



WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE
February 2023

Our Vision: "To celebrate God and share the love of Jesus."

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends

Happy New Year!

As we start another year, are we 'Another day older and deeper in debt' or are we blessed with another opportunity to worship our loving God? With the cost of energy obscenely high it is tempting to answer 'Another day older...' , but we are called to lift our eyes beyond the mundane and see the Kingdom of Heaven, which is not just promised for the future but is here right now.

When I first encountered God I was astounded that God who made all things actually cared for and loved me, loved me so much that he took human form and died that I might live. He loves you that much and He died for you also. But Jesus did not only die, he also rose again, defeating death for all time. You and I are promised eternal life in that kingdom.

We better perceive the closeness of God's kingdom when we are hard pressed, when life is not easy, than at times when everything is running smoothly.

Matthew tells us:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the Earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the Sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely

say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:3-12).

It would be wrong to quote this at those who struggle now and do nothing to help them. As a church we offer friendship to the lonely, food to the hungry, and warmth to those who are cold. “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”

We need people to serve in the café, to speak with and befriend those who come in. If you can help, if you can be Jesus to those who seek him, then please speak to Lorna, Fenella or one of the Elders.

Much love to you

Tony Deighton

Holdfast Credit Union - Naomi Claxton

Recently, I was promoting Holdfast at a community event, and one of the attendees remarked to me that she didn't need Holdfast, because she didn't need a loan.

But Holdfast needs her, and other people like her....we need **you**.

If you have been thinking of Holdfast and associating it just with loans, let me tell you more about our savings options.

When you save with a Credit Union such as Holdfast, you are doing much more than just building up a fund for future expenses – after all, you could do that with a jam jar at home or any high street bank. When you save with us, you are benefitting yourself, your local community, and the wider world community too.

When you save with Holdfast, you have a safe place for your money (your savings are guaranteed under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme just as they would with a high street bank), and if you open an account before you are 65, free life insurance.

The next benefit is to your community – being an active member strengthens the Credit Union and means we can help more people within our community with affordable, low-interest loans, and keep them safe from payday loan companies who charge exorbitant interest rates or unscrupulous unregulated lenders such as loan sharks.

Thinking of the world-wide community - we use an Ethical bank provider to run Holdfast, which means that funds are not invested in companies that make specific products, or use certain practises such as:-



- Health damaging products like tobacco or alcohol
- Environment damaging organisations such as fossil fuel companies
- Companies known to use child labour

Ethical banks instead choose to lend only to businesses which align with their ethical policies, and they support smaller businesses. If you would like fuller details of the ethical policy that our bank uses we are happy to email it to you, but here is a snapshot:

Planet:

- Working to limit and reduce global climate change and the destruction of ecosystems
- Taking steps to reverse the decline in biodiversity
- Preserving animal welfare
- Working towards being a lifetime carbon neutral bank
- Increasing sustainability in our business and suppliers.

People:

- Promoting human rights, social justice in international development and equality
- Campaigning for meaningful change in society
- Being an ethical employer with a strong culture.

Community:

- Promoting economic and social development
- Only working with businesses and organisations that are accountable and share our values

- Supporting the co-operative movement and being a member of Co-operatives UK
- Being good digital citizens and maintaining online protections
- Continuing to actively support the small business community.

So, even if you feel that you don't *need* Holdfast at this time in your life, you could help people who do, by saving with us. And if you do need our help, please contact us.

Whether you are looking to save or to borrow with us, you can apply on our website www.holdfastcreditunion.co.uk or pop up and see us in our office.

Kitchen Manager appointment - Ian Hardie

January Church meeting agreed to appoint a paid Kitchen Manager for the church.

When the proposal was discussed at Elders' meeting the suggestion was made that some members of the fellowship might want to contribute specifically to the costs of this post (and, indeed, some donations have already been received).

If anyone wants to contribute towards meeting the costs either on a one-off or a regular basis will you please speak to Ian Hardie about it?

In the unlikely event that the money received exceeds the costs of the kitchen manager post any excess would be spent on other Centre-related mission activity.

Lent Modules - Forwarded by Emmelia van der Walt

A series of short courses running across the Diocese of Chelmsford between Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Courses cost between £15 and £25 and themes include:

The Book of Job, Christianity and Judaism, Witnessing in the World of Work, Goodness in an often Cruel and Evil World?, Science and Faith?, Christian Prayer Practices, I Believe in the Resurrection, The Development of Holy Communion from the Latin Mass to Common Worship, Church History – The Reformation, Kindling the imagination of Christ, Triple Listening. The courses are open to everyone and include a mixture of face to face, Zoom and online modules, most will include some interactive discussion, breakouts and practical exercises.

If you have any questions please contact Diane Hardy by email: dhardy@chelmsford.anglican.org The deadline for applications is 10th February.

Further Information and booking forms are available on <https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/discipleship/lent-modules> .

Comment from Emmelia who forwarded these details.

I completed the course in Christian Studies a few years ago (offered by the Diocese) and found these Lent courses extremely useful and interesting. I believe we as Christians should arm ourselves with as much knowledge about God's Word, as is possible - and also meet fellow Christians from other churches when the opportunity arises.

News from Great Totham URC

Christmas Coffee Morning 10th December.

We enjoyed a very festive morning. Great to welcome visitors.
Thank you to everyone who supported us.

Lunch Club. Christmas Meal

On 10th January the Lunch Club enjoyed their Christmas meal. Originally planned for December, but cancelled due to snow and ice. A very big thank you to Jean Johnstone for a delicious meal followed by a quiz. A very happy occasion.

Beacon Hill Churches Together

On the 22nd January we shared our united service at St. Peter's Church, Great Totham We joined with friends from St Bartholomew's Church, Wickham Bishops and their Priest in Charge, Revd Hilary Le Seve. It was a beautiful crisp morning, blue skies with the sun glinting on the heavy frost. It is such a serene , rural setting. We walked in to the pealing of the bells.

Our service was led by Revd Sue Godsmark, which included Holy Communion. She gave us a very heartfelt message, reminding us of the beautiful diversity of God 's creation and to celebrate the rich tapestry of the human family.

It was lovely to end with the children telling us about their time together. As their leader led us in prayer ,the children showed us the actions. No better way before going home than sharing in conversation and refreshments. Thank you St Peter's Church.

Great Totham URC February Services

Services begin at 10.30 am . All are welcome.

Sunday 5th. Rev. Lythan Nevard **Moderator for the Eastern area**

Sunday 12th. Rev. Mark Ambrose

Sunday 19th. Sarah Wilson

Sunday 26th. Gil Heathcote

**Articles for the March Magazine
to be with Bob and Jo Stibbards
bjstibbards@gmail.com
by 20th February please**



*"But look", said Martin, "Maltasers have hardly
any chocolate on"*

Five Bible verses to help you trust ‘tomorrow’ to God -provided by Eve Murfitt.

Psalm 9 v 10

Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Psalm 56 3-4

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In God, whose word I praise—
in God I trust and am not afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?

Lamentations 3 v 22 -23

Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

Romans 8 v 28

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

Hebrews 13 v 8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Join us for
Afternoon Tea

Monday February 6th
at 2.30pm

Sandwiches
Scones with Tiptree jam & cream
Home-made Cakes

All for £5.00

Please let the office know
if you would like to come
01376 500958



Attendances over Christmas and New Year - David Goodwin

I thought you might appreciate a brief note relating to attendances over Christmas and New Year compared to 2021/2 (post-covid) and 2019/20 (pre-covid).

December 18 Nativity Service	2022	142	2021	118	2019	199
December 18 Carol Service	2022.	100	2021	69	2019	216
December 25 Christmas Day	2022.	143	2021	63	2019	157
January 1 2023 New Years Day	2023	82	2022	64	2020	165

We continue to have new families coming on a Sunday morning, and this was particularly true for the Nativity Service, and thanks must go to Viv and Tracey for the good work they do with young people.

Celebration of 50 years of the URC.

On Saturday 15 April 2023, the new date after the rail strikes affected us in October 2022 in London to give thanks and to celebrate the URC's 50 years.

From 10am-12 noon at United Reformed Church House at 86 Tavistock Place, London, an Open Church House event will be held, with dozens of activities and crafts related to the jubilee.

Between Church House and Methodist Central Hall there is a Walk to Westminster with self guided tours for all ages packed with buildings of interest to the Church and things to find for younger walkers.

At Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London, from 2.30pm, where the Uniting Assembly of the URC took place in October 1972, a service will take

place to give thanks and to celebrate the five decades of the United Reformed Church.

Tickets for all of these events are free please visit <https://bit.ly/urc50>

Tuesday Praise

7th February. Keith Ives

14th February. 'Femi' Cole - Njie

21st. February Lorna Bantock

28th. February. Gretta Bray

Stamps - Mo Webber

For many years we have been collecting stamps to raise funds for people affected by leprosy. The Leprosy Mission has decided that after 31st March 2023 they will no longer be collecting them. However I have found a new charity that will take used stamps which is the **Royal National Institute for the Blind** and would be very grateful if you could continue to save used stamps and given them to me and I will send them on to the RNIB.



Thank you.

Jean Moody Great Totham URC

Written by Rev Dr Peter Stevenson - Stamford URC

It would be too obvious to make a February article about St Valentine. A 3rd-century Roman saint, commemorated in Western Christianity on February 14 and in Eastern Orthodoxy on July 6. His Saints' Day has been associated with a tradition of courtly love. He is also a patron saint of Terni, asthma and beekeepers. Saint Valentine was a clergyman – either a priest or a bishop – in the Roman Empire who ministered to persecuted Christians. He was martyred and his body buried at a Christian cemetery on the Via Flaminia on February 14, which has been observed as the Feast of Saint Valentine since at least the eighth century.

However, the day after is designated as Singles Awareness. Due to social media, self-love has become a big thing among younger people. It encourages people to learn how to love themselves before getting into a relationship with someone else. There are many negative connotations associated with being single. Single people are dubbed spinsters or bachelors who live sad and unfulfilling lives. But being single comes with plenty of benefits! Singles have the freedom to plan their lives as they want without having to consult with a partner. They can travel, go out for dinner with friends, move to cities for work, and accept job offers, and they are free to make those decisions by themselves. In summary, more freedom, more money, and fewer responsibilities!

Single people tend to be more independent and self-reliant, especially single parents who have a child to care for and raise. Single people are also usually there to support their friends when they're in need, more than people who are tied into relationships. In fact, singleness allows us to reflect on how important non-romantic relationships and love are in our lives. It makes us appreciate ourselves, but also our friends and family, and reminds us that you do not need to have a significant other to celebrate love.

Relationships require couples to give attention and time to each other. This can get in the way of your sound sleep and relaxation. You can go to bed and wake up as per your timeline and not worry about getting up or staying up late for someone else. You also get to focus your attention and time only on the people close to your heart and with whom you feel comfortable. As a single person, you are the boss of your own free time, and therefore you can use this time to help out a friend or family member. You can even volunteer your time to help out a cause that means a lot to you. You can do some real good with your free time as a single person.

Paul decided not to marry and offers much advise on the subject in 1 Corinthians chapter 7.. So, before we elevate the place of marriage and are over-enthusiastic about partnering-up single people let us reflect further on the value of both states of being and celebrate the choices that people make.

Many blessings

A small world !

Rev Dr Peter Stevenson, minister of Stamford URC and his wife Dawn, paid Rose Pryor a new year's visit. Peter and Dawn share a long friendship with Rose and the late Rev Ken Pryor.



**Love Food Hate Waste on ‘Best Before’ dates
article by
WRAP and provided by Emmelia Van der Walt**

'There has been some big news over on our social media pages: more and more retailers are joining the fight against food waste by removing ‘Best Before’ dates on much of their fresh produce! We’re talking fresh fruit and veg that hasn’t been prepared – so not things like the chopped-up fruit salad pots, carrot batons or salad bags you’d find in the chiller.



Most of our major supermarkets are making this important change to help stop good food from ending up in the bin. They’ve done this based on recommendations from our own research, so we’ve put together this post to answer your questions. Let’s start with the basics ...

What’s the difference between a **Best Before and **Use By** date?**

Pre-prepared fruit and veg, such as the salad pots and carrot batons we mentioned earlier, have to have a Use By date, but uncut fresh produce doesn’t – and there’s no legal requirement for it to have a Best Before date either. That’s because Use By dates are about safety, while Best Before dates are about quality. You can’t eat food beyond the Use By date, but you can eat food beyond a Best Before date.

What does the research say?

Our showed that removing Best Before dates increases the length of time people say they’ll still eat fresh produce. In other words, people work out for themselves whether something is still good to eat, rather than being influenced by the date label. Let’s have a quick look at our recommendations.

Ditch the date labels

Presented with a photo of a slightly tired-looking apple, 46% of people said they'd bin it if it had a date on it, compared with just 7% if there was no date. Indeed, when we looked at the effect of removing dates on five fresh produce items, we saw a significant decrease in household food waste for all of them – except bananas. Hence our recommendation to remove date labels from fresh, uncut fruit and veg to reduce food waste.

Sell loose

We have also recommended to retailers that they sell fresh produce loose, rather than pre-packaged, as this means people can buy only what they need. That makes it much more likely that they'll actually be able to eat what they've bought before it goes off. The added bonus is that it also means less plastic packaging, which the research shows makes little or no difference to the shelf life of fresh produce!

Fresher in the fridge

Finally, we recommended that retailers do more to engage with customers on the best ways of storing food at home to make it last longer – in particular, highlighting the fact that most fresh fruit and veg (except bananas, onions and pineapples) stays fresher for longer if it's kept in the fridge below 5°C. Apples, for example, showed the first signs of deterioration three days after the Best Before date when stored at room temperature, but that increased to a staggering 74 days when they were kept in the fridge. Bye bye, fruit bowl!

How much food could be saved?

Combined, these recommendations have huge potential. We estimate the average family in the UK throws away a whopping £730 worth of food a

year, so the possible savings are huge. But the ability to buy what you need – coupled with the removal of Best Before dates on uncut fresh produce – can also hugely reduce household food waste AND plastic. By our calculations, the measures we've recommended could prevent 100,000 tonnes of household food waste and around 10,300 tonnes of plastic.

The great thing about ditching the date label is that we can make up our own minds about whether fresh produce is still good to eat – or not. We already hunt out that ripe melon or avocado, We've shown that fresh produce lasts way beyond the Best Before date, and when it's bought in the right quantity and stored properly – i.e. in the fridge, for most fruit and veg – there's no need for it to end up in the bin.

How will the shops know which fresh produce is the freshest?

Fear not – shops will still use date coding for stock rotation! It's only the labels you see as a customer that'll be removed. They'll still be using those yellow stickers for reduced items, too.

Will this mean less goes to charities and food banks?

On the contrary! It actually means they'll get more than they did before, as some felt unable to take food that had gone beyond the Best Before date. It's safe to say that we're delighted to see retailers heading in the right direction with date labelling and giving us all the chance to use our own judgement about what we're happy to eat. Tackling both food waste and unnecessary plastic packaging at the same time also feels like a big win – let's hope even more shops soon follow suit!



February 2023 Our Shopping List

**Tinned Tomatoes
Tinned Veg
Tinned Rice Pudding
Tinned Fruit
Tinned Cold Meat
Rice (500g pack)
Pasta Sauce
Jam
1 Litre UHT Milk
1 Litre Long Life Juice
Coffee
Sugar**

We follow the Food Standards Agency standards. We can only accept donations of unopened and undamaged goods well within their "use by" date. Items that do not meet these requirements cannot be used and your donation may be wasted.

www.braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk
info@braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk

Registered Charity in England & Wales (1148752)



Minister	Minister	Lorna Bantock	571757
Children and Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Sollis	500958
Associate Children and Youth Pastor	Ms	Tracey Eagling	500958
Centre Manager	Mrs	Ana Martin	500958
Children & Youth Elder	Mr	Gavin McCall	
Church Secretaries (also Elders)	Mr Mrs	Tony Deighton and Muriel Heppinstall	518866
Discipleship Elder	Mr	David Wellings	
Mission and Growth Elders	Mrs Mr	Fenella Hardie Ian Hunt	
Pastoral Elder	Mrs	Sarah Wellings	
Property Elder	Mr	Billy Kennedy	
Church Treasurer (also Elder)	Mr	Ian Hardie	
Worship Elder	Mr	Keith Meredith	
Centre Director	Mrs	Fenella Hardie	
Kitchen Manager	Mrs	Heather March	500958
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