


Hosanna!
Crucify him!
Finished!
He is risen!
Alleluia!



Church Magazine
April 2026

Our Vision: "To celebrate God and share the love of Jesus."

Pastoral Letter

Dear Church Family,

As we step further into this season of Lent and begin to look ahead to Easter, I have been thinking about how kind God is to us in the way He invites us to grow. He does not rush us, shame us, or leave us to figure things out on our own. He lovingly calls us closer, gently shows us what is weighing us down, and teaches us how to let go of the things that keep us from living fully in His peace and freedom.

That feels especially timely as we prepare for our Post Easter series: Let Go.

So many of us carry things silently. Shame. Anxiety. Disappointment. Old wounds. Past mistakes. Inner noise. The pressure to keep going while pretending all is well. And yet Jesus never asks us to carry what He died to free us from. Again and again, He invites us to bring our burdens to Him — not to hide them, not to dress them up, not to manage them in our own strength — but to place them into His hands.

My hope for us as a church is that this series will be more than just a set of Sunday messages. I pray it will be a real invitation into freedom. That as we explore themes like leaving behind shame, leaving behind anxiety, new peace, and leaving behind the past, we will not only hear truth, but experience it. That we will learn, perhaps in fresh ways, that God is not interested in condemning us, but in healing us. Not in crushing us, but in restoring us. Not in reminding us who we were, but in calling us forward into who we are becoming in Christ.

The journey of faith is so often a journey of release. Letting go of fear so we can trust. Letting go of pride so we can surrender. Letting go of old labels so we can receive our identity in Jesus. Letting go of what is familiar, even when it is heavy, so that we can make room for the new life God wants to grow in us.

That is not always easy. Sometimes letting go feels vulnerable. Sometimes it is a slow process. Sometimes we do not even realise how tightly we have been

holding something until God, in His mercy, puts His finger on it. But the good news of Easter is that Jesus meets us there too. He meets us in the ache, in the unpicking, in the surrender — and He does not leave us empty-handed. He gives peace. He gives grace. He gives new life.

As a church family, my prayer is that in this season we would come with open hearts. That we would be honest before God. That we would encourage one another. And that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we would discover the freedom and renewal that only Jesus can bring.

May this be a season where we do not just talk about change but truly encounter the God who makes all things new.

With love in Christ,

Viola Vitcu-Zuokumor



10-16 May 2026



**Saturday
9th May
9.00 - 12.00**

**Orders taken:
Tomatoes; Busy Lizzies; Petunias; Cosmos**

Celtic Style Services - Muriel Heppinstall

What exactly is Celtic style worship? It derives from the early Christian monastic tradition that was spread from Ireland to Scotland and Northumberland by St Columba & St Aidan, whereas the Roman church came with St Augustine to Canterbury.



It is a way of faith that finds time to be alone with God; that is God-centred rather than self or work-centred and which brings both beauty, truth and wholeness into lives that are, if not empty certainly not as fulfilled as they might be.

Elements of the early monastic or Celtic Church are:

- *A genuine love of nature and a passion for God's creation, coupled with a sense of closeness between the natural and supernatural.*
- *A love of art and poetry, seen within surviving illuminated Gospels and other works.*
- *Although they seem to have been theologically orthodox, there was a distinct emphasis on the Trinity, respect for Mary the Mother of Christ, the Incarnation and the use within worship of early forms of liturgy.*
- *Within their religious life we see an emphasis on solitude, pilgrimage and mission, sacred locations and tough penitential acts.*
- *There were few boundaries between the sacred and the secular*
- *We see an emphasis on family and kinship ties.*
- *There seems to have been greater equality for women than in subsequent church life.*
- *A generous hospitality was an important part of everyday life*

There are many modern Celtic style services, most of which include responses from the whole congregation and are usually though provoking and stretch our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. They often use visual objects to enhance worship and help concentration.

We hope to restart the Celtic services during the summer; now on the fourth Sunday, the first one being Sunday April 26th.

NEW FOR 2026

Thinking of joining us? Braintree District Walkabout

A walking group with something for everyone

Walking for Health

We run three regular walks each week:

- Mondays - Great Notley**
Starting from Panners Coffee Bar at 10.30am
- Wednesdays - Braintree**
Starting from Marks Farm Tesco car park at 10.30am
- Saturdays - Witham**
Starting from Morrison's car park at 10.00am

- Friendly and social**
- Walk at your pace**
- No booking needed**
- Free to join**
- Led by walk leaders**

Multiple weekly walks - see Facebook for details
Facebook: /groups/BraintreeWalkabout
 Email: tonydfrazer53@gmail.com

Scan to join us on Facebook:

Manna - a poem by Viola.

I feared seasons
that never stayed.

Nights I thought would undo me
now sit quietly
as distant memories—
names I barely remember
for storms that once felt endless.

I used to ask,
“How will I make it through this?”

But I did.

Not with a grand plan,
not with borrowed strength—
just showing up.

Again.
And again.
And again.

And each day—
there it was.

Enough peace for the moment.
Enough strength for the step.
Enough light to keep going.

Manna.

Never stockpiled.

Never early.

Never late.

Just... enough.

And now I know—

trust is not the absence of fear,

but the quiet decision

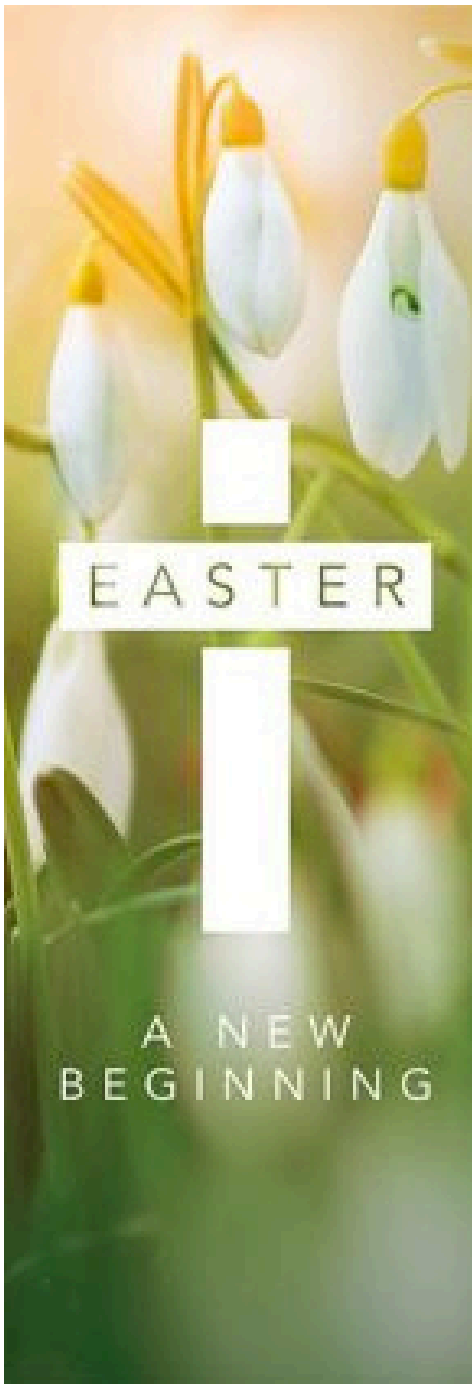
to keep showing up

and finding

that God already has.

He was never waiting at the end—

He was the reason I made it through.



Holy Week Services at Witham URC

Palm Sunday, 29th March

*Church Service, 10:30,
The Sanctuary*

Tuesday 31st March

*Tuesday Praise, 12:30,
The Sanctuary*

Maundy Thursday, 2nd April

*Worship Service, 20:00,
Room 1*

Good Friday, 3rd April

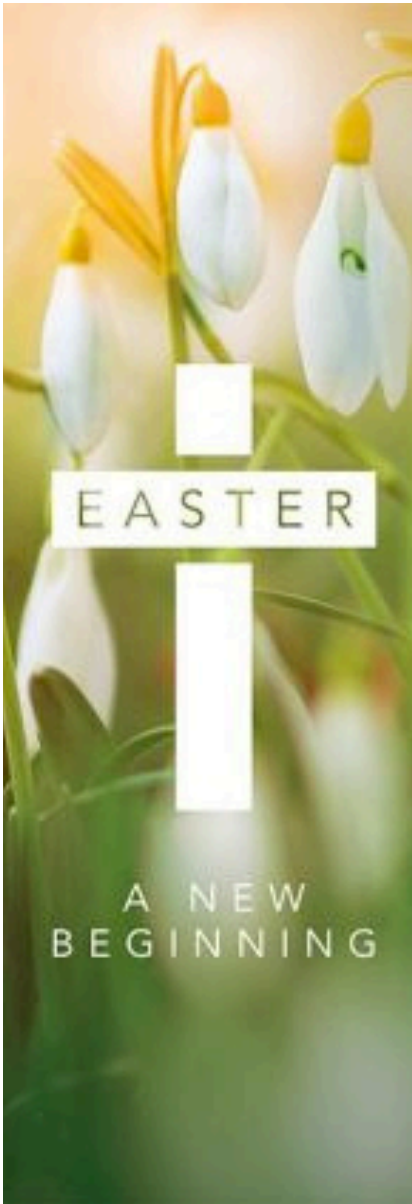
*Messy Church, 10:30,
The Hall (free) tickets only*

*Church Service, 10:30,
The Sanctuary*

Easter Sunday, 5th April

*Church Breakfast, 9:00am,
The Hall*

*Easter Morning Worship, 10:30,
The Sanctuary*



Easter at Witham URC

Tuesday 31st March

Memories and More, 10:30, Café

Wednesday 1st April

*Café and Baby Bank closed,
no Small Talk
no Bumps and Babies.*

Maundy Thursday, 2nd April

Café closed

Good Friday, 3rd April

*Messy Church, 10:30, The Hall
(Free) tickets only*

*Café and Centre closed,
no community lunch*

Saturday 4th April

*Café closed,
bread collection only*

Monday 6th April, Bank Holiday

*Café and Centre closed,
no community lunch*



April

TUESDAY PRAISE

12:30

7TH Lorna Bantock

14TH Jane Quinton

21ST Femi Cole-Njie

28TH Ian Hardie



Witham United Reformed Church
Newland Street, Witham, CM8 1AH
01376 500958 / info@withamurc.org.uk



Pledge Charity for April

"The Swallows"-
Head and neck cancer support charity.

Nominated by Christine Gayton.

My daughter works with head and neck cancer patients and highlighted to me the valuable work that this charity undertakes.



The name "The Swallows" was chosen because many head and neck cancer patients have problems swallowing, during and following treatment.

The Charity was formed and is run by patients and carers. This way everyone understands the problems when you are diagnosed with head and neck cancer.

A 24/7 support helpline is available as well as monthly meeting groups in various places. A virtual meeting is also held monthly for those not living near to a group.

Also available are support boxes for patients, hospitals and clinics who need products to help with side affects caused by their treatment.

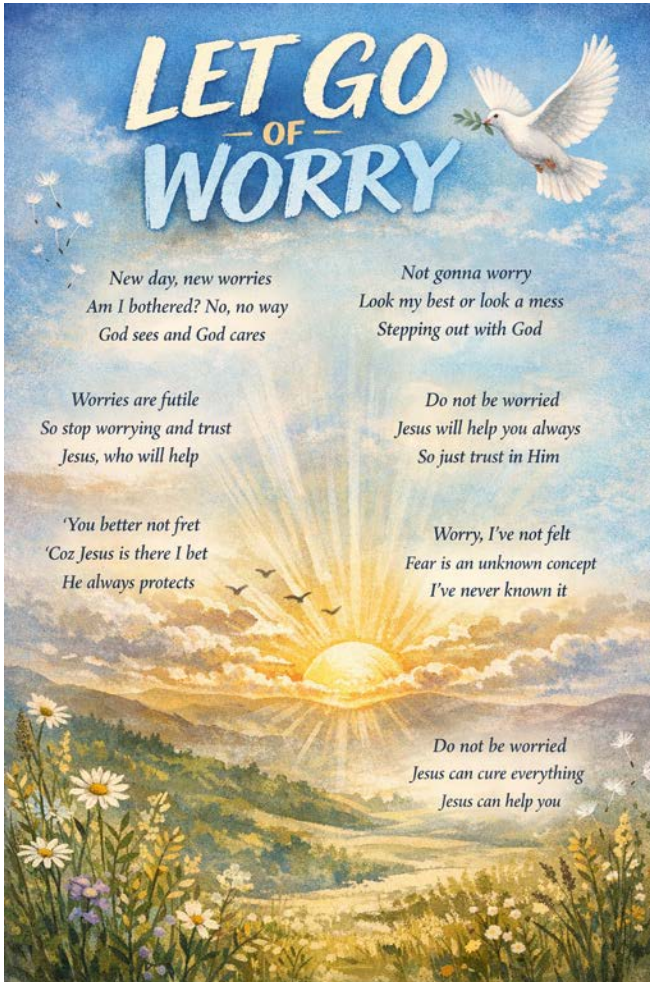
Information is also available about research projects that the charity has been made aware of.

One patient, who contacted the group, was feeling low and wondering what to do next. They were given helpful information on what was likely to happen and that other people have had similar experiences. These were - it's normal to lose your appetite, to think of food as medication, and be able to get help with feeding and with pain control. Also knowing they got through it made coping a little easier.

Their website is theswallows.org.uk
Telephone number is 07504725059

Youth Church - Let go of worry - Viola

The youth recently wrote Haiku's (thoughts and emotions) in Youth Church about Worry inspired by Matthew 6:24-35 which are shared below.



Services at Great Totham URC in April

April 5th Easter Sunday Service led by Jean Moody

April 12th Service led by Trevor Andrews.

April 19th TBA

April 26th Rev. Mark Ambrose

Our services begin at 10:30 am and all are welcome.

You will find us in Chapel Road, Great Totham north CM9 8D

Our next coffee morning will be on Saturday 11th April.

From 10 am until 11:30 am you can enjoy meeting old friends and new.

Enjoy too tea or coffee and a slice of scrumptious cake, perhaps!

Freshly baked pies and cakes to buy , books to browse and raffle.

Hope to see you !

Minister	Rev	Lorna Bantock	07935 307 958
Children and Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Sollis	500958
Associate Children and Youth Pastor	Ms	Tracey Pepper	500958
Building Manager	Mr	Ray Westrip	500958
Church Administrators	Mrs	Naomi Claxton Anna Johansson	500958
Director of Outreach	Ms	Tracey Pepper	500958
Hospitality Manager	Mrs	Heather March	500958
Elder	Ms	Yvonne Egbuna	
Elder	Mr	Allwyn Rajkumar	
Elder	Dr	Viola Vitcu-Zuokumer	
Elder	Mr	David Wellings	
Elder	Mrs	Sarah Wellings	
Church Treasurer	Mrs	Kerensa Rodway	
Prayer Chain Co-ordinator	Mrs	Rosemary Stinson	516602
Pastoral Team Co-ordinator	Mrs	Ruth Blackett	07546 838825
Welcome Team Leaders	Mr & Mrs	David and Mary Goodwin	davidgoodwin2009@hotmail.co.uk
Magazine Editors		Jo and Bob Stibbards	bjstibbards@gmail.com