



Castle Hill
CHURCH

DRYDEN ROAD, IPSWICH, IP1 6QF



NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026

Church Web Site: www.castlehillurc.org.uk

Ministers:

Revd. Adam Earle

E-mail: revaje@outlook.com Tel: 01473 411316

Revd. David Rees

E-mail: revdrees@gmail.com Tel: 01473 402721

SERVICES DURING FEBRUARY 2026

All Sunday Morning Services
will be live-streamed.

Access is via the Church website [www.castlehillurc.org.uk]

SUNDAY 1st
10.30am. Morning Worship
with Communion
Revd. Jenifer Haggard

SUNDAY 8th
10.30am. Morning Worship
Peter Dawson

4.00pm Afternoon Worship
Revd. Adam Earle

SUNDAY 15th
10.30am Café Style Morning Worship
Revd. Adam Earle

SUNDAY 22nd — LENT1
10.05am. Pause for Prayer
An informal short time of prayer, before commencing Worship
10.30am. Morning Worship
Revd. Adam Earle

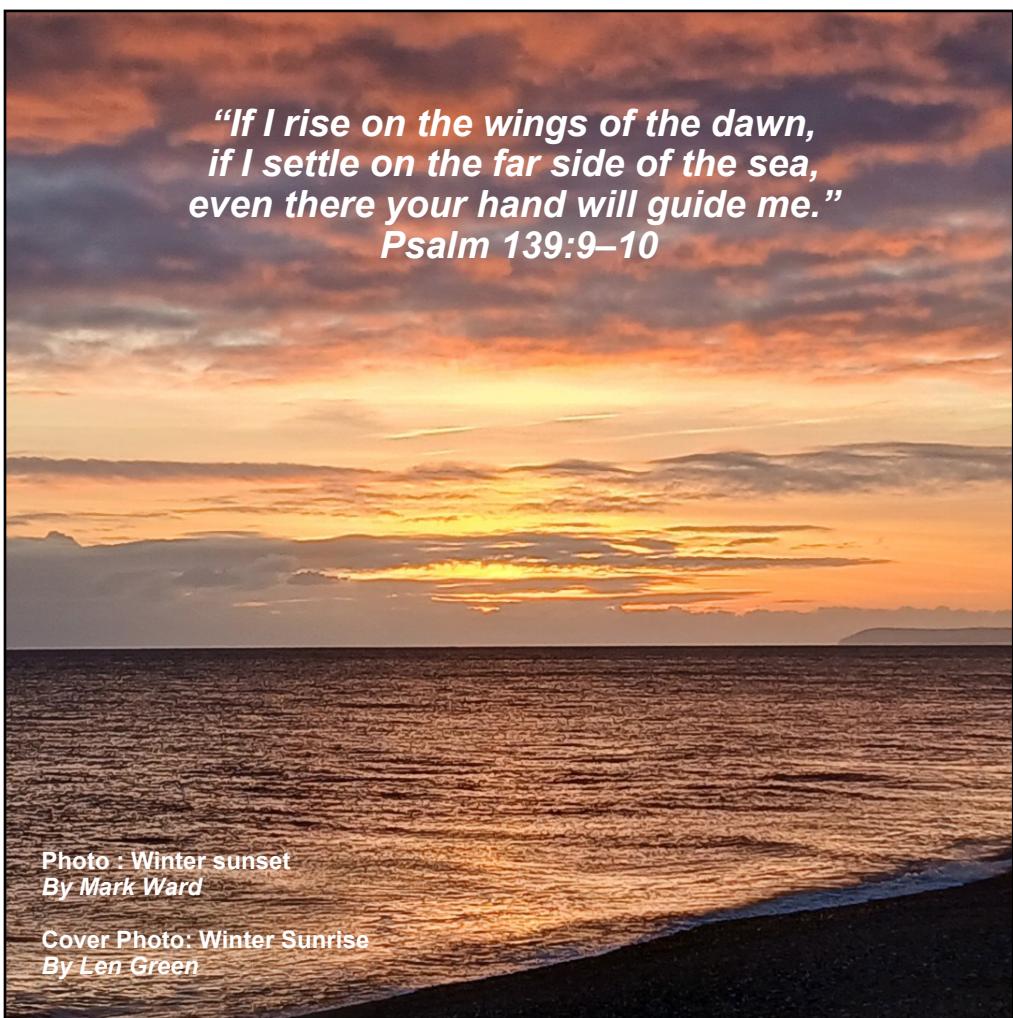
PASTORATE LENT SERVICES

Each church within the Pastorate will be hosting a Lent Service, to which you are welcome to attend. All commencing at 3.00pm on the following dates:

22nd February @ LSUC Leiston ;1st March @ St Johns;

8th March Castle Hill;15th March @ Hadleigh; 22nd March @ Felixstowe

***“If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me.”
Psalm 139:9–10***



**Photo : Winter sunset
By Mark Ward**

**Cover Photo: Winter Sunrise
By Len Green**

**OUR STREET PRAYER FOCUS FOR
FEBRUARY IS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF
WILLOWCROFT ROAD**



A PLACE TO REST YOUR READ

**“But he was in the stern,
asleep on the cushion...”**
Mark 4:38



Mark’s Gospel is the shortest, just sixteen chapters. The writer is not given to superfluous details. He covers the entirety of the Baptism of Jesus, the Temptation in the Wilderness and the beginning of his ministry in just 6 verses comprised of 138 words.

It is interesting then that Mark, and none of the other Gospel writers includes a tiny detail in his account of the “Calming of the Storm” – whilst the storm raged around them and the fishermen disciples feared for their lives, Jesus was asleep and, specifically, on a cushion – his head was resting on a pillow.

Mark usually only includes such detail if there is some theological significance and this example is no exception. There is only one mention of a cushion or pillow in the New Testament. And the specific Greek word that Mark chose, over a number of other options, “proskephalaion” which literally means “Head support thing.”

The meaning is more wonderful in the context, that Jesus was at peace in the heart of the storm, with his head resting on the “head support thing” literally and spiritually. The meaning is revealed in his response to the disciples when they awaken him, he calms the storm and then with their mouths open in awe, ‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’

Jesus was calm because his head rested on the truth of God, he knew that there was nothing to fear, he knew that despite the storm there was no risk of perishing. Jesus knew God, was God and had full faith in his saving grace and power.

The great Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, said this “The sovereignty of God is the pillow on which the Christian rests their head.” The fact that God is God and that he loves us is the truth and assurance we have to rest upon. Even when the storms of life rage around us, we have God and can rest on God, our heads guarded by God’s reality.

A good old Sunday School song reminds us, “With Jesus in the boat you can smile at the storm...” which may be a little optimistic. Storms may fill us with fear and challenge us. Another phrase which might be more helpful and honest is this: “Having Jesus in your boat doesn’t mean you’ll never go through storms, but it does mean your boat will never sink.”

As we face the storms let us rest our heads in the faith in God’s sovereignty and remember that he will not let us down. He will bring us safe to shore.

Revd. Adam Earle



SHARING THE LIGHT

A joint Service to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was held on January 18th between Castle Hill URC and Whitton Parish Church.

*Photo:
Revd. Adam Earle and .
Revd. Mary Socanovic
light Prayer Candles the
light of which is shared
to candles held by each
member of the
congregation.*

DWELLING IN THE PSALMS



LENT STUDY COURSE 2026

The Psalms are a powerful collection of songs, poems, and prayers. They were written by different people over many centuries. The Psalms were and continue to be used in collective worship, and private devotions, giving voice to real human experience and emotions.

Our Lent study this year is an invitation to engage with selected psalms, some familiar and some less so. Each session will explore a different psalm with the aid of music, images and opportunities to reflect and discuss.

The foci and themes for the five sessions will be:

Wednesday 25th February

Introduction to the Psalms &
Psalm 139: The LORD is Always Near

Wednesday 4th March

Psalm 23: The Good Shepherd

Wednesday 11th March

Psalm 91: The LORD is My Fortress

Wednesday 18th March

Psalm 103: The LORD's Love

Wednesday 25th March

Psalm 121: The LORD's Protection & Help

There will be two in-person sessions held on each of these dates. Afternoon sessions, at 2:00pm, will be held at St John's URC (Cowper Street) and evening sessions, at 7:00pm, will be held at Castle Hill URC (Dryden Road).

If you would like to participate, please sign up using the sheets provided at the back of the church. All materials will be provided although you may wish to bring your own Bible. You are welcome to join in some of the sessions even if you are not able to join them all.



MONTHLY ONLINE GATHERING TO EXPLORE THE BIBLE ON 1ST THURSDAY @ 10:00AM

Sessions will begin at 10:00am and will last for about 40 minutes. As well as joining on Zoom via computer or smart phone it is also possible to join using a standard landline telephone. We use the Castle Hill Zoom Account. The host will enable you to join the meeting once you're logged in.

5th February - Justice

1 Kings 3:7-13, Amos 5:23-24
Hebrews 1:8-9, 1 Peter 2:21-23

5th March – Mercy

Matthew 5:7, Matthew 9:13
Luke 6:36-38, Luke 10:36-38

2nd April – Humility

Matthew 11:29, Romans 12:3
Ephesians 4:2, Philippians 2:1-4
Colossians 3:12, James 3:12-13

7th May – Kindness

1 Corinthians 4:12-13, 1 Corinthians 13:14
2 Corinthians 6:4,6, Galatians 5:22-23
Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:12-17
2 Timothy 2:24

4th June – Compassion

Isaiah 49:15, Mark 6:34
2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Galatians 6:1-2
Luke 10:30-37

CARING FOR CREATION WINTER

As the photographs on the cover and page 3 show, there is still beauty to be found in God's creation during the winter months.

At church, we have provided a cosy, straw-filled shelter for hedgehogs, along with homes for a variety of minibeasts, set up a log pile and located a bug hotel in a sheltered spot.

Our wildflower patch is currently resting, but we look forward to seeing the plants burst into life as spring approaches. We have registered with **INaturalist** which is a social network to share nature observations. Our project will be to monitor progress on our wildflower patch and the creatures such as types of bees and butterflies that visit it.

We are also planting a Memorial Tree in memory of our friends and loved ones who have passed away. As the young tree grows and develops, it will attract birds and other wildlife and, in time, provide a shady place of quiet reflection during the summer months.

HOW TO HELP HIBERNATING ANIMALS

Hibernation is one of nature's clever ways to keep animals going through the cold winter months and allows them to reduce their energy use whilst food is scarce and temperatures are low.

Hibernating Hedgehog



You can help hibernating animals by leaving garden leaf and log piles undisturbed, planting native, nectar-rich flowers for autumn, sweeping snow from frozen ponds, and melting a hole into the frozen surface with warm water daily to increase oxygen levels in the water. You can also set up hedgehog houses, bat boxes, and bug hotels to create ideal shelters for a safe hibernation.

Source; RSPB

CASTLE HILL JOINS THE BIG GARDEN BIRD WATCH



The Big Garden Birdwatch is the UK's largest annual garden-wildlife survey, where people spend one hour counting the birds they see and submit their results to the RSPB.

It runs each year in late January and helps track how garden bird populations are changing across the country.

As part of our commitment to care for God's creation Elaine and Arthur Thomas, acting on our behalf spent an hour on January 23rd counting all the birds visiting our Church grounds,

CHURCH LITTER PICK SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7th at 10.30am

As part of our service to the community and our care for the environment, we are planning a church litter pick.

The litter pick will take place in the surrounding area. High-visibility jackets, tools, and other equipment will be provided but please bring your own gloves and wear strong shoes. We will meet at 10.30am at the Church for a short safety briefing. The 'pick' will last around one hour and a warm drink and biscuits will be available at Church on your return.

This will be a wonderful opportunity for our fellowship to spend an hour or so in the fresh air, followed by a warming drink and some biscuits.

Please, if you can, add your name to the sign-up sheet which is in the Vestibule.

Len Green





Castle Hill Church Ipswich, Sunday December 21st 2025

CASTLE HILL



Carol Service



CHRISTMAS PARTY FUN AT TINY TOTS

Tiny Tots held a lovely Christmas Party on our last session of the term where over twenty children, parents and grandparents enjoyed lovely food, singing and played with toys and each other.

The highlight was a visit by Father Christmas, who entertained everyone as well as giving each child a gift. Our very grateful thanks go to Ian Harris, who was the jovial, kind Father Christmas of our dreams.

I would also like to thank the wonderful team of helpers who made the party such a success. Jill and Linda who prepared most of the food (and those who brought along home made sausage rolls, cheese straws, cakes and doughnuts), Maria, Ann, Dale and Liz who got out toys, tables and equipment and put everything away afterwards, and finally Adam and Gillian who came along and joined in the fun. It was a really special occasion.

Shirley Skinner



LUNCH CLUB CHRISTMAS DINNER



Our diners, cooks, helpers and drivers enjoyed a delicious Christmas turkey dinner and dessert selection.

Our two Ministers, Adam and David also joined us for the meal and led the festive Carol singing afterwards.

Everyone went home full, happy and ready for an afternoon nap!

ANNUAL REPORT Time for Your Reports

Dead friends,

Church Annual General and Church Meeting is on Thursday April 23rd, when we will be presenting the 2025 Annual Report.

Please may I remind all Church Organisations and Group Leaders to have their 2025 reports written and sent to Len Green by **Sunday 8th March, at the latest**, to allow time for the report to be assembled and sent off to the printers.

**Many thanks
Sandra Bragg**

20th YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF FNKD

(Friends of North Kigezi Diocese)



2026 is the 20th Anniversary of FNKD and from those early days until now we have progressed into becoming number one charity working in this remote place of South Western Uganda and we were referred to as a model or an example of quality work.

Our sponsorship programme is doing well, and we continue to support 80 children living in their homes in the villages for their education and by providing essentials, food and clothing.

Bunce Children's Centre now accommodates 26 children. We admitted a new baby we named Matthew, meaning gift, just before Christmas – he had been abandoned. And then in the same week one of our 8-year-old boys returned home to live with his grandmother. Our children have grown over the years, and we are beginning to plan for the futures of our older children as at some time they will need to leave care. Our eldest boy, Asaph is part way through training to be a nurse so we are feeling hopeful for him that he will move into employment and start building his own life.

During 2026 we are hoping to start expanding our provision for the young people in our centre by providing another accommodation block in a separate

location. This will act as a stepping stone for our older children as they make the transition from care to independence.

We are asking friends of FNKD if they would set up Just Giving pages to attract donations for us so we can make this provision and secure their futures and continue their life's journeys.

We are still raising funds for the toilet block. I'm pleased to say that we now have half the funds and maybe we can start building at Easter when I'm in Uganda.

Please continue to pray for our work – our children and our Ugandan staff.

Over 20 years we have come such a long way and made the difference to so many lives and lifting children up to a better place. Thank you for sharing our journey.

Canon Rachel Harris – Chair of Trustees
rachh123@hotmail.co.uk 07772311133





THANK YOU

A big thank you to all who donated to the Christian Aid Christmas Appeal in our Retiring Collection and through the Christmas Card Board.

The sum of £210.25 will go to help mothers like Chance in the Democratic Republic of Congo who had to flee her home due to armed conflict and is now in a camp for displaced people. The money will be used to help buy nutritious food, vital medicines and essential hygiene products for her and other mothers like her and their children. On their behalf, thank you.

Elaine Thomas

GIVE THANKS

Are you thankful for your many blessings? Compared with many people in the world and previous generations in this country, we are very fortunate and have been richly blessed.

One way of showing our thankfulness for all we have received is to 'Count Our Blessings'. As the old hymn reminds us:

*'Count your blessings, name them one by one,
and it will surprise you what the Lord has done'*

Lent, which begins on February 18th and takes us through to Easter, is a good time to do this. To help you, leaflets with a pointer for thankfulness and suggested giving each day to show your gratitude in a practical way, will be available from the table at the back of the Church. The money you give will be shared between our Church Charities for this year. Most of us do not carry much cash these days, so if it is easier not to put your daily contributions in one of the small donation boxes, you can note the daily amount and pay the total by cash, bank transfer or the church card machine. Money should be brought to the Church on Easter Sunday.

Elaine Thomas

RE-NEW MINISTRY TO WOMEN



I was first invited to Re-New several years ago by my late sister in law and have been attending as many of the meetings as possible since. The group was started by Christian women from all denominations and last September celebrated its 15th birthday. After coffee (or tea) and cake the meetings open with a time of singing worship songs. There is normally a speaker who brings a message - I almost always find God has something very relevant to say to me - and then we close with a prayer (and more cake!).

The first meeting of the new year is usually a 'do it yourself' session where people speak as led by the Holy Spirit. The meeting on 10 January was a morning of great encouragement where the common theme was God knowing us and our circumstances personally and of His amazing love for us. People had come prepared with various Bible verses which all followed a similar theme. Those quoted were Psalm 46 v 10, Jeremiah 29 v 11, Hebrews 12 v 1, Job 23 v 10, 1 Corinthians 13 v 12 and Psalm 27 v 13-14. Someone said that she had been convinced in her particular situation that although she didn't understand it at the time, God was doing something with the right people in the right place at the right time. Someone else quoted the scripture that 'nothing is impossible with God'. The message for the whole morning was **Keep Trusting** because God loves us and has everything in hand.

Sheila asked me to read the following as she was unable to go to the meeting. It's a wonderful message to take into the New Year:

Greetings

Welcome to Flight 2026. We are prepared to take off into the New Year. Please make sure your attitude and blessings are secured and locked in an upright position. All self-destructive devices should be turned off at this time. All negativity, hurt, and discouragement should be put away. Should we lose altitude under pressure during the flight, reach up and pull down a prayer. Prayers will automatically be activated by faith. Once your faith is activated you can assist other passengers. There will be no baggage allowed on this flight. The Captain (God) has cleared us for take-off. Destination ... greatness.

If anyone would like to know more about Re-New or is interested in going along to one of the meetings, I'd be very happy to have a chat with you.

Shirley Skinner

Re-New Diary Dates for 2026

10 January, 7 March, 9 May, 4 July, 5 September, 7 November

Regular venue: St John's Church Hall, Cauldwell Hall Road, Ipswich, Time 10.30 am - 12.00 noon. Doors open 9.45 am for coffee and cakes.

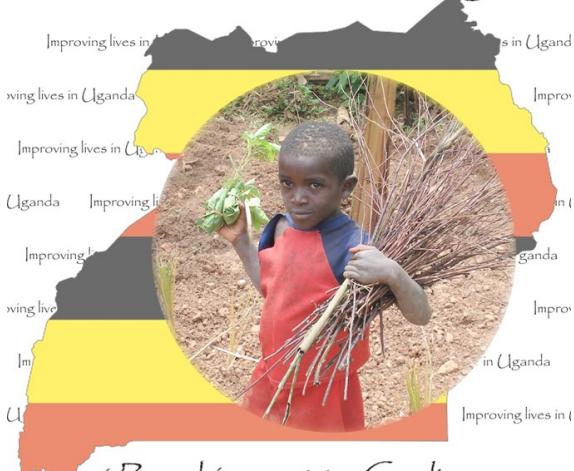
QUIZ NIGHT

Questions by Mark & Fiona Ward

CASTLE HILL CHURCH DRYDEN ROAD
SATURDAY 28th FEBRUARY AT 7PM

ALL PROCEEDS TO THE BUCENCE CHILDREN'S CENTRE IN
NORTH KIGEZI

Friends of North Kigezi



*'Reaching out to God's
children in South Western Uganda'*

Please bring your own drinks and snacks (no alcohol)
Tickets £ 5 per person – Teams of 6
Raffle and Ugandan Craft Stall
Any Raffles Prizes greatly appreciated

For tickets and further information please contact
Rachel Harris 07772 311133



TABLETOP SALE SATURDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2.00pm



Fish, Fun & Film Fridays

An inclusive group – All Welcome

Our Next Meeting is on

Friday 27th February

Sessions begin at 11:30am with varied activities. We share a fish and chip lunch, followed by cake and coffee (or tea) and then enjoy a film.



We are currently asking for £6.50 per session.
We also have a raffle.



**TUESDAY
WELCOME**



10:00 to 11:30

Every Tuesday
Tea, Coffee & Chat



First Tuesday of the month is "Coffee & Cake"

DIARY DATES FOR FEBRUARY 2025

5th Elders' Meeting 7.00pm.

11th Busy Fingers 2.00pm.

15th Pastoral Elders Meeting 3.00pm

17th Wool Court 10.30am.

25th Busy Fingers 2.00pm.

Lent Course Begins 7.00pm.

27th Fish Fun and Film 11.30am.

28th Table-Top Sale 2.00pm
FNKD Quiz Night 7.00pm.



Deadline for the March Newsletter
Submissions to Len Green by **Friday February 19th** please
E-mail: editor@castlehillurc.org.uk