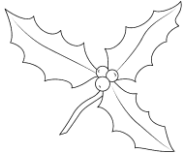


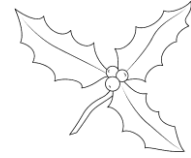
Welwyn Garden City, Harpenden
and Wheathampstead
United Reformed Churches
Magazine



December 2021 & January 2022



URC Harpenden Christmas message



The trees are glowing, and the leaves are falling the season is closing and changing, it is the time for a new season. Advent is starting and a time of newness as we start.

As the Christian year draws to a close it is an opportunity to reflect to examine how we have done in the past year, with an opportunity to walk closer with God. Advent is a wonderful time, leading up to Christmas. The countdown begins, the lights are being turned on, advent calendars are enjoyed.

Last Christmas we were in lockdown and missed out on being with family and friends, this year we look forward to Christmas with anticipation.

As we count down and draw closer to Christmas, let us draw closer to God as we sing Carols and join in with the festive spirit. Homes look wonderful at Christmas as they are all lit up, they look welcoming. Mary and Joseph found it difficult and hard to find a welcome, this is a challenge to us this Christmas, who can we welcome and help?

We have a giving day at Harpenden on 12th December, toys can be wrapped and labelled boy or girl and an approx. age and brought to church. These will be given to the women's refuge in St Albans, making a family's Christmas a little brighter.

Advent is a time of preparation, giving and receiving, what would you like to receive this advent from God? What is your goal for advent?

Lord bless each one of your churches and your people, Lord draw us all closer to you. Amen

Have a great advent and a wonderful Christmas with your family and friends.

We have a lot to look forward too in the new year as we move forward together.

Many blessings from Sharon and the Elders



Photo by [Dayne Topkin](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Dear friends,

At the start of 2021 we were filled with hope. Nothing could be as challenging as the previous year.... could it? The miracle of the vaccination programme was beginning to be rolled out. Life would return to normal before too long. But, of course, it wasn't until Easter that some churches re-opened and indeed many waited until much later in the year. Even then some members still feel uncomfortable about attending in person. Live streaming and Zoom services which had become very strange new phenomena for last year continue to play a central part in the life of many churches.

Last year was a wakeup call about some of the injustices in our world. Marcus Rashford used his status as a Premiership football player to highlight family food poverty. The Government very quickly, with the onset of the pandemic, ensured that some of the most vulnerable were supported through the Furlough Scheme and the additional Universal Credit top up payment of £20 – things that continued into this year. The death of George Floyd made the world stop and consider that *Black Lives Matter*. The stories of historical and contemporary discrimination and persecution opened our eyes to the reality of what it is like to be part of an ethnic minority group not just in other parts of the world but here in our own nation and local communities.

Over the last 20 months we have experienced as individuals, churches and communities some of the darkest of days and yet there have been some glorious glimmers of hope. And as 2021 comes to a close there is much to give thanks for, but the challenges continue, and the biggest frustration is that there are some times when it seems that we have forgotten the lessons learned.

I was excited about taking on my new role as Moderator. I came into post knowing that there would be joys and challenges....and that has certainly proven to be the case. The Spirit is at work in small and bigger ways through his people – you and me. The churches in Thames North Synod demonstrate that we are all one in Christ, whatever our background and whatever our age. But these have been, and continue to be, challenging times with Ministers under great pressure because of having to minister more widely as well as leading churches into a post pandemic world (and of course that also applies to Elders, Office Holders and volunteers generally) and churches are anxious about what the future holds.

As we move into the Advent season (again) it is an opportunity to rediscover hope. Surely God has given seasons like a heartbeat to keep us alive. Surely that is true of Advent with its important focus on hope. No doubt at the end of 2022 there will still be challenges but in the meantime we are called to live, share and proclaim the message of hope which is at the heart of the Scriptures, our faith and the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Myself and my family (Linda, Nathan, Emily, Jacob and Reuben) would like to wish you a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. Despite the frustrations of living and commuting from Surrey and searching for a new home, we can now look forward to moving to Watford in early December which will complete our new beginnings in Thames North Synod.

May the words of the prophet Isaiah encourage us all and fill us with hope as we finish 2021 and move into 2022.

A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,
from his roots a budding Branch.



The Revd George Watt

WGC URC Christmas Fayre

I am delighted to say we raised just over £2180 to date with expenses of around £150 still to be deducted and some money still to come in. I am confident we will clear £2000 of which Isabel Hospice will receive half the other half will go towards completing the window replacements in the main hall. If we donate £1000 to Isabel Hospice this year it will bring our total donations to the Hospice over the 14 years we have committed to supporting them in memory of their founder Isabel Last, a member of our church, to £14,561.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed to making the day such a success, those who donated, those who helped set up, those who helped on the day and not forgetting all who braved the elements to attend. We were missing Mike our Caretaker as he plays a vital role in setting up for this major fundraising event in our Church calendar. Mike was diagnosed with Covid a few days prior to the event. We missed you Mike and hope by the time you read this you are well on the road to recovery.

It seemed the odds were against us, losing Mike, the new Father Christmas Beard failed to arrive and at 9am on Saturday the 27th we were met with high bitterly cold winds and rain. Our BBQ gas kept blowing out so Burgers in rolls to tempt the passers-by at the front of Church had to be abandoned. The only beard I could find was in a local shop and to say the least it was an apology for a beard, but it was all we could find locally.

The gremlins then struck the electrics and our power in both kitchens kept tripping. So, no bacon butties which are always a hit in the morning. Eventually we succeeded in restoring power so hot soup came back on the menu and Allison's salad baguettes were a huge success, but our planned menus had been curtailed which had a disastrous effect on our kitchen takings. By midday it felt like 6pm.

Thank you, Helen and Joanna, for your sterling job on teas, coffees and cakes once the power was restored.

You can imagine how relieved we all were knowing that we didn't have to set up for a Sunday Service after such a stressful day and the icing on the cake came on Sunday Morning when Philip sent out the email to tell us what we raised which made it all worthwhile and came as a huge surprise.

Thank you God for helping us through so many problems and blessing us with such a wonderful result.

Thank you everyone once more from the bottom of my heart for all your hard work it couldn't happen without you. A special thank you to Allison and Philip for all their support and hard work. I think it's fair to say we make a good team.

My prayer is that we can all enjoy Christmas Services together in our churches and with our families this year. I hope and pray we can look forward to a Happy and Healthy New Year with Covid on the decline.

God Bless all my friends at WGC URC and in the Cluster keep warm and keep safe.

Joyce Nicolson

Joint Church Secretary



Remembrance

Remembrance is an opportunity to pause and reflect.



This year for remembrance poppies were made for remembrance Sunday by recycling plastic bottles. The bottles were transformed into poppies, an ideal way to recycle unwanted plastic.

As I reflected about the transformation of the bottles, these were a good reminder and message for remembrance as the heroes of the past wars have changed and transformed life for us bringing peace and hope.

The church stands opposite the Harpenden Academy school making it a busy road, the poppies were placed in the garden on Victoria Road and are a reminder of remembrance for children and their families passing by.

We can be challenged to recycle creatively making use of recycled items, looking after the creation and the world.

URC Harpenden Harvest Festival – 3rd October 2021

Very many thanks to all those who provided and helped arrange the flowers and other produce to decorate the church for our very special harvest celebration. Also, thanks for the generous donations of money to buy flowers. It really was quite a display!

Phil's home-baked sheaf-shaped loaf was the star attraction on the Sunday and we all enjoyed trying our hand at dough-plaiting during the service.



Update from Wheathampstead

We have now had a few services back on site in our Worship Room at the rear of the Halls Building. These have been well attended and much appreciated by all. Unfortunately the Minister who takes the Communion Service in the morning of the first Sunday, Revd David Aplin was in hospital with a serious health problem but we are hoping he will be back with us soon. Jane and I were able to put together a service and hold a church meeting afterwards when David was unable to be with us.

We hope that The Chapel Gym will be open early in the New Year at least for classes.

The heating will soon be installed and it will be necessary to hold another Crowd Funding Campaign to raise money for the Gym equipment although we are pleased to have recently received a grant towards this from Luton Airport. The legal side of being able to open will hopefully be completed in the not too distant future with CIO being approved by the Charity Commission and approval of the letting agreement by the Synod. The refurbishment of the Halls Building is nearly complete which allow us to let this out to different clubs who are showing an interest in renting this large space.

We are obviously missing Revd Jane, as I am sure all the churches are, but we have so much appreciated the services from Harpenden and WGC either on Zoom, or in person where possible. We look forward to working together in search of a new Minister in the coming months.

Jackie and Jane

Coffee in the Chancel will continue to be open on Monday and Tuesday mornings and on Saturdays (in term-time) and we hope to meet many of you socially in St Helen's there on Tuesdays from 10am.

7/14/21st Dec and 11/18/25th Jan

Editor note: Please join me in wishing Jackie a very Happy Birthday for the 3rd December.x

CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

Our first birthdays in December belong to Margaret Br. And Olive J. (95 & 92 respectively!) both on 4th, followed by Melva and Roger S. (61 & 90 respectively!) and lastly, Philip R. on 7th.

Moving on to January 2022, we start with Shaun (see also photo further down!) and Doreen G. both on 6th (Doreen's 90th!) followed by Rory, who will be 14 on 16th, and Linda S. on 20th. We wish all our friends a very Happy Birthday and hope they each enjoy their special day when it arrives.

We send our congratulations to Norma & Ted Collie on their 60th Wedding Anniversary on 16th December. We send our Best Wishes to them both on this special day.

We were very pleased to meet Shaun at the Remembrance Day service in the Town Centre on November 14th, so I took this photo of him proudly wearing his regimental beret and looking very smart.

We were all very sorry to hear of the death of David, Mary Dickenson's husband, on 31st October and we send our heartfelt condolences to her and their two sons, Robin & Philip.

We were also sorry to hear of Ruth Grout's death on 19th October at the Care Home where she had lived for some years.

Please continue to remember those in our church family who need our prayers at this time and let us make sure that no one gets forgotten, especially during the challenging winter which is ahead for us all.

Thank you. Ann Meers



LOVE IN A BOX 2021

We were very pleased to have prepared 79 boxes and collected £475 in donations to hand over to the Mustard Seed Charity for distribution to orphanages, schools and churches in Moldova in Eastern Europe in time for Christmas.

Jamie and Richard arrived at lunchtime on Wednesday 10th November to load our boxes into their truck before driving on to Northampton, Leicester and Coventry to pick up more boxes from schools and churches further north, before moving on to spend the night at the Premier Inn in Ipswich. On Thursday, they were setting off early to pick up more boxes in Cambridge and other places before finally arriving back at the Mustard Seed warehouse in Eastbourne. I have attached some photos to show just how many they can carry in one go!

We are very grateful to Carole, who masterminded the whole thing, to those who prepared their own boxes, to her team of box coverers and to those who donated money for Carole to buy the toys, toiletries, sweets etc. to fill the boxes.

A brilliant result, so huge thanks to all those who took part.

Thank you all! Ann



Letter from Lincolnshire

Allison asked me if I would write something for the magazine along the lines of The Goode Life - that ever-popular programme about Tom and Barbara Goode's quest for self-sufficiency in suburbia. We don't have a Margot and Gerry living next door and I am not sure I have that comedic flare but watch this space!

Before we moved, there were still surprises in store for me on my birthday. It started with a planned breakfast at Cote, with friends, which was such a lovely, relaxed way to start the day. The day continued with people dropping in and phone calls then when we had a quiet few minutes Roger shared with me all the greetings' people had sent for my birthday and retirement.

On my 40th birthday Roger created a book which I still have but this time there were videos as well as the written messages, I was moved to tears by Rogers time and effort and by people's kindness. Roger has just sent me a copy of the messages which I will respond to but I want to say a huge Thank You here to everyone who took the time to write. It was such an unexpected surprise, and I can't believe the subterfuge and secrecy that enabled it to happen - including Allison setting up false email trails to put me off the scent!!!

The final surprise was waiting at the restaurant in the evening. I couldn't see a table for 5 and was completely confused. I didn't look at the people already sat at one long table - good manners not to - but of course it was our table and we were not a table of 5 but 9 with friends making up the party. What a lovely day.

After all that excitement the reality of moving kicked in and a serious amount of packing just could be put off no longer. It all went well. Chanty and Farhan left first with the dogs, I travelled up to beat the removal people and Roger followed on the next day. As I was about to leave several people came past who we knew from shops and who were neighbours so there were hugs and farewells out on Parkway which was another little blessing that came our way.

I couldn't believe how physically, and emotionally exhausting moving was. At last I feel as if I am emerging from the fog and we are making progress.

Working outside, we soon realised that we needed the tools to do the jobs that needed doing. A leaf blower was on the top of my list and a cordless one was duly purchased. Set up was easy and all went well until the time came to change the battery and we discovered that the second battery was faulty. So instead of an afternoon of blowing the leaves it was 20 minutes blowing and an hour with the rake while the first battery recharged. I needed a recharge after that!

Getting a replacement battery was easier said than done. We had to return the whole leaf blower and not just the faulty battery, but no one had told us that once put together, this machine was built never to be taken apart! Helpful videos said how easy it was to do and we were pressing all the right buttons with Roger pushing and me pulling and the other way around. We had to succeed as it had to fit in a box made for the disassembled machine. Finally, after another half an hour of using grease and several different instruments Roger succeeded - much to the amusement of the dogs who thought all our antics were a signal for them to get very excited and join in. Hopefully the replacement will come quickly as all our power tools run on the same batteries!

Then there was the problem of what to do with the leaves. A neighbour said there seemed to be an abundance this year and we filled 12 black bags and 2 huge garden bins which were all sat in the greenhouse waiting for the mulching bin to be built. That was today's job ready for the final push when the trees have eventually given up their last leaves. At least we are now working towards the future, harvesting nature's bounty which will – all being well, provide good mulch next year and a wonderful addition to the compost the year after.

Google is a great help, but we know it will be trial and error until we find the best way of doing things. Oh dear! The 5ft diameter leaf bin isn't big enough!



So we look towards Christmas which will be very strange for us this year. With Farhan in Pakistan, it will just be the three of us, but we have a houseful for new year! The little church near us has no electricity and holds a candlelit carol service on Christmas Eve. We are looking forward to experiencing that.

Keep safe in all you do over the festive season and may the happiness and joy of that first Christmas be with you; the Christ Child's blessings fill your hearts; and may the peace of Christmas fill your lives throughout the New Year! love from Lincolnshire

love from Lincolnshire

Jane and Roger

The Longest Night Service

In 2012 the bereavement team began this service. We saw a need as there wasn't a service like this in Welwyn Garden City. Every year it has been little bit different and this year will be too as Jane and Richard Mein had always brought so much to this service. At its heart is the premise that sometimes, like the first Christmas, Christmas isn't easy. In the bustle and rush it is good to pause and hold a place for quiet contemplation, community, and think of those of us who may be struggling. On the longest night of the year we let our light shine out of the darkness for hope and blessings to our community. The church is open for 3 hours from 6-9, There is usually a small service with readings, prayer, and songs from 6:30-7. The candles are lit and it's a really warm and welcoming atmosphere. There are chairs set out so that people can chat if they wish. There are prayer stations for contemplation and prayer. Everyone is welcome. Some will stay for the whole evening and some will pop in for an hour or even just 5 minutes. And we always have at least one new curious person popping in just to see what we're up too! There are refreshments available throughout the evening. We would love to see you there.

Jennifer Rayne



Knit & Natter

Just a quick reminder that Knit & Natter has now moved to Mondays.

It will be on the 2nd and fourth Mondays.

News from Harpenden

Say hello to our new residents in the Harpenden Manse. Welcome to little baby Seth who was born on the 14th of September and his big baby brother Ruben who is now 19 months old. They are a dear sweet family and appear to be thriving in the Manse.



Date for your Diary 2022

Next spring on May 22nd we will be celebrating a 200th Anniversary at URC Harpenden

Please put the date in your Diary and watch this space

If you have any ideas and would like to be involved in the planning, please see Norman or Phil

Christmas Carols at
URC Harpenden
Vaughan Road
AL5 4ED



Sunday 19th December 6.30 - Carols by Candlelight
Friday 24th December 3pm - Christmas Eve Crib
Saturday 25th December 10.00 am - Christmas Day

You and your pet are invited to a
Christmas Pet Service - a service for
the blessing of all animals



Animals were saved from the flood and afterwards
made a part of the covenant with Noah.

(GENESIS 9:9-10)

Place: The United Reformed Church, Church Road,
Welwyn Garden City AL8 6PR

Date: 5 December 2021

Time: 3-4pm

Please note that you are
responsible for your pet - Do
let us know in advance if
you'll be bringing any very
large pet



Gift Weekend

Thank you to everyone who so generously contributed towards our Gift Weekend. This year we supported YMCA, Resolve Homeless Charity, Home-Start and Happy Days Charity.

Christmas Fayre

I couldn't resist taking this pic of Father Christmas. (Kindly note that permission was received from parents/grandparent to use the photograph)

Feedback from Churches in WGC Meeting:

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

On Sunday 23 January at 4pm there will be a service as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The service will be held at Christchurch Tewin.

Please put this date into your diaries.

Good Friday Services

Hopefully we will be able to resume our Good Friday service in the town centre once more, on 15 April 2022 and the Walk of Witness in Panshanger and Woodhall.

Christmas Service Details

Details of all the WGC Church Christmas services will be updated on the website <https://churchesinwgc.org.uk/> during December.

Facebook

Please like **The URC Community Group of Welwyn Garden City** Facebook page and feel free to share any of the posts that you feel may be of interest.

Wishing you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed 2022.

Liz (Mission Developer)





OH HOLY NIGHT

A D N H P W P J Q B T G F F S Q V
Y D M Q M I A A S T A R R L G F R
F X F A G R D O N K E Y A S Q L J
F S B U G S A V I O R M N F W U W
H H E A X W I X H Z I E K J A C B
E E T M B Y J R S N M V I N Z X I
M P H I N Y R O A E H H N U G L B
I H L B K Y P G S Z B N C Z O Q J
W E E Z M Z N I M E U Q E X L M E
K R H I M Z W F M E P S N P D N S
Z D E R A S K T A B A H S L D Y U
G N M Q J J J S N Y I A E S R V S
V A N F Q F A T G F T G I A Z T X
N J C U R Z Z X E U N O M N G L Z
B K Y M W I H F R A P E A C E G W

ANGEL
ANIMALS
BABY
BETHLEHEM
DONKEY
FRANKINCENSE

GIFTS
GOLD
JESUS
JOSEPH
MANGER
MARY

MYRRH
PEACE
SAVIOR
SHEPHERD
STAR
WISE MEN



DATE	Harpenden	WGC	Wheathampstead
5 th Dec		Communion Service 10.30am Pet Blessing service 3pm	
12 th Dec	Worship Service 10.30pm		St Peters Carol Service 6-7pm
19 th Dec	Carol Service 6.30pm	Carols by Candlelight 4.30pm	
21 st Dec		Worship service 10.30am Longest Night drop in from 6pm – 9pm	
24 th Dec	Christmas Eve Crib Service 3pm		
25 th Dec	Christmas Day 10.am	Christmas Day 10.30am	
2 nd Jan		Communion Service 10.30am	
9 th Jan	Worship Service 10.30pm		
16 th Jan		Worship service led by Worship team	
23 rd Jan	Worship Service 10.30pm		
30 th Jan		Service led by Martyn McPhee	

Please remember that services can be found on you Tube by following the link sent via email or by searching: Welwyn Garden City United Reformed Church **or** URC Harpenden. Zoom links are sent out via email if you wish to join the service live.



Christmas TRIVIA

Q.1. How do you say "Merry Christmas" in Finnish?

Q.2. Which gospels tell the story of Jesus' birth?

Q.3. Who helps Santa Claus in making his gifts?

© MEEBILY

Q.4. Where is the Christmas Island located?

Q.5. What Christmas beverage is known as "milk punch"?

Q.6. Which Christmas word means "turning of the sun"?

Q.7. How many reindeer drive Santa Claus' sleigh?

Q.8. Where did Mary and Joseph go after leaving Bethlehem?

Q.9. Which U.S. city banned Christmas in 1659?

Q.10. Which store sold the first pre-lit Christmas trees?

Q.11. Who was the King of Judea when Jesus was born?

Q.12. Which author wrote the book A Christmas Carol?

Q.13. What is the Chinese Santa Claus called?

Q.14. Who commissioned the first Christmas cards?

Q.15. Who originally sang "Here Comes Santa Claus"?

13). Dun Che Lao Ren 4). Indian Ocean 11). Herod 5). Eggnog

7). Nine 2). Luke and Matthew 8). Egypt 12). Charles Dickens

10). Target 1). Hyvaa joulua! 3). Elves 14). Henry Cole

9). Boston 15). Gene Autry

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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.

Please can I have any articles for the next magazine by the 20th Jan 2022. 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

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