

November – December 2025

Woosehill Church Magazine



Sharing God's love with the
community

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Woosehill Church Magazine

**Dear Church family and all
other readers,**

We are settling into a new phase of church life after a period of uncertainty and vacancy, and I hope you will agree that there is a renewed spirit of optimism within Woosehill Church these days.

It feels as if we have been rewarded for our waiting, just as after the waiting of the Advent season we are rewarded with the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the last issue of the magazine for 2025 and contains news of past church events and things to look forward to over the Advent and Christmas season, praying that we can share the good news within our church family and the wider Woosehill community.

With every blessing,

Val



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A Message from our Minister



I'm about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through this excellent book, 'Don't Forget We're Here Forever' by Lamorna Ash. The plan was to finish the book before writing this, but best laid plans and all that! It's excellent and I would recommend it to you.

The premise is this; Lamorna is 28, Gen Z, and when two of her university friends started looking at ordination, she started looking into Christianity. And she did so in depth – spending a year visiting various different churches of different denominations, doing a Christianity Explored course, retreating on Iona, going to Quaker meetings, Orthodox services, reading the Bible in-depth, meeting and interviewing Christians at every stage and traditions – she looked at it all. Her only prior experience of Christianity was hymns from her C of E school, and she jokingly wonders at the start if it's possible to become a Christian in a year. Spoiler alert, the answer is yes!

Lamorna questions everything; coming from a journalistic background, she doesn't take anything at face value, she reflects, wrestles, (and in fact Jacob wrestling with the angel is a key passage for her throughout), she has difficult yet honest conversations with people who are newly Christian, lifelong worshippers, and those who have left the church but not their faith. She reframes things that I hadn't noticed, or worse, had stopped noticing, such is the danger when you are immersed in the life of the Church. Mostly, she sees people of her generation yearning for meaning, for answers, for spirituality, for God.

It's a great read, but more than that it made me reflect hard on what it must be like to start coming to church for the very first time. The C of E has a week every year called 'Back to church Sunday' which does what it says on the tin and encourages us to encourage people to come (back) to church. It's a good idea, but increasingly, it's not so much back to church as coming to church for the very first time. If you've been to church for a long time then whilst every church does things slightly differently, you know that the general format and expectation is fairly similar. You could go to a different church one week and find yourself surrounded by the familiar prayers and hymns and readings. But if you've never gone to a service before then I imagine it could be very daunting, even in the friendliest of churches.

Ultimately, we come to church on a Sunday to encounter God, to worship God. We hear the words and stories of Jesus Christ and find in him hope, challenge, love, example. We experience the companionship of the Holy Spirit and of one another. We feel at home because we draw nearer to the kingdom of God when we join our worship with that of all the angels and archangels and saints that are in heaven. I would love as many people as possible to encounter God through our worship, I'm sure that is your hope too.

So what are the things that we could do at Woosehill to help lessen people's uncertainty of exploring church and God? Perhaps we have a service start time and say how long, roughly, our service lasts for? Would it help to have a service sheet with just headings so we can see the shape and outline of the service, and find our place within that? What about asking someone to church and then coming with them for their first few times? Pictures of how the church is laid out on a Sunday?

An explanation leaflet as to what we are doing and saying and why? And if you're reading this and are questioning whether or not church is the right thing for you, if you're wondering about God and faith and if there's something more, please take this as your sign to get in touch or come along. God is for everyone.

At the end of her journey and exploration into Christianity (and yes, I have skipped to the end for this quote!) Lamorna writes this:

"I believe that the God of the religion which is my heritage might have come down to earth as a man 2000 years ago to walk alongside us and help us with our terrible pain because I can't think of a more beautiful story for how a god might behave."

How beautiful indeed. We say the words of the creed, our statement of belief, each Sunday, but I could well imagine us saying this too – God came down to earth to walk alongside us and to help us with our terrible pain.

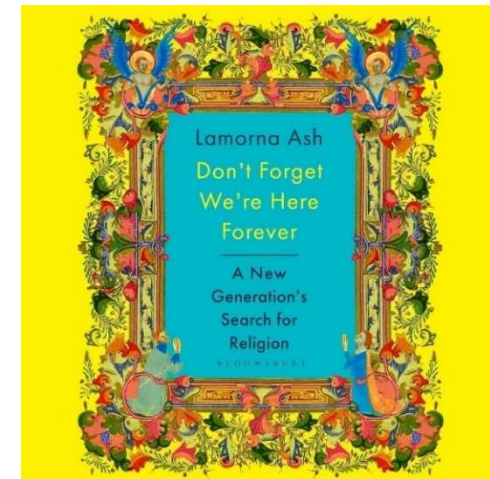
It's a very timely quote as we prepare again for Advent and Christmas, we ready our hearts once more to receive the wonderful and real truth of the incarnation. Christmas is God setting the scene, coming down to earth to walk alongside us and to help us with our terrible pain. Because Christmas is not about God in Jesus being born into a tidy world, or an easy world, or an ordered world or a healthy world. This is not misguided trust, or blind hope, or meaningless love. Christmas is all about God in Jesus being born into a fragile and fractured world, a broken and breaking world, into a weary world which cannot save itself or heal itself. Christmas is about God in Jesus being born into a world desperately crying out for love. Christmas is God setting the scene, coming

down to earth to walk alongside us and to help us with our terrible pain

If you are thinking or wondering about coming to church for the first time this Christmas, we truly cannot wait to welcome you. If you know someone who is searching for meaning, invite them. If you know someone who is wondering about coming back to church, encourage them. If this is your 8th, 17th, 29th, 82nd Christmas, then how wonderful! And to all of you, may you know the sheer beauty of God with you this Advent and Christmas, and may you experience the love and peace of Jesus, now and always.

With prayers,

Rev'd Cara



A Message from our Methodist Minister

Florence Nightingale “felt towards [God] as she might have felt towards a glorified sanitary engineer; and in some of her speculations she seems hardly to distinguish between the Deity and the Drains.” So wrote Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians* in 1918.



We are familiar with Florence Nightingale’s concern for sanitation and hygiene, and the continuing impact on nursing and healthcare that she had during and after her lifetime. Even so, I doubt that many of us would compare God to a drainage expert. Our drains, after all, are generally both out of sight and out of mind, and we are happy to keep it that way.

Until, that is, something goes wrong. As I write, a van bearing the words “emergency drainage clearance” and “clearance – CCTV surveys – repairs” is parked outside the manse for the third day. Although the blockage cannot be seen, its effect is clear enough. So far it is resisting all attempts to remove or break it, so the work continues.

As so often, we have to deal with what is unseen to rectify its visible consequences. Whether the subject is our drainage or our health, the outward symptom often points to a prior issue, which needs to be addressed. This is at least as true of our spiritual health as it is of our physical and mental well-being. There is an unseen world of our day-by-day prayer life, and the nurture we give to our relationship with God through, among other things, our reading of scripture. Jesus warned his disciples that what defiles a person comes from within (Mark 7:21-23).

Unfortunately, sometimes it takes a sink that does not drain – or whatever the spiritual equivalent is – for us to recognize that there is a problem. Whether through lack of maintenance, or because of

something which we could not anticipate, we are forced to acknowledge our reliance on those things which are not clearly visible and turn back to the Great Sanitary Engineer.

Rev’d Wes Hampton

Circling Prayer

Be blessed, Lord
as you bless to me

this air, this light, this earth, this sea -
I stand here in your family!

Encircle me, O Three in One,
in shining stars and rising sun;

within, beneath, around, above
please bind me in your boundless love.

Amen.

Brian Draper

*"Circling prayer," or
caim (pronounced "kyme"), is a traditional practice rooted in Celtic
Christian spirituality for seeking God's protection and presence. It involves
drawing a physical or imaginary circle around oneself or a loved one as a
symbolic boundary of divine safety.*

Elaines' Patch



We have been so grateful to Elaine for her entertaining and thoughtful contributions to our magazine in recent years, as well as leading our Café Church services – after all it was Elaine who introduced us to this informal and popular form of worship.

With Cara in place as our own Woosehill minister, Elaine thinks it is time to step back from contributing to every issue of the magazine. The good news is that she will continue to offer us an article a couple of times a year and will join Cara in our Café Church.

We thank Elaine most sincerely for keeping our spirits up in recent years and hope we won't lose touch with her – she continues after all to be an important part of Woosehill Church and is I am sure a blessing to the churches in her new benefice.

Elaine says:

'I can't thank you enough for giving me the privilege of writing for my friends for the past couple of years.'

... and we thank YOU Elaine.

Val

News from WOW

Our group of Women at Woosehill continues to go from strength to strength and is valued as a social connection for the ladies of the church with a varied programme of approximately monthly activities. In September Sue Peck hosted a Scrabble afternoon and in October Kelly hosted a Pudding and Pie (and Cake) evening when we took along lots of tasty treats and ate far too many of them!



Forthcoming WOW events

November's WOW event is a Pottery Painting afternoon on **30 November** at the church with places already booked through Lynn, the organiser. Watch out for pictures of the finished creations in the next issue!

December's meeting will be held on **Friday 19th December** at 10am at the Church, hosted by Lynne Paine and Linda Hoskins. We will be making a Christmas Table decoration.

Linda & I will be sending out details of what you need to bring by email via Lynn Smith nearer the time. If you would like to attend and don't get Lynn's email please let one of us know.

Lynne



Congratulations to Lynne and family!

For those of you who remember my daughter Emma, I thought you might like to see a photo of her third son, my 5th grandchild who arrived on 31st October, his Grandad's birthday.

This is Elliott Philip, who weighed in at 7lb 15oz after a very short labour at home. He literally nearly arrived before the midwife!





News from Tadpoles

Tadpoles is thriving and we are so delighted to have the support of Cara in our sessions. We continue to provide pastoral support to our families alongside the usual fun, craft, songs, and prayer. We are well-staffed by our regular band of volunteers.

This term we have had the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den:



We are going to have our very own Christingle at the beginning of December and hope to invite Tadpoles family members to join us in our short service led by Cara.

Val on behalf of the Tadpoles team

Tithing and Giving

Each year the church gives away to charities a minimum of 10% of its donated receipts. This is currently around £3,100. Who it goes to is agreed by the Tithing committee, who bring their recommendations to Church Council for approval. Because we are committed to giving to certain charities a set amount each year, we actually do not really have much left to decide who to give it too. Some of the amounts agreed with local charities were agreed when our giving receipts were much higher. We are currently committed to

Soulscape - £1,500

Yeldall Manor - £500

Wokingham Foodbank - £300

Link Visiting - £250

We also give £500 each year to the churches chosen charity which is currently Embrace the Middle East. The charity we support is reviewed roughly every 3 years. This year we also agreed to give £50 to each parent churches mission fund and £100 to All We Can which is a Methodist charity similar to Christian Aid. The latter we support by holding a joint coffee morning each year with St Pauls & St Nicks. We also support both The Children's Society and Action for Children by equal splitting the receipts from the Postbox and the Christmas services between them.

If at any time you would like to change to regular giving if you don't already do so then please speak to me and I will supply you with the necessary information. If you have never signed a Gift Aid form then myself or Ed can supply these. Your giving is greatly appreciated.

Lynne



- A teacher asked her children, as they were on the way to the village Christmas Carol Service ‘And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?’
One bright little girl replied, ‘Because so many people are sleeping’

- A mother took her young daughter to visit Father Christmas in his grotto at the garden centre. He greeted the youngster merrily and asked, ‘And what would you like for Christmas?’
The little girl stared at him, open-mouthed with horror.
Then she gasped, ‘Didn’t you get my email?!!!’

- A Sunday School teacher asked her class, ‘What was Jesus’ mother’s name?’
One child answered , ‘Mary’
The teacher then asked, ‘Who knows what Jesus’ father’s name was?’
Another child ventured, ‘Verge?’
Confused, the teacher asked, ‘Where did you get that?’
He replied hesitantly: ‘Well you know they are always talking about Verge n’ Mary.’

Fr Sam writes:



I'm still learning about Wokingham, and one thing I didn't quite expect was the strength of the civic life! When I went to the Remembrance procession from the Town Hall and to the civic service at All Saints, I was very impressed by the turn-out from cadets, scouts, masons, mayors, councillors, churches, and more. It says a lot about this town and its culture: *lest we forget* indeed.

I have also had a very school-focused week, spending time at the Holt (for their Remembrance service), St Crispin's (for a Soulscape meeting), St Paul's (for a governor day), and St Cecilia's (looking at their Christian identity). I love being in schools, and it is great to get to know them and their priorities and culture. This town is very lucky to have very good schools and very committed teachers. I'm looking forward to spending much more time with them over the coming years.

Autumn Bazaar

The Autumn Bazaar was a great day, with many people through the doors and fun, food, games, and produce galore.

It was also a great success financially. The stalls brought in a combined £1181 for church funds, to which the Social Committee's catering added a further £497. Meanwhile, the Grand Draw (with a fabulous selection of prizes) raised £656 for the Restoration Fund.

Many thanks to all involved for all their hard work!

Woosehill Church Magazine
Remembrance Sunday



Thank you to Wes for delivering such a memorable service for Remembrance Sunday when we were delighted to welcome the Woosehill Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts to take part in our service. It was so good to have all the young people in church, and we appreciated their contributions to the service. We hope to welcome them back again next year.



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Silver wedding celebrations



It was very special to celebrate Kelly and Jason's Silver Wedding at church at the beginning of October, when they also renewed their wedding vows with friends, family and church members present.

The food was amazing – and who knew that these two were such impressive dancers!



Wild Geese

This moving metaphor of Autumn geese, emerges from the powerful pen of American author and poet, Rachel Field, in her "Something Told the Wild Geese:"

Something told the wild geese it was time to go; Though the fields lay golden, something whispered, — "snow". Leaves were green and stirring, berries, lustre-glossed, but beneath warm feathers something cautioned, — "frost". All the sagging orchards steamed with amber spice, but each wild breast stiffened at remembered ice. Something told the wild geese it was time to fly — Summer sun was on their wings, Winter in their cry.

Like it or not, at this time of year, we hear geese calling above and sometimes we stop to see the big V in the sky, and follow after them with our eyes, as we have no wings for following. We have no wings, but the Holy Spirit does!

For Celtic Christians of old, the honking wild goose, not the gentler, cooing, hovering, dove, was their symbol of the Holy Spirit. Yes, European and Western Christians generally prefer the gentle, hovering, cooing Dove Church, to the wild, honking, flapping Wild Goose one. But you have to admit the wild goose on the wing commands our attention, in a way that the sounds of peaceful nesting doves rarely do!

It's been said, " Most birds travel in silence, but not the goose. In the air or on the water, it chatters and gabbles, gossips and confers. Geese are not reticent birds."

It is written: "Something stirs the wild geese— and stirs my soul as well. A quiet wind lifts me upward, a voice I know too well."

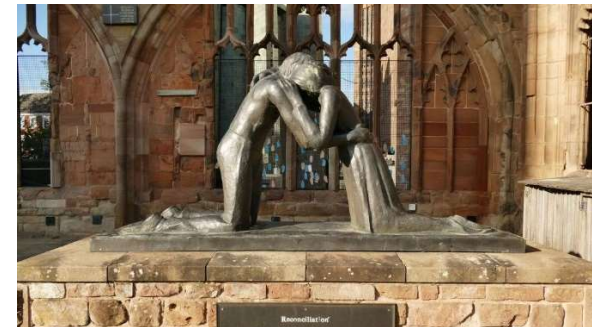
Dear Friends

We are delighted to announce that in December [Embrace will be joining the Community of the Cross of Nails](#) (CCN), a global network of churches, schools, and organisations committed to reconciliation, peace, and justice.

The Community of the Cross of Nails

Rooted in Coventry Cathedral's story of hope after the destruction of the Second World War, CCN brings together nearly 300 partners across 45 countries and is guided by three core principles: healing the wounds of history, learning to live with difference and celebrating diversity, and building a culture of justice and peace. We are honoured to join this movement and deepen our commitment to healing in the Middle East.

Embrace will be formally welcomed into the CCN during Choral Evensong at Coventry Cathedral on 7 December.



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Thirty-one prayers for my enemies

The Revd Caroline Beckett wrote and shared this prayer-poem called “Thirty-One Prayers for my enemies”, and we closed our service with it one Sunday in September. Let her words soak into the undercurrent of hope that we have in God, whose mercy and love are big enough to save us all. It is also on our prayer board.

May you never be awoken by explosions or screams.

May you never be wounded by a weapon or wield one.

May the distant rumbles of your life always be only traffic, voices, waves or thunder.

May you neither flinch nor stumble and may nightmares not find you.

May your home never become rubble.

May the landmarks of your city and the lineage of your family remain unbroken.

May you choose your own clothing and your own dwelling-place.

May your elders see old age and bless the faces of the next generation.

May your young ones play fearlessly in unmined fields.

May there be food for your hunger and water for your thirst.

May there be medication for your sickness and anaesthetic for your pain.

May your effort and skill be rewarded and the work of your hands and heart endure.

May the riches of your culture be protected and your dreams be a source of power.

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May your face wear no spittle and your skin no scars.

May the names you are called be your own.

May you birth your children with celebration and lay your dying to rest in peace.

May your pain never be met with indifference or cruelty.

May you walk in freedom, speak in safety and listen in grace.

May you know and be known.

May you live all your years and finish your becoming.

May the good in you devour the evil and the emptiness in you be filled.

May your body be your own, its territory yours to give or to withhold.

May you never hate yourself or know despair.

May your uniqueness excite reverence, curiosity and celebration.

May you never need to entrust your dearest to hostile strangers or unsafe travel.

May you pray, sing and write the poetry of your own tongue.

May there be no walls to bar you from inclusion, empathy and embrace.

May you be judged only for your own words and actions, and that justly.

May you be merciful and receive mercy.

May the darkness hold no terror for you and the light no shame.

May you find faith, hope and love in this life and in the next.

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Wokingham Foodbank Needs



Don't forget the BanktheFood app for up-to-date needs.

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Developing faith and prayer

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.



Church Contacts

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Deadline for next issue Jan 18, 2026

To: valerie.weedon@btinternet.com

What's on at Woosehill Church

Sunday services: 10.00am at the church or online via the Woosehill Church YouTube channel or click on the link on our Facebook page.

Thursday Morning social groups: From 10 am – just turn up

1st, 3rd & 4th Thursday – Free to do any craft activity, jigsaws or puzzles, with refreshments and chat.

2nd Thursday – WoolWAM - a knitting and crochet group.

Saturday Group: Sip and Share

Have you lost someone or are you just wanting company? Then this group is for you. Chat over a cuppa. Every 2nd Saturday at 11.00am. No need to book.

Tadpoles

On Wednesday mornings from 9.00am. Playtime, craft, coffee and snacks for under-fives and their carers. To register for this group, see the website woosehillchurch.org

Planning a Wedding, Christening or need to organise a Funeral?

Then please do talk to us.

For more information about any of the above, please email either

Rev'd Cara Smart on woosehill.minister@outlook.com

stewards@woosehillchurch.com

Or visit our website www.woosehillchurch.org

CHRISTMAS AT WOSEHILL CHURCH

Please join us at these services



Carol service: 14th December at 7.30pm

Crib Service: 24th December at 4pm

Christmas Day: Communion Service at 10am

