

The magazine of

# Lavington

# United Reformed Church Bideford

www.lavingtonurc.org



**FEBRUARY 2024** 

50p

#### **FEBRUARY DIARY**

Sun.	4 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Family Worship and HC - Revd Colin Biggs
Sun	11 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Family Worship – The Minister - followed by
			Church Meeting at 11.30am
Tues.	13 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Shrove Tuesday - Coffee and pancake
Wed.	14 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Elders Meeting
			Start of LENT
Sun.	18 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Family Worship – Sabrina Groschel
Sun.	$25^{th}$	11.00am	Family Worship – Mrs Paula Littlewood

#### **WEEKLY ACTIVITY**

Tuesdays 10.00am – 1pm Tuesday Cafe 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.



#### We are a Fairtrade Church

#### Answers to Christmas Fun

- 1. As with gladness 2. Scarlett Ribbons 3. Jingle Bells Coventry Carol
- 5. While shepherds watched 6. O Christmas tree 7. Frosty the Snowman
- 8. Twelve days of Christmas 9. The holly and the ivy 10. Santa Claus is coming to town 11. Hark the herald 12. I wish it could be Christmas
- 13. Silent Night 14. Rudolph the red nosed 15. White Christmas 16. Merry Christmas everybody 17. Once in Royal 18. It came upon the midnight clear
- 19. O Come, O Come 20. Rocking around the Christmas tree.



Dear Friends,

With all the worrying news of conflict across the globe, the good news stories sometimes get lost or drowned out by other voices. It was good to hear that despite all the challenges of 2023, the electricity supply for the United

Kingdom was 'greener' than ever before.

Electricity from fossil fuels has now fallen by two-thirds since peaking in 2008. Within that total, coal has dropped by 97% and gas by 45%. These declines have been caused by the rapid expansion of renewable energy (up six-fold since 2008) and by lower electricity demand (down 21% since 2008). As a result, fossil fuels made up just 33% of UK electricity supplies in 2023 – their lowest ever share – of which gas was 31%, coal just over 1% and oil just below 1%.

As an eco-church we should rejoice, this is good news for the planet and for all humanity - there is much more to do but this is measurable progress and we can all help. When we take steps to reduce the amount of energy we use to heat our premises, like adding insulation or secondary glazing, we will help to contribute to the lower demand for electricity and gas. Climate change is affecting all of God's people, it's not just those people living near the sea or rivers that need to worry about flooding. All of us are being affected by the changing climate, from food shortages due to crop failures to water shortages in our region.

We have already achieved the Bronze Eco Church Award, so this year let's do all we can to step up to the Silver Award. I have checked the Eco Church website and the Silver Award is within reach. Please come and have your say at our Church Meeting on 11th February. Let's be guided by God and the Holy Spirit as we care for one another and God's creation!

**Every blessing** 

Rob Weston Minister

#### **CHRISTMAS CARDS**

Each year we receive cards sent to the 'Lavington Family' from friends who wish to keep in touch with us. This last year we received them from –

The Lavington family - Janet Day

Lil Green June Hallett

Sheila and Gordon Harris Pam and Peter Hunter

Amy Mitchell Ray Quick Julia Spencer

Margaret and John Turner Liz and Cecil Watkins

Church friends - Revd John and Mrs Margaret Robinson

Frequent visitor Colin Buxton from West Sussex

Ewart Cockram – elderly gentleman who played the

church organ on Tuesday coffee mornings.

Lay Preacher Paula and Rod Littlewood

All our friends at Muddiford URC

Editor

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#### RECYCLING of CHRISTMAS CARDS

If you still have your Christmas cards knocking around and wondering how to dispose of them, read on. Cards of all descriptions and for occasions can be recycled all year round from the kerbside in your **brown plastic bag**, with your cardboard. However, please DO NOT include any cards with glitter on them as they cannot be recycled and your whole contribution will be rejected. Cards with glitter on them should be put in your black bin bag please. Thank you.

Editor

#### A LETTER OF THANKS

# From Richard Hester's family

Dear Rob,

We would like to thank you so much for organising and conducting the funeral and all that it entailed to make it run very smoothly and sensitively. We really did appreciate all the attention to detail.

A good day of remembering Richard and his life. "To be with the Lord, is far hetter"

We are home safe and sound and sorting out various things related to Richard. We have enjoyed some old photos we have found and even some "high jump" medals dated 1951/52.

On behalf of the family, we thank the whole of Lavington Congregation for all their love and care over many years.

Kind regards.

Stuart and Fiona Trimmer

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#### **PRAYER CARDS**

Look out for some new prayer cards that will be available in the church vestibule, each one is on a different theme. The idea is that anyone who is looking for a prayer for their situation can take a card and use it in their own prayer time, at church or at home. These resources will be freely available, for all visitors and church members. There are twelve different prayer cards and they will be displayed in a special rack. If they are very popular, we may need to have a second rack in the church hall.

Rob

Sadly, C T has decided that it is time for him to give up writing monthly contributions for Connexions. As you know, C doesn't enjoy the best of health and suffers a lot of pain. It has become difficult for him to spend longish periods on the computer, which is necessary.

C first started producing the monthly Prayer Diary at the beginning of 2016 taking over from Helen Potter. He has faithfully produced it every month until December 2023 so, seven years, at 10 per year that makes it 70 different prayer diaries.

His Favourite Hymn each month started mid 2019 - another four and half years - and what a wonderful selection he has given us.

In addition to these regular items, C has also given us some interesting articles from time to time on all sorts of people / situations. I remember one not too long ago about Quasimodo, which made very interesting reading.

C, we thank you wholeheartedly for all your efforts to help keep *Connexions* going over the years. We will miss your contributions and pray that your health will improve with some procedures that may be possible for you and no more monthly deadlines!

This of course means that I hope others will volunteer to take over these 2 jobs to keep *Connexions* going. The jobs can be shared; it doesn't have to be the same person every month. Please speak to the Editor.

This month A has composed the Prayer Diary and R has supplied the hymn slot. We thank them both for volunteering to do these jobs.

Editor



Fairtrade Fortnight always falls in February. However, this year 2024, is a special birthday year so they are changing the dates to celebrate to September  $9^{th} - 21^{st}$ . Watch this space – I just hope I remember to bring it to your attention!!

Editor

#### PRAYER DIARY

# w/c 4th

Dear God, in my thankfulness this week may I not overlook how frequently your remarkable gift of love is found in actions that are small and commonplace. May I receive love in a welcoming smile and return it that way too. May moments of patient waiting give time to hold others, fondly, in my thoughts. May necessary journeys and routine tasks be seen as space and time to think, pray and give. (lan Fosten, Conversations 2021)

# w/c 11th

As we start again our Lenten journey and travel in faith towards Easter, we ask that God will be alongside us to support and guide us through difficult times and peaceful interludes. When we are tempted may the God of love forgive us and help us to understand why Jesus, your Son, suffered and died so that we might live.

# w/c 18th

Lord, we look around at the world you have created and gasp in wonder and amazement. Help us to glimpse you when sunlight shines on a spider's web, when we hear birds calling or see the patterns they make in flight. We see you reflected in the snowdrops, daffodils and foliage in our gardens and hedgerows and in the running stream or mighty river. Creator God inspire us to care for your world and to be good stewards of your bounty.

# w/c 25<sup>th</sup>

This week, on Friday, is the World Day of Prayer when Christians throughout the world share a service prepared by a Christian community. This year the service has been prepared by Christian women in Palestine. How apt to be praying with and for a broken people in desperate need of our prayers of peace. Lord God, we pray for your broken world, of which we are a part. We pray for areas of injustice, war and suffering, particularly the Holy Land, the Gaza strip, the West Bank and Israel. May the olive branch of peace be shared throughout the world and give hope and encouragement to all those who are living today in Palestine.

These and all our prayers we offer to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen



Gosh! Here we go again.

You would think I would be able to remember everybody's birthday, wouldn't you, I've done them for long enough!

Just three in February though, three lovely ladies -

 $\begin{array}{lll} L \ C & 2^{nd} \\ P \ H & 9^{th} \\ H \ V & 14^{th} \end{array}$ 

Girls, your Lavington family send you all love and best wishes for your own special day.

There is only one wedding anniversary that I know of that of L and K B on 24<sup>th</sup>. Again, the Lavington family wish congratulations and send you love for your special day.

Editor

#### **ECO CHURCH NEXT STEPS**

Here are some suggestions of ways we can be even more eco friendly please let us know if you have other suggestions:

- Install one or more bug hotels
- Install one or more bird boxes
- Install one or more bat boxes
- Install more LED tubes to replace existing fluorescent tubes
- Twin our toilets with the Toilet Twinning charity
- Support an overseas environmental charity (such as Amigos)
- Carry out a carbon footprint audit
- Check that we are on a 'green' electricity tariff with our supplier
- Investigate the cost of secondary glazing in the church hall
- Investigate the possibility of a PV solar panel installation

Some of these will require big investment as they are big projects, but many are small investments for a greener world. These apply to Lavington URC but can also be actions for us at home. We will discuss further at our February Church Meeting, all ideas welcomed.

Rob



The local committee have received a letter from Christian Aid as we enter 2024 saying what a wonderful Christian Aid Week 2023 has proved to be. The total raised so far is £4.6 million to fund real and

lasting change for people living in poverty across the globe.

The organisation are very grateful to all the committees, people and donations who made it happen.



During Christian Aid Week we heard the stories about Jen and Esther. (Esther pictured) farmers in Malawi who work with local partners to build better futures for their families securing fairer prices for the crops they plant. Joining the pigeon pea locally programmes run starting to sell as part of cooperative, enables farmers to

earn more for their crops.

They go on to say, "we are absolutely delighted to tell you that both Jen and Esther achieved their highest prices ever in the market season which has just ended." They go on to to say, "through everybody's generosity in sharing time, skills and donations, you have helped farmers like Jen and Esther transform their own lives."

The Bideford committee organised several good fund raising events in 2023 including Christian Aid Week, a musical concert at High St Methodist, the Summer supper, the Quiz and the Carol Concert. Added to these events other money was raised by individual churches - Lent appeals, coffee mornings and cream teas to name but a few. Next month I should be able to tell you exactly how much we were able to send to Headquarters in 2023.

Christian Aid Week this year, 2024, will be May 14<sup>th</sup> – May 20<sup>th</sup>. This year again people are encouraged to participate in another "<u>Big Pea Challenge"</u> and host a pea-themed fundraiser. It's an amazing opportunity for budding gardeners and creative cooks alike to host competitions and community lunches.

\*\*L & J. Lavington's reps.\*\*

#### **FEBRUARY ROTAS**

#### **MINISTRY of FLOWERS**

We thank those who are providing flowers for our worship this month and those who arrange them if asked to do so.

4<sup>th</sup> Miss J S11<sup>th</sup> Mrs J D

**18**<sup>th</sup> \*Vacant date please speak to Jill

25<sup>th</sup> Mrs J D

# **SIDESMAN DUTIES**

 4th
 Mrs H M / Mrs E B

 11th
 Mrs A B / Mrs L C

 18th
 Mr P J / Mr C W

 25th
 Revd C B / Mrs J C

#### **VESTRY DUTIES**

4<sup>th</sup> Mrs L C 11<sup>th</sup> Mrs J C 18<sup>th</sup> Mrs J D 25<sup>th</sup> Mrs A B

#### COMMUNION

Preparation **4**<sup>th</sup> Mrs J D / Mrs A B Servers Mrs J D / Mrs A B

#### **BIBLE READERS**

4<sup>th</sup> Mrs S M 11<sup>th</sup> Revd C B 18<sup>th</sup> Mrs J P 25<sup>th</sup> Mrs J C

**OFFERTORY STEWARDS** Mrs A B / Miss J S

# FEBRUARY – TUESDAY CAFÉ ROTA

	KITCHEN	REFRESHMENTS	TEAS/COFFEES
6 <sup>th</sup>	J D J S	T C	H M W R
13 <sup>th</sup>	A B J S	T C	R S B G
20 <sup>th</sup>	J D L B	L C J S	H M M T
27 <sup>th</sup>	J D A & C B	J C R C	L C J S

#### **WORLD DAY of PRAYER**



Locally this meeting will be held on Friday March  $1^{st}$  at the Church of the Sacred Heart, North Road Bideford at 2pm.

Following the Service light refreshments will be available.

The World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical Christian laywomen's initiative. It is run

under the motto "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action," and is celebrated every year in over 170 countries on the first Friday in March.

A few years ago, World Day of Prayer replaced the Women's World Day of Prayer to include everyone who wanted to share in a dedicated World Day of Prayer. The logo has not changed.

Lavington's representative on the local committee is J C.

J

#### **NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY**

Sadly, shortly before Christmas **Richard Hester** passed away. We were able to celebrate his life of loyal Christian faith at a service held at Lavington. The family wish to thank all those who supported Richard and appreciated the help and support shown to them at his funeral. He is now thankfully at peace. Our prayerful support and best wishes go to **R** and **S W** following the death of S's father, B M . We remember them and the family at this sad time.

We have missed **Cs T** from our worshipping fellowship and send him our best wishes as he is suffering with pain which has further reduced his mobility and confined him to his home. We know how frustrating and tiring this will be and hope things will improve Cs so you can get the help you need. We are pleased that following a consultation **M M** has received good news which will help her feel better. Our thoughts and prayers are with **J P** as she undergoes tests following a short trip to hospital. We also remember **L G** and those in Golden Sands Residential Home in Westward Ho! who appreciate and receive regular visits from Elders and friends.

It is good to write about good news. We send our good wishes to **Gemma**, **Matt and Molly** following the news that **J and R C** are again looking forward to becoming grandparents. Also, **H M's** granddaughter, **D** has passed her police exams and is now a Detective Inspector. We send her and the family congratulations on this achievement and wish her every success in the future in her chosen career.

Our love and prayers are with all those who are unable to join us for worship, the housebound and those anxious and worried about their family or friends. May all be surrounded by God's peace, hope and love.

Α

#### HALL LETTINGS

We are delighted to welcome a new dance group to our premises. The group is called Devonshire Delights Dance and will run on Thursday evenings from 7.00 - 8.00pm.

#### **PREMISES NEWS**

As you may have realised, we had a busy time over Christmas regarding our premises as our gas boiler suddenly stopped working. Thankfully our plumber Daniel Prouse was able to get a new combi boiler installed for the beginning of the year. We are still getting used to the new system and settings; hopefully we will soon have the hall warm and cosy again.

In order to reduce our heat loss in the hall and to make more progress as an Eco Church, the Elders have considered a number of initiatives. We will be fitting a curtain across the entrance hatch to the gas boiler, which should reduce some draughts and heat loss. In addition, we will be installing some draught excluders on the doors to the hall to prevent the cold draughts from the corridor. We will also be investigating the cost of secondary glazing. We hope to be able to bring details to the next church meeting. The secondary glazing will qualify for a 50% eco grant from the South Western Synod.

In the kitchen we have already swapped four fluorescent tubes for LED tubes. These use only a third of the electricity which will help save the planet and save money.

For added safety, we will be installing more smoke detectors. There are already some on the first floor but we will be adding some on the ground floor.

In the kitchen, the Elders recognise that the heating provision is not sufficient in these cold winter months so we have agreed to have a new wall mounted heater installed by our electrician in the coming weeks.

The good news this month is that the blocked drains have now been cleared and we have discovered the exact route of the drain pipes. This is really helpful as we will be able to ask our plumber to quickly resolve any future blockages.

Rob

#### **AMIGOS CHARITY**

Some of you will have heard of the Amigos Charity which has its UK office in north Devon. I recently met with Kayte Potter to find out more about their work. Here is a brief summary for you:

'Amigos' vision is to see people and communities across Uganda thriving. We support disadvantaged and marginalised people to work their way out of poverty with dignity by providing them with the practical and holistic life skills they need to thrive. Amigos runs Kira Farm, a 22-acre farm just outside Kampala, where every year 50 young Ugandans from disadvantaged backgrounds come and spend a year being mentored and learning trades and skills for the future.

We also run sustainable community development in rural areas in partnerships with local churches. Here we invest in training groups in conservation farming techniques – this has a huge impact on crop yields and equips entire communities for long term, sustained change.

Finally, we have a three-year child sponsorship programme. Sponsors pay £18 per month for three years and the money given pays for the child's schooling and to train their caregiver in conservation farming and business skills. By the end of three years, caregivers are self-sufficient and able to meet the needs of their family.'

At our next Church Meeting I hope we might be able to discuss ways in which we might support Amigos to enable individuals, families and communities in Uganda to flourish. You can find out more online: <a href="https://www.amigos.org.uk">www.amigos.org.uk</a>

Rob

#### TO MAKE YOU LAUGH

A grandfather was discussing the bible with his grandson.

"Were you in the ark?" asked the grandson?

"No" laughed the grandfather.

Then why weren't you drowned?

# HERE IN THIS PLACE BY Marty Haugen, published in 1982

"Here in this place new light is streaming, now is the darkness vanished away, see in this space our fears and our dreamings, brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in—the lost and forsaken, gather us in—the blind and the lame; call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name."

Marty Haugen was born in 1950 and is one of the influential composers of liturgical music of our time. We sang this hymn recently at Lavington and I hope you enjoyed the tune and the words. Marty Haugen has written over 400 compositions. He is a member of the United Church of Christ, which is a sister church of the URC in the United States. However, his music is widely used by Anglicans, Lutherans and Catholics and he makes regular appearances in congregations and conferences.

In the first verse, he refers to a community which is one of hope where 'new light is streaming.' It is also a community of honesty where we can bring both 'our fears and our dreamings into 'the light of this day.' Personally, I think it is important to be inclusive. So, it is good to sing of a community of inclusiveness that includes those who regard themselves as 'lost and forsaken' and those with disabilities. Regardless of who we are, we have a place in this community.

Verse two continues a description of this inclusive gathering: young and old, rich and haughty, proud and strong. He also refers to a community that has both a history and a purpose. We are a people called to "be a light to the whole human race" (Matthew 5:14-16).

Holy Communion is the theme of verse three, acknowledging the place where we receive the 'wine and the water' and 'bread of new birth.' This nourishment gives the members of this community strength 'to be salt for the earth' (Matthew 5:13). The nourishment from this sacramental meal has

an ethical result as we show compassion and 'fashion lives that are holy and hearts that are true.'

The concluding verse clarifies that the work of the kingdom takes place neither 'in the dark of buildings confining' nor 'in some heaven, light years away.' It is a great reminder that the work of God's kingdom is already happening, right now in the midst of our gathered inclusive community. Our Christian witness is not restricted to any building or place and certainly not restricted to the next world. The hymn can act as a reminder that we are all invited, all valued and all making a difference in our own unique way.

Rob

#### **CHURCH MEETING**

The next church meeting will be held on Sunday February 11<sup>th</sup> at 11.30 immediately following morning worship which will start at 10.30am to allow for this.

Church members will receive their agenda and papers for the meeting in February.

This meeting is important to provide an up-to-date picture of the finances, maintenance and fellowship at Lavington; an opportunity to ask questions of the Minister and Elders and where the life of Lavington can be discussed and voted on.

Please make every effort to attend the meeting as you are not required to attend worship first. If unable to attend please can you send your apologies via an Elder. Thank you.

Alison Biggs, Church secretary

#### CAFFEINE MAY BE THE KEY TO A LONGER LIFE.

Scientists have found that caffeine - ingredient in coffee and tea - blocks chemicals that can trigger heart disease. So, all the more reason for you to enjoy a cuppa on Tuesday mornings at church! We are here every week for tea, coffee and/or lunches. Tea and coffee are good for you!

# **LEAP YEAR – 29<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY**

Have you realised that 2024 brings us to a Leap Year. We need to add this extra day every four years to keep our calendar in alignment with the Earth's revolutions around the Sun.

The problem is very simple: our calendar has 365 days, but it actually takes 365.242199 days (a tropical year) to circle once around the Sun. That means we are 'out' by nearly 6 hours a year. Four times 6 hours is 24 – hence an extra day every 4 years.

Adding the extra day in February goes back to Julius Ceasar in 45 BC. In his Julian Calendar, February was the last month of the year and 24<sup>th</sup> was Leap Year Day.

An old Irish Legend tells how it was St Brigid who first struck a deal with St Patrick to allow women to propose to men every four years. The arrangement was meant to 'balance' the traditional roles of men and women in a similar way to how Leap Day balances our calendar.

Although Valentine's Day sometimes seems a bit over the top, it is a timely reminder in a dull month of the centrality of love in human love.

The dull month will pass and we will be looking for signs of spring before you know it!

Editor

#### WAITING FOR THE WORD

Peter Skellern is probably best known for his 1974 hit 'You're A Lady'. In 2001, he recorded a song 'Waiting for the Word' especially for Songs of Praise in which, as an agnostic, he yearned for God to speak to him so that he could act on His Word. The melody and the lyrics are both outstanding. Sadly, he died in 2017, but I noticed that they added that he was ordained the year before so his wait had not been in vain. I believe The Songs of Praise recording can still be seen and heard on You Tube.

#### SNOWDROP PLANTING DAY

Tinhay Retreats, Lifton, Devon, PL6 0EL Home of Rob and Suzy

Join us on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February between 10.00am – 3.00pm

Help us to plant another 1000 snowdrops within the grounds of Tinhay Retreats, as we develop our grounds for quiet prayer and reflection.

Come and plant them as a symbol of hope for the future.

No charge, donations invited towards
the cost of snowdrops and refreshments.

Any surplus will go to A Rocha the conservation charity.

tinhayretreats.com/ 01566 784990



#### **VERSES FOR FEBRUARY**

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth; for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home".

February is merely as long as is needed to pass the time until March.

"Surely as cometh the Winter, I know there are Spring violets under the snow".

# Fun Page

All the following are in one of these categories -

# **Desserts / Cakes / Puddings / Biscuits**

1.	Cook perfectly	
2.	Spicy photograph	
3.	Virtuous girl	
4.	Sounds pleasant	
5.	Albert's favourite	
6.	River sediment	
7.	Death by chocolate	
8.	Ballerina's special	
9.	Gabriel's way	
10.	In perfect order	
11.	Eve's pudding	
12.	Somersault	
13.	Tinkerbell's treat	
14.	Daytime moths	
15.	Such a little thing	
16.	Wrong way up	
17.	Feline with possessions	
18.	Israeli orange	
19.	Stony cake	
20.	Richard has acne	

# Who's who at Lavington URC

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#### Minister

#### **Revd Rob Weston**

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# **Church & Hall Bookings**

# **Revd Colin Biggs**

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

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The March issue of Connexions is due out
On Sunday February 25<sup>th</sup>
Please give items for inclusion to Janet Palmer or send by email to
palmer.jan@tiscali.co.uk

Before or at the latest - Sunday February 18th

Connexions is edited by Janet Palmer and printed and assembled by Jenny and Ricky Cawsey