

NEWSLETTER

SEPT OCT '26

Minister's Letter

Hope in Loss

Felixstowe is working through a time of ending and change. Having agreed to proceed to close the church there is the inevitable sense that we are losing something that we have loved - a sense of grief. Since then we have received the very sad news that Christine McIntyre had passed away - a committed and valued part of our church family - a tireless worker, with exacting standards, yet always with a ready welcome and a warm smile. Further loss to contend with and grief to attend to.

Loss is part of being human. Sometimes it arrives suddenly and dramatically; at other times it creeps quietly into our lives. We may lose someone we love, our health, a relationship, a job, a familiar home or a sense of security. As we grow older, we can become increasingly conscious of things which have changed or disappeared, even within the Church. Christian faith does not pretend that these things do not hurt.

When Jesus stood at the tomb of his friend Lazarus, surrounded by grieving people, the shortest verse in the Bible tells us simply: "Jesus wept." He knew that Lazarus would be raised, yet still he shared the

sorrow of those around him. Our tears are not evidence that our faith has failed. Grief is often simply the price we pay for having loved.

Christian hope is rather different from optimism. Optimism says, "Things will probably get better." Hope says, "Whatever happens, God is still here."

That distinction matters. There are losses which cannot be undone. Sometimes there is no way of putting things back as they were, and well-meaning words about "looking on the bright side" can feel painfully inadequate. The Christian promise is not that God will magically restore everything we lose, but that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

At the heart of our faith is a story of loss. On Good Friday the disciples watched their hopes collapse. Jesus was dead and the future they had imagined had disappeared. Easter did not pretend Good Friday had never happened. The risen Jesus still carried his wounds, yet those wounds were no longer the end of the story.

Perhaps that is one way of understanding Christian hope. God does not erase the wounds; God shows us that the wounds do not have the final word.

After loss, life is never the same. We carry memories, scars and unanswered questions. Yet slowly, sometimes almost unnoticed, new possibilities can emerge. A friendship deepens. Someone offers

unexpected kindness. A memory that once brought only tears begins also to bring a smile. Sometimes hope is simply finding enough strength for today.

Christian hope begins not with an explanation, but with a presence: the God who sits beside us in sorrow, shares our tears, carries us when we cannot carry ourselves, and reminds us that even in the darkest places, love remains. And because God remains, hope remains too.

Blessings, *Adam*

Future sustenance

The URC Daily Devotions back in July had two weeks of reflection by David Cornick on Reformed Spirituality. The first piece suggested that there are several roots to our tradition:

- 1) It seeks to let God be God, in mystery, wonder, and grace;
- 2) The Word of God speaks through Christ in Scripture;
- 3) Reformed people know God as an active God who calls his people to active discipleship;
- 4) We expect to meet God in the world, as much as the church.

Cornick quoted Calvin who suggested that "the world is God's theatre". Which again has more meaning than we might think. It brings us all, not just together, but "equally" as God's people. It not only gives us a worldly spirituality, also one that is concerned for all.

Those four roots provide, as Cornick says, a "concentrated simplicity" for our faith and action

and its expression in our worship. We won't be the first, and not the last, to search for new places to worship. As you do I hope this helps your quest.

Pastoral Matters

Even as summer appears to be turning over into autumn, the 'church' has decided we need to celebrate "Creationtide".

It's a time when the visible produce of nature is brought to our attention – the grain harvest, the berries, hard fruit like apples, soft fruit like strawberries and plums. Harvest is a gradual season, spreading from July through September. Indeed, many churches will not celebrate Harvest until October, including ourselves.

The movement of life is mostly just as incremental with some becoming unwell and many of you will know who now needs our prayers, even practical help in the coming weeks. Let it be that active element of our faith and spirituality that can now help those less able. Especially at this time for Christine's family as both they, and we, mourn her passing. Now we all await a time to celebrate her life and service to the church, then begin to contemplate how her example might prompt us to show the fruit of Christian service to the church.

God bless you as you offer your gifts to God.

For the future, pastoral news should be shared with Admin Sec and Rev David Rees for the time being, please. Let's keep looking after one

another as Christine always did.

Worship Leaders:

September

6 Allison Smith Susan Matthews
13 Rev. David Rees
20 Rev. David Keeble Pam Hewitt
27 David Stone Paul Davis

October

4 Rev. Adam Earle
Harvest Thanksgiving
11 Sara Pells Phil Speirs
18 Ann Cook Pamela Hewitt
25 Remembering Service 3.00p.m.

Diary for Sept / Oct 2026

September

2nd 14:00 Elders' Meeting
8th 10:30 Reflections
12th Ride'n'Stride event
21st Start of Fairtrade Fortnight
22nd 10:00 Reflections
23rd 11:00 CTF prayers in Lady
Chapel at St John's, Orwell Rd.
25th 14:00- 16:00 items to Trinity
for Coffee Morning
26th 10:00 Macmillan Coffee Morn'g
until noon. Bring a friend!

October

3rd Family Fun Day for Fairtrade at
Library
10th 10:30 Eastern Synod meeting
at Lion Walk, Colchester
13th 10:30 Reflections
14th 15:00 Climate Justice Meeting
19th 10am Ips & East Advisory Zoom
21st 14:00 Church Meeting
27th 10:30 Reflections

URC General Assembly

The United Reformed Church
General Assembly met at Swanwick
from 3rd–6th July, bringing together
representatives from across the URC
for worship, discussion and decision-

making. Some of the key themes
included:

The future of ministry – With
fewer stipendiary ministers
available, Assembly considered how
ministry might develop through a
wider "ecology of ministry", valuing
ministers, CRCWs, elders and lay
people and encouraging new
vocations.

Training for ministers – Assembly
agreed changes to the URC's
arrangements for theological
education, concentrating resources
principally around the Luther King
Centre in Manchester and the
Scottish College, while further work
takes place concerning Westminster
College.

Legacies of slavery – The URC
agreed the next stage of its
commitment to reparative justice,
supporting projects both
internationally and within the UK,
including work with communities in
Jamaica.

Children and young people – A
task group will consider the future
of URC Youth, looking particularly at
how young people can be more fully
involved in the worship, discipleship
and decision-making of the wider
Church.

Inclusion – Assembly agreed to
review gendered language within
the Basis of Union and reaffirmed
the Church's pastoral commitment
to the dignity and inclusion of
transgender people.

Ministry and safeguarding –
Work will continue towards a new
"Fitness to Practice" process for

ministers. Churches were also encouraged to consider how they might safely welcome people leaving prison through the Welcome Directory.

Running through Assembly was a recognition that the URC faces considerable change, but also a determination that our response should be shaped by faith and hope rather than managing decline.

At the close of Assembly, the **Revd Neil Thorogood** was inducted as Moderator of General Assembly for 2026–27, taking as his theme “Christ’s conspiracy of goodness.” More soon, Adam.

Future Events:

12th Sept Ride’n’Stride – Thanks to those who have volunteered.

26th Sept Macmillan Coffee Morning at Trinity, 10am onwards. Donations of books, jigsaws, unwanted gifts and good quality bric-a-brac welcomed. They can be delivered to Trinity on Friday 25th, 2-4pm. Those who agreed to bake cakes/savouries can deliver these either on the Friday afternoon (times as above) or from 9:30am on Saturday.

4th October - Harvest gifts and any monetary contributions will go to ‘Pop-Up’ shop at St Peter and St Paul Church.

Charity Giving

£107 was sent towards the C.A. Venezuelan Earthquake Appeal. Thanks to those who are supporting the church’s four nominated charities for 2026. Just over £300 had been donated by end of July. At the end of the year all contributions

will be divided equally between Christian Aid, Water Aid, The Leprosy Mission and St Elizabeth Hospice. Please continue to give generously to these worthy causes.

Stowmarket URC

Some of you may have heard that Stowmarket URC have been facing very challenging times of late. The tower on the church building was condemned as unsafe some months ago. The Elders have been exploring options but sadly finally concluded that the congregation will have to vacate the building permanently. Their final service in the current building will be on Sunday 4th October, which both Ann & John plan to attend. Please hold this fellowship in your prayers as they now seek accommodation at Stowupland URC.

Closure of Felixstowe URC

At the Church meeting on 23rd June, the congregation were encouraged to submit any fond memories connected with FURC or favourite hymns that we might use in January. One person has done this so far. Please give these to Admin Sec asap.

Following the untimely death of Christine, there are vital jobs which need covering until church closure in January. Thank you to those who have already offered assistance. If you think you can help, in even the smallest way, please speak with Ann asap. Thank you.

Now, finally, from the Editor:

All items for the Bumper Nov, Dec & Jan edition should be with John C by: **Sunday 25th October.**