



CHURCH NEWS

Kingston United Reformed Church

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026



*Swallow returning home for the Spring,
flying 6,000 miles from Africa in 6 weeks, making a perilous journey,
facing starvation and storms*

A warm invitation is given to all who read this magazine to come and share in our services and activities, both in the building and on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com@kingstonunitedreformedchur2940/streams>

Our Sunday Services:

10.00 – Worship – also live-streamed (with Communion first Sunday monthly)

11.30 – All Age Worship (with Communion on the last Sunday monthly)

17.00 – Reflective Worship (with Communion on the third Sunday monthly)

On the **second Sunday** of each month a **combined service at 10.30** replaces the 10.00 and 11.30 services

Tea and Coffee are served between the 10.00 and 11.30 services and before the 10.30 service on the second Sunday

During the 10.00, 10.30 and 11.30 services there are **group activities for children** of all ages.

Weekly:

Monday:

10.00 Jolly Toddlers' Gym (except Bank Holidays)

10.00 Prayers on Zoom

12.30 Community Lunch (except Bank Holidays)

Tuesday:

10.00 Prayers on Zoom

10.30 Knitting & Crocheting (1st & 3rd Tuesdays monthly)

Wednesday:

10.00 Prayers on Zoom

13.30 Lunch-time Service

Thursday:

10.00 Prayers on Zoom

20.00 The Thursday Club on Zoom

Friday:

10.00 Prayers on Zoom

Saturday:

10.00 Prayers on Zoom

Monthly:

1st Tuesday 19.30 Elders' Meeting

3rd Saturday 10.00 Women's Coffee Morning

2nd Sunday 11.30 Church Meeting

Bi-monthly:

3rd Saturday 14.00 Crafternoons

School Holidays:

Certain Wednesdays 11.00

The Generation Zone

The Sanctuary is open for private prayer, with access via the Foyer.

Our Foyer is normally open every weekday and Saturday from 11.00 until 14.00 for coffee and tea.

A Problem or Concern? There is sometimes a listener available in the Foyer; if not, please speak to the coffee server or contact Lesley Charlton.

Events to look out for in February/March 2026:

18th Feb. 11.00 Generation Zone

20th “ 06.00 Prayer Day

8th Mar. 11.30 Church Mtg.

11th Mar. 12.30 Men's Lunch

21st “ 14.00 Crafternoon

29th “ Holy Week & BST starts

Please also see the e-mailed Weekly Notices.

LETTER FROM LESLEY



Dear All,

The T shirt said, 'mediocrity is a sin. Is it, I wondered? Putting in half the effort into your life certainly is a sin. This is the life that we have been given. We need to live it well and to the glory of God. That does not mean it all has to be work, sweat and frenetic activity, but it is certainly not to be wasted. Yet what does mediocrity, wasting time look like? Is travelling slowly when you could go faster wasting a life? Is sitting, watching the sea ebb and flow

wasteful? Mediocrity in worship is putting your body in the space, or in front of the screen and then planning the telly viewing for the week in your head. Or putting your smiley face on and not allowing your whole self to be seen.

Jesus spent loads of time doing things that some would see as a waste of time. Hanging out with pals. Walking everywhere. 'Get preaching, Jesus'. 'Heal some more sick people'. 'Increase the hours to parables told ratio'. Yet not one of us would say his life was mediocre.

The more I reflected on it, the more I got to the idea that intention is what matters. Why are you doing that? I'm resting, re-charging the batteries because there is a tough piece of work coming. That is good use of time. That is resting to avoid doing something in a mediocre way.

What does mediocrity in church life look like? I suspect it is about habitual unexamined behaviours. That does not mean that new is always right and of God. It means doing things the same without thinking about whether they are right for this time and this place, or not is lazy. Church life is meant to be excellent, which is not the same as perfect. The best that we have to offer. How can we swerve from mediocrity and make our church excellent? Most importantly, how can we work together to create something that God looks at and says 'good job'. It will not be because we are perfect. Perfectionism is life without mistakes. Christianity is life lived with the creativity of the Spirit. There will always be the risk of failure. Trying something new is always risking falling on your face. To try to make our church the best we can make it, will need to involve all of us. Not pretending, but with all our burdens and imperfections. Our intention is that together we are building something that God looks at and says, 'Well done, you people. Thank you for the effort'.

Yours, Lesley



CATHY'S CONVERSATION



By the time you read this, Christmas will seem far away. The vulnerability of new birth, an unstable home and the need to move because your life is in danger if you stay, seems very poignant as 2026 gets under way. Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness Winter Night Shelter is happening and will continue until the end of April. This is an amazing project and will impact lives way beyond a warm dry bed to sleep after eating a nutritious meal. Speaking of nutritious meals, our community meals are so important to many people.

Eating with others can be a brave thing to do for some people. Thank you for all of you who contribute to this important service. A close relative of mine is a senior social worker for children and sadly the number of referrals is increasing. We provide opportunities for parents/carers to spend time together with their young children, for some keeping isolation at bay. Thank you for the teams around our service to children and families. Some church friends have had to move far from their family home because their life was in danger. The detail of these stories is not for telling, but a genuine welcome is. Thank you for the welcome you offer.

This is the season to think about our elders, giving thanks for the service that some have given and to think and pray about future elders bringing their gifts and talents. Please pray for this time of discernment.

I am looking forward to the weather being right to plant seeds and making sure that they will be in the right place to flourish. I will probably get this right and wrong, but I guess that is all a part of the joy.

Cathy

DAY OF PRAYER

Our next 24 hours of prayer begins at 6.00 am on 20th February through to the 21st at 6.00 am.

Pop in and out. Stay for as long or as short as your life lets you.

If you could lead/host an hour, please speak to Maddie - maddie.anlezark@kingstonurc.org

Sally's Stories



It will seem an age away now, but I wanted to fondly remember the Gift Service and the Christingle service.

I was so pleased that children and families who come to our midweek groups decided to come to these, either in person or online. Some of the children are much older now but they still love to come. The parents give really positive feedback.

My constant question is how do we provide ways for them to explore faith more and be 'discipled' (old-fashioned word!)? Nurtured and encouraged in faith? We want to see a transition into the whole family of the church, not just a Toddler group or a one-off event; helpful as these are.

The Generation Zone is well attended and growing, so that's a good place to start. We would love for more Sunday church people to come and you don't need to bring a child!!

On a Sunday morning, sometimes we don't see many children. But I comfort myself with the thought that when they do come, they really engage with the materials we offer now. We share, play and pray together. They ask questions, share experiences and some are saying that they are hearing from God as they pray. That is encouraging. So, do please keep praying for more children to come and for a hunger for the things of God in each of them. My desire has always been that children will encounter God through Jesus, get to know Him better and truly love Him and learn of His plan for their lives.

Sally



Interesting Fact:

'Shine Jesus shine', by Graham Kendrick was voted the favourite school assembly hymn in November in a poll run by the BBC's Songs of Praise. 'All things bright and beautiful' came fourth.

Reform Magazine

PASTORAL NEWS at 23. 1.26.

**Out of care for people's privacy,
names are not included
in the Pastoral News section of the
online Church News**

Loving God, we pray for all who experience grief following the death of a family member or friend. Be with those who are awaiting medical appointments or who have received worrying diagnoses. Healing God, free us from anxiety as we place ourselves in your abounding love. As you freely give us your blessing, may we freely give your generous love to those around us. We pray for children in our care and those who work with them. Your blessings are immeasurable. Amen.

Ann Macfarlane

FLOWER ROTA – FEBRUARY/MARCH

1 st February	Free	1 st March	Ray Erskine
8 th “	Camilo Fernandes	8 th “	Free
15 th “	Free	15 th “	Free
22 nd “	Jean Thompson	22 nd “	Ruth Anderson
		29 th “	Free

Janine Goddard would be pleased to hear from anybody who would like to take one of the free Sundays.



LESLEY CARNEGIE

***Extracts from the Eulogy given by Lesley's daughter, Gillian,
at Lesley's funeral on 13.11.25.***



Mum was born in 1955 in Dundee to Murial and David McWalter, the middle of three children. Mum loved English, particularly reading and writing stories. But it was while caring for her elderly aunt one day that she commented that Mum would make a wonderful nurse and Mum went on to study Nursing at Ninewells hospital in Dundee. It was on a fateful student nurses' night out that Mum bumped into a newly qualified environmental health officer called Murray. He called her the next day from the red telephone box on Broughty Ferry quay and the rest,

as they say, is history.

The story goes that they were babysitting the children of a neighbour and happily building Lego creations when Dad casually mentioned he once won a Lego competition. My mother countered with: I did too when I was younger! Dad continued that this Lego competition was really quite a big deal – he came second and got his picture in the paper! My mother replied that she, in fact, came first in her competition and she too got her picture in the local paper! The newspaper clipping was found and there was Dad, aged 12, winning second prize in the Lego competition and next to him is Mum, aged 8, proudly winning first place! For them first to have met a full 13 years earlier without realising was quite amazing.

Despite the early Lego snub Mum and Dad were married in 1978. Not long before, they had both moved to London, Mum living in the Nurses' accommodation and Dad living in the Boys' Brigade house in central London. They eventually bought a small flat on the King's Road in Chelsea close to where Mum worked as the youngest Ward Sister in London at St Thomas' Hospital. Lindsey came along in 1981.

It was at this time that Mum's friend Yvonne taught her the art of hosting and the importance of a full Sunday roast every Sunday. By this point we were living in Kingston and Mum had moved on from her work in Central London and was now Matron of Kimberley Nursing Home in Surbiton. Mum was a great nurse and I have such fond memories of all the Homes she ran. She had

the ability not just to provide the highest level of clinical care, but to truly care for every one of her patients.

Living near London meant we had a fairly constant stream of visitors over the years. The house was always full and warm, welcoming and overflowing with love and roast potatoes.

Mum and Dad were married for 47 years and didn't spend many of those 47 years in the house alone. Lindsey and I were fortunate to have her as our Mum, but Annabel, Guy, Nora and Hazel won the lottery to have her as a Grandma.

I could go on about Mum's many loves – Wimbledon tennis, musicals, Desert Island Discs and her love of Pagham and the caravan there. We are incredibly lucky that Mum wasn't just a great parent but, later, our best friend too. ✨

RONALD FREDERICK COOK

1 February 1931 – 29 October 2025



For Ron's Memorial Service on 18.11.25. Lois, Ron's daughter, wrote about the first 60 years of Ron's life and Liz Cook wrote the last 30 years. Here are edited versions:

LOIS: Ron grew up in humble surroundings near Milwall football ground and had his first pivotal moment aged 7 when he was evacuated to Ringmer to a fine working farm, dining with the family and where his diction and aspirations were changed for ever! At 11 Ron was spotted as being extremely talented and attended the Haberdashers' Aske's school. He excelled at languages, sport and amateur dramatics. Through a French pen-friend he formed a close relationship with a family near

Amiens and won a Modern Languages Scholarship studying in Paris and Brittany, which was the start of a life-long love affair with France, its culture and language.

Another pivotal moment was National Service when Ron became an officer in charge of his peers and later a Captain in the Territorial Army. After two years in the Army, Ron decided it was too late to go to University, joined United Glass as a management trainee and married Ros. They bought a house in Beckenham where Lois, Norman and Simon were born. Then followed 30 years in Reigate, tending his vegetable patch and home-brewing beer and champagne. Ron and Ros became founder students of the Open University and were the first graduates of the OU and in their families.

In his forties Ron lost his right eye and his marriage also fell apart. Ron rose through the ranks at United Glass and, in a new role of Environmental Manager, researched programmes abroad, after which he introduced a Bottle Bank recycling scheme to this country, gaining the attention of Prince Charles and an MBE.

Ron was intensely proud of his children, was a hands-on Dad and arranged great family camping trips to France and also got involved with numerous Forest School Camps. He was an inspiring father, a character, a gentleman, an entertainer, a provider who will be fondly remembered by his children and grandchildren and will live on in the stories they tell their children.

Ron had a few relationships at this time, but nothing very satisfying, so he bought a flat and a boat on the River Thames, heralding the start of a whole new life.

LIZ: Ron and I met in 1994 on a blind date through the Guardian newspaper. We enjoyed many meetings, the theatre, cinema and a visit to Ringmer (scene of Ron's evacuation and my family home in the '60s and '70s) before things were serious between us. Ron had retired early, we started to get to know each other's families and to celebrate our love of France. Ron had already followed his love of singing by joining the Kingston U3A Choir.

We started to travel – Egypt with a cruise on the Nile and we both had introductions to make in France. We were married in Kingston URC in 1999, found the house in Hatch Place, where Ron immediately designed and built a conservatory and re-modelled the garden, also acquired an allotment to grow lots of vegetables. Ron soon stepped into the role of Site Supervisor of Tudor Allotments and also worked with the Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners.

One of Ron's biggest legacies is his paintings. After art classes in 1997-98 to explore various media, he decided that acrylic paint was his favourite medium. His preference was to copy established paintings, so we lived amongst Turners, van Goghs, Monets, Renoirs Ron, with his strong baritone voice, could always be relied on to perform a solo at most Choir concerts, often a Flanders and Swann number.

The years were punctuated by journeys to new places and particularly a Round-the-World trip in 2001 for Ron's 70th birthday which was spent on the tropical Cook Islands in the Pacific Ocean.

By 2012, Ron had written and had printed his full autobiography, Mr Bottlebank, a much-praised, readable memoir, celebrating a full life and a much-loved family.

Ron has peacefully reached the end of his life. He was a remarkable man, the doyen of the wider family and is so much missed by all who loved him. Now he rests in peace. Thank you all for your loving friendship which enriched his life. ✕

Advent and Christmas 2025 in Pictures



With thanks to all who helped with the services and made the Christmas Lunch possible

To make a financial donation to Kingston URC, please see final page

Christmas Thanks and Shoebox Smiles!



Link to Hope supporters helped send 25,281 gifts of joy to Eastern Europe in 2025. We had an amazing Shoebox Delivery Trip to Bulgaria. More photos and stories will be coming in over the next few weeks as shoeboxes are delivered over the festive season. In some regions of Eastern Europe,

Christmas is celebrated on 7 January, so plenty of time for more shoeboxes to be delivered.



A heartfelt thank-you for all your support.

Extract from Link to Hope email 23.12.25.

KURC Men's Lunch

If you are interested in meeting and chatting to others, please come along to O'Neill's pub for lunch at 12.30 on Wednesday 11th March. This is a casual, social get-together and open to everyone, with or without a connection to Kingston United Reformed Church.

Another lunch is planned for Tuesday 12th May.

If you would like more information, please contact Alistair – email: alistair.borthwick@talktalk.net or phone 07930 762853

CHURCH NEWS THANKS VAUGHAN



December 2025 marked the end of one chapter in the long history of Church News. Vaughan James has been Convenor of the Church News Editorial Group for some years and, running concurrently, has been an editor himself for many years. All the editors appreciated Vaughan being our thoughtful 'Go-to-Person' when in a spot of difficulty and, in addition, admired the originality that went into his own editing. Thank you,

Vaughan, from all editors and readers.

We are pleased to say that Pao-Han Chen has agreed to take over as Convenor of the Church News Editorial Group.

The Editors

Carol spotted in URC's News Update – December 2025



Seven new URC ministers who were between one month and one year into their first appointments and were from Wessex to Wales, visited Church House in November. Staff showed them round and the ministers asked questions about the wider work of the URC and how it might support them in their own ministries. ✨

Crafternoons 2026

Either bring your own craft projects and work in the company of other crafters, make new friends, share ideas, drink tea and eat cake.

And/Or

Try out the craft ideas offered on the day.

Dates: Saturdays 17th January, 21st March, 16th May, 18th July, 19th September and 21st November

From 2-4pm

At Kingston United Reformed Church

For more details contact Carol 07495746131

£5 per family



ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS CARD 2025

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the Alternative Christmas Card, with proceeds going to Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal, which this year is going to support families impacted by war and conflict.

The final numbers are not known yet but to date we have had donations of:

£1,525 plus £200 Gift Aid.

Thank you so much – I hope you got to see the Christmas Card and the Greetings from all those submitted.

CAN you HELP ? I am looking for someone to help with accounts for Christian Aid. This is a few hours work, 2-3 times per year. If you think you can help, please speak to me.

Ray Charlton

Bron Robinson will be editing April/May's Church News.
Articles and photos to Bron please by Friday, 20 March.
bronhr@gmail.com

CRYSTAL KIM

We all enjoy Crystal playing the violin on Sunday mornings, so the editor asked Crystal to tell us a little about herself and was very pleased to receive her article:

My name is Crystal, and I am a 20-year-old student studying Mathematics BSc at King's College London. My main role at church is playing the violin during the 10.00am Sunday service.

I first heard about this church around 3 years ago through my violin tutor, and I became a member about 2 years ago. At that time, I was not very keen on attending church. I felt uncomfortable being in a place full of strangers, and I found it difficult to socialise.

After a long period of encouragement from my violin tutor (and my Mum), I finally decided to attend just one service. During that service, I heard the congregation singing, and I was completely mesmerised by their voices. There was something deeply calming about it, and I remember feeling relaxed in a way I hadn't expected. It was a strange but beautiful experience. After that, I began attending services almost every week and, soon after, I also started playing the violin during the service.

Last year, I took a gap year from my studies. Before that, I was very shy and found it difficult to talk to people or engage in conversations with church members, even though I really wanted to. I came to the UK when I was 11, and my English was not very good at the time. I was mocked for my accent, which made me withdraw and stay quiet around people.

Things began to change when John Fisher and Ray Charlton kindly invited me to help at the Monday soup kitchen. This gave me the opportunity to get to know more people and feel more connected to the church community. Through conversations with others at church, I slowly began to gain confidence. People consistently saw strengths and goodness in me that I couldn't see in myself, and their encouragement meant more to me than I can express. I also learned so much listening to their life experiences, advice and wisdom.

Since then, I have felt a growing sense of belonging. I was also given the chance to paint the church bathroom and the gents' toilet – which was an interesting experience.

Everyone at the church has been unbelievably welcoming and kind, and this has helped me to open up and feel more comfortable around others. I am grateful to have met so many wonderful people here. I honestly don't think I could have managed such stressful periods in my life without the support, warmth and care of this church community. ✨

Key points from Church Meeting: Sunday 11 January 2026

- From the Elders' meeting:
 - AI is supporting writing the minutes
 - Grants for our premises have been unsuccessful – disappointing
 - Ethical banking – being considered. Can anyone help with the evaluation?
 - The transition to YouTube for Sunday services to be completed by the end of January
 - Grateful to the organisers and helpers for the Christmas lunch – 32 came for lunch
 - Church News – content being considered with the change to every two months
- Elders' election 2026: see page 19
 - Obvious that we don't know each other very well
 - During 2024 we co-opted people and training has been started
 - Try self-nomination process
- Can anyone help with managing the Sunday 'readers' rota?
- Live-streaming of services: Janine
 - Continue to use Zoom for weddings and funerals but stop using Zoom for regular services, with the last regular service on Zoom being on 3 February.
 - Support for individuals in the transition would be welcome
- Update on our building projects – see page 18
- A Gift Day is to be held in June to support our work
- Ministers' time
 - Thank you from Suk In for supporting Korean services over the Christmas period
 - Help is needed while Carol is away
 - Can anyone provide transport on a Monday for someone?
 - Can anyone volunteer to help prepare the PowerPoint presentation week by week?
 - Cathy will need support as an advocate with the URC during the vacancy
- Date of next meeting: 8 March (bring and share lunch on 8 February)

Linda Austin

Community Meals – Every Monday in the Foyer

We are continuing every Monday, to serve a two-course meal for whoever wants one. This is on a Pay if you Can basis (suggested £4) and food is served 12:30 – 13:30.

John Shepherd is asking notable local celebrities to come and help serve and, more importantly, talk to our foyer guests.

In early December 2025 we had a visit from actor John Altman, best known for playing the character and villain 'Nasty Nick Cotton' in BBC's EastEnders. He has appeared in many other TV series and films, including Quadrophenia (1979) and An American Werewolf in London (1981) and recent roles in Sci-Fi films. John helped serve food and then stayed to chat in the foyer.



When we returned to cook in January we were honoured to have Kingston's Mayor, Councillor Noel Hadjimichael, come to help. Noel emigrated to the UK in 2016 and was elected as a councillor in May 2022. Previous occupations have included posts as a Naval Officer and Lawyer.



To make a financial donation to Kingston URC, please see final page

Last Week Barrister John Shepherd brought his 'silks' into church, so that he could change and get away quickly, to prosecute some poor soul who had broken the law and was on trial at Kingston Crown Court.

John is dedicated to helping in the kitchen and is possessive of the big dishwasher. It is much appreciated that he tries to arrange his work to allow him to help in our kitchen on Monday's.

If you would like to help prepare and serve these meals, please speak to myself or John Fisher and we will welcome you into the kitchen. We need more helpers to provide holiday cover.



Ray Charlton

KURC'S BUILDING PROJECTS

The rain and frost we have had recently have not been good for working on roofs. We are steadily getting towards completing the roof work – it will be great to get it done. The challenges have continued. We are making sure we have no 'pooling' of water on the roof and that the new rooflights fit nicely in the existing apertures. The latest completion date is 6 February. The good news is that the new windows have been installed and look great and work well. We have the doors in the office and the training room to install. This is arranged for later in January.

The cost challenges continue and we are working with the contractor to ensure that we receive the right job at the right price.

We are turning our attention to the modifications to our mechanical plant – changing the boilers, installing a heat pump hot water system and new controls. We will also revisit whether the inclusion of solar panels would be cost effective. Southern Synod have agreed to give us a grant as a contribution to the work – which is great and we are grateful to them.

This work will not happen until the end of the heating season.

In addition, we are considering the foyer and how that can be upgraded.

We will keep you posted. **Linda Austin, on behalf of the Management Group**

Eldership

Is it possible that God is calling you to be an Elder of KURC?

During the last turbulent time we have had more people openly reflecting on the possibility that this new role could be right for them. We have had people doing training, gaining experience and knowledge which means things have changed for them. There are people who are ready in a way that once they were not.

Usually, the congregation nominates people without necessarily any knowledge of people's personal circumstances. This year we are going to try something different.

Please think and pray about the possibility that this is a role for you. Then let Cathy know - chsec@kingstonurc.org

Or maybe you can see someone around you who should be stepping forward. Maybe you could give them a nudge.

The elders are ordained/inducted on Easter Day, initially for 3 years with an option to serve another 3.

Could you please give it some thought and prayer?

If you want more information, please speak to Cathy, Suk In or myself, or any of the Elders.

Thank you, Lesley

DAILY PRAYERS ON ZOOM

I know that you know this, but just in case.....

Every day we have prayers at 10.00 on Zoom. The format is - the leaders open in prayer. We read a passage from the Bible and talk about it. Then we transition it to prayer.

3 things:

- 1 you would be most welcome.
- 2 if you are ever facing something, or want to give thanks and want someone to celebrate with you, please let us know.
- 3 thank you to Sue Shaw, Cathy Seymour, Julian LeFustec, Janine Goddard and Ann Macfarlane who lead it every week, and for those who join and share their wisdom.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/5032406575?pwd=V0NoaDFaWWNQVUtPbC9SRUJGK3pEUT09>

LOOKING AHEAD TO LENT AND EASTER DAY

Of course, this is being written in mid-January and things could have changed by the time we get to mid-March or the beginning of April, so please check the website or the Weekly Notices.

During Lent we will be having 2 activities running:
A Book Group and discussions on difficult parts of the Scriptures - more details to follow.

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Holy Week - there will be a time to hear the story on Zoom - Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at 7pm for 30 minutes.

2nd April - Maundy Thursday Supper at the Methodist Church.

3rd Good Friday - Gather from 10.00 for hot cross buns followed at:

11.00 by the Walk of Witness.

12.00 Ecumenical Worship

13.00 Generation Zone

14.00 Reflection at the foot of the cross

.....

5th April Easter Day Worship at 9.00 followed by breakfast

11.00 Ordination/Induction of the new Elders

5.00 Easter Worship

All these Easter Day services are Holy Communion.



Oberammergau Theatre Mural

FROM THE CHURCH ARCHIVES



At a church garden party in 1947 the Sunday School staff performed an adaptation of 'Alice in Wonderland'. Some of our older members may recall a few of the actors in this photo, eg in the back row, Roy Cullum as the King of Hearts, Jean McJannet as the Queen of Hearts, Peggy Lake, and Evelyn White on the far right as the Knave of Hearts. Apparently, it is David Golding dressed up as the gryphon and Dan Williams as the mock turtle.

--oo0oo--

Church > Bible > Tik Tok

Reflection:

I think it is a great shame that for many the Church and the Bible are perceived as ‘telling us what to do’ – an attitude that has sadly been off-putting for many. The Bible is filled with great advice but it is an invitation, not a prescription. And its counsel is very contemporary. I can’t help thinking, if it were put on TikTok by the latest influencer, people would eagerly embrace it!

URC Daily Devotions



CHILD ACTION LANKA (CAL)

Many of you will know that since I retired, I have been out to Sri Lanka to volunteer with a charity that I have supported, and I usually go out there at the end of January to end of February.

This year I am going out there to help in September, as it will then be their 20th Anniversary and I am helping plan an appropriate Celebration to mark this significant milestone on the CAL journey.

CAL was started with the leader of the organisation initially providing a meal and basic education to approximately 8 street children. Over the 20 years, this has grown into a large NGO, providing community-focused centres, to provide meals and education to the poorest children and their families across 10 locations around Sri Lanka.

I will be going to Sri Lanka in September 2026 and will share with you all the latest developments and highlights from the 20th Anniversary Celebrations and Service.

Disaster

In November 2025, Sri Lanka faced one of its worst flood disasters in decades due to Cyclone Ditwah, affecting nearly 12 million people and resulting in significant casualties and destruction.

Torrential rains and floods triggered by Cyclone Ditwah have killed 123 people across Sri Lanka with approximately still 150 missing.

Landslides and floods have also caused much damage across the whole island, with the worst areas being around Kandy and the central tea-growing areas. In total over 12m people have been adversely impacted, with over 40,000 requiring to be relocated.

The CAL centres are mostly undamaged, one suffered flood and mud damage from a landslide BUT many of the homes of the children are damaged, some beyond



repair. Basic supplies of water are in need as wells have been contaminated by floods and their fields with crops have been swept away.



CAL workers have been involved in supplying basic essentials to their communities, as water supplies via wells are now contaminated and many fields have been damaged, ruining the food produce that they grow.



To make a financial donation to Kingston URC, please see final page

You can help raise money for The Epiphany Trust by donating online via the following link or QR Code:

https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/slflood?utm_medium=CA&utm_source=EM



JustGiving sends your donation straight to The Epiphany Trust and automatically reclaims Gift Aid if you are a UK taxpayer, so your donation is worth even more. Thank you for your support.

Ray Charlton



House too dangerous to access.



The kitchens at the CAL centres have been busy providing meals. This is at Kilinochchi, where Ray helped raise money to develop their kitchen and make it more resilient to floods. The revised kitchen was undamaged by the severe rains and floods this time!

😊😊 SMILES 😊😊

At Sunday School, the younger children were drawing pictures to illustrate a biblical story. The teacher was startled to see one little boy was drawing an aeroplane. "This is the flight into Egypt," the boy explained. "See, here is Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. And this," he said, pointing to the figure in the front of the picture, "is Pontius. He's the Pilot".

The nativity scene was going as planned and Joseph and Mary were going from house to house knocking and asking if there was any room for them. As they continued to get 'no room' answers, a little voice called from the back of the church "You should have booked!".

If the Three Wise Men had been women:

They would have asked for directions.

Arrived on time.

Helped deliver the baby.

Brought practical gifts.

Cleaned the stable.

Made a casserole.

And there would be peace on earth.

A young couple began to assemble a special gift they had bought for their children. They had bought a kit for a treehouse, but it didn't make sense. Then they realised that the materials were for a sailing boat, so they contacted the company to complain. The company's reply was brief: "While we regret the inconvenience this mistake must have caused you, we are more concerned about the man who is out on a lake somewhere, trying to sail your tree-house."

Did I read that Sign right?

Notice in health food shop window:

Closed due to illness.

Spotted in a safari park:

Elephants, please stay in your car.

Notice in a farmer's field:

The farmer allows walkers to cross the field for free, but the bull charges.

Message on a leaflet:

If you cannot read, this leaflet will tell you how to get lessons.

On a repair shop door:

We can repair anything. (Please knock hard on the door – the bell doesn't work.)



The URC supporting our Church Partners in Ukraine

There is an interesting historical context to why it is right that the URC supports our partner church in the western part of Ukraine (or Transcarpathia) and also our partner church in Hungary, who are faced with the work of supporting Ukrainians displaced by the war.

After the Second World War much of the UK had suffered enormously because of the bombing raids. Communities belonging to the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia collected funds and sent them over to our antecedent Reformed churches that now make up the United Reformed Church. It was family looking after family.

Southern Synod gave a generous donation about 20 years ago to help Ukraine's theological colleges (details lost in the mists of time).

At this time of war in Ukraine, the URC in turn helps out its family in Transcarpathia in western Ukraine and in Hungary. Thousands of refugees now live in that region as refugees and as Internally Displaced Persons.

The United Reformed Church has set up a donations appeal to support both the Reformed Churches in Transcarpathia and in Hungary. Go to the Commitment for Life website <https://urc.org.uk/your-church/church-local-and-global/commitment-for-life/ukraine-appeal/> for this URC appeal (GoFundMe) on behalf of Ukrainian refugees. There is also a video of a recent trip that Kevin Snyman took to that part of the world showing what work the churches are doing.

Christine Thompson



A Commitment for Life Prayer for Transcarpathia (edited)

God, in whom we find our peace, we pray for all whose lives and localities are impacted by war. In particular, we pray:

- for those displaced by the war in Ukraine;
- for families and friendships where the young have fled for safety and the elderly remain;
- for the impact of the declining population that remains.

Bless, we pray, the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, that through the small seeds of hope planted in faith, transformation may bloom in the region: that war may be eclipsed by the abiding peace of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Swifties enjoy Hogsmill View



A spot on the Hogsmill behind Tolworth's Sunray estate has become an unlikely pilgrimage place for Swifties. Fans of Taylor Swift have been arriving at the (well-signposted) spot where John Everett Millais painted *Ophelia*, as well as Tate Britain (where it hangs). The interest comes after the

singer replicated the watery pose of the tragic figure in a video for her recent album *The Life of a Showgirl*. Taylor's video top and Millais' art below.



Credit: 'The Good Life'

BOOK RECOMMENDATION from Graham in the Bookshop:

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry by John Mark Comer



All too often we treat the symptoms of toxicity in our modern world instead of trying to pinpoint the cause. A growing number of voices are pointing at hurry, or busyness as a root of much evil. In this book you'll find a compelling and spiritual case against hurry, and gives you tools on how to nurture a slower simpler way of life.

RRP £14.99 but 10% off for church members.

Church Life Review

At the November church meeting we showed a video that had been produced by the URC Church Life Review group. This group was set up in 2020 to set out:

Vision

the desired future state, 'tomorrow'

A flourishing Church, less burdened and better enabled.

Mission

what we are doing currently to achieve the vision, 'today'

To hold a space for discernment of where God is working and leading us, and to enable collective action to support church communities, so that existing and new URC communities can be freed to realise God's vision for them and develop their faith through evangelism, discipleship, and outreach.

At the recent Extraordinary General Assembly of the URC, it was agreed to establish the **Church Life Fund** for the renewal of the Church and has been offered approximately £3m a year by **URC Synods**, to be reviewed after three years. More details of the Extraordinary General Assembly held in November 2025 can be found at <https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly>

Cathy Seymour

WIDER WORLD NEWS



Christian Aid is running a campaign – **Powered by Hope PLUS** – for justice-seeking churches.

It is a series of online workshops diving deeper into some of the key themes, and explores some practical ideas that couldn't be squeezed into Powered by Hope.

It's open to ALL.

The next session:

- **29 January 2026, 7-8pm - The Justice-seeking church part 2**

We'll be hearing from ordinary Christians about how they, their churches and communities are seeking justice together. What lessons, principles and practices can be drawn from their experiences - come along and find out.

It is possible to sign up for Zoom sessions and ideas by clicking:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/powered-hope-plus>

Christine Thompson

Catherine Winkworth



This name will not be familiar to many. But whenever you sing ‘Now thank we all our God’ or ‘Praise to the Lord the Almighty, the King of Creation’ (and many other much-loved older hymns) it is Catherine Winkworth you need to thank for having translated the words so expertly and sensitively from the original German.

Born two hundred years ago, the daughter of a silk merchant in the north of England, she was brought up in the Unitarian tradition. While spending a year with relatives in Dresden, Germany, she became interested in German Lutheran hymnody and began translating many of their hymns into English. The English words were carefully crafted to fit the original German chorale tunes. In 1854 she published a collection of her translations in *Lyra Germanica*, with another collection four years later and *The Chorale Book for England* in 1863.

Catherine Winkworth did more than any other individual to make the rich heritage of German Lutheran hymnody available to the English-speaking world. In all she translated nearly 400 hymns – around 70 of which are still in the American Lutheran hymnbook! There are 10 in *Rejoice and Sing*. Among her translations of Christmas carols we have ‘A spotless rose’, ‘How brightly beams the morning star’, ‘From heaven above’ and ‘Wake O Wake to tidings thrilling’. In later life Catherine Winkworth became very active in the movement for promoting the higher education of women. On her death, friends raised money to establish two Winkworth scholarships for women at the newly-founded Bristol University. There is a monument to her in Bristol Cathedral.

John Fisher

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Interesting Fact:

18.4 million Bibles sold in the US in the first 10 months of 2025, already passing 2024’s record-breaking total.

Reform Magazine



SAVE THE DATE – Synod Day Out

Dear Southern Synod Family,

We are delighted to invite all congregants to our upcoming Synod Day Out on **Saturday 20th June 2026, at The Hop Farm Maidstone Road, Tonbridge TN12 6PY between 10:00 to 16:00**. A joyful gathering designed to strengthen our bonds across the churches, celebrate our shared faith, and reflect on the work God is doing among us, as well as share food and fun together.

This special day will include:

- Worship and communion
- Celebration and showcase of ministry initiatives from across congregations
- Family-Friendly Fun: Games, food, and activities for all ages
- Quiet space to pray/reflect.

We believe this day will be a beautiful expression of the unity we have in Christ and a chance to fellowship.

To make this day special, we need your help with a variety of roles from leading worship at our opening and closing service; to sitting at a craft station for an hour interacting with people.

Please share this invitation widely within your church community. Please also share the slides at church services or meetings.

We look forward to hearing how you would like to get involved!

In Christ's love,

Ruth Armstrong on behalf of The Synod Day Out organising committee

ruthlucy@live.com

07778 689872

*** **



Hampton Court Gardens have **FREE** access on the weekend of 14 & 15 March and other weekends throughout the year.



Read ■ Reflect ■ Grow

FEBRUARY

NAMES: PEOPLE AND PLACES (2)

Sunday 1 February	Isaiah 43:1-7
Monday 2 February	John 1:43-50
Tuesday 3 February	Mark 11:12-19
Wednesday 4 February	Acts 11:19-26
Thursday 5 February	John 6:25-35
Friday 6 February	Philippians 2:1-11
Saturday 7 February	Revelation 3:7-13

READINGS IN RUTH

Sunday 8 February	Ruth 1:1-18
Monday 9 February	Ruth 1:19-2:16
Tuesday 10 February	Ruth 2:17-3:5
Wednesday 11 February	Ruth 3:6-18
Thursday 12 February	Ruth 4:1-6
Friday 13 February	Ruth 4:7-12
Saturday 14 February	Ruth 4:13-22

MAINTAINING UNITY

1 Unity in the body of the Church

Sunday 15 February	Psalms 133
Monday 16 February	1 Kings 8:54-61
Tuesday 17 February	Ezra 3:1-13
Wednesday 18 February	(Ash Wednesday) Nehemiah 4:1-6
Thursday 19 February	Proverbs 6:12-19
Friday 20 February	Ephesians 4:1-13
Saturday 21 February	Matthew 6:9-15

2 Living in unity

Sunday 22 February	John 11:47-53
Monday 23 February	Philippians 4:1-7
Tuesday 24 February	1 Corinthians 12:14-27
Wednesday 25 February	Ephesians 2:11-22
Thursday 26 February	Galatians 3:26-29
Friday 27 February	Acts 2:42-47
Saturday 28 February	John 17:20-23

All IBRA readings are taken from "Fresh from the Word 2026" – a useful book if you would like a Reflection on each of the readings – available from Graham in the Bookshop.

MARCH

READINGS IN ROMANS (1)

Righteousness in God alone

Sunday 1 March	Romans 1:1-17
Monday 2 March	Romans 1:18-32
Tuesday 3 March	Romans 2:1-16
Wednesday 4 March	Romans 2:17-30
Thursday 5 March	Romans 3:1-20
Friday 6 March	Romans 3:21-31
Saturday 7 March	Romans 4:1-12

EXILE AND HOME

1 Driven away

Sunday 8 March	Genesis 3:8-24
Monday 9 March	Genesis 4:1-16
Tuesday 10 March	Ezekiel 12:7-15
Wednesday 11 March	2 Kings 17:5-23
Thursday 12 March	Genesis 11:4-9
Friday 13 March	2 Chronicles 36:2-23
Saturday 14 March	Numbers 11:1-23

2 The way home

Sunday 15 March	Deuteronomy 6:1-12
Monday 16 March	Jeremiah 29:10-14
Tuesday 17 March	Psalms 137:1-4
Wednesday 18 March	Revelation 1:1-13
Thursday 19 March	2 Corinthians 5:1-10
Friday 20 March	1 Peter 1:1-9
Saturday 21 March	John 14:1-6

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (2)

1 Voices of Holy Week

Sunday 22 March	Matthew 16:21-28
Monday 23 March	Matthew 21:1-11
Tuesday 24 March	Matthew 21:12-16
Wednesday 25 March	Matthew 26:1-16
Thursday 26 March	Matthew 26:17-30
Friday 27 March	Matthew 26:31-35
Saturday 28 March	Matthew 26:36-46

2 From death to resurrection

Sunday 29 March	(Palm Sunday) Matthew 26:47-56
Monday 30 March	Matthew 26:57-68
Tuesday 31 March	Matthew 26:69-75



Kingston United Reformed Church – Information

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How to contribute to Church News:

Contributions on matters of reflection and opinion as well as reports of activities are welcome.

The next copy deadline for April/May is Friday, 20 March 2026

Editor: Bron Robinson: bronhr@gmail.com

FINANCIAL DONATIONS to KURC can be made in a number of ways:

Complete one of the forms at the back of the church to set up standing order payments.

Make regular cash gifts at the Sunday services. By using the offertory envelopes, you allow the church to reclaim Gift Aid.

You can also pay directly into our bank account: sort code 20-46-73, account number 60921289 and quote Kingston United Reformed Church Charity.

We also have a digital collection plate (card reader) at the back of the church

Kingston United Reformed Church is a member of the Local Ecumenical Project in Kingston Town Centre with its partner, All Saints Parish Church in the Market Place.

The town centre ministers meet regularly.

We are a part of Churches Together in Kingston.

Kingston URC is also affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea (PROK)

You can also keep in touch with worship and activities at our church through our website: www.kingstonurc.org. You can also follow us on Facebook and Instagram.