



Yours

Magazine of
The United Church
Winchester

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Tim's Letter: If the Church were Christian...

I'm grateful to one of our members who, when I visited recently, showed me the following by Michael Fielding. It's called 'If the Church were Christian ...' and cites the chapter headings of a book by Philip Gulley. In this season of Eastertide, Michael's closing question, 'Would you like our church to be like that?' seems as pertinent as ever. He goes on to say, 'Let's work on it!' which left me wondering how we think we're doing as a church in achieving this vision.

If the Church were Christian...

I've been reading books again! Will this man never stop?

My latest is a challenging book by Philip Gulley, an American Quaker. The tantalising title of the book is If the Church were Christian.

I'd like to share with you the chapter titles that follow on from the overall title If the Church were Christian...

- *Jesus would be a model for living rather than an object of worship.*
- *Affirming our potential would be more important than condemning our brokenness.*
- *Reconciliation would be valued over judgment.*
- *Gracious behaviour would be more important than right belief.*
- *Inviting questions would be valued more than supplying answers.*
- *Encouraging personal exploration would be more important than communal uniformity.*
- *Meeting needs would be more important than maintaining institutions.*
- *Peace would be more important than power.*
- *It would care more about love and less about sex.*
- *This life would be more important than the afterlife.*

Would you like our Church to be like that? I certainly would. Let's work on it!

Michael Fielding

I think the excellent and thought-provoking Lent resources we were blessed with, and the way Jesus' very human walk to the cross chimed with our own, is a good indicator that 'kingdom living' is at the very heart of what we do. There's always room for improvement, but I think our church does, in many ways, model Jesus' life as the article describes. But it could also be argued that I'm a bit biased, and so I'd be interested to hear if you agree! Furthermore, what areas do you think we need to work harder on? Come to your own conclusions and let me know.

In Christ, Tim

Editorial

'Innocence' is the title of Amy Crocker's front page painting this month. Read her reflections on it, those of the Youth Group and the themes of Leadership, Trust, Openness, Acceptance, Innocence, and Reliance on pages 8–9. Lots to ponder.

Helen Popova writes about an emotional day in February when Ukrainians in Winchester shared their stories at a well attended event at the ARC. Rosie MacMullen continues her cruise in the Canaries and Ralph and Carol Jessop recount a past journey to Israel.

Lesley Little tells us about all the good work done by the Basics Bank as we prepare to donate to them on 21 April.

All this as well as poems, reflections, news and Comedy Corner.

Many thanks to all our contributors.

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

News of the United Church Family

Jo Pellatt received a Mayor of Winchester Volunteer Award at The Guildhall on the evening of 7 March. This is in recognition of her work in initiating and co-ordinating 'Meet and Greet' sessions for refugees and asylum seekers. Richly deserved, Jo!



Chris Roles is now a Lay Canon and Member of Chapter, Winchester Cathedral. New opportunities and encounters for Chris. We look forward to hearing from him about insights and experiences along the way.

We celebrated together with Margaret Axford at a service on Sunday 25 February, during which Margaret was commissioned as a Methodist Local Preacher. A joyful occasion!

We are pleased to hear that Isabel Witham is now regularly attending services at Alton Methodist Church with her daughter, Nancy.

We are very grateful indeed for the very generous legacies left to The United Church by Richard Costard and Ruth Muffet (sister of John, Robert and Elizabeth Hillier) which we have received in recent months.

Jane Lawson would be pleased to hear from you if there is any news you would like included in future editions of Yours.

Jane Lawson
Pastoral lead

The Mayor of Winchester's Community Award 2024

To quote from the City Council website,

'The Mayor of Winchester's Community Award recognises and celebrates the organisations and individuals who have given outstanding service to the people of Winchester District. The



aim of these awards is to celebrate the selfless activity that brightens the lives of many residents, and makes the District a wonderful place in which to live'.

This year the awards ceremony was held at The Guildhall on 7 March and Jo Pellatt was one of the award winners. We are delighted that all her hard work has been recognised.

This is what the nomination said:

'Jo initiated, and now co-ordinates, The United Church's weekly Saturday morning, 'Meet and Greet' sessions for refugees. These well-attended gatherings provide hospitality and a safe, welcoming

space to meet together and find support and friendship. They provide a stable, reliable point in the week and are very important to families.

Jo is also Churches Together in Winchester “Champion for Refugees.” In this role, she personally supports local refugees and co-ordinates volunteers doing the same. Help is both practical and confidence-boosting and helps families settle into the local community.

Jo’s outstanding, sustained, effort over the years richly deserves recognition.’

Many congratulations, Jo!

Helen McTiffin

Poem

He is the lonely greatness of the world (His eyes are dim).

His power it is holds up the Cross

That holds up Him.

He takes the sorrow of the threefold hour (His eyelids close).

Round Him and round,

The wind – His Spirit – where

It listeth blows.

And so the wounded greatness of the world

In silence lies –

And death is shattered by the light from out

Those darkened eyes.

**Madeleine Caron Rock
(contributed by Pamela Gilbert)**

Cover Painting – Innocence

'We walk by faith, not by sight' 2 Corinthians 5:7

Trust. This seems to be becoming a common theme. I've called this second painting 'Innocence', not my first intention but as what first comes to mind when I look at the result. Somehow the brighter yellow only goes to emphasise the young hand on the left.

Before I focus on this month's painting however, I'd like to revisit the first which still carries prominent and continued meaning. I personally got the chance to reflect in our youth group on 17 March. I was asked to lead a session discussing the painting which focused on the themes of trust, steady hands and welcome. Interestingly, these same points were raised when I asked everyone what they thought of when they first saw the original. However, some ideas were put forward that hadn't initially occurred to me, which made the concept that much more interesting for me. They included things like the contrasting light and dark and what that might go to represent, the relaxed or inviting in the nature of the hand, the different colours in the sleeve reflecting diversity and more. Whether these came to your mind or not last month, I thought I would share them for further thinking. It's also important to me that the individual paintings stay connected, so it is interesting to revisit the first before the second.

I put other questions to the young people following on from the personal questions that I posed in the last article, and people were very willing to share. Most thoughts of where guidance is needed from our age group centred around exams or uncertainty for the future. Finally, I asked them what they might imagine as coming next in the series (not quite knowing what far-fetched ideas this may produce in all honesty) even though I'd already completed it. Conveniently, after discussion we ended up almost at the same idea that I've illustrated in this

month's painting; the idea of after extending a welcoming hand, the willingness to take it and be guided.

Leadership. Trust. Openness. Acceptance. Innocence. Reliance.

The idea of a child holding an adult's hand takes you back to when you were younger: a sense of complete reliance on another human being. Whether you see the adult hand as Jesus' or a supportive family member's, the image speaks to the next step of the guidance process. In essence the taking of the hand portrays a vulnerability. One which I would say we all possess, whatever age. So how can we be vulnerable alongside each other to give more support? As we are all aware, as you grow older you begin to rely less on those around you and more on yourself. The idea of leaving for university soon is an extreme version of this. But this doesn't mean I'll need my family any less, if not more so. If we reconsider being the innocent and vulnerable child again, what trust can that produce? 'Not by sight' is an interesting connection considering the only mention of the human here is the hand. At least for me, without sight, I would be extremely reliant on another.

Having touched on this imagery in the youth group the idea came up about whether it is actually the adult leading the child? That is what I first saw, but looking at it again, there is not a direct indication it is one or the other. So maybe a child's confidence in the unknown is also powerful and speaks to you?

So, some of this is maybe what you noticed too, or perhaps it symbolises something completely different. I would be very interested to hear anyone's perspective, especially those completely different to mine.

(I am hoping to get a board up in church with the paintings and ideas mentioned in the youth group to represent the wide range of interpretations from our conversation).

Amy Crocker

Fear Is Not My Future

Sometimes worship can be especially lifted by a song. I am sure you have favourite songs and others you can recall from seasons of spiritual growth. I recently discovered a praise song while waiting in an airport boarding queue. This song of worship carried on to enhance my next day's devotional reading on living the surrendered life. In spreading this discovered joy of our Lord Jesus Christ with friends, a biblical connection was made to the song. The scripture is the hopeful prayer of David found in Psalms 27. The writing below is inspired by the Word of God and His people. God is good. Praise be to God.

(Psalms 27:1-7)

The LORD is the light and my salvation, giver of true life

The LORD is a life giving fortress, where I surrender all of myself

When fear, sickness, heartbreak, and death come my heart will not be afraid

He will set me up high, safe on a rock

I have asked only to live in the Lord's house all my days and constantly see the Lord's beauty

(Lyrics)

Let Him turn it in your favour, watch Him work it for your good

Hello peace, hello joy, hello love, hello strength, hello hope

It's a new horizon

(Psalms 27:8-14)

Come, my heart says, seek God's face

God who saves me, don't neglect me! Don't leave me all alone!

LORD, teach me your way; because of my opponents, lead me on a good path

*I have sure faith that I will experience the LORD's goodness
Hope is the LORD! Be strong! Let your heart take courage! Hope in
the LORD!*

(Lyrics)

He's not done with what He's started... He's not done until it's
good

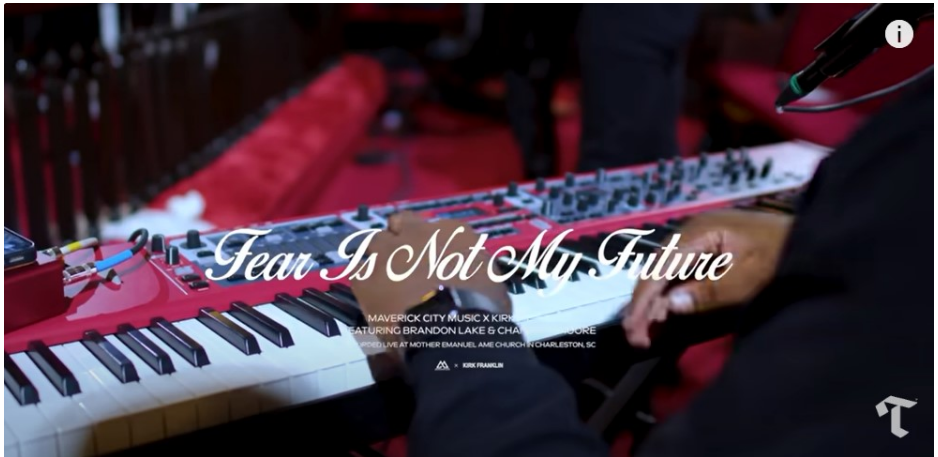
And if you're ready for a breakthrough

Just open up and just receive

'Cause what He's pouring out is nothing, nothing you've ever
seen, you've ever seen

Scripture: Psalms 27

Listen to the song on YouTube bit.ly/3TBdWm5



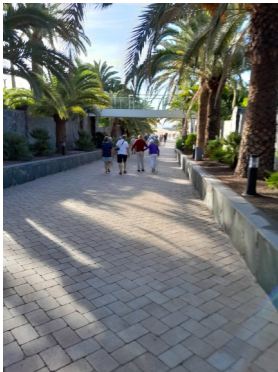
'Fear Is Not My Future' by Brandon Lake and Chandler Moore
(2022)

Andrew La Follette

Rosie's Winter Cruise to the Canaries 2024

Maspalomas and Mogán Harbour

Another glorious sunny day and off to the 'Vast Golden Dunes of Maspalomas and the Little Venice of Mogán Harbour!' I anticipated a joyous day and it was indeed, though not without its share of misadventure. Our Spanish tour guide was witty and charming and kept his spiel to an acceptable length. He informed us that Maspalomas with its sandy beaches, nature reserve and warm shallow waters stretched for 1,000 hectares.



We had signed up for 'Crossing those spectacular dunes on foot' but were only allowed to view them from behind a barrier. I was disappointed until I realised how much effort that would have been, so was happy to stroll along the Faro Maspalomas Boulevard and enjoy the contrasting cool of the nature reserve.

When we reached Puerto Mogán, I headed for a café and had a cappuccino with chocolate sprinkles, before heading to the beach where masses of lobster-red sunbathers overdosed on the sun. Rolling up my slacks, I headed for the sea and paddled on towards the rocks. Unfortunately, one leg of my trousers kept slipping down. I rolled it up, walked on, rolled it up, walked on, rolled it up, until enough was enough and I just let it all hang out. Half an hour later, I headed confidently up the beach towards a tap where people were pumping out water to wash



the sand off their feet. I pumped and pumped until I was puffing but only produced a measly trickle.

Strolling along the street past shop windows full of holiday wear



tempted me to replace my partially soggy and sandy trousers, but the prices were high and ahead of me was The Market. Cheap and colourful clothes hung from rails. I bought a summery top instead, and feeling pleased with myself, thought it might be a good idea to make sure I was

on the right track to the coach. On my way I realised I had not seen Little Venice and changed my mind.

Such a pretty place this is! The white cottages looked enchanting with their blue and yellow piping and balconies, overlooking the yachts gently rocking on their moorings.

Regretfully there was no time to linger so I headed back uphill. When I saw a row of blue buses but no coach I was worried but determined not to panic. I hurried back to the



Market and spied a silver-haired bookseller. His cultured English voice and polite manner would not have been out of place in Winchester. Hearing my tale of woe he smiled reassuringly. 'Take my arm, I will show you'. Leaving his stall unmanned he escorted me up to where the blue buses stood in a row. Behind them was a line of trees which hid the coach I had failed to spot. So near and yet so far!

Brushing aside my apologies my rescuer insisted on seeing me safely on the coach.

My fellow passengers were all agog as this tall handsome hero kissed my hand in farewell and strode off.

Reader, I have to say my heart was beating a little faster but on reflection I fear this was due solely to anxiety and the steep hill.

Back on board Balmoral I thought I had had the perfect end to a perfect day. What next I wondered?

Rosemary MacMullen

A Different Kind of Holiday

We enjoyed reading Rosemary's article in *Yours* about her holiday in The Canary Islands in January, continued in this issue, above. We were on a cruise on a different ship but we also stopped in the Canary Islands for a while. We could write an article about our trip which was very enjoyable and eventful. But no we are writing an article about our trip to Israel which was also eventful.

This actually took place in 1986, and whereas we go on organised holidays now, we went under our own steam (but we were only 43 then). Margaret Thatcher was in Israel in May 1986 and we were there in the June. A British tourist had been shot at The Garden Tomb in April 1986. (We are quite good at visiting places where events have just taken place such as Boston, Massachusetts a week after 9/11.)

We booked a flight on El Al from Heathrow to Tel Aviv, which was the only airline then on which travellers had to go through special security checks, and then were driven a long way from the terminal because El Al planes could not park in the usual places alongside other aircraft. It was a good flight and we arrived at about 10 pm. We went by taxi to the Ramada in Jerusalem which was a really nice hotel, except that when it was

Jewish Sabbath, there was no hot food or drink and the lifts, known as paternosters, ran up and down continuously with their doors open so no physical work was involved.

The Dome on the Rock

We explored old Jerusalem walking along Via Dolorosa with its Stations of the Cross to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and numerous other well known monuments



associated with Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We thought we might explore the Dome on the Rock and we wandered where we shouldn't and were firmly moved on by soldiers with rifles.

We explored the Mount of Olives, a quiet place with amazing views out of the hustle and bustle of the ancient city.

The Mount of Olives



As the city was so busy we chose to spend more time in the countryside (or desert) so we booked a day sailing on Lake Galilee. It is about 12 miles by 7 miles and is freshwater. We had companions on this trip, an Egyptian

couple with their very beautiful teenage daughter, an Argentinian couple and a young British man and there was an Israeli girl steering. In 1986 Egyptians were not allowed in Israel and the mother of the girl explained that their daughter was extremely deaf and we could see her deaf aids. As Christians they had sought permission in Egypt to allow them to come to Jerusalem to pray for their daughter that she might have her hearing restored.

The conversation with the Argentinians was interesting as we had just been at war with them. They spoke good English and were very friendly to us. We had a really good time on the water admiring the sites and chatting and imagining Jesus with his disciples on this very special stretch of water. Our destination was Capernaum, a small village at the north end of the lake where Jesus spent time with his disciples. It is obviously a Christian site and in common with similar places there is a dress code, and our young English friend was wearing shorts which would not be allowed. The young Egyptian girl was wearing trousers which she kindly let him wear as she also had a dress with her. If only world problems could be solved so spontaneously. It was such a memorable day that we can still hear our companions speaking 38 years later.

Temple at Capernaum

As we turned round to return to Jerusalem, our steerer told us that as it was Jewish Sabbath there is always the fear that Syrian aircraft will come over the Golan Heights to attack Israel as their air force could be unprepared because they would be observing the Sabbath.



Golan Heights



We visited Hebron on the West Bank where we felt very vulnerable. We supposedly saw the tomb of Abraham and his wife Sarah and 'the mosque of Abraham'; the coach driver couldn't get out of the place quickly enough.

We also visited Bethlehem, also on the West Bank, with its Church of the Nativity with 'the spot of the divine birth'. This also felt an unsafe place to be.

We went on to Masada, an important place in Jewish history. It is a massive plateau with the ruins of King Herod's palace built around 30 BCE. Its fame comes from the suicide of 1,000 Jews jumping off the rock being besieged by the Roman army. It overlooks the Dead Sea and is a really steep climb. Floating on the Dead Sea was an experience.



We finished our stay in Israel at the Ramada in Tel Aviv which is impressive and, just like most modern wealthy cities, it is full of high quality shops and restaurants. We saw acres of fertile well-tended countryside growing fruit, grain and cotton and there was plenty of high-tech industry. There have been many Israeli Prime

Ministers since 1986, and numerous politicians from all over the world have been involved in trying to solve the difficult issues that continue to burden all of the people who live there. We are witnessing the worst now. Let us hope and pray that a permanent solution to all of the problems can be found.

Ralph and Carol Jessop

Commemoration Day

On 24 February 2022 the world was taken aback by the shocking invasion Russia launched against Ukraine.

The international community was stunned by the outstanding resilience and unbreakable spirit of the Ukrainians.

The Ukrainian Cultural Association and the Ukrainians in Winchester made every effort to remind the world and the local communities that the war is still going on. Our event aimed to achieve several crucial goals:



- to remember the heroism and fortitude of both the military and civilians.
- to pay tribute to the Fallen.
- to highlight the collaborative efforts of Ukrainian and British volunteers in supporting those affected by the war.

The hall of the ARC was adorned with Ukrainian flags, flowers, photos of volunteers and informative leaflets featuring the rich

history, culture, and spirit of Ukraine. These decorations served as a poignant reminder of the ongoing struggles and the importance of solidarity and support. The flag from the frontline with the signatures of soldiers captured everyone's attention.

The event centred around personal stories of refugees accompanied by visuals from family archives, alongside a report on the history of the conflict that began in 2014. It also shed light on historical facts regarding the persecution of Ukrainians and other nationalities by the Soviet regime.

The entire audience burst into applause while listening to the performances of adult and children singing groups, vocalists, solo singers, the accordionist, and bandura player.

The event was well attended, even though it lasted for over three hours. The audience was deeply moved and



In my mind, I flick through my photograph album...



touched by the personal stories shared, as well as the

documentaries and video interviews featuring Kharkiv volunteers.

Many found themselves unable to hold back tears, overwhelmed by profound feelings of empathy and compassion.

In the evening the candle-lit vigil finished this sad day. The prayers were led by one of the canons from Winchester Cathedral, Roly Riem.



The crowd joined in singing the National Ukrainian anthem and enjoyed listening to the breathtaking verse 'Love Ukraine' by V. Sosura.



*Love your Ukraine, love as you would the sun,
The wind, the grasses and the streams together...
Love her in happy hours, when joys are won,
And love her in her time of stormy weather.
Love her in happy dreams and when awake,
Ukraine in spring's white cherry-blossom veil.
Her beauty is eternal for your sake;
Her speech is tender with the nightingale.*

A thank-you banner was hung on the fence of the Abbey Gardens expressing our sincere gratitude to all engaged in this event and those who made it happen.

Helen Popova

Photo credit: Mariia Chelenk

Our New Moderator

The Service of Induction of the Revd Dr Michael Hopkins as the Moderator of the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church was held at London Street URC in Basingstoke on Saturday March 23. The service was led by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the URC, the Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson.

A large congregation was accompanied in some energetic hymn-singing by an excellent choir, and parts of the service were led by a variety of guests. These included ecumenical partners from the United Church of Zambia, the Anglican bishops of Guildford and of Reading, the Southern Baptist Association and the Salvation Army. Pasteur Charles Kлага of the Eglise Protestante Unie de France read one of the lessons (*in French*).

The Chair of the Southampton Methodist District (and soon to be welcomed into our Circuit) the Revd Andrew de Ville led prayers. The sermon was preached by the Revd Dr John Bradbury, the General Secretary of the URC. He stressed the need for growth, and encouraged the new Moderator to make growth in numbers at least part of this aim.

The formal part of the service included the Narrative of the Call, the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC, the Affirmations by Michael Hopkins, the Induction Prayer led by members of Wessex Youth Exec, and the Declaration of Induction.

The service was followed by welcome tea and cake – and the chance to catch up with friends and former colleagues. It was altogether an excellent occasion which gives Michael Hopkins an encouraging start in his new role.

Graham Rolfe

You can watch the service on YouTube at bit.ly/3PCh9zr (Ed)

Winchester Basics Bank (WBB) Update

Thank you for this opportunity to update you about the work of Winchester Basics Bank. And thank you for your past and continuing support.

WBB is part of the fight against food insecurity for individuals and households in the city of Winchester and surrounding areas. We also supply other basics such as hygiene products, clothing and cleaning materials.

We are an independent charity founded 20 years ago by Churches Together In Winchester. We have been blessed with support from our community through donations of food, money and time, and as a result we have a good infrastructure. We have grown and adapted as the needs of our community have grown.

In 2024, the number of clients using our service is already up on last year and they are needing us for longer as the cost of living crisis continues. In 2019 food for 3,626 people was given out during the year – this included repeat visits by some people. In 2023 we gave out food for 7,004, an increase of some 93%. At the same time donations of food and money are down and the cost of food is up. As a result, last year we bought 30% of the food we gave out. We have reserves to cope with this at present but we cannot do so indefinitely and we need to maintain and extend our 'income' (food, money and peoples' time) as our clients' needs expand.

Our challenge is to continue our current offering and look for new ways of supporting our clients. To do this we continually develop our own offering and partner other organisations to collaboratively respond to the increasing, complex and severe needs of our clients. In practice this means supporting the two food pantries in Winchester and working with organisations such as Citizens Advice. Different organisations meet different

but complementary needs and it is best for us to work together rather than compete.

Past additions to our offerings include home deliveries, kitchen equipment (a lot coming from the university at the end of the academic year) and 'school holiday' lunch bags for those who rely on school meals during term time. The school holiday lunch programme is very popular and our local schools, WCC and other agencies help promote this to their pupils' families. In December 2023 we gave out lunch bags for 242 children, this Easter we are up to 271. Each bag includes a small shopping voucher to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables.

We, the staff and volunteers, are humbled by the small part we play in helping our community and we are continually thankful for the generosity of people, like yourselves, who support our work with food, money and time. Every can, jar or packet is gratefully received and needed to continue our work.

**Lesley Little,
Chair Winchester Basics Bank**

Our next date (one of three this year) for collection of donations at United Church Winchester will be on Sunday 21 April. Please give generously.

A list of items recommended for donations can be seen at winchesterbasicsbank.co.uk/donate/fooddonations/



United @ 50!

Many thanks to the two groups and the young people who met with us both to generate some ideas for celebrating our 50th anniversary. Our actual birthday is 8 September, but we think we can celebrate for much longer than one weekend!

Starting in the spring we'll have regular prayer breakfasts, and will be collating our own book of prayers. Look out for information about how to contribute. If you're interested in history then please contribute to the booklet on the history of the church and our denominations.

From 22 July to 11 August, we will be hosting the *Open to All* art exhibition from Elizabeth Gray King, an artist, theologian and URC minister. This exhibition has been touring the country and we will catch it shortly before it finishes.

In a wonderful coincidence, it is Winchester Heritage Open Days from 6 to 15 September. As part of that we can invite people in to view our interesting architecture, advertised through the open days. To draw people in we will host another exhibition during this time – a textile exhibition on the theme of creation and environment – which is provided by Westhill College, Birmingham.

On Saturday 7 September we'll have a birthday tea in the afternoon for members, returning friends and the community who use our building. We are exploring an invitation to the various music groups who use the church to display their talents during the tea. There will be activities too, and we will invite people to add their photos and memories to a timeline that will circle round the ramp. We might even have a celebration dinner!

On Sunday 8 September we'll have a celebration service with the new URC Synod Moderator, Michael Hopkins. The plan is to follow that with a 'bring and share picnic' (we'll resort to the hall if the weather doesn't hold). Members and returning friends

have the afternoon free to chat together or visit some of the other events for Winchester Heritage Open Days. In the afternoon we'll have refreshments before we bid our visitor's farewell.

The following weekend we'll again be open for visitors for the open day and have activities. We will have a thanksgiving service and hope the new Methodist Chair of District will be able to join us.

Further excitement is planned for the autumn with a light show in the church from 4 to 6 October, laid on by our own Christine Cook (famous for her Christmas lights) and a concert or two. Just to keep us on our toes we also host the Methodist and the URC Synods this autumn!

All of this needs **all of you** to take part! Do get in touch via United50@ucw.org.uk to volunteer to help with contributing to the history booklet, organising events, making refreshments, stewarding events, and laying on activities. If you have more ideas we'd love to hear from you. If you are in touch with any previous members then do let them know and ask them if you can pass on their contact details so we can send them the programme of activities.

Howard Mellor and Janet Messer

Introducing 'ChurchSuite'

Like any organisation, the church holds personal details for all its members and friends so that we can keep in contact with each other. This is the data that allows us to phone someone about a pastoral concern, or to email the latest edition of 'Spotlight', or to post paper resources to those who aren't online. Like other organisations, we have a statutory obligation to ensure that we keep our data safe and to periodically obtain your consent to continue holding it. This isn't just a box-ticking exercise but is an

integral part of our care for one another, both as individuals and as members of the wider Body of Christ.

The pressure on organisations to take greater care of their data increased further in 2018 with the introduction of the 'General Data Protection Regulation' ('GDPR'). We responded that same year by composing our own Data Policy and Privacy Statement using resources provided by the URC. We sought consent for holding everyone's personal data according to that policy and have been following the URC's guidelines ever since.

Six years on, and with changes in technology, the church's leadership has been exploring the best way to continue storing the data the church holds on our behalf. A package called ChurchSuite, used by a number of churches in Winchester, has been recommended to us. ChurchSuite is a UK company founded by a churchgoer named Gavin who, when faced with similar issues at his own church, decided to build a dedicated system for securely and efficiently managing church data. You can find out more about ChurchSuite at this webpage: churchsuite.com/about-us/

Over the coming months we will start to integrate ChurchSuite into how we operate. At first, this will only focus on the secure storage of our data and gaining fresh consent from everyone to keep doing so. But in time, we may utilise some of the other functions of ChurchSuite to help streamline what we do. For example, it would be great, in time, if we could all access a central church 'calendar' or manage some of our rotas in new ways. Rest assured; we will take baby-steps as we make these changes. Furthermore, we will take special care to ensure that those who aren't online, or who struggle with technology, are supported throughout this transition.

Yours, in Christ, Tim

Is this a Bank?

As you will probably know, rooms in The United Church are often let to various hirers. Recently, if you dropped into the Coffee Bar, you may have been asked 'Is this a Bank?' At the beginning of March there was an unusual occupant of Room 1 – the bank HSBC. Their premises in the High Street were being refurbished, so they set aside times each day over a fortnight when bank staff were available for consultation in the church – but we were assured that no cash would be involved!

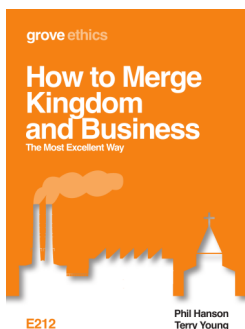
We know that our church site once held the county jail, and since then a school and many other uses. But was this a first when HSBC set up shop in The United Church?

By all accounts, this arrangement worked well. Of course the room was booked only when it was not in use by the church or by other regular hirers. It seems that some of the bank staff took advantage of the food and drink offered by the Coffee Bar during opening hours.

Suggestions for new ventures using our premises will always be welcome. If you would like to follow up this idea, a recent book may be of interest:

How to Merge Kingdom and Business: the most excellent way by Phil Hanson and Terry Young, published by Grove Books.

Graham Rolfe



News of the Wider Church



A Christian historian and analyst of Russia told **Premier Christian Radio** that the death and courageous example of Putin-opponent Alexei Navalny are impacting even those 'who are sympathetic to the Putin narrative' in Russia.

Navalny, who was 47 and a **professing Christian convert from staunch atheism**, died in a penal colony in the Arctic Circle.

Speaking on Premier's 'Inspirational Breakfast', historian Martyn Whittock said Navalny's legacy would be one that enables other Christians to stand up to Putinism in Russia, despite the Orthodox church's official support for the leader. 'And I think he is significant because he shows that a patriotic Russian is willing to take on Putin and lay down his life for the cause. And that is quite extraordinary'.

Cate Blanchett has revealed her battle with faith. The Oscar-winning actress is starring in a new film called *The New Boy*. In this film, Blanchett portrays a nun in 1940s Australia. The film's backers say it 'explores spirituality, culture and colonisation in a way we haven't seen on screen before'. In an interview with *The Times* she revealed that she grew up hoping for God to be real and to feel His strong presence following her father's death. 'But that didn't happen. And so, as a ten-year-old I fled from the Methodist church and moved down to the river and spent my childhood propelled into nature.'



When asked if she abandoned religion because it didn't give her what she wanted, Blanchett responded: 'It was not so much about what I wanted...more what I was hoping for. But religion contains a sense of hope and also a sense of community. And, in a way, that desire for something greater than myself never left me.'

Methodist Church World Mission Fund supports United Church in Zambia response to Cholera Epidemic. In recent months, there has been a serious outbreak of Cholera in Zambia. The majority of cases occurred in December 2023 and January 2024 with over 13,600 cases in the worst hit area alone – Lusaka. In January 2024, the Government closed all schools and opened emergency centres to try to contain the growing epidemic. Today, schools remain closed and there is considerable fear amongst citizens, especially in areas of high population density. *For full article see bit.ly/3TrYyqU*

Christians in Burkina Faso under threat from jihadists are not afraid to die for their faith, according to a local Church leader, speaking after the brutal killing of worshippers on Sunday 25 February. Bishop Justin Kientega of Ouahigouya Diocese, north-east Burkina Faso, told Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that the massacre of 12 people during a prayer service was just one of many incidents of terrorism that have led to the displacement of more than two million people.

Bishop Kientega underlined that, despite the difficulties and persecution, Christians have defied terrorists' demands to embrace Islam. He added that 'faith has grown' as the Church has been forced to adapt to the desperate situation 'We do feel the presence of the universal Church. But the main thing is to pray that the Lord will touch the hearts of these terrorists. We pray for their conversion every day.'

Oscar-nominated actor Mark Wahlberg has said his faith, and his prayer life are the main drives behind his success, describing his

Christian belief as the 'forefront' of everything he does. In an interview with Christian Headlines, he said: 'I credit all of my personal and professional success to my faith and also dealing with all the difficulties in life, all the unexpected things that come your way constantly, especially if you're lucky enough to get older – you experience a lot of death, a lot of suffering, a lot of loss. I'm able to deal with all those things because I get great comfort from my faith. And so I just want to share that with people. People always want to know, 'What do you credit your success to?' And that is at the forefront of everything.'



Inspiration from the Black Country



This photo was taken on our recent visit to the Black Country Living Museum near Birmingham. We thought it could be an inspiration for Outreach in our local community.

Well worth a visit, with sights and sounds of communities in both the 19th century (including the 1828 Methodist Providence Chapel) and 1950s.

Mike and Sandy Foster

* Anna
Chaplaincy
for older people



Vintage Fun

All welcome!



EASTER TEA

Monday 8th April

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,



Space in the City: A Message from our City to your City

If you are a regular attender at the Space in the City talks you will know how good they are. We used to enjoy hearing the talks when we lived in Winchester – such a good variety of subjects over the years. Do you know that the talks are recorded so that if you miss one you can catch up?

Here in Bath we have been using some of the talks from the Space in the City website for our House Group and they have been much appreciated – we thought you might be interested to know that. We'd like to send our thanks to the team who plan/organise/record the talks (and maintain the website) so that we can benefit from them.

Peter & Yvonne Alderson

Growing a Congregation

In response to recent correspondence in the paper about dogs being admitted to some cathedrals and churches, the following letter appeared:

Sir – At our regular Evensong we seldom – if ever – drop below 10 attendees. Recently, however, at five minutes to six we were only eight, when the door opened. A man came in and asked if he could bring his dog. Of course, he was told. An added bonus was that the dog was under 16, meaning an extra brownie point for the church.

There is now a notice in the porch stating: 'Dogs welcome (preferably accompanied)'.

Jo Heydon, Rock, Cornwall

Ken and Barbara Dunton
(as seen in the *Daily Telegraph*)

Space in the City

Early Summer 2024

The Church of St Lawrence
Winchester



Spiritual

Six talks on spiritual traditions that have shaped lives and religious practice over the centuries and how they still influence our flourishing today

12.30-1.15pm on a Wednesday Lunchtime

starting on Wednesday 17th April 2024

Admission free

Donations are most welcome

See the archive at www.spaceinthecity.org.uk

Comedy Corner

We all have that one friend
who's not quite right!!!



**I CAN DO
ALL THINGS
THROUGH A
VERSE TAKEN
OUT OF
CONTEXT**



Interesting garage doors!

To see a classic BBC hoax go to bit.ly/49SMk1z



The deadline for *May Yours* is **Monday 8 April**. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.



Dates for Your Diary



Monday 8 April Vintage Fun Easter Tea—See Page 27.

Saturday 4 May URC Wessex Synod Big Day Out. See info and join up bit.ly/4aqq7bc

Pentecost Sunday 19 May 6 pm at Hope Church

City-wide celebration of our shared faith, mission and ministry on the evening of Pentecost (Churches Together in Winchester)

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

Make sure you block out the weekend of the 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.



Any views or opinions expressed in Yours are the views and opinions of the individual contributors and do not represent the views or opinions of The United Church unless clearly stated.



Services for April 2024

In-person and live-streamed

7 APRIL

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Margaret Axford

14 APRIL

10.30 am **Morning Worship (HC)** Revd Adrian Bulley

21 APRIL

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

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

28 APRIL

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services

