



ST ANNE'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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PRAYER FOR AUGUST 2026

Dear Father,

In this summer month of August, help us to be aware of Your presence.

If we are away on holiday,

If we can't have a holiday,

On our journeys,

In our homes,

With our families or friends,

When we're alone,

When life is sweet,

When it's like an obstacle course,

At all times and in all circumstances, help us to know that You are in it with us, sharing our ups and downs, offering Your love and peace and hope when we connect with You through putting our trust in Your Son, Jesus.

Thank You, Lord,

In His name,

Amen.

Daphne Kitching

Editors: with holidays in mind...

SKY AT NIGHT

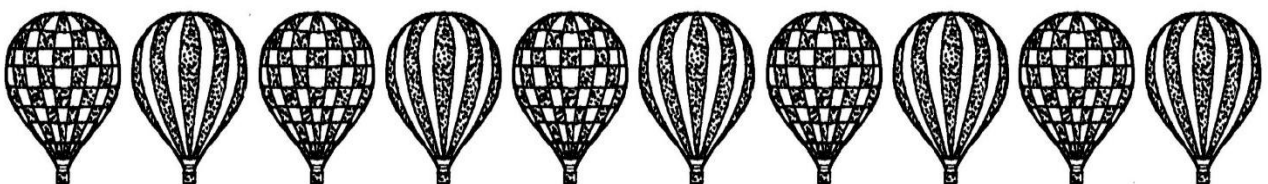
The scientific theory that I like best is that the rings of Saturn are composed entirely of lost airline luggage.

SKY FRIGHT

An airliner flew into a violent thunderstorm and was soon bumping around in the sky. One very nervous lady happened to be sitting next to a clergyman and turned to him for comfort.

"Can't you do something?" she demanded.

"I'm sorry ma'am," said the reverend gently. "I'm in sales, not management."



A MESSAGE FROM THE REVEREND JIM WILLIAMS

LESSONS FROM LUCCA

One of the running jokes during our holiday in Lucca was that the weather forecast never changed. Every day it seemed to say, "Hotter than yesterday!"

We soon adjusted our routine. We explored in the mornings, found cool shade in the churches, and spent the hottest part of the day by the swimming pool. We slowed down—not because we planned to, but because the heat made us.

Looking back, I think that was a good thing.

Life today often feels very busy. Our calendars fill up, our phones demand our attention, and even holidays can become a race to fit everything in.

Jesus lived differently. He had plenty to do, but He was never in a hurry. He made time to pray, share meals with friends, notice people, and rest. When His disciples returned tired from their work, He simply said, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

Those words still matter today.

Rest isn't being lazy. It's part of living well. It reminds us that our worth doesn't come from how much we do, but from being loved by God.

One of my favourite memories of Lucca is sitting outside in the evening as the air cooled. Families gathered in the squares, people took their time over meals, children played, and the church bells marked the passing of the day. No one seemed to be rushing.

Most of us can't escape to Tuscany, but we can all make time to slow down. A walk in the garden, a cup of tea without looking at our phones, a few quiet minutes before the day begins, or simply sitting quietly in church before a service. These small pauses can help us notice God's presence.

The Psalm says, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Lucca reminded me that slowing down isn't wasting time. Sometimes it's exactly where God meets us, giving us rest, peace, and reminding us that His love is a gift, not something we have to earn.

Rev Jim



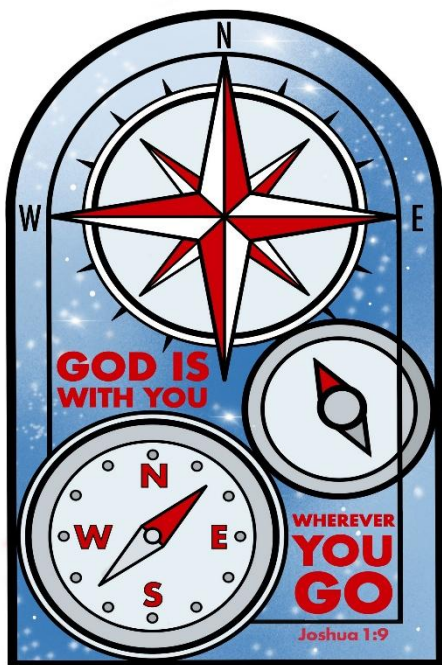
JUST LISTEN!

Techno-dinosaur and curmudgeon that I am, I have clung to my old plug-in satnav for far too long. It has finally given up the ghost, and I have listened to the superior wisdom of Madame - my wife - and started to use my smartphone, held in place via a holder on the car's dash, to navigate around areas I'm not familiar with.

Except of course, this morning, I thought I knew better than the info on the phone which advised an unusual route as I set off in the direction of my hydrotherapy session. (Techno-dinosaur, curmudgeon AND falling to bits- what a combination!). And ran into a long traffic queue at the new and extensive road works in the next village. Serves me right.

There's value in listening to someone who knows. The data on the phone had already taken into account the fact that the traffic queue would make me late and had re-routed me away from the bottleneck. But curmudgeonly dinosaurs often think they know better - to their cost.

The art is, of course, in knowing who knows best. There are many false guides in this world, but it is the witness of Christians throughout time and throughout the world that listening to God - in prayer, or through His word - is a trusted way of navigating our way through today's world where many voices clamour for our attention, not all of which are trustworthy.



That great Welsh hymn 'Guide me O thou great Jehovah' is one of many which sings of our trust in God to guide us. It talks of being pilgrims through a land without waymarks, and it asks God to 'hold me with Thy powerful hand'. Here is Someone who knows and who is worth listening to. God Himself has said: 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5); we can trust the One who will not leave us to guide us down good paths. It's a life-time's work to learn to trust in God, but we can improve, we can know the One who says 'My sheep know My voice' more clearly.

May God guide us on all our journeys, and be a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.

Reverend Roy Shaw,

a retired but active priest in the diocese of York, where he is a spiritual director

SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10.45AM IN THE CHURCH

2nd August	Communion led by Pastor David Grimshaw
9th August	Leader - Margaret Russell
16th August	Leader - Peter Melvin
23rd August	Leader - Rene Kendall
30th August	Leader - Stuart Gay
6th September	Communion led by the Reverend Peter Colwell
13th September	Leader - the Reverend Jim Williams
20th September	Harvest Festival led by Andrew Barratt
27th September	Leader - the Reverend Peter Colwell

FLOWERS

2nd August	Church flowers
9th August	Church flowers
16th August	Jackie Dell
23rd August	Dorothy and Bill Coles
30th August	Church flowers
6th September	Millie Watson
13th September	Pat Duxbury
20th September	Harvest
27th September	Sandra Bigley

THURSDAY SHOPPERS' SERVICES AT 10AM IN THE HALL

6th August	Leader - Stuart Gay
13th August	Communion led by Peter Melvin
20th August	Leader - Pastor David Grimshaw
27th August	Leader - Doug Clements
3rd September	Leader - Margaret Russell
10th September	Communion led by the Reverend Jim Williams
17th September	Leader - Pastor David Grimshaw
24th September	Harvest praise led by Stephanie Johnson

Note: unexpected events may necessitate late changes to the list of leaders.

ECO CHURCH

Well, it has been a challenging time for Eco Church this spring and summer as it has for all farmers, gardeners and those new to gardening. In spring there was a beautiful display of Bluebells, only it was too exuberant and smothered the seedlings that had been planted in the autumn. Storm David caused major disruption over the Easter weekend and, in our case, all the seedlings that were sown over January, February and March were lost; seeds had to be hurriedly sown to catch up again. Those tiny seedlings were then planted out and, before they were established, had to endure a heat bomb in June with the Mediterranean border recording a temperature of 40C or 101F.

So, all very trying, but at Eco Church there is bible reading for each session and one, in particular, that has been extremely relevant for all this climatic and horticultural adversity. In Romans 5: 3-5, written by Paul in a letter to the Roman church before he visited them, it says: 'Take joy with our troubles, because these produce patience, patience produces character and character produces hope.'

Well, patience has meant sowing new seeds so there have been Bags2Grow (B2G) distributed to our B2G growers with My Littlest Pot Herb Garden containing dill, basil, coriander and chive in May, courgettes or squash in June and The Refreshingly Good Brew Yellow Pot containing lemon verbena, lemon basil and chamomile in July.

It has meant taming the Mediterranean border by clearing the over-exuberant vegetation and restocking it with herbs: oregano, golden marjoram, rosemary, lamb's ear, lavender and chives. We have also planted salvia and cosmos flower seedlings to complement the potted roses, figs and vine that were planted up in Autumn 2025.

The original concept of the Mediterranean border was to increase biodiversity and provide a nectar-rich environment for pollinators. Now that it has been cleared and planted up it has given us the opportunity to be a Grow Along Border, so it now has four tomato plants, a courgette and squash for our B2G Growers to observe and compare. This border can now be a part of the Make a Metre Matter campaign, where a small patch of earth can be planted up with a nectar-rich food source to attract pollinators. I am very pleased to say I have witnessed a beautiful, fluffy, tawny brown bumblebee visit the tiny flowers on the salvia and lamb's ear so, very slowly, the border is beginning to achieve the ideas laid out for it back in Autumn 2025. To find out more about Make a Metre Matter follow the link: www.gardenersworldlive.com/makeametrematter.

As always, it is time to thank those of you who supported the fundraising lucky dip at the Book Fair. Congratulations to the winners who went home with the wonderful literary prizes: the delightful Willow Plantable Children's Books, and the ever-informative Monty Don's Down to Earth, plus the vintage prize reads and vintage magazines. A thank-you, too, for the gift from the Book Fair of a leaping porcelain fish that is now a rainwater capture feature in the Mediterranean border.

Finally, the summer is a great opportunity to participate in Citizen Science with the Big Butterfly Count which runs from 17 July to 9 August and the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (UK PoMS) which runs over the summer and finishes on 30 September. Both surveys involve sitting in an outdoor space for 10 to 15 minutes, the Church garden being an ideal location, to observe the area and then record your observations.

Eco Church wishes you all a wonderful summer as you take time to observe the world around you.

Jane Randles

FUNDRAISING

Saturday 15 August 2026. We are looking forward to another musical afternoon but, this time, in the Church given by our very own Lisa Atherton and some guests. This will commence at 2pm and tickets will be available shortly at £5. Refreshments will be served in the hall at the end of the concert. We look forward to seeing you. A summer afternoon of music - what could be more enjoyable?

Saturday 29 August 2026. We are holding another of our popular craft fairs from 10am - 3pm. Our tearoom will be in full swing, but it will close at 2pm. We will have our usual variety of stalls including our "Bake Table" with lovely food to take home.

Saturday 19 September 2026. This is the start of our Harvest weekend. As a change from our usual coffee morning, we are having an afternoon tea with entertainment starting at 2pm; tickets will be available soon.

Sunday 20 September 2026. After our morning worship we will have our usual "Jacob's Join Lunch". Items can be brought before the service and left in the community room on the tables. Later, we can all enjoy lunch together.

Avril Cook, on behalf of the fundraising team.

WHEN CHILDREN WRITE TO THE MINISTER

Dear Mr Minister...

- I know God loves everybody but then He never met my sister. - Arnold, age 8
- Are there any devils on earth? I think there may be one in my class. - Carla, age 10
- More people would come to your church if you moved it to Disneyland. - Loreen, age 9
- My father says I should learn the Ten Commandments. But I don't think I want to, because we have enough rules already in my house. - Joshua, age 10

Editors: Our Parish Pump resource for August lists 25 feast days that remember 'outstanding Christians'. One of these is for "Raymond Nonnatus, the man who was grateful for life." Followers of the BBC series 'Call the Midwife', based on the memoirs of Jennifer Worth, will know that the convent from which the midwives worked in London's East End in the 1950s is named Nonnatus House.

31 AUGUST - RAYMOND NONNATUS **REDEEMING SLAVES FROM A LIVING DEATH**

Raymond Nonnatus (1204-40) is a good patron saint for anyone who does not take life for granted. The account of his own life begins with the story of how his mother died just before his birth, and of how Raymond was somehow extracted from her dead body just in time to save him. ('Nonnatus' means 'not born').

Raymond grew up in Portello, Catalonia and became a monk, joining the Mercedarian Order. Perhaps because of his gratitude for his own life having been spared, Raymond developed a passionate desire to see other people set free to live the lives God had given them. Whatever the reason, Raymond made the difficult and dangerous journey out to Algeria in order to redeem many slaves from a living death. So passionate was he to free them, that he even offered himself as a ransom for others' liberation.

While in Algeria, Raymond preached Christianity to the Muslims, and was put into prison, before eventually being sent back to Spain. The Pope sent for him, but Raymond was so weakened by his suffering in Algeria that he died on the way to Rome. But, by then, Raymond was content. Just as his life had been given back to him, so he had used it to give life back to others.

BIBLE STUDY

Well, we've finished the book of Esther now:

- we've sympathised with Queen Vashti (the rejected wife);
- we've struggled with Mordecai (the cousin) in finding a way forward;
- we've been horrified by Haman's plotting and
- we've been amazed by Queen Esther's courage!

And we've discovered that Purim, the Jewish Festival marking the deliverance of the Jews from a royal death decree, is still celebrated today, at the beginning of March!

Now we're on to the story of the early church in Acts. The account of Ananias and Sapphira is challenging (Acts 5), and the stoning of Stephen is upsetting, except that he managed to preach a huge sermon to the Sanhedrin (definitely more than 20 minutes) and was reassured and distracted in death by a heavenly vision.

We're holidaying in August and start up again on **Tuesday 1 September 2026** at 10am in the community room. Do feel free to join us!

Margaret Russell

WHY WOULD I PRAY IN HOSPITAL?

Hospitals are curious places. One minute you're arguing with a vending machine because it has eaten your £2 coin, the next you're wearing a gown that seems to have been designed by someone who fundamentally misunderstood the concept of "coverage". Hospitals have a remarkable ability to make us feel both very important ("The consultant will see you shortly") and completely insignificant ("Could you just wait another three hours?").

So why would anyone pray in hospital?

It's a fair question. After all, hospitals are full of highly trained professionals. We trust doctors, nurses, surgeons, physiotherapists and countless others with extraordinary knowledge and skill. Prayer isn't a substitute for medicine, and Christians should never see it that way. The United Reformed Church has long celebrated learning, science and the gifts God has given to those who care for others. Thank God for antibiotics—and for the person who invented decent pain relief!

Prayer isn't about replacing medical treatment. It's about recognising that, even with the very best care, we remain human. We worry. We wait. We hope. We grieve. We wonder what tomorrow might bring. Those are deeply spiritual moments.

Sometimes prayer is eloquent. Sometimes it's simply: "Help."

The Psalms remind us that God welcomes every emotion, not just the cheerful ones. We don't have to tidy ourselves up before praying. God already knows when we're frightened, exhausted or cross because the tea arrived lukewarm again. (To be fair, hospital tea has performed miracles of its own by making thousands of people long for home.)

Jesus spent much of his ministry with people who were ill, anxious or excluded. He didn't lecture them from a safe distance. He sat with them, listened to them and offered healing, compassion and hope. That same Christ is with us in the waiting room, beside the hospital bed and during the sleepless nights when every beep from a nearby monitor seems far louder than it should.

Prayer also changes the way we see those around us. We notice the nurse at the end of a twelve-hour shift, the cleaner quietly keeping everything safe, the worried relative pretending to be brave. Our prayers grow beyond ourselves and become acts of love for others.

Will prayer always bring the outcome we long for? No. Faith is not a guarantee of an easy life or a quick recovery. But it is a promise that we never face life's hardest places alone.

So why pray in hospital?

Not because God only visits wards. Not because prayer replaces medicine. But because wherever there is fear, hope, waiting or healing, Christ is already there—and it helps to remember that, even if you're still trying to work out how to put the hospital gown on the right way round.

Rev Jim

STARFISHES

Starfishes ended the summer term on 13 July 2026 with their traditional Teddy Bears' Picnic. There will be no meetings during the school holidays in August. Weekly meetings will resume on **Monday 7 September 2026** at 9.30am in the church hall.

Doug Clements

CONNECT: FOOD, FRIENDSHIP AND FAITH

Following a period of prayerful discernment, the former Messy Church team at St Anne's URC recognised that, after ten fruitful years of ministry, it was time to prune and reshape the programme to make space for new growth. From this process, **Connect** was born.

We like to think that URC can also stand for "**U R Connected**" - connected to God, to one another, and to yourself. Connect seeks to create a welcoming space of belonging where both body and soul can be nourished.

On the third Friday of the month, Sheila and Joyce prepare a simple yet delicious meal, and people gather around tables to enjoy conversation, friendship, and reflection around a chosen theme.



At our gathering in June, Jackie Dell gave a cake-decorating demonstration. As she transformed a simple cake into something beautiful, the Reverend Daleen ten Cate reflected on how creating a cake requires eggs to be broken first. In much the same way, life can sometimes leave us feeling broken. Yet, from those experiences can emerge something beautiful - greater compassion for ourselves and for others, deeper resilience, and often a closer relationship with God.

There will be no meeting in August but Connect will resume on **18 September 2026**, the third Friday of the month, at 1pm for food, friendship and faith.

Why not come and join us?

Rev Daleen ten Cate and the Connect Team

ORDINARY - BUT CHALLENGING

In the church year, we are now well into that long season - it seems to go on forever - variously called 'Trinity' or 'Ordinary time'. Each of those labels tells us something about the six months approximately between Pentecost and Advent Sunday.

'Trinity' reminds us that, with Pentecost, God has made Himself known to us in all His fullness (or at least as much as we can bear) as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 'Ordinary time' tells us that this is the season where, now armed with the insights and power of the Holy Spirit, we can revisit the life of Jesus with new eyes, new heart, see new things in the faith, see new opportunities to serve God.

This is the time when those words of Jesus (John 15:15) 'I have made known to you *everything* I have learned from the Father' come into play. It may seem a long season, it may feel like the drudgery of 'Keep on keeping on' without the excitement of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost to lift our spirits, but it is ordinary time charged with the knowledge that we have *everything* we need in the resources of God. The love of the Father, the words and works of the Son, the power of the Spirit will energise us as we 'keep on keeping on' through this long season.

This long season up to the end of November is a reminder that working out our love for God in our community is probably more about perspiration than inspiration. Few are called to be heroes of the faith, but all are called to faithfulness, and somehow or other, with the transforming power of the Spirit, we are all able to keep on keeping on, doing little things with great love.

Here's a lovely prayer which captures some of the mindset of the Trinity season/Ordinary time; it may help you 'keep on keeping on' through the months ahead;

*Let not our soul be busy inns that have not room for Thee and Thine,
but quiet homes of prayer and praise where Thou mayest find fit company;
where the needful cares of life are wisely ordered and put away,
and wide sweet space is kept for thee.*

Amen to that. Ordinary - but challenging!

Thomas Smith, Leysian Missioner at Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission in London, and a Methodist preacher.

Editors: The Leysian Mission takes its name from The Leys School in Cambridge. This school was opened in 1875 and was intended to be "the Methodist Eton". Non-Anglican students had only recently been allowed to study at Oxford and Cambridge. The Mission was started in 1886 by former pupils of The Leys School who were concerned about the social and housing conditions in the East End of London. Links with The Leys School remain very strong today.

CHURCHES IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) CALL FOR HELP TO FIGHT EBOLA OUTBREAK

As cases of Ebola in northeastern DRC continue to spread, the Bishop of Goma, the Right Reverend Martin Gordon, has joined other church leaders there in calling for urgent help.

The country is facing its 17th Ebola outbreak in 50 years. More than 1,100 people have been affected, with over 350 dead.

Bishop Martin, a Church Mission Society (CMS) mission partner, says that churches across DRC can play a critical role in response.

"The church is on the frontline. Through our schools, clinics, and local congregations, we are at the heart of every village and community, and we are one of the few institutions still trusted to tell the truth."

For it is widespread public mistrust of the authorities that has led many communities to doubt the very existence of Ebola. Restrictions surrounding burials have only intensified tensions, and already two Ebola treatment centres have been set on fire.

Meanwhile, church leaders are circulating pastoral guidance outlining Ebola symptoms and encouraging best practices for hygiene, physical contact and medical referrals. Plans are underway to equip churches and schools with temperature screening equipment.

But Bishop Martin stresses that financial support from outside is essential.

"We need support to equip frontline churches and schools, and help communities respond effectively," he said. "But above all, we ask people to pray for us - for effective treatment development and for churches to continue to be voices of hope."

Andy Roberts, the Chief Executive Officer of CMS says: "Bishop Martin and other church leaders have shown extraordinary courage. They are not fleeing the danger; they are moving toward it with love, practical help and hope."

Would you like to help them in any way? Go to <https://churchmissionsociety.org>



We hope all our readers enjoy the rest of the summer.

Editors

Items for the October/November edition of the magazine should be with the editors no later than **Sunday 13 September 2026**, please.