



**WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE**

**July/August 2023**

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

## **Pastoral Letter**

Dear Friends

Mark 10 v. 15 “ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it”.

Dear friends

Have you noticed that if a baby or a small child smiles at you it is almost impossible not to smile back? It's the same with that lovely, gurgling laugh they have, you just want to laugh with them....and they smile and laugh at so many things they see around them. Everything seems to be a source of wonder and joy. Just watch adults congregate around a new baby in church, everyone wants to look and sigh and bathe in those smiles and giggles. Even better if you are allowed the privilege of a cuddle, just holding that little bundle of joy for a short while brightens up the darkest day. It is one of the great blessings of volunteering at the Centre that you get an opportunity for such cuddles when Small Talk and/or the Baby Bank are in session.

One morning I walked through the Grove precinct and The Works had their bubble machine going. When a little boy in a pushchair caught sight of the bubbles he clapped his hands, shouted “bubbubs” and positively bounced up and down in delight.....and all the adults round about smiled or even laughed to see him.

I know there are lots of possible interpretations of those words of Jesus about children but to me it speaks of their sheer joy in the world around us, the openness and curiosity about seeing and learning new things. In the most ghastly and traumatic situations around the world it is the children who suffer most but at the same time seem to still be able to find something to make them smile and encourage them to play.

I read an article recently where the writer was asking whatever happened to uncontrolled laughter, the kind that comes naturally to children but that we seem to lose as we get older and the cares and worries of everyday life press in.

The dictionary definition of joy is “a deep feeling of happiness or contentment or something which causes such a feeling”. I have that feeling as I sit in our garden as we near the end of a project 5 years in the making. (Although you never really “finish” anything in a garden!) One of my gardening books has a line inside the cover, “you are closer to God in a garden than anywhere else on earth.”

I know Ian and I are very blessed and privileged to have a lovely garden to enjoy and Witham URC is also blessed to have a gardener and a garden at the Centre which brings joy to so many people when they sit out there in the summer. Children especially love to be able to play and run around in it.

In the May magazine Naomi mentioned the things that bring her joy. So many people today would say they have nothing to be joyful about and indeed it might sound heartless to be saying forget your worries and look for the joyful things, but surely that is what bringing the Good News to people is all about. And to me the concepts of JOY and LOVE are intertwined.

John 15 v.9 “ As the Father loved me, so have I loved you. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete”

The people working in the Centre join for a short prayer together before the start of the day’s session and at the core of our prayers is the desire that all who come in will in some way be touched by God’s love through what we say and do and in the way we seek to serve. When I am leading prayers I often include asking for help that we might work with joy in our hearts for

the bible says that if the work is a burden rather than a joy then who will gain from it. This is not always easy and there is also a lot of prayer for patience!

Our hymn and song books are full of verses encouraging us to rejoice, be joyful! E.g. “Joy to the World the Lord has come!”: “Rejoice, rejoice! Christ is in you- the hope of glory in our hearts, He lives, He lives! His breath is in you.”

That passage from John 15 goes on to tell us that greater love has no man than that he lays down his life for his friends. Knowing that our heavenly Father loved us enough to live with us and die for us and sent His Spirit to be with us always must surely be the greatest reason to be filled with infinite joy and unstoppable laughter..... so let's pass it on!

Blessings

Fenella



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Eastern Synod Youth Event



The Playground  
Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2023  
2.30pm – 4.30pm

1km long, 30 obstacle outdoor assault course  
Tonnes of fun whilst challenging too.

The Playground  
Haysborder Road, Barrow, Suffolk, IP29  
5BE

Youth Event  
The Playground, Barrow, Suffolk IP29 5BE

The day is for young people aged between 10 to 18

Come and experience the 1Km assault course with 30 different obstacles including slides, nets and walls and perhaps a muddy ditch or two! More details can be found here:

[OBSTACLES BSE – The Playground \(theplaygrounduk.com\)](http://theplaygrounduk.com)

Refreshments will be provided during the afternoon.

The cost for the event is £7 per person

This is a great opportunity for children and Young People from across the synod to come together in a fun and active way and to meet young people from other churches.

Please encourage  
Young People to come along and have fun.

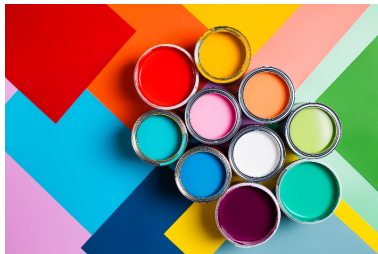
For further information please contact  
Nicola Grieves  
Children's and Youth Development Officer  
[cydo@urceastern.org.uk](mailto:cydo@urceastern.org.uk)

tel 07515721172

## **Volunteers for Summer Painting Campaign**

### **Billy Kennedy - Property Elder**

In the 2-week period from Monday 31st July until Friday 11th August the Property Committee plan to carry out some cleaning, preparation and painting of some of the woodwork outside and inside of the Church. Volunteers who can offer any half day or more during this period are needed.



Sheets for volunteers to sign up will be put up in mid-July in the Café Area (formerly known as Meeting Point)

Please consider adding a helping hand to keep our splendid buildings in good condition.

Jobs include:

1. Painting of the main entrance doors to the Church
2. Sanding, sealing and repainting parts of the front windows.
3. Touching up some of the green paintwork on the balustrade of the balcony
4. Repairing and painting the Church ceiling that suffered water damage some years ago.
5. Repainting a section of the ceiling above the entrance and stairs in the Centre entrance foyer.

Please let us know if you have noticed any other areas in need of attention.



*Join us for a  
Strawberry Afternoon Tea  
Monday July 3<sup>rd</sup> at 2.30pm*

*Sandwiches,  
scones with Tiptree jam & cream  
Strawberries*

*Price: £6.00*

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

*There will be no Afternoon Tea in August  
We restart on September 4<sup>th</sup>*



# July 2023 Shopping List



## Urgent:

Feminine Hygiene  
Size 3 Nappies  
Tinned Fish  
Jam  
Tinned Vegetables  
Tinned Fruit  
Shampoo  
Tinned Vegetables  
Tinned Hot Snacks  
(eg Beans and  
Sausages)  
UHT Milk  
Coffee  
Sugar  
Fruit Squash

## To Maintain Stocks

Size 4,5,6 nappies  
Tinned Tomatoes  
Sponge Puddings  
Tea  
Tinned Spaghetti  
Tinned Rice Pudding  
Tinned Hot Meat (Stew, Curry)  
Custard (Packet)  
Tinned Potatoes  
Instant Mash  
Rice  
Pasta  
Pasta Sauce  
Biscuits  
Instant Snacks (eg Pot  
Noodle)  
Packet Soup  
Long Life Juice  
Cereal (500g & Below)

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](http://www.braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk)  
[info@braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk)

Registered Charity in England & Wales (1148792)



## **Great Totham URC - Jean Moody**

### **Article by Rev Peter Stevenson**

The United Reformed Church East Midland Summer School this year concentrated on the theme of theology and practice in context. Put another way, how does the church relate to its community. Is the community there for the church or is the church there for the community?

John Proctor, former tutor in New Testament studies at Westminster College and former Secretary of the URC concentrated on the letter to the church at Ephesus, while Peter Ball, Director of Church Resource Development at Westminster College looked at the church today. Dave Featonby, a retired minister in the Synod, showed the film *The Bank of Dave* and led a discussion about the business need in Burnley and how Dave Fishwick went about meeting that need.

The three perspectives complimented each other and the discussion they prompted resulted in some good insights and ideas. For instance, rather than saying that the “church should be involved in mission”, one of the delegates spoke of the people of God understanding their purpose in community. It is this aspect of the study that we might reflect on further.

At ChristChurch, we want to become the best, and go to, auditorium in the town. Our stakeholders have told us what they would like and we have engaged professionals to help us imagine how that might be done. The musical community of the town are keen to work with us so that together we can encourage residents to enjoy great music in a great venue. We have listened to the community and are seeking to respond.

In Stamford, the hall is seen as a meeting place for friends to come together to chat and socialise whether over a coffee or a game of table tennis. Rooms are used to help groups meet and support each other. We want to add value

to this by improving the facilities and extending the church's welcome to others.

By listening to and learning from the communities in which our churches are situated, God's people are able to better understand their purpose. That purpose becomes our mission of bring Good News to people who want to see the love of God in action. The task of the people of God/faitth is to make real the knowledge we have of a God that loved the world so much that he sent his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Jesus came not to condemn the world, but to save the it.

### **Great Totham URC - Sue Bowyer**

#### **ChurchPreachers for July and August - Sue Bowyer**

July 2nd	Farm Service
July 9th	Ernie Finch
July 16th	Sarah Wilson.
July 23rd	Rev. Mark Ambrose.
July 30th	At Witham URC

All are welcome to join us. Our services begin at 10:30.

Our next coffee morning will be on Saturday 8th of July at 10 am

A time to chat with old friends and new .

You will find us in Chapel Road, Great Totham North CM9 8DA

August 6th	Richard Maison
August 13th	Trevor Andrews
August 20th	Sarah Wilson, with Communion
August 27th	Mike Harrison

## Muriel Heppinstall celebrating a Milestone Birthday



## Can I please have your egg shells Julie Harris

Dear all,

If you don't use your egg shells in the garden, can you please start saving them for me, maybe wait until you have a decent amount, I would be very grateful, they are brilliant as they are highly nutritious for the soil, I will be able to use them on my Veg plot on the garden and at my allotment.....thank you.



### Celtic services

The next Celtic style service will be on Sunday July 16<sup>th</sup>  
at 6.30pm

What exactly is Celtic style? It derives from the early Christian monastic tradition that was spread from Ireland to Scotland and Northumberland by St Columba & St Aidan, whereas the Roman church came with St Augustine to Canterbury.

It is a way of faith that finds time to be alone with God; that is God-centred rather than self or work-centred and which brings both beauty, truth and wholeness into lives that are, if not empty certainly not as fulfilled as they might be.

Elements of the early monastic or Celtic Church are:

- *A genuine love of nature and a passion for God's creation, coupled with a sense of closeness between the natural and supernatural.*
- *A love of art and poetry, seen within surviving illuminated Gospels and other works.*
- *Although they seem to have been theologically orthodox, there was a distinct emphasis on the Trinity, respect for Mary the Mother of Christ, the Incarnation and the use within worship of early forms of liturgy.*
- *Within their religious life we see an emphasis on solitude, pilgrimage and mission, sacred locations and tough penitential acts.*
- *There were few boundaries between the sacred and the secular*
- *We see an emphasis on family and kinship ties.*
- *There seems to have been greater equality for women than in subsequent church life.*
- *A generous hospitality was an important part of everyday life*

There are many modern Celtic style services, most of which include responses from the whole congregation and are usually though provoking and stretch our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. They often use visual objects to enhance worship and help concentration,

## **Well it has been a while..... Bob Stibbards**

Whilst building work to our house is being undertaken we have been fortunate to spend some time in a house my nephew owns in the Cotswolds and on a lazy and very hot afternoon what better than to share a few moments.

### **Driving manners.**

Well there aren't any here. Let somebody out or give way and no acknowledgement at all, am I invisible? I am not, I believe a slow driver and to prove a point whilst here I picked up a speeding ticket. Every day I am encouraged to go much faster by bumper huggers as Jo calls them, on narrow, twisty roads,. We are thinking of getting a rear blind fitted to our car which says 'back off 'or not so polite words!

### **Daylesford Farm Shop**



This place is ridiculous but curiously amusing. It is a very posh farm shop, £7.95 for a bunch of asparagus! It also sells ludicrously expensive luxury goods. It is in the middle of nowhere and is owned by the founders of JCB. Lots of EV chargers in the car park. Fancy restaurants for women who lunch. A wellness centre. Need to

save up for our next visit!

### **Technology**

My nephews house is full of gadgets which includes the TV telling you when the washing machine at their other house has finished. ( Why?) Presumably they can also see when our washing cycle has finished and as

we have no washing machine at home at the moment we have brought it all here and use it a lot!

### **Could I do this when we are short of musicians?**

Whilst visiting Stratford upon Avon we saw a musician playing a bass guitar and a 6 string guitar on his lap at the same time. Sounded good but before I can give this a go I need to learn to play the bass guitar.....

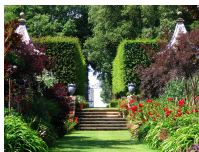
### **Fitbit disaster.**

A total disaster when my Fitbit stopped working but it was relaxing for a few days without the challenge of steps until a new charger arrived.

### **Places to avoid.**

The Cotswolds has many picture postcard villages such as Upper and Lower Slaughter, Bourton on the Water to name a few.. We had been to them before but decided to have another look but they are sooooo crowded and impossible to park so we have crossed them off the list forever.

### **A super garden**



Well if you like gardens  
Hidcote Manor  
is a must, it is stunning.

### **I should have taken my Val Doonican chair.**

There is a small restaurant in the village which has just 12 covers and opens only on Fridays and Saturdays. It has a long waiting list but we were able to

get in due to a cancellation. They do a tasting menu which was very good. We were sat at a counter on very low stools whilst the chef prepared the courses in front of us. This was not at all comfortable. I should have taken the wooden stool I use in the church so that one of us could have reached the counter!

### **The local parish church - a musical idea and surprise refreshments.**



I went 'Bantock summer style ' that is in shorts, sorry Graham, to a morning service. It was very middle class. When invited to say the grace to one another I could not make eye contact with anybody or perhaps they were shocked by the shirt I was wearing ?

However not to be put of I came across a fellow guitar player afterwards. About a year ago he and another guy started to get a group of musicians together to play contemporary worship music once a month This is held in a village hall during the week in the evening and now has about 45 coming along. There are often 10 musicians with sometimes two keyboard players and two drummers with their own kit, the only downside is that it takes a long time to set up!

*Now there's a thought!?*

The real surprise was not just to be offered a cold drink after the service but a choice of a appealing pale straw coloured rose wine. So look out for when we next serve coffee after the service.

Until the next time.....



## Recycling of sunglasses and reading glasses - Julie Harris

Dear all,

You may already know that there is a recycling point/ bin in Specsavers Witham, in which to deposit unwanted Sunglasses and reading glasses....this was halted during Covid, but has now been resumed....I am sure they would be very happy to receive any unwanted glasses, where they will be forwarded on, for a final destination in Africa.

Thank you

**TUESDAY PRAISE**  
at Witham URC  
**EVERYBODY WELCOME**  
July

4th July Richard Wearmouth

11th July Jane Quinton

18th July Keith Ives

25th July Rev. Lorna Bantock

**TIME: 12.30 - 1pm**

You are invited to stay for refreshments



## Confessions of a cyclist

**Alianore Smith**

Associate Speaker, LICC

There's something you should know about me.

I'm a cycling commuter. In London. And most of the time, I'm relentlessly smug about it. Come rain or shine (I make an exception for snow, because I don't have a death wish), I don my helmet and lycra, drape myself in as many fluorescent items as I can lay my hands on, and pedal off to work.

On these journeys, I've recently been reflecting on cycling and the nature of sin. Let me explain.

When I'm a cyclist, I'm broadly at the mercy of drivers' ability (or lack thereof) to drive safely. Sometimes it can get a bit ropey. In fact, my husband and I often compare notes about which drivers we've yelled at on our respective commutes.

The truth is, when I'm a cyclist, I'm pretty much convinced that all drivers are idiots. But I'm also a London driver.

And when I'm a driver, I'm pretty much convinced that all cyclists are idiots.

Notice a pattern?

Don't get me wrong – I'm not a reckless driver. Nor am I an unsafe cyclist. But in my own head, no matter what happens, any near-misses are never my fault. Even if I've definitely forgotten about stopping distances being longer in the rain and accidentally cycled into the back of my husband (true story).

I'm very good at making excuses for my own mistakes, my own sin, and very quick to blame others. I always have mitigating circumstances or a reason for my failings. But everyone else? Well, they're just irresponsible.

This may be particularly obvious on my commute, but where else might this show up in my day-to-day life? A colleague who drops the ball is frustrating, but when I'm late to a meeting there are always 'legitimate' reasons for my tardiness. A friend who forgets an important date hurts my feelings, but when I was late sending my goddaughter her birthday present it was because there was just too much other stuff going on.

Rationalisation is a natural human response to falling short. But what if we extended the same amount of grace to others as we extend to ourselves (Matthew 7:12)? And perhaps we can use moments of failure to exercise the muscle of apologising – without sharing the myriad of reasons why we aren't as culpable as everyone thinks we are.

As a smug cyclist, I know it'll be difficult... but with God's help, nothing is impossible.

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
Community Cafe Pastoral co-ordinator	Mrs	Eve Murfitt	
Prayer Chain Co-ordinator	Mrs	Rosemary Stinson	516602
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