



WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE October 2021

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear friends,

May the peace of God fall upon you and all your loved ones at this time of many new challenges and change. Paul explains how to receive this precious gift of peace we need now more than ever. Simply tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done.

"And the peace of God which surpasses all our understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7) we all want peace and claim to seek it, but there is little evidence of it in our world or indeed in many people's lives or even dare I say in our own fellowship. Why? Because we put too much trust in our own understanding.

Let us be a house of prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help us in humbling ourselves in obedience to Gods word and doing what he asks of us for his Kingdom's sake. Act with honour to glorify God!

Note we have to guard our hearts and minds, because we are under attack! The result of neglecting this instruction is plainly evident, causing division and potentially robing us all of our peace and joy in the Lord. This should not be so amongst God's people.

Make no mistake, we are in an intense spiritual battle as never before, which is being escalated by the day. It's time to wake up! Pray fervently that the Holy Spirit will develop the gift of discernment in us all, so that we will be ready and able to test every spirit against the Gospel of Christ. This the only place we can have real peace.

Be alert and do not believe everything that is driven by the media; there are many false prophets out there. We are to have the mind of Christ (Romans 3:4 NKJB). Certainly not. Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: That you may be justified in your own words and may overcome when you are judged. Despite the suffering, confusion and upheaval during the pandemic, we are called to be overcomers. As followers of Jesus, we can and will overcome all that assails us, but only if we stand together united in the love of God.

Please heed God's instruction and warning: as children of God we must be reconciled to one another. A house divided against itself cannot stand!

We have a better future than we can see right now. However, we need to lift up our eyes to see that God wants us to prosper and have good success. Will you join me in prayer and confession of God's word:-?

- Thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 2:14)
- But in that coming day, no weapon turned against you will succeed. (Isaiah 54: 17)
- Do not gloat over me, my enemies. For though I fall I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord himself will be my light. (Micah 7:8)

The above verses spoke to me that we can be confident of victory over every situation in the resurrection power of Christ Jesus. Is it just going to happen? Nothing will happen until we line up with God's word and do it.

We cannot fulfil our vision and mission alone, we need to stand together, fight together not against each other but against a very real enemy who wants to distract, deceive and destroy us.

Let us agree to finish the race before us together in victory, with a second wind of the Holy Spirit. For I truly believe that triumph over opposition is the inheritance of the Lord. Praise God and thank God for his patience with us, his grace and mercy anew each day.

Yours in Christ, Doug

The Centre - Fenella Hardie

Dear Friends



At the July Church Meeting I was appointed to the role of Centre Director. I know that some people attending the meeting online experienced difficulties in hearing what was being said and so I would like to reprise what I said about my ideas for the Centre going forward and bring you up to date on what is happening so far.

The Centre opened in 1997 and was designed to be a resource for mission and outreach. The Vision statement for the Centre is "**The vision of The Centre is to be a place of unconditional welcome for everyone, a place in which the members of the community can meet God's people with a view to extending God's Kingdom**".

We have been without a Centre Director for some years and I have felt for a while that the Centre has lost a bit of its focus. At the last Centre Support Group meeting I posed the following questions:-

- Is the Fellowship still supportive of the Vision and how can we increase their engagement with the Centre?
- What activities need to stop as they no longer fulfil the purpose behind them?
- What activities need to change so that they can continue fulfilling the purpose behind them and can they be resourced?
- What new activities could be introduced to try to achieve the original vision for the Centre and can they be resourced?
- 1. I think that many of the Fellowship, especially those who have joined in the last few years, have not been really aware of what the purpose of the Centre is and the part of the Vision statement which reads " a place in which the members of the community can meet God's people" has lost its emphasis. The world has changed dramatically in the last 25 years

and what is on offer in Meeting Point no longer meets the expectations of the wider community. I would not invite friends or new acquaintances to meet me in the Centre for a coffee and if members of the fellowship are not comfortable there then how can we expect to meet the community there? I want to change Meeting Point to make it more attractive for everyone and will start with new furniture and a proper coffee machine and I want to change the name to the **Community Café** to show that we are doing things differently.

Witham URC has always had a problem with closing activities even 2. when they no longer serve the purpose for which they were set up. Unfortunately, I believe the Centre Shop falls into this category. The shop was first set up and run by the late Jennifer Watson but that role was taken over about 15 years ago by Mo Webber and, with her loyal and committed team of volunteers, she has been running it ever since. In the past it was a well used resource and for many people it was their port of call particularly for fairly traded goods and Christmas cards. However, it is now cheaper and far quicker to buy Christian literature and similar supplies online and the pandemic has meant that far more people now shop online anyway. Fairly traded goods are now much more available in supermarkets and we should be encouraging those shops to stock more by buying from them. They can also buy in bulk and sell things more cheaply than we can. I would prefer to dedicate a week a couple of times a year to promoting particular goods e.g. Fairtrade Fortnight and in the run up to Christmas and use sale or return to solve the problem of having to sell off goods which have reached their sell by date. We can still continue to sell cards but on a smaller scale and these can be displayed in the Community café and bought at the counter without requiring a shop. I fully appreciate how upsetting this closure is for those who have seen serving in the shop as their way of serving the church. Our volunteers are precious and much appreciated but there are other ways in which their talents can be used to further the Vision.

- Pre pandemic, committed Centre volunteers led by Muriel Heppinstall 3. have kept Meeting Point going and Peter Howard and his team have run the Friday lunch club which was started to fill the void left by the closure of Friday Fellowship. There has been a lunch served at the URC on a Friday for nearly 40 years and there is still a need for such a service. However, non- church goers have had a tendency to see church as a kind of club which is only open to certain people and so I would like the Friday lunch to continue as a Community lunch rather than a club and to take place in the Community Café so that everyone feels welcome. The first lunch took place on 17th September and was a good mix of URC and non-church people and 2 of those attending expressed an interest in coming to church on the Sunday. Going forward, until the arrangement with the catering college in Colchester is set up and we have students coming to cook, Heather will be doing most of the cooking and her commitment to everything involving the kitchen and the café is very much appreciated.
- 4. Small Talk has restarted on a Wednesday and the Centre on that day is devoted to children and carers so the Community Café is not open. The mums' breakfast delivered by Heather is already popular and, with input from a local Social Practitioner who is attached to local surgeries, we hope to have a group for new mums in the café area while Small Talk is on. This is an informal group but we hope to have someone there who can give advice on e.g. breastfeeding, weaning etc. and the Social Practitioner says there is a real need for this in Witham as currently the nearest group is in Braintree.

There will also be another new group starting on 5th October, called Memories and More. This will be every Tuesday morning and is an informal group for dementia sufferers and their carers and will also meet a need expressed to the Social Practitioner. It will also meet in the café area which will not be open to the general public. The pop-up café in the forecourt on a Thursday morning has been a great success and hats off to the team who put it together and have been running it all summer. Some mornings more than 40 people have passed through, new people have been coming and it has been well supported by church people who have really got alongside these new friends who have felt very welcomed and supported. Some of them came into lunch on the first Friday. With the onset of autumn this will move indoors and as we get more volunteers to serve in the café we hope we can restart Mondays. I am hugely encouraged by the number of people who answered my email about the afternoon teas and so hopefully this can restart soon.

Once the new coffee machine is installed we will look to restart Saturday coffee and this is an opportunity for members of the fellowship who cannot be in the café during the week to come in and engage with the community.

Although the café area is not currently open on a Tuesday or a Wednesday, we hope to be able to offer coffee in the reception area but as the weather gets colder this area will be less inviting. To solve this problem, I am talking to architects about ways of stopping the draught from the doors by installing another set of doors further down the path, in effect creating a kind of porch. This would be a big structural project and is obviously going to take time and a lot of thought and at the same time I would like to open up the area currently taken up by the shop to create a bigger space for different events. There are also ideas about widening the hatch into the reception area and creating an opening from the café area into the front kitchen to avoid having to go through the back kitchen.

The toilet block needs to be refurbished to make it easier to keep clean and to conform to current standards and be more eco- friendly.

There are significant problems in the kitchen with some equipment urgently in need of replacement but we already have a promised grant of £1000.00 which will pay for a new potato peeler and if we are running a Community Lunch we should be able to attract more funding.

There are lots of exciting possibilities on the horizon and, as I told Church Meeting, the URC nationally seems to be planning for decline but I would like Witham URC to plan for growth!

I am very grateful to Heather March for agreeing to take up the post of Kitchen Manager and to Muriel Heppinstall for continuing as Community Café Manager. We could not manage without the support of our 2 amazing Centre Managers, Rocio and Ana, who have gone above and beyond in tasks they have undertaken while there has been no Centre Director or Kitchen Manager. We all value your support and prayers and are encouraged by the comments we are receiving.

Some changes are already taking place but others will take some time. You will all be aware of supply shortages in many areas and this applies to new tables and chairs, coffee machines, toilets and all sorts of things! It is very frustrating but please be patient.

Change is never easy and inevitably there are going to be misunderstandings and upsets. We will make mistakes and have to adapt some of our ideas as we go along but, with your prayerful support and encouragement, I believe we really can make an impact in the community and fulfil the vision set out for the Centre all those years ago.

God bless

Hog Roast - Lorna

The hog roast on Sunday 19th September was a huge success judging by the feedback. It was wonderful to see so many of you, over several generations, having fun, enjoying food and conversation.

Thank you to everyone who helped in anyway: setting up, preparing food, serving, washing up and clearing up.

The salads and desserts were all absolutely delicious as was the hog roast! We even had the best of the days weather.

Well done everyone.

Extra special thanks to Julia who organised and oversaw the catering side of it and must have spent hours making salads and desserts herself as well.

Blessings



... if you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this sermon...

Fellowship Walk September 18th

The first fellowship walk organised by the eco committee took place on 18th September. We were blessed with glorious weather as eight of us, plus one dog, set off along the River Walk to Cut Throat Lane allotments. First we were shown the composting toilet, (I don't think it is feasible to install one in the URC!) then Sally showed us her half sized allotment, where we marvelled at her gigantic red cabbages, sweetcorn and beans. Other folks were growing all sorts - marrows, squashes, chard and an abundance of soft fruit, (some of us surreptitiously had a taste). We then made our way back to the church where Audrey provided a welcome cup of coffee and some cake.



Come and join us next month on 16th October. We hope to do a circular walk from Terling to Fairstead church and back, a distance of about 3 miles, along footpaths and quiet country roads with no stiles. We intend to start at 10.00am and finish by about 12 noon, just beside Owls Hill tea room. Please let Muriel Heppinstall (01376 512741) know if you would like to come so we can co-ordinate transport.





Forty- Nine Years and Counting - Ian Hardie

On 5th October 1972 the United Reformed Church was inaugurated, when the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church of England and Wales came together. In 1981 Churches of Christ and in 2000 the Scottish Congregationalist were added to the URC. At each stage some local churches opted out of joining the new united church, but the vast majority of each former denomination saw advantages in coming together.

In 1972 there was a strong drive towards increasing ecumenism and the creation of the URC was seen as potentially the first stage in a much wider amalgamation of Christian denominations in the UK. Indeed, for many years, people in the URC spoke about it as a Church that was born to die - so confident were they that more and more denominations would come together to show their unity to the unchurched among whom they lived.

When the structure of the URC was being worked out in 1972, those involved were a bit casual about some of the detail of how the thing was going to function. They did not expect the structure to last very long before negotiations with a whole lot of other denominations would overtake the arrangements being put in place at the start. It is true that this happened to a limited extent in 1981 and again in 2000 when the Churches of Christ and Scottish Congregationalists were added to the URC. But, over time, the enthusiasm among other denominations for increased ecumenism and unity has waned. The URC has more recently seemed like a jilted bride left waiting at the altar while prospective grooms stick to the single life.

So here we are, 49 years old and no longer expecting to die in a greater union but instead perhaps to soldier on as we are unless we die out.

You may have picked up that I have reservations about celebrating <u>too</u> wildly the fact that the URC is within touching distance of its half-century; but many in the denomination take a very different view. Celebration events are being planned at local church, synod and national levels for the fiftieth anniversary year of the URC's foundation. And despite being an old, anti-

social, curmudgeon myself, I thought I ought to draw the milestone to your attention to see if anyone thinks it might be a good idea to join the 50th birthday partying in some way. Does celebrating 50 years of the URC seem like something you would like to do during 2022?

Answers on a postcard/e-mail or by phone or chat to Ian Hardie.

An ideal Christmas present:

A history of Witham United Reformed Church. On sale in the church office or from Fenella Hardie or Muriel Heppinstall. Price £6.00

Proceeds in aid of Holdfast, one of our nominated charities



WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE PART OF OUR ECO TEAM?

At present we are a small group of enthusiasts at Witham URC, working with A Rocha UK as part of their Eco Church Award Scheme.

We are using their online survey and resources to help us express our care for God's world in the following ways

in our worship & teaching;
how we care for our buildings and land;
how we engage in our community and in global campaigns
in the personal lifestyle of our fellowship.

Their vision and our vision is to care for creation as an integral part of loving our neighbours and following God faithfully. Would you like to join us and help to us bring that vision to reality by being part of our Eco Team?

We meet every 2-3 months to discuss our progress and plan our next steps. If you are interested we would love to hear from you.Please get in touch with one of our members and we will get straight back to you.

Muriel Heppinstall 01376 512741 murielhepp@hotmail.co.uk
Julie Harris please see ChurchSuite
Audrey Kennedy 01376 513567 amkennedy148@gmail.co

Light a Candle - 9th October

On 9th October between the hours of 10 am and 2pm our Church will be open for people to drop in to remember, reflect, give thanks and light a candle for their loved one.



Our community café will be open, the sanctuary will have stations with aids to remembering including lighting a candle and the back hall will be used by supporting charities and similar services.

The event is being organised by Hunnaball of Withan with support from ourselves.

Memories and More Group - Ruth Blackett

From the 5th October 10.30 am- 12.30pm

There will be a new group called Memories and More for people who have Dementia/Alzheimer's and their carer if appropriate.

This new group will be providing activities to promote memories, time for chat, spiritual care, information and music, all in a safe place.

Teas and coffees and treats will be available from the Community café.

This is a drop in group so if you can' get to us at 10.30m please still come

We would love to have you join us.

Please contact Ruth Blackett 07546 838 825 for further details or just turn up on the day. We will be pleased to see you.

There is the opportunity to stay to the Tuesday Praise ecumenical service at 12.30 pm if you would like to.

Witham's Great Big Green Day

Come along to Witham's **Great Big Green Day on Saturday 2nd October** at Witham URC from 10am to 3pm. There will be free film screening, stalls. ECO crafts for children, beekeeping, refreshments and much more. Please look out for further details.



A speaker from TearFund has been invited for our harvest service on 3rd October and details of their Change for Hope Challenge are provided below which it is hoped we will engage with.

Day one – Transport

Option 1:

Pray this prayer with us on day one.

God of creation,

We humbly ask your forgiveness for all the ways in which we have polluted your land.

Inspire in us anew a deep love for the world you have made,

And give each of us the courage and conviction to take steps, however small, to better look after it.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Option 2:

Could you use local transport services or walk or cycle instead of driving? Transport is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions around the world.

Day two – Water

Option 1:

One in three people in the world can't access safe drinking water. Droughts are worsening because of the climate crisis. Meanwhile, in the UK, each person uses more than a 100 litres a day on average. What are your top water-saving tips?

Option 2:

Pray this prayer with us as we reflect on life-giving water.

God of life,

Thank you that because of you we never have to thirst for love or belonging again.

Thank you that we in the UK are blessed with abundant clean water.

Help us to not take this for granted.

We pray for those who don't have access to clean water:

Protect them, and may provision come soon.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Day three – Energy

Option 1:

The amazing increase in renewable energy use is a reason to have hope in the face of the climate crisis. We are thinking about whether we could make the switch to renewable energy. Visit <u>bigcleanswitch.org/tearfund</u> to find out more.

Option 2:

This amazing video from @Tearfund's #ChangeforHopeChallenge shows how solar energy is helping to light the darkness in some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

Day four – Food

Option 1:

We are looking at how food connects us to creation. Saying grace can be a great way to do this – how often do you say grace before meals? Take a few moments before you start eating to thank God: for the weather; for the soil; for the farmers; and for the food itself.

Option 2:

Sustainable farming is essential if we are to avoid climate chaos: currently a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture. To change this is going to mean a change in our eating habits.

Day five - Plastic

Option 1:

Today we reflect on the impact of plastic. Did you know that one in four people around the world live and work around piles of plastic waste? Let's commit to cutting down on plastic use together

Option 2:

Today, we look at ways to reduce plastic waste. For a whole month, what single-use plastic items could we pledge to find alternatives for?

Day six - Reflection/petition

Option 1:

We have reached the final day of the Change for Hope Challenge. What part of the week has resonated with you most? We're going to keep taking action – trusting in the God who is able to do immeasurably more than what we imagine.

Option 2:

Join us in adding our voice to the Climate Declaration: on the UK government to lead the world in delivering a healthier, greener, fairer recovery, which limits warming to 1.5°C. By adding our weight to this campaign, together we can be a more powerful voice in ensuring that the recovery from the pandemic creates a better world.

The Great Escape - Bob Stibbards

Unfortunately this is not about this years exotic holiday, I wish, but rather about a very troublesome stray cat.

As some of you may remember we have two cats and one has featured proudly on several zoom church meetings. A very fiery white cat has come onto their patch and launched himself like a rocket onto our two when they went outside. One of our cats came through the cat flap so fast to get away from the beast that it had to be replaced. Having had two expensive trips to the vet and our cats refusing to go outside in fear of getting beaten up, something had to me done to control the beast!

So Jo contacted a cat charity Face who helpfully arrange for cats to be neutered, which removes the aggression, but you have it catch it first ! First we had to feed the cat in the same location so that it comes back for a few days. We were then loaned a cat trap, this works on the same basis as a humane mouse trap and in which you put a small about of food inside to attract the cat and does not harm them. We set this up in the same location as we had been feeding the beast or so we thought making sure that our two cats were safely in the house at night.

On the first occasion we managed to catch a small white cat, one of our neighbours has 3 white kittens, strangely we think we know the father! Having removed the cover over the trap he was very keen to get out and very cross! So we tried again and set the trap the next night and on checking before we went to bed discovered we had trapped another white small cat and his brother or sister was keen to join him!

Having decided this was not going to work we moved the trap to another location and surprisingly we trapped the beast on the first occasion. Our friendly lady from Face then collected him and took him to a vet to be neutered, jabbed and microchipped. We had naively believed that on getting him back we could arrange for him to be rehoused so agreed for him to be microchipped in our name thinking that this would be transferred to a new owner. However the vet explained that he was completely feral and would never become a domestic cat.

So the beast came back to us and we set up a large dog crate so that in theory he could rest for a few days before being released. On being returned from the vet, in trying to transfer him from the trap into the dog crate, he saw his opportunity and from a very small gap made the great escape to freedom.

We thought that he would completely disappear but Jo has left food out at night for him, oh dear, which is licked clean but by which cat we are not sure! We have seen him again and as assured by the cat charity being neutered has removed his aggression, Jo has nicknamed him Bowie, as he has two different coloured eyes like the musician. I have a different name but decided it best not to print it here, Our cats are now looking for him to beat him up, revenge is sweet!

> The deadline for articles for the November Magazine is 22nd October to bjstibbards@gmail.com

Thank you so much for your support. Our clients are very grateful. We anticipate that the year ahead will be hard for many people, as the removal of the increase in payments to Universal Credit and the end of the furlough scheme comes this side of Winter. It is through your support and generosity that we continue to be here for those most in need.

We urgently need:

- Washing up liquid
- Washing detergent (in a gel form if possible please)
- Juice (1l please)
- Deodorant
- Custard (tinned or packet)
- Sponge puddings

Needed to maintain stocks:

- Long life milk (1l please)
- Tinned spaghetti
- Tinned fruit
- Instant mash
- Chocolate
- Baby wipes
- Shampoo/conditioner
- Shower gel
- Sugar (500g please)

Due to the generosity of our community, at present we do not need: Pasta, Pasta Sauce, Baby Food, Baby Nappies, Jam, Fish, Rice, Hot Meat, Hot Snacks, Tinned Tomatoes, Tinned Veg

* Please note: We often ask for small packs—Larger packs do not fit in our boxes and make it difficult for out clients to carry home. Also, we are unable (for hygiene reasons) to split large size or catering packs.

PLEASE NOTE. We are grateful for your donations to the Braintree Area foodbank. However, we can only accept donations of freshly-bought, unopened and undamaged goods which are still well within their "use by" date (no less than 6 months where possible). It is difficult to use items which do not meet these requirements. Thank you.



Shopping List





Homeless - Peter Howard

Black, white, yellow, red No room, no bed Park bench, station seat Smooth pockets, sore feet Where to go, where to stay Move along, you can't pay Sainsbury sandwich out of date Army angel with a plate Hand out, pride gone Gifted trouser ankle long Resting place doorway hotel Huddle up, sleep a spell Who is he, what's he done Has all hope gone, or just begun

Wow Pete you have a real gift for writing poems

Thank you Philip

Hopefully many of you will have seen and enjoyed the refurbished sanctuary chairs..After the sanctuary chairs seats and backs were stripped of the existing material, Philip Vinton spent many hours making adjustments to the chairs. When the seats and backs were returned having been recovered, on his own he refitted them, there are over 180 chairs ! Thank you for your time and patience Philip.

Shoe Boxes - Christine Huggett

Yes, it is that time of the year again: I know that this year has been especially difficult. We are unlikely to have any more covered boxes as they are all flip top now, but we have plenty of the Samaritan's Purse ones in the loft, but please use any covered ones first as that leaves more loft space.



Details of items suitable for the shoe boxes are available on online.

Operation Christmas Child - Samaritan's Purse UK

www.samaritans-purse.org.uk > what-we-do > operatio...

Boxes will be collected between 15th and 22nd November, and more about that soon. Last year's boxes went to three different countries so please continue to support this.

For those of you who would prefer to have a £20 box prepared for you there is an online option

Whats on every week - starting times

Tuesday: Memories and more 10.30am from 5th October Tuesday Praise 12:30pm

Wednesday: Small Talk 10am and 1:00pm

Thursday: Community cafe 10am, Art Group 12:15pm

Friday: Community cafe 9.30am Community lunch 12.15pm

Minister	Revd	Mark Ambrose	
Associate Minister	Revd	Lorna Bantock	571757
Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Solis	500958
Assistant Youth Pastor	Ms	Tracey Eagling	500958
Centre Managers	Mrs	Rocio MacDonald	500958
	Mrs	Ana Martin	500958
Discipleship and Growth	Mrs	Sarah Biyi	
Worship and Music	Mrs	Sarah Campbell	
Church Secretary	Mr	Tony Deighton	518866
Mission and Outreach	Mr	Gavin McCall	
Children and Youth	Mr	Keith Meredith	
Pastoral	Mr	Doug Sandles	
Property	Mr	David Wellings	
Church Treasurer	Mr	Ian Hardie	
Centre Director	Mrs	Fenella Hardie	500958
Kitchen Manager	Mrs	Heather March	500958
Meeting Point 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

Rev Mark Ambrose is on Sabbatical until end of November