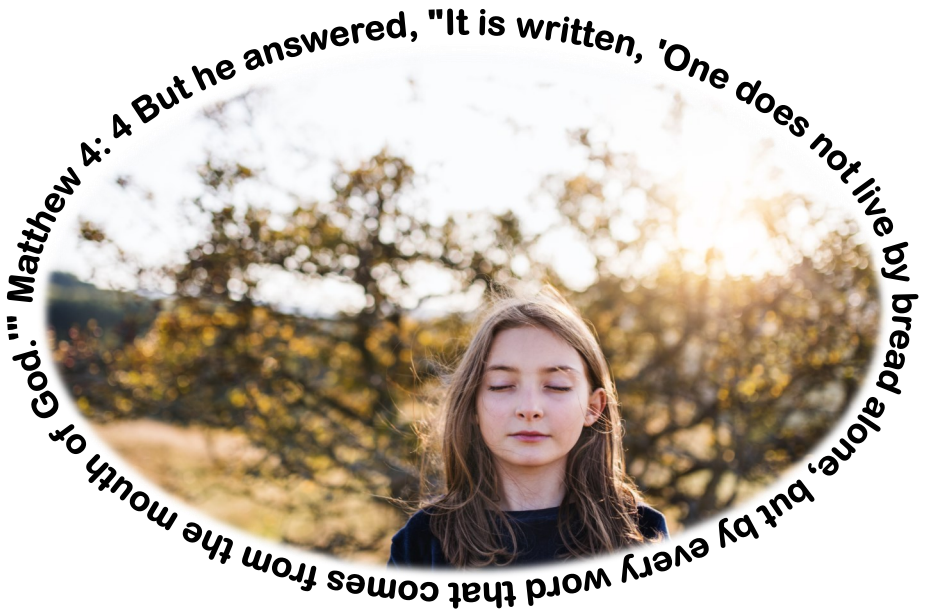




FOCUS

February 2024



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 after reading lectionary passages for February and early Lent.

When you hear the word ‘Lent’ it is common to think about ‘church’, ‘Christianity’, ‘giving things up’, and Easter. After all, Lent is a purposeful 40 day period of sacrifice and spiritual discipline, leading up to Easter Sunday’s celebrations.

But what is Lent really about?

Lent is a time to reconsider the path we are taking, to find the route that leads us home and to rediscover our profound relationship with God, on whom everything depends. It links here also with the time the Israelite slaves spent in Egypt (40 years), reflected in the 40 days Jesus spent in the Wilderness. Lent is not just about the little sacrifices we make, but about discerning where our hearts are directed. This is the core of Lent: asking where our hearts are directed. Let us ask: Where is my life’s navigation system taking me – toward God or toward myself? Do I live to please the Lord, or to be noticed, praised, put at the head of line...? Do I have a “wobbly” heart, which takes a step forward and then one backward? Do I love the Lord a bit and the world a bit, or is my heart steadfast in God?’ I read this online. You can find lots of comments on the meaning of Lent here.

Christians of numerous denominations observe Lent each year. Christians remember the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry on earth, immediately after he had been baptised by John in the Jordan. Christians celebrate Lent with the goal of remembering their great need for God along with taking away a habit or a guilty pleasure they realise they have come to rely on or have been prioritising more than fellowship with the Lord. It is common to replace the time and energy normally spent on these habits with more spiritual practices. We could choose praying, studying the Bible, or helping others. It is a good thing, when we feel desperate for things we have given up, to remember that it is only God who can give us everything we truly need.

Striving to live in a more self-aware way that is also more spiritual, more about serving and trusting in God and loving others and less

about pleasing ourselves, is the very essence of Lent.

Although Lent is often the excuse we have to “Test Drive” a new diet or make good a New Year’s Resolution, that is not its true purpose.

Lent is the time we remember the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert, when he was tempted by Satan (Matthew’s Gospel Ch 4:1-11), it also reflects the 40 years the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt.

Jesus’ temptations show us the humble Messiah’s triumphing over Satan, by following his calling as willed by God.

Throughout his temptations, Jesus relied on Scripture and a resolute commitment to his divine calling. Jesus’ three temptations, of desires of the flesh, desire for proof, and the allure of worldly power, are all reflected in the temptations that we face and resonates with our common struggles such as hunger, doubt, and the allure of power. He teaches us to rely on Scripture and our faith to overcome temptation as he did. Jesus’ resistance helps us to relate to him as a compassionate, empathetic figure, who understands the challenges of being human as Christ is fully human.

May you be truly blessed during Lent.



*May God bless you this Lent,
with a generous heart,
a peaceful spirit,
an open mind,
and a deepening faith.*

Readings taken from: (Sunday, February 4) Isaiah 40:21–31, Psalm 147:1–11 & 20c, 1 Corinthians 9:16–23, Mark 1:29–39. Transfiguration of the Lord (February 11) 2 Kings 2:1–12, Psalm 50:1–6, 2 Corinthians 4:3–6, Mark 9:2–9. Ash Wednesday (February 14) Joel 2:1–2 & 12–17 or Isa. 58:1–12, Psalm 51:1–17, 2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10, Matt. 6:1–6 & 16–21. First Sunday in Lent (February 18) Genesis 9:8–17, Psalm 25:1–10, 1 Peter 3:18–22, Mark 1:9–15. Second Sunday in Lent (February 25) Genesis 17:1–7 & 15–16, Psalm 22:23–31, Romans 4:13–25, Mark 8:31–38.

THE NOTICEBOARD

Information, updates, tips and more.



Church Flowers

Thank you to Ian Scott who has donated flowers for February in remembrance of his brother Peter.

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



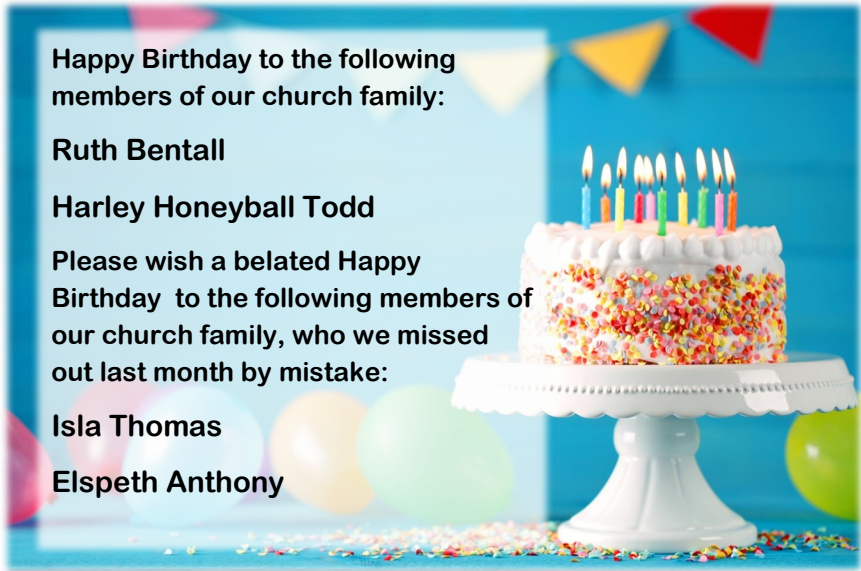
Items **urgently** needed: Conditioner, Tinned Fish, Tinned Fruit, Tinned Meat (e.g. Chilli, Stewing Steak, Ham), Tinned Ravioli, Tinned Veg.

Items needed: Coffee, Cooking Sauces, Custard, Deodorant, Hot/Cold Desserts (Not Rice Pudding), Hot Chocolate, Household Cleaning Products, Powdered Milk, Savoury Spreads (Marmite, Peanut Butter, Meat Paste etc.), Sweet Spreads (Jam, Marmalade etc.), Toothpaste, UHT Milk.

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, or 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/>



Happy Birthday to the following members of our church family:

Ruth Bentall

Harley Honeyball Todd

Please wish a belated Happy Birthday to the following members of our church family, who we missed out last month by mistake:

Isla Thomas

Elsbeth Anthony

FOCUS: Next Issue

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Focus magazine. If you would like to contribute to the March magazine, please contact the editor by **18th of February**.

Eco Tip

God's Gift -- Our World

The Environment -- Our Responsibility



More than 4.4 million potatoes are binned in the UK every day. Store in a cool, dry, well-ventilated cupboard covered with a sack or newspaper away from any heat source. Use left overs for bubble & squeak, sliced and fried or mashed and frozen.

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.

Junior Church

You may have noticed that we have welcomed several new members to our Junior Church...this is great news! How wonderful to be growing as we help children at the beginning of their faith journey. It means that we will be able to split the group into 2 smaller, age related groups which will be better for everyone. However it does mean that we would need more helpers to come through to Junior Church and be a support to the Leader. Would you be able to help? Please pray about this---pray that we will find leaders and helpers and pray that we will be able to meet the varied needs of the youngest members of our church family.

Please speak to Jenny or Carol if you feel you might be able to help.



Departed Friends

We will be saying goodbye to two dear friends at the following services:



Eileen Poulter's Memorial Service

27th February (Tuesday) at 1:30pm at London Street.

Isobel Martin's Funeral Service

13th February (Tuesday) at 11:45am at the Crematorium, led by Revd. Josh Thomas. It will be followed by a finger buffet at the Sun Inn (Dummer) at 12:30pm.

All are invited to attend.

A MESSAGE FROM PAGE'S CHARITY TRUST

In 1802 Mr Joseph Page, a member of the Independent Meeting House in Basingstoke, which was to become the London Street Congregational Church and in turn the London Street United Reformed Church, put monies in a trust so that cottages could be erected as almshouses. These were for people belonging to the congregation of Protestant Dissenters of the Independent Persuasion of Calvinistic Principles, who met for religious worship at their meeting house in London Street. To qualify for a cottage they had to be in need, hardship or distress.

The original cottages were built in Hackwood Road in 1806. They were replaced in 1930 as bungalows on the corner of New Road and London Road. However during the town's redevelopment in the 1970's they were compulsory purchased by the Council and the monies used to replace them with the current bungalows in 1975. The current bungalows are located just a short walk from London Street in New Road, adjacent to the entrance to Basingstoke Court. Originally six bungalows were built with a seventh added later.

Page's Trust was registered as a charity with the Charity Commission on 2nd May 1962. The structure, governance, and management of the Trust for both trustees and residents are set out in a governing document dated 2nd June 1998, amended in April 2013.

The residents will be persons selected by the trustees who satisfy the qualifications of residency as detailed in the governing document. They must be:

- associated with the URC Basingstoke group;
- a resident of Basingstoke or its surrounding area; and
- they must show to be in need, hardship, or distress.

In exceptional circumstances where a suitable resident cannot be selected against the criteria above, the trustees may widen their notification of a vacant bungalow. This will embrace firstly relatives of those associated with London Street URC; secondly those who are associated with the wider URC; and finally Christians from other

denominations resident in Basingstoke.

The trustees are giving notice that we have a vacant bungalow and invite anyone wishing to apply or would like further information to speak with either myself, Liz Lindsay our secretary or Ian Scott our Treasurer.

The closing date for the submission of an application is 14th February 2024.

Owen Collins

Chair of Page's Charity Trust

LENT CUSTOMS

Jenny guides us through the origins of some of our Lent traditions.

Shrove Tuesday

Of course, this is the day before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday.

The word 'shrove' is a form of the English word 'shrive' which means to give absolution for someone's sins by way of confession and doing penance. Thus, Shrove Tuesday was named after the custom of Christians to be 'shriven' before the start of Lent. The date of Shrove Tuesday varies every year BUT it is always 47 days before Easter Day.

In the UK, Australia, and Canada, because Christians give up rich, tasty foods like eggs, butter and sugar during Lent, the tradition was to use up all of these on the last evening before Lent begins, thus evolved the tradition of eating yummy pancakes and Shrove Tuesday becoming also known as Pancake Day.

Why do we toss pancakes?

According to legend, the tradition was born in the 15th century, when a woman in Buckinghamshire rushed to church to confess her sins midway through making pancakes. This tradition is recognised today, at



Olney in Buckinghamshire, where competitors have to don an apron and a hat or scarf, and toss a pancake three times during a race to the church. The winner is the first person to arrive at the church and be kissed by the bellringer.

A poem from Pasquil's Palin said in 1619 the tradition of tossing or flipping them was to prevent them from burning.

“And every man and maide doe take their turne,

And tосse their pancakes up for feare they burne,” the poem said.

In other countries this is known as Mardi Gras (from the French, meaning ‘Fat Tuesday’ it is celebrated with parties, carnivals, and processions.

Ash Wednesday

This is the first day of Lent. It is a holy day of prayer and fasting. It marks 6 weeks of penitence before Easter Day. Many Christian denominations observe this day. Many Christians attend a special service when they receive ashes on their foreheads, often in the form of a cross, this is where the first day of Lent derives its name of Ash Wednesday. The ashes are prepared by burning palm leaves from the previous year's Palm Crosses. Ashes have been used from ancient times to express grief; reference can be found in the Old Testament for example in 2 Samuel 13: 19, and also in Job 42: 5-6.

PLANTING GUIDE

Spring is beginning to make its presence felt and it will soon be time for the gardeners to begin their labours of love. Here's a helpful guide:

Plant five rows of peas...

Prayer, Perseverance, Politeness, Promptness, Purity.

Plant three rows of squash...

Squash gossip, Squash criticism, Squash indifference.

Plant five rows of lettuce...

Let us be faithful, Let us be unselfish, Let us be truthful,
Let us follow Christ, Let us love one another.

Plant three rows of turnips...

Turn up for church, Turn up with a smile,
Turn up expecting to meet God.



A LETTER OF THANKS

A great big thank you to everyone who donated gifts for the women's refuge here in Basingstoke. We have received the following letter in response to your donations...

I am writing to thank you for the extremely kind donations to Stop Domestic Abuse.

We are extremely grateful for your continuing support and if there is anything Stop Domestic Abuse can do to support your work please do not hesitate to contact me.

While domestic abuse happens all year round, Christmas can be the catalyst for more severe and frequent incidents for those living with an abuser. Christmas is a time where the family are together for a sustained period of time, providing fewer opportunities to seek help and support if needed. Between Christmas Eve and New Year's day's Day, 2-4 women in the UK will be killed by their partner and countless more will be harmed. Escaping to a refuge just before Christmas can be difficult, but not as difficult as being abused or worse during that period.

For those families that have escaped and are safe in a refuge during the Christmas period they can be isolated as they might not be able to see friends and family in order to remain safe. However, for some this will be the best Christmas they have had as this is the first time that they have felt safe.

The donations that you have organized will spread a lot of happiness and will remind women and children in refuge that they are not alone and that the local community is supporting them.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely

Claire Lester
Administrative Assistant



THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Please remember the following people in your prayers...

Zoe and family

David and Gill Vickery

Isobel's husband, Ted

All our Iranian friends in their new homes

Carys Haywood

Hyacinth Ridguard

Ali Jannesari

Joyce Cook

Mark & Chris Best

Doina Rasnita

Maxine Perkins

Betty Shipway

David Corfield

Barbara Banbury

Eric & Christine Clucas

Beverley Cantwell

Claire Macro

Stan & Sandra Marut

Joan Musselwhite

Beverly Harris

Hamid Baradaran

Maggie Morgans & family

The Patterson family

Owen Collins and family

The family of Eileen Poulter



DAILY BIBLE READINGS



This month's assigned readings.

	Psalm	New Testament		Psalm	New Testament
1st	18: 16-19	Matt 22: 41 - 23: 12	16th	22: 27-31	Mark 1: 1-20
2nd	18: 20-24	Matt 23: 13-39	17th	23	Mark 1: 21-45
3rd	18: 25-29	Matt 24: 1-14	18th	24	Mark 2: 1-22
4th	18: 30-36	Matt 24: 15-35	19th	25: 1-7	Mark 2: 23 - Mark 3: 6
5th	18: 37-42	Matt 24: 36-51	20th	25: 8-11	Mark 3: 7-35
6th	18: 43-50	Matt 25: 1-30	21st	25: 12-15	Mark 4: 1-20
7th	19: 1-6	Matt 25: 31-46	22nd	25: 16-22	Mark 4: 21-41
8th	19: 7-14	Matt 26: 1-30	23rd	26	Mark 5: 1-20
9th	20	Matt 26: 31-46	24th	27: 1-6	Mark 5: 21-43
10th	21: 1-7	Matt 26: 47-68	25th	27: 7-14	Mark 6: 1-29
11th	21: 8-13	Matt 26: 69 - Matt 27: 10	26th	28	Mark 6: 30-56
12th	22: 1-5	Matt 27: 11-26	27th	29: 1-6	Mark 7: 1-23
13th	22: 6-11	Matt 27: 27-44	28th	29: 7-11	Mark 7: 24-37
14th	22: 12-21	Matt 27: 45-66	29th	23	
15th	22: 22-26	Matt 28			

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			
Mondays	10:15am	Craft Group	
Tuesdays	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	
Wednesdays	10:15am	3Cs Coffee, Chat and Company	3rd Wednesday of the Month Only (21st).
	10:15am	Memory Tree Social Club	
	12:15pm	Lunchtime Prayers	

February Worship Diary

4th	Includes Holy Communion. Led by Revd. Josh Thomas; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Joyce Cook.
11th	Led by The Worship Group; Music & Duty Elder: Joyce Cook.
18th	Led by Peter Bentall; Musician: Peter Dixon; Duty Elder: Joyce Cook.
25th	Led by 8th Basingstoke Scouts; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Joyce Cook.

Next Church Meeting:

February 4th (Sunday), 12 noon (in the Hook Room)

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

Regular Events

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

February Worship Diary

4th	Led by Penny O'Bee.
11th	Led by Philip Jones.
18th	No Service at Old Meeting.
25th	Led by Mark Ward.

Next Church Meeting:

**February 25th (Sunday), after the service
with a bring and share lunch.**

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.

London Street United Reformed Church is a working name of Registered Charity London Street (Basingstoke) United Reformed Church Charity [reg. no. 1130801]