

**BEXLEY UNITED
REFORMED
CHURCH**



**AUTUMN
SEPTEMBER 2024**

50p

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Disclaimer

This Magazine is published by Bexley United Reformed Church but the views expressed are not necessarily those of the Church.

Deadline for the next Magazine will be
Sunday 22nd September 2024

**BEXLEY URC CHURCH HALL
& RUXLEY ROOM**
Junction Bexley High Street and Hurst Road
Facilities include a Stage and a Fitted Kitchen
Reasonable rates include Heating and Lighting

Inquiries to: Letting Secretary 07702 185702
elliestocker@talktalk.net

The Minister's Pastoral Letter
For September

Dear Friends

A new school year begins. We bless the children, adults and schools of our community and wish everyone growth in intelligence, knowledge, respect, friendship and solidarity with one another.

Over the next few months we will be introducing some changes in our church. Firstly, if children are present on Sunday mornings, we will have a red box with a story and a craft to share during the service. The preacher of the day or an elder will suggest that a volunteer from the congregation take the red box and lead the child or children into the area provided to look after them.

The second project is to set up regular exhibitions in the church so that we can engage in conversation with visitors or anyone we wish to connect with. The exhibitions will be on a biblical theme, general or local history, art, etc. I welcome suggestions for new themes.

Thirdly, we will try to establish links with families in the neighbourhood and, if possible, a toddlers' group, to provide a service to them, but also to be in contact with these families.

These three projects are relatively traditional little things that I'd like to set up with your help.

Beyond these three small, very concrete projects, and as a result of the reflections of our Pastorate Away Day last June, I would like to work with you on a more ambitious project, which involves the creation of a Prayer Group in which we will seek to discern how we can reconnect our congregations with the people of our community.

We are the heirs and guardians of a precious tradition – the Church. It is a challenge for each of us to keep it alive and available for others to experience faith. Good things that we have known and enjoyed in the

past may not exist in the future. In God's world everything is transformed. He himself calls us to transformation, as the Apostle Paul says:

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2)

For sure, the Spirit of God will guide us towards fresh expressions of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world, as he has done since the beginning of Christianity.

This new school year promises to be very exciting. I wish you all much enthusiasm and happiness in activities we share.

With every blessing, Rodolphe

Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal
Minister of Bexley URC, Emmanuel United Church Sidcup
& Geddes Place URC

Services for September 2024 at 10.30am except when stated

	<u>Minister</u>	<u>Elder</u>
Sunday 1 st September	Valerie Loader	Mavis
Sunday 8 th September	Tony Ball	Keith
Sunday 15 th September	Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard – Kowal	Philip
	Communion	
Sunday 22 nd September	Philip Shepherd	Ann
Sunday 29 th September	John Twidale	Tony

Communion Fund

The Communion Fund is for those who are known to us who are in need. Gifts may be placed in the box near the entrance of the church on any Sunday whether or not there is a Communion Service.

Philip Shepherd

Family News – on our prayer calendar for September are:-

Sunday 1 st	Peter & Patricia Linder, Barbara & John Johnstone
Sunday 8 th	Ellie Stocker, Tony Ball
Sunday 15 th	Margaret Hunt(Sals), The Bensons, Angela Davis
Sunday 22 nd	Ian & Debbie Markey & Family, Dorothy Down
Sunday 29 th	Val Howe, Linda Wells, Ann Markey

Please also remember in your prayers – those experiencing difficult times for themselves or loved ones. May God bless them with His spiritual presence.

Pause for Thought

Sunday 1 st	Stephanie	Sunday 22 nd	Keith
Sunday 8 th	Essie	Sunday 29 th	Linda
Sunday 15 th	Suzanne		

Flowers for September

Sunday 1 st	Pam Collins	Sunday 22 nd	Ann
Sunday 8 th	Church	Sunday 29 th	Bee
Sunday 15 th	Mavis		

TABLE TOP SALE

SATURDAY 7th SEPTEMBER

10.00am – 12 noon

Free Admission

Light Refreshments

HARVEST SUPPER

SATURDAY 21st SEPTEMBER

7.00pm – 9.30pm

Tickets: £8.00

Incl. Supper

Ham Salad

Fruit Pie & Cream

**Tickets are available
from Social Committee**

SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT

SUNDAY 15th SEPTEMBER

3.00pm – 4.30pm

DOUG SNOW

On the Organ

All Welcome

Thank you to everyone who supported the cream tea held on Sunday 18th August in the Church Hall in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. We have been able to send £420.00 to the charity because of your generosity

Letter from a serving elder

At the time of writing it has been a tough week. The Olympics was in the second week, but on our streets were riots causing us to question immigration, and the role of the police in allowing law breaking on our streets to happen. Now the Olympics are over, news is focused on war in Gaza, West Bank, Ukraine, and nations trying to calm Iran down into not going into conflict.

The closing ceremony of the Olympics showed nations of young people celebrating together, eyes wide and full of hope. The world was celebrating, not fighting. Sport is conflict, there are winners, disputes are dealt with through committee ruling, we go back to the laws of the game, and sports competitors go on to try again, and improve themselves. Friendship between competitors grows.

The Olympic goodwill will be over after the paralympics. What then? Conflict and mistrust?

On Sunday 11th August, Mavis took us through the creation of our world and only recently, after the Apollo 8 view of the Earth from orbiting the Moon, did we realise how precious it is and we sang our hearts out thanking God for what God has created.

I do not believe God wants us to be warring, or to have a monotonous boring life. We also read on Sunday from John 15

John 15 ,10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

As I looked round as we said the grace to each other I could feel the love in our congregation. It is up to us to expand this joy to others outside the church.

Just remember Matthew 28 says **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So as we go out into the world we are not on our own. God is with us, when we drive in bus lanes, loose contact lenses, find our bus pass out of date, (I said it had been a tough week), probably tutting I could do better, but God is with us also when we help others, say hello to strangers, create smiles in others, and doing our best to be wide eyed to a wonderful future, and do what we can to reduce conflict.

Tony Ball

Sunday Afternoon Concerts

On Sunday 18th July we enjoyed a very different concert brought to us by pupils of the Sevan Habib School of Music. Twenty seven pupils took part aged between 7 years and 17+years, and we were delighted to welcome them and their parents, grandparents and friends to a most enjoyable afternoon.

The children were lovely, they all looked very smart in school uniforms, fancy dress or national dress and were amazingly confident. They sang or played the piano individually or as duets, choosing songs or nursery rhymes or selections from classical music and all to the highest standards

Afterward our minister, Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal, presented each performer with a winner's medal and a group photo was taken which you can see below.

We hope we shall see and hear them again next year, when I am sure they will have made even greater progress.

Mavis

Delivering the Message

There are several ways of delivering a message but which is the best way? Do you remember the Sandwich Board men, who used to walk around the streets of London with bold words on the boards which they carried front and back? I remember they sometimes had quotations from the Bible eg, 'The wages of sin is death', or 'The end of the world is nigh'. Such slogans were not guaranteed to cheer up the passing commuters and I wonder just how much they registered with those who bothered to read them.

I often see men from a local church at Bell Corner in Dartford, who shout out passages from the Bible to people walking by. It appears that no one seems to take the slightest bit of notice. I often wonder why these men, who undoubtedly have good intentions, don't relay the parables of Jesus, who engaged the crowd by telling stories, often designed to make people stop and think.

I am confident that members of our congregation could recall some of the parables of Jesus, including The Sower, The Faithful Servant and The Good Samaritan. These were good stories about situations to which Jesus' listeners could relate. However, Jesus was also telling them something about the expectations God has of his people and just as importantly, what God was like. The God they knew from the Synagogue was a fearsome God, but Jesus was talking about a God, who was like the father in the parable of the prodigal son and prepared to forgive his dissolute son.

Jesus was a brilliant teacher and a master storyteller. The stories may have been perfectly clear on the surface, but they were also designed to give the members of the crowd the opportunity to ponder about the real meaning of the story and perhaps gain a new perspective on life.

When you next come across a street preacher will you stop and listen, quickly walk past or if necessary, remind the speaker how Jesus communicated to his audience?

John Johnstone

Legal and Democratic Services

Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street

Bexleyheath DA6 7AT

020 8303 7777

www.bexley.gov.uk

Direct Dial: 020 3045 4214

Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations used for elections

The Council is required by legislation and guidance issued by the Electoral Commission to review the polling districts and places at which electors vote in parliamentary elections.

Local authorities must consider the accessibility of potential polling places and polling stations to ensure that:

all electors in a constituency area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

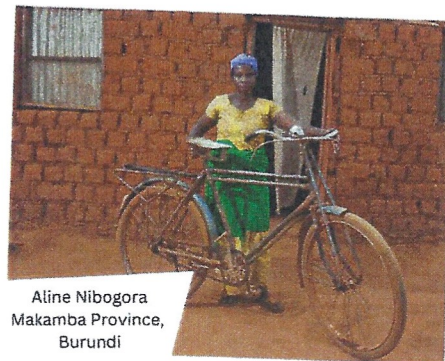
Every person should be able to vote without facing barriers. By identifying and understanding the physical, psychological and information barriers disabled people may face when voting, Returning Officer will be better able to make appropriate arrangements to help support them. We hope that you will be able to help us by sharing your views.

The formal review starts on August with the publication of initial proposals on which we wish to hear your views and a range of other information. The address is:

<https://www.bexley.gov.uk/consultations/review-polling-districts-and-polling-places-2024-consultation>.

You can complete the survey on the website or e-mail us at:

consultation.elections@bexley.gov.uk



Aline Nibogora
Makamba Province,
Burundi

24 June 2024

Dear Friends

Thank you so much for your incredible support, prayers and generosity this Christian Aid Week. Your gift of £200.00 on behalf of Bexley URC will help families around the world to transform their own lives. We acknowledge receipt of donations totalling £367.30 - £200 from church collections and £167.30 from other CAW events.

In Burundi, you can see the lasting difference gifts like yours make for people like Aline. Aline felt the full force of extreme poverty when an early marriage ended in abuse and violence. Separated from her six children, she was forced to sleep on the streets of Burundi, pushed to the brink of survival.

But Aline transformed her life with a little help from Christian Aid and our partners in Burundi. Aline accessed vital training and support that helped her nurture a small income that enabled her to buy and grow nutritious food, build a home to call her own, and return her children to her side.

Aline can now look ahead: she hopes to expand her business and secure financial security for her family as she gets older. She says **'This is not a dream. It is a plan, and I will do it. I am a woman who is an achiever.'**

It's thanks to people like you that this transformation has been possible for Aline and her family. Thank you Bexley URC for your life changing gift.

Aline says **'When we see Christian Aid, we feel comforted; we feel we are not alone.'** Thank you again for standing alongside our global neighbours this Christian Aid Week.

With heartfelt thanks,

Your Christian Aid Week Team

Reference: OR229074

If you'd like to either change the way we contact you, or stop hearing from us all together, please call **020 7523 2493** or email info@christian-aid.org.

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Email: info@christian-aid.org • caid.org.uk

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Jerusalem Prayer for Palestine & Israel — Christian Leader, Jerusalem



Christian leaders in Jerusalem issued this joint prayer in 2014 to be used in services of worship on Sunday and during the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, usually observed in September.

‘Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.’ — *Hebrews 13.3*

We pray for those who are in prison all over the world, those easily forgotten.

We pray especially for the political prisoners of Palestine and Israel.

We pray for the sick among them and those who cannot handle the hardship of a prison cell, for the children and women who are mistreated behind bars.

We remember those left behind, the families who are bereaved as their beloved ones are sent to prison.

We pray for inner transformation for those who committed crimes, and in need of conversion.

We pray for hearts and minds that are haunted by hatred and fear, that we will soon find peace and reconciliation in souls and in the societies.

This region aches with so much troubles of the body and soul, both presently and in history. In Palestine and Israel today many lack freedom and too many are behind bars. For too long injustice, violence and fear have shaped this region.

We pray and ask for human treatment and justice for all, as we are all children of God.

We pray for a just peace settlement and reconciliation, a peace where there will be no more political prisoners behind bars and where harmony will prevail in the hearts of all the peoples of this region.

We pray for God’s mercy, for freedom for those in shackles and for peace in our time.

As we observe this week with our brothers and sisters from churches all over the world we pray:

*Do not hold against us the sins of past generations;
may your mercy come quickly to meet us,
for we are in desperate need.*

*Help us, God our Saviour,
for the glory of your name;*

*deliver us and forgive our sins
for your name's sake.*

*Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"*

*Before our eyes, make known among the nations
that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.*

*May the groans of the prisoners come before you;
with your strong arm preserve those condemned to die.*

Psalms 79, 8-11

© Worship Words

Prayer for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

by Reuben Watt (Commitment for Life Prayer Partners)

Heavenly God,

We pray as a loving family, seeking your divine presence and guidance.

Thank you for the blessings of life, love and togetherness.

As we reflect on what is happening in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, we pray for a world filled with understanding and compassion, where kindness prevails over conflict. May our actions and words reflect the values of love, respect and inclusivity.

Guide us to embrace diversity, celebrating the uniqueness of each person we encounter. Help us build bridges and nurture harmony within our communities.

Grant us the wisdom to treat others with empathy and acceptance, acknowledging the beauty of our shared humanity.

May we be instruments of peace, spreading love and understanding wherever we go. Amen

Written in response to social disruption in the UK by John Campbell and freely
available for use Tune: Aurelia (The Church's One Foundation)

Let's pray against the vi'lence,
let's pray against the fear,
let's pray for peace and justice,
that calm may reappear,
that those who seek disruption
rethink, recoil, review,
that sanity and kindness
may soon break out anew.

Let's pray for those who're victims
of vi'lence, hate or fear,
for Southport's dead and injured,
and all left grieving there,
for those who sought asylum,
new hope within our shores,
who've faced new threats and vi'lence
erupting at their doors.

Let's pray for all who're serving
to guard, protect us all,
that they may practice justice
in answer to each call.
Let's pray for politicians
whose words calm or inflame,
that they may lead maturely,
help care and kindness reign.

Let's pray for deep reflection
across society,
that sifts true fears from false ones,
rebuilds what's fair and free.
May we, ourselves, re-question
our own role in the mix,
re-fire our own compassion,
help make a godly fix.



Update from Bangladesh - A second chance

I reproduce below a recent article from Commitment for Life. It seems a long time since we heard on the news of the plight of the Rohingya people who were forced out of Myanmar and took refuge and were welcomed in one of the world's poorest countries, Bangladesh. Please see the new poster on the notice board depicting the women learning to make Pijara.

In Cox's Bazar, amid the challenges of the largest refugee camp in the world, Christian Aid stands firm in its commitment to support Rohingya refugees, focusing on the most vulnerable: women and children.

With many fleeing their homes in Myanmar to escape persecution, Rohingya families found themselves stripped not only of their possessions, but also of their sense of security and stability.

Since 2017, a refugee camp which was meant to be a temporary solution for shelter has become a home for many trying to rebuild their lives. Among them is Yesmin, a woman of remarkable resilience who has weathered the storms of displacement and abandonment with unwavering determination. Forced to leave her home at a young age, she endured the heartache of displacement, only to find herself abandoned by her husband, leaving her with two young children to support.

Yesmin's journey represents the struggles faced by many Rohingya women; stuck in a cycle of dependency, yet yearning to break free.

Christian Aid and its partners created an opportunity for women to learn practical and marketable skills to earn a living in the camp. This opportunity to upskill, not only helps women to provide for their families, it also improves their wellbeing by creating a community of like-minded individuals.

The programme has trained women like Yesmin, in the art of 'pijara' – a traditional way of making protective fencing for trees using bamboo. Historically, this role had been reserved for men, but through advocacy and training from Christian

Aid local partners, women now have the chance to acquire this valuable skill, not only providing them with a source of income, but also a livelihood and community that supports them as they work to rebuild their own sense of dignity and purpose.

For Yesmin, this opportunity has been life changing. Finally regaining stability, she can now provide for her children, ensuring they have access to food, medicine, and education. But beyond the material benefits, Yesmin finds fulfilment in nurturing trees, seeing them not just as sources of income but as a source of protection against climate disasters in the future.

In her own words, Yesmin shares her joy and gratitude: “I am so happy that I can earn now. I can pay for the groceries, buy food and medicine for my children. I am happy about this. I am nurturing trees, when these trees will grow, we can sit under them. It will be good for us. These trees will save us from cyclones and other natural disasters.”

Yesmin’s story is just one among many. Through initiatives like these, Christian Aid continues to make a tangible difference in the lives of Rohingya refugees, restoring dignity to those who have been marginalised and forgotten.

‘... These trees will save us from cyclones and other natural disasters.’



Yesmin puts her skills-training into action, working in the field to protect the trees with the pijara she crafted.



Weekly Programme

Sunday

Worship Service 10.30am (C)

Afternoon Concert (once a month) 3pm-4.30pm (C)

Monday

Exercise Classes (over 50s) 10am-11am (H)

(School Term Time only)

Afternoon Teas 2pm-4pm (C)

Tuesday

Whist Drive 2nd Tuesday 2pm-4pm (H)

Knit and Natter 3rd Tuesday 1pm-3pm (H)

Wednesday

Singing for Fun 1st and 4th Wednesday

1.30pm – 2.30pm (H)

Thursday

Exercise Classes (over 50s) 10am-11am

(School Term Time only) (H)

(C) in the Church (H) in the Hall

All Welcome



Meeting weekly in Church Hall during term time as well as
enjoying
outdoor activities

Mondays

4.30-5.30pm Rainbows

5.45 – 7.00pm Brownies

8.00-9.30pm Rangers

Wednesdays

7.30-9pm Guides

Our uniformed groups join the congregation for five parade services each year : Harvest Thanksgiving, Remembrance Sunday, Christmas Gift Service, Renewal of Promises and Easter gifts (eggs)

Children are Welcome

At present we do not have a Junior Church BUT for Young Children we do have a well equipped children's corner in the church where parents are welcome to supervise their little ones whilst being able to participate in worship.

Bexley United Reformed Church complies with The United Reformed Church Good Practice Guidelines for Safeguarding Children and Young People in the Church.

Some useful contact numbers

Age UK – 0800 6781174 – provide information and advice that covers every facet of later life.

Bexley Borough Neighbourhood Watch – 020 8284 5537

Bexley Council – 020 8303 7777 Out of hours service 020 8303 7171

Bexley Crime Hotline – 0208284 9234 – report crimes confidentially and anonymously.

Bexley Voluntary Service Council – 01322 431765 – signposts elderly residents in Bexley to the right support services:

Bexley Borough Pensioner's Forum – 01322 527097 – is a non party-political equal opportunity organisation. Their principal aim is to promote the welfare and interests of pensioners in Bexley Borough.

Contact the Elderly – 0800 716 543 – companionship for older people suffering from loneliness and social isolation.

Crimestoppers – 0800 555111

Crossroads Care South East London – 01322 336086/341983 – provide a variety of services to carers of Children, Adults and Older vulnerable people with a diverse range of care and support needs across the London Boroughs of Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham. Email: info@ccsel.org

Darent Valley Hospital, Darent – 01322 428100

Evergreen Care Bexley – 01322 431 765 – seek to serve the older vulnerable adults in our community by improving their circumstances through advocacy, friendship and practical support.

London Dial-a-Ride – 0343 222 7777 – a door to door multi-occupancy transport service for people with disabilities who cannot use public transport. It can be used for journeys such as shopping, visits to friends, appointments, and going out at night.

London Fire Brigade – general enquiries 020 8555 1200
Emergency calls **only** 999

Metropolitan Police – general enquiries 101. Emergency calls **only** 999

National Rail Travel – 03457 484950

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich – 020 8836 6000

Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup – 020 8302 2678

Samaritans – 116 123

Silverline – 0800 4 70 80 90 – is the only confidential, 24 hour, free helpline for older people across the UK open every day and night of the year.