

Yours

Magazine of The United Church Winchester

May 2024



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Tim's Letter: Praying Together

Those of you who were at our second vision lunch (4 February) may remember that it ended with the conviction that we must pray together about our way forward as a church. Prayer is at the heart of Christian discipleship and is vital for discerning where God is leading us. It's of the utmost importance that we create opportunities to meet specifically for this purpose, especially at this significant juncture in our communal life.

I met with two of our members, Margaret and Howard, to get their thoughts on how to move forward with this. Each of us felt that time was of the essence and that getting some form of shared prayer life going was a priority. I'm delighted to announce, therefore, that a new monthly prayer meeting at church will commence on Thursday 23 May and I invite you to join Howard, Margaret, and myself for this time of prayer and reflection.

Starting at **2 pm** and lasting no more than an hour it will be an opportunity for us to explore prayer together. You don't have to be a 'good' pray-er to take part: bringing along a written prayer that's meaningful to you, or simply listening to the prayers of others and offering your own in silence are just as valid. How you pray is not as important as making time for us to come together *in prayer*.

We realise Thursday afternoons won't suit everyone, so we'll be interspersing these with opportunities at different times to meet and pray together. And we realise that people pray in different ways too, so we plan to reflect this in the different meetings. On Sunday 28 July (4 pm), for example, we're thinking of using some Taizé music to lead us in prayer. And we wondered about having a prayer themed communion service on 1 September as a way of prayerfully preparing for the anniversary weekend.

The theme for the first session will be 'listening (to God)'. Other themes will include 'holding (others in our hearts)', 'waiting (for God)' and 'preparing (to celebrate)'. We hope that these themes and these meetings will be an encouragement to us all and will allow us to better discern God's call on our lives and our church in these challenging times.

Here are the first three dates. Please put them in your diary and keep an open mind about how you might engage in prayer with others in our church. Even if you can't make the events themselves, perhaps you could remember them in your own devotions:

Thursday 23 May, 2 pm in the chapel Thursday 20 June, 2 pm in the chapel Sunday 28 July, 4 pm in the sanctuary

Yours, in Christ, Tim

*** STOP PRESS ***

My day-off is changing! With immediate effect I will now be taking **FRIDAY** as my regular day-off. This is so that I can have Barnaby that day, as well as overnight into the Saturday. With thanks for your understanding, Tim.

Editorial

We have more news of our 50th anniversary celebrations together with a logo by Roger Brooks—see page 14.

If you don't fill in a tax return do you inform HMRC of your charitable giving? Roger Hooper from Romsey Methodist Church has written a useful guide on how to do this. It may leave us with more money to give to charity! See page 15.

We read about the positive effect such giving to Christian Aid can have in East Africa on page 10.

Amy Crocker has painted a third inspiring picture for our front cover. It is entitled 'Sacrificial Love'.

Many thanks to all our contributors.

Yours Team—Bob Lord, Dorothy Lusmore and Sophie Armstrong

News of the United Church Family

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Alfred Witham on 29 March. Our thoughts and prayers are with Isabel and all the family.

Alfred had been living with Isabel at a care home in Alton (near their daughter Nancy) since moving from Winchester a few months ago. He



is remembered fondly by many of us. Alfred made a significant contribution to the life of The United Church over many years, including as a Church Steward, Pastoral Secretary and as one of the team operating the sound system.

Many of us enjoyed hospitality with Alfred and Isabel. Alfred was often to be seen by some of our number in the queue for early morning swimming sessions at the leisure centre!

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

A Prayer for Faith, Hope and Love

Gracious God, lamp to my feet,

light on my path.

Where the path before me is unclear, my perception falters, your purpose is obscure and your good will concealed, Grant me ...

Faith to trust that what is currently concealed will, through your grace, one day be revealed.

Hope and confidence that you will be my companion, guide and confident on the way.

Love enough to know that one day I shall gaze upon you fully, face-to-face.

O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who lives in eternal and perfect light, may your will and way be known in me and through me, in your community and in your world. Amen.

Richard Andrew, District Chair, Darlington District



Image: A still from Channel 4 News/YouTube

Commitment for Life Launches Gaza Appeal

Commitment for Life, the global justice programme of the United Reformed Church, has launched an urgent appeal in response to the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The aim is to raise as much money as possible to provide vital support and aid through partner agencies Christian Aid, the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA), and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC). Recent reports reveal a grim reality that Gaza's two million people are experiencing 'severe levels of acute food insecurity.

Learn how to donate to the campaign.

A Different Experience of Israel/Palestine

I was fascinated by Ralph and Carol's description of their visit to Israel/Palestine in 1986, and the impressions they recalled. David and I went on an organised trip there led by Revd Stephen Thornton in 2012. A different time, a different style of tourism, and very different reactions.

We travelled with a small group of Christians from URC churches, and opportunities for worship with unaccompanied singing at holy sites were a major element in our programme; Stephen was disappointed that there were no strong singers among the ladies. Our guide was a Palestinian Orthodox Christian, who explained a lot about icons and other aspects of Orthodox practice and was very involved in a church housing scheme for young Palestinian families. He was a qualified teacher but had taken work as a tour guide because the Palestinian government could no longer afford to pay him a salary. He said that the Israeli government gave him a script he must deliver when guiding, but that no-one had said he could not answer questions, so please ask lots of questions!

In Jerusalem we stayed in a Palestinian hotel in a Palestinian area, between the bus station and the wall of the old city. The only time I felt unsafe in Jerusalem or Bethlehem was when we went to the Jewish equivalent of Oxford Street and went into a coffee shop; a civilian sat down nearby and put his rather large gun down on the table in front of him. We were very aware this was an occupied country, with soldiers on the streets who sometimes took our guide off the coach for questioning. The area around the baptism site on the Jordan was fenced with signs indicating landmines.

When Ralph and Carol went to the Mount of Olives, they experienced its peace; when we were there it was packed with noisy tourists making reflection impossible. Earlier that morning (Stephen insisted we must be up and ready to leave by 8 every

morning), we had enjoyed a wonderfully quiet time at the Church of the Lord's Prayer.

For the second part of our trip we stayed in a Jewish hotel in what had become a totally Jewish area; the hotel was like a very comfortable Best Western anywhere in the Western world. Our promised boat trip on Lake Galilee was curtailed by bad weather. Instead, we were taken to a kibbutz museum, commemorating Israeli freedom fighters. Reading of their exploits we realised just how big a part violence, bloodshed and disruption had played in the founding of modern Israel. A different perspective from that portrayed in the holocaust museum which we had found deeply moving.

Truly one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist.

Our experience at Tel Aviv airport was the worst of anywhere we had been in the world; anyone who appeared slightly different was treated harshly. One of our group, clearly an English speaking western European, had a passport showing she had been born in Africa; the official simply refused to believe her, and she was taken away for further questioning. A heavily built elderly disabled lady had all her hold luggage searched and was reprimanded for having toothpaste in her hold luggage (which is where you are supposed to put it!), yet we were allowed to take bottles of water through in the pockets of our rucksacks, when most airports insist no liquids, buy bottled water once you have gone through security.

So a mixture of emotions: awareness of the complexity of the problem, where ordinary peace-loving people on both side have suffered terrible hurt and injustice; a deep concern and respect for the Palestinian Christian community, and for the many Jewish and Palestinian people who genuinely want a peaceful solution; despair at the failure of the rest of the world to stop arms sales, and take a stand to uphold international law.

Pat Fry

Christian Aid Week 12-18 May



Life in Burundi

In Burundi, malnourishment and poverty affect more than 70% of the population, making survival a daily struggle. Jobs and food are hard to come by, and those who have homes often have no electricity or running water.



For Aline, life was a constant struggle. She was married young and gave birth to her eldest son, Fisto, when she was just 14 years old. Aline experienced constant abuse at the hands of her violent husband.

A few years later, Aline faced even more devastation. Her husband married another woman, forcing Aline to flee. He prevented her from taking their children with her, and in a further act of cruelty, told the local community that Aline was mentally ill and unable to care for her children.

'I wandered the streets, asking anyone for a place to sleep.

Those who showed me kindness would let me stay for two or three days, but it was difficult. People would insult me and treat me with contempt. They forgot I was a human being. It filled me with sorrow.' Aline Nibogora.

How Christian Aid stepped in.

Hungry, scorned and alone, Aline took her first step towards her new life. She started by participating in a transformative three-day community workshop, funded by Christian Aid. 'I came out with amazing knowledge and skills. The trainer restored a sense of hope and energy in me,' says Aline. She was taught how to form a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) and establish a steady income. VSLAs mean people can save for their future and borrow money to kickstart small rural businesses. With all she had learned, Aline's dream of getting her children back finally felt possible.

Building a Business

With a small start-up loan, Aline started trading avocados and peanuts locally. With her profits, she bought a bicycle so she could transport greater quantities of goods to markets further afield. Eventually, her hard work had finally paid off, and she had earned the



money she needed to rent a house.

Once Aline secured a home for herself, her three oldest sons were able to escape their father and join her. They told Aline that their father had abused them and sent their three young siblings to live with different members of his family.

Aline still hopes that she'll be reunited with her youngest children in time.

Today, Aline lives peacefully on her own plot of land in a remote village in the Kayogoro Commune in Makamba Province. She's baked her own bricks and is building a strong home for her and her children in every sense.

Now Aline can afford food, clothes and essential healthcare for her family. She's also purchased solar panels so her children can do their evening homework by electric light.

'I like to feed my family with the produce that I grow, such as beans, vegetables and corn. I am so happy that we are together. Now my children feel supported as they have a parent who can meet their needs.'



A Poem for the Nations

PITY THE NATION by Lawrence Ferlinghetti (After Khalil Gibran) 2007

Pity the nation whose people are sheep And whose shepherds mislead them

Pity the nation whose leaders are liars Whose sages are silenced And whose bigots haunt the airwaves

Pity the nation that raises not its voice Except to praise conquerors And acclaim the bully as hero And aims to rule the world By force and by torture

Pity the nation that knows No other language but its own And no other culture but its own

Pity the nation whose breath is money And sleeps the sleep of the too well fed

Pity the nation oh pity the people who allow their rights to erode and their freedoms to be washed away

My country, tears of thee Sweet land of liberty!

Lawrence Ferlinghetti is an American poet, but his writing speaks internationally.

Contributed by Howard Mellor

Celebration Hopes

It will not have escaped your notice that we are 50 this year! To mark this milestone, we are planning some creative and exciting events and projects. Each month between now and August we will share news of the plans.



United@50 Logo – We are delighted to reveal the new logo for our 50th Celebration events which will appear on everything we are providing during our celebration. Thank you to Roger Brooks – we celebrate your creative skills.

50 Prayers – We are going to publish an illustrated book of 50 prayers to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The United Church. We are seeking prayers written by members of the congregation OR other prayers which have a particular meaning for you. Ideally no more than 100 words in length. Prayers can be on any theme such as thanksgiving for our church, praise to God and prayers for the needs of the planet and its people.

In addition, we are hoping to include some illustrations on these or similar themes. The illustrations need to be drawn/painted on specific sized cards which are available at the back of the church.

All prayers and illustrations to Rosie Mellor by Sunday 30 June. The books of *50 Prayers* will be available from the 1 September.

Remembering with Thanksgiving – We hope to install a 'time-line' decade by decade going up the ramp. We invite you to submit photographs, written memories, published materials including artwork which can be attached to the time-line ready to be displayed by the 6 September. It would be helpful to have

contributions by early August but any time in July. We will have more details next month about this and other ways you can be involved.

Book the dates – The actual anniversary dates are the weekend of 7/8 September, but we are planning events that week and through the following weekend. In June we will give details about our plans for music, art, food and lights!

The Enabling Team for all of this is Janet Messer, Howard Mellor and Revd Tim Searle so if you have ideas or questions contact any of us.

Charitable Giving and Tax

It has long been the case that if you fill in a tax return then the amount of money that you gift to charities will reduce the amount of tax you pay (it's basically the same as having an increased personal tax allowance). For many people who do not fill in a tax return it is still possible for the amount that you have been given to charities to be included in the assessment of how much tax you should pay. The easiest way to do this is to phone HMRC and inform them. The benefit you receive will be in addition to the benefit the charity receives by claiming gift aid.

Perhaps it is easier to look at a little worked example. If John has total earnings of £20,000 per year (this might be government pension plus a private pension) and makes a total of £1,000 per year of charitable donations, and John's personal allowance is £12,750 then John would be expected to pay basic rate tax of 20% on (20,000-12,750-1,000) = £1250 in tax. Without inclusion of his charitable donations then John would pay £1450 in tax. John is better off by £200. Note also that if the charities were to claim gift aid on John's donation they would get £250. So in both cases John will have paid enough tax for the charity to make a claim.

So if you do not submit a tax return or have not yet notified HMRC of your charitable giving then there are 2 simple steps to take.

Review your bank statements and determine your charitable giving. Remember that these are all the charities that you support i.e. Church, Oxfam, Unicef, Jane Scarth House, etc. Also do this for the most recent tax years (tax year ends on 5 April) as you may be able to make a claim for those too. Find also your National Insurance number which should be on your P60 (end of year tax statement).

Phone up HMRC on **0300 200 3300** and explain that you don't complete a tax return but would like HMRC to take account of your charitable donations. If you are able to confirm that your future donations will be at the same level then tell them that too and they will setup for future years until you advise otherwise. For those people who use the Government Gateway system to see their tax/NI record then updates will be uploaded otherwise it will be by post.

There was an old advert that said tax should not be taxing and this process is straightforward, but sometimes you think the government could advertise these options a bit better.

If you have any queries about this or Gift Aid then I'd be delighted to help if I can.

Roger Hooper, Gift Aid secretary RMC roger@romseymethodist.church



Winchester Ukrainian Cultural Association (WUCA) cordially invites you to attend an exclusive

"UK - Ukraine Together" amateur documentary screening.It has been made by the Ukrainian team from Winchester.

The film offers a **profound insight into the solidarity and support** the Winchester community gave the Ukrainians.

The screening will be followed by a discussion.

Don't hesitate to come. All are welcome!

Date: 11th May Time: 3 pm - 5 pm

Location: United Church, Jewry str. Winchester SO23 8RZ

Follow us: www.facebook.com/wuca.official or epova956@gmail.com





Meet and Greet

We are grateful to have recently received two grants for the **Meet & Greet** on a Saturday morning. We have received £240 from the WCC Town Forum Small Grant for specific games/items. We were also very grateful to receive £200 from Churches Together in Winchester which will be invaluable for our weekly costs.

Jo Pellatt Mission Lead

News of the Wider Church

Cosmic dust found on cathedral roofs

A Cathedral roof is the ideal place to find cosmic dust, planetary experts say. Test samples taken from Canterbury and Rochester Cathedrals have so far revealed a rich deposit of micrometeorites.



'It could easily be taken for an April Fool's hoax, but it's really not,' the Dean of Rochester, the Very Revd Dr Philip Hesketh, told the *Church Times*. 'We had no idea this material was there on our roof, but the original building dates from 604 with further construction in the 12th century; so there must be several centuries of particles and debris along with all the history.'

A planetary scientist and member of the project team at the University of Kent, Dr Penny Wozniakiewicz, said that the dust was initially collected with a dustpan and brush, but a special vacuum cleaner was now being deployed.

'Cathedrals are large areas,' she said, 'and they have been collecting for a long time. Cosmic dust is mixed in with far greater quantities of terrestrial dust, but the proportion that is from space, and the number of different cosmic varieties, is likely to be greater on a cathedral than a house.'

The appeal of cathedrals relates to their roofs being large, often inaccessible, and mainly untouched for long periods of time. Cathedral resources can also frequently assist the dating process through consultation of their records and archives.

About 13 cathedrals have been identified for space-dust collection, subject to funding. The research is intended to discover more about how oceans and life are formed on earth.



Some samples are already showing grains up to seven billion years old from other solar systems, which entered our own system after its birth 4.6 billion years ago. It is estimated that more than 100 million meteorite particles land on the planet each year.

'I've been up on the roof and got rid of all that dust at last'
From the Church Times

The President and Vice-President of the Methodist

Conference joined 140 leaders from all denominations worldwide in stating that we cannot be silent as people continue to die in Gaza by military assault, lack of adequate medical care, hunger, and disease... We repeat our call for a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire and welcome the UK Government's support for this call at the LIN Security Council.

Government's support for this call at the UN Security Council on Monday 25 March. We urge the UK Government to follow this up with assertive action to protect the lives of the people of Gaza.



More than 32,000 people in Gaza have been killed, and more than 74,694 have been injured, the vast majority of them women and children. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes the

situation as desperate, as children are dying from hunger and dehydration. The horrific actions Hamas committed on 7 October in no way justify the massive deaths of tens of thousands of civilians in Gaza at the hands of the Israeli military. More than 1.8 million people remain displaced. More than half of Gaza's buildings have been damaged or destroyed. All of this compounds the devastation that Palestinians have experienced during Israel's 16+ year blockade of Gaza and the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza since 1967.

'We, as global Christian leaders, stand with our brothers and sisters in Christ in Palestine and around the world and say the killing must stop, and the violence must be brought to an end. We ask world leaders to exercise strong moral courage to bring an immediate end to the violence and to open a pathway toward peace and an end to the conflict... We know that Jesus himself was among those who suffered, and he comforted the broken-hearted. We say, "Enough atrocities in Gaza; enough violence, death, and destruction! May love triumph over hate." We hold onto the hope that peace is possible even in the midst of this darkest hour.'

Christianity's oldest religious book to be sold at Christies

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The Crosby-Schøyen Codex, written in Coptic script on papyrus in Egypt, dates to between AD 250-350. It is thought to be one of the oldest books in existence and could sell for up to £3m. The liturgical book was

produced in one of the first Christian monasteries and contains texts including the first complete epistle of Peter, the Book of Jonah, and an Easter homily. The text is of 'monumental importance as a witness to the earliest spread of Christianity around the Mediterranean', said Eugenio Donadoni, senior specialist for books and manuscripts at Christies. The 104 pages (52 leaves) were written by one scribe over a period of 40 years at a monastery in upper Egypt and are preserved behind plexiglass. The codex is on view at Christie's New York from 2 April through to 9 April and will be auctioned in London on 11 June.

Archaeologists in northern Israel have uncovered an immense underground hideout comprising narrow tunnels and bigger rooms that were dug by Jewish villagers nearly 2,000 years ago at a time of revolt against the Roman empire. The labyrinth is evidence, the experts said, that Jewish communities as far north as the hills of the Galilee, prepared for the Roman legions quashing rebellions closer to Jerusalem. They carved a hideout that winds at least 100 metres under their village, said Yinon

Shivtiel, a historian at Zefat Academic College who specialises in caves. Cramped burrows, too tight for an armoured legionnaire, run between larger cavities where there is room to stand, gather and store precious goods. The cave system was designed to save entire families.



There were two ill-fated revolts against the Romans in the Holy Land during that period. The first culminated with the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70.

Worship leader Matt Redman and his wife Beth have spoken out about the abuse they suffered under Soul Survivor founder Mike Pilavachi.

Matt Redman, who met Pilavachi when he was 13 years old, described how the former youth leader would wrestle with him in a 'hidden room in the church' after asking him to talk in detail about the sexual abuse he had experienced as a child. In September last year, the Church of England's National Safeguarding



Team found that Rev Canon Mike Pilavachi's 'coercive and controlling behaviour led to inappropriate relationships, the physical wrestling of youths and massaging of young male interns'. In a 30-minute documentary called 'Let There Be Light', the Redmans spoke about the psychological and emotional abuse they experienced during their time at Soul Survivor church in Watford.

Redman, who founded the popular Christian youth festival Soul Survivor alongside Pilavachi in 1993, said the response from some in the Church to the recent news about the charismatic church leader was 'disturbing'. He said: 'Yes, we're all for forgiveness, we're all for moving forward, we do believe people can have a brand new start. Absolutely. Amen to that always. But this isn't about forgiveness... I've forgiven Mike, but this is about accountability.'

The documentary can be found on YouTube: bit.ly/3Jalkhj.



Vintage Fun

All welcome!



MEMBERS' CHOICE

Monday 20 May 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, with tea and cake.

Carawa

Trinity's Big Sleep Out 2024



Join us on Friday 24 May 2024 from 6 pm for an eye-opening night spent sleeping in cardboard shelters in support of Trinity Winchester.

Enjoy on-stage live music and entertainment from the likes of Integr8 dance and 5hades of grey, and delicious food from local vendors such as Piecaramba. Our well-being area this year

includes 3 bell tents with many activities.

Create your own cardboard shelter to be in with a chance of winning prizes including vouchers for Clue Capers escape game.

Winding down, we will listen to a bedtime story read by a celebrity before all non-sleepers depart at 11 pm.

Join us for a night under the stars in our homemade cardboard shelters to raise vital funds and awareness for Trinity's work with homeless and vulnerable people in Hampshire.

It may not be your most comfortable night's sleep, but it will be one of your most rewarding.

Every penny that you raise in sponsorship will go back into Trinity's services, offering long-term, positive change.

We ask participants to raise a minimum of £100 (or £50 for under 18s) in sponsorship for Trinity. Anyone who raises £150 or more will receive a free Big Sleep Out t-shirt.

Non-sleepers welcome!

For more info visit www.trinitywinchester.org.uk

Or purchase tickets directly at bigsleepout2024.eventbrite.co.uk/

MHA Communities Update

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who supported our ongoing book sale with the lovely donations of books. We continue to have a book sale at all our groups hosted at the church and our members were amazed at the selection they had to choose from.

Volunteer opportunities within MHA Communities for Spring/ Summer 2024:

Kitchen	Support to prepare a	Fridays Fortnightly
Helper	Ploughman's lunch for the	10.30-12.30
	Activity Day group at	
	United Church	
Car Drivers	Supporting members to	Mondays &
	get to social and exercise	Tuesdays
	groups at United Church	
Befrienders	Volunteers to visit	Various times &
	members out in the	days
	community	



Hannah Shave Locality Manager Hampshire Central

Comedy Corner





HOW AMAZON WAS INVENTED



"Any ideas on how to get more cardboard boxes into our homes?"

'Don't forget to celebrate Stars Wars Day on May the Fourth'



The deadline for June Yours is Monday 13 May. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.



Dates for Your Diary



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

Saturday 11 May 3–5 pm 'UK-Ukraine Together'
Documentary film made by the Ukrainian Community in
Winchester. (see page 17)

Pentecost Sunday 19 May 6 pm Churches Together Pentecost Celebration at Hope Church

26 May, Mottisfont Priory at 3 pm at the north-end of the East Lawn, a celebration of 800 years since the consecration of the Church of the Holy Trinity at the Priory. Normal entrance terms apply.

7–8 September 2024 – our Church's 50th Anniversary Weekend! (see page 14)



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 May 2024

In-person and live-streamed

5 MAY

10.30 am Morning Worship (HC) Revd Tim Searle

12 MAY CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

10.30 am Morning Worship Abbots Barton House

Group

19 MAY PENTECOST

9.00 am Morning Worship (HC) Revd Tim Searle

10.30 am Morning Worship Revd Tim Searle

6.00 pm Churches Together Pentecost Celebration at Hope

Church

26 MAY TRINITY SUNDAY

10.30 am Morning Worship Revd Tim Searle

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services