



the magazine

Do you rulers ever give a just decision?

Do you judge everyone fairly?

No! You think only of the evil you can do, and commit crimes of violence in the land....

Let them vanish like water that flows away...

then people will say:

"The righteous are indeed rewarded; there is indeed a God who judges the world."



Psalm 58

Park united reformed church

March 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

Dear Family,

We BEGIN again...

and again.

A new month, a new day.

This is true in the natural world too, a new spring, new flowers (snowdrops and daffodils) bringing forth new life!

It is also true for us, that we BEGIN again, we are reborn in Christ.

Welcome to this Spring time of Faith, the season of Lent!

We began the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, 2nd March.

In order for growth and flourishing, we look to turn inwards and examine our lives in the light of Jesus.

We turn from sin towards NEW LIFE! In other words, we must tend to our garden.

During Lent we will be taking time, on Sundays and Monday, to work through the Lent Bible Study Course on the film Hook.

"This course is an attempt to offer a contemporary spiritual experience, an exploration of Jesus' observation that we must become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven, alongside the very real need to search for our true selves – that which is at the very heart of our being."

It is not just our personal lives that need transforming, but also our communities, our country and the entire world.

This is not something that we can accomplish on our own. Especially, things like the situation in Ukraine...

During lent, we will look around at our world and lament it's brokenness, sin, inequality and injustice.



We long for God's intervention to come forth, showing us what REAL freedom, justice and peace look like!

We are thirsting, for the water of Life!

We are in need of the presence of God...

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

Psalms 42:2 NIV

Thirsting...

the metaphor of water is what the psalmist uses to describe their longing for the presence of God. This particular psalm is where the hymn 'As the deer, pants for the water, so my soul longs after you' derives from.

In our Bible Studies on Ezekiel (37:1-14) we discussed in the last session - dry bones and their meaning in the context of Prophet and in our context today too! The dry bones received the word of God and came to LIFE!

Are you thirsting for a closer relationship with God?

Over the course of Lent, I would encourage you to dive deep into the Word of God for nourishment, sustenance and LIFE! However, you mark Lent this year, let us commit to taking time, to pray and deepen our faith in Jesus.

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

Lamentations 3:22-23 NRSV

God's Every Blessing,

Stephen & Tolu

Family News

We send our thoughts and prayers to all those who are suffering in any way in these times of challenge with the coronavirus. For those who are anxious and uncertain, we pray for calm and reassurance.

For those who have been hit hard in any way, we pray for strength to stay strong. And for those who have or are recovering from the disease, we pray for healing.

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.

Rob Knox moved to Yorkshire to start a new job and we pray all goes well.

We 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 continue to pray for Chris Gayford who remains in hospital since surgery.

Jenny King has been poorly but is much better now.

Jim Adkins' house was broken in to and he sustained injuries. He has had a successful operation on his arm.

We think of Phebe Mann who had a nasty fall and fractured her shoulder. We pray for an easing of pain and a speedy recovery.

Mick Stocks had planned surgery at the hospital. We pray that all will go well for both of them for their recovery.

Suzy Weston's Mum has been moved to a hospital much closer to Tavistock. Suzy is still having to care full time for her dad so can't move back home. We pray that Suzy will feel God's presence and great love for her as she lives through this challenging time.

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; 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

World Day of Prayer 2022

A very special thanks to all those who took part in the World Day of Prayer 2022. This year was extra special as the service theme was prepared by a group of Christian Women from England, Wales & Northern Ireland.

The theme was: I know the plans I have for you. A powerful reminder of one of the promises of God found in the book of Jeremiah (29:11)



It was good to be able to gather together in UNITY, and Prayer on this day.

The World is crying out for Peace and Unity in this time. Let us continue to look, listen and live out God's plans of freedom, forgiveness, justice and Peace - the promise and sign of hope for all! The Lord is forever faithful and will do it.

World Day of Prayer 2022 Artwork

This is the artwork chosen for the 2022 World Day of Prayer theme by the artist Angie Fox.

Medium: textile Embroidery, and a peace lily breaking through Applique & Metalwork

Artist statement:
Following the theme given, I have used several images to depict the key words as follows:

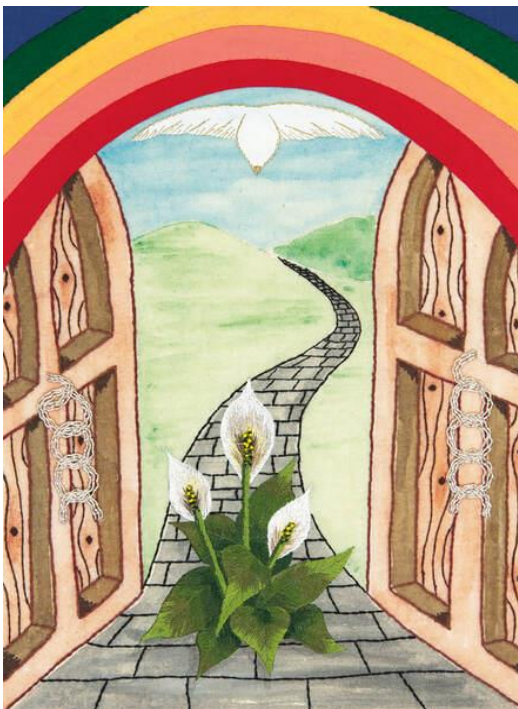
Freedom: an open door to a pathway across an endless open vista;

Justice: broken chains;

God's Peace and Forgiveness – the dove of peace and a peace lily breaking through the pavement.

Overall a rainbow which has come to represent all these

things from the story of Noah through to the modern day. From a sign of God's covenant with a man to a symbol of unity between different sections of a modern community.



from: **World Day of Prayer 2022 Booklet**

Lent Study Course 2022

Hook: Learning to fly – Heather Whyte

This course has evolved out of much thinking about how we can relate to God and each other.

My first revelation was that, although we are born naked, and

leave this world with nothing but our soul, the bit in between is spent adding more and more layers to ourselves. Who are we hiding from?

In the story of creation, Adam and Eve are naked until they eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the Book of Books, Trevor Dennis retells this story and introduces the idea that eating the fruit caused Adam and Eve to grow up too quickly and discover more that they could cope with, so they became afraid.

Many in today's world share this feeling of fear, and, just as in the way Adam and Eve donned fig leaves, we put on masks and guises to hide that fear: we play a part rather than being our true selves. There is no joy in this way of life – no delight.

As more and more people search for the meaning in life, believing there has to be more to life than they are experiencing, the Church seems to be being left behind, out of touch and irrelevant, largely because we are not engaging in spiritual journeying.

This course is an attempt to offer a contemporary spiritual experience, an exploration of Jesus' observation that we must become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven, alongside the very real need to search for our true selves – that which is at the very heart of our being.



Carrie

Why Sunflowers?

The sunflower has long held a meaningful place in the hearts of many Ukrainians as the national flower.

According to historical records, the sunflower became deeply embedded in the Ukrainian culture when the Church didn't ban its oil during Lent.

The flower is an integral part of Ukrainian tradition and can be found in the yards of village houses or woven into the dresses of women worn during celebrations.



But since Russia invaded their country last week, the plant has become a global symbol of resistance, unity and hope.

In recent days, people around the world have been adding bright yellow sunflower emoji to their social media profiles and wearing sunflowers in their hair and on their clothing. Some are planting seeds so more sunflowers can grow.

In the summer of 1996, sunflowers were planted by officials at the Pervomaysk missile base in southern Ukraine to mark the removal of nuclear weapons from the country. "The ceremony celebrated Ukraine's abandonment of the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, which it inherited in the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union," The Washington Post reported at the time.

Protesters around the world are coming forward holding bouquets or wearing sunflowers at rallies to show their support for Ukraine. Several photographs of Russian protesters carrying sunflowers also surfaced online.

The Washington Post

It can be noted that the face of the sunflower follows the path of the sun during the day, moving from the east to look towards the west.

CIRDIC – Churches In Reading Drop In Centre

CIRDIC stands for Churches in Reading drop in Centre and they give hot meals to those in need along with change of clothing and also have shower facilities. They also allow post to be delivered there so people can claim some benefit.

We have traditionally supported them and it is noticeable that people seem to have switched off from this need. They are not only the homeless but people who have a room but cannot afford food and clothing or heating. It is mainly men they support but there are some women too.

Brian Wooldridge is our collector but has been disappointed that the box remains empty week upon week.

There is a list on the box of items they would like to receive which as they provide sandwiches as well, tinned tuna is always welcome, corned beef, tins of vegetables, meat etc. to make meals along with men's clothes and bedding items.

During the lockdown they provided takeaway meals and showers for vulnerable people. They work closely with St Mungo's who have some hostel accommodation and other Reading charities.

They welcome all who have a need or find themselves homeless because of varied circumstances including some quite young adults.

If you want to volunteer to help provide meals and offer support please let Brian or myself know and Mabel would be happy to give a tour of their well-used building.

The box can be found as you enter the church from the side door just before the children's play table and flags.

Brian & Gaye

A Week of Prayer for Ukraine

At this time, many of us are asking ourselves, 'What can I do?'

These prayers are being shared with and by the Church family of St Andrew's URC, Reading.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Please join us together for seven days of prayer for Ukraine and Russia. Please take one minute each day to say the prayers below.

There is power in prayer!!!

Prayer is the portal that brings the power of heaven down to earth.

Prayer is our fiercest weapon against the enemy and all things in this fallen world.

When we pray, God will be near to us, and God's presence sweeps in and surrounds us like a cosy, blanketed embrace filled with his peace and strength.

Let's pray together for Ukraine and Russia - one person a day one minute to pray

"The LORD will give strength to his people. The LORD will bless his people with peace. Psalm 29:11

Day 1

Our Father God who loves us!

Pray for the people of Ukraine!

May the Lord grant grace, love and mercy to this land, take care of the people who are kept in the fire of war, remove all fears, and protect their peace!

Declare that You are the God who is with them as Emmanuel!

Thank you Jesus! We pray in the name of Jesus! Amen!

Day 2

Our Father God who loves us!

Declare You as the Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace! Your great power will cover Ukraine, protect this place, so that the war between countries can leave this place as soon as possible, and completely protect the life and safety of the people!

Declare that nothing is too hard for you, that you give peace in this land!

Thank you Jesus! We pray in the name of Jesus! Amen! □

Day3

Our Father God who loves us!

Oh God! Your justice is like a high mountain; your judgment is like an abyss.

May you use your truth and justice as a shield to protect the people of Ukraine and keep them safe in the midst of war!

Declare that You are Jehovah Jireh and will provide them with all the resources they need!

Thank you Jesus! We Pray in the name of Jesus! Amen!

Day4

Our Father God who loves us!

Declare that the king's heart is in the hands of God like a ditch of water that can flow freely.

May the Lord release your justice and peace among the Russian and Ukrainian regimes, and bind the dark powers behind the war interests!

Proclaim that you are the God of Yahweh Sharon, the God of peace! Protect this land from the flames of war!

Thank you Jesus! We Pray in the name of Jesus! Amen! □

Day5

Our Father God who loves us!

We pray to you for the people of Ukraine and Russia!

Pray for the Lord to release harmony in this, so that the two regimes can quickly reach a consensus in a peaceful way!

Declare that God's grace and peace will come to these two countries, and protect the global economy from the impact of war!

Thank you Jesus! Prayers in the name of Jesus! Amen!

Day6

Our Father God who loves us!

Declare that you are the God of Yahweh, and you are the shepherd of Ukraine and Russia. You release your love among them. The more difficult it is, the source of your life will become their support, and your words will become their power!

Calling on Your name through Your Church united in unity, Your light will come to this place and your peace will be given to this place! Thank you Jesus!

We pray in Jesus name! Amen!

Day7

Our Father God who loves us!

Declare that you are good, and that you are the creator of heaven and earth! Special prayers to you for the wars in Russia and Ukraine affecting the global economy!

Pray for a stable oil and gas supply chain, free from global economic inflation!

Remove the panic of the global economy and bestow your full grace here!

Thank you Jesus! We Pray in the name of Jesus! Amen!

Legacies of Slavery Task Group

We live in a multicultural, multiracial Britain. People hail Black footballers and athletes when they do something great for 'our' country. But those same people are often subject to racist abuse on sports grounds, through social media, on the streets and in shops. Black people who aren't celebrities suffer even worse – discriminated against in jobs, pay, housing, and educational opportunities because of prejudice against the colour of their skin, the way they dress or how they speak, even though most are UK citizens who have lived and worked in this country all their lives.

The hurt has always been there, but it has been aggravated in the past two years by the murder of George Floyd and the inequalities highlighted by the particular vulnerability to Covid of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. We have seen the upsurge in the Black Lives Matter movement among both Black people and white people in response to these global dynamics.

Racism has deep roots in our society. Slavery, one might say, was the original sin: the forcible removal of some 3¼ million Africans in British ships across the Atlantic to the Caribbean and the southern parts of what became the United States. These enslaved people and their descendants were treated as essential labour in the cultivation of crops such as sugar, tobacco and cotton – which played a major role in Britain's commercial and industrial revolutions.

The slave trade was abolished by Parliament in 1807, followed in 1833 by the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire. Slave-owners were granted £20 million as compensation for their loss of 'property' – equivalent to perhaps £340 billion as a proportion of government spending today – but none of the 800,000 ex-slaves was compensated for the suppression of their freedom and that of their ancestors.

Although the UK Government has ruled out any programme of reparations, such projects have been initiated or promised by the institutional descendants of several prime movers in the British slave trade. These include Lloyds of London (who insured

most of the voyages), many of the major banks (which provided credit to slave-traders) and the Universities of Glasgow, Liverpool and Bristol (cities that grew rich from the slave trade).

But the legacies of slavery endure most of all in racist attitudes of mind. In Roman and Saxon times many people in Britain were slaves – the Domesday Book of 1086 classified more than 10% of the population as slaves – but the practice seems to have died out by 1200. The transatlantic slave trade revived the institution of slavery but applied it almost entirely to Africans, marked out by the colour of their skin.

This equation of slavery with race solidified a sense of superior status among whites – 'Britons never will be slaves', proclaimed Thomas Arne's Rule, Britannia (1740) – and this assumption of racial hierarchy became the norm elsewhere in the British Empire – even where slavery had not been practised, such as the Indian sub-continent. The idea of racial hierarchy is the status quo which continues to shape every aspect of our world and our relationships today.

Saddest of all for us, racist assumptions also conditioned the Christianity of our forebears in the United Reformed Church. The URC, of course, was founded only in 1972, and none of its predecessor bodies took shape until the end of the slavery era. It's also true that many Dissenters played leading roles in the agitation to abolish slavery.

But some profited from the ownership of slave ships (William Coward, a London merchant and patron of religious dissenters) or of slave plantations (William Alers Hankey, treasurer of the London Missionary Society for twenty years). The LMS focused on the saving of souls, rather than the lives of the slaves – not least because missionaries were not tolerated in the Caribbean colonies if suspected of being troublemakers.

This painful story is still being uncovered. Although many details remain hazy, it's clear that the URC (like other British institutions) is heir to a racist past that cannot fill us with pride. Most members of the URC have not thought much about the legacies of slavery – which have been whitewashed out of the

familiar narrative of British history – but we are all implicated in the culture of racism that they fostered.

George Floyd's murder and the disproportionate impact of Covid on Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities have made us more aware of the need to act. Although we are not responsible for the sins of our forebears centuries ago, we definitely are responsible for allowing them to poison our society in the 21st century.

That's why the Task Group calls on General Assembly to make a statement of apology and confession and to embark on a programme of 'repairing justice' – to include financial commitment, community projects and education – both in the UK and in parts of the Atlantic world still scarred by the legacies of slavery. These acts should be regarded as the start of a journey – part of our commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist church in God's name.

- The Guardian: Lloyd's of London and Greene King to make slave trade reparations
- Lloyds: Our full statement on the Lloyd's market's role in the slave trade

Some questions for feedback

- How do you respond to what you have read in this paper?
- How happy would you feel to endorse the draft apology?

Please be in contact with the task group to give us your feedback, or invite us to give local church presentations/lead conversations: global.intercultural@urc.org.uk

<https://urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/legacies-of-slavery/legacies-of-slavery-task-group-consultation-overview/>

David Reynolds & Karen Campbell

Thank you Fair Trade Fortnight

Many thanks to all who supported Fair trade fortnight and I am pleased to report that £150 was taken.

For those who ordered Easter Eggs they will be here by the end of March. There is still time to order if you would like at £4.50 each.

Gaye

Fairtrade Sales Boom by 14%

High consumer demand for Fairtrade products, including cocoa, bananas, wine, gold, and cosmetic reflects an increased shopper awareness of sustainability among shoppers, research shows.

According to the latest GlobeScan 2021 data, 65% of people in the UK say they choose Fairtrade, demonstrating continued consumer commitment to products that are ethically and sustainably produced, says Fairtrade Foundation, as its annual Fairtrade Fortnight campaign begins.

Demand is also translating into sales, with the Co-op's 'Ethical Markets Report 2021' noting that the UK 'green pound' has reached record levels, breaking through the £100 bn mark for the first time.

It found, for instance, that Fairtrade sales increased by 14% in 2020. The report has tracked ethical expenditure year by year over the past two decades. Fairtrade's own figures set out in its latest annual report show sales of Fairtrade cocoa grew by 3% and were matched by 3% growth in bananas in 2020.

Major brands and retailers continue to back Fairtrade despite the impacts of Brexit and on-going pandemic-related challenges, making impressive commitments to Fairtrade and the farmers and workers in their supply chains.

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make a note of it!

2022

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

3 - 5pm

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Church
2022**

