



The
**United
Reformed
Church**



HERTFORD, Cowbridge, SG14 1PG



DECEMBER 2025/JANUARY 2026

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,

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 return 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.

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

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, 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 carlives feelries.

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 just passed. Pray for wisdom, healing and renewed purpose as we step into a new year held in God's care.

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.

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

PRAYERS

Continue to pray for Bob, Fran and their family.
Continue to pray for Jan Carter
Continue to pray for Phoebe who is still seriously ill.
Continue to pray for Shirley's grandson, Michael, during the uncertain situation with his work in Madagascar.
Continue to pray for Janet and Trevor Williams' daughter, Jo, as she continues her fight against cancer.
Pray for Bernard Ward
Pray for people known to you that they may know God's love and strength

DROP IN ART GROUP

WEEKDAY WORSHIP

Drop in Art Group – Tuesday 9th December 2025
2 – 3.30 pm
Broxbourne URC Lounge

January 2026, date TBA

MILLMEAD SCHOOL

We are continuing to develop our partnership links with Millmead School. This Christmas the children will be making decorations to display in the Church and the year 6 children will be coming to the Church at 1.30 pm on 5th December to help display them. If anyone would like to join us for biscuits and a drink, they will be very welcome. Please let Fran know if you would like to come along.

John will be going to the school to conduct a Christmas Assembly for key stage one.

We look forward to the school choir taking part in our Christmas Carol Service. Please invite your friends to join us on Sunday 13th December at 10.30 am to hear the Millmead School Choir.





January 4th 2026 - Mimram Choir, Concert, commencing 3 pm in the Church, in aid of Isabel Hospice.

January 11th 2026 – Fellowship lunch at Broxbourne. We have been asked to provide desserts. Sign up sheet on the table at the back of the Church



January 25th - Hertford and District Churches Together – A united service for the week of Christmas Unity to be held at Hertford URC at 3 pm. All are welcome to come and join with our friends from the other Churches in and around Hertford for a joint service.

Refreshments will be served after the service.

Advent message from our Moderator.

Dear friends,

As Christians we are people of hope and expectation. During Advent we look forward to the coming of Christ and even though we know that he has already come, it is a time of reflecting on the world that Jesus was born into, circumstances which has many resonances with us today. The people longed for light to come into their dark world and to be rescued from oppression. It is one of the amazing truths of our faith which we celebrate at Christmas that God became incarnate in Jesus and lived amongst us. He came to bring about change but he faced resistance and today that resistance is as great as ever.

We believe that although Christ has come, we still await the coming of his kingdom in all its fullness as the world goes through birth pains (Mark 13:8). And in the meantime, we are called to carry on the incarnational work that Jesus began to be light, to be peace and also to bring joy to our world.

Prayer

O God Most High, you love justice, hate oppression and promise both liberty and justice.

Anoint us by your Spirit, that we may bring good news to the downtrodden,

bind up the broken and set the captives free.

Help us proclaim your favour, that those who mourn will be comforted,
tyrants face justice, and our earth be renewed according to your will.
Amen

Revd Andy Braunston *Prayers from the Heart - The URC Prayer Handbook 2020*

Wishing you a very happy Christmas and a blessed and peaceful New Year on behalf of the Synod Staff.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "G" and "e" being particularly prominent.

Thames North Synod Moderator

Street Pastor Patrol Report**Saturday 22nd November 2025****Team**

David TL

Sonia

Jose

PP

Tim

Introduction

We met at URC in Hertford at 10pm. Tim shared scripture with us, we prayed for the evening and took some photographs before we went out on patrol. It had been raining earlier in the evening, but we prayed for clement weather.

Patrol

We set out at about 10:30 and walked up to Wetherspoons, which was busy. All of the door staff were busy with customers, so we acknowledged the door staff, but didn't speak. Decos was full! They had two events (upstairs and downstairs) and had about 160 people inside, which is very positive news.

Blackbirds was quite empty and whereas usually there is a large group outside the Quiet Man, there were only a few people. In contrast, there were a lot of tables and people outside Pruve. We got as far as The Practitioner, and the door staff indicated that one of their customers (a young man in a light blue coat) was behaving strangely. We said we would investigate. We backtracked to Parliament Square, but we didn't think he needed our help (not obviously drunk). So, we went back along Fore Street. We got as far as The Practitioner before CCTV indicated there was a young woman in need of an ambulance at Wetherspoons. We backtracked again but when we got to Wetherspoons, there was an ambulance and two police cars, so we weren't required. We went back along Fore Street, all the venues were quite busy (but not full). We talked to door staff at Cinnabar, Dog and Whistle and Jungle bar. Several groups approached us asking what we did and when we explained they were very grateful. One group asked us what was our best advice, for drinking in Hertford, we said, "be safe" and "don't let the group fragment". We indicated that we often needed to help individuals that had become detached from their groups. They thanked us for what we do. The Lord Hague had a band, but the pub wasn't too full. We turned onto Railway Street. The Bell was quite busy, but the White Hart was quiet. They said they would be having a Silent Disco next Saturday and would be busy. Someone dropped a glass on the road outside the White Hart and the team cleared away the glass. Another group of girls asked us what we did, and when we explained they thanked us profusely. We were approached by K**, who said she was homeless. We asked if she was hungry and she said she hadn't eaten anything that day. We walked her down Maidenhead Street to the Kebab shop in The Wash. We bought her a meal deal and gave her one of the blankets. She said she was sleeping at the back of St Andrews. She had been on the streets for about 2 weeks. She indicated that she would probably go to St Andrews later that morning (Sunday). We also got talking to the young man in the light blue jacket. Initially, he blessed us profusely for our work. We found out that he was also homeless. He was in a better place than K**, as he had money (he bought a kebab) and seemed to have somewhere to stay that night. We went off patrol at about 1pm. David shared K**'s dilemma with the Ascension Trust WhatsApp group and asked for pray. We had six responses!

We went back out at about 1:30am. Parliament Square was empty and we arrived at The Practitioner and the door staff asked us to wait as there was a young woman who was drunk and had lost her phone and they were concerned about her. We met with the young woman and discussed what to do. We agreed to take her home to Sele, but from a safeguarding perspective the whole team would need to go with her in one of the cars. Sonia volunteered. Sonia tried to phone the lady's phone and we tried to get into The Practitioner to see if we could locate the phone based on the ring tone. However, they were shut and wouldn't open up. We walked the young lady back to the URC church, but at the Old Cross she said she wanted to walk to clear her head. As it was 2am and there was a good police presence in the town, we came off patrol. We picked up about half a dozen bottles and glasses and swept up one broken bottle. We gave out one blanket to K**, but no water or flip flops. We had several meaningful conversations with groups and individuals in town. We helped one homeless person.

We are developing a great relationship with the door staff at Wetherspoons, The Practitioner, Dog and Whistle, Cinnabars, Jungle Bar, Lord Hague and White Hart, i.e., the bigger venues. They are seeking us out for help with customers they are concerned about. I think this is a great development!

We prayed for several individuals and the continued safety of the town. Sonia and I looked for the young lady on the way home but didn't see her. When David got home, he sent an email to Alan Steward telling him about K**, where she was sleeping and that she may be at St Andrews for the morning service. Alan thanked us for our service and indicated that he would keep an eye out for K**.

David

Post Patrol Note: The young man that was homeless turned up at the Baptist Church on Sunday morning and was talking to Alan about his situation. I shook his hand in passing, I didn't want to interfere in their discussions.

USED POSTAGE STAMPS – If you have any used postage stamps, could you please put them in the container at the side of the Church. Shirley is collecting these for the Isobel Hospice.

DIARY DECEMBER 2025

1 Dec	10.15 12.15	Short Mat Bowls
3 Dec	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
4 Dec	10.00 am 2-4 pm 7.30-9.30	Open House Coffee Morning Short Mat Bowls Short Mat Bowls
7 Dec	10.30 am	Morning Service led by our Minister, Revd Mark Robinson, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion.
8 Dec	10.15 12.15	Short Mat Bowls
10 Dec	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
11 Dec	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning , followed by Free potato lunch

	2-4 pm 7.30-9.30	Short Mat Bowls Short Mat Bowls
14 Dec	10.30	Morning Service –Christmas Carol Service led by John Ellis, including the choir of Millmead School
15 Dec	10.15- 12.15	Short Mat Bowls
17 Dec	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
18 Dec	10.00 am 2-4 pm 7.30-9.30	Open House Coffee Meeting Short Mat Bowls Short Mat Bowls
21 Dec	10.30 am	Morning Service – Led by Chris Hall
25 Dec		Christmas Day
28 Dec	10.30 am	Morning Service – led by Martin Bird, All Saints

DIARY JANUARY 2026

4 Jan	10.30 am 3.00 pm	Morning Service – led by our Minister Revd Mark Robinson, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Mimram Singers, concert in Church. In aid of Isobel Hospice
5 Jan	10.15- 12.15	Short Mat Bowls
7 Jan	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
8 Jan	10.00 am 2-4 pm 7.30-9.30	Open House Coffee Meeting , followed by free Potato Lunch Short Mat Bowls Short Mat Bowls
11 Jan	10.30 12.30	Morning Service – Led by Martin Bird, All Saints Fellowship lunch at Broxbourne.
12 Jan	10.15- 12.15	Short Mat Bowls
14 Jan	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
15 Jan	10.00 am 2-4 pm 7.30-9.30	Open House Coffee Meeting . Short Mat Bowls Short Mat Bowls
18 Jan	10.30	Morning Service – Led by Jerry Forrester
19 Jan	10.15- 12.15	Short Mat Bowls
21 Jan	8.00	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt Churches
22 Jan	10.00 am 2-4 pm 7.30-9.30	Open House Coffee Meeting , Short Mat Bowls Short Mat Bowls

25 Jan	10.30	Morning Service – Led by John Ellis
26 Jan	10.15- 12.15	Short Mat Bowls
28 Jan	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne and Cheshunt churches
29 Jan	10.00 am 2-4 pm 7.30-9.30	Open House Coffee Meeting Short Mat Bowls Short Mat Bowls
1 Feb	10.30	Morning Service Led by our Minister, Revd Mark Robinson, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

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

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