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TAUNTON UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MAGAZINE

NO. 599

October 2022

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Vacant

Pastoral care

For concerns that go beyond mutual pastoral care, please see the note on page 7.

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Taunton United Reformed Church



OCTOBER 2022

Magazine



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From the Editor



Back in June we began thinking about 50 years of the United Reformed Church about the same time as celebrating the Queen's platinum jubilee. Now, in the month that marks the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the URC, we find that we have mourned the death of the Queen.

It never occurred to me, when I chose 'endurance' as the theme for this magazine, that the Queen would not last this long. In fact, one of the things people said about her when she died was that she had always been there: up to that point in my life Elizabeth II was the only monarch I had ever known; even President Macron described her as a "beacon of continuity".

By contrast, the United Reformed Church was never meant to last. Its creation was seen as a stepping stone to greater organic church unity, and the cry went up to other denominations to join us. So this month's celebration has a bittersweet quality about it because of two stark realities: the ecumenical project has faltered, and the days are numbered even for our longest-reigning monarch.

So it turns out that this issue has three strands: the Queen, the United Reformed Church and the notion of endurance.

Life goes on, and you will find news about our former minister, Susan, and an interview with the Work-Wise manager, Lucille, as well as regular items.

Our church anniversary has been aligned with a 50th Anniversary Service for the United Reformed Church on 9th October. This will be followed by a lunch and a quiz. Sue Ingham suggested that you might like to have the quiz questions in this issue. So they are here, scattered in the spaces left by articles that occupy a page and a bit. I suppose that, if you were competitive, you could do some research before sitting down for the event; would that be cheating?

The theme for the November issue will be Darkness and Light. Make of that what you wish. However, all contributions are welcome, though not all are printed. Particularly welcome would be an offer of prayers that readers might find helpful.

Peter Henderson

Forthcoming Church Services

Sundays at 10:30am at the United Reformed Church, Paul Street

- 2 October Morning worship led by the Revd Phillip Jones (includes The Lord's Supper)
- 9 October URC 50th Anniversary Service led by the Revd Ruth Whitehead, Synod Moderator
- 16 October Morning worship led by Miss Sue Ingham followed by a **Church Meeting**
- 23 October United Service at the URC with the Revd Deborah Kirk preaching
- 30 October Morning worship led by the Revd Clare Callanan
- 6 November Morning worship led by the Revd Clare Downing, Moderator of General Assembly (includes The Lord's Supper)

Weekly Activities

at the time of publication these are:

- Wednesdays 9:30am - 12:30 **Work-Wise** in the church hall: offering support with all aspects of job seeking

Other Notable Dates

- Saturday 1 October *Intended Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration for the 50th anniversary of the URC in Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London, now postponed because of rail strike*
- Thursday 6 October Elders' meeting
- Sunday 9 October Anniversary lunch & quiz
- Monday 17 October Magazine deadline

Pastoral letter



Dear Friends

When I read that this month's theme would be 'things that last' or endurance, the first thing that popped into my mind was Sir Ernest Shackleton's ship *Endurance* which was crushed by the Antarctic Ice in 1915. And the heroic trek made by the 28 men to reach safety. I remember reading that as Shackleton and his two companions crossed the mountains of South Georgia to reach the whaling station at Stromness, Shackleton said that on that journey there was a fourth presence with them, which he knew must have been God.

The death of HM Queen Elizabeth II came as a shock to us, but in keeping with the theme this month, we can see from her years on the throne, many of us just assumed that she would always be there – even though we knew that was not possible.

She was part of our lives. Her faith and service throughout her life were constant, part of the 'things that last' during her long life and reign.

As we celebrated and remembered her life and what she meant to each of us and to this country and beyond, we can see how her faith was central to her life, and as we celebrate 50 years of the URC and 360 years of worship here this month, we see a common theme in our love of God and through Him the 'things that last' through the years of our being a community in this church and town.

The church and the community here has survived through the years, even though the building was ruined during the Monmouth rebellion of 1685 and they have also seen two secessions, one in 1732 and the other in 1843. Endurance must have been present during all of those events whose ever side you were on.

We only have to look at how not only our fellowship and our country endured and survived through two World Wars and other conflicts and natural disasters, but we have to keep in mind those people, places and countries where at present endurance to survive is the only thing they have apart from their faith.

As I write this super-typhoon Nanmadol has hit southern Japan and is moving north. 9 million people have been told to evacuate, but there are some who refuse to leave their homes.

To them this is home and it is part of their lives and they see it as possibly the only thing that they can hang on to. 'A thing that lasts'; but as we all know that is not always true.

So may their faith/belief that their homes will last be correct.

As a new era begins, with sorrow and celebrations may the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you in your daily lives.

Sue



Ernest Shackleton's ship
Endurance: not all things last

Praying for endurance

A prayer for endurance using the words of hymn-writer Love Maria Willis to pray for others and ourselves

Father, hear the prayer we offer;
 not for ease that prayer shall be,
 Bless those who are finding life challenging
 but for strength that we may ever
 live our lives courageously.
 Bless those feeling overwhelmed

Not for ever in green pastures...
 Bless farmers as they adapt to climate change
 but the steep and rugged pathway..
 Bless conservationists and mountain rescue teams

Not for ever by still waters...
 Bless Seafarers, coastguards & RNLI
 but would smite the living fountains...
 We pray for access to fresh clean water for all

Be our strength in hours of weakness,
 Grant us restoration
 in our wanderings be our guide;
 Grant us wisdom
 through endeavour, failure, danger,
 Grant us Protection and courage
 Father, be thou at our side.
 Grant us Assurance that You are always with us

Love Maria Willis (1824-1908) and others (Rejoice & Sing 495)

Prayer suggestions this month are provided by Viv Henderson

Revised Common Lectionary for forthcoming Sundays

2 October	9 October	16 October
Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4 Psalm 37:1-9 2 Timothy 1:1-14 Luke 17:5-10	2 Kings 5:1-15 Psalm 111 2 Timothy 2:8-15 Luke 17:11-19	Genesis 32:22-31 Psalm 121 2 Timothy 3:14–4:5 Luke 18:1-8
23 October	30 October	6 November
Jeremiah 14:7-10, 19-22 Psalm 84:1-7 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18 Luke 18:9-14	Isaiah 1:10-18 Psalm 32:1-7 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12 Luke 19:1-10	Job 19:23-27a Psalm 17:1-9 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 Luke 20:27-38

PASTORAL TEAM

Our aim is to foster care and concern for each other in the congregation.

However, If you have a emergency and need help or concern, do not hesitate to contact a member of the Pastoral Team.

Mrs Isobel Tosh Robb, Mrs Meg Cardy, Dr Eryl Harris,
 Mrs Sheena Helliari, Miss Sue Ingham, and Revd. Janet Sowerbutts.

Church Family News

Susan Durber elected president

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) meeting recently in Karlsruhe, elected eight new presidents mostly from regions of the world. The new 'president from Europe' is our former minister, the Revd Dr Susan Durber. Susan succeeds Archbishop Anders Wejryd of the Church of Sweden in this role. An article from the WCC website can be found on page 18.

Can you help?

We are currently running a little short of volunteers to assist with the 'Dora Cox Room duties' on Sunday mornings. Heather will be delighted to hear from anyone who is willing to be an occasional steward who welcomes people at the door before the service, and Pamela similarly would welcome further help with serving teas and coffees after the service. Neither duty requires any special skills, just cheerfulness!

Pamela (01460-234041) and *Heather* (01823-257838)

Birthday Corner

Special greetings to those in our wider fellowship who have a birthday in October. May God bless you all ...

- 18 Kathleen Copp
- 21 Maralyn Bickham
- 21 Pamela Elliott



URC shares nations' grief on the death of Queen Elizabeth II

The United Reformed Church issued this statement on 8th September 2022

The United Reformed Church shares in the grief of the nations following the death of Her Majesty the Queen, Elizabeth II.

Following the death of her father King George, Her Majesty succeeded the throne on 6 February 1952, but was officially crowned in 1953. Queen Elizabeth was the world's longest-reigning living monarch and was a much-loved and popular royal figure.

The General Assembly of the URC, the church's governing body, sends a loyal address to the Queen each time it meets. At the 2022 General Assembly, the Assembly wrote to the Queen noting that in this year both Her Majesty and the URC are marking a jubilee.

The Assembly thanked Her Majesty for her "steadfast and faithful service" over the seven decades of her reign.

Praising her example of "duty, integrity and public service", the Assembly placed on record its appreciation of Her Majesty's public witness to her Christian faith and the way in which she has sought to live her life as a servant of Christ.

The Revd Dr John Bradbury, URC General Secretary, said: "Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II lived the most remarkable life of dedicated Christian service.

"As a devout Anglican and Presbyterian her faith shone from her words and deeds. Her contribution to the life of our nations, the commonwealth, and beyond will be remembered with gratitude for generations to come. She inspired respect from across the political spectrum and from monarchists and republicans alike.

"The United Reformed Church has always been aware that as each General Assembly presents a loyal address to the throne, we have been addressing a fellow baptised sister in Christ. We give thanks for her life and uphold in prayer all who mourn for her. May she rest in peace and rise in glory."

The United Reformed Church

50 years ago

A time of excitement and looking forward

It was an exciting six month journey, starting with representing my home church (Garn, Abercarn) at the Congregational Church May Meetings held in Westminster Chapel where the all-important vote was taken on whether or not to unite with the Presbyterian Church of England.

Things then moved to late evening on Wednesday 21st June with my being in the Strangers Gallery in the Houses of Parliament, sitting next to the Rev'd Reg Cleaves (first Chairman of the Congregational Federation) and of hearing Anthony Wedgwood Benn (son of Viscountess Stansgate, first President of the CF) along with Dennis Skinner and the Rev'd Dr Ian Paisley speak in the debate of the United Reformed Church Bill, a debate which began at 11.13pm and ended at circa 1.30am.

This all led to Thursday 5th October 1972. An early start was made from the Liberal Club where I, in common with others, had spent the night in order to get a good seat in Westminster Central Hall for the Uniting and First General Assembly of the United Reformed Church. I will never forget the tears of joy running down the face of Dr Michael Ramsey who had come to greet the children of the Reformation and to wish us well on our future journey. It was a tremendous moment in time when our first Moderator of General Assembly, the Rt. Rev'd John Huxtable, described Dr Ramsey as "our Archbishop too", a comment which caused the whole Assembly to break out in rapturous applause.

Following a delightful and impressive lunch we all proceeded to Westminster Abbey for a service of Thanksgiving. I will never forget watching the Lord Chancellor, then Quintin Hogg, doze off with his wig going all askew! Of hearing Cardinal Heenan, Dr Ramsey and the Rev'd Dr Irvonwy Morgan (Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council) all promise "to seek that wider unity which is Christ's will."

The day ended with the launch of FURY (Fellowship of United Reformed Youth) in the City Temple; here around 850 people enjoyed a multi-media experience led by the Rev'd Derek Wensley, then minister at Westbrough in Guildford. The evening focused on Birth and Unity with guest star Donald Swann and the sharing of bread by those present. I'm sure the City Temple had, in its long history, never witnessed such an extravaganza like

this, it was also fun watching the facial expressions of the Rev'd Dr Kenneth Slack, the Rt Rev'd John Huxtable and many of the elder statesmen and women within our newly formed and inaugurated Church! The evening ended with many of us dancing to Godspell, and singing Happy Birthday to FURY and the United Reformed Church!

On that day we were all filled with hope for the future, we had begun to travel the road towards Church Unity, but 50 years on organic union seems like a dream which cannot be realised. However, many of us still hold to that dream in the hope that at some point it will become a reality. We all need to hold on to the thought expressed by Pastor John Robinson that "the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from his word". May it be so!

Revd Phillip Jones

Social and Arts Events

Thank you to everyone for helping to make the strawberry tea a success. 45 people came and 4 people received their strawberry tea at home. At one time we thought we were going to run out of scones but fortunately they kept on arriving! It was quite miraculous! A special thank you to those who set up the tables and to those who served. We collected about £154 which we put towards our harvest appeal for Pakistan.

Sunday 6th November

We are looking forward to welcoming Sue Weightman to a snack lunch and to share with us her work with the Taunton Food Bank. Some of you will know the history better than I do but I think the URC gave 'birth' to the food bank some years ago. Sue will give us an idea of the rising needs in Taunton and how families are coping with the increase in costs.

Sunday 4th December

Our Christmas lunch is still work in progress.

Sheila & Janet

Meeting the Queen

Our theme for the month ‘things that last’ and ‘endurance’ has a familiar ring about it as we mourn the death of Queen Elizabeth II. We have heard this week many words and phrases that describe the Queen’s character and personality. I am sure we can add many lasting memories and times of endurance.

I met the Queen once, many years ago, one Saturday morning in the small volcanic town of Rabaul in Papua New Guinea. The United Church and the Church’s office were in the main street and hundreds of people gathered around them. We drove from the United Church teacher training college, out of town, with 40 eager, excited students in a big truck about 15 miles along an unmade, very bumpy road to the centre of Rabaul to join the waiting crowds. Rabaul and its surroundings were home to several small educational institutions that belonged to different Churches and to the Government. If the institution was lucky enough to have transport, coming to town on Saturday morning was the treat of the week.

The wait was not long before the Queen and her escorts arrived, amidst cheering and calling out in various languages. Women ran to join the crowds from the market place where they were selling their garden produce of root vegetables, citrus fruits, bananas, sugar cane and betel nuts. It was a crowd of floral shirts and colourful skirts, even if some were a bit grubby. Remarks heard standing with the students ranged from “that can’t be the queen, she isn’t wearing a crown” to “isn’t she short?”

Queen Elizabeth was invited to be Sovereign Head of State in PNG soon after independence in 1975 and the country became a member of the Commonwealth. King Charles III, who also visited PNG when with a school exchange visit from Sydney, inherits the position as monarch. Perhaps he will recall the words of introduction when in the Highlands from a tribal leader “numbawan pikinini bilong Misis Kwin” (pidgin language)

Sheila Rudofsky

Q U O T E	<p>Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Queen Elizabeth II, quoted in The Servant Queen</i></p>
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Crown and scone

Queen Elizabeth II
21 April 1926 - 8 September 2022



The Imperial State Crown in flowers, an entry at the Frome show



The Strawberry Tea on 3rd September

A Paul’s Meeting plate

Travels in Austria

Clare and Frank Callanan went to Oberammergau for the passion play. Photography there is forbidden, but they did cross the border and visited places in Austria. Here are some photographs.

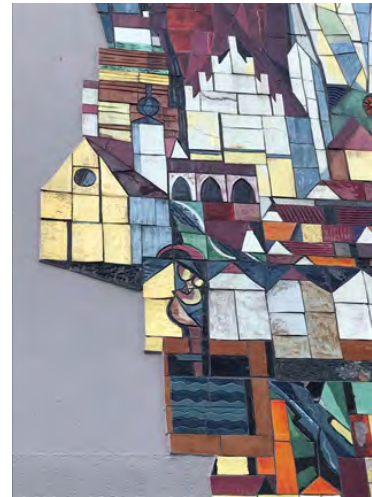


Above: Pitztal Glacier, Tyrol

Below: River Inn, Innsbruck



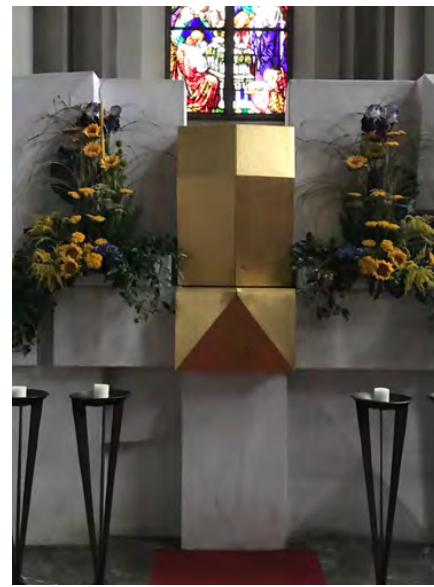
Hoch Imst gorge, Imst



Ceramic mural on building, Imst

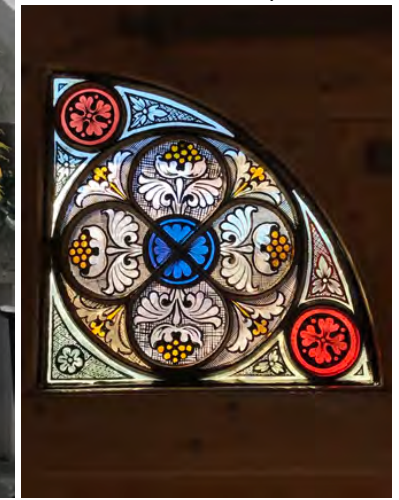


Right: Golden Roof, Innsbruck



Left: Altar, Imst

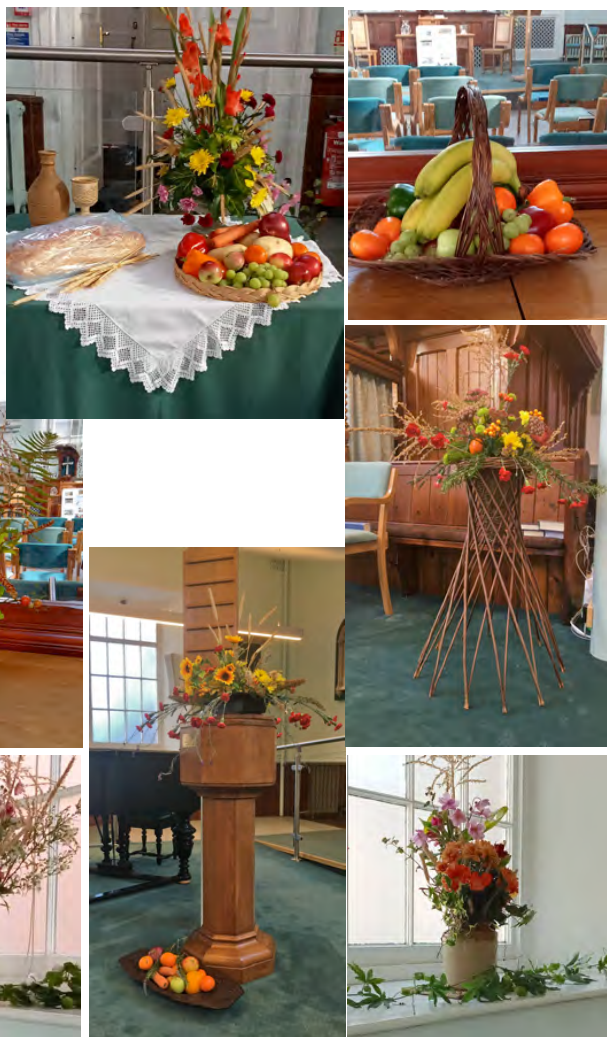
Below: Church door panel, Imst



Harvest decorations

Our Harvest service was on Sunday 25th September. The church looked magnificent.

Photographs by Meg Cardy and the editor.



Taunton URC: How We Got Here

- 2022** 50th anniversary of the URC
- 2000** The Scottish Congregationalists joined the URC
- 1981** The Churches of Christ joined the URC
- 1972** The United Reformed Church was formed by the merging of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales
- 1968** The United Congregational Church in Taunton was formed by the joining of Paul's Meeting Congregational Church, Rowbarton Congregational Church and Bishop's Hull Congregational Church.
- 1910** Rowbarton Congregational Church opened their newly built Church
- 1869** Rowbarton Congregational Church was opened to serve the people from the north end of town.
- 1830** For 5/-, (£50.44 in 2017) Mr James Bunter, secretary of Paul's Meeting gave the trustees of Bishop's Hull Church a dwelling house, coach house, outhouse and farmyard buildings, garden and orchard for the use of the Bishop's Hull Church. Today we know this house as The Old Manse.
- 1750** Sarah Peacock gave Paul's Meeting the land and buildings on Paul Street between what is now Pig Market and Mary Street for the use of the minister.
- 1685** May - July the Monmouth Rebellion. In Taunton, the Corporation and more important people were unwilling to support Monmouth, but the poor folk flocked to his banner. Monmouth was crowned King on 20th June 1685 at the Market Cross in Taunton. Judge Jeffries and the Bloody Assizes were held in Taunton Castle. Many of the non-conformist churches were desecrated by those loyal to King James including Paul's Meeting.
- 1662** Paul's Meeting and Bishop's Hull Churches were formed following the Act of Uniformity which demanded that all clergy should give unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in the revised Book of Common Prayer, never to offer armed resistance to the King and to be ordained by a bishop. So on Saint (Black) Bartholomew Day's (24th August) ministers who would not conform to these demands were ejected from their livings. In the Taunton area most ministers would not conform including George Newton and Joseph Alleine from St Mary Magdalene's, John Glanville from Staplegrove, George Binden from Wilton, Benjamin Berry from Trull and Nathaniel Charlton from Bishop's Hull.

Unity begins with relationships

The World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly elected eight new presidents on 5 September. On the WCC website, Rev. Dr Susan Durber, WCC president from Europe, reflects on the new role, and a vision for how insights gained at the assembly will carry forward.



What inspires you most about taking on this important role within the WCC?

Rev. Dr Durber: I am honoured to be asked to be an advocate for our fellowship within the European region. There are some places where our work in calling one another to visible unity is well known and others where it is not. I believe that unity begins with relationships so that Christ becomes visible as we look with attention to each other.

My priority will be to make and build relationships. I have been part of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, bringing my Faith and Order experience there, and I hope to go on participating in the breadth of our WCC life and speaking about it wherever I can.

What are the top concerns among churches in Europe?

Rev. Dr Durber: Europe is presently facing the reality of a war within our borders, and a war in which Christians are fighting Christians. The churches are tangled with war and with the problems that have led to it - we are not "above it," and we must be active in overcoming and ending the violence.

We also fail to notice the many other conflicts that scar our world. I long for a Europe that is not defensive and protective of its own concerns but is open to the wider world. Europe has within it some of the world's strongest economies and we must do our part in addressing inequality in our world, so hungry for justice.

Many of the churches in Europe, perhaps all of them in different ways, are facing a time of decline in numbers and in our cultural power. We are rediscovering our role as those who are 'salt' in the world, rather than the world itself.

How will the WCC 11th Assembly help move you forward on the path of reconciliation and peace?

Rev. Dr Durber: It helps me by reminding me that Europe is one part of a fast moving and complex world. The colonial story of European powers still haunts the ways that we, in Europe, belong to the world.

A gathering like this assembly shows me how I am part of a wider family and that new kinds of relationships within it need to be shaped. My first identity is as someone "in Christ" - and the challenge is to live out my discipleship with faithfulness in this part of our beautiful and hurting world. Christ's love moves the world - and moves all of us who are Europeans!

URC/Paul Street Quiz - part 1

1. The URC was created in 1972. Which one of these events also happened in 1972?
 - a) British currency decimalised
 - b) The Beatles split up
 - c) The West End debut of Jesus Christ superstar
2. In which year was the Band Aid single "Feed the World" released?
 - a) 1974 b) 1978 c) 1984
3. The passing of the URC Bill in parliament took place on
 - a) 21st June 1972
 - b) 24th June 1972
 - c) 28th June 1972
4. Who were the first ministers of Paul's Meeting?
 - a) Joseph Newton and George Alleine
 - b) George Newton and Joseph Alleine
 - c) Jacob Newton and Richard Alleine

Work-Wise: a family for jobseekers

Having been introduced at the Strawberry Tea the editor arranged to meet Lucille Morris at Work-Wise and discuss her work there.



Lucille has been the manager of Work-Wise since June 2021. In the past she was a legal secretary specialising in litigation but wanted work that was less stressful. Work-Wise is a lovely place, a more relaxed environment, and the staff are good to work with. She is pleased that there is a wide range of expertise and experience among the volunteers.



Left to right: Diana, Lucille, Kathryn, Janet, Norman & Chris.

Not in that day: Brian, Kenneth, John, Maralyn, Sheena, Yukie & Deborah.

It is a good time to chat because Work-Wise is quiet at the moment, largely owing to their success: several members have found jobs. There are currently about 8-10 members coming each week; it has been up to 19, more than the number of laptops available to use. But the Job Centre, with which they have a good relationship, is oddly quiet, too.

Lucille spent her first year learning the ropes and says she is still learning. Work-Wise was like a well-oiled machine when she joined, so there has been little that she wanted to change. It is going through a time of regeneration. They have almost finished upgrading all the laptops and the Work-Wise website needs updating. Lucille has taken to broadcasting every local job advertisement she sees: she photographs it and puts that on the Work-Wise Facebook page.

For now Lucille is focussed on making Work-Wise better known. Tone FM has a regular jobs section and she expects to be a guest on that soon. She is also arranging to meet with a representative of Somerset West and Taunton council. Together with Chris, one of the volunteers, Lucille visits the Job Centre each week to tell jobseekers about Work-Wise. She has found that some are wary of venturing onto church property, fearing that they will be preached at.

Since starting at Work-Wise, Lucille has re-evaluated what is important in life. What she sees here, and in the church, is a type of family - people at ease with each other - and this is of particular benefit for those whose family is small or distant. These days every opportunity to celebrate is taken - any excuse for cake!

What else would she want to readers to know? Well, the Trustees need a new secretary, preferring someone with experience of charity work; and, of course, they are always open to donations.

Work-Wise is still here, Lucille says, and still getting results.

URC/Paul Street Quiz - part 2

5. In which year did Paul's Meeting obtain land to build a church on this site?
 - a) 1667
 - b) 1669
 - c) 1672
6. In which year did
 - a) Rosalind Goodchild become the first female Moderator of the URC General Assembly?
 - b) Libby Lane become the first female Bishop in the Church of England?
7. Of which parish is the Revd Geraldine Grainger the most famous incumbent?
8. How old was the King when the URC was formed ?
9. Which British runner won the 10,000 metres on Super Saturday in the 2012 Olympic Games?
10. In which year did the King James version of the Bible celebrate its 400th birthday?

Oberammergau - The village that has endured

In the 17th century the Thirty Years' War took place (1618-1648) in central Europe. Thousands died as a result of the plague which was a part of the diseases of war. During this time of suffering the citizens of Oberammergau made a sacred pledge that every 10 years they would perform a "Play of the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ" if God would protect them from the plague. Legend has it that after the vow was made, there was not even one further case of Bubonic Plague in the village and those town members that already were afflicted recovered.

The promise was fulfilled for the first time during Pentecost in 1634. Following the 10 year rhythm cycle, the 42nd Passion Play would have taken place in 2020. Due to the Covid pandemic, it had to be postponed for two years. 103 performances will have taken place between May and October. The village has expected around 450,000 visitors from all over the world. That seems to me to be a triumph of things that last, endurance, commitment and loyalty. And in 2022 I was a part of that.

This tradition has endured over 4 centuries with only residents of Oberammergau permitted to actually take part. All of the people taking part in the Passion play (in German "Passionsspiele") are ordinary people who carry on pursuing their normal everyday lives such as doctors, hotel owners, restaurant and shop staff, teachers, carers, family members etc. All the main speaking parts have always been filled by actors who were born in Oberammergau or have lived there for at least 20 years.

The special character of the play is how it happens in a dramatic as well as a meditative way. Between scenes, moments from the Old Testament are shown as tableaux where the actors 'freeze' in position for up to a few minutes. That is some endurance on their behalf. They also serve as a meditative point of reflection, anticipating the next scene and its link with Christ's life and teachings.

The original text was written in the early 1800s, yet large parts have been rewritten. The current director (since 1990) often reformulates even during rehearsals. The desire to update the play in a contemporary way is another aspect of endurance, to ensure that it continues to appeal. The audience today is different from even 12 years ago. Over 2000 people take part as actors, singers, stagehands, and musicians.

Spotting the participants around the village when the play is not on is an interesting activity. Pilate was the owner of our hotel, his son was John, and Mary Magdalene worked in the kitchen. The actor had played Caiaphas and then Judas in previous years. Long haired men with beards who have endured growing them for the previous year are spotted and identified in shops and cafes. The oldest participant was 98, and the youngest was 5 months. Horses, camels, doves (released during the clearing of the temple scene to fly over our heads and out of the theatre) and the donkey/mule all take their cue too.

Jesus' endurance to portray the actual crucifixion, requires stamina, focus and very shallow breathing training as he was on the cross. Since we were sitting only six rows back the graphic aspect of this took some enduring on our behalf too. It was not easy.

Endurance is also needed to sit in the wonderful theatre (which seats 4500) for 5 hours - 3 hours plus an interval to have some food then back for the final 2 hours. Cushions and blankets were on sale in local shops and this is clearly an extra side-line for the numerous gift and other shops!

The people of Oberammergau have tackled the Passion Play 2022 with the same enormous commitment and endurance as they have done in the decades before. They know their duty. The play is not 'popular theatre of bygone times'. Instead, it is a 'theatre of the people for the people' that seeks to convey hope in the enduring story and faith of Jesus Christ.

Clare Callanan

MAGAZINE DEADLINE

Contributions for the November 2022 magazine should be with the Editor

Peter Henderson - 14 Somerset Avenue, Taunton, TA1 5HU

Telephone: 01823 254668 - e-mail: tauntonurc.mag@gmail.com

by MONDAY 17th OCTOBER 2022 (or earlier) please.

The theme will be Darkness and Light.

Commitment for Life

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

Helping United Reformed Churches work for a fairer world and for peace with justice, recognising that change and response starts with each one of us.

Envelopes for your donations and Information Leaflets are available in the Dora Cox Room. Please feel free to put in what you can, when you can, no amount is too small.

*Revd Dr Kevin Snyman - Commitment for Life Programme Officer,
Suzanne Pearson - Commitment for Life Administrative Assistant*

Moving Stories

News from our Partners around the World

News from Bangladesh

AN EMERGING BANGLADESH DEBT CRISIS

Debt is strangling the poorest people in Bangladesh, and in any sane world would immediately be cancelled.

Debt servicing has become a rising concern for Bangladesh, its economy battered by Covid-19 and global economic instability due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Government revenues are slipping and its debt service to revenue ratio has rocketed to 81%, up from 56% pre COVID. There is less available for priority spending like health, education, and public investment. The IMF and World Bank encourages 'restructuring' or the privatisation of public assets to

pay off debt, to the detriment of the poorest.

In fact, the global financial system beggars belief. Take the British foreign aid budget. The majority goes not to poor people but to a colonial-era investment firm called CDC that invests in luxury hotels, malls, and restaurant chains. In the end, only 3% of this aid goes to suppliers in the global south, with over 90% being paid to British firms. "This is the real scandal," says economist Jason Hickel. "Aid money is taken from the pockets of British taxpayers and sent straight into the already-gilded coffers of the British business elite. It's a shameful abuse of our most compassionate impulse," he concludes.

Reflection on Jubilee

In October, the United Reformed Church celebrates its Jubilee year - 50 years since it came into being in 1972.

Jubilee came into being with the rise of the early City-State empires in ancient Mesopotamia. Their recently discovered debt-based credit system made shifting wealth from freshly conquered territories hugely efficient. But it came with problems. Ordinary people fell into debt way too easily, and the system gave rise of a class of oligarchs, whose newly acquired wealth and influence threatened the power of the kings. To cope with this threat, the kings used to declare a regular 'amarga' (lit. 'return to the mother') or Jubilee that reunited heavily indebted peasants to their lands and families.

It's worth noting that Jubilee was originally implemented to protect the hierarchical system of Empire rather than as a redistributive mechanism. Jubilee was picked up in ancient Israel as a means of protecting the people against this debt system, but soon the powerful found ways of subverting Jubilee - and here we are today.

It may well be time for us to leave behind debt as a basis for our economy, given how destructive it is - as Jesus fully understood...

Prayer for Jubilee

God of Abundance, help us find alternatives to debt. Give us the wisdom, means, courage to forgive debt, thereby subverting empire's economics for the sake of your kin-dom.

We pray for Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Israel and Palestine; all are caught up in a web of debt that suffocates everyone, even the planet.

Amen.

Zimbabwe

THE ZIMBABWEAN DEBT CRISIS

This a very similar story as that for Bangladesh. In 2019 Zimbabwean total debt stood at US\$17.69 billion with US\$7.7 billion of that being external debt.

Only 25% is the principal amount, the rest being interest accrued, with the global north being the primary beneficiary of a rapidly unjust, global financial and economic architecture. As with Bangladesh, it is the poorest who suffer.

URC/Paul Street Quiz - part 3

11. Which hymn of Swedish origin won the Songs of Praise viewers 'favourite' in 2013 and came second in 2019?
12. On 21st June 1750 Sarah Peacock gave what to the church?
13. In which year did some members of Paul's Meeting secede to form North Street Congregational Church?
 - a) 1843
 - b) 1844
 - c) 1845
14. When did the last burial take place in our church yard?
15. Which saint did Margaret Thatcher quote as she entered 10 Downing Street for the first time in 1979?
16. The best picture Oscar winner of 1981 told the true story of a congregational missionary. Name the Film.
17. Who was elected as Moderator of General Assembly this year?
18. How many Synods are there in the URC?
19. When was electricity installed in the Sanctuary in Paul Street?
20. Which King was on the throne in 1662?

Q
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Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

ROTAS FOR OCTOBER

CHURCH FLOWERS

- 2 Oct Sue Ingham
- 9 Oct *Church Anniversary*
- 16 Oct
- 23 Oct
- 30 Oct

MORNING COFFEE ROTA

- 2 Oct Heather Parsons & Isobel Tosh-Robb
- 9 Oct Pamela & Alan Bamber
- 16 Oct Pamela Bamber & Carol Rowswell
- 23 Oct Heather Parsons & Isobel Tosh-Robb
- 30 Oct Chris Trott & Sheila Rudofsky

Sunday duties

	Duty Elder	Communion Elders		Zoom host
2 Oct	Eryl	Meg	Frank	Sue
9 Oct	Sue			Eryl
16 Oct	Meg			Peter
23 Oct	Frank			Sue
30 Oct	Stuart			Frank
6 Nov	Sheena	Sue	Eryl	Ron

**OFFICE HOLDERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF
TAUNTON UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

Car-Park..... Eryl Harris
 Christian Aid..... Sheila Rudofsky
 Church Heating Church Administrator (see page 1)
 Church Secretary..... Sue Ingham (07818 637155)
 Commitment for Life Contact Sue Ingham
 FINANCE - Treasurer..... Eryl Harris
 FINANCE - Covenant Collections..... Paula Powell
 Flowers Pam Elliott, Sheila Woolvin
 Letting Secretary Church Administrator (see page 1)
 Magazine Distributor Dawn Wright (01823 331800)
 Magazine Editor..... Peter Henderson (01823 254668)
 Prayer Handbook.....
 Property Stuart Trott
 Pulpit Supply Church Administrator (see page 1)
 Reform Magazine Pamela Bamber
 Social and Arts Group Janet Sowerbutts, Sheila Rudofsky (01823 617411)
 Sound Frank Callanan
 Sunday Coffee Organiser Pamela Bamber
 Sunday News-Sheet the Church Secretary
 Synod Representative Sue Ingham
 World Day of Prayer

SERVING ELDERS

Sue Ingham <i>Secretary</i> 07818 637155	Meg Cardy 01823 443245	Frank Callanan 07789 071935
Sheena Helliard 01823 333382	Stuart Trott 01823 281551	

Taunton United Reformed Church

Vision Statement

For the sake of the Gospel, we will be:

- ◆ a church that welcomes, whoever you are
- ◆ a church that cares and responds with action
- ◆ a church that works with others and plays its part in the community
- ◆ a church that knows and shares the love of God
- ◆ a church that is growing in faith and knowledge of God
- ◆ a church full of hope and joy