Welwyn Garden City, Harpenden and Wheathampstead United Reformed Churches Magazine







February & March 2022

Dear everyone, elders, families and friends, in our three churches Welwyn, Garden City, Harpenden and Wheathampstead.

New Year's Eve seems so long ago now that I thought an opening prayer, previously shared by Jane, that has always stayed with me, would me more appropriate, and accompanied by some encouraging verses from scripture which I hope will inspire you:

May God make our year a happy one. Not by shielding us from all sorrow and pain, But by strengthening us to bear it, as it comes.

'For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me **strength**.' Philippians 4:13

Not by making our path easy, But by making us sturdy to travel any path.

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.' Proverbs 3:5-6

Not by taking hardships from us, But by taking fear from our heart.

'So do not **fear**, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.' Isaiah 41:10

Not by granting us unbroken sunshine (although God did during lockdown 2020) But by keeping our face bright, even in the shadows. 'When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the **light of the world**. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' John 8:12

Not by making our life always pleasant, But by showing us when people and their causes need us most. And by making us ready to be there to help.

The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, **you did for me**.' Matthew 25:40

As we enter 2022, wherever you find yourself, perhaps embarking on a new challenge, maybe recovering from surgery, planning an overdue holiday, we can be sure of God's love for each and everyone of us, and of His presence when we are faced with uncertainty. These verses remind us that the road ahead may be hard at times, but God promises to strengthen us, to hold us up, to guide us, and to protect us from harm.

Our churches are currently without a minister, but it is not the first time. We may not know quite what the future holds or when a new minister will be appointed but God does, and he never fails us or lets us down. The Lord has plans for the future life of our churches, for us, our families and our children. God gives us hope and as a church community we are all connected and can support each other and our elders, as they lead us through this period of change.

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' Jeremiah 29:11

For me, January 2022 has brought my favourite conditions for morning dog walking. I do love spring blossom and autumnal leaves but there is something special about cold, frosty, glorious sunny mornings that

alerts my senses. The clean fresh air awakens me, the sunshine warms me and presents our neighbourhood in an amazing light. Everything is crystal clear. If I stand still and pay attention, I am sure to see, hear, or experience something so beautiful it takes my breath away. Maybe a dew drop on a luscious green leaf, the scent of pine trees, a robin hopping in the undergrowth, a colourful flower bud peeking through the ground. God's beauty is everywhere. It reminds me how content I am with what I have, and in doing so provides me with a comforting reassurance of God's presence.

January has also brought longer days, just a few minutes each day and by the end of the month the sun is setting an hour later. Have you seen some of the spectacular sunsets this month? Burnt orange semi circles in pinky-blue skies, a wonder to observe. Just another hour of daylight seems to lift my spirit, it is like a free gift.

May 2022 bring you all the things you hope for, an end to Covid restrictions as the NHS and government develop further strategies to keep us safe, and most importantly the reassurance that God is right beside us and He will sustain us through whatever uncertainties we face.

With blessings to all, Laura, WGC URC WGC URC Mission Development

Please see the attached poster for details of the day with John Bell on the 7th May at Wigmore Church in Luton.

<u>Alpha</u>

We have started our next Alpha Course on zoom on Wednesday evenings from 8pm – 9.30pm and it is a great opportunity to discuss life's big questions and Christian faith. The course will run until Easter and then a few weeks afterwards – doesn't matter if you can't come every week. Each session starts with a half-hour video so it's also possible to watch the video earlier in the week and join from 8.30 for the discussion. This course has been going many years and improved over time, with recently updated videos which include interviews with people from many parts of the world. After watching the video, it's always interesting to discuss some of the questions in a small group and hear everyone's perspectives as we explore together. Please do join us.

Bible Study Course

A really informative course from the Bible Society for anyone who wants to find out more about the Bible, will be starting Tuesday 25 January at 8pm fortnightly, over an 8-week period. To join in either course please contact Liz at <u>wgc.urc.community.01@gmail.com</u> tel 07834 347755 or Wendy, <u>wendy.lidgate@outlook.com</u> tel 07904 517384.

Thank You Service

On 15.5.22, we will be having our next Thank You Service.

If you have had your prayers answered and would like to share the blessings you received, please get in touch with me and I will either read your testimony on the 15th May or else arrange for you to share it with our church family on the day.

Mid Herts Book Club

Would you like to join our Book Club? We are currently meeting on Zoom every 6-8 weeks to discuss the book we have read.

It is an opportunity for anyone who likes to

read or is interested in exploring Christian fiction or non-fiction to join and share a spiritual journey with other like-minded people.

For more information, please contact Liz on wgc.urc.community.01@gmail.com

<u>Holidays</u>

I am looking forward to celebrating Annabelle's first birthday with her in Edinburgh and will be away from 3 March until (including) 8 March.

This is a photo of her taken at Christmas. I am so blessed.

Facebook

Please like **The URC Community Group of Welwyn Garden City** Facebook page and feel free to share any of the posts that you feel may be of interest.

Thank you for reading. God Bless you and your loved ones

Liz (Mission Developer)





United Reformed Church Thames North Synod Heartland Local Area Group invite you to

A day with John Bell



Saturday 7th May 2022 @ Wigmore Church, Luton LU2 9TE 10.00—12.30 The Imagination as a resource for faith An interactive seminar exploring spirituality

1.30—4.00 Singing the gospel in the 21st Century A music workshop new for this event.

Tickets £10.00 per session, or you can buy a whole day ticket for £15.00. Please bring a packed lunch if staying for the day.

Drinks will be available.

Sessions begin promptly, late arrivals admitted appropriately.

JOHN BELL is a Resource Worker with The Iona Community, who lectures, preaches and conducts seminars across the denominations. He is a hymn writer, author and occasional broadcaster, but retains a primary passion for congregational song. John is based in Glasgow and works with his colleagues in the areas of music, worship and spirituality.

Tickets are limited to 100 per session and are available through your church contact.

Covid restrictions may apply.

Mid Herts cluster Vacancy news from Harpenden.

Many of you know since Jane retired in September last year we are in Vacancy. We miss Jane's leadership in our Churches and activities in the wider Heartland group. Both our individual and joint Worship teams are providing a varied range of services which are available on-line and in Church, filling the services normally taken by Jane with visiting preachers, lay preachers and Worship team members. All this would not be possible without the Tech Teams input!

As part of the Mid Herts Cluster Joint Elders meetings, we have been working towards the next steps in the process since well before Jane left. Without providing all the documents we need to use as Elders and members of the Vacancy Group to assist us, I hope we can explain the first part of process simply.

- Jane gave notice
- Joint Elders work on first drafts of individual Pastoral Profiles/Church reviews etc.
- Jane retires (Sept 21)
- Elders work on individual and joint plans providing worship including preachers etc.
- Joint Elders form a Vacancy Group (two from each Church) to work with Elders and Moderators etc.
- Joint meeting with Revd Jim Dalgleish regarding officially declaring a joint Vacancy in Mid Herts Cluster. (14 Jan 22)
- Joint Elders and Vacancy group to provide basic information (Stats membership, income etc) to enable Moderators and the Pastoral Committee, to start the process of scoping.

Next steps (time frame is open ended).

- Arrange a meeting with the joint Elders and Vacancy Group and Convenor of the Synod Pastoral Committee
- Work on a Joint pastoral profile that reflects our individual Church profiles (this will be a challenge) then submit finished profile to Moderator.
- The profiles to be sent out to Ministers once scoping/profiles are completed for them to view and respond hopefully!
- Ministers CV sent for review by the Vacancy Group (only one invitation issued).

- Possible invitation to meetings and to Preach with a view.
- Voting by Church members
- Possible call to a new Minister!

If you have a question regarding the Vacancy/process please address in the first instance to your Elder, (Correct process must be followed and will be subject to confidentiality regarding any candidate etc)

Many thanks

Phil Vallé on behalf of Harpenden Elders and Vacancy Group.

Harpenden URC has a childrens' theatre group (Perform) hire the church. We have received this email from them and we thought people might be interested in going to this performance:

I wanted to let you know about an exciting project we're working on at Perform. As you may know, we write all our own shows for the children and have done for 22 years. We've always believed in giving the children age-appropriate material to perform. Before I started Perform I used to appear in West End musicals and my business partner Will Barnett was a musical director so we've wanted to combine our previous careers with Perform for a long time.

Therefore in February half-term we are going to be taking a brand new musical called *Jungle Rumble* to the West End - performing at The Fortune Theatre in Covent Garden from 14-20th February. It's a fast and funny musical suitable for children from 3 upwards and performed by a brilliant West End cast.

I'm currently working on spreading the word (as it's our first venture) and I wondered if you could share this link with any families you know as we'd love to reach out to as many young families as possible. Tickets start at £15.

https://www.atgtickets.com/shows/jungle-rumble/fortune-theatre/

With best wishes,

LUCY QUICK

PRINCIPAL PERFORM

URC Harpenden



As we look back at 2021 it was great as we started to open and return to a little bit of normality, after being shut for most of 2020 with all churches closed. We held our first crib service with our knitivity and our normal Christmas day service in December 2021 sharing the real meaning of Christmas. It is great to be able to zoom the services for others to be able to

connect with the service, the community and God.





The new year has now started, some have made new year resolutions, (how are these going?) it is great to start a new year, with a new beginning, there is so much to look forward to and hope.

As we look around as we go on our walks or step out into the garden there are signs of new life around us, bulbs shooting and berries to

feed the birds. Provision is there from God. Soon it will be time to start planning the seeds for this year. Let us also think about what we can plan and sow practically and spiritually for ourselves in 2022. The new cycle begins! As you journey through 2022, think about what are your hopes and dreams? What outcomes would you



like to see? Most of us would hope that covid would disappear and for more know more deaths from this awful virus. Let us make this our prayer.

We wait and look forward to the hope of a new minister as we start the process of being in vacancy.

We have so much to look forward to at URC Harpenden in 2022, we have been able to offer services each week. We have visiting speakers booked, an anniversary service is planned to celebrate our 200th Anniversary on Sunday 15th May 2022, a Jubilee weekend, the URC also celebrates their 50th Anniversary this year, brighter days are coming.

Let's use this prayer for vacancy.

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 guise those seeking the right person for our church, 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

At URC Harpenden our Baby group for babies 0–1-year-old runs on a Tuesday afternoon 1.30 – Baby Roo's and kangaroo club on a Friday at 10 are open for babies and toddlers. Parents and families can meet in a relaxed space to chat and play.

We continue to offer our Connect activities online following the lectionary year C throughout 2022.

You can look at these activity ideas on our fb pages or click the link below

https://www.facebook.com/Harpendenurc

Whatever you do or plan in 2022, Have a very happy prosperous 2022, let God guide us through this year.

Sharon Sookrah

Service Times				
Sunday 10.30				
February 2022				
6 th Morning Service				
13 th Morning Service				
20 th Communion				
27 th Morning Service				
During the covid Pandemic, please check our website/facebook page to confirm that we are open				
27 th Morning Service During the covid Pandemic, please check our				

CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

Our first birthday in February belongs to Laura's husband, Mark on 6th, followed by Karen Mc.'s son, Samuel who will be 18 on 11th, Margaret Ch. On 25th, Reuben C. who will be 8 on 25th and lastly, Peter K. who will be 95 on 27th!

Moving on to March, Milly Mc. and I share a birthday on 3rd, then Brenda B. on 12th, Robert H. on 23rd, Jonathan S. who will be 10 on 24th, Sandra R. on 25th, Frank & Lorraine's son, Karl, who will be 21 on 26th and Margaret H. on 27th.

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

We send Wedding Anniversary congratulations to three of our friends in February and March:-

Mike & Cherylle on their 45th Anniversary on the 22nd January,

Alison & Graham on their 52nd Anniversary on February 7th,

Margaret & Brian on their 64th Anniversary on 15th February

Jenny & Scott on their 20th Wedding Anniversary on March 7th

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

We send our heartfelt sympathy to Olive, on the death of her sister, to Sanjay & Sharon, on the death of Sanjay's father, to Mary D on the death of her sister and to Jonathan Bottoms on the death of his mother Gill.

Please continue to remember those in our church family who need our prayers at this time and let us make sure that no one gets forgotten. We are looking forward to meeting up again in church for our Sunday morning services after another Covid break.

Thank you.

Ann Meers. On behalf of our Pastoral Teams.



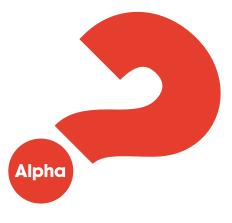
Join the conversation #TryAlpha

When & Where: WGC UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Date & Time: Wednesday Evenings Jan- March

Address: most sessions will be on zoom

URL: Contact <u>Wendy.Lidgate@outlook.com</u> Tel 07904517384



Harpenden Church Christmas Donations 2021

Over the Christmas period we had various collections in support of two of our local charities. On Giving Away Day we collected £820 for the St Albans Women's Refuge together with what seemed like a record number of wrapped presents for the children. At the same time we also had a collection for the Rennie Grove Hospice which amounted to £800. On top of all this we also made a donation of £100 to Crisis at Christmas. Considering many people had to stay isolated at home due to the pandemic and the fact we had to cancel our Carols by Candlelight service these sums are quite remarkable and so a "big thank-you" to everyone who so generously donated over this period.

Norman Deas







David Jonathan of Grassroots, Luton Council of Faiths and Near Neighbours "humbled" at New Year's Honour

Luton man shares MBE for strengthening community cohesion with those who have supported his work over two decades **By Steve Sims- submitted by Rev Jane W**

A <u>Luton</u> man who has spent two decades of his life building community cohesion and interfaith relations in the town has been rewarded with an MBE.

David Jonathan, 53, of the Grassroots Programme, Luton Council of Faiths and the Near Neighbours Programme says he feels "humbled" after receiving the accolade in the Queen's New Year's Honours.

Following Friday's nights announcement, David told the Luton News: "It is with a sense of gratitude and privilege that in 2021, I marked 20 years of my work with Grassroots and Luton Council of Faiths and 10 years with the Near Neighbours Programme. During these years, the focus of my work has always been on strengthening peace building and reconciliation by appropriate mediation and constant relationship building across Luton's diverse communities

"I feel humbled and honoured to be included in the Queen's New Year's Honours List 2022 and to receive the MBE for services to community cohesion and interfaith relations in Luton, but I would like to share this with the people of Luton and many others who have supported and enabled the work over the years. He added: "John Donne's phrase 'no man is an island' is a poignant reminder that human beings do badly when isolated but thrive if they are part of a community. There is nothing that I could have done all by myself. 'I am because we are', as says the African Philosophy of Ubuntu.

"So, while I shall be ever awed by, and thankful for, this honour bestowed upon me, I also remain grateful to the people and diverse communities of Luton, my past and present co-workers, colleagues, volunteers, trustees and partner agencies which include Council for World Mission and United Reformed Church who invited me initially for a 4-year term in 2001 to develop inter faith work in Luton." David said over the years, four different Church denominations have consistently supported inter faith work in Luton through the Grassroots Programme - The Church of England St Albans Diocese, The Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton, The Methodist Church Beds, Essex & Herts District, and The United Reformed Church Thames North Synod.

He said: "I am also grateful to the Luton Borough Council, Luton Rising (formerly known as London Luton Airport Ltd) and Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation for supporting inter faith work in Luton through Luton Council of Faiths.

"And thanks to Near Neighbours Programme for supporting nearly 300 different community projects and initiatives, over the last 10 years, through Luton's diverse community and voluntary sector organisations.

"It is all this work that has kept Luton's diverse faith communities together, consistently over the years and that has enabled Luton to stand stronger, taller and resilient in the worst as well as at the best of the times."

Recalling Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr inspirational quote 'Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can dthat,' David added: "At Grassroots, Luton Council of Faiths and Near Neighbours Programme and many other local faith and community organisations I have had the privilege to work with, we feel we are called to light a candle rather than to curse the darkness. We are called to embrace the 'otherness' of all those 'others' who are often perceived as enemies, despite the fact that they share common aspirations for a better world for all, just like we do.

"Long may our work continue to inspire communities to stand together in solidarity with one another and send a strong message of defiance to all those who seek to divide in the name of race, religion or ethnicity, by promoting prejudice and hate. May we appreciate the strength that comes from being united in concern and work together for the well-being of all and that of our common home, the planet Earth."

Family Church on Saturdays

Jan 15th, Feb 5th & 19th, Mar 5th & 19th at WGCURC AL8 6PR 10.30 am to 12.15

Bring your young family for a relaxing morning with playtime, toys and crafts, a bible story & simple Christian songs. Refreshments provided.



No charge but donations appreciated Contact: Wendy.Lidgate@outlook.com tel: 07904 517384



Easy peasy smoked mackerel kedgeree to add some flavour to January from Becky

The last 2 years have been a challenge for us all. The food challenge can be both dull and exciting. Before the Pandemic if I fancied a dish, it was usually for 6 to 8. No problem, I would just invite friends around. Friends, good food,

good wine and good fun spending a night at my table. That is what made me happy. I was also hit by illness that made eating difficult. Not one to back off from a challenge, I challenged myself. It was to find food that was exciting and healthy and could be made in amounts suitable for one or more. One day I will have friends again at my table, but meanwhile I can have good food by myself. This is a dish my kids loved but could be quite easily adapted to 1 or 2 servings.

INGREDIENTS:

Smoked mackerel skinned Rice 1 or 2 portions 1 or 2 handfuls of peas 1 or 2 eggs for Hard boiling Small onion Garem Masala spice to taste Chicken cube Salt and pepper to taste.

In one pot cook rice with chicken cube, peas and eggs for boiling.

Chop up the onion and skin and flake the mackerel

When rice is ready, drain it and put it in a bowl. Remove the shell from the egg. Slice the egg. Add Garem Masala, salt and pepper to taste. (Garem Masala, is flagrant, with lovely spices without the heat)

Put all ingredients together. Adjust the amounts of seasoning to your own taste.

One of those lovely meals we forget is out there. All the flavours remain distinct, and the meal is a treat of many flavours. Bon appetito

WINTER WALKING

Although we walk more when the weather is kind, we had 3 lovely walks between Christmas and New Year, which made up for several days of inactivity!

We were staying with my son over Christmas, and all went to Elvaston



Castle Country Park, just outside Derby, for a couple of hours. We were 7 adults, a teenager, a baby and a rather bouncy Staffie. The weather was cold and damp, but it is a beautiful 300 acre park, around an early 1800s gothic revival mansion (based on a 1633 house). It is owned by Derby County Council and was opened in 1970 as one of the first country parks in England. They feed the birds every day, and we saw a robin, bluetits, coal tits, a great tit, a

nuthatch, sparrows, pigeons, and rooks.

The following day, Derek and I walked a 5-mile circular walk from Calke Abbey (National Trust), round through Ticknall, again in rather grey weather (although not damp!) and quite heavy going through some muddy bits. The walk was in a Christmas book of pub



walks in Derbyshire (though there was a 1-hour wait for lunch at the pub so we had a drink and pressed on).

On the Thursday, we walked with family and friends (5 adults, 1 baby) a 7.5 mile circular walk from Wilstone Reservoir (near Tring), taking in 3 canals (the Wendover and Aylesbury Arms of the Grand Union Canal and the Grand Union Canal itself) and 2 reservoirs (Wilstone and Tring). Again, a very grey day, though dry (in spite of forecast rain), and very heavy-going muddy paths for quite a lot of the walk. We were quite tired by the end, but had a lovely day out, and saw the ongoing restoration work on the Wendover Arm. And we had a lovely meal in Tring to finish the day.

Dear All,

We hope that you are well and bearing up during these strange times. Well, Olaf is now almost a year old. Remember Olaf? No, not the snowman from Frozen, but a calf born on the farm last winter, and christened by Rose. So we thought you might like to see how he has grown from small beginnings...





...and he really has grown! Having the benefit of spring, summer and autumn grass, as well as milk from his mum, you can see what has happened:

To put things in perspective, the next photo shows him next to his mum. He is well on the

way to catching her up. Ordinarily, he would have been weaned-off at eightmonths-old, but because his brothers and sisters were born in August he will wait until April or May, along with them. As you can also see, one of the main winter jobs on the farm is feeding the cattle. So far, the winter has been fairly

kind. We avoided the worst of storm Arwen and although we have had plenty of rain it has been "spread out" time-wise, which has allowed it to soak in and do some good rather than running off down the ditch to the river Parrett. The other current job is the annual trim-up around the garden. I start to feel rather guilty about such carbon release, but I really do



need to be able to get to the back door of the house and also to the garden shed, both of which can easily get obscured by a year's growth! Sarah and Rose were here for two weeks over Christmas so that was marvellous. It was a pity to say goodbye to them as they returned to Sandwich, but the way the time flies it will soon be half-term. Rose is getting along well in Year 1 at school – I think she enjoys the Maths more than the English though. My father continues to potter along, but this is not the best time of year for him as he can't sit outside with his newspaper.

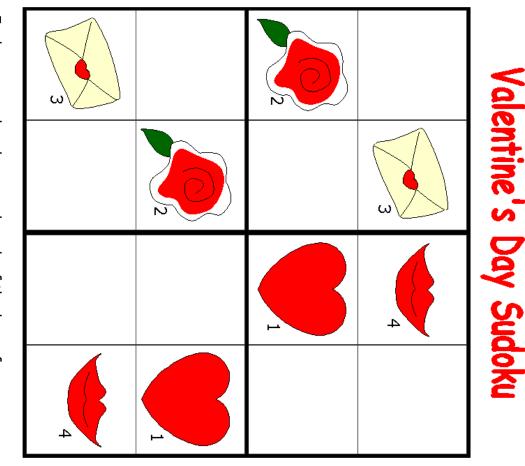
We have been continuing with Zoom services on the first and third Sundays each month, and in-person services at Middle Lambrook for the second and fourth Sundays. This allows us to meet up with the members of our congregation who do not join us on Zoom, so we are therefore catering for different requirements. On the second Sunday we get our minister, Rev Rowena Francis, who belongs to the Mid-Somerset Group of churches – we borrow her, our church being part of the remnant of the South Somerset Group of churches when it disbanded a few years ago. However, we still have good connections with the other two churches that remain from the old group (Martock and Templecombe), after the king-pin church, Yeovil, closed. Indeed, members from these churches turn up on Zoom, so it is a bit like old-times. On the fourth Sunday we rely on a lay-preacher if one is available, and if not we take the service ourselves. It is straight-forward to pick hymns, readings and prayers, but it is the sermon part of the service that can be a bit of a problem to derive. So we have found it can still be fulfilling if we just have a few thoughts about the readings, a sort of semi-Bible study. On the whole it is good to have a chance to say a few words about what a particular text says to you. We are also having a proper Bible study on Zoom every other Wednesday evening. We are working through Luke and Acts, doing a chapter each time. So it is going to take us a while to get to the end of Acts, but that is OK. Moreover, this is something that would not really have happened in ordinary times, because we wouldn't have been turning out to go to each other's houses in the middle of winter! So God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform.

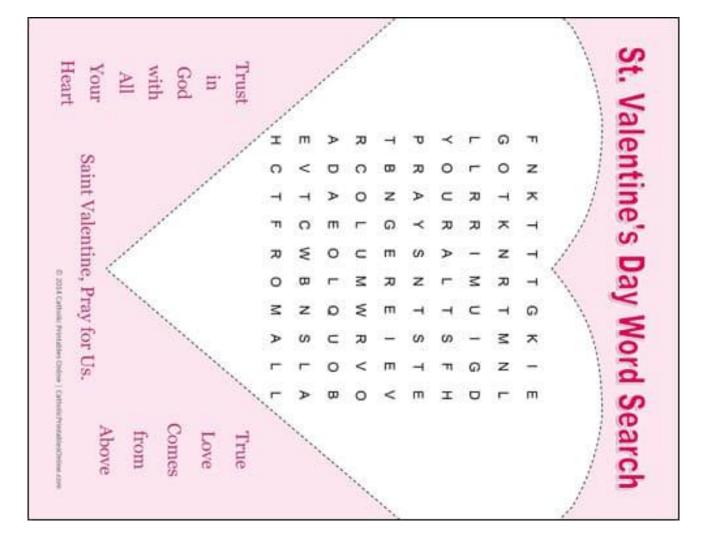
Best wishes, Steve, Sarah and Rose.

PS. We are still catching your services on YouTube! Many thanks!

KID'S CORNER







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Please can I have any articles for the next magazine by the 20th March 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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