

Cheshunt Free Church Newsletter February 2026

Services in February

- 1st Worship with Kathleen Laing
- 8th Worship with Anna Erikson
- 15th Worship with John Ellis
- 22nd Worship with Mark



Dear friends,

February is here, and we stand at a threshold.

We speak the word *Trust* while our feet sense movement beneath us. Amalgamation gathers pace. Lent approaches with its call to truth, prayer, and turning. These moments belong together. They speak to the same journey.

Trust matters most when answers take time. Trust grows when the ground feels unsure and we choose to keep walking. Trust steadies us as we carry memory, hope, and responsibility into something new. This is the trust we name this year—trust placed in God, whose faithfulness holds across seasons of change.

Our work of amalgamation asks for care and courage. It invites us to honour what has shaped us and to pay attention to what is emerging. Churches are living communities, formed by people, prayer, service, and a love that acts, stays, and carries responsibility. This love listens when it would be easier to speak, remains present when things feel uncomfortable, and commits to one another for the sake of the whole.

When communities come together, God gathers more than buildings or plans. God gathers stories. God gathers hope and grief held side by side. God gathers gifts that had been waiting for one another.

Lent soon draws near. Lent sharpens our attention. It teaches us to let go of what distracts without letting go of what matters. It reminds us that faith deepens through honesty, shared discipline, and hope shaped by faithful love. Lent does not hurry us. It forms us. Trust grows well in that ground.

We trust God

when the ground feels unsure.

We trust God

when answers take time.

We trust God

with what we carry,

with who we are becoming,

with the future unfolding before us.

This trust shapes how we speak and how we listen. It shapes how we stay with one another. It strengthens our commitment to justice, mercy, and shared life. It keeps us rooted even as we move.

As February unfolds, may we walk gently with one another. May there be space for questions and patience for the journey. May we notice where God's presence is already at work among us—steady, faithful, and sustaining.

We are church.

We are held by God.

We trust God.

With faith and hope,

Mark

Trust and a Question Worth Asking

Many of us grew up hearing that God created Eve from one of Adam's ribs. It is familiar. It sounds settled. Yet when we look closely at the original Hebrew text, the word translated as *rib* actually means *side*. Everywhere else in the Bible where this word appears, it is translated as *side*.

So why *rib* here?

This question matters. Translation always involves choice, and choices often reflect the world in which they are made. Words shape how we imagine God and how we understand one another.

Rib suggests distance and hierarchy.

Side suggests closeness, shared life, mutual presence.

Side by side.

Face to face.

I studied biblical languages because I wanted to read Scripture carefully, trusting it enough to ask hard and honest questions. One of the discoveries that stayed with me is how much meaning can turn on a single word.

John Calvin once described Scripture as a pair of spectacles. Without them, our vision of God and the world remains blurred. With them, we begin to see more clearly. Yet even spectacles need careful adjustment.

The Bible remains trustworthy. God remains faithful. Our reading continues to grow as we learn to see with care, humility, and courage.

Perhaps faith sometimes begins with a simple question worth sharing over a cup of tea:

Why was this word chosen . . . and what might God be inviting us to see, side by side?

- Mark

Pastorate Update

Proverbs 3 v 5-6:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding;

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

Dear all,

Here we are, already well into the new year 2026. Time never seems to stand still, but how wonderful that we can put our time (past, present and future) in God’s hands and trust Him to lead us.

From Stepanka

Broxbourne Elders Meeting was held on 14 January where important church matters were discussed. Please remember to encourage and pray for your Elders. I will be attending the Synod Resources Day on Saturday 31 January to find out about important updates with a special focus on what the URC’s Church Life Review might mean for the churches. I am currently working through the Annual Church Returns for Broxbourne and Cheshunt and the Annual Safeguarding Reports for the pastorate. The safeguarding compliance levels have significantly improved since the last year’s report, but there are still mandatory Intermediate and Advanced training sessions that will need to be completed by the church volunteers this year. Please note that Belinda Herbert, the Synod Safeguarding Officer, is now back from her maternity leave. Her new contact number is: 0747 153 1977. This is important to note should you wish to contact her directly in case of a safeguarding concern. The safeguarding posters displayed around the churches will be updated to reflect Belinda’s new details. You are all invited to a special Joint service with Catriona Wheeler (Moderator of the General Assembly) on 22 February at Trinity Church in Enfield EN2 6AN. The service will start at 10:30 am and will be followed by tea/coffee and cake. Please save the date and let your Elders know if you are thinking of attending. More details about the church service will follow when we have the details from Catriona herself.

From Mark

January has been a month where we have started looking at trust, recommitment, and shared purpose across our pastorate, as we continue to walk together through an important season in our common life. At the centre of this month has been the ongoing work of amalgamation. This journey has now moved into a practical phase. Much prayerful discernment has already taken place, and we are now turning our attention to how we carry this work forward well. I am in the process of forming an Amalgamation Delivery Team, a small group who will help share responsibility for the work ahead. This will include coordination, communication, planning for key services, practical arrangements, and careful attention to how Cheshunt Free Church and URC Broxbourne become one church together. This work will be steady, thoughtful, and rooted in trust. At Broxbourne, we gathered for a meaningful Rededication and Covenant Service. As a congregation, we recommitted ourselves to following God and to the covenant first made at baptism and renewed through membership. It was a time of shared resolve and deep faith, affirming that God continues to call the church to live the coming year grounded in trust, justice, mercy, and courage. The service spoke of a God who makes divine life known through shared human experience, who names people beloved, and who calls the church to live faithfully in the world. After the service, we shared a joyful pastorate lunch. Broxbourne provided the main course, with Hertford and Cheshunt bringing the sweet. The hall was filled with conversation, laughter, and genuine togetherness. My thanks go to everyone who prepared food, set up the hall, served, and helped create such a warm and welcoming time. These shared moments strengthen us and remind us who we are together. At Hertford, we marked the launch of the Trust theme on the first Sunday of the new year. The Communion service explored trust as something lived and practised in response to God’s faithful presence in a complex world. Trust was named as something shaped

through worship, formed by justice and mercy, and lived out through courage, generosity, and shared life. Around the table, we were reminded that trust grows as we receive grace and offer it to one another. At Cheshunt, worship continued to speak clearly into this season of change and hope. The service called the congregation to recognise Jesus clearly, trust God deeply, and live as a people shaped by Christ's self-giving presence in the world. This clarity continues to sustain the congregation as we move forward together. Across the pastorate, these gatherings reflect a church attentive to God's call, grounded in community, and willing to step forward together. Thank you for your faithfulness, generosity, and steady commitment to this shared journey.

Prayer Faithful God, You are our dwelling place in every season. You call your people to walk together, to listen with care, and to place their trust in your presence. As scripture reminds us, "Trust in God with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge God, and God will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5–6) Guide our life as a pastorate. Let our planning be shaped by wisdom. Let our worship form us for justice and mercy. Let our shared life reflect your generous love. Hold us steady as we move forward together, rooted in trust, open to hope, and attentive to the future you are bringing into being ~ Amen.

A Thanksgiving

Jesus, friend and saviour,
we thank you that we can come close to you
when we share food and drink in your name.

We thank you for coming close to us too,
whether
we are sharing a meal in church, on line or at home,
whether
we have bread and wine, toast and tea or crisps and juice,
whether
we are led by another, read the words ourselves or keep silent.

We thank you that we share fellowship
with believers everywhere,
our focus on you and our hope in your touch.
Just as the branches of a tree or the veins on a leaf join as one
allowing goodness to permeate
right to the tips
we ask that your goodness might permeate through us
right to our tips
equipping us to go out and share your touch with others too.

Drop in art afternoon

Tuesday 24th February 2-3.30 pm

Broxbourne URC Lounge

Drop in and explore creatively using a variety of art materials