



WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE

February 2022

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends

I imagine that by now you have heard the news that our minister Revd Mark Ambrose has resigned his position at Witham URC, this follows an extended period when Mark has been unwell and unable to perform his duties and Mark has decided to resign to allow the church to find a new minister. We are all very sad at Mark leaving and we hope and pray that this will allow Mark to recover his health.

The URC process on finding a new Minister starts once Mark has left his pastorate, the Eastern Synod will appoint an Interim Moderator who will guide us through the process of finding a new minister. Part of this is to produce a Pastorate Profile, you will recall that we spent a long time doing this before we were introduced to Mark and having spoken to the other Elders it is our intention to base the new Pastorate Profile on the old one so as to minimise the time before we can approach Synod and ask them to declare a vacancy. Once a vacancy is declared our Pastorate Profile will be shared with ministers seeking a new pastorate.

As I write this we are in the last few days of January; personally, I do not like winter months, I find the cold, bare trees and long dark nights very depressing, I long for the new life that comes with spring, just February and half of March to go and we can emerge from hibernation. We also have the gift of new life from God, this gift isn't just once when we first become Christians, but every time we seek to follow him and put aside that which has temporarily distracted us. God welcomes us home every time.

All God's blessing to you

Love

Tony

Elders for 2022 - Revd Lorna Bantock

Following the AGM in November and the election of six new elders, we now have eleven elders whose roles are as follows:

Children and Youth elder: Keith Meredith

Church Secretaries: Tony Deighton and Muriel Heppinstall

Discipleship and Growth: Sarah Campbell

Mission and Outreach: Maureen Barry and Gavin McCall

Pastoral: Doug Sandles

Property: Billy Kennedy and Rocio MacDonald

Treasurer: Ian Hardie

Worship: Fenella Hardie

We have often had two church secretaries which is particularly helpful when one works and although initially Tony declined help, he has subsequently realised that it would be extremely helpful as the workload is considerable and he has not yet fully retired.

Sarah Campbell requested to be moved from worship. She (with Lorne) hosts and runs a home group and is keen to promote them.

The position of treasurer is not necessarily an elder's role but where the treasurer is elected as an elder, (s) he retains the position as their elder's role.

Victor Training Centre (VTC) Tamil Nadu India - Shirley Ratnage

Some of you might remember that in 2017 we were busy fundraising for a Christian training centre in India. It is run by SWAP (Serving Women and the Poor). They are trying to provide training to enable poorer people to obtain work. The Centre opened in 2017 with a dressmaking course and a course in Health Care. There are plans to run motor mechanic courses and maybe set up a sewing co-operative.

Jan Bull and I visited at the end of 2017 when the dressmaking courses and the Health care course were in full swing. After 6 months training in pattern cutting and garment making the ladies who successfully complete the course are given a sewing machine (old fashioned treadle machine) to have at home so they can take in work and help support their family. Those on the Health care course went on to work in hospitals/clinics or to further education, such as nursing.

During the pandemic the Centre had to close but when permitted, dressmaking courses have taken place and more women have been given sewing machines (most of the money we raised is used to pay for the machines).

When we visited we took a large suitcase of donated sewing accessories (needles, pins, sewing thread, embroidery thread, buttons, zips etc) with us and the ladies were given a kit containing some of these items, along with the sewing machine. (Wendy McWhirr even cut out needle cases for the ladies to make and embroider). This week we received a photo of the latest group of successful students, with their sewing kits. These are the final kits from the materials we took out, but they will continue to give them kits sourced locally. It is great to see people benefiting from our efforts.



Fellowship Walk - Muriel Heppinstall



The next Fellowship Walk will be on Saturday 19th February. It will be a 'there & back' walk from Maldon Tesco to the Museum of Power at Langford where I hope the café will be open for midway refreshments. It is about 3 miles in total and there are hard footpaths all the way and no stiles. A slight detour will take us to Beeleigh Falls.

Meet at the far end of Tesco's car park at 10.00am. Please let Muriel Heppinstall know if you would like to come. We will try to arrange transport so we use the minimum number of cars.

A Mother's Day Eco Friendly substitute to cut flowers

Julie Harris

With Mother's Day approaching and not far off, I have been thinking about the thousands upon thousands of bouquets of flowers that will no doubt be purchased and either given or sent on that very special day.

I would like to suggest perhaps more eco-friendly alternatives to cut flowers, most of which are more than likely imported which in itself carries a carbon footprint, also they are wrapped in cellophane which may not be biodegradable. So how about buying instead a plant which will have a longer life be more eco-friendly and perhaps not have a plastic wrapper. Or even a miniature tree perhaps to be planted in the garden or something along those lines. An outdoor plant or tree would benefit nature and live much longer than the perhaps two week's life expectancy of a beautiful bouquet of flowers.



"I'm updating the 'rota notice-board' rota,
rota... do I see a hand...?"



Dear Friends

I think you all know my beloved wife, Jacqui has passed away to "Heaven".
I must thank all of you for your cards and sympathy.

Love from
Michael

Five Bible Verses for the New Year - Eve Murfitt

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Isiah 40:31

Those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength they will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

Lamentations 3:22-23

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.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here.

Hebrews:10:23

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Knowing Yourself - Peter Howard

Oh my Lord have I given my heart
or mouthed the words
to look the part
fired by emotions.

My opinions they fly
Are my words for your honour
or Lord truth shy
do I speak from experience

Have I lived what I say
or borrowed ideas
and leant on hearsay
my nature's much twisted
and my promises so hollow

So why would you suffer
then call me to follow
Would I stand when they accused you
and still call you friend

I have not doubts I would
wither and bend
no rights have I
no reason for pride

Only by your favour
am I called to your side
I speak of the truth
and my fervour display

But I will confess
and my doubts convey
perhaps then I would walk at a slower pace
Behind

Patience and love
to give them pride of place
for what will I say
when we meet face to face
save beg for forgiveness
and ask for your Grace



Valentine's Day

What is the real story of Valentine's Day?

The ancient Romans may also be responsible for the name of our modern day of love. **Emperor Claudius II executed two men** — both named Valentine — on February 14 of different years in the 3rd century A.D. Their martyrdom was honoured by the Catholic Church with the celebration of St. Valentine's Day.

**Articles for the
March Magazine by
20th February 2022 please
to bjstibbards@gmail.com**

Tuesday Praise

Feb 1st	Richard Wearmouth
8	Michael Child
15	Dr Jonathan Pritchard
22	Lorna Bantock
March 1st	Fr Nixon
8	Richard Wearmouth
15	Christine Newmarch
22	Marina Price
29	Ian Hardie

Life before plastic - Julie Harris

For many of us we may remember a time when plastic wasn't actually used very much particularly for food packaging. The younger generations perhaps have got used to the plastic being everywhere and maybe think that it is always been this way. I have been quite interested in how we manage life without plastic, here is what I found.

Roundabout the 1950's, They were subtle changes in the use of plastic, a lot of items like fruit and veg would've been brought loose and perhaps taken home in a wicker basket, meat would've been wrapped in paper at the butchers as would have cheese been, other products would have been in tins or cans or reusable bottles. People would buy dried food in bulk and store them, some people if they were lucky might have an allotment or garden where they might grow some of their own produce. Milkman were a very common sight, delivering milk and taking away the empty bottles to be recycled again.

So what changed and what brought about the onset of plastic usage ?

At the end of the 1950s something happened that would change our lives and the world forever. Improvements in the manufacturing and processing of plastics saw the costs declined dramatically, combined with the abundance of oil available, saw the mass production of plastics which is now a blight to our World.



As for snacks and desserts, there wasn't as much availability or variety as there is today. Commonly these items would come in large containers and people would weigh them and put their purchases in paper bags, or netted shopping bags.

Before plastic became so widely used, people lead a very different lifestyle. For instance most food was home cooked so the concept of takeaways and consequently for plastic was not there. Many cleaning items were made from paper or cloth and cloth items were washed and reused including nappies.

Perhaps when plastic production ramped up it may have seemed a very convenient solution to make peoples lives easier perhaps. The world population in 1950 was 2.5 billion, just over a third of the population that is now. Perhaps plastic pollution wasn't such an issue then but scientists and ecologists started to realise in the 1960s that plastic and the disposal of it had become a huge problem.

Here is a broad timeline of the plastic crisis today and we ask ourselves can we really carry on like this;

1946 saw the first national plastics exhibition In New York City which showcases plastics to be used in World War II.

1979 saw the introduction of plastic bags for grocery purchases in the US.

1980 Saw the first awareness of excessive usage of plastic and the damage it is doing already. People acknowledge that plastic is a problem, that must be dealt with, campaigns and initiatives begin.

1990 sees the production and introduction of plastic microbeads for use in the cosmetics industry these were widely in demand, but is seems the dumping of plastic in our oceans and the subsequent breaking down and release of these micro beads hadn't been thought through 1997 this was the first time that a man called Charles Moore spotted a. floating garbage mass

while sailing and the great Pacific garbage patch of the Pacific Ocean was discovered. It is estimated that the Great Pacific Garbage Patch covers an estimated area of 1,600,000 km² which is about twice the size of Texas.



2002 after one of the most severe floods seen in Bangladesh it became the first country to ban plastic bags, which had been the cause of drains to become clogged making it impossible for the Water to recede.

2007 San Francisco is the first state to ban the use of plastic bags.

2008 A Government study is carried out and the health issues of using plastic emerge, it becomes clear that plastic is humanities death knell. In the study it was found that one of the elements used to make plastic bottles and even parts of baby formula bottles were responsible for increasing the risk of cancer and many other diseases.

2014 the Netherlands take its stand against plastic and bans cosmetic micro beads.

The world has realised perhaps too late the dangers of plastic, so, as a race, do we forego the convenience of plastic and go back to her old ways in the old days?

Plastic is probably the number one critical environmental issue for us today, is it too late and will the world be willing to make a sacrifice and live without plastic?

People lived without it once, are we willing to revert and live without it again? I believe it is possible, and if there is a will to save this Planet then I believe we can find a way.

So what now after COP 26?

The frenzy of COP26 now having died down ,with the 30,000 or so delegates that attended, travelling back to their home countries, we ask ourselves what was agreed in a bid to halt the perhaps too late damage to the climate of this beautiful Planet we were gifted.

Here are the key points

Emissions; the target to try and keep temperature rises within 1.5°C to prevent a climate catastrophe this has been pledged but might be difficult to achieve. Cuts to emissions have to be made to achieve this goal.

Coal

An explicit plan was agreed to reduce the use of coal which is responsible for 40% of annual CO₂ emissions.

Developing countries

Agreement pledged to significantly increase money to help poor countries cope with the effects of climate change and make the switch to clean energy.

The idea is for richer countries to donate to a fund to assist poor countries who are the most affected and impacted by climate change. Ways have been discussed to assist poor or developing countries, they include grants , loans and private investments to support efforts to adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects. These include coastal defences to protect against flooding, creation of agricultural systems less prone to drought, the infrastructure to enable these poor nations to switch to renewable sustainable energy sources such as solar wind and hydro power.

Fossil fuel subsidies

World leaders agreed to phase out subsidies that artificially lower the price of coal gas or natural gas, however no firm dates have been set.

I try to do my bit for the Planet, do I live in hope ? Always..... do I think what has been agreed feasible? I really want to have faith and hope..... not for me.... but for the younger generation and future generations to come.

Door Stewards Rota - David Goodwin

The rota for January to June 2022 is being prepared and volunteers of all ages are needed for the very important role of greeting people as they arrive for our Sunday morning service. At present only one door will be open so only one Door Steward is required each Sunday.

Your duties will also include handing out the service sheets (and bibles should they be requested), taking one of the Offertory bags (only if you want to) and collecting the bibles and unwanted service sheets after the service.

I hope enough volunteers come forward so you only have to undertake the role once in the period, although you are more than welcome to put your name down more than once if you wish to.

Please add your name to your chosen date/s on the rota in Church Suite if you can. If this isn't possible then please either email me with your chosen date/s or call me – details below.

Email: davidgoodwin2009@hotmail.co.uk

Tel: 01376 515203

Mob: 07932 198352

Thoughts from a wobbly old chair! Bob Stibbards

When we first came to Witham I remember Jo saying to me when the band were playing wouldn't I like to be part of that. I had not picked up a guitar for several decades but decided, and indeed encouraged to buy a new one, never really thinking that I would actually use it, and in turn another one. It would have been ungracious not to do so, thank you Jo! Then with encouragement from Gerry and Pete, even when I would barely put three chords together, I started to play in the morning services hiding away in the background.

Now I sit on a wobbly but comfortable old chair in the front: I was reluctant to do this at first but did so with encouragement from Nicola, and I am grateful that she did, as I now get a much better idea of the overall sound compared to being under the gallery. More importantly I face the congregation and get some sense of how people are feeling but this is somewhat more tricky currently with masks.

At the end of October I was part of a band put together by Sally Stacey for the bikers AGM, and also for the Sunday service. Tim Shelley provided an excellent article in the December magazine.. Other than playing 3 songs picked by the Bikers for their AGM, I did not know what to expect and came with a completely open mind whereas when I come to Sunday morning services as soon as I walk through the doors I seem to be distracted by past events.

The atmosphere generated by the bikers, for their AGM service was electric; there was a real feeling of joy, love, fun and happiness between the bikers of just being able to get together solely to worship God. I come away with a real buzz as did others in the band, I felt the spirit; did I really just say that, and hope and pray that we may all experience this.

Now on a more normal note for me. Fitbit have sent details of my total steps for last year which was 5,551,665 about 2,750 miles the distance from London and the North Pole. Amazing what you can find on google. However just before Christmas I started to have pain in my right knee which has stopped my long walks but I will be back!

Join us for

Afternoon Tea

Monday February 7th 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



Fairtrade Fortnight 21 February–6 March 2022



Fairtrade and Climate Justice

In 2022 we are continuing to highlight the growing challenges that climate change brings to farmers and workers in the communities Fairtrade works with as COP26 didn't deliver the change needed to tackle the climate crisis.

The facts are straightforward. Farmers and workers in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Honduras, who have done the least to contribute to climate change, are disproportionately affected by it. The climate crisis is the biggest threat to the livelihoods of millions of small-scale farmers and agricultural workers in low-income countries worldwide.



The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us more than ever how interconnected we are globally. This interconnection is at the very heart of the Fairtrade message and is where your role begins. Farmers need better incomes and financial support to adapt to changing weather patterns and change their farming methods to ensure a low-carbon economy. By choosing Fairtrade, you show solidarity with those on the frontline of the climate crisis. You are part of the Fairtrade movement, and you have the power to drive long-term change, not only with your shopping choices but with your support in spreading the message.

The Problem

For generations, the exploitation of people and planet has caused extreme global inequality and a climate emergency. Fairtrade farmers have told us that climate change is their biggest challenge right now.

They are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis in the most climate vulnerable nations. Despite contributing the least to the climate crisis, smallholders in developing countries are disproportionately affected by increasingly frequent weather events, loss of fertile soil and crop diseases. The farmers that Fairtrade works with have seen their crops of coffee, cocoa, honey, and vegetables in Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua be completely devastated. At 1.1 degrees, current levels of global heating are causing communities to suffer hurricanes in Central America, floods and landslides in India, sweeping away people's homes, destroying entire livelihoods in seconds, while swarms of locusts affect East Africa and extreme drought continues in Southern Africa. By 2050 as much as 50 percent of the global surface area currently used for coffee farming may no longer be suitable and many cocoa growing regions in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire – who produce over half of the world's cocoa – will become too hot to grow the crop.

Farmers have fewer resources to adapt to changes in climate and other stresses they are experiencing every day. Yet we all rely on farmers to produce the food we need for a growing global population. 80 percent of the world's food comes from 500 million family farms. With the continuing global COVID-19 pandemic, these communities also face rising debts, falling commodity prices and widespread shocks in the global supply chains. These huge challenges, alongside already low incomes, mean these communities are often unable to invest in ways to adapt to the widespread effects of a changing climate, let alone clean energy and climate-smart farming methods needed to protect the planet's forests and help restore biodiversity.

Summary: Climate change is an immediate threat to farmers' livelihoods, and to the products we love, like chocolate, coffee and bananas. Unless we clamp down hard on global emissions, we will all suffer. As a matter of justice and a matter of science, the matter of the climate crisis cannot be delayed any longer. (Article from Fairtrade)



February 2022 Shopping List

Urgent:

Food Items:

Instant Mash

Coffee

Squash (Small)

Non-Food Items:

Laundry Detergent (Liquid or Pods)

Nappies Size 5 and 6

To Maintain Stocks:

Chocolate Bars

Jam

Cold Meat

Juice

Tea Bags (No Larger Than 80)

Tinned Spaghetti

Packet Soup

Instant Noodles

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 (1148702)

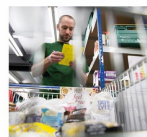
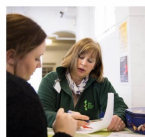




Braintree Area Foodbank has the following exciting vacancies

Volunteering role	Location of volunteering opportunity	Hours for role
Distribution Centre Manager	Braintree area	Approx 6 hours per week, inclusive of home admin work
Signposter (must also be able to work as a centre helper)	Braintree area	4 hours per week, on a revolving rota
Centre Helper	Braintree area	4 hours per week, on a revolving rota
Driver (van provided)	Braintree area	4 hours per week, on a revolving rota

If you would like more information or to apply please contact Lee Ranson, Project Manager on pm@braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk, or call us on 01376 330694. Role packs are available upon request.



Braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk

Registered Charity in England & Wales (1148782)



Minister	Revd	Mark Ambrose	
Associate Minister	Revd	Lorna Bantock	571757
Children and Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Sollis	500958
Associate Children and Youth Pastor	Ms	Tracey Eagling	500958
Centre Managers	Mrs	Rocio MacDonald and Ana Martin	500958
Children & Youth Elder	Mr	Keith Meredith	
Church Secretaries (also Elders)	Mr Mrs	Tony Deighton and Muriel Heppinstall	518866
Discipleship and Growth Elder	Mrs	Sarah Campbell	
Mission and Outreach Elders	Mrs Mr	Maureen Barry and Gavin McCall	
Pastoral Elder	Mr	Doug Sandles	
Property Elders	Mr Mrs	Billy Kennedy and Rocio MacDonald	
Church Treasurer (also Elder)	Mr	Ian Hardie	
Worship Elder	Mrs	Fenella Hardie	
Centre Director	Mrs	Fenella Hardie	
Kitchen Manager	Mrs	Heather March	500958
Community Cafe Pastoral co-ordinator	Mrs	Eve Murfitt	
Prayer Chain Co-ordinator	Mrs	Rosemary Stinson	516602
Pastoral Team Co-ordinator	Mrs	Ruth Blackett	07546 838825
Magazine Editors		Jo and Bob Stibbards	bjstibbards@gmail.com

A CHARITY CONCERT
in aid of
Tear Fund Afghan Emergency Appeal
SATURDAY 5TH FEBRUARY 2022, 7.30P.M.
WITHAM UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



Lucy Curnow (violin), Vicki Hodgson (violin)
& Nikos Zarb (viola), members of the
BBC Symphony Orchestra, play music by
Antonin Dvorak and Max Reger

ADMISSION FREE – DONATIONS WELCOME