

*God has called us out of darkness
into his wonderful light*

1 Peter 2:9

Christ Church URC, Marlow

New Forum

Mar - Apr 2022

Fairtrade Fortnight:

21st February to 6th March

Are You Ready?



Fairtrade Fortnight 21 Feb – 6 March 2022

Since Fairtrade Fortnight 2021, the G7 and COP26 have taken place. These conversations are a good start, but there are still frustrations that the wealthiest nations are failing to recognise the urgent need to invest in farmer expertise, by delaying their promised \$100bn annual funding to the most climate vulnerable countries until 2023. It's not good enough.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us more than ever how interconnected we are globally. This interconnection is at the very heart of the Fairtrade message and is where your role begins. You are part of the Fairtrade movement, and you have the power to drive long-term change, not only with your shopping choices but with your support in spreading the message.” **Fairtrade Foundation**

This year, the focus of Fairtrade Fortnight is climate change, and the growing problems this poses to farmers and workers within the Fairtrade community. The two-week period will highlight the facts; climate change is a huge challenge for farmers and workers in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Honduras, yet these are the countries who have contributed least to the causes of climate change. Droughts, crop disease, floods, heatwaves and shrinking harvests are among the challenges they face. When the Fairtrade Foundation spoke to some of these farmers, they were told that they felt climate change was one of the biggest obstacles their generation is facing. They also commented that only with more money would they feel equipped to meet their everyday needs and deal with the devastating challenges climate change brings.

Choosing to buy fair trade ethical food and drink is everyday activism and is the simplest way to change the world. Through fair trade, farmers and growers can earn enough to feed their families, send their children to school, provide a future for their local community and look into solutions to the problems they face due to climate change.

Why not embark on your own fairtrade journey by choosing to buy fair trade goods today! You can buy online at <https://www.traidcraftshop.co.uk/food> or look out for fair trade products at your local supermarket and in the Oxfam shop. From the very finest fair trade brands like [Divine Chocolate](#) and [Zaytoun](#), to a wide range of Traidcraft's own [fairtrade chocolate](#), [coffee](#), [tea](#), [biscuits](#), and more – there's a world of quirky flavours and ethical bites waiting to be discovered and celebrated.

Dear friends

Going into the Wilderness....

We are at the start of a journey. Lent reminds us of the time when Jesus went on a journey into the wilderness. It was a journey that didn't go anywhere – except around the world!

Jesus' journey was a physical one, in that it was a time of fasting and in a remote and rugged place. But he stayed, as we are led to believe, in one area. His journey was far more a spiritual one. It was here that he faced up to his calling. His calling was to minister in an extreme way that would almost certainly lead to exclusion, upset, and possibly arrest.... Maybe even being seen as a criminal. (No spoilers for Easter!)

Lent is a time when we reflect on being faced with the future, change, and purpose. That is what Jesus did. It is important for us too as a church. Change is around us: a change of people, changes in society, and changes in church. It is a time for us to reflect on your future, possible change and purpose.

Jesus was bold in what he reflected upon. We must be too! It was no good Jesus being resolute in just part of what he needed to do, it was a whole purpose way of life he was starting upon. We are going to have decisions to make, actions to take, and roles to pick up. But there's no point in us doing anything 'just to keep going'. Maybe our Lent church experience should be to prayerfully consider our journey after Lent.

Jesus' simple wilderness experience took him around the world... through the Holy Spirit. That's why prayer is important of course. It links us to the Holy Spirit. It isn't our church for us to make our decisions about church. The church is God's, and we need to seek God's will. That's what Jesus did... sought God's will, and then followed it – and it wasn't comfortable! But no spoilers before Easter!

May God bless us in our Lent journey.

David

Christ Church URC Marlow Diary Mar-Apr 2022

March

- 6th Mr Keith Whyte will lead us
- 13th David will lead our service of Holy Communion
- 20th Zoom worship (see below)
- 27th David will lead us

April

- 3rd The Revd Sydney Shore will lead us
- 10th David will lead our Palm Sunday worship
- 14th Maundy Thursday worship – details TBC – listen for announcements
- 17th Easter Sunday worship at 8.30 am, led by David. This will be held in our church garden at Marlow and will be followed by an Easter breakfast.

At 10.30 am there will be an Easter Sunday service at Maidenhead URC to which all are invited. No 10.30 service at Marlow.
- 24th Zoom worship (see below)

May

- 1st Mr Geoff Cronin will lead us
- 8th David will lead our service of Holy Communion, which will be followed by the **Church AGM**

Third Sundays are still Zoom Sundays!

You can use either a computer or your regular home phone. Zoom services are followed by a chance to chat over coffee together with our friends in Maidenhead URC. It is always the same link and always at 10.30 am:

Topic: Sunday Worship
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82345181397>

Meeting ID: 823 4518 1397

To join Zoom services by phone, please dial one of these two numbers and follow the instructions: 0203 481 5240, or 0203 901 7895.

Churches Together in Marlow

CTM prayer meetings

CTM prayers were held at All Saints Marlow on Saturday 12 February. The next meeting will be hosted by Christ Church URC and will be on Saturday 14 May starting at 9 am.

During the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, midday prayer meetings were held at Marlow Methodist. Martin Ashford set up and hosted a 'virtual' Unity Supper on Zoom, with a speaker from Embrace the Middle East.

Pancake Day – Tuesday 1st March, from 11 am

Come and enjoy pancakes at Marlow Methodist! This event has taken place at MMC in support of Lighthouse Marlow since 2005. Please speak to Janet if you can offer assistance with serving. Thanks to all helpers, and of course to the Ark Café for donating the soup and pancakes.

Easter

Arrangements for Easter have not yet been finalised, but we hope to repeat the Easter church trail that was enjoyed by many walkers last year, possibly promoted as a Love Marlow event. We are also considering re-introducing the traditional Good Friday Walk of Witness, cancelled in 2020 and 2021. For many years, walkers used to start at Christ Church and then process to a service in Higginson Park. More recently, the direction of the walk has been reversed, with a short time of praise in the park followed by a longer service at Marlow Methodist. Arrangements are being checked with church leaders. Please listen for announcements.

Christian Aid Week: A JustGiving appeal, an envelope-drop, a concert at Christ Church and a cake sale at Marlow Methodist will be arranged. We hope to promote details on Marlow FM.

Other news:

Sir Aubrey Ward House Services: A service was held before Christmas and monthly services are to be restarted. More volunteers would be very welcome.

Love Marlow: The Festival programme cannot be continued, but the name and media domain will be retained. The service during Town Regatta weekend will be continued.

St Peter's Church: Kevin Ryan has taken up appointment as deacon.

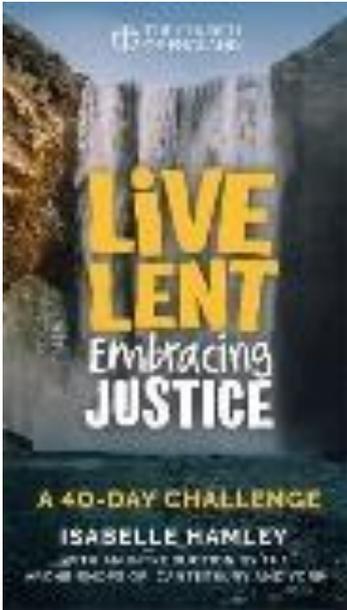
CTM Lent Study Groups 2022

For many years, ecumenical study groups have met in the homes of church members during Lent. This year, groups will meet weekly, starting in the week beginning 7 March. There will be at least three groups meeting as follows – plenty of choice!

1. Tuesdays, starting at 2.30 pm, hosted by Joan & Tony Threlfall at 61 Cambridge Road, Marlow, and using 'Live Lent: Embracing Justice' as a study guide.
2. Tuesdays, starting at 8.00 pm, hosted by Sue & Paddy Gallagher at 8 Spinners Walk, Marlow, and using 'Embrace the Middle East: Days to Lament' as a study guide.
3. Our own house group, meeting at 10.30 am on Tuesday mornings, hosted by Doreen McGechan at 2 Baron's Court, Dedmere Rise and led by George Flett, will become a Lent Group and will follow one of these courses.

Brief details of the courses are given below. If you would like to host a group or join a group, please let Tony know what would suit you best.

Tony Threlfall, tonythrelfall61@gmail.com, tel. 01628 471610.



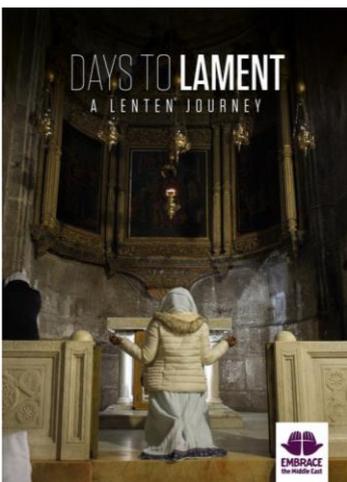
Each year at the start of Lent, Christians are challenged to turn away from sin and towards new life. Together we acknowledge that our own lives, our communities and our world stand in need of God's redeeming and transforming power.

Live Lent: Embracing Justice is the Church of England's theme for Lent 2022. It invites us to examine our own lives truthfully, to see the world more deeply and to pray - for the church and the world far and near - that 'justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream' (Amos 4.24).

For each day of Lent, a booklet offers a daily Bible reading, a short reflection and a prayer, as well as a practical challenge. Each week follows a different thread through the many stories of justice in the Bible to explore how God works with humanity to bring justice, wholeness and salvation to all.

The booklet is supported by a wide range of free digital resources via the website:

www.churchofengland.org/livelent



A Journey through Psalm 13 together during Lent.

Recover the essential place of lament in worship at a time of widespread change and disorientation - both here and in the Middle East. The Hebrew name for the Book of Psalms is tehilim, or 'praises', but up to two thirds of the book is made up of lament.

This guide includes:

Reflections on lament in scripture for each Sunday in Lent, worship ideas, insights from our Middle Eastern family in Christ, original artwork by Heather Holdsworth for devotional purposes.



World Day of Prayer – Friday 4 March, 11 am at All Saints

The World Day of Prayer service for 2022 has been prepared by Christian women from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Entitled ‘I Know the Plans I have for You’, the overarching theme of the service is Hope. All are welcome to the service which this year will be held at All Saints Marlow at 11 am on Friday 4 March. Refreshments will be available after the service.

Currently, the WDP National Committee includes 17 different Christian denominations. We allocate over 40 grants to national and international charities. We support prayer partners in Albania, sending representatives to visit the WDP in Albania on a regular basis.

We continue to review what we do and to adapt to changes in communication and technology. Our office in Tunbridge Wells co-ordinates the distribution of service materials, including activities for children and youth. We also post on Twitter and Facebook.

Details and resources can be found at: <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

Lent Resources from LCRF

If you are not part of a CTM Lent Group, you might like to browse at home through the new Lent resources from the London Churches Refugee Fund.

Entitled *A Space for Refuge and Safety*, these are case studies, reflections and prayers to help you hold refugees and asylum seekers in your hearts and prayers this Lent. They are intended mainly for personal devotion but can be shared with friends or used in worship. The case studies focus on some of the vulnerable people the charity exists to help. You can read more at <http://www.lcrf.org.uk>.

Jean Sewell

24 January 1922 – 26 November 2021

Jean was born one year after my father. Perhaps that's why I always felt an affinity with her and liked to pay her the occasional visit. She is a great survivor, as you will see below.

Jean was born at her grandparents' home in Cockermouth and lived in Carlisle, where she remembered once experiencing an earthquake! At the age of 12 she was sent to a 'delicate' school due to her poor eyesight. There she 'learnt nothing'. She left at 14 and worked first at a shirt factory, winding threads and silks on bobbins. But then she learnt to type, and this led to work as a teleprinter operator in the signal section of the Air Ministry in Carlisle.

Her memories of wartime: 'It was just work – we were kept busy 24 hours of the day. You'd get a signal saying something was urgently required and you would send it off. But you wouldn't know there was a war on. We were far from the action.' Sometimes she went to help behind the counter at Hadrian's Camp.

After the war Jean moved to Little Rissington in Glos (near Bourton on the Water) to do clerical work, then was posted to RAF Medmenham, where she worked in the Pay Office from 1957 to 1962. She also worked in the Technical Library and the Officers' Mess. She was medically retired in June 1972 at the age of 50, ten years early. 'I felt as though I'd been put on a scrap heap when they retired me.'

She moved to Marlow in 1957 but didn't come to Christ Church until towards the end of Arthur Macarthur's ministry. Jean knew Lilian Milne well. She remembers Cyril and Sheila Lowden from when she first came to Christ Church – and that they had a caravan at Harleyford. She was a member of the Ladies Friendship Group that used to meet at the manse (during Stanley Jones's ministry). Jean was always busy with crafts and baking for church events. She ran a soft toy stall at the church's Autumn Fair and baked shortbread and lemon curd cake for church sales.

Jean moved to Gweneth Court in 1989 when it was newly built. She was previously at the Gables in Institute Road and in other 'digs' before that. She shared with a teacher and remembers setting the Baby Belling on fire!

Her niece Janice came for a holiday with her aunt when she was 13. She was put on a train from Carlisle and Jean picked her up from Euston. She slept on a Z-bed in Jean's bedsit in Institute Road, and they went to Burgers for a treat. Jean also took her to see the Queen Mother's Dolls House at Windsor and the Tutankhamen exhibition in London.

Jean drove a Hillman Imp until her eyesight got too bad. At that stage she became very involved with the Bucks Association for the Blind, receiving magazines, talking books and each year a diary. She used to be on their consumer panel which had meetings in Aylesbury. She was active in the Marlow division which held meetings twice a month at the Pugin Rooms. She had lessons in braille. Jean was one of six representatives of the Marlow Division who met the Queen when she came to Marlow for her Golden Jubilee celebrations. Jean remembers eating a delicious Bakewell tart in the house at the bottom of the High Street before going to the marquees to meet the Queen. She got tongue-tied as the Queen approached and didn't say anything!

Jean suffered a number of health problems following her hip replacement in 2004. She became very unsteady on her feet, lost proper use of her hands and often had back pain. Her eyesight continued to deteriorate ('I see through a fog') and by 2014 she had no vision. Yet she was always welcoming when I visited, always had a smile and a cup of tea.

Jean liked to have the flowers in church done in November in memory of her mother who died in November 1973 and her brother Foster who died in November 2003. In 2012 she celebrated her 90th birthday at the Compleat Angler with her brother Denis, her niece Janice and Janice's two boys, together with George Flett and Sheila Blair.

In 2015 Jean moved to a care home in Downley. She remained interested in what was happening in Marlow and at church and appreciated visits from church members. She loved to hear about local things like the bridge closure or the Christmas lights. I used to take *New Forum* and sometimes read to her. Sometimes I asked her to name the minister or the secretary, or to tell me how old she was, and she was invariably right. George told me he had got into the habit of taking Jean's hand just before leaving and reciting the Lord's Prayer slowly with her. Remarkably she was usually word perfect in this.

On one visit, Jean told me she remembered learning to play violin when she was young. She always enjoyed listening to music. I asked her if she had a favourite sort of music or a favourite composer. She said no, it would be very boring always to have the same favourite. Another childhood memory was of walking across a field from her home. From her description I think she must have lived in a small place on a hill overlooking Carlisle.

Jean so nearly made it to her centenary. The last few years were very difficult for her, but we can rejoice that her sufferings are no more, and that she is at peace at last. She was a kind, capable person with a positive outlook and an independent mind. She will be missed by her friends and by the family she loved. We send our heartfelt sympathy to her brother Denis and her niece Janice and family at this sad time.

Jean Ashford

Wycombe Homeless Connection

Martin has received the following letter from Wycombe Homeless Connection in response to his sending a cheque for £447.97 from church collections over the Christmas period:

“We very much appreciate your continued support. Your generosity will help us make sure that help and hope is provided during the coldest, most difficult months of the year and into the future as we continue to support people who are homeless or facing homelessness.

Right now, our focus is on providing emergency accommodation for anyone found to be homeless in the winter. We’re supporting people in this life-threatening situation with a place to stay, food, clothing, other essentials as well as providing advice and tailored support so our guests can find a more permanent home.

Our homeless health worker has been ensuring all our guests are registered with GPs and is arranging all sorts of health care, like dentistry and helping people who cannot afford their prescriptions to get their medication.

Our homelessness prevention hotline continues to be very busy. Our advocacy team are working with people who are facing homelessness, struggling with rental debt, and facing unfair and illegal evictions, more of whom are getting in touch every day.

Thank you for helping us make sure people are able to get the help they need at this very difficult time.”

Treasurer update

I have now handed over the ‘books’ (both physical and computer files) for 2021 to our Accounts Examiner who will check the figures in time for the AGM in May. Both income and expenditure were up on 2020, not least because of the garden project with all its associated grants, donations and costs. Overall, the draft accounts show we incurred a loss of almost £12,000 for the year, a little better than in 2020. Both years, of course, were heavily impacted by the pandemic.

Your freewill offerings therefore remain really important to Christ Church. As you know, we recently acquired a card-processing machine to enable cashless donations to be handled: this has proved a little temperamental, but I am persevering with it, so do grab me on a Sunday if you wish to make a donation. Or you can still give me a cheque. Better still, though, is to set up a regular standing order or donate by BACS from the comfort of your own sofa: for either option speak to me for our bank account details.

A reminder also of the Gift Aid rules:

We claim back an extra 25% from the tax(wo)man when you donate under Gift Aid, but you can only do that from income that has been taxed. The key wording is “I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference”. If you would like to donate by Gift Aid and do not already do so, please ask me for a form. And talk to me if you have previously made a Gift Aid declaration but now believe you may not qualify.

Martin

Music in Marlow

After four concerts last autumn, we lined up four more for this spring. The first has been and gone, but here's what is still to come:

Sunday 3rd April, 7.30 pm. 'Sunrise, Sunset'

A programme exploring some lighter repertoire, both classical and from the shows, by Christine Cunnold (soprano) and Richard Harker (piano). You'll recognise the title as a song from 'Fiddler on the Roof'; expect also perhaps Red Sail in the Sunset, Morning has Broken, Notte by Respighi, Morgen by Strauss and a Chopin nocturne on the piano.

Sunday 24th April, 3.30 pm

Quintessential Brass will bring us music for (or arranged for) brass quintet from the Renaissance to modern times. The group is all from the High Wycombe area and this is sure to be a popular event. It's a teatime concert with tea and cakes (contributions welcome!) as an added incentive.

Sunday 15th May, 7.00 pm

Members of **Taplow Choirs**, performing in support of Christian Aid. After a gap of two years, we're looking forward to bringing some of the finest young singers back to Marlow, under the baton of Gillian Dibden MBE. Details to be confirmed, quality guaranteed!

ALL our concerts are for you and also for the public, and all funds raised go either to the church or a designated good cause.

This may be our last season so don't miss out, and bring your friends too! You can reserve tickets for any event just by speaking to Martin or Jean.



The poster features a photograph of five brass players (trumpet, trombone, euphonium, tuba, and trumpet) standing in front of a brick wall. The text on the poster includes:

Christ Church Music in Marlow Sunday 24th April, 3.30 pm
At Christ Church URC, Oxford Road, Marlow SL7 2NL

QUINTESSENTIAL BRASS

A whirlwind tour of music from the Renaissance to the present day

Featuring **IAN COX, ALISON DAVIDSON, SIMON DAVIE, TIM POCOCK AND DAVE RICHARDS**
and with interval tea and cake

Tickets £12 from www.ticketsource.co.uk/musicinmarlow (no fee) or phone 01628 486227. See more at www.musicinmarlow.org.uk



It's time for an update in *New Forum* about what's happening at Marlow Refugee Action. Here is some of the latest news:

- The annual meeting will be held on Friday 1st April at 7 pm.
- The search is on for new trustees. If you are interested, please see the website: <https://marlowrefugeeaction.org.uk/>
- A donation of £1,000 has been made to the Wycombe Refugee Partnership to be put towards their Activities Fund. This enables refugee families and children to join in local social and sporting activities that they otherwise might not be able to afford.
- They are currently planning events for Refugee Week 20-26 June and would love to have your help. Please let them know if you would be interested in getting involved: info@marlowrefugeeaction.org.uk
- There is an uplifting report from Tom Doust about 'The Nest', Action for Education's Athens project, and another from Tom's daughter Jasmine on the asylum process, which readers may find of interest.

A safe, calm space



The Nest provides respite, information and education to refugee families.

Last year it relocated from Samos to Athens, where Tom Doust visited them.

As many of our friends and supporters will know, MRA have been supporting [Action for Education](#) and so I took the opportunity to visit their project The Nest while I was in Athens.

The Nest provides a safe, calm space for small children and their families where they can play and socialise away from the stress of refugee life. There are currently 25 families (35 children) using the space; the children are aged 2–7 and haven't yet started in the Greek school system. The “living room” provides a play and creative area for the kids and there is a separate area for parents, mostly mums, to relax. English and German classes are provided for the mothers too. They also provide an information service and support for the adults to deal with the Greek administration processes for registration, getting tax numbers, etc.

There is a focus on art and the children are encouraged to explore painting and drawing, with some stunning results. Some of the adults are getting into painting too. They have a quiet period at the end of each day and encourage the parents to spend some social time with the children.

I first met Action for Education in Samos in early 2019, soon after they set up a project there to complement what they were doing in Chios. Things have changed a lot since then. At its peak there were over 7,000 refugees in Samos, over 10 times the number the camp was built for. Living conditions were appalling, with most people there essentially living rough. A number of NGOs were operating there, doing their best to make life a little better for people. The camp was on the outskirts of Vathi and most of the facilities provided by the NGOs were based in the town.

Earlier this year the Greek authorities opened a new camp in Zervou, over 10km from Vathi, with enough razor wire, lockable gates and guards to make it indistinguishable from a prison camp. I'm not going to comment here on the politics and humanitarian issues—you can read a lot about it elsewhere—other than to say that it's not something we would expect in 21st century Europe.

Most of the people from the old camp were moved to the mainland and those that remain are now very restricted in what they can do. Many of the NGOs operating in Samos found that they were unable to continue their activities and restructured them. For example, Action for Education moved the Samos Nest project to Athens.

Now, with many moved from Samos and the other islands to Athens, Thessaloniki and other mainland locations, the strain on the support infrastructure has also moved. The camps are relatively overcrowded and the coronavirus pandemic has added to the problem. Many people were moved while their registration was incomplete so their access to government provided services is limited.

There seem to be fewer people living on the streets than when I was here last year and many families manage to share apartments, but often with a whole family living in one room. Some accommodation is sub-standard with no electricity or water. Inevitably, there are also some unscrupulous landlords exploiting people's vulnerability.

MRA have committed to providing long-term support for operating costs, such as rent, for Action for Education. This is valuable because it provides a stable, predictable income which in turn lets them deliver a stable, predictable service to the people they support.

So you want to understand the asylum process?

I am an immigration and human rights lawyer at Curzon Green Solicitors and our team regularly deals with complex human rights, asylum and protection matters. I represent individuals throughout the asylum process, which can often be a matter of years from start to finish.

Our work derives from the principles of the Refugee Convention, which formalised the rights of those forced to flee their home countries because of persecution and serious harm. The Convention is a piece of international human

rights law that is reflected in the UK Immigration Rules and accompanying guidance documents.

The process starts with an individual claiming asylum either 'at port' – i.e. at a port of entry such as an airport or ferry port – or once they have already entered and have been living in the UK for a period of time.

If claiming at port, the individual should inform a border force officer that they are afraid to return to their country of origin or residence and that they want to claim asylum in the UK. If the individual is already in the UK and wants to claim asylum, they must call the Home Office and make an appointment at the Asylum Screening Unit.

The individual will first undergo a screening interview, where they will be asked some basic questions about their circumstances and their journey to the UK. They will be asked to present evidence of their identity, such as their passport, which is usually retained by the Home Office, and if they have already been living in the UK, evidence of their address. They may also wish at this stage to present evidence to support their claim, but this can also be done later. It is appreciated that not everyone travels with documents, particularly if they had to flee at short notice or lost their belongings en route.

At this appointment, the individual will have their biometric information taken – that is, their fingerprints and a photograph – and thereafter they should be issued with an Asylum Registration Card which they can use to apply for asylum accommodation and financial support. Currently, asylum seekers get £39.63 per week on which to live.

Following the screening interview, the individual will be invited to a substantive interview to discuss their asylum claim in detail. This can be some time after their initial screening interview. In one of our cases, our client waited two years before she was invited to her substantive interview.

The substantive interviews are tiring for the individual. They usually last between two and six hours and can feel very slow paced, particularly when an interpreter is needed. This interview is often the worst part of the process for the individual – they will be asked hundreds of questions and will have to recount traumatic events such as the death of family members or torture.

Legal representatives can attend the interview with their client, but we are not allowed to interrupt the interview, unless we think there has been a misunderstanding. Part of the reason we attend is for moral support, but also to check the accuracy of the interview transcript. The transcript is written by the interviewer as the interview takes place, which can easily lead to written errors. Luckily, the interviews are also recorded.

After the interview, the individual is usually given five working days to comment on the records and provide any additional documents to support the claim that were not submitted before the interview. The case is then transferred to a decision-maker and decisions are usually received within a few months but can take longer.

If the asylum claim is successful, the individual will be granted refugee status for five years. After this, they can apply to settle in the UK. If the asylum claim is not accepted, the decision-maker will consider whether the individual qualifies for humanitarian protection or leave to remain on human rights or discretionary grounds. If so, they will be granted leave accordingly.

If the decision-maker considers the individual should not be granted leave to remain in any capacity, they will refuse the application. The individual is usually granted a right of appeal in the tribunal, but sometimes the Home Office will 'certify' the case, meaning that they can only appeal after they have been removed from the UK.

If the appeal is unsuccessful and the individual has exhausted all other avenues, they can make a 'fresh claim' with further submissions. The submissions must be significantly different from the material previously presented by them and considered by the Home Office.

An individual who has been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection can apply for their family members to join them in the UK under the family reunion rules. The family relationship must have pre-existed their departure from their country of origin and applies to partners and children.

Written by Jasmine Doust for Marlow Refugee Action
Quotes from the UN Refugee Dictionary:

<https://www.unrefugees.org.uk/refugeedictionary/>

From the recent Wessex Synod newsletter ...



Faith – Hope – Love: since 1972

The URC's 50th Jubilee

Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration, Saturday 1 October, 2.30 – 5 pm

This will be a chance to give thanks and to celebrate the five decades of the United Reformed Church. The service will be at Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London, where the Uniting Assembly of the URC took place in October 1972.

We want as many people as possible from across the denomination to attend. Several venues, including URC House, local URCs and buildings of ecumenical partners, will be available for people to visit during the day, offering activities, information, workshops, reflection, discussions, singing, catering and other support for visitors before the service. This is a free event, and we will ask nearer the time for a confirmation of numbers. We expect it to be full and will operate a waiting list of those who want tickets. Any questions, please email 50@urc.org.uk. There is a possibility that BBC Songs of Praise will be filming part of the service too.

If you asked for a seat or seats to be reserved for the service, you should by now have received an email from Eventbrite with your ticket/s. Please keep these safe as the codes will be needed to gain entry to the venue. You can bring a printout of the PDF or show them on your phone. You can also visit the Eventbrite website to amend the number of tickets required or cancel them if needed. More than 600 tickets have been reserved and so if you have yet to reserve any, please do so soon:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/50th-anniversary-service-of-thanksgivingand-celebration-free-event-tickets-163843796205>

URC Wessex Synod - Big Day Out – Saturday 7 May, 11 am – 5 pm

Venue: Hollycombe Steam Fair and Museum near Liss (Wessex Synod will have sole use of the whole site) – see flier in foyer.

Stepwise

The next Stepwise stream starts in May 2022. There is a ‘Come & See’ event on Zoom at 7.30 pm on **Wednesday 30 March**. Faith Filled Life is the first of the Stepwise streams. The aim of the ‘Come & See’ session is to give you an idea of what taking part in Stepwise entails. It is not a course but a way of deepening discipleship.

Faith Filled Life journeys through exploring your own faith, your own calling, and what mission, outreach and discipleship mean. To book or show your interest email: bookings@urcwessex.org.uk Or call: 02380 674513.

Valerie writes: Martin Ashford, Judith Inman and I all took part in the Faith Filled Life stream last year so please speak to any of us if you want to know a bit more to help you make up your mind. I would encourage you to at least go to the taster session.

Lent and Fasting

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent in the modern Western churches. It is preceded by Shrove Tuesday – Pancake Day. ‘Shrove’ because this was the date on which Christians would traditionally make a formal confession as a prelude to entering into the penitential season of Lent. To ‘shrive’ someone was to absolve them of their sins, and it comes from an Old English word. ‘Lent’ itself is not a religious term at all. It comes from the Old English ‘lencten’ meaning simply ‘spring’.

The origins of Lent as the season we now know are rather obscure. It is generally believed that it is the combination of two separate seasons. The first was the solemn fast which immediately preceded Easter. In the early church this was very short, lasting only for the period now known as the ‘Triduum’ – from after the Lord’s Supper on Maundy Thursday to the great ceremony of the Easter Vigil on Saturday night/Sunday morning. By the middle of the third century AD, that period of fasting had been extended to the whole of what we

now call 'Holy Week', although there was still a distinction between the first four days and the traditional final two. By the fourth century the 40-day period of Lent seemed to have become well established. It started exactly 40 days before Easter Day, and therefore included the Sundays. At first this did not seem to worry the Church authorities. But gradually, it began to seem important that the season should encompass 40 days of fasting, not including Sundays. In the eighth century, the season was definitively extended backwards to start on the preceding Wednesday, where the Western church has left it ever since.

Fasting, like many other practices of the early church, was a custom inherited from Judaism. And it was never unique to that religion; as a custom combined with prayer, penitence, mourning and preparation for some solemn undertaking, it had been common in many cultures from the earliest times. References to fasting in the Old Testament show that it could be used as part of mourning for the dead, for expressions of penitence, for intercession and as prayer for God's aid. One of the most vivid descriptions of fasting in the Old Testament is that of David when he was praying for the life of his and Bathsheba's first child, conceived during his adulterous relationship with her. Fasting could be both a corporate and a personal discipline. The Jews still undertake a corporate fast on the Day of Atonement, when they are expected to abstain from all food for 24 hours.

Jesus took fasting for granted as a spiritual discipline. He himself undertook an extended fast when he was working out how he was going to undertake his ministry following his 'call' and his baptism. But he referred casually to it in conversation. For example, he told his disciples that when, not if, they fasted, they should not make a show of it before the world, but should groom themselves scrupulously. Although he did not ask his disciples to fast when they were with him, he took it for granted that they would fast when he was gone. The very early church continued the habit. For example, the Church at Antioch was 'worshipping the Lord and fasting' when the Holy Spirit told them to set apart Paul and Barnabas for a special mission.

The Jews of the early common era fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. The early church ordained that Wednesdays and Fridays should be fast days. What it originally meant was entire abstention from food for the whole or part of the fast day. So it was much closer to the Muslim observance of Ramadan than

what most of us now do. Some may remember the injunction that you should always receive communion fasting (originally meaning no food or drink after midnight). Fasting these days, however, particularly in relation to Lent, is more likely what the Church technically describes as 'abstinence'. That is giving up certain foods altogether. You can observe abstinence and consume as many meals and as many calories as ever! The tradition of fish on Fridays is a relic of the time when the Church ordained abstinence as well as fasting.

The point of Pancake Day, and carnival (which means *carne vale*, or 'goodbye to meat'), was to use up the last of the products which would be forbidden during Lent. Meat, obviously. But in the strictest disciplines, also fish, eggs and dairy products. You need to bear in mind that this might not be quite such a shock as we would now find it. Mediaeval diets were more restricted than ours, especially for the peasantry. And the time of year would be that which was the most barren. Hens and cows would be least likely to be giving eggs and milk, because of their own breeding seasons. The pig, slaughtered in the autumn, was probably finished. Even without the fast, diet would have consisted largely of bread, pulses and root vegetables. Two things which now feature prominently on modern lists of 'giving things up' would not have been included in theirs. First, beer. Almost everyone drank very weak beer as a matter of course, because it was the only way to make water safely drinkable. And secondly, chocolate, which like the potato only arrived from South America in the sixteenth century.

As with much else belonging to the corporate religion of the later Middle Ages, the Reformation tended to 'privatise' Lent. It became more and more an act of individual discipline to do anything different during Lent. Certainly, the outward symbol of fasting would have been regarded with increasing suspicion. What has sadly gone is the sense that the whole community, even the whole Church community, is partaking in a corporate season of discipline.

From 'Wisdom and Wit', extracts from the parish magazine of St Mary's Stoke Newington, used with permission. Written by Judith Simpson.

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Mahatma Gandhi

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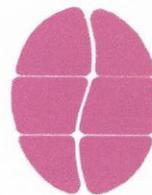
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every third Sunday in the month

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New Forum

Please send copy for the next issue to the editor

by Sunday 24 April –

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