



# SOLIHULL

## UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat  
Communities

**May 2023 Newsletter**

*"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of  
wisdom."*

***Psalm 90:12***



## **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](http://www.solihullurc.org.uk)**  
**[www.centralsolihullchurches.org.uk](http://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**

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

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

Areas of special responsibility are listed in brackets.

## MAY 2023 DIARY DATES

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup>** – Moments Dementia Group – 10am

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>** – Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>** - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup>** - Saturday Café – 9am

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup>** – Sunday Worship and Communion led by Ian Carnell – 10am

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>** – Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>** - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>** - Saturday Café – 9am

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>** – Joint Sunday Worship with Hong Kong Christian Fellowship led by Ian Carnell – 10am

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup>** – Moments Dementia Group – 10am

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup>** – Shout Out for the Girls – 10am

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup>** – Job Club – 10:30am

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>** – Churches Together Prayer Lunch – 12:30pm

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>** - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>** - Saturday Café – 9am

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>** – Sunday Worship led by Dr Rodger Charlton - 10am

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>** – Moments Dementia Group – 10am

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>** – Job Club – 10:30am

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup>** – Linda Faber leading a lesson at Yew Tree Primary School – 1:30pm

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>** – Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>** – Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>** - Saturday Café – 9am

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup>** – Sunday Worship (Pentecost) led by Linda Faber – 10am

**Monday 29<sup>th</sup>** – Moments Dementia Group – 10am

## **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.

## **SCHOOLS WORK**

I now have dates when we are going to be leading lessons at Yew Tree Primary School. If you would like to join me with any of them, please speak to me as you need to get a DBS check from the school before you can come along. I would love to take some people with me as we did before! All the lessons are 1.30-2.30pm:

- **Wednesday 26th April** Year 3 will be exploring the life of Joseph
- **Wednesday 24th May** Year 1 will be exploring the story of Jonah
- **Tuesday 13th June** Year 2 will be exploring the Parable of the lost sheep
- **Wednesday 28th June** Year 4 will be exploring the life of Moses

**Linda Faber**

### **LEISURELY LUNCH**

Unfortunately there will not be a leisurely lunch in May. The next one will be on June 13th. Information to follow in the June newsletter. Many thanks.

**Elaine Jones**

### **SYNOD REP**

It is more than a year since our last synod representative stepped down from her role and we would like a new volunteer. 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 we could make use of and to attend the Synod meetings only a couple of times a year.

### **AWAY DAY AT HOME**

We are going to hold an 'away day at home' on Sunday June 11th. The content of the day will be Sunday worship followed by discussion and fellowship over an extended time together. We will begin the day with our normal Sunday worship service followed by refreshments as usual. If you are then interested in staying we will have a discussion followed by a bring and share lunch.

Following that time together we will again have some teaching and discussion time and aim to finish at about 3.30pm. If you have a topic that you would like us to focus on for the day then please let me know and the Elders will consider what we look at.

**Linda Faber**

## **AN EASTER REFLECTION**

In our garden we have an Eastern Pasque Flower. It sits quietly all year round and then bang on schedule each Easter it blooms profusely with bright blue petals and a yellow centre. Like many plants it has alternative names and is also known as the Prairie Crocus or Cutleaf Anemone.

This particular flower is our private indication that Easter is upon us. The more obvious flowers with religious connections include the Easter Lily which is the traditional Easter flower often associated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Iris which is said to symbolise the Passion of Jesus.

Although something I dug out of the garden many years ago when our grandchildren came along, Lily of the Valley is also known as Mary's tears.

After a busy and enjoyable Easter Sunday, my wife and I set off on Easter Monday to join a river cruise on the Rhone in Provence. It was there that I came across the Judas Tree for the first time. They were in full bloom. Pretty but I think sullied by their name and connection. A bit of research into the name can turn into a day's work quite easily especially when you find many different interpretations of Judas's intentions and subsequent events.

I am not going to attempt a treatise on the subject. Suffice to say that I am glad to have made the tree's acquaintance and enjoyed its blossom but it is hardly a substantial branch network which would give credence to the popular version of Judas's demise that it went slightly wrong!

**Gordon Laurie**

christian

aid

coffee



morning

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May: 10am-2pm

SOLIHULL METHODIST CHURCH HALL



WOW! This Christian Aid Coffee Morning is fab!



Coffee morning  
Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May



Books Books **Books**

**CALLING ALL PAPER BACK BOOKS**



Once again, Solihull URC will be supporting Christian Aid week by running a second-hand book stall at the Christian Aid coffee morning to be held at Solihull Methodist Church on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

**WE URGENTLY NEED YOUR PAPER BACK BOOKS. WE WILL START COLLECTING IN APRIL. PLEASE LOOK OUT FOR COLLECTION BOXES AT THE BACK OF THE CHURCH OR IN THE NATTERY.**

**Myles Ensor**

(I would appreciate any offers of help on the book stall 10-2 pm)



## TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF CHURCH GROWTH

Continuing through the book 'Towards a theology of Church growth' this month, we look at the chapter titled 'The Kingdom of God and Church Growth in the New Testament' by Mark Bonnington.

Mark starts by highlighting the emphasis in the gospels on the Kingdom of God, and Jesus proclamation of it being everywhere in what He said and did. Then he goes on to talk about the early church and how this Kingdom bigger 'picture' is what we must keep in mind. Below are three things he said caught my eye.

With the Kingdom as a backdrop, "the vision of early Christianity could never narrow to a this-worldly movement... The discovery of a purposeful and forward-thinking church ... can never have survival/mission/growth\* (\*delete as appropriate) in its sights as its final goal." "In early Christianity the sights are always higher and the canvas broader—Christian community has more than a global scope and missionary goal... The Kingdom context locates believers within the purpose of God in all human History."

***QUESTION FOR SOLIHULL URC: Do we feel that all that we are, and do, are a part of building the Kingdom of God or do we have our eyes on a lower horizon, maybe only looking at the edge of our own bunker? Or, to rephrase in simpler terms, are we building for God's purposes or are we concerned with building our own church only? What evidence can you give to support your viewpoint?***

"The first churches grew because the gospel was foundational to their life and through it the life transforming power of God created its own dynamics of conversion and community. Perhaps this is also the genius of many contemporary forms of church, especially in their more evangelical and Pentecostal varieties, which generate communities

where the power of Word and Spirit are vital forces in their common life.”

***QUESTION FOR SOLIHULL URC: Do you think that the gospel is foundational to the life of our church? In what ways?***

In the New Testament church “conversion meant quite radical social and religious change. It meant giving up many practices and withdrawing from social activities with religious overtones. There was no such thing as a secular mindset in the ancient world. Everyone had some religion and early Christianity made exclusive claims that had radical, social and relational consequences.”

“The big claims of the gospel at a theological level were matched in practice by changes of patterns of life and behaviour. A slave converted and wanted to go out early or late to meet other believers. He made up for it by working harder. A household converted and the household gods disappeared from the corner of the room. The master avoided temples of the gods but instead invited people to dine with him in his own house. When he did so he omitted the traditional libation to his guild’s divinity and instead thanked the God of heaven for the meal. Insider and outsider alike knew something had changed and the reasons why were freely on offer.”

***QUESTION FOR SOLIHULL URC: Are there things that should change in our homes and practices to reflect our status as Christians or have we allowed some to slip by because “they are not doing any harm”? Should we be giving more attention to our outward witness which is given by our lifestyle?***

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT WE MIGHT MAKE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THIS SERIES OF ARTICLES. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN A GROUP TO TALK THROUGH SOME OF THESE

QUESTIONS, PLEASE LET ME KNOW AND WE WILL SEE IF THERE IS A VIABLE OPPORTUNITY.

**Linda Faber**

### **CHRISTIAN RESOURCES EXHIBITION**

The Christian Resources Exhibition is a 'trade' show where people with anything and everything to do with church and mission exhibit their wares, to sell stuff or just inform the wider church about what they do. There will be everything from banners to Bibles, heating to seating, puppets to pulpits all with stands. There is a full list of exhibitors of the CRE website. There are going to be about 150 stands included.

This year they are coming to our doorstep, for the first time, to Cranmore Park in Shirley on 8th and 9th of November 2023. The Elders are going on the 8th so if anyone else wants to go, let me know asap and I can include you in the group ticket. Group ticket prices are £3 per person, or if you are buying individually £4 in advance, or tickets are £8 on the door.

**Linda Faber**

### **THANK YOU**

Barrie would like to thank everyone for their good wishes and cards that he received for his recent birthday. He had a great surprise party and a wonderful holiday in Rome to celebrate. With many thanks.

**Elaine Jones**



**Join us on the  
Rutland Walk of Hope**

**Saturday 13 May 2023 at 10:30am**

## You're invited to the Rutland Walk of Hope

Will you join us on Saturday 13 May 2023 as we walk around the beautiful peninsula of Rutland Water and raise money to transform the lives of people affected by leprosy? Pop the date in your diary and be sure to invite all your family and friends!

The walk will kick off from St Andrew's Church, Hambleton, LE15 8TL at 10:30am. It will be about 5 miles long and we expect it to take 2 ½ hours, but do feel free to join us for a shorter section of the route.

Afterwards, we'll share refreshments together at Hambleton Village Hall.

As we walk together, we'd love to make a difference for people affected by leprosy who so often find walking a challenge. A pair of orthopaedic sandals costs just £10 and protects the feet of a person affected by leprosy from injury and lifelong disability.

Perhaps you could ask your family and friends to sponsor you to provide sandals for 10 people affected by leprosy as you walk?

You can set up a sponsorship page using our Virtual Collection Box here:

<https://fundraise.leprosymission.org.uk>

If you'd like to come please let me know.

Guy Willcock

07940 721179

GuyW@TLMEW.org.uk

## **ENGLISH CLASSES**

It has come to our notice through the job club that there is a need for cheap or free English conversation classes for those who find themselves in Solihull from overseas. Some of these people are very much in need of the basics but others would like to advance to enable them to get work.

The Elders have agreed that this is something that we could look into holding as an activity of the church. If you have any free time and would like to be a part of starting this new venture please see me as soon as possible.

We will not be giving English lessons but will probably use pictures and articles to stimulate conversation around a particular topic each week. It will be group discussion and no one will be required to be alone as an English speaker in a group unless they have said they are willing to do that, we will always work as a team. The way we do things will be open to input from all the volunteers and will no doubt develop according to the needs of those who come.

**Linda Faber**

## COACH TRIPPERS UNITED 2023 ITINERARY

MAY 18TH Gloucester Warwickshire Steam Railway (Drop off Broadway/ Pick up Cheltenham)

JUNE 15TH Weston-Super-Mare

JULY 20TH Llangollan Viaduct boat trip

AUGUST 17TH Crich Tram Museum/Matlock Bath

SEPTEMBER 21ST Salford Quays

OCTOBER 19TH Oxford

Pick up point West Warwick Sport & Social Club, Grange Road, Solihull at 8:30am.

The cost will be £25 including car parking and driver tip plus entrance fees where appropriate in cash.

To book contact David Argall on [davidargall185@btinternet.com](mailto:davidargall185@btinternet.com) or 0121 704 4006.

**Anne Cherry**



## THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Nowadays Eric and I belong to this group of people who, due to age and health condition, cannot travel any longer. But we have great memories from earlier travels to different parts of this wonderful planet. In the mid 90's we were in Estoril, Portugal. The hotel was excellent, and we had an extraordinary panoramic sea view from our balcony, not to mention the wonderful food and the caring service from the staff.



One morning, I was feeling rather depressed, I confess that all the good things in my holiday started making me feel a bit guilty. I had also been told that my Christian mind-set made me too optimistic and naive. Maybe it was time to grow up, to see reality as it is, understanding that life has more grey than bright days.

In the early 1990's many natural disasters took place in several countries: in 1990 an earthquake in Iran took 50 thousand lives; a flood in China in 1991 killed 1,720 people; another tremor in India in 1993 had a death toll of 9, 750. Besides these, there were also cataclysms in the USA, UK and Europe.



Like many, I became more aware of human suffering after Britain got involved in Middle East wars, which caused desolation to all parts involved, and I also witnessed all the political and socio-economic problems in Brazil during my annual visits there. I was sad.

So I told Eric to go for his constitutional walk, while I stayed in the room. When he left, I decided to pray, but my words sounded more like a grievous accusation addressed to God:

«Oh, Lord, You are the One who allows pain and misery among human beings. You are the God of earthquakes and hurricanes, of floods and fires; whilst You preside the universe, people die on battlefields, or are tortured in prisons. Of course, I am grateful for the happiness You are granting me right now, but I wonder how long it will last, and what will come next...»

Soon Eric returned, not leaving time for me to end my prayer on better terms. I was left with the impression that I had called God and just left a message in his answering machine.

We soon set out for the centre of Cascais, passing a castle on our way, the former residence of Count Castro Guimarães. It was said to be beautiful inside, but not open yet.

We agreed to go for a walk in the surrounding park. There was an open door in the façade and through it we discovered a square courtyard in Moorish style, having a corridor with tiled walls and ancient carved benches along its inner side.



In the centre, there was a garden with a lovely fountain – an ideal place to meditate, read, or listen to music. At regular intervals along the corridor there were built-in plaques with extracts from literature in old English, Latin, and the last one in French. When I read it, I was utterly surprised. It was like leaving a message for an absent person and then finding their reply pinned up on one's notice board. I called Eric, and worked through the text, mumbling its translation:

<p><i>«La nature n'est pas un aveugle puissance: c'est un art qui se cache à l'humaine ignorance. Ce qui parait hasard est l'effet d'un dessein,</i></p>	<p><i>"Nature is not a blind power: it is an art that is hidden to human ignorance. What seems chance is the result of a plan, of which the beginning and the end are concealed from your eyes."</i></p>
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*qui dérobe à tes yeux son  
principe et sa fin.»  
«Ce qui dans l'univers te révolte  
et te blesse,  
forme un parfait accord qui  
passe ta sagesse.  
Tout désordre apparent est un  
ordre réel,  
Tout mal particulier un bien  
universel,  
Et bravant tes sens l'orgueilleuse  
imposture  
conclut que tout est bien dans  
toute la nature.»*

*"Whatever in the universe that  
revolts and hurts you,  
is part of a perfect harmony  
beyond your understanding.  
All apparent disorder is, in  
reality, order.  
Every particular evil, a universal  
good.  
And defying your senses, this  
proud delusion concludes that all  
is well in all nature. »*

The words were carved in stone and had been there for years, and I didn't need to have translated them, as they are a quotation from Alexander Pope! Was I guided to the garden to read, and to interpret them my way? If we accept that God can communicate with us anywhere, by any means, in any language, at any time ... who knows?

Of course, I continued thinking about death and suffering – doing it is inherent to human nature. But the words on the wall of the Cascais palace reminded me of what I had learned as a child – that God is in control, knows what is happening, hears «the smallest prayer», and even answers it. Above all, that he will be with us, especially when times are difficult.

**Elisa Gusmao**

## KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

### **Minister**

VACANT

### **Church Secretary**

Mr. Gordon Laurie

### **Church Phone Number**

0121 709 5505

### **Website**

[www.solihullurc.org.uk](http://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](http://www.generationssolihull.org.uk) [generationssolihull@icloud.com](mailto:generationssolihull@icloud.com)

### **Zoom Details**

Meeting ID: 865 7763 7936

Passcode: 986653

## **JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER**

Material for the June 2023 edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

[stuartkmills@gmail.com](mailto:stuartkmills@gmail.com)

by Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May please.