

Woosehill Church Magazine



Sharing God's love with the community

January - February 2024



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woosehillchurch.org
and on our Facebook page
Or follow our livestreamed services on
YouTube**



Dear Church Family and all other readers,

As we enter 2024, it's a time for many of us to reflect on the past year, its joys, its sorrows, perhaps its ordinariness?

In our church, in the Methodist tradition, we mark the new year with our Covenant Service, this year held on January 28th. It is always a very special occasion when we celebrate all that God has done for us, and affirm that we give our lives and choices to God. Yes it IS daunting, but a beautiful service nevertheless.

Most people find it quite tough to say, and really mean it. But the prayer is so central to the Christian life that other Churches have also adopted it.

A slightly slimmer issue of the magazine this time, but still plenty to read. Thank you to all contributors.

Wishing you every blessing in the coming year,

Val

Next deadline: 13 March 2024
Articles and notices as usual
preferably by e-mail to:
valerie.weedon@btinternet.com

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A Message from our Minister

Seeking God's Holiness



This February is special for us, as it takes us through the end of one season and the beginning of another. Candlemas, which falls on the 2nd of February, brings us to the completion of Christmas season. Marking the presentation of baby Jesus at the Temple, this festival also has the significance of the purification of Mary the new mother, and the encounter of Simeon and Anna with the Messiah. And within two weeks, on the 14th of February, Ash Wednesday takes us through the holy season of Lent.

We enter into this season with a deep awareness of the holiness of God. Those who seek him, feel a sense of holiness being evoked in their hearts. Each time they find a space for him or a personal moment with him, they experience the life affirming presence of God. The lectionary ushers us into this season with the transfiguration of Christ. As Peter, John and James experienced it in the company of Elijah and Moses - both of whom had witnessed the glory of God personally - what shone through Jesus Christ before their eyes, was the holiness of God.

Throughout the history of humanity, as also contained in the books of the Bible, people in every age were bolstered and driven by this awareness, which saw the evolution of human societies and the great civilization of nations. People wanted salvation, both spiritual and political. They needed a direction and guidance in the face of the chaotic pattern of their lives. They longed for a source that would comfort them in times of upheaval and bring in them, a sense of purpose and fulfilment in their effort to counter that.

As God entered into humanity in the form of Christ who, in every sense of his being, experienced the same products of the chaos surrounding human life, human beings realised a creator God sharing the upheavals created by his own people, and even subjecting himself to the humiliation by their hands and finally, the cross. They began to wonder, this is what they have been seeking for all these years: a living God in their midst, offering them love and forgiveness. In this realisation, the sense of God's holiness



overwhelmingly captured their minds once again.

As the term `Lent` indicates, days are lengthening and signs of new life springing up in the new season, being liberated from the clutches of the dark and unyielding time of winter. We enter into this season, aware of God's holiness, his unconditional offer of forgiveness, his sacrificial love and his will to be one with us. We feel the need to know him intimately.

All major religions of the world emphasise the importance of fasting. It enables people to focus on their creator and gives them a sense of being nearer to him. Christ himself has exemplified in his life, the significance of fasting. The forty days experience in the wilderness in solitude brought Christ intimately closer to God. He found in the space he created for God, the much-needed source of direction and guidance, that gave him a clear perspective of his ministry in the face of the chaotic pattern of life in this world, sustaining him till the end.

We enter into Lent with a sense of seeking ourselves in relation to God. We take ourselves on an inward journey with God. We want to recapture and re-live the intimate moments we may have experienced in the light of God's holiness. As seekers we continue in this quest, in spite of all the chaos surrounding us.

May this season be full of God's blessing and peace.

Soba Sinnathamby-

Prayer for the Blessing of Candles: Almighty God, we bless your name for sending us your Son, Jesus Christ, the light of the world. As we light these candles on Candlemas, may they remind us of his light, which guides us through darkness and into your everlasting love.

Amen.



Old dog, new trick



Of all the times we fall into predicable patterns, Christmas seems to be the most hidebound. We have “traditions” and habits, which hardly change from year to year. I learned fairly early in my years of leading the Crib Service on Christmas Eve at Woosehill that not only was there a tried-and-tested formula which seemed to work pretty smoothly (or at least, as smoothly as is possible for any activity involving lots of small children dressing up and acting in front of a large group of people!), but also that people had expectations of familiarity and were comfortable with the repetition.

After a gap of several years, I was given another opportunity to lead my favourite activity of Christmastide, here at St Leonard’s. It had been a long time since the last time this church had attempted one, so when my friend Karen (then our curate) and I relaunched it in 2022, we had no idea what to expect—including if anyone would come! Situated up a narrow driveway off the A33, the church is not exactly an easy place to stroll to like dear old Woosehill. It was a great relief when excited little faces peeked around the huge wooden door, and people came to take their seats in the pews.

But here’s the thing: our happy congregation had no expectations about what they were going to experience, but I soon realised that I had too many. Most of the children walked straight past the lovely new costumes we had bought and laid out for them, refusing to even consider the idea of dressing up! We only ended up with a Mary and Joseph because members of the church press-ganged their granddaughter and son into service, and poor sweet little Mary, who was only three, kept tripping over the costume which was size 7-8. I found it a real challenge talking about the wise men when there was actually only one, who had to juggle all three gifts for the baby as he made his lonely camel-less journey down the aisle.



I have no definitive answer to why there has been such a change in the attitude of children to getting into costumes, and obviously the fact that the church setting is an unfamiliar environment to these kids may be a factor, but I have a feeling that there has been a seismic shift since the Pandemic about participation in shared activities. Most of these little ones can't remember what it was like before 2020; they have grown up into a fearful world, where for very sensible reasons we have become a lot less tactile. At school they don't "change for PE" anymore, but come already dressed in their trackie bottoms, and if they take part in a drama, the poor old parents get a list of requirements about the costume *they* are expected to provide! All this is perfectly understandable, but as I came home on Christmas Eve 2022 I mourned just a little bit for the passing of a more relaxed and joyful era.

In 2023, as darkness softly fell on the afternoon of 24th December and we laid out the costumes, I had made myself move on, and I had a Plan B. No Mary and Joseph? No problem! We would use our imaginations instead. This time I was unsurprised that so many children refused to even consider getting into the costumes, although I was a bit taken aback when one parent told me severely "He has *issues* about dressing up", as if I was deliberately setting out to traumatise her child! As I wove the story around an imaginary Mary and Joseph, I was delighted that a small girl of about five in full angel regalia joined in as the Angel Gabriel, and later we acquired a toddler shepherd (who really only wanted to get a cuddle with the toy sheep which went with the outfit) and a couple of tiny wise men.

Not being DIY-savvy enough to construct a manger, I had bought a sturdy wooden crate and filled it with fake straw, and my daughters' old, long-abandoned baby doll lay there happily, wrapped in an ancient pillowcase. As the adults sang carols and prayed for the less fortunate children of the world, I looked down and realised that the children, in costume or not, had pulled the old unused kneelers from underneath the (also unused!) front pews where they were stored and had snuggled down on them, in a little ring with baby Jesus at its centre.

They were perfectly comfortable, and seemed to feel this was entirely the right place to be on Christmas Eve, and I think they were absolutely correct about that. The mini wise men had nestled their gold and frankincense in the crate; our poor Holy Child missed out on his myrrh this year. Finally, Angel Gabriel took off her wings and tenderly laid them on top of the baby before settling down on her kneeler, which I noticed had been lovingly embroidered over half a century ago. I had a real lump in my throat looking at the tableau as we sang Silent Night. This old dog has managed to adapt to a new trick, and a new tradition may be taking shape as we learn to adapt to life in a post-COVID world.

However, I will be absolutely thrilled if, sometime in the future, our little ones feel confident enough to tell the story in costume once again.

Elaine Steere - Licensed Lay Minister



Mark 10:13-16

“People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them, and blessed them.”

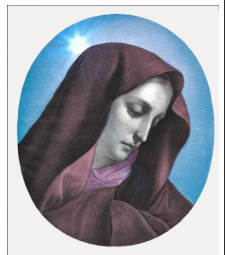


Christmas Poem

*To Mary, the invitation came, skyborne on angel's wings,
Heaven sent and pregnant with possibilities.
For, God knows, she had reasons to say 'no',
Her future, til then, so serenely assured:
A home, her good name, a husband to wed.
Everything indeed for which she thought she'd been raised.
Are such so easily cast aside?
Would love, security, reputation
Be so swiftly pried
From our determined grasp?
How other people's risks seem simpler to take,
Our own stubborn knots so much harder to break.
To us, the royal invitation also comes,
Though usually in less spectacular script,
Sans seraph, but daily clear, which way will we go?
Of course, we are free to decline,
But 'no', promising more for now, always leads to less,
Better, braver, wiser, surely simply to say...*

Mark Greene

Mission Champion at the London Institute for Contemporary
Christianity



News from WOW—past and future!

The last meeting of the year for this popular social group was in December, when we met in the church for a wreath making workshop led by Gillian Payne who worshipped here at Woosehill until she moved out of area.

It was a festive occasion with mince pies served and we did have quite a lot of mess to clear up afterwards, but the results were very satisfying.

Thanks to Gillian for leading us





WOW 2024

A group of 8 ladies from WOW met at Lynn's house on a chilly evening in January for a combined session of film/book reviews plus planning the programme for the coming year.

The recent '**One Life**' and '**Wonka**' films led to some lively discussion, and Sue F's review of the play '**Twelve Angry Men**' which she had seen as a play in Windsor led to some reminiscences about old black and white films.

Moving on to books, most of those present talked about a book they had enjoyed. These included:

The Attic Child by Lola Jaye (Kris)

A is for Arsenic by Kathryn Harkup; **Lily** by Rose Tremain (Ruth)

Mystery/Thriller novels by Stella Rimington (Lynn)

Salt Path and Landlines by Raynor Winn (Linda)

I Julian by Claire Gilbert - about Julian of Norwich. (Val)

Some discussion ensued about 'cosy mysteries' for when an escapist read is needed and The Stephanie Plum, D.S. Butler, and Dr Ruth Galloway series were mentioned alongside The Marlow Murder Club series and of course Richard Osman's novels.

Moving on to our year's planning we hope to include some of the favourites alongside some new ideas. The current provisional plan is as follows:

February - Pub meal

March - Games afternoon

April - to be confirmed

May - Evening walk finishing with drink at a pub.

June - Strawberry tea

July - Pimms and nibbles in Lyn's garden

August - An evening walk up to Walter Arms from church.

September - Daytime walk at Dinton Pastures finishing at the new café.

October - Pub Quiz

November - Pottery Painting at church

December - Wreathmaking workshop.

All ladies of the church are most welcome to join in! Talk to Lynn Smith if you wish to be on the circulation list.

Thursday Groups



A group meets at the Church every Thursday morning at 10am.

On the second Thursday this is WoolWam, a very friendly knitting, crochet and natter group. You can do your own thing or make items for local Wokingham charity 'First Days' (babies & children's clothes, blankets or toys)



WoolWam members are welcome to attend any other Thursday where the emphasis is just on getting together to chat and enjoy whichever activity you fancy. You can simply have a cuppa and chat or you can sew, draw, knit, do puzzles, build jigsaws – whatever takes your fancy. Occasionally we run special activities such as card making – keep an eye on our website woosehillchurch.org



Refreshments are provided, a contribution of £1 is requested. You can bring your children; you are responsible for them - toys are available.

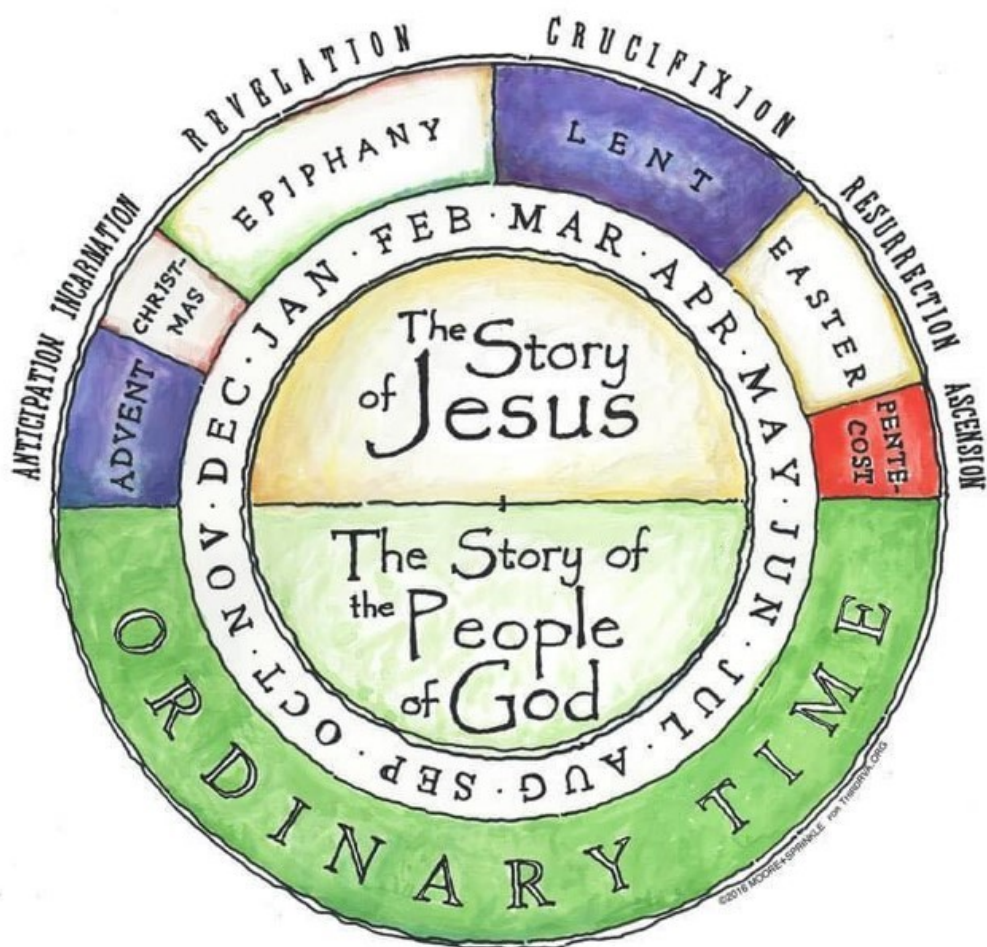


Sharing God's Love with the Community

If you would like to join us, please just come along or to get a bit more information first email treasurer.woosehillchurch@gmail.com



The Church Year



A prayer for tough times

Did you know there's a prayer called the "I don't know" prayer? It's very spiritual. You just go off somewhere quiet and hidden and you walk right up to the heart of God and you say, "I don't know."

I don't know where to go from here. I don't know what is happening. I don't know how to process this. I don't know what to do with these emotions. I don't know how to handle this situation.

It covers a lot of I don't knows.

And then with whatever dusty little sand grain of faith you have, you say, "But You know."

And you leave it there.

God most certainly hears that prayer.



Tithing Gifts

And finally --- a reminder of our current overseas charity

Driven by Christian values CBM works in the world's poorest places to prevent blindness, improve health and transform the lives of people with disabilities.

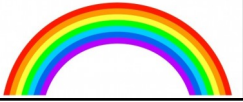
Last year, we...

- Enabled **1.8m** people to access sight-saving treatments
- Helped **8k** children and adults with disabilities to go to school
- Carried out **125k** cataract surgeries to restore sight

We were proud to have broadcaster and author Gyles Brandreth support our sight-saving Christmas Miracles appeal this year.



Gyles Brandreth and his wife have been passionately supporting our sight-saving work for over 20 years! Their mission is clear: no child should have to face a lifetime of blindness just because their family is poor.



News from Tadpoles

The new term has started and we are not quite full, but have regular enquiries through the website and through requests to join the Facebook group. We have a few very new babies joined or about to join (once born!) so have updated our information to ensure the mums/carers know that we can also cater for them alongside our activities for the toddlers and even pre-schoolers. We continue to be grateful for our great band of volunteers who help make the group the success it is.

It looks as if this term's craft will have a cold weather theme!



5, 6, 7, 8s started back on Zoom on Mondays at 5pm on the 15th January. If you know anyone who would be interested from School Years 5 to 9 please speak to Richard Lamey so he can send them an invitation.

All young people in the parish are welcome to this group.



To Make you Smile

Somewhat irreverent and not to be taken seriously!



The @QuireMemes

Christmas Concert

featuring

- 1. The Absolute Banger*
- 2. The Traditional Obligation*
- 3. This Is Modern And Everyone Will Hate It*
- 4. Oh God, Not This One Again*
- 5. A Half-Decent New Piece Composed By Someone Who Knows The Choir*
- 6. Please Kill Me Now So I Don't Have To Sing This*
- 7. Something With Angels In The Title*
- 8. One That Classic FM Featured This Year*
- 9. John Rutter*
- 10. A Willcocks Descant*
- 11. Hark the Herald*



Book Reviews**City of God: Faith in the Streets, by Sara Miles**

I really recommend 'City of God' as a pre-lent reading book. Sara Miles writes the book centring on one particular Ash Wednesday, her first time doing 'Ashes to go'. But the book winds back and forth with stories, memories, experiences of other Ash Wednesdays, of Lent and resurrection, and most of all, community. It is gentle yet powerful, streaked with the grace of God in the most ordinary of people and places, as she reflects on the past 2 decades of city life through a lens of faith. It's a book that can be read at any time, but because of the Ash Wednesday focus, it would be particularly helpful to read in advance, as a way of starting Lent having been reminded of what a gift Ash Wednesday is.

"Repentance means turning toward other human beings, our own flesh and blood, whenever they're oppressed, hungry, or imprisoned; it means acting with compassion instead of indifference."

Rev'd Cara Smart

I, Julian: A fictional Autobiography about Julian of Norwich
By Claire Gilbert

We bought this book at the Greenbelt Festival having missed hearing the author's session due to a scheduling clash. It is beautifully written and although fictionalised, provides a real insight into the life of this woman who lived in the 14th century and gave her life to God. On the sleeve, it is described as 'tender, luminous, meditative and powerful' and I would agree with all of that.

Happy to lend, but definitely want it back!

Val

(Ed: Always happy to receive your book reviews for the magazine.)



An appeal for musicians and singers!

Musicians from St Paul's Church, Chris Merchant and Tom Williams, have been joining the Woosehill congregation in worship once a month for the past two years.

“Sharing music with the congregation has been a privilege and a pleasure, and we appreciate how welcoming the congregation has been,” said Chris. Renewing the arrangement for the coming year, Chris and Tom invite musicians in the congregation to participate, at any level of commitment, in music making for Sunday communion services in 2024.

The first step will be an opportunity to meet informally on Monday 29th January at 8pm to make music together and to explore the musical possibilities in a relaxed context.

Instrumentalists and singers are invited to let Chris (ceaj.merchant@gmail.com) know of their interest.



Woosehill Meetings

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

Parish Bible study on Tuesday evenings 7.15 - 8.30pm via Zoom

Together in Prayer on the *Third* Thursday of the month from 8-9pm via Zoom. Contact Lyn Brown for details

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, come among us and, by your grace, work the miracle of renewal once more in our hearts. Where the sparkle has gone out of life, where joy is lacking, where hope seems exhausted or where resources seem to have run dry, bring the wine of new life, welling up within us – resurgent faith and confidence in your ability to see us through to new beginnings. In your name we ask it
Amen





Our Current Pattern of Services at Woosehill Church

1st Sunday - Holy Communion

2nd Sunday - Morning Worship

3rd Sunday Holy Communion

4th Sunday - Morning Worship

5th Sunday - Morning Worship / Café Church

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



Woosehill Church