

# Christ Church News

## Christmas 2023

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***"Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world." -C.S. Lewis***

*Christ Church Anglican Congregation Vision Statement*

*"Through our worship, mission, nurture and service we want to enable all people to enter into a living relationship with Jesus Christ"*

## ***In this edition of the Parish News:***

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## ***Dates for the diary***

- *Christmas Day family communion Monday 25<sup>th</sup> December 10.00am*
- *Joint celebration at St Botolph's Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December 10.30am*
- *Beetle Drive Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2.00pm*
- *Hope Explored starts Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 7.30pm*

## GOD LOVES YOU

It was one of those nights. Dark. Cold. Disturbed!

For the umpteenth time that night, I found myself in the bathroom holding my son's hand while he vomited in the toilet. My bed was soft and warm - oh so warm. The bathroom was cold, the floor was extra cold on my feet, and the less said about the smell in the air the better. I could feel my bed calling me back to the soft, warm, nice-smelling comfort of a better place.

The only thing that kept me in that bathroom was love... and that's what got me thinking. We know the Bible was written by more than 40 different people over about 1300 years. And yet, it all tells the same beautiful story - God loves you!

My love saw me leave a warm bed, but God's love is so vast that Jesus left the comfort of the best place in existence. God's realm - we call it heaven - where God is in charge and everything is good. Jesus could have stayed in that wonderful place, but he left and came here because God loves us! God loves you!



The stinky, dirty stable. Born into a world of turmoil and pain. Jesus left the most perfect place and came into our mess, into every problem our world has, so he could reveal the perfect place to us. So he could hold our hand and tell us how loved we are.

The heart of the Christmas message is God loves you. And if I wrote to you again in a few months, God loves you is also the heart of the Easter story. So I've only got one message for you today - God loves you!

Love,

*Chris*

## **FUN-D-RAISING!**

Well – what a year we have had with fund raising for the building project. I have entitled this fun-d-raising because lots of what we have done has indeed been fun! From the ‘launch and lunch’ onwards the incredible team have worked their magic.

John Chandler hosting Patrick McCarthy as we discovered some fascinating facts about his life and enjoyed hearing his beautiful voice once more. A substantial buffet satisfied folks inner bodies as well as them having the enrichment of their musical ears.

In April the ‘gardening group’ extended their work to include wonderful background jazz by John Clifton and his band (who we will be able to delight in again in February at the Jazz Night).

In June we were all utterly astounded by Sara Green’s talent as she put on the one woman play written especially for her. We laughed – and I for one cried – at the poignant telling of a woman lost in grief after the death of her husband. What an incredible evening it was. More food went with it!!!

In July we had more food!!! Fun again as Mary Poppins entertained us at Afternoon Tea in the Marquee at Inglis Road. (Not sure I every want to butter a piece of bread again or make another sandwich!)

We took a bit of a breather until November when we started looking towards Christmas with a wonderful evening of flower arranging led by the talented Helen Bird, who made us all feel like professionals! No food this time but plenty of Prosecco and nibbles.

And finally – the one I missed! ‘A Christmas Carol’ with Anthony Roberts where we kept the sustenance going with hot mince pies and mulled wine.

And of course month by month we have had the Sunday Stall, which has ranged in goodies from cakes to cards to craft and beyond.

All in all you have raised £8,808 by your support for these events. We have to keep going as there is still a need for funds and we set a target of £12,000 from church fund raising.

What’s next? A Family event for all ages with a Beetle Drive (Build a beetle fun) from 2.30-4.00 on January 6<sup>th</sup> and the Jazz Night in February.

Thank you so much to the incredible team who have pulled all this together, Toni, Julia, Anna and Judith, with crafty support from Diane.

See you at the next fundraiser!!  
Pat

## ADVENT QUIET DAY 2023

It was *almost* Advent when 15 of us gathered at Assington Hall Annex (really well warmed for us!) on a frosty and misty Saturday – the day before Advent Sunday.

Janie Beales, our leader for the day, was kind and gentle with us (thanks!) but also brought us some real challenge within the gentleness. She invited us into a wide variety of ways to hear from God, and showed us how to put aside the things buzzing in our minds, in order to be still and listen.

Here is the prayer (some know it as a song) which we repeated round the group as we began. It slowed us up and allowed us to absorb the words, by listening to each other repeating it:

*Calm me O Lord as you  
stilled the storm  
Still me O Lord, keep me  
from harm  
Let all the tumult within  
me cease  
Enfold me Lord in your  
peace*



Each of us will have different recollections and treasures from our day. There was a newly signposted Woodland Walk, which was utterly quiet and very atmospheric on that still, cold morning. Clare's picture gives you a window into the stillness of the lake (and look carefully for the grey and white geese – almost invisible against the frost, right in the centre of the picture!)

As well as the outdoor walk, there were, indoors, pictures of roadways and paths, and tiny Scripture fragments, which provided starting points for new meditations. And a persistent encouragement from Janie to pick up paper and colours and paint or draw, and just see what happened.

Some stories emerged from our adventures with paper and colour (thank you for a story about a tree with a hole, and the small, good things that close gaps while we hardly notice) and some beautiful autumn leaves, both drawn on paper and audible in a poem.

If you *were* there, I know you will have found new treasures to turn over and reflect on during Advent.

If you *weren't* there, you might like to accept Janie's invitation to read Luke Chapter 1 rather slowly, and consider the stories of the different characters – especially Elizabeth and Mary – as they hear and respond to the news that God is coming among them. I found it new (again!) and fruitful to ponder.

By the time you are reading this, Advent will be over – or almost over. I pray that we will all have travelled on a good path during this watching and listening time, and be able to share the good news of Christ's coming at Christmas!

*Sara Humphreys*



## A SHEPHERD REMEMBERS

It's bloomin' cold out on the hillside. We check the fences, listen for the sheep, wrap up well in our blankets and tell each other dirty jokes. This particular night I'll never forget. The sky lit up as though daytime had come earlier. And we could hear singing going on about glory to God and peace on Earth. A king had been born, go down to the city of David where you will find the Messiah in a trough in some old barn. And this is good news? If so why tell us, rough, ignorant old shepherds. My mates heard it too so we all charged off down to Bethlehem. We found the shed round the back of the pub. We didn't know what to do. The door was open so we sidled in. Don't ask me why but we all knelt down before the mum and baby. Then the dad waved us forward so like idiots we all shuffled up to the trough on our knees. So there we were like prats but the ice was broken with a few handshakes and eventually off we went very happy. We said peace on Earth and a Messiah is born to any old dosser as we went home. Everybody must have thought, shepherds at the bottle again. Who'd tell a load of rough old shepherds. This child in a trough. Will he be like David and lead a victorious army? Will he kick out the Romans? Can't see it myself. But it must be because God spoke to us on our hillside. This is his word. His love maybe.

Oh well, back to drudgery. By the way, the name's David. Yes. I know not King David. But mothers. What do you do with them? Oh yes they give birth to the hope of our world.'



## DAY OF PRAYER

In November we held a day of prayer ahead of the COP28 climate meeting to spend time praying and sharing our feelings, hopes and fears around the climate crisis. We also had times of quiet and contemplation.

We prayed together for the work of the COP28 delegates, decision makers and world leaders, and for a change throughout all our hearts and minds, to put sustainability ahead of personal gain. We talked and prayed about ways to act and campaign for the good of the most disadvantaged people of the world, whose contribution to climate change is negligible.

We were joined by friends from other churches as well as those from Christ Church, making it a positive and supportive shared time.



Thanks to everyone who joined in, whether at church or elsewhere that day.

Please continue to pray for the restoration of a healthy, stable climate and natural environment on planet Earth, and live in a way that puts sustainability first, as part of our respect for God's creation and all the people of the world.

If you are interested in more shared events that bring Christians together to pray and act for our environment, please contact Colchester Green Christians (07980 898469 - John Clifton) or East London and Essex Christian Climate Action ([seldridge@chelmsford.anglican.org](mailto:seldridge@chelmsford.anglican.org)), or talk to Kate or Jean.

*Kate Clifton*

## **HARVEST PREPARATIONS AND GARDENING**

### **they go together well!**

We had a fantastic sunny morning for our autumn gardening day, that coincided with preparation and flower arranging for the harvest celebration on October 15th.

Some really hard workers did both flowers and gardening ... that's keen!

The harvest flower arrangements looked amazing, the number of flowers and the quantity of foliage that goes into decorating our church is astonishing, and the resulting arrangements are possible thanks to the preparation, skill and time given by the many arrangers. This year some new talent was at work, as well as talent that has been providing flowers every week, as well as at harvest and other special times through the church year, for many years.

Gardeners meanwhile took on the usual essential maintenance tasks, weeding, tidying sweeping and pruning. While unspectacular, these keep the garden and Cambridge Walk looking cared for, and are the groundwork for new planting. Tulips, Alchemilla and Ajuga went in around the benches, narcissi and pansies in the bowl on top of the water butt. The water butt is now brim full and was in use to water these newbies in!

Additionally, we strimmed the long grass on the slope in preparation for raking it up in a couple of weeks. Removing cuttings is important for wild flowers as they thrive in poor soil, so each time the grass is cut and removed, nutrients leave the soil. It's the opposite to adding fertiliser, which favours lush

grasses which outcompete wild flowers. We checked nest boxes which are ready for next spring.

As usual, afterwards we sat together outside for a picnic at lunchtime, aware that as autumn is approaching, the air was at last cooler, and the sunshine welcome for its warmth!

Thanks to everyone who helps with the garden, if you would like to join us please do come next time, there are jobs suitable for all ages and abilities, and we chat and take breaks too!

*Kate*



WELCOME TO

# CHRIST CHURCH LIBRARY

Please browse our selection,  
choose a book and sign it  
out.

Open to everyone!



## FLOWER UPDATE

Christ Church has got talent!

This was evidenced by the varied and attractive table decorations that were produced by members and friends on Thurs 23rd Nov at the evening event arranged by Pat Prestney. This got off to a good start with drinks and nibbles followed by a demonstration, with hints, from Helen Bird who had brought some Christmassy items to be used in the arrangements. Plenty of greenery of all types was available as well as the purpose made saucers. Helen was very active in going round giving hints and tuition to anyone who wanted help, so a very satisfying evening was enjoyed by all. A presentation was made to Helen in appreciation.

Thanks are due to Pat for organising the evening in support of the Building Fund, and also to her helpers for preparing and clearing up afterwards.

*Angela Ennals.*

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Thank you all for once again contributing to the Shoe Box Appeal. A total of 27 boxes were collected and delivered to Kingsland Church which was the local assembly point.

I would also like to make a special mention to two people in the Church who were very active in collating resources. Jill Dyer has over the past 20 years provided the entertaining and attractive knitwear which has appeared on the OCC notice board. Every item was gratefully accepted by the charity as many boxes are made up at the depots and such items give that little extra "fun aspect". Jill has also supplied the tennis balls and here again all went with the boxes to the depots.

Emily has been very helpful in ordering leaflets etc and decorating the notice board so artistically for the past few years. It has really made a bright and cheerful addition to the foyer. Liz Bird, Emily's predecessor, also very much helped in this way and again, grateful thanks are due to her.

As I mentioned in the autumn magazine, this is my last year of arranging the OCC Shoe Box Appeal. The Service Group will take over any Christmas charity appeal, and details will be provided later next year. Meanwhile thank you for all the shopping, knitting, making and hard work that has gone into the many shoe boxes we have sent off to needy children. From the pictures put out by the OCC, it is obvious that much happiness has been brought by a simple gift.

A Very Happy and Joyful Christmas to All and a Peaceful New Year, *Angela Ennals*.



## SPECULAAS FUDGE RECIPE

**Makes:** 64 squares

**Takes:** 5 mins plus setting

Speculaas are traditional spiced biscuits eaten at Christmas in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. This cheat's version uses Lotus Biscoff spread for a speedy treat.

### ***Ingredients***

- butter, for greasing
- 400g white cooking chocolate
- 397g tin condensed milk
- 200g Lotus Biscoff spread
- 3 Lotus Biscoff biscuits, crushed

### ***Method***

1. Grease and line a 20cm square baking tin with nonstick baking paper; set aside.
2. Put the chocolate, condensed milk, Biscoff spread and a pinch of salt in a large, microwave-safe bowl. Microwave for 30 secs, then stir; repeat until the chocolate is just melted. This will take about 2 mins.
3. Tip the mixture into the prepared tin and level with the back of a spoon or spatula. Scatter with the Biscoff biscuits, then transfer to the fridge for at least 3 hrs to set before cutting into squares. Will keep for up to 2 weeks in an airtight container.



# Christmas

Colour the  
Nativity  
scene.

Unscramble the words from The  
Christmas Story!

rats

bealts

raym

ganels

pojhes

## Wordsearch

i s g c s f s f m  
j n j i k x u n z  
d s o o f y k v u  
p o t t s t h z d  
a n n a j e s u s  
b m m k r c p d m  
i a n g e l s h s  
b r p c l y i z a  
p y s t a b l e v

angels  
donkey  
gifts  
Jesus

Joseph  
Mary  
stable  
star

## True or False?

Jesus was born in a stable.

Wise Men gave gifts of gold, fruit  
and marbles.

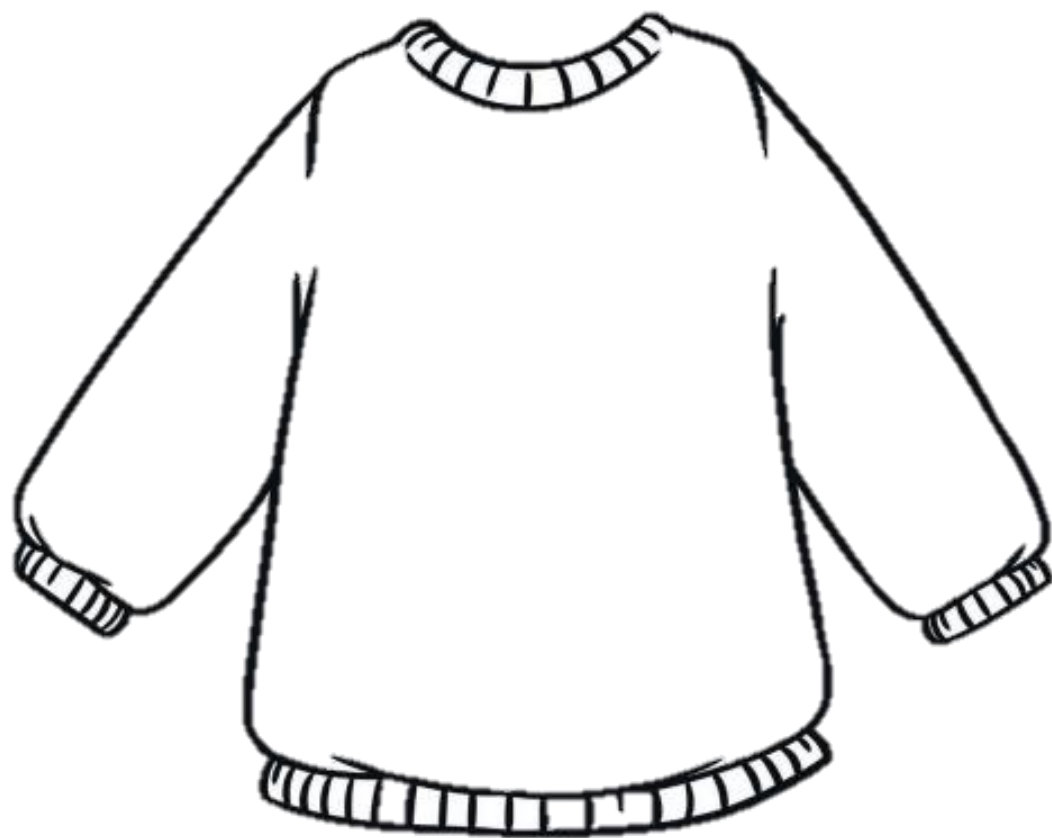
Mary and Joseph travelled by boat  
to Bethlehem.

Angels told the king that Jesus had  
been born.

A bright new star led the Wise Men  
to Jesus.



## DESIGN YOUR OWN CHRISTMAS JUMPER



## Regular activities at Christ Church

### *time together*

Meets every Tuesday morning in term time from 10am to 12 noon,

Our aim is to provide a welcoming environment for little ones (0-4yr) to play and for parents, grandparents and carers to chat and relax over a cup of coffee.

We close our morning together with a Bible story, some nursery rhymes, Christian songs and celebrate any family occasions e.g birthdays.

Please feel free to drop in for a short visit or stay for the morning.

Email:

[timetogether@colchesterchristchurch.org.uk](mailto:timetogether@colchesterchristchurch.org.uk)

### *the* **BREAKFAST CAFÉ**

Thursdays from 9am to 11.30 ish.

A café for all ages held in the main church space, a safe space for little ones to play, adults young and old to meet over cake, breakfast quiche, tea coffee and other goodies.

Pop in for a short time or stay longer.

All ages welcome

### **FLAMES**

(for all those aged 4-11)  
On Sunday mornings

**Bible stories, games,  
crafts and prayers**

more information contact Sheila



An after school club for primary school age children, on Tuesdays 3pm till 4.30pm.

Parents and Carers stay in the building with the children, pre-school children are also welcome (toys provided).

Activities include Craft, Stories, Videos, Lego and Games.

There are refreshments during the afternoon for children and adults.

FrOG club has a relaxed atmosphere for children and adults to enjoy.



**Join us at  
Splodgy on the  
2nd Friday of the Month  
7:30pm till 9pm  
School Years 6 - 10**



COVID19

We will have relevant COVID safety measures in place in line with the government guidance in place.

To see visit [www.colchesterchristchurch.org.uk/splodgy](http://www.colchesterchristchurch.org.uk/splodgy)



Christ Church  
Colchester



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Ruth King Close

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**Church Wardens:**

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The Church of England  
in Essex and East London  

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Diocese of Chelmsford