

Welwyn Garden City, Harpenden and Wheathampstead United Reformed Churches Magazine

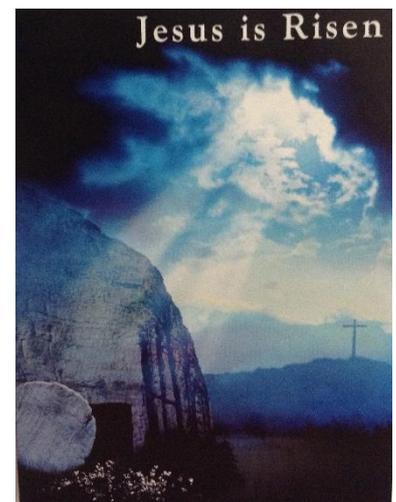


April & May 2022

We are now in the busiest time in the Christian calendar, having past Ash Wednesday and now in to Lent. Many of us will be attending some form of Lent course with others, hoping to understand more about our faith and how to be active within it. We have joined with the Anglican and Catholic Churches in Wheathampstead to study how we can be more inclusive churches and are discussing six topics to help us with this - disability, ethnicity, gender, mental health, poverty and sexuality.

Other events leading up to Easter include a walk from St Peter's Church in Gustard Wood following a donkey on Palm Sunday and a Procession of Witness walk behind a cross through the village on Good Friday. This is followed by a service in the Churchyard at St Helen's with hymns accompanied by the Salvation Army Band.

Easter Sunday is a time of great celebration for the Risen Lord and our church joins with the Anglicans either at the 5.00am Son Rise service or the later All Age Worship. All members of the three churches will have delivered Easter cards to every house in the village with all these events and services and others listed. It includes the following Bible Passage from Romans 6:4:-



“Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Our joyous Easter celebrations this year will be tinged with sadness as we think and pray for those affected by the terrible war in Ukraine. Hopefully by then there will be many of those being helped by people in this country who have volunteered to support them in so many different ways.

It is lovely to see that spring is now in full swing and how beautiful it all looks and for how much we have to thank our dear Lord!

Jackie at Wheathampstead.

Going Forward in the Wake of Covid at WGC URC

As we gradually get back into the swing of moving back into life as we remember it from 2 years ago, we still must be aware that Covid has not disappeared. We are experiencing a rise in people contracting Covid due to the relaxation of restrictions. People who succeeded in remaining clear at the height of the pandemic. Thankfully due to the vaccination programme it appears to be less serious than when it first swept the world. I understand that there is a fear that people are vaccination tired and are refusing to take the next booster. We have achieved so much due to the programme in this country so please continue to practise precautionary measures when we meet in church for worship and other activities and take the vaccine when offered.

Ukraine

Our hearts are heavy as we watch the news daily and see the atrocities and suffering in Ukraine. What can we do? How can we help?

Psalm 94 was a Daily Devotion from Rev'd Andy Braunston Minister for Digital Worship Thames North Synod and is worth reading as it very relevant to the situation today in Ukraine. Andy's Prayer is as follows

Rise up O God

Forget not your suffering people,

Bowed down with murderous rage,

Crying out for liberation from invasion.

Rise up your people O God

inspire us by your Spirit

that we may not be silent

but rage for your Kingdom to come,

Amen

The people of Ukraine are asking for our prayers so please have faith in the power of prayer and continue to pray for the victims of this war the Ukrainians, the Russian soldiers, Russian people, President Zelenskyy for his courage and resolve,

and our world leaders including President Putin for an end to this barbaric invasion of a peaceful democratic country.

Thank you all at WGC URC for the retiring collection for Ukraine which raised £306 and for the home baking stall which raised £188 on Sunday and will hopefully continue to be a success in the coming weeks. Thank you also to Helen C, Allison G and the others who contributed to this stall and to all who supported them by buying goodies on Sunday. Please bring home baking, small craft items and any other small donations for the stall in the weeks going forward.

All donations are going to The Red Cross DEC Ukraine

Farewell and welcome

Sunday was also the day when we said our formal farewell to Michael and presented him with a retirement gift cheque from us all. Michael has given us loyal and dedicated service for 16 years as a caretaker who was always willing to help in any way he could. His creative talents were an added bonus when it came to building Santa's Grotto with his hand painted scenery. We hope to see him at Thursday Club and Community Café as our honourable guest in the future.

We have been very lucky to find a replacement and we welcome Lee Nichols into our church family as our new Caretaker and hope he will be happy working with us. Lee is Tracy our Cleaner's husband so I am confident they will make a good team and we welcome them into our church family. Tracy is already joining us at Friday Bible Study and at Sunday Worship.

Up and Coming

Tea Dances

These are a huge success and well supported raising around £100 per dance for church. Jean H has organised them but is finding the responsibility and the length of time she has to be in church on a Dance afternoon too much for her. Thank you, Jean, for your commitment over the past years which have made these Tea Dances such a success.

Cherylle and Mike are going to be the organisers going forward and we thank them for enabling these to continue. However Cherylle has commitments on

25th June and 24th September so we are looking for volunteers for these dates. Mike will be available to help but we need a replacement for Cherylle on these dates. Perhaps a couple or a lady might consider helping by arriving at around midday to help prepare and let the DJ in to set up then stay for the afternoon to see the DJ is paid before he departs. Please give this some thought as it would be a huge disappointment to those who attend if we have to cancel.

Decorating Church for Easter

On Saturday 16th April from 10.30 am we will be decorating the church for Easter for the first time in 2 years which will be wonderful. Please come along and help and I will supply the Hot Cross Buns.

As in the past we have invited our church groups and families to decorate a windowsill in an Easter Theme and I would like to encourage this again this year.. Anything from Chicks to the Easter Garden is welcome so hope to see you there.

Pop Up Spring Fair Saturday 23rd April 10-2pm

We are praying for good weather and hope to have a few stalls with craft items, alongside Summer bedding plant stalls, and Home Baking. We will offer Bacon Rolls and refreshments all out at the front of the church to attract passers-by. See Allison's Poster for more details in this magazine. All proceeds will be going towards making the Tea Point a permanent fixture with cupboards, sink etc and a dishwasher if we can raise enough. We would appreciate a few volunteers on the morning to help set up and man stalls.

Volunteers for 24/7 contact

We were fortunate to have Mike on 24/7 call out and he assures us he was rarely contacted but we do need 24/7 contact details in case of emergencies. We are looking for volunteers to join us on a rota of perhaps 2 weeks or a month at a time. If you would consider coming on the Rota please speak to Helen K. Please read Helen's Plan below as to how this will work

Helen's Plan

Helen has purchased a phone and the number is 07454 543934

The phone supports CALL DIVERT to another number

Helen proposes a trial to see if this works if so the plan is :

1. Use call divert on the phone to link to e.g. her phone.
2. Leave the phone in the office and charge there as needed eg every Friday
3. Change the call divert number when handed over to someone else.
4. If there is someone in the office they can pick up - it diverts after 15 seconds of ringing.

Advantage is ... only carry 1 phone (your own), everyone knows where the phone is.

We can try this - texts won't divert but I think most people will call the phone if there is an issue.

We won't know the phone number that called?

Helen

Church Flowers

Now we are back having flowers on the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Sundays every month and on 2nd Sundays from August also 5th Sundays when we are not at Harpenden. If you would like to provide flowers in church on a special Sunday please contact me to see if your choice of date is available. We would also be grateful for any donations to the fund to help us continue to provide flowers on blank Sundays and on special occasions like Easter, Harvest. These flowers are now being distributed after Worship to members of our Church Family as in the past.

Platinum Jubilee

We are hoping to hold an outdoor Worship service on the Sunday of the Jubilee weekend open to all who wish to attend from our church groups, hall hirers and the local community followed by a bring your own picnic lunch, games and activities. We will be looking for volunteers to assist with planning and helping on the day. Please let me know if you are willing to help make this event an enjoyable and successful day.

Thank you for reading

God Bless, Joyce Nicolson Mob 07886392602 email joycen2@hotmail.com

What's coming up in Wheathampstead for April/May



One of the newly restored windows

As Jackie has explained in the letter at the start of the magazine WUC like all churches is very busy with Lent and Easter activities at present. For us it is particularly poignant as last Palm Sunday we held our 'service' outside at the side of a local playing field – hardly daring to believe that we might be back in our own buildings later in the year.

As I know you are all aware we planned a great celebration for January to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the closing service held in the church but Covid restrictions made us rethink the plan. We would like you all to make a note of the revised date of the service which will be at 4pm on Sunday 26th June when we hope you will be able to join us in the greatly improved halls building towards the rear of our site on Brewhouse Hill.

In the past few months we have completed the

decorating of the main hall and reconfigured the area around the entrance to give us a much enlarged kitchen space. This has been fitted out with cupboards and is now being decorated with replacement appliances



being saved up for. These improvements are very important as we are hoping to run a community kitchen from the building on a regular basis, starting later in the year. We are currently also raising funds to reconfigure the existing toilets to provide us with better disabled and nappy changing facilities in two new unisex toilets. The plans for the gym opening are also continuing, we have now

interviewed two candidates for the job as Centre Manager and taken delivery of quite a lot of equipment. Last weekend we held an Activity Day. It was very exciting being one of the first people to try out some of the exercise machines in the gym – even if I felt very uncomfortable for the next couple of days! The Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to run the whole site has been recognised by the Charity Commission and we are in the final stages of negotiating a lease for the site from Thames North Synod. It feels as if the end of this long road towards making our buildings viable, versatile and fit for the 21st century has almost been realised – what fun it will be just to be able to use and enjoy them.

Jackie at Wheathampstead

A vacancy Prayer

Heavenly father,
During this vacancy
Guard and grow our church
As we serve you together
In this period without a minister in charge.

Lord Jesus
We know you have plans for us
And these plans are good
We ask now that you help us share the responsibility,
Grow in your faith, love one another, care for those in need,
Reach out to others and welcome newcomers.

Holy Spirit,
Please guide those seeking the right person for our churches,
And those that are seeking the right place for their ministry,
That together we may discover your way for the future.
Seeing your Kingdom grow.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Preschool

After taking over as Preschool manager five years ago, I am pleased to announce that we received an **OUTSTANDING** grade from Ofsted following their long-awaited inspection in February! This is a truly magnificent result for us as only 2-3% of nurseries/ pre-schools have retained their Outstanding grade since the changes to the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) framework in 2021.

We received Outstanding across all 4 areas of the inspection criteria which include:

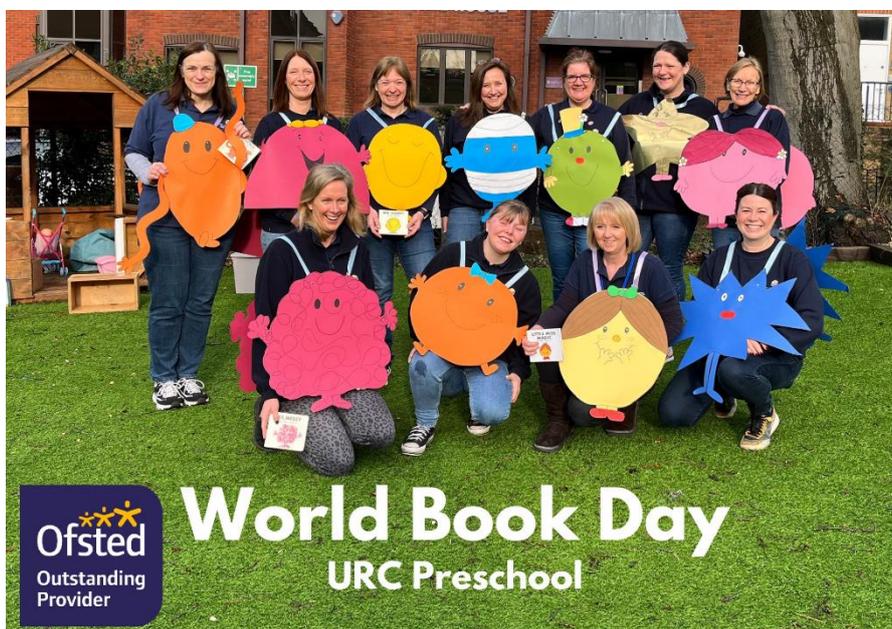
- The Quality of Education
- Behaviour and Attitudes
- Personal Development
- Leadership and Management

The Ofsted Inspector could not find any areas for improvement, and further said that this was the first time she had given an Outstanding grade to a setting!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their continued support during these last few years, and for the wonderful feedback a select few gave to the Inspector which contributed to this grading. I would also like to acknowledge my AMAZING team's commitment and hard work, as without them this result would not have been possible!

If you wish to read the full Ofsted report it can be found on our website:

www.urcpreschool.com.





There is something very special about this time of year, winter is passing, and spring is coming, there has been a lot of waiting and resting and the bulbs emerge without fail, revealing their glory, they stand proud.

As we are heading for Easter the days are getting longer and brighter and we see hope of the new season around us. Most of us long for the sunshine and warmer days.



Its time to think about and start planting seeds, we have a new season, fresh start and beginning, the seeds as they shoot bring new life. As we head towards Easter that is the message - A message of hope and life. Life through Jesus.

Whilst watching the news, we see the difficulties and horrid pictures of war on Ukraine, pictures of buildings, hospitals, schools that have been destroyed, yet through the hardship and rubble there seems so much positivity and hope. The people are united and stand proudly together to defend their country.

Let us remember in our prayers, the families, the elderly, the injured, the disabled young and old. Let us be challenged in helping and supporting as best as we can. The families, women and children that have fled to safety to securer places, having a new start, let us pray for these families to readjust and resettle as they await the outcomes of war.

Below is a psalm from engage worship for the situation and for Ukrainians

The psalmist writes:

“I call on the Lord in my distress,
and he answers me.”
Lord, we call to you in our distress.
ALL: We trust you to answer us.
We lift up the people of Ukraine
before you.
We call to you for mercy and peace.
Bring comfort to the bereaved, bring
an end to violence.

Lord, we call to you in our distress.
ALL: We trust you to answer us.
We pray for the church in Ukraine
and Russia,
give strength to use their hands for
healing,
and courage to speak truth, justice
and love.

Lord, we call to you in our distress.

ALL: We trust you to answer us.

We pray for world leaders,
guide their responses to this crisis,
may hope and grace triumph over
fear and hate.

Lord, we call to you in our distress.

ALL: We trust you to answer us.

In a moment of silence,
we lift our fears, our sorrows and our
hopes to you.

God of peace, God of love,
have mercy on our world,
have mercy on Ukraine.

Lord, we call to you in our distress.

ALL: We trust you to answer us.

Amen.

As we go through lent and the new season let us trust and turn to God for all our personal needs, giving God our worries and our anxieties. Knowing we can trust and hope in a loving God.

Life is returning to normal or as normal as possible let us look for hope and signs of God around us, in creation and the world. Let us persevere in this new season, remembering there is still covid about and that we are in a vacancy and as we adjust to returning to church life that we are all in this together as a church and a cluster. Let us look forward together, sharing, serving, and worshipping together, waiting expectantly to see what God will do.

Sharon at Harpenden

Hi All,

Michael wanted to say thank you again for the generous gift from everyone at the church which was most unexpected.

We have 3 staycations booked between April and July, and with the rising price of petrol was thinking that we would have to curtail some of things we had planned to do at each.

Now, some of it will go towards petrol to be able to travel round in the various different locations we will be staying at.

Mike has already started redesigning the garden, and once that is finished, the rest will go on an item or items for that

Mike & Cherylle C at WGC URC

The Goode Life in Lincolnshire

It is good to be writing again after what has seemed a long winter. There have been interesting and exciting times, for example finalising plans and watching the garden come to life, listening to the cacophony of sound from the flock of geese overwintering nearby, getting to know our neighbours, enjoying walks with the dogs and pinching ourselves at the absolute privilege it is to live somewhere so beautiful.

Finalising our plans for the garden has been a fun thing to do. We had decided on a particular glamping pod. We liked the quality and knew we could design it to our specifications. After several phone calls with the manufacturers, we were about to book a day to go to the factory to talk with designers in person when the question of access was raised. We had been told it would take 7 days to erect the pod on site but then discovered this was only the fixtures and fittings as the pod would arrive premade on the back of an articulated lorry. It might just fit along the road but clearing obstacles of trees, powerlines, and our garage? Can you imagine how large the crane would need to be? We were very disappointed, dusted ourselves off and thought back to the drawing board. What about Shepherd Huts. Rogers' cousin has one on their farm so she was a vital source of information and we eventually decided on a local firm and went to visit them. Shepherds' huts – as you can imagine are quite high and I must have been a sight to behold attempting to scramble into one as a rickety step ladder appeared for my descent!!! They are naturally smaller than we had originally envisaged but are so beautifully crafted and visitors will have the advantage of the use of the Garden Room so hopefully they will work very well and be a bit of a quirky place to stay.

So with that all settled and quite frightening quotes for utilities all received, planning permission was applied for at the end of last week. It was a good experience to talk to people about the vision and we received a few unsolicited letters of support from forwarded emails. I did not have to send it out as widely as I thought so thank you to those who saw it and responded and if you would like to see the supporting paper, please let me know. Praying now for the outcome. It will probably be the middle of May before we hear anything. This is the final design.....all very exciting.



It has been a strange time too! First of all there was a lot to do – but then it all felt a bit like how I imagine the Exodus – once the initial journey was made by the Israelites– then what? I think I understand their grumbling a bit more now and know why it is recommended that ministers take their time before doing anything in the church after retirement. My body mind and spirit were so used to busy working life although I knew God was calling me to a more contemplative lifestyle and my spirit craved that I have found it an uncomfortable time of letting go of what was, to embrace what is and what may be to come. I had to be strict with myself when things began to open up, so I didn't go and join everything and have to learn all over again!!!

In the end I think Covid probably helped because I had to stop. It coincided with the Pastoral Supervision course at Westminster College which was frustrating, but I was not the only covid casualty, so the course was abandoned to be rearranged soon.

Recovering from covid (with its breathlessness and low energy)– which fortunately I didn't gift to the rest of my family – for some strange reason I thought it a good idea to undertake scarifying our very large lawn by hand! I have a lot to learn!!

This lawn had not had any TLC since we bought the house and the moss growth had begun to get out of hand so little at a time it is in the process of being scarified and the moss collected to be disposed of. As I have made slow progress it started to speak to me as a good parable, especially for Lent. The moss has grown in the shade where little sun shines in the winter. The moss creates a 'thatch' (Thank you experts on You Tube!) that in turn stops rain seeping

through to water the grass so the moss gains ground and the grass that you want struggles to grow. Scarifying is a big job and not for the faint hearted (so I discovered!!) You need appropriate tools and to take the time and make the effort required to make a difference then new seed can be sown and watered. I have succumbed to better tools but fortunately, the tools God gives us never change. We only need to reflect on the Cross to know how much we are loved and forgiven, on Creation to know all God made is good including us and reflecting on God as our gardener I know that scarifying, dethatching and pruning are important for the nurture of fresh new growth!

Well, I had better get back to it!! We hope you have a very Happy Easter and keep safe and well. If covid comes to call - love and prayers for a good recovery and maybe just leave the lawn until you are feeling completely better!!

Every blessing

Jane and Roger



Christian Aid Week May15-21

It is a difficult time to be asking for donations when our hearts and minds are focussed on Ukraine but droughts have become more intense and more frequent throughout the world and this year Christian Aid are making this their crucially important focus.

They take the example of Jessica in Zimbabwe whose children often go to bed on an empty stomach. "It pains me to send them to bed hungry," Jessica says. "One year we had no rain. The scorching sun burnt my crops just as they were about to bloom." Our gifts could help her to set up water taps and grow drought resistant crops. 7 out of 10 people in Zimbabwe rely on farming for income and food.

If you would like to give something, you could either catch me at church or phone me (322339) or go to our just giving page. You have to put our justgiving address at the very top of the page where it says "google.com". The address is : www.justgiving.com/fundraising/wgcurc . Please ignore the "£100 target" kindly supplied by Google; I hope we will do a wee bit better than that! Many thanks. Robert

Psalm 121

A song of ascents.

1I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from?

2My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

3He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber;

4indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

5The Lord watches over you—

the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

6the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The Lord will keep you from all harm—

he will watch over your life;

8the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

A wonderful Psalm for these troubled times. How often do I walk along, staring down at my feet, at my phone, or just lost in my own thoughts, and worries. Recently, I had very good reason to Lift my eyes up. I had a rather frightening attack of vertigo last father's day. The world spun I couldn't even stand up and it went on for hours until the ambulance arrived and I was taken to hospital given medication and it stopped. For weeks following though I would start to feel dizzy if I looked down for too long. My screen time certainly went down as looking down at my phone for any longer than a few minutes at a time would start my head spinning. I spent a lot of time looking up to the horizon to the sky and hills and away from my phone or my feet and every time this verse came into my head, a gentle reminder of God's care and I suspect humour. In college I remember our college campus minister Dave taking us all for a walk around the campus for a prayer walk and asking us to not talk to just look and just notice what God had brought to our attention when we got back we talked about what we had seen. The usual spring flowers, squirrels, bunnies and other students and laughter and sunshine. All signs of Gods renewal after the long winter and promises of the coming summer months and end of exams. But the thing that had struck me was that on the west side of the campus campanile clock the hands were missing from that side, something you would think would be quite obvious, but apparently not. No one else had seen it. I checked again on my way home just to make sure I hadn't imagined it, indeed they were not

there, How long had they been like that? How many times had we walked passed that giant clock face and not noticed? No one knew. But it spoke to me that God has his own time for everything, and that he is with us in the waiting. A message that has stuck with me for a long time. I would encourage us all to take our own prayer walk with God this spring and just be mindful of what He is drawing out attention and focus to.

Jenny at WGC URC

CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

Loads of birthdays in April, starting on 1st, shared by Mary D. and Melvyn D. followed by the twins, Howard and Xander, who will be 8 on 9th (amazing how the years have flown by!). Derek G. is next on my list on April 12th, then Margaret T. on 15th, Karen Mc. On 18th, Skye N. who will be 15 on 20th, Sanjay on 21st, Graham D. on 23rd, Arthur T. on 26th, and lastly, Pat D. who will be 94 on 29th!

Moving on to May , we start with Margaret K. on 1st, then Luke A. who will be 11 on 5th, Laura F. on 7th, Nathan C. on 10th, Joyce D. on 16th, Nano W. on 20th Marianne S. on 25th, and Theresa R. on 26th.

We wish all our friends a very Happy Birthday when it comes round and we hope they each really enjoy their special day.

There are also a number of Wedding Anniversaries to celebrate in April, starting with:-

Joyce & Bruce, celebrating their 51st on 12th,

Irene & Roger, celebrating their 68th on 17th,

Helen & Allen, celebrating their 46th, also on 17th,

Janet and John, celebrating their 41st on 18th.

We send our love and congratulations to them all on their special days.

Please continue to remember those in our church family who need our prayers at this time, especially Laura, who is facing another round of cancer treatment over the next few months with great courage and faith. We pray that the treatment will help to reduce the pain and swelling in her arm and keep her stable. We thank God for His sustaining presence and comfort at this challenging time. Thank you.

Ann Meers at WGC URC On behalf of our Pastoral Teams

Saturday Families Church at WGCURC

Saturday Families Church began in January, fortnightly on Saturday mornings, as WGCURC's worship event for families with younger children. It's similar to the popular Breakfast Church we had been running before COVID, though starting at the later time of 10.30 with light refreshments rather than breakfast.

Children can enjoy the toys in Main Hall and join in some crafts, and as the weather improves we will be playing in the church garden, too. After tidying up, we are spreading out into a semi-circle in the Main Hall for our time of worship for around 20 minutes, using pictures and music on the big TV. Some of our 4 year-olds love dancing and it is delightful to see the enthusiasm they are bringing to all the action songs. Last week we told the story of the lost sheep, and made pictures of sheep with cotton wool bodies, woolly tails, and googly eyes. Everyone had a piece of wool to hold for our woolly prayers:

Wool is soft – thankyou Jesus for caring for us. Make us caring to others.

Wool is strong – thankyou Jesus for protecting us. Keep us safe through all life's challenges.

Wool can tie things together – give us strong families and friendships, Lord, knit us together as your church, and make our country united too.

Wool keeps people warm – warm us with your love and the fire of your truth. Give us passion to live life well and make a difference to the world.

In our sermon about the 10 commandments at the beginning of March, one of our 7 year olds suggested

'Here is another commandment: Don't bomb people's houses '

There are so many refugees in Ukraine. Bless them with your warmth and protection, and send them the care and support they need.

AMEN

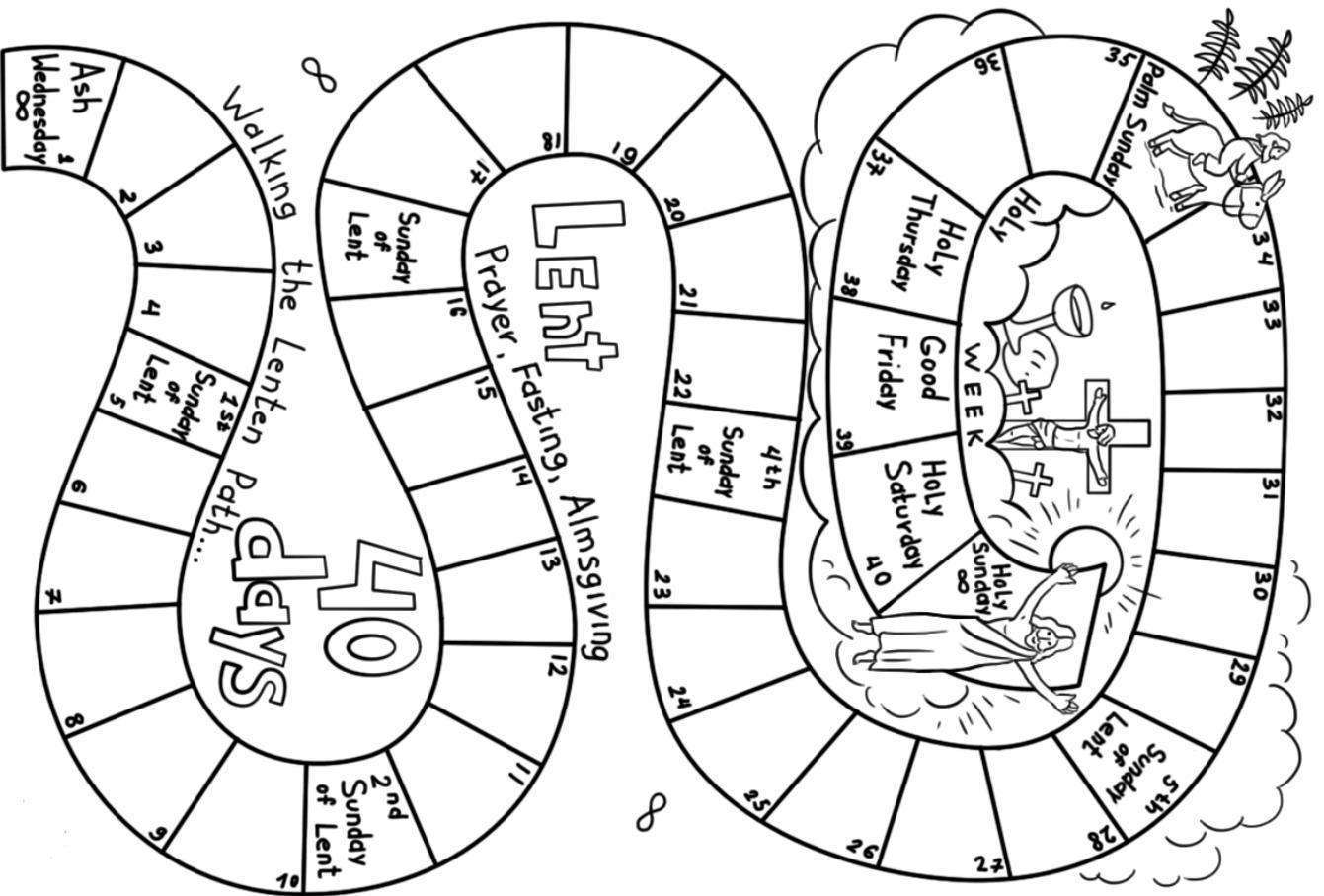
Wendy

Communities and Families worker at WGC URC

Jesus Temptation in the Wilderness

H P Y Y K I H D A W B X E D S W P T X H S W U Q
 W I L D E R N E S S Y X O A Z I E D S X M E N O
 B K D T M J E C J X P E U F C I W M C E O A N K
 M T M O J L E X P O N S O P W F N L V C D E Y V
 Q X Y O G H Z A B Z R J P L W I S G I T G Q T Y
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 Y T R T O D U U A Y Z S V G B Y F M Y C I I W S
 C R K P R W Q O D V L T O K H E E I T S K Q B S
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 R J L S X U L T E M P T A T I O N H L N E T P A
 P K J D C N S H T M C B Z X D M C Y O L P T N S
 V S A O P S C E T P P N S X A D X O K H V G M N
 H C P E N R E B J O A L B N E B D K E I E G W C
 H J I B R K E V N A D X E T R K O K G L P L C D
 S A T A N K G L Q Q C X R U B E P O S F S G V H

- Judea Jesus Temptation Seclusion
- Satan It is Written Bread Ministering
- Angels Temple Lord your God worship
- Kingdoms Become bread Forty Days Wilderness



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Please can I have any articles for the next magazine by the 20th May 2022.
Please send by email or contact me by phone for WGC URC & Wheathampstead
articles. For Harpenden URC articles please contact Sarah Connor Many thanks,
Allison Giles

I hope you have enjoyed reading this magazine. If you have, please consider
sending us an article, I'm sure we would enjoy what you have to say. If you
would like to contribute and are not really sure what, please contact one of the
people above, who I'm sure could give you some suggestions.

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