

THE TEMPLE RECORD

No 445

Part of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



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

www.temple.urc.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

September October 2025

Printing cost £1 - Donations Welcome

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Cover Picture: Lord Howe Island, off the coast of Northern Australia.

Dates for your Diary

Greetings! It is with pleasure that we announce the restart of the *Mission Group Coffee mornings*.

We look forward to seeing our regular customers and we hope new friends on; , October 11 when we will be supporting *The Chartwell Trust*, on Sunday 12th we shall hold a "cake and goods sale" also in aid of The Chartwell Trust, then November 8th and December 6th.

We provide tea or coffee, cakes, a bring and buy stall and the chance to enjoy a friendly chat. Why not give it a go?

The church working party also join us for refreshments while having a break from keeping our premises in good condition.

Hope to see you there.

Mission Group

Please note December meeting is the first Saturday of the month.

Farewell Message Andy and Shirley

In this farewell article, I want to thank the Temple for its friendship, fellowship, fun and memories that Shirley and I have shared with you over the years.

Saying goodbye is never easy especially to friends.

Ministry has been challenging and painful as well as rewarding and joyful. It is like looking at a forest in its seasons. In the spring you see the light shine amidst a canopy of new leaves appearing in the trees and patches of flowers blooming on the forest floor. In the summer you only see the majesty of the trees and foliage in full bloom. In the autumn you see the colours of life's glory as the leaves begin to fade and die.

And ministry is like that. It has its seasons when things bloom with faith and hope and vision and then there are times when things appear to die.

The rich colours of life begin to fade as people once active slow down or move away. Here God gives the forest rest as dark nights and dark days appear, and snow covers the forest floor. Yet while things appear dead God is still at work breathing new life allowing new growth to come.

I have, like most, tried to nurture the forest floor despite its hardness. To try impart ideas of grand design and felt disappointed, to inspire the forest to grow in new ways and present a new look, a new appeal, to think beyond the routine, to develop new ideas and possibilities, but I am not sure I have achieved anything of greatness, except to see a few flowers grow that were not seen before. The measure of ministry is always viewed in the past. The church I am leaving is not the one it will be. The Temple is enterprising. It has those who want to move forward in faith. The church and the buildings have changed over the years; we have replaced old windows and doors with modern double glazing. While numbers have remained static there have been new people come, and others go. We have made the worship space a flexible area for all to use, with a coffee bar at the rear which has influenced more people staying after the service. There are still some upgrades needed regarding décor and there will always be such things. We have seen people come who never came before, some have moved on and some have died and still others are yet to come. The church

has worked well historically with Churches Together doing joint mission events, Baptism services and praise and worship evenings. Faith is what makes the church blossom. My passion has always been for bible study and prayer because I believe when a church takes hold of God's word and begins to apply it to personal and corporate life then new growth appears in unexpected ways. While we move North to County Durham, faith has yet to reveal more of God's abundant blessings for both of us as a family and you as a church.

Saying goodbye is a necessary wrench to allowing God to do new things both in you and us.

Blessings and peace to you all

Andy & Shirley.

PS If you are in the area, please feel free to pop in. I am sure we can offer accommodation if necessary.

JOSHUA DANZIGER

The persecution of Christians abroad is quietly ignored.

In the Middle East, Christians have plummeted from 20 per cent of the population a century ago to only 4 per cent today

Joshua Danziger

Monday August 11 2025, 12.01am, The Times

In late June, a suicide bombing at a Damascus church left 25 dead and another 60 injured. It barely registered in western headlines.

This silence is not new, but why?

Six years ago, the Truro report, commissioned by Jeremy Hunt as foreign secretary, suggested that Christianity was the “most persecuted religion of modern times”. In the Middle East, Christians have plummeted from 20 per cent of the population a century ago to only 4 per cent today.

This decline is driven not just by birth rates but by sustained oppression: the destruction of ancient churches by Isis in Iraq, the violent repression of Christian demonstrators in Egypt and the imprisonment of Christian converts in Iran.

Hunt, in a statement, told me: “There is nothing more medieval than to hate someone because of their faith. That this hatred is growing — churches bombed, worshippers silenced, and ancient communities exiled — should shock us all.” The report was a “wake-

up call” that required policy action: sanctions against abusers, robust asylum protections for victims, diplomatic pressure. Yet words alone are largely what has followed. Of the 22 recommendations in the Truro report, few have been meaningfully implemented. Britain sponsored a 2023 resolution in the UN security council on religious persecution, but it sidestepped naming Christians directly and offered hollow calls to “speak out against hate speech” and “publicly condemn violence”.

Why has Christian persecution gone unseen? The Truro report attributed this blindness to post-colonial guilt, a “sense that we [westerners] have interfered uninvited in certain contexts in the past so we should not do so again”. Ultimately, blindness towards Christian persecution stems from the fact that the victims are Christians.

In recent decades, cultural reckonings across the West have recast Christianity as a symbol of colonialism, white nationalism and privilege, more associated with oppressors than victims. This perception makes contemporary Christian suffering easier to overlook. Westerners that see the world through the prism of this cultural history — where Christianity is responsible for historical evils — greet today’s Christian plight with silence and equivocation. We must not continue to let persecution by Christians in the past justify blindness to Christian suffering today. The Truro report warned the West, but we nodded, then looked away. Now it is time to look back.

Joshua Danziger is a columnist for the Yale Daily News and has worked as a research assistant at two Westminster think tanks

Smile Lanka Newsletter “January - June 2025”

Bringing Change Through Education

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Donors.

We begin this newsletter with deep gratitude to all our donors. Every step we take, every life we touch, and every program we carry out is made possible because of your **generous contributions**. Your

continued support enables us to create meaningful experiences and lasting impact in the lives of the children and communities we serve.



Marking a Proud Beginning – National Independence Day.

The new year began with a sense of pride and purpose as we hosted our very first program for 2025: the National Independence Day celebrations in early February. This event was organized to instill a spirit of patriotism and appreciation for our country's history among the children. The program included the singing of the national anthem, hoisting of the flag, short speeches by children, and storytelling sessions about Sri Lanka's journey to independence. It was a meaningful day that helped our younger generation understand the value of freedom, peace, and national unity.



Sinhala & Tamil New Year Celebrations – A Cultural Milestone.

Our first major program for the year was the Sinhala and Tamil New Year celebrations — a vibrant and joyful occasion that brought our children together in celebration of Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage. The event was designed to help the children understand and appreciate the traditions that shape our identity. Through traditional New Year games, music, and shared meals, the children not only had fun but also learned the importance of teamwork, unity, and mutual respect. Activities such as kotta pora, kana mutti, and tug-of-war encouraged cooperation and strengthened friendships among participants. It was a heartwarming reminder that cultural learning can go hand in hand with community-building — and thanks to your support, it was a day to remember for every child.

Serving the Environment – Hambantota Beach Cleanup.

Our senior children took the initiative to give back to the community through a special environmental project: the Hambantota Beach Cleanup. With gloves, garbage bags, and a strong sense of responsibility, they spent the day collecting litter and learning about the importance of protecting our natural surroundings. This project not only helped beautify the local coastline but also raised awareness among the children about environmental care, teamwork, and active citizenship. We are proud of their commitment to serving both people and planet.





Learning Respect and Harmony – Interfaith Visits.

Our junior children participated in a very special program focused on religious harmony and mutual respect. They were taken to the four main religious worship places: a Buddhist temple, a Hindu kovil, a mosque, and a church. At each place of worship, the children had the opportunity to meet with religious leaders who warmly welcomed them and shared messages about peace, compassion, and understanding. This meaningful experience helped the children appreciate the beauty of Sri Lanka's religious diversity and taught them to respect different faiths and cultures from a young age.



Soaring High with Creativity – Annual Kite Show.

One of the most colourful and joyful highlights of the first half of the year was our Annual Kite Show, held at the scenic Hambantota Beach. This much-anticipated event gave our children the chance to showcase their creativity and imagination through beautifully designed kites. It was more than just a fun day—it was a celebration of togetherness. Families gathered, shared laughter, and watched the skies fill with vibrant colours and shapes. The event created wonderful memories and reminded everyone of the power of community and creativity.



As we close this edition, we want to reaffirm how truly grateful we are for your unwavering support. Your generosity doesn't just fund programs-it builds futures, nurtures hope and strengthens entire communities. We invite you to stay connected, share our work with others, and continue walking this journey with us. Together, we're making lasting change, one child at a time.

With heartfelt thanks.
Smile Lanka

Submitted by: **Richard W**

A LIGHT BUT THOUGHT PROVOKING DEVOTION FROM THE URC

1 Peter 4:8-11

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Reflection

This is one of those times when a Bible passage feels very appropriate. I wonder if the writer has been watching over my shoulder? I confess, I grumble – ask anyone! There has even been talk of getting a “grumble box” for the café counter so that every time I grumble, I must pay a fine! I wouldn't mind paying a fine, to be honest – if the person who keeps putting spoons in the knife drawer also has to pay one! I have come, over the years, to realise the usefulness of grumbles, though.

Working with and in the community, I hear a lot of grumbles – and while it can be just a simple grumble, often it's a sign of something more. Sometimes people just want to know they have been heard – a way of letting off steam while someone listens. Like letting the pressure out of a lemonade bottle slowly so you don't get lemonade all down your trousers. It can also be a way of saying “I'm worried about something” – like the lady who isn't sleeping well, who eventually tells me of her bigger worry which is preventing her sleeping.

It's a privilege to be able to listen to, and perhaps help with, people's grumbles; to be part of their lives in a useful way. I believe it's one of God's greatest gifts, to be allowed to listen, to be given the strength to serve – to lighten the burdens of others and empower them to move forward in some small way.

Prayer

Lord,

help us to be attentive to the words of others, give us the patience to listen and hear that we might serve you and our fellow travellers in a meaningful way.

Amen.

Andy, Shirley and the Family's Last days with us

I am sure we all wish Andy, Shirley and family our very best wishes as they move on in life both literally and physically. We pray that they will both take an active role in whatever church they settle in away from the constant restraints of the regular expectations of the Sunday services and visits to the church members and charring meetings. We hope that you find the climate to your liking. It can be a little cold and damp "up north." We would like to thank you for your many years of service to the Temple People. Take it easy for a little while until you find what Our Lord is calling you next to. I remember thinking I would see what happened when I retired and basically my outside unpaid work just expanded and I managed to finish many of the jobs I had started and then I was offered a regular if unpaid but not under rewarded one day's work on the railway with a fine group of similar retirees and two days' work in the laboratory at the Natural History Museum I had known the boss in the botany department as a lad at School in Germany and he saw me working in the Museum in my holiday and asked me why I had not invited him to give a lecture at a meeting I was arranging at Guildford University. Quickly I said I thought you would be too busy, and he said he would be delighted to do one. A volunteer is worth ten pressed men so I asked him what aspect of the subject he would speak on, and I said I would squeeze him in. It was after his lecture we had a coffee together and it was there he offered me the position in the laboratory. And although he has gone on to higher things in the German Natural History Museum being the director our paths still cross occasionally.

So, although I never planned exactly what I was to do in retirement it all fell into place. So many of my friends just seemed to fritter away their time watching the TV. I now watch less TV and know little about TV, music or popular distractions other than what I read about in the Saturday paper and wonder how I had the time to go to work.

Spend your time Andy and Shirley wisely and we hope to hear what your service holds for you in the future and drop us a line to let us know. Perhaps you may have time for the bimonthly article in the Temple Record.

POETRY

I always found poetry hard. Even the explanations I found difficult. Having been brought up in the church, Biblical and hymn poetry came second nature to me having been surrounded by it all my life but even there it has taken many years of thought and explanation to unravel many complex ideas. I've been surrounded by these ideas for over 70 years. Our Lord realised this when he had to speak to people and training His disciples for the work he had for them. The Words were carefully chosen so they were easily memorized and could be remembered in their times of trial and when some word smiths tried to argue and lead them from the straight and narrow. They were also very important for the continuation of the Lord's work after his death and beyond this as the disciples realised, they would also need to pass on the Lord's work to generations of the future. This also helped them to remember the Lord's work and sayings as some of them committed them to paper in the gospels. Eventually four Matthew's, Mark's, Luke's and John's came down to us. I've always been intrigued by the thoughts of the other disciples who also wrote the Lord's words down. Over the years many of these have come to light. People have preserved them but the paper fragments and most are only partial when others try to translate and copy them. Gospels like the Gospel of Judas, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Truth and the Gospel of Thomas collectively known as the gnostic gospels are fascinating reads

but mostly outside what we as Christians would think as Gospel Christianity.

Jesus himself used poetic language and images and he no doubt used them to good effect so that the disciples could remember them and if written down as in the Gospels would aid the memory of His fellow disciples and those that were yet to be born.

Here is a poem that I found hard, but nuances filtered into my head as I went on and read it again.

Lleyn is the peninsular that sticks out of the NW corner of Wales.

Pat

The Moon in Lleyn

The last quarter of the moon
of Jesus gives way
to the dark; the serpent
digests the egg. Here
on my knees in this stone
church, that is full only
of the silent congregation
of shadows and the sea's
sound, it is easy to believe
Yeats was right. Just as though
choirs had not sung, shells
have swallowed them; the tide laps
at the Bible; the bell fetches
no people to the brittle miracle
of the bread. The sand is waiting
for the running back of the grains
in the wall into its blond

glass. Religion is over, and
what will emerge from the body
of the new moon, no one
can say.

But a voice sounds
in my ear: Why so fast,
mortal? These very seas
are baptized. The parish
has a saint's name time cannot
unfrock. In cities that
have outgrown their promise people
are becoming pilgrims
again, if not to this place,
then to the recreation of it
in their own spirits. You must remain
kneeling. Even as this moon
making its way through the earth's
cumbersome shadow, prayer, too,
has its phases.

From *Collected Poems 1945-1990* (Phoenix Giant, 1993) R S Thomas
© Elodie Thomas

Small Islands

On reading the theme for a recent series of URC devotions it was going to be about small islands. It conjured up my experiences of them and it played on it so that I was thinking about how much I love them. Friends who I travel with introduced me to The Atlantic Islands and I have been fortunate to travel to many of them. I wonder what attracts me to them.

One thing I think might be that I can get to grips with all the ferns if they only have 20 to 30. Far better than going to places like Mexico where there might be 1000.

When I first worked regularly at the NHM we had weekly one-hour meetings by people who had been to exotic places to teach my colleagues and me about different places.

Many of the Lectures were from colleagues at Kew. One that stood out was by a colleague at Kew who regularly went to Lord Howe Island for her work. From the first moment I saw the title slide I fell in love with the place and read up about it and listened intently, never dreaming that I might go there. Later I travelled and took the fern society to faraway places.



Figure 1. Another view of Lord Howe Island

One day I was invited to visit China with a group of 16 people by the Fern Society's secretary. No sooner had I signed up, but my friend, Martin rang me up and asked if I had been invited too. He said it's a long way to go for 12 days, isn't it? So, I asked what he was inferring, and it was that we

should take the opportunity of reaching so far to extend out stay and work out where else we would like to visit

As we expanded each other's wish lists, I was sure Grace was hearing our discussions. We ended up with first stop New Caledonia my choice, Then Cape York, Queensland, Australia where a mutual friend, Nada lived, where she not only offered to put us up for 10 days but to drive us within 25 miles of the top of Queensland where she later explained her husband Garry and her would be in their trailer, but we would be in their tent. I asked if the tent would be snake proof. Nada reassured me the tent was definitely snake proof, but it was not alligator proof. Then we would move on to my second choice which was Lord Howe Island. Martin then had this idea we would invite our Australian friends and five took us up on the offer. There was Dwayne and Kylie who ran a fern nursery, Barry White a vet, Chris Goudey who ran a very large fern nursery with his wife who had toured many of the Australian Islands and also realised the large Bird' Nest Ferns were very different to the Australian ones so they named it after him as *Asplenium goudeyi* but went on to find a hybrid with another *Asplenium* and went on to name it *Asplenium ×robinsonii*.



Figure 2. The five who reached the highest point: Barry, Dwayne, Steve, Chris and Pat.

He also found many other Asplenium hybrids on the other islands and made other hybrids and sold them in his nursery. Last of all we invited a family relations solicitor who was not very good with heights but was very good like most Australian males at swearing a lot. Just as we were about to leave one morning he came out in his pyjamas, and I have the photographic evidence to prove it. Barry was not very happy since he wanted to make the most of his time on Lord Howe and he always walked somewhere early while we were having breakfast and getting ready. However, we all got along well together, and it was a great shame that Martin was quite unwell at times after we moved on from China.

WHAT A BREATH-TAKING INTRO TO JOHN'S GOSPEL

If you don't take the URC's daily devotions, you have just missed it!

John 1: 1 - 5

the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Reflection

Wow, what a beginning! In reading the opening of John's gospel we can imagine it being accompanied by a fanfare of momentous music. John certainly does not skim in his description of the cosmic context of what is going on here.

The author is already familiar with what the other gospel writers have said about this Jesus Christ. He is well versed in Jewish learning and has a profound understanding of Greek thought and philosophy ... and now brings all this together in this stupendously spiritual gospel. As John Marsh commented: "The result is a unified piece of theological writing unmatched in Christian literature."

In contrast to the other gospels, John opens the stage curtain for his gospel drama not with Jesus' lineage going back to Abraham or Adam but instead to creation itself. In fact, he wonderfully transports us to BEFORE creation, so that we see the entrance of Jesus not as a third Act development but having been fundamentally built into the very fabric of the whole dramatic narrative from the outset.

Jesus is the Word, the Logos, which has resonances in both Jewish and Greek thought, and conveys a sense of the central essence, the creative purpose and dynamic being of God. This force was there, fashioning creation in Genesis and is here now at the beginning of this gospel forging a new creation.

And we the reader, the disciple, have the prime position, not just to sit in the stalls, but to step up on to the stage itself. We are privileged to be part of this wonderful narrative, to be invited to enter into this new creation through the loving transforming salvation that Christ brings. I wonder in our day-to-day discipleship – perhaps at times routine and uninspired - do we really appreciate what an astonishing invitation is being offered.

Prayer

Creator God,
Numinous Logos
Saviour Christ
Co-eternal with the Creator
We stand in awe and wonder
We are overwhelmed with gratitude
As we begin to comprehend

the astounding grace
inviting us to enter your new creation.
Amen.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Monday 25th August
RS Thomas 1

The Bright Field

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl of great price, the one field that
had treasure in it. I realize now that I must give all that I have to
possess it. Life is not hurrying on to a receding future, nor hankering
after an imagined past. It is the turning aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

R S Thomas © Elodie Thomas

Exodus 3: 1-4

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.'

Reflection

It might seem at first glance that the burning bush of Moses and the bright field of RS Thomas are very different things. Moses receives a dramatic sign that God is with him, and hears God speak from the bush. Meanwhile, RS Thomas describes the often-sighted, common-place but fleeting joy of a bright field.

These two very different experiences are linked by the concept of turning aside to look, and so truly to perceive. If Moses had seen the burning bush and simply shrugged and moved on with his father-in-law's flocks, he would have failed to engage with God. I wonder sometimes whether the burning bush was the first attempt by God to get Moses' attention – or had Moses already missed the amazing patch of green in the desert, the sun glinting off rocks, the clarity of a desert pool...? But it is in the burning bush that Moses' attention is caught, so that he turns aside and begins to converse with God.

RS Thomas calls us to focus on what is right beside us, if we are to grasp the truth of God's presence with us. Thomas also helps us remember Jesus' parables – of the pearl of great price and of the treasure in the field. When God was alongside us in Jesus, he excelled in using the things around to help people perceive God's kingdom. Longing for the past or yearning for the future will not do us any good. If we want to be attuned to the things of God in this world we need to look, to listen, to attend to nature, to other people around us, even to be alert in a church meeting.

If we pause today and look at what is around us, we will find that God is waiting for our attention.

Prayer

God who is always beside us,
help us attune our hearts and our lives to your love so that we may
attend to your world and the ordinary things in it.
So may we find your love beside us
today and every day.
Amen

BOOK REVIEW

History

I wonder how much we know of our own history. I loved history as a lad. It was of course English History. Thinking about it, this was surprising since I am a quarter Irish! This made me think about it since much of our population have parents and grandparents etc who were born elsewhere in the world. Perhaps this is what makes most of the population very tolerant of people from around the World with only a few isolated pockets of the population racist.

What started me thinking having been interested in History and read books and watched programmes on television about our past was the realisation that I did not know a lot of our own history.

In Saturday's *Times* not only is there an article dispelling the myth of Harold dying of an arrow in the eye at the Battle of Hastings but a very interesting piece on the succession of Elizabeth 1, entitled. "*The Lack of an Heir, the half-mad rival – and James 1's 'stolen' crown.*"

Did you know that James 1 was not next in line to the throne of England. This befell to Arbella Stuart, the great-great-granddaughter of Henry V11. To read more of this fascinating story you will need to read *The Stolen Crown* by Tracy Borman published on 4th September 2025 by Hodder and Stoughton. £26.



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

November December 2025 TEMPLE RECORD

Please send news, articles and notices by
Sunday 26 September 2025
Earlier does help