



# NEWS & VIEWS

December 2024

**The newsletter of the United Reformed Church in Bramhall**

## A Christmas Reflection

‘For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’ (Isaiah 9:6)

As my family and I prepare for our first Christmas here in Manchester, we are experiencing a wonderful blending of familiar traditions with the new. Old decorations bring happy memories to our new home, our children act out nativity plays with new friends, and we enjoy singing traditional carols with new congregations. While there is comfort in finding the known in a new place, I am also reminded to be open to how these familiar words sound in these streets and in this world. What am I hearing differently in this context? What is God pointing me to?

The headlines continue to be filled with news of war, corruption, and rhetoric that seeks to divide rather than unite, and yet in this ever-changing world we still gather to draw

comfort from the familiar yet powerful promises of the Christmas story. The surprise of a child who, as Eugene Peterson writes, will grow up to ‘say the big nouns: joy, glory, peace; And live the best verbs: love, forgive, save.’[1] A radical gospel that is just as needed in these times as it was when it was first proclaimed two thousand years ago.



We all need peace this Christmas. Peace for our families when the endless list of preparations becomes too much, or tensions run high around the dinner table. Peace for those leading activities and services for others, worrying if they have overlooked something important. Peace for

those experiencing grief, loneliness, discrimination, or anxiety about their circumstances. Peace for those caught in conflicts that rage around the world, especially in the land we call holy.

As we work, speak out, and pray for peace for our world this Christmas, remember to

<b>UNITED REFORMED CHURCH</b>  Robins Lane Bramhall SK7 2PE  <a href="http://www.urcbramhall.co.uk">www.urcbramhall.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:urc.bramhall2@gmail.com">urc.bramhall2@gmail.com</a>  Our church is a member of the URC Greater Manchester South Missional Partnership.	<b>SUNDAY SERVICES</b>  <b>10.00 am</b> Reflective Worship <i>In Church and on Zoom (see page 2 for details)</i>		
	<b>SECRETARY</b> Helen Beattie 0161 440 9227 <a href="mailto:helenmbeattie@outlook.com">helenmbeattie@outlook.com</a>	<b>TREASURER</b> Joe James 0161 439 8241 <a href="mailto:jw.james@talktalk.net">jw.james@talktalk.net</a>	<b>MINISTERIAL CONTACT</b> If you require the support of a minister, please contact Sue Matthews in the first instance 0161 439 1066
	<b>CORRESPONDENCE SECRETARY</b> Elaine Noden 0161 355 1459 <a href="mailto:elley2011@hotmail.co.uk">elley2011@hotmail.co.uk</a>	<b>OFFICE</b> Answerphone 0161 439 4807	<b>ROOM BOOKINGS</b> 07909 940819 Answerphone checked daily

take some time to welcome the peace of Christ into your own life. As Jesus said 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.' (John 14:27)

*Revd Steph Atkins, Missional Partnership Minister*

[1] The Cradle by Eugene Peterson published in his book, The Contemplative Pastor (1989), page 169.



## Church News

### 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 1st December-** Alison Pope- Communion

**Sunday 8th December** - Margaret Dexter Brown

**Sunday 15th December-** Liz Dellafield

**Monday 16th December 7.30pm** - Bereavement Service of Light, Cheadle Hulme URC - Margaret Dexter Brown

**Sunday 22nd December** - Alison Haigh

**Sunday 22nd December - 6.00pm** - Carol Service

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

**Wednesday 25th December** - Revd Kurauone Mutimwii

**Sunday 29th December -10.30am** - Revd Kurauone Mutimwii Joint service with Cheadle Hulme and Heald Green at Heald Green URC

### Bereavement Service of Light

Cheadle Hulme URC wish to invite people from Bramhall URC to their annual Bereavement Service which will be held in their church on **Monday 16th December at 7.30pm** It will be lead by Margaret Dexter-Brown and will be an opportunity for those who have been bereaved recently (or at anytime) to remember their loved ones in a short and simple time of reflection and remembrance.

### Prayer Tree and Wall

Please remember the Prayer Tree at the back of Church. Even if you do not feel the need to put something on the tree, just perhaps go and read and pray for the things that others have written, this is all they may need. You can write as much or as little as you like on the leaf you hang.

*Elaine*

### Reverse Advent

The Reverse Advent box will remain in the Foyer until **Sunday 15th December.**

This gives me time to get all the donations to Chelwood in time for them to get things out to their clients before Christmas.



Remember this is where instead of taking something out of an Advent Calendar each day, you put something into the Chelwood Advent box, to be given to those who will struggle during the festive period.

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

*Elaine*

### Friendly Cuppa Club



This months meeting is **Wednesday 18th December 10am - 12pm.**

Please feel free to bring a friend along.

*Elaine*

### Advent Bible Study

The Advent Bible study



started on **Tuesday 26th November at 7pm-8pm**, So feel free to join us for Tuesdays in December .

Everybody is welcome and our friends from Cheadle Hulme and Heald Green joined us.

*Elaine*

## Carols by Candlelight

Our Christmas Carol concert is on **Sunday 22nd December at 6.30pm**. Please bring along friends, you can tempt them with the mince pies and mulled wine we serve at the end.

*Elaine*



## Woodford Winterfest

On **Friday 13th December**, CtiBW will be at the Woodford Winterfest singing Carols at 5,30pm. The evening was excellent last year (except for the weather) There is all sorts going on for Children, including of course a visit from Father Christmas. There was also a small makers market. It is a nice evening and a good start to the Christmas celebrations



*Elaine*

## ECO Church

### A couple of fun facts to get you thinking.

1. A glass bottle can take up to 1 million years to decompose.

Glass takes a very, very long time to break down. It can take a glass bottle more than a million years to decompose in the environment, possibly even more if it's in a landfill. This means that glass manufactured and used 5000 years ago may still be present in the environment. Because its life cycle is so long, and because glass doesn't leach any chemicals, it's better to repurpose and reuse it over and over again before recycling it.

2. Around 27,000 trees are cut down each day

The world has over 3.04 trillion trees. However, 27,000 of them are cut down daily to make toilet paper. This translates to about 9.8 million trees annually. One single recycled

edition of the Sunday Times newspaper could save 75,000 trees.

*Elaine*

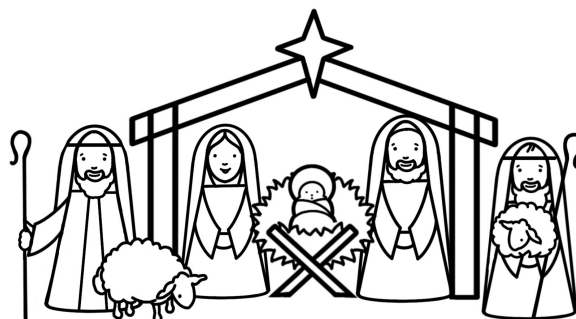
## Church Family and Friends

We just heard of the recent passing of Father Dennis Maher. Some of our members will remember Father Dennis, he was the priest in charge of the Bramhall Catholic Church and worked with Arnold on many ecumenical initiatives. With the blessing of our Church the Catholics, under Father Dennis, started to use our sanctuary for a service every Sunday. This continued for 25 years and helped us form a long standing relationship with the Catholics in Bramhall.

We continue to 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 Most Beautiful Story

A well-known atheist was being interviewed on Radio 4. When asked how he spent Christmas, he said that he went to Midnight Mass at church. "But you're an atheist", his interviewer protested. "Yes", he replied, "but what they celebrate at Christmas is the most beautiful story ever told."

That 'beautiful story' tells of a Creator who sent His Son to share the life of His creation, to be born as a helpless baby, to grow up as a man of extraordinary wisdom, gentleness and love, who was executed by the authorities for contradicting the traditions of the time. His

followers – who today number about two billion people all over the world – believe that He rose from the dead, and that by His death and resurrection He has made possible forgiveness and eternal life for men and women everywhere.

That is certainly quite a story, perhaps the greatest story ever told, and yes, beautiful. And that is the story that will be rehearsed again this Christmas, in children’s Nativities, in hymns and carols, in Bible readings and sermons all over the country. People who stay away from church all year turn up to hear it, and who can blame them? This is a story of hope, of love and of heaven touching earth.

Probably the best-known statue in the world is ‘Christ the Redeemer’, towering over the South American city of Rio de Janeiro, His arms outstretched in blessing. Christmas celebrates the birth of that great Redeemer – a tiny baby laid in a feeding trough.

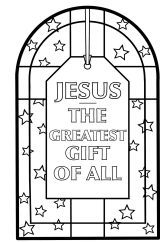
His birth changed history, His life transformed our understanding of what it means to be human, His death was at one and the same time a tragedy and a triumph. Yes, it is ‘the most beautiful story ever told’. Enjoy it again this Christmas.

*Canon David Winter for Parish Pump*



"I'm sorry Michael – even if you HAVE changed your ring-tone to 'Away In-A-Manger', it's still ALL mobiles OFF!"

## Christmas Geese



The story is told of a farmer who didn't believe in Jesus. One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife was taking their children to a service at their local church. He refused to come saying: ‘Why would God lower Himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!’ So, they left him at home.

During the evening the winds grew stronger, and the snow turned to a blizzard. He heard a series of loud thumps on the window. In the field near his house he saw a flock of wild geese. They had been migrating south when they got caught in the snowstorm. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter.

The man wanted to help the geese and so he opened the doors of the barn, hoping they would go inside for shelter. But the geese didn't do anything, despite the man's efforts to move them. He made a breadcrumb trail leading to the barn and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered.

Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn: ‘Why don't they follow me?!’ Then he realised: ‘If only I were a goose and become one of them, then I could save them.’ Finally, he understood the heart of the Christmas message. God has become one of us in Jesus. The eternal creator God has entered time and space as a baby, to show us who God is and how we can know Him.

This Christmas, let's celebrate again this amazing truth that we have a God who knows and can meet our needs in Jesus. ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means ‘God with us’. Matthew 1:23.

*Canon Paul Hardingham for Parish Pump*

## The Light of the World

During the month of December, people are ‘counting down’ to Christmas Day in an ever-increasing variety of ways.



In my childhood we had a

simple card with a traditional picture of a manger scene with doors marked with the countdown numbers and a picture of the different characters behind each. If my parents had extra money to spend, they would buy one with shiny snow made of sparkles!

These days you can pay hundreds to have a gift for each day from toys to jewellery. And don't fret, your pets can have their own also!

Churches don't normally count the days, but they do note the four Sundays before Christmas Day. They give each of those four 'advent' Sundays a theme and light a candle each time. One for the first week, two for the second and so on.

Unlike the secular world, the church counts up, and not down. It increases the light as we get nearer to Christmas Day and then adds an extra light on that day. So, a total of five candles.

Churches vary in their use of colour in the candles. Some will use all white, whilst many only use white for the Christ-light on Christmas Day and 'colours' on the four Sundays.

There again they vary; some use all purple – originally the most expensive colour - as we prepare for The King. In a more modern style, some use blue – perhaps recalling the most associated colour for Jesus' mother Mary. But perhaps reminding us of creation and that we are surrounded by God's love as the earth is surrounded by the blue sky.

And again, others will change the colours for each Sunday, often giving the third Sunday to be pink as we are over half-way through Advent and it is known as Gaudate – Joyful – Sunday. Or there are those who make the fourth Sunday pink, as that one is often dedicated to Mary and it's a 'girly' colour.

This month

Have a look at the advent candles in your church, or perhaps in your own home, and think about what the colours mean to you. How do they reflect your faith? Whatever the colour – Have a Good Christmas!

*Revd Jo White for Parish Pump*

## Missional Partnership Prayer Calendar



Each Church has prepared a prayer for you. The prayers are not designed to be for a specific event, they are about the general life and mission of the Church so they can be used in any month.

This month we pray for **Wilmslow URC**

For all your blessings, gracious God, we give you thanks.

For the work of Wilmslow in the community.  
With young people through the continuing work of Wilmslow Youth

For the support for their parents and families  
With Messy Church and its families, for possibilities and ministry

For the many groups who meet on the premises

With outreach and contact with our neighbours

For growing relations with the Health Centre, the Council and other Cheshire East organisations

And we pray for the congregation, members and friends of the Church

For groups and activities that provide a network of support

For new opportunities ahead

And for all the Church is called to do in the months and years ahead.

In your loving mercy, hear our prayer.

**Amen**



*We don't sing carols no more...  
you 'ave to listen to 'em off me iPod!*



# Christmas Greetings

To all my friends at Church, wishing you a very Happy Christmas.

Ken

Christmas greetings to all my friends at Church. Hope you have a joyful celebration with family and friends. With love to you all, Kath

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful and Healthy New Year  
Love from  
Linda & John

Christmas Greetings to all my Church friends. Wishing you all the very best for the New Year,

Love Carole

I would like to wish my church friends a very Happy Christmas and also thank you all for the caring support you have offered me during the last twelve months. It has made all the difference.  
Brenda R

Wishing all my Church friends a VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

I hope that everyone can have a peaceful time.  
Howard Xx 🐱

Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year to all at Church.  
Warmest wishes

Verina and Stuart

I wish all at the Church a very Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.  
Tom

Best wishes to everyone at Bramhall U.R.C. for a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.  
Love Helen.

Christmas Greetings and best wishes to all.

Rosemary and Christopher

Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and a healthy and peaceful 2025

Sue and Paul

To Everyone at Christmas, wishing you a very happy Christmas and New Year.  
Best wishes Carole D and family

# The Lectionary Readings for December 2024

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 1st 2024 <i>First Sunday of Advent</i>	Jeremiah 33:14-16	Psalm 25:1-10	1 Thessalonians 3:9-13	Luke 21:25-36
December 8th 2024 <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i>	Baruch 5:1-9 or Malachi 3:1-4	Luke 1:68-79	Philippians 1:3-11	Luke 3:1-6
December 15th 2024 <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i>	Zephaniah 3:14-20	Isaiah 12:2-6	Philippians 4:4-7	Luke 3:7-18
December 22nd 2024 <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i>	Micah 5:2-5a	Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 80:1-7	Hebrews 10:5-10	Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)
December 29th 2024	1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26	Psalm 148	Colossians 3:12-17	Luke 2:41-52

## 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 the people of Ethiopia who are experiencing a famine

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

Please pray for those who are alone this Christmas time

Please pray for the people of the Ukraine, Isreal and Gaza

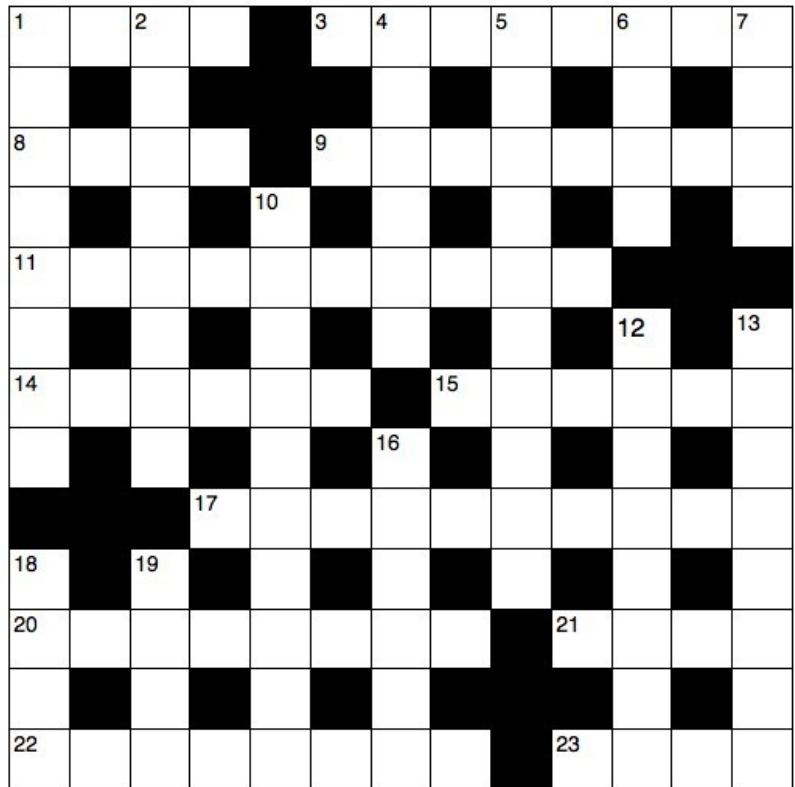
Please pray for those families who cannot afford to celebrate Christmas

# Crossword Challenge

19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)

## Across

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
- 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
- 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
- 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
- 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
- 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)
- 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
- 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
- 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
- 23 'The eye cannot say to the —, "I don't need you"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)



## Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — —, and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
- 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
- 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
- 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
- 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
- 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
- 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
- 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
- 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
- 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
- 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)

## Answers November 2024

**Across:** 1, Charioteers. 9, Immoral. 10, Cairo. 11, SAE. 13, Inns. 16, Firm. 17, Accuse. 18, East. 20, Ogam. 21, Judith. 22, Seba. 23, Msgr. 25, Den. 28, Inane. 29, Entreat. 30, Chrysoprase.

**Down:** 2, Human. 3, Rare. 4, Oils. 5, Ecce. 6, Raising. 7, Citizenship. 8, Commemorate. 12, Assail. 14, Sat. 15, Scouse. 19, Sabbath. 20, Ohm. 24, Seeds. 25, Deny. 26, Nero. 27, Star.

**NEWS & VIEWS** is published on the last Sunday of each month. The deadline for the next issue is:

**SUNDAY 15th December**

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