Dear Friends

As Easter approaches I think back to Easter 1975, the day on which I was baptised and received into membership of the URC. I made my profession of faith, then knelt as the minister baptised me with water in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

On that day I received three precious gifts. The first, and most important, was God’s gift of the Holy Spirit – a gift to the soul. The second was a gift from the Church presented by my Girls’ Brigade captain: a Biblical concordance (a book of words with corresponding chapter and verse references) – a gift to the mind. The third was a gift from my father: a gold cross on a chain to wear around my neck – a gift of the heart. Given that my father usually only attended church once a year on Remembrance Sunday, and knowing the care he would have taken in choosing the gift, it was very special. I wore it day and night.

I still have the concordance. The gift of the Holy Spirit is ever new. Sadly I lost the cross one autumn day, somewhere between Oxford and Sussex, during my third year of ministerial training. I retraced my steps, I scoured the leaf-strewn gutters, I asked around the college and library, I called in at the roadside services where I had stopped briefly, I even phoned the Oxford City Council road sweepers and parking wardens, but eventually I had to accept that it was gone. I felt lost without this precious symbol of my faith and my father’s love.

As we approach Holy Week again and recall the events of the first Easter, we are reminded of all that the cross represents. The crucifix, which is so central to the Roman Catholic expression of faith, testifies graphically to Jesus’ suffering and sacrificial love. The empty cross beloved of the Reformed tradition speaks of suffering and death overcome and of Christ’s resurrection life.

Whether crucifix or empty cross, there is a wide selection of designs to choose from in any jeweller’s shop, appealing it seems not only to Christians but to many who have no active church connection and for whom the Christian faith appears to play no meaningful part in their lives. Is it a kind of ‘talisman’, worn by some in an unacknowledged hope of divine protection? Perhaps the truth is more prosaic and worldly, but in the meantime the jewellers’ windows continue to offer silent witness to the love of God in the arms of Jesus Christ stretched out for all who will look upon the cross. If only they could also display the Scripture verse:

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3.16

I now wear a new cross. It does not replace the old one, but it is a new expression of the same truth. I wear it with joy and gratitude to the dear friends who gave it to me and, above all, to the Saviour who gave his life for me and for you and for all the world.

Perhaps the crosses we wear around our necks, pinned to our lapels or as designs on bags or t-shirts may provide the opportunity to strike up a conversation with a stranger and share the true meaning of Easter.

In the love in Christ,

Caroline

In This Issue:
Fun at ‘Jonah & the Whale’ Pop-In • Notes from February Church Meeting • “What If” Reflection • A new School Prayer • Child of Hope • Dress a Girl around the World..... and more

Also: Church Annual General Meeting 2014 Reports Supplement, pt 1

Dates for Your Diary

Partnership Visit to ZAK Frankenthal 10 - 15 April
Pop-In Express 12 April
Musical Ploughman’s Lunch 27 April
Pop-In Express 10 May
Christian Aid Week begins 11 May
Fund-raising Lunch 18 May
after Morning Worship c.12 noon
Pop-In & Pop-In Express with Praizin Hands puppets & BBQ 28 June 10.30am onwards
We remember in our prayers those who are or have recently been unwell or in hospital: Isobel Evans, Jill Freemantle, Elaine James, Pauline Jenkins, Sheila McMahon, Nora McNiven, Ann Scriven, Janet Stead and Pam Toobe.

We also pray for Mary Joyce and family on the recent death of Dennis, for Betty Wilson and family on the sudden death of Tom Wilson, a past member of this church. We also pray for Margaret Tudor and family following her father’s recent stroke.

Congratulations ... to Emily Meachin on passing her driving test.

Notes from February’s Church Meeting

As our Minister was away, Revd. Tim Meachin kindly chaired the meeting with 21 members and Elders present. As is our custom, we shared news of the church family and prayed for the bereaved and unwell.

Next in the Local Ministry and Mission Review (LMMR) is a meeting on 18 March with Revd Mark Meatcher (our facilitator), our Minister and the Elders of both Broadstone and Lytchett Minster churches.

The Minister is now approaching members nominated by us in our returns for the Elders’ Elections 2014.

The Spring Mission Supper is on 15 March, with a speaker from “Child of Hope”, a Christian charity working with slum children and their families in Eastern Uganda. On the theme of ‘food’, the meeting thanked Pam Sales for providing lunch for Revd Clare Downing during her recent visit to Broadstone.

Hopefully, you have seen the leaflet on the new AV system that the January Church meeting requested; discussions are continuing with the supplier and we need to carry out some in-house work before the contractor can start.

Do you remember last years ‘Summer Jam’ in Broadstone? This year, just entitled a ‘Summer Event’, it’s on Sunday 13 July, 12.30 - 4pm. We will run an activities tent for young people, similar to last time. Churches Together in Broadstone are discussing having a Community Information Tent and a joint morning service.

We were delighted to hear that Saz Holland is looking to undertake a TLS course in preparation for a leadership role in the church. The Elders and Church Meeting agreed to support Saz fully in this.

Under Any Other Business, Elders were asked to tell Linda Smith what cleaning of the hall is required over half-term; a member asked for an update on the Church Grouping proposals – Synod will be asked; and Dilys Lawrence asked for volunteers to make dresses from cotton pillowcases for children in South Africa (see opp page).

My son Peter & daughter-in-law Jo wish to join me in thanking all the friends who wrote, phoned, sent cards, also words of support, at the passing of my husband Dennis. It was of great comfort during this sad time to know your thoughts were with us, and we thank you all most sincerely.

Mary Joyce

Lytchett-Line goes to Cardiff, Sat 31 May

The fabulous ancient, but modernised city of Cardiff is on offer for our next day out. Within this great compact city centre are found many, many attractions, and all within easy walking distance.

These include the incredible Millennium Stadium – open for tours on the day we’re there – a must for rugby fans. Next to the Stadium is the fascinating Cardiff Castle – a really interesting place to visit. Both of these attractions are on the edge of the most incredible shopping district within the pedestrianised central area. With ultra modern shopping centres alongside Victorian and Edwardian Arcades full of boutique shops you’ll be spoilt for choice. Also nearby is Cardiff’s indoor market – trading for over 100 years in a Victorian structure sited under one great glass roof. The Doctor Who Experience is sited a short bus ride away in Cardiff Bay, near to where filming of the programme takes place.

We leave Lytchett Matravers on Sat 31 May at 08.00 to arrive at c.11.00 and leaving at 16.00 to return home for 19.00 - for just £22.

For more details/bookings, phone me on 01929-4593 or email joandeve.puttick@btinternet.com

Jo Puttick

I would like to say a heartfelt ‘Thank You’ for all the cards, flowers and kind words received when I lost Tom. They were much appreciated at a difficult time.

Betty Wilson
Church Life in pictures...

February saw the visit of Wessex Synod Moderator, Revd Clare Downing. Here (left) she is shown enjoying a post-Service cuppa with Janet Meachin and Ian McDonald.

Pat Snow (right) is congratulated by our Minister on achieving 40 years continuous membership of Broadstone United Reformed Church.

Les and Gill Sherlock came to speak at our Spring Mission Supper about the work of the charity Child of Hope, run in Uganda by their daughter Bex and her husband. The following is a brief overview of their work.

“We are a small organisation with big ambitions, working on the edge of the Namatala slum in a town called Mbale in the Eastern part of Uganda. Our ethos is to improve the future of those living in the slum and surrounding area one child at a time. If we can change the life path of just one child, the effect can also make an impact on their family, friends and the rest of their community too. We want to help in building an empowered generation, educationally, morally and spiritually, with the ability to change their lives and those around them for the better.

“Co-founder Moses Okotel was a social worker before he set up Child of Hope in 2008 with his wife Bex. What started out as a small nursery for children in the slums has now developed into an over-subscribed holistic education and social welfare service that has totally transformed the lives of hundreds of Ugandan children.

Dress a Girl Around the World

A work colleague brought in a child’s dress she had made using the ‘pillow case’ pattern given at http://www.dressagirlaroundtheworld.com. It was lovely. I was very keen to make some - so far I’ve only managed one, but aim to make more. They are not very difficult to make so if anyone would like more information - or have a group ‘sew-in’, please contact me.

Dilys Lawrence

continued on page 5
Having a ‘whale’ of a time at February’s Family Pop-In
Family Worship MiX

At the first meeting of the new Children’s and Youth Work Forum in July 2013, we started to consider the future way forward for our outreach amongst the families of Broadstone.

In particular, we have a number of families who are connected to the church and attend from time to time, and the Forum has been discussing how we might seek to encourage these families whilst ensuring that both parents and children have a worthwhile and fulfilling experience. What became apparent very early in our deliberations was that we didn’t want to divide our church family by having separate services for families. Our vision for 2014 was to provide church that is attractive for all ages and to provide for all ages within the church and for those on the periphery of the church.

After much deliberation, discussion and research amongst our pop-in families and with other churches, we have come up with a proposal which we are calling Family Worship Mix which will run on the fourth Sunday morning of the month. In noting that families feel unable to commit to weekly church, they would nevertheless get a more beneficial experience if they all came on the same Sunday. The format of this service will provide an opportunity for the whole church family to worship God and study His Word through a choice of creative arts, discussion, prayer and, for those who prefer a more traditional approach, a topical sermon. All the activities will be open to a mix of ages from children to adults. We will begin with praise and worship in the church before breaking for the various activities, returning later for a short time of sharing together.

With parents who are uncomfortable with a sermon, we hope that by encouraging those of all ages to take part in the practical activities, our message will be accessible to all, with the opportunity for a more relaxed approach to church.

Having discussed the idea with some of our pop-in families, there does seem to be some interest so we hope that you will give us your prayerful support as we take another exciting leap of faith with our outreach work. We are launching the Family Worship Mix on 27th April so hope that you will support us on this occasion. Any feedback, or suggestions for improvement will be welcomed.

Gill McDonald
Mission House Report

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10).

Hello again and Happy Easter!

Some of you have seen me around the last month back in England due to sick leave. As you read this, I will be back in the Netherlands, thank you for your prayers and words of encouragement—it was good to be back for a while to recover!

Last time, I mentioned about 3 churches I like to go to and also experiencing new opportunities with one of my projects. In the city of Amsterdam, there are 100’s of churches of all denominations to choose from. Daniel and I attend Krijtberg Kerk, a Dutch Catholic church on Saturday evenings. This service is in English and very popular for tourists and for non Dutch speakers. The style of worship is formal and simplistic which has an awe inspiring effect on the congregation. The musical cantor / cellist Vincent De Lange has a heavenly rich voice who leads us in musical responses, 2 hymns and plays the cello to reflect to. Sends shivers down your spine! Sunday mornings, I attend St Nicolas Kerk, a Catholic cathedral near Central Station. This style is very formal.......I often think we are on TV to millions of people around the world broadcasting a formal / special occasion! This service is all in Dutch including the order of service........10 A4 pages worth of Liturgy. Strangely, they don’t sing hymns, only musical responses. Sunday afternoons/evenings I go to Hillsong, a worldwide evangelical mega church........very popular with the younger generation. The style of worship is very informal, spontaneous and like a pop concert with flashing lights, smoke, very high tech equipment, load music, lots of songs etc. Lots of cheering, shouting, clapping, dancing, hands in the air, jumping about, ........very high energy in other words! I really enjoy going!! It is interesting learning about the Christian faith and seeing different ways of worshipping. Standing up for the Lord’s prayers, hands in the air, kneeling down to pray, dinging of the bell, admiring the altar/crucifix, high energy services, response time, routine set service, spontaneous services etc. All church services are different through the world with different formats, languages, worship styles etc........a part from this they all have something in common......Preaching the good news of Jesus and showing God’s unconditional love to everybody.

Now, let’s talk about one of my projects, the Straatklinkers. This project is singing songs with the homeless. Lydia and I make and serve lunch every Friday morning for them and join in singing as well. Secular, traditional, religious songs from “Hava Nagia” to “Angels watching over me”, “Molly Malone” to “John Kanaka”, “Drunken Sailor” to “Aan de Amsterdamse Grachten”.....to name a few! While having fun singing, we practise for concerts / events.

The last 2 events, we drove to Antwerp in Belgium and to Bijlmerbajes.....a big prison complex outside Amsterdam!

In Belgium, we spent the day there sight seeing the city and preparing ourselves for a big event in the evening. Can you guess what we did?..........a ‘flash mob’! It was based in a big yard in a high school. Homeless people and people who are in need collect food from a big food bank there. In the long lines of people, we mingled in and waited for our cue to start singing. The trombone started to play and we started to sing “Wild Rover”, big round of applause and we carry on singing more songs. Amazing!

Our second event, we went to Bijlmerbajes, a prison complex has 6 tall towers with 14 storeys, big yard, doctors, library, training/education centre, workshops etc. Massive! We sang in two services with hundreds of inmates from all walks of life. The services were informal and interactive with everyone, all in Dutch, English and Spanish: 2 inmates sang a rap they had composed then a 10 min social time with drinks in the middle of both services.........not like a traditional service! Truly awesome! I would never image myself having an opportunity like this in my life! Really felt God at work and touching people’s hearts who are experiencing great difficulties with life. Giving them a sense of hope, peace, and compassion and showing God’s unconditional love. The whole experience I will never forget, it was really powerful!

In the Bible there are hundreds of verses telling us about God’s unconditional love. Despite our sin, man made-influences and the temptation from Satan which leads us to suffering.......God loves us regardless. It is hard to comprehend this concept due to the nature of God.

A prayer: Loving father, thank you for your unconditional love for us all. We lift our hands to say we love you and we want to worship you. Thank you for sending your son to pay the price of our sin and giving us new life in your creation so we can have a relationship with you. Every blessing you have poured out, we’ll turn back to praise. When the sun is shining down and all as it should be, blessed be your name. Thank you for being with us in our daily lives in the times of joy and the times we are on a road marked with suffering. You are the true living God above all nations and you are worthy of praise. We put our lives into your hands and give us the strength to follow you and to put you first in everything we do. Pray this in Jesus name, our Messiah who lives and reigns yesterday today and forever. Amen.

Blessings

Saz Holland
The Lord's Prayer is not allowed in most Public schools anymore because the word 'God' is mentioned. So a pupil in WINNIPEG wrote the attached NEW School prayer:

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Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule
For this great nation under God
Finds mention of Him very odd.
If scripture now the class recites,
It violates the Bill of Rights.
And anytime my head I bow
Becomes a Federal matter now.
Our hair can be purple, orange or green,
That's no offense; it's a freedom scene.
The law is specific, the law is precise.
Prayers spoken aloud are a serious vice.
For praying in a public hall
Might offend someone with no faith at all..
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In silence alone we must meditate,
God's name is prohibited by the Provence.
We're allowed to cuss and dress like freaks,
And pierce our noses, tongues and cheeks...
They've outlawed guns, but FIRST the Bible.
To quote the Good Book makes me liable.
We can elect a pregnant Senior Queen,
And the 'unwed daddy,' our Senior King.
It's 'inappropriate' to teach right from wrong,
We're taught that such 'judgments' do not belong.
We can get our condoms and birth controls,
Study witchcraft, vampires and totem poles...
But the Ten Commandments are not allowed,
No word of God must reach this crowd.
It's scary here I must confess.
When chaos reigns the school's a mess.
So, Lord, this silent plea I make:
Should I be shot; My soul please take!
Amen
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Submitted by Anne Longley
**“What If” Reflection**

What if God couldn’t take the time to bless us today because we couldn’t take the time to thank him yesterday. . .

What if God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we didn’t follow him today. . .

What if God didn’t walk with us today because we failed to recognize it as his day. . .

What if we never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when God sent the rain. . .

What if God stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to love and care for others. . .

What if God took away the Bible tomorrow because we would not read it today. . .

What if God took away his message because we failed to listen to the messenger. . .

What if God didn’t send his only begotten son because he wanted us to be prepared to pay the price for sin. . .

What if the door of the church was closed because we did not open the door to our heart. . .

What if God answered our prayers the way we answer his call to service.

Submitted by Saz Holland

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**The Pope and Chief Rabbi phone The Lord**

The Chief Rabbi of Israel and the Pope are in a meeting in Rome. The Rabbi notices an unusually fancy phone on a side table in the Pope’s private chambers. “What is that phone for?” he asks the Pontiff. “It's my direct line to the Lord!” The Rabbi is sceptical, and the Pope notices. The Holy Father insists that the Rabbi try it out, and, indeed, he is connected to the Lord. The Rabbi holds a lengthy discussion with Him. After hanging up the Rabbi says, “Thank you very much. This is great! But listen, I want to pay for my phone charges.” The Pope, of course refuses, but the Rabbi is steadfast and, finally, the pontiff gives in. He checks the counter on the phone and says: "All right! The charges were 41 Euros. (£34) The Chief Rabbi gladly hands over the money.

A few months later, the Pope is in Jerusalem on an official visit. In the Chief Rabbi’s chambers he sees a phone identical to his and learns that it also is a direct line to the Lord. The Pope remembers he has an urgent matter that requires divine consultation and asks if he can use the Rabbi’s phone. The Rabbi gladly agrees, hands him the phone, and the Pope chats away. After hanging up, the Pope offers to pay for the phone charges. This time, the Chief Rabbi refuses to accept payment. After the Pope insists, the Chief Rabbi relents and looks on the phone counter and says: "1 Shekel" (17p). The Pope looks surprised: "Why so cheap!?" The Rabbi smiles and says, "It's a local call."

Submitted by Saz Holland

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**Weekly Activities**

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>10.30 am</td>
<td>Morning Service and Junior Church (Communion celebrated 1st Sunday in the month)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.30 pm</td>
<td>Evening Service 2nd &amp; 4th Sundays Communion 2nd Sunday in the month</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>12.30 pm</td>
<td>‘Oasis’ House Group (3rd in month)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>10.30 am</td>
<td>Bible Study (1st &amp; 3rd Wednesday) Toddler Group</td>
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<td>2.00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>10.00 am</td>
<td>Ladies’ Open House (2 groups) (alternate weeks)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.30 pm</td>
<td>Women’s Network - at Methodist Church</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6.30pm - 7.30pm</td>
<td>Open Church (2nd &amp; 4th in month)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8.00 pm</td>
<td>Music Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>9.45 am – 10.15 am</td>
<td>Prayer Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>5.00 - 7.30 pm</td>
<td>Pop-In Express (2nd in month)</td>
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Monthly Church Meeting - contact Church Secretary for details.  
Twice-monthly Home Groups - see weekly news-sheet for details.