

The newsletter of the United Reformed Church in Bramhall

A Christmas Message

Christ was a stranger; you went out and welcomed Him in [Matt 25:35]

Christmas time comes when homes and streets are decorated with Christmas trees and lights are all over. When we do that, sometimes some people have their beloved family and friends in their minds who they will be preparing to meet and thereafter celebrate, exchange gifts, and share life together. Such moments of coming together are hope refilling and they create beautiful experiences we can carry throughout the coming year. In Zimbabwe, around Christmas time, people travel all over the country to their rural or birthplace homes for family reunions, where they do whatever is fun, to celebrate those times together.

That sounds nice, especially for those with family and friends to share these activities. What about those who do not have families to go to, because of circumstances beyond them? One of the many good things I saw happening in some of our Churches was the

packaging and dedication of Christmas presents in shoe boxes. They will be sent out into various parts of the world to people who we will never know and who will never know us. We may wonder how it is and how it feels to spend Christmas time with people who are not family but total strangers to us.

Through these gifts, the hearts of sharing generously, the joy of packaging them, and sending them off to be with other people, is the best way we can spend Christmas time in the company of people to whom we are total strangers. The people whom we do not know, but we make to feel what it means to be a part of a family and to smile as they open a gift box.

Christmas is always an opportune time to celebrate how our families are much beyond those we often focus on. We reflect on God, when he packaged himself, and sent himself out and away to be part of humanity, and a creation that was alienated from God's family on account of sin. May they become the



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Our church is a member of the URC South Manchester and Cheshire Missional Partnership.

SUNDAY SERVICES

10.00 am Reflective Worship *In Church and on Zoom (see page 2 for details)*

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household of God who can feel and understand what it means to be a part of God's family.

Christmas is our opportunity for family to be together with and as strangers. A blessed Christmas to us all.

Rev'd Kuraone Mtimwii



Church Services in December

For those unable to attend church in person the service will be on zoom. The Zoom link each week will remain the same and is as follows:

Meeting ID: 864 1569 9327

Passcode: 490926



The services will start at **10.00am**

The services in December will be led by the following people:

Sunday 3rd December- Christopher Whitehead - Communion and Church Meeting

Sunday 10th December - Elaine Noden

Sunday 17th December- Sue Matthews

Sunday 17th December - 6.00pm Carol Service

Sunday 24th December Christmas Songs of Praise - Sue Matthews

Sunday 24th December 11.30 pm Christmas Eve Service with Communion - Linda Rayner

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day - Linda Rayner

Sunday 31st December - Rev'd Kuraone Mtimwii. Joint Service at BURC

Advent Bible Study

Just a reminder - we are holding an Advent Bible study starting on **Tuesday 28th November at 7pm-8pm.**

The Bible Study will cover the 4 weeks of Advent with Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Everybody is welcome and I have also invited our friends from Cheadle Hulme and Heald Green

Church Meeting

Our next Church meeting is on **Sunday 3rd December** following the morning Service.

Reverse Advent

Our Reverse Advent box started on **Sunday 19th November** and will be there until **Sunday 10th December.** This is due to the fact that Chelwood has to

put together the Christmas boxes for their clients well before Christmas week, so that people know they have food for over this period and can get things that they are missing.

Lots of people are struggling at the moment as the cost of living is increasing, food bills are going up for everyone and some will feel this more than others especially over the Christmas period.

Anything that you put in is good, remembering this is for Christmas and some cannot afford that little extras so, you can include a Christmas treat, selection boxes, nice special biscuits, mince pies the list goes on.

Elaine

Carols By Candlelight

This year our Carols by Candlelight Service is on **Sunday 17th December at 6pm.**

It's a lovely Service that just runs through itself with Carols and readings. Of course there will be mulled wine and mince pies to follow, to really get in the festive spirit.

Elaine

Christmas Songs of Praise



For a change this year, our morning Christmas Eve Service is going to take the form of a Songs of Praise. We will sing our favourite carols and there will be coffee and mince pies after the service. It will be an informal service and one you might like to invite friends or family members to attend.

I would like you to vote for your favourite carol in advance. Please put your votes in the box in church or email me your request by **Sunday**

17th December. We can then sing the most popular ones on the day.

Hopefully it will be a fun way of preparing for Christmas.

Sue

Woodford Winterfest

On **Thursday 7th December 5.30pm - 9pm** this event will be held at the New Woodford Garden village.

Churches together in Bramhall and Woodford will have a stall, with our Christmas service flyers and other literature on. The band from Praise in the Park will be there to play Christmas Carols, it would be good if I can get some people to come along and help especially to boost the singing. Let me know if you are interested. This is a great opportunity to get out in the community.

Other Details.

- A Christmas Fair style event will be happening on the 'green' next to The Aviator pub
- The top of the main road entrance will be closed from 3.30pm-10pm
- Down the centre of the green will be a series of commercial stalls, food stalls, and some charity ones
- The Rotary will be bringing Santa

Elaine

Shine Your Light

There is a Nationwide Ecumenical Campaign called Shine Your Light.

The vision for Shine Your Light is that the whole church across the family of nations stand united to share the Gospel to the whole of society this Christmas.

Every local church and believer who signs up becomes a light that shines to brighten up the whole land like a Christmas tree. Shine Your Lights events will occur around town halls, high streets, town and shopping centres, and other public places and will take many different shapes and sizes of gathering.

The nationwide campaign will run on the weekend of **Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th December.**



I have registered Bramhall URC and other Bramhall Churches are doing likewise. Our Carol Concert ties in nicely with this weekend.

Elaine

Lunch and Chat



As we don't have Friendly Cuppa time in December, we thought it may be nice to have an early New Year Lunch and Chat. So on **Wednesday 3rd January 2024, usual time of 12.45pm for a 1pm serving** we will have a roast dinner to celebrate the start of a New Year. Please feel free to invite friends along.

Elaine

Church Family and Friends

It is with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Peter Browne. Peter was a loyal member of our congregation for many years. He served as an Elder and he provided wise council in elder's meetings, bringing a quiet good humour to discussions.

Peter and Sybil attended church very regularly until ill health kept them at home. They were enthusiastic zoomers during lockdown and despite being unable to attend in person, they maintained their interest in church events. Peter and Sybil enjoyed attending Lunch and Chat and spending time chatting to friends over coffee after the service.

Peter was a real gentleman, interested in everything and he always had a lovely smile and a welcome to all. He will be missed by us all.

We send our love and sympathy to Sybil and to Peter and Sybil's family at this sad time.

We were also saddened to hear of the passing of Bill Rayner, Lawrence's father. We send Lawrence our love and sympathy at this difficult time.

We remember all those in our fellowship who are experiencing ongoing health problems. We remember those who are supporting relatives who are ill and we particularly remember those members who have lost a loved one this year.

We hold them and their families in our prayers.

Sue

The History of Bramhall URC part Ten



By the middle of the 1980's it was clear to the Minister and Elders of the Church that the time had come to ask some fundamental questions about what was going to be needed by way of our Church premises for the coming 21st century. Already the Church was finding the buildings quite inadequate, both in size and layout, some radical thinking was required.

In March 1985 the Church set up a group "to investigate and report on the future of our premises in Bramhall" It was given the title of "Viewfinders", for it was clear that we needed a view or vision of where God was leading us.

The ecumenical context was considered first. Approaches were made to St Vincent's Roman Catholic Church, who had already been worshipping in our Sanctuary for more than seven years, and the Methodist Church who were themselves engaged in the development of their site in the village centre. Whilst these approaches did not produce a specific response they ensured that, in keeping with the Ecumenical Covenant, we shared with one and other our hopes and plans.

The group had before it a range of possibilities, everything from a totally new development on a new, but unspecified site, to the building of new premises on our existing site or of the conversion and refurbishment of the present buildings.

To help the Congregation to see that the commitment to redevelop was a serious one, the Management Committee at the end of 1985 recommended to the Church Meeting that we set aside the surplus income from the Hall to be designated as a Development Fund.

A year later "Viewfinders" reported first to a joint meeting of Elders and Management and

then in May to the full Church Meeting. The various options for development were accepted for wider discussion and over the autumn of 1987 and the spring of 1988 informal meetings were held throughout the Church.

As a result of these discussions, a Feasibility Study Group was established charged with the task of producing "a study of the present site and buildings". In November 1989 they reported to the Church Meeting. Sadly the options did not meet with the approval of the Church and were rejected. This decision could have caused the whole Church to lose heart and the exercise to lose momentum. However, the Elders were instructed to find an alternative way forward.

The Elders took the bold step of setting up a Development Group, convinced that if the right scheme could be found the Church would support it. They and Management were sure that the will to make a new beginning was still there and that this is what God wanted of us.

The Development Group under the sensitive Chairmanship of Prof. David Garner began work in February 1990.

Worldwide the decade was marked as a Decade of Evangelism and our Church recognised our plans as part of that process.

The Development Team's "Vision for the Future" saw the life of the Church under many headings but all centred around WORSHIP! and the conviction was that if the worshipping life of the Church was right then the rest would follow. This would ultimately influence the decision to redevelop the Sanctuary first.

Our work in the community was evidenced by our involvement in the many activities of the Council of Churches, as well as some we pursued alone. Some of our members were playing key roles in the various activities such as Day Care and Beacon, which reached out to people with particular needs.

The Covenant witnessed our ecumenical commitment without denying the distinctive witness that each of the Churches had to make within the life of the village.

Concern for the children and young people was central to our thinking. Whilst we were

seeking to provide for the immediate future, we also recognised the responsibility of handing on to our children both a faith to live by and a place in which to express it. The need and the challenge were clearly spelled out in the "Vision" and it was clear that the vast majority of the congregation were inspired by it.

It has to be said that not all shared that view. The minority against the proposals had many different reasons for resisting. Some believed that we should pursue an ecumenical dimension and rebuild a "Union Church" with the Methodists, whilst at the other end of the spectrum some felt that any large expenditure of money was wrong and that refurbishment of our premises would be adequate. The overwhelming majority, however, held the view that after 90 years our buildings needed more than a facelift and given the congregation's size, more space was needed if we were to be able to go on growing.

On the 1st July 1990 the Church resolved to accept the proposals for the total redevelopment of the site in two phrases. Whilst the order of the phasing remained undecided, the Church gave the Development Team a clear mandate to proceed with detailed plans to launch a Fund Raising Campaign and following an evaluation of its success, return to the Church for ratification and a decision on which phase should be tackled first.

By now the Development Team had grown. At the centre was the Development Group whose task it was to co-ordinate all the work being done. Graham Perkin, the then Church Secretary, led the Building Group. David Hazelby, the Chairman of Management led the Communications Group publishing a regular Development News. Bill McLaughlin led the Finance Group, not only registering us as a Charity but giving sound advice on maximising our financial resources.

The Fund Raising Group had, in John Rees a leader of enthusiasm and inspiration. They insisted on calling themselves the FUNd Raising Group and certainly lived up to that title with their very successful ventures.

An Ecumenical Group to keep in touch with other Churches during the development was chaired by our Minister, who also chaired "A

Ways and Means Group" to sustain church life. In addition, the Development Team had Robin Williamson as Fund Treasurer, Richard Sykes as Secretary, and Gillian Lee, Ann Sykes and David Cowee as team members.

On the 27th October, 1990 the Development Appeal was launched. It proved to be a landmark in the life of the Church. £127,000 was given that day, which with money in the fund brought the total to £151,000 by the time the week-end closed. Over the following months the fund grew steadily so that in March of 1991 the Church Meeting agreed to seek a contractor. On the 16th September, 1991 tenders from four contractors were opened and Snapes Design and Build of Salford were successful in securing the contract.

By now, planning permission had been obtained and Malcolm Lovibond, an Elder at Wilmslow URC, appointed as Architect with Derek Price one of our own members as Quantity Surveyor.

The Church met on Sunday 20th October 1991 and accepted the Development Group's recommendations to demolish the present sanctuary and build a new one at a cost of £270,000. It further instructed the Group to continue its work on Phase Two, for the construction of the Hall, Lounge, Kitchen and Toilet area of the premises. They were convinced that the sooner the whole scheme could be completed the better.

At the invitation of the Vicar, Canon Rex Hack and the Parish Council, plans had been made to move our main act of worship to the Parish Hall at St Michael's. Our Church welcomed the arrangement enthusiastically and it proved to be a very happy and practical instance of Churches working together.

The final services in the old sanctuary were held on Remembrance Sunday 10th November 1991. Within a week the building had been cleared of furniture and the empty tired looking building handed over to the contractor on the 18th November. By mid December the site was cleared, giving those who passed a view beyond the Church not seen for 90 years! The start of 1992 saw the foundations completed and before January was out the steelwork was in place and the brickwork began.

The Commemoration Stone from the old building was relaid on Sunday 16th February 1992 at 12 noon together with a new stone. At the same time a time capsule was placed within the wall.

As the building grew so did the excitement of the congregation, not least over the building's size. It was much bigger than many imagined and made an imposing landmark on the corner of Robin's Lane. People may in the past have wondered what the little building in the corner was, or even missed it altogether, but not anymore. The Monday of Holy Week 1992 was marked by the placing of the new spire on the building fittingly topped by a 6 foot high stainless steel cross. The appearance of the building now brought to people's notice that this was a Church and not just a black and white building.

Around this time it was suggested that the sanctuary might benefit from the installation of stained glass windows. This suggestion was taken up by four families in particular and the windows were designed by our architect Malcolm Lovibond and represent a fitting tribute to the memory of Alan & Peter Boardman, Malcolm Galloway, George Scarborough and Joan Tonge.

At a much later date In 1996, the Church became beneficiaries from the Cronshaw family of a Beckstein baby grand piano in memory of Dorothy. This very fine instrument has contributed substantially to our worship none more so than presently under the aegis of Mark Johnson.

Meanwhile, in 1992, plans began to evolve for the opening of the Sanctuary and the date of 19th July, 1992 was agreed. On Friday 10th July our Quantity Surveyor Derek Price formally took over the building on behalf of the Church. Next day a team of Elders, Management and Development Members assisted by the Housekeeping Group descended on the building to prepare it for our return. There was a growing sense of expectation as the week passed. For the first time the Church was decorated with flowers and what had merely been a shell of a building took on a new warmth and life.

Sunday the 19th July dawned dull and wet. After the 8.00 am Communion, which was held in the old hall for the last time, the

Eldership assembled in the new building for a brief time of prayer. At the usual time the congregation assembled at St Michael's Hall, also for the last time. By 10.45 am the hall was full to overflowing. When the time came for us to set out home it was a glorious day. Many prayers had been answered.

After the usual opening call to the worship the whole congregation processed from St Michael's to our new Church. At the front of the procession the church banner was carried by two of the young people Diane Simpson and David Harrison. Graham Perkin, the Church Secretary, followed with the Bible. Behind came the two Ministers then Robin Williamson, Development Treasurer carrying the morning offering yet to be dedicated. He was followed by two Elders, Eleanor Sykes and Elizabeth McLaughlin. The choir followed and then the congregation and finally the remaining Elders bringing up the rear.

The procession was greeted in the new church with the sound of Toccata from Widor's 5th Symphony played by Brian Rollerson. Almost 300 people filed into the new sanctuary, so that when all were seated there were few seats to spare. As the voluntaries died away and silence descended the congregation had time to take stock of their new surroundings. WE WERE HOME.

However, that is not the end of the story for while the Sanctuary was completed there was still more to do. But with continued dedication to the task, by November 1996, the redevelopment of our whole site was completed at a cost of £606,187. All of this huge sum was provided from our own resources with no debt incurred.

Tom Swan



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves

The Lectionary Readings for December 2023

The readings may not always correspond with those chosen by our preachers, but this information could be used for personal reading.

Sue Matthews



Week beginning	First reading and Psalm	Alternative first reading and Psalm	Second reading	Gospel
December 3rd 2023	Isaiah 64:1-9	Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19	1 Corinthians 1:3-9	Mark 13:24-37
December 10th 2023	Isaiah 40:1-11	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13	2 Peter 3:8-15a	Mark 1:1-8
December 17th 2023	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11	Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24	John 1:6-8, 19-28
December 24th 2023	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26	Romans 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38
December 31st 2023	Isaiah 61:10-62:3	Psalm 148	Galatians 4:4-7	Luke 2:22-40

Prayer Corner

Please let me know if you would like any specific prayers added to our prayer corner each month. Sue Matthews

Please pray for all the people affected by flooding and gales

Please pray for those in our fellowship who are unwell, and those who are caring for them

Please pray for those who have lost a loved one this year

Please pray for those who are alone this Christmas time

Please pray for the people affected by war, particularly in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine

Please pray for those families who cannot afford to celebrate Christmas

Crossword Challenge

Across

- 1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)
 4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)
 7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)
 8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)
 9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)
 13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)

16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)

17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)

19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)

24 Able dock (anag.) (8)

25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)

26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)

27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

Down

1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)

2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)

3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)

4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)

5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)

6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)

10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)

11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)

12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)

13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)

14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)

15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)

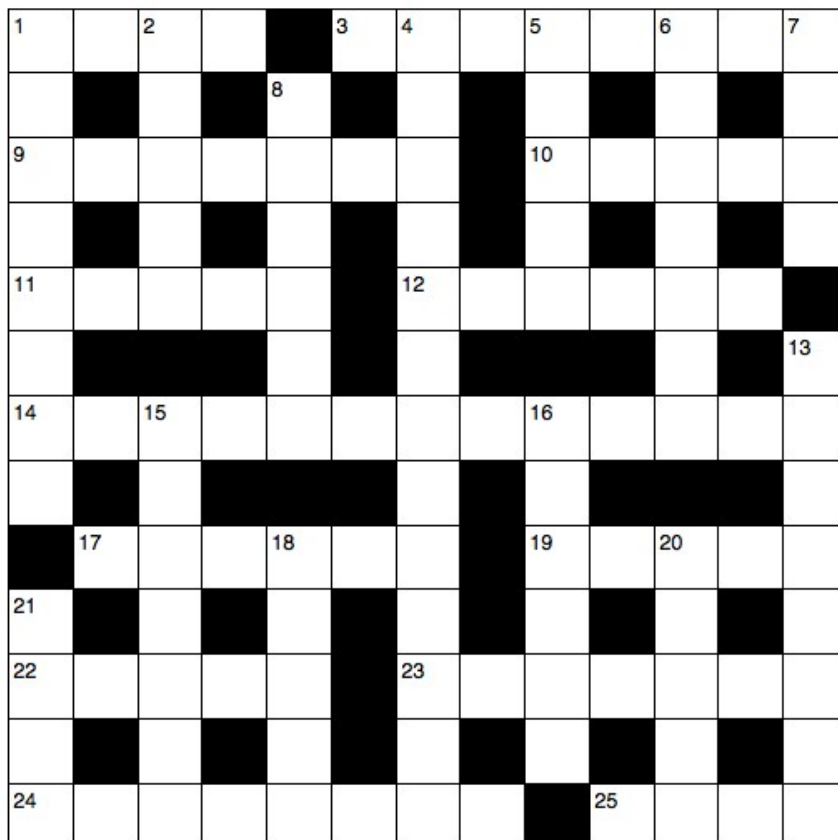
18 Narnia's Lion (5)

20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)

21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)

22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)

23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)



Answers November 2023

Across: 1, Thanks. 4, Banner. 8, Esher. 9, Azariah. 10, Compare. 11, Ishma. 12, Doorposts. 17, Oaths. 19, Galatia. 21, Papyrus. 22, Frail. 23, Listen. 24, Hyssop.

Down: , Trench. 2, Ashamed. 3, Karma. 5, Ananias. 6, Neigh. 7, Reheat. 9, Areopagus. 13, Observe. 14, Satraps. 15, Compel. 16, Gallop. 18, Tapes. 20, Lofty.

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SUNDAY 17th December

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