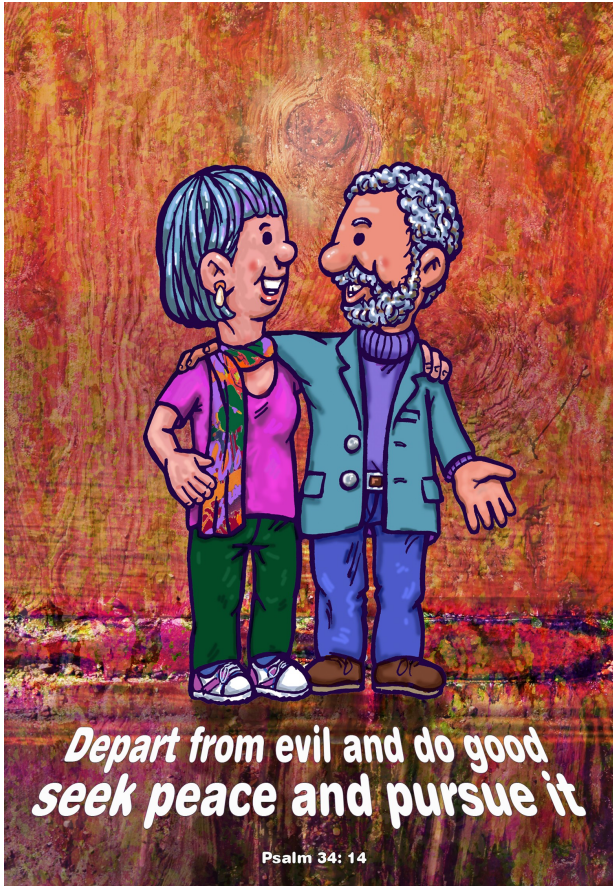




November
2024



CHURCH MAGAZINE
November 2024

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

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends

A few of you know that, before I became a tax inspector, I was a history lecturer. That may be why, when I started to think about this letter, I immediately thought of three dates which (to me) are memorable – though one of them might not have occurred to many of you.

On 5th November 1605, Guy Fawkes and others planned to blow up Parliament, because (in their view) the King was not following the 'true' faith and so, they argued, resort to violence was justified. On 7th November 1917 the Bolshevik October Revolution began in Russia. (At the time, the Russians followed a different calendar so, to them, the date was 25th October.) The Provisional Government, which had replaced the Tsar earlier in the year, was not achieving what the Bolshevik's regarded as Russia's destiny. So, they argued, resort to revolution was justified. On 11th November 1918 an armistice ended fighting in the First World War, during which kings, presidents, prime ministers etc. had told their people God was on their side (whichever side that was); but in which millions had died. So great was the slaughter that people at the time believed this had been the war which would end all wars.

You will be relieved to hear that is the end of the history lecture. But thinking about those events led me to reflect that, throughout human history, people have fought for religion, country, liberty and themselves; always believing their cause was right and violence justified. The 'War to end Wars' clearly has not ended wars: but leaders of countries, or faiths, or breakaway movements have continued to look to violence as the way to achieve their (in their eyes) justified ends. And it is the same for ordinary people in their daily lives.

Our news is dominated by two of many current conflicts in the world – that between Russia and Ukraine and the seemingly ever-expanding one between Israel and various groups and countries in the Middle East. In both conflicts, each side looks to a different starting point in world history to justify its actions and in both ‘civilians’ are dying just as much as (if not more than) combatants. Some of you will have views on the ‘rightness’ of the respective claims by participants in such conflicts; but it is important to recognise that other people will have a totally different perspective and, for reasons which seem good to them, will disagree with your views. Does that make continued violence inescapable at a personal, as well as national, level?

This led me to think about another November date – a Christian-focused one – which, like so many Christian dates, is not fixed; but changes from year to year. The Sunday before Advent begins marks the celebration of Christ the King. This year it falls on the 24th of November.

Jesus said his kingdom is not of this world; but that it is already present in this world when his followers actually do what he has asked them to do. And we all know that what he asks us to do is very different from what humans in this world have believed to be right.

Instead of encouraging resistance, King Jesus stopped his followers defending him against arrest. He encouraged those who would follow him to love their enemies and do good to those who mistreated them. Instead of voicing hate, he spoke of love. Instead of seeking revenge, he offered forgiveness. Instead of grasping power, he stooped to serve. Instead of pushing for victory, he allowed people to kill him, so that we might have life in all its fullness.

Some people say that the way of peace is impractical in this world. But humanity's way can hardly be said to have worked. Perhaps what we learn from King Jesus should matter more to us than country, or church or community. If so, wouldn't it be worth each of us giving his ideas a try?

May the peace that only Jesus can bring fill your hearts and stay with you all!

Yours in Christ

Ian Hardie

Black history Month -Yvonne Egbuna

I was browsing through social media a few weeks when I came across a post someone had made. The subject of discussion was a woman who had just turned 70. I took a second look at the picture of the lady in question because I was a tad confused by the picture I saw attached to the story which you see below.



Just to give a bit of context, this is a picture I had seen associated with a story I had read about many years ago. The story was about a little girl who had to walk to school escorted by Federal Marshalls because there was an angry mob outside threatening to kill her. At the time, I erroneously as-

sumed because the picture was made in black and white, it must have happened so long ago. I also didn't think the little girl in the picture would even still be alive.

So, you can imagine my shock when I read that the little girl in the picture is now 70 years old and still very much with us today. It didn't happen that long ago. The little girl you see in the picture is called Ruby Bridges. Ruby was born during the civil rights movement and was the first African American child to attend a formerly whites-only elementary school in Louisiana during the desegregation crisis. You can read more on her story here- https://sistersouurce.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/the_story_of_ruby_bridges_-_a4_-_robert_coles-1.pdf

On reflection, it struck me how easy it is for anyone to form misjudged opinions about many things in life. Just because I saw a picture in black and white, I assumed it must have happened so long ago that the little girl in the picture must be long gone. But how wrong was I!

How many times do we see a person and automatically assume a stereotype of the person? How many times do we stop ourselves in our tracks when we find that we are making a generally accepted assumption? How many times do we allow ourselves to be kind and curious about things we are not very familiar with, not very comfortable with, do not fully understand or things we have assumed should happen a certain way?

Last month we celebrated Black History Month in this country. We mark this every year. Perhaps it is an opportunity for us to challenge ourselves to be more curious about why in the first place, there is a Black History month celebrated in the United Kingdom today.

Three little words - poem by Rosemary Stinson

I hear them in the playground, the classroom and the street
I even hear them in our churches
where God's Family meet
The whole wide world shouts them
in acts of violence and in greed
The rich wanting more and in the process
overlooking the poor world's need.

I'm sure that you've all heard them
And like me, used them too
And I really did mean them
because I thought that they were true

Three little words - so powerful
showing lack of thought or care
That come from deep within us -
IT'S NOT FAIR!!

Our Father up in heaven looks down with saddened eyes
for He knows how true these words are
as another young child dies.
In His heart all are of equal value
and Jesus died to make it fair.
The one who'd done no wrong at all
on the cross our sins did bear.
God wrote us all a message, three words forever true
And He sent His Son
to say them
"I LOVE YOU!"

Written by Rosemary in September 2004

Pledge 2024

Witham United Reformed Church has for many years had a pledge process, this takes 10% of the churches offering income plus related Gift Aid tax recovery. In 2024 nine charities were supported via our Pledge giving, and through our prayers. The following is a summary of the work of these charities. Further information is available on one the notice boards in the Church Cafe.

Papyrus

Papyrus is a charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide and the promotion of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people.

The Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is a UK based charity and works with over 13,000 women, men and children each year providing crisis advice, mental health counselling and practical support to help people settle and integrate into their new community.

House of Grace.

House of Grace is a charity set up by members of churches in Witham with the help of the established Christian charity Green Pastures, offers supported accommodation to homeless people.

52 Lives

The charity works nationwide and aims to change someone's life every week of the year. People with a need are nominated, mostly by frontline professionals, to receive help.

Hand in Hand

Hand in Hand has its offices in Witham and promotes their work in Essex schools. Their mission is to educate, mentor, train and empower orphaned and vulnerable East African young people.

Buddy Bag Foundation

The charity provide tailored bags containing toiletries, pyjamas, socks and underwear, and some comfort items such as a teddy bear for children taken into emergency care in the UK.

J Bay Recycling Project

The project is based in South Africa. Children are encouraged to collect materials for recycling for which they are paid by weight in tokens called Mula. Mula is an imaginary currency which can be exchanged for goods such as rice, flour, vegetables, tinned food, school equipment, clothing including school uniforms.

Sanctus

Is a charity based and working in Chelmsford and surrounding areas. They serve the homeless and vulnerable with the only day centre for this in mid-Essex, from where they provide food (15,000 meals each year) and a safe space.

African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust

ACLT is dedicated to raising awareness of the severe shortage of donors on the United Kingdom Stem Cell, Blood and Organ register. Promoting stem cell, bone marrow and blood donation, registering potential donors and supporting patients and their families.

Christmas is a coming! Fenella Hardie



Sorry! My granddaughter is already counting the days...

Saturday, 30th. November sees the **Witham Christmas Fayre** take to the streets of our town and as usual we shall be hosting lots of craft stalls throughout the ground floor and entertaining large numbers of our community in the cafe.

It is a huge logistical operation to get everything ready for the day and we need lots of help to make the evening a success and to do all the clearing up afterwards." Please look out for lists going up in the cafe area and speak to Fenella or Heather for more information on how you can get involved.

"Waste not" supermarket runs

As you know we receive quantities of bread, pastries, vegetables and groceries from local supermarkets which we make available to our community, free or for a small donation. This not only reduces waste, as all these items would otherwise be dumped or incinerated, but also helps those who are getting by on small budgets.

It would be really helpful if more people were able to help with the collections from Witham and /or Maldon as it would mean the same people were not being called on all the time.

In the run up to Christmas we are offered even more items and so more help then would be even more appreciated. For more information please speak to Fenella Hardie, Heather March or Stephanie Williams.

TUESDAY PRAISE

NOVEMBER 2024

AT WURC

12.30 - 1.00PM

TUESDAY

Speaker

5th Nov

Jonathan Pritchard

12th Nov

Femi Cole-Njie

19th Nov

Lorna Bantock

26th Nov

Marina Price

Everybody Welcome

Refreshments available afterwards

A moments silence please - article from the London Times provided by Peter Revell.

Today, we mourn the passing of an old friend: Common Sense. He lived a long life in the U.K. No one knows how old he was, as his records were lost long ago in bureaucratic red tape, but he devoted his life to service in schools, hospitals, homes and factories, helping people get jobs done without fanfare or foolishness.

For decades, petty rules, silly laws and frivolous lawsuits held no power over Common Sense. He was credited with teaching such lessons as knowing when to come in out of the rain and why life isn't always fair. Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies, reliable parenting strategies and by the maxim that it's O.K. to come in second.

He survived new cultural and educational trends, but in recent decades his waning strength proved no match for the ravages of well-intentioned but overbearing regulations. His health deteriorated when schools, social workers and an endless succession of quangos implemented zero-tolerance policies.

Common Sense finally lost his will to live when criminals received better treatment than victims and the judiciary stuck its nose in everything and when a person too stupid to realise a steaming cup of coffee was hot was later awarded a huge settlement, Common sense threw in the towel. Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust, his wife, Discretion, his daughter Responsibility, and his son Reason. Not many attended his funeral because so few realised he was gone. He is survived by two step-brothers: My Rights and Ima Whiner. My Rights is now sickening and getting weaker as succession of government regulations gradually remove such rights as are left, but Ima Whiner is going from strength to strength.

Lunchtime concert Thursday 12th December - Lorna



There will be a special lunchtime concert by candlelight at 12.30pm.

It's a solo performance, an inspiring sequence of 'Reflections', focusing on peace and freedom with beautiful unaccompanied melody and classic poetry.

It will be played and presented by bassoonist Laurence Perkins, who is regularly featured on Classic FM, BBC Radio 3 and has had two solo recordings in the U.K. Classical Charts.

The concert is 45 minutes long, and is free admission.

There will be a collection for two charities - UK-Med, a World Health Organisation medical team, and Action Music International who work through music to help and support traumatised war victims.

Both organisations are currently very active in Ukraine, Gaza and other war-torn parts of the world.

Stuff- Bob Stibbards

I have often heard people referring to Millennials but was unsure of the age range. How many do you recognise?

Generation age ranges.

Lost Generation - 1883-1900

Greatest Generation - 1901-1927

Silent Generation - 1928-1945

Baby Boomers - 1946-1964

Generation X - 1965-1980

Millennials - 1981-1996

Generation Z - 1997-2012

Generation Alpha - 2013 to present

Another interesting fact or not....

According to our on line grocery supplier we are the largest buyer of a certain brand of dark chocolate in the east of the country. Wow we are famous!

Christmas is coming oh no

I have noticed Christmas lights up already in some houses. Surely this is too early or is it just me?. However I very reluctantly practised some Christmas songs with Pete and Tim this week!



Hannah Lewis,
cello, and
Hans Montanana,
piano, will perform
music by
Sergei Rachmaninov.



A charity concert for the House of Grace
supported housing project

Sonatas Two by Two

with Cygnus Trio and Hans Montanana

Witham United Reformed Church

Saturday 16th November at 7pm

Free admission with an invitation to donate generously.
Refreshments will be served after the concert.



Javier Montanana,
violin, and
Cesar Saura,
piano, will perform
music by
Johannes Brahms.

Preachers at Great Totham URC in November

November 3rd Ernie Finch from Kelvedon URC

November 10th. Sarah Wilson from Witham URC

Remembrance Service and Communion

November 17th. Gil Heathcote from Witham URC

November 24th Rev. Mark Ambrose.

You are welcome to join us at any of our services which begin at 10:30 am.

You are also welcome to come along to our next coffee morning which is on Saturday November 9th

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

Our Harvest Festival service was held on 6th October it was well attended and ably led by our friend Dot Dean from Maldon URC. We followed with a bring and share lunch.



Rev Dr Peter Stevenson - sent by Jean Moody Great Totham URC

There is a saying that "The darkest hour is always before dawn"

A possible meaning for this proverb is that just before the sun rises the sky is at its blackest, suggesting that when times are at their worst, they will 'soon' get better. The World War Two Prime Minister, Winston Churchill used the phrase about the French capitulation in his *Finest Hour* speech in June 1940 following the Dunkirk retreat. (Look them up on a search engine if you are unsure to what this refers)

In this article I would like to think about the dusk-ness of war and the dawn of peace. I understand that police raids are often timed for 4:00 a.m. because they can take place under the cover of darkness maximising the tactic of surprise. Recently a football match between Manchester City and Arsenal was described as an insight into the dark arts, suggesting that players employed dubious methods to gain an unfair advantage.

There is a story in the bible of a man who visits Jesus during the night, presumably so that he is able to conduct matters in private without others seeing his actions. Perhaps you are able to think of other examples of things that operate in the shadows?

The other side of this reflection is to think about what the dawn looks like and what value it holds. The start of each day brings about a certain hope for something different when things are not going well. The chance that this day might be the beginning of better times. At 11:00 a.m. on 11th November 1918 and 11:00 p.m. on 8th May 1945 Germany surrendered, bringing an end to the first and second world wars. I wonder how people woke on 12th November 1918 and 9th May 1945 knowing that the wars had ended. Did the dawn feel more hopeful and the start of the day a little brighter knowing that war had ended?

And today ... is the world living in the darkness of despair, conflict and uncertainty or is it living in the dawn of hope and the positive belief that one day all will be well. And how about you? Are you living in the darkness of fear, concern and doubt or do you function in a world of light where joy and happiness, kindness and hope abound. There are reasons that we can find ourselves in darkness but there are only excuses making us stay there. In this month of remembrance may we aim to live in the dawn rather than the dusk.



"...and don't forget we're coming into Nativity Play season – make sure we have extra tea-towels in stock!"

Faith in Action Great Totham URC



Our Mission is to spread “The Love of God” to the small Community we serve here in Great Totham North. Our unusually large Churchyard plays it’s part in reaching out to the village folk.



All are welcome to walk in the Yard’s pathways whether it’s to enjoy the wild flowers in summer, exercise their dogs, chat to another or sit on one of the benches and experience its peace. The allotments play their part.

Over the years, they have been a great success, not just for their gardening owners (there's a waiting list!!) but also to those who enjoy watching how they develop during the gardening year.

It's quite surprising how many people come by!





Group for
Evangelism
And
Renewal
within the United
Reformed Church

www.gear.org.uk

AUTUMN PRAYER LETTER 2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On Wednesday and Thursday 25th and 26th September the GEAR Committee met at Herringthorpe URC. We began with sharing news of where each member was within their respective ministries.

It has been good that we have new members on the GEAR Committee since the last time I penned the prayer letter.

As part of our meeting we discussed and we seek prayer for the following issues:

- We seek someone to be an ambassador for GEAR in some of our Synods. Synods that haven't got a named GEAR ambassadors are:

****South Western Synod **National Synod of Wales **Northern Synod**

****Southern Synod **Thames North Synod**

Please pray that people we are approaching for some of these Synods may feel God calling them to be advocates in their Synod.

- We are seeking a new Secretary for the GEAR Committee. Revd Sheila Coop, who has served us so faithfully and well for many years, wants to step back. We pray for a new secretary to be called to that role.
- The committee discussed the possibility of GEAR employing someone/more than one person to be GEAR Evangelism and Renewal Advocates (ERAs). Many of you will know we have had ERAs before and we wonder if God might be prompting us to explore these again in order that we can bless churches who want to explore renewal. Please pray God will make His plan and purpose clear as we discern this prompting.
- The GEAR Pray4URC times of prayer we have offered to the denomination live on Facebook on Thursday evenings in the run up to General Assembly or Assembly

Chairman: Rev Matt Stone
Secretary: Rev Sheila Coop
Treasurer: Rev Simon Copley

15 Gough Close, Rotherham, Yorks, S65 3BB
219 Chamber Road, Oldham, Lancs. OL8 4DJ
73 New Road, Epsbeck, S Yorkshire, S61 8JY

01709 373355
0161 630 2884
01709 314471

chairman@gear.org.uk
secretary@gear.org.uk
treasurer@gear.org.uk

Executive will now be pre-recorded rather than live. Please pray these continue to bless the denomination as and when they happen.

- The pre-recorded Pray4URC weekly videos will continue to be recorded. Please pray that they will continue to help people pray.
- We discussed the possibility of a monthly prayer time on zoom. We are looking at starting this in February 2025. We think these will be on the first Thursday evening of the month from 8-9pm. Please pray that God would show us whether this should replace the Pray4URC videos that are frequently uploaded to Facebook.
- We pray for preparations for the 'Refreshing Your Ministry' conference on the 7-9 October 2025 at Swanwick. We pray that those who God wants to be there will feel prompted to book on to it. The theme is 'Evangelism'.

As always, we thank you for partnering with us in prayer and for praying for the prayer requests above.

Thanks and God Bless,

Revd Richard Bradley.
[Member of the GEAR Committee]

THE LIGHT PARTY

31ST OCTOBER 5.30PM – 7PM

**GAMES, CRAFT, SNACKS, SONGS,
BIBLE STORY AND FUN**



**WITHAM METHODIST CHURCH, 35 GUTHAVON STREET,
WITHAM CM8 1BJ**

TO REGISTER A PLACE OR FOR MORE INFO CONTACT

REV'D FEMI 07952 862497

KENFEM.NJIE@GMAIL.COM

Minister	Minister	Lorna Bantock	571757
Children and Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Sollis	500958
Associate Children and Youth Pastor	Ms	Tracey Eagling	500958
Church Administrators		Naomi Claxton Anna Johansson	
Director of Outreach	Ms	Tracey Eagling	
Kitchen Manager	Mrs	Heather March	500958
Children & Youth Elder	Mr	Gavin McCall	
Church Secretaries (also Elders)	Mr Mrs	Tony Deighton and Muriel Heppinstall	518866
Church Treasurer (also Elder)	Mr	Ian Hardie	
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	
Worship Elder	Mr	Keith Meredith	
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
Welcome Team Leaders	Mr Mrs	David Goodwin Mary Goodwin	davidgoodwin2009@hotmail.co.uk
Magazine Editors	Mrs & Mr	Jo and Bob Stibbards	bjstibbards@gmail.com