

CONNEXIONS

The magazine of

Lavington

**United Reformed Church
Bideford**



MAY 2025

50p

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Sunday	4 th	11.00am	Family Worship with Holy Communion – Colin Biggs
Sunday	11 th	11.00am	Family Worship – Rob Weston
Saturday	17 th	10.00am	CHRISTIAN AID COFFEE MORNING
Sunday	18 th	11.00am	Family Worship – Sabrina Gröschel
Wednesday	21 st	10.30am	Elders' Meeting
Sunday	25 th	11.00am	Family Worship – Alison Biggs
Sunday June	1 st	11.00am	Family Worship with Holy Communion – Revd David Downing (Synod Moderator)
Sunday	8 th	12.30pm	Pentecost lunch (see insert)

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.



We are a FairTrade Church



Dear Friends

During May we will support Christian Aid week through special collections on two Sundays, while people across Britain and Ireland raise funds, act and pray for their global neighbours in a celebration of hope for a fairer world.

This year's appeal is focusing on the charity's work in Guatemala. In the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala, 90% of people are living in poverty. The region is home to the Indigenous Q'eqchi' (pronounced: Co-WAY-chee) people. Men in the community often seek work away from their homes, while many women grow crops to feed their families.

Aurelia is a community leader, a mother of eight and a beloved grandmother. Record high temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns have hit farmers like her hard. Water sources are drying up or being polluted by industry. Aurelia and her neighbours walk for around four hours each day making two trips to collect safe, clean water.

'Climate change has been killing our crops,' Aurelia says. 'As the plants are dying, the next thing that will die is us.'

But she isn't giving up. Congcoop, Christian Aid's partner in Guatemala, supports communities with agricultural resources and training that help them to become more climate resilient. Aurelia took up the opportunity to gain new skills with Congcoop. She's combining her deep knowledge and understanding of her land with innovative techniques to make organic fertiliser, construct rainwater collection systems, and grow a wider range of crops.

With Congcoop's support, Aurelia is using her cacao harvest to make chocolate products to sell at a local market. 'I feel joyful and grateful when I'm preparing chocolate,' Aurelia says. 'I make cocoa products with all my heart! Perhaps that's why they have such a good flavour!'

May God bless us this month as we are inspired by people like Aurelia to praise God and love our neighbours both near and far.

Every blessing

*Rob Weston
Minister*

PRAYER DIARY



w/c May 4th

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those men and women who have died in active service, particularly in the Second World War, whose sacrifice brought Victory in Europe. As we honour their courage and cherish their memory, may we put our faith in your future, for you are the source of life and hope. We pray for the peace of the world and hold before you places of conflict in our fragile world. Grant hope and peace wherever it is needed through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

w/c 11th

Lord, you are faithful to your promises. Through the Holy Spirit, you bless us with abounding hope. When power seeks to silence justice give us the courage to raise our voice. When an end to poverty seems far off, renew our faith in your kingdom on earth. When our neighbour reaches out inspire us to respond with overflowing love. We remember and pray for Congcoop, Christian Aid's partner in Guatemala. We give thanks for all those giving, acting and praying this Christian Aid Week.

w/c 18th

Heavenly Father, we remember all those today who will struggle with their health, either physical or mental. In a moment of quiet we name those known to us and ask that you will surround them with your love and hope, whatever their needs. We pray for those working within the NHS and various charities to provide help, medicine, relief and assessment to those in need. May all use their skills and have time and patience to improve the health and well-being of those they meet.

w/c 25th

Eternal God, only source of the wisdom which can secure our peace and reconcile people and nations, we pray for the world in which we live and in which so many people live without purpose and hope. Father, teach us your way of peace. Keep showing us the truth revealed in Jesus Christ, and let your Holy Spirit shine in the Church today. Let it give us power to proclaim with conviction your word of life in lives devoted to loving service and generous self-sacrificing commitment to others.

These and all our prayers we offer in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A

Visit by the Synod Moderator

On Sunday June 1st our new South Western Synod Moderator, Revd David Downing, will be leading our morning Communion service. It will be the first time David has visited Bideford and given us our opportunity to welcome him to our fellowship along with his wife Jo.



Please make every effort to attend church on that day so we can share together God's love and welcome for all his disciples, whatever their role and witness.

Easter at Lavington

Our Easter celebrations began as some of us gathered in "the Upper Room" on Maundy Thursday evening for a service of Tenebrae. With Easter being so late, the 'darkness' was very much relative, and yet the power of the meditation and reduced light was still appreciated.



Not believing that the disciples washed up after the Last Supper, we left the Upper Room (actually our Oak Room upstairs) just as it was at the end of the service.

Good Friday was wet but the churches of Bideford still came together for the annual Walk of Witness, a celebration of our unity as people of God, worshipping together in this act of public witness.



And then the Easter celebration where the cross, no longer shrouded as at the end of Tenebrae but blooming with new life and colour was paraded to the singing of "Lift high the cross". Special arrangements had to be made to accompany the hymns, but this did not detract from the joy and truth of "Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!"



Pope Francis



The United Reformed Church, with Christians everywhere, mourns the death of His Holiness Pope Francis, and extends its sympathy to Catholics who will grieve this loss most keenly.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected Pope in March 2013 taking office after the abdication of Benedict XVI. All who are called to offices of leadership and oversight in the Church realise how demanding these roles can be; none is more demanding than that of Bishop of Rome. The complexity of the task tired Benedict to the point of exhaustion and the toll of the office was heavy for Francis.

Within the limitations and expectations of the Papal office Francis was an agent of change who sat lightly on inherited traditions and pomp. Living a simple lifestyle meant, for Francis, rejecting a move into the Papal apartments (which he said had room for more than 300 people) and remaining in a small suite in the Vatican guesthouse, taking his meals with other guests.

Francis saw his ministry, primarily, as being one who called the Church to be missionary. He wanted every element of the Church's life to reflect missionary discipleship and the building of the Kingdom.

He also spoke of Jesus knocking on the door, from within the Church, seeking to be let out into the world. Yet Francis was no liberal. He would speak of the reality of the Devil – no doubt the behaviour of some of his bishops led him to become ever more convinced of the reality of evil and remained traditional over some of the hot button topics of the age – gender and sexuality.

Above all, Francis was a pastoral pope emphasising the mercy of God and the need to change our ways to save the planet. The selfless love embodied in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, however, sometimes led to some key mistakes in Francis' pontificate.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

[Extracts from the U.R.C. website response to the Pope's death]

News of the Church Family

We remember **S M**, our organist, as she continues to undergo hospital treatment. We pray for her full recovery following her ongoing treatment. Our thoughts and prayers are with **M T** as she recovers from a hip operation. We hope the operation brings relief and she notices a steady improvement in her mobility.

Missing from our worshipping fellowship have been **J and D B** as J has been unwell and spent a brief time in hospital. Our love and prayers to you both. We hope, with rest, you will soon feel a lot better J. **L W** has been suffering with a painful back which has limited her mobility. We send you our best wishes and hope you will quickly improve.

H M's husband **I** has had his second operation in London and we hope and pray he is now recuperating at home with H's care. **C T** is keeping fairly well but struggling with his mobility. During the recent dry weather he was able to get out on his scooter but this has become more difficult. We send C our love and prayers at this time.

The Lavington fellowship remember all those unable to join us for worship, the housebound, the anxious and those struggling with their health physically or mentally. We send you our love, prayers and support that you will be surrounded by God's love, peace and hope.

A

Pentecost lunch

Pentecost is not until next month – and neither is the lunch, but the booking form for the lunch has come with this edition of Connexions and does need to be filled in and returned. Why not do it now, before we forget.

APRIL ROTAS

MINISTRY OF FLOWERS

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

4th J C
11th
18th
25th J D
June 1st J D

VESTIBULE DUTIES

4th L C
11th J C
18th A B
25th C B
June 1st P J

VESTRY DUTIES

4th A B
11th A B
18th J C
25th J D
June 1st L C

COMMUNION

Preparation 4th J C / L C
Servers L C / A B

BIBLE READERS

4th J D
11th C B
18th A B
25th C B
June 1st T.B.A.

OFFERTORY STEWARDS: A B / J S

TUESDAY CAFE ROTAS

	KITCHEN	REFRESHMENTS	TEA/COFFEE
6 th	J D A B	J C J S	W R H M
13 th	J D L B	J C J S	L C W H
20 th	J D H N	J C L C	J S A B
27 th	J D A B	C B J S	L C C B

BIRTHDAYS and CELEBRATIONS



Apparently, there are no birthdays or other celebrations among our congregation in May.

Do you know differently?

If so, please let us know.



‘Thank you’

I am so very grateful for the beautiful flowers and good wishes I have received and for knowing that I am being remembered by friends at Lavington. Thank you one and all.

J H.

Christian Aid Week – May 11–17 2025

The theme this year is 'Hope Abounds.' The focus is on Guatemala where gruelling heatwaves and extreme weather are destroying livelihoods, such as Aurelia's farm. She worries deeply about how much harvest the family will have to eat and sell.

“Climate change has been killing our crops and this is our food”

The roots of this cruel injustice runs deep. Indigenous communities like Aurelia's have done the least to cause the climate crisis, yet they endure its impact the most. But the unstoppable power of hope is in the hands of farmers like Aurelia, as she leads her community in the fight to overcome the challenges they face.



Aurelia is holding hope in her hands

You can show your support for people, like Aurelia, to receive vital training so communities can effectively fight the climate crisis by putting a donation in the Christian Aid envelopes you will find in the church pew in Christian Aid Week.



Please come to the

**Christian Aid
Coffee Morning**

on

Saturday 17 May 10 – 1pm.

at Lavington

Ministers' Spring School

The South Western Synod organises a Ministers' gathering every year: usually it is held after Easter and this year is no exception (28th April - 1st May). Over the past few years the venue has been Saunton Sands hotel which is an excellent location with stunning views across the beach. You might be wondering what we get up to when we get together... It's a really good opportunity to talk with other Ministers from around the Synod. We are a varied bunch: some are full time, some are part time, some are retired (but still very active in the churches). We also like to learn from various speakers, about the ways the church is adapting to the current context, developments in theology or just sharing good practice. Naturally, we also spend time together in worship. I'm looking forward to this year's Spring School, and will let you know what I learn this year!

Rob Weston

Golf!

The Reverend Francis Norton woke up one Sunday morning and, realising that it was an exceptionally beautiful and sunny early Spring day, decided he just had to play golf. He told his Associate Pastor that he was feeling sick and would be unable to say Mass that day. As soon as his Associate had left the room to prepare to say Mass in his place, Father Norton headed out of town to a golf course some 40 miles away, where he could be sure not to meet anyone he knew. He was alone on the golf course – after all, everyone was in church!

*Saint Peter leaned over to God and exclaimed "You're not going to let him get away with this, are you?" The Lord sighed and said, "No, I guess not". Just then Father Norton drove off the tee and the ball shot towards the pin, dropping just short and rolling up before dropping straight into the hole. **It was a 470-yard hold in one!** St Peter was astonished. He looked at the Lord and asked, "Why did you let him get away with that?" The Lord smiled. "Who's he going to tell?"*

[Thanks to the Muddiford church magazine for this timely warning!]

Synod news

Following an extensive survey of all the churches in the South Western Synod, the synod meeting in October approved the creation of some new roles to support local churches. I'm pleased to report that some of these roles are now being advertised and I'm particularly looking forward to the appointment of a synod communications person who will help to bring the synod website up-to-date and produce a regular synod e-newsletter. All being well, I should be reporting on the name of the appointed person next month!

Rob Weston

Premises news

Every five years, the South Western synod require us to have a surveyor's visit to inspect both our church buildings and our manse. This is an important inspection as it helps to guide the Elders in the maintenance work that should be prioritised over the next five years. We also receive a 50% synod grant towards the cost of the Quinquennial inspection. I'm pleased to report that Adrian Male was able to visit on 16th April and we look forward to his report in due course. Adrian remembered the premises, as he visited five years ago, and was impressed by the progress we have made in caring for our premises.

Otherwise, there are only a couple of small projects to report on this month! The noticeboard has been repaired and is back in place by the front doors, so we can display our posters once again. And the Elders have agreed to replace the over-the-door fan heaters in the church lobby. One of them has stopped working and as they are a matching pair, it is appropriate to replace them both.

The new meeting rooms are now being used and we will be installing a WiFi booster so that this facility can be available in the upper rooms.

Rob Weston

FAVOURITE HYMN

Sing we triumphant hymns of praise (R&S254) *(Hymnum canamus gloriae)*

Ascension Day is recognized in the Christian calendar as an event distinct from Easter and Pentecost – but neither in the Bible nor in worship (especially in the Nonconformist traditions) nor in hymnody is that distinction clear. As the first generation of Christians thought back to the events following the first Easter, they became convinced that the Lordship and Kingship of Jesus demonstrated over that period was, in fact, timeless, even though specially celebrated at a particular time.

For us today, the story of the Ascension is too easily associated with a view of the universe that is at odds with what we know today. (The stained-glass window on the cover showing Jesus enthroned in the clouds is at least better than the ones showing his legs hanging below the clouds as he passes through them!) As a result, we have only a few hymns focussing on Ascensiontide. The early and medieval Church, being much more visually focussed in its worship, was not so restricted and celebrated with equal zeal *'crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and sitting in glory'*.

It is from that context that we have this Latin hymn by the Venerable Bede (a Northumbrian monk, author and scholar from the 7th century). In its original 7 verse form, the hymn is primarily a re-telling of the account in chapter 1 of the Acts but seen from the point of view of Mary the mother of Jesus standing among the disciples. Modern hymnbooks usually omit verses 2 to 4 of the original, moving our thoughts swiftly onwards to the essential meaning of the Ascension for us. We are expected to be among the witnesses to this transition from earthly service to heavenly splendour. But whereas the first disciples needed to learn the message for their own benefit, we are witnesses primarily to enable the truth to be known and celebrated everywhere and always.

C

Fun page

The only thing cuter than an animal is a baby animal, and that's what I'm asking about this month.

What is the official name for the young of these species. I'll be SERIOUSLY impressed if you can get them all (without help from the internet)!

1. Alligator
2. Alpaca
3. Ant
4. Bat
5. Bee
6. Fox
7. Gerbil
8. Goat
9. Hedgehog
10. Horse
11. Moose
12. Oyster
13. Peacock
14. Porcupine
15. Toad

Answers to April's "Fun Page"

1. *Barabbas (possibly Jesus Barabbas!)*
2. *Stones*
3. *Mary Magdalene*
4. *3 hours*
5. *Galilee*
6. *Malchus*
7. *He hanged himself*
8. *They bought a burial field ("The field of blood")*
9. *Staff*
10. *Earthquake*

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

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Enquiries for weddings and baptisms are welcomed.

Please contact Church and Hall Bookings Secretary as above.

**The June issue of Connexions should be available
on Sunday June 1st**

**Please give items for inclusion to Colin or Alison Biggs
or send to them by e-mail as above
before, or at the latest by, 25th May**

This issue of Connexions has been edited by Colin and Alison Biggs

Printed and assembled by Jenny and Ricky Cawsey