



Church in the community Matt 5:14-16, Acts 2:44-47, Phil 2:3-5

Church Magazine
May 2025

Our Vision: "To celebrate God and share the love of Jesus."

Pastoral Letter

Reflections on the Journey from Easter to Ascension

Dear Beloved in Christ,

As we move through the beautiful month of May, we find ourselves in a unique and contemplative period in the Church year. Having recently celebrated the joyous and triumphant resurrection of Jesus at Easter, we now look toward his ascension. This time between these two significant events in the Christian calendar is a moment to pause, reflect, and absorb the profound lessons that this period offers.

Easter, with its message of hope, renewal, and victory over death, has filled our hearts with joy and gratitude. It reminds us of the boundless love of God and the promise of eternal life. The resurrection of Jesus is not merely an event of the past; it is a living reality that continues to transform our lives today. As we bask in the afterglow of Easter, we are called to carry this light into the world, sharing the good news and embodying the love and grace that Christ has shown us.

Moving from the high of Easter, we enter a period of waiting and anticipation as we approach the Ascension. This is a time to deepen our faith, to reflect on the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples, and to prepare for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Ascension marks the moment when Jesus was taken up to heaven, completing His earthly mission and entrusting His followers with the task of spreading the gospel to all nations. During this time, we can draw important lessons for how we act and reflect his teachings:

Trust in God's Timing

The period between Easter and Ascension teaches us the importance of patience and trust in God's timing. Just as the disciples had to wait for the

fulfilment of Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit, we too are often called to wait on the Lord. In our fast-paced world, it can be challenging to be patient and to trust that God is working in our lives, even when we cannot see it. However, this season reminds us that God's timing is perfect, and His plans for us are always for our good.

Embrace the Call to Witness

Before His Ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This call to witness is not limited to the early disciples; it extends to each of us as followers of Christ. We are called to share the gospel through our words, actions, and the way we live our lives. Let us use this time to rekindle our commitment to be ambassadors of Christ's love and truth in our communities.

Prepare for the Holy Spirit

The period leading up to the Ascension and Pentecost is a time of preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live out our faith, to serve others, and to grow in our relationship with God. As we await this divine gift, let us open our hearts and minds to receive the Spirit's guidance and strength. Let us pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of our church.

Live with Hope and Expectation

Finally, this season reminds us to live with a sense of hope and expectation. The Ascension assures us that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us and preparing a place for us in His heavenly kingdom. This hope gives us the strength to face the challenges of life with confidence, knowing that our future is secure in Christ.

As we journey through this sacred time between Easter and Ascension, let us hold fast to these lessons and allow them to shape our faith and our lives. May the joy of the resurrection continue to fill our hearts, and may we eagerly anticipate the coming of the Holy Spirit.

In closing, I encourage you to take time to reflect on the significance of this season, to pray for guidance and strength, and to seek opportunities to share the love of Christ with those around you. Let us continue to support one another in faith and love, building a strong and vibrant community that reflects the light of Christ to the world.

May the peace and grace of our risen Lord be with you all.

Yours in Christ,

Ian Hunt

Our pledge charity featuring in May is International Justice Mission (IJM) UK

IJM globally works with local authorities in 18 countries around the world to bring safety and freedom to those living in slavery and violence. We also have offices in a further ten countries which focus primarily on advocacy and resource mobilisation.



With your support, IJM works to tackle modern slavery (including forced labour slavery, forced scamming and the online sexual exploitation of children), human trafficking, violence against women and children and police abuse of power.

The UK office has been operating since 2005 and has offices in London, Edinburgh and Belfast. IJM's work in this country is mainly to raise resources to support work overseas, raise prayer support from churches and individuals and engage with the UK media and government.

What is slavery?

Slavery is illegal almost everywhere—but 50 million children, women and men are trapped in slavery around the world

Traffickers use deception, threats or violence to force people into gruelling labour or sexual exploitation for little or no pay. These individuals are often denied adequate food or sleep, and they're often barred from leaving for school or medical care.

IJM addresses labour trafficking, sex trafficking and the online sexual exploitation of children in communities around the world: Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, India, Myanmar, Philippines, Romania and Thailand.

What is Violence Against Women and Children?

Because women and children around the world often are not effectively protected by the law, they are particularly - and often disproportionately - vulnerable to violent abuse.

IJM's teams in Uganda, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, El Salvador and Kenya work to address sexual violence and domestic violence.

What is Police Abuse of Power?

In many places, police not only fail to protect people in poverty from violence, but they are perpetrators of violence themselves. IJM's team in Kenya work to address police abuse of power.

Look out for the prayer points in the weekly bulletin and the display in the café. For more information about IJM's work and how you can be involved go to www.ijmuk.org

A King's Friend! by Rosemary Stinson

Why did you leave Heaven's glory,
why come to this world below?
Was it to become Earth's ruler?
I really would like to know.

Did you look down upon us
fighting and arguing so,
and find your heart filled with compassion?
Please tell me, I really must know.

Did you come at the Father's bidding
to show us the right way to go?
Did you have any say in the matter
that day many years ago?

How could you leave and come to us,
showing such love for the lost?
Did you have any idea, I wonder,
just how much this love would cost?

"My child, I saw you and loved you.
I knew of the pain and the loss.
I knew that the plans of my Father
had always included the cross.

I knew too that love would be victor.
That death would not win in the end.
That I would return to my Father
and introduce YOU as my friend."

Philip and Denise Update

We can proudly announce that we actually surprised ourselves and completed reading the whole Bible in 30 days and it has been a real blessing to us both. We were not too confident as we began on the 1 March but with the Lord's help we kept on track and we are so thankful we took on the challenge. There is talk about doing it again next year!!!

Autumn is here in South Africa apparently. Definitely it is darker in the evenings and cooler. We can confirm that in JBay we can experience four seasons of weather in one day. The locals are in boots and puffer jackets. They do not know what a real autumn/winter is. The temperatures in the next week or so are ranging from 17 to 28 degrees – hardly cold to us of course.

What with school Easter hols and bank holidays here the Project has only been open once in April but we are all geared up for a new season come 5th May. The children will be particularly looking to purchase warmer clothing and a big seller has been the crocs of which we were able to buy a large selection of colours and sizes due to a very kind individual donation. We post pics regularly on Instagram so if you are interested search Jbay Recycling Project.

The new housegroup we have been hosting has proved a success after its two month trial and the decision from everyone is for us to continue for the time being and as the numbers increase we will look at dividing up. Currently there are 11 of us but soon we will not have enough seating. No one seems keen in braving the church building which was originally an old factory where there is no insulation or heating. As with any small group we are able to get to know each other more personally and share and pray together as well as studying the Word.

Philip was asked if he would make a necklace for one of the Church teenage boys, Kaden, which he did out of some special wood. He was so chuffed and now his friends are on the list for something similar. The ministry of

the crosses continues and Philip is working hard to keep up with the supply and demand.

We celebrated Philip's 81st birthday at one of his favourite eating places called Walskipper which is well known for its fish dishes and he was able to enjoy some yummy (he said!!!!) oysters – not for me though.

At home we have actually completed furnishing the living/dining/kitchen area and our now turning our thoughts towards the garden. We feel we will need to take some advice as the plants we are familiar with don't necessarily follow the growth pattern in the UK even though they have received tlc and I have talked to them. No doubt we will learn as we go on.

We continue to pray for everyone at Witham URC and of course are in touch with several friends so manage to keep up to date with news of Church family.

God bless

Philip and Denise XX



LIFE Author Unknown provided by- Olatunde Biyi

Life is strange. We come with nothing and fight for everything, and in the end, we leave everything and go with nothing!

Life is a fleeting journey, a cycle of gaining and letting go.

We arrive with empty hands, yet we spend our days chasing, building and holding on; as if we can outrun time itself.

We grasp at love, success and meaning; desperate to make something of the brief moments we are given.

And yet, no matter how much we gather, there comes a day when we must release it all. But perhaps the beauty of life is not in what we keep, but in what we Give, in the Love we share, the Kindness we leave behind and the Lives we touch along the way.

Celtic Service **Sunday May 18th** **at 6.30pm**

Celtic worship stretches our understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It often uses a written liturgy with responses by those present. Why not come along and try a different style of worshipping?

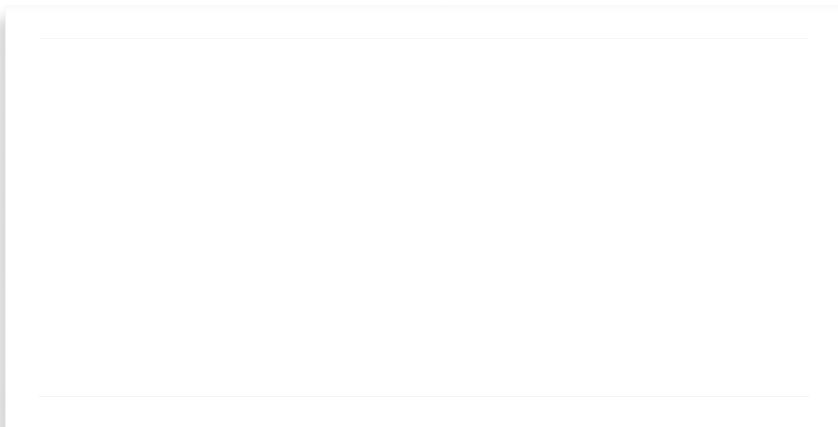
Hospital Transportation - Julie Harris

Dear Church Family,

As you may already know, I am on Peter Revell's list of drivers, to be on hand , if people need taking to an appointment.

I would also like to add that I am aware of an element of recovery for some of you, following Surgery.I would therefore like to extend further assistance in doing shopping for you, if you are not able to do so, it would involve a donation of £5 petrol money, per trip, within a reasonable distance. If you have any questions, please do approach me, if I can help I will.

Every Blessing



**A very happy day to celebrate the marriage of Hannah Robinson
to Josh Yelland on 25th April 2025 at Skyland Church,
Chelmsford ❤️❤️❤️❤️**





Pledge Committee – Emergency Fund

In response to the devastating earthquake in Myanmar the Pledge Committee has donated £500 on behalf of Witham URC to Christian Aid's Myanmar Earthquake Appeal. Myanmar is one of the world's lowest-income countries in the world and was hit by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake, followed by a 6.4 magnitude aftershock.

The earthquake that struck central Myanmar has destroyed homes and left people in urgent need of drinking water, food and shelter. Christian Aid are working closely with their partners and networks in the area to identify the extent of the damage and the risks to communities there. Access to vital services such as water, power and basic foods have been critically disrupted. The immediate emergency support that Christian Aid is providing includes offering food parcels, water kits, shelters and other essential supplies. They have experience of working in the area and plan to stay supporting over the coming months as needs are assessed and appropriate responses are put in place.

Pray for those affected by the earthquake

God, our strength and our refuge,

We pray to you for the people of Myanmar.

We hold in mind those who are injured or have been bereaved.

We ask your protection for everyone awaiting rescue.

May those who have lost homes and belongings be comforted.

May emergency workers and medical staff be safe as they pour their energy into saving the lives of others.

May the international community respond quickly to support those affected.

God, our strength and our refuge, be with our global neighbours today.

Amen



HOUSE of GRACE WITHAM SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION for homeless people

House of Grace Spring 2025 Update

I do hope you are enjoying the current sunshine & are keeping well. House of Grace is busy & we see God's hand in the work we are doing there.

Our fourth resident joined us in February, bringing the house to full occupancy. He is settling in well & we feel blessed that the other residents have been welcoming & supportive. It is so important when sharing facilities that all are considerate towards one another and where possible seek to create a thoughtful & kind environment.

We were delighted when one of our residents who has been attending the Bethel church completed an Alpha course & went on to be baptised. He regularly helps at the Well café & enjoys their loving support.

Two other residents have undertaken a fair amount of voluntary & paid work. Their clients remark on the way they undertake work with consideration, competence & reliability. Several have invited them back for further work. If at a later date our residents are going to move on to independent living, it is important that they are able to support themselves financially. Experience & clientele now will all build towards this. There is more capacity to take on other work (gardening/painting/general maintenance) so please get in touch with us if you are aware of people seeking help.

The problem we had with the flat roof extension to the house, is being fixed by replacing the roof in the next few weeks. This has turned out to be a more expensive job than first thought & we are grateful for some very generous donations which will help pay for the work.

We have been blessed with some brilliant fundraising events which have helped replenish the coffers. We are so grateful for these and for your ongoing financial support & prayers. Our lease payments have gone up, as have the house costs so we need to continue to seek finance, trusting our faithful God to provide for our ongoing needs.

Please continue to keep us in prayer

Many thanks for you love, interest & support

May you have a blessed Easter.

From all of us at House of Grace Witham.

Registered Charity no: 1199138 Registered Address: 41 Laburnum Way, Witham, CM8 2NY



CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

11th – 17th May

Plant stall 17th May

Julie and Muriel are hoping to have lots of plants for a stall in the forecourt on 17th May. We hope to have sunflowers, cucumbers, tomatoes (Gardeners Delight) as well as lots of bedding plants including Busy Lizzies, Petunias, Gazanias, Zinnias, geraniums and sweet peas. Some are ready now so if you want to be sure of getting what you want, speak to Muriel now.

Plant Sale - Julie Harris

Muriel, as many of you know, has been amazing in growing seeds and selling them in advance of the Forecourt Sale.

I would like to tell you that as well Muriel's splendid selection, we will also have a beautiful potted palm for sale, some small Chinese Money plants, bundles of rhubarb, and potentially some Russian sunflower seedlings, if they are strong enough and ready to sell,, as well as some cucumber and tomato plants.

Could you please bring cash along on the day, preferably along with your own bags, newspapers, carriers etc to take away your purchases.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you , and hopefully raise a good sum for this most worthy cause.

Welcome Team Rota - David Goodwin Welcome Team Leader

I'm preparing the rota for July to December 2025 and volunteers of all ages are needed for this very important role of greeting people as they arrive for our Sunday morning service. **Please note that serving and former Elders have their own rota.**

You should arrive by 10:00 and your duties will include handing out the service sheets (and bibles & song books should they be requested), taking one of the Offertory bags (only if you want to) and collecting the bibles, song books, any unwanted service sheets/newsletters and water jugs and empty drinking beakers after the service.

I hope enough volunteers come forward so you only have to undertake the role once in the period, although you are more than welcome to put your name down more than once if you wish to.

Please add your name to your chosen date/s on the rota in Church Suite if you can. If this isn't possible then please either email me with your chosen date/s or text/call me – details below.

Email: davidgoodwin2009@hotmail.co.uk

Mob: 07932 198352

Thank you



May

TUESDAY PRAISE

Refreshments available afterwards

12:30-1:00

6th Femi Cole-Njie

13th Gretta Bray

20th Lorna Bantock

27th Ian Hardie



Witham United Reformed Church
Newland Street, Witham, CM8 1AH
01376 500958 /
info@withamurc.org.uk

All welcome

Ministers preaching at Great Totham URC - May.

May 4th Rev Mark Ambrose
May 11th Dot Dean
May 18th Sarah Wilson
May 25th Ernie Finch with communion

All are welcome. Our services begin at 10:30 am and followed by time to chat and have a coffee.

You are also very welcome to come to our Charity coffee mornings which are on 2nd Saturday of each month at 10am.

These are happy occasions, with opportunities to meet and make new friends, buy homemade baking ,jams , marmalade, browse the books and maybe win a raffle prize.

The proceeds from the next coffee morning on May 10 will go to support the work of the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

You will find us in Chapel Road, Great Totham . CM9 8DA, we have a car park!

Good Friday Procession, Maldon - Jean Moody Great Totham URC

A beautiful Spring Morning. We met at the Catholic Church for coffee in the hall, moved into the church for reading of the Passion. Silently we walked through Maldon, following the cross, to All Saints for an outdoor service ably led by Captain Ana and accompanied by the Salvation Army band. There was a good attendance and more importantly, representatives from all the churches. All Saints provided refreshments, coffee and hot cross buns. I pray we provided a reminder as to what Good Friday is all about.

Pleshey Retreat A thoughtful quiet day with friends - Blessings Jean Moody



Fellowship Afloat - Jean Moody Great Totham URC

We were shown around the ship. They do amazing things for young people. We had tea and cake. A lovely afternoon. It was well attended.

Blessings



(Fellowship Afloat is one of the charities supported through the Pledge this year by Witham United Reformed Church)

Let Me Introduce You to Mr Parkinson's by Josephine Benzie

Let me introduce you, though I'd rather not
To Mr Parkinson's, who moved in on the spot.
I didn't meet him strolling through the park
He crept in quiet, cold, and dark.

One day, I walked just fine, no fear,
The next, my steps weren't quite so clear.
I lost the edge where pavement lay,
And just like that, he came to stay.

Mr Parkinson's, with that crooked smile,
He's been with me a little while.
He has no manners, no grace, no charm,
Yet clings to me like a cold alarm.

He trips me up and slows me down,
He steals my strength without a sound.
He shakes my hands, he tires my knees,
And turns my calm to uncertainty.

I tell him off, I push him back,
But still he keeps me off my track.
He's stubborn, cruel, and hard to beat
A constant shadow at my feet.

But here I sit, and here I stand,
With steady heart and trembling hand.
I fight each day to make it mine,
To laugh, to love, to hold the line.

He may have calmed a part of me
But not my soul, my will, or glee.
So I'll keep going, come what may
Though Mr Parkinson's is here to stay.

Footnote from Shirley Ratnage

Jo Menzies, a member of our church who has Parkinson's and is resident in Park View has written a poem for an Inter Residence competition. When she showed it to me I thought it would be nice to put in the Magazine.

Minister	Minister	Lorna Bantock	07935 307 958
Children and Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Sollis	500958
Associate Children and Youth Pastor	Ms	Tracey Pepper	500958
Building Manager	Mr	Ray Westrip	500958
Church Administrators		Naomi Claxton Anna Johansson	500958
Director of Outreach	Ms	Tracey Pepper	500958
Hospitality Manager	Mrs	Heather March	500958
Church Secretary and Elder	Mr	Tony Deighton	518866
Church Treasurer	Mr	Ian Hardie	
Discipleship Elders	Mrs Mr	Sarah Wellings David Wellings	
Social Justice including the Environment Elder	Mr	Gavin McCall	
Worship Elders	Mr Mr	Keith Meredith Allwyn Rajkumar	
Community Cafe Pastoral co-ordinator	Mrs	Eve Murfitt	
Prayer Chain Co-ordinator	Mrs	Rosemary Stinson	516602
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