



## Weekly Prayer Focus: 23rd January 2022 Hutton and Shenfield Union Church

For some, this is just another prayer focus. But for our feature church this week, it comes as a confirmation of where God is focusing their attentions in 2022.

Hutton and Shenfield Union Church is a Baptist/URC local ecumenical partnership situated on a private estate in a popular south Essex commuter hub. The church recently held an away day (that was neither 'away' nor lasted a whole day!) During their time together they examined their strengths and weaknesses, recognising the positives in the way they practice fellowship and eating together, but felt there was not enough prayer together, so decided to make prayer the church's focus for the new year.

There is a sense of excitement and encouragement that the EBA will be helping them kick-off this new season by joining the church in prayer. One of the ways they have been able to engage with their community has been via the self-contained Prayer Chapel at the foot of the church spire, and it was much appreciated that this remained open every day throughout the pandemic lockdowns. Worship has continued in person every Sunday since it was permitted, and the services are currently being live-streamed through YouTube and shared via the church website. Minister Rev Paul Ellis also sends out weekly updates with pastoral news and prayer pointers.

Another prayer initiative is a prayer tree, (picture on right) seen by the hundreds of people who use our premises each week. The prayer tree was also the deacons' slightly unusual contribution to our biennial Christmas Tree Festival, a major weekend event with over 30 trees decorated by different groups within and beyond the Church. The theme this year was *Our Natural World*, and the prayer tree attracted many prayers for a more ecologically sound use of God's beautifully created World. The Festival also raised £1,000 for the local hospice.

At the carol service which concluded the Christmas Tree Festival, the Church also received its EcoChurch Bronze Award, achieved through the work of its Climate Action Team, despite it only being established in October 2021. The bar has been set to progress to the Silver Award this year!

As we ourselves commit to more prayer together, we should value your prayers for:

- \* The whole fellowship (slightly over 100 members) taking on board the call to prayer;
- \* Our Alpha Course in February and March, shared for the first time with Hutton Parish Church;
- \* Someone to be called to succeed our current Church Secretary, who now comes to the end of her term of office.