



**WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE**  
**November 2022**

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

## **Pastoral Letter**

Dear friends,

Autumn is such a wonderful time of year with the beautiful range of colours in the trees. As a precursor to winter it also heralds that it is time for us to prepare, to adjust, both physically and psychologically, for the shorter days with less sunlight hours. Just the thought of longer dark nights can be daunting but we know that they won't last forever. So, without wishing time away, we look forward because no matter how severe the winter, what might appear to be barren countryside will soon, once again, burst into life. The appearance of small shoots will herald another spring with the longer, warmer days and soon after we will be surrounded by colourful blossom again.

This winter is going to be challenging for many in our community. Given that challenges always bring opportunities, let us pray for God's wisdom and seek his heart for those who, for any reason, are marginalised in our society so that we are ready to step out in faith and action.

Why do we want to do this? To do God's will, his work. To bring God's Kingdom in, to bring a piece of heaven down to earth. All we do is powered by God's abundant love for us overflowing from us to others. Everything we undertake is in acknowledgment that we can only do it through God's strength and power and we want everything we do to bring him honour and glory.

In 1 Peter 3:15 we read: And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.

I pray that as we reach out to our community God will give us many opportunities to share our faith. We have exciting times ahead!

This year, we would like to support families in our community in the run up to Christmas so we are aiming to provide Christmas 'hampers' containing special Christmas fare as well as some staple foods and toiletries. If you would like to donate food then please bring it to the church and give it to the office. Envelopes are available in the church vestibule for monetary contributions.

Although as a church we are changing our focus to support our community, there are Samaritans Purse boxes available in the church vestibule for those who would like them.

We are also supporting the Angel Tree Project again this year. For many years we have provided Christmas presents for the children of prisoners at Chelmsford prison. Some people find it difficult to understand why we do this but the children are innocent victims of their family circumstances. Angel Tree lessens the devastation experienced as a result of parental absence by not only helping families connect and build relationships but by providing children with much needed joy. (For further details and how to help are on page 5.)

November is also the month in which we have our AGM where we review the activities of the past year and elect elders to serve for a three year period. We have several vacancies because some have finished their first three year period of service and others stepped down for various reasons, but far more important than having a certain number of elders is having those whom God is calling to serve at this time.

We work together, as a team each using his or her gifts to encourage and help the fellowship to fulfil our mission of celebrating God and sharing the love of Jesus. So we are looking for people who have a personal faith in Jesus and seek his heart and have a desire to do his will. We know that God is at work in our community, we have seen his hand at work so we are looking forward to all that he has in store for us. Ephesians (3:20) tells us

that: God is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. I find it really challenging not to limit my vision to anything that seems achievable but be open to totally new possibilities even though I know God is not limited to our resources, be that financial or human.

So I need to remind myself regularly of two things:

Firstly: I serve a God of miracles, who loves to involve me in what he is doing. It's got nothing to do with my abilities or inabilities but everything to do with his grace and power.

Secondly: nothing is impossible with God, so I have to let go and let God expand my horizons to his, knowing that when he calls he equips. Maybe, if I show signs of forgetting, you could remind me please? Maybe we could remind each other?

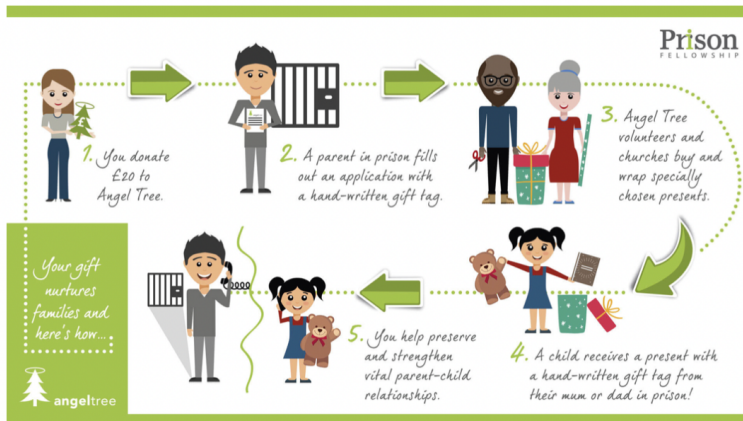
Either way, I look forward to working with the new team of elders, Viv and Tracey our Youth Pastors of course, and each and every one of you as we seek to become the people of God we are called to be.

Yours in Christ,

Lorna

## Angel Tree Project One of our Christmas Charities - Lorna

Angel Tree gives parents in prison as long they are allowed access to their children, the opportunity to send a Christmas present to their children. In 2021, nationally they sent out 4,624 gifts!



The Angel Tree Project gets a list from the fathers (Chelmsford Prison is a male prison) giving the gender, age and interests of their offspring. We then buy, photograph and wrap the presents before they are collected by the Angel Tree Project in good time to be posted to the recipients.

Each gift is dispatched as though it is from the parent in prison and is accompanied by a personal message written by the parent for their child to make the gift extra special. The parent is also given the option of including an age-appropriate Christian story book in their child's gift..Each father receives a photo of the gift so that they know what their child has received

We would welcome donations to enable presents to be purchased. **Marked envelopes are available for donations (any amount is welcome), to be received in the offertory by Sunday November 13<sup>th</sup>**

## Memories and More Celebration

### Ruth Blackett and the Memories and More Team

On 4<sup>th</sup> October, Memories and More celebrated its first birthday. How quickly the time passes when you're having fun!

Here are a few pictures of our celebration session.



Balloon, cake, party games and HATS!

THANK YOU to all Helpers who come each week to support those who come to the group.

If you know anyone with memory issues then please point them in the direction of this group. It's amazing what a safe space can do to stimulate memories, and to have a morning out.

Watch out for our Christmas tree at St Nicholas Church at the beginning of December.



# Memories

AND MORE

Group for people with Dementia  
and their carers

Every Tuesday  
10:30am - 12:15pm

Activities, chat,  
information and music

Refreshments available from  
the Community Cafe

**FREE to attend, informal and friendly**  
**Drop in to any session and join in**

## **The Othona Community - Mark MacDonald**

I have for the past year been a Trustee of The Othona Community. Just to share a little about this Christian Community not very far from Witham!



It was founded in 1946 by an RAF Chaplain Norman Motley, who was also an Anglican minister in London. He had started a series of groups for RAF personnel during WW2, which became known as the Nails movement. People would discuss the war in a safe place and many friendships were formed. Norman requested that Officers not be present, so the men could discuss openly their fears and faith or lack of it. They all fashioned a cross from 4 nails they found discarded and kept them in their pockets.

After the war many people wanted to continue the fellowship with friends they had made during the conflict. Norman Motley searched for a place to start a Community. He went up to Iona in Scotland to meet with George McCleod to find inspiration. He eventually found the Chapel of St Peter on the Wall by the sea in Bradwell Essex. He managed to buy some land near the Chapel using donations and the beginnings of The Othona Community were founded. People, including children, would come up to Bradwell, mainly from London, for summer weeks and use the Chapel for ecumenical worship.

Initially using tents and Nissan huts the Community grew up until the present day with a variety of permanent buildings, just one field away from St Peters Chapel. The Diocese of Chelmsford give permission for the Community to hold services twice a day in the Chapel. In fact it is the only place in the Diocese that an Easter Vigil service is held every year around 6am on Easter Sunday with the Sun rising over the Blackwater estuary as the Son rose from the tomb. The Bishop leads the service every year.

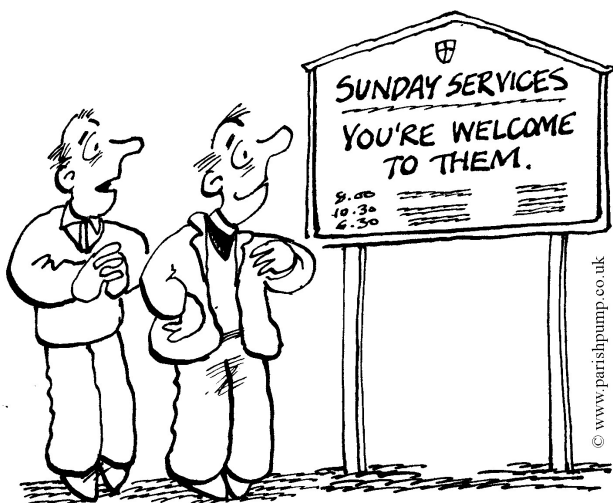


A second Centre was established near Burton Bradstock in West Dorset, also next to the sea and both Centres continue to offer residential and day visits. Please look at the websites for both Centres and let me know if you have any questions.

<https://www.thonaessex.org.uk>

<https://www.thonawestdorset.org.uk>

The Community featured recently on the BBC Radio 4 series Open Country broadcast on July 14th 2022. Still available on BBC Sounds.



*...love the new notice board, Vicar...  
...just not quite so sure about the wording...*



Join us for  
**Afternoon Tea**  
Monday November 7<sup>th</sup>  
at 2.30pm

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

**Price: £5.00**

*Please book  
with the office  
if you would  
like to come.  
01376 500958*



### Church Flowers

We always like to have fresh flowers in the sanctuary on a Sunday morning to remind us of God's wonderful creation.

If you would be willing to supply flowers for one Sunday, please put your name on the list in the Café or speak to Fllis Lawrence (01376 515039) who is always willing to do the actual arranging.

Many supply flowers to commemorate an anniversary or remember a loved one.

## **Budgeting For Christmas with Holdfast - Naomi Claxton**

When you read the word budget, what words come to mind? Cheap? No frills airlines? Or after September's 'mini fiscal event' which turned out to be a fiasco of a budget, perhaps turmoil or confusion comes to mind. Perhaps 'budget' makes you think of spreadsheets, rules, cutting down or doing without...certainly nothing positive.



But what if there was another way of looking at it? What if the word budget could mean freedom? When you consider that the expenditure in the UK budget in 2021 topped one trillion pounds, it is clear that budget does not have to mean a meagre amount of money either.

At its heart, a budget is about knowledge and intention. Knowing what money you have, what commitments you have on it, and how you want to use what is left over. Sometimes, there just isn't anything much left over, particularly in the run up to Christmas when there are more calls than ever on our resources.

There are two ways which Holdfast Credit Union can help you with this. If you are in the difficult situation of just not knowing how you can pay for this Christmas, please reach out to us as we may be able to help you. Amongst the loans we offer is a Christmas loan of up to twice the value of your savings with us, which has no arrangement fee, a low interest rate of 2-3%, and flexible repayments which can be tailored to your circumstances. In some circumstances we can also offer an emergency loan even if you do not already have savings with us.

Those of us fortunate enough to have some money left over after all our bills have been paid and commitments have been met can open a Christmas savings account. You can set up regular payments through the year by standing order through your bank, or arranging for benefits or pension credits to be paid directly to your Holdfast account; you can also transfer money by internet banking or pop up and see us in the office if you would like to pay in cash.

However you decide to do it, putting aside a little throughout the year will give you the best chance of enjoying a stress-free Christmas next year, and the luxury of planning how to spend your money, not worrying about where the money will come from. If you already have a loan with us, don't forget that you can still open a Christmas savings account with us while you continue to pay off your loan.

For more information, please visit our website at [holdfastcreditunion.co.uk](http://holdfastcreditunion.co.uk) where you will also find our contact details, or pop up to the office and have a chat with us about how we could help.

### **Hospital Transport**

Peter Revell is now much better and is willing to offer hospital and other transport to those who need help .

## **Naomi Claxton introducing an article from Sarah Clarkson**

The fourth Thursday in November is a day set aside in America for Thanksgiving. Canada celebrated their national Thanksgiving day back in October. We are blessed that we do not have to wait for a year to roll around before we can give thanks. We have the gift of our church services during which we can give thanks, and also the gift of prayer where we can give thanks at any time of day or night.

But in these troubled times, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed and to wonder what there is for us to give thanks for. There is so much unrest in the wider world, and political and economic instability in our own country. The passing of our Queen after a 70 year reign only adds to the feelings of change and uncertainty. At such times focussing on the positive may feel futile, or even impossible.

I would like to share with you, an article from Sarah Clarkson which has really helped remind me that through all the maelstrom of the world, God remains steadfast and unchanging, as does his love for us.

"I believe that there is a goodness, a personal, creative, generous Goodness beautiful beyond all telling and someday he will turn all the darkness backwards and make all the precious things permanently and heal all the tears that have been so grievously shed. I believe that he is with me and that his love transforms my life on a daily basis. I live by that ultimate belief.

I think I'm a soul who thinks in ultimates - not black and white - but ultimates. And a long time ago I realized that suffering set me ultimate choices. If the loss and pain and sorrow I saw in the world around me and my own grieved self really were the true account of the world, the ultimate and final truth, then I would find it hard to go on.

In order though, for suffering not to be the final word, I understood that I had to find a way to believe in goodness, a beauty, a love so radiantly gracious that it was beyond all imagination, beyond all telling. If I was going to believe that the world wasn't a horror, I had to believe that it was a miracle.

So I did. For me, to believe in God is to trust that he is better and kinder and more tender than I have yet been able to imagine or even understand. I don't feel that belief in a sentimental or emotional way most days of my life. Most days, especially in the past years of physical exhaustion, I feel mostly grey inside, often dull. But I walk, and love, and teach, and yearn toward an ever-greater realization of the Beauty I believe is coming to heal the world.

I live by Beauty.

And as I do, as I choose him, I find him with me, shaping the whole of my life. In the light of this faith and his presence, every fallen leaf, every strain of good music, every child's kiss and autumn feast and quiet moment becomes a taste and part of a larger grace, the one that began us, the one who will see us healed. Either the whole world speaks and sings and grieved and yearns toward its Redeemer...or it doesn't.

I believe it does. That is the story my life is telling. And sometimes, sometimes, I glimpse the wild and gorgeous truth of that trust. I hope you glimpse it today too, friend."

- Sarah Clarkson/@sarahwanders Instagram 24.09.22

I hope that you find the same hope and comfort in her words as I do, and that it will encourage you to be able to look for the good in the world, and feel God's love when you see the beauty he has given us. You can find more of Sarah's writing on her website [SarahClarkson.com](http://SarahClarkson.com).

**CHARITY**



# QUIZ NIGHT

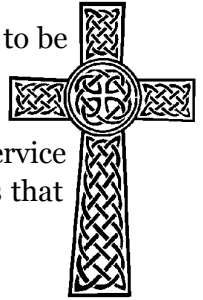
**For The House of Grace  
homeless project  
on  
Saturday 19 November  
7p.m. for 7.30p.m.  
At the Henry Dixon Hall, Rivenhall  
End**

**Tickets £8, teams of up to eight,  
Nibbles provided but bring your own  
drinks**

**More info and tickets from Emmelia**

## Celtic Style Worship - Muriel Heppinstall

A Celtic style evening service was held in October and seemed to be much appreciated. We are intending to hold this style of worship on the third Sunday evening of every month, except December when it will be our Carol Service. Every alternate service will include the celebration of Holy Communion. This means that the first one in November will be a communion service.



What exactly is Celtic style you ask? 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.

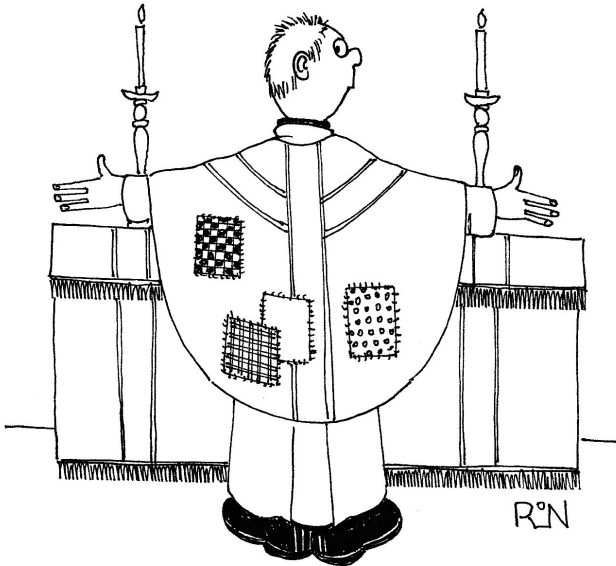
Elements of the early monastic or Celtic Church are:

- *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.



*Trevor hated asking for money, but he  
sometimes made subtle hints*

**Jean Moody Great Totham URC**  
**Written by Rev Dr Peter Stevenson - Stamford URC**

Do you remember the words and tune that rang out at this time of year in the past, “Please to remember the fifth of November: light up the sky with Standard fireworks.” I used to sit for hours on paydays outside the Tri-ang factory in Merton saying, “Penny for the guy mister”. I recall that one year I got enough money to buy myself a pair of Wayfinder shoes with the secret compass hidden in the heel. Many of you know that I adopt the analogy of the car when it comes to remembrance. The rear view mirror is the size it is to merely glimpse backwards and the front windscreen is the size it is so I can look forward most of the time.

However, at the end of October and beginning of November we are encouraged to remember the Saints, recalled the events of the gunpowder plot, recognise the losses in wars, in addition to victims of road deaths and neonatal bereavements. Other faith traditions have their important light festivals of Hanukkah and Diwali and the Christian Church prepares for Advent at the end of the month.

The words of the communion have taken on greater importance for me this year, “Do this in remembrance of me”. It was only in the breaking of the bread that the travellers to Emmaus recognised our Lord. I have reflected in the past that Ministry can often be so concerned with what’s coming up that reflection on the past and enjoyment of the present is lost (or at least diminished). I would encourage you to read 1 Corinthians 11:17 – 34 to gain a wider understanding of the context in which this was said by Paul. The accusation levelled at the church was that while some remained hungry others got drunk. There was an inequality that threatened to harm the church. Paul speaks of the divisions but also recognises that differences are inevitable.

He indicates that it is through the act of Holy Communion that the church is brought together under the common and unifying sacrifice of Christ, whose body was broken and whose blood heralded a new (and final) covenant with God, the Creator. “(Do this) in remembrance of me, (in order to) proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. As we approach the season of Remembrance may we come afresh and anew to the sacrament and prepare ourselves to receive Him, the source, guide and sustainer of all that was and is and will be.

All blessings

**Articles for the December/January 2023  
Magazine to be sent by 21st November  
to [bjstibbards@gmail.com](mailto:bjstibbards@gmail.com)**

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 Elder	Mr	Billy Kennedy	
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
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