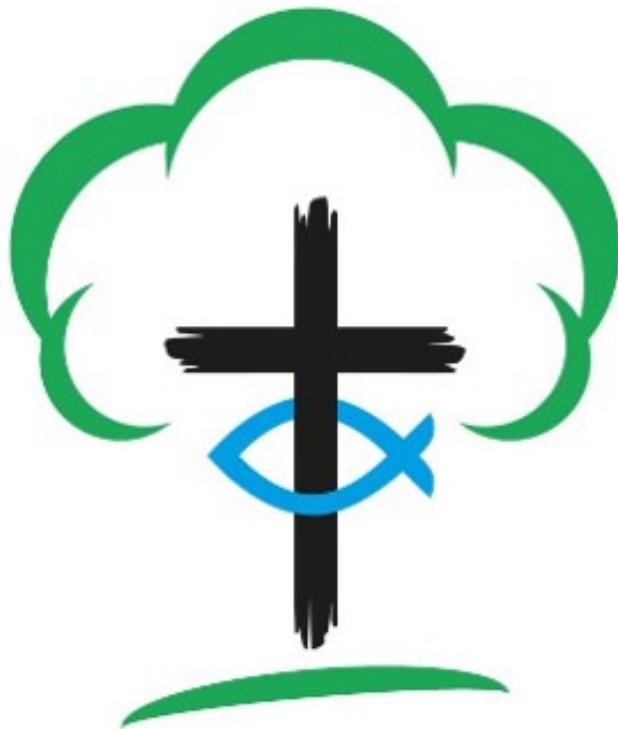


# United Voices!



*St Albans*  
**United  
Reformed  
Church**

**The quarterly magazine of St. Albans United Reformed Church**

**Summer Edition**

**Issue 8—July 2025**

## From the Editorial Team:

Welcome to the 8th edition of 'United Voices', which we hope you will enjoy reading. As usual we give our very grateful thanks to all contributors and we hope you will keep the articles coming. The summer holidays and adventures you may have will give many just the right opportunity to write. So we look forward to hearing from you.

It's amazing just how quickly the months are passing us by – half way to Christmas already. They do say that the older one gets the quicker time passes and personally I find it hard to believe that it's June. Still, although April and May were the warmest we have seen for many years, we are sure that all are looking forward to a lovely summer of sitting in the garden, walks, picnics and barbecues. Something to be said for retirement!

Maggie Snyder ([maggiesnyder92@gmail.com](mailto:maggiesnyder92@gmail.com))

Sue Brooks ([squirrel19@btinternet.com](mailto:squirrel19@btinternet.com))

Gill Elliott

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### Olga Hopkins' VE Day memories

After hearing a recent radio appeal by the British Legion, asking for people with memories of VE Day in 1945, Olga's family responded. So Olga was whisked into new activity and experiences.

Olga served in the war in the WAAF as a wireless mechanic, retuning and repairing aeroplane radios. She was lying in bed early on May 8<sup>th</sup>. She remembers, "Over the tannoy came the message "The war is over, the war is over". Everyone jumped up and put battledress over their pyjamas." There was a party in the Sergeants' Mess and Olga sang 'Don't fence me in.' Later, they all listened to a message from Winston Churchill.



As part of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, Olga was interviewed by three 'A' level students. She was also taken to Buckingham Palace with other veterans and civilians who had served in the war; they watched the flypast. Then they were ushered into a reception, where Olga found herself invited for a talk with the Queen, who had entered the room informally with other members of the Royal Family. "It's an honour, Ma'am," Olga said. The Queen replied "No, the honour is mine to meet those who served in the war in the Armed Forces." Also in the room were heads of the Armed Forces and Cabinet Ministers. Olga also spoke with the head of the RAF.

"It was such a happy day", Olga said. "To me, being in that room surrounded by people from the King, the heads of the Armed Forces and leaders of Government to us, the hoi polloi, all together was democracy – what we fought for."

Four days later, a trip to the National Arboretum with about 100 other veterans had been organised. Olga was particularly keen to see the memorial to those who served in the WAAF, as she had. (Pictured above). Children performed a mime and then a church service was held. Olga was interviewed by national and local media and, as you'll have been able to see at the back of the church, also featured in 'Country Life'.

## Letter from an Elder

– by Elizabeth Barrett

Praying is something that we all do, in many different ways, both alone or together in church, but what is meant by prayer? I found this definition, from the Diocese of London.

“Prayer is giving our attention to God in a two-way spiritual relationship where we talk to God and also listen to Him. Prayer is like a child’s conversation with their parent. It is natural for a child to ask their parent for the things they need, or to ask for advice or guidance.”



We don’t pray on our own, but alongside Christians throughout the ages and around the world. Prayer brings us in touch with God and others, and Christians pray in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we pray, we offer every situation to God, and God uses our prayers to bring love and justice into the world.

Sometimes I do not feel that I have the right words for what I want to say and have been collecting prayers that say something to me. As our relationship with God is highly individual, the prayers that are helpful to one person may not be for another. I have found the following prayer from Sir Walter Raleigh, which makes me think of how whole-hearted we should be in our prayers

‘To you, O Jesus, I direct my eyes;  
to you my hands, to you my humble knees;  
to you my heart shall offer sacrifice;  
to you my thoughts, who my thoughts only sees;  
to you myself – myself and all I give;  
to you I die; to you I only live.’

While the following prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr, makes me realise that what I think should be done is not necessarily what God wants:

‘God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other’

I hope that these prayers may be as helpful to you as I have found them. In the world today there are so many things to pray for that it can seem quite overwhelming, but we should remember that God listens, and answers prayers, not necessarily in the ways that we anticipate.

# Thames North Synod Eco Day 2025

## The Content

The day started with an act of worship led by Gill Elliott, Helen Griffiths and Fiona Smith. This was followed by a very informative talk to a full hall by David Britton, Campaign Officer for Operation Noah. David described how Operation Noah in 2004 was formed by a group of people who felt that the church should be responding more strongly to the climate crisis. (See this [YouTube video](#) for greater detail) Their primary campaign was to encourage Churches to divest from fossil fuel.



David explained that the decision of the Churches to divest has had a wider impact that might be expected. He told the meeting that when the United Reformed Church decided to divest in 2019 and then approached their investment management firm to make a fossil fuel free investment fund for them, the firm decided to offer the fund to others so the initial divestment from the URC of some £6million was increased to a £100million.

Recently Operation Noah has broadened its work in this area and has set up the Bright Now Campaign. This is their rallying call for UK Churches and faith institutions to lead the way in divesting from fossil fuels, investing in climate change solutions and ensuring responsible stewardship of land to fight against climate change.

<https://www.operationnoah.org/bright-now-campaign/church-investment-in-climate-solutions/>

We were reminded that all the big 4 high street banks invest large amounts of money in coal, oil and gas – effectively using our money if we bank with them. Operation Noah is working in partnership with other Christian organisations to encourage individual Christians and Churches to switch banks to one that only invests in clean energy. <https://www.operationnoah.org/partnership-campaigns/big-bank-switch/>

There was an additional short talk from Revd. Francis Ackroyd who was inspired by the talk on the book "Climate Change is Racist" by Jeremy Williams at the Thames North Synod Eco day 2024. Francis has kindly allowed us to print his review of the book, (see page 6) which will also be in 'Reform' magazine. The book is now available now from the URC bookshop and is a 'must read' for anyone concerned about racial/climate justice or, in fact, everyone!

A vegetarian lunch was provided by the Synod.



In the afternoon there were several workshops including:

- Effective campaigning for Individuals and Churches with Roo Stewart – Head of Public Issues, URC
- Climate Resilience in Bangladesh with Peter Musgrave from Vine Church Ilford
- Eco Church new survey with Rachel Johnston, St Albans Diocese Environmental Officer
- Sustainable flower arranging with representative of St Albans Cathedral Flower Guild
- Sustainable Buildings - Approach and Support with Sacha McArdle, Assistant Property Officer Thames North Synod ,
- Green Psalm writing with Revd. Maggie Hindley - [read it here](#)

In between times people were free to wander around the site – enjoy the meadow flowers and engage with the various displays. Oh, and enjoy lots of vegetarian/vegan food too, all so well organised by the Synod.



### **Personal Reflection on the day**

As the Eco Church champion for the Greenwood Site of St Albans URC for the last 5 years and part of the Synod Green Team who planned the Synod Eco Day I had, one way or another, invested a substantial amount of physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual energy in the day. But, oh, how it paid off! Being a tiny congregation, 20 on a good day, it was just wonderful to have 67 people gathered to praise God and pray for his struggling creation. It was just lovely to see people enjoying the meadow, hear them speak with appreciation of what we have done to the buildings and show interest to our future plans for both. Networking with others with the same mindset is always uplifting and I was delighted to make some new contacts. David Britton's talk was a great inspiration for what next steps might be taken by myself as well as my church and the Synod

However, the week before the event, I had heard that I had the opportunity to make the day additionally personally memorable. I had a call from a young man, Lee Wood, who runs a company called Ember Designs in St Albans. Lee is an ardent environmentalist and, amongst many other things, a trustee of Sustainable St Albans. Four years ago, he set up Ember Designs Eco Awards. He invites people from the city to nominate individuals that they feel should be recognised for their efforts to care for the environment. I had been nominated by a fellow Green Christian for what I have been doing through Eco Church and within the local community in recent years and the Independent Panel of Judges decided to give me the award. Despite my mixed emotions of elation and chagrin, I jumped on the opportunity to have it presented at the Eco Day, not to show off, but to demonstrate the power of following the Eco Church programme (and that's all I have been doing) to engage with the wider community. But the icing on the cake came the day afterwards. Lee had bought his young daughter, Eleanor, with him to present the award as she is the impetus for all he does. When Lee contacted me for a quote for his press release, he said how much they had enjoyed their brief visit and that Eleanor had commented on how nice everyone was and on how happy they looked to be there. What better commendation of church life could there be?

Anna Barrett

### **'Climate Change is Racist'**

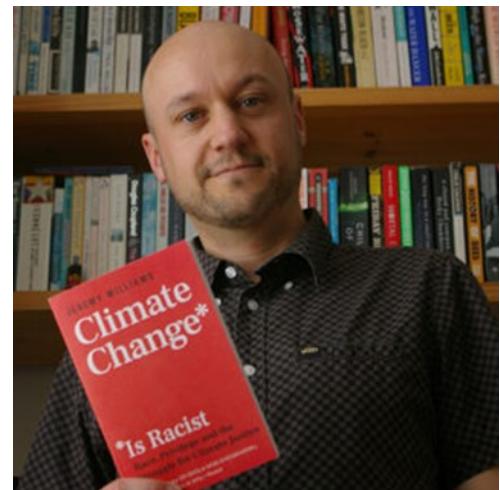
**by Jeremy Williams**

**Icon books Ltd**

**Review**

**by Francis Ackroyd**

Jeremy Williams shows powerfully the difference between the countries of the Global North and those of the South, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa. In general those of the North, predominately white, have caused most of the climate problem, while those who suffer are the predominantly black people of Sub-Saharan Africa. He describes this as structural racism-- inequality laid down over the years by slavery, colonization and imperialism. For example, page 15 shows that electricity consumption for a year by the average person in UK is 4,496 KWH while in Madagascar it is 78 KWH. Droughts, famine, fires and floods have always occurred but the heavy production of CO2 in the North has greatly increased their severity in the South. When disasters hit in Southern Africa people die, often in considerable numbers, and the cost of recovery and rebuilding is way out of reach in poor communities. In 2009 the Capital City of Mozambique, Beira, was destroyed by Hurricane Idal -- 90% of buildings flattened and 1,000 people killed. This leads him to point out that often these disasters are only reported briefly in the UK or not at all. Because we don't feel it, it is easier to deny it or ignore it.



Countries in Africa have tried to work together to ask for realistic reparations. In 2009 at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, countries united together to ask for commitments of 50billion\$ by 2015 and 100billion\$ in 2020 to help produce green energy and enable them to have their own Industrial growth. The wealthy countries of the North united together to divide the African countries with promises of aid, and the Conference ended with targets and promises, but no commitments which were in any way binding. This remains the position.

The URC has pledged itself to become an Anti-Racist Church and has made apologies for slavery at Assembly and in the Caribbean, and at both promising reparations and action. Jeremy's book helps us to see the urgent need for restorative justice and reparations, which is so relevant for us today. I strongly recommend reading this book. [Climate Change Is Racist by Jeremy Williams - URC Bookshop](#)

Francis Ackroyd [Grange Park URC Walthamstow]

## Golden Wedding Anniversaries

In April 1975 two couples were married; Helen and David Mooney, Jim and Marion Allan. Fifty years on we were together on a Strollers Walk when we realised that we had both reached this amazing milestone. From there a plan was hatched to celebrate this event.

It was decided to hire the splendid new hall at Greenwood and invite our mutual church friends for afternoon tea on Sunday May 4th.

Where did those 50 years go?! We feel so blessed to have weathered many storms and still kept our sense of humour and commitment to each other.

Many thanks to our caterer for the delicious food and to everyone who came to help us mark this Golden event.

Helen Mooney



### **HOMEWOOD LUNCHEON CLUB**

We are a self-supporting, family-orientated club that meets every Wednesday from 10am to 2pm. Our clients receive morning coffee/tea and biscuits on arrival and a hot 2-course lunch. The menu is decided each month by all the members and is delivered by the Jubilee Centre. The clients decide the programme, which includes quizzes, card activities and games, including Scrabble and Rummikub. We have a trip out for lunch at least once a year. Birthdays are celebrated with a cake, card and gift. Recently we had a special VE Day lunch. Door to door transport is available, provided by Community First.

We are a small group, having sadly lost eight of our members in the last two years and need to encourage new clients to join us, especially those who are housebound or lonely. I feel that pastoral care is very important. Everyone needs to feel they matter. All will receive a warm welcome.

In order for us to progress we need your help. We are looking for able-bodied volunteers who could spare a few hours on a Wednesday to help. This would involve setting up or cleaning up, chatting over coffee, serving and sharing a hot lunch and joining in games and activities. You are very welcome to come along and see what we do.

Hazel Spooner Tel. 07700 070803

## Greenwood grounds – moving on



In February Greenwood, through our contact with Wilderhood Watch, had a visit from Heidi Mansell (who worked to set up Wilder St Albans with the Wildlife Trust) and Margaret Harris, two very knowledgeable wildlife gardeners. They loved the grounds and saw their potential and therefore prepared a report on how to enhance the grounds at Greenwood to increase its biodiversity.

Things have got off to a slowish start for reasons beyond our control, but with our new gardener, Clare, some church members and a couple of friends of the church we have made some progress. The wildlife meadow has been rescued and is now blooming beautifully and the kidney vetch on the chalk bank has bloomed for the first time.

We are now beginning to consider the garden at the front of the church which we hope to transform into an example of an urban wildlife friendly garden – with all round colour and interest. We have some of the plants already but below is a list of plants that we still need to do this. In addition to these plants, Heidi and Margaret advocated adding various water sources, a small fruit tree, and creating deadwood habitat (logs piled both vertically and horizontally) to provide shelter for insects, birds, and small mammals. A vertical one has already been installed.

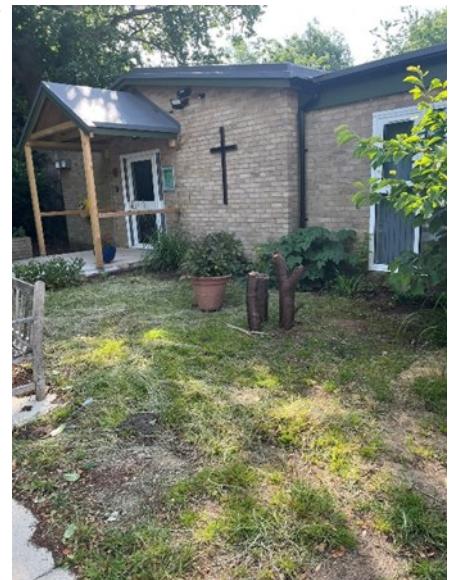
We are at the planning stage now and most of the planting will be done in the autumn. If you have any of the plants in your garden and could divide in the autumn, we would be delighted to hear from you! Similarly, if you are willing to roll your sleeves up and get involved with this project, maintaining the meadow or helping plant the saplings for more hedgerows please get in touch.

(email: [stalbansurcgreenwood@gmail.com](mailto:stalbansurcgreenwood@gmail.com))

Anna and Ian

Here are Margaret's and Heidi's suggestions

*Pulmonaria species (Lungwort), Dogwood, Meadow cranesbill, Red campion, Herbs – sage, thyme, marjoram, rosemary, Cotoneaster species, Sedums, Red Valerian, Winter-flowering honeysuckle, Heather, Mahonia, Snowdrops*



## Let's meet....Elizabeth Martin

I was born and brought up in Edinburgh, attending church and Sunday school with my parents (we got a stamp to stick in an attendance record each week, and were awarded prizes for perfect attendance). My parents ran a drapery shop and later incorporated a post office, meaning long hours of work and worry, especially for my father having to balance the books every Friday evening without even the help of a calculator. I must be the only child whose first word was "wool"!

The school I attended closed immediately after I left, due to the government withdrawing funding to all grant-aided schools, and later reopened as the Gallery of Modern Art, which we enjoy visiting when we return to Edinburgh.

We didn't have a television, so spare time was spent reading or practising the piano or cello, playing in various youth orchestras and taking part in the Edinburgh Competitive Music Festival.

At university I studied French and German, working abroad in the holidays as an au pair, also in a hotel in Oberammergau and spending a year as an English assistant in a school in France.

I met my future husband, David, at church, where he asked me to play the piano for the Sunday school department he led, and I invited him along to the youth fellowship. Our first date was to a wonderful performance (with lavish hospitality) of the Mastersingers opera by Wagner, sponsored by David's work – how could I resist?

We moved down south soon after we married, and when David's job moved to Watford we fell in love with St Albans and moved here when the first of our three children was only 4 weeks old. We soon discovered Homewood Road URC and felt at home there, with its thriving Junior Church and lots of friendly folk to remind us of home! On our first visit, the minister, Henry Starkey, arranged to pick me up and give me a lift to the church Thursday Coffee Club, where young mums and their toddlers could get to know each other and organise charity events. There was no going back after that!

Over the years I have become more and more involved with music, children's activities and admin for the church. I have always appreciated the spiritual support and fellowship at Homewood, and am enjoying getting to know our new friends from Trinity and Greenwood and learning from them.

Outside of church, I enjoy looking after grandchildren, playing in the St Albans Symphony Orchestra and carrying on my previous profession of teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, but now on a voluntary basis to individual refugees in their home or at one of the asylum-seeker hotels. I often think this is more rewarding for me than the learners, and never fail to come away well-fed!



Elizabeth Martin.

## Let's Meet....Heather Webb



I was born in Woolwich Mother and Baby Home, early morning on May 17th, and, so my father told me, it was snowing!!

I lived in Berryhill Gardens, Eltham, South London with my parents - Mum, Elsie, who had run a Post Office and Dad, Phil, who was an ambulance man -for my first few years, being joined by my little brother Paul, when I was 2. Unfortunately Mum couldn't cope with 2 children - these days she would have been diagnosed with Postnatal Depression.

I went to live with my maternal grandparents from age 3-11years (when they passed away). My brother was cared for by various paternal aunts.

During this time my spiritual education began, when I attended the local Catholic church with Grandad. However, all I remember from those days was having to kneel on a cold floor and not 'understanding' the words!

Meanwhile, my parents divorced and Dad remarried – being able to reunite my brother and I into a 'blended' family with our slightly older stepbrother and sister. We all attended the local Congregational Church in Eltham, a building very similar in design to Homewood Road, but sadly closed in 2024. I went to Junior Church there, Seminar group (a very large and vibrant group of teenagers), Youth club, sang in the choir and also enrolled in 1st Royal Eltham West Guides, who met there.

There 2 of the 3 blessed families, loves of my life, were born - church and Girl Guiding. The 3rd, and definitely not the least, was my biological family!

After attending senior school in Plumstead and gaining my A levels, I went to work at Metropolitan Water Board Headquarters in Rosebery Avenue, London EC1 as a trainee accountant. I spent 9 years there, during which time I met my husband, Barry, who moved from Audit to Accountancy, to sit behind me! We will have been married for 44 years next month, marrying at St Thomas' URC in Watford.

In 1982 our best friend, who had worked with us and had moved out of London to work at Chiltern Division (of the now Thames Water Authority), Maple Lodge, Rickmansworth, suggested we come (as a pair) out to join her. So we did!

By this time we had bought our first house in Watford, so it was a dream move, saving us at least 2 hours a day travelling time. There our roles reversed – Barry to Accountancy and me into Audit. In 1988, Barry's role was relocated to Waltham Cross and we were able to relocate a little nearer there to our current home in St Albans. In 1987, we had been blessed with the birth of Kathryn, our first daughter. I gave up full time work - only working in the evenings at the new Sainsburys in St Albans (due to the mortgage rate hitting almost 16%!).

Kathryn and I would pick up Barry from the station and then he would drop me at Sainsburys to start my evening shift...it worked very well!

When Kathryn was nearly 3, she went to Playschool at the, then, Chiswell Green United Reformed Church.

Here, I met a fellow mum, who, having just had her 2nd child (4 months old) was going back to work and had been let down by her arranged childcare. She suggested that as our 3-year-olds got on so well ...maybe I should consider childminding. Then my 2nd career was born!

We also started attending Chiswell Green URC and 35 years on, have never left!

In 1992, our 2nd daughter Jenny was born, Childminding continued. The parents of these children became friends (and still are) and not so long ago I was looking after the twins of my original charge, occasionally!

In 1995, one evening after attending Brownies at CGURC, Barry came home after picking Kathryn up, threw a note at me saying 'here you are - just what you've been waiting for!'. It was a note from Carol Watkins, Brown Owl, saying both she and Snowy Owl were retiring and someone was needed to take over the Unit. At this point I said "No, I don't want to do Brownies, I want to do Guides!" 29 years later I'm still their Brownie Leader !!

In 2010, I decided that it was time for another career change. I went to work at the local pharmacy as a pharmacy assistant - having a branch near Waitrose on the Verulam estate and one in Chiswell Green. I really enjoyed meeting and helping all the clients and stayed there until December 2019...just before the Pandemic.

I have been blessed with my family - both girls being paediatric nurses with lovely partners and we all get on well... we couldn't ask for more!

Kathryn celebrated her marriage to Jam in Sept 2020 during Covid on the URC field. We were restricted to only 30 people, with no music, dancing etc but still a great day was had by all. On Christmas Day 2021 their son, George, was born. A treasured, funny, intelligent addition to the family.

Jenny and her partner of 7 years, Sam, along with their Golden Retriever puppy, Remy, complete the family.

The URC, particularly Greenwood, is at the centre of everything I do both spiritually and socially. Currently I read the notices before Sunday Service, am a small part of the Management team at Greenwood, am the Financial contact with Treasurer, contact with the Guiding sections that meet there and am involved with the Memory Café, which we hope will be a great asset to the community, once it is fully up and running.



## Let's meet....Gill Ogilvie

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century both my paternal and maternal grandparents moved to St Albans. They both attended the newly-built Trinity Church, so naturally Trinity has played a large part in my family's life. In fact, if the Trinity Tennis Club hadn't been there my sister, Sandra, and I might never have been born. Many a 'match' was made there!

Naturally both Sandra and I attended the Sunday School in the Faulkner Hall and Brownies and Guides in the Church Parlour. I enjoyed the fun we had and all the helpful things we learned – when tying up my tall plants a reef knot comes in very useful and the taste of a nice cup of tea, well made, is always welcome. The Guide camps gave important lifelong lessons. And who doesn't remember 'Ging gang gooley' sung round the camp fire?



Both Sandra and I attended Camp Primary School, as previously so had my mother and aunts. We both went to the Girls' Grammar School. I still meet my cycling friend I used to call for at her gate. Now it's either in a charity shop or Morrisons!

After I left school I went to Stockwell College in Bromley to study infant teaching. I was not sure about it at first, but when I did my first teaching practice in a local school I knew it was what I wanted to do. I was fortunate to have a very experienced class teacher to inspire me. She is now in her 90s and as bright as a button.

I returned to St Albans to teach at Cunningham Hill Infant School and later St Helen's School in Wheathampsted. I took the unit for children with emotional and behaviour difficulties at Margaret Wix School and my last school was a special school in Watford. I finally decided that I had had enough fun?! in the classroom and took early retirement. I then tutored individual children who needed a little extra help.

I have always enjoyed drama. For two years each Saturday I attended the City Lit in London for lessons in speech, movement and acting. Many there were hoping to go to drama school, but I just wanted to learn as much as I could for my amateur dramatics in St Albans. I acted with the Trinity Drama Group and the Abbey Theatre. When I retired from full time teaching my friend and I put together a show about Joyce Grenfell. We incorporated her personal history and many of her sketches and poems. We took our show to WI meetings, ladies' clubs and retirement homes. We had as much fun performing as I hope we gave. I still meet a lady in The Quadrant who calls me Joyce Grenfell every time I see her....our number one fan!

My first trip abroad was to Ostend, Belgium, with the Trinity Youth Club led by Brian Fuller and his wife. This was the beginning of my enjoyment of travel. A friend and I crossed to Holland for a cycling holiday around the country, staying at youth hostels. Each summer we chose a different European country, leaving the bikes behind and using public transport between hostels.

I have a good friend who moved to Poland when it became a republic. She invited me to stay and during her time there she moved three times. I experienced her home in Warsaw and its surrounding towns and the lakeland area of the north. It was a time of change for the inhabitants, who were very wary of authority. I was warned not to take photos. This friend has since married a Dane and lives in Denmark. How lucky am I! They have taken me all over Denmark and Norway.

With a college friend I visited China a few years ago. My niece lived in Australia for ten years, so I flew over to see her, stopping beforehand to visit New Zealand South Island on a coach tour and going to North Island to visit a friend. From all my travelling, Dubrovnik remains my favourite place of all.

I live in Jersey Farm, which has convenient shops, doctor and dental surgeons. I find it a very friendly place, with plenty of access to open fields and tracks to Sandridge. I have a garden which I love. I grow summer annuals in my greenhouse and enjoy visiting garden centres for perennials.

Although I have no children myself, I have a lovely family – two nieces and a great-niece, sister, cousins and many friends. I am a very fortunate lady! As Trinity has been important to me throughout my life, I was quite fearful of the move to Homewood. However, I needn't have worried, as everyone has been so welcoming and friendly, especially the Singing Group. SO THANK YOU ALL! Homewood now feels like home!!

Gill Ogilvie

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## Memorial Service

During the course of a month, Gill Chapman was at the organ of five churches, so all were involved at her memorial service in St Mary's, Redbourn, on Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> March. The service opened with Bill Chilcott's 'Irish Blessing' performed by a group of Homewood Singers and ended with selected St Mary's choir members singing 'The Lord bless you and keep you' by John Rutter.

So appropriate that Gill would have known well everyone who had a role in the service - the two choirs, four clergy, a churchwarden, an elder, recorder players, organist – to the greater glory of God.

Gill's family really appreciated the contributions from St Albans URC: the excellent singing led by Helen, accompanied by Elizabeth at the piano, (hidden behind the screen), then John Steele reading an outline of Gill's life.



Brian Chapman

## News Roundup by Anne Goldsmith



### Easter Fun

Lots of colouring, sticking and making activities were enjoyed at Easter Fun on 17<sup>th</sup> April, not to mention singing and eating chocolate eggs! Donations were made for FEED Food Bank. Thanks to the parent/ carers, children and brilliant team of helpers.



Palm crosses were left outside Homewood for passers-by to take.

The Maundy Thursday evening service with supper was a time for prayer and reflection.



This flower cross was assembled by the congregation during the Easter Day service at Homewood. It was then left outside the church as a witness to the community.

## Cosy Café

### Musical Lunch

At the last of the weekly lunches in March the group enjoyed musical entertainment and a sing-along.



### Hall-Warming Concert at Greenwood

The concert, held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, was a great success. Homewood Singers and Kevin O'Donnell performed to a packed audience. Almost £200 was raised in donations for Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

## Strollers



### April Strollers

The April stroll, accompanied by drizzle, included the Hatfield Aerodrome Heritage Trail, and concluded with the usual pub lunch at the Three Horseshoes, Smallford. Thanks to David and Elizabeth for leading it.

### May Strollers

The May stroll around Heartwood and Nomansland Common was accompanied by very warm and sunny weather. Lunch at The Green Man, Sandridge was appreciated by all. Thanks to Helen M.

## **Lunch Club VE Celebration**

The Wednesday Lunch Club members enjoyed a special celebratory meal to remember the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Victory in Europe.



## **Christian Aid Market**

As usual, we organised the Book Stall at the Christian Aid Market outside St Mary's Church on 17<sup>th</sup> May. Visitors also enjoyed stalls selling cakes, plants, jams, crafts as well as live jazz, games for children and refreshments and lunches in the hall. Many thanks to all those who helped raise money.



## **Feedback response**

Some people have kindly given us verbal comments about 'United Voices', before and following our appeal for feedback on church communication in the last edition.

Several have said that they like reading the 'Let's meet...' articles about members of our congregation. This idea was first suggested to us by Lesley King, who had considered running it in the previous church magazine, which she edited. So thank you, Lesley! And thank you to all those who have so far written or been interviewed for this feature!

Other people have said they find it a good magazine. In production terms the three editors work as a team, so it's very much a shared project. However, the magazine mainly owes its liveliness and interest to the articles which you, the readers, send in. Please keep them coming!

I wake in the morning early,  
The sky is light as day  
Already as bright as the afternoon  
But clean and new,  
This dawn like the first day ever  
Never seen before,  
Never touched.

I stumble out of bed to wait at the window.  
No sound, no movement yet,  
No traffic on the grinding street,  
No footsteps on the dusty pavement,  
Only the fresh feel of the morning,  
Still as glass, transparent.

I draw the curtain back,  
The garden holds its breath.  
Quiet, wet and new it waits  
Before the beginning.  
A spider web shimmers in the sunlight.

The same each morning -  
A blackbird in the apple tree,  
Singing...  
And only then, the world awakes.

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

You may know of a podcast called Movers & Shakers about Parkinson's, which I enjoy listening to. I got into it because I have some dear friends who live with Parkinson's disease. The people on the podcast, along with the national charities, are trying to get signatures on a petition to force a debate in Parliament on the subject of Parkinson's and improving the standard of care in the NHS which is currently rather variable. They need to get to 100,000 signatures and are only halfway there so far.

You may have already signed yourself but to collect more support I wondered if it would be a thing for the church magazine. I am sure many folk would add their names.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/713714>

or

<https://www.moversandshakerspodcast.com/charter>

Many thanks, Nick Buckley

## Swanning around!

Jenny and Craig recently encountered a family of lost swans in St Albans in danger of being run over. The story grew and grew. Here's Jenny's account of what happened next.

"We thought the male was taking them to the end of Riverside Road and down Cottonmill Lane past St. Peter's school to get to the river. But oh no! They got to the end of Riverside Road and went to turn up Cottonmill Lane towards town!



So we had to form a human barrier but the male tried to push through then gave up and turned around and they all sat down in the road, probably exhausted. The human barrier got a little bigger as people joined us.

Mark, one of our neighbours, spotted a message on our road WhatsApp group and came to join us. They were in danger of being run over so he called the police, who came in 10 minutes. Interesting job 'ere! At first a young policewoman who, like all of us, didn't know what to do and didn't want to upset the male, but needed to get them off the road. Another two police arrived.

The swans were quite settled and content to just rest where they were in the road and seemed to realise we were there to protect them. Even though cars were directed slowly around them, stopping to take a picture. The sun got quite hot and the cygnets tried to get under mum's wings.



The police used their high viz jackets to wave them on, but the male wasn't having it and flapped his wings and snapped at them. So we let him calm down again. Then finally he got up and started walking back up Riverside Rd with the family following. Hooray! That was the direction we wanted them to go. The high viz jacket helped guide them.

It's as if the male remembered the way to the river. The human barrier followed and we stopped the traffic. I kept alongside the male to stop him going towards garages and getting stuck again.

Then I went in front to guide him to go down Riverside Court, past the houses. They could definitely smell the river and found their way. I ran up the road to the Alban Way to get a view of the river from the bridge to see them. Phew! They made it, and the cygnets were so tired they were getting a ride on mum's back. Happy ending! We heard from a man from Verulam Fishing lakes that they had been born there and the cygnets were only 3 days old. Perhaps they had been evicted, or decided to find a safer home."



Jenny Hill

# St Albans URC Preaching Plan 2025

Version

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Date		At Homewood Road morning 10.30 unless otherwise shown.	At Greenwood	At Homewood Road - Evening/ Afternoon 18.30 unless shown	
Jul	6	Gill Elliott (HC)	Stephen Poxon	3pm CTiM	No Evening Service
	13	Homewood Singers	Rev'd Debbie Hodge 3pm	6.30pm	Fiona Smith
	20	David 'Johny' Jonathan	Rev'd Simon Carver	6.30pm	Rev'd John Steele (HC)
	27	Stephen Poxon	Rev'd David Ronco	6.30pm	Gill Elliott
Aug	3	Mike Findley (HC)	Fiona Smith	6.30pm	Helen & David Mooney
	10	Worship Group led by Sheila Knopp	Valerie Chapman HC	6.30pm	Sue Brooks & Pat Pile
	17	Rev'd John Steele	Mike Findley	6.30pm	Sheila Knopp (HC)
	24	Danny Smith	Songs of Praise	6.30pm	Jacky Wilson
	31	Gill Elliott	5th Sunday: Joint Service at HR	6.30pm	Fiona Smith
Sept	7	Rev'd Martyn Neads (HC)	Harry Smith	6.30pm	Harry Smith
	14	Back to Church Family Service Stephen Poxon	Harvest at GW	6.30pm	Sue Brooks & Pat Pile
	21	Harvest Family Service Worship Group	Rev'd John Churcher	6.30pm	Gill Elliott (HC)
	28	Karen Campbell	Rev'd John Steele	6.30pm	Mike Findley
Oct	5	Wild Goose Group (HC)	Sue Brooks	6.30pm	Songs of Praise
	12	Commitment for Life Sheila Knopp & Homewood Singers	Philip Nalpannis A Rocha UK	6.30pm	Helen Griffiths
	19	Parade Service Geoff Sutton	Valerie Chapman	6.30pm	Martyn Macphee (HC)
	26	Elizabeth Harris	Mike Findley 3pm	6.30pm	Musical Group

HC = Holy Communion; CTiM = Christians Together in Marshalswick CTSA = Christians together in St Albans

Gray sections indicate school holidays and half-terms

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Homewood Road site: **Homewood Road, St. Albans, AL1 4BH**

Current Trustee Elders		
Elizabeth Barrett	Helen Griffiths	Lesley King
Gill Elliott	Anne Goldsmith	Sheila Knopp
Ray Fraser	Jenny Hawkins	David Martin
	Debbie Hodge	Philip Nixon

Website: [www.stalbansurc.org](http://www.stalbansurc.org)

