

CHURCH NEWS

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The
**United
Reformed
Church**

DECEMBER 2020

Friends,

The Story is still the same!

‘Christmas may look different, but the story is still the same!’ That’s the message for Christmas in 2020. Coronavirus will make our celebrations this year look very different from usual. However, the message of the baby born in Bethlehem is still relevant!



In one nativity play, the highlight was to illuminate Jesus, with a light in the manger, when all the other lights were turned off. At the appropriate time, all the lights went out, including the manger one. The silence was broken when one of the shepherds loudly whispered: ‘Hey, you turned off Jesus.’ Of course, nobody can turn off Jesus this Christmas!

The angels announced, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.’ (Luke 2: 10,11). The birth of this baby brings great joy and good news for everyone! As the king of the universe, He has come as our Saviour. In an uncertain world, He offers joy and hope, because He holds this pandemic in His hands. This is a real cause for joy!

‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests.’ (Luke 2:14). We may feel anything but peace amid the anxieties over our current circumstances. How can a Jewish infant born to a peasant family in first century Palestine bring peace to our lives today? Jesus established peace with God through His death on the cross. Trusting the Prince of Peace for our lives brings God’s peace amid the huge uncertainties we face. As the carol says, ‘Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her King.’

Canon Paul Hardingham
Parish Pump website

NEWS AROUND THE FELLOWSHIP

As winter closes in, we must be mindful of the people who will not be able to leave their homes for various reasons. Some will be ill, others depressed and anxious and many will be very lonely.

Christmas is almost upon us - but not like any other Christmas. 'Joy to the World' we sing but there will be no joy for the millions of people who live in war torn countries, poverty stricken countries and those trying to avoid Covid 19.

Our prayers must be for the organisations, charities and members of the public who will try to bring a little joy to the less fortunate. We pray that they will have the funding, willingness and faith that they can make a difference.

We are very grateful to Alison Pope who led a zoom service for us from her home on 29 NOV, the first Sunday in Advent. Lockdown restrictions did not allow for this to be relayed in Church but quite a number of people joined in from their homes. Individual prayer took place separately in Church.

Alison Pope also provided an insight into her Chaplaincy Work in Styal Prison and the extra difficulties that Covid has visited on staff and inmates. We would all thank her for her dedicated work for Christ and on our behalf.

Don't forget Morag is happy to order anyone items from the Traidcraft catalogue such as lovely Christmas cards and paper as well as things like coffee and chocolate. You can see the catalogue online at Traidcraftshop.co.uk. She also has jam to sell - strawberry, rhubarb and red currant, gooseberry and black currant to raise money for Traidcraft exchange. Anyone interested, please give Morag a ring and she will arrange delivery.

Like so many things during 2020, Remembrance Sunday was very different and we were not able to get together as a congregation to remember the sacrifices so many made. We were open at Swann Lane for individual prayer but, at 11 am, we stood outside socially distanced around Mavis' wonderful poppy display for the 2 minute

silence. Thank you to those whose donations over several weeks realised £30 for the British Legion Poppy Appeal

Thanks also go to those who have made donations towards postage, the magazine and Christmas messages. The latter will go to our charities.

The News Team

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

20 DEC - Lessons
& Carols



Dear Alison & Bernie

We don't improve with age do we? Always on the last minute with jobs - especially if they involve letter writing! I still prefer the old fashioned way - computers etc will forever have me confused. I was so sorry to read that Vivienne had died - so many happy memories, especially the holiday on a European Tour (!) including a visit to Oberammergau in 1990, THE play included. Eight intrepid travellers from CHURC - Vivienne & Charles, Ian & Lena, Jean & Bill McMillan and Norman and I - all names from the past I think.

We look forward to reading the newsletter every month - so much good work still being carried out by a band of faithful volunteers.

This pandemic is no joke, with the light at the end of the tunnel only a glimmer at present. I hope it won't be too long before Vivienne's family and the church can have the celebratory service which had to be put on hold at this time of lockdown. Despite being so upset when I started to read Margaret Dexter-Brown's very moving tribute to Vivienne, I could not resist a smile towards the end of it - 'technology was not a forte'. I can really claim to share that accolade! Christmas 2020 will not be as it used to be - I think we can all accept that, but for some it will be much harder than ever. Please use the enclosed donation as you see fit (and help towards postal costs). We send our sincere good wishes to all at CHURC for a Happy Christmas and many blessings in 2021.

Mildred & Norman

Personal Memories of Vivienne Wilson

I read the wonderful tribute to Vivienne Wilson by Margaret Dexter-Brown in the November newsletter. In normal times, I would have attended Vivienne's funeral but was able to share a very moving service through some of that technology that Vivienne did not appreciate. On the day itself, there were some stumbles in the viewing/hearing (maybe my slow internet speed) but I was able to see and hear a perfect recording the next day.

Margaret mentions Vivienne's involvement in church money matters and the Scottish Country Dancing. With others, we were founder members of the Scottish Country dance club in 1974. Of course Vivienne took over collecting the subscriptions and handling ticket sale monies for the many ceilidhs and Burns nights which followed; all that in addition to being a key member of the kitchen team at all times. These few words just do not do justice to the entirety of Vivienne's involvement. One memory of many: at Burns nights, some Scotsman or other had to address the haggis. Vivienne found all this gobbledegook an incomprehensible waste of time and said so firmly as she and others had to wait through this while impatient to serve up the meal.

I also had much involvement with Vivienne in the periods when I was church treasurer and, as Margaret said, she did most of the collection counting and banking. She was also covenant steward (Gift Aid nowadays) which involved a lot more keeping track of individual contributions than simply counting the money.

Finally, when Jean and I became shopkeepers, we encountered Vivienne again in her role as administrator at a wholesalers we used – she was much more than the wages clerk!

Bill McMillan

Hi Alison,

Sorry to hear about Vivienne - we are growing older. The last year has been a testament of God's provision. Soon after we moved house, I went back to my old health centre who immediately picked up on my heart murmur which the NHS had known about for 20 years but only offered medication which, in turn, caused other health problems. Looking back I knew I was unwell and that this was part of my reason for retiring. Looking back from today, there is no doubt that moving house saved my life. My new

GP immediately said that I would require a small half day procedure to rectify the problem.

Meanwhile I was being introduced to Annan in SW Scotland one quarter time. I preached with a view during December last and the following Monday morning was in the doctor's waiting room when the church rang to formally offer me the post, which I accepted. Within 2 minutes I was summoned to see the GP who reviewed the data and told me that, in his opinion, I would need open heart surgery to cut out my aorta and replace it. He also said that he believed that whilst I was cut open I would have a heart bypass. I told him I had just accepted a part time post in Scotland, he just shook his head. Further tests showed that whereas the average adults' aorta opened 2.5 ~ 3.5cm, mine opened 0.6 cm and was I scaled as having - without treatment- a life expectancy of 3~5 years.

Nevertheless, I felt that I had given my word to the church and, after talking it through with the Synod moderator, I would continue. The operation was scheduled for the end of March. I started at the church one week in four from the beginning of February, I was inducted Sat 14th

March, took a service on 15th, during which we all heard the word "Coronavirus" for the first time and along with all other ministers was "stood down" 2 days later.



I don't know if any of you have attended hospital since the spring, but they have all been overwhelmed, including the site in Liverpool where I was scheduled for treatment. The summer came and went and so did the 5 dates I was given, all cancelled.

Finally I went in for treatment on Sept 10th, released 14th and the following day the hospital went back into lockdown.

I went back a few weeks ago to see a different surgeon to review my case. He read my file, looked me in the eye and said "You had months at best, not years". So my word of encouragement to you is that **God knows your situation and has not forgotten you.**

I am gaining strength slowly and as the church has remained closed since, I have not missed a service!

Best Wishes, Alan

LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

6 DEC: Isaiah 40.1-11 Psalm 85.1-2,8-13 2 Peter 3.8-15a Mark 1.1-8

13 DEC: Isaiah 61.1-4,8-11 Psalm 126 or Luke 1.47-55 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24 John 1.6-8,19-28

20 DEC: 2 Samuel 7.1-11,16 Luke 1.47-55 or Psalm 89.1-4,19-26 Romans 16.25-27 Luke 1.26-38

25 DEC: Isaiah 9.2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2.11-14 Luke 2.1-14,(15-20)

27 DEC: Isaiah 61.10-62.3 Psalm 148 Galatians 4.4-7 Luke 2.22-40

CHURCHES TOGETHER

Our prayers are asked -

w/c 6 Dec: St Andrew's & Emmanuel Thanksgiving:

Sunday services are happening and Technology working for those at home on zoom or Facebook. Christmas ideas coming together. For volunteers reaching out to the local community through these plans and that the real meaning of Christmas will be seen and seeds sown.

w/c 13 Dec: Cheadle Hulme Methodist
As we cannot hold our Community Carol Service on 13th December due to number restrictions we are seeking to produce a pre-recorded service with input from schools and community groups. Please pray for this initiative that those contacted will rise to the challenge and that everything may come together effectively at the end.

w/c 20 Dec: CTCH /Methodist Church For all the different services to be held over the Christmas Period in so many different formats. That the message of Christmas will still be heard. Pray for the publicity for the CH Methodist Zoom Christingle on 24th December. That many people who usually come, will pick up a bag of materials to make a Christingle at home and join the service on zoom.

w/c 27 Dec: St Ann's We give thanks for Fr Sean Davidson our new parish priest. Let us be helpful to him in his ministry as he has the task of serving both St Ann's and St Chad's Cheadle. May the Holy Spirit be his constant guide.



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS



Vera and Ron Lees wish everyone a peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Madge & Ann Hardie wish all their friends at Swann Lane as happy a Christmas as possible under the circumstances and best wishes for a better 2021 than we have all experienced this year. Keep cheerful and safe!

Wishing everyone at Swann Lane a blessed Christmas and all the best for the New Year. No matter what is happening in a world turned upside down, there is still love & friendship in the world for us to celebrate. God bless, Val Hodgson

Mildred and Norman Burnell send best wishes to all at Swann Lane for Christmas and the New Year, including every reader of CH URC News.

Mo Morton wishes everyone a safe, warm, friendly Christmas and may 2021 be kind to the world.

Isobel and all the Grieve clan wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Bernie and Alison send every good wish for a Happy Christmas and New Year to everyone associated with Swann Lane

Marjorie Wightman sends Christmas greetings and all best wishes for 2021

Merry Christmas and lots of love for the coming year from Carole.

Heather, David and Louise wish all their friends at Cheadle Hulme URC a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Bill McMillan sends Christmas and new year greetings to all at Swann Lane church. Here's hoping for some sort of return to normal times next year.

Many thanks for your support of Traidcraft & Christian Aid this year and best wishes for Christmas and hopefully even better New Year, Morag & Sandy.

Jean Murkin would like to wish all her friends at Cheadle Hulme a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

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BREAKFAST BEFORE

SOUP, SWEET and MEET

FILM NIGHT

...will each resume as soon as we dare.

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SYNOD NEWS

The Steering group has been almost frenetic lately using Zoom video conferencing to consider the call of a new minister of word and sacrament into the Partnership.

We can welcome Jonnie Hill to our group of 16 churches. At present he is the ordinand (student) already working in our S Manchester and Cheshire Partnership (in the Sale and Altrincham churches). He will be ordained when he finishes training next summer and join Rev Dr Marion Tugwood as our fledgling ministry team.

Our Steering Group is gaining traction in the wider Synod in another way and moving beyond the start up informal non-decision making forum. Following a root and branch review of the NW Synod committee structure a Facilitation Group is proposed that will co-ordinate Synod resources. Steering groups (I think there are 4 in total) are to have a representative on the new forum.



Bernie Stevens

TOYS NEEDED

Our Toy Service will be on Sun 6 December when lots of Good as New items are needed which **we can collect** to be distributed via The Dandelion Community (URC), Wythenshawe.

Alison Stevens

CHRISTIAN AID CAROL 2020

When out of poverty is born
a dream that will not die
a landless, weary folk find strength
to stand with heads held high,
it's then we learn from those who wait
to greet the promised day:
'The Lord is coming; don't lose heart
Be blest: prepare the way!'

When people wander far from God,
forget to share their bread,
they find their wealth an empty thing,
their spirits are not fed.
For only just and tender love
the hungry soul will stay.
And so God's prophets echo still:
'Be blest: prepare the way!'

When God took flesh and came to earth,
the world turned upside down,
and in the strength of women's faith
the Word of Life was born.
She knew that God would raise the low,
it pleased her to obey.

Rejoice with Mary in the call:
'Be blest: prepare the way!'

**Words: Kathy Galloway,
provided with permission**

2019 CHURCH ACCOUNTS

A number of people have asked for some clarification concerning the significant difference in expenditure costs for Renewals and Repairs in 2019 compared to 2018. ie £41,163 vis £1,373.

The bulk of the cost was JWL, the builders who renovated the Coffee Lounge etc.... add all their bills together and it comes to £30,517.20. Brooktech bills re heating amounted to £7,551.16 and then there were a few small items like PAT Testing and Thompson electrical (Fire Alarm service).

We hope this is helpful. If you have any other queries at all, please don't hesitate to speak to Sandy or Don.

**Alison Stevens,
on behalf of the Elders**



Our children sang at Nong khio church thanksgiving service

ORPHANAGE

This year we have all together 28 children. Two are in Bible college and one is in Physical education college. The remaining twenty five are studying kindergarten to high school. The children are now on a break, there schools will resume again on the 12th of November. We thank God that all the children are doing well and are all in good health as usual.

We would now like to make a special prayer request for the fundraising of a drinking water filtration system for the children at the orphanage. We once had a small drinking water filter installed at the orphanage but that one had already broke down and is no longer usable. The water at the orphanage is particularly a problem during the monsoon season as the rain makes the drinking water at the orphanage muddy. For this reason we feel that the water is not very safe for the children there and have asked a water company specializing in water filters to help design a water filtration system that fits the needs of the orphanage. The projected total cost for this project is \$6,680. Please pray with us for this project, that we will be able to raise enough funds to provide safe drinking water for the children at the orphanage.

Left glass (water from orphanage) Right glass (water from city)

**Rev ABEL
SAIRATTANYU**



JOLABOKAFLOD

Icelanders have a beautiful tradition of giving books to each other on Christmas Eve and then spending the night reading. This custom is so deeply engrained in the culture that it is the reasons for the Jolabokaflod or **Christmas Book Flood** when the majority of books in Iceland are sold between September and December in preparation for Christmas Giving.

At this time of year, most households receive an annual free book catalogue of new publications called the Bokatindi. Icelanders pore over the new releases and choose which ones they want to buy, fueling what Kristjan B Jonasson, President of the Iceland Publishers Association, describes as the "Backbone of the Publishing Industry".

"It's like the firing of the gun at the opening of the race" says Boldur Bjarnason, a researcher who has written about the Icelandic book industry. "It's not like this is a catalogue that gets put in everybody's mail box and everyone ignores it. Books get attention here."

The small Nordic Island with a population of 329,000 people is extraordinarily literate. They love to read and write. The country has more writers, more books published and more books read per head than anywhere else in the world. 1 in 10 Icelanders publish a book...

Mo Morton

I find the television very educational. Every time someone switches it on I go into another room and read a good book - Groucho Marx

A hen's egg is quite simply a work of art, a masterpiece of design and construction with, it has to be said, brilliant packaging! - Delia Smith

SERVICES

Our worship **in church** is subject to the Covid rules and Elders wish to keep everyone safe. Please understand our plans may change with little notice.

We are managing individual **Prayer Time** during the tightest lockdown restrictions, and **Service Time** under Tier 3 by Zoom video conference. We will sometimes have a speaker and sometimes a simple in-house led service. We always send a paper based service by post for use outside church.

Over the Christmas period, our celebrations are a little muted this year but we are trying to follow our normal pattern as nearly as possible. The old Tier 3 did not allow mid-week services but we believe that may be different under the new Tier 3, which still leaves Christmas Morning in the air.

Duties are performed by a small team on a rota system. Readers often Zoom in or perhaps read in church from one of the three lecterns.

Date	6 DEC	13 DEC	20 DEC	25 DEC ??	27 DEC
Service	Morning Worship	Morning Worship	Morning Worship	Morning Worship	Morning Communion
Time	10.30 am	10.30 am	10.30 am	9.30 am	10.30 am
Leaders	Bernie Stevens	Sandy Smith	AlisonS & MoragS		Bernie Stevens
Reader					
Elder Duty					
Notes	TOYS + BEREAVEMENT	~NATIVITY	LESSONS & CAROLS	WELCOME CHRIST	COMMUNION

CHURCH REGISTERS - none

CHURCHES' CALL FOR ACTION

A [campaign](#) calling for debt cancellation for people who have been swept into unavoidable debt under Covid launched on 4 October by a group of four denominations representing two-thirds of a million Christians and ecumenical charity, Church Action on Poverty.

It is thought that 6 million people in the UK have fallen behind on rent, council tax and other household bills because of coronavirus and almost one in five have borrowed money to pay for everyday essentials such as food.

Low income families have been particularly badly hit, in particular those with **children**. **young** workers, those from **BAME** communities and those with **caring** responsibilities have been disproportionately affected by job losses due to the pandemic, and many therefore have been forced to borrow to make ends meet.

Rachel Lampard, Team Leader of the Joint Public Issues Team for the four Churches, said: "As

6 million
people in the
UK have
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on rent,
council tax
and other
bills due to
Coronavirus



#RESETTHEDEBT

ResetTheDebt.uk

Christians, we see Jubilee as being about more than just economics. The Jubilee principle allows relationships to be reset, communities to be re-balanced, and people's dignity to be restored. This is the wellbeing that God desires for all people. That is why we are asking the Chancellor for a Jubilee Fund to pay and cancel the debts of people who have been swept into debt by Covid-19.

Director of Church Action on Poverty, Niall Cooper, said: "Over a third of families with children lost income as a result of lockdown. The past few months have been hard enough for all of us, but for those families who have lost income and been saddled with unpayable debts and possible eviction, the pressure is unbearable. To enable these families to get through the hard months ahead, it is essential that the burden of unpayable Covid-19 debts is lifted."

Churches have seen for themselves the impact of debt in recent months. The Rev Dave Warnock, the minister responsible for 5 churches in and around Wythenshawe, South Manchester, has recently opened a debt counseling service in one of his churches:

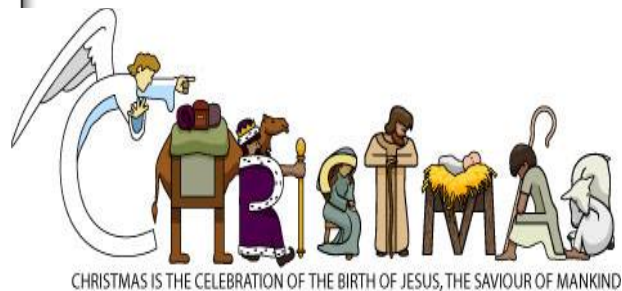
"Being near the airport many people have lost their jobs since the decline of air travel due to Covid. We have seen an increase in demand for food donations (most days one of our churches does about 10 deliveries of food to local families) and digital poverty means the government support that is available can often not be accessed because everything is done on the phone or internet. "Supporters of the campaign are asked to write to their MP and support the campaign online and in their church communities.

Speaking about the value of community in overcoming the challenges of Covid-related debt, the Rev Clare Downing and Mr Peter Pay, Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, said: "During the pandemic, we've all learnt how much we rely on one another. Communities have come together to make sure everyone has what they need. We have to make sure this continues as we move forward, especially for those being pulled into difficulty by debt. A Jubilee would be a chance to make sure everyone is treated with the dignity and care they deserve".



Church Action on Poverty and JPIT

- JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM
(URC, METHODISTS, BAPTISTS,
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND)



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