



# *the* magazine



**Park** united reformed church  
... praying for Ukraine

**April 2022**

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The views expressed in this magazine are those of the individual contributors, and do not necessarily represent the views of Park United Reformed Church, nor those of the editor.

## **The Minister's Letter**

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Dear Family,

How has the season of Lent been for you this year? For me, this season has been really faith enriching, especially attending the Lent Bible Studies.

Thank you to all who attend the Lent Bible studies this year. It has been a real delight to engage with the Word of God in fellowship with one another.

We have quite a few celebrations to look forward to this year and one of the most important is Easter, is anyone else 'egg-cited'? Easter Eggs have been on sale since December, so we can't be the only ones looking forward to celebrating...

At the time of writing, many of us are engaging the world with new hope as we prepare and look forward to Easter Sunday. Yet, on the other side of the world, war rages in Ukraine and beyond as vulnerable peoples flee air raids, famine and untold horrors.

What are we celebrating? Jesus!

Jesus, defeating death and resurrecting after three days buried in a tomb. Restoring our relationship with God and filling us with hope!

One of my favourite songs is by Phil Wickham called Living Hope. It's based on 1 Peter 1:3.

Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope...

This Easter, may our living hope be restored in situations beyond our control. Come, Lord Jesus, Our Friend and Saviour, We are in need again!

God's Every Blessing,



**Stephen & Tolu**

## Family News

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We rejoice with the Lancaster family as they celebrate the wonderful news that Frances is expecting twins. We pray for Frances and all expectant mothers we know of that they may keep fit and well.

We send our thoughts and prayers to all those who are suffering in any way in these times of challenge with the coronavirus. As numbers of infections increase, many are anxious. But we thank God that the infections do not seem to be severe and recovery is generally rapid.

We also remember all those in our family, friendship, and work circles and in our communities who may have friends or family in Ukraine, praying for God's wisdom, integrity and discernment to be fully involved in the situation, and for his courage, strength and hope to remain in their hearts.

Sadly we remember several family and friends of Park Church who have recently lost loved ones.

Janet and Alan Pritchard's have both lost family members; Suzy Weston's Mum, Pam, died recently; Stella Shimell's brother-in-law died suddenly; and recently one of the young deacons at Anderson Baptist church also died.

Terry Speake died peacefully on Friday night. He was the husband of Helen, nee Harvey, the daughter of Marjorie Harvey, a much loved member here at Park, some years ago.

There will be many people within our fellowship and community far and wide who will be grieving at this time, and we pray God will comfort them all and bring them some peace.

Eddie Knox, grandson of Alistair and Elizabeth, had an endoscopy on Friday, which showed he has multiple erosions of his oesophagus. The family are awaiting biopsy results.

We continue to pray for Chris Gayford who is reviewing further treatment.

Please keep Stephen, Tolu, and Stephen's mother, Mercy, in your prayers for her health, and pray too for the family as they navigate through diagnosing her change in health.

We continue to pray for all the children's and youth groups at Park, and give thanks for the many young people and leaders who meet here week by week.

We pray for all others known to us who are affected by ill health, or anxious times, or are receiving or recovering from treatment, remembering in particular Rose Byatt and her daughter Chris; Phebe Mann; Renne and Bert Ewen; Ruth Clark; James O'Neil; Linda Adkins; Steven Ballard; and Thelma Butler.

From Hungerford we pray for Fiona and her family and many others within their fellowship.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

**Carrie**

## **Collection for the People of Ukraine**

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A collection for the Disasters Emergency Committee was made at a recent church service for humanitarian aid for the people of Ukraine, and a sum of over £300 was raised.

The Disasters Emergency Committee website states that £100 provides emergency food for two families for one month, so our contribution will support six families for one month.

Thank you to all who contributed, for your generosity for such a deserving cause.

**Rod**

## Letters

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Dear Park Friends

We would like to thank you for your very kind messages, prayers and lovely flowers received on the sad loss of Janet's sister-in-law Rosemary Gegg and the very unexpected death of Alan's nephew, Mark Pritchard, in Wales.

We are glad to be part of such a loving and caring Church Family at Park.

With love to you all.

**Janet and Alan Pritchard**

### *Amendment to my Annual Report*

Dear all, at the January Church Meeting I delivered my Annual report for both 2020 and 2021. In that report I had said that Rod King and Zie Bhebhe had stepped down from Elders. I had omitted to mention that Bob Dewing stepped down at the end of 2021 as well.

Bob had served as a faithful Elder for many years. In total Bob had served as an Elder in the URC for 47 years, both in his previous Church and 32 years at Park. This is an amazing service. Bob has diligently served our fellowship, supporting both the Elders Meeting and all of his pastoral flock.

Bob also served as our Safeguarding officer for 11 years helping to complete many CRB and DBS checks and advising us for our Safeguarding procedures. Bob had had to step down from this post, 18 months ago, to spend more time as Andrea's full time carer and his own health issues.

I want to thank Bob for all his hard work and to offer my apologies for not including this in my original report.

God Bless

**Roger**

## **We Pray, We Speak Out, and We Help...**

The Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) has condemned the Russian Federation's attack on Ukraine as a "breach of international law and a violation of human rights", as well as expressing its support for all suffering because of the conflict.

The statement, issued on March 18, comes from the communion of 94 Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed and United churches from more than thirty countries in Europe and South America, including member churches in Ukraine and Russia, representing about 50 million people, for whom United Reformed Church General Secretary, the Rev Dr John P Bradbury, serves as co-President.

The CPEC statement said: "We stand together with all people suffering unbearable hardship in Ukraine. We do so in a threefold way: we pray, we speak out, and we help.

"Together, **we pray**, lament and lift up the people of Ukraine to the God of peace and justice. In prayer, we are able to articulate the horror and dread we feel as our continent is again torn apart by war.

"**We speak out** in condemnation of the breach of international law by Russia's president Putin as we stand in solidarity with all sisters and brothers who work for peace and reconciliation.

"**We help** by giving according to our means to support all who suffer in terms of finance, goods, logistics and assistance to integrate in their new communities. We offer hospitality to those fleeing the atrocities of the war, as church communities and individuals."

"As churches, we are called to speak out against injustice and suffering and to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak (Proverbs 31:8). In the light of our responsibility before God, our fellow humans and creation, CPCE condemns the Russian Federation's unilateral attack on the sovereign state of Ukraine as a breach of international law and a violation of human rights."

**URC website**

## **Coming Soon: Christian Aid Week Appeal 2022**

Yes, I know that there are so many appeals for your money these days. Also, money for most people is getting tighter with prices of the basic things that you need increasing all of the time. However; what is clear is that those in the much poorer parts of the world are having an even tougher time.

Particularly as climate change is having an immediate impact on the lives of ordinary families. Those in the poorest parts of the world have done the least to cause climate change yet they are the people most affected in their daily lives.



Even those resourceful people, especially the women who are usually the back bone of their communities now need some additional help. What they need is a hand up not a hand out. With your financial help Christian Aid has the expertise and local knowledge that will enable them to grow their crops and feed their families.

It all sounds so simple, but charities like Christian Aid have had a difficult time raising sufficient money to give the assistance needed to these desperate people.

In this country we are often critical of large families in poor countries, but children are especially important in countries where there is no social security to provide support during old age. In these circumstances it is clearly understood that the younger generation have a responsibility to look after the older members of the community. Also, because mortality amongst young people is high there is an added incentive to ensure that family sizes are large.

The dates of Christian Aid Week this year are from 15th to 22nd May. There will be more information at the Sunday service on May 15th together with the usual envelopes for your donations that can be put into the offertory boxes. You are encouraged to include Gift Aid if you pay income tax as this will add a further 25p to every pound you give at no cost to yourself.



Christian Aid has been working among the poorest people of the world for many years. They are the main charity representing local churches and Christians up and down the country. They are there to offer Christian love to our brothers and sisters in their greatest need on our behalf.

I urge you to support this Christian Aid Week appeal if you can. If you have any questions please email me or ask me if you see me.

**Chris Gayford**

## **The Return of Toddlers!**

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It is with great joy that I can announce the return of TODDLERS on Monday the 25th April 2022.

We will be starting from 9:15 - 11:15 during term time. We provide tea and coffee, healthy snacks and free play.

You can sing along with children's songs and nursery rhymes. All this fun for a £2 donation for each session. Not forgetting, every 5 and 10 times that you attend, your child will get a surprise gift!

Please let me know if you can help in any of the following ways:

- making tea/coffee,
- playing with the children
- informal chats with parents.

Whether it is occasional or on a regular basis, your help would be much appreciated.

Please just contact me, Thank you.

**Judith Enang**

## **Last Chance for a Bargain!**

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After nearly 100 years of service, our Church Meeting has voted to retire our old pews.

However, we felt that in today's environmentally aware spirit of upcycling, recycling and repurposing, we would aim to make them available for many further years of service around the church, but in a more flexible and usable form.

So what were long, unwieldy, and very heavy, banks of six seats, have now been reduced to more manageable banks of two seats.

These have been installed on our entrance hall, with more, potentially, to be repurposed for future use in the church garden.

But now in a special, not to be repeated, bargain offer we do have a few spare benches which we are able to make available for the bargain price of £100.



Just let Roger or Rod know if you are interested, and we would be delighted to make you the proud possessor of a solid oak, unique part of Park Church history.

**Rod**

## **First Thoughts after the World has Changed...**

Occasionally there are moments when you see or hear something on the news, and you know that for good or ill, the world has changed. I remember one of those moments in 1989, when I first heard the news that the Berlin Wall was coming down. In much more sombre vein, September 11th, 2001 was another. Many of you will remember more such moments than I do.

A little over two weeks ago we lived through another of those moments, when we learned that Russia had launched a military invasion of Ukraine. Since then, we have watched scenes not seen in Europe since the end of World War 2: scenes I for one never expected to see in my lifetime...



We know the world has changed, but we have very little idea yet what that looks like. We have barely begun to understand what is going on and what it means for the future.

And as Christian people and churches, we have scarcely begun to reflect on these terrible events in terms of our faith or to discern what a Christian response looks like.

I hope that we can make a start on that long task of making theological sense of this horror and discerning how we are called to respond.

## **1. Paying attention**

Probably the very first thing we need to do is what I'm sure you have already been doing over the past couple of weeks: simply paying attention. Paying attention to the outrage, the horror, the pain and the suffering. And it's part of our moral responsibility to our neighbours, I think, to keep doing that: not to turn our eyes away even when it would be easier and more comfortable to do so; to pay attention and to go on paying attention.

## **2. Reactions and emotions**

Having done that, I think the next step that is necessary is to name and acknowledge our reactions and emotions. I think somewhere near the beginning of this process of reflecting, trying to make sense of what's happened and discern what we are called to be and to do, is to name the whole complex mix of feelings that this catastrophe provokes in us. Now I don't know what you are feeling: I can't see inside your heads. What I can do is share some of my own reactions, which I suspect may not be mine alone.

First: shock and bewilderment that this could be happening in Europe – that the peace and security forged in the wake of two world wars could disintegrate so quickly and easily. Then, horror at the terrible scenes unfolding on our TV screens and news feeds. Compassion for the people whose suffering we witness – people so much like us, living lives so much like ours.

Anger and outrage: I feel I almost have no language to speak of the flagrant, cynical cruelty and disregard for any kind of moral restraint shown by Vladimir Putin and those who serve him. Shame and (again) anger at the lukewarm hospitality shown by this country towards those fleeing the conflict – so far at least. Fear and anxiety about what it all might lead to: it is quite literally too close to home.

These are some of my feelings and reactions, some of which at least I'm guessing you will share. It is important to name them.

But they also invite critical – self-critical – scrutiny; some of them may call for a certain kind of repentance.

Why am I especially horrified that this is happening in Europe, especially outraged that it's people like me who are suffering in this way? We've seen plenty of this kind of suffering in other parts of the world: why is it a special shock when it happens to Europeans?

Or again: does my compassion have a certain detachment about it: am I distancing myself from the suffering and misery for fear of being overwhelmed by them? Is my compassion overshadowed by my fear and anxiety for myself and my nearest and dearest?

These are perfectly natural human feelings and reactions. But they might also disclose to me some of the limits of my own sympathy and solidarity with my fellow human creatures; they might teach me things about myself that are not entirely comfortable to learn.

### **3. Theological and ethical reflection**

Having named and begun to reflect on our feelings, we also need to begin to reflect theologically and ethically on this changed world. How do we understand these events in relation to the loving purposes of God disclosed in Jesus Christ? As Christian believers and followers of Jesus, where do we find good and evil in this situation; how do we discern right and wrong?

The Bible does not speak with one voice about war. Some texts command it, others call us to love our enemies. But among these diverse voices are passages like today's reading from Isaiah; passages which unfold a vision of God's good purpose for humankind and the world. In God's good future, there will be no need for military academies or anti-tank weapons, because God will rule in peace and justice, and war will be no more.

It's in the light of that vision that we should interpret all those diverse scriptural voices on armed conflict. In our present broken and sinful world, war may be a tragic inevitability, but it is no part of God's ultimate will or purpose.

In God's good future there will be no more war; but what about the here and now?

We cannot bring in God's good future, but we are called to live here and now in the light of it, in ways that witness to it. And some Christians argue this calls for radical non-violence. The call in our Gospel reading to love our neighbour as ourselves – and even to love our enemies, as Jesus says elsewhere – forbids us from taking up arms, even in the face of injustice, oppression and violence. For some, this goes to the very heart of Christian identity.

The theologian Stanley Hauerwas is well known for saying that Christians are 'people who would rather die than kill.'

This seems to have been a pretty widely held view during the Church's first couple of centuries, when Christians were a marginalised, persecuted group.

But then the Church's fortunes changed; and for some leading Christian thinkers of the time, this required what Paul Ramsey once called a 'change of tactics' in loving your neighbour. That's how Christian just war theory began.

The reasoning goes like this. If I am attacked by an aggressor who is threatening my life, they are still my neighbour whom I am called to love. So I shouldn't retaliate or defend myself, even if my life is in danger.

But suppose I see an aggressor threatening someone else's life? Love for that neighbour requires me to defend them, by force if need be. By extension, political leaders may be called to use force to defend their people, out of love and responsibility for them.

But if love of your neighbour is your reason for fighting, that should make a difference to the spirit in which you fight, and it places various restraints on when and how you go about it. War can only ever be a last resort. It's only justifiable if the good it will do is in proportion to the harm it causes. You don't target non-combatants. And you are still called to love your enemies, so there are some ways you must never treat them.

To put my cards on the table, I am a reluctant just war theorist. In the end I think that in a broken and sinful world, we find injustices and evils that just have to be resisted by force for love of their innocent victims.

In the light of all this, it hardly needs saying that Vladimir Putin's aggression cannot be justified by any credible Christian ethic. The view I've outlined suggests that Ukrainian Christians who take up arms against it may be acting consistently with their Christian faith.

It also suggests that other countries certainly have a responsibility to support the victims of aggression, but they need to be very careful how they do and don't get involved. For example, NATO members are almost certainly right not to start World War 3 by imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

#### **4. How should we respond?**

For some of you listening to this sermon, these questions might be very close to home – because you've been involved in the fighting or the humanitarian effort yourself, or you have family or friends caught up in the conflict.

Many of us, I'm guessing, find ourselves at more of a distance: watching the horrors unfold, and wondering how we can and should respond as Christians. So, I'll finish with a few very brief comments on what it might mean to be a community of Jesus' disciples in the face of these terrible events.

Perhaps the most important thing a Christian community does is to pray. In our prayers we not only appeal for God's help; we also place ourselves in solidarity with those who suffer, and we open ourselves up to the possibility of being the answer to our own prayers.

A Christian community is also called to witness. To use a well-known phrase, the Church is called to be a 'sign, instrument and foretaste' of God's coming peaceable kingdom. So part of our response to this specific crisis is just to be that kind of community: in every aspect of our life together, to recognize and practice 'the things that make for peace' (Luke 19:42).

Praying and living in this way should shape our attitudes (which matter, because they in turn shape our actions). This goes back to what I said earlier about reflecting critically on our own feelings and reactions.

For example: Putin's action is evil; we should name it as such and oppose it however we can. But there's also something dangerously comforting about having such a blatant evil available to condemn.

I can luxuriate in my moral outrage; and that makes it easy for me not to notice the ways I may be entangled in the very evils I condemn. Many of us burn Russian gas to heat our houses, and so inadvertently help finance the Russian military. And there's nothing at all we can do about it, until the UK manages to phase out Russian gas supplies.

So for sure we should speak out and act against evil; but our speaking and acting need to be tempered with humility and penitence for the ways we ourselves are inescapably entangled in the sin of the world.

## **Conclusion**

In the first part of J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, there is an oft-quoted exchange between the wizard Gandalf and Frodo the hobbit, after Gandalf has disclosed to Frodo the terrible truth about Frodo's enchanted Ring. (Remember that these lines were written not long after the Second World War by a man who had lived through the horrors of the First.)

'I wish it need not have happened in my time,' said Frodo.

'So do I,' said Gandalf, 'and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.'

May God give us, and those for whom we pray, the grace to live faithfully and well in the times that are given to us. Amen.

**Rev Dr Neil Messer** from the URC Website



		
<b>AS WE CELEBRATE EASTER 2022</b>		
<b>JOIN US</b>		
APRIL <b>3</b>	<b>SUNDAY</b> Lent Bible Study <i>Session 5</i>	<b>9:15</b> AM
APRIL <b>3</b>	<b>SUNDAY</b> <i>Communion Service</i>	<b>10:30</b> AM
APRIL <b>3</b>	 <b>SUNDAY</b>	<b>3:00</b> PM
APRIL <b>4</b>	<b>MONDAY</b> Lent Bible Study <i>Session 5</i>	<b>7:30</b> PM
APRIL <b>10</b>	<b>PALM SUNDAY</b> Morning Service	<b>10:30</b> AM
APRIL <b>14</b>	<b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b> Joint Service AT PARK URC	<b>7:00</b> PM

APRIL <b>15</b>	 <b>GOOD FRIDAY</b> PARK URC	 <b>3:00</b> PM
APRIL <b>16</b>	<b>HOLY SATURDAY</b> Youth Group PARK URC	<b>4:00</b> PM
APRIL <b>17</b>	<b>EASTER SUNDAY</b> <i>Easter Morning</i> Communion Service [HYBRID]	<b>8:30</b> AM
APRIL <b>17</b>	<b>EASTER SUNDAY</b> <i>Easter Breakfast</i>	<b>9:00</b> AM
APRIL <b>17</b>	<b>EASTER SUNDAY</b> Morning Service	<b>10:30</b> AM

*He is not here;  
he has Risen!*

*John 20:6*

**Happy Easter!**

 Hungerford  
United  
Reformed  
Church

 Park  
United  
Reformed  
Church

...from the noticeboard: **The Return of Toddlers!**

**Starts 25th April 2022**

**TODDLERS**

**EVERY MONDAY**

**9:15 – 11:15 AM**  
(DURING TERM TIME)

NO BOOKING REQUIRED

FREE PLAY

FUN! 😊

CRAFTS

ACTION SONGS

SINGING

**£2**

PER FAMILY  
PER SESSION

CHILD FRIENDLY  
SNACKS PROVIDED  
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FREE GIFT  
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Reformed  
Church

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Park United Reformed Church  
Palmer Park Avenue Reading RG6 1DN



**WESSEX SYNOD**  
**BIG** 2022  
*Day Out*

**Saturday**  
**7th May 2022**

**Hollycombe**  
STEAM IN THE COUNTRY

Attractions for everyone, Largest Traditional Steam Fairground in Britain, Steam Railways, Listed Woodland Gardens including an Azalea Walk, Treasure Hunt, Reflective Labyrinth, Live Brass Band, Synod Marquee and Activity Field with Interactive Zones and Workshops, Refreshments and Worship.

Save the date, more information including booking information in the new year.

**50** The United Reformed Church

The United Reformed Church  
Wessex Synod

*A great day out for all the family  
and for all ages*

ARE YOU AVAILABLE?

# SPRING CLEAN



Saturday, April 30th 2022  
and  
Saturday, May 14th 2022

For more info  
please contact *Justyn*

Park United Reformed Church  
[www.parkurc.org.uk](http://www.parkurc.org.uk)

**make a note  
of it!**

**2022**

**3 - 5pm**

6th February - Love

6th March - Joy

3rd April - Peace

1st May - Patience

5th June - Kindness

3rd July - Goodness

4th September - Faithfulness

2nd October - Gentleness

6th November - Self-control

4th December - Advent & Christmas

Park **Messy**  
United **Church**  
Reformed **2022**  
Church 

...from the noticeboard: **We Pray for Ukraine**

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**Reform**  
NEWS COMMENT INSPIRATION DEBATE

The United Reformed Church

50 The United Reformed Church  
Faith - Hope - Love - Since 1927



**WE PRAY FOR  
UKRAINE**



[www.urc.org.uk/ukraine](http://www.urc.org.uk/ukraine)

...from the noticeboard: **Thirsty Thursday!**

---

feel like a mid-week cuppa and chat?  
fancy an opportunity to meet up with friends?  
or just feel like sitting quietly reading the paper with a coffee?

you can do all these  
at Park Church's  
new...

**thirsty  
thursday**

every Thursday  
from 10:30 - 12:00  
starting April 21st



Following on from the wonderful fellowship of the First Friday Footpath walks, and in particular the pleasure of having a gentle, relaxed coffee with friends, we have decided to start a regular weekly coffee morning on Thursdays at Park.

This is Park church in action, working in our fellowship and in our community, making our contribution to help against loneliness and isolation.

The '**Thirsty Thursday**' coffee morning is very much a 'drop in' event, to be held every Thursday between 10:30 and 12:00 in David's Hall.

As the poster says, whether you want to come and meet friends and chat, or simply sit and read the paper with a coffee you will be very welcome – and the coffee is free!



## 30<sup>th</sup> Reading Brownies

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What a fun-filled term we have had!

We started the term by celebrating World Book Day. Lots of the girls came to Brownies dressed up as their favourite character and we had a go at different activities linked to Charlie & the Chocolate Factory, Alice in Wonderland, Harry Potter, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, and The Jungle Book.

This term, we have also celebrated St Patrick's Day by hunting for shamrocks and creating their own 'pot of gold' cakes.

Recently, the Brownies became scientists for the evening. They experimented with mixtures to create their perfect slime and had a go at deciphering invisible messages. I think we have some budding scientists in the pack!

Last Saturday, Girl Guiding Southwest Region took over Legoland for the day. Members of the public were still able to visit, however I think they were outnumbered by hundreds of excited Rainbows, Brownies and Guides. The girls had a fantastic day exploring the park and giving lots of the attractions a go. We were also blessed with superb weather – this certainly made getting wet on the log flume more appealing!



It was lovely to be able to take part in a region event again this term. The girls have missed out on experiencing events with other Brownies so it was a lovely opportunity for them to be around other Girl Guiding units. Hopefully these events will continue.

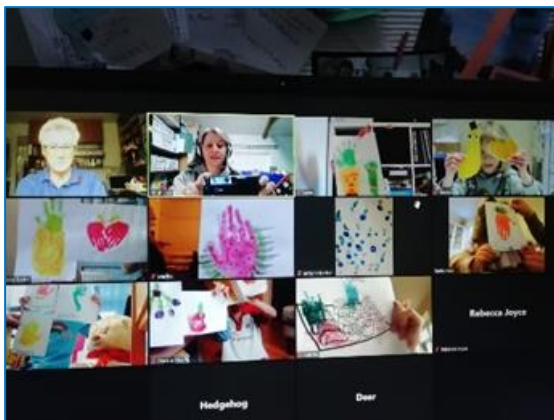
We look forward to more fun in the summer term when we should be able to get outside and enjoy the summer evenings.

## Rainbows

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The Rainbows have been very busy since I last wrote for the magazine. At the start of Half Term we joined a virtual World Thinking Day weekend along with thousands of other Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and leaders from across the South West Region. Our Rainbows joined with the group that Kingfisher now runs in Somerset so it was nice that we could share the weekend with another unit. We visited Asia, Africa, Europe, the Western Hemisphere and the Arab region, and the girls were involved in a variety of activities - hand and foot painting, drumming craft, making a pasta bee, banana craft, decorating a fish and making graybeh (a middle eastern biscuit). On the Saturday evening the girls had a campfire in their pyjamas and some made their own dens to sleep in.

Our weekly meetings have continued, although numbers have been up



and down with Covid-related absences. We celebrated World Book Day the first week after Half Term and the girls were able to come dressed as a book character if they wanted to. Our activities were all to do with books and included story puzzles and storytelling sticks - maybe if you look in the Large Hall you can try to work out what story the Rainbows were trying to tell!

We held a special Promise Evening and were able to welcome three new Rainbows who were finally all well enough to make their Promise at the same time! Then, as St Patrick's Day fell on a Thursday, we included some Irish activities, and our Young Leader was able to tell the girls about the Claddagh ring. Mother's Day soon followed, and we kept everyone busy making cards and a small gift. Still to come is an evening of

science-based experiments, and our last meeting of term full of Easter activities.

As well as our normal weekly meetings, on Saturday 26th March we joined with over 3000 girls from across the Region for a Legoland Takeover Day and in the words of one of my parents and their daughter 'it was epic'!



We had a fantastic day with beautiful weather and it was just lovely to see the girls doing something normal again. The Rainbows went on lots of rides, and it was great to see them bonding together, something that on a Thursday doesn't always happen. They particularly loved going on the Deep Sea Adventure – this was a submarine ride where we got to see lots of different fish, including a shark!

**Jenny**

## Bright Sparks

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This is a new category to our monthly magazine entitled "Bright Sparks" – cost saving ideas which can incorporate helpful hints on cooking or energy saving ideas so that by sharing we can also do our part in saving our planet earth. So come on and write in to [editor@parkurc.org.uk](mailto:editor@parkurc.org.uk) so that we can all benefit from your knowledge.

To get you going here are 2 from me:

- ✓ *If you spill or drip some glue during a craft project or find some gum stuck in the carpet, rub a little peanut butter on the spot. The natural oils will help loosen the glue so you'll be able to wipe the area clean with a cloth. The same process can be used to remove glue residue left behind from stickers or those price tags which are difficult to remove on items.*
- ✓ *If you have plans for your garden this Spring cut off the top quarter of empty plastic milk bottles and place around the base of the new shoot to keep them safe from birds and rodents without bothering with nets, meshes or traps. Use a marker pen to write the name of each plant on the bottle top. Take the bottle off once the shoots are fully developed to avoid mould.*

Over to YOU!

**Gaye**

## **Racial Justice Advocacy Forum on Ukraine**

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The Racial Justice Advocacy Forum condemns the invasion of Ukraine. The RJAF is deeply saddened by the loss of life, the destruction of homes and businesses, and the separation of families which has resulted from Putin's war on Ukraine. The RJAF equally condemns the racism demonstrated by Ukrainian authorities towards Black and Brown people at the borders and routes of escape from the conflict zones.

We believe that all people are made in the image of God and should be equally afforded the dignity, support, opportunity, and protection currently being withheld from many Black and Brown people fleeing for safety.

These actions demonstrate the on-going racist attitudes in Europe which deprive those considered 'other' of basic human needs. The fact that we are seeing demonstrations of racism unfolding amidst this tragic and unlawful invasion is profoundly disheartening and disturbing.

Black and Brown people, and people of Muslim faith affiliation, are facing racism and prejudice as they seek to escape the conflict in Ukraine. We ask Christians to remember all those who are being treated less than equally and fairly in the evacuation process. We must pray and act.

'It is important for Christians to pray. But for those Black and Brown people experiencing double jeopardy - war and racism - practical support needs to be offered. The fact that vast numbers of Black and Brown people are being prevented from leaving Ukraine is indicative of how deeply racism can lurk.' (Rev. Wale Hudson-Roberts, Justice Enabler – Baptist Union of Great Britain/RJAF)

We are calling upon Christians everywhere to remember and pray for those facing discrimination based on their colour, ethnicity, or faith; to pray for those who have experienced the loss of family, friends and livelihoods; and to pray for the many people who do not have access to basic needs such as food and safe shelter.

We are calling upon all Churches in the region to provide hospitality to *all* those fleeing Ukraine, to include both the sharing of resources and the provision of pastoral support at the borders.

We call upon media outlets to accurately report the racism faced by Black and Brown people, and to raise awareness of the unjustifiable acts of discrimination taking place in the midst of a war zone in which every day is a matter of life and death for all those caught up in the conflict.

The RJAF encourages people to write to their MPs and the High Commissions in London demanding clarification of their strategy for intervention and protection of their nationals, and to provide regular updates as events unfold.

*"I think this crisis speaks to the specificity of those racialised as Black or 'other'. It highlights the need to examine whom we extend our love and compassion towards, and to whom we deny it. It calls on faith organisations to take the lead in expanding concepts of love and justice to encompass all, and to attend to the glaring omissions that governments and civil society practice when considering whose story is told." (Edwina Peart, Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator – Quakers in Britain/RJAF)*

The RJAF will hold fortnightly online briefings to share updates on the coordinated efforts to advocate for and support Black and Brown people facing racial discrimination in Ukraine. Christian Aid will support these briefings.

from **Enala**

## **Elders Thought for the Month**

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### **Christ-like in a Crisis Situation**

All of us are aware of the current war in Ukraine, where Russia invaded its neighbour without any apparent provocation. This is covered in all news channels and has even stopped the discussion on Boris Johnson's future. This war and the goings on because of it have highlighted two things to me.

The evils associated with mankind, and Christ-like behaviour of mankind. These present a paradox to me.

### **The evils associated with humankind**

- A weak neighbour being destroyed by a stronger neighbour. We see this in life where the weak are always bullied by the strong.
- Deception and outright lies. We have seen numerous fake videos and photos on social media and newspapers aimed at making an already terrible situation look even worse.
- Political leaders pretending that this is the first time in recent years where a country ignores the sovereignty of another country and just invade with bombs and sometimes boots on the ground without any direct provocation. What comes to mind here are wars in Iraq, Libya, Syria to name just a few. This week Israel bombed and killed innocent people in Syria, and no one talks about it.
- The persecution and bombardment of the Eastern Ukrainians by their government and banning of minority languages including Russian in Ukraine in the last eight years has been downplayed by the west.
- Differential treatment of refugees. Contrast how the Syrian refugees were treated as they traversed Europe with how the Ukrainian refugees are treated.
- Outright racism being faced by the non-Europeans fleeing Ukraine at border posts particularly Poland.

## Christ-like behaviours

- Private people at border posts particularly Poland have demonstrated unparalleled kindness.
- People have opened their doors to strangers and offered to accommodate the Ukrainian refugees freely. This week in the news they showed people offering to accommodate refugees outnumbering the refugees who were coming in. This behaviour even shocked the reporters.
- Nations coming together to condemn Russia as an aggressor.
- People contributing generously to support the refugees and offering their time to assist at the refugee centres.

My wish is that we could cultivate and grow Christ-like attributes in our lives; attributes such as faith, virtue, knowledge, patience, brotherly kindness, charity, humility and diligence. We should always remember that every human being is our neighbour. This was aptly demonstrated by our Lord Jesus in the parable of a Good Samaritan. God Help Us.

A prayer:

*Heavenly Father we pray for your intervention in our deliberations and lives in general.*

*Let your Holy Spirit guide us in everything we do.*

*In Jesus name we pray*

*Amen.*

**Zie**



## Shine Your Love Down

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Lord, shine your light down on our world in its turmoil...  
shine it through to those who cry out for justice and have none,  
shine it through to those who cry out for peace and find none.

*shine Your light down O Lord...*

shine it through the piercing agony of suffering to show Your compassion

shine it through the dark shadows of pain to show Your healing  
shine it through the thunderous clouds of war to show Your peace

*shine Your light down O Lord...*

shine it through the numbing gloom of bereavement to show Your care

shine it through the bewildering fog of misinformation to show Your truth

shine it through the dark pit of sorrow to show Your hope

*shine Your justice down O Lord...*

shine justice down on those who choose to destroy the innocent

shine justice down on those who choose to terrify the weak

shine justice down on those who choose the path of evil

*shine Your love down O Lord...*

shine Your love down on those left with broken homes and broken lives

shine Your love down on those who seek love when others rule in hate

shine Your love down on those who seek truth when others sink in lies

Lord, shine down your healing light on our world in turmoil.

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