

NEWSLETTER

JAN & FEB '26

Pastoral Letter – Revd David Rees ***When Conflict Hurts... and When Conflict Helps***

If you've been around church life for more than about five minutes, you'll know that conflict is basically inevitable. Put a bunch of humans in a room — people with different histories, personalities, hopes, and pet peeves — and sparks will eventually fly. But not all sparks start fires. Some actually forge stronger metal.

One of the wise lines in the Bible about this comes from Proverbs 27:17:- "*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*" In other words, the bumping, scraping, disagreeing, and challenging we sometimes experience with each other *can* be part of growing together. But — and it's a big but — not every clash sharpens. Some just cut.

So let's talk about the difference.

1. Conflict that hurts

This is the sort of conflict where the goal slowly shifts from understanding to winning. We've all been there. Maybe in a church meeting where tensions rise, and suddenly the energy isn't "*How do we listen to one another?*" but "*How do I make sure my point lands harder?*"

I once heard about an Elders Meeting that spent forty minutes arguing — genuinely, passionately — about the

colour of napkins for the Harvest Lunch. By the end, no one cared about napkins anymore; the room was heavy with bruised egos and angry words. That's conflict that wounds: where people stop being people and start being obstacles. This kind of conflict is usually driven by fear — fear of losing control, losing tradition, losing identity, or just losing face. And fear rarely leads us anywhere good.

2. Conflict that leads to understanding

Then there's the other kind. The holy kind. The kind where two people genuinely disagree... but choose to stay at the table anyway.

I think of a pair in one congregation who couldn't have been more different: one adored contemporary worship, the other thought "modern" meant Wesley hymns. They clashed — politely — for months. But they kept talking. They agreed to visit the more traditional service, and then the All Age and quarterly Café style service together. They genuinely tried to see the world through the other's eyes. And, surprisingly, they ended up with a blended service pattern that nobody thought possible at the start. More importantly, they gained a friendship.

Conflict that leads to understanding is rooted not in fear but in curiosity: "*Help me see what you see.*"

There's humility in it. Patience. A stubborn commitment to each other's dignity. That's where the sharpening happens — not in point-scoring, but in mutual shaping.

3. How do we tell the difference?

A few simple checks help:

- *Does this conversation leave people feeling smaller or larger?*
- *Am I trying to protect something, or am I trying to learn something, encourage someone?*
- *Would I say this the same way if Jesus were physically sitting at the table?*

Because He is at the table — in the tension, in the listening, in the courage to stay present when it would be easier to walk away.

The good news is that conflict isn't a sign of spiritual failure. It's a sign that we're alive, growing, and trying. And when we choose the kind that sharpens rather than the kind that cuts, we become more like the community God calls us to be: not perfect, but honest, brave, and learning to love each other well.

With every blessing, David.

Pastoral Matters

A bright day dawns which in turn lifts our spirits. A day to do things? A day to finish other things? A day to walk out into the brightness using God's light to guide the way. Hopefully the gentle path, but on occasions steep and at others sloped.

Within our church family we pray for our future. As one body on a Sunday it is much easier to have the strength and hope for the future.

There are more than a few ailments and situations being shared so please include them all in your prayers for health and healing praying for God's blessing of every one in need of help

and support.

Some will be short winter ailments, other longer-term debilitations, or sadly the ending of a life and relationship that has been cherished. Blessing and be safe.

Yours Christine

Worship Leaders

January

- 4 Peter Dawson Susan Matthews
11 Rev. Adam Earle inc HC
18 Rev. D. Rees
25 Ann Cook Paul Davis
(World Leprosy Day)

February

- 1 at Trinity Methodist Church
Rev. Paulson
8 Rev. D Kimble (H.C) Phil Speirs
15 Rev. David Rees (Ch Meeting)
22 Rev. David Rees

Diary for Jan / Feb 2026

January

- 12th 10:00 Ipswich & East
Advisory meeting via zoom
13th 10:30 Reflections
13th 14:30 Elders' Meeting
14th 10:00 Romans Course in
Small Hall
15th 19:00 Romans Bible study
on-line
17th CTiF Prayer Pilgrimage
around town
21st 10:00 Romans Course in
Small Hall
22nd 19:00 Romans Bible study
via zoom
25th 19:30 CTiF Service at River
of Life
26th 19:00 Pastorate Caring for
Creation meeting via zoom
27th 10:30 Reflections

- 28th 10:00 Romans Course in Small Hall
 29th 19:00 Romans Bible study on-line

February

- 4th 10:00 Romans Bible course in Small Hall
 5th 19:00 Romans Bible course online
 9th 14:30 Monday Club – Fun Quiz and AGM
 10th 10:30 Reflections
 11th 10:00 Romans Bible Course in Small Hall
 15th Church Meeting after morning worship
 24th 10:30 Reflections
 24th 14:30 Elders' Meeting

March

- 9th 14:30 Monday Club talk about Galapagos Islands.

More dates for your 2026 diary

Sunday 14th June 3pm, Summer Songs of Praise at the church. Please suggest hymns we might sing on that occasion and let Ann C have your requests by mid-May, at the latest. It would be helpful if you also say why you have chosen that hymn. Saturday 27th June 10am – 4pm. Pastorate Away Day to New Church Farm near Halesworth. More details nearer the time.

Charity collection Jan Feb '26

In September, a Fire Brigade representative came to talk to Monday Club about fire safety in the home. He showed several disturbing videos which highlighted the need for effective smoke detectors within the home. A donation of £30 was made

to the Firemen's Benevolent fund. After a very informative talk about the work of TWAM in November, the Monday Club was pleased to donate £46 to assist with cost of shipping containers full of refurbished items destined for training centres in central Africa.

November's charity collection for Crisis raised £45

Gifts to Sanctuary were once again gratefully received. Thank you, as always, for providing gifts for the young people in their care.

The October Quarterly church meeting decided that in future all charity monies raised during the year will be divided between 3 or 4 nominated charities.

In 2025 the church supported: Leprosy Mission, BOOST, Commitment for Life, TWAM, Christian Aid, QVSR (Sailors' Mission), Prison Fellowship, Hope Trust, CRISIS and Lighthouse Women's Aid.

Please let Ann C know the 4 charities you would like the church to support in 2026, (in order of preference), before January 31st so that a final decision can be made at the February Church Meeting.

You can suggest another charity, not mentioned above.

The Romans Course

In-Person @ Felixstowe URC – Orwell Rd, IP11 7NZ

10:00 to 12:00 (Noon) - Wednesdays
 A gentle reminder of the dates:-

2025 (Sessions 1-5)	2026 (Sessions 6-10)
8 th October	14 th January
15 th October	21 st January
22 nd October	28 th January
29 th October	4 th February
5 th November	11 th February

The Season of Epiphany

Our annual Epiphany Meal is in the planning stage. The venue is yet to be decided. The date is likely to be in mid-January, probably a Thursday or Friday, says Brian C. I'm sure any number of us are looking forward to this annual sharing of food together.

Thank you, Brian, for the hard work to organise it all.

Climate Justice

A small group from FURC join with others regularly to discuss ways in which churches can engage with the wider community on climate justice issues. You have only to watch the tv news to see that devastating floods, hurricanes and typhoons are increasing in frequency and intensity and causing untold damage in some of the poorest areas of the world.

COP30, held in Brazil in November last year, disappointed many, especially because some key countries refused to attend. The conference could have been a chance to make a real impact on carbon emissions and deforestation but sadly the delegates didn't deliver as they might. Now we hear that several countries in the developed

world are thinking about reneging on promises to cancel the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2035.

One positive though was the increased number of first nations peoples represented at the conference. It is to be hoped that their message will resonate with world leaders. It is incumbent on us all to walk lightly on this earth if we are to address the climate crisis which is already destroying homes and livelihoods, not just abroad but in the U K too. Please continue to do all you can to protect the environment on a daily basis. Commitment for Life, the United Reformed Church's partnership with Christian Aid has set up a special appeal to help the people of Jamaica after disaster struck those islands before Christmas. Information is on the church notice board.

Human Justice

January 27th brings round Holocaust Memorial Day.

Please remember all who have had their lives forcibly ripped from them by the order of despotic rulers crazed about supposed threats to their power. It has happened too often. Nations and peoples swear it will not happen again. Yet it does, and has in our own recent times. Your prayers are the most valuable resistance.

Now, finally, from the Editor:

Whilst welcoming you to the New Year here's another gentle reminder that *All items for the March / April edition should be with John C by Sunday 15th February, please.*