

# Grapevine

December 2022/  
January, February 2023

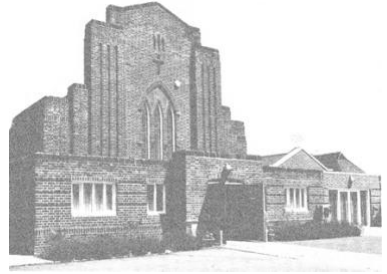


Ickenham United  
Reformed Church Magazine



*MINISTER*

*In Vacancy*



*Contact Secretary and Grapevine Co-Ordinator*

*John Miller*

*1 Pynchester Close*

*Ickenham*

*Middlesex UB10 8JY*

*Tel: 01895 904 556*

*E-mail : [onepynclose@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:onepynclose@blueyonder.co.uk)*

*Church Administrator and Lettings Officer*

*Shellie D'Arcy*

*c/o Ickenham United Reformed Church*

*Swakeleys Road*

*Ickenham*

*Middlesex UB10 8BE*

*Tel: 01895 634 280 / 07792143888*

*E-mail: [ickurc@aol.com](mailto:ickurc@aol.com)*

*Web: [www.ickenhamurc.org.uk](http://www.ickenhamurc.org.uk)*

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**Children & Families Worker:**

**In Vacancy**

**Opinions expressed in Grapevine do not necessarily reflect the views of Ickenham United Reformed Church**

# *From the Elders*

What a year of contrasts 2022 has been!

We have seen the country gradually emerging from the pandemic and the return of some sort of normality. We celebrated the amazing 70 year reign of Queen Elizabeth II at her Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June. Then sadly, in September we learned of her sudden death, followed by the emotional events of her body being returned to London from Scotland, and her State Funeral and burial. This obviously meant the accession to the throne of her son, now King Charles III and our having to revise the words of the National Anthem! Also there will be a coronation to look forward to in 2023. Of course, throughout the year we have been hearing of the devastating effects of the war in Ukraine, both within that country itself and across the world, and our prayers continue for peace in there and safety and healing for its people. We have all been concerned for the chaos that has ensued within our own Government and the damage that it has caused for the UK, and our earnest prayers continue for greater stability and for wisdom and integrity for our Prime Minister and MPs. Added to all this, many people will be struggling to pay bills and feed their families this winter, so that is certainly a great concern over the next few months.

Our church life has also brought a year of contrasts.

At Ickenham URC in March we sadly learned of the death of two of our friends – Alfred Moon, a member and supporter of this church for many years, and Glyn Warden, church member, assistant organist and choir member of longstanding.

We have seen the 'Food for Thought' weekly lunches with speakers continuing to be well supported. We have been greatly encouraged to see the popularity of our weekly coffee mornings in The Oasis Café and the opportunities for fundraising events.

Added to this, we have been welcoming new people to our congregation, including our youngest, little Crimson, who was christened at a joyful celebration in June, and her parents. We were also very pleased to welcome three friends into church membership in October: Esme, Mike and Wendy. The Elders are continuing to work towards a joint ministry with Christ Church, Uxbridge, and meetings concerning this matter are ongoing.

In our community, it was good to see the return of the Ickenham Festival in June and the variety of events for people to enjoy during the week, including our own Arts, Crafts, & Hobbies Exhibition. It was reassuring to see that community spirit still alive and well.



We look forward to Ickenham Festive Evening on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December, when our churches will be open for various events. At the URC we will be preparing the church on the theme of 'Nativity', which will also be

the theme of our Candlelight Carol Service on Sunday evening, 18<sup>th</sup> December.

As we reach the time of Advent and then the celebration of Christmas and the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and then our thoughts begin to turn towards the coming of the New Year, I'm sure that most of us will mull over the events of the past year and how they have affected us, as a country and in our personal lives. Amongst all these thoughts, a quote came to my mind that perhaps reminds us of an important 'life lesson':-



*'Yesterday is history  
Tomorrow is a mystery  
Today is a gift of God,  
which is why we call it the present.'*  
(From Bill Keane, American cartoonist, 1922-2011)

It's a good time to remind ourselves to live each moment of each day in the best way we can, and be grateful for the blessings that God has given us. So whatever your present circumstances, may God bless each one of you and hold you in His care in the coming weeks and months.

*Celia Miller*  
*Elder*

## *Family News*

It was a real treat at our service on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November. The service was led by Dorothy Vickery's son in law Ian McDonald accompanied by Gillian and their son Paul. A real family affair!! And to complete the reunion of old friends it was a real treat to be visited by Ann and Dennis Dove.

The Oasis was buzzing with noise and chatter after the service.



	<b>December</b>
9 <sup>th</sup>	David Fish
27 <sup>th</sup>	John Miller
<b>January</b>	
<b>February</b>	
1st	Dorothy Vickery
5th	Wendy Williams
15th	Julia Fish
3rd	Bryan Webb
10th	Liz Boyes William Sims
19th	Edward Tipton
26th	David Rainbow



**Sunday November 27<sup>th</sup>**

11.00am URC: Advent Morning Service

**Sunday December 4<sup>th</sup>**

11.00am URC: Morning Service

**Wednesday December 7<sup>th</sup>**

1.00pm – 2.00pm URC: ‘Food for Thought’ in The Oasis

## **Friday December 9<sup>th</sup> – Festive Community Night**

6.00-9.00pm URC: Church open with Festive Display on the theme of 'Nativity'

Refreshments served in The Oasis with stalls of Christmas Goods, a raffle and an update on CLICKRukiga

## **Saturday December 10<sup>th</sup>**

10.00am – 12 noon URC: Festive Coffee Morning in The Oasis with stalls of Christmas Goods

## **Sunday December 11<sup>th</sup>**

11.00am URC: Morning Service

## **Sunday December 18<sup>th</sup>**

11.00am URC: Morning Service with Holy Communion

6:30pm URC: Carols by Candlelight on the theme of 'Nativity' – carols, readings and choral items

## **Sunday December 25<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Day**

10.00am Family service led by Esme & Mike Young

## *Diary Dates*

### **Church Meeting**

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023

The Oasis

### **Elders' Meeting**

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 - The Oasis

### **New Year's Lunch**

Sunday 5 February 2023

## *From the Fundraising and Social Group*

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As you all know, the Late Summer Forecourt Sale planned for 10th September was called off as a mark of respect following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and was replaced by a wholly indoor event in October. This took £544 on the day, which was a good result in itself in the absence of plants, and was boosted to a magnificent £948 by sales to dealers and others [my uncle] of donated Picture Posts, Illustrated London News and Beatles LPs, as well as one of our book regulars who had not got news of the 10th September cancellation and was given the run of the unsorted books on the stage at his own risk!

Again the atmosphere seemed good, with people enjoying themselves as well as spending and I am also encouraged by the increasing involvement of a number of the newer members of our congregation, though the final clear-up still depended to a worrying extent on a small number of stalwarts.

By my reckoning our three forecourt sales this year, including associated private transactions, have raised £2666, £1333 to the church and £667 to each of Samaritans and CLICK Rukiga. We also raised £103 at the Coin Mountain event and over £400 and counting for the books left on sale in the corridor.

Our final effort for the year will be on Festive Community night [Friday 9th December], when we will have music on the forecourt, a Christmas display in the Church, stalls of decorations and presents, a CLICK Rukiga stand, hot drinks and mince pies in the Oasis and a raffle. There will also be books, mainly our high-end stock [!] and ones with a local or Middlesex connection. The fun will continue on the following day with a coffee morning and homemade cakes and the church and stalls open again.

We will need help with the set-up but mainly are asking if you can bake some cakes, make some decorations or donate items



suitable for gifts [such as presents you received last year but weren't quite "you"!] or raffle prizes. Above all, please come along to support and help make the event a success. Thinking caps are on for next year, but for now many thanks to all of you who have played a part this time and a Happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

*Richard Piper*

## *Our New Members*

We were delighted to welcome three new members into our church at the Church Anniversary in October. We felt it was a good idea to share with you something about them so they were asked some questions – *Peter Williams*

### **Wendy Munn**

#### **Where were you born and who made up your family unit?**

I was born in Wendover, and I was one of 12 children. My father was in the RAF Central Band, and it was obvious what my mother's role was looking after all the children.

#### **Was there anything, when you were young that you remember that you enjoyed or was of particular significance to you?**

Because I lived in an RAF camp, I really enjoyed playing with all my friends who lived there.

#### **What particular career path did you follow and did that necessitate you moving from the area where you were brought up?**

I became an office worker, working mainly in the accounts department in Kirby Brothers and then with Sandersons. I was at Sandersons for 17 years.

#### **What was your first association with the church and where was it?**

My first association with a church was in the RAF camp church where I went to Sunday School then when we moved to Uxbridge, I went to St Andrew's School Uxbridge which was attached to St Andrew's Church. It was there that I went to Sunday School.

**Would you be able briefly to comment on your own beliefs and how you made a commitment to God?**

I have always believed in God – it was very much a practical faith as I wanted to help others. My beliefs and my understanding have been strengthened in recent years by attending a house group.

**We talk about Christian service – what are some of the things you have done or undertaken in the past**

Again, it was the practical aspects of life which I wanted to become involved in particularly. I help my elderly neighbours doing their shopping and other errands.

**What drew you to this church?**

I came to the URC to attend a funeral and augment the church choir and was drawn to the kindness of the congregation and the worshipful atmosphere. God was clearly saying something to me, and I felt compelled to respond.

**What do you hope to offer us in our fellowship in this church?**

I sing in the church choir and attend a house group. I hope I can offer help when it is needed and be there in the church community when they need me.

**Esme Young**

**Where were you born and who made up your family unit?**

I was born in Southampton, the eldest child of Christian parents. I have two younger brothers and a sister who all still live in Southampton.

**Was there anything, when you were young that you remember that you enjoyed or was of particular significance to you?**

I spent many holidays with my Aunt Esme and my Uncle Bill, who didn't have children of their own, and those holidays were always very special times. My parents were Captains of the Boys and Girls Brigade, so we had the privilege of going to both camps each year.

**What career path did follow and did that necessitate moving away from home?**

From the age of two years when I was given a 'dressing up' nurses uniform for Christmas I wanted to be a nurse and I followed that career pathway. My teachers at the time wanted me to consider medical school but I chose to do the Integrated Course of Nurse Education offered at Hillingdon Hospital. I've lived in the London Borough of Hillingdon since the age of 18. I worked in various roles within the NHS for 40 years.

**What was your first association with the church and where was it?**

As I've said previously my parents were Christians and as a baby, I was taken to the Above Bar Church in central Southampton. Following a house move at a young age my family moved to Thornhill on the outskirts of Southampton and we went to Thornhill Baptist church.

**5. Briefly comment on your own beliefs and how you made a commitment to God.**

Revelation 3 verse 20

*'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with that person and they with me.'*

I was 13 when I knew Jesus was knocking at the door of my heart and I responded to his call in private, I acknowledged this in public in believers' baptism a few months later.

**We talk about Christian service, what are some of the things you have done or undertaken in the past?**

- in my early Christian life, I taught in primary Sunday School.
- at the hospital I led the Nurses Christian Fellowship.
- as newlyweds Mike and I were engaged in youth work
- as a young mother I started and ran a church-based parent and baby group
- Mike and I led a home group

**What drew you to this church?**

We've lived in Ickenham for a number of years, and I felt God was prompting me to worship more locally and specifically with the fellowship at Ickenham URC.

**8. What do you hope to offer us in our fellowship in this church?**

Where God leads, I hope I will be faithful to follow. My natural skills would lead me to areas of hospitality, befriending, support, and pastoral work but I've often found that we are challenged to step out of our comfort zone to be obedient to Gods leading.

**Mike Young**

**Where were you born and who made up your family unit?**

I was an "only child", born in Bournemouth.

**Was there anything, when you were young that you remember that you enjoyed or was of particular significance to you?**

My earliest memory is of being given a bright red metal pedal car on my third birthday. It was my pride and joy!

**What career path did follow and did that necessitate moving away from home?**

I studied Biological Sciences at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, then did research in Lowestoft and Southampton for a number of years before moving to Hillingdon to be with Esme and retraining as an EHO. So....I left Bournemouth aged 18 and never returned on a permanent basis.

**What was your first association with the church and where was it?**

My parents were Christians, and we attended the local Baptist Church in Bournemouth.

**Briefly comment on your own beliefs and how you made a commitment to God.**

I was baptised as a teenager, having gone on a school trip to Switzerland and realised that I had something in my life that was missing from the lives of many of my schoolmates. I love the fact that God loves you “warts and all”.

**6. We talk about Christian service, what are some of the things you have done or undertaken in the past?**

Along with Esme I have, in the past, worked with children and young people at various churches. We have led Home Groups together and I was also an Elder at Hillingdon Park Baptist Church for a number of years.

**7. What drew you to this church?**

Esme!

**8. What do you hope to offer us in our fellowship in this church?**

There is a character in the Bible - Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus - who is better known by the nickname that the apostles gave him - “Barnabus”. It means “one who encourages”. If I could earn that nickname at the URC.....

*CLICK Rukiga update November 2022*

We are so grateful that Ickenham URC continues to support this small local charity and thank you all for your generosity. By the time this is printed we shall have had our fundraising concert by Harrow Apollo male voice choir. I am sure it will have been an enjoyable event and it is especially important for us as this was cancelled due to the pandemic and is the first fundraising activity we have been able to complete since 2019. We are carol singing in Uxbridge train station on December 6th 4-6pm and shall have information about the charity and our calendar for sale here at the URC during the festive evening on December 9th.



Since the charity was established by a small committee in 2013, we have made several monitoring visits to ensure compliance with charity guidelines, monitor the projects that we support and of course get to know our sponsored children, their families and our friends in Uganda. We were fortunate that in 2019 Hillary Turyakira the Project Director in Rukiga was able to visit us and meet many of the child sponsors and the committee as well as experience a warm welcome from the Ickenham community.

This summer, Raymond, a friend from Uxbridge, who was visiting his family in Uganda kindly agreed to visit Rukiga on our behalf. This was a great help as we needed to understand the impact of Covid on the children and families and where to focus future support in the different project areas. He gave a valuable report back to us with beautiful photographs too and some of this can be seen on our new website ([www.clickrukiga.org.uk](http://www.clickrukiga.org.uk)). Here is some of the information that he obtained about the ways in which the money raised is helping above and beyond the child sponsorship.

- **Family emergency fund:** We give money twice a year which is then allocated by a local committee for the most in need in the community. In particular this benefits those

who would otherwise fail to get medical treatment. It enables them to reach the local health centre and Kabale hospital, funds nursing and medical checks and procedures, medication and dressings. Covid relief support was also provided through this including food, hygiene items and face masks.

- **Water project:** The water scheme was started by World Vision during a previous monitoring visit, some of the committee noticed that it had not been fully maintained. CLICKRukiga supported purchase of a further water tank, taps and we have now committed an annual sum to deal with maintenance through their water committee. Repairing leaks and providing new taps (both for public areas and in homes) is essential for this basic need.
- **School support:** All the school leaders gave positive feedback and thanks through Raymond that CLICKRukiga enables sponsored children to pay their school fees in time. Kamwezi primary school is linked with St. Laurence Primary School in Cowley and the head teacher appreciated an improved pit latrine being built saying “It is the best in the school and is used by the girls. Before it was built, girls were sharing same latrine with the boys.” Tap water was brought to the school with the support of our funds and the laptop computer which is the only computer in the school and helps in record keeping. Cowley St Laurence raised money for doors and glass windows in classroom blocks. The children from both schools send letters about their lives. Moving forward, local fundraising through St. James Church has covered about 30% of work required to renovate the three school classroom blocks and St Laurence school have pledged to raise money to help complete this work.

- Kamwezi High School was able to use **CLICKRukiga** funds to plaster the interior walls and flooring for the school main hall. The students no longer have dust there so have been able to conduct assemblies and do examinations inside. In the future they would like to complete some building work and fund a girls' dormitory. These are projects which we are looking to support.
- Kamwezi Brain Trust School. Their classroom block from foundation stage to roofing was built using funds from **CLICKRukiga**. The second class room block was built with funds collected from parents' fees but completed (plastering interior and exterior walls, flooring, putting shutters) was all funded by us. They also are looking at a project to fund a school dormitory as they presently rent accommodation for boarders. If the children do not board, family pressures and distance means that they do not receive an education.

*Julie Dungey*

## *Apollo and Rukiga come to the URC*

We enjoyed a fantastic concert performed by the Harrow Apollo Male Voice Choir on the 19th of November. It was a truly entertaining evening with a varied programme of music lead by their conductor David Heasman. They began with the "Anvil chorus" and proceeded through music from the musicals, pop and classical opera with ease, including Some Enchanted Evening, Uptown Girl, You'll Never Walk Alone and even Nessun Dorma. They were supported by the extremely talented Philomena McRae, who gave us two pianoforte solos.



Over 120 thirsty attendees and choir members enjoyed refreshments and we held a raffle at the end. Together with further sales of the 2023 ClickRukiga calendar we raised over £1600 for the charity. It was an incredible way to start our fundraising efforts post-Covid, and will provide a lot for the community in Uganda.



Many thanks to church members John and Frank for helping us on the night and everyone else who joined us for the entertainment.

*Isobel Dungey*

*Winging It*

An item of interest below is from Roddy Munro's collection of old newspaper cuttings.

## Winging it

SIR – I do not wish to denigrate Felix Baumgartner's brave attempt to cross the Channel (report, July 29) but his claim to be "the first person to glide unassisted across the Channel" is a bit rich, for it appears that he will be "assisted" by a BAe146 to get him up to 30,000ft and then will only achieve a glide angle of about 1:4 – half that of an early 1930s Dagling Primary Glider.

On April 22, 1939, Geoffrey Stephenson was strapped into a Slingsby Gull I at Dunstable at 2.55pm, took a winch launch to about 300ft and soared all the way to Dover. He then climbed in cloud to 6,000ft to glide across those "21 wet miles" and land safely at Le Wast, about 10 miles east of Boulogne. The dear old Gull could probably achieve a glide angle of about 1:20, so Stephenson had to work at it.

The return journey expenses included "hotel, fares, documents" and "came to £25 5s, but everyone was extremely helpful".

Michael Russell  
Holt, Norfolk

It appeared in the Daily Telegraph about 20 years ago.

Geoffrey Stephenson was for quite a long time a member of our congregation with his wife Beryl. They used to sit at back of the church on the right-hand side when we had the old wooden fold up seats (we still have one in store if anyone is interested).

Geoffrey was a pilot in the Royal Air Force from early in the 1939-1945 was and I believe he carried on flying for many years.

Beryl was engaged to one of his pilot colleagues who was killed in action.

Eventually Geoffrey and Beryl got married. I am not sure quiet when or why they stopped coming to our church, but Beryl died in 2002.

Does any other member of our congregation remember them?

*Roddy Munro*

*The Ickermen are Keeping Busy!!*

The Ickermen are an informal group of men from both Churches. The aims of the group are to build friendships among us through a programme of activities, support the activities of the Churches, run social events for the Churches, and share the good news of Jesus Christ with those around us. We also have a great deal of fun together. There are over 30 men on the list and between about 10 to 20 turn up for activities.



One example of what we do is our involvement in the successful Churches group of Marques and Gazebos at the Ickenham Village Gala Day event in Milton Court in June. We set this up and helped staff the various attractions. These included a Cafe, a prayer tent, a children's craft area, information about the Churches, and the Rukiga Gazebo. We were able to meet many people and served several hundred people in the café (*Ed. And a stint during the churches Holiday Club!!*).

We are holding our 'Ickermen Christmas Get Together and Fun Evening' at the URC on 6th December. We will be having a take-away meal delivered and Christmas competitions and games. We are expecting at least 14 men to this.

Our programme of activities for 2023 will be out early in the New Year. If you feel you might be interested in attending any of our activities and would like to go on the list to be notified just let Shellie know or contact Keith Arnold on 01895 672987.

## *Tree of Remembrance*

For a number of years a Tree of Remembrance has been set up in St Giles' Church in December and people have been invited to place a star on the tree in memory of a loved one.



This year the yew tree on the path between St Giles' Church and the church hall will be our Tree of Remembrance. If you would like to place a star on the tree, there are two ways you can do this, either by

- (i) making your own star or bauble, writing on it the name of the person you want to remember, adding a ribbon or cord and placing it on the tree, or
- (ii) picking up a wooden star from Ickenham Butchers (3 Swakeleys Road), writing the name on it and placing it on the tree.

From Friday 9th December (Ickenham Festive Community Night) the tree will be decorated with lights.

During the afternoon of Thursday 5th January the stars will be removed from the tree and placed on the altar in St Giles' Church. Later that day the stars will be blessed during the Service of Evening Prayer at 5pm.

After placing your star, you might like to use the following prayer:

*Loving God, thank you for NAME, for all the joys and sorrows we shared. Be with me, I pray, as I stumble through this Christmas.*

*May your light guide me and your love strengthen me to cope with each new day. Amen.*

*The Lord is my Shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water. He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised. Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me.*

(Psalm 23, verses 1-4, Good News Bible)

## *Carol Singing for Save the Children on Saturday 17 December 2022*



On Saturday 17 Dec at 10.30am, a group from St Giles' Church will meet in front of the Village Hall in Swakeleys Road for carol singing outside the shops. After singing for 40 minutes, there will be a break for coffee and mince pies in the St Giles' Church Hall, followed by another half hour of

singing. Anyone is welcome to join the singers. We hope to collect as much as possible for Save the Children for their vital work of supporting children who are in need.



For further details, call Jenny Reid on 01895 633130.

***Ghosts of Christmases Past***

Our Puritan forebears tried to ban Christmas and this approach was largely shared by my Dad's parents, who were Strict [Calvinistic] Baptists, so the day was scarcely acknowledged in their household. However, my other grandparents were Evangelical Anglicans, who took a different view, and most of my early seasonal memories relate to their house in Eastbourne. Indeed, I understand that at my very first Christmas my dad was finding it so hard to cope with watching Great Aunt Bertha tackle her dinner without the aid of teeth that he surreptitiously pinched me, made me cry and carried me out saying that I must need changing. There's a loving parent for you. It was always eventful there, with Grandpa at the centre of things, not least the year that he went to fetch the turkey from its usual place of safety locked in the outside toilet and dropped and lost the key in the snow. I am not suggesting that it always snowed, but there was at least one Christmas Day in the early 1950s before global warming reached Sussex. The key was found eventually but Grandma wasn't a happy bunny as she liked to run these occasions with military precision. Grandpa was short but dapper, a bit like Kipling [Rudyard not Mr] and on one occasion his lovely dove grey Sunday suit was not improved by him sitting on a half-eaten strawberry cream left on his chair by one of my brothers. He always put up strings of lights in the living room, dining room and hall, with one invariably going on the morning. In those days it was one out all out when it came to Christmas lights and if there was an easy way of identifying the problem one he didn't know it. He survived these various setbacks but his immediate responses were not necessarily always what you might have expected from someone who had spent most of his adult life, after returning from the Western Front, working for the Bible Society. After a time we took to spending our Christmases at home [in Wembley, then Coventry] though in the Wembley days still with a flavour of Eastbourne, coming from one of Grandma's puddings. These were kept on the top shelf of a cupboard in our [unheated] bedroom and moved along each year because it wasn't permissible to eat one that was less than three years

old. With three boys in the house the day started early, in marked contrast to later times when Heather and I had to wake Ruth up to open her stocking.

Presents were less numerous or lavish than would now be normal but at least our stockings might include more exciting things than current ones, such as chocolate Camel cigarettes and spud guns. Despite the early start the day always seemed rather rushed, until after lunch, the Queen and the washing up we were able to enjoy our presents. These generally included one or more annuals, with mine being the Eagle, in which one year even the Dan Dare story had a seasonal theme. There was also often a book featuring Billy Bunter and Greyfriars School in their post War form, because Dad had been a fan of the stories in the Magnet paper in his youth.

It was a simmering grievance of his that he once came back on leave from serving King and country to find that his mother had given his 200 copies to a man who came to the door and said that they were a fire hazard and/or were needed for salvage. The man had not taken the copies of the Little Gleaner, a pious publication distributed through the Strict Baptist Sunday Schools. Apparently they were not a fire hazard or required for salvage.

Looking back, one happy Christmas Day was much like another, though I do recall one when Dad [who generally refused to accept the existence of illness except in the mind] had a cold sufficiently heavy for him to self-medicate with aspirin. He was not a medical man and operated on the principle that if two aspirins were good four were twice as good, and as he followed up with his usual [for Christmas Day] glass of Bell's and claret to wash the turkey down he became festive to a degree that made Father Christmas look like the unreformed Scrooge, and somewhat more than the average Baptist deacon and lay preacher, both of which he was.

I imagine that most of the readers of this [if any of you have made it this far] will have similar memories and stories, but an important thing that I haven't mentioned yet was that we always went to church in the morning. In Coventry we either went to the neighbouring Congregational church with our minister taking the service, or they came to us with their minister doing the honours. Imagine, both churches had at least one minister! Much later, I have very happy memories of Christmas Days at Ickenham URC after we moved here, with Alan Cassingham bringing out his monkey glove puppet [whose name escapes me] and the children bringing presents to show off, though Ruth was rather peeved one year when Heather removed the batteries from her new Rudolf, depriving him/her of the ability to make an authentic reindeer noise during the service. Amidst all the fun and games, the eating and drinking, Christmas isn't Christmas without a reminder of what it's really all about!

*Richard Piper*

## *The Fascinating History of Christmas Stamps*

Every November finds me at our local Post Office buying the Christmas stamps for that year. Maybe you'll be there as well and you might be interested in their fascinating history.

There is some debate as to which was the first Christmas stamp. A stamp of 1898 from Canada bears an inscription "XMAS" and it was proposed to issue it on November 9th to honour the Prince (meaning the Prince of Wales) A displeased Queen Victoria asked what Prince! to which a quick-witted official replied, 'Why Madam, the Prince of Peace'





Christmas stamps were issued irregularly by various countries over the next fifty years until the early 1950's when Cuba, Haiti, Luxembourg, Spain produced issues. Many more nations then took up the practice including the United Kingdom in 1966. By the 1990's approximately 160 postal administrations were issuing Christmas stamps.

The choice of religious or secular designs is highly variable ranging from Christmas trees, Santa Claus, robins, baubles and even Disney characters to an overtly religious image of the Nativity. Such choice is often a bone of contention in some countries between church leaders who feel that secular designs

water down the religious nature of the Christian festival and postal authorities who feel that overtly religious designs will put off people of other faiths or none from purchasing the stamps.

In the United Kingdom, the Royal Mail resolved the difficulty by issuing “religious” and “secular” themed designs in alternate years.

Christmas is a popular theme for stamp collectors. Because of the quantities printed and used, almost all Christmas stamps are easy to come by at reasonable prices. Some collectors challenge themselves to get covers with appropriate postal markings from a particular location such as Christmas Island, North Pole Alaska, Santa Claus Indiana. You can even get a postmark from Bethlehem – the one in South Wales that is!

The Guild of St Gabriel was formed to cater for those who collect stamps with a religious theme; it produces a quarterly journal that lists Christmas stamps as they are issued. You can find out more by contacting the Secretary who is the author of this article: Revd. Derek West on 07957 158069.

*Revd. Derek West*





## *A Philatelists Psalm*

Stamp collecting is my hobby, I shall not be bored  
it maketh me to do research in far places  
it causes me to correspond with many people.  
It keepeth me alert.  
It leadeth me  
into areas of understanding for curiosity's sake.  
Yea, though I live  
through a winter of inclement weather,  
I will fear no boredom,  
for my stamps are with me.  
Their beauty and their history intrigue me.  
They provideth me with a means of  
escaping from the tensions of my responsibilities.  
They filleth my house with books.  
My cash runneth lower.  
Surely interest and knowledge  
shall follow me all the days of my life  
and I will be listed  
in the ranks of the philatelists forever.

*Revd. Derek West*

## *A Royal Monopoly?*

For many, the standout moments of 2022 will centre around Queen Elizabeth II – her Platinum Jubilee in February and her death in September. Surely one of her defining characteristics was that of faithfulness. Writing in the Sunday Times following her death, the historian Max Hastings said.....

“She was a bastion of stability and continuity, head of state in good times and bad.....We have become largely irreligious and almost certainly un-Christian. Yet the nation deeply appreciated a monarch who embodied virtue and believed in God”.

Perhaps not in the same category of year defining moments but, for 2022, Roddy Munro, myself and another neighbour from Wallasey Crescent have celebrated each of our birthdays by taking a trip to the Hambleden Valley together for a pub lunch and a gentle exploration of the immediate surroundings.



Our second trip took us to the village of Fingest and the Parish Church of Saint Bartholomew. The church has a Norman tower with the unusual feature of a double vaulted roof (apparently there is only one other such tower in the country) and a plaque displaying the names of all the Rectors from the year 1217! As I read the church guidebook, the enormity of this unbroken Christian witness in the village was “brought home”

by an article penned by the late Sir William Connor (Cassandra of the Daily Mirror) who lived in Fingest for many years and wrote.....

“On the 20th of July 1588 the Spanish Fleet, a flaunting Armada drawn up in the form of a crescent with the horns seven miles apart, bore down upon England and threatened the existence of this land.....As always there was a priest to pray to in Fingest and a man of God in whom to take refuge.

The Christian chain was unbroken and the link at the church in the Chiltern Hills in those famous times was Peter Ryder.

When Marlborough fought at Blenheim the Rector of Fingest was John Cademan. When the smoke of Waterloo hung in the air there was James Price at the Norman Church in the green valley.”

I found myself praising God for the witness and service of faithful Christians down through the years and recalled the Hymn “ *I sing a song of the Saints of God, patient and brave and true.....*” **Faithfulness** may have been one of Queen Elizabeth II ‘s defining characteristics, but she hasn’t had the monopoly of it !!

*Mike Young*

*Note: If you want to know more about the Hambleden Valley (how to find it, what to see there etc) then why not ask Roddy or myself. If you would like to visit but have no way of getting there then let us know – we might just be able to arrange something for 2023!*





Born for YOU because GOD loves YOU SO much  
John 3:16

**Open on Festive Community Night**  
**Friday 9 December 6.00-9.00pm**  
**Saturday 10 December 10.00-12 noon**

**Friday Night**  
 Festive Display  
 in the church on  
 the theme of  
 "The Nativity"

Stalls of  
 Christmas Goods  
 Books & Raffle

Refreshments  
 served in  
 the Oasis

CLICKRukiga

**Saturday Morning**  
 Festive Coffee  
 Morning with  
 stalls of  
 Christmas Gifts  
 and Books

The United Reformed Church  
 Ickenham

## *From the Co-ordinator*

### **As Time Goes By**

I have often heard that expression, "Time flies by when you are enjoying yourselves" and by golly it does seem to nowadays. Another year of producing the Grapevine has flown by. Another Christmas will soon be upon us and another New Year.

I feel that it has certainly been an exciting and progressive year in the life of this church. After the years of restrictions through Covid, we have got back to normal Sunday services, normal meetings of the U3A groups, badminton, yoga, pilates, choirs, music and film groups. On top of all this new things and times are happening in our church.

There is a new spirit pervading throughout our church and as the New Year approaches hope springs eternal that we may soon have a new minister. A new playgroup has started after Sandra retired after many years of service so why not a new minister? The pastorate meetings with our friends in Christ Church, Uxbridge are moving on under the stewardship of our moderator, Revd Sue McCoan and with God's help and guidance we pray for a fruitful and positive result.

This year we have seen new faces and members join our congregation and three into new membership. From these small acorns great things will grow.

All this does not happen by chance, but by hard work and a combination of skills and efforts by many. The working together of our community and God's spirit will prevail.

I personally would like to thank all those who have contributed throughout the past year to help me bring together each issue of Grapevine. Those who have answered to my call to lead our services each Sunday; those who help to run the Oasis Café for our refreshment and chatter times; those who help me decorate the church for each of our special services on Remembrance Sunday and the Festive Community Night. Without the coming together of those many hands nothing will be achieved.

God Bless you all and may God's spirit be amongst you as we walk forward through Advent to that glorious time of the celebration of Jesus's birth and into the New Year.

As a gently reminder the next issue of Grapevine's deadline date for copy is the 13<sup>th</sup> February.

John Miller

*The body of Christ, or the people that are the whole of humanity, are a team. The body is not supported by one person, but by all of us. We are one, we are strongest working together in unity. Teamwork is the key to living life in harmony, so that we can do God's will.*

**1 Corinthians 12:14**

*John*

## *Regular Activities*

<b>Sunday</b>	10.00am	Choir Practice
	11.00am	Morning Worship (Children's Space available)

Holy Communion is normally included in the third Sunday morning service each month.

<b>Monday</b>	10.30 - 12.30pm	Tea/Coffee in The Oasis Café
<b>Tuesday</b>	10.30 - 12.30pm	Tea/Coffee in The Oasis Café
<b>Wednesday</b>	10.30 - 12.30pm	Tea/Coffee in The Oasis Café
<b>Thursday</b>	10.30 - 12.30pm	Tea/Coffee in The Oasis Café
<b>Friday</b>	10.30 - 12.30pm	Tea/Coffee in The Oasis Café
<b>Saturday</b>	10.00 - 12.00 noon	Coffee Morning (at main fundraising events)

**Church Office** - 01895 634 280

Shellie D'Arcy

(Administrator/Lettings Officer) 01895 634 280/07792 143 888

**Children & Families Worker:** Position Vacant

**Food For Thought:**

(Soup & a roll with speaker)

First Wednesday in the Month at 1.00pm in The Oasis Café

**For Cubs, Scouts and Beavers -**

Chris Potter (Group Scout Leader) [chrispotter\\_@hotmail.com](mailto:chrispotter_@hotmail.com)

**For Guides -** Hilary Parker - [hilaryjparker@hotmail.com](mailto:hilaryjparker@hotmail.com)

**For Brownies -** Susannah Parker [susannah.may@ledvance.com](mailto:susannah.may@ledvance.com)

**For Rainbows –** Nicola Joyce - [nickyjoyce72@googlemail.com](mailto:nickyjoyce72@googlemail.com)

**Happy Days Pre-School –** [happydayspreschoolickenham@gmail.com](mailto:happydayspreschoolickenham@gmail.com)  
07809 195932