

**WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE
September 2022**

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends,

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

We all know this Parable, as taught by Jesus himself. 100 sheep, 1 missing. Shepherd leaves 99 sheep alone and goes searching for the one lost sheep. Shepherd finds sheep. Shepherd overjoyed, tells everyone that the lost sheep has been found. More rejoicing in heaven over finding the one lost sheep than over the 99!

Where are we in this parable? Most of us reading this letter are in with the 99 sheep, the sheep who are Christians, who are safe and saved. Who are the lost sheep?

Searching is required. Searching is effort, and it takes us away from other activities. I'm sure that spending the night looking for this lost sheep had not been the shepherds plan for the evening and was not his first choice. The shepherd sacrificed his comfort to spend the night searching. He made a sacrifice of how he would have spent the night. He searched diligently, looking in many places, walking up and down the hillside, beating back bushes, exploring different areas. He did not give up after looking in one place.

We need to spend a few years being purposeful in attracting the people who will follow us, who will continue the legacy of teaching Christ at the heart of Witham and continue to serve this community. We are not trying to get two or three families; we need to be getting 50 plus people under 50!

Winning these people for Christ, against the backdrop of alternative activities, opportunities and scepticism is going to be harder than it has been in the past. These people have a very different exposure to life, to school, to religion, to technology and to information. They live in a 24/7 entertainment culture. If they don't like it, then they click and change

channels. We need to meet them where they are. They are not going to meet us “half-way”. The Great Commission is GO. We need to go where they are!

We need to search! Let us re-dedicate and re-focus our activities, to find new activities, to share the Good News and save the many Lost Sheep!

Let's GO!

God bless!

Gavin

10,000 Steps a day in August - Shirley Ratnage

Thank you to all who have so generously sponsored me to walk 10,000 steps each day in August to raise funds for House of Hope Witham, the Churches Together in Witham Project to help the homeless. Barclays Bank have agreed to match the amount I raise, up to an amount of £750.



At the time of writing, I am half way through my challenge and I think it is getting easier, although the heatwave means a 7am start to avoid the worst of the heat. It takes me 1.5 - 2 hours to complete the walk so I usually split it into 2. The river walk offers me some variety and I enjoy the greenery and the wildlife - God's wonderful creation. However a change is as good as a rest and Muriel has kindly walked with me in Terling and Maldon is only a bus ride away.

Jo Stibbards kindly lent me her Fitbit to clock up the steps. Useful as it is, it is a bit like having the 'devil on your back' driving you on. Every few minutes I'm checking to see if I am 'nearly there'. At the end of August I shall probably get withdrawal symptoms and have to wean myself off it gradually.

We were able to visit House of Hope in Braintree recently and hear 'the ups and downs' of running such a project. It's brilliant to hear how many they have helped. They still offer support when their clients move on to their own accommodation and certainly look out for those who, for various reasons, don't stay the course with Hope House. It is a big commitment for the churches, trustees, staff and volunteers. It also takes a big financial commitment, with funds coming from grants/churches/individuals. It is an amazing way to show God's love to the community around us and I am so glad we are on the road to setting up House of Hope Witham.

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

Dear Friends,

Is anyone back to normal?

After two years of pandemic and lockdown, and Covid still with us (thankfully, for most, in a much weaker form), we can now worship together in person and find fellowship again. But for most of us it is not simply a return to how it used to be; some people have not returned to church, some have died or become too frail, some churches have closed and others considering it.

Now we have significant European turmoil and its likely effect on fuel and food prices for us in the UK.

Thank God that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13 v.8). Whatever else changes, He is our rock, our cornerstone.

Financially, things were extremely tough for churches in 2021. Plate offerings had collapsed; some regular givers had to reduce or entirely stop giving to support God's work; and those churches which hire out their premises had seen income from that source disappear. Even those churches where the majority of the giving was by standing order or bank transfer (if you have not considered regularising your giving in this way, please do – it helps your treasurer significantly) may have seen a 20%+ drop in income.

If this had been replicated in giving to the M&M Fund in 2021, we might have been faced with a serious financial crisis last year.

But no, through the generosity of individuals, churches and Synods, we can report that income only fell by 4.4%. With a similar reduction in expenditure the M&M Fund result was a deficit of only £80,000 (less than one-half of one percent of income), a deficit that can be comfortably covered by reserves.

So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2021 in full, and thank you to all those who, in adversity, continued to treat the M&M Fund as the first priority and paid what they could.

With churches and individuals under financial pressure, 2022 is not going to be an easy year either. The M&M Fund budgeted income (based on Synods' projections) will not be sufficient to cover expected costs and we are reconciled to dipping into our reserves more seriously as a result.

However, if we “ordinary Christians” are to fulfil the call of Jesus to be His witnesses in the world around us we need ministers and other workers “on the ground” and we need shared resources which are often best created centrally. That all comes from the M&M Fund.

Again, thank you all!

Yours in Christ,

Ian Hardie (URC Treasurer) Vaughan Griffiths (URC Deputy Treasurer)

Bradwell Service on 2nd July 2022 - Eve Murfitt

Shirley Ratnage and myself went to the first service at Bradwell since before covid.. Although there were not too many people there it was good to be back worshipping with fellow believers, some coming from great distances.



The new lady /bishop of Chelmsford preached; the hymn before she spoke was "All who would valiant be (to be a pilgrim): and after we sang "There is a Redeemer" and as the chorus says:

"Thank you oh my Father
For giving us your Son
And leaving your Spirit
Til the work on earth is done."

I hope and pray this will grow each year bringing us together to worship our amazing Lord. The message of unity from the Bishop and what we sang. We closed with the following prayer:

Christ, as a light illumine and guide me
Christ, as a shield over shadow me.
Christ, under me, Christ over me.
Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me lowly and meek
Yet, all powerful, be in the heart of each to whom I speak
In the mouth of each who speaks unto me
This day be within and without me; lowly and see
Yet all powerful.
Christ as a light; Christ as a shield;
Christ beside me on my left and my right Amen

Thinking of others, Eve Murfitt

As I do my daily prayers, part of them for the world watch list 22; of the 50 top countries where persecutions levels are extreme and very high, Afghanistan is now No.1 with North Korea No. 2. Also very much on my mind is the present situation here and around the world.

I feel sure many people are very worried what the outcome will be. In God's word it tell us not to worry, it does not stop or change anything, but can make us ill. We must hold fast to our faith and pray for the economic effects. In Hebrews 6:18-19 we hold to the hope that lies before us.

This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls.

"Lord we pray to you about the global impact on financial markets, national economies and businesses resulting in closures, job losses and other hardships. Amen"

Intercede for leaders around the world: Lamentations 3v22. Because of the Lord's great love we are not consulted for His compassions never fail.

"Lord, grant wisdom, integrity and courage to governments world wide as they announce and enact difficult measures that will seriously disrupt people's lives. Amen"

I hold you all in my heart and prayers to trust in the Lord our God, Jesus our Saviour, the Holy Spirit to guide us. Amen,

Many blessings.

Book Review - Shirley Ratnage

Will I be fat in Heaven and other curious questions by J John

Lorna recommended this book and I bought a copy. It offers suggested answers to some interesting questions and is easy to read.

One question which caught my eye was 'Do all religions lead to God?' I've often wondered what happens to devout Muslims/Hindus/Sikhs/Jews etc after they die. Mainly because I know that no amount of persuasion would make me change from Christianity to another religion and I assume that devotees of other religions feel similarly convinced that theirs is the 'true' religion. People often say 'Well, we all worship the same God' (although I think Hindus have more than one God) but that has never been a satisfactory answer for me.

J John gives 3 thoughts - different religions give varying views of who God is. For Christians He is a personal God seeking a relationship with us, loving us so much He died for us. Others have a more impersonal/unapproachable God.

Secondly different religions view the 'human condition' differently.

- a) Basically good but lacking knowledge, needing enlightenment.
- b) Slightly flawed, guilty of some naughtiness which God can easily overlook
- c) Christianity teaches we have rebelled against God, need to repent and be forgiven.

Thirdly religions differ in how we 'meet' God. Most religions suggest humans have to climb a 'mountain of morality/spirituality to get closer to

the divine being who is at the top. Christianity teaches a God who came to us in the form of Jesus Christ.

J John concludes that whatever road we take we will all ultimately meet God. The encounter will either be as a guilty party before a judge or as a child meeting its father.

The conclusion seems to be that whatever our religion we will have to stand before God our Creator and only Christianity offers a meeting of love and joy.

Makes me rethink my attitude to my Muslim friends.

If anyone would like to borrow my copy of the book, they are very welcome.

*Join us for
Afternoon Tea
Monday September 5th
at 2.30pm*

*Sandwiches, scones
with Tiptree jam & cream
Home-made Cakes*

Price: £5.00

*Please let Muriel know
if you would like to come
01376 512741*



Memories and More - Ruth Blackett

Memories and more is an informal group, run by volunteers, that takes place in the community cafe for people who have any form of memory loss and their carer (if appropriate) It takes place Tuesday mornings between 10.30am and 12.15pm

Restarts 6th September after the summer break

Please feel free to pop along if this is something that would be appropriate for you or advertise it to others who would find it useful.

Exciting News

On the 4th October 2022 we will be celebrating our 1st anniversary and of course it will involve cake, party games and music!



Update regarding pastoral care at WURC - Ruth Blackett

It has been 18 months since the new pastoral care system in the Church was set up. This is a reminder of how this is currently worked out.

Pastoral care is a mutual support and caring for each other as a Church family. This may be one to one, Home groups, small groups or the pastoral care team.

The pastoral care team looks after those who do not attend home groups but are available to take on those who need longer or more specialised support that cannot be met in the home groups. Ruth Blackett heads up the delegation to the appropriate pastoral team member as required. Please contact Ruth if additional help is required, contact details are on Church suite or the back of the Church magazine.

The team currently is Ruth Blackett (pastoral team coordinator), Maureen Barry, Carolyn Joyce, Audrey Kennedy, Gary Lambert, Rocio MacDonald, Gerry Moscrop and Shirley Ratnage

Ruth has a weekly meeting with Lorna and feeds back to the monthly eldership meeting.

We have run a few training sessions and hope to run another one in the autumn which will be opened to home group leaders and other interested people.

So order of referral for pastoral care if needed:-

- 1 . When we see a need and have permission then pass to Ruth or Lorna for delegation.
- 2 . Home groups – initial point of contact and support but if further needs then these again with permission from the person can be passed on to Ruth or Lorna to be delegated to the pastoral team.

3. Additional Pastoral team – if you have issues that you need to discuss further then please contact Ruth or Lorna

Quiz Night with an ECO flavour on 24th September - Ian Hardie (on behalf of the WURC ECO group)

On Saturday 24th September there will be a not-to-be-missed quiz in the big hall of Witham URC. The quiz will contain much of the usual stuff but there will be at least one round with an ECO/Nature theme.



We will serve jacket potatoes and fillings followed by desert at 6.30 pm promptly and the quiz will begin when the meal is over.

It is mainly a bit of shared fun; but with some “green awareness raising” included. The question master’s decision is final on all disputed points.

Please come if you are free and bring your friends.

Tickets (available from the church office or via Church Suite) are £6 per person and must be purchased in advance to help us with catering numbers. (We don’t want waste.)

White cats and stuff. Bob Stibbards

Well it has been a while since I wrote about our exploits with cats.... do I hear a yawn already ?

Just a reminder of the story so far. About a year or so ago we had serious problems with a very aggressive feral white cat who was constantly beating up our 2 cats and every other cat in the neighbourhood and fathering cats at an alarming rate. So with the help of a cat charity, FACE managed to catch them and have them neutered. However this left us with a bit of a problem as some of them had to come back to roam in the fields next to us as they could not be rehoused.

So we, or rather Jo, ended up with a front door cat which was named Hissy. Yes you guessed it she hissed every time you got close to her despite receiving 5 star treatment being feed and watered and provided with a nice new cat kennel and a hot water bottle in the cold weather oh yes indeedy. She started getting a bit more friendly but still could not help herself hissing from time to time but she disappeared a few weeks back and has not been seen since.

Then we have Missy but not sure why Jo named her that other than she is very bossy with other cats. She comes to be fed every night on our boiler tank and this has also attracted a number of other neutered white cats from a neighbour, but she is always in control!

Back to the original aggressive white cat. We named him Bowie after the singer as he has different coloured eyes. Since being neutered is no longer aggressive and in fact backs away from our two and the other white cats. However our big ginger cat has still not forgotten being attacked getting in through



our cat flap by Bowie before he was neutered and he will still not use the cat flap to come into the house which can mean a very long wait when we go out!

We recently noticed Bowie had a badly swollen and messy looking eye, which turned out to be an ulcer. Back to the charity FACE we borrowed a cat trap again to try to catch him so he could be treated by a vet. In the process we managed to catch two white cats and Harry, one of ours, who were all very keen to be released before, to our surprise, catching Bowie. The vet renamed him cauliflower, but I am not sure I feel comfortable calling that name out in the garden !

Now came the big test as after being at the vet for a week he needed further time to recuperate. So we now have Bowie in a dog crate, in our hall. Why a dog crate and inside the house you may be wondering, well that is another story. He now seems relaxed, indeed chilled, and getting used to human contact well and Jo has surprisingly been able to pick him up, I will leave that for another day!. In the meantime our two cats walk quietly past the crate perhaps hoping that they will not be next to visit the naughty room.

A few days ago when letting our ginger cat out at about 4am well it is that or having a thread bare carpet and we are his servants after all, I found Bowie sitting quietly in our dining room having magically escaped from the dog crate. Fortunately our other cat, who suffers from small cat syndrome, had not spotted him as he would have been on to him in a shot. About 3 hours later Jo spotted a white cat at the bottom of our bed, he had escaped again. The crate is now fully secured. What next? Answers on a postcard please.....

***Articles for the October magazine by 25th September please to
bjstibbards@gmail.com***

Using our spaces for growing food - Julie Harris

I just wanted to say how excited I am to be reading of many new initiatives, not only about giving back to nature in terms of perhaps letting your garden go a bit wild, so insects can enjoy the clover and dandelions that grow in the grass, but also about using our spaces, no matter how small, to grow food.

I have noticed the increase in a whole range of groceries, as I am sure we all have. I use a lot of herbs indoors, and have started growing my own. If you do not want to do that, then why not buy a ready potted growing herb, from the supermarket. Remember, herbs should be stood in a pot and watered from the bottom, they will draw up what water is needed; some herbs can also be frozen.

On a larger scale, I have been reading of people using their gardens to create a vegetable plot: a small plot of about 4 feet x 4 feet, could probably keep you in enough lettuce, spring onions, beetroot and such like, for many months, as they can be harvested and then new seeds sown and so the growing season goes on.

Earlier in the year, I planted several tomato plants, they are literally laden with tomatoes, so even if you only have room for a few pots to grow tomatoes in your garden, you could probably have enough tomatoes to see you through the summer. If you can, try and plant them a few weeks apart, so that your crop does not come all at once.

In many countries abroad, they grow fruit trees along the streets, wouldn't that be amazing if everybody could help themselves to fruit grown on sidewalks.

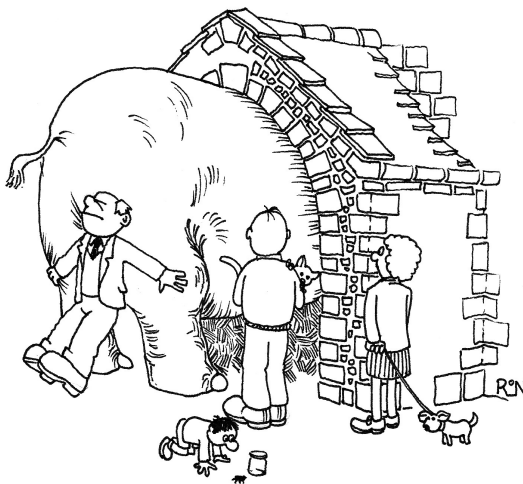
I do not know, but some allotment sites will let you have a half plot, in case you do not want an entire plot.

If this is something you are interested in, please come and have a chat with me.

Have you thought about what you can grow vertically as well as horizontally for example cucumbers can be grown on a support system; again, you could probably have enough cucumbers to last you the whole of summer.

Another thing that is becoming very popular is foodscaping where people are converting their manicured gardens to growing food instead indeed some countries have implemented Agrihoods. This is something I feel particularly excited about. An Agrihood is a type of planned community that integrates agriculture into a residential neighbourhood. Their purpose is to facilitate food production as well as provide a green space, recreation and aesthetics as well as recreation for a community. How amazing is that.

Signing off now. If anybody would like to chat about these ideas then please feel free to come and have a chat with me.



*Eventually they decided to hold the
pets' service outdoors*

Jean Moody Great Totham URC. Extracts of a letter from Rev Dr Peter Stevenson the minister of Stamford URC and Grantham Methodist churches.

As schools return and summer holidays finish, it always feels as though the church reawakens in September, despite many of our folk deciding to take breaks at this time.

One of the delights in Stamford is the privilege of hosting the Battle of Britain Service for a second year. The event will take place during heritage weekend and this year, staff from the Polish Consulate will be joining us to commemorate the 1st Polish Volunteer Parachute Brigade. The Brigade was based in Stamford A new bench will be dedicated in remembrance of the Brigade.

In a different example of remembrance, ChristChurch in Grantham have been asked to consider being the venue for an annual Margaret Thatcher Memorial Lecture. Should the church agree to move forward with its vision to redevelop the rear of its building, the venue will be ideally placed to stage such events and become a second focus for the town's civic life along with St Wulfram's.

In both examples we can see how important it is for churches to be involved with the wider community and recognise that we are here to serve others outside the church. While it is great to have lovely buildings for our Sunday worshipping congregations, they are but a catalyst for change in society. This change comes from the two sources – the way the buildings are used beyond Sundays and the way the congregation interacts with neighbours and contact points between sabbaths. We become representative of Jesus and the Christian faith every time we go about our normal lives whether that be at the pub, in the supermarket, on the telephone, in our discussions with friends and family. We carry our faith as a visible example of Jesus and are constantly challenged to be Good News to all. Quite a task!!

Services at Great Totham - September

4th Rev David Skipp
11th Ian Hardy
18th Sarah Wilson (Communion)
25th Dot Dean (Harvest Service)

All are welcome, services start at 10.30am followed by tea/ coffee and time to chat

Also welcome to the following

10th September Coffee morning 10-11.30

14th and 28th September Lunch Club. 10.30- 2pm Freshly cooked two course meal and tea and coffee at arrival - £6

Enquiries Jean Johnstone 01621 892293

Jean Moody - Great Totham URC

Recently Great Totham URC did something different. With thanks to the hospitality of Vivienne and Bob Upson we had morning worship in their garden. Beautiful morning, beautiful setting, we all felt truly blessed. The service was enhanced by guitar accompaniment.



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	Keith Meredith	
Church Secretaries (also Elders)	Mr Mrs	Tony Deighton and Muriel Heppinstall	518866
Discipleship and Growth Elder	Mrs	Sarah Campbell	
Mission and Outreach Elder	Mr	Gavin McCall	
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