

**Swindon Old Town Partnership of Churches
Anglican - United Reformed - Methodist - Est. 1969**

PARTNERSHIP MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2020

80 PENCE



**At St. Mary's Church for the start of the
Partnership Christmas Tree Festival Walk 2019,
accompanied by the Mayor of Swindon, Cllr. Kevin Parry.**

One in Christ - Together in Mission

PARTNERSHIP CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

The walk, led by the Mayor of Swindon Cllr. Kevin Parry, started at St. Mary's (see photo on front cover)



The next stop: Bath Road Church
Our photo shows the tree which had been decorated by the pupils of Lethbridge School. Due to lack of floor space most of the trees had to be confined to the windowsills throughout the church.

The outdoor display at Christ Church where trees encircled the church.



Our walk ended at Immanuel United Reformed Church. This photo shows some of the many splendid trees that were in the church and foyer.

Your Contacts

BATH ROAD METHODIST CHURCH

Minister: The Revd. Mark Barrett, 147 Drove Road, SN1 3AQ
Tel: 529263 e-mail: markrev55@aol.com
Web site: www.bathroadmethodistchurch.org.uk
Weekly news items: marietait1@gmail.com

CHRIST CHURCH with ST. MARY'S, Cricklade Street **St. Mary's**, Commonweal Road (off The Mall)

Vicar: The Revd. Canon Simon Stevenette, The Vicarage,
26 Cricklade Street, SN1 3HG. Tel. 529166
e-mail: simon.stevenette@gmail.com

Associate Ministers::

Revd. Daphne Hardwick. T. 693721; daphne.hardwick@gmail.com
Revd. Norma McKemey. T. 845917; mckemeyn@talktalk.net

Web site: www.christchurchswindon.co.uk

Weekly news items: parishoffice@christchurchswindon.co.uk

Friends of Christ Church: c/o The Parish Office

PARISH OFFICE: at the Community Centre, SN1 3HB. Tel. 522832

e-mail: parishoffice@christchurchswindon.co.uk

Usually the Parish Office is open Monday-Friday, 9.00am to 1.00pm,
Thursday evening 5.30pm-7.30pm, Sat 10am-12 noon.

COMMUNITY CENTRE: Manager: Chris Smith, T.617237 or 07582 305760
email: chris.smith@cccswindon.co.uk

IMMANUEL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, Upham Road

Minister: The Revd. Robert Jordan, 152 Drove Road, SN1 3AG
Tel. 513039. email: robert.jordan1@btconnect.com

Secretary: David Leadbeater, Tel. 694663. email: davidl1944@live.co.uk

Web site: www.immanuelurc.org

Weekly news items: immanuelweeklynews@yahoo.co.uk

WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHER CHURCHES IN OLD TOWN

MAGAZINE DISTRIBUTOR:

Mr. Geroge Kennedy, Tel. 772589. george.kennedy@mybroadbandmail.com

MAGAZINE EDITORS:

Mrs. Diana Swann, 58 Sandown Avenue, SN3 1QQ. Tel. 529897

e-mail: d.swann6a@gmail.com

Mrs. Margaret Williams MBE, 39 Sandown Avenue, SN3 1QQ. Tel. 421102

e-mail: margaretwilliams111@gmail.com

PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL:

Secretary: Barbara Aftelak, Tel. 536815; email: barbaraaftelak@ntlworld.com

Chairman: Daniel Pitt, Tel. 521732; email: fdpitt@yahoo.co.uk

Treasurer: David Bevan, Tel. 336667; email: david04bevan@yahoo.co.uk

PARTNERSHIP WEB SITE; www.sotpc.org.uk

Partnership Letter

The Manse
152 Drove Road,
Swindon

Greetings to you all. I hope 2020 has been kind to you so far...and continues to be so.

It's not been long since I returned from my holiday time in Argentina - after 4 years since my last visit, I was expecting changes, and certainly experienced quite a few. The main reason for the trip was to see family and enjoy time with them, and this was achieved in many different ways, for which I am grateful to God.

It was a different country to that which I saw last time, as on December 10th the recently elected government was installed and this will have a totally different approach than the previous government. Once again Education, Health, Care for the aged and the vulnerable, and respect for diversity will be top on the list of priorities. This was made clear when the new president set out that it was time those who had more had to help those who had less. Though times are difficult, I have hope things will start being "less bad" and gradually get better. Inflation will continue being high, but I hope this too will be dealt with.

But what I want to draw your attention to is what I experienced in the area of climate emergency: I travelled 12000 kms in each direction, from winter to summer and back to winter again! And during all that time I felt concerned, as you did as well I imagine, about the fires in Australia, the grass that is beginning to grow on the summit of Mount Everest, and very personally - and this is not a joke - the fact that in January our winter here has not seen snow yet, and the summer in Argentina allowed for only 2-3 days on the beach - it was not hot enough, or hot in the morning and then too cold in the afternoon. A friend living in Ohio (USA) recently posted on Facebook "I complain that Ohio has lost Spring over the last few years, but never expected it to be Spring in January!" None of this is right.

I believe that Climate Emergency is real, it is an important issue, it is something we have to talk about, be concerned about and work, each of us in our own place, to change. This is something that I would expect the churches to

do more about than just pray. I know that in our Partnership this is something we will be reflecting on in the next few weeks as part of the Lent Studies which I hope lots of you will get involved in.

Climate Emergency affects the lifestyle of millions, it affects our food cycles and destroys animal, plant and human lives. It calls for us all to be active in finding new ways because we are God's children and we believe it is affecting God's creation.

This is a matter we should be involved in with all those who really care for the planet and are doing something for a better life, a better world. Our faith response should be one of solidarity, of commitment to life, of hope, of new possibilities... a response to God's calling to work with God for the improvement for life. Because the so often repeated words of the Psalm 24 continue to challenge us, to humble us, to inspire us:

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for God founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters..."

Not mine, not yours - but God's.
Not for some but for all

God guide us and direct us to respond in Faith, in Hope and in Love.
See you on the way,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Stanford', with a horizontal line underneath.

Candlemas on February 2nd commemorates the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple when he was a baby.

A quote for Candlemas by the Canon Chancellor of Salisbury Cathedral:

'We focus a lot on candles, not because they give a huge amount of light but because they give a huge amount of hope.'

FAMILY EVENTS

BAPTISMS

We welcome into the family of the Church

BATH ROAD

Dec 15 Florence May Murdoch

CHRIST CHURCH

Nov 24 Ollie Robbert Jesko

Dec 28 Martin Hawi Nyajure Opande

DEATHS

We extend our sympathy to the loved ones of

CHRIST CHURCH

Nov 4 Carol Dickson, 72 years

Nov 15 Elsie Dorothea Ingham, 86 years

Nov 21 Suzanne Elizabeth Easton, 40 years

Nov 22 Brian James Chadwick, 85 years

Dec 6 Dorothy Joan Oxborrow, 93 years

2020

Jan John Wyeth, 89 years

Jan 17 Lyn Adams, 102 years

IMMANUEL

Dec 20 Margery Smith

Jan 8 Louise Edwina Norris, 89 years

FLOODLIGHTING

Dec 6 In loving memory of my wife Pam on her birthday.

Jan 19 Missing you mum, *lots of love, Andrew Dawes*

Feb 3 In celebration and thankfulness for 13 years of marriage and God's continued blessing on us, *Martin and Wendy Hiscock*

Feb 14 In memory of an adored husband Percy 'Bill' Williams, *Love, Rosemary.*

If you would like to sponsor the floodlighting of Christ Church in celebration of a birthday, wedding anniversary, special occasion, to advertise your Company, or in memory of a loved one, the minimum gift per evening is **£30.00**.

Cheques to be made payable to 'Christ Church PCC'. Please write to the PARISH OFFICE, COMMUNITY CENTRE AT CHRIST CHURCH, SWINDON, SN1 3HB at least a week before the date of the floodlighting. GIFT AID:

If you are a UK taxpayer and wish Christ Church to reclaim the tax, you may Gift Aid your donation.

OLD TOWN CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL RAISES £910!

After well over a year of detailed planning, the Old Town Christmas Tree Festival took place throughout December at the four churches of the Old Town Partnership of Churches. The event was a fitting close for the Festival 50, celebrating fifty years of the Old Town Partnership of Churches working together.

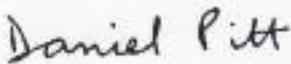
I am grateful for the support and encouragement received from the Partnership clergy team, and also to the organising committee - with representatives from the four churches - and many others - for all their hard work, energy and initiative in making the Christmas Tree Festival not only happen, but also a real success. The feedback received has vindicated the effort.

There was a total of approximately 90 Christmas tree displays at the churches and all were clearly the fruit of love and imagination. All the exhibits were done to a very high standard and were thought provoking. Some were quite moving (in both the sense of inspiring emotion and also, for the trees outside at Christ Church, in the sense of blowing over!!). Fortunately the 25' tree at Christ Church, donated by Lord Lansdowne of Bowood estate, via Richard Deacon, stayed up! Thankfully the floodlighting didn't fuse Old Town either.

The organising committee decided that contributions from visitors to the Festival would be in support of Mayor's charities, CALM (Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Movement) and Swindon and North Wilts Deaf Children's Society. I am delighted that a total of £910 will be divided equally between these charities.

Two things will remain with me. The first is that the four churches are quite diverse places in many ways - a good thing – and this allowed for a variety of interpretations and settings.

The second thing is that the event brought new and sometimes unexpected opportunities to engage with people. Examples include working with individuals and organisations in setting up the displays, the churches being open at times of day in addition to the usual opening times (thanks to all the volunteers) and, the provision of hospitality and the additional events as part of the Festival. Approaching 1,000 people visited the Festival and many might not otherwise have entered our churches. The Christmas services seemed better supported this year and we await to see what seeds have been sown.



On behalf of the Christmas Tree Festival
organising committee)

Christ Church with St. Mary's

Friends of Christ Church Christmas Charity Market 2019



Irene Macdonald, Angela Ruck, Pam Bridgeman, Amanda Gibb,
Ailsa Palmer, Rev'd. Norma McKemey
were keeping everybody going with refreshments.

Photo by Janet French

The Friends organised a very successful event on 16 November 2019. Thirty nine charities and local organisations had stalls and over £4,400 was raised, including £837 for the Friends/Church. Extensive advertising, especially through social media, brought lots of people to the event and both the church and community centre were buzzing. The Mayor opened proceedings and Christ Church hand bell ringers and choir performed in both venues during the day.

As well the Friends providing refreshments, Dotty's Cafe were on site to sell hot dogs and burgers, and Hjälpande Händer Catering (Helping Hands in Swedish - a non-profit charity which gives young adults with special needs the chance to get paid work operating a mobile catering trailer) sold mulled wine.

The Friends would like to thank everyone who helped on the day and with the setting up on the Friday - without your help this event could not go ahead.

The provisional date for 2020 is 21st November so watch this space!

New Year's Day Ramble 2020

Thirteen people and one dog set off from Christ Church on the traditional New Year's Day ramble. A further five people joined us at several stages along the old railway line. The 4½ mile walk was first done on 1st January 2000, and we have now walked it 21 times! As last year, the weather was again close to perfect – mild, light cloud with the air hardly moving.



We toasted the New Year on Beavan's Bridge.

Over the year, several things have opened, or reopened. The new Deanery (CE) Academy school opened in September, welcoming its first intake of Year 7 children. The Hall & Woodhouse pub restaurant on the canal-side, opposite Waitrose, opened in the spring. Here the first Wichelstowe games, hosted by



the pub and Rev'd. Owen Green (one of the Stowe ministers) took place on a hot Saturday in August.

Between Beavan's Bridge and the Wichelstowe Waitrose landing stage extensive civil ground-work near the canal has now been completed and this length of canal towpath has been reopened. More houses are rapidly appearing here. We saw a boat making its way along the canal.

Finally, the new footbridge between Waitrose and the Hall and Woodhouse pub was opened in July. The 35 metre span bridge is of a curved and elegant design and includes laser cut side panels and integral LED lighting.

The whole area beside the canal, around Waitrose, the Hall and Woodhouse development and the Deanery School is something Swindon is entitled to be proud of. A visit is highly recommended - the area is served by frequent buses (Swindon's Bus Company 11 & Stagecoach 9).

Daniel Pitt

Christmas Day Lunch in the Community Centre

In 2016, Chris Smith the manager of our Community Centre, felt that it would be good to do something for the community and introduced a Christmas Day lunch at the Centre for those folk who would otherwise be on their own.

Since then this has become an annual event and has grown in popularity from about 40 guests in 2016 to 75 this year as well as 40+ volunteers.

The event couldn't be as successful as it is without all of the time given up by the volunteers, not just on the day but in advance too, and all of the monetary donations that we receive. We are grateful to you all.



See photo on inside back cover of our guests enjoying their lunch.

Friends,

Whilst on enforced rest because of a rather frustrating spinal problem I found this very interesting article which I would love to share and for us all to consider. I hope I am not causing too much controversy but surely friends should be able to discuss, disagree and yet remain friends.

Blessings, *Daphne Hadwick*

Can we call God ‘Mother’?

By

Katherine Attanasi

Most Christians are familiar with referring to God as Father, but can we call God “Mother”? Many places in the Bible and Christian tradition, as well as theological voices, answer this question affirmatively: God can be referred to as “Mother.” In fact, every recent pope since John Paul I has made some reference to the value of understanding God like a mother.

The Bible does not shy away from using female imagery—particularly related to birth and motherhood—to describe God. Isaiah 42:14 speaks of God “cry[ing] out like a woman in labor” with gasps and pants. Similarly, Isaiah 46:3–4 describes God as having carried the house of Jacob “from the womb.” In Numbers 11:12, Moses tells God that having birthed Israel, God (not Moses) should “carry [the nation] in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child” to the Promised Land. In Isaiah 66:13, the Lord tells Jerusalem, “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.”

The biblical text uses images from motherhood to describe Jesus as well. Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem evokes a mother’s comfort and concern. He says, “How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings” (Luke 13:34 and Matt. 23:37). Early Christian authors also speak of the maternal nature of God. Julian of Norwich, a medieval English mystic, describes God as both Father and Mother: “God rejoices that he is our Father, and God rejoices that he is our Mother.” Anselm of Canterbury depicts Christ as a mother in a devotional prayer. For Anselm, Christ is “the great mother” who brought forth sons through his death and who comforts the frightened with his gentleness. Describing God using characteristically feminine terms can elucidate important aspects of God’s nature. Feminist theologian Sallie McFague claims that maternal images of God “giving birth, nursing, comforting, and caring” highlight

humanity's complete reliance on God. Moreover, recognizing human dependence on God for both spiritual and natural birth (and growth) is central to Christian history and experience.

God's creation of humans—male and female—in God's own image signifies that God is the fullness of masculinity and femininity; God transcends gender binaries and constructions. According to feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson, women's creation in God's image means that women's realities offer helpful metaphors for describing "divine mystery."

Understanding God as "Mother" and drawing on the maternal images of God found in scripture and Christian tradition illuminate important aspects of God's character. We are reminded that although there are limits to every metaphor, God's love, comfort, and care know no bounds. ■

© U.S. Catholic, June 2014 issue (Vol. 79, No. 6, page 46)

**TEA/COFFEE and CHAT at the Goddard Arms,
Tuesday 4th February, 2.30pm to 4.00 pm.
ONLY £1.50, INCLUDING UNLIMITED REFILLS.**

You can have a small dessert for an extra charge of £1.50. We meet in the side room of the Goddard Arms on the first Tuesday of each month. We meet informally and all are welcome whether you belong to a church or not.



CARERS REQUIRED

for private assignment in Old Town

Experienced carers (with DRB certificate) sought for a well-known Swindon character, now in her mid-nineties, to provide easily-prepared meals, minor personal assistance and help with light housework in addition to companionship.

£10.00 per hour, 5-6 hours per week
including alternate weekends.

Also standby carer for emergency cover required on 2-hour retention.

References essential

For more information and an informal chat please call
07770 583223

Becoming an eco-congregation

- a personal perspective

In response to the “climate crisis”, Christ Church with St Mary’s (Immanuel URC too, I believe) aspires to become an “eco-congregation”. On 4 January, Christ Church’s Men’s Breakfast group discussed what this might mean and its implications for churches and individuals.

The breakfast group was established by a former curate, Robert Sanday, in February 1994. For 26 years, it has met on almost every first Saturday of the month for worship (optional Morning Prayer at 07.30), followed from 08.00 by a full cooked breakfast (lighter options available), fellowship and discussion, sometimes led by a speaker, on other occasions (more) informally amongst ourselves. Although breakfast is prepared by men from Christ Church, all are warmly welcome to help consume it, irrespective of gender or denomination. Please do join us. (Contact Mike Palmer for further information.)

The following piece draws on the group’s recent discussion, but reflects my individual (perhaps naively simplistic) views, not necessarily those of the wider group or Christ Church as a whole.

Eco-Congregation is an ecumenical programme in several countries that links environmental issues with the Christian faith, helping churches and individuals to respond with practical actions in their own and others’ lives. In England and Wales, it is administered as Eco Church by the charity A Rocha UK, which operates an accreditation and award scheme for churches that want to demonstrate the good news of the gospel for God’s Earth.

Important though the environmental impacts of premises and operations are, if a church aspires to be an eco-congregation (of people), as distinct from an eco-church (building), it’s primarily about individual attitudes and actions as an aspect of discipleship. That implies a long-term commitment to meaningful changes in behaviour, not short-term box-ticking to get the “Blue Peter badge” (a danger of any accreditation scheme).

God gave people *dominion* over the Earth and nature: “fill the Earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the Earth” (Genesis 1.28). But *dominion* implies privilege and responsibility - for our careful stewardship and enjoyment of God’s creation for the time being - not its exploitation and degradation by *domination*, at the expense of future generations: “The Earth

is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it" (Psalm 24.1, Christ Church's Bible verse for 2020). That is explicit in the Anglican Communion's fifth Mark of Mission "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth [surely the Earth?; it's about the planet, not just the soil, and nobody refers to "mars" or "venus"!]".

But what should individuals be doing as members of an eco-congregation? In a complex system, actions don't occur in isolation. Climate change is just one of a set of inter-related issues that have consequences for others. They include population growth; production and consumption of food (too much of it by many, insufficient by others), water and energy; infectious, and lifestyle-related chronic diseases; pollution and degradation of soil, water and air; loss of biodiversity and the "ecosystem services" it provides, and depletion of other finite resources and "natural capital". In current scientific and policy thinking, those relationships are being drawn together in an emerging concept of "planetary health" - of the Earth and its people.

Changes to one element of a system affect others. "Trade-offs" are inevitable, and there is a danger of unintended consequences. Measures intended to address one problem might cause another elsewhere, and impacts might be shifted from where we see them to other places (and people) where we don't. The introduction of a 5p charge for single-use plastic bags, for example, increased the total quantity of plastic distributed by supermarkets as they were substituted by a smaller number of, individually much heavier, so-called (in principle but not in practice) "bags for life". Other examples were identified in a report published by the Green Alliance on 9 January 2020.

But environmental sustainability and living sustainably are surely imperatives of the second great commandment? There's been endless debate about what sustainability means, but a widely used definition (including by the UK government, comes from Our Common Future, the 1987 report of a commission chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, former prime minister of Norway: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Isn't that just another way of saying "love your neighbour as yourself", recognising that we have neighbours who are remote from us in time as well as space?

Evangelical Christians traditionally placed much more emphasis on saving souls than sustaining the Earthly wellbeing of people and the planet. (An interview in the latest Tearfund magazine, with one of the charity's founders, mentions significant opposition 50 years ago to using, for the relief of poverty,

money that might otherwise have been spent on “Billy Graham-style” evangelism.) But Jesus was concerned with not only life hereafter, whenever that might come, but also here and now, however long it might last: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10.10).

There are no easy answers to - in the jargon of “think tanks” and “policy wonks” - a “wicked” problem. And narrow all-or-nothing responses, such as suggestions that everyone should follow a strict vegan diet and/or eat only organic food, are simplistic, and border on fundamentalism.

But everyone could do their bit, with sound guidance on sensible and practicable lifestyle changes that would enable them to make useful contributions - as Immanuel is providing, I understand, in its weekly news-sheet.

The following prayer that I came across in Exeter is apposite (from Devon Churches Green Action’s liturgy for its “Season of Creation”):

Lord, you gave us the gift of insight to understand the meaning of your creation and our responsibility to care for it.

You gave us eyes to see the beauty of the world,
and the gift of empathy to understand others and their needs.

Lord, forgive us for not caring for your creation.

Forgive us that we seek to become masters of your work;

forgive us our inner blindness and deafness to the needs of our neighbour.

Attitudes and actions are more important than accreditation and awards.

Brian Harris



With the arrival of Seville Oranges in the shops, Margaret Williams has been busy making marmalade which she is selling at £2 per jar in aid of Church funds and the Partnership Project.

Bath Road

**'A Day of Well-being' - Saturday 1st February
10.00 am to 4.00 pm**

A day together together, share fellowship, try out new skills, eat and relax.
Stay for the whole day or drop in for an hour or two.

There will be different activities in which you can join:

**Yoga ■ Painting ■ Pet Therapy ■ Pom-Pom making
Bread-making ■ Table Tennis**

An opportunity to invite a friend.

To confirm your attendance, contact Gary Walker or Allison Davies.
Please notify them of any dietary requirements.

Fundraising events in December

A film night on 13th December raised £115 for Christmas Care, Swindon, and our Carol Singing at the Co-op for an hour on Saturday 14th December £100 for Action for Children.

Our Partnership Project for 2020 is the Desai Memorial Primary School, Nairobi, Kenya. We decided to make an early start with our fundraising for this by donating the collection at our Christingle Service on Christmas Eve and the service on Christmas morning which amounted to £462.97.

The tradition of Carols at the Co-op was kept alive on Saturday 14th December at the Old Town Superstore

About 30 singers from Bath Road Methodist Church, ably accompanied by Phil Mansfield on his keyboard, enthusiastically shared the joy of Christmas with shoppers and staff. The hour of continuous carolling raised £95 in donations, topped-up with an additional donation of £5! This was well received by Action for Children, the charity for children and young people of The Methodist Church. *(See photo on inside back cover)*

For more details of their campaigning and caring for vulnerable young people across the UK, see www.actionforchildren.org.uk ►

We are very grateful to the store Manager, everyone who participated and those who gave so generously in support of this vital cause. See YOU in December 2020!

Pat Room, co-ordinator for Action for Children, Bath Road.

Celebrating Christmas at Bath Road

Bath Road Church, like the others in the Partnership, started with the Christmas Tree Festival when the majority of the trees were on the wide windowsills, all of them telling a little about the group which had brought them in. The Guide tree had a Guide doll at the top, one of the Cub packs made a tree from plastic milk bottles with the various coloured tops representing the lights on the tree. There was a hairdresser's tree with its many cardboard brushes and combs, another from the Music group decorated with various instruments, and one from the Lunch Club seemed to be planted in a saucepan. Photos of the Sunbeam toddlers had been turned into baubles on their tree. There were over twenty trees in total all so different. Fortunately the trees could be left up until Twelfth Night so people who came into the church for various concerts and services were able to share in the trees.

The following week, the Lunch Club celebrated with their annual Christmas Lunch when 36 of its 38 members sat down at the attractively decorated tables to enjoy a traditional dinner, prepared by the 24 volunteers who normally work in one of the three teams but who had come together to prepare

the meal and also to enjoy their lunch.



Two of the young people who enjoyed the visit of Father Christmas to the Sunbeams Toddler Group. They were so excited and wanted to rush outside afterwards to see Father Christmas leaving on his sleigh.

continued overleaf



At the end of the week the Sunbeam Toddler Group made simple Christmas cards before going up into the church to sing one or two carol verses and hear once again the Christmas Story illustrated by the knitted nativity figures. Father Christmas, who suddenly appeared, took us all down to enjoy a special snack before giving each toddler a Christmas present.

A few days later it was the turn of Open House to enjoy each other's company while sharing a special Christmas mid-morning snack before playing some traditional party games. Other groups met to enjoy fellowship and food and there was also the Film Night, then the Nativity and Toy Service, Christingle Service and of course Christmas Day itself.

Gwen Knight



**A new series of talks exploring life and faith in today's world...
at the
New Room, 36 The Horsefair,
Bristol BS1 3JE**

January 16th – Another Planet? Exploring the future of the natural world with nature writer and producer Mary Colwell.

February 20th – Penthouse and Pavement: Is the gap between rich and poor inevitable? With Paul Morrison, policy advisor with the Joint Public Issues Team.

March 19th – Sit Down Next To Me: Does non-violent protest work? – with John Cooper from the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Maggie Moss, a participant in Extinction Rebellion actions.

Every talk runs from 6pm-7.30pm with an opportunity for questions and discussion afterwards.

Tickets cost £5 and can be reserved by emailing info@newroombristol.org.uk (pay on the door), ringing 0117 926 4740 or through the New Room's Facebook page.

You can also book tickets through Eventbrite – just search for “Wes Talks”

BATH ROAD CHURCH WEEKEND AWAY 2021
Friday 29th January to Sunday 31st January
Walton Park Hotel, Clevedon



Walton Park is a very comfortable cliff top hotel. Accommodation is available in single, twin, double or family rooms and are all en-suite. There is a lift to all floors and an accessible room. All will be on a full board basis, starting with the evening meal on Friday and ending with Sunday lunch.

The cost of the weekend will be £150 for adults, and children under 12 at the time of the weekend £46. Places are limited and will be secured on a first come, first served basis.

If you would like to book, please complete a booking form and return it, with a deposit of £20 per person/£50 per family, to Liz or Adrian King or Gary Walker by Sunday 2nd February 2020. Further payments will be needed next summer and towards the end of 2020 (dates to be confirmed).

Walton Park is only an hour's drive from Swindon and we always make arrangements to share lifts.

If you would like more details, please ask Liz or Adrian King (486113) or Gary Walker (876333).

Immanuel

Christmas Joy

Over 200 people of all ages came to visit Immanuel during the recent Christmas Tree Festival, and how delighted they were with the variety of colourful and imaginative trees; who knew there were so many creative talents in our community? Thank you to all the contributors and particularly the back-up team from our church who helped as furniture removers, stewards and caterers to make the whole festival ready for the public to come in.

The Sunday walks between churches of the Partnership were a chance to admire other displays, though only a few people managed to reach Immanuel at the end of each walk. Although the walk was downhill it was also fully dark by that time, but the trees sparkled nonetheless and the joint Advent Service was much appreciated too.

The trees remained in Immanuel until 30th December and brightened up most of our Christmas services.

Gift Service

For our Gift service on Sunday December 15th, we collected books and toys, winter hats and gloves for families involved in the Harbour refugee project. The staff were thrilled to be given so many items for their visitors and want to thank our generous church folk very warmly.

The fine singing at our Christmas services has been appreciated and we must thank Geoff Glead and the choir for all the preparation needed to lift our spirits in every service. It takes a lot of hours to build up such a tradition and sustain it week by week. Thank you all.

During 2019, Immanuel supported several charities and we have received letters from 3 of these:

Our Harvest Appeal for the international relief charity ShelterBox raised £4,025.57, and Christmas donations of £500 each were sent to the Swindon Domestic Abuse Support Service and the Harbour Project.

Carols on the Carpet



In what has become something of a tradition at Immanuel, the church hall filled up on Monday 16th December with folk from the local community around the church for an hour's sing-along of Christmas carols.

Geoff played his usual role of MC and with him on the keyboard, two flutes and bass, a merry time was had by all.

To save everyone's ears we sensibly kept the children's instruments back until half way through the hour, but it has to be said that "Silent Night" wasn't that quiet and few babes (if any) would have slept through it!



There was a good turn-out of church members and friends but the vast majority were from the local community and it was great that afterwards over hot mince pies and coffee many of them popped into the church to admire the display of Christmas trees.

Stephen Brain

Come & Sing
HANDEL'S MESSIAH
Swindon Choral Society

Come and Sing Workshop
with Robin Nelson and Adam Meehan-Staines

SATURDAY 15th FEBRUARY
at Christ Church, Old Town

Registration and Coffee from 9.30 am

Workshop: 10.00am - 11.00am, 12.00pm - 1.00pm, 2.00pm - 3.30pm

Performance: 4.00 pm - 5.00 pm

Refreshments: Coffee and biscuits will be provided from 9.15 am-9. 55 am
Tea and Cake between 3.30 pm and 4.00 pm.
Lunch will not be provided. We suggest you bring a picnic lunch although there are shops nearby.

Cost: £10 Swindon Choral Society and under 21s
£15 non-members

Score hire: £2 (please book if required). Edition is Watkins Shaw

Applications: Please contact Mark Thomas on 07989 492853
or apply on line at www.swindonchoral.org.uk

and to follow...

Swindon Choral Society presents
HANDEL'S MESSIAH
with professional orchestra and soloists
SATURDAY 21st MARCH 7.30 pm
Wyvern Theatre, Swindon.

Tickets £20, accompanied children under 18 free, affiliated students £12

Tickets available on line from: <https://swindontheatres.co.uk>

THE WAY

Mother Mary, Mother Mary
Did you really bear our Lord
As was written in the Bible
Which we call the Holy Word?

We, the physical, You the Spiritual
Formed the universal spheres
This the earth a minute planet
With incredible life appears.

Through the symbol - words once
written
We, if willing, learn the way
That the world beyond the physical
Lives in truth words cannot say.

Our experience here is limited
By our physical nature now
But the world which we call heaven
Is the timeless gift we'll know.

We have access to the Spirit
Through the prayers we're taught
to pray.
Baby Jesus, He the Christ child
Born of Mary is here today.

Yes, this is the Truth once written
For the human race on earth.
Here the journey set in time
His the way, life and new birth.

Yes, it is through faith and prayer
We will know true life is there.
This, the Way from earth to heaven
Where at last true peace is given.

Joy Blacklock, 22/12/2010

'Angels, Buckets and Bells'

A creative response to St. Mary's, Lydiard Tregoze

14th January - 24th March 2020

Tuesday - Saturday, 11.00 am to 4.30 pm

at

Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, Bath Road, Old Town

St. Mary's Church is Grade 1 listed and was awarded funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2018 to conserve its medieval wall-paintings, monuments and decorative schemes.

This exhibition will bring together the drawings and striking artwork created by the project's Artists in Residence, Felicity Cormack and Judy Thomson, which will be exhibited alongside treasures from the church.



The theme for November was Advent, exploring light at a dark time of the year and then for December it was Christmas and Christingles.

November's text was John 8:12 "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". A lighthouse keeper keeps others safe; similarly God looks after us.

Lighthouses were built out of paper cups to illustrate this particular message, and lanterns were made with the reminder that we can take Jesus' light with us even in the darkest places. Folding paper concertina fashion produced a row of candles and a card candle on a craft stick emphasised that Jesus wants us to share his message of light and love with others and not keep it hidden.

Do we in our lives reflect God's love like the stained glass window which was made or the tea lights on the decorated CDs? We can shine for Jesus like the stars in the dark night sky, so many star biscuits were decorated and a sheet of dark paper was lit up when splattered with paint in the art corner.

Having thought about light during the afternoon, the Act of Worship was based on an explanation of the Advent Candles which would be lit in many churches over the four Sundays of Advent, culminating with the central one on Christmas Day.

Many of the activities for December's Messy Church were concerned with the Nativity. The youngsters made the figures of both Mary and Joseph who had to journey to Bethlehem, plus an angel, as the Angel Gabriel had visited Mary with the amazing news of the baby who was to be born not in a palace but in a stable, so there was a simple but effective picture of a stable nativity scene.

During the afternoon cakes had been decorated to look like a Christingle. As the worship was to culminate in the lighting of a Christingle for every child present, a real one was also assembled with an orange, red ribbon, sweets on cocktail sticks and, in the centre, a candle. Following the telling of the Christmas story through selected verses of carols, the lighting of the Christingles, so carefully held by all the young people, brought the Act of Worship to a very fitting end before everyone sat down to enjoy their tea!

We meet on the third Sunday in the month at King William Street School. Our next meeting is on Sunday 16th February at 3.30 pm. We look forward to welcoming you.

Psalm 23 Garden coming to RHS Chelsea

The Bible Society has announced that “We’re absolutely thrilled to be working with award-winning garden designer Sarah Eberle to bring Psalm 23 to life at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May 2020!”

The Psalm 23 Garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2020, designed by Sarah Eberle, will offer visitors the chance “to stop, reflect, and feel refreshed”.

The Bible Society said: “This powerful psalm, with its visual imagery of green pastures, still waters and the valley of the shadow of death, just cries out to be turned into a garden. We hope you’ll love it

“After the Chelsea Flower Show, the garden will find a permanent home at the Winchester Hospice in Hampshire, where it will be a blessing to patients and families.”

The Bible Society says it is also hoping that people will “join us in creating community gardens across the country inspired by the Psalm 23 Garden. You can do this outside your office, in your school grounds, or in your churchyard. Let’s get gardening!”

You can follow the project on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and join us on the road to Chelsea.

Never underestimate a tortoise

They may be asleep at the moment, but tortoises are not the stay-at-home couch potatoes that you may think they are. In fact, so many have been leaving their homes to go on walk-about, that now the RSPCA is advising that they be microchipped. The charity rescued almost 1,000 tortoises last year.



Experts advise that once Spring and Summer comes, tortoises will be able to climb, dig, and push their slow but determined way through barriers and should be kept in a secure enclosure. Tortoises are actually quite active and can move at a fast pace when they want to.”

Nelson Mandela – freed 30 years ago

Nelson Mandela, who led the movement to end South African apartheid, was released from prison 30 years ago this month, on 11th February 1990. He became President of South Africa in 1994.

Mandela had been involved with the African National Congress since 1944, advocating non-violent resistance. But after the Sharpeville massacre of peaceful demonstrators in 1960, he helped organise a paramilitary branch of the ANC.

He was arrested for treason in 1961 but was acquitted. He was arrested again in 1962 for illegally leaving the country, then again in 1964 on charges of sabotage. The same year he was sentenced to life in prison.

When F W de Klerk became President in 1989, as part of the shift away from apartheid he lifted the ban on the ANC, and then ordered Mandela's release. In 1993, Mandela and de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mandela was raised as a Methodist and had strong Christian convictions, which he rarely aired in public for fear of alienating those who did not believe. In 1999 he said: "Without the church, without religious institutions, I would never have been here today ... Religion was one of the motivating factors in everything we did."

Think positively

Hate has 4 letters, so does Love.
Enemies has 7 letters, so does Friends.
Lying has 5 letters, so does Truth.
Negative has 8 letters, so does Positive.
Cry has 3 letters, so does Joy.
Anger has 5 letters, so does Happy.
Right has 5 letters, so does Wrong.
Hurt has 4 letters, so does Heal
It means that life is like a double-edged sword,
So transform every negative into a positive.

Sent in by a reader from Bath Road

PARTNERSHIP DIARY FOR FEBRUARY

- 01 Sat 7.30 am Christ Church, Men's Breakfast
- 02 Sun** 8.00 am Christ Church, 1662 Holy Communion
 9.00 am St. Mary's, Holy Communion
 10.00 am Bath Road, Morning Service, Kate Trowbridge
 10.00 am Christ Church, All Age Service
 10.30 am Immanuel, Holy Communion, Rev'd. Robert Jordan
 6.30 pm Bath Road, Evening Service, Geoff Rhodes
 6.30 pm Christ Church, Holy Communion Service
 6.30 pm Immanuel, Evening Service,
- 04 Tues 2.30 pm Tea/Coffee and Chat at the Goddard Arms Hotel
- 05 Wed 10.30 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
- 08 Sat 9.00 am to 11.00 am Bath Road Community Breakfast
- 09 Sun** 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 9.00 am St. Mary's, Holy Communion
 10.00 am Bath Road, Service taken by the Worship Leaders
 10.00 am Christ Church, Family Holy Communion
 10.30 am Immanuel, Morning Service, Rev'd. Robert Jordan
 6.30 pm Bath Road, Holy Communion, Rev'd. Mark Barrett
 6.30 pm Christ Church, Choral Evensong
 6.30 pm Immanuel, Evening Service, Rev'd. Robert Jordan
- 11 Tues **7.30 pm** **Partnership Council Meeting at Immanuel**
- 12 Wed 10.30 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 7.30 pm Healing Prayer Group at 39 Sandown Avenue
- 15 Sat 9.30 am to 3.00 pm Swindon Choral Society Workshop
 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm Swindon Choral Society perform Handel's Messiah at Christ Church, *see page 20*
- 16 Sun** 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
 9.00 am St. Mary's, Holy Communion
 10.00 am Bath Road, Holy Communion, Rev'd. Mark Barrett
 10.00 am Christ Church, Informal Holy Communion
 10.30 am Immanuel, Morning Service, Rev'd. Robert Jordan
3.30 pm **Messy Church at King William Street School**
 6.30 pm Bath Road, Evening Service, Eric Hewitt
 6.30 pm Christ Church, Common Worship Evensong
 6.30 pm Immanuel, Holy Communion, Rev'd. Robert Jordan

19	Wed	10.30 am	Christ Church, Holy Communion
23	Sun	8.00 am	Christ Church, Holy Communion
		9.00 am	St. Mary's, Informal Holy Communion
		10.00 am	Bath Road, Morning Service, Rosie Beal
		10.00 am	Christ Church, Family Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Immanuel, Morning Service
		1.00 pm	Christ Church, Holy Baptism
		6.30 pm	Bath Road, Evening Service, Adrian German
		6.30 pm	Christ Church, Common Worship Evensong
		6.30 pm	Immanuel Evening Service, Rev'd. Robert Jordan
26	Wed	10.30 am	Christ Church, Holy Communion
28	Fri	7.30 pm	Swindon Male Voice Choir with South Wales Choir at Christ Church

WEEKLY EVENTS

WALKING FOR HEALTH, every Monday, 10.30 am, starting and finishing at Christ Church, followed by refreshments. Excluding Bank Holidays.

OPEN HOUSE every Monday morning, at Bath Road Methodist Church between 10.30 am and 12 noon. Excluding Bank Holidays.
Come and join us for drinks and a chat.

BRIGHT LIGHTS PARENT & TODDLER GROUP, every Monday during term time, 1.30 pm to 3.00 pm in the Community Centre at Christ Church.

AFTERNOON GROUP every Tuesday, 2.00 pm-4.00 pm in the Community Centre at Christ Church for tea, cake and chat, activities or a speaker.

ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in this magazine, please contact

Mrs. Diana Swann,
telephone 01793 529897;
email:
d.swann6a@gmail.com

Whilst care has been taken, no responsibility can be accepted for statements made by the advertisers, neither can we be responsible for any losses caused by any errors or omissions in the advertisements.

Do you suffer from Macular Degeneration?

We use a unique lens technology, to help those suffering from Macular Degeneration by:

- Increasing the Magnification - giving a larger, clearer image
- Incorporating Prism - to focus the light on a healthier part of the eye
- Special Filters - to enhance contrast and reduce glare, giving more comfortable vision



VISIONVISIT
mobile opticians

www.visionvisit.co.uk 01793 232 588

**COPY for the MARCH MAGAZINE
by WEDNESDAY 12th FEBRUARY, please.**

Contributions ahead of the deadline are always welcome.

**Please send to: Mrs. Diana Swann, 58 Sandown Avenue, SN3 1QQ
email: d.swann6a@gmail.com**

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily the views of those held by the Old Town Partnership of Churches.

Hillier

Funeral Service

A tradition of caring since 1923

- Family run and independent
- 24 hour service every day
- Pre-payment plans
- Hillier Bereavement Care

A caring support service for the bereaved



www.hillierfuneralservice.co.uk



HEAD OFFICE

170 Victoria Road, Swindon SN1 3DF
Telephone: 01793 522797

CHAPEL OF REST

The Broadway, Whitworth Road,
Swindon SN25 3BL
Telephone: 01793 522145

EMAIL

enquiries@hillierfuneralservice.co.uk

Established in 1900, today's Hills Group is a dynamic Wiltshire business that covers a wide area of western and southern England.

The Group's operations remain dedicated to three core activities:

- Specialist waste management services and recycling solutions
- Production and sale of ready-mixed concrete, sand, stone and gravel
- Building high quality new homes and undertaking contract building projects

Working today...
...for a better tomorrow



www.hills-group.co.uk

T: 01793 781200



Bath Road Church
singing carols at the
Co-op on
Saturday 15th
December in aid of
Action for Children.



Christmas dinner in the Community Centre at Christ Church
Wednesday 25th December 2019



DEACONS *for* DIAMONDS



DEACONS & SON (SWINDON) LTD
ESTABLISHED 1848

SAME DAY RING SIZING
ON ALL NEW PURCHASES

Items featured subject to stock availability

11 - 15 WOOD STREET, OLD TOWN, SWINDON, SN1 4AN
TELEPHONE: 01793 522072/527530
www.deacons-jewellers.com

B&C MORSE

Painting • Decorating • Property Maintenance

- Local family business
- Interior and exterior painting and decorating specialists
- Wallpaper
- Coving
- Window frames and boards repainted
- Facias and soffits painted or replaced
- Associated building and maintenance work
- Discounts for OAP's
- Competitive rates
- No job too small



For a FREE quotation please call us on: 01793 536867 OR
CHRIS MOBILE: 07754 498760 • BRIAN MOBILE: 07876 074759
EMAIL: chrismorse1974@yahoo.co.uk