



The
**United
Reformed
Church**



CHURCH NEWS

Kingston United Reformed Church
October / November 2026



Liquidambar tree, St Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire (See page 3).

www.kingstonurc.org

Charity No. 1131880

This issue edited by Ruth Anderson

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/@kingston_urc

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

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 10.00 to 1600 (coffee bar open 11.00 until 14.00).

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.

KURC Events to look out for in October/November 2026:

28 Oct 11.00 Generation Zone
 11 Nov 12.30 Men's Lunch
 19 Nov 13.15 Piano Recital by Yoon Seok Shin
 21 Nov 14.00 Crafternoon

Details of events elsewhere in Kingston and Synod online events appear later in this magazine.

Please see also the e-mailed Weekly Notices.

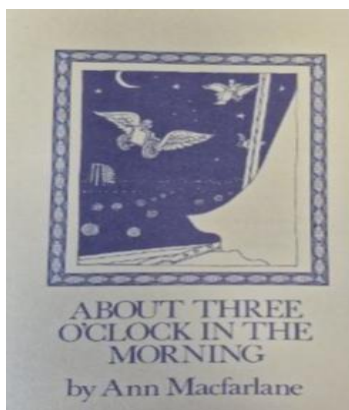
Carol's new email address

revcarol.clack@kingstonurc.org

Emails sent to Carol's old address (carol.clack@kingstonurc.org) will still reach her, but please use the new address with immediate effect.

Contact details for those church members who have agreed to share them can be found in the **September 2025 Church Contacts** list.

If you don't already have a copy, please speak with Catherine Treweek in the office.



Copies of Ann's poetry book 'About Three O'clock in the Morning' are available from Catherine in the office for £10.

This £10 covers the printing cost and a donation to church.

This month's front cover

For centuries English churchyards have been dominated by native evergreen yews which grow to a great age. Now there is a trend towards diversity. Did you know that half of the tree and plant species in Britain originated from abroad? The liquidambar comes from the far east.

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Minister's Report to the 13 September 2026 AGM



We are not church because we are lovely easy people. We are church because we are not. We are mean to each other. Betray each other. Let one another down. Of course we do, we are sinners.

Some people think that churches view themselves as being better than others. Indeed, the opposite is true. We are very aware of our sin and helplessness without God. Yes, it is a rubbish slogan for an ad campaign. But it is true that being part of the church is allowing the Spirit to be at work changing us slowly, gradually and together.

We need to allow ourselves to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. How do we do this? Above all else by taking time to worship, to pray and to reflect on God's word. Week by week, day by day. Nothing flashy but a life transformed. We need to be changed into loving, caring people. Gradually, slowly, bit by bit. You do not do this by merely growing old. Many old people - speaking as one - are reactionary and grumpy. They have increasingly narrow views and horribly shrinking circles of friends. Widen it. Your circle and your mind.

How do growth and change happen? Through worship and through our lives together. We make mistakes, we are rude. We reflect on it. Either we run away or the bravest stick around apologise and work on letting God change us.

To be a community where all of this is acknowledged and all can find a place is a tremendous gift. It is a thing of light or a community where people carry each other's burdens. It is not so lovely because it is perfect. Perfection is superficial and very easy to fracture. We are talking about changes to the depths of us. We are talking about reality.

Whenever anyone walks into our building at any time of the day, we want them to know that they are a loved child of God. Whether it is into the coffee bar, or a meeting room, or the worship space. Or the website or the YouTube channel.

'But they are irritating and smelly.' 'They forget to say please and thank you.' 'They cook food that smells and they have peculiar views about things.' All true. All really maddening. And to raise our eyes above these truths is why we have to keep them on Jesus and gather to worship, virtually or in this room. We need to remember that there are people who find us incredibly irritating and smelly and that we are people with peculiar views on things to some.

With God everyone is welcome.

Our welcome needs to extend beyond a hello to a new person. We need everyone to know they are welcome among us. The edges of church life need to be frayed so that people can find their way across to join in, in their way.

The welcome starts with our understanding that we have something to share and things to learn. A welcome that starts before people come into the building. We are waiting. God is at work calling people.

We do not own this church. Not its good bits, nor its problems. This church is God's. We are putting our shoulder to God's wheel. We are creating something together. If we are wise, we will listen to God's ideas rather than going ahead with our own and following the latest fad. It will be new every morning but never fashionable.

Thanks be to God,
Lesley

Church Secretary's Report to the 13 September 2026 AGM



This report reflects the “how” of the church. The “who” and numbers will be presented in the formal part of the meeting after this service. I invite you to stay.

Prayer

God of conversation and connection, we give you thanks for the opportunities that this place, in person and online, gives for us to explore your plans for us and celebrate your presence with us here in Kingston. Amen

Feeling well connected through our conversations takes a whole lifetime of learning. Each day there are good communications and miscommunications. Even Peter got it wrong when he misunderstood Jesus' prediction of death and tried to rebuke him. (Mark 8: 31-33).

In this report I want to celebrate not only good conversations but also a willingness to offer healing when things get misunderstood. The hymn '*Let us build a house where love can dwell*' has been the inspiration.

Let's start with Sundays:

- 11 services, open to all, happen each month. These include 3-4 communion services.
- Usually the church doors open around 9 o'clock. The next hour is generally a time of preparation: the musician is practising on the organ or grand piano and often someone is working on the flower arrangements. People are preparing the refreshments. The preacher arrives to prepare. The vestry elder arrives to

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support the preacher. The tech is sorted, ready to go online before the service starts. The welcomers arrive. The youth team prepares for the younger ones among us. Others arrive and more conversations start.

- But preparation for the Sunday services starts way before Sunday. Sermons are written, shared, translated and put into PowerPoint in order that they can be shared and not just in English. The sermon is also printed out and shared electronically before the service starts. Over a month at least 10 people are involved for this part to happen.
- Elders manage the setting up, serving and clearing away for communion. For this a rota is prepared monthly. People prepare to read the bible passages. Others make sure that the collection bags and wooden plate are in place along with people to collect the offertory. Many of you are involved. Communications around these activities are instructional, but they are also about building relationships of trust and care.
- Not all things go to plan despite thoughtful preparations. The times when things don't go according to plan can be a trigger point for some people. At these times we stop and pray for help, alone or together. We need God's help.
- Most Sundays we have two other services. Again, these are not prepared in isolation.
- Each service has a time for notices. They are shared in person, on WhatsApp, email and a few are printed. Again, more than one person is involved. For me this is what a gathered church means. There is a way in which anyone of you, here in the building or online can contribute to our worship services. It is the combination of all our contributions throughout the year that makes this a "vibrant" place. I have heard this adjective used to describe this church on several occasions.

Church News

Over this last church year the format of Church News has changed and it is now produced 6 times a year. The change happened after a survey. For this year there have been 7 different editors. We are very grateful to our previous chief editor who is having a well-deserved rest from the role. It is well worth a read and you will find out not just the many events within the church but also learn more about how our church members and friends work towards peace and justice, through supporting non-government organisations. Here are a few:

- Monday meals, Crafternoons, Generation Zone, Music recitals
- Support to the local Welcare Charity, Kingston Hospital Charity, Kingston Environment Forum, Kingston Old People's Forum, Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness, Christian Aid, Commitment for Life, Link to Hope, shoe boxes, Child Action Lanka, Voices of Hope, Kingston Child Contact Centre
- We read that we have received a Home Maker award for work on climate justice.

- Some people have shared their stories of how they came to be a part of this church.
- We also heard from So Young, now studying at Edinburgh University, and about Sue Shaw's visit to the seven churches of the Book of Revelation.
- Christian books are recommended and we have learnt about Augmentative and Alternative Communication. And don't forget the jokes/smiles.

I estimate that around 15 people contribute towards the finished News each month. That means more across the year.

Other conversations

Not every church is able to open their doors every day, but we can and do. We can provide a non-commercial place in Kingston to meet and be with others. A place where conversations can start. Not all of us are happy in the role of starting conversations, but that does not mean that we don't want to talk and spend time with others. We thank those of us that are skilled in being with others and encouraging as conversation flows. Just like anywhere, sometimes conversations do not go well. Offering prayer, time and listening is always a path to healing. This year there has been an extensive survey on the look and potential developments within the foyer area. I ask you to watch this space as these results become a reality over the next church year.

Our work with our children, youth and families is ever evolving as the families' lives change. Sally and our volunteers respond to these changes, keeping their focus on sharing in Christ's love and offering a whole variety in age-appropriate ways. Behind the scenes Sally keeps up conversations with the families, including childminders.

Good conversations across different languages can be challenging. We have been blessed with the long-standing work of Suk In to help us all to understand that it is ok to risk conversations across language boundaries. We benefit so much from all of you who are willing to share your love of God across so many nations.

Thank you God for our story tellers, thank you for our bible readers, thank you for our prayer leaders, thank you for our listeners, thank you for our children, thank you for our young adults, thank you for our busy working people, thank you for our older people, thank you for those of you who contribute online, thank you for our musicians, thank you for our PowerPoint creators, thank you for our quiet people, thank you for our noisy people, thank you for the cautious, thank you for the spontaneous, thank you for our preachers, thank you for our elders, thank you for our committee members, thank you for our creative people, thank you for our diligent people. But most of all, thank you to you, for being you and for being a part of this church.

Cathy

Carol's Contribution



At the beginning of August, I found myself in Andorra, a principality nestled between Spain and France in the Pyrenees mountains. The holiday included cable cars and chairlifts to take you high up into the mountains, spectacular viewpoints, and vistas as far as the eye could see.

Whilst others in the party were taking selfies and group shots, I simply stood and took in the beauty and awesomeness of this stunning work of creation. From a ridge on the Andorran French border we looked down as an eagle soared on the thermals below us.



As I reflected on my holiday, I was reminded of this passage in Isaiah 40:28-31:

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹ but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

It speaks of hope, life and an enthusiasm for the future. I came home having met God in the beauty of his creation.

Carol

Pastoral News as at 13 October 2026

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

A Prayer for Our Community and World

Loving God, the Father who knows our circumstances and governs all things, we desire to lay down everything before you. Especially, please remember our church community.

We pray for those who are restricted and deprived of liberty due to difficult situations, and for all those suffering from illness, and ailments large and small. We pray for those suffering from mental anguish unknown to us. Believing that You can heal us through your sovereign power, we offer you our prayers.

Please guide the paths of those departing for new ventures and show them the way whenever they face adversity in unfamiliar environments.

Protect those who live on the streets and be with those who struggle financially to heat their homes as temperatures fall.

Please remember those suffering from war and natural disasters, and also remember those whose freedom of faith is infringed upon and are persecuted. Above all, we earnestly pray that You open a way to heal this earth, which has fallen into hardship due to global warming, and we pray all these words in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen

Jinsook Kim

ANN MACFARLANE OBE

May 1939 – June 2026



Ann was born in Thorpe, Norwich, in May 1939 and became a wheelchair user when she was five. A few years later the family moved to New Malden and eventually, after fighting to live independently, Ann moved to an apartment block in Surbiton and joined KURC.

Ann was one of the leaders of our community: she became an elder and was deeply involved in the church's pastoral care and spiritual life which also extended to taking services at the local Royal British Legion Nursing Home.

Ann was part of the KURC group which raised funds for the church extension and much-needed lift. By this time Ann had become a disability rights advocate and

pioneer and was Patron for the Kingston Centre for Independent Living. For her services to the disabled she was awarded the OBE in 2009.

A fearless traveller, Ann travelled to the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Japan, sometimes having been invited to lecture on disability rights. And there were holidays on cruise liners, trips to Wisley and Kew Gardens, camera at the ready to photograph the flowers she so enjoyed.

Ann lived her life with love, courage, humour and a resilience that was off the scale. She was generous, supportive to others and demonstrated a deep, insightful and wise Christian discipleship. She was our friend, our teacher, our disturber, who loved us and was a gift to us.

Her passing through our lives, and all those with whom she came into contact, has shaped and helped many in the most positive of ways.

And on a humorous note, which Ann would appreciate, if heaven does not meet all the required accessibility, she will make sure it happens!

And a further tribute to Ann (from a group of her friends, with help from AI!):

Thank You for Being You, Ann

Thank you, dear Ann, for just being you,
For all the wonderful things that you'd do.
A real pioneer; courageous and true,
The most loyal friend to all whom you knew.

You faced your challenges with determination,
Tenacity, courage and inspiration.
Though life had brought you more than your share,
You rose above them with strength and with care.

In your motorised wheelchair, you travelled along,
In spirit adventurous, determined and strong.
Kingston was home, but your heart travelled far,
You showed us that limits don't define who we are.

A Christian, committed, faithful and true,
You gave much to your church and its people too.
Your faith was a light through all you endured,
Your kindness and love were quietly assured.

You could be tenacious — stubborn, it's true!
But that was just part of the wonderful you.
Thoughtful and caring, considerate too,
You made a real difference in all that you'd do.

Your gift of true friendship reached every age,
From youngest to oldest, you welcomed each stage.
You were the best friend, warm-hearted and kind,
And left happy memories in every mind.

You always wanted to make things better,
To help, to encourage, to be a go-getter.
Through every challenge, you rose to the call,
And somehow found strength to overcome all.

So thank you, dear Ann, for the life that you gave,
For being so loving, so thoughtful and brave.
For showing us all what persistence can do,
And, most of all, for just being you.

You'll be sadly missed, this much is true,
 But your courage and kindness will carry us through.
 Your friendship, your laughter, your spirit, your care
 Live on in the hearts of those who were there.

Rest peacefully, Ann, your journey is through.
 With thanks and with love, we remember you.
 A life full of purpose, compassion and light —
 Thank you, dear Ann, for making things right.

Flower rota for October and November 2026



4 October	Pat Foster
11 October	Ursula Oscroft & Harvest
18 October	Blank
25 October	Blank
1 November	Blank
8 November	Blank (Remembrance Sunday)
15 November	David & Robin
22 November	Madge Cole
29 November	Maggie & John Arnold (Advent)
6 December	Blank
13 December	Gift Service

Please contact Janine Goddard if you can fill any of the blanks.

REFLECTIONS

What does KURC mean to me?

Whilst attending Ann Macfarlane's memorial service I was inspired by her clarity of belief that God makes us with purpose and that the best way to thank him is by using what He has given us to help others. This did not surprise me given her public dedication to her work.

What did surprise me was the rippling theme of how much KURC meant to Ann and so, as the week went on, I continued to reflect on why I felt this as an overwhelming wave of pride.

For over 30 years I have attended KURC. Childhood memories from Sunday school with Steve and Glyn to Saturday evening youth group with Emily. I found best friends in my peers and learned to communicate with all generations. I have performed in events such as the pantomime of Cinderella, and more spiritually, sung solos during services. Quizzes, badminton, seaside trips, Greenbelt festival, Big Day In, daily prayers, 24 hours of prayer, Winter Night Shelter, Street Pastors and pre-marital support sessions to name just a few more. KURC has been there for my family through 4 baptisms, 2 weddings and a funeral, but mostly, reliably, for Sunday services. The names and faces fill my memory but it's the spirit of feeling that weaves through it all.

KURC is a place of safety. Not just as a building, but as a collective of people joined by faith creating a space where you can come as you are. Where gifts of time, skill and money, whilst gratefully received, are not exclusion criteria when capacity is low. Come - be with God - be with us - without pretence, prejudice or pomp.

To feel able to express your belief and love of God can be difficult in the outside world. In my journey sharing my faith I have been told 'I thought you were too intelligent to believe in a God,' or 'oh no, are you going to make me pray with you?'

So, I have learnt to live my life in a Christian way and interpret people's compliments on my kindness, patience and care as a hidden prayer of thanks. I have my private relationship with God, but KURC is where I get to be my whole self in faith, show my love of God proudly and know that however long it may be since I made it to the building, a smiling face will welcome me like it's home.

Rebecca Geraghty-Staunton

Reflections from Shadowing a Minister

Sang Hoon Lee reflects on his three-month placement shadowing Lesley.

Reflection 1 – awkwardness

In recent days, one word has kept coming to my mind: awkwardness. I feel awkward. Perhaps I should feel awkward more often.

At Kingston United Reformed Church, so far as I can see, the minister places great emphasis on reaching out, welcoming others, and offering pastoral care, especially to those on the margins of society. She has also served as a Street Pastor. I have seen people who seem to be struggling even though I don't know their stories deeply. This is an example from which I need to learn more deeply, and one that needs to shape not only my heart, but also the way I live.

Staying within my comfort zone may make me feel comfortable, but with few challenges, and it certainly does not bring awkwardness. But when I get up and reach out to those whose backgrounds are different from mine, I feel uncomfortable and awkward. Yet perhaps that is where God is. God is with those on the margins and with those whose lives are different from mine. Approaching them may feel awkward—very awkward indeed. But if love is something that overflows and reaches outward, then I should learn to journey with awkwardness. Awkwardness is not a bad thing. It is a sign that I am trying. Yet it is a baby step within the giant step that God has already taken toward us—and toward others.

Reflection 2 – praying for others

Praying for others is one of my many weaknesses. I know it's nothing to brag about. But during my time shadowing a minister at Kingston, I was asked to lead a 5pm service based on a chapter from *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools*. It was Chapter 5, on intercessory prayer.

The chapter opens with two stories. The first is about the author's brother-in-law's miraculous surgery and survival, against very low odds, credited to the prayers of many people, particularly a prayer offered by a nursing student in the operating room. The second is about Saint Monica and her son. Monica was a devout Christian who prayed for her son every single night. As he grew up, he became known as a womanizer, yet she kept praying, year after year. One night she had a dream in which God told her that her prayer would be answered. Even so, it took nine more years before her son became a Christian. That son was Saint Augustine — one of the greatest theologians in church history.

The author then raises the kind of hard questions a sceptic might ask, pushing back on both stories:

"Your brother-in-law was healed, but why some and not others? What about all the similar prayers that went unanswered? If we insist on celebrating divine action, can someone please explain divine silence? I'm truly happy for Augustine and his mom — I really am. But what took God so long? Why wait decades to answer a prayer, and then answer it? Is there some kind of divine equation with just the right combination of time spent praying, plus number of people praying, plus method of praying, that finally gets God's attention? Or is God just unmotivated most of the time, and she finally caught God at the right moment? And in what other context does withholding that kind of power for years make sense? Doesn't that story speak more of the cruelty of a God with the power to act who carries out that action slowly, apathetically, and randomly, more than it does of the kindness of a God who acts in response to prayer?" (Staton, *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools*, 95)

Agreeing with those questions, I found myself asking the same thing: why do we pray for others at all, when it may take so long for God to answer, or when God may not answer at all?

Long story short: we cannot solve this problem. It remains a mystery why God acts as he does: why some prayers go answered quickly, others slowly, and others seemingly not at all. But I found myself thinking: we cannot leave those who are praying alone — desperately seeking God's help and rescue — to face that alone. Parents praying for their children. Children praying for a parent or guardian. We cannot simply walk away from them.

After all, we know from Scripture that Jesus himself is praying for us (Hebrews 7), and that the Holy Spirit groans with us and within us (Romans 8). God calls us to join in the intercessory prayer of Jesus, and to be aware of the Spirit's groaning in this broken world. God does not simply leave those in desperate need behind.

I came to believe that God would not ignore the prayers of children, of mothers and fathers, of anyone crying out to him. And we cannot leave people to pray alone in their hardest moments. We can pray alongside them, side by side, even if all we have to offer is a lament.

One day during my time shadowing a minister, someone came up to me and shared a story I cannot forget. It was a story of struggle and pain. I don't know how or when God will heal that person. But I cannot simply walk away from it, and I will not be able to forget them in prayer. That, I think, is one of the things this time shadowing a minister taught me — not an answer to the mystery of divine silence, but a reason to stay present in it, praying alongside someone rather than leaving them to pray alone.

Sang Hoon Lee

Our World Family

When you are next in the worship space, please take a moment to look at this wall map.



It was our church secretary's idea to show the countries that our current members come from: Korea, Taiwan, South Africa and more.

The map also shows the countries served by missionaries from our church over the past century: Harriet Betteridge (India), Mary Shrimpton (India), Rev John Sturney (Cook Islands), Brian Sideman

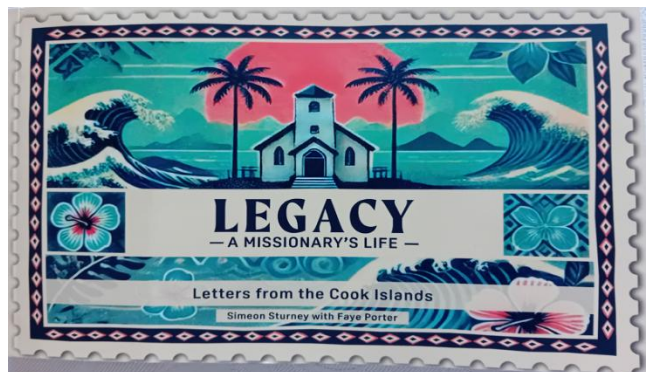
(Zambia), Pat Hollamby (Botswana) and Liz Wilson (Papua New Guinea).

And, of course, some of our members have only recently returned from Sri Lanka where they were working for the charity Child Action Lanka. We are truly a WORLD FAMILY!

While on the subject of missionaries...

Rev. Simeon Sturney has recently written a fascinating and well-illustrated book about the life of an LMS/CWM missionary in the Cook Islands in the mid-20th century. (If your geography is hazy, that's in the middle of the Pacific Ocean!).

Simeon is the son of Rev John Sturney (see 'Our World Family' above). John grew up in our church in the 1930s and 40s, trained as a Congregational minister, and went out to the Cook Islands in the mid-1950s, supported by members of our church.



If you would like to have a look at the book, or purchase a copy, please speak to me.

Incidentally, the Sturney family has strong links with our church going back to 1902! Simeon's grandfather and great grandfather were both deacons.

'Legacy: A missionary's life. Letters from the Cook Islands', by Simeon Sturney with Faye Porter, is published by Sarah Grace Publishing ISBN 9781917455213.

John Fisher

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OUR MINISTERS' / YOUTH WORKER'S 'HIDDEN JOBS'

Naively thinking I might be short of material for this issue of Church News, I decided to commission an article from each of our ministers and Sally on their 'hidden jobs'. I'd recently become aware of some of the good work they were doing outside Kingston URC and was interested to know more. I thought others might be too.

Here are the first two articles. Lesley's and Carol's contributions will appear in a future issue.

Ed.

Sally Butler – Open the Book

Open the Book (OtB) is an exciting storytelling project where Bible stories are shared with children in a way that is fun, interactive and memorable. As invited guests in school, storytelling teams use the Bible Society's Open the Book programme to prepare and present a 10–15-minute scripted Bible story to a school assembly, involving the children as much as possible.

However, it takes much longer to meet, plan and prepare! We now have lots of props and scenery that one of our team has made and every week someone produces a PowerPoint presentation of photos that we can use as a backdrop e.g. the desert or the Sea of Galilee...



I have been doing OtB for more than a decade as a founding member of the local group. A team comprising volunteers from four different local churches visits St. Luke's Primary School every Friday. One person narrates the story, and the rest act it out in full costume! We use a script and we don't learn the lines!! Another person will introduce the theme and then end with a closing reflection and a prayer. We all take it in turns.

The team is friendly, and we always laugh and pray together. The children are a delight and they love the assemblies. We always have children who participate in the drama and the whole school often gets involved with actions or sound effects too. The staff are appreciative, especially Gareth Dutton, the Headmaster, who always recaps the lesson we have learned once the story has finished.

Each story now comes with a few Makaton signs, which I am hoping will help the children who have additional needs to understand what we are saying.

I have played many different Bible characters; even God (a voice from a cupboard) once, though personally I think that was WAY ABOVE my paygrade!!

Sally Butler

Rev Dr Suk In Lee - Building Bridges through Ministry

Much of my ministry, beyond the regular life of Kingston URC, is about building relationships, listening to people, and connecting individuals and communities across different cultures, languages and backgrounds.

At a local level, I offer pastoral support to people from South Korean, North Korean and Korean-Chinese backgrounds, as well as people from other cultural and ethnic communities. Some of the situations people bring are deeply personal and sensitive, involving family relationships, children, loneliness, or the challenges of settling and living in a different country. For confidentiality reasons, I cannot share individual stories, but I have learned how important it can be simply to listen, accompany people, pray with them, and, where appropriate, help them find further support.

Alongside this pastoral work, I run prayer gatherings, Bible study, and conversation groups for people interested in the United Reformed Church, exploring faith, or simply looking for a place to meet others and have meaningful conversations. These small gatherings often give people opportunities to ask questions, share their experiences, and gradually develop relationships.

A particularly important part of this ministry is working with women, children and young people. Within the Korean community, ministry among women and the younger generation is essential. It is not simply one programme among many, but an important part of building the community's future and helping the next generation grow in faith. Following So Young Jung's move into theological training, we are thinking carefully about how we can continue and strengthen this part of the ministry, including the need for a suitable woman minister or youth worker to support this work in the future.

My ministry also has a wider ecumenical dimension. Nationally, I have opportunities to work with churches and ministers from different denominations in the UK, share experiences, and explore possibilities for cooperation. At a European level, I maintain relationships and theological conversations among Korean churches in Europe. I also maintain relationships with churches and denominations in Korea, contributing to wider ecumenical exchange and cooperation between Korean and British churches.

Much of this work happens quietly and is not always something I can report publicly. Yet I believe that building relationships is itself an important part of Christian ministry. Whether it is listening to someone who needs to be heard, gathering people for prayer and Bible study, supporting women and young people, or connecting churches and Christians across denominations and countries, the purpose is the same: to build bridges, strengthen relationships and participate in God's work of reconciliation.

I am grateful to Kingston URC for giving me the opportunity to serve in this wider context. I hope that, in small ways, this ministry helps us to see ourselves not only as a local congregation, but also as part of a much wider and wonderfully diverse family of God's people.

With every blessing, Suk In

RECENT ACTIVITY AT KURC

Premises update

We have had a busy summer regarding the premises. The roof works are complete except for some snagging. Agreeing the final account with the contractor has been troublesome and is still on-going.

The boiler and controls work is now complete, ready for the heating season. We now have two new condensing gas-fired boilers which can be controlled via an app and also a heat pump hot water cylinder serving hot water in the building. The systems should now be reliable and controllable. We will wait to see how the energy bills pan out. This has been quite a relief as we are not sure we could have limped through another heating season with our old, unreliable system!

We are grateful to all those who have contributed to our church's finances to enable this work to be carried out and to Southern Synod for providing us with grant assistance.



Linda Austin

Steve Wenman's visit



It was lovely to welcome back Steve Wenman and her daughter Nicola (Wookey) for the lunchtime service on 23 September 2026.

Steve has now moved to Riverside Lodge Care Home in Rickmansworth, which is just up the road from Nicola. Any post for Steve should now be sent care of Nicola.

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

Harvest hymn from The Thursday Club

A group of us meet week by week on Zoom at 8pm. We are The Thursday Club. We have been meeting since the pandemic. Sometimes we have a theme e.g. favourite book or TV programme, but we always talk about what's been happening in our lives. How great it is to have the facility to meet together for 40 minutes on a Thursday evening just to be together and share views and thoughts. Janine Goddard is our lead.



Recently we were discussing AI. Why not put it into action? We came up with the idea of writing a harvest hymn. So, with the help of AI we came up with the following:

Tune: St George's Windsor ('Come ye thankful people come')

Misty mornings, skies of blue,
Golden sunlight shining through.
Fields and orchards, rich and bright,
Thank you, God, for this delight.
For the harvest, full and free,
Gifts from land and gifts from sea.
Year by year the harvest comes,
Gifts of love for everyone.

Vegetables that grow and thrive,
Fruit in orchards, fresh and ripe;
Cattle, sheep and fields of grain,
Sun and rain bring life again.
Leaves that change from green to gold,
Red and amber, bright and bold;
Year by year the harvest comes,
Gifts of love for everyone.

Thank you for the farmers' care,
People working everywhere.
Fisherfolk upon the sea
Bringing food for you and me.
Thank you for the rain and streams,
Water flowing clear and clean;
Year by year the harvest comes,
Gifts of love for everyone.

Give us wisdom, Lord, we pray,
Help us care for earth each day.
Teach us how your store to share
So that all may have what's fair.
Climate change affects us all -
Help us heed creation's call.
Year by year the harvest comes,
Gifts of love for everyone.

We probably won't win any hymn awards but it was fun and only took about an hour, including editing. It did take a few iterations and manual intervention, but we all learned about ChatGPT and saw how quickly it can develop a few random thoughts into something valuable.

We hope you were able to sing it with us on Harvest Sunday.

We hear about the risks of AI but there are upsides as well.

We are always welcoming new members to our group – why not join us? The Zoom link is on the Weekly Notices – 8pm every Thursday evening.

The Thursday Club

Jolly Toddlers' Gym

It is now nine months since we relaunched the Monday morning Jolly Toddlers' Group as a Toddler Gym. This gives a point of difference between us and other local toddler groups, and it's rewarding to see the children develop in confidence and form new friendships as they explore the various items of equipment.



Numbers vary from week to week and there's an inevitable churn as children start nursery. However, we welcome new children with their parents/carers most weeks and have a core group attending on a regular basis, with beneficial conversations taking place between the parents/carers while the children play.

Keen to have a clear focus for the group, during April and May 2026 Sally, Ray Erskine and I undertook a 'Journeying Together' course run by the charity '[Care for the Family](#)'. This encouraged us to think about our vision for the group and goal setting. We're still on the journey, but wanted to share the vision and goals with you.

Reflecting our rebranding as a gym, the value of the group to parents/carers, and our decision to sensitively make the group more 'distinctively Christian' (*), we decided on the following vision statement:

"A toddler group that cares for you; body, mind and soul"

This is supported by three goals:

BODY – to provide space and equipment to exercise and encourage a healthy lifestyle

MIND – to prioritise the well-being of parents/carers and support them in the care of their children

SOUL – to offer opportunities to encounter and explore the Christian faith.

The above goals are underpinned by a number of specific development steps – some we've already taken, others we aim to take over the next year or so.

In support of the 'SOUL' goal, during the session on 28 September 2026 we held a 15-minute harvest festival in the worship space. This was entirely optional, but we felt blessed when all the parents/carers, together with their children, chose to join us. After a game and a video, we sang the song "*Someone brought a to put on the harvest table*", inserting the appropriate words as the children came up to the front of the church with their gifts for the Foodbank.

And finally....

We could do with some more volunteers to help on an ad hoc basis when one of us is away and/or during school holidays when we are extra busy as other toddler groups close. If you think you could help, please speak to Sally or come along on a Monday morning between 10 am and 12 noon to see what goes on.

**Please see Sally's article in April / May 2026 Church News for further details*

Ruth Anderson

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

KURC Men's Lunch



Friends of Kingston United Reformed Church are invited to meet at O'Neill's pub for lunch at **12.30** on **Wednesday 11 November**. After that, the next lunch date is Tuesday 12 January 2027. It is a casual, social get together and open to everyone with an interest in the church. Please come along to chat and possibly make new friends.

If you would like more information, please contact Alistair Borthwick.

Our Next Recital



Our next lunchtime recital is on **Thursday 19 November** at **1.15pm**. This will be given by the South Korean born British pianist Yoon Seok Shin, a graduate of the Royal College of Music and a Young Steinway Artist. As usual, admission is free and there is a retiring collection.

Invitation to Kingston Community Gathering - Sunday 18 October:

Join us for a wonderful community gathering filled with delicious food and great company! This in-person event is the perfect opportunity to connect with friends and neighbours in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Date: Sunday 18 October 2026

Time: 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Location: Kingston Quaker Centre, Fairfield East, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 2PT

Admission: Free and open to everyone!

Come for the delicious food, stay for the meaningful conversations, and leave with new friendships and unforgettable memories.

RSVP now via Eventbrite: <https://kingston-community-gathering.eventbrite.co.uk> or email: **Kingston Dialogue Society** kingston@dialoguesociety.org

CAP Quiz Night - to raise funds for the CAP Debt Centre:



Saturday 7 November, 7.30pm at St John's New Malden

Entry £10 per person. Tables for up to 8 people. Book individually or for groups. Nibbles and soft drinks will be provided; if you wish to bring something else to drink, please feel free to bring your own.

To book tickets e-mail admin@sjnm.org

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

LOCAL NEWS

News from Oxygen



Oxygen is a Kingston based youth work charity set up in 2001 by local young people and supported by local churches, businesses, organisations, trusts and individual donors.

SUMMER FUEL had a fun but busy summer, working in partnership with St Peter's Church at Archway on the Cambridge Estate. Over three weeks, it delivered a varied summer programme packed with activities, trips and opportunities for young people to have fun, make new friends and develop their skills.

This and other activities provided a great opportunity for young people to build confidence, strengthen friendships and develop new skills in a fun and supportive environment.

SUMMER SKILLS ran a series of workshops at the charity shop, giving young people the opportunity to build their confidence, develop new skills and gain valuable experience in a supportive environment.

NEW GAP YEAR WORKER Luzie, 19, from Germany joined Oxygen mid-August to work as a volunteer as part of a Voluntary Social Year through Diakonie, a German charity connected to the Church and its partner organisation Time for God.

Trustee Opportunity - SEEN

SEEN is a small charity in Twickenham providing a safe space to support those facing unplanned pregnancy and baby loss, and delivering healthy relationship education to empower and nurture its community.



It is currently looking to recruit more trustees. If you would like to know more, please visit [Become a Trustee at SEEN](#)

URC NEWS

New Southern Synod Moderator

The URC's Southern Synod has recently welcomed Revd Paul Robinson as its new moderator.

Paul previously served as minister of the United Church in Rhyl, North Wales for over 15 years.



Training

The URC offers a wide range of training suitable for elders, office holders and members of the congregation. Much of it is on ZOOM. Link to the web-site is <https://southernsynodurc.org.uk/?s=Training>

If you have any issues, please speak to Lesley or to Christine Thompson

Coming up soon:

The next Stream of **Stepwise, Faith-filled Worship**, will begin on 10 November and run for 12 sessions on the 2nd, 4th and 5th Tuesdays of each month (except the 4th Tuesday of December) - 6:30 to 8:00pm on Zoom. Stepwise is the URC's discipleship development programme, designed for people of all ages and backgrounds. Further information is available here. <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/developing-your-faith/stepwise> Please let Lesley know by **Sunday 1 November** if you are interested.

2026 Thank You Letter to Church Members

We have received a letter from the URC Treasurer thanking members/adherents for their ongoing contributions to their local churches. The letter, which includes a link to the URC's full financial statements for the last financial year, can be read here. [2026 Thank you letter to church members](#)



A Rocha UK is a Christian Charity working to equip Christians and churches to protect and restore the environment – for God, nature and all people.

OCTOBER

Greening your home this Autumn. Tackle climate change and reduce your heating bills by finding and reducing the draughts in your home. Find the gaps that let cold air in and warm air out (keyholes, letterboxes and gaps around windows, doors, loft hatches and floorboards for example). Do what you can to fix these gaps - there are lots of tutorials on how to do this online. It's also a good time to prepare for winter by putting radiator reflector foil or baking foil behind the radiator. This will reflect heat back into your room.

NOVEMBER

As winter creeps in, homes are really important. God calls us to give nature a home, too. Does your garden have a bird feeder? Could your balcony or window sill do with some plant life? If you don't own the house, you could make a case to the homeowner for a bird box, hedgehog highway or whatever. (For a hedgehog highway do make sure the neighbours are OK with you making a small hole in a shared fence). Why not gather your housemates, friends and family to discuss how a new recycling, heating or transport arrangement might work for you all - you'll go further together!

For more eco-tips, sign up to A Rocha UK's Wild Christian email: arochoa.org.uk/wild-christian

GLOBAL ISSUES

The disaster in Nepal/Tibet

On 26 August 2026 a devastating flash flood occurred in the Bhote Koshi River region on the Nepal/Tibet border.

Christian Aid is releasing emergency funds to its trusted partners in Nepal to provide emergency shelter, food, water and sanitation, and other vital support. To donate, please go to: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/nepal-floods-appeal>



Commitment for Life is the United Reformed Church's global justice programme, supporting Christian Aid and Global Justice Now, while helping local congregations engage with three focus regions: Bangladesh, Israel/Palestine, and Zimbabwe.

Bangladesh - The Story of Hira Moni Khatun

Across the globe, women are stepping into roles once considered off-limits. They lead farms, build cooperatives and create businesses in spaces where their presence was not always welcomed. Early marriage and limited access to education means that many women never get the chance to earn an income.

Hira Moni Khatun - from a remote region in Bangladesh - is breaking through social constraints. Hira has learned to produce and sell cloth. Along with a group of women she has expanded the business through the use of smartphones. Training in ecommerce has opened new horizons, allowing them to reach customers beyond their village. Hira's confidence has grown, bringing inspiration to other women.

A prayer for Bangladesh

By Peter Musgrave, Vine URC, Ilford

Hope-making God, friend of the poor,
We pray for the beautiful land and people of Bangladesh.

We grieve for the loss of the forests, the rising sea levels,
the depleted soil, the polluted air, the pressure of human population.

Create hope for those who have lost land and livelihood due to floods,
river erosion and cyclones, and been displaced to the slums of Dhaka.

Offer hope to the land, depleted by pesticides and fertilisers.

Bless those working to heal it.

Give hope to leaders working to create a new government
which works for all the people.

Inspire hope through women and men who show that change is possible.

Spread hope through the faithful and patient work of community organisations
which work with few resources.

Nurture hope through Christian Aid and others who bring international resources to
strengthen and encourage local initiatives.

Grow hope among those building relationships between Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists
and Christians, and between Bengalis and minority ethnic groups.

God of hope, in all these ways be with and bless the people and land of Bangladesh.

Amen

Walk and Talk



The two-month trial of the Thursday morning 'Walk and Talk' has now ended. However, we would like to offer further 'Walks and Talks' in the local area on a more flexible basis – anything from a gentle one-mile stroll with a stop in the middle, to a more energetic half-day walk. Walks could be on a weekday or at the weekend. Please let one of us know if you are interested and we will organise something that suits, inviting the rest of the church once we have a date and a route.

Rhianna Jackson and John Fisher



Happy Birthday Kevin!

A number of us joined in Kevin's recent birthday celebrations at The Grove, Surbiton

Pulpit puns....

Who was the greatest financier in the bible? Noah: he floated his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

Who was the greatest female financier in the bible? Pharaoh's daughter: she went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

Who was the greatest comedian in the bible? Samson: he brought the house down.



Read ■ Reflect ■ Grow

List of Bible readings 2026

The International Bible Reading Association (IBRA) has been serving the world church since 1882 with the vision of providing the necessary means for the worldwide Christian church to help Christians read the Bible regularly. IBRA readers make a commitment to reading each day the appointed Bible passage and to pray for each other. The Bible should be read carefully and with prayer that the Holy Spirit will help the reader to understand.

Friday 16 October	Matthew 25:14-30
Saturday 17 October	Matthew 25:31-46

SETBACKS AND COMEBACKS

1 Reason for hope

Sunday 18 October	Job 1:13-22
Monday 19 October	Job 42:10-17
Tuesday 20 October	John 8:1-11
Wednesday 21 October	Luke 22:54-62
Thursday 22 October	John 21:15-19
Friday 23 October	Genesis 39:11-20
Saturday 24 October	Genesis 41:39-57

2 Confounding expectations

Sunday 25 October	Luke 15:11-32
Monday 26 October	Esther 4:4-14
Tuesday 27 October	Esther 7:1-10
Wednesday 28 October	John 9:1-12
Thursday 29 October	1 Samuel 23:7-20
Friday 30 October	2 Samuel 5:1-5
Saturday 31 October	John 11:38-44

READINGS IN ROMANS (3)

1 Love and harmony

Sunday 1 November (All Saints' Day)	Romans 11:1-12
Monday 2 November	Romans 11:13-24
Tuesday 3 November	Romans 11:25-36
Wednesday 4 November	Romans 12:1-8
Thursday 5 November	Romans 12:9-31
Friday 6 November	Romans 13:1-7
Saturday 7 November	Romans 13:8-14

2 Respect one another

Sunday 8 November	Romans 14:1-12
Monday 9 November	Romans 14:13-23
Tuesday 10 November	Romans 15:1-13
Wednesday 11 November	Romans 15:14-21
Thursday 12 November	Romans 15:22-33
Friday 13 November	Romans 16:1-16
Saturday 14 November	Romans 16:17-37

TREASURE

Sunday 15 November	Deuteronomy 26:16-19
Monday 16 November	Luke 12:15-21
Sunday 15 November	Deuteronomy 26:16-19
Monday 16 November	Luke 12:15-21
Tuesday 17 November	James 5:1-6

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Wednesday 18 November	1 Timothy 6:6-11
Thursday 19 November	Job 28:12-19
Friday 20 November	Luke 12:22-34
Saturday 21 November	2 Corinthians 4:4-10

READINGS IN 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS

Sunday 22 November	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Monday 23 November	1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
Tuesday 24 November	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
Wednesday 25 November	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
Thursday 26 November	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28
Friday 27 November	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
Saturday 28 November	2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

SYMBOLS OF ADVENT**1 Foreshadowed from ancient times**

Sunday 29 November (Advent Sunday)	Genesis 22:1-19
Monday 30 November	Exodus 3:7-14
Tuesday 1 December	Lamentations 3:21-30
Wednesday 2 December	Ezekiel 34:20-31
Thursday 3 December	Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14
Friday 4 December	Isaiah 2:2-5
Saturday 5 December	Isaiah 12:1-6

2 Words of the prophet

Sunday 6 December	Isaiah 35:1-10
Monday 7 December	Isaiah 40:1-11
Tuesday 8 December	Isaiah 42:1-4
Wednesday 9 December	Isaiah 49:1-3
Thursday 10 December	Isaiah 52:7-10
Friday 11 December	Isaiah 53:1-12
Saturday 12 December	Malachi 3:1-4

SYMBOLS POINTING TO CHRIST: 7 great 'O's

Sunday 13 December	1 Corinthians 1:26-31
Monday 14 December	Exodus 3:1-6
Tuesday 15 December	Isaiah 11:1-10
Wednesday 16 December	Luke 1:68-79
Thursday 17 December	Isaiah 9:2-7
Friday 18 December	Ephesians 2:14-20
Saturday 19 December	Isaiah 7:10-17

Kingston United Reformed Church – Information

Ministers:

Rev Lesley M Charlton, tel: 020 8399 4423 e-mail: minister@kingstonurc.org

Rev Dr Suk In Lee, tel: 020 8949 2070 e-mail: sukin.lee@kingstonurc.org

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Children, Youth & Families Worker:

Sally Butler, mobile: 07807 348326 e-mail: youth@kingstonurc.org

Premises Manager and PA to the Minister:

Catherine Treweek, landline: 020 8549 1888

work mobile: 07807 351801 (between 8 am – 2 pm only)

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Caretaker:

Shawn Galley, landline as above.

CHURCH NEWS is published bi-monthly

Submissions for the December/January issue should be e-mailed by 1 December to:

churchnews@kingstonurc.org

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

- Set up a standing order
- Make regular cash gifts at the Sunday services. If you are a UK taxpayer, using the offertory envelopes enables the church to reclaim Gift Aid.
- Pay directly into our bank account: sort code 20-46-73, account number 60921289 and quote Kingston United Reformed Church Charity.
- Pay by debit or credit card through the following website.
<https://pay.sumup.com/b2c/QTm2J8PB>
- Use the 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.**

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