

Cheshunt Free Church March Newsletter

Services in March

1st Worship with Mark Robinson

8th Worship with Evodian Fonyonga

15th Worship with Mark Robinson

22nd Worship with Mark Robinson



Dear Friends,

March carries us into Lent.

We step into Lent with ashes. It is like a burning away of the old and turning to what God is making new. Lent calls the church to remember who we are and whose we are.

For Reformed people, Lent is not theatre. It is formation. We do not enter these forty days to perform sorrow, we enter to tell the truth before God. We confess because grace has already claimed us. We repent because mercy has already found us. We fast, pray, and give because we trust that God is shaping us into a people who live for more than ourselves.

The Reformers spoke of the Christian life as continual turning. Not a single dramatic moment, but a steady re-orientation of heart and mind toward God. Lent gives us space for that turning. It invites us to examine what directs our desires, what forms our habits, and what quietly governs our loyalties.

In a season of amalgamation, this matters deeply.

As we move toward resurrection and newness of life, Lent asks us: what do we need to release? What needs to be forgiven? What needs to be strengthened? Unity does not grow through efficiency alone. It grows through shared repentance, shared prayer, shared hope.

We are learning again that the church belongs to Christ. Not to memory. Not to preference. Not to fear. Christ is the head of the church, and we are members of one another. That truth steadies us.

Lent should deepen our faith and help us to make space so that love becomes more deliberate, justice more courageous, mercy more instinctive. It is about allowing God to search us and lead us into wider life.

We walk toward the cross.

We walk trusting grace.

We walk together.

May this season give us clarity.

May it give us honesty.

May it give us courage.

And may God form in us a community shaped by truth, humility, and hope.

With faith and steady trust,

Mark

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Trust and a Question Worth Asking

During Lent we often speak about repentance.

Many of us were taught to think of repentance as feeling sorry — a moment of regret, an apology offered to God.

Yet in the New Testament, the word translated as repent means something deeper. It speaks of a change of mind, a turning of direction, a reordering of life.

Repentance is not simply sorrow.

It is reorientation.

John Calvin described the Christian life as continual repentance — not because believers live in constant failure, but because grace continually reshapes us. As God’s mercy meets us, our loves are re-ordered. What once governed us loosens its grip. Christ becomes the centre.

This matters.

If repentance is only about guilt, Lent can feel heavy and inward.

If repentance is about reorientation, Lent becomes spacious and hopeful.

It invites questions such as:

What is shaping our instincts?

What governs our decisions?

What story directs our common life?

For a church walking toward newness of life together, this question carries weight.

So here is something worth asking over tea:

When you hear the word repentance, do you think of regret - or of reorientation?

And if God is turning us again toward Christ, what might need to shift in us - personally and together?

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Pastorate Update

Romans 15:13:

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

Dear all,

Across the pastorate, this month has spoken of a church that continues to live at the meeting point of past, present, and future. We give thanks for healing, for new beginnings, for testimony, and for the faithful witness entrusted to us.

From Stepanka

I attended the Synod Resources Day on Saturday 31 January where important updates for Church Secretaries, Treasurers, Administrators and Property Managers were shared. The Resource Day Materials were issued by the Synod yesterday and I will be distributing the information to relevant people within the pastorate shortly.

Last month was particularly busy with safeguarding. The Annual Safeguarding Returns have now been submitted for all three churches. I have also been involved in dealing with several safeguarding issues and concerns.

Unfortunately, I found that my safeguarding duties became increasingly harder for me to execute due to a number of obstacles. As a result, I have decided to step down from the Pastorate Safeguarding Coordinator role and have informed the Elders of my decision on 5 February. Please note that this role was not part of my job description, so my admin duties will not become reduced. My grateful thanks to many of you who continue to keep everyone safe within the churches!

Reminder that a special Joint service with Catriona Wheeler (Moderator of the General Assembly) is taking place this Sunday 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 see the attached Order of Service for more details.

From Mark

February has been a month marked by encounter. Encounter with God in healing and prayer, encounter with testimony and new life, and encounter with the living story of the church through its memory and history. I don't use names in my updates because I am not always able to ask permission to identify folks by name.

At Hertford, we gathered for a Rededication and Communion service centred on healing and prayer. The service held a sense of sacred space. As in each service we came carrying burdens, hopes, questions, and gratitude. Through prayer, song and engagement and the sharing of bread and wine, we were reminded that God meets people in every place of life, in

strength and in fragility, in certainty and in searching. It was a service shaped by commitment, compassion, and the steady presence of God among God's people.

At Broxbourne, we shared in a moving All-Age Adult Baptism and Communion service. The presence and participation of children gave the service a sense of honesty and openness. The baptism testimony was deep, spoken with clarity and courage, reminding us that faith journeys are living stories still being written. As we gathered around the Communion table together — children, young people, and adults — there was a deep sense of shared belonging and shared calling as one body in Christ.

At Cheshunt, as part of our ongoing amalgamation journey, we have begun the careful and respectful work of gathering historical items for deposit in local archives, alongside our Broxbourne archives. This work feels deeply significant. It is about honouring those who came before us while also preparing to carry their witness forward into a new shared future.

During this process, through determination and wit, we opened a long-locked cabinet and discovered six historic volumes. Among them was a handwritten book that appears to date from the 1800s, connected to records linked to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. The Countess founded the ministerial training college that later became established at Cheshunt as Cheshunt College, which formed part of the wider story of Reformed ministerial formation in this country. Holding these materials was a powerful reminder that we are part of a long and faithful story; one shaped by courage, conviction, and a deep desire to see lives and communities transformed through the gospel.

Following Stepanka stepping down from the Safeguarding Coordinator role, we are currently in conversation with Synod to ensure appropriate safeguarding and DBS verification arrangements are in place across the pastorate. Safeguarding oversight continues, and further updates will be shared as we progress.

Thank you for the many ways you continue to live out faith, hope, justice, mercy, and love in this shared life together.

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Prayer

Living God,
You walk with your people through every season of life.
You meet us in healing and in celebration,
in memory and in new beginnings.

Where there is weariness, breathe renewal.
Where there is uncertainty, plant hope.
Where there is change, grow courage and trust.

As we hold the stories of those who came before us,

shape us into people who will leave faithful stories behind us.

Form our worship.

Guide our decisions.

Strengthen our shared life.

Lead us into the future you are bringing into being.

Through Christ, who calls us into life together ~ Amen.

Art Drop In

Tuesday 24th March 2-3.30

Broxbourne URC

A Blessing

The God of life go with you.

The Risen Christ be beside you.

The vibrant Spirit within you.