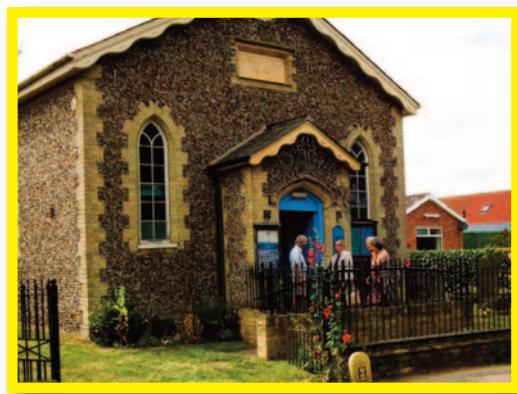
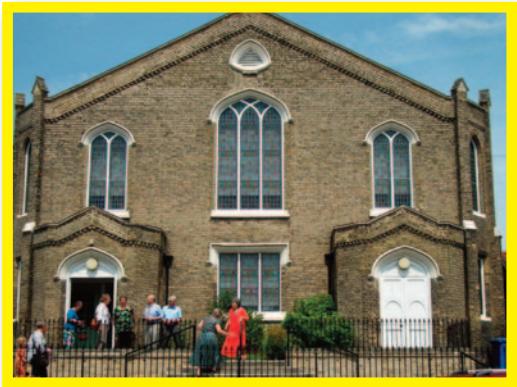


Halesworth and Bramfield URC



February 2026

What we believe

We believe that in obedience to Christ's command, we must proclaim the Gospel to the world in the power and at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

We are called out of darkness to live as children of light, reflecting God's glory all around.

We recognise that as a Church, the bride of Christ, we are commanded to love and encourage one another and ensure that no root of bitterness divides us.

We acknowledge our absolute dependence on Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father made us, Jesus has redeemed us and the Spirit sustains and provides all we need on our pilgrimage.

We acknowledge our commitment to the Bible, as the authoritative word of God able to teach us, guide us and inspire us as we discover God's perfect will for our lives

**If you have something for the
March 2026 magazine,
please email
smedleybigal@aol.com (preferably)
or hand it to me by 22nd February**

Blessings, Alan

**Our Vision:
“To know Jesus Christ;
to make Him known.”**

Dear Friends,

Since Christmas, I have been reading Stephen Fry's book, 'Odyssey – Can a hero find his way home?' It's a retelling of the Greek myths associated with Odysseus' ten-year journey—his Odyssey—after the Trojan War. Even if you haven't read Homer's epic work, you will probably know some of its stories, for example: resisting the sirens, escaping from Polyphemus the Cyclops, steering between Scylla and Charybdis, and visiting the underworld, (to mention just a few).

Even more than the Iliad, I think the 'Odyssey' represents a collection of moral stories—like Aesop's fables or Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress—which observe and comment on the quandaries we face in life, and how we confront them. Thus, 'the sirens' teaches us about temptation and how to resist it; and 'Scylla and Charybdis' illustrates our struggle with impossible choices.

At around the time The Odyssey was written, (circa 720 BCE), many miles away in Judah, the Prophet Micah was also reflecting on existential questions. He asked: 'What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?'

Then, later, in around 375 BCE, Plato identified the cardinal virtues: courage, temperance, prudence and justice, naming them the hinges, around which a deeply satisfying life must swing.

At their January meeting—the first after Jon's retirement—the elders looked at Micah's question, and saw how we could use it as a mission statement for the year ahead. Justice, mercy and humility are words we use when we are thinking about our relationships with each other. As we embark on this, the next episode in our church's adventure together, we do so, in hope and expectation that we will meet the challenges we face, trusting in the God who has promised to accompany us every step of the way.

Peter



As many of you know, I have an online blog on a site for writers called 'Substack'. It's not a Christian site, yet I've been amazed and blessed by the number of Christians writing, praying, encouraging and posting good, solid teaching on the site. Of course, there's the usual smattering of oddballs and offensive stuff but I can avoid that quite easily.

The piece below is something I re-read regularly as I find it so powerful. I pray it blesses you too!

**Reflection by Aaron Salvato
posted on Substack on 22 Nov 2025.**

There has never been an act more courageous than Christ crucified.

The most heroic act in all of history was a man refusing to defend Himself.

Jesus on the cross did not lose His life. He flung it in the face of evil. He shattered the gates of hell.

The nails did not hold Him; courage and love did.

It was not weakness that kept Him still, but the ferocity of divine love refusing to strike back.

The crucifixion is not the story of a man too weak to escape death, but of a God too strong to refuse it.

A God who does not demand human sacrifice, but who sacrifices Himself for humanity.

A King who does not crush his enemies, but dies so that they may be invited into his very family.

The world saw a man defeated, broken, and bleeding.

Heaven saw a warrior in full armour, walking straight into the jaws of death and ripping the heart out of sin with His bare hands.

No soldier ever stormed a hill with greater courage than Christ ascending the cross. It was not the death of a martyr, but the invasion of a King—disguised as a victim!

It was the boldest act ever dared: to die when He could have destroyed, to forgive when He could have condemned, to let His heart be pierced so that ours might be made whole.

He conquered by surrender.

And the enemy never saw it coming.

The way of Jesus is the way of courageous love.

Thanks be to God.

Supplied by Ruth Sermon



Yes, there is still pain but there is hope this time that at the end of 6-8 weeks things will be looking better – I was going to say back to normal but not sure what that is at this age. However, I'm getting a lot of help from family plus my cleaning lady who is happy to do anything and when needed a couple of carers who flit in and out but get the work done ie yesterdays' dishes today!

Hope to see you all again soon and blessings in the meantime. Take care of your selves also - **Moira**

"CONGRATULATIONS to Duncan Metherell on qualifying as a
"Navigational Officer in the Merchant Navy."

Please continue to pray for Doug Mizon : Kathryn Bones.

NO SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

From 19 February 2026, our address will be:
55 Ironwood Avenue, Desborough, Northamptonshire NN14 2JJ.

Jon and Ruth Sermon



Our wonderful musicians (missing Sue) and singers

We wanted to write and thank you for your extremely kind and recent donation to Hope and Aid Direct for £275 for our Ukraine Appeal. I apologise profusely for not writing sooner. Your support really means the world to us and makes a huge difference to those we are helping.

As you may have been aware, we recently celebrated 25 years of humanitarian operations across Europe and more widely where we have been able to provide tangible support. Last month we sent our 94th articulated truck of humanitarian aid to Ukraine, since the start of the 2022 Russian invasion and are now planning our next backload that will leave next week. Recent shipments have contained a mix of humanitarian aid, including food, toiletries, nappies, hand sanitiser, incontinence pads, clothes, shoes, medical supplies, mattresses, blankets and bedding, household equipment, education support for children, e.g. stationary and toys, care home, dental equipment and fire extinguishers to help local services provide support and treatment to local communities.

A small cohort of core volunteers are involved in the direct sorting and loading of aid onto the trucks that we send to our local partners 'Ukraine on Palms' who with their amazing volunteers work tirelessly to distribute to those in need living in the worst affected areas across Ukraine, and/or have been uprooted from their homes and live in temporary accommodation such as Portacabins and Municipal buildings.

The need in Ukraine remains high and with plummeting temperatures (today our local partner wrote that 'it is minus 11 degrees, and tomorrow minus 18 degrees is expected, and all water, heat and electricity are turned off in Kyiv).



This photo of a truck is the one that Hope and Aid Direct donated two years ago to 'Ukraine on Palms' to help their distribution to those in need across Ukraine, enabling greater supplies to be carried and larger items to those in need in a more effective and efficient manner.

With your kind donation we will be able to continue our work to reach those most in need. Thank you all again for your ongoing support and help enabling us to help others. With best wishes for the new year,
Everyone at Hope and Aid Direct

Bev Storer (volunteer for the South East)





Sunday 1st 11.00 am Gathered Worship Paul Potts

Tuesday 3rd 10 a.m. to 12 noon Coffee morning at Lowestoft
followed by Morning Worship

Friday 6th 9.30 a.m. Prayer Meeting in the Church and
followed by Coffee Morning

Sunday 8th 11.00 a.m. Gathered Worship Lorraine Smedley

Sunday 15th 11.00 a.m. Gathered Worship Peter Wagg

Tuesday 17th 10 a.m. to 12 noon Coffee morning at Lowestoft
followed by Morning Worship

Friday 20th 9.30 a.m. Prayer Meeting in the Church
followed by Coffee Morning

Sunday 22nd 11 a.m. Gathered Worship Judy Morton

Tuesday 24th 10 a.m. to 12 noon Coffee morning at Lowestoft
followed by Morning Worship

Friday 27th 9.30 a.m. Prayer Meeting in the Church
followed by Coffee Morning

SPECIAL DATES at HURC

Halesworth United Reformed Church

Come and join us for:



Suggested donation £1 Per Person

Tuesdays 3:30pm - 5pm

January 10th & 24th

Book with Elizabeth - familyhurc@gmail.com



Tuesday 3rd, 10th and 24th
No toddlers on 27th half term



HURC Too
Every Sunday



Messy Breakfast
21st



January Family and Youth News

Throughout the month of January we have been looking at the ways Jesus taught people. During our Sunday Family services, we have been looking at some the parables Jesus told the people and why he chose to teach them in this way. We have learnt what a parable is and how it can be an effective way to teach others, to do this we have explored how each parable connects to the people on a personal level.

It was great to see all our families back to join us during Messy Church and to really kick start Messy Momentum scheme with our teens area, as well as getting the teens involved more with helping during the session. Whether it be helping with the stories or supporting the younger with a craft or helping clear away at the end of the session. Our Messy Church this month has looked at Luke 5:17-26 and how to make a new start washing away our sins. The children decorated soap, talked about forgiving others and ourselves and explored paint that when heated puffed up to create depth to their drawings. We then looked at the story of Noah and how God wanted to wash the world clean again to start a new with people following him again and not giving into temptation. The children needed to use their architectural skills to create Arks using both lolly sticks and cocktail sticks. They made rainbow bottles filling bottles with all the colours of the rainbow. We talked about how God wanted to give his people another chance by washing away the sin and giving Noah and his family a clean slate.

Toddlers started off quiet due to the snow but has now picked back up and we have welcomed a new sibling from one of our regular families into the group. The children have been developing their mark making skills using chalks and how they can wipe it away to start again. The have created sheep supporting the parable of the lost sheep and creating a Noah's Ark picture using paper plates and animal stickers.

We had a craft cuppa that was very quiet due to weather and me not being on top of advising it, but hopefully our next one will be busier along with our Messy Breakfast that is happening on 21st February.

I am away on Sunday 8th to attend the Hand in Hand Conference to support my teaching for the church, Jean will be leading the family service at the back as long as someone else is able to be with her otherwise the families will be in the main service. Elizabeth

Melchior

Dear friend, my name is Melchior. I was once a member of a priestly order of philosophers and scholars who gathered together in Babylon: studying, observing, debating and seeking the truth behind all creation. In my time at our academy, I had found two firm friends who (in our study of the stars and the heavenly bodies) shared my particular fascination about the source and the beginnings of those mighty stars. Balthasar had travelled to Babylon from Ethiopia and Caspar even further: from the far distant land of India. Now, I must tell you, my friend, of the moment which changed all our lives forever.

In our studies of the heavens, we realised that Mars, Saturn and Jupiter (all connected with the nation of Israel) were converging together. If this continued, their combined light would blaze in the firmament like a huge, new star. We all agreed that this event would portend the birth of a Messiah because (from the Jewish scriptures) the fourth Oracle of Balaam foretells a future messianic ruler, prophesying that: "a star will come out of Jacob" and a 'sceptre' will arise from Israel to defeat their enemies." It seemed to claim that he would be mighty and that he would also be God... in the flesh! We all observed the astronomic developments and it became clear that this "new star" would soon appear. All our lives we have been looking for something like this, so we vowed together that we would follow the movement of the new star as soon as it became visible.

The conjunction happened, so we set out, following this miraculous star as it grew in splendour and moved through the heavens. Before long, we realised that we were, indeed, travelling toward the land of the Jews. It was an arduous journey, months came and went; but we were increasingly excited as we neared our destination. We agreed that the birth of this great king must take place in the Palace of King Herod the Great (The King of the Jews at that time) where else would be fitting?.... However, when we managed to gain an audience with the King, he was decidedly suspicious and, after asking us many questions, he summarily dismissed us, saying that he needed to speak with his advisors. This troubled us greatly, but when he called us back, his attitude had changed completely. He was then very interested in when the new star appeared and said that the town of Bethlehem was mentioned in the Jewish scriptures as a likely destination. He urged us to go there and, when we did find the child, to return to tell

him, so that he could welcome the new king in a fitting manner. We thanked him and continued to follow the star into Bethlehem town. In Bethlehem, it came to a full stop. The star was now like a sentinel, still and firm, guarding a very humble, ordinary house. Not at all what we were expecting, but there was no doubt that the star had come to a complete standstill. We knocked at the door, asking the occupant if we could see the new baby, the one born to be King of the Jews. Imagine our bewilderment then, when the person at the door said that there was **no king in this neighbourhood!** She did say that there was a child, who had been born some months earlier (in their animal quarters!) Like the other, distant, family members (which this household was already giving shelter to at the time) a distant relative (and his heavily pregnant wife) had come to take part in the census and the mother had gone into labour before they had found accommodation. The resident of the house went on to explain that, with the passage of time, it became possible for the little family to move into the house ... however... a kingly child? NO! There was no royalty there! Crestfallen, I turned to go, but Balthasar was insistent that we see the couple and their new baby, so the householder let us in.

The young mother was a little shy, but smiling and friendly. The father was very protective, like a "body guard" watching, intently, every movement as we looked at the child. The boy was around a couple of years old, on his feet and, as we stood before him, we were overwhelmed by his presence. Looking into his eyes, time not only seemed to stop, but to cease existence altogether. We all found ourselves on our knees, it was the only way we could feel comfortable, under his infinite gaze. Trembling, we took out our gifts and presented them.

Gold: of course! for a king. A fitting tribute to his truly powerful and majestic aura.

Frankincense: always a recognition of the presence of true deity: which (then) seemed more appropriate than we had ever imagined and....

Myrrh: The choice of myrrh had appeared to be an incongruous offering when we chose it (myrrh is used to embalm a body post mortem; not for a birth) however, there was, indeed, the powerful sense of a significant death here; which made the gift mysteriously fitting. After what felt like a timeless spell in the presence of this remarkable child, he seemed to consciously "release" us and we returned to our pavilion, praising God, overwhelmed with wonder.

That night, as we all slept, each one of us heard a voice. It was as loud and as deep as thunder and like the breaking of mighty waves in a great, sea storm. None of us could see anyone, but we all heard the instruction NOT to return to Herod, because he was intending to harm the child. Instead, we were to return home by another route.

We all awoke from our dream together and confirmed what each one of us had heard. **Who's was this voice? How could we all have heard it simultaneously?** Yet we sensed that this message was true; as well as the right thing to do. Each of us found that we were holding our breath. Aware of a formidable presence, our hearts cramped in fear, adrenalin was coursing through our veins, making our limbs tremble. In a moment of revelation, we realized that we had been addressed by a mighty angel. The enormity of what we had thought was a dream, dawned on our frail existence.... And so, we set out (that very moment) before the sunrise; and we returned home another way.

Each one of us has been affected by this meeting with an infant who seemed ordinary; but whose manifestation seems still to be present, deep inside our heads and hearts. We are, all three of us, confused, excited, bewildered and captivated by that child. We remember his face and we are sure that we have looked on the face of The Living God. For this reason, we have ceased our studies and obsessions. The observation of stars and constellations no longer satisfies our intellect, our curiosity, or our spirits' search for truth. We must follow a different star from now on.

We are (all three of us) agreed, that He: the child himself, is the only one who will truly lead us to where we need to be and we will follow His leading for the rest of our lives..... Lorraine

... There are many traditions surrounding the "Magi after their visit to Bethlehem. One is that they merely returned home after visiting Jesus, but another belief says they later became missionaries, were baptized by St. Thomas, and eventually died. Other traditions have them evangelising and Balthazar being martyred in India.....We simply don't know. My "story" is merely my own wondering about the visit of non-Jews reacting to an astronomical event and Jewish scriptures...who knows??

"Mary treasured all these things in her heart...." Luke 2:19

Balaam's prophecies - Numbers 23-24 (Fourth Oracle (24: 15-24) Lorraine



Volunteers

Coffee Mornings (Fridays)

Other Duties Greeting/Prayers etc

Manse Officer

Open the Book Team and organiser

Please speak to an Elder if you would like to volunteer for any of the above

