

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

December 2022 & January 2023



When they had seen him, they spread the word
concerning what had been told them about this child,
and all who heard it were amazed...

Luke 2:17-18 (NIV)

*May the light of Jesus Christ
shine upon you this Christmas
and throughout the New Year*

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>Minister: Rev. Andrew Birch (01702 338674)</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 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.</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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PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR DECEMBER

Sun 4 th Dec	10.30am	Morning Service	Mrs Heather Brown
Sun 11 th Dec	10.30am	Morning service	Mrs Heather Brown
Sun 18 th Dec	10.30am	Morning Service with Holy Communion	Rev. Andrew Birch
Sun 25 th Dec	10.30am	Morning Service	NO SERVICE

PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR JANUARY

Sun 1 st Jan	10.30am	Morning Service	NO SERVICE
Sun 8 th Jan	10.30am	Morning service	TBA
Sun 15 th Jan	10.30am	Morning Service with Holy Communion	Rev. Andrew Birch
Sun 22 nd Jan	10.30am	Morning Service	TBA
Sun 29 th Jan	10.30am	Morning Service	TBA

ELDERS' MEETING

Thu 12th Jan 12.45pm

CHURCH MEETING

Thu 26th Jan 12.45pm

Prayer Reflection

The Gift

'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'

Recognise the sacrifice made by the Father in sending his Son to die for our sake. Imagine how you would feel if it was your child. Wonder at the love God has for each of us and give thanks.

The Mission

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

Jesus came to tell the poor they mattered to God and to show them how much. He comes today to remind you that you matter to God and how much. Live in the knowledge of that Love.

Jesus came to set the prisoner free – free from the burdens which kept them enslaved. He comes today to set us free – free from the sin and greed which assails us. Live free from the bondage of possessions and concerns about status.

Jesus came to restore sight to those blinded by misunderstanding about what God wanted. He comes today to restore perspective, insight and wisdom as he redirects our lives towards our loving Father. Pray and praise God for the gift of his Son.

Beryl Hunt

Music on Christmas Morning by Anne Brontë

Music I love - but never strain
Could kindle raptures so divine,
So grief assuage, so conquer pain,
And rouse this pensive heart of mine -
As that we hear on Christmas morn,
Upon the wintry breezes borne.

Though Darkness still her empire keep,
And hours must pass, ere morning break;
From troubled dreams, or slumbers deep,
That music kindly bids us wake:
It calls us, with an angel's voice,
To wake, and worship, and rejoice;

To greet with joy the glorious morn,
Which angels welcomed long ago,
When our redeeming Lord was born,
To bring the light of Heaven below;
The Powers of Darkness to dispel,
And rescue Earth from Death and Hell.

While listening to that sacred strain,
My raptured spirit soars on high;
I seem to hear those songs again
Resounding through the open sky,
That kindled such divine delight,
In those who watched their flocks by night.

With them I celebrate His birth -
Glory to God, in highest Heaven,
Good-will to men, and peace on earth,
To us a Saviour-king is given;
Our God is come to claim His own,
And Satan's power is overthrown!

A sinless God, for sinful men,
Descends to suffer and to bleed;
Hell must renounce its empire then;
The price is paid, the world is freed,
And Satan's self must now confess
That Christ has earned a Right to bless:

Now holy Peace may smile from heaven,
And heavenly Truth from earth shall spring:
The captive's galling bonds are riven,
For our Redeemer is our king;
And He that gave his blood for men
Will lead us home to God again.

Anne Brontë was born on 17th January 1820 near Bradford in Yorkshire, the youngest of the six children. Her mother died in 1821. Her father was a curate and they lived at Haworth Parsonage. In May 1846, a book of poems by sisters Charlotte, Emily and Anne was published under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Anne's first novel, *Agnes Grey*, was published in December 1847, followed in June 1848 by *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. In January 1849, Anne was diagnosed with tuberculosis. She left for Scarborough on 24th May 1849 in a hope that the sea air might alleviate her symptoms but she died there on 28th May 1849 aged just 29. She is buried in St Mary's churchyard on Castle Hill overlooking the bay.

From the Minister

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas

Even though we know it is going to happen, we are often still surprised when Christmas comes upon us, even though some shops have been displaying Christmas items since October.

For many of us Christmas really gets underway once we begin to observe the season of Advent, a time of preparation and getting ready for the birth of the baby who is Christ the Lord, the one who has been promised by the prophets of old.

We sing 'O come, O come Immanuel,' who is God with us. I am also reminded of the last verse of 'O little town of Bethlehem':

O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray; cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell: O come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Immanuel.

May I wish you God's blessing as we come ever closer to this very special time of the year.

Hilary and I have been made to feel so very welcome, here at Hadleigh URC, as I begin my

time with you as your minister. Some of you will already know that I am originally from Chelmsford and for much of my growing up years I was involved with Christ Church URC, Chelmsford.

For the first 18 years of my working life, I worked in the printing trade, before moving to London to become the Warden/Caretaker of The City Temple URC. During that time, I candidated for ministry and then went on to train at Queen's College in Birmingham.

I was Ordained and Inducted into the Outer Hastings and St. Leonards pastorate in 2006. Hilary and I were married in 2010 and we moved to Westcliff-on-Sea when I became the minister of Kings Road URC in 2020. I am pleased to be able to share my time between Kings Road and Hadleigh and I look forward to all that we are able to do together in the service of God.

Blessings,

Andrew

Induction of Rev. Andrew Birch

Our new minister, Rev. Andrew Birch, was inducted on Saturday 12th November. The Moderator of Eastern Synod, Rev. Lythan Nevard, presided and Rev. Paul Ellis of Hutton & Shenfield Union Church preached the sermon. Unfortunately, our Church Secretary, Royston Brackin, was unwell and did not attend but Rev. Jim Tarrant and I stood in at the appropriate points in the service.

Members of the congregation were joined by a few friends plus several members from Kings Road URC. Interestingly, Lythan pointed out that the induction constituted a meeting of Synod. Audio and video recordings of the service are available.



Paul Ellis, Jim Tarrant, Andrew, Hilary & Lythan Nevard



Andrew & Hilary with Lythan

We welcome Andrew and Hilary and ask for God's blessing on Andrew's ministry at Hadleigh. We also thank Rev. Jim Tarrant for his service as Interim Moderator.

Malcolm Brown

From the Editor

Welcome to the December 2022 and January 2023 edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger*.

November saw the induction of our new minister, Rev. Andrew Birch. Andrew has chaired his first Elders' and Church Meetings and has contributed his first pastoral letter to this magazine. There is a short report and some photos from the induction in the magazine. An audio recording of the induction service is available and a video recording exists but has not yet been edited.

Andrew has only a 20% scoping at Hadleigh so he will usually preach just once a month at the Communion service on the third Sunday. He will chair meetings and attend the coffee morning when he is able to meet and support the fellowship in any way he can. Hopefully, it will be possible to restart a monthly bible study on a Thursday.

Andrew's wife, Hilary, takes a keen interest in Andrew's work – not least his diary commitments! – and she would make an excellent magazine proof reader having pointed out a couple of mistakes in one of the recent editions! It will be good to get to know Andrew and Hilary better over the coming months.

Whilst the appointment of Andrew is a blessing, it is no secret that life at the church has become quite a struggle with a very small, elderly congregation, containing very few men, and increasing difficulty in organising preachers.

I learned recently that Adrian Tinning, one of our regular lay preachers, has had a spell in hospital. Adrian has been a tremendous support to our church particularly since we re-opened in May 2021, preaching at least once a month and sometimes twice. We remember Adrian in our prayers and hope to see him again soon.

I should also mention Major Geoff Ashdown, who has preached several times since we re-opened and was due to preach at our Harvest Festival service but was unable to do so. Geoff has been very poorly, with at least one spell in hospital, and he is awaiting another operation. We uphold Geoff in our prayers and hope that the operation takes place soon.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish everyone who reads the *Hadleigh Messenger* a blessed Christmas and a healthy New Year, especially those who I don't meet on my travels.

Malcolm Brown



Christmas quotes

- Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. – *Calvin Coolidge*
- For it is in giving that we receive.” – *Francis of Assisi*
- Santa Claus has the right idea. Visit people only once a year.” – *Victor Borg*
- “One can never have enough socks,” said Dumbledore. “Another Christmas has come and gone and I didn't get a single pair. People will insist on giving me books.” – *J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*
- He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree. – *Roy L. Smith*
- Heap on the wood! - the wind is chill; But let it whistle as it will, We'll keep our Christmas merry still. – *Sir Walter Scott*
- It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving. – *Mother Theresa*
- My mother-in-law has come round to our house at Christmas seven years running. This year we're having a change. We're going to let her in. – *Les Dawson*
- “...If I could work my will,” said Scrooge indignantly, “Every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!” “Uncle!” Pleaded his nephew.” – *Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol*
- I once bought my kids a set of batteries for Christmas with a note on it saying, ‘Toys not included’. – *Bernard Manning*
- How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, His precepts! – *Benjamin Franklin*
- Peace on earth will come to stay, when we live Christmas every day. – *Helen Steiner Rice*

Family News

Please remember those associated with our fellowship in need of prayer...

URC News

50th anniversary congratulations from the Methodist Church

Rev. Michaela Youngson, Assistant Secretary of the Methodist Conference, has written to Rev. Fiona Bennett, Moderator of the United Reformed Church (URC) General Assembly, to congratulate the URC on its 50th anniversary.

“I write on behalf of the Methodist Council, meeting in October 2022, to offer a word of congratulations on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the United Reformed Church. We recognise the historical significance of that occasion within the wider ecumenical map of Great Britain and also the place the URC has within the wider and continuing history of the Protestant Reformation.

As we continue to work in partnership in many Local Ecumenical Partnerships and in other less formal arrangements in local mission and ministry, our mutual commitment to sharing the good news of God’s love through Jesus Christ, remains at the heart of all we do. The URC’s ‘Commitment to Life’ demonstrates to the world your passion for justice and the well-being of the most vulnerable people in the world and we honour you for that. We celebrate our partnership through the work of the Joint Public Issues Team.

May God continue to bless your Church in this time of celebration and in your future mission and ministry.”

URC becomes official partner of Warm Spaces

The URC has become an official partner of the national Warm Welcome scheme. The mission of the scheme is to support community organisations, churches, libraries, businesses and other faith groups to open their doors and provide a warm welcome for those struggling to heat their homes this winter.

The URC is partnering with Warm Welcome to provide a ‘heat map’ of when and where people in the UK can access a warm space, to help save them money on their heating bills in these very costly times. The map can be viewed online at <https://www.warmwelcome.uk>. Other maps and lists can be available from your local authority.

Warm hub facilities are many and varied, responding to the needs of the local community. Refreshments and hot food are sometimes

provided (perhaps for free with a donation box available). Many offer a space for interaction, eg a knitting or craft group, a film club or a board game café. Funding is available for such groups from local authorities. Grants are available to cover ingredients, heat and lighting, equipment and training.

Not all URC buildings are easy to heat – perhaps there is another building in your area that would be more appropriate. Ideally, opening a warm hub on a day that the building was already being heated for another activity is kinder to the environment and the bank balance. Many congregations are already operating a ‘place of welcome’, so hosting a warm hub could be a great focus or extension.

With November 2022 having been unseasonably warm, the demand for these spaces has been lower than predicted, but churches have been finding that their warm hubs aren’t just about heating people up but offering a place of connection and community, which can happen whatever the weather!

While individuals and families can often feel a stigma about receiving charity from food banks, warm hubs can be an altogether different experience. It’s not only people experiencing poverty who can benefit from warm spaces, but everyone who’s usually at home during the day can come and share, reducing isolation and using our precious resources better.

What else could your congregation offer the community? Free Wi-Fi? A ‘public living room’ experience? A cup-a-soup and a genuine interest in their lives? Or a place to recharge their USB-powered heated shawls? (Yes, these are a thing now!)

Church refurb leads to reduction in carbon energy

Congratulations to Downing Place URC which recently revealed that the refurbishment of its church, by Archangel Architects in 2021, has led to a significant reduction in carbon emissions.

Prior to the works, the church produced 0.083 tons of carbon dioxide (tCO₂) per metre squared (m²). Afterwards, this dropped down to 0.017 tCO₂/m², an 80% reduction.

Rev. Nigel Uden said: “Alongside future-proofing and access, sustainability was one of the main

drivers when we were redeveloping the premises. The congregation is pleased that the renewal of the building has enabled us modestly to contribute towards the renewal of the planet and it is grateful to the combined expertise of the architects, Coulsons, the contractors, and a dedicated Sustainability Group within the church.”

So far, the church’s efforts has netted a bronze Rocha UK Eco Church award and it now aspires to silver.

Church leaders lament lack of urgency at COP27

Church leaders from the United Reformed Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain, and the Methodist Church in Great Britain have joined together to provide the following statement on the conclusion of the COP27 Climate Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, held from 6-20 November:

“While we are extremely conscious of the cost-of-living crisis and the economic bearing it is having here in the UK, we cannot ignore the tremendous impact of climate change in other parts of the world and overlook our responsibility towards it.

We continue to look to leaders in the UK and across the world to address the climate emergency with a sense of urgency, fairness and justice.

We are grateful for the vital commitment in Sharm el-Sheikh to establish a “loss and damage” facility. All are impacted by climate change. We have recently seen unprecedented floods in Pakistan and Bangladesh and continued drought in East Africa.

Industrialised countries such as Germany and high-emitting states such as China have seen rivers drying up. But it is low income countries that are frequently the worst affected by climate related disasters. They simply do not have adequate resources to rebuild shattered infrastructure and livelihoods.

COP27 has seen recognition of the need for compensation for loss and damage rise much higher on the global agenda. We commend states and regions, including Scotland, that have committed early funding to support those who have seen their livelihoods or homes destroyed.

As the recent UN Environment Programme report has pointed out, limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees requires global emissions to be cut by 45% by 2030. Policies implemented so far suggest that we could be heading for a catastrophic 2.7 degrees of warming.

God’s creation is precious and is vital for the flourishing of all life. We lament the lack of urgency and will to co-operate to address this crisis. COP27 shows that governments have yet to loosen the chains of past practice and vested interests.

World leaders cannot leave this conference believing that they have done enough and must appreciate that there is still much more to do. We pray for a renewed collaboration between people and governments, and that a deeper recognition of our shared humanity might soon lead to the compassionate and just climate action that our world so urgently needs.”

Church organ finds new home

Passengers at London Bridge were treated to an impromptu concert, as a Victorian church organ found a new lease of life amongst the arches. The 250 pipe organ created by Henry Jones, a prolific London organ builder, which originally lived at Whetstone United Reformed Church, was rehomed at the station by charity Pipe Up for Pipe Organs.

An official event welcoming the organ to the station took place in October, with Sir Peter Hendy, Network Rail’s Chair, members of the station team and the charity’s founders all in attendance.



The station was delighted to welcome professional organist Anna Lapwood to play at the event. Anna, who is the director of music at Pembroke College, Cambridge, played with Marcella De Gale who works in the security team at Network Rail stations. The pair recently went viral after videos of them performing together at the station hit the internet. One such video can be viewed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Eq3BzreV44>.

Anna said: “As organists, we often lament the fact that our instruments are often hidden away out of sight and so they are rather difficult to stumble across in everyday life. The organ at London Bridge station has completely changed this! It has been so moving to see it played at almost all hours of the day by everyone from small children trying an organ for the first time, all the way through to professionals who happen to be passing by.

A day out in East Yorkshire

At the end of August, Heather and I and our two eldest sons, Michael and Andrew, enjoyed a week away in East Yorkshire, where I grew up. The main purpose of the holiday was to visit my Mum, Shirley, whom we had not seen since February 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic. Mum lives in sheltered council accommodation in the Norwood area of **Beverley** and we managed to rent a house near the centre of town, just off Wednesday Market, not too far from her flat.



Wednesday Market, Beverley

The house was in a street of old, terraced houses but ours was one of a pair that been built to a similar design only twenty years ago. Despite its youthful age, the house had some of the creakiest floorboards I have ever come across!

We travelled up on Thursday 25th August and on the Friday decided to go out for the day. Our first stop was **Driffield**, a market town that describes itself as the Capital of the Wolds. In 2019, it was listed by The Times as one of the best places to live in the UK.



Middle Street, Driffield

Driffield has a number of pubs and cafes and a variety of shops including a mini-department store named Yorkshire Trading Company where I usually buy one or two of my preferred checked shirts. We had lunch in Driffield and I can recommend the Secret Garden Café for a simple lunch or tea and cake. The café is run by Cooplands, who are the second largest bakery

chain in the UK. Their cafés are clean and the food is reasonably priced. There are Secret Garden Cafés in various other local towns including Hull, York and some of the east coast seaside resorts. Driffield has a thriving street market on Thursdays but unfortunately, we visited on a Friday so after lunch we moved on.

From Driffield we drove to nearby **Garton-on-the-Wolds**, where my Mum's late partner is buried, in the graveyard of **St Michael and All Angels Church**. This Grade I listed church dates back to Norman times and is well worth a visit.



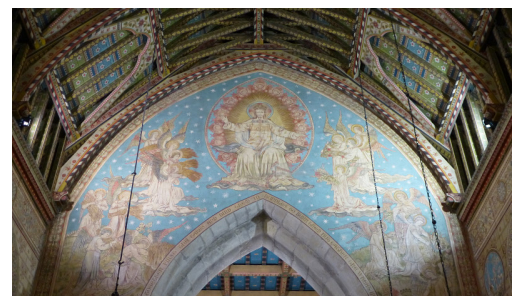
It is a simple church, with the tower, a nave and chancel. It was extensively

restored in the 1860s and 1870s by the second Sir Tatton Sykes, of nearby Sledmere House, but the restorers followed the original style and architecture. Although the historic church building is itself of interest, it is the interior decoration that attracts many visitors. Every inch of the interior walls is covered in stunning paintings that date from Victorian times and tell, in beautiful imagery, the story of the Bible.



Nativity wall painting

On the west wall of the nave is a representation of God the Father. Opposite, on the nave's east wall, is a Jesse Tree symbolising the descent of Christ from King David.



God the Father wall painting

The story of the Old Testament is told in the nave whilst in the chancel there is the story of the New Testament.

Each painting is rendered in great detail and the overall effect is stunning. The paintings were originally created in the 1870s by the firm of Clayton and Bell but were restored in the late 1980s at a cost of £100,000, thanks to the support of the Pevsner Trust.



Andrew, Heather, Mum & Michael at St Michael's

On leaving Garton, we went on a tour of the countryside. We stopped for a picnic tea at **Wansford Lock** on the Driffield Navigation canal, somewhere I had never been before.



Wansford Lock

The lock was built during the construction of the Driffield Navigation between 1767 and 1770 and was designated Grade II in 1985. In 2009, new top and bottom gates were installed and the lock was officially re-opened on 4 July 2009.

On reading one of the information boards by the lock, I was amazed to read that the village church, **St Mary's Church**, had been designed by none other than George Edmund Street. Now, I don't expect many readers to know about Mr Street but those interested in Hadleigh's history may have heard the name before.

George Edmund Street RA was born at Woodford, Essex, in 1824 and became a leading practitioner of the Victorian Gothic Revival style of architecture. Though mainly an ecclesiastical architect, he is perhaps best known as the designer of the Royal Courts of Justice on the

Strand in London. However, before reaching those heights, Street designed Hadleigh National School, which opened in 1855. The building later became St James the Less parish hall and is now used as Sandcastles Nursery.

I paid a quick visit to St Mary's Church, which opened in 1868, but could not go inside. I met a local woman who was passing and she told me that inside the church is a striking Italian marble screen (see photo from the Internet) that Street installed later to replace the original wooden screen. The Grade II* listed church is one of six churches that Street designed for Sir Tatton Sykes. I hope to go back one day to view the interior.



St Mary's Church, Wansford

Whilst standing on the road outside the church, I was fascinated to see both a vicarage and what looked like an old school in Gothic Revival style close by. The woman to whom I spoke happened to live in part of the old school and confirmed that these buildings were also designed by Street. A veritable feast of George Edmund Street architecture!



The Old School, Wansford

I originally intended to cover places visited throughout the week spent in East Yorkshire but it transpired that there was enough material from our first day out. I hope that it was of interest.

Malcolm Brown

Walking backwards has a surprising number of health benefits

Walking doesn't require any special equipment or gym memberships, and best of all, it's completely free. For most of us, walking is something we do automatically. It doesn't require conscious effort, so many of us fail to remember the benefits of walking for health. But what happens if we stop walking on auto-pilot and start challenging our brains and bodies by walking backwards? Not only does this change of direction demand more of our attention, but it may also bring additional health benefits.

Physical activity doesn't need to be complicated. Whether you're regularly active or not, even a brisk ten-minute daily walk can deliver a host of health benefits and can count towards the World Health Organization's recommended minimum of 150 minutes of aerobic activity a week.

Yet walking is more complicated than many of us realise. Remaining upright requires coordination between our visual, vestibular (sensations linked to movements such as twisting, spinning or moving fast) and proprioceptive (awareness of where our bodies are in space) systems. When we walk backwards, it takes longer for our brains to process the extra demands of coordinating these systems. However, this increased level of challenge brings with it increased health benefits.

One of the most well-studied benefits of walking backwards is improving stability and balance. Walking backwards can improve forward gait (how a person walks) and balance for healthy adults and those with knee osteoarthritis. Walking backwards causes us to take shorter, more frequent steps, leading to improved muscular endurance for the muscles of the lower legs while reducing the burden on our joints.

Adding changes in incline or decline can also alter the range of motion for joints and muscles, offering pain relief for conditions such as plantar fasciitis – one of the most common causes of heel pain.

The postural changes brought about by walking backwards also use more of the muscles supporting our lumbar spine - suggesting backwards walking could be a particularly beneficial exercise for people with chronic lower back pain.

Walking backwards has even been used to identify and treat balance and walking speed in patients with neurological conditions or following chronic stroke.

But the benefits of changing direction aren't just therapeutic - an interest in backwards movement has led researchers to discover various other benefits.

While normal walking can help us maintain a healthy weight, walking backwards may be even more effective. Energy expenditure when walking backwards is almost 40% higher than walking at the same speed forwards (6.0 Mets versus 4.3 Mets - one metabolic equivalent (Met) is the amount of oxygen consumed while sitting at rest), with one study showing reductions in body fat for women who completed a six-week backwards walk or run training programme.

When we become confident with travelling backwards, progressing to running can enhance the demands further. While often studied as a rehabilitation tool, backward running increases the strength of crucial muscles involved with straightening the knee, which not only carries over to injury prevention but also our ability to generate power and athletic performance.

Sustained backward running decreases the energy we expend when we run forwards. These improvements in running economy are even beneficial for experienced runners with an already economical running technique.

If walking backwards seems too easy, but space limitations affect your ability to run backwards, another way to increase the challenge further is to start dragging weights. Increasing the overall load increases the recruitment of the knee extensor muscles while placing heavy demands on your heart and lungs in a short space of time.

Loading a sledge and dragging it backwards carries a low risk of injury, as the most likely outcome if we're too tired is that the sledge won't move. But with lighter weights, this kind of exercise can produce an appropriate level of resistance to stimulate significant improvements in lower limb power, with dragging weights as little as 10% of total body weight leading to improved sprint times among young athletes.

How to get started

Walking backwards is simple, but that doesn't mean it's easy. When walking backwards, we're more likely to miss obstacles and hazards that we could crash into or fall over, so in the interest of safety, it's best to start indoors where you won't crash into someone or outside in a flat, open area.

Resist the urge to contort your body and look over your shoulder. Keep your head and chest upright while reaching back with your big toe for each step, rolling through the foot from toe to heel.

If using weights, start light. Focus on multiple sets rather than prolonged distances, and remember to maintain the integrity of your

technique over no more than a 20-metre distance to begin with.

Jack McNamara

Lecturer in Clinical Exercise Physiology, University of East London

From www.theconversation.com, 30th November 2022.

Deadline to use old stamps extended

In February, Royal Mail announced it would scrap so-called ‘definitive’ stamps – ‘everyday’ stamps featuring the profile of the Queen against a plain-coloured background – from 31st January 2023. After this date you would only be able to use barcoded stamps with the Queen’s profile on, which were introduced from the date of the announcement, or non-barcoded Christmas or ‘special collection’ stamps. The addition of barcodes comes as part of the Royal Mail’s modernisation drive, aiming to make operations smoother and to add new security features.

However, in a U-turn following customer discontent, Royal Mail has extended the deadline for a further six months, meaning you now have until 31st July 2023 to use ‘everyday’ non-barcoded stamps. Royal Mail said it recognised that customers needed more time to use up their remaining non-barcoded stamps.

Which stamps are going out of date?

All regular first and second-class ‘everyday’ stamps will be going out of date, as well as first-class large letter and second-class large letter stamps. International tariff stamps and all ‘make-up-value stamps’ will also be going out of date. Examples of stamps that can be swapped out:



What is the Royal Mail Swap Out scheme?

The Royal Mail Swap Out scheme allows you to swap your existing stamps for new ones, if you aren’t able to use them up before they become obsolete. All of the stamps going out of date, apart from country-definitive stamps, will be allowed for the swap.

Barcodes will also be added to Christmas stamps, but non-barcoded Christmas stamps will remain valid as postage after the deadline so are not eligible for the swap-out. Special issue stamps, printed as a one-off to commemorate a person or event, will not be barcoded. These, too, will remain valid as postage and won’t need to be swapped out.

How can you swap your stamps?

To swap your stamps, customers will have to fill out a form available from the post office or to print from the Royal Mail website, and then send non-barcoded stamps back to the Royal Mail free of charge (for less than £200 worth of stamps). If you accidentally send stamps that aren’t part of the Swap Out scheme to Royal Mail, it will swap them for barcoded stamps.

What happens if you use a non-barcoded stamp after 31st July 2023?

Any post sent with non-barcoded stamps after 31st July 2023 will be treated as if there is insufficient postage on the item, so it’s definitely worth swapping them in if you have lots lying around.

How long will it take to receive your new stamps?

The ‘swap-out’ applications will be processed in around seven working days by the Royal Mail, so you can expect to receive your shiny new stamps in just more than one week.

URC Assembly Executive Meeting

This report is based on URC website reports but contains only selected items.

DAY ONE – 28th November

The autumn meeting of the United Reformed Church (URC) Assembly Executive opened on 28th November at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, with a welcome by Rev. Fiona Bennett, Moderator of the URC General Assembly.



Lindsey Sanderson, Chaplain to the General Assembly Moderator, led opening worship with a reading by Luke 21:25-26. Lindsey spoke of the climate crisis, war, economic crisis, scenarios more threatening than had been the case for many decades. As the meeting was at the start of Advent, a season of waiting, the lectionary readings were from the first Sunday of Advent.

After Bernadette Farrell's uplifting hymn *Christ Be Our Light*, Lindsey prayed for Assembly. Andy Jackson, Head of Communications, then read from Isaiah 8:17, 9:17. Fiona then delivered a short sermon on the Bible passage.

Greenbelt feedback

The theme of the URC's presence at Greenbelt was 'Revoluting Christians'. Information boards were placed around the site telling the stories of revolting Christians, with a prize for those who found them all. The café tent contained a display about revolting Christians in the URC. The venue offered craft activities, talks and music from a huge range of URC talents. Christian Climate Action and Operation Noah also contributed.

A team of URC volunteers, led by three Children's and Youth Development Officers, ran the Engine and the Dens, Greenbelt's youth venue. The programme included a late-night eucharist and received very positive feedback. The team have agreed to run this work at Greenbelt for three more years.

There was a service to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the URC on the Sunday evening of the festival, and it was broadcast live on Zoom.

After the report, the Moderator, Rev. Fiona Bennett, said it filled her with joy to hear it and to think about how many lives had been impacted.

Legacies of Slavery report

Sarah Lane Cawte, Convenor of Mission Committee, introduced *Telling It as It Is – Confronting Racism in the Church*, a short film by Prophet Motive Films in association with the URC Mission Committee. Sarah reminded Assembly Executive of the making of an apology for the Church's role in the transatlantic slave trade and how the apology was part of the URC's aim in taking active steps to become an anti-racist Church, .

The film, narrated by Lindsey Brown, Mission Support Officer, is about uncovering white privilege in the Church and explains that the term "white privilege" is not referring to someone is being better off or having special treatment because they are white, but the undetectable privilege of not having to face daily micro-aggressions and judgements based on ethnicity or having assumptions made about where you come from or how you behave, or what you think.

Telling It as It Is can be watched at:
<https://youtu.be/WdUwrW9mHCE>

DAY TWO – 29th November

Day two of the United Reformed Church Assembly Executive opened with Advent worship led by Rev. Lindsey Sanderson, Chaplain to the General Assembly Moderator.

Rev. Maxwell Reay, Minister with the Metropolitan Community Church and chaplain, focusing on queer and mental health needs, offered a pre-recorded personal reflection on Jubilee for the LGBTQI+ community.

Ministry & Mission Fund Budget

Treasurer, Mr Ian Hardie, reported that income for 2023 is expected to be slightly up on 2022 and expenditure considerably less. However, the URC still faces a deficit for 2023. The finance committee had been encouraged that figures for M&M contributions by synods and local churches are estimated to be slightly higher than the 2022 figure. As a result, 2023 budgeted income is more than £100k above the 2022 budget figure. Expenditure is likely to fall back slightly. There had been some difficult discussions leading to a 9% increase in stipends and staff salaries. Using the more usual formula, an increase of 6.6% would have been expected.

The outcome of all the calculations is a £664k deficit. Mr Hardie concluded by saying we need to find a way of reversing the recent trend of deficits. Asked for his 'vision for the deficit' Mr Hardie said that, in the short term, it's sustainable, but that reserves are finite and there are existing commitments, including to the minister's pension fund deficit. Mr Hardie hopes the Church Life Review Group will look again at the 14 separate trusts and see 'where the money lies' compared with 'where it's needed'.

Marks of Ministry of an Elder and of an Elders' Meeting

The meeting discussed a paper outlining the marks of ministry that the URC can reasonably expect of people who are called to be an Elder and how Elders can exercise their skills in the Elders meeting.

The paper outlined that an Elder should be:

- A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ
- A person of integrity and prayer
- A person who cares for others, and
- A person of accountability

The Elders' meeting should:

- Pastorally care for others
- Be a ministry of oversight for the church
- Focus upon mission and evangelism
- Participate in the councils of the Church
- A commitment to the Church always being renewed

The list in the paper is not exhaustive nor is it expected that every Elder will exhibit all the marks. It is also acknowledged that the marks will look different in each individual Elder, their context and their ministry.

Observations from group discussions included that the Marks were not fully developed; the marks of an Elder should include having knowledge about the URC and that this is missing from the marks; what the Marks would look like in practice; that the Marks are positive; if it's intended the fact that the list isn't exhaustive or that every Elder won't have all of the Marks, then this is a sensible comment to make, but it should be expected that they do have all the Marks, but which may vary to the degree.

Assembly Executive asked through a show of cards for more to be done on the Paper. It was subsequently re-presented with changes and, after a lively discussion, the resolution was passed.

Address by Rev. Susan Durber

Rev. Dr Susan Durber, a minister of the URC and



recently appointed as President of the European Region of the World Council of Churches (WCC), set out to explore with the Assembly Executive 'the ecumenical vocation of the URC today'.

Dr Durber began by speaking of the place of love and relationships in ecumenism, and thanked the URC for the ordination promise its ministers make: to cherish love towards all other churches.

Dr Durber recognised that one dominant story in the URC is of ecumenical disappointment: 'The journey on which we set out – the journey of organic, or structural, unity – was not joined by other churches and neither does it seem to have renewed our own – and so we are left wondering whether, after all, it was right to put so much of the lives of our very best into that endeavour.'

Dr Durber believed ecumenism has been more successful than we might expect over the past 50 years, and that it reveals itself in diverse ways, not least in worship. She called those who worked to make the URC unions of 1972, 1981 and 2000 her heroes but wondered how the URC could 'kick start our ecumenical vocation for these times'.

She offered five practical suggestions:

- Stop thinking of ourselves so much as a 'denomination' and regard ourselves as 'a kind of "order" within the one great Church – making more radical efforts to take our gifts and people into the wider church without simply giving up our URChness.
- Work harder at receiving the gifts of the wider church into our own life within the URC.
- Enter 'the age of world Christianity' – move beyond a Eurocentric ecumenism that grew out of colonialism.
- Let go of wanting to be recognised or celebrated as ourselves, but offer the URC's gifts to grow in the wider church, 'and don't be peeved if they grow without our name on them'.
- Celebrate our experience in 'holding together in unity while taking decisions about the most divisive issues among and between the churches today: sexuality and gender.'

DAY THREE – 30th November

Rev. Lindsey Sanderson, Chaplain to the Moderator, opened the final day of Assembly Executive's autumn meeting with prayers.

Church Life Review (CLR) update

Rev. Dr John Bradbury offered an overview of the group's work in hand and reflected on the responses to the structures consultation.

Dr Bradbury said that research by external organisations will give us a chance to see ourselves as others see us. In conversations with local selected local congregations, the lead researcher from Theos has already been struck by what extraordinary things small congregations can do; and noted that those congregations that are thriving in the URC tend to be those that are engaged with communities around them. Some quantitative research is being added into the research process.

Initial conversations have taken place concerning resources to enable reflection on a theology of money, with the aim of making this work available for General Assembly 2023 and providing a theological grounding for other CLR work. Dr Bradbury observed that, as a denomination, the URC appears never to have reflected on how we ourselves use money.

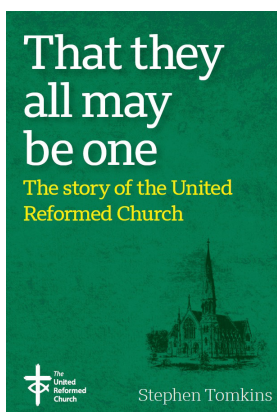
Ms Mel Campbell, synod clerk Northern Synod, spoke about the process of collating financial information from across the Church. Every synod has completed a template of information, and templates have been completed for the General Assembly and Church House. For the very first time, the URC has created an overall picture of the Church's financial position. The aggregated position (and not the information from individual synods) will be presented in a way that suits different audiences.

Assembly Executive closed with worship.

God with us

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare –
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

That they may all be one ~ The story of the United Reformed Church



'The sun shone on London for 5th October 1972. Three thousand people, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, gathered to become the United Reformed Church, celebrating the fruition of nine years' work and full of hope for the future. Leading churchmen danced in the aisle. They did not rejoice for the creation of a new Church, they hailed the dawn of a new age of the reunion of Churches.'

In this highly readable account, to mark the URC's jubilee year, Stephen Tomkins takes us through the story of the Church from 1972 to 2022. It includes crushing disappointment as the hopes for uniting the Churches of Britain collapsed – and then creative soul-searching as the Church worked out what its mission in the world was going to be. Storms of disagreement and tides of social change threatened to overwhelm the URC, but on its side it had pioneering creativity, a passion for engaging with the world and what the author calls 'a genius for listening'.

The book is available from the URC online bookshop for £7.99 plus £2.95 p&p. Stephen Tomkins is the author of eight books of Christian history and biography. He is the editor of Reform magazine

Computer Corner

UK Power Network – Power cut information

Useful website

We have had a few power cuts in Hadleigh in recent times. On the UK Power Network website you can search for power cuts on a map and register to receive text messages on a mobile phone about power cuts in your postcode. The message will include an incident reference, which you can use to view real-time updates.

URL: <https://www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/power-cut>

Google Keep

Useful free software

Google Keep is a note-taking app included as part of the free, web-based Google Docs Editors suite. It is available as a web application as well as mobile app for Android and iOS. It is quick and easy to use but lacks certain features such as text formatting. If you switch syncing on your Google account then the online and mobile versions of Keep will display the current information regardless of which device has been used to enter data. I have started to use it recently for such things as a list of my COVID-19 vaccinations, details of my car and a basic 'to-do' list. There are plenty of videos on YouTube showing how to use the app.

URL: <https://www.google.com/keep/>

Cantique De Noël (O Holy Night)

Interesting video

An amazing recording made under unusual conditions taken from a Lessons & Carols service on Christmas Eve 2020 at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYUD4Gu8rts>

Word Search – Words associated with cold weather

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

ARCTIC
 BITING
 BLEAK
 CHILLY
 CRISP
 FREEZING
 FROSTY
 GLACIAL
 ICY
 NIPPY
 NUMBING
 PARKY
 PIERCING
 POLAR
 RIMY
 SHARP
 SLEETY
 SHIVERY
 PENETRATING
 WINTERY

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 10 Dec 2022 - Coffee Morning at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 10.00am to 12 noon with drinks, cakes and bric-a-brac stall. Every 2nd Sat.
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- ditto - Beat and Beans Café at St James the Less Church from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Live music from Lynda Jiggins with coffee, tea and snacks plus some sales tables with seasonal items.. Free admission. Every 2nd Sat.
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- ditto - Coffee Morning & Book Sale at St Peter's Church Thundersley from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Every 2nd Sat.
-
- ditto - Christmas Market at The Hub, Chapel Lane, Hadleigh from 12.00pm to 4.00pm. With locally crafted gifts & treats, family craft activities, carols.
-
- Sun 11 Dec 2022 - Traditional Folk Carol Service at St Clement's Church, Leigh, at 6.30pm with The Famous Potatoes, The Mudlarks/Feelgood Choir et al.
-
- Mon 12 Dec 2022 Smart Minds - A friendly club for people with dementia and their - carers/families. Art activities and socialising with tea and biscuits. At Hadleigh United Reformed Church from 1.00pm to 3.00pm every Monday. If interested, phone Sue Lesser on 07889 762172.
-
- Tue 13 Dec 2022 - Kettle's On Coffee Morning at St Barnabas Church, Church Road, Hadleigh, from 10.30am to 12.00 noon. Held every Tue.
-
- Wed 14 Dec 2022 - Coffee Morning at St Michael's Church, St Michael's Road, Daws Heath, from 10.00am to 11.45am. Held every Wed.
-
- Thu 15 Dec 2022 - Poetry Reading Group at Hadleigh Library from 2.30pm to 3.30pm - Christmas Special. Every 3rd Thu of month. All welcome.
-
- Fri 16 Dec 2022 - Benfleet Art & Craft Club at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 1.00pm to 3.30pm every Friday. Established 1945. New members welcome.
-
- ditto - Craft & Knitting Club at Hadleigh Library, 12.30pm to 2.30pm every Friday. Meet others who are passionate about craft and enjoy a chat.
-
- Tue 20 Dec 2022 - Christmas Festival at Thundersley town centre, Hart Road, from 2.30pm to 6.00pm with Santa, games, craft stalls, family fun and more!
-
- Thu 22 Dec 2022 - Carols, Coffee & Communion at Hadleigh Methodist Church at 2.00pm.
-
- Sat 24 Dec 2022 - Midnight Communion at Hadleigh Baptist Church at 11.30pm.
-
- ditto - Christmas Eve Worship at SA Hadleigh Temple at 11.30pm.
-
- ditto - Midnight Communion at St James the Less Church at 11.30pm.
-
- Sun 25 Dec 2022 - Christmas Communion at St Barnabas Church at 9.30am.
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- ditto - Christmas Communion at St Michael's Church, Daws Heath, at 9.30am.
-
- ditto - Christmas Day Service at Hadleigh Methodist Church at 10.00am.
-
- ditto - Christmas Day Family Service at Hadleigh Baptist Church at 10.30am.
-
- ditto - Christmas Day Worship at SA Hadleigh Temple at 10.30am.
-
- Mon 9 Jan 2023 - Afternoon Chat & Tea at Hadleigh Library in a warm and welcome environment from 2.30pm to 4.30pm, every Monday from 9 Jan 2023.
-
- Sat 21 Jan 2023 - Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive slideshow 'How old is Daws Heath?' at St Michael's Church Hall, St Michael's Road, Daws Heath. Starts at 2.00pm. Admission at door £3.00. Refreshments available.
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More events listed on the HELIX website at <http://www.hadleighsex.info>