



**DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE**



**ISSUE 82
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*Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of
the Elders and Members of Downing Place United Reformed Church*



Lightning over Cambridge - taken by Tim Rowland

FROM THE EDITOR



Photo taken by RUN 4 FFWPU Creative Commons

Dear Friends,

Just once in a while, a news item pops up on the television screen, or in a newspaper, that somehow lifts the heart – an assurance of human kindness, of generosity. This one occurred a couple of months ago, and now I'm surrendering to a wish to share what went through my mind when I saw it.

Many readers will recall the event. It's the 2026 Boston Marathon, with nearly 30 thousand runners. 26 miles and 385 yards – 3 hours and 45 minutes, even for an average runner. One of those runners was 21-year-old Ajay Haridasse, of the Northeastern University running club. Towards the end of the run he experienced severe cramping, and with only a fifth of a mile to go before the finish line, Haridasse's legs gave out: he hit the ground. Understandably, with their eyes on the prize – completion – many competitors ran past him. But one stopped. A runner from Northern Ireland, Aaron Beggs. Beggs was on track to achieve a Personal Best marathon time, but he stopped, and put out his arms towards the fallen man. Then he was joined by Brazilian runner Robson De Oliveira. Haridasse was assisted to his feet, and with his arms around the two supporters' shoulders, and their arms around him, he staggered to the finish line, with a time of 2:44:32. A very good time, though De Oliveira also sacrificed a Personal Best.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by?" (Lamentations 1:12). What was it that led Aaron Beggs and Robson De Oliveira to stop and assist their (as-yet

unknown) running colleague, when they had so much to lose by doing so? Nothing less than love, surely, because they prioritised the interests and wellbeing of another person above their own. They even set Ajay Haridasse’s wellbeing above their Personal Best times! This kind of generous love is the New Testament *agape*: “love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). And 1 Corinthians 13 “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love (*agape*), I am (only) a resounding gong...”.

So – looking ahead to this June 2026 issue of the Downing Place URC house journal, just a few thoughts. First, especial thanks to Janet Tollington for agreeing to my request to contribute the Minister’s Letter, at rather short notice. I imagine that many readers will have followed, with gratitude and amazement, her recent URC Daily Devotions series on the Book of Judges. Then – month by month I continue to be grateful for Jess Uden’s support and collaboration in the production of *Place Matters*. Therefore I’m all the more pleased to see her piece about Hub Hospitality in this issue. Jess’ insights into Christian welcome and pastoral care at Downing Place URC must be second to none. Finally – for now – warm thanks to Augur Pearce as we come to the conclusion of his ten-episode series about the diversity of Christian groups and practices in the UK, and in Cambridge. They have been a very good ‘read’, Augur: both entertaining and illuminating.

Jess and I send greetings and best wishes to all our readers.

Tim Rowland

Editor, Downing Place URC *Place Matters*

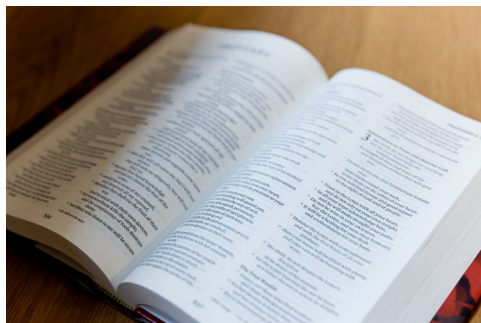


Photo taken by StillVision Photography

LETTER FROM A MINISTER

I'm writing this as I prepare to go away for a few days to the Isle of Wight and in the wake of the recent election results in England, Scotland and Wales. My mind is spinning as I observe the scale of movement in the fortunes of the political parties, but I'm left wondering whether it will actually make much difference to the lives of the majority of people. After a flurry of media reaction to the results I suspect their focus – and that of the public – will have moved on by the time I return home to finish this letter.

The right to vote, to play a part in determining how our councils and nations are governed, was hard won and a privilege to be exercised responsibly. Likewise in our church tradition – and I make no apology that I am continuing the theme brought to us by David Tatem in last month's letter – those of us who are members have the privilege of a vote on all matters brought to Church Meeting, including electing Elders and calling a Minister. But this privilege is to be exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with the aim of furthering Christ's ministry and mission through the mission partnership to which we belong; and not to satisfy personal preferences. It is quite a responsibility.

As you read this, we will be in the season of Pentecost celebrating the outpouring of the Spirit to empower us as the body of Christ, collectively, and to equip us, individually, to play our own part. It is the dynamic between the individual and the collective that makes Church Meeting a significant aspect of our life together and I regret that my preaching commitments mean that I can rarely attend. The chance to hear about all areas of church life and perhaps recognise an opportunity to contribute in a new way, or to appreciate where our prayers are most needed, is what our regular meetings offer. As well as being occasions when relationships between us can be deepened, as the Spirit nudges us to engage with members we know less well.

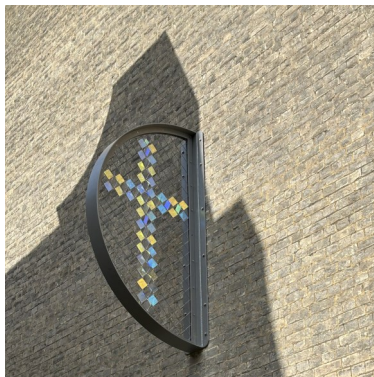
As we move towards the process of seeking a new minister to lead us forwards it is vital that we are open to hearing the voices of those with differing views from our own; and that is so much easier when we know one another and understand a bit more about what makes each one of us 'tick'. Unlike some political meetings, church meeting is never about silencing an alternative perspective; but rather embracing the diversity of views and calling on the Spirit to lead us to a common mind. The decisions we reach are not a matter of achieving a majority, or 'first past the post'; but rather about aligning ourselves with the mind of Christ.

Now I have returned from my holiday nicely refreshed, and thankful for the varied experiences I have shared with previously unknown people whom I am unlikely to meet again. I hope that they will have happy memories to carry forward into the coming months, as do I, of a beautiful island with many places of interest that we explored together. My life has been enriched through them and I hope I may have enriched theirs in some small way.

Home again, sadly I have discovered that the election results have not been left behind but have caused political parties to become introspective, to engage in ‘the blame game’; and to focus on anything but the wellbeing of the communities each council was elected to serve. All over the country, and in Cambridge City, councillors are jockeying for position and trying to gain power or status or control, rather than seeking to identify common values and shared aims that will meet people’s needs. Surely this is not democracy at its best.

As Church I pray that we will not become introspective as the search for our next minister unfolds, but will continue to focus outwards on our ministry and mission to the residents of the city and surrounding villages where we are set. Our world and our immediate communities are troubled and in need of the good news which we are called to proclaim. We have much to offer in love and service to those around us, to improve their lives and give them hope. With the Spirit’s promptings, as God’s people, may we continue to focus on building the kingdom of justice, righteousness and peace. May we trust that the same Spirit will, in due time, nudge the right person to come looking at what is happening through Downing Place URC to explore whether this might be where God is calling them to minister next; and when that happens may we be able to say with one voice, ‘thanks be to God’.

Janet Tollington



Dichroic glass cross in DPURC yard - photo taken by Jess Uden

ELAINE AND JOHN PROCTOR – A PROFILE

John begins:

I was born in Scotland, not far from Stirling, and spent my school years in various parts of England. At secondary school near Birmingham the subject that animated me most was maths, and I applied to study it at Cambridge. University was a positive experience. I enjoyed the studies, made good friendships, and discovered – rather to my surprise – a deeper and more personal aspect to Christian faith than I had ever realised was possible. After Cambridge I went back to Scotland, to the Statistics Department at Glasgow University, for graduate study, teaching, and statistical consultancy to researchers in other parts of the university. Most importantly, I met Elaine.

And Elaine:

I was born and grew up in Glasgow, apart from some pre-school years in Cumbria. Schools and university were all in Glasgow. Involvement in local church life started in a Methodist church in Cockermouth. Significant encouragement in my faith really began as I attended Church of Scotland sea-side missions as a youngster, and also in my teens and twenties with the work of Scripture Union, where I was for many years a leader or cook at their summer camps. I took a degree in Glasgow University's Science Faculty, majoring in statistics, then trained as a maths teacher. I began teaching in a comprehensive in the west end of Glasgow in 1977, the same year that John and I married.

John:

Meanwhile I was applying for ministerial training, with the Church of Scotland. It all happened in Glasgow, with a course at the Divinity Faculty, eight months as assistant minister in a nearby parish, and parish ministry from 1981 to 1986 in a large post-war council estate on the northern edge of the city. That was a really enriching experience, in a big and busy congregation with many kind and warm-hearted people. It was demanding too – morning and evening Sunday services, twenty weddings and sixty funerals each year, involvement in three schools, and a bit of teaching in the Divinity Faculty. I learned a lot, and valued the friendship of some older colleagues in adjacent parishes, among them Philip Jones, uncle of our present Church Secretary. In retrospect I probably worked too hard, and it would have been better to have spent more time at home.



Elaine:

It was an important time in family life. Alison was born in 1982 and Iain in 1984. Friends from Emmanuel Church will remember them growing up in Cambridge in the late 80s and through into the early 00s. Both went on to study statistics and to work in that field. Alison is now at St Andrews University in Scotland,

specialising in analysis of wild bird numbers – migration, population trends, changing habitats, and what conservation measures work best. Iain works for a big manufacturing firm in south-west Germany. He has been there for well over a decade, and has become a dual citizen. He is married to Tanja (also a statistician), with three children aged from eight to two.

John continues:

Now back to 1985, when a letter came from one Martin Cressey, Principal of Westminster College in Cambridge, asking if I would like to apply for a vacant lecturing post in New Testament studies. John O' Neill, whom some church friends will recall, had recently left Westminster for Edinburgh University. I came in his place, and our family moved south in August 1986, into a house on the college site.

Westminster in our early years was a very pleasant place for young children, with a spacious garden, other families to mix with, and all of it handy for the city centre. Martin and Pamela Cressey did a lot to help us settle, as did the Houston family next-door, and we were glad to join Emmanuel URC.

In many ways the job suited me well, and I eventually taught at Westminster until 2014. The core task was helping URC ministerial students to prepare for their work ahead. Many classes also included Anglicans from Ridley Hall and Westcott House, Methodists from Wesley House, and in the course of the years a few Roman Catholic and Orthodox students too. My work overflowed into the wider life of the URC, with preaching dates and training events for serving ministers; also into the Cambridge Divinity Faculty, where the New Testament section was led for a while by an Emmanuel member, the late Graham Stanton.

Elaine:

I took a career break when Alison was born, and it reached into our time at Cambridge. Here I have worked with children and adults from about the age of 2 to 72. For a few years I worked part-time with pre-school children, then in 1997 returned to maths. I taught A Level to international students, to enable them to apply to UK universities. The school was Bellerbys College, where latterly I spent most of my time in the former Cheshunt College building on Bateman Street. I took a part-time Master's degree to refresh and extend my knowledge, and eventually continued at Bellerbys until I retired. Across that period I taught young people from about twenty countries, and took pleasure in watching them learn and grow – which is not always easy thousands of miles from home. I also taught part-time for the Open University for 12 years and marked for an A Level exam board, which I still do now. John and I both retired on the same day nearly six years ago.

John concludes:

The last stretch of my working life came rather unexpectedly. The URC was looking for a new General Secretary, and someone (I still don't know who) put my name forward. It was an interesting job, but never quiet. The base was the URC central office, near King's Cross Station, where I had overall responsibility for the staff. I often had to travel, both around the UK and further afield, some of it in connection with the work of the Council for World Mission. There were myriads (it seemed) of meetings, and a relentless inbox. And there was a fair amount of difficult stuff: any sizeable organisation is bound to have problems here and there, and local people may well need support or advice in unravelling these. I was grateful to have some outstanding colleagues at Church House, and met many impressive people around the churches. The role felt both privileged and quite pressured. My last few months coincided with the onset of Covid, and involved a host of plans and procedures to help the Church steer through the difficulties. I had intended for some years to retire in September 2020. When the day came, it was a low-key transition. I was working at home already. My leaving event was on Zoom.

Retirement has been welcome, going down gently through the gears, although I still gladly do a bit of preaching and writing. I have had a lot of health concerns over the decades, and the people at Addenbrooke's have been supportive and skilful throughout. In 2025 I was very grateful indeed for a kidney

transplant, donated by Elaine, which seems to be helping me a great deal.

We enjoy travelling to Scotland and Germany. Both of us find a lot of pleasure in country walking, and plenty of interest at the University of the Third Age. We value very highly the life and fellowship of Downing Place, and appreciate the friendship, support and kindness we meet through so many people there.



HUB HOSPITALITY – an act of service

Editor: Morning worship at Downing Place URC on 17th May 2026 was led by the church's Evangelism and Service Group (ESG). Among several contributions to the service by members of the ESG, my Place Matters colleague, Jess Uden, spoke about Hub Hospitality at Downing Place. I am grateful to Jess for agreeing to my request to include something of what she said in this issue of Place Matters. What follows captures the essence of her presentation, and most of the text.

At Downing Place, welcome is not simply the task of the two stewards in the Welcome Area on a Sunday morning. It is something shaped by the whole congregation and rooted in our faith. Hospitality here is not just an event or a programme; it is part of how we try to respond to God's welcome to us, in the way we welcome friend and stranger alike.



Photo taken by StillVision Photography

Our Hub Hospitality initiative is built on a simple idea: twice a week, people gather in the Hub for conversation alongside refreshments served by our volunteers. Some stay briefly, others for much longer. They arrive carrying all kinds of experiences; joy, loneliness, exhaustion, grief, anxiety, uncertainty. Some know us already; for others, it's their first hesitant step through the door.

Our church sits in the heart of a busy city, surrounded by universities, shops, pubs, and clubs. Cambridge is full of energy and opportunity, but it can also be isolating. Many who come through our doors are looking for warmth, conversation, rest, or simply somewhere safe to be for a while. That is where hospitality becomes service - not dramatic service, but the quiet, faithful service of making tea, listening carefully, observing and helping create a space where people feel they belong. Often, what people remember is not a polished event or a perfect programme, but whether they felt seen, welcomed, and treated with kindness.

Another thing we remember in our work here in Downing Place, is that good hospitality is not accidental. It requires thought, care, teamwork, and responsibility. A truly welcoming church is not only open-hearted, but also safe. Sometimes people imagine that boundaries make welcome less warm, but I think the opposite is true. When people know they are safe, respected, and cared for

fairly, they are more able to relax, trust, and flourish. As people in churches carry different and difficult experiences, welcome must be thoughtful as well as warm. Safeguarding, healthy boundaries, and clear expectations are not barriers to hospitality; they are part of love in action. In John 10, Jesus speaks not only about welcome, but also about protection. The shepherd keeps watch over the flock. In the same way, part of our service as a church community is ensuring that hospitality is responsible as well as generous.

In my experience, both here at Downing Place and in other pastoral settings, the best examples of welcome are always shaped by community. They are built through small acts of consistency, patience, inclusion, and mutual respect. They grow when people work together to create an environment where everyone is treated with dignity. I think that is something our congregation does quietly and faithfully every week.

Sometimes we can quite clearly see the fruits of the hospitality I am speaking of. It has been encouraging to see relationships and community grow naturally within the Hub. Over time, small groups of regular visitors have begun looking out for one another in ways that feel genuinely pastoral. After the Wednesday concert, for example, one group often stays behind talking together, sharing stories of life, checking on one another, and showing real concern when someone is unwell or going through a difficult period. Indeed, this is seen in our Thursday knitting group too, they celebrate the good moments, and they support, soothe and encourage through the hard times. There is a kindness and attentiveness there that cannot be organised or manufactured. It has simply grown because people have been welcomed consistently and treated with dignity. I also think of a brother and sister who now regularly meet in the Hub every few weeks. For them, it has become a comfortable and familiar place where they can sit together, talk, and help one another. In many ways, that simple act of having somewhere safe and welcoming to gather is itself part of what hospitality can offer.

The Hub may seem simple from the outside: tea, coffee, conversation. But underneath that simplicity is something much deeper. It is a practical expression of Christian service. It says to people: you are welcome here. You matter. You are not alone. You are part of a community.

So perhaps our vocation as a church, is to remember that service is not always found in large or dramatic acts. Often it is found in ordinary faithfulness — in showing up, listening well, offering kindness, creating safety, and making space for others. As sometimes the most Christ-like thing we can do is simply offer a good welcome.

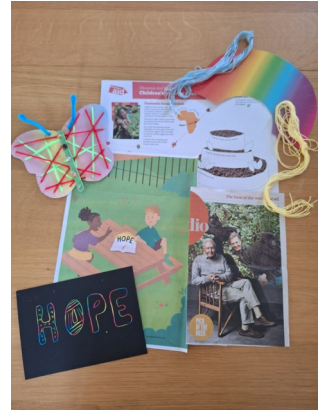
Jess Uden – Downing Place Church Coordinator

AN INSIGHT INTO OUR RECENT JUNIOR CHURCH SESSIONS



On the first Sunday in May, Chris reminded us in the service of a mention in Peter's first letter, of 'living stones' and he shared stories about David Livingstone. When we were in the Hub, in our groups, we thought some more about Peter and his writing to encourage the followers of Jesus. He said they had moved 'from darkness into God's wonderful light'. We decorated 'stained glass' jam jars and lit them with battery tea lights.

When Sheila spoke with us in Sharing Together on 10 May, a small group of Junior Church members learned about the support given by Christian Aid and a partner charity, Beacon of Hope, to enable women living in deprived parts of Nairobi in Kenya. These women were taught how to create gardens in seemingly unsuitable places, enabling them to support their families independently. In our Junior Church session, we took up the theme of hope and thought about how we and others around us might offer encouragement to people facing difficulties (1 Peter 3:13-22). We used David Attenborough as an example of someone who had brought the wonders and difficulties of the natural world to our television screens to help us preserve our 'Life on Earth'. As a craft activity some of us decorated a string rainbow or butterfly as a symbol of Jesus as our hope for the world.



The following week, we spent time thinking more deeply about Peter's letter to the early Christian churches, where he acknowledged that life can be difficult but reminded believers that God promises to help those who trust in Him. It was not an easy passage, and we spent time discussing each sentence carefully, deciding whether it described a difficult situation, advice from Peter, or a promise from God. We then talked about how we can share our worries with God, trusting that He hears us and will help us, before listening to the song "What Shall I Do With a Bag of Worries?"

On Sunday May 24th, we focused on the Pentecost reading from Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit came like a rushing wind and tongues of fire appeared. As the congregation heard many different languages during the service, we reflected on how, at Pentecost, people each heard the message in their own language. We explored this through a "What Am I?" game and a language-matching activity, linking "God loves you" to different languages. French, Dutch and Welsh were familiar to some of us, while Swahili proved more challenging! The story reminded

us that God's message is for everyone, wherever they are from. We finished by making crowns decorated with flames as reminders of the Holy Spirit's presence with each of us.



PASTORAL NEWS

We remember in prayer the family of Iris Davies and Tony Booth. We think of all those who are having tests or procedures in these weeks and pray for Eric and Carol Nye following the death of Carol's mother and Eric sister.

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.

IRIS DAVIES: 23rd August 1932 - 15th March 2026

In the April 2026 *Place Matters*, Pippa Jones reported that



Iris Davies died at home, Pinecrest, as we gathered for worship at Downing Place on Sunday March 22nd. She was 93. Iris and Des, who died in May 2018, were regular and faithful members of Emmanuel URC since the 1970s and beloved of many. Please hold daughters Kathryn and Anne in your prayers at this time: they live in Scotland and Switzerland, but were staying with Iris for a few days. They know she is now at peace. Iris and Des had a good relationship with their local church, and it is where Des was buried in May 2018. Revd Iain McColl and Revd Deborah McVey will lead this service.

Deborah McVey now writes:

Iris Davies slept her way into heaven on Sunday 15th March, aged almost 94. Her deepest prayer was to die at home. When I received the message from her daughters, Kathryn and Anne, to say she had died, it was just before Sunday morning worship. At Downing Place, Ian was singing *In Paradisum* at that very moment: “May the angels lead you into Paradise.” We were most touched by that timing.



Iris’ funeral service was held on May 5th at the 13th century Church of the Holy Trinity in Hildersham, close to Pinecrest where Des and Iris lived since the late 1970’s. The Rector Revd Iain McColl, with great ecumenical generosity, welcomed my leading of this service, saying the opening words and Commendation prayers and glad for me to lead the rest. The church was full of neighbours and a large group of Rotarian friends from the era when Des was much involved with Rotary. It was good to have the support of the Thompsons, Jenny Jacobsberg (at one time Iris’ elder), Janet Bottoms (at one time her pastoral visitor) and William. The sun shone over us as we laid Iris to rest with Des in the peaceful churchyard. My reflection on Hope had included the words of Psalm 23 which we said from memory, so it was a comforting touch that there were sheep in the field alongside us as Iain led the Committal. Rest in peace Iris, those who knew you in days gone by thank you for your many acts of hospitality and grace towards your visitors and your solid support of all that Des gave to Emmanuel Church.

There are some orders of service outside the office if anyone would like to see the photos.

Deborah McVey

FROM OUR ECUMENICAL CORRESPONDENT

X : Concluding thoughts

In previous Episodes of this ‘column’ I have reflected on the diversity of English Christianity (including the local presence of Orthodoxy and German Protestantism). By saying something about the history of each tradition I have tried to show how they originated from a common stem, and the main points which led to their separation. By including something about each denomination’s Cambridge presence I aimed to ‘earth’ the stories in current tangible reality, and also to point where one might go to experience one of these facets of the Christian family first-hand.

The column could perhaps have continued to other Christian traditions. The selection reflects my personal leanings: I have not attempted to write about the Pentecostal movement, of which I have very little experience, nor the Independent Evangelical churches that flourish nearby. I know more about the Latter-day Saints (Mormons), but whether theirs is indeed a ‘Christian’ tradition is even more hotly contested than with Unitarians. I deliberately omitted the fully Reformed denominations, Congregationalism and Presbyterianism, which came together in the first formation of the URC, since experts in our congregation know their history and character better than I.

So I end here, with some thoughts to which preparing these Episodes has led me.

I’ve already struck a sad note, linking ‘family’ and ‘separation’; but also used what, to many today, is more positive term – ‘diversity’. There is a tension here. To start with diversity: the existence of so many flavours of Christianity means that, at least in a place like Cambridge, worshippers enjoy a great variety of choice. We can join the believing community that fits best with our sense of history, or where we most enjoy the music or the silence, or whose reading of the Bible matches ours. We can look for the most welcoming church, the fellowship whose ideas of social justice or community service match our own, the building whose beauty or ‘feel’ lets us feel closest to Heaven. There is almost something for everyone.

This choice is narrowed as churches and their resources shrink: coming together may be a necessity, or it may be seen as mending rifts in the family. The twentieth century was the era of ecumenism par excellence: of great inter-church appeals, congresses and organisations, of shared buildings and ecumenical projects.

These brought their blessings and carried their dangers. Partnerships at local level might grow together so well that they forgot, and therefore no longer represented, the traditions from which they had come.

National bodies, in defining their criteria for membership, necessarily build fences which exclude those outside. Their member churches sometimes seek to build additional fences within the organisation: when in 2019 churches prevented a married lesbian Quaker taking her turn as a co-President of Churches Together in England, some questioned whether that body still served any useful purpose.

The most striking step towards ‘visible unity’, the 1972 formation of the United Reformed Church, brought losses and gains: the ‘subordinate standards’ of Presbyterianism and the local autonomy of Congregationalism were both surrendered to set an example to wider Christianity. Congregations which never had to look over their shoulder to bishops now have to do the same to committees of a provincial synod. If English Methodism and the Church of England ever came together ‘visibly’, a similar result might ensue.

Though Christian division is often lamented, there are serious reasons for it. My comment about choice may be answered that religion is about truth rather than taste; one should join the body where one senses the will of God being obeyed and his challenge accepted. So it still matters what one thinks about God’s nature or human failings and forgiveness, about authority in the Christian community and the calling of kings and nations, about baptism or Communion. Every separation that has taken place was sincere: a breakaway group was persuaded that existing church authorities had departed from some standard with a yet higher claim on their loyalty. I find it hard to condemn those who conscientiously separated for this reason, even when it made the Church Universal still more fragmented. And I respect smaller bodies which resist pleas to rejoin larger ones, if still not convinced their original stance was wrong. We all see ‘through a glass, darkly’; and who is to say a particular body’s vision cannot possibly be correct?

I therefore value the Christian diversity which history has produced and I have described in this column. I understand why the alternative, visible unity, remains out of reach. But It is important for this to be ‘reconciled’ diversity: traditions claiming the name of Christ should show respect and humility in their dealings with each other, as well as co-operating wherever their convictions allow. I regret that the Roman Catholic hierarchy limits Communion to those submitting to its authority; that some Baptists will not accept those baptised as children; that mu

tual recognition as ‘Orthodox’ plays such a big part in the relationship of eastern churches to each other; that the Church of England discounts the ordination of ministers (let alone Elders) in the non-episcopal bodies. But at least the language of mutual rejection has grown milder, and people are no longer exiled or burned for their convictions. And I welcome progress towards different traditions’ followers praying together, their working together whether in Street Pastors or Christian Aid, and at such examples of ‘pulpit and Table fellowship’ as already exist.

Ecumenical endeavour often starts with Jesus’ prayer in chapter 17 of John’s Gospel, that ‘those who believe in me ... may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me’. It is certainly true that a divided witness can hamper missionary efforts: a story tells of a tribal chieftain who refused conversion because of the conflicting accounts of Christianity he was hearing from different missionaries. But in every version of that story I have heard, those missionaries abused each other, each insisting his own message must be accepted as a complete package. How would it have been if they had said ‘We are one in our core message. We have built on it in different ways, but those may be wrong. Accept the core, and then consider what refinements best speak to your needs and understanding’?

Augur Pearce

CHRISTIAN AID

Thank you to everyone who supported **Christian Aid** during **Christian Aid Week**, at the lunch, at the service in Cherry Hinton, through the retiring collection, or by other giving.

The next diary date is Saturday July 18th for the thank you tea, this year at St Luke’s Victoria Road. More in the next Place Matters, in the meantime, put the date in your diary.



DOWNING PLACE URC SPECIAL CAUSE

JUNE 2026: CAMBRIDGE CARBON FOOTPRINT

At Downing Place URC we have committed ourselves to the focus of the church's outward-facing life in the areas of SUSTAINABILITY, INCLUSIVITY and WELLBEING.



Where can we obtain the resources to make progress with these aims? An immediately accessible and authoritative source is **Cambridge Carbon Footprint**.

They write:

- Our vision is of low carbon communities which are sustainable, resilient and rewarding.
- Our mission is to inspire people to engage with climate change and empower them, individually and within their communities, to move towards low carbon living. We offer a varied programme of events and activities which will inspire people to engage with climate change and empower them to join together to build a low-carbon future. We aim to engage at many levels, including with individuals, community groups and local organisations.
- We run an annual Open Eco Homes programme in the autumn and a Thermal Imaging scheme lending out cameras and training volunteers to use them to identify where heat is leaking from homes. We host one of the largest Repair Café networks in the UK, supporting 45 groups across Cambridgeshire to run these popular events where volunteer repairers fix stuff for the love of it. We have Swish kits to borrow to run community clothes swap events, and an Imaginarium kit to help communities imagine a greener, fairer future.
- Find out more and volunteer at www.cambridgecarbonfootprint.org.

WAYS OF GIVING TO OUR SPECIAL CAUSE

- Special Collection at worship on Sunday 21st June 2026 (cash, cheque or card)
- Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts (cash or card)
- Direct to the church bank account (reference SPECIAL CAUSE)
- Via [Home - Downing Place URC](#) - the **'Donate'** button is on the homepage. Select **Special Donations** as the fund
- Directly to Cambridge Carbon Footprint via their website [Donate - Cambridge Carbon Footprint](#)

The Cantilena Singers

Daniel Spreadbury – Director

A CONCERT BY THE CANTILENA SINGERS AT DOWNING PLACE

Songs of the Fleet - Saturday 11th July 4.00pm

Cantilena Singers is a chamber choir – about 16 voices – based in Swaffham Bulbeck. Judy and Tim Rowland sing with the choir.

Join us for a late-afternoon concert built around Stanford's rousing song cycle for solo baritone and chorus, *Songs of the Fleet*, with other water-themed works from Romantic composers, plus Eric Whitacre's *Water night*. These include

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) – *Songs of the Fleet*, Op. 117

Edward Elgar (1857–1934) – *As torrents in summer*

Charles Villiers Stanford – *The blue bird*

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848–1918) – *Music, when soft voices die*

Charles Wood (1866–1926) – *Full fathom five*

Daniel Spreadbury took over the directorship of The Cantilena Singers from Mark Dawes in 2000, and directs us in three concerts in most years, with the occasional evensong.

This will be our first concert at Downing Place. It should last just over an hour, followed by wine and soft drinks – please come and support us!

Tickets £10 on the door. Free admission for under 18s.
All receipts for the benefit of Downing Place URC.

RELAXED SUMMER HOUSE GROUPS



<https://www.magnific.com/photos/creative-community/11>

By popular demand, these will follow the ideas and pattern of last year, with informal conversation around the following themes.

Participation is optional - being present and listening is fine - this is a further opportunity to get to know one another better.

Theme: Encouragement and Nourishment: People, Places and Things.

Week one - a person who has encouraged, inspired or helped us

Week two - a place which has nourished us

Week three - an object we can bring along and share how it has been significant in our lives and offered us encouragement

Week 4 - food to share to nourish each other - and sharing of what nourishes us in our faith journey.

4 Tuesday afternoons at the church 2.30-4pm,
enabled by Zoe Bennett & Deborah McVey

21st and 28th July; 4th and 11th August

A lift can be offered - don't be afraid to ask.

Penny Flynn

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN

Interfaith
Connection
Cambridge

ON TUESDAY
2 JUNE 6.00PM
AT DOWNING PLACE URC

TO EXPLORE THE THEME OF:

**'COMMUNITY AND
CONSULTATION'**

MEET PEOPLE FROM DIVERSE FAITH
COMMUNITIES IN CAMBRIDGE



**FREE EVENT
SCAN TO REGISTER**



Come along to the next Interfaith Connection Cambridge event. Join us as we explore 'Community and Consultation' in our traditions.

How can we create loving and vibrant communities by serving together? How do listening and consultation help in the process of building community?

Join us for an event hosted by the Cambridge Baha'i Community to learn how each of our faiths cherish community and contribute your own ideas and reflections in a spiritual consultation.

Light vegetarian refreshments will be served. Children accompanied by a responsible adult are most welcome.

The Interfaith Connection Cambridge brings together people of faith in Cambridge so that we can learn about one another's traditions, understand one another better, extend hospitality to one another, and become friends. We are open to people of all faiths.

The current steering committee includes members of local Jewish, Baha'i, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian communities. We gather three times a year, taking it in turns to host one another.

Please email publicengagement@woolf.cam.ac.uk if you have any questions about the event.

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



with
Joanna Forbes L'Estrange



VOCAL SCORE
available to
BORROW (free) or BUY
(at a special discount)
*Joanna will be happy to
autograph it for you!*

Saturday 13th June
10am-5pm
Downing Place
United Reformed Church
Downing Place
Cambridge CB2 3EL

☕ Tea & coffee included ☕

In aid of SAMARITANS

LOTS OF FUN • NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE NEEDED • COME ALONE OR BRING A FRIEND

Ticket price: £25 (Full-time students £8)

Tickets available from www.ticketsource.co.uk or scan the QR code ➡



Fulbourn URC Chapel

Exhibition of Arts & Crafts

Sat/Sun
27th / 28th June
12-4pm

Quilts
Crochet
Knitting
Art work

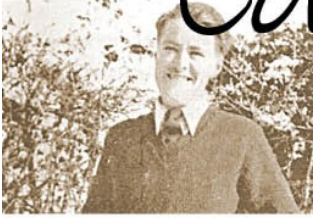
Tea, Coffee & Cake
Sales Table & Raffle

Entry £2 (children FREE)
in aid of church funds

Home End, Fulbourn
CB21 5BS

'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>

JUNE DIARY

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Tues	02-June-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Tues	02-June-26	Interfaith Connection	6.00pm	Main Church
Tues	02-June-26	Worship, Discipleship & Spirituality Group Meeting	7.30pm	Online
Wed	03-June-26	Lunchtime Concert - Symphonia Academica (Peter Bussereau, violin Yukiko Osedo, piano)	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	03-June-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Wed	03-June-26	Finance Committee Meeting	7:00pm	Room 3
Thu	04-June-26	Midweek Worship led by Dr Augur Pearce	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	04-June-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sat	06-June-26	Harmonicham - Organist Portrait of a Hero concert	5:00pm	Main Church
Sun	07-June-26	No Choir Rehearsal	-	-
Sun	07-June-26	Sunday Worship with Holy Communion, led by The Rev. Professor David Thompson	11:00am	Main Church
Tues	09-June-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	10-June-26	Lunchtime Concert - 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	The Thornton's Home
Thu	11-June-26	Prayer Meeting	10:15am	St Columba's Chapel
Thu	11-June-26	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Reverend Professor David Thompson	11:00am	Main Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Thu	11-June-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sat	13-June-26	Come and Sing - Joanna Forbes L'Estrange	10:00am	Main Church
Sat	13-June-26	Cambridge Pride	12:00pm	Jesus Green
Sun	14-June-26	Choir Rehearsal	10.00am	Main Church
Sun	14-June-26	Sunday Worship led by The Rev. Elizabeth Caswell	11:00am	Main Church
Sun	14-June-26	Church Lunch	12.30pm	Gibson Hall
Mon	15-June-26	World Church & Public Issues Group	7.30pm	Online
Tue	16-June-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	17-June-26	Lunchtime Concert - Paul Harris, clarinet & Flora Tzanataki, piano	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	17-June-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	18-June-26	Prayer Vigil	9:30am	Main Church
Thu	18-June-26	Midweek Worship led by the Reverend Dr David Cornick	11am	Main Church
Thu	18-June-26	Gibson Lunch	12.30pm	Gibson Hall
Thu	18-June-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	19-June-26	University of Cambridge Ester Full Term ends	All Day	-
Sat	20-June-26	Harmonicam - Yearnings for Home	5:00pm	Main Church
Sun	21-June-26	Choir Rehearsal	10.00am	Main Church
Sun	21-June-26	Sunday Worship for All Ages, led by Jane Bower	11am	Main Church
Sun	21-June-26	Retiring Collection for Monthly Cause	12.00pm	Main Church
Sun	21-June-26	Open Table Service	6pm for 6.30pm	Main Church
Tue	23-June-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2.30pm	St Athanasios' Church

	Date	Name	Time	Location
Wed	24-June-26	Lunchtime Concert - Jane Bower (live on-screen illustrations) & Andrew Taylor (piano)	1:00pm	Main Church
Wed	24-June-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	25-June-26	Midweek Worship with Holy Communion, led by the Reverend John Proctor	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	25-June-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Sun	28-June-26	Choir Rehearsal	10:00am	Main Church
Sun	28-June-26	Sunday Worship, led by The Rev. Dr Robert Pope	11:00am	Main Church
Sun	28-June-26	Solidarity Hub	6:00pm	The Hub
Mon	29-June-26	Officers Meeting	10.15am	Room 3
Tue	30-June-26	Cherry Hinton Road Tuesday Fellowship	2:30pm	St Athanasios' Church
Wed	1-July-26	Concrete Rose Care Leavers Hub	4:00pm	The Hub
Thu	2-July-26	Midweek Worship led by the Reverend David Tatem	11:00am	Main Church
Thu	2-July-26	Knit One Give One	1:30pm	The Hub
Fri	3-July-26	General Assembly begins	-	The Hayes Conference Centre



MEMBERS PREACHING ELSEWHERE IN JUNE



7 June

Chris Baker - Free Church, St Ives
David Cornick - Bassingbourn URC
Janet Tollington - Saffron Walden URC

14 June

Chris Baker - Melbourn URC

21 June

Penny Flynn - Fulbourn URC
Janet Tollington - Bassingbourn URC

28 June

Chris Baker - Wicken Methodists
Janet Bottoms - Fulbourn URC
Deborah McVey - St Luke's Church
Janet Tollington - Stansted Free Church

LECTIONARY FOR JUNE

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.

7 June

(Trinity 1)

Genesis 12:1-9
Psalm 33:1-12
Romans 4:13-25
Matthew 9:9-13,18-26

21 June

(Trinity 3)

Genesis 21:8-21
Psalm 86:1-10,16-17
Romans 6:1b-11
Matthew 10:24-39

14 June

(Trinity 2)

Genesis 18:1-15(21:1-7)
Psalm 116:1-2,12-19
Romans 5:1-8
Matt 9:35-10:8,(9-23)

28 June

(Trinity 4)

Genesis 22:1-14
Psalm 13
Romans 6:12-23
Matthew 10:40-42

5 July

(Trinity 5)

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49,58-67
Psalm 45:10-17 or Song of Solomon 2:8-13
Romans 7:15-25a
Matthew 11:16-19,25-30



Flowers arranged by Rosemary Johnston - photo taken by Jess Uden

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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 July & August edition
no later than **Thursday 18th June 2026**