



SOLIHULL

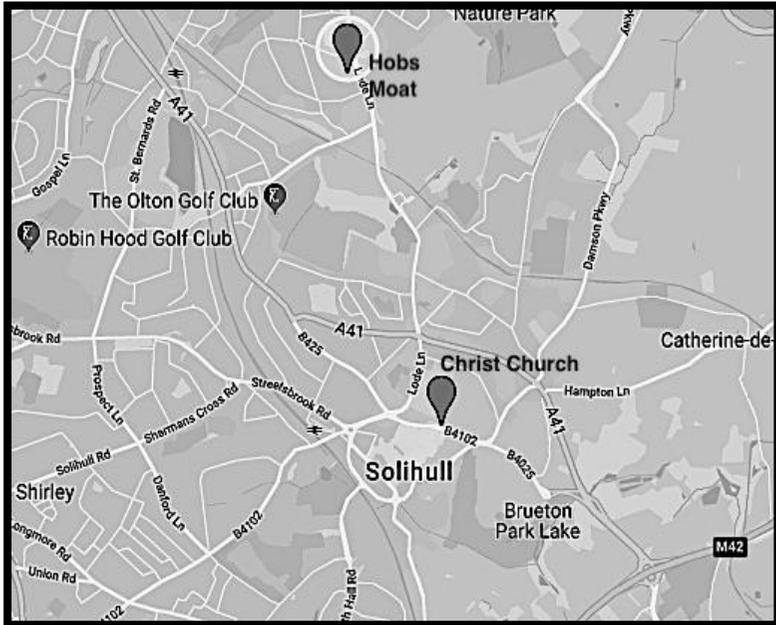
United Reformed Church

Christ Church - Hobs Moat – Olton

December 2018/January 2019 Newsletter

*Today
in the town of David
a Saviour has been born to
you
he is the Messiah,
the Lord.*





SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Solihull URC has united three congregations from Olton, Hobs Moat and Christ Church (town centre). We retain premises in Hobs Moat and at Christ Church. Sunday worship is focussed in the town centre, but we seek to witness in all three communities

We share our mission with other Churches and 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

www.centralsolihullchurches.org.uk

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Mark Fisher - **Minister**

Gordon Justham - **Church Secretary & Elder**

Chris Harman - **Treasurer & Elder**

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

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

Trixie Harman - **Elder (Youth & Children)**

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

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

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

Gordon Laurie – **Elder**

Areas of special responsibility are listed in brackets.

All Elders have responsibility for pastoral care.

CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT as we celebrate Christ's birth.

The Christmas story takes us to first-century Palestine, a place of political turmoil ruled by a foreign power. We are introduced to some shepherds, a group who lived on the edge of society because of their work. Then, some Magi - foreigners led by a different faith.

They were directed to Bethlehem, the 'City of David', a small town whose significance came by historical connection. The outhouse at the pub is the focal point - out of sight, unless you were directed by angel or star - and there is no reference to any others visiting.

The central characters are unmarried parents - wrestling with relationship and childbirth and what the neighbours might think, and then a journey into exile. The star of the event is a baby, unable to either appreciate or affect any of the events surrounding his arrival.

For us Jesus the is the gift which we never fully unwrap as we never explore in depth what all this means - focussing more on the colourful paper and tinsel that we smother it in. But we are encouraged to move beyond the Nativity play portrayal to the reality of the gift of this new life.

It is a complex story and it is not surprising that to grasp it all is quite demanding. Yet, we can simply recognise that the Christ is born among us. God's Saviour present in the context that is our own age:- in a time of political turmoil and confusion over ruling powers - a country living with a past of supposed 'greatness' - many living on the edge of society or of a meaningful life - parents wrestling with relationships and the expectations of society - life mostly happening 'un-noticed' by the majority around - many making long journeys, seeking peace and safety for their future.

It is here that Jesus the Saviour comes.

(Perhaps a next paragraph needs writing, personally, by each of us. What is the context for Christ's birth in us and how is the salvation he brings real for us?)

And so we come to celebrate the gift that is God's salvation for the world and ourselves. **Mark**

DIARY FOR DECEMBER

Saturday 1st, 10am: Coffee Morning @ Hobs Moat

Sunday 2nd, 10am: Advent - Holy Communion - Mark Fisher

3pm: Blessing of the Crib in Mell Square

6pm: Advent Service with Olton Church Together @

Langley School

Monday 3rd, 10am: Shout out for Girls Workshop @ The Manse
Moments Cafe

Tuesday 4th, 10:30am: Neighbourhood Coffee Morning @ Hobs Moat

11am: Worship @ St Francis Lodge

Thursday 6th, 10am: Tots & Tales

2pm: Singing for Pleasure @ Hobs Moat

Sunday 9th, 10am: Gift Service - Linda Faber

11:45am: Worship @ Star & Garter

Monday 10th, 10am: Moments Cafe

12:30pm: Elders' Meeting

Tuesday 11th, 11am: Holy Communion @ Hampton House

Wednesday 12th, 12:30pm: SCAH Open lunch meeting in the Meeting Place

2pm: Wednesday Club @ Hobs Moat

Thursday 13th, 10am: Tots & Tales

3pm: Christmas Worship @ Deerhurst Court

Saturday 15th, 12pm: Carols round the Crib in Mell Square

Sunday 16th, 10am: Crafty Christmas Worship in the JPH

12pm: Bring and Share Lunch in the Meeting Place

Sunday 27th, 10am: Worship - Homelessness Sunday - Mark Fisher

Monday 28th, 10am: Moments Cafe

Tuesday 29th, 10:30am: Neighbourhood Coffee Morning @ Hobs Moat

Thursday 31st, 10am: Tots & Tales

2pm: Singing for Pleasure

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Sunday 17th February will be Mark's final Sunday. Worship will be followed by a lunch, to which others connected with Mark's varied ministry are invited.

Sunday 16th December. Bring and share lunch after church. Please bring a plate of food which can be added to a buffet for everyone to share.

All welcome. **Linda**

SUNDAY WORSHIP & THEMES

Leading up to my final service in February, I am planning to focus on some of the key Gospel themes that have helped to shape my ministry over the years. Below are some headings for Christmas and January and I look forward to sharing what are 'essential elements' for each of us. **Mark.**

16th December

'And there was a baby!' - Making Christmas - worship and crafts

23rd December

Christmas Journey in Words and Music

Christmas Eve

Midnight in Bethlehem Communion

Christmas Day

'Celebrate the Gift' - family celebration

6th January

'New Beginnings - Jesus is born in us' - Epiphany

20th January

'My Relations - through Jesus'

27th January

'A Place to Call Home - Bricks and Spirit'

3rd February

'On the edge' - A church on the margins

CHRISTMAS GIFT SERVICE

This is to be on Sunday 9th December. Our gifts, for both children and mums, will be received by Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid for the residents of their Refuge. Gifts are not to be wrapped, please. Sadly there are too many mums and children who are forced to leave their homes because of family separation or domestic violence. Often little is taken with them, so children are without toys and mums without daily necessities and finance is usually very tight. Your generosity to enable Christmas to be a time of enjoyment will be appreciated greatly.

JOB ADVICE

Every Monday morning from 10.30am @ Christ Church (Story Room). If you know anyone in need of support or advice with CVs etc. let them know about this or speak to Trixie Harman.

SINGING FOR PLEASURE

There will be no Singing For Pleasure on Thursday 27th December and Thursday 3rd January. **Janet**

SHOUT OUT FOR GIRLS WORKSHOPS

Just over a year ago we began supporting a project in Uganda which friends of mine are involved in, and 3 friends from Frodsham in Cheshire came to show a group of us how to make reusable sanitary towels for girls attending Ngora Girls Secondary School, Uganda. Many of the girls were having several days a month off school, when they had their period, as they had no sanitary protection and had to stay at home.

Since then between 8 and 12 ladies have regularly met at the manse to have a workshop making the sanitary towels and the pouches to put the towels in. Some of the ladies come from SURC, some are friends who attend other churches and some have no church connections. Not all have sewing skills, some cut out, others pin material together, some sew and at the end of the process some trim the finished article. Tea, coffee and cake help the work along.

In September my friends went out to Uganda and took 400 pouches with them. Each pouch contains 3 sanitary towels, a pair of knickers and a plastic bag. We provided 80 of the pouches, which were very gratefully received. The school has over 1000 girls attending and my friends have committed to provide a pack for every girl needing it. Our next workshop is at the manse on Monday 3rd December from 10am until 12. After Christmas we are moving into the Activity Space at Church because of our impending move! We therefore need to change the day we meet and have chosen Thursday January 10th for our first workshop for 2019. We are going to meet from 10am until 1pm on that day. If you would like to join us we would love to see you or just drop in to see what we are up to. No previous skills necessary! If anyone

would like to offer to make teas and coffees for the workers that would be much appreciated.

Any further details or information just speak to me. We have great fun, lots of chat and are doing a worthwhile service for the girls. **Judy Fisher**

HOLY HABITS - GLADNESS & GENEROSITY

Pursuing our calling as Disciples of Jesus and how we adopt the character of Jesus and witness for him to others, we have explored a little of our 'front lines' and how our daily lives may be 'fruitful' for God. There are some 'habits' which we understand were part of the life of the earliest Christian communities. Over future months these can offer key themes for our ongoing reflection about our individual Christian lives and our Church character. During the Autumn you will discover the theme of 'gladness and generosity' featuring in some of our worship.

Acts 2. 46-47

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING

There will be a Christmas Coffee Morning with Cake stall, raffle and Craft and Jewellery stall at Hobs Moat on Saturday 1st December from 10:30am-12pm. All proceeds to Christian Aid and the church fund. All welcome-please bring friends. Any donations and contributions to Janet, Annette, Caroline or Angela before or on the morning.

Many thanks, **Caroline Clarke**

SUNDAY DUTIES

The response to the recent plea for more volunteers to come forward to carry out some of the Sunday duties was a very pleasant success. Several members put their names down for the first time and there was little difficulty in covering the following months. Now I think there are some folk who are happy to do some of the duties but do not manage to get their name down in good time. I would ask these folk to try to get into the habit of looking at the table at the back of the Church every week. In addition to the rotas, there is usually plenty of other interesting material - it is worth a look. **Alan**

CAROLS AND MINCE PIES AT CHRISTMAS **on Friday 21st December at 6.30pm** **at Hobs Moat Church in Faulkner Road**



Come and join us for our evening of Christmas carols and mince pies.

This is a light hearted Christmas celebration presented by the Singing For Pleasure Group.

There will be plenty of carol singing and seasonal readings followed by coffee, tea and mince pies. Afterwards there will be a collection for our chosen charity.

FRESH FROM THE WORD: THE BIBLE FOR A CHANGE

It is time to order the 2019 edition of this helpful IBRA book which will inspire your reading of the Bible in a changing world. It is led by theologians, scholars, creative writers, church leaders and activists from around the world, and offers notes, prayers and suggestions for further thought for every day of the year. It will be approx. £10. If you would like a copy, please contact Marian Batten (07855 516687) or Irene Bound (0121 449 6367).

HOBBS MOAT COFFEE MORNINGS

Dates for Tuesday Coffee Mornings at Hobs Moat from 10.30am until 12 noon.

- 4 December 2018
- 18 December
- No coffee morning 1 January 2019
- 15 January 2019
- 29 January
- 12 February
- 26 February
- 12 March
- 26 March
- 9 April
- 23 April
- 7 May
- 21 May
- 4 June
- 18 June

All are welcome for a cuppa and chat.

Anne and Annette

MORE ABOUT LETTING OUR ROOMS OUT

Thank you to those who took the time to speak to me or write up your ideas following the question I put in the newsletter last month which we also spoke about at church meeting. I asked about our letting out of our rooms and if, or how, a church might undertake this activity differently to a community suite of rooms.

Some responded that they hoped there were some activities which would not be accommodated as they are not compatible with our faith and belief (such as extremist groups, combative groups).

We currently don't have a policy about this and we do currently have bookings for groups which we would not automatically accept if some such policy were in place (we don't have any extremist groups using the building – just to reassure you – but we do have a combative group and several groups whose activities come out of a philosophy contrary to Christian belief). Do you think it would be appropriate to put some such policy in place and what should we do about the existing users? Some responded to the initial question by talking about hospitality and welcome. Is issuing keys and telling people to let themselves in, and turn their own heating on, the best that can be done? (Does the insurance company know we give out keys to 'anyone' and would they insure us if they did know?) We have uncovered in recent conversations that there are several people (from both buildings) who have been using the rooms for multiple decades who didn't know the buildings were churches. What does this say to us? There is a lot that can be done differently. There are many other churches whose example we could learn from and possibilities that would be within our capabilities. You may have seen, or know, some yourself. I certainly have experience in this area which I think would be useful in this. Do we have the will to make the necessary changes though? I would love to hear any more thoughts you have on this, or any other church related, issue.

Linda

GIFT AID

One source of income we have not pursued since the joining together of the three churches, is the tax refund from gift aid contributions. Since we are a 'new charity' we need to action this. It is not a straight forward process, hence the reason for the delay. Our weak financial performance has spurred us onto rectifying this shortcoming.

There are some Gift Aid forms on the table at the back of the church.

These are for taxpayers, and just require names, addresses, a signature and a date.

A few points...

- Gift aid can be claimed going back up to 4 years. I have the records going back to the joining of the three churches.
- If a husband and wife both have Freewill envelopes, and only one of you pay tax, then the tax payer can include the non-taxpayer's contribution in their return.

If you are unclear about anything please come and see me.

Chris Harman

WORSHIP GROUP

Many thanks to those who have volunteered to be part of a Worship Group which will organise at least one service in 2019. A meeting will be arranged in the New Year. It is not too late if anyone else would like to join this small group, just let me know.

In addition, anyone who is willing to prepare and read the Intercessionary Prayers occasionally, please tell me. **Maureen Butler**

DREAM DREAMS ABOUT BUILDINGS

You may remember Mark telling us that once the buildings of the church at Olton are sold, 85% of the money becomes available for us to use on any issues we like to do with buildings. We may not use the money for anything else. The availability of the money to us has a time limit of a number of years – though I am not sure how many. We know we have problems with accessibility (steps all over the place), the building needs rewiring, fire alarms are needed. There are other issues which need to be addressed too.

So we have started to dream dreams.

I called in a friend of ours, Jack Marris, who was professionally, and is, when friends need it, a building consultant. He is a lovely, mission focused, Christian man who has started to dream with us. He has measured the place and is drawing up ideas which we might use for discussion. But our starting place for some of the discussions has to be what do we want to be able to do here over the next 10... 20... 30... 40...50 years? What are our decisions now going to enable or disallow for the future? Most of us won't be here in 50 years but we have a duty to engage with God and hear His heart for his church. A people of faith can hear from God about things which we do not know or understand (Colossians 1 v9).

A couple of people have raised the issue of whether we should invest in this building at all. There are a number of very good reasons why we should. Space in an article does not allow me to detail them but I am happy to have that discussion with anyone who would like that conversation.

So what types of ministries might a town centre church want to get in to? What facilities would be needed to allow that type of work? Be radical in your thinking. In for a penny, in for a pound. This money for buildings is available now and won't be available in the future.

Dream dreams and tell me about them. **Linda**

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN CENTRAL SOLIHULL

REPORT FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 23RD OCTOBER AT SURC

18 representatives, both clergy and lay attended. As usual the meeting started with a meal.

1. **Activity in the borough.** As there is much happening at present a suggestion to compile a list showing what each church is doing was accepted. This will enable us to help each other to share the workload and mission.
2. **The Prayer Lunch** will continue on alternate months commencing at 12noon on 20 November, at SURC.

3. **Prayer Sheet.** A prayer sheet will be sent to each church twice a year. This will help us pray for each other's churches.
4. **Mell Square Crib.** This will be blessed on 2nd December. A short service will start at 3pm. Do join in, it would be good to swell the crowd.
5. **Carol Singing.** St Augustines will be leading some carol singing on Saturday 15 December in Mell Square. They have invited us to join them.
6. **The Week of Christian Unity.** The service will be held at St Helens Church on the evening of Sunday 20 January. Everyone is invited.
7. **Generations Project.** Mark presented a paper on the Generations Project detailing care homes in our part of the borough. This shows who is involved in each care home. Diane Webb, a Community Pastoral Worker at the Methodist church will be taking over the lead role once Mark has retired.
8. **Chaplaincy.** Solihull 6th Form College have enquired about chaplaincy. There is an Anglican cleric who is likely to take this on.
9. **World War 1 Centenary.** This will be celebrated at St Alphege. The Methodist Church will be joining them. St Michaels will light a beacon to mark the occasion.
10. **Closing Prayer.** The meeting ended with all saying the benediction to one another.

Judith Kembery

SHOE BOXES

A big thank you to all who did a shoebox. We managed 18 from church and they will be gratefully received by families living in horrendous conditions. Visit the [Link to Hope website](#). How lucky we are!

Thanks, **Anne Cherry**

POSTAGE STAMPS

Many of you used to bring your old postage stamps to Church for Sheila Durant to send to a Leprosy Mission.

I believe that so far no one has picked up the baton since Sheila has been unable to attend our services, so I am suggesting we should start collecting again and send them to the RNIB - the Royal National Institute for the Blind. They will provide all that we need for the collection and the despatch to their Head Office in post-free envelopes. There are three rules they would like us to follow: -

- To trim the stamps with approximately 1 cm of the envelope left around the stamp.
- Not to collect the large PO printed labels, nor any pre-printed stamps.
- To separate British and Foreign stamps.

We can all start with the Christmas card envelopes! **Judith Kembery**

EDITOR: This was meant to be included in the November 2018 edition, sorry to Marian for the oversight.

THANK YOU

I would like to thank all the friends who helped me celebrate my 90th Birthday. So many cards and messages of goodwill and the company of old and new friends made it a birthday to remember. Thank you everyone.

Marian Batten

A CHRISTMAS BLESSING

BY EMILY MATTHEWS

May you have: –

Warm hugs to greet you,

Fun times to meet you, joy in whatever you do.

God's love to guide you,

Good friends beside you,

and happiness all season through!

Barrie and Elaine would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN OLTON (CTO)

Churches Together in Olton (CTO) are holding an Advent Service on Sunday 2nd December at 6pm. It will be held at Langley Senior School, Kineton Green Road. All are welcome.

Everyone is very welcome to join CTO when they sing carols to commuters outside Olton Station on Thursday 20th December from 5pm. Come and swell the numbers.

Maureen

CHRISTMAS WISHES

Sam, Stuart and Harry would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy new Year!

CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:
'There is no peace on earth, ' I said
'For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.'

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.'

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

Minister

Revd. Mark Fisher: 07950 399615 - 0121 291 4726 - mjf.urc@me.com

Church Secretary

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

Website

www.solihullurc.org.uk

Hall Lettings in Hobs Moat or Christ Church – 07925 573259

Generations Project - enabling the Church in care homes

www.generationssolihull.org.uk generationssolihull@icloud.com

Moments - a dementia cafe

Mondays 10am—12 noon@ Christ Church
Details from Mark Fisher - contacts above

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

Material for the February edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

stuartkmills@gmail.com

by Sunday 20th January please.