



Link

November 2024

The Magazine of the United Reformed Church
Stratford-upon-Avon



Worship, Witness and love for others through Jesus Christ

**The United Reformed Church
Rother Street
Stratford-upon-Avon**

Website: www.stratforduponavonurc.co.uk

Local Leader

Dr Peter Horrocks

Roseleigh, Barton Road, Welford-on-Avon, CV37 8EY.

Tel: 01789 750971

Email: peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk

Church Secretary

Mairi Macdonald

Treasurer

Ashley Pettifer

Elders

Ileen Fisher

David Sampson

Kirsty Knott

Mairi Macdonald

Sarah Salmon

Ann Walters

Sue Cragoe-Jones

Wendy Sprake

Finance and Fabric Committee

Rob Fradley

Peter Horrocks

Tom Purves

Sarah Salmon

Ann Jones

Iain Kelso

Ashley Pettifer

Thoughts for the Month

Holiday thoughts

As many of you may know, Linda and I recently went on a 10-day holiday to Uzbekistan. On many levels the holiday was an eye-opener!

Uzbekistan is one of the five 'Stans' in Central Asia, a 10-hour journey from Birmingham, including an hour's stopover in Istanbul. Being landlocked, it has a very chequered history, with many invasions over the centuries – by the Arabs, the Persians, the Sogdians, the Turkic nation, the Mongols and by Imperialist Russia in the 19th Century. More recently Uzbekistan was under Soviet rule, until they were "politely asked to leave" in 1991 (according to our guide!) Early Muslim conquests converted most of the people to Islam. Muslims constitute 87% of the population, with 9% being Russian Orthodox and 4% other religions. We were told that there were a few Christian churches, but we didn't see any of them.

Uzbekistan is a much more developed country than we had imagined. The large cities, like Tashkent and Samarkand are modern, wealthy cities, with many attractive high-rise buildings and lots of electric cars (mostly Chinese). The traffic was bad! - on their four lane highways - we were glad we didn't have to drive! The horn seems to be the main feature of Uzbek driving!



Since Uzbekistan gained independence from the Russian rule there have been two presidents. The first was well liked and we visited his elaborate tomb. The current president didn't seem to enjoy the same warmth. There was a suggestion that he was promoting his own and his families' interests rather than caring for the country. We felt that it was a highly regimented state under his rule, and you don't 'step out of line'.

It is a devoutly Islamic country, and we learned a lot about Islam. Our guides were all Muslims, and we had some very interesting conversations.

Sometimes, these days, Islam gets a bad name, mainly because of the Taliban in Afghanistan or because of the extremist movement ISIS. Islam is depicted as an

organisation to be feared, willing to use violence to further its own ideology. When you speak to Muslims in Uzbekistan, nothing could be further from the truth. Two of them told us that there is nothing in the Qur'an which justifies violence. Apparently, you can only use any degree of violence in self-defence. They are kind, loving and much closer to the Christian faith, in its principles, than you might imagine. Clearly, however, there are differences.

Islam is built on the five pillars of Faith:

- Shahada – an absolute declaration of faith in Allah
- Salah – prayer
- Zakat – Alms giving
- Sawm – fasting
- Hajj – pilgrimage to Mecca

Allah is mentioned frequently in conversation and in greetings. The men go to prayers 5 times a day and there were streams of men, young and old, entering the mosques to pray everywhere we went. There are no homeless people in Uzbekistan: all the poor people are supported by Zakat. Muslims give 2.5% of their wealth and income to support those who have less. There is also a culture of caring for all members of the (often extended) family, especially the elders. We didn't



see much of the fasting but, of course, every year there is a month of fasting in Ramadan. Every Muslim hopes to visit Mecca during the Hajj once in their lifetime unless they have medical conditions which prevent the journey, or they cannot afford it, or their family would suffer as a result of the expense.

Two of our guides were married Muslim women and we had conversations about the place of women in their society. They maintained that there was equality, but with different functions for the two sexes. The man is the provider and the woman the carer. Women are not allowed to pray with men in the mosques. However, we were told that there are two mosques specifically for women. A woman's place to pray is largely in the home. Women are not allowed to show their head in public, nor their legs. Women are not allowed to shake hands with men unless invited to do

so. Men are not allowed to touch a woman who is not their wife. But they stressed that they have a choice – they both chose to follow the rules.



In one smaller mosque there was an Imam (essentially the priest) sitting on the side bench. When he started singing and praying virtually everybody (apart from Western tourists!) sat down and started praying – with both hands open in front of them, palms uppermost. The whole room went quiet. We sat and watched

in silence – although we didn't understand a word of what was being said, we found it quite moving. Our guide introduced us to the Imam afterwards. In terms of prayer, we often saw market stall holders, at one of the prayer times, praying by their stall.

Shaking hands is an Islamic thing and recommended by the prophet as a way to greet people. Placing your right hand on your heart, and bowing your head is meant as a sign of respect, or giving your word of honour or pledging allegiance. It is often accompanied by the phrase "Assalaam 'alaikum" (peace be with you). The reply is "Wa 'alaikum assalaam" (and peace be upon you).

At one of the mausoleums of a famous Sufi Muslim we saw inscribed on the wall one of his sayings: "Occupy your heart with Allah, and your hands with work". It seemed to us to say almost everything about how to lead your life!

We found a high degree of compliance with Islamic customs: questioning and/or doubt doesn't seem to feature at all. Linda and I debated whether this was simply because of their strong faith, or because it is 'expected' and they **have** to comply, or that's the way they have been brought up and it is essentially an integral part of life.

We came to the conclusion that both Muslims and Christians worship a God of kindness, albeit in different ways. My own feeling is that we worship the same God. **We** talk about following in the steps of Jesus ('Walking the Way' in the URC) and **they** follow devoutly the way of the prophet Mohammed. Muslims do respect and venerate Jesus. They consider him to be one of God's messengers to humankind. The Qur'an reaffirms his miraculous birth and abilities. Mary is regarded as one of the most pure and exalted women of all creation.

So, our knowledge and understanding of Islam has been expanded and enhanced. We have no reason to fear or regard Muslims as different: indeed there are so many similarities that differences become almost irrelevant!

Peter

Family News

Friends will be sad to learn that Janet Insoll passed away on 10th October following a short illness. She died merely hours before the 1 year anniversary of her late husband John's passing. A Thanksgiving Service was held at St. Andrews Shottery on 29th October.

Phil Sweet celebrated his 100th Birthday on 25th October with a very special party at the Town Hall hosted by the Municipal Charities and Phil's family. This was attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire, the Town Mayor, Chairman of the Municipal Charities, many friends including a good representation from our Church and, of course, several members of Phil's family including his youngest Great Grandchild aged 2 years.

Joan continues to suffer pain but is stoically coping.

St.Basils Tree:

This will be in place from the service on 17th November. We will continue to support St. Basils Charity as we have done now for many years at Christmas to enable them to continue their valuable work supporting young people across the West Midlands providing advice, accommodation, support and engagement services to assist them back into education, work and training so they can move on successfully with their lives. Place one card on the tree and place a donation in the box provided in lieu of saved postage and cards or indeed any amount you choose.

Ileen Fisher



What's on at the Bear Pit

Old Herbaceous: 1st to 2nd November at 7.30pm
Matinee on 2nd November at 2.30pm



Produced by Giles Shenton Productions, written by Alfred Shaughnessy. Directed by Simon Downing. With Giles Shenton as Herbert Pinnegar. Described as “Downton Abbey with gardening tips”, Old Herbaceous is the humorous love story of a single-minded yet gentle man with a passion for plants and is a charming one man play which has entranced sell-out audiences all around the country over the last five years. An acute and sometimes hilarious observation of relationships between the classes in a simpler age, Old Herbaceous is sprinkled with witticisms and epithets. The evening blossoms into tender humour, much in the traditionally understated English style of the early 20th century.

As Old Herbaceous, renowned actor Giles Shenton truly lives the part of the legendary Head Gardener, Herbert Pinnegar, inviting you to feel included in a private chat from a bygone, comforting age. Keeping you engrossed, amused and emotionally engaged from start to finish, Old Herbaceous will leave you with a feeling that, perhaps, all's right with the world.

Tickets: £15 (concessions £12)

A Haunting in Venice: 3rd November at 7.30pm

Bear Pit Community Cinema - Supported by Stratford Town Trust.

In post-World War II Venice, Poirot, now retired and living in his own exile, reluctantly attends a séance. But when one of the guests is murdered, it is up to the former detective to once again uncover the killer.

Director: Kenneth Branagh. Production Year: 2023. Runtime: 104 mins. Certification: 12A.



Tickets: £5 on the door

I Dream of a Church

On the 20th October, when I stood in for Simon Burne, we considered what sort of a Church we wanted our Church to be. It followed the reading from St John's gospel about Jesus overthrowing the money lenders' tables in the temple and sending out those who were selling their wares. He wanted the temple to be solely a spiritual place. I then read us a poem called 'I dream of a church' written by Kate Compston. It was a poem suggested by Simon to provoke our thoughts about our church. After the service several people asked if I could publish it in Link. It is a poem that bears re-reading, so here it is:

I Dream of a Church

*I dream of a church that joins in with God's laughing
as she rocks in her rapture, enjoying her art;
she's glad of her world, in its risking and growing;
'tis the child she has born and holds close to her heart.*

*I dream of a church that joins in with God's weeping
as she crouches, wedged down by the sorrow she sees:
she cries for the hostile, the cold and no-hoping,
for she bears in herself our despair and dis-ease.*

*I dream of a church that joins in with God's dancing
as she moves like the wind and the wave and the fire:
a church that can pick up its skirts, pirouetting,
with the steps that can signal God's deepest desire.*

*I dream of a church that joins in with God's loving
as she bends to embrace the unlovely and lost,
a church that can free, by its sharing and daring,
the imprisoned and poor, and then shoulder the cost.*

*God, make us a church that joins in with your living,
as you cherish and challenge, rein in and release,
a church that is winsome, impassioned, inspiring;
lioness for your justice and lamb of your peace.*

by Kate Compston

Green Corner

At EcoChat on the 26th October we were treated to a presentation by Jozimba a member of the local Extinction Rebellion group. It was a talk packed with information and explanations as to why Extinction Rebellion feel that, because of the current Climate Change situation, more extreme, but non-violent, methods, are required. He showed several videos, one of which featured Greta Thunberg. She speaks with great authority for a young person and explains why action now is essential.



I have transcribed a lecture she gave in Stockholm in 2018. It bears reading:

When I was about 8 years old, I first heard about something called Climate Change or Global Warming. Apparently, that was something humans had created by our way of living. I was told to turn off the lights to save energy, and to recycle paper to save resources. I remember thinking that it was very strange that humans, who are an animal species, among others, could be capable of changing the earth's climate. Because if we were and if it was really happening, we wouldn't be talking about anything else. As soon as you turn on the TV, everything would be about that; headlines, radio, newspapers - you would never read or hear about anything else - as if there was a World War going on. But no one ever talked about it. If burning fossil fuels was so bad that it threatened our very existence, how could we just continue like before? Why were there no restrictions? Why wasn't it made illegal? To me that did not add up. It was too unreal. So when I was 11 I became ill. I fell into depression; I stopped talking and I stopped eating. In two months, I lost about 10 kilos of weight. Later on, I was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, OCD and selective mutism. That basically means I only speak when I think it's necessary. Now is one of those moments.

For those of us who are on the spectrum, almost everything is black or white. We aren't very good at lying, and we usually don't enjoy participating in the social game that the rest of you seem so fond of. I think in many ways that we autistic are the normal ones, and the rest of the people are pretty strange. Especially when it comes to the sustainability crisis, where everyone keeps saying that climate change is an existential threat and the most important issue of all. And yet they just carry on like before. I don't understand that, because if the emissions have to stop then we must stop the emissions. To me that is black or white. There are no grey areas when

it comes to survival. Either we go on as a civilization or we don't. We have to change! Rich countries like Sweden need to start reducing emissions by at least 15% every year and that is so that we can stay below a two-degree warming target yet as the IPCC have recently demonstrated aiming instead for 1.5°C which significantly reduced the climate impacts. But we can only imagine what that means for reducing emissions. You would think the media, and every one of our leaders would be talking about nothing else, but they never even mention it. Nor does anyone ever mention the greenhouse gases, already locked in the system, nor that air pollution is hiding a warming so that when we stop burning fossil fuels we already have an extra level of warming, perhaps as high as 0.5 to 1.1°C.

Furthermore, does hardly anyone speak about the fact that we are in the midst of the 6th mass extinction with up to 200 species going extinct every single day? The extinction rate is today between 1000 and 10,000 times higher than what is seen as normal. Nor does hardly anyone ever speak about the aspect of equity or climate justice, clearly stated everywhere in the Paris agreement, which is absolutely necessary to make it work on the global scale. That means that rich countries need to get down to zero emissions within 6 to 12 years with today's emission speed. And that is so that people in poorer countries can have a chance to raise their standard of living by building some of the infrastructure that we have already built, such as roads, schools, hospitals, clean drinking water, electricity and so on. Because how can we expect countries, like India or Nigeria to care about the climate crisis if we, who already have everything, don't care even a second about it or our actual commitments to the Paris agreement. So why are we not reducing our emissions? Why are they, in fact, still increasing and we know causing a mass extinction? Are we evil? - no of course not. People keep doing what they do because the vast majority doesn't have a clue about the actual consequences of our everyday life. And they don't know the rapid changes required. We all think we know and we think everybody knows, but we don't, because how could we? If there really was a crisis, and if this crisis was caused by our emissions, you would at least see some signs, not just flooded cities, 10's of thousands of dead people, and whole nations levelled to piles of torn down buildings. You would see some restrictions, but no - no one talks about it. There are no emergency meetings, no headlines, no breaking news, no one is acting as if we were in a crisis. Even most climate scientists or green politicians keep on flying around the world eating meat and dairy.

If I live to be 100 I will be alive in the year 2103. When you think about the future today you don't think beyond the year 2050. By then I will, in the best case, not even have lived half of my life. What happens next? In 2078 I will celebrate my 75th

birthday. If I have children or grandchildren maybe they will spend that day with me. Maybe they will ask me about you, the people who were around back in 2018. Maybe they will ask why you didn't do anything, while there was still time to act. What we do or don't do right now will affect my entire life, and the lives of my children and grandchildren. What we do or don't do right now, I and my generation can't undo in the future.

So, when school started in August this year, I decided that this was enough I sat myself down on the ground outside the Swedish parliament. I school struck for the climate. Some people say that I should be in school instead. Some people say that I should study to become a climate scientist so that I can solve the climate crisis. But the climate crisis has already been solved. We already have all the facts and solutions. All we have to do is to wake up and change! And why should I be studying for a future that soon will be no more - when no one is doing anything whatsoever to save that future. And what is the point of learning facts in the school system when the most important facts given by the finer science, of that same school system, clearly means nothing to our politicians and our society. Some people say that Sweden is just a small country and that it doesn't matter what we do but I think that if a few children can get headlines all over the world just by not going to school for a few weeks, imagine what we could all do together if you wanted to.

Now we're almost at the end of my talk and this is where people usually start talking about hope, solar panels, wind power, circular economy and so on. But I'm not going to do that. We've had 30 years of pep talking and selling positive ideas, and I'm sorry but it doesn't work. Because if it would have, the emissions would have gone down by now. They haven't. And yes we do need hope, of course we do. But the one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere. So instead of looking for hope, look for action. Then, and only then, hope will come. Today we use 100 million barrels of oil every single day. There are no politics to change that. There are no rules to keep that oil in the ground.

So we can't save the world by playing by the rules, because the rules have to be changed everything needs to change and it has to start today - thank you.

Greta Thunberg

**I just tried Kangaroo flavoured beer
you can really taste the hops**

Inside Churches

*I love it inside churches,
absorbing that singular smell;
the quiet calming atmosphere
assures me all is well.*

*The vibrant, fragrant flowers,
plaques to people gone before,
I wonder about the lives they led -
were they rich or poor?*

*The gentle playing of the organ,
the click of heel on ancient tile;
the cheerful chiming of the bells
is sure to make me smile.*

*I love it inside churches,
the chairs bright and soft, glowing warm.
Churches are my comfort,
a true port in any storm.*

***Written by Susan Blackburn, and published in The Friendship Book
submitted by Fran Maddy***

Eating in the 50's.

1. Pasta was not eaten.
2. Curry was a surname
3. A takeaway was a mathematical problem
4. A pizza was - something to do with a leaning tower.
5. A Big Mac was what we wore when it was raining.
6. Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking.
7. Fish didn't have fingers
8. Eating raw fish was called poverty, not sushi.
9. Indian restaurants were only found in India
10. Surprisingly, muesli was readily available - it was called cattle feed.
11. Prunes were medicinal

For your Tomorrow

If you visit Stowe Landscape Gardens, in Buckinghamshire, currently you will be able to see an exhibition called 'For your Tomorrow - the People's Tribute'. It is open from now until 11th November and commemorates the 1475 soldiers under British command who died on the very first day of the D-Day landings. Spread across the fields and in the woods there are 1475 black silhouette figures depicting British servicemen of land, sea and sky. They are taller than life size and you can walk amongst them. It is the UK's official host for the British D-Day 80th memorial exhibition. The whole exhibition took 4 years to construct, and was constructed by volunteers using recycled materials. It is a very moving experience - to think that all those people died on just one day.

Around the gardens there are a number of metal installations which have letters, comments and tributes written on them. Here is one of the letters, written home from the battlefield:

"Oh! How I love you all and as I sit here waiting, I wonder what you are doing at home. I must not do that. It is hard enough sitting waiting. We may move at any minute. When this reaches you, for me there will be no more war, only eternal peace and waiting for you.

It is a legacy of struggle for you but God will look after you and we shall meet again, when there will be no more parting. I am to write no more sweetheart Kiss the bairns for me once more. I dare not think of them my darlings.

Goodbye, you best of women and best of wives, my beloved sweetheart. May God in his mercy look over you and bless you all May he, in that same mercy, preserve me today.

Eternal love from Yours, evermore.

Jim xxxxxxxx"





For your



Tomorrow

Happy 100th



Birthday, Phil!





A truck loaded with thousands of copies of Roget's Thesaurus crashed yesterday losing its entire load....Witnesses were stunned, startled, aghast, taken aback, stupefied, confused, shocked, rattled, paralyzed, dazed, bewildered, mixed up, surprised, awed, dumbfounded, nonplussed, flabbergasted, astounded, amazed, confounded, astonished, overwhelmed, horrified, numbed, speechless, and perplexed.



To: Churches - Stratford Foodbank <churches.suafoodbank@

Dear All,

Could your church community help us with our Reverse Advent calendar this year?

Winter is the most difficult season for people on a low-income as finances are stretched to cover additional costs of heating. Hidden behind closed doors, there will be many families and individuals with little to look forward to at Christmas. However, this is also a season of great generosity, which food banks can harness to help make Christmas a happier time for local people in need.

We are running our reverse advent calendar again this year and we are asking church communities to come together to create advent boxes of the donated items that appear on the calendar. Please can the enclosed calendar be displayed in the church and for members of the congregation to choose an item from the 24 listed to donate and bring in to put in the advent box?

All the items on our calendar are used in all of our parcels so are usually the most needed.

We are asking for the calendar to run in November, rather than December because it gives us time to get all your generous donations out in our Christmas hampers, which we make over the second weekend in December.

No one should go hungry at Christmas and with your continued work and prayers we are able to support the most vulnerable in our community.

Thank you

Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank

Sarah Crompton | Assistant Manager and Operational Lead

Stratford upon Avon | Foodbank

07736975723

Working days Mon-Thurs

Please see next page

Please leave

donations at: Co-Op

Trinity Mead &

Bidford, Lidl,

Morrisons,

Sainsbury's Bridge

St, Tesco & Waitrose

Or direct to our

warehouse @ Fred

Winter Centre, 41

Guild St, CV37 6QY

SEASONAL

ITEMS

SHOULD BE

WITH US BY

WED 4TH

DECEMBER



info@stratforduponavon.foodbank.org.uk
07736 929 029

stratforduponavon.foodbank.org.uk



REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

Please can you help with our Christmas campaign?



The poster features a festive border of Christmas stockings and baubles. On the left, there is an illustration of a stack of colorful books. The Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank logo, which includes a green circular icon and the text 'Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank Together with Trussell Trusts', is positioned in the upper center. To the right, the main text reads 'Can you help with our Christmas campaign?' in large, white, sans-serif font. Below this text is a QR code with the instruction 'Scan the QR code to donate to our campaign'. At the bottom left, contact information is provided: a phone icon followed by '07736 929 028', a location pin icon followed by 'Fred Winter Centre, 41 Guild Street, Stratford-upon-Avon', and an email icon followed by 'Email: info@stratforduponavon.foodbank.org.uk'. On the bottom right, there is a cartoon illustration of a young girl with curly hair sitting and reading a blue book.

Dear Supporters,

At the start of November Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank is launching its Christmas campaign. This year we are doing something slightly different.

Since April we have been asking for donations of used but good condition children's books for children coming to our sessions to take home with them. We've been overwhelmed by the incredible generosity and support. One of our clients spoke about the importance of this resource:

"I don't want to have to bring my children to a Foodbank session, but having a box full of books that my child can sit and go through and choose one to take home, has made it a much less stressful experience."

We want to continue offering the magic of books to families in Stratford-upon-Avon and the surrounding area this Christmas. We want to gift a book token to each child whose family receives a Christmas hamper. Last year our Christmas hampers benefited 600 children. We need to raise £3000 from this campaign to enable us to give each child a £5 book token.

We want to focus on this campaign because of the increasing poverty gap, worsened by the recent cost-of-living crisis. This means increasingly children are growing up without adequate access to books. The impact of this is enormous and lasts a lifetime. Children who are given the time and resources to become readers benefit from greater opportunities, a better grasp on language, improved self-

esteem and empathy as well as increased attainment.

Books are more than a gift under the tree – they bring families together, spark joy and provide comfort in times of stress. Support us in bringing joy this Christmas by gifting a monetary donation to our campaign and help us put a Christmas present under the tree for each child in receipt of a Christmas hamper from Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank.

Here are the ways you can support our Christmas campaign:

Text **XMASBOOK** to **70450** to donate £5.

Texts will cost the donation amount plus one standard network rate message

Or visit our Just Giving page at:

www.Justgiving.com/stratforduponavon-foodbank

Our bank details are as follows:

Account name: Stratford upon Avon Foodbank

Sort Code: 40-43-19

Account number: 92142538

Thank you for your continued and dedicated support.

Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank.

Harvest this year



Sunday Services at 9.30am

3rd November	Holy Communion	Peter Horrocks
	Covenant Service, followed by Church Lunch	
10th November	Act of Remembrance	Peter Horrocks
17th November	Morning Service	Peter Horrocks
1st December	Holy Communion	Peter Horrocks
	1st Sunday in Advent	

F&F Rota November

Please report any problems with the buildings in November to:

Ashley Pettifer on 01789 293578

or

Ann Jones on 01789 266177 / 07580 557163

Flower Rota

3rd November	Phil Sweet
17th November	Margaret Simpson
1st December	Jill & Rob Fradley

Link

Because of the way our Sunday services are now structured, the editors have decided that the physical copies of Link magazine will be available on the 1st Sunday of each month rather than the last Sunday of the month. The electronic version may well be available before then. When there are 5 Sundays in the month the Link will be available on that 5th Sunday.

The December / January edition of Link will be published on the 1st December.

The deadline for submission to the next edition is Monday 25th November.

Please send us your articles, pictures, humour etc.

Editors contact details:

Telephone: 01789 750971 Email: peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk

Jordan Travelogue

At the United Reformed Church
Rother Street
Saturday 23rd November
from 3pm to 5pm
Donations welcomed
for
'Embrace the Middle East'

