



FOCUS

October 2023



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 Joy Williams discusses how we find God's purpose for us.

Psalm 84 : 1-7

How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young - a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

As the people of God today we are on a pilgrimage too. During the years of lockdown there was a lot of talk about how things would be different when we could get back together again. There would be changes. It would be a time of shaking out the old stuff to make room for the new and in a literal sense, as a church we have had a tremendous clear out of things that we no longer use from stores and cupboards. Through force of circumstances (Um?) we have needed to do some radical things to make the building a safer place for people to use and I think we probably would have turned out the sparrow and swallow if there had been any! Now we have been back worshipping together for a year and we have seen change. There have been new ways of doing things and new people have joined us which has been great but, much still remains the same. In the Psalm the pilgrims passed through that dry place, Baka, ever praising and worshipping the Lord and in their wake dry places became places of refreshment, of new life and hope. As the Lord's people in this place, we are seeking Him about His mission for us. We shall only discover it as we continually dwell in His presence wherever we are and whatever we are doing, learning to recognise how He communicates with us personally in the everyday. Our individual contributions are essential

to the whole. As we go, we will begin to envision the part the Lord is asking us to play in His plan and, if it is His and not just our good idea, it will be established because He will give us the strength and the means to do it.

Lord God, Almighty and Eternal, Creator and Preserver of all things we worship you. Lord God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, we thank you for the Love that you shower upon all creation. An unchanging and perfect love which we all long for but find it hard to imagine. Help us in our weakness to draw closer to you, to experience your presence to know you better. Give us a hunger for your presence that we may love you more dearly and follow you more nearly, wherever you may lead us, for you are the bringer of new life.

In Jesus name we ask this. **Amen**

THE NOTICEBOARD

Information, updates, tips and more.



FOCUS: Next Issue

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Focus magazine. If you would like to contribute to the November magazine, please contact the editor by **21st of October**.

Eco Tip

God's Gift -- Our World

The Environment -- Our Responsibility



Buy vegetables and fruit in season, resist the supermarket mentality - do you really need early summer fruit midwinter?

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 needed: Tinned Fruit, Hot Tinned Meat (e.g. Chilli, Hot Dogs, Stewing Steak), Tinned Spaghetti /Ravioli, Cooking Sauces, Savoury Spreads (e.g. Marmite, Meat Paste), Sweet Spreads (e.g. Jam, Marmalade), Long Life Fruit Juice, Squash, Hot/Cold Desserts, Biscuits & Snacks, Ladies/Gents Deodorant, Ladies Shampoo & Conditioner, Nappies (SIZE 6, 7 & 8) & Pull Ups, All Household Cleaning Products, Reusable Shopping Bags, Washing Pods, Tinned Rice Pudding, Hot Chocolate, Instant Mashed Potato, Powdered Milk, Toilet Rolls, Tinned Veg, Sweets, Chocolate & Other Sweet Treats, Washing Up Liquid.

Please do not give Pasta, Rice, Tinned Soup, Baked Beans, Pulses, Tea/Coffee, Hot/Cold Cereal, Non-Dairy Milk, Sanitary Products, Baby Food & Formula, Hand Soap, Men's Shampoo, Dog/Cat Food 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/>

Congratulations!

On October 5th Anne and Dick Davey celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary. All our church family send their love and congratulations!





Happy Birthday to the following member of our church family:

Kenita Moavu

Ian McCloy

Isaac Dumbleton

Carys Haywood

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.

CLOWNING AROUND

A report on the great time had by all at the Tadley Holiday Club 2023 and its inspiring work, presented by Lou Waller and Bev Harris.

It's that time of year... school's out, children bored, rainy days, but it is also time for the Tadley Holiday Club 2023, and this year's theme was "The Circus". This year the club was led by Stewart Madden from the Salvation Army, and such was the enthusiasm for the club, 60 children had booked to attend compared with 44 in 2022. In 2022 the club ran for just two days, while this year it extended to a full five days.

Representing London Street URC, Lou Waller and Bev Harris volunteered as helpers. (Pictured right.)



A collage of pictures from the five days of activities



Each day there were four sessions – Craft, Sport, Story Time and Chill Out Zone. Lou said:

It is great to witness God's love, seeing so many seeds sown day by day, and the children learning and growing throughout the week.

Each day started with a drama, linked to the theme, with the volunteers taking part, and the children joining in with the songs and actions, through which they were learning how to be strong, courageous and not to be afraid, how to be happy and learning about how "God is a great big God".

The start of the week is always a bit tricky, with the children being shy and not knowing many of the others attending, but usually by the end of the first day they are joining in with the singing, dancing and actions. Each day they learnt a passage of scripture, and it was amazing to see how they all remembered them.

I spent a lot of the week in the kitchen, but Bev watched the children's creative skills develop through the week as they made bean bags, decorated biscuits, painted T-shirts and made circus tents.

In the kitchen we had great fun preparing fruit sticks, vegetables, drinks, biscuits, cakes and doughnuts. By the middle of the week I was exhausted and my feet hurt, but it was great fun, and the strength of God's presence was wonderful and great to experience.

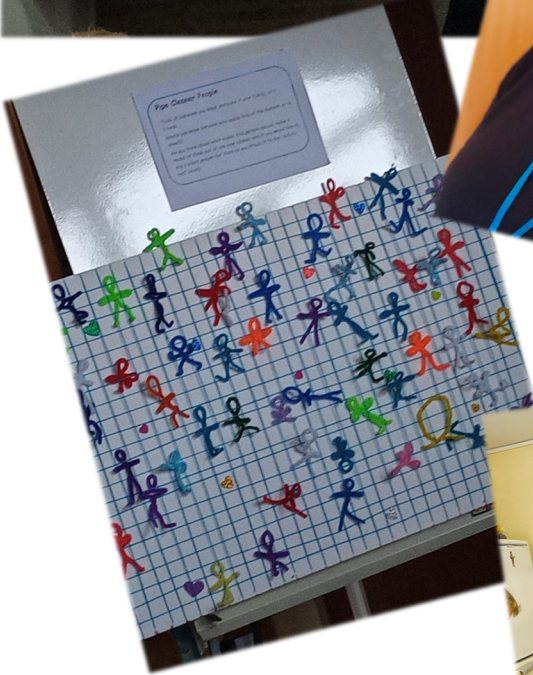
I now feel I may have a calling to help Bev lead a group. It is such a privilege to be part of God's amazing plan, and to work in the community with our brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of age, without which the club would not be able to happen.

Each group had a young leader, helped by wonderful teams of volunteers, many of whom regularly help with the club each year, and to watch the children grow is such a blessing.

May God's plan continue.

Blessings

Lou



Some more pictures from the
Holiday Club

A CARING NATION

Owen Collins appeals for help with an issue that tests our claim to be a caring nation.

Matthew 25: 37-40

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

In August Josh, Jenny and Ian, Tony and myself met with the Basingstoke rep of the charity Care4Calais who specialise in helping asylum seekers. We were struggling in trying to get a bank account open for R who was due to hear from the Home Office about his application to stay in the UK as a refugee. A bank account is required if they are to find accommodation. Every bank interprets the Home Office guidance in a number of ways. And with no logical explanation, well to me anyway, that interpretation can change from one week to the next. Not one bank in the town centre I visited would open an account for an asylum seeker until they had refugee status. Care4Calais had found the same. In fact one bank who had opened accounts for asylum seekers had a change of policy and closed the accounts.

You may think that it is only right that they wait until they have refugee status before they can open a bank account. To a certain degree I would agree. Many of the asylum seekers are being housed in hotels and are starting to have their cases heard and the backlog is beginning to be cleared. Our 'lads' in the Apollo are a good example of this. The bad news is that once a person receives refugee status they have just 28 days from the decision date, not the date they receive the letter, before their asylum support ends. In the case of our 'lads', they could very well receive a notice to vacate their accommodation at the Apollo with as little as 7 days notice. For people who have just been recognised as refugees, having faced persecution and torture, this

time scale is impossibly tight. We did hear from Care4Calais that one family in Basingstoke was made homeless as they were given just 24 hours notice. We are repeatedly told that we are a caring nation with a caring government. I suppose if you count the fact that the children of the family I just mentioned were taken away by Social Services as their parents were homeless, then yes we are!

Why do I consider the timescale of as little as 7 days to be impossibly tight? Once notified they need to wait for the Home Office to send their Biometric Residence Permit and National Insurance Number, open a bank account, apply for Universal Credit and jobs and find a place to rent. The exclusion from work and education during their years in the asylum backlog leave them ill-prepared to understand the system. I don't understand the system either!!

I'm not convinced that the Home Office understand their own legislation and guidance either. There is a website called Free Movement. It is run by Colin Yeo who is a barrister, writer, campaigner and consultant specialising in immigration law. There is a really interesting article about changes by the Home Office to have reduced the notice period a successful asylum seeker is given to leave their asylum accommodation once they have been granted refugee status. Follow the link below to read more:

<https://freemovement.org.uk/home-office-change-in-practice-increases-risk-of-homelessness-for-recognised-refugees/>

Families with children will eventually receive housing assistance from the council. However, most of the new refugees are male and single and will need to find private rentals. This will be especially difficult for individuals whose local housing allowance is in the region of £350 per month, who have no credit history, no family to act as guarantors, no one to make the viewing appointments or advocate for them.

People from the Apollo, and indeed across the country, have become homeless and destitute, the timescales don't allow for benefits payments to start before they need to leave their hotels or hostels.

I am concerned for our 'lads'. How can you help? Firstly I would like to thank the Trustees of the Charity CMW who are helping to fund a deposit on loan for our 'lads'. I'm also grateful to one member of the

church who has already offered to accommodate R and support him in getting a bank account so he can then look for a place to rent. Could you offer a room in your home as a temporary host for one of our 'lads' should they find themselves homeless? It would be only for a short time whilst they open a bank account, sort out their benefit entitlement and find a place to rent. Once settled they can then look for work.

Speak to Jenny, Ian, Tony or myself if you can help or require further information.

Blessings Owen

THE VIEW FROM OXFORD

A letter from our former minister, Kay Blackwell, now a chaplain at The Oxford Academy school.

Well, it is hard to believe it, but I am just about to embark on my third academic year at The Oxford Academy school (TOA). Time has really flown! I thought it was about time I wrote you all a letter to let know how things are going here.



Both Andrew, I and Olive the dog feel quite settled in Oxford. Andrew largely works from home but commutes to London about once a fortnight now, which is good because the commute is not great from here. We have enjoyed getting to know Oxford, a city that neither of us had really explored previously. This was probably because my ministerial training had been in Cambridge and one wealthy historic university city was, we thought, enough for us! However, we do love the variety of Oxford from the multicultural Cowley Road to the rich cultural history of the University Colleges.

My first year in the school was, to be honest, pretty tough. The transition from Church minister to full time chaplain in a school that was both in special measures and had not had a chaplain before was pretty head spinning at times. Some staff were not happy to have a Christian chaplain on the staff and most of the children seemed to be either affronted by or, at the very least, rather non plussed by my presence among them. The school is a church of England school but in

the mists of time they seem to have forgotten that part of their identity. My main role has been to gently put some of that Christian DNA back into the heart of the school whilst recognising we are a place of education for students of all faiths and none. Many of the students at the school come from very deprived backgrounds. As I have got to know them, some of their stories of neglect and abuse have been quite harrowing, saddening and even maddening to hear. A high percentage of students come from Muslim homes, a few from Hindu or Buddhist homes and many hail from atheist homes. Very few seem to openly identify themselves as Christians (I am hoping that that may change over time!). Many have English as a second language. Add into this mix a staff worn out by the see sawing of teaching on-line during Covid and then in person and then back online at the drop of a hat (a situation still not fully settled when I first arrived as numbers of infections were often high and closures still occurring). Also, students who had engaged with little or no learning throughout two years of pandemic and many who have been left with crippling social anxiety and depression as a result of all the disruption and uncertainty of recent years. Some have just never returned to school. As with many schools across the country, we have around only 83% attendance which is shockingly low and many of those not attending seem to be doing so with the support of their parents. This is the is all wrapped up in the tsunami of mental health problems resulting for both young people and their parents. So yes, it may well be a tough place to be, but this was, and is, I believe, where God has called me to be... right in the messiness and untidiness of it all! Some days I really question God about this and feel that I am making no difference here at all! But then, I know, especially with the children we work with, faithfully being there to support them through the thick and thin makes a difference. The longer I am here, the more they trust me. They desperately need calm supportive adults who will love them for who God made them to be; adults who want to find the best in each of them and who will still be there for them even when they have just got things wrong.

In the second academic year it felt like things were really starting to shift within TOA.

The school now has a new set of school values based upon...

“Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don’t be afraid or discouraged, for the God is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.” 1 Chronicles 28: 20 (NLT)

Here is an excerpt I wrote for the TOA welcome pack for the incoming Year 7’s in 2023...

“But what is the context and who is the statement being made by?

King David, often called the shepherd king because he started out his life as the youngest, smallest and most handsome of eight sons of Jesse and he worked as the shepherd for the family. He was chosen by God through the prophet Samuel to be anointed as the King to succeed King Saul, Israel’s first king, because Saul had fallen from God’s favour.

King David was a very creative man, responsible for the poetry of many of the Psalms in our Bibles today. He was renowned for calming down King Saul with his playing of the Lyre instrument when Saul was in a rage. However, as king, David was also known as a great warrior. He battled for many years against the warring enemy tribes in the region until, at last, a hard-fought peace and a united kingdom under his rule was won.

In his older years, King David then decided that he felt uncomfortable living in his palace while the sacred Ark of the Covenant (a box holding the commandments carved in stone by God and given to Moses) remained in a temporary tent. But as it turned out this was David’s ‘good idea’ rather than God’s will. Through the prophet Nathan, David was told that there was too much blood on his hands for him to be responsible for the building of God’s temple. God had been with King David throughout his reign, but God promised that through his offspring the temple would indeed be built. (See 2 Samuel 7:1-14 in the Bible for this bit of the story).

However, David did not leave things at this point for he proceeded to gather all the raw materials such as wood, silver, gold, and bronze, along with all the highly skilled craftspeople that Solomon, his son, would need for the building of the temple. He even had the blueprints, the plans, drawn up for how it was to be constructed (see 1 Chronicles 22: 1-16).

So, with everything that Solomon would need for building the new temple ready, David then called Solomon, his successor to the throne, and commissioned him with the words...

“Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don’t be afraid or discouraged, for the God is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.”

The Oxford Academy School has been preparing for your arrival, gathering the skilled teachers and support teams and the raw materials needed for supporting you in your ongoing education. We value every student in this school and hope that all will be ‘strong and courageous, and do the work’ so that you can all achieve a lot and be the best that you can be.

We are a Church of England School which is why our Bible passage is at the heart of our vision and values but we are also a proudly diverse community and we want everyone to flourish here whether they are people of different faiths or no faith. We encourage everyone to show respect no matter what their role is within the TOA community, the teachers, staff and students who will travel with you throughout your time at TOA. So, apart from our Bible verse you will hear a lot about our values of ‘being courageous’, ‘being curious’ and ‘being compassionate’. Learning new things, making mistakes but being ready to get up and try again takes courage, the sort of courage that both David and Solomon needed in order to make sure the temple got built. Being curious enough to ask questions about ourselves, others and the world around us keeps us all intellectually moving and growing constantly. Being compassionate, thinking of others and wanting the best not just for ourselves but for those around us is so important. We want you all to be committed to your learning and committed to others around you.“

The Bible passage is writ large in the school along with attractive graphics reminding all of the core school values of being courageous, being curious and being compassionate along with two trees graphics, one looks like the tree of knowledge, the second more like the tree of life. God is on the move for sure. This year, in time for the summer term, I also moved into a new chaplaincy office which is attached to a good sized ‘Be Space’ chapel area which feels like a real

sense of endorsement for chaplaincy in this school.



The 'Be Space' at the Oxford Academy School

There are so many stories to tell but I will sign off for now. Two years' worth of mission would fill more than one letter! My request from you is that you would hold TOA and the growing chaplaincy role in your prayers. There is still much to do, and this school does still need so much prayer support, not least because an OFSTED inspection is due at any time now and the staff are working so hard to bring us out of special measures. So please pray for staff and students through another stressful year. Pray that God would break through in this place and young lives would be transformed through both education and knowledge of God's love for them. Pray that God would continue to use me in this place.



Yours in Christ,

Rev. Kay (as I am called these days!)

A member of our church family has recently been affected by a scam, so please read this information from Citizens Advice and see their website for more details.

Are you scam aware?

#ScamAware

The logo for Citizens Advice, featuring the words "citizens advice" in a lowercase, sans-serif font inside a white speech bubble shape on a blue background.

citizens
advice

There are lots of different scams out there. By knowing what to look out for you can help protect yourself. Common scams include:

Emails scams. These messages contain links to genuine-looking websites that are designed to steal personal and financial information.

Upfront payment/fee scams. They usually ask for an upfront payment to unlock either a cash prize, a PPI claim amount or for initiating a service.

Doorstep selling. These all begin with the person getting an unrequested knock on their door. They are often for expensive home improvements which the victim did not want or was pressured into.

Investment scams. Often conducted either online or over the phone, these can result in people losing thousands of pounds for non-existent stocks, shares and other investments such as rare wine or art.

Antivirus/computer. People are cold called and told they have a problem with their computer which, for a fee, can be fixed. Alternatively the victim might initiate the contact in response to an online advert or prompt claiming that their device has been infected with a virus.

Romance scam. Strangers initiate contact online with a person and pretend to be interested in friendship or romance only to suddenly 'need' money from them with a fake crisis or sob story. Often they will take several payments from a single person and then never be heard from again.

Cost of living scams. Scammers pretend to be energy companies, luring people in with 'too good to be true' deals in order to steal their money, or pretend to offer an energy rebate or government support to obtain people's personal information.

Warning Signs of a Scam:

- It seems too good to be true
- Someone you don't know contacts you unexpectedly
- You're being urged to respond quickly
- You've been asked to pay for something urgently or in an unusual way
- You've been asked to give away personal information

If you think someone might be trying to scam you, get advice.

How to protect yourself from Scams:

- Don't be rushed into making any quick decisions
- Never give money or personal details, like passwords or bank details, to anyone you don't know, trust or have only met online
- Before you buy anything do research the company or website you're using
- Pay by debit or credit card
- Make sure your antivirus software is up to date and keep your online accounts secure
- **Be suspicious - scammers can be very smart**

It's also important to talk

By sharing your experiences with family and friends they can be prepared, and together we can put a stop to scams.

Suspect a Scam?

Call the Citizens Advice consumer service on **0808 223 1133**. We'll pass on details of the scam to Trading Standards, and can offer further advice.

The logo for Citizens Advice, featuring the words "citizens advice" in a lowercase, sans-serif font inside a white speech bubble shape on a blue background.

citizens
advice

THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Please remember the following people in your prayers...

Zoe, Elaine and Brian's daughter

Elaine, David Vickery's daughter in law

Linda, Penny's step daughter

All of whom have had recent operations.

Christine Weaver

Doina Rasnita

Archie, grandson of Chris Jones

Beverley Cantwell

Eric & Christine Clucas

Stan & Sandra Marut

Claire Macro

Barbara Banbury

David Corfield

Betty Shipway

Mark & Chris Best

The Patterson family

Jean Young

Joyce Cook

Ali Jannesari

Hamid Baradaran

Maggie Morgans & family

Matt & Beka Dumbleton, and the family of Abigail
Packer

Owen Collins



DAILY BIBLE READINGS



This month's assigned readings.

	Psalm	New Testament		Psalm	New Testament
1st	109: 6-15	Eph 4	17th	118: 1-7	1 Thess 5
2nd	109: 16-20	Eph 5: 1-20	18th	118: 8-14	2 Thess 1
3rd	109: 21-25	Eph 5: 21 - 6: 9	19th	118: 15-21	2 Thess 2
4th	109: 26-31	Eph 6: 10-24	20th	118: 22-29	2 Thess 3
5th	110	Phil 1	21st	119: 1-8	1 Timothy 1
6th	111: 1-5	Phil 2	22nd	119: 9-16	1 Timothy 2
7th	111: 6-10	Phil 3	23rd	119: 17-24	1 Timothy 3
8th	112: 1-5	Phil 4	24th	119: 25-32	1 Timothy 4
9th	112: 6-10	Col 1	25th	119: 33-40	1 Timothy 5
10th	113	Col 2	26th	119: 41-48	1 Timothy 6
11th	114	Col 3: 1 - 4: 1	27th	119: 49-56	2 Timothy 1
12th	115: 1-11	Col 4: 2-18	28th	119: 57-64	2 Timothy 2
13th	115: 12-18	1 Thess 1	29th	119: 65-72	2 Timothy 3
14th	116: 1-11	1 Thess 2	30th	119: 73-80	2 Timothy 4
15th	116: 12-19	1 Thess 3	31st	119: 81-88	Titus 1
16th	117	1 Thess 4			

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 (18th).
	10:15am	Memory Tree Social Club	
	12:15pm	Lunchtime Prayers	

October Worship Diary

1st	Harvest Festival Service Led by Revd. Josh Thomas & 8th Basingstoke Scouts; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Gill Miller.
8th	Led by Revd. Mike Burrell; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Gill Miller.
15th	Includes Holy Communion Led by Revd. Julian Macro; Musician: Peter Dixon; Duty Elder: Ian Scott.
22nd	Led by Revd. Howard Sharp; Musician: Alex Macro; Duty Elder: Ian Scott.

29th	Led by Joy Williams; Musician: Mark Best; Duty Elder: Ian McCloy.
------	--

Next Church Meeting:

November 19th (Sunday), 1:15pm

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.

October Worship Diary

1st	Harvest Service Led by Eve Baker.
8th	Led by Mark Ward.
15th	Led by Greg Whittick.
22nd	No Service at Old Meeting.
29th	Led by Karen Jones & John Featherstone.

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]