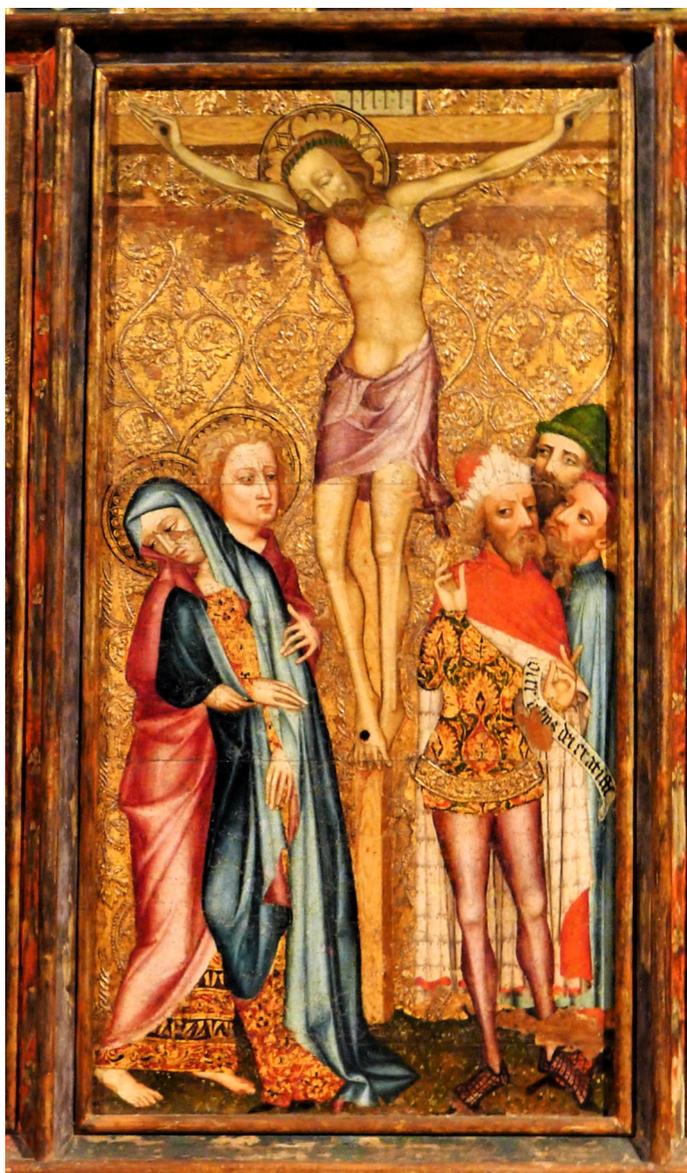




Yours

Magazine of
The United Church

April 2025



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Tim's Letter: People of the Resurrection

There's no doubt about it; the death of Jesus was unexpected, and whilst he gave plenty of hints that it would happen (along with plenty of hints that he would rise again), the disciples either didn't believe him, or didn't want to. And when it finally did happen, it left the disciples in a state of shock and dismay that they wouldn't have recovered from had it not been for what happened next. For if Jesus' death was unexpected, his resurrection was doubly so ... or was it?

As we've encountered some of Jesus' most well-known miracles through our Lenten services, it seems to me that resurrection followed him around. The healing of the woman with haemorrhages and of Jairus' daughter, the restoration of sight to the blind, and the raising of the dead to new life are all moments of resurrection. Whether you believe these miracles were actual bodily restorations or, in the case of the healings, symbolic of the deeper wholeness we find in Christ, the point is that they were so much more than just random miracles by some mystic from Nazareth. Rather they were the unexpected moments of resurrection that invariably came when the afflicted chose to put their faith in Jesus. If he stood for anything in his earthly life, it wasn't for death, but the limitless possibilities of resurrection.

As we draw close to Holy Week it is natural, and appropriate, for us to focus on Jesus' death. For in this act, the mind-blowing grace of God was made possible for all through his sacrifice. Yet we must also remember the resurrection, not just as a happy afterthought to welcome in Easter Day safe in the knowledge that Jesus was 'alright in the end', but as a realisation that this was at the very heart of what Jesus was about. His death would have been empty without the resurrection, as empty as the disciples felt as they wandered aimlessly without their teacher and friend. The whole point of Jesus' ministry was not to die on the cross, but to be raised from it, however unexpectedly.

Therefore, let us live confidently as people of the resurrection. Not as a people confined to death as though still pinned to the cross, but as a people set free by the possibility of resurrection.

In Christ,

Tim

Editorial

Our front cover this month is a photo of the Reredos at Norwich Cathedral, taken by Pauline Brooks. Dating back to c.1380, it is the only surviving medieval English altarpiece with scenes from Christ's Passion. It is also known as the Despenser Retable. We sense the shock and dismay described by Tim in his letter above, and are glad that Easter will follow.

Pat Fry's friend Catherine James helps us on our Lenten Journey and Howard reflects on Atonement and Resurrection with some inspired writing.

Rosie MacMullen continues her Spanish and North African cruise and we hear exciting news of fundraising events for our new piano.

All this and much more as usual.

Many thanks to all our contributors.

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

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.

News of the United Church Family

The United Church family will be very sad to hear of the death of Joan Wood. Joan died on 20 March. Joan has been a member at The United Church since moving to Winchester in 2009.



Although no longer able to attend services, she kept in touch through *Yours* magazine and visits from church friends and has remained a much loved member of the church family.

Joan celebrated her 100th birthday on 18 August 2024, at Abbotts Barton care home, surrounded by her family and friends. An article in *Yours*, celebrating Joan's special birthday, includes a lovely picture of her.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Joan and her family. We think especially of Clive and Alison and their daughters (Joan's much loved granddaughters) Charlotte and Francesca (Chessie) and of Joan's son Stephen and all his family.

We were very sorry to learn recently of the death of Jenny Rolph. Jenny and her husband Paul (who died in March 2021) were long standing members at The United Church, although latterly Jenny had attended St Paul's church, where her funeral took place on 13 March.

Jenny was a Local Preacher and had a much valued leading role in the *Olive Branch* counselling service. We hold Jenny and her family in our prayers and remember her life and ministry.

In our service on 16 March, we remembered Ted Rushmoor who recently celebrated his birthday. Happy Birthday Ted!

Please do let me know if you would like me to include anything in this space in future editions of Yours.

Jane Lawson, Pastoral Lead

Today's Children of Bethlehem

On 15 March a few of us had the immense privilege of listening to Ursula Mukarker, a child psychologist working at Wings of Hope in Bethlehem, telling us about what life is like there now. Ursula had great difficulty in getting to England; Palestinians living in the West Bank are not allowed to fly from Tel Aviv; instead, they have to travel through many Israeli checkpoints to get to the border with Jordan, then on to Amman to get a flight to England. Thirteen years ago, I witnessed the harassment suffered by Palestinians at such checkpoints, and this is now far worse.

Life for Palestinians in the West Bank has been difficult since 1948, but after the horrific Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023, their situation became much more dangerous, with many more attacks on Palestinian farmers by illegal Jewish settlers (at present an average of 4 such attacks every day), yet none of this is reported in the news we get. More than 800 Palestinian people have been killed in the West Bank; in the last three months alone 17 children have been killed. Collective continuous trauma is a major problem.

The charity Wings of Hope provides support for traumatised children and their families, providing a secure safe space, and trauma counselling using play therapy. Ursula stressed that many families on both sides of the conflict long for peace, and that strong family bonds and strong supportive communities offer the best hope for the future.

This opportunity to hear about their work was provided by the charity Action for Child Trauma International, which was the charity our world action group raised money for about seven years ago. The money we raised then enabled them to set up a training scheme in Lebanon, teaching child trauma counselling technique to professionals: teachers, medical staff and social workers there, and also to establish a centre in Gaza, though

that is no longer able to function.

More information is available on the ACT website:

www.actinternational.org.uk



Action for Child
Trauma International

Pat Fry

Fundraising Events for our New Piano

The Fundraising Group, led by Tony Wood, has been busy organising concerts and other events set to happen this year and next.

Piano Concerts

Roger Owens (Classical Concert) Saturday 10 May 7.30 pm

Roger has played Beethoven, Rachmaninov and Liszt at the Barbican Centre with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, at the Royal Festival Hall with the Philharmonia and at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.



Robert Carter (Jazz Concert) Saturday 12 July 7.30 pm



Robert's influences are wide-ranging ... among them are Olivier Messiaen, Robert Schumann, South African township music, Glenn Gould, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor.

Gerard Brooks (Piano and Organ) 18 October 7.30 pm (Date to be confirmed)



Gerard is Director of Music at Methodist Central Hall. He played regularly for BBC Radio 4's *Daily Service* and *Songs of Praise*, and toured with the All Souls Orchestra, playing in many concert halls, including the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall and Moscow Conservatoire.

Hanna Csermely 9 May 2026 7.30 pm

Twenty-one year-old Hungarian pianist, Hanna Csermely, grew up in Southampton for the majority of her life where her passion for music was ignited. From the age of 7, she began having piano lessons and participated in many competitions and music festivals such as Fareham Music Festival, Gosport Music Festival, Southampton Music Festival and Portsmouth Music Festival with great success, winning many of her classes.



Other Concerts in the Pipeline (still to be agreed)

Amelie, Jacob and Friends June 2025 (tbc)

Amelie and Jacob Grigorian are both on the Specialist Music Course at Peter Symonds College. They will be joined by friends from the Course in a concert featuring various instruments.

Liliya Solomova and Vlodimir Vasylenko November 2025 (tbc)

Liliya and Vlodimir are both accomplished musicians. Liliya is a classical pianist and Volodimir a self-taught accordion player who has already delighted audiences at The United Church with his virtuosity.

We are also hoping to invite amateur pianists to play 15 minute slots on Hat Fair Day with the winner playing a concert in the church during Heritage Open Days.

There will soon be news about other events, including a Quiz and Curry/Fish and Chips night.

See the [Upcoming Events Page](#) of our website for latest news and confirmation of dates. Concerts can be booked at ucw.org.uk/concerts/.

Bob Lord



The poster features a green background with white Easter egg patterns. At the top left is an illustration of a coffee cup with the word 'Coffee' written on it. The main title 'EASTER COFFEE MORNING' is in large, black, hand-drawn letters. Below it, the text 'CHURCH OPEN FOR QUIET REFLECTION AND PRAYER' is in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. The date and time 'SATURDAY 12TH APRIL 2025 10AM - 12NOON' are written in red. The church name and address 'ST ANDREW'S METHODIST CHURCH, BLENHEIM ROAD, EASTLEIGH' are in black. At the bottom left, there are three icons: a group of people, a coffee cup, and a hot cross bun. Below these are the activities 'TEA, COFFEE & HOT CROSS BUNS', 'CAKE STALL', and 'KIDS CRAFT ZONE' in blue. At the bottom left is a Facebook icon and the handle '@STANDREWSCHURCHEASTLEIGH'. At the bottom right is a cartoon illustration of a grey donkey and the text 'Free entry' in a cursive font.

EASTER COFFEE MORNING

CHURCH OPEN FOR QUIET REFLECTION AND PRAYER

SATURDAY 12TH APRIL 2025
10AM - 12NOON

ST ANDREW'S METHODIST CHURCH,
BLENHEIM ROAD, EASTLEIGH

TEA, COFFEE & HOT CROSS BUNS
CAKE STALL
KIDS CRAFT ZONE

@STANDREWSCHURCHEASTLEIGH *Free entry*

Worship for Holy Week and Easter

Whilst it seems most people in England still see Christmas as a big event to celebrate, even if they don't understand it's true significance, Good Friday and Easter are largely overlooked. Perhaps like me you were shocked when it was said on *The Apprentice*, 'There is no character associated with Easter', and Lord Sugar responded, 'Haven't you heard of the Easter Bunny?' What a reflection on the society we live in.

For us as Christians these are most significant days. So let me draw your attention to events at The United Church this year. On **Maundy Thursday** at 7.30 pm there will be a Tenebrae service in the church. This is based on an ancient tradition, reading the Gospel accounts of Thursday and Friday of Holy Week, as candles are gradually extinguished.

On **Good Friday** there will be our usual reflective service at 10 am, followed by coffee and hot cross buns in the hall. There is no ecumenical procession of witness this year, nor events on the Cathedral Green. Churches Together have produced a booklet for a prayer walk around the town centre stopping at historic buildings and reflecting on the stations of the cross and joining in prayer. The booklet can be used at any time during Lent, but we are taking up the original idea and invite you to join a group of us walking this way together at 11.15 am on Good Friday. To give us an idea how many booklets to order, it would be helpful if you added your name to a sign-up list near the hatch in the hall or let me or Tim know that you are hoping to come. I have not yet timed it but anticipate the walk would take a little under an hour.

On **Easter Sunday** we will meet for breakfast at 8.30 am, followed by Communion around the table. There will be slips to book from the first Sunday in April, or let me or Tim Clifford know by email, (with your choice of egg or fish) so we know how much food to provide. Of course, we will always provide for a

few unexpected guests, but a rough idea of numbers is helpful. The main service, including Holy Communion will be at 10.30 as usual, and we invite you to bring some flowers to decorate the Easter Cross.

Pat Fry, Worship Lead

Wednesday Worship

Every Wednesday at 11 am a small group of us meet for a short time of worship, usually in Room 1. Sometimes it becomes like a history lesson and did so recently when Graham spoke to us about Isaac Watts. Although I knew of him as a prolific hymn writer, e.g. 'O God our help in ages past' and 'When I survey the



Wondrous Cross', I had not, in my ignorance, realised that he was born and educated in Southampton.

This snapshot of his recently renovated statue was taken by our son during his lunch break. It stands in Watts Park (a.k.a. West Park). Sorry about the gull.

So, if ever you are in the coffee bar just before 11 am on a Wednesday and feel like a stimulating twenty minutes, do join us. You would be most welcome.

Jean Giles

Lenten Journey

It began
in the wilderness –
the unforgiving desert,
entered for our forgiveness –
hard and harsh
with stones mocking loaves.

Water scarce
after the winter rains
and any greenness
drying fast
among the layered metallic rocks.

Soon Galilee will come and go,
a brief, heady, life-changing memory
for those who were there beside the glittering lake,
and the road will lead south
past hills tended and terraced to the sky
past vineyards and barley,
the white road punctuated by olive and cypress
for a moment's shade.

There will be talk,
hopes, dreams

of the kingdom round campfires.

There will be sheltering walls
for thoughts, for rest,
and peace in Bethany.

But the track leads south,
onwards, relentless,
to Jerusalem,
and palms and praise,
before the deepening darkness of Gethsemane.

And onwards to Calvary.
bleached and brutal,
scorched in the glare of noon,
in the unforgiving sun –
an echo of the desert
where it all began,
the journey
for our forgiveness.

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Contributed by Pat Fry

Atonement

Jesus dies,
exposed and alone.
The one on whom we pinned our hopes
is nailed to the cruel tree.
On this Friday we call *Good*
scheming leaders, manipulate power,
pass the buck, wash their hands.
Jesus, stripped and whipped,
strapped beneath a cross beam
stumbles upward
radiating mercy.

On this tree
plain and stark,
encrusted with sin,
sparkling with love,
the nailed God offers
mercy and forgiveness.
A new beginning
for all who come, humbly and penitent,
seeking grace,
desiring to walk
in newness of life.

Revd Dr G. Howard Mellor



Seeing
is
Believing!

Resurrection

Jesus LIVES!
Death's grip cannot hold
the One who springs the tomb
breathing forgiveness,
transforming creation
making all things new.

On this glorious day
saving love blossoms,
cascading fragrant grace
offering new life for all.

Risen Lord Jesus,
by your vibrant presence
and the gift of your grace
save and transform us,
shaping all people,
moulding all practice
cleansing all places.

Come, living, glorious Lord!
Make us, make me ANEW!

Revd Dr G. Howard Mellor

The Assisted Terminally ill Adults (End of Life)

The March edition of *Yours* (page 24) reported the decision of many faith leaders to oppose 'The Assisted Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill', that passed its second reading in Parliament on 29 November 2024. As the Church of England website expressed it; 'Faith leaders join to oppose the Bill to legalise assisted dying'.

The Moderator of the Free Churches Group, the Bishop of London and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, were among the 29 faith leaders who signed the petition. While I fully respect the view of those who find the concept of assisted dying reprehensible, there are committed Christians who have a different opinion.

What bothers me about the statement by Church leaders is that they do not seem to accept that there will be members of Christian denominations who, on balance, would have voted in favour of the Bill at its second reading in the knowledge that there would be another opportunity to make a final decision following extensive consultations between the end of November and whenever the Bill returns to Parliament. If church leaders mean what they say about being part of inclusive communities, shouldn't that be reflected in the announcements they make?

John Lander

Position of the Methodist Church and the URC

Helen Cameron, President of the Methodist Conference and Moderator of the Free Churches Group was one of the signatories. The Methodist Church's views on this can be seen www.methodist.org.uk/about/news/assisted-dying/.

The URC were not a signatory to the petition. The URC's views can be found urc.org.uk/terminally-ill-adults-bill/

The positions of the two churches are as follows: (Ed.)

Here are extracts from the Methodist Church website:

'Historically the Methodist Church has opposed any change to the law on this issue. In 2015, when assisted dying was last seriously considered in the House of Commons, the Methodist Conference discussed the issue, and heard contributions on both sides of the debate. While there was consensus around affirming the intrinsic value of human life, and the importance of high quality palliative care, two extracts from the motions put forward illustrate the very sincere beliefs held both by those who believe the law should change to allow assisted suicide, and those who see that as a slippery slope:

'[Assisted dying] would have a seriously detrimental effect on the wellbeing of individuals and on the nature and shape of our society, and can only add to the pressures that many vulnerable terminally ill people will feel'. 'Where death is considered both certain and imminent, a compassionate due judicial dispensation to allow assisted end-of-life could be appropriate'

Resources are available on the Methodist Church website here: [Death and dying - The Methodist Church](#)

As this issue is debated in Parliament again, we commend those resources for study and informed reflection. The web pages will be updated with additional resources and information over the coming days. We also urge that this important issue is debated with sensitivity and kindness, recognising its potential to prompt pain and strong feelings in the people most closely affected by it.

Here are extracts from the URC website:

Many will be troubled at the result of the vote, and perhaps feel that the will of lawmakers or wider society is profoundly out of step with their own personal convictions. Others will be relieved by the

result, believing it will offer some hope and choice to them (or loved ones) as they approach the end of life.

The URC is unchanging in its commitment to support vulnerable people and to offer spiritual counsel and Christian love to all who seek it. Visiting – and endeavouring to meet the needs of – people who are sick is enshrined in our practice, following the example and instruction of Jesus, as well as supporting those who care for them or are bereaved.

We continue to call for the improved provision of palliative care, and note the persistent lack of universal access to good quality hospices and home-based support for people nearing the end of life.

We are concerned for medical staff, already under constant pressure in trying to deliver services to patients, who may face increased demands, and may face difficult moral choices.

Key to our response is our belief of the inherent worth and value of every human being, made in the image of God. The Bill, if enacted without sufficient safeguards, risks devaluing the lives of people who have often been marginalised by society.

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill therefore requires much work. There will be continuing scrutiny and debate as the Bill proceeds through the UK Parliament. Within the URC, the Worship, Faith and Order Committee will be listening to our congregations and ministers and considering carefully the implications of the developing Bill for us all.

Through all these things, we look to Jesus, the originator and finisher of our faith, and the one in whom all things hold together, as the source of our belief, our well-being and our hope. We will continue to encourage people at all stages of life to seek him, and experience his comforting presence found in his body, the Church.

The Church Clock



Most of you will have seen the old pendulum clock on the east wall of the sanctuary. It was made specifically for our building at the time of its opening as a Congregational Church in 1853. It was designed and made by Joseph Knowles whose family owned a jewellers and clockmakers in the High Street for many years.

Originally the movement was installed on the ground floor of the church (pavement level) with the dial in the upstairs gallery of the church, and the two parts were connected by a drive rod 8 feet in length. When the building was refurbished and the upper floor built in 1989-91, the drive rod was reduced to 3 feet and the movement

was repositioned upstairs. At this time the clock was designated a heritage item by English Heritage.

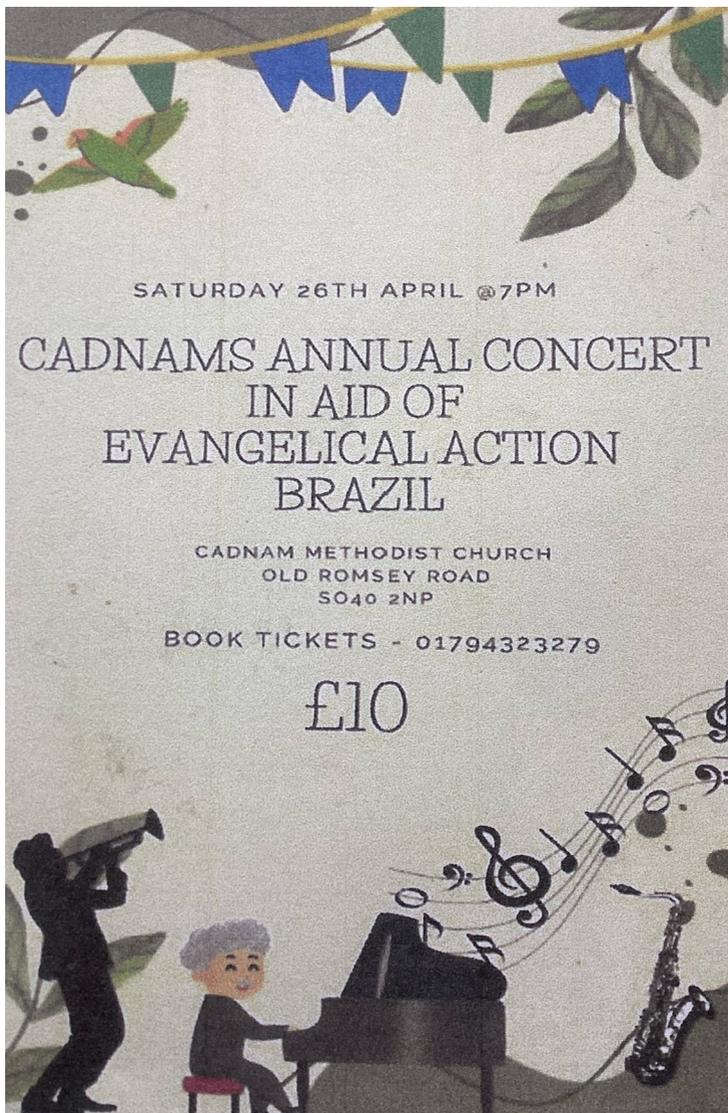
The mechanism of the clock is basically simple, and operates as the pendulum swings under gravity. For this to happen, the weight needs lifting, and this needs to occur regularly. It is useful that, with a full wind, the clock will run for a week. Hence the clock must be wound regularly once a week.

Since John Kingdon retired from the post of clock-winder many years ago, it has been my responsibility to fulfil this simple task. I am



now looking for someone to take over this duty. Essentially this means winding the clock once a week. I will provide full training which should take no longer than 10 minutes! Applications (on paper please) should reach me by Easter Day.

Graham Rolfe



The Chosen Taster Review

Rating : 5 loaves and 2 fish

The United Church hosted taster sessions for The Chosen on three Wednesday evenings in March. We viewed and discussed Season 1, Episodes 1-4. There is so much to enjoy about this groundbreaking series based on the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus.

Some responses:

1. There are so many characters introduced in the first episode, it is beneficial to watch as a group.
2. The portrayal of the time and the desperate circumstances of the Roman rule, Jewish law, and the many struggling, including fisherman, is reflected in our Bible readings.
3. The children in Episode 3 invite us deeper into being a viewer and also spending time with Jesus.

Were the many voices in Episode 4 trying to get Simon's attention before the miraculous catch and calling of disciples by Jesus?

Some characters' highlights

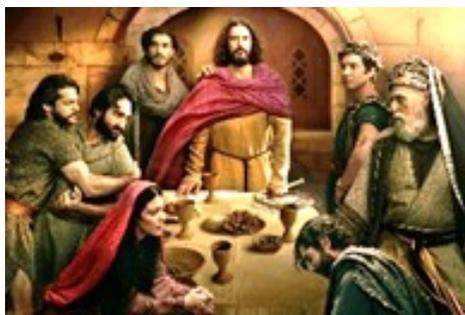
Simon, who will later be called Peter by Jesus, is first shown fixing a fight. He is a persuasive speaker which is admired, and he is ambitious, which is risky. His family orientation in the taster sessions depicts a struggling husband and brother who is both determined and frozen in worry.

Matthew is not a good tax collector in disguise. He is an outsider to his family and a traitor to the Jewish people. He is a good collector of taxes by using his unique gifts of memory, observation, and numbers.

Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin is confounded by the miraculous healing of Mary of Magdalene by Jesus and is drawn to cautiously seeking out the mystery of Jesus.

Mary Magdalene after her healing by Jesus says, 'I was one way and now I am completely different.' Mary then invites others, the previously uninvited, to a Sabbath meal and Jesus joins the meal giving both introduction and encouragement.

The children in Episode 3 come, first as one child and then more, to Jesus' camp. He commends the children for their understanding of his teachings and finds joy in listening to their recalling of Scripture. He tells them, 'You are much more than students.' The lessons of honouring your parents, acting differently, and letting God have the justice, and more, were discussed with the children.



The Chosen: The Chosen Season 5, the Last Supper, is being released in three parts, each with two -three episodes. Part One is being shown in Odeon cinemas in the UK on 10 April.

All seasons will be available on YouTube and The Chosen App.

For more information or to book see the Odeon Cinemas website. hbit.ly/4j0ollb

Andrew La Follette

Highlights of a Holiday in Spain and North Africa: 2

We had only a short time at Cartagena, so I hurried along the path to the port until I came across a wide expanse of seemingly marbled walkways leading up to the most beautiful buildings. I am not usually interested in shopping but it was much colder than we had been expecting so I wasted a bit of time searching for something to warm me. In a boutique I found a white lacey sweater which I would not have spent so much on at home but added to my sense of holiday gaiety.

Several sculptures caught my eyes. These two contrasting ones particularly. The one by Victor Ochea which honours the victims of terrorism is extraordinary. You feel pain emanating from this man and is hard to shake off a feeling of despair.



I decided to visit the Naval Museum but as it is located on the ground floor of what was built in the 18th century as the Prisoners and Slaves Barracks, maybe it also had an atmosphere.

However, after the Civil War it became the Marine Instruction Barracks. In 2005 it was remodelled to host one of the campuses of the Polytechnic University of Cartagena, reserving its space for the Naval Museum. In 2013 it was expanded.

I did not expect to find such a massive amount of naval artillery, portable weapons, flags, uniforms, paintings, models of ships, china, maps, etc.

It was a sail through naval history and quite fascinating. The development of everything connected with warfare at sea is an example of man's ingenuity but a little chilling to realise the destruction of so many lives. Those uniforms were worn with pride however and it is a reminder of bravery and sacrifice to be remembered.



I was roused out of my slightly melancholy mood by the Beatles Tribute Show aboard that evening. No matter how old I still felt a bit of a Dancing Queen!

Rosemary MacMullen

Searching Beneath the Silence

Simon Bray, much loved in The United Church as a former member of Junior Church and Youth United, is staging an exhibition at the Arc from 27 March to 18 May.

Simon spoke movingly at a Morning Service on 29 September in connection with the 'Love Thy Neighbour' exhibition he put on as part of our 50th anniversary celebrations.



Searching Beneath the Silence is a contemplative search for solace amidst loss. Through photography Simon takes us to some of the places that mean the most to him. Woodland scenes and chapel pews alike alight as spiritual spaces of beauty, reflection and renewal, in this exhibition of sumptuous imagery.

Simon describes it as 'A contemplation on loss, exploring the potential of the eternal through the beauty and fragility of spiritual and natural spaces.'

"It is only in the silence that you can hear God's voice. Maybe." – Jon Fosse

You can read more about the exhibition on the Arc's website bit.ly/3Ft8xJf. The exhibition is free and donations are welcome.

Simon will be giving a free talk about the exhibition on Tuesday 1 April at 6.30 pm. You can book bit.ly/4hbjg8n.

More on his website bit.ly/4ipfTM3

Bob Lord

News of the Wider Church



The popular Catholic youth gathering **Flame** sold out ahead of its event at Wembley Arena on 15 March, where adventurer and author Bear Grylls was the star speaker. With over 10,000 seats filled, the event featured music, performances, and a keynote

address from Cardinal Vincent Nichols. Bear Grylls took to the stage as part of the launch of his new book, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, which presents a series of eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life. He has shared his faith telling Gen Z and Gen Alpha Christians that they are 'unstoppable'. Attendees had come from England, Wales, Gibraltar and the Ukrainian National Chaplaincy.

The theme of the event, 'Unstoppable: Fan the flame of hope' echoes Pope Francis' Jubilee year theme: 'Pilgrims of Hope'. In conversation with Catholic speaker David Wells, Grylls said 'Faith is in your heart, faith is in relationships, faith is a constant connection to the Almighty. I have many struggles, many doubts, I really don't have it all together, but I know that I am loved and held, and the light shines. Faith is part of the adventure; faith is the adventure. It's a journey... It's a backbone, a streak of steel, the presence of Jesus besides us in the highs and the lows. It's fire and life and water, all in one. It's a journey.'

Other key guests include Christian rapper Isaac Borquaye, known as **Guvna B**.

One of the URC's largest churches, Woking United Reformed Church, has celebrated its 20th anniversary. The service was led by the Revd Lucy Brierley, and the address was given by the General Secretary of the URC, the Revd Dr John Bradbury.



The 20th anniversary of Woking URC was marked by a Communion Service on 2 February. The packed church enjoyed a celebratory service followed by a huge buffet, provided by members and volunteers of the church, which filled the central aisle of the sanctuary.

The former St Andrew's URC and York Road URC joined to become Woking URC in 2005, and the church has been on a significant journey of growth, and engagement with the wider town since.

The Revd Lucy Brierley, minister of the church since November 2005, said that one of the most notable parts of the church's story was the redevelopment that took place from 2009 to 2010, allowing the church to transform its building into 'a place of warmth and welcome for our local community. This was the catalyst to become a place of welcome and hospitality with the strap line "Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey you are welcome here".'

Revd Lucy Brierley is married to Christian journalist and author Justin Brierley.

The United Reformed Church (URC) is holding a hymn-filled service on 3 May to celebrate 35 years of its hymn book, *Rejoice*

and Sing. Following on from the 50th anniversary service in April 2023, where 1,200 people gathered to celebrate the first 50 years of the URC, hundreds of people will gather at the Methodist Central Hall, Coventry, on May 3 to sing lots of hymns and to listen to those who helped create the hymn book in the late 1980s and early 1990s, sing a new hymn by Dominic Grant, with contributions from David Thompson, Stephen Orchard, Anne Sardeson, Roo Stewart, David Williams, David Jenkins, Brenda Stephenson and more. There will also be a special contribution from one of the URC's best known hymn writers, Brian Wren. A panel discussion, chaired by the Editor of the URC's magazine, *Reform*, Stephen Tomkins, will also be part of the service.



Over 3500 churches have closed in the last 10 years – with many being converted into spas, residential buildings, and even nightclubs. The National Churches Trust reports around 3000 to 5000 parish churches are either closed or used intermittently without a permanent vicar. Yet with many buildings having Grade I listed status there are restrictions on

how they can be renovated. A representative from the Church of England told *Premier* 'Only 15 to 20 church buildings are sold each year – and we are proud to have over 15,000 buildings across the country. There are rules – our buildings can't be turned into mosques, for example. This was the case in Stoke-on-Trent last August, when the CofE blocked a disused church in Stoke-on-Trent from being transformed into a mosque. However, St Thomas' United Reformed Church in Woking tells a different story, as it has been purchased by an Islamic group with plans to turn it into a community centre and mosque. St Bartholomew's Church Hall in Winchester was sold to the Muslim Community last year with the restriction that it cannot be used for prayer.

The *Daily Mail* reports several churches being turned into nightclubs, such as The Chapel Nightclub in Salisbury, Wiltshire – once a Pentecostal church – and Sanctum nightclub in Bournemouth, which was once St Andrew’s United Reformed Church.



Christian band to play at Glastonbury.

Ezra Collective, fronted by Christian drummer Femi Koleoso, are billed to play Glastonbury this year. Fresh off their first BRIT win for Band of the Year, it will be the second time the band plays

Glastonbury – the first was in 2023.

Koleoso began his BRIT acceptance speech with: ‘First and foremost, let me thank my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,’ before paying tribute to youth clubs and schools which encourage young people to explore music. The band met at youth jazz programme *Tomorrow’s Warriors* and have since won the prestigious Mercury Prize for emerging artists in 2023.

Hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians

flocked to in the nation’s capital over the weekend of 9 March to hear U.S. evangelist Franklin Graham share the gospel. The two-day event,

Encountering God Ethiopia, drew an

estimated 437,000 people to Addis Ababa, marking the 65th anniversary of Billy Graham’s historic sermon in the same city.

More than 1,600 evangelical churches across Ethiopia partnered with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) to organise the outreach, which saw thousands make commitments to faith in Jesus Christ.





Bible sales soar among Gen Z: Gen Z are proving that they are a generation open to faith, as Bible sales soar among their demographic. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) has noted an 87% increase in purchases of the Bible

between 2019 and 2024. A survey in January 2025 indicates that a quarter of Gen X (born between 1965 and 1980) identified as atheist – but this falls to 13% amongst Gen Z (born in the late 1990s and early 2000s).

Mark Woods, of the Bible Society, told *The Times* that ‘there’s a very clear increase in demand. This seems to arise from a perception that the Bible has something important to say to young people, and from a desire to make it accessible to them.’ According to 2022 data from **YouGov**, Gen Z are more likely to think religion has a place in the modern world than older generations.

Young men in Finland are showing increased interest in Christianity, more so than younger women according to new research. Historically, women have shown stronger religious beliefs than men, particularly in Christian societies. However, recent studies suggest a shift in this trend, particularly among young men in Finland, who are increasingly committing to Christianity at higher rates than young women.

‘Mutual respect, understanding and deep faith has united us in partnership for the care of these scrolls. We look forward to continuing that commitment into the future.’ Revd Steven Cooper, Connexional Ecumenical Officer for the Methodist Church

The Bishops of the European Union have reaffirmed their unwavering support for Ukraine, stating that its fight for peace is not only a national battle but one that will shape the fate of

Europe and beyond. In a statement released on 4 March, the Presidency of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) emphasised that Ukraine's struggle 'will be decisive for the fate of Europe and the world.'

The bishops expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian people, who they said have 'endured over three years of suffering due to Russia's full-scale invasion' and also stressed that the consequences of the war extend far beyond Ukraine's borders. The statement praised EU decision-makers for providing 'unprecedented humanitarian, political, economic, financial, and military support' to Ukraine, urging them to maintain this commitment, as reported by *Vatican News*. They also expressed hope that the EU would continue to serve as a promoter of peace and stability, both in Europe and globally.

Leaders from the Baptist, Methodist, Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church have responded to the Prime Minister's announcement concerning further cuts to the international development budget.



In the statement, the leaders said:

'We deeply lament the government's stated intention to make further cuts to the UK's international development budget. This would break a manifesto promise made to people in the world's poorest communities and have a devastating impact on lives and livelihoods across the globe. While there is a case to be made for increasing defence spending to support Ukraine in resisting Russian aggression, that shouldn't come at the cost of vital humanitarian and development programmes, which play a crucial role in promoting human security around the world.'

Dorothy Lusmore

Sing Now

CHOIR

Charity Fundraiser



Sunday 22nd June 2025

6pm

United Church, Jewry Street,
Winchester

£10



Special performance from the
Sing Now Choir
Raising funds to support MHA
Communities Hampshire Central.
Money raised going towards local
services and activities to help those
over 60 to live later life well.

To book your ticket please email
Hampshirecentral@mha.org.uk
or contact Hannah on 07568612044



QUIZ & CURRY NIGHT

Come and test your knowledge whilst raising vital
funds for MHA Hampshire Central. All profits go to
run local groups and services for the over 60s and
to support them to live later live well.



Thursday 22nd May 2025
United Church, Jewry Street, Winchester
Arrival 6.30 for 7pm start - 9pm

£25 per person

including entrance to quiz and buffet style dinner

To buy tickets please email
Hampshirecentral@mha.org.uk
or contact Hannah on 07568612044

Please let us know if there are any dietary requirements.



Comedy Corner



CHOCOLATE COMES FROM COCOA,
WHICH IS A TREE
THAT MAKES IT A PLANT.
CHOCOLATE IS SALAD.

The deadline for May Yours is **Monday 14 April**. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.





Vintage Fun

All welcome!



He is Risen

Monday 14th 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, with tea and cake.





Services for April 2025

In-person and live-streamed

6 APRIL	PASSION SUNDAY	
10.30 am	Morning Worship (HC)	Revd Adrian Bulley
13 APRIL	PALM SUNDAY	
10.30 am	Morning Worship	Pat Fry
17 APRIL	MAUNDY THURSDAY	
7.30 pm	Tenebrae Service	Revd Tim Searle
18 APRIL	GOOD FRIDAY	
10.00 am	Morning Worship	Revd Tim Searle
20 APRIL	EASTER	
8.30 am	Easter Breakfast with Holy Communion	
10.30 am	Morning Worship (HC)	Revd Tim Searle
27 APRIL		
10.30 am	Morning Worship	Chris Roles

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services

