

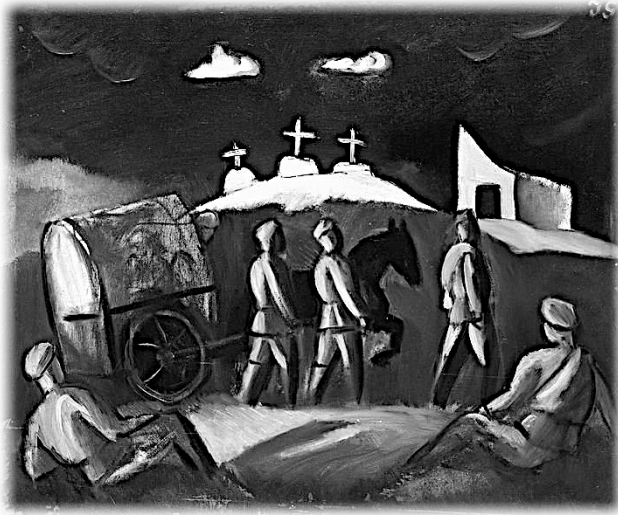


The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Please take a copy

Taunton

United Reformed Church



EASTER 2023

Magazine



Walking
the Way
Living the life of Jesus today

TAUNTON UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MAGAZINE

NO. 605

April 2023

MINISTER:

Vacant

Pastoral care

For concerns that go beyond mutual pastoral care, please see the note on page 8.

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR:

Currently vacant

Church Secretary, Sue Ingham

tauntonurc.secretary@gmail.com

07818 637155

WORK-WISE manager - Lucille Morris
email:

manager@workwise-taunton.org.uk

tel.: 01823 325030

Church website:

<http://tauntonurc.org.uk>

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From the Editor



This will be the last issue of this magazine, for the time being at least, and certainly with me as editor. So I have tried to provide information, not just for April, but for May as well. That is why I have called it the Easter issue (the season of Easter lasts from Easter Day to Pentecost).

The season of Holy Week and Easter immediately inspires thoughts of endings and new beginnings so, if there is a theme for this last instalment, that is it.

The prayers for the week are based on some of the events in Holy Week, but I hope they work as devotions for any and every week.

Changes in our circumstances are often stressful (don't I know it?) and it can feel as if life is falling apart. In different ways, in her pastoral letter and her article on page 18, Clare encourages us to put the pieces together.

Having introduced colour pages during Covid lockdown and found these to be popular, I could not finish without including some this time. There are images inviting your contemplation from Clare (on page 13) and from the Hendersons (on page 16). In the centre there is a photographic record of the Synod meeting at the church. The report on this is on pages 11 and 12.

The URC *Commitment for Life* office publishes 'Moving Stories' every other month and the latest ones begin on page 22. With their programme in Central America now concluded, there are now stories from Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. By the way, I have been on their email distribution list since taking over from Christine Whitfield as editor; if anyone would like to receive 'Moving Stories' on behalf of the church, please let me know and I will tell the *Commitment for Life* office.

My time as editor has been characterised both by joy - I love the sense of satisfaction in the completed product, especially when readers appreciate it - and the treadmill of regular deadlines. I can understand why no-one wants to take this on. Finally, our printer, Brightsea in Exeter, deserves the thanks of all readers: they have served us well and been a delight to work with.

Peter Henderson

Cover image: White Crosses by Latvian painter Jāzeps Grosvalds (1891-1920)

Forthcoming Church Services

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

- 2 April Morning worship led by the Revd Clare Callanan
(includes The Lord's Supper)
- 9 April Morning worship led by the Revd Phillip Jones
- 16 April Morning worship led by Miss Sue Ingham
followed by CHURCH MEETING
- 23 April Morning worship led by the Revd Martin Nicholls
- 23 April Morning worship led by the Revd Clare Callanan
- 7 May Morning worship led by the Revd Phillip Jones
(includes The Lord's Supper)
- 14 May Morning worship led by Ms Sheila Rudofsky
(Christian Aid Week)
- 21 May Morning worship is united at Temple Methodist Church
and/or led by the Revd Tim Richards (*to be clarified*)
- 28 May Morning worship led by the Revd Clare Callanan

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

Tuesday coffee mornings and prayers are on hold till the new year.

Other Notable Dates

- Sunday 9 April *Easter Day*
- Thursday 13 April Elders' meeting
- Thursday 4 May Elders' meeting
- Saturday 6 May *Coronation of King Charles III*
- Monday 8 May *Coronation Bank Holiday*
- Sun 14 – Sat 20 May *Christian Aid Week*
- Thursday 1 June Elders' meeting

Pastoral letter



Dear Friends

I recently read a one line "10 second sermon" in a book written by Milton Jones that read: "Church should be everyone arriving with one piece of the jigsaw." That image stayed with me because I am a great lover of doing jigsaw puzzles, as you will read later in the magazine.

It seems a very apt metaphor and I found myself exploring it ... as well as holding a piece of the 50 piece jigsaw that is Taunton United, then I am also holding a piece of the 40,000 piece jigsaw that is the URC. And, if as a church we see ourselves as holders of one piece in the 2.4 billion piece jigsaw of Christianity, then what about society and even humanity. As well as holding the piece of jigsaw that makes me a Christian, I also hold one piece of a jigsaw in which the whole population of the world holds a piece too: one piece of the 7 billion piece jigsaw of humanity.

On a smaller note, I also hold a piece of a 70,000 piece jigsaw that makes me part of Taunton. And I hold one piece of a 2 part jigsaw that completes my household at the moment. The amazing thing is though, we only have one jigsaw piece each. My 2 part jigsaw clicks in with my 50 piece jigsaw, my 50 piece jigsaw is part of the 40,000 piece jigsaw and the 2.4 billion piece jigsaw completes the picture of the 7 billion+ piece jigsaw. We are each so much a part of such a big picture and yet every one of our pieces is unique. Bit of a 'wow' thought really.

Alongside those jigsaw thoughts recently, I have also been holding ones of change, as we so often do.

Change is always a time for reflection... beginning of a new year, a change of job or house, family relationships, retirement, births, deaths, global events. The list goes on. Daily. Little adjustments and huge transitions. A continual resetting of our thoughts, beliefs, values and

circumstances. I am aware of the changes that have happened in our church family over the relatively short time I have been here... house moves, job changes, deaths and births, illness, new membership. Each occasion involves an aspect of letting go, saying goodbye, but also welcoming and gratitude. This April season of Easter brings one of the most transformational changes of all time with its story of resurrection and new life.

Each one of us brings a piece of the jigsaw to the table. Unique and special. Your piece will fit and work in whichever part of the picture you are in. As the jigsaw that is Taunton URC we know the call to care for one another, to comfort and support one another at all times. I think the writer of the letter to the Colossians had it right in Chapter 3:

¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

We are called also as the one jigsaw... let us be thankful.

Blessings

Clare Callanan



A 3-dimensional jigsaw puzzle

Praying through Holy Week every week

These prayer suggestions are inspired by the events of Holy Week and Easter, though for use every week. For this reason we begin with Monday.

Monday When Jesus cleansed the Temple he made a symbolic protest against practices which put an obstacle before people who needed to worship God, while giving a profit to the merchants.

We lament the ways in which modern economic and trading practices are biased towards those already rich and diminish the lives of others.

Give me wisdom to use what money I have so that it works for good in our world.

Tuesday Jesus spoke out against the abuse of power and misuse of authority.

We long for leaders of organisations and nations to fulfil their responsibilities with demonstrable integrity and enabling peace and justice for all.

Give me an awareness of what power I have over others and of the temptation to use this selfishly. Give me also the grace to exercise this power to build up and enrich the lives of those I encounter.

Wednesday We recall how Judas Iscariot conspired with the religious authorities to betray and deliver Jesus into their hands.

Recognising how society is built on trust, we think of people who have been betrayed by partners, friends or associates; perhaps we think even of ourselves. We ask that those wronged in this way will discover a greater good and find a way to forgive.

Give me the grace and tact not to presume (aloud) that this will be so for injured parties.

- Thursday At a time when he was under pressure, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in an act of simple humility to exemplify his commandment to love one another.
- Aware of the temptation of thinking that my needs are more important than those of others, give me a humble heart, willing to be of loving service to others. Help me to say, with Jesus, not my will but yours be done.
- Friday Towards the end of a life of full obedience to God, Jesus cried out on the cross, "Why have you forsaken me?"
- We think of people who feel desolate and abandoned through no fault of their own; we ask you to comfort them and give them hope.
- Saturday As Jesus lay buried in a tomb, and God rested on the Sabbath, his disciples were filled with grief, doubt, and perhaps disillusionment.
- For all going through hard times with no relief in sight or hope in prospect, we ask for patient endurance and the precious gift of your peace which surpasses our understanding. Nurture in me the readiness to be a true companion to the heartbroken without attempting a 'quick fix'.
- Sunday Those who witnessed the risen Jesus were both overjoyed and confounded. The apostle Paul wrote that, if Christ has not been raised, our faith is in vain.
- Help me to comprehend the full wonder of the good news of the resurrection and to trust that the radical teaching of Jesus is vindicated and the ultimate victory over sin and death has been won.
- Empower me to live as a citizen of heaven, walking the way of Jesus each day.

Revised Common Lectionary for forthcoming Sundays

2 April <i>Palm Sunday</i>	9 April <i>Easter Day</i>	16 April
Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 31:9-16 Philippians 2:5-11 Matthew 26:14–27:66 or Matthew 21:1-11	Jeremiah 31:1-6 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 Acts 10:34-43 Matthew 28:1-10	Acts 2:14a, 22-32 Psalm 16 1 Peter 1:3-9 John 20:19-31
23 April	30 April	7 May
Acts 2:14a, 36-41 Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 1 Peter 1:17-23 Luke 24:13-35	Acts 2:42-47 Psalm 23 1 Peter 2:19-25 John 10:1-10	Acts 7:55-60 Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 1 Peter 2:2-10 John 14:1-14
14 May	21 May	28 May <i>Pentecost</i>
Acts 17:22-31 Psalm 66:8-20 1 Peter 3:13-22 John 14:15-21	Acts 1:6-14 Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11 John 17:1-11	Numbers 11:24-30 Acts 2:1-21 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 John 20:19-23

PASTORAL TEAM

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

However, if you have an 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 Helliar, Miss Sue Ingham, and Revd. Janet Sowerbutts.

Church Family News

Verene Duder

It is with great sadness that we note that Verene Duder of Quantock House died suddenly on March 10th. In recent weeks she had been in hospital but had returned to 4th floor apartment at Platinum Skies with a care package the week she died.

Verene had been married to the owner of County Stores, so she was well known in the area.

Verene was a vibrant charismatic Christian and had been involved in missionary work in Spain before returning to Taunton. She was supportive of strengthening the links between Taunton URC and Quantock House, and instrumental in encouraging those she befriended to come to church with her. She leaves three children and several grandchildren; please pray for them.

Dee Norval remembered

Dee Norval was born in Sussex in 1945 raising her two children there with her husband Bun. Dee worked as a secretary in London and later taught short hand and typing.

In retirement Dee enjoyed time with her grandchildren and great grand children, many of whom attended her funeral at Taunton Crematorium on March 10th. The celebrant included memories from Dee's book *Dear Mum* in her reflections.

After a long and happy marriage, her husband died about four years ago. Dee moved to Quantock House when it opened last year and enjoyed being actively involved in the varied social life on offer. She was keen to develop the garden there. Dee had a strong faith and regularly came to worship at Taunton URC with her friends. Dee died peacefully in her sleep on February 6th.

Turkey Syria earthquake appeal

Members of the congregation contributing to the appeal to help victims of the powerful earthquakes affecting Turkey and Syria enabled the church to send £1000 to Christian Aid. This is in addition to donations made in other ways.



Christian Aid –
 “we are a global movement of people,
 churches and local organisations. We are
 the changemakers, the peacemakers, the
 mighty heart”

GIVE ACT PRAY this Christian Aid Week

The stories this year come from Malawi in Central Africa. The picture is of Esther who has successfully grown pigeon peas on her farm. Her pigeon pea bread and buns have changed the lives of her family. We will revisit the story of Esther in our service on **Sunday May 14th**.



Sadly, the news in March described the devastation caused by cyclone Freddy across southern Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar, leaving many dead in the floods and landslides. Please hold the suffering people in your prayers.

Does anyone know where I can buy pigeon pea flour?

Birthday Corner

We offer birthday greetings to those in our fellowship whose special day falls in April. May God bless you all ...

- 1 Christine Trott
- 1 Shirley Luscombe
- 9 Sheila Rudofsky
- 14 Isobel Tosh-Robb
- 21 Sheila Woolvin
- 30 Meg Cardy



Synod report

The 101st meeting of the South Western Synod of the United Reformed Church, with representatives of our churches across the region, met at Paul Street on Saturday 11th March. This was the last meeting of Synod to be chaired by the Revd Ruth Whitehead. Sheena deputised for Sue Ingham in representing our church. Here are some highlights of the proceedings. There are photographs on page 14.

Bristol Korean Church

It is exciting to have reached the point where Bristol Korean Church, which has been meeting at wish to become a local United Reformed Church. Synod voted to approve this, so a resolution will be brought by Synod asking General Assembly to receive this new URC.

Church Life Review

A video summarising the work of the URC Church Life Review Group was shown. The Group is preparing a report to General Assembly which will appear on the URC website (possibly in April).

Report from the Discipleship and Service Committee

The *Making Christ Visible* initiative, an ongoing opportunity to consider ways in which existing work might be encouraged and renewed, was launched by our Moderator at the October 2022 meeting of Synod. It was suggested that this might be better named *Making Christ Known* given the emphasis upon encouraging our mission and outreach. Much of the October 2023 meeting of Synod at Bridgwater will be given over to discussing this. Churches are encouraged to send 5-10 members.

Eco Synod Report

We now have 41% of our congregations signed up and registered with the Eco Church programme*, demonstrating that they are keen to make changes to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions and to increase biodiversity. Currently 22% of our congregations have been awarded Bronze, Silver or Gold Eco Church Awards. Synod Eco Grants are available, and details are on the Synod website, to help churches with replacing old bulbs and fluorescent tubes with LED lighting, draught proofing, or secondary glazing, or double glazing, loft insulation, etc.

We were encouraged to think, not just about our church, but also about our household carbon footprint; a way of assessing this, and calculating any desired carbon offset payment, is available at climatestewards.org.

Calling a new synod moderator

The Synod Clerk, Rachel Leach, outlined the process of appointing a new moderator. A group of four members of Synod, plus a similarly sized group, representing General Assembly, will be responsible for determining the priorities for Ruth's successor, and arranging to interview candidates. An advertisement will appear in the April issue of *Reform* magazine with the hope of appointing someone by the October meeting of Synod.

Ruth reflects on her 10 years

Ruth Whitehead was encouraged to spend an hour of the afternoon session reflecting on her time as moderator. She said that the 17 local churches that have closed during this period - they were listed - had lived out and completed their mission. She noted that their financial legacy had provided seeding for further work in the Synod (for example, paying expenses for an expanded attendance at the next meeting of Synod). Quoting John 12:24 ("unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit") Ruth reflected that even in death churches had borne fruit.

Looking more widely, Ruth invited Susan Durber to talk about her work at the convenor of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and her new role as WCC President from Europe.

In closing Ruth commended the final words of St David:

Be joyful
Keep the faith
Do the little things in life

Peter Henderson

***A word about Eco Church**

I introduced my church to the excellent Eco Church programme more than 25 years ago. But if you are still unaware of this, please see page 21.

Reflections

Clare Callanan offers us images from a trip to London.



Winter shadows



Linear curves

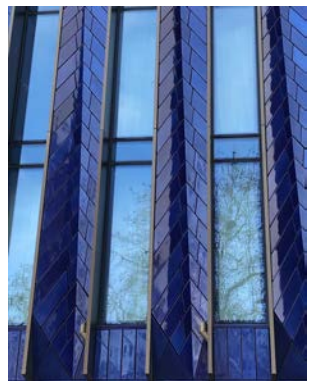
Rainbow triangles



Diamonds in the rough



Rhapsody in blue



Synod meeting

On Saturday 11th March synod met in the sanctuary at Paul Street.



Such meetings are usually occasions to spot familiar faces.



The flexible seating, light environment and display screens made the church a good venue for this type of meeting.

When the Synod Clerk gives the notices, we know that the lunch interval is approaching.

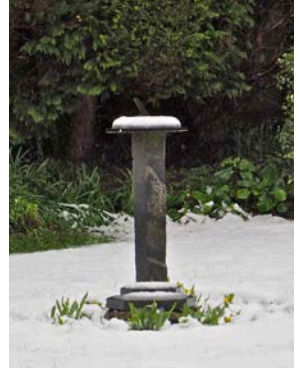
The editor was not the only person to have a camera.

Here Tracey Lewis is photographing the whole meeting for posterity.





Three days earlier there had been snow on the ground...



... and on the sundial in the church garden.

It was Ruth's last meeting of Synod before moving to Wales. In the afternoon session she reflected on her time as moderator.



A special cake had been prepared...

which Ruth duly cut.



Among the gifts Ruth received was a drawing of her dog, Phoebe.





"If ever there was a contemporary example of ignoring our neighbour and walking by on the other side, this is it."

Statement on the 'Illegal Migration Bill', by leaders from The Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and Baptist Union - 8th March 2023

Signs of spring



Buds on the plum tree



Raindrops on the honeysuckle foliage



Violets

and primroses





Joint Public Issues Team

From the March JPIT newsletter

Illegal Migration Bill

“We are appalled by the proposals in the government’s ‘Illegal Migration Bill’ to detain, punish and reject thousands of people seeking safety. They are completely incompatible with our Christian conviction that all human beings are made in the image of God, and are therefore inherently worthy of treatment which honours their dignity.”

In early March, senior leaders from JPIT’s denominations (which include the United Reformed Church) responded to the government’s ‘Illegal Migration Bill’, opposing the Bill’s unjust treatment of people seeking sanctuary (see image opposite). Since then, over 1000 church leaders from across the UK have added their support.

You can read the full statement and add your name to it at



Don't Lose Your Right To Vote

By the elections on 4 May, you will need **photo ID** to vote in local elections in England and UK General elections.



<https://tinyurl.com/yurtexjr>

The deadline for new voter registrations is 17th April, for requesting a postal vote 18th April. Guidance on acceptable voter ID can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/2s3r88mn>

JPIT podcasts / recordings

You can listen to what JPIT commentators have to say about a range of current affairs at <https://soundcloud.com/jpitpodcast>

When the editor last looked topics included The Budget, Homes for Ukraine, Women and Policing, and Women in Politics, but there are probably more recent recordings now.

Do you find life puzzling?

OK. I will admit it. I am a dissectologist. And proud of it. It is something I usually enjoy doing on my own but happy for people to join if they wish. I find it very relaxing for my body and my brain. I can do this activity for a quick five minutes or for a long hour session or more. And what is more... I know some of you are dissectologists too!

A dissectologist enjoys doing jigsaw puzzles! Sad or creative? Nerdy or focussed? There's nothing new about puzzles (the first jigsaw is thought to have been created in 1762), and as a family we would have one on the go at Christmas, sharing the searching and the puzzling.

Research has shown a number of wellbeing benefits: improving brain function and memory, time away from screens, increased cognitive ability, and reducing stress and anxiety. But how does this simple toy accomplish such amazing things? It seems it is due to the simultaneous use of both sides of the brain. The left brain, our analytical side, sees all of the separate pieces and attempts to sort them out logically. The right brain, our creative side, sees the "big picture" and works intuitively. Both types of thinking are required in order to successfully piece the puzzle together. In addition, completing a puzzle, or even just the successful placement one piece, encourages the production of dopamine, a brain chemical that increases learning and memory. That satisfying "yesssss" of finding the right piece!

I think jigsaw puzzles are like life; for me it's also a metaphor for my faith. One big challenge that requires you to take small steps, one at a time. Both require time and patience. You have to do it all but there are no shortcuts. With a combination of planning, patience and care, things will get done. The picture on the lid provides both inspiration and a roadmap; some way to get started. Sometimes, I will think I've found a piece that fits only to discover upon closer examination that it wasn't quite right. Usually, once I realise my mistake and remove the piece, I can easily see how to make another, more important connection. Seeing if a piece will fit based on size or colour, and re-assessing where that piece may go if it doesn't fit is good practice for evaluating our daily choices. It also teaches us the patience to figure out how to adjust these choices if necessary. Sometimes I can stare at the pile of puzzle pieces for a long time and not see a single piece that fits. Other times, puzzle pieces I've been searching for suddenly appear in quick succession, snapping together with a satisfying click, finally moving the picture-- and life or faith -- forward.

During a time of stress and overthinking a few years ago when my mind and damaging thoughts were in constant overdrive, I intentionally returned seriously to jigsaws. I noticed the effect on my conscious mind was revealing. I found that doing a puzzle was a way to quiet my mind. As I stare at the 1,000 or more pieces, I begin to think of myself as a reflection of each piece. I'm one whole that consists of 1,000 different pieces. Some pieces are so similar that you can't tell them apart, while others so different, I wonder if they even belong. I begin to study the colour and the shape of each piece, and make connections. Throughout this process, my perception of time, along with my ability to think of anything but the task at hand, is completely lost. This provides me with a well-deserved break from myself. I'm living in the moment. There's something freeing about simultaneously losing and centring yourself in a disarray of colours and shapes.

Sometimes it is helpful to turn the jigsaw puzzle around, and look at it from another angle. Literally changing the way I see the puzzle enables me to piece together bits that previously did not seem to fit; a changing my perspective to find solutions. And it is helpful to look at the box lid sometimes to see the 'big' picture every now and then to remind myself of where I'm going.

So maybe I am only seeing through a glass dimly whilst I seek the piece that will fit, but the revelation is always rewarding and comforting.

Clare Callanan

Q
U
O
T
E

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended...

T.S. Eliot, Four Quarters: East Coker (first stanza)

Q
U
O
T
E

In our end is our beginning; In our time, infinity.
In our doubt there is believing; In our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; At our last, a victory.
Unrevealed until its season, Something God alone can see.

Natalie Sleeth, Hymn of Promise (last verse)

News from Taunton churches

Drop into Silence

Are you in Taunton on a Wednesday lunchtime? Would you like to enjoy some silence as well as meeting others over a cuppa?

Drop into Silence at Quaker Meeting House, Bath Place TA1 4EP between 12.30 and 1.30 on 1st and 3rd Wednesdays in March but we hope this will be every Wednesday from April.

Taunton Friends will welcome you, offer you a chance to meet and chat over tea or coffee and biscuits. We are open to all, whether a Quaker, from another faith or none. There will be a quiet space for you to sit in silence for as long or short as you wish. You are welcome to bring and eat your lunch.

More information from the warden on 01823 327530 or John Ainsworth ainsworth.john@yahoo.com

Train as a Debt Advisor

It is sad to say that many people will experience financial difficulties as we enter a season of rising inflation, but hope is at hand. Taunton Area Debt Advice is a Christian Charity with a team of trained FCA approved volunteer debt advisors. We aim to take the burden off the shoulders of clients and provide them with a

plan, make arrangements and negotiate agreements. We provide hope. Our team of Debt Advisers is growing as we prepare for what will undoubtedly see an increase the number of people in financial difficulty. Applicants will receive training and supervision, and we expect them to be in agreement with the ethos of this Christian Ministry. Interested?



Contact Steven Reed on 07794552321 for an initial discussion

ECO CHURCH

AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT

A Rocha UK is a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world and committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment. You can read about their work at <https://arocha.org.uk/>

Eco Church is A Rocha UK's award scheme for churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God's earth. Their website - <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/> - states this:

Our free online survey and supporting resources are designed to equip your church to express your care for God's world in your worship and teaching; in how you look after your buildings and land; in how you engage with your local community and in global campaigns, and in the personal lifestyles of your congregation.

The actions you take will count towards a prestigious Eco Church Award at Bronze, Silver or Gold level. Complete our Eco Survey to gauge where your church currently is in relation to the three different levels; you may find you already qualify for an Eco Church Award!

Our vision is for churches of all denominations to care for creation as an integral part of loving their neighbours and following God faithfully.

Help us bring that vision to reality by participating in Eco Church.

Yet more notable dates

Saturday 22 April Earth Day www.earthday.org

Saturday 20 May World Bee Day
www.un.org/en/observances/bee-day

Friday 16 June World Refill Day www.refill.org.uk

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 are available in the Dora Cox Room. Please give 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

In Bangladesh, there are small, well-defined, transgender communities called Hijras. Hijras are often born male but look and dress in traditionally feminine ways. They face discrimination in every aspect of life: healthcare, education, public transport, and constitutional rights. The main reason is lack of awareness in the wider population, along with no official recognition or formal statistics.

Our partner Bandhu Social Welfare Society has been lobbying on behalf of the transgender and Hijra communities for seven years, alongside UNFPA (the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency) and UNICEF. This year, they achieved a significant victory when the National Curriculum and Textbook Board of Bangladesh agreed to incorporate comprehensive sexuality education into the national curriculum, which helps sensitise children on gender diversity. Bablai Raj Kumar is a Hijra. He writes that he used to work as a manual scavenger. Our Christian Aid partner in the region trained him in manufacturing cleaning products and flower stands. Now he earns 20,000 rupees a month, enhancing his status in society.



Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories

“Being involved in the project, I have felt a change in myself. It has made me more confident and more able to face challenges with greater confidence.” - *Noura Amin Sa’ad*

Noura Amin Sa’ad lives in the occupied Palestinian village of Beit Skariya in the West Bank. Her home is surrounded by illegal Israeli settlements. Noura, and other Palestinians like her, find themselves almost completely cut off from access to essential services such as healthcare and education.

Beit Skariya stands as an example of the Israeli scheme to ‘Depalestinize’ an area which might be viewed as a barrier to the expansion and growth of Israel. These illegal Israeli settlements make daily life deeply fragile and uncertain for Palestinians. They ensure that life is permeated with tension, violence, and an impoverishment of the possibilities for flourishing life not only for Palestinians, it should be noted, but also for Israelis.



Noura and the community in Beit Skariya (Khirbet Beit Zakariyyah) have been supported by our Commitment for Life partner the YMCA Women’s Training Programme to find ways to challenge the Israeli occupation and to build the resilience of individuals faced with threats to their land, lives, and livelihoods.

Safe spaces for children and families

In Palestine there are very few safe spaces for children to spend quality time with their peers and parents in a public place.

Christian Aid partners with the YWCA of Palestine, working in the West Bank with vulnerable communities. In 2022 the YWCA hosted workshops for communities in Alshweikeh and Kufur Nimeh to help them identify key vulnerabilities and needs within their communities and worked with them to develop strategies for addressing these needs. Both communities highlighted the need for spaces for their children and families.

Children in Alshweikeh lacked a space to meet and play safely and do joint activities with their parents after school and on holidays. The

community's priority was to repurpose a piece of land adjacent to the local youth club, covering it with grass and providing playground toys for local children and families to use.

Youth in Kufur Nimeh are very interested in sports, yet the only youth club in the village lacked the seating for youth and parents to sit and watch the games. Through YWCA workshops, the community decided to upgrade their facilities and encourage the youth to visit the club by putting in seating for families to sit and watch and improving their cafeteria. The club will also be able to host football games with other clubs and teams to enhance youth exchange and utilise the space to its full potential.

The head of Kafr Ni'ma Village Council, Rafat said, 'Now, the number of visitors has increased, and young players are motivated by the presence of their families to encourage them in training and games.'



Children playing football in Kufur Nimeh

By putting the voices of the communities central to both projects, each community gets to determine its own needs.

Thank you for your support through Commitment for Life.

Zimbabwe

Many aid agencies have relied on the strategy of 'development' to bring about an end to poverty. Yet after decades of hard work, we still observe islands of absurd wealth surrounded by a sea of debilitating poverty in Zimbabwe. What has gone wrong? It seems despite our best efforts at development, extreme deprivation and inequalities persist. Why? At least part of the answer is that the economic architecture in which we operate is fundamentally unfair.

This means that development - in this context - simply increases the gap between rich and poor at an ever-faster pace.

Christian Aid's research suggests that highly exploited countries lose \$416bn a year in revenues because of finance flowing illicitly across borders, often facilitated by British, American, and now Chinese banks. The IMF estimates that \$200bn a year is lost to low-income countries alone, a larger share of

GDP than for advanced economies, and over four times the amount of official aid that they receive from donors. Often this ‘aid’ is geared towards privatising the social good around the world to benefit Big Finance. This tracks well with Jesus’ observation that in this ‘Domination System’ of empires (some Bible translations call it ‘this world’) the poor will always be with us. It is well beyond time that all aid agencies concentrate their efforts at exposing this global financial architecture and proffer genuine alternatives to business-as-usual.



Please pray that economists, bankers, politicians, aid agencies and churches wake up to this fundamental injustice for the sake of all those we seek to bless through our sharing and gifts.

Producing resilient livestock

Gilbert Butau from Mudzi, Zimbabwe is a livestock farmer who contends daily with the realities of climate change and unpredictable weather conditions. Christian Aid partner BRACK has been working to help communities

like Gilberts, to prepare and adapt to a changing climate and economic shocks.

BRACK have provided training in livestock management, worked to improve farmers access to animal feed, provided farmers with incubators for chicken farming and has introduced young male boer goats for breeding. The boer breed develops swiftly and has a high meat yield, increasing profitability. Its successful breeding programme has meant that other villages are now benefitting too. Gilbert says, “Each time I got male kids, I would pass on one of them to another farmer in the next village. In that way we are realising great success with the goat improvement programme.”

When assessing the health of their cattle herds, farmers identified ticks as a major cause of sickness, low market value and animal death. BRACK, helped to support farmers to make financial contributions for buying dipping chemical for their herds. Gilbert says, “The BRACK program taught us self-reliance. As a community we raised our own money and procured cattle dipping chemicals... Ever since the start of the sustainable dipping initiative, we no longer have ticks, and our cattle are now marketable. Our goats and cattle now fetch good market prices.” Another farmer in the community, Kerry Mavandiva, says, “Before the BRACK project came, my oxen would fetch about

\$250 or \$300 but now fetch about \$500 to \$600 which means we now get better returns that go a long way in sustaining our families". With these gains, the farmers like Gilbert can prioritise their family's

own nutritional needs and bring to market their surplus.

Thank you for your support through Commitment for Life

Global Justice Now

Global Justice Now would like to thank *Commitment for Life* sincerely for its generous support throughout 2022 and into 2023.



Rich countries and polluting corporations in the global north are the most responsible for climate change. As much as 92% of the carbon emissions that are in excess of safe planetary limits come from those rich countries. These include the UK, which is historically the world's 5th biggest polluter. Billions of people across the global south are facing climate chaos, despite being the least responsible for causing it.

At the COP27 climate talks, held in November 2022, countries finally agreed to set up an international compensation fund for 'loss and damage' due to climate change.

Global Justice Now is campaigning to make sure that this compensation is paid by the big polluting corporations in the fossil fuel industry, including in the UK, which has a moral and historic responsibility to act.

Global Justice Now is encouraging us to stand in solidarity with the global south in their demands. We can do this by telling the UK government to make polluters pay for loss and damage! You can do this by signing the petition addressed to the Prime Minister that is on their website www.bit.ly/mpptcd

Prayer

God, thank you that we have the privilege of serving you. Give us the courage to face down injustice, the strength to make a difference, and the wisdom to choose the right action to bring about your desire for peace, equity, and justice, especially for the poorest in the world. In Jesus we live and pray. Amen.

ROTAS FOR APRIL & MAY

CHURCH FLOWERS

2 April	-
9 April	<i>Easter flowers</i>
16 April	-
23 April	Julie and Jon Trott
30 April	Meg Cardy
7 May	Pamela Bamber
14 May	Kay Copp
21 May	-
28 May	Deb and Keith Gallacher

MORNING COFFEE ROTA

2 April	Rita Williams & Pamela Elliott
9 April	Heather Parsons & Isobel Tosh-Robb
16 April	Pamela & Alan Bamber
23 April	Chris Trott & Sheila Rudofsky
30 April	Pamela Bamber & Carol Rowswell
7 May	Heather Parsons & Isobel Tosh-Robb
14 May	Pamela Bamber & Carol Rowswell
21 May	Pamela & Alan Bamber
28 May	Chris Trott & Sheila Rudofsky

Sunday duties

	Duty Elder	Communion Elders		Zoom host
2 Apr	Sheena	Meg	Sue	Frank
9 Apr	Sue	Frank		
16 Apr	Stuart	Church	Meeting	
23 Apr	Frank			
30 Apr	Eryl			Frank
7 May	Meg	Stuart	Eryl	
14 May	Eryl			
21 May	Sheena			
28 May	Sue			Clare

**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

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

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