

WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE
October 2023

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

Pastoral Letter

‘Let the little children come to me’

It can't have escaped the notice of most of you that there has been something of an explosion of new babies attending our church services of late. Many of you (of both sexes) with strong 'maternal' instincts have been seen queuing up to hold and cuddle tiny bundles after worship. It has been uplifting to hear gurgles and even the odd cry ring out in our sanctuary: bringing smiles to our faces and joy to our hearts, knowing that some very little children are being brought to Jesus as he commanded.

But, as I watched nine-month-old Malachi exploring his world while the rest of us were engaged in the September Church Meeting, I was reminded that they don't stay very little for long. Clothes which were too big a matter of weeks ago, now have to be discarded as too small. Equipment and toys required just after birth are replaced by stuff designed for a growing and learning toddler. Moses baskets give way to cots and rattles to baby's first book. And so it goes on.

Buying all this stuff new and using it for such a short time would be extremely expensive and, indeed, impossible for many parents.

And that is where the Witham URC Baby Bank came in 12 months ago - in October 2022.

Here is a short extract from what our website says about this venture: “We wanted to help some of the families we were already in contact with through Small Talk and other families with the cost of life with kids. As an Eco Church we can also appreciate the impact we are having on the environment by providing a space to recycle the items swapped and donated every week.”

Good-condition clothing, toys, books, sterilisers, bottle warmers, buggies, stair gates, monitors, high chairs, baths and bath toys (and more) are brought in by people who no longer need them and they are taken away by those who do now need them. There are also supplies of food, milk, nappies and wipes for those who might need them.

In one short year the service has taken off unbelievably with regular groups of mothers and babies flooding into the Centre wherever the Baby Bank is open - some of whom are now staying for coffee and cake as well. We are reaching out to our community and particularly young families in a way which fulfils the part of our vision to “share the love of Jesus”.

Such has been the impact of the venture that a charity attached to one of our local supermarkets and one of the other churches in the town have given donations to support some of the work being undertaken.

She will not thank me for mentioning her, but Steph Williams has been the inspiration behind the scheme and has worked tirelessly to make it the success it has become. (She has also developed an amazing ability to pack a mountain of stuff into one small room so that the space is clear for Sunday worship,)

If you have not seen her and the Baby Bank in action, why don't you drop into the Centre on a Thursday or Saturday between 10 and 12. And see what you have been missing. I guarantee it will brighten your day and give you almost as much joy as cuddling one of our new Sunday worship babies.

Happy anniversary, Witham URC Baby Bank!

Ian Hardie

Peter Flint's Retirement - Gerry Moscrop.

On Sunday 17th September, a few people who have been in the church for 35+ years and who remembered Peter and Judith Flint, travelled to New Malden for Peter's retirement service.

Peter was minister at Witham and Terling URCs from 1979 until 1987 and we were his first church. Since then he has been minister at 6 different places, often having two churches in his care. His wife Judith is a very accomplished musician and along with producing four children during their time in Witham, she led the music ministry, introducing a band and a singing group for special occasions.

Under God's guidance, Peter initiated the redevelopment of our fairly restricted buildings into the amazing facilities that we now enjoy. He was the first to roll up his sleeves and start digging foundations and he led the church into revival and growth.

The retirement service on Sunday was led by Peter, and his family provided the music, while someone from each of his previous congregations read Bible passages. He took us on a journey as he talked about each church he had ministered in and what God had taught him through his experiences there and also through the various exchanges he made with other ministers from around the world. We sang lots of songs which had been especially relevant to the different places Peter has served God in, and which were special to Peter and his family during the past 40 years. It was very inspiring to see how God has used and blessed the Flint family. Peter's eldest daughter paid tribute to her father and from the standing ovation at the end of the service, it was obvious how well loved Peter and Judith were by all the various congregations.

After the service, we were provided with tea and delicious cakes and a chance to catch up with friends from the past. We all left feeling blessed

and uplifted and feeling it was a privilege to have been part of Peter's journey.





**Celtic Style
Communion Service**

Sunday October 15th
6.30pm

*Join us for
Afternoon Tea
Monday October 2nd
at 2.30pm*

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

Price: £6.00

*Booking with the Centre Office
is essential.*

01376 500958



Great Totham URC - Jean Moody Provided by Revd. Dr. Peter Stevenson

Among others things this month, we are encouraged to remember those in prison. It is an interesting challenge to prayer for those who have been incarcerated for crime. Currently there are just under 100,000 people, and rising, whose liberty has been removed. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1138135/Prison_Population_Projections_2022_to_2027.pdf

Re-offending rates remains around 30% and there is a 96:4 ratio between males and females in prison.

Prisonweek.org encourages to use the following prayer:

Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care. Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime. Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day. Amen

As we can see the prayer covers ‘inmates’, those who are charged with ensuring sentences are served, families left alone and the victims of the crime. When someone breaks the law, the impact is vast and the ripples of disturbance great.

The Christian Bible in Luke chapter 4:18 declares that: “the Spirit of the Lord is on me (referring to Jesus), because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoner and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” Does this suggest the church must do likewise? The reading appears at the beginning of our Lord’s ministry

following his baptism and during a period of wilderness reflection. I would suggest that it does not mean that he was to break open the jails and give clemency to all. Rather, it was a vision to help all to see the futility of this world and to seek the kingdom of God where there will be no laws because people will not need to worry about such things.

One of our guests at The Passage, recently explained that he was tempted to deliberately break the law in order to regain the stability of prison life - regular food and a place of warmth under cover. His life is disrupted by addiction and his outlook is without hope. The reality of this world is too difficult for him to look beyond to a place of hope in the Lord. My prayer is that words and actions can be found that helps him to find another way. As we approach Prisons Week 8th – 14th October, could I encourage us to explore our own hearts to the needs of those in the justice system and to image what a world would look like without the need for laws, courts and prisons.

Blessings

Great Totham URC Preachers for October

October 1st. Roger Smith
October 8th Rev. Mark Ambrose
October 15th Pat Goodall
October 22nd Dot Dean,
October 29th service at Witham, URC.

All are welcome to join us. Our services begin at 10:30,
followed by coffee and time to chat.
Our next coffee morning will be on Saturday 14th of October at 10-30
Proceeds to “humanitarian aid in Ukraine”.
You will find us in chapel Road, Great Totham North. CM9. 8DA

Extract from a poem by Edgar Guest provided by Peter Revell.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That “cannot be done,” and you’ll do it.

Social Events - Julie Harris

Dear Church Family,

Would you like to see more Social events at our church. We have a great venue, a great church family...diverse in its ages. I'm sure we all love to have fun. I would be very happy to consider ideas for events and if possible go ahead and organise them. So what are we all waiting for? Let's get cracking. I have already received one offer from someone who would like to come on board with this, thank you to that lady, others are very welcome to join, so please if there is a social event that you would like to see, then please let us know.

Please also let us know if you are thinking of afternoon, morning, evening.

I really look forward to hearing from you.

My first idea is a family disco...perhaps a prize for the best costume and for the best dancer. I love to have fun and am very sociable, anyone else ?

Every Blessing

I found this in a magazine - Muriel Heppinstall

Aocedrig to rsceearh at Cmarbgdie Uinervitsy, it deons't mtttaer in waht oedrr the Itteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tibng is taht the frist and Isat Itteer are in the rghit pale. Beuseae the hamun mnid deos not raed ervey Iteter by istelf, but the wrod as a wlohe.'

Thank you, Muriel for opening up a whole new world of spelling

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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
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Prayer Chain Co-ordinator	Mrs	Rosemary Stinson	516602
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