



Yours

September 2026

Magazine of
The United
Church
Winchester



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

Opening Letter

Welcome back after the summer break. I hope you have had an opportunity to relax or enjoy new adventures. The Autumn quarter brings us new challenges and new opportunities as we seek to work and witness without a minister allocated to us. Circuit ministers are, however, offering some support for pastoral issues in situations where this is needed. We are grateful for this.

During the summer the leadership team have been working hard on planning worship for the next few months, and ensuring the circuit have all the information they need as we seek a new minister for September 2027. The property team have been busy; hopefully, by the time you read this, the new more energy efficient lighting will have been installed. A huge thank you to Martin, Christine and their teams.

Here are some highlights to look forward to:

In September both our parent denominations encourage us to engage with 'Season of Creation', both giving thanks for the beauty and plenty of the earth and addressing serious environmental issues. On 20 September Jo Crocker will lead a service for Winchester Green Week, and on 27 September we celebrate Harvest Festival with a Songs of Praise service (followed by church meeting, with a working light lunch).

In October we will engage with the book *So What's the Story*, written by Barbara Glasson and Clive Marsh, who were President and Vice President of Methodist Conference back in 2019. The book invites us to consider how the stories in the Bible, particularly in the Gospels, relate to our lived experience. Clive will be our preacher on 11 October, and Lesley Ritchie and Jane Lawson will develop this theme on 18 October, followed by an opportunity to get to know one another better as we enjoy a social lunch. On the weekend 24/25 October our friends at Wesley Church Weeke celebrate their 70th anniversary and have invited us

to join them; their Sunday morning service will be livestreamed to you here.

I pray that we will find ways to use this time wisely, to grow closer as a church fellowship, discover hidden gifts and talents to be shared, and benefit from new insights from the different preachers who come Sunday by Sunday.

Grace and Peace,

Pat Fry
Worship Lead

Editorial

This month's front cover painting was commissioned by the church from Amy Crocker to go with our tag line: 'Building Community in the Love of Christ'. It will be displayed on the dais again soon.

In this edition Mike Holt tells of a Hillier connection in Italy, Anne Bray and Howard Mellor recommend books to read in the Autumn and Advent and John Lander writes about the Bible and Abstinence and gives his own view on how we should treat alcohol today. You might like to send in your own views on this important issue for a future edition.

We also have reflections, a poem, comedy corner and much more.

Thank you 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

Friends will be sad to hear of the death of Jeanette Mullins on 30 July at Abbotts Barton nursing home. A funeral service will take place at the United Church on Monday 5 October at 1.30 pm. This will be followed by refreshments in the church hall. Church friends are warmly invited by Jeanette's daughter and son, Jan and Steven. We hold Jan and Steven and all of the family in our thoughts and prayers.



Jeanette and her late husband Eric moved to Winchester in the 1970s, becoming members at the Methodist Church here. Then later, they were members of a newly formed United Church, with Eric being very involved in the design of the church building, which we now occupy. Sadly, Eric died before the building was completed.

Jeanette was a faithful, active and involved member at the United Church, joining services online from the care home until her death. Both Jeanette and Eric were very involved in church hospitality. Eric is still remembered as an expert with the barbeque. Jeanette was a hardworking and dedicated member of the catering team with many teas, church lunches and funeral teas under her belt. She was also a volunteer in the Coffee Bar. Jeanette had many talents and was a member too of the flower arranging team and of the choir as well as being a pastoral visitor and a volunteer at the then Methodist Homes Live at Home Scheme. Jeanette is remembered fondly by many of us.

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Joan Charrett on 11 August at Flowerdown nursing home. Our thoughts and prayers are with Joan's daughter, Caroline, and all of her family and friends. Joan and her husband Maurice were long time members of this congregation and were very active contributors to the life of the church. Latterly, since Maurice's death and a move to Weeke, Joan

worshipped at Wesley, Weeke Methodist Church, whilst maintaining links with the United Church.

Joan's funeral service will take place at Chesil House on 9 September at 2.30 pm.

Our thoughts and prayer are with Clive Jacob, whose wife Linda died suddenly and unexpectedly on 6 July.

An update on Adrian Bulley, who has been in hospital for over a month. Thankfully, after numerous tests and biopsies which were negative, medics are now closer to narrowing down the problem and starting targeted treatment under the infectious diseases team. Adrian only wishes for family visitors, but Ann is receiving email messages to pass on. Please continue to hold Adrian, Ann and all of the family in your prayers.

We think of and pray for all those awaiting results of medical tests or recovering from surgery. Carol Jessop is gradually regaining strength after an operation. Please remember Carol and Ralph in prayers.

Rosie and Howard Mellor are really grateful for the prayers, care and concern from the United Church congregation. The surgery went well and Howard is taking things slowly. Thank you again.

Our congratulations to Tim and Sue Clifford who have just celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

We send our congratulations and best wishes for next steps to Ellie Berriman and Tom Mawdsley on receiving excellent GCSE results. Also, to Amelie and Jacob Grigorian who are very happy indeed with their A level results. They will be going to Birmingham University to study Maths and Music (Amelie) and the Royal College of Music, London (Jacob). Jacob will be joined at RCM by Zach (who regularly plays organ for us at Sunday services).

Congratulations too to Luke Grigorian on gaining his degree and on securing employment from September with a London design

company, and to Hal Armstrong who also graduated this summer from York University, and is hoping to return to York to undertake a Masters in the autumn.

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

Worship Questionnaires

If you have not yet replied to the worship questionnaire, it's not too late.

In response to what I have received so far:

Early in September I will be contacting those who have volunteered to take part in our Harvest Songs of Praise.

We are hoping to have a social lunch on Sunday 18 October now we have more volunteers to join in a hospitality group.

As many of you requested, this church will be open as usual on 25 October with the service from Wesley livestreamed here for us to join in.

In a few weeks' time, we hope to set up a discipleship group using the new book published by the Methodist Church.

We still need volunteers to join the welcoming and stewarding teams, and to sign up to serve coffee after services, please ask the current stewards, Helen, Graham and Lesley for more information about stewarding, Jen for information about the coffee rota.

If you missed the questionnaire, please e-mail me (worship@ucw.org.uk) and I will supply it online, but I need your replies no later than 14 September in readiness for the church meeting.

Pat Fry, Worship Lead

A Psalm for Today

Restore us, O Lord!
Shine your love upon us
for we are your people
planted in this community;
joined from two streams of faith,
United in offering hope,
wellbeing and grace
to all who come.

Revive us, O Lord!
By your Holy Spirit,
guard our footsteps,
renew our vision,
empower our witness,
strengthen our resolve,
and guide our future
that we may serve others in Jesus' name.

Restore us, O Lord!
Let your face shine upon us
that we may be a beacon church,
radiating your love,
preaching grace,
standing for justice
and faithfully serving the community
to the glory of your holy name.

(Written after reflecting
on Psalm 80)

G. Howard Mellor

A Prayer for Today

Gracious God, when we stop and take time to think about the world, our place in it, in the vastness of your creative power, we, like the Psalmist, feel like saying, 'What is humankind that you are mindful of it' and yet we have learned, in Christ, that you made your home amongst us and lived, appreciated nature and life and loved it.

And so we thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life – for moments of joy, for growth through disappointment, for courage after failure, for forgiveness after sin and above all for Love, in all its forms – between lovers, within the family, amongst friends, across continents, with the animal kingdom and all the variety of life we experience – as well as our experience of your love, seen most clearly in Jesus.

For the gift of life itself and the challenge to grow through all its stages and for all the glimpses of your life in us and in the world, accept our thanks, through Christ our Saviour.

AMEN.

Revd Howard Sharp from his service on 26 July.

Annual Conferences of Our Two Denominations, 2026

The **Methodist Conference** met in Telford at the end of June and welcomed the new President of the Conference 2026/7. He is Revd Mark Slaney, the Chair of the Scotland District and also of the Shetland District. Also welcomed was the Vice President, Caroline Stead, who is a Local Preacher in the Yorkshire West District, and previously a Maths teacher! Over the conference weekend in local Methodist Churches ordinations were held of 13 Presbyters and 2 Deacons.

Among issues discussed at the Conference:

1. Online celebration of **Holy Communion**: a final decision on this practice will be made next year following responses from Synods; meanwhile current arrangements can continue.
2. The usage and implications of **AI** in training and in other aspects of church life were discussed in detail.
3. It was with reluctance but facing reality that Conference agreed to abandon the target of **Net Zero** by 2030.
4. **Palestine**: Conference asked the President to write to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary urging them to support the rule of law in Palestine as they make decisions and are involved in discussions.
5. Conference expressed support for **further collaboration** between the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church.

The **United Reformed Church General Assembly** met at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire in July. The Assembly Moderator 2026/7 will be Revd Neil Thorogood, who is the minister of two churches in the South West Synod, and was formerly Principal of Westminster College in Cambridge.

Among issues discussed at Assembly:

1. Churches were urged to celebrate the **Feast of Creation**, to recognise the theological impulse of the care of creation.
2. A new amended form of the training schedule for **Safeguarding** was accepted.
3. There was a serious discussion on the size, shape and cost of General Assembly itself.

Further details of both conferences can be found on the two denominational websites: www.methodist.org.uk and urc.org.uk

Holly Wisdom

Early in the Spring
soil prepared, planted with care,
young holly bringing **hope**,

In Mid-Summer drought,
leaves die and fall, branches bare
yet still green, give faint **hope**.

Wise gardener's words
'Dropped leaves to protect itself.
keep watering, in **hope**.'

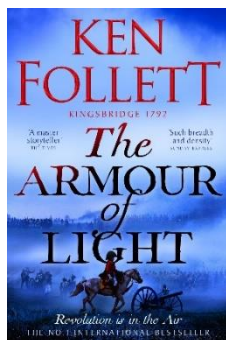
As drought lasts for weeks,
patient watering brings reward,
New buds burst into **life**.

In dark of Winter,
holly in full leaf will glow
symbol of enduring **hope**.



Pat Fry

Book Recommendation – *The Armour of Light*



Ken Follet is renowned for his series of books exploring the history of medieval Britain and describing life through the people and families of the fictional Kingsbridge. *The Armour of Light* is set in 1792 – France is in revolutionary turmoil, industrialisation is transforming Britain and non-conformists are becoming more prominent.

John Wesley died in 1791, and growing Methodism (with Congregationalists and Baptists) is enabling workers to find community and giving a platform to voice their demands. The establishment (church, justices, landlords

and factory owners) conspire to crush the people, to keep them in poverty and ignorance. Riots are commonplace across England, calling for 'Bread and Peace', and Luddites smash new machinery. Prime Minister William Pitt responds with the 'Treason Act' in 1795 to outlaw emerging unions of workers. However, non-conformists circumvent this by starting 'Improvement Groups' to teach adults reading and writing and widen learning, as well as schools for girls and boys. In all this period 1792–1815, the war with France takes a toll on conscripted (and press-ganged men), and at the same time gives massive profits for those in clothing and armaments.

Against this backcloth Follett brings families to life, rich and poor, powerful and victim in what is a ripping yarn! The non-Conformists, especially the Methodists, come out of this very well.

At our present time of unprecedented change and international chaos, where will the vision and moral fibre come from to promote the 'common good' and community building? It may be time for non-Conformists to speak up again!

(Ken Follett, *The Armour of Light*, 2023, Pan Books).

Howard Mellor

Rt Revd Guli Francis-Dehqani

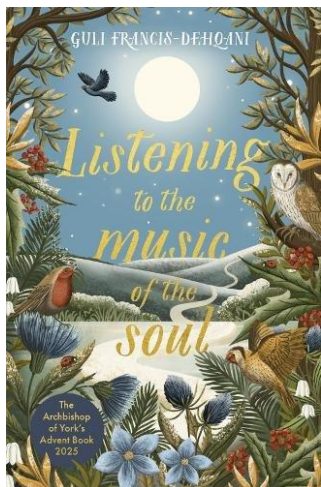
I was interested to read about the Rt Revd Guli Francis-Dehqani, the Bishop of Chelmsford in both June and July/August editions of *Yours*.

In June this year, to mark Refugee Week, Bishop Guli had an interesting conversation with Paula Gooder, Canon chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral. In it she reflects on her own experiences as a refugee, the history of Christianity in Iran and the theme of migration in Scripture. It's available to watch here

bit.ly/4cei3xB

I also remember hearing Bishop Guli on Desert Island discs
bit.ly/4qs7T2g

and last year I read her book *Listening to the Music of the Soul* (The Archbishop of York's Advent Book 2025) which followed on from that programme.



In eight chapters, each one linked to a piece of music and with themes that relate to Advent, Bishop Guli reflects on her life experiences and invites readers to look for personal connections to illuminate their own life story. Her hope is that as we listen – in any and all circumstances – we can begin to find ourselves not only inhabiting our own lives more fully but enabling others to live more fully too.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know more about Bishop Guli, taking time with her easily readable insights, reflecting personally through her questions and following her links to other books and podcasts. I commend this little book to you as Advent reading, or at any time.

Anne Bray

WINCHESTER
**GREEN
WEEK**
IS
COMING...

19th - 27th
September
2026

winchestergreenweek.org.uk

**Winchester
Green Week**

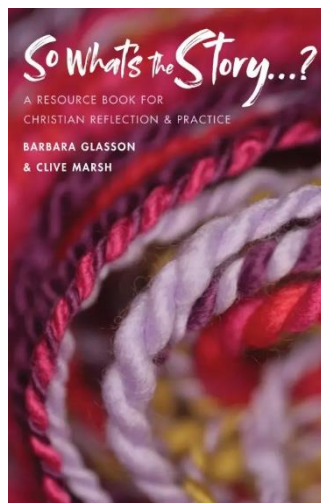
Thinking about Faith ...

This autumn there is an opportunity to join a group encouraging us to reflect on the journey of faith. We have a number of house groups which meet regularly, and you might like to join one. Also this autumn we are offering an additional group for people wanting to explore the meaning of Christian faith.

So What's the Story?

Most of the house groups will be engaging with an intriguing book *So what's the Story* written by two experienced practitioners Barbara Glasson and Clive Marsh. Both are stimulating people, Barbara led the 'Bread Church' in Liverpool and later 'Touchstone' in Bradford working with interfaith leaders. Clive has spent most of his life encouraging people who say 'That's not for me' to engage with the Christian faith.

The book is an interesting and challenging read and will give rise to fascinating discussion about lived faith today. Clive Marsh is in fact leading our service at the United Church on 11 October, so we get to meet the author! For copies of the book and details about house groups, see Pat Fry.



On the Way

On The Way offers a gentle but thoughtful journey through some of the big ideas, practices and questions of Christian faith. It offers a space to pause and reflect – to explore and refresh our journey with God. The material helps us explore core ideas of Christian faith in an open way,

engage with Scripture, art, music and prayer and share insights, questions and stories with others.

There are 12 sessions in the course and Rosie and Howard Mellor are leading the group which will begin in October for six sessions and then six in the spring. Dates to be decided. For copies of the book and details of proposed dates see Rosie or Howard.

Pat Fry and Howard Mellor

For details of House Groups, see March Yours page 12
ucw.org.uk/yours/ (Ed.)

Can a University Become a Refugee?

The Story of Ukraine's Displaced Universities

I thought I knew my university's story. I knew that Mariupol State University had been forced to leave occupied Mariupol and find a new home in Kyiv. I knew it had resumed teaching, welcomed new students, and expanded its international partnerships.

But only after attending an international conference in Hull did I realise that I had been looking at the wrong story.

The real story is not Mariupol State University. The real story is that Ukraine has created something the world has rarely seen before:

Until recently, I had never really thought about what the two words 'Displaced Universities' meant. A university is much more than lecture halls, laboratories and libraries. It is a living academic community. It is students, lecturers, researchers, traditions, ideas and values. When a university is forced to leave its city, it cannot simply pack its buildings into boxes and move elsewhere.

Yet this is exactly what dozens of Ukrainian universities have had to do. Since Russia's aggression began in 2014 – and especially after the full-scale invasion in 2022 – Ukraine has witnessed a remarkable phenomenon. More than thirty universities have been displaced from their home cities. They have rebuilt themselves in new locations, resumed teaching, continued research and created new international partnerships, all while preserving their academic identity.

Mariupol State University is one of the most inspiring examples. After Mariupol was occupied, the university established its new base in Kyiv. But relocation was only the beginning. It rebuilt its educational environment, continued teaching thousands of students, strengthened its international activities and became an active participant in European academic life.

Its partnership with the University of Hull is one example of what a displaced university can achieve. What began as support has grown into genuine academic co-operation – joint conferences, research projects, staff exchanges and new opportunities for students and scholars. It was this partnership that brought me to Hull.



I was invited by my former colleague, Associate Professor **Natalia Marakhovska**, one of the conference organisers. Years ago, we worked together at Mariupol State University. Meeting again in Britain, through the same university that had once been rooted in Mariupol, was both unexpected and deeply symbolic.

As I listened to scholars from Ukraine and the United Kingdom discussing education, displacement, communities and the future, I realised that I was witnessing much more than an academic conference.

I was witnessing a university that had refused to disappear. That is why I believe Ukraine's displaced universities deserve far greater international attention.

They are not only preserving education. They are preserving academic freedom, scientific research, international co-operation and the intellectual foundations on which Ukraine will one day rebuild. Buildings can be occupied. A university does not have to be.



Helen Popova

A Change of Mind

Are there times when views you have developed and nurtured over many years suddenly need to be rethought? That happened to me a few weeks ago. Howard and Rosie Mellor came into possession of a booklet, *Total Abstiners and the Bible*, and thought I may be interested to have it. It was written in about 1960 by Revd Henry T. Wigley who was ordained into the Primitive Methodist ministry in 1917 and continued to serve Methodism with distinction until his death in 1970.

For the past 25 years or so, I've written many books and papers on various aspects of temperance and teetotalism, mostly connected with Cornwall or the relationships that church denominations had with alcohol issues. I have quoted Bible verses that appeared to justify total abstinence or, equally, others that suggested moderate alcohol consumption was acceptable. What crystallised my opinion 20 years or so ago was when, as a non-executive director of the Royal Cornwall NHS Hospitals Trust, I occasionally visited the A&E Department at Truro on a Saturday night and through to Sunday morning. I saw at first hand the state of many patients, mostly young people, who had been brought to the hospital in ambulances. A good proportion of them had drunk too much alcohol and had little control over their behaviour towards those

who were to treat them. The abuse some gave ambulance and hospital staff was often appalling, and when one nurse told me with obvious and understandable irritation, 'they will probably be back again next weekend', it confirmed to my satisfaction that total abstinence from alcohol consumption was the only answer.

Henry Wigley was, unashamedly, a total abstainer, and ends his booklet with these words: 'we abstainers believe that when for the sake of Christ and the Kingdom of God ... we abstain from all intoxicating liquors as beverages, we are in a deep spiritual sense truly following Christ our Lord.' However, in the booklet's earlier chapters, Wigley provides compelling evidence that advocates of teetotalism should not do so based on the writings of the Old Testament and the Gospels of the New. Taking the Old Testament first, there are repeated warnings about excess consumption of wine, the only alcoholic drink at the time, but no insistence on total abstinence. Wigley finishes the chapter with a comment about Old Testament priests: 'priests were allowed to drink this intoxicating wine when off-duty ... In short there is no prohibition of the moderate use of fermented liquors in the Old Testament.' Commenting on the four Gospels, Wigley's message is essentially the same; wine was fermented 'as modern methods of preservation were unknown' and, as most people were of modest means, water had to be added, resulting in the alcoholic content being very low. Again, consumption was not prohibited altogether.

Wigley draws a different conclusion, though, from his understanding of the Epistles, where there are more references to drunkenness. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 6, 'he puts drunkenness in the list of those evils which will exclude people from the kingdom of God,' and chapter 14 of his letter to the Romans 'is the only place in Scripture where a case for total abstinence from intoxicating liquor is directly presented'.



The key to Wigley's advocacy of total abstinence is his insistence that 'there is really a grave Drink problem today', much more so than in the days when the Bible was written. In the same way, he claims, that while 'the Bible nowhere condemns slavery, it definitely allows it'. Christians should apply the 'spirit and principles it (New Testament) reveals to the concrete problems of daily life'. Excessive drinking of alcohol is one among several.

Others, you might think, include the role of women – both in the home environment and their roles in church.

For 200 years at least, theologians and others have argued, sometimes vehemently, whether there is, or not, biblical justification for promoting total abstinence from alcohol consumption, although it's no longer a subject that generates much discussion. So, how has my mind changed? I'm now far less interested in whether biblical teaching supports total abstinence, or not. Instead, when I do my best to interpret and apply New Testament teaching about the life of Jesus to present day issues, I'm convinced that damage caused by even low levels of alcohol consumption to health, family finances and general wellbeing, particularly for our young people, should be avoided.

Encouragingly, it is now believed that more students are making conscious decisions to refrain from alcohol, but the sad fact is that those who do consume intoxicating liquor are drinking greater quantities, resulting in short as well as long term adverse consequences.

I would be very happy to lend Henry Wigley's booklet to anybody who wants to read it.

John Lander

Boston Steinway Piano

As many of you will probably know, our church has purchased a Boston Steinway grand piano. This is a quality small concert grand piano with the makers having a fine reputation.

The church agreed to cover the cost of £19,000 for this piano, with the understanding that half the cost (£10,000) be paid for by our own fund-raising efforts. I'm pleased to report that we have now achieved our funding target of £10,000.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all at our church, and beyond, who supported the various concerts and events to raise the money for this piano. In addition, thanks should also go to our fund-raising team who supported me in this endeavour. It has been very much a team effort. I'm also grateful to those who took part in the concerts and events, many performing for a reduced fee, or sometimes no fee at all. The feedback from these artists has been encouraging.

Although we have achieved our target, the concerts and events will go on, and monies raised from them will go to promoting musical and other events at our church, and this in turn will aid the profile of the church to a wider, and perhaps non-church going audience and will hopefully bring more people into our church. We already have several people who come and play our piano, sometimes to practice for exams, and sometimes for pure pleasure. I hope this will continue. The piano is after all the 'people's piano'. We are trying to encourage all ages to come and have a go for the pure pleasure (or otherwise!) of it.

So thanks to all of you again. For your information, we currently have three concerts lined up. They are: a concert by the Hampshire Constabulary Band on Saturday 26 September at 7.30 pm; a handbell concert by Bishop's Bells on Saturday 17 October at 3 pm; a piano recital by the internationally renowned pianist Stephen Hough at 7.30 pm on Thursday 20 May 2027. More will follow!

Tony Wood

BAND OF THE
HAMPSHIRE &
ISLE OF WIGHT
CONSTABULARY



BAND OF THE
HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT
CONSTABULARY

LIVE IN CONCERT

*Featuring traditional marches,
classical overtures, solos,
music from the stage and screen,
and much more!*



Saturday 26th September 2026 7:30PM
The United Church, Jewry Street, Winchester
SO23 8RZ

Tickets: £15 per person, £10 Concessions (Adults / Children)
from ucw.org.uk/concerts



Calling all Flower Lovers

There are 2 teams within the flower ministry in the United Church. The first is a small band of members who help, on a rota, to provide flowers for the Sanctuary on Sundays. It doesn't have to be an elaborate creation. A vase of flowers is most welcome and much more ecologically acceptable for the environment. We could certainly do with some more helpers on this rota please.



The second is the flower dismantling team who then take the flowers to members of the church who are unwell or in need of a pastoral visit. This ministry is so much appreciated and continues week by week – usually on a Monday morning. At present we have 5 people on this rota, but it would be much easier if we could call on 1 or 2 extra so that we do not have as many turns in a quarter and to cover for people who are unable to carry out the commitment for any

unforeseen reason.

The third aspect of the Flower Ministry is the Flower Fund. A big thankyou to those Members who have donated to this fund for a special occasion, an anniversary or in memory of a relative over the past year and to those who donate to the fund on a regular basis.

Donations to the United Church Flower Fund can be made regularly per Standing Order or by Single Donations by cheque or Bank Transfer to the same account to which offertory payments are made.

Please contact me if there is a way, however small, that you can assist these faithful teams.

Lesley Worrall lesleyworrall981@gmail.com

Link to Hope Shoe Box Appeal

Once again, we are supporting this worthwhile project of sending shoe boxes to Eastern European countries, including the Ukraine.

Donation of goods and money are welcomed as well as filled shoe boxes.



Leaflets are now available in the church. Please can all filled shoe boxes be in by the **end of October**.

Thanks to all those who have been busy making various articles throughout the year.

A team of about 6 or 7 people will be needed for sorting and filling boxes during October and for getting the boxes ready for dispatch in November.

If you have any queries, please contact either Yvonne North or Lesley Worrall.

Thanks, in anticipation, Lesley and Yvonne.



Revd John Cohen

On 1 September 1991 I stood in the chapel belonging to the Catholic Church where we had been welcomed while the rebuilding of our church was happening. I loved the small interior which shone with sunlight and felt intimate. There the Revd John Cohen received me into membership of the United Church.

It was the culmination of a steady pastoral course of visits to my home. Devastated by divorce I did not ask for help and when this quiet, seemingly reserved church man appeared at my door I was reluctant to engage. Several people had quoted biblical texts which held no interest for me. All Revd John did was sit, place his hand on mine and say, 'I feel your pain'. That brought my emotions up beyond my determination to be stoic and it was not long before I opened up to him. Gradually we began to share coffee and a more relaxed relationship. He found me painting in splattered overalls and shower cap and laughed delightedly. Then he made coffee while I cleaned myself up and we got down to serious talk. One New Year he rang at 11.30 pm and insisted Gretel and he would like me to join them to see in the New Year. I demurred of course but he drove to pick me up and we sang songs round his piano. He realised this would be a difficult time for someone suddenly single, which showed a degree of care and concern which I had not felt for a very long time.

I was grateful to be able to watch his funeral service online and hear how lovingly his son spoke of him. Another spoke of the gracefulness, warmth and tenderness Revd John Cohen embodied. That summed up the ministry he gave to me and I will always value those memories.

Rosemary MacMullen

Coffee Bar Thank You

Our coffee bar volunteers received this lovely card from Osborne School pupils and their helpers. Osborne is a community special school in Winchester. This year they have been regular visitors to our church coffee bar on Wednesdays. It's always a joy to see them and we're pleased that they appreciate our warm welcome and our homemade cakes!

Pauline Brooks



To all the lovely staff at the
church cafe,

Thank you for always being
so welcoming on our Wednesday
visits to the cafe! Thank you for
making really
good cake.
From Osborne School

An Italian Lake with Hillier Connections

In June 2026 Hilary and I spent a very enjoyable and relaxing holiday in the town of Stresa on the shores of Lake Maggiore in Northern Italy. Majestic views and the snowcapped Alps in the distance have drawn people to the Italian Lakes since ancient Roman times. Little did we know that we would find a connection with Sir Harold Hillier; but more of that after we tell you more about this fascinating area.

Lake Maggiore is the longest lake on the south side of the Alps. It extends for about 40 miles between Locarno in Switzerland and Arona in Italy. It widens at the southern end into what is called the Borromean Gulf, where the cluster of Borromean islands are located.



The Borromean islands are part of the estate of the House of Borromeo, a prominent Italian aristocratic family tracing its roots to 14th-century bankers in Milan.

Ancestors like Saint Charles Borromeo (1538–1584) led Counter-Reformation efforts as the Archbishop of Milan. Such was his influence that a colossal 75-foot statue of him was erected in 1697 overlooking the lake. It remained the largest statue of its type in the World until overtaken by the Statue of Liberty in 1886.



Isola Bella is the most striking of the islands, which has been transformed into an architectural masterpiece resembling a ship, with tiered gardens representing the stern and a Baroque palace, the prow. Designed as a multi-tiered pyramid, the cascading gardens feature an explosion of statues and obelisks and the 'Garden of

Love', complete with a lily pond, box hedges, and free-roaming white peacocks.

A short ferry trip away is Isola Madre, the largest island, whose landscaped botanical gardens are a joy to explore. Peacocks and parrots roam freely in the gardens, which are famous for their many azaleas, camellias and wisteria.

Hilary had her sketchbook to record the view across the gardens, while I was wandering around with my camera taking photos, as per usual. I noticed a terrace planted with Proteas, which I had only ever seen in South Africa, where they are native. I started to read a noticeboard about these plants when the name 'Sir Harold Hillier' jumped out at me. This is what it had to say:

'In around 1985 thanks to the famous English nurseryman and plant collector Sir Harold Hillier, some young protea plants and Banksia serrata, another proteacea, this time Australian, arrived on Isola Madre. First flowering occurred in 1988.'



'Again in those years, from a trip to Chile Sir Harold brought an envelope of seeds of another proteacea, *Embothrium coccineum lanceolatum*, called "solforito" (little match in Spanish) in honour of the match-shape of its inflorescences. Wagering on the

successful acclimatisation of this plant seemed unthinkable, but the special climate of Isola Madre also made this inclusion possible. The "solforito" tree became so large (6–8 meters) that groups of people would stop during its flowering to admire the fiery branches of this plant, which was even visible from the coast during flowering.'

There is much more to explore than I have space to describe, but I recommend Lake Maggiore to all those who love scenery, history, architecture and gardens.

Mike Holt

Summer Picnic



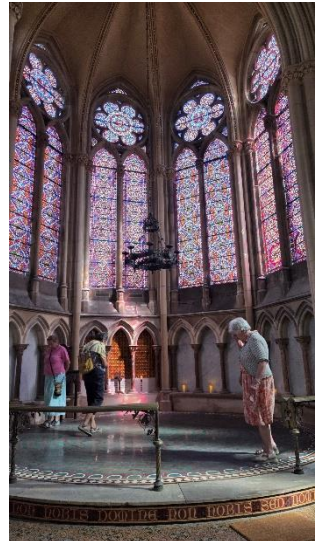
Alison and Clive Wood welcomed a group of us to their beautiful garden in Itchen Stoke on 23 September on behalf of the St Cross House Group. We enjoyed chatting and relaxing in the shade before Alison led some of us on an enchanting walk past a mill and along the banks of the Itchen.



Tim Clifford guided small groups round St Mary's church where we were able to walk a labyrinth which is an exact copy of the one in Chartres Cathedral.

Thank you Alison, Clive and Tim for organising this opportunity to spend time in each other's company, enjoy nature and a spiritual moment in the church.

Bob Lord



News of the Wider Church



The United Reformed Church (URC) has called for reflection following the death of Professor Jason Arday, who was found unresponsive at an address in London on 14 August. Professor Arday, 41, became the University of Cambridge's youngest Black professor in 2023, when he was appointed Professor of Sociology of Education. He resigned from the post following intense public scrutiny and allegations of plagiarism. The URC said it was 'deeply saddened' by his death and that congregations across the church would be holding his family and friends in their prayers.

Revd Neil Thorogood, Moderator of the URC General Assembly, said Arday's death had raised difficult questions about the pressures placed on individuals within academia. He added that while universities must be places where work is examined critically, and claims are tested, there was a need to consider whether the scrutiny faced by Arday had remained fair and proportionate.

He said: 'Critical thinking and seeking to get to the truth are fundamentals to our God-given desire to discover and learn. Many will need to understand how fair such scrutiny of Jason Arday's work was. When does reasonable questioning become something brutal and cruel?

'I am deeply aware of just how few UK academics come from Black and Global Majority communities; how hard it is to celebrate the rich diversity of experience and backgrounds, and to hear every voice at our universities. It seems that too many hopes, forces and demands became focussed upon just one appointment and one person.'

Karen Campbell, the URC's Head of Global & Intercultural Church, said she was 'grieved beyond words' by Professor Arday's death. She said: 'Whether or not Professor Arday made mistakes, could any mistake justify the relentless pursuit he faced in the weeks before his death? And would a white colleague in a similar position ever be subject to the same level of pursuit?'

His academic work focused on race, inequality and education, and he became a prominent voice on diversity and representation in higher education.

Jason Arday speaking at Greenbelt Festival in 2024



A church in Walsall has been beating the heat, with baptism by bucket. St Matthew's welcomed Carl Perry into the family of God with three bucket loads of water – marked 'Father,' 'Son,' and 'Holy Spirit'.

The original plan had been for Carl to be baptised in a pool, however, the church wanted to be 'water conscious' amid national hosepipe shortages.

'Filling a large immersion tank simply didn't feel responsible regarding our water consumption' Revd Trood said. 'By switching to three buckets, we were able to preserve the deep spiritual significance and joy of the baptism while being sensible stewards of our resources.'



The world's tallest statue of Jesus Christ is being constructed in Armenia. The aluminium figure is 33 metres tall, representing one year for every year of Jesus' life. It will eventually be erected on the summit of Mount Hatis, making

it visible to much of the Armenian capital, Yerevan. The statue will sit on top of a 44-metre pedestal, making it just over 100 metres high – taller than Brazil's Christ the Redeemer (38 metres) and New York's Statue of Liberty (93 metres).

Work on the statue began four years ago and is being constructed in stages at a workshop outside Yerevan. It's understood to be 90% complete and it's hoped it will be entirely finished in 2027. The businessman behind the project, Gagik Tsarukyan, told *The Guardian* that the statue would reflect Armenia's status as 'the oldest Christian nation in the world. It only makes sense we should have the biggest Jesus statue in the world.' Armenia was the first sovereign state to adopt Christianity as its official state religion in 301 AD. A tourism complex with a museum inside the statue's pedestal and a dedicated cable car are also set to open next year.



Cast members from the gospel-inspired show *The Chosen* have entered the wilderness, to take on daring challenges with Bear Grylls.

The Chosen in the Wild with Bear Grylls features

zip-lining over canyons, jumping out of helicopters and eating deer tongue with six stars: Jonathan Roumie (Jesus), Paras Patel (Matthew), Elizabeth Tabish (Mary Magdalene), Noah James (Andrew), Luke Dimyan (Judas), and series creator and Dallas Jenkins. The six swap their biblical set for some of America's most

rugged terrain for the Prime Video series, produced by 5&2 Studios which makes *The Chosen*, to be pushed out of their comfort zone and have conversations about their faith. In the show trailer, Grylls describes *The Chosen* as chronicling 'the greatest adventure of all time'. Speaking about the episode with Roumie, Grylls told *USA Today*: 'It had been a life dream to do one with Jesus, and I guess this is about as close as I'm ever going to get.' 'There wasn't an actor from *The Chosen* who at the end of this didn't say, 'That was one of the hardest days of my life,' and I love that ... That's what the show is,' he added.



The roof of St Andrew's, Jarrom Street, a 160-year-old church in Leicester, has been 'severely damaged' by fire. The fire on 28 July began on the ground floor and spread to the roof of the church, causing extensive damage.

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service say they believe it was caused accidentally.

The parish priest, Canon Johannes Arens, told the *Church Times* that he had left the church after a service attended by about 50 people, marking the reception of the body of a 'beloved' churchwarden and altar server during the afternoon.

In a statement this week, St Andrew's thanked the Fire Service and said: 'It was thanks to their bravery that the coffin of our churchwarden, Tony Simons, was rescued. 'The whole community is in shock, but we are discovering our own "Blitz spirit". We will rebuild our beautiful church.'



British Methodists are encouraged to hold the people of Colombia in prayer after a powerful 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck the west of the country on 10 August. The quake struck at 7.34 am local time in Chocó Province, with its epicentre

near San José del Palmar. Shaking was felt for around two minutes and was felt across Colombia and neighbouring countries of Panama, Ecuador and Venezuela.

The government has recorded 1,575 damaged homes, many damaged health schools and significant damage to transport infrastructure, with roads and airports affected across the region. The tower of the Catedral Basílica Metropolitana Nuestra Señora del Rosario came down following the earthquake, with debris scattered across nearby streets. Church communities across Colombia have since rallied to support those affected, while several other churches and religious buildings have also suffered significant damage.



The voices of Christians in Palestine have been heard by the Methodist Conference, meeting in Telford, with the Conference receiving the Kairos II document as part of the Mission Committee presentation. This is an update on the first Kairos document regarding the effect on Palestinian Christians of the occupation of Palestine that was first published in 2009 and called for Christians worldwide to respond with faith, hope and love. Kairos II responds to the events in Gaza after 7 October 2023 and was launched in November 2025 as *A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide*. Developed collaboratively, it renews the call for justice and an urgent, global Christian response.

A Notice of Motion was passed by the Conference, asking for a study resource to be produced based on Kairos II that can be used for churches. It also asked for the President of the Conference to write to the UK Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary and the governing bodies of other jurisdictions in which the Methodist Church of Great Britain has a presence, urging them to uphold international law.



Belgian footballer Jeremy Doku has spoken about how his faith and the Christian unity shown by many players carried him through the World Cup, which for him included injury and scrutiny for leaving to attend the birth of his son. In a candid mini-documentary released recently, the Manchester City attacker spoke of his hope that 'seeds have been planted' by Christian players praying on the pitch together and celebrations pointing to Christ. The 24-year-old shared how footballers from different nations came together before the tournament, wanting to use their platform to show 'there is a king above all kings and that he must be glorified.'

Doku also believes a calf strain and breathing problems, were a moment of 'the Lord using injury to his favour'. It allowed him to travel back to the UK as his wife went into labour with their son, named Praise. The move drew both support and criticism, with one journalist being suspended from her role for saying Doku had abandoned the team because a father is 'completely useless' at a birth. He responded that 'In the kingdom of heaven, it's Jesus first, then family, then football and the rest. My witness outside the pitch was even louder than my witness on the pitch. When Doku returned to America, his injury issues had disappeared, and he was able to play. He shared about how the tournament had been a humbling experience, not meeting the expectations he set himself on the pitch. Asked about a message to his son when he grows up, he said: 'I pray that he will serve the Lord with his whole heart'.

The Bishop of Dudley has told *Premier Christian News* of the 'terrifying' moment he escaped wildfires in Stourbridge, with just two carrier bags of belongings. Local churches are among the groups to have opened their doors for refuge and provision of supplies.



Dorothy Lusmore

Comedy Corner



The deadline for October *Yours* is **Wednesday 10 September**. All contributions welcome. Send to yours@ucw.org.uk.



Services for September 2026

In-person and live-streamed

6 SEPTEMBER

10.30 am **Morning Worship (HC)** Revd Bryan Coates

13 SEPTEMBER

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Graham Hepburn

20 SEPTEMBER GREEN WEEK

9.00 am **Holy Communion** Revd Gary Watt

10.30 am **Morning Worship** Jo Crocker

27 SEPTEMBER HARVEST

10.30 am **Harvest Songs of Praise** Pat Fry

followed by Church Meeting

HC: Holy Communion

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

YouTube: tinyurl.com/ucw-services

