

THE BRIDGE



Winchmore Hill United Reformed Church The Church by the Bridge

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said.
"This shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16²² ... read verses 21-27)

Dear friends,

Who of us were not struck by Alexei Navalny's return to the face-to-face, political fray in 2021 when he could have sought asylum in the West? Motivation is often multi-layered but his own answer written on Facebook was, "I don't want to give up either my country or my beliefs. I cannot betray either the first or the second. If your beliefs are worth something, you must be willing to stand up for them. And if necessary, make some sacrifices."

When news of his death was broadcast, I was beginning to prepare for Palm Sunday which prompted me to find out about his beliefs. Like much of the activist movement, originally he had been, in his own words, 'quite a militant atheist', and recognised that his new faith set him up for ridicule by his own political friends and allies. Nevertheless, during his trial in 2021 he said, "The fact is that I am a Christian believer, and that helps me a lot in my activities. There are fewer dilemmas in my life, because there is a book in which, in general, it is more or less clearly written what action to take in every situation ... It's not always easy to follow this book, of course, but I am actually trying. And so, as I said, it's easier for me, probably than for many others, to engage in politics."

Do I hear a sharp intake of breath at this current demonstration of faith in action? I was suddenly back in chaplaincy being called upon to comment on burning issues in current affairs and concerned about being insufficiently informed not to be glib. Then I heard the Rev'd Professor David Wilkinson speaking on Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day'.

The death of Alexei Navalny has led to an outpouring of grief and been widely condemned by many world leaders. His campaign against high level corruption and opposition to Vladimir Putin, led to harsh jail sentences and previous assassination attempts which made him vulnerable to this possibility. He had flown back to Moscow rather than live in exile following one of those attempts, knowing he would be arrested. He commented, 'if I want people to trust me, then I have to share the risks with them'.

Navalny was a complex character, criticised by some for his belief in Russian nationalism and lack of clarity in political ideology, yet he was courageous in pursuing truth. In his closing statement during his court appeal, held three years ago, he characteristically used humour and references to pop culture but also spoke about his Christian faith.

A former atheist, he highlighted the importance of the Bible in sustaining and energising his activism. He quoted specifically the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied'.

This is part of a series of sayings called the Beatitudes. They are promises of God's blessing on those who are vulnerable, 'the poor in Spirit', 'those who mourn' and 'the meek' and those who choose the path of vulnerability 'the merciful', the pure in heart', and 'the peacemakers'. They reflect the values of the Kingdom of God which are not based on military or economic power, tyranny or oppression, but on the courage of self-giving love and commitment to truth.

There are many in this world who are vulnerable because their agency is taken away by force, whether through violence, imprisonment or economic injustice. There are others who choose vulnerability, using their agency for the sake of others. As a Christian I see a model and inspiration for this in the God who risks becoming a human being in Jesus. And in the resurrection of Jesus, a reassurance that this way of love will ultimately triumph over evil.

With others I will mourn the death of Alexei Navalny, giving thanks for his courageous activism and faith. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness give me both hope and a challenge. The challenge is about justice for all who are imprisoned or threatened in the pursuit of truth, here and throughout the world. It also raises questions for my own life, about how I might speak and act for those who are vulnerable, even if that is a risky thing.

Good wishes to everyone for your Lenten journey, and a Happy Easter.



David Wilkinson is a British Methodist minister, theologian, astrophysicist and academic. After ordination, he was Methodist minister in Letchworth from 1990 to 1991. Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, he holds PhDs in both theoretical astrophysics and systematic theology, becoming Principal of St John's College, Durham, from 2016 to 2023. His current work involves the relationship of the Christian faith to contemporary culture.



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2024 DATE CHANGE



Fairtrade Fortnight 2024 will be moving to September as part of our Fairtrade's 30 year milestone celebrations. This will give more time to make the most of the opportunity to raise awareness of how working together has made the Fairtrade mark a leader of life-changing impact for farmers and workers across the world. This will be a permanent change of date, meanwhile, look for the Fairtrade mark.



'COSY CHURCH' is at 10.30 a.m. on Sundays followed by time to chat over light refreshments.

We are meeting in the Parlour behind the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings from January to March to conserve energy required to heat the Church i.e. electrical and often also gas heating from late afternoon the previous day.

We use the door on the railway side; there is a T.V. screen and the clavinova has been moved from the church to provide musical accompaniment. It is indeed cosy and friendly and we seem to sing more heartily.

Sunday 3rd March Shared service at Palmers Green URC in Fox Lane, beginning at 11.00

Third Sunday in Lent, service led by Anna Erikson and including Holy Communion.

Sunday 10th March Mothering Sunday when the service will be led by Elders.

Sunday 17th March *As Holy Week approaches, the atmosphere of the season darkens; the readings begin to anticipate the story of Christ's suffering and death, and the reading of the Passion Narrative gave to the **Fifth Sunday of Lent** its name of **Passion Sunday**.*

The service will be led by the Moderator of General Assembly, the Rev'd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson.

Sunday 24th March Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday

Our service will be led by Rev Jim Gascoigne; the service will be followed by the Annual General Church Meeting.

Annual General Meeting

All of us who confirmed baptismal promises on becoming a member of the United Reformed Church are called on to be faithful in public worship and in maintaining the ministry and mission of our local church and of our denomination when possible. We rise to the tasks of ministry and mission in various ways including our participation in Church Meeting which is held quarterly.

The AGM is when Church Officers give an annual report and our conversation is likely to turn to how we go forward in the various aspects of our activity. This includes the election of Elders and by giving formal notice of the AGM here, we invite nominations for the Eldership, which the current Elders will be happy to discuss with anyone who is interested in this role.

Elders are ordained and so they are Elders within the URC for life but may be either serving or non-serving at any given time; there are eight currently serving Elders who are willing to continue to serve, subject to confirmation at the AGM: Dawn Foyle, Jim Gascoigne, Fiona Henderson, Andrea Latter, David Latter, Gillian West, Clifford Woolley, Sally Woolley.

Friends who are not members are welcome to join in discussion but only members may vote. If we can start by 11.30, we should be finished by 12.30 – being in the Parlour we can have coffee as we move from worship into business.

Flowers in March and April will be given both in memory by some and in celebration by others: by Liz Brakspear for Alec and Meg Robb, by the Scouts for Martin Spooner, by Bryant Ambrose for Mother and Padre, by Dawn on her birthday and for Olivia and Brian.

Maundy Thursday reflection

with Rev Ruth Dewis and Rev Martin Legg

Thursday 28th March 7pm
Bush Hill Park United Reformed Church

Come and join us as we remember the last supper Jesus had with his disciples in the upper room before his crucifixion and resurrection



29th March - Good Friday at 10.15

Our shared service with the Baptist Church is a decades long tradition and will take place at the URC this year.

Rev Jim Gascoigne to conduct,
Rev Ebenezer Boakye to preach

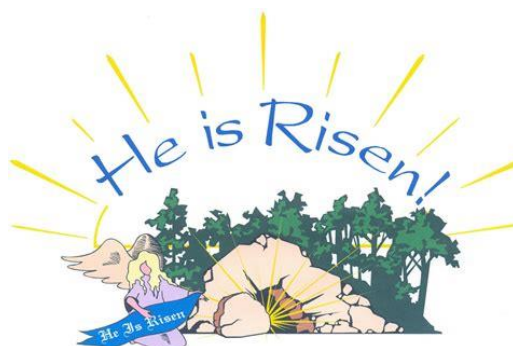
At 11.30 the Walk of Witness starts on The Green meeting the walkers from Palmers Green for a short act of worship on the car park of St Monica's.

Then, traditional cross buns with coffee.



Churches Together also invite you for
Reflections at the Cross at 19.30
at St Monica's Church, N13 4DJ

EASTER DAY

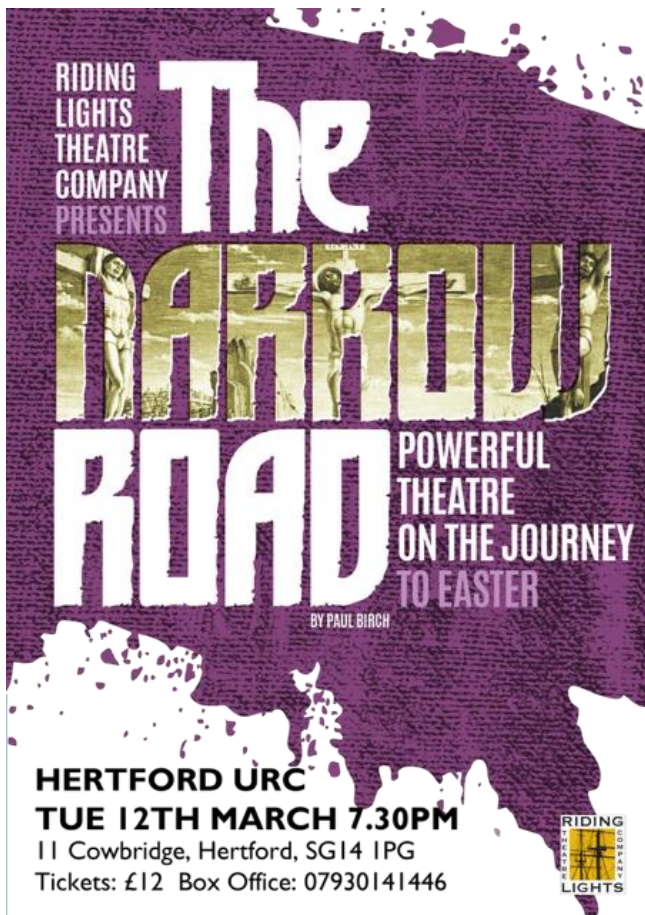


On Easter Day, 31st March, our preacher will be Tim McBryan who is Youth Worker and Pastoral Assistant at Enfield Baptist Church.

Sundays of Easter in April

- 7th Service led by Martin Wells, including **Holy Communion**
- 14th Dr Paul Ashitey from Palmers Green URC will lead worship
- 21st Alex Biggs, Deacon, Enfield Baptist Church
- 28th **Eco Church** led by Andrea, our Green Apostle, with friends from St Monica's.

5th May with Tony Davis from Tottenham High Cross URC



Amid the heat and beauty of ancient Palestine, a man stands alone on a dusty road.

An extraordinary journey will take place, retracing the footsteps of Jesus into a world of miracles and madness, violence and liberation.

As The Narrow Road is walked, this turbulent world is turned upside down; its inhabitants confronted by an unexpected and surprising vision.

As we walk with these people to the cross and on into the challenge of the life beyond it, The Narrow Road asks each of us to review our understanding of our own faith in relation to the journey.

The Narrow Road is a communal experience of theatre and worship for the season leading to Easter.

SOME OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



Praying together for the churches and the needs of our area, **Palmers Green, Winchmore Hill and Grange Park**

Normally first & third Tuesdays:
5th and 19th March then 2nd and 16th April, 10.30-11.15 a.m.

Forum meeting at 19.30 on **Tuesday 23rd April, 2024**
Everyone welcome at Winchmore Hill Baptist Church

Zoom Link for all meetings (Meeting ID: 746 8020 4904 Passcode: 8zq1F7)

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74680204904?pwd=TjJhQnBIYVVuUzNRY3ZXQjJ6MHEzQT09>

Elders Meetings ...

... have been tabled for Thursdays 14th March and 9th April at either 14.00 or 19.00 in the Parlour, as required.



On 28th March, Emmy will be celebrating a very special birthday!

Alles Gute zum Geburtstag!

Have a lovely day!

VISIT BY THE MODERATOR OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY – Sunday 17th March at 10.30

The moderator of General Assembly is the national figurehead for the denomination, representing the United Reformed Church both internally and in the wider world; the moderator chairs major meetings, visits churches at home and abroad, and seeks to provide worship, teaching and pastoral care.

The Rev'd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson



In the Moderator's Blog, Tessa writes, "Friends, I am Tessa Henry-Robinson – Minister of the Word and Sacraments in a four-congregation pastorate in Thames North Synod. I am the present Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church. I am also a spouse, mother, grandmother, sibling, and colleague." ¹

Since November 1983, Tessa has been married to the Rev Mark Robinson who serves the URC as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, is Convener of the URC Business Committee and is one of the Chaplains to recently ordained ministers. Mark is minister in the North Lea Valley Pastorate of our URC Local Area Group and he will be leading worship at Winchmore Hill in May.

Learning from Mark that we were struggling to find preachers, Tessa kindly offered to visit us on one of the few remaining Sundays available during her moderatorial year. She will simply be supporting a local church which is struggling a bit at present, with no expectation of 'red carpet' treatment. However, the Elders hope that every member will do their best to be at Church on Sunday 17th March.

Tessa's four churches include Wanstead where, in 1990, our former member Rev Dr Hazel (Brenda) Denvir began her first call in ministry following, several decades later, Rev John Jermyn who went to Wanstead in 1899 after twelve years in Winchmore Hill, and before a current member, Rev Jim Gascoigne, served as interim minister 2014-2015. We have welcomed Sue Brooks and Grace Smith from Wanstead URC to preach here in the past, and Jeevan Bethala transferred his membership from Wanstead to Winchmore Hill for 'holding' whilst he is working in Qatar. Another connection is with the church at Gants Hill where our friend Adrian had family connections and preached regularly.

These notes are an attempt to acquaint us personally with Tessa but mention should be made of her significantly developed ecclesiological perspective, have a look at the two footnotes to this piece. ²

Eco Awareness

At our [service with an Eco-church focus on 28th April](#), reference will be made to 'Laudato Si' (Praise Be to You), the second encyclical of Pope Francis with the subtitle, 'On care for our common home'. In 2015 the Pope gave a critique of consumerism and irresponsible development, lamented environmental degradation and global warming, and called all people of the world to take "swift and unified global action." A compilation by the Catholic Agency For Overseas Development follows:

The Earth is God's gift to us, full of beauty and wonder, where the fruits of the Earth belong to everyone. But what we see today is that our common home has never been so hurt and mistreated as it has been in the last 200 years.

¹ <https://assemblymoderators.urc.org.uk/introducing-the-revd-dr-tessa-henry-robinson-general-assembly-moderator-2023-2024/>

² <https://www.keepthefaithe.co.uk/2022/07/11/history-made-at-urc-general-assembly-with-new-moderator-elect/>

We have developed at a greater speed than we could have ever imagined. We have treated the Earth like it has an unlimited supply of resources, taking more than our fair share from most people on the planet, as well as future generations to come. We have stripped the Earth of its natural forests, contaminated the Earth's waters, its land and its air. Plants and species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate. The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. Our increasing use of polluting fossil fuels, especially coal, oil and gas, is helping to drive climate change which is one of the biggest challenges we face today. Climate change affects us all, but it is the poorest communities who suffer the most.

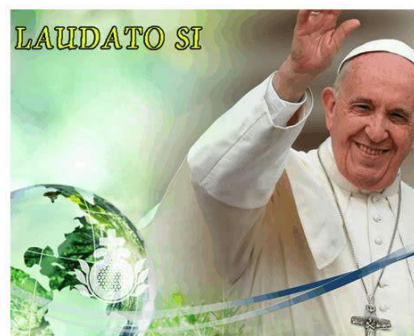
We are now at crisis point, where the future of our common home is under threat and, despite this crisis, there seems to be no slowdown in the lifestyles of the rich nations. Enormous gaps between the rich and the poor continue to rise; between those who are trapped in poverty with few or no resources and those who are consuming and wasting at an ever-increasing rate, leaving a trail of waste and destruction.

Our digital world is also polluting us with noise and distractions, stopping us from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. Real relationships are replaced with virtual friendships, which we can choose to accept or reject, making us dissatisfied with true deep relationships, or can give rise to a new sense of isolation.

Yet, despite all of this, all is not lost. Young people demand change. Young people want to build a better future, which takes seriously the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the poor. So, we *can* change, we *can* make a new start. To protect our common home, we need a common plan. The whole human family needs to work together, so that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Our use of polluting fossil fuels also needs to be replaced without delay. And we need to stop treating the world's resources as an object for profit, with no thought on how our actions might affect the environment or future generations.

So, let's put love for the world and love for our neighbour into action, by living together in harmony, listening to one another, caring for nature and getting involved with society and politics.

Let's undergo an 'eco-conversion' ... in which we listen to the cry of the earth, and the cry of the poor. This means taking seriously things like avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water waste, separating rubbish and using public transport as a part of our calling to protect creation. But more urgently we can slow down on how much we consume and throw away. We can find great joy and freedom in living simply, rather than being always on the look-out for what we do not have. We are capable of these changes and making a new start, so, let us make that start today!



Moving Stories

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our global partners ZIMBABWE**

Commitment
for **Life**

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

Living God, who clothes us in garments of gratitude, adorn this prayer with the light of your grace. We bring to mind the many blessings that You so generously give ... *Moment of silence...*

We prayer for those gathered in this place ... those in our churches ... those in our communities ... for those who selflessly serve in making the world a better place.

Forgiving God, we too easily diminish the dignity of others, sowing division when you call for openness and trust.

Lord, have mercy.

We stand ashamed at the depth to which humanity can sink, how easily we march to the drums of war, how quickly we are swayed and seduced by the savagery of self-justifying narratives.

Christ, have mercy.

May the Trinity of Love bind our wounds, challenge our complacency, bring freedom from oppression, and lead all to abundance of freedom.

Amen.

Gender Justice in Zimbabwe



Regina Bhobo, a Gender Officer with the Evangelical Fellowship in Zimbabwe, coordinates the Zimbabwe Gender and Faith Network, also known as 'Side by Side, Zimbabwe'.

Photo: by Kevin Snyman, Regina Bhobo

Side by Side encompasses around eighteen different organisations. Its flagship project is called 'Against Gender-Based Violence'. It operates in six districts of Manicaland.

Raising awareness about the issues surrounding gender-based violence is a key part of the strategy, giving women and men the awareness, language and tools to confront this awful scourge in communities.

The project has also harnessed the support of over five hundred pastors and ministers. Each was trained to be a gender champion in the local community. One large church created a well-respected refuge for survivors of gender-based violence.

Your support through Commitment for Life enables Regina's work to thrive in Zimbabwe. You can hear Regina say more about the project in this filmed interview: <https://bit.ly/4bFE0Ue>

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