

Woosehill Church Magazine



Sharing God's love with the community

November—December 2023



**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,

This is a more eclectic issue than I planned, because having decided on a festive issue I received a number of powerful, more serious pieces so that putting them together has been a bit of a challenge, but I hope you will agree they are all well worth reading. Perhaps light and darkness reflects the time of year and our world at present.

As we enter Advent and look forward to the Christmas season, let us be thankful for our homes, our friends and our church community.

It is hard at this time not to think of the troubled areas of the world and so many prayers are needed for peace and comfort for those who suffer, especially the children.

In the meantime prepare to be moved, to be amused and to reflect as you read the latest issue of the Woosehill Magazine!

With every blessing,
Val

Next deadline: 15 January 2024
Articles and notices as usual
preferably by e-mail to:
valerie.weedon@btinternet.com

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God's love for us



The darker and colder time of the year is leading us into the season of light and warmth. The holy season of Advent is heralding the arrival of the light of the world. Christmas is just around the corner, bringing to us a deep sense of the warmth of God's love as seen in the birth of the Christ child.

As the season of hope and joy approaches, we begin to feel a sense of familiarity around us. Soon, there will be carols, Christmas trees, nativity plays and all the unmissable aspects of this time, giving us the traditional feel of the season. Cards, presents, greetings and family gatherings will be heightening the mood of festivities.

As the hustle and bustle increase, we see a question pervading our thoughts, making the whole thing a bit strange. And the question is:

what is this all about?

Christmas is all about God's love being shown to the world in the most simple and humble form. The birth of Christ takes place in the most unimaginable circumstances: on a cold winter night, away from home and everything familiar and comfortable, pursued by the ruler with an intention to kill. But baby Jesus, God's own son was born in a stable, surrounded by animals, wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger.

With the birth comes a message of hope for the world. As seen in the nativity story, from the moment the birth of Christ was foretold by the angel, Mary, Joseph and the shepherds were comforted with the words: ***do not be afraid!*** Their initial shock and bewilderment at this incredible news and the very presence of God's angel near them, soon became something to look forward to.

We too go through times of hopelessness and uncertainty. Our personal, social and political situations take us through the darkness of experiences at times. It is into these circumstances, Christmas brings home the greatest gift of all: Christ Jesus - a sign of God's love for all of us. With that comes the message of hope: ***do not be afraid! I am with you and for you!***

May this Christmas be a time full of peace and great blessings for all of us!

Warm greetings to you all!

Soba Sinnathamby-



Wassailing

The wassailing, or blessing of the fruit trees, involves drinking and singing to the health of the trees in the hope that they will provide a bountiful harvest in the autumn. This ancient custom is still practised across the country today...



Anglo-Saxon tradition dictated that at the beginning of each year, the lord of the manor would greet the assembled multitude with the toast *waes hael*, meaning “be well” or “be in good health”, to which his followers would reply *drink hael*, or “drink well”, and so the New Year celebrations would start with a glass or two, or perhaps even a drop more! It is likely that such celebrations were being enjoyed many years before Christianity began to spread throughout Britain from around 600 onwards.

Depending upon the area of the country where you lived, the wassail drink itself would generally consist of a warmed ale, wine or cider, blended with spices, honey and perhaps an egg or two, all served in one huge bowl and passed from one person to the next with the traditional “wassail” greeting.

The Wassailing celebrations generally take place on the Twelfth Night, 5th January, however the more traditional still insist in celebrating it on ‘Old Twelvey’, or the 17th January, the correct date; that is before the introduction of the Gregorian calendar messed things up in 1752.

There are two distinct variations of wassailing. One involves groups of merry-makers going from one house to another, wassail bowl in hand, singing traditional songs and generally spreading fun and good wishes. The other form of wassailing is generally practiced in the countryside, particularly in fruit growing regions, where it is the trees that are blessed.

***“Love and joy come to you,
and to you your wassail to;
and God bless you and send you
a happy New Year.”***

(Remember the days when Gavin and Debbie hosted Wassail at their home?)

Have you done the paperwork?



Behind the bar at the Goat and Locust Inn, Bethlehem, the landlord's wife is most distinctly Not Happy.

"Reuben, I've told you time and again, when people come asking for rooms you *need to refer to the booking scroll!* Then you can see, at a glance, whether we're fully booked or not. Look," (unrolling a huge sheet of papyrus), "These little cells get filled up when the rooms have been reserved. You just have to spread it out and check it carefully; that's why it is called a Spreadsheet! It is quite clear that tonight, 24th December, **EVERY SINGLE ONE** of our rooms is occupied. So why, *my darling*, have you just told me that you have accepted some more guests?!"

Wriggling a little under her intense gaze, Reuben stammers apologetically, "They won't be any trouble at all, Miriam my love; in fact, you won't even see them. I just felt so sorry for them, having travelled all the way from Nazareth in this weather, and her being heavily pregnant, too. They both looked so tired! So, I told them" (proudly) "that we didn't have any rooms free, but they were welcome to sleep in our stable overnight. I would have entered it into the Spreadsheet, but I couldn't find a cell to write it in." He trembles as he sees the look of wrath on her face. "What? Surely they are not going to be any bother down in the stable?"

"**BOTHER? BOTHER????!!** After all the trouble I had arranging that inspection for the Fire Safety Certificate, you have invited a couple with a lantern to spend the night in an outbuilding full of combustible hay and restless animals? And what if she gives birth down there, Reuben? Will my farm-fresh artisan ox meat still sell at top prices when customers find out that our usually hygienic premises have been turned into a labour ward?" Overcome with emotion, Miriam storms out into the darkness, slamming the door behind her, leaving Reuben a broken man.

Meanwhile, in the shimmering glory of the Sapphire Throne Room of Heaven, the Archangel Gabriel is patiently debating (not arguing, you realise; angels never argue) with Administrative Angel Raphael.



"If you had checked on ChurchSuite, Raphael, you would have immediately noticed that I am unavailable for a proclamation mission this evening, since I am scheduled to lead Celestial Choir practice with the fledglings at 7. I do have a slot free tomorrow at 8, if you would like to pop it in for then."

"Look, Gabe, I'm really sorry." Raphael's wing-feathers are quivering with embarrassment. "This one comes right from the top; the Boss says that it absolutely *has* to be tonight. I know you hate people swapping the rota at the last minute, but honestly, Michael and I can lead choir practice tonight, just this once."

"Michael? For goodness' sake! I have the greatest respect for him as a warrior and messenger, but the angel's tone deaf!"

"Let's face it, Gabe," sighs Raphael, "So are most of the fledglings...."

Meanwhile, on a chilly hill just outside Bethlehem, Union Representative Abel is once again explaining to his fellow shepherds how the timesheet system works.

"Everything's getting outsourced these days, boys," he says patiently, "And the HR department from Jericho have sent out all these little skins for us to punch each time we work a shift." He hands a small piece of vellum to Samuel, the youngest of the team. "There you go, Sam. Just take a stick and make a little hole in that corner, then when it goes back to Deborah in the office, she will be able to see that you worked on 24th December. That's right! Well, it's a shame you've managed to get sheep poo on the vellum, I'm not sure how Deborah's going to feel about *that*, but at least you've marked it in the right place."

Right at that moment, the skies split open, and a blinding light floods the field. The shepherds stare in utter amazement as Gabriel with his huge, shining wings hovers above them and announces, in a voice that sounds like thunder, "Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." As he continues with his astounding message about the birth of a Saviour, a chorus of smaller and slightly fluffy angels appear behind him, breaking into enthusiastic if rather out of tune songs of praise. By the time the angels have fluttered back through the clouds and disappeared, the excited shepherds are preparing to hike down to Bethlehem and find out more about this miraculous event.

“Er....Abel....” Young Samuel tugs at the Union Rep’s tunic. “How am I going to mark this off on my timesheet?”

“To be honest, kid, I think you should just put it back in your pocket and forget about it,” says Abel, heavily. “I’m not sure Deborah would have a clue how to sort this one out.”

In the dimly-lit stable, Mary smiles at her fiancé over the downy head of her precious newborn. “What a night!” she says wearily. “I didn’t get to follow my Birth Plan after all. It has all been complete chaos.”

“Not at all,” says Joseph, as he sits down and encircles her in his warm, comforting arm.

“God was totally in control the whole time.”



Elaine Steere—Licensed Lay Minister



News from WOW—past and future!

A small group of ladies from WOW spent a very relaxing afternoon doing some pottery painting at the end of September. We were all quite pleased with our results and would recommend the activity for relaxation and fun.

**Sue
Falquero**



The October meeting was a Quiz Night at the Wheelwrights Arms. The team came 3rd out of 11 teams.



December WOW

2pm on 10th December at the church

Come and make a wreath with Gillian, bring a copper ring if you already have one, but we have spares if you need one. Gillian will bring the moss.

Please bring greenery, string or wire and decorations—pine cones, bows, some bling—whatever you want!

Gillian needs numbers to know how much moss to get so please let me know by 3rd December if you are coming. Everyone welcome. There will be a small charge for moss and anything else provided.

Lynne

lynnepaine@yahoo.co.uk



January WOW

The WOW group of church ladies continues to thrive with activities suggested and organised by its members.

As our dates seem to have slipped rather during the Autumn, we have decided to combine the book/film review evening with our yearly planning in January.

This will take place at Lynn's house on 11th of January. Lynn will circulate details nearer the time. Do come along with your ideas for next year's activities!

The poster overleaf is for a concert for the band Phil Paine played with and they are doing a clarinet piece in his honour and the money raised in the raffle is going to Brain Tumour research.



WOKINGHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Sunday 3rd December at 7pm

*Join us for a fabulous evening of popular and festive music
performed by BWCB's Second Wind band*



SECOND WIND IN CONCERT

Kevin Ransom Conductor



Raffle in aid of

**THE
BRAIN
TUMOUR
CHARITY**

Interval refreshments

Wokingham Baptist Church, Milton Road, Wokingham RG40 1DE

Tickets: £12, 16 and under free when accompanied by an adult

Advance booking: secondwindbwcb@outlook.com

Also on the door, subject to availability



One Set of Footprints

There has been a lot of talk in church about our pastoral system, what we need going forward. Personally, I am not sure that there is a single system to meet everyone's requirements but I would like to share how I have felt and indeed still feel.

I have titled the piece "One Set of Footprints" because I am reminded of the poem called Footprints in the Sand when I think of my situation. Phil had a step change in his abilities the weekend he was diagnosed and from there on he faced quite a swift and steep decline. From the start I was not able to leave him on his own and quite quickly he wasn't able to cope with trips to the shops etc. The Lord carried me from that first diagnosis and is still carrying me as I come to terms with a future without Phil, my other half in every sense, my soulmate. There is only one set of Footprints currently, our Lord's. How do I know the Lord is carrying me, how does it work? Well, we are the Lord's hands and feet on earth and you the church members along with my wonderful family and other friends have been just that. You did my shopping, collected Phil's prescriptions, lent us a wheelchair, cooked us meals, allowed me to get out and gave us so much support. And now my diary is full and you are always checking up on me. I go out for tea & cake, go on walks, you come with me to events. People arrive at my door with flowers.

So, for me the wonderful people who make up Woosehill Church are God's hands and feet on Woosehill. THANK YOU.

Lynne



Quiet Day at St Mary's Winnersh

I couldn't attend the recent quiet day organised by Mary Cassidy at St Paul's which was held at St Mary's Church, Winnersh. However I did go to the previous one, and found it very special and worthwhile. I spent a lot of time sitting in the main Sanctuary enjoying the beautiful sculpture of Jesus which hangs on the altar wall. It is predominately blue in colour, seeming to glow as the light from a nearby window changes as the day goes on. Here is a piece of prose I wrote about my thoughts that day.

Lyn Brown

Your Hand

I have spent today sitting quietly in a Church
Reading, praying, thinking
And much of the time looking up at you,
High on a brick wall behind the Altar
Beautiful, resplendent, a blue halo for a crown
What peace you convey
But I couldn't work out what your right hand was doing
The morning light must have been wrong, the sculptors work unclear
Until, that is, later I bent my head to pray again
And then I looked up at you, all shining in the afternoon sun.....
Your right hand is held out in a blessing for me
What symbolism and hope
Thank you my Lord and Father.





Tithing Gifts

Embrace the Middle East

In our series looking at the gifts we make to charities in this country and overseas, it is particularly poignant that in this issue, at a time when horrific events are taking place in the Holy Land, we look at Embrace which was our nominated overseas charity a few years ago and one to which we still donate.

OUR VISION

As a Christian development charity, we partner with Christians in the Middle East as they work to transform lives and restore the dignity of the most excluded and marginalised communities. Where there is a need – for refuge, a home, for health care, for education, for justice and human rights – we, with our partners, respond. Our goal is to contribute to a culture of human flourishing in a troubled region.

Ours is a vision of love in action. It is rooted in, and inspired by, Christ's invitation to care for those most in need.

OUR PARTNERS

We currently have 50 courageous, inspired, creative and skilled partners in the region, providing education, healthcare and community support. All are working to transform the lives of those most forgotten and on the margins; all are inspired by the Gospel. We feel deeply privileged to work in partnership with Christians in the Middle East and honoured to be able to bring their witness closer to people in this country.

You can contribute individually by buying from the Christmas catalogue, by donating to their current appeal and by praying for them guided by the diary published online and in paper form.

embraceme.org

Dear Friends

As the situation in Gaza and the West Bank continues to deteriorate, many of us are struggling with feelings of helplessness. But working together we can make - and are making - a difference.



News from Tadpoles

Our group for under fives and their carers continues to flourish and we have welcomed some new little ones this term, needing to adjust our craft and storytelling accordingly. The group continues to have a gentle Christian approach with an emphasis too on pastoral care of its members. This term we have marked Baby Loss Awareness week and All Souls, reflecting these at our Prayer Circle time and as always the opportunity to put more confidential prayers in our Prayer Teapot.



For all Souls, prayers were hung on our Rosemary 'tree of remembrance'.

Val was amazed and touched on her birthday to be presented with a wonderful cake made by one of our Tadpoles mummies.



What a blessing to us all this group is.

A Prayer

Lord, thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older and will some day be old.

Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.

Release me from the craving to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest Lord, that I want a few friends left at the end.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.

Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of other's pains, but help me to endure them with patience.

I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint – some of them are so hard to live with – but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the Devil.

Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people.

And, give me, O Lord, the grace to tell them so.

Amen



All Souls 2023

Cara's very moving sermon from the All Souls service at St Paul's

I miss you

I miss you. 3 small words which we utter so often in the face of bereavement. I miss you, I miss him, I miss her, I miss them, I miss you. In the first days and weeks of grief, we say to people, 'I will miss them', the grief not quite having become real yet, all the events that we thought we'd experience together are contained in that word 'will', I will miss you, because you are now missing from my life.

But there is another unspoken meaning behind the words I miss you. When someone we love dies, it can feel like a part of us dies with them, we can miss ourselves too. No matter how much we might know intellectually that the love we shared will remain forever... emotionally and physically, we feel this loss. Death changes who we are, it sometimes even changes our status - from spouse to widow, from child to orphan, and there is no getting around that, no matter how much we may wish things to be different. So when we say, 'I miss you', we are also saying, I miss being your wife, your husband, your child, your friend, your grandchild, your parent. I miss the way I loved you, and the way you chose to love me back. I miss the way I laughed with you, I miss being known by you, I miss the me I was when you were alive. When I say I miss you, I mean it, I miss everything that you were in life, but I also miss myself. I miss being your wife, your husband, your child, your friend, your grandchild, your parent. I miss you, and I miss me too.

Grief is destabilising, even if the death is expected, even though we believe that Christ has conquered death and we believe in the resurrection and life eternal. Love never dies, but it does change, and we change too. Part of the tenderness and power of tonight's service comes from hearing your loved one's name spoken out loud again, in a church full of people, all who have come together this night to remember, to acknowledge who is missing from our life. In a moment, you will hear the name of your loved ones in this holy space, and you will hear the pause and silence between the names too. In that pause, we hold not just their names, but also those words,

I miss you, I miss myself

In that pause we remember that we aren't promised a life free from pain, from grief, from sorrow, from tragedy, from mourning. But what we are promised is a God who loves us through the pain and grief, who has the name of each one of us and of those who have died inscribed on the palm of his hand. We remember that even as we say, 'I miss you', God replies, I know, and I will be there for you as you miss them and as you miss who you once were, and I will be there as you find yourself once more. God who says to us, I love you, and as you miss those who have died, know that love remains even after death, because love is stronger than death.

Know that love keeps you united to all those you miss and long to see once more. Know that as you say, 'I miss you', love keeps us hoping, keeps us together, keeps us healing as we live. Love flickers in the candles surrounding us tonight, that will flicker in the candle you are shortly to light for your loved one, each light shining brightly, a flame that says
'I miss you, and I love you, now and always.'

Amen.

Rev'd Cara Smart



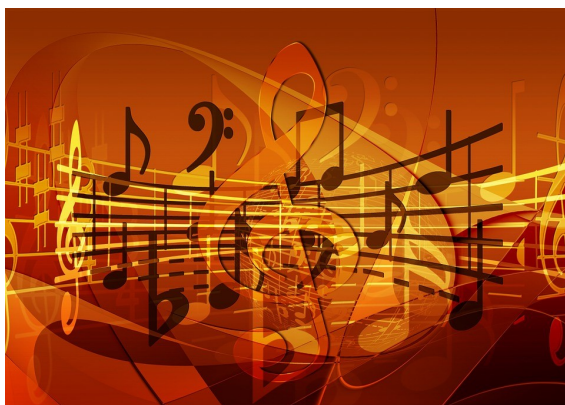


An appeal for musicians and singers!

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 a Monday evening in January to make music together, just 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 before the New Year, so that a date that suits all can be arranged.



CHRISTINGLE



Our Christingle service this year is at the 10am service on December 3rd - please spread the word!

BUSY SATURDAY

Your help is needed on 2nd December. We are hoping to not only have a Christingle assembly line but also run the normal monthly working party who will be putting up the tree.

So, if you fancy a bit of Christmas tree decorating, Christingle assembling or normal monthly jobs please come and join us at 10:30am.

We can take a vote on the need for Christmas music to get us in the mood.

Thank you,
Lynne

Donations of sweets or raisins for the Christingles welcome.



Christmas Post Box



When posting your cards, please don't forget to make your "Donation" to children's charities.

Last Posting Date is 17th December at 10am

Cards will be available to collect after coffee.

Christmas funnies for kids—young and old!



What do you call a snowman with a six-pack? *An abdominal snowman.*

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire? *Frostbite.*

What do snowmen wear on their heads? *Ice caps.*

What happened when the snowgirl broke up with the snowboy? *She gave him the cold shoulder.*

How does a snowman lose weight? *He waits for the weather to get warmer.*

What do you call a snowman who holidays in the tropics? *A puddle.*

Why was the snowman looking through the carrots? *He was picking his nose.*

What do snowmen eat for breakfast? *Without frosted flakes!*

What do you call a snowman with a bad temper? *A meltdown.*



Our Current Pattern of Services at Woosely 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 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



St Paul's Church, Wokingham (Reading Road RG41 1EH)

Sunday 17th December 6.15pm Nine Lessons & Carols

Wednesday 20th December 10am Crib Service for younger children

Sunday 24th December 3pm & 5pm Christingle Service

11pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day 8am BCP Communion

9.30am Christmas Day Eucharist

St Nicholas Church (Emmbrook Village Hall)

Sunday 24th December 9pm First Mass of Christmas

Woosehill Church

(Chestnut Ave, behind Hawthorns School)

Sunday 17th December 7.30pm Carol Service

Sunday 24th December 4pm Crib Service

Christmas Day 10am Morning Worship

Contact us: 0118 979 2122 / church.office@spauls.co.uk / www.spauls.co.uk





Christmas Services

**Happy Christmas
From
Woosehill Church**

Please join us at the following services

Carol Service - 18th December at 7:30pm

Crib Service - 24th December at 4pm

Christmas Day Family Service at 10am



**“May peace and plenty be the first
To lift the latch at your door
And happiness be guided to your home
By the candle of Christmas.”**