



Yours

Magazine of
The United Church
Winchester

July/August 2024



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Magazine Editor

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Tim's Letter

An Election Prayer for Voters, provided by JPIT (the Joint Public Issues Team)

Loving God, we face a choice.

Be with us as we consider the options
weigh the arguments
and assess the claims and the candidates.

But also prompt us to listen:
to the voices on the margins
to the cry of the earth
and to those who reach a different conclusion to us.

God, we pray that you would
stimulate our minds
stir our hearts
and sanctify our choosing.

Help us also to remember
your command to love our neighbours
both during and after this election. Amen

And a quick word on House Groups ...

I hope that those of you who are in one of our House Groups are enjoying the experience, and find the study, fellowship, and support they offer a great blessing. It's been wonderful to be invited to lead or attend some of the groups in the first half of this year – I really do enjoy praying, sharing, and opening up God's Word with you.

And if you're not currently part of a House Group, then perhaps you might consider the following opportunity. John and Pat Lander have a vision for starting a new House Group at their home in Barton Stacey. They're envisaging running it in the daytime, either on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon. They'd love to hear from anyone interested in joining them so they can gauge how much interest there is for this new venture. And if you like the idea and timings but are not sure about getting out to Barton Stacey, do contact them anyway; there may be creative ways around this!

For more information and to register your interest, speak to John or Pat, or email them at: jandplander@btinternet.com

Yours, in Christ,

Tim

Editorial

This month's front cover is 'Nativity Tancred' from *Open to All*, an art exhibition at the church in the summer, focusing on the way all are welcome at the Carpenter's table. The paintings are the work of Elizabeth Gray King, a URC minister. This is part of our 50th anniversary celebrations. You can find all that's planned for us, including a celebration meal and a special concert on pages 30–34.

Margaret Axford introduces a new series of reflections on prayer, and Tom Belshaw shares his thoughts on the responsibilities of Christian Voters. Pamela Gilbert writes about the important work of Anna Chaplains and Jane Lawson shares a book review. We also have news of Miranda Roles in Ghana. Enjoy!

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

News of the United Church Family

Joan Wood will celebrate her 100th birthday on 18 August.



Joan was born in Plymouth and family legend has it that she met her husband Phil under a lathe bench during a bombing raid in Devonport dockyard in 1942. She moved to Winchester in 2009 and has been at Abbots Barton nursing home for the last three years.

Joan has been a much valued member of this Church since moving to Winchester and was a regular attender at MHAC lunches. Although Joan can no longer attend services in Church, she keeps

in touch via *Yours*. Church members enjoy her company when visiting her at Abbots Barton.

By the time *Yours* goes to press, exams will be over and we wish everyone well for results. Very best wishes for next steps, especially for those planning a move away from home for the first time.

Welcome back to Neil Messer, returning for the summer from Waco, Texas. Good to have you back amongst us.

For those people taking holidays, go well and come back refreshed and ready for our Church anniversary celebrations!

Jane Lawson, Pastoral Lead

Other News of the Church Family



Here is a photo of my daughter Helena's wedding to Bradley Downton on 31 May at Ampfield Golf and Country Club.

I would like to thank all the people at church for their interest and kind messages

of support for Helena and Bradley.

Tony Wood

I am conscious that I have been 'missing' from Sunday worship for about 18 months now and I have been touched by the enquiries after me, mainly via Jean when she has been present, and the good wishes I have received while stuck at home. Thank you. .

I am under doctor's orders to stay at home at least for the present time as I have had many falls, all but one at home, because of a balance problem. In addition, more recently, and as a result of the last damaging fall, I have fractured a bone at the base of my spine. I can only walk with a Zimmer frame, hoping that my mobility will gradually improve.

I look forward to being with you all again,

Ian Giles

News from Miranda Roles, Seva island, Volta Region, Ghana, June 2024

At school we have made a lot of progress with our after-school clubs and activities. Both the Girls Club and the Knitting Club have been a big success, though not always in the way I had envisaged. We have a theme for each Girls Club, but it always involves music and dancing! We have made bracelets together, did some colouring, made birthday cards for myself and my project partner Sophie (we share a birthday!) and had a little movie afternoon while it was raining. The girls love it. The first meet was truly amazing, we felt so lucky to provide a space where the girls can fully relax and there is no expectations of them – we 'start' at 3pm so the girls have time to get changed and complete any chores they have to do at home. The girls just turn up when they are ready, it is very relaxed, and a very different atmosphere than usual at school.

My Knitting Club was given a big boost when Sam very kindly brought many knitting needles and balls of wool in his luggage from the UK (more about his visit below!!) I definitely had a picture of what the club would be like – more so than I did for our Girls Club. It definitely has turned out different to what I had imagined but it works! I thought I would be doing a lot more teaching of knitting, but the reality is that all the kids are so practical, and pick up new skills so quickly, that they can watch me do it once and then can do it themselves without my help! I had this picture of sitting down all together knitting, but really they do it whenever they can - breaks at school and at home! So far they have made small holders for phones, purses and even flags for fishing boats – a very creative idea. Lots of them are making bigger bags and even skirts! It is so good to see such enthusiasm and creativity and I love being a part of it.

My science lessons involve a recap from the previous lesson, notes, written exercises and an activity to help the kids

understand if possible - I try and make this as interesting as possible but for some topics all I manage is a group discussion with some silly drawings. When we were covering food chains it was nice to make a food chain with everyone and have the kids discuss who would eat who - something they remember doing lessons on and means they have thought through the concept more than in written work. This makes a big difference to their performance in exam questions because they feel much more confident in the concepts.

My ICT lessons are a little different - often involving one theory based and one practical lesson per week. It's great to have a working computer and be able to give the kids a chance to experiment and have a go at things like how to save documents that they have to learn about.

Over the Easter school holidays we had an amazing few weeks travelling around Ghana! After being here for a few months, we hadn't had a chance to explore outside of our home area in the Volta region and the capital, Accra. We (five Project Trust volunteers) started our travels by heading to Accra – always an interesting journey – from where we set off on a 14 hour coach to the northern region. We spent 3 nights in Mole National Park and did afternoon, morning, and night safaris! We were very lucky and managed to see at least one elephant on each! Each safari was in Jeeps but one of them was a walking safari so we got super close to an elephant - such a surreal experience. We then spent one night in Tamale which is the capital of the Northern region which was super interesting – it felt very different to other cities we have been to in Ghana. We were able to visit two of the mosques, which are many hundreds of years old – they were beautiful. Then we travelled down to Kumasi which is the second largest city in Ghana, and spent 2 nights there – it has some amazing museums and also the largest single market in West Africa with over 10,000

stalls! We then went on to visit Lake Bosomtwe which is the only natural lake in Ghana and so beautiful. And the last stop was Cape Coast! It was a good chance to learn more about aspects of the history of Ghana, in particular the impact of the slave trade, by visiting the castles at Cape Coast and Elmina.

In mid-May one of my brothers Sam flew out to Ghana to visit me for 10 days! We travelled to Cape Coast so he could have the chance to learn about some of the history of Ghana and do some more touristy things! Sam came to all my lessons at school so had a chance to get to know the kids. He tried all my favourite food to eat at school and Mansa cooked for us in the evening too, so he had the chance to try Akple and Crab stew! He even got the chance to see a big storm – my favourite! The sky was almost purple and we were in the middle of a science lesson but the classroom went so dark the kids couldn't see the board! The school looks like its own island after rain like that – water almost all around!

The markets are another part of our weekly routine I really enjoy. We go to the same people each week for our bread, vegetables, fruit, rice, beans, biscuits and fabric! So seeing their familiar faces is enjoyable too. Our fruit lady often tells us when is best to eat the fruit we buy from her and if it's a new variety of melon (like this week) guides us on how best to prepare it too. It is often hard to walk past our fabric lady and her stall and she tempts us with new fabric most weeks but she is helpful in choosing between fabrics and guiding how many yards we need for certain clothes if we haven't asked our seamstress before.

Trips to the seamstress have been a very regular occurrence throughout my time here and we really look forward to them! Our seamstress is amazing and she can make absolutely anything! We usually give her photos of how we would like different tops or dresses and she pulls them off every time! She is also really good at using all the fabric and if there is spare she will make a

'surprise item' usually an extra top or skirt! It's definitely something I really miss when my time here comes to an end - all the Ghana volunteers go to her to get any clothes made so we've all got to know her.

Afternoons in the compound continue to be a favourite time of mine - starting new clubs at school has been amazing but I find it important that we still have afternoons with time just with our host family. We play games - a recent favourite is throwing bottle tops through shapes with cutout cardboard with an egg crate behind - Innocent (3yrs) has very good aim for his age! We enjoy colouring together - a nice calm activity after a busy day at school. The kids always help us cook, lots of our recipes include grinding a mixture of dried chilli peppers, onion and tomato so having a helper to chop while I grind is really nice and I am most grateful. After eating, I normally help Klenam and sometimes Emefa with homework. It's been nice to see improvements in their work - especially Emefa who after not having a teacher for all of our first term here is now being taught as part of a bigger class so has been coming home with maths homework. She has been improving lots more now, before I would do written exercises for her but she is of course improving much quicker.

We are lucky enough to regularly be given fish for our dinner!! Often those who live on Seva and regularly go fishing will come to sell some fish to Mansa and we get given some too! More recently I've been lending out my head torch to people who are going out on the late fishing trips - some of my students today were going fishing around 7pm when it is already very dark here, so the torches helped them and they gave us fish in return!! I hope you have found my news interesting. Thank you for your continuing interest and support!

Miranda Roles.



Lining up for school.



Helping with
homework.



Fishing boats at Cape Coast



Dressing for church.

The Wednesday Service at United

Every Wednesday we hold a short service of worship at The United Church.

It is an opportunity to take a midweek break in our busy lives and make time for prayer and hear a short 'thought'.

I was leading the Service this week and afterwards it was suggested that my theme should be put in *Yours*.

So here it is ...

United Wednesday 12 June 2024

At our Wednesday Service over the last couple of weeks we have thought about the forthcoming General Election, looking at the candidate's responsibilities and then thinking about our own responsibilities as Christian voters.

This morning, I want to continue this theme and wonder what would happen if we formed the Christian Party, or even perhaps the 'Wednesday Service Party'!

What might our manifesto contain?

What would be our key points?

What Bible quotations might we include?

What are the key points of our Christian faith anyway?

This should only take few hours to sort out, so I hope you have nowhere else to be for a while ...

Seriously though, these are interesting questions!

We might each have different answers anyway, and for me that is very important to grasp, because our Christian faith is not a set of fixed rules that we all must adhere to – and then all will be OK with the world!

There isn't a Bible verse to solve every issue, political or anything else!

Our faith is very much about relationship, with God of course and very much with our neighbour.

Above all it is about love, God's first love of us and our response.

So, just three suggestions for a verse or passage to put in our Manifesto – but let's not get too involved in suggesting others, there are thousands more – but do think about the verses you might include.

These three are simply what came very quickly to my mind:

Isaiah 1:17 NIV

[17] Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

Here we are simply asked to think more about others than ourselves!

Surely everyone on earth is of equal worth in the eyes of God, regardless of status.

How many political parties or world leaders promote that simple truth?

Some verses from Matthew 5:43–48

[43] 'You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." [44] But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'

The concept of loving our neighbour and including our enemies as being neighbours too, that is tough for people to accept and act upon!

But it is surely the key.

What a transformation if all the world lived by that simple mantra!

It would make folk see the situation in Ukraine or Gaza quite simply unacceptable! WHICH OF COURSE WE KNOW IT IS!

Selected verses from the feeding of the five thousand:

Luke 9:10–17 NIV

*[13] **Jesus replied, ‘You give them something to eat.’** They answered, ‘We have only five loaves of bread and two fish – unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.’ [17] They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.*

The disciples were worried about not having enough resources, not enough helpers, etc.

How often do we hear politicians come up with that excuse?

Yet, the people were fed with the resources they already had and there was plenty left over.

There was no need for any complicated plan – the people simply needed to share what they already had, and indeed had too much!

This surely this is a beautiful and simple example of loving one’s neighbour.

Be it in Ukraine, in Russia, in Israel and Gaza, in our own street, we are all part of one family, a minuscule part of God’s infinite creation and yet infinitely precious to him.

On reflection, perhaps we would call ourselves ‘the love your neighbour party’?

Read Hymns 256 and 257 in *Singing the Faith*, they put it rather well ...

Tom Belshaw

Anna Chaplaincy: a Ministry of Relationship

We are so accustomed now to 'hard sell' advertising and grand promises made by global companies! And yet our lives are ultimately based upon relationships of all kinds; we live independently, and our interactions with friends, families and fellow Christians carry great importance for us all.



How encouraging, then to know that Anna Chaplaincy has been built upon such foundations. From one Anna Chaplain – pioneer Debbie Thrower – this is now a UK wide grass roots movement, involving over 350 individuals serving among older

people in their communities. This number doesn't include the hundreds of volunteers who serve alongside each Chaplain: truly, this is a ministry that has spread quickly and has a ministry of presence that positively impacts whole communities and people in later life, for good.

In almost all cases, individuals approach the national team or local network members, having heard about Anna Chaplaincy from a friend or Church leader. I have lost count of the times we have heard this, and it is so encouraging. This is the wonderful way in which the Spirit of God illuminates a vocational journey, prompting a heart response to engage in ministry among older people, perhaps for the first time.

The Anna Chaplaincy network, then, is truly a web of relationships, fostering encouragement and inspiration in an ever-growing number of localities. And the journey usually starts with a personal introduction.

Anna Chaplaincy Testimony

Anna Chaplain Phillip Head, at Liskeard, Cornwall, tells his own story of the importance of Introductions:

'I was introduced to Anna Chaplaincy by an existing Anna Chaplain, who told me about the ministry and gave me the Anna Chaplaincy Handbook to take home and read. The introduction led me to pursuing training as an Anna Chaplain, which led me to being commissioned in June last Year.

'There are many avenues to be pursued as an Anna Chaplain, but as I am in my retirement years, I wanted to be careful not to take on so much that I became ineffective, so I have chosen to pursue two avenues only; they are home visiting and the conducting of a monthly service in two local care homes which care for residents with dementia as well as those without dementia. I am also available for prayer, in times of bereavement, and to serve staff and families in the care home environment.

'This has meant that I am able to share my faith, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ and to be available for those who have no other spiritual input in their lives. The ministry provides an avenue for chaplains of all ages to continue serving as long as they are able.'

From BRF Ministries News.

Pamela Gilbert: Anna Chaplain for older people, in Winchester

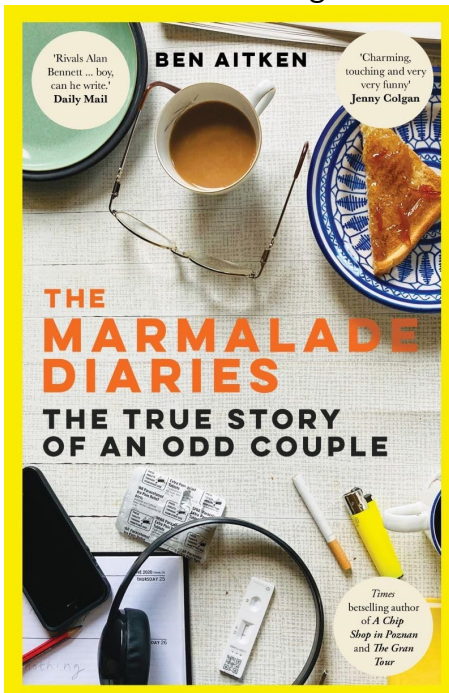


Book Review

The Marmalade Diaries: The true story of an odd couple by Ben Aitken. (Published 2022)

The service at The United Church on Sunday 9 June was led by local preacher Elizabeth Britton. It was MHA (Methodist Homes Association) Sunday and Elizabeth encouraged us to think about friendship and about the MHA mission which includes reducing loneliness and isolation. The service reminded me of this book, which I read a couple of years ago.

I thoroughly recommend this account of 'an unlikely friendship during an unlikely time'. The book is a true account of Winnie and Ben, who are separated by 50 years and between whom there are major differences of opinion. Ben goes to live in Winnie's house during the Covid pandemic, October 2020.



The synopsis says the book is about grief, family, friendship, loneliness, life, love, lockdown and marmalade! There are some important messages and real warmth and depth in this story, which also contains lots of humour.

Winnie is 85 years old. Her husband, Henry, died some ten months before Ben moved in. Her 'children' feel she could do with someone in the house for a bit of security and to assist with jobs. Ben was looking for a room in London and says that when he saw the advertisement for a

room in Winnie's house, he wondered what the catch was. A great price in a lovely part of London! He goes to live with Winnie in her six-bedroom Victorian house, lodging in the flat at the top of the house.

The book describes itself as full of warmth, wit and candour. It is about the unlikely friendship that develops between 'a grieving and inflexible former aristocrat in her mid-eighties' and 'a working class millennial snowflake'.

Jane Lawson

MHA Communities Update

June saw us celebrating Volunteers Week, showcasing the amazing work our volunteers do across our services. We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who gives their time to support us, we wouldn't be anything without you.

Each year we give our members a Christmas gift full of treats for the festive time. This year we are hoping to include some hand-made gifts from the wider community. We are looking for keen crafters to join us in making tree ornaments. If you would like more information or to get involved please come and see the team or call us on 01962 890995.



Hannah Shave, Locality Manager

Collections for Basics Bank and MHA Communities, Winchester.

Collection for Basics Bank, 21 July

There will be a collection of items for the Basics Bank on Sunday 21 July. Please bring items (preferably in carrier bags) for donation and leave in the church hall.

The school summer holidays can be a particularly challenging time financially for some. We understand that the Basics Bank is in particular need of donations for this period. We have therefore planned a collection just ahead of this holiday.

Further information about donating to the Basics Bank can be found at [Donate Food – Winchester Basics Bank](#)

The following are particularly popular items during school holidays:

Noodles	Hot dog sausages
Soup	Spaghetti hoops X 4
Pasta sauce (not just tomato)	
Sweet stuff like cookies, chocolate biscuits	
Tinned ham	Breadsticks
Tinned meat Stew, mild curry, bolognese	
Tinned carrots, peas, sweetcorn	

And/or please donate any of the following:

Tinned fruit (in juice)	Tinned veg
Tinned meat (meatballs, chicken in white sauce, mince, curry, corned beef)	
Vegetarian/vegan protein	Custard/rice pudding
Soup	

Jam, honey, marmite, peanut butter

Rice, pasta, noodles

Cooking sauces

Squash & fruit juice

Cereals & porridge

UHT milk (full fat, semi-skimmed and dairy alternatives)

Condiments

And these hygiene products:

Cleaning sprays, toilet cleaner, bleach

Washing up liquid

Cleaning cloths

Laundry tabs / small bottles of laundry detergents

Loo roll

Clean carrier bags

Thank you.

Collection of nearly new books for MHA Communities on Sunday 28 July

Our last collection of books for MHAC was very well received. Please engage in more decluttering activity and donate your nearly new books (fiction and non-fiction). We don't require any children's books, thank you. Please leave books in the hall.

MHAC members offer a donation for the books and income is generated in this way for their valuable work.

Thank you.

Jane Lawson, Pastoral Lead and Jo Pellatt, Mission Lead

People of Prayer

As part of our thinking about prayer, it was suggested we should run a series in *Yours* on people of prayer. This, the first one, is on David, one of the great figures of the Old Testament.

Most of us, if we were asked what we know about David and prayer would probably start with the Psalms. But I want to start further back, with the story of David and Goliath, which comes in 1 Samuel 17.

It's told in vivid detail. Initially we see Goliath through the eyes of the Israelite army. He's over nine feet tall and his armour is equally large and state-of-the art. No wonder there were no volunteers when Goliath issued his challenge to fight him in single combat!

Everyone, from the king down, was terrified.

And then David arrives on the scene, a young lad who spends his time looking after the family's sheep, who has now been sent to take supplies to his brothers on the front line. David sees the situation from a very different perspective. Instead of being terrified by Goliath, he sees him as someone who has dared to challenge the living God – and so he volunteers to take up the challenge, trusting in the living God to fight for him. And we all know how the story ends.

Reading between the lines, I think the narrator wants us to see David as a person of prayer, someone who, out there on the hills, watching over the sheep, has spent much quiet time with God, allowing him to mould his thinking and shape his perspective.

And that God-focused perspective is what sustains David throughout his life, governing his thoughts and actions.

Although we no longer think of David as the author of every psalm, there are a number of them that are specifically associated with him and with particular incidents in his life. Several relate to his life as young man, continually on the run from Saul, who saw him as a threat to his power. It was a life of constant danger, always having to live on his wits. On one occasion Saul got so close that David and his small band of followers were forced to take refuge deep inside a cave. What they'd not anticipated was that Saul would get caught short and see the cave as a handy place to relieve himself. David's men were cock-a-hoop. This was just the opportunity they needed to put paid to Saul once and for all. But David saw things differently, with the eyes of God. Saul was God's anointed king; it was not for David to take the initiative into his own hands and kill him.

Psalm 57 arises out of this experience. It acknowledges the very real danger David was in, but it also expresses his complete trust in God's protection. So instead of giving way to fear and the temptation to do things his way, he chooses to trust God, to do things God's way, and as a result discovers yet again God's faithfulness and protection.

But things didn't always work out so well, did they? What about Bathsheba, when David stopped looking to God and instead focused his eyes on her? Taking his eye off God led him to adultery and murder – and a complete abuse of his God-given role as King. Yet even then, David could not ultimately escape his conscience, that part of him that had been shaped and formed by his close relationship with God, and so when the prophet Nathan confronted him, David could see his actions for what they were in God's eyes. Psalm 51 takes us into the heart

of his remorse and repentance as, with eyes now wide open, he confronts his own utter sinfulness, begs for God's mercy and seeks once more to be back in tune with him.

For David, prayer became the habit of a lifetime. It shaped who he was and the way he approached everything life brought him. Above all, it nurtured his relationship with God and, through prayer, he discovered more and more the grace and faithfulness of God.

And as he expressed his feelings honestly before God, he was able to work through them with God, so that his praying became transformative. That's why so often he was able to end on a note of praise, praise that finds expression in worship. And often that worship has a public dimension. It involves others, 'the great congregation'.

Thinking about David as a man of prayer can teach us a lot about our own praying and what it means to be a praying church, as we too seek to see things through God's eyes, to be in tune with him and his purposes and to worship him.

Margaret Axford

Quiet Holy Communion

After a trial period we have decided there will be a Quiet Holy Communion every month.

The next three services will be on the following Sundays at 9 am:

23 June; 21 July; 18 August.

Worship and Learning Enabling Group

'UK – Ukraine Together' Documentary

After many months of dedication and hard work, which she describes below, Elena Popova presented her documentary film to a packed hall at The United Church in May. Hosts and volunteers attended along with many Ukrainians from Winchester and further afield. The film was warmly received and was followed by many extremely interesting and informative comments from those present.

You can see the film on Youtube youtu.be/ZjW-6ixKlds



Elena described how the film was conceived and produced.

This film resulted from my reflections, observations, inquiries, and conversations.

At first, I found it intriguing and surprising that thousands of Ukrainian families were hosted by British people. What motivated the British to host Ukrainians? I decided to question the hosts. However, it proved to be rather challenging. Some didn't want publicity and attention; others weren't sure what was wanted from them. Most importantly, they didn't want to acknowledge they were doing something significant.

Observations over two years revealed that assistance and support were provided not only by the locals but at all levels of society: government, county, and city, numerous organisations, and churches, which serve as the hubs for many initiatives and

events. Colleges, libraries, community centres, practically all the people encountered were willing to help. This represents all segments of society. .

I was amazed, excited and impressed by the scope of the support that was given. Language study, emotional and mental support groups, equine therapy, day trips, free sports facilities, a plethora of children and teenager-focused events and so forth.

There were three objectives for the interviews. The first was to look at motivation. The second to see what assistance was offered to Ukrainians. And third to provide a vehicle via the film for an expression of gratitude for the support and help.

How the Film was Made

Lyricism. Can a refugee with limited means and no knowledge of the laws in a foreign country do something creative? It turned out that they could. But suffering and a loss of strength and energy were needed to overcome obstacles.

Technical issues. I made all the videos on my old Samsung phone. I made my 8 video interviews in Mariupol with a professional cameraperson/editor, so I didn't need to deal with technical nuances.

When almost all the interviews were ready, I knew I needed to obtain consent from the participants to use their photos and videos on social media. This meant I had to find the right forms.

I couldn't find a professional editor who was both competent and Ukrainian.

Solution. Maria, a lady from Ukraine, unexpectedly came into my life. She had to learn everything from the start, but one of our main tasks was to provide visual information and improve the sound level.

The editing took several months to complete. I became

frustrated and thought I was losing momentum.



In the end the film was completed and ready to be shown. Thank you to those who attended the show at United.

If you like the film and want to support our project, leave your comments on YouTube.

Elena Popova

The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar



Myanmar has been dropped from the news headlines, but there is extreme suffering there. The country has been ruled by dictatorship since 1962, with occasional short times of limited democracy. Since then fresh disasters have cascaded in: Covid, a coup and military rule, civil wars, cyclone and floods. The present military junta seized power in 2020. Many able and public-spirited people, mostly young, are dead or imprisoned, or have left home to join the resistance. There are about two million internal refugees – quite apart from the ugly expulsion of almost

a million Rohingya in 2017. Education, health care and economic life have largely collapsed. Villages are frequently attacked both from the air and on the ground . People are not flourishing.

The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (PCM) is engaged in giving shelter to displaced people, and has an ambitious programme of providing medical aid, and is expanding its hospital.

The URC in Britain and the PCM have a long and solid relationship. Our 2016 renewed partnership commitment has among its affirmations, a 'commitment to give and receive from each other, learn from one another, and to pray for one another as we seek to serve and walk the way of abundant life of God in Christ.' The URC are asking us to commit to praying for our brothers and sisters in the PCM as they try to live out their faith in such terrible circumstances.

God of hope and purpose, we pray for Myanmar:
you know the many people who love that land,
who seek and long to serve its good.
So we pray that hurt may turn to hope,
poverty to promise, and fear to trust.
Bless your Church in Myanmar,
that they may be steady in faith and hope.
May they be signs of your love,
witnesses to your justice,
and a blessing to others. Amen.

Abridged from URC Daily Devotions, 18 June

Pat Fry

Christian Aid Week 2024

As usual, The United Church was responsible for fundraising in the Teg Down area of the city for **Christian Aid Week**. For many, many years we held a traditional house-to-house collection which was very labour intensive. Increasingly, it became difficult to find enough people willing to both deliver envelopes and to call back (often several times!) for donations. However, we soldiered on...

All this changed in 2020 with the onslaught of the pandemic. That year, there was no collection at all due to restrictions. However, in 2021, Christian Aid produced an extra 'delivery only envelope' as a relatively 'contactless' option and we have used these every year since. This envelope acts as one would expect from the name: volunteers only deliver envelopes and do not need to go back to collect them. (We have found it much easier to recruit people for the less onerous task). Householders are invited to return their full envelope to a named address in their street or local area. Alternatively, the envelope can be returned to Christian Aid by Freepost or donations can be made online. We hope that spreading the message in this way helps to raise awareness and results in giving by a variety of methods.

With Gift Aid, the total for Teg Down this year was £980. Together with £443 given via The United Church, this means our church has raised at least £1423 and it might be much more.

Thank you to all those who willingly delivered envelopes in Christian Aid Week and to everyone who donated in any way.

Helen McTiffin





Party Time is almost Here!

Celebrations need both parties and plans. We have both for you in this month's *Yours!* In fact, we are inviting you to share and participate as these plans unfold. Our idea is that at each stage we can make the work enjoyable and part of our developing fellowship together.

Delighting in Worship

One of the compelling features of the gospel story is the way after Pentecost the emerging people of 'The Way' meet for praise and prayer. At the heart of our celebrations are two Sundays when we can give thanks and praise to God for 50 years of ministry and mission together in this city. On 8 September Revd Tim Searle will lead us in a special thanksgiving for our life as The United Church. On 15 September our guest preacher will be the Revd Rachel Bending who is the new Methodist Chair of District for Southampton. In both services we will celebrate the past and look forward to our future work and witness.

Celebration Dinner

The plans for this are almost complete and this month is the time to book your place/s at the feast! The date is Saturday 7 September, the venue is the sanctuary which will be transformed with round tables and golden anniversary features.

Drinks will be served from 6 pm as we mingle, share and identify our place on the table plan. Revd Tim Searle is the MC for the evening and he will call us to the first course served to

tables at about 6.30 pm. The main course will be served 'family style' so that portion size can be determined at the table. Desserts will follow and drinks will be on the table. Research for the menu has been with a celebrated local restaurant!

We need to know of any allergies and dietary requirements as you book your places for this three-course meal. Bookings open 1 July and the price is £15 per person, and you can book at ucw.org.uk/50th-anniversary/.

Prayer and Prayers

Thank you to all those who have already offered prayers for the prayer book '50 Prayers' You might just have time to squeeze your offering in in the first few days of July. Don't forget that drawn/painted illustrations could be included using the cards at the back of the church. Rosie Mellor is still searching for more. The book, CD size, will be available from 1 September with a suggested donation of £5.00. You can order your copies at ucw.org.uk/50th-anniversary/.

We will have our third prayer time for our church, our city and the world on Sunday 29 July at 4 pm in the sanctuary. At our morning service on 1 September we will gather with anticipation round the Lord's table for Holy Communion, and prayerfully prepare ourselves for the celebrations to come.

Telling the Story

We have been researching the history of the Congregational and Methodist streams of spirituality and church life which formed our United Church. We have loads of information and hundreds of documents, so the task is to highlight the formative moments and celebrate them.

The book, prepared by John Lander and Howard Mellor, will be available from 1 September and in the same format as *Yours*. As the darker evenings come this autumn you will find it fascinating reading! You can order your copies [[HERE](#)] with suggested donation of £3.00 as you pick it up.

Art in the Church

Last month we indicated that we have not one, but three, exhibitions this summer and early autumn. The first to arrive is *Open to All*, an art exhibition focusing on the way all are welcome at the Carpenter's table. The paintings are the work of Elizabeth Gray King, a URC Minister, and will be available to view in the Sanctuary when the church is open for coffee bar on weekdays, plus Saturday mornings from Tuesday 23 July to Saturday 10 August.

From 1 September there is to be a photographic exhibition by Simon Bray entitled *Love thy Neighbour* prepared especially for our United@50 celebrations which can be viewed downstairs in the church. In the sanctuary from 7 September we will host a textile exhibition by Pamela Pavitt entitled *Creation and Environment*.

Together these celebrate the life we have together and also point towards Green Week and our commitment to dealing with climate change.

Life Together – a Golden Thanksgiving

We hope you have been ferreting around in the attic and back of cupboards to find the things which you think celebrate our life as a church over the last 50 years. Now is the time to gather your items – articles, photos, quotes, memories which are really important for you. We want the 'time-line' to celebrate and give thanks for the work and worship of the church, its fun and festivities, decade by decade.

Bring your items this month to Janet or Howard in preparation for mounting them in August. During the actual nine days of celebrations, 7–15 September, we will give opportunity for visitors to add their contributions.

Captivating music and fascinating lights!

We are delighted that the celebrated soloist Jonathan Viera will

be coming to The United Church on Saturday 19 October at 7pm. He will offer a selection of songs from a range of genres to entertain us. The price of the concert is £10 for adults and £5 for children and tickets can be booked at ucw.org.uk/50th-anniversary/

Christine Cook has agreed to install a light show in the sanctuary in the autumn which will be a fascinating addition to our life as a church. We are also planning an Organ Concert this autumn so watch out for details.

Of course, we shall want to support Winchester Green Week and during our celebrations the Winchester Heritage Open Days, who are running at our church an engaging seminar about the 'Swing Riots'!

Your part in all this!

We have plenty of opportunity for you to participate in these events!

Some of the ways are:

- Bring your prayers and drawings/paintings to Rosie Mellor, soon!
- We will need a couple of people to write out headings and table place names.
- When the church coffee bar is closed, we will need help in setting up the 'United time line' with all your contributions.
- The art installations in the Sanctuary will need 'stewards' when the church is open to the public especially:
 - * *Open to All* – Monday 23 July–Sunday 11 August.
 - * *Creation and the Environment* 7–23 September.
 - * *Love thy Neighbour* will be downstairs so won't need separate stewards.
 - * Stewarding is simply about at least one person being upstairs in the sanctuary to keep an eye on the art and be a friendly face. See Janet for details.

- The Celebration Dinner will need people to move chairs and tables and reset the church for Sunday 8 September. See Howard for details.
- Join the prayer time on 28 July.
- Share the details with others and invite them to join in the events.

Finally

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

Love Thy Neighbour

In the context of the forthcoming photographic project, 'Love Thy Neighbour', I would recommend Richard Carlson's book *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff with Your Family* and in particular the following in a little essay entitled 'Schedule time for Kindness'.

'The way this strategy [schedule time for kindness] works is really quite simple. You look at your calendar and set aside a little time on a regular basis – ten minutes, thirty, an hour, whatever you want – and you stick to it, like any other important scheduled appointment. During this time, you drop everything else you are doing and give this time of kindness your undivided attention.

'The scheduled time for kindness is reserved for doing something (anything) thoughtful for someone else. Sometimes I use this time to write a heartfelt letter to someone I love or appreciate, write a check to charity, or make a phone call to someone for no other reason than to say, "I love you"' Other times I'll reflect on how I can contribute to society in more effective ways or think of ways in which I can contribute in a positive way to someone else's life ... Or I'll simply close my eyes and think good thoughts for other people. What you do

is up to you ... There is no right or wrong way to practise this strategy. The only thing that's important here is that your intentions are loving.'

RC's words to conclude the essay are: *'I think you'll be pleasantly surprised if you give this idea a try; it will encourage kindness and love in all aspects of your life.'*

Jeffrey Lough

The intention of the 'Love Thy Neighbour' project (part of our anniversary celebration) is to get us thinking and talking about kindness. Readers are invited in future editions to extend this part of that conversation, started by Jeffrey. (Ed.)

See more about 'Love Thy Neighbour' in *June Yours* and on Simon Bray's website.

bit.ly/3UGQNhv



Responses to Amy Crocker's Paintings.

Here are a few words in response to Amy's paintings:

'I see these bold, striking images not so much as a journey but as interconnected aspects of our relationship with God. The first, an invitation, welcoming but not forceful. The second, God with us, giving comfort, encouragement, reassurance.

'The third, humbling, serving, healing. The fourth, showing we are uniquely made and moulded.'

I hope Amy will welcome our responses. Her paintings are very thought-provoking.

Pauline Brooks

First a huge thank you for all you put into this, both the art itself and your writing about it. You have an amazing gift.

Each picture in the series said something about the nature of God; and each invited a response, and sometimes led on to difficult issues.

I am a somewhat divergent thinker and tended to go off at a tangent from the initial thoughts arising from the pictures.

A hand outstretched to welcome us. We are called to accept that welcome, follow Jesus' leading and in our turn offer welcome, bear our own pain, and let others share their pain with us.

It reminded me of a favourite Iona hymn:

Come take my hand and be my friend;
Your health and hope I'll gladly mend,
Your worth thought hidden I'll reveal,
Your brokenness I'll touch and heal.

And if you will go where I will go
On pathways smooth and troublesome,
And if you will love as I will love,
You'll see on earth God's kingdom come.

Hand in hand: God taking us by the hand, we are called to put our trust in God's hand and let Him lead us ... Old and young can learn from each other, sometimes one is leading, sometimes the other.

I also thought about when a child's natural trust is abused.

Jesus washed his disciples' feet, tends our need, and offers us refreshment and cleansing. We in turn are called to the same kind of humble service, not to be afraid of getting our hands dirty (actually and metaphorically).

I tried to guess what the final picture would be and could not guess – but it was exactly right.

God shapes us gently and persistently. That shaping is sometimes a gentle caress and sometimes more like punch in the teeth!! The clay is still the same piece of clay, we are still our unique selves.

Once again a phrase from an Iona hymn:

'Let my life be yours and yet
Let it still be me.'

The potter shapes the clay to make something useful or perhaps beautiful, something to be filled, but what it is filled with is not the potter's decision. We are meant to be useful in some way, but it is our choice what we fill our lives with. (I thought of a phrase associated with Mother Teresa – 'something beautiful for God'.)

Might there be a place for a final picture as a response – this time of many varied human hands lifted in praise?

Pat Fry

News of the Wider Church

The Bishop of Chelmsford is urging people not to take democracy for granted. In a video for the Church of England's #PrayYourPart campaign, Rt Rev Guli Francis-Dehqani said she is 'praying for all those standing for office and involved in the campaigns. For moderation in language, for good disagreement and for kindness and gentleness. I'm also praying for the electorate, that we wouldn't take for granted our democracy, but use our vote to make our views known.' The Bishop was sharing her prayers as three weeks of prayers and reflections began across the Church of England in the lead-up to the General Election.

A Christian convert has been sentenced to five years in prison by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Esmail Narimanpour, a member of the Liberation Message Church was accused of 'acting against national security through association with Zionist Christian organisations'. *Mohabbat News Agency* reported that security forces arrested Narimanpour in December last year after searching his private residence and confiscating some of his personal items. Narimanpour was among at least 46 Christians arrested across Iran in a crackdown on house churches during the Christmas period.

ISIS has claimed responsibility for recent attacks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that resulted in the deaths of more than 80 Christians and the closure of several churches. According to the [*Christian Broadcasting Network*](#) (CBN), the Islamic terrorist group announced on their *Telegram* channel: 'More than 60 Christians were killed, including a Congolese army officer, in an attack by Caliphate soldiers in eastern Congo.'

The Methodist Church in Britain is profoundly concerned by the ongoing violence and the worsening situation in Sudan and supports the World Council of Churches governing body in denouncing the conflict which is causing unimaginable suffering

to millions of people. During the past year alone, 15,500 civilians have been killed and 8.8 million people have been displaced, including 3 million children. These are in addition to the 3.8 million displaced by previous fighting. A third of the population of the country are food insecure. Meanwhile, civilian infrastructures are collapsing with few administrative or health services available and in large areas of the country, telecommunications, vital to lifesaving information, have been cut.

'I was the right person to deliver the URC's slavery apology to Jamaicans'



[In a letter published by](#) the *Guardian* on 12 June, the Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, Moderator of the URC General Assembly, responds to a suggestion that it was absurd for her as a Black British woman to deliver the URC's apology to Black Jamaicans.

Tessa's letter comes after Dr Robert Beckford, a theologian and broadcaster, wrote in an article published on 4 June, that '... Jamaicans were perturbed by the existential absurdity of seeing Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, a Black British woman and the current leader of the denomination – herself a descendant of the Caribbean's enslaved – delivering its apology to Black Jamaicans'.

Explaining why she was the right person to deliver the URC's slavery apology, Tessa responded by letter including, 'It is necessary to clarify my identity and role. The suggestion that a white person might have been more suitable to apologise perpetuates a harmful "white saviour" narrative. As the elected moderator, it was my duty and right to deliver this apology, representing not only the church but also my personal, historical connection to the issue.'

For full details bit.ly/3RC3pWy

Dorothy Lusmore

Flowering and Fruition

One of the delights of summer lies in being able to shed some of the protective layers between our bodies and the cold of winter. Summer becomes a time for reconnecting with the natural light and with the elements. 'This is my body' becomes an invitation to engage more deeply with the incarnation, with God embodied in our human, bodily experience and encounters.

In the Ignatian spiritual tradition, the 'application of the senses' encourages us to pray with our bodies, savouring and testing what surfaces in prayer through the medium of our senses. It's a more contemplative type of prayer that allows the body to verify what the mind and heart have only groped towards. The warmth and light of summer bring so much enrichment in sight, sound, scent, touch and taste. Perhaps part of the spirituality of summer is an invitation to a more contemplative approach to ordinary things: the feel and scent and taste of food, of flowers and plants, sea air, sunlight and warmth, fresh wind and the sound of birds and children, cities, streets and gardens unusually alive.

But if bodies come alive in summer, they can also become problematic. An entire fashion, beauty and advertising industry exists whose skill in making us buy products lies in causing anxiety and dissatisfaction about our bodies. Every aspect of our body becomes a potential fashion threat. 'This is my body' becomes an invitation to live more at ease within our enfleshed selves. A positive embrace of the bodily, the incarnate, frees us from negative judgment of the flesh, born of fear and self-hatred. We learn to thank God for what is, here and now, for the flowering and fruition of our own bodies and lives, whatever their stage and shape.

Sr Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ , Director, Religious Life Institute, Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge
www.stpauls.co.uk/explore-christian-life-and-faith



Vintage Fun

All welcome!



ZAMBIA

Monday 8th July

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.





Vintage Fun

All welcome!



POSTCARDS

Monday 5th August

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.



Comedy Corner



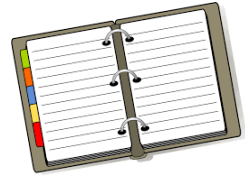
THE CHURCH ORGANIST



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



Dates for Your Diary



Saturday 6 July 7.15 pm **World Buffet Evening**
at Avenue St Andrews URC ([See June Yours](#))

Sunday 14 July **Monthly Munch Club** at the Golden Lion.

Contact Rosemary MacMullen for more details.

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.

7 September 6–11 pm Celebration Meal.



The Celebration Dinner will be on Saturday 7

September with arrival drinks at 6 pm. The meal will consist of a three-course dinner in the specially decorated sanctuary. More details soon.

19 October 7–9.30 pm. Concert with Jonathan Viera.

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 July 2024

In-person and live-streamed

7 JULY

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

14 JULY

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Tom Belshaw

21 JULY

9.00 am **Holy Communion** Revd Tim Searle

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

28 JULY

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services





Services for August 2024

In-person and live-streamed

4 AUGUST

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

11 AUGUST

10.30 am **Morning Worship** St Cross House Group

18 AUGUST

9.00 am **Holy Communion** Revd Tim Searle

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

25 AUGUST

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Dr Mike Wood

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services

