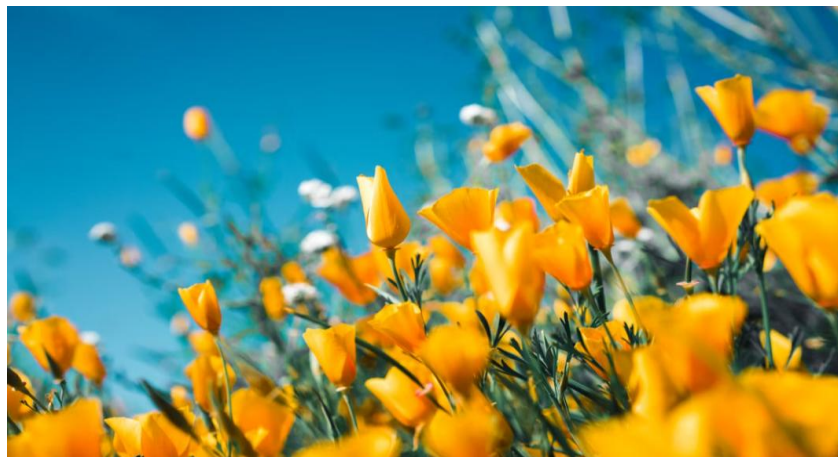


HERTFORD, Cowbridge, SG14 1PG



JULY 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,

One of the pleasures of our monthly Hot Potato Lunch at Hertford is the conversation around the tables. Last month a question came up that surprised me, not because it was unusual, but because it is one that many people have quietly wondered about. "What is the difference between a christening and a baptism?"

One person confidently replied that a christening is for babies and a baptism is for adults who have decided to become Christians.

It is an easy assumption to make, and many people have heard something similar. The reality, however, is a little different.

The Church celebrates one sacrament called Baptism. The word christening is a familiar and much-loved word, especially when people are talking about the baptism of a baby or young child. It is part of everyday language and many churches use it when speaking with families. Yet the ceremony itself is Baptism. Christening is another name that people often use for the baptism of a child; it is not a different sacrament or a separate ceremony.

When an adult comes for Baptism, they answer the promises for themselves because they are making a public profession of faith.

When a baby is baptised, parents and godparents make those promises on the child's behalf and promise to nurture that child within the Christian faith until they are able to respond for themselves.

Whether we say Christening or Baptism the Church celebrates the same gift of God's grace. Water is used, promises are made, and welcome is offered into the life of Christ's Church.

Perhaps that is one of the beautiful things about Baptism. It begins with God's love reaching towards us. Whether we come as an infant carried in someone's arms or as an adult who has discovered faith later in life, we are welcomed by the same gracious God.

If you have ever wondered about Baptism, whether for yourself, your child or your family, please do ask. These conversations are always welcome, and I am always happy to sit down over a cup of tea and explore them together.

With every blessing,
Mark

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Trust... and a Question Worth Asking

Was Paul a Christian?

At first glance the answer seems obvious.

Of course Paul was a Christian.

Yet when we open the pages of the New Testament, something interesting appears.

Paul never calls himself a Christian.

In fact, the word Christian appears only three times in the whole New Testament. It was first used in Antioch, and it seems to have been a name given to the followers of Jesus by other people.

Paul usually describes himself differently. He speaks of being “in Christ”, a servant of Christ Jesus, an apostle, a disciple and a member of God’s people. His letters are full of language about faith, grace and new creation, yet he never introduces himself by saying, “I am a Christian.”

So here is the question.

If Paul did not use the word “Christian” to describe himself, what difference might that make to the way we think about following Jesus today?

I would very much like to hear your thoughts. Perhaps discuss it with someone over a cup of tea, bring it up at a church gathering, or send me an email. Sometimes the most interesting conversations begin with a question we thought had an obvious answer.

PASTORATE UPDATE

“Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.”

1 Corinthians 15:58

Dear all,

For me this past month has been shaped by one significant chapter in the life of our pastorate. Following the URC Broxbourne church meeting’s decision to finalise the sale of the Cheshunt Free Church building, we entered a period of careful preparation as we made ready to hand the building on for its next stage of ministry.

I find that there is something deeply Christian about the kind of work that followed, because it is faithful work. I believe that faith is expressed not only through worship, prayer, preaching, and study, but also through practical acts of service. Over several weeks, many have given generously of their time and energy. Rooms were emptied, cupboards sorted, archives prepared, furniture moved, memories shared, and countless practical decisions made with patience and care. Every box lifted, every shelf cleared, and every conversation reflected a shared commitment to honouring the faithful witness of generations past while preparing faithfully for what lies ahead.

The elders spent time together in the building discerning which items would continue our ministry within URC Broxbourne and which would be donated and which remain as part of the building’s future. Historic records have been preserved through local archives so that the story of Cheshunt Free Church will continue to be available to future generations. It has been encouraging to see such care taken over the church’s history, recognising that every generation builds upon the faithfulness of those who came before.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who helped with this enormous undertaking. Some gave many, many hours over several days, while others quietly took responsibility for particular tasks behind the scenes. Whether carrying furniture, sorting the kitchen, helping with issues concerning the manse, preparing archives, clearing rooms, sorting items, or simply being willing to do whatever was needed, every contribution has been deeply appreciated. This is truly a shared labour, and I have been reminded once again of the generosity, commitment, and servant-hearted spirit that exists within the church.

Life across our churches also continues in the ordinary rhythms that quietly sustain our shared ministry. At Hertford, Open House, the Hot Potato Lunch, and our regular gatherings continue to

offer friendship, welcome, and conversation for members of the church and the wider community. At Broxbourne, worship, pastoral care, fellowship groups, and preparations for the months ahead continue to strengthen our life together as one church.

As we move into the next stage of our journey, we do so with gratitude for all that has been given, respect for the faithfulness of those who have gone before us, and hope for the opportunities God is opening before us.

Prayer

Faithful God,

We give thanks for every person who serves with willing hands and generous hearts. Bless all whose quiet acts of care so often go unseen, yet strengthen the life of your church in countless ways.

As we continue this shared journey, guide us with wisdom, patience, and hope. Help us to honour the past with gratitude, embrace the present with courage, and step into the future trusting that your Spirit continues to lead your people.

Shape us into a church that reflects the love of Christ through worship, service, hospitality, and justice, so that all who encounter us may glimpse your welcome and your grace.

In the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PRAYERS

Continue to pray for Bob, Fran and their family.

Continue to pray for Jan Carter

Continue to pray for Phoebe who is making progress back to full health, but is having a setback at the moment. Pray for Heather as she helps her family at this very difficult time

Continue to pray for Shirley's grandson, Michael, as he prepares to return home after his time in Madagascar

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

Pray for people known to you that they may know God's love.

Drop in Art Group –
Tuesday 14th July, 2026 - 2.00 – 3.30 pm
Broxbourne URC Lounge.

The next meeting will be in September.

From Shirley Sloan

ON REFLECTION by David McLaughlan

I went to a Pink concert. Twice! I was a chauffeur the first time and took my wife to the show the following evening.

I enjoyed it – a lot.

Pink is an entertainment phenomenon! And she has a very loyal fan base.

Having seen my daughter and granddaughter to the gates on the first night, I headed back against a tide of people in pink – T-shirts, cowboy hats, feather boas.

The stadium is in a residential area.

I was wondering what it must be like having your neighbourhood taken over, when I saw her.

An older woman out with her broom.

How fussy, I thought, as she swept feathers and sequins into the gutter.

I heard her tell a concert-goer that she would leave the mess for the bin men to clean up in the morning.

Each time she finished a strip of the pavement and moved on, the breeze undid her work. Nothing would be as she left it in the morning.

But still, she kept sweeping and chatting.

“What a grump!” I heard a girl tell her mum.

“Maybe” her mum said. “Or perhaps she’s just found her own way to be part of the celebration.”

That stayed with me.

The woman might never have considered actually going to the concert.

But perhaps she was lonely.

Perhaps the joy streaming past her window was too much to resist.

So, she joined in, in her own way.

She had conditions and constraints on her life. Ways she had to do things.

We all do. Those constraints and conditions are different for each of us. It doesn’t help to judge someone else on our own experiences.

For example, we may follow the faith we are born into, or that the society we live in favours.

The “other side” does the same. And the experience is no less real for them.

I once argued with a minister who thought that prayers were wasted if the person praying had a different faith or called God by any other name.

Wouldn’t God, I asked, judge less by the name used – or the posture adopted, or the direction we faced, or the food we had eaten – than by the sincerity of the heart?

Would a mother’s prayer for her child go unheard if she lived in a place that had never heard of our church?

Enthusiasts of every faith may think that's why they need to spread the word.

But others, who see God as all-in-all, knowing our conditions and constraints, have no problem imagining him providing everyone with their own way to join in the celebration.

I might be wrong, but I will always err on the side of a more inclusive Creator.

If we find our own way to faith, is that less authentic than the way society would have us believe?

To quote one of Pink's hits, "It's a trust-fall, baby!"

Find a way to join in that works for you. Trust. Fall.

Be caught in loving arms.

SAFEGUARDING

At the Church meeting it was agreed that I would be the Safeguarding Coordinator for Hertford United Reformed Church. There are a number of posters around the Church with contact details, both telephone number and email address.

Regards Sue Ellis.

Do you need help with your garden?

Contact Chris Hamilton – 07568 355444. Services Provided: Lawn mowing, Hedge cutting, Garden Renovations, Jet washing, Leaf clearance, Gutter clearance.

DIARY DATES

Tuesday 21st July - 10.30 am – Joint Elders' Meeting at Hertford.

Thursday 30th July - 2.00 pm – Hertford Elders' Meeting.

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.

Saturday 1st August

10 am – 12 noon

Church Coffee morning, raising funds for Isabel Hospice

Scones, cakes, Tea & Coffee for sale

With a Book and Cale Stall

Saturday 8th August

2.30 pm

Social Tea Party in the Church Garden

With an invitation to Broxbourne to join us.

DIARY JUNE 2026

1 Jul	8.00 pm	On line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
2 Jul	10.00	Open House Coffee Morning
5 Jul	10.30	Morning Service – Led by John Ellis, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion
8 Jul	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
9 Jul	10.- 00	Open House Coffee Morning followed by Hot Potato Lunch
12 Jul	10.30	Morning Service – Led by our Minister Mark Robinson.
15 Jul	10.30	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
16 Jul	10.00	Open House Coffee Morning
19 Jul	10.30	Morning Service – Led by Martin Legg
22 Jul	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
23 Jul	10.00	Open House Coffee Morning
26 Jul	10.30	Morning Service – Led by Chris Hall
29 Jul	8.00 pm	On line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church

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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