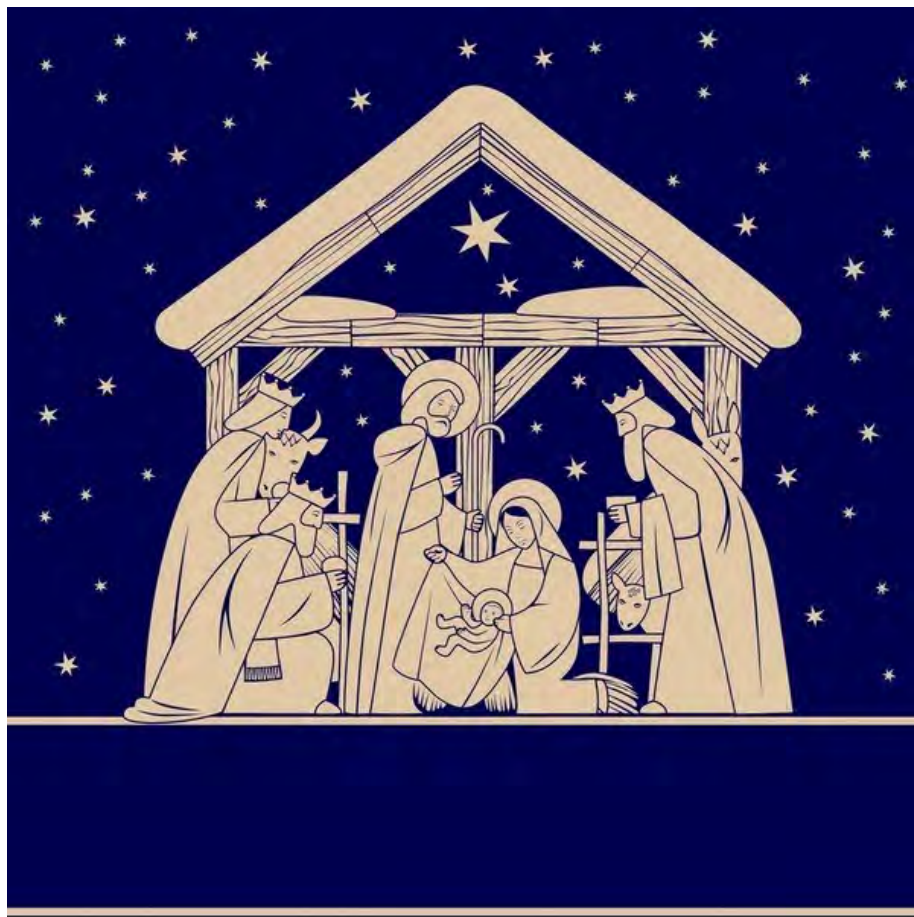


THE OPEN DOOR

The Magazine of the Lymington United Reformed Church



**DECEMBER/
JANUARY 2026**

Our Open Door Vision Statement.....

"Our vision is to be a church with an Open Door for all people to come in and for us to reach out, responding to the needs of the community and spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ."

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

It's that time of year where we start to think about unexpected visitors arriving. Of course, the most obvious is Santa Claus on Christmas Eve, but for some there might also be those friends and family who just drop in unexpectedly. For both we make preparations, ensuring that everything is ready for their arrival, whether or not it is expected, or "just in case"!

We once had an unexpected visitor to the manse garden, where we had no time to prepare. A small hedgehog was out, during the day, and exploring our garden. We know that there is nowhere for hedgehogs to nest, so he must have come in under the gate – really searching for something. Advice online suggested that if he was small, he should probably be asleep somewhere, and to get him in the warm. We did and hastily made holes in a shoebox with an old towel in it. Using gloves, I picked him up and he curled up into the box.

Our visitor was now our guest, and we explored what to do next, contacting a couple of hedgehog sanctuaries. One was full (something I questioned as to whether there was a reason so many hedgehogs seemed to be leaving the safety of nests) but another was happy to take him in. We were told to transfer him to a big box or cat basket as shoe boxes were too small and bring him over when we could. When we arrived, the sanctuary immediately took care of him, identifying that he was under weight and probably had a parasite. They promised we could text in a few days and check how he is doing!

In the nativity story we hear of visitors arriving throughout it, Angels arriving unexpectedly, Mary travelling to visit Elizabeth with news of her own, and of course the shepherds and the wise men arriving to visit Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. In these cases, the visitors are made to feel welcome, even if they are all unexpected.

After all of these events we also hear how the family left Judah in a hurry, fleeing to Egypt as refugees from Herod. They went from hosts to visitors, in a strange land, asking for help and support, how long they lived in exile we do not know for sure.

What brings all this together is that when we spotted that hedgehog, we stopped everything to help him. He was unwell, he had fleas, and I was at risk in picking him up. The time spent looking after him and keeping him warm overtook our normal routine and delivering him to the sanctuary meant Flora missed seeing some friends, which she enjoys very much, but was prepared to sacrifice so we could help the refugee in our garden.

So, as we approach this time of year, let's reflect on our church's visitors, those that might need our help and ensure that we do all we can to support them – whoever they are. But also, let's reflect where we might become the visitors ourselves, what hospitality or support might we expect, even if we are entering somewhere new, unusual, and not our home.

Blessings,

Paul

SECRETARY'S BITS AND PIECES FOR DECEMBER/ JANUARY 2026.

Well, it hardly seems five minutes ago we were basking in the hot sunshine in our lovely Garden Café and here we are at the end of another year, winter almost upon us and planning for Christmas once again. By the time you read this, the Christmas tree that the Rotary Club kindly provides us with each year, should have been erected, the Nativity scene in place in the Church foyer and the Christmas tree that stands on the dais will have been decorated.

A lot has happened at Church since the last edition of the 'Open Door Magazine'. We were once again entertained by our very own United Warblers. An enjoyable afternoon was had by all, helped by the cream tea! Chris Brown and I attended Synod on 11th October – there are a lot of changes afoot in the structure of Synod, but more about that another time. At our October communion service, we welcomed one new member to our Church family – Trisha Hopkins. We hope she will be very happy worshipping with us. Paul has continued leading his bible studies on certain Tuesdays and those who have attended have found them both informative and enjoyable. On November 2nd approximately forty of us sat down to a lovely roast dinner, prepared, cooked and served by Leanne and Les (Saunders), with members of the F & F group waiting at table.

Friday 28th November sees the 'Christmas in Lymington' event. There will be the usual stalls and attractions in the High Street with the crib blessing at St Thomas' Church at 6.00 pm.

Amongst this, the Town Band will be playing on our forecourt. Don't forget the High Street will be closed from 12 midday to 9.30pm.

Our 'Carols by Candlelight' service is in Church on Sunday 21st December. The carol service, led by the Worship Group, starts at 4.00 pm but coffee/tea and mince pies will be served in the hall from 3.00, prior to the service. There will be a retiring collection at this service, all donations will be sent to HOPE New Forest, a charity dedicated to improving the well-being of older people.

The Christmas morning service will be at 10.00 am and will be led by Mrs Chris Brown.. We are very grateful to her, once again, for giving up part of her Christmas celebrations to lead us in worship on this very important day.

On Sunday, January 4th, after morning service, we will once again be having our celebratory New Year's lunch – more details about this event later. Put the date in your diaries - you won't want to miss it!

Our next Church meeting is on Sunday, 11th January, following the morning service. These meetings are an important part of Church life, when it's your opportunity to have your say. Do please try to come along.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who can't believe that we are at the end of another year. Thank you for all you do to keep our Church the warm & welcoming place it is and for all your

support during 2025. A very happy and blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you all.

Many thanks.

Margaret

“OUR STORY” WITH DAVID ATTENBOROUGH AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, LONDON

During our recent visit to London we attended David Attenborough’s immersive experience at the Natural History Museum. I went in expecting a “rap on the knuckles” from this amazingly insightful and intelligent man but came out feeling very optimistic about the future of our planet.

Whilst he is openly Agnostic, I felt that David’s 50 minute “journey” through the evolution of our world could have been produced by a man of faith. He concluded the journey by saying how we had already started to turn our planet’s deterioration around, citing the return of the whale population through scientific knowledge, amongst other positive changes, utilising the given intelligence and motivation of the amazing species, the Human Being.

I hope every influencing person in every country gets to see this immersive presentation – and as many of us mere mortals who can also play our part.

Gill

LYMINGTON URC DIARY

Free Wi Fi connection to the internet available in the Open Door Café, balcony, main hall and cottage meeting room areas. Just ask for the required passwords!

**CLOSING DATE FOR FEBRUARY/MARCH 'OPEN DOOR':
19th JAN 2026**

COFFEE MORNINGS:

The Open Door Café, hopefully every morning except Thursday, from 10 a.m. (See poster below)

WORSHIP:

Note: The Prayer Group meets on Wednesday at 9.15 a.m. at Church.

DECEMBER

7th: 10.30 a.m. Worship including communion
led by Christine Brown

14th: 10.30 a.m. Worship led by Rev'd Paul O'Connor

21st: 10.30 a.m. Worship by Mary Ann Jardine
4.00 p.m. Candlelit Carol Service

25th: 10.00 a.m. Christmas Day Service
led by Mrs Christine Brown

28th: 10.30 a.m. Worship led by Mrs Linda Lee

JANUARY 2026

- 4th: 10.30 a.m. Worship led by the Worship Group
- 11th: 10.30 a.m. Worship including communion
led by Rev'd Paul O'Connor
- 18th: 10.30 a.m. Worship led by Rev'd Mary Thomas
- 25th: 10.30 a.m. Worship led by Mrs Christine Brown

CHANGES TO SYNOD STRUCTURE

As reported at our recent Church, there are major changes in hand to the structure of Synod. Putting it simply, it is down sizing as there are no longer enough people able and willing to serve the Synod in its current configuration. This is mostly down to the fact that churches are closing and therefore fewer members. And the average age of members is getting higher.

It has been agreed there will be fewer committees, fewer meetings and more direct connections with local churches.

Below is a portion of a letter received from our Moderator, Rev Dr Michael Hopkins:

..we made major changes to how we structure our work as a Synod, with the aim of being a much smaller structure, requiring fewer volunteers, and more agile and better able to support local churches more. As a part of this, we adopted this

statement of what the Synod is for:

Wessex Synod exists to support, equip, resource, and challenge local churches in a living faith, and to encourage the growth of new Christian communities.

Within the new Structure we have a number of roles that need volunteers to support these areas of work.

Please don't hold back in sharing the call for help as widely as you can, or in exploring it further if you are at all interested in more information about what might be involved. All roles are open to ministers and lay people, and there are no age or other restrictions (apart from the legal restrictions on who can be a trustee of the Wessex Trust).

Any member of any LEP is welcome to apply, you do not have to have a URC background. Please give us your support in bringing this new structure into fruition'.

Obviously, this is only the briefest of explanations – if you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me. If I can't help, I'm sure I can find somebody who can!

Margaret



Volunteers Needed

A transcript of the Synod advert:

Net Zero Lead: champion the Synod's response to the climate crisis, guiding our journey towards Net Zero and helping churches are for God's creation through practical action and shared inspiration.

Mission Lead: inspire and resource mission and evangelism across the Synod, supporting churches as they reach out to their communities and discover fresh ways of sharing God's love.

New Christian Communities Lead: encourage and support the creation of new Christian communities and fresh expressions of church, helping to identify and nurture pioneering mission across the Synod.

Racial Justice Advocate: promote racial justice and inclusion throughout the Synod, raising awareness, supporting local churches in good practice, and keeping equality central to our shared life.

Rural Advocate: champion and support the life of rural churches, ensuring their voices are heard, their needs understood, and their ministry celebrated and strengthened.

Trustees: serve as a trustee to help oversee Synod resources and property in line with charity and company law: we seek people who understand local church situations and needs, and care about the URC's mission in Wessex.

Convener of Synod Executive: chair meetings and guide the work of the Synod Executive, ensuring good communication, clear follow-through on decisions, and a spirit of collaboration and encouragement in Synod leadership.

Local church file sorting: we have a number of local church files inherited from District Councils which now need to be weeded and sorted before they are scanned and digitized. This can be done from home or from the Synod Office. This needs to be a URC member with enough awareness to know what to keep and what can be destroyed.

All volunteers work within the context of a supportive staff team, a collaborative team on the Synod Executive, and full expenses reimbursed. All roles are open to ministers and lay people, and there are no age restrictions (except legal requirements for the Trust). Volunteer roles are normally for a maximum term of four years, which can be renewed if all parties wish. The Synod follows a Safer Recruitment process for everyone wishing to serve, and the Synod reserves the right not to appoint every applicant.

To express interest email Deborah Walker on office@urcwessex.org.uk

To ask for more information, or to suggest possible candidates, please email Michael Hopkins on moderator@urcwessex.org.uk

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE – we are hoping to have a team in place by 1 January 2026.



What's been happening?



Festive Cardmaking workshop

Chris Brown led a group of in cardmaking one afternoon. Here are some of us hard at work! Sewing Christmas cards proved very enjoyable and, with a little guidance from Chris, not too tricky!

Look at some of the beautiful examples she had made to inspire us. Thank you, Chris.



Open Door Cafe

We have continued to open our Cafe to the community of Lymington four mornings a week thank to our dedicated band of volunteers and cake makers.

Why not bring a friend for a cuppa and a piece of our delicious homemade cake?

We'd love to see you.

Open Mon-Wed & Fri 10-12pm



What's been happening?



Here we are, on Sunday 2nd November, enjoying a fabulous 2 course lunch after the morning service. Many of us enjoyed delicious roast chicken with all the trimmings followed by a choice of dessert.



Many thanks to the Fundraising & Fellowship team who helped prepare and serve the meal and a special thanks to Leanne and Les for working so hard being our amazing chefs behind the scenes.

Not only was it a great opportunity to socialise with others and enjoy each other's company, but we also raised over £440 for church funds. We hope we will have more lunches like this in the future!



Fancy a cuppa and a chat?



Lymington United Reformed Church
"God's Open Door at the Centre of the Community"

Our Open Door Café is open
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Fridays
(Closed Thursday)
10am to 12noon



Lymington United Reformed Church,
High Street, Lymington, SO41 9AG.
01590 676306 or www.lymurc.org.uk

Carols by Candlelight

Sunday 21st
December

Mince pies 3pm
Carols at 4pm

Lymington United Reformed Church



Merry Christmas!
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR

Celebrate 2026 with us!

Join us for lunch on
Sunday 4th January
after the morning service

Further details will be announced in December
See poster in the hall for details and let us know
you're coming!



ROTAS FOR DECEMBER

COMMUNION SUNDAY: 7th

COMMUNION ELDERS: Margaret and John

DUTY ELDER

7th David Bywater
14th Chris Brown
21st John Wiseman
28th Dave Best

READING IN CHURCH

Ken Evans
Andrea Best
Margaret Clark
Pat Weaver

STEWARDS

7th Judith Baker
14th Lizbeth Eason and Janice Sellars
21st Janice Perkins
28th Kate Noon

SOUND SYSTEM

DB/GC
WD/MC
DW/MC
DB/GC

ROTAS FOR JANUARY

COMMUNION SUNDAY: 11th

COMMUNION ELDERS: David and Dave

DUTY ELDER

4th Margaret Clark
11th David Bywater
18th Chris Brown
25th John Wiseman

READING IN CHURCH

Dave Best
Judith Baker
Richard Mallory
Wyn Davies

STEWARDS

4th Liz Griffiths
11th Andrea Best
18th Brenda Nevard
25th Pat Weaver

SOUND SYSTEM

WD/MC
DW/MC
DB/GC
WD/MC

Whilst every care is taken to ensure information within the advertisements and posters on display in the magazine is accurate, Lymington URC does not accept any liability to any party for any errors or omissions. Lymington URC does not officially endorse the advertising material included on any external organisations' adverts/posters.

If you wish to advertise in The Open Door magazine (6 issues per year), please contact the Lymington URC for more details. Competitive rates, both mono and colour adverts accommodated in quarter, half and full page sizes!"



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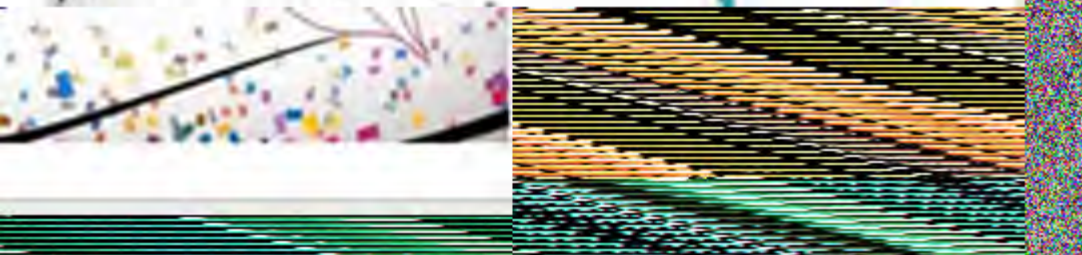
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 Free portrait, Engagement, Baby and product photo shoots.
 Bespoke web sites, business cards, invitations, brochures...

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*Further details will be announced in December
 See poster in the hall for details and let us know
 you're coming!*





Please order online using the URC Bookshop's new easy-to-use website www.urcshop.co.uk or by calling 020 7916 8629.



Jubilee Scarf - By popular demand from scarf wearers and those wanting fabric for other purposes, a lightweight polyester scarf measuring 2m x 80cm in the new anniversary blue and multi-coloured fish design. £7.99 +p&p.

A pair of jubilee socks, designed by Holy Socks. Each pair comes with details about the URC and a reflection on Faith, Hope and Love by Holy Socks founder Margaret Wyllie. Available in two sizes, 4-7 and 6-11. £5.95 +p&p.

(Other 'Jubilee' items available)





TRAIDCRAFT
Fighting poverty through trade

PLEASE NOTE: This magazine is printed on paper from renewable sources out of our concern for the environment.

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