



St Luke's News

December 2023

Number 277

Join the Angels' Song



Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"

The angels appeared to the shepherds in *Luke 2:13-14*, praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

As we approach the Christmas season, many preparations are going on, for example, planning for services (see information later in this magazine), making Christmas puddings and putting together Christmas boxes and hampers for those in need. There are choirs practising for the Carol service and for singing at the Essex Arms.

But why? To enable the birth of Jesus 2000 years ago to be truly celebrated. The call is for us on the Cassiobury estate and nearby to join that celebration in worship at St Luke's.

There are many groups, clubs and events we join in life. But joining Christmas celebrations, joining with the people of God, the Church, is a

special thing. It makes us consider the past, yes, the present – particularly the spiritual dimension to life – and the future. Many join St Luke's at Christmas, but there is more...

St Luke's is a special place set aside to worship the living God. It is also a community for those who believe and follow Jesus - a loving, caring, supporting, welcoming community, sharing our Saviour Jesus with all.

Come and join us this year as we praise the newborn Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Scripture states the angels spoke and sang to the shepherds.

Who or what are angels?

One of the most famous Christmas films, *It's a Wonderful Life*, starring James Stewart as George Bailey, also stars a novice guardian angel called Clarence who through his actions and counsel earns his wings!

The Bible points to angels as being spiritual beings. But people would say: "Vicar, be serious! Angels don't exist today!" However, I believe they do and the Bible has numerous accounts of people meeting with angels from *Genesis* to *Revelation*. Many testify to meeting them in the past and today.

The Bible sees them in several roles:

- **They are messengers of God**, for example, in *Luke 1:26-38*, Mary's encounter with the Angel Gabriel. They are not to be worshipped but are spiritual servants of God.
- **They protect us**. *Psalms 34:7* states "The Angel of the Lord encamps around those that fear him, and he delivers them." So you can pray to God for angelic protection. We each seem to have guardian angels as *Matthew 18:10* says "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."
- **They minister to us**. *Hebrews 1:14* says "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" And angels can be in disguise: *Hebrews 13:2* states "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

It is clear from scripture, from people's experiences down the ages and today, that angels are around but always in the background; they are messengers and they carry out God's commands but they are never to be worshipped. Sadly, we see that scripture also shows us there are fallen angels, so (like any guidance or encounter) their messages need to be tested.

- 1 Does it align with the Bible/biblical truth?
- 2 Is it pointing to and/or honouring Jesus?
- 3 Does it reflect sanctified (faith-filled) common sense?
- 4 Do you feel an inner conviction, ie do you know inside by God's Spirit that it is from God?
- 5 Do circumstances point to it being right?
- 6 When shared with wise Christians do they agree it's from God?

Is all that I've written fanciful? Well, the Bible reveals a world, especially in the UK, that we have turned away from – we seem to have a world framework of life being only a physical dimension with a vague belief in God for after we die. However, the Bible reveals a world that is spiritual as well as physical. Both are fallen. There is good and bad – angels and demons – and there is a future of Heaven, but also division with Hell being a reality and a place without God and all goodness.

This Christmas, join us to worship Jesus, Saviour of the world, but also join with the angels in walking God's way, encountering the spiritual dimension of life.

Happy Christmas and may God bless and guide your life in 2024.

***Yours in Christ
Michael
Vicar of St Luke's***

Want to find out more about angels? Here's some recommended reading:

- *Angels: God's secret agents*, Billy Graham, 1986
- *Angels* (Thinking clearly series), John Woolmer, 2003
- *Angels of Glory and Darkness*, John Woolmer, 2006.



Services at St Luke's Church

Sunday

8:00am Holy Communion Service

This is a said Communion and is held once a month in the Chapel at St Luke's. All are welcome.

10:30am Morning Service/Holy Communion Service

This is our main morning service, and is currently available live-streamed on YouTube. All are welcome, and there are usually children's groups and a crèche for younger ones. The details in the calendar below may change.

5:30pm Encounter - Informal Evening Service

This service includes worship, a talk and opportunities to be prayed for. There are activities for young people (ages 11+).

Tuesday

10:00am Holy Communion Service

We also have a weekly Communion (or Service of the Word if the Vicar is unavailable) at 10:00am on Tuesdays. This is a lovely, reflective service with a couple of hymns, followed by community tea and coffee.

December	8:00am	10:30am	Evening
Sunday 3rd		Family Communion	Encounter 5:30pm
Sunday 10th	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	Mince Pies and Carols around the Crib, 4:30pm
Sunday 17th		Family Communion	Carols by Candlelight 6:30pm
Sunday 24th Christmas Eve		Nativity Service	Christingle 4:30pm Midnight Communion 11:30pm

Note: The forms of service may change.

December	8:00am	Morning	5:30pm
Monday 25th Christmas Day		Holy Communion 9:00am All-Age Family Service finishing with an optional shortened Holy Communion 10:30am	No evening service
Sunday 31st		Morning Worship 10:30am	No evening service
January	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
Sunday 7th		Family Communion	Encounter
Sunday 14th	Holy Communion	All-Age Service <i>Book of Esther</i>	Encounter
Sunday 21st		Holy Communion <i>Book of Esther</i>	Encounter
Sunday 28th		Morning Worship <i>Book of Esther</i>	Encounter with Holy Communion
February	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
Sunday 4th		Family Communion <i>Book of Esther</i>	Encounter
Sunday 11th	Holy Communion	All-Age Service <i>Book of Esther</i>	Encounter
Sunday 18th		Holy Communion	Encounter
Sunday 25th		Morning Worship	Encounter with Holy Communion

Note: The forms of service may change.

Diary dates coming up

December

4th	Newcomers' Welcome Evening, 7:00-9:00pm
8th	Cameo Christmas Lunch at The Cock Inn, Sarratt
9th	Breakfast Club
10th	Mince Pies and Carols around the Crib, 4:30pm
14th	Carols at The Essex Arms (featuring CaNCC), 7:00pm
15th	Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm
17th	Carols by Candlelight, 6:30pm
21st	Carols at The Essex Arms (featuring CaNCC), 7:00pm, outside if weather permits
24th	Nativity Service, 10:30am Christingle, 4:30pm Midnight Communion, 11:30pm
Christmas Day	Holy Communion, 9:00am All-Age Family Service, 10:30am, finishing with an optional shortened Holy Communion

January

12th	Cameo Film Night
13th	Breakfast Club
26th	Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm
27th	Breakfast Club

February

9th	Cameo + Talk on Watford's Street Angels by Geert Tap, Watford Town Centre Chaplain
10th	Breakfast Club
17th	Full performance of <i>Esther</i>
23rd	Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm
24th	Breakfast Club

March

1st	World Day of Prayer at St Luke's, 2:00pm
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If you would like to give to St Luke's by bank transfer, the details are:

Account name	PCC St Luke's Watford
Sort code	20-91-79
Account no.	70687472
Reference	Please state if the donation is for a specific appeal, eg Santa's hampers, Foodbank, etc.

Please remember to complete a Gift Aid form if you are a tax payer

Regular groups at St Luke's Church

Children/Youth Groups (evenings, term-time)

Urban Saints	Tuesdays	6:15–7:30pm	7–11 year olds
Base	Thursdays	6:15–7:30pm	11–14 year olds
K2	Tuesdays	7:45–9:00pm	12–15 year olds
RISE	Thursdays*	7:45–9:00pm	14–18 year olds

* Meeting intermittently so check with Neil and Lydia for dates

Breakfast Club

Every other Saturday, 8:30–10:00am

For more information, speak to Lydia

Cassiobury and Nearby Community Choir

Wednesday evenings, term-time, 8:00pm in the church

For more information, speak to Jeremy C

Come And Meet Each Other (Cameo)

Friday evenings, monthly (usually 2nd Friday of the month)

For a programme, speak to Jos or Pam W

Creative Space

Craft activities for women, monthly

For more information, speak to Pam N

Friday Club

Monthly, last Friday in the month

For more information, speak to Janet G

Knitting Group

Monthly on a Monday morning

For more information, contact Di via the church office

Prayer

FOCUS, Tuesdays, 8:00pm: every 2nd Tuesday of the month meet in the chapel, all other Tuesdays meet on Zoom (for log-in details, contact the church office)

Prayer for Children & Youth, term-time, Thursdays, 3:00pm

Hour of Prayer, Fridays, 10:00–11:00 am

Toddlers (term-time)

Thursday mornings, 9:30–11:00am



Santa's Hampers Appeal

The St Luke's Santa's hampers team are back in action and have begun work on 50 gift boxes which will be filled and given to 50 families within the Watford Refugee Partnership Trust. The hampers will be packed with the help of St Luke's youth group on Thursday 7th December.



Each box contains treats for the whole family. Then essentials such as toothbrushes, hair brushes and body wash are added. Finally, age-appropriate toys and books are selected for each family.

How can you help?

Please support the cost of the hampers if you are able by 'buying a Christmas box' for a family. Each box costs £50 to put together. You can donate on the St Luke's website or through the envelopes in church. Please write 'Santa's hampers' on your donation.

All donations are most gratefully received.

Thank you and a very Merry Christmas to you all!

Angel Project for Ukraine

Every winter, a group of Christian professional string players known as the King's Chamber Orchestra (KCO) partners with churches and venues across the UK to provide chamber music for entertainment and worship.

Led by Jersey-based cellist Gerard Le Feuvre since 1985, they play over 45 concerts a year bringing spectacular classical arrangements and plenty of humour. Catering for a wide audience, they offer both an evening's concert as well as a young families' matinee. Children are even permitted to bring their teddy bears along.

The orchestra is made up of a large reserve of distinguished musicians, some of them internationally based, whom Gerard has recruited whilst freelancing with bigger orchestras around the country.

In the recent months since the conflict in Ukraine broke out, Gerard has been in contact with a young Ukrainian cellist called Vlad, who leads worship at a Pentecostal church in the heart of Kiev. Throughout the war, they have got to know each other virtually, regularly meeting up via Zoom due to travel restrictions in Ukraine.

Vlad's church has been helping to send trucks of food and supplies to the front line, whilst tending to the needs of those locally affected by the aftermath of the conflict.

To help support this cause, the orchestra's response was to put together a film project that involved recording KCO musicians and Vlad (remotely) and commissioning work by three fine artists local to Chorleywood (of which I was one) and another in Jersey.

*When at night I go to sleep
Fourteen angels watch do keep;
Two my head are guarding,
Two my feet are guiding;
Two upon my right hand,
Two upon my left hand,
Two who warmly cover
Two who o'er me hover,
Two to whom 'tis given
To guide my steps to heaven.*

In May this year, the KCO produced a rendition of Evening Prayer taken from the Hansel and Gretel operetta by 19th-century German composer Engelbert Humperdinck (not the British singer Arnold George Dorsey!). The theme of the piece centres around the two children being overwhelmed by darkness, and in their anxiety praying for God's protection. God hears their

prayer and sends 14 angels to watch over them (see box on previous page).

The four artists were each invited to produce an individually painted meditation that would then be montaged together with the orchestra's footage and the other three artists' work. As the theme was on angels, each artist was left to their own devices as to how they would respond. For me, I began the process by noticing how in the prayer there were particular active verbs for each angel mentioned in the Bible. It made me think about how throughout the Bible angels are sent by God not just to sit around doing nothing, but instead to engage with the world. God is omnipotent but also omniscient in protecting His people, sending angels to minister, lift and encamp around those who fear Him. These are just a few examples of actions shown by angels.

Then this picture came to me of an angel's wings surrounding and covering a soldier of war, and on those wings included strands of Bible verses where the angels are referenced. Although this initial vision got me started, I had no idea how the final outcome would resolve, and it was almost as if the painting became prophetic and prayerful as I plastered together this winged angelic figure.

The piece was produced in June over two weeks using mixed media, capturing the design process on camera as I added each layer. In the following weeks, the video was knitted





Detail of the angel's wing showing strands of Bible verses referencing angels

together with the other contributions to show this powerful prayer of protection over the nation of Ukraine.

Due to the recent news of other world events that have come to our attention, it's easy to forget the ongoing struggles that Ukraine is facing. However, this project reminds us of the all-important task we have to intercede for others without ceasing, and to fervently pray for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and in other troubled countries; despite being separated in distance, our faith in Christ still unites us.



Similarly, the film beautifully shows the unity of music bringing people together, so I encourage you to watch it. You can either search for King's Chamber Orchestra on YouTube or scan the QR code on the left with a smartphone.

The paintings will feature on the KCO's winter tour this year. They are playing at St Andrew's Chorleywood on Saturday 9th December for the final leg of their Christmas tour. To check if tickets are available and to book online, go to www.st-andrews.org.uk. For future KCO performances, go to www.kco.cool or follow their social media profiles.

Jeremy Hogarth

Remembrance Day Poppy Installation

This stunning poppy installation was, for a second year, erected on the double doors of the Church Hall facing Langley Way to remember and honour members of the armed forces who have died in conflicts at home and abroad.

Thank you to all who contributed to its creation and to the team who gave their time to put it in place on Friday 3rd November.



CHRISTMAS DAY

Mon 25th Dec

All Age Communion Services

9am

In person only

10:30am

In person with a 9am service
playback for those watching online.



Illuminated Cross Returns to YMCA Building

Extract from a Press Release issued by One YMCA on 26th September 2023

In late September, an illuminated cross was reinstalled on the roof of Charter House, the YMCA building in the centre of Watford. The 10-metre cross was carefully lifted onto the roof, replacing the one blown down by Storm Eunice in February 2022.

For over 20 years a simple cross has illuminated the town's skyline, and staff, volunteers and residents at YMCA are pleased to see it return.

Guy Foxell, Chief Executive of One YMCA, was delighted to see the cross reinstated:



“For so many people across the town this is a symbol that brings light and hope, and we’re thrilled to see a new weather-proof cross secured into place. We challenge any storm to try and remove it!”

The shape of Watford is changing dramatically as development of high-rise buildings continues across the town centre. Since it was built in 1975, the YMCA’s Charter House hostel has been the tallest and most prominent building on the horizon.

“Our town is changing,” said Tim Roberts, One YMCA’s Head of Christian Mission and Culture, “and it will be a reassurance to many who’ve been around for a while to once again be able to look up at night and see an illuminated cross back on the skyline.”

Charter House is home to nearly 200 residents, with staff and volunteers offering a range of support to men and women with housing needs.

One YMCA are especially thankful to Essex firm Romark Engineering for manufacturing the cross, Ian Nash for lighting design, and Ambassador Lifts for their ingenuity to get it to the roof on top of the passenger lifts after high winds prevented the use of a crane.

One YMCA Communications

YMCA Making HOME (before Christmas)

Help transform our residents lounge in
Watford this November...



The residents lounge in our Watford Town Centre hostel, Charter House, is desperately in need of a makeover. Our Christian Mission team want to make this space feel like home *before Christmas*, and you can help!

If you would like to help us with the cost of replacing furniture, a large screen tv and light fittings, please use this QR code to make your donation:



For further information, contact our Lead Chaplain,
Matt Penny
Email: matt.penny@oneymca.org

Firework Prayers used on Sunday 29th October

This week fireworks will begin to paint bright colours in the autumn skies, and dazzling hues will drip, sparkle and explode across the heavens. Everyone's gaze will be fixed on the heavens and on things above. As we enjoy the displays let's keep in mind the One who gives us stunning night skies.



Ephesians 5:8 says,

“For you were once darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light”

So let's think through what lighting a firework can say to each of us about prayer.

- 1 **Light the taper** (hold your hands cupped in front of you as if you are protecting a flame). We carefully light the taper and carry it to the firework.

Lord may we recognise your Holy Spirit at work in our lives. May we see Your fire at work within each of us. Lord help us to be a worldwide church of Christians who nurture the flame of your Spirit through prayer, Bible study, fellowship and outward kindness. Keep us in tune with You and focussed on You. Amen

- 2 **Kneel down** (place your hands on your knees). When we light a firework we need to kneel down to light it. It is a reminder of the fact that as we approach God we approach the maker of all things (including fireworks and light). Kneeling puts God in His rightful place and us in ours.

Lord we humbly bow before you and bring before you events around the world which leave us in despair. Lord draw alongside the people of Israel, Gaza, Ukraine and Russia. Lord may the leaders put peace at the forefront of their agendas, may you bring your comfort and light to those displaced, in danger, distressed or in mourning. Lord work in and through those in power throughout the world and we ask for your rich blessing and boldness on those lawmakers with a Christian faith. Lord we ask for your increased presence in the world around us. Amen

3 *Light the touch paper* (touch hands together in prayer). This is the moment of contact. There is no going back from here on. The firework is now live.

Lord we pray for those who we make daily contact with. Those in our church, those in our community and in our places of work. Lord we pray that you might use us as your hands and feet in those places, to touch the lives of others and to introduce them to the flame of your love. Lord give us sensitivity, boldness and a deeper passion to see others set alight by coming to know you. *Amen*

4 *Step back* (hands open to your sides in an offering position). We step back from the firework once lit. We give it space to do its thing before it fires into the sky.

Lord we bring ourselves to you today, whatever that might look like. We bring our needs, our hopes, our prayers, our praise. Lord we step back from the business of our daily lives and we take a moment to pause and to bring our personal prayers before you. Lord thank you that you do hear us when we pray. *Amen*

5 *Watch and wait* (grasp hands together). Prayer is described in *Revelation 8:4* as earthly petitions rising up “as the smoke of incense together with prayers”.

When we pray, it can feel like we are shooting earthly petitions up to God. Sometimes those prayers feel very insignificant from down here and almost indiscernible! There is a moment of real silence after the boom or the woosh as the rockets shoot into the sky. In that quiet moment we wait with our eyes riveted to the hard-to-see streak paving its way to the heavens. We know the best is yet to come.

Lord we pray for those waiting. Those who are sick or in need. Those who have longed for your touch for many years. May they know your hope, your peace, your healing and your light in their lives. Name someone you would like to remember before God ... *Amen*

6 *WOW!* (raise hands in praise). And then comes the ‘kaboom’. Every corner of the darkness is filled with light, to our delight and surprise. Oooh - Ahhh! And what about those fireworks that keep going, with exploding offshoots that keep us amazed.

Like fireworks, our prayers do break through and God takes hold of them. Then something wonderful happens. He responds to each prayer individually, producing powerful and magnificently varied results.

Lord of Light, your beauty illuminates the darkness of the world. As fireworks paint the sky with light, may we also vibrantly reflect the joy and delight of your Kingdom. Let this dazzling celebration of

spectacular brilliance remind us of the glorious light of your love and remind us to pray expectantly, for you to move in the situations where only you can perform the seemingly impossible, and bring light, peace and healing. *Amen.*

Neil Brookes
Youth Director

Adapted from the CBN article *Exploding prayer* by Dee Aspin and the URC article *A praying church creates heavenly fireworks* (Author unknown).



Join the
Angels' song

MINCE PIES & CAROLS

Sun 10th Dec 4:30pm



At the back of the church
With your choice of carols
sung around the crib
Refreshments served afterwards

ST LUKE'S
WATFORD



Join the
Angels' song

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Sun 17th Dec 6:30pm



Our Traditional Nine Lessons & Carols Service
Featuring items from St Luke's Christmas Choir
In person & live streamed

ST LUKE'S
WATFORD

News from some of our Mission Partners



Dear friends,

Greetings from Malawi! In the last few days we have had some rain in Blantyre, which has brought significant relief from high temperatures. However, it's likely to get hot again before the rainy season fully starts in a few weeks' time.

They say variety is the spice of life, and I've certainly experienced variety in the last few weeks! It was great to be in Kenya again in September, for the first General Assembly of the Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA). I was encouraged in individual conversations, and by seeing the passion there is for evangelical theological training which will equip pastors for serving God in the specific contexts and challenges in Africa.

Following my trip to Kenya, I stayed with the Wheatleys and Marilyn Barr in Nanjoka. It was wonderful to spend a day with the Africa Evangelical Church pastors and wives of the lakeshore area, and hear firsthand about some of their challenges. For example, one pastor told me of people wanting to move to other churches where the preaching is more dynamic or they are promised material blessings. How important it is to encourage pastors to "Stand up for the gospel", going against the tide of prosperity teaching and other false teaching. *Stand up for the gospel* is the title of a great book I'm reading about defending the gospel and knowing the hope of the true, life-transforming gospel of Christ.



Back in Blantyre, I attended the graduation ceremony at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi, before going to Lengwe National Park in the south of Malawi for the annual game count, organised by the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi. This included, over the course of two days, four 3-hour shifts sitting in different hides just watching for animals, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Although very hot (43°C one day) I found it relaxing.

Other days have seen me checking on the SIM guesthouse (which I'm helping with while the guesthouse manager is away); having zoom calls; sending out a newsletter for SIM people involved in theological education; catching up on emails; and attending a meeting of SIM Malawi's Ministry Leadership Team, where we spent time discussing projects and finances. Our former Personnel Coordinator left Malawi last year and is helping out remotely, but we really need a full-time Personnel Coordinator on the ground which would help to relieve the pressure on the team.

Coming up, I have two more international trips this year. This Sunday I will go to Lusaka, Zambia, to join an ACTEA Visitation team at the Baptist Theological School of Zambia. I'm looking forward to having input into the team as we help the school towards accreditation. In mid-November, I'll travel to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to take part in a continental gathering of the Lausanne congress (see <https://lausanne.org/gatherings/lausanne-4-africa-and-middle-east-gathering>). This is a meeting leading up to the global Lausanne gathering in Seoul next year (which I will be attending online).

Summary of prayer points

- Praise God for his enabling in all the different things I've been involved with.
- Give thanks for safe travel to Kenya, and for good connections at the ACTEA General Assembly.
- Pray for the Visitation Team going to Zambia (22-28 October), that we would work well together and be an encouragement to the Baptist Theological School of Zambia.
- Pray for learning and collaboration at the Lausanne gathering in Ethiopia (14-17 November).
- Pray for a full-time Personnel Coordinator for SIM Malawi.

Thank you so much for your prayerful support.

With love in Christ,

Ruth Guinness
ruth.guinness@sim.org
P.O. Box 136 Blantyre, Malawi

Update from the Gelsthorpe family



We are very grateful for our 4-month Home Assignment and, being based in Watford, are thankful for the opportunity to get to know people at St Luke's more.

We are thankful for the different churches and supporters we have been able to visit during our Home Assignment and the time to catch up with family and friends.

We flew back to Japan on 16th November and are pleased to be in Japan again.

Like St Luke's, we have a busy run up to Christmas with various events planned. Many people in Japan know of Christmas but not why we celebrate so it is a great opportunity to invite people to church. Please pray that many people will come along to these events with open hearts to hear the Gospel.

Thank you again to St Luke's for all your encouragement and support.



Left to right: Grace, Mark, Caleb, Sarah and Isaac

The Gelsthorpes are working for OMF leading a church plant in rural, northern Japan.

Matsuzono Cho 1-11-40, Hanamaki Shi, Iwate Ken, Japan 025-0066
mark.gelsthorpe@omfmail.com
sarah.gelsthorpe@omfmail.com

Lillian's operation date is 5th December - Please pray!

Lillian is once again going to Nairobi to have a further operation on her left eye where she has the neurofibromatosis on the optic nerve. Please pray for this delicate operation to be a permanent success.



Pamela, now the social worker at Kisumu Children, and Lillian's mother will escort her and give her valued support.

Lillian believed years ago when having the first operation that she would be healed but sadly it only gave her some respite. Now she's become an adult the surgeons believe that there is more chance of a positive outcome.

Please pray for this dear young lady. Thank you.

***Jos Lawrance
PIM***

News from Clive and Andrea

Thank you so much for your prayers for our travel to Nepal, which all went well. It's been great to meet with colleagues face-to-face, and it certainly makes a difference to have an official visa. Our time has been somewhat dominated (in a good way) by having our niece with us. She's packed in a lot, including work experience in different hospitals and labs, a visit to Chitwan National Park, and a trek to Annapurna Base Camp! We can't remember what we were doing when we were 18 but it definitely wasn't as exciting as this!



INF

Thank you for your prayers for our newest INF families – praise God, their visas arrived just in time! Please pray for a smooth visa process for another couple arriving soon and the increasing number of people who

are applying for shorter-term service, particularly in INF's ground-breaking palliative care work.

On the whole, the agencies who send expats to INF are seeing fewer people willing to serve beyond a year or two. And yet, the 'harvest is plentiful'! Please pray for much-needed long-termers; by God's grace, INF has been granted a large number of visas... we just need people to hear the call! Please remember Andrea as she continues to steer the conversations between INF Nepal, INF International, mission agencies and the applicants who God is calling to work in Nepal. It's not always an easy process.

Please pray for the life-changing palliative care work to grow, especially as diabetes and hypertension are on the rise and there is an increasing demand for 'Chronic Disease Management'. Deaths due to non-communicable diseases in Nepal rose from 51% in 2010 to 70% in 2022!

Clive is increasingly involved with issues of ethical story-telling/reporting in a mission context, especially now that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is in common use. What does this mean for Christian organisations? 'The genie is out of the bottle' and won't be going back in anytime soon, so please pray for wisdom and integrity. To help navigate this tricky subject, Clive attended a 2-day conference on 'Photography and AI' and arranged for the INF Communications Team, and some other Christian storytellers, to attend an online webinar on 'The use of AI in Mission Communications'. The follow-up discussions will help inform both organisations as they develop relevant policies.

Deep Jyoti Church

We have always felt privileged to have been part of a growing church and to witness many people coming to faith, often through works of the Spirit. You can probably imagine how sad it is to see the congregation diminishing in size and zeal. The older young-people (worship team and future leaders), continue to head overseas leaving a remnant to run things as best they can. Please pray for a fresh injection of the Spirit, and for mature believers to commit to the vital work of discipleship and outreach. Please also pray for wisdom for Clive as he works with the young people (and leadership) to help build a sustainable worship team when there is such a high turnover.

And finally...

We are reminded time and again of the importance of having a longer-term mission mindset – relationships take time to develop. For example, our friendship with a young childless couple, who live in the

hills, with whom we were able to share our own journey of being childless. Praise God, they now have a lovely one-year-old baby girl! Before Shanti was conceived, we gave Shristi a Bible and when we stayed with them recently, she told us that she still reads it. Please pray for them as her husband Raj recently lost his father and they have some difficult decisions to make in the near future. We may only see them once or twice a year but they treat us like family and we spend hours just chatting around the fire; conversations which can go a little deeper due to our understanding of the language and culture.

It can sometimes feel like we're not achieving much in human terms but we need to trust that, as God continues to call us to Nepal, He is using us – even when we're not aware of it. Some colleagues, who are just finishing their 40-year association with Nepal, shared the following:

“Until God opens the next door, praise Him in the hallway.”

Everything is in His timing – praise God!!

Wishing you all every blessing, and thank you again,

Clive and Andrea



Dear friends,

It has been a busy start to the year, with a lot of ups and downs through October and into November. There have been some great encouragements and stories over the past few weeks, as well as some moments of disappointment and discouragement. I am so thankful for your partnership in both the exciting and difficult moments of this ministry, and I am pleased to share some stories from the past month or so with you!

It was great to get to know lots of new students at our welcome events, with around 70 students attending our second September Drop-In Café, and 80 attending our Welcome Week Afternoon Tea event. There were some encouraging stories to come out of these, including one volunteer who was able to invite some of the students she met during the Drop-In Café to church! Please do pray that there would be many more stories

like this as our volunteers come alongside international students and take up the opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with them!

The encouragement of our welcome events was followed by a big disappointment as our relaunch of International Corner in the city centre saw no students attend for the first two meetings. It was a difficult time as we tried to analyse why that was the case and I was worried that we had made the wrong decision in moving International Corner off campus. However, our decision to move was reinforced by being able to reconnect with a staff member at the University of Cumbria who is keen for the students there to get involved in Friends International events. At a recent International Corner we rejoiced when two students came along, one of whom had only been in Lancaster less than a week, and we are praying that we will start to see some consistent numbers.

The first of our monthly International Dinners this term was a great encouragement, with 41 students attending. Some of these were students we hadn't seen since our welcome events, but the majority were completely new to Friends International and the Christian Union's Globe Café! We had a great time eating and chatting together, with many staying for a long time after they had finished eating to continue talking. We are praying that many of these students will come along to future events and that there will be opportunities for us to share the good news of Jesus with them! It has been exciting to start doing these events alongside the Globe Café, and for the November Dinner I cooked a South African dish with one of the students from that group.

It has also been a joy to see some students sign up for our Local Link hospitality programme. Connecting international students directly with local volunteers has always been a great opportunity for friendships to be built and invitations to attend a local church to happen. Please pray, as I link these students up with some local Christian households, that these connections would lead to more international students hearing



International Dinner where international students can enjoy a free meal of food from cultures around the world and meet other students

the gospel. It has also been encouraging to see some new hosts sign up, meaning that we will be able to re-open student sign-ups!

Prayer points

- **Please pray for International Corner.** Please pray that we would see more students coming along and that we would be welcoming those who do come well. Please pray that some of the students who attend would also want to take part in the Bible study afterwards.
- **Please pray for Local Link Hosting programme and the Christmas Hosting Local Link sign-ups, 11-15 December.** Please pray for good friendships to be built through this and for lots of opportunities to share life and faith together over the next few months.
- **Please pray for me as I continue to work on our financial situation.** I have been taking a morning a week to focus on ministry partnership development, both for myself and for the Lancaster centre, and I would value prayer for making that a priority. Please give thanks for the encouragements and progress we have seen already this year - do join me in giving thanks for everything we have received and for the ministry opportunities that this has enabled!

Thank you so much for your continued support and prayers!

*Sally Miller
Friends International, Lancaster Branch*



Reflections on St Luke's Church Weekend

As a church, we were privileged to have the opportunity to hear Greg Downes, an international speaker and a gifted evangelist, at Restore Hope, Latimer Park, on Saturday 7th October and at St Luke's for the Sunday services on 8th October. We were also very



fortunate on the Saturday to be able to use the same beautiful barn that we have had for past Alpha Away Days, set in the idyllic countryside. Everybody who came seemed to really enjoy the sense of community and fellowship – evidenced by the 'buzz' in the barn and the opportunity in the lunch break to walk around the grounds.

Entitling his first talk, 'Becoming a missional community', Greg explained that a vibrant church is a loving community which cares for its own but also is outward facing and praying for opportunities to share the gospel with others. He added that we can all share our own personal testimony and be witnesses in the workplace, home and wider community but there are some whom God has gifted with the specific gift of evangelism. He emphasized the importance of this gift in a church as without it, there would be little, if any, growth in numbers.

He challenged us with these questions:

- At St Luke's, are we a shepherding community?
- Are we a missional community?

He stated that people don't want to join an institution but want to become part of a loving community where you are loved and accepted. Greg mentioned this was especially true in the case of young people struggling with their identity and gender.



He challenged the well-known quotation attributed to St Francis of Assisi, "Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." The gospel, he said, was to be preached with words alongside being demonstrated in a humble and godly life.

On Sunday morning, speaking on the evangelist Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (*Acts 8:26-40*), Greg made some thought-provoking comments on how we could use the same strategies today:

- 1 ***Build a rapport with people***, seek to find common ground. Small talk can lead to big talk. Go out to people, don't always expect them to come to you. Philip ran to the Ethiopian.
- 2 ***Ask questions as Philip did***. Sermonising creates a barrier but chatting and asking people about themselves helps to build a bridge to their circumstances, their personalities, the situations they are faced with in their lives. You have to be a good listener to be a bridge builder. Philip's bridge was the Old Testament Scripture which the Ethiopian was reading.
- 3 ***Discern the common ground you have with others***, the natural bridges.
- 4 ***Invitation is the key, not coercion***. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman and Philip is gentle in the way he responds to the official; he waits to be invited up into the chariot.
- 5 ***Use the appropriate Scripture as the Holy Spirit leads***. Philip explained the meaning of the verses from *Isaiah*, showing the man how they referred to Jesus' death and resurrection.
- 6 ***Conversion is personal but also you are converted into a community through baptism***. The Ethiopian instinctively said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised?"
- 7 ***The nudge of the Spirit was better than any evangelistic programmes***. Philip had the nudge to go down the road from Jerusalem to Gaza.

The weekend of ministry we experienced was inspirational and I do pray that, with God's grace, something of the fire of the Spirit which motivates Greg would encourage us all to have more of a yearning to see many more people of all ages and backgrounds becoming Christians.

How amazing it would be if we had people asking us the same question as the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, "Why shouldn't I be baptised?"

Ann MacLeod

Face2Face Concert

St Luke's Church hosted a concert by Face2Face on Saturday 28th October.

Face2Face is a group of nine Christian professional musicians who perform a wide range of music from classical, jazz and opera, to songs from West-End musicals and pop songs. They perform in a range of venues, including concert halls, churches, shopping centres and prisons.

For the evening, the church was transformed into a cafe-style concert hall and welcomed a large audience from Watford and the surrounding area.

The concert programme included Puccini's aria 'O mio babbino caro', a jazz theme from the tv programme 'Jeeves and Wooster' and Stevie Wonder's 'You are the sunshine of my life'. Most memorable was a virtuoso performance on the xylophone of the hugely entertaining piece 'Sparks' by Kenneth Alford.

The musical items were threaded together by Face2Face members as they courageously shared some very personal experiences of bereavement, serious illness, day-to-day caring for a spouse with a degenerative disorder and how God found them when they were searching for more meaning in life. Throughout the challenges they've faced, they testified to how God has stood by them even when they haven't always been loyal to Him, how, following a family tragedy, He has held them close and pulled them through to the other side, how He has placed each of us here for a purpose and how He will be faithful always.

The concert finished to enthusiastic applause followed by an encore - a lively Celtic reel.

Thank you Face2Face for a wonderful evening - inspiring and uplifting - truly music for the body, mind and soul. Thank you also to Jeremy C and Jeremy H for organising the event, to those who made and served the interval refreshments (top vol au vents!) and to many others who helped behind the scenes and with the setting up and dismantling.

Yvonne Wilder



Image by John Williamson
(watfordphotographers.co.uk)

Light Party

We live in dark world. Turn on the news and we are bombarded with scenes of war, injustice, racism, hate, disaster and sadness. But there is hope in this darkness: Jesus says He is the light of the whole world! Christ's light dispels the darkness and He encourages us to do the same for others in spreading love, hope, peace, kindness and joy! Light overcomes the darkness because it is so much more powerful, the dark doesn't stand a chance. Jesus' light guides us in these dark times and brings hope to billions of people all over the world.

For our Light Party on 31st October, the church was transformed into a 'disco room' with flashing lights and videos to dance along to. We were blessed with a half-time performance by the Gospel Manna Community Choir which was a great time of worship. This year, we took Jesus' statement "I am the Light of the World" together with its "I am" neighbours with activities pointing to all the things Jesus reveals about His character.

I am the Good Shepherd – we reflected on the comfort of being one of God's 'sheeple' with sheep biscuit decorating using marshmallows, icing and chocolate buttons.

I am the Bread of Life – we satisfied our physical hunger with soup and bread just as Jesus satisfies our spiritual hunger. (It was the night of the living bread!)



I am the Resurrection and the Life – at this time of year, all sorts of undead things are celebrated in the community - zombies, mummies, ghosts, ghouls, skeletons, etc. These don't have life at all and have nothing like the overflowing maximum fullness of life that Jesus promises us.

I am the Alpha and the Omega – Jesus has no beginning and end just like the circular 'glow in the dark' bracelets we made!

I am the Vine – we got messy with orange paint and created a pumpkin patch. Pumpkins grow on vines, and they reminded us of our connectedness and growth with Jesus.



I am the Gate – the front doors of church got a chalk pen make-over with drawings and self-portraits to show Jesus is the way in!

I am the Way... – we experienced following the ups and downs of life with Jesus using a giant game of snakes and ladders.

A big thank you to all the volunteers who gave their time for the evening to help serve the children and families who came along. The Light of Christ was indeed shared with our community.

Lydia Davies
Children & Family Team Leader

Alternate Saturdays

8:30 - 10 AM

Bacon, Vegan Sausages, Pastries, and Cereal
Table Tennis, Mini Snooker, Board Games, Crafts, and Fun!



All pre-school
and primary
school families
welcome!

FREE!

9th Dec
13th Jan
27th Jan
10th Feb
24th Feb
9th Mar
23rd Mar

Stirring Up a Storm – Christmas Puddings 2023

It will come as no surprise, that I love Christmas Pudding. Any of you who have seen me announce the pudding event at St Luke's, have no doubt questioned my choice of Christmas pudding headband, and I was pretty much a one-woman walking pudding at the Christmas pudding event last Thursday with a sparkly pudding top, pudding earrings and even pudding socks.



I am also aware that Christmas puddings have a similar effect on people as marmite. I am obviously in the “love it” camp, whereas others turn up their nose in disgust. In fact, I am in a family where some siblings love fruit cake but not Christmas Pudding, others gorge on mince pies but politely decline the pudding... and I can't get enough of all three. I find it a bit odd, as they all include the same ingredients to a large extent!

But Christmas pudding didn't begin as a sweet dish. Originally, in the 14th century, it included beef and mutton along with the currants, raisins and spices and a slice would be served up alongside beef for your Christmas dinner. By 1595, it had transformed into ‘plum pudding’ with the plums presumably being dried fruit including prunes and thickened with eggs and breadcrumbs. It wasn't until the Victorian era that Christmas puddings became recognisable as the ones we eat today – although fancier households would have used moulds to shape their puds.

Alas, there were no moulds at our pudding event on 17th November. But our puddings were all vegetarian and contained some Fairtrade products to boot. Around 80 puddings were made over the course of the evening and it was lovely to chat with the individuals, groups and families who gathered to start the preparations for the festive period. As I said last year, I love the tradition of mixing the pudding and making a wish, and even more so now, with my own children... even if you have to watch the youngest one like a hawk to ensure he doesn't help himself to cherries... or apples, when you're not looking.

Puddings are traditionally made on 'Stir-up Sunday' – the last Sunday before Advent. It is named after the opening words of the collect for that day:

"Stir-up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

I like the idea of considering this prayer next year when I mix our pudding. Or considering the fruit of the Spirit we are blessed with as I enjoy the raisins, sultanas and cherries on Christmas Day. And everyone who made a pudding has helped to contribute to 'good works' as we raised £100 for the Food Bank, and money was also raised for the Peace Hospice from the sale of Christmas cards and gifts.

Many thanks to Fran, Mark, Beth and Lydia, who made this event such a success and to Helen D, Pam, Wendy, Jill and Delia and everyone else who helped behind the scenes.

Kate Dorsett-Bailey



**note the change of day*

CHRISTINGLE

Sun 24th Dec 4:30pm

In person only

Families with young children
are welcome. Volunteers are
needed to help with oranges
For more information contact
children@stlukeswatford.org



URBAN SAINTS

Tuesdays 6:15pm - 7:30pm in Church Hall

7-11 year olds



LADIES CAMEO CLUB Winter 2023/2024 Programme

December

Friday 8th

11.45am

Meet in car
park, St Luke's

The Cock Inn

Sarratt

Christmas lunch

Cost: £21/head

January

Friday 12th

7 for 7:30pm

Church Lounge

Film night

'A Man Called Otto'

Includes choc ices!

February

Friday 9th

7 for 7:30pm

Church Lounge

Watford's

Street Angels

Cameo + event

Talk by Geert Tap,

Watford Town

Centre Chaplain

Refreshments at 7pm

Bring your friends and neighbours!

For more information, email:

Jos (jocelyn_lawrance@hotmail.com) or Pam (pamela.willis@btinternet.com)

Cameo + events = men are welcome too

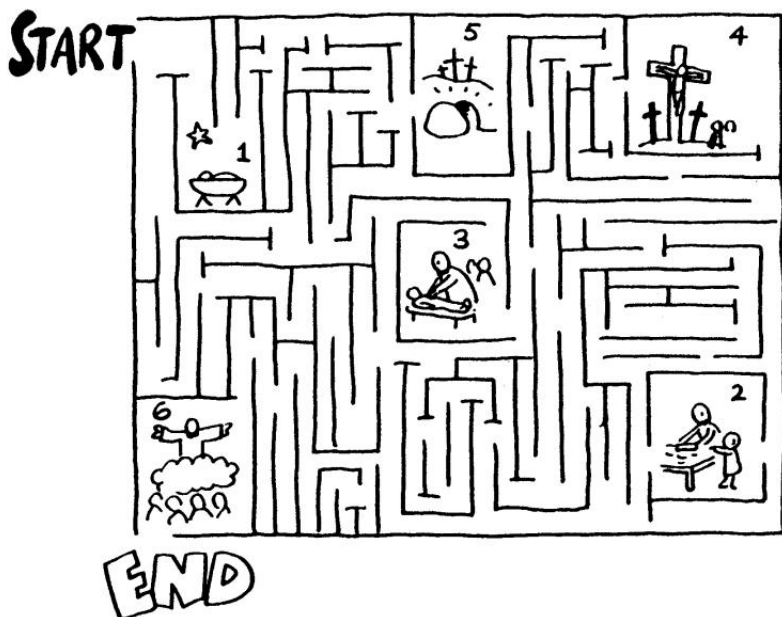
Donation for Club evenings - £4

Children's Page

Can you find your way?

You must travel right through each event in Jesus' life in the right order!

- 1 Jesus is born at Bethlehem.
- 2 Joseph teaches Jesus to work as a carpenter.
- 3 Jesus heals a little girl.
- 4 Jesus is crucified.
- 5 Jesus is alive again.
- 6 Jesus ascends to heaven.



Friday Club Tea Parties 2:30pm at St Luke's

Dec 15th

Jan 26th

Feb 23rd

*Now all you people
At work bench and sink
Stop all your business
Have time to think.
Who else on his birthday
Is put back in a cot
That was only part one
Now read the lot.*

ST LUKE'S NATIVITY

Sun 24th Dec 10:30am

All Age Service with live actors



You are welcome to submit an article for the next edition of St Luke's News which should be no more than 450 words. We may edit articles for clarity.

Please email articles to the Church Office: office@stlukeswatford.org

If you wish to receive St Luke's News regularly, either delivered to your door or emailed, please contact the Church Office (246161). Large print is also available. Alternatively, please let us know if you no longer wish to receive it.

The magazine appears on our website, www.stlukeswatford.org

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Readers	Dave Clarke
	Pam Norman
	Wendy Somerville
Reader in Training	Simon Trundle
Ordinand	Tolu George
Music Director	Jeremy Cooke
Youth Director	Neil Brookes
Children & Family Team Leader	Lydia Davies
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	John Williamson
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PCC Treasurer	Martin Kirk
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Please leave a message for any of the above on the Church Office answerphone – 01923 246161

Website www.stlukeswatford.org

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