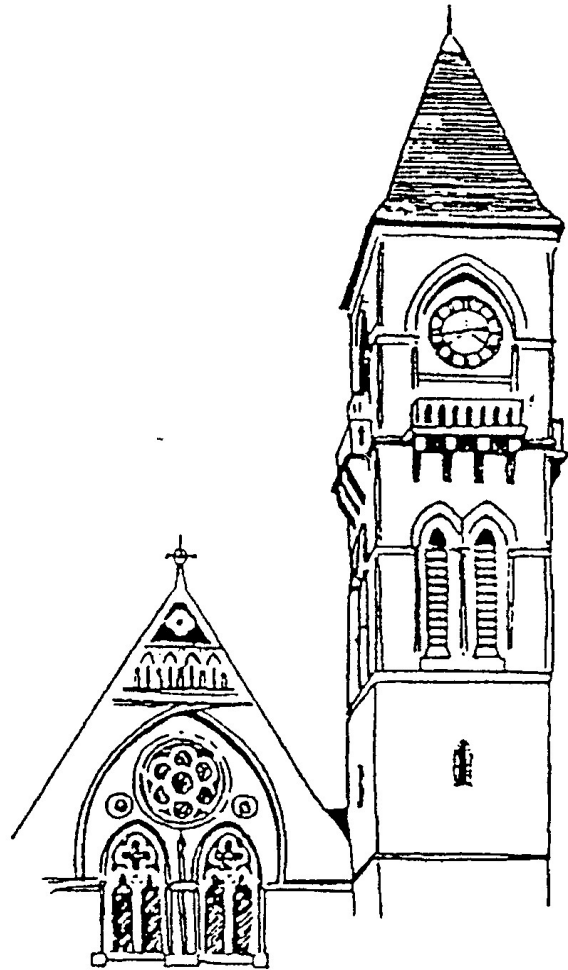
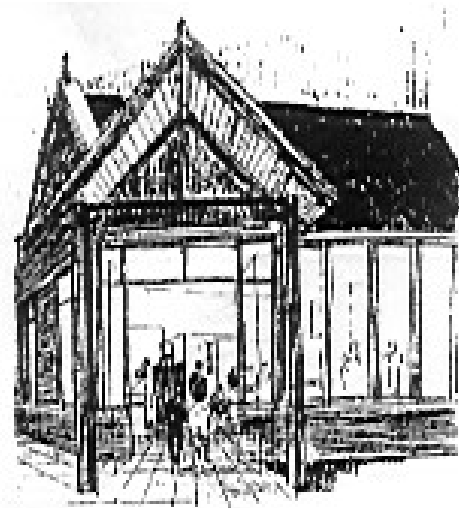


UNDER THE CLOCK

The Magazine of
Caterham United Reformed Church



February – March 2025

Welcome Letter

Dear Friends

I hope you have all had a happy time over the Festive period. At the time of writing, we are coming towards the end of January, which is known as the longest month even if factually that is not true! There are of course other months that are 31 days long and October is currently 1 hour longer than all the others (due to the clocks going back) so it is definitely not January! However, after the week of very cold icy weather earlier this month and the strong storms we have seen, it will be nice to move on to February and nearer to Spring.

One bright event this month was the lovely Christingle service which took place in our church. Janette Butler organised it brilliantly, and Huw and Gail Marshall-Jones enthusiastically led the service. It was a joy to see the church filled with so many families and children and we should be very thankful for that blessing. We are very fortunate to have several Junior Church helpers to guide our youngsters. They have such an important role and do a tremendous job.

One thing I always look forward to at the start of a New Year is a different daily reference guide. In the past it may have focused on a piece of music, poetry or a historical event. This routine started about 7 years ago when I was given a book called *The Year of Wonder* as a Christmas present. The book suggests a piece of classical music each day of the year, and now that we are able to access music via Spotify, Apple music etc it is practical to do. My siblings were also given a copy and together we would compare notes throughout the year.

The book was written by a very talented broadcaster, journalist and violinist called Clemency Burton-Hill. It was very sad to hear a few years after we had followed the book that she was struck down by a catastrophic and life-threatening brain

haemorrhage. She survived thanks to timely intervention and medical expertise, but had to relearn how to walk and talk, having been in a coma for seventeen days.

I have followed her progress partly because we have a family friend who suffered the same devastating injury at a very young age. I saw how much he was determined to recover the use of his sight, speech and mobility. The resilience and tenacity with which he fought to get better was awe inspiring and very humbling. The strength of the human spirit is often amazing and there are icons that we can look up to who have illustrated this. One of my heroes is Nelson Mandela. How he was confined in a prison cell for 27 years and yet displayed forgiveness and love to his captors after his incarceration is so amazing. He demonstrated how important resilience is.

The Bible has many stories of individuals who stood firm through trials, and trusted to God to help them through. As a teenager I enjoyed reading 'Esther' by Norah Lofts and saw how Esther's courage saved her people. Joseph's journey from slavery to leadership is another prime example in the Bible of resilience.

While most of us won't face such extreme challenges that these people have faced and endured, we all face struggles and stresses of our own, some minor and some major. Their example is an inspiration for us all.

It was with some joy that when I was browsing in Waterstones before Christmas last December that I came across '*Another Year of Wonder*' which was published after Clemency Burton-Hill had had her injury. I snapped up a few copies to give as Christmas presents so that I could go through it this year with my siblings.

The following poem, *Life*, was written by Henry Van Dyke. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1852 and was an author, diplomat

and Presbyterian clergyman. I particularly like the positive message that it gives.

Life

*Let me but live my life from year to year,
With forward face and unreluctant soul;
Not hurrying to, nor turning from the goal;
Not mourning for the things that disappear
In the dim past, nor holding back in fear
From what the future veils; but with a whole
And happy heart, that pays its toll
To Youth and Age, and travels on with cheer.*

*So let the way wind up the hill or down,
O'er rough or smooth, the journey will be joy:
Still seeking what I sought when but a boy,
New friendship, high adventure, and a crown,
My heart will keep the courage of the quest,
And hope the road's last turn will be the best.*

I wish you a peaceful and happy 2025.

Diane Roberts



MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER



Our Love and Prayers for:

Bette Bailey, Iris Beaney, Doreen Dupre, Jill Eliff, Daphne Hughes, Ceinwen Jeremiah, Joy Perkins, Maureen Perry, Lesley Scotford, Linda and Melvyn Smith, Joy Sorensen, Peter and Ann Stygal, Mabel Wann, Tony Waters and Adrienne Winkley.

Please also remember in your prayers Joan Pike, Michael Pritchard, Gail and Huw Marshall-Jones for their contribution to the life of Caterham URC as they lead worship.

Please let the Editor know if you would like to include anyone in the prayers of our church fellowship or have news you wish me to include in the magazine.

Let people know we are thinking of them

Our social contact team represented by the Elders – do not automatically know who is alone at home and would appreciate a phone call. So that's where you come in! If you know of anyone who is unwell or in voluntary isolation at home and would like a call, please let one of the team know.

Communion at home

If you are housebound for any length of time and would like to receive communion at home, please let your Elder know and it will be arranged.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCH AND SYNOD



The United Reformed Church - Southern Synod
Synod Office East Croydon URC Addiscombe Grove Croydon CR0 5LP
Telephone: 020 8688 3730

Dear friends,

We are delighted to announce our new Mission and Discipleship Officer, Jo Patterson, and Training Consultant, Mark Rigby. Please join us in welcoming them both into their new roles.



Jo Patterson – Mission and Discipleship Officer
Serving in South London for nine years, my work as a Church Related Community Worker - or CRCW as we're better known – has been diverse, challenging and rewarding. Throughout my ministry, I have actively engaged with community groups of all sizes and types, working collaboratively to facilitate successful group work on Vision, Mission, and more. My passion is to enable local churches to envisage creative mission relevant to their own individual context, using existing gifts from within the congregation whilst, where possible, proactively engaging with local communities.

Let's grow in our discipleship and our mission together, all for the Kingdom of God.

Jo's email is mndo@urcosuthern.org.uk



Mark Rigby – Training Consultant

Mark Rigby will be joining the Synod Team as a Training Consultant. Mark will initially be working with Elders around our new training package and in bringing to light the Synod Strategy chosen by Synod Together in October; "Renew, Reimagine and Reorder".

Mark is an Elder of Tonbridge URC, and a Synod Accredited Lay Preacher. In his "day" job he produces technical reports for the Criminal Justice System, distilling often complex matters into material easily understood by ordinary jury members.

Mark is passionate about empowering and encouraging people wherever they are in their faith journey and in using technology as a tool for Mission.

He is married to a URC Minister, they have two daughters and live in the centre of our Synod, making it easier to get around to visit you all.

Mark's email is TC@urcsouthern.org.uk

Best wishes,
Lauren

Lauren King
PA to the Moderator and Synod Clerk

URC Southern Synod Office

News of the Pastorate

I have recently been corresponding with Rosemary Addison, my counterpart as Editor of the Oxted URC newsletter, and we have arranged to share articles of interest to our churches as members of the new Surrey, Sussex & Kent Borders Pastorate. In their recent edition, they included Richard's most thoughtful Welcome Letter from our October-November issue. Our churches naturally have much in common, as well as many refreshing differences which I feel may be of great interest and benefit to our respective congregations.

In November 2024, Oxted URC hosted the annual Snelling Lecture, presented by John Bell in a most encouraging and thought-provoking talk entitled "A World Fit for Our Children". Knowing how important the young people in our church are to us all and how much we appreciate the work of our junior church leaders, I thought it would be fitting to reproduce our sister church's report on this very interesting lecture.

The Snelling Lecture 2024

On the evening of Friday, 15th November, John Bell delivered the annual Snelling Lecture at Oxted URC.

John Bell is well-known within (and outside) Christian circles as a highly-respected broadcaster, speaker, author, hymn-writer, and long-time member of the Iona Community, and in keeping with their ethos is passionate about social justice and inclusion. He is also a Church of Scotland minister.

John had visited Oxted URC on two previous occasions, and his lecture was eagerly anticipated. John's talk was entitled: 'A World Fit for our



Children' and he explained that although he has no children of his own, Jesus's statement that every person is a brother and sister in Christ (and, by extension, a father, a son, a daughter...) means that we all share a collective responsibility for the care of young people and

their future. The love of God connects us all to one another. He was not, however, going to describe how he sees a future world; that is not for older people to determine. Instead, he would wish for today's young people to be empowered to determine their collective way forward, but with help from the 'older generation'.

John began by looking at the past and how that has determined the present. He used examples of his own youth to demonstrate the significant social changes which have occurred over the past fifty or sixty years: what would he miss from his own childhood and youth, if he were a young person today? John detailed how an absence of affluence, for example, had characterised his early years. As a student, and as the recipient of a 'full grant', he and his peers lived on £100 per term, and 'made a pound of sausages last four days!' This was 'a great leveller', according to John. He contrasted this with students today, who are obliged to borrow money to live, and will be paying off the loans for years to come.

John also talked about the absence of choice, in society today. There is a presumption that we have more lifestyle choices than ever before, but a glance at the reality suggests otherwise.

John went on to highlight the subject of optimism within society. He feels that, as a student and young person in the 1960s and '70s, hope was possible. There was the hope that the Vietnam War would end and it did. There was the hope that apartheid would be overthrown; it was. Contrast this with the global matters of concern which surround our young people today. Climate change, conflict, domestic politics, international tension...the young are surrounded by negativity and a feeling of helplessness. They are the inheritors of the earth; what can we do to help them?

The second part of John's lecture addressed directly, and from a specifically Christian viewpoint, strategies which we might pursue to help young people to move forward.

He illustrated one practical strategy with a story from Luke, Chapter 4:24-30. After initially being impressed by Jesus and hailing him as one of their own, the people in the synagogue are aggrieved and angry that Jesus seems to be favouring non-Jewish people in illustrating his message. They do not want to hear that God made all of humanity in his image; he loves all people and not just the Jews. John's point is that social ills and injustices, in society today are the legacy of misinformation and lack of education. Faced with the reality of riots, hate speech and mistrust of the unfamiliar, young people may learn by

example. An important factor is the lack of knowledge of the history of our own nation. If young people are not taught about colonial rule; Britain's involvement informing other nations; the slave trade - just as examples - a climate of mistrust and fear, which in turn breeds unrest and even hate, may follow. Education is so important in forming knowledge and good judgement regarding our society. To quote Jesus, 'the truth will set you free'.

John also advocated that we should set an example to young people, with restraint in all things except generosity! Generosity is to be encouraged at all times, and can and will affect those who benefit from it, and those who observe it as a lifestyle choice. Those of us who are fortunate in being financially comfortable should adopt altruism as a lifestyle choice.

Young people need to see us talk more to one another; Jesus practised, encouraged and endorsed conversation on a daily basis as a means of understanding one another.

They also need the opportunity to solve problems in their own way... we should not be aiming to solve the problems they encounter in society, but instead to give them the freedom of choice to do things their own way. John illustrated this with the story of David and Goliath. Allowing young people to experience hope by tackling situations in new ways is something we can give them.

Finally, John expressed his overall message thus: 'Pray God that we may give young people the best possible chance of using their own initiative, and may they forgive us for not giving them the heritage which they deserve'.

Jane Damesick

I hope you found this talk interesting and inspiring and look forward to including further articles from Oxted (and potentially also Marsh Green and Moat, East Grinstead) in future issues of Under the Clock. We and our sister churches in the Pastorate can, I feel, only benefit from hearing from one another. Ed.

That Was The Christmas That Was

The Christmas period always seems to go so quickly, so now is a good opportunity to have a look back at what went on and how richly decorated our church looked. Our roving reporter Dave Kitchen was as ever on hand to capture the moments:











OUR CHURCH FLOWERS

Flowers for all our Festivals, Weddings. Funerals, vases and special services, like our forthcoming 150th Anniversary are worked out, collected, arranged and maintained by just four of us at present. When I first began to help out there were about 10 or more ladies regularly doing this lovely and satisfactory job for the Church.

Arranging flowers for our Church is a very calming and privileged job. Where else would you be able to arrange beautiful flowers in large amounts, unless you did it as a career or owned a flower shop ? However, I am very worried that because apart from us four, all in our seventies and eighties, there is no one younger to learn, and eventually arrange flowers for our Church.

You can start by just coming when we arrange, usually on a Saturday morning, to watch and decide if you would like to have a go. I never thought I would be able to be as good as my predecessors, but something wonderful happened and I can now create passable pedestals and arrangements.

We have a meeting about 4 weeks before a Festival, to sort out who is doing what, and which flowers to use. These are very happy occasions, usually with coffee and cake! You don't have to be available for all dates, and you can always just help with the collection and putting the flowers into buckets of water at Church, a few days before the arranging. You can do as little or as much as you can manage.

I do hope we get some reaction to this plea for help. Please do search your minds as when I took over the organisation of flowers in 2009, our then Church Secretary, Cynthia Price said,

“Flowers are an important part of our Church worship”

Yours hopefully,
Sandra Simpson
Contact ss60hvr@gmail.com
Or 07714 187870

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PAGES



Birthdays in February and March

6 February Imogen Pritchard

4 March Johannes Pizzey

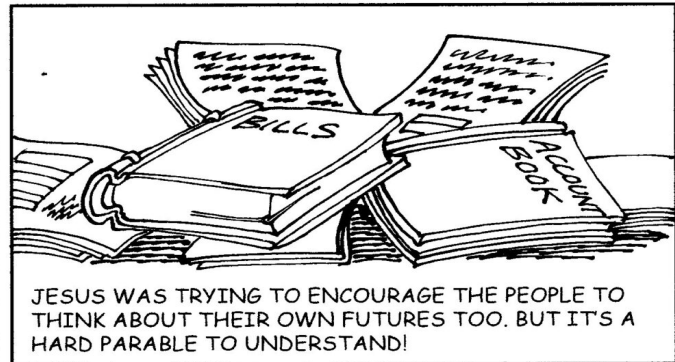
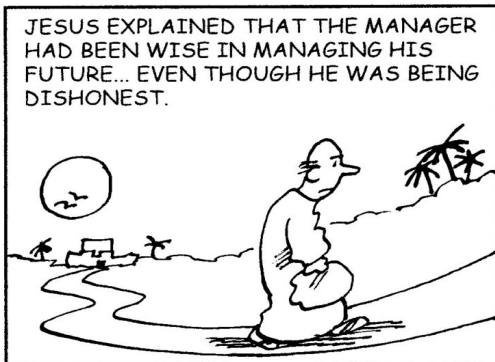
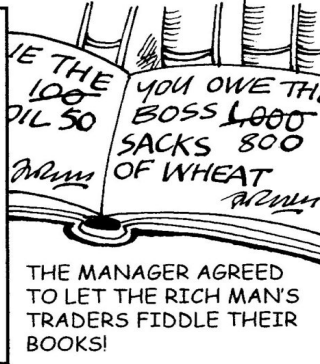
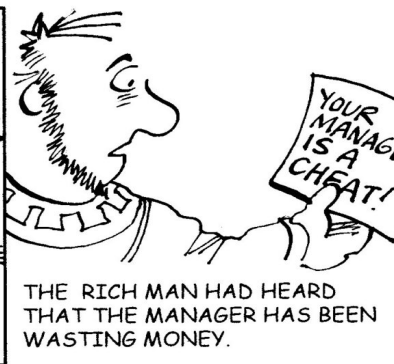
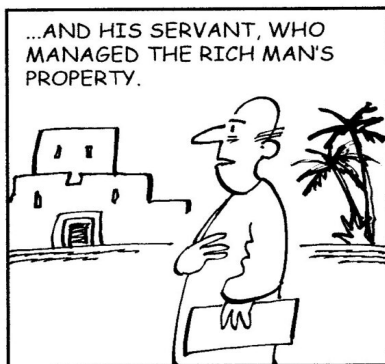
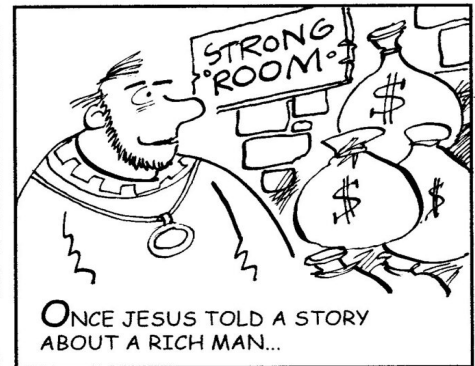
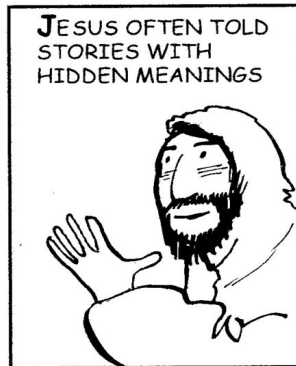
We wish them a very happy time on this special day



...are you late with your 'Vicar's Letter' again, dear?

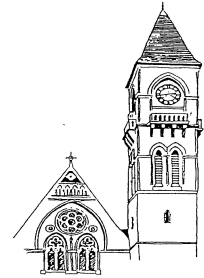
I couldn't possibly comment! – Ed.

PICTURE PARABLE



150 YEARS

(and counting ...)



The planning and preparations for our 150th anniversary commemoration in just over 2 months' time (!) are ongoing, with much already done and even more to do. To start the ball rolling, here's a message showing how we can all contribute to making it a worthy celebration of this momentous milestone.

EVERYONE CAN HELP!

The festivities for the 150th anniversary of the consecration of our church will culminate with a Thanksgiving Service on Sunday afternoon, April 6th. And yes, everyone can help – and this means you.

We intend this service to be a memorable, joyful event. We have invited civic guests, and we expect many friends from other churches in Caterham will join us, too. But from the 'home team' we would like not only the present members of our church community but also former members to come.

So, this is where you come in. Now is the time to get in touch with any former members of our church you know who have moved away, to tell them what is proposed and to invite them to come to Caterham and join in the celebration.

Don't wait until it's too late, and they are booked up with something else. Please get in touch with them now and explain to them how much they will be welcome. You can assure them that they will not be disappointed! It will be lovely to see them, and for them to enjoy the celebration too.

Michael Pritchard

Laying the Foundations

by Ray Howgego

As most of you will know, this year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the dedication of our church to the service of God. With this in mind, and at John's invitation, it seemed a good idea to recall, in a series of short articles for UtC, some of the significant events that took place during the church's early years.

For ten years Caterham congregationalists (as they were then) had occupied a small purpose-built chapel in Stafford Road, designed to accommodate 150 worshippers. This was more than adequate for the thirty or so registered church members but not for the 200 villagers who, having nowhere else to go, regularly flocked into the Sunday services. Something needed to be done, so in 1872 a Building Fund Committee consisting of senior church members was established to work out a solution. Finally, after eighteen months deliberation, at the Annual Church Meeting of February 1874, Mr William Garland Soper declared it imperative 'that a new church be erected more suitable to the requirements of this improving locality,' adding that a three-quarter acre site had already been purchased and that the Committee had been reassured that the entire cost of a new church to hold 500 worshippers, with vestries, would not exceed £4,500.

The congregation would ultimately subscribe £2,500, in addition to which another £800 was raised from local institutions and individuals, leaving a deficit of £1,200 which was filled by Soper himself. A young innovative architect, John Sulman (later Sir John Sulman), had been selected to design the building, and the company of Messrs R.H. & R. Roberts of Tollington (Islington) was contracted to carry out the work at the slightly below budget cost of £4,080. A proposed school and lecture hall, complete with vestries and classrooms, suggested by Sulman but needing an extra £1,300, was put on hold due to lack of funds. (When eventually completed in 1878 the cost of these ancillary buildings had escalated to £4,300; a higher price than that of the church itself!)

Work went ahead at a speed that defies the imagination; so fast, in fact, that by 30th May 1874, when a date for laying the foundation stone could be publicized in the *Croydon Advertiser*, the ground had been cleared and levelled and the foundation brickwork laid right around the outer frame to a height of two feet above ground. Whether there had been any sort of public consultation or any need for planning permission of the type that would nowadays delay such a project for years, is not known. At that time Caterham Valley was administered by Godstone Council, the archives of which were destroyed in 1899 when the Valley achieved unity with the Hill.

At a quarter past two on Tuesday, June 9th, after a few prayers, readings from the Bible, and the singing of a suitable hymn, W. G. Soper, with a specially commissioned ivory handled silver trowel, spread a little mortar, and the foundation stone was lowered into place. After tapping it down with a 'most inadequate' mallet, Soper declared in a loud voice that it was 'well and truly laid.' Beneath the stone, in a cavity designed for the purpose, was placed a copy of the *English Independent*, the day's *Times*, a handbill and order of service, and a collection of financial and administrative documents. The ceremony was attended by most of the residents of Caterham Valley, many of them no doubt lured there by the offer of a 'cold collation' and other refreshments for a modest three shillings and sixpence.

It is understandable how few of our present church members actually know the location of the foundation stone, most of them entering the vestibule from the slope on the Harestone Hill side, rather than by the steps from Harestone Valley Road, alongside which the stone lies. Severely eroded and defaced by 150 years of wind, rain and frost, the inscription is barely legible, even under the most favourable conditions of lighting. More obvious, however, in a single course of five bricks above the stone, are five sets of initials, clearly engraved and somewhat better preserved than the stone itself. Despite their appearance they are not examples of tourist graffiti, but rather the initials of the children of members of the Building Fund Committee: WS (William Soper junior), JC (Jessie Clarke), MMR (Margarite Maria Redgate), MW (Marion Winter), and MES (Maria Eliza Soper).

Celebrations over, the congregation returned to the chapel in Stafford Road where it would remain for the next ten months while the new church took shape. There are few records of the period between the laying of the foundation stone and the formal dedication of the church on 6th April 1875. We know that John Sulman, the architect, took the train daily from his digs in central London to personally supervise the work, while at the same time courting Sarah Redgate, daughter of Thomas Redgate, who just happened to be one of the major benefactors of the church. They would marry on the day of the dedication and would subsequently move to Australia where John would design many of the continent's most prestigious buildings.

To be continued ...



The foundation stone in its best light. Note the children's initials above.



The foundation stone overprinted with the original text

OUTREACH



In early December, a team of enthusiastic volunteers gathered at Oakhall Church for the annual packing of Christmas parcels for those in need of cheer in our community in Caterham.

The parcels included a selection of special Christmas biscuits, cakes, mince pies and other festive fare which we often take for granted (and no doubt rather regret come January), but which are unaffordable luxuries for many among us. The thought of children being denied these small treats at Christmas, simply because they exceed their parents' already overstretched budget, is unbearable and it gladdens the heart to think that we have brought a smile to their faces on Christmas morning.

Just a brief summary of what was achieved:

- + 301 hampers packed
- + from 22 referral agencies (schools, CAB, social services etc.)
- + benefitting 1069 local people, 619 of whom are children (58%)
- + overall contents weighing in at 1.6 tonnes (all of which had to be moved to Oakhall pre-packing)

None of this would have been possible without the generous donation from the local Lions Club, which they have kindly provided for a number of years now, and we were pleased to welcome Lions Club President Tony and his wife Sue for the presentation of the ceremonial cheque (see photos).

We must also thank Oakhall Church for kindly allowing the use of their premises, and Caterham Community Church for storing boxes and food items for some weeks when the warehouse threatened to overflow!

Here are a couple of photos of the packing team, which you'll be pleased to note includes a couple of our own congregation:



John Lord
Mission & Outreach Committee

PS: Don't forget our collection basket located in the Foyer for your food donations to the Foodbank. All contributions gratefully received.



Dear Friends

I would appreciate it if you would please come and support the Leprosy Coffee Morning on Friday, 21st February.

This has been held annually for the last seventeen years. It was started by my late husband Don and I have been trying to continue with it since.

You have all been so kind in helping and supporting this worthy cause and your generosity has been amazing and much appreciated.

Any unwanted Small Gifts, Books, or a Cake would be most welcome.

I look forward to see you all on the 21st February.

Anne Bailey
Mission & Outreach Committee



You may already have seen this poster on the Concourse noticeboard, but this is such an important issue that it bears repeating. Please keep it in mind and keep an eye out for any signs you may see – the victims are often hidden in plain sight. Help and advice are available on the numbers below.

MODERN SLAVERY

SPOTTING THE SIGNS



APPEARANCE

- Show signs of physical or psychological abuse and untreated injuries.
- Look malnourished, unkempt, withdrawn and neglected.
- Seem under the control or influence of others.
- Wear the same clothes every day.
- Wear no safety equipment even if their work requires it.



SEEKING HELP

- Reluctant to seek help and avoid eye contact.
- Appear frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers.
- Fear of police, don't know who to trust or where to get help.
- Afraid of deportation, and of the risk of violence to themselves or their family.



ACCOMMODATION

- Living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation.
- Living and working at the same address.
- Appear unfamiliar with their neighbourhood or where they work.



TRAVEL

- Rarely allowed to travel on their own.
- Collected and dropped off on a regular basis early in the morning or late at night.
- In a crowded minibus with other workers.
- Have no control of their identification documents such as their passport.

WHO TO CONTACT:

If someone is in immediate danger then call the police on:
999

Report non-emergency suspicious activity to your local police on:
101

Ask for advice by calling:

The Modern Slavery and Exploitation Helpline: **08000 121 700**

The Salvation Army: **0300 303 8151**

NSPCC Helpline: **08008 800 5000**

And the usual final funny bit on a very familiar subject:

The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

Since you were the one to ask this parishioner of yours to act as PCC secretary, you have no reason to complain about the minutes of meetings she produces. You should never let anyone act as a secretary unless they cannot speak English or are hard of hearing, and preferably, both. The more significant the committee and the more contentious the issues being debated, the more you should nobly put yourself forward both to chair the meeting and take the minutes. In the majority of cases, that will spare the other members that awkward moment when you ask for a volunteer, and they all feel the sudden need to stare at their feet.

If you act as secretary, then you can be certain that accounts of what took place will only be what you had wanted to happen and that the decisions taken will be what you had already decided before discussions started. Any inconvenient observations from other committee members can be omitted entirely.

Admittedly, the more observant may notice that your accounts of the meeting may not wholly agree with their recollections, but the skill of being a secretary is not to produce the minutes of the previous meeting until the day before the next one. This will mean that the great majority will have long forgotten what actually *did* happen two months previously, and that many will not have had the time to read them anyway and will avoid having to admit that fact by passing them.

Only the deeply committed will want to pursue apparent discrepancies. In that case, confess to the meeting that your hand-written notes were accidentally left on a bus and so you can no longer check the accuracy of what you have written. As a way of appearing helpful, you could even give the person challenging you the bus route number and time of day you travelled. Further challenges will rally the rest of the committee to your side, and soon someone will suggest you proceed to the next item on the agenda. Since you are also the chairman, you naturally bow to their request.

Just in the way that church rotas bear no resemblance to the people who actually turn up to do the jobs, minutes of meetings need not bear too much resemblance to what actually happened, especially if what did happen is inconvenient for you.

After all, democracy is all very well – provided a benign dictator is in overall control.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

The above subject of writing minutes, or indeed anything at all, reminded me of a question I was often asked by my students when I taught English abroad: why is English pronunciation so random and how am I expected to know how to say things correctly when they bear no resemblance to how they are written? Even when they're written the same, only you seem to know how to pronounce them! Here's an example of how we conspire to baffle our non-native speaker friends:

Eye Rhyme Calamity at the Annual World Limerick Contest

There was a young poet from Slough,
Who hadn't prepared quite enough.
He started to read
Then wished himself dead,
Having failed to think his rhymes through.

His brain must be made out of dough,
So slapdash, careless, unthorough!
Mumbling into his beard,
He made them unheard
And ended each line with a cough.

Brian Bilston

NOTICES

Friday Coffee Mornings

A message to all in our church, whether members of the congregation or just friends:



All welcome every Friday 10.30-12 noon for a chat. Drop in any time and stay as long as you like!

Looking forward to seeing you

Daphne Hughes
Mission & Outreach Committee