

**BEXLEY UNITED
REFORMED
CHURCH**



KESTREL

**AUTUMN
SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2026**

50p

Minister:

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

Church Website: www.bexley-urc.co.uk

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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 25th October 2026

BEXLEY URC CHURCH HALL
& RUXLEY ROOM

Sadly our hall is not available
for hire while modernisation is taking
place

No: 267/8

Services for September and October 2026
at 10.30am except where stated

	<u>Preacher</u>	<u>Elder</u>
Sunday 6 th September	Philip	Mavis
Sunday 13 th September	Suzanne	Keith
Sunday 20 th September	Kathy	Mavis
Holy Communion		
Sunday 27 th September	Val Loader	Suzanne
Sunday 4 th October	Suzanne	Keith
Harvest Parade Service		
Sunday 11 th October	Philip	
Sunday 18 th October	Rev Ian Gow	Mavis
Holy Communion		
Sunday 25 th October	John Twidale	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 September & October are:-

Sunday 6 th September	Val Howe, June & Don Bobby
Sunday 13 th September	Ann Markey, Sue Clark
Sunday 20 th September	Peter Linder, Gill Brooks, Peggy Simmonds
Sunday 27 th September	Kim, Tim Kleinschmidt & family, Jackie, Fred & Matthew Benson, Angela Davis
Sunday 4 th October	Francis Christou, Sandie Lewis
Sunday 11 th October	Tony Ball, Philip Shepherd
Sunday 18 th October	Lucy, Chris & Rosie Reynolds, Margaret Hunt (Salby)
Sunday 25 th October	Edward & Essie Boateng, Penny & Colin Denyer & family

Please continue to remember in your prayers – those waiting for hospital appointments or procedures, and those suffering from world disasters.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT

SUNDAY 20th SEPTEMBER

3.00pm – 4.30pm

MANDY & ME

All are welcome

SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT

SUNDAY 25th OCTOBER

3.00pm – 4.30pm

CAROL ANN WELLS – PIANIST

All are welcome

Pause for Thought

Sunday 6 th September	Essie	Sunday 20 th September	Keith
Sunday 13 th September	Stephanie	Sunday 27 th September	Linda
Sunday 4 th October	Harvest	Sunday 18 th October	Stephanie
Sunday 11 th October	Essie	Sunday 25 th October	Bee

Flowers for September and October

Sunday 6 th September	Eileen	Sunday 20 th September	Suzanne
Sunday 13 th September	Bee	Sunday 27 th September	Ann
Sunday 4 th October	Harvest	Sunday 18 th October	Michael
Sunday 11 th October	Ellie	Sunday 25 th October	Keith



HELPING LOCAL PEOPLE IN CRISIS

Harvest Thanksgiving Service - Sunday 4th October at 10.30am

This Harvest Thanksgiving we are supporting the work of **Bexley Foodbank** which has centres across the borough.

Bexley Foodbank are grateful for everything we donate however this year they ask that we particularly think of the following items which they are now **having to purchase each week**:

Bars of soap
Deodorant
Shower gel
Shampoo
Razors
Toothpaste
Tooth brushes

Otherwise tinned and dry foods are welcome although they have plenty of pasta, cereal and beans.

Tinned Tomatoes Jars of Pasta Sauce
Tinned vegetables (Peas, Sweetcorn & Carrots only)
Tinned Meat Tinned Fish Tinned Fruit
Tinned Custard & Rice Pudding
Jam, Honey, Peanut Butter and Chocolate Spread
Dry Noodles Rice Biscuits Sugar
Chocolate, Sweets & Crisps
Long life Milk Long life Juice Squash
Tea, Coffee & Hot Chocolate
Laundry Powder and Capsules Washing up Liquid
Carrier Bags and Shoppers are super useful too!

Cash donations may be made by cheque payable to “**Avery Hill Charitable Trust**” and sent to the Treasurer, Avery Hill Charitable Trust, 7 Sandhurst Road, Sidcup, DA15 7HL. If you are able to **Gift Aid** your donation the Trust will receive an additional 25p for each £1 donated. **Gift Aid** forms are available at the back of the church.

LETTER FROM NON-SERVING ELDER

Dear Friends, I love this song:

“Head of thy church triumphant,

We joyfully adore Thee;

Till Thou appear,

Thy members here

Shall sing like those in glory.

We lift our hearts and voices

With blest anticipation,

And cry aloud, and give to God

The praise of our salvation”

In my article in the Spring April 2026 edition of the Newsletter, I mentioned that since Essie and I joined this Church about forty years ago, we have worshipped with four Ministers and Associate Ministers. Little did I know that the fifth Minister who we had in post was just going to leave us in July this year.

As a Church, we said goodbye to our Minister Dr Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal with hearts full of gratitude for his spiritual guidance. May God continue to bless him abundantly with strength, joy and grace as he serves his people in his new congregation.

During his stay in Bexley, he became the co-ordinator of Bexley Cyclists Association. I arranged for him to discuss the Rules for Cyclists on the roads of Bexley, their Rights and Protection with the Member of Parliament for Bexleyheath and Crayford, and a face-to-face meeting with a Party leader on the Bexley Council. Hopefully, the Cyclists Association in Bexley will also miss his leadership.

I would like to pay special tribute to the Elders of the Church and all the members who contributed greatly to the Church's activities for the long period we did not have a Minister.

During our interregnum and the Covid-19 pandemic, especially the latter which impacted significantly on Churches' activities worldwide, our Elders and Non-Serving Elders led by Mr John Twidale kept the Church together worshipping on line. The Elders provided spiritual leadership, pastoral care and oversight of the congregation. I have every confidence that until a Minister is appointed, the Elders of the three Churches will continue to provide Spiritual leadership and Pastoral care.

Currently, the building construction in progress has limited the Church's activities. However, Mavis Wilson has asked members who are able, to join her for coffee mornings. I hope those who are in the village and are able to will join her to keep the love and friendship that exists in the Church.

The Church has suffered significantly in membership. When the Early Church was first formed at Pentecost with addition of three thousand converts, the practice of prayer was one of the basic elements of their instructions. Constant prayer was a hallmark of the Early Church and should be a hallmark of any Church that desires growth.

It is my hope and prayer that Christ who suffered on the cross out of compassion for the human race will touch and heal the members who are undergoing treatment for any form of illness and are currently receiving hospital or home treatment.

Edward Boateng

-believer that what Jesus taught was essentially practical and a sound basis for a good life and thus give it a purpose. Having written the last sentence, I am well aware that a majority of people, would not even give a thought to the purpose of life because religion and any philosophical thought would be a distraction from checking their phones!

John Johnstone

I have received this today, Saturday 22nd August, and am passing it to Ann for the magazine.

Kathy

**Prayer for the URC to mark the UN International Day
commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion
or Belief**

In 2019 the United Nation's General Assembly resolved to keep 22nd August as a day to commemorate victims of violence based on religion or belief.

We live in a world addicted to violence and where intolerance seems to be on the rise in so many areas of life. So, today, please take a moment to pray for a better world. We are grateful to the Revd Stephen Ansa-Addo, for writing this prayer for us.

God of justice and peace,
we grieve that people, here and worldwide,
are threatened, attacked, and killed
because of their religion or belief.

We remember Jewish people facing antisemitism,
Muslims attacked in homes and mosques,
Christians worshipping in secret,
those of other faiths or none
condemned for belief,
and all who live afraid.

Forgive our silence.
Comfort victims and families.
Confront hatred; overturn systems of violence.
Strengthen the United Nations and all who defend the persecuted.
Awaken your Church to speak, protect, welcome,
and stand alongside the suffering,
until violence is overcome
and peace is established.

In Jesus' name. Amen

The Meaning of Life

Since the world began, philosophers and sages have been trying to come up with an answer to the meaning of life. If you asked youngsters in the 1950's about the purpose of life, they would probably mention; job, house, marriage and raising a family, and maybe living to 70 years. Modern youth might mention; riches, a partner, travel and job satisfaction, and would expect to live until 80. Neither the earlier or the modern generation would be likely to mention God or religion, even though church attendance was much greater in the early years.

According to the atheist Richard Dawkins, humans came into existence by the mere chance of a scientific event, such as a collision of self- replicating cells. It would seem to be that life was an accident and thus purposeless. Yet, he writes;

‘The truly adult view, by contrast, is that our life is as meaningful and as wonderful as we choose to make it’. (The God Delusion)

Later, he continues;

‘... the knowledge that we have only one life should make it all the more precious. The atheist view is correspondingly life affirming and life enhancing. (The God Delusion)

If life happened for no reason, it follows, if my logic is correct, that it has no purpose and no value. I will always be grateful to the writings of Professor Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens because they challenged what we believe and think about what we believe. Firstly, as Christians we believe in God and secondly, we believe what Jesus taught gives a meaning to life. I am neither a philosopher or a sage and to someone like Dawkins, the statement above would appear to be too simplistic because it is based purely on belief or faith.

We also have a belief in the Spirit, which dwells within us and acts as a guide throughout life. Some might refer to it as their conscience, but it is more than that. Certainly, we learned the difference between right and wrong from our parents but as we grew older, as a Christian, it is the Spirit which becomes our guide.

It would be difficult to argue with an atheist about the existence of God but on the grounds of pure logic, it would perhaps, be easier to convince a non



 Your account number
BB01335374

 [thameswater.co.uk](https://www.thameswater.co.uk)

0800 316 9800

24 August 2026

We're installing new pipes near you – Bexley High Street

Hello,

As part of our biggest upgrade programme in 150 years, we will soon be starting work in your area to install brand-new water pipes.

For our project in Bexley, we are investing £14.3m to install 11.74 kilometres of new water pipes. This investment is being delivered to address a history of bursts in the area and to improve long-term reliability.

What to expect

Between Saturday 5 September and Sunday 6 September, we will work to remove the traffic islands on Parkhill Road at the junction of Thanet Road.

Our main works will then start on Monday 7 September and last for approximately 5 months. However, to ensure works can start as quickly and safely as possible, we will be installing the road closure in the evening on Sunday 6 September.

Our permitted working hours are Monday to Saturday, between 8am and 8pm. Sunday between 9am and 8pm, as agreed by your local authority.

Phased Work

We will start our work on Bexley High Street from the junction of Salisbury Road to the roundabout junction of Bourne Road. The work will be carried out in phases, and the work area will move progressively along the road as each section is completed.

Phase	Location	Duration
1	Hurst Road to Oxford Mews.	Approximately 5 weeks.
2	Oxford Mews to Station Approach.	Approximately 4 weeks.
3	Station Approach to Tan Yard Lane.	Approximately 2 weeks.
4	Tan Yard Lane to outside Village Hotel.	Approximately 3 weeks.

Thames Water Utilities Limited, a company registered in England and Wales with company number 02366661.
Registered office address: Clearwater Court, Vastern Road, Reading RG1 8DB. VAT registration number: GB 537-4569-15.

5	Outside Village Hotel to mini roundabout	Approximately 7 weeks
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Parking Bay Suspensions

We will need to suspend parking in this area to safely carry out our works. Please refer to on-street signage for details of parking suspensions and any restrictions in place.

Road Closure

We will set up a road closure in phases to complete these works. Access will always be maintained for emergency vehicles, and pedestrian access will be maintained for residents and businesses.

You may notice an increase in noise during our works.

Please be aware there may be short periods of time where there is no site presence, this could be whilst we are waiting for test results or equipment to arrive. We will do our best to complete our work as quickly as possible keeping disruption to a minimum.

Buses

The bus stops on Bexley High Street will be suspended for the duration of our works. Buses will be diverted along Thanet Road.

Have a question?

Please call 0800 316 9800, selecting option two and quote your BB reference number BB01335374. If you are a retailer, you can also contact your retailer to chat about this project.

Follow our progress at <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/bexley-high-street>

Need extra support?



If you or someone you know needs a little extra support, our free Priority Services Register can help us to understand your situation so we can provide the support you need. Carers, friends, or family can register on behalf of someone they think could benefit from extra support. For more information, please visit [thameswater.co.uk/priority](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/priority) services or call us on 0800 009 3652.

Thanks for bearing with us while we work – we really appreciate it.

Luke Breakspear
Customer & Stakeholder Coordinator



CHRISTIAN AID – Partner Region Update - BANGLADESH

From invisible to included

Transforming life for Manta families

For generations, the Manta community in Barisal, Bangladesh, have lived on water—floating from place to place, unseen and often forgotten.

Life on the river has meant more than movement. It has meant exclusion. Children grew up on boats without access to education, often tied with ropes to keep them safe from falling into the water. Families depended entirely on unpredictable fishing incomes, vulnerable to storms, climate shocks, and seasonal bans. Without official identity documents, many were unable to access even the most basic public services. For many, it felt like their lives did not matter.

But change is happening. With support from *Commitment for Life*, working alongside local partner AVAS, 200 Manta families have begun a powerful journey—from isolation to inclusion. Safe spaces for children have been created—places where they can learn, play, and simply be children. For the first time, many are holding pencils, writing their names, and discovering a world beyond the river.

“Before, I couldn’t do anything except say my name,” shares one young girl. “Now I can write it. I can read books. I am no longer tied to the boat.” Families are also safer. With life jackets, solar lights, and training in disaster preparedness, daily life on the water is no longer defined by constant fear...

At the same time, new opportunities are opening up. Through skills training and small business support, families are no longer reliant on fishing alone. Women

and men are learning net weaving, small trade, and other income generating activities—giving them stability even when fishing is not possible. “Before, we only knew fishing,” one community member explains. “Now we can run our families in different ways. We feel capable.”

Perhaps most transformative of all, families are gaining official recognition. With support to access national ID cards and birth registrations, many Manta people are, for the first time, recognised as citizens. This simple but powerful shift opens the door to education, healthcare, and government support—restoring not just access, but dignity.

As one elder reflects: “Our lives had no value; people used to drive us away. But today, our grandchildren go to school with bags on their shoulders. We have been given not just opportunities, but dignity.”

This is the impact of *Commitment for Life* in support of Christian Aid. We work with communities to address not just immediate needs, but the deeper causes of poverty and exclusion: from safety to education; from livelihoods to identity, and from invisibility to inclusion.

As one elder reflects: “Our lives had no value; people used to drive us away. But today, our grandchildren go to school with bags on their shoulders. We have been given not just opportunities, but dignity.”

Thank you for your continued support of our valuable *Commitment for Life* partners.

Loving God, We pray for the Manta community in Barisal: for children learning in safety, for families building secure livelihoods, and for all who are gaining dignity and recognition.

Bless the work of AVAS, and all who seek justice and inclusion. Open our hearts to respond with compassion and generosity. Amen

Submitted by Kathy



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