

**Swindon Old Town Partnership of Churches
Anglican - United Reformed - Methodist - Est. 1969**

PARTNERSHIP MAGAZINE

JULY/AUGUST 2023

£1.00



Photo by Margaret Williams of the Wisteria
in her garden in Old Town

One in Christ - Together in Mission



THE WESSEX

Present an evening of song at their

Summer Concert

With Special guests, from Tonyrefail, South Wales

The Richard Williams Singers

Friday 14th July at 7.30pm at Christ Church Swindon,

26 Cricklade St, SN1 3HG

Tickets £12.50 U16s £6.00

You Tube

 Find us on
facebook



Tickets — [Ticketsource.co.uk/Wessex-male-choir](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/Wessex-male-choir)

or scan the QR code



TheWessex.org.uk follow us on Facebook and Instagram @Wessexmalechoir

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St. Mary's, Commonweal Road (off The Mall)

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WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHER CHURCHES IN OLD TOWN

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Partnership Letter

Siblings in Christ,

I was always taught that honesty is the best policy. Now there are times when a white lie can prevent a person's feelings from being hurt, maybe telling my brother there was egg shell in the muffins he made me in high school wasn't the kindest thing I could say as my first comment on the baking masterpiece and there are times when we have to hold things in confidence but generally honesty is a good thing.

I've been reading up about honest church (www.honestchurch.org.uk). The suggestion on that website is that we are honest about what we believe as churches in regards to LGBTQ+ people and women in leadership. For each there is a 5 point scale that helps us to work out what we believe and then be honest to people outside the church on that. It isn't written as a judgement, just with the belief it is better to be honest so people know what they are getting when they walk through our doors.

June has been LGBTQ+ Pride month and in August Swindon and Wiltshire Pride meets in Swindon to celebrate and to continue the fight for equality for all people. It was the Pride event last year when I first donned my collar in Swindon to go and be in a place of joy and love, for where love is, there is God. I was very pleased to be able to say, when asked, that Bath Road is registered to marry any two people. I know I need to keep standing up with my queer siblings, the world is not an easy place to be trans at the moment, or any of the other letters that make up the rainbow of sexual and gender diversity. As straight and cis (cis means that the gender I was assigned at birth is the same as the one I identify as) I need to use my privilege so that it is not just LGBTQ+ people standing up for themselves when that is both tiring and at times dangerous.

For that reason, I am glad to be having a celebration of Pride communion at Bath Road on Sunday 13th August when we will look at being called out of the boat and the courage to step out and be yourself in following Jesus. I also will be glad to be back at Pride on the 12th August once again.

As I preached at Pentecost, it is good to find the diversity of God in our churches, in the ways that we worship and in what we believe. It is ok, good even, that we don't all agree on everything but to be able to be honest with each other and with the wider world is so important. ➤

I believe that where love is, God is and therefore may we be people of love, sharing more of God's diversity with all that we meet.

May the love of God be with us all.

Happy Summer

Rev'd Rach



**Partnership Birthday Service
at Immanuel URC
on
Sunday 28th May**

Sunday 28th May was certainly a day to remember! Messy Church led our worship, in a way only they could, to celebrate not only Pentecost but also to welcome the new membership of a group of recently confirmed individuals. It was a joy to see the church so full with all ages and denominations from the Partnership. It may not have been what you were expecting, you may not have opted to make a 'prayer plane' or 'Pentecost Hat' but there was a positive and warm atmosphere for all to enjoy. Thank you again to Messy Church.



Birthday Greetings to Barry de la Haye

Barry will be 90 on the 26th August. Many of our readers will remember the holidays and days out that he organised for the Partnership.

We send him greetings and hope he will have an enjoyable celebration of this special birthday..

FAMILY EVENTS

BAPTISMS

We welcome into the family of the Church

CHRIST CHURCH

May 28th Rosie Carol-Ann Read
June 11th Anaya Boyce

CONFIRMATION

We welcome into to the family of the church those who were Confirmed at the Swindon Deanery Confirmation Service at St. Mary's Church, Purton on Sunday 21st May:

Fariba Roozveh Ahvazi, Aidin Amari, Maryam Behtari, Harry Davies, Amir Reza Ghasemian, Abdian Hosseinali, Benedict Ko, Bagheri Morteza, Sachin Prajabati, Ramin Ansari Shoushtar, Zahra Ansari Shoushtar, Smaranika Tripathy

MARRIAGE

We wish joy and happiness to

CHRIST CHURCH

May 27th Ray Brewer and Andreea-Elena Folescu
June 2nd Thomas George Bradley and Rachel Dawn Benny

RENEWAL OF MARRIAGE VOWS

June 4th Nitin and Nikita Shinde, 25 years.

DEATHS

We extend our sympathy to the loved ones

CHRIST CHURCH

May 13th Catherine Darling Bryan, 87 years
May 25th Patricia Dorothy Boulton, 84 years
May 31st Cynthia Lund, 96 years

FLOODLIGHTING

June 14th In memory of John (Steve) Stephenson

If you would like to sponsor the floodlighting of Christ Church in celebration of a birthday, wedding anniversary, special occasion, to advertise your Company, or in memory of a loved one, the minimum gift per evening is **£30.00**. Please visit www.christchurchswindon.co.uk/flood, Tel. 522832



Ride + Stride 2023
Saturday 9th September between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

This is an opportunity to visit some of our beautiful ancient churches and chapels that aren't always open.

The event, run by the Wiltshire Historic Churches Trust, is sponsored and the idea is to visit as many places of worship as you can. You can travel on foot, by bike, on horseback or on a mobility scooter. Visit as many or as few churches as you wish, planning your own route and going at your own pace.

Money raised will be split between your own church and the Wiltshire Historic Churches Trust, who give grants to maintain and repair historic churches.

Our four churches will be open to provide refreshments and toilets for those taking part. If you can help to welcome people for an hour or so, please contact your organiser.

If you would like to take part in Ride + Stride, full details and a sponsor form can be downloaded from the WHCT website, or speak to your organiser, details below.

Bath Road

David Sinclair phone 07768 775288 email: .sinclair302@btinternet.com

Christ Church and St Mary's

Arline Stovell phone 07716 394754 email: royandarline@gmail.com

Immanuel

Liz Gleed phone 07768 120364 email: liz.gleed@gmail.com

Please note new phone numbers for Liz and Arline.

Bath Road

All services start at 10am

02	July	Rachel Browning
09	July	Worship Leaders (Barbara Aftelak)
16	July	Rev'd. Andrew Bird
23	July	Rev'd. Rach Collins, Holy Communion
30	July	David Easter
06	Aug	Adrian German
13	Aug	Rev'd. Rach Collins, Holy Communion
20	Aug	Alex Scott
27	Aug	Eric Hewitt

The livestreams of our services are now on YouTube instead of Facebook.

**You'll be able to watch them at
www.youtube.com/@bathroadmethodistchurch,
where the livestreams will start at 10am.**

Open House - Mondays 10.30 am to 12 noon

Please feel free to come along.

Bath Road Church Community Breakfast

9.00 am to 11.00 am

10th June

£1.00 for a bacon roll with tea or coffee

All are welcome.



MOPS

(MOPS stands for Mix Of People)

6th and 27th July

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 2.30pm to 3.30 pm in the Crossland Room at Bath Road Methodist Church. The usual format is to spend the first half hour chatting and the second half hour listening to a speaker or doing an activity.

September 7th The Importance of Story Telling, Margaret Williams

September 21st Stephen Roe

ORGANISERS: Brenda Hewitt, Tel. 683926 and Janet Hunt, Tel. 521934

Christian Aid Quiz £230.50 raised.

The quiz was held on Saturday 20th May and we had five teams competing. Disappointingly, nobody from Christ Church was able to come as they were involved with the organisation of the High Sheriff of Wiltshire's Concert which was also on 20th May, but there were plenty from Bath Road and Immanuel. Thank you to everybody for their support. We hope you enjoyed the evening.

There were ten rounds on a range of topics, including one on the Christian Aid theme this year – 'Peas'. Due to a shortage of questions, or possibly knowledge, this was expanded to include some other foods.

We also had a challenging picture round. Noel had photographed various buildings, murals and sculpture around the town and everybody was asked to identify where and what they were. It's surprising how difficult this proved. Even people who drove the same routes repeatedly and recognised the image sometimes found it hard to identify the location.

If you would like to give the picture round, or indeed all the rounds, a go, please contact me. I will happily make the photos, questions and answers available to you, preferably in exchange for a small donation to Christian Aid.

We raised a total of £230.50 on the night. Many thanks to everyone who helped during the evening, asking questions, marking the answers, and providing refreshments. *Janet and Noel Hunt*

Email: janethunt21@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 01793 521934





Joanne Vatcher and Luke Granville
serving refreshments at the Christian Aid Quiz

Some of Noel Hunt's photos as part
of the Quiz.



Christ Church with St. Mary's



As you are aware, our site manager Chris and his friends took part in the 3 peaks challenge over the last weekend in May. Scaling the heights of the highest mountains in Scotland (Ben Nevis), England (Scafell Pike) and Wales (Snowdon).

We are delighted to advise you that they completed the challenge in under 24 hours, 23 hours and 20 minutes to be exact!

They are delighted to have finished and are nearing their sponsorship target for Dementia UK.

Chris will also be taking part in a 100k ultra marathon (Race to the Stones) in one day on 8th July.

Please sponsor him if you can - <https://www.justgiving.com/page/clare-smith-1678227120147>

Will Stevenette, currently an Ordinand training for the Anglican ministry at St Mellitus, Nottingham, visited Christ Church on Sunday 18th June to talk about his journey of faith and share about the theologian and mystic Julian of Norwich which he has recently been researching.

As an introduction to this theme, Will writes:



The cultural moment we currently find ourselves in is unsettling. Grief sits heavily on the hearts of many after the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine still rages on, political and religious divisions have been exposed in recent months and many are navigating the crippling effects of the Cost of Living crisis in the UK. These times are unsettling. We hunger for good news but when we turn to BBC One at 6pm it seems our pleas go unanswered. Where can we find hope?

I want to introduce you to the writings of a theologian and mystic from the 14th century. A woman who found herself in a season of history not too dissimilar from our own, and who was labelled by Thomas Merton as the best-ever English Theologian. Her name is Julian of Norwich. Born in the Fourteenth Century in Norwich. Julian of Norwich lived as an Anchorite, which means she was devoted to a life of prayer and withdrawal. Though her real name has sadly been lost in history, scholars have attributed her with the name 'Julian' as St Julian's Church was the location in which she took residence for most of her life.

Julian lived in a time of global and national crisis. The Black Death pandemic was raging on around the globe, recording death rates of over 100 million, there was major exploitation of rural peasants leading to the Peasants Revolt and England and France were midway through 'The Hundred Years' War' (I'll leave it to you to guess how long that would last). Furthermore, Julian was navigating a debilitating illness which would likely prove to be fatal. Within her pain and anguish, Julian had an encounter with Christ through a vision which led to her dramatic recovery. This preceded a series of prophetic visions followed by years of reflection on what they meant. These writings have been recorded 'in the wonderful book Revelations of Divine Love'. ■

Anne Grainger writes...

I am a member of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). Last weekend I attended the WCCM UK Annual Conference at the High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire – HOW THE LIGHT ENTERS – Contemplative Wisdom for Flourishing in Our Broken World. The speaker was The Rev'd. Dr. Mark S. Burrows who travelled from the USA to be with us. Some joined us on-line, some for the day(s) I joined those who stayed for the weekend. It was a 'time out of time' – I wish you could have been there. The following are a few thoughts Mark shared with us in our WCCM UK Meditation News before the conference:

Coming to Love Like a Refugee

*In a dark time, the eye begins to see...*Theodore Roethke

Imagine finding yourself walking through a forest at midnight on a moonless night, with only the flickering candle of an old lantern as your guide. As you slowly make your way through the dense thickets, the lantern throws shadows as you hold it to the left and then to the right, hoping to find your way forward. The trees seem startled by your motion, keeping silent watch as they do in their rooted presence. All at once, though, a gust of wind extinguishes the flame, and you realise you have no more matches to light it again. Panic overcomes you. A surge of fear rises in your throat. You stop dead in your tracks, waiting to see if your eyes can find the path again, afraid you'll run headlong into the next tree if you go further. You feel your heart racing and realize you are not breathing. You feel the crease of your vulnerability and sense the fragility of your life. There is no way ahead that you can dimly see or even imagine.

In that moment, you find yourself listening more intently than you had known possible before this time: you hear the creaking of tree limbs above and around you, stirred as they are by winds whistling through their outstretched arms on this particular night. Other sounds are less familiar, there are no footsteps to hear, or are there? What is that sound that seems to be moving quite close to you through the brush, snapping a branch here and there? Could it be a deer you have wakened from sleep or a racoon? Perhaps even a bear? Your ears are in full alert as you stand still and try to find your bearings. You feel yourself frozen in place, with time standing still.

Perhaps you've experienced something like this. If so, you know how unsettling the feeling of vulnerability is. When you find yourself facing a wall of darkness through your own suffering, or that of others - you know that acute

sense of awareness that surges through your body, accompanied perhaps by the pressing weight of dread. And yet such moments might well awaken you to experience a heightened sense of your true “self” in the midst of the dark. They might even give you a momentary sense of belonging to a larger wholeness beyond what you can see and quite different from the things you think you can grasp. “In a dark time,” as the poet Roethke once put it, “the eye begins to see...”.

But let us return to the darkness, so often for us a source of fear. How do we face the dark? The legendary singer-song-writer Leonard Cohen wrote – famously – that “there is a crack...in everything, that’s how the light gets in.” Precisely. That’s how the light enters. Through the dark.

It may be naïve or presumptuous to say we should be grateful for the darkneses we face. But face them we must and it is just possible - as the poet suggests - that the broken places in our lives allow the light to “get in.” Our vulnerabilities, our wounds, can overwhelm us, but the light is waiting. Or, as Cohen put it:

Every heart, every heart
To love will come,
But like a refugee.

Ring the bells that still can ring;
Forget your perfect offering,
There is a crack, a crack in everything –
It’s how the light gets in.

During the conference we explored this claim through the lens of texts by those we’ve come to call “mystics” – among them, Meister Eckhart and Julian of Norwich – in conversations with scripture and a sampling of contemporary poets and writers.

What we discovered on the long path of meditation is that the path into a space of emptiness, leading us into a greater experience of openness, invites us to face our vulnerabilities. In and through this emptying we find ourselves embraced and held by a love that “slackens not,” as Julian put it, and will not let us go. Or, as Cohen put it, coming “to love, but like a refugee.” In all this, as the apostle Paul put it, we find ourselves re-minded of “the God (who) said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness.’” *Mark S. Burrows*

Theodore Roethke, “In a Dark Time”, in *Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke* (New York: Doubleday, 1963)

Leonard Cohen, “Anthem”, on the CD “The Future” (1992)

UNPLUGGED

Young Musicians' Fundraising Concert



DATE: 6:30 PM, Sunday, 23 July 2023

- FREE ENTRY WITH RETIRING COLLECTION -

- INTERVAL DRINKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE -

Christ Church, Cricklade Street, Swindon, SN1 3HG

www.christchurchswindon.co.uk, 01793 617237

From the community, for the community: an evening of pure and exciting unplugged musicianship!

Local talent of all ages: we will bring you a very special evening celebrating our voices, our instruments, the organ, and the splendour of the church itself.

All donations: help raise much-needed-funds for the community's very own and cherished Christ Church.



Christ Church, Old Town



If you would like to explore more about Christian Meditation you can contact me, Anne Grainger, by mobile/text on 07741 412203
mobile/text email: AnneG@Christchurchswindon.co.uk.
or The Rev'd. Canon Simon Stevenette, Tel. 529166



**Concert at Christ Church, Old Town
Friday 14th July at 7.30 pm**

Since its foundation in 2001, the Wessex Male Choir has sought to entertain audiences with a variety of music styles and provide a platform for singers of all abilities to make the most of their singing skills. Twenty one years on and we are regarded as one of the UK's most respected male choirs. We have sung across the UK and Europe, striving to break the mould of the traditional male voice choir! We pride ourselves on being a relevant contemporary and innovative ensemble. Our record in competitions is enviable, having successfully competed in both UK and European competitions.

Our most recent victory was to achieve first place in Krakow against a number of European choirs. We will be entering three more competitions next year too.

Step Out Swindon Wellbeing Walks leave Christ Church at 10.30am every Monday morning, excluding Bank Holidays.

We walk at a leisurely pace for 1 hour, visiting the many green spaces around Old Town, before returning to the Community Centre for refreshments and social interaction. The walks are free but we do ask for a donation of £1 towards the refreshment and venue costs.

'Step Out Swindon' is part of a national scheme, the walks are led by trained volunteers and are fully insured.

There are also opportunities to take part in other walking and social events. All are welcome.

For more information contact Grahame Lee on 07932 109209
Scheme Leader 'Step Out, Swindon'.



The Friends of Christ Church

Caroline's farewell

Thank you Margaret for your piece in last month's magazine about the Friends AGM at which I retired as Chair. You mentioned some of the achievements of the last seven years and here are some more details.

I have enjoyed my 7 years as chair since the AGM in 2016. (I was co-opted as a trustee and membership secretary in 2009.) As I threatened/promised when elected, we have spent all the money! The total income and expenditure over that time is around £100,000.

Much of the income came from legacies from kind people. The biggest were dear Peter Ford and John Plaister, both of whom were Friends trustees. The money was mostly spent on the organ. John Sondermann kindly left his legacy to the PCC and this was also spent on the organ in 2018. The adjudicator at that year's music festival commended the work and said the organ should serve us well for the next 20-30 years.

We've also spent a lot on the clock, which has now been refurbished and changed from BST to GMT and back by itself several times, as requested and paid for by John Plaister.

We helped with the production of the 'Beacon on the Hill' book, the history of Christ Church and Swindon more generally. There are still lots of copies left in the parish office, price £13. Also available are cards of Janet's lovely pictures of our stained glass windows.

Most of the expenditure in the early days (2017) was on the major reordering of the church – the projector now in use and its shelf, the notice board and the doormats, all of which have served us well.

We have also provided a whole list of other items – listed below - in no particular order and variable in size. In some cases we have bought things outright. In many other cases we have made a contribution via the PCC or the Community Centre to a larger expenditure.

I repeat Margaret's thanks to Christine for taking on Membership Secretary and Charity Commission contact. She also runs the choir teas before Choral Evensong – the music is all the better for it. ➤

Thanks also to Juliya for maintaining the accounts and to all the trustees for their help and support and we are glad to welcome Lyn Eggers as a trustee. Especially big thanks to Chris Smith for taking on the responsibility of Chairman. Please support the Friends if you do not already do so. Membership is only £5 per year for singles and £10 for families, or £75 for life membership. Members may make suggestions for expenditure for consideration by the trustees. There are membership forms in the leaflet stand at the back of the church and on the church website.

List of what the Friends have done since 2016

Repair to white altar frontal
Recovering of Wedding kneelers
Refurbishments of Little table
Repair to Aumbry door
Parts for lectern moving system (Daniel)
Paint for car park lines
Parts for outside tap by Jubilee Memorial Garden
Jubilee memorial garden – 2 faculty fees
Contributions to expenditure for Jubilee Memorial garden
Geraniums at west end of church (2023)
Projector and shelf
Notice board
Doormats
Choir cushions and lady chapel minister's seat
Organ – major refurbishments
Organist's fees for relaunch concert
Church Clock – automatic time changer and refurbishment
2 CDs (Skyline Sounds II and III), including new anthem by David Bednall
'Beacon on the Hill' book
South transept window (Contribution)
New curtain and draught excluder for the South Transept door
New Diocesan flag
New music folders for the choir
Sponsorship for Old Town Festival piano recital
Sponsorship for Orgelkids organ workshop as part of International Organ Day.

Caroline Pitt

JULY/AUGUST DIARY

To find out the latest information for Christ Church, please sign up for our weekly email from the Christ Church News Desk:
www.christchurchswindon.co.uk/blog/

Alternatively, check our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/Christchurchswindon>

Listen to our latest service at a time to suit you from 1.00 pm each Sunday by going to our website and clicking on 'Services'

Morning Prayer at Christ Church

9-9.30 am Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the Lady Chapel
apart from the first Saturday when it is 7.30 am.

9-9.30 am Wednesday and Friday, virtual Morning Prayer

Telephone 0800 260 5903 to join by phone

Use this Pass code 69404 36078

Call Stephen 07885b217077 if you would like to join and need advice.

Every Wednesday, 10.30 am-11.00 am - Christ in Quiet with Holy Communion

- | | | |
|---------------|----------|--|
| 01 Sat | 7.30 am | Morning Prayer followed by fellowship breakfast in the Community Centre. |
| | 5.00 pm | Brunel Brass Band Concert in Christ Church |
| 02 Sun | 8.00 am | Christ Church, 1662 Holy Communion |
| | 9.00 am | St. Mary's, Holy Communion |
| | 10.00 am | Christ Church, All Age Service and Baptism Welcome |
| | 6.30 pm | Christ Church, Holy Communion |
| 03 Mon | 7.30 pm | Christ Church Staff meeting in the Community Centre |
| 04 Tues | 1.30 pm | to 3.30 pm Afternoon Tea in the Community Centre |
| | 2,30 pm | to 4.00 pm Tea & Chat in the Goddard Arms |
| 05 Wed | 7.00 pm | Christ Church Fellowship of Faith |
| 08 Sat | 3.00 pm | Christ Church, Blessing of Marriage |
| 09 Sun | 8.00 am | Christ Church, Holy Communion |
| | 9.00 am | St. Mary's, Holy Communion |
| | 10.00 am | Christ Church, Family Holy Communion,
Mission Giving Day |
| | 6.30 pm | Christ Church, Healing Service |

- 11 Tues 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm Afternoon Tea in the Community Centre
 12 Wed 6.30 pm Healing Prayer at private address
 7.00 pm Christ Church, Bible Encounter Group
 14 Fri 7.30 pm Wessex Choir Concert at Christ Church
 15 Sat 7.30 pm Christ Church, Swindon Male Voice and Andover Ladies Choir - Concert in aid of the Prospect Hospice.
- 16 Sun** 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 9.00 am St. Mary's, Informal Holy Communion
 10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 6.30 pm Christ Church, Choral Evensong
- 18 Tues 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm Afternoon Tea in the Community Centre
 19 Wed 7.00 pm Christ Church, Fellowship of Faith
- 23 Sun** 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 9.00 am St. Mary's, Holy Communion
 10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 6.30 pm Unplugged Concert at Christ Church
- 25 Tues 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm Afternoon Tea in the Community Centre
 26 Wed 7.00 pm Christ Church, Fellowship of Faith
- 30 Sun** 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 9.00 am St. Mary's, Holy Communion
 10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 12 noon Christ Church, Holy Baptism
 6.30 pm Christ Church, Songs of Praise



Choral Evensong

Sunday 16th July, 6.30 pm

at Christ Church

Immanuel

**Services every Sunday at 10.30 am with
Holy Communion on the third Sunday of the month.**

2nd	July	Andrew Fleet
9th	July	David Leadbeater and Wally Knight
16th	July	Rev'd. Geoff Glead
23rd	July	Rev'd. Gerald England
30th	July	Brian Elkington
6th	August	Rev'd. Robert Jordan
13th	August	Rev'd. Robert Jordan
20th	August	Rev'd. Robert Jordan
27th	August	Rev'd. Mark Barrett

Sabbatical:

Robert's three month sabbatical continues through July and August. All those who follow him on Facebook will have seen his journey and visits to Bilbao, Madrid and Valencia and at the time of writing he is thoroughly enjoying the museums and art of Prague and the Czech Republic.. Just imagine it all?!

SERVICE OF SUMMER PRAISE accompanied by Organ and two Pianos

**Sunday 9th July, 10.30 am
at**

Immanuel United Reformed Church, Upham Road

Join us in a Service of Summer Praise with well known Hymns and Readings to the glory of our Lord. Accompanied by organ and two pianos.

Let us raise the roof with singing and then enjoy a time of fellowship over a glass of summer drink (non alcoholic)/Tea/Coffee/Biscuits.



TEA and CHAT 11th July and 8th August

Come along and bring a friend. It is a time for fellowship, shared over a cup of tea and sometimes a piece of cake! Everyone is really welcome.

Other Faiths worshipping at Immanuel Church

In October 2016 Immanuel URC was approached by a group of people wondering if they could use the premises for worship. They explained they were a Romanian Pentecostal Church and wanted to use the actual temple and a few of the rooms for Bible Study, Prayer Group and Sunday School. A delegation of Elders met with them and it was discussed at an Elders meeting, who brought the request to Church Meeting, and it was agreed to proceed.

We have had at least one joint service - both in Romanian and English, we have come to know each other and respect each other and it is working well.

Below, the Romanian Church tells their story... we pray for further deepening of our common witness to the Love of God for our world. Robert Jordan

Immanuel Romanian Church

Immanuel Romanian Church was established on June 10th 2017 and has grown steadily since then. It currently has around 45 registered members, along with a similar number of children. The church began with 15 individuals gathering on October 16, 2016, who shared a strong belief in God and wanted to spread His message. They have a mission to preserve their values and culture while reaching out to those who haven't experienced God's love. Immanuel Romanian Church has celebrated significant milestones with approximately 30 children's dedications, the baptism of 5 individuals and a joyous wedding ceremony, each milestone representing the testament of God's faithfulness.

Immanuel Romanian Church has dedicated itself to various missions both in Romania and internationally. A recent initiative has been the church's support for the people of Ukraine, the neighboring country of Romania, which has been grappling with the consequences of war. Through collaboration with the Barnabas Fund, the congregation actively engaged in packing and dispatching

essential supplies such as food and blankets to alleviate the suffering faced by those affected. Additionally, the church provided financial aid to support individuals in Ukraine. The church has even visited the Romanian-Ukrainian in collaboration with brothers from Swindon Evangelical Church and North Baptist Church to show their support.

Immanuel Romanian Church is also committed to humanitarian work in other countries such as Niger, Namibia, Ethiopia, and Madagascar. The congregation has sent three containers to the Kalahari New Hope mission in Namibia and two containers to Niger, providing essential resources such as food, clothes, and blankets. Members of the church have volunteered for these missions personally, with a group of brothers even volunteering to contribute to the construction of the CURE hospital in Niger. Additionally, the church provides monthly financial assistance to two missionary families and their work, one from Madagascar and another from Ethiopia. With an unwavering dedication to missionary work, Immanuel Romanian Church aspires to continue its efforts in spreading love and grace through God's guidance, in obedience to Jesus's command in Matthew 28:19-20. ■



Geoff's Jottings

Little things: A 1 inch by 2 inch size of the full 900 pages of Qur'an was found buried in Albania.

Big things: 6,510,000 were estimated to have been involved in the King Charles BIG HELP OUT.

Decline: 457,371 is the estimated decline in membership of the Southern Baptist Convention during 2022.

The Coronation: The service for King Charles III in Westminster Abbey was the most ecumenical gathering of religious faiths ever known.

Better late than never: The Covid postponed celebrations of the 50th Anniversary since the founding of the United Reformed Church took place on Saturday 15th April when over 1200 people gathered for a Service of Thanksgiving in the Methodist Central Hall, London. Trumpets heralded the start of the service. ►

GRACE:

Lord, give me grace when the sun is shining.
Grace when the sky is black.
Grace when things go wrong.
Grace when everything goes right.
Grace when my clothes are fresh and new.
Grace when they're worn and old.
Grace when my purse is empty.
Grace when it's full of gold.
Give me the grace to always give you thanks,
For it is through your Grace that we are able
to cope with life in all its changing scenes.

Learn, laugh and live with Swindon u3a

u3a Open Day Saturday 2nd September

Is there something you've always wanted to learn more about – a language, a new sport or game, technology, an art or craft, your family tree? You can do all this and more in one of the u3a's many interest groups.

To find out more about the u3a, visit us at our Open Day on Saturday 2nd September from 10am until 1pm. This will be held in St Joseph's College on Ocotal Way. Here you will find 'stalls' for the interest groups with people to talk to about all the different activities. If you need refreshment you can relax with a cup of tea or coffee.

The u3a is for people who are no longer in full-time employment. You can relax in the company of good friends while taking part in exciting new activities together.

As well as all the interest groups there are day trips, talks, holidays, theatre and concert outings and much more. There's never a dull day with the u3a.

Visit www.swindonu3a.org.uk to see everything on offer, the current membership fee and how to join. Alternatively you can phone our office on 01793 614629 between 10am to noon on Monday, Wednesday or Friday.

Legislation to safeguard Church of England Academy land moves forward

The Church of England's lead Bishop for Education has welcomed a recent Government amendment to a Bill which safeguards land held for Church Academies.

The amendment to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill will reintroduce clauses originally found in the Schools Bill, with which the Government decided not to proceed.

The clauses ensure that new sites for Church Academies, where they are relocated, continue to be held on charitable trust. The amendment was brought by the Government at the House of Lords Committee stage.

The Bishop of Durham, Lead Bishop for Education for the Church, said: "Church of England schools provide a highly valued education to over a million children which is distinctly Christian, but serve a diverse community of all faiths and none."

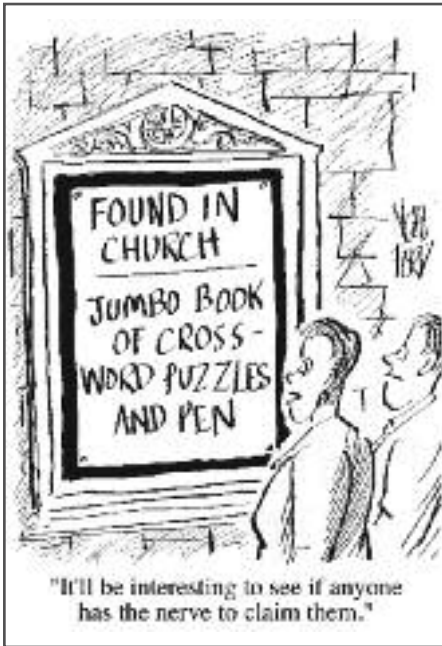
Church of England's Social Impact Investment Programme grows

The Church of England's Social Impact Investment Programme, which directs capital towards new solutions to deep-rooted social challenges, has invested £5.7m in its first two years, according to its 2023 Impact Report.

The programme, established in 2020, aims to support vulnerable people and communities, while generating sustainable returns that preserve the capital for future impact.

Vanessa Morphet, Head of Social Impact Investment at the Archbishops' Council, said that the C of E works with "excellent investment managers who have deep knowledge of the UK charity and social enterprise sector" and she is "confident our capital will have a real, lasting impact where it counts most."

The programme has so far made four investments, including one to a fund which provides refuges for vulnerable women and their children. ■



My sermon today comes from Apps Chapter 1 beginning at verse 2.

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