

**WELWYN GARDEN CITY
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2016

**Celebrating 2 years as
Welwyn Garden City URC**

Moving forward together as People of the Way.

People of the way

This was the theme for the URC's General Assembly this year at Southport. It was also the launch pad for the planned resources being produced by the group looking at missional discipleship to be called 'Walking the way of Jesus today'.

I wonder what this means for us?

Jesus said 'I am the way, the truth and the life...' and this may well have been the statement that named early followers of Jesus 'People of the way'. Followers of Jesus: those people who try to live their lives in relationship with Jesus and according to his love, principles and values.

When we look at Jesus, what do we see?

A life of love and self sacrifice, someone with a heart for the poor and the marginalized, a person willing to step outside cultural norms – even willing to make himself ritually unclean in his engagement with those considered to be 'unclean'.

He was a person of deep compassion who would touch a leper to heal them, restore sight to the blind, release people from the 'demons' holding them prisoner, restore a dead son, alive, to his widowed mother.

He would not hold back from difficult conversations. He did not worry what people thought about him. He spent a great deal of time alone with his Father and always obeyed his Father's will.

He taught his disciples and sent them out as apprentices to do as they had seen him doing. All that is just the tip of an iceberg!

So how do we discern who Jesus wants us to be as a church today and the first steps we can take to be more like him?

As he began each day with prayer and emphasised the importance of prayer to his disciples this is the only place for us to begin.

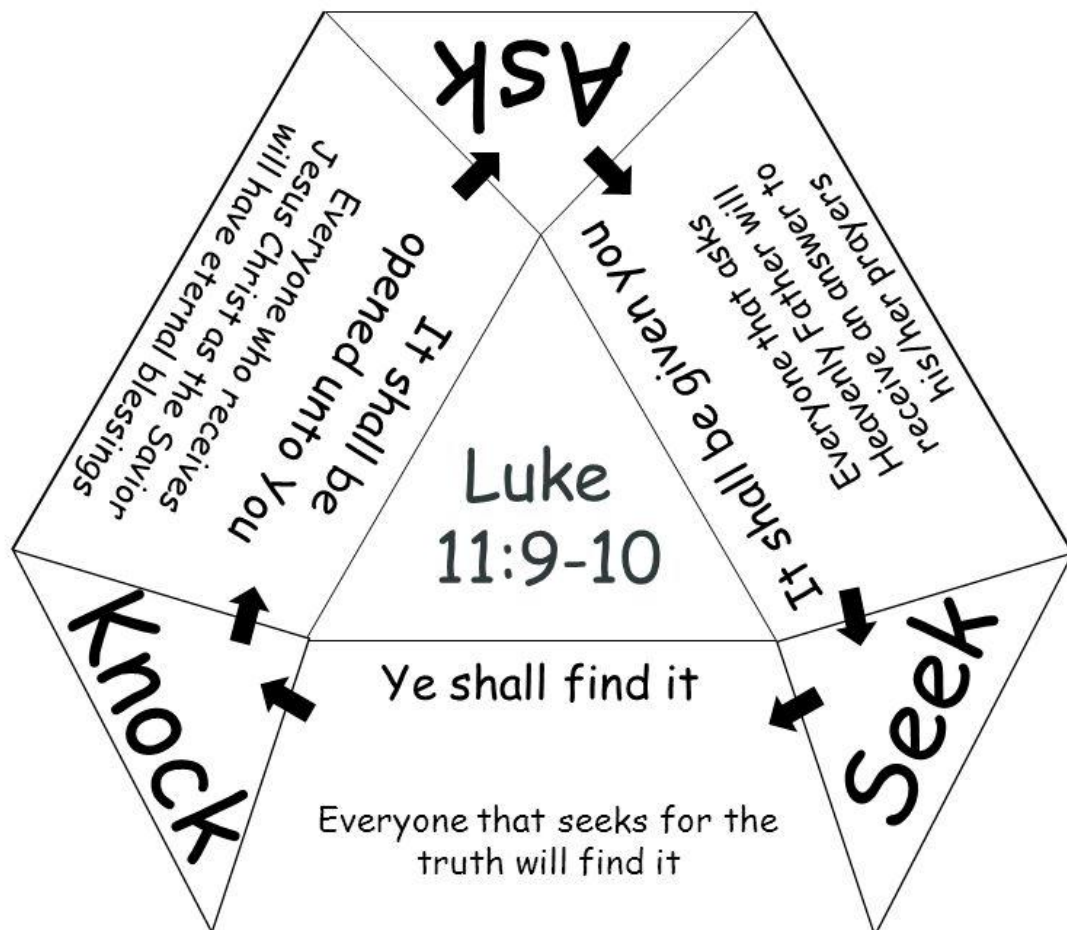
So as we approach a time of reflection we will look for ways to pray together, (please see dates later in the magazine and put a time in your diary to come and join in), we can share our insights and dare to discern what our future might look like. There are so many possibilities and so many things that are working well the time is right to seek Gods guidance as to what is important to develop and even what it might be important to let go of if it has run its course.

We can do this in faith and trust. Jesus said (Matthew 7:7) “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.”

And as they say ‘The family who pray together, stays together!’

Every blessing

Jane



Secretary's Notes

Our course Embracing Eldership at Westminster College was a refreshing, re-energizing, and uplifting experience. A weekend spent with thirtysix elders from many different parts of the UK. We soon became aware that most of us are experiencing the same challenges as Elders in our churches.

Our tutors led workshops over the weekend relating to the common concerns we had flagged up at our welcome meeting on Friday evening. Their delivery, understanding, knowledge and experience coupled with their encouragement for us all to share with each other was invaluable.

The opportunity to share in worship for evening and morning prayers and share Communion together on Sunday morning was spiritually uplifting. My anxiety and concern that I may find myself out of my depth among so many elders who were possibly more knowledgeable and experienced than little me was soon dispelled.

Jean and I have come back with some useful ideas and strategies to help us in our role as serving elders. We pray with faith and trust that God will guide and support us as we carry out his work in our church. At all times remembering that we are not alone God is always with us.

I will be strongly recommending that other Elders take the opportunity to attend this course which is being held again in the coming year.

Secretary's Soap Box

June and July have been busy months in the life of our church.

Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations

Thank you to Christine for all her hard work which enabled the Churches Together joint venture on Howardsgate be such a wonderful

celebration of our Queen's 90th Birthday while offering fellowship to the community.

Allison's craft ideas, as usual, were so well organized and prepared making them a huge hit with the children. Thank you Allison and thanks to everyone who came along to help the children on the day.

Heartland Day

Our first group day was enjoyable and most Churches were represented. Around 70 people enjoyed worship together, a variety of activities, and the opportunity to socialize and get to know one another. Thanks to Cherylle and Jean for their part in organizing the event and to Ade for putting together the photographs for us.

I would strongly recommend you try to attend the next one as it was fun.

Upside Down Sunday and family BBQ

Thank you Anthony and Gill for organizing the Songs of Praise which sadly some of us missed as we were ensuring the BBQ food was ready on time.

To my helpers in the kitchen and my Chefs in the garden thank you all for helping to make the day a success in spite of the rain.

To Karen and Paul McAlister for the gift of a gas BBQ which will enable us to have BBQ's at any time with groups who are meeting in church.

Not least a big thank you to everyone who brought along salads and such a mouthwatering variety of desserts and cakes.

Thank you also to everyone who attended and donated so generously. A total of £70.57 was collected which helped to cover most of our expenses leaving a claim of only £50.78 from Church funds.

Up and Coming Events

National Prayer Weekend & Harvest Weekend- 23-25 Sept

Decorating the church.

On Friday 23rd September I will be looking for volunteers to come along at 10am to help decorate the church for the Harvest Celebrations. Please come along and join in bringing your harvest gifts to put on display along with foliage, berries and your own pair of willing hands. You do not have to be an expert flower arranger as there are many tasks to fulfil in making the church look festive for this special weekend.

Please don't be shy.

Harvest Supper and Barn Dance - Sat 24 Sept 2016

Please see the poster in the magazine for more details.

I will once more be looking for help to prepare meats for a cold evening buffet, supplemented by donated salads and desserts. If you can help with cooking and slicing meats, or donating any of the above please let me know.

I will also need help with setting up, serving and general help in the kitchen before and after our meal.

I am away from 29th August until the 13th September so please let me know of any help you can offer before I go.

Christmas Fayre Sat 26 Nov

This is the church's major fundraising event of the year - with proceeds being split equally between Isabel Hospice and our own Building Fund - let's make this the best one yet!

The balloon Entertainer has already been booked

I know that this seems a long way off but could you please be thinking over the summer months how you could help:

Buying/ collecting small items as prizes and gifts

Perhaps you would like to run one of the usual stalls/activities or you may have a new idea of your own which you would like to include in this year's fayre.

Could you please let me know as soon as possible how you would like to be involved.

Please be aware if you plan to run a stall you will need to put your appeal for items etc. in the next issue of the magazine.

October November magazine deadline 21st September.

NB Stall holders are responsible for :-

- Advertising for items for their stall.
- Setting up their stall
- Staffing their stall
- Providing their own float
- Clearing away at the close of the day and disposing of unsold items when necessary.

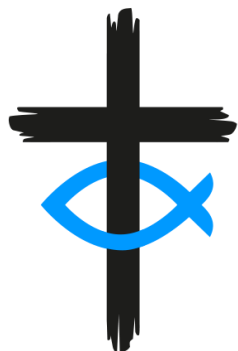
I will be happy to look after catering on the day but would welcome volunteers to help.

I think this covers everything for the moment and I look forward to being swamped by your responses to my various requests. Enjoy your summer break and come back refreshed and ready to take part in our busy autumn schedule.

Lastly, please save the TARGET STAMPS from the WH Times to go towards gifts and prizes

In my prayers

Joyce



We are delighted to present the refreshed URC logo to you. It will be in use from today – 1 June – on all new URC materials. For the past six months, the URC's design team has been working to make the denomination's visual identity more positive, striking and adaptable. The previous logo was composed of 14 different elements

and the typography was similarly intricate. The brief was to take the essence of the existing logo and to simplify it. Lead designer Chris Andrews said: 'There was a real need to take the logo, pare it back, make it simpler and more functional. 'We now have something much more contemporary. We're using a brighter, sharper colour than before, and the rough, loose edges of the cross give a new feeling of energy. We wanted to reflect a church that is vibrant and dynamic.'

**We will not need to change our noticeboards etc*

Praying for our future



Come along to one of our prayer dates to pray together about our vision and our future.

Prayer breakfast Saturday 6th August in church

8.30 for breakfast

9 – 9.45 prayers

Tuesday 9th August 12.30 – 2pm for lunch Lower Hall

Friday 19th August 10-11.30am Quiet Room

Thursday 25th August 7.30 – 8.30pm Quiet Room

Why, How and Where do I Pray?

Faced with the challenge of writing about prayer for this edition of the magazine made me anxious. What can I say? How do I write about prayer? Researching prayer on the internet, reading what others have written in previous magazine issues left me feeling even more inadequate for the task I had been asked to fulfil.

Can you guess what I did!!

I turned to God my Father and asked him in prayer for his guidance and help as I often do when faced with problems and challenges outside my own capabilities or comfort zone.

I feel he has guided me to share from my own experience why, how and where I pray.

Why do I pray

I believe prayer should be a part of our everyday lives and not the desperate call for help when our backs are against the wall. I believe we should give thanks to God every day for our world and the blessings we receive. I also believe that God will listen to anyone who prays in faith. Qualifications are not a requirement as we are all God's children and he loves each and every one of us for who we are. My faith gives me the confidence to trust that he will answer my prayers, perhaps not always with the answer of my choice or the speed I would like. I have learned to be patient, continue to pray, and never to lose faith or give up.

How do I pray

My prayers are mostly thoughts in my head but I do pray out loud when I am at Bible Study where I feel comfortable among friends.

Where do I pray

I tend to pray in the morning and at night by a window with my eyes lifted to the sky where I find comfort in the knowledge that somewhere out there in the vast universe God my Father is listening. Throughout the day there can be many little prayer conversations, perhaps only a sentence long, asking for his

guidance, his comfort, his support or thanking him for helping me and being with me in various situations.

I do not believe there is a right or a wrong place or way to pray as long as our prayers are from the heart.

How would I like to improve.

I am in awe of those who can express themselves so beautifully in prayer, straight from the heart, without a script, out loud in group situations and also with individuals in need of prayer. I am sure this is a confidence which grows from experience but perhaps it is an area where some training could prove useful. There are times when we find ourselves alone with individuals who are in need of prayer.

All the above focuses on my personal thoughts and my own personal approach to prayer but I am also a great believer in the power of Collective Prayer.

During August we are holding Collective Prayer Sessions asking God for his guidance. We will be focusing on our Church, our vision for the future, (including the building project) our mission and growth.

I hope and pray that you will make a conscientious effort to attend at least one of this summers' prayer sessions listed below.

Saturday 6th August Prayer Breakfast

8.30 Breakfast 9-9.45 Prayers

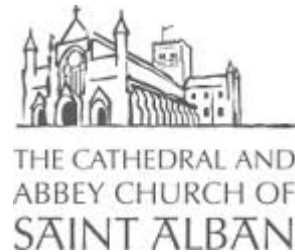
Tuesday 9th August Prayers 10-12noon

Friday 19th August Prayers in the Quiet Room 10.30-11.30

Thursday 25th August Prayers in the Quiet Room 7.30- 9pm

Joyce

You are invited to attend a
Free Church Service in the
Lady Chapel on the dates Mentioned below:



Wednesday 3rd. August 2016 at 11a.m. Preacher: Reverend Fr. Brian Reynolds, Catholic Ecumenical Chaplain, St Albans Cathedral. • The service is followed by a Fellowship Lunch

Wednesday 7th. September 2016 at 11a.m. Preacher: Reverend Richard Lowson. Methodist Minister in The West Herts. and Border Circuit • The service is followed by a Fellowship Lunch

Special Activities:

‘Making the Bible Make Sense’ Tutor: The Very Reverend Dr. Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans. Wednesday 27th. July 2016 from 7-30 – 9-30pm. Cost £6. Book at 01727 890205. Email: studycentre@stalbanscathedral.org

Free Family Discovery Mornings

4th. August Paddington Bear.

11th. August Winnie the Pooh.

18th. August Peter Rabbit.

25th. August Charlie the Chocolate Factory

Suitable for ages 3-11. Drop in anytime between 10am and 12-30pm. But we advise before 11.30am. Children must be accompanied by a parent or carer. Free, donation gratefully accepted.

Other Services – Please view the Cathedral Website :

www.stalbanscathedral.org.

EMBRACING ELDERSHIP

On the 1st of July Joyce and I attended a very interesting course at Westminster College in Cambridge. The title of the course was 'Embracing Eldership' and we spent the whole of the weekend in the company of 34 other elders and 4 extremely good leaders. We felt very privileged to be representing Welwyn Garden City United Reformed Church at such an amazing weekend.

Mornings started at 8.00am with a short service in the chapel, followed by breakfast together before we settled down to the various discussions. These covered a wide variety of problems faced by elders and we were led through the maze of subjects by the leaders, one of whom was Neil Thorogood. Our last session of the evening was timed from 7.30 to 9.00, when we closed the day with another short service in the chapel.

The highlight for Joyce was the chance to catch up with Neil and find out about his family life. (See the picture of Joyce with Neil). The highlight for me was watching Joyce just sit back and enjoy the whole experience without having



It was good to talk with elders from a variety of churches. Some came from Newcastle, North and South Sheilds and the Midlands, while others were much closer to home.

Our final and most moving experience was the opportunity to share communion at midday on the Sunday, with a group of elders from such diverse churches, all with one focus, the love of God.

Joyce and I felt that we gained a lot of useful information which we will hopefully be able to put some of the ideas into practice and possibly persuade other members of our eldership to attend the course next year.

Jean Hughes

Mission Co-ordinator Update

I have been almost a year (Sept 1)! It seems that time really does fly when you are having fun. Thank you to everyone for helping me to feel very much part of the family.

Much of my time has been spent developing relationships with members, groups and users of building and it has been good to see people start to link between them, including coming into church.

Tuesday Coffee Morning - 10am - 12noon continues to go every well with between 30-40 people every week, including the 6-10 regular helpers. The interaction, conversations and relationships are growing stronger and it is a privilege to support people through the ups and downs of their lives. The group from HCC Adult Day Services are very settled with us and sort themselves out with colouring and dominoes, and more recently watering the plant pots! We still have a monthly Curling session from one of their other groups where members of the coffee morning can join in. Our communal 'Rag Rug' is coming on nicely and we are planning to make other good quality crafts to support a stall at the Christmas Fayre.

Anyone is welcome to join us.

PLEASE NOTE - NO Coffee Morning on 2 Aug and 30 Aug

Tuesday Lunchtime Group - 12.30-2pm will pick up with 'The Story' in Sept but during August is offering 'Exploring Faith' - a time where people can discuss their questions about God and faith. It has been great that we have had a few people stay on from the Coffee Morning.

Prayer and Pastoral Support. More people are presenting themselves for support and prayer, and I shall be looking at how we can develop this ministry opportunity. Do let me know if this is something you are interested in.

Town Centre / External Partnerships. We have a key role to play due to our town centre location for events, mission activities and partnership opportunities. Please pray about how we can effectively do this.

Building Development Project I shall be working with the Project Group over the next few months to develop a specification for the building. We are currently undertaking a questionnaire for users of the building to give their feedback - please add your comments and ideas.

Worship Team This has been an added bonus to my job due to the changes in Jane's commitments. I have thoroughly enjoyed stepping into this new area of ministry and hope that you have been blessed by my contribution.

And finally, please look out for more detail about our involvement in the **National Prayer Weekend 23-25 Sept.** This is a time when we can pray alongside churches from across the nation for our church, our community and our country.

Every blessing

Christine Novelli



On a Saturday morning in July we hosted a Butterfly morning in the church garden to coincide with the national Big Butterfly Count. We got quite anxious in the weeks leading up to the event when hardly any

butterflies were around even as the weather warmed up. And huge thanks to Alan and Helen for doing their best to ensure wild and cultivated flowers and suitable foliage - and even a feeding station with fresh fruit and saucers of sugar solution. However, on the day we were graced with a glorious warm morning and some of our families saw eight large whites (or cabbage whites) altogether in the 15 minutes allotted for counting. We also saw a little Holly Blue flit by, and were excited about a beautiful Comma butterfly resting in the fruit cages. He had interesting shaped wings. And Wendy was able to bring along a brown and orange Gatekeeper with a broken wing she had found on the patio at home the previous day (we suspect Max the cat!). The Gatekeeper obligingly opened his wings to show the pattern when his tank (old fishtank) was put in the sunshine.



We welcomed 8 families to the event, mainly from our Breakfast church, plus another Mum and baby who came with their friends and already knew us a bit from Bumps and Babies.

Everyone really enjoyed the garden, using the tables in the shade of the hedge and some ride-on toys on the patio. The youngsters also produced some beautiful butterfly pictures, cards and painted suncatchers to take home. And as we coincided with the Welwyn Harmony choir's summer fayre, we had a couple of teen girls outside playing volleyball some of the time too, who also joined in the count. And some of our families enjoyed a visit to their stalls.

Many thanks, *Wendy Lidgate Webb*

CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

Belated birthday greetings go to Bertie E. who celebrated his 90th birthday at the end of July. We hope you enjoyed your special day, Bertie.

We have a number of friends celebrating their birthdays in August, starting with Mary S on 3rd, then two of our friends from the Woodhall Lane members, Hilda J who will be 94 on 9th and Edie W who will be 91 on 10th. Then Joyce N. on 15th, and last but not least, Pauline F. and John M. both on 30th. Among our younger friends, Erin F. will be 16 on 2nd, Lucas H. will be 12 on 16th and Lauren D. who will be celebrating her 18th birthday on 21st. Only two birthdays (that we know about!) in September, Ted C. on 24th and Ice B. on 28th. We send birthday greetings to all these friends and hope that they enjoy their special days when they arrive.

We send congratulations to Mary & John Sartin on becoming grandparents for the first time on July 3rd, when their son, David and his wife, Hannah, celebrated the birth of Nathan John. Jane Sartin now becomes Aunty Jane! Congratulations to you all.

Pauline Flynn has now moved to Hastings to be near her daughter, Monique and grandson, Charlie and is gradually getting used to living in a flat instead of a bungalow. We hope you are enjoying the beach and the fresh sea air, Pauline.

We were sorry to hear that Melvyn Deans had recently suffered a slight stroke but pleased to hear that he is back enjoying his trainspotting again already. We send our heartfelt sympathy and prayers to Pauline Magee on the death of her husband, David, in early July.

We are asked to pray especially for Margaret Ansell who is very poorly in hospital in Milton Keynes and for Laura Fitzgerald who is undergoing a long course of treatment for aggressive breast cancer. We pray for God's blessing on both Margaret and Laura.

Please also remember those mentioned in our Interessions book and add any names or situations that you would like included.

Let's continue to support all those in our church family, especially in times of need through our Sunday fellowship and during the week, as our prayers and concern are greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your support

Ann Meers, on behalf of our Pastoral Team.

An Appreciation

Recently a friend of mine remarked "What an active Church yours is" as she handed back a borrowed copy of our magazine. We would all agree with that. Personally I appreciate the energy and commitment of those who organise, and freely spend their time in a multitude of activities both in and around our buildings.

We know that decisions are made through the Elders and Church meetings, and that Secretary Joyce produces a masterplan. But who works behind the scenes, collecting, editing, illustrating (often with her own artwork) and finally printing, not only weekly service sheets, but an informative and interesting Church magazine?

It is of course, Allison Giles.

So thank you, Allison, for all that you do for us!

Margaret Brisby

Many thanks Margaret, I am blushing as I print this!!

Thursday Club

We have enjoyed a Birthday Party to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday, Cream Tea at Van Hague's Garden Centre and our last meeting before our August break enjoying tea and cakes in Ann Meers garden.



We will not be meeting again until Thursday 22nd September but I will get in touch to remind you all nearer the time.

Looking forward to more fun and laughter in the Autumn.

Joyce

Newly-inducted Moderator of the United Reformed Church Alan Yates began his term of office urging the Church to take up the challenges of a renewed focus on discipleship.

Taking an informal style he offered to Assembly some of his hopes and fears for the United Reformed Church.

Mr Yates said that the next four days would be a journey in which – through Bible study worship, social gatherings and business – we could sharpen our understanding of what it means to be people of the way.

He linked the challenges that the United Reformed Church faces with the personal challenge he took up to cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats. Mr Yates emphasised the importance of overcoming fear and lack of confidence when travelling into the unknown, of taking each day as it comes, preparing well, and enlisting the support of others.

Preparing for the journey

He committed to cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats, covering about 1,000 miles in 12 days, despite never having cycled as much as 100 miles in a single day before. 'I really did not have the confidence I could do it,' he said. 'I am a risk-averse person – if I think I might fail, I often won't start.'

Long distance cycling is a challenge for the mind as much as the body, he said: 'You have to deal with the Gremlin on the shoulder that says "too old, too cold, too wet... Give up before you hurt yourself." He managed the journey by taking each day as it came, concentrating on the next footstep, the next pedal stroke.'

Turning to the challenges facing the United Reformed Church he invited the Assembly to take up the recently-renewed focus on discipleship wholeheartedly. 'We have started on a new course,' he said, 'a new direction to our journey.'

Mr Yates noted that the URC's membership is about 40% smaller today than it was a decade ago and could easily be another 40 to 50% smaller in another decade.

'That's not to say that there are no good things happening. In my time as Moderator-elect I have met wonderful people and seen wonderful things. I see what we are doing and some of it brings tears to my eyes and joy to my heart.'

Walking the way

He introduced the URC's focus on missional discipleship, Walking the Way, as a new course that will drive the church to something different.

Mr Yates said that the URC will need to accept that it is travelling into the unknown: we need to be clear, not panicking, taking each day as it comes, praying and preparing, and supporting one another,' he said.

He concluded: 'Walking the way is our call to arms. We need to set off with courage and determination, even though we don't know exactly where and how and when we will get there, taking one step, one pedal stroke, at a time.'

- See more at: <http://www.urc.org.uk/latest-news/2081-moderator-s-address-walking-the-way.html#sthash.fC5w9Pav.dpuf>



General Assembly Highlights – Jane Weedon

It was good to be part of the 350 people gathered in Southport this year for the URC's General Assembly. Here are a few highlights:

Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK

addressed General Assembly, focussing on refugees and the Middle East. He said: 'The infant Christ and the holy family were refugees; we must be able to look for the face of Christ in every refugee.' The talk ended with a call to advocate justice, 'not just for ourselves but for everyone made in the image of God'. The address was very well received by Assembly.

The talk began by Bishop Angaelos explaining that he had addressed Methodist

Conference earlier in the week and had travelled to Southport from the Anglican Synod in York. He described his visit to the URC Assembly as his 'ecumenical grand slam', adding: 'Together, whatever our differences, we are the Church. There is only one body of Christ.'

The United Reformed Church joined the **Churches' Mutual Credit Union** (CMCU) on Saturday, enabling ministers, elders and congregations to invest savings that will then fund affordable loans to people who might otherwise have had to use payday lenders. General Assembly enthusiastically agreed to the resolution, commending the three years of work that made it possible. Immediately after the debate, Mr John Ellis, URC Treasurer, and the Venerable Antony MacRow-Wood, the President of the CMCU, started signing up the first CMCU members from the URC. Mr Ellis was 'delighted' by Assembly's support and urged local churches to 'spread the word, join this movement and do something practical [for] economic justice.'

This is a chance to point to the values of the kingdom of God.'

www.cmcu.org.uk

At Saturday lunchtime, the United Reformed Church General Assembly celebrated the work of the four winning initiatives commended in its **Community Project Awards scheme**, which is sponsored by the church insurer, Congregational & General. Assembly warmly applauded the finalists after

watching an upbeat video about the work of each project.

The overall winner is Families Matter, based at Cornerstone URC in Hythe, Hampshire. The project provides a range of practical support for families, including parenting classes. Representatives of Families Matter were presented with a wall plaque and a cheque for £4,000.

The Revd David Grosch-Miller, immediate-past Moderator of the URC's

General Assembly and one of the award judges, said that he was 'absolutely delighted' at the 'impressive, life-giving projects' from local URC congregations. Visit <http://youtube/W84aTZkKqAY> to watch a video about the winning projects.

Same-sex marriage vote

It has long been clear that the denomination cannot express a single view on the issue of same-sex marriage; on Saturday afternoon, when Assembly considered the issue again, it voted to empower its local churches – if they so wish – to conduct and register marriages for same-sex couples. This means that the URC is now the largest UK denomination to freely permit same-sex couples to marry in its churches. A two-thirds majority was needed to allow the proposal to be confirmed as the denomination's final decision – Assembly voted in favour of the resolution by 240 votes to 21 votes. United Reformed churches in England and Wales wishing to register their buildings for the marriage of same-sex couples are now able to start that process immediately. (In Scotland the legal framework is rather different, but the effects of the Church's decision will be broadly similar.)

Speaking about the vote, the Revd John Proctor, General Secretary of the URC said: 'Today the URC has made an important decision – at which some will rejoice and with which others will be uncomfortable ... this has been a sensitive issue for many in our churches. It has been

important to take our time over the decision process, and to listen as carefully as we can to one another along the way.’ More at <http://bit.ly/sslegal>

The Revd Tracey Lewis, convenor of the mission committee, said **that following the vote to leave the EU** we were in ‘days of uncertainty and change ... as we seek the good news ... and challenges of the kingdom of God.’

The mission team affirmed the URC’s commitment to a diverse and multicultural society, to security for EU and other global citizens, to partnership with European churches, to challenge racism, reconciliation and the need to engage with global justice. Assembly members discussed:

- What are your experiences and thoughts after the EU Referendum vote? and
- What will we say together, politically, as the URC?

A facilitation group brought a resolution, which was passed overwhelmingly. The full text is available online from <http://bit.ly/gabrexit>

Environmental Policy A resolution was passed urging churches to decrease their carbon footprint year on year. It is a statement of intent encouraging churches to take up practical steps, and give attention to prayer, Bible teaching and reflection in caring for God’s creation.

<http://www.urch.org.uk/latest-news/2110-the-urch-adopts-new-environmental-policy.html>

The vote on Israel and Palestine (written by Sal Bateman)

With three slightly different amendments being proposed at GA, including ours, the initial discussion determined which resolution was to be chosen for discussion. It was clear from the outset that any mention of boycott, sanctions or divestment (BDS) was unacceptable at this time for GA. Even when the Wessex version of the proposal was chosen for

discussion there was considerable disagreement on content and whether a motion could be approved even if a facilitation group was directed to work on a revision. In the end GA did task a facilitation group with the work (on part 3 of the Wessex resolution only) and the revised resolution below was adopted by GA.

GA instructs the Mission Committee to explore and develop further our existing work around the issues of the Israel/Palestine situation with indigenous churches, interfaith and ecumenical partners and public authorities, including:

- dialogue and action;
- peacebuilding;
- justice and security for all;

in order to enable Synods, local churches and individuals to become more aware and to respond with informed prayer, grace and solidarity.

This mandate now provides individuals, churches and Synods the opportunity to develop their own strategies to demonstrate solidarity with Palestine whilst recognising the nuances of an extremely sensitive situation that has no easy resolution.

Assembly was treated to a vibrant Communion service on Sunday, including uplifting hymns, choral singing, a youth group drama, a video presentation from children and a rousing sermon from the Revd Kevin Watson, Moderator of General Assembly. Making plentiful use of images, video and songs, Mr Watson's sermon encouraged the Church to 'rediscover the way of resurrection.'

URC Youth delivered a drama based on Matthew 9:9-13 that elicited many laughs; in their version, Jesus brags about his food-based miracles, and the disciples were sick of eating bread and fish – they ate Chinese food instead. The drama ended with a series of statements and a call to

let Jesus into our lives, 'all right?' The Assembly enthusiastically replied: 'All right!'

Rev'd Kevin Watson included the Beatles song Ferry cross the Mersey in his sermon and by an amazing coincidence that morning the ferry was involved in a collision that caused her to take on water and 68 passengers needed to be rescued. In his closing remarks Rev'd John Proctor, general Secretary, quipped that he had already received an excited request from a church who had been trying to get permission to develop their building without success for many years. Their invitation was to ask Kevin to come and preach at their Anniversary service. The story went that they had been encouraged by the Synod to ensure their insurance is up to date and the whole church were looking forward to the outcome of his visit!

Cooks Corner

Blackberry Crumble Cake



Ingredients

- 120 g butter, plus extra for greasing
- 120 g sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 120 g self raising flour

- 200 g blackberries

For the crumble topping

- 100 g flour
- 50 g butter, diced
- 50 g sugar

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180C/fan 160C/gas 4. Grease and line a 500g loaf tin.
2. Place the butter in a mixing bowl. Add in the sugar and beat until light and fluffy.
3. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating in well with each addition.
4. Fold in 120g self raising flour.
5. Spoon the mixture into the loaf tin, spreading to the edges. Top with the blackberries.
6. Place 100g plain flour in a bowl. Add the butter and rub with your fingertips until the butter is absorbed and the mixture resembles crumbs. Mix in the sugar.
7. Sprinkle the mixture over the blackberries.
8. Bake for 45-50 minutes until golden. Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly before turning out.

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