



HERTFORD, Cowbridge, SG14 1PG



Ascension Day 14th May 2026

MAY 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,

We are still in the season of Easter.

Easter is more than one Sunday. It is the season in which the Church continues to live with the news that Christ is risen. The joy of Easter does not finish when the hymns of Easter Day have been sung. It continues through the life of the Church as we pray, worship, serve, and seek to follow Christ in the world.

This month also brings us to the Ascension of Christ.

What do you think of when you hear that Jesus ascended to heaven? What images come to your mind?

Some people think that the Ascension is a fanciful tale of fantasy. Perhaps that is because of the images the Ascension conjures in their minds. Many of those images have come to us through paintings, icons, stained glass windows, and children's Bible pictures.

If you do a quick search for Jesus 'Ascension, you will see many artists' interpretations of the event. Very often Jesus is shown floating above the disciples. He has been lifted from the ground and is pictured rising bodily into heaven. There are sometimes clouds, angels, trumpets, and doves around him as he ascends.

Perhaps these are the images that influence how many of us picture the Ascension.

The Bible accounts are much simpler.

The Gospel of Mark says:

“After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.”

Mark 16:19

Luke records it this way:

“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.”

Luke 24:50-51

Acts gives us a little more detail:

“After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”

Acts 1:9

These accounts give us eye witness testimony. They tell us that those who saw the Ascension experienced something beyond ordinary explanation. They speak of Jesus being taken up, of a cloud hiding him from their sight, and of the risen Christ returning to the life and presence of God.

The one who came from God, who lived among us, cared for us, loved us, suffered with us, died for us, and was raised, is taken into the fullness of God's glory.

This is the risen Christ carrying human life, human suffering, human wounds, and human hope into the presence of God.

The risen Christ carries our human life into the presence of God, with all its wounds, sorrows, struggles, and hopes. The risen Christ still bears the wounds of crucifixion. The life of God receives the wounded life of the world through Christ.

In our own time, this gives us much to hold in prayer. We see danger and displacement across the world. People are driven from their homes. Families are scattered by war, violence, poverty, and fear. Many live with uncertainty about tomorrow. The Ascension reminds us that human suffering is gathered into the presence of God. The wounds of the world are known by God.

Luke also tells us that Jesus lifted up his hands and blessed the disciples. And that is something that stays with me. While he was blessing them, he left them.

The final gesture of the risen Christ is blessing. The disciples are left with work to do. They are left with questions; with a world to serve; with the promise of the Spirit and with the blessing of Christ.

And what is more. Jesus promised that his leaving meant the Spirit would come. His earthly ministry was for a time and place. Through the Spirit, the presence of Christ is with us always. The Church is called to live as a Spirit-filled people, bearing witness to the love of God in worship, service, mercy, justice, and hope.

The Ascension therefore belongs with Easter. The empty tomb, the risen Christ, the blessing at Bethany, the cloud that hides him from sight, and the promise of the Spirit all belong together. They tell us that Christ is risen, Christ reigns with God, Christ blesses the Church, and Christ sends us to live as witnesses.

So, as we continue through this Easter season and come again to Ascension, may we lift our eyes in faith, open our hearts in prayer, and offer our lives again to the work of Christ.

The risen Christ blesses us still.

With every blessing,

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Trust and a Question Worth Asking

When Translation Shapes What We See

When we read the Bible, we are usually reading a translation.

That means someone has made a decisions about how words from Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek should be carried into English. Most of the time, we open the Bible, hear the words, and receive them as Scripture.

Yet translation shapes what we see.

In Acts 1, Jesus is taken up, and the disciples are left looking. Some English translations say they were looking “towards heaven.” Others say they were looking “into the sky.”

The Greek word is *ouranos*. It can mean heaven. It can also mean sky.

If we hear “sky,” we may picture the disciples looking upwards into the clouds. If we hear “heaven,” we may think of Jesus returning to the presence of God.

Both are close to the passage. The question is what the text is inviting us to understand.

Acts tells us that Jesus was taken up, and a cloud hid him from their sight. The passage bears witness to who Jesus is. The risen Christ is taken into the life and presence of God, and the disciples are prepared for the coming of the Spirit and the work of witness.

This is where we need to trust Scripture enough to read it carefully.

Sometimes confusion comes from assuming that one English word carries the whole meaning of the original text. Careful reading shows us that a biblical word may have a wider range of meaning than we first realised.

So here is an exercise for this month:

Read Acts 1:9–11 in two or three different Bible translations.

Ask:

What words are used: heaven, sky, or something else?

What picture does each translation create in your mind?

What does the passage actually say?

What have I assumed it says?

What is the main point of the passage?

And here is the question worth asking together:

When translations differ, do we become anxious, or do we become more curious?

And if God speaks through Scripture, what might careful reading teach us about trust?

PASTORATE UPDATE

Isaiah 43:19:

*"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth,
do you not perceive it?"*

Dear all,

As we continue to move forward together, the above words of the prophet speak with particular force to us in this season.

From Stepanka

Broxbourne Elders meeting took place on 8 April. It was the first Elders' meeting of the amalgamated church, marking the shared life of Broxbourne and Cheshunt as one eldership. The Joint Elders meeting will be held next Tuesday 28 April.

The following two events are taking place next month:

The Craft and Plant May Market at Broxbourne on Bank Holiday Monday, 4 May, from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm; and Hertford Church Anniversary Celebration on Sunday 24 May at 10:30 am.

Please spread the word and invite your friends and family. Posters for the events are attached.

The Pastorate website (www.nlvg.org.uk) is another excellent way to promote the church services, events and activities. You can copy links to events and paste them into your emails, texts and social media posts.

The new location All Nations Christian College will be moving to has not yet been finalised due to the process being more challenging than expected. Please pray for wisdom for the Senior Leadership Team and Board as they move towards a final decision.

From Mark

This month, one of the great joys of our shared life was the Easter Day Communion and Welcome Service at United Reformed Church Broxbourne. It was a deeply meaningful occasion in which we celebrated the risen Christ and marked the coming together of Cheshunt Free Church and United Reformed Church Broxbourne as one local church. The service held together Easter faith, memory, thanksgiving, and new beginning with warmth and grace. It was especially good to see children involved throughout the worship, helping to lead, respond, pray, and take part in the symbols and movement of the service. Their presence brought life and energy to the morning and reminded us that the church's future is already among us and growing.

We were also grateful to receive messages of encouragement from the wider church through the Synod Moderator, Revd George Watt, and through Revd Martin Legg, Immediate Past Convenor of the Local Area Group. Their words helped place this moment within the wider life and witness of the church. It was heartening to see the church so full for the occasion, and the time of refreshments and fellowship afterwards was a real gift. People stayed, talked, greeted one another, and shared in the joy of the day. My sincere thanks go to all who prepared, served, and supported that time of hospitality. It strengthened the sense that this was a day of genuine welcome, shared thanksgiving, and renewed fellowship.

At Hertford URC, we have been encouraged by the growing work with local schools during the Easter season. Through this initiative, around 200 children were reached with the Easter story. John Ellis led a whole-school assembly at Millmead School, and we were also delighted to welcome, for the first time, two classes from St Andrew's School to hear the Easter story and learn something of the life of our church. The response has been heartening. The children from St Andrew's remained engaged throughout the visit and we heard that they were still speaking about it later in the day, with a wish to return again in future. We have also heard of at least one child from Millmead School going home and speaking with enthusiasm about the Easter story and the song they had learned. These are signs that seeds are being sown, and we give thanks for John's faithful and imaginative work in helping children engage with the story of Jesus in ways they can receive and remember.

Alongside these developments, the marketing of the Cheshunt Free Church building

is now moving ahead under the guidance of Rapleys. There has been strong interest, and a number of prospective parties are coming to view the building. This is an important stage in the process, and we continue to pray for wisdom and steadiness as matters progress. Although the Amalgamation Delivery Team has now held its last official meeting, members have agreed to remain available should help be needed. There is still work to do in ensuring that the remaining aspects of the amalgamation are carried through smoothly and well. I want to express my sincere thanks to Jill, Mary, Val, Dorothy, and David, who have worked faithfully together and each brought their own gifts, insight, and commitment to this significant undertaking. Their shared labour has helped bring us to this point with care and strength.

As we continue on, we do so with gratitude for all that has been given, and with hope for what God is still bringing to life among us.

Prayer

Living God,

we thank you for the ways your church is being renewed among us.

For worship filled with joy,

for children hearing the Easter story,

for fellowship shared around tables,

and for all who labour quietly and faithfully in the life of the church,

we give you thanks.

Guide us in the days ahead.

Give wisdom where decisions must be made,

patience where processes continue,

and courage for all that still lies before us.

Bind us together in love,

root us in the life of the risen Christ,

and lead us into the future you are opening before us ~ Amen.

PRAYERS

Continue to pray for Bob, Fran and their family.

Continue to pray for Jan Carter

Continue to pray for Phoebe who is starting to make progress back to full health.

Continue to pray for Shirley's grandson, Michael, as he prepares to return home after his time in Madagascar and give thanks that Vinney has had his operation and has recovered well.

Continue to pray for Janet and Trevor Williams' daughter, Jo, as she continues her fight against cancer.

Pray for Jant Dummett as she recovers from hip surgery.
Pray for people known to you that they may know God's love and strength.

THANK YOU.

I would like to thank you all for the support given to me following my recent knee operation. As you know it has taken quite a while to recover but knowing your prayers were with me was a great comfort. Thank you all and I look forward to getting back to full recovery.

God bless
Margaret x

Drop in Art Group
Tuesday 19th May, 2026 - 2.00 – 3.30 pm
Broxbourne URC Lounge

Date for your Diary

We will be welcoming the Mill Mead School Choir to sing for us on Sunday 7th June at 10.30 am. Please invite your friends to join with us to hear the choir. (Our Communion service will be on 14th June).

John Ellis

HERTFORD CHURCHES TOGETHER

There are free Grief and Loss Counselling sessions held in the St Andrew's Centre (behind the church). These have been set up to help those in our congregation and community who could benefit from them.

Katie and Stuart, who are running the course, are keen for more people to know about it and so I'm sharing this with you to circulate within Churches Together, if that's okay.

There are more details on our website: www.hertfordstandrews.co.uk/griefandloss

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There is a special event at St Andrews Church on Thursday 21st May with a brilliant line up of guests.

Celebrating the Natural World will explore the beauty, wonder and importance of the natural world through music, art and conversation. We'd love to see as many people as possible from Hertford churches and the wider local community there, so please spread the word if you can.

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.

CHURCH DIARY

Hertford Art Society are using the Halls all week from 1 – 10 May

Tuesday 12th May, 7.30 pm - LAG Meeting at Broxbourne

Tuesday 19th May – Fire Assessment in Church and Halls

Thursday 21st May, 12.15 pm – Elders Meeting in Church Vestry

Sunday 24th May, 10.30 am – Church Anniversary

Sunday 31st May – Church Meeting after Morning Service

DIARY MAY 2026

Sun 3 May	10.30 am	Morning Service – Led by John Ellis, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion.
Wed 6 May	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
Thu 7 May	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning
Sun 10 May	10.30 am	Morning Service – Led by our Minister Mark Robinson
Wed 13 May	10.30 am	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
Thu 14 May	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning followed by Hot Potato Lunch
Sun 17 May	10.30 am	Morning Service – Led by Martin Bird, All Saints
Wed 20 May	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
Thu 21 May	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning
Sun 24 May	10.30 am	Morning Service – Led by John Ellis (Church Anniversary)
Wed 27 May	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
Thu 28 May	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning
Sun 31 May	10.30 am	Morning Service – Led by our Minister Mark Robinson followed by Church Meeting

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

Enquiries 07851 70847

<p>07510782031 revdmarkr@gmail.com Church Administrator: Stepanka Moysey urcnlvg@gmail.com MINISTER: REVD. MARK ROBINSON, 6 Tudor Rise, Broxbourne, EN10 7HB Editor: Fran Spence 01992 586585 franjspence@gmail.com Website: www.hertford.urchurch.org.uk</p>
