

**BEXLEY UNITED  
REFORMED  
CHURCH**



**SUMMER  
JULY & AUGUST 2025**

**50p**

Minister: Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal  
[minister@bexley-urc.co.uk](mailto:minister@bexley-urc.co.uk)  
Tel: 07484 257534

Church Address: Bexley United Reformed Church  
500 Hurst Road  
Bexley, Kent DA5 3JN

Church Website: [www.bexley-urc.co.uk](http://www.bexley-urc.co.uk)

Church Contact: [anthony.ball73@ntlworld.com](mailto:anthony.ball73@ntlworld.com)

Church Treasurer: Philip Shepherd  
[philshepherd97@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:philshepherd97@yahoo.co.uk)

Magazine Compiler: Ann Markey  
[ann.markey@btinternet.com](mailto:ann.markey@btinternet.com)

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 24<sup>th</sup> August 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 July and August 2025 at 10.30am except where stated**

	<b><u>Minister</u></b>	<b><u>Elder</u></b>
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> July	Rev. Ian Gow	Mavis
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> July	Anthony Ball	Philip
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> July	The Minister	Ann
	Holy Communion	
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> July	The Minister	Keith
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> August	Rev. Ian Gow	Suzanne
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> August	Suzanne Whitnall	Mavis
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> August	Kathy Shaw	Philip
	Holy Communion	
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> August	Valerie Loader	Ann
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> August	The Minister	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 July and August are:-

Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> July	Gill Brooks, June & Don Bobby
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> July	Ian & Debbie Markey & Family, Sandy Lewis
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> July	Elizabeth Whorlow, Stephanie & David Honey
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> July	Ellie Stocker, Angela Davis
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> August	Kathy Shaw, Keith Thomson
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> August	Peter & Patricia Linder, Suzanne & Mike Whitnall
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> August	Helen & Mike North, Kim & Tim Kleinschmidt & Family
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> August	Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal & Family
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> August	Ann Markey

Please also remember in your prayers – John Johnstone & Family, and Ann & Tony Ball.

### **Pause for Thought**

Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> July	Essie	Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> August	Essie
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> July	Stephanie	Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> August	Stephanie
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> July	Suzanne	Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> August	Keith
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> July	Linda	Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> August	Philip
		Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> August	Linda

### **Flowers for July and August**

Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> July	Church	Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> August	Michael
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> July	George	Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> August	Margaret(Sal)
	Dimond	Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> August	--
Sunday 30 <sup>th</sup> July	Elizabeth	Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> August	Mavis
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> July	Keith	Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> August	--

## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT**

**SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JULY**  
**3.00pm – 5.00pm**

**SEVAN AND HER ASPOIRING  
YOUNG MUSICIANS**

**All Welcome**

## **JIMMY VAN LIN ENTERTAINS**

**SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup> JULY**  
**7.00pm – 9.30pm**

**Tickets: £8.00**  
**Incl. Supper**  
**Buffet**

**Tickets are available**  
**from Social Committee**



**CREAM TEA**  
**In Aid of**  
**MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT**  
***WITH BACKGROUND MUSIC***  
***BY COLIN PETERS***

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON**  
**17<sup>th</sup> AUGUST**  
***In the Church Hall***  
**3.00pm – 4.30pm**

**TABLE TOP SALE**

**SATURDAY 6<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER**  
**10.00am – 12noon**

**Free Admission**

**Light Refreshments**

**CAN YOU HELP**

**Raffle Prizes** – Everyone like to take part in a raffle at Table Sales or Saturday Events but we are very short of Raffle Prizes. We would be very grateful for any unwanted gifts you might like to give us or anything else you might think suitable.

**Flower Rota** – Would you like to choose a date when you would like to provide the flowers or give a donation for flowers in your name for a birthday or a remembrance? We have ladies in the Church who will arrange your flowers if you do not wish to do it yourself. Fresh flowers in Church every Sunday always give pleasure to those present, and after the service they are distributed to those of our congregation who are unable to attend due to poor health or age. They are always much appreciated that they have been in our prayers and that we remember them frequently.

**The Miniuster's Pastoral Letter**  
**for July/August**



Dear Friends,

I have been with you for two years now. I arrived and was inducted in July 2023, and it took me some time to adjust to the three local churches in the pastorate. Now I am used to the rhythm of the cafes, lunches, services and events that our churches organise throughout the year. The three churches I serve all have different personalities. However, one thing is common to all three: the generational challenge. Our churches are no longer filled with a mix of young and older people. A disconnect has gradually developed over several decades. Now it is complete. This poses a real challenge for us, because we still want to be churches that are open to everyone in the community who wants to become a Christian, reconnect with their faith, or live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. At the same time, we offer only one model of church member; in which many of our contemporaries cannot see themselves.

Today, it is fashionable to give names to generations: boomers, generations X, Y and Z, millennials, etc. I have long been sceptical about these labels, probably because I don't think it's good to label people and I don't want to be pigeonholed myself. However, I have recently found that these categories can still help us to understand certain issues. When I think about my own family, I see elements that echo the history and evolution of morality over the last few decades. My grandfather was a young man in the 1920s and 1930s, at the height of the colonial empire. My parents, who are baby boomers, were born in a context where racism and condescension towards people from colonized nations were normal. People who were not white Europeans were given special names that we are ashamed of today. Born into this context, my parents became accustomed to a new morality, in which racism is no longer acceptable. It is even



punishable by law. In their youth, a new way of seeing the world gradually emerged, especially from the recognition of the LGB+ minority. All these causes are familiar to us. Their development did not stop in the 1980s and 1990s. These movements have continued to flourish in Western and democratic societies to this day, to the point where several generations now co-exist without the same experience of these causes for justice: the older ones saw them emerge, while the younger ones were born into a context where they are already established, providing a foundation for further developments. As a result, cultural divides have emerged: generations no longer speak the same language. A millennial is familiar with queer culture and speaks its language, while a boomer who lived through a time when homosexuality was punishable by imprisonment (or worse) finds it impossible to understand. This should challenge us as Christians, because through the gift of the Spirit of Pentecost, we are given the ability to understand other languages, so that we can proclaim the Good News. Even if we have travelled a long way, gained experience and come to understand the world with a certain wisdom, our curiosity and our ability to interpret the world should not fall dormant. Only a good understanding of the community in which we find ourselves will enable us to be welcoming again. I mean welcoming in the sense that there are real people in our churches, not welcoming in the sense that we think we are welcoming, a bit like the Pharisee who considers himself a good man, and that people should just come and sit next to us on Sunday morning.

Encountering a person and encountering God involves grace, something special that is beyond our grasp. This is what I hope to discern in my ministry with you. I am very grateful that many of you have a strong relationship with the church, and that our elders carry out excellent spiritual, pastoral and social work every week and throughout the year. This is true faith and Christian commitment. However, as you know, this is far from enough, and I wouldn't ask any of the elders to do any more than they already do with love and care. Our congregations continue to weaken, which is why I am looking for new ways to witness Christ. I count on you to be open to discussing new topics all year round and to pray for inspiration from



the Holy Spirit to enable us to act in new and creative ways. This may sometimes be difficult and uncomfortable, but ultimately we will be able to speak a new language that allows us to reconnect with the community.

I wish you all a wonderful summer, full of blessings with your loved one.

Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal

### **Bexley Food Bank**

Most folk do know that we collect for Bexley Food Bank, but the box to receive donations has been moved to stand on the shelf by the library books. I look every Thursday to see if there is anything to take to the food bank in Bexleyheath which is open from 9.00am-11.00am every Friday, but sadly there is very little to collect. I know there are trolleys in the supermarkets for donations and some will undoubtedly give when there, and some prefer to use direct debit so that the people organizing the Food Bank can buy the items that are in short supply (which is a good idea).

We are a generous church when we are asked to donate to specific causes, and I wonder whether between us we could contribute a jar, a tin, or packet of food perhaps once a month for those whose needs are greater than ours. *Mavis*

## Elder's letter July/August 2025



This is a photo of part of Ashenbank Wood at Cobham. Mike and I had never been there before, despite it only being only about a 20-minute drive from us. It's a beautiful, well cared for, wood and we were lucky to visit in bluebell season. Absolutely stunning!

There were many dead trees, which have been intentionally kept to enrich the insect population & the diversity of the wood. In nature, death is a natural part of the cycle of life, where decaying matter provides nutrients for new growth and the continuation of life.



I took lots of photos of these magical trees, thinking how they would make wonderful starting points for story-telling. Who might have lived in this tree trunk? Fairies or goblins? Did they hang their washing out on the branches, or did they play on them, jumping from one to another? Did they hide out to capture unsuspecting visitors? Did they sit & listen to the birdsong in the evening while they rocked their babies to sleep?





But I found this tree particularly captivating & thought provoking.

It was dead - not just a bit withered, but completely & utterly dead, and probably had been for nearly 40 years, having fallen in the 1987 storm. However, amazingly, there are several new trees growing from it.

When we visited it was just after Easter, & the tree reminded me of Jesus dying, in order to give us new & everlasting life.

In death there is life. Death isn't an end but a new beginning. Symbolically, endings can create opportunities for new beginnings & growth, and even in the midst of difficult times, there is still a possibility for hope and renewal.

I thoroughly recommend Ashenbank woods (in Cobham, Kent) if you want a woodland walk. I hope you enjoy it as much as we did.  
(However, be aware that the car park, although free, is small, & there are no toilet or refreshment facilities.)

Suzanne Whitnall



## **The Greatest Story Ever Told,**

When you were at Primary school and learning how to write a story you would have been told every story has to have a beginning, a middle and an end. In time you would have learned to avoid cliches like the ending of a story with, 'I woke up and it was all a dream'. You may have also been advised to select an interesting opening sentence. Enough of the English lesson because it is merely an introduction to one of the best opening sentences in the Gospels.

One of my favourite readings from the Bible is John chapter 1, which is often read at a service of lessons and carols. The opening sentence is both puzzling and intriguing.

'In the beginning the Word already existed, the Word was with God, and the Word was God'

I looked at a commentary, which very helpfully translated the whole chapter into everyday language. The opening section is interpreted as follows,

'At the very first moment of its existence, the whole reason for our universe was already there and had been there for all eternity. Both the purpose and pattern of it all were to be found in a person, someone who could look God in the face because he too was fully divine. From the start of what we call Time. he was working along with the Creator. It was through this partnership that everything else came into being. In fact, not one thing was made without his personal involvement.' Ref. Unlocking The Bible. David Pawson. 2007

A very different explanation to the 'Big Bang Theory' or the story of Evolution. Neither of the above theories explains why but concentrates on how the world came into existence. However, John was writing for his time, and he wanted to explain the reason for John the Baptist as the messenger and the true light, who was Jesus. It was probably written in Greek but the English translation is beautiful.

'The word was in the world, and though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognise him.' John 1 v10

If you read the chapter a few times as it appears in the Bible, it becomes in perfectly rational without the interpretation above.

## **Note**

Whenever I wrote an article for the church magazine. I asked Barbara to criticise it. She always did and then we would argue about any changes she suggested. I usually accused her of being pedantic, but we always ended up agreeing that Barbara was right!

John Johnstone

## **Many Ways to Worship**

Dear Editor

Thank you so much for publishing the article Many Ways to Worship by John.

It took me back to being in churches on my own feeling, but not knowing why, it was a special place. St Johns church as a choir boy putting out the service sheets, a small church in the Lake District I cycled past and back packed past, both times taking time to sit inside and absorb the atmosphere. In a catholic church in Spain on my sailing trip.

It also reminded me about times of appreciating God's creation. The rock cliffs from the beach on the Gower Peninsula, looking down a valley from a hill top, watching the bees visiting the lavender bush in our garden, sound of children playing in the park, sun rises on the channel, the planetarium stars when camping above the clouds, the loyalty of a working dog with its owner and moments when something unexpected makes you smile.

As our faith grows we realise indeed, there are many places and ways to worship/appreciate the Lord.

*Tony Ball*



**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



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