

# SOLIHULL

United Reformed Church

Christ Church—Hobs Moat—Olton



## JUNE 2017 NEWSLETTER

For the Spirit of Peace  
that calms our mind  
and stills our life,  
we give you thanks.

For the Spirit of Love  
that touches hearts  
and reaches out,  
we give you thanks.

For the Spirit of Joy  
that lifts our soul  
and gives us faith  
we give you thanks.

For the Spirit of Power,  
that gift of grace  
for this your church,  
we give you thanks.



## **Who is King of the Jungle?....asks Mark**

Outside the kitchen window two pigeons are fighting and, with much wing-flapping and clawing, each seeking to dominate the other. I presume that this is about rights to a female partner, who is nowhere to be seen.

I reflect that this is generally the way of the world. From insects and birds to the lions and even the human species life seems to be about power that overcomes others to gain more for self.

As we celebrate Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit to mankind we celebrate God's gift of himself, his life and his power, to all. It is not to be earned or fought for, but is offered on the basis of a simple step of openness, trust and faith on our part.

So why the posturing and the aggression? Why the strenuous efforts of individuals and nations to gather power to themselves? Why the readiness to impoverish and belittle others for the enrichment of 'self'? Why the desire for greater human power, whether economic or military, when God gives us all we need?

And here we find the real evidence for a lack of faith in the graciousness of God, that around the world, including the UK, so much poverty and hardship is caused by the lust for power. (You may fill in your own examples readily.)

We approach a General Election with debate around issues such as the poverty/wealth gap, the spending on nuclear arms and the dire needs of our welfare state. The debates around tax are always about what is the lowest increase we can get away with, with no thought that a truly caring society would be content to be taxed for the good of the whole.

Of course, the most powerful is the King of the Jungle but in God's Kingdom it is the one who sacrificed all for the sake of the least and all who is recognised as worthy of our faithful allegiance and worship.

"Ah!" people will say, "but that is not the real world!", dismissing Christian faith as irrelevant. If we are among them then our prayer "Thy Kingdom come" is just hot air, but if we trust in the grace of God and know his Spirit within us this place of God's creation might be a very different place.

Mark Fisher

## DIARY FOR JUNE

- Thursday 1st** Singing for Pleasure 2pm @ Hobs Moat
- Sunday 4th** Pentecost Holy Communion 10am @ Christ Church
- Monday 5th** Community Prayers 10am @ Olton  
Moments Cafe 10am @ Christ Church  
Job Advice 10.30am @ Christ Church
- Tuesday 6th** Worship 11am @ St Francis Lodge
- Wednesday 7th** Make & Mend 10am @ Christ Church  
Churches Together in Central Solihull 6.45pm @ Christ Church
- Thursday 8th** Tots & Tales 10am @ Christ Church  
Singing for Pleasure 2pm @ Hobs Moat
- Sunday 11th** Worship 10am @ Christ Church  
Messy Church Training 2pm @ Christ Church
- Monday 12th** Moments Cafe 10am @ Christ Church  
Job Advice 10.30am @ Christ Church
- Tuesday 13th** Neighbourhood Coffee Morning 10.30am @ Hobs Moat  
Holy Communion 11am @ Hampton House
- Thursday 15th** Tots & Tales 10am @ Christ Church  
Singing for Pleasure 2pm @ Hobs Moat
- Sunday 18th** Worship 10am @ Christ Church  
Worship 11.45am @ Star & Garter
- Monday 19th** Moments Cafe 10am @ Christ Church  
Job Advice 10.30am @ Christ Church
- Tuesday 20th** Fellowship Prayers 10am @ Hobs Moat
- Thursday 22nd** Tots & Tales 10am @ Christ Church  
Singing for Pleasure 2pm @ Hobs Moat
- Saturday 24th** Pleasant Saturday Afternoon 2.30pm @ Hobs Moat

**Sunday 25th** Worship 10am @ Christ Church

Woodland Walk 11am @ Cold Lands Wood

**Monday 26th** Moments Cafe 10am @ Christ Church

Job Advice 10.30am @ Christ Church

**Tuesday 27th** Neighbourhood Coffee Morning 10.30am @ Hobs Moat

Holy Communion 11am @ Tudor Lodge

**Thursday 29th** Tots & Tales 10am @ Christ Church

Singing for Pleasure 2pm @ Hobs Moat

### **ADVANCE NOTICE**

**Sunday 2nd July** 1pm Churches Together in Olton Picnic @ The Friary

### **WOODLAND WALK**

Sunday 25th June 11am

This is the postponed event from March.



All are invited to a discovery of God's creation in Summer, with various activities and opportunity to enjoy the lovely Cold Lands Wood. This will follow a shorter Sunday Worship @ Christ Church.

### **The Oldest Computer**

The oldest computer can be traced back to Adam and Eve.

Surprise, surprise!

It was an Apple but with extremely limited memory.

Just one byte!

Then everything crashed!

Ian Carnell

## **HELP THE METHODISTS CELEBRATE**

In September 2017, there are plans to show some of the Methodist Church in Great Britain's stunning and renowned Modern Art Collection in Solihull. The collection will be divided between the church and the Courtyard Gallery in Solihull Central Library.

This is part of celebrations of 80 years of worship in the current building at Solihull Methodist Church. We aim to 'bring the community into the church and the church into the community' – not just our church, but all the churches. So we hope that the initiative will also help build closer working relationships between our churches.

**The support of our congregation in stewarding the part of the exhibition which will be in the library is invited.** The role of a steward is to be available as a point of contact while the exhibition is open, and to direct interested members of the public from the library to the church if they wish to view more of the exhibition. There will also be guide books to sell. There is NO expectation about being able to discuss the works of art.

There will be 2 stewards in each location whenever the exhibition is open to the public. The plan is to be open both in the church and the library between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Saturday, from 7th - 30th September. We intend to divide the time into three 2 hour shifts, meaning a total of 12 people will be required each day, six in the church and six in the library.

It would be good if we in SURC could provide stewards for one of the days - **Friday 15th September 11 - 1pm. 1 - 3pm. 3 - 5pm** are suggested time slots.

**Please sign up on the sheet at the back of church if interested.**

A short information/training session for volunteers is planned before the event.

More details about the art works can be found at:

[www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/mmac](http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/mmac)

There will also be some other events (musical, flower festival etc.) during the period of the exhibition that will relate to the paintings.



This is a monthly opportunity for discussion and sharing ideas around aspects of our mission.

### **Wednesday 7th June 10am in the Meeting**

**Place** will be the first of these and is open to anyone interested or involved. Each month will have a different emphasis. This first gathering will identify the different aspects of our mission that we will need to address over the coming months.

While these discussions are monthly, it is anticipated that ongoing conversations and plans will take place in other settings too.

**Look out for further information in church.**

### **MINISTRY STUDENT PLACEMENT**

Tim Reith has completed his training for Non-stipendiary ministry in the URC and is coming to us in Solihull for a final practical placement. He will be with us for around 10 hours per week to the end of November and will engage with a variety of elements of our church life. Tim works of the ForMission College, which operates around the country but is based in Bournville. His family (wife, Necia, and five children) live in Fulham, London, so Sunday involvement will be limited. Tim has worked as a Mission Enabler for the Thames North URC Synod in the past, so has much experience to share with us over the next six months. We look forward to sharing much with Tim.

## **Get into the habit! – with Churches Together in Olton - CTO**

I do love being an active part of Churches Together in Olton. I am very comfortable with all denominations – my Mum was Methodist, my Dad was C of E – and in their wisdom they sent me to a RC convent school to be educated by nuns during my teens! I loved it and almost became Catholic.

So now I only have to walk into the Friary for CTO meetings at Olton and it is like stepping back in time – having a welcoming blanket wrapped around me spiritually. There are statues of ‘Our Lady’, Mary the mother of Jesus, always dressed in blue - and I smile happily, reflecting on similar statues seen my schooldays. It always amazed me how early the nuns got up to pray – for them prayer meant the start of the day at some unearthly hour of the morning. Before they did anything else they prayed. Then at 11.0 o’clock in the morning the angelus bell would ring – I loved that sound – and we would all stop the lesson and pray. Everything stops for prayer – and the day is punctuated with prayer - quite right too!

So when I heard that the Rev Dom at St Margaret’s C of E in Olton is having regular early-morning-prayer sessions for anyone who would like to come, 4 days a week at 7.30 a.m, I decided I’d try it. Last Wednesday morning I happened to wake at 6.30 am – and thought ‘I’ll go!’

By the time I was washed, dressed and had a cuppa and toast, I needed to walk briskly along the road to be on time – but somehow that added to the spiritual experience. And there, coming up the path to the church door, was Sharon, one of my Olton Baptist friends, also wanting to go in for the prayer session. Then Rev’ Dom the vicar arrived and the three of us walked into the old church, built in 1881.

‘We’ll go into the side chapel’ said Dom ‘and have you brought your mobile phone as we’ll use the Daily Prayer App?’ I hadn’t brought my phone – and in any case it only rings and texts! However there

was no problem as I could share theirs and I read aloud from the Bible: Deuteronomy 6 – the whole chapter! We also read Psalm 105 – we each read a verse in rotation. We said prayers for the community, for all 4 Olton churches and all the local schools – speaking aloud prayers, as guided in our hearts by the Lord. Silent prayer was included too.

‘Where 2 or 3 are gathered together there am I among them’, said Jesus – and we were but three there that day - but if felt so right; so good, to pray and read from the Bible together that early in the morning. I usually sing to the Lord when I wake – or I play guitar pieces – so I do think of Him. But actually praying and reading from the Bible with others in the early morning has much to recommend it I reckon. Those nuns, that taught me, certainly knew a thing or two! Praying regularly at certain times of day gave the nuns their strength and their wisdom; it’s a good habit to get into. I chuckled upon re-reading this and realising the un-intended pun! I am not implying you should all wear nun’s clothing! Just get into the habit of regular prayer like they did. And the early morning is a very good time to start.

From St Margaret’s Church I went to the station to pick up a freebie copy of the Metro News and, as I walked back, I met Rev Dom walking two of his six daughters to St Margaret’s School. It’s a small world in Olton and I often meet folk I know, when walking the local streets. I so love the place and its people. I went back home invigorated and refreshed – and the experience had set the whole tone for my day. And next time I wake early on Mondays to Thursdays I shall go and pray at St Margaret’s again. God bless the Churches Together movement and the sense of unity, peace, understanding and outreach that it brings.

Smiles and blessings to all,  
Carol Andrews.

## **FELLOWSHIP PRAYERS**

### **Housebound or in Care**

Doris Thompson , Pam Tovey, The Jenkins Family, Norma Clement

### **Health issues or increased frailty**

We pray for God's blessing on our friends who need our thoughts and prayers at this time:

Sheila Schwartz, Thea, Eunice Thomson, Margaret Toogood, Sheila Durant

### **Bereavement**

Trixie and her family, after the loss of her step mother.

Marion Vining and her family after Alan's sudden death.

Ron & Iris and their family.

John and Mavis Payne on the loss of their only daughter Sally who lived in Australia with her husband Mark. Our thoughts go to the whole family at this sad time including Guy and Tim, Sally's brothers who represented the family at her funeral.

We send love to all mentioned above and keep them, their families and carers in our prayers each day. May all our friends and neighbours who are in need feel the strength of our support.

### **Others to whom we relate within our life and mission:**

For our friends in the Moments Café living, coping and struggling with the impact of dementia, including those who are carers.

For the pre-school children and their parents/carers who enjoy Tots & Tales.

For those who gather for the Neighbourhood Coffee Morning.

For the uniformed organisations and their leaders (Cubs, Beavers, Brownies and Rainbows).

For the 'Olton Community Centre Joint Management Group', including some of our own folk, as we work together seeking means to maintain our premises for the use of the community and as a resource for us.

## Thank You

**Christian Aid:** Sincere thanks to everyone who either helped or attended the coffee morning at The Methodist Church, and to those who have helped with the door to door collections, special thanks to Trixie and Chris for their help with the money counting. Bridget.

Thank you so much to all those who helped and supported the Hobs Moat Coffee Morning on 6th May. Along with cake sales on the Sunday morning we raised the splendid total of £302. Janet

**Marian Batten:** I would like to thank all my friends for their gifts and good wishes on leaving Orchard Way and moving to Longbridge, which means that I will not be able to attend Solihull URC regularly, as I have done (with Olton) for many years. It is not "Goodbye", as I shall still come from time to time.

I am at present staying with relatives before being able to move into a one-bed apartment in Longbridge Retirement Village, which opens in July. When I have settled there I will send a description of my new home in this large complex built on part of the former Rover site.

In the meantime, my best wishes and God's blessing to all my friends, whom I will never forget.

## 2nd OLTON SCOUTS

You are invited to the 2nd Olton Scouts Group's Annual General Meeting. This will be held in the Olton Church Hall on Monday 19th June at 6.30pm. Please come and support them - you will be very welcome.

'As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and forever.  
Amen.'

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer © The Archbishops' Council 2005*

## **ZIMBABWE - Stories for Change 133**

### **ZIMBABWE**

Christian Aid's programme in Zimbabwe has faced many challenges over the last year or so. The political, economic and environmental situation has created an extremely difficult set of circumstances for our partners to carry out their work. That said, through sensitively building constructive relationships at the local government and authority level, Christian Aid has been able to continue implementing its programmes largely unimpeded.

Christian Aid's programme has continued to focus on profitable, resilient, drought resistant agriculture, conflict transformation and peace building, and the strengthening of citizens to build capable states. Projects include those focusing on market development, extractives, tax and responsive budgeting accountability, and transparency. The programme has been designed to dovetail with Zimbabwe's national economic development strategy to support the restoration of economic stability and growth. As such, it strikes a balance between responding to the needs of the poor and seeking transformative change through being rooted in policy and advocacy.

### **Political outlook**

Zimbabwe remains politically volatile, particularly as the country approaches general elections in early 2018. Internal conflicts amongst potential opposition parties abound, meaning, yet again there is virtually no meaningful opposition to Robert Mugabe's ongoing, tyrannical regime.

Outside politics however, a new wave of political activism consisting of individuals, churches and spontaneous social movements has emerged as an alternative force to the malaise of political opposition.

During the second half of 2016, these activists and movements spearheaded a wave of violent demonstrations and confrontations against the Mugabe regime. Security forces cracked down heavily in response to these demonstrations, and in late August 2016, in a direct violation of the constitution, a total ban on demonstrations

was introduced.

While the momentum of these movements has reduced somewhat in early 2017, there is growing concern that the government is now almost totally preventing and suppressing any alternative or opposing opinions, and as such has ordered the immediate arrests of anyone voicing opposition to the government.

A group of Commitment for Life supporters will be visiting Zimbabwe and will bring back stories and worship materials to share with churches.

### **GANESH KUMAR**

Here is the latest letter from Ganesh. There will only be one more as ACTION AID are moving on from the area because the local community now feel able to support themselves. Good news indeed!

Dear Supporter,

Greetings. Your sponsored child GANESH KUMAR says I am fine here and hope that you will also be fine in your country. I have drawn the picture of a boat floating on water with help of water colour. I love to make drawing it makes me happy.

Update on Ganesh

Ganesh Kumar is good boy. He is brilliant in his studies and always helps his friend in study problem. He never misses his school and never allows his friends to miss the school. He loves to play cricket with his friend after coming home from the school.

There is a second letter from Ganesh in response to a picture I sent of the Royal family. He was most impressed!

I will put all these on the notice board together with his picture and a report of the success stories in the region. The children now have bikes to cycle the 17 km to school.

## **Au Revoir Marian**

Intelligent, efficient, capable, hardworking, loyal and supportive --- these are just a few of the words I could use to describe our friend, Marian Batten, who had to leave us recently when she moved to Longbridge where we hope she will soon be happily settled in her new apartment home. Marian was the personal secretary to a professor at the university and the skills she needed for this work have been of great benefit to the church for many years. It was mainly during the time at Olton when Marian served the church as a member, an elder, pulpit supply secretary, minutes secretary not only at Church Meeting, but also for some of the social groups within the life of the church, producer of the weekly pewslip, editor of the Newsletter, a member of the choir, and she helped with the gardening. As well as all this, Marian was the Junior Church secretary.

Anne and I came to know Marian very well when 'The Secretarial Team' was formed following the retirement of Betty Bancroft. I was the named secretary with Marian and Anne as the support staff. Marian has kept herself up-to-date with all the latest modern technology, but wisely still makes use of valuable skills from the past, such as 'shorthand' which, to Anne and myself, seemed like some mystical foreign language. In view of her experience, it was Marian who knew how to make the most efficient use of a computer, and what to do when the photocopier wasn't behaving itself correctly.

Anne and I, indeed all of us, have much to thank Marian for. She has given her time, experience and expertise to the church unstintingly, and her contribution to our church family life will certainly be missed. As Marian will be visiting us from time to time, it's not 'good-bye' but, 'Au revoir, God bless, and we look forward to seeing you soon, Marian. Keep safe, well and happy!'

Rita Routley and Anne Cherry.

## COACH TRIPPERS UNITED

### Thames River Cruise

15th June



The next outing will be a cruise down the River Thames from Staines to Windsor.

We sail at 11.10 arriving at Windsor at 13.15 meandering through some of the most historically important landscape in the history of England. We pass the vast Home Park through which one can gain exceptional views of the castle at Windsor. Further downstream one passes Runnymede where the Magna Carta was supposedly signed in 1215.

We then have the afternoon in the Royal town of Windsor which is dominated by the castle built in the 11th century by William the Conqueror. It includes St. Georges's Chapel – the burial place of ten monarchs. It is open all the year round.

The Museum is in the Guildhall where Prince Charles and Camilla were married. There is an open top bus service. The town has many attractive shops and eating places.

The coach will leave Olton URC at 8.30am. The fare will remain at £18, which includes a trip for the driver, and any surplus will be used to subsidise admission fees.

The person to contact if you would like to come is Val Cross on **706 9687**. Please contact her at least ten days before the event, so that the coach can be booked.

## **Yew Tree Primary School visits**

We were delighted to invite Yew Tree Primary School to visit us at Christ Church this week to be creative. We linked in what they made to their RE curriculum. The school were having a Creative Arts Week and all the staff from Year 1 (5 year olds) to Year 6 (11 year olds) accepted the invitation—I was hoping for 3 or 4 classes but we got six which made getting ready extra busy. Some of the days there was a lot of rain but they came anyway and none of the children complained. Each class came at a different time and slotted in between our usual activities which carried on uninterrupted. There is a display in the church showing some of the things they made and the topics they covered. With 'Parables' as the topic it wasn't too hard to think of things to make but the topic of 'Persecution' took a bit of lateral thinking.

The school have been tremendously thankful for the opportunity and I want to pass on that thanks to all those who helped with preparing the craft materials, preparing the rooms, running the sessions and clearing up. Activities such as these are a great way of making people aware of our presence as well as making a positive contribution to the lives of young people. We don't really get the opportunity to share our faith as such with these school groups but all the children received invitations to other things such as Messy Church and our up-and-coming Forest Event (which was postponed from earlier in the year due to rain).

Thanks once again to everyone who contributed.

Linda Faber

## **URC Big Day Out at Warwick Castle**

We went as a family to the URC Big Day Out at Warwick Castle yesterday (20th May). People of all ages had come from as far away as Scotland to join in with this great opportunity for the church to get together and meet people outside their own small circle of the URC wherever they are. We personally got to catch up with a few friends from years ago who we knew from previous churches that we bumped into. The theme was Festivals and Feasts and as well as all the usual activities at Warwick Castle which were still available, there were many other things laid on by a great organising team from the URC. Children had to collect stickers from 12 locations around the castle grounds to fill in a picnic picture. (We found ourselves one sandwich short of the picnic as we couldn't find the last sticker station but with a little detour round another pathway we did get it.) There were seminars in tents by a stage from where two sessions of worship were led during the day. There were tents with crafting activities and some information stations promoting things like Messy Church and Reform Magazine amongst others. The rain fell in a few showers but most people had come prepared and nothing was going to spoil this great event.

Linda, Steve, Anna & Rebecca

### **A PLEASANT SATURDAY AFTERNOON**

**on Saturday 24th June at 2.30pm**

**at Hobs Moat Church**



The Singing For Pleasure Group invite you to this enjoyable afternoon. This is your chance to tell a funny story or joke, read a poem, sing a song or play an instrument.

Maybe you just want to sit back and be entertained.

Tea and cakes to follow. Donations to a chosen charity.

**GARDEN PARTY**  
**SUNDAY 25th JUNE**  
**AT 3.00 pm**  
**at 64 Widney Manor Road**

No admission charge  
But we will ask for donations to the Church charity

Cream teas + Competitions  
Bring and Buy + Plants + BookStall

Car Parking at 62, 64 or 68.

If no spaces available drivers can drop their passengers off then park at  
the 6th Form College

**Junior Church Appreciation of Marian Batten**

Marian was our Junior Church secretary for many years. She could always be relied upon to create a calm atmosphere and see us through some ups and downs. Her meticulous record keeping ensured that nothing was left out of the minutes and we could call upon them for accuracy at any time. Marian encouraged us all, and was honest when the projects that we might have thought brilliant were not quite so! Marian was our rock in Junior Church --- a kind, loyal and supportive member of our team and Olton URC.

Happy times ahead, Marian. We wish you Good Health and Happiness, and say a big thank you.

Sue Plant and Val Cross.