



# **SOLIHULL**

## **UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat  
Communities

**December 2020/January 2021 Newsletter**

*...and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.*

***Luke 1:47-49***



## **SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

Based in the town centre, Solihull URC seeks to minister and witness to the local community, the wider town and the areas of Olton and Hobs Moat where we have formerly had a worshipping presence.

We share our mission with other Churches and are in partnership with others in the community. We invite you to join us as we seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

**[www.solihullurc.org.uk](http://www.solihullurc.org.uk)**  
**[www.centralsolihullchurches.org.uk](http://www.centralsolihullchurches.org.uk)**

### **LEADERSHIP TEAM**

VACANT - **Minister**

Gordon Justham - **Church Secretary & Elder**

Linda Faber - **Mission Enabler & Lettings Administration**

Maureen Butler - **Elder (worship & prayer, charities, social activities)**

Barrie Jones - **Elder (Property, Health & Safety)**

Elaine Jones - **Elder (Administration, Data protection, Catering)**

Jackie Justham - **Elder (charities, social activities)**

Gordon Laurie – **Elder**

Chris Harman - **Elder**

Liz Amos - **Treasurer**

Areas of special responsibility are listed in brackets.

## **WORSHIP**

At the time of writing it is not clear whether we will be able to open for worship in December. If we are not able to open then we will continue with the recent practice of broadcasting a service via Zoom. We are also considering the option of recording a service and placing it on the website. If we are able to open for worship then we may also simultaneously broadcast the service via zoom for those unable to attend.

The Worship leaders for December are:

6 December	10:00am	Mr Ian Carnell (Communion)
13 December	10:00am	Mrs Linda Faber
20 December	9:45am and 11:15am	Worship Group (Carol Service)
24 December	4:00pm	Mr Ian Carnell
25 December	10:00am	Revd. Steve Faber
27 December	10:00am	Mr Gordon Justham

## **THEMES FOR SERVICES**

This month's themes for services link loosely into the Advent booklet of daily readings which has been produced and posted to everybody on the mailing list. During the month we are looking at many of the people who are present in the legal lineage of Jesus as listed in Matthew chapter 1.

There are many people there, all of whom have stories of good and bad lives, but no matter which, they can all teach us something for our own walk and growth in faith. In Sunday services, at this time of giving and receiving, we will be looking at people who received something specific from God.

**6 December, 10am** - Ian Carnell: Present list: Abraham (Received the Promise)

**13 December, 10am** - Linda Faber: Present list: Rehoboam (Received the Kingdom)

**20 December, 9:45am and 11:15am** - Various: Lessons & Carols (Both services will be the same). Please book seats in advance\*\*

**24 December** - Ian Carnell: All age worship. Please book seats in advance\*\*

**25 December** - Steve Faber: Present list: Mary & Joseph (Received Jesus)

\*\* These services have been particularly well attended in the past. Subject to gathered worship being permitted at Christmas time, we need to be sure that we can accommodate everyone appropriately with regard to social distancing regulations.

For this reason, **we are asking people to book their seats** by phoning the church on 07925 573259 or emailing [solihullurc@gmail.com](mailto:solihullurc@gmail.com). Please feel free to invite friends or neighbours although different households will not be able to sit together. We cannot guarantee seats will be available if you haven't booked. Please book early to help us plan.

1. We need to know how many people there are for each household who need seats.
2. Please leave a contact name and phone number for each household for whom you are reserving seats.
3. Please state which service you would like to attend.

Please note: If numbers are unexpectedly low on 20<sup>th</sup> December, we reserve the right to cancel the 11:15 service and in that circumstance, everyone will be given a seat at the 9:45 service. If numbers are unexpectedly high, we will add a third identical service on 20<sup>th</sup> December 20th, early evening. Please let me know if you are willing to be moved to this time slot to allow for visitors in the morning, should it be necessary.\*\*

**27 December, 10am** - Gordon Justham: Big Themes of the Major Prophets: Isaiah: New Status (Salvation)

**3 January, 10am** - Ian Carnell: Big Themes of the Major Prophets: Jeremiah: New Covenant (Renewal)

**10 January, 10am** - Linda Faber: Big Themes of the Major Prophets: Ezekiel: New Relationship (Grace)

**17 January, 10am** - Gordon Justham: Big Themes of the Major Prophets: Daniel: New Sovereign Rule (Triumph)

**24 January, 10am** - Rev Peter Bates (retired Methodist): Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

### THE LECTIONARY

Readings for Sundays in December and for Christmas Day from the Revised Common Lectionary are as follows. Please note that worship leaders are not obliged to follow the lectionary but you may be interested to know what the lectionary readings are in any event. The readings in bold are the gospel readings for the day. **Gordon Justham**

6 December **Mark 1.1-8**; Isaiah 40.1-11; Psalm 85.1-2 & 8-13; 2 Peter 3.8-15a

13 December **John 1.6-8 & 19-28**; Isaiah 61.1-4 & 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24;

20 December **Luke 1.26-38**; 2 Samuel 7.1-11 & 16; Psalm 89.1-4 & 19-26; Romans 16.25-27;

25 December **Luke 2.1-20**; Isaiah 9.2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2.11-14;

27 December **Luke 2.22-40**; Isaiah 61.10 - 62.3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4.4-7;

## **ADVENT and EPIPHANY**

To be thinking of summer when we are fast approaching the Christmas season may not seem appropriate, but something which gives me great pleasure and which I truly appreciate during the time I spend with my daughter and son-in-law in rural France in August is to sit on the terrace in the evening and to watch the glorious sunset as it disappears round the corner of the house over to my right. At the same time, over to my left, the moon appears, quickly followed by Venus. As the evening progresses and the sky darkens it is filled with an innumerable spectacular array of stars, comets and planets --- all bearing witness to those well-known words:

**‘THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF THE LORD.’**

History tells how, in times gone by, travellers made use of the sun, moon and stars to journey around the world, eventually doing so with the extra help of a sextant, an instrument which ships, even large modern liners, are still obliged to have on board nowadays. In more recent times man has actually been to the moon and back, and, on taking his first step on the moon, Neil Armstrong said, ‘That’s one small step for man, a giant leap for mankind.’, but space travel is not yet common!!! Just heard the news that four astronauts have arrived at the international space station where they will stay for the next six months, so it’s Christmas in space for them.

In the Old Testament we read about the Children of Israel leaving Egypt and spending many years wandering in the wilderness. Then, in the New Testament, Jesus himself travelled around teaching, preaching and healing the sick, and later we have a record of the three extensive missionary journeys made by Paul.

However, at this time of the year, the journeys we think about are those associated with the Christmas Story as recorded by Matthew and Luke. We learn from their accounts of the birth of Jesus that Mary went to visit Elizabeth; Joseph and Mary travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem; the shepherds left their flocks in the fields and went to find

the stable where Jesus was born; the Wise Men travelled from the East to look for a newly born King; Joseph, Mary with baby Jesus fled into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod and then made the journey back after his death. The night sky, stars and angels played a significant part in these journeys.

Sadly for us, living in a country prone to cloud cover, and at the edge of the Birmingham conurbation causing light pollution, the wonders of the night sky are hidden from our view. Although, I recently noticed an advertisement for a projector which, 'turns your room into a starry night'.

During the Christmas season we too are usually journeying to be with our families and friends, but maybe not this year, so as we step forward into 2021 and make our New Year's resolutions, perhaps we need to consider how best we can live our lives in a way which will cause less destruction to the wonderful world which God created for us to enjoy. Let us pray the Covid19 problem will be solved, and that God will help us face the future with courage and determination to stay strong whatever it brings.

I send my best wishes to you all, and even though our celebrations are likely to be very different from usual:

May your Christmas be as happy, and your New Year be as joyful, as possible in these strange times.

**Rita Routley**

### **MUSIC IN OUR CHURCH SERVICES**

We are all missing singing hymns in our services. So if you play an instrument or would like to sing solo or in a small group in our service, socially distanced of course, please contact me. Looking forward to hearing from you.

**Janet Ince**



## **CHURCH MEETING**

At our October Church Meeting the redevelopment of the buildings was raised. A feasibility study had been prepared by architect Colin Wilcox (who had handled the redevelopment of Lillington URC).

Our biggest issue is the number of different levels in our current building (at least 13) which do not make it user friendly from an accessibility point of view. In addition to the number of levels the topography of the land is awkward in that it slopes downward from Union Road and downward towards the Warwick Road.

The architect's basic recommendation was that the best way forward is to demolish and rebuild. The Elders support this view. However there are options as to how this should be achieved given our current needs and the available budget. At the Church Meeting it was proposed and accepted that we create a "Buildings Group" to review the work that has been undertaken to date and to take the matter forward.

Some of the work that has been undertaken to date was on display at the rear of the church. We are holding a further Church Meeting after worship on 6 December at which one of the agenda items will be to confirm the "Buildings Group". If you feel you have any skills that would be appropriate to a "buildings project" and you would like to be a part of this small group then please contact the Church Secretary - Gordon Justham – on 01564776229 or via email at [gordonjustham@talktalk.net](mailto:gordonjustham@talktalk.net).

**Gordon Justham**

## **CHRISTMAS MESSAGES**

Our Christmas Greetings, love and best wishes to everyone.  
**From Barrie and Elaine, Irene and Peter, and Maureen**

## **CHURCH AT CHRISTMAS**

This year things will be very different for all of us at Christmas. We would however like to make the church welcoming for all of us and especially for any visitors who may be able to join us.

If you would like to help to decorate the church, could you let me know and we can arrange a time for us to meet. Thank you.

**Trixie Harman 01675 442 859**

## **CHURCH CHRISTMAS CARD**

In the past we have had a church Christmas card where everyone was invited to place their Christmas greetings in lieu of exchanging many cards between ourselves. We invited you to put a donation in the box towards our Christmas charity reflecting the money saved on not buying those cards.

We would like to do the same this year but as it is inadvisable to have every one handling the same card we will be doing things a little bit differently. Please write your greeting on a small piece of paper and leave it in the basket at the back of church by the end of the service on December 20th or email me your greeting to be included. These will be stuck into the card; the contents of the card will then be projected on the screen for everyone to read on Christmas day.

Please leave your money in the box at the same time or post a cheque to the church if you are not attending worship in person. (cheques made payable to 'Solihull United Reformed Church' please write 'Christmas charity' on the back.)

The money donated from this and our Christmas eve and Christmas day services will go to Carers Trust Solihull.

**Linda Faber**

## **MESSY CHURCH ADVENT BOXES**

Since we have been unable to have any meeting of Messy Church for the majority of this year, we decided to send out boxes of activities to those who wanted them for Advent.

Originally, we were going to purchase them from the URC but before I had got final numbers together they were all sold out. The URC made much of the material available for churches to download as so many people were disappointed allowing people to make their own if they wished.

However, it turned out that the families we had interest from all had very young children and the activities would have been too difficult. In the end I put together some more appropriate boxes which have been sent out. They were only sent to 9 children but I hope they all have a great time in the approach to Christmas.

**Linda Faber**



## SHOE BOXES

At the beginning of August, the charity 'Link to Hope' collected 79 boxes from me which included 21 from Solihull URC – 3 more than last year. I was also able to include £90 in donations so that was a brilliant result especially at the present time. Well done, Solihull URC!

Jane, the collector, told me they will be welcomed even more warmly this year as many places have no health service for those in poverty in Eastern Europe. How lucky we are!

I will circulate the photos when they come next year so see me if they miss you. Thank you all for your valiant efforts and support.

**Anne Cherry**

**Please remember:**

- Your job is the dream of the unemployed
- Your house is the dream of the homeless
- Your smile is the dream of the depressed
- Your health is the dream of those who are sick

**Don't let difficult times make you forget your blessings 🙏**

**Ian Carnell**

## **SOLIHULL CHURCHES TOGETHER**

Unfortunately all the events planned for this year to celebrate 800 years of Christianity in Solihull were cancelled and it is very difficult to plan for the future due to ever-changing restrictions.

There are a couple of things that we hope will take place:

- The Crib will be placed in Mell Square in December but there will be no Service of Blessing this year.
- The service for Christian Unity is planned for Sunday evening 24th January. Venue, time and booking details to follow.

**Elaine Jones**

### **A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER?**

My first grandchild was born in September. Although she only lives 10 minutes away from me, I've yet to be able to hold her. I know a great many of us will have similar stories to tell. Grandchildren, nephews and nieces, aging parents, lonely and isolated friends: a raft of people with whom we would long to share safe physical contact, whether that's a huge hug or the reassuring touch on their hand or arm to let them know that they are not alone. I, at least, am able to know that this will be quite some story to tell my granddaughter when she is older, but for some people at the other end of life we may never get to reminisce with them after this is all over.

It really has been – and I use the term advisedly – one hell of a year for so many. I hope that by now you are waiting for the, “And yet...” Well, here it comes! Throughout this, God has not abandoned us. Yes, I know many have experienced isolation, desolation even. But God has been with us, constant and faithful.

How can I be so confident that this is the case, even if God has not been obvious in our life, and in the world as so many millions have

been ill and countless families have been plunged into grief because of Covid-19? It is because at the beginning and the end of it all, we have God's promises.

Jesus came into the world as, "Immanuel" – God with us. He ascended to heaven with the promise, "Surely I am with you always, to the end of the age." These are words that merit full acceptance, to borrow from 1 Timothy and the assurance of pardon in our service book. In a world that has been violently unpredictable during 2020, with everything from wildfire to flood, drought, and an as-yet-unresolved Presidential election (will he finally concede defeat when the College of Electors meet in December?) besides the global pandemic and all that has brought us: surely we will be glad to see the back of it and pray that 2021 bring better news.

But hold fast. We already have the best news of all: a baby born in Bethlehem, our true Hope, the True Light, the Saviour of the World. I cannot see that we will have church worship the way we know it and want it for Christmas but there is still so much for which we can thank and praise God.

My prayer for you is that you know the closeness of God in your lives this Christmas and always, and for the help of the Holy Spirit to share Christ's light in the world.

**Steve Faber, Synod Moderator**

## **SOCIALISING AT CHURCH**

We have missed being able to see each other through the long months of lockdown, but now that the church has re-opened for worship we must continue to exercise considerable restraint in how we socialise after worship.

It is a requirement that after worship we move outside as quickly as is safely possible.

Once outside, we must still keep 2 metres apart even whilst enjoying conversation. Please avoid standing for a chat where others will need to walk past you within 2 metres.

We must not meet in groups larger than 6 indoors or outdoors, and we should not move from group to group – the Government are asking us to “limit how many different people you see socially over a short period of time.” Not only will you be liable for a fine (fixed penalty notice) if you breach the “Rule of Six”, you will be giving a very bad witness to anyone who walks past the church and sees a large group of people standing outside talking.

Please leave the church premises quickly after worship, and keep in touch with your friends through the week by telephone or online. We’ve all been disturbed by the predictions of cases doubling every week or so – let us be scrupulously careful not to be responsible for adding to the numbers, or to put ourselves at unnecessary risk.

Remember that the great majority of members at Solihull are at greater risk of developing serious illness should they catch Coronavirus, because of age and health condition. By keeping our distance – physically rather than emotionally – we will be loving our neighbour as we love ourselves.

**Steve Faber**



## KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

### **Minister**

VACANT

### **Church Secretary**

Mr. Gordon Justham: 07540 289855 - 01564 776229 -  
gordonjustham@talktalk.net

### **Website**

[www.solihullurc.org.uk](http://www.solihullurc.org.uk)

**Hall Lettings:** 07925 573259

**Generations Project** - enabling the Church in care homes

[www.generationssoalihull.org.uk](http://www.generationssoalihull.org.uk) [generationssoalihull@icloud.com](mailto:generationssoalihull@icloud.com)

**Moments (currently not meeting)**

Mondays 10am—12 noon@ Central Solihull

### **FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER**

Material for the February edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

[stuartkmills@gmail.com](mailto:stuartkmills@gmail.com)

by Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January please.