



WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE

November 2023

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends

But seek ye first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given unto you. Matthew 6: 33.

I've been on a journey over the past six months exploring the joys and blessings of home groups. They come in different styles frequency of meeting and location. It's been a voyage of discovery and it's not finished yet as there are more home groups to visit. The beauty of each one is the different studies that they are covering, each one biblically based, with good discussion and learning from these studies, as well as good fellowship.

And that is what has encouraged me to talk about the learning in this letter. My letter won't be like St Paul's letters to the Romans or the Ephesians, as St Paul was in a master class that has stood the test of time. But similarly, there is learning for all. St Paul's journeys took him too many places, as he shared the divine word of God, and that of Christ crucified that we may know and love the Lord our God.

Our spiritual learning is not an overnight Sensation but built over many years of growth, development, challenges, hardship and love. It is God's grace, mercy and love that he extends to all of us if we are willing to accept Jesus as our Lord and saviour through his sacrifice for us. Once we accept this gift our spiritual learning can begin.

There is so much to learn from the bible, it will take us a lifetime. Nevertheless, each day is a blessing in itself. As you start to understand God, why He does the things He does, you may come to learn that He knows you better than you know yourself. This shouldn't be scary but thought of as a blessing, from someone that loves you so much, and wants to do good for you, if only you'll give Him time and space in your life, to teach and encourage you. God is so passionate about you that He wants to convey to you through His word the immense 'LOVE' that HE has for each

one of us, whatever baggage and life's scars we may have accumulated throughout life.

As we study His precious word, on our own, in pairs, or triplets, or in a home group, the Holy Spirit speaks into those words and brings life, meaning and peace. To bear fruit from the vine we need to attend to the vine ourselves and read God's word.

With Advent just around the corner, and this special time of year, why not as Ian Hunt recommended in the September Magazine, 'be like children and have a thirst to grow and develop in our love and understanding of the Lord'.

I hope this has encouraged a fresh perspective and will enable you to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. There are home groups that you can join, to grow in faith, learning, wonderment, and fellowship. Email info@withamurc.org. I pray that journey will bring you joy and blessings.

In closing, one of my favourite bible passages from a home group was Romans 12. A letter from St Paul. 'Therefore brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will'.

So... seek 'first' the kingdom of heaven, and His righteousness; and all these things will be added to you.

God Bless

David Wellings

In memory of my dear friend Loveday - Betty Hitchcock



I would like to thank all members for their prayers, cards, flowers, 'phone calls and visits.

God bless you all.

Black History Month - Kemi

Black History Month (aka October) is only one month in the year, but it's a month where we get to take a special moment to remember the significance of Black Lives and Black History. For me, BHM is about celebrating black excellence and recognising/acknowledging where the journey started for black people, especially in this country. It is an opportunity to learn and educate others about the richness of the many diverse Black cultures - from Africa, the Caribbean, and the diaspora.

As a young black woman growing up in the UK, I have always been proud of my Nigerian roots. My mum was born in the UK but moved to Nigeria at eight years old and stayed until 18. She always speaks fondly about how that period of her life shaped her. My dad was born and raised in Nigeria and moved to England after university. He is never short of a story about what Nigeria used to be like and some of his experiences there - like taking part in the National Youth Service, which included a short stay in an army base.

My dad's stories show me that history is not that long ago – in his lifetime, Nelson Mandela was arrested, jailed, and freed. When he was in university, he and his classmates in Nigeria held rallies supporting South Africans suffering from Apartheid.

Coming to England for both my parents was different; going from where everyone looks like you to where you're the minority is hard and takes some adjustment, especially as an adult. To know that my parents lived in a time where people would openly ask to call them by a different 'easier' name (what they meant was 'English') instead of their 3-syllable Nigerian names, or only offering my dad low-paying jobs despite his degree qualification or didn't consider him for promotions because "he wasn't there yet." Sadly, I grew up hearing the phrase, "You have to work twice as hard to prove yourself," although they didn't explicitly say it, I knew the silent part of my

parents' sentence was "Because you're black." What's sadder is that my mum was also told the same thing growing up.

I have felt 'othered' at various times, and it is a shame that racial discrimination still exists. I grew up in an area where to be Black was uncommon and was to be different. People I went to school with didn't understand my culture or have the same appreciation for it that I'd always had.

I got used to being one of the only Black people in my environment. My hair was a topic of conversation and not always in a good way; my skin colour criticised; it was sometimes hard to feel beautiful and good enough. But I love being Black and African, and spending time around my extended family, with whom our culture was normalised, consistently reaffirmed my love for the culture and my confidence in it.

While my life hasn't been shaped in the same way as my parents by living in Nigeria, I have my own experience as a Black Brit, and I'm proud of that. Being Black and British makes me who I am. Yes, discrimination has affected me and others in my generation, with some still experiencing violence because of race or even poorer health outcomes; however, we are doing better at acknowledging these areas of unfair treatment.

I can live as it is now because of everything those before me have worked for and achieved. We have come a long way, and it's because of the many inspiring and courageous trailblazers worth remembering – that includes the famous Black names and the non-famous Black names of those who I know have worked hard to get to where they are today, counting my parents.

BHM is an empowering time for me; a time to share my pride about being black with others and hopefully facilitate a greater understanding of black

experiences. Though the black community has some commonalities, every black person has their own powerful, unique, and individual experience – and BHM allows us to spotlight some of these voices. It is important to stress that Black voices should not be restricted to just one month of the year, **but** BHM is *an exceptional time* for generating greater awareness of what it means to be Black.

I would encourage any Black colleagues in the Trust to get involved in Black History Month this year – whether you’ve been part of the Ethnic Minorities Network Group before now or didn’t even know we had one! Black History Month is **for us** and should be **by us**. Support from our allies is vital too!

Friday Bible Study Group Outing - Muriel Heppinstall

Every year (except for the Covid years) we have visited places of interest. These have included the British Museum to look at Assyrian sculptures from the time the Israelites were in exile, the National Gallery to look at the interpretation of New Testament scenes by artists, the wonderful tapestries of Revelation and Creation by Jacqui Parkinson at St Edmundsbury Cathedral. Between these further afield excursions we have visited local churches.

This year we went to Stebbing and Great Bardfield churches. Both have unusual stone rood screens, unusual because most were destroyed by Cromwell's troops and these are the only two left in England. Great Bardfield also has the most wonderful set of Victorian and later stained glass windows depicting scenes from the gospels and various saints including St Cedd clutching a model of St Peters on the Wall. We ended up with a lovely meal at The Blue Egg farm shop, with optional shopping afterwards!



Update on the Pledge Emergency Donations 2023 - Deborah Robinson

This year we have seen some awful disasters happen around the world. We all watch the news and see normal people going about their daily lives, only to have it stopped in their tracks as devastation and destruction hits. All too quickly the news moves on to something else and it is easy to forget their situations. But for people living, working and volunteering in the middle of the disaster it is not ending.

Here I'm just taking a moment to look back at the appeals we have made donations to through our Pledge Emergency Fund which total £2,000 thus far this year. We can see what our money went towards and remember each situation in our prayers as life continues for those living there.

Syria/Turkey Earthquake

On 6th February a massive earthquake struck southern and central Turkey and northern and western Syria. We all watched the devastation and destruction on the news as 300,000 buildings were destroyed leaving thousands homeless and many lives lost. Infrastructure was destroyed including roads, water supply and power. Through our Pledge giving we donated £500 to DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee) appeal. This appeal raised £150 million from UK public support.



DEC immediately started supporting people in both countries. 427,000 people were provided with access to safe drinking water, a luxury that we take for granted. Emergency shelters and food provisions were provided. Nearly 50,000 people reached free health services through DEC and 13,000 hygiene kits were handed out to try to stop the spread of diseases.

6 months on and still the majority of people are housed in temporary tents and camps. Donations are being used to help provide education and safeguarding of children, as well as vaccination programmes to stop the

spread of common childhood diseases such as measles. There are also projects to help people restart their businesses so that families can earn money to support themselves and regain some independence.

Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal

On 24th February 2022 Russia launched a military offensive against Ukraine. Since then many lives and homes have been lost. Through our Pledge giving we donated £500 to Christian Aid's Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. This appeal raised £23 million for the people of Ukraine.

Christian Aid have used these funds to deliver emergency assistance to 800,000 people. By working with Hungarian Interchurch Aid they have also distributed lorry loads of food, hygiene kits and medical equipment including 34 baby incubators. By working in conjunction with Swiss Church Aid they are continuing to support people in the neighbouring countries of Hungary and Romania where they are assisting refugees who are hoping to stay in the area by organising accommodation, help with job seeking, medical needs and legal matters. As well as providing essential psychological support.



Morocco Earthquake

On Friday 8th September a massive earthquake struck Morocco with the total number of people affected in the hundreds of thousands. Many areas affected are remote and mountainous which made reaching these areas very difficult. The immediate needs of search and rescue and emergency food and water were given by many agencies including the British Red Cross to which we donated £500.



In an emergency like this the Red Cross have the skills and equipment to step in fast. The UK deployed 60 search and rescue specialist, along with

four dogs and a medical team. Medical caravans were sent to remote villages and blood donation centres were set up to aid the medical emergencies.

Libya Flood

On Sunday 10th September storm Daniel hit Libya. More than 11,300 people are known to have died after the catastrophic Mediterranean storm burst two dams and flooded the city of Derna. Torrents of water swept away entire districts, thousands of homes were buried under mud and infrastructures were lost. Through the Pledge Committee we were able to donate £500 to Christian Aid for their appeal.



Christian Aid is working with Dan Church Aid who have a long established presence in Libya. In the first instance essential emergency supplies were provided such as shelters, body bags, food and medicines.

Just over a month since the devastation happened, and Dan Church have machinery in place and are working on a programme of rubble clearance followed by reconstruction. They are helping with psychological support centres as people try to process their losses. Dan Church also has significant experience in delivering information about risk of mines. Following such massive movement of land there is a significant risk of land mines from previous conflicts being displaced posing risks to many. An education programme to try to prevent exposure to mines is now in place.

Please use these updates to remember the thousands of people who will be affected by these emergencies for years to come. And to remember the aid agencies who continue to work to help ease the dire situations as much as possible.

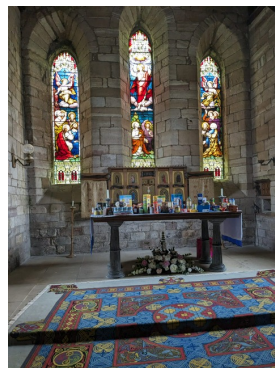
Next year it is intended that there will be regular articles in the magazine on the 9 charities receiving a distribution from the pledge fund as approved by the September Church Meeting.

Big Talk - Wednesday 25th October - some crafty volunteers!



My trip to the North - Eve Murfitt

After seeing on TV that Northumbria has the darkest skies in this country where you can see the milky way and northern lights I arranged a trip and invited Ruth Lindsley to join me, not knowing storm Babet was arriving. We had a great time visiting some beautiful places with no bad weather until Thursday. The Holy Isle Lindisfarne, the first place in the UK to have Christianity; we also found the moon experience in Hexham Abbey including Ruth and me in our moon suits. Some beautiful displays including a Harvest display, 297 photos taken that where the ones I kept. We were so blessed, lots of laughs and thank God for our safe journey home in the storm.



Witham URC Baby Bank - Fenella Hardie

In October the Baby Bank celebrated its first birthday with balloons and cakes



And here is one happy customer.



From small beginnings, working out of a cupboard in the back hall, the bank has grown exponentially and can meet most physical needs for children up to 5 years of age. In many instances where a piece of equipment has not been immediately available, in a short time the item required will turn up. More and more people are coming to the bank and staying for coffee and a chat, not just parents but grandparents too, looking to help with childcare.

The bank now also has maternity clothes and a new support group will shortly be starting for pregnant and new mums. A grandmother shopping for a baby sling got chatting about the Centre and about the new mums' group and turned out to be a retired midwife who was keen to offer her services to the new group. God's provision is amazing!

Coming into the bank on a Saturday morning parents are also able to collect bread etc. from the Lidl supply and if necessary can get food from the Pantry including frozen meals.



October also saw the publication of a major new study by the Joseph Rountree Foundation (JRF) which indicates an explosion of extreme poverty in the UK. More than 1 million children experienced destitution at some point last year. Destitution is defined as the inability to meet basic needs to stay warm, dry, clean and fed, either because of a lack of clothing, heating, shelter or food, or because household income falls below a minimum level after housing costs. Severe material hardship is “no longer a rare occurrence” the study found, with rates of destitution more than doubling in recent years.

We see this at first hand in the Centre but we also see God’s amazing provision. Recently a consignment of bread and rolls from M&S turned up in Reception. We have no agreement with them and no-one knew where it had come from or why. The Lidl supply had finished and we weren’t sure what we were going to do with it. Within half an hour a lady and small child turned up who had 2 slices of bread that morning to feed 4 of them. She went without. Both she and her husband were in work but an unexpected bill had cleaned them out. She was given breakfast and then got bread, rolls and food from the Pantry.

Later that morning another lady appeared and she also got bread and rolls. Advice was also forthcoming about other possible sources of help and interim benefits.

These are not isolated incidents. We will be running Warm Space again this year and expect an increase in numbers as the weather gets colder.

Please continue to pray for all the activities at the Centre and for all those who work there, often in very emotional circumstances, but also thank our amazing God for all his blessings.



Witham Street Entertainment Festival - 16th September.

A polar bear in Witham! A great day when we welcomed many people coming through our doors as part of the Street Festival and we will be part of the **Christmas Fayre, on 2nd December.**





2nd
DECEMBER
3PM-7PM

WITHAM
Christmas
FAYRE

NEWLAND STREET, WITHAM

FOOD - MULLED WINE - GIFTS - ENTERTAINMENT

Festive light switch on at 6pm



"Celebrating 30 Years of Music Making"

**WITHAM
LUNCHTIME CONCERTS**

Presents

**A Concert of
Memories**

with

**Hazel Morgan, singer
Christopher Roberts, piano**

**MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 1-2pm
WITHAM UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
NEWLAND ST, CM8 1AH**

**ADMISSION FREE,
DISCRETIONARY DONATION**

Holdfast Credit Union - Naomi Claxton

“Every week, Dad used to leave a sixpence for me on the mantlepiece....”

“My grandad gave me a shilling every Saturday. I had to buy a 6d savings stamp, and I could spend the rest...”

“I had the Princess Anne stamps, and my brother had the Prince Charles...”

“I remember queuing at the teacher’s desk on a Monday morning to buy my stamp...”

“My sister and I had these every Christmas from my mother’s maiden aunts and I saved mine buying my first refrigerator when I married in 1970...”

If you are of a certain age, you too may have memories of buying National Savings stamps. The money habits we learn when we are young can stay with us for life. This is one reason why Holdfast runs a savings club at one of the local schools, to help the children learn to save now for later. Sadly, we don’t do stamps, but they do still get a little paying in book and they can see their money adding up every week.

As well as helping children develop savings habits, the National Savings Stamps also helped the country – the money raised from the scheme was instrumental in supporting the war effort during World War II. The War Office used slogans like “Save Your Way to Victory” and “War Savings are War Ships”. When people saved with the stamps, they benefitted themselves, but also their country.

In many ways, Holdfast Credit Union is a modern equivalent of this. When you save with us, your money is completely safe, and it allows us to make small, low-cost loans available to members of our community. For some of our members, this can be life-changing, and offers a safe alternative to loan sharks, and a more affordable alternative to pay day lenders.



If you can do so, saving a small, regular amount with Holdfast will benefit you (having a sum tucked away for a rainy day, free life assurance which pays out a bonus of up to £5,000 on your death, dependent on your age when you join us), but will also benefit the community. We operate using an ethical bank, so you will also be putting your money to good use in so many ways, and you can withdraw it at any time you need to.

Joining Holdfast is quick and easy – you can apply on our website or pop up to the office and see us. You will need proof of your ID, and proof of your address, £1 for your joining fee, and £5 for your first deposit.

If you've got any questions, want to find out more, know how to set up a savings account for a grandchild, how to apply for a loan....just come and see us, email us, or give us a call.

The Holdfast Team

www.holdfastcreditunion.co.uk
office@holdfastcreditunion.co.uk 01376 516994

Photo courtesy of <https://www.ukphotoarchive.org.uk/>



*Join us for
Afternoon Tea
Monday November 6th
at 2.30pm*

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

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

Price: £6.00

TUESDAY PRAISE
at Witham URC
EVERYBODY WELCOME
November 2023

DATE

LEADER

7th November

Revd. Stephen Northfield
(Hatfield Peverel)

14th November

Marina Price (Healing Bus)

21st November

Revd. Lorna Bantock
(WURC)

28th November

Ken Davies (Valley Church)

TIME: 12.30 - 1pm

Preachers at Great Totham URC in November

Sunday 5th Rev. Mark Ambrose
Sunday 12th. Remembrance Sunday. Sarah, Wilson.
Sunday 19th. Gil Heathcote.
Sunday, 26th. Ian Hardie. Communion

All are Welcome to join us, our services begin at 10:30 am.

You are also welcome to come to our next coffee morning on Saturday 11th November at 10:30.

We hope to fill 30 Christmas boxes, full of goodies for children in need and the proceeds from this coffee morning, will help to send them.

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

Tiptree Art Club Exhibition

Saturday 18th November

Tiptree Community Centre

10 to 4 pm Free Entry



Come along and view the art created by local amateur artists who are members of Tiptree Art Club. As well as seeing unique works of art you will be able to buy cups of tea/ coffee and cake to support a local children's cancer charity. There will be paintings and crafts available for purchase.

Rev Dr Peter Stevenson sent by Jean Moody, Totham URC

Lest we forget. This month is all about remembering things whether it be saints, the armed forces, victims of road traffic collisions, neonatal deaths and a number of other organisations want us to remember something. This got me thinking about people diagnosed with dementia and the prospect of forgetting, unable to access their memories and, in the most difficult extremes, even unable to connect with people they have known for a lifetime.

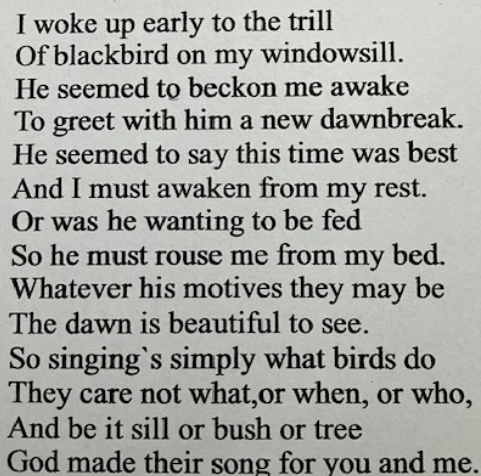
The Alzheimer's Society are currently running an advertisement that claims the disease is the largest cause of death in Britain. Dementia is an umbrella term for a range of progressive conditions that affect the brain. Each type of dementia stops a person's brain cells (neurones) working properly in specific areas, affecting their ability to remember, think and speak. Doctors typically use the word "dementia" to describe common symptoms – such as memory loss, confusion, and problems with speech and understanding – that get worse over time. Dementia can affect a person at any age but it's more common in people over the age of 65. There are over 200 subtypes of dementia. The most common are Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia, frontotemporal dementia and mixed dementia. By 2025, it's estimated that over one million people in the UK will have a diagnosis of dementia – and almost all of us will know someone living with the condition.

I recall a lovely lady in my first church referring to her well developed 'forgetary'. The earlier stages of the condition can magnify personality traits, grumpy people may get grumpier; peaceful people might have a look of serenity. In the later stages most become locked into themselves with occasional sparks of recognition. I was leading worship in a care home and started reciting the Lord's Prayer. The resident suddenly spoke up and joined me before retreating back into their own hidden world.

Christians know that through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, God is with us always, until the end of time. My reflection is that we must not forget those who are forgetting, redoubling our effort to show care and compassion for all those affected by this very cruel disease.

Blessings.

Ron Hutson a member of Tiptree URC - Jean Moody Great Totham URC



I woke up early to the trill
Of blackbird on my windowsill.
He seemed to beckon me awake
To greet with him a new dawnbreak.
He seemed to say this time was best
And I must awaken from my rest.
Or was he wanting to be fed
So he must rouse me from my bed.
Whatever his motives they may be
The dawn is beautiful to see.
So singing's simply what birds do
They care not what, or when, or who,
And be it sill or bush or tree
God made their song for you and me.

Ron Hutson

BF F

The Break Fill Four

Claire, John, Lucy and Rebecka on vocals; Tom on the keys

Where:
When:

British Legion, Memorial Hall,
Newland St, Witham CM8 2AZ
Saturday 18th November, 7 for 7.30!



ALL proceeds to:
House of Grace Witham - who offer
supported accommodation to the
homeless.

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Rock, blues, jazz, glam, ballads and much more from the sixties to the noughties!

Blondie, David Bowie, The Bangles, The Animals, The Beatles, Abba, Elton John, The Monkees, Bananarama, Frank Sinatra, T-Rex, The Sweet, Queen, Neil Diamond, Elvis Presley, Carpenters, The Proclaimers, Jeff Beck, Dire Straits and many more.

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Bring your own beer, wine, soft drinks and snacks

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www.tomdenton.org/music





November Shopping List

Jam
Tinned Cold Meat
Biscuits
Tinned Fish
Tinned Fruit
Tinned Tomatoes
Squash
Nappies Size 3 & 6

We follow the Food Standards Agency standards. We can only accept donations of unopened and undamaged goods well within their "use by" date. Items that do not meet these requirements cannot be used and your donation may be wasted.

www.braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk
info@braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk

Registered Charity in England & Wales (1148782)



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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