

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

December 2021 & January 2022

A happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year
to all readers of the Hadleigh Messenger



“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph,
and the baby, who was lying in the manger.”

Luke 2:16

The Magazine of the
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



The United Reformed Church (URC) began in 1972 by a union between the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church of England - hence United. The Union has since been extended to include the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ, which joined in 1981, and the Congregation Union of Scotland, which joined in 2001.

The description 'Reformed' refers to the doctrine of the church, which derives from the Reformation of the 16th century. There is a full Statement of Belief in the Basis of Union determined by the Act of Parliament in 1972. Briefly, however, it may be stated thus:

- We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe that the Word of God in the Old and the New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.
- We believe that Jesus Christ, born into this world, living as a man among men, dying upon the cross, raised from the dead and reigning for evermore, is God's gift of himself to the world whereby his love and mercy are revealed, offering to all men forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life.
- We believe that the Church is God's people, gathered by his love to serve Him in reconciling the world to Himself.

The URC is governed by God acting through its members who are guided by the Holy Spirit in their councils – the Elders' Meeting, the Church Meeting, the provincial Synod and the General Assembly. At Hadleigh URC, the Elders' Meeting is held monthly and the Church Meeting every other month. The church is part of the Eastern Synod, which meets twice a year. It also belongs to the South Essex Area Partnership (SEAP), a group of local URC churches that meets twice a year to share news etc. The General Assembly, the URC's main decision-making body, meets once a year.

<p>HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS</p> <p>Interim Moderators: Rev. Dr. Jim Tarrant MA MTh Rev. Celia Whitman</p> <p>Hon. Secretary: Mr Royston Brackin (01702 558862)</p> <p>Acting Hon. Treasurer: Mr Royston Brackin</p> <p>Elders: (* denotes Serving Elder) Mr Royston Brackin* Mrs Heather Brown* (01702 557678) Mr Malcolm Brown* (01702 557678) Miss Jean Reeve* (01702 554907) Mrs Mary Milne</p> <p>Elder `emeritus': Rev. Peter Brewer</p> <p>Each Serving Elder has a list of Church members and adherents for whom they have a pastoral responsibility. Please speak to your Elder if you have any problems, news etc.</p>	<p>USEFUL INFORMATION</p> <p>Address: 1 Church Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, SS7 2DQ Website: www.hadleighessexurc.org.uk URC website: www.urc.org.uk</p> <hr/> <p>URC Eastern Synod Office contact info:</p> <p>Address: Synod Office, The United Reformed Church, Whittlesford, Cambridge, CB2 4ND Tel no: 01223 830770 E-mail: eastern.admin@urc.org.uk Website: www.urc-eastern.org.uk</p> <hr/> <p>An invitation...</p> <p>If you are not connected with a place of worship, wish to try somewhere different or are just visiting the area then you would be most welcome at any of our services. Alternatively, drop in at the weekly Thursday coffee morning which is open to all. COVID-19 measures should be followed.</p> <p>If you are in need of help that the ministry of the church can supply then you can be assured of our interest and concern. If you are suffering from ill health, loneliness or bereavement and feel that we could help, or if you have a prayer request then please let any church officer know. All requests for help are treated in strict confidence.</p>
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My Christmas List

There is a list of folks I know, all written in a book.
And every year at Christmas time, I go and take a look.
And that is when I realise that these names are all a part,
Not of the book they're written in but of my very heart.

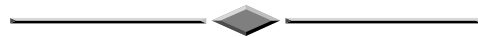
For each name stands for someone who has touched my life sometime,
And in that meeting they've become the "rhythm of the rhyme".

I really feel I am composed of each remembered name
And while you may not be aware of feeling quite the same,
My life is so much better than it was before you came.

For once you've known someone, the years cannot erase
The memory of a pleasant word or a friendly face.
So never think my Christmas cards are just a mere routine
Of names upon a list, forgotten in between.
For when I send a Christmas card that is addressed to you,
It's because you're on the list of folk that I'm indebted to.

And whether I have known you for many years or few,
In some way you've had a part in shaping things I do.
So every year when Christmas comes I realise anew,
The biggest gift that God can give is knowing folk like you.

Author unknown



The Twelve Days of Christmas

The Twelve Days of Christmas is different from other Christmas carols, because it doesn't seem to have a religious theme and it doesn't deal with the Nativity. But although words like, gold, music, dancing and food and drink, seem to be about the bounty of the Christmas season they do carry a religious message. The song was written at a time in England when Catholic worship was illegal (1558 - 1829). During this time, Catholics could be imprisoned or even executed if they were caught practising their faith, so they had to come up with secret ways of worshipping.

The Twelve Days of Christmas was one of many catechisms (writings that teach the basic elements of Catholicism) that were written at this time. These catechisms were unusual because their secular wording masked their true meaning.

The partridge in the pear tree is said to symbolise Jesus Christ, a mother partridge protecting her nestlings (Jesus's followers).

Two turtle doves. The Old and the New Testaments.

Three French hens. The Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity.

Four calling birds. The four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Five gold rings. The first five books of the Old Testament telling the story of man's fall from grace.

Six geese a-laying. The six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Eight maids a-milking. The eight Beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing. The nine fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Ten lords a-leaping. The Ten Commandments.

Eleven pipers piping. The eleven faithful disciples.

Twelve drummers drumming. The twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

The Songs of Mary & Zechariah

The words in the Song of Mary, which were originally spoken, not sung, are magnificent because she's singing about how the Lord has chosen her. She's prophesying about her unborn son who will turn the world upside down, humbly accepting she will give birth to the Son of God: "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." (Luke 1:38).

She hurries to see Elizabeth, who is also miraculously pregnant herself, in order to confirm the reality of it all – of what was going to happen in her womb. Upon greeting her cousin, the baby within Elizabeth's womb jumped for joy. It's not Braxton-Hicks; it's the Holy Spirit! The same Spirit that gave her wonderful words of congratulation to say loudly to Mary: "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honoured, that the mother of my Lord should visit me?" (Luke 1:42-43).

She's excited as she sees that it's Mary who is to be the mother of the Messiah, the Saviour who would fulfil the dreams of the people. She also knows Scripture's prophecies that mention the messenger who would go ahead to prepare the way. Through the Holy Spirit she knows that will be her son. To all this Mary responds in marvellous praise with the first Christmas carol as she glorifies the Lord in the Magnificat so-named in Latin thousands of years ago. It resonates with Hannah, another woman who lived way back in OT times who didn't expect to have a baby but had one. It's ultimately a song proclaiming God's justice.

Again, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Mary worshipped God, in relatively few words, for who He is. This is what she states:

He is the Lord.

He is God my Saviour.

He takes notice of us.

He is the Mighty One whose Name is holy.

He has done great things for us.

He is merciful.

He is faithful.

He keeps His promises.

Her evangelistic words reflect God's unending grace. He pays attention to nobodies like us and changes the direction of our lives. He forgives us countless times when we confess our sin and shows us mercy when we don't deserve it by sending us Jesus. He doesn't forget His people or the promises He has made to us. There is no other Name under heaven by which we can be saved.

There is no one else worthy of worship!! "Oh how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed." (Luke 1:46-48).

Every blessing points straight back to God. She's going to be carrying His Son but it's God who has performed the miracle and caused the conception to take place. In humility she recognises this and shows her need for a saviour. She also refers to herself as a "lowly servant girl" indicating that she must not be elevated in church to something she's not. The conception is immaculate. She's not. She's a sinner like all the rest of us.

The Song of Mary is a song that all believers still sing as it's a song of hope knowing that this crazy world is not all we have; that this world with all of its brokenness and injustice is not all there is. Those on the margins of society, the oppressed, the refugee, the poor, those looked down upon by the powerful and treated badly can sing this Advent song as the day is coming when: "Justice shall flow like a river and righteousness a never ending stream!" (Am.5:24).

The Lord promises us rivers of living water, not a stagnant puddle, but life-giving water flowing unrestricted! We, who are believers in Messiah, have those living waters within us and we sing, like Mary, because Christ is among us and is bringing the fullness of God's hope, peace, love and joy and the kingdom with Him one day: "For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever." (Luke 1:55)

The Christmas song of Zechariah – the Benedictus – is also about the coming of the Messiah. Zechariah, who has only just got his voice back, recalls hundreds of years of God's sovereign work in history, beginning with Abraham, onto His servant David, and eventually to John: "And you my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins." (Luke 1:76-77).

John, Elizabeth and Zechariah never appear on our Christmas cards and yet if we want the real message of Christmas then we shouldn't ignore them for they are a part of God's promise that those living under the shadow of death will see the dawn of salvation (Luke 1:78-79).

Zechariah saw his son's ministry as the one fulfilling Isaiah's vision of being the voice in the wilderness, making a straight path in the desert, preparing a highway for the Lord, as that's how God chooses to work (Isaiah 40). No wonder he sings about it! It's real worship from the heart of a godly man. To sing of a God who remembers promises. To sing of a God who is not content to stand at a distance, but to be physically born into His world so He can guide our feet into the way of peace, forgiveness and eternal life.

It's all there in the words: v.68 the price to free us from sin is paid because the Lord has come; v.69 the power to accomplish our salvation is His. The "horn of salvation", think of a rhino's horn indicates power and sheer brute force; v.71 the victory over our enemies is assured. This has both a physical and spiritual meaning, our worse enemies are sin and death; v.77 the forgiveness of sins. When you pin it down like this, it's what Christmas is all about.

We always hope that people, politicians especially, are faithful to their word. We vote for

their manifesto and end up disappointed when they change their minds, their plans, their policies, or even their political party without hesitation. But God is ALWAYS faithful to His promises. He's kept them in the past and He will keep them in the future.


Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches our hearts. He stands patiently at the door, waiting for us to open and welcome Him in. If we don't we will continue to stumble in darkness as only He is the light of life.

Therefore, let's sing the good news of Mary and Zechariah's songs and make them the Christmas No.1 in our lives this year and into the next. And rejoice, for we can trust the Good Lord with tomorrow because He was faithful yesterday.

Love in the Messiah. Blessed be His Word.

Rev. Tim Mullings

Minster of Tettenhall Wood & St. Columba's URC, Wolverhampton. Posted on 5 Dec 2021.



'Thank you' from Vera

As the end of a second, less than cheerful year approaches and everyone looks forward to returning to 'normality', thankfully one aspect of 'normality' has remained constant throughout 2021, i.e. the publication of the Hadleigh Messenger.

Sincere thanks to Malcolm for compiling the Hadleigh Messenger month by month and, in doing so, keeping us all in touch with each other as a fellowship. The interesting, thought-provoking articles, together with jokes and puzzles are much appreciated and enjoyed.

In addition, Malcolm delivers the magazine locally to the housebound and other subscribers and (within COVID regulations) often makes time for a chat and a 'cuppa'.

So, here's wishing, Malcolm, Heather and all members of their family a happy Christmas and, for Malcolm, a well-earned rest from the editorial trials and tribulations until the February 2022 edition of the Hadleigh Messenger appears high on the horizon.

Vera Knaption

P.S. My thanks and Christmas greetings to all my friends who have kept in touch with me during 2021 to offer practical help and/or who have remembered me in their prayers. I feel truly blessed and very grateful.



"Peace on earth will come to stay, when we live Christmas every day." – *Helen Steiner Rice*

From the Editor

Welcome to the December 2021 & January 2022 edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger*.

I think most people would agree that 2021 has turned out slightly better than 2020. The Coronavirus vaccines have reduced the risk of serious illness and death. However, many people have still been infected and some have reported how poorly they have felt as a result. Some are still suffering symptoms weeks and months after infection, particularly fatigue.

Thankfully, as far as I am aware, there have been no cases of virus transmission at the church so thank you to everyone who has abided by the regulations and guidance that has been in operation since we re-opened.

The Elders adopted a very cautious stance towards re-opening the church premises. We eventually re-opened for worship at Pentecost on 23rd May but the coffee morning didn't restart until October and it is only in the last few weeks that outside groups have been allowed back into the Small Hall and Riffhams.

Not every member of the congregation has been able to return. The congregation at present is

very low with an average of about eight people in attendance. Please pray that 2022 may see some increase in numbers as it is difficult to see the church surviving at the current level.

Arranging preachers when we first re-opened proved difficult for Royston, our Church Secretary. Although things have improved, we are reliant on a small group of people, in particular Heather, who led all but two of our services in May, June and July and has been averaging two services a month since then. Although I may be biased, her services have been excellent and I thank her on behalf of the whole church for all her efforts.

It is good that we can celebrate the birth of Christ this year in our Christmas services but please remember all those in the fellowship who are unable to do so. Please keep in touch with those who live alone and especially those who may be spending Christmas on their own.

Finally, may I wish all readers of the *Hadleigh Messenger* a peaceful Christmas and a hope-filled New Year.

Malcolm Brown



Preachers in December 2021 & January 2022

The service on Boxing Day will take the form of a carol service to reduce Heather's workload.

Date	Preacher
December 5 th	Mrs Heather Brown
December 12 th	Major Geoff Ashdown
December 19 th	Rev. Dr Jim Tarrant (with Holy Communion)
December 26 th	Mrs Heather Brown (Carol Service)
January 2 nd	Mrs Heather Brown
January 9 th	Adrian Tinning
January 16 th	Rev. Dr Jim Tarrant (with Holy Communion)
January 23 rd	Adrian Tinning
January 30 th	Macrina Ejaz

COVID-19 precautions

At our Sunday worship, we are still maintaining a register for Track and Trace purposes with hand sanitisation and social distancing measures. Masks should now be worn at all times following the adoption of additional measures to slow down the spread of the Coronavirus Omicron variant.

Malcolm Brown

Family News

Jamie Gargrave & Tami Melo

Jamie, son of Stephen and Frances Gargrave and grandson of June Gargrave, has become engaged to Tami Melo, whom Jamie has known for around four years. Tami is an architect and interior designer and is originally from Sao Paulo, Brazil. The couple hope to marry fairly shortly.

June writes:

“Tami is a lovely girl and we are delighted at the news. We are becoming a quite scattered family with relatives on Keith’s side from Japan, my daughter-in-law Vera (Richard’s wife) from Ukraine (but with sisters now in Belarus) and now Tami from Brazil. Sadly, Vera has just lost her mother and has made a rather fraught visit to Belarus to attend the funeral. We are praying that she gets back safely as Belarus is a no-go country now.”

We send our congratulations to Jamie and Tami and pray for travelling mercies for Vera.

The hope of Christmas

God, our dayspring and our dawn,
We turn to you when we fear the dark
And all around us weep.
We pray you greet us with your shining light
That we may spread your warm embrace
And kindle the hope of Christmas
In all whose lives remain in shadow.
Come and be our strength, O Lord,
Our hope and our salvation. *Amen.*

Annabel Shilson-Thomas for CAFOD



John Porcher (1936 – 2021)

Sadly, John Porcher, a former member and Elder of Hadleigh URC, passed away in October at the age of 85. John had been ill for some time suffering from Parkinsonism, which affected his eyesight and balance. A few weeks ago, he suffered a fall that resulted in a broken hip. Although he came through the operation to repair the hip, there were complications and he died in hospital on 4th October. This obituary is largely based on a tribute by his daughter, Mo McGuire, read at John's funeral on 1 November. I am grateful to Mo for sending the tribute.



John was born on 1st June 1936, the youngest of two siblings. His sister Pauline was nine years older. He grew up in Hayes, where he attended school, began his working life, and attended church.

John was a quiet and sensitive man. When he was called up for National Service as a teenager, John was a conscientious objector. He was assigned to work in a psychiatric hospital but rarely talked about his experience though it had a profound effect on him.

John met Pat at church and they were married in 1958, aged only 22 and 19 respectively, travelling to their honeymoon on a motorbike and side car. Mo was born one year later, followed by Jackie and then later Darren joined the family.

The children enjoyed a childhood surrounded by cars and tools. The family car rarely went in for a service as John took care of that, and he loved 'tinkering'. He always had a DIY job to do, either for the family or the neighbours. In more recent years, his DIY projects felt a little grander as he moved on from the garage to the summer house (as he liked to call the shed!).

John spent most of his career working for Ford. He often brought new Ford models home for the weekend to test new car functions or designs. Cars and motorbikes were always a passion of his. He took numerous photos of them and his collection of toy 'collector' cars took pride of place in his home.

John's Christian faith was a central part his life. Mo remembers him preaching at Southminster Baptist Church but, wherever he lived – be it Hayes, Nottingham, Steeple, Wickford, Rayleigh, Woodbridge or Penarth – he became a member of the local church and often took an active role in the church community.

Whilst living in Rayleigh, John and Pat became members at Hadleigh URC. John became an Elder in March 1996 and took on the Treasurer role for a couple of years and in September 2001 became Church Secretary for eighteen months. John and Pat also edited the church magazine for a year and Pat was leader of the Wives' Fellowship for several years.

John and Pat always tried to help the people around them – helping the neighbours, joining organisations such as Riding for the Disabled or volunteering at the local Hospice. John was a trustee at Little Havens Hospice and Chairman of the Trading Company for several years until stepping down in 2001.

Music also played a large part in John's life. Throughout his life, John was a member of different choirs and sang solo pieces at concerts. As well as giving him the opportunity to sing, the choirs also provided opportunities for him and Pat to travel, once singing in the Epcot Centre at Disneyland in Florida. John used to sing with Keith Gargrave in the Crowstone St George's Male Voice Choir. Like Keith, John had a stammer but when he sang the breathing helped control his stammer and he felt 'free'.

John and Pat enjoyed holidays and travelling. Family holidays were spent in England and Wales but in later life, particularly in retirement, they travelled further afield to the United States, Uganda, Switzerland and Australia, and they also went on a cruise to the Arctic Circle.

John had a dry, if somewhat corny, sense of humour. When Mo got married John gave her husband Mick a tube of Bonjela for 'any teething problems' they might have. He was never reluctant to share his delight in something by rubbing his hands together and giving a little giggle.

Mo's daughters, Sam and Claire, remember him as 'silly grandad', turning his glasses upside down on his face to make them laugh. Sam and Claire and Darren's daughters, Emily and Beau, were lucky to have such a playful grandfather. John was fortunate to be able to witness three great grandchildren start life's journey but was a little sad that his knees didn't allow him to get down on the floor to play with them!

After Pat and John moved to Woodbridge in 2008, members of the Wives' Fellowship and friends made an annual pilgrimage to visit them. We were treated to a delicious sit-down meal before relaxing in the spacious garden or, occasionally, venturing into the centre of Woodbridge. On our final visit in 2014, Pat was relieved of catering duties and we enjoyed lunch together in a Woodbridge café. Those happy visits will be a lasting memory of a kind and caring couple to those who went.

John and Pat did almost everything together. Pat was John's guiding force and his motivator but, sadly, she died just a short time after they had moved to Penarth in Wales in 2017. As Mo wrote, it is fair to say that since Pat's death, John had been lost without her. Fortunately, he received good support from family and from friends at Stanwell Road Baptist Church. With continuing ill health, John's last few weeks were spent in Morel Court care home in Penarth, where he made friends very quickly.

We send our sincere condolences to Mo and the rest of John's family. John will be sorely missed but he will be remembered for being a loving and caring husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather. We thank God for John's steadfast Christian faith which led him to do so much for others. May those who mourn take comfort from the knowledge that John is now at eternal peace with his beloved Pat.

Malcolm Brown

Photographic memories of John and Pat Porcher



John at a choir performance with Keith Gargrave and choir conductress



John with Rev. Gordon Bates at Gordon's retirement tea in 2002



With Pat Wallace, Vera Knapton and Elsie Forster at the 2003 Anniversary tea



Woodbridge 2010 – John with Pat Wallace, Mary Milne, Vera Knapton & Mary Hawthorne



Golden wedding celebration with the Wives' Fellowship in 2008



Lunch in the Georgian House café, Woodbridge, in 2014 – the final visit

Mensa Word Puzzles (answers in next magazine)

- Which of the following words is the odd one out?
RETIRE ICONIC EDITED TRUSTY CHURCH
- Rearrange the letters of 'NORTHERN SEA ROCK' to give three wading birds.
- Rearrange the following letters to give three seven-letter words: A C E R S S T
- The alphabet is written here but some letters are missing. Arrange the missing letters to give a word.
B C D E H J K M P Q R S U V W X Y Z
- When each of the following words is rearranged, one of them can be used to suffix all the others to give three longer words: US LENS RAVE LAP

Summary of Eastern Synod Meeting held on 9th October 2021

The latest Eastern Synod meeting took place at Plume Avenue URC, Colchester, on 9th October. This was the first in-person meeting since the Coronavirus pandemic began. Proceedings were also broadcast on YouTube. Total attendance was 51 including 9 speakers and visitors. This summary is based on the minutes of the meeting available at <http://www.urch-eastern.org.uk/synod-meetings>.

Opening – The meeting was chaired by Rev. Lythan Nevard, the new Moderator of Eastern Synod. The opening worship was led by Liz Bird. Rev. David Sebley, the Interim Moderator at Plume Avenue (and former minister at Bramerton Road Community Church, Hockley) thanked Liz for all the work she has put in at Plume Avenue over the years and in vacancy. He led the meeting in prayer and welcomed everyone to Synod.

Ministerial movements – Lythan welcomed all the new ministers and asked those attending their first Eastern Synod meeting to stand up and be welcomed.

Minutes of last meeting – The minutes of the Synod Meeting held on 20th March 2021 on Zoom were agreed subject to one amendment.

Moderator's Address – Lythan's address focused on three main areas:

1. Discipleship - Lythan encouraged folk to seek out Lindsey (training@urch.org.uk) to talk about resources such as Stepwise.
2. Mission. Lythan touched on the mission work that is carried out outside our buildings and mentioned the mission grants that are available to work dreams into reality. Folk were encouraged to contact Lindsey, Nicola or Lythan.
3. Deployment and leadership. The number of ministers that we can have is now restricted and we have to reduce that further, in fact, to give equity across the Synods. How ministerial deployment is worked out will be a huge challenge. Thought needs to focus on what can be done without stipendiary ministry.

The full text of Lythan's address can be found at <http://www.urch-eastern.org.uk/synod-meetings>.

Being an Anti-Racist Church – A video was shown introducing Karen Campbell, Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries (Mission) on the Legacies of Slavery. It can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/KrZaswCeXoU>. Lythan gave Synod ten minutes to talk over three questions posed by Karen.

Being an Eco Church – Jeremy Flack, Green Advocate, showed a video about how to become an Eco church (available at <http://www.urch-eastern.org.uk/synod-meetings>) and encouraged churches to contact him on jeremyflack25@gmail.com. Graham Gibbs from Emmanuel Church, Bungay, spoke about their recent award of Eco Church Gold Status.

Celebrating the URC's 50th Anniversary – A video with John Bradbury reflecting on the URC's 50th anniversary on 2022 was shown. It is available at <https://youtu.be/MyR9oCfOwHQ>. Another video details how the 50th anniversary will be marked – <https://youtu.be/3crc-4C0i8k>.

Lythan said that churches have time to think about what they can do to celebrate. Three of the four forthcoming books on this subject are by members of Eastern Synod, Anne Sardeson, David Cornick and Robert Pope.

Safeguarding – The first item after lunch was a presentation on Safeguarding by Nicola Grieves. The presentation is available at <http://www.urch-eastern.org.uk/synod-meetings>. Nicola emphasised that training should be every three years and confirmed that training could be by Zoom or in person.

Feedback from General Assembly – Lindsey Brown and Rev. Dr. Catherine Ball gave feedback on General Assembly that was held online in July. From next year there will be one Moderator of General Assembly, serving for one year. For 2022-2023, this will be Fiona Bennett.

Synod Appointments – A paper was presented by Keir Hounsome, Synod Clerk. The Moderator and new ministers were formally welcomed in a resolution.

Reports – The following reports were then presented: Executive Committee (Kier Hounsome), Mission Committee (Ruth Dixon), Pastoral Committee (Rev. Paul Ellis) and Resources Committee (Gil Heathcote).

Closing – Closing worship was led by the Moderator. The Moderator notified Synod that the next meeting would be held at Lion Walk, Colchester, on 19th March 2022. She formally declared Synod closed at 4.01pm and wished everyone a safe journey home.

Malcolm Brown

URC News

New minister for digital worship appointed

Rev. Andy Braunston, Minister of Barrhead, Priesthill, Shawlands and Stewarton URC in Scotland, has been appointed as the URC's new Minister for Digital Worship.



The need for the role was introduced at General

Assembly in July by Rev. Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC, to make the Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday service an integral part of the life and witness of the denomination.

The Devotions began as a personal initiative of Mr Braunston and now reach about 4,000 people daily. More than 1,500 people access the Daily Devotions Sunday Service each week, a further initiative that started as a result of people being unable to attend church during the pandemic.

As part of his role, Mr Braunston will develop a range of digital worship ministries for the URC and continue and extend the Daily Devotions and Daily Devotions Sunday Service formats.

He'll also explore how new forms of discipleship development, for individuals and congregations, might be fostered to supplement the Daily Devotions initiative, and support the work of the Worship Reference Group to ensure that URC makes available a wide range of quality worship resources for the work of the whole Church.

Andy's role is full-time and sits in the URC's Discipleship team. It will be home-based with support from the URC's Communications Team.

URC appoints new Designated Safeguarding Lead

Sharon Barr, Safeguarding Officer for the United Reformed Church (URC) Wessex Synod, has been appointed the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the denomination. Sharon has been offering limited cover as Interim Safeguarding



Lead since February, following a series of changes in the department.

Sharon has extensive experience working with children, young people, and adults within the voluntary, charity, and local authority sectors ranging from direct delivery to strategic management.

The post comes under the remit of the Revd Adrian Bulley, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), who said: "Over the past nine months, Sharon has been covering certain elements of the Designated Safeguarding Lead role in a limited capacity. She has proved worth her weight in gold and has worked hard to build effective relationships with colleagues in Church House and elsewhere. She will be a great asset within the discipleship team, and I look forward to working with her in this new way."

Speaking about her appointment and vision for the department, Sharon added: "I feel privileged to be able to take on the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead for the URC, working alongside the Discipleship Team and the amazing team of Synod Safeguarding Officers. Safeguarding those that access the URC's breadth of churches, events and activities is the whole denomination's responsibility and my aim will be to support understanding and implementation of this."

URC 50th anniversary service tickets available

Free tickets are now available for the United Reformed Church (URC's) 50th Anniversary Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving taking place on 1 October 2022, at Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London, where the Uniting Assembly of the United Reformed Church took place in 1972.

The day starts at United Reformed Church House at 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT with an Open Church House event, packed full of jubilee related talks and activities, as well as to meet the team that work at the office. There will be a Walk to Westminster with a guided tour before gathering for the service that starts at 2.30pm.

The intergenerational thanksgiving service is free and open to all in the URC. To ensure adequate provision is made, tickets for under 5s, 5-11s, 11-18s, and wheelchair users are available.

Book your tickets through the Eventbrite booking system via: www.bit.ly/urc50.

A Message to a Troubled Nation

This is an edited version of an article posted on the reasonsforhopejesus.com website.

As we pass through the gate of the year, no one can know what the New Year will bring. But God knows!

There's a great lesson to be learned from a generation past. It comes from a message to the people of one of the most powerful nations on earth as they endured a time of uncertainty and fear. More than seven decades have passed, but the truths of this message remain. As we stand at the gate of the New Year, let us remember these unshakable truths.

In December 1939, Great Britain was at war. The Third Reich of Nazi Germany had ruled in Germany since Hitler took over in 1933. Germany had become a fascist totalitarian state and the Hitler regime had spread terror across Europe.

In September 1939, Great Britain had entered the Second World War. And in three months, the nation was gripped in the clutches of fear. With every air-raid siren that pierced the ears of the English people, anxiety increased and fear overwhelmed them. Uncertainty for the New Year reigned in the hearts and minds of Great Britain's citizens.

In December 1939, King George VI was England's reigning monarch. As was the custom, the king addressed the nation on a BBC radio broadcast on Christmas Day, and, in the uncertain last days of 1939, the king spoke words of peace to calm his nation. He reminded them of the only true King, the One who can provide true peace and real rest in such troubled times. As King George concluded his message of encouragement, he read the preamble of a poem that had been brought to his attention by his young daughter, Princess Elizabeth.

Princess Elizabeth was only thirteen years old in 1939. The poem that she brought to her father's



attention was written by British poet Minnie Louise Haskins (1875-1957). Published in 1908 and titled *God Knows*, the poem was part of a collection of poems in a book titled *The Desert*. Years later, this poem

gained popularity with a new title, *The Gate of the Year*, taken from the poem's first line.

King George read the poem's preamble to reassure the people of England that their future was secure...in the hands of God.

The poem's wisdom was true for the English people on that Christmas Day in 1939 and it is true for us today.

As the New Year dawns, let us remember that God is our only safe harbour. He is our only true hope. He will lead and direct our lives when we put our trust in Him. He will light our path and direct our steps as we enter into the New Year.

God Knows / The Gate of the Year

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

Upon the death of King George (1952), Princess Elizabeth became the Queen of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Remembering the poem, her father had read so many years before, she had the words engraved upon brass plaques and attached to the gates of the King George VI Memorial Chapel at Windsor Castle. Interred at this chapel are the bodies of King George VI, his wife Queen Elizabeth (The Queen Mother), and the ashes of their second daughter Princess Margaret.

When The Queen Mother died in 2002, the reigning Queen Elizabeth had *The Gate of the Year* read at her funeral. The words are also inscribed in a window at the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy.

The words of this poem were a message of assurance to a nation at war. They were words of comfort in the loss of loved ones, and words of hope for war to end. They were words of truth that our God is in control and we need not fear.

Take a minute and hear King George's Christmas message and read the entire poem.

God Knows / The Gate of the Year

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”
And he replied:
“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”
So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.
So heart be still:
What need our little life
Our human life to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife
Of things both high and low,
God hideth His intention.
God knows. His will is best.
The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim
To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God. Our fears
Are premature; In Him,
All time hath full provision.
Then rest: until
God moves to lift the veil
From our impatient eyes,
When, as the sweeter features
Of Life’s stern face we hail,
Fair beyond all surmise
God’s thought around His creatures
Our mind shall fill.

Minnie Louise Haskins

How do you “put your hand into the Hand of God” and let Him lead you this year? It’s not by doing better, it’s by believing better. It’s by trusting that “God knows. His will is best.”

Commit this year to knowing Jesus better through reading and studying His Word. When you know Him better, you will love Him more and you will find peace in Him.

Commit this year to entering into deeper communion with Jesus through prayer. When you commune with Him more, you will find rest in Him.

Commit this year to remembering all that Jesus has done for you and all that He has given you.

When you remember Jesus, your mind will be transformed and God will faithfully conform you more and more to the image of His Son.

As you enter the gate of the year let this be your prayer:

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

Psalm 118:19-21

Happy New Year.

Shari Abbot

Commitment-Phobe - Receiving generosity

From the December 2021/January 2022 edition of Reform magazine

Moving on from atheism, Commitment-Phobe toured churches and tried God. Now, as a Christian, her journey continues...

I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt as people turned up to honour their child with praise and with luxurious and expensive gifts. Were they overwhelmed by how vital their child was to others? Did they graciously accept the gifts? Were they puzzled about what to do with them? No doubt their cash value came in handy when they needed to flee to Egypt to start a new life there until it was safe to return. How do you feel about receiving generosity? Do you feel you need to return it right away?

This Christmas will be our first as a family living with a newly diagnosed chronic illness. In September, our lives turned on a sixpence and since then we have gone from being parents to being carers as well. The job of carer brings with it the need to quickly acquire a whole lot of medical knowledge and a whole lot of psychological pressure. Unsurprisingly, we have felt the strain and we have asked for help from friends, family and our church.

Going from serving at church to needing to be served is a new challenge. 'We want to live in a place of generosity, both freely given and accepted' I knew I found it hard to ask for help; I had no idea how hard I found it to accept help. Every time someone offers me help - mainly in the form of time - I am overwhelmed by it. The tears kick in and I am at a loss for what to do with all the feelings. What is this constant tearing up when someone is kind, as if kindness is the worst possible thing that could happen?

In this season, my husband and I have many times found ourselves at a loss as to why our lives have changed and how we can find the capacity to endure. We are on a weekly, and sometimes daily, process of being humbled and seeking God's help to endure our marathon. And every time we do he sets someone on our path. Sometimes it's the text from the person you don't know that well, who

follows up on the invite to take you for a walk. Sometimes it's the person who invites you over as family and wants the kids to play. Sometimes it's the nice man from church, who you rarely speak to, who asks how you are coping and patiently and empathetically listens as you start to cry and spill it all out for the next twenty minutes.

Although we are not quite ready to start seeing the gift in our change of circumstances, we can already see that in our weakness we are able to connect to others and are learning to make those connections without holding back. We can't do all this on our own and we can't afford to be proud of our independence and ingenuity in difficult circumstances. We rely on our medical team and on the kindness of others to help us through this. And, in this storm, we are learning so much about what true family and community is.

My husband and I found a moment to sit down and try to identify what our priority should be for this season. As we talked, we started to focus on support. We want to be a support to our child and we need the support of others. We want to live in a place of generosity, generosity both freely given and freely accepted. We want to lean on God for our strength and capacity and we want to trust in the surprising forms in which these things come.

We talked about the generosity of others and how we could repay it, but came to the realisation that this is a season to receive it and relish it. Receiving a gift should not always be about how we find a way to return the gesture. It is about being able to accept that this generosity is freely given.

One day, we will also have the opportunity to pass on some unexpected generosity to another with no strings attached, and simply enjoy the chance to be blessed through blessing another. But for now we are learning to accept our weakness and the chance to experience the love and kindness of others.

Commitment-Phobe

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight

Proverbs 3:5-6

Computer Corner

Christmas Carols - The Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge

Interesting video

There are some excellent Christmas concerts on YouTube but this performance by the Choir of St John's College recorded in 2018 in Amsterdam, takes some beating. It's not a particularly large choir but there is a nice blend of voices. Unfortunately, there is some annoying coughing at times but this is almost inevitable with a live performance.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwlAig-5e0w>

Printable Desk and A4 Calendars

Useful free Download

Cartridge People, a company that specialises in printing inks and toners, has once again made available a variety of printable desk and A4 calendars, which are downloadable in the form of pdf files. Some readers may recall that I gave away examples of these calendars last year with the December 2020 magazine.

Download from:

<https://www.cartridgepeople.com/info/blog/printable-desk-and-a4-calendars>

Castle Point Local Plan Main Modifications Consultation 2021

Interesting website

As a result of earlier examination of Castle Point Local Plan by planning inspector Mr Philip Lewis, some modifications are required to make the plan sound and/or legally compliant. The inspector has invited the council to consult on these modifications. If you're interested in the future of the Borough, the Schedule of Main Modifications is probably worth a read even if you don't submit any comments.

URL: <http://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/main-modifications-consultation>

Word Search – Synonyms for 'party'

No prizes for guessing the inspiration for this word search!

J	W	Y	J	Q	I	S	Q	B	U	L	Z	E	P	Y	Q	W	B	W	M
J	C	R	H	T	U	J	A	F	A	Q	F	F	N	T	T	J	M	D	U
V	M	E	E	U	M	N	G	C	N	B	I	O	T	G	O	D	A	N	W
O	B	J	M	C	Q	Q	B	A	S	H	I	S	Z	S	M	A	G	A	U
A	J	N	E	U	E	R	D	T	T	T	J	G	A	S	M	F	G	N	A
V	J	D	E	E	Y	P	X	I	A	B	H	Q	V	U	O	T	A	E	S
M	F	T	K	E	V	R	T	R	N	F	I	E	S	T	A	W	T	B	O
I	I	T	V	O	A	G	B	I	L	N	J	S	J	L	E	Q	H	F	I
D	K	P	B	N	A	E	N	A	O	Y	E	R	N	W	X	V	E	I	R
E	T	L	X	L	L	B	C	F	P	N	G	R	X	N	L	J	R	S	E
O	L	I	A	E	N	S	E	P	F	D	R	B	B	A	W	Q	I	H	E
F	D	M	C	Z	L	M	L	R	G	L	O	A	I	U	E	N	N	N	I
X	E	M	E	F	E	A	S	T	V	M	U	C	E	N	B	V	G	M	Y
O	G	S	X	X	U	F	D	S	W	B	O	N	T	C	G	M	A	N	B
Y	B	Y	T	G	A	N	J	H	Y	S	E	Z	C	N	N	E	G	R	F
X	V	G	Q	I	G	W	C	H	R	I	R	Y	S	H	I	N	D	I	G
L	X	C	D	B	V	F	E	T	E	K	J	Q	Z	O	E	W	P	V	N
Q	E	I	K	U	A	I	E	W	I	Q	U	U	D	K	X	O	D	M	T
Q	X	A	V	H	Q	L	T	D	M	O	S	U	A	D	E	R	N	V	A
R	P	O	P	T	I	N	L	Y	N	L	N	E	X	U	N	H	B	C	X

- BALL
- BANQUET
- BASH
- BINGE
- CELEBRATION
- DINNER
- DO
- FEAST
- FESTIVITY
- FETE
- FIESTA
- FUNCTION
- GALA
- GATHERING
- LUNCHEON
- RAVE
- RECEPTION
- SHINDIG
- SOCIAL
- SOIREE

Words may appear in any direction including diagonally, back to front and upside down.

WHAT'S ON

A round-up of future events in the area

Sat 11 Dec 2021	- Coffee Morning at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 10.00am to 12 noon with drinks, cakes and bric-a-brac stall.
ditto	- Beat & Beans Café at St James the Less Church from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Live music with coffee, tea and snacks. Enjoy music in historic surroundings. Free admission.
ditto	- Coffee Morning & Book Sale at St Peter's Church Thundersley from 10.30am to 12.30pm.
ditto	- Musical Matinee at Hadleigh Methodist Church, Chapel Lane, from 1.30pm to 4.00pm. With music from the Sixties, Ballads, Latin, Country and Rock & Roll. Tickets £7.00 from Mike Tanner on 01702 551786.
ditto	- Allegro present 'An Evening of Christmas Music' at St Mary's Church, South Benfleet. Starts 7.30pm. Tickets £10.00 from 01268 751303.
Thu 16 Dec 2021	- Poetry Reading Group at Hadleigh Library from 2.00pm to 3.30pm.
Sun 19 Dec 2021	- Carol Service at St James the Less Church at 11.00am.
ditto	- Carol Service at SA Hadleigh Temple at 10.00am.
ditto	- Nine Lessons & Carols at St George's Church, Thundersley at 6.30pm.
Thu 23 Dec 2021	- Carols & Communion at Hadleigh Methodist Church at 2.00pm.
Fri 24 Dec 2021	- Christmas Eve Crib Service at St James the Less Church at 3.30pm.
ditto	- Christmas Eve Crib Service at St Barnabas Church at 4.30pm.
ditto	- Christmas Eve Midnight Service at St James the Less Church at 11.30pm.
ditto	- Christmas Eve Midnight Service at SA Hadleigh Temple at 11.30pm.
Sat 25 Dec 2021	- Christmas Morning Service at St Barnabas Church at 9.30am.
ditto	- Christmas Day Holy Communion at St Michael's Church at 9.30am.
ditto	- Communion for Christmas at St Peter's Church at 10.30am.
Sun 26 Dec 2021	- Carol Service at Hadleigh United Reformed Church at 10.30am.

2022

Wed 5 Jan 2022	- Coffee Morning at St Michael's Church, Daws Heath, from 10.00am to 11.45am.
Sat 8 Jan 2022	- Coffee Morning at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 10.00am to 12 noon with drinks, cakes and bric-a-brac stall.
ditto	- Beat & Beans Café at St James the Less Church from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Live music with coffee, tea and snacks. Free admission.
ditto	- Coffee Morning & Book Sale at St Peter's Church Thundersley from 10.30am to 12.30pm.
Sat 22 Jan 2022	- Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive presents 'A Thundersley Heritage' by Bob Delderfield & David Hurrell at St Michael's Church Hall at 2.00pm (doors open 1.30pm). Admission £4.00. Refreshments available.
Sat 29 Jan 2021	- Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive Drop-In at Hadleigh Library. Bring along old photos and documents for scanning, chat about your memories of the area. Books for sale. From 10.30am to 12 noon.

More events listed on the HELIX website at <http://www.hadleighsex.info>