

Halesworth and Bramfield URC



August 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

September 2026 magazine,

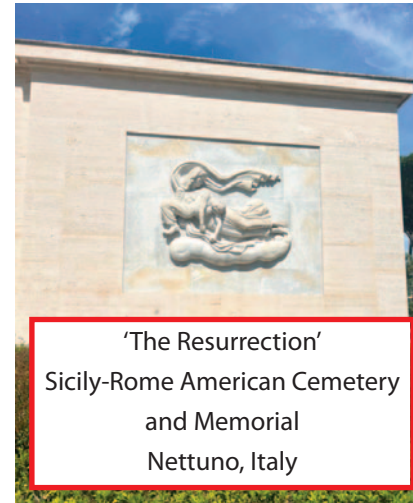
please email

smedleybigal@aol.com (preferably)

or hand it to me by 22nd August

Our Vision:

**"To know Jesus Christ;
to make Him known."**



'The Resurrection'
Sicily-Rome American Cemetery
and Memorial
Nettuno, Italy

In June, Jean and I spent a week in Lazio, the region of Italy that includes Rome. For the most part we stayed in Nettuno, close to Anzio; which for those who know their war history, is where the Allies undertook a beach landing during World War Two. While we were staying there, we visited the American War Cemetery, where close to eight thousand American War dead are interred. The cemetery is a green and peaceful 'oasis' when compared to the parched and busy landscape beyond its walls. Whilst there, we also visited a

small museum, where the stories of some of those who fell are preserved.

Among the books I took on holiday with me was 'No Greater Story – Rediscovering your place in God's epic adventure', by Leon Evans. I bought this book at Spring Harvest last year, when it was the book to accompany the main talks. Leon is an expert on the Old Testament Book of Isaiah, and he skilfully demonstrates how Isaiah is a book for all times.

Sometimes described as the 'Romans' of the Old Testament, it's like the Bible in miniature. The first thirty-nine chapters dwell on the judgement of God, whereas the remaining twenty-seven chapters focus on God consoling his people. It's second only to The Psalms in the number of times Jesus quotes from it; and Paul mines it more than any other book when trying to describe the Messiah's mission, and God's grace to the Gentiles.

Leon Evans discusses the features that make a good story: a beginning, a middle and an end; but more than that, a compelling plot-line involving tension and suspense, that leads ultimately to a surprising yet deeply satisfying ending.

Reflecting on our visit to the American war cemetery, the seemingly

endless rows of crosses, (mostly crosses), stand testimony to the grim sacrifice of so many lives. Few, if any of us get to write the life story we choose for ourselves. Rather, more often than not, our stories get hijacked or derailed by other people or unforeseen circumstances. I'm thinking, not only of servicemen, but of people who acquire life-threatening or life-limiting diseases, and families who lose a child. And, I'm also reflecting on the other end of life's spectrum, when people lose a sibling or a soul-mate.

Redemption seems to be the key to understanding Jesus' story. It would be a tragedy without the resurrection. But, instead, in rising again, he defeated death! And that, it seems to me, gives us hope to rewrite our own story. Regardless of how it may look right now, if we can see our story enfolded in the overarching narrative of Christ — his birth, death and resurrection — we will find faith and love, to live in hope!

Like other empires before and since, the Roman Empire, relied on slave labour. And over many centuries, millions of conquered people have been uprooted from their families and neighbourhoods. Where could they find hope in a foreign land? Isaiah has an answer: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned (Is.9:2);"... "The Spirit of the sovereign LORD is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, ... to comfort all who mourn,

(Is.61:1-2)."

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10)."

Peter



[An open letter of introduction from the Rev Alex Jacob](#)

To Members and Adherents of congregations within the possible 'North Suffolk Coast Mission Partnership'.

Back in October 2023, I was appointed by the Eastern Synod to the ministry post of Synod Transitional Minister. The main role in this new appointment is to encourage and help congregations discern and plan for being part of the new Mission Partnership structures. The principles and core values of Mission Partnerships were agreed at the Synod meeting in March 2023. These Mission Partnerships (the current plan is for 19 Mission Partnerships to be established across the Synod) will begin to replace/develop previous pastorates. This work has made good progress with ten Mission Partnerships being established in the past three years.

I have worked closely with five of these newly formed Mission Partnerships and hopefully I have contributed to the mission and future direction of these Mission Partnerships. I have also had the privilege of preaching and teaching within 27 congregations across the Synod during this time.

I believe that the structure and wider strategy of Mission Partnerships are very important in helping congregations to be sustained and to flourish, but ultimately structures and strategies do not produce 'spiritual fruit' - only the Holy Spirit can do this. So, in all our planning and endeavours our heart-felt prayer must be: "Come, Holy Spirit, bless, direct, empower and renew us."

This current present Mission Partnership plan involves the following congregations: Halesworth (and Bramfield) Southwold, Lowestoft, Beccles (URC/Methodist LEP) and Wrentham. The current allocation is for one full-time stipendiary URC Minister to be appointed, and he or she will compliment and work with ecumenical colleagues, lay staff members etc.

I look forward to getting to know you as we work together on the formation of this possible Mission Partnership. In terms of a bit of information about me, I am a United Reformed Church Minister ordained in March 1985. Before this Synod role, I led three URC pastorates (1985-2006) and was CEO of an International Mission Agency (2006-2023). I have published and taught mainly in the field of Jewish-Christian Relations and most recently on Christian Discipleship.

I made a Christian commitment as a teenager, and trained for Ordination at Northern College, Manchester, and did further studies at the Cambridge Theological Federation and Nottingham University. I am married to Mandy, and we have three adult children and four grandchildren. I live in Sawston, and enjoy travelling, music, eating Indian food, playing golf and supporting Cambridge United F.C (but not all at the same time). I am a member of Linton Free Church (URC) and I currently serve on the Synod Pastoral Committee and the General Assembly Appointments Panel.

I plan to begin my work with you from 15th June onwards. I will be working across the Synod from July onwards on a 50% scope basis and I plan to focus my work with you on most Tuesdays and Wednesdays plus being available to lead worship within the potential Mission Partnership

congregations on the first two Sundays each month.

I value your prayers and support, with kind regards and Shalom

Alex

Rev Alex Jacob



Halesworth URC

As part of my ministry with the formation of the possible Mission Partnership, I plan to be at Halesworth most Tuesdays. On Tuesdays when I am here, I hope to get to know some who share in the Toddler group, attend Messy Church and will be available to share in the monthly (?) Elders meetings. I have been given some workspace in the vestry which will be where I am based on these Tuesdays.

In order to give the opportunity for those who would appreciate some 'pastoral support' I have set aside three 45 min slots of time (10-10.45, 11-11.45 and 12- 12.45) when I will be available to have a conversation and to pray with anyone from the congregation who would perhaps like to share a pastoral concern, or explore together an aspect of discipleship or share any hopes/concerns about the Mission Partnership process.

To help me plan and to make sure I am available please if you would like to meet with me can you email me – stm@urceastern.org.uk to book your time slot. I will then send to you confirmation of date and time. As I said I may not be at Halesworth every Tuesday so it will be helpful to 'pre-book' slots.

In terms of the next few weeks, I plan to be at Halesworth on 7th 14th and 28th July. I will put up a notice on the vestry door for my availability in August and following months.

With kind regards and shalom

Alex

Rev Alex Jacob Synod Transitional Minister (Mission Partnerships)

"Never ceasing motion..."

Fellow Fans of Gilbert and Sullivan will recognise that the title (above) is taken from the Chorus of Fairies' opening song in "Iolanthe"

It's ok! I promise that this is not an encouragement to enjoy the experience of G&S Operettas, but collection of thoughts on the way our lives are also in "never ceasing motion", even though we don't always recognize this.

Six years ago, this theme of "never ceasing motion" led me to focus on the first 2 chapters of Ezra, the return of exiles from Babylon after 80 years in captivity! How it took lots of time, planning, rebuilding, dedication and fighting off many attempts to undermine God's plans, to bring the nation through to where God wanted them to be....and I mused (at the time) about what this situation had to say to us, when we have unexpected problems?

And now, 6 years after all that, I am again pondering on the way God 'keeps us in "never ceasing motion", as we now have a new direction before us, bringing new situations every day. What is the direction into which God is leading us? Like every church, we are a living body, which changes through the years. We, here in HURC, are facing possible changes to our "patterns of life". We are all older for one thing (well, Alan and I are really noticing that **we** are older!)

Remembering how God used the gargantuan changes and "movement" in the lives of the Jewish people (after 80 years of captivity), I wonder if we, in "little old Halesworth" today, might be looking at a new movement of God, which will bring changes to the life of His "Church" (that is **all the Christians** in the town).

Truly, these are difficult times for new, young Christians. The pattern of Sundays being a 'special' day are gone. For very many people it is just another working day, making "Sunday Services" practically impossible for them: also, many children will be involved, more than ever, in sports activities etc. on Sundays. I realize that some of these things have always been a problem to "church attendance", but at this time, the difficulties are huge. I feel that we should focus prayers for **Christ's body** in Halesworth, that we all might really seek God's directions and follow the way in which He is planning. I have no idea what God might want to change, or provide: I simply feel that we need to LISTEN very carefully to how God is directing His Church and enabling her to be active in these (almost), Godless times.

I am also prompted to request prayer for the Edgar Sewter School.

Earlier this year, Peter Wagg and I were invited by Helen Capes (the new Deputy Head at Edgar Sewter) to meet with her and the teacher in charge of Religious Education at the school. They displayed a real desire for the school and HURC to work together more, with regard to "Religious Studies". They were keen for us to have regular sessions together in our Church building... and other exciting possibilities. were enthusiastically discussed.

However, **Helen has now been appointed (with Immediate effect) as Head Teacher at another school!** At the time of writing this, I still don't know whether those (discussed hopes for future contact with the school) will remain. Because of the Smedleys' health difficulties, I have not felt able to make further enquiries, but I hope, soon, to follow up with the school if we can confirm our "plans". There is a 'sense' of motion, but we need to really hear from God what **His** plans are.

Thank God for Elizabeth, who has done (and is doing) amazing work. But she is only human and there is always a limit to what any of us can do. The direction of that "never ceasing motion" of Holy Spirit is important and we need to be aware of where the Spirit is moving and (indeed) where the Spirit is generally leading people in these crucial times.

IF any of you has any indication in your prayers, of the way God is speaking to you about "movement" in the life of the church and community, please speak to the elders and share what you are feeling. You might think **"it's only me"**... but check scripture, God often gives particular prayer, or prophetic, responsibilities to individuals. You may be the "praying" or the "prophetic" part of God's next "movement" in East Anglia! **Have faith and courage.**

On a personal note, at the time of writing, it looks as though I have come to a point when my involvement with "Open the Book" is either not going to be possible for me, or will be severely reduced. Alan also is facing totally unexpected changes in his own health and well-being, which might mean that his "never ceasing motion" is taking him in directions quite different to those we had ever expected. We thank God that He knows "...the ways that we take" (Job 23:10) and that these things are in His Hands, for all of us in God's family.

May He open our eyes and ears... (With love and prayers in Jesus)

Lorraine

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Please continue to hold Moira Cook, Doug Mizon, Chris Dominic and Alan Smedley plus others who may need prayer at this time.

I am sure many church members will remember Norma Thwaites who was a member of our church for many years before moving to be with her family in Bexhill-on-Sea. During those years she served periods of time as Magazine Secretary and Church Elder playing a very active role in our Church.

Norma continued her Christian journey at the United Reform Church at Bexhill-on-Sea, being a very active member there and enthusiastically serving many supporting groups within the Church.

Sadly, after a comparatively short illness, Norma passed away on 21st June this year. A Celebration and Thanksgiving for her life was held on 15th July at Bexhill United Reform Church and, in accordance with Norma's wishes, she was brought back to Halesworth to be buried with her late husband Albi in the cemetery here, which took place on 17th July.

Christian Aid Week – 2026

As a result of another successful Christian Aid Week a total sum of £3312 was sent to Christian Aid to support it's work in enabling some of the world's poorest people to sustain themselves and to improve their situation and that of their community.

Of this £1124 was Gift-Aided, so that an additional £281 (25%) will be recovered in Income Tax by Christian Aid, giving them a total benefit of £3593.

Most of the donations were made through Church Services, unlike previous years when a significant amount was contributed through the door-to-door delivery of envelopes. Our Service at HURC, and donations made subsequently, raised an excellent £609 of which £379 was Gift-Aided.

On behalf of the Halesworth and District Christian Aid Group, I should like to say a sincere "Thank You" to everyone who donated so generously and helped, in whatever way, to achieve this very satisfactory outcome

Chris Dunn (Local CA Treasurer)



Sunday 2nd	11.00 am	Gathered Worship Rev Alex Jacob
Friday 7th	9.45 a.m.	Prayer Meeting in the Church and followed by Coffee Morning
Sunday 9th	11.00 a.m.	Gathered Worship Elizabeth
3 pm BRAMFIELD CHAPEL		
Friday 14th	9.45 a.m.	Prayer Meeting in the Church and followed by Coffee Morning
Sunday 16th	11.00 a.m.	Gathered Worship Paul Potts
Friday 21st	9.45 a.m.	Prayer Meeting in the Church followed by Coffee Morning
Sunday 23rd	11.00 a.m.	Gathered Worship T.B.A
Friday 28th	9.45 a.m.	Prayer Meeting in the Church followed by Coffee Morning
Sunday 30th	11.00 a.m.	Gathered Worship T.B.A

SPECIAL DATES at HURC Halesworth United Reformed Church



HURC Too
Every Sunday
ALL AGE SERVICE 9th

School holidays start week commencing 21st July so no weekday family or youth activities until - -

Holiday Bible Club on 4th - 7th August 10am - 12pm.



July Family and Youth Recap

During our time on a Sunday, we have been looking at some of the women in the Bible who, along with the disciples, followed Jesus, and the ones that (even after Jesus rose to heaven) continued spreading his teachings amongst their families and villages. The families have also been helping with getting things made for our Holiday Bible Club. Helping with the stage design and props to help support the stories we will be sharing. It has been lovely to get both the adults and children involved in creating things for Holiday Bible Club, it gave us all a chance to catch up with one another and offer support, where needed, for things happening in their lives.

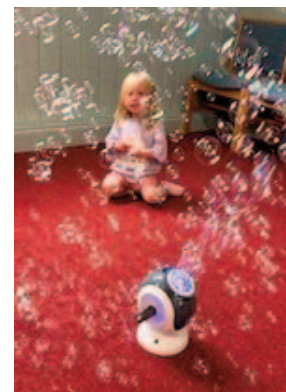
We had just the one Messy Church session this month as the term has now finished for the schools. With this we had a celebration style Messy Church, looking at how Paul reached so many countries via visiting them and writing letters. They then enjoyed creating paper aeroplanes to see who's would fly the furthest and junk model trains to bring people with them, as they journey with Christ.

Our Toddler group enjoyed creating their own football shirts to show their support for our country playing in the FIFA World Cup, as well as having a party to celebrate the end of term. We had a wonderful last Toddlers of the term, the children enjoyed creating different patterns with paints and having party food during snack time. We said our goodbyes to the ones that will leaving Toddler group due to starting Primary School in September and those moving homes to start a new adventure in a different town.

We pray for all our families and children to have a joyful Summer Holidays, spending time together and making those lovely family memories with one another. We ask God to be with each and everyone of them during the holidays, we know (for some) it can be a difficult time of juggling work and childcare, the noise and chaos of having the children home all day every day... and those wishing to have the noise of children, but as they juggle co-parenting, the children are with their other parent. However our families and children's summer holidays look, we pray for God to be with them, comfort, them and bring them peace.

To end the school term, Edgar Sewter hosted a school festival, run by their PTA group, who invited our church to run a stall. It was great to get out into the community again and meet the families who attend our local primary. We had some wonderful conversations with some (hopefully) new families planning on joining our Messy Church group, as well as our Toddler group. We shared information about our Holiday Bible Club and are hopeful they will come along to get a taster of what our church has to offer for our families.

Elizabeth



My Testimony – Learning to Persevere

Our reading today from Hebrews 12 tells us to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Those words challenge me every day because, in my work, I see a world that is increasingly teaching the opposite.

As many of you know, I work as a teacher, Assistant Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Pastoral Lead. Every day I work with children, young people and their families. It is a privilege, but it also gives me a window into the pressures facing this generation.

One thing I have noticed over the years is that perseverance is becoming much harder.

We live in a society that expects immediate results.

If we don't like a television programme, we change the channel.

If a video doesn't grab our attention within seconds, we swipe to the next one.

We order today and expect delivery tomorrow.

The message our culture constantly gives us is that if something is difficult, uncomfortable or takes too long, move on.

I see the effects of that every day in school.

Children often struggle to persevere when learning becomes difficult.

They become frustrated more quickly, and their behaviors reflect this.

They want answers immediately rather than working through the problem.

Many parents, understandably wanting the very best for their children, also want immediate solutions. They want problems fixed quickly. Waiting, practising and gradually building resilience can feel uncomfortable for all of us.

Research is increasingly helping us understand why. Developing brains are being shaped by constant exposure to rapid entertainment, instant feedback and endless choice. Using YouTube, TikTok and other Apps, it is too easy to move on when they are bored, a quick swipe to the right and scroll down to the next video. Children are becoming accustomed to immediate rewards rather than delayed ones. As a result, many find frustration harder to tolerate and perseverance harder to develop.

But if I'm honest, this isn't just about children.

Our whole society has become impatient.

We become impatient with politics, 7 Prime Ministers in 6 years!

With our careers.

With our relationships.

Even with God.

How often do we pray, expect an immediate answer, and when it doesn't come, become discouraged or look elsewhere?

Yet throughout Scripture, God works through waiting.

Abraham waited.

Joseph waited.

Elizabeth and Zechariah waited.

Even Jesus endured the cross because He looked beyond the suffering to the joy that was set before Him.

God develops perseverance because perseverance develops faith.

This is where I believe the Church has something desperately needed by today's generation.

Not another quick fix.

Not another programme.

Not instant answers.

But a community that teaches people how to stay.

To keep praying when answers don't come immediately.

To keep encouraging when life is difficult.

To keep loving children even when they are challenging.

To keep supporting parents who feel overwhelmed.

Families don't simply need advice; they need people who will walk alongside them.

Young people don't simply need rules; they need relationships.

That is why I am so thankful for our church.

Our Messy Church, cafés, toddler groups and all the relationships we build are about far more than activities. They are opportunities to model something that the world rarely offers—patience, consistency, faithfulness and hope.

Opportunities for someone who feels isolated to be welcomed.

For a tired parent to be encouraged.

For a child to discover they are loved by God.

For someone who would never attend a Sunday service to experience the love of Christ through His people. (There have been many times when a child or their parent has come to me in such despair—either because of broken friendships and relationships, or a feeling that they are just not good enough. In those moments, I have offered them love, care, and a listening ear, showing them that they are good enough and telling them that, no matter what, they are loved. This has been so important in calming their emotions and helping them to feel listened to and believed.)

Church isn't just what happens here on a Sunday morning.

Church is every conversation over a cup of tea.

Every smile that says, "We're glad you're here."

Every volunteer who remembers a child's name.

Every person who notices a struggling parent and simply asks, "How are you really doing?"

Those moments matter more than we often realize.

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can give the next generation is not simply telling them to persevere but showing them what perseverance looks like.

Showing them a church family that doesn't give up on people. A church that walks alongside families through the difficult seasons.

A church that reflects the patient love of God.

Because if our culture teaches people to move on, the Church should be the place that teaches people to remain faithful.

That is the race that Hebrews calls us to run.

And I believe it is one of the greatest gifts we can offer the children and families God has placed among us.

Testimony given by Carolyn Mann

Sunday 19th July



Volunteers

Coffee Mornings (Fridays)

Other Duties Greeting/Prayers etc

Open the Book Team and organiser

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

