



**WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE**

**December 2021 / January 2022**

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

## **Pastoral Letter**

Dear friends,

Advent! A time of joy and hope as we look forward to the advent (arrival) of Jesus on Christmas Day, when we start the Christmas season, the twelve days of Christmas, from Christmas Day until the 6th January, Epiphany.

We tend to think of Christmas as being for children and of course every family wants the children to have a special time. But it's just as much for adults, all adults, not just the young at heart! Christmas is ageless and timeless. The greatest gift ever, given to every single person regardless of age or background or anything else. Like any gift, we can refuse it or accept it. If we accept it, we have another choice - do we open it or just leave it? Forget about it thinking that when you have a bit more time to investigate you will do so. Those of us who have accepted the gift of the baby Jesus, have a better idea of what this gift might lead to. Hopefully we will have experienced some of excitement of this gift which brings us new life, transforms our life and brings ever more gifts and blessings.

Then we have a New Year to look forward to: none of us knows what will happen during this year, the challenges, opportunities, joys, bitter moments and sweet ones, that it might bring. The one thing we can be absolutely sure about is that our God will never desert us or abandon us. Not only that - he will always be right with us whatever happens. Better still, God can redeem these experiences, weaving them into our lives in such a way that it enriches ours and the lives of others.

Often a New Year brings New Year's resolutions. If I'm really honest I dislike New Year's resolutions and seldom, if ever, make any because I lack willpower. Hence, for me, one of the best things about Christmas is that with Jesus I have a new start every day. I know that the changes I want and

need in my life are never going to succeed through my willpower. They will succeed if they are God's will and then only through his power.

'I said to the man who stood at the gate of the Year, "give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown". And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'"

(King George VI. Broadcast, Christmas 1939. Minnie Louise Haskins 1875 - 1957)

Whatever 2022 brings, let us commit to working together, so that by God's grace we will be able to use the challenges we will inevitably face, as opportunities.

One of the changes we will be adapting to is the new eldership team comprising Maureen Barry, Sarah Campbell, Tony Deighton, Fenella Hardie, Ian Hardie, Muriel Heppinstall, Billy Kennedy, Gavin McCall, Rocío McDonald, Keith Meredith and Doug Sandles.

Please pray for them all and your ministers and Children and Youth Pastors as we pray and work to bring God's kingdom to earth, here in Witham. Together we can really make a difference in our community, Witham, as we continually celebrate God and share the love of Jesus in small every day ways with those we meet.

I look forward to this Christmas and New Year in fellowship with you all.

Bless you

Lorna

## Christian Motorcyclists Association - Annual General Meeting - Tim Shelley



It was over 20 months ago that Sally Stracey, CMA Essex member, began trying to organise a visit of the Christian Motorcyclists Association to Witham United Reformed Church. However, due to the pandemic the planned weekend in 2020 of course didn't materialise, and we were wondering if this event would ever happen. Thankfully it did.

Sally asked the musicians to keep the weekend of 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October free. We were involved in the song selection for both the Saturday and Sunday, and we met on the Friday to rehearse. I could not believe the number of CMA attendees on the Friday. The weather was poor and I reckoned on maybe 30 max. I don't have the final figure but I know it was massively more than that. Mike Harrison announced that the CMA AGM was last here in 1997 so it was long overdue.

For the Saturday service pre-AGM we played 3 songs, and the singing from the assembled m/cyclists was amazing. The lockdown has prevented singing like that for far too long. Mike Fitton, UK National Chairman, gave a short talk, and we were then dismissed for the business meeting to proceed.

On Sunday, again the weather was poor, in fact worse than the previous day, but again the CMA turned up in force. This time we were privileged to have 2 bikes parked inside the sanctuary. Mike Fitton told us these both belonged to ladies, and that generated a round of applause. With our Youth Pastor Viv, Mike demonstrated the Armour of God, though we were hoping he would actually put all the gear on! Anyway, some more great singing followed by a time of fellowship over coffee in the back hall. The CMA are

such a friendly and enthusiastic bunch. And they received so much good feedback from among our fellowship.

I managed to read at least some of their latest Chainlink magazine overnight and had a brief chat with Brian Carbonero on Sunday regarding his article on biker clothing. When it comes to protective motorcycle clothing Brian (from Tiptree) prefers leather over textile, and why not after having survived a serious accident with his leathers merely scuffed. Although my last bike was nearly 30 years ago, I have remained a biker at heart, and still have my 1970's light blue Lewis Leathers jacket to prove it! I also hold a copy of the Manual For Life which is a predecessor of The Bikers Bible, though cannot remember which biking event that came from.

I know that the CMA really appreciated the warm welcome we extended. Likewise the CMA do some great work and we were privileged to meet some of them here.

Photographs courtesy of Mike King





## Life Stories - Rod Gayton



I'm the 'old person' in this month's Family-Story Church Magazine slot.

I was born, to parents of strong historic Congregational stock, towards the end of WW2, in a Leeds Nursing Home, and then subsequently brought up in Castleford, a nearby mining Community. Apart from the six working collieries within the town limits, Chemical, Glass-making and Pottery firms offered school-leavers a variety of options. There were some negatives – any strong wind, over a weir on the River Aire, in the town centre, produced toxic 'candy-floss' floaters. Pity the poor car owner – not too many of them, in those times - finding that one had settled on their paintwork, eating into it within minutes.

I was given a family baptism, by my Congregational Minister grandfather, in the backroom of our home with the use of a cup of water – dad was absent overseas, on more important duties. My older sister, Elaine, and I grew up in an enviably happy home. We attended our local church, twice each Sunday, with Sunday School, Scouting and Youth Club attendance too. Dad was an Optician – his business much boosted by the formation, in 1948, of the NHS, with its FREE optical and dental work, GP cover and so on; people all leapt at those opportunities. Even so, and as a professional man, dad was almost fifty, before purchasing his first motor car. Family holidays were spent on the Yorkshire Moors and, wonderfully, in the Lake District. Their relative isolation was important; the western Lakes areas, particularly Eskdale, were favourites, with Windermere/Ambleside and Keswick shunned, as 'far too crowded!'



My schoolboy memories are mainly sporting ones. In 1957 Featherstone Rovers reached the Rugby League Wembley Cup Final, and, early on that matchday, it was belatedly realised that the First Eleven cricket team would be decimated – and frantic calls were made, even to the under 14s. Thus I turned-out at Hemsworth Grammar School, on a murky Saturday afternoon, to come face to face with Geoffrey Boycott. How did I know it was him, amongst seven years of summer cricket fixtures? Well, he opened their batting, cleaning the rain spots off his NHS spectacles, after every ball he faced, whilst producing an unbeaten century, out of a total of around 140 runs. He then proceeded to become their tearaway opening fast bowler; fortunately for us heavier rain intervened. It was only several years later, when he burst into the County Cricket side, did we realise the identity of our earlier opponent.

My first love was football, but I never got anywhere near any school teams, standards were far too high. Strangely, down in these Southern parts, I was spotted playing in an after-work interdepartmental team, and I went on to play happily for about 15 years – in an Alan Mullery - type role (for all you Spurs fans) – in Divisions Five and Six of the Mid-Essex Saturday League.

From my childhood I had much enjoyed ‘playing around with numbers’ – this led to a Maths degree, at UMIST, and almost 40 years with GEC Marconi, as an Industrial Accountant. I still find it hard to believe that I was decently paid, and well looked-after, for all that time, just dabbling with numbers. I was introduced, by a Unit Manager – a Cambridge-educated Marconi Engineer – in my first significant position, as ‘the young, new bean counter’; no reference to my glowing qualifications. My pride was not a little hurt, but his words were wise ones. Thereafter, and as Church Treasurer too, I always felt that my role was to provide, on time, accurate actual and predicted financial data to Management, so that they – predominantly world-class Engineers - could make better-informed future decisions. It did not always work out – in the late 1970s the Company, despite its leading Mobile Radio position, in trunking systems, private network and cellular radio, used by police forces, public utilities and other



large governmental and commercial undertakings, opted, at Board level, not to join, probably lead, the nascent Personal Mobile Radio scramble – ‘(a) it would never be financially viable, (b) who on earth would buy them in the necessarily enormous volumes and (c) what would be their attractions?’ What an opportunity missed!

In 1970 I, most fortunately, met Suffolk-born Chris, whilst both working at the same Chelmsford factory site. We had actually joined in 1964, in the same month, but it took five or more years for our paths to cross. We married in 1974, a time when mortgages were extremely difficult to obtain, and we opted for Witham, as property prices were lower there than in Chelmsford. It then took us another five years, after the arrival of Emma and Joanna, to make contact with WURC, via Chris’s keep-fit friends, Anne Priest and Pauline Clark, together, separately, through near-neighbour, Carola Markham.

Membership rapidly followed, in 1981, with, for Chris, Eldership and a role as Joint Church Secretary, for more than ten years. Meantime, thanks to its position as a leading British Electronics Company, operating on a worldwide basis, I was progressively offered a range of Chelmsford-based positions – both accounting and non-accounting - before spending my final 15 years at Head Office in London’s Mayfair. Following the retirement of Lord Weinstock, its outstanding Chief Executive, the remaining Directors, sadly and foolishly, opted for new, external talent, largely from the recently-demised British Leyland Company. Within a handful of years, the Company collapsed, its many sort-after parts being sold off and the remainder closed down. I, fortunately - with my experience and advice pointedly unwanted - sought after and obtained early retirement a year or so before the end.

I now find, incredulously, that I have been retired for almost 20 years, the family being expanded with the arrival of two delightful son in laws, and four divine – may I use that word – grandchildren.

Chris and I joined WURC at a wonderfully exciting time, with a dynamic, first-rate, under 30 years of age, Minister, Peter Flint, his musically gifted

wife, Judith, and their expanding family. Eventually Richard Church followed for 14 years, before Lorna, Leonard, Viv, Paul and now Mark came along. More than 30 years as Church Treasurer, more than half of those as an Elder, have flashed by. I am now much enjoying a Fellowship role as a garrulous 'has-been'; I thoroughly recommend it.

My most memorable Fellowship time came in the early 1990s when, with both Interest rates touching 15%, and an initially unconvinced Minister, Richard, finally onboard, I, against all my financial instincts, enthusiastically and vocally joined in the decision to, somehow, build a £750k site extension. This involved demolishing several old buildings, replacing them with a single large one – now called The Centre; all at a time when church funds totalled perhaps 1% of that overall cost figure. Don Markham as Project Leader, with much volunteer support, from largely full-time working folk, carried things through to a remarkable conclusion; the eventually necessary £350k loan - after time-consuming volunteer fund-raising, grants, donations, etc, efforts - was repaid within 10 years.

I hope that my words reveal my absolute belief both that God has wondrously, overwhelmingly blessed me, my loving family and our dear Witham Fellowship in countless, countless ways; and that he will continue to do so.

## **Merry Christmas - Peter Howard**

The Christmas rush was on again  
and the homeless to the shelter did go.  
For once again this year they would star  
in the annual lets give 'em a mattress shows  
Out of the park and the railway arches  
the forgotten army did hurry.  
Runaway daughters, long lost sons,  
and Fred, a Chartered Accountant from Surrey.  
Easing the country's conscience  
laying on a special treat.  
Putting things right for a couple of days  
the high wash the so-called lowlys' feet.  
A chest of compassion sealed tight for a year  
is opened and its contents let fly.  
To free the eye and soften the heart  
and for a time we hear the doors' cry.  
The season of hope, a time of goodwill  
of mountains of mince pies and drinking our fill.  
But it's over and done before we know  
and self once again takes its hold.  
While the helpless army go back to the streets  
with Christmas paper to keep out the cold.  
Seen as a burden, seen as the weak  
a beggar, a conman, a waster.  
The once family man who still mourns his wife  
is so broken, would owe like a taster.  
The raw wind and rain know not what they do  
to them everyman is a stranger.  
But we of the flesh are petitioned to care  
to give shelter, even if only a manger.

## **Book Review - Rosemary Stinson**

### **When God Whispers Your Name by Max Lucado**

*"The sheep listen to the voice of the shepherd.  
He calls them his own sheep by name and leads them out."  
John 10v3*

This book tells us just how important we are to God. Your name is on God's hand; hard to realise that God knows my name. Max describes this book as a book of hope whose sole aim is to encourage. We are all anxious and bad news out paces the good. Sometimes we need a reminder that God knows our name. Not a sermon - a reminder.

I found the book a real reminder of how much God loves me. At times it made me cry and at others it made me laugh.

#### **Fruits of the Spirit**

Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law.

## **How could it be - Rosemary Stinson**

God, how could it be, your son in a manger?  
The bright star of heaven asleep in the hay  
Around him some cattle and maybe some sheep  
the Redeemer of Earth sound asleep.

God, is this the way you meant it to be?  
instead of splendour and triumphant majesty  
A cold, dirty stable - no place to be born  
the birthplace of Jesus that first Christmas morn.

God, why did it happen the way that it did?  
You have a reason, I'm sure  
You loved Saviour of all had too to sleep in the hay.

God, your ways are past knowing, but still we can try  
that child in the manger came here to die  
Your love so amazing down through the years  
sent Jesus, our Saviour to bear at our fears.

A child in a manger, still with us today  
the Redeemer of all asleep in the hay.

November 2021

## **Witham Christmas Fayre 4th December - Muriel Heppinstall**

On Saturday 4th December, Newland Street will be lined with festive stalls organised by the Town Council to include Crafters Corner at Witham's United Reformed church and we will be hosting a number of events both in our forecourt and in the halls.

It starts at 4.00pm and we hope to serve refreshments including cake and baked potatoes. We need lots of help both during the event and to clear up afterwards. If you are able to help please look at the list on the notice board in the Community Cafe and add your name or let Fenella Hardie know.

This will be a fantastic outreach event and we need all the help we can get. Please be aware that Newland Street will be closed from 3.00pm to host the event safely.

On the evening of Wednesday 15th there will be Christmas Carols organised by Churches Together, please look out for further details.



"I'm sorry Michael – even if you HAVE changed your ring-tone to 'Away In-A-Manger', it's still ALL mobiles OFF!"



★ **Saturday 4th December**

**4pm to 9pm**

***Festive light switch on at 6pm***

**A festive market on Newland Street, Witham.**

**Including...**

★ **Food** ★ **Drinks** ★ **Gifts** ★ **Entertainment** ★

**... plus Crafter's Corner at Witham United Reformed Church!**



## **Soft plastics can now be recycled at supermarket collection points - Emmelia Van der Walt**

Over the past few months Sainsbury's, Tesco and Co-op have announced soft plastic recycling schemes in stores across the UK.

Soft or flexible plastics are lightweight plastics that cannot be placed in your clear recycling sacks at home.

Now [all large Tesco supermarkets](#), [many Sainsbury's stores](#) and [local Co-ops](#) will accept items such as bread bags, fruit and vegetable packaging and crisp packets at recycling collection points. They will then be turned back into new plastic packaging.

So why not collect your soft plastics and take them along next time you shop? It's quick, simple and helps prevent plastic ending up in landfill or the oceans.



## **Our playing areas, open spaces and parks are winners!**



Our district has been recognised at this year's Essex Playing Field Awards 2021, to having some of the best kept green areas across the County.



The awards, run by the Essex Playing Field Association were held on Thursday 21 October, to celebrate the work of organisations who own, maintain open spaces and protect local playing fields to a very high standard.

We were presented with 42 awards - 21 Gold Awards, 17 Silver Awards and 4 Certificates of Merit. This is 10 more awards than last year!



Visit [www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk) to  
Find out more about our parks and open spaces

### **Howbridge Junior School - Julie Harris**

Just an update. I have recently been in contact with Howbridge Junior School who are a collection point on behalf of Terracycle, The receptionist advised that the school are not currently collecting Crisp packets or blister packs and confirmed they were not and do not know when this might recommence. I now take my crisp packets for recycling at the exit to Tescos where there is a collection cage for soft plastics. I have made inquiries at many outlets regarding the blister packs and nobody is collecting them for recycling at the moment. I am loath to throw them away in the dust bins as I don't think we can put them in a plastic recycling bag. So we are in limbo about this at the moment but I don't know how long that might be for.

**I not just running- a poem by Julia Santomauro  
provided by Mo Webber from the Wickham Bishops Parish  
Magazine published online October 2021**

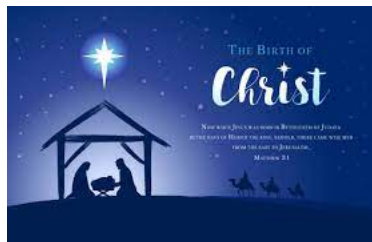
I happily greet faces I know whose names I do not. I call hello to ladies in cool, billowing dresses  
Who are sweeping paths and watering plants.  
I nod in comradery to fellow runners  
And sometimes I grunt, 'I hate this hill'.  
I smile at babies and dogs and  
Fail to quench my questions about puppies.  
I wonder at new parents pushing babies in prams All of them in a brand new world.  
I quietly salute gentle men.  
I glare at loiterers and dodgy vans.  
I endure ogling workmen.  
I smile with joy at the lady who calls 'you look fit!' I frown at the man who shouts 'go faster, love!'.  
I reminisce as I go past my old house.  
I listen for the satisfying thwack of a tennis ball And rejoice in the shouts of footballers.  
I hear birdsong and chatter  
And children at play.  
A booming bass from a passing car.  
I marvel at the magic of the gnarled winter twig That bursts into leaf, bloom and fruit.  
I smile at the library's apple tree  
Hearing Hector's happy crunch.  
I keep a beady eye on that tree.  
I stop in wonder at magnolia in flower. I sniff strangers' roses and lilac.  
I admire hollyhock, lavender and  
flora I cannot name.  
I joyfully scrunch through autumn leaves.  
I relish the gentle, springtime sun, Raindrops, mist and gusts of wind. I curse hot sun, ice and fog.  
I seek shade and I seek sunlight;  
I seek peace of mind.  
With every footfall I am in prayer and mantra; I am not just running.

## **Christmas Greetings - Eve Howes**

I won't be sending individual Christmas-cards to each of my friends this year. I'd like to give the cash I would have spent on them to a charity and put a joint one on the notice board.

I wish you all, everyone, a very happy and blessed Christmas.

Christian love.

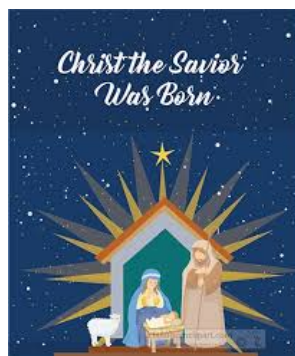


## **Christmas Greeting - Christine and Bill Huggett**

Bill and I have made the decision that we will not be sending Christmas cards this year, but will given the money to charity instead.

We will however send a card to church for the notice board addressed to all.

We wish you a very Happy Christmas and joyful New Year.



[Articles for the February edition of the magazine by 23rd January please to bjstibbards@gmail.com](mailto:bjstibbards@gmail.com)

## **The Eco Committee Julie Harris**

As you probably already know the church has an Eco committee. We are a small but committed group, dedicated to thinking of new ideas of how we can live more sustainably and help to save this precious, fragile Planet. God has entrusted each and everyone of us to be stewards of this Planet and to love it.

What does it mean to everybody who shops excessively and without a conscious decision about the impact on the planet have to do with poor suffering countries? Everything!!!!!!

Caring for the planet is caring for our fellow humans. We tangibly show love for our neighbours when we act in ways that promote their good. The effects of environmental degradation on human health are devastating. Malnutrition from food shortages, high rates of tropical disease, cardio respiratory distress from pollution, and conflicts over natural resources to mention a few of the ways that environmental problems are impacting the lives of people over the world. At first climate change might seem unrelated, but it's more than a matter of warming up a few degrees, climate change is a threat multiplier, it will make a lot of existing problems worse, like the refugee crisis, hunger ,disease ,poverty biodiversity loss deforestation air pollution and scarcity of resources.

The planet needs you and the Eco committee need you. We are desperate for new energy, new ideas and a new passion to be brought to our **Eco Committee and we would love to meet you.** If you care about the planet and future generations and you can spare a couple of hours every couple of months we will be so pleased. The more people on the committee the more effective we can be and become a greater force in the saving of this planet. I care so much about future generations and what we are leaving them, please consider joining us if you can.



*Join us for  
Afternoon Tea  
Monday December 6<sup>th</sup>  
at 2.30pm  
Sandwiches  
Scones with Tiptree jam  
& cream  
Cakes  
All for £4.00  
Please let the office know if you  
would like to come  
01376 500958*

# The Leprosy Mission - Mo Webber

Please continue to collect stamps and hand them into the office. Thank you.

	
<p>Witham United Reform Church</p> 	
<p>Dear Friends,</p> <p>You are amazing!</p> <p>Thank you so much for donating your used stamps and collectables. You are transforming lives.</p> <p>When Hasan was diagnosed with leprosy, his community turned against him and his family. They were forced out of their village, with nowhere to go. But, because of your caring heart, leprosy trained health workers spent time talking to members of the community, dispelling the myths and misinformation which surrounds this feared disease. Welcomed back into the community, Hasan and his family were able to return to their village. And, because of the support from a self-help group, Hasan's mother has been able to raise enough money to build their own home. Without supporters like you, who share your heart for people affected by leprosy, none of this would have been possible. The money raised from the sale of these stamps and other collectables, will cure people of this debilitating disease and restore hope and livelihoods, now and for future generations.</p> <p>Thank you for your kindness and compassion.</p>	
 Nicky Ward Supporter Relations Manager	<p><b>We would be grateful if you could collect any of the following items please:</b></p> <p>Stamps of all descriptions (GB and Foreign) Postcards Coins &amp; Bank notes Medals</p>
 01733 370505  post@tlew.org.uk  leprosymission.org.uk	 The Leprosy Mission England & Wales  @leprosytalk  leprosymission
<small>☎ The Leprosy Mission England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay Peterborough, PE2 9GZ</small>	<small>Registered Charity No. 1050327   A Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England and Wales No. 3140347</small>

# Recycling - The Centre

As a church we are trying to recycle as much as we can. We pay to have the recycling bin emptied by Braintree Council but often it is rejected as it is CONTAMINATED.

So what is contaminating it?

- Dirty paper & card. Please ensure only clean, dry paper & card is put in the recycling bins.
- Dirty food containers – please rinse them out.
- Polythene – bin bags, carrier bags and plastic wrapping from things such as soft drink packs. At present polythene cannot be recycled by our contractors.
- Food waste – we cannot recycle food waste, it has to go in the general waste bin (or take it home). Raw vegetable waste and dead flowers can go in our compost bin (through the gate at the bottom of the garden).

Minister	Revd	Mark Ambrose	
Associate Minister	Revd	Lorna Bantock	571757
Children and Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Sollis	500958
Associate Children and 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
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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\* Elder