



Dear Friends,

In these dark winter days, when the weather is often gloomy and so cold, and the state of our country and the wider world seems so depressing, where do we find light and hope to sustain us?

Words, someone said, are signposts, they point to something but are not the thing itself. Like a finger pointing to the moon. The finger is the signpost but not the moon. There are certain words and lines from Christmas Carols that always particularly speak to me and point me to the nature and ways of God. I wonder if you can recognise the carols these words come from or spot them when you sing them this Christmas?

For a start *'Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long; beneath the angel-strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong; and warring humankind hears not the love-song which they bring'*.

These words remind me that the world has never been an easy place to live – yet easier for some people than others. But humanity still makes a mess of things – back then it was the Roman Empire against others, now it's Jews against Palestinians as well as Russians against Ukrainians and other wars like Sudan against South Sudan.

But for all the 'darkness' then and now, the good news of Christmas, is that the *'Light Of Light', 'Mary's Son came long ago to love us'*. The revelation of God in the face of Jesus is a glorious stream of life-giving light that can lift our spirits and warm our hearts and minds in the dark places of our lives as we sing *'yet in the dark streets shineth the everlasting light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.'* No matter how bleak things are the Light of Christ shines on. We were never promised an easy ride – it was into a dark and dangerous world that Jesus was born but to *'meek souls who will receive him still the dear Christ enters in'* so that *'Light and life to all he brings risen with healing in his wings'* can be ours.

All the noise, glitz and busyness at this time of year can be such a distraction that we miss Him because He is to be found in a stable and *'with the poor and mean and lowly lived on earth our saviour holy'*; born in a far off land two thousand years ago, yet He continues to touch people's hearts and minds so gently yet powerfully for *'how silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given'*.



As is always the case, Christmas will be difficult for some people as they are aware of those no longer present; for others a joyful reunion with family and friends; whatever our situation Jesus shows us that God cares, *'and he feeleth for our sadness and he shareth in our gladness'*.

This is a time especially for generosity towards those less fortunate than ourselves. We do well to acknowledge that for all our human failings, humanity can be wonderfully kind and thoughtful without realising that *'Ye who now will bless the poor, shall yourselves find blessing'*.

There is a line from one carol that always makes me chuckle and I doubt if I am alone in thinking 'you must be joking' when I sing, *'Christian children all must be mild, obedient, good as he'*.

There are lots of understandable reasons why people don't regularly come to church but when at Christmas they do, I hope that they find a sincere and warm welcome. For as the angel proclaimed the *'glad tidings of great joy I bring are for you and all humankind'* and the goodwill of God is *'from heaven to all'*.

Life may seem somewhat bleak (that's a clue) at present but it would be unthinkable without Jesus who gave his life freely out of love for us unconditionally but hopefully so that we may respond, *'yet what I can I give Him; give my heart'*.

Wishing you and yours this Christmas all God's blessings,

Paul

Service of Renewal of Wedding Vows

2.30pm 4th January 2024

St James Church, South Wraxall

Led by Revd. Tessa Mann

Four Churches Forum

Last meeting this year 14th December 2023

First meeting next year 4th January 2024

First Aid Training?

Do you have first aid training through work or former profession? If you have a current, valid First Aid qualification, please do let us know by contacting the Benefice Office by email: nboabenefice@gmail.com or by telephone 01225 865046. Thank-you, **Bridge**



NewsLink

The next edition of NewsLink will be on **Sunday 7th January 2024**. Please email any relevant contributions to the Benefice Office at nboabenefice@gmail.com by **9.30am Tuesday 2nd January 2024**. You can read the full version on our website at www.nboachurches.co.uk

Updated Editorial Policy: In order to help create a relevant newsletter, it has been decided to follow the following general guidelines:

- No general charity adverts (these will be added to a short leaflet for each church)
- Add only Benefice and any relevant Deanery & Diocesan events etc
- Named, completed contributions only
- Methodist church adverts allowed
- Keep to the requested copy deadline

Ministry Team:

Revd. Tessa Mann (309374)

Benefice Office:

Bridge Duncombe (865046),
nboabenefice@gmail.com

Website www.nboachurches.co.uk

Church Wardens:

Winsley: Roy Ludlow (868779) Linds Batson (720069)

Christ Church: Hilary and Stephen Pike (782537)

South Wraxall: Dave Wyper (865384) Valentine Thornhill (862552)

Monkton Farleigh: Rachel and Colin Exley: (851485)

Lay Pastoral Assistants:

Stephen Pike (782537), Denise Davies (863678)

Gill Fairhurst (867560), Daphne Cox (868224)

Elizabeth Bush (866624), James Middleton (920564)

Children's and Families Worker:

Zoe Yeomans zyeomans3@gmail.com

Upcoming Services

Sunday 10th December

10.00am Holy Communion Service St Peter's Church, Monkton Farleigh. Led by Revd. Paul Batson.

10.00am Refresh Service St Nicholas Church, Winsley. Led by Alison Wells and Zoe Yeomans.

10.30am Carol Service Christ Church, Bradford on Avon. Led by Revd. Tessa Mann.

6.00pm Carol Service St James' Church, South Wraxall. Led by Revd. Tim Hawkings.

Wednesday 13th December

6.00pm Compline Service St Nicholas Church, Winsley. Led by Revd. Tessa Mann.

Sunday 17th December

10.30am Holy Communion Service Christ Church, Bradford on Avon. Led by Revd. Bernard Hughes.

6.00pm Carol Service St Nicholas Church, Winsley. Led by Revd. Tessa Mann.

6.00pm Carol Service St Peter's Church, Monkton Farleigh. Led by Revd. Tim Hawkings.

Wednesday 20th December

10.30am Holy Communion Service Christ Church, Bradford on Avon. Led by Revd. Paul Batson.

Sunday 24th December (Christmas Eve)

10.00am Crib Service St James' Church, South Wraxall. Led by Revd. Tessa Mann & Zoe Yeomans.

3.00pm Nativity Service St Nicholas Church, Winsley. Open the Book team.

4.00pm Crib Service Christ Church, Bradford on Avon. Led by Zoe Yeomans, Hilary Pike & team.

4.00pm Crib Service St Peter's Church, Monkton Farleigh. Led by Revd. Tessa Mann.

11.15pm Holy Communion Service St Nicholas Church, Winsley. Led by Revd. Tessa Mann.

11.15pm Holy Communion Service St James' Church, South Wraxall with St Peter's Church, Monkton Farleigh. Led by Revd. Tim Hawkings.

Monday 25th December (Christmas Day)

10.00am Family Holy Communion Service St Nicholas Church, Winsley. Led by Revd. Tim Hawkings.

10.00am Holy Communion Service St Peter's Church, Monkton Farleigh with St James' Church, South Wraxall. Led by Revd. Paul Batson.

10.30am Holy Communion Service Christ Church, Bradford on Avon. Led by Revd. Tessa Mann.

Sunday 31st December (New Year's Eve)

10.00am Benefice Service with Holy Communion St Nicholas Church, Winsley. Led by Revd. Tessa Mann.

Sunday 7th January 2024

10.00am Benefice Service with Holy Communion St James Church, South Wraxall. Led by Revd. Tim Hawkings



Village Carol Service



St James, South Wraxall
Sunday 10 December 2023 6.00 pm



Carol Service

**St Nicholas Church,
Winsley**

**6.00pm Sunday 17th
December**

Everyone welcome

**Service followed by
mulled wine, mulled fruit juice
& mince pies**

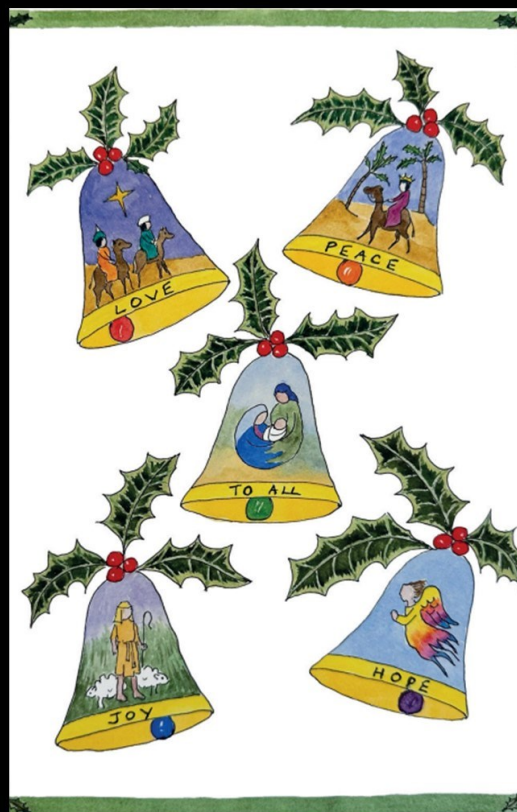
**Collection in aid of
Save the Children Gaza Emergency Appeal
(cash only)**

Carols by Candlelight



**St Peter's Church,
Monkton Farleigh**

6.00 pm on 17th December 2023



Christ Church Carol Service
10.30am Sunday 10th December
Followed by seasonal refreshments

Christmas Toy Collection



Update!



Christ Church Toy Collection

A big thank you to all those who donated presents for the Salvation Army Appeal. They were very gratefully received and will make a lot of children very happy this Christmas. **Stephen Pike, Church warden, Christ Church**



Helping spread the joy of Christmas.

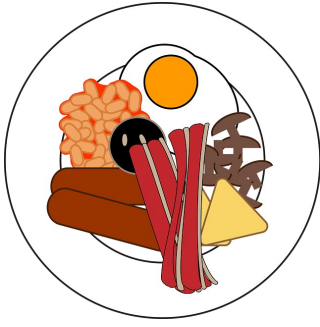
Once again, South Wraxall villagers have excelled themselves with generous donations of toys in support of the Salvation Army annual Christmas Toy appeal. **David Wyper, Church warden, St James' Church, South Wraxall.**

ADVENT TEA

So much fun was had on Sunday afternoon at the Advent Activity Tea! Over 35 children with their families came along to South Wraxall and loved making their own advent calendars, turning ice cream cones into Christmas trees and beach pebbles into a nativity entrance display in St James' porch! Becky from Discover Christ Church led some beautiful card making, with bespoke stamps and with other crafts, games and Christmas quiz everyone was very busy. The grown ups enjoyed mulled wine and mince pies, the children a wonderfully festive tea and there was a great buzz of activity and conversation. None of this would have been possible without the amazing team of volunteers, some pictured here, and others who came along to help in the kitchen or by preparing sandwiches and treats in advance. Thank you so much to everyone who was involved and everyone who came along, to make it all that it was, and for all the generous donations - a brilliant way to begin advent! **Zoe Yeomans, Children and Families worker**



Sunday Breakfast South Wraxall



We invite you to join us in the village hall on Sunday **17th December** to enjoy a delicious breakfast, while relaxing with friends and neighbours for a Pre-Christmas treat. We will be serving Full English Breakfast, which includes toast, home-made marmalade, tea, coffee and fruit juice, from 9:00 am until at least 11:30 am. All the profits go towards the upkeep of St James', our parish church.

You are welcome to take pot luck and turn up on the day, but it does help us to know how many people to expect. You can reserve your table by emailing southwraxall@outlook.com.

Methodist Church, Winsley Carol Service



2.30pm Tuesday
12th December 2023

All welcome

Soup's Up Dates for the New Year

St Nicholas Church Hall

12—3pm

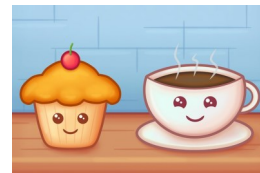
Fridays 5th and 19th January

Fridays 2nd and 16th February

Fridays 1st and 15th March



KETTLE'S ON- Jan to June 2024



Kettle's On drop-in Community Café is open 10-12pm on the first and third Wednesday of each month in St Nicholas Church Hall.

Coffee, tea, cake and conversation. Everyone is welcome. Bring your friends, neighbours and those new to village.

3rd and 17th January 2024

7th and 21st February 2024

6th and 20th March 2024

3rd and 17th April 2024

1st and 15th May 2024

5th and 19th June 2024

CENTENARY PEAL
SATURDAY 13 JANUARY 2024
10AM - 1PM

Christ Church bells have reached their 100TH birthday!

The bells were cast by **Gillett & Johnston** of Croydon in November 1923.

To mark the occasion a peal will be rung lasting approx 3hrs on **Saturday 13th Jan**

All are welcome to come along, enjoy some refreshments and listen to the ringing.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE EMAIL nboabenefice@gmail.com OR CALL **01225 865046**



Christ Church's first joint event with Dementia Action Alliance was a huge success, with over 40 people of all ages coming together to make Christmas cards, sing carols and chat. As part of the National Lottery Heritage Funded Discover Christ Church! programme of events, our Christmas cards designs were inspired by our newly restored clock and the stencilled stars on the walls of the church. A lovely time was had by all, so please watch for our Conversation and Crafts event in January 2024!

Gillian Ellis-King

The first week of December saw the completion of the restoration of Christ Church Bradford on Avon's landmark spire. Standing at the highest point in town, and towering above Christ Church primary school next door, the spire can be seen for miles around.

21 year old stonemason Ethan of Wiltshire Stonemasons and a former Christ Church Primary and St Laurence Secondary school student, has carved a the intricately decorated stone that crowns the south west pinnacle - the original having succumbed to the ravages of the weather. He then scaled the heights of the tower to help install his masterpiece at the top of the south west pinnacle.



Together with colleague Mark who has re-carved one of the huge and complex lower stones that had cracked as a result of corrosion of the Victorian rod that supported it, and Wiltshire Stonemasons boss Adrian – also a former St Laurence student – they will complete the installation of the intricately carved pinnacle – restoring it to its former glory.

Before hoisting the stones up to the top of the tower, Ethan and Mark were on hand at a BoA Youth drop in attended by close to 100 people, where they were able to show people of all ages both the original and newly carved stones sitting side by side. They answered a wide range of questions from how they became stone masons to how they carved such complicated designs, and people of all ages took the opportunity to stroke the stones before they were hoisted aloft where they won't be touched hopefully for another 100 years.



The previous week Wiltshire Steeplejacks had been on hand to talk to young people about the life and work of the steeplejacks who have re-

pointed and repaired the spire.

Speaking to young people at the BoA Youth drop in Ethan said "It has been an amazing privilege to carve this special stone. Opportunities like this don't come along very often. And having this stone here at Christ Church - right next to my primary school - makes it extra special".

Becky Strike, Community Outreach Project Officer for this National Lottery Heritage Fund and Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust funded project commented: "We were absolutely thrilled to learn that a former student of both our local schools was carving this key feature of Christ Church, and that he was able to talk to people of all ages about his work at our 'Meet the Stonemasons' drop in last week'.

Rev Tessa Mann added " It is so special to see such talented traditional skills in action. The pinnacle marks the culmination of the restoration of Christ Church's landmark tower and spire and restart of its landmark clock.

This is not the end though – next we move onto new lighting and restoration of the interior of the church, so there will be many more opportunities for people to get involved".

Gillian Ellis-King, Discover Christ Church project coordinator





A POEM FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

Charles Gorer 2021

If our memories recall a past where innocence prevailed
And cling to images of bells that
Brightly summoned us to prayer and carols sung from lamplit pews,
When we were young and strong,
Could we be wrong?

Did we abhor the stable door was all that opened
On a night when every inn was closed
To those whose faces did not fit? Did we invent a narrative to sit
When conscience looked the other way?
Do we today?

The lamps that shine on busy streets ignore the shadows in between;
So too we sometimes turn our backs on facts
Our world would rather went unseen: the old, the cold,
The minds that wander in between the light of day and darkest night.

Our world is changing. We struggle with the challenges we face.
Sometimes are not embraced by images which once gave comfort and sustained
Our faith.

Within our shrinking world new strangers must be welcomed in,
And we must offer solace where we can,
Provide a refuge, cushion age, share more;
Be not remembered only for a barely open stable door.

But let us on this day sing out; a child is born. to give us hope, to grant us joy.
Among the shadows there is light which beckons from a distant hill.
It guides our path. It always has.
It always will.