



Yours

Magazine of
The United Church
Winchester

February 2024

FIND A COHERENT WAY FORWARD

TRUTH WILL SPRING UP

THIS MATTERS



CHANGED BY EVERY ENCOUNTER
WE ARE HERE TODAY

GROWING TOGETHER

Tim's Letter: Vision, Vision, Vision ...

At the beginning of our jubilee year, we're again, and rightly so, considering our vision as a church. It's a word that evokes mixed feelings, some being energised by it, others being turned-off instead.

Whatever your feelings about the word, I want to thank you for engaging in this conversation once again. We could use a different word to describe the path we're on, but the purpose would remain the same: we are discerning whether The United Church, in its current form and within our current building, has a sustainable future, or not. And by sustainable, I'm not just talking about our green credentials, but whether we can sustain what we currently do (and would like to do), given the current squeeze on our finances and decline in our numbers.

I want to reassure you that as your Minister my role is to facilitate (or moderate, that's a good URC word!) our conversation rather than to steer it. And, to offer what spiritual guidance I can on how we approach this conversation.

Later in this edition of *Yours* is the feedback that's been collated so far from our first church vision lunch. As you read what we have collectively contributed, I ask you to consider just one question: How do we respond faithfully in prayer to these challenges, trusting that the Spirit will guide our thoughts and actions?

Gracious God,
by your love you have brought us into being,
and by your grace you give us purpose and shape our lives.
May we who bear your image be faithful in discerning your call.
Comfort us by your Spirit, both now, and in the days to come.
Whatever the future holds,
fix our eyes on Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.
Amen.

In Christ,

Tim

Editorial

On this month's front cover is a photo of St Brigid (St Bride), the patroness saint of Ireland and one of its three national saints along with Patrick and Columba. Her feast day is 1 February or Candlemas. This photo was taken by Pauline Brooks inside St Brides Church, St Brides Bay, Pembrokeshire, during a holiday with Roger last summer. Amongst many other things, St Brigid is the patron saint of scholars, travellers and mariners. It is said that the Hebrides are named after her, hence her name 'Bride of the Isles'.

Amongst our usual mix of news, reflections, sharing and humour, we focus this month on a vision for The United Church (pages 28 -37). Our first 'vision' lunch on 14 January was attended by some 55 people. A selection of phrases spoken then are on the front page, with more on page 37.

A second 'vision' lunch will take place on 4 February. Please take time to read thoughts and ideas shared in house groups and from individuals, ready to bring your own on the day.

Many thanks to all out contributors. We hope you enjoy this edition.

Yours Team—Bob Lord, Dorothy Lusmore and Sophie Armstrong
Communications Enabling Group

Would you like to join a team looking to build on and improve what we already do to make sure those in the community around us are aware of who we are, what we are about, what we believe, and what there is to discover in our building? If so, come to a meeting of the Communications Enabling group on Tuesday 6 February at 7.30 pm. If you can't be there, contact us with your ideas.

For more information phone Bob Lord on 07753526961 or email spotlight@ucw.org.uk or yours@ucw.org.uk.

News of the United Church Family

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of Doris Creber who died peacefully at home on 19 November after a short illness. She was 98 years old and had continued to live at home with support. Doris and her late husband Reverend John Creber were longstanding members of this Church.



We hold in our prayers Janet Messer and all the family following the death of Janet's Mum, Jessie Axtel. Jessie died on 17 December.

We send our good wishes and congratulations to the parents and grandparents of several babies born in recent weeks...

- Grace, daughter of Alison and Simon Fenton and granddaughter to Helen and Mac McTiffin, was born on 21 December.
- Kyra, daughter of Hollie James and her partner Ryan, was born on 8 January. Hollie, Ryan and Kyra are all doing well, and Tim and Andrea are very proud grandparents.
- Chris and Nigel Trimmings have welcomed their new granddaughter Gigi. A daughter for Guy and Becca.

We send good wishes to Jill Cook who has recently moved into 'Winchester Heights' care home. Jill sends best wishes to friends at The United Church.

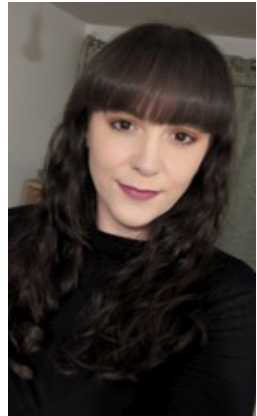
Miranda Roles has begun an eight month teaching assignment in Ghana with Project Trust. We send our love to Miranda and look forward to learning more about these experiences.

Our best wishes to Elise Grigorian who celebrated her 18th birthday on 11 January.

Jane Lawson, Pastoral Lead

Introducing Hannah Shave— MHA Winchester Locality Manager

Hello everyone, some of you will already have seen my face around MHA Winchester but I am excited for my new role as Locality Manager. I have worked within the charity sector for 10 years before joining MHA six years ago. I started as a Community Co-ordinator with the Eastleigh team and came to Winchester in early 2022. I am looking forward to where this year takes us and seeing the amazing work the MHA team does to support the older generation to live later life well. We have groups and services across the borough; including lunch clubs, exercise groups and befriending services. Contact the team for a copy of our latest newsletter. Our office is open Monday–Friday 9–3, pop by or call us on 01962 890995. If you have any questions feel free to come and meet the team.



Best wishes Hannah.

Hannah Shave

Introducing Kate Rybakova – Our Admin Assistant

Hello everyone, my name is Kate and in my past safe life I was a lawyer in Ukraine. With the beginning of the war I received protection in Great Britain and met wonderful people from The United Church who decided to support me and help me with employment.

This Christmas I spent with my host family. I am very grateful to Anne Silvester for her kindness and support. We had a wonderful traditional Christmas evening with a delicious dinner,



presents and fun. They prepared their traditional dishes for me, and I prepared for them a salad popular in my country.

I have a brother and a nephew left in Ukraine, so I celebrated Christmas online with them. In my free time, I love to read books related to my profession or biographies of famous people. I have been working as an admin assistant for almost a year and I am very grateful that I can be useful.

Kate Rybakova

Fair Play!

Steve Lawson and Jeffrey Lough play for Winchester Walking Football Club ,who are the Hampshire FA league champions! They recently won awards. It will come as no surprise to all who know them that they came away with the Fair Play Trophy! Congratulations to both of them!



Christmas Eve Carol Service

I felt full of anticipation walking into our candlelit sanctuary. Christmas trees sparkled and the blue boards were enhanced with superbly created artwork. It felt special and so proved the service. I loved the choice of carols, especially 'It was on a starry night' (StF 206) and 'Who would think that what was needed' (StF 222). Having a full congregation singing their hearts out made for a joyful noise indeed!

How fortunate we are to have such talent among our church family. The Grigorian's musical performance, heartwarming and spirit raising was something I hope will be repeated – much too good for a one off!

Aside from the expected readings we heard poems 'O Emmanuel' by Malcolm Guite, 'A Christmas Prayer' by Robert Louis Stephenson and a spellbinding 'Story of a Star', which was new to me.

Deep and meaningful, this quieter service seemed the perfect way to prepare for Christmas Day.

Rosemary MacMullen

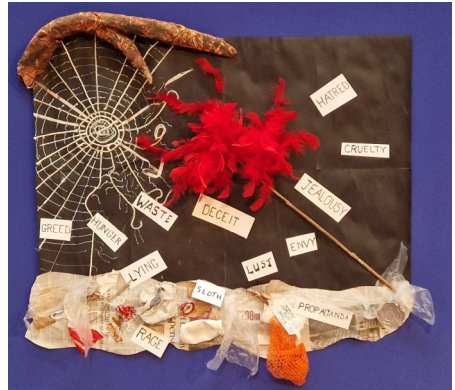


Artwork for Advent

We all appreciated the artwork which accompanied the Advent services. Here it is, followed by a note from Pamela Gilbert.



Carol and Ralph Jessop



Marjory Monro



Hilary and Mike Holt



Hilary Lock and Pamela
Gilbert

Dear, 'Out of the Ordinary' Art Team.

Heartfelt thanks to you all, for the planning, inspirational ideas, and skill in producing our Advent Artworks.

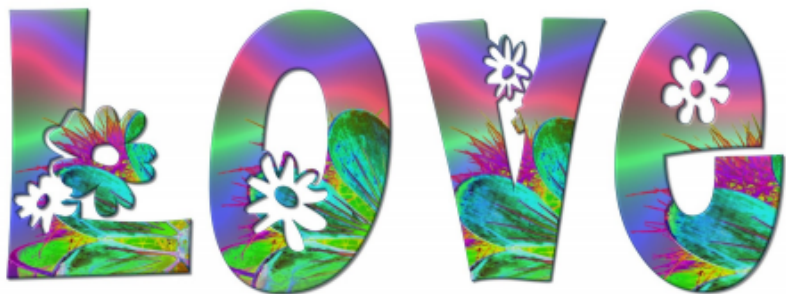
A special thank you to Tim James, who each year gives of his time to install our Artworks. May God bless you all, Pamela.

* Anna
Chaplaincy
for older people



Vintage Fun

All welcome!



LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Monday 12th February

2 - 4 pm

at the

United Church

Jewry Street, Winchester SO23 8RZ

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

Caraway

Winchester Churches Christmas Project 2023

At Christmas we offered help to 38 adults and 60 children (27 families and 4 single people) – a total of 102. Our 54 volunteers from 15 different Winchester churches have been brilliant. We have also been supported by some volunteers from Home-Start. Thank you all!

At the time of writing (mid-January) some of our volunteers have been in touch to tell us of their experiences but there is still more feedback to come – including some from the referring agencies. As always, some cases went really well and others have proved a bit trickier. One can never know in advance because we work with individuals, not stereotypes – each with their own particular issues and situations.

The items provided this year have been many and various – Christmas presents, Christmas food, a trampoline for energetic children, tablets to enable schoolwork, children's mattresses, a new microwave oven, a new set of saucepans, pantomime tickets and Marwell membership.

A flavour of the feedback from volunteers:

'Overall, both [my Christmas Project partner] and I would say, it was an enjoyable if somewhat humbling occasion.'

'She [mum] was delighted and very appreciative.'

'Our "mum" was in tears (of joy).'

'It was difficult to persuade the couple to buy something for themselves.'

'She was absolutely thrilled.'

'She was very grateful to everyone involved in the project.'

'A couple of days later she rang up to thank us and said she had been offered a new home and she just wanted to share her excitement with us.'

Thank you to everyone for your support through prayers, donations and as volunteers.

Helen McTiffin
(Joint Co-ordinator with Janet Stewart)

Drama in Church

Drama has been one of the earliest features of church services. From the fourth century onwards, there are records of Easter Services with a single piece of dialogue – a priest, representing the Angel at the tomb, asks the question '*Quem quaeritis*' – whom are you seeking?



However, to find the earliest scripted drama of the Easter play we do not have to travel



very far! Following a programme of religious instruction introduced by King Alfred the Great, Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester introduced a series of liturgical reforms called 'Concordance of the Rules' for worship and religious life among the monastic communities of

England during the reign of King Edgar. This 'Concordance' includes a manuscript called the *Visitatio sepulchri*, as performed in Winchester. Four members of the religious community are instructed to disguise themselves by dressing up in costumes taken from the monastery's liturgical vestments: an alb for the angel, and copes for the three women. They use props from the church – censers to represent the containers of spices carried by

the women and a tomb to represent the sepulchre. The main focus is still the question 'whom are you seeking?'

By the eleventh century Christmas plays were also being presented, but because Christmas was a less solemn feast than Easter, liberties were taken with the biblical text and, as well as the shepherds, the journey of the Magi, their interview with Herod, Herod's violent response and the flight into Egypt, many extra characters were added – perhaps this is where we get the Innkeeper in our Nativity plays.

We now have many excellent dramas about Christianity and there are plays ready to be performed at every level. Do we think that Drama enhances our worship – does it help us understand things a bit more, or possibly, it is just fun? What do you think? Would you like to see more drama in our services?

If you would be interested in exploring this further, please contact me.

Dorothy Lusmore

50th Anniversary Celebrations

The United Church will be 50 on 8 September! Were you around then? Do you have any memories to share? Do you have contact details for anyone who was there that we could invite to celebrate with us? Do you have ideas for how we should mark the occasion?

All ideas and suggestions welcome. Contact Janet at finance@ucw.org.uk.

Janet Messer

Listening

From the e-magazine of St Albans URC Church. It's anonymous and comes from an article published by psychotherapist Andrea Harrn.

LISTEN

When I ask you to listen to me

And you start giving advice

You have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me

And you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way

You are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me

And you feel you have to do something to solve my problems

You have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen!

All I asked was that you listen.

Not to talk or do – just to hear me.

When you do something for me

that I can and need to do for myself

You contribute to my fear and weakness.

But, when you accept as a simple fact

that I do feel what I feel

No matter how irrational,
then I can quit trying to convince you
and get about the business of understanding
what's behind this irrational feeling.

And when that's clear,
the answers are obvious
And I don't need advice.

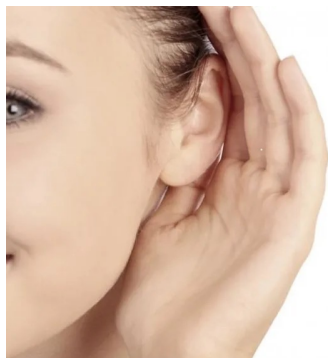
Irrational feelings make sense
when we understand what's behind them.

So please listen and just hear me

And, if you want to talk,
wait a minute for your turn

And I'll listen to you.

Pat Fry



Israel/Palestine

Revd Stephen Thornton is the retired minister of Fleet URC. He has visited Israel/Palestine 47 times, 4 times by himself for study, and 43 times leading pilgrimages. He used to work at Sarum College as a half-time member of staff at STETS (the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme), which was part of his job as Director of Training for Wessex Synod of the URC. He specialised in Biblical Studies, including the Hebrew Scriptures, the Reformed Tradition, the place of children in the Church, and different liturgies. He was the first non-Anglican on the staff of Sarum College. A former member of The United Church, Revd Anne Bray, was one of his students. Printed below is Stephen's 'take' on the situation in Israel/Palestine, as at late November. Revd Tim Searle has agreed that it ought to be published in *Yours*.

Beth Sharratt

'Hi Beth,

Good to hear from you, and to know of your deep concern about the horrors in Israel/Palestine. Truly dreadful beyond words.

My take on it is that in 1948 the United Nations, spurred on by the Governments of the UK, the USA, France and Russia agreed to create the State of Israel on Palestinian land, with a portion left for Palestinians. (Israel was offered other sites – in Africa and South America, but chose Palestine.) The UK was given the task of organising it, so they ordered thousands of Palestinians to leave their homes and land to go to camps in Lebanon, Jordan and the West Bank, assuring them that they would only be away a short time, and then they could return. Many took their house keys with them. But, tragically, they have never

been allowed to return. Meanwhile, Israel has built countless illegal settlements on designated Palestinian land, and neither our government nor any other, does anything about it.

Therefore the Palestinians have just been left to suffer vast illegal trauma, which no other people would tolerate.

Until the Governments who set it all up take their responsibilities seriously under UN authority, including our own, and make a secure State of Israel and a secure State of Palestine, the intolerable violence will continue, and if the rest of the Muslim world join in before that is accomplished we will all be blown up.

Many people have contacted me to ask what they can do to help. Of course, the power of prayer is a fundamental, but also some agencies which people can support, with whom I have close contacts. I list them here, and more details can be found for them all on the internet.

E.A.P.P.I – the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.

The Bethlehem Rehabilitation Centre
Jeel al Amal, a Boy's Home in Bethany
and the charity, Embrace the Middle East.

I hope this might help a little.'



Revd Stephen Thornton

Is Rwanda a Safe Country?

You will have seen that the government is still intending to send asylum seekers to Rwanda. So far, this aim has been thwarted by the Supreme Court which decided that Rwanda is not a safe place for refugees (mostly men) who are vulnerable.



Revd David Bagnall

In a recent *Church Times* article, the Revd David Bagnall made a strong case that Rwanda still has its problems and is by no means safe. Most of the population is either Tutsi or Hutu, and you may remember that in the 1990s the two groups were involved in a civil war which erupted into genocide in which 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu people lost their lives.

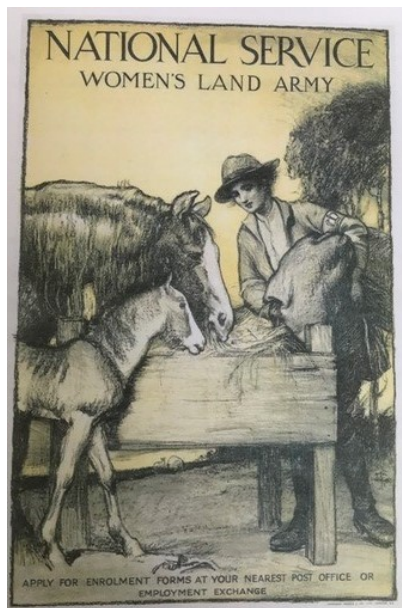
The country has moved on since then, and the theory is that all ethnic distinctions have been 'abolished'. Although the country has modernised and is much improved, the government of Paul Kagame has consolidated power in the hands of officially 'former' Tutsis, who form only 10% of the population. His party (RPF) has a tight grip on power and any criticism is brutally repressed.

Dr Bagnall completed his doctoral thesis on the Anglican Church in Rwanda and has close contact with several friends in the country. He says that Rwanda is chronically unstable, and that the UK government's assertion that Rwanda is a safe country is absurd and even reckless.

Graham Rolfe

Land Girls

John Lander's latest book, *Don't Delay – Enrol Today*, charting the history of The Women's Land Army (WLA) in Hampshire in both 20th century world wars, will be published by The History Press later this year. He is keen to make contact with descendants of family members who served on local farms in the Great War between 1914 and 1918. Hampshire was a leading county in training and placing thousands of women and girls to work on farms, replacing male labourers who joined the armed forces. If any members of the congregation have information, John would like to hear from you.



A 1917 advertisement for land girls

John Lander

Reflecting on the First British-Ukrainian Raffle



Incorporating a raffle into the Ukrainian Christmas programme aligns with the traditions of using such activities to raise funds for social courses. Technically, it is a type of lottery. But it cannot be run for private or commercial gain. That's where the difference lies. It adds an element of excitement and contributes to the festive atmosphere.



To add a bit of our culture, we put a small Ukrainian gift into each Raffle prize. A friendly 'hello' from our country. So, everybody agreed to call it a British-Ukrainian Raffle.

The enthusiasm shared between the English and Ukrainian communities as we prepared for Raffle was amazing.

We sold over 500 tickets but, to our great surprise, over half of prize winners didn't wait till the end as the party lasted for about 4 hours. We anticipated the chance of some winners leaving earlier, so we collected their contacts to reach out later and arrange the prize delivery.



The event went smoothly with tremendous excitement. Participants were thrilled to receive prizes, including greetings from Ukraine. One Ukrainian lady was lucky to get three prizes, while others were fortunate to win two each.

We were truly thrilled, that our first British-

Ukrainian raffle was a resounding success. We aspire to integrate this tradition into our upcoming events.

P.S. All proceeds from the raffle will contribute to develop future projects of the newly formed 'Winchester Ukrainian Cultural Association'.



Elena Popova



Churches Together in Winchester Update

May you find the New Year to be blessed and grace filled.



On the Feast of St Nicolas (6 December) we had the great joy of welcoming Rachel Jordan-Wolf to present the research about Talking Jesus. The quick summary of what she said is this: people actually want to know about Jesus but we are too hesitant to share. We have been told to keep the faith – but we are keeping it a secret!



There is all you need to know from: www.hopetogether.org.uk

This fascinating research should give us confidence to share the faith with others. One of the major influences which prompt people to want to explore faith are life events. So with Covid, political turmoil, wars in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine there are plenty of 'life events' which affect people. In a general election year even more so. Then of course there are births, marriages and deaths, moving house and changing job – plenty of occasions to be talking about Jesus over a cuppa!

In 2024 Churches Together in Winchester are doing two main things and seeking to enable many more expressions of gospel sharing. The two main things will be a Good Friday witness in the cathedral outer close (29 March) and a special service on the evening of Pentecost (19 May). But perhaps more importantly will be our encouragement to local churches to be more confident in all sorts of expressions of gospel sharing.

If you want to be involved contact me for details.

We began the year joyously with a pulpit swap on Sunday 21 January with preachers from different traditions coming to your church. It is just one small way of expressing our oneness in Christ.

Grace and peace to you all for 2024,
Howard

Revd Howard Mellor (Chair CTiW).

City Centre Chaplain

We are delighted to announce that the Law Courts Chaplaincy provided by the Winchester City Chaplaincy has restarted after a four year break.

The Courts, led by Her Honour Judge Morris, have worked with us to restart this service and since November a small team has been rebuilding our presence there. We are now ready to recruit more members to the team, which is where we hope you will come in.

Working in the Courts is a fascinating context with unique challenges requiring a cautious, sensitive yet affirming presence.

We are called, above all, simply to listen and be a calming help to staff and visitors to the Court.

If you think this is something that might be of interest to you and you may want to explore more, you can shadow Tim or I on a shift.

Please don't hesitate to contact us for more information about our work, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Chris Trimmings (Law Courts Team Leader) and Tim Searle (Law Courts Chaplain and Chair of The Management Group)

News of the Wider Church



The Bishop of Chelmsford, Rt Rev Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, has been speaking of how her brother's murder following the Iranian revolution led her family to flee to the UK when she was 14 years old. Her 24-year-old brother, Bahram, was murdered in Tehran in 1980. She said she regards his death as 'a sacrifice' that led to her and her family having 'the gift of a chance of a new life in this country'.

'We've spent a lifetime coming to terms with it. In a sense, it was his sacrifice that brought us here. I don't think my mum and my sister and I would have left if we hadn't had a very good reason to. So he gave us the gift of a chance of a new life in this country.'

Bishop Guli moved to the UK, where her father, the Anglican Bishop of Iran, was staying on a visit. She worked at the BBC before being ordained as a priest, becoming the first minority ethnic woman in the UK to be ordained as a bishop in 2017. She served as Bishop of Loughborough before being installed as Bishop of Chelmsford in 2021. She was speaking on 'Desert Island Discs'.

We remember the young men asylum seekers from Iran who worshipped with us last year.

Martin Scorsese has confirmed that his new movie about Jesus will film later this year. The 81-year-old director announced last year that he had a project in the pipeline about Christ after meeting Pope Francis, and has now revealed that the screenplay is complete, and production is scheduled. 'I'm trying to find a new way to make it more accessible and take away the

negative onus of what has been associated with organised religion’, Mr Scorsese said.



The rapper, Nzube Olisaebuka Udezue, known publicly as Zuby, described the West as ‘screwed without Christianity’ and likened the removal of Christianity from western culture to ‘removing the foundations of a building but pridefully expecting it to remain standing forever... All while enemies both inside and outside are trying to knock the building over,’ on a post to his one million followers, that was liked 28,000 times.

The Vatican has clarified its decision to permit priests to bless gay couples by specifying that the blessings should be brief, lasting no more than 15 seconds, and should not be misconstrued as legitimising homosexual relationships. Last month, the Holy See’s declaration allowing priests to bless same-sex couples, under certain conditions, was met with opposition. Pope Francis also cautioned believers against splintering into groups driven by individual ideologies and stressed the importance of not reducing faith to mere religious devotions or outward appearances.

‘Reacher’ actor defends his role. Alan Ritchson, who plays U.S. Army Military Police Major Jack Reacher in the popular TV show has taken to YouTube to respond to Christians who have complained about the nature of his character. He has hosted his own YouTube channel since 2022, called InstaChurch, on which he has discussed various aspects of Christian faith. In a video entitled ‘Some say I can’t be a Christian and play Reacher...’, Ritchson claimed it was ‘laughable’ for Christians to expect believing actors to only play ‘saintly’ characters, when God, in scripture, tells stories that feature all kinds of people to reveal himself.



Destinations to Generate a Bright and Cheerful Start to the Spring

Mid-January and a walk in the garden reveals a few Snowdrops in the white bud stage; a first portent of the year of bloom which is to come.

Could I suggest that a good way of giving yourself a positive start to the spring is to visit a garden which features late winter/early spring flowers such as Snowdrops and/or early flowering Crocus such as *Crocus tommasinianus*.

Last year I visited Little Court, Crawley, Winchester, Hampshire, SO21 2PU, hence very local to the UC; in addition, visiting Warnford Park in the Meon Valley.

Note that these gardens/estates are only open on particular days over specified times.

Little Court, along with many other gardens, is opened under The National Garden Scheme (NGS), where the owners invite the public to view their private gardens on certain dates for an entrance fee which goes to charity.

The specific NGS online garden search facility has a number of variables allowing users to refine the search for such things as geographical area, envisaged date and range of the visit, etc:

findagarden.ngs.org.uk/

After a walk around a beautiful garden on a crisp late winter day you might be pleased to discover that refreshments are often available, including a slice of fresh moist cake that such settings in the rural English environment always seem to yield.

Whist Warnford, being rural parkland, is not included in the NGS it does have its own online point of information:

bit.ly/3vxHXJT

On visiting, you will find it is run along similar lines to the above with refreshments available and volunteers to help the day roll out efficiently and to answer any questions which might arise.

When I visited last year, I found it to be very popular with many cars in attendance, however, being a rural estate there is ample parking space available.

Don't forget your gloves!



Early Crocus at Little Court

Given suitable weather, an added bonus of being in the environment of early flowering Crocus will be the sight and sound of bees working on their first few days of activity for the year.

Chris Young

14 January 2024 – Church Vision Lunch: Feedback

Question 1: We've asked for this conversation: what are we hoping to achieve?

- To discern a coherent way forward that we can all get behind.
- To discern what's distinctive about us. What is our niche?
- A chance to unpick and react to some of the discussions started at the Worship Day, and to generate ideas together (and in small groups).
- Is 'adventure' the right word? (A reference to the sermon delivered on 7 January). We need to survey and be realistic about the wider church scene without losing sight of God working within us.
- It's important to balance the needs of those in their later years, whilst finding energy for new expressions. It needs to be 'good for now', as well as for the future.
- We need to stop beating ourselves up about being in decline. Where are we in terms of the lifecycle of a church? Is the church entering (or has entered) its later years?
- What can we do to make contact with people 'out there'? What we have is such a blessing, we exist for them too.
- We ought not to expect outreach to automatically translate into an increase in our Sunday congregation, and yet we do need to grow numerically if we're going to survive.
- Let's celebrate what's already working well! – Coffee Bar Playtime, and Meet & Greet, for example. Let's not lose sight that the church is already engaged in meeting different people in different ways and in different settings.

- Don't forget our amazing sanctuary! It's a hidden gem that people are always surprised is here.
- We need to give thanks for the welcome this church gives through its outreach, for example, to the refugee community. We need to acknowledge these achievements. How many church members know what goes on throughout the week?
- We want to be a vibrant church attracting a range of age groups into an encounter with Jesus.
- Do we need to be better at 'selling' ourselves?
- What we gain from our outreach is as important as what we give.
- To be a place which nurtures and values, listens and changes, responding to the voices in our community.
- Being a learning community that doesn't do things for people but encourages mutuality and shared living.
- 'Wherever you're from, wherever you're going: you're welcome here'.
- Shaping a vision for a new, or refreshed way, of expressing ourselves. A renewal of life, of colour and vibrancy.

Question 2: What excites you about what we do as church?

- Things that have purpose – real engagement – feeling that what we're doing really matters, Meet & Greet being a prime example.
- Nothing.
- We're excited about our involvement in the community – but worried about whether we can continue to resource it.

- Our relationship with MHAC – we have good connections already, but there is potential for more.
- House groups and small groups – the chance to pray together and share doubts – How can I become part of a House Group?
- A community that cares for us!
- *Yours* magazine – a much loved and valued publication.
- Music in worship which feeds us spiritually. Where does our worship and theology sit in the rich tapestry of Winchester's churches?
- Vintage Fun (some people didn't know about this).
- What's exciting? The fact that we are here today. Over 50 people, talking about vision and thinking about new ideas and possibilities.
- 'When I come here to worship, I rarely go home disappointed.' It's the whole experience!
- The peace and teaching I encounter in worship is so appreciated.
- Meetings such as these in which we can share and listen, with respect.
- The creativity of this conversation.

Question 3: What new ways of doing church interest you?

- How about creating a mosaic of artwork from the wider community. Perhaps this could be a way of sharing a vision more widely and growing together.
- Exploring activities that bridge the worshipping community with our wider community involvement. How do we do this effectively?
- Could we utilise the banner points on the outside of the

building? What possibilities might this provide for advertising our vision and activities?

- Should we write a letter to us from our future self? A way of imagining the news, articles, and activities you'd love to read about our church.
- Is there potential in exploring ecumenical collaboration again? Could joining with another church be the right way to respond to the challenges we face?

Question 4: What worries you about all of this?

- Our reluctance to share our faith and the story of Jesus.
- That 'evangelism' remains a no-go word.
- 'Dad, you'll never get any young people coming to church with those hymns.'
- Our age profile.
- Fear of loneliness and isolation, especially as we get older.
- The decline of our denominations, and their inevitable demise within the next 10–15 years.
- The problems we have in resourcing what we're already doing. We really value our worship, yet we're struggling to secure enough worship stewards to resource this. No stewards, no worship.

Abbotts Barton House Group Vision Thoughts

First our 'Vision'

Our vision for The United Church is fundamentally very simple, we want to see a vibrant church which is attracting all age groups in increasing numbers to discover the benefits of following Jesus Christ. We envisage this being achieved with the help of an invigorated CTiW enabling churches to support each other.

We suggest that to help achieve this we at United need to become more effective at marketing ourselves so that nobody in Winchester is unaware of our presence and the values in our current 'Mission Statement'.

Some of our further thoughts about the details:

We begin with a number of benefits!

- A wonderful building – if we wanted to design the ideal church building it would be very close to our building in Jewry Street? Yes, it's a bit 'tired' and we need to sort out the sustainability issues. We are bang in the centre of town and we have a virtually continuous flow of folk walking past, most of whom don't know we are here.
- We have a great Minister and a great leadership team, etc.
- We have excellent and varied worship styles and have a lively Worship Enabling Group.
- We are hosts to many active groups supporting local needs, Meet and Greet and Live at home to mention just two.
- What we don't have is enough 'people'! Marketing ourselves is the key to getting more people and this would provide bodies to the jobs and presumably more income?

We need to set up a group to study all the possibilities and suggest the following areas are worthy of looking at.

- Car parking is an issue – probably no solution.
- Liaison with local schools and the University, offer help with worship and use of our premises.
- Talk to and work with other local churches. Do they have the same issues? More co-operation?
- Use Local radio to publicise ourselves.
- Use Local Newspaper.
- Our online streaming output is truly remarkable, but how can we make it more widely known? How about streaming to the Hospital and the Prison?
- Use the building for more local concerts and other gatherings.
- Make more use of the street chapel.
- Look at how to make more use of the Coffee Bar to promote the church itself.
- Does the coffee bar area need some restructuring?
- Are we sometimes afraid to promote our faith?
- Install an illuminated and very visible cross on the front face of our building.
- Can we improve our relationship with the URC and Methodist Synod and Circuit?
- Messy Church.
- Vintage fun.
- What are we willing to give up in order to do less but do that better?

We need some blue sky thinking, how about this for a crazy thought. Why not reverse the sanctuary and the hall? We then get a sanctuary visibly attached to the coffee bar and a beautiful concert hall. Crazy or not?

None of this is easy and we can't do everything. We must talk and pray and put our trust in God. No matter what we change or do, it will make no difference unless folk outside the church 'know' about it!

Abbott's Barton HG, Jan 2024

The United Church 2024: '50 years young'

Before we go any further we should determine what are our strengths?

We should aim to work to those strengths and set aside those matters which may hinder our future – therefore what are our weaknesses?

Record only three 'tasks' which we should concentrate on. My three suggestions:

- To determine our past inheritance from the three inner-City churches and state them clearly for all to know, i.e. the Nonconformist Churches' record in the past of caring and support to those around us in Winchester;
- To state our (continued) mission as a caring church;
- To make known our role as an integral part of Churches Together in Winchester.

*From our past and our determined strengths (as above + avoided weaknesses), **as a basis for working**, create a template of The United Church's three 'tasks' for the foreseeable future.*

To sum up: OUR FUTURE RELEVANCE IN THIS PLACE

Ian Giles

Key Points from two Teg Down House Group discussions, November 2023

Being clear about our identity as a Church. Who and what we stand for:

Thoughts about this may not primarily be about bringing people into services but about our visibility, our messages and the issues we hold as important and are tackling. This may draw people to our building and to us.

If UCW wasn't here, would Winchester notice? What is it about us that might make them notice? How would people know anything of what we are about/talking about?

Being a means to reconciliation (in many senses of the word) is important, including climate issues. What we do with the building and how we use it in service to God. Creating a space which is least harmful to environment.

What do we do that makes our vision real? How do we welcome? Importance of authenticity, arising naturally out of experiences of God/Faith/expressions of these.

Sharing the 'personal'.

What might we do and why?

Multi faith building. Faiths coming together to understand and respect one another. A place to meet and not be judged. A safe place in which to talk and allow exploration/sharing of ideas.

Idea of incorporating experiences from different parts of the world into a service. And/or difference of experiences (in other respects). For example, someone living in a care home might contribute something that means a lot to them. Celebrating difference and exploiting its potential. For all of us, sharing with others your culture and 'what makes you, you', is empowering and valuing.

Creativity as part of our welcome. We could be a place to bring people together through art and music. Enabling, inviting, valuing people to tap into different things.

TRUST->sharing-> listening ->valuing-> confidence-> welcome.

Think about what 'belonging' looks like.

Some important thoughts on how we go about taking this forward:

Ellie, Matthew, Amy were all at the Church worship day and have lots of ideas. We must seek out and harness ideas from younger people and from all ages and sections of our Church community and include in our wider discussion.

Don't be afraid to try new things and to fail. Failing leads to insights and learning. Importance of seeding ideas and waiting to see what grows.

Explore and make connections with things already going on (in our Church and in the wider community) with a view to establishing partnerships. 'Building on', not just starting new things.

Think about how we make the bridge to 'Sunday' from all the other activities.

Comments by Chris Roles at the 'Vision Lunch'

Let's do this thinking alongside realism and the difficult decisions about the future.

We might need the same sort of courage that was there 50 years ago [referred to by Lesley Worrall].

We can ask the question: 'if this Church is offering something distinctive, what is it that is distinctive?'

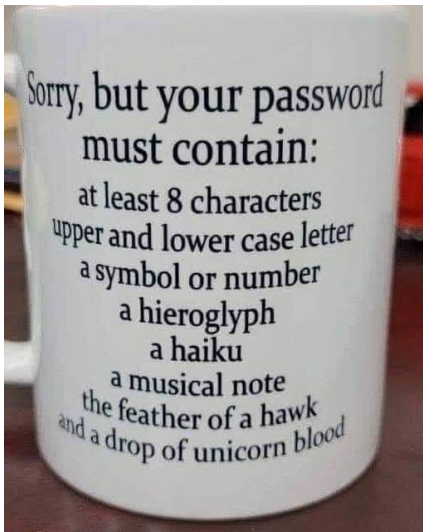
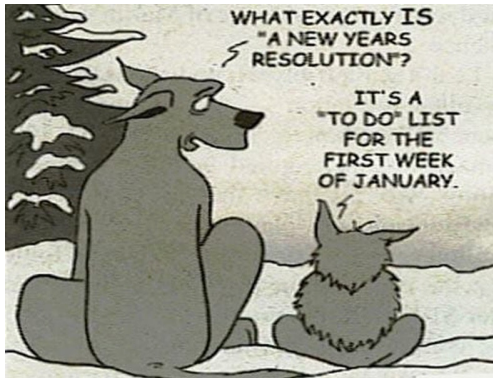
We can feel greatly encouraged by the creativity of this conversation and put that alongside the realism expressed too.

Here's what I Heard

These are words picked up by Jo Crocker at the first 'vision' lunch.



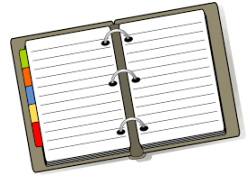
Comedy Corner



The deadline for March Yours is **Monday 12 February**. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.



Dates for Your Diary



Sunday 4 February 12–2 pm

Church 'Vision' Lunch 2

Sunday 25 February 6.30pm

Admission of Margaret Axford as a Methodist Local Preacher

Friday 29 March

A Good Friday witness in the cathedral outer close (Churches Together)

Sunday 19 May

A special service on the evening of Pentecost (Churches Together)

7–8 September 2024 – our Church's 50th Anniversary Weekend!

Make sure you block out the weekend of 7–8 September. We're planning to have a weekend of events to celebrate this. If you have any ideas about how best to celebrate, or would be willing to help plan and co-ordinate the weekend, please let us know.

To see latest events go to the updated page on our website ucw.org.uk/events/





UNITED CHURCH
WINCHESTER

Services for February 2024

In-person and live-streamed

4 FEBRUARY

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

11 FEBRUARY

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Chris Roles

18 FEBRUARY

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Tom Belshaw and Pat Fry

25 FEBRUARY

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services

