

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

## **PARTNERSHIP MAGAZINE**

**DECEMBER 2023 & JANUARY 2024**

**£1.00**



**Would Jesus still  
be homeless  
in 2023?**



**One in Christ - Together in Mission**

# IMMANUEL CHURCH

UPHAM ROAD SWINDON

## SPECIAL SERVICES

DECEMBER 2023

17TH 10:30AM CHRISTMAS READINGS & CAROLS

18TH 6:00PM CAROLS ON THE CARPET  
45 MINUTES SINGING FESTIVE MUSIC FOR ALL THE FAMILY

25TH 10:30AM CHRISTMAS DAY CELEBRATION

JANUARY 2024

14TH 10:30AM READINGS  
& CAROLS FOR THE NEW YEAR

A WARM  
WELCOME  
AWAITS YOU.

[www.immanuelurc.org](http://www.immanuelurc.org)



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## **PARTNERSHIP LETTER**

The Manse,  
152 Drove Road,  
Swindon

Peace, grace, and hope to you!

You will be reading this edition of the Partnership Magazine, about the time Advent begins. So, on one hand, yes – all those Christmas decorations you have been seeing in the shops, now start to have more sense.

I want to take this opportunity to share some thoughts with you on the Christmas story of “then” and its amazing connection with “now”. The House Group I am part of has been using Searching from Home (Advent reflections on the God who welcomes everyone). This is a York Course, and it has really got us talking and connection matters in an extremely exciting way. There are four chapters, and when I write this, we are just halfway through, and it has proved to be a wonderful journey. The titles of each meeting: Leaving home, Fleeing home, Carrying home, Finding Home. And it as certainly helped us think of what Mary, Joseph and Jesus went through.

The sharing of the House Group has helped us grasp the relevance of the story of “then” to the current times, our “now”. Joseph receiving the call to go from Nazareth, where he was living with Mary, to go to Bethlehem, to where the baby was to be born. Heavily pregnant, sitting on the back (the hard back) of donkey, and Joseph walking beside her- off they go. Whether it was a long or short journey is irrelevant. It was a time where common sense suggested they stay where they were. But no...and when they get there, where to stay? Not a vacant place available. Finally, a stable is offered. Think for a moment is that is what you would like for your loved one to be at the time of giving birth a first child?

And some time later, after the visit of the Magi the call to leave, in a hurry to Egypt because the life of the child was in danger. The political authority was after all children 2 years and less. Leave at night...what to take? No room for this, no space for that? Throw something into the bag and run...run, not just round the corner, but to Egypt. Remember Pharaoh and Moses, and the rush to leave Egypt. Well, now it is going back to Egypt to be able to live. Of course, we have learnt the lesson, we would not repeat such horror, would we?



And we realized that this IS the story of so many people today. Running to safety, to a foreign place, where there is no room, where they are not wanted. Taking nothing with them. For how long? God only knows. Why? Why? Why? The haunting question. People leaving in a hurry, taking nothing, risking everything because it is dangerous to stay where they are. Crossing land and sea to “safety”. Really?

And we understand the Christmas Story in the light of our today...Joseph, Mary, Jesus were asylum seekers, refugees, persecuted. Their life was in danger. Dear God, that is horrible. Dear God, that is wrong. Jesus, the saviour born into risk. And yet, that story is being repeated today. How many persecuted? How many fleeing? How many refugees? How many living in tents? How many suffering hostility? God this continues to be horrible. God this continues to be wrong.

What Joseph, Mary and Jesus experienced is more complicated than what a Christmas Carol can communicate; more troublesome than what a Christmas Card can depict.

As we approach Christmas, I thank God for The Harbour, for Amnesty International, for Christian Aid, for Threshold, for Night Shelter, for the Food Bank, for MSF and Doctors of the World...and so many organizations helping those who today suffer; may our lives be open to the needs of others, may we see the troubles of today in the light of the troubles of the past and through the Love of God be truly welcoming, loving, kind and filled with a passion for justice. May the Joy of the birth of the Saviour be the announcement of life for all people.

I close with the words of The Peace Carol – sung by The Muppets and John Denver.

The garment of life, be it tattered and torn  
The cloak of the soldier is withered and worn  
But what child is this that was poverty-born  
The peace of Christmas Day.

Add all the grief that people may bear  
Total the strife and the troubles and care  
Put them in columns and leave them right there  
The peace of Christmas Day

The branch that bears the bright holly  
The dove that rests in yonder tree  
The light that shines for all to see  
The peace of Christmas Day.

You can listen to this song at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRJS7jBuUM>

God bless you and may Peace be with you and with our world.

Robert Jordan



## Notice for December 2023 Partnership Magazine

Partnership Magazine for 2024

It is with great regret that it was agreed unanimously at the recent Old Town Partnership (OTP) Council meeting that this will be the last issue of the magazine for the time being. Our editor, Diana Swann, who has been our editor for 25 years, has had to retire for personal reasons with immediate effect. There is no-one, at least at present, who can pick up her role. We are tremendously grateful for her dedicated work in producing such an interesting magazine each month. We also mustn't forget Margaret Williams, who has also been so heavily involved in ensuring we have a magazine each month together with all those regular contributors and those that deliver the magazine each month. A huge thank-you to you all.

The Partnership is committed in continuing to provide interesting and relevant information not only to our congregations but to our wider audience and so we are urgently looking at revising our communication strategy to achieve this aim.

Therefore, if you would like us to keep you informed and would like to receive any future communication publications, please do contact someone from the Partnership team (contact details are on the first page of this magazine).

Anne Farrow  
Chair of the OTP

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### REQUEST

Have any of you some CDs of hymn singing which you no longer need? If so we would be pleased to make use of them when we lead services at care homes as the residents are more likely to join in if they can hear a good congregation singing! Please contact me if you have any.

Margaret Williams

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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.

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

## **Diana Swann**

For the past 25 years Diana Swann has been the editor of this Partnership magazine, having started in March 1998. During that time Diana has edited, found interesting articles which pertained to our situation here in Old Town, persuaded members of our congregations to contribute their interesting experiences and kept in touch with all three church congregations!

Although we always said that magazine material should be with her by the 12th of the previous month ready for her to edit properly and efficiently, many times she would receive articles after that date and she would juggle things around so that she could include them. Often she would be left with a difficult decision as to whether to include an article which would mean going over to another page and then finding something else to fill the other side of the page or to omit the article because it was past the deadline date of the 12th of the month! Diana always made these decisions with gracious calmness and diplomacy.

Diana was and is a member of Bath Road church but is a true ecumenist, always trying to support ecumenical services and all partnership ventures. She always referred to herself as “a background person” but I can tell you how important her background as far as the magazine is concerned has been; without it there would have been no magazine in its current form!

The past few months have proved difficult for Diana and culminated in her house being flooded by the recent rains and so she feels it is time to give up doing this task and have a well earned rest.

So thank you, Diana, for all those 25 years of service to our Partnership and for 25 years of tolerating all the last minute entries arriving on your computer well after the 12th of the month with little apologetic notes from so many of us!

We all wish you well in your now dry house!

Margaret Williams

HOWEVER YOU'RE FEELING  
**THIS CHRISTMAS,**  
ALWAYS KNOW YOU ARE  
**NOT ALONE**



**#NotAlone**



**WILL YOU BE ALONE ON  
CHRISTMAS DAY?**

*You are welcome to join us!*

**CHRISTMAS DAY - 12NOON - 3:30PM  
AT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE AT CHRIST  
CHURCH**

**3 Course Christmas  
Dinner**

**Christmas Carols**

**Fun and Laughter**

**The King's Speech**

**TO RESERVE A SPACE CONTACT 01793 617237 OR EMAIL  
CCOPERATIONS@CHRISTCHURCHSWINDON.CO.UK**

**SUGGESTED DONATION OF £10**



## **FAMILY EVENTS**

### **BAPTISMS**

*We welcome into the family of the Church*

#### **CHRIST CHURCH**

Nov 26 - Arthur Neil Chambers and Belle Daisy Chambers

### **MARRIAGE**

*We wish joy and happiness to*

#### **CHRIST CHURCH**

Nov 11 - Joshua Joseph Thomas Rose and Shannon Bella Holloway

### **BLESSING OF MARRIAGE**

*We wish joy and happiness to*

#### **CHRIST CHURCH**

Nov 11 - Oluwapelumi Olufemi Ajayi and Ese Shennah Twala

### **DEATHS**

*We extend our sympathy to the loved ones*

#### **CHRIST CHURCH**

Oct 10 - Maureen Patricia Green, 87 years

Oct 10 - Patricia Clare 'Tricia' Hannon 50 years

### **FLOODLIGHTING AT CHRIST CHURCH**

Oct 31 For Sandy & Ann Morrison - In celebration of our 25th wedding anniversary - married at Christ Church 31st October 1998.

Dec 23 Lovegrove, Doris (23.12.93), James (Jeweller) (18.04.97). Sadly missed by daughter Jeanette and husband Chris Penney. RIP.

Jan 30 Fondest memories of dear Mum and Dad, Phyl & Harry Dyer on their wedding anniversary.

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**.

For more information, email: [parishoffice@christchurchswindon.co.uk](mailto:parishoffice@christchurchswindon.co.uk). Tel. 522832.

## Marian Evans 1930-2023 - A life filled with love



Marian died in the last week of September at Fitzwarren house, which had become her home 3 years ago.

We were fortunate to have such a wonderful mother and will miss her greatly. She was a wife, a mum, a nurse, a midwife, a sister, daughter, grandmother, great grandmother, and friend of many. A poet and accomplished prayer writer, a theologian and studier of PCN and radical theology. Her faith was very important, and she loved attending our house group at the manse. Thank you all for so many messages and cards.

Alzheimer's is a cruel, nasty disease, taking away so much of intellect and memories, so slowly and painfully, we were lucky that mum was able, with encouragement, to remember us and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. There was still love and fun to be had until her last couple of weeks. It's strange what gets lost and what is deeply seated and remains and is at times reachable.

In the last year or so there are two highlights that demonstrate this: meeting my youngest granddaughter Lily, babies have always been important and she never lost that. Then when she required a new wheelchair and Gary Walker delivered it, she immediately connected him with church and said how kind it was that the church would be so lovely to give her a wheelchair; truly a special moment and shows her love of Bath Rd and the church in general.

We thank Fitzwarren House for their care and Rev Rach and all who helped with her funeral.

Ceri and family



**THE JT STUDIO SINGERS PRESENT**

**A RECITAL OF**

**CHRISTMAS SONGS**

**AT ST MARY'S CHURCH**  
**COMMONWEAL ROAD, SWINDON**  
**SN1 4LB**

**ON MONDAY 18 DECEMBER 2023**  
**AT 7.30pm**

**ADMISSION FREE WITH RETIRING COLLECTION**

**REFRESHMENTS**

**IN AID OF THE SWINDON MUSIC FESTIVAL**

**JTP**  
**TRUST**

*Smf*  
SWINDON MUSIC FESTIVAL



# Immanuel

**Services every Sunday at 10.30 am with  
Holy Communion on the third Sunday of the month.**

## **December Services**

- 3rd December 10.00am Advent Service at Christ Church - **No service at Immanuel today**  
6.30pm Joint Service at Christ Church, a welcome to the new Bishop of Swindon
- 10th December 10.30am Advent Service of Praise with Holy Communion, Rev Robert Jordan
- 17th December 10.30am Service of lessons and carols, Robert Jordan
- 18th December 6.00pm Community Carols on the Carpet in the church hall - 45 minutes of Christmas music with Geoff Glead and the music group
- 20th December Immanuel and Christ Church choirs sing carols and Christmas songs for the Light Trail in Old Town Gardens bandstand
- 24th December 10:30am Worship for Christmas Eve, Geoff Glead
- 25th December 10.30am short service of Family worship. Rev Robert Jordan. Bring a present to show the congregation
- 31st December 10:30am Worship for the New Year's eve, Rev Robert Jordan

## **January Services**

- 7th January 10.30am Morning Worship, The Rev'd. Robert Jordan
- 14th January 10.30am Readings & Carols for the New Year, Mark Barrett
- 21st January 10.30am Morning Worship with Holy Communion, Rev Robert Jordan
- 28th January 10.30am Morning Worship, Mr Bryan Elkington from Highworth URC

## **MY SABBATICAL**

In the previous issue of the Partnership Magazine, I shared some thoughts on my Sabbatical, focusing on Symbols, this month I would like to take one more step along the way and share thoughts on Silence.

My pastoral experience has shown that on the whole, most of our churches don't like silence too much as part of a service. A short little time is fine, but it has to be short. If the silence is a bit longer, people become uncomfortable, even fidgety and impatient. But so often only silence will allow us to reflect, to come closer to the depth of our feelings and be open to God's words. And then again, we don't really like noise either. So how do we balance moments in our lives?

During my Sabbatical, I visited a number of art museums, and a number of temples – mostly Christian, but again, in Prague a number of synagogues. And suddenly I realised that there was more silence in an art museum, standing in front of wonderful paintings, than there was in a church or a cathedral, also with lots of art around. And I got thinking about it.

Add to this that for about 6 Sundays around my Sabbatical, when I was in Swindon, I chose to attend the Sunday Meeting of the Society of Friends, better known as The Quakers, when the worship times is about one whole hour of silence, sometimes someone is moved by the Spirit to say something for the edification of the people, will speak.

And true, the first couple of times it was “different” to so say the least, but then, one Sunday that silence was filled with meaning, with deep communication, and I came away feeling I had really “heard” what I needed to. And can those of you who know me, imagine me in silence for a whole hour 😊

Silence can be a time of profound communication. When in prayer we are given the chance of more than five seconds of silence as a token of something different...when we have the time to go deep inside ourselves to bring to God what otherwise we would not do. Time to reflect, time to respond, time to understand what has just happened. Time to be nurtured – as the Psalmist says: “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46; 10)

And what can I say when I come face to face with an amazing painting, in which the artist lets us grasp a time, a feeling, a situation that no words can express. This happened to me a number of times – When in El Prado Museum I stood in front of Hieronymus Bosch Garden of the Earthly Delights; and when at the Reina Sofia I was overwhelmed by Picasso’s Guernica, and in Prague when I walked through the Jewish Cemetery and found a grave from 1498, and in Berlin when I visited Zion Church where Dietrich Bonhoeffer had been minister back in 1932 ... or in Leipzig, visiting St Thomas Church, where Bach was composer for so many years, and the only sound was an organist playing the same organ Bach had played and, and was responded to by the new massive organ, in a church where there was no human voice heard, as all were listening to the music, or in Colmar when I stood face to face with Matthias Grunewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece, probably one of the most sublime paintings I have ever seen...those are places and moments when no words can communicate, only silence. Deep, moving silence.

Silence is not always absence, as you can find in those special moments in prayer when questions you don't even know are there, find a way forward. Or when you have read something in the Bible and in the silence that follows, you "hear" something you have not heard before. And the fact that during the travel time of my Sabbatical I was on my own, there were many times of silence, which contributed to good times of reflection, and a further appreciation on the importance of silence, in a world where there is so much noise going on.

If there is any group which would like me to share some of the Powerpoints I have prepared on my Sabbatical, just let me know. I'd love to share with you.

Robert Jordan



## Geoff's Jottings

### Did you know?

Astronauts grow taller in space.

The number of Lego figures currently made up around the world is more than the population of China.

The Eiffel Tower gets taller in the summer.

Snakes can predict earthquakes.

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### Some Christmas and New Year Quotes for you to consider:

Christmas is not a Season; it's a frame of mind.

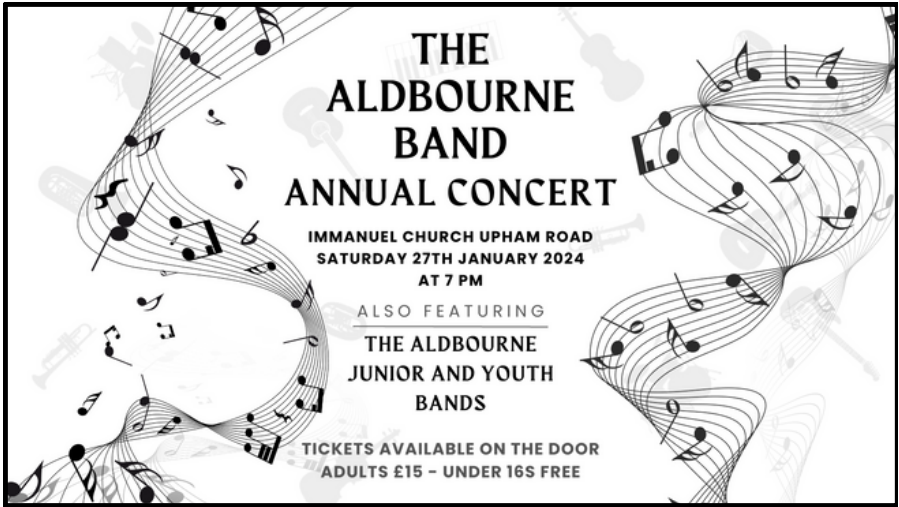
Love the Giver more than the Gift.

Christmas is not only about opening our presents, it's about opening our hearts.

---

Don't live the same year 75 times over and call it life.

What the New Year brings **US** will depend a great deal on what **WE** bring to the New Year.



I thought I would just print the text of some words based on a Celtic Blessing set to music by Geoff Nobes which Immanuel Choir sang a few weeks ago. Remember that the word Peace derives from the Hebrew word Shalom which means may you know peace, harmony, wholeness and tranquillity. Whilst the Words of this Blessing are personally addressed to us as individuals, can I suggest we think of them so that they embrace the whole of humanity?

“The peace of Christ be with you, the love of Christ enfold you, the joy of Christ inspire you. The strength of Christ uphold you and the beauty of Christ be within you, all the days of your life.”

---

**... and one final thought:**

Darkness cannot drive out darkness - only light can do that.

God Bless  
Geoff

# Bath Road

**All services start at 10am**

## **December Services**

3rd December	United Partnership Service at Christ Church (No service at Bath Road)
9th December	Christmas Fayre 9am to 1pm
10th December	Worship Leaders and Toy Service
17th December	Holy Communion, Rev Rach Collins
24th December	6:30pm Christingle Service, Rev Rach Collins (No morning service at Bath Road)
25th December	10:45am Christmas Day Service, Rev Rach Collins
31st December	Revd Andrew Bird at 10am

## **January Services**

7th January	Covenant Service including Holy Communion, Rev Rach Collins
14th January	Chrissy Whittington
21st January	United Partnership Service at Immanuel at 10:30am (No service at Bath Road)
28th January	Michelle Pickering

**The livestreams of our services are now on YouTube instead of Facebook.**

**You'll be able to watch them at  
[www.youtube.com/@bathroadmethodistchurch](http://www.youtube.com/@bathroadmethodistchurch),  
where the livestreams will start at 10am.**

**Open House - Mondays 10.30 am to 12 noon**

Please feel free to come along.

## **Bath Road Church Community Breakfast**



**9.00 am to 11.00 am  
9th December  
£1.00 for a bacon roll  
with tea or coffee All  
are welcome.**



# CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December  
9.00am to 1.00pm

at

**BATH ROAD  
METHODIST CHURCH**

**Craft stalls • Bric-a-brac • Jigsaws • Books  
DVDs • Children's Games • Cake Stall  
Food and lots more...**

**FREE ENTRY**

*Something for Everyone!*





## **MOPS**

MOPS stands for Mix of People  
7th and 21st December

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 2.30pm to 3.30 pm in the Crossland Room at Bath Road Methodist Church. The usual format is to spend the first half hour chatting and the second half hour listening to a speaker or doing an activity.

December 7th Favourite Carols,  
December 21st Mince Pies and Merriment

ORGANISERS: Brenda Hewitt, Tel. 683926 and Janet Hunt, Tel. 521934



**Come and join us at  
Bath Road Methodist  
Church**

**3pm - 4:30pm**  
October 1st 2023  
November 5th 2023  
December 3rd 2023

Messy fun for all the family!  
Worship, Games, Crafts,  
Stories & Tea!

 "Messy Church Old Town"  
messychurcholdtown@gmail.com

Old Town Partnership of Churches  
Bath Road Methodist - Christ Church C of E - Immanuel URC



# Christ Church with St Mary's

## WELCOME TO THE NEW BISHOP OF SWINDON



We are delighted to share the exciting news that The Venerable Neil Warwick has now been consecrated as the new Bishop of Swindon.

The consecration of the Bishop of Swindon took place on Thursday, 30th November at Canterbury Cathedral, with the Archbishop of Canterbury presiding over this momentous occasion.

Neil will succeed the Rt Revd Dr. Lee Rayfield, who retired earlier this year, bringing a fresh perspective and renewed energy to the diocese.

Neil has been a prominent figure in the Diocese of Bristol, serving as Archdeacon of Bristol since 2019. In this capacity, he oversaw three thriving deaneries within the vibrant and diverse city of Bristol. His dedicated service as part of the Bishop of Bristol's leadership team played a pivotal role in the formation and implementation of the diocese's mission plan, "Transforming Church Together."

Hailing from Surrey, Neil's journey of faith and service has been both diverse and inspiring. He initially pursued a degree in geography at Nottingham University before venturing into the transport industry and overseas development with World Vision. It was during his time with World Vision, and his experiences with the communities they serve, that his faith was profoundly deepened. Neil's commitment to community development and leadership led him to complete an MBA at Eastern University, Pennsylvania.

In the year 2000, while on a trip to Zambia, Neil felt a divine calling to priesthood. This pivotal moment marked the beginning of his journey toward ordination, and after training at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, he was ordained in 2005 at Peterborough Cathedral. His initial ministry took root during his curacy in the market town of Towcester.

In 2009, Neil assumed the role of Vicar at St Nicolas Earley, a bustling suburban church. Over the years, he also served as the Assistant Area Dean for Reading for five years. Most notably, Neil was a valuable member of the Archbishop's Racism Taskforce, contributing to the creation of "From Lament to Action," reflecting his unwavering passion for fighting injustice.

Neil's vision and enthusiasm for his new role as the Bishop of Swindon are palpable. He is eager to embody the diocese values of openness, creativity, generosity, and bravery as he serves the churches and communities in Swindon and North Wiltshire. He is devoted to supporting Swindon's churches in their mission to foster community, establish local partnerships, and be a positive presence in town and beyond.

The heart of his vision lies in the power of the Church of England as a steadfast presence in every local community. With a particular focus on schools and chaplaincies, he envisions a significant force for Gospel change. Neil's deep commitment to these ideals, combined with his faith and joy, promises to be a source of blessing to the diocese.

I have reached out to Neil as part of Christ Church's mission of supporting the Bishop of Swindon and their families. This support includes practical and spiritual assistance, a tradition Christ Church has maintained in the past with Bishops Michael Doe and Bishop Lee. We will continue our support when Bishop Neil relocates to Swindon at the beginning of next year. Neil is married to Helen and has two grown-up children. He loves collecting jazz on vinyl, going to gigs, and shouting at Nottingham Forest games! So we should get on very well.

Neil says "I'm delighted at the prospect of being the Bishop of Swindon, in a Diocese I love and at an exciting time in its life."

Furthermore, it is a great privilege for Christ Church to host Bishop Neil's diocesan Welcome service on Sunday, 3rd December at 6:30 pm.

The Old Town Partnership choir will lead the worship, and the church's bell ringers will ring before the service. Additionally, the church will organize the practical arrangements and a reception in the Community Centre afterward.

We eagerly anticipate the arrival of Bishop Neil and look forward to the continued growth and transformation of our diocese under his leadership.

Please join us in praying for Neil as he takes on this new role, that he may faithfully and joyfully serve the communities of Swindon and North Wiltshire, guided by the help of God.

Revd. Canon Simon Stevenette

## **CHRISTINGLE AT CHRIST CHURCH**



This year we will be holding our **Christingle Service at 4pm on Sunday 10th December** and as always, we will be helping the Children's Society by donating all the collection at that service to them.

On the Sundays previous to the 10th of December we will be giving out collecting boxes in the shape of candles or envelopes for you to fill with your donations. These will be exchanged at the service for a Christingle.

This service is very popular and is a lovely way to begin your Christmas; it is always an inspiring sight to see everyone making a large circle around the church singing a carol lit only by the light of the Christingles so make a note of the date now and we look forward to seeing you there!

# ***2024 Art Group***

**11th January - 14th March  
2024**

**10 weeks - £10 per session  
(to be booked and paid in advance)**

...



...

**Thursdays - 1:30-3:30  
Community Centre @ Christ Church  
in the Garden Room**

To book your place please contact 01793 617237  
or email [ccooperations@christchurchswindon.co.uk](mailto:ccooperations@christchurchswindon.co.uk)

Attendees will need to provide their own supplies.

# AN EXCITING TIME AT CHRIST CHURCH



The Community Centre is turned 10 years old on 30th November and we have lots of fun events and activities coming up at the end of this year and into 2024.

Firstly, please be aware of our 10 year anniversary competition. We are looking for young people to come up with an entrepreneurial idea of a way in which they can fundraise for Christ Church. There are 3 categories – Ages 8-11 (Juniors), 11-16 (Secondary) and 16-18 (Further education). Nick Hewer of Apprentice and Countdown fame has kindly agreed to come back and be a part of a panel to judge the winners of whom will have the opportunity to bring their idea to life. find out more at: [www.ccccswindon.co.uk/page/news](http://www.ccccswindon.co.uk/page/news)

We have lots of events coming up, I detail some of them below :

**Fri 1st December – 10th Year Anniversary Quiz Night.** The Community Centre is turning 10 years old. We celebrate by running a quiz in partnership with The Old Town Residents Association as they were the first booking in the centre 10 years ago. Doors open at 7pm, games begin at 7.30pm. There will be one round specific to Old Town and Christ Church plus some lots of other fun rounds. Teams of 2-6 people. Only £6 each. Food included (half a pizza per person) as part of your ticket price. Pay bar available. What are you waiting for? Book now before it's too late. - [cccswindon.co.uk/events/6/details](http://cccswindon.co.uk/events/6/details)

**Sat 2nd Dec – Brunel Brass Christmas Concert** – 4pm - Join us for a spectacular feast of Christmas entertainment featuring all the bands of Brunel Brass, including our Beginners Band, Rising Stars, Shooting Stars, Brunel Academy and the Championship Band! Tickets £10, Under 16s £5, Under 5s FREE - [www.ticketsource.co.uk/brunelbrass](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/brunelbrass)

**Fri 8th Dec – The Wessex Christmas Spectacular** – 7.30pm - Get into the Christmas spirit with our special guests, Shrivenham Military Wives Choir, conducted by Jon Driver - [www.ticketsource.co.uk/Wessex-male-choir](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/Wessex-male-choir)

**Sat 9th Dec – Swindon Choral Society’s Ceremony of Carols** – 7.30pm - with a retiring collection for ‘Alone at Christmas’ - [www.swindonchoral.org.uk/scs/](http://www.swindonchoral.org.uk/scs/)

**Wed 13th Dec - Julia’s House Hospice - Carols by Candlelight Concert** - 7.00pm. Following their highly successful Swindog Art Trail, Julia’s House are pleased to bring our popular Carols by Candlelight event to Swindon - [www.juliahouse.org/book-event/1093](http://www.juliahouse.org/book-event/1093)

**Fri 15th Dec – Swindon Male voice choir – Annual Christmas Concert** – 7.30pm - <https://www.swindonmalevoicechoir.co.uk/>

**Christmas Day – Alone at Christmas** – Do you know anyone who will be on their own on Christmas Day? We host a 3 course Christmas meal between 12-3.30pm including transport (if needed) to the venue. For more information or if you would like to help please get in touch – [chris@christchurchswindon.co.uk](mailto:chris@christchurchswindon.co.uk) – 01793 617237

**Saturday 20th January – Christ Church Does The Apprentice 10 Year Anniversary Event** – young people will be pitching their ideas to business professionals including Nick Hower of the Apprentice and Countdown fame.

#### **SAVE THE DATE FOR THE FOLLOWING 2024 EVENTS:**

**Sat 27th Jan – Jazz Festival fundraiser** – TBC

**Fri 8th March - Divorced Beheaded Died - An audience with Henry VIII** – tickets will be available from the community centre website in due course.

**Sat 9th March – Out of the Ashes – Blues night**

**Fri 19th/ Sat 20th April – 4th Swindon Jazz and Soul Festival**

**Thurs 9th/ Sun 12th May – 11th Old Town Beer and Cider festival**

You can keep up to date with what’s going on at Christ Church and the Community Centre follow us on social media or visit us at:  
**[www.linktr.ee/christchurchswindon](http://www.linktr.ee/christchurchswindon)**

We hope to see you at Christ Church very soon!

Chris Smith  
Christ Church Site Operations Manager  
email: [chris@christchurchswindon.co.uk](mailto:chris@christchurchswindon.co.uk), Tel: 01793 617237, Mob: 07582 305760



Swindon Choral Society presents:

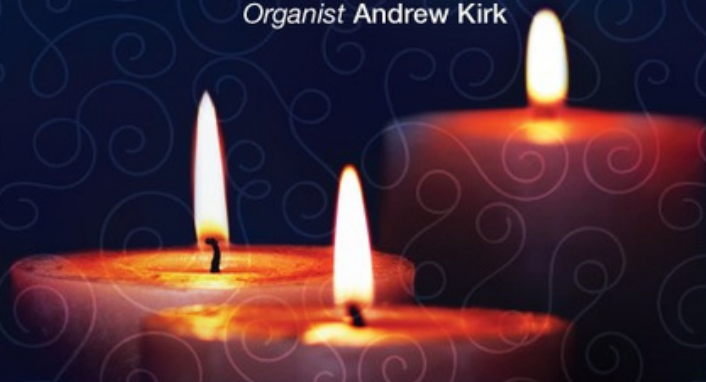
# *A Ceremony of Carols*

Come and hear festive music by Britten and Holst and  
join us in singing some cosy Christmas favourites!

*Conductor* Elinor Cooper

*Harpist* Laurette Pope

*Organist* Andrew Kirk



6:00 pm, Saturday, 9th December 2023  
Christ Church, 26 Cricklade St, Swindon, SN1 3HG

*Including festive refreshments*

**£15.00** (under 18s free)

Retiring collection in aid of *Alone at Christmas*

**swindonchoral.org.uk**

Swindon Choral Society, registered charity 800695



## **SWINDON CHORAL SOCIETY**

### **A REVIEW OF OUR PERFORMANCE OF GLORIA**



Swindon Choral Society performed a dynamic and exciting programme at Christ Church on Saturday 7th October.

The first half was a collection of Venetian pieces from Monteverdi to Lotti. The choir also performed pieces by women of the period in an attempt to raise the profile of less well known works and to diversify the programme.

The choir rose to the challenges these offered, performing unaccompanied and 8 part harmonies!

We were joined by Meg Rees a second year PhD student in Music, Nel Wilmer, a 3rd year studying English Literature and Alice Chapman, a final year English literature student. All attend the University of Bristol. All three of the visiting soloists performed with joy and the audience were wowed by their control and vigour.

The second half was the performance of Vivaldi's Gloria. The rehearsals with our excellent musical director, Elinor Cooper, pushed us further and we sang with such pleasure and delighted our audience who were appreciative of our programme. We were accompanied by the wonderful Ian Crabbe at the piano. Another milestone for this established choral society, bringing the old favourites and new treasures.

We are now in rehearsal for our Christmas concert, 'A Ceremony of Carols' again to be performed in the beautiful setting of Christ Church at 6:00 pm on Saturday, 9th December 2023.

Our festive programme includes pieces by Britten and Holst, among others, featuring our accompanists Laretta Pope on harp and Andrew Kirk on organ. Tickets are available through our website.

We would love to welcome new members. If you would like to come along, we rehearse each week from 7.30 to 9.30 at Freshbrook Church.

## **THIS IS LIFE NOW**

In 2021 we published an article by Simon Giles who was new to the Christian faith. Now he writes again to give us a sequel:

The last three years of being a Christian have been full of Love, loss, faith, hope, doubt, family, and hardship. I have faced challenges and difficulties that have strengthened my relationship with Jesus Christ and through him I have drawn closer to God. I have found the Psalms a great comfort in darker times, and they have helped me express myself in prayer. I have grown up spiritually with you all at Christ Church for the last 3 years.

We have celebrated Christmas, Easter, Mothering Sunday, Lent, Pentecost, Weddings, Birthdays, fetes and attended funerals. We have laughed together, celebrated good news together. I've shared many benches around the grounds of Christ Church with friends. The dirt underneath those benches hold many tears and as many Joys of good news delivered.

We have shared meals together and I have had the privilege to cook for a few of you. For me this is community, this is my family that I always longed to be a part of. I have always felt I had a hole in my heart, that never was able to be filled. Drugs and alcohol didn't fill it, money and stuff didn't fill it, poor behavior and worse friends couldn't fill it, living didn't fill it. What completed my heart was the Grace of God and all of you.

As I think back to that guy three and a half years ago who was so consumed by the black dog, self-annihilation who was at the door. That's where the Grace of God came into my being, and I have been on this ultimate life adventure of being a follower of Jesus Christ. I positively have the scaffolding up, I have a lot of work to do, bridges to mend and some to rebuild. For the first time in my life, I have a sound foundation to build my life upon.

You are all part of that foundation held together by God's mercy. I am eternally grateful to God and to all of you. My unwavering faith in God and gratitude for my Christ church family, blesses me everyday, sharing The Good News and serving others in love, with compassion. Developing a personal relationship with God and Jesus Christ through prayer, meditation, worship, and pilgrimage.

Gathering together for Fellowship of Faith and seeing the sharing of faith, food, fun, family, feelings and firsts. Serving stew and dumplings at Fellowship of Faith Harvest gathering, watching my family gathered round a table sharing stories and life, seeing children running around playing amongst the adults engaging with them, the smell of the church, the sound of the music and voices all blending together.

That's my life now as a Christian, saved and born again, a life in the light with community, family, friends, support, help, hugs, high fives, and love. The Holy Spirit, who fills me with purpose and wisdom, I know I'm never alone walking with Jesus Christ and feeling God's Grace always in the good times and in the dark times.

I am loved unconditionally by my Lord, I have a peace filled heart. God requires me to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with Him that is my life now as a Christian. Being a Christian is everything all at once, it's academic and domestic all at the same time, it's in the doing, as well as the being.

Living a truly Christian life is the challenge, which is why it's the ultimate adventure pilgrimage. As I pilgrimage my way through life now, I look forward to life not dread it, and when I back slide it's a strong fellowship that God uses to bring me back to the narrow path. This is life now.

Simon Giles

### **A Life**

I was lost from You most of my life.  
I never was on the side of right.  
Just as the suffering and pain  
my own will caused.  
Just as darkness led me to fall.  
Your mercy gave me pause.  
Your son came to me in the dawn.  
Your Grace from which I was reborn.  
Your Love I tell all.

***A poem by Simon Giles***





**Christ Church  
Swindon**



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

**Christmas Services at Christ Church  
with St Mary's**

Sunday 10th December 4pm in Christ Church - Christingle Service

Sunday 17th December 2.30pm St Mary's - Carol Service

6.30pm Christ Church - Service of Lessons & Carols by Candlelight

CHRISTMAS EVE - in Christ Church  
4pm Crib Service ; 11pm Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY - in Christ Church  
8am Holy Communion  
10am Family Christmas Holy Communion

**ALL WELCOME**



## DECEMBER

To find out the latest information for Christ Church, please sign up for our weekly email from the Christ Church News Desk:  
[www.christchurchswindon.co.uk/blog/](http://www.christchurchswindon.co.uk/blog/)

Alternatively, check our Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/Christchurchswindon>

Listen to our latest service at a time to suit you from 1.00 pm each Sunday by going to our website and clicking on 'Services'

### Morning Prayer at Christ Church

9-9.30 am Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the Lady Chapel  
apart from the first Saturday when it is 7.30 am.

9-9.30 am Wednesday and Friday, virtual Morning Prayer  
Telephone 0800 260 5903 to join by phone  
Use this Pass code 69404 36078

**Every Wednesday, 10.30 am-11.00 am** - Christ in Quiet with Holy Communion

- |        |          |   |
|--------|----------|---|
| 01 Fri | 7.00 pm  | Community Centre @ CC 10th Anniversary quiz night   |
| 02 Sat | 7:30 am  | Morning Prayer and Men's Breakfast  |
|        | 4.00 pm  | Christ Church, Brunel Brass Concert   |
| 03 Sun | 8.00 am  | Christ Church, 1662 Holy Communion  |
|        | 9.00 am  | St Mary's - NO SERVICE  |
|        | 10.00 am | Christ Church, Partnership Advent Carol Service   |
|        | 2.30 pm  | Christ Church, Prospect Hospice Annual service of Remembrance                             |
|        | 3.00 pm  | Bath Road, Messy Church   |
|        | 4.00 pm  | Christ Church, Prospect Hospice Annual service of Remembrance                             |
|        | 6.30pm   | Christ Church, Bristol Diocese service of welcome for the new Bishop of Swindon           |
| 04 Mon | 10.30 am | Community Centre @ Christ Church, Walking for Health                                      |
|        | 7.30 pm  | Community Centre @ Christ Church, Staff Team meeting                                      |
| 05 Tue | 1.30 pm  | Community Centre @ Christ Church, Afternoon Tea   |
|        | 2.30 pm  | Goddard Arms, <b>NO</b> Tea & Chat today  |
|        | 6.00 pm  | Christ Church, Great Western Hospital NHS Choir Concert                                   |
| 06 Wed | 10.30 am | Christ Church, Christ in Quiet Service  |
|        | 7.00 pm  | Christ Church, Fellowship of Faith  |
| 08 Fri | 12.00pm  | Christ Church, Lainesmead School Christmas Carol Service                                  |
|        | 7.30 pm  | Christ Church, The Wessex Christmas Concert with the Defence Academy Military Wives Choir |
| 09 Sat | 7.30 pm  | Christ Church, Swindon Choral Society Concert   |

- 10 Sun 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
9.00 am St Mary's, Holy Communion  
10.00 am Christ Church, Family Holy Communion  
4.00 pm Christ Church, Christingle Service  
6.30 pm Christ Church, Informal Evening Worship
- 11 Mon 10.30 am Community Centre @ Christ Church, Walking for Health  
10.30 am Christ Church, Lethbridge Primary School Christmas service  
7.00 pm Commonweal Carol Service
- 12 Tue 10.30 am Christ Church, Lethbridge Primary School Christmas service  
1.00 pm Christ Church, Croft Primary School Nativity Play  
1.30 pm Community Centre @ Christ Church, Afternoon Tea
- 13 Wed 10.30 Christ Church, Christ in Quiet service  
7.00 pm Christ Church, Julia's House Carols by Candlelight Service  
7.00 pm Bible Encounter Group
- 14 Thu 1.00 pm Christ Church, Croft Primary School Nativity Play  
1.30 pm Community Centre @ Christ Church, Afternoon Tea
- 15 Fri 7.30 pm Christ Church, Swindon Male Voice Choir Christmas Concert
- 16 Sat 3.30 pm Christ Church, Family Murder Mystery Party
- 17 Sun 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
9.00 am St Mary's, NO SERVICE  
10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
2.30 pm St Mary's, Carol Service  
6.30 pm Christ Church, Service of Lessons Carols
- 18 Mon 10.30 am Community Centre @ Christ Church, Walking for Health  
6.30 pm Christ Church, STFC Carol Service  
7.30 pm St Mary's, Swindon Music Festival Recital of Christmas Songs
- 19 Tue 9.30 am Christ Church, Lawn Manor Academy Christmas Carol Service & Concert  
1.30 pm Community Centre @ Christ Church, Afternoon Tea
- 20 Wed 10.30 am Christ Church, Christ in Quiet service
- 22 Fri 6.30 pm Fever Candlelight: Festive Christmas Films  
8.30 pm Fever Candlelight: Festive Christmas Films
- 23 Sat 6.30 pm Fever Candlelight: Festive Christmas Films  
8.30 pm Fever Candlelight: Festive Christmas Films
- 24 Sun 8.00 am **Christmas Eve** Christ Church, Holy Communion  
9.00 am St Mary's, Holy Communion  
10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
4.00 pm Christ Church, Crib Service  
11.00 pm Christ Church, Midnight Mass
- 25 Mon 10.00 am **Christmas Day** Christ Church, Christmas Worship Service  
12.00 pm Community Centre @ Christ Church, Alone at Christmas
- 27 Wed 10.30 am Christ Church, Christ in Quiet service
- 31 Sun 8.00 am **New Year's Eve** Christ Church, Holy Communion  
9.00 am St Mary's, Holy Communion  
10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
6.30 pm Christ Church, NO SERVICE  
11.00pm Christ Church, Watchnight Service

## JANUARY

- 02 Tue 2.30 pm Goddard Arms, Tea & Chat
- 03 Wed 10.30 am Christ Church, Christ in Quiet Service  
7.00 pm Christ Church, Fellowship of Faith
- 06 Sat 7.30 am Morning Prayer and Men's Breakfast
- 07 Sun 8.00 am Christ Church, 1662 Holy Communion  
9.00 am St Mary's, Holy Communion  
10.00 am Christ Church, All Age Worship  
3.00 pm Bath Road, Messy Church  
6.00 pm Christ Church, Holy Communion
- 08 Mon 10.30 am Community Centre @ Christ Church, Walking for Health
- 10 Wed 10.30 am Christ Church, Christ in Quiet Service  
7.00 pm Christ Church, Bible Encounter Group
- 11 Thu 1.30 pm Community Centre @ Christ Church, Art Group
- 14 Sun 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
9.00 am St Mary's, Holy Communion  
10.00 am Christ Church, Family Holy Communion  
6.30 pm Christ Church, Healing Service
- 17 Wed 10.30 am Christ Church, Christ in Quiet Service  
7.00 pm Fellowship of Faith
- 18 Thu 1.30 pm Community Centre @ Christ Church, Art Group
- 20 Sat 6.30 pm Christ Church, Fever Candlelight Concert  
8.30 pm Christ Church, Fever Candlelight Concert
- 21 Sun 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
9.00 am St Mary's, Holy Communion  
10.00 am Immanuel, Partnership Service for Week of Christian Unity  
6.30 pm Christ Church, Evensong
- 24 Wed 10.30 am Christ Church, Christ in Quiet Service  
7.00 pm Christ Church, Bible Encounter Group
- 25 Thu 1.30 pm Community Centre @ Christ Church, Art Group
- 27 Sat 4.00 pm Christ Church, Jazz Festival Fundraiser (provisional)
- 28 Sun 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
9.00 am St Mary's, Holy Communion  
10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion  
12.00 pm Christ Church, Holy Baptism  
6.30 pm Christ Church, Informal Evening Worship

### **The Friends of Christ Church Charity Christmas Market**

The event took place on 18 November with over 30 local charities and organisations attending. The Trustees would like to thank everyone who took part in whatever capacity and helped to make the event a success.



## Swindon Humanitarian Aid Partnership Update



In last month's article, I mentioned the offer of huge numbers of hospital beds and mattresses from a source in Yorkshire.

In the last month SHAP volunteers and Ukrainian trucks have collected around 250 hospital mattresses from a Yorkshire village called Shelf. Most were then sent on their way, along with dozens of hospital beds to various hospitals and charities in Ukraine. The remaining mattress and beds will be loaded and sent to Ukraine this week.

All at SHAP were proud and honoured to receive a visit from The Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, Mrs Sarah Troughton.

We have existing plans to convert a bus donated by Go East Anglia Bus Company into a Children's Story Bus and we hope there may be some well known children's champions involved in the handover of the bus to the people of Ukraine. Discussions continue!

Finally we believe SHAP is doing a pretty good job getting aid into Ukraine, supporting Ukrainians in Swindon and representing our town in the wider world.

With modest funding we could do so much more, but the £millions controlled by the Disaster Emergency Committee in London are only available to the big 10 charities. Can any of them match our economic efficiency-1500 tonnes of aid delivered for £18000. I doubt it. SHAP's work is undertaken entirely by volunteers.

We have written to politicians from all parties asking them if there is any pressure they can exert to give little players like SHAP the opportunity to compete for funds held by the DEC. When the public so generously donated to the fund I don't think they were aware of the restrictive rules so we hope fairness will prevail.

Mike Bowden, SHAP

## SWINDON LIONS MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

The Lions Message in a Bottle scheme is a simple but effective way for the elderly and vulnerable people to keep their basic personal and medical details where they can be found in an emergency, on a standard form and in a common location – the fridge.



The scheme works as follows. A small white and green bottle is supplied which contains a pre-printed form and two green cross stickers. The user fills in the form, puts the completed form, with a photograph if possible, in the bottle and puts the bottle in the fridge. One of the stickers is put on the fridge door, and the other one is stuck on the inside of the front door. If there is more than one relevant person in the house, then they should all complete a form each and put them in the same bottle.

In an emergency the presence of the stickers will alert the emergency service to the presence of the patient's details in the fridge, which could be essential in any treatment given at the house or at the Hospital.

This scheme was adopted as an official project by Lions Clubs in 2004 and today more than 7 million green topped bottles have been distributed across the British Isles. Lions Clubs promotes this scheme because we believe that it gives elderly and vulnerable people more confidence about their treatment in an emergency. It also gives peace of mind to relatives that essential information will be available in an emergency situation. It also helps the emergency services in a potentially difficult situation.

As a former emergency worker I wholeheartedly endorse this scheme. If you require a bottle, the Parish Office at Christ Church have some. If you would like one but cannot collect it, or you would like more information, please contact me – Lion Rod Davis, Lions Club of Swindon, telephone 01793 723314.

The Lions helped Father Christmas at the Christ Church Market on 18th November and also at Morrisons, Dorcan, on 25/26th November. They will also be helping him at Sainsburys, Bridge Mead on 2/3rd December; Waitrose on 9/10th December, and Sainsburys, Gable Cross on 16/17th December, 2023.

The President and Members of the Lions Club of Swindon wish you all a Merry Christmas and hope you have a Happy New Year.

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