

**BEXLEY UNITED
REFORMED
CHURCH**



**WINTER
DECEMBER 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 14th December 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

Services for December 2025 at 10.30am except where stated

	<u>Minister</u>	<u>Elder</u>
Sunday 7 th December	The Minister	Keith
	Toy Service – Parade	
Sunday 14 th December	John Twidale	Mavis
Sunday 14 th December	Suzanne Whitnall	
<u>3.00pm</u>	Service of Readings & Carols	
Sunday 21 st December		Ann
Thursday 25 th December	The Minister	
	Pastorate Service for Christmas Day	Philip
Sunday 28 th December		Suzanne

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.

Thank you. *Philip Shepherd*

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

Sunday 7 th December	Parade Service
Sunday 14 th December	Stephanie & David Honey, Sandy Lewis
Sunday 21 st December	Kathy Shaw, Linda Wells
Thursday 25 th December	Christmas Day
Sunday 28 th December	Val Howe, Angela Davis

Pause for Thought

Sunday 7 th December	Parade Service
Sunday 14 th December	Stephanie
Sunday 21 st December	Essie
Sunday 28 th December	Linda

Flowers for December

Sunday 7 th December	Mavis
Sunday 14 th December	Suzanne
Sunday 21 st December	Christmas Church)
Sunday 28 th December	Flowers)

**SERVICES OF READINGS
& CAROLS**

SUNDAY 14th DECEMBER
3.00pm – 4.30pm

All are welcome

SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT

SUNDAY 11th JANUARY
3.00pm – 4.30pm

MARK SEDGEWICK
will sing us into
the New Year

All are welcome

The Minister's Pastoral Letter **For December**

Dear Friends,

This year, I would like to take a new angle when talking about Christmas, the big event of December. I am going to deconstruct Christmas, I am going to blow it all up, just for a moment's reflection, but rest assured, we will find it again afterwards and the celebration will still take place on 25th December!

I will start by tearing out the most obvious elements: the commercialism attached to Christmas, first and foremost, of course. You can see as clearly as I can that shopkeepers are bored. They need events to trigger people's consumption. That's why Christmas decorations start appearing a few days earlier every year. You could even say that this year, Christmas is the event that follows Halloween. Once the scary decorations are taken down from shop walls, Christmas decorations quickly replace them. We also hear the first carols at the beginning of November.

The second layer I'm going to remove is that of traditions. I don't judge them, but I'm going to remove them anyway: the family Christmas meal, Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, the nativity scene, the presents – I'm getting rid of all of that. Hymns? No, I still want to keep them, because they contain precious testimonies of Christian faith, a bit like those books that remain on the shelves for generations in a house, but one day a child dusts them off and starts reading them. There are some very profound verses in our traditional carols that can inspire faith.

Now I come to the Christmas service and its traditional Bible readings. I'll keep those. The readings can change every year. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke tell us about the birth of the baby Jesus. I'm not throwing that away, of course, but I'm going to skip over it. I'm going to focus on the other two Gospels: Mark and John, which don't tell us any of that. There's no nativity in Mark. And in

John? The Word becoming flesh, the light that comes to enlighten us. There, yes, it was worth clearing everything away. Now we are at the heart of the Christmas of faith, the spiritual Christmas, the one that extends far beyond 25th December. It is about the incarnation, an encounter between God, the creative and loving power, and God's creatures. It is a breakthrough that changes everything in our lives. It shows the possibility, at any moment, but perhaps in the worst moments we experience, of divine intervention, of a message that comes from another world – a kingdom that does not function according to human logic, but according to a logic of peace, unity and reconciliation. So it was worth stripping Christmas down like an old piece of furniture, removing all the layers that surround it wasn't it?

I wish you and your families a wonderful and blessed Christmas season!

Rev Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal

Parade Toy Service – Sunday 7th December 2025

We are again supporting Bexley Women's Aid at our Toy Service. They are happy with toys suitable from birth up to 16 years / mixed genders. Toys, games, puzzles, gift cards, toiletry sets, clothing items, stocking fillers, sweets, wrapping paper, sellotape. They would be very grateful if these are new and unwrapped so they can sort them for families they are supporting. They are also happy to take items suitable for women using their services or items for goody bags / hampers such as nets of coins, tubs of sweets, biscuits etc.

Kathy

Letter from a non-serving Elder

Reflections as the end of the year approaches

As a congregation, mostly of an advanced age, we can look back on some of the changes that have occurred in our lifetime. We can now enjoy central heating, inside toilets, coloured television, free transport and life expectancy is much greater. The variety of foods available in the super- markets would have astonished our forebears. The places we can visit on holiday, would also be beyond the imagination of previous generations.

Advances in medical science mean we can replace worn out joints, and even organs. We enjoy free hospital treatment and drugs are available which reduce pain or anxiety and make us feel well.

We can communicate with people at the drop of a hat rather than sending a letter. We can even speak to and look at someone thousands of miles away with the aid of the worldwide web. Many of us have developed computer skills we once thought impossible. For example, I am typing an article which I can send to our editor in a matter of seconds.

All these material changes in health, diet and wealth must mean that people are happier. If people are richer and healthier then they must be happier. But is that really, so obvious? The question is what makes people happy. The generally accepted definition of happiness is 'subjective well-being'

Even in our affluent society there are some for whom without work, life is meaningless once they retire. They may have a feeling of irrelevance as they are no longer a contributor to society. There are also the bereaved, where the loss means they suffer from loneliness. Our church's outreach programme is certainly a boon for the latter group with the opportunity for them to socialise.

Perhaps our ancestors were happier because they lived at a time when there was a greater sense of community. When I was young, I knew many of the people who lived in the same street, whereas the opposite would be true today. The other great change is the decline in attendance at church. Is this because people cease to believe in a higher power? I remember that above the entrance to my school were the words; "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". It would appear, that there is no concern for many about a future beyond this life.

There are certainly many things in life that give us momentary happiness or pleasure. Winning the lottery, scoring a goal, going on holiday. seeing a beautiful view, listening to a piece of music. You would have no problem adding to the list. However, they do not bring lasting happiness. Maybe we have to settle for long term contentment.

At this particular time, society seems to be disintegrating. There are more frequent knife attacks in schools, more incidents of mindless vandalism, more attacks on people of different colour or religion. Is this because we no longer believe in the rules provided by the Ten Commandments? In other times the older generation intervened when they witnessed bad behaviour, nowadays such action would land them in court.

Are these changes because of the breakdown in religious belief? The evidence would show that Christianity is suffering more than some of the other religions. Maybe, the absence of religion in the lives of many people changes the way they behave.

I wonder what you think ?

John Johnstone

A shoutout for used postage stamps.
In aid of
"Support Dogs"
For Autism - Epilepsy - Disability
Reg Charity No. 1088281
www.supportdogs.org.uk

There should ideally be a 1 cm border around the stamp.
There is a RED collection tub in the Church.
Thank you. Christine



Prayer for Peace *by Maurice Omorogie, URC*

Eternal loving God, full of justice and peace,

We pray that your justice become more visible in our communities and in the wider world, to dismantle wars and the powers that fan its flames.

We pray that your Holy Spirit will possess our human governments and fallible justice systems and transform them into your perfect reign that caters for peace and extends loving kindness to all Your creation.

We remember students and pupils, in places like Gaza, Northern Nigeria, Ukraine, Myanmar, Syria, and so on, who are caught up in the evil of war and terror and have had their learning disrupted.

God of the weak, may your power propel and take charge of every peace talk and agreement, and continue to empower programmes like Commitment for Life, Christian Aid, and Global Justice Now to constantly be your hands and legs in our world, showing your benevolence and bringing hope to many.

Especially, we pray your comfort, restore and illuminate the state of mind of these students and pupils to cope and be able to carry-on with their learning, as we continue to trust in your work of justice and peace in our world. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

Submitted by Kathy



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 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

Girlguiding at Bexley URC

Rainbows

(for 4 to 7 year-olds)

Mondays, 4.30pm to 5.30pm

Guides

(for 10 to 14 year-olds)

Wednesdays, 7.30pm to 9pm

Brownies

(for 7 to 10 year-olds)

Mondays, 5.45pm to 7pm

Rangers

(for 14 to 18 year-olds)

Mondays, 7.30pm to 9pm

To register your daughter, visit
www.girlguiding.org.uk/joinus

To register as an adult volunteer, visit
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.

Some Useful Contact details for Bexley residents :

Age UK Bexley – Services for older people
020 8300 0883 www.ageuk.org.uk/bexley

Alzheimer's Society – Dementia advice and support
01322 524950 www.alzheimers.org.uk

Bexley Accessible Transport Service – Telephone support & prescription pickup
01322 322333 www.bexleyct.co.uk

Bexley Carers' Support - Support for Carers
020 8302 8011 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

Bexley Mencap – Support for people with a learning disability & their families
020 8303 6336 www.bexleymencap.org.uk

Bexley Moorings – Befriending & virtual social group for ages 10-15
020 8304 9609 www.bexleymoorings.co.uk

Bexley Voice – Service for parent/carers of SEND children
07512 409936 (Thurs a.m.) 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

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

Counselling Matters – low cost counselling
07498 377305 www.counsellingmattersbexley.org

Crimestoppers UK – 0800 555111

Darent Valley Hospital, Darenth - 01322 428100

Family Lives – support for parents with a child under 5 years experiencing challenges 07739 788120 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

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

Samaritans freephone - 116 123