

THE MESSENGER

THE MAGAZINE OF PETERSFIELD AND LISS
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



PETERSFIELD AND LISS
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From the Minister ...



A few weeks ago, we started focusing on the theme of Worshiping in the Wilderness. This theme of wilderness is one that occurs frequently throughout the Lenten period. We remember how Jesus took himself off into the desert led by the Spirit, and how he was tested by the devil into succumbing to temptation. Now Jesus' reaction to his wilderness experience could not have been much more opposite to the reaction of the Israelites when they found themselves in the wilderness. They spent so much time and energy moaning about the things that they were lacking and even insisted that they would have been better off remaining in slavery in Egypt. Jesus on the other hand is hungry, and the devil reminds him that he has the power and the authority to turn the stones beneath his feet into food to sustain him. Jesus' rebuke shows his resolve; 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

This stark comparison got me thinking. Am I more like the Israelites in times of trial and tribulation than I am Jesus? The simple answer is yes! We are flawed human beings and we give into temptation and an easy way out of a situation far too easily. I have a guilty pleasure – I love nothing more than watching the survival show – 'The Island' hosted by Bear Grylls. I like to think I'd cope a lot better than those on the show when all the modern comforts were stripped away but I seriously doubt that I would. What becomes evident each day that progresses though, is that we are fundamentally selfish beings and when it comes to the choice of feeding ourselves or providing for a group – we instinctively choose to look after number one. Now, is this the kind of life Christ calls us to? No – we see from the way he lived his life that he sacrificed so much for us his children. But we, just like the Israelites can never live up to such perfection, does this mean we should just not bother trying though? Of course not, we are called to model our lives on Christ doing our best every single day to be the kind of people he calls us to be. Of course, we are going to slip up, temptations will come our way, we will moan and groan when things are tricky for us! But Jesus reassures us that whenever we come to God and ask for a clean slate, it will be given because of his love for each one of us.

This lent starts in a funny place, a place where we are, in a way, wandering in the wilderness. We are not sure what the next few months are going to throw at us! But as we journey toward Easter and the joy of Christ's death and

resurrection, let us live the wilderness experience, being open and honest with ourselves and God when we know we've slipped up and seeking a clean slate to start again trying to live the lives God calls us to.

I wish you every blessing,
Josh.



'One Year On'

It was just over a year ago that the WHO discussed the coronavirus that was starting to spread around the world. None of us could have foreseen the devastating effect on our world, with over 80 million people infected and nearly two million deaths. How has the pandemic challenged our faith, as we look back over the last year?

Firstly, it has forced us to face up to the **reality of our situation**. We cannot underestimate the health, social and economic effects of the virus on our lives, churches and communities. We have learned how to do church online, but the future shape of church life is uncertain! As the apostle Paul writes: *'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus'* (2 Cor 4:8-10).

The pandemic has challenged so much of what we take for granted, but also demonstrated that God is alongside to help us in these circumstances.

Secondly, alongside the fear and uncertainty of this year, we have also learned to find **new faith and hope in Jesus**. The experience of Jesus' death and His resurrection provides a pattern for us in facing the future: *'so that His life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.'* (2 Cor 4:10-12).

During the season of Lent, as we anticipate the events at Easter, it's good to focus on the promise of sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus. As we consider our present struggles, are we ready to surrender them to Jesus? May the hope of Easter Day take us forward into the coming year.



Secretary's Snippets!

Hello everyone,

Thank you to everyone who joined our first Zoom Church Meeting. It went really well and I have had lots of positive feedback from those who attended. The minutes have been circulated but let me know if you haven't managed to get a copy and we will make sure you get one as soon as possible.

For quite some time, the leadership of the church have been pondering on what should happen to our building on Hill Brow, Liss – St Paul's. As you are probably aware, the regular congregation there has been diminishing over the last few years and, although we were usually providing one service a month before lockdown, the numbers of attendees have been very small. We have been praying about what God wants us to do with the building and I know within the eldership there were very divided opinions about what should happen to St Paul's! BUT, as Josh told us at the church meeting, God might just have a plan! The Liss Foodbank are being made homeless and had asked if we could be a hub for them, initially in the short term. Well, I could almost see the cogs turning inside Jo and Josh's heads as the possibilities that this might lead to unfolded. Jo was already visualizing herself serving coffees and teas to folk coming to the Foodbank. Josh was building permanent storage so that we could become the home for the Foodbank and provide opportunities for outreach in the Liss community. It's early days but if we carry on praying – and listening – to God maybe there will be an exciting new beginning for St Paul's.

I'll just tell you about my first time of visiting St Paul's. At 18 I went to Bishop Otter College to train as a teacher. I had belonged to St John's Presbyterian Church in Orpington where I had attended the youth club and become treasurer (don't ask – it was a disaster!). I had become a member not long before going to college and, unbeknownst to me, my lovely Minister, Andrew Jaimeson, had contacted Jock Wilson at college. Now Jock was the college councillor and, as far as I knew, only helped folk in trouble. I got a note in my pigeonhole asking me to go and see him. My first thought was "Goodness they've found out about me very quickly". Always a guilty conscience! Anyway, with trepidation I went to see Jock only to find out that he was a lay preacher, and he was asking me if I would like to accompany him on Sunday mornings to the churches where he was preaching. My room mate and I both went (they had paired us up as we were both Christians) and one of the first churches we went to was St Paul's!!

I remember it so clearly and I remember that the church was full and a thriving community. So I am excited to see what God has planned for St Paul's now.

I want to finish with a few words for the Daily Devotions again. I shared this with Jo (God bless you, Jo) when I heard of her news, but it seems appropriate for us all at the moment.

“Sometimes life feels like a walk in the dark. There are perils and dangers, and not only in the night. We are fearful and anxious, sometimes even in broad daylight. At such times, these wonderful and powerful words speak to us. ‘The Lord is my light, my light and salvation; in Him I trust.’ When we are in any kind of dark, we have to trust those who can see ahead. When the path is uncertain, we search for a light for our steps. When the darkness deepens, we reach out for a hand to hold. And God is there.”

God bless you all,
Carol

Dates for your diaries

Each Sunday – worship at 10.30 am on Zoom and available on our YouTube channel.

Thursday March 11th and 25th at 8.00pm – Prayers for the NHS, our nation and the world, on zoom. Recurring link which is in the newsletter.

Socially Distant Pub Quiz – Alternate Saturdays at 8.00pm. This will be held on Zoom and details of how to join will be in the weekly newsletter.



Royal robes??

There was an article recently in the Daily Mail about the discovery of a piece of cloth in Southern Israel. Carbon dating estimates that it is around 3,000 years old, and this means that it was around during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon. The cloth is purple in colour and matches the description of royal purple on the Old Testament.

With thanks to **Ron Wing** for bringing this to our attention.



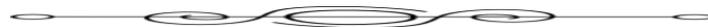
A Message from our Church and Community Worker...

This month I don't know what I will be doing to be honest with you. I'm sure some of it will be filled with work and chatting with you, some will be at the hospital getting my treatment. While other parts will be resting in the presence of the Lord, learning his word and being still with him. To know his vision for me to grow spiritually and be at peace with him.



Just because the path is treacherous doesn't mean it's the wrong path, it's means that God will hold our hands so we can face our fears, learn more about him and yourself and your relationship together. A dear friend sent this to me. 2 Tim 4:17 The Lord will stand with you and give you strength... In the hard times the Lord will not forsake us, he will stand right next to us, and in the darkest of times he will carry us. Whatever lies before us he'll be there. Be still and hear what he is saying to you. God loves, and accepts us for who we are be assured of that. May all our prayers ask for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, may you know his peace and love. May we grow and be the people he knows we can be, and wants us to be. Be bold be strong be who you're meant to be in Christ.

Jo Hopkins



From the editors ...

Preparing this issue of the Messenger at the middle of February brings some signs of hope : the days are getting longer, Spring bulbs are beginning to flower, and several million people have already received their first Covid vaccine including a good number of folk in our fellowship. In March, we continue to travel through Lent and Mothering Sunday is on March 14. Easter is not far away at the beginning of April. As usual, we have a wide variety of articles in this issue, which we hope you find inspiring, interesting and informative. With our thanks, as ever, to all our contributors.

Keith and Mary

Open for business

Throughout the last year of 'on-off' lockdowns with varying degrees of severity we have been encouraged to undertake physical exercise. For me that has chiefly meant walking. One of the joys of rambling in the English countryside has been, admittedly when not constrained by the 'local' ligature, coming across churches in the landscape. Beloved by Betjeman, medieval, or earlier, some now with only a semblance of a village around them, others were built at enormous human expense, their current maintenance costs outstripping revenue. Their obvious past centrality to community life contrasts with the requirements of smaller congregations in recent years.

If you walk past many today, whatever may be the permissibility of holding Christian worship, doors will be locked with little sign of life. Is the Church dead? Not a bit!

Wonderful as the architectural and historical significance of these buildings may be, and I would hate to see any fall into disuse, the last year has reminded Christians that the Church is neither bound by, nor dependent on, physical structures. The Church is a fellowship of believers, and thanks to the wonders of technology unimaginable only a couple of decades ago it has remained 'open all hours'. Although for most congregations, live streaming and virtual worship are a poor substitute for the real thing, they offer accessibility in a less confrontational way to enquirers of the faith, and comfort for the housebound, with the ability to join in services when inclement weather or distance inhibits physical presence in Church. Look out for innovative ways of worshipping complementing regular Church services when social distancing is, I pray, a thing of the past. Yes, the Church has joined the current century and is rising to the challenges of relevance in the new 'normal'.

Peter Jolly

This article was first published in the 'Faith Comment' column of the Petersfield Post on 10 February.



It is with sadness that we report the recent deaths of Gordon Gilbert, Pam Welch and Lucy Restall. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families at this difficult time.

A message from Emsworth ...

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Mark Chapter 6 verse 34

Cora and I have been living in Emsworth for well over six years; where does the time go? Living on my own in a four bedroomed house in Liss all that time ago did not seem sensible and as I had always had a dream of living near the sea, the bungalow in Emsworth beckoned. I thought that downsizing would need me to lose a lot of furniture and furnishings. So that's what I did only to realise that I over-did the losing bit!

Cora and I found this wonderful charity in Havant called "Stella's Voice." Founded in 1996 as a charity concerned with the appalling conditions in the State run orphanages of Eastern Europe, Stella was an orphan who was exploited by human traffickers, sold and eventually died of AIDS at 19 years old. We were able to buy some wonderful pieces of furniture which only now we shall be returning to the Charity to be resold. They also sold second-hand books; three for £1!!! One of my three books recently bought was Selwyn Hughes autobiography "My Story"

Selwyn Hughes, who died in 2008, became a follower of the Lord Jesus as a fifteen year old in the Mission Hall at his home village of Fochriw in the county of Glamorganshire, South Wales. In his book Selwyn describes the preacher that night of his conversion as a not very dynamic, ordinary man he had heard many times before who, to his shame hoped would not make to the Mission Hall that night because of the snow as Selwyn found him "boring". That night, however that man seemed "on fire". He said the words "This is the night when God wants to draw you to Himself. Come to Jesus, who will save you from your sin, live in you and give you the power to be able to serve Him." What is it about Wales and Welsh Preachers that can really stir the emotions? It should be remembered that the Holy Spirit moved mightily among the Welsh people in the early nineteen hundreds. When do we hear such evangelistic words from preachers today? When Jesus began His Ministry He taught the people as one who had authority. When the apostle Peter preached his first sermon (See Acts Chapter 2) we read "Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number **that day.**"

I remember going to the Billy Graham Crusade at Earls Court in London many years ago and felt vaguely disappointed with myself that I did not feel sufficiently inspired to go to the front after the service. It was just not my time, but Jesus, before He ascended into Heaven told His disciples to "go and make

disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28: 19) Those words could not be clearer, but when was the last time you introduced someone to the Lord Jesus?

As I read this wonderful book I realised that with the Churches I am a visiting preacher I have become comfortable with the congregations. The same people I have got to know and love over a number of years. I have never made such an evangelistic call as that preacher did that night in Wales.

Again in his book, Selwyn tells of the time that he preached at a gathering of around 5,000 Christians in South Korea. Apparently in Korea people pray in concert - everyone crying out loudly to God at the same time. Imagine the sound of 5,000 people fervently storming the gates of heaven! Selwyn had just finished commenting (through an interpreter of course) on the story of the Holy Spirit descending on the people gathered in the house of the Roman Centurion; Cornelius (Acts 10), when the Spirit again fell on the people in that Korean Church in such a way that it felt as though the building was being shaken. People were standing not only praising God in their own language but in other ones as well. One elderly Korean lady standing a few yards from Selwyn was praising God in Welsh saying over and over again, “*Diolch i ti Arglwydd*” - “Thank You, Lord, Thank You.”

With all the fears created by this Global pandemic there is, I believe, a hunger for the Spiritual from outside and inside our Churches. Are we ready to share the Gospel? Are we ready for revival? Do we want revival? All I can say is YES Lord YES!

Are we concerned that if we take the Gospel to a rally outside the Church that no-one would turn up? Are we concerned that if we made a plea for people to come forward to commit their lives to Christ and His Kingdom that no-one would move? Are we concerned that if we follow such a rally with an Alpha Course to help disciple new converts no-one would come? This year has shown us through the numbers that are out-side the Church that have shown an interest in on-line services that we should look out at this crowd and have compassion on them as they are like sheep without a Shepherd. Then introduce them to the Lord Jesus; our Shepherd.

*When Jesus landed and saw
a large crowd, he had
compassion on them,
because they were like
sheep without a shepherd.
So he began teaching
them many things.*

MARK 6:34



Love, Alan and Cora

Petersfield Sanctuary Project.

With Covid Pandemic restrictions having halted any progress of our project for over a year we have, with the use of technology and a Zoom Meeting, managed to make some further steps forward. The meeting, held early in February, discussed the overall project with our contact from the Wessex Synod and an appointed Project Architect. To them we described the project in terms of its Vision and the Key Elements of refurbishment work etc which have been identified as being required to achieve it. For a worthwhile recap on these :-

Our Project Vision.

Is, that in addition to some redecoration, the Project includes a reconfiguration and rebuild of the Sanctuary to extend and make more efficient and flexible use of the available space. The Project will convert the Sanctuary into a more open, spacious and flexible area for multi-purpose worship and community activities. The envisaged Stage Area for instance, will accommodate differing styles of worship and encourage use from our wider community for things like plays and small drama productions. The Project will modernise Sanctuary fabric and fittings and create a warm and welcoming environment for a broader range of worship and community activity than our present space allows. It will be the 'Right Space' for the activities, present and perceived, of a growing, progressive and outward looking Church in Petersfield in the 21st Century.

Possible Major Elements of the Refurbishment.

- a). Remove existing Pulpit area.
- b). Remove the Organ and all Ancillary Equipment.
- c). Remove Pews (replaced with modern singular seating) and make-good tongue and groove side walls.
- d). Investigate levelling Sanctuary Floor
- e) Create a stage area at front of Sanctuary... The stage will be equipped with appropriate power distribution, audio and control cabling etc to accommodate musicians, instruments, microphones, electronic screen, stage lighting etc.
- f). Form Passageway Access onto the rear of the stage area for talent etc
- g) Review existing House lighting and positioning of audio/lighting/IT control positions and cabling.
- h) Re-carpet Floor
- i) Revamp heating system. (Existing Boiler should be ok).

The next stage in our progress is to commission the architect to undertake a Feasibility Study of the project and we have asked that it should explore and include a selection of refurbishment options within the brief that we have given. Further meetings to pursue this have been scheduled and hopefully, in the not too distant future, the completed study will be available for Church members to consider and comment upon. It will be the basis for debate, changes and input towards a decision which confirms the final detail of the refurbishment and the end-goal of an exciting project to secure that Vision for our Church.

As we progress, there will be much to do, and shortly we will need to bring out, from enforced hibernation, members of our Steering Committee who have responsibilities for various aspects and components of the project. That's to put them on Notice !! This Committee will keep Church members involved, appraised and updated of our progress and be available to answer any of your questions as they might arise.

Watch this Space.....

John Sollis.



Jesus and His mother

When Jesus was at a Galilean wedding (John 2:1-11), He was there with His disciples and Mary, His mum. During the celebrations, unknown to the groom, the wine ran out. Mary was quick to spot the problem. She knew this could be an embarrassing moment for the groom if people couldn't have a drink, and the married couple would face ridicule and shame.

So, Mary asked her Son for help. Although we know that Jesus responded by turning water into wine, she didn't know this was going to happen. At that time Jesus had not performed a miracle! Whatever she thought, Mary simply showed concern and trusted Jesus to do the right thing.

At first Jesus seems to respond to His mum with a rebuke. This dilemma was not His concern. Even so, Mary says to the servants "Do whatever He tells you." Jesus instructs the servants to fill six large stone jars with water. A sample is taken, and it has become the best wine to conclude the festivities. Jesus had met a human need and prevented a ruined wedding day.

The servants obeyed Jesus and a miracle followed. Later, through His ministry, many people obeyed Jesus and their response brought healing or some other beneficial change.

In this story, only Mary, the servants and the disciples were aware of this miracle. It was not a public spectacle such as Jesus feeding 5000 people with a handful of bread and fish. We too should be alert to what God is doing *amongst us* while others are oblivious of a divine hand.

“Do whatever He tells you” Mary said. What wise words! When we do this our lives will be transformed. It took a mother to know the right thing to say in a troubled situation. Mary knew Jesus would not let her down. So must we.



14th March: Mothering Sunday, 4th Sunday in Lent

There is an old Jewish saying: *God could not be everywhere, and therefore He made mothers.*

Mother Church, Mother Earth, Mother of the Gods – our human mothers – all of them have been part of the celebration of ‘Mothering Sunday’ – as

the fourth Sunday in Lent is affectionately known. It has been celebrated in the UK since at least the 16th century.

In Roman times, great festivals were held every Spring to honour Cybele, Mother of all the Gods. Other pagan festivals in honour of Mother Earth were also celebrated. With the arrival of Christianity, the festival became one honouring Mother Church.

During the Middle Ages, young people apprenticed to craftsmen or working as ‘live-in’ servants were allowed only one holiday a year on which to visit their families, which is how ‘Mothering Sunday’ got its name. This special day became a day of family rejoicing, and the Lenten fast was broken. In some places the day was called Simnel Day, because of the sweet cakes called Simnel cakes traditionally eaten on that day.

In recent years the holiday has changed, and in many ways now resembles the American Mother’s Day, with families going out to Sunday lunch and generally making a fuss of their mother on the day.

Mission News

For your information and prayers, there will be news from one or more Missions each month. If you support a mission that has any information and prayer updates, please send these to the editors so that they can be included

Love Russia

We are a UK based charity that cares for and empowers vulnerable people in Russia...

orphanage leavers, mums in crisis, at risk children, adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those coping with extreme poverty.



LOVE RUSSIA

Restoring Broken Lives

WHY LOVE RUSSIA?

Compared to the UK, Russia has a huge number of orphans. Many grow up into lives of crime, addiction, poverty and abuse. Some also end up with their own children placed into orphanages.

We believe that by providing support through community based projects and equipping orphanage leavers, mums who are orphans and at risk of having their own children removed from their care (due to addiction, poverty or abuse), we are providing a solution to reduce the number of children being placed into orphanages.

Help for orphanage leavers

Orphans leave Russian orphanages at age 16 so ill equipped for life outside an institution that by age 20, 9 out of every 10 orphanage leaver will either be addicted to drugs or alcohol, have become a criminal or prostitute, have died or have committed suicide.

We have been caring for orphanage leavers for over 25 years to transform those statistics and give them all the opportunity to have healthy and independent futures.

We support young people with 3 aspects of life: life skills and mentoring, education support and transition homes.

Help for vulnerable women & children

In Russia, if a mum seeks support to rehabilitate from domestic violence, abuse, addiction, homelessness or poverty, she faces serious risk of her children being removed from her care. We believe that keeping families together can be an essential part of rehabilitation.

Love Russia supports groups that help orphan mums and a crisis centre that provides refuge and rehabilitation for vulnerable women and their children.

These groups and the crisis centre have been successful in preventing children being removed from parents and sent to orphanages, empowering women as mothers, helping women move forward from addictions and abuse and restoring whole families.

Help for the disadvantaged

Love Russia is privileged to be supporting a centre that welcomes and nurtures young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

This centre plays a valuable role in a society that still struggles to help young people with learning difficulties. Here they have the opportunity to learn skills, feel valued as useful members of a community and reach their full potential.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- SIGN UP FOR THE **LOVE RUSSIA NEWS**
- GIVE AS YOU LIVE
- FUNDRAISE
- BE A SPONSOR
- VOLUNTEER IN RUSSIA!
- RECYCLE

For more information, contact Love Russia at

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Church Lane
Thrumpton NG11 0AU
+44 (0)115 983 1100
<https://www.loverussia.org/>

With thanks to Ron Wing, who has been a supporter of Love Russia for many years and who brought this organisation to our attention for highlighting in the Messenger.



Open Doors has found that more than 340 million Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their

faith, amounting to one in eight worldwide. Here are the top ten countries that are most hostile toward Christians.

1. **North Korea** - Being discovered as a Christian is a death sentence in North Korea. If you aren't killed instantly, you will be taken to a labour camp as a political criminal.
2. **Afghanistan** -ISIS and the Taliban continue to have a strong, violent presence in Afghanistan, with the Taliban controlling large regions.
3. **Somalia** - Islam is considered a crucial part of Somali identity, and if any Somali is suspected of having converted to Christianity, they are in great danger. Members of their family, clan or community will harass, intimidate or even kill them. Women may be raped and forcibly married.
4. **Libya** - There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of religion and very limited possibility of public church life in Libya. Although there are around 34,500 Christians in the country, only a tiny number (approximately 150) are Libyan – the majority are expatriates and migrant workers.
5. **Pakistan** - Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws are used to target Christians, and Islamic extremist groups vehemently "defend" these laws, including attacking or killing those believed to have contravened them.
6. **Eritrea** - Government security forces monitor phone calls, scrutinise activity and conduct countless raids which target Christians, seize Christian materials and damage house churches. Christians can be arrested and imprisoned without trial.
7. **Yemen** - Christians in Yemen usually keep their faith secret, because if they are discovered then they could face the death penalty. Leaving Islam is forbidden, and all Yemenis are considered Muslims by the state.
8. **Iran** - The Iranian government sees the conversion of Muslims to Christianity as an attempt by Western countries to undermine the Islamic rule of Iran. Christians from a Muslim background are persecuted the most, primarily by the government, but also by their families and communities.
9. **Nigeria** - More Christians are murdered for their faith in Nigeria than in any other country. Violent attacks by Boko Haram, Hausa-Fulani Muslim militant herdsman, ISWAP (an affiliate of ISIS) and other Islamic extremist groups are common in the north and middle belt of the country, and they are becoming more common further south.
10. **India**- Hindu extremists believe that all Indians should be Hindus, and that the country should be rid of Christianity and Islam. They use extensive violence to achieve this goal, particularly targeting Christians from a Hindu background.

My, rather individual, thoughts -

18 months ago I took my first fall in Scotland. It is now nearly 9 months since normal life came to an abrupt halt in order to deal with the spread of the COVID virus - we still can't be sure when 'normal' will return, despite the number of vaccinations achieved. It has left me with rather a lot of thinking time, and no-one on hand to test or refine those thoughts.

Many of them are concerned with time, probably because there are so many years behind me and increasingly fewer folk who share my early memories. My 'Scottish' son has been digitising my father's slides and quite a few slightly more recent videos taken by my mother or me. He has turned to me for information re. who, where - and when! It is much easier to suggest a decade rather than a particular year! And there is no-one left in the family to disagree with me.

Time is truly a mystery. Cold, short, winter days with few or no 'appointments' left me free to count the hours as I pleased. It is what we have done in "summer" or "double summer" time. 91 years may seem a long time to me, but in the context of human history it is just a few seconds; even less on the scale of evolution; while space has to be measured in "light years". Can you get your head round the thought that what we 'see' in the night sky may not even still exist? That light has taken too long to travel there and back! It all makes 'eternity' easy, even appealing.

I am also aware that my very human body has had its best and can't be expected to last me much longer - something that does not worry me in the least, for I still feel 'young at heart', and more and more sure there is a better, quite different, life to come. I also accept that the intermediate time will not be easy (we 'oldies' say " Old age is not for sissies!"). On another time scale, birth into this life is not easy for mother or the baby who, happily, will not remember the restrictions or discomforts of birth and who has very few clues as to what human life will be like.

And so I go on, wondering and thinking "out of the box". I would never have had the time or inclination if it wasn't for COVID19. Does anyone else find it exciting, liberating? I do.

Joyce Perry

... and more individual thoughts

Firstly I was delighted to receive Josh and Jo's "Journey through Lent 2021" and for all your ideasperfect for dieters(pancakes) Having wondered for several days on my own project for Lent and having decided to read "Lent with Luke" promoted by David Thomson.

Lent being a time of "growing in our faith."

Opening scripture randomly in Luke's gospel, I was drawn to Luke 16 v 1-15 where Jesus tell a story about a deceitful manager of a very wealthy man who was accused of wasting his master's possessions. The crafty manager knows of his master's interest in watching his portfolio grow and how his job is on the line if he fails to grow that portfolio. Yet this manager decides to grow friends by granting favours to merchants who owe his master loans of goods. As he had no other way to support himself, he reduced what each merchant owed so that in turn he would be looked after when sacked from his job.

Jesus goes on to say that the wealthy man commended the dishonest manager for his shrewd way of dealing with people of his kind, however the remainder of what Jesus says has not been entirely clear to me, as far as in "no servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard the story and joked and sneered at Jesus, however He countered "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but The Father knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

David Thomson revealed the Jewish Law part within the story, that interest was forbidden to be charged on such loans, however to compensate for lack of compound interest, the initial sum loaned was increased well above that granted and all the steward did for each person was to reduced the bill back to the actual original debt. Should the master challenge these actions everyone would be aware of his own sharp practice and would draw attention to his cheating ways.

So what was Jesus really saying.....that those who heard and continue to hear the story in Luke should not hang onto their money but use it in ways which will make us welcome in homes on earth and our eternal home i.e. use it wisely for both charitable reasons as well as promoting God's Kingdom.

Maybe you are surprised as I was, or perhaps you knew. Jesus shows in His tale that He and His disciples are trusting and true and He forgives sins both large and small (debts we each owe) through His amazing love, yet people still say He is not entitled to do this, especially for those persons who have been extremely wicked but have yet repented.

Where would we place Hitler, Judas Iscariot, Pol Pot and others ? How would we workout our redemption ?

Ours is not to question but work tirelessly for Our Master sharing His Love and blessings, using money at our disposal for the benefit of the needy to further The Kingdom and adding to His Glory.

There are many instances where Jesus talks about money and wealth and how His followers should conduct themselves.....as shown in Luke's Gospel...."Practical application of some of our Lord's parables by Malcolm Horlick

1) One day we shall be called to account

2) Invest in the Lord now, not wait until we have enough! That might never come or happen too late to accrue us blessings or rewards.

3) If we were false and unfaithful in everyday life, yet displaying a Christian image, we would also be unfaithful in spiritual life, so that no one will entrust us with their spiritual riches and our image will be shown to be untrue.

4) All our riches belong or have been given by God ; He and others will see how we use these . Faithfulness in looking after these resources will result in blessings for us ; by not profiting or manipulating benefits for ourselves.

5) Most probably Jesus is quoted in Aramaic but Luke wrote in Greek, which causes the translations to twist slightly Jesus' words as this "Parable "? (my thoughts are story) is about faithfulness and "no one can get away with it" whether cunning/shrewd/ or deceitful as God sees all and nothing happens without His knowledge, nothing is hidden and will be revealed in time.

6) Our earthly fortunes can increase or dwindle but are nothing compared to our account of "love" , this being the main currency we can take into the life to come. And in our future explaining of our lives other important currencies are hope, faithfulness, mercy, justice, forgiveness, harmony, joy and LOVE.

7) Our God is pure grace and love, so opposites of deceiving , lying , cheating, selfishness, and shrewdness will incur His displeasure, so neither the rich man nor the steward are aligned with Jesus, as He shows joy in being faithful and true with no need to trick to gain any advantage because of being Who He Is....." I Am"

Tony Phillips



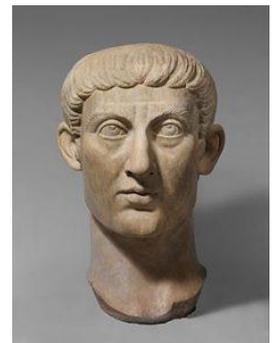
How Sunday became a Christian day of rest

It was 1700 years ago, on 7th March 321, that the Roman Emperor Constantine 1 (Constantine the Great), who had converted to Christianity, decreed that Sunday should be a day of rest throughout the Empire.

This was a change from normal Roman Empire practice, which was to regard Sunday as just another work-day – something the UK seems to be reverting to. But Constantine’s civil decree made Sunday a day of rest from labour. It said: “All judges and city people and craftsmen shall rest upon the venerable day of the sun.”

This was not intended to replace the Jewish Sabbath, which starts at sunset on Friday and continues to sunset on Saturday. Such Jewish observance was regarded by most Christians as being bound to the old law instead of the Spirit, and so was resisted. Christians backed the Sunday rest because it was the day on which Jesus had risen from the dead and the Holy Spirit had come – despite possible doubts about the phrase “day of the sun”.

Christians meeting for worship on Sunday in fact dates back to the Acts of the Apostles, and it is mentioned historically about 115AD. Actual practice varies across the world and through the years.



Picture from Metropolitan Museum of Art, CCO, via Wikimedia Commons



Books of the Bible

This is a series outlining all the books of the Bible, the word of God, which is central to our Christian faith. This month we are focusing on ... **Philippians and Colossians**

- *What type of books are they?* Teaching
- *Who wrote them?* Paul
- *When were they written?* 61 AD (Philippians) 60 AD (Colossians)



Philippi is in Macedonia (in the north of Greece) and Paul had founded the church there during one of his missionary journeys. The letter to the Philippians is a thank you letter to the church for a gift they had sent him while in prison, and is a letter of thanksgiving and encouragement. Paul expresses joy in serving, believing and giving and he encourages Christians to rejoice in all things.

Colossus is in what is now Turkey, and the church there had been founded by converts from Paul's journey, and it seems that there had been some false teaching there. In this letter to the Colossians, Paul clearly explains the deity and sacrifice of Christ as the only way to God and also gives some guidance for Christian living.



Real Easter Egg launches despite being dropped by supermarkets

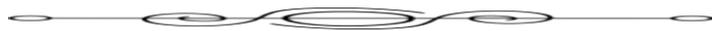
The Meaningful Chocolate Company has launched its 2021 Fairtrade Real Easter Egg range. All Real Easter Eggs come with an Easter story in the box. The stories range from simple guides to a 24-page activity book version with a prize competition worth £200. They provide an opportunity to share the joy of Easter with friends and family.

The 2021 Original Real Easter Egg includes a new 24-page Easter story activity book. It features a rainbow design to remind us of the importance of working together, in amazing and inspiring ways, for the common good. It costs £4.50 and is delivered in multiples of six or as singles.

David Marshall, from Meaningful Chocolate, said: “Even with the current uncertainties we believe that it is more important than ever that churches, schools and individuals find ways to share the Easter story in 2021. Our aim is to provide some of these resources and continue to support Fairtrade. The Real Easter Egg is a proven way to do this. You can order direct from www.realeasteregg.co.uk”

Tel: 01948 831 043

As supermarkets sales of Easter Eggs were badly hit in 2020 during lockdown 1, stocks of Eggs will be much lower this year and the 'Real Easter Egg' brand will not be available on shelves



Switched on

A housewife was helping her aged mother get up the stairs on their brand-new stair lift when the minister telephoned her. He was horrified to hear her say: “I’m so sorry, but I’ll have to ring you back. I can’t talk right now because I’ve finally got Mother in the electric chair and I’m eager to press the switch and see if it works!

Save the earth. It’s the only planet with chocolate.

A filing cabinet is a place where you can lose things systematically.

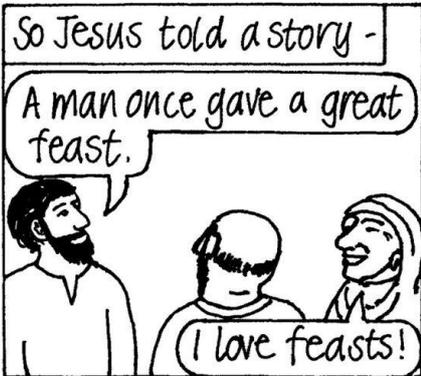
For our younger readers ...

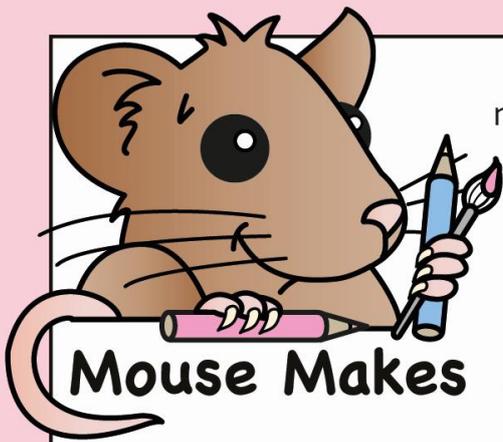
Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke chapter 14 verses 15-24

Jesus was at a dinner when one guest said how good it would be to be at God's feast for His people at the end of time.





Mouse Makes

Who is my mother?
Look up the Bible verses then find the mother's names in the word search

CAIN and ABEL
Genesis 4:1-2

JOSEPH
Genesis 30:22-24

ISHMAEL
Genesis 16:15

TIMOTHY
2 Timothy 1:5

RUBEN
Genesis 29:32

GAD
Genesis 35:26

SAMUEL
1 Samuel 1:20

OBED
Matthew 1:5

ISAAC
Genesis 21:3

Jesus was **loved** by his mother Mary, she looked after him, worried about him and prayed for him. She **cuddled** Jesus when he was born, **cried** when he died and **rejoiced** when he rose from the dead.

SOLOMON
1 Chronicles 3:5

JOHN
Luke 1:57-60

ESAU and JACOB
Genesis 25:24-26

JESUS
Acts 1:14



R	A	C	H	E	L	M	A	R	Y	A	V	Z
E	L	I	Z	A	B	E	T	H	H	E	V	I
B	Z	D	R	E	B	V	S	U	A	U	O	L
E	T	M	U	M	L	E	A	H	N	N	L	P
K	M	O	T	H	E	R	R	T	N	I	E	A
A	I	S	H	H	A	G	A	R	A	C	G	H
H	S	T	A	B	A	T	H	S	H	E	B	A

There are two other words in the word search, can you find them?

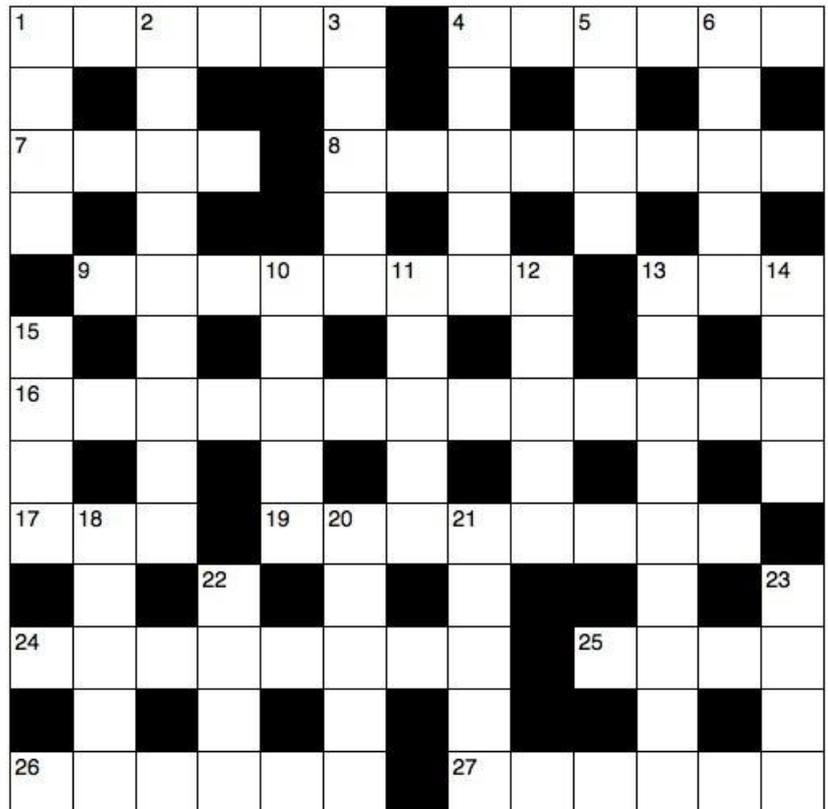
Crossword

Across

- 1 The earth is one (6)
- 4 'On a hill far away stood an old — cross' (6)
- 7 'I am the — vine and my Father is the gardener' (John 15:1) (4)
- 8 The Caesar who was Roman Emperor at the time of Jesus' birth(Luke 2:1) (8)
- 9 'Your — should be the same as that of Christ Jesus'(Philippians 2:5) (8)
- 13 Jesus said that no one would put a lighted lamp under this(Luke 8:16) (3)
- 16 Involvement (1 Corinthians 10:16) (13)
- 17 Armed conflict (2 Chronicles 15:19) (3)
- 19 Where the Gaderene pigs were feeding (Mark 5:11) (8)
- 24 What jeering youths called Elisha on the road to Bethel (2 Kings 2:23) (8)
- 25 The Venerable — , eighth-century Jarrow ecclesiastical scholar (4)
- 26 8 Across issued a decree that this should take place (Luke 2:1) (6)
- 27 Come into prominence (Deuteronomy 13:13) (6)

Down

- 1 Where some of the seed scattered by the sower fell (Matthew 13:4) (4)
- 2 Sexually immoral person whom God will judge (Hebrews 13:4) (9)
- 3 Gospel leaflet (5)
- 4 Physical state of the boy brought to Jesus for healing (Mark 9:18)
- 5 Tugs (anag.) (4)
- 6 To put forth (5)
- 10 Nationality associated with St Patrick (5)
- 11 Leader of the descendants of Kohath (1 Chronicles 15:5) (5)
- 12 'After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping — heel'(Genesis 25:26) (5)
- 13 At Dothan the Lord struck the Arameans with — at Elisha's request (2 Kings 6:18) (9)



- 14 'Peter, before the cock crows today, you will — three times that you know me' (Luke22:34) (4)
- 15 Spit out (Psalm 59:7) (4)
- 18 'When I — , I am still with you' (Psalm 139:18) (5)
- 20 Concepts (Acts 17:20) (5)
- 21 Thyatira's dealer in purple cloth (Acts 16:14) (5)
- 22 Does (anag.) (4)
- 23 The second set of seven cows in Pharaoh's dream were this (Genesis 41:19) (4)

Answers on page 27

Sudoku

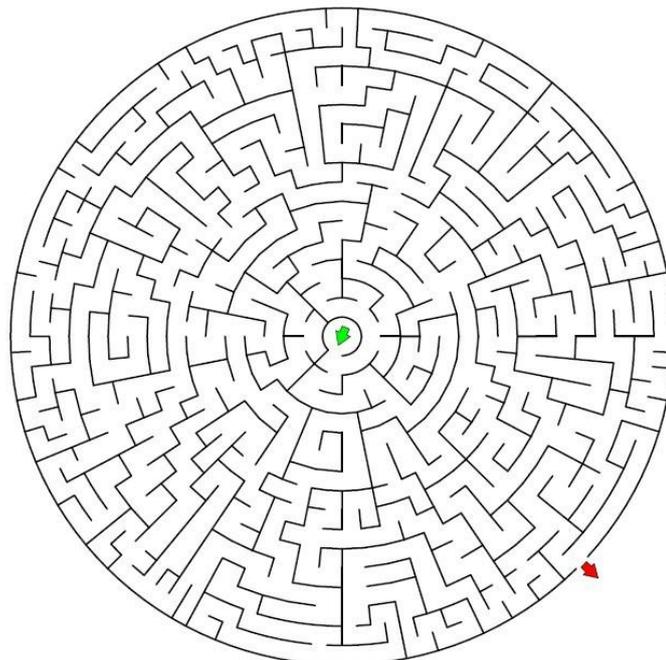
					7	9		8
			8	6	9			
	6	8	4			5	1	7
7			2	5			3	
5	1	6				2	7	4
	2			7	4			1
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	5		8			4	6	
		1				3	7	
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		8	6	7				
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				5	9	2		
					6			
	2	3				5		
	7	4				2		9

Easy

Medium

Maze



News from the United Reformed Church items from the February edition of the Synod Newsletter



World Day of Prayer Service 5 March 15:00 on Zoom Friday 5 March is World Day of Prayer. Andover, Devizes, Poole and Salisbury area World Day of Prayer planning groups have united to provide an exciting and vibrant service open to all. Salisbury URC is hosting on Zoom – with space for 300 to join in. Groups around the world will gather virtually for this year’s service, written by the Christian women of the Republic of Vanuatu. Consider joining in, linking with fellow worshippers around the Synod and around the world on this momentous day of prayer.

Learn more about joining the service on 5 March at 15:00 here: [World Day of Prayer service Friday 5 March 15:00 on Zoom | Salisbury United Reformed Church \(salisburyurc.co.uk\)](#) You do not need to register.

Are you thinking about whether to attend this year’s summer conference? Are you a regular Forumite keen to get a mid-year fix of your favourite Christian get-together? Come and experience our free event - **Holiday Forum in a Day!**

More details: [Holiday Forum in a Day - Saturday 20th March](#)

News from Zambia Link The past few months have seen a number of changes within the Lusaka Presbytery. The Revd Rodwell Chomba completed two distinguished terms as Presbytery Bishop and is now stationed in the Matero Consistory in North West Lusaka. His successor, Bishop Lordwell Siame, is a former participant in the Link Programme and has been a vocal supporter of the Link within the Presbytery. Most congregations in the Presbytery are now meeting for worship although with varying degrees of social distancing and the wearing of face masks. To accommodate everyone whilst observing distancing some are holding extra services and assigning members to different times. Almost all have two services as standard of which one is generally in English and each service lasts around two to two and a half hours.

Whilst I am aware that not everyone is a fan of Facebook it is a medium used by a number of UCZ congregations and provides opportunities to have a window into their life. The Presbytery itself has a FaceBook page and a number of congregations live stream their services. In each case if you log onto FaceBook and then search for the congregation you want to see you will be offered the opportunity to “follow” them and can receive alerts to tell you when they are streaming their services “live”.

Nigel Appleton

Wessex Synod URC - Lusaka Presbytery UCZ Co-ordinator.

Enquirers' Event - What is God asking of YOU? Ministry Enquirers' Event to help you think about God's call to Worship Leading, Lay Preaching, Ministry with children and young people, the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work. Saturday 27th February 2021 - 10am – 3pm online Register with ministries@urc.org.uk to receive Zoom details

Change of Date– Synod Big Day Out will now be in 2022 URC Wessex Synod - Big Day Out Date: 7th May 2022 Time: 11am till 5pm Venue: Hollycombe Steam Fair and Museum near Liss (Wessex Synod will have sole use of the whole site) Theme: Jubilee: 50th anniversary of the URC More details to follow.

New Training – Leading Small Groups online Thursday 29 April 2021 at 10.30am. This course is suitable for anyone leading small groups online (children's and youth leaders, Ministers). Lessons learnt from the Lent for Youth online course.

Children's Day 2021 – save the date! Forest Church Children's Day on Saturday 24 April 2021– venue to be confirmed. We will be inviting children between 7 and 13 years to come to an exciting Heroes and Villains Children's day. It will be held predominantly outdoors in Forest Church Style, in small groups, so our hope is that it can take place even in the current climate. Watch this space for further details and opportunities to book your places.

Mental Health First Aid training dates

Mental Health Awareness. This course is one session on Zoom, 9am – 1pm.

- **24 March 2021** (book by 15 March)
- **26 May 2021**(book by 17 May)
- **21 July 2021**(book by 12 July)

Become a certified Mental Health First Aider. Choose the adult focus or youth focus course .These courses are delivered online across four sessions with some self-learning exercises to complete in preparation for each of the live Zoom sessions with the trainer. **Upcoming dates.**

- **Become a Certified Mental Health First Aider - Adult focus**
22 March – 1 April 2021, Monday and Thursday mornings 9am to 12 noon. (Book by 15 March).
- **Become a Certified Mental Health First Aider - Adult focus**
20 April – 30 April 2021, Tuesday and Friday mornings 9am to 12 noon. (Book by 12 April)
- **Become a certified Youth Mental Health First Aider**
17 May – 27 May 2021, Monday and Thursday afternoons 1pm to 4pm. (Book by 7 May 2021).

Booking for all mental health first aid courses is essential.

Please email: bookings@urcwessex.org.uk to register for a course.



Lectionary Bible Readings for March

March 7	Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22
March 14	Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21
March 21	Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12; Psalm 119:9-16; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33
March 28	Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Mark 11:1-11; John 12:12-16; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 14:1-15:47;

Important - Sensitive issues

As the Messenger is included in the Church Website, it is important that all the content is suitable for public exposure. When composing an article, if there is anything at all that you consider should be removed before publishing on the website, please inform the editors, Keith and Mary Evans.

The articles contained in this magazine do not necessarily represent the views of Petersfield and Liss URC leadership.

The deadline for the **April** Messenger is **Sunday 14 March 2021**. Please send articles to Messenger Editors, Keith & Mary Evans, tel 01730 235922 e-mail keithnmary@talktalk.net

Wessex Synod Prayer Calendar March

7	Meeting of Synod; Twyford (Bucks); Cheap Street, Sherborne
14	Jersey; Woodley Airfield Church; Portsmouth: Drayton United Church
21	Christchurch; Thame; Southampton: Hedge End
28	Oxford: St Columba's; Guildford: St Peter's



Answers to Crossword on page 23

ACROSS: 1, Planet. 4, Rugged. 7, True. 8, Augustus. 9, Attitude. 13, Bed. 16, Participation. 17, War. 19, Hillside. 24, Baldhead. 25, Bede. 26, Census. 27, Arisen.

DOWN: 1, Path. 2, Adulterer. 3, Tract. 4, Rigid. 5, Gust. 6, Exude. 10, Irish. 11, Uriel. 12, Esau's. 13, Blindness. 14, Deny. 15, Spew. 18, Awake. 20, Ideas. 21, Lydia. 22, Odes. 23, Lean.

Church Contact Details

Church	Petersfield : College Street, Petersfield GU31 4AG 01730 266475	Liss : Hillbrow Road, Liss GU33 7PX
Minister	Rev Joshua Thomas Tel 07734 254983 minister@petersfieldurc.com	
Church Office	Administrator Mrs Esme Kelly Office Hours 9am-12noon Tuesdays to Fridays	
Church & Community Worker	Mrs Jo Hopkins 01730 266475 communityworker@petersfieldurc.com	
Telephone	Church Family Centre 01730 266475	
Website	www.petersfieldurc.com	
E-mail	admin@petersfieldurc.com	
Sunday Services	Mornings at 10.30 am Services are relayed by Zoom during lockdown. They are also available on Youtube	
Secretary	Mrs Carol Tubbs 39 Rotherbank Farm Lane Liss Forest GU33 7BJ Tel 01730 893489 Mobile 07766 412160.	
Treasurer	Mr Jim Cleverly, 4 Crundles, Petersfield GU31 4PJ Tel 01730 300558	

Petersfield United Reformed Church Mission Statement

“As a congregation worshipping God: we seek to reach out with the love of Jesus; to worship God in our daily lives; to draw others into the knowledge and love of Christ; and to make disciples”