



# SOLIHULL

## UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat  
Communities

### September 2023 Newsletter

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on  
your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.”*

***Proverbs 3: 5-6***



## **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.

## SEPTEMBER 2023 DIARY DATES

- Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup>** – Sunday Worship and Communion led by Ian Carnell – 10am
- Monday 4<sup>th</sup>** – Moments Dementia Group – 10am
- Monday 4<sup>th</sup>** – Job Club – 10:30am
- Monday 4<sup>th</sup>** – Elders Meeting
- Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>** – Sunday Worship led by Alan Cotgreave – 10am
- Monday 11<sup>th</sup>** – Moments Dementia Group – 10am
- Monday 11<sup>th</sup>** – Job Club – 10:30am
- Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup>** – Dining Out Lunch – 12:30pm
- Thursday 14<sup>th</sup>** – Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall
- Thursday 14<sup>th</sup>** - Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room
- Saturday 16<sup>th</sup>** - Saturday Café – 9am
- Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>** – Sunday Worship led by Linda Faber - 10am
- Monday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Moments Dementia Group – 10am
- Monday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Shout Out for the Girls – 10am
- Monday 18<sup>th</sup>** – Job Club – 10:30am
- Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup>** – English Conversation Café - 10:30am
- Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup>** – Churches Together Prayer Lunch – 12:30pm
- Thursday 21<sup>st</sup>** – Tots and Tales – 10am in the Hall
- Thursday 21<sup>st</sup>** – Singing for Pleasure – 2pm in the Meeting Room
- Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>** – Saturday Café – 9am
- Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>** – Sunday Harvest Worship led by Kathy Lloyd Roberts – 10am
- Monday 25<sup>th</sup>** – Moments Dementia Group – 10am
- Monday 25<sup>th</sup>** – Job Club – 10:30am
- Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup>** – English Conversation Café - 10:30am
- Saturday 30<sup>th</sup>** – Saturday Café – 9am

## **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**

## **A PLEASANT SUNDAY AFTERNOON**

The Singing For Pleasure Group presented a concert on Sunday 16th July. It was an enjoyable afternoon full of singing, laughter, funny stories and poetry. There was plenty of audience participation. Nadia, our Ukrainian friend entertained us with Russian, Ukrainian and English songs accompanied by her guitar.



Ian spoke about our church charity Educaid Africa and a collection raised £262.32. The afternoon finished with tea, coffee and cake using our china tea sets!

The group starts again on Thursday 14th September, 2 - 3:30pm. Please come and join us especially you gentlemen. No auditions needed. Please ask me for more details.

**Janet Ince**

## **LEPROSY MISSION SERVICE ON SUNDAY 22ND OCTOBER**

Please support this wonderful charity and hear all about their work in many different parts of the world. The service will be led by Guy Willcocks who is the area organiser.

**Janet Ince**

## **ENGLISH CLASSES**

We are launching the English Conversation café for people who want to develop English as a second language on Wednesday 20th September, 10.30am - 11.30am. The sessions will be led by Tim Freeman (from the Job Club) and myself and we are looking for people who will join a rota to chat to those who come along on a given topic of the day.

If you could come to chat with, or maybe even befriend, some of these overseas residents on a monthly, or more frequent basis, I would be glad to hear from you. We will also have some input from Elisa who has some experience of learning, and teaching, English as a foreign language. The classes will only meet during the school term time and will begin in September.

## **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**

## **DINING OUT LUNCH**

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

on

12<sup>th</sup> September at 12.30 pm

£4.00

ALL ARE WELCOME

### **MENU**

Chilli Con Carne

Rice

Garlic Bread

.....

Fruit Crumble and Custard

.....

Tea or Coffee



Please book by contacting Elaine 0121 744 6067 or email  
[vej46@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:vej46@yahoo.co.uk)

**By Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

## WHO WAS PAULO STUART WRIGHT?

Sometimes, reading Christian literature or even attending study groups, we come across fascinating stories of Christians who lived their faith to extremes – people like St. Albans, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, or St. Elizabeth Romanova. In other words, they became martyrs. Hard stories for us to hear, because we, contemporary Christians in the West, don't seem to need worrying about trials, or persecution. We are surrounded by a culture that is at the least benevolent and at the best supportive of our faith. In a Christian country, we don't see any issues against which we should make a stand.

This doesn't mean, though, that there are no battles for us to fight in the name of Christ. There have always been great causes for Christians to engage on.



In 2017 we commemorated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. That year an article about Martin Luther in the 19 March Observer described his contemporary relevance for all of us lies in understanding how and why an obscure monk triggered a revolution that brought a then immensely powerful Catholicism to its knees. The writer then affirmed that Luther's *revolution* was not only down to his 95 theses, but also because he addressed the deep isolation in which



the **poor** lived in Germany. They were disillusioned not only with the church, but also with their own local rulers. And Luther acted bravely, **disrupting** the *status quo*, and fighting to put things right.

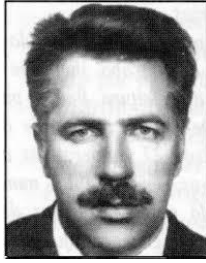
Other bold 'disrupters' closer to us were William Wilberforce, involved in the long fight for the abolition of the slave trade, against which John Wesley had also spoken out forcibly, repeatedly referring to it as the «execrable sum of all villainies».

But I wished to bring to you someone born more recently, in 1933, though farther away: in Santa Catarina, South of Brazil. As you probably know, between 1964 and 1985, that country lived under a military dictatorship, during which major atrocities were committed against those who opposed the regime. Students, intellectuals, engaged politicians, were tortured and killed without trial.

Paulo Stuart Wright was the son of a couple of American missionaries. As a particularly caring person, since his early youth Paulo used to visit orphanages and asylums, donating clothes, shoes and comforting the homeless families. As a graduate studying in the USA, he worked in construction during his holidays, because of his concern for the condition of the workers, and founded a group opposed to racial discrimination.

Around 1960, already a sociologist and back in Brazil, Paul began to work as a lathe operator and soon founded the Steelworkers Union, and, in 1963, he was at the head of a project to organize the fishermen in his State in unions.

For all his concern with the poor, and opposition to the dictatorship, he was condemned to prison, *in absentia* (without being present).



In 1971, trying to escape from the chilling *DOPS*(\*), he knocked at the door of church friends. At the house of one of them, the wife was alone with two small children and, knowing of the dangers of hiding political prisoners, refused to open the door to him. Another friend, a Minister, opened his door to Paulo just to tell him to go away.

In 1973 Paulo Wright was found and arrested by the army and taken to be tortured, dying 2 days later. No one knows where his body rests.

After having rested this burden at my Lord's feet, I felt I also had to tell this story, of a man who kept his faith, and acted according to it to the very end. The memory of that day, when I chose to protect my family instead of helping him, is something I will for ever struggle with as a Christian.

*(\*) DOPS means "Department for Political and Social Order", it was the Brazilian "internal secret service".*

**Elisa Gusmao**

## **BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT CONCLUSION**

At the June Church Meeting the Building Committee gave a lengthy report on the outcome of the work that it had carried out since it was set up in December 2020. I indicated that following the meeting an article would appear in the newsletter. Rather than use all the space in the newsletter I set out below the conclusion that it had reached.

“The Building Committee has now completed the application that we made to Solihull MBC for Pre-Planning Advice. We now know what we would and would not be allowed to build on the site. Originally, the plans that we had had drawn up were for a brand new one storey building being built end on to Union Road. However, we do not feel that we should proceed with a complete rebuild.

Many things have altered since 2020 when the Committee first met. We no longer think that that building would be affordable given the rising costs that have occurred since Covid. At the time we were expanding. However, covid has caused our congregation to contract. We have lost a significant number of people. It is only now, following covid, that we have started to show signs of growing again albeit from a smaller base. It is apparent that even if we were in a position to proceed it would take at least 2 ¼ years before a new building would be fully built. (We are advised that at present there is a waiting list of 6 months for any builder).

We do not feel that we would be able to maintain our congregation whilst the site would be unusable during a total rebuild. That would be the last thing that our congregation would want having already experienced a complete church closure through covid. We also have concerns about being able to manage all the day to day work that would be involved in a total rebuild. Having said that, we do not believe that doing nothing is an option. The current church building is expensive to maintain and is no longer suitable or cost effective for a

congregation of our size. Instead, we feel that we should look to spend money on completely redesigning the existing John Palmer Hall as a worship space. We would want to include a new café including a kitchen inside the structure and perhaps have a meeting room at the end of the JPH where the stage is currently situated. There would be no access problems to that part of the site. We are not talking about a small refurbishment it would be much more substantial than that.

We should also contemplate, and this is something for the Elders to consider, whether we should just retain part of our existing buildings. We could divide the site in half. We retain the redesigned John Palmer Hall and the new meeting room. We could let the existing church out to say Jubilee on a long lease. We could also consider leasing out all the other rooms leaving us to concentrate on our mission from a modernised smaller worship space.”

Following the delivery of the Report two resolutions were passed by the Meeting.

- First, that the Building Committee should continue to look at the possibilities of developing the John Palmer Hall and
- Second, that they should report back to Church Meeting before approaching Planning.

The existing members of the Building Committee namely Bev Hands, Howard Cotes, Barrie Jones, Linda Faber, Ailsa Betts and Janet Ince have agreed to stay on. New members are welcome, and Gordon Laurie has agreed to join us. Following the Church Meeting some attendees asked me to provide them with a full copy of the report. It is available, so if you would like a copy then please let me know.

**Howard Cotes (Secretary of the Building Committee)**

## **CHURCH FINANCES UPDATE**

At the June church meeting members and friends were brought up to date with the church's financial position. The church has some investments which are managed by Brewin Dolphin on the church's behalf. In keeping with the stock market those investments had not performed well over the last 12 months.

The Elders keep a close eye on the investments and have a meeting annually with Brewin Dolphin to discuss both Brewin Dolphin's performance, charges and the performance of the investments. This year Gordon and I attended the meeting which took place in July. In keeping with the URC 's updated guidance to trust bodies not to invest in fossil fuel companies whose total turnover is more than 10% derived from the extraction and/or supply of fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas and oil, we made some changes. As a result, we gave instructions to divest from fossil fuels and mining shares.

There was some better news on the investment front, in that, before we made the changes the value of the investments had increased 2.45% in value in 2023.

**Howard Cotes**

## **FUNDRAISING APPEAL**

I'm running the 2023 NICE 10k race on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November, taking place in Cannon Hill Park.

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 benefitted greatly.

NICE organize an annual 10k race every year, and I'm taking part 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 call or email me. My details are at the end of the newsletter.

Thank you,

**Stuart Mills**

## TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF CHURCH GROWTH

Continuing through the book 'Towards a theology of Church growth' this month we look at chapter 5 titled 'Theology, Eschatology and Church Growth' by Alister McGrath. I will share a few paragraphs that caught my attention and some questions about how we might think about, and use, what we read.

*"Theology matters to church growth, precisely because it aims to sustain the luminous and captivating vision of God which lies at the heart of the Christian faith."*

*"If the church is to grow, it needs to tend the vision of God which stands at its heart, and ultimately underlies worship, mission and theology."*

**QUESTION FOR SOLIHULL URC: This pair of sentences remind us that our vision of God drives our mission in the church. To what extent do we concern ourselves as a church with a vision of God or is this just a byproduct of other things that we study or think about?**

"It might reasonably be suggested that an innate capacity to grow is built into the genetic profile of the Christian faith. Consider the parable of the sower (Mark 4 v3-8).

"There are two points that need to be made here; first that the Gospel seed is good. It does not need to be made good. The church's task is fundamentally to exhibit and communicate the goodness of the seed, not to alter it in the light of transient cultural trends.

"Secondly, the reaffirmation of the goodness of the seed does not obviate the need for serious reflection on the nature of the soil into which is necessarily falls. The church's evangelistic tasks extend beyond the mere 'sowing of the seed'. What can be done to break up the ground and make is receptive to the seed taking root? How can the weeds be removed, to give the growing seed more space and light? What can be done in the face of external threats?"

**QUESTION FOR SOLIHULL URC: To what extent do we sow Gospel seed without thinking about where it will land? Do we have any concern for the tending and watering of the Gospel seeds we have sown over the years?**

During the war years CS Lewis found himself in a position of having to express difficult theological ideas to the public through the medium of radio. He considered a great deal about how to use ordinary English as a medium to communicate with this audience outside the church and academia. On talking about this experience later “Lewis emphasised the empirical necessity of discovering how ordinary people speak through observation and encounter.”

**QUESTION FOR SOLIHULL URC: How much time do we spend reflecting on conversations we have with people outside of the church and the ways that we could have communicated with them better?**

“We must avoid the presumption that we somehow occupy a privileged and unprecedented place in history. So, what wisdom and treasure can we salvage from the past? And what new opportunities and openings can we grasp in the future?”

**QUESTION FOR SOLIHULL URC: We always need to be relevant for the time and generations we are responsible for in terms of Gospel proclamation. What experiences and insights can we apply?**

**Linda Faber**



## COACH TRIPPERS UNITED 2023 ITINERARY

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**



## **CHRISTMAS SHOEBOXES**

You might remember that last year we put in the newsletter each month a suggested item to buy for the Christmas shoebox appeal. This was so people didn't have to buy many things all at once in the autumn. Similarly, I have put the list, with a collection box, in the Central Foyer (Nattery) so that people can make contributions all through the year if they want to. Please consider putting together a whole box of your own (leaflets are usually available in September) or contribute through this community box if you want to spread your giving.

**Linda Faber**

## **SHOE BOXES**

I have put out this year's leaflets in case people want to start collecting things when they see them. This spreads the expense and avoids a last-minute rush. The charity is hoping to make a special effort this year because of the hardship Ukraine and other countries are experiencing.

If you haven't done a shoebox before, the leaflet explains clearly how to do it. If you want to know more, please see me. Thank you in anticipation.

**Anne Cherry**

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

The next two years hold a couple of special anniversaries for us as a church. 2024 is the 10th anniversary of Solihull URC being formed when Olton URC, Hobs Moat URC and Christ Church, Solihull came together. Whilst this was, rightly, a slightly fluid affair of feeling the route to coming together, we would like to pick a weekend in the early spring when we will celebrate that new chapter in the church's history.

2025 is another year to remember and we hope to make the whole year one of celebration as we mark 200 years since the founding of the non-conformist church in Solihull, of which we are the descendants. (The Olton church came about through a church split from Solihull and then the Hobs Moat Church was planted from Olton on the new housing estates of the 1950's, so both have their roots in the central Solihull church that we are once again.)

Please have a think about ideas that we might use to mark these events. For 2025 we would like to form a planning group to take up ideas that are offered (and add other ideas, maybe) so if you would like to be a part of this please speak up – newcomers are just as welcome as those who have been here longer. We are going to need all sorts of people with all sorts of different skills and experiences to make a truly memorable, and big, splash in the town.

**Linda Faber**

## KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

### Minister

VACANT

### Church Secretary

Mr. Gordon Laurie – 07500 902593 – [gordonjlaurie@gmail.com](mailto:gordonjlaurie@gmail.com)

### 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

## OCTOBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Material for the October 2023 edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

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

by Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September please.