



*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Nelmes News



**February 2025**

Dear friends,

I have recently returned from a nationwide URC conference that was part of the ongoing Church Life Review. The conference focused on rebirth and renewal of the church (in many different forms). It was challenging. It was inspiring. It was, at times, overwhelming.

We face a lot of different challenges when we try to think about ways to grow or revitalize our churches. We live in an increasingly secular society. Public perception of churches is damaged by the bad actions of a few. For those who might be interested, we struggle to stand out among the other churches in our communities.

I don't think that our conference came to any definitive answers for the challenges we face, but we sure did come up with a bunch of reasons why we weren't growing. Many of those in attendance commented on their goals of seeing their churches survive until the next generation could assume control.

But what I want to share with you today was part of one of the Bible Studies that started each day of the conference. I share this with some risk, because what I am about to say might initially seem upsetting to many of you...but hear me out, because there is a lot of hope and possibility in this message!

We were studying Deuteronomy 30:11-20 which is the end of Moses' extended sermon to the Israelites as they stood on the banks of the Jordan preparing to enter into the Promised Land. We talked about the difference between what Moses was presenting to the Israelites (a re-covenanting with God) as opposed to a golden age of faith and a promise of permanence and stability until the end of time.

The point our study leader made was that, as Christians, we are never promised permanence...nor should we seek it for our churches. Moses

encourages the Israelites to “choose life” so that they may live. It was not a complicated thing Moses was asking...just to make a simple choice.



The same choice could be said to be facing the URC at this moment, and God would indeed encourage us to “choose life” with all the costs and joys that come with it. And that means being open to the movement of the Spirit within us and around us. That also means that things might look different in the years ahead.

And that’s okay. Because, as scary as change might be, it is in the very nature of the church to change over time. After all, if our goal is to keep things exactly as they are forever, we’ve placed our hope in permanence - and permanence leads us to idolatry, because we are then putting our faith in something that is not God.

However we feel about change in our churches, the fact is that change is coming (spoiler alert: it’s always coming). The Spirit moves where it will, and we are called to respond. So now is not a time for pessimism...but it’s not a time for optimism, either. It is a time for hope—hope that the Spirit will move among us and provide for new and continuing expressions of faith - hope that our witness and message to our community and the world is not in vain - and hope in the promise that it is God who will always have the last word.

May that sense of hope renew and revive us, strengthening us for the journey ahead.

Travelling mercies,

*Brian*

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*Thanks*

## **Church Offerings**

We are most grateful to all who have continued to support our Church. In January we received £1,460.00 in offerings and donations.

# News of Friends

I start with the very sad news that our good friend Moreen Cross passed away on Saturday 25 January. Moreen's daughter, Bev Lewis, wrote in her e-mail that evening that her mother had "peacefully passed away earlier in the day" and that her father, Peter, "is coping as well as can be expected." Moreen was, of course, a serving Elder and Church Secretary at Nelmes for many years until her severe 'vertigo' forced her to curtail some of those duties. It didn't, however, prevent her from attending Sunday Worship regularly and the slightly more comfy arm-chair will always be 'Moreen's chair'. We'll all have individual memories of Moreen but my overriding thoughts are of someone who often said just the right word of encouragement at the right time, and provided me with a supporting squeeze of the hand when most needed. She'll be sorely missed and we pray for Peter and the family as they come to terms with their loss.

Christine's husband, John, had a fall before Christmas that required an operation to mend a nasty fracture. Inevitably her Christmas was spent going backwards and forwards to the hospital and fearing for the future. When John was sent home a couple of weeks ago he was unable to walk but thankfully, in Christine's words, "the wonderfully forceful" physiotherapist has managed to get him moving short distances within the home. We pray that they continue to receive the help they need and that John's mobility gradually improves.

Hazel reports that her leg isn't so painful now and she hopes to soon be able to rejoin us for Sunday worship.

Several people said that they enjoyed the coffee and chat following the Service led by the Moderator on 5 January. The Elders agreed and, after consulting those present at the Church AGM, it's been decided that coffee or tea will be served in the Sanctuary after worship on the 1st Sunday of alternate months. The next occasion will be on 2 March.



The Elders, (and Keith, who kindly wished to continue to contact those previously on his pastoral list) take their pastoral duties very seriously and each meeting starts with prayers for those in need. We are aware that illness and mobility issues sadly prevent many friends from regularly attending Sunday Worship but please always know that you're not forgotten.

*Jill Hilton*

## Anna

*Luke 2:36-38*

All those years in the temple,  
In waiting widowhood.

All those years  
Worshipping, wondering,  
What had it all been about?

Seven years of marriage  
Then this lifetime alone,



And yet  
There was this sense of purpose,  
Of Spirit-significance  
Impending,  
Then there He was,  
The child.

And Simeon sang  
Of salvation and sorrow,  
Of rising and falling,  
Of light and loss,  
Of revelation and piercing.

I gazed at the child,  
Glimpsed the glory of God  
And gave thanks  
For the years.

*Daphne Kitching*

# Candlemas

## The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

In bygone centuries, Christians said their last farewells to the Christmas season on Candlemas, 2 February. This is exactly 40 days after Christmas Day itself. In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary,



like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present Him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was 'purified'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

So, where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day - hence the name, Candlemas.

The story of how Candlemas began can be found in Luke 2:22-40. Simeon's great declaration of faith and recognition of who Jesus was is the Nunc Dimittis, which is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer in the West. But in medieval times, the Nunc Dimittis was mostly used just on this day, during the distribution of candles before the Eucharist. Only gradually did it win a place in the daily prayer life of the Church.

### **Should the Churches agree on a common date for Easter?**

That is the question for the leaders of the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, as this year (2025) marks the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople believes that 2025 is a 'golden opportunity' for Catholic and Orthodox believers to finally agree on a joint date for Easter, because this year also brings a 'fortunate alignment' of the Easter dates of both



churches. “It is indeed regrettable that 1700 years later, we are still debating this issue,” he says.

Any agreement would only pertain to the date of Easter’s celebration. It would not involve any joint liturgical practices. Those would require ecclesial communion between the churches, something which does not yet exist.



In 2016 the Archbishop of Canterbury held talks with Coptic Pope Tawadros II in Cairo, when he hoped that a unified date for Easter might be achieved within ten years. He commented that, for the C of E, either the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in April would be acceptable.

## That Marmalade Colour in Cats

It has been a mystery for cat lovers everywhere: what makes some cats ginger? Now – after 60 years of searching – scientists have good news. They have finally found the chunk of DNA that is responsible. The so-called Garfield gene is Arhgap36.

Arhgap36 has been hiding away on the X chromosome, of which males have one copy while females have two. When the Arhgap36 gene is present on a cat’s X chromosome, it forces the pigment-making cells in the skin to produce more pheomelanin, leading to the orange morph.



It seems that if a male inherits this gene from either parent, he will be Garfield-ginger, while a female will usually turn calico or tortoiseshell. This may sound simple, but it took two teams of scientists, one at Stanford University in the US and one at Kyushu University in Japan, to find the Garfield gene independently, thereby solving a 60-year mystery.

# That Big Freeze of 1955

Seventy years ago, from early February 1955 and well into March, a Big Freeze took place in Britain. Deep snow and freezing temperatures caused havoc, with many places cut off. The RAF dropped food and medical supplies to affected areas, while thousands of sheep died from exposure. Although the winters of 1947 and 1963 have attracted more publicity, 1955 saw severe weather in most parts of Britain, as well as in other parts of Europe and North America.

Snow fell in many areas of the UK from 11 February onwards, with night frosts gradually worsening and blizzards developing over the north of Scotland, where the RAF scrambled to do several rescues: in Caithness the



response by emergency services was known as Operation Snowdrop. An exhausting search for a postman from Thurso, who went missing in the deep snow, eventually led to his being found at a remote farm where he had sought refuge.

Several snowploughs were stranded, and the heavy snow spread gradually south, reaching as far as the Scillies and the Channel Islands. In North Norfolk there were 10ft drifts on the coast road, and Lancashire had its worst storm for 14 years. Devon, Cornwall and the Peak District had similar experiences. More than 70 roads in Britain were blocked by snow, according to the Automobile Association, and hundreds of vehicles were abandoned in snowdrifts. Many parts of the country were cut off from essential supplies, and rail travel was disrupted. Church attendance was also hit, of course.

Temperatures in some places fell below 28F (-3C) – the lowest for 30 years, and February’s record UK minimum was set. That year also experienced the last May snowfall of the century, but despite all that, there was plenty of sunshine, and as a total contrast, there was a drought and a heatwave the following summer.

*Tim Lenton*



# The World of P G Wodehouse

Fifty years ago, on 14 February 1975, P G Wodehouse died. The well-loved British-born comic novelist, short story writer, lyricist and playwright is best known as the creator of Jeeves.

He was always a prolific writer, publishing more than 90 books, 450 plays, 200 short stories and much else between 1902 and 1974. He had an unusual first few years, being brought up by relative strangers in England while his parents lived in Hong Kong. He later went to Dulwich College, with which he formed a close attachment.

Wodehouse's genius was primarily in his writing; in person he was described as "dull," and was certainly very shy. Baptised an Anglican, he had an agnostic outlook: Evelyn Waugh once said that Christianity didn't really apply in his work because he – or his characters – had never left the Garden of Eden. He wrote sympathetically about "pious but fallible" curates, vicars and bishops, and his work revealed an unexpectedly deep knowledge of Scripture.

Born in Guildford, he moved to France for tax reasons in 1934 and was later taken prisoner by the advancing Germans in 1940. After his eventual release he made the naïve mistake of making five broadcasts on German radio to the USA, which had not yet entered the war. The broadcasts were humorous and apolitical, but they provoked some anger in Britain, to which he never returned. Wodehouse took US citizenship in 1955, while retaining his British one. He had always loved America, and his biographers suggested that this "exile" may have benefited his writing, helping him to go on describing an idealised England, rather than the harsher reality of the post-war years.



He died in Southampton, Long Island, New York, a month after he was made a Knight in the Order of the British Empire (KBE).

*Tim Lenton*

Brian will be spending some of his office time in our local cafes and coffee shops in the coming months. You are welcome to stop by to say 'hello,' stay for a chat, or just share some light conversation over a refreshing beverage.



**All sessions will take place from 9:30 to 11.00 am**

**Hornchurch:** *Costa Coffee* (across from Sainsbury's)  
 Wednesday 19 February  
 Wednesday 19 March

**Upminster:** *Costa Coffee* (across from Trinity URC)  
 Tuesday 25 February  
 Wednesday 26 March

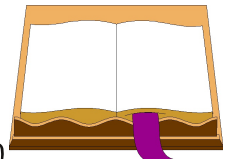


Shane Banda  
 Barbara Ashworth

3 February  
 3 March

*Sunday Readings ....*

<b>2 Feb</b>	Jer 1:4-10	Lk 4:21-30	1 Cor 13:1-13
<b>9 Feb</b>	Mal 31:1-4	Lk 5:1-11	1 Cor 15:1-11
<b>16 Feb</b>	Jer 17:5-10	Lk 6:17-26	1 Cor 15:12-20
<b>23 Feb</b>	Gen 45:3-11, 15	Lk 6:27-38	1 Cor 15:35-38, 42-50
<b>2 March</b>	Ex 34:29-35	Lk 9:28-38	2 Cor 3:12-4:2



*This month's worship leaders ....*

**Claire Bottone** and **Barry Smith** are Elders of our Church.  
**Brian Buschlil** is a minister within the Heath, Havering & Forest Group.



Items for March Nelmes News need to be submitted by 21 February.

Publication date: **1 March.**

# Make a note in your diary



Feb

2 11.15 am Morning Worship: Mr Barry Smith

M 3 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays

9 11.15 am Morning Worship: Mrs Claire Bottone

M 10 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays

Tu 11 9.45 am Second Tuesday Prayers 

W 12 5.30 pm Evening Communion Service at Nelmes



16 11.15 am Morning Worship: Revd Brian Busckill

M 17 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays

W 19 9.30 am Cuppa with the Minister: Costa Coffee, Hornchurch  
7.30 pm Elders' Meeting 



23 11.15 am Worship with Communion: Revd Brian Busckill


24 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays

Tu 25 9.30 am Cuppa with the Minister: Costa Coffee, Upminster

March

2 11.15 am Morning Worship: Mr Keith Finch  
followed by tea or coffee

M 3 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays

Tu 4 9.45 am First Tuesday Prayers 



9 11.15 am Morning Worship: Revd Brian Busckill

M 10 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays

W 12 5.30 pm Evening Communion Service at Nelmes



16 11.15 am Morning Worship: Revd Martin Wheadon

M 17 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays

W 19 9.30 am Cuppa with the Minister: Costa Coffee, Hornchurch  
7.30 pm Elders' Meeting 



23 Nelmes Gift Day

11.15 am Worship with Communion: Revd Brian Busckill

Contact [keithf2006@btinternet.com](mailto:keithf2006@btinternet.com) for zoom details



# Nelmes United Reformed Church

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### Sunday Worship

Morning Worship for all ages at 11.15 am.  
Communion Service on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month

### Blue Sky Mondays

7.00 pm: A quiet hour to spend time with the Lord

### Activities in the Halls

Nelmes Pre-School	School-days	08:00 - 15:00
Indian Dance	Monday	17:00 - 19:00
Jump Fit	Tuesday	19:00 - 20:00
Nelmes Womens Institute	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday	12:30 - 16:30
EP & AG Residents Association	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday	20:00 - 22:30
Beavers, Cubs & Scouts	Friday	16:30 - 21:30
Woodcarvers' Group	2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday	10:30 - 14:30

*Nelmes URC is part of the Heath, Havering & Forest group of Churches*  
[www.heathandhaveringurc.co.uk](http://www.heathandhaveringurc.co.uk)