

THE HADLEIGH MESSENGER

February 2023



The Magazine of the
United Reformed Church, Hadleigh, Essex

SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning service starts at 10.30am

For more information about services,
please phone 01702 557678

PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS FOR FEBRUARY 2023

Sun 5 th Feb	10.30am	Morning Service	Mr Adrian Tinning
Sun 12 th Feb	10.30am	Morning Service	Rev. Dr Jim Tarrant MA MTh
Sun 19 th Feb	10.30am	Morning Service with Holy Communion	Rev. Andrew Birch
Sun 26 th Feb	10.30am	Morning Service	Mrs Heather Brown

ELDERS' MEETING	Thu 16 th Feb 12.45pm
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CHURCH MEETING	Thu 23 rd Feb* 12.45pm
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**postponed from Thu 26th Jan*

Prayer Reflection - Movement and Change

Picture your favourite stretch of water – river bank, lakeside or even the beach. Listen to the sounds of the area. However quiet it is there will be some sound of moving water. Recognise that movement brings life to the water. Even with lakes there are entry and exit points. Without them the water becomes stagnant and smelly and no longer a pleasant place to sit beside. The river you sit beside today is not the same water as that of last week or even a few moments ago. It has moved on. Praise God for the endless beauty of his creation, constantly changing yet still, in many ways, the same

Ponder the fact that most living things need movement to survive. Even plants need to put down roots and grow upwards towards the sun to reach their full glory. Those that do not grow are restricted in some way. For humanity this is true mentally and spiritually as well as physically. But growth means change and we often try to avoid change preferring the status quo. Ask God for forgiveness and pray for the grace to face any changes needed for growth.

Persevere in your faith especially when faced with challenges that demand, not just a change in circumstances, but also a change in outlook. Pray for guidance and support so that you know the way forward for you at this time. Know that God remains with us even when we can't sense it. Thank him for his faithfulness.

Prayer – Thank you, Lord, for your amazing creation and the continuing change of seasons. May we know your presence with us and have the courage to face the changes that occur in our daily lives, whether they be large or small. Enable to be aware of the problems others may be facing. Please grant us the grace to bring your love to those around us. Thank you Lord. Amen.

Beryl Hunt

<p>HADLEIGH URC OFFICERS</p> <p>Minister: Rev. Andrew Birch (01 702 338674)</p> <p>Hon. Secretary: Mr Royston Brackin (01 702 558862)</p> <p>Acting Hon. Treasurer: Mr Royston Brackin</p> <p>Serving Elders: Mr Royston Brackin Mrs Heather Brown (01 702 557678) Mr Malcolm Brown (01 702 557678) Miss Jean Reeve (01 702 554907)</p>	<p>Useful information</p> <p>Address: 1 Church Road, Hadleigh, Benfleet, SS7 2DQ Website: www.hadleighsexurc.org.uk</p> <p>An invitation</p> <p>We invite you to join us for worship and fellowship at any of our services where a warm welcome awaits. If you are in need of help that the ministry of the church can supply then 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 would like to ask for a prayer or personal visit then please let one of our church officers know. All such requests are treated in the strictest confidence.</p>
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From the Minister

A New Year Message

Dear Friends,

We are now well into the New Year, and I feel both hopeful and positive about the future, because as Christians, People of faith, People of goodwill, we are making a difference in the world.

Having said that, as Matthew Fox says, in his book, *A New Reformation*. 'At this critical time in human and planetary history, when the earth is being ravaged by the violence of war, poverty, sexism, homophobia, and eco destruction, we need to gather those who offer a future that is one of compassion, creativity and justice to speak their conscience as never before. Religion ought to be part of the solution, and not the problem.'

Whatever stage of life we are at, we form part of the Church of Jesus Christ. As we get a little older we might think that we can't do as much as we

once did, but we should remind ourselves that our mission is very simple and that is to glorify God and make God known. By doing this we will be faithfully covering every aspect of God's mission because, when we make God known, we reflect God's love in the world.

Jesus said, 'He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.' (Matthew 5: 45) In other words, God is equally kind and generous in supporting life no matter how people live. So, he says, we should reflect that same attitude – we ought to love our enemies as well as our friends. By doing this we are reflecting God's attitude to the world.

Hilary joins me in wishing you all a happy and fruitful 2023.

Andrew



Churches Together in Hadleigh Lent Course

This year's Lent course will be based on the York Course 'Superstar'. We covered two sessions of this course in 2020 but the pandemic lockdown brought a sudden end to our studies. The course booklet is written by David Wilbourne, former vicar of Helmsley, Yorkshire, and author of six books. He has worked with three Archbishops of York and went on to serve as Assistant Bishop of Llandaff.

Back in 1970, the show *Jesus Christ Superstar* asked daring questions. Over half a century on, its message remains just as relevant, and we explore themes from its iconic lyrics in this 5-session course. The course audio is produced by Simon Stanley, co-founder of York Courses, Canon Emeritus of York Minster and a former BBC producer/presenter. Simon puts questions to the participants on the course audio who comprise: Carmody Grey (Assistant Professor of Catholic Theology at Durham Cathedral), Steve Chalke (A Baptist minister and author, and a leading Christian thinker), Catherine Fox (author of seven novels, with a degree in English and a PhD in Theology) and Stephen Wigley (Chair of the Welsh Synod of the Methodist Church).

All five sessions will be hosted by Hadleigh URC on Thursday evenings from 2nd March to 30th March. Each session will be led by a different leader from the local church community. The dates, leaders, subjects and bible references for the five sessions are as follows:

Date	Leader	Subject – Bible reference
Thu 2nd Mar	Major Marian Fripp	Who is Jesus? – John 8:1-11
Thu 9th Mar	Tom Pender	Miracles – Matthew 19:26
Thu 16th Mar	Rev. Sue Croucher	The Psalms – Psalm 27:1
Thu 23rd Mar	Rev. Ruth Cartwright	The Church – 1 Peter 2:9-10
Thu 30th Mar	Rev. Andrew Birch	Cross Purposes – John 12:27-36

The sessions start at 7.30pm with refreshments served from 7.15pm. All are welcome to attend.

Malcolm Brown

From the Editor

Welcome to the February 2023 edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger*.

Christmas will soon be a distant memory but I've included an article about the Christmas gift bags that were distributed after our Christmas Gift Service on 4th December.

Spring is almost on the horizon and, as we approach Lent, I'm glad to report that there will be a Churches Together Lent course despite doubts at last October's meeting. The programme for the course is covered by a separate item. For simplicity, the course is often hosted at one location and I offered to host it at our church this year. Having the sessions on a Thursday evening won't suit everyone but it's just not possible to suit everyone as we all have varying commitments. If anyone would like to help serve refreshments before any of the sessions then please let me know. Unfortunately, the session on Thursday 23rd March clashes with the URC South

Essex Area Partnership meeting so I'll be at The Cornerstone that evening.

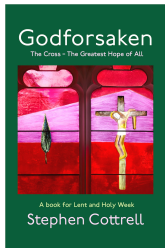
May I thank those kind people who have already proffered a donation towards the cost of publishing the paper edition of the *Hadleigh Messenger* in 2023. The suggested donation is £5.00 (for ten editions) plus any postage costs for copies that have to be posted. If you currently receive a paper copy but would be content with an electronic (pdf) version sent by e-mail then just let me know. I have to admit that I still like to read paper copies of magazines.

Some readers will know that Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, grew up locally and attended St Barnabas Church. Partly for that reason, I've included the review below of his latest book. From the glowing review, it sounds as if the book might be suitable for next year's Churches Together Lent course!

Malcolm Brown

'Godforsaken: The cross – the greatest hope of all' by Stephen Cottrell

In this slim, highly readable Lent book, Stephen Cottrell unflinchingly listens to the last words of Jesus as they appear in Mark's Gospel – 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' – and invites the reader to journey with him in response to what he learns as he listens.



Too often in the past I have looked at Lent materials, for my own use or to help individuals and groups to approach Easter in a thoughtful way, but found the resource to be either too dense or too superficial, too contrived or simply asking questions that I don't think most people are asking. Therefore, I approached *Godforsaken* with low expectations, but ended up reading the whole book in one sitting! The language and style are clear and accessible. The manner in which Cottrell allows the words of Jesus to speak into everyday circumstances is natural and unforced. He manages the balance between background information and laying out challenges and implications well and in a way that doesn't patronise readers who have some prior knowledge

or intimidate readers who are encountering the passion story freshly.

Each chapter of the book concludes with useful, stimulating questions, and an afterword. Using a helpful mixture of insight, relevant personal anecdotes and quotes from a diverse collection of writers – from a sceptical Philip Larkin to Julian of Norwich – the reader explores the reality of abandonment, the deliberate echo of Psalm 22, and why these words are remembered in the vernacular Aramaic. Stephen finally takes us up a difficult, rocky path where we catch a glimpse of how the whole of the Trinity, not just one part, experiences the torment of Godforsakenness at Calvary.

The concluding paradox of this well-crafted journey through very dark places is that that it leads inevitably not to despair but hope. As Stephen states in the book's subtitle, it is 'the greatest hope of all'. I shall be buying copies of this book for some people I know who are already on this journey, and recommend it as a quality individual and group resource for Lent and other times too.

Ian Fosten, book reviews editor for Reform

Articles for the magazine can be e-mailed to the Editor, Malcolm Brown, at mgbrownmail@yahoo.co.uk.
Opinions expressed in any published articles do not necessarily reflect the view of the Editor or the policy of the United Reformed Church, either locally or nationally.

Christmas gift bags

For our Christmas Gift Service on 4th December, we asked for donations of items suitable to give to members of our own fellowship whom we don't see very often for health or mobility reasons or because they live slightly further afield. Heather Brown drew up a list of items that would be suitable for a range of people such as pens and notebooks, woolly hats and gloves, toiletries and the like. The number of donations allowed Heather and her helpers to fill ten colourful gift bags.

The recipients of the gift bags, in alphabetical order of surname, were: Susan Brackin, Jim Clubb, John and Pauline Horwood, Vera Knapton, Florrie Large, Colin and Marion Melliush, Mary Milne, Jean Parnell, Jack Roche and Irene Webb.



Nine of the Christmas gift bags – I had already delivered one!

Most of the recipients were surprised when I turned up at their door with a gift bag but all were grateful for the gifts and for the fact that they had been remembered in this way. We have received letters of thanks from several people.

Unfortunately, I was suffering from the cough that was doing the rounds around Christmas time so Jack Roche, our former minister, who lives in Shotgate, Wickford, didn't receive his gift bag until after Christmas. Heather and I eventually visited Jack on 20th January, after my cough had subsided. He was pleased to see us and delighted by the gift bag and immediately spotted a woolly hat and some gloves, which he said would be very useful. Jack said that he is feeling well but still needs to build up his strength and put back the body weight that he lost while ill.

Thank you to everyone who contributed items for the gifts bags. It was a very worthwhile endeavour. I only wish that I had taken photos of some of the recipients with their gift bag for this article!

Malcolm Brown

Open Church House & 50th Anniversary Service of Thanksgiving

On Saturday 15th April 2023, join us in London to give thanks and to celebrate the URC's 50 years. This is the new date after the postponement in October 2022 owing to rail strikes.

- From 10.00am to 12 noon at United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London, an Open Church House event will be held, with dozens of activities and crafts related to the jubilee.
- Between Church House and Methodist Central Hall there will be a Walk to Westminster with self guided tours for all ages packed with buildings of interest and things to find for younger walkers.
- At Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London, from 2.30pm, where the Uniting Assembly of the URC took place in October 1972, a service will take place to give thanks and to celebrate the five decades of the United Reformed Church.

Tickets for these events are free. If you would like to attend, please book now to avoid disappointment at <https://bit.ly/urc50>. Once booked, you will receive an email from Eventbrite which you must bring on the day - either printed out or on the Eventbrite app - to gain admission to the venues. If you have any questions, please email 50@urc.org.uk.

Family News

A prayer for Lent

Lord, may we see your goodness and your glory in new ways throughout the season of Lent. May we know the depths of your love for us more fully. May we feel the pain you endured for our sake, Jesus, and may we rejoice that you conquered evil when you rose to life again.

Amen

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





Ladies Recreation Group

The Ladies Recreation Group, which meets on Monday evenings to play table tennis and to chat, held a Christmas social for old and new members on Monday 19th December.



Ivy, Janet, Emily, Doreen, Pat, Margaret, Kay, Pamela



Pat, Margaret, Kay, Christine

Pamela George kindly sent two photos, one that she took and one that Christine Brackin took. In an effort to include everyone who was there, I've used the whole of the photo that Christine took and part of the photo that Pamela took.

Sadly, one of the founder members of the group, Beryl Drewer, passed away on 22nd November. Several members of the group attended Beryl's funeral at Pitsea Crematorium on 15th December.

The Ladies Recreation Group is thriving again after having recruited several new members recently but, with only one table, this inevitably means more chat!

Malcolm Brown

Youth Assembly round-up: 27-29 January 2023

Ninety-seven young people and ecumenical guests gathered at Whitemoor Lakes in Staffordshire for Youth Assembly 2023, held from 27-29 January.

The meeting kicked off Children's and Youth Work's year of 'Love Is...' and featured a lively weekend of worship, discussion, fellowship, music, exploring how we love God, our neighbour and ourselves in ways that make a difference.

Topics on the agenda included encouraging local churches to offer quiet spaces, signposting people impacted by substance misuse to support and help, developing or supporting local warm spaces, and building relationships and partnerships with other churches to share resources.

Also at the meeting, the process for Youth Assembly to nominate candidates for General Assembly Moderator was approved, a new role of Champion for Younger URC Youth was established, and a Gender and Sexual Identity Discrimination Task Force was set up.

A deeply concerned discussion was held about the increasing threats and worsening conditions for Palestinians living under Israel occupation, however Youth Assembly concluded that members did not believe they had sufficient knowledge and understanding of the situation to decide the motion under discussion. This will be followed up with opportunities to learn more across the year so the discussion can resume at Youth Assembly 2024.

A highlight for many on Saturday night was a set from double MOBO award-winning rapper, author, and broadcaster Guvna B. This flowed beautifully into a reflective late night Communion Service lead by Rev. Fiona Bennett, General Assembly Moderator.

Heather Moore, of the Southern Synod was elected Moderator-Elect 2023-2024, and Philippa Osei, of the Thames North Synod, was inducted as URC Youth Assembly Moderator 2023-2024, becoming the first Youth Assembly Moderator from a BAME background. A new Youth Executive was also elected.



Jo Harris, Philippa Osei & Heather Moore

Jo Harris, National Synod of Wales, concluded her outgoing speech with the following encouragement to everyone attending:

“You've got to dance like there's nobody watching, love like you'll never be hurt, sing like there's nobody listening, and live like it's heaven on earth. Go now and live today being unapologetically you.”

The URC Youth Leaders' Gathering ran alongside Youth Assembly for the second year, with 22 youth leaders attending. They joined in worship, Guvna B's set and a business session, as well as having their own programme which included sessions lead by Rev. Paul Nash, Senior Chaplain at Birmingham Children's Hospital.

The youth leaders commented on how valuable this was and asked for it to become a regular event going forwards.

Published on the URC website on 7 February 2023.

School humour

Teacher: Your essay on 'My Dog' is exactly the same as your brother's. Did you copy his?

Pupil: No, sir. It's the same dog.

Teacher: What do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?

Pupil: A teacher?

Teacher: You missed school yesterday, didn't you?

Pupil: Not really.

Churches Together in Hadleigh meeting

The latest meeting of Churches Together in Hadleigh took place on 10th January 2023 at the SA Temple.

Opening – The meeting, which started at 2.00pm, was chaired by the Leader, Rev. Ruth Cartwright, the Priest-in-Charge of St James the Less and St Barnabas churches. Ruth opened the meeting with a prayer.

Representatives from the Baptist Church, St Thomas More Church, SA Hadleigh Temple, St Michael's Church and the URC were present.

Hadleigh Christmas lights switch-on – Rev. Ruth reported that the Hadleigh Christmas lights switch-on event went well and that the Churches Together Christmas service leaflets produced by Roger Kingston had been distributed. Roger was thanked, in absentia, for his efforts.

Treasurer's Report – Treasurer Maureen Maley (SA) was unable to attend but Rev. Ruth advised that Maureen had sent a cheque to her husband, Stuart Mann, representing the closing balance from the closure of the Churches Together Lloyds bank account. Stuart is the Treasurer of St Barnabas Church and will ring-fence the money in one of St Barnabas's bank accounts.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023

Arrangements for meetings in this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were finalised:
Wed 18th Jan 4.30pm – St James – Rev. Ruth
Thu 19th Jan 2.00pm – Methodist Church – TBA
Tue 24 Jan 2.00pm – SA Temple – Major Marian
A united service will also be held on Sunday 22nd January at the SA Temple and will be led by Major Marian.

Churches Together Lent course

In 2020, two sets of material for the York Course entitled 'Superstar' had been had been purchased. Only two of the five sessions were held before the COVID-19 lockdown commenced. It was agreed that, if the material could be located, then that course would be studied this year otherwise material for a different course would be obtained.

I offered our church as a venue for the Lent course. It was agreed that all sessions would be held on Thursday evening starting at 7.30pm with refreshments served from 7.15pm. I said that I would ask our minister, Rev. Andrew Birch, whether he would be prepared to lead one of last two sessions. (See separate magazine item for the Lent Course final arrangements.)

Good Friday (7th April 2023)

At the previous meeting, Roger Kingston had indicated that Methodist Church would be willing to host the Good Friday united service and also serve refreshments afterwards. Subject to confirmation, this was agreed. Roger had said that he would ask Rev. Zena Smith to lead the service but in case she is unable to do so, Rev. Ruth agreed to be in reserve.

There was some discussion about holding a Walk of Witness after the service, as used to be held before the pandemic, when it ended at our church. It was eventually agreed to hold a Walk around the town centre, starting at around 11.00am. The Walk will end back at the Methodist Church, when refreshments will be served.

Easter Day Sunrise Service (9th April 2023)

Major Marian Fripp (SA) confirmed that a Sunrise Service will take place on Easter Day at Hadleigh Castle, organised by the SA Temple. A start time of 6.15am was agreed, which is around the time of the sunrise.

News from the churches

URC – I reported that our new minister, Rev. Andrew Birch was inducted on 12th November. I explained that Andrew is minister of Kings Road URC and that we have a 20% share of his time. Some of this time will be spent leading our monthly Communion service and chairing Church and Elders' meetings, now both held on Thursdays, which is the day of the week Andrew reserves for Hadleigh. I mentioned that we may be able to restart a monthly bible study, which was previously held after one of our weekly Thursday coffee mornings.

St Michael's Church – Rev. Sue Croucher reported that St Michael's had recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of the opening of their new church building. In December, a carol service had been held for Deanes School and the church had hosted a candlelight remembrance service organised by Stibbards.

The funeral of Ann Ackland of Ann's Mini Market was held on 21st December at St Michael's. Ann was very well-known in Daws Heath and the congregation filled the church and the community room.

Baptist Church – Jane Brown reported that the Christmas services had gone well. They were led by Rev. Paul Stow, who officially retired in November. A service and buffet lunch to celebrate Paul's retirement after 16 years of ministry at Hadleigh is planned for Sunday 15th January.

A draft pastorate profile has been circulated to church members and will be discussed at a church meeting on 18th January. If the pastorate profile is agreed, the vacant post will then be notified to the Baptist Union to be advertised.

Jane introduced Tom Pender, a member of the congregation who has decided to enter training for ministry. Tom said that he had just completed the first semester of a six-year, part-time Bachelor programme at Spurgeon's College. Tom works part-time as a supply teacher and will preach once a month at the church during the interregnum.

St Thomas More Church – Pauline Sandgrove, attending for the first time, explained that the church relies on a few people to carry out cleaning and gardening. The congregation sees the priest, Fr Eduard, only for the duration of the Sunday morning service as, immediately afterwards, he leaves to take the service at Holy Family Church in Benfleet. He then travels to Barking to lead a service at a Romanian church, where he served before moving to this area. Gabrielle Budds added that although Fr Eduard is very busy, he is very supportive of Churches Together.

Pauline added that the congregation has not quite yet returned to its pre-pandemic size with a few people still watching services online. She also described long-standing difficulties with use of the church car park by nearby residents and customers of Fatty's Bar.

St James the Less Church & St Barnabas Church – Rev. Ruth mentioned that her churches held Christingle services on Christmas Eve instead of crib services. There were over two hundred people at the St Barnabas Christingle service so two services may be held next year. A Christmas Eve Midnight Communion was held at St James with a Christmas Morning service at St Barnabas.

Salvation Army (SA) Temple – Major Marian reported that the relationship between the Temple and the Hadleigh Farm Estate is becoming closer. Some estate staff are now worshipping at the Temple and, in the summer, members of the Temple supported activities at The Hub and elsewhere on the farm estate. There are regular forest walks and muddy church events.

At Christmas, activities took place at the Temple and at The Hub. A variety of Christmas services were held at the Temple, including the Civic Carol Service, a Toy Service and a special service incorporating elements of messy church, a Christingle service and a carol service. Future plans include a Band Festival and concerts to which people can be invited.

Major Marian explained that, as she will be retiring in July, it is likely that her husband, Major Steve, will be moved to a single-person appointment.

Date of next meeting – The next meeting, the Annual General Meeting, will be held on Tuesday 16th May at the SA Temple, starting at 2.00pm.

Closing – Rev. Sue closed the meeting with a prayer and those present shared the Grace together. The meeting ended at 3.35pm.

Malcolm Brown



Save Hadleigh Old Fire Station

Many of you will know that much of my time outside church is spent on Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive activities. The Archive group has rented one of the studios in Hadleigh Old Fire Station (HOFS) since 2011 when it re-opened as a community hall and artists centre. Owned by Essex County Council (ECC), HOFS is an Olympic legacy project and has proved to be a brilliant facility, well-used by many organisations and artists. Sadly, ACAVA, the arts charity that manages HOFS has decided not to sign a new lease, saying that it is no longer financially sustainable for them. Existing users, including the Community Archive have been given two month's notice to quit, which ends on 20th March.

If you would like to see HOFS continue, could I urge you to sign the petition that has been organised by the newly-formed Friends of HOFS. The petition requests that ECC keep HOFS open until an alternative organisation, e.g. a Community Interest Company, can be formed to take over the management. Paper copies of the petition are in various shops around Hadleigh and an online petition is available on the ECC website via this link: <http://bit.ly/3xlvtCI>. Thank you. *Malcolm Brown*

Earwigs – the hero single mothers of the insect world

You lift a stone and staring up at you is a little insect with its tail curled and pincers ready to inflict who knows what. Then you see its attendants – tiny white insects, huddled underneath. What you have discovered is a family of one of Britain’s least loved, but one of the most caring insects – an earwig. Only about 1% of insect species show parental care. Earwigs are one of them.



Female earwig protecting her eggs

Females construct an underground chamber and lay 30 to 60 eggs which they protect and keep clean from fungi by “licking”. If a mole or another burrowing animal scatters her eggs, she diligently collects them together again.

They hatch after about 70 days, normally late winter. Searching for food in winter when predators are hungrier than usual is risky, but it helps the mother ensure her babies survive to adulthood because it means they can stay safely in their chamber until they are larger. By the end of spring the baby “wiglets” have dispersed. The female may then have a second, smaller brood with eggs fertilised from the original mating.

Maternal tenderness seems to be built into an earwig’s genes as wiglets raised artificially later demonstrate nurturing to their own babies. Caring parents make the most of the opportunity to pass on their genes, despite the energy costs.

Clever wings

Earwigs are unusual in other ways. They are members of the order Dermaptera (“skin wings”), a reference to their shortened, leathery front wings, also called tegmina. These protect the membrane-covered hind wings. Grasshoppers, stick insects and cockroaches have skin wings too.

Earwigs react to touch, known as showing positive thigmotaxis, so they habitually crawl into confined spaces. As an adaptation to this behaviour, their

hind wings are folded under the tegmina. It is possible the name “earwig” comes from their ear-shaped hind wing, which is so intricately folded it has been studied for engineering solutions from self folding tents to space flight.



Earwig nestled inside a leaf

The word “earwig” comes from Old English ‘ēare’ (ear), and ‘wicga’ (insect). Several types of insects, including flies, moths and crickets enter people’s ears and have to be carefully removed. But they will not bore into your brain, whatever stories your older siblings or classmates traumatised you with. Earwigs may enter human ears because they prefer close contact, not because they want to do you any harm.

Not just for show

The most distinctive feature of European earwigs is their terminal forceps. Forceps are used for defence, to incapacitate prey, and in mating rituals. The forceps are straight in females and curved in males.

They differ between males too. Those with shorter, strongly curved forceps are called brachylabic. Males with long, straighter forceps are called macrolabic. Macrolabic males are more successful in mating and interrupt ongoing copulation involving less well-endowed earwigs.

One study examined the relationship between weapon size and the efficiency of earwigs’ immune system. It found forceps size trades off with haemocyte concentrations. In insects, haemocyte cells are crucial in the prevention of infection. Brachylabic males produced more haemocytes when infected with bacteria than macrolabic earwigs.

Just like us, earwigs can be a social bunch. In autumn, they release a pheromone that attracts other earwigs. This is primarily for mating, but earwigs aggregate in hibernation, a bit like ladybirds.

Courtship involves the forceps. Males wave them in the air and use them to stroke and grasp the female, but they aren't used in mating. The pair couples tail to tail for sperm transfer, which can take several hours. Males and females can have multiple mates. They may stay together after the female has made a burrow and laid her eggs, but males usually return to the surface to forage, so don't feed their wiglets.

Are earwigs good or bad?

They carry no known human pathogens but can use their forceps to deliver a slight nip. They are sometimes garden or horticultural pests. They damage plants, particularly dahlias, lettuce, strawberries, potatoes, and roses. But earwigs benefit us too. As consumers of organic matter they speed up decay in compost. They are nature's pest controllers, and on plants will eat aphids, mites, and insect larvae.

Earwigs do enter houses through cracks and crevices and may collect in damp cellars, pantries, or bathrooms using their aggregation pheromone. But they do no harm to your house and won't breed indoors. They can be trapped using a damp, rolled up newspaper or controlled by nonchemical methods, including diatomaceous earth.

Perhaps people's dislike for earwigs is similar to the reaction ants get, when you lift a stone and find a seething colony. Here you are interrupting a mostly peaceful family life, with mother and wiglets startled by a sudden stab of light. Carefully replace the stone. They want to be left alone just as much as you do.

Christopher Terrell Nield

Principal lecturer, Bioscience, Nottingham Trent Univ.

Published on The Conversation website at www.theconversation.com on 30th January 2023.

First woman pastor in Holy Land ordained

In many parts of the Christian world, female church leaders are no longer unusual. But until now, the Holy Land had not seen a local woman ordained. On 22nd January, a Palestinian from Jerusalem, Sally Azar, became its first woman pastor at an event at the Lutheran church in the heart of the Old City, attended by hundreds of international well-wishers.



Rev. Sally Azar

Christians make up a minority in the Palestinian Territories, Israel and Jordan. Most Christians here belong to the Greek Orthodox and Latin Catholic Churches, which do not allow women priests.

However, the ordination of women has been taking place in a growing number of Protestant Churches in the past few decades. These have small local congregations and run schools and hospitals in the Holy Land.

"Everywhere where you have a patriarchal society and culture this is a major step," says the recently retired Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Antje Jackelen. Since I've been



ordained for over 40 years, I've met many people who didn't think it was possible. But now they've seen women actually serving as pastors, as bishops, as archbishops, we know it works and we know that it's actually in accord with the Bible."

In the Middle East, churches in Lebanon and Syria have already conferred holy orders on women, while at least one Palestinian woman is known to serve in the US.

Ms Azar was ordained by her father Bishop Sani Azar. She insists that while his example inspired her, she never felt pressured into studying theology. "It's what I wanted, what I was called to do," she says.

As a pastor she will take on different duties including leading services and bible studies in Jerusalem and in Beit Sahour, in the occupied West Bank, for English speaking congregations.

Yoland Knell

URC News

The URC has appointed its new Chief Operating Officer

The United Reformed Church (URC) has



appointed its new Chief Operating Officer. Victoria James, who recently served as the Diocesan Secretary in the Church of England's Diocese of Portsmouth, will take up the post on 9 January.

As agreed at the 2022 General Assembly, the post replaces the Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources) role after the retirement of the Jane Baird in June. To ensure a smooth transition, Victoria will start the role on a part-time basis shadowing Jane, and will become full-time in April.

Prior to working with the Diocese of Portsmouth, Victoria practiced as a solicitor, specialising in family and matrimonial law, and civil litigation and employment law, for a number of years.

Lundie Memorial Award winners: October to December

Each month, a recipient of the Lundie Memorial Award will receive a medal, certificate, and a gift of £100 to be spent on the benefit of children and/or young people in their church, synod or local community. For more information, see bit.ly/URCLundie. Here, we recognise and celebrate October, November and December's recipients.

October - Ten-year-old Lily Hatton, from Yorkshire Synod, is October's recipient. Lily's bubbly personality is said to shine through all that she contributes to within her church family: from singing worship songs loud and clear, or her willingness to help with whatever is needed.



The ten-year-old regularly participates in 'Whizz Kids', the children's group in her church, attends all-age worship, and enjoys and excels at reading the Bible out loud bringing it to life for others to hear. After the service Lily can usually be found collecting the hymn books, stacking them carefully and helping to clear away refreshments. Lily's

cheerfulness is described as having a "positive effect on the rest of the congregation making them smile and feel as though she is a friend to all".

John Paskell, an Elder at West Melton URC who nominated Lily, described her as "a very willing, helpful young girl who is keen to contribute".

November - 14-year-old Harri Bourne, National Synod of Wales, is November's recipient.



Nominated by Rev. Julia Bartholomew, Minister and Children's Club Leader at Rhos-on-Sea URC, Harri is described as an "outstanding committed, reliable, mature and adaptable younger leader".

Harri began volunteering at 'Flying Foxes', an after-school club, to help him work towards the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. While at the group, he helps run any tech needed, sets up and tidies away without being asked and helps to serve the refreshments on offer.

Julia said: "When the opportunity to participate as a member of the service crew at an Urban Saints camp arose, Harri jumped at the chance, even giving up weekends to be trained and to attend the camp itself."

Harri hopes to donate this £100 award to Happy Faces, a local charity which helps disadvantaged children in his hometown.

December - Nine-year-old Lexi Cobbold, from Eastern Synod, is December's recipient.



Nominator Jo Patel, a local leader at Wattisfield URC, describes Lexi as "an enormous help and valuable part of the volunteer team" at the Wattisfield's Saturday Morning café.

Lexi began volunteering for the café after attending with her grandmother. Every other Saturday Lexi's whole family attends the café, participating and waiting for her to finish her 'shift'. When assisting at the café Lexi helps to set up and tidy away, serves food and drinks, and chats to those who attend.

Lexi hopes to use her £100 award money to purchase a blossom tree for the church grounds and some decorations for the café itself.

Reform Editor marks 100th edition

Congratulations to Stephen Tomkins, Editor of Reform, on reaching his 100th issue on 18 January – which coincidentally arrived on press day!



Church House colleagues helped Steve celebrate with a cuppa and lots of cake donated by Andy Jackson, Head of Communications.

Steve said of all the issues he's worked on, the URC's

50th-anniversary edition was one of his favourites and his dream interview would be with singer, songwriter and activist Billy Bragg.

Church House hosts national ecumenical gathering

Church House was host to Churches Together England's National Ecumenical Officers' (NEO) Gathering on 23 January.



Ecumenical representatives from the Church of England, Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church, Baptist Union, Salvation Army, Lutheran Church and the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch attended the event in-person and were joined online from the Society of Friends (Quakers), Church of Scotland and the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

The day-long gathering of ecumenical officers – which coincidentally took place this year during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – takes place bi-annually and was chaired by URC's Rev. Philip Brooks, Deputy General Secretary (Mission), and facilitated by Lindsey Brown, Mission Support Officer.

The day began with worship and prayer, led by Roo Stewart, Programme Officer for Church and Society, and URC representative for the Joint Public Issues Team.

Participants then openly shared some of the challenges of ecumenical working, but also the many opportunities and joys.

Seasonal superhero returns lost Christmas presents

A seasonal superhero delivered a true Christmas miracle after returning a package of festive gifts to a retired URC minister who dropped them in a river. Rev. Martin Camroux was walking to Colchester's city centre on 14 December to post Christmas presents to his mother-in-law and do some festive shopping, but disaster struck when he slipped on ice and hit his head while making his way across a Bridge, dropping his gifts into the River Colne in the process.

The gifts, which included photographs, a photo calendar and handmade book, floated away while Martin watched on dejectedly. He thought he would never see them again.



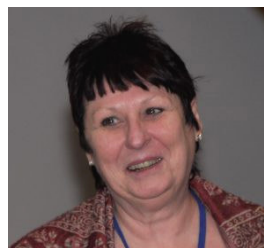
Rev. Martin Camroux and Sue Hyett

But, the following day he was left dumbstruck when he received a visit from Good Samaritan Sue Hyett, who had retrieved his soggy presents from the river. In the true spirit of Christmas, Sue tracked down Martin after embarking on a mission to find him. She knocked on doors and searched all over social media.

Martin said: "The absolutely wonderful Sue knocked on my door and returned the presents. Someday this will be a sermon story and it will be true. It is a story to restore faith in human goodness."

Synod administrator retires after 46 years' service

Patricia 'Patsi' Dickie, Administrator for the URC National Synod of Scotland, retired at the end of December after 46 years of supporting Congregational and URC local churches and people across the country. Enjoy your retirement Patsi!



Patsi is wished many good wishes for the next chapter of her life and gratitude has been expressed across the Synod for all her support. Gemma Walker is now the Synod's new administrator.

Angels unawares

I remember that day
so very well,
the day I entertained an angel
unawares.

Late one night,
a knock at the door –
the homeless, raggedy man
who stood there.

A private sigh,
a forced, public smile,
the door held wide
and a ‘do come in’.

The teacup gratefully cradled,
the food sandwiching the words:

‘Yes, I’ve come a long way.’

The voice so soft yet strong,
the gaze so piercing yet pure.

Then he stood so tall,
lightly touched my arm –
and how his touch did burn! –

‘Thank you!’

spoken so tenderly,
the blessing caressing
and encircling my soul.

‘Who are you?’ I whispered
as he disappeared from view.

But in reality I knew –
as I have since always known for sure –

that day, that night,
I had entertained an angel
unawares.

Susan Hardwick

From the Diocese of Norwich Connect booklet 5: ‘Neighbour’

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me... Just as you did so to one of the least of these... you did so to me”

Matthew 25. 35,40

Computer Corner

The 1953 North Sea Floods: Memories from Canvey Island, Essex

Interesting Video

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the infamous 1953 Floods. Canvey was one of the communities in Essex that suffered the most significant loss of life, with 58 deaths. In this video, Ray Howard MBE (aka 'Mr Canvey') and Malcolm MacGregor recall living through the floods on the island.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7jW1IImygs>

UCL Press

Useful website

Although this website was only a recent discovery. UCL Press was established as the UK's first fully open access university press in 2015. It publishes traditional peer-reviewed scholarly works, open access books and academic journals.

UCL Press makes all its books and journals available in open access form to download freely in PDF form or read online anywhere in the world. They can be downloaded from UCL Press's website or from many other platforms where they are distributed.

URL: <https://www.uclpress.co.uk>

Why is Amazon called 'Amazon'?

Interesting article

A short article giving the history of the naming of the company founded by Jeff Bezos, now the third wealthiest person in the world (according to Wikipedia).

URL: <https://www.howtogeek.com/870518/why-is-amazon-called-amazon>

Word Search – Things that fly

Inspired by the rogue Chinese weather balloon...

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
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Q	W	A	V	Z	D	H	I	M	M	C	P	K	N	N	T	C	I	R	S
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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

- AIRSHIP
- ARROW
- BALLOON
- BLIMP
- BROOMSTICK
- BULLET
- DRONE
- FLY
- GLIDER
- HELICOPTER
- JET
- KITE
- MISSILE
- ORNITHOPTER
- PIGS
- ROCKET
- SPARKS
- SQUIRREL
- SUPERMAN
- TIME

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

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- Mon 13 Feb 2023 - Art Ministry Cosy Crafts Session in hall next to Hadleigh URC from 11.00am to 1.00pm. Free, for all ages. To book, phone 07582 025163.
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- ditto - 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.
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- ditto - Afternoon Chat & Tea at Hadleigh Library in a warm and welcome environment from 2.30pm to 4.30pm, every Monday.
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- Tue 14 Feb 2023 - Kettle's On Coffee Morning at St Barnabas Church, Hadleigh, from 10.30am to 12.00 noon. Held every Tue.
-
- Wed 15 Feb 2023 - Coffee Morning at St Michael's Church, St Michael's Road, Daws Heath, from 10.00am to 11.45am. Held every Wed.
-
- Thu 16 Feb 2023 - Poetry Reading Group reading poems of TS Eliot at Hadleigh Library from 2.30pm to 3.30pm. Held 3rd Thu of every month. All welcome.
-
- Fri 17 Feb 2023 - Benfleet Art & Craft Club at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 1.00pm to 3.30pm every Friday. Established 1945. New members welcome.
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- 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.
-
- Sat 18 Feb 2023 - Love Your Library Day - Mental Health and Wellbeing at Hadleigh Library with colouring, creating, crafts and storytimes.
-
- Sat 25 Feb 2023 - Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive Slideshow - 'Snapshots of Thundersley History' at St Peter's Church Hall starting at 2.00pm (doors open 1.45pm). Admission £3.00 at the door.
-
- ditto - Southend Symphony Orchestra Concert at Kings Road URC starting at 7.30pm. Admission £12, concessions. £10, U18 £1.00.
-
- Sat 11 Mar 2023 - Coffee Morning at Hadleigh Methodist Church from 10.00am to 12 noon with drinks, cakes and bric-a-brac stall. Held 2nd Sat of month.
-
- Beat and Beans Café at St James the Less Church from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Live music with coffee, tea and snacks. Free admission. Held 2nd Sat of every month.
-
- Coffee Morning & Book Sale at St Peter's Church Thundersley from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Held 2nd Sat of every month.
-
- Sat 18 Mar 2023 - Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive Drop-In at Hadleigh Library from 10.30am to 12 noon. An opportunity to share memories, bring photos and documents for scanning, buy history books and cards.
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- Sat 25 Mar 2023 - Hadleigh Heritage talk 'Wells of Hadleigh & Daws Heath' by Terry Barclay at St James the Less Church. Starts at 11.00am with refreshments served from 10.30am. Admission at the door £3.00.
-
- Fri 7 Apr 2023 - Churches Together Good Friday United Service at Hadleigh Methodist Church at 10.15am followed by Walk of Witness around town centre.
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- Sun 9 Apr 2023 - Easter Day Sunrise Service at Hadleigh Castle starting at 6.15am.
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- Sat 15 Apr 2023 - Jumble Sale at St Michael's Church starting at 1.00pm. Admission 50p.
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More events listed on the HELIX website at <http://www.hadleighsex.info>