



DOWNING PLACE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
CAMBRIDGE

PLACE MATTERS



MONTHLY MAGAZINE – ISSUE 16
DECEMBER 2019 - JANUARY 2020

CONTACT DETAILS – DOWNING PLACE URC

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LETTER FROM ANNEMARIE PACHEL

Hi there!

Have you also already seen the Christmas lights in the city centre sparkling in the dark winter nights? When the days get shorter again Christmas season is in the air. During this time of the year many people remember their old traditions. So it is a good opportunity for me to learn a bit more about English Christmas traditions and to share with you some German customs.



Quite different to my experiences so far, most Christmas markets in Germany **won't be open before the first Advent weekend. Then the air is filled again** with the lovely smell of mulled wine, punch, roasted almonds, German lebkuchen and bratwurst. Thousands of lights on the huts and stalls will create with their warm sparkling lights an almost magical atmosphere. All sorts of things will be sold: arts and crafts, Christmas baubles, hats and socks, candles and tons of sweet treats. Sometimes you will find a gigantic Christmas pyramid or an ancient carousel in the middle of the market, and of course at least one huge Christmas tree.

On the first of December all children, great and small, are excited to open the first door of their Advent calendar. There is a wide range of types: from rather traditional ones with a picture, story-telling ones with a chapter to read every day, self-made ones with small bags filled with sweets and small gifts, to commercial ones from Playmobil, Lego etc. Some charities like Rotary clubs sell Advent calendars with the chance to win vouchers for local shops or leisure time activities.

In some villages, often organised by the local congregation, there is a living Advent calendar. In the evening interested people gather on a central place and then go to a certain home, where a window display has been created, which is then revealed to everybody. A story is told and some carols are sung matching with the display, lebkuchen and mulled wine or punch are served.

The 4th December is Saint Barbara's Day in the roman-catholic church. In some former rather catholic areas of Germany it is still custom that people cut off twigs of fruit trees and put them in a vase in their house. If you are lucky they will blossom at Christmas Eve. It is believed that this is a sign of fortune in the coming year.

On the morning of 6th December, Saint Nicolas' Day, children will dash out of their beds to peer in their shoes. Traditionally they will find some chocolate, tangerines and small gifts in them. Saint Nicolas is the patron of children and the

custom to put something in the shoes of the children goes back to a legend. It is said that Nicolas dropped some gold coins in the shoes of three poor maids in the night before their marriage to provide them with a proper dowry.

What may not be missing in any home during Advent season is the Advent wreath with four candles. As far as I remember both at home and in church the candles used to be red and the wreath is decorated among other things with red ribbons. The modern wreath was invented by Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-1881), a German pastor in Hamburg. Wichern founded an orphanage for **children in the slums of Hamburg**. Originally Wichern's wreath had four big white candles marking the Advent Sundays and little red candles in-between for the weekdays till Christmas Eve. It should help the children to count the days until Christmas.

In Germany we celebrate Christmas on the evening of 24th December. Still most people go to church on this day. It is one of the best attended services throughout the year. In most churches there are at least two, often three services on this day. One of those is especially focused on families with rather small children. Often a nativity play prepared by children takes place in this service. In all services on this day we will always read the nativity story of Luke and sing "Silent night".

Before Santa Claus became famous all over the world - by the way the figure of Santa Claus still popular today was drawn by the artist Thomas Nast who was born in 1840 in Landau / Palatinate - it was believed in the western and southern parts of Germany that the Christ Child brought the Christmas presents. The Christ Child is often depicted as an angel-like figure with curly fair hair in a white dress. Often the Christ Child is accompanied by a helper called Knecht Ruprecht. He is depicted as a rather severe looking elderly man with a beard in a long red greatcoat, carrying a bag with presents for the well-behaved and a rod for the naughty children, who will get hit on their back instead of a present. In other parts of Germany it was believed, that only he brings the presents instead of the Christ Child.

The traditional dish for Christmas Eve was potato mash with sausages. This originates in a time when Christmas Eve was a normal working day and there was no time left for preparing a big meal. And in former time Advent was an act of fasting as well, so no big meals were allowed anyway. This has changed today. Nowadays often every meal during the Christmas Days is a feast.

After reading this, I hope you are in a Christmassy mood now ;-)

I wish all of you a joyful Advent season and a merry Christmas with your family and friends!

Annemarie Pachel

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Everyone can enjoy seasonal cooking. In recent years our Time for God volunteers have enjoyed encouraging their German tradition of baking vast quantities of little Christmas biscuits to share with visitors or give as gifts. We send Christmas Cards with greetings to all our former volunteers

This recipe for VANILLEKIPFERL is from Katrin, TfG number 8 who was here for 2007/8

Ingredients:

250 grams	plain flour
1	egg yolk
1 pinch	salt
20 grams	vanilla sugar
80 grams	icing sugar
100 grams	ground almonds
200 grams	butter

(1 oz is about 28.35 grams)

for dredging:

4 tablespoons	icing sugar
40 grams	vanilla sugar



NOTE: To make vanilla sugar, store a vanilla pod in a jar of caster sugar and leave in a cool dark place for 1 month

Mix all the ingredients together to a dough.

Let it cool down in a fridge for about 30 minutes.

Afterwards cut the dough in small pieces. Then roll every piece in reels (about 5 cm long) which you form into the shape of a small croissant.

Bake the Kipferl in an oven at about 180°C (gas mark 4) for about 10-15 minutes.

Directly afterwards - when the biscuits are still hot – turn them over in a mixture of icing sugar and vanilla sugar.

Let them cool down then.

Have a lots of fun while making the biscuits and enjoy eating them.

ADVENT FESTIVAL - 15 DECEMBER

ALL TOGETHER ALL THE TIME

WORD SEARCH

How many of these words can you find in the grid below?

GOD

YES

MARY

CHRISMON

ADVENT

TREE

MAGNIFICAT

CANDLE

WAITING

JOSEPH

GABRIEL

STAR

ANNUNCIATION

TELL

ELIZABETH

RICH

DOWNING

GOOD

PLACE

HUNGRY



BUILDING WORKS – LATEST

Our Downing Place project got a good airing in the press recently – the *Cambridge Independent* devoted a whole page to our redevelopment – see the article at <https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/3-3m-vision-is-transforming-iconic-cambridge-church-9090299/>

Here are two more photographs, one showing where the new windows onto Downing Street will go in, and the other the courtyard, with the temporary scaffolding roof over the St. Columba Hall. More photographs on the Downing Place website.





Thanks to Robert Porrer for the pictures.

Reflections on a
URC Study Tour to
Israel / Palestine
September 2019



Cambridge Area Partnership

2 December 2019

7.15 for 7.45pm

Whittlesford United Reformed Church

Advance Notice from Fulbourn URC

A Musical Coffee Morning is to be held at Fulbourn URC on Saturday 1 February from 10am to 12noon to raise funds towards a Toilet Twinning Project.



You are invited to join us for coffee and spend a few pennies!



FEBRUARY FILM NIGHT – ADVANCE NOTICE

The next Film Night will be on Monday February 10th. The film will be *Mrs. Lowry and Son*.

Details from Rosemary Johnston.

CHRISTMAS AT DOWNING PLACE URC



Join us this
CHRISTMAS

May the God who came to us as a baby,
bless you with peace and hope.



Tuesday 17 December 11.30am: Traditional Carol Service

Sunday 22 December 11.00am Carol Service

Christmas Eve 11.30pm Midnight Communion

Christmas Day 11.00am Christmas Morning Worship

DECEMBER DIARY

Sunday 1st	10.00am	Choir Practice	Emmanuel
	11.00am	Advent Sunday Worship with Communion led by Revd Dr John Bradbury FOODBANK COLLECTION	Emmanuel
Monday 2nd	12.30pm	Prayers for the Life and Witness of our Church followed by a simple lunch	At the home of John & Elizabeth Whitehorn
	2.00pm	Advent Housegroup Week 3: 'They were there' using the hymn 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen'	At the home of John & Elizabeth Whitehorn
	7.15pm for 7.45pm	Area Partnership Meeting Speaker: Richard Lewney (see poster on page 8)	Whittlesford URC
Tuesday 3rd	12.45pm	Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship Christmas Dinner	Contact Penny Milsom
Wednesday 4th	1.00pm	Free Lunchtime Concert: Victoria Ayano Royce (flute) Richard Hinitt (organ)	Emmanuel
Thursday 5th	1.30pm	Knit One, Give One	Emmanuel
Sunday 8th	10.00am	Choir Practice	Emmanuel
	11.00am	Morning Worship led by Revd Paul Whittle	Emmanuel
	7.00pm	Open Table Bring and Share Supper	Emmanuel

Monday 9th	2.00pm	Advent Housegroup Week 4: 'Infant of days', using the hymn 'Let earth and heaven combine'	At the home of John & Elizabeth Whitehorn
Tuesday 10th	2.30pm	Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship Carol Service	St Athanasios' Church, Cherry Hinton Road
	7.30pm	Finance and Management Committee Meeting	At the home of Stephen Thornton
Wednesday 11th	1.00pm	Free Lunchtime Concert: Olive Murray (soprano) Christopher Foreman (piano)	Emmanuel
Thursday 12th	10.30am	Ferried Friends	At the home of Sally Williams
	11.00am	Midweek Worship led by Revd Nigel Uden	Emmanuel
	12.30pm	Gibson Christmas Lunch	Cambridge Regional College
	1.30pm	Knit One, Give One	Emmanuel
	7.00pm	Singing Housegroup Christmas Supper	At the home of David & Penny Flynn
Sunday 15th	10.00am	Choir Practice	Emmanuel
	11.00am	Advent Festival All Age Worship led by Revd Dr John Bradbury	Emmanuel
	2.00pm	Christingle Service led by Revd Nigel Uden	Fulbourn URC

Tuesday 17th	11.30am	Traditional Carol Service (with those living with dementia and their carers particularly in mind) followed by mince pies.	Emmanuel
	2.30pm	'The Word Together' Bible Study Group	Fulbourn URC
Wednesday 18th	1.00pm	Free Lunchtime Concert: Cambridge Voices Christmas Concert	Emmanuel
Thursday 19th	1.30pm	Knit One, Give One	Emmanuel
Sunday 22nd	10.00am	Choir Practice	Emmanuel
	11.00am	Carol Service led by Revd Nigel Uden and Revd Dr John Bradbury	Emmanuel
	3.00pm	Carol Service with members of Cottenham Brass led by Revd Nigel Uden	Fulbourn URC
Wednesday 24th CHRISTMAS EVE	11.30pm	Midnight Communion led by Revd Dr John Bradbury and Annemarie Pachel	Emmanuel
Thursday 25th CHRISTMAS DAY	11.00am	Christmas Morning Service led by Revd Nigel Uden	Emmanuel
Sunday 29th	11.00am	Morning Worship led by Revd Dr John Bradbury	Emmanuel

JANUARY DIARY

Sunday 5th	10.00am	Choir Practice	Emmanuel
	11.00am	Epiphany Communion led by Revd Dr John Bradbury COLLECTION FOR THE FOODBANK	Emmanuel
	6.00pm	Epiphany Service with Cambridge Voices led by Revd Nigel Uden Followed by refreshments	Emmanuel
Monday 6th	4.00pm	Officers' Meeting	Emmanuel
Tuesday 7th	2.30pm	Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship Winter themes in poetry, readings and objects	St Athanasios Church, Cherry Hinton Road
Wednesday 8th	1pm	Free Lunchtime Concert Eric McElroy (piano)	Emmanuel
Thursday 9th	11.00am	Midweek Worship	Emmanuel
	1.30pm	Knit One, Give One	Emmanuel
	7.30pm	Elders' Meeting	Emmanuel
Sunday 12th	10.00am	Choir Practice	Emmanuel
	11.00am	Morning Worship led by Revd Professor David Thompson	Emmanuel
	7.00pm	Open Table Bring and Share Supper	Emmanuel

Tuesday 14th	2.30pm	Tuesday Club: It All Started with a Kneeler Speaker: Daphne Thomas	At the home of Pamela Cressey
	2.30pm	Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship 'A Palestinian Study Trip' Speaker: Richard Lewney	St Athanasios Church, Cherry Hinton Road
	7.30pm	Finance & Management Committee	At the home of Stephen Thornton
Wednesday 15th	1pm	Free Lunchtime Concert Yoon Seok Shin (piano)	Emmanuel
Thursday 16th	10.30am	Ferried Friends	tbc
	12.30pm	Gibson Lunch	Emmanuel
	1.30pm	Knit One, Give One	Emmanuel
Saturday 18th		WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY BEGINS	
Sunday 19th	10.00am	Choir Practice	Emmanuel
	11.00am	Morning Worship led by Revd Dr John Bradbury	Emmanuel
	12.15pm	Followed by Church Meeting	
	4.00pm	Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Preacher: Revd Nigel Uden	Great St Mary's
Monday 20th	7.30pm	Book Group: <i>Silas Marner</i> by George Eliot	At the home of Margaret Underwood

Tuesday 21st	2.30pm	Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship Annual General Meeting	St Athanasios Church, Cherry Hinton Road
Wednesday 22nd	1pm	Free Lunchtime Concert Christian Dawson (piano)	Emmanuel
Thursday 23rd	11.00am	Midweek Worship	Emmanuel
	7.30pm	Ferried Friends	At the home of David & Penny Flynn
Sunday 26th	10.00am	Choir Practice	Emmanuel
	11.00am	Morning Worship led by Steve Tomkins	Emmanuel
	6.00pm	Evening Worship with Holy Communion led by Revd Dr Janet Tollington	Fulbourn URC
	7.30pm	Open Table Service for LGBT+ folk and their allies. Refreshments from 7pm	Emmanuel
Monday 27th	7.30pm	Worship, Spirituality and Discipleship Group	tbc
Tuesday 28th	2.30pm	Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship: Bible Quiz	St Athanasios Church, Cherry Hinton Road
Wednesday 29th	1pm	Free Lunchtime Concert Nicholas Jackson (tenor) Christopher Gould (piano)	Emmanuel
Thursday 30th	1.30pm	Knit One, Give One	Emmanuel

IN EMMANUEL CHURCH
Trumpington St Cambridge



Carol Service

Tuesday 17 December *at* 11.30am

WITH WELL-KNOWN CAROLS

particularly for those living with dementia and their carers

EVERYONE IS OF COURSE WELCOME!

Join us for coffee and mince pies after the service

A service by Downing Place United Reformed Church

BIBLE READINGS AND PRAYER TOPICS

December 2019 and January 2020

Below are the Bible readings we will be following in worship at Downing Place during December and January. You are invited to read them before coming to church. **The highlighted passage may be the focus for ‘Sharing Together’.**

Overleaf are prayer topics for each day, suggesting church and related matters, and a reminder of regular weekly events that need our prayers.

Then, on the fourth page, you will find the names of church members preaching elsewhere this month.

December 1st: Isaiah 2.1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13. 11-14; Matt. 24. 36-44.

December 8th: Isaiah 11. 1-10; Romans 15. 4-13; Matthew 3.1-12.

December 15th: Isaiah 35. 1-10; James 5. 7-10; Matthew 11. 2-11.

December 22nd: Isaiah 7. 10-16; Romans 1. 1-7; Matthew 1. 18-25.

Christmas Day: Isaiah 52. 7-10; Hebrews 1. 1-4, (5-12); John 1. 1-14.

December 29th: Isaiah 63. 7-9; Hebrews 2. 10-18; Matthew 2. 13-23.

2020

January 5th: Isaiah 60.1-6; Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12.

January 12th: Isaiah 42. 1-9; Acts 10. 34-43; Matthew 3. 13-17.

January 19th: Isaiah 49.1-7; I Corinthians 1. 1-9; John 1. 29-42.

January 26th: Isaiah 9. 1-4; I Corinthians 1. 10-18; Matthew 4. 12-23.

An Advent Blessing

Follow, where the Spirit of Hope leads you . . .

Listen, as the child of Peace cries for you . . .

Rejoice, as the Love of God embraces you . . .

And go now, with Hope, Peace and Love in your hearts

And the blessing of Creator, Child and Spirit for ever be with you.

Richard Becher

ARROW PRAYERS FOR DECEMBER 2019

- 1st Advent Sunday. **'FoodBank' collection in DPURC.** Pray for the families who need this support especially throughout this Christmas season.
- 2nd/3rd Pray for Israel/Palestine, and find out more from the talk on Monday evening by Richard Lewney at Whittlesford URC – **'Make Hummus not Walls'**.
- 4th /5th Pray for the Cambridge Churches Homeless Project, that those who need support may find new friends to accompany them in their daily lives.
- 6th /7th Pray for your Elder and pastoral Visitor, and thank God for their ministry in caring for families and friends connected with DPURC.
- 8th Pray for the Open Table Service this evening – for the Bring and Share Supper, and for new friends to join and feel a part of the community.
- 9th /10th Pray for the Tuesday Group Christmas Service with Fulbourn URC. Thank God for this time of fellowship and friendship together.
- 11th /12th Pray for the UK Election on Thursday – for candidates, supporters, and all who seek to build a country which is warm, caring and welcoming. . . .
- 13th/ 14th Pray for those who are disappointed by the election result – may those now in power, use their power wisely, on behalf of all.
- 15th Thank God for music in worship, and pray for Ian, Mark, the choir and the orchestra, and all who enhance our worship through their gift of music.
- 16th /17th Pray for the Downing Place Carol Service for dementia sufferers and their carers on Monday. May they know the peace of Jesus in their daily lives.
- 18th /19th Pray for the Knit One, Give One (Cambridge Knit Café) and for the many organisations at home and overseas supported by their work.
- 20th /21st **Pray for the Street Pastors, for Nightlite, for the Police and St John's Ambulance workers,** and all caring for those in distress in Cambridge at night.
- 22nd On this Sunday before Christmas, pray for all Carol Services – remembering those who find this season a time of sad remembrance – grant them peace . . .
- 23rd Pray for all in Cambridge City Centre, especially those working today – may they share the excitement and expectation of the children and adults!
- 24th Christmas Eve. Pray for all children, that they may know the hope and joy of Christmas, as we hear again the story of the coming of Jesus, our Saviour.
- 25th Christmas Day. Thank God for the birth of Jesus, and for His love and welcome for people of all ages, nationalities and abilities. Praise the Lord!
- 26th Boxing Day. Pray for people who are lonely and find Christmas a time of sorrow and sad remembrance of people long departed. May God bless them!
- 27th /28th Pray for those who are homeless today, and for those who seek to **help and support them into a settled way of life. Pray for Jimmy's and Winter Comfort.**
- 29th Pray for the members of DPURC leading worship in other churches today – and thank God for the ministry of Annemarie Pachel, as she returns to

Germany.

30th /31st At the turn of the year – thank God for the many good times, and pray for God’s blessing on all whom you love and care for – and who care for you!

ARROW PRAYERS FOR JANUARY 2020

1st /2nd **New Year’s Day**. Pray for this new year – for family and friends, and for the development of our new church in Downing Place – and give praise to God!

3rd /4th Pray for those who are unwell, in hospital or at home, and especially pray for the Chaplains in the Hospitals and in the Arthur Rank Hospice.

5th Epiphany. Pray for our evening Epiphany Carol Service with Cambridge Voices, and for Ian, their Director. Thank God for the gift of music and singing!

6th /7th Pray for those dependent on Food Banks for enough food to feed their families – may we seek new ways to support the hungry in our communities.

8th /9th Pray for those who have suffered from floods this winter – where their homes have been inundated and the transport links have broken down.

10th /11th Pray for those who are cold today . . . who do not have enough money for heating, may we support organisations who provide shelter and a hot meal.

12th Pray for our Lay Preachers and Ministers, out leading worship in other churches today (next page) thank God for their ministry and careful preparation!

13th /14th Pray for the Pastoral Care Group meeting on Monday – and for any members and concerns you know about – and lift them up to God.

15th /16th Pray for the Ferried Friends who meet on Thursday – thank God for **those who ‘ferry’ & those who open their homes so all can share time together.**

17th /18th Pray for the Group Therapy Centre, and for those who need their help and support; and for mental health nurses who visit people in their homes.

19th Pray for the Church Meeting today, and thank God for all those involved with the organisation, administration and development of our church.

20th /21st Each day this week, pray for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - **the theme is ‘Unusual Kindness’, about offering kindness at difficult times.**

22nd /23rd Pray for those who show kindness to refugees and asylum-seekers - may they find friendship, support and help into new communities.

24th /25th Pray for those who show kindness to the homeless and the despairing – particularly through the Churches Homeless Project in Cambridge.

26th Pray for the URC Youth Assembly this weekend – and for young people **who seek support and meaning in their lives, in today’s very uncertain world.**

27th /28th Pray for the Worship, Discipleship & Spirituality Group meeting on Monday – thank God for their care and concern for spiritual needs of members.

29th /30th Pray for our Ministers, John and Nigel, for their careful preparation of worship, and their concern and support for many other people and churches.

31st Pray for those whose work is never done: doctors, nurses, police, emergency services, and all with home caring responsibilities. May God bless them!

CHURCH MEMBERS LEADING WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

December 1st

Elizabeth Caswell – Melbourn

Deborah McVey – Sawston: Christingle Service

David Thompson – Bassingbourn

Nigel Uden – Princes Street, Norwich

Paul Whittle – Lusaka (Zambia)

December 8th

Janet Bottoms – Fowlmere

David Cornick – Bury St Edmunds - Whiting St

Janet Tollington – Buntingford

Nigel Uden – Sompting URC (am); West Sussex Ministers (pm)

Paul Whittle - DPURC

December 15th

Elizabeth Caswell – Wickhambrook

Penny Flynn – Bassingbourn and Melbourn

David Thompson – Castle Camps

Janet Tollington – Stetchworth and Cheveley

Nigel Uden - Fulbourn

Paul Whittle – Sawston

December 22nd

Elizabeth Caswell – Burwell

Maureen Kendall - Melbourn

Paul Whittle – Wymondham

Christmas Day

Nigel Uden – 9.30: Fulbourn; 11.00 DPURC

Paul Whittle - Sawston

December 29th

Chris Baker – Fenstanton

Elizabeth Caswell – Fowlmere

Penny Flynn - Buntingford

David Thompson - Fulbourn

Janet Tollington – Bar Hill LEP

CHURCH MEMBERS LEADING WORSHIP IN JANUARY

January 5th

Elizabeth Caswell – Fowlmere

David Thompson - Buntingford

Janet Tollington – Melbourn

Nigel Uden – Christ Church, Chichester

Paul Whittle – Stetchworth and Cheveley

January 12th

Chris Baker – Ely, Methodist

Janet Bottoms - Stansted

Elizabeth Caswell – Burwell

David Cornick – Bassingbourn

David Tatem – Melbourn

David Thompson - DPURC

Janet Tollington – Stetchworth and Cheveley

Paul Whittle – Sawston

January 19th Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – **‘Unusual Kindness’**

Elizabeth Caswell – St Mary’s, Quy

Penny Flynn - Fulbourn

Maureen Kendall - Melbourn

Nigel Uden – East Hill, Wandsworth (am)

Great St Mary’s Cambridge (WPCU) (pm)

Paul Whittle – Billericay

January 26th

Janet Bottoms – Stansted

Maureen Kendall – Stetchworth and Cheveley

Janet Tollington – 6.00pm Fulbourn

Nigel Uden – Wesley, Cambridge

Paul Whittle – Bowthorpe, Norwich

SPECIAL CAUSE FOR DECEMBER

The Besom in Cambridge

The Besom helps people make a difference. It provides a bridge between those who want to give time, money, things or skills and those who are in need; and it ensures what is given is used effectively.

Giving Time - a variety of opportunities to reach out into the community to give help in practical ways - such as gardening for the elderly and painting the homes of single parents and families living in shabby, run down housing.

Other opportunities include

- Sorting donated clothing and distributing it to those who really need it.
- Van delivery and collection - helping deliver donated items
- Collecting good quality items given away by local shops and hotels

Befriending - There are so many opportunities in Cambridge to get alongside people and help them in practical and other ways. This doesn't need a big group of people. Just a pair can make a world of difference!

Giving Things Besom is very happy to receive any good quality items you wish to give away and to pass them on to vulnerable people who really need them, such as refugees, homeless people, women escaping domestic violence, families or individuals living in extreme poverty. Items such as:

- furniture - in good condition - can be collected (ideally send a photo of the offered items)
- **children's clothing** - in good, clean condition, that are made up into packs for parents and their children
- bedding packs - duvets, sheets, towels, pillows and pillow cases.
- common kitchen items, such as cutlery, crockery, saucepans, and cleaning products to be put together into packs for people in need moving into new accommodation
- baby bundles - items that would be useful to new mums, all made up into a beautifully presented pack.

Giving Money

Please make cheques payable to 'The Besom in Cambridge'

SPECIAL CAUSE FOR JANUARY

Cambridge Churches Homeless Project

The CCHP needs no introduction – Downing Place at Emmanuel has been one of the host churches for some years, and many Downing Place people have volunteered to serve as hosts (leaders, helpers, cooks). Downing Place has not felt able to offer its premises for this winter or next in this time of transition, so it is even more important that we offer support to the project by adopting it as our January Special Cause.

The project is now in its seventh winter. Eleven Churches and one synagogue offer their premises for one night a week from December through to March. The aim is to offer “a friendly welcome, a healthy hot supper and a safe space to sleep throughout the winter”. Last winter 36 men and 7 women were accommodated by the project, staying an average of 84 nights. There were 376 volunteers, and around 3 000 hot meals were provided.

CCHP say: “The core values, ethos and behaviours of the Cambridge Churches Homeless Project are rooted in and sustained by the Christian faith which is characterised by a commitment to social justice, bringing hope, building community, celebrating diversity, and showing compassion and reconciliation. We do not discriminate on the grounds of race, language, colour or sexual orientation”.

Please support the CCHP not only by giving generously, but also in prayer – prayer for the guests, that they feel welcomed, and for the volunteers, who feel the experience enriches their own lives.

Please make cheques payable to Cambridge Churches Homeless Project (please note the bank will not accept cheques made out to ‘CCHP’).

More details on the CCHP website –
www.cchp.org.uk



YORK STREET FUND DONATIONS 2020

Charitable giving is very important to DPURC. Beside our monthly donations, the congregation allocates to charities its York Street Fund. The Fund, the result of a bequest to St Columba's Church and a very rich history, is named after a property in York Street, Cambridge. The new World Church & Public Issues group is tasked with offering recommendations on such disbursements to the **Elders' meeting. These allocations will then receive final approval from the Church meeting.**

This year, WC&PI invites your suggestions of possible charities to support. We are interested in local, national, and international charities. We would like to support both charities with a clear Christian mission, as well as non-religious charities that share the values of inclusivity and justice that we cherish at DPURC. In particular, we want to support small charities, as perhaps less well-known to the public, and ones with which members of the congregation have particular links.

WC&PI group would like to hear your recommendations for its 2020 round of disbursements. Please email me with your suggestion and your reasons by Christmas.

Thank you!

COMMITMENT FOR LIFE IN OCTOBER

Downing Place Commitment for Life collection throughout October raised

£6,322.20

The Bangladesh evening held on Friday October 11th raised

£91.84

Many thanks for this!

Madeline Impey (link person for Commitment for Life)

PLACE MATTERS – WHAT SHOULD WE COVER?

Last October's *Place Matters* was a bit different, because it looked at the World Church, focusing on Bangladesh and the overseas charities Downing Place supports, as well of course as covering the usual “news” items about Church life.

It would be good to have more of these focused issues, where we concentrate on a topic or campaign, and we would welcome suggestions from you about what we might cover in future issues.

Do you have any ideas, any special knowledge, any special concerns, which you think we might feature in an issue next year? If so, please contact the Editor, Sheila Porrer, details on the back cover of this issue. All suggestions are welcome.

Thank you for giving this some thought.

STREETBITE is a service offered by a dedicated group of University students who volunteer to provide sandwiches, snacks and hot drinks to homeless people on the city centre streets. For many years they have undertaken this commitment two or three times a day, seven days a week, in term-time using the kitchen at St Columba's as their base. They have now moved over to the Emmanuel building and use the kitchen there to provide the same service on a set route with two teams of students serving lunch and dinner. In the past we have donated some money to help them but would now like to respond to a request which Elaine has brought to us for specific food donations listed below. This will allow them to hand out snacks and breakfast bars and also soups in the very cold weather. There will be a box downstairs for your donations.

- Cup a soups
- Sugar
- Tea
- Coffee
- Breakfast bars
- Chocolate biscuits - individually wrapped
- Hot chocolate powder
- Dog biscuits
- Sanitary pads

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS TO GO TO CHRISTIAN AID APPEAL



Christian Aid's Christmas appeal this year is about helping mothers living in places where it is hard to be a woman. Places like Afghanistan, Bangladesh or India. Christian Aid's partner organisations are working to empower women, especially mothers, so that they can give their children the education and opportunities they themselves haven't had.

Bibi Aisha fled conflict and drought in Afghanistan with her children and is now the family breadwinner. A Christian Aid partner gave the family a tent to shelter them, and now Bibi Aisha is determined that her children will be educated to give them a better future.

In Bangladesh, Ameena was given a voucher for hospital treatment so her baby could be safely delivered.



Ameena with her baby

In India, Ranjita received training to apply for a government grant to set up a tailoring business. Now instead of poorly paid and degrading manual scavenging, she can earn with dignity and provide an education for her children.



Ranjita with her daughter

These are just three examples of how a small investment can help women develop their God-given gifts so that they and their families can live in dignity.

We at Downing Place will be giving our Christmas offerings to the Christian Aid Christmas Appeal. Please give generously, and remember Christian Aid and those they seek to help in your prayers.

More on the Christmas appeal at caid.org.uk/Christmas

SHEENA JACKMAN TALKS TO SHEILA PORRER ABOUT HER LIFE



I was born in Edinburgh, so I am Scottish, but we moved to England when I was just two. My father, a highly skilled engineer, was offered a job in Dover. I often think how hard it must have been for my mother to leave all her family behind in Scotland and move to such a different place with three small children – my brother, Hew, was just a year younger than I was, and my older sister was five.



Sheena and Hew

When I was eight I sat the exam for the prep. department of the grammar school, moving up to the grammar school at eleven. I enjoyed school – I **didn't** overwork! – but then the war came. Dover was at high risk of shelling from across the Channel, and my father built us an air raid shelter in the garden, but we only used it twice before we heard we were to be evacuated. I remember standing on the station platform with my sister, and my brother nearby with his school, when I caught sight of my parents up on the bridge. I was so excited I **didn't even think about what they must be feeling.**

We were all taken to South Wales, my sister and I to Caerleon, my brother to Ebbw Vale. We were lined up in the school playground and people came to choose a child to board with them. The Headmaster and his wife took us in – a very kindly couple with three older sons of their own, who cared for us without fussing over us. They had a horse and a pony so we both learned to ride there.

When I reached eighteen, with the war still on, I had the choice between nursing, teaching, the forces or munitions work, and I chose nursing. I got a place at Manchester Royal Infirmary (by now the family home was in Heaton Mersey, near Manchester), but I was just too young to start preliminary training, so I took a job in a twenty-four hour nursery for children whose parents were both in war work. It was very hard work from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. in an old building – we had to bath all the children every night, carrying the hot water up two flights of stairs from the basement. I was exhausted, so I left in the summer to have a couple of months at home before starting my nursing training.

We had lectures in the day, and were on the wards in the evenings. It was very demanding, especially when a convoy of war wounded arrived in the small hours and everyone was on duty. This was the point in my life where my faith became active. My family were staunch Congregationalists and I had been to a Baptist Sunday School, and I sometimes attended Anglican services in the hospital, without always getting a lot out of it, but it was on the wards, where we saw such terrible things in the war, that I felt really upheld and supported.

Then I met Stuart, and became a very regular Churchgoer! Originally from Manchester, Stuart had left his Edinburgh University course to join up, and had a tough time in the war, serving in the desert. Rather than go back to University he trained for the Ministry at the Northern Congregational College in Whalley Range, near Manchester, with the encouragement of Hubert Cunliffe Jones, the distinguished Congregational theologian and academic. When we married he was already ordained and about to take up his first charge in Barnstaple.

The Barnstaple congregation were mostly elderly, and the new young Minister who got around on a motorbike with his wife behind him wearing trousers came

as a bit of a shock. Stuart introduced me as “my wife, not my unpaid curate”. They were very welcoming to us, but efforts to bring change weren’t always appreciated. Stuart tried hard to get young people into the Church, and he set up a boys’ club, but it did not go too well. So he was looking for new opportunities. He was sought by a large American Church, but that didn’t feel right, and instead we set out for Pretoria with our first child, Nick, then aged 18 months.

Again, the Church people were very welcoming, but our four years in S. Africa were not easy. Stuart made himself unpopular with the Government by writing in the press to challenge the conditions for Africans under apartheid – he was very outspoken. One day a government official turned up at our door to say that Stuart was banned from publishing or broadcasting, his books were banned, and our phone was tapped. Nick was bullied at school because he was English, not Afrikans. And when I was in hospital after our daughter Morag was born I felt that the English patients didn’t get quite as good care as the Afrikaners. All the ladies carried pistols in their handbags, and Stuart insisted I have a gun too, which I was sure I would never use! I worried about him out on his motorbike – sometimes there were wires strung across roads at neck level. Like everyone else we had servants – not approved of these days, but these people would have had no work otherwise. We became very fond of our “Nanny”, a lady called Elizabeth. But we were glad to come back to England.

We came back to a Church in Caterham, where our third child, Max, was born, and Nick and Morag started school. I set up a Young Wives group there which was very successful. Next came New Zealand. Stuart was asked to go out to a Church in Auckland, New Zealand, and our fourth child, Andrew was born there. We found New Zealand slightly behind the times in a very pleasant way – the schoolgirls had to wear gloves as well as hats! We came back after four years, this time to a Church in Upminster in Essex.

Then Stuart had a letter from the Secretary of Oxted Church in Surrey inviting him to preach with a view. Things moved very quickly, we both felt this was right for us, and the Church meeting was unanimous. We were there for twelve successful years – our longest stay anywhere. With Stuart the congregation was larger than it had ever been. I worked part time as a lab technician in a school, quite a change from nursing, but they were eager to appoint me despite my lack of scientific knowledge.

The next stage was a move to Melbourn, where Stuart looked after three small Cambridgeshire Churches, a little less demanding than our big busy Church in Oxted. While we were there I returned to my nursing, working part time in a clinic in Cambridge.

When Stuart was due to retire we decided to go back down to Barnstaple, where Stuart had a close friend. We were there three or four years, but unfortunately we both had health problems, Stuart developing a heart condition, and myself being diagnosed with breast cancer and undergoing a major operation. Stuart was wonderful, supporting me in every way, but above all in prayer. Prayer was a tremendous help. It was a very difficult time, but we both survived it, however our family urged us to move closer to them. One of our sons lived in Cambridgeshire, and we moved to Willingham, where I still live now. Our family has grown since then – I now have eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Of course we looked around for a Church. After trying several local Churches, none of which suited Stuart, we started looking in Cambridge. We received such a warm welcome at Emmanuel that it was there that we stayed. Stuart used to take services when needed, and especially liked taking Remembrance services.

Stuart died in 2002. He was an exceptional man, much in demand. As well as all his Church work he was a writer. He could prepare his sermons very speedily, which left him time for writing in the evenings. He had half a dozen novels published by Faber and Faber and numerous articles in the press. Not only that, he was also a very good speaker for organisations like the Rotary Club. Many members of Emmanuel will remember him well. I remain grateful to Emmanuel for their warm welcome which still continues today.

PASTORAL NEWS

Congratulations to John Barrow, who has been awarded the Occhialini Prize and Medal awarded jointly by the Institute of Physics and the Italian Physical Society for contributions to physics in the past ten years. The presentation took place in November in London.

Annemarie Pachel's time at Downing Place URC is coming to a close, and we would like to thank her for her contributions to the life of the congregation and to wish her well on her return to Germany (and final preparations for ministry).

FULBOURN UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
HOME END

Warmly invite you to our

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

at 2pm

on Sunday 15 December

Collection in aid of *Giggle Doctors*,
The Theodora Trust at Addenbrooke's Hospital

and our

CAROL SERVICE

with members of
The Cottenham Brass Band
at 3pm

on Sunday 22 December

Collection in aid of the Arthur Rank Hospice

Please join us for seasonal
refreshments after each service

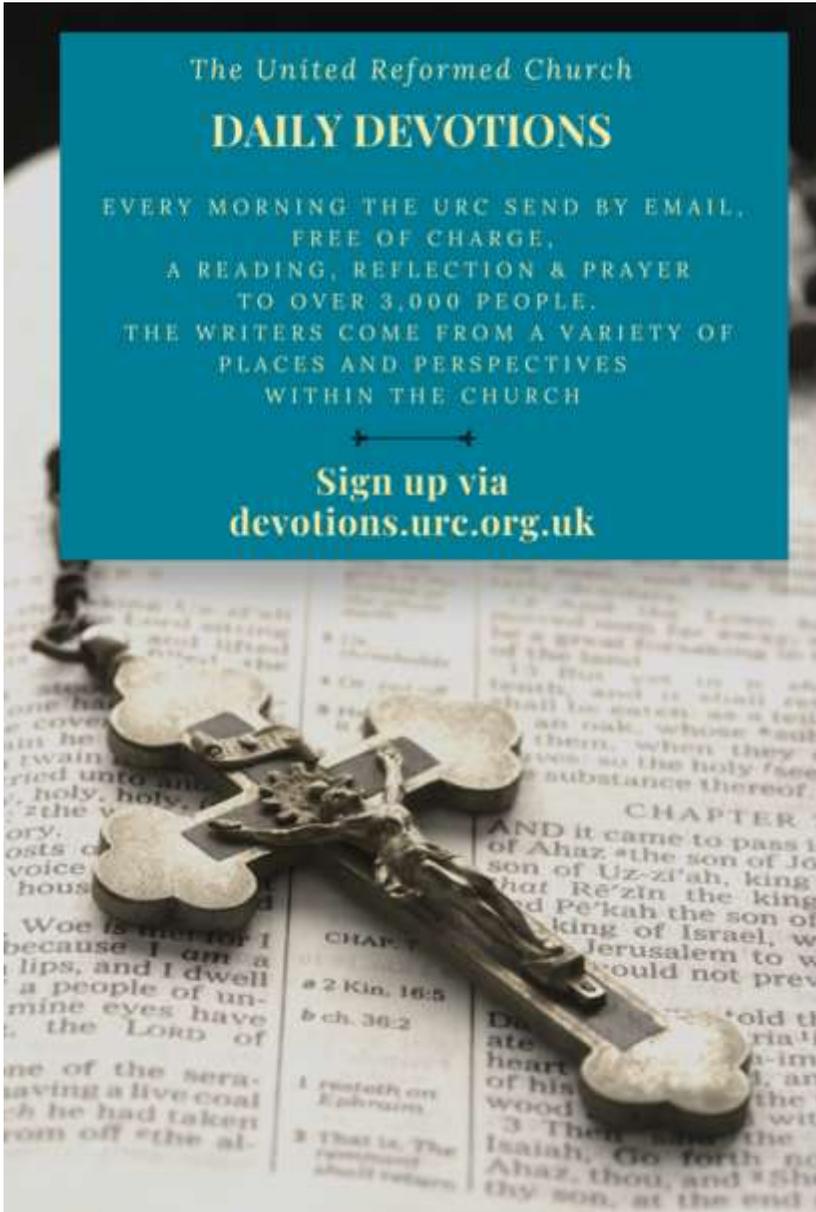
The United Reformed Church

DAILY DEVOTIONS

EVERY MORNING THE URC SEND BY EMAIL,
FREE OF CHARGE,
A READING, REFLECTION & PRAYER
TO OVER 3,000 PEOPLE.
THE WRITERS COME FROM A VARIETY OF
PLACES AND PERSPECTIVES
WITHIN THE CHURCH



Sign up via
devotions.urc.org.uk



Have you signed up for the URC Daily Devotions on-line? Every day you can get an e-mail with a reading, reflection and prayer to use as best suits you. The current series of readings about the Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha, is written by our own Downing Place member, the Rev. Dr. Janet Tollington, so this is a very good a time to sign up. The poster tells you how.

REFLECTIONS ON REMEMBRANCE

The Monday after Remembrance Sunday I was startled to receive an email questioning the use of the poem ‘In Flanders Fields’ during worship. Startled because I was entirely unaware that I’d used anything that might be construed as ‘pro-war’. I’d chosen it, at the last minute and at the end of a hectic week because of the place that particular poem had in the development of the poppy as the sign of remembrance. It is a poem I’d obviously been aware of, but never engaged with it at depth. Having discovered its role in the story of the poppy and read it through, I asked Jane to read it.

As soon as the issue was raised with me, I went back to the poem, and instantly saw the problem. This set me off on an exploration of readings of the poem, and its use throughout history, which left me rather shocked. I thought it would be worth just dwelling on the poem a little more here in writing. Let us remind ourselves of the text:

In Flanders' fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders' fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from falling hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high,
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' Fields.

What had struck me in my rather cursory reading of it, were two primary things: the contrast between the natural world and the consequences of war, and the centrality of death as the subject of the poem. The poppies and the larks eking out their ‘natural’ existence in the midst of the shocking rows of crosses and the overwhelming noise of gunfire. In the second stanza we get the disturbing realisation that we, as those reading or hearing the poem, are being addressed by the dead – the dead who but a short time ago were like us, living and loving

beings. There is no sense of the glorification of war in these opening two stanzas, and indeed the unnaturalness of war is helpfully elucidated. Death seems to be the central subject – death through war.

Which brings us to the third stanza. ‘Take up our quarrel with the foe’. Who, or what, is the foe? My cursory reading of this (not ever having stopped to study this particular poem at all, or, perhaps to your amazement, aware of its history or the way it has been used), was that death, the primary subject (as I read it) of the second stanza, is the ‘foe’. What we are to quarrel with is that which unnaturally leads from living and loving to lying dead in the grave. By implication, therefore the war itself is to be quarrelled with. Were this poem by Wilfred Owen, writing rather later in the war when its futility was becoming rather plainer to the men in the trenches, that might well be the reading of the text one might offer. But this was written rather earlier in the war, when notions of glory and honour perhaps rang a little less hollow. I suspect I read it with Owen in my mind (rather a long time ago ‘A’ level English steeped me in Owen) and my own convictions about war.

Perhaps the first rule of biblical exegesis is to pay attention to the plain sense of the text. That is not to say the plain sense is necessarily the ultimate reading the Spirit leads us to, but it is the place we must begin. I failed to apply that way of thinking to my reading of this. As soon as it was pointed out to me, it was **blindingly obvious: the ‘foe’ was the foreign enemy, the living being exhorted to honour the dead by continuing the war.**

When one begins to look into the history of the use the poem has been put to, it becomes clear that this plain sense reading is the one which has dominated its **reception. The Encyclopaedia Britannica states: By 1917 “In Flanders Fields” was known throughout the English-speaking world. It was used to further the war effort, to raise money for the troops, and to help recruit American soldiers as the United States mobilized to enter the war. John McCrae became a household name in the US.” Undoubtedly this history of the reception of the poem colours how it is read. The scholar Nancy Homes reflects on the place that the poem has in Canadian national life. She observes that, “Its key symbol, the poppy, has recently been hijacked as a symbol of the military, partly because literary critics have ignored the poem; by not pointing out its ambivalences, officials have easily and uncritically been allowed to misuse and distort it.” Whilst Holmes does not offer the reading that I initially took of the poem, she does see in it an ambivalence usually missed when it is used as a recruiting sergeant.**

Christian attitudes to war vary. Indeed, in the history of our predecessor congregations, the question of pacifism has at times been deeply divisive. The range of Christian opinion ranges from proponents of ‘Just War Theory’ (the key proponent of which is often considered to be Thomas Aquinas, who in the 13th century proposed that war must be duly authorised, it must be for a good and just purpose, and peace must be a central motive) through to those who are total pacifists, and believe that the Jesus we see in the gospels would never tolerate violence of any kind. What war is never, in the Christian tradition, is glorious. It is also never for national gain or national pride. My own view is perhaps summarised in words I used in an ecumenical service in Duxford a couple of years ago, when my sermon said: “War is never in the purposes of God. God does not will us to go to war. God wills us to peace. And yet, we live at the moment in this world, not the next. The kingdom has not yet come, the lion has not yet lain down with the lamb. And whilst I think there is simply no way that we can ever claim that God is ‘for war’, there are situations in which, in this fallen world which is not yet the kingdom, war is the least worst of the available bad options”.

So, my choice of poem on Remembrance Sunday has led me to some interesting reflections, and perhaps what I write here might encourage you to some reflecting too. Does a text bear only one meaning, or can it legitimately be read in a variety of ways? Does the way a text has been used throughout history pre-determine the meaning it carries? Do we answer these questions in the same ways when handling scriptural texts as opposed to ‘secular’ texts? Can war ever be genuinely ‘just’, such that we are required to ‘take up our quarrel with the foe’? These are not easy questions.

To conclude: would I use this poem again in worship in quite the way I did on Remembrance Sunday? No. What I’ve learnt about the way it has been read, and the purposes it has been put to, mean I would be much more hesitant to do so unless very much more carefully hedged around. Do I think that in using it, the kind of thoughts and conversations that have been prompted are creative and constructive? Probably. What do you think?

Yours in Christ,

John.



REMEMBRANCE

This beautiful art installation was prepared by Jane Bower for Remembrance Sunday, November 10th, 2019, using poppies which were knitted, crocheted, folded, and cut out by members of the congregation – some of them working through the ‘coffee time’ after the service on November 3rd.

Many thanks, to Jane, for preparing this for our worship.

FESTIVE OCCASIONS

Most of us enjoy the chance to meet with others over a meal, but in this year of transition, we find ourselves unable to provide either a Christmas Lunch or a Burns Supper for the congregation. Please be aware that those who have organised the occasions in the past have other pressing reasons for standing down this year. Be assured that there will be opportunities to party in May, and again, as the interim arrangements come to a fitting end.

Margaret Thompson, Church Secretary

MAGAZINE EDITOR: Sheila Porrer

ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

Please send items to both Sheila Porrer and Ann Auger
(ann@downingplaceurc.org)

ITEMS FOR MONTHLY

PRAYER DIARY: Maureen Kendall

WEB EDITOR: Alison Binney

Please send all items to be included in the February edition to both Sheila and Ann by the cut off date of Wednesday 15 January 2020.

Any items received after the deadline will not be included.

The February edition will be available in church from Sunday 2 February