



## Hertford

Cowbridge SG14 1PG



**AUGUST 2024**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

**We aim to be an active Christian Church open to all, meeting together for worship, teaching and prayer and offering loving care and support to all. We work alongside other Christian Churches reaching out into the Community with love**

---

Dear friends,

Prayer is a powerful tool!

We know that almost all of us have found ourselves wanting to pray at some time in our lives. How do you pray: in silence, out loud, with activity, or some other way?

Often, we pray during times of crisis, seeking something from God—whether material, physical, or spiritual. While this is a common view of prayer, it is much deeper than that. Prayer stems from recognising our need for a close, abiding relationship with The Almighty, our Maker. This relationship reveals the true value of prayer, benefiting not just ourselves but others as well.

Prayer can take many forms. Silent prayer, aligning our thoughts with God's Will, can be comforting and healing. Praying out loud can be a source of strength.

Incorporating our prayers into our daily activities and connecting with God amidst the busyness of life can keep us connected to God through all we do. Each form is valid and valuable, reflecting our unique ways of building a relationship with God and seeking the well-being of family, friends, and neighbours.

During times of crisis—illness, financial hardship, or emotional struggles—we naturally turn to God for help. While seeking God's help in prayer is important, prayer is not merely a tool for crisis management. It deepens our connection with God, helping us see God's presence in both good and challenging times. Remember, while prayer is not always answered in the way we expect, it is answered in accordance with the Will of God and for the good of the situation.

As people of faith, we are called to hold events, situations, issues, and people in prayer. We bring these to God not just because it is right, but because it nurtures our relationship with God and is a powerful tool of transformation and healing. Scripture shows that God desires an abiding relationship with us. It is God who makes the first steps toward us, speaks to us, and we respond through prayer and action.

Intercessory prayer, or praying on behalf of others, is a profound act of love and compassion. When we pray for others, we lift their needs to God and acknowledge

our interconnectedness as children of God. This practice comforts those in need and strengthens our own faith, reminding us of God's power and presence in our lives.

As a pastorate, we meet online every Wednesday evening for prayer, and I invite you, if you are able, to join this important gathering. It is a time of communal strength and shared faith, and your presence would be a blessing.

Prayer is vital to me, and I am certain it is to all of us. Belief in the power of prayer is not misplaced; it is faith in God's power and what God has done and is doing for us through Jesus Christ. Even when we don't know what to say and we sit, stand, or walk in silence, God hears us.

"Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27)

Let us pray: Our Father in heaven, may Your name be forever honoured and praised, may Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever ~ Amen.

Blessings,  
Mark

---

*A few weeks ago Shirley Sloan sent me this newsletter from her grandson Michael who is serving with the Peace Core in Madagascar. We hope to have further updates of his Voluntary Work.*

### **Special Intentions:**

- Fellow Volunteer Maddie has requested to be kept in your prayers if possible, simply to be comforted in the face of the challenges both current and ahead. She thanks you all for your prayers in advance.
- My host grandmother, Bebe, has fallen ill, primarily due to the cold and rain this past week. It would mean so much to me if you could keep her

in your prayers, she has treated me with such warmth, kindness and patience since I arrived. Thank you ever so much.

- They are a faith filled family, my host family. We sing the psalms each night, and attending weekly services here with them in the Malagasy language has been wonderful. They extend prayers to you all in turn, especially you Nan, who they thank for allowing me to come here and trusting them enough to care for me.

### **A (Very) Brief Summary of the Goings on at Peace Corps Madagascar:**

Well, it has been a little over three weeks since our cohort of twelve volunteers touched down at the airport in Antananarivo and stepped into the beginning of the adventure to which we have dedicated the next 27 month of our lives. In that time I have experienced incredible natural beauty, culinary masterworks sprung like magic from nothing more than a charcoal stove, a battered pot, and produce straight from the field: just one example of the humble mastery born of years of experience living and working in this drastically different but equally wonderful world that characterises most every action of every member of my host family. My host mother, Nenny Simone, is a baker by trade, and as I hope Nan will show you, the cakes she makes would be impressive with all the conveniences available in a modern western kitchen, and are doubly so when considering she does everything by hand and bakes them over an open fire. My host grandmother, Bebe, is a seamstress whose work in making lambas (wraps part of Malagasy in future entries. Suffice it to say that her skill is remarkable, and it has been my pleasure to watch her work. I have had the privilege of sharing their home these past few weeks in a provincial town called Mantasoa village, centring both geographically and socially on the titular, picturesque Lake Mantasoa. Rice patties line the main road, interspersed with patches of beans, carrot, cauliflower, and potato, as well as banana trees (Mantasoa is noted for its bananas which, as I can now attest from personal experience, are exceptionally sweet and fragrant). The aromas of fresh baked mofogasy, a malagasy sweetbread endemic to the region, and the strong black coffee with which it is served mingle with the scents of livestock and the dank petrichor of wet soil to grace my morning walks with a fragrance that I believe I will never forget.

The Malagasy language, our education in which, alongside classes in teaching, constitutes the bulk of our training (supplemented by requisite, less frequent sessions on safety, security, medical/first aid best practices), has proven a fascinating intellectual challenge so far. Our language and cultural facilitators have been excellent, but it is the full immersion that staying with my host family and living in the

community here in Mantasoa that has made grasping Malagasy possible. In these three short weeks we have gone from the rudiment, hi (salama!) and thank you (misaoitra!), to haggling over live chickens in the market town and chatting about the weather with strangers. It has been intense and rewarding in equal measure, and I cannot wait to discover more. We have just recently been informed of the locations where we will be living and teaching these next two years (Sahamidio, in the southeast of the Island), who we will be teaching (12-16 year olds), and have begun learning the corresponding dialect of the region (in my case, Betsileo North). In a couple weeks, I will be visiting this site, staying with a host family in the community. This will be my first impression on the community of my site, and I am, I think understandably, incredibly nervous. However, with the incredible amount of support I have received both here, from home, and all over the world (for which I am unceasingly grateful, and by which I am deeply humbled), I will go and put forth my best effort. Thank you all specifically for your thoughts and your prayers. I cannot express how much it means here, so far from home, in the face of the myriad opportunities and challenges ahead.

It is the most innocuous things that have struck me most on this journey so far, and so, if I may risk overstaying my welcome, I would like to share a simple, special moment, as quaint as it may seem, both to preserve them from the gossamer fragility memory and to exemplify the type of people I have been lucky enough to encounter here in Madagascar. Cooking with Nenny, as I have mentioned, has been one of the chief pleasures of this adventure, but last week we were making a shredded carrot salad (incidentally one of my favorite malagasy dishes, as the carrots here are exceptional) together and she asks me to check it for seasoning. I, at risk of offending her and bringing shame to myself and my taste, said it needed more salt. She looked at me sceptically, handed me the salt, and allowed me to seal my fate. When grace had been said and it came time to eat, she took one bite of the salad, smiled, and said that there was (as best I can translate) just enough salt to make it great. This moment has put a smile on my face every time I think of it, as a marker of both progress in the language (as Nenny has no English the exchange took place entirely in Malagasy) and integration. I hope it can bring you all some joy as well.

---

*Letter sent from the URC Finance Office*

**To: All members and adherents of United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships**

Dear Friends,

Firstly, thank you for all your contributions to your local church in 2023. This includes your financial contribution which plays an important part in the life of the whole church through the Ministries & Mission Fund.

As officers of the denomination, it's good for us to be rooted in a local URC (or LEP) congregation and to work out our faith in the local context, as well as across the entire United Reformed Church. On the other hand, it is good for you in local churches to know that those who serve you nationally understand the local church financial issues as well. And there have been some big issues over the last 12-18 months: inflation, a "cost of living crisis" for many, with energy costs rising unprecedented levels etc. Churches and ministers have had the same challenges as so many others.

The M&M Fund of the URC pays for ministers' stipends, training, Assembly costs and all the central support functions for ministry in the URC across three nations. The M&M Fund's main income is contributions from the churches with some top-up from synods, together with investment income and grants etc.

In 2023 the churches continued to support the M&M Fund to a wonderful level, but there also was significant and generous synod support. Overall, the giving to M&M Fund was slightly ahead of budget at £16.3 million. It was also only 2% down on 2022's result. However, we should note that these figures include the synods' extra contributions this year which amounted to £1.9 million, an increased amount compared to 2022.

**The full M&M account for 2023 in summary:**

Income – £18.2m – of which 16.3m was from churches and synods contributions

Expenditure – £19.3m

Deficit – £1.1m

2024 is not going to be an easy year either and we are again budgeting for a deficit. We have a commitment from synods to continue their support on top of church contributions and a plan for balancing the M&M budget over the next 5-7 years, including budget reductions of central costs of 3 to 5% p.a.

So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2023 in full, and thank you to all those who, in adversity, continued to treat the M&M Fund as the first priority and paid what they could.

Stewardship of our resources, personally, as local churches and as a denomination is rarely easy, but it is one of the challenges we are called to in making our faith real. As the Spirit directs and as our means allow, can the churches once more continue to respond to the call of our gracious, loving and ever-generous God?

Again, thank you all!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Alan Yates (Treasurer)

Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer)

---

**AUGUST 2024**

Thurs	1	10.00 am	Open House Coffee morning & Short-Mat bowling session
<b>Sun</b>	4	10.30 am	Morning Worship Led by Mark Johnson
Wed	7	8.00 pm	On-line Prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
Thurs	8	10.00 am	Open House Coffee morning & Short-Mat bowling session.
<b>Sun</b>	11	10.30	Morning Worship led by our Minister Rev Mark Robinson including the Sacrament of Holy Communion.
Wed	14	8.00 pm	On-line Prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
Thurs	15	10.00 am	Open House Coffee morning & Short-Mat bowling session – followed by Hot Potato Lunch – all welcome
<b>Sun</b>	18	10.30 am	Morning Worship lead by John Ellis
Wed	21	8.00 pm	On-line Prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
Thurs	22	10.00 am	Open House Coffee morning & Short-Mat bowling session.
<b>Sun</b>	25	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Martin Bird from All Saints Church, Hertford
Wed	28	8.00 pm	On-line Prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
Thurs	29	10.00 am	Open House Coffee morning & Short-Mat bowling session.

***Foodbank opens on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings 10 – 11 am and on Tuesday and Thursday mornings 10.30 – 11.30 am at the Priory, Ware.  
Enquiries 07851 708470***

**MINISTER: REVD. MARK ROBINSON**, 6 Tudor Rise, Broxbourne, EN10 7HB  
97510782031 revdmarkr@gmail.com  
Church Administrator: Stepanka Moysey [urcnlvg@gmail.com](mailto:urcnlvg@gmail.com)  
Editor: Fran Spence 01992 586585 [franjspence@gmail.com](mailto:franjspence@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.hertford.urc.org.uk](http://www.hertford.urc.org.uk) Coordinator Phil Coleman  
Phil.hertfordurcwebsite@btinternet.com