



SOLIHULL

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat
Communities

April 2021 Newsletter

*But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of
the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my
Father's kingdom.*

Matthew 26: 29



SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Based in the town centre, Solihull URC seeks to minister and witness to the local community, the wider town and the areas of Olton and Hobs Moat where we have formerly had a worshipping presence.

We share our mission with other Churches and are in partnership with others in the community. We invite you to join us as we seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

www.solihullurc.org.uk
www.centralsolihullchurches.org.uk

LEADERSHIP TEAM

VACANT - **Minister**

Gordon Justham - **Church Secretary & Elder**

Linda Faber - **Mission Enabler & Lettings Administration**

Maureen Butler - **Elder (worship & prayer, charities, social activities)**

Barrie Jones - **Elder (Property, Health & Safety)**

Elaine Jones - **Elder (Administration, Data protection, Catering)**

Jackie Justham - **Elder (charities, social activities)**

Gordon Laurie – **Elder**

Chris Harman - **Elder**

Liz Amos - **Treasurer**

Areas of special responsibility are listed in brackets.

WORSHIP DURING APRIL

At the time of writing the country is not yet out of measures to restrict the spread of Covid-19. Although the rules of lockdown permit churches to open for worship the Elders have decided that it is safest for the congregation that we remain closed for communal worship.

We had hoped to open safely for worship from Easter Sunday. However, following fresh guidance from the Moderators of the thirteen URC Synods we will remain closed for the time being and review again in May when, hopefully the situation in the country will have eased. Please keep a look out for further information as we get nearer that time. We will continue with offering an online service through Zoom throughout April.

The Worship leaders for April are:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---------|---|
| 1st April | 7:00pm | Mr Ian Carnell - Maundy Thursday
includes Communion |
| 4th April | 10:00am | Mrs Linda Faber (Communion) (Just as He said: You will see me) |
| 11th April | 10:00am | Mr Ian Carnell (followed by Annual Church Meeting) (Just as He said: Peace be with you) |
| 18th April | 10:00am | Mr Gordon Justham (Just as He said: You are witnesses) |
| 25th April | 10:00am | Mrs Linda Faber (Just as He said: Do not refuse Him who speaks) |

THE LECTIONARY

Readings for Sundays in April from the Revised Common Lectionary are as follows. Please note that worship leaders are not obliged to follow the lectionary but you may be interested to know what the lectionary readings are for the specified Sundays. The readings in bold are the gospel readings for the day. An interesting challenge is to try and understand the link between the readings for a particular day.

- 4th April** **John 20.1-18**; Isaiah 25.6-9; Psalm 118.1-2 & 14-24;
1 Corinthians 15.1-11 or Acts 10.34-43 (Easter Sunday)
- 11th April** **John 20.19-31**; Psalm 133; Acts 4.32-35,
1 John 1.1 through to 1 John 2.2
- 18th April** **Luke 24.36b-48**; Psalm 4; Acts 3.12-19; 1 John 3.1-7
- 25th April** **John 10.11-18**; Psalm 23; Acts 4.5-12; 1 John 3.16-24

Gordon Justham

EASTER CROSS

If you find yourself near the church over the week following Easter, please take a look at the Easter cross which will be displayed this year in Union Road. Thank you for Chris and Trixie Harman for taking responsibility for this.

Linda Faber

A HAPPY EASTER TO EVERYONE!

Easter is a wonderful time, we celebrate the rebirth of Jesus, we enjoy the flower filled cross, the new life around us in our gardens and in the fields. But it is also a time when we remember the build up to Jesus rising from the dead. A time of horror, of lies, as Peter denied knowing Jesus, of pain, and the agony that Jesus, a man born to suffer, endured. I wonder how we would have coped in that situation?

Yet as I write this, I do not know what our situation will be at Easter. Will we be able to meet up with our families and friends? Will we be able to look forward to holidays and our 'normal' activities? For over twelve months we have been isolating, some of us more than others. It is a new way of life which we should be used to by now but I, certainly, have still found it difficult to accept and to cope with.

There are so many things that have made our lives difficult during Lockdown but let us put it all into perspective. For most of us, we have had neighbours, friends or family who have shopped for us, checked that we are safe and have phoned us for a 'chat'. We have, thanks to Linda, Gordon and Ian been able to worship and to reinvigorate our faith. I am sure that all of us have found comfort in prayer.

We have learnt new skills, to shop online, to Zoom and to be very conscious of our neighbour's needs. As we come out of Lockdown and back to our old habits, let us remember the good that has been achieved over the last year. Let us continue to be caring for others, as Jesus taught us, more ready to smile as we pass people in the street and to remember the power of prayer.

Trixie Harman

A Smile

*A smile costs nothing but gives much
It takes but a moment, but memory of it lasts forever
None are so rich that can get along without it
None are so poor but that can be made rich by it*

*It enriches those who receive, without making poor those who give
It creates sunshine in the home,
Fosters good will in business,
And is the best antidote for trouble –
And yet it cannot be begged, borrowed or stolen for it is of no value
Unless it is given away*

*Some people are too busy to give you a smile
Give them one of yours
For the good Lord knows that no one needs a smile so badly
As he or she who has no more smiles left to give.*

John Keats

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

The Annual Church Meeting will take place via Zoom on 11th April following the morning act of worship. Three current Elders (Gordon Justham, Barrie Jones, and Maureen Butler) have finished their three-year terms and all offer themselves for a further term. Mr Chris Harman, after many years loyal and dedicated service has decided to step down from the serving eldership and we thank him for all that he has done for the church over the years.

Please also note that Mrs Trixie Harman stepped down from the serving eldership during the summer of 2020 and we are also extremely grateful for the loyal and dedicated service she has given over the years. Both are keen to stress that, although they will no longer be serving Elders, they will still be around.

We have, to date, received two nominations for people to join the serving eldership team - Mr Ian Carnell and Mr Howard Cotes. A separate note will be issued prior to the Annual Church Meeting regarding voting procedures. The Annual Church Meeting will also cover the Annual Accounts, the charities to be supported throughout 2021 and an update on the redevelopment plans.

Gordon Justham

THANK YOU

I should like to thank all those who very kindly sent me cards on my 'milestone birthday'. They were very much appreciated as were the beautiful flowers that Trixie delivered on behalf of everybody at church. They brightened up my day. Thank you.



Sheila Durrant

PUT YOUR THINKING CAPS ON

After we eventually come out of lockdown, I am going to put together a survey to ask you your thoughts about what has been going on in the church over the past year and what you think we should be doing into the next one. Do you have any specific questions about these things that you would like to ask the whole congregation? If you do, they could be included in the survey, so let me know please.

Linda Faber

SCAH

Every month I receive an email detailing the activities of SCAH (Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness) who we support in various ways. This is the last information I received (edited from the detailed report).

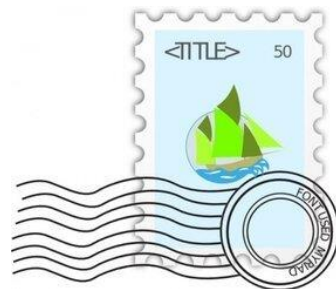
Linda Faber

February was a very busy month for our shoppers with assistance provided to 23 adults and 4 associated children. Compared with the previous month, January (when it appears that numbers are 'traditionally' low), the numbers of adults have increased sharply – by over 200%, but there has also been an increase of 27% in the number of adults compared with February 2020....an even greater percentage increase, month on month, than we saw for January 2021 vs. January 2020. The 4 associated children in February compared with 1 in February 2020 (but 6 in January 2021). The increases, which trustees anticipated last year as a result of some of the effects of the pandemic, are disturbingly high!

The average cost of a 'starter pack' was about £135 in January to (cumulatively) £114 by the end of February. This reduction demonstrates the cost-ameliorating effect that donors who have contributed in 'kind' rather than cash have had on the starter packs. Examples include 7,600 tea bags from the NFU. This month ASDA in Shirley, via its Community Champion, Janet, has also donated duvets, pillows and other items which go into starter packs...and we're very grateful!

USED POSTAGE STAMPS

In the March issue I wrote that I would try to find out exactly what happens to the stamps you collect and I send off to an organisation known as 'Xchange Master'. We have been told that the RNIB will benefit financially from their sale.



When the stamps arrive at Xchange-Master they are sorted into various types. Any old or high-value stamps are put to one side whilst the rest are batched according to weight. The batches are then advertised for sale on the internet. The price depends upon the weight.

I was surprised that it was worthwhile doing this but apparently there are potential buyers all around the world. The day I spoke to one of the staff he told me he had just sold a batch to a buyer in Peru. Surprisingly the most popular country is China. A proportion of the price received by Xchange Master is then forwarded to the RNIB.

Please keep cutting your stamps off the envelopes and I will collect them when we are back in Church.

Alan Kembery

MARIAMA

Thanks to everyone's generosity I was able to send a cheque for £332 in support of Mariama and her community. There were 19 contributors and I would like to thank them for their prompt and open-hearted response. Our last letter from Mariama is still languishing unread on the board in church so if I receive a new one, I will share it with you in the newsletter. Thank you.

Anne Cherry

RE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT – UPDATE

Back in December Church Meeting appointed a subcommittee to help drive forward the buildings project to create a modern eco-friendly and accessible building. The Church Meeting asked the subcommittee to report back to Church Meeting by March.

Since then we have faced a lockdown and the church has not been open for worship. In view of covid, the subcommittee felt that the easiest way to update everybody was to include an update in the newsletter. There will be an opportunity for questions and answers at the ACM on Sunday 11 April, which we be held on Zoom.

Despite the lockdown the subcommittee have been working very hard. We have held six meetings over zoom. One of those meetings was with an architect Colin Wilcox (he was the architect who was responsible for redesigning the church at Lillington and he regularly deals with Solihull MBC). We have also obtained Synod's approval in principle to carry out a redevelopment.

We have ascertained that the first step that we need to undertake is to make a formal pre-application submission to the planning department of Solihull MBC. We need their approval for any works that we wish to undertake and they will also tell us what they will not allow us to do. This is the only way in which we can find out what limitations the council will place upon any development.

There is a fee to be paid to Solihull MBC to cover the work they have to undertake in connection with the pre-application. We understand this fee may be in the order of £3,000. We have been advised that it is likely to take at least twelve weeks for the council to respond.

All of the members of the subcommittee were impressed by Colin Wilcox's knowledge and his previous track record of rebuilding churches. We have appointed him, as our architect, to prepare the pre application submission and he has been sent a detailed letter of

instruction in March. In effect the letter sets out our “wish list” of what we would like to achieve with a new building. This has been compiled after input from the congregation and the groups that use our facilities.

It is important to point out, at this stage, that any such application is only in outline. E.g. where we could build, positioning, height, access etc. Now is not the time to worry about all the details of the interior. Details of the interior of any rebuild would be fine-tuned at a later date.

What is important to stress is that our architect has advised us that it will take a minimum of two years but probably longer from when we submit any pre application submission to Solihull MBC until any building work is completed. With that in mind we have given him a budget and included a contingency to reflect the timescale involved.

What the subcommittee will be doing is to meet with the architect once he has prepared the pre-planning application. Then, we will need Synod to approve it and sign it off before it can be submitted to Solihull MBC.

Once we have heard back from Solihull MBC we will then report back to Church Meeting with any necessary plans for discussion and for approval to progress to the next stage which will be preparing documents and plans for the Planning Application. The whole committee are frustrated by how long the process will take but we have to follow all the necessary procedures.

The ACM on 11 April after the church service will take place by zoom. There will be the opportunity to ask questions. To make any discussion more manageable, if you do wish to ask questions at the ACM, could you please email your questions to Linda@family.org.uk in advance of the meeting. By doing it that way everybody should have the opportunity of hearing both the questions as well as the answers and so prevent everybody wanting to talk at once.

If you are not able to take part in the ACM please feel free to contact any of the members of the subcommittee to answer any questions that you may have.

Solihull URC Building Committee

Linda Faber (Mission Enabler, Chairperson)

Howard Cotes (secretary)

Gordon Justham

Barrie Jones

Beverley Hands

Ailsa Betts



CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 10TH-16TH MAY 2021

Christian Aid is a global movement of people, church and local organisations. They believe everyone is equal in the sight of God and for over 75 years this truth has inspired them to stand together in solidarity with the most marginalised global neighbours, of all faiths and none. Their belief that poverty can be ended is based on their understanding of scripture and the work of a creative loving God.

To mark their 75th anniversary they have recently published a book, *Rage & Hope: 75 prayers for a better world* includes prayers written by 75 Christian writers, theologians, leaders and activists from around the

world. Copies are available in paperback priced £9.99 or as an eBook priced £7.99 at spckpublishing.co.uk or on amazon.co.uk

Fund raising is vital, enabling their many life-changing projects around the world to continue. Once again, this year, because of the current restrictions, many of the usual events held to boost funds for Christian Aid cannot take place. However, Christian Aid is encouraging people to find new ways of raising money. Here are a few ideas:

Quizian Aid

On Saturday 8th May at 7pm Christian Aid will be hosting a fun filled online quiz suitable for all the family with some special guests, yet to be announced. You can sign up for this now at christianaid.org.uk
<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week/virtual-events>

300,000 step challenge

Take on Christian Aid's 300,000 step challenge throughout May, getting fit and raising vitally important funds through sponsorship.

You can sign up for this now at christianaid.org.uk

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week/challenge-yourself>

Julia intends to sign up for this and will be hoping to find people willing to sponsor her. (More information in May's newsletter)

Quiz

You may recall that last year we printed a Christian Aid quiz in the newsletter asking people to challenge themselves and submit donations. Once again, we hope to be able to include a quiz in May's newsletter with the answers available in June.

There will also be information about the various ways to donate to Christian Aid in May's newsletter.

Myles Ensor

EASTER REFLECTION

On 28th February last year my wife and I flew home from Adeje in Tenerife. The previous Friday we had made an emergency landing flanked by fire engines racing along beside us and the following day a sandstorm closed the airport. The hapless holiday makers who could not get home were put up in the Adeje H10 hotel, one of a series of popular all-inclusive hotels. They probably thought that was a bit of a bonus until a doctor from Lombardy arrived with his family and brought Covid 19 to the Island. The hotel went into lockdown surrounded by armed military.

A lot can happen in a week.

I was scheduled to decorate our kitchen on our return and had been accumulating newspapers. Little did I know that the job would get my undivided attention due to the first lockdown.

There is always a temptation to read old newspapers. Harvey Weinstein's fall from grace. From Hero to Zero. A lead article following Panorama's undercover footage demanding that we stamp out the curse of care home cruelty. The lockdown put the spotlight on care homes and the difficulties under which the staff were working. From Zero to Hero.

Yes, a year is a long time and no more poignant than the front page on March 9th 2020 stating that a third victim of coronavirus had died in hospital the previous day. We had no idea what lay ahead.

As we celebrate Easter we reflect on the one man who did know what awaited him following his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The disciples and the people of Jerusalem were joyful. They were convinced that Jesus was going to lead them to a new era. It was not, however, going to go to plan. At least it was not going to go to their plan and there were those awaiting the opportunity to cast their own influence over matters.

Worldly plans were no match for God's plan. All the disciples knew was that Jesus had gone from Hero to Zero in a matter of days and had ended up on a cross. They felt abandoned understandably and did not know what lay ahead. The situation was recovered very quickly, however with his subsequent resurrection and the experiences of the disciples in meeting him again.

Doubting Thomas has my sympathies and is also for me one of the finest examples of a disciple empowered anew. The existence of the Church of St Thomas in Kerala in India, built in AD 52, is evidence to that.

Time is on our side. Our Faith is on our side. The events of a few days turned into over two thousand years of Christian Worship. We shall prevail and meet again and be wiser and more appreciative of what we have and what is around us. As we say at the end of our prayers "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen"

Gordon Laurie

LENT GROUP

We enjoyed our Lent Bible Group on Zoom this year as we were not able to get together but it never-the-less enabled some fruitful discussion and an opportunity to get to know each other a bit more in a different setting. It is so easy to have brief ‘how are you today?’ conversations in church and never really get to know each other very well.

During the group we were able to share stories of things that had happened to us through our lives linked to the theme of the day, and wrestle a few answers to questions out of a designated Bible passage.

Our theme this year was ‘Images of the Spirit’ from a booklet of that name by Dale and Sandy Larsen. We looked at the idea of the Holy Spirit as wind/breath, Water, Fire, pledge/guarantee and Giver of Gifts. We had opportunity to talk about our experiences of the Spirit and explore some ideas of what we would like to receive from Him.

Each session ended with a time of prayer for others and ourselves, sometimes as open prayer and sometimes led by me, the group facilitator. Most people joined in again and again, so I hope that meant they enjoyed it and possibly even found something useful!

Linda Faber



Dear Liz Amos,

For your records I acknowledge receipt of a cheque for £172.12 as a donation to EducAid Africa from the congregation of Solihull United Reformed Church.

Your churches have supported us in the past and we continue to be in touch with our colleagues in Kenya in spite of the disruptions of the pandemic. Children in Kenya returned to school a few weeks ago now after a long break, but we are pleased that all our sponsored pupils have reported back and some are taking delayed exams just now.

We are grateful to all our supporters for donations throughout the last year and we shall ensure that your donation is put to good use. I am about to send a substantial transfer of funds to Mombasa to cover school fees in the next school year as well as uniform and equipment needed by new students. We are also supporting the nursery schools with fees and a feeding programme of maize porridge.

Our most recent project is to build a small open air style kitchen for the primary school we support as they are wanting to provide meals for pupils in school. They had just started this when Ian Carnell and I visited in February last year (little did we realise at the time how fortunate we were to get that visit in before lockdown!) and the facilities they had for providing meals at the time were inadequate.

We have had some funding for this from donations so we are hoping it will be put in place very soon. There is a possibility they may need

more funds to initiate a feeding programme as many of the children are from families where income is irregular and the local economy dependent on the rains in the rainy season to provide food from the family “shamba” (like an allotment)

Thank you again and please convey our appreciation of support to members of your congregation.

Jenni Kitson
EducAidAfrica Treasurer
March 10 2021

LENT - WALKING TOWARDS EASTER TOGETHER

The United Reformed Church have made a pack available on their website, called ‘Walking together towards Easter’. It is a Lent resource for churches to give to students, seniors, households and families to reduce isolation and offer hope in these challenging times.

The pack invites them to join a journey through Lent with opportunities to build connections with Jesus, others and their local church. The materials include a wide range of activity suggestions so there should be something for almost everyone to engage with in their own home.

You can access this pack on their website at <https://urc.org.uk/lent>

Stuart Mills

EASTER POEM (BY KATHLEEN GILLUM)

At Calvary the women cried
When they saw Jesus crucified.
They stared in horror at the Cross
Still weeping for their dreadful loss.

They laid him in another's grave,
That rich man Joseph kindly gave.
The sepulchre was made secure,
A watch was set outside the door.

The women went on that first day
At dawn, to where His body lay.
The tomb was sealed with mighty stone
Too hard for them to move alone.

On entering the burial place
An angel met them face to face,
And declared, "The Lord is Risen" –
Death couldn't hold Him in that prison.

From death to life the Lord was raised,
And on that day all heaven praised,
For He has set the captives free,
Death's swallowed up in victory.

I often ponder in my mind
What Jesus did for all mankind.
He conquered evil, fear and death,
And sent His Holy Spirit's breath

To set our hearts on fire for Him,
Redeeming from the snare of sin
For on that day at Calvary
One man gave up his life for me.

KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

Minister

VACANT

Church Secretary

Mr. Gordon Justham: 07540 289855 - 01564 776229 -
gordonjustham@talktalk.net

Website

www.solihullurc.org.uk

Hall Lettings: 07925 573259

Generations Project - enabling the Church in care homes

www.generationsssolihull.org.uk generationsssolihull@icloud.com

Moments (currently not meeting)

Mondays 10am—12 noon@ Central Solihull

MAY 2021 NEWSLETTER

Material for the May 2021 edition
Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393
stuartkmills@gmail.com
by Sunday 18th April please.