



**WITHAM URC CHURCH MAGAZINE**  
**December 2022 and January 2023**

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

## **Pastoral Letter**

Friends,

In our calendar the old year closes in December and the new one begins in January (although in this country the financial year is very different). It is fortunate that those who picked a date to celebrate the birth of Jesus chose the 25th of December because, whenever the date of his birth really was, it marked the end of the old world and the start of the new one.

On that day God entered the world as a human baby and changed it utterly. God was no longer distant and judgemental; but among us and preparing us for the salvation to be brought about by the death of that baby, Jesus. God's message of love for humanity and desire to prevent people from deservedly being judged for their sins brought, and still brings, ecstatic joy and relief to those who believe the Christmas message – that God came into the world to save us from ourselves.

It is the Christmas gift which really does keep on giving.

But, for too many people, Christmas does not mean any of that. To them it is an expensive, mid-winter, holiday season: with the baby in the manger ignored, forgotten or never known about.

Can we do anything to change that?

It seems to me there are several small things we might do to open people's eyes to the Good News.

If you send Christmas cards, make sure that every one of them tells part of the Jesus story – no snowmen, robins or the like.

If you give chocolate advent calendars, they also should be focused on the story of Jesus coming into the world.

If someone asks you what you are going to be doing on Christmas day be sure to mention the church service which I hope you will be attending if possible.

If someone asks you what you would like as a gift for Christmas, why not suggest a good gift from a charity for someone in more need than you are?

These are quite small things but they have the potential to make other people ask themselves “Why?”, Why focus on a baby? Why go to church? Why think about others and not yourself?

God changed the world. Help someone discover that truth for themselves.

May God bless you all this Christmas and always!

**Ian**

## Ivy Toms - From Eve Murfitt

Joyce and I went to visit Ivy Tom's on 15th of November; as always we had a very long conversation about our lovely Queen: Ivy is still looking so well, very bright she knew all the names of the royals

She is a remarkable lady, we always have a time of prayer before 🙏 leaving. She will be 101 in the new year.

I asked her permission to share the photos and she said: "Oh yes that would be nice". I took a photograph of Joyce with her and she said: "and with you".

She asked me to send her warm regards to all who remember her. I left feeling very blessed to have had such a good visit with her; we could not believe how well she looks and so bright.



## **Welcome Team Rota (Previously Duty Elder & Door Stewards Rotas) - David Goodwin Welcome Team Leader**

The rota for January to June 2023 is being prepared and volunteers of all ages are needed for this very important role of greeting people as they arrive for our Sunday morning service. The role is for all including serving and former Elders.

Your duties will also include handing out the service sheets (and bibles & song books should they be requested), taking one of the Offertory bags (only if you want to) and collecting the bibles, song books and unwanted service sheets after the service.

I hope enough volunteers come forward so you only have to undertake the role no more than twice in the period, although you are more than welcome to put your name down more than once if you wish to.

Please add your name to your chosen date/s on the rota in Church Suite if you can. If this isn't possible then please either email me with your chosen date/s or call me - details below.

Email: [davidgoodwin2009@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:davidgoodwin2009@hotmail.co.uk)

Tel: 01376 515203

Mob: 07932 1983

## **Creativity in the face of adversity - Julie Harris**

Sometimes we can become disillusioned and lose hope for the future of this precious planet and it's guests. But....my faith and hope has been renewed....I have always tried not to waste food, and have found ways to avoid doing so. It is not the cost of the food that makes it criminal and sinful, but the fact that there are so many in the World who are literally starving, I feel that if we are fortunate enough to have access to food and can afford it, then we are incredibly fortunate.

More and more outlets are popping up, where food is donated from various donors, whether they be individuals or stores....this is very commendable. But what about other areas of food waste ? I hadn't thought about it before....but what do eateries etc do with their left over food ?

My husband's granddaughter, Paige, happened to mention an App...it's called Olio....and it's pretty impressive, here's what they do:

What is OLIO? OLIO **connects neighbours with each other and with local businesses so surplus food can be shared, not thrown away.** This could be food nearing its sell-by date in local stores, spare home-grown vegetables, bread from your baker, or the groceries in your fridge when you go away.

Isn't that brilliant.....it's a free App and it's so innovative....it has boosted my hope and faith that humans can and will, in their own ingenious ways, do their bit to save the Planet.... we need it as it is close to 8 Billion guests !!!!!



*Join us for  
Afternoon Tea  
Monday December 5<sup>th</sup>  
at 2.30pm  
Sandwiches  
Scones with Tiptree jam  
& cream  
Cakes*

*All for £5.00  
Please let the office know if you  
would like to come  
01376 500958*

## **Spare plastic containers please - Julie Harris**

Can I please ask you to let me have any plastic containers with lids, for example ice cream tubs, spare tupperware containers etc. The larger the better.



I aim to use these to distribute any extra food that I am cooking. If I have the oven on, I may as well do extra roast potatoes etc and pass them on, or an extra portion of pasta bake etc.

I am following the fine examples set by Rocio, Heather, Fenella, Lin and many others. I feel God moved to consciously think more and do more, not only is winter coming, but also much hardship in terms of the cost of living crisis, rocketing fuel bills and much more....

So please, if you can, let me have some containers and I will make sure they are put to good use.

**The date for articles for  
the February Magazine should be with  
Jo and Bob Stibbards  
by 23rd January 2023  
bjstibbards@gmail.com**

## **The Disco for people with learning disabilities Bob Stibbards.**

Until the October Disco Maureen thought the Disco had started 14 years ago and then one of our guests mentioned they had a diary note that it had started 15 years ago !



Maureen, together with I believe Shirley Ratnage, had the vision to start the Disco. Our guests have had the opportunity on the last Monday of the month to meet with their friends in the community cafe where we have served hot and cold drinks and the ever popular hot dogs and they have had a chance to have a dance in the rear hall.

Maureen's daughter Paula has been the DJ since the inception of the Disco. Maureen and Paula have in particular developed a unique bond over the years with our guests. Our regular supporters and helpers include Peter Howard, Shirley, and Joyce Clouting, Ernie Dearman was also for many years a loyal supporter of the Disco Jo and I are newcomers having helped for about 8 years.

However after much thought, and before we get much older and with numbers of guests attending having fallen since covid we have decided that the last Disco will be the next meeting at the end of November. This will be celebrated with a full Christmas dinner provided by Heather and Fenella, as they did so well for us last year, and followed by dancing to the disco.

This outreach has very much accorded with the churches mission statement of sharing the love of Jesus. We feel blessed to have shared time with these lovely and gentle people.

## **Jean Moody - Great Totham URC**

On Sunday afternoon ,October 30th, my friend Heather and I attended a Churches Together service in Maldon in the Salvation Army Citadel.

Our friend Teresa from Maldon Baptist church invited us along We accepted. We were very happy to support her.

The Salvation Army family gave us a warm welcome and their belief and sincerity shone through.

What took me by surprise was the moment to reflect on the importance of all Churches Together groups and their relevance in the area they represent. As explained to us, by working together as one, we can we become 'the church' and show how the benefits of our diversity strengthens us and brings us together rather than divides.

This was followed by a representative from each church signing the renewal of the covenant made on the instigation of Churches Together In Maldon.

I hope it focused the minds of what they were 'signing up to'.  
Let us look forward in faith to where this time together may take us.

Love and blessings

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

In these days of correct-ness I am sure that we no longer hear references to the fairer or weaker sex, somehow believing that males are stronger than females. In the Advent studies at ChristChurch we were looking at some women in the Bible who displayed strength, courage, power and fortitude. In preparing for the first study, I was challenged to draw out some comparisons between Eve and Sarah. In their unions and relationships with Adam and Abraham would we say that the women were in anyway inferior to their husbands? In the second study Ruth was the focus and Mary was studied in weeks three and four; her Annunciation and Visitation.

The preparation got me thinking, although I am not sure as a male whether I can truly reflect on the historic and continuing subordination of women. What was it like when humankind first started populating the world? Was gender discrimination prevalent from the very beginning? Some people do believe that women were born subordinate to men and patriarchy existed from the very beginning. According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, *'men are always active and women are passive'*. The biological difference of women makes them inferior in their capacity, ability to reason and therefore the ability to make decisions, according to him.

However, these theories of male supremacy have been challenged, and it has been demonstrated that there is no historical or scientific evidence for such explanations. There are biological differences between men, women and other genders in the spectrum, but these differences do not have to be the foundation of a sexual hierarchy in which men are dominant. Evidence from primate social groups like chimpanzees shows that food sharing takes place with matrifocal (mother centred) groups rather than between sexual mates. The women were in the centre of the social group and were in

charge of carrying infants, teaching their culture to their infants, and distributing food to the group.

When humans began to settle and become domesticated, it heralds the change from equality to patriarchy. The land and the animals were valuable assets that needed to be protected from intruders. As a result, wars began. Invaders seized the property of the opposition, which included women. It was done to demonstrate power. Women became property, possessions to be territorially owned. Women had to be domesticated and confined, and their sexuality regulated and controlled, in order to establish the right of men over them. A scrutiny of history does show that gender roles and power equations as we see today were created to retain male dominance and supremacy.

As we begin to look into the future, how will a feminist imperative unravel the inequalities and unfairness that now exists? Has male privilege become so ingrained into our societal thinking that we are unable to avoid its affects? We go into a new year and maybe 2023 will be the time when men accept their need to treat women as equal in every way. What would make a difference?

## **Preachers at Great Totham URC. - Sue Bowyer**

### **December**

Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup>	10:30am	Ian Hardie
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup>	10:30am	Ron Hudson
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup>	4:00pm	CAROL SERVICE - Rev. Mark Ambrose
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup>	No Service	

### **January**

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	No Service	
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup>	10:30am	Ian Hardie
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	10:30am	Ernie Finch
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	10:30am	“Churches together Service” at St. Peter’s Great Totham
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup>	No Service	

When there’s no service at Great Totham, we come to Witham.

You are very welcome to come to our Coffee Mornings on the second Saturday of the month.

The next dates are December 10<sup>th</sup> and January 14<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 – 11:30am

## Great Totham URC Christmas Shoe Boxes - Sue Bowyer

Members and Friends of Great Totham URC filled 35 Samaritan's Purse Christmas Shoeboxes to go to children in Ukraine.

A coffee morning helped raise the money to send them.



"Does anyone have a light, please?"

## **The Holdfast Team - Naomi Claxton**

It can be so easy to feel overwhelmed at this time of year. The shops are busy, there is often a loud soundtrack of Christmas music playing, and the shelves are piled up almost to the ceiling in some cases with tubs of chocolates and sweets, special offers and promotions. We can all find ourselves running a constant mental to-do list of presents to buy or make, cards to write, last posting dates, school nativity play dates....it can all be just too much at times.



When I feel myself feeling overwhelmed, I try and clear my mind just for a moment or two and refocus on the reason for the season. There is a particular rendition of “Joy to The World” by Sufjan Stevens which I love to listen to. I find it calming and beautiful – if you haven’t heard his version before, it is worth looking up on YouTube or similar.

In a season which can feel like the commercial message is ‘more, more, more’ I reflect on the line ‘let every heart prepare him room’ and try and hold on to that calming message instead. To replace the feeling of overwhelm with a feeling of quiet anticipation and preparedness.

It can be hard to feel calm and prepared when not only your senses are overwhelmed, but your purse is feeling pressured too. This year more than ever it feels that prices have risen higher than before, money doesn’t go as far as it used to, and there can be a strong temptation to pay for things using credit with the intention to pay it off in January.

There is another way, though. As your local community bank, Holdfast can offer you a Christmas Savings account that you can add to throughout the year. You can set up a direct debit and pay in regularly, or pop upstairs to our office and pay in cash. We can also receive any benefit payments you may be in receipt of for you, take out an agreed amount for your savings, and put the rest back into your usual bank account, all in the same day.

Regular savings is the surest way to grow a nice nest egg ready for next Christmas, but you can also choose to just pay in as and when you can.

When it comes to time to do your Christmas shopping next year, you then have the flexibility to either withdraw your savings and spend them as usual, or to take it as a loan, and pay it back across the year.

To find out more, have a look at our website, [www.holdfastcreditunion.co.uk](http://www.holdfastcreditunion.co.uk), or pop upstairs to our office for a chat.

Wishing you peace and joy this Christmas,

### **Prayers for Qatar. Eve Murfitt**

If you have been watching or still watching the World Cup could I ask that you remember to pray for people in Qatar who are persecuted in that country, Qatar is 29 on the world watch list 2022, and also for unrest for young women protesting for their rights.

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies."

2 Corinthians 4 v 8-10 (ESV) This scripture is on the World Watch list.

### **Group for Evangelism and Renewal within the URC Eve Murfitt**

We have the sad news that Chris Copley ( formerly Chris Vivian) has died. Chris held many roles on the Committee over many years and we are grateful for all the work she did. Please include her family especially her daughters Rachel and Joanna in your prayers.

**Witham United Reformed Church:  
A date for your diary**

*Burns Supper & Family  
Entertainment*

**Saturday January 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Programme:  
Fun Family  
activities from  
5.00pm**



**Traditional Burns Supper with Haggis  
6.30pm  
(Other options will be available)**



**Followed by a Ceilidh  
with singing,  
dancing & poetry  
Adults £10  
Family ticket £20**



The Centre  
Witham United Reformed Church  
Newland Street, Witham  
Essex, CM8 1AH

Tel: 01376 500958  
Email: [info@withamurc.org.uk](mailto:info@withamurc.org.uk)  
Web: [www.withamurc.org.uk](http://www.withamurc.org.uk)

### **Cleaner required for the Centre and Sanctuary at Witham United Reformed Church**

**Hours:-** 11 hours per week, Monday to Saturday. While there is some flexibility of working the cleaning has to be done around the day's scheduled activities. This will mean finishing before 9am and may require some work to be done in the late afternoon or early evening.

**Duties:-** The post holder is to ensure that all specified areas of the Centre and Sanctuary at Witham United Reformed Church are cleaned to a high standard. This includes the café and kitchen areas and the public toilets. In addition he/she will be required to set out and clear away furniture for the various activities and this will involve the lifting and carrying of tables and chairs.

The applicant will work in conjunction with an experienced employee.

**Salary:-** Currently £11.35 per hour

**Declaration of Confidentiality:-** Upon appointment the applicant will be required to sign a declaration of confidentiality.

Applications, including CV and the names of two referees, should be addressed to:-

The Centre Director  
The Centre  
Witham United Reformed Church  
Newland Street  
Witham  
CM8 1AH



## November 2022 Shopping List

### Food Items

#### Coffee

**Sugar (1kg Maximum Please)**

**Squash (1 litre Maximum Please)**

**Tinned Hot Meat (Curry/stew etc)**

**Tinned Hot Snack (Beans & Sausages etc)**

**Sponge Pudding (Non-chilled)**

**Pasta Sauce**

**Tinned Cold Meat (Spam etc)**

**Custard (Packet or Tin)**

#### Toiletries

**Size 6 Nappies**

**Toilet Roll**

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](http://www.braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk)  
[info@braintreearea.foodbank.org.uk](mailto: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	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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