



KINDLE

**Newsletter of the Romford
United Reformed Churches at
Western Road and Heaton Way**

September 2023

Ministers' Letter

Dear Friends

I hope you have enjoyed the summer despite the indifferent weather we've experienced. It has been a pleasant time, I think.

I'm sure we have all seen with horror the pictures of the destruction caused by the wildfires as well as the devastation caused by torrential rain in parts of Europe and around the world.

As we move into a new academic year for the teachers, students and pupils among us, the church moves into Creation time. A period for us to focus on God's creation, our stewardship of creation and the enjoyment of creation for all people. This year the theme for the time, which ends on 4th October, is "let justice and peace flow".

Let Justice and Peace flow, both justice and peace are much needed in our world today. Climate justice, food justice and tax justice are some of the phrases that come to mind when I think of justice. The work of charities such as Christian Aid and the Trussell Trust help us to think about some of these justice issues in our own lives and how we can campaign and support change as we celebrate Creation time and our impact on the created world.

Justice and peace are very closely linked and some verses from a hymn by Brian Wren came to mind.

Say 'No' to peace,
if what they mean by peace
is the quiet misery of hunger,
the frozen stillness of fear,
the silence of broken spirits,
the unborn hopes of the oppressed.

Tell them that peace
is the shouting of children at play,
the babble of tongues set free,
the thunder of dancing feet,
and a father's voice singing.

Peace is a tree,
growing from the soil of justice,
watered by the rain of love.

Brian Wren (born 1936)
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I hope we will all celebrate Creation Time, enjoying God's wonderful creation and seeking to ensure that our stewardship is sustainable and supportive of justice and peace.

Alison



Shelia Burrell

It was with sadness that we learned of the passing of Shelia Burrell nee Tack long time secretary at Western Road on Thursday 5th August 2023.

Dennis Riches



Congratulations to Dennis who celebrated his 100th birthday on Monday 28th August.

The Church would like to commemorate Dennis life and many years of unstinting service. by planting an apple tree in the memorial garden. This needs to be done in the winter and the church will arrange a planting ceremony one Sunday.

Dennis writes.

This note is a very heartfelt expression of gratitude to all my kind and thoughtful friends in Romford U R C for all the individual 100th Birthday cards and those who signed the beautiful card from the Church. It means a lot to me to realise that the 47 years I endeavoured to be as useful and helpful, within my capabilities to both the Church and the Trustees, is acknowledged.

Obviously, congregations have declined dramatically during my lifetime, and I am pleased to say the Romford U R C has weathered the storm more successfully than many due I think to dedicated and able members who willingly gave, and still give their time and best efforts. I hope to be of service to the Trustees for a little longer. May it all so continue.

In closing, I have enjoyed the jobs I have done in the Church. To quote James 2, 17. "If faith does not lead to action, it is a worthless thing."

May God keep you all in his care.

Dennis.

Brownie news

Linda Marriott has decided now to hang up her uniform for one last time.

Linda has supported Brownies and Rainbows for numerous years too many to count. During this time, she has been a great asset to the group offering a listening ear, supporting the children and became a mainstay for the Brownies and Rainbows.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Linda personally and from the groups for all her hard work and dedication.

Linda, I will certainly miss you and the support you have shown me personally and for all the 'girls' that you have helped.

You have become a dear friend and I wish you all the best.



Tracey (Brown Owl).



Rev'd Ann Woodhurst

Ann retires this month. There will be a celebration of Ann's ministry on 23rd September at Nelves at 3pm. If you would like to attend, we need to give number by the 10th September. Please let Fiona know if you plan to attend. If you would like to make your own individual donation, please let Fiona have this as soon as possible.

Regular Events

- MON** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Line Dancing 9.30am-12pm
U3A Cultural Group (2nd Monday)10am-12pm: Parent & Toddler 1pm – 2.30pm
- TUE** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Line Dancing 9.30am-12pm:
Havering Women's Aid 10-12.30: Coffee Time in the Foyer 11am – 12pm
Trinovante 1.30-3.30pm: Retired Gents 2-3.30pm: Havering Women's Aid 1-3pm
Alcoholics Anonymous 7.30 – 10pm: Yoga 7-8.30pm Badminton 8-10pm
- WEDS** Playgroup 9am -12pm: FL exercise 1.30-2.30pm: U3A Craft Group 1.30-3.30pm
Dementia Music & Social Club 1.30-3.30pm: Rhodes Arts Drama 5-8pm
- THUR** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Rainbows & Brownies 4.30-7.20pm
Western Road Ladies 7- 9.30pm: The Liberty Singers 7-9.30pm
- FRI** Playgroup 9am - 12pm: Crafternoon 1.30 - 3.30pm:
Coffee Time in the Foyer 11am – 12pm
Boys' Brigade 6pm - 10pm: Street Pastors overnight base 9pm – 1am
- SAT** Renee's Dance School 9am –1.30pm: Card Club (1st Saturday) 2-5pm
Romford Embroiderers (2nd Saturday)1- 4pm
- SUN** Morning Service 10am – 11am

Activities News

We welcome Kharis Church an evangelical youth group for 15- to 25-year-olds who now worship in the sanctuary here Tuesday evenings.

We also welcome Aria Tuition, who will start from the end of this month giving children extra tuition in English, Maths and Science on Monday evenings.

Advance notice: Following last year's successful Christmas Tree Festival we shall be repeating it again on Saturday 18th November, so please start thinking about designing your group's tree entry.

The H&H Communion services will be starting again in September and will be held once a month on a Wednesday evening at 5.30pm.

The dates for this service are: -

14th September -Nelmes United Reformed Church

11th October - venue TBC

8th November - Romford United Reformed Church



Sunday 1st October 3pm A Service of Thanksgiving for the life and witness of Heaton Way United Reformed Church

GROUP GROUP SPOTLIGHT

The Liberty Singers is an enthusiastic four-part adult community choir. Our repertoire ranges from classical pieces and carols, through folk songs to songs from the shows, musicals and pop songs. We are currently around 27 members strong singing under the direction of Mac our music director and Carol our piano accompanist. We are always looking for new members and are open to anybody with a love of music but while an ability to read music helps, it is not essential.

We meet every Thursday evening in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, from 7.30pm to 9.30pm for practice in the Upper Hall at Western Road URC. You are more than welcome to come along and see if this could be something for you. There's no charge to come and see what we are like. We don't bite! Alternatively, you could either come to hear us at the November Christmas Tree festival at Western Road or our Christmas Concert Friday 15th December at Trinity URC Upminster. Put it in your diary now.

We currently perform two concerts each year, a Summer Concert at Western Road URC church in July and a Christmas Concert at Trinity URC church in Upminster. For further information contact either Pam via pamelanuttall@hotmail.com or Graham via grahamwdavies@gmail.com .

A Big Thank You and Update

Seven years ago, on this first week in September, many of you were kind enough to pray for my grandson, Kristiaan, as he suddenly suffered from heart failure on his fourteenth Birthday. The same day he was transferred from Addenbrookes Hospital to Gt. Ormond Street to be placed on an ECMO Life Support Machine. For three weeks we were not sure of the eventual outcome. Thanks to expert clinicians and prayers, he survived and following a lengthy period of recuperation he returned to school, resumed his studies and his life. This week he will be 21 and it seemed appropriate to give you an update on where he is now. He is starting Year 3 of his degree course in Mechanical Engineering at Leeds University and at 6'6", powerfully built, he is quite a formidable force in the University American Football Team (the one in Green). Miracles do still happen with a little expert help.



More recently you have extended your prayers to his sister Saskia as she faced horrendous treatments following her diagnosis of leukaemia, in addition to her diabetes. Following her bone marrow transplant and an eighteen-month period of recovery she too is resuming her studies, not, as originally at Sheffield University, but at the University of Eindhoven in the Netherlands where she will continue to study Mechanical Engineering. Her father is Dutch, and she has always held a Dutch Passport. Fortunately, the course is in English!

For information I also include her last year's birthday request as some of you may have children or grandchildren who could register as donors even if my age range are unable to do so.



'For my birthday this year, I'm NOT asking for monetary donations to any charity (although obviously, if you have the means to do so there are thousands of fantastic charities for you to choose from). Instead, I'm asking you to register as a stem cell donor, a cause that means a great deal to me. I've only made it to my 23rd birthday because a kind stranger in Poland was registered on the donor database, and I hope that you'll consider registering as a way of celebrating with me.

You might say "Oh, I'd do it for a sibling/parent/child/relative," but did you know that a full sibling has only a 25% chance of being a good enough match for a successful transplant, and after you've exhausted those options (if you have them in the first place), other relatives are basically as likely to be a match as a stranger on the street?

If you are aged between 16-30, Anthony Nolan are looking for donors (particularly males and those from minority ethnic backgrounds): <https://www.anthonynolan.org>

If you are aged up to 55, you can become a donor through dkms: <http://www.dkms.org.uk/>

If not, spread the word.' Those who were at Café Church last Sunday could be 'Angels' and respond but clearly, as a family, we are very grateful over recent years for our Clinician Angels and those who prayed for us. Our thanks to you all.

Pauline Collier

*"When we work, we work. When we pray, God works."
—James Hudson*

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-9

“That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: ‘A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.’”

When I was preparing a talk for a recent service at Heaton Way, it occurred to me that an ultimately rewarding gardening experience of mine could provide an alternative illustration of this parable.

I had moved several plants around in my garden but had nothing suitable to plant in a bare patch of soil at the front of a border between two perennials when I remembered being given a packet of Orange King, a delicate Californian poppy.

Perfect, I thought and wondered how many of the seeds to sow.

They were very fine and hard to count so, considering that birds would eat some and not all were likely to germinate, I decide to throw the whole lot in all the gaps along that part of the border.



True enough, the birds seemingly had a feast but after a while tiny some seedlings started to appear in patches. I was then away for a few days and returned to find some had shrivelled to nothing where the ground was stony and too shallow for seeds to survive without regular watering but several were developing into sturdy little plants.

Shortly after, my 5-year-old grandson, Ben came joyfully in from the garden to proudly announce that he had done some weeding for me!

A quick survey of the area confirmed my fear, some weeds and most of the tiny seedlings were now uprooted and dying in the garden refuge sack.

Ben had missed a couple of the larger seedlings and I consoled myself that there would still be a few orange flowers on the remaining delicate silvery foliage.

But imagine my surprise when recently I spotted some beautiful orange flowers growing between plants in areas slightly away from the original planting area. The notes I was using to prepare the talk include this comment: “The Sower needs hope to sow. In other words, what leads him to sow the seeds is the hope that the seed will bear fruit in the future. God shares his hope among his people, his hope is scattered across the world. And every we time we share his Word, his hope, live kindly and well alongside all the folk we meet and share our lives with, we too are God’s seeds of hope for his world.” *Pope Francis*

When we look at declining church numbers, it can be tempting to lose hope. But this parable, my disappointment with remaining bare patches of soil in the border, and my subsequent discovery of healthy plants in unusual places, are a reminder that some seed will bear fruit, often in unexpected places.

So, let’s not be so disappointed over the bare patches but celebrate the opportunity to share God’s seeds of hope wherever we go. It may not increase our Sunday church attendance but who knows where those seeds may develop and flourish in lives that have been touched by the hope, we can share in the way we live and interact with folk we are ‘thrown alongside’ in our daily lives.

Jill Hunt

“Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.” –Saint Augustine

There are almost two million Christians in Sudan – a substantial nu population of 46 million.

Despite Sudan making positive strides towards religious freedom in recent years, persecution of Christians remains at a high level in the country, and there are fears this will worsen following the military coup in October 2021.

The seizure of power occurred following an escalation in hostilities between conservative Islamists who want a military government and those who toppled Omar al Bashir in April 2019. The overthrow of al Bashir resulted in a transitional government, with power shared between the military and civilian leaders. After mass protests led to the resignation of civilian prime minister Abdallah Hamdok in January 2022, there are fears that Sudan will return to the authoritarian years of the former president – which could also mean that the death penalty for leaving Islam, which was abolished in 2021, could be reinstated.

Even without the coup, social attitudes towards Christians have not changed, despite the positive steps made under the transitional government. This is especially the case in areas outside the capital Khartoum. Christians are still vulnerable to extreme persecution in public and private life, particularly if they have converted from Islam, and the government hasn't put real protections in place for Christians and other religious minorities. For example, even with the change in official status, confiscated churches and lands have yet to be returned to their Christian owners, and trying to build new churches is still extremely difficult.

Meet 'Abdul'

“There are not equal rights for Christians to build their churches the way Muslims have the full right to build their mosques.” **ABDUL, A SUDANESE CHRISTIAN**

Christian women and girls in Sudan, particularly converts, are vulnerable to rape, forced marriage and domestic violence for their faith. On a broader level, Islamic extremists have reportedly kidnapped Sudanese girls for marriage and/or sexual slavery. Inside the home, converts may also be isolated to reduce the embarrassment and shame of the conversion on the family, as well as to ensure they cannot meet with other Christians. Converts will also be denied inheritance and, if they're already married, divorced from their husbands.



Church leaders are frequently targeted, including reports of drugs being falsely planted on them. Christian men and boys, particularly converts, are vulnerable to beatings, imprisonment or even murder. Converts may be kicked out of their house and shunned by their families, and face intense persecution in the workplace.

Sudan has re-entered the top ten on the World Watch List after dropping out from 2020-2022. In October 2021, the military effectively conducted a coup that ended the power-sharing agreement with the civilian members of the transitional government. In August 2022, the government established a community police which resembles the disbanded morality police. Power is now firmly held in the hands of the military. Many believe that Sudan will return to the authoritarian years of ousted leader Omar al-Bashir; this could undo the positive steps made towards religious freedom under the transitional government.

In general, persecution of Christians has intensified, both in terms of violence and in the pressures they face.

“However, many blessings we expect from God, His infinite liberality will always exceed all our wishes and our thoughts.” – John Calvin

Ministry And Mission Fund
Annual Letter to all Local Churches, Members and Adherents

Dear Friends,

When will normal service be resumed?

As we are writing this letter and closing off the URC's accounts for 2022, the country is still torn with industrial disputes, mostly notably with Health Service workers, rail industry workers, teachers etc. etc. Whatever your view as to the wisdom or justice of such action, we suspect all of us are affected by the disruption to some degree.

In church life too, are we back to "normal life"? Some churches no doubt have returned to something like their pre-Covid level of activity and attendance numbers. Quite a few have recommenced their activity but find their numbers have reduced. Some churches have found re-opening too difficult and have decided to close.

Whatever the "new normal" was to be, we suggest its arrival has (like many trains) been disrupted, delayed, or cancelled all together.

The URC's finance officers had concerns that the late arrival of the return to normality would impact very significantly on the giving to the M&M Fund in 2022.

However, the churches responded magnificently and the giving to M&M was £600,000 ahead of budget. It

was also only 2.5% down on 2021's result. So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2022 in full, and thank you to all those who, in adversity, continued to treat the M&M Fund as the first priority and paid what they could.

With normal service not yet resumed, 2023 is not going to be an easy year either. We now have the added disruption of high inflation, pushing up wages and overhead costs. As the Spirit directs and as our means allow, can the churches once more respond to the call of our gracious, loving and ever-generous God?

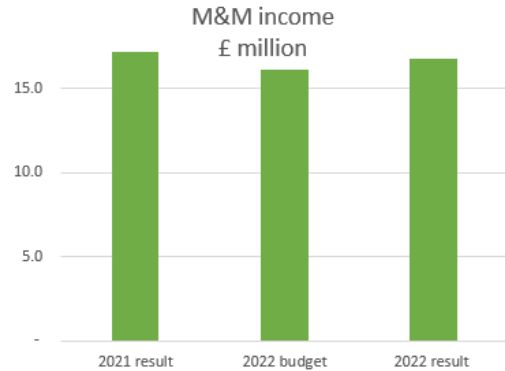
Again, thank you all!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Ian Hardie (Immediate Past Treasure)

Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer)



Prayer

God who loves without condition, help us to reflect your love.
Valuing all people as equal, seeing them as you see them.
Full of dignity and worth.
May we hold firmly to these values, striving always for systems that are fair.
Bless the NHS, bless all who offer loving service,
Bless all who will be cared for today.

AMEN

from URC daily [devotions](#)

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