



# outlook

Newsletter of **Pond Square Chapel** | Highgate United Reformed Church | **October 2025 - December 2025**



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## • Minister's Message

Mirrors are almost as old as civilisation itself. The oldest date back as far as 8,000 years, to ancient Turkey. This year, I enjoyed a trip to Paris and was particularly taken (like many other tourists before me) by the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles.

The Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles was built between 1678 and 1684 during the reign of King Louis XIV to showcase the glory and power of his rule. Designed by architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart and decorated by artist Charles Le Brun, the grand gallery features 357 mirrors facing tall arched windows overlooking the gardens. It became a symbol of French opulence and absolute monarchy. Historically, it hosted major events, including the 1871 proclamation of the German Empire and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which ended World War I. Today, it remains a key highlight of Versailles and a testament to France's royal past.

Scripture also includes references to mirrors we read:

"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face..." 1 Corinthians 13:12

"Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." James 1:23-24

"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

But whether it is the polished metal of the ancients or the filtered phone screen of the post-moderns, a mirror has never been able to offer a true reflection of reality. That's why I have always appreciated the old Irish proverb, "a friend's eye is a good mirror." This metaphor rightly affirms how a different perspective can provide a clearer vision than anything we might glean from our own visage.

In church, we seek out that different perspective, faith is the "friend's eye" that allows us to see and understand ourselves better. May we hold our faith like a mirror to the world around us, reflecting the image of Christ into many of the pressing political and social problems that we hear reported on a daily basis and may we as a community come to see that there is another way of doing things and behaving, and that is the Jesus way. A way that cares for the vulnerable and the outcast, a way that welcomes the refugee, a way that affirms at its core the value of every human being and a way that always chooses kindness and love (even when that is difficult).

## • PhD Graduation



'It has been quite the journey' was the feeling that resonated as mum and I travelled to The Royal Festival Hall at the end of July for my PhD graduation. Despite having been awarded the doctorate the previous year, this was the first graduation ceremony it was possible to attend. With the passage of time, it meant that the day could be fully enjoyed as I reflected back on the journey that had begun at Lancaster University and culminated at King's College London.

As you may be aware, the title of my thesis was 'The Relevance of Faith to Abuse: A Study of Lived Experience of Clerical Childhood Sexual Abuse within the United Kingdom.' The thesis explored the faith journeys of both those who have experienced clerical childhood sexual abuse and those who have perpetrated it. The thesis itself drew on observations from twenty-five one-hour interviews, twenty-one of which were with individuals whom a clerical perpetrator abused, and four were with perpetrators of clerical childhood sexual abuse.

It is hardly surprising that as I prepared to walk across the stage in the auditorium, those who had so willingly shared their stories with me were first and foremost in my mind. Their courage and bravery to speak and to allow me to document their lived experiences is a privilege I will never forget. I will be forever indebted to them. I only hope that if they read it, they feel I have represented them fairly and compassionately.

As I listened to the speeches, I was once again reminded of the ability of London as a place to bring together so many people from so many backgrounds and allow them to each flourish in their own individual ways and to collectively pursue endeavours for the common good. I hope this doctorate is my small contribution to that.

Rev Dr Jonathan Abernethy-Barkley





# • Dates for the diary

## OCTOBER 2025

**Sun 5th** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship.

**Thur 9th** 11.00 am  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge)  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm

**Fri 10th** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

**Sun 12th** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship.  
The service will mark harvest, and any donations of food items will be donated to a local food bank.  
The service will also include communion.

**Thur 16th** 11.00 am  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge)  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm.

**Fri 17th** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

**Sun 19th** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship

**Thur 23rd** 11.00 am  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge)  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm.

**Fri 24th** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

**Sun 26th** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship

**Thur 30th** 11.00 am  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge)  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm

**Fri 31st** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

## NOVEMBER 2025

**Sun 2nd** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship.

**Thur 6th** 10.00 am  
Little Village Collection Drive  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge) 11.00 am  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm

**Fri 7th** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

**Sun 9th** 10.30 am  
Remembrance Sunday Morning Worship.  
The service will include an act of remembrance and communion.

**Thur 13th** 11.00 am  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge)  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm

**Fri 14th** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

**Sun 16th** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship

**Thur 20th** 11.00 am  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge)  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm

**Fri 21st** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

**Sat 22nd** 10.30 am  
Fundraising Ceilidh (more details to follow)

**Sun 23rd** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship

**Thur 27th** 11.00 am  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge)  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm

**Fri 28th** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

**Sun 3th** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship. First in Advent

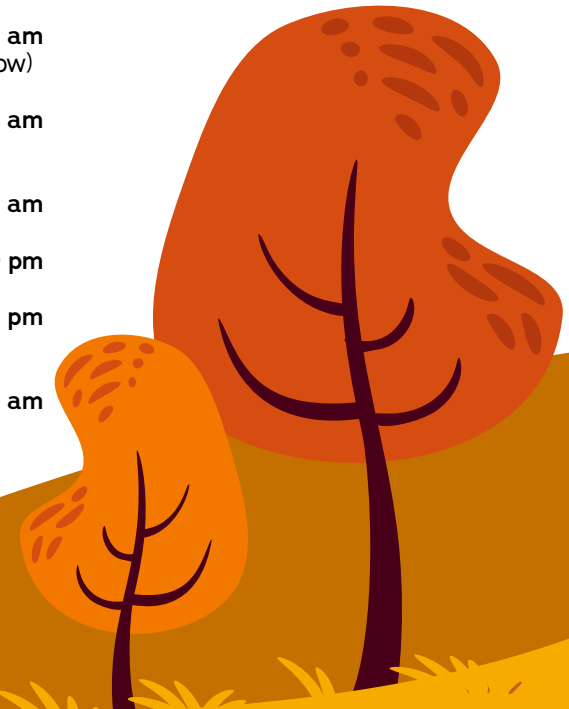
## DECEMBER 2025

**Thur 4th** 10.00 am  
Little Village Collection Drive  
Informal Bible Study (in the Lounge) 11.00 am  
Noon Drop-in Community Lunch till 13.30 pm

**Fri 5th** 12.30 pm  
Meditation via Zoom

**Sun 7th** 10.30 am  
Morning Worship. Second in Advent

Christmas Events to follow in next edition!



## • Spire Repair Project Update

At the 2024 AGM it was reported that cracks had been identified in the spire, and that there was a need for possibly significant further work and maintenance.

The initial challenge for the Church has been the unknown cost and unknown urgency of any necessary repairs to the spire. In the expectation that the costs would not be small the second challenge has been how to pay for necessary repairs.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund was identified as a potential source of funding. An initial project enquiry was submitted in late 2024. The response was generally positive and advised that the project should be divided into two phases being first an investigation to survey, scope and cost the needed repairs, and second being the work needed to carry out the repairs. Applications for funding should be made separately for each phase.



In February the Church applied for a grant of £18,852 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to cover the costs of surveying the spire and engaging the necessary professionals to scope, design, and tender the necessary repairs. The application was successful. To date we have received £9,426.

Atkinson Roe are engaged as the architect and project manager for the project. The aerial survey of the spire was completed in August and ideally the necessary works will be scoped and costed in order for a funding application to be submitted to The National Lottery Heritage Fund before the end of the year.

While the NLHF have confirmed the whole works are eligible for funding they have not confirmed how much of the works they will fund. Any shortfall in funding is therefore a risk for the Church and a potential call on Church funds and reserves

## • Church Heating Replacement

The three existing boilers were installed in 2013 at a cost of less than £14,000. Since then there have been fairly regular instances of failure and additional cost in pursuit of reliable operation. In 2021, in response to reliability issues, almost £18,000 was spent on a major overhaul in the expectation that this would provide 5 to 10 years of operation. However, as was experienced over the last two winters, the system is still not robust and reliable.

Elders have considered two alternative approaches: Either continue to spend money on hoping the existing boilers work and wearing a thick coat when they don't, or replace the existing boilers with a new reliable system. Elders view is that the lack of effective and robust heating will begin to erode the sustainability of many of our activities in the church from making worship less attractive, to challenging our suitability as a venue for the winter shelter, to encouraging key users of the building to rent space elsewhere. As such Elders recommendation to Church Meeting is that the boilers should be replaced.

Over the last twelve months the Management Committee have investigated various potential alternatives and proposals for replacing the current trio of unhappy gas boilers. Existing and potential suppliers have advised that the existing boilers should be replaced and that parts are increasingly difficult to source. Several options have been researched. An added complication is that a new boiler will also require replacing the flue as it is no longer compliant. Our preferred option is a single Viessman boiler which requires replacing the flue and also the noisy fan heaters in the chapel which should provide much more efficient heating. The boiler comes with a ten year guarantee. In total the project will cost in the region of £100,000.

Elders are recommending that the project go ahead in early summer 2026 in order to provide time for investigating and applying for grants, as well as for planning and pursuing specific fund raising activities. Boilers appear to be less appealing to potential grant funders than the spire and the current expectation is that the majority of the £100,000 cost will have to be covered by specific fund raising by the church and from church funds.



## • Winter Shelter

As in previous years the shelter at Highgate URC in Pond Square will be on Sunday evenings providing a hot 2-course meal, followed by tea/coffee, chat, Scrabble, chess and a friendly warm environment, then an overnight bed and breakfast.

In 2024/25 Pond Square Chapel hosted the shelter for the full season from early November until early April. In the second half we were able to allow St Michael's Camden to use the building to let their volunteers facilitate their turn in the rota. We plan to do this again. For the first half of the winter – November- mid-January Jonathan and Patricia will be coordinating all the volunteers to provide food and welcome every Sunday night/Monday morning. From mid-January-end March Nick from St Michael's Camden Town will be in charge.

Between November 2024 and April 2025, the shelter supported 80 individuals, the majority of whom were young adults aged 18–24, demonstrating the urgent need for early intervention in homelessness. Of the 80 guests: 45% were aged 18–24 29% were aged 25–34 Only 26% of guests were over the age of 35. Of the 80 guests this season:

- 46% were evicted from National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation
- 28 days after receiving a positive asylum decision.
- 17% were rough sleeping due to immigration issues.
- 9% became homeless due to family or relationship breakdowns.
- 3% cited domestic violence or abuse.



97% of those who engaged with the service achieved a successful move-on outcome. 43% secured positive accommodation pathways, including placements in hostels or supported housing, private rental schemes, and Home Office or council-provided accommodation.

C4WS runs a jobs club and a weekly lunch and drop-in advice centre throughout the year as well as the winter shelter from November to March. Demand for their services continues to increase.

For those unable to volunteer in person contributions of tea, coffee, sugar, breakfast cereal, and small containers of toiletries will be gratefully received. Donations of warm clothing and coats are also welcome as are new men's underpants and socks.

## Sunday's COOL

at Pond Square Chapel

Since Spring this year we have based our children's ministry on the lessons covered in the main service so that we could cover the same topics both upstairs and downstairs. This has given us the chance to develop discussion about the same themes, but from the younger perspective!



We still hold our monthly "Fun Sunday" event, where we always bake a sweet treat for the congregation.

A huge thank you to Iveta for organising this every week!





## • Poem

### The cross-country run

*"Those who want to win something should enter the 100 metres. Those who want to experience something should enter the marathon."*  
Emil Zatopek, Athlete (1948 Olympic Games London)

I wake every morning at six,  
shake myself  
and prepare for my cross-country run.

Winter,  
Spring,  
Summer,  
Autumn,  
I run alone;  
except for the birds  
and the words in my head.

In the billet  
my companions lie dead to the world,  
curled in their sleep.  
Outside: silence.  
Early-morning beautiful.

I pack a glucose tablet into my cheek  
and bouncing over the grass  
anticipate the sickness-barrier  
to my second wind.

I used to feel  
that if I ran enough  
the sickness would go.  
I try not to think of it,  
pace my running to my breathing,  
take pleasure from the feeling  
of contact with the ground.

The early-morning chill wraps round me,  
thoughts of last night intrude  
I adjust my breathing to my running.  
I'm aware of the world slowly waking.  
Rabbits in the grass,  
birds singing.  
And I'm on my way to the windmill,  
half-way point on my run.

Bounding over rutted ground  
in narrow country lanes,  
feeling self-conscious in shorts  
(but trying not to show it).  
Past early-morning workers  
who smile benevolently.

Close to the windmill  
panic in my stomach,  
"must be mad to have  
the mill as half-way point."

I plod up the hill,  
feel my legs shortening.  
Plod, plod,  
pant; plod.  
"Try not to think of the top,  
or look to the top."  
Plod, pant, plod.  
Just me and my breathing,  
me and my guts!

Some days I want to stop,  
give up as I did at school.  
Am I still frightened of the ridicule?

I strain to the top, body like lead.  
Take a few breaths, run on the spot,  
and marvel again at the mill,  
deserted and gutted.  
Built by a man for his wife,  
In Memoriam.

I plunge down the hill,  
thinking with my feet.

Dennis Evans FRSA  
RAF Tangmere, Sussex



Join us for a

# HIGHGATE CEILIDH

*Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 7pm*

**Adults £25    Children £5**

*Live band    Hot supper*

South Grove N6 6BA

Tickets on eventbrite – QR code – or  
[admin@pondsquarechapel.org](mailto:admin@pondsquarechapel.org)

