

THE TEMPLE RECORD

No 447

Part of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



The  Temple

**The Temple United Reformed Church,
High Street, St Mary Cray, Kent. BR5 4AX**
www.templeurc.org.uk

*A lively Church for all ages seeking to follow
Christ and serve the Community*

**Sunday Services 11.00am
including Junior Church and Crèche**

January February 2026

Printing cost £1 - Donations Welcome

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Cover Picture: Church plate, painted by Wilf Sampson featuring Joynson' Paper Mill

Editorial

I have tried for an age to get people to share a little of themselves. Many of us work together in the church or Brigades and assume rightly or wrongly that we know each other's interests or friends and what we do in our spare time.

Most people know I study ferns and have seen my vast collection of fern books. By the time you read this I hope to be "ferning" on the other side of the world with two friends.

Do please share a little of your interests with other members of the church. I know the older members of the congregation appreciate what you do in serving the church and the work in Brigades, but they would really appreciate hearing all the exciting things you get up to in your spare time, if you have any!

I write this principally to tell you how blessed I have been.

Do write something!

News from Reeta, Kevin and Justin

Greetings to you all in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I trust you all had a great vacation.

As we celebrate this blessed Christmas season, I wanted to share this beautiful picture with you—a small reflection of the warmth, joy, and light it brings.

May it remind us of the peace that Christ gives, the hope He restores, and the love He continues to pour into our lives.

I pray that the Lord surrounds your home with His comforting presence, fills your hearts with His joy, and strengthens you with His everlasting grace. May the year ahead be filled with good health, divine protection, and abundant blessings for you both.

Wishing you a Christ-centred Christmas and a New Year overflowing with His favour and goodness.

Please convey our heartfelt greetings to all the Temple Family members. Stay healthy and blessed.

With Lots of Love & Prayers Reeta, Kevin & Justin

A Second Letter from Reeta

Warm greetings in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you so much for your deeply thoughtful message. Reading your words filled our hearts with joy, comfort, and gratitude. It is truly a blessing to hear how faithfully the Lord continues to uphold the church,

and the wonderful community that has shaped so many lives—including ours.



We are humbled to know that we remain in your prayers and thoughts even after all these years. The love, care, and spiritual foundation we

received from the entire church family continue to strengthen us every day. Your dedication to God's work, even in challenging times, is a powerful testimony of faith and perseverance.

It is inspiring to hear about the many ways the church is being sustained—through the commitment of the elders, the faithful service of Norman and Rosemary, and the new generation stepping forward, including Sam. Please convey our heartfelt congratulations to him on his ministry and our warm wishes and prayers for the safe arrival of the little one. May the Lord bless their family abundantly.

We are also glad to hear that despite the absence of a minister; the church remains active and united. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes..

Please convey our loving greetings to Harry as well. His constant care and kind remembrance mean so much to us.

Here in India, by God's strength alone, we continue to serve Him wholeheartedly. The Lord has been gracious, guiding Kevin and Justin in both their ministry and their work. They were so happy to hear your message and send their warmest regards and gratitude. Your encouragement means more than words can express.

We deeply miss Dev, and your kind words about him touched our hearts. We believe he is rejoicing with the Lord, and his memory continues to inspire us to serve with faith and commitment.

Thank you once again for your love, prayers, and blessings. You will always be a cherished part of our spiritual family. May the Lord bless you richly during this Christmas season and in the new year ahead. May He strengthen your hands and continue to use you mightily for His Kingdom.

One more piece of good news is that Justin is doing his Theology.

With our love, prayers, and warm regards,

Reeta, Kevin, & Justin (Our most recent picture)



With Lots of Love & Prayers

Reeta, Kevin & Justin

Devotions care of the URC

Jesus said: 'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.'

Reflection

The First Nations Bible renders this as, "No one can be loyal to two rival chiefs. You will have to choose between them. You will either hate one chief and love the other, or honour one and resent the other. You cannot be loyal to the Great Provider and to possessions at the same time." Utterly true. For possessions add any other focus - object, ideology, person, media stream, pursuit.

Yes, we know. How on this earth do we possibly enact this aspiration? The fundamental thing about the Gospel is that when we're willing to face raw reality and ask questions, we are given understanding and

grace to answer. We face reality, grieve or rejoice about what we see, then get hopefully enriched life.

Instead of giving ourselves lists of ‘musts’ and ‘must nots’ (which may change) we can believe that we may freely accept and enter the experience of partnership with God. We can remember that God isn’t out there somewhere, stuck in a cloud or in some other galaxy.

Jesus/incarnation says God is right here, where you sit to read and I sit to write. Through Spirit inside us, we have courage to ditch the ‘must’ lists into the compost heap. Instead, we look into each day as a set of revelations about where our love can make the most difference.

Sometimes, we love ourselves first to make ourselves safe because we finally named a painful reality. Sometimes we love another first to ease their lives or situation and, in the process, dare to help them name realities.

What we know from watching selfish greed roll out on an industrial scale is that putting anything other than God as our priority doesn’t do much long term good for any kind of life. Putting greed last is counter-cultural. Let’s love our Great Provider first and giggle as we watch communities get strong. When we see our lives as serving love first, the results can be incredible.

Prayer

God, it always seems easy
when I read what someone else wrote
about what we’re supposed to DO with you.
Help us know in our bodies
that whatever we do or don’t do,
your physical presence is not fake news.

As we read this, help us stop,
breathe in.....out...and listen inside.

Your love quickens our pulses
to tell us we’re not alone.

With you, we can act your Gospel.
Today’s way. Alleluia, Amen.

**An Obituary printed in the London
Times.....Absolutely Dead Brilliant!!t**

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years.

No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain;
- Why the early bird gets the worm;
- Life isn't always fair;
- And maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a

teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student; but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death,

- by his parents, Truth and Trust,**
- by his wife, Discretion,**
- by his daughter, Responsibility,**
- and by his son, Reason.**

He is survived by his 5 stepchildren;

- I Know My Rights**
- I Want It Now**
- Someone Else Is To Blame**
- I'm A Victim**
- Pay me for Doing Nothing**

**Not many attended his funeral because so few
realized he was gone.**

**If you still remember him, pass this on. If not, join
the majority and do nothing**

Important Note re Temple Record

I am sorry about the thinness of the Temple Record this month. It is because of the lack of copy and I am having to cut down on expenditure. The Record for some little while has been sponsored by my son's work and the last two have been printed through the generosity of people who continue to donate and the Record Fund was able to pay for it. Unfortunately, the donations have been wiped out by us having to pay a printer to do it professionally. Hopefully by the next copy, March's issue the problem may be resolved; it cost £103 to print it last month.

With Grateful thanks

I hope that you do thank our many Ministers, elders, guest visitors and friends for taking our services week by week. I hear from so many friends that the URC in General is struggling to train enough people to fill the pulpits. I heard this week from Marilyn and John formerly of our church that their minister leaving will mean they will have to share a minister by 7 other churches, so it is not only us.

A NEW YEAR GREETING

Barry B would like to extend to all his friends at the Temple a very Happy and prosperous New Year.

URC Devotions 2

Reading

St Matthew 7: 1 - 5

Jesus said: 'Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbour, "Let me take the speck out of your eye", while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.

Reflection

This passage is derived from the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus advises his disciples on how to treat others and emphasises the importance of self-awareness and humility. I believe that cultivating the ability to self-examine prior to passing judgment would have helped the disciples better understand the diverse individuals they encountered. This self-awareness could also have facilitated stronger connections and ultimately encouraged more individuals to follow Jesus. Therefore, developing these qualities was, and continues to be, of significant importance.

Regarding the act of forming judgments, many of us are quite skilled at doing so. The passage suggests that we should avoid passing judgment on others to prevent ourselves from being subject to similar scrutiny. It highlights that the standards we apply to others will ultimately be the standards used to assess us.

So, why do we engage in judgment?

Does it divert our attention from our personal lives? Does it enhance our self-esteem or create a sense of superiority over others? Do we experience any emotional benefit from making these judgments?

The reality is that, on occasion, we may find a temporary sense of relief or satisfaction in noticing differences - such as recognising that we would not choose to dress in a certain way or that we would not make a particular mistake ourselves.

I believe that, in life, we often strive to feel better about ourselves - whether it's our appearance, our intelligence, or our status - and that judging others (in all honesty) can make us feel better, at least for a while.

However, in truth, we are all created equally, and God's love for each of us is unconditional.

For my latest challenge, I am committed to cultivating a less judgmental and more positive outlook as part of my spiritual growth. When I recognise how loved, blessed, and valued I am in God's eyes, I find it easier to refrain from quick or harsh judgments of others.

Prayer

Father in Heaven,

we thank you for loving us just as we are.

We thank you that despite our less positive traits, you still bless us.

Help us to grow in the confidence of your love, and learn to show this same love and acceptance to others.

Amen

Reported in the Times Newspaper 1st January 2026

Americans brace to start New Year without healthcare
Adrienne Martin and her family are starting the New Year off without healthcare.

The 47-year-old Texas mother had to make a difficult choice when she found out her monthly healthcare premium was increasing in 2026 from what she described as a manageable \$630 (£467) to an unaffordable \$2,400 (£1,781). Her husband depends on an IV medication to treat a blood-clotting disease that costs \$70,000 a month without insurance. Knowing their benefits would expire, the family stockpiled the drug to survive the first few months of the year.

"It would be like paying two mortgage payments," she said of the new monthly price for healthcare. "We can't pay \$30,000 for insurance a year."

Ms Martin and her family are not the only ones facing this conundrum. Millions of Americans will see their healthcare bills skyrocket when these subsidies, which were provided through the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, expire.

Some members of Congress on both sides of the aisle attempted to extend these subsidies into 2026, but Washington was gridlocked. A vote in the new year could offer hope, but until then, many like Ms Martin will have to live without insurance or see their bills steeply increase.

About 24 million Americans buy health insurance through the ACA marketplace, and the majority were used to receiving tax credits to lower the monthly price.

Those tax credits, also referred to as subsidies, were first introduced through former President Barack Obama's ACA in 2014. They were then expanded during Covid.

The fight to extend the subsidies became the centre of the longest government shutdown in US history, which went on for more than 40 days earlier this year.

Democrats wanted to force Republicans to extend the subsidies for an additional three years, which would cost \$35bn per year. Republicans did not want the government to foot the bill for another three years of subsidies without spending cuts.

The Temple

NORMAL WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Monday	9.30am	BUTTERFLIES PARENT, TODDLER & BABY CLUB
	6.15pm	Boys' Brigade ANCHOR BOYS (5-7yrs.)
Wednesday	9.30am	BUTTERFLIES PARENT, TODDLER & BABY CLUB
	6.15 pm	Girls' Brigade EXPLORERS (5-8 yrs.)
Thursday	6.15 pm	Girls' Brigade JUNIORS (8-11 yrs.)
	7.30pm	Girls' Brigade SENIORS & BRIGADERS (12+yrs.)
Friday	6.00 pm	Boys' Brigade JUNIORS (8-11 yrs.)
	7.45 pm	Boys' Brigade COMPANY & SENIORS (12+yrs.)
Saturday	10.00am	MISSION GROUP COFFEE MORNING- 2nd Saturday of month
Sunday	11.00am	Sunday Service in church and on Zoom.

Want to know more? - See our "Welcome" leaflet available in the Church Vestibule or visit our website at www.templeurc.org.uk

March April 2026 TEMPLE RECORD

Please send news, articles and notices by

Sunday 23 February 2026

Earlier does help