

Welwyn Garden City, Harpenden and Wheathampstead United Reformed Churches Magazine



February & March 2025

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you.

February is often a month in which people like to think about love. Often the focus is specifically on romantic love because St. Valentine's Day falls in the middle of the month. This day has become a focus for love over the years, and that only seems to be increasing with the amount of commercial activity and products that we see each year.

Yet, we know that there is more to love than what we see represented on television, in our newspapers, and on Valentine's Day cards. Romantic love is a wonderful and joyful thing, but it is only but one example of the whole spectrum that love fills.

And we find this illustrated throughout our Scriptures as we read about how God is the very essence of love, how God loves us, and how we are called to respond to that love in the way that we live our lives.

John expresses all this clearly in his first letter when he writes,

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Paul defines something of what loving one another means in his great praise of love that we know so well from his first letter to the church in Corinth. In that passage he reminds us that,

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Here we see it expressed clearly what love truly means. Love is not expressed through anger, envy, bitterness, or greed, but is demonstrated through patience, kindness, grace, and trust. It is the expression of the very being of God, and when we know God and are filled with His Holy Spirit then our lives should be guided by that same love.

And should we ever doubt the love that God has for us, then we need only to look at what John tells us in his gospel. Words that are very familiar to us, but words that should never lose their power or beauty.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

This is God's love fully demonstrated for us. Love that has no limit. Love that is deeper and truer than anything we could ever imagine. "*Love divine,*" as Charles Wesley reminds us, "*all loves excelling.*" And love that, as Isaac Watts so powerfully puts it, "*demand my soul, my life, my all.*"

February falls neatly between the celebrations of Christmas and Easter, which seems to be a good time to remind ourselves about the love of God. God who comes to us in Jesus at Christmas, and God who dies for us on the cross and is raised to life again at Easter to reveal the wonder of His love and set us free.

May we rejoice in God's love and seek to live our lives in ways that reflect that love to everyone around us.

In His name,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Daryl', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

News from Wheathampstead

Looking forward to 2025 as it gets well underway. We have had our first Churches Together meeting with the Anglican and Catholic Churches in the village and planned early year activities, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity worship, World Day of Prayer, Lent Groups to be arranged, Good Friday Procession and churchyard service among others.

We have been a homeless church again for a month whilst the halls have had massive work taking place to improve the heating after receiving a Government Energy Efficiency Grant of £73,000. We found out that we had received the grant in November 2024 and the work to be completed by 14 February 2025! With many challenges along the way this is now nearly completed. The hall has had all the inside outside walls insulated and is in the process of being redecorated. Air source heat pumps have been installed and we have solar panels fitted to the church roof. Also, the flat roofs at either end of the hall building have been replaced, so hopefully no more leaks! We are looking forward to welcoming you to our 'warm' building before the winter is out! Songs of praise to be held at 3pm on 16 March will be a good opportunity.

We have some extremely bad news to tell of our organist of many years, Gill Chapman, after appearing to recover well from an operation three years ago she fell ill again in November which was assumed to be a virus. Seeming to recover from this she attended our Community kitchen dinner before Christmas with her husband Brian but the day before Christmas was admitted to hospital and after lots of investigations was discharged home, after a short time she was given the bad news that she was seriously ill and sadly passed away peacefully on the 21st January. We will miss her so much as she has been so loyal to us. When our church closed in 2012 and the organ was taken to pieces and made its way to a new life at a church in Poland she stayed and played whatever instrument was available and has continued to do this all these years.

Looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Pastorate Service on Mothering Sunday, 30 March, at Harpenden. Hopefully some of you will be able to join us for our Songs of Praise on 16 March, please let us know of any hymns you would like to be included.

Jackie and Jane Wheathampstead

DEFIBRILLATOR

The Church Road side of WGC town centre is not well served by defibrillators sited in public spaces, and available for use 24/7 in emergencies. The closest to the Church is listed on an app. as being outside Snappy Snaps about 350 metres away. Perhaps some nearer premises may have a defibrillator indoors for use when open to customers. Perhaps, this is something that the Church could consider saving money; in other words, only available when the Church is open.

The alternative is one sited on the outside and illuminated and expenditure is estimated to be in the region of £2,000 plus on-going costs. Planning permission is required because the Church is in a conservation area and anything which alters the external appearance needs permission. However, this obstacle has already been cleared.

Accordingly, the Eldership has given the go ahead, with some donations already pledged and a British Heart Foundation grant a possibility.

Once installed, the location will be added to 'Find a Defibrillator' apps.

If you feel inclined to support this appeal, any donation sealed in an envelope and marked 'Defibrillator' and popped into the Sunday collection will find its way into the fund. Please have a word with me in respect of donations that can be Gift Aided.

Thank you.

Philip Read 01707 329484

Christmas Collections.

As we do each year over the Christmas period we had a number of collections on behalf of various charities.

As well as donating a large amount of toys and gifts for the St Albans Women's Refuge we also had a collection, on their behalf, amounting to £681. We also collected for another of our local charities, The Rennie Grove Hospice Care, this amounting to £568 and coupled together with £100 donation to Crisis and £60 to The Children's Society this, in total, amounted to £1409 over the festive period.

A big thank you to all those who donated so generously for these very worthwhile causes.

Norman Deas Harpenden

What's in a Word?

Que: What connects 'Authentic' 'Brain rot' and 'Manifest'?

Ans: They are words which various dictionaries have named as their 'Word of the year - 2024. 'Brain rot' was nominated as THE word of the year – this was the OED chosen word.

So, what **is** in a word? Shakespeare wrote: 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet' (Romeo and Juliet).

I've always liked words and this is one of the reasons I do the cryptic crossword every day – well it does help to prevent Brain rot! I look out for long words having visited **Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch** – 58 letters. Of course, this is a composite word, which translates as '*The church of St. Mary of the pool of the white hazels near to the fierce whirlpool and the church of St. Tysilio of the red cave.*'

Many countries seem to have a liking for composite words, not necessarily long. I recently came across **Friluftsliv** – a Norwegian word meaning 'Open air living'. A quick search of the internet, however, threw up many long words – quite a lot of the English words described medical conditions or chemical terms. The longest German word is:

Donaudampfschiffahrtselektrizitätenhauptbetriebswerkbauunterbeamtengesellschaft. With 80 letters, it translated as '*Association for Subordinate Officials of the Head Office Management of the Danube Steamboat Services*' – not very inspiring though.

And here's a South African word to ponder: The longest official word ever from the nation was the 80-letter tongue twister

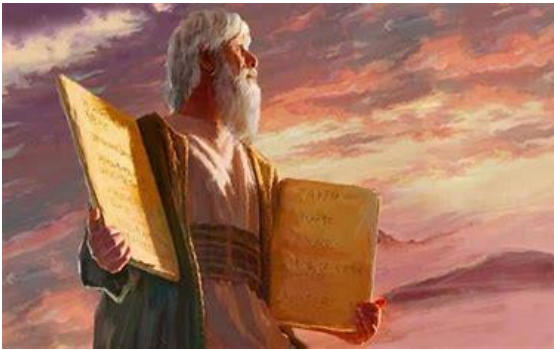
Tweedehandsemotorverkoopsmannevakbondstakingsvergaderingsameroepers-toespraakskryw. It's the name of a farm. And finally, you may now be suffering from

Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia – which is 'the fear of long words'!

There are many references to the word 'Word' in the Bible. Probably the most well-known and most significant being in John 1;1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Of course, we read that the patriarchs, the prophets and many biblical characters received the words of God – in visions and dreams. But Moses was the only one to actually received the **‘written words’** on Mount Sinai.



‘The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” (Exodus 24:12)

Vivienne Kendall (Wheathampstead)

Book Club

At the moment a small group of enthusiastic readers have been meeting up online about once every 6-8 weeks to discuss what we thought about a book. We started during the pandemic when meeting up physically wasn't possible and continued when some of our members moved out of the area (Jane Weedon and Liz Laing). We enjoy the Zoom calls very much as a means of sharing ideas about the books and wonder if any other members of the churches might be interested in joining us.

Our next meeting will not be until March - so hopefully time for any interested people to contact either Joyce or myself.

Jane Deller: janedeller2@gmail.com

Joyce Nicolson: joycen2@hotmail.com

Harriet Beecher Stowe would get up every morning at 4.30 to watch the sun rise. It filled her heart with delight! The beautiful colours changing moment by moment as the shades of night were scattered by the brightness of the dawn. Then she read in Psalm 139, verse 17 and 18 these words: "How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake and am still with you." (English Standard Version.) Harriet's reaction was to write one of the most sublime and beautiful hymns ever written.

Still, still with Thee — when purple morning breaketh,
when the bird waketh and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness—I am with Thee!

Alone with Thee amid the mystic shadows,
The solemn hush of nature newly born;
Alone with Thee in breathless adoration,
In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.

Still, still with Thee—as to each new-born morning
A fresh and solemn splendour still is given;
So doth this blessed consciousness, awaking
Breathe each day nearness unto Thee and heav'n!

So shall it be at last in that bright morning,
When the soul waketh and life's shadows flee;
O in that hour, fairer than daylight dawning,
Shall rise the glorious thought—I am with Thee!

Let us just look back and see what she is doing! First of all she is thirteen years of age. And very bright!

It is a Sunday and, as usual, Harriet is perched on her pew listening to her father preach. It isn't one of his usual sermons - taking a text of Scripture and dealing with doctrine, it was a passage, like a parable, which was more open to his gift of extemporaneous preaching. As he spoke Harriet, somehow, felt different- she felt

God was speaking to her. After the service was over, she went straight home and waited for her father to arrive. All excited she threw her arms around him as he came into the house, and said, "Father! I gave my life to Jesus!"

Was it real? Harriet's life showed it was real! She was an ardent anti-slavery activist. She wrote many novels on social issues but her story, Uncle Tom's Cabin sold thousands upon thousands in America, Great Britain, and across the World. If you haven't read it, treat yourself to a copy!

Graham Neads Harpenden

LENT COURSES

Lent commences on the 9th March and there will be two course available at WGC URC for you to attend.

Daytime 10am starting on Friday 14th March in the Lower Hall

Evening on zoom starting on Monday 10th March, time to be confirmed, for those who would find this more convenient.

The evening course will go ahead providing we have sufficient interest.

Please contact Joyce on joycen2@hotmail.com or Mob 07886392602 to enrol for either of these courses to give us an idea of numbers.

All Welcome

Thank you

Joyce Nicolson

Matt's Big Quiz of the Year

1. Where were the Olympic and Paralympic Games held in 2024?
2. Which country won the most medals at the Paralympic Games?
3. How old did Mariah Carey's 'All I Want For Christmas' turn in 2024?
4. In 2024, which pop star released a biopic about his life in which he's portrayed as a monkey?
5. The Belfast-based shipyard that built the Titanic went into administration in September. Name it.
6. Whose resignation in January sent Liverpool Football Club fans into a tailspin?
7. Which actor gave voice to both Darth Vader, in the Star Wars films, and Mufasa, in "The Lion King" died in September 2024?
8. In April which piece of music was voted the Nation's favourite for the second year running in Classic FM's Hall of Fame survey?
9. Who played the role of postmaster Alan Bates in the ITV series "Mr Bates vs The Post Office"?
10. In September Tata steel closed the last of its blast furnaces in which South Wales town?
11. Who in winning snooker's 2024 Masters became both the youngest and oldest winner of the event?
12. What creatures feature on the reverse of the new Charles III one pound coins that entered circulation in August 2024?
13. To the nearest billion, how big did the new UK Labour Government say the "Black Hole" in the public finances was when they took office in 2024?
14. Who resigned as First Minister of Scotland in May 2024 after just over a year in office?
15. Donald Trump won the US Presidential election in November to become only the second US President to serve two non-consecutive terms, who was the other?
16. Whose portrait did Kier Starmer remove when he took up residence in 10 Downing Street?
17. It was announced in October 2024 that Thomas Tuchel will become the third non-Englishman to manage the England men's football team, who were the other two?
18. In April 2024, the Lower Red Lion pub in St Albans hit the headline after banning what from entering their establishment?
19. Which country in January 2024 became the fifth to land on the moon although the craft initially landed on its nose ?
20. Who was the author of the best-selling novel "A Woman of Substance" who died in November 2024?

CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

Quite a few birthdays to mention in February, starting with Penny J. on 2nd, John M. on 12th, Lynn N. on 20th, Margaret C. on 25th, Reuben C. who will be 11 also on 25th, Peter K. who will be 98 on 27th, and lastly Janet M. on 28th.

Moving on to March, it's yours truly on 3rd, followed by Colin J. on 6th, Brenda B. on 12th, Madison C. who will be 10 on 15th, Lee N. and Graham N. both on 17th, Robert H. on 23rd, Jonathan S. who will be 13 on 24th, Sandra R. On 25th, and lastly Margaret H. on 27th.

We send our birthday congratulations and best wishes to all these friends and hope they each enjoy a happy day.

Please help me to add to my birthday list by giving me your date of birth or anniversary dates by finding me on Sunday mornings or by contacting Allison in the church office on 01707 333326 or email: officewgcurc@gmail.com.

We have 3 Wedding Anniversaries to celebrate in this edition:-

- * Alison & Graham Daniell will celebrate their 55th on February 7th.
- * Margaret & Brian Richardson will celebrate their 67th on February 15th.
- * Jenny & Scott Rayne will celebrate their 23rd on March 7th.

We send congratulations to all these couples and hope they enjoy their special day when it comes round.

Please continue to keep Scott, Jenny, Xander and Howard in your prayers as Scott continues to rebuild his stamina and improve his dexterity with sewing and knitting projects. February is when the secondary school places for year 6 pupils are due to be announced and we pray that the best place for Xander will be forthcoming. Please pray especially for Jenny as she copes with it all every single day.

Please continue to pray for Cherylle as she has been driving the long distance to Yorkshire to support her granddaughter, Katy, who is on her own with 3 young children.

Please remember to pass on any other concerns to our minister, Martyn, an Elder or Pastoral Friend so that no one gets forgotten. We thank God for all the Blessings we receive as members of our Church Family here in Welwyn Garden City.

Thank You, Ann Meers

The Dash by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to
speak
at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on the
tombstone
from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date
of birth
and spoke the following date with
tears,
but he said what mattered most
of all
was the dash between those
years.

For that dash represents all the
time
that they spent alive on earth.
And now only those who loved
them
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we
own,
the cars...the house...the cash.
What matters is how we live and
love
and how we spend our dash.

Submitted by Philip R

So, think about this long and hard.
Are there things you'd like to
change?

For you never know how much
time is left
that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down
enough
to consider what's true and real
and always try to understand
the way other people feel.

To be less quick to anger
and show appreciation more
and love the people in our lives
like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with
respect
and more often wear a smile,
remembering that this special
dash
might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being
read,
with your life's actions to rehash...
would you be proud of the things
they say
about how you spent YOUR dash

*A letter from old friends
of WGC URC*

We hope this finds you well, and that you've had a good year. We thought we'd include an update as we've now settled in Hereford and have a permanent address after about 5 years of what has felt like a somewhat nomadic existence!



We completed on the sale of our Braunston house at the end of January, and heart-wrenching though it was to say goodbye, we finally concluded that Hereford was indeed our next 'stop'. After a near miss on a property 5 miles from the city centre, we finally completed on our new home just 1½ miles out at the end of August and are still setting things up as we gradually retrieve boxes and belongings

from storage in our mums' lofts, but we are very happy indeed to have a space of our own again.



We are especially pleased as it has a lovely garden and a

small patch of woodland behind that where we are planning to create a vegetable garden and resurrect our greenhouse very carefully transported from Braunston. We are fortunate in that the previous owner was an avid gardener and not only left us all sorts of bits and pieces, including a little greenhouse and shed, but a 5 year journal so we have at least some chance of being able to keep it alive and well maintained if we follow it diligently! There are various fruit trees dotted about

including pears, apples and plums, and some lovely oak, sycamore and silver birch trees - we have our work cut out for us though as the lawn and woodland take over 2 hours to mow! Andre's mum has been brilliant in helping us identify over 30 different trees and shrubs (a project still in progress)! She is now in Port Elizabeth with Andre's sister and family, but due back before Christmas and we hope to see them all at some point around then. Joanne's mum will be spending the Christmas week with us, having enjoyed a lovely sunny week in Madeira with Joanne in October to celebrate her 80th birthday.

Workwise, PumpkinPip continues to keep Andre busy and was pretty much unaffected by yet another office move as it is as varied and interesting as ever. The cathedral keeps him busy too as he's signed up to be a volunteer and helps steward some of the bigger events, including the Narnia storytelling evening and the Light Show recently. He also acted as the disciple, James, in a home-spun production of the Hereford Passion just before Easter in a cast made up of staff and volunteers.

Branching out slightly from acting, Andre is now volunteering at the nearby Courtyard Theatre doing live audio descriptions for the visually impaired. He is nearing the end of the training, shadowing on shows such as Footloose and The Full Monty, and will be doing his first official stint at the Sleeping Beauty Pantomime on 14th December. Joanne tends to muck in at the cathedral when needed, workwise and otherwise (it's a very blurry line!), or when they need a 'grown-up' on site as the events team are youngsters by comparison (sadly!) and somehow think she knows what she's doing (she doesn't think she does!)! Apart from that, Joanne enjoys the challenge of cathedral life with no two days the same and never a dull moment it seems. She's very much enjoying walking to work every day which preserves her sanity, albeit donned in waterproofs some days! Involved across most areas of the organisation and not just confined to supporting Sarah as Dean though that is the best part of the job for her - they are a pair to be reckoned with when they plot and scheme together! They've recently done a

couple of interesting guided walks on days off, visiting remote churches and holy wells in Wales which they've both enjoyed, and are bracing themselves for taking a group of 20 to Iona next August for a week. Not quite the Holy Land, which doesn't look like it will ever be safe enough to visit again, however, a good second choice for now, and Andre is looking forward to going too.

Whilst it's been quite a year for us, having celebrated our 25th anniversary the same weekend as moving house, we also very sadly had to say goodbye to our beloved Belle who after Easter went downhill quite fast, struggling with all aspects of life. Although she required care and



attention throughout the day and night, and could not be left unattended for more than an hour towards the end which was utterly exhausting, we miss her terribly.



It has meant however that we were suddenly able to get about a bit more, and so we took the opportunity to visit friends in Edinburgh for a long weekend shortly afterwards, and have since been enjoying exploring the local

countryside, day tripping and walking especially as we're now members of CADW and we love that Wales is only half an hour away. Although it pains us to be without pets, we will be doing a bit of travelling next year to South Africa in March, France in June and Iona in August, and so will wait until the autumn before adopting any furry family members.

If you're ever visiting Herefordshire or nearby, do let us know as we'd love to see you.



With love from Joanne and André

Please can I have any articles for the next magazine by the 20th March 2025 .
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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*I would like to thank Sarah Connor, for all her help in collecting articles
and distributing the magazine for Harpenden. I look forward to working
with the next person, but in the meantime, please send any articles to
myself. Contact details above.*

Allison