

London Street United Reformed Church

Basingstoke, Hants, RG21 7NU

Tadley (Old Meeting) United Reformed Church

Malthouse Ln, Hants, RG26 3NY

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

This month Jenny McCloy shares her thoughts on what we should be focused on at this time of year.



Do you love Advent with all the preparations and anticipation of the season? Or are you beginning to get stressed by the speed at which Christmas is approaching, especially with all the inevitable questions... 'Are you ready for Christmas?' 'Have you done your shopping?' 'Have you written your cards yet?' (Don't even mention the price of postage!) 'What colour theme will you have on your tree this year?' (this was a question I heard asked at a garden centre recently, when surrounded by various themed areas of the store!).

### STOP...

...just chill and consider for a few moments what the season is actually all about----even though, in Christmas themed shops you will usually struggle to find anything which speaks of the true meaning of Christmas, maybe the token Nativity scene!

In Advent we are preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ, but also waiting for the Christ who will come again, even though we don't quite know when that will be.

The Advent season is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming.

Advent (from ad-venio in the Latin, meaning 'to come to') is the beginning of the church's liturgical year... the season leading up to the celebration of Christmas. There are many ways to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and to remind us of the true meaning of Christmas.

Children will point you to Advent Calendars, with a new door to open each day in December, revealing a picture behind each one, loosely connected with the season, culminating with an image of the Nativity on 24th December. These now have the added bonus of having a chocolate behind each door!

A tradition in our family (which we are pleased that our 'children' have continued with our grandchildren) is the lighting of the Advent Candle at the beginning of each evening meal in December.

Both of these and other commercialised ways of preparing don't actually begin on Advent Sunday, (December 3rd this year) but just follow December's days.

We are also reminded at Advent not just to prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth, but also to anticipate Christ's second coming, when we will be expected to account for the way we have lived our lives. This concept carries with it difficult and disturbing issues, but it is one which features strongly in Christ's teachings, not least in the Parables.

The broad thrust is that a time of judgement WILL come. It always used to concern me that God would be judgemental, until I accepted the fact that he is ultimately a God of love, who is full of compassion and forgiveness. This is a message that brings both promise and challenge--the assurance that good will finally triumph over evil, but on which side will our lives tip the scales?

Have we used our gifts wisely?

Have we thought of others as well as ourselves?

Have we been honest and above board in all our dealings?

Have we offered forgiveness in the way that God has repeatedly forgiven us?

Have we responded to the call of Christ to love the poor, the weak and the hungry?

The response to these questions is needed here and now!

The day will come when we will answer before God: do you remember the Gospel reading when John Sinclair led worship? Matthew 25:1-13 which tells the story of the ten bridesmaids who went to meet the groom, five of them were foolish and didn't have enough oil in their lamps and so weren't ready when the bridegroom came. Verse 13 reminds us to 'Keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour'.

When will the day come when we must answer before God. Is it time to take a long hard look at our lives to see whether anything needs changing. And, if it does, isn't it time to do something about it?

Enjoy the preparations during Advent but be mindful of God's challenge to us too.

Wishing you every blessing as we approach this Holy Season.

Jenny

Some thoughts stimulated by reading:

Nick Fawcett's 'Reflective Services for Advent and Christmas'

*A Prayer for Advent*

Lord of all  
you are not a God who delights  
in judging remotely and uncaring.

You are a God rich in mercy,  
always looking to forgive;  
extending chance after chance.

You act in our hearts to stir  
consciences and challenge wrong.

Teach us to live today in  
the light of tomorrow to  
use our lives,  
especially during Advent,  
to make your love known.

Amen

## THE NOTICEBOARD

Information, updates, tips and more.



Thank you!

The retiring collection for Christian Aid's Middle East appeal raised £240. Thanks to everyone who donated.



FOCUS: Next Issue

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Focus magazine. If you would like to contribute to the January magazine, please contact the editor by **20th of December**.

Please note, up to date contact information is on the page two of Focus.



Eco Tip

God's Gift -- Our World

The Environment -- Our Responsibility



In the UK about 20 million slices of bread are thrown out every day. Revive a stale loaf by sprinkling with a little water and giving it 30 second blasts in the microwave, alternatively make Apple Charlotte, Bread and Butter Pudding or Summer Pudding. Or turn it into breadcrumbs and use it to thicken soups or to replace pine nuts in a pesto.

Don't forget, you can recycle the following items at London Street:

Empty Printer Cartridges, Aluminium Containers and Foil, Batteries, and Plastic Milk Bottle Tops.



Can you help to make sure that no one in our local community goes hungry?



Items **urgently** needed: Christmas Crackers, Deodorant (Male/Female), Hot/Cold Desserts (Not Rice Pudding), Hot Chocolate, Long Life Fruit Juice, Loo Roll, Powdered Milk, Savoury Spreads (Marmite/ Peanut Butter/Meat Paste etc.), Tampons, Washing Up Liquid.

Items needed: Biscuits & Snacks, Cooking Sauces, Custard, Household Cleaning Products, Squash, Sweet Spreads (Jam/ Marmalade etc.), Sweets/Chocolate/Other Sweet Treats, Tinned Meat (Hot e.g. Chilli/Hot Dogs/Stewing Steak), Tinned Spaghetti/Ravioli.

Please **do not** give Baby Food, Hand Soap, Hot/Cold Cereal, Men's Shampoo, Non-dairy Milk, Pasta, Pet Food, Pulses, Rice, Sanitary Pads, Tea, Tinned Beans, Tinned Rice Pudding, Tinned Soup, as these are already in surplus.

Donations can be left at London Street URC in the container provided. For up to date lists, or to find other donation points, go to:

<https://basingstoke.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>

Or, you can now install the BankTheFood app on your Android or iOS device to keep up to date with the latest shortages at the Basingstoke foodbank.



Happy Birthday to the following member of our church family:

Dick Davey

Ruth Nicholson

Amos Grant



**Come** and join a service of “Nine Lessons and Carols”, hosted by the Sounds of Hope Singers and orchestra, on **Saturday 16th December** at **London Street URC** starting at **7:00pm**.

**Come** and sing some of your favourite traditional Christmas carols.

**Come** and listen to the 40 strong choir and orchestra singing some wonderful contemporary Christmas carols.

**Come** and rediscover the true meaning of the Christmas message through music and readings.

**Come** and join us for some light refreshments after the service, ask questions or just fellowship together.

**Come** and bring your family and friends and relax, and maybe kick start your Christmas celebrations.

**Come, admission is free to all.**





## London Street URC Christmas Party!

**Saturday December 2nd 2pm - 4:30pm**

Adults and children welcome,  
Refreshments,  
Games and DVDs for the children,  
Music,  
And a very special visitor!



Please sign up and read further information on the notice board in the  
concourse.



## Craft Group Appeal

Are you looking for something to do in the winter nights?

Well would you like to knit or crochet green squares?

Any shade of green, approx. 4inches  
square.

The Craft Group are hoping to create a  
knitted/crocheted Christmas tree in 2024,  
and we will need at least 1000 squares.

If you need green wool please ask, or come  
along on a Monday morning for a chat and  
knit/crochet.

All are welcome.







## A Message of Thanks from Maggie Morgans



I would like to express my sincere thanks to our wonderful church family who have shown so much love and support to Richard and me in the last few difficult years. Thank you too for supporting our family at Jeff's funeral on October 24th. He is at peace now after a very long period of declining health.

As most of you know, dear Richard developed early Alzheimer's disease some years ago. He could no longer manage in his own flat and so has lived at home with us for 2 years. In the summer, he started having seizures and now needs more care. He has just moved into a small, supported living home in Darlington Road where he will have full-time carers. At the same time, he retains his charming sunny nature and love of humour and has already endeared himself to the staff there.

This is a huge transition and there will be some teething troubles settling in, not least the separation from his old mum - a wrench for us both. However, I have decided to take the opportunity to visit my 90-year-old sister, Mary, in South Africa, over Christmas. My daughter, Fiona, will see that Richard gets together with some of the family. He still wants to come to church and so hopefully that can happen when I return.

I will have more time to see my older son, David, who few of you know. He has long-standing schizophrenia and lives quietly in Oxford. He was a gentle and scholarly young man, but this cruel disease struck, causing turmoil and robbing him of so much. Despite this, I value the sustaining power of God's love, demonstrated through you, and I look forward to new things next year.



## Messages from The Flower Committee

### Church Decorations

If you would like to decorate a windowsill in the church for Christmas, please sign the list on the notice board. If possible include a nativity scene. The church will be open Saturday 9th December 10am–12noon for decorating.

### Church Flowers

If you would like to celebrate an anniversary or birthday by donating the flowers on the first Sunday of the month in 2024, please contact Liz Lindsay (details in the Church Directory). You do not need to arrange the flowers, unless you wish to, as we have a Flower Committee who can arrange them for you.

## A DEPARTED FRIEND

**Joyce Cook shares her memories of our recently departed friend, Eileen Poulter, who died on the 11th November.**

I remember Eileen coming to Ladies Club with her sister Sheila in about 1986. She introduced her sisters-in-law as well. They also came to Friendship Hour. At first Eileen was still worshipping mainly at Trinity but gradually came to be with us at London Street, and going to Trinity for their Ladies afternoon meeting. She was welcomed into membership here at London Street on 29th November 1998.

She gradually took up committee posts for Friendship Hour. In about 2000 she became secretary and stayed in that position until the group folded around the start of Covid.

Eileen had been a draughtsman and was a very good artist. A great

reader and she was also a lover of history.



She belonged to many local organisations including the Basingstoke Arts Club, The Field Society and the Basingstoke Concert Club, also the RSPB. I know she was a keen gardener and was known for bringing home cuttings after a day out in the countryside. I am sure there were other societies as well.

After Cynthia Yeomans gave up the House Group at Pages, Eileen took on the role, with Grace Springfield, of co-hosting the weekly bible study house group. This finished about 6 years ago I believe.

Eileen did not like some of the modern means of communication but was a great letter writer and very often I would look out my kitchen window and see her hurrying passed to get to the post box for the night's collection.

When I left Basingstoke in 1989, Eileen was mainly a member of Ladies Group and Friendship Hour at London Street. When I returned to Basingstoke in 2003 and was fortunate to receive one of the bungalows it was to find that Eileen had also just moved in three doors away. We were both widows and became firm friends during our time of living in Pages.

Eileen went on many coach holidays all over UK, and she had a love of visiting new places. She also ventured abroad and enjoyed some cruises.

The last three years we have kept in touch by telephone as she moved to live with Sheila. This was very good for both of them during Covid

especially.

I, and all who knew her, will miss her but are just happy that we had the joy of knowing her as a friend.

## THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Please remember the following people in your prayers...

The family of Eileen Poulter

Owen Collins and family

The Patterson family

Maggie Morgans & family

Beverly Harris

Joan Musselwhite

Stan & Sandra Marut

Claire Macro

Beverley Cantwell

Eric & Christine Clucas

Barbara Banbury

David Corfield

Betty Shipway

Mark & Chris Best

Doina Rasnita

Ali Jannesari

Joyce Cook

Hamid Baradaran

Penny O'Bee in Uganda

Zoe (Elaine & Brian's daughter)

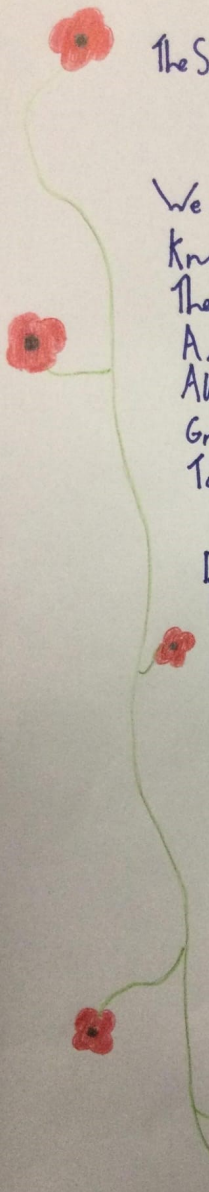
Elaine (David Vickery's daughter in-law)

Archie (Chris Jones' grandson)



## A REMEMBRANCE DAY POEM

Jenny McCloy's grandson, Ethan (aged 10), has written this poem to mark last month's Remembrance Sunday and has kindly shared it with us.



The Soldier!

We cursed through sludge,  
Knocks kneed, bent double, blood shot,  
The thunder of desperate, flaming bullets,  
A deep agony of pain surging through our bones,  
All went lame,  
Grimy, bitter, vile,  
Tired with fatigue,

Baraging bombs screamed from the sky,  
Death looking you right in the eye,  
All it takes is a bullet or shrapnel,  
Your gate, immediately sealed,  
The roar of a lion,  
The roar of a gun,  
The roar of fiery flames,

Who would choose this foul war over sweet peace?  
The poisonous sea, of thick green gas,  
The loss of life,

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS



This month's assigned readings.

	Psalm	New Testament		Psalm	New Testament
1st	135: 15-21	2 Peter 3	17th	143: 7-12	Revelation 8
2nd	136: 1-9	1 John 1: 1– 1 John 2: 2	18th	144: 1-8	Revelation 9
3rd	136: 10-15	1 John 2: 3-29	19th	144: 9-15	Revelation 10
4th	136: 16-26	1 John 3	20th	145: 1-7	Revelation 11
5th	137	1 John 4	21st	145: 8-13a	Revelation 12
6th	138	1 John 5	22nd	145: 13b-21	Revelation 13
7th	139: 1-6	2 John	23rd	146: 1-5	Revelation 14
8th	139: 7-12	3 John	24th	146: 6-10	Revelation 15
9th	139: 13-18	Jude	25th	147: 1-6	Revelation 16
10th	139: 19-24	Revelation 1	26th	147: 7-11	Revelation 17
11th	140: 1-5	Revelation 2	27th	147: 12-20	Revelation 18
12th	140: 6-13	Revelation 3	28th	148: 1-6	Revelation 19
13th	141: 1-5	Revelation 4	29th	148: 7-14	Revelation 20
14th	141: 6-10	Revelation 5	30th	149	Revelation 21
15th	142	Revelation 6	31st	150	Revelation 22
16th	143: 1-6	Revelation 7			



## EVENT DIARIES



**What's on this month at London St. & Old Meeting URCs.**

**At London Street URC (unless otherwise specified):**

### Regular Events

Sunday Worship 10:30am			
<b>Mondays</b>	10:15am	Craft Group	
<b>Tuesdays</b>	5:45-6:45pm	Beavers	In Term Time.  All in the Den except Scouts who meet in the Wessex Hall.
	7-8:30pm	Cubs	
	7-9pm	Scouts	
<b>Wednesdays</b>	10:15am	3Cs  Coffee, Chat and Company	3rd Wednesday of the Month Only (20th).
	10:15am	Memory Tree Social Club	
	12:15pm	Lunchtime Prayers	

### December Worship Diary

<b>3rd</b>	Led by Revd. Josh Thomas.
<b>10th</b>	Gift Service  Led by 8th Basingstoke Scouts.
<b>17th</b>	Includes Holy Communion  Led by Revd. Julian Macro.
<b>24th</b>	Family Service  Led by Revd. Josh Thomas.
<b>25th</b>	Christmas Day Service

31st	No service at London Street
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## December Events

2nd (Saturday) 2pm-4:30pm	<b>London Street Christmas Party</b> Further information on the church noticeboard, or contact Gill Miller.
9th (Saturday) 10am-12noon	<b>Decorate The Church</b> The Sanctuary will be open for you to decorate your chosen window sill. Further information on the church noticeboard.
10th (Sunday) 10:30am-11:30am	<b>Gift Service For The Women's Refuge</b> Please bring along suitable gifts (unwrapped) for the following: 17 adults; 7 girls aged 7 to 13; 6 girls aged 7 months to 6 years; 4 boys aged 7 to 14; 4 boys aged 10 months to 6 years.
15th (Friday) 6:30pm	<b>Carol Service</b> Service will be followed by mulled wine and mince pies.
31st (Sunday)	<b>No Service At London Street</b> A link will be provided to the service produced centrally by the URC. A paper copy can be printed and handed/sent to you. Please speak to Tony Patterson for more details.

**Next Church Meeting:**

**February 4th (Sunday) 2024, Time tbc**



**At Tadley (Old Meeting) URC (unless otherwise specified):**

**Regular Events**

<b>Sunday Worship 10:30am</b>		
<b>Monday Afternoons</b>	<b>Ladies' Cell Group</b>	<b>Contact Penny O'Bee.</b>
<b>Monday Evenings</b>	<b>Cell Group</b>	<b>Contact Mark Ward or Paul Gross.</b>
<b>Tuesday Evenings</b>	<b>Joint Prayer Time with St Paul's</b>	<b>Contact Penny O'Bee.</b>
<b>Wednesday Evenings</b>	<b>Prayer via Zoom</b>	<b>Contact Mark Ward.</b>
<b>Friday Afternoon</b>	<b>Men's Shed</b>	<b>2pm, once a fortnight. Contact Paul Gross.</b>

**December Worship Diary**

<b>3rd</b>	<b>Christmas Crafts (in the Immanuel Centre) Led by Karen Jones.</b>
<b>10th</b>	<b>Communion Service Led by Mark Ward.</b>
<b>17th</b>	<b>No Morning Service at Old Meeting Carol Service at 5pm (Old Meeting)</b>
<b>24th</b>	<b>No Service at Old Meeting.</b>
<b>31st</b>	<b>No Service at Old Meeting.</b>

# London Street United Reformed Church

London Street URC, Basingstoke seeks to ensure that all content and information published in this issue of FOCUS is current and accurate. The information included does not in any way constitute legal or professional advice and the church cannot be held liable for actions arising from its use.

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