



SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat
Communities

December 2021/January 2022 Newsletter

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

James 1:17



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

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)

Ian Carnell – Elder

Howard Cotes – Elder

Gordon Laurie - Elder

Liz Amos - Treasurer

Areas of special responsibility are listed in brackets.

WORSHIP DURING DECEMBER AND JANUARY

It is good to be back in church. However due to the current infection rate in Solihull and the potential for further increases in cases as we move into winter, we ask that you adhere to the following Covid 19 restrictions even though these may be stricter than the law requires.

We recognise that many will have been double vaccinated but that doesn't, in itself, stop the spread of the disease. The Elders have decided that we should continue with some steps to mitigate the further spread of the virus. Basically, for our services during December and January this means:

- please sign in (either by using the NHS track and trace App or at the desk by the entrance)
- please use the hand sanitiser provided or wash your hands
- social distancing rules should be followed with no more than 6 people or 2 households grouping together indoors.
- Communal Singing: we have a large spacious building and as long as you are socially distanced and, ideally, wearing a mask then please feel free to sing along with the hymns.

We will continue, where possible, to offer the service via Zoom for those who are unable to get to Church or still feel uncomfortable about attending. We appreciate that there can be technical difficulties at times, particularly, with sound quality but we keep experimenting to resolve these issues. Life is a continual learning curve!

It is also our intention to serve tea and coffee at the end of the service subject to having sufficient volunteers to prepare the drinks.

Gordon Justham

The Worship leaders for December and January are:

5th December	10:00am	Mr Ian Carnell (includes communion)
12th December	10:15am	Mr Gordon Justham
19th December	10:00am	Worship Group (Carols and Lessons)
24th December	4:00pm	Mr Ian Carnell
25th December	10:00am	Mrs Linda Faber
26th December	No Service	
2nd January communion)	10:00am	Mr Ian Carnell (includes communion)
9th January	10:00am	Mr Gordon Justham
16th January	10:00am	Mrs Linda Faber
23rd January	10:00am	Revd. Kathy Lloyd Roberts
30th January	10:00am	Revd. Nick Stanyon

Please note that there is no service on Sunday 26th December

THE LECTORY

Readings for Sundays in December and January (and 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 for the specified Sundays. The readings in bold are the gospel readings for the day. An interesting challenge is to try and understand the link between the readings for a particular day. **Gordon Justham**

5th December Malachi 3.1-4; Luke 1.68-79; Philippians 1.3-11; **Luke 3.1-6**

12th December Zephaniah 3.14-20; Isaiah 12.2-6; Philippians 4.4-7; **Luke 3.7-18**

19th December Micah 5.2-5a; Luke 1.46b-55; Hebrews 10.5-10; **Luke 1.39-45(46-55)**

25th December Isaiah 9.2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2.11-14; **Luke 2.1-14,(15-20)**

26th December 1 Samuel 2.18-20,26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3.12-17; **Luke 2.41-52**

2nd January Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.1-7,10-14; Ephesians 3.1-12; **Matthew 2.1-12**

9th January Isaiah 43.1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8.14-17; **Luke 3.15-17,21-22**

16th January Isaiah 62.1-5; Psalm 36.5-10; 1 Corinthians 12.12-31a; **John 2.1-11**

23rd January Nehemiah 8.1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 12.12-31a; **Luke 4.14-21**

30th January Jeremiah 1.4-10; Psalm 71.1-6; 1 Corinthians 13.1-13; **Luke 4.21-30**

FOREWORD

I recently visited Bletchley Park. During World War II Bletchley Park housed the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS), which regularly penetrated the secret communications of the enemy – most importantly the German Enigma and Lorenz ciphers. The nature of the work at Bletchley remained secret until many years after the war.

In January 1945, at the peak of codebreaking efforts, around 9,000 personnel were working at Bletchley and its outstations. Many of the personnel held degrees in the areas of mathematics, physics and engineering. These disciplines are well known for using formulae which abound in symbols and are gobbledegook for many. Even a simple formula like $x + y = z$ can leave some folk utterly perplexed. I have a degree in Mathematics and therefore I can appreciate with, perhaps a greater understanding than many, some of the technicalities and issues facing the code breakers.

One of the interesting points that I read at Bletchley Park was that the number of potential codes that the advanced enigma cryptograph machine could create was greater than the number of seconds of time that have elapsed since the creation of the universe – mind boggling stuff. The letters x, y and z are used to represent “unknowns” in mathematical formulae. And in cryptic crosswords (another fascination of mine) the appearance of the word “unknown” or “variable” generally means that the answer will include the letter x, y or z.

As I write this piece, we are approaching the season of advent but when you read it, we will be in advent. During advent we are looking forward to remembering the birth of Jesus. We do not know the date or the exact circumstances of Jesus’ birth but we do know that he was born because he lived and had a tremendous impact upon all those he met and many that he didn’t including those of us living 2000 years later.

Although the month and date of Jesus' birth are unknown, the church in the early fourth century fixed the date as December 25. This corresponds to the date of the winter solstice on the Roman calendar – the shortest day – and, for many historic civilisations, the birth of a new year. Most Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25 in the Gregorian calendar, which has been adopted almost universally in countries throughout the world although some of the Orthodox Churches celebrate Christmas on January 7 which corresponds to December 25 of the older Julian calendar. For Christians, commemorating that God came into the world in the form of man, rather than knowing Jesus' exact birth date, is considered to be the primary purpose in celebrating Christmas.

It is a bug bear of mine when I see Christmas written as Xmas. I am aware that the Greek Letter Chi (written as X) is often used to abbreviate the name Christ, and when fused within a single typespace with the Greek letter rho (written as P), is used to represent the person of Jesus Christ. The Chi-Rho symbol is one of the earliest codes for representing Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I do not think that modern society appreciates this distinction.

Let us not rely on modern day code breakers to tell us what Xmas is about. For me, Christ is not a letter; Christ is not a variable; Christ came into the world through Jesus and this is what Christmas is about. In the words of the hymn “Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine”. And therefore, I think we should be happy to use the word Christmas, rather than the codified form Xmas, so that we, promote the name of Christ to all those with whom we have contact.

God bless.
Gordon Justham

ADDITIONAL DIARY DATES

- Thursday 2nd December** Singing for Pleasure 2:30pm
- Thursday 9th December** Singing for Pleasure 2:30pm
- Saturday 11th December** Last day of Saturday Cafe
- Tuesday 14th December** Leisurely Lunch
- Thursday 16th December** Singing for Pleasure Carol Singing at Brueton Place 2pm
- Thursday 16th December** Last Tots and Tales until 13 January
- Monday 20th December** Moments finishing for Christmas
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- Saturday 8th January** Saturday Café reopening
- Monday 10th January** Moments restarting
- Tuesday 11th January** Leisurely Lunch
- Thursday 13th January** Singing for Pleasure restarts 2:30pm
- Thursday 13th January** Tots and Tales restarts
- Tuesday 18th January** start of Week for Prayer for Christian Unity
- Thursday 20th January** Singing for Pleasure 2:30pm
- Sunday 23rd January** Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Ecumenical Service TBC
- Thursday 27th January** Singing for Pleasure 2:30pm

ALL AGE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

You are all invited to attend our All-Age Christmas Celebration on Friday 24 December at 4pm at Solihull URC. This will be suitable for anyone from young children to we older members.

Please also invite your families and friends to come along to enjoy carols, readings and stories for this celebration of Christmas Eve.

Ian Carnell

GIFT SERVICE

This Newsletter will be available the day of our Gift Service so, at the time of writing, I don't know how it went. I wanted to include a thank you though, in anticipation, to all of you who made a donation. We know our generosity makes a great deal of difference to those who find themselves living in the local women's refuge each Christmas.

Thank you also to Elaine who co-ordinates the delivery of the information of their needs to us, and the giving of the gifts to the refuge.

Linda Faber

CHRISTMAS CARD

We are once again offering the opportunity for you to put Christmas greetings to one another in the large card which can be found at the back of church. The idea is that any money that you would save by not sending out individual cards to each other should be donated instead to our Christmas charity which this year is Acorns Children's Hospice, which was chosen at our Annual Church Meeting in April.

(Our local charity for the year is the local facility of the National Institute for Conductive Education, where Harry attends, and our international charity for the year is Educaid Africa. We also chose to have one-off giving events for Christian Aid and UNICEF at different times, particularly if there are catastrophes which produce sudden need.)

Linda Faber

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Christmas greetings from Irene and Peter. We send, with our love for you, at Christmas all good wishes, and for the New Year Peace and Joy and Good Health.

Barrie and Elaine wish everyone a "Very Happy Christmas & a Healthy New year.

Happy Christmas everyone and all the best for the New Year. Anne Cherry

Sam, Stuart, Harry and George wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Peace and love to you all.

GENERATIONS PROJECT – SHARING GOD’S LOVE THROUGH ACTIVITIES, WORD, TOUCH AND SONG

Generations Outreach (CTCS project) aims to offer a wide spread of different activities including Worship and Pastoral Care within Care Homes and Sheltered Accommodation.

Amongst those resident in local care homes are many who have led lives of faithful Christian discipleship and those who have had little church contact, for many the traditional hymns will resonate in their memories.

This work has obviously been limited by the Pandemic but homes are beginning to open up again now with various safety measures in place.

Could you spare a few hours a week to help CTCS further develop this work and offer a wide range of different activities with the Care Homes and Sheltered Accommodation within our Community

‘Adopt a Granny’?

Looking to develop befriending schemes across our Community, could you spare an hour a week to visit or telephone an elderly person? To be a friend, to care for and pray for them. Each volunteer will be assigned one person to contact on a weekly basis.

Interested in volunteering? Please get in touch with Our Coordinator:
Diane Webb (Pastoral and Community Worker) 07478001759
Email: paws555dog@gmail.com

Thank you.
Elaine Jones

ECO CHURCH

As we approach Christmas we might be keenly aware of the materialism and over excesses of the celebration period as has become tradition and custom in this country at this time. Whilst God is a great one for celebrations, He instituted many in the Bible, are there ways we can still have, and do, all the things we enjoy but with less impact on our planet?

Why not take a look in a second hand shop to see if there are appropriate presents, or other bits and bobs, you can buy there. There are often brand-new things that people don't want and pass on to the charity for resale. One purchase from each of us of something second hand, rather than new, would make a great difference.

If you send Christmas cards and use wrapping paper, try to purchase ones that can be recycled. Avoid those with foil backing, or glitter, as these cannot be recycled.

Look out for crackers which don't include plastic prizes—they are becoming more widely available.

Aim to give as many gifts that are environmentally friendly as possible. Consider things which aren't plastic or have not been shipped from the other side of the world.

What other ideas do you have?

Linda Faber

CHRISTMAS SINGING FOR PLEASURE

We are now singing Christmas carols and would welcome any other members. We don't audition and would love more members. Try a free taster session any Thursday afternoon 2-3.30pm in the John Palmer Hall.



We are leading carol singing at Brueton Place on Thursday 16th December at 2pm.

We start singing again on Thursday 13th January 2022
More details from **Janet Ince** 0121 7060204

CHILDREN'S VIDEOS

In an effort to be involved with working with children, even though we have so few in our church, we have produced some videos which are available on the church website during Advent. We have used puppets to introduce the topic of the day before reading a bit of the Christmas story and introducing a craft, or other activity, for the children to do.

We have given out some chocolate coins, with the web information attached, to children at Tots and Tales and in the café. One or two members of the congregation took some to give away to those they know.

Linda Faber

DINING OUT LUNCH

Come and enjoy a leisurely lunch and a chat in our café style restaurant

on

14th DECEMBER 2021 AT 12:30pm

£3.50

ALL ARE WELCOME



MENU

ROAST PORK with SEASONING

ROAST POTATOES

CARROTS & SPROUTS



.....

CHRISTMAS PUDDING WITH CUSTARD

.....

TEA OR COFFEE



Please book by contacting Elaine 0121 744 6067 or email

vej46@yahoo.co.uk

By Thursday 9TH DECEMBER

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IS A GLOBAL REALITY

At least 340 million Christians around the world experience systematic discrimination, unfair treatment and persecution. That means 1 in 8 Christians are affected by ‘extreme’, ‘very high’ or ‘high’ levels of persecution in 74 countries.

Open Doors assembles a list of the top 50 where there is the most extreme persecution and asks us to pray for them.

This month: Pakistan

Christians in Pakistan face extreme persecution in every area of their lives.

Believers who have converted from Islam face the greatest persecution, but all Christians are considered second-class citizens in this strongly Islamic country. They are given jobs perceived as dishonourable, and can be victims of bonded labour.

Pakistan’s notorious blasphemy laws are used to target Christians, and Islamic extremist groups vehemently ‘defend’ these laws, including attacking or killing those believed to have contravened them. Christian girls are at risk of abduction and rape, and are often forced to marry their attackers and coerced into converting to Islam.

Pray

- For Pakistan Christians to have courage to speak about their faith.
- For protection over Pakistan’s churches, especially around Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter

- For God's strength for Christian girls who have been abducted and forced to convert and marry.

Linda Faber

SHOE BOXES

Many thanks to all who managed a shoe box and for your generous donations. We sent 20 boxes and £60 in donations to Link to Hope. You can be sure they will brighten someone's Christmas.

Anne Cherry

BEST WISHES

We wish Lanica Agnew all the very best as she commences her new post in the planning department of the council at Stratford upon Avon.

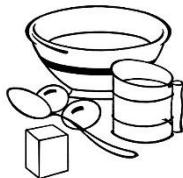
She has now finished her Masters in Urban Planning from Birmingham University and starts work in December at Stratford District Council. She got a first-class honours degree at Hull University.

Well done Lanica, we wish you all the best in your new job.

Gweno Nichols & Trixie Harman

FLAVOUR OF THE MONTH

This easy one-pot dish is packed with flavour and its low fat too.



Rich Beef Casserole

This recipe is recommended by our “Dining Out” diners

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 Tablespoon oil
1 lb Lean stewing steak, cubed
2 Onions
1 Clove garlic, crushed
1 can condensed cream of tomato soup
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pint Red wine or beef stock or mixture of both.
1 level teaspoon dried mixed herbs
8 oz Carrots, sliced
Salt, freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons single cream

METHOD

Heat the oil in a saucepan and fry the meat until browned. Add the onions and garlic and cook for a further 3-4 minutes.

Add the soup and wine or stock and mix well.

Add the herbs and carrots, bring to the boil, cover and simmer gently for 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours until the meat is tender.

Add seasoning to taste and stir in the cream just before serving.

Elaine Jones

If you would like to contribute a recipe for the ‘Flavour of the Month’ item, please let Elaine or myself know. Thank you.

Stuart Mills

LEPROSY MISSION UPDATE

Dear Friends,

It's with some regret that I have decided to no longer continue to collect the boxes for the Leprosy Mission.

The pandemic has brought so many changes, particularly in respect of money transactions and collecting small change is no longer viable.

I'm sure that a representative of the Leprosy Mission will be coming to take a service at our church in the coming year, so there will be a good opportunity to donate then.

If you would still like to support the Leprosy Mission you can send donations directly to them in Peterborough.

I would like to thank everyone for their support to the Leprosy Mission, and for the many boxes that have been filled over the years.

Many thanks, once again,

Sue Plant

KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

Minister

VACANT

Church Secretary

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

Website

www.solihullurc.org.uk

Hall Lettings: 07925 573259

Generations Project - enabling the Church in care homes

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

Moments

Mondays 10am—12 noon@ Central Solihull

FEBRUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

Material for the February 2022 edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

stuartkmills@gmail.com

by Sunday 23rd January please.