



# *the* magazine



# Park united reformed church

June 2017

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The views expressed in this magazine are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily represent the views of Park United Reformed Church, but I wonder if anyone ever reads this bit.

## Minister's Letter

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7 High Tree Drive, Earley, Reading RG6 1EU

Dear Friends,

This is my penultimate Minister's letter for the Park URC magazine, the one before the last one! As you may well have heard, after 14 years at Park URC, I have received a call to serve as the next Minister of Tavistock United Reformed Church, in Devon. This calling has been discerned after months of prayer and reflection; as Suzy and I also feel called to set up a Retreat Centre and small campsite near to Tavistock. This is a huge step of faith and we both recognize that it will be hard work for the next few months, to get everything sorted and set up.



Some people may be wondering whether this is a move away from ministry, into a new work area - our view is that this is a whole new area of ministry to which God has called Suzy and I. We will be meeting many people who might never enter a church or view themselves as 'religious' but we know that some of the conversations we have will be about things that matter, things that affect our lives, things that affect our beliefs. Far from thinking that we will be involved in less 'ministry' we anticipate being involved in more ministry, pastoral care and worship.

I came across these words the other day: In building the global Church, God knew exactly what he was doing. If you think that McDonalds has global influence with its 68 million customers from Bangkok to Baltimore, then how much more powerful is the local church with its 2.2 billion members in virtually every community on earth?

What's more, the Church doesn't consist of flat-pack franchises offering the same options everywhere; local churches reflect the diversity of their communities and are powerfully positioned to respond to the needs that exist there.

Each local church is different, that is part of God's plan! God seems to love diversity and you don't have to look far to find very different ways of being church and doing church. My hope is that there will continue to be new developments; like our Ignite service, like Messy Church, like our Lakeside services - different but important ways of worshipping God. Similarly, Ministers can be quite a diverse bunch of people, each offering a special mix of gifts and experiences, no doubt your next Minister will bring his or her own special mix of gifts. Thank you, all of you,

for being partners in our church here at Park over the past fourteen years - I will always treasure your support and advice.

No doubt, the local church in Tavistock will be quite different to Park URC, as it will reflect its community and seek to serve as it is able. As a fellowship here in Reading, you will begin a process of reflection as you seek to discern the direction God is calling you and the Minister who will assist you in that mission. I am confident that you can continue to grow and develop and I look forward to reading your news in the magazine in the future.

Whilst we don't yet have a permanent address down in Devon, we have arranged to stay with friends in Tiverton during some of the summer. My first preaching engagement in Tavistock is on Sunday 6th August and my induction to the pastorate will be on Saturday 2nd September - if you are able to join us down in the South West you would be most welcome!

Here in Reading, this month we welcome four new members to our church and look forward to their contribution to our fellowship. It is a real joy to have welcomed so many people into our fellowship over the past fourteen years - next month I'll publish some of the figures, perhaps some of them will surprise us all.

As we work towards this time of transition, we hold onto the reality that God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. So may the God of all time; bless our lives and strengthen all our relationships.

*'I am convinced that nothing... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord'* Romans 8:39

Yours in Christ,

**Robert**

## Family News

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In May we celebrated the activities of our Salt groups at the Salt Group Festival and gave thanks to God for all the volunteers who lead the children and youth activities, remembering especially Bev Warden for her contribution to Guiding.

We gave thanks to all Chris Gayford and all those who helped in the Christian Aid collections.

Thanks were given by members of the Churches Trust who attended church and recognised the efforts made over the years by cyclists from Park who had participated in the "Ride and Stride" events led by Tony Durrant.

We rejoiced in the news that four people wish to become church members – Becky Jemmott and Rebecca Bullard on 4th June, and Karen McDonald and Sarah Jenkins on 18th June, praying for God's blessing on all of them.

We prayed for those taking exams in our fellowship during the coming weeks, including Solaya and Amy .

We also pray for our minister, Robert and the family as they prepare for their move to Devon with the current uncertainty about accommodation in the area.

We remember all those receiving or recovering from treatment including Doreen Durrant, Ken Curtis, Sylvia Wise, Judith Enang, Peggy and Albert Molineaux, Alastair Clark, Carole Clark And Roger's mother , Bob Dewing's brother, Peter, Pat Fuller and Thelma Butler. We have also had a prayer request from Joy Peters, regarding her cousin, Linnell, who is awaiting a diagnosis.

**Bob Dewing**

## **SALT Festival – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May**

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What a wonderful treat we had on Sunday morning the 14<sup>th</sup> May. Our young people did us proud with their marvellous SALT Festival service.

It was all about journeys and travelling and Simon explained about the labyrinth on the front of the order of service which was not the same as a maze as it showed that there is only one way to reach God and that is through Jesus.

The Sparklers and All-Stars acted out Abram's journey beautifully, packing up their possessions and travelling to Canaan, where Abram built an altar.

The Trailblazers focussed on the many rooms in our Father's House and made a room each with things in that they liked – all the rooms had a TV!

Then there was a lovely Meditation about asking for anything in Jesus' name and we were reminded about the things which we should not ask for but to ask for the right things.

Finally, the Lasers and Infra-Reds spoke of difficult journeys in today's world which fitted in very well with the Christian Aid Week theme about refugees.

The carefully chosen hymns were perfect for the theme and I really enjoyed singing them as I am sure a lot of other people did too.

A big thank you to all our young people in SALT and to all their leaders – we are so lucky to have you all at Park URC.

**Julia Marsh**

## **Property Maintenance News**

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Most of the maintenance work in in the past month has been in the gardens, with the bulbs being replaced by a bed of petunias and the roses have been blooming well with the warm weather we've been having. The rose bed has a new layer of wood bark mulch and the rose plants are looking healthy. My thanks to Ruth and Alastair Clark for the tubs of flowers which have added even more colour near the entrance to the church. We thank Charles Woods for his ongoing care of all our shrubs, roses and flower beds.

During the summer months, two bird boxes and a water butt will be installed in the church gardens. The skylights above the Large Hall are due to be repaired and repainted in the coming weeks, and we thank to Phil Dray for his work in maintaining our premises.

**Robert Weston**

## **Fundraising this year**

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Whilst our development project is completed we still have a small loan of £10,000 per year, to repay to the Wessex Synod. We hope that you'll be able to support some of these events, which will help raise funds and give us opportunity to share fellowship together.

Coming up this year we have:

- 9<sup>th</sup> July                      Gift Day and Church Lunch
- 9<sup>th</sup> Sept                        Ride and Stride sponsored event
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept                      Harvest supper and barn dance
- 25<sup>th</sup> Nov                        Christmas Fair

Details of each event will be given out in the notices and displayed on posters in the church halls.

**Fundraising team**

## **Faith in Politics**

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As political parties step up their General Election campaigns, the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is encouraging Christians to consider not only

how they should vote but also what their churches should be saying and doing in the run-up to 8 June.

JPIT's latest resource, Faith in Politics, addresses four issues around the 2017 General Election – the UK's relationship with the European Union; migration, forced displacement and the UK asylum system; poverty and economic inequality in the UK and the UK's role in the world.

As part of JPIT, the United Reformed Church joins with the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the Church of Scotland to combine expertise in public issues and social justice concerns. The Faith in Politics briefing highlights the General Election issues and invites Christians to engage with the material in a way that is helpful and reflective.

The new resources seek to support Christians and local churches as they engage with the issues and work to keep important things on the political agenda:

- This is a time .... offers some biblical reflections on some of the key themes of this election.
- Holding a Question Time Meeting or Election Hustings ... is a resource containing everything you need to know to hold a hustings in your constituency.
- Faith in Politics: General Election 2017. This issues briefing explores four of the key issues around the general election and offers the opportunity to explore them in detail.

All these resources, and more, can be found on the General Election pages on the Joint Public Issues Team website.

JPIT has now also produced banners, sold on the Christian Publishing and Outreach (CPO) website, encouraging people to 'Think Pray Vote'. The banners, and a bookmark, all contain the verse from Micah 6v8 as a reminder and inspiration for Christians to remember God's calling to justice, love, kindness and humility.

## **Synod Quiet Day**

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Synod Quiet Day for all members and ministers in Wessex Synod

Wednesday 21 June 2017 at Crowe Hill Methodist Church and Retreat Centre, Ringwood, BH24 3DQ. To be led by Mike and Louise Shrubsole.

There will be one walk before lunch and one in the afternoon. There will be quiet environmental activities for those who can't manage the walking / wet weather alternative.

Cost for the day is £14 which includes a cream tea!

Further details from Ruth Heine, Wessex Synod Office, 023 8067 8570

## **Advance notice: Synod Retreat Weekend**

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Synod Retreat Weekend for all members and ministers in Wessex Synod 27-29 October 2017 at Old Alresford Place. To be led by Revd Howard Sharp.

Title: Christlikeness - the challenge for Christians today. Looking at events in the life of Jesus to see their implications for living as Christians today.

Cost: £140 per person. Full board from Friday evening meal to Sunday tea. (Bursaries available in case of financial difficulty. CME funding available for Ministers).

Come and enjoy a relaxed weekend (in a very comfortable venue, set in 5 acres of grounds near Winchester). Further details from Ruth Heine, Wessex Synod Office, 023 8067 8570

## **Council for World Mission**

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In 2017 the Council for World Mission (an organization of 32 churches across the globe including the URC) celebrates 40 years of shared partnership in mission. This important milestone in the journey together will be marked by a series of events, programmes and publications, beginning with the launch of the CWM 40th anniversary in Singapore at the Annual Members' Meeting in June.

From June 2017 until June 2018 CWM will mark the anniversary giving thank for God's faithfulness, seeking to discern what the Spirit is saying to CWM today and committing ourselves to the future journeying together with God in mission.

CWM Member churches and local congregations are invited to share in celebrating the CWM 40th anniversary in worship together in their own places on Sunday 16th July.

The Council for World Mission remains committed to sharing resources of money, people, skills and insights globally to share in God's mission locally.

## **Visiting Preachers during Vacancy**

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If you feel you could lead or take part in Morning Worship during the vacancy then please speak to Roger Clark. So far I have booked the following people from July to October:

- 16th July: Rev Alan Holmes
- 23rd July: Keith Whyte
- 30th July: Phebe Mann & David Wong
- 6th August: Roger Clark
- 13th August: Nomad House Group
- 20th August: Michael Penny
- 1st October: Rev Ray Stanyon
- 8th October: Friday House Group
- 22nd October: Robert Dimmick
- 29th October: Phebe Mann & David Wong

**Julia Marsh**

## Revd Constance Coltman

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On 17 September 2017, the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation in the UK will mark the centenary of the ordination of Constance Coltman as a Congregational minister. She was the first woman to be ordained in a mainstream British denomination – and she continued her pioneering role by remaining active in ministry as a married woman and mother.

Her courage showed from the start in the sacrificial ministry she shared with her husband in London Docklands. A committed pacifist and suffragist, she was also an early supporter of birth control. With clear views on women's history and role in the Church,



Constance Coltman did much to promote women's ordination across the churches, at home and abroad.

There will be two public events to mark this important centenary to which all are warmly invited:

On Saturday 16 September at 1pm there will be a public lecture at the Dr Williams Library in London. Please contact Eve Parker 0207 916 2020 to register your interest. More details will be made available in due course.

A thanksgiving service to mark the Centenary will be held on Sunday 17 September 2017 at 3pm at the American International Church in London. The preacher will be Revd Dr Susan Durber and taking part will be international guests from the wider family of the Council for World Mission. Please contact Tracey Hardingham 0207 916 2020 to register your interest.

from [urc.org.uk](http://urc.org.uk)

## **Call not to forget refugees at the 'door of Europe'**

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The United Reformed Church Youth Assembly representative to the URC's General Assembly and Mission Council, has recently returned from a Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) fact-finding trip to visit refugee projects in Italy.

He was one of seven young men from churches across Britain and Ireland to hear first-hand testimony from refugees and support workers on the islands of Sicily and Lampedusa, the 'door of Europe'.

Jake said: 'The trip to Italy was eye opening and educational as well as being incredibly heartbreaking.'



On Lampedusa, Jake – and the rest of the group – spoke with the local Catholic priest Don Carmelo La Magra who opens his church for prayer each day and welcomes refugees to participate in its regular services. A phrase that the priest used has remained with Jake ever since: 'I meet the very flesh of Christ in the faces of the migrants.'

Jake is keen to ensure that as many people as possible know the continuing story of what's happening in the Mediterranean. 'The trip was something I felt called to do. I did a lot of reading about the situation and, of course, we've all seen it on our screens but then I was there, in the thick of it, and it was completely different. To put names and faces to the desperate people arriving – and to hear their stories when you're there – is beyond harrowing.

'We went out there in partnership with the Mediterranean Hope organisation which is run by the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI). It's astonishing to think of the scale of what's been going on, and what is still continuing today.

The indigenous population of Lampedusa is about 6,500 but more than 572,000 people have come through it in the past three-and-a-half years.

There is a small dedicated team of people in action and the work they do is hard and gruelling; I found that I really needed time to reflect after having been there.'

Jake has a challenge for the United Reformed Church. 'I would like the URC as a whole to make some sort of commitment to the work that happens out there and to truly appreciate that they're dealing with real people with real needs. The whole mindset in Lampedusa and Sicily was, "We're not dealing with a migrant, we're not dealing with a refugee, we are caring for human beings who are hungry and cold."

'I want people to remember this is an ongoing issue and it was an honour to be alongside people whose lives are as intricate, fragile and delicate as our own. I want to motivate people to get engaged in this. That might be in a practical way, through volunteer programmes for young people, through prayer, through raising awareness of the issues at General Assembly and Mission Council and synods.

I know the news agenda moves quickly but I get so frustrated about what, to me, amounts to media silence on it. Granted, the situation is not as bad but it's still bad. I'm hoping that the URC Youth Council's youth executive will think about taking some action on a practical level as well as through all-important prayer. I'm still very raw about the things I've seen during this trip but I'm going to be candidating for ministry within the next 12 months and I'm sure this experience will be something that sticks with me and will feed what I do in future.'

Overland Balkan routes into Europe are all but closed. After the signing of the EU agreement with Turkey last April, the primary entry point into Europe switched from Greece to the central Mediterranean, with the majority of people crossing by sea into Italy from sub-Saharan Africa.

More than four in five (83%) of first time asylum seekers in the European Union in 2016 were less than 35 years old.

## Church Contacts

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### **Minister:**

Rev Robert Weston      office: 0118 926 5003  
e-mail: minister@parkurc.org.uk

### **Church Secretary:**

Roger Clark      e-mail: churchsecretary@parkurc.org.uk

### **Treasurer:**

Alistair Knox

### **Assistant Church Secretary:**

Chris & Yvette Gayford

### **Centre Manager:**

Julie Cameron      e-mail: centremanager@parkurc.org.uk

### **F & GP Committee Chairman:**

Alistair Knox

### **Gift Aid Secretary:**

Tony Durrant

### **Magazine Editor:**

Rod King      e-mail: editor@parkurc.org.uk

### **Church Website:      [www.parkurc.org.uk](http://www.parkurc.org.uk)**

Our church website is updated regularly and has details of the many activities of the Church. You will also find some of the charities that we support, with links to even more helpful websites.

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/ParkURC?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](http://www.facebook.com/ParkURC?ref=aymt_homepage_panel)

## Regular Activities at Park

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|                  |          |   |
|------------------|----------|---|
| <b>Sunday</b>    | 10.30 am | Worship<br>Young people's groups & Crèche facilities<br>Holy Communion (1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday) |
|                  | 3.00 pm  | Messy Church (1st Sunday of the Month)  |
|                  | 3.45 pm  | Newlife Celebration Tamil Church  |
|                  | 6.30 pm  | Ignite Coffee & Cakes (in term-time)  |
|                  | 7:00 pm  | Ignite Worship(in term-time)  |
| <b>Monday</b>    | Various  | Read Dance & Theatre College  |
|                  | 9.30 am  | Park Mother & Toddlers Group  |
|                  | 5.15 pm  | Beaver Scouts   |
|                  | 6.45 pm  | Cub Scouts  |
| <b>Tuesday</b>   | 7.30 pm  | Housegroup  |
|                  | Various  | Read Dance & Theatre College  |
| <b>Wednesday</b> | 10:00 am | Happy Feet Footcare (every 6 weeks)   |
|                  | 10.30 am | Fitness Pilates   |
|                  | 1.00 pm  | Cranberry College (Sept-Mar term time)  |
|                  | 2.15 pm  | Friendship Club   |
|                  | 2:00 pm  | Reading U3A Yoga (every 2 weeks)  |
|                  | 7:30 pm  | Earley Folk Dancing   |
|                  | 7.30 pm  | Badminton Club (Sept – March)   |
|                  | 7.30 pm  | Housegroup  |
|                  | 8.15 pm  | Aldbrickham Clog & Dance Group  |
|                  | Various  | Read Dance & Theatre College  |
| <b>Thursday</b>  | 9.00 am  | Morning Prayers   |
|                  | 9:30 am  | Embroiderers' Guild (monthly)   |
|                  | 10.00 am | Park 60+ Exercise (12 noon seated session)  |
|                  | 12.00 pm | Reading Lunchtime Choir   |
|                  | 2.00 pm  | Reading Macular Society (bi-monthly)  |
|                  | 5.00 pm  | Beavers   |
|                  | 7.00 pm  | Scouts  |
|                  | Various  | Read Dance & Theatre College  |
| <b>Friday</b>    | 9:45 am  | Tuneful Tales   |
|                  | 10.30 am | Reading MenCap  |
|                  | 2.00 pm  | U3A Madrigal Society (every 2 weeks)  |
|                  | 2.00 pm  | Active Living Tai Chi   |
|                  | 2:00 pm  | Reading Abbey Trefoil Group (4th Thurs of month)  |
|                  | 5:30 pm  | Brownies  |
|                  | 5.30 pm  | Rainbows  |
|                  | 7.15 pm  | Guides  |
|                  | 7.30 pm  | Housegroup  |
|                  | Various  | Read Dance & Theatre College  |
| <b>Saturday</b>  | 9.45 am  | Zumba Fitness Class   |
|                  | 6.30pm   | Pilots  |
|                  | 9.00 am  | The Allenova Ballet School  |
|                  | 9.30am   | Reading Seventh Day Adventist Community Group   |
|                  | 10.00    | Parenthesis Choir   |
|                  | 4.00pm   | Reading Community Gospel Choir  |

