

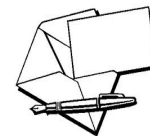


'Happy they within that stable,
Worshipping their infant Lord'

**St. John's Methodist Church
Whitchurch**

December 2022/January 2023

Message from the Manse



Hello friends,

We all know the Christmas story, yet we often skip over what happened next and head straight into Jesus' ministry. King Herod was far from overjoyed at the news of new baby, let alone one that was foretold as the true King, the Messiah. And so he sends out his army to kill all children under the age of 2 in order to get rid of this King. There is a lovely story, of Joseph being woken in the night by an angel telling him that he and Mary need to flee Bethlehem and head for Egypt.

They travel many miles and at night they find a cave to shelter in. A tiny little spider hears Mary crying and to help the little spider weaves the most beautiful web across the door of the cave to help cheer Mary up. In the morning the dew falls on the web and as the sun shined it created the most beautiful colours. The soldiers pass by and are amazed at the beautiful web. They do not wish to destroy its beauty and so don't check the cave, leaving Mary, Joseph and Jesus safely hidden inside. The actions of the spider saved their lives.

The story of the spider and the cave is just that, a story. But the plight from Egypt, the struggles and tears of being a refugee and homeless are the real experiences and stories of

people today. We might want to wrap the Christmas story up with that beautiful scene of a mother holding her precious new born with the ox and sheep, in a very clean and hygienic stable, yet the reality was very different. It would be so easy for us to live in our own worlds that are as a whole, comfortable, happy and secure but then we would be missing the true reality of the real world. Across our world there are many refugees, and many homeless people; who we often skip over and ignore. Maybe because it reminds us of our own vulnerability. We might not like to hear it; we might like to shield our eyes from it but we can't. It's not someone else's problem, it is ours.

Maybe this year we have realised that we can't ignore, because the problems are now on our doorsteps too. The cost of living crisis is affecting us all; granted some more than others; but we can no longer hide our faces from it. The food banks report that more people than ever are having to use them and that includes families where both parents are working but are unable to make ends meet, a situation that I'm sure many of us never expected to experience.

Perhaps this year it is more important than ever for us to think about the true meaning of Christmas, which is about love and hope for all. Too long we have lived in a world that tells us that the perfect Christmas is about piles of gifts under the tree and tables full of food. All we have gained from this way of thinking, is crippling debt; guilt for not providing the perfect Christmas; envious and jealous hearts; greed and overconsumption and tears and tantrums from stressed out adults and tired worn out children. This is far from the Christmas that God would wish us to have. If you think back to your own Christmas memories the most cherished ones will be more about those who were present with us rather than the presents under the tree.

People often to say to me I just don't feel "Christmassy" and that's often because they put the "Christmassy" feelings into the hands of Kingdoms of this world rather than into the hands of God whose Kingdom is not based on money and consumerism, but in love, being present with others and celebrating Jesus coming to us to show us how to love one an-

other and who died so that we could have the hope of an everlasting life with God in heaven. Giving the gift of memories, giving the gift of a small part of ourselves is something that we can all do and it is what God has done for us in the giving of His son, a gift that is freely given to each of us and that God longs for us to receive.

As we come to celebrate Christmas and begin a new

Decorating the Church for Christmas...

has usually been done just before the Candlelit Carol Service. However, this year, as we are having a Nativity and Christingle service at the beginning of December, it would make sense to decorate in time for that. We are planning to be at church on Thursday 1st from 10.30am—2.30pm and Friday 2nd from 1pm -3pm. Anyone is welcome to come along and help. Maurice Latham has three trees from last year and Briony has one, plus we have two artificial ones so although we are not holding the Christmas Tree festival, it should look quite festive. Please come and help. Other times can be arranged.

Whitchurch Community Choir

The choir uses our building for rehearsals and are inviting church members, family and friends to a coffee morning with stalls at the Civic Centre on Friday 16th December, admission £1.00 to include coffee and biscuits. They will also be singing Christmas Carols and songs at the Market on Friday 2nd December.

STEWARD'S LETTER

Dear Friends,



First of all, an introduction as not everyone may know me. My name is Dorothy Charlesworth, although most of my friends call me Dot, and I've been in Whitchurch for 10 years now. I'm originally from Stockport and I've been a Christian and regular church goer for most of my life. I've always been involved with church life and made many friends through church over the years but I've never been a steward before. I'm thoroughly enjoying the challenge of being a steward at St. John's, and appreciate all the support and encouragement I've had, so thank you all.

I've been compiling Pew News for some time now and I also enjoy helping at BBT, and organising Make Do and Renew Craft days once a month. I'm passionate about caring for our wonderful planet so I try very hard to recycle, renew and make do where I can. I'm also a regular shopper at the local refill shop, Refill Your Boots, minimising the packaging if I can, and I spread the word and encourage others whenever and wherever I can.

I'm really looking forward to Christmas now although it's always such a busy time of year. We have some good events lined up at St. John's, including the Nativity service with Christingles and the Christmas Party. I haven't started buying presents or writing cards yet, as I'm a last-minute sort of person, but I usually manage to get

things done. One of my favourite things is receiving Christmas letters from old friends and writing them in return. I hope you all get to enjoy your favourite things this Christmas, but also remember the true meaning of Christmas because, in the words of John Betjeman,

*No love that in a family dwells,
Nor carolling in frosty air;
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare –
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.*

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas,

Dot Charlesworth

"Love is spontaneous and craves expression through joy, through beauty, through truth even through tears. Love lives the moment, it's neither lost in yesterday nor does it crave for tomorrow. Love is now."

From Grace magazine

B. B. T. Picture - Tree of Life

I have finished the Tree of Life picture I've been doing with the children, mums and even some helpers on Mondays' BBT sessions. It's now gone for framing but we're hoping to have it up in church in time for Christmas so watch this space!

Dot Charlesworth

The Living Tree

How beautiful the living tree with buds and early green arrayed,
With branches whispering in the breeze and gently arching arms
displayed,

How Beautiful.

She reaches up in praising God and offers joyous harmonies
Of light and shade and varying greens with solid trunk and
gnarled bark,

She reaches up.

But as we see the woodman's craft in shop displayed
Of logs and branches shaped and smoothed and carved in intri-
cate design,

Oh skill divine!

What riches shown in grain and shade and infinite variety,
Of beech and walnut, oak and pine and ebony, what shapes and
colours to enrich,

Such treasury.

To think it took a thousand years of sun and rain in forest far,
To grow this dark and beautiful wood we use to make mere
furniture,

Alas what waste.

No vaulted cloister high and grand in abbey church
Could match the living, changing tree or vie with won-
drous verdant green,

To challenge it.

What fruits you give to senses all oh lovely tree.
Your fragrant flowers and whispering leaves,
Enhance our woods.

How cooling is your tender shade of arching branches overlaid,
Protecting all with generous care and leaning over to declare
A song of love.

What cruel hands could cut you down, oh gentle tree,
And strip you of your canopy to fashion you in cross of wood
What cruelty.

What sinful man could use you thus as gibbet for a gentle
prince
And nail you both together thus, a double death of blows and
pain,
TO LIVE AGAIN!

Submitted by Edna Perry

COP 27 Loss & Damage Fund

On the final day of COP27 in Egypt, delegates from across the world agreed on a framework for a loss and damage fund. It means a fund will be created to support those impacted by climate disasters. This is a huge step forward - but how exactly the fund works is still to be decided.

Thank you for your support in getting this issue the traction it so desperately needed. We wrote to our MP Helen Morgan on behalf of Christian Aid in Whitchurch and sent her a picture of our Prayer People. At our request, she joined other MPs asking the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, to change his mind and go to COP27 and support the creation of this Loss & Damage Fund and, as a result of our combined actions, he did.

We can make a difference!

*Many thanks for your support
Briony, Helen & Brenda*



PRAYER REQUESTS

Pray for those known to us who are ill, housebound, in care, lonely, bereaved or in any other kind of need, that may experience peace this Christmas tide.



At Christmas Time...

Long ago
When the world was dark
And the city was quiet
You came
You crept beside us.
And no one knew.
Only the few
Who dared believe
That God might do something different.

Will you do the same for us today, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of today's world;
Not the friendly darkness as when sleep rescues us
from tiredness,
But the fearful darkness,
In which people have stopped believing
That war will end,
Or food will come,
Or that the government will change,
Or that the church cares?

Will you come into that darkness and do something different

To save your people from death and despair?

Will you come into the quietness of this town;
Not the friendly quietness
As when lovers hold hands,
But the fearful silence,

When the phone has not rung,
The letter has not come
The friendly voice no longer speaks
The doctor's face says it all.

**Will you come into this Darkness
And do something different,
Not to distract, but to embrace your people?
And will you come into the dark corners
And the dark places of our lives?**

We ask this, not because we are guilt-ridden,
or want to be,
But because the fullness of our lives,
Depends on us being open and
Vulnerable to you as you were to us,
When you came as a tiny baby,
trusting human hands to hold their maker.

**Will you come into our lives if we open them to you
and do something different?**

When the world was dark
And the city quiet
You came.
You crept in beside us.

**Do the same for us today, Lord
Do the same today.**

Sadly we have heard that Reg Hall has died. He will
be sadly missed. We will remember the family in our
prayers.

A service of Thanksgiving will be held at St. John's
on Friday 16th December at 12.30pm

Let us enjoy some joyful news for a change.

Good things are happening.

This is just an introduction to one happy event. I have put several copies of the whole account at the back of church.

NEWS FROM REA VALLEY METHODIST CHURCHES

It began in prayers in Stiperstones, for Ukraine which was under merciless attack, and for its traumatised people. The agony of Ukraine continues but in Stiperstones here is a steady victory.

A family of four has been rescued and now live peacefully and safely in one of Shropshire's tranquil beauty spots, embraced by the community surrounding them. Safe now from their shelled home in Lyman in the Donetsk region:

Dad Iryan (who has already found a job)
Mum Vitali, their two year old son, Oleksandr
And Grandma Yuliia.

The prayer meeting on March 1st, as the war unleashed, was held in the very building, the then Methodist Chapel, which has been transformed into the family's new home.

'They' really have done an amazing job. My brother and I went round the imaginatively restored building in the company of Margaret and Eddie—who really were (behind the scenes) the instigators and encouragers of it all.

We also had the joy a few days later, of joining with the people of the circuit in a large farm barn somewhere very high up, looking back towards the Stiperstones ridge, for a lovely service to celebrate what God had helped them achieve.

I have also included on a separate sheet a copy of some more joyful news—a letter sent by my nephew, Ian, from Laos, to the CMS so that it can be sent out to people in all churches who pray and support them and all the missionaries they have trained and sent out.

Ian and Sue have very recently started in this mission and already find it very exciting and rewarding. Our prayer joins others for them and their work

Elizabeth Jennings

Introducing...MORE Plus



Come along to **MORE Plus** on Mondays from
12-1.30pm for Soup + toast.



M.O.R.E On Mondays
Meet Others, Relaxation, Exercise



Why not come along to St John's Methodist Church
every Monday in December and January,
1pm to 4pm

Coffee & Company, Tea & Table Tennis
Biscuits & Board Games
All are welcome



Nativity & Christingle service

On Sunday 4th December at 10.30am Rev Donna is leading a Nativity & Christingle service. This has been advertised on our Facebook page and also in the Whitchurch Herald. We are hoping some Mums (and maybe Dads!) and toddlers will take part, but members of the congregation might also like to join in.



We are asking that you come dressed up in some way to represent a shepherd, angel or king. We do have a few costumes at church but perhaps not the right sizes!

Please come anyway and join in this celebration.



From The Months by Sara Coleridge:

Chill December brings the sleet
Blazing fire, and Christmas treat.
January brings the snow
Makes the feet and fingers glow.

Action For Children

I'm pleased to report that this year's collection for Action For Children has been counted and the total of £252.17 has been sent to the charity. Thank you, all of you, who over the years, have in any way contributed to this cause.

As was announced to the Church Council early this year, this now completes my role as this charity's representative for St. John's.

Over the past sixteen years Mary and I have enjoyed this task, made possible by your individual support. In total St. John's has contributed over £7000 to Action For Children.

Whoever steps up and takes on this task, will get satisfaction from this role.

On behalf of Mary and I — Thank you.

David Whiteley

Editor's note: Our grateful thanks go to David and Mary for their faithful work for this charity. If there is anyone in the congregation who feels that they would like to take on this task, please speak to one of the stewards. It would be good to continue to support such a worthwhile charity.

Christmas Party

We are holding our annual Christmas Party again after church on Sunday 11th December. As we no longer have a social committee (*they were wonderful at providing party food, harvest suppers and church birthday lunches for which we say a big thank you*) we have decided to try a Faith lunch. In other words, everybody brings something and we share it out.

To this end, **a list will be at the back of church** for you to indicate what you would like to bring. Please sign up and then we will have an idea of numbers and quantities.

Suggested items -salads, quiche, pork pies, sausage rolls, crisps, cooked meats, cheese, scones, trifles/ jellies, mince pies and anything else you can think of!

Vic & Helen are in charge of the party games so it should be fun.

On Saturday 17th December we are holding a Christmas Fair Coffee morning followed by a midday Christmas concert and soup lunch at St. John's. We hope to have the usual stalls—bric-a-brac, cake, books, tombola and raffle and others if offered. Please will you bring any contributions to church during the three weeks before and cakes on the day. Offers of assistance will be gratefully received by any of the stewards.

Bumps, Babies & Tots for December

Bumps Babies and Toddlers will be looking at the Christmas Story in December. Please join us from 9.30-11.30am for craft, toys, singing, stories, coffee & chat. Older brothers and sisters are invited to our final session before Christmas (**19th**) and then we will be having a break and starting again on **Monday 9th January**. We are keen for more people to join our rota of helpers so if you would like to help or just want to come and say hello, please speak to someone on the rota.

BBT Rota for December/January

Date/Lead	Setting up	Gen & Craft	Tea	Open up
5/12 Chris/ Mike	Chris / Mike	Hazel/ Brenda	Sarah	Pete
12/12 Kathryn/ Donna	Mike	Dot/ Elaine	Hazel	Pete
19/12 Kathryn/ Donna	Briony	Dot/ Chris	Sarah	Briony
No BBT	In	Christmas	Holi- days	

9th Jan Kathryn	Briony	Chris Brenda	Sarah	Briony
16th Jan Kathryn	Mike	Dot Elaine	Hazel	Pete
23rd Kathryn	Briony	Brenda Elaine	Sarah	Briony
30th Kathryn	Chris	Mike Dot	Hazel	Pete

Preachers for December

4th Rev Donna
11th Mrs Yvonne Alcock
18th 10.30am Elizabeth Jennings
6.30pm Carol Service
25th Rev Brian Acty

Stewards for December

4th Andrew Fawcett
11th Dot Charlesworth
18th 10.30am Chris Crowther
6.30pm Stewards
25th Elaine Gollins

Sound for December

4th Andrew Fawcett
11th Mike Nimmo
18th Sarah Lunt
25th Norman Gollins

Tea & Coffee Rota for December

4th Brenda Aumeer + Nancy Millington
11th Sarah Lunt & Linda Jenkins
18th Helen Thompson & Linda Weston
25th No refreshments



Preachers for January

1st	Rev Edna and Mr Ivan Perry
8th	Dr Geoff Dickenson
15th	Mrs Pat Maidment
22nd	Rev Donna <i>Covenant Service</i>
29th	Rev Rob Hilton

Stewards for January

1st	Andrew Fawcett
8th	Dot Charlesworth
15th	Mike Nimmo
22nd	Elaine Gollins
29th	Chris Crowther

Sound for January

1st	Andrew Fawcett
8th	Mike Nimmo
15th	Brian Acty
22nd	Norman Gollins
29th	Mike Nimmo

Tea & Coffee Rota for January



1st	Chris Crowther +
8th	Chris Crowther & Elaine Gollins
15th	Marion & Tony Griffin
22nd	Elizabeth & Pete Shingler
29th	Hazel & Mike Nimmo

Spick & Spanners for December

1st Nancy Millington & Gwen Reeves

15th Linda Jenkins, Elizabeth Shingler &
Briony Myles-Hook

Spick & Spanners for January

6th Mike Nimmo & Vic Trigg

20th Chris Crowther & Dot Charlesworth

Reporting scams—the basics—from Age UK

If you suspicious about...

...a call — hang up.

...an email— forward it to:- report@phishing.gov.uk

...a text message forward it to 7726, which is free of charge.

Zoom Services

The next Zoom service will be on Sunday 18th December at **2.00pm** (*World cup final at 3pm!*) Everyone is welcome for a short service of carols and time of fellowship. In January it will be on the 22nd, back at the usual time of **4pm** and will take the form of a Covenant Service led by Rev. Donna

Contact Avril for the link.

A Christmas Quiz *Here are the last lines (excluding the chorus) of the first verse of some Carols. What are the first lines?*

1. Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
2. There is room in my heart for Thee.
3. The Lord of every nation.
4. Is riv'n with Angel singing.
5. Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.
6. Promised from eternal years.
7. Are met in thee tonight.
8. Worshipping their infant Lord.
9. And glory shone around.
10. Evermore be led to Thee.
11. On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
12. Gath'ring winter fuel.
13. Snugly round your tiny form.
14. The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
15. Jesus Christ her little child.
16. Guided by a star.

Dates for your Diary—

Regular Activities

Mon. 5th/12th/19th Dec 9.30—11.30am BBT

Mon. 5th/12th/19th Dec 12 -4.00pm MORE plus

Mon 9th/16th/23rd/30th Jan. 9.30-11.30am BBT

Mon. 2nd/9th/16th/23rd/30th Jan 1 -4.00pm MORE plus

Weds 21st Dec.(new date) 11th Jan 2pm Jones's Ladies Tea

December

Sun 4th Nativity/Christingle Family Service 10.30am

Sun 11th Noon Christmas Party—Faith lunch

Sat. 17th Xmas Coffee morning +stalls 10am -noon followed by a Christmas Concert with refreshments.

Sun 18th 2pm Carols on Zoom

Sun 18th 6.30pm Candlelit Carol Service

Sun. 25th 10.30am Christmas Day -Rev B. Acty

January 2023

Tues. 10th 7.45pm Churches Together

Thurs. 19th 7pm Service for Christian Unity at St. Alkmund's

Sun 22nd 10.30am Covenant service Rev Donna

4pm Zoom Covenant Service

February 2023 Newsletter

Please let Vic Trigg have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by 22nd January.

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Taxi! for December

4th Hazel Nimmo
11th Peter Shingler
18th Hazel
25th No taxi service

Taxi! for January

1st No taxi service	8th Hazel
15th Peter	22nd Hazel
29th Peter	

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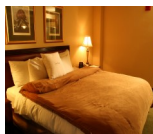
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& Cake Makers in
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