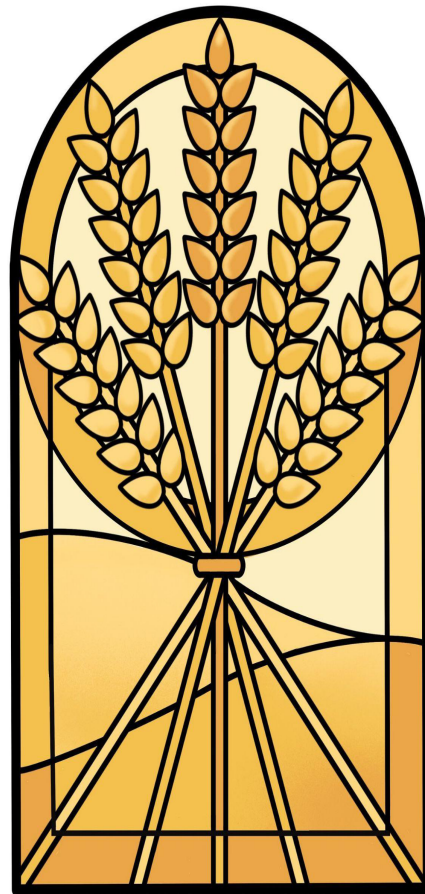


## ***ST JOHN'S URC CHURCH MARSH GREEN***



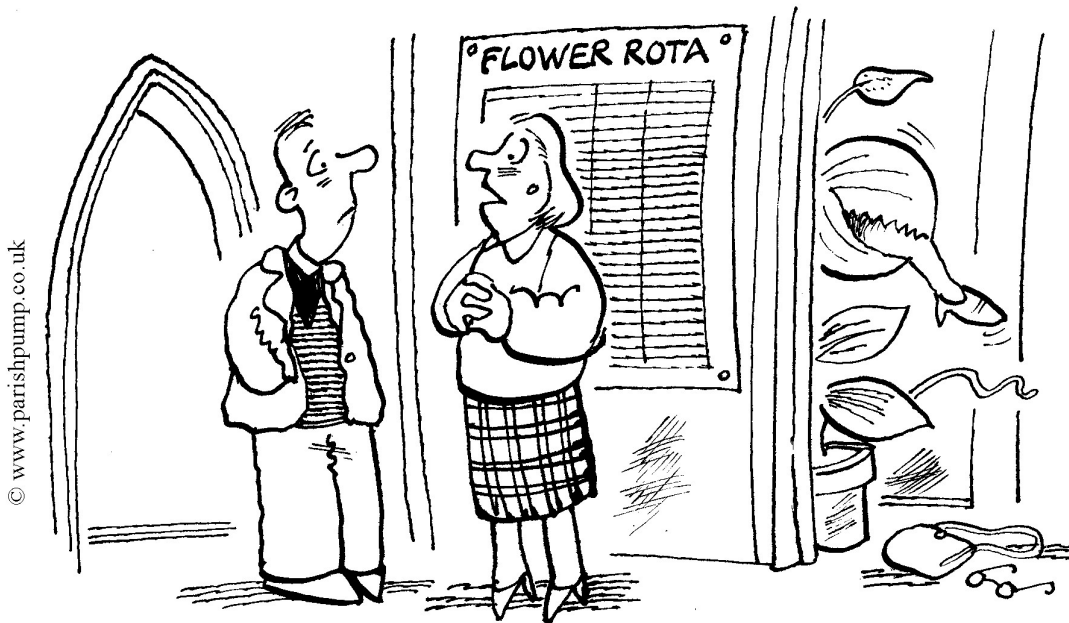
## ***HARVEST 2023 NEWSLETTER***

### ***INTRODUCTION***

As the summer holidays end and we move into autumn it is now 2 years since we last had an ordained Minister to lead us, and with the shortage of URC Ministers the road towards the end of the vacancy is still not clear, and certainly what we will find once we get there is not at all certain. Although we have made all the preparations that we can to move forward, the way in which available Ministers will be allocated, and how they will be shared between churches in and around our cluster, remains uncertain.

So it's worth reflecting with some hope that our small congregation has been very resilient in moving forward without a Minister. There are new and active Members of the church, we have carried forward our existing activities reasonably successfully and have embarked on new ones, and we have done a lot to improve the fabric of the church and more is to come, and members of the congregation, new and old, have stepped up in numbers to lead our services.

But we have no room for complacency. As churchgoing numbers in all denominations continue to fall, what we once thought of as a tiny congregation is now much closer to the average size. We still have some engagement from children and young people, but it isn't what it was even a few short years ago. We are working hard to reach out to more people of all ages and to ensure that our church remains as valuable in the community now as it has been for nearly a century and a half. We give thanks for what has been done so far, and go forward in hope for what is still to come!



*...er Vicar, it's about that flower Mrs Brindle's brought back from her foreign holiday...*

## **DIARY FOR AUTUMN 2023**



*They knew it was left over from the Harvest Festival, but not what it was, or where...*

## **WORSHIP LEADERS FOR SERVICES**

### **SEPTEMBER**

**10<sup>th</sup> Stuart Dew – Hassocks URC**

**17<sup>th</sup> Hilary and Peter Brand**

**24<sup>th</sup> HARVEST – Tricia Rey assisted by Junior Church**

**After the service there will be an Auction of Produce in aid of Christian Aid**



## **OCTOBER**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Jon Dean with puppets - Sanderstead URC**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Revd Graham Dadd – our former Minister**  
**15<sup>th</sup> Gary Bradford**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> Ian Fletcher – Horsham URC**  
**29<sup>th</sup> Mark Rigby – Tonbridge URC**

## **NOVEMBER**

- 5<sup>th</sup> Peter and Hilary Brand**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Remembrance Sunday – Tricia Rey**  
**19<sup>th</sup> tbc**  
**26<sup>th</sup> Julia Hill – Crawley URC**
- 

## **ADVENT FAIR**

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November at 10 am to 12 noon**

## **A LETTER FROM BUNTY WALKER!**

*Greetings from Alnwick, Northumberland, my new home town.  
So here I am in this historic, granite-built town. Even part of my address has an historic ring to it: 'Bondgate Without'. The bondgate, or bailiff's gate is a tall, heavily granite stone archway into the town and was built around 1450. Thankfully nowadays no bonds are necessary to gain entry to the cobbled streets of Alnwick but the bondgate does stop any juggernauts or heavy traffic entering the town from this side. Yes, Alnwick is deeply steeped in history with Alnwick Castle (just five*

*minutes from my flat) still the residence of the Percy family, the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, descendants of the mighty Hotspur – of Tottenham? No No not really! A few days ago my niece and I drove up to Berwick-on-Tweed about an hour away. We wandered around the walls of this lovely old, redstone town admiring the gorgeous houses on the waterfront with gardens running down to the wide river Tweed. We visited an L.S. Lowry exhibition in the Barracks Museum where there was a delightful Lowry original and a number of other artistic gems on loan from the Glasgow Burrell Collection. Evidently Lowry visited Berwick often and wanted very much to buy a house there. Unfortunately the house he set his heart on turned out to have rising damp so he didn't proceed. Buying and selling houses was ever a big headache as well I know! Today I went with my next door neighbour to Howick Hall, the ancestral home of the Earls Grey and, you guessed it, birthplace of the founder of the Earl Grey tea company. We wandered around the gardens, enjoying the sensory garden and duck pond and finishing with coffee in the attractive Howick Tearoom. Not a bad way to familiarise myself with this area of the country.*

*All good wishes to everyone at St John's Marsh Green from Bunty*

## **CORONATION BIG LUNCH ON THE GREEN**

Church members joined many Marsh Green village residents for the Coronation Big Lunch on the Green. It was a wonderful gathering and went on for six hours! Edenbridge Town Band attended, along with other musicians, including David and Sara.

Maypole dancing returned to the green for the first time since well before covid. Dancers of all ages were gathered from church and village. It

wasn't quite the same as it once was as you can see from the photos but it was good to continue the tradition and it was great fun.



1905  
2023



The whole event was a very heart-warming time of sharing of church and village.

## ***FROM OXTED URC***

### **Lavender Planting 'Tea Party'**

On the 3rd June 2023 members and friends of Oxted URC planted thirty lavender bushes, sponsored by the congregation. The bushes were planted in an arc on the front lawn, to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III and for the community to enjoy.

The variety chosen for the planting was *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote'. *Lavandula angustifolia* is commonly known as English lavender and has narrow, oily and aromatic evergreen leaves and bears dense spikes of

small tubular flowers in summer. It is extremely attractive to bees, butterflies, and hoverflies.

*Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote' is named after Hidcote, the beautiful Arts & Crafts garden in Gloucestershire, and The Royal Horticultural Society has given the plant, its prestigious Award of Garden Merit (AGM). The plants were sourced from a local nursery and delivered to Oxted URC the previous morning, complete with their plant



passport: UK/EW/20318. Plant passports ensure that plants can be traced throughout the supply chain and declares compliance with plant health requirements such as freedom from pests, and is essential for

maintaining biosecurity.



The 3rd of June dawned warm and sunny (not too hot) and a team assembled just after 2.30pm for the purposes of planting. Fortunately, a small border had already been prepared by Ben; our gardener. Consequently, we were able to readily dig holes in the well

cultivated soil, add plenty of water and firm each plant in individually. Everyone got involved, carrying rainwater from the back of the church, removing weeds, and sweeping up. Within a relatively short time the arc was complete and ready to be admired, as we sat in the sunshine and enjoyed homemade cake and tea.

June 2023 has been confirmed as the hottest June on record, so a watering rota is essential.

Lavender enjoys a hot sunny spot, and we are hopeful the bushes will



thrive for years to come!



## MARSH GREEN SUMMER TEAS

We have had a very joyful and well attended series of Summer Teas this year.

We have enjoyed wonderful refreshments, and welcomed a wide range of visitors from the village, passing walkers, friends from other churches in Edenbridge and around the area – a number of folk coming from other churches in our U.R.C. Cluster. There

have been children running around enjoying themselves, older folk appreciating the conversation and cake, sitting in the sunshine (when we have it!) – or in the shade of the trees and plenty of people exploring and learning from the nature reserve, including the pond which is developing water wildlife and flowers.

In June there was a Hedgehog themed event with craft activities for the children – producing some lovely hedgehogs! There was also a hedgehog house for visitors to admire, built by Ben Brownless which later in the summer became established in the reserve with its first hedgehog inhabitants. We also had a human hedgehog, Liz Crothall!



In July the weather was much less good so we stayed inside where we were very pleased to welcome The Oxted Glee choir – very good and great fun. At the August teas we were back outside sitting around tables in the shade or the trees, with music this time provided by David Sayell, Sarah (Violin) and Ben Brownless. Liz Crothall sang and the rest of us sang along when we felt able!

We are very grateful for all the hard work Shirley Homan puts in to preparing for these events as well, of course, to all those who bake cakes and other goodies, help set up, and clear away afterwards as well as the many serving tea and food and washing up. We are helped too, by so many visitors who join in and help at the time in various ways, including Matthew from Oxted who sang with the rest of the musicians.

Thanks to all. Spread the word and come again next year!

Jean Gibbons



## ***Eco Date for Your Diary Apple Pressing Event***

The Eco Group is organising a community apple pressing event on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September from 10am to 2pm.

The main activity will be apple pressing and juicing. We will have an electric and a hand mill working as well as two cider presses. All we need is you to bring lots of apples (and some clean plastic bottles – like those you buy milk in from supermarkets) and your labour to produce lovely juice for you to take home. Ask about making home-made cider or vinegar too.

There will also be various stalls, a coffee and apple themed cake stall (organised by the couple who have recently been running a weekly Sunday pop up tea garden in Marsh Green), mulled apple juice, soup and rolls for lunch and live musical entertainment.

## ***Eco Update – Harvest 2023***

### ***Newts***

When we started digging out our nature reserve pond in October 2021, we were optimistic it would attract more wildlife to the nature reserve and this was proved to be true, as last summer as we saw a great range of insects (pond skaters, dragon flies, damsel flies) also frogs and even a grass snake among the native plants that we have gradually been introducing into the pond and its margins. But I don't think any of us imagined that within 18 months the pond would have been colonised not only by the common smooth newts but also by the great crested newts (GCNs), which are the biggest of the three newt species in the UK (reaching a maximum adult overall length of up to about 170mm) (see Photo 1) and have been around for approximately 40 million years. An amphibian expert from Kent Wildlife Trust did a torch survey of the pond in May and we counted at least 6 smooth newts, also 2 GCNs, including a pregnant female. Like nearly all amphibians, the great crested newt is

dependent on bodies of water such as ponds for breeding but usually spends most of its life on land. GCNs have suffered a massive population decline and are now protected by law, officially classed as an endangered species, which will affect how we manage the pond and wider reserve.

To find out more about GCNs, see <https://www.arc-trust.org/great-crested-newt> and <https://www.froglife.org/info-advice/amphibians-and-reptiles/great-crested-newt/>



Photo 1: Great Crested Newt (photo from <https://www.arc-trust.org/great-crested-newt>)

## ***Hedgehogs***

For several years we have had several hedgehog boxes in the nature reserve and the young people of the church family have been very keen to have rescued hedgehogs released in the reserve. Last summer we did a survey to ensure that we had suitable habitat, including hedges as hogs like to keep to these linear habitats on their nocturnal foraging, also our pond as a water supply. However, until June 2023 we had no proof of hedgehogs in the village – so were never considered as a release site. All this changed in June, just days before the summer tea which had a hedgehog theme, we heard from Lin in the village who reported having been “*woken up by some horrendous noises early hours in the morning. We thought perhaps a cat was injured. However, it turned out to be a ball of hedgehog! ..... In the end we put our guinea pig run over it ... we gave the hedgehog a dish of water and some of our cat’s food.*” The family later released the hedgehog where it had been found.

About the same day, Justin in the village “*sadly spotted a hedgehog that had been run over just outside our house*” which he assumed to be the same hedgehog he had seen a few times and had caught on his garden trail cam. “*The morning after we found a hoglet wandering around by the back door which we took into care and fed and watered, we took the little one to a wildlife rescue for proper care. To cut a long story short over that weekend we found 5 more little ones that needed care.*”

(Photo 2)

After about a month of care at the wildlife rescue centre, 2 of the hoglets were ready to be returned to the wild and at Justin’s request they were returned to Marsh Green for release. Again after the publicity around hedgehogs by the Eco Group, Justin asked if they could be released in the nature reserve, further from the busy road than his garden. It was a huge pleasure to watch the hoglets being placed in a brand new hedgehog box - seeing how big they had grown by Photo 3)!



Photos 2 and 3 (copyright Justin Walker and Ruth Woodfine)

We initially left out some cat and hedgehog food for the hoglets and saw it was rapidly eaten the following day. Since, there have been no further sightings of the hoglets – but I think this is not a worry, as they are nocturnal and can forage up to a mile each night searching for food. We hope the remaining hoglets will also be returned to March Green for

release soon. (*Since Anne wrote this we have received the remaining four hoglets*)

## ***Swifts***

Swifts, swallows, house martins and sand martins are all migrant birds which fly into UK from Africa in summer to raise their young and feast on insects snatched from the sky. Swifts are very sociable and can often be spotted in groups wheeling over roofs and calling to each other with high-pitched screams. Unfortunately, all these bird species have been declining in numbers, at least in part due to lack of good safe nesting spots. The church has recently received a very kind donation of three swift boxes to provide nesting sites for swifts in the village.

There are very specific instructions where to fix swift boxes, including that they must be fixed facing between north and east (for shade), at least 5m above the ground. Fortunately, scaffolding was being put up on the church tower during August for some maintenance work, so the builders have attached the boxes. Swifts will be migrating south soon, so we will have to be patient and wait to see if any swifts want to make the St John's church tower their home.

## ***Anne Woodfine***

### ***Some miscellaneous observations on modern life...***

- Fools rush in where fools have been before.
- It's called 'take home' pay because you can't afford to go anywhere else with it.
- If at first you succeed, try to hide your astonishment.
- You must have learned from others' mistakes. You haven't had time to think all those up yourself.

- It's okay to let your mind go blank, but please turn off the sound.
- Middle age is when broadness of the mind and narrowness of the waist change places.

### Body parts

A doctor in our village surgery often plays a game with his younger patients to put them at ease, and to test their knowledge of body parts. And so it was that one day, while pointing to my young son's ear, the doctor asked him solemnly, "And so this is your nose?"

Alarmed, my son glanced over to me and said softly: "Mum, I think we'd better find a new doctor!"

***Shirley Homan***

## ***THOSE WERE THE DAYS***

What follows is an extract from the Westerham Herald of 17 th October 1903, that is just after the church celebrated its 21 st birthday. It makes me quite breathless but I suppose they didn't have TV (or any of the other distractions of life today).

"The Marsh Green Presbyterian Church (that's us!) harvest services were held on Sunday October 4 th. On the Saturday a company of willing workers made the church look exceedingly pretty with the gifts of fruit, flowers, vegetables, evergreens and farm produce lavishly sent by friends from far and near. In the morning service the church was nearly full, when the minister, Rev. D. Smith preached an impressive sermon on "Lessons from the Harvest". At the close, the ordinance of the Lords's Supper was observed by a large attendance of church members and friends.

Mr Blanchard gave a very telling address to young people at 3 pm. The minister conducted an open-air meeting in the village at 4 pm, which was addressed by Messrs. Harwick, Tilbrook and Bush (sounds like a firm of solicitors), who sang a solo. At night the church was crowded, the minister conducted the service and the address was given by Mr Townley on the word "Harvest". An after meeting was held, attended by the whole congregation, when the elders and others prayed for a revival of God's work among them.

On Monday, the farewell meeting of Hop-pickers Missionaries was held. The minister conducted, Mr. Bush sang two solos, and addresses were given by Mr. Tilbrook. Mr Blanchard and Mr Townley. A liberal collection was taken for Tunbridge Wells Hospital.

Thus closed the 13 th Hoppers' Mission conducted in the Edenbridge district, for some five miles round. We have held 71 open air meetings in the hop gardens and also distributed 30.920 items of Christian literature among the pickers this season.

On Monday, the freewill offerings in kind of the people were sold for the work of God and realised almost twice as much as any previous sale. The whole festival and efforts realised £10. Much harmony, enthusiasm and spiritual blessing characterised all the meetings of what has been by far the most successful harvest thanksgiving season in connection with this church."

***Mike Musgrove***

