



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 Ian McCloy.



In some ways it could be most depressing to look forward into 2023.

Why? Simply out of concern for those in our community who are struggling.

How would I, or you, face making the decision of whether to eat or to stay warm? Not a decision I would relish.

Those who care for our communities warn of the challenges to come: the old unable to stay warm; children going to school feeling hungry; those families unable to meet the rising costs of fuel and food. There is a growing dependence on Foodbanks and other organisations providing all kinds of help. These groups are overwhelmed and crying out for volunteers. Our own Hot Food Table has already had to close on a Friday because we don't have enough volunteers (we are trying to address this need), in fact we have become dependent on our Iranian friends who are working most days in the kitchen, trying to give something back to the society which has made them welcome.

As we begin the New Year we remember we have just celebrated Christ's birth, in that coming of the Christ Child we met with God, active in our lives and in our communities. As the carol says, 'God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day' Life is full of surprises!

When the Commonwealth Games were held in The City of Manchester Stadium (now The Etihad) in 2002, a piece of art work was commissioned to stand outside the stadium. This was in a very deprived area of Manchester. The art work was entitled 'The B of the Bang' and was based on a quotation from Linford Christie, the 100m runner, who famously said that athletes should be ready to run on the 'B of the Bang' (of the starting gun!). It was a great expression of the explosion of energy and the element of surprise. It evoked images of bursting out into new life and the feeling of hope at the beginning, on the 'B of the Bang'!

We are at the beginning! The beginning of a New Year.

Our God, a God of surprises, encourage us to be the B of the Bang in our shattered communities as we try to bring your love to our neighbours.

God of surprises, challenge us to be a part of the help and comfort that people need.

God of surprises, help us to be open to finding new ways to help those around us.

God of surprises, help us to see your way forward, into this New Year, so that we don't face it feeling depressed about the challenges, but rather, supported and strengthened by your presence in our lives, feeling enabled to be your face, your touch, your love to those we meet each day.

***God,
go before us to light the way,
go behind us to comfort and encourage,
go with us;
go with us.***

Sadly, the 'B of the Bang' was deemed to be dangerous, bits of metal were falling off gradually and it was dismantled in 2009. It was sold for scrap metal! Maybe you can see a metaphor in its demise? Maybe, if we don't respond on the 'B' maybe our communities will continue to suffer??



Picture taken by [Steve Garry](#) (Manchester, UK)

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THE NOTICEBOARD

Information, updates, tips and more.



Happy Birthday to the following members of our church family:

Anne Davey

Sheila Munro

Daniel Moavu

Scarlett Weller

Amelia Ann Green

Peter Bentall



Eco Tip

God's Gift -- Our World

The Environment -- Our Responsibility



You don't have to use a bottle of wine up in one sitting to stop it going sour. Use an inexpensive vacuum pump to remove the air and stopper it with a rubber stopper; however, for champagne hang a silver (or silver-plated) teaspoon in the top of the bottle.

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.

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!



Stamps

We have, for a number of years, collected stamps to raise funds for people affected by leprosy and Chris Ayland has forwarded them on to the Leprosy Mission. In the last couple of years, the value of stamps has greatly reduced. With the introduction of bar-coded stamps, stamp value has been further decreased. Sadly, it has got to the point where there is not really any money to be made in this area. So it is with regret that the Leprosy Mission have made the decision to wind down stamps and collectibles in line with many other charities. **Used stamps will be collected by Chris for the Leprosy Mission until 31st March 2023.**

With barcodes now being added to stamps, a reminder that **after 31st January regular stamps without a barcode will no longer be valid.** You can swap your regular stamps for barcoded stamps by completing a form and sending them to the Royal Mail. See royalmail.com/barcodedstamps for further details. Non-barcoded Christmas stamps and Special stamps (i.e. pictorial stamps issued to commemorate anniversaries or special events), will remain valid and do not need to be swapped.

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 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.

An update on last month's petition appeal...



The International Liberty Association's on-line petition has reached almost 2000 signatures! But there is still time to help it reach it's goal of 10000 signatures. To learn more, click the following link or type it into your web browser:

<https://iliberty.org.uk/petition-to-support-human-rights-in-iran/>

FOCUS: Next Issue

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

SIGNPOSTS OF HOPE

An uplifting message for the new year from our interim minister, Josh Thomas.



Tom Wright recently wrote: ‘This is a time for lament. For admitting we don’t have easy answers. For refusing to use the crisis as a loudspeaker for what we’d been wanting to say in any case. For weeping at the tomb of our friends...The initial calling of the church, first and foremost, is to take our place among the mourners... The call of Jesus’ followers, then, as they confront their own doubts and those of the world through Jesus and behind locked doors, is to be sign-producers for God’s kingdom.

We are to set up signposts – actions, symbols, not just words – which speak, like Jesus’ signs, of new creation: of healing for the sick, of food for the hungry, and so on... For these tasks we will need the living presence of Jesus, and the powerful breath of his spirit. That is what we are promised.’

The amazing thing about a New Year is that we have just enjoyed Christmas in which we are given the opportunity to reflect on the story of Christ’s birth and in particular this year the words of John chapter 1 – The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. No matter how bleak things feel – we have a hope for the future.

We are called to imitate the light that Christ brings to the world, to try and offer hope to those who otherwise feel hopeless, to set up those signposts which Tom Wright mentioned – We are called to serve our brothers and sisters and throughout the many crises we have seen in our world over the past twelve months from the war in Ukraine to the cost of living difficulties faced by so many, the evidence of people

doing this in our local community has been outstanding. We are so fortunate to have a hope for this New Year and we have a real opportunity and responsibility to share that hope with those in our world. What opportunities might we take in 2023 to share the good news with those we meet? There is light and hopefulness on display in the actions of so many people and I am certainly praying for a more hopeful, joy filled 2023.

May God bless you and those whom you love at the start of this new chapter.

THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Please remember the following people in your prayers...



Linda Hicks	Seb and Dorcas
Christine Weaver	Chris Whitten
Beverley Cantwell	Joyce Cook
Beryl Wootton and family	
Shirley Craft	Gill Craft
Clare Macro	Stan and Sandra Marut
Doina Rasnita	Janet Parr
Ali Shahrabi	Ron Holt
The Patterson family	Gill Miller and family
The family of Kay Cook	Isobel Martin
Sandy and Liz Lindsay	Jason Dudley
Jo Tremarco	The family of Ann Hill

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

This month's assigned readings.



	Psalm	New Testament		Psalm	New Testament
1st	146	Mark 1	16th	2	Mark 12
2nd	107	Mark 2	17th	42	Mark 13
3rd	70	Mark 3	18th	73: 21-28	Reflection
4th	147	Reflection	19th	90	Reflection
5th	40: 1-8	Reflection	20th	111	Mark 14
6th	71: 1-13	Mark 4	21st	3	Mark 15
7th	148	Mark 5	22nd	112	Mark 16
8th	40: 9-17	Mark 6	23rd	4	Acts 1
9th	71: 14-24	Mark 7	24th	43	Acts 2
10th	149	Mark 8	25th	74: 12-23	Reflection
11th	41	Reflection	26th	91	Reflection
12th	72	Reflection	27th	113	Acts 3
13th	150	Mark 9	28th	5	Acts 4
14th	1	Mark 10	29th	115	Acts 5
15th	108	Mark 11	30th	6	Acts 6
			31st	46	Acts 7

EVENT DIARYS

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. Not running on 2nd Jan.
Tuesdays	10:15am	Little Angels	In the Wessex Hall.
	2:30pm	Take Time Meditation	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 (18th).
	10:15am	Memory Tree Social Club	
	12:15pm	Lunchtime Prayers	

Other Events

Weds 4th	7:30pm	Elders' Meeting	
Sun 22nd	12pm	Members' Meeting	
Sat 28th	10am-3pm	Alpha Course Away Day	Held at Petersfield URC

January Worship Diary

1st	No Service, the church will be open for prayer.
8th	Led by Worship Committee; Musician: Emily Scott; Duty Elder: Ian McCloy.
15th	Led by Joy Williams; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Ian McCloy.
22nd	Led by Revd. Howard Sharp; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Ian McCloy.
29th	Service includes Induction of Elders and Holy Communion. Led by Revd. Josh Thomas; Musician: Peter Dixon; Duty Elder: Margaret Carrick Smith.

Church Meetings 2023: (In the Hook room unless stated otherwise)

January 22nd (Sunday), Midday

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

May 15th (Monday), 7:30pm

July 24th (Monday), 7:30pm

September 18th (Monday), 7:30pm

November 19th (Sunday), 1:15pm

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.

January Worship Diary

1st	No service at Old Meeting.
8th	Led by Penny O'Bee. A Communion Service.
15th	No service at Old Meeting.
22nd	Led by Ed Vassie.
22nd	CTAT Unity Service (at Tadley Common Methodists, 4pm).
29th	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.

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