlddayofprayer.net/cook-islands-2025) ✝

Downing Place  
United Reformed Church

Friday 7th March,  
10.30am

All are welcome!

Refreshments will  
be available  
afterwards

## HOUSE GROUPS FOR LENT A STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Gospel of John – a study in six parts, by Professor David Ford

1. Why John? Who Jesus is
2. The Spirit given without measure for the Ongoing Drama of loving
3. Why John? God and All People, All Creation
4. Why John Now? Jesus Now
5. Why John Now? The Church Now
6. Why John Now? The World Now

David Ford

David Ford OBE is an Anglican public theologian. He was the Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, beginning in 1991. He is now an Emeritus Regius Professor of Divinity. His research interests include political theology, ecumenical theology, Christian theologians and theologies, theology and poetry, the shaping of universities and of the field of theology and religious studies within universities, hermeneutics, and interfaith theology and relations. He is the founding director of the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme and a co-founder of the Society for Scriptural Reasoning.

This material comes from ‘Home Groups’, a project of [SPCK](#), ‘equipping you with Bible studies and discussion guides from [SPCK](#), [IVP](#) and other publishers and [partners](#).’ Supported by [Allchurches Trust](#) and [The Jerusalem Trust](#).

The weekly material can be found here:

<https://homegroups.org.uk/series/gospel-of-john-study-guide/>

This includes a short video of David Ford talking, which you may choose to watch before each week’s meeting. Excerpts may also be included in the weekly meetings.

Meetings will be held on Zoom on Thursday evenings, starting at 7.30pm:

Introduction and session 1: February 27<sup>th</sup>, then a short break before 5 consecutive weeks: March 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and April 3<sup>rd</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>.

These will be led by Kurt Roeloffs - see next page. Kurt will provide the Zoom invitation nearer the time.

Also, a daytime group in the Hub on Tuesday afternoons from 2pm:

March 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. These will be guided by Penny Flynn. Just turn up.



Material can be printed and made available for those who need it.

We are very pleased to have our Associate Member, Kurt Roeloffs, to lead the evening sessions. Kurt introduces himself here - New Year Greetings, Downing Place! I am Kurt Roeloffs, an American, and very excited to be leading our **Lenten study of John's Gospel**. While I am a relatively new associate member of the congregation, I have attended services as and when I could since my family and I moved to Cambridge several years ago in order for me to prepare for ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA) through Cambridge University and Westminster College. As coincidence would have it, my ministerial studies included a lot of translation of, and exegetical papers on, The Gospel of John. So, I am hoping to put those studies to good use as a modest augment to our use of **Professor David Ford's** very comprehensive, thematic study.



## ZOOM LECTIO DIVINA

on five Fridays starting on 14th March from 8.30 to 9.30 am.

Lent affords another opportunity to be part of the online zoom Lectio Divina experience. Several church members have now been part of the group for over three years and are committed to each new series. **If you have wondered what it's all about, do make contact.** We can put you in touch with someone who can help you **understand why it's one valuable approach** to reading scripture and dwelling within the chosen passage. We will use a mix of psalms and gospel from the Year C Lenten lectionary.



William will send a zoom link on the day before each Friday, simply let him know to send. Contact details: [wmmcvey@aol.com](mailto:wmmcvey@aol.com) or [deborahmcv@aol.com](mailto:deborahmcv@aol.com) or tel 01223 410 332



LUNCHTIME CONCERTS  
MONDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS AT 1PM

Free Lunchtime Concerts with a retiring collection shared between Church funds and our monthly Special Cause. Booking is not necessary.

Refreshments are available before and after each concert.

Monday 3 March  
Bonnie Cooper (soprano) & Ian de Massini (piano)

Wednesday 5 March  
Simeon Walker (piano)

Monday 10 March  
Nicole Zwier (soprano) & Marion Caldwell (piano)

Wednesday 12 March  
Cambridge University Brass Ensemble

Monday 17 March  
Tobias Brook (piano)

Wednesday 19 March  
Raphael Brandnan (piano)

Monday 24 March  
Seth Schultheis (piano)

Wednesday 26 March  
Ian de Massini & Anne Page (organ)

Monday 31 March  
Tony Bridgewater (piano)

Full information about each concert including the programme is available on our website

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

# Ash Wednesday

Communion service & Imposition of Ashes

5th March, 7.30pm

Downing Place URC, Cambridge

**Ola Gjeilo:** 'Sunrise' Mass

**Gibbons:** Psalm 51

**Gibbons:** O Lord, in thy wrath

**Ravenscroft:** Remember, O thou man

**Byrd:** Come, help me, O God

The service will be led by  
**The Reverend Nigel Uden,**  
and the music will be provided by  
**Cambridge Voices.**



# ALL AGE LUNCHTIME CONCERT

at Downing Place United Reformed Church

Sunday 16th March 2025,  
12.45 - 1.15pm



Free admission  
with retiring collection



**Saint-Saëns: Carnival of the animals**

Ian de Massini (organ)

& Jane Bower (voice & live illustrations)



Cambridge  
Action Group

# Spring Supper and Talk



## 'The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God'

Friday 21 March 2025  
6.30 pm for supper (£10.00)  
7.45 pm for talk

Queen Edith Chapel,  
Wulfstan Way, Cambridge  
CB1 8QN

Please email [penny.f.lynn@gmail.com](mailto:penny.f.lynn@gmail.com)  
to reserve a supper place or for the live-  
stream link.



Speaker:  
Justin Brierley

Justin has hosted a radio discussion show for 18 years, focusing on serious topics of faith – God and atheism, belief and doubt, scepticism and commitment. Over this period he has noticed a changing mood in our society. Many secular thinkers are speaking more positively about faith, and there have been some surprising and high-profile converts to Christianity. New atheism is growing old. More people are taking God more seriously than before. Justin will explore this change, and help us to think about what is happening and why.



# ***ADVANCE NOTICE***

## ***CAMBRIDGE HALF MARATHON SUNDAY 9 MARCH 2025***

***Traffic management will be in place across Cambridge  
and the city centre will be very busy.***

***Full details of diversions and restrictions are on our  
website or scan the QR code below.***

***[cambridgehalfmarathon.com/traffic-information/](https://cambridgehalfmarathon.com/traffic-information/)***



***SCAN TO SEE THE  
TRAFFIC GUIDE***



## MARCH DIARY

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	02-Mar-25	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	02-Mar-25	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Sun	02-Mar-25	Open Table Social	7:00pm	The Hub
Mon	03-Mar-25	Officers' Meeting	10:15am	Minister's Office
Mon	03-Mar-25	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Bonnie Cooper (soprano) & Ian de Massini (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Mon	03-Mar-25	World Church & Public Issues Group Meeting	7:15pm	Zoom
Tue	04-Mar-25	Lent House Group (see p.39)	2:00pm	Rooms 1 and 2
Tue	04-Mar-25	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	05-Mar-25	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Simeon Walker (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Wed	05-Mar-25	Ash Wednesday Service led by the Revd Nigel Uden (see p.42)	7:30pm	Church
Thu	06-Mar-25	Midweek Worship led by Jane Bower	11:00am	Church
Thu	06-Mar-25	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	07-Mar-25	World Day of Prayer (see p.38)	10:30am	Church & Hub
Fri	07-Mar-25	Meditation Group	5:30pm	Rooms 1 and 2
Sat	08-Mar-25	<i>Synod Meeting</i>	<i>All Day</i>	<i>Plume Avenue URC, Colchester</i>
Sun	09-Mar-25	<i>Cambridge Half Marathon (see p.45)</i>	<i>All Day</i>	

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	09-Mar-25	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	09-Mar-25	Sunday Worship led by the Revd David Tatem	11:00am	Church
Sun	09-Mar-25	Solidarity Hub	2:00pm	tbc
Mon	10-Mar-25	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Nicole Zwier (soprano) & Marion Caldwell (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Mon	10-Mar-25	Pioneer Minister's Steering Group	3:00pm	Rooms 1 & 2
Mon	10-Mar-25	Finance Committee Meeting	7pm	Room 4
Tue	11-Mar-25	Lent House Groups	2:00pm	Rooms 1 & 2
Tue	11-Mar-25	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	12-Mar-25	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Cambridge University Brass Ensemble	1:00pm	Church
Wed	12-Mar-25	Elders' Meeting	7:30pm	Zoom
Thu	13-Mar-25	Prayer Meeting	10:15am	St Columba's Chapel
Thu	13-Mar-25	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Thu	13-Mar-25	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	13-Mar-25	Lent House Groups	7.30pm	Zoom
Fri	14-Mar-25	Lectio Divina (see p.40)	8:30am	Zoom
Sun	16-Mar-25	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	16-Mar-25	All Ages Worship led by the Revd Nigel Uden followed by a Retiring Collection for Medical Aid for Palestinians	11:00am	Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Sun	16-Mar-25	All Ages Lunchtime Concert - see p.43)	12:45pm	Church and Organ
Sun	16-Mar-25	Open Table Supper to say goodbye to Alex Clare-Young (see pp 15 & 37)	6:00pm	Gibson Hall
Sun	16-Mar-25	Open Table Communion Service	7:00pm	Church
Mon	17-Mar-25	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Tobias Brook (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Tue	18-Mar-25	Lent House Groups	2:00pm	Rooms 1 & 2
Tue	18-Mar-25	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship join Fulbourn URC for 'The Word Together'	2:30pm	Fulbourn URC
Wed	19-Mar-25	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Raphael Brandman (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Thu	20-Mar-25	Midweek Worship	11:00am	Church
Thu	20-Mar-25	Gibson Lunch	12:30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	20-Mar-25	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	20-Mar-25	Lent House Groups	7:30pm	Zoom
Fri	21-Mar-25	Lectio Divina	8:30am	Zoom
Fri	21-Mar-25	Meditation Group	5:30pm	Emmanuel Room
Sat	22-Mar-25	Stewardship Initial Launch (see p.29)	10:30am	Gibson Hall
Sun	23-Mar-25	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	23-Mar-25	Sunday Worship led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Sun	23-Mar-25	Church Meeting with Election of Elders	12:30pm	Church
Sun	23-Mar-25	Solidarity Hub	7:00pm	Hub



	Date	Name	Time	Location
Mon	24-Mar-25	Officers' Meeting	10:15am	Minister's Office
Mon	24-Mar-25	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Seth Schultheis (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Tue	25-Mar-25	Lent House Groups	2:00pm	Rooms 1 & 2
Tue	25-Mar-25	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	26-Mar-25	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - Ian de Massini & Anne Page (organ)	1:00pm	Church
Thu	27-Mar-25	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion led by the Revd Dr David Cornick	11:00am	Church
Thu	27-Mar-25	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	27-Mar-25	Lent House Groups	7.30pm	Zoom
Fri	28-Mar-25	Lectio Divina	8:30am	Zoom
Sat	29-Mar-25	Elaine's Leaving Coffee Morning (see p.37)	10:30am	Gibson Hall
Sun	30-Mar-25	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	30-Mar-25	Sunday Worship led by Dr Janet Bottoms	11:00am	Church
Sun	30-Mar-25	Solidarity Hub	7:00pm	tbc
<i>Mon</i>	<i>31-Mar-25</i>	<i>Elaine Retires</i>		
Mon	31-Mar-25	Monday Lunchtime Concert - Tony Bridgewater (piano)	1:00pm	Church
Tue	01-Apr-25	Lent House Groups	2:00pm	Rooms 1 & 2
Tue	01-Apr-25	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	02-Apr-25	Wednesday Lunchtime Concert - The Ammenti Trio	1:00pm	Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Thu	03-Apr-25	Midweek Worship led by the Revd Professor David Thompson	11:00am	Church
Thu	03-Apr-25	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Thu	03-Apr-25	Lent House Groups	7:30pm	Zoom
Fri	04-Apr-25	Lectio Divina	8:30am	Zoom
Fri	04-Apr-25	Meditation Group	5:30pm	Emmanuel Room
Sat	05-Apr-25	Prayer Vigil	9:30am	Zoom
Sun	06-Apr-25	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Church
Sun	06-Apr-25	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion and the Induction of Elders led by the Revd Nigel Uden	11:00am	Church
Sun	06-Apr-25	Open Table Social	7:00pm	Zoom

### MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE

2 March	Chris Baker David Cornick Janet Tollington	Christchurch, Newmarket Bassingbourn <b>Water Lane, Bishop's Stortford</b>
9 March	Chris Baker Liz Caswell Janet Tollington Nigel Uden	St Ives Free Church Trinity, Burwell Abbey Lane, Saffron Walden <b>St Vigor's Fulbourn</b>
16 March	Janet Bottoms Penny Flynn Janet Tollington	<b>Bishop's Stortford</b> St Ives Free Church Whiting Street, Bury St Edmunds
23 March	Liz Caswell Penny Flynn Deborah McVey Janet Tollington Nigel Uden	Stetchworth & Cheveley Melbourn <b>St Luke's LEP</b> Buntingford Fulbourn (pm)
30 March	Chris Baker Nigel Uden	Trinity, Burwell <b>St Luke's LEP</b>

## LECTIONARY FOR MARCH

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

### *2 March (Transfiguration)*

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

### *9 March (Lent 1)*

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

### *16 March (Lent 2)*

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalm 27

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Luke 13:31-35

### *23 March (Lent 3)*

Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalm 63:1-8

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

### *30 March (Lent 4)*

Joshua 5:9-12

Psalm 32

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

### *6 April (Lent 5)*

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm 126

Philippians 3:4b-14

John 12:1-8



*Photograph by Stillvision photography*



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 April edition to both Tim and Ann by the cut off date of Wednesday 19 March.

The April edition will be available from Sunday 29 March