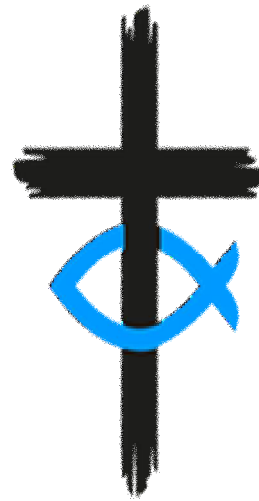


# CHURCH NEWS

Swann Lane Cheadle Hulme  
STOCKPORT SK8 7HU  
[www.cheadlehulmeurc.org.uk](http://www.cheadlehulmeurc.org.uk)

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The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

Partnership Minister:  
Rev Kurauone Mutimwii  
[swannlaneminister@gmail.com](mailto:swannlaneminister@gmail.com)

**FEBRUARY 2024**

## Friends, Life on a spin

Many years ago, at the Pleasure Beach at Blackpool, there was a certain 'ride' or amusement that was strictly for the physically fit. It consisted of a flat wooden disc about 20 feet in diameter and set at an angle of 45 degrees in the floor. When it began to rotate, the aim was to get to the centre where there was a pole. As the disc rotated faster and faster, everyone who failed to get to the pole got flung off. Nowadays there's probably a European Community regulation banning it as far too dangerous!

The principle of the game was a basic law of physics. When any wheel rotates, the outer rim moves fastest of all. Half way to the centre and you are moving a lot more slowly. And, at least theoretically, at the absolute centre will be a point which is totally still. That's why anyone who reached that pole could stand there quite comfortably.

We have just started the Church's season of Lent. It's generally thought of as being a time for giving up chocolate, wine, whatever. But it's really a time to remind us that in our own rapidly spinning world, God is the still centre.

All around God is motion, sound, change and decay – galaxies circling, seasons and years rotating, life developing and decaying. And at the still centre, where there is no variableness, is God, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Only about seven weeks ago Christians worldwide were thinking of God getting involved in a special way in the ever moving and changing life of the world. And one great characteristic of Jesus was His stillness. Busy, harassed, injured people found someone with neither clever chat nor idle gossip, neither vulgar boasting nor loud opinion. His life always seemed to rotate round a still central point, which gave Him balance and authority.

"Be still then and know that I am God" wrote the Psalmist. Lent is a time for us to try and do just that – to find the still centre of God in our own individual lives.

Of course, we're all of us very much in the world, and must live our lives in all of its busyness. But it may do none of us any harm to be a little more silent than we often are – quick to listen and slow to speak. And the more silent spaces we give ourselves, the more we'll give that still, small voice within each one of us the chance to be heard.

**Rev Dr Gary Bowness**

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### STOP PRESS

The United Church Meetings voted unanimously to call Steph Atkins as the new partnership minister, to work in the team with Kurauone and the worship leaders. Starts in September.

## NEWS AROUND THE FELLOWSHIP

We were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Rev John Mitchell on 8 JAN aged 80 yrs. A man of many talents who was our minister at Swann Lane, 1990 ~ 1999. Norman Burnell (former church secretary) has written *"Another 'mighty fallen', like most of the people we have known. I liked John a lot and learned a lot about the URC - and its failings - from him."* John's funeral, held on 23 JAN at Vale Royal Crematorium, was led by his friend and colleague, Rev Bob Day. June, Kirsty and Bruce are in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time.

We are thinking of Eric Ward, our organist, now that he has had his long awaited hip operation and we wish him an easy recovery. Thanks go to Alex, our pianist, who will be standing in for Eric some Sundays.

Our grateful thanks go to Sandy and Bernie for their worship leadership last month when we also had the opportunity to meet and hear our new partnership minister, Stephanie Atkins, and who has answered our call to minister here.

To all those who will be celebrating a birthday or special anniversary in February we hope you have a very happy time.

***The News Team***

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FRI 1 MAR - World Day of Prayer ~ St Ann's 2pm

Sun 10 MAR - Mothering Sunday

- Afternoon Tea - details to follow.

Sat 11 May - Concert in memory

of David Williams

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### JOINT LENT BIBLE STUDY

These sessions will be held on the following Thursday evenings, initially in the Bramhall Conference Room, from 7~8pm. The venue may change if those attending so decide.

15 FEB

22 FEB

29 FEB

7 MAR- this may be moved to another day because of a clash with Steering group.

14 MAR

***Elley Noden***

*See also Lent Lunches...*

## FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE

We've had an entertaining month with Soup and Sweet and also a new game (for us), 20 Questions, which everyone really enjoyed.

We rely very much on Eric who makes sure anyone who needs a lift, gets to the meetings. He is also very good at keeping scores and conducting bingo games. He is having an operation and will be out of action so we have decided not to make any plans for a few weeks. Saying that however, Mavis is happy to see anyone for coffee at her house on a Wednesday afternoon. Many thanks for that Mavis and we all hope Eric will be back on his feet and re-joining us soon.

At our last meeting we discussed many varied topics which caused a great deal of laughter. Long may it last.

**Carole Davies**

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### URC AT CROSSROADS

A culture of listening and collective discernment

#### **Buildings: a blessing and a curse**

On one level, church buildings were seen by many interviewees as a clear asset, providing critical community space at a time when such spaces are becoming increasingly scarce. This was especially true for churches using their premises for community outreach. But on another level, they are expensive to maintain, especially old, traditional buildings from the Victorian period, in a context where congregations are diminishing and the cost of living is rising.

16% of respondents to our survey said their church building was no longer fit for purpose. We heard that synods are mitigating this through maintenance and building development grants, although we also heard that not all congregations are aware these exist or struggle with accessing them, lacking people and the capacity to fill in and submit the necessary applications.

At the same time, church buildings are for many congregations a vital revenue stream, with churches renting out their premises (e.g. church halls) to local or regional organisations. But as noted above, the pandemic has adversely impacted this. Fewer organisations returned and

those that did, are coming back slowly. This is putting a strain on church finances and adding to the sense of precariousness and uncertainty.

Deeper still, we found that there isn't always missional alignment between churches and the organisations they hire their venues to. In some cases, venue hiring is seen in purely transactional terms, with church leaders failing to recognise any missional potential to the relationships established. Where some missional alignment was discernible, we noticed limited imagination to see the full missional potential of relationship with the guest organisations being realised by, for example, creating further touch points and pathways for faith-sharing.

One respondent to the 'Jubilee Questions' put it starkly: *"Mostly [buildings] take up a lot of time and fool congregations into thinking they are doing mission when they are only a community centre."*

During interviews with synod staff we were made aware of situations where synods assisted congregations in selling their buildings in order to purchase smaller, more accessible, multi-purpose/flexible spaces. In some cases, this has been transformational, freeing local believers to pursue new missional opportunities. A survey respondent to the 'Jubilee Questions' painted a picture of what a local gathering of believers could achieve in the absence of a large building:

*"Our expenses are minimal, because we rent a simple room within a building for a nominal rent. We can also say from experience that the money we gave our local youth project, for mentoring, will liberate some disadvantaged young people from the barriers around them, including lack of opportunity and confidence, and in some cases, mental ill health."*

### **Church-wide challenges Denominational structures**

Overall, the structures at all levels were reported to be unwieldy and unsuited for a significantly smaller church than when they were originally created. They assume a much larger and thriving denomination. A large number of interviewees said the URC is "top heavy", with structures and modes of operation that are in tension with the

congregational and grass-roots ethos of the church and the need of a denomination experiencing decline. As one survey respondent put it: "The structures and culture of the church often appear to work against acting with flexibility, pace and momentum." Another respondent noted: "We perceive many layers of bureaucracy within the organisation which prevent rapid solutions."

When giving examples of structures that need reforming, several interviewees complained about the number of committees, the shortage of people and the lack of diversity among those who do sit on them. One interviewee said: "Most committees are just the same people over and over again." This problem was also reported by members of the Youth URC.

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## **SOUP, SWEET & MEET**

Wed 21 FEB

12 noon

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But there were other voices that warned against rashly reducing the number of committees. One local church leader we interviewed worried that this may prevent valuable work from being delivered:

*"You've got to have some safeguards in place when you're spending thousands of pounds. Yes, there's some paperwork. Yes, there's some structure. But I think it's there for a reason. And I think if we lost it, we would lose the support we currently have. I don't honestly think this would solve our problems at all. It will just push the can down the road, because we'll have more money, but no ideas and people paid to do the job."*

The same interviewee went on to note what they perceived to be the root problem: "We're trying to take people from local churches... there is a smaller and smaller pool. We've got the right number of committees but not the 'right' number of people in the URC."

The general sentiment that came through, both in the qualitative and the quantitative research, was that the denomination is excessively bureaucratic, with structures that risk stifling rather than enabling congregational life and local mission.

**Nathan Mladin  
to be continued...**

## MISSIONAL PARTNERSHIP

### PRAYER FOR ASHTON-ON-MERSEY URC

As we gather today in the churches across our Missional Partnership, we ask you to pray for Ashton-on-Mersey URC. Our membership increased significantly as many members transferred when Sale URC closed in Oct 2022.

We are working together to blend the best practices from both churches as we move forward with a new mission and renewed commitment to our local community.

Our “visitors” are now becoming our partners and co-workers as we seek to do God’s work together in a variety of practical and spiritual ways.

We ask you all to pray that by working together we can successfully meet our challenges.

*Amen*

### CHURCHES TOGETHER

#### LENT LUNCHES

**12 noon - 2pm**

17 FEB – St Ann’s RC

24 FEB – Grove Lane Baptist Church

2 MAR – United Reformed Church

9 MAR – All Saints Parish Church

16 MAR – Friends Meeting House

23 MAR – Methodist Church



Everyone Welcome

### WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

from Palestine

“I Beg You...

Bear With One Another in Love”

at St Ann’s RC Church

2 pm - FRIDAY 1 MARCH

ALL ARE WELCOME

## A GREENER LENT

Become zero waste. Slowly try to reduce your waste a bit every week. Consider giving a home-made gift instead of buying a present, up-cycling items or looking at your food shop and seeing what items you could buy differently, spending a bit more on loose fruit and veg for example.

Spend more time in nature. With weekly themes, these ‘Get Outside in Lent’ outdoor resources profiled in our Eco Church resources will help you connect with God as Creator and celebrate his creation in different ways over the Lenten period.

Invite wildlife into your garden or church green space (with permission!). Where possible, invite and encourage others in your church community to be part of the journey, for example, planting seeds as part of the children’s ministry or getting your church youth group to help build and stock up a hedgehog home.

Try a plant-based recipe or diet. Start by cooking yourself vegan or plant-based meals once a week and take it from there. As time goes on, cook more vegan/vegetarian meals and try to eliminate as many animal products from your diet as you can. Explore tasty recipes with Meat Free Monday.

Grow your own. Whether you have a garden or sunny windowsill, find out what you can sow and grow on a month-to-month basis here.

Change your method of transport. How about walking or cycling for repeated errands, choosing one day a week to walk, cycle or take public transport to work where you are able to.

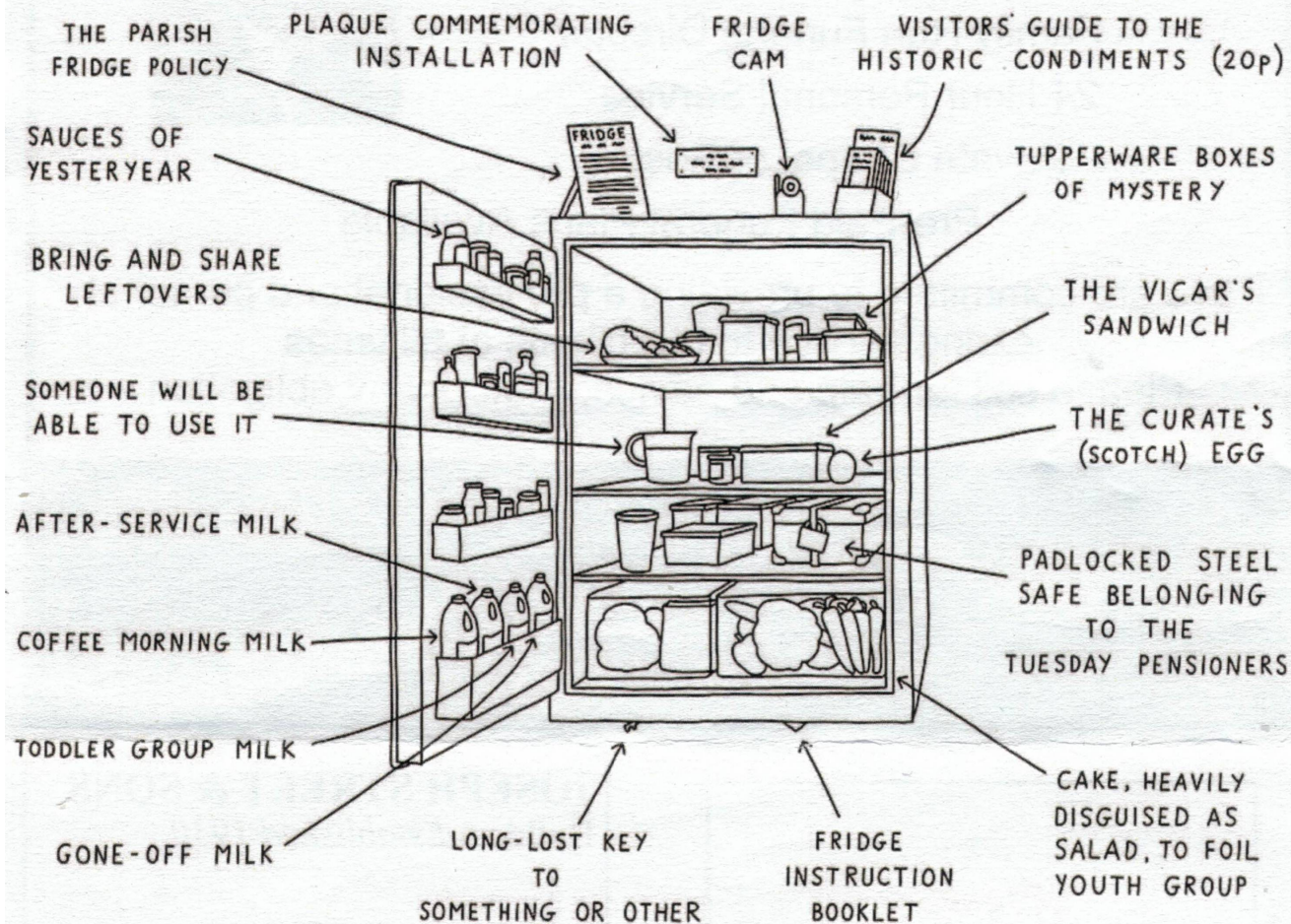
Take a step to save energy in your home. From draught-proofing windows and doors to swapping your bath for a shower, here’s a list of quick tips. You might be surprised at how many of these changes you’ve already made!

[arocha.org.uk](http://arocha.org.uk)



# ...THE LAST LAUGH

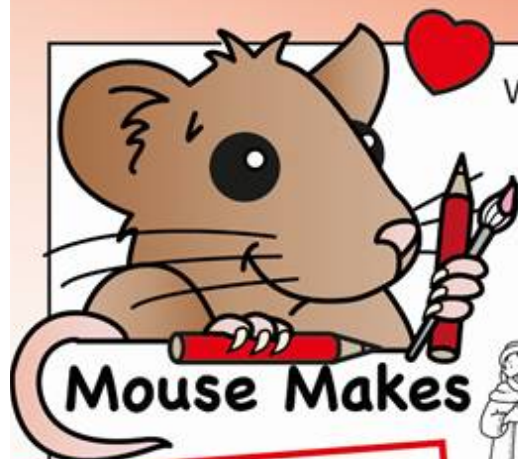
## THE CHURCH FRIDGE



### SUDOKU

		5			7	3		
	1					2		
7				1	5			6
	5	9			6			
			3			4	2	
6			5	4				7
		1					8	
		8	2			6		





## Mouse Makes

### CONNECT THE BIBLE COUPLES

ADAM	ELIZABETH
ABRAHAM	MARY
ISAAC	HANNAH
JACOB	PRISCILLA
BOAZ	EVE
ZECHARIAH	RUTH
ELKANAH	REBEKAH
AQUILA	RACHEL
JOSEPH	SARAH

Which couple helped the Apostle Paul in his ministry?

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Romans 16:3

Who were the first couple?  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 2:22-25

Who's wife became a pillar of salt because she disobeyed the angel's warning?

\_\_\_\_\_ Genesis 19:26

Which of Laban's daughters did Jacob love?

\_\_\_\_\_ Genesis 29:18

Who was Moses' wife?

\_\_\_\_\_ Exodus 2:21

Who married Boaz to become King David's great-grandmother and a distant relative of Jesus?

\_\_\_\_\_ Matthew 1:5

### FIND THE BIBLE VERSE

Change each letter in this bible verse to the letter **before** it in the alphabet.

XIBU HPE IBT  
KPJOFE UPHFUIFS,  
MFU OPU NBO  
TFQBSBUF.

NBSL  
UFO WFTF  
OJOF

### DID YOU KNOW?

King Solomon had **700** wives! They were princesses of royal birth and he loved them all, but his wives caused him to turn away from God  
See 1 Kings 11:1-3

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

ABRAHAM  
ADAM • AQUILA  
BOAZ • ELKANAH  
ELIZABETH  
EVE • HANNAH  
ISAAC • JACOB  
JOSEPH • MARY  
PRISCILLA  
RACHEL  
REBEKAH • RUTH  
SARAH  
ZECHARIAH

## SERVICES

Elders' wish to keep everyone safe, so please stay home if you are unwell.

You may wear masks (perhaps for singing). Also, understand our plans may change with little notice. We may sometimes have a speaker and sometimes a simple in-house led service. Video conferencing continues and Leaders or readers may Zoom in or speak in church.

**Duties** are performed by a small team on a rota. Please check the board for changes.

Date	4 FEB	11 FEB		18 FEB	25 FEB
Service	Morning Worship	Morning Worship	MP Zoom Evening Service	Morning Worship	Morning Communion
Time	10.30 am	10.30 am	***6.30 pm***	10.30 am	10.30 am
Leader	Worship from <b>Wilmslow URC</b> by YouTube	In House	Rev Kurauone Mutimwii	Chris Whitehead	Rev Kurauone Mutimwii
Elder Duty	S Smith	P Oliver		D Phillips	B Stevens/ S Smith
Door	G Elsdon	M Hardie		J Hodson	C Davies
Reader					
Flowers	Silk	D Green		Silk	J Hodson
Coffee	H Elsdon	M Morton		S & M Smith	B & A Stevens
Notes	2nd Sunday before Lent	Church Action on Poverty Sunday	Meeting ID: 717 0575 5463 Passcode 2Hs7w3	1st Sunday in Lent	

**CHURCH REGISTERS - none**

## LECTIONARY for FEBRUARY

**4 FEB:** Isaiah 40.21-31; Psalm 147.1-11,20c; 1 Corinthians 9.16-23; Mark 1.29-39

**11 FEB:** 2 Kings 2.1-12; Psalm 50.1-6; 2 Corinthians 4.3-6; Mark 9.2-9

**18 FEB:** Genesis 9.8-17; Psalm 25.1-10; 1 Peter 3.18-22; Mark 1.9-15

**25 FEB:** Genesis 17.1-7,15-16; Psalm 22.23-31; Romans 4.13-25; Mark 8.31-38

## SUDOKU Answers

Members, friends & neighbours

**FILM MATINEE**

Sat 24 FEBRUARY

4	8	5	6	2	7	3	9	1
9	1	6	8	3	4	2	7	5
7	2	3	9	1	5	8	4	6
2	5	9	4	8	6	7	1	3
8	3	4	1	7	2	5	6	9
1	6	7	3	5	9	4	2	8
6	9	2	5	4	8	1	3	7
5	4	1	7	6	3	9	8	2
3	7	8	2	9	1	6	5	4

# CALENDAR

...to the best of the editor's knowledge, unless you know better...



## FEBRUARY

Thu 01		7.30 pm MP Steering Group meet ~ Zoom
Fri 02		
Sat 03	10.30- 12 noon	Coffee Morning in aid of <b>The Leprosy Mission</b>
Sun 04		
Mon 05		
Tues 06		
Wed 07	10.30am Elders' meeting	7.30 pm Worship Group ~ Zoom
Thu 08		
Fri 09		2 pm Choir Rehearsal
Mon 12		
Tues 13	Shrove Tuesday	
Wed 14	Ash Wednesday	
Thu 15		7pm Joint Lent Bible Study ~ Bramhall URC
Fri 16		2 pm Choir Rehearsal
Sat 17	12-2pm	CTCH Lent Lunch ~ St Ann's RC
Mon 19		
Tues 20		
Wed 21	12~2pm	SOUP, SWEET and MEET
Thu 22		7-8pm Joint Lent Bible Study ~Bramhall URC
Fri 23	10 am Management ~ Church	2pm Choir Rehearsal
Sat 24	12~2pm	CTCH Lent Lunch ~ Grove Lane Baptist
	2.30 pm	Film Matinee
Mon 26		
Tues 27		
Wed 28		
Thu 29		7-8pm Joint Lent Bible Study - Bramhall URC

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