



Thatcham United Reformed Church

Feb

NEWSLETTER • ISSUE N° 292 • 2023 • 60p DONATION

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Dear Friends,



Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2023, and I wish you all a happy, settled and peaceful New Year. In December we celebrated the real Christmas story and I hope you all enjoyed a busy Christmas time with family and friends.

Thank you to all those who committed themselves during December to work and support our various services and events, including with our guest Revd Daphne Preece at the Anniversary Service and Lunch, Toddlers Crib Service and Party, the Nativity Service, the Carols by Candlelight on Christmas Eve, and our Christmas Day Family Service. All of this helped us to give thanks to God and make our church a welcome and joyfully decorated place. Enjoy the pictures inside this Newsletter.

And now we are in the new year – a time for hopes, plans and resolutions. I know of a certain squash club and fitness centre, but I hasten to add that I don't attend. Each year on 1st January the centre brings in extra gym equipment. The place is packed out every day. By about 7th January they move all the extra equipment out again, as most people have given up their new year's resolution, and the club returns to normal. Oh dear! Getting fit, losing weight, reducing drinking, stopping smoking, getting out of debt. There is nothing wrong with making these common new year's resolutions. But, of course, a lot of us make resolutions that we fail to keep, I'm sure.

The good news is that each year is an opportunity for a fresh start. But then so is each week. Every Sunday is the first day of the week – a new beginning. Actually, every day is an opportunity for a new beginning. The first three words in the Bible are, 'In the beginning...' There are many passages in the Bible that tell us something about new beginnings and new opportunities and even suggestions of possible new resolutions. Our God is a God of new beginnings, and even those particularly special ones we call second chances.

At the start of a new year we sometimes make plans for the months ahead. Or we may talk about God's plan for our lives. Sometimes our plans go well and some can go all wrong and we wonder what God is doing.

In the reading and reflection for the 1st January in the Every Day with Jesus booklet, we read Jeremiah the prophet's words to the nation of Israel as they were going into exile. What was happening was not what the people of Israel wanted or had hoped for, and yet in their disappointment God gave them a promise of hope and a future. Just like the Israelites, we can end up disappointed when plans go wrong, but we too are promised the same hope and future. Are we able to trust God for that even in our place of disappointment, and to know his purpose? It says in Jeremiah 29:11-13:



**"For I know the plans I have for you,"
 declares the Lord,
 "plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
 plans to give you hope and a future.
 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me,
 and I will listen to you.
 You will seek me and find me
 when you seek me with all your heart."**

Jeremiah 29:11-13

And God promises that he will be found by you.

With gratitude to our God of promises

John

Sunday Worship

FEBRUARY 10.30am unless specified

- 5 Revd John Lee, Communion
- 12 Revd John Lee
- 19 Mrs Karen Frost and church band
- 26 Mrs Esther Lewis, Fairtrade



'He's been updated. He's now the patron saint of Tweeting'.

Knit and Natter

13 & 27 February

Weekday Worship

Tuesdays at 12.15pm on these days:
14 & 28 February

Elders Contact

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Esther Lewis 861332	Jackie Tarry 873642
Gill Mossman 827103	David Weller 864551
Alan Mossman (Church Secretary) Evening 827103 Daytime 523240	Jackie Wood 874241

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**Deadline for next issue:
Sunday 12 February**

REMEMBER IN
YOUR PRAYERS



We pray for God's love to surround Pauline Gresswell, Lian, Carly, Jarrod and all the family following the passing of Tony Gresswell. Also June and the family of Revd Arthur Baker; and for the family of Revd Nina Mead.

We pray for all within our church family who need the reassurance of your loving arms around them at this time.



Flowers from the church have been passed on with our love to:

December: Millie
January: Jeanette, Nikki, Dorothy, Pauline.

Dear Lord,

Here we are in February – month of cold days, winter days, but days that promise hope and signs of Spring. Snowdrops and lengthening light; echoes of the hope and light that Jesus brought to Simeon and Anna all those years ago in the Temple.

Thank you, Lord, that you always bring light, you always bring hope and peace and joy when we put our trust in Jesus, our Saviour. Jesus, Lord of all our days and seasons.

In his name we thank you, as we look to his Light.

Amen. **By Daphne Kitching**



*A prayer for Ukraine
For the one year anniversary of
the war in Ukraine*

Almighty and Great God, accept our gratitude for your boundless mercy towards us. Hear the supplication of our afflicted hearts for the land and people of Ukraine, as they confront foreign aggression and invasion. Open the eyes of those who have been overtaken by a spirit of deception and violence, that they be horrified by their works. Grant victory over the powers of evil that have arisen and bless Ukraine with your gifts of liberty, peace, tranquility, and good fortune.

We implore you, O Merciful God, look with grace upon those who courageously defend their land. Remember the mothers and fathers, the innocent children, widows and orphans, the disabled and helpless, those seeking shelter and refuge, who reach out to you and to their fellow human beings looking for mercy and compassion. Bless the hearts of those who have already shown great generosity and solidarity, and those who prepare to receive their Ukrainian brothers and sisters in Ukraine's greatest time of need. Bring us together as your children, your creation, and instill in us your strength, wisdom and understanding. May you be praised and glorified, now and forever, and to the ages of ages.
Amen

EMBRACE the Middle East

(extracts from Prayer Diary)

5 February The Arkan Cultural Centre in Alexandria invites Christian and Muslim young people to learn technical and communication skills that will improve their chances in the job market. By working together, youths of different backgrounds build friendships and cultural understanding, which promotes cohesion in the wider community.

12 February In the political turmoil of the occupied West Bank, olive trees – a major source of income for generations of Palestinians – are a target for Israeli settler attacks. Our Olive Tree Project helps replace the destroyed trees, both to support the livelihoods of future farmers and as a peaceful act of solidarity.

19 February This week is the UN's World Day of Social Justice (20 February). We pray for all our partners in the Middle East as they strive for peace with justice amid some of the most challenging situations in the world.

26 February The Maryamana Hospital in Erbil was established in 2020 to provide a high standard of medical care to disadvantaged people in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The hospital is led by the Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese and offers a full range of services, including maternity care, an intensive care unit and an emergency department.

ST MUNGO'S EVEN LESSER

On the 20th day of January
In the Year of Our Lord
2023

To Uncle Eustace
Rector
St James the Least of All



Dear Uncle Eustace,
Thank you very much for providing such helpful feedback on the subject of after dinner speaking.

It would appear that the solution may be to provide a paltry meal; strong black coffee as the only beverage, and a full team of night staff.

Darren

P. S. re: my apparel, the Rector assured me that it would be most apt. However it was just after I had spent 4 hours helping him sort a backlog of correspondence, and he did appear a little stressed.

The cost of living is always about the same - all a person has.

**ST. JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL
from The Rectory**



My dear Nephew Darren

Winter certainly exposes the difference between those of you who live in cities and us rural folk. While you bask in your centrally heated flat, with every modern convenience that could be imagined and complain about the half an inch of slush that makes your life so inconvenient, we country folk wear overcoats in our houses, open all doors

and windows to let the heat in and battle through snow drifts, measured in feet, to get the morning paper.

Colonel Wainwright has acquired a new toy: a snow blower, of sufficient power that I believe it could clear the Antarctic. He kindly volunteered to clear the paths around the church. Working outwards from the church door, the path to the church soon became snow free. Unfortunately, he only realised when his job was complete that the blown snow then formed a five-foot drift under the lychgate. We now have to climb over the churchyard wall and negotiate buried gravestones before we can reach his pristine paths.

Miss Margison, ever meaning to be helpful, decided to unfreeze the pipes in the church hall. A blow torch was not the ideal solution, although

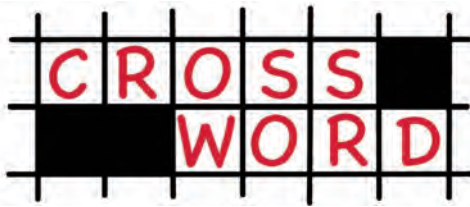
the resulting burst did make some rather attractive ice sculptures round the kitchen equipment. The village badminton team that uses the hall has now temporarily changed sport, to ice hockey.

Inevitably, our congregation has soared these past few weeks. There is nothing like adversity for making people want to prove they have the moral fibre to overcome it. Much satisfaction seems to be obtained on discovering who has not dared venture out, which is taken as judgement on their strength of character. The Prentices upstaged most people by arriving on a sleigh. Mr Prentice was warmly wrapped in a travelling rug, while his wife pulled it. As her husband explained, he couldn't possibly let the pony work in such conditions.

What I momentarily thought was applause during my sermon was merely people keeping their hands warm and the hymns were drowned out by the stamping of feet. Our organist complained that the cold made his fingers so numb that he couldn't play properly – although I didn't notice that things were much different from normal.

No, my dear nephew, you continue to fret about your church heating dropping to temperate, and a few flakes of wet snow obliging you to close your carpark for health and safety reasons. We shall continue to triumph heroically over adversity and return home after Mattins, feeling we have proved our Christian commitment by being utterly uncomfortable.

Your loving uncle, Eustace



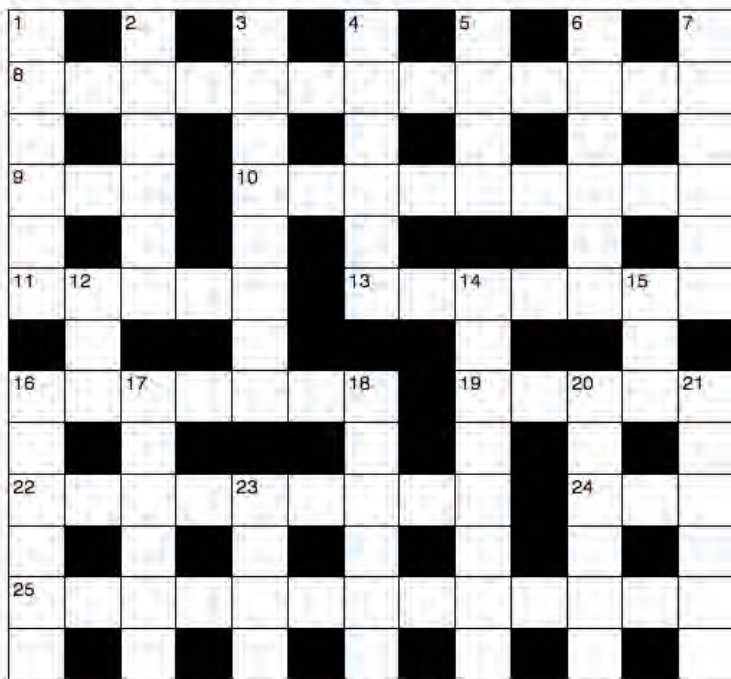
Across

- 8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)
- 9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)
- 10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)
- 11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)
- 13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)
- 14 Went to (John 4:46) (7)
- 19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)
- 22 David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'One — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)
- 24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1) 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)

Down

- 1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)
- 2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)
- 3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)
- 4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)
- 5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)
- 6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)
- 7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)
- 12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)
- 14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)
- 15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)
- 16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)
- 17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)
- 18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)
- 20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)
- 21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)
- 23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)

Answers next page



I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the ordeal of meeting me is another matter. - Winston Churchill, on his 75th birthday.

Drinking from the saucer

Do you remember older generations drinking from their saucer? I came across this poem that made me feel there was symbolism to the coffee ritual.

Drinking from My Saucer by John Paul Moore

I've never made a fortune and it's probably too late now.
 But I don't worry about that much, I'm happy anyhow.
 And as I go along life's way, I'm reaping better than I sowed.
 I'm drinking from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed.
 I don't have a lot of riches, and sometimes the going's tough.
 But I've got loved ones around me, and that makes me rich enough.
 I thank God for his blessings, and the mercies He's bestowed.
 I'm drinking from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed.
 I remember times when things went wrong, my faith wore somewhat thin.
 But all at once the dark clouds broke, and the sun peeped through again.
 So God, help me not to gripe about the tough rows that I've hoed.
 I'm drinking from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed.
 If God gives me strength and courage, when the way grows steep and rough.
 I'll not ask for other blessings, I'm already blessed enough.
 And may I never be too busy, to help others bear their loads.
 Then I'll keep drinking from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed.

My grandmother always drank her coffee like this! I thought it was because it was too hot. **Helen Groves**

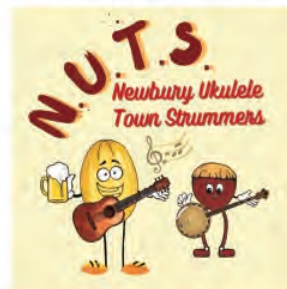
Offertory envelopes

Envelopes for 2023 are in the vestibule. Please collect your numbered envelope. If you haven't used envelopes in the past, please see Allan C and he will help you.

**Sunday 5th February 2023
3.00pm**

Concert *Thatcham*
United Reformed Church

**with Newbury Ukelele Town Strummers
and Thatcham Just a Singalong Choir**



**Refreshments in interval
Proceeds in aid of Thatcham URC renovation fund. Tickets £7.50**

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

Pancakes for everyone!



Tuesday
21 February 2023
6.30pm
in the Primary Room

Suggested minimum donation 50p per pancake with no limit!



Thatcham URC
 Church Lane

All in the month of February

- 175 years ago, on 21st Feb 1848 that the Communist Manifesto was published in London. It was written by Karl Marx, with the assistance of Friedrich Engels.
- 150 years ago, on 7th Feb 1873 that Thomas Andrews, Irish/British shipbuilder and businessman was born. The naval architect in charge of the plans for the RMS Titanic, he perished along with 1,500 others during her maiden voyage.
- 100 years ago, on 16th Feb 1923 that British archaeologist Howard Carter opened the sealed doorway to Tutankhamen's tomb in Thebes, Egypt.
- 70 years ago, on 28th Feb 1953 that British scientists Francis Crick & James D Watson announced that they had discovered the double-helix structure of DNA.
- 65 years ago, on 6th Feb 1958 that the Munich air disaster took place.

Wordsearch

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was 'purified'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, 40 days after Christmas. Jesus is described in the Bible as the Light of the World, and so early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day - hence the name, Candlemas. The story can be found in Luke 2:22-40.

D	L	R	O	W	J	E	W	I	S	H	P	N	Forty
N	E	O	S	L	O	R	D	Y	R	R	A	D	Days
N	O	I	T	A	T	N	E	S	E	R	P	R	Baby
O	U	S	F	V	M	E	A	S	H	I	P	Y	Boy
E	L	N	I	I	G	E	E	A	T	S	E	W	Public
M	S	R	C	T	R	N	L	I	O	P	A	W	Appearance
I	T	O	J	S	T	U	I	D	M	A	R	Y	Mary
S	H	D	R	E	S	I	P	N	N	S	A	B	Jewish
E	G	N	M	F	S	U	M	R	E	A	N	A	Mothers
Y	I	P	R	Y	B	U	E	I	A	V	C	B	Temple
N	L	T	A	L	O	N	S	E	D	Y	E	Y	Jesus
E	N	D	I	D	Y	S	M	R	Y	D	E	S	Purified
C	E	C	I	F	F	O	R	T	Y	V	E	R	Present




- Lord
- Festival
- Presentation
- Light
- World
- Candlemas
- Simeon
- Nunc
- Dimittis
- Office
- Evening
- Prayer
- West

Easy sodoku

1	9				5	8		
	2	6		3	8	1	9	
8				7	4			
				9			6	
3	4		8		6		1	7
2				1				
		4		8				1
7	3	9	2		6	5		
6	2						8	3

Children are natural mimics - they act like us, in spite of all our attempts to teach them good manners.

Commitment for Life

Supporting Bangladesh

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

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

Crossword Answers

ACROSS: 8, Cross-examined. 9, Ash. 10, Apocrypha. 11, Sci-fi. 13, Typical. 16, Visited. 19, Offer. 22, No account. 24, RAC. 25, Sovereign Lord.

DOWN: 1, Oceans. 2, Hophni. 3, Islamist. 4, Exhort. 5, Omar. 6, On spec. 7, Add all. 12, CBI. 14, Plotting. 15, Awe. 16, Vanish. 17, Starve. 18, Daub it. 20, Furrow. 21, Recede. 23, Cure.

- 50 years ago, on 8th Feb 1973 that the US Senate established a select committee to investigate the Watergate scandal.
- 40 years ago, on 8th Feb 1983 that champion racehorse, Shergar, was kidnapped in Ireland and a £2million ransom demanded.
- 30 years ago, on 24th Feb 1993 that Bobby Moore, British footballer and captain of the England team that won the 1966 World Cup, died.
- 20 years ago, on 1st Feb 2003 that the US space shuttle Columbia disintegrated over Texas during re-entry, killing all seven astronauts.
- 15 years ago, on 29th Feb 2008 that Prince Harry was immediately withdrawn from active service in Afghanistan, after the media revealed he was serving a tour of duty with British troops there.
- 10 years ago, on 1st Feb 2013 that the Shard, a 72-storey skyscraper in London, was officially opened. It is the tallest building in the UK.



The Corn Exchange Newbury's Ageing Creatively programme delivers a wonderful array of creative workshops, classes and courses designed for anyone over 55.

CHAIR EXERCISES

AT THATCHAM METHODIST CHURCH

£2
No booking required



Enjoy fun movement sessions that will help you keep fit and improve your posture led, by Ellie Aldegheri.

Available to anyone aged 55+

Wednesdays 22 Feb - 29 Mar
11am - 12pm
Thatcham Methodist Church
RG18 4QL

Hot drinks available!
12-12-30!



If you would like to find out more information please contact: Katy Stevens, Ageing Creatively Co-ordinator at getinvolved@cornexchangenew.co.uk or call 01635 582666

We are grateful to the National Lottery Community Fund for their support



CORNEXCHANGENEW.COM/AGEINGCREATIVELY

CORN EXCHANGE NEWBURY



We invite you to join us at

Vintage Adventure

A time of fun, making friends, singing, informal Christian worship, activities, drinks and homemade cakes

For the young at heart in our community

Inclusive and dementia friendly

Led by the Churches in Thatcham



Theme: Dance

Thursday, 16 February 2023

2.30-4.00pm

Thatcham Methodist Church

Book your place: contact Karen on 07444 851606 or email: pastoraldevelopmentworker@outlook.com

Come to

Snacks

Games

Messy Church

Crafts

Worship

and have lots of fun learning about God!

For children age 4-11

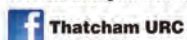
Next session:

Friday 17th February 2023
10am-12noon

The British School hall
Thatcham United Reformed Church
Church Lane, Thatcham RG19 3JL

Contact Esther Lewis 01635 861332
messychurch@thatcham-urc.org.uk

www.messychurch.org.uk/church/messy-church-thatcham-urc



Thatcham URC



Mens Breakfast

Sat. february 4th 8am

Venue : Thatcham Baptist Church

Representatives from The Gideons will be here to discuss their work - Should be an enlightening session

Spaces are limited ! if you wish to attend please email me your confirmation asap and I'll book your place:

gregoryamth98@gmail.com

or by Text : 07415 678392



Suggested Donation £2.50

Additional Information:
Refreshments include: Hot Coffee, Tea, Soft Drink, Biscuits, Fruit, Eggs, Bacon, Sausages, Mashed Potatoes, Toast, Butter, Jam, Honey, Syrup, Maple Syrup, Pancakes, Waffles, Doughnuts, Smoothies, Yogurt, Fruit, Nuts, Seeds, Grains, Beans, Lentils, Tofu, Quinoa, Rice, Pasta, Noodles, Vegetables, Herbs, Spices, Oils, Vinegar, Dressing, Sauces, Condiments, Snacks & More!

INTERMEDIATE

							7	2	
					9	5		3	
6	7			3	2	9			
9				1					
4	1	6					7	9	5
				6					1
		3	1	8			4	6	
2		7	4						
8	4								

Blood Bikes

Back in May 2020 I applied to be a Blood Biker!

What is that you may ask? We are an out of hours service for the NHS.

Here is an excerpt from my group's website: <https://serv-obn.org.uk/>

We are a volunteer organisation that supports NHS Hospitals in the Oxford, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Northamptonshire area by using its dedicated fleet of motorcycles and 4 x 4 vehicles to provide a rapid response courier service, out of hours, delivering blood products to the point of need.

We also provide support for the neonatal units collecting and delivering human milk to give premature babies the best start in life.

SERV OBN is a registered Charity and depends solely on public donations, you might have seen us about, but as we operate generally at night we are not the best known volunteer organisation, but we are vital.

We may be run by volunteers, but we pride ourselves on providing a professional service, we're trained to a very high standard and we continually monitor our activities to ensure we maintain those standards. Many have also been trained in F.P.O.S. (First Person on Scene). The fact our service is FREE is just the icing on the cake!

During normal working hours, the blood transfusion service provide their own transportation to move Blood, Plasma, Tissue Samples, Documentation and other vital supplies to where they are needed. Outside of working hours this service is not available to the hospitals, this is where the blood bike volunteers come in.

Without the Blood Bikes, if urgent medical supplies were required hospitals and care homes etc. would have to rely upon Private Hire Taxi Companies, Couriers and in exceptional circumstances, Emergency Services.

SERV-OBN provide an out of hours service which not only saves a substantial amount of money, but money that can be passed on to provide more appropriate frontline patient care such as nurses and equipment.

Although bikers and sometimes car drivers are providing the actual transport of blood there are other

critical roles in SERV OBN. The charity also needs Controllers take the calls from hospitals, then reach out to the volunteers to see who can deliver. Like all charities fundraisers pay a vital part in keeping the bikes on the road.

So I took my advanced qualification (since 1996) and joined the waiting list. One year later I was invited to a meeting near Witney to start the process. Then we were locked down! So another year later, after working out how to train on Zoom, I took my theory test followed by touring all the hospitals in my patch to understand where all the blood banks are. The training is very comprehensive. There has to be traceability on the products we carry, special handling regulations and the more practical stuff of what to do in case of breakdown! Just my luck – on the way back from Corby Hospital familiarisation, I got caught speeding on the A43 by Towcester!!! Only 3 points – I still passed!

The core of the charity transports blood from John Radcliffe, Oxford, to wherever it is needed in the Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Northants area. Defined by 3 distinct areas – North, Central and South. I come under the "South" territory which can see me serving hospitals and care homes from Hungerford to Slough and as far North as Oxford.

As I still have to perform at work the next day, I pick up the care home duties which involves transporting samples (blood etc) from the Newbury and Reading areas into Royal Berks Hospital, Reading.

The other guys will volunteer themselves for the overnight shifts which could have them out all night in "nearly" all weathers. We run a strict colour coding system, Green – no restrictions, Blue – rider discretion and Red – all bikes grounded. As I write this, all the bikes are grounded due to the cold weather. Not just from a safety perspective but also from the regulations in place for transporting blood below a certain temperature. This is where either the 4 wheeled vehicles come into action, (Dacia Duster and LR Discovery) or the riders use their own vehicles (as long as insurance clears them for charity work)

The whole country has a network of Blood Bikes – governed by NABB. Its not uncommon for a relay across the country take place where blood is transported from region to region with hand overs at service stations.

This is me a couple of years ago – about to go on my first shift.



And here are a few from various other locations – Hungerford, Wokingham and Reading.



One of the other important roles, is fund raising – it takes £8000 per month to keep the charity running. If the NHS were to use Taxis, which aren't trained to the level we are, a typical booking would cost the NHS £150. We do it for free! Hence as well as a rider – we are all classed as Fund Raisers. I have spent an afternoon in front of Tesco's in Newbury with a collection box and card payment device. Typically, on a busy day – £1000 can be raised in the way on one shift. Thanks to the generosity of the

shoppers! Our Chairman also does a lot of work with Rotary clubs etc for raising money and we also participate with a Gazebo at many events – NEC Bike Show, Formula One and Moto GP to name a few.

All the bikes are named after people in history who have made a significant contribution to the medical world. Here are a few examples:

Sheila – Funded by the Wolverton and Stony Stratford Rotary Club. Sheila Helena Elizabeth Kitzinger MBE was a British natural childbirth activist and author on childbirth and pregnancy.

Cecilie – Funded by St Wildred & Graham Milton Lodges & Province of Northants & Hunts Freemasons. Brigadier Dame Cecilie Monica Golding DBE – (1902-1997) was a British Army nurse, who rose to Colonel Commandant, Matron-in-Chief and Director of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

Grace – Grace McDougall – (1887–1963) was Commandant of British First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) during WW1.

Jane – Jane Haining (1897–1944) was a Church of Scotland missionary. She worked in Budapest.

Ruby – Ruby Bradley – (1907–2002) was Chief Nurse for the Eighth Army and one of the most decorated women in the U.S.

Rosalind – Sponsored by Brackley Festival of Motorcycling. Rosalind Franklin – (1920-1958) was an English chemist and X-ray crystallographer who made contributions to the understanding of the molecular structures of DNA.

Elizabeth – Elizabeth Webber Harris – (1834-1917) risked her life to nurse soldiers hit by a deadly cholera outbreak back to health.

In the photo at the top I am riding Sheila – my first!!!! But at nearly 100,000 miles (maybe more), I wasn't her first!!!

This is a completely voluntary charity on all sides. From Riders, Drivers, Controllers, Fleet Management, Operations – we even have a quartermaster! The pleasure we get is knowing that we are able to use our skills developed over many years of riding to put something back into the system in a hugely worthwhile way (and also getting to ride nice bikes!)

Just give us a wave next time you see one of us!!!

Adrian

Elders' Away Day at Aston Tirrold URC



12th November 2022. The day started and ended with short services led by John. The morning was a session reflecting on prayer.

Everyone enjoyed a lunch of a choice of soups made by Esther and cakes made by Jackie W after searching the cupboards for bowls and plates.

Chocolates courtesy of Karen kept us going throughout the day. John shared with the Elders, an opportunity that he and Rachel had

been given to travel to Israel in the new year. Missed out on a walk this year, so had to exercise the calories out of the system afterwards.

Thatcham Warm Spaces



We opened our doors as part of the Warm Spaces project at the end of November offering a place to keep warm and save on heating bills. Each week we have been welcoming local residents on Tuesday mornings, as part of our regular Coffee Break, and Wednesday afternoons, providing a warm space, hot drinks and good company.

We have a lovely group of volunteers on the rota ready to welcome all visitors.

Please help us spread the word to those who might be struggling at this time, there is a Warm Space open in Thatcham every weekday.



a place to **keep warm** this winter and **save on heating bills**

Thatcham Warm Spaces are are now open at four locations in the town.

You are welcome to come and use these spaces to save on energy costs at home. Sometimes there will be an activity going on which you are more than welcome to join in with. If you prefer to do your own thing that's fine too. There will be free tea and coffee available, and you can use our WiFi. All ages are welcome; all we ask is that you respect the needs of others around you and be considerate as you use our premises. The Warm Spaces are all non-smoking areas.

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Monday 10.30-2.30 | Thatcham Baptist Church, RG19 4YF |
| Monday 2.00-4.00 | St. Mary's Church, RG19 3PN |
| Tuesday 10.00-12.00 | United Reformed Church, RG19 3JL |
| Tuesday 2.00-4.00 | Glendale Church, RG19 3RG |
| Wednesday 2.00-4.00 | United Reformed Church, RG19 3JL |
| Thursday 12.30-4.30 | Thatcham Baptist Church, RG19 4YF |
| Friday 2.00-4.00 | Glendale Church, RG19 3RG |

Church Anniversary Christmas lunch



Fairtrade Fortnight

Thatcham United Reformed Church

Fairtrade Fortnight

Coffee & Cake Morning

Saturday 18th February 2023

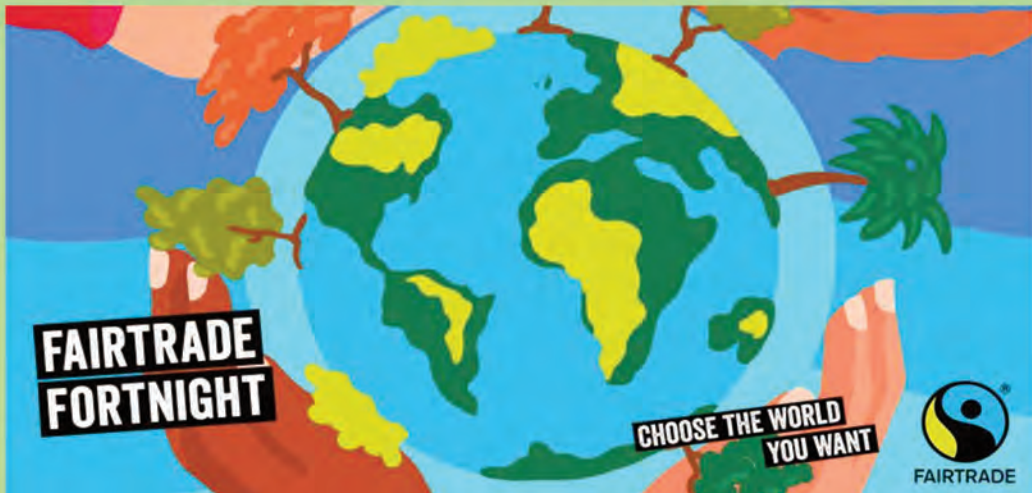
10.00-12.00

Fairtrade Worship

Sunday 26rd February 2020

10.30

All welcome!



Fairtrade Fortnight 2023 is taking place 27 February – 12 March 2023.

This Fairtrade Fortnight, join us in spreading a simple message: choose Fairtrade now and help save our favourite foods.

Did you know cocoa, bananas and coffee could soon be much more difficult to find on our shelves?

Climate change is making crops like these harder and harder to grow. Combined with deeply unfair trade, communities growing these crops are being pushed to the brink.

But here's the good news.

More of us choosing Fairtrade means extra income, power, and support for those communities, as they work to build sustainable and prosperous futures.

So not only is choosing Fairtrade best for people and planet, it could help save everyday treats like chocolate, bananas and a hot cuppa!

Join us on Saturday 18th February for a Fairtrade cuppa and cake-made with fairtrade ingredients! 10.00-12.00

Fairtrade Worship, Sunday 26th February, 10.30am, followed by Fairtrade coffee & chocolate!



Knit and Natter group Christmas lunch



Nativity Service



Christmas Eve and Christmas Day



Roy travels to Madrid

1) Puerto del Sol (Gate of the Sun) is said to be the geographical centre of Madrid and the centre of Spain. Ten roads radiate from Puerta del Sol. The man on the horse is Charles III of Spain, described as 'probably the most successful European ruler of his generation', providing firm, consistent, intelligent leadership. His personal life had won the respect of the people.

2) This statue depicts a Cantabrian brown bear. Such bears still survive in the Cantabrian Mountains of Spain but are on the endangered species red list. Following a 1973 ban on hunting them, anybody killing one of these bears can be fined up to €300,000. The building behind is the official residence of the President of Madrid City Council,

3) Telefonica building in Gran Via is about 300ft high. The building in front does not appear to be a church at present even though a cross stands on high.

4) The Royal Palace is the official residence of the royal family, for state ceremonies, but is generally open to the public. It occupies an area of 33 acres with 3,418 rooms and is the largest royal palace in Europe. Replacing an earlier palace that burned down, it was built in 1738-55.

5) Queen Isabel II of Spain reigned 1833-68, becoming Queen before her 3rd birthday. Her uncle Carlos refused to recognize a female monarch for seven years and waged war against her but Isabel and her mother were supported by the Spanish Army. Under her mother's regency, Spain transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in 1837. Queen Isabel was deposed in 1868 and formally abdicated in 1870, her son becoming



King Alfonso XII in 1874. Isabel died in 1904 in Paris and was buried at El Escorial monastery, Spain.

6) Plaza de Isabel (Isabella) with statue of Isabel.

7) The foundation stone of the Cathedral of St Mary the Royal (or the Almudena Cathedral meaning the City Cathedral) was laid in 1883: Work ceased during the Civil War (1936-39) and was only fully restarted in 1950, completed in 1993 and consecrated by Pope John Paul II) that same year.

The diocese of Madrid formerly came under the archdiocese of Toledo but in 1964 Pope Paul VI made Madrid an archdiocese.

8) Church of St Jeronimo dates from the early 16th century. The present structure is the remains of the Jeronomite Monastery. In 1808 the monks were expelled and the monastery was occupied by French troops, who caused major damage to the building. Since then, much restoration has been done to the

church. St Jeronimo was the biblical scholar who translated the Bible into Latin from 382BC. It took him about 25 years to complete the work.

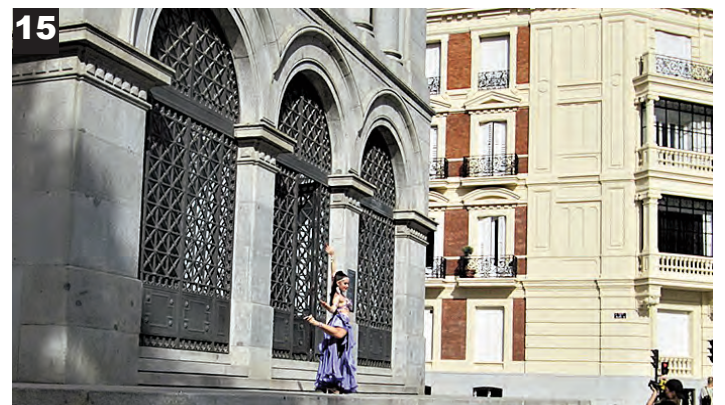
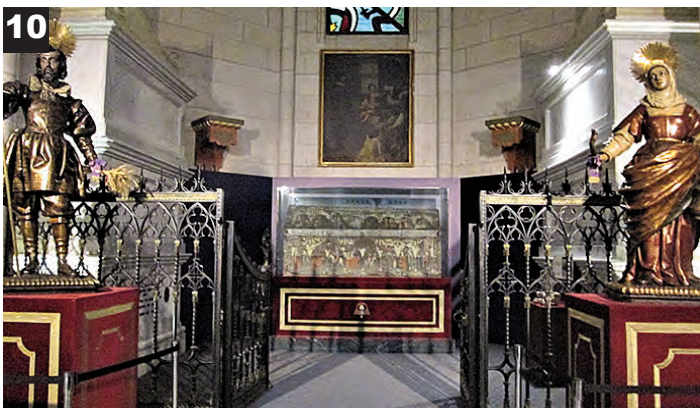
9) Inside the Church of St Jeronimo.

10) During the Middle Ages two funerary chests were provided to preserve the body of St Isidro, the patron saint of Madrid. One of them (in this picture) is in the Almudena Cathedral. It is one of the oldest pieces of furniture that now exist in

Madrid and many experts claim it to be Europe's most important medieval artifact. St Isidro was a farm worker known for his piety towards the poor and animals. He was born c1070 and died in 1130.

11) St Nicolas' Church is one of the oldest churches in Madrid. The bell tower was built in 12th century. The rest of the church was rebuilt during 15th-17th centuries but has been much altered since then.

12) The building in the centre may



resemble a church but it is the Hotel Plaza Mayor in Mayor St (Main Street).

13) This imposing Palace of Communications was formerly the main Post Office, telegraph and telephone headquarters. Now occupied by Madrid City Council, it was constructed in 1907-19.

14) Park de Retiro (Park of Retirement) is 291 acres in area, It was constructed in the mid 17th century for King Felipe IV. It is now a public park with a large boating lake in the centre. A monument to King Alfonso XII, which may be seen in the picture, dates from 1922.

15) While I was passing this building, suddenly this model (followed by her photographer) hastened from a car and posed on these steps. She did not seem to mind me taking a photograph, so here it is!

16) Hotel Liabeny in the quiet Salud Street, where I stayed, just a few minutes walk from the centre of

Madrid. It has 212 rooms and seven floors.

17) The ever-present taco queue outside this little Mexican restaurant - as seen from my room window. There appears to have a queue there every day from noon to after 10pm, The cost? Only €1.

18) This queue in Calle de Rempelanzas is a lottery queue.

19) Congress of the Deputies (Lower House of Parliament) in Madrid. There are 350 deputies of which in 2019, 48% were female, making it the European country with the highest percentage of women. As in the UK, the Lower House wields more authority.

20) Monastery of Escorial is 30 miles north-west of Madrid city. Built in 1563-84 during the reign of King Philip II of Spain, it was a palace and a monastery, being used as a retreat and later as the centre of political power. St Lawrence was a 3rd century Christian from Valencia:

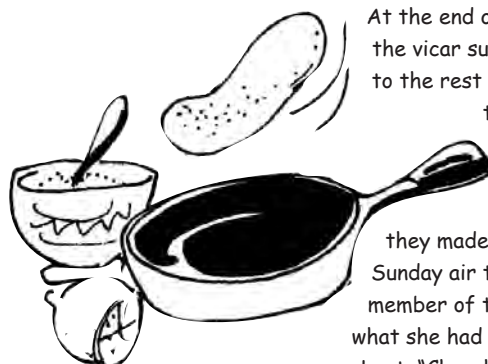
eventually he was made the archdeacon of Rome. When the Prefect of Rome ordered him to hand over the wealth of the church, Lawrence asked for three days to collect it all together. During that time he distributed as much as he could to the poor and needy, after which time he presented the latter to the prefect saying that they were the true treasures of the church. For that act of defiance, Lawrence was executed on a grill of fire. For that reason the palace of Escorial was designed in the shape of a grill, the instrument of fire on which St Lawrence was burned to death.

21) This is a memorial construct, including a cross of stone 500 feet high dedicated to about 40,000 from both sides who perished in the Civil War 1936-39. They are buried in this, the Valley of the Fallen on both sides of a crypt beneath the church that was commissioned by General Francisco Franco. The massive crypt

was declared a basilica in 1960 by Pope John 23rd.

Franco was buried in front of the altar in the basilica on his death in 1975. He was the only one buried in the Valley of the Fallen who did not die in the Civil War. However, the Spanish Government had his remains exhumed and reburied in a family grave in 2019.

General Franco led the Nationalists against the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. The Nationalists were supported by Italy, Germany and Portugal, the Republicans by Mexico and the Soviet Union. Both sides had foreign volunteers. The war was viewed variously as a class struggle, a religious struggle, a struggle between dictatorship and republican democracy, between revolution and counter-revolution and between fascism and communism. It is estimated that about half a million people died in the war, including many civilians.



At the end of the pre-Lent sermon, the vicar suggested, as an example to the rest of the community, that the congregation should worship in an unheated church for the whole of Lent. As they made their way into the chill Sunday air the vicar addressed one member of the congregation, asking what she had decided to give up for Lent. "Church," she replied firmly.

What the papers say...

FEMINIST GROUP TELLS CHURCH (URC) "YOU HAVE LET WOMEN DOWN".

By Daniel Sanderson, Scottish Correspondent, *Daily Telegraph*, 27th Sep 2022.

Gender-critical activists have accused a church of discriminating against women after a feminist talk was cancelled because of their stance on trans rights. Sole Sisters, a small grassroots organization, which believes that sex is immutable, is considering suing Augustine United Church in Edinburgh after it scrapped a discussion about the erasure of terms such as "woman" and "mother" in healthcare that was scheduled to take place in a meeting room at the venue.

Days before the seminar, the church told the group that its booking had been cancelled owing to "distress" the prospect of the talk had caused among its congregation. The venue, part of the liberal United Reformed Church, claimed it had not been aware of the "nature of the event" which "represents a viewpoint on transgender identity that our church community is not aligned with".

Courts have established that "gender-critical" beliefs – that a person's biological sex cannot change – are protected under the Equality Act of 2010 and the group believes that disagreement with its opinions is not a lawful reason to cancel.

A spokeswoman for Sole Sisters said: "We are concerned about language changes where women are referred to as "cervix-havers", "menstruators" and words like that. The church didn't question us about what our views actually are. We respect trans identities but have issues about excluding women".

A spokesman for Augustine United Church said it was taking legal advice.

23% OF PEOPLE HEAD TO A&E AFTER FAILURE TO SEE A GP

By Arj Singh and Paul Gallagher, *The Independent*, 9th January 2023

Nearly a quarter of British adults (23%) have used overstretched accident and emergency (A&E) departments because they cannot access GP appointments, an exclusive poll for I suggests.

Those aged 18 to 24 were the most likely (43%) to use A&E because they could not get an appointment with their family doctor, compared to around a third (32%) of 25 to 34-year-olds and 35 to 44-year-olds (30%), the Redfield & Wilton poll, shared exclusively with I, showed.

Older age groups were less likely to use A&E in lieu of a GP appointment, with 16% of 55- to 64-year-olds and those over 65 saying they had turned to urgent hospital care and 12% of 45 to 54-year-olds.

The figures underlined some of the drivers behind the crisis unfolding in emergency departments as access to urgent care and GPs is squeezed. With seven million patients on waiting lists for elective treatment, voters said they blamed the Government most (46%) for care backlogs, rather than the Covid pandemic (20%).

NEARLY 50 UK SHOPS CLOSED DOWN EACH DAY IN 2022

By August Graham, *The Independent*, 2nd January 2023

In a bruising year, more shops in the UK closed their doors in 2022 than at any other point for at least five years. About 47 sites shut up shop for the last time every day last year, according to analysis.

The Centre for Retail Research found 17,145 shops across the country closed in 2022 - up by nearly 50% on 2021, when 11,449 closed. The group's survey found a little over 5,500 of the shops went under, while more than 11,600 of them were closed as a larger chain decided to cut its costs.

The Centre for Retail Research's director, Professor Joshua Bamfield, said: "Rather than company failure, rationalization now seems to be the main driver for closures as retailers continue to reduce their cost base at a fast pace". He said the trend was likely to continue this year but added that a few "big hitters" could also go under.

The centre said more than 151,000 retail jobs had been lost in the UK last year, including from online retailers. This was an increase of more than 45,000 on the year before. The real estate adviser Altus Group said that retailers and landlords would have to pay close to £1.1bn from 1st April to cover the business rates on empty sites - these are sites that have been

empty for three months.

Robert Hayton, UK president at Altus Group, said: "Rate-free periods need to be urgently extended to reflect the time it actually takes to re-let vacant properties".

FANS CAN SING SWING LOW SWEET CHARIOT IF THEY WANT TO, SAYS ITOJE

"I don't think anyone in Twickenham is singing that song out of malice" says Marc Itoje. By Gareth Davies, *Daily Telegraph*, 3rd January 2023

England rugby player Maro Itoje has said fans can sing Swing Low, Sweet Chariot if they want. The song, traditionally sung by England supporters to encourage their team, has been the focal point of a culture row for its links to slavery. The Rugby Football Union (RFU) has attempted to phase it out.

Itoje, 28, previously said he would not sing it because it makes him "uncomfortable".

However, talking to Today on BBC Radio 4 yesterday, he said: "First of all, I don't think anyone in Twickenham is singing that song out of malice. Most people sing it to support their team; to support English rugby. I'm not going to sit here and tell people what they should or shouldn't sing. Everyone has the choice to make up their mind on that matter.

This is one for individuals to make their mind up on".

In May, Itoje said: "I have sung the song previously when I was naive to the original context but given what I know about it now, personally, that's not the song that I'll be singing anymore".

In June 2020, the RFU announced it would conduct a review into the "historical context" of the song over concerns it is inappropriate. Now it is no longer played over the speaker system for international matches at Twickenham.

All previous branding referencing lyrics to the song have also quietly been withdrawn from rugby memorabilia. But when spectators were let back in after the Covid lockdown bans, it took the crowd less than three minutes to start singing it again.

Boris Johnson, the former prime minister came out in support of Swing Low and Tom Ilube, new chairman of the Rugby Football Union and first black man to chair a British sports governing body, included it as one of his choices on

Radio 4's Desert Island Discs programme.

Some people were less supportive, with The Daily Telegraph's rugby writer and former Red Roses captain Maggie Alphonsi and the RFD's chief executive Bill Sweeney both saying that they would not sing it.

HALF OF BANK BRANCHES SHUT IN PAST SEVEN YEARS

From *Daily Telegraph*, 24th December 2022

Half of all bank branches have been closed down shut in the past seven years as the industry pulls out of towns and villages across Britain. Banks and building societies have closed more than 5,000 branches since 2015, research by Which? found, with a further 206 expected to shut by the end of next year (2023). NatWest has closed 1,147 outlets, Barclays 962 and Lloyds 629 as internet banking has grown in popularity. Consumer groups have highlighted the negative effect on the elderly in rural areas.

LET CHILDREN BE CHILDREN

Christian Institute, Winter Newsletter 2022

We are thankful that in recent months there have been moves to protect children from sexualisation and radical transgender ideology. The long-awaited Online Safety Bill will help protect children from pornography and content promoting self-harm and suicide. This is great news, especially so because the Government has also backed down on censoring legal content deemed 'harmful' to adults.

NHS England has finally admitted that gender confusion is only a phase in the majority of cases. The controversial Tavistock gender clinic, responsible for placing so many children on a conveyor belt to transition, is set to close early next year.

The Prime Minister wants to ensure that youngsters are not exposed to inappropriate sex education materials, and Mermaids, which has promoted puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to children for years, is being formally investigated by the Charity Commission.

As we head into a new year, let us pray that God's good design for humanity, especially children, would be honoured and upheld.

Facebook favourites

Please submit your Facebook favourites to thatcham.urb@ntlworld.com
Be sure to download them and then send as attachments – copying and pasting into an email will not work!

