

# CONTACT

## August 2023



Volume 64 - Issue 8  
Sawston Free Church

## Churches Services and Dates for Your Diary

Future Services-(also available via zoom) SFC email: [secretary@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk),  
Castle Camps email: [sarabdavey@outlook.com](mailto:sarabdavey@outlook.com)

### Sawston Free Church:

06 Aug 10.30am Morning Worship – Rev Mike Wilson and Communion  
**NO Messy Church** due to Holiday Club  
13 Aug 10.30am Morning Worship led by the Elders  
20 Aug 10.30am Morning Worship – David Lloyd  
22 Aug 10.30am Go4th

The closing date for **September** Contact is **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August**

David Nunn is the editor, so please email your items  
to [anne.nunn@btinternet.com](mailto:anne.nunn@btinternet.com)

| Minister                 |   | Tel         |
|--------------------------|---|-------------|
| Rev Phil Nevard          | 12 Hinton Way, Gt Shelford,<br><a href="mailto:minister@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk">minister@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk</a> | 07814920187 |
| <b>Secretary:</b>        |   |             |
| Mary Simuyandi           | 28 New Road, Sawston  | 837433      |
| <b>Elders: Sawston</b>   |   |             |
| Jenny Karpuk             | 5 Prince William Way, Sawston   | 564121      |
| Rosemary Livings         | The Gables, 1a Granhams Road, Gt Shelford   | 845948      |
| Anne Pegram              | 2 Brookfield close, Sawston   | 832597      |
| Beryl Penny              | April Lodge, 81 Brewery Road, Pampisford  | 833635      |
| Mike Purdy               | 42 Granta Road, Sawston   | 830903      |
| Peter Sharpe             | 32 Edinburgh Ave, Sawston   | 834805      |
| Mary Simuyandi           | 28 New Road, Sawston  | 837433      |
| <b>Joint Treasurers:</b> |   |             |
| Lynne Hays               | Baggot Hall, Station Road, Harston  | 871800      |
| Terry Penny              | April Lodge, 81 Brewery Road, Pampisford  | 833635      |
| <b>Contact Editors</b>   |   |             |
| David & Anne Nunn        | 10 London Road, Sawston<br>Email: <a href="mailto:anne.nunn@btinternet.com">anne.nunn@btinternet.com</a>                | 832913      |
| <b>Church Bookings</b>   | Maggie Jones, 21 Hillside, Sawston  | 565637      |
| <b>Church Website:</b>   | <a href="http://www.sawstonfreechurch.org.uk/">www.sawstonfreechurch.org.uk/</a>  |             |
| <b>Facebook page:</b>    | <a href="http://www.facebook.com/SawstonFreeChurch">www.facebook.com/SawstonFreeChurch</a>                              |             |

# Contact

The monthly magazine of  
**Sawston Free Church United Reformed Methodist**

Minister: Reverend Phil Nevard – 12 Hinton Way, Gt Shelford, Cambs CB22 5BE

Tel: 07814 920187 Email: [minister@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:minister@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk)

[www.sawstonfreechurch.org.uk](http://www.sawstonfreechurch.org.uk),

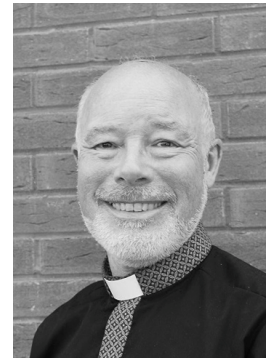
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Dear Friends,

As the summer season unfolds before us, it's a great time to consider the importance of rest and rejuvenation in our lives. The concept of Sabbath, a day of rest, holds great significance in our spiritual journey. It is a time to pause, reflect, and reconnect with our inner selves and with God. With this in mind, I would like to use this space this month to share some thoughts on the value of Sabbath rest and how it intertwines with the joy of summer holidays.

In our fast-paced and demanding world, finding time to rest can often feel like a luxury. However, it is essential for our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. God Himself set the example by resting on the seventh day of creation. He recognized the importance of rest and declared it holy. Likewise, we too must prioritize rest in our lives.



Summer holidays provide us with a unique opportunity to embrace the beauty of God's creation, spend time with loved ones, and refresh our spirits. Whether it's a trip to the beach, a hike in the countryside, or simply enjoying a leisurely afternoon in the garden, these moments allow us to experience God's presence in the wonders of nature. As we immerse ourselves in the serenity of summer, let us remember to consciously set aside time for Sabbath rest, even amidst the excitement of our holidays.

Sabbath is not just about physical rest; it is a state of mind and a spiritual practice. It is a time to detach from our worries, anxieties, and daily routines, and instead focus on seeking God's peace and presence. It is an opportunity to engage in prayer, meditation, and Scripture study, allowing the Holy Spirit to restore and renew our souls.

During our summer holidays, why not intentionally create space for Sabbath rest? Set aside a day, or even a few hours, to step away from the distractions of technology, work, and busy schedules. Instead, embrace moments of stillness and contemplation. Dive into a good book that nourishes your soul, take leisurely walks along the shore, or simply sit in silence, listening to the gentle whispers of the breeze.

As we embark on our summer adventures, I encourage you to cherish the gift of Sabbath rest. Prioritize your well-being and spiritual growth, understanding that true rest comes when we surrender to God's loving embrace. May this season of summer holidays be a time of renewal, restoration, and deepening of your faith.

Wishing you all a blessed and restful summer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Nevard', with a long, sweeping underline.

*Every Blessing. Rev'd Phil Nevard*  
*Phil*

*(Please note that the views expressed in this article are those of the author, Michael Wilson, and not in any way representative of the views of Sawston Free Church.)*

I write this as news comes in that Russian missiles have just destroyed 60,000 tons of Ukrainian grain destined for export together with the associated port infrastructure. This in the wake of Russia's declining to extend the UN brokered deal allowing Ukrainian grain to be exported to the developing world.

No doubt war is always callous, but the particular callousness of the Russian way of waging war has long been noted: currently in Ukraine or in Syria as an ally of President Assad, in Afghanistan in the 1980s, in Eastern Europe in WW2 and WW1, in the Crimean War or even in the war against Napoleon in 1812. Loss of military and civilian life, it would seem, never has been an important consideration in Russian military strategy. This is in direct contrast to Western Just War theory, rooted as it is in Christian theology. (See AISI.117 – Contact May '23) Where, one wonders, did this historic indifference to human life come from in a country claiming to have its cultural roots in Orthodox Christianity?

In Mongolia, some time around 1200 AD, Genghis Khan embarked on a campaign of invasion that would fashion the largest land empire the world has ever known. The Mongols were Tengrists, worshipping Mother Earth and Father Sky, and practising shamanism, animism and ancestor worship. The Mongols took Moscow in 1238, and Kiev in 1240, massacring the vast majority of the population. Indeed, massacre was the Mongol response to resistance everywhere they went. In 1241 they were at the gates of Vienna, and Western Europe trembled. But that was as far West as they got. Instead, Genghis' vast empire settled into four sub-empires, two of them more or less defining India and China to this day. In 1255, Batu Khan, a grandson of Genghis, established The Golden Horde, a Mongol/Turkic empire stretching from Siberia to the Danube, and from the Caspian to the Baltic Seas. (Turkic is the language group spoken throughout the region. Modern Turkish is just one derivative dialect. Russian is not a Turkic language.) The Horde's capital was on the current Kazakhstan/Russian border. It controlled almost all of what we today call Russia for 250 years. They were eventually ousted in 1552 by the first Tsar of Russia, Ivan the Terrible (Ivan the 'terrifying', that is), whose method of rule Stalin unashamedly much admired. (Chairman Mao was another admirer.) Not only did the emerging Russian state have a large Turkic/Mongol sub-population: it had Turkic/Mongol noblemen, Turkic laws, Turkic culture, Turkic administration and much Turkic vocabulary. The very word 'Tsar' is Turkic. Some of Ivan's successor Tsars were ethnic Turkic, not Russian. Though Russia undoubtedly inherited much that is culturally positive from its Turkic masters, not surprisingly, Ivan and his successors ruled as their former overlords had taught them – brutally.



Other Mongols, who invaded Iran, Arabia and the Levant eventually converted to Islam. Islam aside, there is much that Russian culture holds in common with Iran and Kazakhstan. (A frighteningly intelligent young Russian woman staying at Wesley House, Cambridge last year told me, to my surprise, that she felt more culturally at home in Kazakhstan than she did anywhere in Western Europe. That, in fact, is where this piece started in my mind.) Sadly, one notable commonality is their preference for oppressive totalitarianism.

Tsars from Ivan onwards considered the two main purposes of the Church to be to defend Tsarist rule and, as Karl Marx memorably put it, to be an opiate to dull the pain of the masses. Accordingly, the Russian Orthodox Church never challenged Tsarist excesses. Russian Orthodoxy is as much a statement about what it is to be Russian as it is about Christianity. The pseudo-Christian myth of Holy Mother Russia evolved, in part, to erase the painful memory of 250 years of Turkic rule. Even today, it is hard to be Russian and not be Orthodox.

Serfdom (slavery) was invented as the Mongols left to ensure that all power remained firmly with the nobility and the Tsar. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 80% of peasants were serfs. In 1861, when the remaining 23 million serfs were finally emancipated – they were still 35% of the total population. As Dostoevsky explores in his novels, holy Christ-like endurance in the face of unending suffering was (and remains) etched into the Russian soul.

As I see it, Russia wages war today much as did Genghis Khan. Perhaps we should not be surprised that President Assad's Syria, and even the (perhaps too-quickly forgotten) fundamentalist forces of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) do too. They are all fellow inheritors of Genghis Khan's brutal regime. Perhaps too we should not be surprised that Vladimir Putin rules much as any Tsar would rule, and uses the Church (and Patriarch Kirill in particular) as any Tsar would. The Russian cultural heritage lying behind it has nothing to do with Christianity as we understand it in the West. On the other hand, it seems to me, it has everything to do with the calculated savagery of the Tengrist Mongol hordes unleashed upon an unprepared world by Genghis Khan around 1200.

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## **The Craft Group**

The Craft Group and Friends have been knitting hats, scarves, gloves and mittens in anticipation of the announcement of the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal. We have sizes to fit all. These will be on sale after the Sunday morning services starting in mid September. The proceeds from the sales will go to the Church Fabric Committee as a donation from our crafters.

Many thanks

Kind regards

Margaret Badcock

## To All Our Friends At Sawston Free Church

Mary suggested I put together some words to send you, to let you all know how Sharn and I are going, so here are my attempts at coherence and connectivity.



It's Sunday afternoon when I'm writing this, a grey, cold, wet and windy dreary winter's day. Sharn is in her office working with a client but a bit later, when she's done, our son David with Jasmine and Rowan (our grandson of 17 years now) will be here for the evening meal tonight.

They've just been visiting with our daughter Allison and her husband and kids who live just 7 km away. It's great because Sharn and I often pick up the grandies after school and take them for a swim or milkshakes and treats at the local coffee shop. Logan is a gangly, fit, fast running 8 year old, Alex a 6 year old dynamo of energy and humour. We love them to bits. Sometimes they stay weekends.

I was the music leader this morning at church and we shared the 46th Anniversary of the Uniting Church with another church who came and joined us. We have a great band and this morning I was singing and on guitar; we had piano, organ, flute, violin and drums. We also did some lovely 3 part harmony on the Kyrie Eleison Taze chant. Beautiful. Sharn was the Vestry Steward which means she welcomes people, acknowledges that we meet on the lands of the Waddawurrung people, leads the opening prayers, reads the Scriptures and generally looks after the minister. She writes beautiful prayers and reflections, and that's without any bias on my part. Everyone says this.

Sharn's immersed in her PhD and there are books in every room. It's a lot of fun as well as painstaking work; I get to proof-read and edit so Sharn does the work, and I learn.

We've got an Eco group at church and we've just set up a library for our people, and anyone who has good books on the environment brings them in for others to borrow and read. We've also got a Tennis Club with four courts; we do lots of fundraisers and on Monday there is a tournament there and I'm the barrista for the canteen. If I'm lucky I might get a hit in after the comp. I've had to take a break from competition because I messed up my knee diving for a shot one day, but cycling is helping it rebuild. I'm playing again and back in the competition team in August.

We've got a bunch who go out on Wednesday mornings for about 65-100km ride. We are called Wheels on Wednesday; "WOW" is on our vests, so that makes us a bunch

of wowzers I suppose. Sharn and I sometimes go out on our tandem bike, but Sharn visits the gym almost every day for her exercise and she's getting so fit.

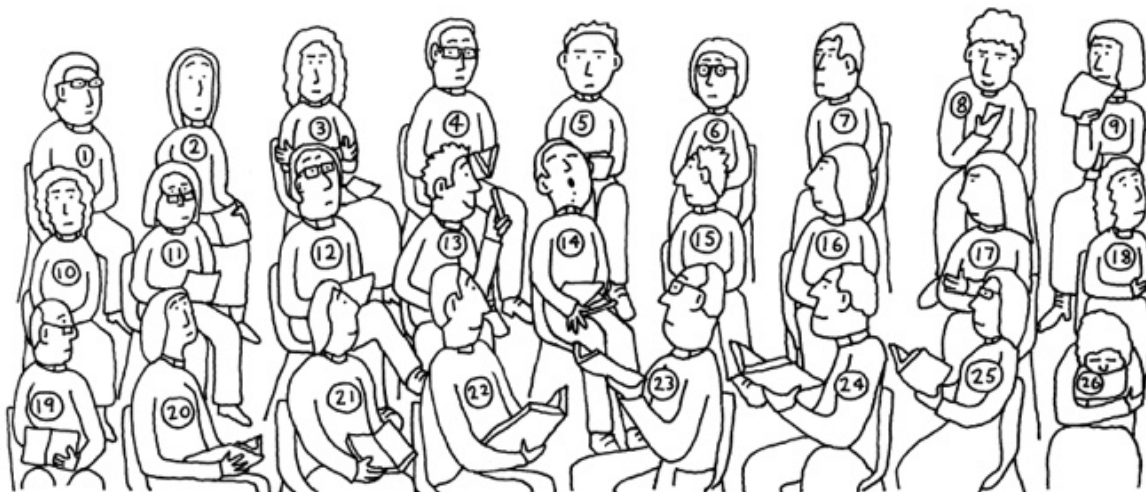
We have a Bassett called Winston. He eats and sleeps and follows his nose around, and romps with Charlie our Kelpie. They are best mates. Winnie also eats pot plants and boots and rugs and curtains and phones and chair legs. But he's loved, and only 5 months old.

So love to everyone; we think about you often, talk about you lots and miss you all. Gordon, we have a Property Committee, but nowhere near as efficient as your Fabric Committee, and I miss work days with Rosemary's Lemon Drizzle cake. Lovely people here, just not as organised as you were. I save them money by fixing things rather than calling tradies so they reckon I'm useful.

We are both well and loving life, and so grateful for our lovely 10 1/2 years at Sawston.

Love from us both  
Bruce

## THE CLERGY CONFERENCE



- ① IS IT COFFEE BREAK SOON?
- ② I COULD HAVE BEEN AN ASTRONAUT
- ③ IT IS SO COLD IN HERE
- ④ HOPE THE CATS ARE OK
- ⑤ WISH HE'D SNORE QUIETLY
- ⑥ HOW RUDE!
- ⑦ OH NO - HE'S MY ROOM MATE
- ⑧ OOH - FACEBOOK MESSAGE!
- ⑨ IT IS SO HOT IN HERE

- ⑩ WHAT TIME SHALL I PHONE?
- ⑪ SO MUCH TO DO WHEN I RETURN
- ⑫ WHICH PUB SHALL WE GO TO?
- ⑬ I'M TWEETING THIS
- ⑭ ZZ ZZ
- ⑮ HE MIGHT MISS SOMETHING
- ⑯ HOW VERY EMBARRASSING
- ⑰ WHY AM I HERE AGAIN?
- ⑱ LOOK AT THOSE FIELDS

- ⑲ CAN WE GET BACK TO THE TEXT?
- ⑳ WONDER WHAT'S FOR DINNER
- ㉑ ISN'T ⑮ LOVELY?
- ㉒ SERMON ILLUSTRATION!
- ㉓ OH DEAR - DRIBBLE
- ㉔ WHEN I'M BISHOP ALL THIS WILL BE MINE
- ㉕ WOULDN'T MIND HIS PARISH
- ㉖ ....

## **Fostering A Culture of Invitation**

We are working to foster a culture of invitation at Sawston Free Church. This builds on the foundational culture of prayer which we are also trying to build and establish. Of course, you can invite anyone to any of our services or events, but to help focus our thinking, we have set aside six Sundays in the year as “invitational Sundays”. Our next invitational Sunday is August 10<sup>th</sup> when David Lloyd will be leading worship. So it’s time to start thinking if there is someone you might invite. As you do that, here are some top-tips for inviting someone:

### **1. Choose the Right Moment**

Timing is crucial when extending an invitation to a church service. Look for a moment when the person is relaxed and receptive to conversation. Avoid approaching them when they seem preoccupied or rushed.

### **2. Be Enthusiastic and Personal**

When you extend the invitation, do so with genuine enthusiasm and a personal touch. Share your own experiences and what you enjoy most about the church community. Being sincere and passionate about your faith will make the invitation more compelling.

### **3. Inform, But Don't Overwhelm**

Provide basic information about the church service, such as the time, location, and style of worship. Highlight any special events or activities that might pique their interest. Avoid overwhelming them with too many details initially; you can always provide more information later if they show interest.

### **4. Emphasize an informal Atmosphere**

Some people may feel apprehensive about attending a church service for the first time, fearing they won't fit in or feel out of place. Assure your guest that the church welcomes newcomers and maintains an informal and inclusive atmosphere. Let them know there is no dress code, and they can come as they are.

### **5. Offer to Accompany Them**

Offering to accompany your guest to the church service can significantly reduce their anxiety about attending. Going together provides them with a familiar face and makes the whole experience less intimidating. This support can be crucial, especially for those unfamiliar with church traditions.

### **6. Respect Their Decision**

Not everyone may be receptive to the idea of attending a church service, and that's perfectly fine. Respect their decision and avoid being pushy. Instead, leave the invitation open for the future and assure them that they're welcome whenever they feel ready.

### **8. Follow Up with a Thank You**

Whether they accept the invitation or not, follow up with a thank you for considering it. Express your appreciation for their time and willingness to listen. This small gesture reinforces the notion of a caring and respectful community.



## 9. Stay Connected

Continue to build your relationship with the person, regardless of whether they attend the service or not. Invite them to other church events or social gatherings, ensuring they feel welcome and included in the community.

Inviting someone to church should come from a place of genuine care and a desire to share what you love about Sawston Free Church. By following these top tips, you can offer a warm and inviting experience, encouraging others to explore the enriching atmosphere of your church. Remember, creating a welcoming environment is an ongoing effort that extends far beyond the initial invitation. It's our job as a whole church to ensure that our morning worship is a space in people's lives where they feel valued, welcomed and treasured – a place where they can be themselves and find space for faith to grow.

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### GOD CALLING

*Keep Close Our Lord, guide us. Show us thy will and way in everything*

Keep close to me and you shall know the Way because, as I said to my disciples, I am the Way. That is the solution to all Earth's problems. Keep close, very close to Me. Think, act, and live in My Presence. How dare any foe touch you, protected by Me! That is the secret of all Power, all Peace, all Purity, all influence, the keeping very near to Me. Abide in Me. Live in my Presence. Rejoice in My Love. Thank and Praise all the time. Wonders will unfold.

\*\*\*\*\*

Prayer without action is no prayer at all, you have to do your work as if everything depends on you, then leave the rest to God.

Mother Theresa

***Many blessings to you all***

***Kate Leach***

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### Blythswood Shoe Box Appeal

At the church meeting we again agreed to collect for the Blythswood Shoe box Appeal

Further details will be available but please keep your shoe boxes ready for decoration. They are always filled so generously with such love and thought.

Toiletries, warm socks, pyjamas, tooth brushes and paste, underwear, warm gloves, hats and scarves, shower gels and soaps, pens, coloured pencils, note pads, candles, sweets and toys etc.

The Charity also add a Bible story book or a calendar with Bible verses for adults and a story book for the children.

***Rosemary Livings***

# Cream Teas



in the  
Challis Garden  
High Street, Sawston



(If wet the event will be held at the Footprints Café at the rear of Sawston FC)

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September**

**2.30 – 5pm**

**Entrance by ticket: £9 (10 years & under £4)**

**from Mary tel: 01223 837433**

**or Pam tel: 01223 834220**



## Reverend Jacob Bali

“Do you remember Jacob and Esther who were with us for a year when Bruce was here?” I am pleased to give you an update on their news. Mary

### Introduction

I am an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments in the URC, trained in Westminster College, Cambridge. Currently I am serving in the Pioneer Ministry role of Southern Synod Evangelist and completing my doctorate in pastoral care. I am married to Esther Eunjeong Yu (유은정 兪恩淨), who is South Korean, and is a registered Music Therapist and Nurse, and we have a 9-month-old son named Iwan (이완 怡完).



(Photo taken at 100th Day Celebration for Iwan)

My faith journey began at an early age as I was raised in a Christian home. My maternal grandfather was an Army Chaplain during the Second World War, and my maternal uncle was an Anglican Canon. I grew up in Kingston-Upon-Thames and my family attended the local United Reformed Church (KURC), where my mother continues to serve as an Elder.

When I was seven years old, I had a sense that God may be calling me to be a minister, although I also had a keen interest in animals and wanted to be a vet. When I pursued veterinary science in university, the gentle nudging feeling towards ministry never left me. In my second year of university, a close friend passed away and I decided to take a gap year. During the year I was employed as a children's and youth

worker in KURC, and I participated in several short courses exploring faith. It was during this time that I gained a keen interest in theology and found that I had an affinity towards Celtic Christianity. Nearing the end of my gap year, my minister asked me to lead an evening prayer service and during the service there was a moment when I felt with every fibre of my being, that I was doing what I was meant to be doing and exactly where I was meant to be doing it. Following this experience, I made the difficult choice not to return to my degree in veterinary science in order to test the call to ministry.

Whilst I was candidate for ministry, I had many meetings and conversations and I felt it would be wise to gain life experience and I decided to place my candidature on hold. Following conversations with URC military chaplains, I decided to apply for the British Army, and before long, I was riding a horse outside Buckingham Palace as a soldier in the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment.



My role in the Household Cavalry included guarding the late Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family at Buckingham Palace, Whitehall, being part of the Horse Guards Parade, and visiting heads of state, and taking part in famous public events on horseback and representing the Household Cavalry at military shows.

(Photo taken when I represented the Household Cavalry at a military show)

While on duty in Hyde Park Barracks in London, I was kicked by a military working horse which caused a life changing injury. I spent a year as an in-patient in the Headley Court Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre and I was informed by a surgeon that I would not be able to walk on my left leg in the foreseeable future. This was a very challenging period as I was forced to undergo many tests, physiotherapy sessions, and surgery. Unfortunately I had a severe allergic reaction to the medications which led to the development of a medical condition called vitiligo.

Despite these challenges and the uncertainty of the future, this proved to be a time of transition in terms of my faith that led to a resolve and clarity in my sense of purpose and desire to follow God's calling.



Upon my medical discharge from the Armed Forces, I began my training for ministry at Westminster College in Cambridge. During my studies I was elected by the student union to serve as the student president in my second year and then the worship facilitator in my third year. By interacting with students and staff across Cambridge University, I learned how to uphold my integrity while respecting the integrity of those who hold very different views. Following the successful completion of my studies I was ordained and inducted as the Associate Minister of Crossway URC in Southwark in the Special Category Ministry role of Southern Synod Evangelist.

During my time in Crossway URC, I worked alongside the Eldership and Local Church Leader, to provide pastoral care and leadership to the church. As the only ordained minister in Crossway URC, I chaired Elders' and Church Meetings, led worship on a regular basis, conducted weddings, and encouraged the church in whole-of-life discipleship. Through the pandemic, I gained extensive pastoral experience as I conducted hospital visitations, supported funeral preparations, and facilitated conflict resolutions.

In my Pioneer Ministry role, I am responsible for providing opportunities for people to explore faith and develop as disciples, by reaching out to those who live, work, study, and travel to the local area of Elephant & Castle, Tower Bridge and Walworth. I also extend mission and evangelism to other local churches through workshops, seminars, and leading worship. Additionally, I am one of the URC's Racial Justice Advocates Coordinators for the Southern Synod, with joint responsibility to organise the racial justice and multicultural work within the Synod.

My decision to apply for Trinity was largely affected by my experience. As I serve the community and visit churches across the URC, I feel a pull towards pastoral ministry.

I particularly feel drawn towards a pastorate that has a vision to see beyond the four walls of their building to reach the community in which they are situated. I feel drawn towards a pastorate that genuinely seeks to integrate discipleship in the life of their congregation; in other words, a pastorate that takes whole-of-life discipleship seriously. I feel drawn to a pastorate where the experiences I have had could be useful. I feel drawn to a pastorate in which the voice of children and young people are considered. I feel drawn to a pastorate where my family would be at home. I feel drawn to a pastorate in which inclusiveness is not only preached but practiced. I feel drawn to a pastorate in which ecumenism is not only tolerated but accepted.

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# **It's The Thought That Counts**

## **Choosing a gift for an elderly mother**

Three sons left home, went out on their own and prospered.

Getting back together, they discussed the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother.

The first said, "I built a big house for our mother."

The second said, "I sent her a Mercedes with a driver."

The third smiled and said, "I've got you both beat.

You remember how mum enjoyed reading the Bible? And you know she can't see very well.

So I sent her a remarkable parrot that recites the entire Bible. It took elders in the Church 12 years to teach him. He's one of a kind. Mum just has to name the chapter and verse, and the parrot recites it."



Soon thereafter, mum sent out her letters of thanks:

"David," she wrote one son, "The house you built is so huge. I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house."

"John," she wrote to another, "I am too old to travel. I stay most of the time at home, so I rarely use the Mercedes. And the driver is so rude!"

"Dearest Jeffrey," she wrote to her third son, "You have the good sense to know what your mother likes. The chicken was delicious."

*Anonymous*

(First appeared July 2016)

## SFC Friends' Milestone Moments

Maggie and I were privileged to share in a couple of milestone events for some friends of Sawston Free Church over a couple of weekends in June and July.

Firstly we went to Hadleigh (Suffolk) Great Meeting URC for Bryn Rickards' last service as minister there. You may recall that Bryn was a student minister at SFC and he, Lilly and the children (Davit, Vahan, Inga and Narek) were a lovely addition to our worshipping life in Sawston during Bryn's placement. The family are moving to Abingdon in Oxfordshire. Davit will be starting a Classics degree at Oxford University. Vahan, Inga and Narek will be starting new schools in Abingdon (in Vahan's case after he gets back from the USA where is taking part in the Yale Young Global Scholars program). Bryn and Lilly will both be working in Oxford. It was lovely sharing news with the Rickards and the fellowship at Hadleigh URC where we also had a splendid bring-and-share lunch.





The following weekend we went to the ordination of new priests at St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds to take part in the ordination of 13 new Anglican priests including Nicola Grieves who is CYDO (Children's and Youth Development Officer) for the Eastern Synod of the URC, and supports many of the youth activities at SFC including facilitating the Holiday Club. The ordination was a lovely service (but quite long) with beautiful music and a great sermon from the Bishop of Dunwich. Nicola is now attached to the Benefice of Barrow which includes Anglican churches in Barrow, Denham, Great and Little Saxham and Risby. Alongside this, she continues her work as CYDO for the URC.

**Matthew Jones**



Nicola with colleagues from the URC Eastern Synod Office

## Flowers for August

These are the dates that we will be arranging flowers for this month. As you see there is a blank week so it's not too late to offer. If you would like to put flowers in church to remember a special date, please talk to the flower team as they will be happy to arrange them for you.

6<sup>th</sup> August

13<sup>th</sup> August - Linda and Adrian Moxon

20<sup>th</sup> August Rosemary Harriss

27<sup>th</sup> August- Mary Simuyandi

Many thanks



**Flower Team – Rosemary Harriss & Livings, Dawn Haughton**

## National Assemblies

The Methodist Conference and the URC General Assembly have had their annual summer denominational meetings. Here's a VERY digested version of what happened at each!

### Methodist Conference 2023

(held at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole: Presbyteral Session 22-23 June; Representative Session 24-29 June.) [methodist.org.uk/conference](https://methodist.org.uk/conference)

#### Induction of the President and Vice-President for 2023/2024

On Saturday 24 June, the Revd Gill Newton was elected and inducted as President of the Conference, and Deacon Kerry Scarlett as Vice-President. They shared their theme of 'Hidden Treasures' in their addresses to the Conference.

New presbyters and deacons were ordained on Sunday 25 June 2023. They were received into Full Connexion with the Conference on Sunday morning, and travelled to Coventry for the diaconal ordinations and the presbyteral ordinations.

#### There is Room – Triennial Membership Returns 2019-2022

The numbers indicate a 3,000 reduction in membership between 2021 and 2022, more typical of pre-pandemic trends. The extrapolation implies a loss of 10,000 members during the pandemic, representing 15% of our membership.

#### A justice-seeking Church: the report of the Walking with Micah project

Walking with Micah is a two-year project helping the Methodist Church to explore what it means to be a justice-seeking Church. It recommends a framework of principles for justice and a two-year programme to embed these principles, priorities and practices.

#### 3Generate 2022 – Methodist Children and Youth Assembly

The Conference received a report that encouraged Methodists to engage in conversation with children and young people about faith and life.

#### Reconciliation and Mediation Team and Positive Working Together

The Conference agreed to roll out a scheme to help resolve disputes in church communities across the Church.

#### Memorials

The Conference considered 23 memorials on topics including district probationers' committees, probationers' retreats, email provision for ministers, Israel Palestine, the Annual Affirmations, EDI training, annual returns and statistics, locally resident members.

# **United Reformed Church General Assembly**

(which took place at The Hayes Conference Centre from June 30-July 3),

<https://bit.ly/URCgapapers23>

## **General Assembly Highlights:**

The Revd Fiona Bennett, the Moderator of the General Assembly, said that we need grace in communal life to laugh, cry, wonder, and have hope. She had discovered a great community of disciples, and felt she could trust the people she met right across the denomination. The Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson was inducted as the new Moderator of General Assembly after a joyous closing act of worship. She is first black and ethnically-minoritised woman to be elected as General Assembly Moderator.

Days two and three started with worship and a Bible study led by Dr Nicola Brady. She invited members to imagine themselves in Zacchaeus's place.

## **New Local Churches**

Bristol Korean Church was officially received as a new local church of the URC. The Revd Yohan Song asked for prayers that the church would be a proactive, fertile church, filled with hope and joy. General Assembly made the online meeting yoURChurch a congregation of the URC, and heard feedback from worshippers about how yoURChurch meets needs other churches don't.

## **Community Project Awards**

The United Reformed Church's community project awards were founded in 1998 and have awarded £125,000 to 66 projects. Three projects won awards at this year's Assembly. Causeway Community Garden, Darwen Asylum Refugee Enterprise and Wooler Warm Welcome are all run by churches.

## **Poverty and Inequality in the URC**

Resolution 31 called on General Assembly to challenge poverty and the structures that cause marginalisation, and asked the Mission and Ministries committees to reflect on how the Church might demonstrate its commitment to people living in poverty.

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The URC affirms the human dignity of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people, and requests the Equalities Committee to facilitate the understanding of, and pastoral care for, these people. It also acknowledges that the church sometimes perpetuates these patterns.



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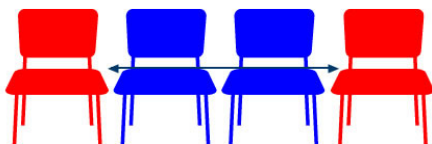
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