



The
**United
Reformed
Church** Sunday 4 September 2022

Welcome to Thatcham URC

We extend a warm welcome to all visitors and ask them to make themselves known to an Elder or to one of the Welcomers and to sign the visitors book in the vestibule, please. For items of family news, please see the duty elder in the vestibule.

The duty Elder will come forward a few minutes before the service will start and light the peace candle to mark the start of a time of quiet.

You are all invited to stay for refreshments after the service, when there will be opportunity for fellowship and conversation. Please observe covid restrictions and respect each other's space.

Sunday 4 September

Our communion service will be led by John, with music by Rachel. Alan M will be duty elder and lead family news. You will be welcomed by Val and the reader will be Gill. Alan T will film the service. Coffee after the service will be served by Esther.

Tuesday 6

10.00–12.00 Coffee break

Thursday 8

8.00–10.00 Badminton Club (definitely!)

Sunday 11

Our service will be led by John, with music by Rachel. Jackie W will be duty elder and lead family news. You will be welcomed by Jackie T and the reader will be Jackie T. Alan T will film the service. Coffee after the service will be served by Jackie W.

Birthdays

Margaret Wilson's son-in-law Conrad on 5th Sept.

Gill's grandson Oscar on 5th.

Esther Lewis on 8th.

Ride+Stride – 10th September

The churches of Berkshire are worth saving for many future generations. One way you can help is by signing up for the annual Ride & Stride event and then please ask all your friends and family to sponsor you generously. Sponsor forms can be printed off via the Ride+Stride website: <https://ridestride.org/berkshire>. For JustGiving sponsorship please follow the detailed instructions in 'Guidelines' which can be found under the Ride+Stride drop down tab on this website.

You can go by yourself or in a group, any time between 10am and 6pm on September 10th. Sign in at each church you visit; have a look round and enjoy refreshments.



Thatcham
United Reformed Church
Church Lane, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 3JL
www.thatcham-urc.org.uk

Every Day with Jesus

Booklets for September/October 2022 are available on the table in the vestibule to take away. Please help yourself. Rachel

Newsletter

September newsletters are now available. Time to think about your contribution for the October issue.

CTiT Prayer for Thatcham

There is a CTiT Prayer for Thatcham Meeting on Sunday evening, 11th September at 6.30pm, at the Baptist Church. These meetings are held every other month and are open to all, but particularly provide an opportunity for those who feel called to pray for the town, its councillors, the schools, the amenities, public issues, refugees, etc, and for the churches too as we seek to be a force for good in the town.

Mousefest

September's Mousefest is approaching fast, after a fantastic response for knitters, we now need a few people to help finish sewing up & stuffing the last of the mice.

We also need volunteers to help with refreshments & stewarding over the weekend (17th & 18th September) these will be 1 hour slots. And we need cakes!!! Lots of cakes to sell with refreshments. If you can help in any way please sign up on the sheet on the noticeboard
Many thanks for your support. Esther & Kate

Church family news

Pauline & Tony Gresswell celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on 2nd September.

David and Hilary will be celebrating their 52nd Wedding Anniversary on the 5th.

Margaret Gill is now in Winchcombe Place Care Home, Newbury - Room 9

Our next Church Meeting is Sunday, 25th September, following the morning service.

If you know of anyone who would appreciate receiving the church flowers, please let Gill know.

Please give any family news to the welcomer on Sunday mornings so that it can be shared with the congregation at the start of the service.

If you have any birthdays or news for next Sunday, please ring Gill on 827103 or 07899 897741.

Please remember that the Elders and I are here for you should you have a concern or need help, or if you become ill. You have our contact numbers, so please do not hesitate to call one of us. John: 0118 957 3964

Wessex Prayer Calendar – 4 September

Woodley: Christ Church; Longham

Prayer

Lord God, we hold before you
situations of death and destruction ...
Thank you for people
who bring dignity to others in their helplessness.
Keep alive within us all
the promise of your resurrection.
Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

One day from URC daily devotions

Ruth 2: 1 - 13

Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favour.' She said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, 'The Lord be with you.' They answered, 'The Lord bless you.' Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, 'To whom does this young woman belong?' The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, 'She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, "Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers." So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment.'

Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.' Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favour in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?' But Boaz answered her, 'All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!' Then she said, 'May I continue to find favour in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me

and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants.'

Reflection

Have you ever had your DNA tested to find out where your ancestors hailed from? Those who have tried this are sometimes amazed to find that their roots lie in faraway countries. Since time immemorial, people have trekked across territorial borders, established themselves and built up whole new family trees.

These days, borders are harder to cross than they were in history and anyone attempting to establish a home in our country will face a barrage of obstacles and legalities that often seem designed to deter. Those fleeing, for example, war or famine may be described as refugees in sneering tones or even "illegals" and there is no guarantee that they will be tolerated, let alone welcomed.

Ruth the Moabite, transplanted in a foreign country to care for her mother-in-law, finds an unexpected welcome when she goes shyly into the fields to gather up gleanings from the harvest, the stalks of grain deliberately left behind for the needy. Boaz first greets his pickers kindly before spotting Ruth and inquiring about her. And when he learns who she is, he ensures that she is safe with the other women in the field and that she can refresh herself whenever she needs to. Moabites were not generally treated so warmly!

The ancient story of Ruth may be just that – a story – but one with a purpose. The theory is that it was written around the fourth century BC with the deliberate intent of softening attitudes towards foreigners and people brought up as non-Jews, and also to tackle fears about mixed marriages.

There is an important reminder here for us. God's love does not discriminate. Man or woman, rich or poor, regardless of skin colour or country of origin, we are all loved. As Christians, we are asked to share that love.

Prayer

Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ. You crossed every border between divinity and humanity to make your home with us. Help us to welcome you in newcomers, migrants and refugees. You work in the hearts of all to bring about harmony and goodwill. Strengthen us to welcome those from other lands, cultures, religions, that we may live in solidarity and hope. Amen
[Excerpt from Immigration through the Lens of Faith.]

Thattham URC – Worshipping Together Reflective Service with Communion Sunday – 4th September 2022, 10.30am

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to our Reflective Service today, here at church, online or read at home. It's good to be together again as we also celebrate Communion together. Today is the 4th September! The summer holidays are nearly over now and it's like a new year start in the life of the church. God loves the gathering of his people together to worship, so let's turn to him now.

Call to Worship and Gathering Prayer

In Psalm 1, it says, 'Blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord.'

A Gathering Prayer

Faithful God, we gather again from our scattered and varied lives, drawn by your love and goodness to us, drawn to worship you and to be renewed by your Holy Spirit. Thank you for the blessing we experience in delighting in your presence and your word. Open our hearts and minds to listen for your voice today. May we recognise your Spirit's leading and see your perfect intent for our lives. **Amen**

Hymn R&S 489: Be thou my vision

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|--|--|
| 1. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
thou my best thought, in the day and the
night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light. | 2. Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true
word,
thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord;
thou my great Father, thy child let me be,
thou in me dwelling, and I won with thee. |
| 3. Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the
fight.
be thou my dignity, thou my delight,
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my strong
tower;
raise thou me heavenward, great Power of
my power. | 4. Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty
praise;
thou mine inheritance, now and always;
thou and thou only, the first in my
heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure
thou art. |
| 5. High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
grant me its joys after victory is won;
heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all. | |

Mary E Byrne (1880 - 1931)

Introduction to Theme

In Luke 14: 25-33, we see Jesus travelling with a large crowd; Jesus tells them that following him involves difficult choices. He speaks of conflict, renouncing family ties and economic security, and of 'carrying their cross'. He gives two brief illustrations (parables) that caution against making a hasty decision. It's easy to allow our faith to be an added extra to our busy lives. This week's reading challenges us to explore whether we are willing to accept the consequences of a faith that comes first, following Jesus, becoming a disciple. What truly influences us? Is God's way evident in our lives?

Old Testament Reading from Psalm 1

Blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever they do prospers. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.

The psalmist states that those who delight in and meditate on the law, which is the teaching, of the Lord are like trees planted by streams of water. The teaching of the Lord is not a burden, but a blessing because it is a gift from God for our life and its true growth and strength. Happiness lies in following the ways of God. Those who do so are likened to healthy trees, planted by life-giving streams and who bear good fruit. As we seek to delight in the Lord, we find it changes our lives. Our lives prosper, that is to say, they go well and flourish, and are useful, and therefore blessed. **Amen**

Prayer of Praise and Confession, and The Lord's Prayer

Gracious and merciful God, we come before you with joy and gladness, singing your praise, thanking you for your many gifts, celebrating your love for us, and offering you our grateful worship. We come knowing you have made this day and every day, this place and every place, ourselves and all people. We come conscious that once more you have blessed us beyond our deserving – that we have tasted your goodness and received richly from your loving hand. We praise you for choosing to walk beside us and for being with us on every journey.

Forgiving Lord, we come too, conscious that we have not always appreciated your love, that we have been slow to thank you, yet quick to ask for more, dissatisfied with what we have, yet wasteful of the resources you have given us. Forgive us for our failure. Forgive us that we have not always been aware of your presence and have closed our hearts to you; that we have come sometimes to worship with little enthusiasm or expectation, more out of habit or duty than a real desire to praise you; that we have committed our lives to your service, and then only had time for ourselves.

Gracious and loving God, assure us once more of your mercy, renew us through the living presence of your Holy Spirit, and so restore our relationship with you we pray. Lord in your mercy here our prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Hymn MP 988: How deep the Father's love

1. How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss,
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the chosen One,
Bring many sons to glory

2. Behold the Man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice,
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that left Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished

3. I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom.

*Stuart Townend © 1995 Thankyou Music
CCL No: 2249*

Dedication of our Offerings

Almighty God, we give thanks to you for all your gifts and provision for us. And in our thanksgiving, we have offered our gifts. Please accept our offerings, and we pray they may be used well for the sake of your kingdom here, through the work of your church, to be a blessing to others. **Amen**

Bible Reading: Luke 14: 25-33 The cost of being a disciple

²⁵ Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ 'Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, "This person began to build and wasn't able to finish."

³¹ 'Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Thanks be to God for his word.

Reflection: Loving God more

Jesus is once again on the road, after having a meal at a Pharisee's house as we heard last week from Rachel, speaking on humility. He is drawing large crowds (v.25), but this time with the emphasis on the cost of following Jesus. Three times Jesus repeats 'cannot be my disciple' as if his aim is to put off the casual enquirer. Out of the 9 verses here, only 4 of the verses (25-27 and 33) cover Jesus' main emphasis. The other 5 verses (28-30 and 31-32) cover 2 explanatory parables about building a tower and forming an army.

Picking up on Jesus's previous table talk to the host about dinner guests (see v.12f) in last weeks reflection, where he said, 'when you give a lunch, don't just invite family – invite the poor and lowly', Jesus tells his would-be followers that being a disciple means family loyalties take second place. 'Hate' (v.26) in this context is not about how we should feel towards them but who we take our lead from. Hate here means to love less than, rather than positively loathe. In that culture where family ties were stronger and parental authority lasted longer than it does in today's western world, Jesus scandalously claimed an allegiance to God that took precedence over family. So we begin to understand him as speaking not about the depth of love for our families, but about our priorities when a choice has to be made between them and God.

We've encountered this before (ch12:51-53) in my reflection 3 weeks ago where Jesus said, '*Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and so on*'; Jesus is fleshing out those remarks here, stressing that the division results from the choice to follow him. But there is more: it is not just family; it costs us our lives. We are to 'hate' our own life (v26; ch9.23-25) ie. to love our life less than we love God. We are to deny ourselves and take up our cross (v.27; ch9.23). Again, this picks up on Jesus' earlier dinner conversation last week where the guests were too interested in wealth and possessions, in status and position in society. Jesus said to them, when you are invited, take the lowest place, and when the host comes he will say to you, friend, move up to a higher place, and you will be honoured. He who humbles himself will be exalted. (vv.7-11). A disciple must leave these things behind, like humbling themselves at the table, and set out behind a master who is going to Jerusalem to shoulder a cross.

Jesus then tells two parables (vv.28-33) that urge his hearers to weigh the cost before deciding to follow. He did not want people to come after him who hadn't first thought it through carefully. The first concerns the builder of a tower. Has he the money and materials to complete what he's started? If not, he will be open to ridicule by his neighbours. He or she should sit down and cost out their enterprise in advance, before they commit.

In the second parable, a king is on the brink of war. Surely he will weigh up the consequences of going to battle against an enemy with twice the military muscle, before rushing headlong into battle. It could result in humiliating defeat? The punchline to both parables is verse 33: are we prepared to give up everything to follow Jesus? For some the meaning may be literal. For others it means putting what we have at Jesus' disposal, to give our ambitions, belongings hopes to him, to love them less than our love for God. For everyone it means no longer calling the shots. We are bidding farewell to our old life with its allegiances and joining Jesus on the road in new life (v.25).

When we watch a great sporting event such as the Olympics or the Tour de France, part of the spectacle is the fact that competitors have given up and sacrificed so much in order to be able to compete. Hours of training every day, special diets and a testing training regime that intrudes into their private life – all so they have a shot at gold and glory. Jesus invites us to give up everything – here symbolised by all our material possessions – so that we can follow him and know glory. **Amen**

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## ***We come now to celebrate the Sacrament of Communion***

We are brought together as we remember. Let these symbols of bread and wine help to make Jesus real to us in his body and blood. A body that was broken for us and blood that was shed for us. In this sacrament, we are made one with him — delivered from the power of death into his Kingdom of life and love.

**Almighty God**, we remember that Jesus was born of Mary; he lived our common life on earth; he revealed your love as a Father; he showed us the way to live; he suffered and died for us; on the third

day you raised him from the dead; and he is present with us now through the Holy Spirit. In his presence, and in the company of all your people, we are grateful to celebrate the Lord's Supper. **Amen**

**On the night before the crucifixion**, when evening came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer. And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, '*This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.*'

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, '*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you, for the forgiveness of sins.*' When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane.

**Hymn: R&S 448. Here, Lord, we take the broken bread**

|                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Here, Lord, we take the broken bread | As you have given, so we would give  |
| And drink the wine, believing        | Ourselves for others' healing:       |
| That by your life our souls are fed, | As you have lived, so we would live, |
| Your parting gifts receiving.        | The Father's love revealing.         |

*C V Pilcher (1879-1961)*

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sharing – The Bread**

We give thanks to you, O God, that from the earth you cause the grain to come for the making of bread. We praise you for Jesus, the bread of life, whose body was given for us. By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and **this bread**, that the bread which we break may be to us the communion of the body of Christ, and that we may be made one in him. As of old you fed your people in the wilderness, so feed us now that we may live to your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When Jesus had given thanks, he broke the bread and said:  
**'Take, and eat: this is my body given for you. Do this, in remembrance of me.'**  
**The Body of Christ broken for us.** (*let us take the bread and eat*)

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sharing – The Wine**

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit. We bless you for Jesus, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us. By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and **this wine**, that the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him we may bear fruit that lasts. As we share the sufferings of Christ, so give us grace that we may know the power of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When Jesus had given thanks, he gave the cup to his disciples and said:  
**'Drink this, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, in remembrance of me.'**  
**The Blood of Christ shed for us.** (*let us take the wine and drink*)

Thanks be to God for these gifts beyond words, the bread of life, the cup of salvation,  
this lasting memorial. **Amen**

**Gracious God**, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life, and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**



**Prayers of Intercession**

**Loving Lord**, your compassion knows no bounds and you care for every part of the world; we pray for those suffering as a result of floods especially the people of Pakistan: those whose homes are under water, those who have lost loved ones, villages isolated as a result of the destruction of bridges and roads, those who have been evacuated and who now live in overcrowded makeshift camps, and those who have lost fields and crops. Give wisdom to the government as it seeks to implement a recovery programme and give generosity to other nations that they may support its endeavours. You call us to bear our crosses, give those who need it: **strength to bear their crosses and wisdom to know the way forward.**

**Loving Lord**, you are the Prince of Peace, we pray for an end to all violence and warfare throughout the world. We hold before you: those who are suffering as a result of war and civil war, those who have lost loved ones, those who have been injured, those who have lost homes and livelihoods, those who are fearful. We especially ask for your comfort and strength for the peoples of Ukraine and Iraq. You call us to bear our crosses, give those who need it: **strength to bear their crosses and wisdom to know the way forward.**

**Loving Lord** you share our joy and our pain. We pray for those who have recently received examination results; those who are rejoicing at a clear way forward; those who are processing thoughts for their future. We pray for their families and those who offer counsel and advice. We hold before you children starting school; those going into new classes and new schools; those beginning college and university; those looking for work and those beginning new jobs. You call us to bear our crosses, give those who need it: **strength to bear their crosses and wisdom to know the way forward**

**Loving Lord** you teach us to love one another, we pray for those who have been victims of violent crime; for families of murder victims; for those who seek to support them; for the police and justice system. We pray for those traumatised by what they have witnessed; those who struggle to find hope for the future; those who keep asking 'Whats the point?' You call us to bear our crosses, give those who need it: **strength to bear their crosses and wisdom to know the way forward**

**Loving Lord**, grant to all who struggle the knowledge of your encouraging presence, the aid of your strength and the power of your peace. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen**

### **Hymn R&S 510: O Jesus, I have promised**

1. O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve thee to the end;  
be thou for ever near me,  
my Master and my friend;  
I shall not fear the battle  
if thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if Thou wilt be my guide.

2. O let me feel thee near me;  
the world is ever near,  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear;  
my foes are ever near me,  
around me and within;  
but, Jesus, draw thou nearer,  
and shield my soul from sin.

3, O let me hear Thee speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self will.  
O speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
O speak, and make me listen,  
thou guardian of my soul.

4. O Jesus, thou hast promised,  
to all who follow thee,  
that where thou art in glory  
there shall thy servant be;  
O guide me, call me, draw me,  
uphold me to the end;  
O give me grace to follow  
my Saviour and my Friend.

*J E Bode (1816-74)*

**Thank you** for joining us today, here at church, online or reading at home. It has been good to worship together and celebrate communion, and to reflect on the life changing consequences of loving God more than anything else in our lives.

### **Closing Prayer**

**Faithful God**, you open the way to life by offering us unconditional love. Help us to follow you. We rejoice in our freedom, our wholeness and hope in you. Help us to be faithful to you and your word, and to be open to you, to offer welcome, friendship and your blessing to others, in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

### **And so, to you, our dear Church Family and Friends**

Let us bless one another as we say to each other together:  
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all. **Amen**