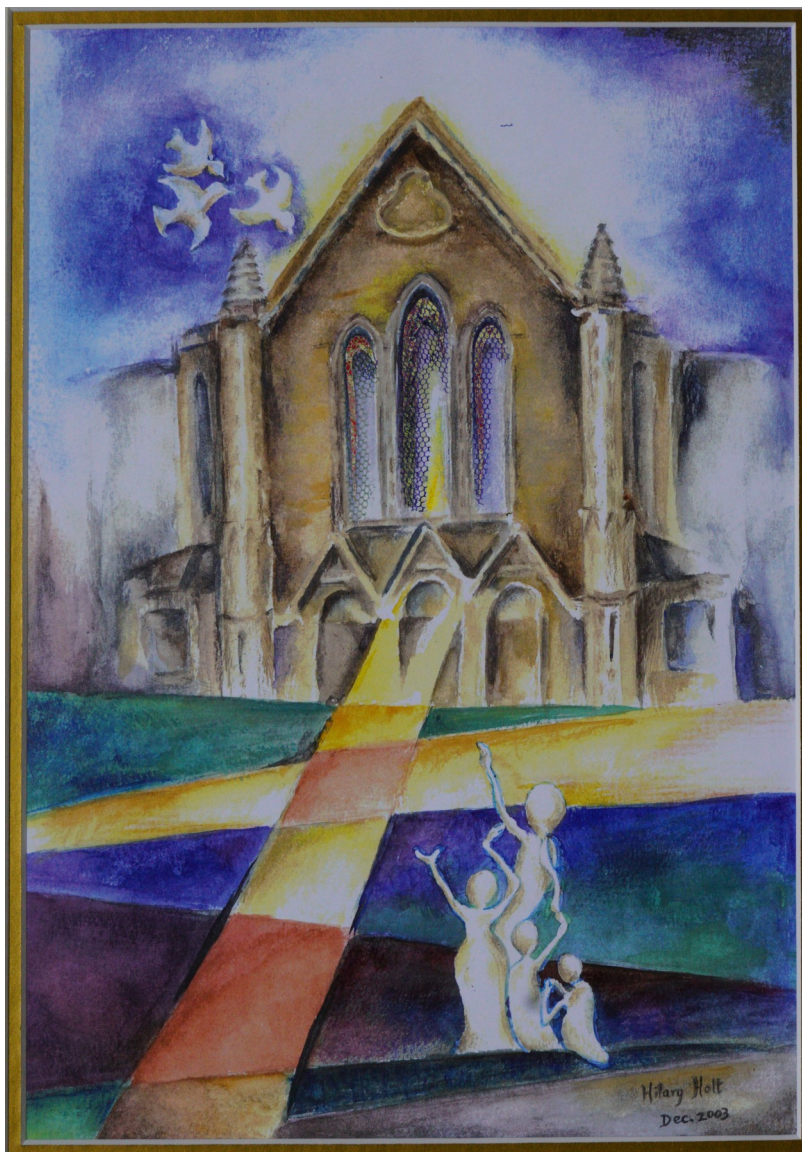




Yours

Magazine of
The United Church
Winchester

March 2023



**The United Church
Jewry Street
Winchester
SO23 8RZ**

01962 849559

Website: ucw.org.uk

Minister

Email address:

Revd Tim Searle

minister@ucw.org.uk

Fellowship, Worship and Education

Co-ordinator

Tim Clifford

Asst Co-ordinator

vacancy

Pastoral

Co-ordinator

Helen McTiffin

Bereavement

Sandy Foster

Flowers Distribution

Lesley Worrall

Cradle Roll

vacancy

Students

Steve Lawson

Finance

Co-ordinator

Christine Cook

Donations and Gift Aid

David Worrall

Administration

Co-ordinator

vacancy

Asst Co-ordinator

Dorothy Lusmore

Facilities Manager

Patricia Mitchell

01962 849559

facilities@ucw.org.uk

Mission

Co-ordinator

Jo Pellatt

Youth Worker

Sam Barnes

sambarnesyouthworker@gmail.com

**MHA Communities
Winchester (formerly LAH)**

Anna Miles

01962 890995

Magazine Editor

yours@ucw.org.uk

Tim's Letter: 'Love is in the air...or maybe just chocolate'

As I sit at my desk about to write this month's opening letter, I check the calendar and realise it is 14 February, Valentine's Day, the day when love is supposed to be in the air. But have you ever wondered about the history of this holiday and its significance to Christianity? Well, grab some chocolates and let me tell you a tale that is both romantic and absurd.

The origins of Valentine's Day can be traced back to ancient Rome, where the festival of Lupercalia was celebrated in mid-February. This pagan festival involved sacrificing goats and dogs, and then whipping women with the hides of the slain animals. Not exactly romantic, right? Well, don't worry, it gets better (or worse, depending on how you look at it).

In the 5th century, Pope Gelasius I decided to Christianise this pagan festival and declared 14 February as Saint Valentine's Day. But who was Saint Valentine? There are several legends, but the most popular one involves a Roman priest who defied Emperor Claudius II's order to ban marriages in order to strengthen his army. Saint Valentine continued to perform marriages in secret and was eventually caught and executed on 14 February.

Now, you may be wondering what any of this has to do with love and romance. Well, apparently, while in prison, Saint Valentine fell in love with the jailer's daughter and wrote her a love letter signed 'from your Valentine'. And thus, a tradition was born.

But wait, there's more! In the 14th and 15th centuries, Valentine's Day became associated with courtly love, thanks to the works of poets like Chaucer and Shakespeare. This led to the exchange of love letters and romantic gifts between couples. And let's not forget the commercialisation of the holiday, with heart-shaped chocolates, roses, and teddy bears taking over store shelves.

So, what can we conclude from this brief history lesson? Well, Valentine's Day is a mishmash of pagan and Christian traditions, legends, and commercialism. But hey, who needs historical accuracy when you have love and chocolate? Happy Valentine's Day, everyone!

God bless,
Tim.

Editorial

Our front cover this month was painted by Hilary Holt incorporating designs from stained-glass windows which were created for the church refurbishment in 1991. If you have been a member of The United Church for some years, do you remember for which occasion Hilary painted this? Answer on page 25!

We have been blessed by the presence in our church of refugees and asylum seekers from many countries recently. Members of the church have been supporting families from Syria for 6 years now. An example of how individuals can flourish with support can be seen in *The Swimmers*, a film about a Syrian refugee and Olympic swimmer, reviewed on page 6. She says: 'We had to risk everything for our basic human rights and start a new life...You don't choose to become a refugee, you leave your country because of war and violence.'

We have a book review by Jean Giles of allotments and spiritual nourishment, more Italian adventures by Rosie MacMullen and a moving tribute to music by Tony Wood, expanding on his recent contribution in church. Carol Jessop shows us another miniature house and John Lander tells us about a special Methodist village chapel.

We meet Martin Ramsey for a Brief Encounter, Tim Clifford

brings back a striking welcome message from Wales and Jill Cook makes us think whether we can bring back an occasional evening service.

Many thanks for all our contributors.

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

News of the United Church Family

We hold in our prayers all of the Hillier family after the death on 31 January of Ruth Muffett (née Hillier), sister of John, Elizabeth and Robert. Ruth was brought up in Winchester Congregational Church and was a member for many years. Her funeral service will be conducted by Tim Searle at The United Church on Thursday 9 March at 2 pm.



We were very pleased to receive Andrew LaFollette as a church member on 5 February. He has transferred his membership from The United Methodist Church of Mount Vernon in Iowa, USA. Welcome, Andrew!

I stand down as Pastoral Co-ordinator (at the Annual Church Meeting) at a time of change for The United Church. The advent of enabling groups means, I hope, a wider sharing of responsibility for pastoral care. Our committed Pastoral Visitors, now Pastoral Links, do a brilliant job but they have become fewer in number over the years. I do thank them all for their dedication and support over the last four years. Thanks also to Tim for his guidance and support for me and for his care for us all.

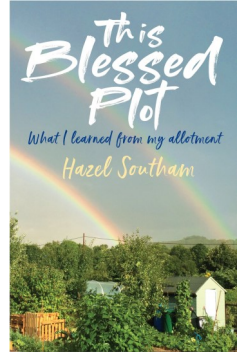
**Helen McTiffin,
Pastoral Co-ordinator**

Book Review:

This Blessed Plot by Hazel Southam

Anyone who has tackled an overgrown allotment or even a neglected garden will, I think, enjoy this book. The author recounts her efforts to grow fruit and vegetables on an unpromising plot. It is not great literature but an easy read suitable for bedtime, for example.

As the author, a journalist who lives in Winchester, gradually succeeds in growing fresh fruit and vegetables, she also finds her allotment provides her with spiritual nourishment too.



Jean Giles

Film Review:

The Swimmers –recommended by Jane Lawson

‘Sometimes your purpose in life is way bigger than you can ever imagine,’ says Yusra Mardini, the Syrian refugee and Olympic swimming champion whose life story forms the basis for the new Netflix film, *The Swimmers*.

Growing up in Damascus in Syria, Yusra dreamed of competing at the Olympics. She remembers watching the games with her father, who was a professional swimmer, and began training when she was nine years old. But after civil war broke out when she was just 13, her life changed dramatically. ‘Our house was



destroyed, so we had to live with my grandma, and sometimes with my aunt,' she says. 'We went to school, but it was dangerous; it was the same with swimming.'

After four years of living in fear of shelling and sniper attacks, she and her older sister Sara made the difficult decision to flee in search of safety in Europe. 'We had to risk everything for our basic human rights and start a new life. It was really hard for me, because I was abandoning everything: our belongings, my family, my friends, my home, everything.' They had heard stories about friends who had made the sea crossing and found information on smugglers and the routes they took from a Facebook group, so in August 2015, they embarked on the treacherous 25-day journey.

They travelled to Turkey, where they boarded a small dinghy with 18 other people, but mid-crossing the engine on the boat faltered and it became waterlogged. Helpless and drifting, Yusra and Sara jumped into the water and swam for hours with two others, guiding the dinghy to eventually reach safe shores. 'Honestly, I wasn't thinking about anything, I was just trying to survive and to save myself and everyone on the boat,' she says. 'In the moment, you're just thinking about the simple stuff.'

When they arrived in Lesbos, Greece, they had been deprived of food and water for three days. A young woman helped them after a restaurant turned them away, and they then continued on to Germany, which became Yusra and Sara's second home – although it took some time for it to feel like it. 'I didn't really accept living in Germany at first because I thought I would be there only for a while, and then we could go back home when the war ended,' says Yusra. 'But that wasn't what happened, unfortunately. The one thing that made me feel like home again was swimming.'

She began training at the Wasserfreunde Spandau club, applying her determination and resilience to the sport she loved – and the next year, she was selected to compete at the Rio Olympics as part of the first ever Refugee Olympic Team.

For a long time, Yusra didn't identify with being labelled a refugee – it came with assumptions that weren't reflective of her experience. 'You don't choose to become a refugee, you leave your country because of war and violence,' she says. 'Now, the word "refugee" means so many things to me. In the beginning, I was in denial of it. But then I realised that it's just a word, and it doesn't matter what the word means. I am who I am.'

Competing on the world stage alongside athletes from all other countries ('Michael Phelps was swimming in the same lane as me'), she realised that she was representing others like her – those who were forced to live beyond borders. 'It made me proud, and it made me realise I have a voice that I can use to help people understand that refugees are normal people, who have hopes and dreams.'



From that moment, she has worked tirelessly to share her story, and those of so many other refugees, to bring greater visibility to the dangers they have faced. As an ambassador for UNHCR, she has spoken at the World Economic Forum, Google Zeitgeist, WE Day and the Global Women's Forum, and has also visited refugee camps. When she was approached by Netflix to make a film about her life, it felt like a natural extension of this work –

but reliving the events surrounding her escape has not been easy. 'It's surreal. You don't wake up every day and think about what happened in your life. But then when we saw it on the screen for two hours, it was a very emotional thing to watch,' she explains. 'But this movie tells the story of millions of refugees all around the world, it's not just my story.'

In the next year, Yusra will launch a foundation to provide refugees around the globe with access to education and sport; she is also currently studying film and TV production in Los Angeles. 'Sometimes life takes you to places that you would not imagine ever being in,' she says. 'When I was young, I would have never imagined doing everything that I'm doing right now.'

Swimming remains her cornerstone, the true constant in her life. 'Swimming has taught me a lot: it has taught me patience; it has taught me to know when to ask for help; it saved my life,' Yusra says. 'Most of all, it taught me to try again. If you're going through something tough, it doesn't mean that it is over.'

Review from [Harper's Bazaar](#).

Another film recommendation: [The Two Popes](#) is a 2019 biographical drama film. Predominantly set in Vatican City, the film follows Pope Benedict XVI, played by Anthony Hopkins, as he attempts to convince Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio, played by Jonathan Pryce, to reconsider his decision to resign as an archbishop as he confides his own intentions to abdicate the papacy.

Jane Lawson

[The Swimmers](#) and [The Two Popes](#) are available on Netflix. If you do not have Netflix, they can be watched for free if you take out a one-month trial subscription. (Ed.)

A Welcome Message from Newport Cathedral

Back in September, Sue and I were walking along the Wales Coast Path, and we arrived at Newport. There we decided to refresh ourselves with some tea and stop to visit and pray in the Cathedral. On entering, we saw this large welcome poster – and thought you might like to share in reading (& praying upon) it.

Tim Clifford

BEWARE!

Here we try to practise the inclusive Gospel of Jesus Christ
This means that here you may be mixing with seekers,
searchers,
and those who are bruised,
those who limp and those who mourn
and those wounded by war;
refugees, asylum seekers and foreigners of all kinds,
citizens of different colour from yourself,
women bishops (yes, there a few!)
and priests who may be struggling,
leaders who are worn out, clapped out, burnt out,
lesbian and gay couples, even singles,
the wealthy who are trying to get through the eye of a needle,
and the poor who are struggling to maintain their dignity,
the emotionally deprived and harmed,
people of other faiths or of none,
fundamentalists and liberals,
radicals and traditionalists,
those who have failed to love
and those who are afraid to receive love:
those rejected by their ministers and their churches;
those who have broken their promises,
those bowed down with burdens,
those who teeter on the brink of breakdown,

those who have been abused physically, emotionally, sexually
and spiritually,
those for whom the grip of alcohol or work, drugs or sex,
gambling or unnamed powers, is getting stronger
and those for whom the grip is loosening,
those struggling with faith and doubt,
and goodness knows how many others...

Indeed, anyone like those who Jesus mixed with.

*This is not a private club
but a public space open to all people of goodwill.
And though we are not yet strong and vulnerable enough
to show the unconditional love of God at all times,
we hope we are moving in that direction.*

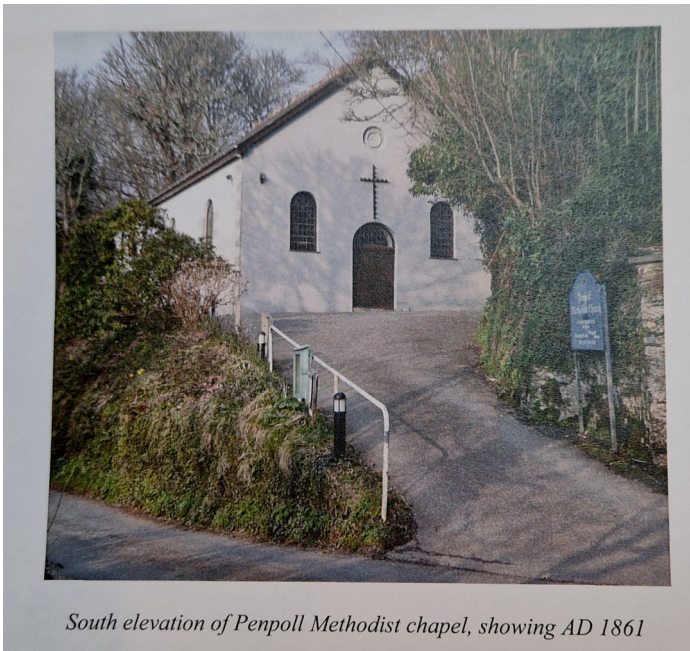
WELCOME!



Newport Cathedral

Life in a Rural Cornish Chapel

Having had to relinquish, with much sadness, our membership of the Methodist Church at Penpoll (one of three Cornish villages with the same name) situated midway between Truro and Falmouth, Pat and I feel able to look back on our 16 years there with rather less emotion than if we had prepared this article sooner. We provide an insight into the ways a small rural worshipping community manages its activities, for comparison with a city centre one.



Penpoll's Methodist chapel, situated at the end of a creek of the river Fal, is a small, simply designed building, largely constructed by its own members at a cost of £355. Mid-nineteenth century local employment was mainly found in one of two lead smelters, or on farms. Of the nine original chapel trustees, two were builders, three were employed in the lead smelting

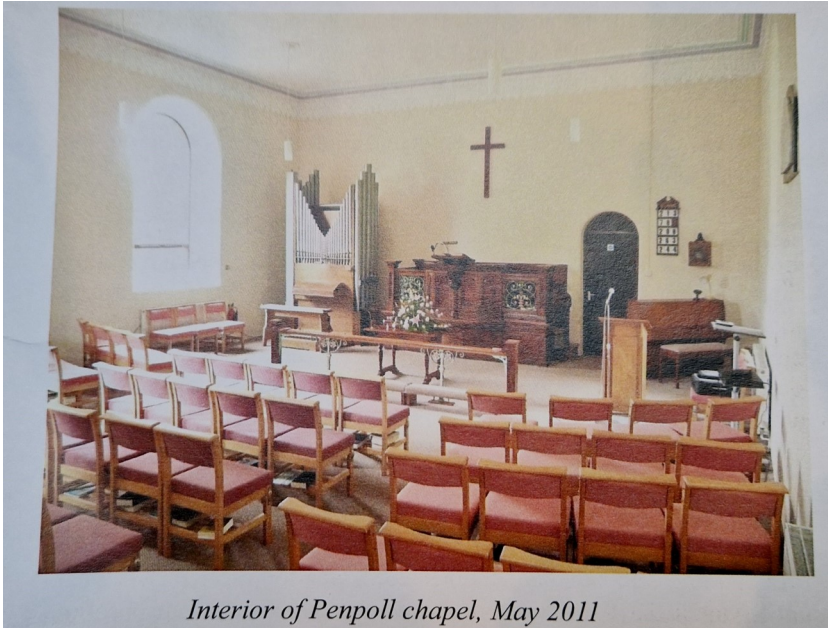
factories, two worked in agricultural settings, one was the local school master, and the other was a millwright. All were men, and just one lived more than ½ mile from the chapel. The first services were held on 30 January 1862, and its membership has ranged from 75 five years after it opened to just 11 in 1876. The Sunday School was a particular strength; when the chapel opened there were already 50 teachers taking classes once or twice a month. The number of scholars peaked at 170 in 1864 when there were 23 classes consisting mostly of boys who were taught separately from girls. It was a privilege to write the chapel's history in preparation for its 150th anniversary in 2012.

In 2003 Pat and I had moved to our home overlooking the Fal, and we transferred our membership to Penpoll, quickly making friends with many living in the nearby villages and hamlets. The ability to walk to Sunday morning worship alongside the river creeks, sometimes seeing a kingfisher fly by, is a memory we will never forget. The chances were that we would meet and accompany others on their way to the same chapel. As we passed the quay, a particularly beautiful place, we would recall that every year, as part of the village sailing regatta weekend, we organised an ecumenical open-air service that attracted over 100 people, many of whom didn't normally attend church or chapel services.

Penpoll's membership comes from diverse church backgrounds. No more than half are longstanding Methodists with others having been brought up in the Congregational and Baptist denominations, as well as the Church of England, and Church of Scotland. One worshipper had previously attended services at the nearby famous Quaker Meeting House and the Church of England. He was an integral member of our fortnightly house group, as was the wife of a Scottish Presbyterian minister who attended Truro's Roman Catholic Church.

Methodism was especially strong in Cornwall, and even when we

left in 2019 there were three other Methodist chapels within two miles of Penpoll. Not bad for a population of about 1,000 in the civil parishes that cover all four chapels, compared with a peak of 2,411 in 1861.



Interior of Penpoll chapel, May 2011

A notable feature of the chapel's membership is its ability to cope with whatever circumstances arise. When our longstanding and much-loved organist died, we acquired a music box that played hymn tunes. When the regular cleaner moved away, we took turns to keep the chapel in immaculate condition. Flowers for the sanctuary were never bought but provided by members on a rota basis from their gardens. Just before we left Cornwall, the Truro Methodist circuit (despite my opposition!) divided its chapels into 'mission' and 'fellowship' churches. Penpoll, as a 'fellowship' church where growth was assessed as being less likely, would have fewer services conducted by ministers, active or retired, and local circuit preachers. An inevitable result was the need to provide

'own arrangement' services, often more than half the 13 Sundays in a quarter, but a group of members took on the responsibilities of organising and leading them. Duties of Church Treasurer and Secretary were filled by willing volunteers, albeit serving for longer periods than the 'rules' suggest. We chuckled as we read 'Pew News', giving notices for the week, written by the same person for decades, and which frequently including humorous observations and grammatical posers for discussion over Sunday lunches.

Penpoll, with a membership now of around 15, has always met its financial obligations to the circuit, made its premises available to local secular bodies including the Women's Institute and table tennis teams and, until Covid restrictions intervened, organised monthly coffee mornings and lunches for over 20 local elderly people. While, like many churches, Penpoll has a predominance of older members, there is a group of eight or so in their 50s and 60s, some being third or fourth generations of families whose chapel connections go back nearly 100 years. A feature of the membership is the pastoral care, informally exercised, not only for regular worshippers, but for other villagers.

While Pat and I came to realise the need to move closer to our family, affection for the people of Penpoll will never wane, and they feature daily in our prayers. If anyone needs an example of Christian love at its best, Penpoll Methodist Church provides it. If UCW members find themselves in that part of Cornwall on a Sunday morning, they will be made very welcome.

John and Pat Lander
February 2023

Rosie's Trip to Italy

Part 3: Rome

Waking early on Day Four, I was persuaded by the blurb in our brochure to book up for the walking tour. 'There will be ample free time to see the mighty Colosseum (entrance not included), the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps.' I snuck down early to breakfast and chose a seat at the far end of the restaurant. I was joined by the wig-wearer's son who looked woebegone. I discovered he had brought his widowed mother with him as he thought it would cheer her up. I asked him, 'Why this trip?' 'She just wanted to see Italy,' he explained. As she had avoided all the excursions and had only seen the village, I urged him to bring her to Rome. Big mistake!

He was on the coach in good time but as ten minutes went by with no sign of mother, he was sent to hurry her up. Another ten minutes and neither of them appeared. We waited! A full half-hour late we drove off. The previous day President Macron of France had visited Rome, resulting in hordes cramming the roads. Poliziotti were everywhere and as a result all guided tours were cancelled. The Vatican City Tour was also cancelled and a promised refund was not an acceptable compensation to those who, unlike me, had booked early.

When we alighted I could see St Peter's Basilica away ahead so strolled along beside the river towards Vatican Square. Going over a bridge, I found myself a bit lost in a maze of narrow streets so found a café and sat down with my favourite almond croissant and cappuccino to study my map. I had not taken note of the bridge's



name but the Ponte Umberto seemed a good bet, so I sat back, enjoying the musicality of the Italian language all around and relaxed. Surprisingly, I had chosen the right bridge and, re-crossing, saw it was indeed the Ponte Umberto.

Unskilled in reading maps, even if they were in English, I just



aimed for the breath-taking buildings I could see and found myself at the Castel Sant' Angelo. This is not a fortress, though it looks formidable. Building began in AD123 on what was to be a tomb for Emperor Hadrian.

Ten minutes later I reached St Peter's Square where the

queue for the church was so long there was no point in trying to get in. I was so happy not to have gone on a whistle-stop tour of the city after all.

Michelangelo did not live to see his dome completed but those of us fortunate enough to have seen this



remarkable creation are bound to feel inspired. It was enough just to sit there and soak it all in.

All this was food for the soul indeed, but I was reminded of the

needs of my body by a slight gurgling and realised I was hungry. I sat at a pavement table watching children playing in the park and feeding a cheeky sparrow who had hopped up to peck at my panini.

Of course, it was too much to hope that everyone would return to the coach on time. One couple who had disobeyed the advice not to try a City Bus Tour were twenty minutes late, but I was so satisfied with my Day in Rome I didn't join in the chorus of disapproval and simply closed my eyes and kept my mind on the glorious buildings of the Eternal City. It's certainly worth a return visit, if not by coach!



Rosemary MacMullen

Traidcraft Goes into Administration

Traidcraft, the Christian fair trade pioneers whose goods have been sold at many churches, has gone into administration after 44 years. Members of The United Church will remember that we have supported Traidcraft for many years, especially for supplies for the hospitality team and the Coffee Bar, and for Christmas cards and specialist items.

The brand, which has struggled for a number of years, cited the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and soaring energy prices as the reason behind the severe financial difficulties. An open letter to customers on the decision to call in the administrators reads: 'It is heart breaking to bring the Traidcraft plc story to an end in this manner but we can at least take some consolation from the knowledge that we have been a major force for good in the ethical retail sector for over 40 years. We have championed the cause of trade justice to the point where we now have better

standards and procedures in place to protect the rights and dignity of growers and producers all over the world.'

The charity arm of Traidcraft, now called Transform Trade, will continue its work supporting producers and fighting for trade justice and people centred trade.

Graham Rolfe

News of the Wider Church

The Church of England has agreed plans allowing clergy to bless couples in same-sex marriages or civil partnerships. Same sex couples will not be permitted to marry in church but may now ask for a service of blessing from July 2023. Revd Richard Coles, host of *Saturday Live* and guest on many TV programmes, has revealed his civil partnership with late partner David Oldham was blessed inside a church in 2010, despite it being banned within the Church of England at the time.

Kenya has held the first National Day of Prayer. Kenya and other east African nations have been experiencing some of the worst drought conditions in decades, causing crop failure, loss of livestock, wildlife and biodiversity, and malnutrition. 'As a government we have set out elaborate plans for food security, we have seeds, ample fertiliser, and water harvesting strategies including dams. We now need God to send us the rain,' the President said. 'I urge all people from all faiths ... to pray for our country.'

King Charles III will host his first ever Maundy service at York Minster. Joined by The Queen Consort, the King will meet 74 men and 74 women to thank them for their service, both to Christianity and to their communities. Each year, the monarch travels to a different cathedral for the service. The Maundy

service – which will be held on 6 April 2023 – commemorates Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper.

The Church in Wales has published a ten-point plan to achieve net zero by 2030. The new plan was published on Creation Sunday, 12 February. The list contains a number of actions that every church – no matter the size – can take to make a difference. It also points towards an online calculator that allows each church to measure their carbon footprint before putting more procedures in place.

Things We Have Lost and Found

‘All praise to thee my God this night
For all the blessings of the light
Keep me, oh keep me, King of Kings
Beneath the shelter of Thy wings.’

When did you last sing that verse?

Since we no longer hold Sunday evening services are we in danger of forgetting many well-loved hymns? ‘Now the day is over’, ‘Ere I sleep for every favour this day showed I will bless my Saviour’. These gave us opportunity to reflect on the past day, to give thanks, to ask forgiveness as a community.

On your own try the practice of Examen. Pause to be still and become aware of God’s presence. Review the day with gratitude. Pay attention to emotions experienced during the day. Choose one feature of the day and pray about it. Look forward to tomorrow.

One of my favourite evening hymns is 'The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended'. This is sung at the end of the service held on the first Friday in March for the International World Day of Prayer (formerly known as the Women's World Day of Prayer). This includes the thoughtful verse:

'As o'er each continent and island
the dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
nor dies the strain of praise away.'

This brings me a great feeling of joy in recognising that I am part of the worldwide church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This year the service has been prepared by the women of Taiwan – not an



easy country in which to profess a Christian faith. Their theme is 'I have heard about your faith', based on Ephesians 1 15-19

Sadly there is no information about a service in Winchester, but Romsey Baptist Church in Bell Street is hosting one at 13.30 on Friday 3 March, and the online WWDP site is well worth looking at, too.

Thank the Lord for technology as well as His loving care each night.

Jill Cook

My Miniature World

After finishing my first miniature house and filling it with tiny things and very small people, it became clear that one house was never going to be enough. It was now time to look for miniature house number 2. Now 35 years later and the proud owner of 10 houses that certainly proved to be true.

Ralph has been happy to accompany me to Miniaturist Fairs from time to time over the years. Wonderful events! In fact I shall be visiting Kensington Miniaturist Fair in May this year with daughter Catherine. It was at a fair held in 1990 at Alexandra Palace that we found the perfect house. Ralph grew up in a 1930 style house in Surbiton. This house was an almost perfect miniature version of his parents' house.

As with all my miniature houses it has its own story frozen in time. It is set in 1937 between two world wars.

Wisteria



Mrs Pearl Button is a dressmaker. Lily has come for her final wedding dress fitting. Lily will make a beautiful bride and little Amy a very sweet bridesmaid.



Mrs Button has a confession to make. She has never been married. She was once nearly married to Albert. In fact she had admired herself in her wedding dress a week before her own wedding, just like Lily.





Then Albert had to be a hero on the battlefield and die for his country. It was so unfair.





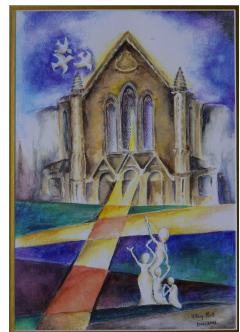
Still, she thinks he would have been proud of her. She hopes he doesn't mind her pretending to be a widow. So much more dignified than being a spinster.

Please give me a call if you would like to see my houses.

Carol Jessop

Answer to the Front Cover Picture Question

Hilary painted it as a farewell gift to Revd Howard Sharp when he left The United Church to become Moderator of the URC Mersey Synod in 2003.



Devotion to God Through Music

'If Music be the food of love, play on'. These are the words of Orsino in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

Orsino's famous words seem to be asking for an overdose of love. We are not asking for that! But he does recognise that music will have a strong emotional effect on us. In Shakespeare's plays, music was common, even expected by his audience, and came to represent a harmony of the soul, as opposed to his storm scenes, which foretold turmoil.

Cast your minds back to a time three, four, five hundred years before the age of Shakespeare, to a land where life was 'nasty, brutish and short'. This was the stereotype, but it was not necessarily true. Life was indeed usually short, but not always nasty and brutish. But it was hard grind for all. The ruling classes – knights, lords, and monarch – might have some degree of security in their castles. The monks might be secure in their monasteries. But life was hard for all. Relief was to be found in the transcendent, God. On Sundays and Holy Days, the church was the place where common folk could reach God in the Mass. Even though communion for lay people was only taken once a year at Easter, the consecration was weekly observed and held in awe by the common people. Ancestors and saints could be venerated in shrines and pilgrimages to holy places. These occasions could be celebrated through music and dance.

Devotion to God was nearly universal. This could take the form of prayer, fasting and good works. In this devotion, music played an important part, particularly in the monasteries. This was formulated around the eight Benedictine offices or services over the 24-hour day. The offices were usually sung or chanted in Latin to aid articulation in the dark, cavernous spaces of monastic churches. Music was a way to communicate with God, but not just to communicate. Music had the power to move and speak to the soul.

Down the ages, many composers, even those of agnostic or atheist persuasion, have written religious works, particularly masses. This seems to be a way of trying to reach for a mystery, something transcendent, to speak to our souls. If you like, seeking a love of God through music.

In modern times, music, like art or poetry, is a universal language. We can show our devotion to God through music. In the Bible, we are exhorted to praise God through hymns and songs. As St Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 5, 'speak to one another in psalms and songs from the spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.'

Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts are prime examples of hymn writers to which others would write the music. Today people still seek sustenance for the soul through music. Thousands flock to music festivals like Glastonbury, probably most of no religious persuasion, to be moved by music. Arguably, they are proclaiming the love of their god, Music.

Music, even sad music, is usually written for enjoyment and delight, and can be expressed as a balm for the soul, or as a physical manifestation, as in dance. It is an act of giving – in a sense an act of love. It has a profound effect on us, even when our faculties seem lost. Witness the effect of music in care homes. People who have shown very little stimulation suddenly become transformed by music; their soul is renewed and brought back to life. Music not only brings love – it seems to bring hope. In this context, it does not necessarily have to be calming – it can be enlivening – modern rock music may be as equally valuable as a relaxing lullaby.

We could go into why music has such a profound effect on us – it may have some biological evolutionary echo, but that would be to digress. The fact is, music is a vital part of our being, and perhaps part of a greater Power.

Tony Wood

Brief Encounter with Martin Ramsey

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

Probably the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1961. It was scary because news coverage then was quite sparse and you didn't really know what was going on.

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

Get to know 'what you are like' – develop a strong sense of self. Listen to what others say but remember they may well be wrong.

Do you have a hero?

Ludwig Wittgenstein – the greatest philosopher of the 20th century – a genius whose ideas on language I have spent so many hours trying to understand.

What is your favourite saying or quotation?

'Cogito, Ergo Sum' – 'I think, therefore I am'. René Descartes believed introspection is the only source of knowledge that we can rely on without doubt.

What is your favourite piece of music?

It must be a Bob Dylan song – they have been an integral part of all my adult life. Impossible to choose a favourite so I will go with the one I heard first, 60 years ago. The answer, my friend, is 'Blowin' in the Wind'.

What have you changed your mind about?

I used to believe, very strongly, that emotion and faith should not mix – perhaps it was seeing Billy Graham. Now I think that is wrong and emotion is a valid, perhaps important, component of our faith.

What would people be surprised to know about you?



I love ballet. My mum persuaded me to go to Covent Garden in 1969 just after I left university and I was lucky to see all the great dancers of that time; Anthony Dowell, Antoinette Sibley – I even saw Natalia Makarova dance *Swan Lake*. Happy memories!!

Where do you feel closest to God?

It is more like where can you clear your mind of everything that constantly fills it up. Twilight walks along the Navigation with the swans and ducks are good. During the lockdowns I realised it was quite hard to do at home but found a way through music and modern technology. I sit with my laptop at the kitchen table – noise reduction headphones shutting out the everyday – and let Mahler help me get a little closer to God.

Comedy Corner



"How's the Psalms' title-page coming along?"



The deadline for *April Yours* is **Monday 13 March**. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.

Churches Together in Winchester News

Dear friends,

We have been consulting and planning and I hope you like the outcomes. Here is what is coming up.



City-wide Prayer time – the next one will be on Tuesday 14 March 7.30 at the Vineyard. The last one we held was excellent really appreciated by the many who came, so do plan to be there.

Good Friday – Good for You!

I was asked by the November Council to explore ways of re-imagining what we have traditionally undertaken as our Good Friday witness. As a result, I have had a conversation with Cathedral staff and others to move things forward. We are exploring the possibility of using space on the grassed area in the Outer Close. The event will involve an interactive response to a cross which will be erected. From 10 am to noon we will, during each half hour, have story-telling, music and singing. There will be space for children and adults to join in and prepare or draw a prayer. Watch out for more details.

Whatever time your Good Friday services (7 April), there will be opportunity for you to support this venture – declaring this day and this cross to be **Good for You!**

The **Annual General Meeting** will be on **Thursday 4 May at 7.30 pm** – venue TBC.

Pentecost Sunday 28 May. A special evening celebration of our churches of all nations and backgrounds at the Hope Church. Book the date now!

I look forward to seeing you around,

Blessings, Howard

Revd Dr Howard Mellor, Chair, CTiW, hmellor49@gmail.com



UNITED CHURCH
WINCHESTER

Services for March 2023

In-person and live-streamed

5 MARCH

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

12 MARCH

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Mrs Margaret Axford

19 MARCH

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

26 MARCH

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

HC: Holy Communion.

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services