

JUL-AUG
2026

St John's
United Reformed Church

Record

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

Who's Counting?

Do you know the number of hairs on your head? Apparently it averages between 90,000 and 150,000, although some of us lose them as time goes by!

Jesus is quoted as saying in two of the gospels, "but even the hairs of your head are all counted", meaning that our lives are of infinite value to God.

In Isaac Watts' hymn, *O God our help in ages past* based on Psalm 90 we sing, 'A thousand ages in your sight are like an evening gone.' In other words, God is beyond time. He may regard a thousand years as we would a single day or night.



Numbers were important in the fascinating Old Testament story of Gideon. He assembled an army of 32,000 men to repel the massive Midianite forces who had been oppressing Israel for seven years. God said - no. Gideon was told to reduce the numbers to just 300 so that it would be obvious that it was God who had brought them victory.

What are numbers to God?

In this edition of Church Record is an article on the closing of Muswell Hill United Reformed Church. A church on that site had been in existence for 127 years. There were 23 members when the church closed. >

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Trusting God by:

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

Contacts

Website: www.stjohnsnewbarnet.org.uk

Record Editors: Richard & Janet Harvey, email: churchrecord2023@gmail.com

Church Secretary: Alison Bond, Tel: 020 8440 1941 email: aegbond@hotmail.co.uk

Church Administrator: Alison Cousins, Tel: 07816 115 817 email: info.stjohnsurc@gmail.com

Do you think God takes the worship of a church such as Lakewood in Houston — with its 16,000 seat sanctuary and over 43,500 people attending weekly — more seriously than the worship of one of our local churches with tiny attendance figures?

Jesus said, 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

In the early Church Christians gathered together in each other's homes or in synagogues and their numbers would have been small. Our congregation has become smaller over the years. We are rightly considering the paper prepared by Andrew Summers - inspired by thoughts and suggestions from church members and Elders - on the Long-term Vision for St John's; in part, how to ensure we have enough volunteers to keep the church running week by week. At the same time we are offering worship to God, seeking to build each other up in faith, and caring for those in need.

One of our former ministers told the story of a vicar in a country parish turning up for the service one Sunday evening to find that the local farmer was the only congregant. The vicar prayed his prayers, gave the readings and preached his sermon. At the end of the service the farmer thanked him but then went on to say, 'You know vicar. If I find I've got only one sheep in the field I don't give her the whole bloomin' trailer full of feed!'

How wrong was his analogy thought the vicar. It makes no difference how many are joined in worship to God. He hears everyone the same.



Editors



Evening of Prayer & Bible Study

2nd & 4th Wednesdays of the month

7-9pm

10 June to 26 August

Holy Trinity vicarage (next to church)

We'll spend the first hour sharing life and praying together, and have a Bible study for the second hour



Elders' Ordination and Induction

At our Communion Service on Sunday 3rd May we welcomed two new Elders on to the team at St John's: Barbara Campbell and Janet Harvey, as well as inducting Alison Bond, Helen Snider, David Paul, Roz Douglas and Andrew Mills for a further term of three years. Revd Derek Lindfield presided.





Christian Aid Week 10-16 May 2026 Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who supported Christian Aid Week so generously again this year. We heard in our service about the stories of Fridah and Belinda, from Dagoretti in Nairobi, Kenya. Christian Aid's partner Beacon of Hope, has helped them meet the challenges they face by training them in urban farming techniques. Fridah can now feed her family her own nutritious, homegrown vegetables, and can also generate an income by selling her produce at market. You can see how grateful they are in this clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLg3mRNnND0>

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 from St John's joined over 200 Christian Aid supporters on the London Freedom Walk on 9 May, visiting many churches and sites, beginning at St Martin-in-the-Fields, and finishing just in time for Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral. All of this inspired you to give very generously to this year's appeal.



Alison leading worship/
Fridah tending her urban farm crop



Christian Aid Lunch and Walk

- Our digital church e-Envelope, raised £1,905.77.
- Some preferred to give in other ways including using the traditional Christian Aid envelopes and this raised £375.
- So, the total raised by St John's this year was £2,280.77. All figures quoted include Gift Aid.

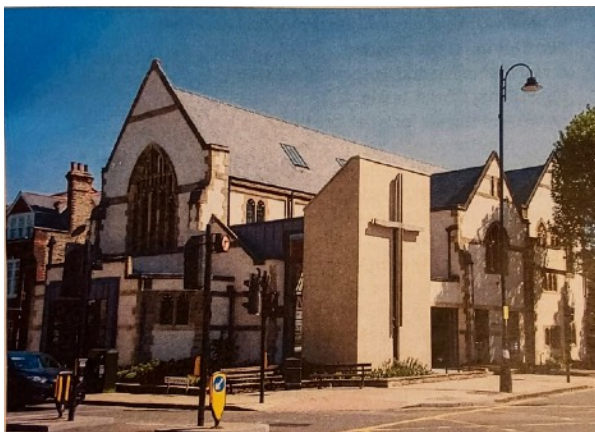
This message comes from Christian Aid:

Thank you for joining us this Christian Aid Week. Over seven days, you made a difference in so many ways. It's the incredible outpouring of prayer, dedication and generosity from people like you that powers the projects we fund. Projects that are supporting communities to overcome poverty and make their hopes a reality.

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

Alison Bond

Muswell Hill URC closes after 127 years



More than seventy people attended the last service at Muswell Hill URC on Sunday 31st May, led by the Revd George Watt, Moderator of the Thames North Synod.

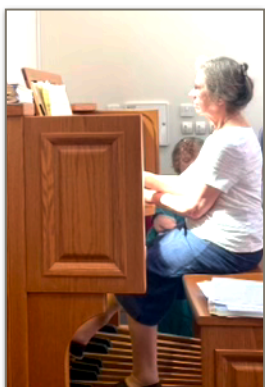
The service included Holy Communion and a history of the church read out by two elders, Sylvia Mannering and Adrian Stannard. In a very informative talk, they revealed that the history of congregationalism in Muswell Hill goes back to 1890, before the opening of the current church building on the corner of Tetherdown and Queens Avenue in 1899.

They took us through the church's history during the First and Second World Wars, and the history of the Tennis Club, the Tetherdown Players, Music in Muswell Hill, and other organisations as well as the amalgamation in 1974 between the Congregational church, with 184 members, and the Presbyterians with 152 members, to form the Muswell Hill United Reformed Church.

Sadly, the church's congregation has fallen steadily over the years. By 2020 it was down to just twenty-seven and, even though the building was modernised and reconfigured on two floors in 2022 to provide two chapels for worship plus meeting rooms and a communal café area, in November 2025, following the sudden death of Elder Pat Stannard, the remaining twenty-three members decided they could not keep on running the building throughout 2026 with their reduced numbers and ageing membership.

This was a very poignant service for me as I was a member of the church in the early 1980's with my then baby son and two small daughters, when Revd Bert Baker was minister, before we moved up to New Barnet and joined St John's where I am now an elder. I represented St John's at the closing service together with our Treasurer, Sarah Beaumont, who has preached at Muswell Hill many times.

The service ended with the hopeful hymn 'One more step along the world I go', a blessing from Revd George Watt and some beautiful recessional music including Widor's Toccata from Symphony No. 5 played with great skill on the organ by Elder Margaret Lyon.



The church is now closed for worship and is under the control of its owners, Thames North Synod. However, the Wave Hub community café <https://www.wavehub.org.uk/> will continue to open every Wednesday and Thursday and the more than twenty community organisations who use the modern facilities at the church will continue to meet for at least a year while the future of the building is determined.

Let us all pray that a permanent Christian future for this landmark building with all its history of service to the community of Muswell Hill can be secured.

Roz Douglas

This is also the church where Hugh Martin grew up and was an active member until he married Joan in 1956. They settled in Barnet and joined New Barnet Congregational Church.

“I’ll just repeat that for the Zoomers...”

These days, something clever and useful is going on at the back of the church during our services. You will all have benefitted from it in one way or another, but not all of us entirely understand the process (including some of us who are helping!) and maybe it helps to know just a little...

During the week, the Elders (or visiting clergy) send Richard or Paul the order of service and they create a series of PowerPoint slides containing the words of the hymns - these have to be within the package of hymns we have copyright permission for, because they will, through the recording, be available on YouTube, later – as well as the words of the readings and any other text to be displayed on the screen during the service, such as the Call to Worship, the Communion liturgy or photos, pictures, maybe even a video clip. Meanwhile Alison Cousins, as you know, will be sending out the Zoom link in the email invitation.

On Sunday there are two laptops to set up...

The volunteer at the table nearest the congregation is responsible for the PowerPoint laptop. They get the slides up on the screen at the front, and then click to move to the next slide as required, at the end of each verse of a hymn, for example.

The volunteer in the booth at the back records the service, connects our Zoom worshippers, and aims the camera at the lectern, pulpit or communion table, as the people taking part move around. (This role is the more skilled one!) The service is recorded from the moment we stand to begin the service, until the blessing at the end. We don't record the Notices and News of the Family, as these are personal and not for the public domain. The Zoomers are still “present”, however, but they can only hear what is said into a microphone, which is why the Vestry Elder at the lectern will repeat any news given by worshippers in the sanctuary. Even if you speak loudly the Zoomers will only hear a slightly baffling silence! That's why it's helpful if people keep such contributions brief, and give any people's names, or dates of events, really clearly, so the Elder can tell the Zoomers what has just been said. The Zoomers' view is from the back of the church, so if you want to smile or wave at them, you need to turn round and face the camera. At the end of the service the recording is downloaded on to a memory stick to be edited (any odd delays or gaps are edited out) and uploaded onto YouTube. You can access any service from the links on our website.



Janet Harvey

FILM NIGHT Wednesday 29th July

Free entry. Donations in aid of the Good Samaritan School for the Deaf in Uganda.
The film will be shown at 7:30pm. Church open for cold drinks and snacks from 7pm.

Bank of Dave:

Based on true events, this comedy tells the story of how Dave Fishwick, a successful van salesman from Burnley, decides to open a bank that uses local money to fund local enterprises after the big financial institutions have failed the people in his town. However, he soon



fights an uphill battle as he tries to convince the elite London-based financial authorities to grant him a new bank licence.

‘Rory Kinnear is brilliant in this warming comedy about a Burnley businessman who took on London's elite and won.’
(*The Guardian*)

Thames North Synod Eco Day 2026



Memorial gardens at the Parish Church

Andrew and Valerie Mills and Alison Bond attended the URC Thames North Synod Eco Day 2026 at Amersham Free Church on Saturday 13 June 2026 along with over seventy participants. It was a most enjoyable and inspiring day bringing together creation, nature and community action that was both practical and spiritually rooted.

The theme was 'Nature on our Doorstep' focusing on appreciating local wildlife, sustainable gardening, and energy saving habits.

Following the opening worship in the Sanctuary led by Rev Ian Green there was a talk by Michelle Catanach and the Amersham in Bloom team entitled 'Transforming Public Spaces for Nature and People'. Examples were shown of the creative ways in which the team, including a large number of volunteers, have helped to brighten up the streets in Amersham with raised flower beds and a water feature and other planted areas in some of the public open spaces to encourage biodiversity. Some ideas were put forward which other communities could replicate.

There was the opportunity to attend workshops on a variety of topics including:

'Supporting hedgehogs' which included webcam footage.

'Pop in and paint' encouraging us to look closely and marvel at the beauty of creation.

'Creative hymn writing'.

'How a nature friendly garden was set up at Vine Church, Ilford.'

'Energy Savings for buildings – simple and practical steps.'

'Citizen Science projects, and an introduction to the iNaturalist app.'



After lunch a number of us went on a guided walk through the woods to the River Misbourne exploring local habitats and chalk stream ecology. The day ended with a plenary session and closing worship led by the Taiwanese Fellowship with a blessing from Rev Geoge Watt.

Plenty of practical ideas to consider for St John's URC and for other local Church Fellowships. Well worth attending.

Andrew, Valerie and Alison

My Early Childhood Memories by Alan Pryor

I was born in Camborne, Cornwall, in November 1941, the youngest of four children. My eldest sister, Patricia, was eleven years old, Margaret was six, and Michael was almost two. I had a lovely childhood as the doted-on baby of the family, and my sisters taught me to read, well before starting primary school. I took full advantage that our house contained a multitude of books written by Enid Blyton, Malcolm Saville, and Richmal Crompton ("Just William" books) amongst others.

My first real memory was on 7th May, 1945. A few weeks earlier it had become clear that Germany was close to capitulating, so Winston Churchill declared that Tuesday 8th June would become VE Day (Victory in Europe Day), so that church bells (those that hadn't been melted down to make battleships!) would ring out across the country. However, Hitler died in his Berlin Bunker and it was decided to announce the end of the war on the radio early on Monday 7th June, principally so that the hundreds of thousands of German troops fleeing from Russia could surrender to the Allies before they were caught and brutally murdered by the rapidly advancing Russians.

Thus, celebrations everywhere began on the 7th, and in the evening my family took me to the huge local celebration bonfire, the first I'd seen. A good memory! My next memory came soon after, witnessing my dad coming down our garden path, straight from being demobbed.



Camborne Wesley Methodist Church

Then a new exciting chapter of my life began: I was admitted into the Sunday School of Camborne Wesley Methodist Church. On my first attendance I learned a new song "*Jesus wants me for a sunbeam*" and nearly drove my family mad singing with gusto the first dozen or so words time and time and time again. I really enjoyed the Sunday School, with all the biblical stories and little plays to act out. More exciting songs to learn! Every week if our families could afford it we brought one (old) penny to put into the collection box, singing "*hear the pennies dropping, listen as they fall, every one for Jesus, he shall have them all*". Around this time, when walking to Sunday School, we often met another boy who lived nearby, called Tommy Hicks. Occasionally he

came to play with my brother and me and friends, cricket or football in our front street (maybe only one car or lorry interrupting us per hour – those were the days!) His name was Tommy Hicks but sometimes we couldn't understand his accent. He turned out to be an evacuee from London who also attended our same Sunday School, and in later years became a famous pop singer: Tommy Steele. He was five years older than me but small for his age. I'm told that there were more than two hundred children in the Sunday School between the ages of four and fifteen. If we attended Sunday School for at least fifty ➤

Sundays a year we were awarded a book token with which we could buy, for example, the latest Famous Five book.

Most Sundays the sessions at the church began with a rousing hymn, and I recall that one frequently chosen was *"New every morning is the love"*, a very appropriate way to start. However, as a young child I found some of its words confusing. Verse 5 began with *"The trivial round, the common task, will furnish all we ought to ask"* and my imagination suggested that this referred to a creature called "a trivial" which ran in circles about a thing called "a task", probably tethered to it by string! Incidentally, the author, John Keble, was an almost unique scholar. He achieved a Double First degree at Oriel College at the age of eighteen, a feat achieved previously only by Sir Robert Peel.

I loved Sundays: we probably started the day with porridge (cooked very slowly in a porringer) followed by the walk to Sunday School, then home for a roast lunch: usually beef, occasionally lamb, and only once or twice a year a fowl – we never ate chicken which in those days were cute little feathered creatures! I never saw nor even heard of a turkey. After lunch we'd have a long family walk if the

weather was nice (a trot for me with my short legs to keep up with the family) or otherwise played card games, followed by tea at around 5.00, including Spam sandwiches, Cornish cakes (saffron or yeast buns, scones with clotted cream that mum made twice a week by skimming off the tops of our daily six pints of non-homogenised milk and slowly steaming the cream into clotted cream), and tinned peaches, pears or plums. Lots of bread and butter with blackberry jam to fill the gaps. Mum and dad would enjoy Camp chickory coffee. In the evening we played games with my granny who was present because mum and dad usually went to the evening



Helston Flora Dance

service. At the age of seven I was allowed to stay up until 7.30, and received seven pence pocket money a week. Thereafter on each birthday I gained an extra half hour before bed time, and one extra penny a week.

A key milestone in my young life was joining the choir at my primary school when I was seven. We managed to win the prize in "the junior choir class" at the Cornish Eisteddfod, the event being held at "my" Camborne Wesley Methodist Church. We sang the beautiful and moving "Pilgrims' Chorus", the choral version of Richard Wagner's Tannhauser overture. Another non familiarity with difficult vocabulary once more hit me here in the dramatic conclusion: "At last, dear Lord, with rapture we greet thee". So, what was rapture? Well, I happened to overhear my mum telling my father that Uncle Jack had gone to hospital for an operation on his painful rupture. Of course, I heard it as "rapture", and was fearful that if I ever met Jesus (as we were frequently assured in Sunday School would one day happen, provided we were well behaved) I would do so in great pain. Fortunately mum soon clarified things! At this time (1949) it was somewhat surprising that Wagner's music was chosen as a test piece for the festival: he was well known to have been Hitler's favourite composer and his music (including Tannhauser) formed an integral background to many of the political functions that Hitler attended. I also won a certificate at the Eisteddfod in the "seven year old boys' vocal class" for reading the story of Daniel in the Lions' Den, taken from one of the children's books we listened to or read in Sunday School. [Ref: Daniel 6, in the Old Testament.] >

Most years our family visited by bus the Helston Flora dances, and in some years Gwennap Pit, to which John Wesley walked from London numerous times in the 18th century.



Gwennap Pit



A crowd at Gwennap Pit

Every Whitsun Monday, the town's non-conformist children would process through the town's streets, around the beautiful grounds of the largest private house in town, called Lowenac, and up the world-famous Camborne Hill to a large field with a stream and trees to climb (which children were almost encouraged to do in those days). Every child would be given a drink, an ice cream, and a "tea treat bun": a rich fruited yeast-leavened sweet bun, shaped like a discus, around one inch thick and eight inches in diameter. Delicious and filling! Whitsun is the name given to the Festival of Pentecost, and falls on the seventh Sunday after Easter to commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples. Today the word "Whitsun" is rarely mentioned. The Whitsun children's town procession continued until the 1970s, when it changed to a day out at St Ives beach (on a Saturday!). Lowenac became a hotel in the 1980s but earlier this year was turned into a refugees' centre, complete with a car wash. Camborne Hill is world famous because it was on Christmas Eve in 1801 that Camborne-born Richard Trevithick's full size steam powered carriage Puffing Devil carried six passengers over two miles up the hill, a world first. In 1804 in Merthyr Tydfil another of his locomotives hauled a train along a tramway: the world's very first train journey!



Puffing Devil

Perhaps this article will stir the memories of some of the not-so-young members of our congregation, if only just as reminders of the tales they heard from their parents. ❖

Calendar of Events

JULY

Thursday 9	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 12	11:00am	Worship led by Revd Roger Orme
Tuesday 14	7:30pm	Elders' Meeting
Saturday 18	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 19	11:00am	Worship led by Revd Cindy Kent
Sunday 26	11:00am	Worship led by Roz Douglas
Tuesday 28	11:00am	Ladies' Coffee Group. Venue tbc
Wednesday 29	7 for 7:30pm	Film Night in aid of the Good Samaritan School for the Deaf, Uganda (see p.5)

AUGUST

Saturday 1	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 2	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Alison Bond
Sunday 9	11:00am	Worship led by Helen Snider and Barbara Campbell
Saturday 15	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 16	11:00am	Worship led by David Paul and Richard Harvey
Sunday 23	11:00am	Worship led by Paul Elsdon
Thursday 27	11:00am	Ladies' Coffee Group. Venue tbc
Saturday 29	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 30	11:00am	Worship led by Revd Jenny Robinson

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 6	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Sarah Beaumont
Thursday 10	9:30am	Mainly Music

Thanks for flowers

Sunday May 24th Pauline Wishart
 Sunday May 31st Hugh Martin
 Sunday June 21st Jean Davies

Closing Date for articles
 for the Sept/Oct Edition
 of Church Record is
 Sunday 23rd August