

# BEXLEY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



**SPRING  
APRIL 2025**

**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 20<sup>th</sup> April 2025

**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](mailto:elliestocker@talktalk.net)

**Services for April 2025 at 10.30am except where stated**

	<b><u>Minister</u></b>	<b><u>Elder</u></b>
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> April	Martin Leonard	Suzanne
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> April	The Minister	Philip
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> April	The Minister	Mavis
Maundy Thursday(7.30pm)		
Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> April	John Twidale	Mavis
Good Friday		
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> April	Rev. Ian Gow	Philip
Easter Sunday Holy Communion		
Easter Breakfast (8.30pm) – Names by Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> April		
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> April	Val Loader	Keith

**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 April are:-

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April  
Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April  
Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April  
Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April

Please also remember in your prayers – Barbara and John

**Pause for Thought**

Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> April	Keith	Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> April	Bee
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> April	Essie	Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> April	Stephanie
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> April	Mavis	Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> April	Linda

**Flowers for April**

Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> April	Mavis	Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> April	Easter Church
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> April	Easter Church	Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> April	Ann



### **The Minister's Pastoral Letter for April**

Dear Friends,

Easter Sunday comes very late this year, on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April. I hope to see many of you in church for this important service. Please also take note of the other services in our Bexley Pastorate during this period, which are also very important moments for our faith. Maundy Thursday service, with communion, which we'll be celebrating at Bexley URC on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm and Easter breakfast, with communion on Easter Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> April at 8.30am, also at Bexley URC.

At Easter, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is an important doctrine of Christianity. It was proclaimed at a time, in ancient times, when religion was the answer to almost everything in people's lives: it told of the physical origin of the world, the planets and the stars the existence of everything inanimate and animate; it explained why there was a drought or a flood; the hands of a healer and the prayers of a community were often the only remedy for illness and psychiatric disorders. Our world has changed enormously since ancient times. Astrophysicists, physicists, geologists, archaeologists and biologists explain the universe and nature, doctors and psychiatrists treat us. Religion has to deal mainly with questions of spirituality, faith and salvation which all these disciplines are unable to do and which are complementary to them. We need to be fair and precise in our assertions of faith. They must not encroach on areas that do not fall within the remit of religion, but, on the other hand, in everything that does, they must be excellent. This is what I want for our testimony on the resurrection. It should always be a spiritual testimony about the resurrection.

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24), says Jesus.

I am well aware that the resurrection is a concept that seems difficult and complex. But that shouldn't stop us from sharing it with those close to us or those who are wondering about Christianity, because it is at the heart of our faith.

We can grasp the meaning of resurrection intuitively, through our feelings, but I think it's even better if we can talk about it, in our own words. For me, one important thing is to understand that it is an operation of God's spirit and that it is not confined to a 1<sup>st</sup> century event, but that it is an expression of God's power of love throughout history – before us, after us and beyond us.

I like this very enlightening expression: “resurrected to eternal life.” It's actually the title of a book by the great German Reformed theologian Jurgen Moltmann (died 2024): *Resurrected to Eternal Life* (2019), which I recommend reading if you're wondering about the resurrection. And I particularly like this interpretation of the resurrection that Moltmann draws from his meditation on the Scriptures: ‘A life in fellowship with the resurrected Christ is eternal life here and now.’ (p.36)

There are, of course, a multitude of ways of bearing witness to the resurrection. Among these interpretations is your own – your own way of saying what the spirit of the resurrection is doing in our life. Your testimony is precious, especially if you communicate it with warmth and love to the younger generations.

I wish you all an excellent Easter season!

Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal

### Letter from a Serving Elder

I suppose it was just a coincidence that the week after I preached at The Grove Centre, the new film "Bonhoeffer" opened in the UK.

The Grove Centre is a joint Baptist and United Reformed Church in Sydenham (SE26). I have just been appointed Interim Moderator there. It should not be a too stressful job as it is the Baptists turn to find a minister but I am expected to take a few services.

That Sunday I did ask them if Bonhoeffer was considered a local hero. Certainly most of the older folk there agreed. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a theologian, author, vehement opponent of Nazism and martyr. He was also, for a short time, pastor of the German Church in Dacres Road, Sydenham.



The original German Church was consecrated in 1882, but was severely damaged during World War 2. It remained a burnt-out shell until the late 1950s when the present church was built on the site and named after its most famous pastor. Bonhoeffer was at the church for 18 months, from late 1933 to Spring 1935.

He returned to Germany fully aware of the danger he was facing.

Bee and I saw the film the following week. I am glad we did. Of course, film biographies do not have time to tell the full story and is not the medium for complicated theology. A poignant moment was when Bonhoeffer, a life long pacifist, supported a plan to assassinate Hitler.

Of course, you don't expect historical accuracy in such a film but identifying some errors make you wonder about other parts of the story. In the film he died alone while in fact he was executed with five others including Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Abwehr (Military Intelligence).

He was hanged on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1945. The war in Europe ended on 8<sup>th</sup> May.

My apologies for missing the recent Table Sale and my regular bacon butty. There was a meeting of Southern Synod Together at East Croydon that Saturday.

We heard the news that our Moderator, Revd Bridget Banks is unwell and will be off for a couple of months. Please pray for her and the rest of the Synod Team coping without her.

Two bits of good news. Two vacancies on the team have been filled.

Mrs Jo Patterson has been appointed Mission and Discipleship Officer. Jo was a member at St Johns Orpington before training as a Church Related Community Worker. Until recently she was based at the Copleston Centre, Peckham.

I know less about the new Training Development Officer, Revd Charissa Hunter Crump. She claims to have been born in England but has a very Texan accent.

*John Twidale*

**WORDPLAY**

**SATURDAY 12<sup>th</sup> APRIL**

**7.00pm – 9.30pm**

**Tickets: £8.00**

**Incl. Supper**

**Pie, potatoes & peas**

**Fruit jelly & Cream**

**Tickets are available**

**from Social Committee**

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT**

**SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup> APRIL**

**3.00pm – 4.30pm**

**THE SERENADERS**

**All Welcome**

**TABLE TOP SALE**

***WITH PLANTS***

**SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> MAY**

**10.00am – 12noon**

**Free Admission**

**Light Refreshments**

## KNIT & NATTER

Another group covered by the church is Knit & Natter. This is held in the Ruxley Room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month, (excluding August & December) 1pm to 3pm. There is no charge for this although a small donation towards covering the expenses, e.g. heating and lighting, are gratefully received.

The meeting at present is attended by approximately 10 to 12 individuals. People can choose their own projects e.g. 6" squares to make blankets for the homeless, hats for premature babies, through to more complicated items such as jumpers etc.

This is another opportunity to socialize if you are feeling lonely. We have a cuppa, or coffee, and biscuits at the start of the session.

We look forward to seeing you – if you can't yet knit but want to learn that's ok, we can teach you.

The next meeting is on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

*Stephanie.*

## VE Day Celebrations

On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May at 3pm we shall be celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day at the monthly Sunday Concert from 3pm – 4.30pm.

Please come along for this joyous celebration.

## The Good Samaritan

Earlier this year on one of my visits to St Micheal & All Angels, Wilmington, I read a twist on the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan. It was written by the Rev. Carl Chambers in the weekly church leaflet and referred to a sermon preached by Martin Luther King.

You will remember that Jesus told a parable in answer to the question; 'who is my neighbour? A man was beaten and left to die. A Priest and a Levite, a devoutly religious person, both walked by on the other side of the road. Fortunately, a Samaritan, who were much despised by the Jews, stopped to help and thus saved the man's life.

Martin Luther King had preached a sermon in which he posed the question that the Samaritan must have asked himself. **'If I do not stop what will happen to him?'** The question the Priest and Levite would have considered was, **'If I do stop to help the man, what will happen to me?'**

Martin Luther King was asking his listeners to consider the concept of **dangerous unselfishness**. It is a question anyone would have to face when deciding whether to interfere in a dangerous situation. Would you put your life at risk if you saw a man wielding a machete? The question could also apply if you came across someone who had collapsed on the pavement. It would be very tempting not to stop. He or she might be a drunk or a drug addict and you might be loath to get involved. It would be easy to think someone else might come along and phone 999.

As Christians we have been taught to love our neighbour. This should apply, even in uncomfortable or dangerous circumstances. No one said it would be easy!

*John Johnstone*



A big thank you to all the Uniformed Groups, Church members and friends who donated Easter Eggs at our Easter Egg Parade Service. These eggs will be taken to the Children's Wards at the local Hospitals and Demelza House.

Dear Friends and Members,

Just causes are important to our faith. While we appreciate that each of us has our own opinion about government policy, we find it useful to publish the following article in which it is suggested that we write a letter to our Member of Parliament about the ceasefire in Gaza.

Please feel free to amend the sample letter below to suit your own views. *Rodolphe*

### **Israel/Gaza War**

After more than a year of war and the establishment of a ceasefire, I was shocked to hear of the attack across Gaza on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025. I realise by the time you see this the events of that day will no longer be in the news or in the forefront of our minds however we should not allow things to go backwards. Efforts to ensure a pathway for a just peace must continue, and the UK Government's contribution is essential.

Please consider writing to your MP for the violence in Gaza to end. Thank you. A suggested template letter prepared by Embrace the Middle East follows:

Dear <Name Last Name MP>

I am writing as your constituent following the shocking news of Israel's large-scale attack across the Gaza strip on 18 March 2025. This is the deadliest attack on Gaza since the ceasefire began on 19 January, and more than 400 people, including innocent civilians and children, have reportedly been killed by the Israeli strikes.

These attacks come amid a humanitarian crisis which is putting millions of lives at risk. This crisis has been exacerbated by the full aid blockade imposed by Israel which has been in place since 2 March and has restricted access to water, food and electricity for Palestinians living in Gaza.

After more than a year of war and the establishment of a ceasefire, the UK government, along with the international community, cannot allow things to go backwards. Efforts to ensure a pathway for a just peace must continue, and the UK Government's contribution is essential.

I urge you to call on the UK Government to firmly condemn Israel's breaking of the ceasefire and this attack, which seriously damages negotiations for a second ceasefire phase. A ceasefire must be urgently restored to halt these attacks and allow for full access of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The actions by the Israeli government also further endanger the successful release of the 59 Israeli hostages still held by Hamas, 24 of which are thought to still be alive, and it has already been condemned by the hostages' families, who expressed utter shock and loss of hope to see their loved ones again.

**Since 7 October 2023, the UK Government's response to the crisis in Gaza has fallen short of any decisive action or clear condemnation towards Israel's actions in Gaza and the recent concerning developments in the West Bank. We therefore ask you to urge the Government to:**

- Condemn without delay the resumed widespread attacks on Gaza, which have already killed more than 400 people, including innocent civilians and children
- Demand an end to the blockade of aid into Gaza, which constitutes a breach of international humanitarian law
- Suspend all arms sales to Israel immediately whilst there is a clear risk that these could be used in violation of International Humanitarian Law

Yours sincerely,

*(submitted by Kathy)*

# Moving Stories

## Commitment for Life

Committed to supporting our global partners **BANGLADESH**

### Facing the conflict in Ukraine

*Commitment for Life* is pleased to be supporting the work of our URC partner churches in Hungary and in Transcarpathia, Western Ukraine.

NATO expansion into Ukraine has been met by a devastatingly bloody, Russian special military operation. The conflict has led to the mass dislocation of ordinary Ukrainians. People have fled to the safer, western parts of Ukraine and into neighbouring countries like Hungary.

Our partner churches are doing brilliant work to support these refugees. Watch our CFL video:

[https://youtu.be/lK9s\\_v4ebPU](https://youtu.be/lK9s_v4ebPU)

and support our appeal here:  
<https://gofund.me/d99524e8>

gofundme



Scan to donate to CFL's fundraiser  
"The URC Supporting our Church Partners in  
Ukraine"



Photo credit: Christian Aid

**C**hristian Aid reports that there are around 6.5 million Dalits in Bangladesh. Many are descendants of migrant labourers from India under colonial rule. This history, their caste, and their ethnicity are all causes of discrimination. Little is known about these Dalits, who have come to be known as the 'missing poor'.

Women and girls among ethnic minorities in Bangladesh face intersecting challenges. These include restricted access to decent work opportunities. Older women and women with disabilities are especially denied access to public services. Christian Aid works to promote inclusive societies in Bangladesh and India.

Usha (pictured) was born into a family of Dalit farm labourers in Uttar Pradesh. She gradually emerged as a leader within her community. She organised Dalit agricultural labourers to oppose caste domination and negotiate for better wages. Some in her family and community rejected her new-found voice. This led to family violence and Usha was forced to leave her marital home. But the backlash has not dampened her resolve to fight for oppressed communities and Dalit women, and she now leads the women's collective supported by Dynamic Action Group.



*'Commitment for Life' is the global mission support and advocacy group within the United Reformed Church in Great Britain*

**Prayer for divine direction** *by Ana Gobledale*

Unite us to be peace makers  
building peace among people  
promoting human rights  
churning arms into ploughshares

Empower us to be justice workers  
speaking truth to evil  
dismantling oppression  
liberating the occupied

Peace perfect peace  
Justice perfect justice

Show us how to walk your path  
Guide us in the ways of peace and Justice. Amen

**Action Prayer – Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is a country where many clothes are made and are sold in the UK. As you look through your cupboards and drawers, see how many of them are made in Bangladesh. (It should say on the label) and ask God that the clothes we wear will be ethically made. Pray that factory owners will create safe working places and be compelled to pay their workers well.

Dear God, we thank you for our clothes. We pray for the women in Bangladesh that work in poor conditions and for very little pay to make the clothes we wear. We pray that you may hear their cries for better working conditions and pay, and bless them. Amen



**Bexley**  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday 2pm-4pm (H)

Knit and Natter 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday 1pm-3pm (H)

## Wednesday

Singing for Fun 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 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

## Girlguiding at Bexley URC

### Rainbows

(for 4 to 7 year-olds)

Mondays, 4.30pm to 5.30pm

### Brownies

(for 7 to 10 year-olds)

Mondays, 5.45pm to 7pm

### Guides

(for 10 to 14 year-olds)

Wednesdays, 7.30pm to 9pm

### Rangers

(for 14 to 18 year-olds)

Mondays, 7.30pm to 9pm

To register your daughter, visit  
[www.girlguiding.org.uk/joinus](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/joinus)

To register as an adult volunteer, visit  
[www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved)



### 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.

Family Lives – support for parents with a child under 5 years experiencing challenges 07739 788120 [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

London Fire Brigade – general enquiries 020 8555 1200. Emergency 999

ManKind – domestic abuse helpline for men  
01823 334244 weekdays 10am-4pm

Mental Health Crisis Line - 0800 330 8590

Metropolitan Police – general enquiries 101. Emergency only 999.

Mind in Bexley – Talking therapies and support for Mental Health  
020 8303 8932 [www.mindinbexley.org.uk](http://www.mindinbexley.org.uk)

National Rail Enquiries – 03457 484950

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich - 020 8836 6000

Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup – 020 83022678

Re-instate – Employment retention support  
01322 438155 [www.re-instate.co.uk](http://www.re-instate.co.uk)

Samaritans freephone - 116 123

**Some Useful Contact details for Bexley residents :**

Age UK Bexley – Services for older people  
020 8300 0883 [www.ageuk.org.uk/bexley](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/bexley)

Alzheimer's Society – Dementia advice and support  
01322 524950 [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

Bexley Accessible Transport Service – Telephone support & prescription pickup  
01322 322333 [www.bexleyct.co.uk](http://www.bexleyct.co.uk)

Bexley Carers' Support - Support for Carers  
020 8302 8011 [www.carerssupport.org](http://www.carerssupport.org)

Bexley Council Contact Centre – 020 8303 7777 (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm)

Bexley Deaf Centre – support for deaf & hard of hearing residents  
01322 351122 [www.bexleydeafcentre.com](http://www.bexleydeafcentre.com)

Bexley Mencap – Support for people with a learning disability & their families  
020 8303 6336 [www.bexleymencap.org.uk](http://www.bexleymencap.org.uk)

Bexley Moorings – Befriending & virtual social group for ages 10-15  
020 8304 9609 [www.bexleymoorings.co.uk](http://www.bexleymoorings.co.uk)

Bexley Voice – Service for parent/carers of SEND children  
07512 409936 (Thurs a.m.) [www.bexleyvoice.org.uk](http://www.bexleyvoice.org.uk)

Bexley Women's Aid – Domestic abuse support for women  
020 8301 1536 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm) [www.bexleywomensaid.org.uk](http://www.bexleywomensaid.org.uk)

CAP – debt advice  
0800 3280006

Citizens Advice – Advice for legal, financial and housing issues  
01322 517150 Mon-Fri 9.30am-3.30pm [www.bexleycab.org.uk](http://www.bexleycab.org.uk)

Counselling Matters – low cost counselling  
07498 377305 [www.counsellingmattersbexley.org](http://www.counsellingmattersbexley.org)

Crimestoppers UK – 0800 555111

Darent Valley Hospital, Darenth - 01322 428100