

# **BEXLEY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**



**AUTUMN  
SEPTEMBER 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 21<sup>st</sup> September 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 September 2025 at 10.30am except where stated**

	<b><u>Minister</u></b>	<b><u>Elder</u></b>
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> September	Philip Shepherd	Keith
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> September	Valerie Loader	Suzanne
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> September	The Minister	Mavis
	Holy Communion	
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> September	Valerie Loader	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.

Thank you. *Philip Shepherd*

**Family News** – on our prayer calendar for September are:-

Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> September	Eassie & Edward Boateng, Dorothy Down
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> September	John Johnstone, Eileen Hollingworth, Mike Adams
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> September	Val Howe, Linda Wells
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> September	Peter Linder, Lucy & Chris Reynolds & Rosie

Please also remember in your prayers – the families of John Johnstone and Peter Linder.

**Pause for Thought**

Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> September	Essie
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> September	Stephanie
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> September	Suzanne
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> September	Linda

**Flowers for September**

Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> September	Helen
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> September	Mavis
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> September	Ellie
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> September	Ann

**TABLE TOP SALE**

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

**Free Admission**

**Light Refreshments**

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONCERT**

**SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER**  
**3.00pm – 4.30pm**

**TWO BOWS**

**All Welcome**

**HARVEST SUPPER**

**SATURDAY 27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER**  
**7.00pm – 9.30pm**

**Tickets: £8.00**  
**Incl. Supper**  
**Ham Salad &**  
**Apple Pie & Cream**

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



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



Dear Friends,

The story of our lives can be written in linear time: time passing, years going by and accumulating. But our lives are also part of a cyclical time: the clock that ticks and brings us back to the same time every 24 hours, the week that brings us back to the same day, and the year that brings us back to the same month. As we watch time pass, see ourselves grow older and lose something we will never regain, sadness can take hold of our minds. The tradition of the Church offers a response to this. When cycles return, new beginnings are celebrated. This is true of the beginning of the year, which coincides with the Nativity of Christ, spring, which coincides with the Resurrection, and – a recent addition to the tradition – the celebration of Creation in September. This liturgical season is not old. It is becoming widespread in churches around the world. It is gaining momentum as awareness of the ecological crisis grows.

Creation is a magnificent doctrine of Christianity. To be honest, it is not specific to Christianity, but Christianity has a special approach to it. All the world's religions have some kind of creation story, a story that answers the question we have all asked ourselves at one time or another: 'How did everything around us come to be?' Biblical commentators say that the creation story we find in Genesis 1 owes much to that of the Babylonians. My Old Testament professor said that it was the greatest moment of happiness in the Bible. Everything is put in place by God so that God's creatures may live happily and always flourish. The first chapter of Genesis is a peaceful text, in which there is no deception, violence, sin or murder (all of which appear on the next page...). The biblical account of Creation tells us something essential: we did not create ourselves, nor did we create the environment in which we live (even if the cities and artificial environment in which we live would have us believe otherwise...). When we look around us with the eyes of faith in the One who created us, we are filled with a single emotion: gratitude.

Contemplating Creation leads us to recognize the greatness and magnificence, the power of love and goodness that created us. This emotion cancels out the sadness I mentioned in the first lines of this letter. Thus, the beginning of a new school year while celebrating Creation in September is a joyful time. Even though it tells us that a year has passed, in faith it reminds us of the importance of living in gratitude, for we are the recipients of a gift that we can never offer or return to the One who gave it to us: life.

I wish you and your families, especially the children and young people, an excellent start to the new school year.

Rev. Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal

## **Barbara and Patricia**

It is with great sadness that we have to announce the deaths of two of our most faithful members and friends, Barbara Johnstone died on 9<sup>th</sup> June and Patricia Linder on 15<sup>th</sup> July. Two lovely ladies who will be missed so much.

Both ladies were members of this Church for many years and also served as Elders, taking on the responsibility of supporting the various Ministers we have had over the years, and welcoming people into our fellowship.

Barbara was a gifted musician and trained and lead our choir for many years. She also regularly played the piano for Sunday morning worship when we had no regular Organist and very kindly donated her precious piano to the Church when she could no longer play. In addition to all her other responsibilities she was also our Deputy Safeguarding Officer for the Church.

Patricia excelled in craftsmanship and was able to use her skills in needlework, baking and floral arrangements, which she used for the benefit of the Church.

Both these ladies were kind, gentle people who got on with the job, always willing to help in any of the Church activities and they will be greatly missed by us all.

They have always been supported by loving husbands and caring families and we keep them all in our thoughts and prayers.

*Mavis*



## **The Race for Life**

The Rev. Ian Gow's daughter, Catherine, took part in "The Race for Life" in Mote Park in Maidstone on 5<sup>th</sup> July, participating in the "Pretty Muddy" 5km section of the race, and it was "pretty muddy" and it rained!! But she achieved her goal and raise £1,361.00. She sends us the following message:-

"Many thanks for your very kind donations in memory of my wonderful Mum".

Well done Catherine.

## **Church Garden**

Our Church garden is a quiet little oasis of peace, despite all the traffic that passes by, but it now needs a bit of tender loving care to bring it up to the standard we would wish, because it demonstrates to passers-by that we care.

Tony and Keith have done their best to keep it tidy and the grass cut, and Keith has spent a number of Saturday mornings recently cutting back and defining the flower beds.

If you have any small shrubs or plants you would like to donate that will not take over the plot, we could arrange a "Gardening Day" in September with a light lunch provided. Many hands would make it fund and light work. Please let Tony or Keith know if you can help.

(Sadly small trees will be rejected).

## **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> August**

We enjoyed a cream tea in the Church Hall on Sunday afternoon to help raise funds for the Macmillan Cancer Support Charity. It was a lovely afternoon, the sun shone but it was not too hot and we were able to welcome over sixty members and friends to tea accompanied by Colin Peters playing music from popular shows.

Your support has enabled us to send £450.00 to Macmillan of which £260.00 was Gift Aided which enables the charity to claim an additional 25% or £62.00 from the Tax Office at no extra cost to those who pay Income Tax.

So many thanks for your support, for your donations, preparation of the teas and all the clearing away. Many thanks also to Colin Peters who provided us with suitable music throughout the afternoon – just like “Tea at the Ritz”.

*Mavis*

### **Rule-breaking Spirit...**

Rule-breaking Spirit,  
Nudge us  
Inspire us  
Empower us.

When we are stuck  
in how church has always been  
rather than how it could be.

When we are sticklers  
for rules and regulations  
rather than embodying compassion.

When we are stiflers  
of newness and innovation  
rather than cultivating creativity.

Rule-breaking Spirit  
Equip us to dream more inclusively and expansively  
to create communities of love and compassion  
where all creation can thrive. Amen

## The Unbelievers

Recently, the Rev. Ian Gow spoke in his sermon about the unbelievers . This led me to think about two of the most prominent unbelievers or atheists, if you prefer. They are Professor Richard Dawkins in this country and a fellow Englishman, Christopher Hitchens in the USA. Both of them, wrote books, which attacked religion and belief in God. Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*, and Hitchen's book, *God is not Great*, sold thousands of copies around the world and were probably responsible for many people losing any faith in God or religion.

Dawkins is an Emeritus Professor of New College, Oxford and was formerly Professor of Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University from 1990 to 2006. His academic and scientific prestige gave him a challenging platform. His most famous quotation from one of his scientific books, which possibly set him to write his anti-religious text is;

‘The universe we observe has precisely the same properties we should expect, of these is at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference’.

Thus, in a sentence he attempts to destroy anything we might believe about a world created by God.

Christopher Hitchens, our second unbeliever, spent a great portion of his life in the United States, where he was very successful journalist and an articulate lecturer. He died of cancer and rejected many offers to pray for his soul before he succumbed to his illness. He never recanted his views.

Both authors ridiculed much of the Old Testament; an easy target, as many of the stories were written in an attempt, to explain some of the vital questions in the ancient world. Questions such as; how did the world begin? And why does sin exist? Stories were written in such a way that people could understand at a time when much of the knowledge we now take for granted did not exist.



However, I believe that the works of Dawkins and Hitchens were not without merit. For years the Church was not challenged to the same extent as it is now. Theologians were required to respond to all the assertions made by Dawkins and Hitchens and some of we more humble readers were required to think afresh about what the church taught and what we truly believe.

Did they do more harm than good? The answer must be yes because they destroyed the faith of millions. You could argue that our faith in God was blind but can faith be anything but blind? The church is in decline, but millions still believe that there is evidence of a God and who could argue that the teaching of Jesus made no sense. Millions still believe that his teaching was inspired by God and millions still believe that he was God in human form.

Is life meaningless? Is there a divine power who influences our lives? These are the questions that remain unanswered except in a religious context, and it is up to the church to provide them and rise to the challenge of the unbelievers.

*John Johnstone*

**Prayer for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory** by Nathan Eddy

God of peace, we pray for peace in the land you love, the land we call holy: we pray that Palestinians and Israelis can find a just and lasting peace and security for all. We pray that violence might be rejected, and practical solutions found.

We pray for our United Reformed Church and our ecumenical partners, that in the name of the Prince of Peace we can be agents of goodwill in the region.

We pray that here in these islands we can promote understanding between Jews, Muslims, and Christians, and between people of all faiths and none, about the Holy Land – the land that is ‘competitively loved’.

We pray that we can stand together courageously in the face of all intolerance and hate, including Islamophobia and antisemitism, so that we, too, can live in peace and mutual flourishing. In Jesus name, Amen.

*Contributed 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-11.am(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



**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