

Welwyn Garden City, Harpenden
and Wheathampstead
United Reformed Churches
Magazine



December & January
2023/2024

Dear Friends,

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.*

So says the prophet, Isaiah, in a reading that we regularly hear as we journey through the season of Advent and celebrate Christmas. It is a reading that speaks of the glory of Jesus, the Son of God, and of the reality of his kingdom.

But as we live in the here and now it can, at times, be difficult to fully appreciate the truth that God's kingdom has already broken into this world and that things are already being affected, even as we wait for the culmination of all things and the beauty of the new creation.

Among other attributes, Isaiah tells us that Jesus will be called the 'Prince of Peace', and that there will be no end to the increase of his peace. And yet, as we have just marked Remembrance Day, recalling wars and conflicts down through the years, we also watch, hear, and read the news that informs us that conflicts are continuing and escalating all around our world – most particularly at this time, in the Holy Land; though as I write there are hopes of a pause.

How do we reconcile the promise made in Isaiah's prophecy with the reality that we see in the world around us each and every day? In truth, it is difficult to do so because we live in what are often termed the 'in-between times.' That is, we recognise that Jesus has won the victory at the cross and has brought his kingdom into our focus, yet, at the same

time, we will not see the full results of that victory until Christ comes again. This leaves us caught in a world that yearns for peace.

What then, should we do?

There are two answers that come readily to mind. Firstly, we should pray. We should pray for peace to flow in our world, and we should pray for peacemakers and peace-builders to be raised up and to be strengthened, supported, and encouraged in the work that they seek to do in our communities and around our world.

And then, secondly, we ourselves should work for peace. We may not be called to go and serve in places of warfare, or to solve international crises, but each of us regularly encounters breakdowns in peace in small ways. We see peace broken in families. We see peace broken in relationships. We see peace broken in churches. We see peace broken in streets and communities. And sometimes, if we are honest, we are either the cause of the breakdown in peace, or we are party to it.

Therefore, what we can do, is work to rebuild the relationships that have been damaged and, through doing so, work to rebuild the peace that has been broken. In this way we can truly become peace makers and, small step by small step, we can begin to bring about change in our world. It may not be noticed by everyone, but it will be noticed by those for whom it makes a difference.

This hymn by Alan Gaunt encourages us to pray for peace, real peace that comes from God and which makes a difference in our lives; but it also encourages us to take that step and do more by being those who reflect the values of the Prince of Peace whom we serve.

*We pray for peace,
but not the easy peace,
built on complacency
and not the truth of God.*

*We pray for real peace,
the peace God's love alone can
seal.*

*We pray for peace,
but not the cruel peace,
leaving God's poor bereft
and dying in distress.*

*We pray for real peace,
enriching all the human race.*

*We pray for peace,
and not the evil peace,
defending unjust laws
and nursing prejudice,
but for the real peace
of justice, mercy, truth and love.*

*We pray for peace:
Holy communion
with Christ our risen Lord
through death or tumult, peace
will come*

Alan Gaunt (1935-2023)
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May we see true peace come to
our world and into our lives as
we worship the Prince of Peace
this Christmas.

In His name,



*and every living thing;
God's will fulfilled on earth
and all creation reconciled.*

*We pray for peace,
and for the sake of peace,
look to the risen Christ
who gives the grace we need,
to serve the cause of peace
and make our own self-sacrifice.*

*God, give us peace:
If you withdraw your love,
there is no peace for us
nor any hope of it.
With you to lead us on,*



Photo by [Ben White](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Dear friends,

It feels like everyone is getting ready, getting ready for Christmas. Christmas Trees going up (even as I write!) cards being written, presents being bought, menus being planned and food being bought. Although sadly, and increasingly, for some they are not able to prepare to celebrate and certainly not in the way they might have hoped. They have a deep concern as to how they can simply heat their homes and feed their families this winter. That is if they even have a home to live and eat in.

In the past I have had the privilege of volunteering at a winter night shelter. What struck me was that everyone's story was different as to how they found themselves homeless. It taught me not to make assumptions. Some had been estranged from their families, got behind with their rents and evicted, couldn't afford to put together a deposit despite working, experienced broken relationships and so the stories could go on.

Some churches will be hosting winter night shelters, arranging warm hubs and providing hot drinks and meals to not just those who are homeless, but also to the lonely and vulnerable. As Christians we cannot close our eyes and ears to the needs around us as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. We cannot welcome Jesus and shun our neighbour. As Jesus himself said 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

The nature of Jesus' birth highlights who these brothers and sisters are. Jesus himself was born homeless with parents who were dependent on the charity of others to give them shelter and food. The story worsens as the family had to flee and become refugees in Egypt. Yes, Jesus was a refugee! When we fail to look out for those in need, we are hurting God.

Today our hearts and the heart of God is breaking looking at what is happening in the place of Jesus' birth. The violence and suffering in Israel and Palestine makes us stop and think, pray and act even as we prepare for Christmas. In our sanitised Christmas we usually miss out the story of the massacre of the innocents just after Jesus's birth which is recounted in Matthew's Gospel. But we can't turn a blind eye to the massacre of the innocents in the current conflict.

Martin Leckebusch in his variant of a popular carol, 'O West Bank town of Bethlehem', asks the question:

'How violently, how violently
the hope of peace is riven;
can God impart to these torn hearts
the blessings of his heaven ?
Who now recalls his coming to this dark world of sin?'

As Christians we believe that peace is possible, the hungry can be fed and the homeless find shelter. And we can work together to achieve it and thus truly remember and celebrate the God who came to earth as a baby to transform a troubled world.

I would like to wish you a peaceful Christmas as you celebrate and seek to play your part in bringing about transformation in this world.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George".

Synod Moderator

Ministering around the Pastorate

Dear Friends,

This brief note is written to keep you up to date with what I've been doing in and around our pastorate, as well as, at times, further afield in the Local Area Group, Synod, or Nationally. Sometimes the things that a minister does is hidden away and folk can wonder what goes on, so my aim is to be open about what I do. This isn't, in any way, meant to be an exhaustive list, but just give a flavour of what's going on.

- Attending and leading worship at the three churches
- Attending elders' meetings at the three churches, and jointly across the pastorate
- Attending Church Meeting at Welwyn Garden City
- Serving as a trustee and attending meetings of the Wheathampstead Chapel Community Hub
- Attending Churches Together meetings in Welwyn Garden City & Harpenden
- Attending the shared supper for Inter Faith Week in Welwyn Garden City
- Meeting individually with other clergy in Harpenden & Welwyn Garden City
- Meeting with colleagues in the pastorate
- Meeting with people pastorally
- Attending church events – coffee mornings, Saturday church, Worship Café, games evening, Christmas Fayre, Kangaroo Club, Baby Roos
- Attending LAG Steering Group Meeting and meeting with the LAG ministry team
- Attending Synod
- Visiting the Synod office and meeting Synod staff
- Attending and helping out at the National Assessment Training Conference

Looking forward, many of these things will continue to happen, and I hope that more things will be added to the list. Elsewhere in this magazine you will see details of when events such as Bible Studies in both Welwyn Garden City & Harpenden are going to be taking place; there is also going to be a mid-week worship in Welwyn Garden City.

Finally, let me finish with a request.

If there's anything that you want to ask about, anything that you want to know, anything that you want to chat about, please do get in touch with me. I'm happy to chat when we meet at church, to find a quiet corner to have a conversation, to meet up somewhere for a coffee, or to come and visit you.

In His name,



Christmas Fayre 2023

Thank you to everyone who helped make this years Christmas Fayre such a resounding success. To all who contributed by donating items, helping by manning stalls and activities and not least my kitchen and refreshment teams. A very special thank you to Allison for all the volunteering time she has devoted to the planning, setting up and on the day over and above her administrative



employed hours. We are also very blessed by the support we receive from friends and families especially Lee, Shaun, Mary Bedford and her friends.

The total profit after expenses was £2542.09 after all expenses up on last year total so well done everyone and we will share this equally with Isabel Hospice.

For those who are interested I have added a breakdown.

Many thanks once again for all who offered their support .

Joyce

Christmas Fayre Stall Holders Takings

Stall/Activity	Hosting	Profit on the day
Plants & Garden Items	Ann Meers	£189.70
Christmas Bits and Bobs	Mary Bedford's Friend Hilary	£80.64
Adult's Tombola	Lyn Henderson Mary Bedford	£104.35
Crafts various	Allen & Helen	£319.30
Preserves	Dorothy Tulloch	£293.15
Pick a Bottle	Derek Groves	£150.15
Pre-Loved Items	Linda Sutton & Joyce Deans	£255.65
Home Baking Sweet & Savoury	Helen Cunningham & Kathleen Muir	£200.73
Hand Crafts	Margaret Taylor Hazel Thorne	£2.70
Raffle	Mary Sartin Robert Harvey	£178.50
Face Painting	Christine Novelli	£23
Childrens Games	Sarah Smith	£61
Chocolate Tombola	Janet & John Mortimer	£102.10
Father Christmas Grotto	Ray Gibbins, Claire Andrews + Elves	£63
Kitchen Taking orders & money	Allison G, Joyce N, Sandra, R & Lee N. Margaret Ch	310
Teas and Coffees	Philip & Joanna	94.70
Door	Cherylle & Graham	96.55
Non Church Stalls £15	5x£15	75
On the Day		2538.22
Sunday Takings		92.83
Donation		65
Fayre Expenses		213.96

Harvest Festival Harpenden – Sunday 1st October

Harvest is such a lovely, uplifting time of year and decorating the church in readiness to celebrate this season is always a joy. I am extremely grateful to all those who came along to help with the flower arrangements on the Saturday morning. With such an artistic, talented team, the church was soon looking magnificent. Many thanks also go to all those who generously provided funds or brought foliage, flowers, fruit and vegetables to enhance the displays. It was lovely catching up with everyone's news as we worked.

Sharon led a wonderful service on Sunday when one of the activities was planting hyacinth bulbs, whilst the children searched for clues on the harvest mice hidden around the church. All donations of dry and



tinned goods and toiletries were donated to the Salvation Army Food Bank. After the service, everyone was able to enjoy a 'bring and share' lunch together.

Many thanks to all those involved in making our harvest festival celebration so special.



Bronwen

Martyn, Lynn & Family

Invite you all to Open House at the Manse

Saturday, 16 December

Feel free to drop in any time between 10 & 3pm
refreshments will be available.



18 Ambrose Close
Harpenden
AL5 4AX



WGC Bible Study
Restarting on 5 January

Friday morning
10am

In the quiet room



Harpenden Bible Study
31 January

Wednesday afternoon
2.30pm

at the church



WUC News

As churches we are all very busy at this time of year, lots of services to look forward to and prepare for, apart from more social activities. We enjoyed attending the WGC Quiz Night, even though we came away with the jelly babies, much better than a wooden spoon, have too many of those! WGC also worked very hard for their lovely Christmas Fair, we thoroughly enjoyed our lunch there.

This week has been particularly busy as we have had a Trustee meeting for the Chapel Hub, all seems to be going well with the Gym, our new manager has improved so many aspects of it and we have nearly 300 members. We had a visit from the local radio and did an interview about how the project evolved, they were very impressed with the building and how the church was involved. We also had the Community Meal, forty people attending for a three course dinner and plenty of conversation. We have celebrated, four church members who have birthdays this week and visited another, Vivienne Kendall, in hospital after a fall in her home which sadly resulted in a broken hip.

Wishing you all a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas.

Jane and Jackie



CAROLS OF PRAISE AFTERNOON

3pm on Sunday 10 December
In the Chapel Hall.



Come and let us know your favourite carol that we can all sing.
Followed by tea and mince pies.

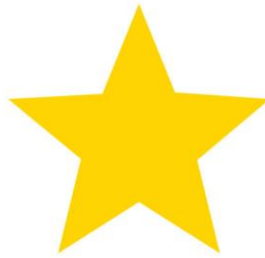
Planning for Christmas at URC Harpenden

The reason for the season!

Lights up Sunday and advent

For Harpenden's light up Sunday, Harpenden URC will be open on Sunday 26th November from 12.30 join us to make tree toppers, Christmas tree trims and cards, ice biscuits or find the church mice and see what the elves are up too!

You can find the church mice, follow the stars finding the Christmas message.



We look forward to stir up Sunday on 26th November at 10.30 which will nicely end our Christian year. Martyn will be leading this service.



We are holding a Christingle service on Sunday 3rd December in aid of the children's society this will be the beginning of Advent. If you would like a Childrens society money box or candle these are available at the back of church.

In the service there will be an opportunity to bring along wrapped up gifts for children (and labelled with boy or girl and age). The gifts will go to children at the women's refuge in St Albans. Then on Sunday 10th December 10.30 Phil be leading our nativity followed by a bring and shared lunch.



Gill and Don plan our annual carols by candlelight on Sunday 17th December 6.30 join us for a wonderful candlelight service to sing some wonderful carols.



On Christmas eve – Sunday 24th December, we have our crib service at 3pm and our midnight mass at 11.30 led by Martyn. Join us to begin your Christmas.

Christmas day service is Christmas morning start at an earlier time at 10.00 led by Sharon.



Whatever you plan this advent and Christmas – be blessed! As we count down, celebrate and worship together! The newborn King.

Church Flower Rota for 2024

I am including my 2024 appeal in this edition of the magazine in the hope that those who have forgotten to respond will be reminded.

There were 20 blank spaces in the 2023 rota and for the first time since I started looking after the Rota in 1988 we have not succeeded in breaking even or ending the year with a small balance to carry forward. I will be looking to church funds to help me pay my flower account with Lamberts.

If we cannot find more people to support flowers for Sunday Worship and special occasions like Harvest and Easter we may find ourselves unable to provide flowers every Sunday or replace the arrangements with a simple bunch of flowers in a vase.

Flowers are distributed after the service to elderly who are housebound, or in Care Homes, the sick or bereaved, and those coping with difficult situations or celebrating special events.

They are greatly appreciated, and I receive many letters of thanks so to enable this to continue in 2024 I need your help.

You may not have contributed before, but all are welcome to donate for the flowers in church on a Sunday of their choice which may have a special meaning. If you would like to be included on the Rota please contact me before the end of December. Please give me a choice of at least two dates and I will try to accommodate your first choice.

The new rota will be displayed in the Rota Folder located in the top drawer in the Tea Point. If there are any blank Sundays, please try to fill them. A group of friends, for instance, may wish to subscribe jointly.

On your dedicated Sunday you can opt to arrange the flowers yourself or by donating and one of the team will take care of the rest.

Extra donations, regardless of the amount, are always welcome throughout the year.

Making a Donation

Please make cheques payable to me or if cash in an envelope clearly named.

Please let me know if you would like your donation to be Gift Aided

The Flower Team is sadly depleted, and we are now a team of three Mary Sartin, Margaret Richardson and me. We would warmly welcome people who enjoy flowers to come and join us. We would gladly support anyone who would like to help until they feel happy and confident to work on their own.

Thank you, Joyce Nicolson, – mob.07886392602 email
joycen2@hotmail.com

Christmas Cards

Rather than send Christmas cards to all your church friends please add one card for everyone on the board in the vestibule. By placing a donation in the plate provided you will be supporting our nominated Christmas charity **Crisis at Christmas**. They will also receive our retiring collection at Carols by Candlelight on the 17th December at 4.30.

If I don't see you in person may I take the opportunity to wish you a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year

Joyce

JOY TO THE WORLD

One of the loveliest Christmas hymns is “Joy to the World” by Isaac Watts. As a young man he was fed-up with singing what he called ‘dreary old Psalms.’ He annoyed his father so much by his continual complaining that his father challenged him to write something better. So he did! This hymn is only one of the 750 hymns that he wrote. Watts was born in 1674 and is recognised as ‘The Father of Hymnody.’ That refers only to English Hymnody, for as we shall see Martin Luther encouraged Christians to sing hymns over 100 years earlier.

Watts most famous hymn is ‘Our God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,’ but he wrote other favourites such as, ‘When I survey the wondrous Cross.’ Which happens to be my favourite.’

During the Reformation in Germany in the 1500’s Martin Luther had this to say about singing:

“Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music.”

Sadly, today Lutheran hymn books contain few of Luther’s hymns, and those translated into English are hard to find in English hymn books. “A mighty fortress is our God,” is, of course, an exception!

So, here is Watts lovely and joyous Christmas carol:

Joy to the world, the Lord has come!
let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare Him room
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature
sing!

Joy to the earth the Saviour reigns!
your sweetest songs employ
while fields and streams and hills and
plains

repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
or thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and
grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of His righteousness,

the wonders of His love,
the wonders of His love,
the wonders, the wonders of His
love.

Graham Neads



Monthly Mid-week Worship Service

With Communion

Wednesday 10th Jan
From 10.30am

Led by Rev Martyn Neads

2nd Sundays at WGC URC

FamilyWorship@10

from 10am til 10.40am in the Church followed by refreshments with everyone, then activities for families in the Lower Hall til 11.45am.

Followed by

Traditional Worship at 11 am

Refreshments from 10.40am in the Church, leading into worship with hymns and sermon led by our minister Martyn.

Dates including Jan 14th; Feb 11th;

Mar 11th; April 14th

Welwyn Garden City URC Events

Sun 3rd Dec	10.30am	Communion Service - 1st Sunday of Advent
Sun 10th Dec	10.30am	Family Worship -2nd Sunday of Advent
	3pm	Pet Service You and your pet are invited to a special Pet Service - a blessing of all animals
Fri 15th	6pm	Film night for all ages- Please bring your Adult Animated animal adventures leading to the nativity – Should be a hoot!!
Sun 17th Dec	10.30am	Family Worship – 3rd Sunday of Advent
Wed Dec 20th	3.30 – 5.15pm	Christmas Special for young families. Christmas story and simple carols in church, playtime and crafts for families with children up to age 7. Older siblings welcome. All children must be accompanied.
Thurs 21st	6-8pm	The Longest Night A welcoming space for all, and especially for those who don't find Christmas easy. Short reflective service. Opportunity to talk, light a candle & remember loved ones. Refreshments served
Sun 17th Dec	4.30pm No morning service	Carols by Candlelight Come and see the Church at its very best! Traditional carols and the Christmas story in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Please note the extensive use of candles. Doors open at 4.15- 4 th Sunday of Advent
Sun 24th Dec	10.30am	Family Worship
Mon 25th Dec	10pm	Christmas Day Service Coffee and mince pies from 9.30am

CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

Two friends share a birthday on December 4th, Margaret Br. who will be 97 and Olive J. who will be 94!! Two more friends share the 5th, Roger S. (a youngster at 92!) and Melva S. followed by Philip R. on 7th, and last but not least Lucy S. who will be 8 on 10th.

Moving on into 2024, we start with Shaun C. and Doreen G. both on 6th January, followed by Rory F. who will be 17 on 16th, and lastly Linda S. on 20th.

We send our birthday congratulations and best wishes to all these friends and hope they each enjoy a happy day.

If you are feeling left out and would like us to mention your birthday, anniversary or any other news, then please find me on a Sunday morning or contact Allison in the church office on 01707 333326 or email: officewgcurc@gmail.com.

We send Wedding Anniversary congratulations in January to two couples:-

Barbara & Jo Palacio's 68th on 14th and Cherylle & Michael Cooper's 47th on 22nd.

We send congratulations to both couples and hope they enjoy their special day when it comes round.

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Norma & Ted's son- in- law, Tim, Lorraine's husband, and send our heartfelt sympathy and prayers to the family at this very sad time.

We are very sorry to hear that Carol Tucker is in hospital and send her our love and prayers that she will be able to return home soon.* Edit : Carol is now resting at home.

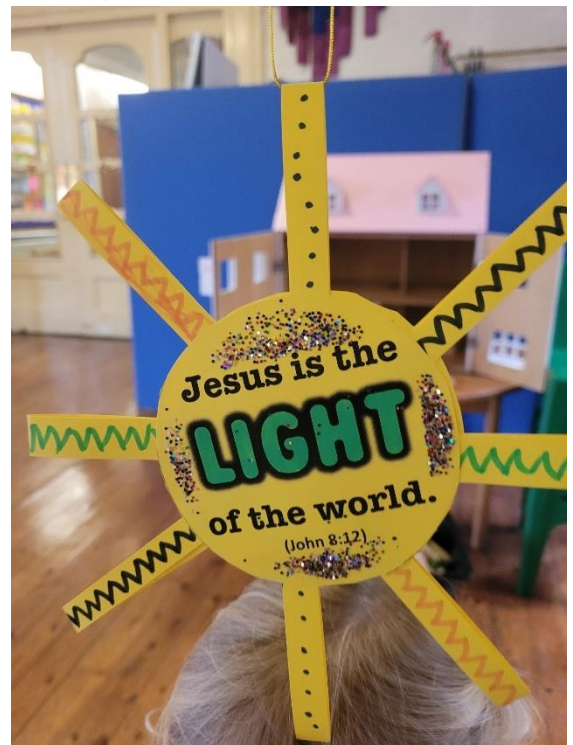
Please remember to pass on any other concerns to our minister, Martyn, an Elder or Pastoral Friend so that no one gets forgotten.

We thank God for all the Blessings we receive as members of our congregation here in Welwyn Garden City.

Thank you on behalf of our Pastoral Teams

Ann

It has been a busy couple of months for Childrens, Families and Youthwork in WGCURC. We hope you enjoyed seeing the lego models on the window ledges made during our first Gamesnight **indoors** in October, which was so successful we had a second one in November. And the photo is a craft made by Beth and Lily at Saturday Families Church, where we had two sessions on light either side of Hallowe'en: 'Jesus is the light of the world', and 'Let your light shine' – our church motto. We've been singing 'My lighthouse' by Rend Collective, and the old favourite 'This little light of mine' and waving tea lights around during our prayers.



In November, I had a 24 hour conference of structured sharing with 5 others working for URC churches either as Childrensworkers or Youthworkers, hosted by Lorraine our North Thames Synod CYDO (children and youth development officer) which was encouraging. It was good to be in a room full of people in their twenties – which rarely happens to me in the URC! And it was good to hear how youthclubs and childrens' groups are flourishing in other places.

The other photo is from a visit to Highfield School in Letchworth where 4 of us formed a panel for an Interfaith Week debate with years 8 and 13, on the theme "Does the complexity of the universe prove the existence of God?"

Wendy



Musings from the Manse

Well, we have been here a few months and I can honestly say that they have been a wonderful (and often chaotic) time of settling in to a new home, meeting fantastically kind and welcoming people and catching up with friends, who living much nearer now, are able to come along for a weekend visit.



Our manse garden project is



underway and while a blank canvas is a little daunting, the opportunity to create a new garden is thrilling. We have been fortunate with the weather and been able to spend more time 'doing' than we anticipated.

Martyn has become very proficient at wielding a mattock while I have been digging a new flowerbed. Spending time in the garden is such a pleasure for me and honestly gives me a real sense of peace – it is a real time of thought and reflection and although the digging may be hard (thank you clay soil), the thought of creating a place to enjoy outside is wonderful.

Alex is loving his new school, which has been a real blessing. He has made new friends and developed new interests, all the time running around at rocket pace. He has 'encouraged' us this past week to extend his school nativity project and, under his firm project management, we have created a toilet roll nativity.



It has been wonderful to hear him talking about all the people involved in it and the very particular role each person played in this amazing birth story. The real

joy is seeing the delight in him as he uses the toilet roll characters to act out the nativity, and while the camel may not have actually climbed on the stable roof to chat to the angel about Pokemon, people really did come to seek Jesus; born in a stable, bringing joy to our world.

Lynn Neads

Here are a few lines for the folks at Harpenden

We hope that you are all well at Harpenden URC. Five years have gone by since we said goodbye. Not sure where that time has gone! Good to see that you have a new minister. At Middle Lambrook we now call on the services of Rev Tim from the Mid-Somerset Group once a month and lay-preachers for the other Sundays, or else we go to Martock URC when we cannot fill the pulpit but they have a service booked in. Tim retires next July though so we will see what happens as regards ministry for the URC in Mid- and South Somerset after that.

It has been a very wet autumn so far on the farm. Our cattle generally stay out in the fields with the option of a barn to go in if and when they want to - but there are too many of them to be shut in all the winter. However, if autumns and winters are going to carry on in this vein we might have to, well, not pull down our barns and build bigger ones like the unfortunate fellow in the Bible, but just build an extra barn so that there is a bit more room! Despite the weather, everything (silage, hay, potatoes, pumpkins) got harvested in the end, and there has been plenty of grass for the cattle, unlike last autumn. So we mustn't grumble. My father is continuing to potter around and take an advisory role. Back in October, one day when it wasn't raining, I took him for a trip around the fields as he sat in his deckchair set up on the back of the trailer. (Sorry, I should have taken a photo of that!) This was better than him sitting indoors on a sunny afternoon and allowed him to look about the farm without having to walk too far.

Down at Sandwich, Sarah and Rose are getting along well. Sarah is pursuing her health and safety role at work and Rose is now in Year 3, at the junior school.

A tad early, but I'd better wish you all a very happy Christmas!

Steve Powers

Gift Sunday 26th November

Many thanks to all who brought in such a wonderful array of donations for our gift Day. All the donations will be collected this week by our 3 charities, Home start , Resolve and Hert Wise. The money that was donated was spent on donations for resolve after Joyce spoke to the organizer.

We were also asked by BID (the local business group) to facilitate a collection and distribution of Advent Calendars from the local RiseGym. Their customers had donated an advent calendar for a free session.

Well, Joyce and I walked over to collect them with 4 large shopping bags, thinking we should be able to manage them. Oh, were we in for a shock!! BID had forgotten to say that the Stevenage Branch was also collecting. There were 600 .

But luckily, these two lovely young men were able to help us!

Allison



The fund raising team would love to thank everyone for their efforts and support this year. Due to anyone that has donated, attended or helped out at any of the events this year, we have managed to raise
A wonderful total of £9760

We will be continuing with the Talents table and Lucky numbers club. And are very grateful to receive the regular donations from the Tea Dance and Child Minders group. The Pop up Fayre will be in May and along with some more quiz Nights we would like to offer a quiz afternoon or even a beetle drive. In October, along with Harvest, we hope to have a truly different event... more to follow...Please let us have your ideas and any offers of help, as we would really like to include everyone in this. Allison on behalf of fundraising team.

Hello my dearest friends

Daisy and I left WGC on 28 August and although the vet gave me some 'kitty calming' medicine, it didn't work at all! Daisy spent the entire 8-hour trip voicing her displeasure of travelling by car.

I started working at Birthlink Charity on 4 September as their Income Generation Manager. Birthlink is a small Scottish charity, based in Edinburgh, whose origins date back to 1911. From 1930 until 1980 there was forced adoption practices in place in Scotland. During this period babies were cruelly and unnecessarily removed from their mothers and placed with adoptive parents. This practice did not have any regard for the mother or child's wishes or needs but was because these mothers were judged unfit due to their circumstances at the time of the birth, including not being married or being deemed to be in poverty.

Birthlink established the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland in 1984. This enables birth parents, adopted people and their relatives to place their names on the register with the potential of finding a match with an adopted person or family member who is also seeking to be reunited. They offer a free professional mediation service to families who wish to reconnect. <https://birthlink.org.uk/>

I feel so blessed to work there, and the staff are very supportive. I share an office with the CEO and we work collaboratively on projects. I recently updated the charity website, introduced a lottery as an additional income stream and line manage the shop manager, who oversees two of the oldest charity shops in Scotland.

While I was flat hunting, I stayed with Ryan (my son) in Penicuik. This gave me an opportunity to bond with my gorgeous granddaughter. She introduced me to soft play and I had to climb up climbing frames, go down slides and play in ball pits, to keep up with her. I'm not sure where she gets all her energy from!

I moved into my flat mid-October and thank God daily for blessing me with all the wonderful opportunities that I've been given.

I have attended the URC in Granton. They are a small and welcoming congregation.

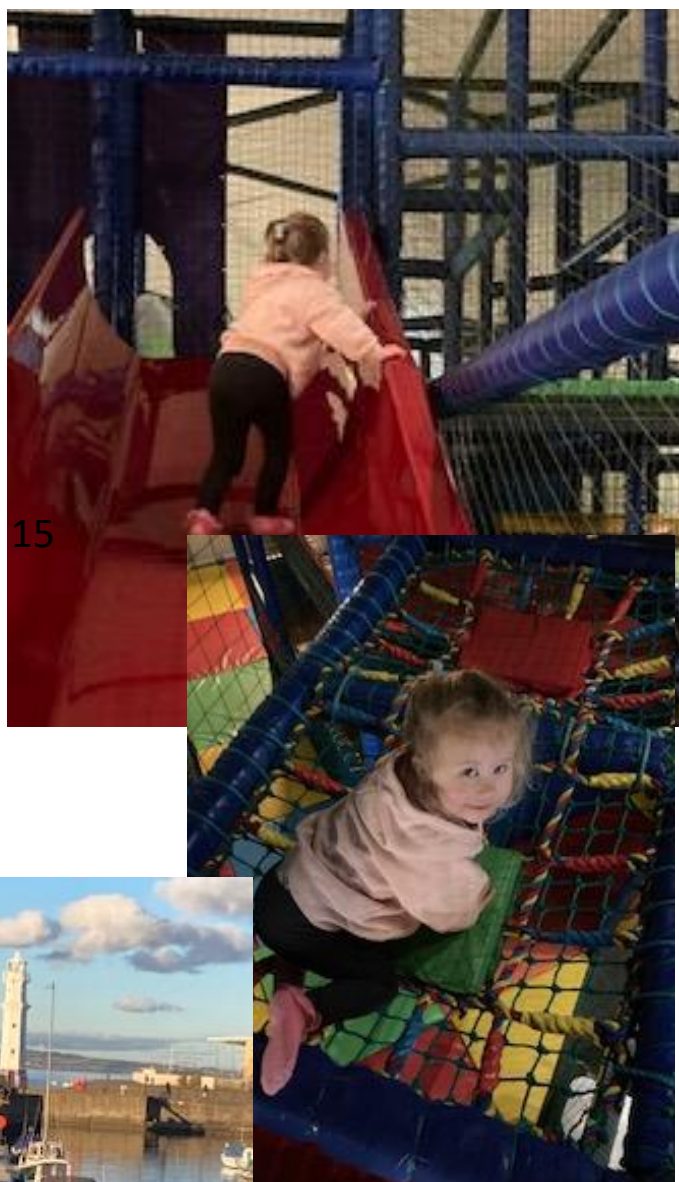
Thank you for all your love, prayers, and support. I really miss my WGC Church family. God Bless you all.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Blessed 2024.

Love Liz

Fearless Annabelle climbing up on the highest point of the soft play area and finding it amusing that I am not as fast as she is!

This is Newhaven Harbour which is about 15 minutes walk from my flat. They serve the most delicious fish and chips at a little restaurant overlooking the harbour.



Lincolnshire Life: I can't quite believe how life has changed in the last 2 years. Having felt the call to something new I couldn't expect things to stay the same and although I knew where I thought it would lead it still surprises me to see how life is developing in so many different ways.

The garden has been fairly quiet over the last couple of months. The rain has meant the grass still needed to be mowed and we are still harvesting some late vegetables but apart from that everything is still pretty soggy so best to leave it to its own devices until the leaves have fallen.

This has opened up time to dedicate to things long overdue. We have been working on our web site and holiday listings. By the time you read this the web site should be live. If you want have a look you will find it here: <http://www.kairosdaysretreat.uk> along with photos we will try to keep up to date and the occasional blog about what is happening.

I joined the Association for Promoting Retreats earlier in the year and thought it would be helpful to attend their annual retreat to get to know people. It was a wonderful 48 hours at Shallowford House in Stone, Staffs with Bishop John Stroyan leading us. The subject was 'Encountering God' which he introduced through icons and their meaning, scripture, story and prayer. It was a long way to go but that 48 hours was a wonderful time of refreshment where God truly was encountered in the silence and in our sharing with each other.



Shallowford House rescue old and retired animals – now there's a thought!!

This time away renewed a need in me to share with people on a deeper level on a regular basis and so I have joined an early morning on line meditation group – part of the World Christian Community of Meditators and using the same material as the group at WGC. This has also been a great blessing and has opened up a new contact locally. We have arranged to meet and see where that leads us.

It had been good to be well fed because there has been work to do! The World Day of Prayer is in the preparation phase for the service on March 1st 2024. It has been my privilege to attend three prep days in different parts of the county observing what happened and then sharing in simple tasks. I had never been to such event before and it has been a real blessing to meet the people who will be organising services far and wide to share in their locality next year. The work that goes into this is amazing from gathering suitable items for a display of the country who have prepared the material to arranging and rehearsing the service, ensuing that each part has a reader and the musicians have the music. The prep days provide the first look at the service enabling people to get an idea of what they will need to do, buy relevant material and ask questions about anything from the service to practical things such as how to pay people donations to the charity.

Gods timing struck me in particular. It was 2017 when the World Day of Prayer committee in Palestine were asked to prepare for this service and now in 2023. 139 countries are sharing together reading the stories and praying for these Christian women whose theme ‘I beg you, bear with one another in love’ could not be more appropriate. The history of the area has been very sensitively compiled and many have gained far greater insight already into the complexity of the situation. The Christian women’s voices of the area are not often heard as they are in such a minority. Only 3% of those living in Palestine are Christian today and as we watch the horrors that continue to unfold it has been good to remember that the women offered the service in love and the

timing has ensured people worldwide are joining with them in prayer for peace. If you want to read more the web site is <http://www.wwdp.org.uk>

That has been a privilege in itself and this week I have had the joy of getting to know the people on the committee much better as we have been participating in preparing the material for the service in 2025. I had no idea just how far in advance everything would need to be done. We have spent 4 days together at Wydale Hall near Scarborough. It has been hard work and our reward is an afternoon outing to the seaside – watch out Scarborough, here we come!!



This was
a special
place for
us to
stay and
work



Now home after an exhausting few days it is the Winter Fair at church this weekend offering The Narnia experience which lasts for half an hour as people meet grown up Lucy (me!) and go through the wardrobe into the magical world. Mr Tumnus will greet them at the Lamp post, the Beavers will offer hospitality in their lodge and eventually they will meet Father Christmas busily mending his sleigh as he has heard that Aslan is on the move and Christmas might be celebrated once more. I have not been here to help set it up but I am sure it will be quite spectacular and great fun for all ages.

I mentioned Gods timing earlier and this came to me again when I was walking the dogs with Chanty in what we thought was a window in the rainy weather. It had been so wet and the forecast promised an hours respite, the sky looked hopeful as well so off we set. We had not gone far when the rain started again. It didnt seem much so we kept going.

The dogs were having a great time - with one dog loving splashing through the puddles and the other keeping as dry as he could. Half way around the fen road the heavens opened and I soon discovered that the jacket I was wearing was not waterproof! I was soaked to the skin! I grumbled away to myself! It had seemed the right time to set off and now look what had happened. Just like life when we think the time is right to start a new project or move house and then all sorts of things go wrong. More often than not it is worth the effort in the end and the delays and struggles shape what we are doing into something even better. As I grumbled away to myself on that walk we passed a field of sheep who were totally unperturbed by the downpour. They looked at us walking by with some interest and then went back to their grazing. I was struck by the symbolism. If we, like sheep, trust God completely, even in stormy times in our lives we save ourselves so much anxiety. As the hymn writer reminds us

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

With all this thinking about Gods perfect timing I know it is the right time for me to step back from my musings in this magazine. Life is moving on for all of us and as Martyn settles in as your minister it is time I withdrew and concentrated on what God brings our way here. You will always have a special place in my heart and my prayers and if you want to see what is happening here you will find a blog on our website that I will endeavour to keep up to date!

<http://www.kairosdaysretreat.uk>

Roger joins me in wishing you all a very Happy Christmas, with all the special blessings of the season. May the joy of the angels, The gladness of the shepherds, The worship of the wisemen And the peace of the Christ child be yours, this Christmas and always.

Jane

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Please can I have any articles for the next magazine by the 20th January 2024. Please send by email or contact me by phone for WGC URC & Wheathampstead articles. For Harpenden URC articles please contact Sarah Connor Many thanks,
Allison Giles

I hope you have enjoyed reading this magazine. If you have, please consider sending us an article, I'm sure we would enjoy what you have to say. If you would like to contribute and are not really sure what, please contact one of the people above, who I'm sure could give you some suggestions.

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