

CHRIST CHURCH

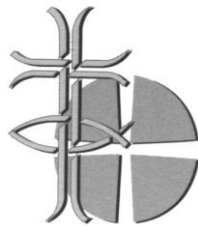
United Reformed and Methodist

CHRIST CHURCH

LINK



February 2024
March 2024



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Vacancy

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The publication date is normally the final Sunday of the preceding month, and items for inclusion should be sent to the Secretary by the Wednesday before that date.

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REFLECTIONS FOR FEBRUARY AND MARCH

THE “I AM” SAYINGS FROM ST. JOHN’S GOSPEL

The ‘I am’ statements that Jesus makes in St. John’s Gospel are amongst the best-known and loved verses within the whole Bible. On seven occasions in John’s Gospel, Jesus uses the phrase ‘I am’ to explain who he is, why he came, and what he offers to those who choose to follow him.

Our Bible Study classes in January and February have been looking at the “I Am” sayings, using material from the Scottish Bible Society which adopts a “Talk the Word” approach. This encourages us to listen to what Jesus is saying and then aim to remember it and recall it to others, in much the same way as Jesus’ audience would have done back in New Testament times.

Our Bible study sessions are held in church on Wednesdays at 1.30 - 2.30 p.m.

Here are the seven “I am” sayings



“I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51). In this chapter, Jesus establishes a pattern that continues through John’s gospel—Jesus makes a statement about who He is, and He backs it up with something He does. In this case, Jesus states that He is the bread of life just after He had fed the 5,000 in the wilderness. At the same time, He contrasts what He can do with what Moses had done for their ancestors: “Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died, but here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die” (verses 49–50).

“I am the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5). This second of Jesus’ “I am” statements in John’s gospel comes right before He heals a man born blind. Jesus not only says He is the light; He proves it. Jesus’ words and actions echo (Genesis 1:3), “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

“I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7 and 9, ESV). This “I am” statement stresses that no one can enter the kingdom of heaven by any other means than Christ Himself. Jesus’ words in this passage are couched in the imagery of a sheepfold. He is the one and only way to enter the fold. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber” (verse 1, ESV).

“I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14). With this “I am” statement, Jesus portrays His great love and care. He is the One who willingly protects His flock even to the point of death (verses 11 and 15). When Jesus called Himself the good shepherd, He unmistakably took for Himself one of God’s titles in the Old Testament: “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1).

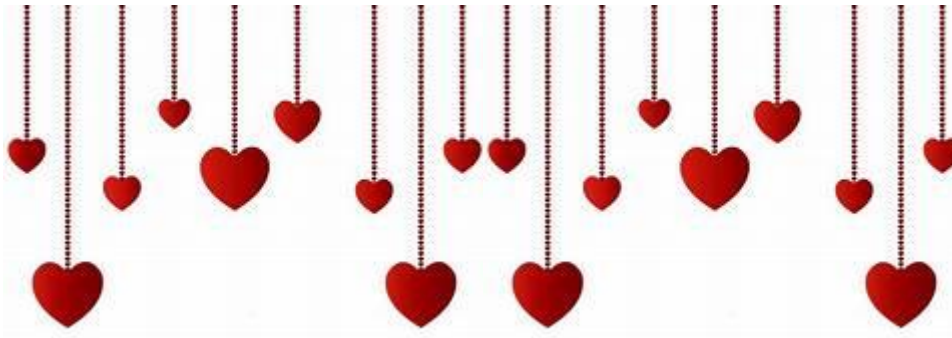
“I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). Jesus made this “I am” statement immediately before raising Lazarus from the dead. Again, we see that Jesus’ teaching was not just empty talk; when He made a claim, He substantiated it with action. He holds “the keys of death and the grave” (Revelation 1:18, NLT). In raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus showed how He can fulfil Yahweh’s promise to ancient Israel: “[God’s] dead shall live; their bodies shall rise” (Isaiah 26:19, ESV). Apart from Jesus, there is neither resurrection nor eternal life.

“I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). This powerful “I am” statement of Christ’s is packed with meaning. Jesus is not merely one way among many ways to God; He is the only way. Scripture said that “The very essence of [God’s] words is truth” (Psalm 119:160, NLT), and here is Jesus proclaiming that He is the truth—confirming His identity as the Word of God (see John 1:1, 14). And Jesus alone is the source of life; He is the Creator and Sustainer of all life and the Giver of eternal life.

“I am the true vine” (John 15:1, 5). The final metaphorical “I am” statement in the Gospel of John emphasizes the sustaining power of Christ. We are the branches, and He is the vine. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it is joined in vital union with the vine, only those who are joined to Christ and receive their power from Him produce fruit in the Christian life.

LOVE COSTS EVERYTHING

A LENT MESSAGE FROM REV. ANDY MELVIN



This year, Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday fall on the same day. Apparently this last happened in 1945! It happened three times in the 20th century (1923, 1934 & 1945) , but will only happen twice this century (2024 and 2029).

Valentine Day celebrates St Valentine, who was martyred by Emperor Claudius in the 3rd Century AD for not denying Christ. Valentine was famous for thwarting the emperor by marrying couples so that they could avoid conscription into the army, thus annoying Claudius by depriving him of a much-needed army. Some accounts list that Valentine gave persecuted Christian parchment hearts to remind them of their vows to one another and of God's love for them.

On Ash Wednesday we are reminded by the smearing of the ashes from last year's palm crosses on our foreheads or hands of Christ's death for us and our call to repentance for our sins and our commitment to a period of reflection, prayer, meditation and fasting to realign our lives with Christ. This period of 40 days is called Lent in the Christian church.

Love of Christ cost Valentine his life, he died because he wanted to remind people of their commitment to one another through marriage and to following Christ, who gave up his life that all may have life in God.

Today sometimes Valentine's Day becomes nothing more than a commercial festival and love is limited to a cheesy greeting card, but as we celebrate Ash Wednesday and Valentines Day, let us be reminded that Christ's love for us and God cost him everything.

A Prayer: Thankyou Jesus for dying for us, help us remember this Lent your sacrificial love for us and help us to walk in your ways. Amen

God bless you all this Lent

Love Andy

Lent Study Groups, open to all

Wednesday early afternoon at Christ Church.

The Christian Aid lent group at 1.30 pm starting on 14 February, using material from Christian Aid.

Monday mornings at St.Annes

Led by Peter Shears. The sessions will involve open-ended discussions with poetry as stimulus material. Details are not yet defined but all will be welcome.

Evening group at St.Annes

Ben Brown will lead an evening Lent group, which will use the same material as the Monday morning group.

FROM THE SECRETARIES

Welcome to the February and March edition of ***Christ Church Link***. We have decided to move over to producing a new edition every two months, rather than trying to do so monthly. There will still be plenty to read, to provoke thought and prayer, and to entertain in these pages, but it will mean a bit less strain on our administrative resources, by not having to produce a newsletter on a tight four to five week cycle.

At our December meeting, Church Council discussed **use of the financial surplus** which has built up over recent months largely as a result of the continuing absence of a dedicated minister at Christ Church and the reduced payments we make “up the chain” to the URC Southern Synod and the Central Sussex United Area. We have also benefitted from the recent rise in interest rates, which has increased our investment income during 2023. As a charity, it is important that the church actively pursues its charitable purposes, rather than build up and sit on a financial surplus.

Accordingly, Church Council is recommending to the Congregational Meeting on Sunday January 28 that we allocate funds for a number of “one –off” spending items as follows:

Item and project leader	Approximate cost *	Purpose
1. New electric hob cooker and oven	£4,500	Will enable us to better meet catering needs for both church and community use in the kitchen This will also improve the environmental performance of the building, by reducing gas consumption and

		instead using electricity generated by renewables
2. Maintenance and improvement works in the church building		
(a) Carpets around the apse steps	£1,000	Replace current worn and tatty carpets
(b) Signage and imaging	£2,500	New sign on street frontage and various other signs and imaging inside the church to underline its Christian ethos
(c) Insulation works	£7,000 -£8,000	New internal door at main entrance, and renewal of degraded draught excluders to doors and windows, to improve insulation and reduce heat loss from the building. This will improve the environmental performance of the building

3. New desktop computer	£550	Replace existing old PC
4. Reserve item : Investigate new screen and sound system	Not known	Upgrade existing system and improve audio-visual presentation during worship and other activities
5. Reserve item : Partnership projects with other Lewes churches	Not known	Church Council has agreed to open up discussions with other Lewes churches about partnership projects, some of which might involve additional costs.

*Costs need to be confirmed by working up detailed specifications for projects and getting quotes etc.]

Ideas were invited from Church Council members for our charities for 2024 and the following will be recommended to the Congregational Meeting on January 28:

- **Home charity - The Prison Fellowship** : volunteers who work with prisoners at Lewes to promote rehabilitation , restorative justice , maintenance of family links, and access to faith support
- **Overseas Charity: - Médecins Sans Frontières** for a second year in view of the urgent need for their medical support work in war zones and areas affected by natural disasters. 2023 has been a difficult year around the world and, as we start the year, 2024 does not look good.

Thank you to Claire for all her hard work in setting up and running our **Saturday prayers and the Wednesday Bible Study classes**. Before Christmas, we completed our study of St .Paul's Epistle to the Romans and have now moved onto the "I Am" sayings. (see article above). In mid -February, we will start with a new Lent course from Christian Aid on "Poverty and the Gospel" (see article below). All of these initiatives have helped us in developing our faith and fellowship with other church members.

Lastly, we are reviewing our progress on **Eco Church status** with a view to soon applying for silver level, to add to the bronze level we were awarded in spring 2022

Neil Fisher Church Secretary

Lindsay Frost Administrative Secretary

JANUARY BLESSINGS

On 14 January 2024 Christ Church was the venue for a joyous occasion, the baptism of Courteney and her children, Skyler and Kai. The service included a hymn chosen by Courteney, "Today I Awake", written by John Bell and Graham Maule, which was unfamiliar to many of us but the words of which were so appropriate.

Many Church members took part in the service doing the readings and prayers, and we enjoyed coffee (and a specially decorated home-made cake made by Irene) and fellowship after the service with Courteney and her family members.

We look forward to getting to know Courteney, Skyler and Kai in the weeks to come

Claire Bell



CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES



Carols on the Green was held at Nevill Green on Sunday December 17. We were fortunate to enjoy a cloudy but dry afternoon, in what had been an otherwise very wet month. The service drew a good crowd of more than 60 people (part shown here), with hot mulled drinks and minced pies served at the interval.

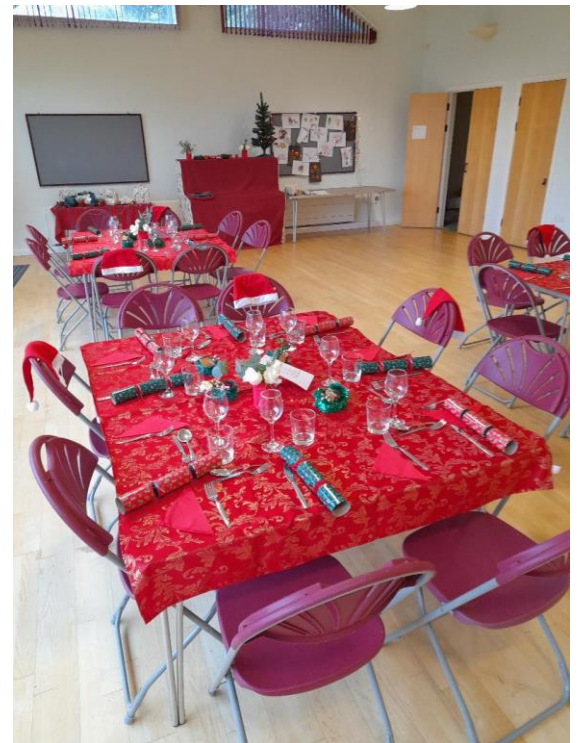
Thank you to the Rev. Ben Brown of St Anne's Church for leading the service and providing an excellent short sermon on the meaning of Christmas, in between the carols

and the readings on the nativity from the Bible. This is an important event of Christian witness in our local community.

Churches Together in Lewes (CTLA) organised a **Christmas Day Dinner** at Christ Church for senior citizens who would otherwise be spending the day alone. The picture shows our main hall with the tables laid out for the arrival of our guests and looking splendidly "Christmassy".

This was a first for us, as the event was previously held at the House of Friendship in Lewes High Street for many years.

As well as the lunch, transport was provided to and from the event and there was carol singing and festive fun. Thank you to the many CTLA volunteers who worked to make the event a success, particularly the organiser, Gretel Scott



SHEPHERDS ARISE!

CHRISTMAS CONCERT AT CHRIST CHURCH



Despite wild and wet weather , the Shepherd's Arise ! concert attracted around 55 people to Christ Church on Sunday December 10 . The concert drew on the rich heritage of 18th and 19th century seasonal folk music and carols from Sussex, together with readings on life in rural areas of the county from that period . This was when Christmas was a brief interlude for family and community celebration in an otherwise tough life of manual labour out in the fields .

Many parishes had their own distinct Christmas carols and we heard music from the Sussex villages of Ringmer , Rodmell , Falmer , Rottingdean and Catsfield. A highlight was a Sussex Mummers Play which gently mocked the aristocracy and the church, and re-enacted St George's fight with the dragon. (the feet of the vanquished dragon are just visible in the picture)

The concert raised money for church charities and we were pleased to nominate our overseas charity for 2023 – **Médecins Sans Frontières** - which is doing sterling work this year in areas suffering from conflict , natural disaster and famine , notably Ukraine , Israel, Gaza, Sudan , Yemen , Libya and Morocco . The sum raised was £318.

Thank you to Brenda Vance for all her hard work in organising the event with the Shepherds Arise! singers , musicians and mummers. **Lindsay Frost**

CHRISTIAN AID COURSE ON “POVERTY AND THE GOSPEL”

Starts on Wednesday February 14 at 1.30 p.m. in the church



Christian Aid has teamed up with partner organisations across the UK to help churches gain a deeper understanding of poverty and empower Christians to act in the run up to the next UK general election.

It all starts with the 'Act on Poverty' Lent course.

Christian Aid is working with the Baptist Union, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church, Church Action on Poverty, The Trussell Trust, and others. Together they'll enable churches and individuals UK-wide to gain a deeper understanding of experiences of poverty, local and global. This will involve sharing stories of faith and activism that challenge the status quo , and offering inspiration for actions big and small that we can all take to tackle poverty together.

“When people say that religion & politics don't mix, I wonder which Bible it is they're reading.”

- Revd Desmond Tutu.

CHRISTIAN AID:

GIVE AN HOUR TO PRAY AND ACT FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE –

14 to 23 FEBRUARY



Starting on Ash Wednesday people from across the UK will be holding vigil outside Parliament for 10 days and nights to pray for environmental and climate justice. All are welcome to join the vigil in person or from home, to give thanks for the earth and all that is in it, to lament the damage that has been done and the impacts of climate change, to speak out for justice for our global neighbours who have lost homes, livelihoods and loved ones and to seek ways of hope and transformation.

The vigil aims to prompt the UK Government to:

1. Make the UK's biggest polluters pay for climate action.
2. Deliver and build on the UK's international climate finance pledges and pay into the UN's Loss and Damage Fund.
3. Ban new UK-based fossil fuel projects.

By writing to/emailing our local constituency MP to tell them we are taking part in the vigil and to ask them to champion bold climate action we can also play our part in making a positive difference.

An MP briefing outlining ways MPs can raise the issue in Parliament is available at caid.org.uk/C4CJbriefing.

Liz Lunt

CHRIST CHURCH WALKS

Our February walk is on **Sunday February 18**. The suggested route is one of East Sussex County Council's country walks and starts from the village of Ripe to the east of Ringmer. They say it is "an easy walk along country lanes and across fields with a few stiles", with a distance of 2.5 miles /4 km. All the details are here:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisure-tourism/circular>

The March walk will be on **Sunday March 17**. It's not easy to find an Irish themed walk in East Sussex, so instead we will be doing a walk from The Street in Kingston up onto the Downs and back down through Swanborough, with a distance of about 3 miles /5km.



On the prom

Our January 21 walk took us to the cliff top and promenade from Telscombe Cliffs through to Peacehaven. It was a windy day with the approach of Storm Isha, which we certainly felt on the opening cliff top section of the walk. However, the promenade section below was

relatively calm for a nice flat walk along the coast, with the waves roaring in at low tide. Some weathering of the cliffs was evident from the recent spell of cold and frosty weather

We then had a 185 step staircase climb back up to the cliff top and soon reached the South Coast Road for a bus back to the start.

Lindsay Frost



Only 125 more steps to go

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY –

CUCKMERE PILGRIM PATH - SATURDAY JUNE 15

After our Bosham to Chichester pilgrimage walk last summer, another one is planned for 2024. Please reserve this date in diaries

The plan is to leave Lewes by train late morning and start the walk at Berwick and work our way around some of the beautiful churches of the Cuckmere Valley including Alfriston and the celebrated wall paintings at Berwick, before finishing off with a pub garden meal.

We can decide on the length of the walk (and the number of churches to visit) by soundings with those who are interested. Details of the Cuckmere Valley pilgrimage route are at <https://bit.ly/Cuckmere-Pilgrim-Path-Leaflet>. As you will see, several walking options are available



CHURCH RECORDS GROUP

The Group met on December 5. We have been looking at how we manage our church records at a time when our records are increasingly held in electronic form, but where we still have a stock of some older paper records requiring sorting , cataloguing and long term storage arrangements. Here are some notes of the key points:



- 1. Discussion focused on the range of paper records we still have, and the best means of maintaining, storing and accessing them in the future. Most day to day business of the church has been conducted electronically for the last ten years or more, so our remaining paper records mostly predate c.2013*
- 2. These older paper records are stored in cupboards in the loft . There are the equivalent of about four large cupboards of material which will need to be sorted and decisions made on whether to retain them. Some material may be discarded . We will then need to make a summary list of all the material we wish to retain. This will be a big job.*
- 3. Guidance from the URC is that records should be retained in paper form. This is because electronic storage and retrieval systems are subject to radical technical changes as time goes on and may not provide a dependable long term solution. See <https://urc.org.uk/your-church/guidance-support-for-churches-synods/archive-record-keeping-guidance/> It is recommended that we adopt this guidance for our archive and record keeping work*
- 4. In the past, we have archived church records at **The Keep in Falmer** (The East Sussex / Brighton & Hove City / University of Sussex*

Record Office). This means that they are kept under controlled conditions and that there is public access to them. Once we have made our summary list of the documents we would like to archive (see 2. above), we would need to arrange a meeting with The Keep to see if they are willing to accept them and, if so, make arrangements for transfer

6. There may be a limited number of documents (or duplicates of them) that we wish to retain at the church building, for example relating to building works , or safeguarding and other confidential matters

Lindsay Frost

From the treasurer

I have just made the gift aid claim for the previous year and received over £6,500 from HMRC. I would like to remind everyone that if your circumstances change and you don't pay tax anymore, then you should tell me so that I don't claim gift aid on your behalf. If you are not sure about your gift aid status with the church, then please contact me for clarification.

Many thanks

Irene Gannon

R.I.P DAVID SALE

David Sale looked after the Nevill section of the Sussex Express' "Parish Pump" section for many years, faithfully gathering all the news from the Nevill Estate in Lewes. Every weekend for the last six or seven years, I have sent him material on what we have been doing here at Christ Church and our plans for the coming week. It has found its way into the newspaper, giving us some useful local coverage and, who knows, maybe even introducing a few people to our church.

David passed away suddenly on January 20. Though I never met him (it was all done online), I feel that I have lost a friend. David was a postie for many years and lamented the current state of the postal service. He was also a big supporter of Arsenal Football Club and we shared their ups and downs over recent years.

David and his wife Val moved to Ringmer three years ago and he tried hard to recruit a replacement news gatherer on the Nevill Estate for the Sussex Express, but was unable to do so, so he carried on with the job from distant Ringmer . He was a real servant of the local community.

Our condolences go to Val and the family.

Lindsay Frost

THINKTANK

The next meeting will be on **21 February** at 7.30 pm, when
Professor Robert Harwood will be speaking on

**" Climate Change:
How much leeway do we have in achieving Net Zero ? "**

There is now widespread agreement that the planet is warming as a result of the release of greenhouse gases. Consequently many nations have agreed to reduce their output of greenhouse gases to zero. This talk will emphasise that the science is relatively simple, incontrovertible, and urgent. The economic dangers of delay have been recognised for many years. The mindset needed for resolution of the problems presented by greenhouse gases has received less attention even though calls for action have been made by many faith leaders and others. Bob obtained degrees in mathematics and meteorology at Imperial College, worked in the atmospheric physics department at Oxford, and in 1976 was appointed Professor of Atmospheric Science in the University of Edinburgh, where he led the UK's contribution to the Microwave Sounder Instrument on NASA's Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite and Earth Observing System. He moved to Lewes in 2013

The following meeting will be on **20 March** at 7.30 pm, when the speaker will be **Gwyneth Watkinson**.

Church Calendar for February 2024

- Thu 1 7.30 pm Pastoral leaders meeting (on Zoom)
- Fri 2 9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
- Sat 3 10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
- Sun 4 10.30 am Morning worship led by David Coleman
- Wed 7 10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
1.30 pm - 2.30 pm Bible study in the church - The I am sayings of Jesus
- Fri 9 9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
- Sat 10 10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
- Sun 11 9.30 am Prayer Meeting in the Quiet Room
10.30 am Second Sunday worship
- Wed 14 10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
1.30 pm - 2.30 pm Lent Bible study in the church - Christian Aid - 'Act on Poverty'
7.30 pm Church Council (business)
- Sat 17 10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
- Sun 18 10.30 am Morning worship led by Kenneth Smith
1 pm Church Walk
- Wed 21 10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
1.30 pm - 2.30 pm Lent Bible study in the church - Christian Aid - 'Act on Poverty'
7.30 pm Thinktank
- Fri 23 9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
- Sat 24 10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
- Sun 25 10.30 am Morning worship with Holy Communion led by Rev Tricia Williams
- Wed 28 10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
1.30 pm - 2.30 pm Lent Bible study in the church - Christian Aid - 'Act on Poverty'

Church Calendar for March 2024

Fri 1	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 2	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 3	10.30 am Morning worship led by
Wed 6	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café 1.30 pm - 2.30 pm Lent Bible study in the church - Christian Aid - 'Act on Poverty'
Fri 8	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 9	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 10	9.30 am Prayer Meeting in the Quiet Room 10.30 am Second Sunday worship for Mothering Sunday
Wed 13	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café 1.30 pm - 2.30 pm Lent Bible study in the church - Christian Aid - 'Act on Poverty' 7.30 pm Church Council (Discussion)
Fri 15	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 16	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 17	10.30 am Morning worship led by 1 pm Church Walk
Wed 20	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café 1.30 pm - 2.30 pm Lent Bible study in the church - Christian Aid - 'Act on Poverty' 7.30 pm Thinktank
Fri 22	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 23	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 24	10.30 am Morning worship led by
Wed 27	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
Fri 29	10 am Good Friday worship led by
Sat 30	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 31	10.30 am Easter Day worship with Holy Communion led by
Wed 3	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
Sat 6	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 7	10.30 am Morning worship

Rotas for February 2024

	4	11	18	25
Welcoming	Graham	Brian	Brenda	Linda B
Vestry Steward	Irene	Irene	Irene	Irene
Coffee	Viv & Lindsay	Glenda & Alan	Janet & Linda B	Ian & Judy
Powerpoint	Graham / Irene	Irene	Tom	Neil
Organ	David	Norman	David	Norman

Rotas for March 2024

	3	10	17	24	29	31
				Palm Sunday	Good Friday	Easter Day
Welcoming	Andrew	Janet	Graham	Joan		Brenda
Vestry Steward	Lindsay	Lindsay	Lindsay	Lindsay		Lindsay
Coffee	Rod & Aly	Viv & Lindsay	Glenda & Alan	Pam & Jane		Janet & Linda B
Powerpoint	Graham / Irene	Irene	Tom	Neil	Neil	Graham / Irene
Organ	David	Norman	David	Norman	David	David

CHRIST CHURCH (United Reformed and Methodist) seeks to proclaim the Gospel and serve the community around it.

The Layworker and Church Council Members would appreciate information about those who need pastoral care, and will endeavour to answer the questions of those who want to know more about the Church's life and witness here in Lewes.

