# The Messenger

# **Christ Church Barnstaple**

Methodist & United Reformed Church

"He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. He hurls down his hail like pebbles. Who can withstand his icy blast? He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breeze, and the waters flow." Psalm 147 16 –18

### February 2022



www.christ-church-barnstaple.org.uk

### February 2022

Most activities are cancelled or postponed until further notice but look out for updates as things start to change.

As the church magazine is printed once a month you may find more up to date information on the church website. I strongly recommend that, if you are able to, you have a look there for updates.

### **Our family matters**

### **Christ Church Family News**

It's good to see a regular congregation of 35 - 45 people every Sunday morning, and some of the church activities beginning to start up again.

While we are not all meeting together please look out for each other and let our Church Friends coordinator know of any concerns.

### Calendar

### January

Sun 30th 12.15pm Annual Church Meeting. We plan to serve hot drinks from the kitchen after the end of the morning service - you're welcome to bring something to eat, as, although the meeting will not be too long, it could mean a late lunch.

### February

Sun6th10:30amRev Don MacalisterSun13th10:30amRev Marilyn TrickerSun20th10:30amRev Don MacalisterSun27th10:30amRev Don Macalister

Following the successful trial runs of Café Church and Parents & Toddlers, both these groups plan to cautiously continue. To start with, they will need to limit numbers so anyone wishing to go along will need to get in touch first to reserve a place. The Young Families report starting on page 7 gives details of who to speak to.

Communion

Sound it Out have been meeting since November - details of the dates of their meetings are on page 4.

Most of you will be aware that the Circuit Service continues on Zoom on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm. Zoom gives the opportunity to allow visitors from a distance to participate. You may be interested to know that on February 3rd the service will be led by Rachel Leather daughter of Helen Leather and once in our 'Junior Church' and now a minister in the Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit. The service on March 17th will be led by Terry Spencer - minister here before Don. If you've not been before but would like to come, make sure you get on the mailing list for the link. Dear friends,

Fifty years ago this year the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches in this country took the brave decision to join together to take a step in realising a vision of building a visibly more united church.

It was a commitment to building unity which, from the very start, was seen to be short term, the hope was that the United Reformed Church would quite quickly be replaced by something closer to a United Church in Great Britain as other denominations shared the vision and joined together.

It wasn't an empty hope as this movement for greater unity in the body of Christ had begun in 1925 with the forming of the United Church of Canada when Methodists, Congregationalist, and Presbyterians united. It had carried on in South India in 1948 with the joining together of Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist churches to form the Church of South India.

So in the 1960s the hope was that here is Britain we would follow these amazing examples and talks were held between several denominations, including of course the Church of England and Methodist Churches.

In the end it was just the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England which chose to take that first step in this country, but later the Churches of Christ joined in 1981 and the Congregational Union of Scotland in 2000.

Work towards greater unity continues in this country and around the world, the Uniting Church in Australia being formed in 1977 with the uniting of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches.

As someone who grew up in a Presbyterian Church which became United Reformed it seems strange to be celebrating just 50 years of a denomination whose roots go back to the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and Luther, Calvin and Knox. In many ways the history of the denominations which make up the United Reformed Church is one to be proud of, but it is right that, as we celebrate 50 years of unity, we don't just look back those 50 years, or even 500 years, but look forward.

The vision and hope that the United Reformed Church was formed with is still very much alive and is perhaps even more vital to the life of The Church in Britain than it was in 1972.

As followers of Christ, as Christians, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we are One Body, and it is more important than ever that we express that unity in ways that are ever clearer and more visible to the communities we are a part of.

I thank God for Christ Church, for the unity we share and that we are not just Methodists and United Reformed but also Anglicans, Catholics, Baptists... children of God worshipping and working together to build the Kingdom of God in this place.

With love and prayers,

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## **Prayers for February**

### 6<sup>th</sup> Feb

Father, we praise you for allowing your kingdom to break through into our lives; for the things that to you are ordinary, but to us are extraordinary; and we thank you that you have called us to be part of your story, ordinary people caught up in the extraordinary tale of your plan for salvation, the base metal of our tarnished natures turned to gold in your hands. Amen.

### 13<sup>th</sup> Feb

Lord, we thank and praise you for all the many blessings in our lives. For food and shelter, for family and friends, for the measure of health we have, and the many comforts we take for granted.

Thank you also for your plain speaking; these blessings are not merited by anything we have done, just as the problems of many – of those who hunger, and are homeless, and sick – are also undeserved.

So, Lord, in giving our heartfelt thanks, we ask that we might be a blessing to those whom the worldly-wise often curse. Amen.

#### 20<sup>th</sup> Feb

Father, we thank you for showing us a better way to live.

When someone wrongs us, our first thought is to take revenge, to give as good as we got.

But you teach us to take pause for thought, and by so doing, perhaps make 'them' do likewise. We praise you, God, for your wisdom, imparted to us through your Son, Jesus Christ, and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit – to whom be all thanks and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

#### 27<sup>th</sup> Feb

God, thank you that, as we journey with you, you are transforming us. Thank you for the mountaintop experiences as well as the everyday journeys. We ask to know your presence and your power as we live each day for you. Amen.



# What's happening?

A brief report on some of the things under discussion at the last elders' meeting, on January  $11^{\text{th}}$  2022.

- Pastoral matters were reported and prayers said for all those mentioned.
- Church directories these need to be updated and reprinted.
- Roles and responsibilities With huge thanks to Elaine Stevens, Ian Allen and John Ruhleman for countless years of service, Alison Cairns takes on the role of church secretary, Jack Neville the role of room bookings secretary and Staveley Dawson the role of property steward for Christ Church. (There are still many opportunities for others to offer service to Christ Church in small or large ways.)
- The trial run of Café Church in December, with limited numbers, went very well. Movement was minimised, masks worn etc so everyone felt safe. There will be a further trial using a booking system. The aim under the present guidelines would be a maximum of 50 people plus 10 helpers - to be revised when the situation changes.
- The Jubilee Singers return to Christ Church for choir practice this month. They will be starting off with reduced numbers.
- There was some discussion about opening the windows on a Sunday morning. The advice from the Methodist Church, URC and the Government is that indoor spaces should be ventilated. Some windows must be open to allow a change of air. Members of the congregation should be aware of this, but may need reminding, and be prepared.
- Causeway, an organisation involved with adults with learning difficulties, would like a worship slot suitable for their particular needs. As café church is limiting numbers, getting together on a different Sunday afternoon was suggested. (Since the meeting a trial session has been set up in February.)
- With two years closure, the leaders of the Guides, Brownies and Rainbows have found that many of the girls have grown out of their previous age range. They plan to build from the bottom up and start a Rainbow group in February and hopefully follow up with Brownies in September.
- No negative feedback (so far!) on the different arrangement of chairs in church
  - some positive comments.
- Community Links Project nothing new to report. Date to be set by the next elders' meeting, for the CLP phase 2 group to meet.
- Finance The first quarter summary of income/expenses was circulated. We are still running at a loss of around £230 per week. The collection for the DEC Afghanistan Crisis Appeal raised £595.20. (Cheque now in the post.)
- Property Staveley reported that the leak in the disabled toilet is now fixed, the dishwasher is still waiting for the engineer to call. Matters still ongoing are the toilet twinning certificates and the update of the sign on the side gate. We hope to organise a group to work with Staveley for property matters.
- Young families reported separately in the Messenger
- Christian Aid reported separately in the Messenger
- Events/bookings Jack outlined his ideas for future room bookings, to comply with the requirements now in force. Letting rooms is becoming increasingly complex, requiring even more paperwork.
- Events Committee to be discussed at the next church meeting.
- Date of next meeting Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February at 7:15pm on Zoom







# CAFÉ Church

Angels came down to welcome back Café Church





Nativity Story Time led by Joan Cole

# Afternoon Tea at Ashford Garden Centre

A great chance to meet up over a cuppa every Friday at 2pm.



Happy New Year to you all!

Yes, the excitement of Christmas has come and gone but we look back to the enjoyment we had at church leading up to it, and we look forward to further good times we will share together...

**In Sunday Club in December** we followed the Christmas story week by week leading up to the story of the Three Wise Men, and thus on to the Flight into Egypt, We 'lit' our own Advent candles each week and made Christmas decorations, followed by crowns and lollipop stick stars in January in response to the story of the Wise Men. Every week too there was a general feeling of celebration – with the addition of a few Christmas treats at snack time! We now look forward in the coming weeks to hearing the stories about Jesus as he begins his ministry and teaching. It has also been a real delight to welcome one of our young people to be part of our Sunday Club team. Having chosen to be with us for the volunteer component of her bronze Duke of Edinburgh award, she will be with us for three months - although we hope she will stay with us for longer! She is proving to be a huge asset and is much liked and trusted by the children (and the rest of us of course!). An added bonus is that having her as part of the team, each of us is then given the opportunity to take it in turns to go into worship in church. Sadly, Sunday Club was not able to go into the service on the 19<sup>th</sup> December as planned due to the changed Covid situation, but hopefully it won't be too long now before we are able once again to join the rest of the congregation....

**At Parents and Toddlers** just before Christmas we had great fun, the children really enjoying a special Nativity Character Hunt and story with Joan. After song time, Christmas snacks followed with a very welcome cup of tea (and mince pie!) for the parents and helpers – the first since returning after lockdown!

We are now continuing with our meetings on Wednesdays between 1.30pm and 2.30pm and will be delighted to welcome newcomers into the group. So please, if you would like to come or know of others who would like to come please get in touch with either Joy on 07583 089863 or 01271 376171 or Anthea on 07979 393220 or 01237 471740 both for further details, and also to ensure that there will be a place available. For Covid safety, numbers still have to be limited so please, it is necessary to let us know that you would like to come. Many thanks.

**Christmas Café Church** met in December- by invitation to our usual families as it was 'a trial'. We needed to limit the numbers to see how it would work with the different organisation necessary for Covid safety. It was a great success and much enjoyed, everyone thrilled to be back. All the families responded to the slightly different Covid-safe way of doing things, remaining at their tables throughout. The children were amazing, were very co-operative and behaved wonderfully. Christmas Activities and crafts, appropriate for the different age ranges in families were provided on the tables. A brilliant team in the kitchen sorted the food which had been generously provided by our volunteers. Orders were placed on arrival and when teatime came the plates were delivered individually and very speedily to each table. The worship too was appreciated with music from the band led by Christopher Punt, and Joan telling the Nativity Story as the children joyfully followed her round the church.

As this one worked so well, we are now planning our next Café Church for February  $13^{th}$ depending on the Covid situation. Due to safety restrictions numbers will still have to be limited, so it will be necessary to book to reserve your place(s) with Anthea by Tuesday  $8^{th}$  February.

(07979 393220 or <u>coates@anthea-tony.eclipse.co.uk</u> or 01237 471740)

We now look forward to the coming year with hope and faith

With love to you all and many blessings for 2022

from the Young Families Work Team

### SAINT VALENTINE'S CAKE

**Ingredients** 

6 ounces (*150gms*) dark brown sugar 2 large eggs 7 fluid ounces (*200mls*) cooking oil, such as sunflower or olive 5 ounces (*125gms*) finely grated carrot 2 ounces (*50gms*) chopped walnuts 3⁄4 level tsp bicarbonate of soda Pinch of salt 6 ounces (*150gms*) plain flour 1⁄2 level tsp cinnamon 1⁄2 level tsp mixed spice

For the icing:

- 4 ounces (*100gms*) soft full fat cheese
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 6 ounces (*150gms*) sifted icing sugar
- 1 ounces (25gms) chopped walnuts

#### <u>Method</u>

- 1 Heat the oven to 160 C gas mark 3.
- 2 With a wooden spoon, beat the sugar and eggs together.
- 3 Stir in the oil, carrot and nuts.
- 4 Sift the dry ingredients and add to the carrot mixture, stir until well mixed.
- 5 Turn into a prepared 7 inch tin, or two 7 inch sandwich tins.
- 6 Bake in centre of oven for about 1 hour (25 30 mins for sandwich tins), cake should be firm, but springy to the touch.
- 7 Turn out on a wire rack to cool.
- 8 In a bowl beat together the cream cheese until soft, add the lemon juice and icing sugar.
- 9 When cake is cool, split in half if desired and sandwich with jam of choice.
- 10 Spread the cake with icing and sprinkle with chopped nuts.

Music to enjoy: Nat King Cole: My Funny Valentine John Field: Nocturnes

### SAINT VALENTINE

Saint Valentine was a 3<sup>rd</sup> century Christian martyr. His feast day is celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup> February, the anniversary of his martyrdom. He is the patron of beekeepers, epilepsy and the mentally ill, affianced couples, happy marriage and plague.

Many sources mention that there are two or even three Valentines, but it is likely that they were all one and the same.

The name Valentine is derived from *Valens* (worthy, strong, powerful) and was popular in late antiquity.

Saint Valentine was a priest of Rome and a former Bishop of Terni, an important town in Umbria. Valentine



was imprisoned in Rome for his Christian faith. Whilst held under house arrest by Judge Asterius, he discussed the validity of Jesus with him. The Judge tested him by asking him to heal his blind adopted daughter. Valentine prayed to God, laid his hands on her eyes and her vision was immediately restored. The Judge was humbled and asked Valentine for the next move. Valentine instructed that all idols around the house be broken, that he should fast for three days, then be baptised.

The Judge obeyed and as a result of his fasting and prayers, freed all the Christian inmates under his authority. In addition, forty-four members of his family and household were baptised.

This was not enough to save him. He was arrested again and was sent to the emperor Claudius Gothicus. Claudius liked him, until Valentine attempted to convert him to Christianity. Valentine was condemned to death unless he relented his faith. He refused and was ordered to be stoned to death. This did not kill him, so he was ordered to be beheaded. This happened on 14<sup>th</sup> February 269.

Legend has it that before his execution, Valentine wrote a note to Asterius's daughter, signed "from your Valentine", which is said to have inspired today's romantic missives.

Another popular myth was that he was arrested whilst marrying Christian couples, thus allowing the husband to escape conscription into the Pagan army. Apparently soldiers were in short supply at the time so this was a great inconvenience to the Emperor. It is said that in order to remind men of their vow to God and of God's love he cut out hearts from parchment and presented them to persecuted Christians, a possible origin of the widespread use of hearts on Valentine's day.

In reality there is no mention of romantic love in connection with Saint Valentine, it has been suggested that Saint Valentine's identity was manufactured in an attempt to supersede the Pagan holiday of Lupercalia when young men looked for a mate.



This event took place around the middle of February. It was also considered that birds paired around this time. These myths and legends did not exist before Chaucer's time when he documented them in a fictional text, Parlement of Foules.

Whatever the origins of the customs we now embrace, these myths have certainly benefited the greetings card and other manufacturing industries.



Thanks to your amazing generosity, Christ Church has raised enough money to buy not one but 2 cows for Christmas. This gift will make such a difference to two families (who we shall never meet) but whose lives, livelihoods and sense of hope and worth will be changed for the better as a result of your donations. A cheque for £389 is currently winging its way to Christian Aid in London and as soon as we get the certificate back I will display it in the foyer. Thank you so much for supporting this fundraising initiative. What shall we add to the Christ Church virtual farm next?!

Christian Aid week is  $15^{th} - 21^{st}$  May this year. We would love to organise a Big Breakfast or a fundraising coffee morning during Christian Aid Week if the Covid situation permits, so watch this space for updates nearer the time. May will be here before we know it!

Your continuing support is much appreciated.

Janet Marshall & Paula Littlewood

# Kira Farm and Amigos update -

unexpected news from Scovia

It was a surprise and delight to receive a letter from Scovia in December. We had not expected another one. This was because the decision had been made to conclude Kira Farm's training programme at the end of October instead of November. Unexpectedly, the trainees would be going home a month earlier than originally planned as they were required to receive vaccinations against Covid 19 in their local communities. So, not expecting to hear from Scovia again, and feeling rather sad about this, I wrote to her wishing her all the best for the future and sending love and blessings from Christ Church. But then, along with a lovely picture of her in her gown during graduation, there came the following letter in December...

#### A New Chapter Begins

Dear Anthea and Tony and friends at Christ Church

I am so happy to be reading your letter from home. I didn't think I would be writing to you after leaving Kira but it is a surprise. Thank you so much for everything you have given to me but also for always encouraging me through the letters and praying for me. I have friends in you that God has sent to me. I am so happy to hear that you my friends at Christ Church have been enjoying reading my letters all the time I was at Kira Farm, thank you so much for taking the time to read them.



"Sincere thanks to all of you who sponsored us." Elaine

Joy Morley and Brian and Elaine Stevens raised £340 in aid of The Children's Hospice SW with help from marshals Marrianne and Harry







# **Amigos & Kira Farm News**



Amigos have planted hundreds of thousands of trees in Uganda in 2021

Scovia has graduated from Kira Farm

*Right now, I am in Awach, a town near my village doing some construction work, I hope to get paid and I can join two friends from Kira to do a joint business and apply all our knowledge in it.* 

*I am really grateful for the time at Kira Farm and I thank you so much for sponsoring my training. My life is completely changed. I pray that God blesses you abundantly.* 

I send my greetings to all the Christ Church family

Have a Merry Christmas!

Scovia

What wonderful news to hear that Scovia has already started work on what she most wanted to do and is making plans to start a business with her friends from Kira. We hear too that other graduates from Scovia's year are doing exceptionally well. To quote from Amigos...

We heard from Joshua (central to the smooth running of Kira Farm) that the 2021 trainees really hit the ground running when they returned home in December, some of them have set up businesses already, and one has even taken on an employee! We never cease to be amazed at the creativity and drive of these young men and women, and we pray that they will each of them become true agents of change within their families, communities and their nation.

We shall now look forward to hearing further news of Scovia's progress in Autumn 2022 when she will be visited by the team from Kira Farm.

So our prayers are with Scovia that she may blossom, and, along with the other graduates from Kira Farm, that she will become an agent for change - change within her own family, community and nation making a difference in the lives of others.

Our blessings go with them all.

Anthea

### **Eco church comment**

### **Plastic Free North Devon**

**Cleanse and Clean**: This January PFND have launched their annual Cleanse and Clean competition and this year it is open to everyone to enter. They want

to encourage everyone to get outside in the fresh air - a walk, a cycle ride, or just a splash in muddy puddles in your local park - and then do a clean at the same time. They want to encourage everyone to connect to what is around us and inspire a passion to want to protect it. Being outdoors can hugely benefit our mental health by relieving stress and improving our happiness, and this campaign is about encouraging people to do just that whilst giving back to the environment at the same time.



They have 3 Dryrobes to give away to all age groups in the hope that this will encourage lots of entries! They are also holding a Cleanse and Clean Day of Action on 29th January.

(Details of the competition are on the PFND website - you need to send in a photo of your 'Cleanse and clean' action to enter the competition in one of the three age groups.)

**#LookLocal:** We are lucky enough to live in an area surrounded by green space, some of which is used for the production of local fruit, vogetables and animal products. This

production of local fruit, vegetables and animal products. This means we have some brilliant local suppliers and shops that can keep us topped up with what we need, and deliver it to our doors if required - we need to support and encourage their use. Check out the directory of local producers, suppliers, refill stores etc. on the PFND website.

https://plasticfreenorthdevon.org

# Thinking ahead and Thinking positive!

Hopefully we will soon be organising events to raise some much needed money for Church funds. If you have any of the following:

- Unopened boxes of biscuits or chocolates with a use-by date of at least June
- Unwanted gifts
- Christmas items/decorations

please could you save them for us? As soon as we are able to store them in the Church we will let you know. Many thanks.

# Our newest local preacher

A presentation Bible is given to each newly accredited local preacher, with a special label signed by the President of Conference and others. I chose a Study Bible giving extra information about people in the Bible, Bible passages and other information of use in preparing sermons. The one I selected is the New King James Version Study Bible Full-colour edition as I did not have a copy of that Bible translation. The Bible was presented to me by Revd Graham Thompson at the circuit service to welcome Revd Stephen Caddick and Sharon to our circuit.

My thanks to everyone for their prayers, encouragement and support during my training, especially to Marilyn as my tutor, Joan as my mentor and those who took part in helping me with some of the items for my portfolios.

Many blessings,

Alison





(See photo on back cover)



# All at Christ Church Barnstaple are committed to the following Safeguarding Principles:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and all adults.
- \* the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable.
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse. (Methodist Safeguarding Guidelines, online: www.methodist.org.uk)

	Weekly Offertory for 2021					
		Cash and Envelopes	Gift Aid			
November	7th	£167.10	£300.00			
	14th	£92.00	£0.00			
	21st	£264.10	£10.00			
	28th	£98.50	£20.00			
December	5th	£97.00	£0.00			
	12th	£111.00	£300.00			
	19th	£179.50	£10.00			
	25th	Retiring collection for DEC appeal	£10.00			

An increasing number of people are donating money direct to the Church account by standing order. Currently this offertory is £1781.00 per month. Many thanks to all of you. If you have given me an envelope number your gift will be included in the offertory in the accounts, otherwise it has been recorded as a donation. *If you are a tax payer* and would like the church to claim back the tax on your giving or if you change your address or other details, please contact Janet Marshall or speak to a serving elder - Thank you.



If you are visiting Christ Church today we extend a warm welcome. Please take a Messenger home with our good wishes.

Christ Church Minister Rev Don Macalister

tel. 01271 345313 dasmacalister@icloud.com

Young families worker

Elders - There will be changes after this is printed, following elections at the AGM on Sunday 30th January - update next month.

Shirley Baxter	Kathy Jeacock (treas)	Jenny Newman
Alison Cairns (sec)	Chris Marshall	Eff Poole
Anthea Coates	Janet Marshall	Liz Seymour
Staveley Dawson	Jack Neville	Elaine Stevens

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# **Candlelight Carol Service**









Christ Church has raised enough money to buy 2 cows for Christian Aid - page 10



St Valentine's cake - Recipe page 8



Congratulations to Alison Cairns Alison has received a 'presentation bible' on becoming a newly accredited local preacher—Page 13