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January 2025

We wish you and your family a very happy and peaceful New Year.



**How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (Psalm(133:1**

Dear Friends,

As we welcome the start of a new year, I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, who calls us into community and renews our purpose as God's people. Together, we enter 2025—a year brimming with possibilities to deepen our faith, strengthen our relationships, and live out our shared mission of love and service.

**The Call to Harmony**

This year, our guiding theme is **harmony** : living in unity with God, one another, and all creation. Harmony is a calling found throughout Scripture, where the psalmist celebrates the joy of unity and Paul exhorts the early church to "live in harmony with one another") Romans 12:16). It reflects the heart of God's work, bringing reconciliation, peace, and shared purpose.

Harmony does not mean uniformity or the absence of disagreement. Rather, it is the Spirit at work among us, fostering love and mutual understanding. It seeks to repair what is broken, transform conflict into peace, and replace injustice with equity. Harmony is not merely a human ideal but a vision of flourishing grounded in God's design for creation.

As a church pastorate, we are called to embody this harmony. Let us work to deepen bonds of compassion and understanding within our congregations. Let us stand in solidarity with those who are excluded or marginalised. And let us care for the earth, honouring its sacredness as part of God's abundant gifts.

**A Year of Prayer**

At the heart of our journey is prayer, which roots us in God's presence and aligns us with God's purposes. Prayer connects us more deeply to God and one another. This year, I invite us all to adopt a shared rhythm of prayer as a way of nurturing harmony across our three congregations.

Each Sunday, I invite us to pray together the **Growth Prayer**, seeking the Spirit's

guidance as we grow in faith, service, and community:

**God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church,**

**Send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning,**

**Wisdom to our actions, and power to our witness.**

**Help our church to grow in numbers,**

**In spiritual commitment to you,**

**And in service to our local community,**

**Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

To help integrate this prayer into each service, I suggest we will provide in church, bookmarks or cards with the prayer printed on them so that each member has access to the prayer.

I also encourage us all to pause at **midday every day** to reflect on God's presence and the life and love we have received through Christ. Let this moment of stillness become a practice that unites us in prayer and purpose.

**A Year of Action**

While prayer sustains us, harmony must also be expressed in our words and actions. This year, let us actively seek ways to grow in harmony through worship, learning, service, and outreach. Together, let us strengthen relationships, serve our communities with compassion, and care for creation in meaningful ways.

As we step into this year, let us do so with hope and confidence. The God who calls us into harmony is faithful and steadfast, continually drawing us into deeper love and service.

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Parent of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:5-6).

May 2025 be a year of renewal and growth as we live out our faith in unity with God, one another, and all creation.

With prayers and blessings,

**Mark**

# Worship this month



<b>Jan</b> 5th 10.30 am	Brox URC	Epiphany John Danso
12th 10.30am	Brox URC	New Year Rededication Communion Revd Mark Robinson
19th 10.30 am	Brox URC	Harmony Theme Ian Matthews
26th 10.30 am	Brox URC	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Revd Mark Robinson

## REGULAR CHURCH ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR DIARY

**COMET** Please come along if you enjoy togetherness - that is meeting friends over a cuppa in the church hall and having a chat and possibly a game of Rummikub. There are occasionally special sessions such as fish and chips. It is on Mondays, 2-4pm, in the church hall. Next meeting is on January 6th.

**SHORT MAT BOWLS** Every Thursday evening in the church hall. Please speak to Alan Earl if you would like to join.

**AFTER EIGHTS** is now open to gentlemen as well as ladies. A programme of interesting talks in the church hall on the first Tuesday of each month from 2pm-4pm. If you are interested in attending a meeting please speak to Brenda McAuliffe or Marion Hall - or just go along at 2.00pm. Next regular meeting will be on February 4th .

**REGENT REGALE** an informal get-together for gentlemen on the last Wednesday of the month.

**PRAYER GATHERING** every Wednesday at 8pm via Zoom for approximately 45 minutes. All are welcome to come and pray silently or aloud, or to be still and enjoy an oasis of peace - please contact Rosemary Woodall for further information [rosemary.woodall@ntlworld.com](mailto:rosemary.woodall@ntlworld.com) or to be included in the circulation list.

## ADVANCE NOTICES

### Service of Rededication 12 January

A Happy New Year to you from the Elders!

We invite you to our service of Rededication, which we hold each New Year. In 2025 our service is on Sunday 12th January. It will be led by the Revd. Mark Robinson and include Holy Communion.

At this service, those of us who are Members will renew our life-time commitment to serve and worship God, both as individuals and through the life of our church

family. The service traditionally includes two elements of commitment. The first is the renewal of the promises each of us made when we came into Membership. The second is the Covenant Prayer.

Everyone is very welcome. We look forward to seeing you at the service. If you are unable to come, please let one of us know.

Yours in the Service of our Lord,

*Amanda, Rosemary and Natasha*, Elders

### WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



#### World Day of Prayer 7th March 2025

Prepared by the women of the Cook Islands. Very different from last year's service which was written by the women of Palestine.

St Augustine's C of E Church, Broxbourne is hosting the morning service at 11am, followed by lunch

7:30 for 8pm Hoddesdon Baptist Church, Old Essex Road, Hoddesdon, EN11 8HX (same service)

The service is based on Psalm 139 with the theme 'I made you

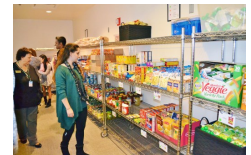
wonderful'. It is, as always, a beautiful service. We shall be sharing this with every church denomination throughout the world. Truly a time to 'Praise the Lord' for the unique WDP movement.

All are invited.

Our representative is Natasha Appiah. Thanks Natasha!

### Broxbourne Food Bank

Please remember to bring donations to the foodbank as our communion offering.



### IN OUR CHURCH HALL— JANUARY

25th 3.00pm Hoddesdon Music Club The Broxbourne Handbell Ringers.

28th 8.00pm SE Herts RSPB **ZOOM 8pm** Ian Barthorpe a tour of RSPB Minsmere. Contact

se\_herts\_repb@yahoo.co.uk

### ***Amanda's Eco-Message of the Month : January***

**Happy New Year, Everyone,**

Foil wrapping paper, can't be recycled, so why not wrap it round the roots of plants to protect from ice and snow.

Christmas tree – did you have a real tree? If it's got roots, you could plant it, for next year, or donate it (see online)

If it's just a stump, here's a thought from a tv programme – a group of neighbours put all their discarded trees together, sideways, to form a natural hedge. If you have space, the old tree could form a shelter for wildlife.

Place dropped needles around acid-loving plants, eg acers, camelia, azaleas, pieris.

If you start feeding birds, please don't suddenly stop – they will come to rely on your food. Please no greasy foods. They

need to keep their feathers in good condition to keep warm, so would appreciate a bowl of water or sand to bathe in, especially in cold weather.

Remember to change frozen water – birds can't drink ice.

If you have a pond, I suggest you place a ball (with string attached, so you don't fall in!) to float and maintain an unfrozen hole in any ice. But remember to put it back, or the air-hole will freeze. Please don't bang the ice, as the shockwaves could kill or harm fish and other wildlife.

God bless, Everyone. A blessed and happy 2025

## Luke 2 v 11

Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you;  
He is the Messiah, the Lord.

Dear all,

What a beautiful time of year this is - celebrating the birth of Jesus! Thank you for stepping in, particularly in Mark's absence, to make this season's services special for all who need to hear the good news!

### From Stepanka

There have been some lovely, festive events taking place over the last month including the Christmas Market and the Carol services! Just a reminder that **services and events are also advertised on the website: <https://nlvg.org.uk/>**. We also try to include short reflections with photographs of the past events for you and the public to enjoy. Please note that there will be no Christmas Day Services taking place at any of our churches this year – alternative options are included on the website.

The next year's first six months of the 'business' calendar (that I keep) containing dates for Elders, Joint Elders, Church and AGM meetings are filling up fast! Please note the **correct dates for the following church meetings:**

Sun 19 Jan - Cheshunt Free Church meeting

Mon 10 Feb, 7pm - Broxbourne Church meeting

Mon 16 June, 7pm - Broxbourne Church meeting and AGM

Christmas and the New Year are opportune times for reflection. It's been a real pleasure getting to know you and supporting Mark and the Elders in their great efforts this year. The work has been varied and sometimes challenging, but very much worthwhile. Thank you for helping me to settle in well! **I will be off for a couple of weeks over Christmas from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> December, back on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January.**

I wish you all a peaceful Christmas and a blessed New Year!

### From Mark

Dear Friends,

This Advent and Christmas, we remember the God who enters into our human fragility and brokenness. In the Christ child, born into poverty and vulnerability, we see a God who not only observes our suffering but fully embraces it. This season challenges us to reflect on the liberating truth of Emmanuel—God with us—and the hope, justice, and peace Christ brings into the world.

For me and my family, this Christmas season has also been marked by challenges. Over the past month, I have undergone major surgeries on both eyes to remove cataracts and begin the repair of my retina. Many of you may have noticed in recent months that my sight was failing, making it difficult for me to read notes, hymn books, messages and more.

It began in October, when a long-overdue visit to the optician led to an urgent referral to Moorfields Eye Hospital. Their team responded quickly, scheduling surgeries on November 25th and December 9th, alongside a series of assessments to monitor my recovery. I am deeply grateful for their skill and dedication. While I am still recovering, I give thanks for the significant improvement these procedures have already brought. Once fully healed, I will—for the first time—be able to read without spectacles, though I will still require glasses for driving and long distances after further assessments in January.

Throughout this time, I have sought to serve you in whatever ways I could, even in my limitations. My wife, Tessa, and I prepared a five-week Advent Bible Study, which was shared via email and printed for those without email access. I also provided reflections and full service scripts to ensure the worship life of our churches continued uninterrupted.

I am deeply grateful to the elders of our three churches and our pastorate administrator, who have worked tirelessly to support the ministry and mission of the pastorate during my recovery. Their dedication has ensured that the work of the church has gone forward smoothly.

Though my eyes remain sore and I face some discomfort, I trust in the healing power of God, who walks with us even through our bleakest days. Thank you for your prayers and support during this time. I look forward to returning to full ministry with renewed strength and vision. I will be leading a joint service for Broxbourne and Cheshunt at Cheshunt on Sunday, 29th December, while Hertford will have a previously scheduled service in Hertford. I look forward to seeing you after my recovery period, which ends on 24th December. I am contactable by phone and will respond to emails as I am able.

**Bible Passage for Reflection:** "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." – John 1:14

**Reflection:** What does it mean for us today that the Word became flesh? How can we live into the reality of God's presence among us, bringing grace and truth into the world?

**Prayer:** *Incarnate God, In this holy season, we give thanks for the gift of your Son, who comes to dwell among us in grace and truth. Open our hearts to your light, that we may reflect your love to the world. Empower us to be instruments of your justice and peace, bringing comfort to the broken and hope to the hopeless. In this season of waiting, fill us with the joy of your presence and the promise of your kingdom. ~ Amen.*

**Rosemary writes: Prayer Gatherings .... A question please.**

I am convinced that absolutely everyone reading this would .... if asked.... say that they believe in prayer; that they value prayer; and that it is important to them.

Our **Prayer Gathering** started in our living room in October 2019 when Joanna, our younger daughter, suggested that instead of just talking about concerns, we should provide a focus so that any that wished to, could pray together. And so the Prayer Gatherings were born.

They have taken place **every Wednesday evening at 8pm** since then, currently doing so by Zoom!

We meet for 45 minutes and pray silently or out loud, as comfortable.

Over time, many people have attended; many more have asked for prayers; and an unquantifiable number have used the printed sheets for their own private devotions.

The Prayer Gathering has become a supportive, caring group of friends from all three churches in the Pastorate and is greatly valued by all that attend.

However, disappointingly, the regular attendance is now in single figures.

And I'd love to know why.

And so, my question to you is this – assuming that I am right, that everyone reading this would .... If asked..., say that they believe in prayer; that they value prayer; and that it is important to them - what can we do to encourage more of you to join us and to benefit from the friendship, comfort and prayerful support provided by being part of this group?

If you have tried the group and it's not for you – then so be it.

If you haven't tried it yet, please give it a go.

Either way – please have a think and let me know how we can make it more useful for more people.

Thank you.

Rosemary



Nearly time for the bird watch—that hour when all the birds round about decide not to visit our garden!!



*Jill reminds us about the URC 's ongoing support for the charity 'Commitment for Life'*



**Commitment for Life is the global justice programme of the United Reformed Church, working in partnership with Global Justice Now as well as Christian Aid in Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, and Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.**

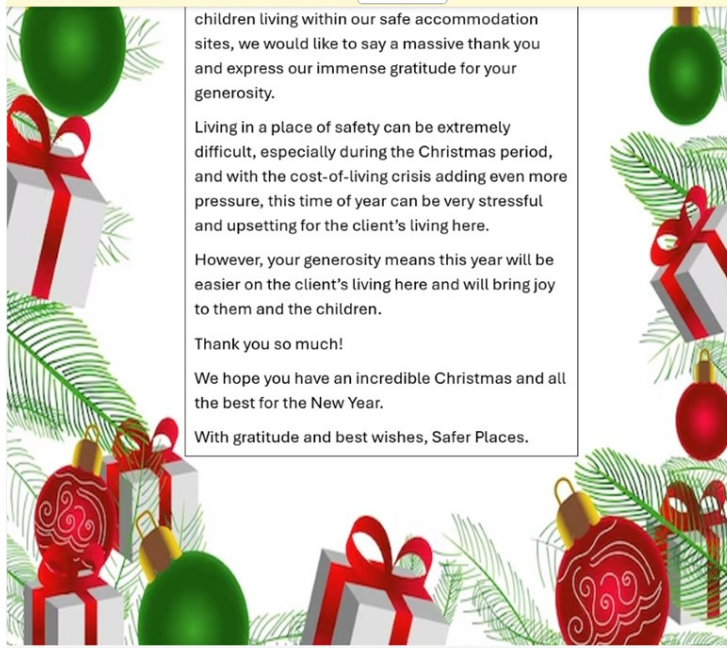
*Commitment for Life* is partnering with the Methodist Church's **All we Can**. We have come together to support people in Gaza and Lebanon. We would very much like you to pray for peace in the region. You could use the attached prayer in one of your services of worship.

Would you also consider donating to the appeal? In Gaza, your contribution will support a medical clinic. This is a wing of the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre, which has been supported by All We Can for many years. In Lebanon, we are supporting the vital work of our URC partner church, the National Evangelical Synod in Syria and Lebanon (NESSL).

NESSL's General Secretary is the Revd Joseph Kassab, writes:

**We appeal to our partners... to persist in their prayers for Syria [and Lebanon]. We urge you to advocate for Syria's future in your country, ensuring that this future becomes a sanctuary of safety, inclusion, and freedom for Christians to practice their faith without persecution... The path ahead will be challenging, but it cannot be navigated without partnership in faith, prayer, and mutual support. Your donations will go directly to these partners and will enable them to continue their vital work helping the most vulnerable in this conflict.**

On behalf of the children at **Safer Places** :



## GRAPEVINE

Happy New Year to all—and thank you for your generosity in 2024!



### Clothing Collection for Refugees

**It's still cold outside**, but thanks to **you** refugees staying in local hotels will feel It less!

A HUGE thank you to the many of you that donated pre-loved clothing and shoes desperately needed by the recent influx of refugees.

On the afternoon of Monday 16<sup>th</sup> Ian and I, assisted by Catherine – a friend of ours who was representing **Herts Welcomes Refugees** – took almost 3 car loads down to the hotel collection point.

The receiving agent was impressed by the extent and quality of our collection which will help many people who have come to our area with nothing, to keep a little warmer this winter.

Another example of the total being so much more than the sum of its parts.

Thanks again, Rosemary

### Closing Note from Mark

Thank you for your prayers and support during this season of recovery. May you and your loved ones find peace, joy, and renewed hope this Christmas.

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