



Yours

Magazine of
The United Church
Winchester

September 2022



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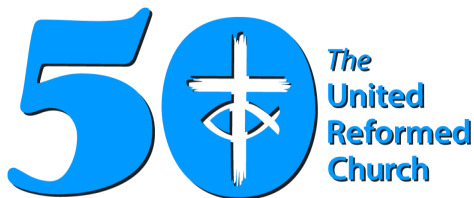
Anna Miles

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Tim's Letter: The Year of Jubilee Happy 50th Anniversary, United Reformed Church!

As I've mentioned a number of times this year, the United Reformed Church, one of our partner denominations here at United, and the church which inhabited this building (if only for two years!) before we

United our family, turns 50 this year; it is its Golden Jubilee in modern parlance, and it is the Year of Jubilee if looked at from the perspective of Leviticus 25. Fifty years ago, on the 5



Faith – Hope – Love – Since 1972

October 1972, the United Reformed Church came into being by Royal Assent of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. It was a groundbreaking moment as it represented the first major union of two different Christian bodies (Congregational and Presbyterian) since the Reformation. The denomination's first General Assembly, and Service of Thanksgiving held on that date, was celebrated at Methodist Central Hall, a sign of the emerging partnership between these two traditions that has underpinned much of this country's ecumenical endeavours in recent decades.

It might surprise you to learn that the URC was never meant to last this long: it was born to die. In the ecumenically charged years which followed WWII, the possibility of wide scale, visible union of major English denominations seemed an achievable aspiration. Ecumenists had high hopes that the Church of England, along with the Methodist Church, might build on the work of the URC in forming further unions. Though this dream was never fully realised, the URC rejoiced when they united with the Churches of Christ in 1981, and again, in 2001, with the Congregational Union of Scotland.

To this very day, and despite its diminutive size, it continues to lead the way in championing Christian unity, and in building on the success of local ecumenical relationships which have flourished through its work as part of the Churches Together movement. A special service of thanksgiving will be held on Saturday 1 October, once again at Methodist Central Hall, to mark this moment of jubilee. And we at United will be spending time rejoicing in the life of the URC in our worship on Sunday 4 September, and again as part of our all-age Harvest service on 2 October. Let us pray that these events, and our own celebrations and reflections, will enable us to appreciate all that the Reformed tradition has contributed to our life and witness, and may it challenge us all to think about how the denomination, and our own place within it, will minister to the world in the years to come.

Editorial

Welcome to a bumper edition of *Yours!* We are grateful to Marjory Monro for our front cover picture. This was created with a class she taught while they were reading *A Pilgrim's Progress*. She writes: 'We are looking at the burdened Christian climbing the rocky paths to the Celestial city. As are we all, perhaps.'

Graham MacKenzie explains the background to Merchant Navy Day which he asks us to remember on 3 September, Chris Young gives us tips on growing mouth-watering peaches and Adrian Bulley shares memories of his life in the URC.

You will enjoy a Brief Encounter with Jean and Ian Giles while 'Where Are They Now' returns with news from Mary Kamara (Keniger). She writes of time spent in church as a child. 'Throughout all those years, I cannot remember experiencing

anything other than acceptance and encouragement.' This has been true for so many and that is a witness to a host of present and past members of the community.

The Yours Team—Bob Lord, Dorothy Lusmore and Sophie Armstrong

News of the United Church Family

We were delighted to receive Adrian and Ann Bulley into membership on 7 August. They have transferred from Parkminster URC in Cardiff.



On Sunday 26 June, Tim conducted the Baptism of Luke, son of Kevin and Kim Emery. This was a quiet afternoon service in church.

Many of you will be aware that Donna Keniger is now living at Westacre Care Home on Sleepers Hill. (see Mary's update below)

Lyn Puleston wishes to thank all those United Church friends who were in contact with him after the death of Brenda. He very much appreciates it.

Congratulations to those who received A Level results recently- Hal Armstrong is taking a gap year before going to university next year.

Courtney Barnes is going to study Forensic Investigation at The University of South Wales.

Michael Giffin will be starting a degree in Mechanical Engineering at University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol.

Luke Grigorian is off to Loughborough University to study Product Design and Technology.

All of them are in our prayers as they start this important next phase of their lives.

In addition, several of our young people have just completed their GCSEs. We wish them all well for the future.

The long-awaited 2022 edition of the Fellowship List will be available in September from church on a Sunday and from the church office in the week!

Helen McTiffin, Pastoral Co-ordinator

Update on Donna Keniger



Many of you will know Donna well. Having moved from Canada in the early 70s, she has attended The United Church for over 40 years, and has always been very active in church life. Donna was on the founding Coffee Bar Committee, and also acted as treasurer. She managed the annual local Christian Aid

collection, which due to her keen attention to detail meant our house was briefly taken over each year with neatly stacked red Christian Aid envelopes, ledgers, and calculators. As a naturally sympathetic person, and an excellent listener, she was a dedicated pastoral visitor for several church members over the years too, and she always made an effort to welcome newcomers to the church.

Of all the things Donna did at church, I think her favourite was helping with Sunday School. Donna worked at Winchester University Library for most of her working life, but had originally wanted to be a teacher, which makes perfect sense when you see what a gift she has with children. She worked alongside Miss Evelyn Penny looking after the youngest children for many years, and eventually she served as the leader of the Junior

church. I remember always being surprised at her energy, and her confidence in addressing all the children, and in thinking up new games, activities, and songs.

Sadly, in recent years, Donna's health has worsened because she has dementia. She actually has an unusual form of dementia called Primary Progressive Aphasia. This means that the first and most profound skill affected is her language ability. As many of you will have experienced first-hand, this hasn't stopped Donna from communicating, and she still enjoys and excels at social interaction. As a family we wanted to thank the church for all the kindness and friendship shown to Donna during what became daily visits to the church and the coffee bar, accompanied by her husband Bev, who has taken care of her for many years. On Sundays, perhaps some of you have also seen her taking pleasure in music – she is becoming a more and more confident singer and dancer, which is lovely to see.

Donna moved into Westacre Nursing Home on Sleepers Hill in mid-July. True to her personality, she immediately started smiling and chatting with other residents, and we have high hopes that she will quickly settle in and enjoy her time there. Once she is settled there, we think Donna would love to have some visitors, so please do go and say hello if you get the chance. Good company and familiar faces always provoke a smile. Donna may



not understand all your words, but she will definitely understand friendship, kindness, and fellowship.

Mary Kamara

See Mary's 'Where are They Now' piece on pages 18–20. (Ed.)

**Donna with her
granddaughter, Joy**

Book Review Corner

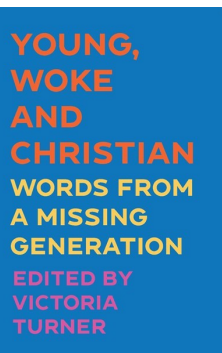
Young, Woke and Christian: Words from a Missing Generation, edited by Victoria Turner

Puzzled by the title? ‘Woke’ is a fairly new word in England, often used in a derogatory way by the press. In this book it is taken to mean ‘awake to inequalities, committed to pursuing justice’. And the missing generation? – ‘thoughtful, Christian young adults, many of whom do not find conventional “church” speaks to them’.

This book is not a light-hearted read for a hot summer afternoon, but a serious clarion call to the church to wake up to the issues that concern young people. It is a collection of 13 articles from Christians mostly in their twenties, on issues about which they feel passionate, and long for the church to join with them. As in any such collection, there is a great variety. Some articles may leave you feeling exasperated, even shocked, while others, I hope, you will find challenging, inspiring, even hopeful.

In his preface Anthony Reddie, an eminent theologian and educationalist (also a Methodist local preacher), speaks of ‘the radical joy of this book ... seeking to model the very qualities of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ... a call for Christianity to rediscover its radical roots ..., to side with those who are told they do not count and their lives do not matter’.

Agree or disagree, its certainly food for thought!



Pat Fry

Film Review

A new film version of *Persuasion* (PG) does little to show Jane Austen's subtle portrayal of damage wreaked by past hurts. Gone, too, is the author's nuanced phraseology. Former lovers are now 'exes'. Solicitous enquiries into another's welfare are reduced to asking if everything is 'OK'. A person's relative attractiveness, frequently mentioned in Austen's works, is now judged on a scale of one to ten.

The stage director Carrie Cracknell's cinematic debut is less an adaptation, more like contemporary variations on a theme composed many years earlier.



Nineteen-year-old Anne Elliot was persuaded by her mentor, Lady Russell, to reject the impecunious Frederick Wentworth's proposal. Eight years on, though still mourning the loss, she has turned her own secret pain into empathy for (often selfish) others ...

Like Austen, the film questions whether the Almighty placed the high and lowly where they are and ordered their estate. Sir Walter, Anne's father (Richard E. Grant) is a narcissistic aristocrat forced to 'downsize' because of 'his excessive excesses'. The prospect that Admiral Croft, a self-made man, will rent his stately home disgusts him ...

Anne fruitlessly counsels her father that true reputation comes from honesty, integrity, compassion, acceptance of responsibility

for the welfare of others – endorsing Austen’s own Christian values in the face of an entrepreneurial middle class.

One might lament the near-absence of clergy in this production. No mention of Dr Shirley or Frederick’s brother – both clerics – and only passing reference to Henry Hayter, a curate ... For Austen, the clergy are crucial to the well-being of the country. What they are, or are not, provides its Christian moral compass. This film chiefly relies on Anne, not the Church, to be this, amid the scrutiny of patriarchy and a reassessment of the place of feelings in our social arrangements. All to the good; but in the process the film lacks the exploration into the part that sorrow and pain might play as a necessary stage in Anne’s (and the audience’s) spiritual development.

Extract from *The Church Times*,
29 July 2022

Please Remember 3 September: Merchant Navy Day.

Why this date for this day?

It is coincident with the outbreak of World War 2, and the reason this date is chosen is that the first losses at sea occurred within hours of the declaration of war with the sinking of SS

Athenia, having left Glasgow on the 1 September for Montreal calling at Liverpool and Belfast with 1,103 passengers and 315 crew on board. *Athenia* was approximately 60 miles south of Rockall when she was torpedoed by a U-30 at



approximately 16.30 with the subsequent loss of 98 passengers and 19 crew, and hence opened what became known as the Battle of the Atlantic that continued until peace was declared in Europe in 1944.

Did you know that during the Battle of Britain, every gallon of high octane fuel for the RAF fighters came by sea from the USA? Tankers were the most dangerous ships to crew during those times.

Also, without the combined efforts of the Merchant and Royal Navy, Britain would have starved, as then, as now, we are not self sufficient in foods or other materials to support our daily lives. Today, more than 95% of Britain's trade is by sea.

In total, the Merchant Navy lost 30,248 seamen during WW2; a death rate proportionally higher than any of the armed services. For survivors, once the ship went down, their pay stopped.

We should give thanks to all seafarers for sustaining our ability to trade with the rest of the world, regardless of weather and often with long separations from families.

Please remember seafarers as you go about your daily lives.

Graham Mackenzie



Foxlease Camping Weekend 15–17 July

It was great that it could take place again this year. Many thanks to Mel and Rob Grigorian for organising this great Church family time together.

Most groups arrived on Friday afternoon to set up camp. This was followed by a camp fire and fish and chips.

Anyone can join this event and you do not require children to attend. It was great to see so many youngsters being able to interact with older members.



We arrived on Saturday morning for the day. Just as we arrived the group were setting off for a walk through the New Forest. A beautiful walk on a very warm day. We walked to a cool stream where we stopped to picnic and splash in the water. It was wonderful to listen to the group of teenagers join in singing on the river bank. I did not know that Jacob sang opera and he was accompanied by Rob on guitar. Ellie, Amelie and Elise were also playing sound instruments and singing. What musical talent we have in our church. Well done everyone; it was great.

When we decided to walk back to camp we were all tired and hot, and as we came round the corner we spotted an ice cream van driving away. We all shouted and waved and luckily on seeing our large group he stopped, much to all our delight.

The rest of the day was spent chatting and relaxing in the shade. A camp fire was lit ready for a BBQ. It was a lovely evening, everyone enjoying each others company.

Although we did not camp this year, we have attended as campers and day visitors in other years. If you have never been

it is well worth a visit.

Foxlease is in a beautiful setting and used by schools, guides and scouts. We have so many happy memories here.

Do come and join in the fun next year.

Many thanks again to the Grigorian's for organising this great event.

Ann Coleman



The Hampshire and the Islands Historic Churches Trust is organising its annual 'Ride and Stride' event on Saturday 10 September 2022. People of all ages are invited to spend an enjoyable time raising funds for repairs and restoration to the churches and chapels in the area. Participants are asked to visit as many churches as possible by cycle or on foot, or even by horse or mobility scooter. They obtain sponsorship, the proceeds to be shared between HIHCT and their own church.

If you would like to take part, full details are available on the website www.hihct.org.uk

Graham Rolfe

Our Mission Project–Link to Hope

As turbulent times continue in the world, we are grateful for all our supporters and volunteers. We are eternally grateful for those who month after month, support our projects with direct debits and sponsorships that fund our education and social care work.

Equally for the people that practically help us, pray for us and give their valuable help.



The Shoebox appeal is needed more than ever this year.

We are already busy filling shoeboxes. Leaflets are available at the front and back doors in Church. We will have some empty shoe boxes at Church in September for you to take to fill. Please do see if you have any items we require.

Coffee Morning

We will be holding a fundraising coffee morning on Tuesday 6 September at Yvonne North's 10 am–12 midday. If you have any items please bring them along. (See posters in Church of items we especially need.)

Many thanks.

**Ann and Yvonne
World Mission Group**

With One Voice

At the AGM of Churches Together in Winchester at the end of June, Revd Dr Howard Mellor was appointed as Chair, to follow our minister Tim. We asked Howard to re-introduce himself to Yours.

My first appointment was in Deptford and Greenwich in the early seventies. It was here in an area still bearing the scars of bomb damage, with plots surrounded by rusty corrugated steel fencing, that I learned so much.

I was invited each week to a minister's prayer group, focussed around Holy Communion, at the Church of the Ascension where the vicar was Revd Paul Oestreicher. Then to his place for breakfast. It was in these heady days that I first realised the importance and power of working together as one. This has been proved in all my appointments, leading to joint Bible studies in Croydon called 'Life in the Spirit', a big community mission, and it influenced all the work we undertook at and from Cliff College. And so, to Winchester where working together we were able to present the Winchester Passion. Then to Hong Kong where the churches organised an international Justice Conference.

These are the headline things but they were only possible because of the relationships, shared times of fellowship and prayer, opportunities to acknowledge difference and yet to celebrate the faith we hold in common.

This ought not to be surprising because Jesus called us to be one 'that everyone may know you are my disciples' (John 13:35). The importance of working together ecumenically is underlined by Paul in Romans 15:5–6: 'May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may **with one voice** glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

The biblical record is quite clear that speaking is not only audible but also leads to action. So when Paul speaks of 'one voice', he

also infers that we engage as one and act as one. I'm a Methodist and recall that when John Wesley met with his preachers in 1744 the question was posed: 'What may we reasonably believe to be God's design, in raising up the Preachers, called Methodist?' The answer is illuminating: 'To reform the nation, more particularly the Church, to spread scriptural holiness over the land.'

I have the hope and vision that in sharing together with other churches in the city we might be able to have Wesley's vision as part of what we are able to do in shared ministry and mission, speaking prophetically to issues in our nation, serving pastorally our community and sharing in engaging ways our faith in the transforming power of Jesus.

There are already many ways in which we see these things being done as we work together. I'm convinced that working together, 'with one voice', there is increased scope to engage in mission and ministry in the public arena, increased power in our shared message and a deeper engagement in the city. It is a pleasure and a privilege to serve in this way, to build on the sterling work which Revd Tim Searle has led and I look forward to what lies ahead.

Blessings to you,

Howard
Revd Dr Howard Mellor

Churches Together in Winchester News

Winchester Green Week 24 September–2 October

Make plans now! Last year 45 organisations put on over 60 events in the green week programme which you can still scroll through here [www.winacc.org.uk/](http://www.winacc.org.uk/what-we-do/events/winchester-green-week-2021/green-week-2021-events/)

[what-we-do/events/winchester-green-week-2021/green-week-2021-events/](http://www.winacc.org.uk/what-we-do/events/winchester-green-week-2021/green-week-2021-events/)



Consider making a Burning Bush in the church as a symbol of the community's intention to remove our sandals as we recognise the Earth as holy ground, and listen for the voice of God, and the voice of creation praising God.



Communities could be invited to pray for and with the vulnerable of the community. The bush could be present in liturgies or events throughout the Season of Creation as a symbol of the community's intention to Listen. Just think what an impact it would have if every church in Winchester did so!

Prayer Meeting – All may come! Put Tuesday evening, 8 November in the church calendar for a city-wide prayer time. Mark the date for prayer for the city, our nation and the world.

Lantern Procession Friday 18 November at the Cathedral. Watch out for info on this procession from the Cathedral around the city and into the Christmas market – making a lantern from recycled items.

Christmas Market Drama Howard Mellor is working with Philip Glassborow (who wrote the script to *The Passion*) to create a short drama to be available on the five weekends of the Christmas market.

Where are They Now? Mary Kamara (Keniger)

I attended The United Church with my Mum, Donna Keniger, throughout my whole childhood. As a serious, self-conscious child, I always appreciated the safe and friendly atmosphere at the church. This was a space where it didn't feel necessary to make myself invisible, as I did at school. Throughout all those years, I cannot remember experiencing anything other than acceptance and encouragement. When I left to go to university and study medicine, I took from the church the notion that whatever one did, it should be with the aim of helping others.

My medical degree lasted for six years. We studied pre-clinical medicine, also known as textbook medicine, for two years, and then spent the third year in the laboratory, to see which of us (not me as it turned out) had a knack for research. After that we went on to our three clinical years, learning in the hospital. As taxing as the textbooks had been, this was harder, and yet I remember it academically as my happiest time. Meeting real doctors and real patients began to bring everything to life, and brought my dream of working internationally closer.

With my feet itching to travel, I felt frustrated that after qualifying, I still had two years of working as a House Officer before I would be anywhere near useful elsewhere in the world. I started on night shifts at Peterborough City Hospital, covering all the wards whilst my senior colleague fought fires in Accident and Emergency. That hospital has since been demolished, but I remember there were six floors, and I ran up and down them all night with my bleep going off continuously. Of course you'll guess who got me through that experience – the nurses. Medicine is a job where you learn the meaning of teamwork very fast!

Subsequently I moved up to Liverpool to complete the Tropical Medicine Diploma – an intensive course covering tropical

diseases and healthcare in low income settings. I was enthralled – there was so little of this in the standard UK curriculum, and yet it was exactly what I'd come into medicine for. Enthused, I set off for Kambia, a town in Sierra Leone close to the border with Guinea, and still bearing the scars of the civil war, which by then had been over for 10 years. I lived in the Old MSF Base with some other doctors, nurses, and midwives from the UK. We worked at the local hospital, and we tried to help to set up some teaching programmes and training sessions. I was challenged during this time about my core beliefs about development, and about what strategies can actually help a setting such as that. It was an important lesson to realise how heavily health systems rely on central government, funding, and policy; if there is no solid foundation to the health service, efforts at the grass roots level can easily be thwarted or counterproductive. What the local staff went through working in such a frustrating and broken system can only be imagined.

A little wiser perhaps, I returned to the UK where I completed a master's degree in Reproductive Health Research at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine, and then I started my training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Basildon Hospital in Essex. My daughter Joy arrived on New Year's Day 2016, and we returned to Sierra Leone for most of my maternity leave. Whilst there, I enjoyed joining the faculty of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Sierra Leone as a guest lecturer.

My little girl and I returned to what seemed a very cold Britain, and I went back to work full time at Southend on Sea Hospital, fortunately one of the few to still have an on-site nursery! Later I moved back to Peterborough, and although it was a new hospital by then, some of the staff remembered me, and I quickly settled in and enjoyed the work there very much.



It was shortly after this that I took on an additional job as a Clinical Advisor for a charity called Medical Justice, who work with asylum seekers and refugees held in Immigration removal centres. This humanitarian work meant a lot to me, as I'd always assumed I would spend large portions of time working abroad, but as a new Mum, my new situation seemed to suit our little family much better.

Meanwhile, back in Winchester, my Mum became gradually more unwell with dementia, and my Dad was fully consumed with taking care of her to the best of his ability. Just before it was time for Joy to start school, we moved back to Winchester, and it has proved invaluable to be closer to them. The story of watching a loved one suffer with dementia could be an entire book, but I will always be grateful that I was able to move home and see more of both my parents during this time.

By a great stroke of fortune, a job in the maternity unit came up at Winchester Hospital, where I have been working since. It's such a friendly place to work, and I hope to stay there for some time. I also love the coincidence that both I and Joy were born there. I regularly deliver babies in exactly the theatre where Joy arrived!

Joy has started at a local primary school and is very settled and happy, now going into year 2. It's funny how things seem to come back round full circle. I've lived and worked half way around the world, and ended up back in Winchester – but it really does feel like home.

Mary Kamara

The Ripe Fruits in the Garden

Locally Grown Semi-Exotic Fruit Remembered at Harvest Time

During the service led by Mrs Elizabeth Britten we sang the hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', which includes the line 'the ripe fruits in the garden'. I am very keen on growing fruit in the garden; there is nothing quite like picking a fully ripe fruit off the tree on a hot afternoon at the height of the summer and eating it there and then. 'Transport' distance? An arm's length. Carbon footprint? Nothing – well for harvest and 'shipping'.

We are fortunate in living in southern England to have a climate almost perfect for apples, but which, in addition, given a bit of know-how and skill, is capable of growing semi exotic fruit outside in all but 'the worst' summers weatherwise; I speak of apricots, figs, grapes, kiwi fruit, nectarines, peaches, etc. Your author is further advantaged by living only 50 feet above sea level, living down in the Itchen Valley; coming with this, deep rich fertile soil; and, as if this was not blessing enough, a south facing brick wall on the north side, for part of the garden.

I am focusing on peaches here, *Prunus persica*. The nectarine is a very close relative.

I will have no hesitation in recommending the cultivar 'Peregrine'; this was developed by Rivers of Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, in 1906 (Rivers plant nursery was established in 1725) and is one of the best cultivars suited to growing outside in southern England.

There is one particular problem with growing peaches outside in southern England – a disease known as Peach Leaf Curl. This means that, one way or another, the plants must not get wet on the stems at their susceptible period, which is just as they are coming into growth. I use polyethene sheeting mid-January to mid-April, rolling the front up on nice days once the plant is flowering to encourage pollination by insects, supplemented by

human pollination using cotton buds.

The peach in my collection that we are focusing on in this article is only in its second year in the garden, having been purchased as a one-year maiden in 2020 with the purpose to train as, what I would describe as, a fan on a short leg.

All fruit trees come in two parts; the top part, called the scion, is grafted onto a related rootstock.

For Peaches, the stocks are available for dwarfing, semi vigorous and very vigorous performance; which you choose depends on a number of factors, notably what space you have together with the training method envisaged along with the fertility level of the soil it is to be planted in.

Only prune peaches during periods of growth, never in the winter and if you get a good fruit set in the spring, thin out the fruit, this year I had to thin twice; once when the fruitlets were the size of hazel nuts and again when the remaining fruit was the size of walnuts.

In a dry summer watering a laden tree is a good idea. Finally you will be rewarded with fruit which is much fresher and juicier than any shop bought fruit. This year the fruit ripened over a month from late July to late August, slightly earlier than usual, no doubt brought about by the two 40^o days and the hotter than average summer generally.

Harvesting is worth paying some attention to; fully ripe peaches are very soft and although I put in place a 'catch net' below the fan, they inevitably hit a branch, cane or straining wire on the way down and in the heat of the summer such fruit will soon start to rot if left for many hours. Alternatively, it is possible to 'net' fruit individually by placing for example a used supermarket onion net over each ripening fruit, but this is rather tedious and you would need to eat four times as many onions as peaches!

The fifth verse of the cited hymn is thus:

*The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden, –
He made them every one.*

This is even more relevant than you may think. For 'temperate' fruit trees to bear fruit, they must have a number of hours of 'chill exposure' commonly expressed as chill requirement; i.e. the cold winter weather is just as important as summer warmth, thus, although southern England is at the cooler end of the climate range, attempting to grow peaches in hot countries devoid of sufficient chilly temperatures for an adequate number of hours will not be successful.



Spring and summer in the presence of peach trees

Late February/early March: peaches, when flowering well, are impressive ornamentally; this is Peach 'Saturn' which grows in the glasshouse, thus no problem with Peach Leaf Curl; however, there is a different problem – Red Spider Mite, also known as RSM.



Early spring and Peregrine is found both flowering and commencing its all-important vegetative growth. It is also at its most susceptible to Peach Leaf Curl; however, the fungus

needs moisture to attack; hence it is only on dry days that the polyethene cover is rolled up for the middle part of the day. It is, of course, the windy days of winter that concentrate the mind; good quality heavy duty polyethene and adequate tying down are required to hold out against the likes of Storm Eunice.



Late April and a good fruit set; now the thinning begins.



Late July and the fruit is nearly fully ripe. Not overlooking two 'minor problems'; the thin rolled up leaves is the work of leaf curling peach aphids; the

sparrows do a good job of eating 'conventional' aphids but locating these is difficult for them; meanwhile the small holes in some of the leaves is probably the work of leaf cutter bees, they cause no harm to a healthy plant.



Yes, have a closer look; can you smell the fruit?

Chris Young

Jubilee Reflections on the URC—Adrian Bulley

The formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 didn't



Faith – Hope – Love – Since 1972

have much of an impact upon me, to be honest. I was eleven years old, and all I noticed was that the noticeboard at the front of my Church in Rayleigh, Essex, changed, and my Dad, who had been a

deacon in the Congregational Church, suddenly became an Elder, which I thought a rather strange name for a man in his mid-thirties.

Within less than ten years from that formation date, the United Reformed Church was taking on rather more tangible form for me. I started candidating for ministry in 1980, entered Westminster College Cambridge in 1982, and was ordained in 1986. My first pastorate was in West Yorkshire, on the doorstep of Compo and Norah Batty. Since then, I have served pastorates in north London, Buckinghamshire, west London and Cardiff, as well as nine years as Moderator of the Wessex Synod and – now – a Deputy General Secretary based in Church House in London. I have served as Synod Clerk of two synods (Thames North and Wales) and on numerous committees and working parties.

The United Reformed Church has moved for me from being a minor blip in my consciousness to the fulcrum around which my life has revolved for the past four decades.

There are times in that fifty-year journey to this jubilee when the United Reformed Church has truly been life-affirming and life-sustaining:

- The worship and witness and community outreach and

service of Us across 3 nations

- The sharing of resources, of money and people, not based upon ability to pay, but upon need
- The ways in which young people and children have been at the heart of decision-making
- The commitment to ecumenical co-operation and initiatives which has been part of the URC's DNA since it's conception and to inter-faith dialogue
- The prophetic ways in which the URC has spoken truth to power (so often in unison with our ecumenical partners), and galvanised us on issues such as global debt, poverty at home and overseas, global justice, racial justice, legacies of slavery, climate justice, peace and conflict, asylum and migration issues, the economy, and so much more besides
- The programmes that have brought new life into communities, not least the Church-Related Community Work focus which offers hope and love into communities that might otherwise feel hopeless and unloved.

And, of course, there have been times in that fifty-year history that are causes for concern:

- Such as the relentless decline in membership across those decades (a trend which we share with all the mainstream denominations in this country)
- Such as the increase in the age profile of so many of our churches
- Such as the effect of the pandemic in accelerating the decline of some congregations to the point where their closure has been brought forward by many years
- Such as the ways in which those principles of which we are justifiably proud – such as the sharing of money and people

according to need – are now creaking as consumerist principles creep in and some people are looking for value for money.

There is much to celebrate as we mark this jubilee; and much that demands careful reflection and – yes – even confession.

But jubilees and anniversaries are surely not just a chance to celebrate the past; they must combine reflecting upon the yesterdays that brought us here with where we are today and where we're going tomorrow, always onwards into God's future and inspired by God's Spirit.

Where is God taking you next in your discipleship adventure?

Adrian Bulley



The first URC assembly at Central Hall Westminster on 5 October 1972– note how few women there are in the throng! And the rather orthodox attire of the clergy. Another age!

Summer Conferences

As I reported in the July/August *Yours*, the annual conferences of our two parent denominations were held in person this summer, with participation online also available.

The **Methodist Conference** met at Telford in Shropshire in June. According to tradition, the new President and Vice-President of Conference gave substantial addresses to the meeting.



The President 2022–23 is the Revd Graham Thompson, who had just retired as Chair of the Plymouth and Exeter District. His theme was: ‘Love God, love

your neighbour and love yourself’.

The Vice-President 2022–23 is Anthony Boateng, who was born in Ghana and is currently a Methodist Local Preacher in London. His address was entitled: ‘Revival: the Methodist dream’.

Decisions of the Conference included the following:

- The process of candidating for the Methodist ministry is being completely revised – the first major change since 1932! Specifically, it will no longer be necessary to be a Local Preacher to enter the process.
- Money is to be found to try to bring about improvements in the response to climate change and to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.
- There will be a further report on Marriage and Relationships to the Conference in 2025.

- Plans for the recognition of Local Lay Pastors are nearly ready for testing.
- The Methodist Council is working ecumenically and with Government to be part of a safety net to help refugees from Ukraine if relationships with host families break down.
- Responses to the current numerical and financial situation were considered. The size and length of Conference are to be substantially reduced from 2024. A proposal for larger (and fewer) Districts was firmly rejected by Conference.

Footnote: Any interruption to proceedings by a mobile phone was met with a fine of £15 payable to the Methodist charity All We Can!

The **United Reformed Church General Assembly** met in July at The Hayes, Swanwick in Derbyshire.

Issues at the Assembly included:

- An interim report on the work and future of the URC will be followed by a full report in 2023.
- The 50th Anniversary of the foundation of the URC will be celebrated at a service on 1 October at Methodist Central Hall. Meanwhile, greetings and congratulations were received from the Congregational Federation, the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, and the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate in Germany.
- A new 'umbrella' for children aged 0-12 is being developed.
- The environmental policy of net zero by 2030 was approved.
- The latest statistics on the number of churches showed a significant decline in 'pure' URC, from 1,164 in 2013 to 892 in 2022. Meanwhile the number of LEPs which include the URC (such as The United Church) increased from 348 to 367.



- Clare Downing reflected on her two years as Assembly Moderator, and then inducted her successor for 2022–23, the Revd Fiona Bennett.

Graham Rolfe

Sport

Teenage diving sensation Andrea Spendolini-Siriex's medal-winning performances at the Commonwealth Games and European Championships were inspired by Bible verses.



The 17-year-old cited one verse after her gold medal victory in the 10m women's platform diving competition; She said: 'Mark 4:37–41 – Peace be still. This was the title for my competition yesterday. Peace of mind and stillness of water.'

Her second successful podium attempt was inspired by another verse; Philippians 4:13. 'I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.' She went on to win a third medal – a second gold – in the mixed synchro 10m event.

Andrea was named BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year in 2020 and has been outspoken about her Christian faith. At the end of 2021, she reflected on a mega year – which included a trip to the Tokyo Olympic Games – with an Instagram post saying: 'From the most amazing support team and family, to achieving my childhood dream, I truly am blessed by God.'

Brief Encounter with Jean and Ian Giles

What is the first news/historical event you can recall from your early life?

Ian: About or before 1939: The regular BBC gardening programme by Mr Middleton – with his deep ‘Good Afternoon’ voice.

Jean: My early life was completely overshadowed by WW2. I remember the air raids and looking for shrapnel in the garden the next morning. We were evacuated twice, first to north Devon and, when the flying bombs came, we went to north Wales.

One bit of advice you’d give to your younger self?

Ian: ‘Don’t worry about the past – it has gone.’

Jean: ‘Don’t waste time and energy worrying about things which may never happen.’

Who was your first hero?

Ian: My first Scout Troop leader (male).

Jean: Aneurin Bevan because he oversaw the start of the NHS for which my parents, like many others, were very grateful.

What is your favourite saying or quotation?

Ian: ‘Chance is a fine thing, opportunity better.’

Jean: ‘You can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.’

What is your favourite piece of music?

Ian: Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*.

Jean: It is hard to make a choice but my favourite is Schubert’s Octet. It is wonderfully written, full of beautiful melodies and a joy to play and to hear.

What do you wish you had invented?

Ian: The tea bag!

Jean: I am not at all inventive and I cannot think of an answer to this question.

If you could spend a day in one city or place at one moment in history, where and when would that be?

Ian: Aberdeen – 1955.

Jean: It's not all that long ago, but I would like to have been in Berlin when the people began to demolish the wall which had separated them for so many years.

What would people be surprised to know about you?

Ian: I was once stranded by bad weather for five days on Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel in the height of summer (no sailings, no airport – one day's work missed).

Jean: When I was four years old I had meningitis and was not expected to survive, but after being unconscious for six days, I made a miraculous recovery

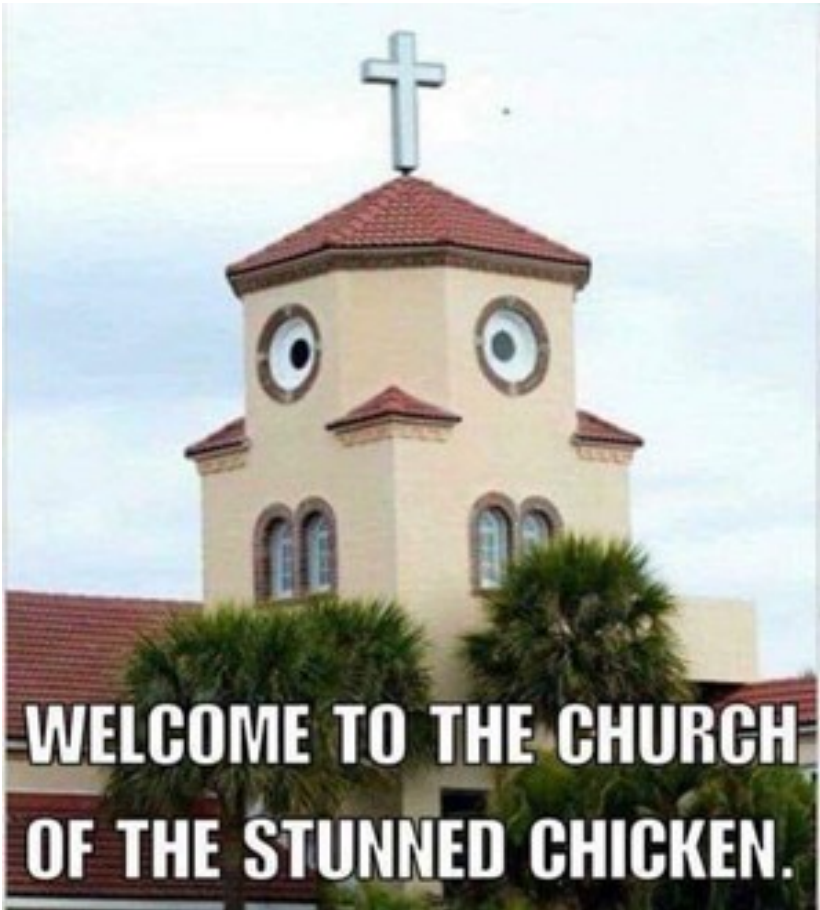
Where do you feel closest to God?

Ian: In our Church Sanctuary.

Jean: I always feel close to God when I am walking in the countryside, be it in the Swiss alps, in Wales, or the South Downs, to give just a few examples.



Comedy Corner



The deadline for October *Yours* is **Wednesday 14 September**. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.

Calling all Flower Friends



There are two teams within the flower ministry. The first is a small band of members who help in a rota to provide flowers for the Sanctuary on Sunday. It doesn't have to be an elaborate creation. A vase of flowers is most welcome. We could certainly do with some more helpers on the rota.

The second is the flower dismantling team who then take the flowers to members of the church who are unwell or in need of a pastoral visit.

This ministry is so much appreciated and continues week by week – usually on a Monday morning.

The third aspect of the flower Ministry is provision of the flower fund. Members can donate for a special occasion or an anniversary or in memory of a loved one. We are very grateful to some members who also donate to the fund on a regular basis.

Please contact me if there is a way, however small, that you can assist the faithful teams.



Lesley Worrall



UNITED CHURCH
WINCHESTER

Services for September 2022

In-person and Live-streamed

4 SEPTEMBER

10.30 am **Morning Worship (HC)** Revd Tim Searle

6.30 pm **Welcome service for Revd Peter Rayson**
(new Methodist Circuit Superintendent)

11 SEPTEMBER

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

18 SEPTEMBER

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

25 SEPTEMBER

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Prof Neil Messer

6.00 pm **Youth Service** Revd Tim Searle/
Mr Sam Barnes

HC: Holy Communion.

UCW website: ucw.org.uk/streamed-services/

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services