

Wantage & Abingdon Circuit

CHILDREY

GROVE

WANTAGE

SECTOR

NEWS


The Methodist Church



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December 2020

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Contributions for the **next Newsletter** should be sent to the editor by email, phone or in writing by **Sunday 10th January 2021** to
wantage.sector.newsletter@gmail.com
Tel : 01235 766655 / 07710 214601
Editors : Gill & Gordon Skidmore

Sunday Services and Church Activities

All three churches in the sector are meeting for worship. Business meetings and other church activities on the premises remain suspended.

See page 6 for details.

There is a Zoom Service shared from Wantage at 10:30 each week:
(for access to these please contact Rev Keith Underhill)

Texts for Services at home for each Sunday are posted on the websites.

Grove web site is found from www.wantab.org.uk

Wantage web site www.wantagemethodist.org.uk

Circuit web site www.wantab.org.uk

Circuit YouTube channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBpMj71hDzpMhVj6t_ZQt0w

Each week Wesley's Chapel in London will continue to live-stream worship, adapted for no physical congregation.

Service times: Wednesday 12:45, Thursday 12:45, Sunday 9:45 and 11:00.

All these services will be available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA>

More information about all of this can be found at

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/worship-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

From the Manse.....

Over the past few weeks there has been an uncertainty about how we might or might not as a nation be able to celebrate Christmas this year.

In the past week or so there has been clarification from the Government along with what is and what is not allowable in that small window between 23rd - 27th December, when there will be a relaxing of the restrictions we are currently living under.

Despite the controversial nature and divided reaction to this decision, newspaper headlines have nevertheless told us that Christmas has been saved and not cancelled - hurrah!

Of course, the notion that Christmas either needs saving or can simply be cancelled is interesting and one I suggest we would wish to both challenge and refute.

Not allowing families to meet in each other's homes for the usual Christmas dinner and the giving of presents, is not the same as Christmas being cancelled.

Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans of the seventeenth Century strongly disapproved of singing and all Christmas festivities, seeing them as wasteful, abhorrent and sinful. They viewed the celebration of Christ's birth as "popish" and argued that God had not called upon humanity to celebrate Christ's nativity in such a manner. As a result, an Act of Parliament in 1644 effectively banned the celebration and in, June 1647, the Long Parliament passed an ordinance confirming the abolition of the feast of Christmas.

Was Christmas cancelled then? No! Whilst even with the easing of restrictions for five days will mean that everyone may not be able to celebrate Christmas this year as they wish and we will be prevented from doing all that we might normally do, Christmas itself, can never be cancelled.

It can never be cancelled for one extremely important reason; Christmas is not what we do, but what God did and does. Which is why to proclaim that Christmas has been saved is to get things the wrong way round. God doesn't need saving, we do! God came to us at Christmas for that simple reason.

He came in human form to show us a better way of living and being. He came among us almost unnoticed so that we might be reunited with Him. At Christmas we acknowledge that we are not on our own and that in the midst of the messiness of our world and lives, God comes alongside us.

May we all be aware of the peace and presence of the Christ Child as we celebrate his birth once more.

With love and God Bless

Keith

Revd Jeffrey Bloomfield

Some of you may well remember **Revd Jeffrey Bloomfield**, a former Superintendent Minister of this Circuit.

Jeffrey lived in Wantage when the Manse was then in Witan Way.

One of his daughters, Emma, contacted Keith to inform him that her dad had died peacefully on 6th November after a short illness.

Emma thought that those who remember Jeffrey's time in the Circuit would like to know.

Jeffrey's funeral was held on the 18th November 2020 in Risby. If anyone would like the link to the live streaming of Jeffrey's service, which will be available online until 16th December, please contact Keith directly so that he can pass this information on.

Likewise, if you would like to send a card or a greeting to Anne, Jeffrey's widow, Keith can let you have her address.

We give thanks for Jeffrey's ministry and service in this Circuit and for new life in heaven even as we mourn his passing.

Publication Dates

Because of the volatility of the Covid19 situation, we are planning to publish as follows for the immediate future:

Christmas Greetings Edition	Deadline	Thursday 17 th December
	Publish	Saturday 19 th December
January Edition	Deadline	Sunday 10 th January
	Publish	Wednesday 13 th January
February Edition	Deadline	Sunday 7 th February
	Publish	Wednesday 10 th February
March Edition	Deadline	Sunday 28 th February
	Publish	Wednesday 3 rd March
April Edition	Deadline	Sunday 21 st March
	Publish	Wednesday 24 th March

Cover image

Thanks to Naomi Chester (Naomi's Stained Glass, York) for permission to use the image of her nativity panel set. Many of you will remember Naomi growing up in Wantage when her father, Michael, was our Superintendent Minister in the 1980s.

Christmas Greetings

With Scout Post out of action this year and the church buildings having very limited access for shared card greetings, we are offering the following opportunities for the exchange of Christmas cards/greetings for our people in Wantage & Grove.

Christmas Cards for individuals

We are grateful to Andrew Barber and Ann who have volunteered to distribute cards to addresses in Wantage and Grove.

The service will be on offer to people from Wantage Methodist Church and Grove Methodist Church, with the following conditions:

- the delivery area is only to addresses within Wantage and Grove
- the cards are to people who are part of Wantage or Grove Methodist churches [i.e. it's not an alternative to the Scouts Post!]
- there are two alternative receiving points: these are the letterboxes of 22 Priory Orchard or 7 Parsonage Close
- the latest date for receiving cards for delivery is **Thursday 17th December**

Christmas Greetings for all (equivalent to cards for the notice board on church premises)

For those who would have sent a card/greeting for putting it on the boards at church to share with everyone, we shall publish a special edition of the Newsletter with all greetings that we have received.

These greetings can be sent either

electronically to one of the following email addresses :

Wantage.sector.newsletter@gmail.com

wntgmethodistnotices@gmail.com

johnskidmore2@gmail.com

or as messages by phone to 01235 766655 or 07710 214601

or on paper / card either to 32 Black Croft or put in the post box at Wantage Methodist Church on the external hall wall by the link.

The latest date for receiving greetings is also **Thursday 17th December**.

If you wish to make a **donation to charity** in return for this, we suggest one of the following :

Crisis

Action for Children

Alzheimers Society

MHA

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

We are very sad to hear of the death of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks and we extend our sympathy to the Jewish community, his family and friends. A man of faith and a highly respected theologian and philosopher, he reached out to wider society and was well known to many through his writing and broadcasting. Among many things, he will be remembered for his commitment to developing understanding between different faiths. May his memory be a blessing.

Revd Ruth Gee,

Assistant Secretary of the Conference and Connexional Ecumenical Officer

Wantage & Grove Church Partnership Christmas Project 2020

The Christmas Story

A Carol Service for the whole community from the churches of Wantage & Grove

This is in the form of a video which will aim to bring the Christmas Story to people in Wantage and Grove (and further afield) through local churches working together.

The video comprises:

- An introduction.
- A segment contributed by each of the participating churches.
- A short homily on the significance of Jesus' birth.
- A closing prayer.

Each church in the partnership has contributed to tell part of the Christmas story with a "reading" and a Christmas song.

The video will be released onto the WGCP website and participating church websites at 6 pm on 13th December 2020 under the title "The Christmas Story – a carol service for the local community from the churches of Wantage & Grove."



The Christmas Story

A Carol Service for the local community

From churches in Wantage & Grove

Online at

6pm

13th December 2020

Wantage

Parish of Wantage

wantageparish.com

St John Vianney RC Church

wantagecatholicparish.org

Wantage Baptist Church

wantagebaptist.org.uk

Wantage Christian Fellowship

wantagechristianfellowship.org.uk

Wantage Community Church

wantagecc.org.uk

Wantage Methodist Church

wantagemethodist.org.uk

Grove

Grove Free Evangelical Church

gfec.org.uk

Grove Methodist Church

wantab.org.uk/grove.html

St John's Parish Church

groveparishchurch.org.uk

Vale Elim Pentecostal Church

valeelimchurch.org.uk

www.wgcp.org.uk

Notice from HMG

The Prime Minister has announced that England will be returning to a Local Restriction Tiers system from **2nd December 2020**. We are in Tier 2.

The key thing to note is that **communal worship will be able to restart from 2nd December in all Local Restriction Tiers**.

Please note that wherever a gathering can take place, social distancing of 1m+ should still be strictly maintained between anyone who doesn't live together or are not in a 'support bubble.'

Activity	High Tier 2
Communal Prayer	Open for as many people as can be safely accommodated with social distancing measures
Communal Worship	Can only interact indoors with your own households but outdoors can interact in groups of up to 6
Other Standalone Life-Cycle Ceremonies (not part of communal worship)	Can only interact indoors with your own households but outdoors can interact in groups of up to 6
Supervised Activities for Children (including Sunday school)	Can take place with no limit on the number of children permitted to attend, following COVID-Secure guidance. Adults must ensure social distancing at all times.

The President of the Conference responds to the latest lockdown guidance

Our churches have responded in different and imaginative ways to the challenges of the last few months. Local trustees have had to make the appropriate decision about opening their buildings for worship in response to their context whether that be a national lockdown in England, the firebreak in Wales or all those living with restrictions in Scotland and the Islands of our nations.

The Government has commended the churches on their adherence to the guidance and the care they have taken to help protect worshippers in their buildings. It is sad that the freedom to make those decisions has been removed as part of national efforts to control the spread of the virus in England (as is the case in Wales). We will continue to engage with the Government to try to ensure that where appropriate church buildings can safely reopen for worship sooner rather than later.

Many churches have been at the heart of supporting local communities, for example through food provision, support groups and mutual aid groups. As we enter into periods of new restrictions, we encourage people to continue loving their neighbour through this kind of service. As we have seen, the pandemic and lockdown have hit the poorest and most marginalised the hardest. The Methodist Church, along with others, have been speaking out about the impact of household debt and poverty, and we must continue to do so.

Revd Richard Teal

President of the Methodist Conference

A pastoral message from the Secretary of the Conference

A message from the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler to the Methodist people following a further lockdown in England and continued restrictions in Wales and Scotland.

I don't want to exaggerate our current situation by suggesting any similarity between our position and his, but I have turned to [Dietrich Bonhoeffer's](#) *Letters and Papers from Prison* as I think about the 'lockdown' that began at midnight today. Even 'lockdown' can seem to be an exaggeration as for many life will not be so very different. Unlike in the Spring, schools and other educational establishments are still open; there is no restriction on the number of times per day that someone can leave their home; churches can be open for individual prayer, funerals, and the live streaming of acts of worship (as always, up-to-date guidance for ministers and managing trustees is available on the [Methodist Church website](#)). Our liberty has been restricted for the sake of others; it is going too far (I think) to claim that our liberties have been infringed.

None of that makes lockdown easy; there is a number of reasons why this feels so hard. One is the divergence with which we have to live in the Connexion. As activities in England become more confined, there is soon to be an easing of the restrictions in Wales. Scotland (at the time of writing) continues to operate a policy of regional tiers. The Isle of Man and the Channel Islands have had a very different experience in some respects and may feel more isolated than before from the rest of the British Isles. Remembering that we are one Connexion has never seemed so important.

Another reason that this feels hard is the time of year. Bonhoeffer wrote to his parents on 9 November 1943, 'Now the dismal autumn days have begun and one has to try to get light from within.' I was talking to a friend last week about some practical arrangements which involved meeting outdoors and said that I supposed it was harder than in the Spring because November seems grimmer than April. 'That's because,' he replied, 'November is grimmer than April.' This might be one year when we do not complain about preparations for Christmas beginning too early; the Christian message is that it is when the darkness is deepest the light of Christ shines most brightly.

Bonhoeffer continued that letter in November 1943, 'Your letters always help with this.' The discovery of pandemic for me and many others has been the range of communication technology available to us and the simple importance of keeping in touch. One of the principal tasks of ministry (for the whole community not just the ordained) is to maintain the links; that many church buildings had not reopened for worship before governments ordered their closure again was testament to the imaginative ways of sustaining fellowship that had been adopted. Of course, meeting online is not the same as gathering around a table but neither is it simply 'better than nothing' and we shall continue to reflect and to explore what it means to be a church that is drawn together in physical and non-physical ways.

A third reason that this is hard, however, is the (temporary) loss of a church service in those buildings where public worship had resumed. Bonhoeffer wrote in April

1943 of the ringing of the prison chapel bell being the best time to write home. 'It's remarkable what power church bells have over human beings and how deeply they can affect us. So many of life's experiences gather around them.' Meeting in a church building has a similar resonance. It is not simply about being in a particular place for a particular purpose on a particular day but about somewhere that has resonance with an host of memories, both communal and individual. 'I think,' Bonhoeffer went on, 'of all the different parishes I have worked in, then of all the family occasions.... I really cannot count all the memories that come alive to me, and they all inspire peace, thankfulness, and confidence.' At a time when we are anxious about when the restrictions will be lifted, reminding ourselves not of what we are missing but of what has blessed us in the past can be a gateway to peace, thankfulness, and confidence, and not only for us but for one another as, confined to our homes though we might be, we make sure that we keep in touch. 'I don't expect a long letter from you' wrote Bonhoeffer to one of his friends, 'but let's promise to remain faithful in interceding for each other.'

Jonathan Hustler, 5th November 2020.

Presidency marks Inter Faith week with letter celebrating friendship

An open letter from the Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference and Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, to mark [Inter Faith Week 2020](#).

Dear Brothers and Sisters of all Faiths,

We greet you all at the beginning of this Inter-Faith Week 2020 with good wishes of peace. This is an occasion when we celebrate our friendships and also when we consider what we share in common. The Methodist people are known to be friends of all and enemies of none. That friendship we would like to extend to you again this year, with respect, and indeed love.

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, taught us to acknowledge the work of God in all peoples of faith. To recognise the finger of God, to rejoice in God's work, and praise God with thanksgiving for God's presence and work amongst people of all faiths.

We share with you a life of dedication to our traditions and faith. This year in particular Methodist People have been reflecting on the fact that in spite of all the suffering and struggles we have faced collectively as a Kingdom and worldwide that the best of all is that God is still with us. This we choose to affirm in faith and hope of a better future.

With renewed friendship

With every blessing,

The Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference, 2020 - 2021

Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, 2020 - 2021

Wantage & Grove Street Pastors

REPORT OF OUR SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2020 ACTIVITIES

Our first patrol since the end of March went on to the streets of Wantage on Friday 4 September. Street Pastors maintained a 'social distance' from each other and from members of the public; the latter being easier said than done sometimes.

Street Pastors did not take any lollies out with them, initially, so as to help keep their distance from other people. Of course, many people missed getting a lolly from us although they were glad to see us back on the streets.

We have regularly reviewed our operating procedures following changes in Government regulations. Our Prayer Support Volunteers are 'working from home', patrols are shorter and as a result of pubs closing earlier in the evening, our patrols have started earlier and finished around 10.30 pm. Teams now carry a pack of PPE including visors, plastic aprons and over-shoes, etc. for use in emergency situations that would enable us (or another qualified individual) to deal with life-and-death situations.

We patrolled twice in September and five times in October. There were no serious incidents for us to deal with as our streets were much quieter than we are used to. We spent much of our time talking with people, being a 'listening ear' and encouraging those who are struggling with 'the new normal'. Where a large group of people were gathering outside at closing time, we encouraged them to make their way home.

We were in Wantage when a very large lorry had difficulties navigating the corner of Newbury Street and dragged a parked car some distance into the market square. We called the police and reported the incident. No one was injured.

As of 5 November, a National lockdown has been mandated which will see the streets of Wantage and Grove be almost totally vacated at night. We will continue to review the needs of our communities as time progresses and explore options of what help and support we could offer for the time being.

Prayer Gathering

We were delighted that so many of you were able to join us for the first Zoom Prayer Gathering in October and want to let you know that the **recording** is now available on the Prayer Page of the Street Pastors and Ascension Trust websites (<https://www.ascensiontrust.org.uk/prayer-pastors/>).

The **Prayer Declaration** we used can be downloaded there too.

I am sure many of you have not seen the **Prayer Page** before; it is new in the last year or so. Do check out the resources there and let the Prayer Team have your comments and ideas!

We are planning another **Zoom Prayer Gathering**, this time in the evening, of **Saturday 5th December (7 – 8.15 pm)**. We are delighted that **Rev Les Isaac**

will be our speaker. On that night we also plan to pray together in groups for the Street/ School/ Rail Pastor projects and the initiatives of Ascension Trust.

Do please pencil this event in to your diary and make a point of registering, so that you get the Zoom ID and Passcode after you have registered nearer the date. The Registration link is below:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYudO-sqz8iH9TPPG7S-Lmo2R_8wODmjxyl

Our Zoom account has a cut off at 100 participants, so do join in good time on the night!

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and be gracious unto you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you and give you peace.

We look forward to seeing you in December!



**ASCENSION
TRUST**

**The
Prayer
Gathering**

Saturday 5th
December 2020

7:00PM to 8:30PM

Join us for
a special evening!

Speaker: Les Isaac
CEO Ascension Trust

Registration link available by mid November

Childrey

Childrey are planning to meet for worship on the second and fourth Sundays in each month.

Please contact Keith if you wish to attend as there is a strict limit on the numbers that can be present.

We wish to welcome Kevin & Angie Goodman to Childrey on their membership transfer from Trinity Methodist Church, Abingdon.

Kevin & Angie have decided on a re-set in their busy lives post-pandemic and both look forward to having a long and productive future at Childrey.

Prayers:

Prayers are asked for Amy Rose Legge and her family, Keith & Leonora, David, Barbara, Shirley, Jean and all those unknown to us who are in need of our help.

Christian Love to all.

Grove

It was a real blessing to be able to open our church again after such a long time closed during lockdown. Even though we were only able to be open for two weeks, due to the second lockdown, I'd like to think it lasted two months as our first service was 25th October and the second on 1st November.

Getting ready for opening was a real challenge due to the need for risk assessments and procedures to be written. Many thanks are due to the small team who got it all together and enabled the opening. Due to their efforts, we now have everything in place for when we are able to surface once again. This will be on 6th December.

I hope to be able to greet everyone in Jesus name once again in the flesh and am looking forward to it immensely. *Ian Sturt*

Cards for Freyja's Fund. Thank you from Judith to everyone who supported the card sale. £130 was raised and this will be added to money raised from commissions she has received, for which she thanks you. She will be sending a cheque shortly to the fund which is available at the J.R. Hospital to support children suffering cancer and their families.

It is with great sadness that we have to record the loss of two of our church family. Katie King died peacefully at home on 27th October after a very courageous stand against Motor Neurone Disease. David Phillips died peacefully at home on 28th October after suffering with a brain tumour. They are very much missed and our love and sympathy go out to both of their families.

Eric Thomas' condition has not progressed as they had hoped. As many of you know Eric has been fighting oral cancer for some time. After the operation in August it was thought the cancer had all been removed. However on 27th October, after more scans, Eric had a phone call to say that it had reappeared. On 12th November he had further discussion with the cancer surgeon and was told it has spread, is aggressive and inoperable. He is now undergoing palliative care. Your loving prayers and support are asked for Eric and Judy and all the family.

We continue to remember all of our church family who are in poor health or have other difficulties and problems compounded by the coronavirus situation. We remember especially Jim and Cathy Voller separated by ill health after their long life together.

The Wednesday Zoom Coffee mornings are a good chance to keep in touch and if you would like to 'come along' please let Keith know and he will arrange for you to be included. You will then receive a weekly invitation by email and can join in as and when you are able to.

Wantage

Keeping in Contact

We are trying to maintain various ways of keeping in touch.

There is always our internet website, and our Facebook presence, but it is understood that many of us cannot access the internet easily, if at all.

We will continue to publish a monthly newsletter and weekly notices and post those on the website. We will also do our best to distribute copies to those who would wish to receive them.

Sunday Worship

We resume using the chapel for worship each Sunday at 10:30 am from **December 6th**. These will only last for around 30/40 minutes.

The planned services are shown in the feature on page 14/15.

- Please book ahead each week to attend worship by telephoning or emailing Clive & Alison Phillips on 01235 760335 or by email to candaphillips@gmail.com **by 6:00 pm on Saturday before the Sunday**. Clive and Alison will reply to answer machine messages or emails to confirm that the place has been reserved
- Please observe social distancing.
- Please sanitise your hands on entry.
- Please scan the Wantage Methodist Church QR code for the NHS-Covid19 app displayed at the entrances if you have the app.
- If you wish to use a Bible and hymn book, we encourage you to bring your own wherever possible.
- Please bring your own cushion and bottled water with you if you need them.
- You will need to keep your coats etc. with you.
- You should wear a face covering whilst in church. Some people are exempt from wearing a face covering for various reasons and will not be required to do so while attending worship.
- Sadly we may not sing but can join in with spoken responses.
- There will be no creche, Junior Church or Kids@Church for the time being.
- Should you require to use the toilet at any time, please speak to the "Link" door steward.
- You should sanitise your hands as you leave.
- There will be a basket for any offering you wish to be made either on your way in or way out.
- When the service has ended, please leave promptly in an orderly fashion so as to maintain social distancing.

Coming to a service will always involve an element of risk, although we are committed to making sure that the risk is as small as we can make it. You must decide for yourself whether this is a risk you wish to take and the decision will be

different for different people. If you don't want to physically come to a church service that is fine, we are all still one Church.

We are committed to ensure that there will be a **Zoom service** each week either from the service held in church or alongside the service held in church.

To share the Zoom services please contact Keith for the links.

Initially there will not be break out groups after Zoom services from when it comes live from the Chapel but we will develop things so that this is possible.

Also other material for worship at home that has been available since lockdown will continue to be supplied.

Worship on Wednesdays.

On the first Wednesday of the month, June Grunwald is projecting a short (30 - 40 min) Powerpoint with prayers, bible reading, hymn(s) and images at 2:00 pm in the Chapel. During these continued strange times, it will be another opportunity to meet in our Chapel (with all the social distancing etc in place) for those who would like to attend. This has obviously been interrupted by the November lockdown and the one original set for **December 2nd** has been **cancelled**. June is now planning to have the next one in the New Year on **Wednesday January 6th**.

YMOSES

Jane Kent

YMOSES (Youth meeting on Sunday evenings) will be meeting again in person in the church hall on **Sunday 13th December** between 7 and 7:40 pm. Anyone of secondary school age is really welcome - please give me a ring if you have any questions. (Jane Kent, 01235 765421)

Regular Zooms:

Tea@Three at 3:00 pm every Tuesday - a chance to see people for a chat. Please contact Keith for the links.

Knit & Chat at 2:30 pm on the first and third Monday each month.

Please contact Helen Carter for the links.

Please watch for the latest information which will be posted on the website.

<https://wantagemethodist.org.uk>

Winter Walkers

A few people have mentioned that they would appreciate a walking companion, particularly in the winter when it takes more of an effort to get out. As the weather is so changeable one idea might be to have a group email so anyone who fancies a walk can email the rest with a suggested day, time and length and others respond and join in. (Obviously keeping to the Covid regulations - currently groups of 6.) If you would like to join a group of winter walkers, please email June Grunwald jnurdqlaw@live.co.uk or phone 01235 760488, giving your permission for your email to be shared with other potential walkers. If you don't have an email and

like to walk, please give your permission to share your phone number with the rest of the walkers.

Pastoral

Ann Barber

In this final Newsletter of 2020, we may all be reflecting on what an extraordinary year we've experienced. Our physical involvement with Church, and our participation in worship has never before been so restricted. At present we cannot predict how much will change within the first part of 2021, and so we've had to rethink the distribution of membership tickets. Next year's annual Covenant Service, at which our Pastoral Visitors are re-dedicated and given the membership tickets for the people for their list, will not be in its usual form this time. However, everyone can be reassured that they will receive their membership ticket.

Sadly, there are more deaths of former church members to record this month. On 27th October Katie King died peacefully at home after a long illness. Katie was a member at Wantage for a long time until she transferred to Grove, and her children, Jacqueline and Richard grew up in our Sunday School. We hold Alec and all of the family in our prayers in their present sadness.

On 8th November, one of our very elderly members, Ian Campbell, died in the JR Hospital. Although it is many years since he worshipped with us, he retained his longstanding membership of our church. We offer our sympathy to Ian's daughter Fiona and her family, and to his other daughter, Marianne, who has been a helper at Friday Lunches since they were first established. We hold them all in our prayers, and it is hoped that a Thanksgiving Service for Ian's life will take place when the government restrictions allow it.

On 12th November, many members of our church family joined in a Zoom Farewell to Sharon who will be returning to Ghana on 4th December. Despite our sadness at Sharon's departure, the evening was a joyful celebration of all that she has brought to our church and the local community during the 11 years she has been with us. We were able to present Sharon with some gifts, including, thanks to the generosity of all those who contributed, a large cheque to help with the heavy expenses of her return and some support when she is back in Ghana.

To say that Sharon was overwhelmed by all of the warm tributes, gifts and love that was expressed, would be a big understatement. So too would be the suggestion that she will be missed by us all. We will hold Sharon in our thoughts and in our prayers, and hopefully will be able to maintain contact with her via our phones, computers and I-pads etc.

A piece of good news: Diane Barton was allowed to leave the Nursing Home in Burcot and return to her own home on 9th November. Rather than delay this move for three weeks whilst a Care Package was put in place, Diane's daughter Claire offered to stay on and fulfil the caring tasks herself, for which Diane is extremely grateful. Diane has also expressed her great appreciation for all of the cards received from church friends, saying that the messages have been wonderful, and have brought her much joy and encouragement. She would like to thank everyone for their kindness.

In December and January the people listed below, who are on Mary Trotter's and Mary Whittaker's pastoral lists, will be included in the ***Praying for each other*** prayer time during which the members of Eileen's House-group, join together to pray in their individual homes: Diane Barton, Mary Whittaker, June Crouch, Richard George and Shirley & Arnold Tucker. In addition to the names listed above, those in our church family, who through frailty or ill health would no longer be able to worship with us at our usual Sunday morning Services, will also be prayed for by name by the members of Eileen's house-group.

Prayer list

Eileen Rennie

Loving God, we come with thankful hearts, praising you for your presence with us always, but especially for the support that has been given to us in these recent times of uncertainty. As we celebrate Advent, Christmas and New Year in whatever circumstances, we can be assured that you are with us in all that we do. Celebrating the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day will bring the joy it does every year. We know that your Holy Spirit is with us each day guiding and supporting us and so we give resounding thanks as we offer this prayer in Jesus name. Amen

Please pray for:

Jean M, Bethan Grant, Jane, Alan Bunn and family, Carl, Carol Mackinder, Anne, Emma Wright and family, Alex and Brian, Gordon & Marina, Betty, Caroline, Adrian, Jenny, Linda, Kathy, June Coppock, Sarah Holt, Jinnie Brown and her sons, Margaret McAlpin, Diane Barton, Alastair Wright, Sharon and her family, Pauline Hawkins, Charlie Webb, Emily, Marianne, Fiona and family, Eric and Judy Thomas and family, Margaret Watts, All at Bullingdon Prison, staff, prisoners and visitors, YMOSES, kids@church and Street Pastors. Those members of our church family who, through frailty or ill health, can no longer worship with us.

If you or the person/people you have put on the prayer list would still like to be in the next Newsletter, please let Eileen know by **Friday 8th January** in order for her to meet the newsletter deadline.

Telephone: 01235 224284; email: m.rennie50@ntlworld.com

Christmas Greetings

Hilary Rewcastle sends love and good wishes to everyone in the Church family for a peaceful and happy Christmas followed by a brighter and hopeful New Year.

Greetings from Sharon

Thank God for the life of the people who God has called together as a family. Where people come and always feel welcomed.

Since the day I joined this amazing family I have never looked back and I deemed it a great blessing till today.

I want to thank you all for your kind donations and your wonderful message in the created album and also the recorded Zoom farewell service which Rev Keith kindly did for me. It is something I will keep and cherish. God bless you all and for Ann and others who made this possible during this lockdown period, when everyone is struggling in different ways yet contributed I say, God richly bless you. My prayer is that may Jehovah God bless everyone who has blessed me materially and financially or in any other way. Our times in church, lunches, Tuesday house group, coffee mornings, etc I should miss greatly.

It saddens me that I am leaving but the love of God binds us all together.

Though I am far away from here, I know the memories we have had together will still remain with us.

God bless you all. I will keep in touch.

Once again I say thank you and may God bless you all. Amen.



Knit & Chat

Carolyn Roche, 01235 764310

An amazing effort this year with 1770 angels awaiting delivery!

Due to the current situation the angels received their blessing a little earlier than usual. Keith blessed them at the Zoom service held on the first Sunday in Advent.

Thank you for all the knitting and the tying on of the labels. 700 are shortly going to be taken to Ray Collins for the Christmas Hampers. Next the angels for the Care Homes will be delivered so that they can be quarantined before they are given out. Lastly the angels will go out into the town. I think this will probably be in the week beginning 14th December. If you need an angel for someone or some for your neighbourhood then please let me know – angel knitting is still taking place.

To join us on Zoom Knit & Chat please contact Helen Carter and to be part of the Facebook group please contact June Grunwald. Do keep in touch and please call me if you have any queries or just fancy a chat. I look forward to hearing about your current projects.

So now I finish by wishing you all a peaceful and Happy Christmas.

Tuesday Afternoon House Group

Eileen Rennie

Sadly yet another month has passed in which we have not been able to meet as a group.

Who could have predicted, when we went into the first lockdown, that so many months would pass and things still be so very uncertain. We must continue to pray for the current situation and that we will all act responsibly and so look forward to a brighter future ahead.

I will continue to email the group each Monday with details for our prayertime that week when each Tuesday although apart we have united in prayer at 3:00 pm. It is good to know that Zoom Sunday Services will continue even when we are eventually able to be back in Church in smaller numbers for those who wish to attend. It is always a joy to seeing smiling faces after we have enjoyed worship together each Sunday. People have really appreciated these times as well as the opportunity for "Tea @ Three" on Tuesdays and all the material on the Church website and on you tube.

We are all sad at the prospect of missing Sharon's company, wonderful smile, participation in study and her wonderful ardent prayers from the heart. However we do rejoice that she will be re united with her family. We will never forget her and we will hold her and her family in our prayers.

We will all have to keep careful watch on updates from our government to know how we can continue to plan.

In the meantime as we get out a little we hope that we will meet up with some familiar faces to catch up whilst still socially distancing.

We do all look forward to the time when we can all meet together again. In the meantime pleased be assured that you are all held in prayer.

We wish you all the joy of Christmas and the prospect of new beginnings in the New Year.

If you have any queries you can contact me (Eileen Rennie) by telephone on 01235 224284 or email: m.rennie50@ntlworld.com

Community Drop In Café

Eileen Rennie

With the passing of yet another month we are sadly still not in a position to predict when we may be able to reopen the Cafe due to the current Coronavirus situation. The current lockdown has set things back again. However it is good to remember that our Church was open for a few weeks before the current lockdown and we can look forward to that being the case again as soon as restrictions allow it. We will keep you updated.

We are pleased to have been able to keep in touch with some of you through phone calls and also meeting up in town by chance whilst socially distancing. We know from these contacts that many people are missing the joy of their Monday morning weekly visits. Please be assured that as soon as we have some definite news on re-opening we will be letting you know.

We continue to look forward in faith to when we are able to meet again and enjoy each other's company. Meanwhile be assured that you are being held in prayer. When we are able to meet again the donations will be going to Clean Slate, a low cost, long term listening and support service for all victims of abuse and mental illness. Our sincere thanks to our 22 willing volunteers who have served us so well. They too have missed seeing your friendly faces and hearing your news. When normal service is resumed we look forward to welcoming you all back.

Our good wishes to you all as you celebrate the joy of Christmas and look forward to what the New Year will bring.

For further information contact either Eileen Rennie or June Grunwald.

HMP Bullingdon Christmas card appeal (from Helen Carter)

A huge thank you for the fabulous response to the appeal for Christmas cards for Bullingdon. As a result of the generosity of the church family very nearly 400 cards are being sent to the chaplain I have contact with at HMP Bullingdon. This includes cards sent on behalf of WMC to be put up on boards to let the staff know we are thinking of them and praying for them and also thanking them for the work they are undertaking. The chaplain is delighted with the success of this appeal and adds his 'Thank you' to mine. He says it will be make such a difference for so many men to be able to send a card to their loved ones, and I believe some of the men will be able to send more than one card. I don't know how the chaplaincy staff will choose who to give cards to so they can send them out of the prison, but I am sure they will do that very prayerfully. So thank you to all of you who have enabled this to happen.

Property News

Internet at Wantage

We have internet available on the Wantage premises thanks to PlusNet. Original plans to use Virgin Media failed when Virgin were unable to organise a connection to our premises. Thanks are due to Rodney Tillotson for his work getting this established. His tenacity and patience with Virgin was remarkable.

At present there is a good service in the vestry, Godfrey Room and Parlour. We have installed and commissioned an access point in the Chapel. There is service in the Hall but the signal is only fair and we plan to install an access point there in the next few days.

Users

We remain closed to our community users. It seems unlikely that we shall reopen before Lent or even Easter.

We have been able to make the Parlour available as a store for Food Bank as they prepare for the Christmas distribution. This will be packaged and prepared for distribution on the afternoon of December 6th.

Oxfordshire MIND have permission to have a meeting in the Hall on Wednesday morning 9th December.

Bad News

The boundary wall at the rear of the site has been found to have moved and we are exploring what needs to be done to ensure the safety of the areas adjacent to it. The movement is away from our site so that the risk is that collapse would be onto the nursery site next door, were it to happen. Potential costs are significant.

Worship in December

Sunday 6th December

Zoom Service	10:30	from Wantage – see below
Wantage	10:30	Morning Worship in the chapel led by Rev Keith Underhill
Grove	10:45	Morning Worship in the chapel led by Ian Sturt

Sunday 13th December

Zoom Service	10:30	from Wantage – see below
Wantage	10:30	Morning Worship in the chapel led by Rev Helen Cameron
Grove	10:45	Morning Worship in the chapel led by Carol Sturt
Childrey	11:00	Morning Worship in the chapel led by Rev Keith Underhill

Church web sites 18:00 The Christmas Story : A Carol Service

Sunday 20th December

Zoom Service	10:30	from Wantage – see below
Wantage	10:30	Morning Worship in the chapel led by Peter Hemmings
Grove	10:45	Service in Chapel led by Rev Keith Underhill
Zoom Service	18:30	Carol Service

Thursday 24th December

Zoom Service	16:00	All age “Getting ready for Christmas service “
Zoom Service	23:30	Watch-night service with Love Feast

Friday 25th December

Zoom Service	10:00	Christmas Day Christmas Morning
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Sunday 27th December

No service in churches.
Service available on youtube

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBpMj71hDzpMhVj6t_ZQt0w

Worship in January 2021

With the restrictions of Tier 4 now in place, along with the rapid increase in Covid infections, particularly those linked to the new variant, we have taken the decision to suspend worship in the churches for the time being.

Recognising our duty of care, the need to do all that we can to help keep the wider community safe and play our part in trying to minimise the spread of the virus, we feel that this is the right thing to do.

The Church Stewards, Church Councils and I continue in our commitment to ensure that we keep everyone as connected and as in touch as we possibly can, through emails, texts, WhatsApp, letters and phone calls.

We will continue to send out weekly Orders of service to use at home, have a weekly Zoom service each Sunday at 10:30am and put acts of worship on the Circuit YouTube Channel. Please contact me directly for further details.

keith.underhill@methodist.org.uk

DIARY

DECEMBER

Tuesday 1st World Aids Day

Sunday 13th 18:00 WGCP Christmas Video release
19:00 YMOSES

Thursday 17th **Last day to send Christmas Greetings for publication or distribution.**

JANUARY

Sunday 10th **DEADLINE for January newsletter**

Monday 18th to Monday 25th Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity
Wantage & Grove Church Partnership plan a period of prayer sometime each day – see weekly notices / next Newsletter for details.