

Triangle



The quarterly magazine of the
Methodist Churches of
Wombourne and Springdale

Winter 2015

The greatest story ever told . . .

The Reverend Christopher Collins



It's that time of year for the "Strictly" final so it must be Christmas! "Carols from King's" beckons and a whole host of other television and radio favourites' herald the arrival of Christmas. All of the glitzy and shimmering trees have pointed us to the great day, cards written, presents wrapped, the turkey stuffed, the nuts roasted and finally, finally it's Christmas Day!

Yet have you ever stopped to think about all of the expectation we often put on ourselves to have the perfect Christmas? And by doing that, are we missing something beautiful and simple?

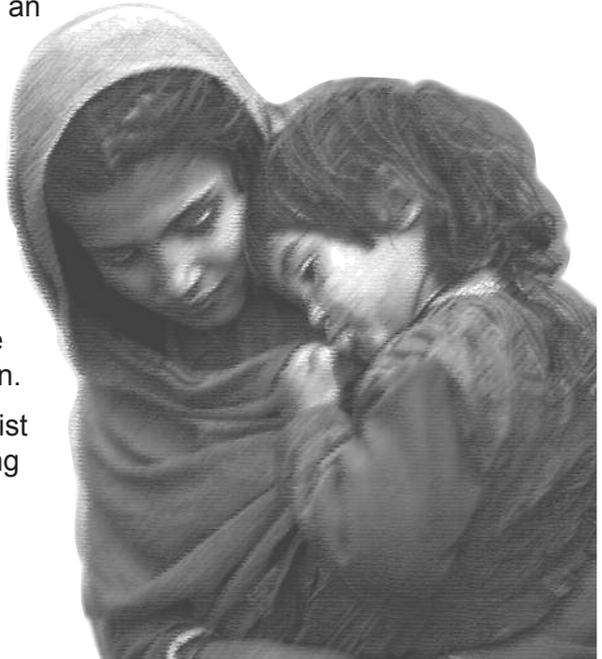
If we gaze on the crib – as many of us have because of the wonderful Penn Crib Festival (see Page 16) – then we will find something simple yet utterly profound. The moment that "our God contracted to a span / incomprehensibly made man". God was born of Mary and dwelt among us. There was no fanfare. No plush palace was prepared. In fact, there was no room in the inn. Just a stable. Born amongst the cold of the night and the sheltering animals. Born into the messy middle of life.

And that is where Jesus is today, dwelling in places we call lonely and hopeless. In the homes of all who are sad. Jesus, the refugee – an alien born 100 miles from home in an alien place – is amongst all we call refugees today.

So, I think our challenge this year is to look beyond all that shimmers and shines and look for Christ in the unwelcome places, in the uncomfortable places, for there Christ will be just as he is in the refugee and the alien.

My prayer for you is that Christ will dwell within in you to bring you hope, peace and love.

*Shalom,
Rev'd Chris*



Wombourne pastoral news

Pauline Hotchkiss, pastoral secretary

Winter! Where has the year gone? We are already in the season of Advent.

REACHING OUT

In November we visited The Maltings and celebrated Advent with a ring of candles. Nancy and Bridie lit the candles for the Maltings and Helen and Mo for the church. It was a blessed hour. By the time you read this we will have celebrated Christmas, our fourth at the Maltings, and in good Methodist tradition we enjoy a few mince pies and sausage rolls.

Another group from church visit Himley Mill Care Home each month. They witness to two units at the home and I am sure the residents and the staff enjoy this time of fellowship. If anyone is interested in joining in with either of these monthly events, please ask Carole Walker about the Maltings and Denis Beaumont about Himley Mill. I am sure there will be a warm welcome for new people to join them

GOOD NEWS

Ellie James gave birth at 4.12am on the morning of December 5th to a beautiful daughter, Manon Olwen, who weighed in at 8lb 7oz. Manon is the first granddaughter for Sue and Pete Moyle. Our many congratulations and our love and prayers to all the family.



Ellie with baby Manon and son Iorie

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE (AND THE NOT-SO-YOUNG)

I have never brought sad news of our young people, but in November we heard that a former member of Junior Church and Good News for Kids had been knocked over by a car and killed. We remember Joe Tenant as a bright, fun loving, lovable young man. Joe had just started at university in Bristol. He was the drummer in a band, and was studying subjects to enhance his career as a musician. Our prayers and thoughts are with Claire, Paul and all the family at this traumatic time, and we ask God to sustain them.

Jack Cottis is a member of the same band. I think most people will remember Jack. He went through Junior Church and Good News for Kids with Joe. Jack took a leading role in Hairspray at the Grand Theatre in November. I understand he had rave reviews and was wonderful. Jack is a very talented young man so watch the space – we will hear more about him.

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS

Congratulations to Barbara Tromans who celebrated her 70th birthday in October. Who would have thought it? She looks so young!

PRAYERS

The prayer circle meet every two months to up-date our prayer cards. At the meetings in we always name our older loved ones who are no longer able to care for themselves and are in residential care. We pray especially for each one of them, as well as praying for the world and all its problems

Our prayers are with those who are or have been in hospital, and ask God to place His healing hand on all those who are sick. We ask Him to sustain their loved ones during this time, especially Pete Moyle who is undergoing treatment. We are thinking of you, Pete, Sue and the family. God bless. Joy Brandrick's sister, Rita, is not doing so well after surgery and we are praying for her and her family. We continue to pray for Cathy Anderson, Robyn, the granddaughter of Eric and Carole Walker, and Ruth, the sister of Eric, who is being cared for in a nursing home. We also pray for Sylvia Webb, who is recovering from a broken shoulder, and her brother, Bryan Green, who is still in critical care after three months after a triple by-pass operation. Many of you will remember their mom, Millie. We ask that Your Holy Spirit will watch over them. All those who are in need of our love and prayers for healing will be blessed.

Many thanks are due to Denis, our Lay Pastoral Worker, and all the Pastoral Group visitors, for the work they do in caring for us in so many ways.

If I have failed to mention anyone with a need or with good news then I apologise. Jesus knows our every need and will watch over us.

SAD NEWS

We were all sad when we heard that Cintra Beaumont had died, but oh what a joyous celebration of her life took place at our church! Denis led the service and treated us all to Cintra's life story. We were able to meet the rest of Denis's family at the Cricket Club in Wombourne over a cup of tea and a sandwich.

Our thoughts are with Pam and David Rogers at the loss of their son, Nicholas.

Beryl Edwards' husband, Gordon, passed away early in December. We ask God to comfort and sustain all those who mourn and that His spirit will bring them peace.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As I have been writing the Pastoral News I have been involved in lots of projects. The Christmas cards are all written, the majority of the gifts wrapped. David has painted a wall that badly needed doing, and I have started the "deep cleaning", as

David calls it. I am sure many of you will identify with that. Where is Jesus in all of this? He is with me because this is for the celebration of His birthday. But it is also for my Aunty Betty, the only aunty I have left, who will be 90 on December 22nd. We are having her celebration with us at home.

Our prayers will be with those who will be hungry, cold, lonely or homeless this Christmas.

Springdale pastoral news

Jane Rawlings, pastoral secretary

Well another year is almost over and everyone is preparing for Christmas. It seems to come around more quickly every year, or is that just me getting old?

On October 11th we celebrated the baptism of Joseph Cook with a bring-and-share lunch organised by Lucy, Andrew and Emily afterwards, which was a great time for all his Springdale family to celebrate his special day. May Joseph continue to grow in the knowledge that God is with him every step of the way.

On December 4th we heard the sad news that Charles Wade had passed away. Charles has been a large part of the Springdale family over many years and has remained very close to our hearts in the last few years, when his health did not allow him to continue to worship with us. He has left a gap in our church family and we continue to pray for Gwyneth and his family and friends as they try to come to terms with their loss. His thanksgiving service was a beautiful celebration of his life with all his children giving a heartfelt message of their memories of their dad, resulting in tears and laughter. God bless you Charles.

We continue to remember and pray for anyone who is not finding life easy at the moment, those undergoing operations or hospital treatment. We pray that the Lord's healing hand will offer the strength they require to get through this difficult time.

Congratulations to anyone who has celebrated a birthday or anniversary recently or has one coming up in the near future.

During the Christmas season we look forward to welcoming people back with us as they return to spend Christmas with their families. We especially welcome our youngsters back from university and hope to hear all about what they have been up to over the last few months.

Well this is the last triangle for this year, so may I take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

God bless . . .

Better than Epic!

Lesley Cook joined the youngsters at 3Generate

“Better than Epic!” That was Lauren’s opinion of this year’s 3Generate at PGL Liddington, near Swindon, Wiltshire. Lauren, Scarlett and Reuben, at eight years old, had bravely decided to join the four older children from Springdale Junior church – Tia, Dylan, Daniel and Sam – who had been to 3Generate at Cleobury Mortimer last year. They and about 750 other children and young people, aged eight to 23, from Methodist churches and youth clubs all over Britain, including Guernsey, were very well cared for by a host of volunteers.

Meanwhile children’s and youth workers, paid and unpaid, gathered in the bar area for networking and writing a manifesto for children’s and youth workers which may be sent to Conference. We also had a visit from the Youth President and Reps, Quaker-style worship with the President and Vice-President, and entertainment from a science-magician and Paul Karensa – Christian stand-up comedian and comedy writer.

The young people also had a great time, doing so many, varied things – or “trapped in a jail of fun” as Reuben called it. The silent disco seemed very popular, as were the outdoor activities provided by PGL, such as giant inflatables, archery, giant swing, zip wire and mountain bikes. They also did interviews for 3Generate TV, listened to Fischy Music and Bob Hartman, storyteller. There was also worship of course! The older children enjoyed the discussion groups called “logins” and the Live Lounge where they could chill out with games. The children and young people also wrote a manifesto and voted for the next Youth President and Reps.

All who travelled to 3Generate would like to thank the District for paying for our coach, and the many people at Springdale who supported our fund-raising efforts, which meant each child only had to pay £20. We particularly would like to thank Springdale Indoor Bowling Group for their support. Rev’d Chris and John Howard were there too – so ask us about it please. I would certainly like to go again next year. It was one of those times I could say I was proud to be Methodist!



Fun on the way to 3Generate

A new phase in fair trading

Brenda Shuttleworth



It is now 20 months since fire devastated the Fair Trade shop at the Darlington Street Methodist Centre. With the help of the City Council, the Board quickly set about finding alternative premises which were decorated and fitted out so that two months later the shop reopened for business at 10 Salop Street, near the indoor market.

It has been an interesting experience. While retail sales have grown, we have not been able to attract a lot of new customers due to the location of the shop and purchases by our "sale or return" customers (largely the churches) have fallen.

It became clear that we could not sustain our work by moving to a city centre position so, having explored all the options, the Board decided that the shop should move back to the Darlington Street premises when these become available.

We are now looking forward to a new phase in the development of Wolverhampton Fairtrade. David Fulljames, the shop manager, has worked closely with the Darlington Street Vision Group, ensuring that the premises will provide an attractive shopping environment. No longer tucked away in a couple of back rooms, the shop will move into the large room facing School Street. This will be an opportunity to display a wider range of craft goods as well as groceries and background information on our products. In a completely new venture we will have a coffee bar which will sell a variety of coffees and teas and a range of snacks.

We close our Salop Street shop on Christmas Eve and hope to open at Darlington Street towards the end of January. We look forward to meeting you there!



Volunteers still needed!

**Could you join the team of volunteers
who run Wolverhampton Fairtrade on a rota basis?**

Contact: David Fulljames, 01902 471475

David Fulljames
www.wolverhamptonfairtrade.org.uk

Traidcraft

Since the 1980s Traidcraft has pioneered Fair Trade in the UK. It has brought us new products of an increasingly high quality. We no longer have to grit our teeth when drinking Fair Trade coffee but can choose from a wide range of flavours to suit every taste.

In many ways Traidcraft is the victim of its own success. For the last four years its sales have fallen, while globally sales in Fair Trade have risen sharply, reaching £1 billion in the UK alone. We can now find a wide variety of Fair Trade items in our supermarkets and this is a mark of how successful campaigns have been.

In church we have encouraged our members to buy from supermarkets, which has had the unintended effect of depressing sales for Traidcraft itself.

Why is this important? Well, High Street traders pay the Fair Trade premium to producers but they do not do the development work undertaken by Traidcraft. Traidcraft works with communities, supporting health, education and training programmes, until the communities are able to produce goods of a quality high enough to earn the Fair Trade mark. In this way many new products have been brought to us. Currently Traidcraft is working with rice farmers in Myanmar as they develop a new “rice crispie” bar.

Please continue to support the world’s poorest communities, either by buying from Diana at church, by visiting Wolverhampton Fairtrade or by seeking out Traidcraft goods in the supermarket.

In the run-up to Christmas the circuit Fair Trade group challenged churches to take a box of small items to sell as they thought appropriate. We are delighted that we have sold almost £1,000-worth of goods in this way and this does not include regular sales at Springdale, Wombourne and Beckminster.



STOP PRESS: Barbara Gwinnett, vice-chair of the Wolverhampton City Fairtrade Partnership, and I travelled to London in October to receive an award from the Fair Trade Partnership at its national supporters’ day. We were runners-up in the Outreach and Networking category, having won that award in 2014! We are pictured with Cllr John Reynolds, whose portfolio includes fair trade. Thank you for all you do to support the work of fair trade.

Springdale vestry news

James Peterson, senior steward

In the last edition of Triangle we were looking forward to October half term, and here we are again looking forward to our Christmas services. How quickly time flies, and yet so much has happened, showing that our church here at Springdale is as vibrant as ever.

Rather than the usual chronological list of events here is a more random flavour of some of the things that have been happening! We've had a couple of musical events recently. Firstly the Wives' Group hosted the West Midlands Concert Band at the end of November for a Christmas Concert. The church was packed and more than £400 was raised for charity. Then the Circuit Choir provided an entertaining evening comprising "Carol of Christmas", a Christmas cantata by John Peterson (no relation!), a selection of some of the less-well-known "new" Christmas songs in Singing the Faith hymn book. This was interspersed by some particularly fine Christmas Jazz pieces by Laura Priest on Saxophone and a Trio of Springdale's young adults singing Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah, which brought a tingle to my spine and was better than any on TV. I've only heard the choir a few times, but every time I've been really uplifted by them. It really is worth going to a circuit service even if only to hear them sing. It reminds us of why we often say Methodists are "born in song".

The Christmas Fayre was excellently organised, as always, very well attended and a really good fundraiser. This year I'm relieved to say that I didn't win a large stuffed toy, but there was definitely something for everyone, from knitted goods to homemade jams, cakes and pickles, books galore and lots of games and sweets for the kids. And to cap it all probably the best pork sandwiches you'll find at any similar event.

Up the road at St Barts we were supporting the Penn Ecumenical Council's first Crib Festival. Groups from all four member churches alongside businesses and groups in our community got together to produce many different nativity scenes. I was surprised to see the sheer variety – from "knit-ivity" scenes to my favourite, which was some hand-stitched Clangers looking down a telescope proclaiming "we have seen his star!" Springdale members were actively involved in the organisation of the festival, both beforehand and on the day with the co-ordination of stewards and the all-important tea rota. Thank you to everyone who helped make it such a success.

At church council it was suggested that a really good way of extending the hand of fellowship to those who live closest to the church would be to take them some mince pies. A flurry of organisation ensued and on December 12th hundreds of mince pies (home-baked by a small army of volunteers), boxed up (by another army), with a message of goodwill and a handwritten tag were delivered. Is it wrong to be proud that this is the sort of thing that our church does?

If you come into the atrium on a regular basis you might have spotted a new noticeboard. It's our Eco-Congregation noticeboard. Over the past few years we have

considered becoming an Eco congregation. This involves, amongst other things, integrating environmental themes in our worship, and considering how we can make our buildings and grounds more Eco friendly. Our uniformed organisations have already started to produce materials to help explain the various areas of the Eco congregation that we can study and help us to achieve the award. As the climate talks have drawn to a close in Paris, with what is being feted as a successful and challenging outcome, this is one way that we can play our part in looking after God's creation. Thanks to Phillippa for leading this initiative, and to Denis for putting the board up.

I'm running out of room, and yet there's so much that I haven't mentioned. Hotpot. Springdale Tots. Uniformed Organisations. Poetry Group. Wives. Bowling . . . I am sure that I've forgotten things because we're just such a busy church – and isn't that the best way to be? Thank you to everyone who contributes something towards the life of our church, big or small, frequently or occasionally. Everything is valued, nothing is wasted. Without you, it wouldn't be as good.

Until next time, I wish you a very happy Christmas and may 2016 bring you peace and joy.

Lake Galilee sponsored walk

Chance to help Lesley and Bryan Cook raise funds in Holy Land

On January 25th next year, Bryan and I will be heading to Israel/Palestine once more. This time we are taking part in a sponsored walk along Lake Galilee to raise funds for the McCabe Educational Trust.

McCabe's specialise in running pilgrimages to many locations, but they also raise a great deal of money for projects in India and the Holy Land. We visited Jeel al-Amal Home for Boys in Bethany last

year with John Howard and Ivor Sperring and we will direct our fund-raising efforts to this wonderful place and to two more schools in Bethlehem for blind and disabled children.

Could you help by sponsoring me please? I have a sponsor form and I have a Just Giving account too. There is no particular deadline, but it would be best done before January 18th.

Thank you.



Bryan and Lesley on a previous trip

Wombourne vestry news

Brenda Shuttleworth, senior steward

My autumn vestry news ended with the thought that harvest would soon be upon us and here we are, well into Advent, looking forward to remembering the coming of the Prince of Peace as we celebrate Christmas!

Harvest was indeed a joyful occasion, when we thanked God for the ingenuity of village communities in Ethiopia, where, with the support of All We Can, villagers are learning to use modern methods to work with their bee population. Gradually their standard of living is improving as they harvest and sell their honey. A collection for All We Can, together with generous donations for the work of the Good Shepherd Ministry, were tangible reminders of our response to the teaching of Jesus that “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”.

Gifts of toiletries, toys and warm clothing donated at our Toy Service have been another generous demonstration of our church reaching out into the community.

The autumn is a busy time in the church year with business meetings at church and circuit level. At the request of the Church Council the group overseeing the ramp project

consulted with church members after which Council agreed that we should seek funding of £19,050 for the construction of a ramp from the sanctuary to the community rooms and the replacement of the existing partitions.

Church Council committed £6,000 to the project and we are grateful to the Circuit Meeting which awarded us £1,000. We are currently seeking grants from several



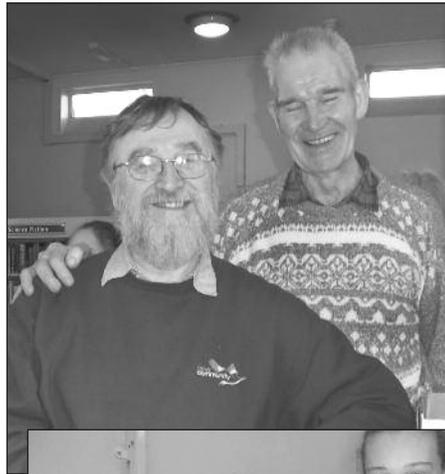
Above, Revd Chris presented Gill Worrall with flowers to mark her final year as organiser of Wombourne's bazaar. This year £1,376 was raised. Right, Louise Wright and family manned one of the stalls.



funding bodies and ask that this project remains a matter of prayer for us all.

Last month we were entertained by the Ashmore Park Community Choir who brought us an excellent and varied programme of music and verse. We raised over £500 that evening which will be shared equally between the ramp project and Friends of Kenya Children. Well done Pauline on a magnificent effort!

I always think that November is a solemn month. Once again we remembered the



Denis Beaumont and Tom Wood on the door at the community centre. Below, Jorja and Jasmin were among those raising funds.

dead of two world wars and more recent and on-going conflicts at our parade service on Remembrance Day led by Dr Janet Anderson. On the following Sunday we held a memorial service, drawing in many of the wider community who have suffered bereavement during the year.

The service was sensitively led by Revd Chris and we trust that all who attended felt God's love in their time of sadness and that they will feel an ongoing connection with us.

The annual church bazaar was a great success, if less well attended than in previous years. There was a lovely atmosphere and huge thanks go to Gill for organising this and many bazaars in previous years.

The fact that it ran like

clockwork is a huge testament to the hard work that Gill put into this effort, of course co-opting friends along the way!

All as we look ahead to the New Year, we are aware that we need to give thought and prayer to the life of our church. We are seeking new stewards and need to listen carefully for God's voice, to see where our mission lies in the future.

Knitting together for Craft and Chat

A regular date to practise skills at Wombourne



The Craft and Chat Group meet fortnightly at Wombourne, the ladies following their own hobbies or knitting for special appeals, while the gents (plus one non-crafty lady) compete at indoor bowls or other games. Thanks to John and Val Philpott for organising these pleasant Monday afternoons.

Above left, Doreen Pike and Heather Jones. Above Jo Butler and Jean Gray.



Above, Val Philpott, Val Edwards and Edna Fellows. Left, Joy Brandrick and Nell Piper.



Left, Kathy Monckton, Val Moss and Kathy Henderson. Above, taking on the challenge of the artificial turf.

Our journey through the Nativity

Bernard and Lorna Davis on a thoughtful weekend

Last year Lorna and I went to Holland House, Crothorne, Worcestershire, for a pre-Christmas retreat. We stayed for the weekend, praying, studying and discussing the theme – Stations of the Nativity.

In the chapel, arranged across the communion rail, were 14 large pictures depicting scenes from the Nativity story. Each picture had a heading and a gospel reference as follows:

- 1 Zechariah** – Luke 1: 5 – 20
- 2 The Annunciation** – Luke 1: 26 – 37
(I asked why verse 38 had been omitted – this, for me, is a key verse. Mary must have trusted God completely! Have I served God with the same trust?)
- 3 The Visitation** – Luke 1: 39 – 56
- 4 The Birth of John the Baptist** – Luke 1: 57 – 66
- 5 Joseph's dream** – Matthew 1: 18 – 24
- 6 The Nativity** – Luke 2: 1 – 7
(Note – No mention of a donkey!)
- 7 Shepherds and angels** – Luke 2: 8 – 14
- 8 Adoration of Jesus by the shepherds** – Luke 2: 15 – 20
- 9 Circumcision of Jesus** – Luke 2: 21
- 10 Magi** – Matthew 2: 1 – 12
- 11 Presentation of Jesus in the temple** – Luke 2: 22 – 35
- 12 Flight into Egypt** – Matthew 2: 13 – 15
- 13 Massacre of the Innocents** – Matthew 2: 16 – 18
- 14 Return to Nazareth** – Matthew 2: 19 – 23

The whole weekend was devised and led by the warden, Rev'd Ian Spencer. He really brought the events to life and made us think deeply, reflect, pray and share our ideas.

The weather was very mild and we were able to use the spacious grounds, in which the house is set, for solitude and reflection. I had never before been to Holland House in winter and was amazed to find snowdrops already blooming! In the orchard I also noticed much mistletoe growing in the fruit trees.

Over the days we were there, we gradually worked our way through the 14 pictures, studying the relevant Bible texts and having much time to write, discuss, pray and meditate. The whole group gelled together really well and, with encouragement, shy people chipped in with their thoughts and opinions quite comfortably.

Lorna and I got a lot out of the experience and we will do it again if it is repeated.

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All the news that almost didn't make it . . .



Wombourne's organist Mrs Doreen Pike celebrated 45 years in the post and was presented with a certificate from ArtServe by Rev'd Chris at the morning service on December 13th. Doreen also conducts the choir in acts of worship and concerts.



Wombourne entered two trees in the Christmas Tree Festival at the United Reformed Church. Left is the one created by the Toddlers, Tea and Toast group, while on the right is the one decorated by various groups and families from the church.



Penn's first Crib Festival hailed a success!
Four churches and the community working together!
Over £3,000 raised for two local charities!
People of all ages "Came to the Manger".
Praise the Lord!



Picture: Val Rayney, St Michael's
The Street Pastors' crib, "Let us play", was one of more than 60 entries.