



FOCUS

February 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's article is written by Peter Bentall and looks at the lesson of Job.



Signs of hope in the dark days of winter?

Daylight hours are getting just perceptibly longer and two days ago, walking with my sister in Uckfield, we saw a daffodil plant with two heads in full bloom. Nature awakes again as the Lord has always promised.

However, so many of the people in the sixth largest economy in the world are continually asking 'How can we survive, heat our homes, and feed our families in the current crises?'

After a physically and mentally draining 8 or 10 hour shift the nurse has to go home via a Food Bank in order to put food on the table for an evening meal!

Christians (and others) understandably ask the question 'Where is God in all this?' and that is not even considering the situations in Ukraine, Iran, Somalia to name but three other countries.

In the Old Testament the allegorical story of Job clearly shows that these questions are far from being new. Job is described as,

'This man was blameless and upright, he feared God and shunned evil. He was prosperous and wealthy with wives, children, sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys, and servants. He was the greatest man amongst the people of the east.' (Job 1 v1-3)

Without warning he lost everything almost, it seems, overnight.

His first reaction though was,

'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised.' (Job 1 v21)

Then for the next 37 chapters he argues his case with his so-called friends who try to convince him that it must be the result of sin and that he needs to admit it and repent. Job is adamant that he is blameless and halfway through these discussions he proclaims,

'I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end he will stand upon the earth' (Job 19 v25)

But the discussions and arguments continue and achieve nothing!

Finally, from chapters 38 to 41 the Lord answers Job in what I think are among the most powerful chapters in the whole Bible. Job has been arguing and debating from a human perspective, from the limits of his human mind and logical thinking, from his own understanding.

The Lord reveals that 'his ways are not our ways, nor are his thoughts like our thoughts' as the Psalmist puts it elsewhere. The Lord batters Job's understanding with a whole litany of questions which Job cannot answer.

'Were you there when I laid out the earth's foundation?' (Job 38 v 4)

And so on for four long chapters!

In the end Job's response takes but six verses!

'My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes' (Job 42 v5-6)

That is where God is, simply everywhere. Finally, Job understood and that too is our reassurance.

The dark days of winter will pass as they always do. There are already signs of the rebirth of Spring.



THE NOTICEBOARD

Information, updates, tips and more.



Julian House is a charity that supports vulnerable and at-risk people across the Southwest, including our homeless outreach services in Basingstoke.

On 24th March 2023, it's the return of the **Big Basingstoke Sleep Out**, with individuals, families, students, businesses, and community groups all sleeping out for one night only, in May's Bounty cricket ground, raising vital funds for some of the most vulnerable people in society. If you are interested in taking part, please contact the Church Secretary for further details.

Don't fancy sleeping out? If you want to support the charity but don't fancy sleeping out, then we will be having a retiring collection the weekend of the Sleep Out.

Lettings Secretary Needed

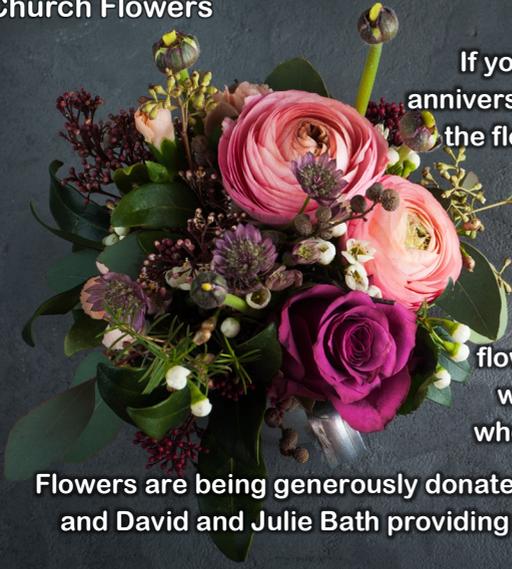
There is an immediate need for an individual or two or three working together, to take over the responsibility of lettings at London Street. The income we receive from the rental of rooms at London Street provides essential income for the upkeep of the premises. Please speak with Karen Bell for further information.



URC 50th Anniversary Service

Re-scheduled for Saturday 15th April 2023 at the Methodist Central Hall in London. Tickets are still available on the URC website or contact the Church Secretary.

Church Flowers



If you would like to celebrate an anniversary or birthday by donating the flowers on the first Sunday of the month in 2023, please contact Alison Jamieson or Liz Lindsay (details in the Church Directory). You do not need to arrange the flowers, unless you wish to, as we have a Flower Committee who can arrange them for you.

Flowers are being generously donated by Ian Scott for February, and David and Julie Bath providing flowers for March. All other months still available.

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.

Carrier Bag Appeal

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



FOCUS: Next Issue

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Focus magazine. If you would like to contribute to the March magazine, please contact the editor by **15th of February**.

Eco Tip

God's Gift -- Our World

The Environment -- Our Responsibility



Save water

If you have to run off water at your kitchen sink save it in a jug that you can subsequently transfer to a bucket. You can then use that water to water plants in the garden or use it to flush the toilet. Should you have an overfull water butt this could also be used for these purposes.

Don't forget, you can help London Street care for our earth by recycling the following items in the provided containers:

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

Church Directory for 2023

Work is progressing on producing the Church Directory for 2023. It will be issued shortly as an e-copy to those with an email address and a hard copy to those who don't.

Thank you!

Thank you for your donations collected at the Gift Service for the Women's Refuge and to Leng and Chris for taking the donations to the refuge. A letter of thanks to the congregation was received from the manager of the refuge.

Thank you also to those in the congregation who donated money for the Iranian lads for Christmas. They were grateful to receive a tin of biscuits and a £50 M&S voucher each.



Freedom from Torture Concert 2023

You may remember this invite from 2022. The original concert was cancelled due to Covid, but has now been rescheduled for Monday, 13th March 2023.

Enjoy a live concert, featuring The Doctors' Orchestra, from London's prestigious Cadogan Hall. The Doctors' Orchestra brings together a unique ensemble of 75 musically gifted doctors to play in aid of 'Freedom from Torture', under the leadership of conductor Stephen Brearley, and features outstanding violinist Nathan Mierdl, in his first appearance with the Doctors' Orchestra, presenting a beautiful Nordic inspired programme.



Tickets cost £32, £25 or £15, (plus handling fee) and are available from the Box Office, www.cadoganhall.com or phone 020 7730 4500

Don't fancy trekking up to London? Enjoy the concert in the comfort of your own living room via live stream. Live stream tickets are just £10.00 plus £1.00, i.e. £11.00, and are available on <https://freedomfromtorture.eventcube.io/>

The proceeds of all ticket sales go to the charity 'Freedom from Torture', (Registered charity: England 1000340).

Freedom from Torture provides specialist psychological therapy, group therapy in areas such as music and art, as well as offering vital legal and welfare aid to help asylum seekers and refugees who have survived torture to recover and rebuild their lives in the UK. The charity also provides training for professionals working with torture survivors. As well as working with survivors to bring about change in the UK and across the world, they help to raise awareness and influence decision-makers about torture and its impact. For more information please visit the Freedom from Torture website at <https://www.freedomfromtorture.org>

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!

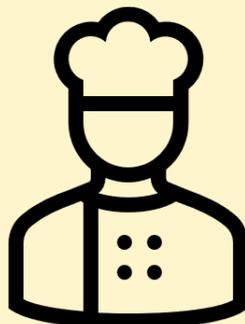


Next Month: Community Cookbook

Starting in March we are hoping to feature a healthy recipe, each month, from members of the congregation.

Do you have a simple but tasty favourite at home? Why not share it with the community and get everyone's tastebuds tingling!

If you are interested, please contact the editor with your recipe and a picture of your delicious food.



Save the Date! Moderator's Farewell Service

There will be a Farewell Service for Clare Downing on Saturday 1st April at 3pm at London Street, followed by tea and cake. All are welcome, however please could let Deborah (office@urcwessex.org.uk) know if you will be attending so we have an idea of numbers for catering purposes.

CANDLEMAS

Jenny McCloy discusses the origin of the festival.

It is said that the festival at Candlemas marks the mid-point of Winter, being the shortest day and the start of the Spring Equinox, however this contradicts our understanding of the shortest day being on December 21st.

Before Christianity was born, the Pagan celebration on this day was known as The Feast of Lights, in celebration of the increasing strength of the sun as Winter gives way to the Spring.

Candlemas is a Christian Festival celebrating the presentation of Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The festival is based on the Bible passage in Luke 2: 22-38 when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple for the Purification rites. This was celebrated 40 days after the birth of a baby in Jewish culture, so Jesus was taken to the Temple 40 days after December 25th, this falls on February 2nd.

Simeon and Anna were in the Temple when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus. Simeon had waited all his life for the Messiah. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would see the Messiah before he died. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and recognised him as the Messiah.



The Christian Church has celebrated Candlemas since the fourth century AD.

On February 2nd many Christians take candles to church to be blessed, this ritual of blessing the candles has taken place since the seventh century. Since the candle represents Christ, so blessing the candles recognises Jesus as The Light of the World. These blessed candles are used in churches for the rest of the year. As we are reminded that Jesus is the Light of the World, so we are reminded at Candlemas that we are to follow his example in our lives.

THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Please remember the following people in your prayers...

Beverley Cantwell

Joyce Cook

Shirley Craft

Gill Craft

Carys Haywood

Clare Macro

Stan and Sandra Marut

Tony Chan

Doina Rasnita

The Patterson family

Beryl Wootton and family

Rosemary Martin

Isobel Martin

Sandy and Liz Lindsay

Our Iranian friends on the occasion of their
Baptism: Raya, Mateen, Ali, Hamid, Morteza and
Alireza

Linda Hicks

Christine Weaver

John Featherstone

Lucy Haines

HANTS HOSPITALS CHAPLAINCY TEAM

A message from the Chaplaincy Team at Hampshire Hospitals to churches supporting the Chaplaincy Team.

On behalf of the Chaplaincy Team at Hampshire Hospitals I want to thank you for all your prayers and support during the past year and wish you a very happy 2023. As you are no doubt aware the hospitals continue to be extremely busy. The Chaplaincy Team is busy supporting patients, their families, and carers as well as staff. It is encouraging to see just how relevant chaplaincy is with more and more requests for our services.

At the start of this new year, I'm writing to update you about what we are able to provide for patients and staff and also to share some opportunities with you.

Chaplaincy visits for patients

If a member of your church is in hospital you (or they) can contact the Chaplaincy Team to request a visit from a Chaplain (See contact details below). We are always very happy to provide this support and often a visit to one patient results in us being called back to see another patient who just happened to see us on their ward!

Partnering with us

We are keen to partner with local church leaders to support not only patients and their families but staff also. Due to the demand on our service, we often have more opportunities than we are able to fulfil. We are grateful for church leaders who partner with us in different ways such as: visiting patients, supporting staff generally or in specific ward areas, leading services, providing emergency cover. If you are a church leader and feel able to offer a few hours a week/ fortnight/month or on an ad hoc basis, please do get in touch with me (Debbie.Howard@hhft.nhs.uk).

Chaplaincy volunteers

We have a small number of church members who volunteer with us and visit a specific ward area where they build up relationships with patients and staff. We are keen to increase our number of volunteers so that each ward and department in every hospital has this support. However, we are also keen to recruit volunteers to help in other ways such as with administration and regular prayer support. If you know someone who you feel would be suitable, again please do get in touch with me.

Supporting hospital staff who you know

WhatsApp HHFT Christian Staff Group: We have a WhatsApp group to connect Christian staff with each other. This has proved to be a source of encouragement and support. If you have church members who work at the hospital, please do ask them to get in touch so we can add them to this group.

Pastoral Care Advocates: On each ward and department we have members of staff who play a key role in looking out for the spiritual and religious needs of their patients. Full training is provided; please encourage staff you know to get in touch.

An opportunity for knitters and crafters

Our Organ Donation Team have requested blankets and felt hearts. These will be placed over, and in the hand of the patient in their final moments and will then be given to their next of kin as the last item their loved one “wore” or held. Blankets should be 80cm long by 40cm wide; hearts should be able to easily fit in the palm of a hand.

Please contact us using the Chaplaincy email address to arrange for any blankets to be delivered to us and we will pass them on to the Organ Donation Team.

Once again, thank you for all your prayers and support. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of help to you.

Blessings

Rev Debbie Howard

Lead Chaplain, Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Debbie.Howard@hhft.nhs.uk

Chaplaincy@hhft.nhs.uk

Note from Owen: If you want to know more about the work of Chaplaincy at Hampshire Hospitals please have a word with me and I can forward a leaflet to you.

TRAIDCRAFT UPDATE

The latest information on the future of Traidcraft from John and Margaret Carrick Smith.

At the 22nd January 2023 church meeting we informed the church that Traidcraft was in a serious financial position and was going into administration. Since then, we have learnt that they are no longer taking orders and the hand over to administrators is likely to happen before the end of January 2023. Here is part of a message we have received:

"The business has been in a weak financial position for some years and the Covid-19 pandemic presented a significant new set of challenges. Just as we were emerging from the pandemic, like many other retailers, we faced the combined effects of the war in Ukraine, rising energy prices, and increased transport costs.



TRAIDCRAFT

"Sadly, despite the heroic efforts of our team at Gateshead, low consumer confidence during the critical autumn trading period led to a sales result significantly short of what was required to sustain the operation. December sales were also negatively impacted by the uncertainty created by Royal Mail strikes.

"After much deliberation and following advice from external advisors, we have come to the conclusion that the only honourable course of action is to appoint administrators. Our hope is that by doing this in a timely manner, we can minimise the impact on our suppliers and creditors."

Sadly, it seems that the Traidcraft plc story is coming to an end. We will be selling what stock we have - and there are quite a few bars of chocolate - before closing the stall. We will keep the church informed of any significant news relating to this.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

This month's assigned readings.



	Psalm	New Testament		Psalm	New Testament
1st	18:16-19	Matt 22:41-	15th	22:22-26	Matt 28
2nd	18:20-24	Matt 23:13-39	16th	22:27-31	Mark 1:1-20
3rd	18:25-29	Matt 24:1-14	17th	23:1-6	Mark 1:21-45
4th	18:30-36	Matt 24:15-35	18th	24	Mark 2:1-22
5th	18:37-42	Matt 24:36-51	19th	25:1-7	Mark 2:23-
6th	18:43-50	Matt 25:1-30	20th	25:8-11	Mark 3
7th	19:1-6	Matt 25:31-46	21st	25:12-15	Mark 4:1-20
8th	19:7-14	Matt 26:1-30	22nd	25:16-22	Mark 4:21-41
9th	20	Matt 26:31-46	23rd	26:1-8	Mark 5:1-20
10th	21:1-7	Matt 26:47-68	24th	26:9-12	Mark 5:21-43
11th	21:8-13	Matt 26:69-	25th	27:1-6	Mark 6:1-29
12th	22:1-5	Matt 27:11-26	26th	27:7-14	Mark 6:30-56
13th	22:6-11	Matt 27:27-44	27th	28	Mark 7:1-23
14th	22:12-21	Matt 27:45-66	28th	29:1-6	Mark 7:24-37

A LETTER FROM REVD. CLARE DOWNING

A message from the Moderator of the Wessex Synod.

Dear friends,

Many of you will already be aware from the email to ministers and churches just before Christmas, that I will be leaving my post as Wessex Synod Moderator at the end of March 2023. I have been called to serve the North Western Synod as their Moderator, for the next three years, which will take me to retirement.

Following an unsettled time in the North West, it has been agreed that they would benefit from a Moderator serving them on a transitional basis. My experience here, along with offering them some support whilst I was General Assembly Moderator provides a good foundation for helping the Synod move forward.

Whilst there is a degree of excitement at taking on a new challenge, I will be very sad to leave Wessex behind. The churches, the people, the staff team and the beautiful area have meant that this has been a good place to be. It has been a privilege to spend twelve years of my ministry here. It's not always been plain sailing but I hope that, like me, you will have enjoyed this stage of the journey. You will see elsewhere in this newsletter that there are plans for an event to mark my move, and I hope that I will be able to say goodbye in person to many people both there, and at other events in the next couple of months. I will certainly appreciate the opportunity to thank so many of you for the support and friendship that you have given me.

Please pray for John and myself as we prepare to move to Manchester - though the exact destination is as yet unknown. Pray too for the Synod Executive as they plan for a period without a Moderator, and also start the work towards a future appointment. The timescale for this is not yet fixed, so there will be a period where various responsibilities will need to be shared out amongst other staff and volunteers. Times of change can be disturbing, but also bring new opportunities - and we believe in a God who works for good in all things. I am reminded of the response which is commonly used in our partner church in Zambia: God is good - all the time; All the time - God is good.

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	
	1pm	Alpha Course	In the Hook Room.
	7:30pm	Take Time Meditation (Exploring Mark's Gospel)	On Zoom. Contact Church Secretary for password.
Tuesdays	10:15am	Little Angels	In the Wessex Hall.
	2:30pm	Take Time Meditation (Exploring Luke's Gospel)	On Zoom. Contact Church Secretary for password.
	5:45pm	Beavers	In Term Time.
	6:45pm	Cubs	
	7:45pm	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	

February Worship Diary

5th	Service includes Adult Baptism. Led by Revd. Josh Thomas; Musician: Alex Macro; Duty Elder: Alison Jamieson.
12th	Led by Worship Committee; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Alison Jamieson.
19th	Service includes Holy Communion. Led by Revd. Julian Macro; Musician: Peter Dixon;
26th	Led by Peter Bentall; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Alison Jamieson.

Next Church Meeting:

March 20th (Monday), 7:30pm - Annual Church Meeting

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.

February Worship Diary

5th	No service at Old Meeting.
12th	Led by Joy Williams. A Communion Service.
19th	No service at Old Meeting.
26th	Led by Mark Ward.

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.

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Church Charity [reg. no. 1130801]