



Yours

June 2026

Magazine of
The United
Church
Winchester



The United Church, Jewry St, Winchester, SO23 8RZ 01962 849559
Registered Charity no. 1135083 Website: ucw.org.uk

Minister Revd Tim Searle (day off Fri)
Email address: minister@ucw.org.uk

Worship

Lead Pat Fry

Pastoral

Lead Jane Lawson
Bereavement Sandy Foster
Flowers Distribution Lesley Worrall

Property

Lead Martin Ramsey

Finance

Treasurer Janet Messer
Donations & Gift Aid David Worrall
Payments & Expenses Steve Barber

Administration

Church Secretary Adrian Bulley
secretary@ucw.org.uk
Asst Secretary Dorothy Lusmore
Facilities Manager James Daniel
facilities@ucw.org.uk

Mission

Lead Jo Pellatt
mission@ucw.org.uk

Safeguarding

Co-ordinator Tim James 07925 691260
Deputy Co-ordinator Christine Cook 01962 884510

MHA Communities Hannah Shave 01962 890995

Winchester (formerly LAH)

Yours magazine website page: ucw.org.uk/yours/
email address: yours@ucw.org.uk

Tim's Letter: Reality Check

As I was thinking about what to write for my penultimate opening letter, I decided to scan through some of the previous articles I'd written for inspiration. I happened on a letter written just a couple of months into my time at United which ponders the question of what to expect from a minister. Here's an excerpt to give you a flavour:

What are your expectations of the Minister? If a 1989 computerised survey is to be believed, then I have cause for concern! From its results the following summary was compiled:

'Perfect Ministers preach for exactly 15 minutes; they condemn sin but never upset anyone. They work from 8.00 am until midnight and are also good caretakers. They receive about £50 net a week, wear good clothes, drive new cars, entertain regularly and give at least £2,500 a year to the poor and to their congregations. They are between 28-30 years old and have 25-30 years' parish experience. They have a burning desire to work with teenagers and spend all of their time with senior citizens. They make daily calls on congregational families, shut-ins and those in hospital, yet spend all their time evangelising to the un-churched and are always available in the office when needed.'

Good for a giggle I'll grant you, and I'm certainly relieved that your understanding of ministry is more enlightened than the survey's! That said, given how people, according to the survey, can have such varying expectations of their Ministers, how do we decide what the priorities for my role are? And how do we ensure that the role is achievable whilst maintaining a healthy work/life balance?

At this time of transition for the church, this article struck me as apt and worthy of repetition. In a perfect world we would love

ministers to be pastor – teacher – leader – evangelist – ecumenist – tech guru – intergenerational and community worker all rolled into one. But we do not live in that world.

Learning to prioritise therefore, particularly when looking at the scope of a minister's role, has never been so vital. Churches that learn to lever this reality and look to compliment ordained ministry with their own gifts and graces, can become beacons of growth and creativity. Churches that expect *their* minister(s) to both meet the challenges of the present and future whilst maintaining the historical, often idolised expectations of the past, will flounder and fail. Question is: what kind of church will you be?

In Christ. **Tim**

Editorial

This month's front cover is a part of a painting by Ann Bulley of the church of St Mary and cottages in a Hampshire town to the north of us in Winchester. See where it is on page 7!

Adrian Bulley reflects on four decades of ministry on page 9. Despite a decline in the membership of the URC (of 75%), he is able to say there is much of which we should be proud. He feels 'more confident in the faithfulness of God, and more grateful for the privilege of walking this road alongside others'. That may well reflect the experience many of us at the United Church as we reflect on our presence as worshippers here over the last months, years or decades.

Rosemary MacMullen continues her cruise diary, John Lander reflects on the Temperance Movement and Dorothy Lusmore writes about an attempt to build bridges between the Israeli and Palestinian communities instead of perpetuating hatred.

Many thanks to all our contributors.

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

News of the United Church Family

Val Hillier died peacefully at home on Friday 8 May. Val was a member of this church family for more than 60 years. She will be greatly missed by us all.



We especially remember Pepe, Andrew, Martin and James in our prayers as well as all of the wider family.

Val made such a significant contribution to the life of this church. Among her many roles, she was a long-standing Junior Church leader, a leader of the Mums and Toddlers group and a valued member of the St Cross house group. Val came on church weekends away and she and John joined in with all manner of things from church walks to helping with the communion washing up! All this, and many more ways in which Val enriched the life of the church through her positive and upbeat presence. We feel blessed that Val has played a part in our lives.

Val's family have said how much Val and they valued the visits, contacts and prayers of all those who kept in touch over recent times when Val was unable to get out. A Service of Thanksgiving for her life will take place at church on Wednesday 10 June at 3 pm.

We pray too for Helen McTiffin and all her family after the death on 28 April of Helen's brother, John. Helen would like to thank United Church friends for their prayerful support since John's stroke two years ago.

Duncan Ransay's Mum died recently. Her funeral took place in Liverpool on 21 May. We remember Duncan, Val and all the family.

We send our best wishes to all those members of our church family who are taking exams, completing end of year assignments and projects, considering next steps in education or work/experience. We trust that these endeavours will go well. We

very much look forward to welcoming some of you back from various places of study over the summer.

We remember all those who are unable to join us in church, remembering especially this month Jenny Allan and Naomi Thomas.

Finally, we say farewell at the end of this month to our minister, Tim Searle. We have gained so very much from Tim's ministry amongst us over the past ten years. We offer him our thanks, our good wishes and our prayers as he starts out on a new path. Tim leaves us to join the Solent Cluster of United Reformed Churches, located in the southeast region of the URC Wessex Synod. We know that his many gifts will be well suited to this role. More of that over the next month, Tim!

Please do let me know if you would like me to include anything in this space in future editions of *Yours*. You can email me on: pastoral@ucw.org.uk

Jane Lawson, Pastoral Lead

Tim's Leaving Events

Saturday 13 June, 3 pm: farewell party at Littleton Memorial Hall, bring and share afternoon tea (food plated and ready to serve please). Please sign up on list in the hall if you are bringing sweet or savoury, so we ensure a mix.

If the weather is nice, we may well spill out onto the field – if you would like to sit outside, please bring your own rugs/chairs. Parking is free and easy, but not everyone has a car so if you need a lift, or could offer one, please let Steve Barber know.

Sunday 14 Circuit Farewell Service 4 pm, led by Circuit Team, preacher Revd Adrian Bulley, followed by tea and cakes, etc.

Sunday 28 June 10.30 am: last Sunday service with Tim leading. Followed by Fellowship – a bit more special than usual!

Reform: Stop Press

Further to my article in last month's *Yours*, I can now reveal the *Reform* magazine's new name.

It is not a major change: the public vote was strongly in favour of the simple addition of two letters to the end.

So it is now:

Reformed
reforming, reviving, reporting, resourcing

We are assured that it will still be of the same high standard – but hopefully the confusion with politics will be reduced!

Graham Rolfe

This Month's Front Cover



This month's front cover is a detail from the watercolour above of Marlborough Street, Andover, by Ann Bulley.



UNITED CHURCH
WINCHESTER

Could you help shape the future of our church?

We are looking to appoint up to two new Trustees to support and strengthen the leadership of our church community.

This is an important role that helps ensure the church is well-run and meets its legal responsibilities – and it's also a valuable opportunity to contribute your skills and experience.

What's involved?

- Attending quarterly evening meetings
- Helping guide decision-making and governance
- Supporting the church's mission and long-term direction

You don't need to be part of the Leadership Team – we are especially seeking non-executive trustees who can bring a fresh perspective.

Who might this suit?

We would love to hear from church members who:

- Have practical skills or professional experience
- Care about the life and future of the church
- Are willing to offer their time thoughtfully

The role is not overly demanding, but it is very important.

Interested?

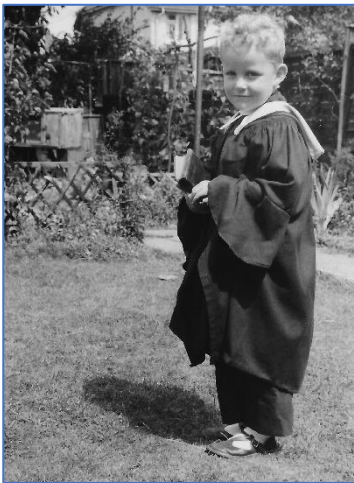
For more information, please contact Adrian Bulley at secretary@ucw.org.uk. To express interest or make a nomination, please get in touch by **Sunday 21 June**.

Reflections on Four Decades of Ministry

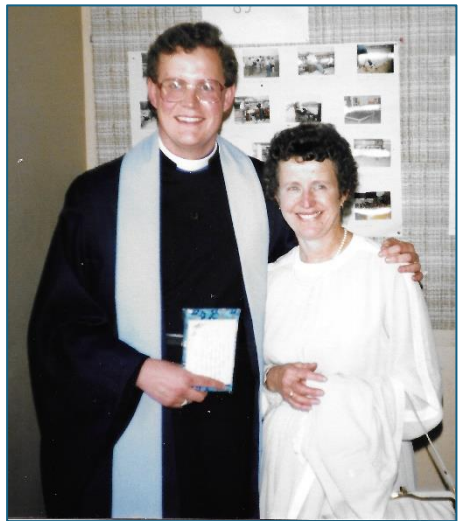
June sees the anniversary of my ordination. A moment for reflection. Anniversaries invite not only personal nostalgia, but shared reflection on what ministry – and church – has been, and what it is still called to be.

On 21 June 1986 – 40 years ago this month – I was ordained (little more than a toddler!) in the United Reformed Church's Yorkshire Synod at a service presided over by the Revd Alasdair Walker, in the rather lovely Pennine town of Holmfirth, better known to those over a certain age as the home of Compo, Norman Clegg, 'Foggy' Dewhurst and (of course) Norah Battie.

It was a church located halfway up a hill, where the platform and pulpit were faced, at the back of the church, by picture windows looking out across the beautiful Holme Valley, with cottages, farms, fields, dry-stone walls, and sheep all visible. Idyllic! But also quite a distraction for the preacher who was always preaching with a view!



Looking at this photo of me aged (I think) 5, dressed for a fancy-dress competition at my church, you might think that my Ordination was pre-ordained (so to speak)!



This photo shows me and my mother on the day of my Ordination. I think you'll agree that I haven't changed at all, save for the 'should have gone to Specsavers' glasses!

Forty years feels like a lifetime ago. It is actually over 61% of my lifetime ago.

Add to the 40 years since that day in Holmfirth the 4 years I spent training at Westminster College, and we're talking 44 years of 'ministry' and formation for ministry. That's well over two-thirds of my life.

I was twenty-one when I went to Westminster College. Ridiculous really: talk about naïve. I had barely any life experience and probably wouldn't have been accepted today!

To be honest, back in 1981 I didn't imagine I'd be accepted. At every step of the candidating process I fully expected to be told to get back to the bank in which I was working and stop wasting their time. But that didn't happen so, much to my surprise, I ended up packing my bags and moving to Cambridge in September 1982 to begin a very steep learning curve.

It has been a varied 40 years, during which I've served churches in two West Yorkshire mill towns, North London, Buckinghamshire, West London and Cardiff, as well as nine years as a Synod Moderator in central southern England, more than 3½ years at Church House and two spells as Synod Clerk (firstly in Thames North Synod; later in Wales). No one could say that it's been boring! And I've met and worked with some truly great people along the way.

At the time of my Ordination, the United Reformed Church had something like 150,000 members; today it's only about a quarter of that. Meaning that I and my contemporaries have presided over catastrophic decline, which is not something to celebrate.

With that decline, the age profile of the Church has increased as the number of people gathering on a Sunday morning with hair of a colour akin to mine attests.

And the number of churches has declined also, from nearly 2,100 in 1986 to under 1,200 today, meaning that 900 or so churches have closed, including that church in Holmfirth. To put it another way, over 40% of the churches that were around in 1986 are no more. A statistic accelerated by the pandemic which caused so many congregations to decline to the point where their closure was brought forward by many years.

Alongside all that, some of the principles of which we have been justifiably proud – such as the sharing of money and people according to need; not ability to pay – are now creaking as consumerist principles creep in, and some in our churches are looking for value for money.

But there's much of which we can be proud over those decades:

- The place that women have occupied: as elders, church secretaries, ministers, synod moderators, moderators of General Assembly, and in so many other key roles
- The ways in which young people and children have often been at the heart of our decision-making, frequently better informed on the issues than their elders
- The ways in which so many in our churches have tried to be open to and affirming of people who are in any way 'different' or 'other'
- The commitment to ecumenical co-operation and initiatives which has always been part of the URC's DNA, and also to inter-faith dialogue.
- The prophetic ways in which the URC has spoken truth to power (so often in unison with our ecumenical partners), and galvanised us on issues such as global debt, poverty at home and overseas, global justice, racial justice, legacies of slavery, the climate crisis, inclusiveness, peace and conflict, asylum and migration issues, the economy, and so much more besides
- The programmes that have brought new life into communities,

not least the Church-Related Community Work programme which has offered hope and love into communities that might otherwise feel hopeless and unloved. Also, the Special Category Minister programme and the initiatives that has made possible. And most recently the emphasis upon pioneering ministries which – we pray – will enable mission dreams to be realised

Forty years on, I find myself less certain of easy answers, but more confident in the faithfulness of God, and more grateful for the privilege of walking this road alongside others.

Adrian Bulley

‘Let us build a house where love can dwell’

The hymn ‘Let us build a house where love can dwell’ was written by American Lutheran composer Marty Haugen and published in 1997. A popular hymn at the United Church, it has now started to be sung in other denominations. The hymn has become increasingly relevant in recent times, and the Methodist Church has published the following article on their website.

‘With tensions rising in communities across the UK, last September the Methodist Church released a new recording of the hymn ‘Let us build a house where love can dwell’, known to many as ‘All are Welcome’. More than 140 Methodist churches contributed their voices to the project.

The hymn was intended as a response to the protests in London, the disorder outside the accommodation of those seeking asylum and the ‘Raise the Colours’ campaign that have all led to a growing sense of intimidation. Crosses and other Christian symbols have been seen at some demonstrations where they have been used to communicate hate rather than love.

Ben Lawrence, Digital Content Producer at the Methodist Church, who wrote the arrangement and produced the recording, commented, 'Many people have been made to feel, not just unwelcome, but frightened and intimidated by what is happening. We want this to be a song of reassurance, friendship and understanding.'

'When we posted the invitation for churches to record their contribution we were staggered by the response,' continued Ben. 'Within 48 hours over 100 church groups had sent in their recordings, illustrating the strength of feeling held by many when faced with intimidation in their communities.'

'The Methodist Church proclaims itself to be inclusive and justice-seeking,' said the Revd Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Methodist Conference. 'We believe that the Church has been called into being to proclaim that God's love is indiscriminate and unbounded, and which seeks to become a sign of God's reign from which no one is excluded and in which no one is devalued.'

See bit.ly/49sjln1

Dorothy Lusmore

Snippets of Cruise Diary

Wednesday. Couldn't wait to set off on a Catamaran Cruise. This was promoted as an irresistible search of Tenerife's amazing marine life. 'As your crew navigates through the sparkling waters of the Atlantic, sit back and relax as you sunbathe on the netting whilst sipping on a refreshing drink and tucking into a delicious sandwich. Common sightings include short-finned pilot whales, bottlenose dolphins and occasionally fin whales.' I had been whale watching in New Zealand but not had a glimpse so hoped for the best.

After an hour in the coach, we reached Puerto Colon and climbed aboard. The weather was glorious and we were assured many

whales had been seen that morning, so we were highly expectant. The first let down came with the meagre sandwich which was a slice of dryish ham between unbuttered bread. A can of coke was refreshing but I think we all expected something more than this basic food as the cruise was not cheap. I really would have taken crisps and chocolate as we had a three-hour sail and one sandwich seemed inadequate. In all that time the whales kept their distance, but we did have small dolphins playing around the boat which were cute.

It was a bit chilly when the sun was clouded over so I was glad I had a windproof jacket. When we moored at a cove so people could swim, I decided not to and applauded the few who dived in. They did come out pretty blue and shivering but were proud of themselves.

There was no time to have a cuppa at Puerto Colon's tempting cafe before the coach back. We had had no lunch so back on board I headed for the afternoon tea and, I have to admit, gulped down an egg roll, crisps, fruit pancake and a sugar-free vanilla cake! As I was down for the six pm dinner it was a bit crazy to eat but after such a long time at sea with meagre rations, I was starving!

Thursday. This was to prove the place I would remember from this cruise. I had not had high expectations of Lanzarote. Don't know why but Jameos del Agua is truly unique. There you will find a series of lava caves and volcanic tunnels transformed by Cesar Manrique. A saltwater lagoon, two cascading waterfalls and an underground concert hall create a habitat for 38 endemic species found nowhere else on Earth. The first level is a dark lagoon with reflective roof which is awesome. Steep inclines and steps take you higher where your breath is taken away by the beauty of a clear turquoise blue lagoon, and above that is the concert hall. All the levels have seating so you can rest and take it all in, and finally the exit leads you to the gift shop and cafeteria. No words can show how amazing this place is, so I hope these photos bring some of this magical tour alive for you.

Steep inclines with steps take you through the dark entrance and up to the blue lagoon and bright cafeteria space at the exit. Words cannot describe the magic atmosphere of this upward climb.

Rosemary MacMullen



Winchester and the Temperance Movement

John Lander's next book exploring the history of social issues in Hampshire will be published by Heritage Hunter in early June. *'This diabolical sin of drunkenness' - Hampshire and the Temperance Movement*, charts the growth, and then the decline, of both strands of temperance – total abstinence from alcohol, and acceptance of moderate drinking – from the time in late 1831 when the first Hampshire society was established at Portsmouth.

Local disputes quickly emerged between those with opposing views, and with brewers and holders of public house licences who wanted no restriction on alcohol production and sale. Their objections were not surprising bearing in mind that at the end of the 19th century there were no less than seven breweries in Winchester alone. Despite disagreements, the movement that increasingly favoured teetotalism gained tens of thousands of adherents from the mid-1830s, until membership began to fall from around the time of the First World War.

One prominent Hampshire leader of teetotalism was Revd William Thorn. Appointed minister of the Congregational Church,



Parchment Street, Winchester, in 1826, he supervised the move to new, larger premises in Jewry Street, completed in 1853; the chapel we still worship in today. Thorn was passionately concerned with children's education, and this prompted him to lead one of the city's largest Band of Hope groups, regularly taking over 500 children on summer outings to Portchester Castle

and elsewhere.

The temperance movement spread to all parts of Hampshire, not least to Winchester. Early supporters, though, occasionally met with violent opposition and harassment. As early as 1836, Winchester magistrates heard a complaint from the Secretary of a teetotal society about their meetings being disrupted, and in 1842

total abstainers processing 'from the High Street to Chesilhill [sic]Street' were 'assailed by blackguards and a banner was destroyed'. That case led to eight men being sent to Winchester prison.

Bishops of Winchester, notably Revd Charles Sumner, who served from 1827 to 1869, were usually supportive of total abstinence. However, when, in 1869, the Archdeacon of Coventry addressed a congregation of 1,500 for an hour on a Sunday afternoon in Winchester Cathedral about the need for more clergy support, a newspaper report commented that 'a great number left without hearing a word'. Later, members of the Winchester diocesan branch of the Church of England Temperance Society were constantly beset by internal disagreement between total abstainers and non-abstainers.

Indications of confidence among Winchester's teetotal supporters were to be found in the number of 'coffee taverns', temperance hotels, and temperance halls that sprung up. By 1842, Burton's Temperance Coffee Shop was operating in Parchment Street, and by 1848 it had added hotel accommodation. From 1884, the Anchor Coffee Tavern, converted from the Compass Inn, 70 Parchment Street, was open for business from 5.30 am to 11 pm, and was still operating in 1901. Other coffee taverns in Winchester were the Hand-in-Hand Coffee Tavern, 55 Canon Street, that was capable of seating 40 people, but probably open for just two years to 1886, and the Railway Coffee Tavern, Station Hill, that opened in 1906 with 'good accommodation for cyclists and visitors', which existed until it was sold by auction in 1913. Another, active in 1892, was the St John's Coffee Tavern, next door to which was a Temperance Hall. At the end of the 19th century and into the first decade of the 20th there



were at least two temperance hotels: the Oriel Temperance Hotel in City Road, and Flower's City Temperance Hotel, Station Hill.

All the Christian denominations established temperance societies in Winchester, some permitting memberships from total abstainers and 'moderate' drinkers, others insisting on total abstinence. One significant development that originated in Hampshire was the inspiration of Mary Sumner, wife of George Sumner, Rector of Old Alresford and son of Charles Sumner, Winchester's bishop. In 1875, she expressed the firm view that wives ought to discourage their husbands from going to public houses, and talked to children 'urging them to avoid strong drink'. Her concerns led directly to the founding of the Mothers' Union that, by 1892 had 60,000 members, a figure that had grown to 169,000 in 1899.

Teetotal advocates were quick to assert health, financial and social benefits of teetotalism, frequently providing statistics relating to greater life expectancy to justify total abstinence. In 1902, their claims were supported by a Hampshire licensing magistrate who could not understand why 'a sleepy cathedral city like Winchester' needed more than ten times as many public houses than Bournemouth. No logical explanation could be found.

From the period when First World War time restrictions required temperance meetings to be held in day light hours, and leaders of church based and other bodies had to devote their commitment to more pressing duties, the perceived importance of temperance steadily declined. Another factor was epitomised at a Winchester meeting of the Licensed Victuallers' Defence League in 1927 when a speaker considered 'the language of teetotal extremists was most insulting to decent and respectable citizens'. These factors plus aggressive marketing of alcohol products, additional capital expenditure to make public houses more attractive, and a general post-Second World War increasing tendency for citizens to decide for themselves how they spent their non-working time and income, all led to the disbandment of those organisations devoted to seeking to curb alcohol abuse.

A personal view to conclude. The Office for National Statistics produced a report in 2024 showing that alcohol-related deaths in England had risen by over 30% between 2019 and 2022, to 14.5 per 100,000 population. Just three days later, a World Health Organisation report from a survey of 280,000 children in 44 countries reinforced the concerns. One conclusion was that 'England is "top of the charts" for child alcohol use at the ages of 11 and 13 – which health chiefs warned is a major health threat, damaging brain development and increasing the risk of violence and drug abuse.' Even more recently, in October 2025, the Institute of Public Policy Research recorded that 'Workplace drinking culture is driving sickness absences.'

It is believed that more young people are avoiding alcohol consumption but those that continue to drink alcohol are consuming larger quantities with the associated high risk of adverse consequences to their own lives, and those of others. Is there not a strong case for legislation to ensure greater awareness of the risks of alcohol consumption? The wording of a current Alcohol Anonymous leaflet makes the position abundantly clear: 'Alcoholism is a fatal disease ... and many victims are forced to wage a losing battle.'

John's book – *'This diabolical sin of drunkenness' – Hampshire and the Temperance Movement* – charts the history of Hampshire's attempts to curb alcohol consumption and includes many references to Winchester. More information can be obtained from him. His email address is jandplander@btinternet.com

Note: A 'blackguard':- (a) 'a rude or unscrupulous person' (b) 'a person who uses foul or abusive language'

John Lander

The Parents Circle–Families Forum

We hear so much about the enmity between the Israeli government and Palestinians but not so much about the work being done, particularly by women, to bring about reconciliation in Israel. The Parents Circle is a joint Israeli and Palestinian organisation of over 1,000 bereaved families who have lost a close family member to the decades of conflict in the Middle East. Instead of seeking revenge, they have chosen to be committed to dialogue, reconciliation and peace. The long-term aim is to create a reconciliation process which will form part of any future peace agreement. The organisation is supported by the UK-based Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum, a non-political organisation in the UK that has been moved by the courage of the Parents Circle–Families Forum and its attempt to build bridges between the two communities instead of perpetuating hatred. It is committed to raising funds and also to increasing awareness.

Key activities in Israel include:

Dialogue Meetings: Arranging meetings, both in person and online, where a bereaved Israeli and a Palestinian share their stories together in schools, community centres, and homes.

Education and Outreach: Conducting educational activities aimed at bringing together people who would not otherwise have the opportunity to know each other, designed to bridge gaps between communities.

The Women's Group: A group of over 50 women using activities like cooking, photography, and public demonstrations to share stories of loss and hope.

Narrative Workshops: Fostering empathy by encouraging participants to listen to the other side's personal stories of loss.

Memorial Events: Organising initiatives like the Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day ceremony to promote a shared future.



Peace Activism:
Working towards a future based on reconciliation rather than continued hatred, often in partnership with the UK-based Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum, which raises

funds to support these activities.

The dialogue meetings, stories and public outreach projects have influenced thousands of Palestinians and Israelis every year, believing that the tragic loss of lives will come to an end only through both sides' empathy and respect for each other's pain and dignity.

From **Families Forum website:** bit.ly/4d0nZLj

Dorothy Lusmore

Refugee Week 15–21 June

To mark Refugee Week, Paula Gooder of St Paul's Cathedral will be interviewing The Right Reverend Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford.



Bishop Guli came into our coffee bar recently in 'civvies' and struck up a conversation with volunteers. She was born in Iran and fled to the UK when she was a teenager following the murder of her brother during the Islamic Revolution. In this conversation, Bishop Guli reflects in the interview on her experiences, on the history of Christianity in Iran and the theme of migration in Scripture. She traces the importance of faith in her life and uncovers what it means to have courage and hope in God.

She is a member of the Lords Spiritual in the House of Lords. She previously served as the first Bishop of Loughborough, in the Diocese of Leicester, from 2017 to 2021. Guli arrived in this country as a refugee from Iran, aged 14.

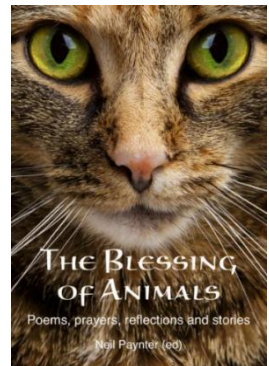
Book to see the online interview with Bishop Guli for free on Monday 15 June, 7 to 7.45 pm at bit.ly/42LjRJB , or catch up on the St Paul's YouTube channel later.

www.youtube.com/stpaulslondon

Unconditional

My spell-checker
doesn't correct words
that are spelled correctly but
might be the wrong word.
I once wrote in a prayer
'My dog loves me unconditionally'.
It should have been God, of course, but
my spell-checker didn't know that.
I was happy with that though.
My dog loving me unconditionally
was as close to God's love
as I needed to be today.
So it looks like my spell-checker
knows more about love
than I give it credit for.
But then, maybe it's my dog
who deserves the credit.

Tom Gordon, from [The Blessing of Animals: Poems, Prayers, Reflections and Stories](#)



Contributed by Pat Fry

Lifelong Learning: Part Two

Developing Our Practical Driving Skills with some Reflections on a Lifetime of Change in the Nature of 'Motoring'

I had the advantage of experiencing my first drive at age 15. No, I wasn't a member of a teenage gang 'hot-wiring' cars for an illegal thrill – quite the opposite. The supervised driving took place in a BSM car with an instructor and was part of an 'off the road' course of instruction with local police involvement by way of theory sessions, with the purpose of introducing us to the police driving system 'Roadcraft'. The course was arranged by the publicly funded school where I was a pupil.

Whilst I did not seek car ownership at age 17, when I did become a car owner shortly after arriving in Hampshire I sought to keep developing my driving skills.

I looked to the main body associated with advanced driving skills, this being The Institute of Advanced Motorists, giving myself a target of passing their advanced driving test which involved a driving assessment of approximately 50 miles over various types of road from residential streets to rural roads and motorways, assessed (using the nomenclature of the time) by a Class 1 police driver.

Whereas in those days, from memory, aspiring institute members were mainly on their own when it came to preparing for the test, nowadays the institute, now known as 'RoadSmart IAM', is much more proactive in helping candidates prepare for the advanced test whilst also being a point of contact and assessment for those who may just want a driving assessment to identify current strengths and any practices requiring improvement:

<https://www.iamroadsmart.com/>

I mentioned two months ago that the process of being mindful of the need to keep updated on driving matters had been precipitated by my acquisition, for the first time, of a car with an automatic

gearbox. It would take a separate article to give full justice to my experiences; but just two observations for inclusion here. On the minus side, I find it to be 'behind the times' when descending a hill. Whereas I would change down before descending a hill, with this automatic (leaving the option of using the 'finger paddles' aside) it assesses the situation via use of the brakes, thus changing down somewhat later than I would have done manually, and thus increasing brake dust pollution, which many would cite as being one of the most toxic particulates in the road environs.

By way of contrast, as a positive observation, when operating with the cruise control in hilly terrain, e.g. on the A34 driving over the North Wessex Downs, the system proactively changes down as much as necessary to hold the car at e.g. 68 mph; I do find that impressive.

All this has left me with a feeling of how cars, buses and lorries have changed in my lifetime. The earliest car I can remember my father driving, a Ford Popular 103E, had just three forward gears, a top speed of about 50 mph, wipers that went slower the faster the car went, due to the engine vacuum being the power source, no heaters and a bonnet held down by rubber toggles.

When, some years later this car was replaced by a 1962 Ford Anglia 105E – the journey towards the cars of today for me had begun. Four forward gears, wipers powered by the car's electrical system, etc.

There are resources in place short of observed drives to get you started. One such is the police driving manual *Roadcraft*. This is available to members of the public, i.e. it is not about police pursuit driving above the speed limits; it is published as a tool for improving driving ability, and that is in all our interests.

I recommend two driving textbooks: The (then) Department of Transport's Manual, used as part of my training in the 1980s, and The Police Foundation's *Roadcraft* 2025 edition, purchased initially for 'pearls of wisdom' on driving vehicles with automatic



transmission; however it will be found to contain 'nuggets of insight' on a wide range of driving issues.

It may or may not be many years since you took your standard driving test and the concept of voluntarily submitting yourself

for 'reassessment' may be the last thing on your mind. Be not afraid for a voluntary assessment is seeking to hone your driving skill, not establish if you have met a minimum criteria to be on the road unsupervised; although it could be argued that it fulfils part of the National standards for driving cars that should be part of our 'lifelong learning', i.e. 'Element 5.2.1: Keep up to date with changes'.

Chris Young

News of the Wider Church



**'The Lord is my refuge and my strength':
Christian poet wins BGT's golden buzzer.**

A spoken word performance about fatherhood, faith and family brought tears, a standing ovation and a golden buzzer on an episode of *Britain's Got Talent*.

Before performing in the last semi-final on 16 May, contestant Sonny Green explained the inspiration behind the piece. He recalled walking his seven-year-old son to school when his son became embarrassed and did not want to give him a cuddle in front of his friends.

What began as a heartfelt message about love and respect took a deeply personal turn when Green opened up about his Christian faith.

He said: 'I hope you find God like I did. For the Lord is my refuge and my strength, and when we meet our maker one day, finally all of this will make sense. But until then, we all have the freedom to choose. I'll never force my views upon you, but I'll do my best to show you what I know...'

His poem went on to share a message about the importance of character, kindness and purpose, encouraging his sons to work hard. 'Be accountable,' he added. 'It's only right that sometimes you're wrong, and that you learn from your mistakes. You know what? It's even better if you can learn from mine. So go on, ask me anything. It's fine. There's very little in life your dad hasn't tried anyway. That's a letter for another day.' Judges praised Green's authenticity and emotional honesty.

The performance culminated in a golden buzzer moment, meaning Green automatically progressed to the final. *From Premier Christian News* bit.ly/4uQs6j0

A free, ecumenical resource from Churches Together in England (CTE) aims to help Christians 'think biblically, prophetically, and pastorally' about the rise of Christian Nationalism. Kingdom Over Nation presents eight accessible Bible studies and theological reflections that explore discernment, justice, hospitality, power, ideology, and faithful Christian witness in today's world.



Contributors from across the ecumenical and denominational spectrum include Chine McDonald, director of the religion and society think tank Theos, the Right Revd Mike Royal, General Secretary of CTE, and the Revd Dr Helen Paynter, a Baptist minister whose most recent book is *Faithful Presence in a Fractured World: A Church Toolkit for Resisting the Far Right*. The resource has been edited by Minister Shermara Hoyte, who leads CTE's work in the areas of Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations.

The authors say the resource is not a knee-jerk reaction but a careful response that has 'grown out of a sustained period of reflection and response across the ecumenical landscape'. They add: 'At a time when the Church is navigating political polarisation, culture wars, and questions around national identity, this resource seeks to help Christians think biblically, prophetically, and pastorally about what it means to place the Kingdom of God above every earthly allegiance.'

The URC's Head of Ecumenical Relations and Evangelism, Lindsey Brown, adds that the resource includes 'many practical suggestions for how we might respond. Please do share these resources widely, and perhaps even initiate a discussion group yourself.'

Kingdom Over Nation can be [downloaded free from the CTE website](#), where other resources responding to Christian Nationalism are also available.



Bukayo Saka has given 'glory to God' after scoring the winning goal to send Arsenal through to the Champions League final.

The midfielder's strike was the difference in a narrow 1-0 semi-final win on Tuesday night, ending 2-1 on aggregate against Atletico Madrid.

It is the first time Arsenal have made the final of Europe's top club competition in 20 years, and only the second time in the club's history.



Tens of thousands gathered in central London on 16 May for the Unite the Kingdom (UTK) march and a separate Pro-Palestine Nakba Day

rally, which prompted the Met Police to deploy thousands of officers and make 43 arrests across the capital.

Christian groups collaborated to set up listening stations during the demonstrations to counter tension at Unite the Kingdom protest and to create spaces for conversation with people on all sides of the protests. At the event, organisers from Better Story, Red Letter Christians and Christians Against the Far Right said they aimed to engage both marchers and those who felt affected by the protests, emphasising their focus on listening rather than confrontation.

Meanwhile, Tommy Sharpe, co-founder of Better Story, said: 'Across the country, we've got far more that unites us than divides us. We set up listening stations today to try and find those areas of common ground that unite us.' Revd Sally Mann said the Christian groups were acting as 'peace envoys', while Revd Rachel Summers said they were present 'to listen' and respond to fear with faith-based dialogue.

Dorothy Lusmore

Worship Matters: Three Things to Consider

1. Last week a local preacher who will be coming to us soon came in to see the church, as she had never been upstairs before. 'Now I understand', she said, 'I suppose everyone must sit at the back. Watching online I thought there was hardly anyone in the congregation.'

I wonder how many people switch off, because it's not inviting to watch an online service from an empty church. Please, unless you have a good reason for sitting near the back, consider moving into the front three rows, leaving space at the back for hesitant visitors and late arrivals.

2. **If you arrive late**, as sometimes inevitably happens with Winchester traffic and parking, don't forget there is a door bell by the single door, and from now on the door steward will normally stay near the front door for most of the service. We are so sorry some people have been unable to get in when, unfortunately, delayed arriving.

3. **Our worship stewards** do a great job, but they need more people to join their team, especially as we are going to have a lot of visiting preachers in the next few months. This is not the same role as a steward in Methodist Church who is also automatically a member of the leadership team, it is just a role for Sunday worship, but an essential role nonetheless. It does mean arriving early and staying to the end to open up and lock up, ensuring the church is set up ready, and welcoming and giving information to visiting preachers as they arrive, and staying alert for any problems. Helen, Howard, Lesley, Tim and Graham would be very happy to explain in more detail. Without a steward, you, the worshippers, would be unable to get in when you arrive!!

Pat Fry, Worship Enabling Group

Comedy Corner



The deadline for July/August *Yours* is **Monday 15 June**. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.

* Anna
Chaplaincy
for older people



Vintage Fun

All welcome!



IT'S SUMMER TIME

Monday 8th June

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
Cakes



Services for June 2026

In-person and live-streamed

7 JUNE

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

14 JUNE

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

21 JUNE

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Rachael Hawkins

28 JUNE

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Revd Tim Searle

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services

