



Yours

Magazine of
The United Church
Winchester

November 2022



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Tim's Letter: Decisions, decisions ...

On the 30th June 2021, the Annual Methodist Conference adopted the provisional resolutions of the 2019 Marriage and Relationships report entitled, 'God in Love Unites Us' (GiLUU). This represented a significant widening in the denomination's understanding of Christian marriage, thus paving the way for local churches to open their doors to same-sex couples, should they choose to. In addition, the report's resolutions celebrated the love and commitment of unmarried cohabiting couples, and continued the conversation on deepening our understanding of gender identity. Following Conference's decisions, we at United Church have visited, and revisited, the GiLUU report in preparing for our response as a local church. At our next Church Meeting (Sunday 20 November) the opportunity to decide on this important matter will finally be before us.

At this point, I want to thank you all for the compassionate, thoughtful, and sensitive ways that you have engaged with the GiLUU report. It was correct to spend time as part of this process on how we 'disagree well', but in a way, I felt as though I was preaching to the converted! It is a mark of your character as a congregation, and the openness and integrity of all of us as members, that we can express our differences confidently. And that we can do so safe in the knowledge that those differences will not only be respected, but cherished.

Given the scope of the GiLUU report, I envisage that the November meeting will focus on discerning what our church's position on same-sex marriage is, and whether we want to take a decision on registering our premises for the solemnisation of same-sex marriages. To help us with this, I intend to provide two opportunities before the meeting for facilitated conversations on this topic. The first of these will be on Thursday 17 November via Zoom starting at 7.30pm. The second will be on Saturday 19

November in Room 1 starting at 1.30pm. These won't be 'meetings' or 'seminars' with an *agenda* or *speakers*, more a forum for people to informally discuss the issues. Alongside these forums, study material should already be available to house groups for them to have their own discussions on this.

I hope that our deliberations on this, and more importantly the way we go about them, will be a means of growth for us all. We can't control the world we live in, but we can manage our response, and reflect on how our faith calls us to act in light of it. We won't always agree on that last bit, but Godly growth comes from the willingness to be challenged, not only by our own convictions, but by those of others as well. Provided we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, then there will always be more that unites us than divides.

In Christ, Tim

Editorial

Uppermost in our thoughts this month will be friends who have died recently and over the last 12 months. David Cornick writes on page 10: 'As I look back over fifty years of the URC, it is the URC's 'saints' that I am profoundly grateful for.' That is very true of many 'saints' of the United Church who are greatly missed, but whose example is an inspiration to us.

We are grateful for Richard Costard's many contributions to Yours and his piece on Cancer in July/August Yours is well worth re-reading. We pray that Pauline and Richard's family, along with Phil Woodhouse's family and the family and friends of others who we will remember at the memorial service on 13 November, can 'grieve with hope' as Neil Messer encouraged us in his helpful sermon of 16 October.

This month we have exciting news of Advent and Christmas events, book reviews and a thought provoking piece on changing

the words of hymns. Should they be left alone? Please let us have your thoughts! We see the return of Brief Encounter, with Veronica Postles, and of Comedy Corner.

Many thanks to all our contributors.

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

News of the United Church Family

Sadly, we have two deaths to record this month. Phil Woodhouse died in September after a long illness. He became a member of this church in 1991 and he and Katie were married here. Despite his ill health, Phil attended services very regularly right up until his death. We send our sympathy and prayers to Katie, Josh, Ben and Clarisa and their wider family at this difficult time.



Richard Costard also died after a long illness, on 15th October. He and his first wife, Val, moved to Winchester from Solihull and became members of The United Church. After Val's death, we were delighted that Richard met Pauline and they married in February 2021. Richard was a keen and talented singer, an expressive reader of lessons and contributed much to church life. We want to assure Pauline and their families of our prayers and support.

We shall miss both Phil and Richard very much.

As mentioned in last month's magazine, there will be a special service at 3pm on Sunday 13th November. This is an opportunity to remember and celebrate the lives of those friends and relatives who have died. Some people died in lockdown and as a result the chance to commemorate them was severely limited. Some will have died some time before or since then and we hope that all of us might find this gathering a help in the journey

onwards.

At the end of September, Ann and Richard Coleman moved to Swanage after 30 years in Winchester. The move happened very quickly in the end so we had no opportunity to say a proper 'goodbye' to them. However, we do thank them both for their contributions to the life of The United Church in that time. Between them they have been involved in Coffee Bar, Coffee Bar Playtime, Cradle Roll, World Action Group, the church website, Church Council, organising social gatherings, pastoral visiting and more.... We wish them happiness in their new home by the sea.

We rejoice with Sue and Tim Clifford on the recent engagement of their daughter Anna to Tom Mariani. Congratulations!

Helen McTiffin
Pastoral Co-ordinator

Our Mission Project–Link to Hope

Thanks to all who have already filled a shoebox and/or donated items or money. Shoeboxes will be needed more than ever this year with the situation in Ukraine.



Please see if you can fill a shoebox or give a donation if you haven't already done so. The very last day will be Sunday 6 November when Tim will be blessing them before they go on their way.

Yvonne North

Book Reviews: URC Jubilee.

As we know, the Celebration Event planned for October 1st to mark the Golden Jubilee of the United Reformed Church had to be postponed because of a rail strike.



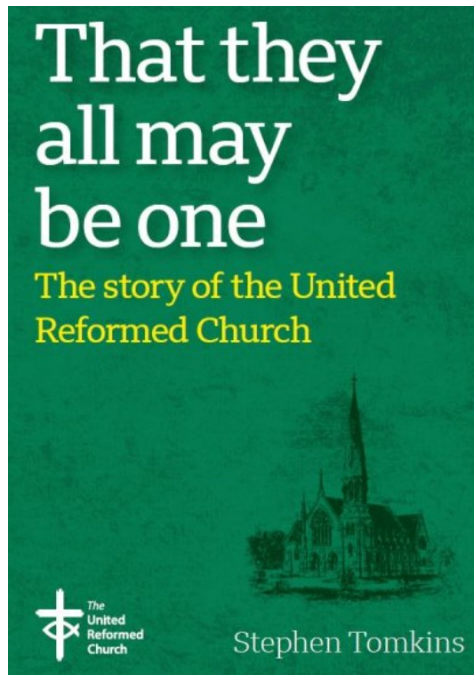
Faith – Hope – Love – Since 1972

We can nevertheless learn a great deal about the life of the URC over the past 50 years in two books specially written for the occasion.

The first is 'GOLDEN THREADS', which is a compendium of individual reflections from 50 years of the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation. (Just a reminder – the latter body consists of those Congregational Churches which decided not to join the URC.) Each contribution is quite short, and a flavour of the book can be given by the section headings: Special moments, Opportunity and challenge, Patterns of ministry, One main focus.



The second is 'THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE' – the story of the United Reformed Church. It has been written by Stephen Tomkins who is the editor of Reform magazine – he led our morning service a few years ago. He has clearly done a fair bit of research, not least in trawling through the pages of 50 years of issues of Reform! Not surprisingly, the book is very readable and tells not only the success stories but also recounts some of the difficult issues with which the URC has had to deal. The main disappointment has been the failure of further attempts at union of any other main line churches.



Both books are available from the URC Bookshop via the URC website, www.urcshop.co.uk

Graham Rolfe

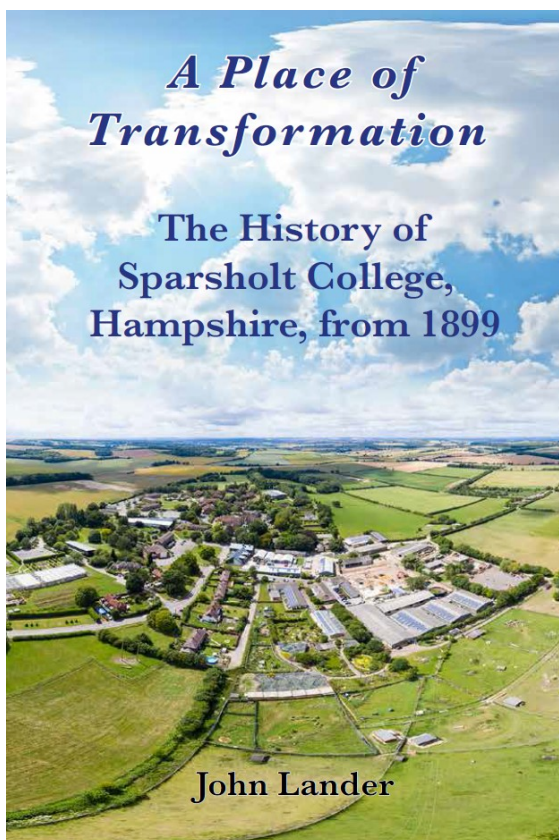
A History of Sparsholt College—John Lander

Hot off the press, a comprehensive history of Sparsholt College, written by John Lander, containing over 86,000 words and 65 illustrations, has just been published.

The College, originally founded at Old Basing in 1899, moved to its present site at Sparsholt in 1914, and the book has been produced in advance of its 125th anniversary.

While John knows of several people in local churches that have an association with the College, there are sure to be others who could be interested in acquiring a copy of the book.

They are available from John, priced at £12.



Five Loaves and Two Fish.

For nine years I had the privilege of teaching church history at Westminster College. Church historians, it seems to me, hold the keys to the church's treasure chest, and its skeleton cupboard! Historians, of all the church's servants, are peculiarly aware of the humanity of the church. They are constrained by the traces that people leave behind them, with the biases that brings – clergy rather than lay people, rather more men than women, the articulate and able rather than those differently gifted.

As I look back over fifty years of the URC, it is the URC's 'saints' that I am profoundly grateful for. Some have been big canvas men and women, those whose words and actions will be sifted by future historians. Most aren't. They are ordinary folk who came to our doors with their five loaves and two fish, and without realising it found themselves turned into blessings for other people. My personal pantheon includes two middle aged women who had a vision of a lunch club for the lonely that transformed the lives of generations of elderly people, a Junior Church leader whose care for the young people extended to taking them all to a Christmas pantomime so their parents could breathe in the run up to Christmas, and some remarkable non-stipendiary ministers who gifted churches with Word and Sacraments despite the almost impossible demands their day jobs were making on them. But the list expands to include those who turned sickness and misfortune into the stuff of discipleship, and those whose patient love for those struggling with the difficulties of old age was transformative and life-enhancing, true demonstrations of Christian love. Most of that escapes the eye and pen of the historian, but God rejoices in the faithfulness of that United Reformed Church.

Rev. Dr David Cornick—from URC Daily Devotions 14 October 2022

Portrait of a volunteer by Elena Popova.

Elena Popova, who left Mariupol 7 months ago, was generously hosted by Ann and Richard Coleman. She asked if she could write something for Yours.

Here is Elena's portrait followed by a few sentences from Ann herself. This seems appropriate as a tribute to Ann and Richard as they leave us for Swanage. Elena wrote her piece before their move. Our loss is Swanage URC's gain! (Ed.)

Ann is engaged in many different activities. She is a wife, a mother of 3 children and 4 granddaughters, active church member, volunteer, friendly neighbour and what not.



Ann has been involved in the Shoebox Appeal volunteering activity for many years. The name speaks for itself. This is a shoe box that is filled by a volunteer at one's own expense with necessary and useful things for those who are in a difficult situation and need help in Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Bulgaria for children or older people. The simplest things are pencils, pens, combs, shampoo, gloves, hats, socks, scissors. Every evening she takes knitting needles and knits for children

she does not know. And she has been doing it for many years. And that's just part of her activity.

She also helps a girl from Bolivia, writes letters and postcards to her, sends gifts, her portrait is on a prominent place in the house.

Ann is also very active in her church. She helps out with groups for children and the elderly, she is attached to single elderly ladies and calls them regularly so that they do not feel lonely. Weekly meetings for Ukrainians are also part of her work.



Then there is the Charity shop, where she works one day a week.

And then there is me, a Ukrainian, whom she takes care of, instructs, teaches, takes to English friends and simply loves.

Ann says that thinking about others helps her forget her troubles.

Ann adds: Richard has been a great help to Helen sorting out doctor, dentist, pension and her 3 year visa. Applying for housing and

being very fortunate in getting a flat at St John's charity in town, sorting out furniture and fittings. We are very pleased that she is living in a supportive community especially as we were moving. We brought Helen to Swanage in the Summer. She misses living by the sea so I am sure she will be visiting us here.

Ann and Richard will write about their move to Dorset for December/ January Yours. (Ed.)

CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION FOR ALL AGES

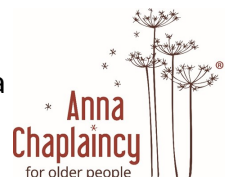
VINTAGE FUN INVITE YOU TO ENTER ONE TO THREE CARDS.

To be sent in to The United Church Office by Wednesday 30 November.

Judging will take place on the 12 December, at Vintage Fun meeting, by Anna O'Brien, from Winchester Radio.

There are 2 categories of prizes to be given.

For further information please contact Pamela Gilbert, Anna Chaplain, The United Church



Pastoral Care Review – November 2022

Pastoral Links

Can you help us to keep in touch with people within the church? Have you, yourself, appreciated having a Pastoral Visitor? Our existing Pastoral Visitors do a brilliant job but perhaps you have missed having one due to low numbers? We are in the process of re-focusing our pastoral system and would like more people to be involved as (what we are now proposing to call) a “Pastoral Link”.

Working on the premise of “many hands make light work”, we would like each new volunteer to keep in touch with a small number of people. Each relationship will be unique, depending on what the people involved find works best for them. However, we would like there to be regular contact by whatever means suits – by phone calls, emails, chats at church or in the coffee bar or visits (perhaps with copies of Yours). You will work with the Pastoral Co-ordinator and the Minister, especially if there are concerns or if a visit by a Minister might be appropriate.

Above all, the purpose of this role is to be the friendly face of the church, to do so consistently, and in such a way that makes our church family feel remembered and cherished by us, and by God.

If this role might be something you would like to explore further, then do please get in touch.

Many thanks.

Helen McTiffin, Pastoral Co-ordinator

Stourhead by Mike Holt.



November News

Church leaders have sent a private letter to former Prime Minister Liz Truss urging her to abandon the possible relocation of the British Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The letter was signed by leaders of the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, United Reformed Church, Methodist Church in Great Britain, Quakers in Britain, Christian Aid, and other churches and Christian humanitarian organisations with a long history of working with Palestinians and Israelis striving for peace. It urged Liz Truss to drop the proposals and follows a statement released by the Council of the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, which said it was "gravely concerned" at Liz Truss's plans. The letter reminded Ms Truss that "The Holy Land Co-ordination, mandated by the Holy See,

and made up of Christian church leaders from around the world, after its May 2022 visit stated: 'Jerusalem is a Jewish city, a Christian city, a Muslim city. It must remain a common patrimony and never become the exclusive monopoly of any one religion. It is our right and duty as Christians to uphold the city's openness and universality' . "For us, moving the embassy would be a statement that the UK doesn't really care about the status quo, doesn't really believe in a negotiated settlement, because by moving the embassy to Jerusalem, we end up with a scenario where we are perhaps taking away the possibility of it ever being a shared capital, by recognising it as Israel's capital. It's really important to understand that there is a large number of Palestinians who still believe that Jerusalem would be a shared capital in any negotiated solution." The letter concluded with a warning that "a review of the location of the embassy would only send a negative signal that would not serve the interests of a sustainable and just peace for all, Palestinian and Israelis alike."

Church of Norway to offer 'drop-in baptisms'.

The Church of Norway will be offering people drop-in baptisms in their local communities for two weeks in 2023 during their second consecutive national baptism awareness campaign. The Church first started experimenting with the idea in 2021, after seeing a drop in people interested in the ritual because of the Covid pandemic.

The concept of drop-in baptisms is very simple: you go to a church, sign a form, have an interview with the pastor and then be baptised. Although many local priests support the idea, others think it "trivialises" the ritual. Although 'drop-in baptisms' is a national initiative, local chapels can decide whether to join the campaign.

Raising Ebenezer – an article by Gary A. Parrett for Christianity Today

One of my mini-crusades recently has been trying to help raise Ebenezer. I seize every opportunity to publicly lament modern revisions of that beloved hymn, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," written by Robert Robinson in 1758. The revisions all seem to agree on deleting "Ebenezer" from the hymn's second verse, which begins, "Here I raise mine Ebenezer." Some of the "improvements" offered through the years include: "Hitherto thy love has blest me," "Here by grace your love has brought me," and "Here I raise to thee an altar." Why protest such efforts to make the great hymn's message more accessible to very-likely-to-miss-the-point worshipers today? After all, the word *Ebenezer* likely calls to mind that old curmudgeon Ebenezer Scrooge. But protest I must, for several reasons.

First, I protest on artistic grounds. As a hymn writer myself, I imagine Robinson felt he had found just the right expression to say what needed to be said. His phrasing, in this case, was succinct, biblical, pointed, poignant, and poetic: "Here I raise mine Ebenezer."

Second, the revisions are, at best, inconsistent attempts to be culturally relevant. How can the revisers leave in words like *hither* and *fetter*, as they typically do, while *Ebenezer* is heartlessly expunged?

Third, I protest on biblical grounds. Robinson's choice of *Ebenezer* (which means "stone of help") is a reference to 1 Samuel 7:12. After the Lord had given a great victory to Israel, "Samuel took a stone and ... named it Ebenezer, saying, 'this is a witness that so far has the Lord helped us.'" This single word ushers the worshiper into both the biblical episode and the greater narrative of God's redemptive dealings with his people. It points us, also, to Robinson's dramatic conversion three years before he penned the hymn, inviting us to reflect upon our own

stories and to remember God's faithful dealings with us. By removing the word from the hymn, we likely remove it from believers' vocabularies and from our treasury of spiritual resources.

Finally, I protest as a Christian educator. What we have in such revisions is the worst sort of accommodation, even contribution, to biblical illiteracy. Our faith is filled with names and terms that were unfamiliar to us when we joined the family—*atonement*, *propitiation*, *Sabbath*, *Passover*, *Melchizedek*. What are we to do with such terms? We teach! How difficult would it be to simply explain the reference to Ebenezer?

Other types of hymn revisions are even more troubling. Consider the many choruses that have lifted titles or phrases from hymns of earlier days. "Jesus, lover of my soul" has turned up in a number of contemporary songs. In one such song, the worshiper is invited to promise Jesus that "I will never let you go" and "I will worship you until the very end." The original, written in 1752 by Charles Wesley, could not be more different in emphasis. "Hide me, O my Saviour hide, till the storm of life be past" and "Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee" are cries of utter dependence upon God's faithfulness, not promises of our determined faithfulness to God.

Generally speaking, we are misguided to attempt to improve hymn texts. Of course, we cannot assume that hymnists of old were more spiritual than their contemporary counterparts (stories tell of Robinson painfully fulfilling his words, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it"). Yet most seem to have known their Bibles far better than we do. Frances Ridley Havergal, author of "Take My Life and Let It Be" and "Like a River Glorious," was a Scripture-soaked woman. We are told she memorized large portions of Scripture. I fear today we are too distracted to produce many such songwriters.

Thankfully, there are better ways to approach our inherited hymnody. Many artists are using their creative gifts to write new tunes or arrangements for rich but forgotten texts of old. Others are writing theologically and spiritually weighty choruses and hymns that complement them. Those who lead us in worship music could make hymns more accessible by noting the scriptural basis of a song for the congregation, by introducing unfamiliar terms and concepts, and by familiarizing worshipers with the story of a hymn's composer. Rather than trying to rewrite these treasures or, worse, relegating them to the sea of forgetfulness, let us raise high the Ebenezers of old with humility and deep gratitude.

Do you agree with the idea that we water down the meaning of some hymns by trying to put them into contemporary language – any comments?

Coffee Bar Baking: Calling All Cooks.

As the weather gets colder we are finding the coffee bar is getting busier, though some days are still very quiet. Recently a friend said to me, “You can feel the love when you walk in here.” We have a reputation for good cakes and scones, as well as for our friendly welcome, but we are in need of some more cooks, and always glad of new volunteers to serve or act as welcomers.



We are really grateful for all Ann Coleman contributed to the coffee bar; her Victoria sandwich and chocolate cakes were especially popular. Now Ann has moved to Swanage we would be delighted to welcome new cooks to the team, even if you can only bake occasionally.

There are rules we have to follow, but these are not irksome, and expenses can be claimed. To meet hygiene standards, we cannot accept cakes brought in without notice. So if you would like to know more, please have a chat with Pat or another member of the committee so we can explain how our system works.

Coffee Bar Committee

From Rossini to One More Cornetto: An Evening With Jonathan Veira.

Four of us from United Church enjoyed the 'UNlockdown session live with Jonathan Veira' at Romsey Methodist Church, an evening of entertainment and inspiration led by the internationally renowned opera singer Jonathan Veira. We were treated to a joyful evening of music ranging from opera, to hymns, spirituals and songs from the shows, even the audience joining in with advertising jingles.

It was especially meaningful for me, as more than fifty years ago, nine-year-old Jonathan was in the first class I taught after qualifying as a teacher. It was wonderful that a child from that tough under-resourced inner-city school should have achieved a career with the English National Opera.

Jonathan spoke movingly of his experience of needing a kidney transplant at the height of lockdown, the miracle that his wife's kidney proved to be the perfect match, a less than one in ten thousand chance, and his joy at being back on the road entertaining audiences in churches as well as on line .

If you find long dark Sunday evenings difficult, then try brightening them up by listening to "JV from the Steinway Room", put out on YouTube most Sunday evenings, a magazine programme of music, humour and interviews hosted by Jonathan and his wife Sue.

Pat Fry

CHRISTMAS

a JOURNEY with the



JOHN LOFTHOUSE

Renowned local baritone

presents the
World Premiere
of his original show:

WISE MAN

An exciting evening of music and
drama for all the family

December 3rd 7.30 p.m

**United Church
Jewry St
Winchester**



Tel : 01962849559

Tickets £10 + £1 booking fee

Cash or Card at the door.

Refreshments.

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/>



John Lofthouse Baritone

I thought it might be interesting to talk a little about John's background and career before Wise Man comes to The United Church on Saturday 3rd December.

Originally from Levens in the Lake District, John studied Theology at Durham University before teaching Religious Studies at Alleyn's School in Dulwich. He subsequently trained as a classical singer at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the National Opera Studio. He now lives in Micheldever with his wife and two children and continues his vocal training with Russell Smythe and Garry Coward.



John has worked for many of the UK's leading Opera Companies. The list of his roles is too long to mention here but he has graced the stage in favourites such as The Barber of Seville, Madama Butterfly, La Traviata, Rigoletto – to name but a few!

Oratorio performances include Handel's Messiah, Mozart's Requiem and Mendelssohn's Elijah among others.

Having been so impressed by John's moving performance in Jesus My Boy (see review in past Yours) I was lucky enough to catch him recently in an Alan Bennet's Talking Heads performance. To be honest I did not recognise him and only found out it was our star at the interval, so absolutely into the character he was. Again a moving, truthful portrayal.

So I can't wait to see Wise Man with the added bonus of hearing that rich baritone. I am counting the days!

Rosemary MaMullen

Voices of Advent

Churches in the northern area of the Methodist Circuit will be sharing in this theme during Advent.

Each church will consider the theme in their own ways as together we engage with the voices of

shepherds

sages

singers

This Advent you are invited to attend to these voices, dwelling on what God has done in the gift of the birth of Jesus His only Son, as we listen to words of

revelation

expectation

adoration

May we hear the voice of God within their voices.



Voices of Advent will be followed in our House Groups and we will have a Christmas tree display (see next page) and artwork following this theme,

Christmas Tree Prayer Walk

In conversation about Christmas plans several people have said it would be nice to have Christmas trees around the church again.

This year we are proposing to do something a little less ambitious, with not quite so many trees, but we hope very worthwhile. Together with Wesley and Alresford, we are following a study theme through Advent entitled 'Voices of Advent' Shepherds, Sages and Singers (see page 22) , so the trees will be decorated to link to these themes to create a prayer walk, and a leaflet provided to encourage reflection.

Yvonne and I will lead a couple of Tuesday morning craft sessions in Room 1 to make decorations, possibly also at another time if its more convenient. We also hope there may be individuals who would like to take responsibility for a particular tree. (Some are already booked)

The intention is to put the trees up on Saturday 26th November in readiness for the beginning of Advent. If you would like to know more, I will happily send you the outline plan, which is an initial idea to be adapted as people make suggestions.

Please don't wait till the last week of November to come forward, we need to throw our ideas in the melting pot in good time, as it is pooling ideas that achieves the best results.

Pat Fry and Yvonne North



Brief Encounter with Veronica Postles.

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

The Coronation of Queen Elisabeth when I spent the night before on the Mall.

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

Believe in yourself and be more confident.

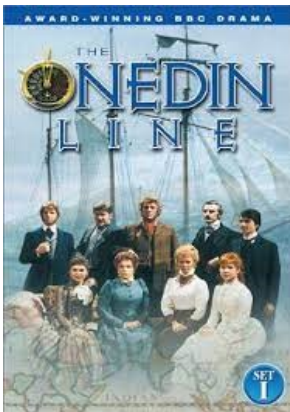
Who was your first hero?

Nelson Mandela.



What is your favourite saying or quotation?

Don't worry about things you can't control.



What is your favourite piece of music?

The theme tune to the Onedin Line.

What do you wish you had invented?

Computers.

If you could spend a day in one city or place, where would that be?



Venice.

What would people be surprised to know about you?

My parents had a restaurant near the airbase in the village and I was the mascot for the airmen when they went out on their air raids

Where do you feel closest to God?

In a beautiful garden.



Comedy Corner

ANGER MANAGEMENT

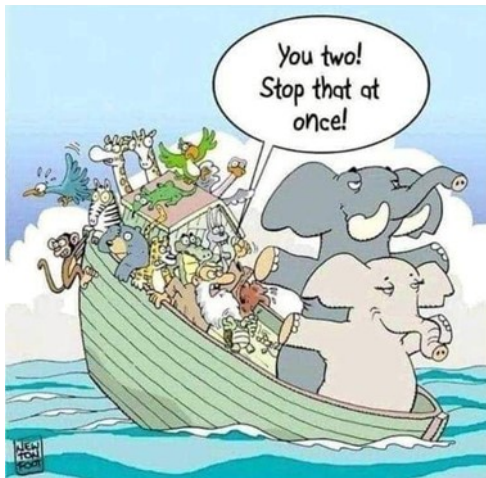
When angry with someone, it helps to sit down and think about the problem...



For Musicians

Musicians Theory of Relativity

$$E = F \flat$$



The deadline for December/January Yours is **Wednesday 17 November**. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.



Vintage Fun

All welcome!



Memories

Monday 14th November

2 - 4 pm

at the

United Church

Jewry Street, Winchester SO23 8RZ
01962 849559

Vintage Fun is a monthly afternoon of friendship over a cup of tea. Each afternoon will offer a variety of activities, with tea and cake

Caraway



UNITED CHURCH
WINCHESTER

Services for November 2022

In-person and live-streamed

6 NOVEMBER

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

13 NOVEMBER - REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

3.00 pm **Memorial Service** Revd Tim Searle

20 NOVEMBER

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

Service followed by Church Meeting

27 NOVEMBER

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Mrs Margaret Axford

HC: Holy Communion.

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services