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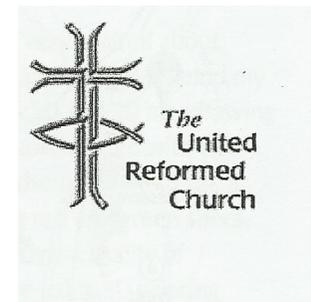
Website

www.solihullurcs.weebly.com

SOLIHULL

United Reformed Church

Christ Church - Hobs Moat— Olton



November 2014 Newsletter

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
the new creation has come:
the old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5.17

DECEMBER/JANUARY NEWSLETTER

Material for the December/January
edition is due to

Marian Batten, 0121 689 8213

mborchard@blueyonder.co.uk

by **Sunday, 23rd November**, please.





SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Formerly three independent churches, Hobs Moat, Olton and Christ Church, are now united as a single church. We are now holding only one Sunday worship service - using the premises in the different neighbourhoods for a month at a time.

November - Hobs Moat

December - various. see Calendar

January - Olton

As we develop our life together we continue to explore how we might continue to serve the two neighbourhoods and the town centre. This will involve some rationalisation and development of our various premises. Prayer is at the heart of what we are doing, as our desire is to be fulfilling God's calling to us as a Christian fellowship. We invite you to join us on the exciting, and at times scary, journey and look forward to seeing you in Sunday worship - wherever.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

AT

**SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
KINETON GREEN ROAD OLTON**

ON

SATURDAY 29th NOVEMBER

FROM

2.00PM

WITH

TOMBOLA, HAMPER, GAMES, CAKES,

CHOC-A-BOLA, BRIC-A-BRAC, TOYS,

JIGSAWS, TEAS, JAM & PICKLES

FATHER CHRISTMAS

MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION

PLUS MANY MORE STALLS

Bring family and friends to enjoy a fun afternoon

Entrance:- Adults 50p

Children free

Heaven Sent

Most of us have learned to live with 'voice mail' as a necessary part of our daily life when ringing an organisation. Have you ever



wondered what it would be like if God decided to install voice mail? Imagine praying and hearing the following: Thanks for calling Heaven. For English press 1, for Spanish press 2, for other languages press 3. Please select one of the following options: Press 1

for requests, press 2 for thanksgiving, press 3 for complaints, press 4 for all other enquiries.

I am sorry all our angels and saints are busy helping other sinners right now. However, your prayer is important to us and we will answer it in the order it was received. Please stay on the line.

If you would like to speak to God, press 1; Jesus 2; Holy Spirit 3. If you would like to hear King David sing a psalm while you are waiting, press 4; to find a loved one who has been assigned to Heaven, press 5 to enter his or her security number followed by the * sign. If you receive a negative response, please hang up and try area code 666. For reservations at Heaven, please enter JOHN followed by the numbers 316. For answers to nagging questions about dinosaurs, the age of the earth, life on other planets and where Noah's Ark is, please wait until you arrive.

Our computer shows that you have already prayed today. Please hang up and try again tomorrow. The office is now closed for the weekend to observe a religious holiday. Please pray again on Monday after 9.30am. If you are calling after hours and need emergency assistance, please contact your local pastor. Thank you and have a heavenly day.

From St. Peter's Simonstone Magazine

Mark reflects on Creativity - what we are about!

Many know that in a previous life I was a potter and the reality of working with very messy clay - 'the stuff of the earth' - and shaping out of it something useful, beautiful or meaningful is something I miss. While one might think that in the making of a pot you are in control of the creative process, there are strong elements of risk involved. The final process for a pot is the firing in a kiln up to temperatures as high as 1300°C within which the clay undergoes chemical changes and any glazes that are used come to show their colours etc. The potter simply has to watch and wait - the exciting part coming when things have

cooled down and you can see the final form and colour, while also discovering flaws and weaknesses that have led to cracks etc.



It is Isaiah who gives us the image of God as the potter, with us as the clay. Elsewhere we also get the image of the refiners fire - a different material, but the same action of heat to refine and bring to perfection God's creation.

I find it helpful in considering our role, as human beings in the world, to understand that we are called to share in God's creative process. Just as in the beginning, it is about our care for the world in which we live - its beauty and its ability to sustain life. It is also about relationships and the building of community. It is exciting to have some responsibility for creating something new and, as with the pottery process, there are things which will likely come as surprises as God shapes us and refines.

In moments when I yearn to get my hands mucky again with clay I am quickly reminded that ministry is a similar sort of creative process, with individuals and people together as the Church as the materials given me. I trust that I am enabled to play a small part in people's lives being shaped and refined as disciples of Jesus Christ.

All of us are similarly called and have responsibility in moulding our lives to the likeness of Christ and, beyond that, to be part of the process whereby our community and humanity take on similar characteristics. I trust that whatever shape our church takes in the

months ahead it will have God's thumbprint firmly in it, but also be a useful vessel.

The Midlands news recently reported the saving of the Wedgwood collection. I have to admit that I don't really 'go for' Wedgwood pottery, especially those pieces that are purely decorative. While I appreciate that things can have a value simply because of their beauty, I would rather invest in the more rugged stoneware pots from the Winchcombe Pottery in the Cotswolds, that are very practical and fulfil their household purpose effectively.

I hope that we can all get excited about creating something that is beautifully effective for God and for Solihull.

Mark Fisher

CALENDAR for NOVEMBER

Monday 10th 12.30pm Generations Lunch Hour @ Christ Church
7.30pm Elders' Meeting @ Hobs Moat
Tuesday 11th 10.30am Remembrance Service @ Newholme Gdns
Neighbourhood Coffee Morning @HM
2.00pm Holy Communion @ Hampton House
Sunday 16th 10.00am Fellowship Prayers within worship
11.45am Worship @ Star & Garter
Wednesday 19th 10.00am Worship @ The Grove
Sunday 23rd 4.00pm Churches Together on Olton Advent Service
Monday 24th 10.00am Praying with the Papers @ Olton
Tuesday 25th 10.30am Neighbourhood Coffee Morning @ HM
Saturday 29th 2 - 4.00pm Christmas Fayre @ Olton
Sunday 30th 3pm Blessing of the Crib in Mell Square

FUND-RAISING QUIZ NIGHT for

Solihull Churches' Action on Homelessness

Wednesday 19th November 7.30pm

The High Grove pub, Hobs Moat

Tickets £5 from Marian Vining or Mark

Bring your friends - make a team! Refreshments and raffle.

electricity. In town, there was no evening street lighting, and evening power cuts meant traffic lights were out of order and there was massive traffic chaos in complete darkness. Police are not usually available, as they are needed to man the ubiquitous road blocks. Apparently, revenue from the fines they impose is needed to pay police, civil servants and teachers... Many residents are despondent about these conditions, especially as 'important' areas like the well-off quarters and districts where government ministers live never suffer power cuts, and a programme to power traffic lights with solar panels has so far only reached those areas. In the same way, affluent areas get rubbish collections, while in middle-income and poor areas people have to burn their rubbish. These fires and fumes from diesel generators during power cuts are a real burden on the city's air quality.

The state of education is still difficult. This country, that once had the highest literacy rate in all of Africa, is now struggling to educate their children at all. The educational infrastructure has simply collapsed and people reckon it will take several generations to rebuild it. There are state schools - not entirely free, but fairly affordable - but they cater for 50 children per class and 2 sessions of different pupils per day. Some charities run low-cost private schools (like the school we attended), and those who can afford it will have their children educated at commercial private schools at a cost of \$2000 per term. We had occasion to ask some school-leavers about their plans for higher education, and they all talked in terms of studying in the US, Britain or South Africa. There was nothing for them locally.

F.Herring. *Part 2 of this report will appear in the next edition of Stories for Change.*

Commitment for Life Prayer

We pray for those who face injustice because of ruling parties who do not believe in democracy. For those who have no land rights, and those whose land is now on the other side of a separation barrier.

ZIMBABWE - Extract from Stories for Change 103

One person's experience

In July of this year, I went on my first ever trip to Zimbabwe, joining a group from Broadway United Reformed Church in Walsall with the specific task of helping at Falcon Junior School in Harare, a school founded by Broadway's current minister, Wilbert Sayimani, and his wife Irene. They had started the school in their local church in 2008, when they witnessed the collapse of educational provision. The school is financed privately, but the school fees are pitched so low that even less well off parents should be able to afford them. And yet, at the end of every term the school faces the problems that many parents haven't afforded the school fees and there is a struggle to pay rent for the premises and to pay the teachers.

We were accommodated with local families and received a wonderful taste of Zimbabwean hospitality. The families we stayed with were well enough off to be able to feed us and to look after all our needs. But we still got some insight into the difficulties life in Zimbabwe poses, even now while the country is said to be on a programme of recovery from the famine conditions of 2008.

I stayed with families where the grandparent generation was trying make ends meet without the security of drawing a pension, where they were looking after grandchildren and great-grandchildren during their time in education, while the entire economically active generation of their children were in the US, in Britain or in South Africa, supporting them from abroad to the best of their ability. Any food left over from our table was gratefully received by worse off neighbours.

The daily power cuts were impacting particularly harshly on school life. During our third week, there was no available power during school hours on any of the days. We had brought along computers and had installed an IT lab in the school, but the time-table for giving the children computer education was dictated by the availability of

FORGIVENESS - Good to Share says Mark

An invitation to share in the 'Flame of Forgiveness' at the Star and Garter home found me in their dining room with sixty residents and staff, along with children from Widney Junior School. The event was part of an initiative of the Forgiveness Project, focussing particularly on the centenary of the start of WW1. The lighting of a simple candle and a period for silent reflection were at the centre of a time to consider what forgiveness is. The children had their contributions and some poems to read. and I was there to reflect on the context of the scale of casualties in WW1 and was able to introduce the idea that, where we may find forgiveness difficult, we may find motivation in knowing that we are forgiven, by God.

The poignancy of the occasion was added to by a conversation I had before the event in the coffee lounge. Chatting to a lady resident I discovered that she had been resident in Solihull for over 60 years, but I was interested in her accent and learned that she had come to England from Vienna in Austria just before WW2, escaping Nazism. She found work for her parents, but before they could leave Vienna the war started. She never saw them again.

There was clear significance in the occasion for this lady but also, in different ways for all present. It struck me that here was one of the themes we might work with as part of our mission. It might be explored in all sorts of ways, but it would always resonate with the community around us and for us echo with those words of Jesus "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing."

www.solihullurc.org.uk

For those with internet access our church website is increasingly a place to find information, when you may have lost the paper version! Worship plans, Cell Group resources, Elders' and Church Meeting details and papers, Newsletters, Bulletins and Events are all there. There is also a gallery of photos from past occasions.

I dream of a church

A hymn written by Revd Dr Kevin Snyman who was inducted as the WM Synod Mission Enabler at the Synod Meeting on 12th October.

I dream of a church that joins in with God's vision
Of a people who live without counting the cost
She trusts in the Spirit of Christ Jesus' mission
Lifts up the oppressed with Good News for the lost.

I dream of a church that joins in with God's laughter
Rejoices in justice and shares all freely;
Turns over the tables of monied disasters
An abundance of mirth in a new Jubilee.

I dream of a church that joins in with God's prancing
In a swirling star-skirt made from light cosmic love:
Like the prophets of old who lead people by dancing
Unafraid of the Pharaohs enthroned up above.

I dream of a church that joins in with God's caring
As she rises to love the unloved refugee:
This church that shines light on corruption then daring
To forgive and embrace in God's comm-unity.

Dear God, would you make us a people like Jesus,
With his trust in your kingdom of unfailing grace:
A travelling band of peculiar people
On your journey t'wards joy and true life in this place.

Kevin Snyman - WM Synod Mission Enabler

be sure – it's likely that he would have been dark-skinned. In any case it matters not at all what he looked like. It's what he did and said that remains important, and his love and influence remains with us until this day and for eternity, whatever the colour of our skin – or his!

Carol Andrews

Poppy Day

Within the soil of Flanders fields
our British soldiers lie.
We owe our freedom to them all,
how sad they had to die.



For those young men, just in their teens,
each one a child, a son,
were all gunned down so cruelly,
when their lives had just begun.

And many a telegram there came,
to homes across our land,
to say a child of ours had died,
and no one held their hand.

Now they're with God, we can be sure;
He did their souls release.
We won't forget them; never will,
they gave their lives for peace.

For all the pain, the fear, the cold,
they had to suffer there;
we wear red poppies every year,
they're worn to show we care.

Carol Andrews Oct 2014

WHAT DID JESUS LOOK LIKE?

Have you ever wondered what Jesus looked like? As a child I thought I knew exactly what he looked like. He gazed down at me from my bedroom wall. There he was in his long creamy white robes, with a shepherd's crook in his hand, sheep (rather like Trixie's) all around him and one laid across his shoulder. He'd found 'the lost sheep'!

The Jesus in my picture had pale skin, blue eyes and brown hair and his face was very kind. I felt safe with him watching me there every night. What a comforting sight he was. As I grew up I no longer needed to see Jesus there on my bedroom wall. He was there beside me and in my head so the thought of what he looked like never occurred to me again – until I was 66 and recorded a song to put on Youtube. It's called 'Come to the Water' otherwise known as 'For Those Tears I Died'. It's by Marsha Stevens and is well known in America but less well known here. Type in 'Carol sings Faith – Come to the water', using Google search, and you'll find my video.

The song is all about Jesus so I needed several illustrative pictures. I usually use photographs that I have taken for my Youtube videos. But, strange as it may seem, I am not over 2000 years old and in any case cameras hadn't been invented when Jesus was alive! So I looked on the internet for suitable images.

In ancient icons Jesus looked rather stern and forbidding, so I dismissed those. Stained glass windows often depict Jesus but, though colourful, these didn't match the image of him that I wanted. The actor who played Jesus in the film Jesus of Nazareth – Robert Powell, looked just the sort of chap I was looking for. His face was kindly, compassionate and full of love. Yes, here was an updated image of the picture of Jesus that comforted me as a child.

But handsome and compassionate as Robert Powell looks, he is not Jesus and he is definitely European in looks. We'll never know whether Jesus was tall dark and handsome but of one thing we can

SUNDAY WORSHIP in NOVEMBER AT HOBS MOAT

2nd November

Mrs Wilma Frew - Communion

Joshua 3:7-17 Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37, Micah 3:5-12, Psalm 43
1 Thessalonians 2:9-13, Matthew 23:1-12

9th November

Worship Group - Remembrance

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25, Psalm 78:1-7, Amos 5:18-24, Psalm 70
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Matthew 25:1-13

16th November

Rev Mark Fisher - family worship

Judges 4:1-7 Psalm 123, Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18, Psalm 90:1-12
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Matthew 25:14-30

23rd November

Mrs Zaidie Orr - family worship

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24, Psalm 100 or Psalm 95:1-7a
Ephesians 1:15-23, Matthew 25:31-46

30th November - Advent

Mrs Fiona Elvins - family worship

Isaiah 64:1-9, Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18, 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

THANK YOU

Just to say 'thank you' to the person who handed my green jacket in when I left it behind at Christ Church, and also to Frank, the Church caretaker, who returned it to me. I am deeply grateful.

Mary Newbery

CHRISTMAS FAYRE, 29th NOVEMBER, 2 pm

Arrangements are going well, and we look forward to a successful afternoon.

Donations for the stalls may be left at the back of the church.



On Tuesday, 11th November at 7pm, Cynthia Parker will host a **Tombola Coffee Evening** at 78 Dovehouse Lane, Solihull, at which people are invited to bring Christmassy gifts suitable for the Tombola stall.

Decorations will be put up and tables dressed on Friday, 28th, at 6.30pm, when assistance will be appreciated.

OLTON JUNIOR CHURCH

Following the closure of Olton Junior Church we will no longer be collecting pennies. We would like to thank all those friends who over the years have contributed to the charities, both home and abroad.



Our final charity is the Ifakara Bakery Project in Tanzania. The total collected over the past two years is £170.16, and using the remaining funds we are making our donation £275. Thank you all so much.

Val and Sue

COME AND JOIN THE CHURCH CHOIR!

If you enjoy singing, please come and sing with us. You don't have to read music, or sing harmony, or even come regularly to choir practice on a Friday evening (though all of these can be helpful).



There is a great joy in singing hymns and carols in a small group, and through this helping the congregation as a whole. We would love you to come and share this with us.

Adam Pearce

OLTON

Prayers for, and News of, the Church family

Those we especially remember in our prayers are:

Neil and Elaine, and all those whose needs are not known by us at this time. We give thanks that Christine and Lilian have been able to join us in worship again, and that Gweno's cataract operation was successful.

There is also news of the Maskell family:

Congratulations to Helen Maskell who gave birth to Ben on 30th August, weighing in at 7lbs. All are well. Meanwhile her brother, Chris, has taken up an interim appointment as Acting Head of UK Trade and Investments for Mexico. He will move to be Head of UKTI for Nigeria, based in Lagos, in February.

Rita.

CHRISTIAN AID CHRISTMAS APPEAL

This Advent and Christmas the United Reformed Church is partnering with Christian Aid to deliver hope to mothers and babies around the world. Women and children in Kenya die every day in pregnancy and childbirth from preventable causes. Christian Aid partners are running an impressive project in south-west Kenya that will save thousands of lives of mothers and babies now and for years to come. URC churches can be a part of this incredible work by giving, acting and praying. The money raised for Christian Aid this Christmas will go towards this project and others like it, and the good news is the UK government will double every pound your church raises this Christmas – so even more lives can be saved in childbirth!

Envelopes will be in all three churches in December so please give generously and your generosity will be doubled.

Anne Cherry

HOBS MOAT

These friends are in need of our thoughts and prayers at this time. They all have their individual needs as they cope day by day.: Alf Andrews, Maureen Bellamy, Peggy and Harold Crosby, Jean and Brian Mather, Margaret McWilliam, Sue Roberts, Joan Shaw, Vera Thomas, Norman Wilkins, Nora, Irene Lambert and partner Keith, Terry Young. We pray for God's blessing on each of them.

Congratulations !

To Alf Andrews who has recently celebrated his 90th Birthday. Love and best wishes from all of your friends at Church.

Love and good wishes to Pat and Tom Combe who celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on the 23rd October

Jeanne.

Thank you!

I want to say a big thank you to members and friends of Hobs Moat Church for your love and best wishes on my 'Special' birthday. I love the twin-stemmed orchid.

With love from Alf.

CHRIST CHURCH

Please remember friends and families in your prayers, especially the following :-

Barbara and Keith Fisher; Brenda Cotes; Anne Lavery; Margaret and Brian Parry; Chris and Trixie Harman; Michael Hogg; John Higgins; Arthur Francis; Betty and Helen Dodd; Margaret White; Pam Meadows; Barbara and Alan Mence; Irene Sime; Wendy Jarvis; Jane Williams; Syd and Michelle; Beryl and George Skerratt; Cyril Chester; Ian Rogerson.

Alan

EducAid Africa

Dear Supporters,

I know Christmas seems far away but can I remind all sponsors that If they wish to send Christmas cards to their sponsored pupils, they should do so next month as they break up from their schools at the end of November.



Please send any cards addressed with the pupil's name and his or her school and mark it

c/o Mr Stephen Z. Arome
PO Box 86668
Mombasa GPO
Kenya.

Ian Carnell

COACH TRIPPERS UNITED

We have had some enjoyable trips this year, and now we need to plan for 2015. If you have any ideas as to where you would like us to go, please give them to either



Val Cross (706 9687) or

John Robinson (745 3516).

Please keep free the date of **Thursday, 15th January**, when we will enjoy a finger buffet at 1.00pm before deciding which places we will be going to. We have had a small rebate from Johnsons, and have decided to share it with everyone in this way.

We look forward to seeing all Coach Trippers on 15th January.

David Argall

CAROL CONCERT.

The Monday Night Ladies Club will be holding their annual Christmas Carol Concert with the Solihull Male Voice Choir at Hobs Moat URC on Monday 8th December. There is no entry charge but a collection and a raffle, with all proceeds going to the Cardiac dept. of the Childrens Hospital .



Tea , coffee and mince pies will be served at the end of the evening . Doors open at 7.30 pm. Everyone is welcome so please come and join us for an enjoyable evening.

Margaret Wilson

CHURCHES TOGETHER — CENTRAL SOLIHULL

The representatives of the Central Solihull Churches met on 15th October at St Helens Church commencing with a meal. 12 members were present.

Events

Crib Service. The annual service to bless the crib in Mell Square will take place on Sunday, November 30th at 3.0 pm.

Week of Christian Unity. The service to mark the week of Christian Unity will be held at St Helens on January 25th.

The mid-week lunch and Prayer Service will be held at Christ Church on January 21st from 12 noon to 2.0 pm. .

Lent Breakfasts. A small group has been set up to arrange the speakers for the Lent Breakfasts. These will be served at Wetherspoons in Poplar Road. The breakfasts will be followed by a short address.

Advent Prayer Hour. There is to be an Advent Prayer Hour on Friday, November 28th from 10.30pm to 11.30pm, at Carrs Lane Church Centre. It will be led by the Rev Carole Christensen. This is organised by the Women's Ecumenical Network of Birmingham Churches Together.

Everyone is invited to join their friends at all the above events and will be warmly welcomed.

The next meeting of the representatives will be held on Wednesday, February 4th.

Judith Kembery

UNION THEATRE

On behalf of Union Theatre can I thank everyone who attended the Harvest Supper, for the very warm welcome and for the very generous donation of £80.60 which will be added to other charitable donations we will make at our AGM. We have given to many charities over the years. Often we favour small local charities who are not well known and struggle for funds.

Union Theatre was started at Christ Church around 30 years ago by the late Pauline Brand. Pauline was a member of Christ Church for many years, and latterly the Church organist. Pauline was tireless in her work with young people. Several members have been with the group since it's inception, joining in their teens. Pauline certainly succeeded in keeping them 'off the streets'!



Our next production will be **Peter Pan** which is taking place at Christ Church on 4-6 Dec at 7.30pm. There will also be a matinee on Saturday, 6th, beginning at 2.30pm. The show is a lively modern version of this much loved story, with lots of singing and dancing. The large cast ranges in age from 10-60+. Ticket prices for the evening performances are Adults £12, Concessions £10 and Under 16s £5. Matinee prices are Adults £10, Concessions £8 and Under 16s £5.

If you would like tickets please see Gordon or Jackie Justham, phone 0121 784 4067, or go online at www.uniontheatresolihull.co.uk

We would love to see you there, and yes Peter, Wendy, John, Michael and Tinkerbell do FLY!

How?? Well by magic, and a little bit of fairy dust, of course. Come along and see for yourself!

Jackie Justham