



**DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE**

PLACE MATTERS



**ISSUE 81
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*Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of
the Elders and Members of Downing Place United Reformed Church*

Front page: Easter Sunday flowers and Easter Garden - taken by Rosemary Johnston



Easter Sunday flowers - taken by Jane Bower

LETTER FROM A MINISTER: what is distinctive about URC spirituality?



Ecumenical Church of Christ the Cornerstone
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Between 2003 and 2009, I served as the Free Church minister at the Ecumenical Church of Christ the Cornerstone in Milton Keynes, a single congregation local ecumenical partnership involving five denominations. This was housed in a carefully designed, very modern building, modelled on St Paul's Cathedral, standing at the heart of the city, opened by the Queen in 1992. Ecumenical hopes were high, and the expectation was that this 'Ecumenical Cathedral' would become the flagship of a flotilla of

similar churches across the country. At my induction I was given one of the identical robes that all the ministers of the church wore to symbolise the hoped-for unity that was to come, so that one tradition was not distinguished from another. Cornerstone was also set within the city-wide ecumenical Mission Partnership, which was an attempt to establish, as far as possible, a single Christian presence and voice within a geographical area. When I became the team leader, I was treated by the local media like the dean of a cathedral, and would often be interviewed on local radio when they wished to have the Christian perspective on some issue or another.

Things have moved on and not in the way that the original visionaries had hoped, but surely never has the need for a united Christian voice in society been more needed. Some are pessimistic and say that the will for unity has been diluted, and has even evaporated. On the other hand, initiatives such as Receptive Ecumenism, which encourages Christians of different traditions to see the characteristics of others as potential gifts and not as threats, has done much to enable us to recognise one another as different but equally gifted, valuable and integral parts of the Body of Christ. Paul's image of the body is, after all, not a hard one to grasp, with its image of essential unity in diversity. Things may simply not move as quickly as we would like or quite in the way we had thought they should!

Throughout my time at Cornerstone I asked myself, "What is distinctive about URC spirituality and the contribution we can make?". After all, the services felt

very Anglican, even when the liturgy used was from the URC worship book; the way we robed as ministers looked more Anglican or Catholic and the church was full of the symbolism those traditions contributed, such as the stations of the cross; whereas the symbolic plainness of many Free Churches was correspondingly invisible. It was not a case of trying to compete and outdo, but of trying to see how the gifts of our tradition could blend with and complement the gifts of the other traditions, especially in terms of those things that might be considered to be spiritually valuable and even of high importance.

What had been contributed especially from the URC tradition was probably too subtle for many to recognise as being distinctive. We introduced the practice of carrying the Bible into the sanctuary at the head of the procession of clergy, and the option of non-alcoholic wine at communion; and for a few members at Cornerstone, individual glasses rather than the common cup. The most significant contribution that came from the URC, however, was the introduction of Church Meetings. They were written into the constitution, but on arriving I was told that there had been no Church Meeting for 18 months, other than the one required to issue the call to me. It was seen simply as part of URC polity rather than something that might enrich the life of the whole congregation. So we introduced regular, quarterly church meetings, with lunch and the chance to discuss in depth various issues about the life of the church on into the afternoon. We recognised that especially in the ecumenical setting of the congregation, being able to recognise and respond to the differences and even potential disagreements in the life of a single congregation was important. So other opportunities to explore how this might work were created. We also began to see that because of the role that the church played in the heart of the city, recognising the need for a forum where differences and disagreements in the wider community could be responded to was also not just a need, but something that might reflect a Christian spirituality of reconciliation and peace making.

We may not see our church meetings in that way, but they grow out of the very early tradition of gathering together in large or small groups to listen carefully to one another and to the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit. Think of the Council of Jerusalem described in Acts chapter 15. That dynamic has long been emphasised in our elders' meetings, church meetings, synods and General Assembly, even if it has been forgotten from time to time! But it nevertheless holds the essential desire to achieve consensus rather than the victory of one side over another.

If we are to look for something especially distinctive about URC spirituality that characterises the life of Downing Place and the URC Mission Partnership into

which we are entering, might not the determination to actively listen to one another, learn from one another, and to allow ourselves to be changed, be something that could inspire the initiatives that we take? These might be both in Downing Place and collectively in the Mission Partnership. There may be many new kinds of ways of doing this that are yet to be explored. As we know, we are not a congregation drawn solely from one tradition, but in fact from quite a few, and St Luke's is already a recognised ecumenical partnership. There is much richness to build on.

By extension, with what appears to be an increasing and often vitriolic polarity in society and the wider world, the churches together need to be not only speaking of peace, but making peace. Should we be finding ways of taking what has been learned in bringing different traditions together out into the wider community; and if so, how?

That, then, is a reflection on what is distinctive about the spirituality of the URC. There are surely many others. Maybe it's something for us to talk about as we move forward.

David Tatem



The communion table at Downing Place URC - taken by StillVision Photography

CAROL SLATTERY – A PROFILE

I was born in East London in the late 1950's. My Dad had followed his father and brother into the docks, becoming a crane driver. It was in my first six months when my aunt noticed my eyes moved about more than they should. In time I was registered partially sighted. I have two brothers; I am the middle child. From the age of 7 to 12 years, we moved into two different corner shops - the first was



Holidays in Lake District

a grocery shop then a newsagent. We all helped in the shops; I had a teatime paper round. We then moved to a house in Romford. I had a very happy childhood, spending family time at weekends at Hatfield Forest or Epping Forest and a one-week holiday in the Lake District most years.

My first memory of church was at Sunday school at the local C of E, and the Vicar saying that “God sees and knows everything” - at five I found this a little worrying. I joined Girls Brigade when I was eight years old, which was attached to a Baptist Church, and I attended both weekly until I was twelve and we moved out to Romford. Fortunately for me, a neighbour was Lieutenant in the local Girls Brigade, also attached to a Baptist Church, and she took me there each week. My parents, not being religious whatsoever, thought this was something I would grow out of in time. They were surprised that, when I was 18, I announced I was going to be baptised. They did attend but didn't understand.

On leaving school I worked in an office for about six months, then I worked for a year making Legal Wigs in London. At 18 I started working for a London Borough in a Children's home. This was very rewarding and at times challenging. I did this for about seven years.

I married Ralph in June 1981, in a Catholic Church in Romford. Although it was not his parish church, his parish priest married us, so as to keep both my parents and his mum happy. Even though I had attended a Baptist church until then, I was happy with this because I knew God was with me wherever we married.



Carol & Ralph on their wedding day

Up until now my faith had never been really challenged. But in October 1981, Ralph was

diagnosed with chronic kidney failure. With no internet then, we blindly navigated this journey with the help of some wonderful doctors and nurses, and the support of family and friends. At this time I wasn't sure about God and his plan for us. We had moved a few times (Basildon, Chelmsford and then leaving Essex in 1986 for St. Ives) before arriving in Cambridge in 1990. I attended various churches. and would always attend a Catholic church with my mother-in-law when visiting her. After four years on dialysis, Ralph received a kidney transplant at Addenbrookes in 1987. Although a happy day for us, you are also aware that a family had lost a loved one. We will always remember this family.

From 1986 to 1999 we had fertility treatment, with 12 IVF cycles between 1990 and 1999 resulting in four pregnancies and four early miscarriages. I did have a lot of questions for God at this time and I was very hurt. It is only in hindsight that I know that my faith in God was there, maybe a little buried in our grief, and it was him who gave me the strength when I needed it. It is not only how miscarriages affect you but how it also affects those closest to you. We have no regrets on having fertility treatment - the regret would have been not trying and not knowing if it would have worked.

I attended St George Church in Chesterton for many years and was involved with the over 60's, lunch club and church rota, including a year on the PCC (Parochial Church Council).

On moving into Cambridge, I worked for Social Services as a care assistant with the elderly in their homes, mainly with those with dementia or mental health, including supporting their families.

We moved to another part of Cambridge in 2016 and I attended the local C of E church. But when I returned there after Covid, something didn't feel right. I looked around at various options and decided to attend Downing Place. I knew about the church through the Hodge family when I cared for Jim in the 1990s for about four years. Both Jim and Evelyn (his daughter) spoke highly of what was then St Columba's Church. I became Evelyn's carer some years later. I was Evelyn's next of kin when she went into a care home. Nigel Uden was always very supportive of Evelyn, and of me, towards the end of Evelyn's life. I appreciated church members stepping in when I was away on holiday. I had attended church with Evelyn a few times, and went to quite a few Thursday lunches. I decided I would come to Downing Place to see if this is where I should be, and I am now happy to be a member.

I have travelled to many different countries for holidays; with three trips to New Zealand to visit my brother and his family, and a visit to an indigenous

communal territory in Mexico, where a Shaman “cleansed us of evil spirits”. I also enjoy the UK countryside, and cruising too. I still volunteer to help a few elderly people, and I have volunteered for Cam Sight and Addenbrookes Kidney Patients Association.

In 2018, results showed Ralph transplanted kidney was rejecting. Although the transplant team tried everything to save the kidney it was not going to happen. I had always said to Ralph that he could have one of mine if this ever happened. In one of Ralph’s hospital appointments, I asked about donating a kidney. I kept getting good results from all the tests, and in September 2018 Ralph received one of my kidneys. I put my trust in the surgeons and God that this would work, and it did.

Retirement hasn’t turned out as we had planned with another illness for Ralph, but with God at my side I know I need to take one day at a time. I have been blessed with some very good friends who are there for us, as I am for them.

PASTORAL CARE NEWS

Members will be sad to hear of the death of Tony Booth at the age of 95, on Saturday 18th April. He died peacefully in his sleep. He will be very fondly remembered, along with his wife, Pat, who died in November 2021. Shortly after that, Tony moved to Baldock to be nearer Paul, one of his sons, where he became a member of the URC there.

The funeral will be on May 11th at 1pm at North Herts Crematorium, Bedford Road, Holwell, Hitchin SG5 3RT. There will be refreshments afterwards, venue to be confirmed. All are very welcome, but please let the office know if you intend to go, as the family would like to have an idea for numbers going to the post-funeral refreshments.

Please remember all Tony’s family in your prayers.



The Pastoral Care Group will be organising another simple soup, bread and cheese lunch on June 14th. We would welcome help from members to prepare the soup from 9.30am and to serve and clear away afterwards. Please let Pippa or Hazel know if you are available to help in any way.

There will be a sign-up sheet from 31st May.

Thank you.



DIETRICH BONHOEFFER (4 February 1906 – 9 April 1945)

Editor: Last month, on Thursday 9th April, David Thompson led the mid-week morning worship at Downing Place URC. That day marked the 81st anniversary of the death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in Flossenbürg concentration camp. David kindly agreed to my request that we share his reflections from that service in this edition of Place Matters.

On Thursday 9th April 1945 between 5.00 and 6.00 in the morning, having made the journey south from Buchenwald to Flossenbürg, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his companions were led to an improvised court and charged with conspiring to murder Adolf Hitler, an attempt which had failed in 1944. They were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. Hitler had given special orders that those prisoners should be executed as soon as possible. The sentence was carried out immediately. Bonhoeffer said to his companion, the British Secret Service Agent, Payne Best, “Give this message to the Bishop of Chichester (George Bell): This is the end; for me the beginning of life”. We shall use this anniversary to remember the martyrdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

There is a description of Bonhoeffer's death by the camp doctor, who did not at that point know what Bonhoeffer's background and biography were. “Through the half open door in one room of the huts I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer before taking off his prison garb, kneeling on the floor praying fervently to his God. I was deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost fifty years that I have worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.” [Endnote 1]

I first came to know about Dietrich Bonhoeffer when I was a student, when a group of us studied his books *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*. It

was 1963, and everyone was going mad over John Robinson's *Honest to God*. I dutifully bought a copy and read it. Having read Bonhoeffer, I was slightly puzzled by what everybody seemed to be getting excited about. For me it was a rather sudden immersion in the world of religious journalism, and its unpredictable twists and turns. But it was a different kind of Christian world from that of my provincial local (nonconformist) church in the East Midlands

The basic human story was very simple. It was an introduction to the inner struggle within the German churches, which I had never known about before. It was, I think, characteristic of the British ignorance about the Churches elsewhere in Europe, not only in the prewar period, but the postwar period as well. As such it is also a reminder of why the ecumenical movement is so important. In many ways Bonhoeffer came from an ordinary upper-middle class German family. He read Theology at university, and almost inevitably became a Lutheran pastor, though he was strongly influenced by the Swiss Reformed theologian, Karl Barth. But more than anything else, he was attracted by, and involved in, the young ecumenical movement of the inter-war period. This was the context in which he came to know George Bell, secretary to Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1920s and 1930s. Bell was made Dean of Canterbury in the 1920s before eventually becoming Bishop of Chichester in 1938.

When Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, he immediately set about creating a more pliant Church in Germany. He first made a new agreement (or concordat) with the Papacy, which allowed him to exercise more control over the appointment of bishops. In principle, the State already had more control over the appointment of Protestant Bishops, and this was extended in practice. But problems arose over Hitler's obsessive anti-Semitism. Believing in a kind of hereditary taint attaching to the Jewish race which made them effectively sub-human, Hitler wanted to marginalise all Jewish people from public office. Because the Churches were public institutions, it was proposed that people of Jewish origin should not be eligible to become ministers in the Church, even if they had become Christians. This was something that Bonhoeffer and those who felt like him believed that the Church could not accept; if someone wished to confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, they had to be free to do so. What made Bonhoeffer and his companions unusual was that they rejected anti-Semitism specifically, not that they had other quarrels with National Socialism. In the late 1930s Bonhoeffer took charge of an informal college to train ministers for what became known as the 'Confessing Church'. That was the context for the lectures he wrote for what was later published as *Life Together*, the book we studied as undergraduates.

But this was not why Bonhoeffer was accused of treason and hanged. That was

the result of a more drastic step. he took When war broke out in 1939, Bonhoeffer was not short of offers from overseas friends of temporary or permanent refuge. And he was actually in the USA when the war began. Initially he hesitated; and then decided that his duty was to return to Germany, perilous as he knew that to be. He could not stay in the college where he had been, and was banned from there. He carried on his writing; and attempted to use his ecumenical contacts to persuade people in the UK that a peace deal with Germany might be possible. But Churchill's Foreign minister, Anthony Eden, was unconvinced, and Bonhoeffer found himself drawn into the plot to assassinate Hitler in July 1944. The plot failed, and the conspirators found a heavy revenge exacted upon them. This was why there were specific instructions from Hitler to ensure that the conspirators were executed before the war ended.

Was Bonhoeffer a martyr? He would not be the only martyr to be executed as a traitor. Many of those in the early Church would fall into that category. But there can be no doubt that the reason he felt driven to join the plot was his commitment to a church without boundaries. And it is one additional reason to remember this anniversary at this time, because these questions and problems have neither been resolved nor have they gone away. We take them with us into our future.

David Thompson

Note 1: Eberhart Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, A Biography (ed. Edwin Robertson, Collins, London 1970.830-831).



*"The ordeal. No man in the whole world
can change the truth. One can only look for the truth,
find it and serve it. The truth is in all places."*

Citation by Bonhoeffer. Sculpture by Edith Breckwoldt

DOWNING PLACE URC

– findings from the Skills Audit

As part of our search for a new Minister, Downing Place URC needs to compile a ‘Pastoral Profile’ – a summary of the church’s strengths, and its needs. Between the church meeting on 22nd March 2026 and Easter Sunday, members of the congregation and friends were asked to complete a ‘skills audit’ form, indicating some things they can already do, and others they are willing to learn to do. Skills were grouped into three broad areas (see below) and respondents were asked to specify both their skill (0-2) and availability (0-2) in each area. The following report analyses the results.

THE OVERALL PICTURE

The audit confirms a **broad and balanced skill base** across the congregation, with notable capacity in **pastoral ministry**. Availability generally tracks skill levels, though in several areas the gap between skill and availability suggests limited time rather than lack of ability.

1. MINISTRY & WORSHIP

This area shows **healthy levels of both skill and willingness**, especially in core ministries:

- **Leading worship, prayer, and bible study** show robust skill levels and healthy availability.
- **Children’s ministry** maintains high skill but slightly reduced availability, indicating a need for team expansion.
- **Music and tech** show moderate skill and availability, indicating a capable but smaller pool of volunteers.
- **Safeguarding and risk management** have modest team of willing volunteers.

Overall: Worship and teaching ministries are well supported, though children’s ministry and tech support still rely on smaller teams.

2. OPERATIONAL

Operational roles show **solid expertise but more limited availability**, suggesting that these tasks fall on a smaller number of people:

- **Management, events planning, and business/strategy** have strong skill and moderate availability, indicating a good leadership base.
- **Finance, property, legal, and communications** show good skill but noticeably lower availability, suggesting workload pressure.
- **Office and IT support** sits in the mid-range for both measures.

Overall: The church has significant professional expertise, but fewer people have time to contribute regularly in these areas.

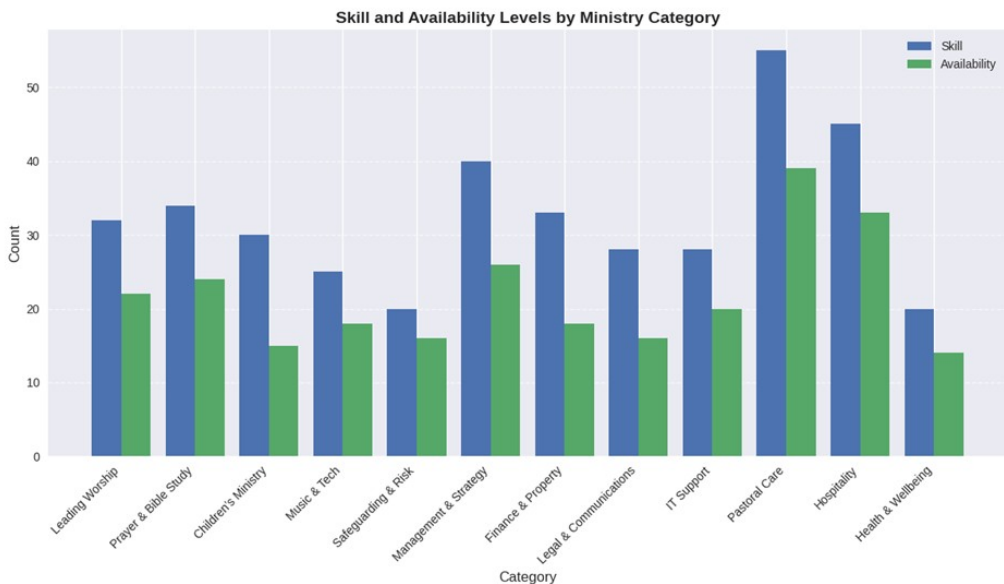
3. PASTORAL

- Pastoral ministries are the **strongest area** of congregational life:
- **Pastoral care** has high levels of skill and availability
- **Hospitality** also scores strongly.
- **Health-related skills** are present but in a smaller group.

Overall: The congregation's pastoral and hospitality gifts are a defining strength, with a large pool of people willing to serve.

KEY INSIGHTS

- **Pastoral care and hospitality are major strengths**, with the largest and most available volunteer base.
- **Worship and prayer leadership** are well supported and sustainable. **Children's ministry** places a high demand on a small team.
- **Music, tech, finance, property, and legal roles** have good skill levels but smaller teams, suggesting areas where recruitment or training could help.



The graph shows total value (adding the 0s,1s and 2s) of self-identified skill and availability from 60 respondents.

Following the audit, if you have identified an area of church life to which you would feel you could contribute, or in which you would like to be trained, please speak to Pippa Jones, or one of the Downing Place Elders.

Yvonne Norgett and Jenny Jacobsberg, April 2026



AN INSIGHT INTO OUR RECENT JUNIOR CHURCH SESSIONS

On Palm Sunday, though we were small in number, we began our time together by singing ‘We have a king who rides a donkey,’ recalling Jesus’ joyful entry into Jerusalem and looking ahead to the celebration of his resurrection. We then followed a trail of footsteps around the Hub, pausing at different points to hear parts of the Holy Week story. At the water fountain we stopped for a drink and a biscuit while reflecting on the Last Supper. Moving on, we gathered by the olive tree in the garden and imagined the sadness of Jesus’ being arrested on the

Mount of Olives. Our footsteps then took us to look at the Easter garden we had made the previous week, where we thought about Jesus' dying on the cross and being buried in the tomb with a stone sealing the entrance. In one week's time we celebrating Jesus' resurrection on Easter Day, when the stone would be rolled away!



Easter poster

- image taken by Rosemary Johnston

On Easter Day, we celebrated together and helped everyone to share Easter joy with our Easter garden, Easter crosses and messages of global Easter greetings.

On 12 April, during the church service, we listened to the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples in Jerusalem after his resurrection. In Junior Church, we explored how those who never saw Jesus in person could still share in this joy and become part of the growth of Christianity across the world. Reflecting on the phrase 'seeing is believing,' we considered how listening to others also helps us to learn and grow. Loving and believing in Jesus together enables us to rejoice and strengthen our faith, even in challenging times.

Across our three age groups, the children took part in activities that encouraged teamwork and reflection, including games, completing a jigsaw without a reference picture, making cards of encouragement, and sharing their thoughts about different aspects of the Christian faith.

The following Sunday in Junior Church, the children engaged with the story of the risen Jesus walking with Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus, where he was not immediately recognised. We began by discussing why we might fail to recognise someone, with ideas ranging from changes in appearance to different clothing or not wearing glasses. The children then tested their observation skills by identifying partially obscured images from magazines, with impressive

success. The middle group listened to the story again, each holding a key word and eagerly placing it down whenever it was heard. To conclude, the children took part in a craft activity, creating ‘Walking with Jesus’ sandals, with many tracing their own feet as templates, helping them to reflect on the journey in a hands-on and memorable way.



Sandal craft - image taken by Elza de Bruin

Elza de Bruin, Lorraine Thornton and Jess Uden, with thanks to all the leaders and helpers for their contributions to the work of Junior Church.



On Easter Day, crosses that the children decorated in Junior Church were gifted with plants to members of the congregation.

MONTHLY SPECIAL CAUSE FOR MAY: CHRISTIAN AID



May's special cause is **Christian Aid**, the charity set up 81 years ago by British Churches to support refugees.

Christian Aid still supports victims of conflict and natural disasters throughout the world, but nowadays its focus is on working with local communities to help them build a secure and sustainable future.

How you can support Christian Aid in 2026

- Come to the **Bring and Share** Lunch at Downing Place, after the service on **Sunday May 17th**

Sign-up sheet available soon in the office.

- Go on to the **Ecumenical Service** in the afternoon.

At St. Andrew's Cherry Hinton, at 4 pm.

Speaker from Christian Aid, refreshments afterwards.

This year's **Christian Aid Week** focus is on Kenya, a country with a huge debt problem and not enough money to spend on education or health. And now Kenya is also coping with a massive number of refugees from Sudan and other nearby countries, while it is losing much of its international aid funding. Many families live in poverty, unsure whether they will be able to feed their children or pay for school fees. Conditions are crowded; there are few facilities.



*Fridah with her grandson, Quillan
Christian Aid/ David Macharia*

Christian Aid is working with a Kenyan partner charity, Beacon of Hope, to train women urban farmers to grow crops in the most unlikely spaces. Belinda and Fridah are two women from a deprived quarter of Nairobi who have gained financial independence and personal dignity thanks to the programme.



*Belinda in her urban farm
Christian Aid/ David Macharia*

Please be generous in your support for **Christian Aid**, your money will be well used.

WAYS OF GIVING TO OUR SPECIAL CAUSE

Ways of Giving to Christian Aid, our May special cause

Via the red envelopes, available in Church, or at the lunch. Don't forget to fill in the gift aid slip.

Through the monthly retiring collection on Sunday 17th May, by cash, cheque or card.

Via the e-envelope – click on [Downing Place Christian Aid envelope - Christian Aid Week](#)

By direct donation to Christian Aid, via their [website](#).

Call 020 7523 2269 to donate over the phone

Send postal donations (cheques) to: Christian Aid, York House, Wetherby Road, Long Marston, York, YO26 7NH

EASTERN SYNOD MEETING 14th MARCH 2026

Alan Rickard, Downing Place URC Synod Representative, reports:

The Eastern Province of the United Reformed Church met in Synod at Christ Church URC, Braintree on Saturday 14th March 2026, the theme of the day's agenda being '**Mission Partnerships - our journey so far**'. The Synod Moderator welcomed new members, including newly accredited lay preachers and commissioned local leaders.

Revd Anne Sardeson, Convenor, spoke on behalf of the Synod Pastoral Committee. Moving towards the formation of Mission Partnerships (MPs), the primary way local churches relate will be through MPs, and that Area Partnerships will cease to exist. Revd Jo Clare-Young has been called to serve the Chelmsford and SW Essex MP, with her induction at Christ Church, Chelmsford on 18th April. Revd Naomi Young-Rodas will serve in Thames North Synod at St Albans, and Revd Bethan Rodden, an Anglican priest, will serve as the new Pioneer Minister at Love's Farm Church LEP. Southchurch Park URC, Southend and Trinity, Burwell have closed.

Anne presented progress on Mission Partnerships. Revd Alex Jacob reflected on the challenges and difficulties, the joys and hopes in discerning and planting MPs. MPs are a cultural shift from pastorates, with teamwork at the heart of flourishing MPs. In 2023, 22 Eastern Province congregations had no stipendiary ministers at all. The current plan is that by 2028/9 there will be 19 MPs led and served by 26 stipendiary ministers.

The Moderator explained how the Church Life Fund approved at General Assembly in November 2025 fits in with MPs by resourcing shared grants for lay workers and for new communities. Faith in Action awards were presented to Christ Church, Braintree for their Refresh Café and to Norwich Area MP for their welcome bags.

Following a lunch break, the meeting resumed with Mission Team updates, the Synod Clerk's report and the Resources Committee report. Matthew Willmott and Helen Bell were introduced as Mission Practitioners, (Youth) and (Children) respectively. Resolutions approved included a vote of thanks to advocates; amended fields of responsibility and membership of the Pastoral Committee and of District Council; appointments and vacancies; Directors of Synod Trust; receipt of Synod Administration Fund (SAF) and Church Life and Mission Fund (CLMF) reports; Kathryn Pickering has been appointed as Synod Treasurer on a part-time consultancy basis.

The meeting closed with worship led by the Moderator, during which Revd Janet Sutton was inducted to the Ecumenical post serving the North Cambridgeshire Ecumenical Mission Partnership, and at which the Revd Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC, preached.

The next meeting of Eastern Synod will be held at Lion Walk URC, Colchester, on 10th October 2026.

'Having beaten my typewriter into a ploughshare,
I shall never be able to face going back to town life.'

Call me John



Enid Barraud went from capital to
cornfield, living with war, disability,
and as a man.

**Words, sounds and images from
the life of a WWII Land Army girl.
Devised, written and performed
by Jane Bower**

Comments on Jane Bower's previous productions:

*Congratulations on a mammoth effort – your
technique is excellent, the line between reading
and telling is often impossible to discern.*

— Alan Bennett, after *A Letter from Paul*

*...masterly. I should have known from the
quality of your writing that your acting would
be as good. Bravo.*

— Maureen Lipman, after *My Name with Yours*

*The concept and delivery is masterful.
Integrity, talent and love run through it
like Blackpool rock.*

— Diane Sammons, after *Daddy's Diaries*



DOWNING
PLACE URC

THURS 9 JULY 2026, 7.30 PM

DOWNING PLACE CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE, CB2 3EL

TICKETS: £12 (PROFITS TO DOWNING PLACE CHURCH)

<https://downingplaceurc.churchsuite.com/events/2fd6ohnc>

Come and Sing Vivaldi's **The Four Seasons**



with
Joanna Forbes L'Estrange



Saturday 13th June

10am-5pm

**Downing Place
United Reformed Church
Downing Place
Cambridge CB2 3EL**

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MAY DIARY

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Fri	01-May-26	Officers' Meeting	10.15am	Room 3
Sun	03-May-26	Choir Rehearsal	10.00am	Main Church
Sun	03-May-26	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion, led by The Reverend Chris Baker	11:00am	Main Church
Mon	04-May-26	Building Closed—Bank Holiday	All Day	-
Tue	05-May-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	06-May-26	Lunchtime Concert - Joanna Lam (piano)	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	06-May-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Wed	06-May-26	Property Group Meeting	7:00pm	Online
Thu	07-May-26	Midweek Worship led by the Reverend David Tatem	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	07-May-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	10-May-26	Christian Aid Week Begins	All Day	-
Sun	10-May-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church
Sun	10-May-26	Sunday Worship, led by Dr Augur Pearce	11:00am	Main Church
Tue	12-May-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Tue	12-May-26	Elders' Meeting	7:30pm	The Saxon's Home
Wed	13-May-26	Lunchtime Concert - Shubhan Iyer (piano)	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	13-May-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	14-May-26	Ascension Day	All Day	-
Thu	14-May-26	Prayer Meeting	10:15am	St Columba's Chapel
Thu	14-May-26	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Reverend Professor David Thompson	11:00am	Main Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Thu	14-May-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	17-May-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church
Sun	17-May-26	Sunday Worship, led by Members of the Evangelism & Service Group	11:00am	Main Church
Sun	17-May-26	Retiring Collection for Monthly Cause	12:00pm	Main Church
Sun	17-May-26	Christian Aid Lunch	12.30pm	Gibson Hall
Sun	17-May-26	Christian Aid Week Service	4:00pm	St Andrew's Cherry Hinton
Sun	17-May-26	Open Table Service	6:00 for 6.30pm	Main Church
Tue	19-May-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	20-May-26	Lunchtime Concert - Anson Lam (piano)	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	20-May-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	21-May-26	Midweek Worship led by Dr Janet Bottoms	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	21-May-26	Gibson Lunch	12:30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	21-May-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	24-May-26	Whit Sunday	All Day	-
Sun	24-May-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church
Sun	24-May-26	Sunday Worship, led by Members of the World Church & Public Issues Group	11am	Main Church
Sun	24-May-26	Church Meeting	12:30pm	Main Church
Sun	24-May-26	Solidarity Hub	6:00pm	The Hub
Mon	25-May-26	Building Closed - Bank Holiday	All Day	-
Tue	26-May-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	27-May-26	Lunchtime Concert - Sandra Goldberg (violin) & Yukie Smith (piano)	1:00pm	Main Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Wed	27-May-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	28-May-26	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Reverend Elizabeth Caswell	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	28-May-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	31-May-26	Trinity Sunday	All Day	-
Sun	31-May-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church
Sun	31-May-26	Sunday Worship, led by Mrs Faith Paulding	6:00pm	The Hub
Tue	2-June-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Tue	2-June-26	Interfaith Connection Cambridge 'Community & Consultation'	6pm	Main Church,
Tue	2-June-26	Worship, Discipleship & Spirituality Group Meeting	7.30pm	Online
Wed	3-June-26	Lunchtime Concert - Symphonia Academica	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	3-June-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	4-June-26	Midweek Worship led by Dr Augur Pearce	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	4-June-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	07-June-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church
Sun	07-June-26	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion, led by The Rev. Professor David Thompson	11:00am	Main Church
Tue	09-June-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	10-June-26	Ivan Hovorun (piano)	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	10-June-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Wed	10-June-26	Elders' Meeting	7.30pm	Gibson Hall



MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE IN MAY



3 May

Janet Tollington – Thaxted URC

10 May

Elisabeth Caswell - Fulbourn URC
Janet Tollington – Buntingford URC

17 May

Elisabeth Caswell - Melbourn URC
David Cornick - Clare URC

24 May

Janet Tollington – Melbourn URC
Chris Baker - Stetchworth & Cheveley URC
David Thompson - St Luke's Church

31 May

John Proctor - Buntingford URC
Janet Tollington - Water Lane URC, Bishop's Stortford
David Thompson - Fitzwilliam College

LECTIONARY FOR MAY

These are the readings suggested by the Revised Common Lectionary, as in ROOTS, the material used by our Children's Ministry team.

They may be altered if that is the preacher's wish.

3 May

(Easter 5)

Acts 7:55-60

Psalm 31:1-5,15-16

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

24 May

(Pentecost)

Acts 2:1-21 or

Numbers 11:24-30

Psalm 104:24-34,35b

1 Cor 12:3b-13 or

Acts 2:1-21

Jn 20:19-23 or Jn 7:37-39

10 May

(Easter 6)

Acts 17:22-31

Psalm 66:8-20

1 Peter 3:13-22

John 14:15-21

31 May

(Trinity Sunday)

Genesis 1:1-2.4a

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-20

17 May

(Easter 7)

Acts 1:6-14

Psalm 68:1-10,32-35

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

John 17:1-11



Easter Day flowers - taken by Rosemary Johnston

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ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

Please send items to the Editor and Jess Uden

- preferably by email (see above)

WEB EDITOR: Jess Uden jess@downingplaceurc.org

Please send items to be included in the June edition
no later than **Monday 18th May 2026**