

May-Jun 2025

St John's
United Reformed Church

Record

Somerset & Mowbray Roads, New Barnet, Herts., EN5 1RH

The Widow's Mite

Jesus looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.' Luke 21: 1-4 NRSV



'The Widow's Mite' by James Tissot 1836-1902, Brooklyn Museum. Public Domain

Safeguarding training can be quite depressing if you're not careful. So can hearing stories about climate change and the environmental crises affecting our planet. Then there's the plethora of appeals for people needing support in times of poverty, homelessness, famine, lack of access to clean water or education. I will stop there for fear of depressing you, and myself, further. ☞

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Trusting God by:

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

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The need is so great and we feel helpless to make a difference. I started thinking this way during some recent safeguarding training about the increase in children's access to porn and online grooming where I felt a bit like King Cnut facing the incoming tide without even a decent pair of wellies.

I can't change the world, but I can do my bit. I can't stop the internet but I can make sure I am a safe person that the children and young people I engage with know that they can talk to without judgement. I can help them use social media and the internet for positive purposes. I can't stop homelessness or poverty but I can make a donation to a charity like Beam to help one person into a stable home or employment. I can't stop climate change but I can use the train instead of my car. And I don't need to make a big song and dance about it – the important thing is that I do what I can and do it in God's name.

My widow's mite may seem insignificant, but mine and yours and yours and yours can make a difference if God's in control. Let's do it together – stop worrying so much about what we can't do and concentrate on making sure we do what we can.

Prayer

*Jesus, who noticed the widow give all that she had,
accept the gifts we humbly offer,
whether they be money or time or effort or material things,
and use them for your purposes.*

*Don't let our paucity become an excuse:
'I can't change the world so I won't even try.'*

*But empower, equip and encourage us
to change a little bit of the world, just where we are.*

Amen.

Lorraine Webb, former Programme Officer for Children's and Youth Work
Reprinted from URC Daily Devotions

World Day of Prayer

The annual ecumenical service for prayer in our world took place on Saturday 8th March at Holy Trinity Church, Lyonsdown. The service had been prepared by the women of the Cook Islands. Worshippers were given flowers as they arrived, as a symbol of this nation, and participants wore floral crowns and garlands.



It included a moving tribute to Marjorie, who had been such a key member of the committee, and who is clearly much missed. The service was followed by refreshments and fellowship in the church hall. The photo above shows the members of our local World Day of Prayer Committee, including Rev'd Jenny Robinson, who is in charge at Holy Trinity Church, and Rev'd Abe Konadu-Viadom, the new minister at Brookside Methodist Church.

Editors



Every **Christian Aid Week**, people across Britain and Ireland raise funds, act and pray for their global neighbours in a celebration of hope for a fairer world. For 80 years, Christian Aid has been fighting poverty and injustice and been able to offer hope to communities who need it most.

In Guatemala, gruelling heatwaves and extreme weather are destroying Aurelia's farm, pictured above. She worries deeply about how much harvest the family will have to eat and sell: "Climate change has been killing our crops, and this is our food." The roots of this cruel injustice run deep. Indigenous communities like Aurelia's have done the least to cause the climate crisis, yet they endure its impact the most. But the unstoppable power of hope is in the hands of farmers like Aurelia, as she leads her community in the fight to overcome the challenges they face. Aurelia is holding hope in her hands.



The climate crisis is killing Amelia's precious crops. Dying crops means food stops. "I worry about what my children will eat." She relies on the land to feed her eight-year-old son, Lazaro, and four-year-old daughter, Yakelin. As her farm is devastated, the search for solutions becomes critical. And that comes through changing the way she farms. With the support of specialist training from Christian Aid's partner, Congcoop, Amelia is planting resilient crops, conserving water and making fertiliser.

We are finalising our plans for Christian Aid Week this year at St John's. Some of us will be doing the **Christian Aid London Freedom Walk on Saturday 10 May** which begins at 12noon at St Martin in the Fields church, Trafalgar Square and calls in at several churches along the route. The walk finishes at St Paul's Cathedral in time for Evensong at 5pm. Let me know if you would like to join us on this walk. You can register through this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/christian-aid-freedom-walk-london-2025-tickets-1077518740559> (Press CTRL & Click to follow the link)

Our **Service on Sunday 11 May** will focus on the support given by partner organisations of Christian Aid in Guatemala. After the service, we invite you to stay for a jacket potato lunch. There may be some quiz questions to entertain you over lunch.....

See next page for ways to donate 📄

Donations for Christian Aid Week can be made:

- Using our Digital Church e-Envelope: <https://envelope.christianaid.org.uk/envelope-2025/christian-aid-week-2025-stjohnsurc>
- Or by enclosing your donation in one of the Christian Aid Week envelopes which will be available at church.

Please also pray for the work of Christian Aid and all their partner organisations around the world.



What could your donations buy?

- **£6** Could pay for the seed trays to kickstart a plant nursery at someone's home
- **£10** Could pay for a pruning tool enabling a farmer to care for their cacao trees
- **£20** Could provide climate resilient seeds to help diversify a family's crop
- **£30** Could help fund the training session that teaches someone how to make valuable organic fertiliser.
- **£100** Could fund the metal roofing sheets that shield a market stall holder and their produce from the sun and rain.

Alison Bond

WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

What a wonderful experience, to be worshipping with our friends in Svitavy, thanks to the efforts of the technology teams on both sides. On Sunday 6th April the two congregations, St John's in New Barnet, and the Church of the Czech Brethren in Svitavy, Czechia, met via Zoom for our morning worship. To accommodate the time difference, we started an hour early, and they had their coffee first and started considerably later than usual. They led two hymns and we led two, each congregation singing in their own language, although our Svitavy friends sang 'You are the Vine' with us in English! The readings and sermon were heard in the language of the participant and the translation was on the screen. There had been a huge amount of preparation for this service, in both churches (Filip was responsible for so much translation, in what was already a busy week for him, and there was a great deal of technical rehearsal, as you can imagine). It all worked wonderfully and it was such a joy to see and hear our friends again.



EASTER FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS

Flowers for Mothering Sunday 30th March were given and arranged by Gill Hailey.

Flowers for Easter Sunday April 20th were arranged by members of the Flower Committee.





Fellowship: Yuri Sabatini

St John's Fellowship welcomed Italian Tenor Yuri Sabatini to their March meeting for an entertaining evening of a variety of classical arias and popular songs from musical shows. Yuri sang for about an hour but the very appreciative audience would have welcomed further encores! Our dear late friend Marjorie O'Connor had arranged for Yuri to come to give a recital for the Fellowship meeting and it was gratifying that we welcomed many followers of Yuri to join us at what was such an enjoyable event.

Jean Davies

The Battle of Barnet - Mike Noronho



In complete contrast our April meeting welcomed Mike Noronho, from Barnet Museum, to give a talk about the Battle of Barnet 1471. Mike is extremely proud of Barnet's place in English history of this Battle and spoke very enthusiastically about events which led up to Civil War in England, which became known as the War of the Roses between the nobilities of the House of York (White Rose) and the house of Lancaster (Red Rose). The Battle of Barnet is recorded as a decisive engagement in the dynastic conflict of 15th century England, resulting in victory for the

Yorkists led by King Edward IV and defeat for the Lancastrians led by the Earl of Warwick, who was killed in the battle. Edward IV, the victor, went on to reign until 1483.

The exact place where the battle was fought is still not fully established but the land around Hadley Green and stretching down towards Trotters Bottom is thought to be the area. Mike did also mention that there will be some further exploration in the gardens of houses in Hadley and it will be interesting to find out further evidence of the battlefield. A very interesting evening was enjoyed by the Fellowship.

Jean Davies



Desert Island Discs in May

On 21st May the Fellowship will be welcoming Rev'd Cindy Kent MBE for Desert Island Discs hosted by Roz Douglas. Cindy Kent is currently Team Vicar in the Chipping Barnet Team Ministry with special responsibility for Arkley. Before that she found fame as a singer in the folk group the Settlers and has also had a career on the radio.



Marjorie Isabel O'Connor - *Obituary*

29th August 1952 – 30th January 2025



Marjorie was born in Barnet in 1952, the eldest child of Edward and Grace Absolon. She grew up in Somerset Road, with her siblings Sylvia and John; St John's Church, where she attended Sunday School, Brownies and Guides, was to be important to her for the rest of her life. She enjoyed music, sang in the school choir, and played recorder, flute and piano. She went to Cromer Road School, and Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, and then to Bishop Otter College of Education and Loughborough Technical College. As a chartered librarian she worked for Barnet Libraries for twenty years. She was then involved, with Joe, in training and assessment with the Red Cross, and went on to obtain a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults as a second language) and a PGSE at the Institute of Education. She engaged in private tutoring — mainly Somali children in Edgware. She and Joe hosted international students at their home for fourteen years.

Marjorie and Joe were married in April 1991 at St John's Church. Joe is a member of St Gregory's Catholic Church in Barnet; they had many friends in both churches and supported each other's events. Marjorie's faith was fundamental to her.

At St John's Marjorie has been a Manager, a Reader, Church Meeting minute secretary, a member of the Pastoral Team and a member of the Fellowship Committee. Her tireless efforts to promote and organise talks, events, film nights, concerts, and meals out are legendary and we miss her so much, sitting at that table with her notepad, her ready smile and her welcome to friends and strangers alike. She was instrumental in the setting up of the Women's Coffee Group, meeting monthly in local coffee shops, which has been very successful and much appreciated. She was our representative on the local World Day of Prayer Committee, where she is also much missed.

She was an active member of Barnet U3A, helping to organise speakers, and attending groups, outings, and trips. She attended Bay Jazz at Botany Bay Cricket Club, with Joe, and had recently helped with organisation at the local Guild Theatre productions.

Marjorie was such a faithful friend; she sent a huge number of birthday, anniversary and get well cards and postcards from her holidays. Her brother recalls accompanying her to a seaside newsagent to buy a hundred and fifty postcards! So many church members have appreciated her kindness in this, and have also enjoyed her Christmas newsletter — in Barnet and much further afield. Her family received many condolence messages with memories of Marjorie's unfailing kindness, generosity, and service. One from a former minister said the following: *"Marjorie was a gentle loving person who possessed, I found, a lot of wisdom. When confronted with some difficulties she found a way through, that struck me as containing grace and real strength of character."*

As Alison Bond concluded her tribute, *"We thank God for all that she has done both here at St John's and in the wider community. We will truly miss her. May her example, continue to inspire us all."*

This obituary is a compilation of the tributes given at the memorial service by her brother and sister, John and Sylvia, and by Alison Bond, also the 'resumé of her life' which Marjorie had written for the Queen Elizabeth's Guild Newsletter — Editors

Calendar of Events

MAY

Thursday 1	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 4	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Valerie and Andrew Mills
Tuesday 6	7:30pm	Elders' Meeting
Thursday 8	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 10	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 11	11:00am	Worship led by Alison Bond. Followed by Jacket Potato lunch for Christian Aid Week
Thursday 15	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 18	11:00am	Worship led by Paul Elsdon, followed by a Church Meeting
Tuesday 20	from 7:30pm	Joint Men/Women at <i>The Railway Bell</i>
Wednesday 21	7:30pm	Fellowship: Desert Island Discs with Rev. Cindy Kent MBE hosted by Roz Douglas
Thursday 22	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 24	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 25	11:00am	Worship led by David Paul and Richard Harvey
Wk. beg. 26	11:00am	Women's Group - date & venue to be advised

JUNE

Sunday 1	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Sarah Beaumont
Saturday 7	10:00am 10:30—4:00	Community Garden Thames North Synod Eco Day at St Albans URC Greenwood
Sunday 8	11:00am	Pentecost: Worship led by Rev'd Roger Orme
Tuesday 10	7:30pm	Elders' Meeting
Thursday 12	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 15	11:00am	Worship led by Tony Alderman
Thursday 19	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 21	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 22	11:00am	Worship led by Helen Snider <i>Closing date for copy for July/August Church Record</i>
Wednesday 25	from 7:30pm	Men's Group at <i>Ye Olde Mitre Inne</i>
Thursday 26	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 29	11:00am	Worship led by Roz Douglas
Monday 30	11:00am	Women's Group - venue to be advised

contd. over ➞

Thursday 3	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 5	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 6	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Valerie and Andrew Mills

Kathryn Finlayson on GRAND DESIGNS

Kathryn Finlayson, the widow of Jon Finlayson the award winning architect of St John's United Reformed Church, recently appeared in Channel 4's 'Grand Designs' programme which followed her challenging journey to build a new house right next to the house that she and her husband had shared since 1965 until his death in 2022, and in which they brought up their son, Gordon and daughter, Rosalind, both of whom appeared in the programme.

Jon had a long-standing connection with St John's, and his unusual church design won a Civic Trust Award for good design in 1970. He also appeared in the programme as a young man in family videos.

After his death, instead of selling up and moving away, Kathryn, now in her eighties, decided to commission a young architect to build a house for her, turning her detached Edwardian house into a semi.



The new house adjoining the old one

Kathryn's new house, designed by architect James Mak, features triple glazing, an air source heat pump, ten solar panels and a battery in the roof, making it the perfect model for modern sustainability. In order to create the space for the new house, a garage and Jon's old music room were demolished.

The project took nearly two years to complete, and went heavily over budget, owing in part to the increased cost of building materials following Russia's invasion of Ukraine; however Kevin McCloud, the presenter of Grand Designs, praised the new house when it was finished, calling it 'glorious' and saying it looked like her old home's 'long lost sister'.



Kathryn admiring the wooden carving — made for the pipe organ Jon built for his music room — now displayed on the wall of her new home



Kathryn now has accessible ground floor accommodation specifically designed for her needs, including a walk-in shower and adjacent bedroom and bathroom. Not only is it eco-friendly, but her modern well insulated home has drastically cut her energy bills by at least a half.

There are many connections to her husband in the new house, not least in the wooden floor to ceiling divider on the staircase, reminiscent of the work of the renowned Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, whom Jon admired. Kathryn rescued the wooden elm floor which Jon had put in the music room; this has been used for all the cupboards, kitchen island and dressing table.

Roz Douglas/Editors

You can watch the programme here on Channel 4.

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/grand-designs/on-demand/76838-003>