

Woosehill Church Magazine

Sharing God's love with the community

December 2021



Find us on our website
woosehillchurch.org
and on our Facebook page
Or follow our livestreamed services on
YouTube



Dear Church Family and all other readers,

As we enter the season of Advent, times continue to be uncertain for many of us; church is still not as we knew it and we at times struggle to adapt. Will it ever be the same again?

Yet, as my Advent reader tells me "God constantly comes to his people. He often comes softly, in places that surprise us, and His comings are rarely what we expect, so we generally miss their 'earthly disguise'."

Our Partnership in Missional Church initiative encouraged us to notice where God had been at work in the past week; it's worth revisiting.

I feel blessed by our families at Tadpoles who thank us as they leave and tell us how they value the group. I feel blessed when I see Jeanette sign our worship songs so eloquently, bringing added power to the words we sing.

How about you? Where do you feel God's presence and blessing, even in the tough times? Let me know in time for the next issue and I'll publish a few.

Meanwhile we look to another Christmas which as of old celebrates the birth of a baby born to be our Saviour and nothing has changed this fundamental truth.

With every blessing to you in the coming season from all at Woosehill Church.

Val

Next deadline: 16 January 2022
Articles and notices as usual
preferably by e-mail to:
valerie.weedon@btinternet.com

IN THIS ISSUE

Editor and contents	2
Advent Hope Rev'd Soba Sinnathamby	3-4
Innkeepers and Lamplighters Ed Smith	5
Fairtrade Church	6
Light and Darkness John Birch	7-8
Identity Elaine Steere	9-11
An anxious note to Baby Jesus Peter Thurston	12-13
Sit and Sip Lynn Smith	14
A Celtic Blessing	15
Congratulations	16
Carols and Christingles	17
CBM	18
A daytime House Group	19
Thursday groups	20
Sunday Club Easyfundraising	21
A Closing Reflection	22
Church services, meetings and contacts	23
Christmas services	24

Advent Hope



One of the collects from the Book of Common Prayers, used every day during Advent, reads:

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

We see in this prayer the essence of Advent encapsulated. It speaks about darkness and light; about our present mortal life and the rising to immortality in the future; it speaks, more importantly, about Christ who came to visit us before in humility and his glorious return in majesty in the future.

Darkness symbolises the state of God-forsakenness in the world. It also speaks of the lostness of humanity. But there is light. Light symbolises future and hope. There is an instance recorded in the book of Isaiah [21:11-12], after the fall of Babylon. A messenger asks a seer “watchman, what of the night?”, meaning whether the troubles are over. The reply was “the morning comes, and also the night”, meaning there is hope and respite in the midst of troubles. St Paul’s observation on light is far reaching. He says, “*The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light*” [Romans 13:12]. He encourages us to think about the final salvation we will experience when Christ returns.

As we begin Advent this year, we are drawn into pondering the contrasting nature of our Christian belief. There is light and darkness; there is death and immortality; dread and hope; judgement and grace; first and second coming; end and beginning. This is the reality of our times. We cannot ignore or eliminate one or the other, but hold them in balance. Richard Hoefler, a Christian writer, describes Advent as a ‘season of stress’.



Advent gives us a glimpse into the future. While we see in our world, the principalities and powers still firmly holding on, we believe in the scriptural proclamation of the true and faithful words of God who says, "behold, I will make everything new".

This sense of hope in the future is what makes us special and different. As people of the 'mean time' - living in an era between the first and second comings of Christ - we see this season evoking a deep sense of hope throughout. While we take this season to prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of our saviour, our eyes are still set on the time when the consummation of our salvation is realised.

With every blessing
Soba-



In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in unity,
that our praise and worship
might echo in these walls
and also through our lives.
In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in mission,
that the hope within
might be the song we sing,
and the melody of our lives.
In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in service,
that the path we follow
might lead us from a stable
to a glimpse of eternity.

Inn Keepers and Lamplighters

At Greenbelt one year John Bell told his audience that he had once been asked by a church how they could get a fresh insight into the Advent season. He asked them do you have any inn keepers in your congregation? (The Iona Community offer a collection of Advent Songs called Inn Keepers and Lamplighters.) Might they be able to offer some insights into the plight facing Mary and Joseph at a time when hospitality was difficult to supply?

The next time I came across the theme of inn keepers in a church context was at my mother's funeral, where I puzzled over why the vicar had chosen the parable of the Good Samaritan as the New Testament reading. All was revealed in his sermon, where he explained that without the inn keeper the whole story falls apart, since the inn keeper is charged with nursing the man who fell amongst thieves back to health. When he was a young curate my parent's pub was the inn where he could engage with those who lived in his parish. The same clergyman presided at my father's funeral and was similarly able to draw a parallel with the role of the inn and fostering of community.

It was shortly after that that I visited my son in Oxford and following a very enjoyable day, we decided that a visit to the Eagle and Child is where the Inklings discussion group, who included J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis met and exchanged ideas. It was here that the early readings of the Screwtape Letters and Out of the Silent Planet were given. Again without the publican none of this could happen. So this Christmas spare a thought for the inn keeper who, at a time when he was under considerable pressure and had few options, had to improvise place for the Son of God to be born. There will be many others at the festive period facing similar challenges, spare a thought for them also.

Ed Smith



Fairtrade Church

We have recently renewed our commitment to being a Fairtrade Church - our certificate, as seen below is on the noticeboard. Being a Fairtrade church means we:

- Use Fairtrade products wherever possible (at least tea, coffee and sugar) and share this information with the church family.
- Celebrate [Fairtrade Fortnight](#) and integrate Fairtrade into the life of our place of worship through sermons and services and magazine articles as well as our social media.
- Engage with other Fairtrade campaigns and connect with community groups, such as schools and towns, where possible.



Light and Darkness

In the beginning, Lord
I was alone
Like the earth
before your Spirit moved over the waters.
I was formless and empty
and darkness filled the depths of my heart.

Then, it was as if you declared
'Let there be Light'
and out of the darkness
I began to see hope
like a shimmering ray of love
breaking through the parting clouds
at the conclusion of the night.

In the beginning Lord, I was alone
but when I saw you in the light I was no longer afraid.
You held out your hand
and though I had a choice
I had no choice
Because to refuse
was to embrace again the darkness.

In the beginning Lord, I was alone
now I am again
a part of your creation
loved, wanted, needed, family.
In the light of your presence
the brightness of your face.



I hold out my heart that others
might glimpse through it your reflection
and be drawn from the darkness that I once embraced
into the light of your sunrise
the brightness of your face.

John Birch, Celtic Advent Liturgies



Identity



Matthew is far from my favourite gospel (much too fussy!), but I absolutely love its beginning. For the first seventeen verses, Matthew chronicles the genealogy of Jesus. He starts with Abraham, takes in famous names like Isaac, Jacob, David and Solomon as well as obscure ones like Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, and ends up with Joseph, the man into whose family Jesus was born and who brought him up and formed his character. There are four extraordinary women in the list: Tamar, a widow who conceived twins with her former father-in-law whilst posing as a sex worker, Rahab the Canaanite who actually *was* a sex worker, Ruth, a courageous foreigner who was rescued by the Israelite Boaz when destitute, and Mary, the teenager who said “yes” to God’s outrageous plan of salvation and became Jesus’ mother.

It’s a brilliant opening for the story about someone very special, because it gives you the very building blocks of Jesus’ identity, even though no physical DNA heritage appears to have been involved (although frankly, I don’t think any of us understands the Immaculate Conception well enough to know exactly *how* that panned out.....!)

We are avid watchers of programs like *Who Do You Think You Are?*, which trace family histories and help people learn a bit more about themselves by discovering the characters and actions of their ancestors. Sometimes there are remarkable examples of resonance, like when a famous actor discovers that their great grandparent was a renowned Music Hall artist! In the past I have shared my pride in visiting the little church founded by my paternal great-great-grandfather Revd John Croisdale in a mining village in Northumberland to minister to the impoverished families whose menfolk worked in the dangerous environment of the local pit. However, I only knew about his heart-warming achievements because of the genealogical research done by one of my cousins; it had never occurred to me that I should actively do some digging in the past myself.

That was to change this year, when I was given membership of one of the online family history companies as a Christmas present. It came with a DNA test, and I thought it would be fun to find out if my DNA showed any links to other countries or ethnic groups. Sadly, though, the test revealed that I was the



bog-standard combination of British with a few percent Scandinavian thrown in as a reminder of the Vikings! However, I decided to take up the offer of making my result available for potential family matches identified by the Ancestry website, thinking that although it was a very long shot indeed, there was a possibility that I just might discover something about the mysterious, nameless maternal uncle I had never met. My mother had always told me, as I grew up, that she was the youngest of four sisters; she had lots of funny stories about Gwen, Betty and Kitty, although it became obvious that relationships in the family were often volatile. Then one day-and only once-she stunned me by talking about a brother, saying that he had “gone off the rails” and nobody knew where he was. She didn’t even tell me his name, and after that one occasion would never speak of him again, however much I asked and prodded! I felt annoyed that I had quite a close blood relative about whom I knew absolutely nothing. Was he wicked? Vulnerable? Had he gone off the rails because of lack of support from the members of his family, or had they abandoned him in despair because he was an embarrassment to them?

About a week after my results were posted, I received an email from someone I didn’t recognise called Oliver. It was very gentle and tentative, and it began with the words “I hope you don’t mind me contacting you, but it appears that my grandfather Archie was your mother’s brother”. I was stunned! My first contact was a relative of the very person I wanted to find. Over the next few weeks, Oli revealed the results of the research he had been doing about Archie, who was his mother’s birth father. It is a sad, almost unbelievable story of a young man, nineteen at the beginning of the war, who became a glider pilot and served bravely with an exemplary record until taking part in the disastrous attempted invasion at Arnhem, from which he seems to have emerged damaged in body and mind. Of course, PTSD was not diagnosed in those days, and Archie never seems to have received any help or treatment. Some years after the war he became involved with a Scottish woman who left her husband and five children to go to London with him, but once their daughter (my cousin Alison) was born they split up, and their baby was adopted, never to know the truth about her origins until she left home as a student and followed up her suspicions that her adoptive family were not her birth parents.

Oli and I shared all the information we had; he sent me Archie’s military records, and a few photographs which he had been clever enough to dig up. In one of them, staring back at me over the years, was the charming smile which

had obviously bowled over Alison's mother, and the brilliant pale eyes with dark rings around the pupils which were so beautiful in my mother's face and have been inherited by my daughter Kate. Finally, nearly six months after he first made contact with me, I plucked up the courage to ask Oli if he would like to meet up with me. Which is why, last Saturday morning, I was standing outside Waterloo station wearing my red coat and feeling all kinds of why-am-I-doing-this nerves, when a shy face came into view in front of me. "Elaine?" he smiled, "Come this way. Mum is waiting to meet you." And around the corner was an attractive, bubbly, smiling woman about my own age, who flung her arms around me.

For me, it has been a great pleasure to find a "missing" cousin (with whom I have a great deal in common) and second cousin, and to fill in a previously-unknown part of my family history. But for Alison, coming from an unhappy adoptive family and then resented by the half-siblings (whom she also traced) whose mother abandoned them for the love of my charming but unstable uncle, it has meant far more. She has at last connected with a father who, although damaged and struggling, passed on to her the bubbly personality and courage which are at the heart of her identity.

Jesus answered to the title "Son of David", and even though he was the Son of God he took pride in the ancestors who formed the foundation of the human side of his nature. In the past few months, I have discovered the power of that pride myself.

Elaine Steere



Prayer of Approach

Lord, in this busy season please help me to be still. I am opening my ears now to hear You, quietly preparing my heart for the wonder of Your coming at Christmas.





An anxious note to Baby Jesus

Dear Lord

I feel tired before it's even started
The cards (should I bother?)
The presents who to buy for?)
The decorations (real or artificial?)
The family.... (enough said)
The crowds, the hassle, the weather-
Wake me up when it's all over
I know I shouldn't feel this way
but, if I'm honest.
Advent-
It makes me weary just thinking about it.

Which makes me wonder,
how was it for you?
Were you weary too?
Just thinking about it?
The call, the life-long challenge, to
hear God
listen to God
follow God?
For those with ears to hear
and eyes to see,
to be God?
All begun in makeshift circumstances.
(Sorry, Lord, we were not better prepared-
some things don't change.)

A sign of things to come,
of an uphill struggle
to make your voice heard.
Uphill towards Jerusalem.
Uphill to the Mount of Olives.
Uphill to the hill of execution.
Hoping we would follow.
Hoping we would understand you.
respond to you
welcome you then,



welcome you now.

Lord were you tired before it even started?

Or was your love your inner energy,

the love you received, your support

the love you gave, a light in the darkness,

the love you give, the strength I need?

Will you help me through Advent, dear Lord
little one?

Give me the grace to greet you

without suppressed sighs of weariness.

Give me the generosity to invite you home

without thought to the inconvenience.

Give me the will to rise to your demands,

to share your love and to receive it.

It's not so much to ask, I know,

when you have faced it all-

the advent task, the Christmas hope-

two thousand times before.

Peter Thurston





Sit and Sip

We offer a friendly space for those who want to make new friends or just meet new people sharing a drink and cake. This happens on the **second Saturday of each month from 11am**; so far we have met three times and have a few regulars attending.

Recently we have been asked by the Friendship Alliance (made up of Age UK Berkshire, Involve Community Services, the Link Visiting Scheme and the Wokingham Volunteer Centre) if we would have a friendship table for people to sit at knowing that they would find a friendly face and a listening ear. I told them that all are tables are for that purpose.

The Friendship Alliance will include our 'Sip and Share' mornings in their twice monthly emails so our numbers could rise. I would love to see more church friends drop in for a coffee and if you feel you could help me with a regular commitment that would be great.

Lynn Smith



A Celtic Blessing

MAY YOU GROW STILL ENOUGH TO HEAR
THE SMALL NOISES EARTH MAKES IN
PREPARING FOR THE LONG SLEEP OF
WINTER, SO THAT YOU YOURSELF MAY
GROW CALM AND GROUNDED DEEP WITHIN.

MAY YOU GROW STILL ENOUGH TO HEAR
THE TRICKLING OF WATER SEEPING INTO
THE GROUND, SO THAT YOUR SOUL MAY
BE SOFTENED AND HEALED, AND GUIDED
IN ITS FLOW.

MAY YOU GROW STILL ENOUGH TO HEAR
THE SPLINTERING OF STARLIGHT IN THE
WINTER SKY AND THE ROAR AT EARTH'S
FIERY CORE.

MAY YOU GROW STILL ENOUGH TO HEAR
THE STIR OF A SINGLE SNOWFLAKE IN THE
AIR, SO THAT YOUR INNER SILENCE MAY
TURN INTO HUSHED EXPECTATION.

~ BROTHER DAVID STEINDL-RXST



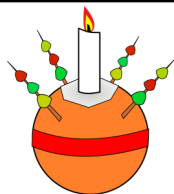
Congratulations!

To Lynne and Phil Paine on the arrival of their second grandson—and of course to Rachel and James the proud new parents of Flynn.
Special times:



Carols and Christingles

We are all familiar with the tradition of Nine Lessons and Carols, a service during which the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus is told in nine short Bible readings from Genesis, the prophetic books and the Gospels, interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols. We are also familiar with Christingles as a Christmas tradition. But we don't often think of them as telling the same story. Yet the Christingle gives us a symbolic representation of the same story.



We start with a round orange symbolising the world, created by God as Genesis tells us. We add fruits & sweets on 4 cocktail sticks symbolising God's provision, the four seasons and the four corners of the world. God's provision to meet our needs to provide us with all that is necessary for our wellbeing.

In Nine Lessons & Carols we hear the story of how God's good creation was spoiled by mankind's disobedience. And we hear the words from the prophets of the Old Testament as they foretell the coming of the Messiah who will put things right between God & the world by his death. So we put a red ribbon round the orange, to symbolise the blood of Jesus. The ribbon goes right round the orange; Jesus died for all the world.

The final part of the Christingle is the candle. There is so much symbolism in a simple candle! There is a white candle in the middle of the Advent Ring to symbolise the birth of Christ; we light it on Christmas Day. We light the Paschal or Easter Candle on Easter Sunday to symbolise the resurrection. Pentecost is symbolised by fire. We give a candle as part of the sacrament of baptism. We light candles when we pray for the sick, and when we remember the dead. The Christingle candle is both a Christmas candle for the Messiah, the Word made flesh, born on Christmas Day and an Easter Candle for the Risen Lord, and when it's lit, its glowing flame reminds us that Christ is alive, that he lives in us, present with us now.

I love candles, in the Advent Ring, on a Christingle, on the Communion table or the dinner table, on the coffee table, reflected in the windows, at home, at church. Each time I light a candle this Christmas I shall remember and give thanks that Christ was born in a stable in Bethlehem, died on a cross and rose again, and lives on through the Holy Spirit.



Doreen

Introducing our new Church Charity



After three years with Embrace the Middle East as our main church charity, we have recently chosen a new one for the next three years. Here is a bit about it to start us off, and more will be added in articles in future issues.

CBM Mission Statement

CBM is an international Christian development organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the poorest countries of the world.

Based on its Christian values and over 100 years of professional expertise, CBM addresses poverty as a cause, and a consequence, of disability, and works in partnership to create a society for all.

Building an inclusive society

CBM works in the most disadvantaged societies, irrespective of race, gender or religion. CBM seeks to:

- Reduce the prevalence of diseases which cause impairments.
- Minimise the conditions which lead to disability.
- Promote equal opportunities for economic empowerment, livelihood security, and full inclusion in all aspects of society for persons with disabilities.

A House Group



The church has operated a Monday evening House Group for some time but most of the members have now moved on and it is no longer viable. It has been suggested that a daytime group might be more popular as there is already the Bible Study group on a Tuesday evening. The group could either meet in someone's home (maybe each member of the group taking turns) or be on Zoom.

If you would be interested in joining such a group, please email stewards@woosehillchurch.org





Thursday Morning Groups

We are running 4 groups now

Sing Something Simple

A musical meander down Memory Lane



Woosehill Watercolour Group



Chat while painting!

Come and have a go!

1st Thursday Sing

2nd Thursday Knit

3rd Thursday Paint

4th Thursday Sew

WoolWAM

Wool With A Mission



Knit & Natter

Sewing and Thread Craft Group



This new sewing/thread craft and natter group.

Just bring along your latest project and

have a chat and a cuppa while you sew.

Please note that there will be no Sewing Group in December. The group returns on the fourth Thursday in January.

SUNDAY CLUB



Sunday club will run once a month, on the 3rd Sunday term time only. All children of reception age are welcome, and children will be supported by two experienced (DBS checked) Sunday club leaders. Parents are welcome to stay until their child/ children are confident to attend on their own.

We will use bible-based lessons which we will relate to experiences the children will have already had in their home and school environments. The lessons will also follow the church calendar.

The sessions will be fun and thought provoking. We will use activities appropriate to the age of the children which may include craft, drama, and discussion.



EasyFundraising reminder

EasyFundraising is a way for the Church to gain extra income from your online shopping at no cost to you, and is simple to use. It's safe to use as you still buy from the retailers' own web site with all the usual security and delivery information available. By going to the retailers' web site via EasyFundraising they will record your visit and make a small donation to the Church if you purchase something.

EasyFundraising works on any common computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. It will look a little different depending on your device and software, but the principles remain the same.

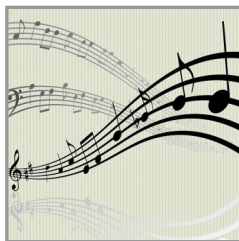
To get started either download and open the **EasyFundraising** App, or use any of the common web browsers and go to

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/woosehillchurch>





A Closing Reflection



This Advent season, as we enter consciously into the waiting between God's promise and its fulfilment once more, I pray that every joy we find in earthly music may be multiplied many times over in our spirits, as we make space and prepare our inward ears to hear the stirring of the heavenly melody.

As we join the song of the angels this Christmas, may our lives, as well as our voices, be tuned to that melody, so that we not only hear it, but also carry it into the restless world to which God is still - and always - coming.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Written by Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, as the foreword to his chosen Advent book for 2021 'Music of Eternity' by Robyn Wrigley-Carr

Woosehill Church Services and meetings

As more of us return to church, we continue to livestream our 10am service on our Woosehill Church YouTube channel, the link also advertised weekly on our Facebook page, newsletter and website woosehillchurch.org

A new venture is our monthly 'Be Still' service at 6.15pm on the first Sunday of each month. Contact Cara Smart at cara.smart@spauls.co.uk or see our website.

Also at the moment on Zoom:

Parish Bible study - currently the Advent Course on Tuesday evenings
7.15 - 8.30pm

Together in Prayer on the third Thursday of the month from 8-9pm
Contact Lyn Brown for details

Church Contacts

Rev'd Soba Sinnathamby, 23 Sheridan Way RG41 3AP,
01189894374 soba.sinnathamby@hotmail.co.uk

Rev'd Richard Lamey, The Rectory, Holt Lane 0118 3279116
richard.lamey@spauls.org.uk

St Paul's Parish Office, Reading Road, Wokingham RG41 1EH
0118 979 2122 (Parish administrator Louise Cole)
church.office@spauls.org.uk

Rev'd Catherine Bowstead, Methodist Superintendent Minister
5 Chetwode Close, Wokingham RG40 2LL 0118 9781756
minister@wokinghammethodist.org.uk



Christmas at Woosehill



Woosehill Church

Chestnut Avenue, Woosehill, RG41 3RS

This year our Christmas services will be either in-church or live streamed (on YouTube) or both. Search YouTube for Woosehill Church.



Christingle Service – Sunday 28th November at 4.00pm, at Church only.



Carol Service – Sunday 19th December at 7:30pm at Church.



The Christmas Story – Christmas Eve at 4.00pm, YouTube streamed only.

(We regret that due to the Covid situation we feel it wise not to conduct a live Crib Service this year)



Midnight Communion - 24th December at St Paul's, details on their website.



Holy Communion for Christmas Day - 10.00am at Woosehill Church.



Parish Service – 26th December 9.30am, at St Paul's and livestreamed.

Also see links on our website. www.woosehillchurch.org

For St Paul's service see their website for details. www.spauls.org.uk



Correction to the above - the Christingle service is available on YouTube

