



SOLIHULL

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat
Communities

February 2024 Newsletter

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."

2 Timothy 3: 16



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

Ian Carnell – Elder (Chair of the Elders, Worship & Prayer)

Gordon Laurie - Church Secretary & Elder

Liz Amos - Treasurer

Linda Faber - Mission Enabler & Lettings Administration

Howard Cotes – Elder

Bev Hands – Elder (Children’s work)

Barrie Jones - Elder (Property, Health & Safety)

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

Areas of special responsibility are listed in brackets.

FEBRUARY 2024 DIARY DATES

Thursday 1st – Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall

Thursday 1st - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

Saturday 3rd - Saturday Café – 9am

Sunday 4th – Sunday Worship inc Communion led by Ian Carnell – 10am

Monday 5th – Moments Dementia Group – 10am

Monday 5th – Job Club – 10:30am

Monday 5th – Elders Meeting

Wednesday 7th – English Conversation Café - 10am

Wednesday 7th - Churches Together in Central Solihull meeting at St Helen's Church – 7:30pm

Thursday 8th – Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall

Thursday 8th - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

Saturday 10th - Saturday Café – 9am

Sunday 11th – Sunday Worship led by Margaret Marshall – 10am

Monday 12th – Moments Dementia Group – 10am

Monday 12th – Job Club – 10:30am

Tuesday 13th – Dining Out Lunch – 12:30pm

Tuesday 13th – Pancake Party – 3pm

Thursday 15th - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

Sunday 18th – Sunday Worship led by Ian Carnell – 10am

Monday 19th – Moments Dementia Group – 10am

Monday 19th – Job Club – 10:30am

Wednesday 21st – English Conversation Café - 10am

Thursday 22nd - Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall

Thursday 22nd - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

Saturday 24th - Saturday Café – 9am

Sunday 25th – Sunday Worship led by Linda Faber – 10am

Monday 26th – Moments Dementia Group – 10am

Monday 26th – Job Club – 10:30am

Wednesday 28th – English Conversation Café - 10am

Thursday 29th - Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall

Thursday 29th - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

ROTAS

Please sign the rotas at the back of church if you can serve in any of the following roles. Thank you to those who have volunteered:

Sunday Welcome (2 people needed each week)

Serving Coffee (2 people needed each week)

Providing flowers for the Communion Table

Please consider if you can learn how to serve in any of these ways for the first time. If you have no previous experience in serving in any of these ways, we would be more than happy to help you.



SYNOD REP

We still do not have a Synod Representative. The purpose of the role is to keep us in touch with what is happening in the wider church, help us to access resources and personnel that we could make use of, and to attend the Synod meetings only a couple of times a year.

Could you take on this role to keep us in touch with the wider church? Please speak to Gordon Laurie if you are interested in finding out more.

Linda Faber

SATURDAY CAFÉ URGENT REQUEST

We have had an excellent response for volunteers over the last seven years, and I would like to thank them for their support. However unfortunately we are in need of more help, especially if anyone is on holiday or is unable to cover. We usually work in pairs and training will be given.

We have found it very rewarding, enabling us to have conversations and build relationships with those who use the café. The café is open every Saturday during term time from 9.00am -11.30. If you are able to come and join us and help to keep the café open please contact me and I will talk to you about the details. Many thanks.

Elaine Jones

DO YOU ENJOY SINGING?

If yes, why not come along and join our friendly SINGING FOR PLEASURE group.

We sing a mixture of popular, folk, classical and sacred songs. We meet in the church cafe on Thursday afternoons at 2pm. Usually we sing for about an hour and then we have refreshments and a chat.

Most of all we have fun while making music.



It only costs £2.50 which includes the music. Why not try it. No audition needed. Free taster session. Please see me for more details.

Janet Ince

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The 21st of January was the Sunday of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We marked this week in Solihull by having a 'pulpit exchange'. We swapped preachers with the C of E in Temple Balsall arranged by Ian Carnell who went there to lead worship, and we enjoyed worship led by their new vicar Debbie Collins.



In the afternoon, there was a service organised by Churches Together in Central Solihull (Elaine and Julia are our representatives on the steering group and Maureen is our representative at Churches Together in Olton). Everyone from all of the churches in Solihull were invited to worship together at the service which was hosted by St Augustine's, the Catholic Church. Pretty much every church took part in leading the service in some way and the sermon was delivered by Jonny Lee, the senior Pastor from Renewal. Thanks go to Father Dominic for organising those who would lead each piece of the order of Service. Thanks to everyone who attended – it is pointless without you!

Linda Faber



THANK YOU

Hello Elaine, just wanted to say thank you from all of us for the lovely donations, it is really appreciated.

**Henna Jaffery, Refuge Project Worker
Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid**

A belated thank you for prayers, cards and telephone calls when my husband Graham passed away in October. It was good to know that so many people were thinking of us and we really appreciated your kindness. Thanks again to Ian for such a lovely service, it was perfect.

Beryl Nix & Family

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

On the last day of last year I gave out a list of different areas of church life produced by the URC. All of the areas listed are a part of our church life all the time, but at that service, and through email afterwards, I asked people to indicate 3 or 4 areas which they felt the church should be emphasising in 2024. I asked people to share thoughts along with their choices if possible. We can't guess what you are thinking.

There are some ideas/questions raised which we will be thinking about and responding to in due course. No one put their name on their sheet (you weren't asked to) and so we cannot respond in person to individuals unless you make yourself known to the Elders.

The areas which people most indicated should be emphasised in 2024 are the areas of 'Spirituality and Prayer' which came with the supporting sentence, "We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ and developing our discernment of where God is, and what God is calling us to do, by reading, and studying, the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit." and 'Church Growth' which came with the supporting sentence, "We will be a growing church with and increasing membership."

The Elders feel that there are enough challenges with those two matters and so have not chosen a third area to pursue as well. All 10 statements received ascent from at least one person. The most selected was chosen by 12 people. I received 17 responses.

So in 2024 look out for more encouragement from the church for you to engage with God's work in these two areas of 'Spirituality and Prayer' and 'Church Growth'.

Linda Faber

DINING OUT LUNCH

Come and enjoy a leisurely lunch and a chat in our café style restaurant

on

Tuesday 13th February at 12.30 pm

£4.00

ALL ARE WELCOME

MENU

Warming Sausage and Bean Casserole

.....

Pancakes

.....

Tea or Coffee



Please book by contacting Elaine 0121 744 6067 or email
vej46@yahoo.co.uk

By Thursday 8th February 2024

REFORM MAGAZINE

We currently have several subscribers for this magazine. It is described as follows:

“Reform is a fresh and challenging magazine exploring theology, ethics, personal spirituality, and Christian perspectives on social and current affairs. The magazine is for thinking people who enjoy reading about Christian ideas from a range of viewpoints. It features writing from journalists, academics, politicians, campaigners, scientists, and religious leaders. As well as high-profile interviews, in-depth features and book, music and film reviews, Reform carries letters and a regular light-hearted column. The magazine is published 10 times a year by the United Reformed Church but has readers from all Christian denominations, as well as readers from other faiths and from no faith tradition.”

I am the contact for Solihull URC. I need to put in this year's order. The latest copy of the magazine is on the table at the back of the church if you would like to take a look. If you wish to join our list of subscribers, would you please let me know by no later than **11 February**. My email address is howard@cotes.me.uk or alternatively give me a ring on 01676535692. The cost is £29.50 pa which covers 10 issues.

There is an alternative option should you wish. Instead of a paper copy you could have a digital copy by email in which case the cost would be £18 for 10 issues.

The paper copy of the magazine is sent to me, and I arrange to distribute it to all subscribers. I look forward to hearing from you.

Howard Cotes

PRAYER ON SUNDAYS

On many Sundays the worship leader will include in our intercessions, (prayers for others) prayers for specific situations or individuals known to us. One of the ways you can alert the worship leader to your prayer request is to note the bare details, or first name only, on a piece of paper and place it in the offertory basket before church. These will be brought forward and given to the worship leader with the offertory.

(Duty Elders please remember to explain to visiting leaders what they are or they won't know to include them.)

Also, if there are urgent and/or weighty prayer requests please contact the prayer chain through Rosalind Smart whose phone number is in the church phone directory. Your request for prayer will be passed to those on the prayer chain.

If you would like to join the prayer chain as someone willing to be contacted to pray, please contact Rosalind.

Linda Faber

SOLIHULL CHURCHES ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS: THE MONTH OF ACTION FOR FINANCIAL DONATIONS

In previous years SCAH has organised a flag day to help raise much needed funding. During the pandemic we were, of course, unable to have a physical flag day event so since 2021 we have held a virtual flag day which has proved far more productive and brought in much needed additional revenue, so thank you to those kindly donated.

We call this virtual flag day our MONTH OF ACTION.

SCAH relies on the fantastic support and generosity shown by you, our Christian and faith community, and as ever we are very, very grateful for that support. In 2023, our expenditure has exceeded our income and that is of course unsustainable if allowed to continue. We need to address that as a priority. **So, we need your help again please.**

Please go to www.scah.org.uk, click on the 'Fundraising and Donors' page, then click on the 'CAF Donate' button...and donate a minimum of £5. You will be helping enormously. As an ecumenical Christian organisation, SCAH does not judge people...it just tries to help them. Thanks for your generosity. Virtually every penny donated goes to help someone in need.

Unable to give online? There will be a basket at the back of church each Sunday in February to receive your donations for SCAH. We at Solihull URC are founder members of this charity and continue to be their physical base to house their stock of items they provide in starter packs for those being placed in housing for the first time. Please look out for the list of new items they collect and consider giving at other times of the year as well.

SCAH

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF CHURCH GROWTH

This year we are focusing on the two topics of 'Prayer and Spirituality' and 'Church Growth' selected by the Elders from the feedback we were given from you all: those of you who returned the information sheet or offered verbal or written feedback.

This being so, our look through the book 'Towards a theology of Church growth' that we began last year continues to be relevant and important. This month we continue by looking at chapter 7 titled 'The Prodigal Spirit and church growth' by Graham Tomlin. I will share a few paragraphs that caught my attention and some questions about how we might think about, and use, what we read.

"In terms of church growth [in the UK and globally]...the key factor that they have in common [amongst the growing churches] is that most of these churches are either Pentecostal or Charismatic in character or origin.

...the question is why? What is the dynamic that explains this?

...At the heart of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity is the invocation of the Spirit upon the people of Christ, in other words, the explicit expectation of the Spirit's direct presence and power on the believer and the church... Neither individual Christians, nor the Church as a whole possess the Spirit. Asking is part of the way in which the Spirit is given. The church needs to ask and ask continually... Invocation of the Spirit is something the whole church does, but perhaps Pentecostals and Charismatics do it with a little more confidence and expectation!"

For us at Solihull URC: What are your immediate thoughts to this presentation of this commonality in growing churches around the world and in our own country? Do you find it interesting or challenging? Do you become defensive or does it open new ideas to you?

[One understanding] of the Spirit's role in the Trinity emphasises the spirit's expansive, missionary purpose. The Spirit is sent out from the heart of God, from the Father and Son to draw us back into the love that exists at the heart of God...This movement outwards is not a secondary activity of God but is part of His very being...This perhaps helps us to see theologically why Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, churches that constantly invoke the Spirit on the people of Christ, tend often to grow. To invoke the presence of the Spirit on the people of Christ is to be caught up in this missionary movement of God towards His world.

For us at Solihull URC: To what extent do we demonstrate that we are caught up in the missionary movement of God towards His world? Is there enough evidence that those outside the church can see beyond reasonable doubt that God is at work here?

Linda Faber



FUNDRAISING APPEAL

I'm abseiling down Millennium Point to raise money for NICE!

For those who aren't aware, NICE (National Institute of Conductive Education) are a charity based in Moseley providing a range of flexible services, such as physical therapy, to adults and children with movement disorders. Harry, our eldest, has attended services at NICE since 2020, and has really benefited from their support and guidance.

NICE are organising the event on Saturday 13th April, and I'm abseiling to help support the charity with their work. If you would like to make a donation towards their work, please let me know either in-person, or email me at samjensor@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Sam Mills

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The next World Day of Prayer is on Friday 1st March. There will be opportunity to pray at any time of the morning or early afternoon at our church using prayer stations to guide individual prayer. Some of the prayer stations will be put together by other churches but if you would like to help put together the rest, please speak to me. The World Day of Prayer material this year is provided by the women of Palestine rather appropriately on the theme of “I beg you, bear with one another with love” from Ephesians ch 4 v1-7. This has influenced the focus of the stations and some of the ideas for presentation and interaction.

We won't be using the service they provide but there will be 20 minutes of prayers led from the front in the middle of the day for those who would like some community guided prayers as well as the opportunities to pray alone. Come and speak to me for more information.

Do you know people who have got out of the habit of going to church who used to? This might be perfect for them. They don't have to engage with formal church, but it is an opportunity to come into a building again and reawaken their faith and engage with God in a way that is bigger than their internal conversation with God.

Our church will be open for this for private prayers using the prayer stations for inspiration and ideas 10am -2.30pm with 20 minutes of prayers from the front at noon.

Linda Faber

UNANSWERED PRAYER

Many years ago I participated in a Thursday evening Prayer Group hosted by the then Minister, Wilfred Biggs. Wilfred told us that he had not prepared his sermon for the coming Sunday as he wished to give the Prayer Group the opportunity to set the theme. I suggested Unanswered Prayer and he took that on board. My memory of his sermon was that we could ask God for anything; we just might not get it!

I have experienced Unanswered Prayer in the past and it was a challenge on my faith at the time. On the balance sheet I have had prayers answered and have thanked God for that. So, there have been negatives and positives, bad experiences and good experiences. From what I have seen and heard of Artificial Intelligence (AI) there would appear to be both evil and good usage. On the one hand it will make scams more professional looking and believable and on the other hand it may help make breakthroughs on currently incurable diseases happen quicker.

I decided to ask AI for 100 words on Unanswered Prayer. The following is what it came up with:-

“Unanswered prayers often perplex us, leaving an ache within. We yearn for resolution, seeking solace in faith. In these moments it’s vital to embrace the unknown with patience. Unseen reasons may underpin these unmet desires, guiding us towards unseen paths. Sometimes it’s not a denial but a redirection toward something greater. Unanswered prayers can foster resilience, fortifying our spirits with endurance. They teach us to find peace amidst uncertainty, nurturing a deeper understanding of trust and hope. Although we may not comprehend the reasons now, unanswered prayers may ultimately lead to unexpected blessings, unveiling new opportunities beyond our present perceptions.”

Prayer is both a collective thing and a personal thing and as a Church in the coming months we will be giving it more prominence and attention.

Gordon Laurie

ADVANCE NOTICE

2024 holds the 10th anniversary of Solihull URC forming from the three churches at Hobs Moat, Olton and Central Solihull. We are going to hold a special service on Sunday 17th March 2024. Please write the date in your diaries and come and celebrate the occasion with us if you can.

Looking further ahead, 2025 is the 200th anniversary of the formation of the nonconformist church of which we are the present-day congregation. Many changes, and ups & downs, have happened over those two centuries but we are still here! I want to make a whole year of celebrations but we will be holding a full weekend of activities on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd November 2025. Please avoid booking your holidays that weekend if you can, as we would like to have as many join in as possible.

If you would like to join a group thinking up ideas, and organising activities, for those bicentenary celebrations please speak to me. I am already putting into place some plans.

Linda Faber

NEW URC PODCAST

The all-new United Reformed Church podcast from the Reform magazine team is now available!

Presented by Stephen Tomkins, Editor of Reform magazine, and Ann-Marie Nye, URC Communications Officer and Digest Editor, the podcast is available on Spotify and all major podcast streaming platforms.

In the first episode of the new series, they explore “Will the Church Life Review change the URC?”.

[You can listen to the latest episode here](#)

To listen to past seasons and keep up-to-date with latest episodes, [follow The United Reformed Church Podcast](#)

Stuart Mills

KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

Minister

VACANT

Church Secretary

Mr. Gordon Laurie – 07500 902593 – gordonjlaurie@gmail.com

Church Phone Number

0121 709 5505

Website

www.solihullurc.org.uk

Hall Lettings: 0121 709 5505

Safeguarding: Melanie Tillman - 07511 084840

Generations Project - enabling the Church in care homes

www.generationssolihull.org.uk generationssolihull@icloud.com

Zoom Details

Meeting ID: 865 7763 7936

Passcode: 986653

MARCH 2024 NEWSLETTER

Material for the March 2024 edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

stuartkmills@gmail.com

by Sunday 18th February please.