

Pathway



The
United
Reformed
Church



Newsletter of Broadstone United Reformed Church
April & May 2026

Dear Friends,

I'm writing to you this afternoon from wonderful Woking! I am away with all the ministers of Wessex synod for our spring school, and so far it's been a great week. We've worshipped, learned, prayed, eaten and quizzed!

The highlight so far has been Justin Brierley - a speaker, writer, broadcaster on faith issues - who spoke today about his work around the rebirth of belief in God. For years, Justin has been hosting debates between people of very different views. No so long ago there was a rise of a new atheism, which was really quite anti-God and Christianity. Now though, Justin says he is seeing a real rise in curiosity around Christian faith. People seeking a new depth to life and a reason and purpose for their existence.

As a church there is little we need do to respond to this shift it seems, other than strive to be faithful to God and welcoming to all who might come through our doors. In fact, the more we might try and dress things up, the less interesting it might become. Authentic faith alongside worship offering a depth of experience and exploration seems to be the way ahead.

It's been a very inspiring week that I will need to reflect on further, but hopefully it will prove fruitful for us all.

Andy



God befriends

From the URC Prayer Handbook 2013, kindly suggested for inclusion in Pathway by Pat Johnson

God of compassion
You feel the pain of those who hurt,
You cry with those who are near to breaking
You share the load of those most heavily
burdened.
You're the friend of those who are most alone
You listen to those who are most alone.
You listen to those who are rendered voiceless
You stoop to lift all who have tripped and fallen,
left unnoticed by a world which cannot see.

God of compassion, fill us with compassion too -
to see the ones you never pass by,
to remember those you never forget,
to love the ones you always love,
and bring your healing to a hurting world.

Karen Campbell

FAMILY NEWS

We remember in our prayers those who are, or have recently been, injured, in hardship, unwell or in hospital, including **George Goodbody, Peter Legg, Gwyneth Maling, Charles Meachin, Sheila McMahon, Tony Mesher, Val Rowberry** and **Michael Shutt**.

Easter Greetings from Frankenthal

We have received these Easter greetings from Florian Theobald, our Frankenthal co-ordinator:

Dear friends from Broadstone,

Thank you very much for the palm crosses, which the members of our congregation have once again greatly appreciated this year and which have become a well-established and cherished tradition in our church.

Attached you will find a photo of our pastor, Pfarrerin Simone Gerber, together with Elias and Clara Theobald and the crosses. Many

thanks as well for your Easter greetings. We wish you a very happy Easter too and hope that you will enjoy joyful and blessed days within your community and with your families.

Warm regards and Happy Easter from your friends in Frankenthal,
The Twelve Apostles Church Congregation



One of my favourite pieces of Christian writings is One Solitary Life. Although the author is frequently cited as "unknown" it is actually attributed to James Allen Francis. Having just celebrated Easter and mindful of global issues, I thought I would share it with you in case you have not seen it before.

Caroline Foster

'One Solitary Life' by James Allen Francis

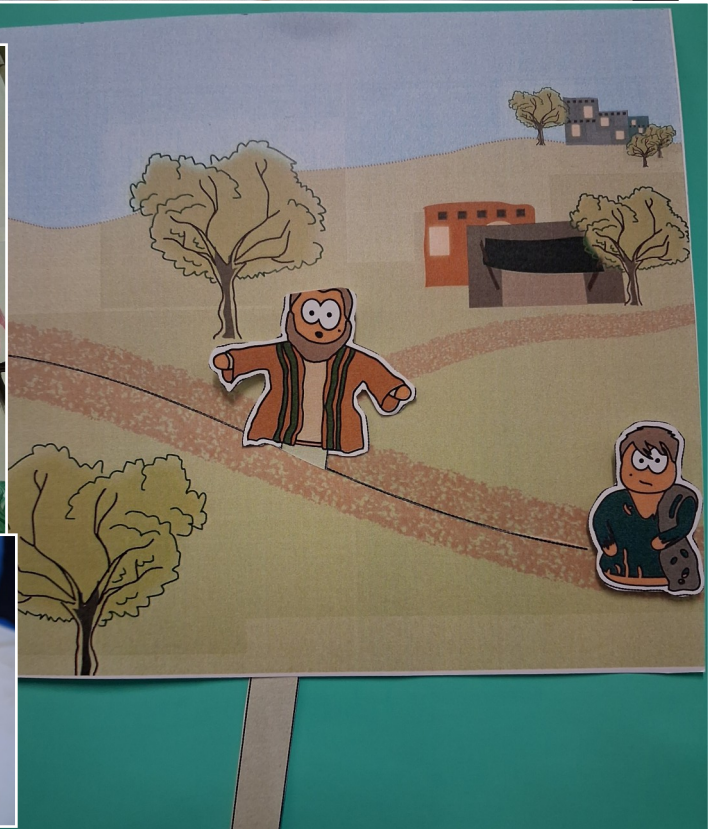
Here is a young man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30, and then for three years was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never travelled more than 200 miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of those things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself....

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed on a cross between two thieves. While he was dying his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth and that was his coat. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone and today he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever were built, all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as has that one solitary life.

Church life in pictures...

The church's monthly 'Pop-In' family activity mornings continued in February and March. With the February date falling on the 14th, the theme was, suitably, 'Love: How Does This Grow'. Reflecting on the themes of the Prodigal Son and love shared all around, activities included decorating hearts made from clay, making a house for bugs, painting hearts giving out love, icing pig biscuits, and a puppet father on a slider welcoming home his son. In the church, they made a 'Welcome Home' collage poster.



A month later on 14th March, it was Easter at Pop-In, with Easter nests, cross bookmarks and Easter wreaths being wrought by the children and families. This was followed by a short service led by Andy.

Photos by Margaret Tudor

Church life in pictures...



You will have noticed that the lighting has changed in church! Our ageing and barely accessible fluorescent tubes, installed in 1980, have been replaced – the needed lighting update was added to the building project to take advantage of grants from the Wessex Synod, and the momentum to get the job done.

It was something of a journey; the lighting was specified in outline by the architect, designed and supplied by lighting suppliers and installed by our trusty builders Rob and Bradley, with the help of two electricians from Hook Electrical Contractors.

While the work was underway, services were held in the church hall, including one in a 'café church' style, with tea and coffee shared as the service began. Thank you to our minister Andy, visiting preacher Andrew Williams, helpers during the services and all the congregation for their flexibility and helpfulness.

The new system uses high efficiency LED lights, giving a warm light (at the discerning recommendation of the electrician) to create an appropriate atmosphere. For three weeks the church was full of scaffolding as the system was installed, and the lights were adjusted after the first Sunday in use to the arrangement we have now.

Flexibility was one of the requirements – lighting is controlled by either of the sets of switches, found by the doors nearest the piano and the organ. A diagram by each shows which switch does what. This flexibility enabled appropriate lighting for our Maundy Thursday service, and also the Dorset Chamber Choir concert that we hosted in Holy Week. Thank you to Andy for masterminding this project; we expect that the lighting will prove its worth in the years to come.

Martin Casey

Photos by Saz Holland



Unrelated to the building works, Saz also snapped a photo of this frog on the church premises in February while we were having our endless torrential rain - she said she could only assume it was looking for Noah's ark!

Church life in pictures...

It was wonderful to see the magnolia tree at church out in bloom in March. For those who are not aware, the tree was originally planted at Lytchett Minster URC in memory of Miss 'Phil' Phillips, the sister of Pearl Wilson. When Lytchett Minster closed, Rev Martin Ambler asked the congregation if there was anything they would like from the church (thinking, perhaps, a hymnbook) and instead the tree made its way to our church! After a few years taking root, it now flowers annually in early spring. Photos by Margaret Tudor



To compare - right is the tree's first flowering in 2020, a few years after the move



In March we also took the time to mention the participants in the Macmillan Cancer Support Dorset Bike Ride, a long-standing church tradition. Janet Watkins and Ian McDonald plus a friend rode 45 miles each last July and raised £1,000 for the charity.

Janet Meachin was also awarded a medal, as she has been a volunteer for many years making teas and welcoming the riders back at the finish line.

At the Movies - Shaken not Stirred!

So, who loves watching movies? I do, especially good action and adventure films like Indiana Jones, True Lies and James Bond, and also Disney movies, which I can't deny are my favourites!

At first glance, the world of spies, gadgets and international adventure may seem far from the world of Bible. What could a fictional secret agent possibly teach us about our faith?

James Bond lives in a world of danger and excitement. He is sent into dangerous places where the lines between good and evil can blur and adrenaline-pumping antics are needed. And yet, his secret mission is always clear: protect life, stop destruction, and prevent chaos from overtaking the world under the watchful eyes of MI6 and the quiet wisdom radiating from M.

In many ways, we are like a secret agent of the Holy One. Sounds exciting! We are placed into the world not always with clear instructions, but with a purpose or mission embedded in our tradition: bring more justice, more kindness, and more holiness into the places we go. Joshua 1:5 *"No one can withstand you as long as you live. As I was with Moses, I will be with you: I will not leave you nor forsake you."*

Like a secret spy, we often work quietly. In the Talmud, the key book of Jewish teachings and law, it states *"when the righteous come into the world, good comes into the world, and divine retribution is removed from the world"* as well as *"the righteous sometimes walk through the world unnoticed"*. A small act - a kind word, welcoming a stranger - can change the course of someone's life, and does not require an exploding pen!

To be a secret spy Bond must be fit, requiring discipline and training, which his survival depends on. We, too, value practice: prayer, study, and doing good for the world, all of these are skills we can learn that become easier and more powerful with practice.

One of Bond's famous phrases about his beloved martini, 'shaken, not stirred', may offer a clever metaphor. Life shakes us: hardship, uncertainty and fear can shake the soul. God does not promise that we will not be shaken, however He does promise *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you."* (Isaiah 43:2)

Our mission is, of course, not set by MI6; it is set by God Himself. We don't need gadgets, a tuxedo, or a secret code name. Our mission is already assigned from the very beginning of time: Bring light where there is darkness. Bring faith where there is doubt. Bring dignity where there is cruelty. On our divine mission, every single act of goodness may be the moment that saves the world.

1 Chronicles 28:20 *"Then David said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished"*

Saz Holland

The Olympic Games - Let's Race!

I come from a family who love sports, especially the Olympics. There is something very special about it, it's beyond words. Every four years, the world stops to watch human beings from around the globe stretch the limits of strength, discipline, and endurance. We see runners collapsing at the finish line, snowboarders defying gravity, ice hockey players making big hits whilst chasing their goal of victory. The Olympics celebrate the glory of the human body and the power of human will and determination.

There is a Hebrew word *avodah* which simultaneously means 'work', 'service' and 'worship', drawing a connection between these things. When we watch elite athletes train for years, we are reminded of a powerful truth: mental effort and physical discipline can also be a form of service of God.

The Olympics are built on competition. Faster. Harder. Stronger! *Pirkei Avot*, an ancient

Continued on page 7...

The Olympic Games - Let's Race!

Continued from page 6...

compilation of theological teachings, has the quote "*Who is strong? One who conquers their inclination.*" The arena is not the only stadium; so is the human heart - to find strength, determination, flair, sportsmanship with a perfect heart. Psalm 144:1 "*Praise be to God, my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle.*"

In the Olympic Games, you may compete against others, but in reality the competition is against yourself - both maintaining the self-control over a long period of training and preparation, and then not giving into ego or envy. An athlete may win a gold medal and still lose their humility. Another may finish last and yet display grace, kindness, and dignity that shines brighter than any podium.

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Olympics for me, is the gathering of nations. Flags from every corner of the earth. Languages, cultures and histories all converging in one place. Our tradition teaches "*When God*

created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God" (Genesis 5:1). We are loved and accepted, 100% guaranteed!

The Olympics teach us something else essential: every athlete runs their own race in life. A sprinter cannot compare themselves to a skier, and a snowboarder does not measure success by a cyclist's time. Each soul has its own calling or mission. Your path is not mine. My challenges are not yours. Psalm 18:32 "*It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.*"

If we can take the Olympic spirit - discipline, perseverance, striving for excellence - and infuse it with common values like humility, gratitude, compassion, hope and faith, then we transform competition into our journey with God. So let's race and just do it!

Psalm 60:12 "*With God we will gain the victory, and He will trample down our enemies.*"

Saz Holland



Items for the June & July 2026 issue of *Pathway* should be sent to Dominic Casey by Monday 25th May 2026

Weekly Activities

Sunday	10.30 am	Morning Service <i>Holy Communion celebrated 1st Sunday in the month</i>
Tuesday	12.30 pm	'Oasis' House Group <i>(3rd Tuesday in month)</i>
Wednesday	10.00 am	Yarn with Yarn Charity Craft Group <i>(alternate weeks)</i>
	2.00 pm	Toddler Group
Thursday	10.30 am	Ladies' Coffee Morning <i>(alternate weeks)</i>
	8.00 pm	Music Group
Friday	2.00 pm	Home Group sessions <i>(last Friday in the month)</i>

- Church Meeting - contact Church Secretary for details.
- Monthly House Group - contact Elizabeth Howard for details, and please advise her if planning to attend
- See weekly notice sheet or get in touch for details of 'Oasis', Ladies' Coffee Morning, and other activities.

Points of Contact

Minister: Revd. Andy Hall
phone: 01202 698638
email: minister@broadstoneurc.org

Church Secretary: Mrs Janet Meachin
email: secretary@broadstoneurc.org

Treasurer: Mr Ian McDonald
email: treasurer@broadstoneurc.org

Organist: Mr Martin Casey
email: music@broadstoneurc.org

Editor: Mr Dominic Casey
email: pathway@broadstoneurc.org

Web: www.broadstoneurc.org

Facebook: [Broadstone URC](https://www.facebook.com/BroadstoneURC)

YouTube: [Broadstone & Blandford URC](https://www.youtube.com/Broadstone&BlandfordURC)