

THE TEMPLE RECORD

No 444

Part of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



The  temple

**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

July August 2025

Printing cost £1 - Donations Welcome

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Cover Picture: Summertime's here and look over there, flowers everywhere in the morning, in the morning.

Editorial

I started life in the Anglican church. My mother thought my father was an Anglican. I think the army put down Anglican for convenience in those days in case you got killed. However, my mother I found out, went to the Temple Congregational Church, St Mary Cray. A lovely girl, Lilian took me down the road to St Mary's and I was told to do what she told

me as she was about three years older. A few years later my younger brother joined us.

After a time in church, we went across the road to the Stevenson Hall for Sunday School. My brother was in the younger group and in a different room, I think. I was in the older group. Here a very old lady or so she seemed took the children from six to around twelve when you were expected to join the choir and stay in church. In this group the children just did what they wanted and played the older lady up; She had no control, and the children just messed her about. This was a new experience for me having been brought up to be respectful of all adults and quite distressing. Sometimes the old lady never showed, and we stayed in church for the whole time which was incredibly boring. My friend went to the scouts at the Anglican Church, so I tried it for a few weeks but being one of the youngest I stopped because I found the games too rough, my friend told me they announced it and everyone laughed.

At about seven years of age, I realised this was just a waste of our time and decided to precipitate something. We used to walk down the road a few prefabs to meet Lilian at her house. I hurried my brother to get ready a little earlier and we went down the road a different way and hid behind some electricity transformers I knew about on my way to school; they are still there today. There was not much to do there. With no watch we set off for home early. My mother realised we had not been to church. I explained the situation and asked whether we could go to her church, and she said she would ask our father. He did not mind and so we went to the Temple. What a difference! Instead of around 12 children from six to fifteen there were different departments with around sixty children in juniors in around eight classes with a leader. Also, with many departments spread around the church. My mother had friends in the church, and I was encouraged to join the Lifeboys (Junior Brigade today). One of my mum's friends, Mr McGilvray was one of the leaders and he looked after me from my first day as I started out and the rest is history.

Although many of the friends I made then in The Brigade are now dotted around the country and world some still take an e-copy of the

Temple Record and take a great interest in the activities at The Temple and in the continued work of the Brigade and church.

I don't know whether I experienced pride before, but I remember feeling such pride when I found out that my friend's organisation the Scouts was the junior organisation with their founder Baden Powell an officer in The Boys' Brigade before he founded the Scouts. After I found out I rushed around my friend's house and told them all about it.

This note all came about when I read with interest the Daily Devotions of the URC. At The Temple when I started there were these large pictures on the walls dotted around the rooms of Brigade members being lead or guided with the Lord. These had a great impact on me and made me think a lot about them. I was sorry when they were taken down just a few years ago.

Over the years John Ellis and I have met on many occasions and shared time in meetings and at services and I have followed how this great servant of the church handled difficult situations locally and nationally in the URC becoming the National Moderator a few years back. A few weeks back in the URC devotions, I read with special interest the daily devotions as it mentioned these pictures of the Lord walking with Brigade members and then read John had written them. I was always sure I had a bond with John, and it was then it all became clear that we had been nurtured in a caring church fellowship.

I have copied John's closing paragraph but if you want to read the whole devotions I can forward it to you.

John Ellis's concludes his devotions:-

If you have ever had links with The Boys' Brigade, you may remember a painting of a boy stepping out in his short trousers and BB uniform. A figure who is clearly intended to be Jesus is beside him and has his hand on the boy's shoulder. The painting is called "I will come with you." For me at the age of eight, that was enough. Decades later, it still is.

To Be Fully Understood, the Christian Faith Must Be Tried

When I was a young teenager, I heard a visiting vicar in my school say: "Jesus Christ came to kill religion and bring life."

I was intrigued. On one hand, religion always seemed the source of war, division and conflict. On the other hand, whenever I came across stories about Jesus, he seemed about peace, kindness, sacrifice, freedom and affirmation.

I decided to read up about this Jesus person and the one thing I always noticed is that whoever he met --- rich, poor, sick, healthy, preacher or prostitute, powerful leader or simple fisherman --- no one seemed to walk away unchanged.

It made me want to explore the notion of faith and learn more about what he was about. It wasn't religion I was after as --- a teenager, I wasn't exactly hungry for more rules, restrictions, customs and conventions. But I did like the sound of freedom and empowerment that seemed to come from being around this guy. What I didn't know was how it would truly change me from the inside out.

Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man confirmed to have climbed the World's highest mountain once said, "There is no such thing as an atheist in the 'Death Zone' on Everest.

I am sure a few atheists have climbed Everest over the years but the point he made is that when we're truly afraid and there's no one around to help us, to possess a quite faith can give us a persistence and courage that is so much greater than what we have in ourselves.

But what is this faith within? Can the power and presence that Jesus had on people 2000 years ago have such an effect on us today?

I can only talk from personal experience. For me, having a Christian faith can be difficult to articulate. It's like describing ice-cream or swimming --- it has to be tried to be felt. In a nutshell my Christian faith has strengthened me in so many battles I've faced in life.

Not long after that visiting preacher delivered those life words about religion verses life, I said a quiet prayer to myself in a tree at the end of our garden. I closed my eyes and asked if Jesus was real, then please

be with me and help me. Little did I know that his simple prayer would be the acorn from which an oak tree would grow.

At heart my Christian faith tells me I will never walk alone, and that I have the light of the Almighty within me. The most beautiful part is that this gift is given to any of us freely when we simply ask. And I've witnessed it change so many lives over the years.

None of us deserves this gift. I certainly don't. If anything, I am more aware than ever how often I have failed, yet still I am forgiven.

That's why Christ turned everything on its head. His forgiveness is free because He has paid the price, He took our place on the Cross. He died to set us free. It's the greatest story ever told.

In years gone by, I have ignored my faith and tried to do life without it. I've tried to be strong only in myself. But I have found that my heart is restless until I open the door to Christ again. I have discovered that we lose our power when we try to live in our own strength alone. I really need His peace within and that quiet reassurance.

My longing for this life within me is stronger than the fear of what others may think. I am not too proud to admit that I need my Saviour beside me, within me.

Does that make my faith a crutch? Maybe. But what does a crutch do? It helps us stand and walk on in life, even when we have wounds and hurts. I like that.

My Christian faith helps me to live more adventurously, be bold and take risks, but also to care and encourage, to love and support those closest to me and hopefully beyond as well.

It's easy to be cynical about faith and push difficult issues and questions aside. But to explore is good. To question is wise. To seek truth is courageous. And, of course, we will have doubts. That's part of it all. The uncertainty. But I have realised that doubts are OK. Two sides of the same coin: doubt and faith. It means we can't have one without the other.

But to choose to have a faith takes courage. All too often it is the tougher path, but life and the wild have taught me that the tougher path, often ends up the most fulfilling one.

So be brave. Bend the knee, close your eyes and ask for help.

It's a beautiful, humble powerful thing to do. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Bear Grylls *The Times* 24 May 2025

This URC Devotion seemed so apt to go with this Bear Grylls devotion in *The Times*.

27 May 2025

St John 6: 22 - 34

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the lake saw that there had been only one boat there. They also saw that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So, when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So, they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'

Reflection

Where's Jesus? He was here a moment ago and now he has gone. But where? Jesus later explains that having had their fill of fish and bread, the crowds were no longer focussed on him. It is a salutary warning that when all is well, we lose sight of Jesus. But when the hunger returns, they go looking for him again. So, with us, when there is need, we turn once more to God, and we re-engage in prayer.

The crowds go looking and find fulfilment of Jesus' promise that those who seek will find. And yet when they find him it still comes as a surprise 'When did you come here?' It is almost as though they weren't expecting to find him. And yet Jesus shows up. Sometimes Jesus shows up at the most surprising of times and in the most unexpected of places. Oh, we of little faith.

The crowds had missed what Jesus was about. Yes, the feeding of the five thousand was in many ways a sign and yet, they had only noticed that they had been fed, not realising who Jesus is and what he had come for. The ever-patient Jesus then explains that God-given bread is what brings life to our world.

Being a baby boomer I have lived in a world of relative peace and prosperity. It is a shock then to discover a world of unprecedented uncertainty and fear on many fronts. Where's Jesus now when we need him? As we go looking for him, we should not be surprised to find him in the refugee camps, in foodbanks and warm hubs and even sometimes in the corridors of power as a still small voice witnessing and working for a better way of life and living. And indeed, we can be Jesus' presence wherever we find ourselves and bring life and light to our dark world.

Prayer

Lord where are you?

Open our eyes and ears
to see and hear your presence amongst us.
Open our hearts to believe in you
and that you have come to bring life in all its fullness.
Stir us to go
and be there for those who are looking for you. Amen

These two short verses expose our unconscious biases — how much our perspective has been decided by our society and our culture.

What difference does it make that this is where Jesus wants us to be and asks us to be? Not on a mountain looking down on others. Or looking up as if we are not worthy. In coming to a level plain, Jesus reminds us of our call is to find the level places of life and ministry. The level place demands our faith sees the world from that perspective, to call out the proud and lift up the marginalised and says an unclear view might actually reveal vistas that enable us to see the Kingdom of God.

Prayer

Incarnate One,
when we are influenced by the ways of the world, when we fail to keep our feet on the level plain, when our trust in your grace and love is lacking and our vista is blurred, forgive us.

You know our hearts better than we know ourselves.
You deal with us justly;
grant us your forgiveness and by the power of your Spirit, strengthen and empower us to follow your way that your Kingdom may come.
Amen.

2025 March Something New? Book Review

It has been said that the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.
There is some truth in that. In the context of this series of book reviews

it probably means that we need to focus, even if only for once, on doing something we perhaps have never done which is closer to home than books on Concorde etc.

Here's a question? Have you ever sat down one evening and read all through one of the New Testament books in one sitting as if it were a novel? If you are like me, you probably won't have done this very often but be more used to reading the Bible in small chunks of not more than 20 verses at a time. But think- how would your favourite novel sound if you read it like that, a couple of pages from the beginning and the next day another page near the end and so on? I think the answer would be that you would be hard put to it to get an overall picture of what is going on in the story and properly understanding how one bit of the story leads to another. A few years ago, now, I read through Acts at one sitting, and it revolutionised my perception of what is going on in that book. It was a very exciting book too and when I had finished, I had a totally different appreciation of the Early Church.

I am going to suggest that you do this sometime this month. Why not try a gospel such as Luke and then go on to reading Acts which chronologically follows straight on from Luke and is also by him. If reading isn't your thing there is a wonderful reading of the Bible done by David Suchet [aka Poirot] who is a Christian. All you must do is go to Google and type in You Tube David Suchet reading Luke or Acts, and it will start. Be warned though. Don't listen when you are tired as his beautifully modulated voice will send you to sleep!

Another suggestion is that you use a modern version such as The Message or Good News. Often a different translation will make the text seem very fresh and alive. And when you have finished try an epistle such as Ephesians. Epistles are, overall, very short but by reading the whole thing you begin to understand how the argument fits together. This too can be an eye opener. I should be very interested to hear what your reaction is if you take this suggestion up.

Happy reading. Jenny M



Figure 1 John Ellis preaching at The May Morning Breakfast

Concluding the life of our minister Alan F

Epilogue

If Max Hastings had not written in the Sunday Times four weeks ago this essay would not have been born. He wrote "If you've lived until you're 75 you must have done some interesting things. Please share them." So, sitting on our lawn, carved out of a cow yard 45 years ago, with the little pond with the moorhen continually bullying two mallards, I and my best friend, CAT, have tried to put down the most memorable parts of my eighty-one and a half years. There are bigger life changes than most make. Was I right to do them? Do I now regret that I was not more placid and continually questioning? Should I have gone to the Courthaud and spent a life in "Art"? I think not. All parts of my life have had their satisfying side. I avoided having to be polite, and, for me, cringing to the rich in selling paintings. We have been to every country

we want to. We are proud of our children and their children. Most of them are conscientious and have had none of my awful not trying until 16. But then they will never get the kick out of performing well when it did matter. No, I don't want to change anything except being six inches taller. If I hadn't served in South Norwood, I wouldn't have known Des and Audrey and the West Indians. At every stage there has been excitement and pleasure. The social jump from South Norwood to Royal St. Georges Golf Club may be an almost unbridgeable gulf but living with both has given me a broad vision. I began a staunch socialist and end a Tory – nearly. Bernard Shaw summed me up well. Travelling from fervent believer, having been for 40 years an agnostic and ending, I think, as an atheist means that at least I continue thinking. A bonus is that having made huge changes I have NOT had the hell of later thinking I had been wrong. Art appreciation has remained constant. I am always enthralled by colour, shape, beauty. It's been great, I am a happy old buffer. What next?

Alan F.

June 2020.

With sincere thanks to Cherry F who gave us permission to copy Alan's autobiography. It brought back many cherished memories of all the fun we had together. One is etched on my memory and that was having just learned to swim Alan talked me into sailing along the River Medway on my 21st birthday on the 31 January 1968 in his tiny sailing dinghy on a freezing cold day with all these Ocean-going container ships passing by and him announcing this was only his second time out with the dinghy. I must write my experiences up someday.

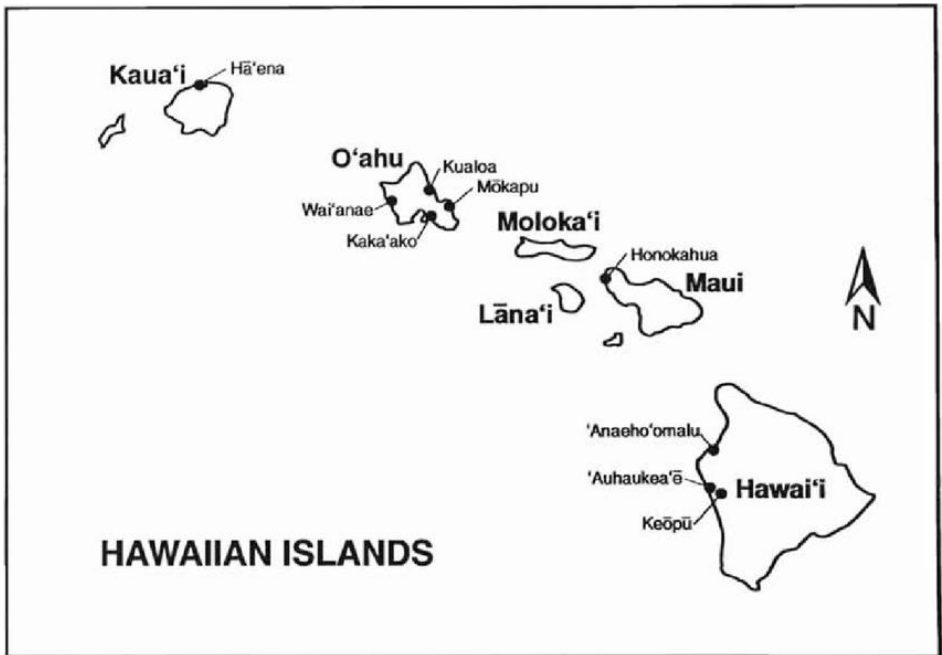
Is There Anyone Out There?

It would be really nice to hear of your fun on holiday. Perhaps someone could give us a taste of Brigade camp. I am pretty sure it is a whole lot different from the last time I went 66 years ago. You could also send some pictures of Temple Friends having fun and in interesting places.



Figure 2. Klaus, Grace and my son's two dogs Harry and Obi.

HAWAII



If you were in church a few weeks ago you would have heard our minister Andy, tell the story of the leper colony and the minister who served in it. I remembered the story as I had heard it told probably in Boys' Brigade Bible Class, some sixty plus years ago. It started me thinking which of the Hawaiian Islands it must have been. Jane S knew it was Moloka'i. Several e-mails later and I realised Jane knew a lot more about these islands than I did. I have been fortunate while visiting with Grace my son Richard and his wife Laura to visit them regularly and since they have come back to England, I have been able to carry on visiting with my friend Paul whose daughter and family now live there since she married a New Zealander. This year we are going again and taking our Mexican friend Klaus there.

Captain James Cooke discovered the island for the British but he was murdered on Kaua'i. The Hawaiian people got to like the British people and the last Hawaiian Queen, Liliuokalani used to correspond with Queen Victoria, but she was deposed by the unions serving the Americans on O'ahu which became an American base. They still fly the Union Jack on the corner of their flag.

Jane corrected me on a lot of my previous knowledge and filled in the gaps to the story so here it is.

The original story is that A leper colony was set up in Hawaii. In those days there was no cure and unless you could prove leprosy had left you, you would not be allowed away from the camp you were in. In Hawaii this was in Moloka'i, later a priest Father Damian was assigned to the camp.

He did not seem to relate to the lepers and after his time of service was up, he prepared to leave and a boat to take him to one of the other islands was arranged. As he was near boarding, he realised he had now contracted leprosy and he had to turn back, Apparently, his church services had been poorly attended, and he never had many converts. At the next service he was amazed at the turn out and he addressed the congregation as we Lepers and suddenly the colony all related to him, and he found himself no longer a hired in minister, but a fellow sufferer with many new friends. The colony closed in 1969.

I have found this true in life that we can only relate to situations with people if we have shared those experiences together.

If you haven't read Bear Grylls story now is the time to do so.



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

September October 2025 TEMPLE RECORD

Please send news, articles and notices by
Sunday 28 September 2025
Earlier does help