

Connect

Autumn Edition

September to November 2026



Editor's Greeting

Friday 24th July marked the fourth anniversary of my ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church and induction to serve in the Ipswich and East URC Pastorate. However, I still find the idea of not having the whole of August as annual leave! A hang-over for my teaching days. Gillian and I enjoyed our Summer leave in July and David Rees has had his in August – he has been walking the West Highland Way.

We now come to the Autumn edition of Connect, the fourth Autumn edition. Our first edition was Winter 2022. There is plenty of interesting news to share and information about forthcoming activities and events, so please grab yourself a cup of tea (or the beverage of your choice) and enjoy the read.

Rev'd Adam Earle

News from the Churches



**St John's
United Reformed Church**

Preschool & New Hall Floor



As well as being the home of St John's URC, our building also houses the St John's Playtime Preschool who make daily use of the upstairs hall during term time.

We very much value the pre-school not least of all as, with the regular income they provide, it helps us to continue the mission of the church. We were delighted to hear that the number of children joining the preschool in September this year will be greater than the number who left, in July, to start the next phase of their learning journey, in Primary School.

As a joint venture, with funding from both the pre-school and the church, the hall floor has just been replaced. The old floor surface was well worn and hard. The new flooring is slightly cushioned which will hopefully reduce the number of bumped heads and also help further insulate the upper floor from the ground floor in respect of sound.

The new flooring is a wood-effect heavy duty vinyl and is looking very smart. The improvement will be a great asset both to the pre-school and other hall users.



Together Worship & Lunch

We launched the new weekday worship and lunch "Together" in May and have held these on the first Wednesday of the month since then. We begin at **13:00** and share in

a simple time of worship which usually includes a song, Bible reading, prayers, discussion and reflection. The worship element of our gathering lasts about half an hour.



Due to its proximity to Trinity Sunday our June gathering focussed on the Trinity of Love. We explored the ideas behind the precious concept including examining the famous icon of the Trinity by Andrei Rublev. This was followed by a Ploughman's style Lunch.



Our July gathering explored the theme and meaning behind the parable of the wise and foolish builders. We considered how Christ Jesus provides us with a firm foundation throughout the storms and troubles of life. Lunch this time was sausage rolls (with vegetarian option) and salad.



In August we reflected on one of the "I am" statements from John's Gospel when Jesus declared, "I am the true vine..." exploring John 15:1-11 including some of the challenging verses and the idea of "bearing fruit". Lunch was quiche, pork pie and salad – all very tasty.

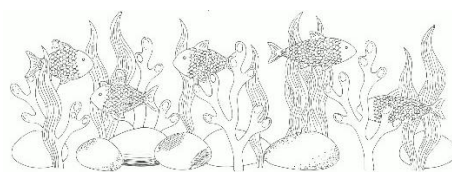
Our next Together worship will be on **Wednesday 2nd September** beginning at **13:00** and our theme will be "Peace I leave with you." Our Scripture passages will be John 14:25-27 and Philippians 4:4-9.

We will meet also on **Wednesday 7th October** and **Wednesday 4th November**. All are welcome to join us so please feel free to come along. There is no charge

for the lunch although donations are welcomed.

Just 4 Fun

Our regular meetings, on the first and third Wednesdays, continue with a mixture of arty and crafty creations, games, conversations, puzzles and singing. Our themes for the June meetings were, "Under the sea" and "Hedgehogs".



In July we got creative with "Owls." at our first session. Our second meeting was a games afternoon and we celebrated Brenda's 90th birthday.

In August we had an Irish theme (which was linked with the Castle Hill holiday at home). This continued on our second August session where we enjoyed stencilling celtic designs onto shopping bags and a game of "Blankety Bank". We had a lot of fun with this although nobody won a cheque book and pen!



North East Ipswich Churches



St John's is pleased to be part of the North East Ipswich Churches. The leaders of the churches meet regularly to share prayer needs and discuss ways of working together. We also hold a shared

evening service on the first Sunday of most months. The services are hosted by different churches each time. In July the service was held at the Salvation Army Citadel in Woodbridge Road and in August we gathered at All Saints – Little Bealings.

The September service, at **18:30** on **Sunday 6th September** will be held at St John's (URC). To mark the beginning of the Season of Creation, we will be celebrating "Ocean Sunday" with a focus on order vs chaos with selected verses from Psalm 104 and Colossians 1:15-20.

In October the service will be hosted by St Andrew's Church in Rushmere St Andrew. This will be at **18:30** on **Sunday 4th October**.



Leiston & Saxmundham United Church

A Fond Farewell

On Friday 10th July we gathered at Saxmundham Chapel to celebrate the life of Gloria Newson, and say a very fond farewell to a much loved elder and member of our church family. Following the service Gloria was laid to rest in the church yard.



Gloria was a wonderful example of love and faith lived out in family, church and community. She was part of the team that led the Sunday School for many years and was ordained as an elder in the URC in 1986. She continued as an elder for forty years.



On Sunday 28th June we held our annual church gift day with worship led by

Revd David. We would like to say a huge thankyou to everyone who contributed to the work and mission of the church. We are delighted to report that a total of £540 was given – what a blessing!

Planning for the Future

On Wednesday 10th June Revd David and Revd Adam spent several hours in



Saxmundham and Leiston reflecting on the LSUC mission action plan and prayerfully discussing some of the different strands of the life and work of the church. There are many important things, including some challenging and inspiring opportunities for the elders and members to consider.



The Leiston and Saxmundham Christians Together "Gospel-A-Thon" took place in Church Square, Leiston, on Saturday 1st August

from 10:30 to around 12:45. During the morning folk from the local churches read through each of the chapters of the Gospel according to Mark.



Mark is the shortest of the Gospels with just sixteen chapters. It was a blessing to hear the whole text read out.

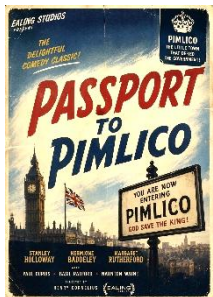
We were able to raise a small amount from donations, £60, which was then given to the East Anglia Children's Hospice in support of their work. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the event gave to the charity.

Welcoming Jo Moreira



From September 2026 to May 2027 we will be welcoming Jo Moreira, trainee minister from Westminster College - Cambridge, for part of her final year "Living Ministries" placement. Based in Lowestoft Jo will be working with Southwold URC and LSUC, leading our service about once a month, and joining in some of our other activities and events. Jo has already been introduced to some folk as she has attended a couple of our "Start The Week" events.

Film Lunches



For our film lunch on Saturday 6th June, we enjoyed a French themed lunch and watched the Ealing Comedy Classic – Passport to Pimlico. Starring Stanley Holloway, Hermione Baddeley, Margaret Rutherford and Paul Dupois, it tells the story of a community who discover their links to France and declare independence. After much trouble they are reconciled with the UK and things return to normal but the adventures on the way proved highly entertaining. Our next Film Lunch will be in September as advertised below. Please do come along if

you would like. We always begin with a tasty lunch before enjoying the film.



Sat 12th September
13:00 Saxmundham Chapel

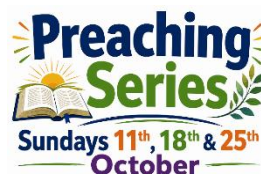
We begin with a Summer lunch followed by the film with sing-a-long songs.

Forthcoming Worship

Since July we have transitioned to holding just one service each month at Saxmundham Chapel and the others at Leiston Church. On the fifth Sunday we join folk from the local methodist churches for a united service. These are held either at Peasenhall, Knodishall or Leiston. For full details of our forthcoming services (should you be in the area and wish to join us) may be found on the diary page of our website: www.lsuc.org.uk – along with information about other activities and events.



Preaching Series – October



In October, as part of the plan introduced across the pastorate, we will have three services in a row, with the messages at each linked to a common theme. Two of the services will be led by Revd David and one by trainee minister Jo Moreira. We will be agreeing the precise theme with David in the next few weeks.



Felixstowe United Reformed Church

Summer Praise



Our Summer Praise service held on Sunday 14th June was a joyful occasion. We were delighted to see

the church so full with folk from many of the Felixstowe churches, and the pastorate, in addition to our own congregation.

Revd David led the service, with readers from the congregation, and Revd Adam played the organ – airing the pipes fully! We began with “Angel Voices Ever Singing”. Our first requested hymn, chosen by Phil, was “In Christ Alone” by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend – written as a reminder of the core of our faith.

The next hymn, also a great hymn of faith was “Amazing Grace” written in 1772 by John Newton. Newton started out as the captain of a slave trade. After turning to Christ, he became a minister and often

reflected on the mercy that God had shown him despite his sinful past.

Brian’s request came next, a hymn which looks forward with hope. “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky” written in 1979 by Dan Schutte. Inspired by God’s call to Isaiah and Samuel, the hymn speaks God’s love and his invitation to serve.

“Jesus Christ is Waiting” followed, an Iona hymn, requested by John and set to the French carol tune, Noël Nouvelet. Written by John Bell in 1988 – the hymn reminds us that Christ is present among the poor, the lonely, and the forgotten, and calls His people to show love through acts of compassion and justice.

We next joined in a joyful rendition of the lively hymn, “The Spirit Lives to Set Us Free” with its refrain, “Walk, walk in the light.” Written by Damian Lundy who worked extensively in youth ministry in the UK – it celebrates the freedom, unity, and new life given by the Holy Spirit.

Our final hymn, requested by Sue for it’s warm sentiment, was “The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, is Ended” written in 1870 by John Ellerton. It begins as an evening hymn but quickly broadens into a beautiful vision of the worldwide Church. As one part of the world turns to sleep, Christians elsewhere are rising to worship so praise of God never ceases.

Following the service we gathered in the big hall for a hearty tea. This was a wonderful opportunity for fellowship with friends from the town and pastorate. Thank you to everyone who took part, made preparation and everyone who supported the service and helped to raise the roof with singing to God’s praise and glory.

Looking Back & Looking Forward



On Thursday 4th June, at a special Church Meeting, the members, having prayerful discerned God's will, voted to accept the necessary formal resolutions to proceed to close Felixstowe United Reformed Church. This was, unsurprisingly, a very challenging decision and moved us into a time of transition including a great deal of planning and paperwork.

On 23rd June we were pleased to welcome the Moderator of the URC Eastern Synod, Revd Lythan Nevard, joined us for an informal discuss meeting. During this, members and friends were able to ask questions about the process over the next few months. On 29th July we held our most recent, regular Church Meeting during which we welcomed two representatives of Felixstowe Methodist Church to share some ways in which they would be willing to welcome and support any folk from the URC who might choose to worship with them in future.



The building in which Felixstowe URC has gathered for the last 48 years was originally established as St George's Presbyterian Church. The foundation stone was laid on 14th August 1899, and the opening and dedication ceremony was held on Wednesday 27th June 1900.

In 1972 the United Reformed Church was established. At that time there were two URCs in Felixstowe, the former St George's Presbyterian Church, on this site, and the former Congregational Church on a site in Cobbold Road, now home to the Salvation

Army. In 1978 the two congregations united to form one and it was decided to make the Tomline Road building our home. The first minister of the combined church was Revd J. Vincent Cairns Henderson. The roll of ministers shows all those who have served the church and its predecessors in this role.

The interior décor and furnishings of the church building remain largely unchanged since its establishment. The elegant but understated design is typical of the Presbyterian tradition: smart and purposeful without being over- elaborate.

One of the challenging tasks we are having to undertake is to determine what will happen to many of the fixtures, fittings and artefacts. We hope that many items will be able to continue to support the work and mission of Christ's Church in the wider sense.

Please continue to pray for all the members and friends of Felixstowe URC as we work through this challenging time. May all know God's peace and vision for the way ahead.



Hadleigh United Reformed Church Great Meeting

Blythwood Care – Shoebox appeal.

At the beginning of June we held a fundraiser to raise money to support the provision of Christmas Shoeboxes of gifts, to folk in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine as part of the Blythwood project.



We had an enjoyable and fruitful time with various stalls, delicious refreshments and plenty of time to chat and share in fellowship. We were pleased with the result of £353.20. This will go a long way to help purchase extra essential items, like, underwear, toiletries and stationery.

Elders Inducted



On Sunday 14th June, as part of our Sunday Worship and Communion, Revd David inducted three elders to serve the church. Two were continuing in the role, Chloe and Paul, and Barbara returned to the role. Elders are an important part of the life and work of the church – called by God and ordained to the office. Please do pray for the elders as we continue to prayerfully lead the church as we look to the future.

A Special Welcome



On **Saturday 26th September** our fellowship, in partnership with Hadleigh Baptist Church and Suffolk Refugee Support will be welcoming

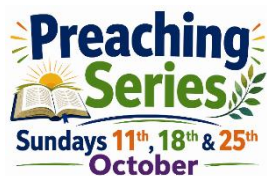
a number of Ipswich-based refugees to Hadleigh. The precise arrangements are being finalised, but it is likely we will be welcoming between twelve and twenty folk, a combination of adults and children for this special day event.

Thanks to Michelle, Chloe and George Elmer, we've produced a short guide to Hadleigh to stimulate the interests of our prospective guests. Jan and Chris have been working hard to secure the transport to get our guests to and from Hadleigh. Karen is already planning wet weather activities should the worst happen!

We understand that the new Mayor of Hadleigh, Cllr Zunaid Saiyed, will be in attendance to offer a civic welcome. The outline elements for the day (subject to volunteer numbers, precise timings, weather conditions etc.) will include: A formal welcome, Informal chat over tea/coffee, Children's activities, A light meal, A walk by the High Street and river, Giving of gift bags, and Guests leave for Ipswich.

Please pray for all the guests and those who will be hosting the visit.

Preaching Block



We will also be having our three-week preaching block in October, led by Revd

Adam. Our overall theme will be, "God at Work in Changing Times." We will focus on a different aspect of this each week.

Sunday 11th October

The God Who Is Faithful: We will consider how God remains faithful when everything else changes.

Sunday 18th October

The God Who Calls Unexpected People:

God's purposes are carried out through ordinary, often unexpected people like us

Sunday 25th October

The God Who Leads Us Into The New:

Faithfulness does not mean keeping everything as it always has been.



Art Exhibition

The Castle Hill Art Exhibition, advertised in the last edition of connect, took place on Saturday 4th July. We welcomed a wonderful selection of local artists to display and sell their creations. Although quieter than we'd hope it was a good event. There was plenty to see and some inspiring pieces of art to enjoy.



Big Street Sale



For the second year we held a Big Street Sale in July raising money for charity.

As well as stalls in the church building, where toilets and refreshments were available, Katie organised a map showing folk where local households had set out their own stalls with items for sale. It was a popular and successful event.

Our usual Indoor Carboot Sales return in the Autumn on the fourth Saturday of most months, beginning on **Saturday 26th September at 14:00.**

Holiday @ Home



Our annual Holiday @ Home for the older members of the church family and community took place on the 29th and 30th July. This year we "journeyed" to Ireland and enjoyed two wonderful days of themed activities, fellowship and fun.



We started each day with chair exercises with an "Irish" flavour, moving to some well-known Irish music. On the second day Revd Adam actually led the "cool-down"! Our morning activities included crafts, painting and flower arranging.



On the first day we enjoyed a "home-cooked" lunch of gammon, vegetables and a delicious choice of desserts including Irish Apple Cake. On the second day we tucked into fish and chips followed by ice-cream.





Wednesday afternoon included a comical monologue by Ian, an Irish Quiz, Bingo, Music on the organ from David Smith, and music for cello and guitar provided Lynn & Neil Morley. On the second day we had songs, and dancing (yes there is video footage of Adam actually dancing) performed by Donny Dave, followed by an Irish song sing-a-long interspersed with stories and facts about Ireland led by Adam. Each day concluded with tea and cakes.

A big thank you to Liz, our coordinator and everyone who volunteered their help to make this event so successful, and to everyone who came along to be part of this joyful event. Now we have to decide where to "visit" next year.

Charities BBQ



Our annual fundraiser – the Charities BBQ took place on Saturday 8th August at the home of Michael and Anita.

The weather was ideal - warm but not overwhelming. We had a wonderful time of fellowship and laughter, some very tasty food and a raffle. All this was to raise money in support of our two nominated charities for the year, St Elizabeth Hospice and The Nest Farm.

A big thank you to everyone who prepared and hosted the event, those who cooked and served the food, sold raffle tickets, and everyone who came along to support the event. We will let folk know how much was raised in due course.

Pastorate and Other News

Pastorate Away Day

Our first Pastorate Away Day, involving folk from each of the churches, took place on Saturday 27th June at New Chapel Farm, Mells, near Halesworth. It was a very warm day but we survived with plenty to drink to keep us hydrated.

The day was divided into three parts, Knowing Me, Knowing You and Knowing God. We began with a time of worship together, led by both ministers.



Adam introduced the first section and folk were given the opportunity to undertake some creative art, craft or reflective activities, or join in a reflection on Scripture, focussing on how we are loved and viewed by our creator God. We regathered to share some of our observations and experiences before taking space for lunch.



The second session, introduced by David, gave us time to get to know one another. We had plenty of space to sit and chat, to share parts of our stories and meet folk from the other pastorate churches under the "banner" of God's love.



The third session "Knowing God", brought us back together to consider the wonderful God that we worship and serve. We had more time for creative activity and for reflection on Scripture.

Our day concluded with a short time of worship which included Holy Communion, again led by both ministers. Feedback from the day was very positive and we have already started to think about a Pastorate Away Day in 2027.



Link Bible Fellowship



Following our last meeting in June (July was called off), the folk attending agreed that we would try a new

approach to our monthly Link Bible Study. Rebranded as the Link Bible Fellowship - meetings will be held **in person**, in the Common Room at Castle Hill URC, with the option to join online via zoom, making use of our special camera and microphone system. Joining via telephone will also still be possible.

Sessions will be on the **first Thursday** of each month, beginning at **10:15am**, for about an hour, including refreshments. For those wishing to join via Zoom, we use the Castle Hill Zoom Account – ID 889 953 6542, and to join by telephone you can call 0208 0806592. Dates and themes for the 2026:

Thursday 3rd September

Faithful Israel & the New Moses

Thursday 1st October

The Teacher of Righteousness

Thursday 5th November

The Holy Mountain

Thursday 3rd December

The Fulfilment of the Law



On **Sunday 11th October** at **3:00pm**

Wrentham Chapel are hosting a service of worship led by the Moderator of the URC General Assembly for 2026-2027, the Revd Neil Thorogood. Neil was formerly the Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge before returning to pastoral ministry as Minister of Thornbury and Trinity-Henleaze URCs in South-Western Synod. Do please come along and join in this special time of worship.



We will soon be raising our voices to sing our thanksgiving to God for the Harvest. A time to both rejoice and remember others in generous giving.

Sunday 27th September

Castle Hill: 10:30 Harvest Festival Worship
Peter Dawson

Sunday 4th October

St John's: 10:45 Harvest Communion
Revd David Rees

Sunday 4th October (Cont'd)

Felixstowe: 10:30 Harvest Communion
Revd Adam Earle

Hadleigh: 10:30 Harvest Festival Service
Revd Janice White

LSUC: 10:30 Harvest Festival Service
@ Leiston Church
Sue Liddell & David Sillett



For the first time since 1983, a major new festival has been added to the Revised Common Lectionary - the one we follow week by week. The "Consultation on Common Texts" has introduced the "Feast of Creation in Christ". This historic change is part of a three-year trial period running from 2026 through 2028.

The season officially ends on October 4th (when many of us have our Harvest Celebration), which is traditionally the feast day of St Francis of Assisi. Named the patron saint of ecology, St. Francis is an inspiration for this season.

He famously called the sun, moon, and elements his "brothers and sisters," teaching us that all of creation is one big family under God. By ending the season on his feast day, churches around the world honour his legacy of humility, love for nature, and call to protect our shared earthly home.

Our Autumn Eco-Church services will pick up on aspects of this theme. Each church will have their own service (as is the usual

approach) led by one of the ministers as they visit the churches.

These services will take place as follows: **13th September** LSUC @ Leiston Church – A Hybrid version prepared by Revd Adam and led by the elders, **27th September** St John's and Hadleigh, **25th October** Castle Hill and **1st November** Felixstowe.

The theme for our worship will be "Woven Together – God's wonderful creation". We sometimes imagine that humankind are distinct from the rest of creation and risk viewing creation as a commodity to be used or exploited for human benefit. This is not the Biblical view – we are part of the eco-system, dependent upon creation in so many ways.



Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Churches are required to have a Safeguarding Coordinator but the serving elders have legal responsibility to ensure each church is compliant. As part of our commitment, we are required to ensure updates about Safeguarding are made available as appropriate. We will include such updates in Connect.

DBS Requirements: From 1 September 2026, the definition of Regulated Activity with children in England and Wales is changing. The previous "supervision exemption" is being removed. This means that someone who regularly works with children may now be undertaking Regulated Activity even if they are always supervised by another leader. Churches therefore need to review everyone involved regularly with children and young people. Anyone whose

role now constitutes Regulated Activity will require an Enhanced DBS check with Barred List check.

Safeguarding Reviews and Strategy:

Following recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), the URC is introducing regular Synod Safeguarding Reviews. General Assembly has agreed that every Synod will participate in a review once every three years.

The URC Safeguarding Committee has also published its Strategic Plan for 2026–28, concentrating on four areas: Culture and Leadership, Engagement, Training, and Practice Development.

Safeguarding Training: The URC's safeguarding training matrices help churches check which level of training is required for different roles. Mandatory Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced training is organised through Synods in England and Wales. The national Safeguarding Team also offers shorter specialist courses online.



Many of us were deeply shocked by the news of the death of Jason Arday. The URC issued a statement reflecting on this tragic news. Here is

a shortened version of this. To read the full version visit: <https://urc.org.uk/urc-calls-for-reflection-following-death-of-jason-arday/>

The United Reformed Church (URC) is deeply saddened by the death of Professor Jason Arday. Professor Arday, became the

University of Cambridge's youngest Black professor in 2023 before resigning from his position as Professor of Sociology of Education, following unrelenting public allegations of plagiarism about his work.

The Revd Neil Thorogood, Moderator of the URC General Assembly, says: "Congregations across the URC will be holding the family and friends of Jason Arday in our hearts and prayers. We share the shock and sadness of so many at news of his death. His all too brief life was an inspiration in so many ways, even as recent events begged so many questions and leave so much to face now.

Jason Arday himself reflected, academia must also be a place of searching questions.

Critical thinking and seeking to get to the truth are fundamentals to our God-given desire to discover and learn. Many will need to understand how fair such scrutiny of Jason Arday's work was. When does reasonable questioning become something brutal and cruel?

I pray for those who mourn and for those whose lives are shattered by this news. I pray for the wider Cambridge and academic community as the soul searching and questioning continues. I pray for our communities where too many people are denied possibility and hope through discrimination and bias."

The **Winter Edition** of Connect is due to be published at the beginning of December. If you have any items for inclusion, please let Revd Adam have them by Sunday 15th November.