



# FOCUS

April 2023



London Street United Reformed Church

Basingstoke, Hants, RG21 7NU

Tadley (Old Meeting) United Reformed Church

Malthouse Ln, Hants, RG26 3NY

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

This month Beryl Wootton shares her experiences with a charity close to her heart, Compassion UK



Thank you for your welcome into London Street URC. As you may have heard, I have come from a Methodist/URC Local Ecumenical Partnership, in Woodley – near Reading. Each year we had a new Charity Project to support by providing various events, such as a Pancake evening, a May Fair, and maybe a concert (Reading Male Voice Choir was a warm favourite). And all money collected went to the project for that year.



Nethrabia (aged 15)

One project that I got very involved in was for Compassion UK, as I had been sponsoring a child from India for many years. Now, sadly, India has withdrawn from all outside financing, but not until after our lass had grown from 4 years old to a beautiful 16-year-old and her last photo was of her dressed in a new Sari, which she purchased with her birthday money. I wondered whether you would be interested in knowing a bit more about how Compassion works.

Compassion is an international organisation that sponsors children from poverty-stricken backgrounds. The children are then educated, have health checks, receive food daily, and attend a 'centre' where they are taught about Jesus.

Compassion UK gets British people to sponsor a child for £28 per month. We write letters to the child, and receive letters back. At first a teacher will write, but once the child is old enough they write, and their letter is translated into the sponsor's own language.

Some people think this only helps one child and that this is not fair, but nothing could be further from the truth. By helping one child in a family the burden of feeding that child is lifted from the family - so that means more for the others to share. It also means health care for all the family. The child receiving any gifts eagerly shares those gifts, sent by the sponsors, with the rest of the family.

Each Centre is Church Based. **ONLY CHURCH BASED.** (This in turn has meant some churches increasing their congregations from 50 or so at the beginning to 300 after a while as the people see Christ at work in their community.) The Motto of Compassion is 'Christ Centred, Church Based, Child Focused'. Compassion works in 25 Countries, and more than 3,900 Churches.

At the end of our Project, we had raised enough money to sponsor a child for ten years, so Christ Church sponsored first Suellen, and then Miluska, aged 10, from Peru. As I was the one who wrote to Miluska, when the money from the Project had run out, I carried on with her sponsorship. She is now 21 and studying to be a pharmacist. Her sponsorship will continue until graduation.



Miluska (aged 10)



Kiberinka (aged 14)

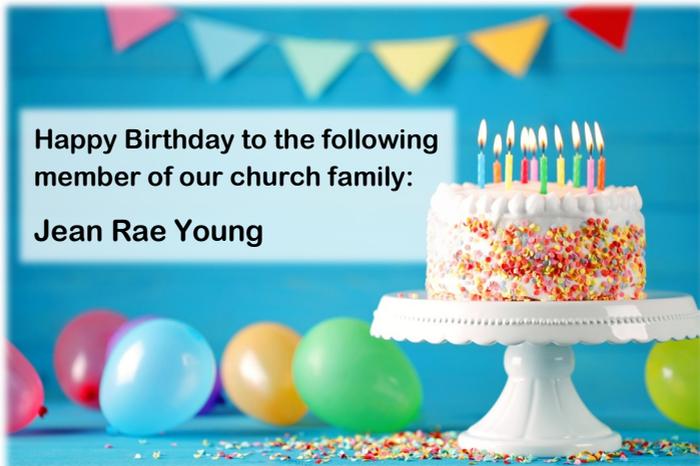
During this time Christopher and I sponsored a child of our own from Rwanda. She is now 16 and studying hard so that she can go to College to learn other languages.

So, by sponsoring children at a young age we are enabling those young people to acquire education to lift them and their families out of poverty and enabling them to become useful citizens of their community, country, and the world. Next month (May) Compassion asks its members to highlight the work they do, and this is the reason I chose Compassion as my 'Thought for the Month'.

To find out more visit: <https://www.compassionuk.org/>

## THE NOTICEBOARD

Information, updates, tips and more.



Happy Birthday to the following member of our church family:

**Jean Rae Young**

### Carrier Bag Appeal

Please give any spare carrier bags you have to Alison Jamieson for use by the Foodbank.



### Steward Rota

Joyce Cook requires volunteers to support the 2nd elder on duty to welcome people as they enter for Sunday Worship. Even if you can only help on the odd occasion, all offers would be most welcome. Offers of help please to Joyce.

## Eco Tip

God's Gift -- Our World

The Environment -- Our Responsibility



Be a BUDDy!

When getting materials for a DIY project, remember the **BUDD** rule: **B**uy only what you need, **U**se up everything you buy, or **D**onate leftovers to a neighbour or community group, and **D**ispose of waste responsibly.

Don't forget, you can recycle the following items at London Street:

Empty Printer Cartridges, Aluminium Containers and Foil, Batteries, Plastic Milk Bottle Tops, and Empty Medicine Blister Packets.

Can you help to make sure that no one in our local community goes hungry?



Items needed:

Desserts e.g. Jelly, Sponge, or Steamed Puddings, Long-life Milk, Powdered Milk, Evaporated Milk, Long-life Fruit Juice, Cooking Oil, Tinned Meat (any except Corned Beef), Vegan/Vegetarian food, Instant Mash, Chocolate (Confectionary), Shampoo, Toilet Paper, Kitchen Roll, Small Packs of Washing Machine Tablets/Pods, Nappies (Size 5), Dog Food.

Please **do not** give Pasta, Rice, Baked Beans, or Biscuits as there are already plentiful supplies of these items.

Donations can be left at London Street URC in the container provided. For up to date lists, or to find other donation points, go to:

<https://basingstoke.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>



## Church Flowers & Easter Decorations

A big thank you to all the generous donors who have filled the flower rota for 2023!

If anyone would like to decorate a window sill for Easter, the church will be open on Saturday 8th April, 10:30am-12pm, for people to do so. Please sign the form on the church noticeboard to indicate your interest.

-The Flower Committee

## FOCUS: Next Issue

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Focus magazine. If you would like to contribute to the May magazine, please contact the editor by **19th of April**.

## Calling All Bakers!

Memory Tree needs you!

Our guests at Memory Tree love having cake on a Wednesday morning.

If you could help by joining the rota to provide cake on a regular basis please let Jenny know.

You would only have to bake once every 6/7 weeks!



## CHURCH SECRETARY'S REPORT

Owen's report as Church Secretary of the events and activities during 2022, celebrating what God has done with us here at London St. and presenting a challenge to prayer and action for the future.

Basingstoke URC registered as a Charity (number 1130801) with the Charity Commission in July 2009. We are known as London Street (Basingstoke) United Reformed Church and we take our structure, governance and management from the Scheme of Union of the URC which is set out in a document known as 'The Manual'. Our objective as a Charity is the advancement of the Christian faith for the benefit of the public in accordance with the Scheme of Union. We achieve that through our activities and facilities offered to the community by our building.

### Church Meeting

The Church Meeting of the local church shall consist of those persons who have been admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the URC and whose names are included in the membership roll of such local church. (Item 2(1) of the Manual)

Church Meeting of London St. met on 6 occasions during 2022, 1 being conducted via Zoom video conferencing. Our quorum for the year was set at 12, down from 13 for 2021.

**February** With no applications for the post of Mission and Hospitality Manager, our first meeting focused on the need to re-think our mission and it was agreed that we should have an Away Day to which all in the congregation would be invited.

I also reported that on behalf of the congregation I had sent a letter to the Synod in response to their consultation on the role of stipendiary ministers of Word and Sacrament. Joy Williams had appropriately set the scene for this consultation when she preached in January.

**March** In March the meeting debated the termination of the licence granted to the Community Food Link (CFL) for the use of The Den. On behalf of the 8th Basingstoke Scouts, Gill Craft explained to the meeting the steps which had been taken to enable the various sections of the Group to continue with meetings without the use of The Den.

Despite best efforts they had concluded that this could not continue long term. I set out the policy on providing hirers with a licence set by the Synod. The meeting agreed to terminate the licence for the CFL effective from 1st September 2022.

Arising from an agreement of Elders' Meeting, I reported that we had appointed on a fixed term contract, Carol Tooke to serve as the Kitchen Supervisor for 8 hours per week. A decision as to whether this appointment would continue hinging on the results of our Away Day which had been scheduled for 25th June, led by Revd Mary Thomas.

Gill Miller gave an interim review of the new arrangements pertaining to pastoral care with a full review to take place in the Autumn.

We finished the meeting in agreeing to a recommendation from Elders' Meeting to admit three persons into membership: Beverley Harris on profession of faith, and Matthew and Rebecca Dumbleton on transfer from Fleet URC.

**May** Our May meeting was primarily an update on arrangements for the Away Day, an update on the Synod deployment consultation and arrangements for our Garden Party.

**July** In July thanks were given to Maggie Morgans for hosting the Garden Party, and to Jenny and Ian McCloy, Alison Jamieson and Gill Miller for organising the day.

I reported that the CFL had found alternative premises in the town centre. Grateful for our support over the last 2½ years, the CFL stated that 'Without your willingness to accommodate us, we would not have been able to grow as an organisation and help support hundreds of families around the town by providing them with fresh food that they otherwise may not be able to afford'.

The Away Day had been a good day and I spoke about the final session of the day which focused on putting together a framework for growth centred around the four aspects of growth that Revd Mary Thomas had spoken about. With this in mind the Elders called an extraordinary meeting in August to consider how the findings from the Away Day should be debated at the September Church Meeting, in the hope that we can all agree on one primary commission.

I brought welcome news to the meeting of the prospect of securing Revd Josh Thomas as Interim Minister for London St. Thanks were expressed to Revds. Clare Downing and Mary Thomas for creating this and supporting this appointment. In preparation for Church Meeting to agree this appointment, I introduced Josh to you on Sunday 7th August and then Church Meeting in September.

We finished the meeting in agreeing to a recommendation from Elders' Meeting to admit two persons into membership; Christopher and Beryl Wootton on transfer from the United Church at Woodley.

**September** Apart from the Annual Church Meeting which was attended by 38 members, the September meeting attracted the largest number of attendees at 33. The meeting focused on two important aspects of our life, and dare I say future, here at London St.; our mission and the appointment of Revd Josh Thomas as our Interim Minister. The meeting discussed our mission based on the findings of the Away Day. Once finalised and agreed our attention then turned to the appointment of Josh. In addressing the meeting, Josh explained that his focus will be helping us to deliver on our suggestions and commitments centred around our mission. When the time came to vote, I was pleased to report that all were in favour.

At that meeting I also reported that Matthew Dumbleton had agreed to take over the role of editor of Focus from Christine Robertson. The meeting expressed thanks to both Christine and Matthew.

**November** In November I reported back on seeking to kick start certain aspects of our agreed mission and a reminder that further volunteers were needed.

## **Church Members**

As of 1st January 2022, our membership stood at 78; 77 by 31st December 2022. We gained 5 by welcoming Beverley, Matthew, Rebecca, Christopher and Beryl into membership but over the course of 2022 we lost 5 dear friends: Kay Cook, Chris Holt, Jean Holton, Roger Pike and Christopher Wootton. In addition, Jo Tremarco moved away from Basingstoke.

## Elders' Meeting

The Elders' Meeting of the local church shall consist of the minister and the elders elected by the Church Meeting. (Item 2(2) of the Manual)

Elders' Meeting of London St. comprised of 10 serving elders in addition to the church officers (and from September the Revd Josh Thomas). They met on 13 occasions during 2021. Attendance: Church Secretary (12); Church Treasurer (9); Leng Ayland (10), Margaret Carrick Smith (11), Joyce Cook (9), May Honeyball (11), Alison Jamieson (13), Jenny McCloy (12), Kengjisu Moavu (8), Tony Patterson (12), Carol Scott (11), and Joy Williams (10). (Numbers in brackets refer to the number of meetings attended from 13.)

**January** It felt as though we had taken a step backward when the main item of discussion at the January meeting was once again the impact of the pandemic on our worship. You may recall that our worship in January reverted back to Zoom.

**February** In February the elders considered the arrangements for the Away Day and the consultation on the future deployment of stipendiary ministry and the role of stipendiary ministers. Terms of Reference were agreed for the sub-committees of Elders' Meeting and following on from a decision made by the Assembly Executive, a framework on the election of elders.

**March** March saw the appointment of a Kitchen Supervisor as an interim measure pending the review of our mission; and the termination of the CFL licence to occupy The Den.

**April** In April arrangements were made to attend the Synod Big Day Out. Finding preachers for Sunday morning worship was a cause for concern, noting that Church House now provided excellent resources that churches could use.

**May** In May Elders' Meeting put together the final arrangements for the Away Day and agreed a new sponsorship agreement with the 8th Basingstoke Scouts. With the daily decrease in the number of COVID infections, arrangements were put in place to revert back to the pre-pandemic arrangements for the offertory and communion. Finally on

behalf of the church, Jenny McCloy registered London St. as a Sight Loss Friendly Church.

**June** Work started on revising a number of policies in June, arrangements for a Garden Party and for spiritual support and personal prayer for the congregation.

**July** Work continued on our policies in July and I notified Elders' Meeting of the prospect of Church Meeting agreeing to the appointment of an Interim Minister.

**August** Normally Elders' Meeting take a break in August. Not so in 2022. A meeting was called to discuss the findings of the Away Day and how to communicate the findings to Church Meeting in September.

**September** The main items on the agenda for September were the timetable for the election of Elders; the approval of our Health and Safety, and Safeguarding policies; the introduction of the Revd Josh Thomas and the arrangements for his appointment; the baptism of our Iranian refugees and putting in place an Alpha course during the Autumn and Winter.

**October** October saw the beginning of making changes to the 'care chain' for prayer and spiritual support, the agreement of a Self Declaration form for new elders; arrangements for worship during Advent; and plans on working with Revd Josh Thomas.

**November** In November I gave a report to Elders' Meeting on the lack of response from the congregation in volunteering to support our mission that had been agreed in the September Church Meeting.

**December** I provided rotas and guidance notes to the Elders at the December meeting as well as a schedule for Elders' and Church Meetings for 2023. As part of our contribution to the Warm Welcome Campaign, working together with OneChurch Basingstoke we would open our premises on a Saturday afternoon to provide a warm space and a meal.

## Trustees

The serving Elders at London St. are appointed as Trustees of the London Street (Basingstoke) United Reformed Church Charity. The role, responsibilities and training of Trustees is dictated by the Charity Commission:

*Charity Trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the administration of a Charity. Trustees have and must accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of a Charity, and ensuring that it is solvent, well run, and meeting the needs to which it has been set up.*

The Trustees here at London St. have paid due regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

The Basis of Union states that the functions of Church Meeting and Elders' Meeting (Trustees) (and the minister (who is also a Trustee)) collectively share the duties and responsibilities outlined for the Elders' Meeting along with accepting the ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of the Charity as laid down by the Charity Commission. The general control and management of the administration of the Charity is further exercised by representative Elders being members of the Church's' four main committees:

- **Finance** – managing all the day to day financial responsibilities and the preparation of the accounts. Thank you to Julia Burrows as Chair and Karen Bell as Treasurer;
- **Property** – managing the maintenance of the Church (the Church building is vested in The United Reformed Church (Wessex) Trust Limited as trustees and held for the benefit of London St. in accordance with the trusts applicable to URC properties). Thank you to Joy Williams, Chris Ayland and Rob Williams in particular;
- **Children and Youth Work** – instituting and overseeing the work with children and young people. Thank you to May Honeyball as our co-ordinator, to Carol Scott and Jenny McCloy as Junior Church leaders, and to Gill Craft as leader of the 8th Basingstoke Scouts;

- **Mission** – ensuring that the Church demonstrates its concern for the local community and the world. Thank you to Alison Jamieson who chairs the World Mission Group.

Elders' Meeting received reports from the committees and in turn these went to Church Meeting.

Not all serving Elders have undergone formal training for their duties specifically as Trustees, other than to acquaint themselves with their responsibilities when required to do so, for example in connection with the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, and health and safety generally. Those nominated to serve as Elders from 2023 are now required to declare their intention to undertake such training as dictated by the General Assembly Executive and it is incumbent on those already serving to do the same. For my report for 2023 and onwards, I will include a statement pertaining to the courses offered to Elders' Meeting and the names of attendees.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service, Safeguarding, Health and Safety, and GDPR**

On-line Disclosure and Barring Service is administered by myself and Joy Williams for those at London St. who will work with children, young persons and vulnerable adults. All serving Elders are required to be DBS checked and in accordance with policy set by the URC, every 5 years.

In relation to safeguarding, all Trustees are required to undertake formal safeguarding training every 3 years and some attended courses during the year via Zoom. There were no safeguarding incidents to report to the Charity Commission in 2022.

The Safeguarding Policy drafted by the URC has been adopted by London St. with modifications implemented to reflect the nature of our work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. It's important that we provide a caring and safe environment, not just on a Sunday morning for our church family, but during the week too with all those we meet at activities such as Memory Tree and of course during pastoral visits. This structured approach helps us to achieve that. Thank you to May Honeyball and Joyce Cook as our safeguarding co-ordinators.

Through Elders' Meeting, as Church Secretary I ensure that the Church complies with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

**An overview of the Church's life and work during the year**

### **Worship, prayer, and study**

At the start of the year worship was conducted via Zoom. We returned to the sanctuary from February. Clearly people remained cautious about returning as numbers initially averaged only 45. With the warmer weather numbers increased with the average attendance by December of 55 to 60.

We are grateful to all our visiting preachers, including Peter Bentall and Joy Williams our two lay preachers. Thank you to Alison Jamieson and Joy Williams for organising and running Take Time meditation and bible study on Zoom. Thank you also to Josh for organising the Alpha Course which we started in October.

### **Children and Young People**

Thank you to Carol Scott and Jenny McCloy who organise worship for Junior Church and to the adults who support them. In addition to worship, it was a joy to hear that they celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the URC and enjoyed a day out at Millers Ark in the summer and again at their Christmas Nativity. Thank you to Gill Craft and Annmarie Smith Browne for leading the 8th Basingstoke Scouts.

Thank you to Anne Davey, Leng and Chris Ayland and Lou Waller for running Little Angels albeit for a short time, a decision being made to close in the Autumn as numbers attending never recovered from closing during the pandemic.

### **Community Work**

We continued to serve the community here in Basingstoke. Until the Autumn we continued to use the Den to bring in food from the supermarkets, sort it and distribute it to those in need. During the week on a Monday, Tuesday and Thursday lunch times, we ran our hot food table utilizing food from the supermarkets and serving it to those in need who came to the table. On a Saturday at lunchtime we open our food table to distribute food from the supermarkets. Thank you to Carol Tooke our Kitchen Supervisor and the volunteers who help in

the kitchen; to Joy Williams who organises the rota of volunteers for the table and those who help; to Alison Jamieson, Karen Bell and Leng Ayland and volunteers for helping on a Saturday.

## **Iranian Refugees**

Perhaps one of the biggest changes we have seen in our worship, our mission and serving the community, has been the number of Iranian refugees we have supported. With the foundations of our mission established by our Away Day, the Lord clearly steered us towards embracing the Iranian lads who came to worship at London St. Since May 2022 we have been blessed in having a number of refugees not just worshipping with us but taking a proactive role in our mission. R and M joined us in May coming to the UK because of the persecution they encountered as Christians in Iran. They arrived in the UK on 3rd May. Transported to the Apollo Hotel they first came to London St. on 8th May. Why London St.? Why not? In speaking to R and M, I asked them that very question given the number of churches in the town centre they could have attended. With the Lord as their guide, they were led to London St. An answer to their prayers. Their faith very much alive during their turbulent journey from Iran. What followed was a group of refugees being led to London St. from the Crowne Plaza. You may recall that during the Summer we had as many as 15 attending worship. With many being moved away from Basingstoke by the Home Office, by the end of 2022 just 6 remained: R, M, A, H, MP, and AF.

We have been blessed with their contribution in serving the community by helping in the kitchen, and in worship by reading the scriptures in Farsi. As a congregation you have donated money, toiletries and clothing for them. I know that they are extremely grateful for the love and support which has been shown to them. Thank you. They are very much part of our church 'family' and we are blessed by their presence. Together with Tony Patterson, Jenny and Ian McCloy, I have spent a lot of time supporting them through their spiritual journey as well as their welfare. Thank you Lord for your presence and comfort to us in our support for your Iranian children. Your Son became a refugee Lord and had no place to call His own, we ask that you look with mercy on all who are fleeing from danger and seek a

safe haven in countries like ours.

## **Pastoral Care**

Our objective as a Charity cannot be achieved if we don't look after one another. Knowing Jesus and making Jesus known is perhaps a key foundation stone of our church family. By His love and care for us we reach out to one another and in the wider community through our words and actions. It may be in a practical way by shopping or giving a lift for a medical appointment or to worship on a Sunday. It may be by listening or encouraging with a comforting word, smile or hug or praying for one another. We are thankful to God for His love shown to so many during the last 12 months. Following a recommendation for change made to the Church Meeting in November 2021, a new pastoral care system with two components: a care chain and a pastoral care team, was introduced in January 2022. Some in the congregation like it; some don't. With a review having been undertaken, it is likely that some changes will be made in 2023. Thank you to the Care Team – Gill Miller, Jenny and Ian McCloy, Alison Jamieson and Rob Williams.

## **Premises**

With our premises re-opening in 2022, the building has to be maintained and lettings managed. Thank you to Joy Williams, Chris Ayland and Rob Williams for the maintenance work undertaken, to Lou Waller for cleaning and to Jason Dudley for helping when required, and to Karen Bell for overseeing the lettings.

## **Thank you**

In concluding my report, on behalf of the congregation, my thanks go to all who contribute to the life of London St. week by week through faithful witness serving God in many ways. In addition to those I have already named, there are the stewards and greeters organised by Joyce Cook and (the late) Jean Holton; those who arrange flowers organised by Liz Lindsay; those who serve refreshments after worship organised by Jenny and Ian McCloy; those who clean the communion glasses organised by Elspeth Anthony; our musicians Peter Dixon, Ian Rees (who retired to the West Country playing at his final service here on 5th February), Alex Macro, Mark Best and Joyce Cook; those who

count the offertory organised by Julia Burrows; John and Margaret Carrick Smith for the Traidcraft stall; Christine Robertson and Matthew Dumbleton as editors of Focus and Ali Grant who distributes it by post; (the late) Jean Holton as our archivist; Alison Jamieson for our shop window and also co-ordinator of the Foodbank; Emily Scott for our Facebook 'window'; our audio rota organised by Alex Macro; Tony Patterson for the PowerPoint on a Sunday morning; Gill Miller and Alison Jamieson for organising our fellowship meals; Margaret Carrick Smith and Liz Lindsay for drafting the minutes of Church Meeting and Tony Patterson for the minutes of Elders' Meeting; Chris Ayland for organising the collection of stamps for the Leprosy Mission; and to John and Elaine Coakes for distributing Reform. Apologies to anyone who I might have missed.

I conclude my report with a prayer:

*Thank you Lord for our church here at London Street, and for those who have worshipped in it over the years and for those who serve it today. May we continue to know your presence here Lord and open our hearts and minds to all that you have given us and may you in return graciously accept all that we have to offer you. Support and guide us all as we take the light of your Spirit thereby illuminating the path to Christ so that others too become your sunbeams. We ask for this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*



## THE RETURN OF SPRING

Alison Jamieson shares a poem by Betty Shipway.

Hold your breath – the new day is dawning,  
The sun dispels the mists of morning,  
Silently, imperceptibly she comes  
The earth again stirs and mantle  
Everywhere with green; the living world  
Again renewed with the miracle of spring.  
For now the forsythia's a golden haze,  
And daffodils a golden blaze.  
Now the cow presents a white-faced calf  
Who lurches insecure on new-born legs.  
And lambs' heads butt with sheer delight,  
And blackthorn bush is garlanded with white.  
Capture the moment, life's for living,  
God has given- we should be praising.  
So thank God for this heaven sent day  
Now the earth is stirring; to yield once more  
The tender shoots of May.

*Betty Shipway, March 1993*

Betty has been a member at London St. URC for many years and now, as her health has deteriorated she has had to move to be cared for in a nursing home.

In a publication some years ago she said "I have always liked writing and started when I was very young. I had a solitary childhood so escaped into a fantasy world," She explained. "My work is influenced by people, places, religion and current affairs and I would describe my style as descriptive".

Betty is now in her 93rd year. Though her poems were written some years ago, they still speak to us today.

## THE MIRACLE OF EASTER

Revd. Josh Thomas explores the Easter story and the emotional journey of the disciples.



Can you imagine, you are with your friend and teacher Jesus, you are seeing this man do incredible things, his teaching is unlike anything you have ever encountered before – radical and life changing, and suddenly, everything seems to just come to an end. Endings are never an easy thing to deal with and this particular ending was so sudden and so tragic. Just a few days earlier, you and this group of friends were on top of the world, the whole city had poured out into the streets to acknowledge Jesus as somebody incredibly special – they shouted hosanna and waved palm branches welcoming him and your little group as kings. Just a couple of days later you are sharing a meal together and Jesus makes a shocking revelation – one of this close-knit group of friends and allies will betray him – who could it be, surely it couldn't be you, right? As soon as the meal is over it seems, there are soldiers there to arrest him and take him away for trial. The hours go by so slowly as you await news of what was going to happen next and then the worst news possible arrives – your friend is to be put to death in the most humiliating way imaginable whilst a serious criminal is released from prison in his place. Can you imagine the mood on that Friday? The streets are suddenly lined with people once again, but this time they aren't cheering for him, they are mocking and shouting abuse. You stand watching, feeling helpless as you see this hero in your eyes carrying a heavy wooden cross through the streets, knowing that shortly he will be hanging on it. Hours once again go by so slowly as you just wait for the inevitable – but you know that the hours for him will be feeling much longer. And then he is gone.

Everything you thought you knew has come to an end – this wasn't how it was supposed to be...

Grief is something that every single one of us will have to deal with at some stage in our lives, but this grief that the disciples must have felt will have also been intertwined with real feelings of anger and hatred at the people responsible for the decisions leading to the death of Jesus on that Friday. I can't imagine any of his friends slept on that Friday or Saturday night.

But then, the impossible. Some of the women in the group went off early on Sunday to go and anoint his body and when they returned, they are claiming crazy things and saying they have encountered the risen Jesus. Luke's account tells us that Peter got up and ran to see what had happened, but the rest of his friends must have thought that grief was causing the women to see what they wanted and not the reality of the situation. But then, sat in a locked room, frightened that the same authorities would come for you in the same way, there he is, standing there, in the flesh.

Can you imagine how these friends of Jesus felt? Everything they knew had come to an end and yet here was their friend, somehow raised from the dead and telling them that the mission was in fact, not over!

This is the miracle of Easter – it changed absolutely everything that anybody knew about the world they lived in, and the amazing thing is, the Holy Spirit – God's presence with us, is still doing the same thing today! We should be living expectantly as Jesus' friends today, that although everything around us might be changing and sometimes this can feel unsettling, God can bless us in those times of change. And, who knows, everything might change for the better!

## COMMUNITY COOKBOOK

Another delicious recipe from Jean Young.

### FISH WITH BLACK OLIVES AND TOMATOES

Serves: 2

286 calories (fat: 14.3g) per serving.



#### INGREDIENTS:

1 x tablespoon olive oil.

1 x small, chopped onion.

Small pinch chilli powder (optional).

200g (or half a 400g can) of chopped tomatoes.

1 x dessertspoon of tomato puree.

1/4 teaspoon dried oregano.

75g/3oz. Pitted black olives.

2 x boneless white fish fillets (e.g. cod or hoki), they need to each be about 175g/6oz.

Chopped fresh flatleaf parsley to garnish.

Half a lemon cut into wedges to serve.

#### TIPS:

Goes well with boiled new potatoes, rice, crusty bread, focaccia, or a ciabatta roll.

Budget packs of white fish are good, but contain a lot of water, so you may need to use extra fillets.

#### METHOD:

1. Pre-heat oven to 200C (Fan 180C)/Gas Mark 6.

2. Heat half the oil in an ovenproof pan on the hob.
3. Add the onion and chilli (if using) and cook for a few minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Add the tomatoes, tomato puree, oregano and some salt and pepper. Bring to the boil then add the olives.
5. Put the fish, skin-side down onto the sauce, drizzle with the rest of the oil.
6. Bake, uncovered, in the oven for 15 minutes or until the fish is cooked.
7. Sprinkle with the chopped parsley and serve with lemon wedges to squeeze over the fish.

## THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Please remember the following people in your prayers...



Bev Harris and her partner Dom

Karen Jones	Christine Weaver
Linda Hicks	David Bennett
Paul Gross	Mark Best
Beverley Cantwell	Shirley Craft
Carys Haywood	Stan and Sandra Marut
Claire Macro	Doina Rasnita
Sandy and Liz Lindsay	Tony Chan

The Patterson family

## MEMORIES OF JEAN HOLTON

**Margaret Carrick Smith shares some memories of our departed friend.**

As recorded in the Church Secretary's report for 2022, towards the end of last year we said "goodbye" to Jean Holton. Jean's death was not expected, although she had been ill for some months and became frailer.

Jean became a member of London Street in 1958, and was an active and much valued member of the congregation from then on. Jean and her beloved husband David together devised and ran popular treasure hunts. She also supported and gave practical help to David as he for many years chaired our Premises Committee and was then a key person during the planning of and execution of the major redevelopment of our premises during the 1990s.

Jean continued alone after David's untimely death, and served in many ways, including as assistant to several Church Secretaries, an Authorised Person for marriages, the organiser of the distribution of Harvest gifts, Church Archivist, and organiser of the rota of greeters on which she took her turn.

In his tribute to Jean during the service of thanksgiving for her life, her cousin Clive said that: "she didn't have an unkind bone in her body". As he also said, she was universally liked. Jean had made many friends during her long life, and she kept in touch with them loyally. When Clive spoke with those friends, he compiled a list of the adjectives they used about Jean, which included: "intrepid, brave, patient, considerate, determined, resolute, and kind." So many of us at London Street were also counted among her friends, and we know what a lovely, thoughtful person she was. She was a complex character - a meticulous archivist, with superb organisation and attention to detail, a motor sport fan, an avid texter, an enthusiast for coffee and cake, and a lover of Jane Austen's works and historical novels who was always beautifully and stylishly dressed.

Following David's death Jean commissioned the beautiful and very useful "David's Dovecote" which graces the wall outside the vestry in memory of him. Perhaps now it can be regarded as a fitting memorial

to them both.

To know her was to respect and love her. She was a constant and much appreciated part of our congregation, and we miss her. Again, to quote her cousin Clive:

"Jean was not a very big person. She can't have weighed more than six stone, wringing wet, but she has left a very big hole in a good many lives."

We thank God for Jean, her life and witness and all that she meant to us.

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS



This month's assigned readings.

	Psalm	New Testament		Psalm	New Testament
1st	39: 1-6	Luke 6: 1-26	16th	46: 1-7	Luke 12: 22-34
2nd	39: 7-13	Luke 6: 27-49	17th	46: 8-11	Luke 12: 35-59
3rd	40: 1-10	Luke 7: 1-28	18th	47	Luke 13: 1-21
4th	40: 11-17	Luke 7: 29-50	19th	48: 1-8	Luke 13: 22-35
5th	41: 1-6	Luke 8: 1-25	20th	48: 9-14	Luke 14
6th	41: 7-13	Luke 8: 26-39	21st	49: 1-4	Luke 15: 1-10
7th	42: 1-5	Luke 8: 40-56	22nd	49: 5-11	Luke 15: 11-32
8th	42: 6-11	Luke 9: 1-20	23rd	49: 12-20	Luke 16: 1-15
9th	43	Luke 9: 21-43a	24th	50: 1-6	Luke 16: 16-31
10th	44: 1-8	Luke 9: 43b-62	25th	50: 7-15	Luke 17: 1-19
11th	44: 9-16	Luke 10: 1-24	26th	50: 16-23	Luke 17: 20-37
12th	44: 17-22	Luke 10: 25-42	27th	51: 1-6	Luke 18: 1-17
13th	44: 23-26	Luke 11: 1-28	28th	51: 7-12	Luke 18: 18-43
14th	45: 1-9	Luke 11: 29-54	29th	51: 13-19	Luke 19: 1-27
15th	45: 10-17	Luke 12: 1-21	30th	52: 1-5	Luke 19: 28-48

## EVENT DIARIES



What's on this month at London St. & Old Meeting URCs.

At London Street URC (unless otherwise specified):

### Regular Events

Sunday Worship 10:30am			
Mondays	10:15am	Craft Group	
	7:30pm	Take Time Meditation (Exploring Mark's Gospel)	Starting on the 17th. On Zoom. Contact Church Secretary for password.
Tuesdays	2:30pm	Take Time Meditation (Exploring Luke's Gospel)	Starting on the 18th. On Zoom. Contact Church Secretary for password.
	5:45-6:45pm	Beavers	In Term Time.
	7-8:30pm	Cubs	All in the Den except Scouts who meet in the Wessex Hall.
	7-9pm	Scouts	
Wednesdays	10:15am	3Cs Coffee, Chat and Company	3rd Wednesday of the Month Only (15th).
	10:15am	Memory Tree Social Club	
	12:15pm	Lunchtime Prayers	

### Other Events

Sun 2nd	8:30am	Prayer Breakfast	In the Hook Room.
Wed 12th	7:30pm	Elders' Meeting	On Zoom.

Next Church Meeting: May 15th (Monday), 7:30pm

## April Worship Diary

2nd	Led by Revd. Josh Thomas; Musician: Alex Macro; Duty Elder: Joy Williams.
6th	Maundy Thursday with Communion, 7:30pm in the Hook Room
9th	Dawn Service, 6am at Tadley Skate Park (Tadley Common Road, RG26 3PX).  Service will be followed by breakfast at the Immanuel Centre at Tadley URC (8am), please inform Mark Ward or Paul Gross if you wish to come.
	Easter Sunday and Holy Communion  Led by Karen Smith; Musician: Peter Dixon; Duty Elder: Joy Williams.
16th	Led by Mark Ward; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Joy Williams.
23rd	Led by John Sinclair; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Joy Williams.
30th	Led by Revd. Julian Macro; Musician: Alex Macro; Duty Elder: Carol Scott.

**At Tadley (Old Meeting) URC (unless otherwise specified):**

### Regular Events

Sunday Worship 10:30am		
Monday Afternoons	Ladies' Cell Group	Contact Penny O'Bee.
Monday Evenings	Cell Group	Contact Mark Ward or Paul Gross.
Tuesday Evenings	Joint Prayer Time with St Paul's	Contact Penny O'Bee.
Wednesday Evenings	Prayer via Zoom	Contact Mark Ward.
Friday Afternoon	Men's Shed	2pm, once a fortnight. Contact Paul Gross.

## April Worship Diary

2nd	Led by Ed Vassie.
9th	<p>Dawn Service, 6am at Tadley Skate Park (Tadley Common Road, RG26 3PX)</p> <p>Service will be followed by breakfast at the Immanuel Centre at Tadley URC (8am), please inform Mark Ward or Paul Gross if you wish to come.</p>
	<p>10:30 at London Street URC, Easter Sunday and Holy Communion</p> <p>Led by Karen Smith; Musician: Peter Dixon; Duty Elder: Joy Williams.</p>
16th	No service at Old Meeting.
23rd	Led by Mark Ward.
30th	Led by Rob Lloyd.

# London Street United Reformed Church

London Street URC, Basingstoke seeks to ensure that all content and information published in this issue of FOCUS is current and accurate. The information included does not in any way constitute legal or professional advice and the church cannot be held liable for actions arising from its use.

London Street United Reformed Church is a working name of  
Registered Charity London Street (Basingstoke) United Reformed  
Church Charity [reg. no. 1130801]