

## Cheshunt Free Church Newsletter December 2025

### Services in December

- 7<sup>th</sup> Worship with Sandra Rose
- 14<sup>th</sup> Worship with Anna Erikson
- 21<sup>st</sup> Worship with Mark Robinson
- 28<sup>th</sup> Worship with Kathleen Laing



Dear friends,

As we move into December, the season gathers around us with its familiar glow. Yet for many among us this year carries a different weight. Some are stepping into a Christmas shaped by change; a loved one gone, health unsettled, relationships shifting, finances stretched, or a world that feels harsher than it did last year. The lights go up, the music returns, and still something inside may feel out of rhythm.

If that is your experience, you are not alone. This church family, this community holds you, and God holds you with a loving kindness deeper than any season can offer.

The first Christmas rose from a world that carried its own heaviness; occupied land, political fear, uncertainty pressing in from every side. Into that landscape came a child whose arrival signalled a future far larger than the moment. That story continues to carry us. It tells us that hope is never fragile, even when we are. It tells us that God's presence grows in the most unexpected places. It tells us that eternal life begins as a quiet pulse within our ordinary days and expands until it carries us through every change life brings.

So if this December feels unfamiliar, allow room for that truth. Let Christmas speak in its own way this year, even where life feels raw. Let it remind you that nothing in your story lies outside the reach of God's renewing love.

As we journey through this season together, may strength rise where weariness sits, may peace settle where anxiety speaks loudly, and may hope take root in every heart searching for steady ground.

Blessings,

Mark

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### **December Prayer Themes – Hope in a Changing Season**

December can feel different for many of us. Some are carrying loss, stress, or big changes into this month. Others feel out of step with the celebrations around them. Even so, the heart of Christmas still speaks hope — God's life reaching into our lives. These themes help us pray with honesty and expectation.

### **Week 1: Waiting with Openness**

Scripture: “For God alone my soul waits in silence; from God comes my salvation.” — Psalm 62:1

Focus: Pray for those who enter December feeling tired or unsettled. Ask for the strength to be open with God about joy, sorrow, and everything in between.

### **Week 2: Peace for Our Daily Lives**

Scripture: “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds.” — Philippians 4:7

Scripture: “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

Focus: Pray for homes, workplaces, and relationships that need calm and steadiness. Hold before God anyone who feels anxious or overwhelmed, and ask for peace that steadies the whole person.

### **Week 3: Joy that Makes Room for Everyone**

Scripture: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. — Philippians 4:4

Focus: Pray for joy that is gentle and real. Lift up children, young people, carers, and those who find the season difficult. Ask for joy that grows from God’s faithfulness rather than from pressure or expectations.

### **Week 4: Hope at the Heart of Christmas**

Scripture: The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth. — John 1:14

Focus: Pray for God’s hope to fill our gatherings and worship. Remember those facing a different kind of Christmas this year. Ask for hope that strengthens, lifts, and carries.

### **Week 5: Stepping into the New Year with Trust**

Scripture: Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. — Proverbs 3:5

Focus: Give thanks for moments of grace in the year that has passed. Pray for wisdom, healing, and renewed purpose as we step into a new year held in God’s care.

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### **A Measure of Breath — Now Available**

“Belief is what we think. Faith is what we live.”

These words are at the heart of A Measure of Breath. The novel follows the inner journey of a minister travelling to a church disciplinary meeting, opening up questions about lived faith when life feels heavy or uncertain. It moves through courage, memory, resilience, and the quiet strength that carries us forward.

The book is now available to order online and through major bookstores. I also have discounted copies here in the pastorate for anyone who would like to purchase one directly. If you are interested, please let me know. Mark

## Pastorate Update

Psalm 25:4-5

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.

Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour,  
and my hope is in you all day long.

Dear all,

We hope that the latest issue of Pastorate Update finds you well.

## From Stepanka

The business meetings that took place in the pastorate over the last month included Broxbourne Elders Meeting on Tuesday 4th November and Joint Meeting with the Thames North Synod Property Development Officer on Wednesday 12th November. The record of this meeting was circulated to the whole pastorate earlier today.

The meetings coming up in the next month are:

Broxbourne Church Meeting on Sunday 23rd November

Joint Elders Meeting on Tuesday 25th November

Joint Church Meeting (Broxbourne and Cheshunt) tbc

Hertford Elders meeting on Wednesday 3rd December

I had the privilege of joining the serving and non-serving elders for the Elders Away Day on Saturday 15th November, which was very well hosted by Broxbourne URC. The day was organised by Martin Legg as a training and development opportunity for Elders from within the Local Area Group of churches. It was led by Dr Alison Gray, the Tutor in Old Testament Language, Literature & Theology at Westminster College. A very worthwhile day for all!

Broxbourne URC are kindly organising a Fellowship Hot Lunch on Sunday 11th January 2026, 12:45 pm at their church. Please see the attached flyer. All pastorate churches are invited, together with friends and families. Diane, Fran and Val will be reminding people in their respective churches to use a couple of sign-up sheets, indicating: 1. If you are coming and 2. If you can provide a meal (Broxbourne) or dessert (Cheshunt and Hertford). The deadline for numbers is 5th January. More information will be available on the sign-up sheets.

Churches Together will be packing Christmas gifts for the Delta Hotel on Monday morning, 15th December, from 10.00am until midday in the Hunt Room opposite St Catherine and St Paul's Church. They would be grateful for as many people as possible to help with this. There will be toys to pack for the children, toiletries to pack for the adults and 150 Christmas cards in which to hand-write a greeting. Plenty to do! The gifts will be given out at the hotel on Wednesday evening, 17th December.

Please note that I will be attending a short course at All Nations Christian College called Engaging Islam Today in the second week of December. I will be taking annual leave and will not be available during this time. The Carols from Easneye will take place on Wednesday 3rd December at 7.30 pm. You are welcome to join either on site or through the live stream. For more information please contact the college or visit their website.

## From Mark

Across our three churches this past month, I have witnessed a depth of community, courage, and devotion.

At URC Broxbourne, we gathered for a memorable Remembrance service. The 1st Broxbourne Girl Guides joined us, and the girls played a full and meaningful part in the service alongside our own young people. Rosemary worked alongside me and she helped us to look at the work of remembrance with clarity and compassion, calling our attention not only to past sacrifice, but also to those who labour today for peace, comfort, and healing.

Many of us then processed to the memorial to stand with the parish church and the wider community with reverence, prayer and silence, and with the march of the uniformed groups framing the moment. Afterwards, we returned to URC Broxbourne for refreshments and conversation that carried the spirit of the morning. At Hertford, we shared a warm and joy-filled baptism service. The church was full. Families and children brought an energy that lifted the whole space. Carolina and I worked together. The introductory message she delivered set a powerful tone as we welcomed new life and renewed our own sense of commitment. It was a day that reminded us that faith grows through the hands and hearts of many. At Cheshunt, we continue the steady and courageous work toward amalgamation. A significant joint meeting took place with David Skipp from Synod and Martin Legg from the Local Area Group. Together, we explored questions, sought clarity, and considered the road ahead. The conversation was honest, constructive, and forward-looking. We are now preparing for a joint church meeting where we will gather again to shape the next stage of this journey. Through all of this, I am mindful that God accompanies us in every step we take together; across remembrance, celebration, discernment, and decision-making. May our shared labour continue to deepen our unity and strengthen our witness. Prayer Holy One, Steady our steps in these days. As the psalmist says, "Show me your ways; teach me your paths." Guide our churches with wisdom rooted in compassion. Let remembrance deepen our longing for peace. Let baptism renew our hope. Let our meetings be shaped by truth, patience, and courage. Hold our pastorate in your generous grace, so that everything we do reflects the light of your love and the promise of a future shaped by justice and mercy. Through Jesus Christ our saviour we pray ~ Amen.

## Poem

### An Autumn Walk

Leaves, colourful and reassuring,  
as we gaze at them hanging on to branches  
or push our feet through them,  
with a swish-swish,  
along the paths, through trees,  
which now show off their stately branches  
against blue and grey skies,  
patterned with wispy clouds.

It's mild and cold interchangeably,  
we shed jackets or add gloves and hats,  
as rain arrives in squalls and showers.  
We shield our eyes against the low sun  
when it drops to the horizon,  
all the while,

skirting small reflecting puddles  
and slippery wet leaves.

Squirrels dart and chatter,  
snails are out and about,  
their beautiful spiral patterns iridescent  
against the dark bare soil.  
Birds fly over en masse  
seeking a roost before dark.  
Brightly coloured berries stop us in our tracks –  
God's bounty!

We step out faster  
enjoying the fresh invigorating air  
in these shortening days.  
admiring piles of fruits and nuts  
beneath the laden trees.  
noticing bright new growth  
that heralds an eventual spring, in response  
to the wonderful cycle of creation.



#### Eco tips

Provide food and water for the birds in the cold weather.  
Make use of thermal clothes and blankets to avoid high heating bills.  
Take a daily walk whatever the weather.  
Recycle as much as you can especially during the holiday season.

#### Drop in art afternoon

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2-3.30 pm

Broxbourne URC Lounge

Drop in to explore creatively using a variety of art materials