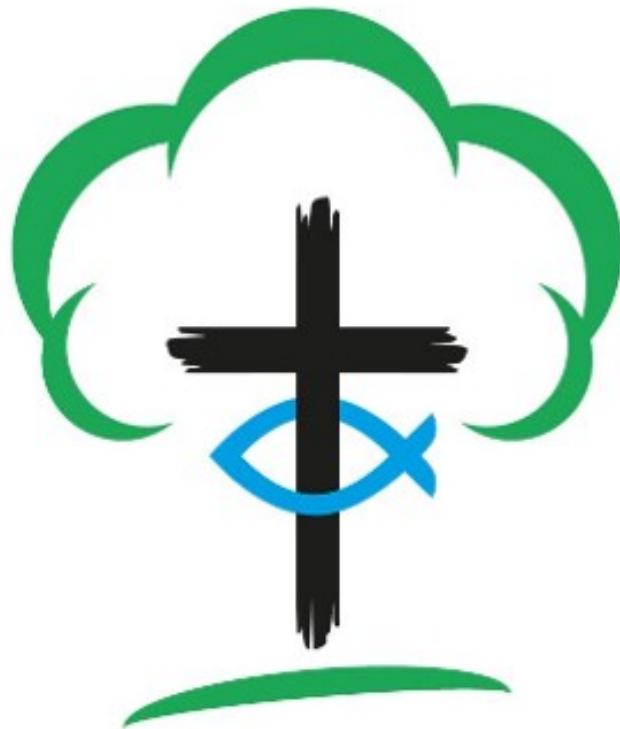


United Voices!



St Albans
**United
Reformed
Church**

The quarterly magazine of St. Albans United Reformed Church

Autumn Edition

Issue 9—October 2025

From the Editorial Team:

A very warm welcome to the autumn and Christmas edition of 'United Voices'. We hope that you enjoy the various articles and photographs which perhaps will remind some of you of your own summer holidays and country walks.

Autumn is now officially with us, bringing a change in the weather: after weeks of sunshine we have now experienced our first few days of quite heavy rain and, while some of us may regret this, we are sure that our gardens and green spaces have welcomed the rain.

Although we are very aware that some areas of our country, and world, have had wild fires and flash floods, which must have been very terrifying. How fortunate we are in this particular area!

As we always ask, please do not forget to keep sending us your articles and photographs for our winter edition of 'United Voices'. Until then we wish you happy reading.

Maggie Snyder (maggiesnyder92@gmail.com)

Sue Brooks (squirrel19@btinternet.com)

Gill Elliott

You can choose!

Is your experience of our worship all it could be? Can you easily see the words of the hymns and read the order of service? Or would you like some written music to help you sing better? There are practical ways we can help when you come in through the doors.

If any of these issues affect you, please do ask us for assistance. We have large print hymnbooks on request. If enough people are interested, we can also produce large print orders of service. Then we have music copies of the hymnbooks too, to help those who read music to sing the trickier tunes.

Please ask. It's your choice!

URC Daily Devotions

Each morning the United Reformed Church sends out a reading, reflection and short prayer which helps us to focus on our journeys of Christian discipleship. The reflections are written by more than 100 people with differing perspectives and from different places. The Devotions are available by [email](#), [URC social media](#) and this website: <http://devotions.urc.org.uk>. Podcasts are also available. Ray Fraser is one of the people who record them.

Each Sunday they also produce a service which is sent out by email and social media too.

For more information or to sign up, go to the website above.

Letter from a Minister

by Revd John Steele

Live tomorrow's life today!

'Are you the one who is to come?'.

It's a strange and perplexing question John the Baptist sends to Jesus, and then adds 'or should we expect someone else?'.

It hadn't been that long since John had baptized Jesus, and called him the Lamb of God. Their mothers were cousins. Remember how John had leapt in his mother's womb at the sound of Mary's voice. John and Jesus are second cousins. Now John's in prison, seemingly beset with doubts about whether or not Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the One for whom he had urged people to prepare.

An ancient Dead Sea Scroll has given us a glimpse of the kind of person who was expected, and what they would do:

*'He will free prisoners, giving sight to the blind,
straightening out the twisted,
and he will heal the wounded and make the dead live,
he will proclaim good news to the weak, give to the needy,
lead the exiled and enrich the hungry'.*

Could this unlikely, undemanding character gently mingling with his people really be the Hope of the Ages?

Back comes Jesus' reply, both compelling and liberating. 'You want to know who I am? Then look at what I do. See how the prophecies are fulfilled and then decide for yourself'.

In our day those prophecies continue their relentless progress towards the fulfilment of God's purposes for the world. The redemption of the whole created order. These days of oppression, injustice, personal and national tragedies, mark the transition of our life and times in what God has planned. That universal reign will be fully realized in a coming day, but it is not yet.

What then are we to hold fast to as we wait? These words of Brian Wren (R&S 329v4) remind us:

*'Still the Spirit gives us light, seeing wrong and setting right
God in Christ has come to stay, **live tomorrow's life today**'.*

Tomorrow's life today! This is how we are urged to live.

Even as we look anxiously around us at the plight of our world, Christ comes to make all things new.

John Steele



Interfaith meeting at Greenwood



The faith leaders at the meeting with Jade Mole (left) and Cllr Ajanta Hilton

On 14th September Greenwood played host to an interfaith meeting instigated by the Parish Councilor, Ajanta Hilton. There were some thoughtful talks from faith leaders, who all emphasised the similarities rather than the differences between the faith groups. These included Philip Nixon, who also read this message from David Jonathan:

The incidents that took place over the last Bank Holiday Weekend have proved that the need for events & meetings like today afternoon is more than ever before. Activists for the Homeland

party, which is a splinter organisation from Patriotic Alternative - Britain's biggest far-right group, set up a number of online groups in an attempt to organise protests in over 20 cities and town across the country. It is uncomfortably obvious now that the far-right, xenophobic and racist narratives are increasingly being normalised in public discourse. These sentiments are being amplified not only by far-right extremists or anti-migrant agitators but also by the mainstream right-wing politicians and media. This is creating an environment of fear, anxiety, anger and frustration on all sides.

We cannot ignore the painful legacy of last year's riots, when after the Southport killing of innocent girls, mosques, immigrants, refugees & asylum seekers were deliberately targeted, vandalised and defaced. The saddest part was that it was all based on lies, misinformation and rumours, and that these attacks were not random, they were rooted in organised hate. It is also vital to recognise that these threats are not confined to migrants alone. The rhetoric we are hearing seeks to question the belonging of all Black, Brown and minority communities, in this country. It almost mirrors the hostility of the 1970s and 80s, when overt racism was rife and tolerated. The rise of unchecked racism, and incitement of hatred online has direct, real-world consequences. The hostility experienced by many in our communities is undermining community cohesion. This requires urgent, visible and long-term proactive measures, and actions from both the government and the Police.

However, communities must also play their part. No positive step or action is too small. It is only small actions that make significant changes. I take this opportunity to highlight two statements we use extensively at GRASSROOTS;

1. *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. (Margaret Mead)*
2. *The world may seem dark at times, but it is better to light a candle, than to curse the darkness. And that is precisely what you all are doing at your meeting today on Sunday afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to meet and show solidarity in these troubled times. Let's rejoice that we have Councillors like Ajanta Hilton who are willing to take lead and support today's meeting.*

There was lively open discussion between people, learning from each other showing compassion, understanding and friendship. The Q&A from Jade Mole, our hate crime officer, was very much appreciated. Many felt comforted by her assurance of the police's commitment against race crimes.

Moving forward it is hoped that there will be more similar events including youth, sport and development of a peace and reflection garden in the Greenwood grounds. Thank you to all who came to support and stand up against hate.

Anna Barrett



Join us this Christmas

**at St Albans United Reformed Church
(Homewood) AL1 4BH**

Carols around the Tree

Friday, 5th December 6pm

Carol singing by the outside Christmas tree, followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the hall

Christmas Fun

Saturday 20th December 10.30am – 12 noon

(for children aged 0–11 accompanied by an adult) Lots of festive activities arts, crafts & refreshments followed by a **Crib Service** in the Church

Carol Service

Sunday, 21st December, 5pm

followed by mulled wine and mince pies

Midnight Service

Wednesday, 24th December, 11.30pm

Christmas Day Service

Thursday, 25th December, 10am

You are also warmly invited to join us each week for our

Sunday Services, at 10.30am

Coffee at the back of the church from 10am



Join us this Christmas

at St Albans United Reformed Church (Greenwood) AL2 3HG

Carols and cakes Sunday, 21st December 3pm
Christmas Day Service Thursday, 25th December, 10.30am

'Light' - a film about Community Peacemaker Teams in Hebron

The evening gathering /service at Homewood on Sunday, 29th June, was very encouraging. Despite extreme heat, 66 people came to see the film 'Light' and then stayed for 45 minutes of Zoom with West Bank Hebron. Maggie Hindley would have been in the film, but for the security situation last year which prevented her from travelling to Palestine. We saw visits to a shepherd community in the South Hebron Hills, and conversations with Palestinian woman living inside Hebron City close to several settlements. The film was called 'Light' because "Where all other elements are controlled and rationed, perhaps our light is the one thing that cannot be taken."

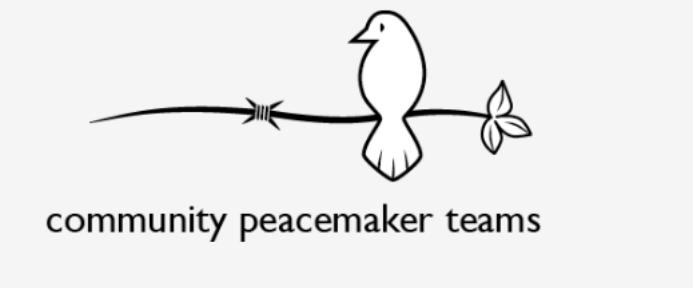
The film director and his colleague then answered questions from us. They were very impressive for the measured speaking, their pro-peace attitudes and their call for us to pray for them.

Donations of just over £500 were collected to go to Community Peacemaker Trust. The evening also saw sales of Palestinian crafts and embroidery – all of which will help the craftspeople and olive farmers in Palestine, whose markets have collapsed.

Interestingly, the inspiration for the CPT group came from the Mennonite World Conference in 1984. "Unless comfortable North American and European Mennonites and Brethren in Christ are prepared to risk injury and death in nonviolent opposition to the injustice our societies foster and assist we dare never whisper another word about pacifism to our sisters and brothers in those desperate lands....Unless we are prepared to pay the cost of peacemaking, we have no right to claim the label or preach the message"

We had a dozen folk there from St Albans URC, and representatives from Wheathampstead, Kensington and Chesham URCs; also Dagnall St, St Barts, the Cathedral and Harpenden Methodists. The Soroptimists were also represented, and some members of the Muslim community came.

Hilary Tyrrell



No room!

No room! No room!
Nonsense! said Alice
there's plenty of room.
This table's been laid
and it's enormous
much bigger than
all your concerns,
Mad Hatter, March Hare
and dormouse.
But because each moved
and shifted their places
it was clear to Alice
in terms of spaces
there were none
for her or anyone.
It's a bit like that
in this world of ours
the mad, bad and lazy
hang on to their powers
And many another
circle the table
but to find a seat
are just not able.
Did our Lord decide
in his mother's womb
when he heard those
dismissive words
No room!
That he'd make room for
everyone
and wonder how it might be
done?

John Steele

Poetry page



Christmas peace

Once again our thoughts return to the Nativity
When our Saviour came among us in simplicity -
Born in a stable among the poorest of the poor
Came the Saviour of the world to open up the
door
To Peace, Joy and Happiness for each and every-
one
Who believes in His name and can
say, "Thy will be done".
I am so glad my Saviour came to live
amongst men
And that He is just as alive now as He was then.
Grant that Peace and Joy may fill our hearts this
Christmastide
And please hasten the time when that Peace
may be worldwide.

Heather Olsen



Memories of childhood

by Alan Bryant

When my parents married, they lived with my paternal grandparents in the Chalk Farm/Primrose Hill area of London. Soon after I was born, my parents and I moved to a house in Mill Hill. The first thing I can remember was going to Cornwall with my mother at the start of World War 2. We lived with a distant cousin, who I knew as 'Auntie Dorothy', for three months. She had a friendly dog and a garden full of flowers. I like to think that this was the start of my love of gardening - I still like dogs. Dorothy helped by sending me a box of primroses every spring for many years.

We returned to Mill Hill, as there had been no bombing in our area. My father was in a reserved occupation as an instrument maker but the firm that employed him had left London for Hampshire. This meant living away from home during the week and returning home at Saturday lunchtimes. Every week I would wait at the gate and open it when he arrived on his motorbike. I started school and this ritual continued until one day in December he did not return. My mother told me that Dad had been sent away for a long time, but I felt it was worse than that.

Soon after this episode, the home of my father's parents was bombed and I remember visiting and seeing the gaping hole in their roof. Shortly after this visit, my grandparents moved into our house at Mill Hill. They took over the upstairs rooms and Mum and I had the front room downstairs as our bedroom. The back room became a family room, with all our furniture packed in with my mother's sewing machine (she was a dressmaker).

My church life began when I was about 6 years old when my mother took me to a Methodist Sunday School, which was held in a nearby house. This appealed to me as I knew one or two children and there was a pleasant atmosphere. The other attraction was the cards which were handed out with Bible verses and a picture of a flower – about the size of a cigarette card. At the end of the war we were moved back to the church, along with other house groups. I didn't settle in this new environment and one day a close friend suggested that we should go tiddler fishing instead. The lure was too great and I might have got away with it, but I returned home with some very wet shoes and socks. I was duly admonished and told that on the following Sunday I would attend the morning service as well as the afternoon Sunday School. The morning service with a group for children suited me better and I stayed until I was asked to sign "the Pledge". This seemed unreasonable to me, so I left and went to the Congregational church around the corner. Later I joined the Scouts and the Youth Fellowship.

I can remember having happy holidays in Lyme Regis with Mum and her younger sister, Grace, in 1944 and 1945. On the second holiday, we had the use of a cottage at the rear of the guest house, but this did mean that we had to use an outside toilet. I had just gone in when I heard my aunt Grace telling the landlady what had happened to my Dad. He had left early on the Monday morning whilst it was still dark, and you could only use heavily shielded lighting in those days of blackout. There had been an accident, when a van coming out of a side turning drove straight into my father's path. He was in a coma for a few days, but didn't recover.....Later in that holiday, the Town Crier announced that Victory in Japan was to be celebrated that evening on the beach. We went along and enjoyed the huge bonfire, fireworks and singing.

My 10th birthday in 1946 was very special and when I got home from school there was a bicycle in the hall. I just thought that it belonged to a friend. I went into the living room to find my Aunt Grace had come to visit us and she had managed to buy one of the first bikes to be made after the war, and it was for me! I could hardly believe my luck. After a meal, my family moved outside into the garden and I was left inside, admiring my shiny new bike. When they came back indoors, they found that the bike was missing, and so was I! Feeling worried, they searched the nearest roads and, as I was not in sight, they eventually came back into the living room. They found that I was just wheeling my precious new bike around the table.

That year and the next year, my mother and I went for long holidays at my Aunt Dorothy's home in Cornwall. This involved lots of walking, because she lived three miles from the nearest station and four miles to the sea at Looe, where I learnt to swim. The distances increased when we stayed with distant relatives on their farm near Lerryn for the final week. A treasured memory was joining in with all the farm workers for a tea party when the harvest had been completed.

(Ed: in this wonderful period photo below, Alan is the boy in the front row in the middle)



Let's meetSandra Harwood

My parents lived in Finchley after the war and so I was born in London in 1947. My mother said it was the worst winter on record. Two years later, a sister was born in July 1949.

Auntie Rose and Uncle Harry lived next door with their two daughters, Valerie and Yvonne – same ages as my sister and me. I was very fond of Auntie Rose and was always popping round to see her. On one such occasion, Auntie wasn't in and so I assumed she had gone to the local shops and set off to find her. (I was about 4 years old). My mother was obviously most concerned when she discovered I was missing and had the presence of mind to go to the local police station. The officer in charge asked if she was Auntie Rose! I think Mum must have had a few choice words from the officer on keeping an eye on youngsters!



We moved to Buntingford when I was about 8 or 9 – a place which I really loved. My mother was originally from Cotttered (the next village) and met my father there when his family bought a cottage for family holidays and a getaway from the London bombings. Mum would deliver groceries to the cottage. My young days in Buntingford were very special and I enjoyed life there. Mum would walk us to school each day, which was a couple of miles away. As there was no local church, Dad made my sister and me kneel by our beds each night to say prayers and be thankful for each day. We also had to recite a number of Hail Marys – depending on how naughty we had been that day!

When I was about 10 or 11, we moved again to Forest Hill, a suburb of London, and then a few years later moved yet again to a big house in Sydenham and Gran moved in with us to live. My sister and I went to the Girls' High School, which I loved, but my sister was not keen.

We moved once again to Harrow and now had another sister, born in 1957. I met Robin – my first boyfriend, who later became my husband. Goodness knows why he stayed the course, as Dad was so strict and insisted I was home no later than 10pm, which made it difficult to go anywhere, especially the cinema!

We were married in 1969 and bought our first place together in Garston, then in 1972 moved to Park Street. We had our two fabulous boys there and made many friends. I joined the Holy Trinity Church in Frogmore and got involved in the Sunday School and Brownies – stepping in to temporarily stop the Pack closing till a permanent leader came forward. Little did I know that it would be 32 years later when Roselle appeared and took the reins! Thursday evenings were not popular with Robin, as he had to feed our two sons and see them ready for bed while I was out, but it worked. I really enjoyed my years as Brown Owl and would do it again in a heartbeat.

We moved to Chiswell Green in 1985 and, with two young boys, going out to work was not really an option for me, so I set up my own curtain-making business from home. I really enjoyed the work and was constantly busy.

My sons are truly incredible and have both settled into good jobs and happy marriages. I have three fabulous grandchildren – two boys, both aged 8 and a 'princess' girl, who will be six in October.

My time at Holy Trinity was coming to a close and Carol suggested I came to the URC at Greenwood (then Chiswell Green) and I've not looked back. I have made good friends and enjoy a different approach to prayer, which I find refreshing. I am pleased to help anywhere I can and hopefully don't get in the way!

Season of Creation - Reflection of an Eco Warrior? By Anna Barrett

When Mike Findley started his Service for a Midsummer Evening at Greenwood in June he opened with "I'm not an Eco Warrior – we have one of those!" I, like any good revolutionary, raised my fist in acknowledgement. I have no idea if Mike meant this as a positive or negative epithet but in reality "I feel I deserve neither such praise nor such censure". True, I have been on the odd march calling for more Government action for the environment, but I am far too cowardly to do anything too radical and risk the anxiety that it would cause my husband and children. Likewise, although I strive to make lifestyle changes that cut my carbon footprint and support our struggling wildlife, I am a long way from being a true Eco Warrior. For example, though I follow a plant-based diet I am far too fond of dairy products to give them up completely! But I need to keep doing what I can. Watch this short video to find out why I think that it is important by clicking the link here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYb7YLsXvzg>



Maybe you will identify additional carbon reductions you can take – I'm always ready to talk that through with you. I hope you do watch the video because it mentions a significant action we might all take with very little trouble to ourselves.

So, though I am not yet a true Eco Warrior (never say never!) my role as Eco Church champion over the last six years has been a learning journey and what I have learnt I feel compelled to share with others. The video intimates that the whole story is more complex and darker for our individual carbon footprint reductions to be enough.

For a couple of years, I have been increasingly aware of the role our financial institutions have in maintaining the fossil fuel industry. I did a bit of research on the ethical standing of the Halifax Building Society with whom I banked. It seemed not too bad in comparison to others so, given the inconvenience I thought changing would involve, I let it go. But after the talk from Operation Noah at our Eco Day in June I looked deeper. Their website states "*The climate crisis isn't just happening, it's being funded – sometimes by those of us who are most concerned about caring for creation, and all because we have a bank account with HSBC, Barclays, Santander, NatWest, Chase, Lloyds, or another high street bank.*" I realized that Halifax was a subsidiary of Lloyds so I could no longer let myself off the hook.

As it turned out it was easy. The JustMoney website [The Big Bank Switch - JustMoney Movement](#) guided me through a very simple process and I am now very proud to say I have an account with Smile Bank. I appreciate that, like me, you may find it quite hard to leave an institution you have trusted with your finances for decades but, for the sake of our grandchildren and our brothers and sisters in the global south, I urge you to carefully consider who you trust with your money. In the video mentioned above the creator, Alex, uses a poignant allegory. Just in case you don't get to watch it, he says that having your money in a bank that supports the Fossil Fuel industry is like giving a donation to the WWF and then going out to shoot pandas. I wish I had acted sooner! You can check out your bank's ethical status here: [Find Ethical & Sustainable Banks In Your Area - Bank.Green.](#)

One filled, and on to the next one!

By Fiona Smith

Congratulations to us all!
Our first blister pack recycling box has been filled!

The collection carrier is on the way, and a replacement box is about to be ordered. I think we should take a moment to appreciate that we have saved a substantial number of toxic blister packs from going into landfill, and that the church has also ticked a useful box on our journey towards a silver Eco award.

Our first box broke even, thanks to some generous donations made to the honesty box, to cover the costs involved in recycling, delivery and collection of the box. However we feel it is prudent to raise the requested amount to 5p for each blister pack, (20 packs = £1) to adequately cover these costs in the future. We also ask that only silver coins and higher denominations be donated towards the cost of our second box.

Many thanks to all for supporting this worthwhile project, but we needn't stop there! Did you know it is possible to buy your own box or bag from Terracycle, for other difficult to recycle items? They will deliver and collect bags or boxes from your home into which you could put other medical items, fabrics, cosmetics, coffee pods and more. Check out what is possible at www.terracycle.com.



Thoughts from Greenbelt

by Gill Elliott



One of my retirement goals was to go to Greenbelt for the first time in 27 years. Greenbelt is a Christian Arts Festival, held in various locations every year since 1974. You can stay in a nearby bed and breakfast but most people camp. It is currently being held in the grounds of Boughton House, a stately home near Kettering. (Stop press: next year will be the last at Boughton). It's pretty basic, with open air cold water wash stands and chemical or earth drop toilets, although there are some bookable showers. The Festival goers are known for leaving the entire site spotless at the end. I volunteered with the URC, a sponsor, as I thought it would be fun to work in their café, and they pay for your ticket!

Cake ready to serve!

I arrived in hot sunshine, put up my borrowed tent, then spent a very cold night trying to sleep. Ensuing nights were warmer, with a borrowed blanket. Next time I will take a warmer sleeping bag!

Working in the URC café was great. We share a large tent with the Trussell Trust, and host some discussion and worship. We buy extremely yummy cakes (gluten free and vegan options!) from a local bakery, and sell the lot - 1800 slices over 3 days! We also serve hot food, working with a team from Re-f-use from Chester-le-Street, who rescue surplus food from local supermarkets for the lunches. Being budget friendly, we are very popular, and served 2000 hot meals and hot and cold drinks.



URC café

It was fascinating to work alongside people from all over the URC. Volunteers were equal, but I noticed one Synod Moderator, and discovered I was working with a tutor from the course I am about to take at Luther King College in Manchester.

Greenbelt's incredible atmosphere includes a wide array of speakers, including John Bell, Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Jeremy Corbyn, Mike Berners-Lee, Liz Carr, and many others, on topics like the environment, Palestine, Christian Patriarchy.... There are opportunities to experience Celtic worship, Goth worship, a Wild Goose Big Sing, Wild Goose for the ukulele, Christian music (soul, rock, pop, even punk), weaving and darning workshops, circus skills and much more. There is a wide range of food and 3 pubs - the Jesus Arms, the Blue Nun (it was amusing explaining that joke to a German visitor) and the Hope and Anchor, a "dry" Methodist pub.

Greenbelt has an incredible completely inclusive atmosphere, not just because every space was fully wheelchair accessible. In everyday life, many feel they need to mask (hide) who they really are; however, here people feel free to be themselves. It was truly uplifting to see everyone able to express their personalities, sexualities, and gender identities in what they perceived as a safe space. One of the last URC events is a LGBTQ+ discussion, in which people can talk about the Greenbelt experience. Wouldn't it be good if all of our churches could truly welcome everyone to be a refuge from society, and wouldn't it be good if society were able to accept everyone as they truly are?

Summer Fun organised by Pauline Blacket, Norma Slatford, Helen Griffiths & Anne Goldsmith

Summer Fun was a tremendous success again this year. There were four activity sessions on four of the Thursday mornings during the school summer holiday. The over-all theme was 'Holidays' and each week there were different activities related to that theme. The first week's activities were based on the Seaside. Over 80 children attended, accompanied by a parent or carer. It was very busy and quite noisy, but great fun!



A paper plate sea scene



Decorating a biscuit with sprinkles



Paint stencils of farm animals



Making a card grasshopper

The second weeks' activities were connected with holidays in the Countryside. Nature-themed activities were enjoyed by over 60 children on that week. Then we had 'At the Zoo' with lots of animal crafts, and lastly 'All the fun of the Fair'. A big bouncy castle was erected in the church which was popular with small and older children alike.

Towards the end of each session the children go into church to sing songs and listen to a prayer. All four sessions were really successful, and thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by all who attended. Over the 4 sessions £435.45 was raised for the Woodland Trust. As we currently have little contact with children and families on a Sunday morning, our holiday family fun sessions are an important way to make links and keep in contact with our local community - making them feel cared for and welcomed when they come to our church. We can only do that with the help and support of many of our members, thank you!



Playing with zoo animals



Making a clown



Popcorn making

Historic London Walk



Thanks to Jonathan Kiek for such an interesting London walk last June at Clerkenwell. Highlights included St John's Gate, St Bartholomew's, Charterhouse and even a fly past by the Red Arrows!!

Alban Day



Robert and Jenny represented our church at the annual Alban Day procession in June, through the town and down to the Abbey. They carried our church banner which was seen by many groups from other churches as well as shoppers and tourists to our historic city.

Strollers

June Strollers around Sandridge, with lunch at the Green Man.



July Strollers in Wheathampstead, with lunch at the White Swan.



Homewood Wildflower Border

The wild flower border near the entrance to the church hall has been blooming again this summer. Though not as spectacular as last year due to the very dry weather we have had, nevertheless, nature's beauty can be found when we search for it. Thanks to the Green Team for this initiative.



Dog Friendly Service



One Evening Service in August was a dog-friendly service. All three dogs who attended were very well behaved, as were their owners and numerous other members of the congregation! All those who didn't have a dog to stroke were able to have a cuddly toy. The themes of friendship, loyalty and searching were very fitting for this service.

Following this service, **Peter Elliott** had thoughts on some possible hymn titles for future use:

Allsations that on earth do dwell

Bark! The herald angels sing

And Cairn it be...

Dare to be a Spaniel

Great Dane is thy faithfulness

I the Lord of sea and Skye Terriers

Lead us, heavenly father, lead us

The Lord's my German Shepherd

The Lurcher's one foundation

We cannot measure how you HEEL!

We go walkies in the light of God

Guitar for Gaza concert at Homewood

by Pat Pile



On a hot August night about two hundred people were present for a concert in aid of Medical Aid for Palestinians. A young professional guitarist, Noah Layzell, came and gave us a remarkable evening, a mixture of skill and emotion. The programme began with several pieces from the classical repertoire. First a Prelude Fugue and Allegro by J S Bach followed by two "salon" pieces from the Paraguayan composer Barrios Mangore, showing further evidence of the

young man's mastery of his instrument. We in the audience were all held by the range of technical ability and the variation of sounds demonstrated by the choice of these contrasting pieces.

After an interval for refreshments, the mood changed to the theme of sorrow and loss, in keeping with the prevailing emotions of the news unfolding from Gaza at the time of the concert. A short piece from the Palestinian composer Ibrahim Saleh was followed by Elegie by Johann Kasper Mertz. After this the audience was drawn in by learning to sing the Arabic words of a folk-song Hala Lala Layya, at first following the melody sung by Noah and then singing as a choir accompanied by his guitar. The concert ended with a piece entitled Last Solo, written by a friend of the guitarist, Mahmoud Abuwarda, whose family were among those held in Gaza at the time of the concert. The piece demonstrated sorrow through its use of discordant sounds, but from which emerged a more hopeful feeling as the melody of the preceding folk tune broke through, a tune recognised and picked up by the audience who began, hesitantly at first, then more confidently to hum or sing along. The piece ended with a feeling almost of triumph, that the present horrors might possibly be overcome through the powers of goodness shared through the power of music. The audience burst into sustained applause at the conclusion of this most uplifting evening.

But we were given an encore and we were once again treated to a well-known piece from the guitar repertoire, "Memories of the Alhambra" by Tarrega. This once more aroused great appreciation for the dedication and artistry of this young man who had given his time to share his hopes and dreams for the people of Gaza.

A HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



Sue and Stuart Gray are pictured celebrating their Golden Wedding anniversary in July.

Warm congratulations from all of us!

Beautiful Norway



Ray Fraser took a trip to Norway in June to July this year and has provided us with some lovely photographs from his travels. He journeyed through the country by train, coach and boat and took photos of the midnight sun over the sea at Gimsoy Beach (left) in the Lofoten Islands.



Oxfam Walk for Water

On Saturday 13th September a group of Greenwood Ramblers and Homewood Strollers set off from the Scout Hut in Heartwood Forest for a 4 or 5 mile walk to raise money for the Oxfam 'Walk4Water' appeal. They were blessed with beautiful weather, good company and they gratefully received refreshments at the end provided by volunteers.



St Albans URC Preaching Plan 2025

Version 14

Date		At Homewood Road morning 10.30 unless otherwise shown.	At Greenwood	At Homewood Road - Evening/Afternoon 18.30 unless shown	
Oct	5	Wild Goose Group	joint at Homewood	X	
	12	Commitment for Life Sheila Knopp & Homewood Singers	Philip Nalpannis A Rocha UK	6.30pm	Helen Griffiths
	19	Parade Service Geoff Sutton	Valerie Chapman	HC	Martyn Macphee
	26	Elizabeth Harris	Mike Findley 3pm	6.30pm	Songs of Praise
Nov	2	Rev'd Simon Carver (HC)	Rev'd Robert Fletcher	X	
	9	Remembrance Worship Group	Anna Barrett	X	
	16	Mike Bramwell	Fiona Smith	HC	Martyn Macphee
	23	Danny Smith	Stephen De Silva	X	
	30	Kirk Service / Advent 1: Rev'd John Steele	Anna Barrett	X	
Dec	7	Advent 2 HC: Mike Findley	Joint Service at HR	X	
	14	Advent 3: Rev'd Jenny Mills	Carol Service	HC	Sheila Knopp
	21	Advent 4: Revd Geoff Lackey	10.30 am: Bob Little	5 pm	Choir Carol Service
	21		3 pm: Tea and Carols		
	24	Christmas Eve Midnight Service:		11.30pm	Ray Fraser
	25	Christmas Day 10 am: Gill Elliott and John Steele	Anna Barrett		
	28	Harry Smith	Streamed from HR		

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

Gray sections indicate school holidays and half-terms

Administrator: Charlie Thurlby
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Tel: 07709 924347

Greenwood site: **Watford Road, Chiswell Green, AL2 3HG**

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

