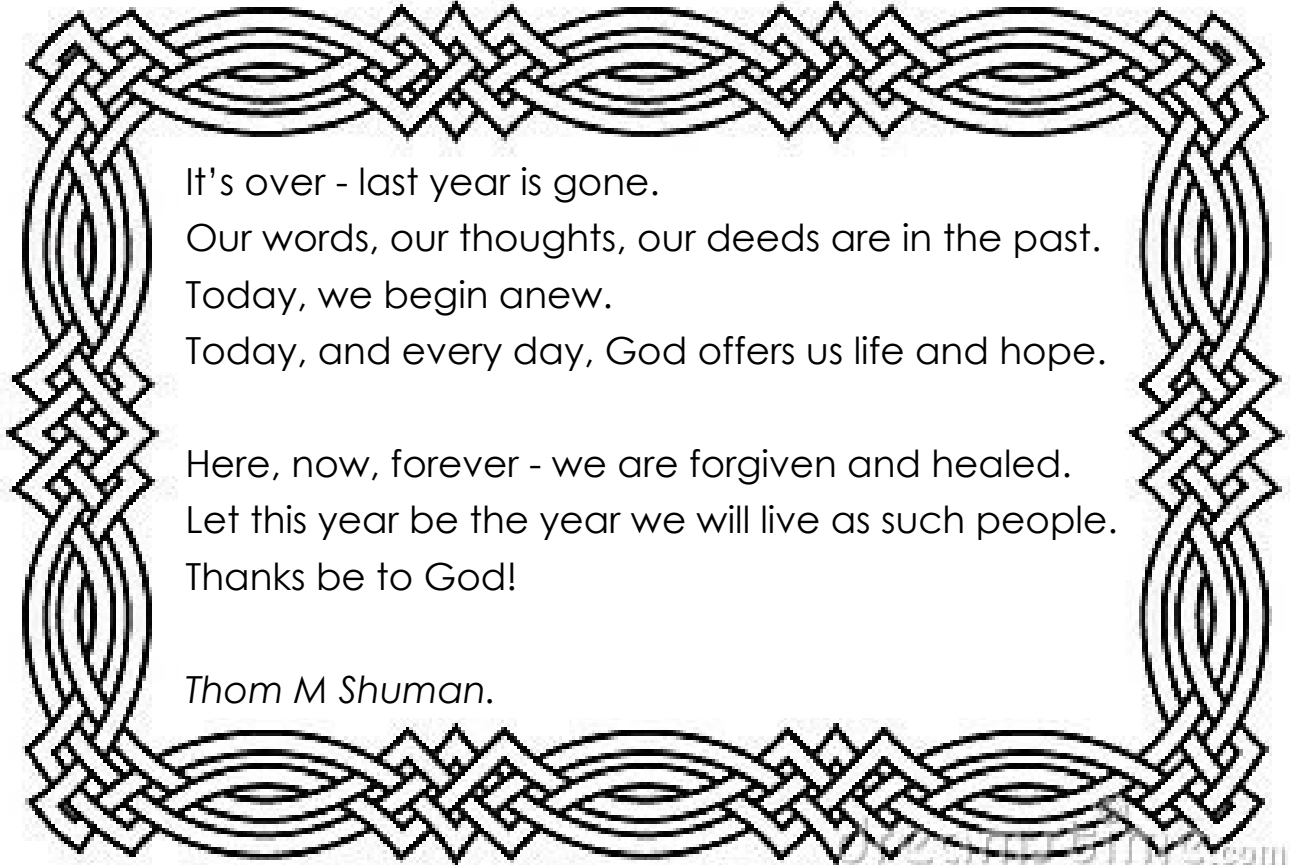




The Heartland Bulletin

Issue 5 - 18th January 201



It's over - last year is gone.
Our words, our thoughts, our deeds are in the past.
Today, we begin anew.
Today, and every day, God offers us life and hope.

Here, now, forever - we are forgiven and healed.
Let this year be the year we will live as such people.
Thanks be to God!

Thom M Shuman.

It has been pointed out to me that this bulletin contains a lot of photos which are lovely to look at but very expensive to print. If you would prefer more words, then please send them to me!

Solutions can include printing off one copy to be passed around; to show the newsletter to the members of your congregation on someone's tablet or on an overhead projector; you can also email it to anyone who has access to a computer, so it does not need to be printed off.

All suggestions for this bulletin are welcome - please get in touch via your rep or on the below email address.

This bulletin has been collated by Gill Elliott of Trinity URC St Albans.

If you have news or notices that you wish to be included in the next Bulletin, please email gilldotelliott@gmail.com, or ask your Heartland representative to do so on your behalf.

Christmas Celebrations

It might seem a long time since Christmas, but it's good to have a round-up of how we all celebrated, and how people communicated their events.

Panshanger are using Instagram, a photo sharing application. They shared news of their work on creating hampers for people in need, and hosting a lunch for 20 people who would otherwise have eaten alone.



Panshanger also used Twitter to spread their message



Trinity sang carols to passers by, astonishing them by refusing money.



Welwyn Garden City Church looking beautiful for the Longest night as the space is held for all people who do not find Christmas easy. May God's love and peace and hope and joy surprise us all.



Homewood Road's angels were joined by angels from Trinity and Chiswell Green. One flew to Radio Verulam, who tweeted about it, and one, knitted by Anna from Chiswell Green URC, made someone else very happy.



Homewood Road had a very chocolaty telling of the Christmas Story (so did Trinity at the Carol Tea but without the props!)

A very tasty Crib Service this evening at 4pm!



Bricket Wood held a Christingle Service with people from the groups that meet in the church.



Christmas Carol service at Edward Street.

The church hall was almost filled to capacity on the afternoon of December 18th for the Christmas Carol service.

The theme was Welcoming Strangers and the service included reflections from Mary, the innkeeper, the shepherds and the magi. Familiar carols and new carols were sung.

The Chiltern Singers rehearse in the church each week and take part in the Carol service. The pictures show the choir before the service and the table prepared for worship.



Christmas at Harpenden URC

The nativity this year required the involvement of the congregation in most cases as they arrived. So many heads were covered in tea towels (shepherds) and some quite respectable Kings! It followed the traditional biblical story this year and we had five children assisted by "grown ups" and it was fun for all.

Our Carols for All candlelight service saw a full church of over one hundred, with Christingles for the 17 or more children. Mulled wine and mince pies were served after the service and these must have been enjoyed, as was the service, as there was a great reluctance to go home. It was good to see many of our young folk home from university with their families.

Christmas Day was very well attended with various Christmas presents on show for all.

Activity Ideas

At the recent Links meeting the delegates were thinking about the sort of activities we in the Heartland Group would like to do together, and when the best time would be to do them. Ideas included a flower arranging course (to be held in day time on a week day) followed by a Flower Festival. Does anyone have any other activity ideas, or views on when and where they should be held? Please let your Heartland delegate know!

There will definitely be a **Heartland Day** at **Wigmore Church** run by Grassroots of Luton on Saturday the 3rd of March, and a **Barbecue and Songs of Praise** day at **Chiswell Green** on Saturday the 8th of July.

FRIDAY FOCUS

At St Katherine's, we share a magazine, *Team Spirit*, with the Anglicans, our LEP partners. There are 3 other churches besides ourselves who contribute to it.

Recently, an article appeared called '**FRIDAY FOCUS**', which calls all Christians across the UK to pray **wherever they are on Fridays**, for their churches to grow and help others to know Jesus.

Our Prayer Group at St Katherine's has recently asked our congregation to take part in this, with a view to mission and increasing our awareness of a wider church across the nation.

We would also like to share this idea with Heartland churches.

Maybe we will all become part of the answer!

Events in the next month

St Katherine's will be taking part in an ecumenical worship service through Dunstable Churches Together on the 22nd of January in the Methodist church in The Square at 4 p.m.

St Albans Churches are invited to share in a service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at **Homewood Road United Reformed Church** on Sunday the 22nd at 6.30 pm: "Reconciliation – The Love of Christ Compels Us".

Trinity will be taking part in a candle exchange during their respective morning services with St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Church on the 22nd for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Harpenden are holding a **Pet Service** on Sunday the 22nd at 10.30 pm.

Trinity will be joining an event **at SS Albans & Stephen Parish Church Hall** on Tuesday the 24th for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: **Grill the Clergy!** An inter-denominational exploration of faith in the form of a round table discussion with speakers from the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Salvation Army and URC (the Revd John Reardon). You are welcome to attend Mass at 7 p.m.; Refreshments are served from 7.30 p.m.; Start at 8 p.m

Wigmore Church are holding a **Poverty Lunch** on Sun 29th Jan at 12 noon. Sally Jones (A steward in the South Beds Methodist Circuit) will talk about Dementia.

PRESIDING AT COMMUNION AND RITES AROUND BIRTHS, MARRIAGE AND

DEATHS. There will be a course at **St. Katherine's** on Sunday 5th February from 1-30 p.m. to 4-30 p.m. regarding the above. This will be run by the Rev. Anne Sardeson, the URC Training officer. This course, for lay members, is becoming more vital as the number of Stipendiary ministers diminishes. Please come along and encourage other members to join you. We need to know numbers by the end of January.

Trinity Lecture series

Teodora Domotor from Trinity will be giving a lecture series entitled "English Literature - reading emotions". She writes: "The only end of writing is to enable the reader better to enjoy life or better to endure it" - said the great English writer, Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), who experienced severe depressive episodes in his lifetime. In line with Johnson's words, this lecture series takes a bibliotherapeutic approach. We set out on a journey to investigate how literature can help us understand emotional strain and personal challenges, and, by extension, how a shift in thoughts can *alleviate* symptoms associated with stress, anxiety and depression.

Series I - *Ethnicity, National Identity, Otherness*

14 February 2017 7 p.m.	Fannie Flagg - <i>Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe</i> (1987)
14 March 2017 7 p.m.	Ernest Hemingway - <i>Indian Camp (In Our Time)</i> (1925)
11 April 2017 7 p.m.	Harper Lee - <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> (1960)
9 May 2017 7 p.m.	Thomas Keneally - <i>Schindler's Ark</i> (1982)
6 June 2017 7 p.m.	Benjamin Zephaniah - <i>Wicked World! (Poems)</i> (2000)

Teodora Domotor received her PhD in American Literature from the University of Surrey. She also completed further studies in psychology and bibliotherapy (University of Reading, University of Warwick). She is committed to interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and research: gender studies, psychoanalysis, social history and literary theory form the basis of her arguments. Her primary research goals are directed towards the study of modernism and 20th-century transnational American literature with a strong emphasis on the narrative representation of national and gender identity. Her articles and book reviews have appeared (or are forthcoming) in American and European peer-reviewed journals.

Church-led emergency provision for rough sleepers in St Albans - An update from Trinity's Mike Smith

Trinity URC is leading a development of a church-led provision of extra beds for rough sleepers when the weather is severe. Currently there are five such beds provided at the Open Door Night Shelter and funded by the Council. These are known as SWEP beds – the acronym stands for Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. The definition of severe weather is not precise but is generally taken to be three consecutive nights when the temperature is forecast to be sub-zero. The government encourages Councils across England and Wales to make such provision and many of these projects are church-led. Church support enables a good mix of clinical and relational services by putting the emphasis on treating guests with dignity which can lead to better outcomes.

Across the country, homelessness numbers are at the highest level for a decade and continue to rise. Our initiative will be to match the existing number of St Albans SWEP beds and, depending on demand, possibly provide more. The project will be self-funding. It will work in conjunction with existing providers (principally Open Door and Centre 33) and Open Door will be the only referral agency. It is hoped that beds will be available at one central location in St Albans; hot drinks will be available throughout the night and a light breakfast will be provided before guests depart in the morning. Evening meals continue to be available at Centre 33. The service will be available throughout the winter months on those occasions when the Council deems the weather to be severe. Last winter, which was mild, the beds were made available on 18 nights; in the winter of 2012/13, SWEP beds opened on 104 nights.

When the final arrangements have been agreed a full launch plan will be announced and churches, other faith groups and the community will be invited to get involved. Training and support for volunteers will be provided by the national charity Housing Justice which has worked on the development of hundreds of similar church-led projects. From those churches which commit, we ask for prayerful support, encouraging your members to participate, and limited financial support to get the project off the ground.

This plan has been put together in consultation with local homelessness providers, St Albans District Council and Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Prayer Rota		
22/01/2017	Wheathampstead	for the ecumenical development
29/01/2017	Heartland	for the vacancies and for the Minister preaching with a view.
05/02/2017	Bricket Wood	Hold the fellowship in prayer
12/02/2017	Chiswell Green	Hope to hear from the Council about future plans for the Hall.
19/02/2017	Dunstable Edward Street	For the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people
26/02/2017	Dunstable St Katherine's	Future planning
5/03/2017	Harpenden	Continued efforts to find a Youth Worker