



Yours

February 2026

Magazine of
The United
Church
Winchester



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Tim's Letter: On Growth

When people talk about church growth, they often mean numbers: fuller pews, larger ministries, bigger budgets. Yet Scripture reminds us that growth is first and foremost spiritual, rooted in becoming more like Christ. The challenge for today's church is not choosing between spiritual depth and numerical growth, but holding the two together in a healthy, sustainable way.

Spiritual growth is the foundation. A church that prioritises prayer, worship, and discipleship nurtures mature believers whose lives reflect the love of Christ. When members are growing in faith, they are better equipped to serve, give, forgive, and persevere. Without this depth, numerical growth can become shallow and fragile, easily lost when difficulties arise.

At the same time, numerical growth matters. Jesus' command to 'go and make disciples' implies movement outward, not just inward. Churches are called to be welcoming communities that intentionally reach those who do not yet know Christ. Sustainable numerical growth often comes through simple, faithful practices: genuine hospitality, clear communication of the gospel, pastoral care, and ministries that meet real needs in the local community.

The key is balance. Churches grow best when spiritual formation fuels mission. Small groups, such as our House Groups, mentoring, and teaching help us grow deeper, while outreach, service to the community, and invitation help the church grow wider. Importantly, numerical growth should be paced wisely. Structures, leadership, and pastoral care must grow alongside attendance so that people are known, supported, and discipled rather than lost in the crowd.

Ultimately, healthy church growth is God's work, not a human strategy. Our role is faithfulness: planting and watering through

prayer, love, and obedience. When a church is deeply rooted in Christ and open-hearted toward its community, growth – both spiritual and numerical – can flourish in ways that honour God and bless others.

In Christ,
Tim

Editorial

This month's front cover features 'Tranquil spot' by Helen McTiffin painted on a June day in Cornwall (see page 13). It helps us look forward to sunny days ahead amidst the grey skies of recent weeks.

Some of us have been able to benefit from warm climes abroad, including Ann and Adrian Bulley who write about a spectacular cardboard cathedral in New Zealand on pages 9–12. It's a hopeful story of how a community can respond to a disaster.

We have several book and film reviews, Moireach Harmer remembers her school days, and Chris Young looks back to 1979–80 and the Iranian revolution.

Helen Popova shares the recreation of 'a piece of Ukraine' and Howard Mellor witnesses the 80th anniversary of the first meeting of the United Nations in Methodist Central Hall.

All this plus news of the wider church, concerts and events to look forward to, and comedy corner.

Many thanks to all our contributors.

We hope you enjoy reading this bumper edition.

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

News of the United Church Family

We were very sorry to learn of the sudden and unexpected death of Dorothy Lock on 1 January 2026.

Dorothy and Geoffrey have been very long standing and active members at the United Church, having worshipped here for some 20 years, more recently joining us online and enjoying communion at

home. Dorothy was a coffee bar helper for some years and a collector on behalf of Christian Aid. A thanksgiving service for Dorothy's life took place on Wednesday 28 January at the United Church.



It is a while since the December/January edition of *Yours* went to print. In the interim several notifications have come out sadly, reporting a number of deaths. This news is set out below. Our thoughts and prayers are with all these people and with their families and friends.

Very sadly, Revd Greg Black died suddenly and unexpectedly on Monday 24 November. We have been very fortunate that Greg, Rosemary and Sophie have been a part of our Church community following Greg's retirement. Greg's contribution to the life of this and other churches, including as minister at Alresford Methodist Church has been much valued. He played a very active part in issues of social justice, in part through his role as prison chaplain. He will be greatly missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with Rosemary, Sophie, Nix and all the family.

We heard in late November of the death of former minister at this church, the Revd Debbie Borda. Debbie died earlier in November. On leaving the United Church, Debbie moved to a church in Bury St Edmunds. She then retired and moved to Margate.

Dorothy Fendick died on Saturday 15 November. We had only just in November *Yours* reported the recent celebration of Dorothy's

99th birthday. Dorothy was a much-loved member of this Church and along with her late husband, Dennis, was a member for around 50 years. Dorothy was also an active member of Wednesday Fellowship.

We heard also in late November from the family of Ted Rushmoor that he had recently died. Ted worshipped here for many years and had recently moved to Walsall to be nearer to family.

We continue to hold in our prayers all those coping with illness and facing bereavement.

Alongside this there is much to celebrate.

We celebrated the birth of Zach (Zachariah), born on 10 November, another addition to the family of Pauline and Roger. A son to Sam and Farah.

We send our good wishes for future happiness to Chessie Wood and Tom Sanderson, who were married locally on a beautiful December day!

We have enjoyed seeing the return at Christmas of those who are currently studying away from home. We wish you all well for this term and look forward to seeing you at Easter.

Congratulations to Jenny Allen who celebrates her 100th birthday on 7 February.

We recently received a message from the family of Jill Cook, who died in February 2025. Jill's daughter Ruth wrote: *'Thank you to all [Mum's] Church community and Tim especially, for their support and friendship which made such a difference to Jill.'* Ruth also attached a little handwritten note which was left by Jill, informing us of a legacy, which she very kindly left to the United Church. Jill's note reads as follows:

'This legacy comes with love and thanksgiving for all the care and ministry I received during my years at United from 2007. Use it as you will. May God continue to bless all that is done in His name'. Jill Cook.

A nest of tables and a tapestry (crafted by Jill) was also donated to the Church in Jill's memory.

As always, should you wish something to be included with *news of church family*, please let me know. You can email me on pastoral@ucw.org.uk.

Jane Lawson, Pastoral Lead

Reviews and Recommendations by Members of the Church Community

A Knock at the Door by Rob Parsons

This is a simple if remarkable story of lives transformed, which began with a knock at the door. A few days before Christmas, a young homeless man, who was holding a frozen chicken under his arm, knocked on the door of a young couple whom he remembered from Sunday School many years ago, Rob and Dianne Parsons. They invited him in, gave him a meal and cooked his chicken. They then realised they couldn't just send him out into the night without anywhere to go. So, they offered him a bed – and then spent a rather sleepless night as they realised they had a virtual stranger sleeping under their roof. They were soon going to discover it was far more difficult to ask Ronnie Lockwood to leave than it had been to invite him in – and he stayed under their roof for the next forty-five years, becoming a dearly loved member of their family.

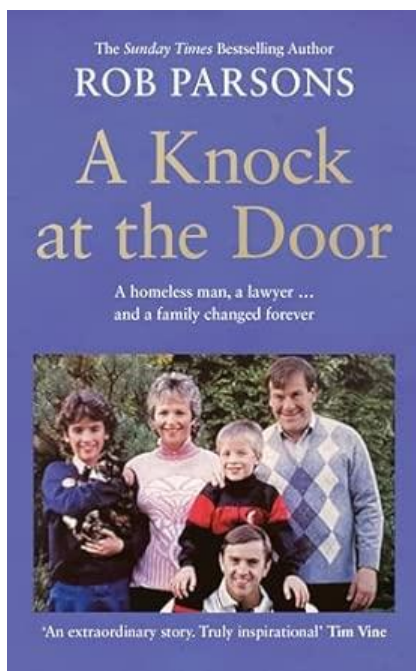
As a child of eight, Ronnie had been sent into care with no explanation, and he never saw his parents again. Both at the care home and at the residential 'Backward School' to which he was later sent, he was persistently bullied and humiliated, not only by the other boys, but also by the uncaring staff. Then, at the age of sixteen he was sent out into the world to fend for himself, with no

preparation or forewarning. Inevitably he failed ... which is how he ended up on the Parsons' doorstep with nowhere else to go.

Over the coming years that he spent with them, we see how his life gradually changed. His social skills developed as he lived alongside people who really cared for him and offered him friendship and practical support. He learned self-respect, as he was given simple responsibilities such as putting out the chairs each Sunday at church. He got employment as a dustman. He opened a building society account and learned to manage his money. And he began to be confident in himself as he discovered things he was good at.

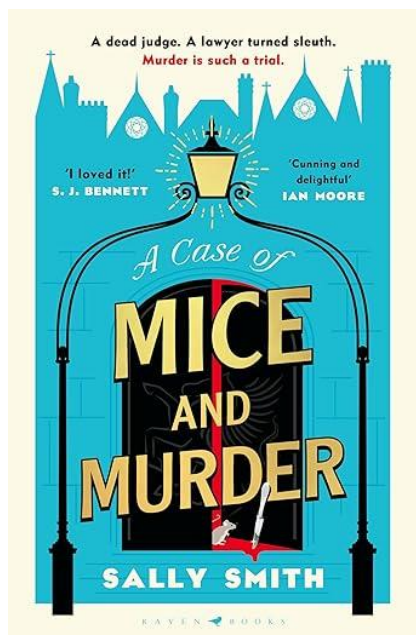
Of course, none of this happened in a vacuum. Ronald's story is part of Rob and Dianne's story, as they face everyday joys and challenges of their own – starting a family, building a successful and demanding career, facing tensions within their marriage, coping with illness – and doing it alongside the demands that Ronnie makes on their love and patience. But, in the process, we see they are also being transformed as the direction their lives is shaped and informed by his.

This is an inspirational book, a triumph of goodness and love. Beg, borrow or buy it, above all read it. You won't be disappointed. You may even find yourself being transformed in the process.



Margaret Axford

A Case of Mice and Murder by Sally Smith



I enjoy reading mystery novels and came across a new series recently from Raven Books.

The author is Sally Smith and the first book is *A Case of Mice and Murder*. When barrister Gabriel Ward steps out of his rooms in the Temple one morning in May 1901, his mind is so full of his latest case, he scarcely notices the body of the Lord Chief Justice of England on his doorstep. As the police have no authority in the Temple, who better to investigate than the man who has dedicated his life to the law? But Gabriel soon discovers that

murder is much messier outside the courtroom.

I really enjoyed the book and highly recommend it.

I read it on my Kindle but it is available in paperback.

Barbara Dunton

The Great Escaper

The Great Escaper was shown on BBC2 on Boxing Day and is available on BBC i-Player. It's a moving dramatisation of a true story, starring Michael Caine and Glenda Jackson. This was Glenda Jackson's last performance before her death in 2023, aged 87.

A film based on 89 year-old Bernard Jordan's (Michael Caine) 'great escape' in 2014 from a care home. A veteran of the D-Day landings, he sneaked out of the seaside care home where he lived



with his wife, Rene (Glenda Jackson), to travel to Normandy for the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

It's described as 'an inspirational but sanitised retelling of one man's need to come to terms with the lasting trauma of war.' Bernie's adventure, spanning just 48 hours, also marked the culmination of his 60-year marriage to Rene.

It's a very moving film and has great performances from the lead actors.

Jane Lawson



Hope from the Rubble

At the end of November, we returned from an extended holiday in Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. So many experiences. So many memories.

One of the many memories which has stayed with us is our visit to Christchurch, on New Zealand's South Island.

In the early hours of 4 September 2010, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake rocked Christchurch, causing a great deal of damage across the city and leaving two people dead and over 1,700 injured.

Six months later, a 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit the city. Over the next three and a half hours, it was followed by a further five earthquakes, ranging in magnitude from 5 to 5.9. These earthquakes combined to kill a further 186 people.

Christchurch was devastated. Ann had been to the city 30 years before and couldn't recognise it at all on this visit. We spoke to a couple of residents who talked of walking in the city in the aftermath of the quakes and not being able to identify where they were. Even after fourteen years there are still empty spaces where buildings once stood.

The September 2010 earthquake had weakened some of the structure of the Anglican Cathedral in Christchurch; the February 2011 earthquakes destroyed the spire and part of the cathedral's tower and severely damaged the structure of the remaining building. As if it had not suffered enough, further earthquakes in June and December 2011 caused the west wall to collapse, taking with it a beautiful rose window.

The Anglican Diocese decided to demolish the cathedral and replace it with a new structure, but various local groups opposed

the plans, including taking a case to court. While the judgements were mostly in favour of the church, no further demolition occurred after the removal of the remains of the tower in early 2012.



It was not until September 2017 that the Diocese, succumbing to local pressure and lured by the offer of grants and loans from central and local government, announced that the cathedral would be restored. Work on the restoration did not start until 2019 and is still ongoing today. It is not anticipated that the cathedral will open for at least another 6 years; probably much longer. In need of somewhere to worship, the cathedral congregation decamped to a transitional cathedral in the city centre in August 2013.

The transitional cathedral was designed by Japanese architect Shigeru Ban who had gained a great deal of experience designing temporary buildings following the Kobe earthquake. Ban gifted his design to the Diocese. The transitional cathedral is better known as the cardboard cathedral due to the architect's use of over 90 large cardboard tubes for its walls and roof. This 'cardboard



cathedral' is not only remarkable in its design and choice of sustainable materials, it is one of the most uplifting and joyful places of worship we have ever visited. You feel this as you walk inside, bathed in light from a spectacular A-line stained-glass window. The very design says this is the future for the city. It was heartwarming to hear of the connection between Kobe in Japan and Christchurch.

When the old Cathedral is finally restored and open, we wouldn't be surprised if this transitional cathedral lives on because it has so captured the hearts of residents and become iconic. The cardboard cathedral symbolises hope, and is a symbol of Christchurch's renewal, at the heart of this very resilient city.

Ann and Adrian Bulley

The United Nations @80



On 10 January 1946, representatives from across a war-torn world walked into the Methodist Central Hall Westminster and took their seats for the first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. The church moved out to a Theatre and the 'The world moved in'.

These wayfarers sought for a path of peace; it was an audacious dream of cooperation over conflict and dialogue over destruction. It was an act of responsibility – the first attempt to build a framework for cooperation strong enough to prevent the return of global conflict. Eighty years later the UN still matters.



On Saturday 17 January 2026 a service of thanksgiving marked that beginning, again at the Methodist Central Hall Westminster. It honoured the people who believed dialogue was stronger than division, and diplomacy stronger than vengeance.

The Revd Tony Miles (Minister of MCHW) says, 'We are delighted that the Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres, alongside representatives of the UK government, will be present'. The service brought together government ministers, diplomats, civic leaders, faith representatives, students, and members of the public to reflect on what began in this building: the idea that nations could work together with purpose, accountability, and patience.



Building Our Future Together

Cardinal Vincent Nichols was the preacher. He acknowledged the UN is facing 'the cold winds of nationalism and authoritarianism'. He called the congregation to 'rekindle the spirit' of that first General Assembly. Vengeance will only lead to ashes he said, but diplomacy

becomes the soil in which peace may grow.

Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, read the epistle from Romans 12, 'Let love be genuine ... live peaceably with all.' António Guterres led the congregation in reaffirming the United Nations Charter. The service in that venue brought the UN in full circle, and the agenda is as important today as it was eighty years ago.

Indeed, many would argue that the events of the 2025/6 make the need for the UN even more important. The world is rocked by rebels in Sudan and Myanmar, with the Israel and Gaza conflict unresolved, and by powerful world leaders such as Putin pushing his claim on Ukraine, Xi Jinping reinforcing his claim on Taiwan, and an unpredictable Trump ordering incursions into Venezuela and making claims over Greenland.

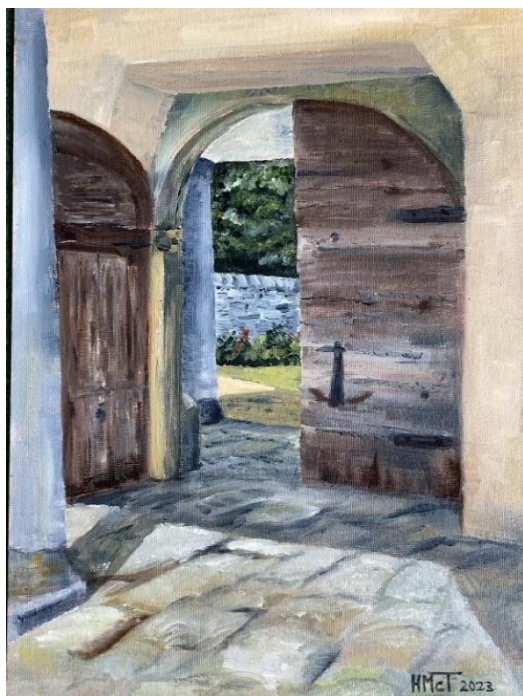
Now is the time for diplomats to speak calmly, but forcefully; for peacekeepers to be supported; for churches to pray, for citizens to be conscious we live in unpredictable times and to ensure our communities are at peace.



The service ended with a commitment to work for the relief of want, fear and suffering as we work together for peace in the world. May it be so!

Howard Mellor

This Month's Front Cover



Tranquil Spot, Godolphin
(oil on board)

I painted this on a hot June day at Godolphin, a National Trust property near Marazion in Cornwall. It was a tranquil spot with few visitors discovering me! The ancient open doorway leads to a busier garden.

Perhaps a sunny view to encourage us that now, in the midst of winter, warmer weather *will* come eventually ...

Helen McTiffin

Memories of School

My secondary schooling was a positive experience, in the main. The school had only been open for one summer term to iron out any unforeseen issues before I joined – from an all-girls private school – to the first of 5 years of a co-ed state school ... but I coped!

I made a friend and we were able to keep in touch till her sad death early last year – 63 years, all told – along with at least 3 or 4 of our classmates. What an achievement.

Our headmaster, Nicholas H, was, I think in retrospect, innovative in his approach – apparently there were no rules – unless you

broke them! If anyone broke a rule and didn't own up to it, then the whole school suffered for a specified time, presumably decided by the severity of the misdemeanour.

As many of us were bussed in from the surrounding villages, we were required to walk, 2 by 2 quietly through the housing estate to school, where we lined up in our class group, come sun, rain, wind or snow! This was required throughout the day, in breaks and back into school and in reverse to get our buses. It certainly concentrated the mind!

Our deputy headmistress was a tiny Welsh lady – but, boy, did she have a presence! She threw open a classroom door when she could hear much uproar inside. She said nothing, she just stood there till all was quiet and everyone was sitting at a desk. I remember that my 14-year-old self felt very sorry for the new teacher, who knew his subject – but couldn't (then) teach.

My friends and I went back to the school, now much expanded, to help celebrate its 50th anniversary. Such a good time was had by all, including with one of our teachers.

A mostly enjoyable, but definitely informative time for me.

Moireach Harmer

Creating a Piece of Ukraine in the UK

(How Gigantic Motankas were Born)

It wasn't easy to come up with an original idea for a Ukrainian Christmas. We wanted something truly festive – and unmistakably Ukrainian.

After a long, very long period of thinking, we found it. Motankas. But not the usual ones. Big. Very big. Almost two metres tall. Ukrainian. Mysterious. Christmassy.

We were given two giant models: white and black. Our first attempt was ... enthusiastic. We dressed them in whatever we could find, colourful shawls, embroidered blouses, flower wreaths, anything Ukrainian-looking from our own wardrobes. It was fun. And chaotic. Too many colours. No structure. No tradition. More carnival than culture.

So, we stopped. Thought again and started properly. We toured charity shops, raided friends' wardrobes, and researched Ukrainian sources online. And slowly, our girls began to take shape. Skirts, petticoats and aprons, flower wreaths, ears of wheat, artificial hair, threaded cross, and an embroidered towel in the hands of one of them.



I even learned how to make a **дідух** – a traditional sheaf of wheat. Every day we added something new, and every day we felt a little prouder and happier.

At one point, I had a brilliant idea. Two dogs at their feet, very Ukrainian, very symbolic. Very... rejected. Our Ukrainian volunteers firmly said no. I had to let my dogs go.

Then came the next challenge: How could we transport two nearly two-metre-high ladies? After a week – success. A car with a very long boot was found. And then ... catastrophe. They collapsed into pieces. So, we transported them in parts, fragments. Remnants of beauty.

The next day, everything was assembled again. And somehow – even better than before. Standing tall and proud, and picturesque. We presented them at the Ukrainian Christmas Party.

For several festive days, around forty leaflets were shared with Brits and Ukrainians.

Everything good comes to an end. Undressing. Dismantling. Taking them apart.

They became more than decorations, part of our lives and hearts. I can't stop crying.

A piece of Ukraine – created, carried, broken, rebuilt –and lovingly shared here, in the UK.

Helen Popova

**WINCHESTER
PRAYER**

MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY 8pm
Christ Church (Christchurch Rd)

THE SMOKE OF THE INCENSE,
TOGETHER WITH THE PRAYERS
OF GOD'S PEOPLE, WENT UP
BEFORE GOD (REV 8:4)


CHURCHES
TOGETHER
WINCHESTER

Iran 1979–2026

International affairs remembered as a backdrop to what is often termed 'daily life' in the hymn books

The current demonstrations in Iran are bringing to the fore in my memory the very similar events of 1979–80. I suspect I am not alone in that experience. Additionally, I am finding that the whole drapery of attached memories is also coming forth, perhaps because the 79/80 period was a major pivot point in my life.

In 1979 I was the groundsman at the Brighton Cricket Ground which was (and is) surrounded by the oldest cycle track in the UK. The 'office' cum mess room, located in the cricket pavilion, was also the spot that the area

senior foreman located himself when not out on site, while the room also housed a good set of comfortable chairs for use at lunch time. Consequently, we would often find ourselves hosting 'itinerant' members of staff such as the area superintendent and the area



lorry driver during break times, such visits for them bringing the bonus of freshly brewed tea. All would arrive fortified with their chosen newspaper, tabloid or broadsheet. After some minutes someone would make a comment re the article they were reading. Newspapers now laid aside, discussion would then commence about the hot topic of the time, often in 1979/80 being about Iran, the protests, the Shah, and/or the Ayatollah Khomeini; the latter initially making his pronouncements from France.

We were always strict about keeping to the allocated break times, thus there was added gravitas to whoever had the last word. One last word following the Shah's departure I have always remembered was made by the lorry driver, Bob:

‘The thing is, how do they (the Iranian people) know that what will replace the Shah is going to be any better’?

Seemingly now forgotten, there was a period at the end of the Shah’s rule and into the early days of the ‘Supreme Leader’ (the Ayatollah Khomeini) that some more moderate influences on the country’s ‘secular’ governance arose. For example, Shapour Bakhtiar, Abolhassan Banisadr and Mehdi Bazargan. However, such a response did not last long.

Back in Brighton, the emergence and acts of these secular politicians to the backdrop of the Supreme Leader were still being debated in ‘that’ cricket pavilion.

Leaving the cricket ground and all other things Brighton in September 1980, I left the south coast for higher education in North Yorkshire; coming with this was worship in David Watson’s church now known as ‘The Belfry’.

Among many other ministries the fellowship had a strong emphasis on Christian community, having amongst others a focus on students living away from home, often for the first time and allocating to those that wished it a ‘church family’. I was allocated to an older couple Noel and Phyllis who did not have their own biological children. Noel maintained the considerable church cassette tape library, having built an extension on their home to do so; while Phyllis had a particular interest in Israel and the (associated) ministry of Lance Lambert who’s tape recordings were also held in The Belfry’s tape library together with the likes of David Pawson et al. And, I had access to it all!

I remember Lance talking about Iran/Persia and how he thought that the Shah had invited retribution on himself by declaring himself to have been ‘King of Kings’ (although he is not the only person, humanly speaking, to have done so).

In Iran, as we now know, as time passed matters, from a ‘liberal’ western perspective, got worse. In the background, as is seemingly

often the case, was the USA, replete with some eccentric characters on stage; for example, Colonel Oliver North and the pipe smoking Admiral John Poindexter.

So, to the present day. The question raised by Bob the lorry driver is still as valid as ever; perhaps in the light of subsequent events in countries such as Iraq and Libya even more so – will developments be an improvement?

Matters such as this can be fast moving and may have developed between the writing of this in the second week of January and your reading.

For any who wish to refresh their memories about the events in 1979–80 there are some useful resources on You Tube including a good Timeline Documentary:

1979 Iranian Revolution, Explained | Last Persian Shah
bit.ly/4qM44DJ

While part of the Shah's last tv interview is found at:
bit.ly/4sBOKoL

Oh, one last word about Bob the driver; he was the spitting image of John Thaw, who at that time played Inspector Regan in the tv series *The Sweeney*; hence Bob acquired the nickname of 'Regan'. As if to add to the excitement, another lorry driver, Tony, who might also appear if the volume of work was such that it required two lorries, looked like Dennis Waterman, who played 'Sergeant Carter' next to Regan. Thus, we had our own 'Regan and Carter'.

Very occasionally I would go out on the road with Bob, to manually load 3 tons of fly ash onto the lorry, so that it could be applied to a cinder running track. We both knew that we were fortunate to be in the UK as opposed to Tehran.

Chris Young

Message from the Basics Bank



Thank you so much for your £300 cash donation to the Winchester Food & Basics Bank recently. This is a very timely donation and we are very grateful.

In 2025 we served 8,471 people in the Winchester and surrounding areas. As food prices are on the up, food donations from our supermarket collection points are not meeting the demand, so we are having to spend over £1,000 each week in topping up our supply.

Our School Holiday Lunches scheme has been much in demand in recent years. In 2025 we gave out holiday lunches to 1,238 children, that was over 11,802 lunches.

In April 2025 we opened a new Hub for our clients at the Sainsbury's Community Centre. It has a good bus connection, we hope it will be easier for those without transport to reach us.

We are providing a much-needed service and it is only possible because of the support that we get from local businesses, volunteers, schools, donors and churches.

We welcome visitors to our main site at Milland Road or at our warehouse in Winnall.

Please let me know if anyone would like to visit. Thank you very much once again.

Regards

Beauman Chong, Trustee

The Bright Field

*I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realise now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying*

*on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.*

by R. S. Thomas

Prayer

Spirit of God,
in moments of searching and exploring,
keep my senses alert
to find, in all around me, newness of joy and wonder
in the love of Jesus, my priceless treasure.
Wisdom of God, may pearls of insight, truth and grace in Jesus
capture my heart and my imagination anew
so that my faith may be enlarged,
my perspective on your work in the cosmos sharpened
and my commitment to follow Jesus deepened. Amen.

*Revd Dr Noel Davies, retired Welsh Congregational minister and a
member of Uniting Church Sketty, Swansea (Methodist/URC) from
URC Daily Devotions 15 January 2026*

News of the Wider Church

Deputy Prime-Minister praying for resilience and wisdom for 2026. The Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Secretary spoke



about how his Christian beliefs ground his politics, defending reforms to the jury system as bringing justice for the victims of crime. He told *Sunday* on BBC Radio 4: 'I'm not embarrassed about doing God. I'm not embarrassed about my faith. I'm not embarrassed

about what my faith has given me. I'm not here to proselytise. But I'm absolutely not shying away from my Christian faith, my Christian conviction, my Christian socialism, and the huge privilege that I've had in this role, for example, to meet the Pope recently. That matters to me.

'We're living in far darker times than I experienced when I came into politics 25 years ago. I particularly think this is a more challenging moment for young people and for their generation than has been the case for some time. It's important to keep them front and centre, to hope, to pray, to work on their behalf for a better country and a better world.'

Lammy has previously told *Premier Christian News* that he feels 'at home with a faith and an understanding of Jesus Christ who turned over the tables of the temples, who believed in a sense of social justice and mission.'



The incoming Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally, warned that plans to legalise assisted suicide could put vulnerable people at risk and create a false choice. Mullally, who will be installed as the 106th archbishop of Canterbury later this month, drew on her experience as England's former

chief nursing officer, saying that even with safeguards, the law would not fully protect those most at risk. She echoed concerns raised by former prime minister Gordon Brown about state-funded assisted suicide leaving terminally ill patients without a genuine choice. The interview aired on New Years Eve on BBC Radio 4 *Today Programme*, where Mullally said she was 'worried that people may make a decision for assisted dying because they're not having the right palliative care or the right social care'. She added that the law could 'signal that we are a society that believes some lives are not worth living'.



Bible sales rise to record high in 2025. Sales of the Bible in Britain soared to record levels in the last year, according to new research from Christian publisher SPCK Group. The total sales of UK Bible sales reached £6.3 million, more than doubling in value since 2019. The overall number of

physical copies sold has risen by 106 per cent since before the pandemic; the highest rise since records began. Annual sales climbed from £2.69 million in 2019 to £6.3 million in 2025 – an increase of £3.61 million in just five years. To put this growth in perspective, between 2024 and 2025 alone, Bible sales surged by 27.7 per cent, in terms of the number of copies sold. The bestselling Bible translation in 2025 was the English Standard Version (ESV), published by Crossway.

2025 saw the first report of a [Quiet Revival](#) stirring the UK, and a recent YouGov poll revealed that 49 per cent of 18-to-25 year olds believe in a higher power. Recent data suggests Generation Z was becoming the most religious generation alive and research backs up accounts of a Christian revival taking hold. As religion becomes an increasingly relevant, and important part of British life, the report recommends that at all levels of government, an emphasis is placed on improving religious literacy: 'Officials do need a working grasp of how faith communities function, their

internal diversity, their sensitivities, and their transnational ties. Rather than ad hoc training, institutions should integrate religious literacy into core professional competencies (civil service, local authorities, policing, education).'



A star from *The Only Way Is Essex* (TOWIE) and *Love Island* has spoken openly about her Christian faith. Matilda Draper, 25, said she once felt mocked for believing in God but told Sky News that faith was now 'becoming more normal among young people. I

remember when I was in school I would tell people I believed in God and they would be like "you're a loser",' she said, adding: 'Now I couldn't be prouder.'



Bishop prays for peace in Iran.

The Bishop of Chelmsford has said she is praying for a 'peaceful resolution that will lead to justice and freedom' in Iran. Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, who was born in Iran, said while the situation 'will raise hopes for many about the possibility of a regime change', it was impossible to predict the country's future.

At least 500 people are reported to have been killed during anti-government rallies across the country. In a statement, Bishop Guli said the current events 'will raise hopes for many about the possibility of a regime change' but were being met with the inevitable. 'There is no doubt that the current administration appears to be in its final throes and fighting for survival, though it's impossible to predict the timing,' she added. 'Whether the end will be soon, or is still some way off, no one can say. The real question for Iran is what will follow. My prayers are for a peaceful resolution that will lead to justice and freedom.'



Chinese church members have been urged to remain united amid persecution after church leaders were recently arrested. In a statement seen by *The Guardian*, the church called on members 'to hold fast to the faith, to love one another, and to remain united amid persecution'. The arrests have

been the latest in a wave of repression against Christians in China with the ruling Communist Party tightening control over religious expression. Benedict Rogers, Senior Director of Fortify Rights and co-founder and Chair of Hong Kong Watch, told *Premier Christian News* incidents like these are becoming 'increasingly common'.

Michael Bublé sings at the Vatican In December, the star opened



up about his personal Catholic faith, before a performance at the Vatican. 'When I hear music, I hear the voice of God,' he said. He described his pre-show routine, which involves prayer: 'Right before the curtain opens and I walk out, I say the same

thing. I say, 'Thank you God, for blessing me with the ability to connect with these beautiful souls. And when I say it, I get goosebumps.'

Bubl  headlined, the Vatican's 'Concert with the Poor' attended free by 3,000 vulnerable people, around Rome. Bubl  said it was 'an honour to serve' and to celebrate the birth of Christ. He shared that he teaches his children about how Jesus washed the disciples' feet, as an example of serving others.



The religious landscape in Britain is becoming increasingly diverse and polarised according to new research by members of the Good Faith Partnership and Hope Not Hate. *Questions of Hope and Hate: Faith and Faultlines in a Changing Britain* highlights an increase in religious symbols being interwoven into political protest, such as

crosses featuring at Tommy Robinson's Unite the Kingdom march, and arguments of Zionism overlapping with public demonstrations about Gaza. A group of three Christian friends from North London are attempting to tackle notions of 'Christian nationalism' through a grassroots movement. **Better Story** aims to spread a gospel-based counter to recent anti-immigration riots, which saw crucifixes displayed alongside nationalist symbols. The group describes itself as 'Christians who believe Jesus' teaching to love our neighbours and our enemies is a far better story than Christian Nationalism'. 'We also really want to empower Christians to speak about this issue and challenge it, where they see it... to tell a better story in their own contexts. You never know what a small group of people can do in terms of changing the world.'

Dorothy Lusmore

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.

UKRAINIAN

Valentine's Concert

6PM • 15 FEBRUARY 2026

UNITED CHURCH • JEWRY STREET • WINCHESTER



You are warmly invited to a Ukrainian
Valentine's Concert, featuring a beautiful blend of music
and dance performed by Ukrainian artists:

Kateryna Bolkunevych Soprano • **Liliya Solomonova** Piano

Volodymyr Vasylenko Accordion • **Ava Solomonova** Vocal

and the **Chervona Ruta Dance Group**

ADULT £10 • CONCESSIONS £5

Tickets available on TicketSource and on-the-door

**Soprano
& piano** & friends



TicketSource Link:



Caring for our Planet



Morning: Seminars
on Caring for our planet

Why? Ruth Valerio

*Programmes, Partnerships and
Advocacy Director, (Embrace
the Middle East)*

How? Steve Collins

*Net Zero Carbon (NZC)
team, The Church of England*

**Afternoon:
Panel discussion**

A free community event

with much to explore

All zones are accessible

View movies in the **Science Dome**

Creative fun **Craft Zone for children**

Poems, photos, posters **Exhibition Space**

Expand your thought? **Seminar Room**

Reflect in the **Quiet Room**

Drinks and snacks **Refreshment zone**

Local action groups **Market zone**

Something for everyone

When: **18 April 2026**

Where: Chandler's Ford Methodist
Church, SO53 2GJ

Time: 10 am to 4 pm

Updates will be published on:

<http://www.wermethodistcircuit.org.uk>



Yours Christmas Quiz 2025 Answers

Part One

- 1 Wesleyan Methodist Church – Primitive Methodist Church – Congregationalist Church
- 2 Moving St Swithun's body from outside to inside the Cathedral (he had expressed a wish to be always under the sky)
- 3 Licoricia of Winchester
- 4 The County High School
- 5 The Plague Memorial
- 6 The George
- 7 In the Cathedral Inner Close
- 8 The City Mill (older than the Cathedral)
- 9 St John the Baptist Church
- 10 Colin Firth

Part Two

- 1 Ebenezer
- 2 25 December
- 3 364
- 4 Jingle Bells

Which book of the Bible –

- 5 Matthew
- 6 Isaiah
- 7 X represents the Greek initial letter of Christ
- 8 13th
- 9 The gifts of the three wise men – cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg
- 10 6 January – Epiphany (visit of the Wise Men)

Part Three

- 1 Abbey Grounds
- 2 Parchment Street
- 3 Bottom of Oram's Arbour
- 4 Winchester College Headmaster's Office Wall in College Street
- 5 First Floor of TG Jones (formerly WH Smith)
- 6 Wharf Hill
- 7 Top of St James' Lane
- 8 Hyde Church Path
- 9 Canon Street
- 10 St James' Terrace

A Warning from the Internet

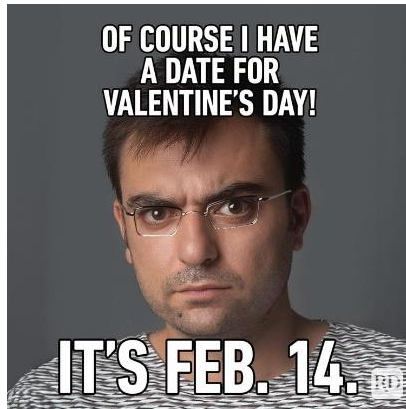
Recently, as part of my work with musical boxes, I needed to find the composition/publication date for the song '**Where the Bee Sucks**'. The Internet, that 'brilliant, indispensable tool' of today that dispenses the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, came back with this reply to my simple question:

'Where the bee sucks, there suck I' is a line from the poem '**Where the Bee Sucks**' by Dr. Thomas Arne, set to music by William Shakespeare.

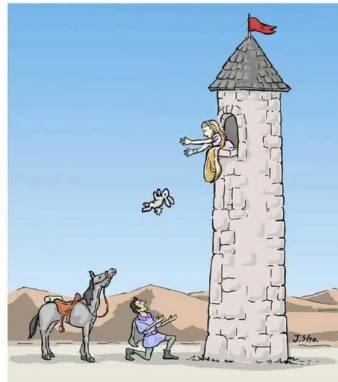
I hope this is a case of 'AI', that much vaunted new bauble on the Internet Tree mis-presenting correct information, rather than it finding & presenting incorrect information; either way, my 'ghast' was truly 'flabbered' and my mind boggled.

David Worrall

Comedy Corner



When you know the sermon's gonna run a little long



The deadline for March *Yours* is **Monday 9 February**.
All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.

**Anna
Chaplaincy**
for older people



Vintage Fun

All welcome!



FLOWERS GROW ON YOU

Monday 9th February

2 - 4 pm

at the

United Church

Jewry Street, Winchester SO23 8RZ

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

Caraway



Services for February 2026

In-person and live-streamed

1 FEBRUARY

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

8 FEBRUARY

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Abbots Barton House
Group

15 FEBRUARY

9.00 am **Holy Communion** Revd Tim Searle

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

22 FEBRUARY LENT 1

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services

