



London Street

United Reformed Church

BASINGSTOKE, HAMPSHIRE RG21 7NU
and
TADLEY (OLD MEETING) URC



Focus
December, 2019

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Tel: 01256 477070

Website - www.basingstokeurc.org.uk

MINISTER:

Revd Kay Blackwell (*Day off - Monday*)
6 Camberry Close
Basingstoke RG21 3AG
Tel: Vestry - 01256 242152
Mobile - 07582 056286
e.mail - revkblackwell@gmail.com

CHURCH SECRETARY:

Mr Owen Collins
15 Cyprus Road
Hatch Warren
Basingstoke RG22 4UY
Tel: 01256 477425
e.mail - secretary@basingstokeurc.org.uk

TREASURER:

Karen Bell
47 Tobago Close, Popley,
Basingstoke RG24 9PX
e.mail - lsurctreasurer@yahoo.com

HALL LETTING:

Mrs Joy Williams
9 Montague Place
Basingstoke RG21 3DS
Tel: 01256 326746
e.mail - joyamwilliams@gmail.com

FOCUS:

Mrs Christine Robertson
1208 Skyline Plaza, Alencon Link,
Basingstoke RG21 7AZ
Tel: 01256 869968
e.mail: christina774robertson@btinternet.com

Tadley (Old Meeting) URC

10.00am Prayer Time followed by Worship at 10.30 every Sunday
"TASTE" Youth Event at 7pm at the Point (behind Community Centre)

Minister:

Revd Kay Blackwell

Church Secretary:

Paul Gross
22 Pelican Road, Pamber Heath RG26 3EN
Tel: 0118 970 0809
e.mail: paulgross3107@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Mark Ward
10 Hartleys, Silchester, Reading RG7 2QE
e.mail: mandjward@hotmail.co.uk

View from the Manse

'Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.' (Matthew 1:18-19)

Christmas is nearly upon us. A time of tinsel, glittery stuff and twinkling lights in a dark season of short days and cold weather. But many around us at this time of year are more stressed. They seem to walk around with heavy weights on their shoulders and furrowed brows of worry. So much to do, and so little time. Gifts to buy, parcels to wrap, cards to write, people to see, houses to decorate. The list can feel endless in people's already full lives. The journey to Christmas can feel like running a marathon, or perhaps a sprint. Then suddenly it's all over. The waiting in eager expectation, the hopes for a good Christmas ended. And what has changed? Our bank accounts may be lower, we may have had some time off and caught up with friends and relatives, but really what in our lives has really changed? I don't know about you, but I have to constantly re-remind myself, and place Jesus at the centre. Christmas without Christ really doesn't make any sense! Join an advent study in one of the house groups this year and take time out to reflect on the real story of Christmas and what it might teach you.

For so many people Christmas can be a very difficult time. A time of remembering those they have loved and lost. A time when aloneness can feel a stark contrast to the bright, cosy, family and friend filled Christmas which the TV ads show. It can be a time of the deep hurts of one's life coming to the fore.

The thing is we have a very idealised and unrealistic expectation of what Christmas is about. Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus. In our society more than half the population are now no longer accepting of or caring about the birth of Jesus. Jesus has become irrelevant to them. But in the Christian church, the birth of Jesus, God's Son entering into the world as a vulnerable baby is absolutely at the heart of our message. It is a message of hope entering into a dark and hurting world.

The real story of the birth of Jesus is gritty and perhaps even disturbing in parts. It is not the comfy neatly rounded, clean story told in children's nativity plays each year. It starts in Matthew's Gospel with a rather dodgy family tree. The genealogy written at the start of Matthew's Gospel is there in order to show Jesus' lineage to King David. It does,

however, also reveal other truths of brokenness and scandals in the family line. Foreign women, a Canaanite in Tamar, a Moabite widow in Ruth, and a Gentile Harlot in Rahab, but also the married Bathsheba with whom King David committed adultery. These skeletons were all in the broken family tree of Jesus. Yet they also highlight strong and courageous women in his lineage.

Next, we have a young virgin engaged to be married and found to be mysteriously pregnant. The penalty for becoming pregnant by another while betrothed to Joseph should have been great humiliation to the family and possibly could have led to the public stoning of Mary. Joseph took a great risk by not revealing Mary to public disgrace. Mary showed extraordinary courage and faith too in becoming the absolute servant of God.

Then came the long and uncomfortable journey to Bethlehem due to the Roman census. This led to Mary giving birth in the temporary accommodation of a stranger's household livestock quarters, their stable (which was probably more like a dark cave than the wooden stable that we envisage).

After the birth came strange visitors divinely sent to meet this special child. Lowly, unkempt shepherds, and foreign stargazers bearing exotic gifts.

And later came the escape to Egypt in haste. Mary, Joseph and toddler Jesus fleeing like refugees on the run from the tyrannical King Herod who was sending out troops to kill all boy babies under two years of age in and around Bethlehem.

This was a story of broken family history, vulnerability and great risk. This is the situation God chose to send his son into, an occupied territory under oppressive Roman rule, to a young village girl and her carpenter husband. Into a broken world and the humblest of circumstances. God could have sent Jesus to be born into a wealthy family with power and influence or even into a palace. But God didn't. God sent Jesus to be born among the least, the lost and the broken. He came to be amongst the ordinary people, people like you and me. Jesus came as a very different sort of king, one that would not rule over others with fear but serve others with love. Wherever he went, Jesus brought restoration and healing. He came as a sign of the kingdom of God. That is the good news! Jesus came for us all, loves us all and longs for us to love him. So let us try not to be burdened by the unrealistic expectations of the perfect Christmas that commercial advertising sells us. Let us instead keep it honest and simple and all

about Jesus. Jesus, the one who continues to bring light into our world through his disciples, his believers today. We are his followers. I pray that we may buck the commercial trend and not make Christmas a time to carry heavier burdens but a time to shine, to be salt and light to others by small acts of loving kindness, and those can be free.

May I wish you all a very blessed Christmas!

Yours in Christ, Kay



CIRCLE OF PRAYER:

Please remember the following in your prayers, together with their families, friends, carers, doctors, nurses:

Short Term: Barbara Banbury; Phyllis Birchmore; Kay Cook; Lilian Meredith and family; Eileen Poulter; Edmund Shaw; Betty Shipway; Yvonne Thornton.

Long Term: Beverley Cantwell and family; Christine Clucas; Penny Dilley; Claire Macro; Ron and Rosemary Martin; Maggie Morgans and family; Gillian and Tony Patterson and family; Hyacinth Ridguard; Joyce Smith; Fay Spurr; Jo and Steve Tremarco.

Prayer Focus

Matthew ch 2 vv 1&2 'Wise Men came from the East'

Once again with the beginning of Advent the season of Christmas really starts and we have another chance to undertake a spiritual exercise to prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus

This year maybe is a bit different as we have the (unwelcome?) distraction of a General Election only a couple of years after the last one!

An election is a serious business and a vital element of our democracy so however cynical we may have become with our politicians we do need to consider our vote prayerfully. Remember also that many young people will have the opportunity to vote for the first time and we should encourage them to do so - they are our future.

Within the Church we have the opportunity this year of Advent House groups to help us in our preparations by means of a biblical meditation about the real meaning of the Christmas stories. As with many Bible

stories they can raise sometimes more questions than they answer. The visit of the Wise Men I think is an example. Who were they? When did they start out? How far did they travel? How long did it take? How many were they? What really prompted them to set out? It seems to me it was above all a journey of faith, which had some unintended consequences - the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem, and the sudden flight into Egypt. But they achieved their objective of finding the 'King' they were looking for.

Perhaps it reflects our personal journeys of faith through our own lives as we are prompted to search for the one who will give real meaning to our lives. However long it takes. Whatever the trials and difficulties of the journey we too can finally find that child born in the manger and worship him as 'King' in our own lives. That is what Christmas is all about.

Pray for

- guidance about our votes in the Election
- young people voting for the first time
- opportunities to tell people about the real meaning of Christmas
- the Night Shelter and all the volunteers caring for the homeless
- our celebration preparations at London Street
- all Basingstoke Churches as they spread the message of Christmas

Daily Bible Readings for December:

	<u>Psalms</u>	<u>New Testament</u>		<u>Psalms</u>	<u>New Testament</u>	
1 st	119:113-128	Reflection		16 th 56	Revelation	12
2 nd	18:20-30	Revelation	2	17 th 23/24	"	13
3 rd	119:129-144	"	3	18 th 87	"	14
4 th	18:31-42	"	4	19 th 100/101	"	15
5 th	52.	"	5	20 th 124/125	"	16
6 th	119:145-160	"	6	21 st 25:1-10	Reflection	
7 th	85	Reflection		22 nd 126/127	"	
8 th	98	"		23 rd 25:11-22	Revelation	17
9 th	119:161-176	Revelation	7	24 th 57	"	18
10 th	19	"	8	25 th 102:1-17	"	19
11 th	54	"	9	26 th 128/129	"	20
12 th	86	"	10	27 th 26	"	21
13 th	121/122	"	11	28 th 130/131	Reflection	
14 th	99	Reflection		29 th 27	"	
15 th	20	"		30 th 60	Revelation	22
				31 st 89:1-13	Rejoice!	

Ffald-y-Brenin

With apologies to Jean Young, the following report should have been included in the November FOCUS:

INVEST IN PEACE - "SOLUTIONS NOT SIDES"

Owen and I attended the above debate in St. Andrew's URC, Southampton on Tuesday 17th September. It was organised by The Board of Deputies of British Jews and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Alan Whitehead, M.P. for Southampton Test gave a brief introduction and welcomed everyone, and Councillor Peter Baillie summed up the debate.

The speakers visit many schools in the UK to educate and promote peace between Israel and Palestine. Ruby is a 28 year old Jewish trainee barrister from Israel whose grandparents survived the Holocaust. Youmi is of a similar age and is a Muslim Palestinian whose grandparents fled one of the 500/600 villages that Israel bombed in the 1948 war, and they became refugees in Lebanon. After the war they returned to Jerusalem. Palestinians who remained in Israel during the war were given Israeli citizenship for which her family was ineligible.

Ruby and Youmi put forward their respective narratives and positions.

Youmi was the first to speak. She displayed a map showing the spread of (illegal) settlements on Palestinian land and wants an end to occupation, and the removal of checkpoints and separation barriers from Palestinian land; an end to Israeli control of water sources; an end to Military Law and control of practically all of Palestinian life; recognition of Palestine's lack of status; Jerusalem as the capital with access to holy sites; shelter for refugees; an end to the Gaza blockade (Palestinians don't have their own sea ports or airports); an end to Gaza air strikes on a dense population where young children are disproportionately the victims; no more violence.

Ruby knew nothing about the Palestinian position in the conflict until she became 18 and was conscripted into the army. She too wants similar things to Youmi but from her perspective; an end to violent attacks on Israel; a safe place for Jewish people; Jerusalem as the capital with access to holy sites; no more incitement; resolve economic issues; normal relations with neighbouring states; and an end to 18 year old Israelis in heavily armed military combat.

The audience made some interesting comments and asked questions. Ruby agreed that more education on both sides was needed and not propaganda to counteract hostility. She also disagrees with the policies of the current right-wing Israeli government. They would both like to see a separation between State and Religion. Youmi noted that life in the UK is not perfect but overall we live side by side which is their aim for Israelis and Palestinians. They spoke of the Good Friday agreement and believed that a solution along similar lines is seen as a possibility.

Councillor Baillie summed up and suggested that a process of Truth and Reconciliation may be useful. The “Hand in Hand Schools” programme and Women’s organisations bring hope for the future, and he wished them “all power to their elbow”!

Jean Young

A Strange Christmas

We spend a month or more preparing for it every year and it is celebrated to varying extents in almost every area of the globe. But have the details of the nativity story ever struck you as being a little strange? After 400 years of silence from God, a baby is born into a family marked by poverty and scandal. He's born in a stable, not a palace and His first visitors are shepherds, not family... yet this is the promised Messiah?

Although the birth of Jesus fulfilled every Scripture with divine precision, none of it happened in the way the Jewish people expected. Jesus, and the kingdom of God that He reveals, both have a habit of turning all our cultural norms and expectations on their head, transforming lives in the process

This Advent why not go on that journey again with friends from London Street? Dig deeper into the strange circumstances that led to the birth of Jesus, and what that means for us and our messy lives. There are two house groups running in parallel covering 5 weeks. See the diary on page 15 for details of venue and time.

Sadly, we have to report the death of Beryl Welbrock. Beryl was the wife of Revd David Welbrock, a former minister at London Street. Beryl had been in good health but she suffered a severe brain haemorrhage and died very suddenly.

Advent 'Calendar'

Luke's Gospel comprises 24 Chapters - read one a day over Advent and you will have read the story of Christ's life and know what you are celebrating on the 25th.



Emma Bentall, 18 years on 9 December
Dick Davey, 86 years on 11 December
Ruth Nicholson, 5 on 17th December
Amos Grant, 4 years old on 25 December

Gift Service - Sunday 1st December

Please bring to the Gift Service gifts of toys and toiletries for distribution to the Women's Refuge and also to teenagers moving from full-time care to independent living.



Thank you.

Goodbye and Best Wishes to



Lilian Meredith as she moves to her new home at 21, Walton Road, Gosport, Hants PO12 3QG. Thank you for sharing your gifts here at London Street.



Flowers Rota December

The Church will be open on Saturday 7th December – 10am-12 noon for the decoration of window sills. Please sign the form on the Notice Board to reserve your window sill.

Tea/Coffee Rota



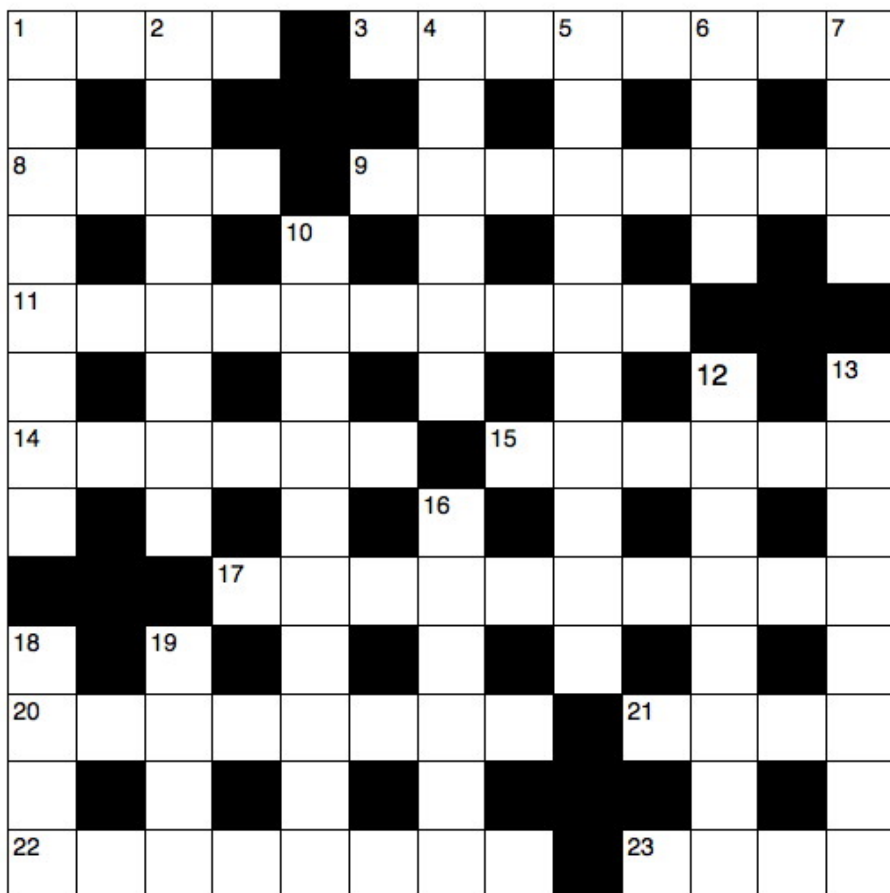
Do you enjoy a cuppa with your friends after the service? This fellowship is great, especially for visitors. Could you help on the rota? Turns don't come around very often, especially if we have a lot of people on the list. Please speak to Jenny McCloy if you can help.



Night Shelter clients are desperately in need of ladies/gents new, medium-sized underpants, briefs, socks, thermal underwear. If you can help, please get in touch with Carol Scott.

Thank you to everyone who contributed gifts and money to the Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Appeal. I delivered 28 filled shoe boxes for distribution to children around the world.

Gill Miller



Clues Across

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
- 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
- 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
- 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
- 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
- 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)

- 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how
Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
- 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
- 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
- 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "I don't need you"
(1) Corinthians 12:21) (4)

Clues Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in
the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
- 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
- 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on
me, a sinner"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
- 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
- 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
- 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
- 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
- 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
- 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
- 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as
'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
- 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was
fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
- 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)

Answers next month

Christmas Dinner –

A four-year-old boy was asked to give thanks before Christmas dinner. The family members bowed their heads in expectation. He began his prayer, thanked God for all his friends, naming them one by one. Then he thanked God for Mummy, Daddy, brother, sister, Grandma, Grandpa, and all his aunts and uncles.

Then he began to thank God for the food. He gave thanks for the turkey, the stuffing, the gravy, the cranberry sauce, the mince pies, the Christmas pudding, even the brandy butter. Then he paused, and everyone waited – and waited. After a long silence the young boy looked up at his mother and asked, "If I thank God for the sprouts, won't He know that I'm lying?"

A Piece Of Cake

Sometimes we wonder. “What did I do to deserve this”, or “Why did God have to do this to me”? Here is a wonderful explanation! A daughter is telling her Mother how everything is going wrong. She’s failing algebra, her boyfriend broke up with her and her best friend is moving away.

Meanwhile, her Mother is baking a cake and asks her daughter if she would like a snack, and the daughter says “Absolutely, Mum, I love your cake.” “Here, have some cooking oil” her Mother offers.

“Yuck” says her daughter.

“How about a couple of raw eggs?”

“Gross, Mum”

“Would you like some flour then? Or maybe baking soda?”

“Mum, these are all yucky!”

To which the mother replies: “Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves. But, when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake! God works the same way. Many times we wonder why He would let us go through such bad and difficult times. But God knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful!

“God is crazy about you. He sends you flowers every Spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, He will listen. He can live anywhere in the universe and he chose your heart. I hope your day is a ‘piece of cake!’”

Author unknown

One Liners...

Some people are kind, polite and sweet-spirited until you sit in 'their' pews.

It is easier to preach ten sermons than to live one.

God didn't create anything without a purpose, but mosquitoes come close.

Many people want to serve God but only as Advisers.

ECO TIP

Keep the pressure up. Maintaining the appropriate pressure in your car's tyres will help to minimise its fuel use.

**God's Gift – Our World
Our Environment – Our Responsibility**



Diary - December, 2019

London Street, unless otherwise stated

Sun	1 st	8.30am	Prayer Breakfast
		10.30am	Worship – led by Revd Julian Macro (Gift Service)
Mon	2 nd	2.30pm	House Group – <i>A Strange Christmas</i> Session 2 at London Street (see p.8)
Wed	4 th	7.30pm	Elders' Meeting
Thu	5 th	7.30pm	House Group – <i>A Strange Christmas</i> Session 3 at 33 Amport Road, Sherfield Park (see p.8)
Sat	7 th	10.00am	Church open for Decoration
		2.30pm	Carols with Harps at Immanuel Centre, Tadley
Sun	8 th	10.30am.	Worship – Parade Service
Mon	9 th	2.30pm	House Group – <i>A Strange Christmas</i> Session 3 at London Street
Tue	10 th		Little Angels Christmas Party
Wed	11 th	7.30pm.	House Group – <i>A Strange Christmas</i> Session 4 at 5 Magnus Drive, Hatch Warren (see p.8)
Fri.	13 th	6.30pm	Carols for all with Peter Dixon, followed at with Refreshments
Sun	15 th	10.30am	Worship – led by Mark Ward and including Holy Communion
Deadline for contributions to January FOCUS			
Mon	16 th	2.30pm	House Group – <i>A Strange Christmas</i> Session 4 at London Street (see p.8)
Wed	18 th	7.30pm.	House Group – <i>A Strange Christmas</i> Session 5 at 33 Amport Road, Sherfield Park (see p.8)
Thu	19 th	Oasis and	Youth Cafés now closed for Christmas holiday
Sun	22 nd	10.30am.	Worship – led by the Minister, including Christingle
Mon	23 rd	2.30pm	House Group – <i>A Strange Christmas</i> Session 5 at London Street (see p.8)
Tue	24 th .	6.30pm	Carol Service at Tadley led by the Minister
Wed	25 th	10.30am	Christmas Day Worship
Sun.	29 th	10.30am	Worship – led by Revd Adam Payne

Services at Old Meeting, Tadley

	<u>Preachers</u>	<u>Welcome</u>
1 st	Rev Clare Downing	Ena and George
8 th	Mark Ward	Mandy and Dave
15 th	Rev Kay Blackwell	Ladies Cell
22 nd	Rev Adam Payne	Elaine and Brian
24 th	Christmas Eve Carol Service Rev Kay Blackwell	
29 th	Penny O'Bee	TBC

Regular Events and Meetings

(at London Street unless otherwise stated)

The Sanctuary is open for prayers every weekday from 9.30 to 10am and again from 12.15 to 12.30pm

Monday's:

10am-1.30pm OASIS Café in the Concourse (Term Time)
10.15am Craft Group
2.30-4pm HOME GROUP normally at 39 New Road:
prayer time, Bible exploration and fellowship
3-5.30pm in Youth Café for secondary school and
Term Time college students

Tuesday's:

10am-1.30pm OASIS Café in the Concourse (Term Time)
10am-12 noon 'LITTLE ANGELS' pre-school Club (Term time)
3-5.30pm in Youth Café for secondary school and
Term Time college students
6.00pm (BEAVER SCOUTS — 8th Basingstoke Colony)
7pm (CUB SCOUTS — 8th Basingstoke Pack) Term
7pm (SCOUTS — 8th Basingstoke Troop) Time
7-8.00pm PRAYER MEETING at **Tadley URC or St Pauls**

Wednesday's:

10am-1.30pm OASIS Café in the Concourse (Term Time)
10.30-12 noon MEMORY TREE SOCIAL CLUB
10.15-11.30am **3Cs on 3rd Wednesday of each month**
12.15pm Lunch time worship and prayer meeting
3-5.30pm in Youth Café for secondary school and
Term Time college students

Thursday's:

10am-1.30pm OASIS Café in the Concourse (Term Time)
9.30-11.30am TADLEY LITTLE ANGELS in the Immanuel Centre
10-11.30am CCBBies Parent and Toddler Group at Christ Church,
Chineham
3-6pm in Term Time Youth Café for secondary school and college students

London Street URC, Basingstoke seeks to ensure that all content and information published in this issue of FOCUS is current and accurate. The information included does not in any way constitute legal or professional advice and the church cannot be held liable for actions arising from its use.

London Street United Reformed Church is a working name of Registered charity
London Street (Basingstoke) United Reformed Church Charity [reg. no.1130801]