

**BEXLEY UNITED
REFORMED
CHURCH**



**SPRING
MARCH 2025**

50p

Minister: Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal
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

Church Contact: anthony.ball73@ntlworld.com

Church Treasurer: Philip Shepherd
philshepherd97@yahoo.co.uk

Magazine Compiler: Ann Markey
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 23rd March 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 March 2025 at 10.30am except where stated

	<u>Minister</u>	<u>Elder</u>
Sunday 2 nd March	Philip Shepherd	Keith
Sunday 9 th March	The Minister	Mavis
Sunday 16 th March	Rev. Ian Gow	Ann
	Holy Communion	
Sunday 23 rd March	The Minister	Keith
	Easter Egg Parade Service	
Sunday 30 th March	John Twidale	Philip

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 March are:-

Sunday 2 nd March	Stephanie & David Honey, Dorothy Down, Keith Thomson
Sunday 9 th March	Kathy Shaw, Val Fox
Sunday 16 th March	Essie & Edward Boateng, Gill Brooks, Francis Christou
Sunday 23 rd March	The Uniformed Groups
Sunday 30 th March	Helen & Mike North, Barbara Anderson, Angela Davis

Please also remember in your prayers – Tony & Ann Ball, Barbara & John Johnstone, Essie & Edward Boateng

Pause for Thought

Sunday 2 nd March	Kathy	Sunday 23 rd March	Parade
Sunday 9 th March	Ann	Sunday 30 th March	Bee
Sunday 16 th March	Stephanie		

Flowers for March

Sunday 2 nd March	Elizabeth	Sunday 23 rd March	Val H.
Sunday 9 th March	Suzanne	Sunday 30 th March	Patricia
Sunday 16 th March	George Dimond		

The Minister's Pastoral Letter for March



Dear Friends,

We are now in the season of Lent. I thought it would be interesting to reflect for a moment on the traditional time of the Christian year. Today, only very few people have any idea of its meaning. And even if you do, it's a good idea to refresh your memory.

Lent falls between the Epiphany and the Holy Week preceding Easter. Like all the seasons of the Christian year, Lent highlights the importance of an essential Christian practice: doing penance, or a time of critical reflection. A traditional ritual marked this time of reflection and personal deepening of one's faith. This mainly involved fasting and praying regularly during this period. It also involved abstaining from leisure activities and distractions. These things were supposed to be practiced throughout society, so even those who had no religious commitment were deprived of leisure and good food. It must have seemed unfair to them. Today, all that has disappeared. But it certainly helps that this season of the Christian year reminds us of the importance of thinking critically about everything we do.

The Gospel story that opens the Lenten season is the temptation of Jesus in the desert. This story echoes the time spent in the desert by the Hebrews, once they had come out of Egypt, freed from slavery. What these two stories have in common is that they take place in the desert, a place of deprivation. The bareness of the desert encourages us to rethink the essential things in life, and in particular our relationship with God. This is particularly relevant in our world today. A world in which we lack nothing. We can get anything we want or need in a matter of hours. We have the answers to any question in a few clicks – a matter of seconds. We are far from being deprived. Our world is marked by abundance and many of our

behaviours express our greed. Greed even seems to be the driving force behind our economy, and capitalism in particular.

The apostle Paul has a way of responding to this problem when he says that 'those who deal in material goods' act 'as though they were not fully occupied with them' (1 Corinthians 7:31). So we live in a society in which we lack nothing, in which there are minimum standards that make us consider it normal to own all sorts of things: a car, a smartphone, all sorts of more or less useful and complex objects, made of plastic, filled with electronics, using fossil fuels, not necessary, often wasted and thrown away without being recycled, and to do certain things such as eating poor and sentient animals and animal products that our body doesn't need and that causes lots of suffering, travel by plane to faraway countries, cruise by boat for which we consume tons of oil, take our car for any trip, and even, quite simply, out of boredom. We have all these things, we have them, but the apostle tells us that we can live as if we could do without them completely, and that it would be good in the end to do without them. These are things that belong to the world and are futile. We do not belong to the world and our life is not futile. Our life is in God.

I wish you all a fruitful Lent in your thoughts and your witness to the Christian faith.

With every blessing,

Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal

The Unexpected Benefits of Attending Church

As someone who once studied exercise physiology, it is with tongue in cheek that I began thinking about the unexpected physical benefits of church attendance.

The Physical Experience

We usually sing 5 hymns, which means that most people move from sitting to standing and vice versa at least five times. In doing so we are using and strengthening our thigh muscles, especially if we do not rely on using the pew or seat in front to aid the movement!

If we sing with enthusiasm, we are using our lungs more than usual and thus improving our lung capacity and general breathing.

There are of course social benefits to church attendance.

Several of our congregation live alone and coming to church is an opportunity to join up with other like-minded people. There is also a chance to enjoy a chat over a cup of coffee at the end of the service.

The religious experience.

Some religions practise meditation and for this to be effective it takes some learning and knowledge of techniques. The nearest we get to meditation in the Christian church is the quiet time in prayer and when we are actively listening during the sermon. Hopefully, these activities can help to reduce any stress we might be experiencing.

The main reason we come to church is, of course to learn more about God. We have the opportunity to talk to God and listen to him. There are usually at least two Gospel readings and often the sermon interprets these readings and helps us understand more about our faith and sometimes its relevance to everyday life.

But don't forget the unexpected benefits when you next attend Sunday worship!

John Johnstone

Letter from a Serving Elder

In last month's newsletter John Johnstone listed some of the things we should value as members of Bexley United Reformed Church, and they are true. I hope you had a chance to read them.

I would like to suggest that we also look at what we should value as residents in the London Borough of Bexley. We live in a pleasant London Borough with many free open spaces for our enjoyment. If we are elderly we have free bus and train permits to enable us to move about and be more active and independent. Free access to GPs and Hospitals (if we can get an appointment) and access to other helpful groups if we wish to use them.

And what about all the other facilities we can enjoy if we are blessed with good sight and hearing, to appreciate bird song and sunny days and beautiful golden sunsets. The love of families and friends and the pleasure of seeing our young people growing up into responsible adults, all adds to our joy of life.

Throughout our lives, if we have faith in God, we know that He speaks and guides us in many different ways. We may not recognize His guidance, but with hindsight often we can see that what we might have thought was a 'coincidence' or 'a bit of luck' turned out to be a good decision and made a difference to our actions. How often do we think to thank God for those circumstances?

We have so many blessings they are impossible to number and which we often do not remember, but God provides them for us because He loves us and sacrificed His son, Jesus Christ, to be our Saviour and guide at all times.

How blessed we are to have the freedom to come into our Church to greet all who come, with Christian love and fellowship, and to give God the glory and the praise.

Mavis

TABLE TOP SALE

SATURDAY 8th MARCH

10.00am – 12 noon

Free Admission Light Refreshments

SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT

SUNDAY 30th MARCH

MOTHERING SUNDAY

3.00pm – 4.30pm

JACKIE SMYTH & FRIENDS

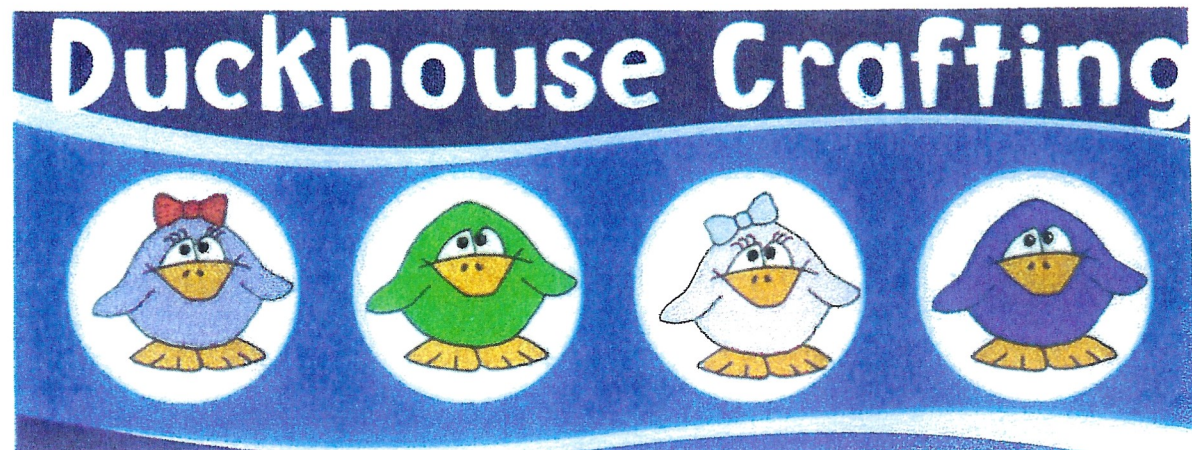
All Welcome

WORDPLAY

SATURDAY 12th APRIL

7.00pm – 9.30pm

**Tickets: £8.00 Tickets are available
Incl. Supper from Social Committee
Pie, potatoes & peas
Fruit jelly & cream**



CRAFT WORKSHOP

This is a full day craft workshop from 10am until 4pm.

Location: - Bexley United Reform Church Hall, Hurst Road, Bexley, Kent DA5 3JN. (Parking available)

Date: - **Wednesday 19th March 2025**

Cost: - £15.00 (All materials will be supplied.)

We will be making 4 cards using different materials and techniques.

To book a place contact Penny: -
duckhousecrafting@gmail.com 07415 138284

(Please ensure you bring a packed lunch - tea/coffee and cake will be provided)



WHIST GROUP

Hello everyone,

One of the groups covered by the church is the Whist group.

We have between 8 and 10 of us, but are always happy to know of anyone who would like to join us. If you have never played Whist but would like to learn we can teach you.

If you are interested then my telephone number is 020 8851 1035 evenings after 7pm is a good time to catch me.

We meet on the second Tuesday of the month (except for August and December) from 2pm to 4pm in the Ruxley room. £3 cost for session goes to church funds.

We have two small prizes. One is for the overall highest score. The second is a raffle according to the number on your Playing card. These are usually a choice of a small bottle of wine, or Chocolate or other sweets.

Whist is a very social game, and there is usually plenty of time to chat. We have a cup of tea or coffee half way through the session.

So we hope to hear from you or see you soon?

Stephanie.

Easyfundraising

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online - from your weekly shop to your annual holiday - you could be collecting free donations for Bexley United Reformed Church?

Head to <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/bexleyurc/> and join for free.

Every time you shop online, go to Easyfundraising site first to find the site you want and then start shopping.

After you've checked out, that retailer will make a donation to your good cause for no extra cost whatsoever!

There are no catches or hidden charges and Bexley United Reformed Church will be really grateful for your donations.

How it works

Easyfundraising turn your daily shopping into every day magic!

Easyfundraising partners with over 8,000 brands who will donate a percentage of what you spend to a cause of your choice (**Bexley United Reformed Church!**). It won't cost you any extra. The cost is covered by the brand.

Brands pay Easyfundraising a commission because when you start your shop from the Easyfundraising website or app, they can see we sent you to them. If you make a purchase, a commission is generated, and they turn that into a donation - magic!



Prayer For Bangladesh *by Nuzhat Jabin, Christian Aid*

We pray for justice for communities who have been historically neglected due to religion, caste, profession or gender and deprived of basic rights. Across the region we see how this deprivation has played out – children have no or very limited access to healthcare – leaving them in a vicious cycle of poverty. We pray for their well-being, for their children to grow up with access to education and opportunities, to choose livelihood options instead of those that have been decided for them before their birth, and for their community members to thrive without fear of persecution based on their religion, caste, profession or gender. We pray in general for societies to embrace diversity and value the human capital each individual brings, regardless of their orientation. Amen

Advance Notice

On Saturday 17th May we shall be holding our annual Table Top Sale including Plants. Last year we sold out of plants within the first ten minutes of opening, and there was a constant request for a variety of plants from many folk.

Now that Spring is fast approaching and many of us will be thinking about our gardens could we request that if you have cuttings or plants that you want to divide, that you might think of the sale and pot bits and pieces up. So long as they are labelled we shall be able to sell them and help raise more money for the Church.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Mavis



5 February 2025

Dear Faith

Remittance from 11C04 Bexley

We are most grateful for your congregation's kind donation of £480.00 received by bank transfer on 12th December 2024, to *Commitment for Life*. Please find enclosed a certificate to display on your church notice board thanking your congregation. Your continued generosity towards our support for Christian Aid and Global Justice Now is much appreciated.

Please find below a short message from Patrick Watt, Chief Executive Officer for Christian Aid:

"Thank you so much for all of your dedicated support for Commitment for Life. Ongoing partnerships like Commitment for Life deepen our relationships with those across the world and challenge us to keep justice and peace at the centre of our Christian life. Together we are part of the transformation of God's kingdom and seeing change happen."

Your contributions make an enormous and practical difference to our partner communities. Your prayers, activism & generosity are a wonderful demonstration of 'life giving faith, defiant hope and generous love'.

Please pass a copy of this to your Treasurer. They often ask us for receipt, and this letter should suffice.

With grateful thanks,

Suzanne Pearson
Administrative Assistant

Administrative Assistant Suzanne Pearson 020 7916 8638 suzanne.pearson@urc.org.uk

www.bit.ly/URCFL

Programme Officer Kevin Snyman 020 7520 2726 kevin.snyman@urc.org.uk

FB: [@comm4life](https://www.facebook.com/comm4life)



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, Darent - 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