

Nov-Dec
2025

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

Women of Faith



As we approach the year's end and the season of Advent and Christmas we turn our thoughts to the birth of Christ and his mother Mary. When the angel Gabriel came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." Luke records that she was 'much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God"'. As a young Jewish woman this form of address would have brought to mind the way in which the great prophets in the Hebrew Bible were addressed by God when he was calling them to an important task. Think of Moses at the burning bush or Joshua leading his people to the Promised Land. So when Mary hears from Gabriel "The Lord is with you," she is standing in the tradition of the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament.

Mary, in spite of her fears and troubled emotions, was prepared to hear the Lord's call; she replies, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

There have been many women who have heard and responded to the Lord's call throughout history: Joan of Arc, Corrie Ten Boom, Gladys Aylward, Mother Teresa of Calcutta to name a few.



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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

One woman, whose name you may not know, is Guli Francis-Dehqani. She grew up in Iran. Her father was a Muslim-born convert to Christianity who later became the Anglican Bishop in Iran. Her mother was born in Iran to second-generation British missionaries. Following the Islamic revolution of 1979, persecution of Christians in the country increased rapidly and her parents narrowly survived an attempted assassination. Just months later, her brother was murdered, aged just twenty-four. He was killed, Guli says, as "a scapegoat" for her father.

Just as Mary and Joseph became refugees in Egypt after the birth of Jesus, when Joseph was warned in a dream to flee because King Herod wanted to kill the infant, so Guli's family fled to the United Kingdom when she was a teenager. Following in her father's footsteps, she became Bishop of Chelmsford in 2021 — the first minority ethnic woman to be ordained as a bishop in the UK — and she was one of the leading candidates for Archbishop of Canterbury this year.



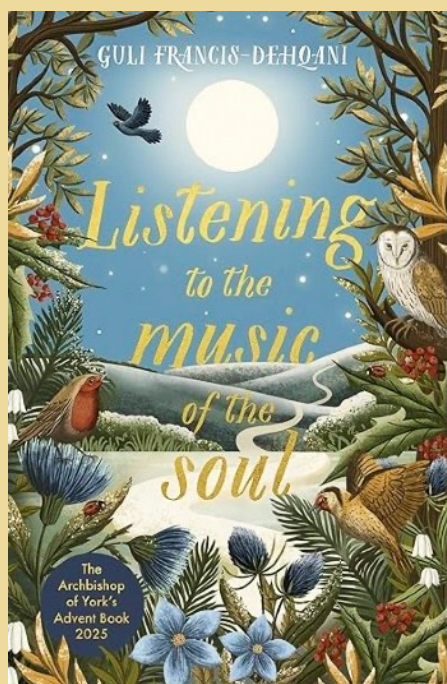
Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani

Her book, *Listening to the Music of the Soul* is the Archbishop of York's Advent book for this year. We will be looking at parts of it over a three week course. (See the notice below.)

Bishop Guli says: "My parents were extraordinary people. They had a very deep, authentic faith. I still recall a sermon my father preached in the early stages of the revolution. He said: "We preach forgiveness, we preach reconciliation, we preach being people of goodwill – and that is going to be tested. Our faith is nothing if we don't live it out when we enter times of trial and temptation."

Editors

Advent Study: 'Listening to the music of the soul' 'Violence, Angels and Reconciliation'



This Advent we will have the opportunity to explore three chapters of Guli Francis-Dehqani's book, 'Listening to the music of the soul'.

Born in Iran, Guli's family left the country in the wake of the Iranian Revolution in 1980, when she was 13 years old. Guli Francis-Dehqani is the Bishop of Chelmsford, she makes connections between the themes of Advent and her own experiences – and invites us to do the same. The three chapters we will delve into are entitled, Violence, Angels and Reconciliation. Each chapter is linked to a piece of music.

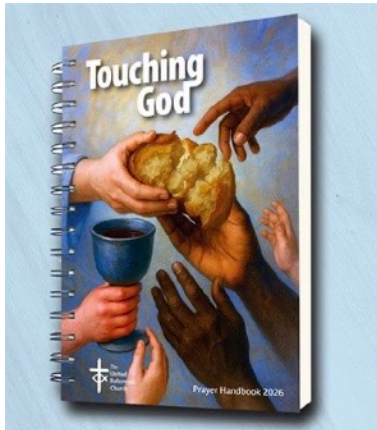
Fridays at 3:00 - 4:30pm

21 November

28 November

5 December

Touching God – The 2026 URC Prayer Handbook



The United Reformed Church is well known for its hymn writers, but is also notable for writing or creating prayers, especially prayers rooted in the scriptures. Some prayers are freely created in the moment, some crafted for one occasion, and others honed with great care over time to be printed and used on many occasions and in different contexts. We might be wary of fixed forms and authorised prayers, but wherever prayer is heartfelt it may be celebrated and treasured.

The prayers in this 2026 edition come from many and diverse writers, both from within and beyond the United Reformed Church. All of them are shaped by scripture; the lectionary-based prayers in the first part, but no less the prayers for worship together and private devotion in the second part.

Many relate to the theme for the year, reflecting on times when God comes close to us and when we, in prayer and in daily life, may come close to God. They have been composed thoughtfully, edited carefully and presented beautifully in the hope that they will find a ready home, whether from a lectern or at a bedside. May they provide words with which to pray, so that God's loving touch may be known.

As editors, we are so grateful to those who took the risk of submitting prayers and whose words often moved us deeply. We have been mutual editors of each other's work too and grateful for the process of what we hope is a refiner's fire! Thanks are also due to those at Church House who turn the text into a work of beauty. Above all, may praise be given to God who touches us through words, silence, and sacrament.

Susan Durber and Jonnie Hill,
Editors of the 2026 URC Prayer Handbook

The cost of the Prayer Handbook is £6.99 – please let me know as soon as possible if you would like me to order one for you. Payment will be on receipt of the book.

Alison Bond

Christmas Services

Saturday 13th December at 2:30pm

— 'Christmas Joy' for children and families

Sunday 14th December at 11:00am - Gift Service

— donating toys and gifts for New Citizens Gateway

Sunday 21st December at 6:00pm — Carol Service by candlelight

Thursday 25th December at 10:30am — Christmas Day service





Community Garden

At the end of August, Rachel Dring from Capital Growth, came to talk about how to identify pollinating insects. After a brief introduction we were given a chart to see how many we could spot in the garden.

If you would like to know how to identify insects that may be in your garden, follow this link:

<https://linktr.ee/growingfornaturecapitalgrowth>

Capital Growth support food growing spaces in London and our community garden is on their food growing map. For more information:

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



On Saturday 27th September we held an Apple and Pear celebration, more than 60 people aged from under six to over 60 came to the event. Fortunately, the weather was good. Apples and pears were chopped, crushed, and pressed to make amazing juice. Other apple themed activities took place in the large hall, including the *Longest Piece of Apple Peel* competition and a chance to taste a variety of different apples. There was also a talk on how to grow and care for our fruit trees.

Heather Elsdon



Creation Sunday

On 21st September St John's played host to friends from Brookside Methodist Church and St Mary the Virgin, East Barnet to celebrate the Season of Creation.

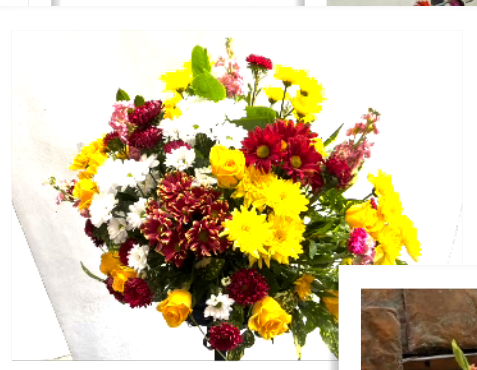


The church was decorated with floral wreaths made by volunteers at the Community Garden. Alison Bond led the service and members of all three churches led prayers and gave the bible readings. There was also an augmented choir for the occasion directed by Alan Danson with Richard Harvey on piano and organ.

Editors



Harvest Festival



Our Harvest Festival service was conducted by Revd Roger Orme on the theme of 'Different kinds of harvest', quoting a poem by Edith Sitwell, *Eurydice*:

*Love is not changed by death
And nothing is lost and
all in the end is Harvest.*

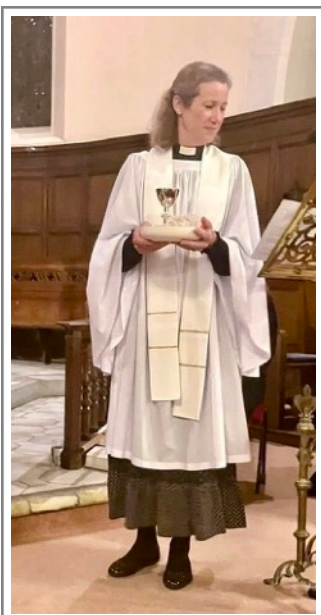
During the service Sonal Shepherd and Rebecca Hyland were welcomed in to membership of the church.

Thanks for the flower arrangements go to the Flower Committee, Marion Hopwood and Rebecca Hyland.

After the service a baked potato lunch was enjoyed by all, organised by Janet Harvey, with grateful thanks to the other willing helpers.



Licensing Service for Revd Jenny Robinson-Beswick as Priest in Charge of Holy Trinity Church, Lyonsdown on 29 September 2025



St John's and all the local churches were very well represented at this service which was conducted by the Bishop of Hertford, the Rt Revd Dr Jane Mainwaring, and the Archdeacon of Hertford, The Venerable Janet Mackenzie. The Archdeacon's inspiring sermon gave reference to the three biblical archangels: Michael, which means 'Who is like God', Gabriel, which means 'God is my strength', and Raphael, which means 'God heals', and spoke of their relevance for Jenny's ministry.

I was asked to offer one of the four official welcomes from the local community, following on from the Mayor of Barnet, Rabbi Danny Rich. Our relationship with Holy Trinity had until recently been 'on hold' for several years, so I did my best to convey the joy and privilege it had been to re-establish our links through Jenny, and how we looked forward to seeing where God would guide us, in terms of our shared mission for God's kingdom within the local community.

Alison Bond

Christmas Joy for Children and Families

On Saturday 13th December at 2.30pm in the Church we will be holding an afternoon of story, singing and crafts for children and families. We will be telling the Christmas story using figures from our crib scene and singing some Christmas carols. This will be followed by some Christmas crafts and finishing with a showing time, a final carol and some refreshments.

If you know of any children who would enjoy this, please invite them.

We will have flyers available to hand out nearer the time.

Valerie Mills



Image by Jeff Jacobs from Pixabay

CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

'Refreshing Your Ministry'

In early October I attended a Conference for URC Ministers and Lay Preachers at The Hayes Christian Conference Centre at Swanwick in Derbyshire. The conference was entitled 'Refreshing Your Ministry' organised by the Group for Evangelism and Renewal within the URC. (GEAR). The Centre had been much extended since the St John's Youth Group stayed there for the URC Holiday Forum in 1979 with Grace Orr and Revd Philip Eastman, and can now accommodate 400 people with 247 bedrooms.

There were thirty of us from a number of URC Synods around the country, including four from Thames North Synod. It was good to be able to have a time of networking together in the lounge when the bar was open in the evening.

As well as inspiring worship there were excellent speakers with subjects ranging from 'Finding Jesus', 'Healing Ministry', 'Effective Evangelism', 'Deepening our Prayer Life' and 'Being guided by the Holy Spirit'. The Bible Study on 'Discipleship' led by Revd Alex Jacob, based on the calling of the first Disciples in the Gospel of St John, helped me to think about my own faith journey and the importance of being active in my Christian journey rooted in the Bible. I would recommend the book by Alex Jacob entitled 'Discipleship' (2024) reminding us that the parables Jesus taught are 'Kingdom Parables' (Matthew Ch.13 v.44). The healing ministry of Jesus demonstrates God's kingdom power and promises. The prayer life and teaching of Jesus is kingdom-focused and his final commission to his disciples is to go and make known the kingdom by making, baptising, and teaching new disciples. He makes the point that Kingdom and discipleship are intrinsically linked. Kingdom is the message; discipleship is the method.

Each one of us can be 'Good News People' as we share the Gospel message of God's love for us through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

It was a most stimulating few days sharing together with other Christians with lively worship and encouraging teaching in a pleasant environment with good accommodation and excellent food.

Andrew Mills



The Hayes Christian Conference Centre at Swanwick

Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 4	7:30pm	Elders' Meeting
Thursday 6	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 8	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 9	10:45am	Remembrance Sunday Worship led by Alison Bond
Monday 10	7:30pm	Men's Group at <i>The Railway Bell</i>
Thursday 13	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 16	11:00am	Worship led by Jean Davies using the URC service followed by a Church Meeting
Wednesday 19	7:30pm	Fellowship: 'The Shops of London', speaker - Diane Burstein
Thursday 20	9:30am	Mainly Music
Friday 21	3:00pm	Advent Course at St John's (see article)
Saturday 22	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 23	11:00am	Worship led by Tony Alderman
Wednesday 26	11:00am	Women's Group (venue to be announced)
Thursday 27	9:30am	Mainly Music
Friday 28	3:00pm	Advent Course at St John's
Sunday 30	11:00am	First Sunday in Advent Worship led by Roz Douglas

DECEMBER

Thursday 4	9:30am	Mainly Music
Friday 5	3:00pm	Advent Course at St John's
Sunday 7	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Sarah Beaumont
Tuesday 9	7:30pm	Elders' Meeting
Thursday 11	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 13	2:30pm	Christmas Joy for children and families
Sunday 14	11:00am	Gift Service Worship led by Paul and Heather Elsdon
Wednesday 17	7:30pm	Fellowship AGM and social

DECEMBER contd.

Sunday 21	11:00am	Worship led by the Elders with the URC sermon
	6:00pm	Carol Service by candlelight
Thursday 25	10:30am	Christmas Day Worship led by Alison Bond
Sunday 28	11:00am	Worship led by the Elders

JANUARY

Sunday 4	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Tony Alderman
Sunday 11	11:00am	Worship (leader to be confirmed)

Copy for the January/February 2026 edition of Church Record
to be with the editors by Wednesday 31 December.

churchrecord2023@gmail.com

Thanks for flowers:

21st September Lesley Calder

19th October Marion Hopwood

STOP PRESS

Radka, our contact with our twin church in Svitavy has sent a letter to us all at St John's. It arrived too late to be included in this edition of Church Record, but it can be viewed online, with other news from Svitavy, by clicking on this link:

[Letter to St John's congregation](#)



A NEW MINISTER was visiting in the homes of his parishioners. At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door. He took out a business card and wrote "Revelation 3:20" on the back and stuck it in the letterbox.

When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned, but added to it was this cryptic message "Genesis 3:10".

Reaching for his Bible to check the citation, he broke into gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock". Genesis 3:10 reads: "I heard you in the garden, and was afraid for I was naked."

Seen in another church magazine
Submitted by Hugh Martin

NEWS FROM SVITAVY

Members and friends may remember that our twin church in Svitavy, in Czechia, and Filip and Květa especially, have been working to create a housing complex for elderly people in Vendolí, in their local area. When completed it will be home to twenty elderly people with support and some shared facilities. Květa says that "... hopefully the home will be a pleasant and dignified place for them for the last stage of their lives." When our friends from Svitavy visited in 2024 they showed us photos of the early stages of the project; the good news is that it is now nearing completion.

We have received the following update from Květa:



Dear friends, we are in touch with you again after a few months. During that time, the construction has made significant progress and we are approaching the final stage. The building has completely changed since the "rough" construction a year ago. Although not everything is finished, equipment and interior elements such as cabinets, tables, chairs, beds, kitchen equipment, and other furniture are still missing, but even now you can feel very comfortable inside. Large windows, wooden ceilings, parquet floors in the shared areas and a large tree in the entrance hall give the house a family atmosphere. We believe that the residents will soon settle into the new premises and feel at home. We plan to refurbish the home during the autumn and at the same time we have already launched the registration process and are looking for the employees. I believe that we will be able to create a team of people who will like to work with seniors, for whom this work will bring joy and a sense of meaning. We plan to open the home in February 2026. Thank you for supporting us from afar, both in prayers and thoughts. It means a lot to us. We look forward to planning your visit here soon so you can see the home in person.



Květa has studied to achieve qualifications in the care of elderly people and at the end of August she left her job at the Supreme Court in Brno and is now employed by Diakonia, an international organisation supporting projects that "ensure a dignified future for vulnerable people." She is already working alongside a nurse and a social worker as they prepare to welcome the first residents, and Filip has also been busy with technical issues. We are so pleased to hear that the project is so near completion, and send our friends in Svitavy our best wishes for the final few months of planning.

Editors