St Luke's News

October 2026
Number 291

In Desperate Need

Drought has been affecting the UK and most of Europe for the past three to four months. It's made everyone desperate for rain—the farmers for their crops, the water companies to supply customers and gardeners for their plants. We give thanks for the recent welcome rain and pray for more.

In *Mark's Gospel*, we read in *chapter 7, verses 24-30* of a desperate parent:

> "Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. 'First let the

children eat all they want,' he told her, 'for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.' 'Lord,' she replied, 'even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he told her, 'For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.' She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone."

Pastor Tim Keller, in his book *King's Cross: Understanding the life and death of the Son of God*, comments on this passage and says "there are cowards, there are regular people, there are heroes, and then there are parents!". Here, we have a parent in desperate need—her child was very ill with an unclean spirit—so she approaches Jesus with incredible humility, perseverance and faith, all of which lead to her child's release and healing.

The woman's approach shows us how we are to approach God with *rightless humble assertiveness*. This Syrophoenician woman had no right even to talk to Jesus, a Jewish Rabbi. She was Greek, a gentile who likely worshipped Canaanite gods, she had a daughter with an unclean spirit and, lastly, she was a woman in a male-only society. Everything was against her but she showed an understanding that the disciples had difficulty grasping.

It is this faith that God's love is enough and available for all with the coming of the Kingdom of God that brought her to Jesus. Even the crumbs of His love are enough, like they would be for the puppies under the dinner table. This showed an understanding and a trust in the living God. Jesus saw her faith expressed and her desperation, and then the miracle happened.

I wonder how desperate we are for God. How keen to grasp what he offers us? Often distractions and our busy lives so easily numb that desperation for God. We need the desperate, humble assertiveness of the Syrophoenician woman in *Mark's Gospel* to truly lead us to meet God.

The prayer of humble access

We do not presume to come to this your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.

But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ and to drink His blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body and our souls washed through His most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us. Amen.

This prayer was based on the same passage from *Mark's Gospel*, expressing the rightless, humble assertiveness of the Syrophoenecian woman. The prayer was written by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, author of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1549), and a founding Father of the Church of England. It is still used today in our Communion services.

People respond to Jesus' words in a variety of ways as the Syrophoenician woman could have done. Two reactions are negative.

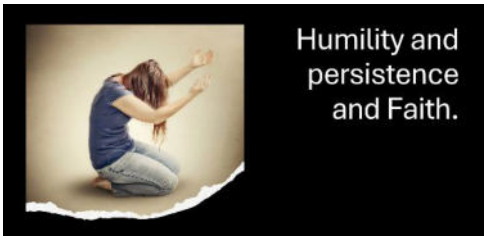
- She could have rejected Jesus by being too proud and having a *superiority complex*, not accepting his challenge, wanting to lead her life as she chose, her pride preventing her from meeting with God.
- She could have had an *inferiority complex*. She might have thought, I'm so awful God couldn't love me. Tim Keller states in *King's Cross*, "It's just as much a rejection of the love of God to refuse to seek him, to refuse to come after his mercy, to refuse to accept it, to refuse to be content with it".

But to come to God we need to be like the Syrophoenician woman, having rightless humble assertiveness. It's what all who come to Jesus need.

- *Rightless*: we cannot earn our way to God. We are not good enough. We are not worthy! We have no rights to demand He accepts us.
- *Humble assertiveness*: God through Jesus has done something amazing. He has died for us on a cross and risen from the dead. He is offering us something amazing: *His mercy*. Humbly we accept this as the woman did.

God is so loving that He wants His children to be rescued and transformed, and as a parent He has given His life on the cross so we can be rescued (saved). Wow! What a God we have. He's done it all!

Let's discover more of the Father's love for us this Autumn and share it with those around us.



Yours in Christ,
Revd Michael Norman
Vicar of St Luke's

Autumn Sermon Series at Encounter

Sharing our Faith—the Challenge and the Call
This Autumn we are looking at the vitally important topic of sharing our faith with others.

Our Lord Jesus did not request but commanded His first Apostles to be witnesses to the incredible Good News we have. They were to go into all the world and make disciples. The same command applies to us 2,000 years later.

However, in the UK the Church has found this difficult to do. Sometimes it is due to fear, feeling inadequate, not knowing enough, etc. *Encounter* this Autumn will, through preaching, interactive prayer and discussion, look to address these fears and equip us, we trust, to have a new confidence in sharing our faith. See pages 5 and 6 for the theme each week.

Revd Michael Norman
Vicar of St Luke's

Prayer

FOCUS
Tuesdays 8:00pm every week by Zoom (details from the church office), apart from 2nd Tuesday in the month which is in person, in the Chapel

Prayer for Children & Youth
Thursdays 11:15am in the Chapel (during term time)

Hour of Prayer
Fridays 10:00-11:00am in the Chapel

Half-day of Prayer
One Saturday in the month 9:00am-12 noon in the Chapel (check Diary dates on p 7)

If you would like to give to St Luke's by bank transfer, the details are:

Account name	PCC St Luke's Watford
Sort code	20-91-79
Account no.	70687472
Reference	Please state if the donation is for a specific appeal, eg Santa's hampers, Foodbank, etc.

Please remember to complete a Gift Aid form if you are a tax payer

Services at St Luke's Church

Sunday

8:00am Holy Communion Service
This is a said Communion and is held once a month in the Chapel at St Luke's. All are welcome.

10:30am Morning Worship/Holy Communion Service
This is our main morning service, and is currently available live-streamed on YouTube. All are welcome, and there are usually children's groups and a crèche for younger ones. The details in the calendar below may change.

5:30pm Encounter - Informal Evening Service
This service includes worship, a talk and opportunities to be prayed for.

Tuesday

10:00am Holy Communion Service
We also have a weekly Communion (or Service of the Word if the Vicar is unavailable) at 10:00am on Tuesdays. This is a lovely, reflective service with a couple of hymns, followed by community tea and coffee.

Plan for Sunday Services:

September	**8:00am**	**10:30am**	**5:30pm**
Sunday 20th		Family Communion *Mark 8:27-38* *The turn*	Encounter *Know the Gospel, Part 1*
Sunday 27th		Morning Worship *The mountain* *Mark 9:1-13*	Encounter with Holy Communion *Know the Gospel, Part 2*
October	**8:00am**	**10:30am**	**5:30pm**
Sunday 4th		All-age Worship *Harvest*	Encounter with Holy Communion *Testimony—Your story*
Sunday 11th	Holy Communion	Morning Worship *Coming down the mountain* *Mark 9:14-29*	Encounter *Creating interest—Stirring the seeker*

Note: The forms of service and sermon titles may change.

October	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
Sunday 18th		Family Communion *Mark 9:30-51* *The Kingdom*	Encounter *Difficult questions, Part 1*
Sunday 25th		Morning Worship with Baptism *The little children* *Mark 10:13-16*	Encounter with Holy Communion *Difficult questions, Part 2*
November	**8:00am**	**10:30am**	**5:30pm**
Sunday 1st		Family Communion *The gift of marriage* *Mark 10:1-12*	Encounter *Leading people to Jesus*
Sunday 8th Remembrance Sunday	Holy Communion	All-age Worship with Parade *Remembrance*	Encounter *Prayer and listening to God*
Sunday 15th		Family Communion *The trap* *Mark 10:17-31*	Encounter *Invitation and stepping stones*
Sunday 22nd		Morning Worship *The ransom* *Mark 10:32-45*	Encounter with Holy Communion *Know your Bible*
Sunday 29th Advent Sunday		Morning Worship *Blind Bartimaeus* *Mark 10:46-52*	Encounter with Holy Communion *Signs & wonders and boldness*

Note: The forms of service and sermon titles may change.

Concert at St Luke's Church

Saturday 21st November, 7:30pm

Watford Symphony Orchestra

Glinka: Overture to Ruslan and Ludmilla, Grieg: Piano Concerto in A minor (soloist Florian Mitrea), Tchaikovsky: Symphony No.4 in F minor

Tickets £18 (accompanied children under 18 free)

Book in advance at ticketsource.co.uk/watford-symphony-orchestra
Also available at the door (debit/credit cards accepted)

Diary dates coming up

September	
19th	Creative Space (see p 30)
21st	Knitting Club
21st Sep-4th Oct	Fairtrade Fortnight (see p 14)
23rd	Taste and Sing Session with CanCC, 7:30pm (see p 25)
25th	Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm
26th	Breakfast Club (see p 16)
October	
3rd	Half-day of Prayer, St Luke's Chapel, 9:00am–12 noon
4th	Harvest Service followed by Church family lunch
10th	Breakfast Club (see p 16)
11th	Sunday afternoon recital (see p 26)
17th	Creative Space (see p 30)
19th	Knitting Club
24th	Breakfast Club (see p 16)
30th	Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm
	Holiday Club Short: Light Party (see p 35)
31st	Film Night, 6:00pm (more details to follow)
November	
7th	Half-day of Prayer, St Luke's Chapel, 9:00am–12 noon
	Healing of the Family Tree Conference, St Luke's, 10:00am-1:00pm (coffee at 9:30am; see p 16)
	Live at St Luke's (speak to Neil Brookes for more information)
8th	Remembrance Sunday Parade Service, 10:30am
14th	Breakfast Club (see p 16)
	Tear Fund Big Quiz Night, 7:00pm (see p 29)
15th	Annual Bereavement Service, 3:00pm
16th	Knitting Club
21st	Creative Space (see p 30)
	Watford Symphony Orchestra Concert (see p 6)
22nd	Church family lunch
27th	Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm
28th	Breakfast Club (see p 16)
December	
5th	Half-day of Prayer, St Luke's Chapel, 9:00am–12 noon
12th	Breakfast Club (see p 16)
18th	Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm
21st	Knitting Club

Regular groups at St Luke's Church

Children/Youth Groups (evenings, term-time)

Kids Club	Tuesdays	5:30–6:45pm	4–11 year olds
Rock Solid	Mondays	6:30–7:45pm	Years 7–9
Base	Tuesdays	6:30–7:45pm	Years 9–11
K2	Tuesdays	8:00–9:15pm	Years 11–13

Badminton and Table Tennis Club
Friday evenings (except 2 weeks at Christmas and Good Friday), 7:30–10:30pm, in the Church Hall and Gathering Area
For more information, speak to Fiona Craigie

Breakfast Club
2nd and 4th Saturdays each month, 8:30–10:00am
For more information, speak to Bekki Hadley

Cassiobury and nearby Community Choir (CanCC)
Wednesday evenings, term-time, 7:30pm in the Church
For more information, speak to Pam Norman or Jeremy Cooke

Creative Space
Craft activities for women, monthly
For more information, speak to Pam Norman

Friday Club
Monthly, last Friday in the month (except in December when it will be on 18th)
For more information, speak to Janet G

Knitting Group
Monthly on a Monday morning
For more information, contact Di via the church office

Prayer
FOCUS, Tuesdays, 8:00pm: every week by Zoom (for login details contact the church office), apart from 2nd Tuesday in the month which is in person, in the Chapel
Prayer for Children & Youth, Thursdays, 11.15am, term-time, in the Chapel
Hour of Prayer, Fridays, 10:00-11:00 am, in the Chapel
Half-day of Prayer, 1st Saturday in the month, 9:00am-12 noon, in the Chapel

Toddlers
Thursday mornings, term-time, 9:30–11:00am
For more information, speak to Bekki Hadley

New Faces at St Luke's

Sally, Administrator

Dear Santa, we've found your beard…

A big welcome to **Sally Wood** who took over from Dorothy Englert in the church office in July as our new church administrator.

Sally describes herself as a city girl, having worked in London for many years for major companies, such as Exchange Telegraph and Associated British Ports.

Any plans for St Luke's? "Well, I want learn the ropes first and I'm looking at growing into the role", she said. She has already made a start by simplifying the form for church clients wanting to book rooms. And then there's the kitchenette attached to the office…

I was a bit surprised to be able to see a clear worktop when I went in to meet Sally. Normally, it's covered with an accumulation of cups, saucers, mugs, kettles, old biscuit cartons, the odd teapot and other stuff people have forgotten to put away.

It was spotless when I walked in. When was it last cleaned up? "Well I did find Santa Claus's beard hidden down the back of the plate rack", Sally said.

Dorothy, our former administrator, is moving to Sheffield to be near her daughter. We wish her well in her new job as an English and Drama teacher at a local school.

Belle, Assistant Youth Director

With Sally's arrival, the church office is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 3.00pm.

Another big welcome to **Belle Fleming**, our new assistant youth director who started at St Luke's on 1st September and will be working with Neil Brookes, Ordinand and Youth Director.

Belle, who is 20, is currently in her second year at the London School of Theology (LST). In her case, theology won out at the last minute over pharmacy. "When I left school I was persuaded to consider a university pharmacy degree, but after a year out, I decided I wanted to be more involved in church matters, so I switched to theology," she said.

At St Luke's, Belle will be involved with helping Neil run the youth groups on Sunday mornings and weekday evenings.

Are some groups more significant than others? "I think the age range of youth is particularly special because they develop so much in their faith and their personal identities, and so supporting them becomes critical to their development", said Belle. "The age at which this happens can range from Year 7 to Sixth Form, and they usually help each other. I'm really looking forward to getting to know them throughout this year".

Chris Webb

Safeguarding Recognition at Lambeth Palace

On Monday 7th September, Mary Bowen, St Luke's Safeguarding Officer, was invited to a Safeguarding Recognition Eucharist at Lambeth Palace, London. At the event, Mary met the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally, together with some 60 other Safeguarding Officers from Anglican churches in the Southern Province of the UK.

You can spot Mary in the photo, in the second row, two in from the left.

Tragedy at the Big Church Festival 2026

Within just three hours of the Big Church Festival 2026 officially opening at Wiston Park, Steyning, West Sussex, on Friday 28th August, strong winds caused a wooden sign to fall, injuring six people, four of whom were taken to hospital, and one person tragically lost his life at the scene. The person who died was named as Pastor Robert Guanco from Jesus the Living Water Church in Eastbourne, East Sussex. The organisers closed the festival that same day amidst the shock and sadness, saying they were "heartbroken" by Pastor Guanco's death and adding:

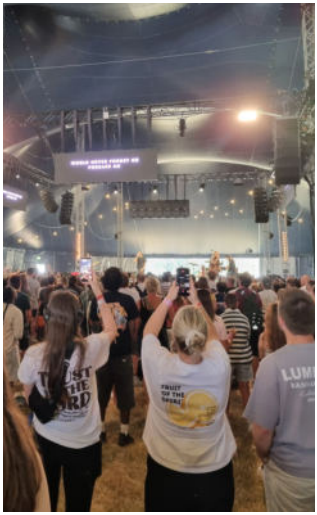
> "Big Church Festival is about bringing people together. At the moment, that community is grieving."

In a statement, Pastor Guanco's church said:

> "Pastor Robert was a faithful servant of God, a loving husband to Isay, a devoted and caring father to Ellie, and a blessing to so many people whose lives he touched. His life, his faith, his love, and his service to God will never be forgotten."

As a family, Big Church Festival (BCF) has been a special part of our lives since 2012, always around my birthday in May. I began volunteering in 2018 and I have had the privilege of serving in various departments alongside volunteers from all walks of life and from different parts of the world. Every year brings a unique and wonderful experience with new friendships and memories. This year, however, our experience ended very differently when the festival closed early under these tragic circumstances.

Big Church Festival is a celebration of faith, music and community. It's a Christian music festival that celebrates the diversity of Christian music, bringing together some of the biggest names in Christian music from around the world. But it is much more than music (there are 8 stages). In a



world where large gatherings can sometimes feel intimidating or divided, BCF is a place of safety, community and belonging, where people of all ages, denominations, culture and backgrounds come together to worship, connect and celebrate the unity of Christian faith.

BCF was founded by Tim Jupp (Delirious? music group) in 2009 as Big Church Day Out (BCDO). What started as a one-day event held on the Saturday of the May Bank Holiday weekend at the Wiston Estate, quickly grew in popularity and became a two-day event, running on both Saturday and Sunday.

Following the Covid-19 Pandemic, growth was significant and from 2022, it became known as the Big Church Festival. In 2025, the festival became a three-day event running from Friday to Sunday over the August Bank Holiday weekend at the same West Sussex venue. And there are now plans for BCF to make its European debut in the Netherlands in 2027.

Over the years, artists such as Matt Redman, Chris Tomlin, Israel Houghton, Sinach, LZ7, Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes, For King & Country and Hillsong have graced its stages. This year was no exception, CeCe Winans, Brooke Ligertwood, Lauren Daigle, Charity Gayle, Elevation Rhythm, Rend Collective, Jonathan and Melissa Helser and many others were in the line-up.

BCF also hosts kids activities, craft stalls, spoken word, prayer spaces, an Expo, Food vendors, creative art vendors, fun fairs, late night worship and camp fires. Something for everyone.

It's always really special to have Christian worship with all these artists in one place and with Christians who have left their denomination labels at the gates. The unity does feel like 'heaven on earth'.

The festival is accessible to all and the cost of attending a day or an entire weekend is very reasonable compared with many other major festivals and concerts. For some of the artists at BCF, this is their only UK tour date, making it a unique opportunity to see them perform live.

- **Please pray with us** for God's comfort and strength for the family, congregation and friends of Pastor Robert who lost his life, and for everyone who was injured and affected by what happened.

- **Pray** for the organisers, volunteers, artists and the wider BCF community as they process this devastating event.
- Above all, **pray** that this tragic incident will ultimately be turned around for the glory of God.

May the vision behind Big Church Festival continue to bring people together in faith, worship and community.

Mo Fasanya

Mission With A Vision
Giving Girls in Kenya Hope and Safety

Mission With A Vision is a charity working in Kenya to protect vulnerable girls and young women, particularly those escaping female genital mutilation, forced child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence.

Based mainly in the Maasai region of Narok, the charity provides a place of safety for girls who have nowhere else to turn. Its work includes safe housing, education, vocational training, counselling and community support, helping girls rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

This charity is especially close to my heart because my daughter travelled to Kenya four times as a volunteer, helping to build the refuge for the girls. Through her visits, our family saw first-hand how practical help, prayer, generosity and compassion can make a life-changing difference.

Mission With A Vision does not simply offer temporary shelter. It gives girls the chance to continue their education, learn skills, grow in confidence and look towards a safer future. Many girls supported by the charity have gone on to become independent young women, breaking cycles of harm and helping to create change in their communities.

At its heart, this is a story of hope: hope for safety, hope for education, hope for healing and hope for a better future.

As a church community, we are invited to remember these girls, the staff, volunteers and all those supporting this important work in our prayers.
If you feel able to make a financial donation, Sarah Innes or Pamela Willis would be happy to receive it. Alternatively, you can donate directly to Mission With A Vision:

Account name: Mission With A Vision
Account number: 92091429
Sort code: 40 09 12

God bless you all

Marjorie Shaw

Why not make a swap this Fairtrade fortnight? Please consider popping one Fairtrade product in your trolley when you go shopping.

"With Fairtrade you have the power to change the world every day. With simple shopping choices you can help farmers get a better deal. And that means they can make their own decisions, control their futures and lead the dignified life everyone deserves.

Fairtrade is a simple way to make a difference to the lives of the people who grow the things we love. We do this by changing the way trade works through better prices, decent working conditions and a fair deal for farmers and workers in developing countries."

Fairtrade Foundation

STOP PRESS . . .
Felipe's Big Swim!

Felipe lands in France after an 11-hour solo swim across the English Channel

At the time of going to press, one of St Luke's young people, Felipe Irvine, at the age of 16, has just finished his solo English Channel swim from Dover to Calais.

After waiting patiently since Friday 4th September for the right conditions (calm seas), the swim started at 02:08 on Monday 14th September. Felipe was aiming to land in Cap Gris Nez but the wind and rough waves pushed him away so he ended up at Tardinghen, Calais. He swam 21.5 miles and it took him 11 hours, 20 minutes and 41 seconds (2 miles/hour approximately!).

With the support of Swim Herts Open Water, Felipe trained hard for this challenge since finishing his GCSEs in June, gradually building up distance and time spent swimming in open water, having ice baths and doing fast feed practice.

Felipe's Channel swim was in support of YoungMinds Trust because, he says, "Every young person deserves access to mental health support. The charity provides advice, resources, and essential services for young people, like myself and their families. Every donation helps ensure that no young person has to face their mental health challenges alone." The total on the JustGiving page keeps rising and currently stands at £5849. There is more information about YoungMinds Trust here: www.youngminds.org.uk

Felipe thanks everyone for their generosity which will change people's lives. If you would like to support Felipe's fundraising for YoungMinds, please visit his JustGiving page:

https://www.justgiving.com/page/felipe-irvine

Felipe you are AMAZING! Well done!

Yvonne Wilder

Felipe with his 'Solo' medal

Healing of the Family Tree Conference

Do you have sins or illnesses that have seemingly passed down the generations in your family? It may be a minor thing or something more major. We are very privileged to have a morning conference where we can understand more about what can pass down the generations. It will be run by the Revd Andrew Goodman (the Diocesan Healing and Deliverance Adviser) and will be held on Saturday 7th November at St Luke's. It starts at 10:00am and finishes at 1:00pm. There will be coffee from 9.30am. The session will consist of teaching, testimony, a Communion Service of Offering the Family to God and prayer ministry.

I believe this could be an important time of release and healing from generational problems for many people. Please put it in your diary and come if you can.

Revd Michael Norman
Vicar of St Luke's

SIM By Prayer
Ruth Guinness
Malawi
www.sim.org
+265 984 425 575

Dear friends,

Greetings from the warm heart of Africa! It hasn't been as hot here as in England but the weather is gradually getting warmer as we climb towards the hottest time of year in October and November.

In mid August I hosted our SIM Malawi prayer meeting in my house and gave thanks for 26 years since I arrived in Malawi with SIM, celebrating God's faithfulness! My neighbours, the Fazakerleys, have been here for just over 33 years but will be leaving at the end of October. We had a special time to say farewell to them during our Spiritual Life Conference (SLC) at the beginning of August.

SLC was just a few days after I arrived back in Malawi from my time in the UK. Those days were a bit of a whirlwind of unpacking, adjusting and preparing for SLC by baking lots of goodies to share. This I did with my friend and former neighbour, Andrea Richter! Andrea and Hans-Jörg visited us in July and August, which was a real encouragement to all the team. After SLC I had a long weekend with them in Zomba, just what I needed after the busyness of the previous weeks.

The theme of SLC was 'Flourishing in a new season'. We had an excellent speaker, Matt Jackson, a SIM chaplain. He talked of being connected with God and each other, and God used him to help to build connections among the team. Thank you for praying!

I was (and still am) a bit overwhelmed with all that I need to catch up on. There has been lots of administration in the past couple of weeks, such as writing reports, answering emails, and working on SIM Malawi's budget for the next financial year with our leadership team.

Thankfully, I've also had conversations with several people about opportunities – whether that is to encourage students and staff at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi, facilitate courses of *The Story of God and His World* or come alongside other facilitators. I've also been re-connecting with my Ministry Point Person team and group of coordinators.

I had a warm welcome back at church and have some preaching engagements.

Although I'm glad to be back in my own little house, the adjustment to living in Malawi has not always been easy. Power cuts have been frequent, though thankfully not usually longer than 2–3 hours. And my house has hardly had any mains water since I got back! The problem seems to be with the water meter which has been taken away to be mended. Its reinstallation keeps being delayed. Thankfully it is possible to tap into the Fazakerley's water supply, so I have not been stranded.

Whilst in the UK I developed a frozen shoulder. I am thankful that here it has been easy to book appointments with a good physio, who I am seeing regularly, and who has given me exercises to do. I am also thankful that Mum is doing very well and is no longer needing the help of the rehabilitation team who were helping her.

Prayer points

- Give thanks for a safe return to Malawi, coinciding with the Richters' visit
- Give thanks for connections being built between team members at the Spiritual Life Conference
- Pray for each member of the team to continue to work at connecting with others
- Pray for continued conversations to lead to ministry opportunities
- Pray that my frozen shoulder would respond to treatment/exercises
- Pray that I will be attentive to God, both as I prepare and then preach in the days ahead.

Thank you so much for your prayerful support.

With love in Christ,

Ruth Guinness
ruth.guinness@sim.org
Serving in Mission (SIM)
P.O. Box 136 Blantyre, Malawi

Dear friends

With joy, I am writing to you from my flat in Tamworth having finally moved! Now that I'm settling in, I thought it was a good time to sit down and write an update.

The last term and the start of the summer has been a strange mixture of waiting, as well as exciting opportunities to see what the ministry might start to look like once the move was all sorted out. The photos in this letter were taken from a walk with international students from many different Friends International Birmingham ministries coming together to take part. It was a great chance for me to meet both volunteers and students from across the different ministries, and I came away with the prayer that next year, I will be able to be there with some students from Aston University and Birmingham City University!

As the term went on, I was reading through the *Psalms* in my quiet times and I kept coming across the same phrase: 'wait for the Lord'. It was a great comfort to remember that God is the one in control and that everything happens according to His timing, not mine. It was also a great reminder to make the most of the time given in this waiting period, serving and continuing to trust the Lord.

> "We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.
> In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.
> May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you."
> *Psalm 33:20-22*

Now that I have moved and am settled in Tamworth, I'm looking ahead to the start of the new academic year and the opportunities that are to come in the next few months!

Ministry updates

The new term is fast approaching, with Welcome Weeks for both Aston University and Birmingham City University beginning on 14th September. I will be joining Aston University

Chaplaincy to help with some of their Welcome Week activities, such as their drop-in café, and throughout the term and getting to know the international students and supporting them pastorally.

Please do pray for a good onboarding process as I start partnering with the Aston University chaplaincy and pray for good connections with the students in these first weeks. Pray also for doors to open as we try to reach students from Birmingham City University. Please pray for a good relationship with the universities as a result and pray that I would care well for the international students I meet and that there might be some who are interested in finding out more about Jesus.

I will also be looking to continue conversations with local church and ministry leaders, aiming to begin a regular, weekly event for international students across the different city centre universities in January. Please pray for the right location to be found, and for wisdom to discern the right type of event for the students we will be trying to reach.

Summary of prayer points

- Please give thanks for being able to connect with the new Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF) staff workers in Birmingham and pray for the ongoing partnership with them in the city centre.
- Please pray for good relationships with the other chaplains following my onboarding/introductory meetings with the chaplaincy team at Aston University and that my role in the team would become clear.
- Please give thanks for the opportunity to partner with Aston University Chaplaincy during Welcome Week (14th September). Please pray that I would meet lots of new international students throughout the week!
- Please pray for the start of the drop-in café at Aston Chaplaincy on 23rd September, and for follow up with students met during Welcome Week.
- Please pray for opportunities to reach international students at Birmingham City University.

Partnership

I am so thankful for your partnership as I go into this new chapter of my life and ministry. I know that there were many people praying for my move and I appreciated all the prayer and support during this time!

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If you would like more regular prayer updates, please sign up for these using the link below (and if you signed up last time, there's no need to do so again as I have included you on the list already):
https://tinyurl.com/yn33v7mc

If you are interested in supporting me financially in this new ministry in Birmingham city centre, do get in touch; I would love to chat about what that would look like. Alternatively, you can find a link to donate online:
https://www.friendsinternational.uk/donate/

Thank you for your partnership and prayers.

Sally Miller
Friends International, Birmingham City Centre Branch

Update from the Gelsthorpe family on Home Assignment from northern Japan

"Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day."

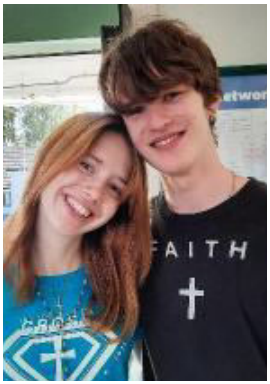
Psalm 96:2

Thank you so much for continuing to pray for our time visiting churches and supporters in the UK. We continue to be encouraged by the generous support of everyone.

Isaac, Sarah, Mark and Caleb at Cissbury Ring, West Sussex

Clearances for returning to Japan
We are currently waiting for a meeting with the OMF UK National Director to confirm whether we are able to return to Japan. **Please pray** that we will receive the clearances we need so that we can return to Japan at the end of September.

Student finance and India Visa
Thank you for praying for Caleb's visa which he needed to return to



Grace and Caleb spending time together over the summer

school in India. **Praise God** that it was granted with just over a week to spare. Caleb began his new term at Hebron School in August and is settling in well although it's not easy being away from home. **Please pray** for good friends and good concentration for him in this final year of GCSEs.

Praise God that Isaac was accepted onto his preferred course to study Engineering in Nottingham. We are still trying to provide the required evidence for him to be categorised as a home student so he can receive a student loan. **Please pray** that his application for a student loan will be approved quickly so that he can receive it before he starts his course. **Please pray** for good Christian friends for him and a good start to his course.

Thinking about church leadership

Praise God for the faithful service of our church Advisory Board in helping to run the church in Hanamaki while we are away. When we return to Hanamaki we want to think with the church and OMF about whether the church is ready for an eldership and what that might look like. **Please pray** for God's guidance for us in our planning and for good communication and discussion with church members and OMF. **Please pray** that we can honour those who have helped so much in our absence but not overburden them going forward.

Church and Home Group visits

Please pray for many people to be encouraged in their interest in supporting the work in Hanamaki following our visits at the end of August and early September: Emmanuel Church Canterbury, Rochester Baptist Church and Worthing.

Thank you so much for praying for us.

With love from

Mark, Sarah, Grace, Isaac and Caleb

Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) Japan

Watford Foodbank
Together with Trussell

Harvest Appeal from Watford Foodbank

After a record-breaking Summer, it's hard to believe that Autumn is here, which means that Harvest time is just around the corner too!

As we approach the colder months of the year, we find ourselves once again preparing to replenish our supplies of essential food and toiletries. Due to rising energy costs putting a squeeze on household budgets, we know the demand for our services will increase in the coming months.

Thank you in advance to those of you who will be organising special Harvest collections. Last year over 8,000 kg of food was donated by local schools, churches, businesses, community groups and individuals. It would be amazing if we could beat this amount this year! Please see our shopping list below.

Large community donations can be brought to us at Empire Centre during our opening hours (Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm) which is greatly appreciated as we are very busy during Harvest, but if that is difficult then please contact us and we will arrange a collection.

Remember, you can also donate food by arranging a supermarket shop order to be delivered directly to us or purchase an extra item or two whilst in the supermarket; we have donation points at Asda, Sainsburys (Dome & Watford) & Tesco Extra.

If you would prefer to make a monetary donation, you can do so with cash, bank transfer or through the QR code on this page.

Shopping list

Tinned Meat & Fish	Tinned Vegetables	Cooking Sauce
Long-Life Fruit Juice	Tea & Coffee	Tinned Soup
Tinned Potatoes	Jam/Honey/Spreads	Chopped Tomatoes
Biscuits	Instant Noodles	Rice Pudding/Custard
Deodorant	Shower Gel	Shampoo

Reminder - we don't need pasta, rice or baked beans

THANK YOU to everyone who supports us. Without the generosity of our community, we wouldn't be able to help those facing crisis and we really appreciate every single tin, packet and £ that is donated.

Watford Foodbank

Note: You can also contribute to the Watford Foodbank Harvest Appeal at St Luke's Harvest Service on 4th October. Watford Foodbank will collect the donations from St Luke's following Harvest services for local schools.

Devastating Floods in Nepal

On 26th August, a devastating flash flood in Nepal killed more than 1,300 people, and with at least 4,000 more missing the death toll was expected to rise further.

The districts of Rasuwa and Nuwakot, in the hills between Kathmandu and the Himalayan border with Tibet, were the hardest hit. The UN estimated that more than 84,000 people had been affected by the floods.

INF Nepal and their other partners responded and provided vital supplies to more than 3,500 people. Food, blankets, clothing and other essentials were distributed to families who had lost everything.

INF continue to support communities affected by the floods. If you would like to support the flood relief effort, financially, INF UK has set up an appeal to help provide essential supplies and support to families as they begin to recover and rebuild:

https://www.inf.org.uk/get-involved/donate-nepal-monsoon-appeal/

There is more information about INF's emergency relief work here: https://www.inf.org.uk/nepal-flood-update-2/

St Luke's 20th Anniversary Thanksgiving Appeal Update

The Anniversary Thanksgiving Appeal launched over the weekend of the 20th Anniversary in May achieved a fantastic total of £5733.

This sum will be divided 50/50 between our two nominated Partner charities:

- our local nominee—Rennie Grove Peace Hospice
- our international nominee—Nireekshana HIV/AIDS and Leprosy Clinic in Hyderabad, India.

Thanks to everyone who donated to the appeal.

If you missed the appeal first time round it is never too late to add to the total. Just make sure your donation is clearly marked 'Thanksgiving Appeal' and please Gift Aid it if you can. All donations will be divided between the two causes.

Bill Miller, Chair of Partners in Mission (PIM)

Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care

Nireekshana ACET

Thinking of joining a choir? CanCC invite you to a taster session on Wednesday 23rd September at 7:30pm, St Luke's Church

Sunday Afternoon Recitals at St Luke's

3:00pm

11th October
Winnie Wu, Piano
To include works by Liszt, Ravel and transcriptions by Rachmaninov

24th January 2027
Jachana Piano Trio
Charis Sykesud, Violin, Anna Galloway, Cello, Jack Redman, Piano
To include works by Amy Beach and Bedřich Smetana

Recitals are about 40 minutes. Free entry, donations welcome.
Tea & coffee afterwards

Badminton and Table Tennis Club

Come and join us at St Luke's Church Hall on Friday evenings, 7:30-10:30pm, for badminton and table tennis

It's for singles, couples, young people and families (children under 11 yrs old must be accompanied by an adult)

We welcome all standards

For more information, please contact:
Fiona Craigie: Tel 07759 024409 (Sept–April) and
Vicky Harman: Tel 07747 429618 (May–Sept)

Summer Camps and Events Highlights and Reflections

Thank you to all who sent **postcards** from their holidays. The postcards gave a flavour of some of the fantastic things God has done over the summer.

New Wine, Bath & West Showground, Somerset, 28 July-2 August. The St Luke's group welcomed three newcomers who loved the New Wine experience so much they've signed up for next year!

Wildfires festival, Wiston Estate, Steyning, West Sussex, 29 July-1 August. Belle Fleming worked on the Night Staff Support Team directing people to the pastoral, safeguarding and chaplaincy teams. Belle said it was a joy to meet, chat and pray with so many people and she found out what it was like to go without sleep for 3 days and nights.

Greenbelt, Boughton House, near Kettering, Northamptonshire, over the August Bank Holiday weekend. The highlight for Derek Hill and others from St Luke's was that every year on the Sunday morning of the festival everything stops and 10,000 people celebrate Holy Communion together.

Bekki Hadley enjoyed a **Spring Harvest Holiday** at Le Pas Opton, a 4* holiday park on the French Vendée coast. The highlights were lots of swimming in the lovely warm outdoor pool, fun evening activities and great Bible teaching.

Keswick Convention 2026
All One in Jesus Christ

View from our campsite over Derwent Water to Cat Bells and beyond

It was great to be at Keswick again this year after our plans to attend the 150th Anniversary Convention in 2025 were washed out by car problems. The Lake District location is stunning and the weather this year was brilliant for the first few days—a cooler version of the heatwave in the South.

Keshy and I use a campsite up-the-hill-behind-the-town-off-the-Ambleside-road where the views across Derwent Water to Cat Bells are fabulous. So combining tours of the Whinlatter and Honister Passes, Buttermere, walks and the bus to Grasmere with the Convention's great Bible teaching, made for a fairly relaxed but refreshingly spiritual break.

All the morning Bible Readings, the evening celebrations and some of the seminars are freely available through the Keswick Convention website and YouTube channel so you can look them up.

The Convention runs for 3 weeks and we straddled Weeks 1 and 2 so missed some sessions but it was straightforward catching up online. Andy Robinson spoke on *Matthew, chapters 8-12* in the first week, summarised as 'The person, power, and mission of Jesus as the true King'. Christopher Ash spoke on a selection of *Genesis* passages in the second week: 'How God brings victory, hope, and perseverance'. As ever, we were challenged to deepen our relationship with Jesus, to know Him better and to build resilience in Him for difficult times.

There was a fantastic talk in Week 1 by Andrew Fellows on 'Inside Temptation with The Screwtape Letters' (The Keswick Lecture—well worth looking up).

The Convention's overall theme was a surprising extension of our studies in *Ephesians, chapter 6* at St Luke's earlier this year: 'Strong in His Strength'. It's worth listening even harder when something is repeated —God is speaking to us!

Gathering for the morning Bible Reading

And because the Convention has deep roots in challenging Christians in mission, it was not surprising that we bumped into friends from the mission community. This year they were from Serving in Mission (SIM) and Africa Inland Mission (AIM). Of course, it was also good to meet up with folk we see at St Luke's as well!

Next year in Keswick, the Convention theme is 'Rend the Heavens' *(Isaiah 64:1*-2). Weeks 1–3 take place between 17th July and 6th August. We heartily recommend it and hope to see you there…. (Book your accommodation now if you want to go next year!). There's more information here:

https://www.keswickministries.org/convention

Simon Trundle

CREATIVE SPACE
FOR
HARD-WORKING WOMEN

COME JOIN THE FUN!

Saturday 19th September, 9:30am-12 noon
Embroidery
£8 + donation for breakfast

Saturday 17th October, 10:00-11:30am
Informal Bring & Share Craft with crochet lesson (Free)

Saturday 21st November, 9:30am-12 noon
Christmas sweet making
£8 + donation for breakfast

Payment is by cash only on the day
Contact Pam to *book your place*:
whatsapp 07975 748243 or email pam.stlukes@gmail.com

Bethany Houseparty

Some of the St Luke's group at Bethany Houseparty

This summer Mimi, Jake, Orla, Fletcher, Archer, Annabella and I went to Bethany Houseparty, an 8-day Christian houseparty for youth held at a boarding school in Kent.

The camp is a fun and welcoming place for young people to learn more about God, make many friends and get to be part of a community with the same faith. We do lots of sport, craft and sociable activities as well as having time to relax and chill. There is a service every evening taken by a leader and the theme this year was mountains and valleys.

On some of the days we had a large activity involving everyone, including a wide game, the night walk and my favourite, the barn dance!

The food was delicious. Every day we had a full English breakfast, main meals for lunch and dinner and hot chocolate and sandwiches before bedtime.

It was a wonderful week of friendship, fun and faith, and we were thankful to God for all the leaders who gave up their week to run the camp and for the opportunity to spend time together as a christian community.

I can't wait to go again next year! If you're aged 11–16 years you can come too but you need to book early as it fills up fast. If you're interested you can speak to Neil Brookes for more information.

India

Children and Youth Camp in Hungary

View of Budapest and the Danube

This summer has been pretty packed with volunteering (mainly on kids' teams) but I wanted, specifically, to share my experience of volunteering on a children and youth camp (ages 10-18 years) in Hungary, organised by The Oakes Christian activity centre in Sheffield and Tahi Baptist Church in Hungary. Many of you were so gracious with your giving and helped make Hungary possible! I am eternally grateful.

It was a week of chaotic and very watery fun (I was drenched multiple times in games!). The focus was on encouraging the kids' English language skills and guiding them through *Acts*, chapters 16, 17 and 18.

I learnt a lot about stepping outside my comfort zone and serving in whatever way was needed, regardless of my experience in that area - and I really enjoyed it, being pushed to try new things, such as leading worship and creating actions for the songs and helping out with sports (definitely out of my comfort zone!). I learnt to be spontaneous and improvise and it's been so helpful with building my confidence in trying new things!

It was wonderful building cross-cultural connections with both the Hungarian children and their leaders. The children and youth were so much fun to get to know, witty and joyful as they were! The genuine hospitality we experienced from both groups was incredible, and we really felt God's love through them.

Some of the children already followed Jesus, while some gave their lives to Him that week. We pray continuously for them, that they may grow deeper in their love for Christ, and that those who do not yet know Him were encouraged by this camp to find out more!

It was an incredible week and I can't wait to return next year, God willing!

Emily Waddington

Kingdom Builders Holiday Club

From 4th August to 7th August, we ran our holiday club again. During the week, we had between 69 and 76 children joining us each day.

The theme this year was *Kingdom Builders* based on material from Scripture Union. It focused on the kingdom of heaven, as described by Jesus in Matthew's Gospel.

We explored lots of different Bible stories in a fun and engaging way, including a video and interactive talks. The Bible teaching included:

- how the kingdom of heaven is like treasure
- who the King of the kingdom is
- why children are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven
- why it is wise to build your house on Jesus' words.

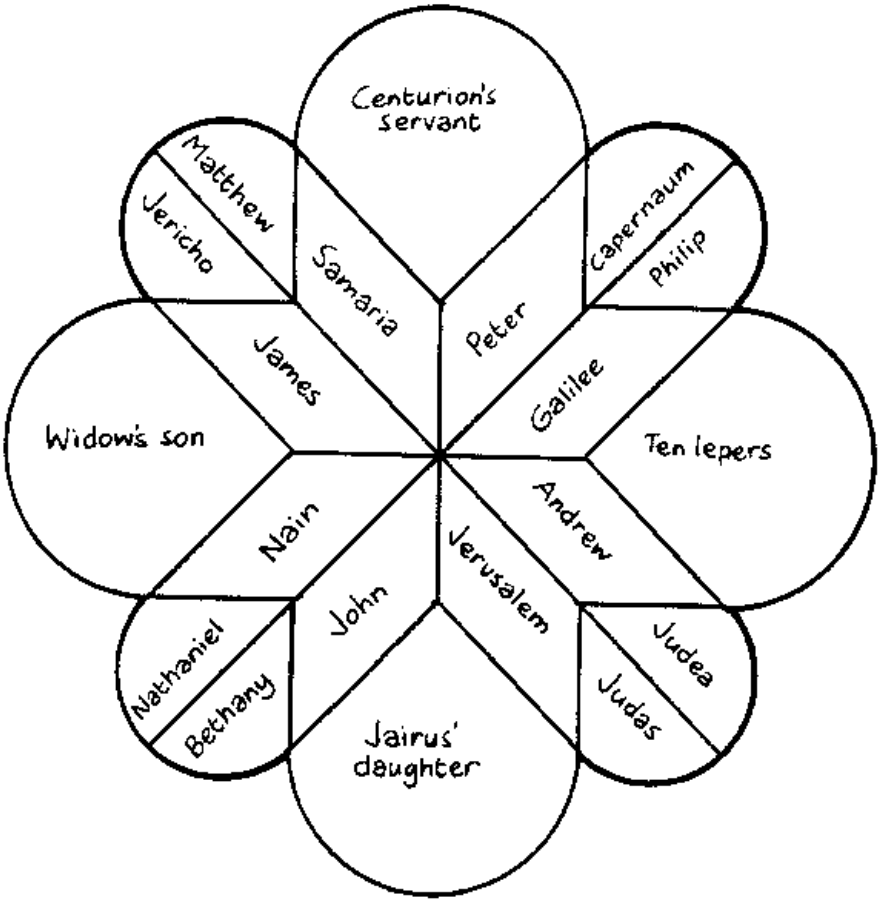
Each day the children enjoyed engaging in the teaching, singing worship songs with actions, learning a memory verse, having a snack and dividing into smaller groups for games, craft and question time where they explored the teaching theme in more depth. Then there was a short time to chill, make bracelets or play board games. After enjoying a good lunch together, they finished with a short time of worship before going home.

Huge thanks to all the volunteers who helped during the week.

Our next holiday club event will be the *Holiday Club 'Short' Light Party* on Friday 30th October, 5–7 pm. Please book your place using the QR code on page 35 or contact the church office.

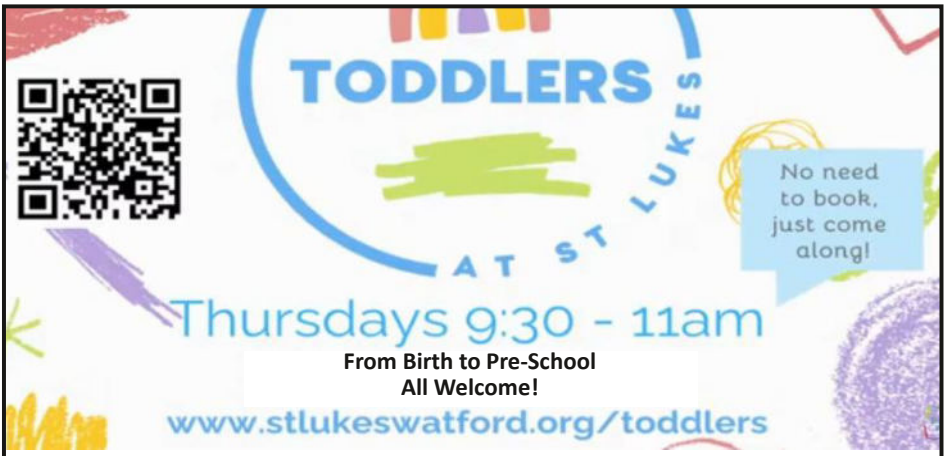
Bekki Hadley
Children and Families Team Leader

Children's Page



COLOUR:

RED	all the friends of Jesus
ORANGE	all the people Jesus healed
YELLOW	all the places Jesus worked



For more information, scan the QR code above
or contact the church office
(email office@stlukeswatford.org or phone 01923 246161)

You are welcome to submit an article for the next edition of *St Luke's News* which should be no more than 450 words. We may edit articles for clarity. The delivery date for contributions to the next issue is Monday 16th November.

Please email articles to the Church Office: office@stlukeswatford.org

If you wish to receive *St Luke's News* regularly, either delivered to your door or emailed, please contact the Church Office (01923 246161). Large print is also available. Alternatively, please let us know if you no longer wish to receive it.

The magazine appears on our website, www.stlukeswatford.org

Vicar	Michael Norman
Readers	Dave Clarke
	Pam Norman
	Simon Trundle
Ordinand and Youth Director	Neil Brookes
Music Director	Jeremy Cooke
Children & Families Team Leader	Bekki Hadley
Assistant Youth Director	Belle Fleming
Administrator	Sally Wood
Publicity Officer	John Williamson
Churchwardens	Terry Sullivan
	Debi King
PCC Lay Chair	Melanie Sills
PCC Treasurer	Vacancy
PCC Secretary	Pam Norman
Safeguarding Officer	Mary Bowen

Please leave a message for any of the above on the Church Office answerphone – 01923 246161

Website www.stlukeswatford.org

Email office@stlukeswatford.org