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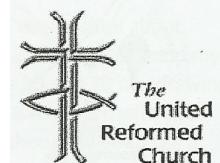
### Website

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

# SOLIHULL

United Reformed Church

Christ Church - Hobs Moat— Olton



## December 2014/January 2015 Newsletter

A child is born, a son is given:  
He sleeps on earth who rules in heaven.  
Who is this child?  
Where is this heaven?  
Both come alive where love is given.

*Iona Community*

### FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

Material for the February edition is due to

Marian Batten, 0121 689 8213

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**by Sunday, 18th January, please.**



*Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia*



### SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Formerly three independent churches, Hobs Moat, Olton and Christ Church, are now united as a single church. We are now holding only one Sunday worship service - using the premises in the different neighbourhoods for a month at a time.

December - various, see Calendar

January - Olton

February - Hobs Moat

As we develop our life together we continue to explore how we might continue to serve the two neighbourhoods and the town centre. This will involve some rationalisation and development of our various premises. Prayer is at the heart of what we are doing, as our desire is to be fulfilling God's calling to us as a Christian fellowship.

We invite you to join us on the exciting, and at time scary, journey and look forward to seeing you in Sunday worship - wherever.



### Christmas



If only we could keep this love  
we feel within our hearts  
for all mankind at Christmas time  
and when the New Year starts.

This special time of year it seems  
brings out those hearts of gold.  
We celebrate the birth of God  
with gifts for young and old.

And while all nature slumbers deep  
beneath the frosty earth;  
the holly and the ivy,  
with the mistletoe, for mirth,

encircled on the big front door  
with berries in a ring,  
while muffled up in coats and scarves,  
we all with joy do sing.

Then in the kitchen, busy hands  
ensure that all are fed,  
the pastry on the mincemeat tarts  
handmade, not bought instead.

And though our presents, great and small,  
may not all perfect be,  
they represent a greater gift,  
Gods' love for you and me.

Carol Andrews

*Merry  
Christmas*

## MEMORIES LINGER

We met, we married, a long time ago,  
we worked for long hours, wages were low;  
no telly, no radio, no bath, times were hard,  
just a cold water tap, and a walk up the yard.

No holidays abroad, no carpets on floors,  
we had coal on the fire—and we never locked doors.  
Our children arrived—no ‘pill’ in those days,  
and we brought them up without ‘State aid’.

No Vallium, no drugs, no LSD,  
we cured our pains with a good cup of tea.  
If you were sick you were treated at once,  
not “Fill in a form, come back in six months”.

No vandals, no muggings—there were nowt to rob,  
in fact we were rich with a couple of bob.  
People were happier in those far-off days,  
kinder and caring in so many ways.

Milkmen and paper boys used to whistle and sing,  
and a night at the flicks was our one mad fling.  
Oh, we sll had our share of troubles and strife,  
but we just had to face it— “That’s life”.

But now we are old and look back through the years,  
we don’t think of the bad times, the trouble and tears.  
We remember the blessings, our home and our love,  
we shared them together, and we thank God above.

Anon



## One end leads to new beginnings

Advent is a season of longing for and looking forward to the return of Jesus. We come to the end of the church year when we celebrate the birth of Jesus and we look forward to God’s perfect reign of justice and peace to be seen all over the world.

As well as longing for God’s kingdom to come, Advent is also a season for preparation, getting everything ready for the King of Kings. Instead, we find that we are busy with getting ready to celebrate by rushing around to buy that really good bargain and that once in lifetime gift. This year, we reflect over the past months and we ask ourselves the question: what are you preparing for and what are you longing for this Advent/Christmas?

The birth of Jesus promises us something new and different. It is a time of new hope and new beginnings. Jesus comes and offers us the precious gift of salvation which we can share with others through the good news. At this special time of year, the hurt which humanity experiences does not go away, so as we prepare we remember the struggles and hardships. We pray that we will serve the hungry and the thirsty, the stranger and the naked, the sick and those in prison, so that we are all prepared to receive the gift of Jesus.

When we consider the verses from Isaiah (*Isaiah 9:6-8*) we marvel at a time of justice and peace from this time and forever more. For me, I would long to see God breaking through in our worship together, I long to become more obedient a disciple of Jesus, and in doing so bring about transformation to our community.

Let us not rush headlong too quickly in to the Christmas and the New Year celebrations as they will come and go before we know it, but take time to fast, pray and make space for God, so that this time of waiting and preparing will be an adventure worth waiting for.

May God bless you this Christmas and coming New Year.

Zaidie

## **MAKING COMMITMENTS FOR OUR FUTURE ....**

On Sunday 14th December our worship will include a Church Meeting where we trust we will be led to make some significant commitments regarding the future for Solihull URC.

### **Why in a service?**

Because our decision-making needs to be done in an attitude of openness to God - seeking his way for his church. Even in this setting we should not be afraid of expressing our own viewpoints, but it is 'in the mix' of listening to each other, taking note of what we find in Scripture and listening in prayer for God's promptings that we may discern God's way for us.

It was in January of this year (2014) that we listened prayerfully to the 'voices within and around' and moved to the decision to become a single church. We now come to listen again for what we have heard during our ongoing discussions, in our conversations with other churches and the communities we serve and, above all, for what our faith in Christ is telling us.

### **Commitments rather than decision**

The paper 'A Way Forward' presented at the October Church Meeting referred to "a series of decisions that will enable the church to express commitment to different aspects of our life and witness". Actually, it is various commitments that will shape our future life and will lead to decisions about how we might fulfil them.

Commitments to 'love God and our neighbour as ourselves' give shape to much else: Commitments to worship, prayer and exploring God's word in scripture. Recognising God in the themes and things of life (some suggested in 'Mission not Impossible'), discovering the life of Jesus in the community around us where we find healing, love, justice, sacrifice, restoration, forgiveness etc. and taking a share in enabling these to happen.

### **Please prepare**

Despite the myriad of issues that need to be considered, it is too easy for us to say "I know what I think", when in reality little thought has been given. If we are to make confident commitments on 14th December it requires that each of us gives prayerful consideration to the issues, sensitive to the 'voices within and around' and most of all to God.

were given a great welcome and in-depth information about current programmes Christian Aid are involved with. Unfortunately, all the programmes supported by Commitment for Life Programmes are taking place in the South-West of the country (Matabeleland), where there are particular problems with drought caused by climate change. They gave us details of their current programme of planting crops for drought conditions and the impressive results. Helped by support from Commitment for Life these methods have now found their way into the curriculum of national agricultural colleges.

Another need that struck me was the country's need to rebuild its tourist industry. When we visited tourist attractions and craft markets, we were pretty much the only visitors and were keenly aware of artisans offering fantastic goods for sale at really good prices, but of course we couldn't buy everything. When we spent a night in a safari lodge, we came across the same phenomenon: great service, excellent facilities and no other customers in sight.

Franziska Herring, Trinity Church, Stafford

### **COMMITMENT FOR LIFE PRAYER**

We pray for all Christian Aid partners in the region who are facing a challenging time - but especially Silveira House which works with communities to help build small enterprise schemes including plumbing, carpentry, sewing and juice making. We pray that these schemes allow people to financially support their families and give something back to their local community.

We pray and give thanks for all churches that are part of Commitment for Life, that they may continue to support the programme through action and giving because their faith demands it.

## Extract from Stories for Change 104.

### ZIMBABWE

This is the second part of an article. The first part was in the November Newsletter.

On our first Sunday, we visited a Presbyterian Church in Gweru. This church is set in a deprived area of the town, and the church members witness daily how the children from their neighbourhood cannot access education. The church have now found a small house on a local estate for their minister, and are using the manse on their premises as a Secondary School. They have some 100 children crowded into living rooms and bedrooms, but everybody is pleased with the opportunity to learn, and the church has great plans for building extension blocks for the school on their premises.

On our final Sunday, we worshipped at the Presbyterian Church in Mhangura, a mining town where the Copper mine closed down some 10 years ago. Since then, the only income came from occasional agricultural jobs at surrounding farms. We witnessed desperate poverty – and incredible generosity when these people gave us, a group of some 20 people, a Sunday lunch fit for a king. The only comment from them – the Lord provides!

Through common British friends we made contact with a Zimbabwean family, Weston and Liz Muronzi, who had set up a feeding programme for Aids orphans in their rural home north of Harare. The orphans stay in their villages with their extended families, but come daily to the Muronzi home for a meal, for education and for training in useful skills like growing food, carpentry and sewing. There are now some 200 children attending the programme, and they walk from villages up to 10 km away. There are plans to build a health centre and a primary school in the near future ([www.letsgivethemhope.org](http://www.letsgivethemhope.org)).

And we were able to visit the Christian Aid Offices in Harare, where we

### BIRTH .... the Christmas Experience

These reflections are based on material prepared by Mark on ‘Life Themes’ and you are encouraged to focus on the three perspectives: Me, You & God.

#### What is your experience?

**MOTHER** - enabling new life, yet not being in control. Mary said ‘I am the Lord’s servant’. Is ‘servant’ a term you would use to describe bringing a life into the world? (*Luke 1.26 The Annunciation*)

For a parent any thoughts of servanthood are soon overtaken by the weight of responsibility. Can the sense of hope we find in a new life be sustained, and how?

Children are ‘flesh of my flesh’, yet they have life in their own right and parents have to let go. Mary’s experience throughout Jesus’ life is one of anguish and faith. What is your experience of ‘letting go’?

**WHO’S THE DADDY?** - there at the beginning, yet when it comes to the birth more of a spectator. Many babies are described as ‘accidents’ - what is the place of ‘decision’ in the process of birth? How do these experiences help us understand God’s role in the birth of Jesus? (*Luke 1. 68 - Zechariah reflects on the birth of John - high hopes!*)

**GRANDPARENT** - there is real awareness of the challenges and risks of life, but difficulty in understanding the young and ‘modern life’. Birth is very much a mark of faith in the future. How do you feel about the hope and potential of a new birth? Do you have trust and confidence? (*Luke 2. 22 - Simeon sees what the parents cannot - salvation*)

#### BORN AGAIN! What does this mean for you?

Reflect on God’s new life, a hope for what lies ahead, a life of dependency, increasing responsibility, born for what? .... (*John 3.1-8 - Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit*).

## CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER & JANUARY

### DECEMBER

Monday 1st 7.15pm Elders' Meeting @ Hobs Moat

Thursday 4th - Saturday 6th Union Theatre's Peter Pan @ Christ Church

Sunday 7th 10am Holy Communion @ Christ Church  
with Accreditation of Ian Carnell as a Lay Preacher  
4pm CT in Olton Advent Service @ The Friary

Monday 8th 12.30pm Generations Lunch Hour @ Christ Church  
6.45pm Olton Scouts Toy Service  
7.30pm Solihull Male Voice Choir @ Hobs Moat

Tuesday 9th 10.30am Neighbourhood Coffee Morning @ Hobs Moat

Saturday 13th 10.30am CT in Hatchford Brook sing carols @ Sheldon Tesco

Sunday 14th 10am Toy Service @ Christ Church  
Church Meeting will be part of a longer service  
6.30pm Carols & Mince Pies @ Hobs Moat

Tuesday 16th 10am Fellowship Prayers @ Hobs Moat

Thursday 18th 2pm Christmas Worship @ Deerhurst Court  
6pm Carol Singing @ Solihull Hospital

Friday 19th 2pm Christmas Worship @ Newholme Gardens

Sunday 21st 10.30am Christmas Worship @ The Grove  
11.00am Christmas Worship @ Hampton House  
and Star & Garter  
6.30pm Carols by Candlelight @ Olton

Tuesday 23rd 10.30am Neighbourhood Coffee Morning @ Hobs Moat

Wednesday 24th 10am Praying with the Papers @ Christ Church  
4pm Christmas Celebration @ Olton  
9pm Midnight in Bethlehem Communion @ Hobs Moat

Thursday 25th 10am Christmas Day Celebration Worship @ Christ Church

Sunday 28th 10am Family worship @ Christ Church

### SHOE BOXES

Thank you everybody who helped in any way with the shoe boxes.either by filling your own box, helping to fill other boxes or donating articles or money. 62 boxes were sent and £62 of surplus money was given as a donation.



We shall be getting a receipt in due course and photos of the delivery next year'

Anne Cherry

### HOLIDAY



During my recent holiday in America and Canada, I attended Church services on two occasions. One service was held in First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto. All Souls Day was being observed on the Sunday I was there. We were invited to take a photo of a departed loved one and to name them during a quiet and reflective time during the service. We also had a time during worship when we recalled the wider world and were invited to verbalise concerns in different countries. This was met with a vigorous response. The service at Hobs Moat led by Mark on 16th November, when he encouraged us to bring our fellowship prayers within the service, reminded me of my time in Canada. I trust that this is an experience which will be repeated in future services.

Another idea that caught my attention at church in Canada was sponsoring a Syrian family. Everybody in both Canadian Churches wore name badges , and the congregation was encouraged to apply a named sticker. It is good to consider ideas from other Churches and countries.

Bridget Goudie

## OLTON

### PRAYERS for, and NEWS of, the CHURCH FAMILY

We pray for our families and friends, for Neil and Elaine, and for all those who are suffering in any way. We think especially of: Enid Chapman who was in hospital recently after a fall which caused facial injuries and the loss of a tooth; for Sheila Durant who is presently awaiting the results of an angiogram, and who has also just had a cataract removed; for David Argall who is experiencing back problems; for Christine Yapp whose recovery slowly continues, and whom we are always pleased to see whenever she feels well enough to join us in worship; for the family and friends of Dorothy Lane who has now passed away after a long illness; and for all those who, like Eunice Thomson, are suffering the usual winter coughs and sneezes.

Please remember all these folk in your prayers.

Rita

### LEPROSY and CWM

The recent collections enabled me to send £239.22 to the Leprosy Mission and £62.06 to CWM. Many thanks to all those who still contribute

Sue Plant

I do not feel able to send Christmas cards this year, but would like to give warm Christmas greetings to all my friends who have been so kind to me this year.

Norma Clement

To each is given a bag of tools.  
a lump of clay and a book of rules;  
and each must fashion e're life has flown  
a stumbling block or a stepping stone.

## JANUARY

- Sunday 4th 10am Holy Communion @ Olton  
Tuesday 6th 10.30am Neighbourhood Coffee Morning @ Hobs Moat  
7.00pm Social Events Committee @ Olton  
Thursday 8th 7.30pm Hatchford Brook Churches Together  
Sunday 11th 10am Family Worship @ Olton  
Monday 12th 12.30pm Generations Lunch Hour  
7.15pm Elders' Meeting @ Hobs Moat  
Tuesday 13th 11am Holy Communion @ Hampton House  
Wednesday 14th 12.15pm Churches Together in Olton @ The Branch  
Thursday 15th 1.00pm Coach Trippers buffet & meeting @ Olton  
7.30pm Cell Group Leaders meet @ Jill Hughes'  
Friday 16th 10am Fellowship Prayers @ Christ Church  
Sunday 18th 10am Family Worship @ Olton  
11.45am Worship @ Star & Garter  
4pm Churches Together in Olton Service @ Olton  
Tuesday 20th 10.30am Neighbourhood Coffee Morning @ Hobs Moat  
Wednesday 21st 10am Worship @ The Grove  
12.30pm Lunch & Prayers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity @ Christ Church  
Saturday 24th 10am Praying with the Papers @ Hobs Moat  
10.30am Leprosy Mission Coffee Morning < Hobs Moat  
Sunday 25th 10am Family Worship @ Olton  
6pm CT in Central Solihull Service @ St Helen's

## CAROL CONCERT

Hobs Moat Monday Night Ladies hope to welcome you to their annual Christmas Carol Concert with Solihull Male Voice Choir on 8th December. There is no entry charge but a collection and a raffle, all proceeds going to the Cardiac dept. of the Children's Hospital. Tea, coffee and mince pies will be served at the end of the evening. Doors open 7.30pm.



## SUNDAY WORSHIP

### DECEMBER AT CHRIST CHURCH

**December 7th** Communion. Revd Stuart Scott, Mrs Ann Tempest  
Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8

**December 14th** Revd Mark Fisher  
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, Psalm 126, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24,  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

**December 21st** Christmas Worship in Care Homes  
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26, Romans 16: 25-27,  
Luke 1: 26-38

**December 28th** Mrs Zaidie Orr  
Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Galatians 3:23-25;4:4-7, John 1:1-18,  
Psalm 147 or 147:13-21

### JANUARY AT OLTON

**January 4th** Revd Mark Fisher  
Jeremiah 31:7-14, Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19a,  
Matthew 2:13-15,19-23 or Luke 2:41-52, Psalm 84

**January 11th** Mrs Zaidie Orr  
Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Acts 19:1-7, Mark 1:4-11

**January 18th** Revd Mark Fisher  
(Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Homelessness Sunday)  
1 Samuel 3:1-10(11-20), Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17,  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20, John 1:43-51

**January 25th**  
Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62: 6-14, 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31  
Mark 1:14-20

## CHRIST CHURCH

**Harvest Boxes.** Thank you to all who filled their Harvest boxes for Commitment to Life. The money raised amounted to £47.10.

**Reform Magazine.** The 2015 order has now been confirmed and paid for. Please may I have any outstanding payments as soon as possible.

Bridget



### Mell Square Crib Service

Sunday  
30th November 2014  
3.00 pm

Please join us at 3pm in Mell Square, Solihull, for the Blessing of the Crib and Carols. The service will last for about half-an-hour.

All are welcome.

Please also note two other dates:

**United Service for Unity**, Sunday, 25th Jan. 2015  
6.30pm at St.Helen's Church, St.Helen's Road,  
off Buryfield Road, Solihull. B91 2UA

**United Prayer Lunch**, Wednesday, 21st Jan. 2015  
12.30pm at Christ Church, Warwick Road, Solihull.  
B91 3DG

## **HOBS MOAT**

The following friends need our prayers at this time. May God's love and peace surround each of them and all who are feeling unwell.  
Maureen Bellamy, Alf Andrews, Peggy and Harold Crosby, Jean and Brian Mather, Maegaret Mc William, Joan Shaw, Vera Thomas, Norman Wilkins, Nita Renshaw, Irene Lambert and partner Keith, Terry Young, Irene Kettle, Thelma Phillips.

Thank you for your much appreciated phone calls, messages and prayers during the last couple of weeks while I have been incapacitated.

Jeanne

We would like to express our thanks for all the good wishes, cards and kind gifts which were given to us on the occasion of our 60th wedding anniversary.

Pat and Tom Combe

We would like to thank all our friends for their Get Well cards and messages when Eric had a hip replacement in October. We are pleased to say that he is making good progress. With our love to you all.

Eric and Marcia Bignall

A very big Thank You to Anne Lamb and her helpers for all the cups of coffee and tea served after the Sunday services. Also a big Thank You to Irene Lambert for looking after the garden, and for making sure the rose in memory of Kath Rogers is cared for.

## **CHRISTMAS TOY SERVICE**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> December we will be holding our Christmas Toy service at Christ Church at 10.00am, and on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December the uniformed organisations at Olton will be holding one from 6.45 – 7.15pm, to which we are all invited.



I thought it would be helpful to let you know just where our toys are going. Jenny, who works at the Sunshine Gang Craft Club in Nechells, will collect these for distribution. Children in this group range from 5-15 years and the group is going well with the parents supporting each other in times of need. The group has also started a holiday club where families are taken on holidays in the autumn half-term, other trips are also arranged. The group is mainly made up of families on benefits or very low income.

The toys we will have given are distributed in various ways. Some go to the children in the Sunshine group, but the majority go to needy families in the local community who need that bit of extra help at Christmas. Birmingham City Mission also receive toys to give out to the wider community. We know from the past how grateful the families are who receive our gifts.

Nechells is a very deprived area in our city, and this is one way we can help families this Christmas to feel less stressed and able to enjoy being a family.

Irene Bound

## **CHRISTIAN AID CHRISTMAS ENVELOPES**

Just a reminder to look out for the Christian Aid envelopes which will be appearing in the pews in December. The focus this year will be on improving maternity services - something we take for granted. Remember that whatever we collect will be doubled by the UK Government..

Anne Cherry

**Hobs Moat Singing for Pleasure** group invites you to

A festive evening of **Carols and Readings**,

followed by **tea and mince pies**.

Come and join us at **Hobs Moat URC**, Faulkner Rd,

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> Dec at 6.30pm.**

All are welcome – bring a friend!



Mince pies were a regular part of Christmas festivities as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At that time mince pies were coffin or cradle shaped and contained shredded meat as well as dried fruits. Crusaders returning from the Holy Land brought spices with them and it was thought to be appropriate to celebrate Christ's birth with a pie containing spices from his native land. It became traditional to add three spices to the pies, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg, as the Magi had brought three gifts to the Christ child.

Apparently luck would come to anyone who ate a mince pie a day for the whole twelve days of Christmas. Many poor people lived frugally in those days so a mince pie every day for twelve days would certainly have seemed very lucky. They may indeed have had the luck to put weight on if they ate a mince pie for 12 consecutive days!

It was thought that a wish should be made when eating the first mince pie for the season and that all mince pies should be eaten in silence. I suspect we don't follow this last bit of advice nowadays!

Carol Andrews

#### **COACH TRIPPERS UNITED**

Please keep free the date of **Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> January**, when we will enjoy a finger buffet at 1.00pm in the Sunny Room at Olton before deciding which places we will be going to. We have had a small rebate from Johnsons, and have decided to share it with everyone in this way.

Afterwards we will vote on the trips we would like to go on in 2015.

We look forward to seeing all Coach Trippers on 15<sup>th</sup> January.

David Argall

#### **SPONSORED CHILD**

For the last few years we have sponsored a child in India through Action Aid. His name is GANESH KUMAR and he is a Dalit which is the lowest caste, formerly called the Untouchables. Being at the bottom of the social heap they were denied access to jobs, housing and education and were only allowed to work as scavengers (sewage removers). The charities have worked to improve their conditions and many more children now go to school. More individual success stories are told in the news letter on the notice board by Ganesh's photo at Olton. Twice a year we have a drawing and message from Ganesh, which also go on the notice board.

It costs £12 a year per person to sponsor Ganesh, which is collected in January. Action Aid have to have a minimum of £15 a month to make it viable so we need at least 15 people to support this scheme.

Of course, the more the better! If you would like to sponsor Ganesh see me, preferably before January so that I can set it up.

My grateful thanks go to all the kind souls who already sponsor him

Anne Cherry 0121 707 4285

#### **LEPROSY COFFEE MORNING**

A special coffee morning in aid of **The Leprosy Mission**

will be held at

**Hobs Moat on**

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

**From 10.30 to 12.00**

Coffee, Tea & Raffle.



..Come along and enjoy a chat with friends

and at the same time help those

many people who still suffer from Leprosy.