

# OVERVIEW



Depicting the life and witness of the church.

June & July 2022



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*The Northern Lights. Please see page 1 'Ministers Letter'*

**We are here to worship God as disciples of Jesus; to welcome,  
love and serve the community, and to share our faith**

# Ministers Letter

**When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which  
you have set in place,  
what is mankind that you are  
mindful of them, human beings  
that you care for them? (Psalm  
8:3,4)**



Jane and I recently had a special trip to Norway. It was special because it was a celebratory trip delayed from 2020 when she and I celebrated 'big birthdays'.

The trip wasn't billed as a holiday but an 'expedition in search of the Northern Lights as we set sail to the northernmost reaches of coastal Norway. We did indeed get to see the Northern Lights on a number of occasions and in doing so, I was reminded how we can see God but not always fully see God.

We were entertained on our travels by Magnus who is a Norwegian Historian. He encouraged us to engage with every sight, sound and taste wrapping the experience in a tale or two about trolls or Norse heroes. His English was very good but occasionally his phrasing or mispronunciation amused us 'brits'. One night we were invited onto the upper deck in the small hours to witness a showing of the Northern Lights. One passenger was very underwhelmed by what he saw and expressed this by saying 'you can't see it the same with the naked eye.' Magnus replied by saying 'it depends on the nakedness of the eye!'

This picture represents what a human 'sees' when viewing the Northern Lights. This is because, in the dark, the naked eye tends to see in monochrome; our eyes are not able to process colours or shapes very well.

However, when we give time for our eyes to adjust to the darkness, they begin to absorb more light. We are then able to see the light, dancing, and shimmering in different intensities. When the Aurora gets really active it is even possible to see some colour (. Please see the front cover)

Sometimes I think we fail to let our eyes adjust to the presence of Jesus who is the Light of the World. We can be underwhelmed by our image of God when the real problem is the 'nakedness' of our eyes. I am reminded of the account in John's Gospel when Jesus heals the man who had been born blind. The man hadn't seen Jesus but was asked if he believed in the Son of Man? The man responds by saying yes, if only he knew who this person was. Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.

May the nakedness of our eyes be lifted so that we see Jesus. May we adjust in the darkness of the world so that we might see him more clearly and more beautiful than ever before. May we declare, 'Lord, I believe.'

Every blessing,

Garry

## FROM THE SECRETARY

Towards the end of April, a group of Elders and regular worshippers met the new Synod Moderator, Rev Geoff Felton, to talk about our church life. Geoff had offered to visit any churches in the Synod which wished to meet with him and from what he said to us at the time it appeared he had been welcomed at a number of churches and was enjoying getting to know the people in the local churches. At the end of the meeting Geoff handed out a small magnifying glass to each person as a symbol to remind us to keep focussed on Jesus in church activities and also in our day-to-day living. At the end of May he returned to lead our Church Anniversary service which was followed by lunch. As Synod Rep I attend the Synod meetings and keep contact with the life of other churches around the Synod. In turn the meetings also keep the ministers and church representatives in touch with the work of the wider church in this country. These contacts are important and help us to understand that the issues we face are more often than not being faced by other churches. They provide valuable resources and links not only to the reformed church across the country but also the worldwide reformed church.



*From left to right Maurice Boughey,  
Rev. Geoff Felton. Lesley Clark.*

This year the United Reformed Church in Great Britain is celebrating its Jubilee, fifty years since its formation in 1972. This event is being marked by Synod with a Jubilee Celebration in the form of a Jamboree at Parkgate and Neston Church, Moorside Lane, Neston, CH64 6UZ on **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July from 10.00am to 3.00pm**. The event is for all ages with children's activities, messy church, bouncy castle, puppetry and plenty of adult activities including a time for historical reflection, worship and a café jam workshop as well. There will be catering, no need to take your lunch but you can if you want, and it's all free. Tickets need to be booked in advance for catering purposes so please let me know by Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June if you would like to go and we can arrange to share transport. Each person/family needs to complete a booking form and I can supply these, or you can print one from the Mersey Synod website.

<https://www.urcmerseysynod.org.uk/welcome.htm>

On **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July** Garry will lead another café style worship in the hall when we will be considering some of the ideas which have come out of the work of the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity. Rev Stuart Radcliffe, the Synod Mission and Discipleship Enabler (MDE), has arranged for this programme of meetings to be held over a two-year period, for churches from across the Synod and we have participated in the meetings so far. The initial meetings took place via Zoom because of Covid restrictions, however, the last meeting in May was a joint event, for attendance in person or via Zoom. In presenting the material Steve Rouse likened being part of an active church to being a member of the gym. You do not get fit by solely subscribing to membership of the gym, you have to go and get busy, using the machines, lifting weights and being active in the gym itself. Similarly, as part of a church we need to be active in the community, showing the love of God, praying for people and situations which we know need prayerful support and living the Christian life to the full. He made the point that discipleship is not about knowing everything about Jesus and the Christian way of life but about being prepared to learn and practice, not about being perfect in the way we live but acknowledging our human weaknesses and being prepared to try again when things don't go as we might expect. There are a number of churches which attend these meetings, and it is interesting to hear how other churches are using the material in their worship and discipleship.

The Café Service in July will be followed by an in-person Church Meeting. This will be the third church meeting this year and we have so far had one Zoom meeting in January and one Wednesday evening meeting in person (the AGM and church meeting in April). We hope that since this meeting is taking place after worship people will be able to stay behind and participate in the meeting. There will be a limited agenda to keep the meeting short.

Ros Ellison



## A Special Jubilee Afternoon Tea

Four of us enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea at the library hosted by special students from Warrington and Vale Royal College. We attempted to turn up in red, white and blue to echo the Jubilee aspect. Tempting food was displayed on tiered cake stands (Ian had lent them his mum's) and Vera Lynn sang quietly in the background. We were asked for memories and Frank remembered his Dad buying a (VERY small) television because his aunt Maud

was coming over from Australia especially for the celebrations. The students did very well. They serve excellent food Mondays to Fridays during term time, and it is well worth supporting them (but don't go if you are in a hurry.)

Ann

### **Article from Rev Tim Clarke, Reflections on the URC's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

As minister from 1996 until 2001, I was delighted to be asked to write a few words about my memories of the URC at 50. Just the other day that I was looking at some anniversary material from 1997, on the URC's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, when we had a Mid Cheshire URC's joint service, which planted a seed for the current grouping of United Reformed Churches, or Clusters as was the in phrase then. It is interesting to look back at what our hopes were. There was optimism for the future then, especially with the Millennium approaching and the many joint ecumenical things we ended up doing during 1999 and 2000. *For me this is the URC at its best acting together to enrich the fellowship of Christians and try and live out unity of Christian life and purpose.*

50 years on, from where I am now, things may seem more pessimistic. But one might say mid-life often brings that. Resurgence in seeking war to resolve problems, as with Ukraine and Russia, provides a gloomy backdrop to our celebrations of the URC's 50 birthday. The challenge in this anniversary could be to not only give thanks, remembering the 'golden past', but also give witness to the possibilities and signs of hope that there are. One wonders if the current multiple crises we face will wake up society to the need to come together for positive reasons and work together for the common good and purpose. *The URC at its best, in my memory, was and is always at the forefront of such efforts.*

My personal memories of 1972 are limited, as I was only 5 years old, and my family were living on a farm in the Orkney Islands, off Scotland. We attended a Baptist Church then, so the URC was not really on our radar. Later we moved back down to Devon, joining the then large modernist URC/Methodist Church that is Central Church, Torquay. It had then some 600+ members, and services were always overflowing in my memory. I hear that numbers are now much reduced, many having died off, or moved to other Churches, such as I ended up doing when I became a minister. A question from that is whether for URCs larger Church model was the right model to aspire to? Without good pastoral caring teams, nominal Christianity can be the norm, and one can easily feel forgotten by the fellowship. That said though, as a fellowship they were good to our family and you learnt as a young person, in such United Churches, that you were Christian first, before considering what denomination you choose to identify with. That was the legacy given to me, and other young people brought up at Central Church. Often the only outward sign of the URC was the use of the old 'blue books' (Congregational Praise) rather than the red ones (Methodist Hymnbooks).

In the 1980's even that distinction disappeared with the advent of the Mission Praise books, and growth in modern worship songs. From the URC, as David Skitt noted in his piece, I learnt that the URC was interested in Reformation (it's in our middle name), especially in the motto you may have heard me mention a few times: '**Semper Reformanda**', which can mean 'Reform us continually'. The front piece to the aforementioned blue hymn book, Congregational Praise, speaks of how each generation needs new hymn books, and hymns and ways of worship. Didn't everybody at Over love learning to use the new hymnbook Rejoice and Sing? Now it's 30 years old itself, and probably is past its best as well. So how is Reformation going to go as we pass 50, and can we *Reform ourselves again?*

In my memory what really helped me grow in faith, in the 1980's, was the URC's national youth work, in FURY (Fellowship of United Reformed Youth), and its gatherings for Christmas Conferences. Also important was Greenbelt (a major Christian Arts Festival) and its encouragement around engaging in social justice issues, and the URC still supports and encourages it. Whilst local Churches were important for me, and many like me, it was those wider events with their innovative worship and means of study that really got me engaged in faith. I do worry as many local URC's feel they are losing steam and momentum; the pressure can be to focus everything on the local and pass up opportunities to engage in the wider Church. *As I have said, for me the URC at its best, is engaging the local, as well as the national, and global.*

Editing past service material recently, so I can digitally archive the best of it, hence finding the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary worship material, I am reminded of the varied worship we had in Over in my time. We made much use of material from Christian Aid, One World Week, Education Sunday, for the Millennium and the many special Sundays for which material was offered to us, which helped connect the very local of Over to the national and Global. I remember for instance one Unity service, I think at Pentecost, where one of the local Salvation Army officers livened up the service no end, by showing his party piece of breathing fire. Do you remember that? It feels to me that there is still room for all that, albeit most of the material being delivered digitally and online now, something many of us in the 1990's thought impossible to do, but now through Hybrid and Zoom worshipping et al, is a reality.

Finally thinking globally, through the URC, as a minister I have visited Lebanon, Syria, New Zealand, and the United States, for solidarity visits and study, and seen partner Churches engaged in witness and action throughout the world. In many of those places our partner Reformed, and reforming Churches are still truly very much alive, even though they may be hard pressed, as the Apostle Paul might put it. In the last year for instance, we had an online Zoom conference with our partner Presbyterian Church in Lebanon, where much was shared about the situation and Church in Syria. Despite outward appearances there are hopeful things to pray about there. There is always hope. So, finding that hope, I pray that we may all be blessed, as we go into our 50's, and beyond. I look forward to reading what other former ministers of Over have to say on the URC going into our 50's and beyond. Don't they say life begins at 50? ***What else has God to say to us as we mark 50?*** Rev Tim Clarke

## Churches Together in Winsford



**Jubilee Fair:** - To be held inside and outside St Chad's church on **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2022** from 11.00am to 3.00 pm

**Picnic Lunch at St Chad's Church:** - To be held on **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022** from 11.00 am onwards.

Open air 'Songs of Praise' type worship from 11.00am followed by a bring your own picnic. Tea, Coffee and cold drinks will be available, and there may also be cakes left over from Saturdays Fair!

Bring along your teddy for a Teddy Bear's Picnic.

On both days everyone is encouraged to come in fancy dress. Crowns, tiaras etc!

## D Fest – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2022

There will be a Churches Together stand at the festival on Delamere Street. Over. Sue Evans is asking for artistic contributions to the St John's Art Exhibition in the church during D Fest.

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## Thank you

Len and Barbara Moss would like to say a very big thank you for all the kindness and visits when Len had his stroke. We are very happy to be part of a caring church.

God Bless.



## Garry and the Elders are really grateful for the help and support that has been offered to them.

Our Eldership now comprises **4 elders:** Stephanie Smith, Chris McKie & Philip & Simone Burrows

**Secretary:** Ros Ellison and **Treasurer:** Maurice Boughey

In the past the church has had as many as 12 elders and support from wives of elders too!

Stephanie & Simone have also taken on the job of preparing the media presentations for invited service leaders who are not so comfortable with the technology.

We are grateful to Sandra Finney for stepping in and helping us with this task.

We are also grateful to Moira McLachlan who will be helping Maurice and Stephanie in overseeing gift aid for the church.

Lesley Clark and Martyn Finney have volunteered to help with vestry duties – opening up the church and giving notices

Stephanie & Simone are glad to welcome Maurice to the team re helping on the media desk



Ephesians 4: 32 **32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

## Statement about the Nationality and Borders Bill

**The Revd Clare Downing, Moderator of the United Reformed Church General Assembly, has issued a statement regarding recent developments around immigration policy, saying “to fail to speak out would be a denial of our gospel calling”.**

On 14 April, the government announced a plan to send some asylum seekers arriving in the UK to Rwanda, prompting widespread criticism, including from [the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Easter sermon](#).

Then on 20 April, MPs voted to reject amendments to the Nationality and Borders Bill made by the House of Lords which would have expanded and protected family reunion rights, enabled asylum seekers to work, established a target for resettlement, and amended the discriminatory two-tier system proposed for asylum seekers. Ahead of that vote, [church leaders had urged MPs to support the amendments](#).

This followed [a joint letter signed by over 1000 faith leaders in February](#) expressing horror about the potential repercussions of the Bill.

Revd Clare Downing said:

“Church leaders have been criticised for joining the debate about asylum and immigration plans. But in the face of unfair and cruel proposals, to fail to speak out would be a denial of our gospel calling. The Biblical mandate is that righteous nations ‘welcome the stranger’.

“While recognising the many complexities involved in setting immigration policy amid the challenges of the contemporary world, we are clear that every individual, whatever their status, should be treated by the state with humanity, dignity, respect and fairness.

“To criminalise and discriminate against those asylum seekers who currently have little choice but to arrive in the UK through ‘irregular routes’, when the majority have a legitimate basis for their asylum claim, is a disgraceful and dishonourable policy.

“To export some of those seeking asylum to Rwanda is a denial of the UK’s responsibilities and of the rights and dignity of refugees. Questions have rightly been raised about Rwanda’s record on human rights and the treatment of LGBT people in particular.

“There are many more suitable options open to the government that would save lives in the Channel and tackle people-smuggling, including the establishment of new safe and legal routes for people to come to the UK, allowing refugees to reunite with their families, and providing increased international development assistance to countries that neighbour conflict and crisis.

“As we said in our [letter to MPs ahead of the vote in parliament](#), we will not stop advocating for love to be shown to our neighbour through the policies and practices in our asylum system. Our churches will continue to come alongside those who remain in desperate need of our friendship and welcome.”

The Nationality and Borders Bill now returns to the House of Lords for further consideration. For the latest updates, and guidance on how you can raise your voice about the Bill, visit [the Joint Public Issues Team website](#)

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Thank you very much to everyone who has contributed articles and photos to this addition of the Overview. Sally

<b>Duty Rota and Diary Dates for June / July 2022</b>					
	<b>Vestry elder</b>	<b>Welcomer/Steward</b>	<b>Preacher</b>	<b>Media desk</b>	<b>music</b>
29 May	Mrs Ros Ellison	Mrs Pam Bird	<b>Rev Geoff Felton Church Anniversary *</b>	<b>SS</b>	
<b>5 June</b>	Mr Chris McKie	Mr Len Moss & Mrs Barbara Moss	<b>Pentecost Rev Garry Wareham service includes Communion</b>	<b>SB</b>	
12	Mrs Stephanie Smith	Miss Moira McLachlan	<b>Ms Claire Roberts</b>	<b>MB</b>	<b>organ</b>
19	<b>Mr Martyn Finney</b>	Mrs Jean Challinor	<b>Rev Dr Nigel Wright</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>organ</b>
26	<b>Mrs Lesley Clark</b>	Mr Ian Tabernacle	<b>Rev Michael Field</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>organ</b>
<b>3 July</b>	Mrs Simone Burrows	Mr Ian Mason	<b>Rev David Hamblin service includes Communion</b>		
10	Mr Philip Burrows	Mrs Fiona Worthington	<b>Rev Garry Wareham</b> Café Style Worship in the Hall. (see page 2 for details)  After service: Church Meeting	<b>SB</b>	
17	Mr Chris McKie	Mr Len Moss & Mrs Barbara Moss	<b>Rev Jenny Wakefield</b>		
24	Mrs Ros Ellison	Mr Ian Tabernacle	<b>Rev David Spence</b>		
31	Mr Maurice Boughey	Mrs Pam Bird	<b>Mrs Ruth Hatton</b>		
7 August	Mrs Lesley Clark	Miss Moira McLachlan	<b>Rev Garry Wareham service includes Communion</b>		

\***Church Anniversary - Lesley Clark** is overseeing a planned faith lunch meet up for this event – see link sheets for details

## **Other dates for your diary:**

**Zoom Café Service:** Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022: Rev David Spence

**Jamboree:** Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July from 10.00am to 3.00pm at Parkgate and Neston Church Moorside Lane, Neston, CH64 6UZ. (see 'From the Secretary' for details. Tickets needed to be booked for catering arrangements.

**Chat & Craft:** 21<sup>st</sup> June & 19<sup>th</sup> July: 2pm – 4pm in lecture room.

**Tea & Chat** – waiting to speak to the local care homes re a start date

**Verse of the Day** *“Remain in Me as I remain in you”* (John15:4)

The next Overview will be for: -

**August & September 2022.**

Last day for articles: -

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July**

The Overview is out on **Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July**