



HERTFORD, Cowbridge, SG14 1PG



OCTOBER 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,

For the first time in a very long while, I took part of my annual leave properly this year. I stepped away from the usual routines of ministry, spent time with Tessa and visited with family. People I love were all around me. Together we entered into conversations that had nowhere particular to go, we shared meals, laughed freely, and enjoyed the times when simply nothing needed to be done.

I came home grateful.

Perhaps it is fitting that I returned as we move towards Harvest. Harvest usually turns our attention towards what has been produced: the fruit, the vegetables, the grain, the food placed before us. We give thanks to God for the earth and for those who work upon it. We remember too that while some tables have plenty, others remain painfully bare, and gratitude must always keep company with our concern for justice.

Yet there is another part of harvest that I have been thinking about. Before anything can be gathered, much has to be received. The earth receives seed. It receives rain and sunlight. The seed lies hidden for a while before anything appears above the soil. Growth has its own time, much of it beyond our control. Perhaps human beings are more like this than we sometimes realise.

We spend so much of our lives doing. There is work to complete, people who need us, responsibilities that cannot simply be put aside. Even within the church, where we speak so often about service, it can become easy to measure faithfulness by how much we are doing.

My leave reminded me that receiving is also part of being human before God. Jesus understood this. The Gospels sometimes show Jesus withdrawing from the crowds, going away to pray, sitting at a table, sharing food, accepting hospitality, sleeping. These moments belong within the life and ministry of Jesus.

We give a great deal of ourselves. Sometimes we need to receive too. I think I had forgotten that.

Being away with Tessa and just being among siblings and friends reminded me that there is a time to sit, to talk, to laugh, and sometimes to do very little. And somewhere in all of that, I began to realise again that rest is part of the life God gives us.

Harvest can invite us to give thanks for these gifts too. And as we bring our thanksgiving to God this year, we might also remember that there are people for whom rest is difficult to find. Especially for those working long hours because there is never quite enough money; those caring for someone they love; and those who wake already tired because life is asking so much of them.

I have come back from leave knowing how much I needed the time away. I am thankful that I had it, especially the time with family. Perhaps this Harvest, alongside everything else for which we give thanks, we might think about rest. About whether we allow ourselves to receive it. And about those for whom rest remains difficult to find.

With every blessing,

Mark

Pastorate Update

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.
1 Corinthians 3:6

Dear friends,

Over these past few weeks, I have found myself thinking about beginnings.

A conversation begins around a table. A young person walks through the door of a new group for the first time. Someone responds to a call to serve. We cannot always know what will grow from these moments, yet we can give thanks for them and remain attentive to what God may be doing among us.

We have had much to celebrate across our pastorate.

At Hertford URC, we recently welcomed John Ellis into the eldership through his ordination and induction. At URC Broxbourne, Laurence Sinden has also been ordained and inducted as an Elder, and we have celebrated the commissioning of Natasha Appiah as a Locally Recognised Worship Leader.

I give thanks for John, Laurence and Natasha, for the gifts they bring and for their willingness to serve. God calls people in different ways, and the church has the privilege of recognising and encouraging those gifts.

Another beginning at Broxbourne has been the launch of The Hive, our new group for children and young people. Seven children and young people came to the first gathering, and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It was a brilliant beginning. I am grateful to Maggie and everyone helping to create a place where young people are welcomed, valued, build relationships and have opportunities to explore faith.

At Hertford, I have introduced Pause for Thought cards over the past couple of weeks. The cards offer a short thought or question intended to invite reflection and conversation.

Already, they have led to conversations with two men who come into the life of the church. One comes to the Hot Potato Lunch and another attends regularly. Both live with particular challenges, and on each occasion a card became an opening for a deeper conversation.

Ministry can begin with giving someone time, listening carefully, and creating enough space for them to speak about what is happening in their life. It also reminds me of the importance of Open House and the Hot Potato

Lunch. People return, and relationships develop. Sometimes people begin to talk about what is of concern to them.

Across the pastorate, the Photography Competition has now closed and judging will begin. The competition grew from Amanda's idea, developed with Cheryl, and people of all ages from both churches have taken part. Further details will be shared soon.

When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he used the simple image of planting and watering, while growth belonged to God.

Perhaps that is a helpful way of looking at our pastorate at present. New ministries are beginning. Gifts are being recognised. Children and young people are gathering. Conversations are taking place.

These are beginnings. Our calling is to tend them faithfully and remain open to the ways God is at work among us and within the communities we serve.

Prayer

God of life,

We thank you for the people you call and the gifts you awaken within your church.

We give thanks for John, Laurence and Natasha as they begin new ministries among us, and for the children and young people gathering at The Hive.

We pray for those who come through the doors of our churches carrying burdens we may know little about. Help us to listen with patience and offer the hospitality of Christ with care.

Bless both our churches and the communities of which we are part.

As we plant and water, teach us to trust you for the growth.

In the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Photography Competition

On Sunday 18th October, 2.30 – 4.30 pm, at Broxbourne, there is an Afternoon Tea where we can see all the photos submitted to the competition and the prize giving.

If you need a lift, please let Cheryl know.

Drop in Art Group –
Tuesday 13th October 2026 - 2.00 – 3.30 pm
Broxbourne URC Lounge

Beautiful Resistance in Zqaq Abu Dah (13.09.26) by Maggie Hindley

Every year that I can, I go to Hebron in the West Bank to join Community Peacemaker Teams there. The core team is five young Palestinians who (in term time) accompany children as they pass through Israeli checkpoints on the way to school; they observe and report on regular points of tension such as Friday Prayer time at the Ibrahimi mosque and the Saturday evening walk through the Old City on the part of a large group of settlers; they support people who have been abused by soldiers or settlers; and they use social media to publicise what is happening as widely as possible.

Here's my own reflection on this year's visit, August 2026.

The phrase *Beautiful Resistance* has been used in many contexts to describe the non-violent struggle to bring change in the face of oppression - for example in relation to climate change and in the celebration of black lives and culture. Recently, a Christian book calls its readers to resist dominant Western cultural norms and replace them with values such as celebration, sacrifice, hospitality and the hunger for justice.

But I think it was Alrowwad in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem that coined the phrase in the first place and exemplified it in art, drama, photography, dance and education. In the face of the very real ugliness of the Occupation and its violence, it's a way ordinary Palestinians defend their humanity and show the beauty of their lives; it breaks the stereotypes that suggest that hatred and violence are the norm or, alternatively, that the only response is passivity. Sometimes it's creative and inclusive, sometimes it's found in what's normal and everyday. It looks to long-lasting change and it's full of celebration.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WR8izNtdI1Y>)

There's a lot of *beautiful resistance* in Zqaq Abu Dah, the street in Hebron Old Town where the current CPT office is situated. Come with me to see some of what's going on in the street.

At the bend in the road contractor Bader al Batsh is working on restoring an 800-year-old house to its original shape and appearance, advised by Maissa the civil

engineer and Alaa the construction expert. When finished, it will be let to an ordinary Hebronite family. It's a project of the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, which with the help of external funding was set up to revive what might otherwise become a ghost city, to activate economic activity and to secure Palestinian presence in the face of rapid settler expansion. A beautiful house. Part of the resistance.



Turn left from this corner house and you're at Bayt Sitti, *Grandmother's House*, a restored traditional bakery that sells – among other delicacies - pastries with zaatar, spinach and a soft salty cheese around lunch time. It's owned by Abu and Um Jihad. Every day they make a huge pot of some hot and traditional food and serve it to the community; anybody can have some and poorer families can take a boxful home. They also deliver meals to the homes of needy families. It's funded by donations from the community, often to commemorate someone who has died. If it sounds idyllic, it's not. Last time the settlers made their weekly invasion the soldiers ordered Abu Jihad to shut the shop immediately. But there were things baking in the oven! So Abu Jihad closed the shop and left Um Jihad alone inside, cooking. He was mortified he couldn't do anything to help. Nevertheless, the daily baking and the cooking for others says *We live by other values*. Beautiful!



<https://www.facebook.com/share/1JghxMCNZG/?mibextid=wwXIfr>

On the right of the corner house and a few houses down is an alternative health centre. Veterinary surgeon Dr Bader, who owns it, recalls how he used to treat a steady stream of cattle, sheep, horses, donkeys and poultry, and how you couldn't see the ground under your feet in Zqaq Adu Dah, it was so busy. Then came the Ibrahimi mosque massacre and the closure of Shuhada Street; business plummeted and Dr Bader had to move out and worked till retirement for the Municipality. The house is now restored and beautiful, but for the back yard, which has been completely filled with rubble pushed down by settlers living above and behind. It's resilience like this that builds hope and encourages resistance.





Cross the road and you come to a restored studio, run by international artist Sonia Qonipi. Sonia was born in nearby Tel Rumaida, and her own home is now allocated for a cemetery to keep the land safe from settler appropriation, and inaccessible to her. She reaches the Old City instead by taxi from Jalal Khan. As well as pursuing her own art, Sonia works with local people, children as well as adults, to draw out their own talents. She believes that it's important to develop and share Palestinian talent,

art, and culture. At a recent exhibition of work by local, people, Palestinian identity and liberation was the dominant theme; resistance by means of boldly asserting the heritage that the oppressor denies.

(Facebook: Sonia M. Qonipi; Instagram Sonyaqonipi; Tiktok Sonia Qonipi.)

Between Sonia and the CPT house is a restored Ottoman period hammam owned by Sameer Al-Qasrawi, who was born in the adjacent house on Shuhada Street, and whose grandfather and father were accomplished masseurs. Forced out by settlers who set fire to the building, he moved out in 2004 but has since moved back and, with help from the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, has restored it to its original splendour and offers sauna and cold baths as well as massage. He's very vulnerable to attack by settlers on Shuhada Street; last year they forced open the shutters and squirted pepper spray in his face. He needed two months' treatment to recover. Nevertheless, he continues work to restore the house to the same standard as the hammam. He is glad that people in the West are beginning to get a better idea about the violence of the Occupation.



To reach the CPT apartment you have to climb a steep internal staircase. It leads also to the home of our immediate neighbour, Zleikha, a retired teacher. When she



moved to Zqaq Abu Dah twenty years ago, she brought with her the experience of organising school patrols to get children safely to school. So she began a nursery in her home, right inside the Old City, making it easier for families to stay. The nursery functions like a community centre. This September she expects at least 35 children to enrol. She plays a key role in a community that cares deeply about their children's development and education, and that cares about their long-term future, and they know it. Part of the resistance.

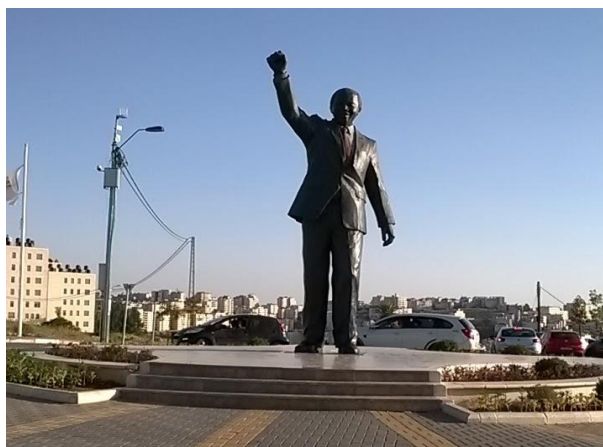
So CPT is at home with its neighbours in Zqaq Abu Dah, itself exemplifying and empowering resistance in many ways in response to new developments. The daily reality is full of danger. The team has had to shut off access to the roof and the balcony, with their panoramic views of the Old City, because they have become targets of military surveillance. Its members face daily dangers such as harassment from settlers at home severe enough to necessitate leaving the family house and moving to a small and expensive apartment in H1, the less contested and safer part of the city. There is the strong probability that team members will once again be detained as they stand at the checkpoint while children pass through to go to school; this happened last winter, as a couple of time before, and is a shocking and humiliating experience. At the same time, the team empowers resistance as it stands in solidarity with local people, who are emboldened by their presence at the checkpoint. This summer a project with teenage girls has helped the participants to explore their dreams, to set goals, to recognise obstacles and to find ways of dealing with them. Part of their learning has been a workshop on the rich history of their city, 4,500 years old, with a distinctive place in the development of the region and - city of Abraham - a distinctive religious significance for Jews,



Christians and Muslims alike. The girls were encouraged to be proud of their city. CPT will move soon to a safer location. I hope that the lush indoor garden they've cultivated within the office can go with them; it is a symbol of *beautiful resistance*.

Beautiful resistance isn't just a local thing. It's for all of us if we believe, with Nelson Mandela, that *our own freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians* or with Najib Azouri, that on *the result of this strugglelies the future of the world*. For all of us, the mundane repetitive things we do towards ending the Occupation; our campaigning, our activism, our attempts to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people, the way we appreciate and share Palestinian culture, *matters*. I am honoured to have a tiny share in it.

Maggie Hindley
August 2026



STREET PASTORS QUIZ



If you would like to make up a team for this Quiz on Friday 16th October, please have a word with Fran.

Two events for your Diaries

A poster for a Prison Sunday Service. The top half features a man in a grey shirt with his hands clasped in prayer, looking down. In the background, there is a large wooden cross and several birds flying against a bright, hazy sky. The title 'Prison Sunday Service' is written in a large, dark red serif font. Below the title, the date and time are given in a smaller black font, followed by the church name. A line of text invites people to join for remembrance and prayer, followed by a bulleted list of those being remembered. A cursive phrase 'Everyone is welcome' is next. At the bottom, the church's address and website are listed, along with its logo.

Prison Sunday Service

Sunday 11th October at 10:30 am
Hertford United Reformed Church

Join us as we take time to remember and pray for:

- Prisoners and their families
- Victims of crime
- All who work in the justice system

Everyone is welcome

Hertford URC • 11 Cowbridge
Hertford SG14 1PG
www.nlv.org.uk

The United Reformed Church

A poster for 'November Nightingales' with a nautical theme. The title is in large, bold, yellow letters on a blue background. Below it, text invites people to brighten their autumn afternoon with good-time songs. The featured acts are 'Hertford Shanty Folk' (Songs of the sea), 'Uke Troupe' (Songs to set your feet a'tappin'), and 'John Bell' (Songs to make you smile). A fourth act, 'Why Not' (Songs to make you sigh), is also listed. The event is held at Hertford United Reformed Church on Sunday, November 22nd, from 3pm to 5pm. It is free entry with free tea and cakes. A banner at the bottom mentions a voluntary collection for RNLI. The poster is decorated with a lifebuoy, a guitar, and an anchor.

NOVEMBER NIGHTINGALES

*brighten up your autumn afternoon
with some good-time songs*

HERTFORD SHANTY FOLK
Songs of the sea

UKE TROUPE
Songs to set your feet a'tappin'

John Bell
Songs to make you smile

Why Not
Songs to make you sigh

HERTFORD UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

3pm — 5pm
Sunday November 22nd

Free entry!
Free tea and cakes!

Voluntary collection for RNLI

Shared at the recent LAG Meeting on Thursday 10th Sept. 2026

Broxbourne from Rev Mark Robinson

There has been much happening at URC Broxbourne over recent months.

We have introduced a transport arrangement to help members who would otherwise find it difficult to attend Sunday worship. A driver collects people from their homes, brings them to church and takes them home afterwards. The arrangement is working well and is helping people to continue to be part of worship and church life.

Our Children's and Youth Worker, **Maggie Stewart**, has settled well into her role and is building good relationships with the children and young people. This Friday sees the launch of The Hive, a new weekly youth group for young people aged 8–15. The Hive will meet every Friday from 4.30–6.30 pm and will provide a welcoming and safe space for young people, grounded in our Christian values.

Last Sunday we held a special service in which **Laurence Sinden** was ordained and inducted as an Elder. We also commissioned those elected at our AGM to serve the church in various roles during the coming year.

On Sunday 20 September we will commission **Natasha Appiah** as a Local Recognised Worship Leader (LRWL), recognising and affirming her ministry in leading worship.

We are encouraged by these developments as we continue to grow into our life together as URC Broxbourne following the amalgamation earlier this year.

Hertford from Fran Spence

As we look to Autumn and the end of the holiday period, summer seems to have flown by in one hot haze! Looking back, we hosted a successful Concert in June by the Mimram Singers, this was well attended and raised approx. £800 for our local Hospice. Our weekly events carried on except for a couple of Hot Potato Lunches that were cancelled because of the extreme heat. Numbers attending worship on Sunday have been steady and have increased with visitors attending quite frequently.

A new avenue of outreach seems to be opening up to us. Our weekly Open House and monthly free hot potato lunches are attracting new visitors and it is obvious they feel comfortable and welcomed and many have attended church on occasions at different times. Mark will make it a priority to engage with all our visitors on Thursday mornings, particularly around inclusion, conversation and helping all to feel that they belong. Mark has also introduced printed thought-provoking topics for conversation each week to encourage involvement. We hope there is something important developing here which we should encourage and support.

Our large hall is being used again by Young Life as a venue for their youth work and in between their arranged evenings we have another Youth Worker from the local Town Church running “Open Mike” sessions for young people wanting to get experience of performing in public and also for Christian Worship, they will also work with each other to share resources. We will be restarting our Short-Mat Bowls Group for older people in October, including some of our Open House visitors.

A recent Fire Assessment has presented us with some issues that need to be addressed and we have worked towards that, one of the main issues is to install a Fire Alarm System in the Church and the Halls and to replace some doors for Fire Doors. Next week we have a visit from the Hertford Fire Station to advise us on what they consider to be really necessary as the Alarm and Fire Doors, if all deemed necessary would cost approx. £25,000.00. Grants will need to be applied for! On top of this we are going through the most urgent jobs outlined in our last QQI.

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.

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

DIARY OCTOBER 2026

1 Oct	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning
4 Oct	10.30 am	Morning Service – Harvest Service, led by our Minister Revd Mark Robinson, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion.
7 Oct	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
8 Oct	10.- 00	Open House Coffee Morning followed by Hot Potato Lunch
11 Oct	10.30 am	Morning Service - Prison Sunday Service - Led by our Lay Preacher, John Ellis
12 Oct	10-12 am	Short mat Bowls
14 Oct	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
15 Oct	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning
18 Oct	10.30 am	Morning Service - Led by David Ronco, Hertford Baptist Church
19 Oct	10-12 am	Short Mat Bowls
21 Oct	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
22 Oct	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning
25 Oct	10.30 am	Morning Service – Led by Chris Hall, Ponders End URC
26 Oct	10-12 am	Short Mat Bowls
28 Oct	8.00 pm	On-line prayer meeting with Broxbourne Church
29 Oct	10.00 am	Open House Coffee Morning

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