



**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 discusses the festival of Halloween and whether it is compatible with our Christian beliefs.



A few days ago it was Halloween. I don't know if you were affected or whether you even thought much about it. Not that we could miss all the displays that were in the shops for the last month!! How much do we Christians know about the origins of Halloween? Is it wise for Christians to be involved with Halloween at all? Lets look at some words of Scripture to see God's thoughts and feelings on this subject.

Deuteronomy 18: 9

*When you come into the Land that the Lord your God is giving you, don't follow the disgusting practices of the nations that are there.*

After all if you read Exodus Chapter 20 you will see God says, *'I am the Lord your God... You shall have no gods before me.'*

The story told in 1 Kings Chapter 18 contains these words, *'The Lord – He is God! The Lord - He is God!'*

I think the story of Elijah challenging the false god Baal is well known. If not please read 1 Kings chapter 18 verses 16-39.

Back to Halloween. A festival at this time of the year goes back to the time of the Celts, about 500 BC. There was a secret society, whose priests were called Druids. They worshipped nature - especially Oak Trees and Mistletoe. Celtic kings feared the Druids.

The Celts had 400 gods and one was called "Samhain", the god of death. He was worshipped on 31st October, which was the last day of the northern autumn, and also their New Year's Eve. On this night Samhain allowed the spirits of those who had died the previous year to return for a few hours to associate with their families.

The Druids carried a hollowed out pumpkin with a candle inside. They would go from house to house demanding special foods. If these were supplied, obediently, they would leave for the next house. That's the origin of 'Trick or Treat'.

By the 8th century, the Christian Church (now more political than spiritual) had attempted to overlay many pagan festivals and holidays with a “Christian” veneer. To counter Samhain, the Pope decreed November 1st as “All Saints Day” to honour the Christian Dead. This attempted substitution did not work, because another name for All Saints Day was All Hallows Day. So the night before became All Hallows Evening, which has since become Halloween.

Modern “Halloween” began with the migration of many Irish folk to America at the time of the Potato Famine in the 1800’s. It is now promoted by Pagans of various kinds, along with commercial interests, who see it as a way to make a lot of money from the desire of children to dress up. Children today love to dress up in fancy costumes, so it really has become a popular part of Halloween, but Pagans, and those involved in the occult, still celebrate on October 31st - so occult activity is heightened at this time.

For myself, I abhor Halloween. I have tried giving out 'tracts' to trick or treat callers, but that back fired with the tracts torn up and scattered on my drive. Once I had eggs thrown at my front door!!! Have you tried getting dried egg off? Lastly I downloaded a poster from our local Police asking people not to call, and I must say we did not have callers that year. Now that I have moved to Lady Susan Court I won't get trick or treat callers, BUT the 'events' group here puts up Halloween decorations. Even worse this year they will be linking Halloween and bonfire night, which is my birthday!! I shall be elsewhere!



## THE NOTICEBOARD

Information, updates, tips and more.



### Thank you from Owen

Greetings and thank you all for your prayers and messages of love and support I have received since my accident. I had planned a short 'break' in Durham, the Lakes and Liverpool. I certainly wasn't expecting a break of my right leg and shoulder courtesy of a driver who wasn't paying attention. The police have informed me that the driver responsible is to be charged with GBH without intent as a consequence of careless driving.

After two lots of major surgery and spending my vacation in 4 different hospitals, unable to fend for myself at present, I'm now recovering at my daughters house.

I pray it won't be too long before I see you all again at London Street.

Blessings and thank you.



Happy Birthday to the following members of our church family:

**Beryl Wootton**

**Ethan Grant**



The General Assembly of the URC invites  
you to

**The Induction of Revd. Dr Michael  
Hopkins**

as Moderator of the Wessex Synod

3pm Saturday 23rd March 2024 at London Street  
URC



The service will be led by the Moderator of the General Assembly, Revd. Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, and the preacher is the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, Revd. Dr John Bradbury.

RSVP by 1st March 2024 (email where possible)

The United Reformed Church Wessex Synod Office  
120 Alma Road, Southampton, SO14 6UW

Tel: 02380 678570

Email: [office@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:office@urcwessex.org.uk)

**A Synod Choir for Michael Hopkins'  
Induction?**

We are trying to gather a choir of people from around the Synod to sing at Michael's induction. There will not be auditions, and you don't need to sing in a choir at the moment. There will be one rehearsal at Basingstoke in the morning of the induction, and there may be a brief rehearsal or two via Zoom if that is deemed helpful.

If you would like to join the choir, please contact the Revd. Michael Hodgson by email ([michaelgwenidog@gmail.com](mailto:michaelgwenidog@gmail.com)), no later than Monday 4th December, with your name, phone number, email address, which part you sing, and a brief note of any relevant experience.

If you like to sing, but don't have a church choir in your church, this is an ideal opportunity!

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



Items **urgently needed**: Hot/Cold Desserts (Not Rice Pudding), Long Life Fruit Juice, Powdered Milk, Savoury Spreads (Marmite/Peanut Butter/Meat Paste etc), Tinned Spaghetti/Ravioli.

Items needed: Biscuits & Snacks, Cooking Sauces, Custard, Deodorant (Male/Female), Hot Chocolate, Household Cleaning Products, Instant Mash, Squash, Sweet Spreads (Jam/Marmalade etc), Sweets/Chocolate/Other Sweet Treats, Tinned Meat (Hot e.g. Chilli/Hot Dogs/Stewing Steak).

Please **do not** give Baby Food, Hand Soap, Hot/Cold Cereal, Men's Shampoo, Non-dairy Milk, Pasta, Pet Food, Pulses, Rice, Sanitary Pads, Tea, Tinned Beans, Tinned Rice Pudding, Tinned Soup, as these are already in surplus.

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/>

You can now also install the BankTheFood app on your Android or iOS device to keep up to date with the latest shortages at the Basingstoke 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 December magazine, please contact the editor by **19th of November**.

## Prayer 4 Basingstoke

Sunday 19th November, 7pm

Wessex Christian Fellowship, Wessex Close, RG21 3NP

Theme: Food Security

Worship led by WCF Band



**Come** and join a service of “Nine Lessons and Carols”, hosted by the Sounds of Hope Singers and orchestra, on **Saturday 16th December** at **London Street URC** starting at **7:00pm**.

**Come** and sing some of your favourite traditional Christmas carols.

**Come** and listen to the 40 strong choir and orchestra singing some wonderful contemporary Christmas carols.

**Come** and rediscover the true meaning of the Christmas message through music and readings.

**Come** and join us for some light refreshments after the service, ask questions or just fellowship together.

**Come** and bring your family and friends and relax, and maybe kick start your Christmas celebrations.

**Come, admission is free to all.**





## London Street URC Christmas Party!

Saturday 2nd December 2pm - 4:30pm

Adults and children welcome,  
Refreshments,  
Games and DVDs for the children,  
Music,  
And a very special visitor!



Please sign up and read further information on the notice board in the concourse.

## Services of Reflection and Remembrance

Thursday 16th November, 7pm at

Church of the Good Shepherd  
Winklebury Centre,  
Basingstoke, RG23 8BU

Parking is available at The Winklebury Centre and in front of Castle Hill Schools.

St Peter's Catholic Church  
Jewry Street, Winchester,  
SO23 8RY

Parking onsite is limited. Please use public car parks nearby.

An opportunity to gather in either Basingstoke or Winchester to remember loved ones who have died. Refreshments will be served after the service. For further information, email: [chaplaincy@hhft.nhs.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@hhft.nhs.uk)



Please order online using the URC Bookshop's easy to use website [www.urcshop.co.uk](http://www.urcshop.co.uk) or by calling 020 7916 8629

### **Christmas gift ideas from the URC Bookshop**

Gifts and stocking fillers for all ages including new designs and bestsellers in the URC Bookshop's Christmas selection. From £2.99, plus p&p.

### **Charity Christmas cards**

New designs and bestsellers in the URC bookshop's Christmas card selection. All cards purchased raise money for a variety of Christian charities. From £2.99 for a pack of 10 cards with envelopes, plus p&p.

### **New merchandise**

Revolting Christians badges and hats, jubilee communion glasses, polo shirts, hoodies and much more. Ideal gifts and resources.

## **Pay as you can Craft Sale**

**Sunday 5th November to Sunday 12th November**

**Craft Items are priced, however please pay what you can.**

**Monies will be divided towards the work of our Hot Food Table and the Community Food Link**

**Payment by Cash or Card (Honour System will be in place)**

**Wessex Synod**

**Big Day Out**

**Save the Date: Saturday 4th May 2024**

at

**Hollycombe**  
STEAM IN THE COUNTRY



Please hold the date and think about who you will bring to join us for a fun filled day of activities and worship.

### **Eco Tip**

**God's Gift -- Our World**

**The Environment -- Our  
Responsibility**



The average UK household throws away £730 worth of untouched food every year. Bad for our pockets and bad for the environment. To avoid this:

1. Store ingredients properly to keep them fresher for longer;
2. Plan recipes and mealtimes; and
3. Get creative with leftovers.

More suggestions next month.

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

**Empty Printer Cartridges, Aluminium Containers and Foil, Batteries, and Plastic Milk Bottle Tops.**

**London Street URC**

**Carol Service**

**Friday 15th December at 6:30pm**

**A service of lessons and carols led by Revd. Josh Thomas,  
organist Peter Dixon.**



**The Service will be followed by mulled wine (non-alcoholic)/  
fruit punch and mince pies.**



**Thank you!**

**Rob and Christine Williams would like to express their grateful thanks for the lovely gift of flowers given to them after the service. The flowers were very much appreciated and enjoyed. Thank you to all involved in distributing these gifts.**

## MEMORIES

Revd. Josh Thomas reflects on the importance of what we leave behind.



I've often mused on November as being the month of remembrance and indeed, I've written church magazine articles on it before. We remember those dear friends we have lost on November 1st, we remember, remember on the 5th of November and on the 11th, we think of all of those who have lost their lives in conflict throughout the years. This week, as I've been reflecting on and writing my sermon, I've been immersed in a couple of scripture readings which have really hit home to me the importance of memories and what it is we will leave behind when we are gone. Hannah's prayer of praise in 1 Samuel 2 is such a well-known story in scripture and it is one that we often turn to if we need to illustrate the importance of saying thank you to God. She had promised to dedicate the life of her son to God and this prayer of praise is the outpouring of a heart that is eternally grateful for the gift and the responsibility that has been given to her.

Contrasting with this is a passage from 2 Timothy in which Paul who is nearing the end of his life, laments about those friends he has lost and the loneliness that he is feeling as a result of those partings. We have two readings here which contrast so vividly but I think they both serve as important reminders that we can take anything to God, whether we are feeling jubilant or whether we feel horrendous.

Hannah's prayer in particular led me to think what it is that we will be remembered for. Churches, unlike any other public space, have an interesting history of brass plaques. I can think of several places around all of the church buildings I visit regularly that have a plaque commemorating an object to someone who has gifted it in the first place. Whilst these gifts are so important and hugely valued, it is often the case that generations later, these names do not mean anything to the people using the building today. It is a sad reality that although these names are on our walls, our collection plates, in our hymnbooks etc, to many, they don't mean anything.

Hannah's song has been immortalised because it is such a humble but genuine outpouring of praise. Paul is remembered for sharing the good news and encouraging others to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Whilst for a season, it is lovely to have our names etched on to something, surely what is more important is the legacy we leave behind us? We are designed to be relational beings, this means sharing together in the extremes of life, praying for one another, caring for one another and sharing our stories together.

We will be remembered for the relationships we have shared with one another, for the impact that one encouraging word had on someone 50 years ago in their walk with Jesus. So, let's do our best to get to know one another, to walk the journey alongside one another and let's do our best to be remembered for the way we have shown Jesus Christ's love for the world in what we do and what we say.

## ARE YOU SCAM AWARE?

Rebecca Dumbleton shares her professional experience as we approach a time of giving and, sadly, scamming.



With Christmas fast approaching and, in this increasingly digital age, I felt it important to follow up on last month's Citizens Advice article regarding scams. Since Covid, scamming has increased exponentially, especially online. The main people being targeted are the older generation and those who are not as computer savvy, however, saying that, I am aware of all generations being affected, even those who work in the financial industry. All you need is for a call or message to come through at the wrong time and they potentially have a foot in the door.

I work for a high street bank and there are a few things we look out for when assisting our customers. This is not an exclusive list however, coupled with last month's article, I hope it will guide you so you stay safe:

1. Buying online: Does the website address bar have a https address (denoted by a padlock)? If possible, use PayPal or Debit/Credit cards

to pay. It is unlikely they will request you to transfer funds to their account but, if they do, check with your Bank that the details match and it is a reasonable request. Never pay by cash!

2. Receiving a message from a friend or family member: If they ask you to contact them on a new phone number because their phone is 'broken', always contact them using their existing details first. Be suspicious of anyone requesting funds but refusing to talk to you face to face, over video chat, or over a voice call.

3. Trusted phone calls: The Police, the Fraud Squad and your bank will NEVER call you and ask you to move funds from your account. They will NEVER use you to catch bank staff who are taking part in illegal activities. If you are contacted by your bank and they want you to give them any details, hang up and call the number you have on the back of your card either from a different phone or wait 10 minutes before using the same line. Fraudsters can spoof (imitate) the number they call from to make it look like it is from a trusted person. They can also hold the line open once you have hung up so when you call back you are actually talking with them not your Bank etc. Any legitimate financial institution will understand and wait for your call.

4. Charities: This is a very hard one to discuss due to the nature of their need. Most charities are legitimate and will display a charity number on their website which can then be double-checked at:

<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search>

Always pay by debit or credit card. Do not feel pressured into giving at any point and always kept in mind to only donate what you can afford.

A scammer's biggest weapon is secrecy and their biggest fear is people talking about their experiences, so if in any doubt, ask! Talk to family and friends, pass on the details of this and last month's articles. Your bank is there to help you and will happily answer any questions you have. Do not feel embarrassed or upset, we are happy to help. Remember, if it seems too good to be true, it more than likely is. Take time to think, do not be rushed into anything.

With open discourse and taking things slow, we will hopefully have a safe and enjoyable Christmas.

## THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Please remember the following people in your prayers...

Owen Collins and family

Beverly Harris

Joan Musselwhite

Archie, grandson of Chris Jones

The Patterson family

Beverley Cantwell

Eric & Christine Clucas

Stan & Sandra Marut

Claire Macro

Barbara Banbury

David Corfield

Betty Shipway

Mark & Chris Best

Doina Rasnita

Ali Jannesari

Joyce Cook

Hamid Baradaran

Maggie Morgans & family

David's daughter in-law Elaine

Zoe

Jim



## DAILY BIBLE READINGS



This month's assigned readings.

	Psalm	New Testament		Psalm	New Testament
1st	119: 89-96	Titus 2	16th	124	Hebrews 11: 17-40
2nd	119: 97-104	Titus 3	17th	125	Hebrews 12
3rd	119: 105-112	Philemon	18th	126	Hebrews 13
4th	119: 113-120	Hebrews 1	19th	127	James 1
5th	119: 121-128	Hebrews 2	20th	128	James 2
6th	119: 129-136	Hebrews 3	21st	129	James 3
7th	119: 137-144	Hebrews 4	22nd	130	James 4
8th	119: 145-152	Hebrews 5	23rd	131	James 5
9th	119: 153-160	Hebrews 6	24th	132: 1-5	1 Peter 1
10th	119: 161-168	Hebrews 7	25th	132: 6-12	1 Peter 2
11th	119: 169-176	Hebrews 8	26th	132: 13-18	1 Peter 3
12th	120	Hebrews 9	27th	133	1 Peter 4
13th	121	Hebrews 10: 1-18	28th	134	1 Peter 5
14th	122	Hebrews 10: 19-39	29th	135: 1-7	2 Peter 1
15th	123	Hebrews 11:	30th	135: 8-14	2 Peter 2

## 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			
<b>Mondays</b>	10:15am	Craft Group	
<b>Tuesdays</b>	5:45-6:45pm	Beavers	In Term Time. All in the Den except Scouts who meet in the Wessex Hall.
	7-8:30pm	Cubs	
	7-9pm	Scouts	
<b>Wednesdays</b>	10:15am	3Cs Coffee, Chat and Company	3rd Wednesday of the Month Only (15th).
	10:15am	Memory Tree Social Club	
	12:15pm	Lunchtime Prayers	

### November Worship Diary

5th	Some service information <b>Led by Revd. Josh Thomas; Musician: Mark Best.</b>
12th	<b>Led by John Sinclair; Musician: Alex Macro.</b>
19th	Some service information <b>Led by Mark Ward; Musician: Peter Dixon.</b>
26th	<b>Led by Peter Bentall; Musician: Mark Best.</b>

## Next Church Meeting:

November 19th (Sunday), 1:15pm

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

## Regular Events

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

## November Worship Diary

<b>5th</b>	<b>No Service at Old Meeting. 12:30pm Special Prayer Time for Persecuted Churches at Old Meeting.</b>
<b>12th</b>	<b>Laying of the Poppy Wreath and Two Minutes Silence during the service. Led by Philip Jones.</b>
<b>19th</b>	<b>No Service at Old Meeting. (Mark Ward preaching at London St. (10:30am), all welcome there.)</b>
<b>26th</b>	<b>Led by Ed Vassie.</b>

# 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]