CONNEXIONS

The magazine of

Lavington

United Reformed Church
Bideford

www.lavingtonurc.org

April 2026

50p

APRIL 2026

Thursday (Maundy Thursday)	2nd	6.00pm	Service of Tenebrae in the Upper Room
Friday (Good Friday)	3rd		Procession of Witness (see p.3)
Sunday (EASTER DAY)	5th	11.00am	Easter Family worship with Holy Communion - Colin Biggs
Wednesday	8th	10.30am	Elders' Meeting
Sunday	12th	11.00am	Family worship – Alison Biggs
Sunday	19th	**10.30am**	Family worship – Rob Weston followed by Annual General Meeting
Sunday	26th	11.00am	Family worship – Paula Littlewood
Saturday	25th	1.00pm	Organ recital at Tavistock URC by Bernadette Bishop
Sunday	3rd May	11.00am	Family worship with Holy Communion - Rob Weston
ADVANCE WARNING!			
Sat.	30th May	1.00pm	Organ recital at Tavistock URC by Tom Bayliss

WEEKLY ACTIVITY

Tuesdays	10.00am-1pm	Tea/Coffee, refreshments and lunches

Mission Statement
Lavington's mission is to seek the kingdom of God
and his righteousness encompassing the love of Christ
and to share this through worship and service.

Dear Friends

As we gather our thoughts for this Easter edition, we are reminded once again of the profound message at the heart of this season: hope, renewal, and new life.

At Lavington United Reformed Church, Easter is not only a celebration of an event long ago, but a living promise for each of us today. The story of the risen Christ speaks into our everyday lives - into moments of uncertainty, weariness and even sorrow - with a quiet but unshakeable assurance: light overcomes darkness, love overcomes hate and life is stronger than death.

On that first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb in grief and confusion, expecting only to mourn. Instead, she encountered the unimaginable - the stone rolled away, and the risen Christ calling her by name. In that deeply personal moment, sorrow was turned into joy and despair into hope. Her story reminds us that even in our darkest moments, God is closer than we realise, already at work bringing new love, new hope, new life.

In a world that sometimes feels heavy with conflict and division, Easter invites us to look again for signs of hope. We see it in our Good Friday Walk of Witness, in simple acts of kindness, in our standing together with other Christian communities, in the beauty of creation as spring unfolds around us and in the strength we find in community and shared faith.

The empty tomb reminds us that no situation is beyond God's power to transform. Where there is despair, God brings hope. Where there is brokenness, God brings healing and where there is fear, God brings peace. Where the church feels weak and insignificant, God reminds us of the importance of yeast and tiny seeds.

May this Easter be a time when each of us feels renewed - encouraged to carry hope into our homes, our neighbourhoods and our daily lives. Whether through a kind word, a listening ear or a helping hand, we each have the opportunity to reflect something of that Easter joy to others.

You are warmly invited to join us as we celebrate together, giving thanks for the promise of new life and the enduring presence of God among us.

Wishing you a joyful and hope-filled Easter.

God bless

Rob Weston
Minister

Easter Plans 2026

At Lavington, our Easter worship will once again start with a Tenebrae service - Maundy Thursday, April 3rd at 6pm. The service will be held in the "Upper Room" and involves hymns, prayers and communion to reflect the events of the Last Supper. The road to Crucifixion is shared through readings and the extinguishing of candlelight to leave the room in darkness (weather permitting).

On Good Friday, the churches in Bideford share in a Walk of Witness around the town, see page 6

Then on Easter Sunday, April 5th at 11am, we celebrate the joy of Resurrection with our morning worship led by Colin. At the beginning of the service the floral cross will be processed around the church. Please bring a flower to worship to add to the cross.

Hallelujah, hallelujah

Christ is Risen!

He is Risen indeed!

A

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN BIDEFORD

Good Friday 3rd April 2026

Walk of Witness

Starting (with hot cross buns) from 9.15am

Pollyfield Centre, East The Water (led by Rock Church) (gather at 9.15am for a 9.45 start). We will have a reading, a minute of silence, prayer or meditation and a hymn or song at each venue – leaving **Pollyfield Centre at 10.00am** Our route then stops at …….

Central Church (Bideford Old Station)
Arrive 10.10am, leave 10.20am

Torridge Methodist Circuit (Honestone Street car park)
Arrive 10.35 am, leave 10.40am

The Sacred Heart Catholic Church (North Road**)**
Arrive 10.45am, leave 10.50am

Lavington United Reformed Church: (Bridgeland St)
Arrive 10.55am, leave 11.00am

Bideford Baptist Church (Mill Street)
Arrive 11.05am, leave 11.10am

Northam Methodists (Jubilee Square)
Arrive 11.15am, leave 11.25am

The Quakers (Corner of High Street and Allhalland Street)
Arrive 11.30am, leave 11.40am

St Mary's Church, Bideford (Church Walk) **11.45am. The short United Good Friday Service commences at 12 noon** followed by coffee and hot cross buns, bread and cheese. Lunch will be served until 1.00pm so that everything is finished and cleared away before the Devotional Service begins in St. Mary's Church at 2.00pm.
The collection at the United Service will be for the Disasters Emergency Fund.

Please join us anywhere along the route, you are very welcome.

Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday

Here is an invitation from Revd Adrian Lloyd, Minister of Bideford Baptist Church.

We will be meeting on Bideford Quay (near the Kingsley Statue) at **6:30am** on **Easter Sunday Morning** for a short Sunrise Service.

After the service we will go to the Baptist Church for a hot drink and a bacon sandwich. If people are planning to come back to the church then it would be helpful to have some idea of numbers. You can contact Adrian via his email: revpal56@gmail.com

News of the Church Family

We are delighted that **S M** has returned home and is now convalescing in the company of her husband C and dog, R. Our love and prayers, S, that you continue to slowly improve and feel stronger each day.

H M is recovering well after her operation and we send her our love for her continued healing. We were sorry to hear that **G M** has had a fall but pleased that she has suffered no lasting ill effects.

It was good to be able to welcome **J D** back to worship recently following her eye treatment which has taken a long time. We remember **L W** in her concern for her daughter S following a major operation. We pray that she makes a full recovery.

The fellowship send Easter prayers of love, joy and hope to all those feeling lonely, anxious, worried or struggling at this time. May you be surrounded and upheld by God's continuing grace, peace and love.

A

Annual General Meeting

Following worship on Sunday 19th April 2026 (starting at **10.30am**) the church will gather to hold its Annual General meeting.

The AGM is an important part of the church's life, a time to thank those who faithfully take on roles within the church and work to keep Lavington URC witnessing in this local community and beyond. There is an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to help the Minister, the serving Elders and others in their present tasks as we vote them into various offices.

Mrs Alison Biggs' term of office as an Elder ends at the AGM and we also have vacancies on the serving eldership. Are you called to be an Elder? Would you be willing to take on this role in our church? If any member might consider becoming an Elder, please speak to the Minister or one of the serving Elders. Nomination forms are available and being sent out with this magazine. Please ensure the nominated person is willing to stand and get two members sign the form. Completed forms should be with the Church Secretary by Sunday 12th April 2026.

Please make every effort to attend the meeting. If you are unable to attend, please send in your apologies via any Elder. Thank you.

A B, Church secretary

A Prayer for Holy Week

Loving Lord God as we journey through this week with you, we remember the excitement of the crowd as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Joy which led to betrayal, arrest, abandonment and the agony of crucifixion. Cross-carrying Jesus, as you stagger on your lonely journey forgive us that too often we turn away, embarrassed, uncaring and despairing. Help us to stay with you; to watch and wait, to know the depths of your anguish and to realise that you carry us, your forgiven people and love us. We praise you for this assurance of life given through the death of Jesus, treasure beyond price. **Amen**

Prayer Focus for April

Please use these prayers, in any order, to reflect your prayer life as we celebrate the Easter season and all it means to people of faith.

Easter God, we have waited for you, trusting that again we can celebrate Christ's rising. We rejoice in the hope that your rising brings to our lives. We thank you that you are our Lord and as your people we come in love and faithfulness to witness to your saving power. Help us to listen anew to the Easter message and send us out to live and work in your resurrection name.

Almighty Father we pray for your creation and think of this spring season of new growth where buds unfurl and flowers blossom with a profusion of colour in gardens, hedgerows and woods. A time to rejoice in your creative power. Help us to be inspired by the hope which creation gives us.

Saving loving Lord, powerfully present in your Spirit we ask you to forgive us for failing to take the time to appreciate the price of love you bore on the Cross. Like the disciples, we are too fearful, caught up in our own activities and desert our faith all too quickly. Forgive us, gracious God and free us to celebrate your resurrection with deeper understanding and joy.

Thanks be to God, that in your risen power you walk alongside us, as you did on the Emmaus Road. Be our companion as we walk the lonely path or when life is perplexing and hard. Come into our disappointments and unease and open our eyes to recognise you.

Eternal God, we pray for your fragile, broken world and hope that instruments of war be beaten into machines of peace and plenty, and

conflicts between nations lead to peace and reconciliation. Silently, we pray for those situations in our world which need our prayers……

Risen Christ, your power reaches every human heart. Touch our hearts, our lives and the life of your church so the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God. **Amen**

SATURDAY 11th APRIL 2026 – *CELEBRATION OF*

25yrs **in Bideford: All welcome**

10.30 -12.30pm in Mill Street (in front of Baptist Church and between the bookshop and the café.

Activities include: crafts, bran tub, singing, guess the weight, dance workshop, and Spring Quiz. Goody bags for u13's. Many special deals in the shop including cards for all occasions, presents and DVD's.

MINISTRY OF FLOWERS

We thank those who are providing flowers for our worship this month (There are vacancies on the list. Please see Jill if you are interested.)

5th	EASTER DAY
12th	
19th	
26th	Mrs L W
May 3rd	Mrs J C

VESTIBULE DUTIES

5th	L C
12th	J C
19th	A B
26th	H M and L B
May 3rd	H M

VESTRY DUTIES

5th	J C
12th	C B
19th	J D
26th	J C
May 3rd	A B

COMMUNION

Preparation	5th	J D and A B
Servers		A B and J C

BIBLE READERS

5th	A B
12th	C B
19th	A B
26th	J C
May 3rd	J D

OFFERTORY STEWARDS

J and R C

TUESDAY CAFE ROTAS

	KITCHEN	REFRESHMENTS	TEA/COFFEE
7th	A B	J C J S	L A H N
14th	J D	J C J S	L C C B
21st	A B	J C L B	H M M T
28th	A B	C B L C	R S B G

BIRTHDAYS and CELEBRATIONS

A month for the men to celebrate

5th	R Q
21st	R C

And 2 wedding anniversaries:-

On Easter Sunday (5th), P and P H celebrate an astounding 68 years of married life

April 11th marks the day when J and C H celebrate their 60th (Diamond) wedding anniversary (not quite as big a number!)

Our congratulations

trypraying **- A Simple Invitation to Explore Prayer**

It has been estimated that in the UK 27 million adults pray. Some clearly know how to; some develop their own prayer life over decades; some people might be keen to try but aren't quite sure where to begin. The **try**praying initiative offers a simple, welcoming way for anyone to explore prayer, regardless of background, belief, or experience.

Originally developed in Scotland, **try**praying is a short, 7-day journey designed especially for those who might not consider themselves religious, or who feel hesitant about church. It's not about pressure or persuasion. Instead, it's an open invitation: *why not give prayer a try and see what happens?*

What is **try**praying?

At its heart, **try**praying is a small booklet (also available as an app and online resource) that guides readers through a week of honest, thoughtful reflection. Each day includes:

- A short reading
- A real-life story
- A simple prayer to try

The tone is down-to-earth and relatable, encouraging people to be honest with God - whether that means expressing doubt, gratitude, questions, or even frustration.

Why does it matter?

As a United Reformed Church, we are called to be open, inclusive, and rooted in God's love for all. **try**praying fits beautifully with this calling. It creates a gentle way to connect with people in our communities who may never walk through our doors but are open to spiritual exploration.

Many people today describe themselves as 'spiritual but not religious.' **try**praying might engage some of these people - without

jargon, expectations, or assumptions - and offers a starting point for encountering God in everyday life.

How can we use it?

There are many simple and creative ways our church can share **try**praying:

- Making booklets available in the church building or community spaces
- Including them in welcome packs or local outreach
- Offering them during seasons like Pentecost

Most importantly, it's something we can talk about naturally with friends, neighbours, and family. A simple "Have you ever tried praying?" can open the door to meaningful conversation.

An invitation

trypraying reminds us that prayer doesn't need to be complicated or polished. It's simply about being real with God.

As a church, we have the opportunity to extend that invitation - to say to others: *You don't have to have it all figured out. Just try praying.* Perhaps, as we do, we might find our own prayer lives renewed as well. Of course prayer comes in many different forms and the booklet is just one resource, if you have other resources or examples of prayer that you have found helpful please share them or write in to our next magazine.

You will see the **try**praying banner on display outside our church for the month of May and the booklets will be available in church and in the halls - a free gift for people to take and share.

Rob Weston

Knitted Bible Mission Project proposal

For the background to this proposal, please see the article in last month's Connexions.

As promised, there was a short presentation of the idea at the March Synod Meeting. The response was immediate and there are more than six churches already involved. Lavington Church Meeting have already pledged their support.

Now it's time to make a decision as to how to move the project forward at Lavington. Which scene from the Bible would we like to produce (it can be from Old or New Testament)? Is there someone who would like to volunteer to co-ordinate our efforts? Are you someone who has their knitting needles ready and willing? Please speak to one of the Elders if you'd like to be involved.

On your laptop or tablet, you can search for St George's URC Knitted Bible project or type in: **https://www.stgeorgesurc.co.uk/the-knitted-bible/**

Rob Weston

Premises news

The WiFi system is running properly again with super fast download speeds and the new WiFi password is on display in the hall on a sign. There is still a problem with the WiFi signal in the church and in the upper rooms, so a specialist audio company has been contracted to carry out work on solving this issue. The contractors have rearranged and are due on 2nd April. Our audio grant from Synod covering 50% of the 'mesh' WiFi work will be claimed once an invoice is received

The idea of solar panels on the church hall roof was raised at the last Church Meeting. This will take some investigation as we need to know whether our roof and walls are strong enough to take the extra weight. We have been alerted to the fact that some remedial work took place to stop the walls being push outward by the roof - expert assessments will be required.

Our fire extinguishers have been inspected and 2 should really have been replaced, but as the rest will all need replacing next year it was decided to delay replacing the 2 expired units until then. The placement and type of extinguishers now required will also be adjusted next year.

The Church Hall kitchen inspection by the Torridge District Council Environmental and Hygiene Officer has taken place. This covers not only the fabric of the building and catering equipment but also the operation of the kitchen. Once again we have been awarded a 5 star rating.

We thank J for sourcing a new hall fridge, including the removal of the old fridge and a redundant fridge/freezer from the kitchen.

We thank B H our new cleaner and all who attend to ongoing maintenance and repair work.

Rob Weston

The Missing Decades - 1940, 1950, 1960

A fascinating project is underway entitled “Bideford Archives”. Recently a meeting was held. to which anyone interested in helping to compile the pictorial history of Bideford and its people was invited. Although some fascinating photos (or copies of) have already been assembled and catalogued, there are very few covering the dates mentioned in the heading so a call has gone out asking anyone who has photos relating to those years - of people, places and events - to help. Once lost, such documents can never be replaced. Any photos that are lent to the project will be handled with the greatest care, copies made and the photos returned. Envelopes have been prepared in which photos can be put and will be available at Lavington from Jill Davis or Janice Shambrook. On the envelopes are spaces for you to fill in your name, contact details and names of people and places and dates (if known) of the photos enclosed. You may think that your photos are of poor quality or condition, but copies taken can be enhanced by expert photographers. Some patient cross-referencing can often identify names, events and places. So please have a think and a search. Involve neighbours, family, school friends, workmates to enable the story of Bideford and the lives of its people to be preserved. Envelopes can be handed in to any Elder and will be kept safe until they are forwarded to the project co-ordinator.

J

A short story for Easter

My wife, Jean, and I lived next door to each other for ten years before we were married. An interest in high school biology had sparked a live caterpillar collection. Their home was a shoe box, covered with screen wire. When I went on vacation, Jean fed them faithfully with leaves from her willow tree. She hated it.

Finally the caterpillars stopped their incessant crawling and chewing, attached their tails firmly to a stick and lay still, sheathed with a shiny leather-like case. For weeks they seemed to be dead, unmoving in their tiny gray wrappings. I removed the screen and waited.

One by one, the cases began to twist and turn violently, and suddenly split open. A beautiful butterfly emerged. It stood for hours gently moving its wings, pumping fluids into them to extend them fully. Then the butterfly soared gracefully away on the breezes of summer, leaving nothing behind but a broken chrysalis to indicate its former bondage.

The chrysalis and butterfly suggest the empty graveclothes of our risen Lord. When Peter and John heard the news that the Lord's body was gone from the garden tomb, they ran all the way from their lodging. Peter entered the tomb and "he saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen" (John 20:6-7, NIV). The graveclothes once wrapped continuously around the body now lay collapsed, mute testimony that the corpse they had once shrouded had now emerged in life.

The bondage of death is broken. Christ is risen! We can face tomorrow with the assurance that Jesus is in fact alive to help us, to guide us, to give us hope for the future. And since He is living, our problems are not insolvable. The broken chrysalis of His graveclothes proclaims that Christ is Victor even over death. Because He lives, nothing is impossible.

Dr Ralph F Wilson (Joyful Heart Renewal Ministries)

FAVOURITE HYMN

Too early for the blackbird (R&S 249)

Thomas Caryl Micklem was born in 1925 in Oxford, to a family steeped in nonconformist tradition. After schooling at Mill Hill School and New College, Oxford, he was accredited as a Congregational minister in 1949 and ordained in 1952, serving congregations in Oundle, Banstead and, following the formation of the United Reformed Church, Kensington and Oxford. Although never called to serve as Moderator of General Assembly, he was one of the best known figures within the denomination, especially as a hymn writer, composer and editor.

He served as Chairman of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the URC Musicians' Guild, as well as being on the Council of the Royal School of Church Music. He was Free Church Religious Advisor to ATV and a contributor to BBC Radio 4's Thought for the Day.

But it is for his work as hymn writer, composer and editor that he is most remembered. He chaired the music committees for both New Church Praise and Rejoice and Sing and it was during discussions for the latter book that a need was raised for additional Easter hymns for use in all-age congregations. No sooner raised than Caryl wrote and composed *"Too early for the blackbird"*. The verses are well adapted for those – not only children – for whom concrete images rather than concepts are the best medium. The refrain, however, contains deliberate echoes of words with which many adults might not be very familiar. Philip Doddridge's hymn *"Ye humble souls that seek the Lord" (R&S242)* has as its' second line *"chase all your fears away"*. And Richard Crashaw, an English cleric and poet of the 17th century, wrote that the cross was a place where *"Life seemed to die; Death died indeed."* (And we could also mention *"Death of death and hell's destruction"* from *"Guide me of thou great Jehovah"!)*

Jesus Christ is ris'n today and death itself is dead! Hallelujah!

C

Easter-tide hymns

(The first line – initials of each word – of hymns in Rejoice and Sing: we may sing or have sung them during the Easter season)

1. A, A, G T T T R L,
2. A G, L, A H
3. C T L I R T, A!
4. I T C O C I G,
5. J L! T T N
6. L L A L T T S I S A S,
7. M S I L U,
8. O S H, S W,
9. R O, R O, I M!
10. T B T G, R, C S,
11. T E F T B,
12. T I A G H F A,
13. T S I O, T B D;
14. W H A K W R A D,
15. W I S T W C,
16. W Y T W T C M L?

Last month's Fun page answers

1. Salsa 2. Gherkin 3. Swede
4. Toast 5. Milky Way/Galaxy 6. Sesame
7. Raspberry 8. Rocket 9. Chilli
10. Marmite 11. Chips 12. Squash

Who's who at Lavington U.R.C.

Bridgeland Street, Bideford, EX39 2QE

Minister

Revd Rob Weston
tel: 07982 622949
e-mail: lavingtonurc@gmail.com

Church Secretary

Mrs Alison Biggs
tel: 01805 625632
e-mail: lavington.secretary1@gmail.com

Church Treasurer

Revd Colin Biggs
tel: 01805 625632
e-mail: lavington.treasurer1@gmail.com

Church and Hall Bookings

Revd Colin Biggs
tel: 01805 625632
e-mail: lavington.treasurer1@gmail.com

Enquiries for weddings and baptisms are welcomed.
Please contact Church and Hall Bookings Secretary as above.

The May issue of Connexions should be available
on Sunday April 26th

Please give items for inclusion to Colin Biggs or any Elder
or send to Colin by e-mail as above
by 19th April

This issue of Connexions has been edited by Colin Biggs
Printed and assembled by Jenny and Ricky Cawsey