



West Street News
DECEMBER 2015



*The quarterly magazine of the
United Reformed Church, West Street, Dorking*

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

West Street, Dorking

A Church with a Welcome
and a

Clear Christian Message

We are so glad that you have picked up this magazine

Our Church Community is made up of people of all age groups who come from different walks of life. The diversity is fascinating. This being so, we have sought to develop the life of the Church, so that as many different needs as possible are catered for.

Here you can come to worship God.
Here you can meet with Jesus Christ, who is the
Head of the Church – because He lives in the
hearts of His people.
Here you can find companionship and build
lasting friendships – and so much more.

The opportunities for children and young people are particularly
good at West Street

Our Chaplain, Church-Community Worker and Elders are
available to help you.

An Emergency Prayer Chain operates for anyone who feels they
need prayer for any reason.

See the Weekly Leaflet, or ask for a WELCOME PACK,
or visit our website on www.dorkingurc.org.uk for more details of
our life and work

CHAPLAIN'S CHATTER

I write this on the morning after the tragic event in Paris. The news report I have just heard puts the dead at 127 with many more seriously injured and countless more traumatised with their lives changed forever. The violence of terrorism has struck at the very heart of our nearest European neighbour. In staggering contrast is the start of the build-up to Christmas. Along with many others I am beginning to think about the cards to write; the presents to buy; the food to plan; the decorations to put up; the countless other jobs needed to enjoy the festive season. It is difficult to believe there is a connection between the horror on the streets of Paris and the preparations for the joy of Christmas.

The connection is our need to turn to God in such times and to understand the gift He has given to us in Jesus. Psalm 16 is often referred to as a Prayer of Confidence and contains these words: 'I am always aware of the Lord's presence. He is near and nothing can shake me'. We can be shaken by events close or far, but we are encouraged to stand fast in our faith. The gift of Jesus - his birth, life, death and resurrection – provides us with tangible hope not only for our personal future but for the future of the world. We can go forward with a confidence grounded in what Jesus has done for us on the cross in dealing with sin and removing the sting of death, as well as what he will do in bringing peace and justice to all people.

If Jesus gives us so much, why is it that over half the population in the UK say that the birth of Jesus is not relevant to their Christmas? And probably that means to their lives as well. Where have we gone wrong in failing to communicate and convince people of His message? This year the Church is again taking part in the national campaign – Christmas Starts with Christ. A small but significant attempt to remind people that Christmas is a celebration of Jesus' birth and is not merely an opportunity to give and receive presents and probably over indulge in food and alcohol. Christians everywhere need to say loud and clear that Christmas is all about God's gift to us in Jesus Christ and what that means to us all. When events like those in Paris shake us we can be comforted that our confidence in God

is not misplaced. As Hebrews 10: 35 puts it: 'Do not lose your confidence because it brings great reward'.

Ted

GOMSHALL CHAPEL

"During supper Jesus took bread." - These wonderful words from Matthew's Gospel are in many ways the cornerstone of our faith.

From the very earliest days the act of Communion has been the very core of our faith, the simplest and best expression of Our Lord's love of mankind. In Chapel we celebrate this overwhelming outpouring of love on the second Sunday of each month and, in consequence, the sharing of the bread and of the wine as an expression of love and devotion takes on a special meaning for each of us.

By tradition, the Elders of the Chapel minister the bread and the wine to each member as they sit in the congregation. A few Sunday's ago I broke with this tradition, standing alone at the table and then moving around the Chapel to bring the elements to each as he or she sat and contemplated. In simple terms I wanted to serve - I felt the need to offer the elements to each person in the Chapel. I felt a great uplifting, tempered by humility. "Take, eat, drink ye all of this."

"Bright Hour" in December (16th at 2.30 in the Chapel) will be a selection of music presented by myself, whilst the meeting in January (20th at 2.30 again in the Chapel) will be a quiz organised by Di Moore. Do join us if you can - the more the merrier (excuse the pun!)

"Take, eat, this is my body - this is my blood". May the Lord bless us all, now and forever

In love,

David Beard

MODERATOR'S LETTER - CHRISTMAS 2015

Dear Friend,

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus.....

So much of our Christmas preparations have been 'disinfected' to consist of warm fuzzy feelings. So it is not surprising that we forget that while Christmas celebrates the coming among us of a tiny baby as the Emmanuel, God-with-us, his coming was indeed a sign of contradiction. We understate the fact that Mary, who was heavily pregnant, and Joseph were turned away from the inn because there was no room. We forget the slaughter of the Holy Innocents and that the infant Jesus was spared their fate only through the hurried flight into Egypt where the Holy Family lived in future hope for many years as what today we would call political refugees.

Yet this is the Christmas reality experienced today by the ever-growing number of migrants and refugees throughout the world. There is a humanitarian crisis on our doorstep. The stark reality is that 12 million Syrians have fled their homes because of conflict; half are children. 4 million are refugees. Children affected by the Syrian conflict are at risk of becoming ill, malnourished, abused, or exploited. Millions have been forced to quit school. More than 700,000 Syrian refugees and other migrants risked their lives this year to travel to Europe. It's a heartbreaking situation but the headlines scream at us: that most people in the UK don't want refugees coming here.

It may be difficult to believe, but rather than drawing us closer to God, sometimes Christmas actually draws us away! No wonder the little girl who was praying "forgive us our trespasses" got confused and said, "forgive us our Christmases." Sometimes we need to be forgiven for our Christmases. We simply leave no room for Jesus.

Over the summer, our family was very fortunate to be able to attend a conference in Speyer, Germany, entitled "We are one". During our last night our host Sabine, a social worker, who has

befriended a number of asylum seekers, invited them to a barbeque at her home. It was fascinating listening to Malik, Ali, Tariq and Issak, four young men from Pakistan and Afghanistan, tell their story of hurried flight and future hope. All four had been in Germany for over two years, Ali nearly three. All four were still waiting for an interview – an interview which would determine their right to stay. All four were graduates, intelligent young men in their twenties. All had left their homeland because they had to – their life was threatened. Tariq had left a wife and two children and hadn't seen them for over two years. As Issak said: we would not have left our families and our homes unless we had to. This is the Christmas reality: we are not one.

This encounter has left me wondering about the significance of 'no room in the inn' that first Christmas and for us in 2015. Perhaps one reason there was no room for Jesus was ignorance. After all, how could the innkeeper know the baby about to be born was the Son of God. Or perhaps the innkeeper was too busy what with everything else that was occupying his time.

The choices which we make as human beings often lead to disaster for ourselves or others. The Christmas story teaches us that the faithful love of God is always seeking better outcomes than human folly dictates. Christmas is the time we celebrate Emmanuel, this God-with-us, who makes the promise of God's faithful love real amongst us. This promise stands in a world which gives us cause to grieve as well as to rejoice. It is no accident that the gospel writers are at pains to set the story of the infant Jesus in a world of power politics, fear and injustice.

It is only when we have the measure of such challenges to our lives (such as we did this summer in our encounter in Speyer) that we can truly celebrate the God who comes among us as a helpless child and, in doing so, reveal to the world that the faithful love of God is greater than anything else.

Russell, Cameron and Ross join me in wishing you the gladness of Christmas, which is hope, the spirit of Christmas, which is peace, and the heart of Christmas, which is love.

(signed) Nicola



Notes from the Church Meeting

Printed copies of the minutes of the September Church Meeting are available from the holder on the Church Notices board in the Main Hall.

It was good to hear, at that Meeting, that 'Project Oasis' had been completed. The total cost of the work has been about £167,000, of which about £40,000 still needs to be raised to repay loans from the Church's 'Legacy' and 'General' funds. The 'Oasis Courtyard', as it is called, was dedicated after the morning service on 27th September. The 'Courtyard' does indeed provide an oasis of quiet for people to sit in pleasant surroundings; with the water feature gently burbling in the background. Also, it provides better access to the rear of our buildings and a platform lift to enable easy wheelchair access to the rear of the worship area and to the Little Chapel. Our thanks are due to those who have brought the 'Project' to fruition, particularly John Quincey and Geoff Price, and to the Scouts who planted the garden.

We were pleased to agree "wholeheartedly" to the admission of Bethen Haines and Josie Morgan into Church membership. Bethen was received into membership on 11th October and, as I write this, a date has yet to be fixed for Josie's reception. So far this year we have admitted 5 new members who share with other members, through the Church Meeting, in shaping of the way in which the Church carries out its mission. If you would like to join them, please speak to Ted Bellingham.

We heard that Terry Thomson had decided to retire from the position of caretaker after 15 years of service. Thanks were given for Terry's service and we wish him and Louise a happy retirement. Our fellow member, Peter Nimmo, had taken up the position and good wishes were expressed to him on his appointment.

Since the last Meeting, a candidate for the position of Minister of the Dorking URC and Gomshall URC Pastorate has been interviewed, and invited to 'preach with a view'. However, the candidate replied to the invitation by saying that, on reflection, he felt "no sense of call" to ministry at this Pastorate. Please pray for God's presence to uphold us as we wait to receive further applications.

Leslie Mitchell
(Church Meeting Secretary)

DORKING URC ANNUAL REPORT DECEMBER 2014 – NOVEMBER 2015

Mission

The appointment of Chris Currie to the post of 'Church-Community Worker', in January, has been of great assistance to our 'mission' work.

'Mission' is part of the calling of every Christian and every Church. The following 'Five Marks of Mission' were adopted, in 1997, by the 'Forum of Churches Together in England' of which the United Reformed Church is a member.

1. Proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom

The good news of the Christian Faith is proclaimed through our Sunday services, including 'Junior Church', and on other occasions such as at 'Messy' Church, 'Mid-Week Takeway' and 'Open Doors'. 'Second Sundays' has been added to our 'Junior Church' programme to offer older children and young people special sessions on the second Sunday of each month.

A lunch was held, in March, for young families associated with the Church; and a 'What is this Place?' event was held in May

to enable people to find out what the Church is about, what we believe and membership. A new website has been established, which contains a link to an interactive 'Facebook' page.

2. Teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers

Teaching goes on through our Sunday services, 'Junior Church', 'Messy Church' and 'Mid-Week Takeaway'.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to continue the monthly 'Tuesday Morning Bible Study Group' beyond February.

A pilot run of the 'Christianity Explored Course' was started in October and will run for six sessions until January. The course has been attended regularly by about 16 members of the congregation, and it is hoped that the course will be run again in 2016 with invitations extended to people outside the Church. It replaces the 'Tuesday Evening Study Group' for the time being.

There have been seven children's 'Blessings' at the church, five from three families at a special service in August and two in November. There was one children's baptism, which took place in August.

There was a 'renewal of wedding vows' at the church in April and a wedding in October.

3. Responding to human need by loving service

During the past year we have provided Christmas hampers for 'The Besom in Dorking', raised £265 for the 'Royal British Legion' by means of the 'Christmas Post Box, and collected £900 for 'Shelter' through the offertories taken at the Christmas services.

Early in the year we established a partnership with the Brigitte Trust and St Catherine's Hospice, which facilitates a fortnightly bereavement group meeting at the church.

A number of members helped with the street collections during 'Christian Aid Week' in May, and with the Disaster Emergency Committee's 'Nepal Earthquake' and 'Syria' appeals later in the year.

We donated £300 to the 'Dorking Area Foodbank', which came into operation in June, and which is run by 'Churches Together in Dorking'. We are one of the 'Referral Agencies' and donations of food and money are collected on our premises.

The 'Coffee Mornings' held when 'Open Doors' was closed during the summer vacation raised £416 for various charities.

Our Harvest Festival Service in September was linked to the URC's 'Commitment for Life' appeal, which supports the work of 'Christian Aid' and 'Global Justice' (formerly the 'World Development Movement'). Food items were donated to the 'Foodbank'

Items for the refugees held in camps near Calais were collected during the autumn, and our Brownies, and members of the congregation, took part in the 'Operation Christmas Shoebox Appeal' run by the charity, 'Samaritan's Purse'.

We continue to support the work of the 'Street Pastors' and 'Soul Connect' through 'Churches Together in Dorking'.

Free use of our buildings is given to charitable organisations such as 'My Time for Young Carers', and the Scouts and Guides and members of the Church are involved in running these organisations.

Our pastoral work has been enhanced by the recruitment of more 'Pastoral Group Facilitators' and the reorganisation of the 'Pastoral Groups'. The 'Chain of Prayer' has been enlarged and reorganised to make contacting people more effective.

4. **Seeking to transform unjust structures in society**

Our work in this aspect of 'mission' is largely confined to our support of 'Global Justice' through the 'Commitment for Life' appeal.

5. **Striving to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth**

This aspect of 'mission' does not feature greatly in our work.

Worship - Thanks to the work of our 'Pulpit Supply Secretary', worship leaders have been provided for each Sunday during the year, and our 'Accompanists Co-ordinator' has, with a few exceptions, managed to book organists.

Anthony Merryweather resigned from the post of organist at the end of December and, so far, we have been unable to appoint a replacement.

Cards inviting people to the Christmas and Easter services were distributed to organisations associated with the Church and to local households. On Maundy Thursday we held a special 'Last Supper' Communion Service. Members joined in the Good Friday 'Walk of Witness' organised by 'Churches Together in Dorking'. The Easter Day morning service included songs from 'Godspell'.

Small Fry also held special services at Christmas and Easter, and a Harvest Festival Service.

We hosted the annual 'Women's World Day of Prayer' service in March.

The Evening Service with Holy Communion held on the third Sunday of each month, in the Little Chapel, was discontinued with effect from April. The Evening Service at Chapel Court has been rescheduled to take place on the third Sunday of each month, instead of the first, and now includes Holy Communion once in each quarter of the year.

Since April, the monthly 'Prayer for the Work of the Church' meeting, held on the 1st Sunday of each month has been replaced by occasional 'Prayer Events'. The 'Tuesday Prayer Group' continues to meet on the first Tuesday of each month.

Events - A 'Socialeyes' Committee' has been formed with the objective of bringing together the various social activities the Church offers ('Oasis', 'Out and About', 'Open Doors', 'Open Home' and 'Holiday at Home') under one 'umbrella' to ensure that we have a full and balanced programme. These events are run by different committees with the 'Socialeyes' Committee being responsible for 'Oasis' and 'Out and About'.

'Oasis' meets on the 2nd Monday of each month and has a varied programme designed mainly for the older members of our community.

'Out and About' and other events have included a 'Quiz and Pizza Night' in February; walks and pub lunches in March, June, and October; a 'Sunday Lunch' arranged by the 'Open Home' group in April; a picnic and rounders match at Meadowbank in May; an outing to Goring-by-Sea, and 'Feeling Groovy' (a concert organised by 'Arthur Pound' in aid of 'Project Oasis') in July; and a 'Harvest Lunch' in September.

In addition we hosted a Barn Dance and Fish and Chip Supper in aid of the Brigitte Trust in February, and 'My Time for Young Carers' served cream teas at the church on the first Saturday in August.

'Holiday at Home' was held during the last week of August with the theme 'A Tour of Britain', and concluded with a 'Hymns of Praise' service on the following Sunday.

The church was open for the 'Heritage Days', in September, with the theme being 'The Harvest of Bygone Ages and the Hope of the Coming Days'; cream teas were served. This theme was continued into our Harvest Festival Service at the end of the month.

Buildings - A Special Church Meeting, held in February gave final approval to progress with 'Project Oasis'. Work started at the end of March and was completed in August. The 'Oasis Courtyard' was dedicated after the Harvest Festival Service in September. 'Arthur Pound', and others, continue to raise money to repay loans from other Church funds.

Repair and redecoration work has been done on the flats.

Plans to establish a 'branding' for the Church to be used on signs etc. are almost complete, but plans for new notice boards on the premises have yet to be brought to fruition.

Ministry - The Dorking URC and Gomshall URC Pastorate has been scoped for 100% of a minister's time. In August, the Vacancy Committee received 'Personal Profiles' from two candidates interested in the post of Minister at the Pastorate. One candidate was chosen for interview in October, and was invited to 'preach with a view'. However, that candidate replied to the invitation by saying that "he felt no sense of call" to the Pastorate. Currently, we are waiting to receive further 'Personal Profiles'.

General - The Elders held an 'Away Day' in February to consider progress on our 'Three-year plan to grow our Church'. This continues to be a matter for discussion at the Church Meeting and for action. Progress has been made, but the 'Growing' and 'Harvesting' phases are proving to be challenging.

A Special Church Meeting was held in February to enable members to express their opinions on the question, referred to the Meeting by the URC General Assembly, "Should local URC congregations who want to offer and host same-sex marriage services be allowed by the Church to do so?" 13 members were in favour, 9 were against and 5 were undecided. The result of this consultation was sent to the General Secretary of the Assembly.

The booklet, "What is the Spirit saying to the Churches?" referred to local Churches by the URC General Assembly, was

considered by the June Church Meeting. The booklet is concerned with the future of the URC, and members were invited to feed back their thoughts on a questionnaire. Five members responded and their responses were sent to the Secretary of the General Assembly.

David Young stood down as Church Treasurer, with effect from the September Church Meeting, following 24 years of service. The Meeting appointed Ian Tucker in his place.

Terry Thompson retired from the post of Caretaker in September following 15 years of service. Our fellow member, Peter Nimmo, has been appointed in his place.

Our 'Lay Chaplain', Ted Bellingham, has worked hard and to great effect to maintain the work of the Church during the time we have been without a Minister, and to establish new initiatives. We are also indebted to our Interim Moderator, the Rev'd John Dubois for his continued advice and support.

Membership - We remember 3 members who have died: June Chapman in February, Cecely Anniss in March, and Molly Young in June.

The Church Meeting agreed to the removal of 5 members from the roll of members.

We welcomed 5 new members: Caroline Baker, Bethen Haines, June Hopper, Pam Strudwick and Carol Webster. The September Church Meeting agreed to the admission of Josie Morgan into membership, but a date has yet to be arranged for her reception

The current number of members is 112, which is 3 less than at this time last year.

Leslie Mitchell

FAMILY NEWS

Prayers are asked for all

- Rhona Howell has had treatment on her heart and is recovering well.
- Ilse Traube has had a time in hospital but now has to remain in care.
- Jean Jackson has suffered a stroke. She is recovering, but still remains quite poorly.
- Florrie James has suffered a pulmonary embolism. She is now at home with care help.
- Sheila Ellams has had a fall, causing her to need her hip pinned. She is at present in Dorking hospital.
- John Quincey has been in East Surrey Hospital. He has clots in his leg and both lungs, which are being treated.
- Julian Race has had to have an operation on his spine to help him cope with the brittle bone disease from which he suffers.
- Betty Mann has had concerns and investigations into an eye problem. Sadly she has been told she has lost sight in one eye.
- Fanny Hughes who is 102 has suffered a fall and has had a spell in hospital. The family are now looking for a permanent care home
- Janice Brown has had keyhole surgery on her shoulder and is recovering well

- Eileen Ring has had a knee replacement and is making excellent progress.
- Pam Strudwick is having chemotherapy and this is causing her to feel very low.
- Joan Tennant, whose son has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and is at present too unwell for treatment.
- Remember Martyn and Pam Waldren whose daughter Emma died suddenly.
- Peter Millson has had an operation and is recovering well.
- Simon Ring is now recovering from a heart infection, followed by cellulites. Furthermore he is to have a procedure on his heart which will enable this to rid itself of excess fluid.
- Murielle Putnam has had a hip operation and is recovering well.
- Whilst John Du Bois' health continues to improve, his wife, Moira is now unwell.

Congratulations to -

- Helen and Tim Jones on the birth of their baby, Daniel
- Chris and Sarah Shaw on the birth of Isla Ruth Shaw and also to grandparents Mike and Pam Shaw.
- Nicola and Mark Cobbold on their marriage on 3rd October.
- David Yeomans to his engagement to Vanessa Thyer. They plan to get married in August 2016.
- Ivan and Val Longhurst on the birth of their third great-grandchild.

THE OASIS COURTYARD

The sun shone for Harvest Festival and the Dedication of our new Oasis Courtyard. Our Harvest service and dedication were both led by Ted Bellingham. It was a momentous day in several ways not just that it was harvest, but that years of work culminated in the opening of our new space. This too is a type of harvest of talents, from the architect to the builder, from members of the congregation to external sponsors.

We were pleased to see Margaret Cooksey, Chairman of Mole Valley District Council and County Councillor Hazel Watson taking part in the opening ceremony. Other sponsors in attendance included Karen Holdsworth-Canon from Surrey Community Action (and her assistance dog Giuseppe) plus our own Tudor Thomas, Chairman of the John Beane Charitable Trust. Unfortunately Joyce Kingsley-Jones from Age Concern Dorking received her invitation too late to attend but I did visit her and offer our thanks for their donation as well as showing her some pictures. We are grateful to all our sponsors either from outside the West Street fellowship or from members and friends of our community. (See photo on back page)

Since the launch we have received many favourable comments from people who use the premises. Barbara Philips was here arranging the flowers one Saturday when a couple of ladies who were using the Follett Hall commented to her that they felt a certain presence when sitting in the Oasis Courtyard. Let's hope that continues and people use the space as a tranquil area just right for contemplation.

The harsh reality is that, now that the dust has settled, we still need to repay just short of £40,000 to our legacy and general funds. Arthur Pound is doing his bit each week, so keep the 50p's coming but collectively we do need to do a little more than that to pay off this money so that the next stage of our upgrading of facilities can take place.

John Quincey

FLOWERS IN THE CHURCH 2016

As in previous years, a new flower rota will be drawn up soon and again I would ask that you see me as soon as possible if you have a particular Sunday you would like to reserve for 2016.

The new rota will be on the noticeboard in the main hall in the New Year. Or you can see me or ring me on 01306 882296.

If you feel you would like to donate the flowers but do not feel able to arrange them, there will always be someone to do this for you.

Thank you for your continued support.

Maureen Flood



NOTES

The pictures on the front and back covers are provided by Mike Shaw and John Quincey

Thanks go to Maureen Flood who proof read this issue

Produced by Val Longhurst

Material for the next issue of West Street News should be available by **Sunday, 14th February 2016**

CHRISTMAS POEM

We have a list of folk we know, all written in a book
And every year at Christmas time, we go ahead and take a look,
And that is when we realise their names are just a part,
Not of the book they're written in, but in our very heart.

So never think of Christmas Cards, as just a mere routine
Of names upon a Christmas list forgotten in between.
'Cause when we send a Christmas card that is addressed to you
It's because you're on that list of folk, we are endeared to.

And every year when Christmas comes, we realise anew,
The biggest gift that life can give, is knowing folk like you.
So may the Spirit of Christmas, that forever and ever endures
Leave its richest blessings, in the hearts of you and yours.



CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Can you identify these Carols - Answers to be found in R&S

- a) O Shepherd, ever near us
- b) Frosty winds, may moan
- c) He that was born upon the joyful day
- d) News of great joy, news of great mirth
- e) The stars in the bright sky
- f) Glory to God! On earth be peace
- g) As He is our childhood's pattern
- h) Hail the sun of righteousness!
- i) Christ the Babe is Lord of all
- j) We call you now to worship him

Answers: a) 168: b) 162: c) 158: d) 153: e) 146: f) 144: g) 167:
h) 159: i) 149: j) 141:



***Opening Ceremony of the
Oasis Courtyard***

***Living Jesus'
Love***

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