

BROXBOURNE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MAGAZINE

January 2026

Minister: Revd. Mark Robinson 07510782031 revdmarkr@gmail.com

Treasurer: Amanda Harwood

Pastorate Administrator: Stepanka Moysey Mobile 07362592580 urcnlvg@gmail.com

Guest Editor: Dorothy Blatcher

Please submit news to the Editor by 28 January for the February magazine.

Dear Friends,

A new year opens and I wish you strength, health, and deep peace as we step into 2026 together. As we move toward Epiphany, we celebrate the revealing of Christ's light in the world, and we trust that God continues to reveal wisdom, courage, and grace among us in this season too.

This year our shared focus will be Trust. At our Joint Elders' Meeting we agreed that 2026 will be shaped by this theme across our pastorate. Each month in worship we will reflect on trust in God, trust shaped by prayer, trust for daily living, and trust that steadies us in changing times. We hold close the words of Scripture that encourage us: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and acknowledge God in all your ways, and God will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Trust is vital for the journey ahead as we continue toward amalgamation between Cheshunt and Broxbourne. This year will bring holy moments of gratitude and new beginning. We will honour the life and faithful witness of Cheshunt Free Church with a Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration on 22nd March 2026. Then we will step into a hopeful future together with a Service of Welcome and Renewal at Broxbourne on Easter Sunday 2026. These services will allow us to give thanks, to tell truth about emotion and memory, and to place our shared future confidently in God's hands. Trust gives courage for this work. Trust creates space for honesty, listening, and care. Trust keeps us rooted in prayer, Scripture, and community as we move forward with faith and reverence for what God is shaping among us.

As the year begins, may we live fully into this calling.

May Epiphany faith steady us.

May trust grow deep among us.

May hope carry us forward.

Mark

Our services in January

4 Jan	Junior Church. Matthew 2 1-23 No. 44 8-11 book p.305 – 311 God talks to the Wisemen No. 46 p.280 – 284 11-14 Stars in their eyes.	John Ellis
11 Jan	Rededication. Launch of Trust theme. Communion. Pastorate lunch at Broxbourne 12.45.	Mark Robinson
18 Jan		Jackie Hall
25 Jan		Ian Matthews



You are invited to a delicious hot lunch on Sunday 11th January at 12.45.

Warm up with good company and food on a cold Winter's day. Please sign up if you have not already done so. There is a sign-up sheet for those offering the main course, which is shepherd's pie. There will be a vegan and dairy free pie too. Our friends at Hertford will bring desserts. Donations will be invited for the meal. Please see Diane or Dorothy for the sign-up sheets both for eating and providing meals.



Christmas

We are grateful to Diane and Faye, with help from Helen, for the welcoming festive decorations in the lounge window, hall, entrance and Upper Room and to Natasha for the beautifully decorated real tree in the sanctuary. Thank you! It all looks amazing.

Christmas Craft Market Saturday 28 November

From Dorothy: This wonderful Christmas event would not have happened without Mary Bite and Rosemary Woodall. A huge thank you to you all, for setting up, being such welcoming and effective stallholders, making and serving refreshments, bringing your friends, family and neighbours and clearing away. You know who you are! Especial thanks go to: Mary for organising all the guest craft stall holders; to Rosemary and Ian for organising and running the kitchen, serving refreshments this year as well as lunches; and to Diane and Jenny, with support from Gary, for the amazing home baking and preserves stall - always very popular.

The Market raised a phenomenal £1483.72!

From Rosemary to the amazing kitchen team: 'Just thought that you'd like to know that our superb kitchen team made an astounding £420! Thank you ALL for your hard work and exceptional good humour. It was an absolute pleasure working with you'. Also from Rosemary 'Thanks too to Dorothy herself for spearheading this event. Every willing team needs someone to lead, which she did with energy, decisiveness, rationality and good humour. Well done Dorothy'.

See more in 'Pastorate News' at the foot of this magazine.

Christmas Services

Sunday 14th December 10.30 Carols café – see the Pastorate update



Thanks to Mark and everyone who made this such a lovely festive occasion, and especially the café refreshments team of Liz S and Marion.

Sunday December 14th 6.30pm Carols by candlelight



Our singing group sang 'Mary did you know' and 'Hallelujah'. at the Carols by Candlelight Service and, with the Broxbourne Handbell Ringers, created harmony at the culmination of our theme of Harmony for 2025.

Rosemary Woodall sent a 'quick email to thank you all so much for your input into our singing group. We aimed to enjoy it - regardless - and we did! Our contributions we GREATLY appreciated by the congregation. And what a congregation! There was an amazing turnout - over 60 people - the most we've had for Carols by Candlelight in many years. Helen Knight even described us as 'Wonderful' and a number of people said how they had enjoyed our efforts and how well we did - especially with 'such a complex piece' as Hallelujah. Other comments included that it the service was 'magical', 'beautiful', 'warm and welcoming' with a 'lovely atmosphere', and that the bellringers 'made it so special'. And there were more. So....I think that the basic message was that we pulled it off! SO, VERY WELL DONE ALL.

As last year, apart from enjoying the singing, I particularly enjoyed the camaraderie during our, admittedly minimal' - practices, with everyone chipping in; everyone contributing ideas; everyone being heard; and everyone finding a solution together. So thank you ALL. Especial thanks must go to Debi for being so patient, so unflummoxed, so time-generous, and of course so talented! To God be the glory, great things He has done.'

A huge thank you to the wonderful Broxbourne Handbell Ringers and to Diane and team for the welcome refreshments. We raised £90.43 for the Handbell Ringers' charity, the Air Ambulance and the same amount towards our Christmas charity, The Isabel Hospice.

We have very sad news that Mary Cole, Director of the Handbell Ringers, passed away on the morning of our Carols by Candlelight service. We remembered her in reflective silence. Mary made a great contribution to our community through music, the U3A and many other activities. She is much missed. We send our deep sympathy and condolences to her husband Laurence and family.

Christingle Service 21 December



Rosemary, Maggie and the children of Junior Church led a beautiful service. We had fun making Christingles as we arrived. This Service supported the work of The Children's Society who work tirelessly to transform the hopes and happiness of young people facing abuse, exploitation and neglect. The Christingle is a reminder of the Light of Christ coming into a dark world bringing love and light and hope for all. Donations for the

Children's Society were around a wonderful £185.

Toy Service

Our Toy Service was held on Sunday 7th December, led by John Ellis. During the Service members of the congregation presented gifts of new or as new toys and books, which were received and displayed by Maggie and our youngsters.



On Monday afternoon several bags of these beautiful toys for children of all ages were collected by two representatives of Safer Places. Safer Places run anonymous local refuges for women and children who have had to leave their homes, often with nothing, to escape domestic abuse. They provide survivors and their families with temporary emergency shelter and longer-term safe houses as well as services designed to ensure their safety and recovery, including advocacy, emotional support and assistance with legal options. Their trained staff work to empower survivors and help them rebuild their lives.

Thank you, Gordon, for again being the confidential intermediary between the church and the organisation. And thank you to you too thanks to your generosity, children who might have received nothing this Christmas will now receive a beautiful gift.

Rosemary

Good News

- Don and Betty Wratten have moved down to the ground floor in a double room in their care home. They thank those who have sent Christmas greetings.
- Our Christmas Craft Market raised a phenomenal £1483.72
- We have a substantial donation to give to the Isabel Hospice in fond remembrance of Dorothy Kelso. Final amount to be announced.

Wrap Up Coat Collection

Thank you to all those who donated their unwanted winter coats to the Rotary



District 'Wrap up' Campaign which has now completed. Over the month of November, we had a large box in the church foyer into which over 60 coats were donated – 30 women's, 20 men's and 10 children's. Our box was one of 4 in our local area – the others being at Wodson Park, Southern Maltings, and Van Hage – all in Ware. In total 256 coats were donated, including 40 new ladies' coats by Van Hage.

Our items were distributed as follows:

- 30 men's and boys' coats to the refugee centre in Turnford via the charity Care4Calais.
- 3 coats to the women's refuge who collected the toys from the toy service and
- 27 women's coats to the charity Herts Welcomes Refugees to be used in the north of the county where the need was greater.

Other donations went to Isabel Hospice and the Hertford Pantry for 26 local junior school children whose parents are struggling financially.

As is so often the case, a small-scale effort by a few can result in a massive impact. You contributed to over 250 people feeling warmer on these cold days, not just because of their coats, but knowing that someone somewhere cared enough to give them a winter coat. So, thank you.

Rosemary

CHURCH ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR DIARY

COMET Mondays 2-4pm Come along if you enjoy togetherness. On Monday 15th December we enjoyed a festive tea.

SHORT MAT BOWLS 7.30 Every Thursday evening in the church hall. Please speak to Alan Earl if you would like to join.

AFTER EIGHTS A programme of interesting talks in our church hall on the first Tuesday of the month 2-4pm. A delicious Christmas lunch was enjoyed on Tuesday 2nd December. On 6th January the speaker is Barbara Dalby on Bee Keeping.

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.

ART DROP-IN with Jill 27 January 2-3.30 materials provided. All welcome.

The SE Herts RSPB meeting on 27 January will not be in our hall, but by Zoom. The RSPB's Scotland Biosecurity team will tell us about initiatives to safeguard Scotland's internationally important sea bird islands. Contact: Dorothy Blatcher

Some future dates for your diary

Wednesday 14 January Elders' meeting

Friday 6 March World day of prayer Methodist Church, Middlefield Road, Hoddesdon, 11am followed by lunch. Wormley Community Centre, 7:30 for 8

5 April – Easter Sunday Amalgamation Welcome Service at Broxbourne

AMALGAMATION – Summary from the Joint Church Meeting of Cheshunt and Broxbourne URCs held at Broxbourne on Sunday 30th November 2025

History

21st September 2025: Cheshunt Church Meeting bravely recognised their concern regarding their sustainability and voted in favour of pursuing amalgamation with Broxbourne URC.

12th November 2025: Pastorate Elders met with David Skipp (Synod) and Martin Legg (Local Area Group) to discuss the parameters of amalgamation as directed by the Broxbourne Church in their Extraordinary Church Meeting on 12th October.

23rd November: Broxbourne Church Meeting voted in favour to proceed in principle with amalgamation with Cheshunt, with the proviso that the church building and manse be sold so that the new church does not have responsibility for these buildings.

30th November: Both churches came together in order to confirm their mutual commitment to the process of amalgamation and to go forward together.

Amalgamation in Practice

All members of the two churches will become members of the one new church. The worship life and pastoral care of both congregations will be combined. We will worship together in Broxbourne in the Broxbourne church building. The Cheshunt Church and Manse will be sold.

Elders of both churches will be joined to form the eldership of the new church. Transport will be hired to convey members from Cheshunt to and from church – and any along the way from Broxbourne.

Resolution passed unanimously

The Thanksgiving Service at Cheshunt should be held on Sunday 22nd March 2026.

The Welcome Service at Broxbourne should take place on Easter Sunday 5th April.

After Easter we will go forward together officially. Services are planned at Cheshunt until March. In the interim, Cheshunt members have an open invitation to worship at Broxbourne. There will be guidance from Synod on the process of closure of Cheshunt Free Church, which will still need to be administered after amalgamation. There are many things to organise. The Minister promised transparency and detail at every stage.

This month we highlight the Mill Lane Pre-School – there are places available



Mill Lane Pre-School

Charity number: 1023359

We are a pre-school based in Broxbourne United Reformed Church, with a team of fully qualified early years practitioners.

Established in 1964, we offer exceptional child care for children ages 2-4 years, Monday - Friday 9am - 12pm (term time only).

We welcome self funded and government funded spaces into our warm and playful pre-school. For enquiries or to arrange a visit please contact us on 07597 439799 or alternatively email us millanepreschool.toddlers@gmail.com



Amanda's eco-hints January 2026

Reminder – balloons are fun, but **busted balloons** are also very **dangerous choking** hazard for pets and wildlife, so **please cut them up** into small pieces before binning. Wrap and bin turkey bones securely as they can splinter and choke foxes.

Birds can't **drink or bathe** in frozen water, so please put out some **warm water** for them. We sometimes have a **warm** spike in mid-January. If this happens, **bumble bees** can **wake** up looking for food. Suggest **cut apple**, cut grapes or other fruit, or some **fruit juice** in a clean **milk bottle top** (small enough to prevent them drowning in a bowl).

Holiday activities? Put up a **bird nesting box** for **shelter**. If you have some wood, Amanda has a template to **make a nesting box**. Children's fun – make some **food balls**. Mix cake crumbs, dried oats, bird seed with **melted suet** to make food balls. Wrap mixture around a length of string and put in fridge to solidify. (Note: **do not use turkey fat or butter** as these do not solidify and will ruin the birds' feathers.) Suggest tie a twig to end of string as a perch and hang up in a cat-safe place. Make **fruit necklaces** to hang up in **trees**.

Recycling news: **Empty blister packs** (Used for tablets) can now be **recycled** at some **Boots** branches, or alternatively, you can leave them in the small container (marked asthma inhalers) in the **Upper Room** (next to Foodbank box).

New Year's Resolution: natural berries are the best food for some birds and animals, so perhaps think where you could **plant a berry bush** (holly, pyracantha, cotoneaster etc) when the weather and soil warm up.

Happy New Year, and God's blessings in 2026. Amanda

PASTORATE UPDATE 17

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! While we recognise that this time of year can be hard for some of you, it is our aim to bring a bit of Christmas cheer to you in this issue.

From Stepanka



There have been some lovely, **festive activities** taking place over the last month, including the Christmas Craft Market and the Carol services. What a joy it was to be part of the great kitchen team (see photo below). Thank you to all who have made these special Christmas events such a success!

The **Fellowship Hot Lunch** will be served on Sunday 11th January 2026, 12:45 pm at Broxbourne URC. All pastorate churches are invited, together with friends and families. Thank you for remembering to sign up and letting us know if you can provide a meal or a dessert. Food donations

can be reimbursed. Cash donations are welcome on the day to cover the cost.

I am taking annual leave over Christmas from Monday 22 December. I will be in the office on Monday and Tuesday 29 and 30 December and off again for New Year's Eve. I will continue to

provide **safeguarding cover during the Christmas period**. If you have any safeguarding concerns, please do not hesitate to call me on 07362 592580.



Christmas and the New Year are opportune times for reflection. It's been a real pleasure supporting the pastorate again this year. The work has been varied and sometimes challenging, but very much worthwhile. A big **thank you** for getting on board with the safeguarding piece – most of the items on the safeguarding checklist have now been put into place.

I wish you all a peaceful time celebrating Christmas and the New Year!

From Mark

This is the final update of the year, and it comes with gratitude for all that has been shared, offered, and held together over recent weeks.

Broxbourne

The Advent–Christmas season began with a lively and well-attended Christmas Market at Broxbourne. On the same day, we opened the sanctuary for visitors, offering space to pause, listen to gentle seasonal music, and view a rolling PowerPoint introducing the church, its life, and forthcoming events. Alongside this, stalls in the hall and Upper Room created spaces of conversation, welcome and refreshment, shaping a sense of openness that felt right for the season.

On Sunday 14 December, the Carols Café service brought together people of all ages for an intergenerational time of worship shaped by carols, food, craft, quizzes, prayer, shared discussion, and short reflections. The atmosphere was relaxed and joyful, and it was encouraging to see families, children, and adults engaging so fully together.

Later that same day, we gathered again for the Candlelight Service. The church was full, and the sanctuary - lit by candles - became a place of music, stillness, and celebration. With the Broxbourne Handbell Ringers, our own singers, and a fully engaged congregation, the service carried a deep sense of shared joy. Seasonal refreshments afterwards extended the time of togetherness.

On the following Sunday, the Junior Church will lead a Christingle service, which many are already looking forward to.

Hertford

At Hertford, the church was beautifully prepared for Christmas thanks to the Year 6 class from Millmead School, who spent an afternoon decorating the building. Their care and creativity were evident, and their work brought a fresh sense of seasonal warmth into the space.

On Sunday 14 December, the Millmead School Choir joined the service, turning it into a genuine celebration of Christmas. Their singing lifted the congregation and reminded us of the growing and valued connection between the church and the school.

Cheshunt

We will gather for a festive Christmas service at Cheshunt on Sunday 21 December, the final Sunday of Advent. While fewer public seasonal events have taken place there during this period, the church continues to be held firmly within the shared life of the pastorate. Planning conversations, pastoral connections, and the wider journey we are on together continue to shape the months ahead.

As the year draws to a close, **thank you** to everyone across the pastorate for the many ways you have contributed - through presence, preparation, generosity, prayer, music, hospitality, and care. Each act, whether seen or unseen, shapes the life we share together.

May the days ahead hold moments of rest, light, and hope, and may the story we celebrate continue to meet each of us where we are.

Bible Passage for Reflection

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

Prayer

God of grace and presence,
thank you for sharing life with us
in ordinary days and holy moments.
As this year draws to a close,
hold our churches and our communities in your care,