



# St Luke's News

February 2025

Number 283

## Five 'Ps' for the New Year



As we start 2025, some of us may have made resolutions: diet, alcohol intake or other things. However, sadly, 93% of these resolutions are broken after a few weeks! But I ask the question: *Are there more important spiritual resolutions we can make and keep, or at least try to keep for 2025?*

On 5th January we looked at the 'Daniel Diet' (*Daniel*, chapter 1) where Daniel and his compatriots thrived on a diet of just vegetables and water. It raised questions about our spiritual diet: Is it nutritious, peppered with plenty of prayer, studying God's Word the Bible, times of worship and serving others? Or perhaps our spiritual diet is not so healthy and we have become lethargic, taking in other things which reduce our appetite for God. New Year is a good time to start afresh and focus on the crucial things of life.

As a church, it's easy to get overwhelmed with practical work. I believe the time between New Year and Easter gives us some space – in fact this

year, it's a good stretch to Easter so even more time to put our relationship with God, and our reliance on Him, centre stage in our lives.

A preacher once asked: *Is Jesus the steering wheel of your life or just the spare tyre?* For us as individuals this may at times be true. That can be true of church life too.

So, this year of 2025, I have five letter 'Ps' to share with you which can help us. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus" as it says in *Hebrews 12:2*.

5P

### 1 Prayer

Prayer is like the air we breathe. It brings God's life to us as a church and individually. It is how we align ourselves with God and His will, and how we enhance our relationship with him.



There will be *monthly half-days of prayer* on Saturdays in St Luke's Chapel. I trust this will be a new norm for 2025. We had a great start in January and have already announced further half-days of prayer on Saturday 1st February and Saturday 1st March.

Undergirding with prayer, all our church activities and all we do, will transform church life and bring God fully into every situation.

### 2 Presence

A church seeking the presence of God is essential so we can be empowered and led by God's Spirit. Worship brings us into God's presence. We are called to seek God's presence in our corporate worship and also in our daily lives.



### 3 Prophecy

Flowing from prayer and God's presence comes the prophetic, not usually the future-predicting prophecy familiar to us

from the Old Testament, but the sudden relevant word from the Lord in specific situations which opens the moment up to God working in our lives and in others.



### 4 Providence

God's providence is the continual undergirding of God's will in our lives and in our church life,

which again flows from the three 'Ps' above. We can take comfort from *Romans 8:28* when we face difficult times:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

## 5 People

As a church, the call this year is to concentrate on developing our church family life in a welcoming, supportive way, caring for each other and aiming to get to know those who need our friendship and love as well as those we naturally get on with. This especially applies to those who are single (over 40% of our congregation). So to help church family life we aim to have more occasions for us to socialise, for example, bring and share lunches, and to encourage individual hospitality, for example, asking people we don't know to join us for lunch or a coffee, or to go for a walk and chat together. Developing a dynamic community will be important for us in 2025.



Let's pray we will all put the '5 Ps' in place in our lives and in church life this year: *Prayer, Presence, Prophecy, Providence* and *People* so we can see a continuing positive transformation in 2025.

**Michael**  
**Vicar of St Luke's**



# Prayer

## FOCUS

Tuesdays 8:00pm every week by  
Zoom (details from the church  
office), apart from 2nd Tuesday in the  
month which is in person, in the  
Chapel

## Prayer for Children & Youth

Thursdays 11:15am in the Chapel  
(during term time)

## Hour of Prayer

Fridays 10:00-11:00am in the Chapel

## 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.

### 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.

February	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
<b>Sunday 2nd</b>		All-age Worship <i>Daniel 5</i>	Encounter with Holy Communion <i>Daniel 10</i>
<b>Sunday 9th</b>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship <i>Daniel 6</i>	Confirmation Service with the Bishop of Hertford
<b>Sunday 16th</b>		Morning Worship <i>Jesus prophecies from the Old Testament, Pt 1</i>	Encounter <i>Daniel 11</i>
<b>Sunday 23rd</b>		Family Communion <i>Jesus prophecies from the Old Testament, Pt 2</i>	Encounter <i>Daniel 12</i>

*Note:* The forms of service and sermon titles may change.

March	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
<b>Sunday 2nd</b>		Family Communion <i>Jesus prophecies from the Old Testament, Pt 3</i>	Encounter <i>Hard sayings of Jesus, Pt 1</i>
<b>Wednesday 5th</b> Ash Wednesday			Holy Communion NB: 7:00pm
<b>Sunday 9th</b>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship <i>Jesus prophecies from the Old Testament, Pt 4</i>	Encounter with Holy Communion <i>Hard sayings of Jesus, Pt 2</i>
<b>Sunday 16th</b>		Family Communion <i>Jesus prophecies from the Old Testament, Pt 5</i>	Encounter <i>Hard sayings of Jesus, Pt 3</i>
<b>Sunday 23rd</b>		Morning Worship <i>Jesus prophecies from the Old Testament, Pt 6</i>	Encounter with Holy Communion <i>Hard sayings of Jesus, Pt 4</i>
<b>Sunday 30th</b> Mothering Sunday		All-age Worship	Encounter <i>Hard sayings of Jesus, Pt 5</i>
April	8:00am	10:30am	5:30pm
<b>Sunday 6th</b>		Family Communion <i>Jesus prophecies from the Old Testament, Pt 7</i>	Encounter <i>Hard sayings of Jesus, Pt 6</i>
<b>Sunday 13th</b> Palm Sunday		Morning Worship <i>Jesus prophecies from the Old Testament, Pt 8</i> <i>Zechariah: Coming of the King of Zion</i>	Encounter with Holy Communion <i>Hard sayings of Jesus, Pt 7</i>

Note: The forms of service and sermon titles may change.

## Diary dates coming up

### February

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1st  | Half-day of Prayer, St Luke's Chapel, 9:00am-12 noon  |
| 7th  | World Day of Prayer Bible Study, Christ Church<br>Watford, 2:00pm (see p 14)                              |
| 8th  | Creative Space (Book in advance, see p 31)<br>Live at St Luke's (event for Secondary pupils), 7:30-9:15pm |
| 15th | Breakfast Club (see p 31)   |
| 16th | Sunday Afternoon Recital, 3:00pm (see p 15)   |
| 28th | Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm   |

### March

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1st  | Half-day of Prayer, St Luke's Chapel, 9:00am-12 noon<br>Watford Symphony Orchestra Concert, 7:30pm (see p 33) |
| 4th  | Shrove Tuesday Community Party, drop in any time<br>between 5:00pm and 8:00pm (see p 23)                      |
| 5th  | Ash Wednesday Holy Communion, 7:00pm  |
| 7th  | World Day of Prayer, Christ Church Watford, 2:00pm<br>(see p 14)  |
| 8th  | Breakfast Club (see p 31)   |
| 9th  | Bring & Share Lunch, 1:00pm (approx.), followed by<br>Sunday Afternoon Recital, 3:00pm (see p 15)             |
| 22nd | Creative Space (Book in advance, see p 31)<br>Recital by Garfield Jackson & Winnie Wu, 2:00pm<br>(see p 33)   |
| 28th | Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm   |
| 29th | Breakfast Club (see p 31)   |

### April

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1st  | Easter Holiday Club Short, 5:00-7:00pm (Advance<br>booking essential, see p 23) |
| 12th | Breakfast Club (see p 31)   |
| 13th | Sunday Afternoon Recital, 3:00pm (see p 15)                                     |
| 25th | Friday Club Tea Party, 2:30pm   |

## Regular groups at St Luke's Church

### **Children/Youth Groups (evenings, term-time)**

Kids Club (Urban Saints)	Tuesdays	5:30–6:45pm	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 Brookes for dates

### **Cassiobury and Nearby Community Choir**

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

For more information, speak to Jeremy Cooke

### **Creative Space**

Craft activities for women, monthly

For more information, speak to Pam Norman

### **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 week by Zoom (for log-in details contact the church office), apart from 2nd Tuesday in the month which is in person, in the chapel

Prayer for Children & Youth, Thursdays, 11.15am, term-time

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

### **Toddlers (term-time)**

Thursday mornings, 9:30–11:00am



## Thank you to Catherine Farman



At the Nativity Service on 22nd December St Luke's celebrated the Rainbows unit, the youngest section of the Girlguiding UK family, and said goodbye to its leader, Catherine Farman. The service was attended by current and past Rainbows and their families and leaders and helpers.



Catherine (right) being presented with her Baden Powell Trefoil in 1985 by Assistant Guider, Pam Reynolds (left)

The Rainbows unit was started in 1997 by Catherine and her mum, Jean Wallis, who is a parishioner and was present at the service.

Catherine decided in 2024 that after 27 years it was time for her to step down from Rainbows. Rainbows had their last meeting with Catherine in early December and the unit is taking a rest for the moment. Neil Brookes, Youth Director, said that St Luke's had loved having the Rainbows as part of the church family and would continue to look for a new Rainbows leader.

He hoped there would be a Rainbows unit at St Luke's again in the future.

Catherine has been a Guide leader at St Luke's since 1985, initially as a young leader and then taking over the running of the 12th Watford Guides with Jenny Gray. When asked about the highlights, Catherine said lots of fun and friendship – some friendships had lasted for decades. Camps and the camp team were a particular highlight. Catherine thanked Wendy Dodson for making their flag and thanked the families (including the Chapman, Forester, Fox, Gibbs, Rogers and Sullivan families) for their support, for joining her at the service and for providing lots of old photos.

Neil thanked Catherine for her incredible and dedicated service. Michael, our Vicar, prayed and gave thanks for Catherine and the Rainbows and their leaders and helpers, past and present. The congregation responded with applause.

***Yvonne Wilder***





## The Recorder: an Instrument for Worship and Praise

The recorder is often associated with early music and school classrooms but it holds a significant place in the history of sacred music. Its pure ethereal tones have graced church services for centuries making it an enduring sound for worship and spiritual expression.



St Luke's Recorder Consort in action at the Carols by Candlelight service

### A brief history of the recorder

The recorder's history goes back to the Middle Ages with early examples in the 14th century. Its simple construction and sweet, clear sound made it a popular instrument across Europe. By the Renaissance, the recorder was seen as an important instrument for both secular and sacred music.

The recorder flourished during the Baroque period (1600–1750) when composers such as Bach, Handel, Telemann and Vivaldi wrote intricate, virtuosic pieces where it could convey a sense of divine serenity.

Despite falling out of favour during the Classical and Romantic periods, the recorder experienced a revival in the 20th century, thanks to its accessibility and unique tonal qualities. The success of the recorder in modern times is often attributed to Arnold Dolmetsch as he was responsible for broadening interest in the UK beyond a small group of early music specialists.

Carl Dolmetsch, son of Arnold, became the first virtuoso recorder player and began to commission recorder works from leading composers of the day, eg Frans Bruggen, Hans Martin Linde and David Munroe. Nearly twice as many pieces for the recorder have been written since the modern revival as in previous periods by, eg John Tavener, Michael Tippett, Benjamin Britten and Leonard Bernstein.

In 2012, Charlotte Barbour-Condini was the first recorder player to reach the final of the *BBC Young Musician of the Year* playing a Vivaldi concerto.

### The recorder family

The recorder is part of a family of instruments, each with a distinct pitch and range, enabling the recorder to perform a range of musical roles from melody to harmony.



My collection of recorders, from left to right: Bass, Tenor, Treble/Alto, Descant/Soprano and Sopranino

Each recorder in the family also differs in size and tone. For example, the descant/soprano recorder is small and light while the bass is much larger and requires more air to produce sound.

The descant/soprano is often the first instrument learned by beginners. Its bright, clear tone is well suited to leading melodies. The treble/alto recorder is favoured by some experienced players and composers especially in Baroque music. Its rich warm sound makes it ideal for meditative or expressive sacred pieces. The tenor recorder provides a mellow, flute-like quality. It is often used for melodic lines in ensemble settings but is more often used to provide harmony. The bass recorder produces rich deep tones and plays an octave lower than the treble/alto recorder.

**Pam Willis**

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

**Feb 28th**

**Mar 28th**

**Apr 25th**

*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.*

## Coffee and Chat with Janet Gibbon

St Luke's has been my church for some 60 years so I've seen off a few Vicars in that time, starting with Robert Morley for a short time in 1964 before Frank Gray was appointed, through to our current Vicar, Michael. I was brought up in a Christian family and before joining St Luke's went to Hornchurch Methodist.



Janet with Pippa, a rescue dog from Romania

I trained in floristry at Ludgate Circus which was the *crème de la crème* as they made up all the royal bouquets. I was a GPO telephonist for a while after marrying but when the family came along I stopped working. When I returned to work I worked for Royal Doulton in Clements for 15 years. And yes, the staff in the Menswear Department did bear some resemblance to the characters in the tv sitcom *Are you being served?*!

How did I meet John? I was going out with Ted at the time (fondly referred to as 'Red Ted' because he was a communist). On a Methodist Guild holiday, I prayed about the situation with Ted and I heard God say quite clearly "go and see John". I hadn't met John before but I knew he was based at RAF Hornchurch and visited my Aunt Olive on occasions. I think my mum was quite surprised at my eagerness to visit Aunt Olive but we went as soon as we got back from holiday and John was there with an RAF friend. I knew instantly that John was God's choice for me. John invited me to go with him and his friend for a drive in his car and then he asked to see me again. This was all God's providence. We were married for 56 years.

John went to St Paul's Langleybury but I felt he hadn't fully put his trust in Jesus as his Saviour and Lord so I prayed really hard for him and when there was a mission at a church in Vicarage Road, I asked John if he'd like to go. At the end of the evening the speaker invited people to go forward if they wanted to publicly declare their faith in the Lord Jesus. In an answer to my prayers, John got up and went forward ... and I fainted!

After marrying, we joined St Luke's and were warmly welcomed. We quickly became part of the Sunday Service team at Watford General Hospital. I also became involved in running the Sunday School, together with Wendy Dodson, which at that time was held at Cassiobury School and later became the Seekers group at St Luke's. Wendy and I have known each other for a very long time – we were young mums together.

In the 1970s, John and I were invited to be part of a panel at the 14–18 year-olds group, Koinonia, which met on Sunday evenings. We were asked some tough questions like “What do you think about pre-destination?” and “Why is there suffering in the world?”. We came up with some kind of answer! Years later, the leaders of Koinonia moved on and the Vicar said he wanted John and me to be the new leaders. We were stunned and as we walked home I don’t think we said a word to each other. However, we led Koinonia for several years and really enjoyed it.

After that, Wendy and I led Explorers for many years. I loved telling the children stories – I would rewrite, for instance the parables, as modern-day equivalents. I was an only child so I lived in my imagination. When I meet past Explorers, they say to me, “I remember your stories ...”!

It was a busy time, juggling family life, work and church life. St Luke’s didn’t employ youth workers at that time, we did it all ourselves.

I also managed the church flower arranging for many years and enjoyed that too. It included bridal bouquets for St Luke’s weddings. John and I went to the flower market at Covent Garden at an unearthly hour of the morning to get the flowers really fresh. We brought them back, put them in water, went to work and then I worked on the displays and bouquets through much of the night. I didn’t charge for the work on the wedding flowers but asked the couple to make a donation to charity.

When Network Groups were introduced in the 1990s, the Vicar asked John and me to lead one. I was reluctant initially because I was managing the flower arranging and leading Explorers but the Vicar said he’d found someone to take over the flower rota. So with Myrtle taking on the flower arranging I didn’t have an excuse any more. Our Network Group later became a Home Group and seemed to attract older people so my involvement in leading Friday Club was a natural progression and I’ve now been doing it for 34 years!

My favourite Bible verse? *Ephesians 3:20-21*:

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

God can do anything but we must be in His will.

***Edna Williamson and Yvonne Wilder***

## Watford Foodbank Update

During Harvest 2024 Watford Foodbank received over 7,000 kg (7 tonnes) of donated food from 31 schools and 8 churches, including 132 kg from St Luke's, for which we are very grateful. During the Christmas period we also received over 20 tonnes of donations from local businesses, churches and schools, as well as other items like advent calendars and presents for children.



2024 was our busiest year ever as we gave out over 8,000 food parcels to single people and families in crisis in the local area, averaging over 650 parcels a month. However, due to the cost-of-living situation, we found in the earlier part of the year that the amount of food donated by the public was not keeping up with clients' needs, and consequently we had to purchase a significant amount to make up the shortfall; in some months this amounted to 50% of the stock given out. This situation was eased by some significant financial donations from The Trussell Trust and a few major local businesses. The food donations received over Harvest and Christmas have reduced the stock purchased but the cyclical nature of donations means that in the Spring we shall probably need to purchase more stock.

During 2024 we introduced a talking therapy service to help those of our clients who suffer with mental health issues, often arising through the stress and worry associated with the choice between eating or heating. The take-up of this service is beginning to increase.

In December our foodbank distribution point at South Oxhey Baptist Church closed as its leaders moved from the area, but we are pleased to say that a new distribution point opened in January at Carpenders Park and South Oxhey Methodist Church, so we shall be able to continue to support clients in that area. Our other distribution points remain at the main warehouse off Imperial Way in North Watford and at Wellspring Church Centre, Christ Church, and St Michael and All Angels Church.

Watford Foodbank is now in its 13th year of operation. We would all like to see the need for foodbanks disappear in this country but there seems little likelihood of this happening in the medium term – in fact, the need seems to be increasing each year. We are very thankful for the continuing food donations and financial support given by members of



St Luke's – non-perishable in-date food donations are always gratefully received (there is a basket in the Gathering Area) and any financial donations will be much appreciated (see the JustGiving QR code). We also value your continued prayers for our work – for our staff, volunteers and trustees – that we may continue to bring God's blessing to the clients we serve.

**John Bishop**  
***watford.foodbank.org.uk***



## **World Day of Prayer**

*"I made you wonderful"*

**Friday 7th March 2025, Christ Church, 2.00pm**

*Kia Orana!*

Our sisters in The Cook Islands welcome us and lead us for the Day of Prayer 2025. This group of 15 islands in the South Pacific Ocean has a rich and colourful Māori heritage and a deep connection to nature. Join with us as we pray together and reflect on the theme 'I made you wonderful'.



The local Watford committee, led by Christ Church, are organising this annual service and warmly invite you to join with Christians across the whole Watford area.

Four weeks before on **Friday 7th February at 2:00pm**, Revd Vicki Davies will be leading a Bible Study on *Psalms 139 1-18*, in preparation for this service. Do join us at Christ Church, 181a St Albans Road, WD24 5BD.

**Mary Bowen**



# CanCC

Cassiobury  
and nearby  
Community  
Choir



**Wednesdays from 8pm  
@ St Luke's Church, Watford**

**Anyone welcome of any musical ability to join.**

**Feel free to turn up on the night, or contact  
[music@stlukeswatford.org](mailto:music@stlukeswatford.org) 01923 246161**



## **Sunday Afternoon Recitals at St Luke's**

**3:00pm**

**16th February**

Dogoda Quintet (Wind quintet formed in September 2023  
by students at the Royal Academy of Music)

*To include works by Ravel, Amy Beach and Nielsen*

**9th March**

Matthew Bethel and Winnie Wu

Violin & piano

(following the Bring & Share Lunch)

*To include works by Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, R Strauss*

**13th April**

Charis Sykesud and Jack Redman

Violin & piano

*To include works by Fauré, Amy Beach and Debussy*

Each recital is about 40 minutes. Free entry, donations welcome.

Tea & coffee afterwards



## News from Partners in Mission

### Update from the Gelsthorpe family in northern Japan

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all men on whom his favour rests." *Luke 2:14*



### Christmas events

Thank you for praying for the Christmas events at our church. **Praise God** that many people have heard the Gospel and taken tracts home with



Christmas craft café

them. About 15 children came to the Christmas party and Erika, our church member, was able to share about the meaning of the nativity. **Praise God** that a handful of new people came to our Christmas music night. **Please pray** that God will continue to bring new people to hear the gospel through that ministry.

### Team from New Zealand

Thank you for praying for the team of six short-term missionaries from New Zealand who joined us to run a day of events on 28th November.

**Praise God** for the 10 or so who came to the cooking class in the morning with many returning in the evening for the *NZ night*. **Please pray** that God will continue to work through the Gospel messages they heard. Our neighbour, Mrs S, said she couldn't sleep that night because she was so interested to hear about another culture. **Please pray** that God will use this interest to draw her to Christ.

### Baptisms

**Praise God** that on December two of our Sunday School boys were baptised. **Praise God** for the encouraging time we had together preparing for this day. **Please pray** that they will be committed to reading God's work and following



Baptism service

Him and that nothing will lead them away from Jesus. **Praise God** for the good time of fellowship we had in the afternoon at our Christmas Party.

### **“Please tell me what this means”**

Mr W came to the church some time ago because he'd received a Bible verse from a Christian customer and was asking what it meant. Since then, he has been to our worship service a few times but less so recently. In December, he returned to ask more questions about the Bible. **Praise God** that he is now open to doing one-on-one Bible study. **Please pray** that God will answer his questions and lead him to believe in Jesus.



Caleb's 14th Birthday celebration

### **A mystery visitor**

For a couple of months now, we've had a middle-aged man attending our worship services who quickly goes home at the end before we have a chance to speak to him. **Please pray** that he will understand what he's hearing and believe in Jesus.

### **Can I really be a Christian if I sin?**

M rang the church just over a month ago to ask to do some Bible study. She has made friends with a local Christian and hopes to get more answers about the Bible through Bible study in church. **Praise God** that Yuzuki has been able to meet with her five times now. She struggles with questions about sin and what it means to be a Christian. **Please pray** for firm faith for her and for her to regularly join the fellowship.

### **American short-term team**

Praise God for the Youth with a Mission (YWAM) team from the US (8 adults and one child) who are staying with us from 13th January for three weeks. We are planning events with Minecraft, English, craft and cooking as well as using the opportunity to deliver lots of flyers. Please pray for good planning for this team, effective ministry and good fellowship.

### **Changes in the New Year**

New Year is important in Japan and people take time to “forget the old year” and to look forward to the new year. For us as a staff team, the new year will bring change. Please pray for guidance on a new ministry for Yuzuki as she will leave in March. We are then hoping to get a couple

and a single lady short term to live in the church from April. **Please pray** that God will provide the right people and their ministry will be fruitful.

If all goes to plan, Isaac will finish his A-Levels in the summer of 2025 and then begin a Gap Year. Thank you to all those who've been thinking about possibilities for this time. **Please pray** for what God will provide for Isaac in that year before he goes to university.

Thank you for praying for us, please let us know how we can pray for you.

With love from

**Mark, Sarah, Grace, Isaac and Caleb**  
**OMF Japan**

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



Dear friends,

In December I was looking out on frosty grass in the UK. The world outside my window now looks completely different with green, lush vegetation! I arrived back in Malawi in January and am gradually adjusting to life here again – thank you for praying for this transition.

It has been good to reconnect with people. My new neighbours, but old friends, Megumi and Helen Fazakerley, collected me from the airport and gave me a welcome meal. I had a warm welcome from Malawian friends



at church on Sunday but found the volume of the microphone extremely loud. I think they were trying to drown out the noise of the heavy rain on the roof! It has also been good too to meet with colleagues in the SIM Malawi office just behind my house, where I work for much of the time.

I've realised afresh the challenges that so many here cope with. It has rained every day since I arrived back

but I've been told that there was a dry period of a few weeks after the rains began. Some people have planted their second lot of maize, as the first lot died. Some have even planted for the third time, having lost two lots of seed. This is really hard as many didn't have a good harvest last year.

That all puts into perspective some of the inconveniences I have to deal with. I am thankful for the water tank on the compound as the mains water supply has been off quite a lot since I arrived. Yesterday evening was my first dark evening because of a power cut. On the positive side, I love listening to the night sounds – squeaker frogs, fruit bats and insects. And during the day, I like seeing a variety of birds in the garden.

As I get back to my desk here there is a lot to catch up on. In SIM Malawi I'm on the Director Search committee, as we start the process of searching for a new director to come when Pete Ong, our current director, finishes in September. I'll be renewing relationships with Bible colleges and am going to a Board meeting of Chisomo theological and vocational training centre next week. I have several zoom calls lined up for my international work too.

Looking forward, in the last week of February I will be going to Northern Cyprus for a conference of SIM leaders. The following week, the first week of March, there will be another international conference, this time based on theological education, run by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE). That will be in Albania. I'm excited about both of these events, and thankful for these God-given opportunities at the beginning of this year.

### **Prayer points**

- Give thanks for my home assignment, and times with family, friends and churches
- Praise for safe travel back to Malawi and for settling in again
- Pray for the rains to continue well so that there will be a good harvest in a few months' time
- Pray for the process of searching for SIM Malawi's new Director
- Pray that I will walk closely with the Lord and see His priorities, taking things a step at a time.

Thank you so much for your prayerful support.

With love in Christ,  
**Ruth Guinness**  
*ruth.guinness@sim.org*  
**P.O. Box 136 Blantyre, Malawi**



Dear friends,

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” *Hebrews 10:23*

We have just come back from the *Friends International* January conference, which also served as the launch of celebrations for the 40th anniversary of *Friends International*. It was great to meet many former staff workers and hear stories of God’s faithfulness over the past 40 years. To help us reflect on the past 40 years and look ahead we looked together at *Hebrews 10-12*, being reminded of how God keeps his promises as well as how important it is for us to fix our eyes on Jesus rather than being distracted by the things around us. Please pray that this would be a priority in the new term and that we would keep encouraging each other to continue running the race and persevering. Please also pray that we would be encouraging Christian students to do the same.

### Prayer points

- **Please pray for events starting up this term.** Please pray for the Chaplaincy soup lunch starting this week. Please pray particularly for opportunities to go deeper with students we have connected with over the past term and that many would be invited along to church.
- **Please give thanks for the five students who came to our Conversation Café in early January.** Please pray that we would continue to have opportunities to get to know these students better and that they would be interested in hearing more about the Gospel.
- **Please give thanks for an encouraging time at the Friends International January conference.** Please pray that we would keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and that we would persevere in running the race before us. Please pray that this 40th anniversary year of *Friends International* would remind us of God’s faithfulness.



Thank you so much for your continued support and prayers!

**Sally Miller**  
***Friends International, Lancaster Branch***

## Open Doors News

### Dan Gower's return visit

The Daniel drama series reaches its conclusion at the morning service on Sunday 9th February, with the story of Daniel in the lions' den which provides a suitable context for Dan Gower's visit that day.

Dan visited St Luke's in Autumn 2021 and we're very pleased that we're able to have him back with us. He will be taking part in the morning service, talking about the work of Open Doors as it supports and advocates for persecuted Christians worldwide. He will highlight the Arise Africa campaign ([www.opendoorsuk.org/act/arise-africa](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/act/arise-africa)) with the aim of getting one million signatures asking the UN to take more seriously the rampant violence towards Christians in parts of Africa.



Dan Gower,  
Church Relations  
Lead, Midlands  
and North

### Matt Turmaine MP attends World Watch List 2025 launch

Thank you very much to everyone who wrote Christmas cards inviting Matt Turmaine to the World Watch List 2025 launch, and who prayed. Matt was one of 102 MPs who attended the launch on 15th January which was an amazing result as there was such a large turnover of MPs in the July 2024 General Election.

The newly released World Watch List ([www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list)) tells us that the number of persecuted Christians worldwide has reached 380 million, an increase of 15 million on the 2024 number.

### New Advocacy Rep for Watford

Michelle Ephraimson is now the Open Doors Advocacy Rep for Watford. I have become the Advocacy Rep for the South West Herts constituency as my address in Abbots Langley was affected by the constituency boundary changes.

Gagan Mohindra is the MP for South West Herts and he's been in the role since 2019.



Michelle Ephraimson, new  
Watford constituency Open  
Doors Advocacy Rep



Alastair, me and Hannah at the Open Doors prayer and learning event in November

I met Gagan at a hustings meeting in the run-up to the July 2024 General Election. Gagan has replied to my emails and letters by post and I hope to have a surgery with him to discuss the World Watch List and seek his support for the persecuted church.

For more information about Advocacy Reps, see [www.opendoorsuk.org/act/volunteer/advocacy-rep](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/act/volunteer/advocacy-rep).

### **Prayer and learning event**

Hannah Joy, Open Doors Church Relations Manager for the London area, led an excellent evening of prayer and learning at St Luke's in November. We were joined by members of Christ Church Chorleywood. Hannah spoke about the persecuted church, illustrated with stories of people who have experienced persecution, and led us in prayer.

Alastair Paterson also shared some persecution experiences of people he is involved with through his translation work.

### **Thank you!**

Thank you very much to St Luke's members and friends for all the support given to persecuted Christians.

If you have a question about Christian persecution or Open Doors, or how you can help, please

- phone or message me on 0777 999 1551,
- phone me on 01923 350596, or
- email me at [john@petermagnusdesign.co.uk](mailto:john@petermagnusdesign.co.uk).

*John Williamson*





In six weeks time it's Easter morn,  
The Risen Christ revealing.  
So today let's eat some pancakes,  
(once we've scraped them off the ceiling)!



Join us on March 4th 2025 at anytime  
from 5-8pm for pancakes and activities

# Shrove Tuesday Community Party

**ST LUKE'S WATFORD**  
**EASTER**  
**Holiday Club Short**  
April 1st 2025  
**Vanished?**

A cartoon detective character wearing a brown hat and trench coat, holding a magnifying glass over his eye.A QR code located at the bottom left of the poster.Three circular icons with text: 'Age 5-11', 'Free Event', and '5 to 7pm'.

Food included!

Pre-book using  
the QR code



John with one of the *Good News for Everyone* Bibles he distributes in schools

## Good News for Everyone

Our Life Group is now much better informed on the subject of *Good News for Everyone*, the new-ish name for what was *The Gideons*.

John Sills joined our Life Group one evening in October last year to tell us about his voluntary role offering Bibles to students at some of our local secondary schools. John usually joins religious studies lessons with Year 7 students. He talked a bit about the history of the organisation, the prayer and resilience needed to get invited into schools, and how important it is to allow God to speak to others through His Word, rather than trying to put ourselves in the way. We remembered Jack Watson, a former member of St Luke's, and all the work he did in schools and hospitals as an incredibly hard-working member of *Good News for Everyone*.

It was a great evening with John enthusiastically answering our many questions and increasing our appreciation of the Bible.

Our Life Group meets fortnightly on Monday evenings in the Chapel at St Luke's. We normally start with coffee, followed by a Bible study, often on the current Sunday morning preaching theme. We finish in plenty of time to break into groups of two to four people to pray for each other.

### Would you like to join a Life Group?

If you're interested in joining, or visiting, a Life Group please speak to the St Luke's office, Revd Michael Norman, or one of the Life Group leaders (see the Life Group information board in the church welcome area).

*John Williamson*

### 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**

## Big Parenting Questions

About 50 people from all over Watford came to St Luke's for the Big Parenting Questions event on 6th November. *Care for the Family* were taking this new event for mums, dads and carers all around the UK. Robin Vincent, Chief



Executive of *Care for the Family*, and Cathy Madavan, a popular speaker and author of several books on raising children, were the speakers.

We were excited to get some tips on the challenge of raising teens! Tips on responding to requests like: 'Can I have a phone?', 'Can I stay home on my own?', 'Can I have Snapchat?'. We also hoped to get some help with questions such as 'How do we know what's best for them?' and 'How can we give them the freedom to grow without letting them wander into chaos?'.

These were the main takeaway points:

**1 Why is everything changing?** Our teenagers are changing so as parents we need to be prepared to learn and adapt. As they change, our role changes – we are more coach than controller. We need to support them by listening and loving them unconditionally. We are still the most important influence in their lives.

**2 How do I keep the connection?** Be in their boat with them. Step into their world and become familiar with their crew, the new voices in their lives. Be the anchor – steady, reliable, dependable.

**3 What can I do to protect them?** Know your gates and fences. Where is your line to create secure boundaries, and where will you open the gate to be more flexible? Think together about how to behave online, make a Family Media Agreement and consider the family's relationship with technology generally. We need to put safeguards in place but we also want to help them think for themselves and make wise choices.

**4 Who are they becoming?** Help them discover their future rather than dictating it for them. Help them to see a world beyond themselves and facilitate their engagement with it. Be the person you would like them to imitate!


More thoughts on these and other challenges can be found here:  
[www.cff.org.uk/bpqbonus](http://www.cff.org.uk/bpqbonus).

**Susan Miller**



# TODDLERS AT ST LUKE'S

## THURSDAYS 9.30-11.00AM

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- 9th Jan - Daniel and his friends eat veg  
16th Jan - Daniel's friends in the furnace  
23rd Jan - Daniel in the lion's den  
30th Jan - Jesus' friends- Peter the fisherman  
6th Feb - Jesus and the children  
13th Feb - Jesus Miracles- Water into wine  
20th Feb Half Term  
27th Feb - Jesus the Healer - Through the roof  
6th Mar - Jesus Miracles- Calms the storm  
13th Mar - Jesus the Storyteller -  
The Wise and Foolish man  
20th Mar - Jesus the Storyteller -  
The Lost Sheep  
27th Mar - Palm Sunday  
3rd April - Easter special - He is Risen  
Easter Holidays  
24th April - Restart



## Tearfund's The Big Quiz Night

### Transforming communities, one quiz at a time

The totals are in and £139,100 was raised by nearly 300 churches and 11,000 quizzers across the UK on 16th November at Tearfund's Big Quiz Night event! At St Luke's, 40 of us enjoyed the evening and raised nearly £500.



The money raised will support Tearfund's *Transforming Communities* programme, helping local churches around the world lead their communities out of extreme poverty and into a sustainable future. It supports people like Julius in South Sudan, who listened to Tearfund's training on Hope FM, a local radio station, and learned how to use new farming methods to earn a steady income. "Without this training, we would still be stuck in our old lifestyle," says Julius.

"We had no idea how to transform the soil to produce more. [Tearfund's training] has inspired me to discover what is within our environment."

The evening started with a lovely meal together (thank you Mary and Marion!) and then the teams had a go at Tearfund's quiz video. The competition was fierce, the laughter loud (particularly from my Life Group table pictured below!) and eventually *Slice of Pi* narrowly won for the third year! So, the challenge for us all is to find a team who can beat them and win the coveted cup for 2025!

*Susan Miller*







## Wines for a Christmas Dinner

Picture the scene: it's a few weeks before Christmas on a Saturday evening in the church hall. About 25 parishioners are sitting at small tables. At the front is the Vicar standing behind a table laid out with about a dozen bottles of wine, each wrapped in brown paper.

Holy Communion? No. This is not church as I remember it. This is something different. From the adjoining kitchen comes the mouth-watering aroma of Christmas dinner. Volunteers appear and serve plates of hot turkey, baked potatoes and all the trimmings to the parishioners.

When everyone has been served, the Vicar asks: "Now which wine would you choose to have with the main course?" Helpers put a splash of white wine in everyone's glass and we are all invited to try it. This is followed by a sample of a different white ... or maybe two?

Michael our Vicar is a wine enthusiast and he is keen to pass on some of his knowledge. As well as food and drink we are given several sheets of A4 paper with all sorts of questions and facts on the wines. Some wines are from France and Italy, some from New Zealand, Australia and other areas.

One of the wine facts is that the sparkling Vouvray on offer is: "An extremely elegant sparkling Vouvray with a fine mousse and exceptional freshness. Typically, the aromas are moderately intense, delivering flavours of pear, honeysuckle, quince and apple."

But enough of this. Two desserts follow the main course, first a cheesecake, along with another drop of white wine (or was it a rosé? I forget...) followed by Christmas pudding and another glass or two. These are dessert wines.

I'm sure you're getting the idea by now. The brown paper wrapped round each bottle ensures you cannot see the name of what's inside. The wines are listed on one of our papers and, as well as enjoying it, it's our job to guess which one is which and comment on its taste, colour and texture. We also had to guess the price of each bottle, most of which came from local supermarkets with some being more expensive than others. After that, all the wines were unmasked and we totted up our scores.

Now for some facts:

- I didn't get a single question right.
- The subscription for the evening was £15 per person, which paid for the wine and food. Most people added a bit more, and when everything was totted up, £200 was donated to the Peace Hospice.
- Michael did all the cooking himself. He's an excellent chef!
- The event was supposed to last from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. It finished at around 10 pm.
- No one left early.
- We walked home.

*Chris Webb*

## Santa's Hampers 2024

"Are you over Christmas?" my friend asked me early in the New Year. The answer was yes, just, but it takes a few weeks to get back to normal. Aren't we lucky though? We all get caught up in the whirlwind that Christmas brings, a flurry of fun, nativity services, Christian celebrations, overeating, presents, family gatherings, etc, but for many, this would not have been their Christmas story.



Once a year, a small team at St Luke's shops and packs 50 hampers to give to families from the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership (WTRRP). These hampers might be their only Christmas treat so we aim to make them as special as possible. The 2024 hamper was definitely the best yet.

The team has a WhatsApp group which came alive in September, and from that moment we researched the best buys, shopped, and stored all the items, large and small, practical, edible, cosy, and fun.

Finally, on 6th December we brought everything to the upstairs hall at St Luke's and laid it all out, ready for packing. We are so grateful to the youth who once again came in the evening to help us to pack the boxes.





In April 2024 we received a letter of thanks from the WTRRP for St Luke's continuing generosity. Numbers of people seeking help from WTRRP continue to increase as they apply for permission to remain in the

UK, usually as a result of war or persecution, and despite this being beyond our control, once a year at Christmas we can spread a little joy and love and show that we care. However, we couldn't do this without generous financial contributions from St Luke's, for which we are all so very grateful.

If anyone would like to join our team, you would be most welcome. More hands to pack boxes would be particularly helpful.

Wishing you all a very blessed 2025

***Jill Rogers and the Santa's Hampers Team***



## **Au Revoir Cameo Club**

We completed our 9th and final year of Cameo Club on 6th December with a good Christmas lunch at The Essex pub and a promise that if no one comes forward to develop that 'New

Season' for Cameo, which we wrote about in the September 2024 issue of *St Luke's News*, then we will do our best to arrange an outing or two in 2025. Maybe we'll organise a trip to Ashridge in the Spring to see the bluebells ... on a sunny day rather than the wet day we had in 2024 ... together with a repeat of the lovely lunch at The Greyhound in Aldbury.

If any St Luke's ladies would like to consider taking over the reins of Cameo to take it into a new season, please have a chat with us. Fresh input and ideas will be so welcome!

***Jos Lawrance and Pam Willis***

Email: [jocelyn\\_lawrance@hotmail.com](mailto:jocelyn_lawrance@hotmail.com) or [pamela.willis@btinternet.com](mailto:pamela.willis@btinternet.com)



## CREATIVE SPACE FOR



### HARD-WORKING WOMEN

# COME JOIN THE FUN!

**Saturday 8 February, 10:00-11:30am**

Informal bring & share craft and Valentine theme  
Free

**Saturday 22 March, 9:30am-noon**

Landscape felting  
£8 + donation for breakfast

**Payment is by cash only on the day**

To book your place, email Pam:  
[pam.stlukes@gmail.com](mailto:pam.stlukes@gmail.com)

The poster has a light blue background with a large bowl of cereal at the top left and a red mug at the bottom left. The text is arranged in a central column. At the top, it says 'RISE &amp; SHINE! IT'S' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this is 'Breakfast Club' in a large, stylized, black font with a white outline. Underneath is 'Start your family weekend with a tasty breakfast and fun activities' in a smaller, black font. Then, 'Saturday Mornings 8.30 to 10am' in a bold, black font. Below that is 'Dates until Easter' in a bold, black font. At the bottom, a list of dates is presented in a bold, black font: '25 Jan', '15 Feb', '8 March', '29 March', and '12 April'. The dates are enclosed in a white oval shape that resembles a piece of toast or a bowl of cereal.



## Christingle

The St Luke's Christingle service has long been one of my favourite Christmas services.

This year Dorothy, our church administrator, ordered 150 huge, juicy oranges for the event and on Christmas Eve afternoon a group of us got busy preparing the Christingle kits. After an hour of hard work we had filled 150 paper bags with oranges, tape, cocktail sticks and lots of sweet treats ready for the congregation to put together during the service.

Neil Brookes led a great visual sermon to explain the meaning behind the different parts of a Christingle: a huge globe to represent the world (orange), a wooden cross to symbolise the love and sacrifice of Jesus (red tape around the orange), a massive plant to represent God's creation (sweets and dried fruit) and a huge light display to symbolise Jesus' light in the world (lighted candle), and informed us that an Amazon delivery truck was on its way to deliver all of these items to each of our houses for Christmas!

Then it was time to get busy and put together our Christingle kits. Once everyone had assembled them we spread out around the edge of the church and one by one the candles were lit.

It is such a special moment standing there amongst the candle light singing and remembering the reason for the season, Jesus, the Light of the World. There may also have been some little fingers picking off the sweets from the cocktail sticks...

Thank you to everyone who came and gave up time on their busy Christmas Eve to help with the service and make up the 150 Christingle kits. Please remind me next year NOT to buy dolly mixtures. You can't push them onto the sticks!

*Caroline Tearle*



## Life Group Leaders' Training Session

On a freezing Saturday morning in January, twenty participants gathered for this training session led by Jenni Fenton, an experienced leader who had travelled from Birmingham to present this course.

It was an opportunity for fellowship, teaching and sharing experiences of our individual groups. Recognising that each group is unique, we were all united in our desire to strengthen Christian faith and witness, and also to work out priorities for Life Groups in general.

It was an encouraging, practical and helpful session. Many thanks to Jenni for her time and preparation.

*Mave Clarke*



### Concerts in St Luke's Church

**Saturday 1st March, 7:30pm**

**Watford Symphony Orchestra**

*Beethoven's Coriolan Overture and 'Eroica' Symphony and Haydn's Trumpet Concerto*

Tickets £18, available at the door or via  
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/watford-symphony-orchestra>

**Saturday 22nd March, 2:00pm**

Garfield Jackson and Winnie Wu

Viola & Piano

*To include works by Bach, Rebecca Clarke and Schumann*

Entry free, donations welcome



# Children's Page

## JESUS SAID:



**Matthew 6:19. Reshuffle the words and write them in the spaces.**

Do here not up for on moths  
riches yourselves store where  
earth, and robbers in destroy  
rust break steal. and and

— | o t | s t — | — p | — | f — r | y — — — — s  
— e — e | — | e — — — — | w — — — — | — t h — | — — | — s t  
d — — — — y, | — — — — | — b b — — — — | — e a — | — — | — n — | s t — — l.

### Christmas cracker jokes

**Q** Why did no one bid for Rudolph and Blitzen on eBay?

**A** Because they were two deer!

**Q** What do angry mice send each other at Christmas?

**A** Cross-mouse cards!

**Q** What did the stamp say to the Christmas card?

**A** Stick with me and we'll go places!





ST LUKE'S  
WATFORD

# Kids Club

Tuesdays  
5.30 - 6.45 pm

Age 7-11



Subs £2.00 PW  
or £20 per term

14th Jan Baby Moses  
21st Jan Fire!  
28th Jan Plagues  
4th Feb Desert  
11th Feb Rules  
18th February Half Term

25th Feb Jericho  
4th Mar Gideon  
11th Mar Samson  
18th Mar Branches  
25th Mar What a week!  
1st Apr Light Club Short  
29th April Summer Term

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](mailto: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](http://www.stlukeswatford.org)

Vicar	Michael Norman
Readers	Dave Clarke
	Pam Norman
	Wendy Somerville
Reader in Training	Simon Trundle
Music Director	Jeremy Cooke
Youth Director	Neil Brookes
Children & Families Team Leader	Vacancy
Administrator	Dorothy Englert
Church Wardens	Susan Miller
	John Williamson
PCC Lay Chair	Vacancy
PCC Treasurer	Martin Kirk
PCC Secretary	Margaret Forester
Safeguarding Officer	Mary Bowen

Please leave a message for any of the above on the Church Office answerphone – 01923 246161

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