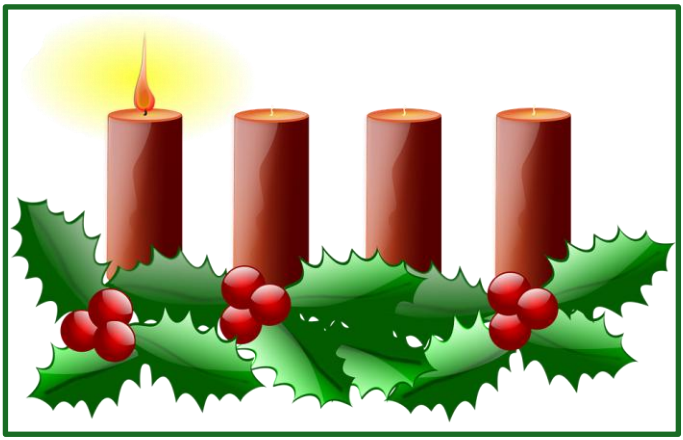
Woosehill Church Magazine

November – December 2026



Sharing God's love with the community

Follow us on our Facebook page,

Find us on our website woosehillchurch.org

Or follow our livestream services on YouTube

Dear Church family and all other readers,

If you were in church on 22nd November, you were privileged to be at one of our really special services – you can catch up on the Woosehill Church YouTube channel.

This was Christ the King Sunday which takes place on the final Sunday of the Christian liturgical year, right before Advent begins. So, as our calendar year draws to an end our Christian year starts.

It was also Stir-up Sunday as you will read further in these pages. My main memory of this is hearing it on the Archers as I was growing up – anyone else?

And finally, it was a day when we drew together as a church family mourning the loss of one of our own.

With every blessing for the Advent and Christmas season,

Val

In this Issue

Editorial and contents	1
A message from our minister, Rev'd Cara Smart	2-5
Krysia Elaine Steere	6-7
News from Tadpoles	8
Christmas at Yeldall Manor	9
BSL service	10
Ritual of Morning Coffee	11
Stir-up Sunday with cake recipe	12-14
December WOW Bishop's Service	15
A Message from our Methodist minister	16
Embrace the Middle East	17
Parish News	18
Bishop's Fund	19
Christmas Prayers	20
Developing Faith and Prayer	21
What's on at Woosehill Church	22
Christmas at Woosehill	23



A Message from our Minister

Safety, belonging, and worth

Earlier this month I went to Yeldall Manor to deliver the donations from our Harvest Festival, and I was lucky enough to also have a tour around, thanks to my lovely neighbour Abby. As soon as you turn into Yeldall, there's a sense of beauty and peace, with a long, gorgeous tree lined drive which meanders past a field of Highland Cows, up to the house. The scenery is stunning and you feel God immediately; it's like returning to a harbour and knowing that God is coming out to greet you.

We started the tour with some information about Yeldall, some history about the house and grounds, and saw just how passionate the people who work there are about the programme. Yeldall is a drug and alcohol recovery centre and is rooted and grounded in the Christian faith. The men who come there stay for 24 weeks in the house, which is longer than other programmes, with 2 different phases – grounding and growth. There is also the opportunity to stay afterwards with some more independence whilst still being able to access support as needed. And you can feel within the walls that this gift of time is not just precious but life-changing, and different from how we generally function as a society. It changes Yeldall from just a recovery centre to a home.

There are 3 beautiful principles that govern life at Yeldall, that they want each man to know and feel and inhabit. Safety, belonging and worth. These are Gospel principles, they come from the love of God and when we know them to be true, they are truly transformative. Every human being should know themselves to be held by God, held by one another.

Unfortunately, that isn't always the case though, and when those values are missing, life is so much harder, sometimes unbearably so. Without knowing yourself to be safe, it's hard to belong and harder still to know yourself to be worthy of the love God pours out on each one of us. Safety for the men at Yeldall is found through knowing there are no drugs or alcohol on the premises, knowing that there are counsellors and experts who will support them and who won't leave when things get tough, knowing that everyone else there understands even if their circumstances are different, through prayer and worship that gives peace and security, and probably much more! Safety is key to belonging and worth.

As we walked around Yeldall, I noticed how peaceful it was. Not because recovery is easy and peaceful, of course it's not. No, this was a deeper peace, a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that could only come from God. It was the type of peace that makes you feel safe and held, because it was the type of peace you get when you realise and notice that the kingdom of God has indeed broken through and you are there in it right now. It was the type of peace you get when you start to know that things *will* be OK, even though they're not OK right now. The type of peace that comes from wandering through those prayer-soaked walls and reminding you that no matter what has happened and what might happen, God has been, is, and always will be with you. Safety, belonging, and worth.

As a church we support Yeldall through charitable giving each year, Harvest donations and praying the monthly prayer requests, and I know that there has been some kind of link historically as well.

But this coming year, and Advent is the start of a new church year, I'd really love us to become more connected with the local charities we support – Yeldall Manor, Soulscape, and Wokingham Foodbank. I'll be asking them all to come along for a Sunday to talk to us at some point, as a way of starting to re-build some of those relationships. Having seen Yeldall and learnt a bit more about their work, I now have their picture in my mind when I pray for them, and that has made a really big difference (to me anyway, probably not to God who was already aware of what I was praying for!) Where might we be able to help more, or become a bit more involved? Before I went, I hadn't realised there's a conference room we could book for a Church Council away day/meeting. Or that you can buy your logs from Yeldall, chopped to the size you'd like and even have them delivered! As Tesco say, every little helps, and every small thing adds up. Every prayer uttered is heard, and with God, nothing is ever wasted.

I'm also aware that this is the last magazine before Advent and Christmas, and I haven't written on that theme. Apart from, of course, I have. Because every Advent, we get ourselves ready to welcome Jesus as a vulnerable baby, in need of safety. Every Christmas we are more mindful of the family, friends, church and God to whom we belong, and we take care to notice those who don't have a place to call home and welcome them into ours.

Every Christmas we remember that God chose to give us his son, Jesus, knowing what would happen to him, and knowing that we are worth it, we are worth everything to God. Every Christmas we are brought back to the reality that the place where Jesus was born is still in flux, that

there still isn't peace or safety in the Middle East, and what a devastating effect that has on all who live there. Every Advent we invite the whole of Woosehill to the Carol Service and Crib Service and Christmas Day Communion because we have found a place where we belong and long for others to experience that too. Every Christmas, we remind ourselves that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not and cannot overcome it, because Jesus is the light of the world, our world, born because we're worthy of God's love. Safety, belonging and worth are at the heart of the Gospel, the heart of Yeldall, and I hope and pray that you cradle them in your heart this Advent and Christmas too.

Rev'd Cara





Krysia

Faithful and true

In the 1990s, when many of the congregation of this church were families with young primary school aged children, we had a large Sunday Club and needed lots of teachers. It seemed an obvious choice to ask Krysia if she would help, since she worked with young children in a nursery school and had kids in the Sunday Club herself.

However, Krysia would have had every reason or excuse to have refused the request. After her divorce she was dealing with some complex problems whilst bringing up her two boys as a single parent. Perhaps she would rather have spent her Sunday mornings getting some spiritual nourishment and a bit of much-needed peace herself, not spending yet more time dealing with excited little kids, after having done it all week! Yet, with her quiet, no-nonsense manner, she joined the teaching team and became one of its core members. Her calm presence and dry humour grounded many a team meeting; her ideas were always practical, and her advice was invariably helpful.

In fact, the memory I treasure most of Krysia was at one of our early Sunday Club birthday services, when we were still meeting in Hawthorns School. We had chosen Psalm 23 as our theme, and we wanted the youngest class of 3–4-year-olds, which she taught, to take part in some way, but they were too young to take part in drama or do readings. So, we chose some beautiful music (Bach's "Sheep may safely graze") and Krysia said she would lead them around the hall as it played, as an image of the trust described in the Psalm.

On the day, I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but as we turned on the music, Krysia walked into the hall with a very authentic-looking biblical shepherd's outfit complete with staff-I have no idea where she found it!- followed by a line of adorable little "sheep", who closely followed her as she slowly walked amongst the congregation. It was such a simple, powerful image, so very beautiful, that it has remained in my heart for over 30 years.

I no longer live in Wokingham, so I haven't seen a great deal of Krysia during the last years of her illness, unlike many of you who I know have been lovingly supporting her. What I have seen in my infrequent visits back, however, was that she seemed to be applying the same quiet, uncomplaining strength with which she met every challenge to her battle against cancer. She hung on, demonstrating her rock-solid love for her family, as long as she could, and now she has passed into the glorious presence of her Lord and is at peace. She has set us an example of faithful service, and I know we are all truly grateful.

Elaine Steere



Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of Krysia who died on 21st November after a long illness so bravely borne.

She will be much missed within the Woosehill Church family.



News from Tadpoles

Sometimes in Tadpoles we experience moments which have to be stowed away as treasured memories of this special group. On the day of Remembrance, the two minute silence at 11am on the 11th of November was due to fall at the very end of our group. We had not thought we could mark it, had even joked about the impossibility of keeping a group of lively toddlers quiet for seconds, let alone longer …

However, on the day, two of our regular mums asked if we were going to keep the silence and we felt this had to be responded to. With Cara having a deeply sleeping toddler draped across her and unable to officiate, Sue (Youle) took the wreath from the cross and explained to the children what was going to happen.

It was a very moving moment as the children sat solemnly, little Jamie with his hands together and eyes closed on the front row, and silence held for a full minute – and indeed the calmness of the moment lasted for the rest of the session. Precious memories.



Our Remembrance tree for All Souls

Val on behalf of the Tadpoles team


You're Invited to
Christmas
AT THE MANOR
Join us for an evening of festive delight with musical entertainment from the residents and staff of Yeldall Manor.
Tickets £15 including interval refreshments.
Dress code: Smart Casual
17.12.2026 | 7:30PM
Yeldall Manor, Blakes Lane, Hare Hatch.
YELDALL MANOR

BSL Signed Service

We were again delighted to welcome Rev'd Hannah Lewis from Deaf Church Oxford Diocese to lead us in worship in British Sign Language at the end of October, ably supported by an enhanced Music Group.





A LITURGY FOR THE

Ritual of Morning Coffee

Meet me, O Christ,
in this stillness of morning.
Move me, O Spirit,
to quiet my heart.
Mend me, O Father,
from yesterday's harms.

From the discords of yesterday,
resurrect my peace.
From the discouragements of yesterday,
resurrect my hope.
From the weariness of yesterday,
resurrect my strength.
From the doubts of yesterday,
resurrect my faith.
From the wounds of yesterday,
resurrect my love.

Let me enter this new day,
aware of my need, and
awake to your grace, O Lord.

Amen.

An excerpt from EVERY MOMENT HOLY: VOLUME ONE

Stir up Sunday

Stir-up Sunday this year fell on Sunday, November 22, on the last Sunday before Advent, also the day of Christ the King. It is the traditional day to mix and prepare Christmas pudding, Christmas cake, and mincemeat so the flavours can mature before Christmas Day. The name comes from The Book of Common Prayer collect for the day, which begins, "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people...".

We really celebrated in style this year at Woosehill Church, with Cara bringing in the ingredients for an 'All-inclusive Christmas cake' – dairy/gluten/nut free! Cara was ably assisted by three young people and after they had stirred from east to west to honour the Wise Men travelling from the east, the bowl was passed around the entire congregation for all to stir and pray. The baked result will be enjoyed on the visit of Bishop Mary on 20th December, and we look forward to it!



The ingredients are ready

Ready to bake!



<u>Woosehill Church "Everyone's Included" Christmas Cake: gluten, dairy, nut and alcohol free</u>

Fruit mix
250g sultanas
250g raisins
200g currants
100g dried cranberries
75g dried apricots
Zest 1 organic lemon (non-organic now have chemicals meaning the peel isn't suitable for us to eat)
140ml orange juice

Cake batter
140ml vegetable oil
60g dairy free spread
1tbs treacle
6 large eggs
225g gluten free self-raising flour
1 1/2 tbs cinnamon
1/2 tbs ginger
1/2 tbs nutmeg
1/2 tbs total of cardamom, allspice, cloves
Decorating
Royal Icing

Soak the dried fruit and zest with the orange juice overnight.
Mix together the dairy free spread, oil and sugar. Add in the eggs one by one and stir. Mix in the treacle. Sift in the flour and spices and gently stir to combine.
Finally add in the dried fruit and mix until no lumps of flour.
Leave to rest for at least an hour to allow the gluten free flour to absorb the moisture, then add a tablespoon of orange juice and stir.

Bake at 140 (fan oven, other ovens adjust to whatever usually works!) low and slow until cooked, 4-4.5 hours. Cover with tin foil half way through so the top doesn't burn.
Take out the oven and cool. Wrap in parchment and foil and store in an airtight container until ready to decorate and eat. Enjoy!



DECEMBER WOW

This is just an advance notice to let you know that we will be doing the flower arranging on Tuesday 22nd Dec at 10am at the church. Just wanted to let you know as it is near Christmas, this is so your arrangement will survive for you to display for Santa. Details later.

Thank you, **Linda & Lynne,**



The WOW group will meet in the new year to plan our activities for 2027 – new members always welcome, as well as new ideas!

Bishop's Service

We hope for a big turn out on December 20th when the Bishop of Reading, Bishop Mary is coming to preach.

Put the date in your diary!

A Message from our Methodist Minister



Dear Friends,

Waiting can be tedious. We have so many experiences of unwelcome waiting – for the engineer who is coming to fix the 'phone line *sometime* between noon and 6pm, for the person we were speaking to on the telephone who has put us on hold while he consults with someone else, and so on. These are just some of my experiences; you can add plenty of your own.

We do not want to be made to wait, for it feels like time is being wasted while we cannot do anything else. Yet we know that if waiting a little means that our query can be answered correctly, or that we shall get to see the doctor who understands our problem, then the waiting might seem like a reasonable price to pay. Until the wait is over, however, we do not know if that will be so.

The season of Advent is a time of waiting. The decorations in the shops and lights in people's windows tell us that many are racing towards Christmas. We get caught up in the headlong rush, even though we know that Advent reminds us that God's preparation for the first coming of his Son went on for centuries.

Every year we tell ourselves that Advent is a reflection of God's preparation. As such, it involves a lot of waiting. This is not the futile waiting that annoys us and tries our patience, but the waiting that allows us to find God in the hustle and bustle of our days.

RS Thomas, in his poem ***Kneeling***, says:

Prompt me God

But not yet. When I speak
Though it be you who speak
Through me, something is lost.
The meaning is in the waiting.

May we, during these days of Advent, find the meaning in the waiting and, when Christmas comes, find the meaning in the celebration.

Wes

Journey with us this Advent by signing up to receive our free Advent Reflections emails. The theme this year is 'A Stable Place', exploring what the Christmas story can teach us about navigating stability and instability in life and faith. Sign up on embraceme.org

Includes video reflections from Embrace's Revd Su McClellan
Each weekly email will include a short video, filmed by Revd Su on her visit to the West Bank last month. Su's journey around Bethlehem will take you to the places at the heart of the Christmas story.

Beth Amplett : Content Manager
Embrace the Middle East

Parish News

Service for 16 Days of Activism

The St Paul's branch of the Mothers' Union will be holding their annual service for the 16 Days of Activism in St Paul's Church on:

Thursday 3rd December at 10am

The service will be led by Rev'd Jane Kraft and all are warmly invited to attend.

The Mothers' Union has been actively campaigning against and supporting survivors of domestic abuse in the UK for a number of years now and the Global Day of Action takes place on Saturday 28th November this year.

The theme for 2026 is **Together for dignity and safety**. Mothers' Union stands united across the world to promote peace in every home and community. This reflects our core commitments:

- Dignity – Recognising the value and worth of every person as created in God's image.
- Safety – Creating homes, churches, and communities where people are protected from violence, abuse, and exploitation.
- Togetherness – Recognising that preventing violence requires collective action from women, men, young people, families, churches, and communities.

The Bishop of Oxford's Outreach Fund – Diocese of Oxford

You may have read in our last issue that our Tithing Committee recommended that we cut the parent church charities and instead give to the Bishop's Fund which supports a number of different charities, based on need.

This was agreed by Church Council.

Below is information about this fund:

The Outreach Fund is dedicated to supporting the mission of the Church nationally and internationally and is generated by offerings across the diocese, particularly at ordinations, confirmations, collations, institutions and licensing. Through the fund, the Bishop of Oxford is able to respond to a wide range of requests for help, in areas such as humanitarian need, Christian education, training and mission.

In 2024, the fund received gifts totalling £34,500 and made grants totalling £48,000. Grants were made, amongst others, to support relief and mission agencies working in the Middle East, such as Friends of the Holy Land and Embrace the Middle East.

We continued our regular support to international mission agencies such as CMS, Congo Church Association, Latin Link, MANNA, Mission to Seafarers, USPG and Tearfund. Emergency relief was given through Christian Aid and to The Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands Relief Fund in response to Hurricane Beyrl. Closer to home grants were made to Be Space, The Retreat Association, Asylum Welcome, The Porch Day Centre, and the Performance, Resilience and Support Programme for our Schools Head Teachers.

Christmas Prayers

- Let the love that shaped earth and heaven dwell within us this Christmas.
- Let the love that created humanity dwell within us this Christmas.
- Let the love that overcomes suffering and hatred dwell within us this Christmas.
- Let the love that causes us to rejoice with loved ones dwell within us this Christmas.
- Let the love that forgives and renews dwell within us this Christmas.
- Let the love that brings the blessing of peace dwell within us this Christmas
- May we share that peace with all people near and far.

Amen

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, fill our hearts with Your quiet joy this Christmas. As the world celebrates Your birth, help us to carry Your light into the dark places, to forgive as we have been forgiven, and to seek peace with everyone around us. Amen.



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. No meeting in December
Contact Lyn Brown for details.

Church Contacts

Rev'd Cara Smart, 23 Sheridan Way RG41 3AP,
07812349857
woosehillminister@outlook.com

Rev'd Wes Hampton Methodist Minister
5 Chetwode Close, Wokingham RG40 2LL, 0118 9781756
wesley.hampton@methodist.org.uk

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 woosehillminister@outlook.com

stewards@woosehillchurch.com

Or visit our website www.woosehillchurch.org

Deadline for next issue on Sunday 24th January-**

as usual 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.

Quiet service at 6.30 pm on every second Sunday.

Carol service in lieu in December.

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 9-11am in termtime. Playtime, craft, coffee and snacks for under-fives and their carers. To register for this group, see the website woosehillchurch.org or contact: tadpoles@woosehillchurch.org

Church hire Lynne Paine: treasurer.woosehillchurch@gmail.com

Other information: stewards@woosehillchurch.org

Christmas at Woosehill Church

Sunday 29th November
Advent Sunday Cafe Church, 10am
An informal service with coffee, tea, cakes & pastries

Sunday 13th December
Carol Service, 7.30pm
Sing carols and hear the Christmas story

Christmas Eve
Crib Service, 4pm
A fun-filled slighty chaotic (in the best way!) telling of the Christmas story. With costumes for the children and Christmas Carols.

Christmas Day
Holy Communion, 10am
Come together to welcome the baby Jesus!



With every blessing for the Christmas season

from all at Woosehill Church