

**Jul-Aug
2025**

St John's
United Reformed Church

Record

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A LEGO CHURCH

How many of you enjoyed playing with Lego when you were younger?


In the 1970's and 80's Lego was one of the world's leading toy brands but at the turn of the Millennium sales figures showed a steep drop and there was a genuine risk that Lego would go completely out of business.

However, if you glance around any modern toy store today you will see that those fears were unfounded. Lego has made a great comeback and has risen to more world-dominating heights than ever before. So, what happened to bring this change about?



In 2004 a new chief executive Vig Knudstorp took over the toy company. Changes were made and the theme parks and other lines that were making losses were sold off and the company focused on what Lego was actually all about. This meant re-engaging Lego fans and re-branding it as a fun activity for every age. He introduced more challenging sets for over-16's and by 2015 Lego was once again the popular toy it had once been.

So why am I talking about Lego and what has this got to do with the church?

Well, the church has been in a state of decline and it is sad to hear of churches closing and their buildings being sold off. Like Lego, churches have tried different ways to reverse this decrease in numbers. These have included making worship more relevant to modern times, having festivals, events in large stadiums and in one cathedral a helter skelter was brought into the nave to attract more people in. 

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Trusting God by:

Walking the way of Jesus
Putting faith into practice
Valuing all people equally

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None of these are bad, but a lesson drawn from Lego's experience is that these things are cherries on the icing and really the important question is about the nature of the cake.

At its heart what is the Church really for?

In his book 'The Purpose Driven Church' Rick Warren lists five aims of the church. These are based on Jesus' Great Commandment and Great Commission (Matthew 22: 37-38 and Matthew 28: 19-20).

The five aims set out by Rick Warren in his book are that every church needs to:-

- Grow warmer through fellowship
- Grow deeper through discipleship
- Grow stronger through worship
- Grow broader through ministry
- Grow larger through outreach

These five point towards the same goal 'The Church's job is to love and follow Jesus' example in interacting with His Father, each other and the world.

If a great innovator like Lego's Vig Knudstorp was brought in to turn around the Church how far might he feel that we have drifted from this?

Has the Church lost sight of its true purpose, become stuck in its ways, become insular and inward focused and detached from the community around it?

I'd like to think that St John's is not like this. But we are an ageing congregation and we haven't got the people to do all the things that we used to do. We do need to attract some younger people.

It has been said that atheism is the assumed default position in every modern urban adult after following a 'godless childhood'. But are young people content with this? No because it has been seen that some young people with parents of no Christian background are starting to go to church and not necessarily to churches with modern music but to connect with the ancient forms of faith. Some are also bringing their parents with them.

The Bible Society published a report called the 'Quiet Revival' which backs up this and shows that the Church is growing and attendance has risen by 50% over the last six years. 18 to 34-year-olds are showing a fresh and new spiritual interest and more men are attending churches. It seems that the church can offer them something more satisfying, and this leads to less stress and anxiety. With many young people struggling with mental health, loneliness, and a loss of meaning in life, church can give them a greater connection to their community and their creator.

If this is the case, we need to ensure that any newcomers to our church are receiving discipleship and learning about the Christian faith.

I'd like to think that those who come to our church building for Mainly Music, Fellowship, Community Garden and other activities might experience the love of God from interaction with the church members and this will make them want to learn more about the Christian faith and perhaps come to church.

Let's hope that we can make a recovery like Lego. And, like a well-designed Lego model, we'll stay standing if we put the right pieces in the right place.



The Rev. James Spencer built two replicas of his St Mary's parish's churches in Toronto out of Lego and found an opportunity to meditate on community outreach in the process. Photo: The Rev. James Spencer



Few people have had a career as long and as varied as Revd Cindy Kent MBE, currently the vicar at St Peters Church in Arkley.

Cindy was born and brought up in the Midlands, but her mother was Welsh, and her first music choice was the hymn *Cwm Rhondda* – 'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer'.

Music and singing were always part of her life and, speaking to the St John's Fellowship Group in May, she told us about how she started her career in the 1960s as the lead singer with the pop-folk group *The Settlers*.

Cindy talked about their hit records and some of their concerts and TV work, and how they recorded the theme tune 'The Lightning Tree' for the ITV series 'Follyfoot', which was one of her record choices.

In the 1970s *The Settlers* did concerts singing with Cliff Richard and also appeared on the Morecambe and Wise Show. Cindy told us about her long friendship with Sir Cliff and about how she met Princess Margaret, who was a big *Settlers* fan.

Some of *The Settlers'* songs are available on YouTube complete with videos and it was fascinating to see the young Cindy singing with the *Settlers* and with Cliff more than fifty years ago.

In 1973, after the *Settlers* disbanded, Cindy became a broadcaster for BBC Radio and Premier Christian Radio among others, and received her MBE in 2016 for her services to religious broadcasting.

She explained how being a Christian has always been important to her since childhood, so it seemed natural to her to change career again to become a priest in the Church of England. But this was not an easy career path.

She described how, as a woman, she faced opposition from the bishop in charge of her, and it took several years before, having studied theology, she became a priest in 2007 and the curate at St John the Apostle Church, Whetstone, becoming the vicar from 2010 to 2016.

She then retired and moved away from North London to a bungalow on the Isle of Sheppey where she made many new friends. However, she came back to work at St Peter's in Arkley in order to be near her young granddaughter. Her son James is the choirmaster at All Saints, Friern Barnet, and her last record choice 'Sweet Baby James' was dedicated to him.

Now nearing 80 years old, as well as her work at St Peters, Cindy is still broadcasting. She has a slot on Serenade Radio every Saturday afternoon. She is a terrific storyteller, and this was a very enjoyable evening filled with laughter which kept the audience fascinated throughout. It was a privilege to interview her.

Roz Douglas



CINDY'S RECORD CHOICES

Cwm Rhondda

It's Only Make Believe - Conway Twitty

The Lightning Tree - *The Settlers*

Love Is More Than Words - Cliff Richard & Cindy Kent

O Happy Day - London Community Gospel Choir

There Is A Green Hill Far Away - *The Gesualdo Six*

Tapestry - Carole King

Sweet Baby James - James Taylor

Christian Aid Week 11-17 May 2025

Thank you!



Thank you to everyone who supported Christian Aid Week so generously again this year. We heard in our service at the start of the week about the stories of Aurelia and Amelia, from the Indigenous Q'eqchi community in the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala. Christian Aid's partner Congcoop, has helped them meet the challenges of climate change by training them about drought resistant crops, conserving water and making fertiliser.

Afterwards, as we reflected about the service, we shared a delicious jacket potato lunch together and we thank Janet and her team for preparing this for us to enjoy. We also had fun trying to answer some quiz questions.

Some of us from St John's joined over 200 Christian Aid supporters on the London Freedom Walk on 10th May, visiting ten churches, beginning at St Martin-in-the-Fields, and finishing just in time for Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral. Guides were on hand to tell us about all the interesting features in each church and to help direct us to find the answer to the quiz questions. All of this inspired you to give very generously to this year's appeal. 🙌



The start of the London Freedom Walk outside St Martin-in-the-Fields Church

- Our digital church e-Envelope raised £1,812.50.
- Some preferred to give in other ways including using the traditional Christian Aid envelopes and this raised £297.64.
- So, the total raised by St John's this year was £2,110.14.
All figures quoted include Gift Aid.

This message from Christian Aid reminds us why our support is still so desperately needed:

A huge thank you for fundraising, worshipping and campaigning with us this Christian Aid Week. Your support will help farmers like Amelia and Aurelia in fighting the effects of the climate crisis. You are helping their communities escape hunger. For over 80 years, supporters like you have been part of a movement built on hope—a hope that speaks out against injustice and stands firm against poverty. This Christian Aid Week, you kept that hope alive.



**The end of the walk
outside St Paul's Cathedral**

So, thank you to everyone for your support which will make a huge difference to many lives.

Alison Bond

ST JOHN'S LADIES' COFFEE MORNINGS

The ladies of St John's are so grateful to Jean Davies for organising these sessions (and to dear Marjorie for starting them!) They are well attended and much appreciated by those who go along. This event is very informal; we just meet at the designated coffee shop and enjoy a coffee and a chat. Those who are free also have lunch together.

The next two dates are as follows:


Wednesday 30th July 11 am

Noel Cafe 51-53 East Barnet Road, EN4 8RN
(opposite Sainsbury's New Barnet)

Tuesday 26th August 11 am

Rise & Shine Cafe, 2 Exchange Buildings,
High Street, Barnet EN5 5SY
(just beyond junction with St. Alban's Rd.)




for better mental health
in the City,
Hackney and
Waltham Forest

Rachel Snider would like to thank all those at St John's who so kindly supported her in raising £800 for Mind Waltham Forest by completing the Hackney Half Marathon.

A Letter from Rosemary

Dear Elders and members of St John's Church,

Another academic school term is in session and our children are doing wonderfully well, all thanks to your continued prayers and support. Although we have a few students battling with cough and flu, they are all being treated and we hope that soon they will be back to good health. The holiday went swiftly and, as always, we had twelve learners left at school. These kept busy by helping out in the garden a couple days a week and learning how to do home chores while taking good care of themselves.



By the time the school term opened up in third week of May they had done a tremendous job clearing and harvesting food crops we had grown during the rainy season and had been missing their schoolfellows.

We have learned about a special fundraiser Mr and Mrs Tony Shepherd had in celebration of their wedding. They shared this special day by asking their guests to donate to support our work at Good Samaritan School as a special gift. We want to take this opportunity to appreciate the Shepherds for sharing their day with us and to all family and friends and most especially members of the church for honouring the invitation and gifting us. Over five hundred pounds was donated and this has been allocated to cover part of staff salaries for the month and nutritious meals for children and staff. Thank you so much.

The school management has recently had its usual meeting and came up to a decision to celebrate our 30th anniversary. We have never celebrated an anniversary before. This is going to be the first celebration and we would like to make special this lifetime event next year in August, 2026. To commemorate this significant three decade milestone of serving children with disabilities we are to celebrate through a series of activities, and we hope that both our national and international friends will join us throughout.

We will host a grand gala dinner in Masaka, bringing together alumni, current students, staff, local community and esteemed guests to celebrate our achievement and share inspiring stories of resilience and success. We would love to have some members of St John's join this gala physically! We also intend to intensify our outreach programs raising awareness about deaf education and advocating for inclusivity in our community. Hopefully you will have some time to join the virtual sessions we will host all year around?

Embracing our diversity, we will organize cultural exchanges with local and international partners and schools, to foster global connection and mutual learning. We are proud to say that we have recently sparked a relationship with St Mary's C of E Primary school in New Barnet and hopefully this will highlight and promote education and understanding of the richness of deaf culture across borders to achieve common goals.

We will launch fundraising campaigns, hoping to raise funds to implement the transformative and vital initiatives such as infrastructure development — for the construction of another classroom block, to provide enough room for each class to be accommodated in an individual room rather than sharing as we are currently structured. Hopefully this can be a legacy project building named after St John's!

We intend to improve our educational teaching and learning resources, and provide scholarships for deserving students as one way to improve our sustainability efforts. We would also like to have the school fencing constructed and also provide new and comfortable beddings for children in their dormitories. The current mattresses, blankets, bed sheets, mosquito nets and bedframes have been in use for quite a number of years, most of them are in dire shape making them unfit for children to sleep on. We have had to even make children share a single bed together which is not acceptable by the Ministry of Education and Sports of Uganda and may lead to revocation of our recently attained license. We hope to also expand our gardening activities with a new farmland.



Your unending prayers, selfless generosity will play a crucial role in ensuring that we achieve these goals and in sustaining our mission for the next 30 years and beyond of generations of deaf children while receiving highest quality education and support.

Our June record of updates is out and we invite you to take some time to read it and share any feedback regarding any and all interesting topics you find.

Webale nnyo! (Thank you very much.)

With much love and prayers,

Rosemary and the entire Good Samaritan School for the Deaf family.



Thames North Synod Eco Day 2025

The third URC Thames North Synod's Eco Day was held on 7th June 2025 at St Albans URC – Greenwood, one of the two premises that makes up St Albans URC – One Church on Two Sites.

The day started with an act of worship led by the St Albans URC Worship Team. This was followed by a very informative talk by David Britton, Campaign Officer for Operation Noah. David described how Operation Noah in 2004 was formed by a group of people who felt that the church should be responding more strongly to the climate crisis.

David Britton reminded us that churches and faith groups have a vital role to play in accelerating the transition to net zero emissions and financing a liveable future.

We can all play our part by signing the Green Investment Declaration which is an initiative developed by Operation Noah and JustMoney Movement to support churches and other faith institutions across the globe to increase their investments in climate solutions and lead the way in building a greener future.

<https://www.operationnoah.org/>



There was an additional short talk from Revd Francis Ackroyd who was inspired by the talk on the book "Climate Change is Racist" by Jeremy Williams at the TNS Eco Day 2024. The book is a 'must read' for anyone concerned about racial/climate justice.

In the afternoon, after a healthy lunch which included vegetarian/vegan food, there were several workshops including:

- **Effective campaigning for Individuals and Churches with Roo Stewart – URC Head of Public Issues**
- **Climate Resilience in Bangladesh with Peter Musgrave from Vine Church Ilford**
- **Eco Church new survey with Rachel Johnston, St Albans Diocese Environmental Officer**
- **Sustainable flower arranging with representatives of St Albans Cathedral Flower Guild**
- **Sustainable Buildings - Approach and Support with Sacha McArdle, Assistant Property Officer, TNS**
- **Green Psalm writing with Revd. Maggie Hindley**





We were fortunate that the rain held off so that there was an opportunity to wander around the site. As well as the use of the newly built eco-friendly hall and kitchen, which is a highly energy efficient premises and includes solar panels and is linked to the main Church building, there is an extensive wildflower meadow. Bat, house sparrow and other bird boxes have also been provided and the wildflower meadow attracts many species of insects, butterflies and a variety of animals reflecting the care and concern for God's creation.

The need for each one of us to be aware of the devastating effects of climate change which affects the whole of the created world and the importance of reducing our carbon footprint was made clear as an urgent priority in our world today.

The closing worship was led by the Worship Team and the Moderator, Revd George Watt, gave the final blessing. Thanks were expressed to all those involved in organizing the Eco Day and helping to make it such a success.

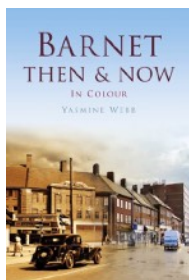
Andrew Mills a member of the URC TNS Green Team.

Anna Barrett, member at St Albans URC Greenwood, one of the Green Apostles.

THANKS FOR FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS

Sunday May 11th Pauline Wishart
 Sunday June 1st Hugh Martin
 Sunday June 15th Jean Davies

ADVANCE NOTICES



- The speaker at the Fellowship meeting on 16th July will be Yasmine Webb, author of the book *Barnet Then and Now*. Her theme will be 'Barnet during the Civil War 1642-1660'.

- Mainly Music will restart on Thursday 11th September.



- This year St John's Church will be hosting Creation Sunday on 21st September when we will be joined by members of St Mary the Virgin C of E and Brookside Methodist Church.

- Our Harvest Festival service will take place on Sunday 28th September.

Our 2025 Theme:



Calendar of Events

JULY

Sunday 6	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Valerie and Andrew Mills
Monday 7	3:00pm	Fellowship Committee in Sanctuary
Thursday 10	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 13	11:00am	Worship led by Tony Alderman
Tuesday 15	7:30pm	Elders' Meeting
Wednesday 16	7:30pm	Fellowship: Barnet during the Civil War 1642-1660. Speaker: Yasmine Webb
Saturday 19	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 20	11:00am	Worship led by Tony Shepherd
Tuesday 22	from 7:30pm	Joint Men/Women Evening at <i>The Railway Bell</i>
Sunday 27	11:00am	Worship led by the Elders
Wednesday 30	11:00am	Women's Group at <i>Noel Café</i> (see article on page 5)

AUGUST

Saturday 2	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 3	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Tony Alderman
Sunday 10	11:00am	Worship led by Alison Bond
Saturday 16	10:00am	Community Garden
	2:00pm	Fellowship Summer Party with bring and share lunch in St John's Church Hall and Community Garden
Sunday 17	11:00am	Worship led by Paul Elsdon
Monday 18	from 7:30pm	Men's Group at <i>Ye Olde Mitre Inne</i>
Sunday 24	11:00am	Worship led by Roz Douglas
Tuesday 26	11:00am	Women's Group at <i>Rise and Shine Café</i> (see article on page 5)
Saturday 30	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 31	11:00am	Worship led by David Paul and Richard Harvey

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