

## The New Walk

The monthly magazine of St Stephen's  
United Reformed Church (formerly  
Presbyterian)

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### **From Rev. Philp Tiplady:**

I find the production of bread to be a magical, almost mystical, process. A few simple ingredients are taken – flour, water, yeast, salt and maybe sugar or butter or something else. They are mixed together, allowed to rest and the magic starts in the dough as it expands, until it is bashed down and allowed to expand again. Then baked to fix the product and create something that can be marvellous to eat.

Most of us probably don't see the process too often; we are likely to buy our bread from the baker or the supermarket, having allowed someone else to do the hard work in a factory or artisan bakery. After all it is a time-consuming process if you do it manually from first principles.

Bread is probably the most democratic foodstuff. It is something that virtually everyone eats in some form or another. Different places in the world may have their different styles and recipes, people may buy mass-

produced loaves at low prices or really expensive speciality recipes, but at its root it is all bread.

Bread has a function in building communities. It is a foodstuff that is designed for sharing. It is impossible to make a small amount and it doesn't keep very well, so people can give away their surplus, or exchange it for something that they need and they can make rituals out of the exchanges.

We find in the roots of our faith tradition ideas of the importance of bread. We start with the bread of Passover traditions, unleavened, hastily made for a people that were about to leave their place of enslavement. These same people received miraculous rations of bread as they travelled through the wilderness towards their promised land.

In the Gospels we hear about how Jesus was able to take loaves (and fishes) and miraculously feed a multitude of people. There was a little but there was enough to satisfy the whole people, once again God was able to provide the sustenance to maintain life in a miraculous way.

At the end of his earthly ministry Jesus was able to rework the ritual of the Jewish table he was sharing with his disciples to bring a new meaning to the sharing of bread, bringing to it the meaning (or to some the substance) of his suffering at the hands of humanity and God's victory over that suffering.

We continue to find meaning in that ritual today, while it has moved a long way from its root at the community meal table, we still find in it the deep significance it had in the beginning, that has been explored through many years of reflection.

We can also remember the sharing of bread as we share with family and friends, as we see it in food banks and community pantries, as we reflect on where the good things that we have should go.

The mystical may exist in bread, but it is also very practical and we continue to reflect both strands.

Philip



## Services for Jan. and Feb.

- Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>**      **11am Service, led by Rev. Mike Playdon; also on Zoom**
- Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>**      **11am Service, led by Rev. Philip Tiplady; also on Zoom**
- Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>**      **11am Service, led by Rev. Paul Ellis; also on Zoom (Church Meeting to follow at 12.30pm)**
- Jan. 25<sup>th</sup>**      **11am Service, led by Mr. Gary Wood; also on Zoom**
- Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>**        **11am Communion Sunday Service, led by Rev. Paul Ellis; also on Zoom**
- Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>**        **11am Service, led by Rev. Philip Tiplady; also on Zoom**
- Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>**      **11am Service, led by Rev. Mike Playdon; also on Zoom**
- Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>**      **11am Service led by Rev. David Howlett; also on Zoom (first Sunday in Lent)**

### Remembrance Day 2025





### Dates for diaries:

- The next **church meeting** is scheduled for January 18<sup>th</sup> after the morning service when it is hoped as many as possible will be able to attend to help make plans for the coming months.
- Our regular Friday **book sale** recommenced on January 9<sup>th</sup>. As well as demonstrating that we are open and welcoming, this is proving to be quite a profitable venture. Volunteers are needed to help and a sign-up sheet for either the early session (11-1.30) or the later session (1.30-4pm) can be found in the coffee area. A big thank you to all who have helped out to date.

