



WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE

September 2023

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends

Heaven and Earth were created on Sunday the 21st October 4004BC or at least that was the calculation of Archbishop James Ussher. We now think that it came into being 14 billion years ago. But was he right; and fossilised dinosaur skeletons are a joke that scientists haven't seen yet?

As I write it is the summer holidays. Children are thronging the highways and byways (and in many cases our homes) with their inevitable stickiness, insatiable appetites and of course the question "Why?"

As we grow, learn, and develop we stop being childlike. Instead, we develop serious learning, practical certainties and our thoughts and debates become more grounded and detailed. We move from a sense of wonder and excitement towards a worldly organised place. Ussher was working in the 1650's, and although he is only remembered for a single "fact", his work was very detailed. He looked at all the available histories not just the bible, in fact much of what he wrote has been shown to be accurate. He just didn't have the scientific knowledge of more recent times to help him. Should we have accepted his truth, or continued to ask why?

Two contrasting versions of learning are given in Mark. In Chapter 10, there were crowds coming to Jesus. In verses 2 to 12 the Pharisees tested him. During this exchange, marked by the social acceptability of age and mature understanding the disciples sat back. In contrast we see their approach in verse 13 when for the first-time children are specifically included. The gaggle of children will have been as with all children, excitable, loud, uncoordinated, and of course brimming with questions. The disciples rebuked the children's parents, wanting to keep the calm and contemplative debate and learning of adults.

Jesus had another way; he called for the children to come to him to be blessed and to learn, saying in verse 15 “Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” Was this Jesus just reflecting the Old Testament approach (see Exodus 12:26-27, Exodus 13:14, Deuteronomy 6:20-21) which accepts that children will ask questions and that it is our duty to answer them. No, he went much further. He encouraged a quest for lifelong questioning and keeping a mind able to roam wide and far?

So how do we learn as children? We must keep the “why” in our hearts, be like them and have a thirst to develop and grow in our love and understanding of the Lord. Never getting stuck in narrow doctrinal or rigid debates, after all are the fossils of our fixed ideas a joke we have yet to see? This September pray for the children in our lives, that we can learn from them how to engage once again with learning and our faith.

With love and blessings
Ian Hunt

Ship Halfpennies - Muriel Heppinstall



Have you ever wondered why the path to the seat in the church garden is made of slabs that look like ship halfpennies? (½ d in old money). When I was young every Congregational Church collected ship halfpennies to support the missionary work of the London Missionary Society in the South Pacific using the boat ‘John Williams’.

John Williams (1796 - 1839) served with the London Missionary Society in the South Pacific. In order to expand his work to the Samoa and the Society Islands he built a missionary ship –‘The Messenger of Peace’. Following his murder by natives in the New Hebrides, the LMS named seven of their missionary ships after him.

The South Seas islands, and the missions, were deeply affected by the events of the Second World War, which obliged the LMS and its administrators in London and Sydney to reassess its policies. As in other areas, the period after the war was characterised by the metamorphosis of mission into independent church and the last ‘John Williams’ was decommissioned in 1968.



Afternoon Tea

Monday September 4th

at 2.30pm

Sandwiches,

scones

with Home-made bramble jelly & cream

Home-made cakes

Price: £6.00

Revd. Peter Flint's retirement - Muriel Heppinstall

Witham URC was Peter Flint's first pastorate in 1979 and he spearheaded the rebuilding of the sanctuary. His retirement service will be held at New Malden URC on Sunday September 17th.

Does anyone recognise the guy in this photo? Gerry and Keith Moscrop

If you were part of Witham URC 20 years ago, you may well remember him!



Matthew Carlisle was one of our Time for God volunteers from USA, who worked in the church for a year. He lived with us for that year and helped a lot with youth work and was also available for Friday Fellowship, Meeting Point and many other activities that the church was engaged with. Matthew went on to study medicine and is now a Consultant and Assistant Professor of medicine in an Accident and Emergency department in a hospital in New Orleans USA.

In August he came with his wife Christina and four children, to spend a week with us in Cornwall. We had a great time with them and they wished to be remembered to anyone who remembers them!!!

TUESDAY PRAISE
at Witham URC
EVERYBODY WELCOME
September 2023
TIME: 12.30 - 1pm

DATE

LEADER

5th September	Deirdre Schnaar
12th September	Gretta Bray
19th September	Femi Cole-Njie
26th September	Lorna Bantock

You are invited to stay for refreshments afterwards.



"Er... vicar – does the church have a position on the donation of GM vegetables for the Harvest Festival?"

'In the Final Analysis'

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centred	Forgive them anyway!
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives	Be kind anyway!
If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies	Succeed anyway!
If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you	Be honest and frank anyway!
What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight	Build anyway!
If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous:	Be happy anyway
The good you do today, people will forget tomorrow	Do good anyway!
Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough	Give the world the best you've got anyway!
You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God	It was never between you and them anyway!

Walk humbly with God and serve one another

(Adapted and tweaked by Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

St Francis of Assisi - Mary Goodwin

I was inspired to write this article having recently visited an exhibition in London about St Francis.

St Francis of Assisi was born in 1181/2 in Assisi into a wealthy family. As a young man he gave up a life of pleasure for absolute poverty and the love of God. He felt a duty of care towards his fellow human beings and all God's creation.

Initially, he had a military career and converted to Christianity in 1205/6. He renounced his father to lead a life of poverty and became an itinerant preacher. In 1219 he attempted to convert the Sultan of Egypt to Christianity and put an end to the conflict of the 5th Crusade. In 1223 he arranged for the first live Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy. This may be the origin of Nativity plays and cribs.

In 1224 a miracle occurred when the stigmata appeared on his body. He founded the Order of Franciscans which quickly spread throughout Europe and around the world.

He died in 1226 and was canonised by Pope Gregory IX in 1228. Paintings from that time onwards show him performing miracles, preaching to the birds, meeting the Sultan of Egypt and receiving the stigmata. His body was buried in the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi in 1230. In 1290 the painter Giotto and others painted frescoes in the Basilica telling the life of St Francis.

St Francis is the Patron Saint of animals and Ecology, and is one of the Patron Saints of Italy.

The present Pope decided to take the name of Francis when he was elected in 2013.





URC Finance Department

9th August 2023

Ministry And Mission Fund - Annual Letter To Local Churches

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

Dear Friends,

When will normal service be resumed?

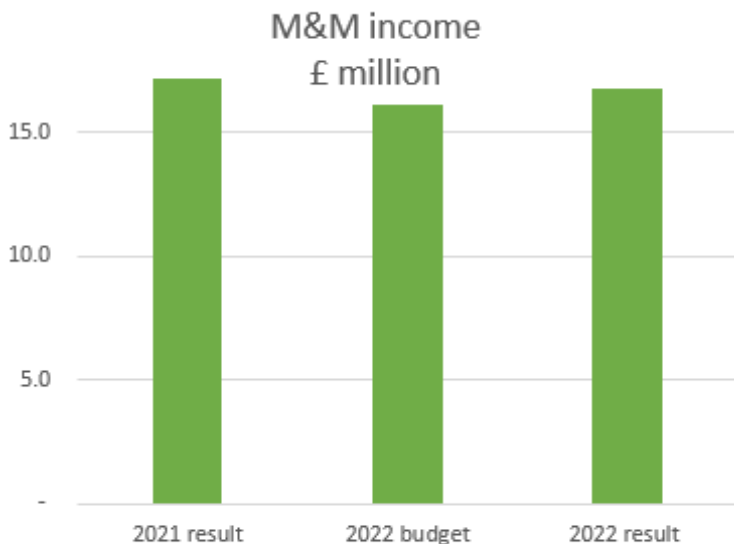
As we are writing this letter and closing off the URC's accounts for 2022, the country is still torn with industrial disputes, mostly notably with Health Service workers, rail industry workers, teachers, etc. etc. Whatever your view as to the wisdom or justice of such action, we suspect all of us are affected by the disruption to some degree.

In church life to,are we are back to "normal life"? Some churches no doubt have returned to something like their pre-Covid level of activity and attendance numbers. Quite a few have recommenced their activity and find their numbers have reduced. Some churches have found re-opening too difficult and have decided to close.

Whatever the "new normal" was to be, we suggested its arrival has (like many trains) been disrupted, delayed or cancelled all together.

The URC's finance officers had concerns that the late arrival of the return to normality would impact very significantly on the giving to the M&M Fund

in 2022. However, the churches responded magnificently and the giving to M&M was £600,000 ahead of budget. It was only 2/5% down on 2021's results.



So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2022 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 normal service not yet resumed, 2023 is not going to be an easy year either. We now have the added disruption of high inflation, pushing up wages and overhead costs. As the Spirit directs and as our means allow, can the churches once more respond to the call of our gracious, loving and ever-generous God?

Again, thank you all!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed

information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Ian Hardie (Immediate Past Treasurer)

Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer)

SEWING / ALTERATIONS

Barbara Dove has sewing and tailoring skills that she is kindly offering to people in the church family who might need clothes mending or altering. Many of us (and I am speaking for myself) are incapable of much more than fixing the odd seam and sewing button on so that is very helpful. Please speak to me (Lorna) or one of the elders if you would like to identify her.



Locking Cooker Valves - article produced by Cadent (cadentgas.com) and provided by Deborah Robinson

“When you care for a person with a condition such as Dementia(s), cognitive impairment or Autism, it can often help to have additional measures in place to provide that extra peace of mind.

This simple safety device will help individuals to retain their independence, and provide reassurance to family, friends and carers; as the caregiver can easily control when gas can and cannot be used safely once fitted. For example, this could help avoid leaving the gas cooker/hob switched on unignited or help prevent a plastic kettle being placed on an ignited ring where the person living with Dementia(s) may have remembered how to make a cup of tea but forgotten that these days they have an electric kettle to do this.



We're proud to offer our locking cooker valve fitting service to our customers. The service is completely free of charge and will be carried out by one of our own qualified gas engineers.

We provide this service regardless of your gas supplier. You don't need to change energy supplier or inform your supplier of the device. Simply call **0800 389 8000** for more information. Once fitted, we will need a carer/person(s) responsible to keep the key safe, meaning they can turn the locking cooker valve on and off to prevent future risk.

The locking cooker valve is not suitable for use with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supply”

Fun in Fellowship Afloat! - Joanna Allwyn

Spending a total of 6 days in Fellowship Afloat was enjoyable and an educative experience for us with both its activities and spiritual knowledge.



There were more than enough activities such as sailing, archery, team building games ,etc.. to keep us occupied and productive every single day along with delicious cakes and great meals that we looked forward to daily. (Our personal favourite was sailing as it was thrilling to be out on the sea and also to learn how to steer a sailboat).

Moreover,the FACT leaders and volunteers were very friendly and took great care of us also helping us discuss spiritual questions and share our experiences.

Overall, Fellowship Afloat was a memorable experience as we mingled, spent time with and got to know both staff and other children while also learning about God.

Great Totham URC - Jean Moody

Article by Rev Peter Stevenson

The big news is that ‘we are with child’ so I am looking forward to being a granddad – in my case ‘Pops’ – on Valentine’s Day 2024. As retirement approaches in April 2025, I think I am ready to take on this exulted responsibility. A search of the internet advises me to be adaptable, teachable, respectful, and supportive. The article also says that I should change with the times; share quality time; follow the grandchild’s lead; respect differences; and say “No” sometimes.

When I was preparing to be a dad, I read the work of Dr James Dobson, an American evangelical Christian author, psychologist, and founder of Focus on the Family, which he led from 1977 until 2010. One book in particular, Dare to Discipline, was helpful. It encouraged tough love and warned of getting into habits with babies that you did not wish to continue into their young lives. For instance, not to lay down with the child or have them in your bed to get them off to sleep. Our children went into cots down the hallway in a separate bedroom away from ours and if they woke in the night, they needed to make plenty of noise to get our attention. Even when they did, we gave them water rather than milk and it soon made them realise that it wasn’t worth waking up in the night.

The author also suggested that strict discipline between the ages of 0 – 5 meant that you could have an easier passage through the school years. Dawn’s mum thought that I was too strict as I barked instructions at the children and expected them to respond immediately and perhaps I was. However, they grew up as wonderful children who could be taken anywhere in any company and they have become even better adult. Although there was one occasion when Dawn took Adam and Faye to the British Museum and Faye screamed the place down because she could not have a KitKat. With that the trip was abandoned and they returned home – it did not happen again.

I doubt whether Faye and Pete will adopt the parenting style that we used, but I am sure that they will surround their child with love, stability and hope for the future. Uncle Adam is 'made-up' and as a key stage one teaching assistant, he will have all the answers and will probably keep them to himself.

Every blessing

Preachers at Great Totham URC in September

- September 3rd. Rev. David Skipp, from Maldon
- September 10th. Ernie Finch from Kelvedon.
- September 17th. Gill Heathcote from Witham.
- September 24th. Ian Hardie from Witham, celebrating Harvest.

All are welcome to join us, our service begins at 10:30.

Our next coffee morning will be on Saturday 9th September at 10:30

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

Prayer Walking - Lorna and Josie Bloice

At a recent prayer morning the idea of prayer walking in Witham was raised again and several people did not know what it entailed. Josie Bloice kindly sent an article copied below which explains how it was undertaken in Brightlingsea and written by a former minister there.

This is not a blue print but shows the principles. It doesn't have to be highly organised in terms of times and dates but people who walk regularly might like to walk and pray as they walk once a week - or maybe more if you have a dog to walk.

If anyone is interestedly in teaming up with someone to prayer walk, please let me know and we can organise some pairs and possibly even the odd date we could walk then meet together for refreshments and prayer at the end.

Look forward to hearing from you

Bless you

"Prayer walking is easy to do and the benefits go on and on.

You can change the atmosphere of a town.

You can build up your own strength up in the Lord, walking through the countryside or by the sea. Praising Him and allowing Him to minister to you.

As we walk, we should pray. It's the one thing we can do with ease everyday that will make a difference to not only you, but your surroundings.

Brightlingsea had areas of deep darkness. You can just glance at a window and see so much. Evidence of the enemy at work in people's lives. We see so much of the people who live inside by what is displayed in their windows or on their doors. Paganism and the occult on clear display.

Walking through one area, I was sensing deep darkness. I later found out that it was indeed an area where several satanists were living. The atmosphere was the first indication and then I looked and saw some of the things that were displayed in the windows.

Prayer Walking the Town

When the ‘churches together’ decided to meet each week to prayer walk, we found that the results were amazing.

First, we had a map of our town enlarged at our local printers and pinned it on a large board in the front of us, and then we prayed.

We did this each week first for a few minutes, then in small groups of two or three we walked. We took a couple of small Gideon’s New Testaments with us and any leaflets of what was going on in the town have regarding events or seasons and popped them through doors.

On our return to the church at the appointed time (usually about two hours) we marked on the map with felt tip pens the streets that we had covered.

It took a year to cover the town totally, but the outcome was amazing.

The Results

1. The whole town was covered in prayer
2. We spoke to many people
 - a) to pass the time of day
 - b) to help them, perhaps put their dustbins out when we could see them struggling.
 - c) to converse with them about what we were doing and why.
 - d) to pray with them.
3. The atmosphere in the streets changed as we walked.
4. Our prayers broke down unseen barriers.

5. We prayed for businesses as well as homes.
6. We prayed for people and their homes as we walked.
7. We learnt to read what we could see and bring situations before the Lord.
i.e. evidence of poverty, wealth, and disability to just mention a few.
8. We learnt about each other as we walked and shared together.
9. We also gave out our 'Churches Together' leaflets containing the times and dates of our services.
10. People would ask us what we were doing. What a great opportunity to share our faith and love for our town.

Ongoing Effect

We found that we had more confidence as individuals to be able to share our faith when the opportunity arose in a natural way.

We also noticed that the atmosphere in some dark areas had changed. When I walk down those same roads now, I sense that we stole ground from the enemy.

Personally, I now find I quite naturally pray as I walk. Praying for what I see as I am walking and lifting people and situations to God for His help.

Prayer walking changed my life for the better. "

‘In the mood’

*

A fundraising concert for The House of Grace, a local charity providing support for the homeless.

*

Jazz pieces from America and Folk Dances from Europe, for solo piano, performed and introduced by Hans Montenana. Pieces include ‘The Entertainer’, “I got rhythm” and “Molly on the shore.”

*

SATURDAY OCTOBER 7th 2023

*

Witham United Reformed Church
at 7.30p.m.

*

Admission free but please donate generously! Refreshments served after the concert.



Witham
town council

JOIN US FOR

**WITHAM STREET
ENTERTAINMENT FESTIVAL**

SEPTEMBER 16, 2023

10AM – 3PM



**INTERACTIVE - MEMORABLE -
FUN - ENGAGING**

The Old Testament is massive, often hard to understand and difficult to navigate.

Relax and enjoy the journey as an experienced presenter encourages you

to see God's Word through the 'Big Picture'. Our ENGAGING and

MEMORABLE sessions will help you learn with such CLARITY that you'll be able to retell the whole STORYLINE to a friend. We will also INSPIRE and EQUIP you to keep digging deeper with fresh insight.



Book online today at www.Bible.org.uk or contact the Event Promoter

VENUE

Maldon United Reformed Church Market Hill Maldon CM9 4PZ

Saturday 16th September 10am - 4.30pm

Arrive from 9:30am

Please bring a packed lunch

Cost £14

FREE for children aged 11-17 if accompanied by an adult -

PROMOTER

Churches Together in Maldon

ENCOURAGING - INSPIRING - HELPFUL

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
Pastoral Team Co-ordinator	Mrs	Ruth Blackett	07546 838825
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