

# Triangle



Winter 2007

## Message from the Manse

I believe there is a place for political correctness. At its best, it is an attempt to make sure that minority groups are not ignored or worse still, mocked. There are lots of jokes about Jews or Irish people, for example, based on stereotypes about their supposed national characteristics: they are not “P C”, because they are really rather offensive to the people concerned.

But I do think it can be taken too far. For me, it's taking it too far when we are discouraged from openly celebrating Christmas. There seems to be a move to call the Christmas holidays “Winterval”, or something of the sort. The reason given is sometimes that it is upsetting to those of other faiths to have “our” religion so prominently on display. Yet I find that most of those who do practise other faiths are quite happy for us to celebrate ours! We raise no objection to them celebrating their religious festivals, and they feel the same about ours.

Christmas is the time of year when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, whom we believe is the son of God. I don't want to apologise for that, nor do I want to attempt to force anyone who doesn't believe that to pretend that they do. But either Christmas is a Christian festival, or it is nothing, and we might as well give everyone a few extra days holiday and let them choose for themselves when to take the time off. Why have a party if there is nothing to celebrate? Why give presents if not to give thanks to God for His great gift to us? We might just as well get straight on with the sales and forget about Christmas.

But there is a point to it all. God sent his son to live among us, not to have an easy life, but to have the hardest life you could imagine. He lived as a wandering teacher, preacher and healer in order to tell us and (better than that!) to show us what God is really like. The baby in the manger, so sweet and lovely on the Christmas cards, grew up to be the man Jesus Christ whose death and resurrection we celebrate at Easter. That's the point of it all!

Without Jesus, Christmas has no meaning. With him, it's a truly wonderful time of year. Have a really happy Christmas!

With Christian greetings,

*Robert* (Rev. Robert Ely)

# Gospel Ash Vestry News

Sometimes in conversation we speak of our Church as being an "Oasis Church". And there are reasons for this. An oasis is a watering place in a desert. We are out in the country and situated in a sparsely populated hamlet called Halfpenny Green. A hamlet content to being a sort of suburb of the village of Bobbington. Our Church on Gospel Ash Road is an outpost of the Wolverhampton Trinity Circuit, which will soon cover a very large conurbation. People come from a great area to worship here and join in the various activities. They seem helped and happy, and when they go back to their various places will tell you that they feel refreshed and uplifted.. We see our present role as just that - to sustain a worship centre, to relate to the local community, and also to meet the needs of those who join with us.

At the Church Council in October we welcomed our Minister Robert Ely and were grateful for the gracious and orderly way in which he conducted the matters in hand. Here we reviewed our situation, reflecting on the remarkable workings of our Father God through His people who are seeking to be faithful and obedient to His call. We are looking at what is, and asking what is to be? Thanks were expressed in that meeting to each one who has had a part in the story so far and then, in response to the question, we appointed a group to consider the future mission of Gospel Ash Methodist Church.

For the present we are an "Oasis Church" and in this we seek to be a living, loving and friendly fellowship with a well-accommodated suite of premises. We offer what we have in the service of Christ our Lord to the nearby neighbours and any who will come from far or near. "Our times are in His hands who says, a whole I've planned."

In recent months we have been encouraged by the growing numbers attending the Coffee Morning Sing-along, and that the Sunday worship is well sustained. We feel blest in the standard of preaching and worship and are thankful to the ministers and preachers who give of their time. An example of this is in the visit of our friend Haden Middleton. He has a round trip of thirty miles and loves to visit, and, in visiting, always has a good message for us.

At the meeting we planned a special "Celebration" of Christmas on Thursday 20 December at 3.00pm, to include refreshments, and then our Carol Service on Sunday 23 December at 3pm. The final item was the arrangements for the Lenten Activity. A happy and blessed Christmas to you all.

# Springdale Vestry News

As I write this article Advent is almost here - hasn't the year flown by? Since the start of the Methodist year our church has continued to be busy.

The Wesley Hymn Sing on the 9 September was wonderful, with a full Darlington Street church. Some Wesley favourites were sung, but also some hymns I didn't know. The speaker, Leslie Griffiths, was a joy to listen to. I'm sure I'm not the only one who left with a sore throat because of singing fervently for over 1½ hours, but feeling uplifted non-the-less, and we were well represented from Springdale. Very well done, Don, for organising the event.

Our Ecumenical Barn Dance on Saturday 29 September was a very enjoyable evening with a buffet which most of us "burned off" with all the dancing. Well done Val and Denis for raising over £130 for the GAVI fund. Our church looked lovely decorated for Harvest Festival, Sunday 30 September. All the produce was donated to the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd. Thanks to those who donated, helped, cleared the church, and packaged the food on the Monday morning.

Our 54th Church Anniversary, in this building, was celebrated on Sunday, 14 October. The service was led by Robert, followed by a "bring and share" lunch, enjoyed by the young and not-so-young. We thank all who donated to our Gift Day and all the volunteers who co-ordinated the lunch and cleared away.

The Junior Church have begun practising for their Christmas Story and preparations are in hand for Advent. The Emmaus Group has begun this week, led by Robert, focusing on "Light". It's a small group, but with lively conversation, as we discuss our faith. Talking of Emmaus reminds me of Phil. Let us all remember Phil, Jo and Ele in our prayers, that God is guiding them in their mission.

We thank you, Lord, for Robert, our church, and the people in it who strive to make our community and world a better place. Our church is blessed with people who care and, as Robert would say, do care. I am grateful for the support of various people who are helping me whilst I'm serving as Senior Steward.

God bless you all.

Jackie Neilson

P.S. On Saturday 24 November our Christmas Fair was a great

success despite the gloomy, cold weather, raising over £1850. Well done to our organiser Penny.

## **Wombourne Vestry News**

I has been lovely to welcome Robert and Teresa into the church family at Wombourne. We look forward to getting to know them better over the coming months.

Denis led our harvest worship using material from the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. Gifts were distributed to our older members and tinned goods were taken to the Good Shepherd Centre at Darlington Street Methodist Church. On Monday we enjoyed a lovely harvest supper followed by an auction. Bob Hughes was a formidable auctioneer ably aided by Joven Gaur - we all bought cabbages and carrots with great enthusiasm. We ought to be the healthiest congregation in the circuit!

Good News for Kids Club continues to thrive. September was led by Lesley Cook and was a great beginning to the Kids Club year. In October they produced decorated vases to display our flowers for harvest. In November they focussed on "remembering", particularly on how we remember Jesus. he made four beautiful banners showing a silhouette of Jesus surrounded by vibrant colours, two of which were hung in church for Remembrance Sunday.

Prayers and Bears also meet every month. As well as being a good time for all concerned, it does the most important job of showing children that God's house is a happy, welcoming place to be. This experience will stay with them all through their lives and is an important start in the learning about God.

We were joined by the Scouts for the service on Remembrance Sunday and there was an impressive turnout for the lovely family worship. We have begun a new venture in ministry, responding to the request from Himley Mill, where Roland Bamford now lives. to provide a worship opportunity for the Beech Unit. Denis leads a group of people from Wombourne and Gospel Ash who take a service on the second Tuesday afternoon of each month.

Pauline and David Hotchkiss welcomed us to their home for a Christian Aid Big Tea Party and we enjoyed fair trade cakes with our cups of tea. Val Edwards hosted a coffee morning to raise money for the Friends of Kenya's Children.

*cont. over*

Sanctuary Services are held on Sunday evening as an alternative to the rush of Christmas. They are quiet and meaningful services that leave you feeling as though your spirit has truly been fed by God.

These are some of the things that happen at Wombourne - it is great to be part of a busy church, reflecting God's love in many different ways.

Brenda and Janet

## **Wombourne Pastoral News**

Doesn't time fly? In my last report we were eagerly waiting to welcome Robert and Teresa and now, I'm sure you feel like me, they have both settled extremely well and getting to know us all.

It was good to see some of our Wombourne folk at Darlington Street at the beginning of September for the celebration of Charles Wesley's Tercentenary, and to share with so many others in singing some of his beautiful hymns.

In that same month we remembered in our prayers Derek Martin (Alison's father-in-law), and Lynn Hancox's father, who both passed away. May both families be especially blessed as they mourn their loved ones. We would also like to ask God to bless Cynthia on the loss of her brother-in-law Michael.

Many of our fellowship have recently been in hospital and several are having ongoing treatment. We pray for Margaret Armstrong after her recent operation and ask God to heal and renew her strength. We also remember Olivia, Jean and Les, and ask God to bless them, and all those who are receiving treatment, at this time.

We pray for all in the armed forces, especially Steven Rock in Afghanistan, and for Ben Smith's safe return next week from Iraq. Be with them and all their families.

For any who have recently celebrated a birthday or anniversary, we send our best wishes, and pray that you will enjoy many more - to Margaret and Naomi on your "special 0's".

To all our members and friends, especially those who are housebound, we pray that you will have a Happy Christmas, and that the New Year will bring you health, joy and peace.

# Springdale Pastoral News

It was good to welcome Robert, Teresa and family way back in September, and trust that all the packing cases are empty now! At the time of writing Alison has been through a traumatic few weeks in Ghana. We pray for Alison, trusting that she is feeling much stronger, and that she may be aware of the prayers of the church family. We also remember Robert and Teresa in their anxiety.

On September 8 Joyce Hutchings was called home to be with her Lord, now free from pain and suffering. Joyce was a loyal member of the Women's Fellowship and also, until a few years ago, looked after the crèche and helped with Prayers and Bears. We remember Elaine and her sister and their families.

Margaret Race, Rene Ashfield and Dora Clayton, three of our older church members, are all in hospital - we pray they may know the Lord's presence, and we particularly think of their families at this difficult time.

There are also many of our church family who are housebound; also, many others have ongoing hospital appointments. We remember each and every one of you, trusting that you will be given strength each day. Remember, the Lord knows each and everyone, and we lay these concerns in His hands.

In September we said "Bon Voyage" to Helen Cook as she went to work on Iona for 8 weeks. It's good to say "Welcome Home", and to see all the photos. We pray that God will now direct your path as to your future.

Congratulations to Sheila and Derrick Sanders on the birth of their 9th grandchild, William George, born on 12 November, a son for Adrian and Justine and a little brother for Niamh. Also, on 12 November Charles and I became proud great-grandparents to Bethany Hope, a daughter for Claire (nee Sammonds), our granddaughter (who was a pupil at Springdale Infant and Junior Schools and Highfields). Congratulations to Barbara and Ian Beynon on the birth of twin grandchildren, a boy and a girl, to their son David and daughter-in-law Sam. May God bless these little ones and their families.

To all who have had, or are about to have, a special birthday, we send our love and best wishes.

So, as we approach Christmas, may our prayers be "Peace to all", both here at home and in the war-torn countries - may we remember the families of service men and women in the Armed Forces. May God bless each and every one.

Gwyneth M Wade *Pastoral Secretary*

# A Letter from Jesus

Dear Friend,

I just had to send you a note to tell you how much I love you and care for you. I saw you yesterday as you were talking to your friend. I waited all day hoping you would want to talk with me. As evening came I gave you the sunset to close your day and a breeze to rest you, and I waited. You never came. Sure it hurts me, but I still love you because I am your friend.

I saw you fall asleep last night and I longed to touch your face. Again I waited, wanting to rush down so we could talk. I have so many gifts for you. You got up late and rushed off to work. My tears were in the rain.

Today you looked so sad, so alone. It makes my heart ache because I understand. My friends let me down many times too, but I love you.

If you would only listen to me! I try to tell you in the blue sky and the quiet green grass. I whisper it in the leaves in the trees, and breathe it in the colours of the flowers. I shout it to you in the mountain streams and give the birds love-songs to sing. I clothe you with warm sunshine and sweeten the air with nature scents.

My love for you is deeper than the ocean and bigger than the biggest want or need in your heart. If you only knew how much I want to walk with you. I know how hard it is on Earth. I really know! And I want to help you.

I want you to meet my Father. He wants to help you, too. My Father is that way you know. Just call me - talk with me! Please don't forget me! I have so much to share with you!

All right, OK, I won't bother you anymore. You are free to choose me. It's your decision. I have chosen you, and, because of this, I will wait, and wait, and wait, because I love you.

Your friend,  
Jesus





## **Worship Clusters**

Have you wondered just what it will be like when we are part of the new Circuit which is to come into being next September? (I don't even know yet what it is to be called). In particular, what will the Circuit Plan look like, with 23 churches? Well, it will look different! It will look different because the churches will be grouped into "clusters", and within those clusters we will have the opportunity to plan our own worship to suit our own wishes and needs.

There will be five "clusters" with four or five churches in each: ours will consist of Gospel Ash, Wombourne, Springdale and Beckminster, with Rev. Graham Smith and myself as the ministers. Each quarter there will be a gathering of those most closely involved in the leading of worship to plan the worship for the next three months throughout the cluster: not just the Sunday Services, but all the worship: midweek services, "Prayers and Bears", and so on. All these worship activities will then appear on a "Cluster Plan" (or whatever we decide to call it), designed to make it clear just what is offered on each occasion. There will also have to be a big "Circuit Plan" for the whole Circuit, but that will be mainly for ministers, preachers, and stewards, because each preacher will have the opportunity to preach across the whole Circuit if they want to. When each "cluster" has done as much planning as they want to, the task will be completed to produce the final version.

I hope that makes sense! To have only a huge grid of preachers for Sunday Services might be about as appealing as a railway timetable! As 2008 proceeds, we shall be thinking more and more about the new Circuit, and in particular about "Worship Clusters". Please keep these plans in your prayers.

Robert Ely

## **A Prayer for Personal Peace**

"Lord, in the quietness, reach out and hold me. Draw me gently into your peace. And in the loving silence at your heart, attune my ears to hear the sounds I never listen to.

May I hear the gentle echoes of your love, reflected all around me. Give me the joy of listening to your voice, the quiet rustle as your arms enfold me."

Eddie Askew

## **Memories of Joyce Hutchings**

Joyce's life at Springdale Methodist Church was centred very much on children, big and small. For many years she taught in the Sunday School when Cappy was Superintendent. She then took over the crèche where she devoted each Sunday morning to looking after the babies and younger children of our church congregation. The children loved "Auntie Joyce". She was so patient and caring, always ready to read them a story or play on the carpet with them. Many children will have benefited from her Christian influence. I know the mums and dads were very grateful to know that their offspring were in good hands. I remember one mother asking Joyce not to retire until her youngest had had his turn in the crèche.

In 1996 Prayers and Bears was started and Joyce helped with our monthly sessions. As we sat waiting for the children to arrive with their teddies we would have a little chat and often Joyce would talk about the Women's Meeting which was very dear to her. She will be missed by her friends there and also by the ladies who say by her in church on a Sunday morning.

Joyce's Christian love shone through her life and she will be remembered with great affection.

Sheila Thompson

## **Service of Thanksgiving - Martha Small**

Martha Small was a member of Wombourne Methodist Church for many years and on 21 August, 2007, there was a Service of Thanksgiving for her life, held at Lynton United Reformed Church. John Alldritt, her son-in-law, gave this tribute at the service:

"In her 95 years I have calculated that she must have listened to something around 6,500 sermons sitting in church. The over-riding thought I would like to leave you with is that she was, in fact, a walking, living sermon herself. And her message was that you find the love of God in the little things in life, and these are as important as the big things. They are the very fabric of life".

Carol Walker

## Ladysmith Black Mambazo

On Monday 19 November five of us attended a concert at the Grand Theatre to listen to Ladysmith Black Mambazo. We were not disappointed. The performance was vibrant and energetic and the harmonies were wonderful. We didn't understand the language but the songs were meaningful, especially the one about Nelson Mandela's "Walk to Freedom".

The choir has been performing for 46 years and obviously generations of families have sung through time. These eight youths have great fun performing (with a leader) routines whilst singing. One of South Africa's sons from Pretoria sung with great emotion and superb guitar playing - his name was Vusi Mahlaelsa.

Jackie Neilson



## A Welcome in Funchal, Madeira

On the outside wall of the English church in Funchal, Madeira, can be found these words:

“This church opens wide its doors in welcome, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,

To all who are lonely and need friendship,  
To all who are bewildered and need peace,  
To all who are desperate and need hope,  
To all who are happy and want to rejoice,  
To all who are grateful and want to give thanks,  
To all who are challenged and want to give service.”

In addition, the verse “Footprints in the Sand” may also be found there.

Carol Walker

## **A Prayer as we get Older**

Lord, thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older and will some day be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject, and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everyone's affairs. Make me thoughtful, but not moody, helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end!

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing, and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of others' pain, but help me to endure them with patience.

I dare not ask for improved memory, but for growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memory of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a saint - some of them are so hard to live with - but a sour old person is one of the crowing marks of the Devil. Give me the ability to see the good things in unexpected places, and talents in unexpected people; and give me the grace to tell them so.

**Methodist Youth and Children's Workers Conference:  
4 - 6 February, 2008  
at Feldon Lodge, Hemel Hempstead.  
Further details on the children's website –  
[www.methodistchildren.org.uk](http://www.methodistchildren.org.uk)**

**Breakout -- a Christian youth Festival "beyond",  
11 - 13 July, 2008  
at Cliff College.  
Further information from  
[info@mayc.info](mailto:info@mayc.info) or 020 7467 5209**

# **Playing their Full Part in Society**

**From the Rev Graham Hawley:**

The last census in 2001 revealed that 21 per cent of our population are over 60 and for the first time outnumber the under-16s. In addition, it revealed that there are 1.1 million over-85s. We are assured that this growth in the older generation is set to continue. A testimony to better health care! But what about the continuing development and productive use of the talents and experience of such older lives?

The annual conference of the British Society for Gerontology (study of ageing) at Hallam University, Sheffield, recently addressed these issues. A total of 300 delegates, including academics, researchers, social workers, healthcare and nursing staff, along with a sprinkling of clergy, met to hear papers and discuss current research together with possible practical policies.

There was a focus on ways of empowering older people to support their continuing independence and how they could contribute to society. It was good to discover a recognition of the importance of the spiritual dimension in work with the elderly. The acknowledgement that older people's life stories are an important resource in understanding their needs and to enable them to contribute to society was well made. This all demonstrated for me the need for the Church to acknowledge the realities of ageing more specifically than we have done. More collaboration across the professions could help us in this.

The work of pastoral care towards older people is always important but we need to address the issue of the contribution that older people can make through their life experience. Older people have a real contribution to make to worship, church life and intergenerational work with their continuing questions and life experience. But we need to develop policies that ensure that this happens. In this way they may be able to play their full part in the priesthood of all believers.

Methodist Recorder, October 18, 2007 *Reprinted with permission*

## **Don't Break 'em!**

There was a very gracious lady who was mailing an old family Bible to her brother in another part of the country. "Is there anything breakable in here?" asked the postal clerk. "Only the Ten Commandments," answered the lady politely!

# Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

There cannot be many people who have yet to hear the phrase "Reduce, reuse, recycle" but I'm sure the vast majority of us still have a long way to go in implementing this. In our house we are constantly trying to find ways of doing the 3 R's, but it's not always easy. Having watched Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" recently, the consequences of not making lifestyle changes are very worrying indeed.

So how can we start to make a difference? As well as recycling using your council box, plastic bottles and tetrapaks can be recycled at the tip. Cardboard can also be recycled at the tip or at stores such as Waitrose. Carrier bags can be recycled at Waitrose, but, better still, why not invest in a few bags for life? These can be found in many shops or online - you just have to remember to take them with you in the first place! (We keep ours in the boot of our car - they're not at all heavy so they don't increase our carbon emissions from carrying excess luggage!) Real Christmas trees can be recycled in the new year with the kerbside collections.

If you use a lot of kitchen roll why not invest in some good quality dish cloths and change each day? Fair Trade cloths can now be purchased in supermarkets. Also, try to buy recycled kitchen roll and toilet roll.

Keep a large jug by your kitchen sink and fill with whatever would normally be wasted water - we have a combi boiler and sometimes it takes forever for the water to run warm - we can often fill two jugs with water that we used to allow to run down the sink. Use this saved water to rinse out your recycled tins and bottles.

There are more and more earth-friendly products arriving on shop shelves and it isn't too difficult to find cleaning products that are much kinder to the environment as well as to ourselves. Borax and bicarbonate of soda, as well as distilled white vinegar and lemon juice, are all good cleaners. Use neat vinegar on taps to descale. Add some borax to washing-up liquid and water to remove heavy deposits on cooking pans or, alternatively, use salt with boiling water, and leave to stand. Use some lemon slices in a bowl to eradicate nasty smells in the house. Borax sprinkled in the bottom of a bin will inhibit mould and bacteria growth.

Instead of using harmful chemicals to de-ice your car either use a scraper, or prevent the ice from sticking in the first place by mixing 3 parts vinegar with 1 part water and then coat the windows.

If you have any useful tips why not let us have them for future issues?

# Children's Bit!

Hi!

Welcome to the children's part of Triangle. I hope you enjoy these two pages, let me know if you do or if you don't!!

If you would like to contribute to these pages for future issues of Triangle, please see me at Springdale or e-mail me on: sarahjphilpott@hotmail.com

Hope to hear from you soon,

Sarah Philpott

What did the snowman and his wife hang over their baby's crib?

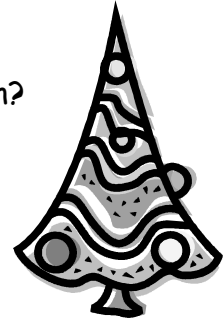
A snow mobile!

What's brown and sneaks around the kitchen?

Mince spies!

What is Mum's favourite Carol?

Silent Night!



It was Christmas and the judge was in a merry mood as he asked the prisoner, "What are you charged with?"

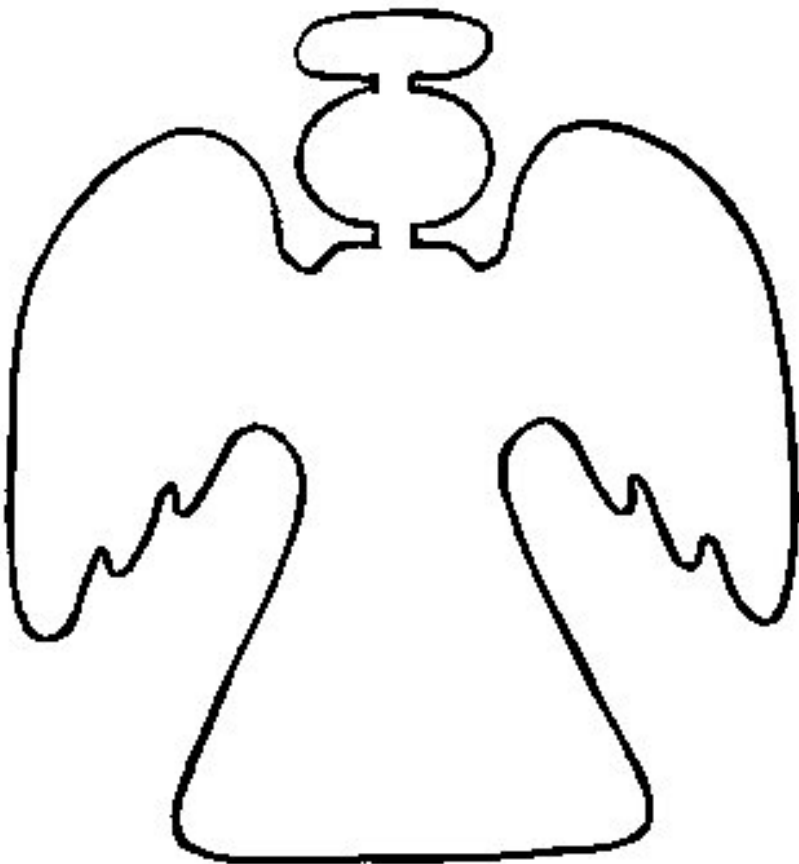
"Doing my Christmas shopping early", replied the defendant.

"That's no offence", said the judge.

"It is if you do it before the shop opened", countered the prisoner.

'Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!" Luke 2:13,14

Why not make some angels for Christmas decorations? You can use the template below - either cut it out or trace it, or if you are good at drawing, make your own angel. Decorate them: perhaps you could put a thank you to God on it for the things that you have been blessed with. Then place them on you Christmas tree. You could even give them as presents which can be used each Christmas!





# What does Advent mean?

During the season of Advent, Christians across the world prepare for the celebration of the arrival of the Lord into the world through the birth of his Son, Jesus Christ. Advent is a time to celebrate light in the midst of darkness. It is also a time to look forward to when Jesus will come a second time.



So however you decide to spend your Advent, try and keep in mind that it is a time to get ready - not just for the traditional celebrations but more importantly for getting ready for the coming of our Lord. He is our light - may we hold Him in our lives so that others might see his light shining where ever we go!

## Advent and Christmas Wordsearch

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

Angels

Baby

Crackers

December

Decorations

Donkey

Father Christmas

Jesus

Joseph

King Herod

Mary

Presents

Reindeer

Shepherds

Sleigh

Stable

Star

Tree

Turkey

Wise men

Would you like your wordsearch to be included on these pages? If so, send your puzzle (or just the list of words) to Sarah or Helen and we'll try to use it in future issues.

## Looking for God

**L**ooking all  
**O**ver the world. Trying to find the  
**O**ne and only God. It can be hard to  
**K**eep trekking across the earth.  
**I**ndividuals each search for something  
**N**ew and different about  
**G**od

**F**inding him would be amazing, for he's  
**O**mnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. Keep  
**R**unning on, turning every stone, looking, searching.

**G**od the one who I believe in. Not  
**O**nly the people who follow him but also the ones that  
**D**on't are welcomed into his kingdom of heaven...



*Poem by E. Philpott from Springdale Church.*

## An Innkeeper's Defence

Why expect of me some rare new insight,  
demanding unheard of wisdom that night?  
I spoke with courtesy. No loyalty  
was due. There was no hint of royalty,  
no servants, no velvets, no jewels gleamed.  
Just poor and tired travellers they seemed.  
I judged them not worthy of special care,  
although I remember the woman's hair  
Cascaded dark streams about her wan face.  
Too, the man accepted with rare grace  
my stern refusal. No curses poured down  
upon my head. I saw his worried frown,  
it made me fret. I had no vacancy,  
'twas true. So then I tried to make them see  
my side of it. Therefore I repeated.  
She looked at me. At once I felt cheated.  
'Twas then I offered them the cattle shed  
behind the inn. I saw her nod her head.  
They disappeared. Days later on the wing  
of local talk, I heard about the King.  
Then I caught a hint of what her look meant.  
I rushed out there on restitution bent.  
The stable greeted me, deserted, cold,  
there on the straw, a single piece of gold,  
in payment for the lodging. Had I known,  
that here there dwelled the new heir to a throne,  
gladly would I have sacrificed my room.  
But as I said in the gathering gloom,  
they looked like all the others as they came  
a'knocking here. So who are you to blame  
me? Suppose they had knocked, accusing one,  
on your door that night, what would you have done?



Eileen Norris

## **A Chance to live in Community**

I was on a ferry weighed down by my heavy rucksack and violin, wondering what on earth I was doing crossing the misty water over to Mull to spend the next 8 weeks of my life on the Isle of Iona. Little did I know it was going to be the most amazing time of my life.

As a volunteer, I was going to join a team of 24 resident staff, 20 other volunteers (vollies) and 100 guests staying on the island in the Abbey and the Macleod Centre. Each week the guests arrive and become part of the community by taking part in worship, programme sessions and daily chores. My role was as General Assistant, so I helped in the kitchen, with the housekeeping, and was in charge of after service tea and coffee.

The day would start with the 9.00am morning service, which lasted only 20 minutes and was a chance to focus on the day to come. After this I was either put in the kitchen or housekeeping department. I enjoyed both jobs as they were equally rewarding and involved a lot of washing up! Housekeeping involved guiding the guests with their morning chores, doing linen and serving the meals. This was hard work, especially on a Friday when we had to clean 20 rooms ready for the new guests on the Saturday. However, we did manage to have numerous tea breaks and lots of chats and singing whilst folding linen. More importantly I learnt how to flip rubber gloves, fold fitted sheets correctly and, most importantly, clean toilets properly!

Working in the Abbey kitchen was brilliant as well. It was really satisfying to cook for 60 people and watch them really enjoy it. My first dish of potato salad will always stick in my memory as will the first time I was entrusted to make the dessert! My banoffee pie became famous and my leek crustade eagerly anticipated by all. I have also become quite proficient at serving tea and coffee.

The day would end at 9.00pm with an evening service and then there would be various social events including a Ceilidh on a Monday night. After building community for the week, the guests would leave on Friday morning and all the staff would wave goodbye on the jetty. If they were lucky they might even get a Mexican wave or cartwheels.

One of the most special things about Iona was the services in the Abbey; being able to begin and end the day in worship surrounded by candlelight and God. Although some services weren't to my liking, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the silence is like nothing I have ever experienced. Music is a big part of the community and worship, and I was lucky enough to take part in many of the services. This took the form of

teaching the congregation chants, singing in choirs and playing my violin. Some of my happiest times were playing my violin at the end of a service in the beautiful Abbey looking out of a small gothic window, at the sea and Mull beyond.

Even though working in the kitchen and housekeeping with the guests and other vollies was enjoyable, spare time and days off were also special times. Taking walks around the island, spending time in the craft room making candles and having cream teas in the Columba Hotel took up some of my spare time. We also spent many an evening playing board games or just learning more about my new friends by laughing and sharing stories (there was no television!)

My time on Iona was a very special time and I have learnt not only new skills but also how to live in community. I loved the simplicity of life and the way work and worship went hand in hand. I miss the rainbows, stars, and bursting into song at any opportunity. Everybody was made welcome and everybody was included in every aspect of community life. I also loved the diversity of both the guests and the vollies, who ranged in age from 18-72 and were from all over the world including Paraguay and Australia. It was just a wonderful experience.

Helen Cook

## **Jesus did not carry a Pocket Calendar**

Jesus didn't have a diary, didn't have a watch and certainly didn't say, "Sorry, Lazarus, I can't make it on Tuesday. I've got Church Council". He didn't say, "No, Martha, Mary, Saturday's out. I must finish those Beatitudes!"

When mothers brought children to him for a blessing he didn't say, "Is that the time - I can only give you five minutes". And when Nicodemus came at night he didn't say, "Look, Nick, it's after ten already. How about coming back tomorrow morning? I'll be free for fifteen minutes at 11.00."

Just how free and available are we in relating to others? Do efficiency and timetables take priority over people?

Are our Circuit, Church Council and Church Family beginning to look more and more like a business? Dates are important. Appointments are necessary. Order has its place. But we musn't let these take over our church life.

Brian Moores (*with permission*)

# **Make This the Best Year Ever**

## **I will no longer worry about yesterday:**

It is in the past, and the past will never change;  
Only I can change by choosing to do so.

## **I will no longer worry about tomorrow:**

Tomorrow will always be there, waiting for me to make the most of it,  
But I cannot make the most of tomorrow without first making the most of  
today.

## **I will look in the mirror and I will see a person worthy of my respect and admiration:**

This capable person looking back at me is someone I enjoy spending time  
with, and someone I would like to get to know better.

## **I will cherish each moment of my life:**

I value this gift bestowed upon me in this world and I will unselfishly share  
this gift with others;  
I will use this gift to enhance the lives of others.

## **I will take a moment to step off the beaten path and to revel in the mysteries I encounter:**

I will face challenges with courage and determination;  
I will overcome what barriers there may be which hinder my quest for  
growth and self-improvement.

## **I will take life one day at a time, one step at a time:**

Discouragement will not be allowed to taint my positive self-image,  
my desire to succeed, or my capacity to love.

## **I walk with renewed faith in human kindness:**

Regardless of what has gone before,  
I believe there is hope for a brighter and better future.

## **I will open my mind and heart:**

I will welcome new experiences. I will meet new people.  
I will not expect perfection from myself nor anyone else...  
perfection does not exist in an imperfect world.  
But I will applaud the attempt to overcome human foibles.

## **I am responsible for my own happiness and I will do things that make me happy.**

I will admire the beautiful wonders of nature, listen to my favourite music,  
pet a kitten or puppy, and soak in bubble bath.  
Pleasure can be found in the most simple of gestures.

**I will learn something new; I will try something different:**

I will savour all the various flavours life has to offer.

I will change what I can and the rest I will let go.

I will strive to become the best me I can possibly be.



I will live this year in a way that I can  
look back on fondly and without regrets and

**I will make this the best year ever!**

Author unknown

## A Smile

A smile is a curve which straightens out many things. It enriches those who receive it without impoverishing those who give. It happens in a flash but the memory sometimes lasts forever.

None are so rich that they can get along without it, and none are so poor but are richer for its benefits.

It is a rest for the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and nature's blessing in time of trouble, yet it cannot be bought, borrowed or stolen. It is something that is of no earthly use to anyone, unless it is given away.

And if, in the rush of business, some of us should be too tired to give you a smile, may we ask you to leave one of yours? For no-one needs a smile so much as those who have none left to give.



## Children in Conflict - Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Can you remember much about your life when you were aged nine? The chances are that your memories would not include living alone with one other child not much older than yourself, miles away from your family, paying for your education by milking cows. That was the beginning of the story that Luis Samacumbi shared with my friend, Wendy Bate and me last week as we spent the day with him.

Luis is a Christian Aid partner from Angola and he is the development programme leader with IECA, the Congregational Church in Angola, responsible for supporting work with young people in the villages of Angola where families are struggling to rebuild their lives five years after the civil war ended.

Luis is quite a remarkable man and Christian Aid asked John Keane, a celebrated war artist, to visit Luis and his projects in Angola and to produce material for an exhibition which is currently on show at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Luis' story is of a boy born into a poor family in rural Angola, one of two brothers and four sisters. When Luis was four, his brother was abducted by rebel soldiers. Aged nine, Luis was thirsty for education and left his family for a nearby town but soon discovered that there was very little love or money to spare for a young 'orphan'. He was befriended by another young boy who lived alone in an empty house and they survived on the few provisions that his mother brought him. Sadly, when his mother tried to visit him for a second time, she and her companions were targeted by rebel soldiers and, in escaping from them, she fell into a river and was quite badly injured. Luis was unaware of what had happened to her but found work, milking cows for a local farmer who paid him in dried fish and maize. So it was that he managed to get a rudimentary education.

After many more adventures, Luis was forced to join the government army and as a teenager was trained as a tank commander. He served in remote areas of the country, surviving on food taken from local villages. In 2002, when a ceasefire was declared, Luis left the Army and returned home where he found his elderly father looking after his sisters as best as he could. Luis trained as a nurse to help support his father and family and his own young wife and children. In 2003 his mother managed to find her way home but was very frail and died not long afterwards. In 2005 his older brother also returned home, now disabled having been the victim of a landmine. Soon the terrible irony was revealed – Luis' brother was an anti-tank officer in the rebel army and they had actually been fighting against one another. It was perhaps then that Luis decided to work for peace.



Luis' story is perhaps typical of many young adults in Angola today but he has a strength of character that has enabled him to bring a message of hope and reconciliation from his troubled life. Angola needs people like him as it struggles to raise itself out of poverty. Christian Aid needs people like us to work in partnership with him.

Take time to pop into Wolverhampton Art Gallery before the end of January to look at John Keane's work. Included in the exhibition is work by children from Gaza, telling their story of conflict. You will be interested to see that there is work there from children at the Sunrise and Hope Centre in Khan Younis which our District supported in the Building Hope project.

Let us remember to pray that the hope of the incarnate Jesus will be with all those who live with conflict and those who seek to bring reconciliation.

Brenda Shuttleworth

## **Speak up and be Heard**

### **From the Rev Malcolm Trew:**

No, Dr Greet (Recorder, October 5) you are not being presumptuous in reminding preachers, lay and ordained - and, I would add, worship leaders, stewards who make announcements and lesson readers - of the need to project their voices when they speak in church. As the average age of congregation increases, a larger proportion of worshippers will experience hearing difficulties. In earlier days there was a chorus of "Can't hear" if ministers were frustrated by speakers who were inaudible beyond the first four rows at synods I attended. In later times the cry became "Use the microphone".

Of course no-one would be so irreverent as to do this during worship. So I offer four suggestions:

1. Everyone who reads or speaks in a service should invite an honest friend to meet them in their empty church. They should read a poem or other material and request constructive criticism of the way they deliver their words.

2. Every church needs an adequate sound system complete, of course, with a loop induction. The system should be operated by a competent person who would also be responsible for ensuring that speakers know how

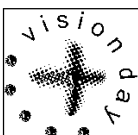
to get the best use from the microphones. Those with impaired hearing should be encouraged to wear a suitable hearing aid.

3. All of us appreciate being thanked and few enjoy being criticised. So it takes courage to share honestly and sensitively with the preacher or readers or the person who operates the sound system. These people need to know our difficulties when voices are dropped at the end of sentences or during prayers, or when microphones are ignored. Worshippers with “normal” hearing will also be aware of any problem and they should not leave it to those with impaired hearing to try to improve matters.

4. In earlier days the only voice heard in most services was that of the appointed preacher standing in an elevated pulpit. Worship is enriched nowadays when we encourage a wider variety of people to lead us, and more circuits are offering training for potential worship leaders. To read lessons well, to offer prayers sensitively and to make clear announcements requires more skill than people realise. Those who do so should be prepared to share in these courses and practise speaking and reading in public.

I am aware of some who stay away from worship when particular preachers are appointed because they have considerable difficulties in hearing what they say.

Methodist Recorder, October 18, 2007 *Reprinted with permission*



Stafford: Saturday 9 February 2008

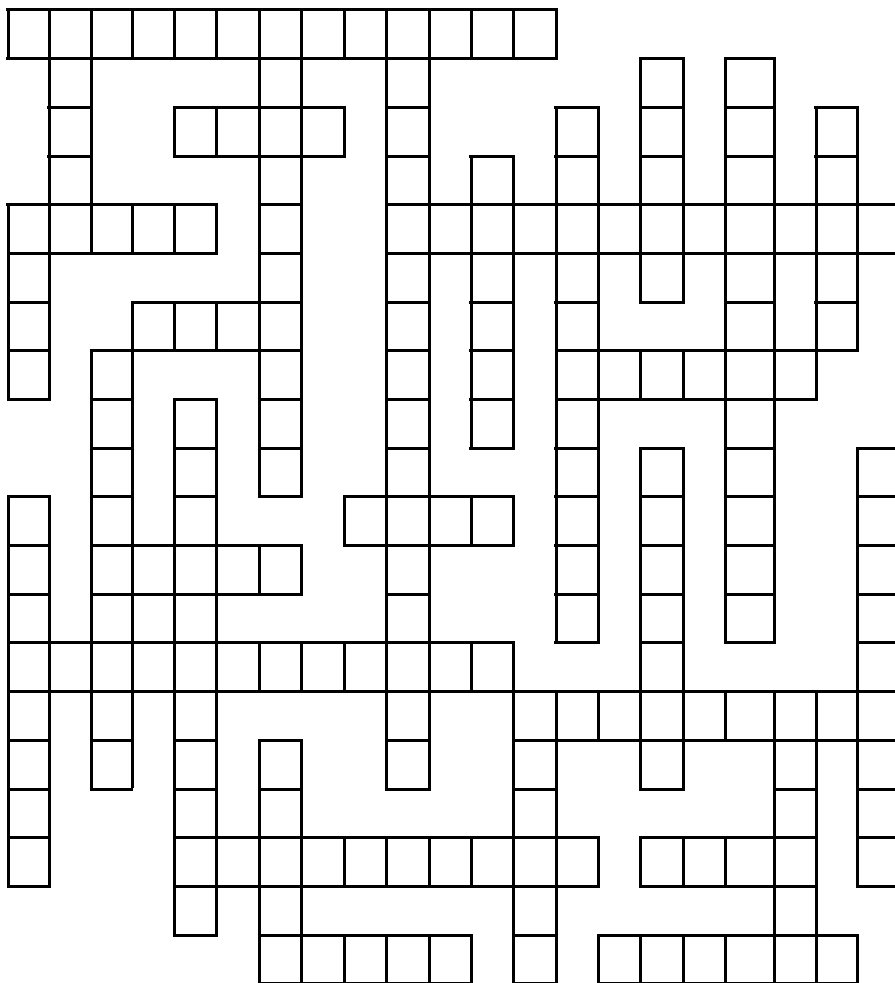
9:45am – 4pm, Berkswich Methodist Church

An opportunity to experience fresh expressions, explore dreams, ask questions and learn from those developing new ways of being Church.

At Stafford we will be introducing the new *Mission Shaped Intro* six week course on fresh expressions that will be available as a free download. Seminar groups will experience the stories of several local fresh expressions.

Admission to both days is free but places must be booked in advance. To book or for more information, please email Andrew Roberts 01384 279065

For more on Vision Days please go to [www.freshexpressions.org](http://www.freshexpressions.org)



**4 letters**

Gold  
Mary  
Snow  
Toys  
Yule

**5 letters**

Cards  
Herod  
Holly  
Magic  
Myrrh  
Santa

**6 letters**

Advent  
Goose  
Manger  
Sleigh  
Stable  
Tinsel

**7 letters**

Sprouts  
**8 letters**  
Mince Pie

**9 letters**

Innkeeper  
Mistletoe  
Shepherds

**10 letters**

Mulled Wine  
Three Kings

**11 letters**

Decorations  
Fairy Lights

**Christmas Kriss Kross**  
Can you fit the words listed into the grid above? Answers on p 30

**12 letters**

Carol Singing  
Frankincense  
Selection Box

**13 letters**

Christmas Cake

**16 letters**

Christmas  
Pudding

# Komera

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Methodist District in partnership with PHARP and Kibagora Hospital is seeking to

- raise awareness about the issues facing the Rwandan people as a result of the genocide;
- raise funds to build an isolation unit at the hospital which is supported by the Free Methodist Church of Rwanda, and to provide better facilities at PHARP, the Centre for Peace, Healing and Reconciliation in Kigali.

The project has captured the imagination of our District and so far has raised £25,950 for the hospital, as well as £5,300 for PHARP. There is a further £3,000 to come in gift aid. A profit of £1,200 has been realised from the sale of CDs. There have been some very generous donations by individuals who have sent money to the project in lieu of gifts for birthdays, weddings and other anniversaries. A great number of these donations have also been gift aided, which is a great help. Our Circuit contributed £270 to the appeal via the welcome service for Rev Robert Ely at the beginning of September. There has been a sponsored walk around the District by one of our ministers; another entered the Great North Run. We received the collection from the District Charles Wesley Big Sing at Darlington Street, as well as collections from other farewell and welcome services throughout the District.

A very big thank you to you all.

## What is in the pipeline?

A group of young people and leaders from the district will spend three weeks in Rwanda next summer. Other individuals with particular gifts and skills may also offer time to the project.

We are in the very early stages of finding out whether it will be possible to gain fair trade certification for the tea and coffee grown in the Lake Kivu region of Rwanda.

## How have the churches in our circuit becoming involved?

**Beckminster** organized a supper and invited John Howard and Kate McClland to be part of the evening celebrations on Saturday 17 November.

**Cranmer** held a karaoke hymn singing morning on Saturday 24 November.

**Rakegate** has adopted KOMERA as its project for the year.

**Wombourne** has invited John Howard to preach at morning worship on Sunday 20 January, and will be having a church family lunch afterwards

Several individuals have expressed an interest in visiting Rwanda either as part of the youth visit or on another occasion. Other individuals are involved with the Fair Trade Certification initiative.

Two young people from Springdale will be going on the youth trip to Rwanda - Emma Baker will be one of the young people visiting Rwanda and Lucy Gilbert will be going as a leader.

If you would like to know more about how you could get involved, please get in touch with Brenda Shuttleworth on 01902 658383 or email [Brenda@trinitycircuit.org.uk](mailto:Brenda@trinitycircuit.org.uk)

If you wish to make a personal donation to the fund then cheques should be made out to the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Methodist District and sent to either Moira Stuart, the District Treasurer, or to your church treasurer.

## Christmas Thoughts

At Christmas time, when we receive presents we don't really need, God offers us a gift we cannot do without.

God couldn't have made himself bigger to impress us so he made himself smaller to attract us.

Don't miss Christmas. The innkeeper did because he was too preoccupied with his business. The Jewish leaders did because they couldn't be bothered to walk five miles to check things out. Herod did because he was threatened by a baby.

If you take Christ out of Christmas all you are left with is M & S.



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

**PUZZLE ANSWERS**

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

## Dates for your Diaries

Sun 16 Dec	Sanctuary Service	Wombourne	6.30pm
Thur 20 Dec	Christmas Celebration	Gospel Ash	3pm
Sun 23 Dec	Nativity Service	Springdale	10.30am
Sun 23 Dec	Carol Service	Wombourne	6.30pm
Sun 23 Dec	Sanctuary Service	Springdale	6.30pm
Mon 24 Dec	Candlelight Carol Service	Springdale	7pm
Tue 25 Dec	Christmas Day Service	Springdale	10.30am
Tue 25 Dec	Christmas Day Service	Wombourne	10.30am
Sun 30 Dec	Communion Service	Springdale	6.30pm
Thur 3 Jan	Coffee Morning	Gospel Ash	10am - noon
Sun 6 Jan	Covenant Service	Wombourne	10.30am
Sun 13 Jan	Covenant Service	Springdale	10.30am
Sun 20 Jan	Ecumenical Covenant Service	Springdale	3pm

Deadline for the next edition of Triangle is  
**Sunday 24 February.**

Remember! No photocopies! Please check copyright and gain permission where necessary! Email if you can - it makes things so much easier for us! Thanks!

Please hand in your articles directly, or via your stewards, to **Helen Cooper** triangle(at)springdalechurch.org.uk) or **Sarah Philippott** .

**King David and King Solomon lived merry, merry lives,**  
With many, many lady friends, and many, many wives.  
But when old age crept upon them, with all its many qualms,  
King Solomon wrote the Proverbs and King David wrote the Psalms!

Anon

Wishing you  
Peace at Christmas

