

WHITTLESEY QUEEN ST CHURCH

Methodist / United Reformed LEP



Fresh Horizons

Winter—2024



From our Minister

From Advent to Epiphany: God With Us in Every Moment

As we journey through Advent, Christmas, and into Epiphany, it's striking how much this season mirrors the rhythms of life and ministry: times of preparation, moments of revelation, and the 150 challenge of living faithfully amid uncertainty.

Advent is a season of preparation - a time to reflect, to pray, and to anticipate Christ's coming. Yet, I find myself pondering how often the work of preparation becomes more consuming than the event itself. This feels particularly true in ministry. Whether it's crafting a sermon, planning a meeting, or even dealing with the aftermath of our roof repairs, preparation demands much of us. The Christmas story reminds us that God values the journey of preparation, but also that He often shows up in ways we least expect. Mary and Joseph prepared for their child's birth, only to find themselves in a stable (Luke 2:7). And yet, even in that humble place, the glory of God broke through.

As we move through to Christmas, and the birth of Jesus, we are reminded that God is present, even during the most challenging of times. This year, we've been reminded of what it means to "make do" as a church family. After rain damaged our roof, leaving us without access to over half of our building, we had to adapt. We called in the Portaloos (that was my idea by the way - whilst I recognise the initiative of others and the vast amount of work that was done, please allow me this small concession which makes me feel like I did something practical). Children ended up in the flower room. Youth ended up in the vestry. Yet God was with us. In a practical sense, we relied on insurance to help repair the damage. Spiritually, we leaned on God's assurance—the promise that we are never alone, no matter the circumstances. As Psalm 46:1 declares, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." This assurance is not something we "call up" only in times of crisis; it's a foundation we build on every day. This said, and linking back to the advent-preparation theme, one is mighty glad that we were prepared and

had taken out our insurance as was required.

As we journey on to Epiphany we remember the importance of revelation and resilience. Epiphany celebrates Christ's revelation to the world through the visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12). But it also speaks to those moments when everything comes together—when we suddenly understand God's purpose or find a way through a challenge. The Magi's story is one of wisdom and resilience. Despite Herod's attempts to manipulate them, they discerned a better path and returned home "by another way" (Matthew 2:12). Their journey reminds us that God gives us the courage and insight to navigate the complexities of life.

My reading continues! Last month, I finally tackled *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austin, written in the early 19th century. While romance is not my usual choice, I was struck by the tension between societal expectations and the forces that women battled against, coupled with personal agency - that ability to use the power that we do have to bring about security and change. Much like the Christmas to Epiphany story, Austen's characters live in a world shaped by patriarchal power. Similarly, the Magi navigated Herod's oppressive rule and found ways to protect the Christ Child. Their actions remind us that even when the world feels against us, God's plans cannot be thwarted. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). Perhaps, in all of this - Advent, through to Christmas, through to Epiphany, that is a Word that can encourage you. remember these truths:

God is with us in our preparation, even when the work feels endless.

God is with us in the disruptions—whether they involve stables, roof repairs, or Portaloo facilities!

God is with us in moments of revelation, bringing clarity and peace.

And God is with us when the world feels against us, offering His assurance and strength.

May this season of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany remind you of God's unshakable presence. And as you encounter the Christ Child, may you experience His embrace and grow in your desire to walk with Him, discovering the fulfilment that only He can bring.

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory” (John 1:14).

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with God’s peace,

Langley



THE PETERBOROUGH CIRCUIT
OF METHODIST CHURCHES

Our calling is to respond to the gospel
of God’s love in Christ



A short Christmas morning Family Worship Service will be held at 9.30am, led by Rev. Langley. Please bring along one gift you receive to share with others.



Rear store room on left and Wesley room, showing repair work ongoing after the recent flooding!





Whittlesey Queen st Church CHRISTMAS EVENTS

ALL ARE WELCOME

Event	Date	TIME
Christmas Family Cinema: Dr. Seuss' The Grinch	Sun 24th Nov	3:00 p.m.
Cinema Night - "A Christmas Carol Goes Wrong" (PG)	Sat 7th Dec	7:00 p.m.
Christmas Messy Church (At Salvation Army Studio)	Sun 8th Dec	Details on Website
Christmas Festive Afternoon	Sun 15th Dec	2:00 p.m.
Christmas Carol Service	Sun 22nd Dec	4:30 p.m.
Christmas Day Service	Wed 25th Dec	Details on Website

All events are free and open to everyone.

We are inviting children to join our carol service choir. Our first rehearsal session will be held on the morning of Sunday 1st December.

More information:

whittleseyqueenstreetchurch.org

or contact Tim via timwongwhittlesey@gmail.com

24 QUEEN ST,
WHITTLESEY,
PETERBOROUGH PE7 1AY



Candlelit Carols Service

Sunday 22nd Dec

at 4.30pm

Followed by warm mince pies and hot drinks

Thanking about our flooding, as we were, on page 4.....

One day God calls down to Noah and says, "Noah me old mate, I want you to make me a new Ark".

Noah replies, "No probs God, me old Supreme Being, anything you want after all you're the boss...

But God interrupts, "Ah, but there's a catch. This time Noah, I do not want just a couple of decks, I want 20 decks one on top of the other".

"20 DECKS!", screams Noah. "Well, OK Big Man, whatever you say. Should I fill it up with all the animals just like last time?"

"Yep, that's right, well . . sort of right . . this time I want you to fill it up with fish", God answers. "Fish?" queries Noah.

"Yep, fish . . well, to make it more specific Noah, I want carp, wall to wall, floor to ceiling carp!"

Noah looks to the skies. "OK God my old mucker, let me get this right, You want a New Ark?" "Check".

"With 20 decks, one on top of the other?" "Check".

"And you want it full of carp?" "Check."

"Why?" asks the perplexed Noah, who was slowly but surely getting to the end of his tether.....

"Dunno", says God, "I just fancied a Multi-Storey Carp Ark."

Tommy Takes Pride of Place!



Following the autumn torrential rain storm which took down part of the Wesley Room ceiling, Rhod retrieved a section of plywood and came up with the grand idea of a “Tommy” to take pride of place in our memorial garden on

Remembrance Sunday. Rob Taylor was approached and kindly agreed to use his expertise to shape and paint Tommy’s figure which, I’m sure you’ll agree made a wonderfully poignant appearance. **Well done to both!** The photos show Rob hard at work, Tommy revealed to the Church Family in October and in our garden on Remembrance Day.



Paul's Piece (a regular article from our Secretary)

When I penned the Autumn piece I noted there was a lot going on as we strive to keep our church a community hub in Whittlesey. We offer a safe space with varied and interesting things going on for our townsfolk, always with mission in mind as we do so in the love of Christ.

Little did we know how some of our safe space was going to become unsafe for a while yet, but we have illustrated how our faith and hard work is overcoming the consequences of our flooding. All our groups and activities are proceeding (even Messy Church albeit off site) and our longstanding letting group leaders have been very adaptable and understanding.

It does not seem that long ago I was writing about our church BBQ and now we focus on our Christmas program of decorating, festive films and FoG party, Advent, Carols Service, our Christmas meal at The Falcon and of course our Christmas Day service (9.30am). I think it is quite something to celebrate that the variety and amount of work that goes on at Queen Street is illustrated by the fact that we recently had two trustees' meetings in less than a calendar month! As we move into 2025 we will see the need for more change and adaptability beyond our flooding issues as we continue to understand and pray about the changes our Circuit will be making as we see Rev Langley & Rev Janet depart in August and have a single superintendent presbyter serving the Methodist churches. We are still working as an LEP church with the URC as regards their resourcing and this will mean changes too.

As much as change is stressful and brings insecurity, we have our foundations rock solid in our faith. Our openness to the Spirit working through us to step up and serve our Church as you may be moved to do so through a group, worship team, property team, FoG, the trustee board and our Circuit is to be encouraged. Your generous financial giving is an important part too and our Winter gift day will soon be upon us and a contactless means of giving has just been approved by the trustees...so DONA may well have made an appearance in the vestibule by the time this edition is published.

How Many Heartbeats.....

How many ticks in the life of a clock
How many beats in a drum
How many do we have in our hearts
Before we finally succumb
We just don't know, just can't tell
So it's important in life to use them well
How many heartbeats are wasted in worry
How many wasted living life in a hurry
How many used in pointless fights
How many beats in sleepless nights
How many wasted in negative thoughts
Leading to stomachs tied up in knots
Working all hours, too busy a job
How many beats from your life will it rob
It's so easy to let life drift
Wasting our heartbeats, wasting this gift
Do we use them wisely, it's so hard to say
Life isn't easy with stress holding sway
Does anger make the heart beat more
I thought love did, so not too sure
So many things I still want to do
So much living before I'm through
Maybe time to be taking stock
But how many ticks are left in this clock
I want to live this life in extremes
I want to pass with memories, not dreams
You never know what's around the corner
So let's all vow to no further squander
No more regrets, or 'wish I'd done'
Use those heartbeats having fun
Use every beat to explore
To live that life till there's no more
Let's make every one really worthwhile
Let each one bring a lasting smile



Do the things you want to do
Find yourself your favourite view
If health allows, travel afar
Visit that dreamt of Turkish Bazaar
I know that there are many things
That affect our lives and clip our wings
Be that cash or health or both
So many things to stunt our growth
It may be that our adventures
Need to be closer to home
But there's still satisfaction, in smaller actions
If we're not able to roam
Whatever be your aim in life
Whatever moves your feet
Wherever you wander, please don't squander
A single precious beat
Let's try and live with no regret
Use well every heartbeat we get
Remember something that's universal
This old life is no rehearsal



Bill Clayton ©2022
(Friend of Marian, used with permission)

**I believe that God put us in this jolly world to
be happy and enjoy life.**

Robert Baden-Powell



**Read more at:
www.brainyquote.com/topics/enjoy-life-quotes**

A Christmas Card

(An Ian Cornall contribution)

*Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of
cloth, and laid him in a manger
(Luke chapter 2 verse 7)*

All the world loves a baby
Tender, dependant, full of promise
New life, fresh hope, parents' pride, friends and strangers say "Ah,
lovely!"
Jesus comes, creation's source encradled among people and cattle.

All the world loves a baby
Except an innkeeper
Pregnant woman? - a baby disturbs the guests, makes more work for
the staff -
well, put them in the stable!
Jesus comes, the Prince of Peace, bringing disturbance, asking for
love.

All the world loves a baby
Shepherds, rough countrymen, stand abashed and tongue-tied
then leave, amazed and full of wonder
Jesus comes, Good Shepherd, to meet the shepherds.

All the world loves a baby
Except King Herod
fearful for his dynastic succession, ready to kill to protect himself.
Jesus comes, King of kings, to shame the world's rulers.

All the world loves a baby
Foreign visitors, charmed, leave rich gifts
while the village people come with baby clothes and dinner plates.
Jesus comes, the Giver of All, and receives our gifts

All the world loves a baby
Except the chief priests in Jerusalem.
They have waited centuries for a Saviour-Messiah
but not a baby born in poverty, not one inconveniently coming on
their watch
Jesus comes, Immanuel, God-with-us, unwelcomed.

We love a baby, cradled among us
We are ready to be disturbed
We are prepared to be shamed
We do not mind being inconvenienced
We will go away full of wonder
And we will offer our gifts.
Jesus, Hope of the World, welcome in Bethlehem,
Welcome in Whittlesey.

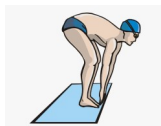


Malcolm's Wordsearch

OLYMPICS

S	J	A	V	E	L	I	N	B	D	E	F
W	D	G	W	E	I	G	H	T	S	I	R
I	I	S	K	M	P	O	R	S	U	V	E
M	v	I	C	Y	C	L	I	N	G	W	E
M	I	L	X	I	Y	D	Z	H	T	L	S
I	N	V	C	E	P	F	A	G	T	L	T
N	G	E	H	J	K	M	L	N	U	A	R
G	G	R	O	P	M	R	Y	S	P	B	O
E	Y	T	M	E	D	A	L	L	T	T	K
C	M	B	R	O	N	Z	E	V	O	E	E
A	W	X	S	E	L	D	R	U	H	N	Y
R	O	W	I	N	G	S	U	C	S	I	D

Find the following in the above Word Search: .OLYMPIC .JAVELIN. DISCUS, HAMMER SHOT PUTT, CYCLING, NETBALL. HURDLES,GOLD,SILVER, BRONZE,SWIMMING. DIVING, FREE STROKE,RACE, MEDAL, WEIGHTS,BYM, ROWING.



A kindergarten teacher asked the class to draw a Christmas story as part of their art class at school. A little boy sketched a nativity scene - with Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus lying in a manger. However, there was also a large, rotund fellow in the scene. The teacher asked: "Johnny, who is this man in the Nativity picture? Did you think that Santa Claus was part of Jesus' birth?"

"Oh, no, that's not Santa Claus", replied Johnny. He's the guy we sing about in Silent Night. That's Round John Birgins."

Pontius Who?

At Sunday school, the younger children were drawing pictures illustrating Biblical stories. The teacher walked by and noticed one little boy was drawing an airplane! "Oh, what Bible story are you drawing?" she asked. "This is the Flight into Egypt," the little boy answered. "See, here is Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. And this," he said, pointing to the front of the plane, "is Pontius. He's the Pilot."

At a recent event at Willow Court run by Whittlesey Sports Association the residents joined in doing exercises our own Ruby Smith won a medal. There'll be several "newer" members who will not know Ruby (pictured below) who was a former senior Steward at Queen St and is a LOVELY lady!!



Reflections on our family summer in South Africa

by Ejiro Maubane

This summer, Molefe (Patrick), the boys (Nathan & Benjamin) and I visited South Africa. Some of you may remember me sharing reflections from our family visit to Nigeria (my country of Birth). It's been a long time coming but just like our trip to Nigeria had many "firsts", going to South Africa (Molefe's birth country) to spend time with the wider Maubane family had a lot of firsts too. I won't get into the planning, logistics of packing, travel, prayers and thought that goes into going away anywhere as a family. I think most of you will be well familiar with the skills and precision required especially when kids are involved.

After many prayers and preparation, we landed safely in South Africa and were met at the airport by my brother in laws. One older (Rramogolo) and one younger than Molefe; both of whom I had met previously in England when we got married in 2013, however it was the first time they got to meet their nephews in person and certainly the first time Molefe was bringing his wife and kids home. Hugs, smiles, pictures taken as you do, and it was off to get tidied up to head to Dannhauser. To the Maubane family home where a small crowd of family members and neighbours had gathered and were eagerly waiting to meet us.

As the car got to the entrance of the family home, it stopped. And before me were singing Aunts, Uncles, neighbours and friends who had come to welcome home their son, his wife (Makoti) and kids. I didn't understand a word of what they sang but I knew the sentiment very well. After all, being Nigerian it was common practice for brides to be welcomed into the family home with a similar ceremony the first time they stepped foot in it. It didn't matter that we were doing these 11 years after we got married – It still felt very poignant, very familiar. A rite of passage, a blessing and I was thankful that I could see this day and share it with my boys who looked on with wide eyes. I recognised some faces in the crowd (Molefe's Aunt and Uncle who came to England when we got

married, his cousins I had seen countless time in pictures and videos) and greeted them warmly as any good wife would .

I spotted Molefe's maternal grandmother (Koko), she's 94, a petite woman but my goodness with a wonderful presence and a strong aura about her. She needed no introduction, I instinctively knew this was Koko, the matriarch of the family. She used her walker and approached. She spoke passionately, this was her grandson and his family. In that moment, I remembered my Grandmother whom I saw in Dec 23 in Nigeria. I heard her prayers in my ears and I understood that Gogo was saying a Blessing over me. I received it. Isn't it amazing that certain things transcend language barriers.

The women placed a blanket on my shoulders, representing a warm welcome into the Maubane family. I was humbled and if I felt any nerves before, they had all disappeared. This is home. I could see my Mother represented in the women before me. Everyone smiled. Those who spoke English introduced themselves. Lunch was served, introductions carried on and a friendship had begun. I kept saying over and over it is so good to meet you in person. Thank you for the warm welcome. And I meant it.

In that moment, I carried with me several members of my family and lineage. I came with all I was, not just as Molefe's wife but a representation of my life and all the people who have shaped it. Starting with my mother – her input in my life, her countless prayers and counsel, the values she had taught me without fail growing up at home, at church, in the wider family, in the community. My father - for all his endless love, provision, kindness, kind manner, support, pride in me all through his life. My grandmother – her guidance, her words of encouragement and prayers. My brothers for their protectiveness and their brotherly embrace of Molefe. I could hear my sister say "Go Chiki (as she calls me) – you've got this" in her American way.

And above all my Faith – God was with me. I muttered prayers under my breath, and I said 'Thank you Lord.'

Each day relatives, family members came from Molefe's maternal and paternal side, friends, neighbours, even Molefe's

primary and secondary school teachers came to meet us. They came with delight, with generosity of spirit, with well wishes. We shared meals together, the children played without a gadget in sight. Cousins met each other and friendships formed. We learnt some of the language and shared of our lives in England and of my Nigerian heritage with them. It was heart-warming.

We had a big family party on the Saturday after we arrived followed by a barbeque. It started with a guest list of 120 persons – all friends and family; and grew to include the villagers who could hear the commotion from afar. Everyone came smartly dressed, there were prayers, singing, dancing, words of encouragement, eating with lots of laughter. I got gifted a South African traditional dress from Molefe's Aunt. It was a truly wonderful time.

During the barbeque as I chatted with Molefe's older cousin and her husband – he reflected to me and said the Maubane's & Lehele's (Molefe's Maternal family) take family very seriously. I thought what a wonderful testimony of family. To truly be there for each other and supportive of each other.

We also went as a family and laid flowers at the graves of Molefe's parents and brother who are sadly no longer with us and said a prayer of Thanksgiving for their lives. They never got to meet us in person but like my mum says of my late father – Heaven rejoices with you. I thanked them in my heart for their son Molefe and Blessed God that through them Nathan and Benjamin get to be part of God's continuing story in the Maubane family. We will do the best we can to parent them by God's grace.

We had a short safari break in between, and my goodness it lived up to expectations. As we rode through the safari seeing giraffes in their natural glory and beauty, rhinos munching away, lions strutting with pride, jaguars, elephants, wildebeests, zebras etc, etc I felt truly lucky to be there and awe inspired. Nathan and Benjamin are still retelling me their favourite bits. Safe to say we all agreed that up close the herd of elephants were in equal parts exciting and scary!

As all holidays do, they come to an end. Lots of goodbyes with big hugs and tears, another plane ride back and a drive from

Heathrow and we were back home with a few days to rest before the new school year kicked off.

As I dropped the boys off one morning and on the drive back – a quiet voice within me said – ‘Do you see what I mean when I say that Family Matters?’

Sometime in June, we spent time reflecting as a church on the topic Family Matters.

And I felt that the message was certainly not over – not for me at least. I started thinking of the wonderful hand of God in my life, in my lineage, weaving the fabric that has enabled Molefe and I to be united in marriage. I remembered Abuti Clifford saying to me “The Maubane’s take family seriously”.

I could see in my mind’s eye the herds of Elephant and all the family of animals seen on the safari. And yes, I learned anew that God in his divinity & in his creation takes family seriously too.

As I reflect on our time away, the goodness of God and the journey we’ve been on that started well before I was born. Sensing God’s hand and purpose in knitting the generations that have brought my little family of 4 here, I have been singing these 2 songs over and over. The first I think you will be familiar with...see next page.



Have thine own way, Lord. By
Adelaide A. Pollard. United
Methodist Hymnal, 1989

Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter,
I am the clay.
Mold me and make me
after thy will,
while I am waiting,
yielded and still.

Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Search me and try me,
Savior today!
Wash me just now, Lord,
wash me just now,
as in thy presence
humbly I bow.

Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Wounded and weary,
help me I pray!
Power, all power,
surely is thine!
Touch me and heal me,
Savior divine!

Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Hold o'er my being
absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit
till all shall see
Christ only, always,
living in me!



The second is a song I grew up singing in Nigeria. At church, at home, during family devotionals. Very simple but effective at getting to say Thank you to God. It can be found on YouTube.

What shall I say unto the Lord?

All I have to say is Thank you

Lord!

What shall I say
Unto the Lord?
All I have to say
Is THANK YOU LORD

*What shall I say
Unto my Father?
All I have to say
Is THANK YOU LORD*

**THANK YOU LORD!
THANK YOU LORD!**

All I have to say is
THANK YOU LORD!
 For the breath in my lungs... (I
 THANK YOU LORD)
 For the strength in my body... (I
THANK YOU LORD)
 You're_a_wonderful Father to
 me....
 From the depth of my heart
 All I have to say ...
I THANK YOU LORD!

God bless,
Ejoro Maubane



Seasonal Movie Event

"A Christmas Carol Goes Wrong"

Saturday 7th December at 7pm

Following their disastrous production of "Peter Pan", the Cornley Polytechnic amateur dramatic society have been banned from participating in this year's "A Christmas Carol" with Sir Derek Jacobi. However, the enthusiastic amateurs, undeterred, nobble Sir Derek and the other cast members to stage their own version. There is dissent in the company when Chris (Henry Shields) and Robert (Henry Lewis) both want to play Scrooge, while nervous Dennis (Jonathan Sayer), as Bob Cratchit, has to read all of his lines off prop and Annie (Nancy Zamit) gets glued to her chair. When Lucy's (Ellie Morris') Tiny Tim is knocked out by falling scenery, the hulking Robert rather improbably must replace her. With faulty greenscreen special effects, and a seemingly romantic betrayal exposed, the company's version seems doomed until Sandra's (Charlie Russell's) Aunt Diana (Dame Diana Rigg) comes to the rescue.



Free admission
Refreshments served at interval

"A boy turned 17 years old, went to his dad who was a church minister, and said, 'Dad, I've turned 17 and I'd like to use the family car.' His dad said, 'Son, I appreciate you'd like to use the family car but I think we have other priorities. Number one, you need to improve your school grades. Number two, with me being a minister, it'd be nice if you were to start reading the Bible. Number three, you need to get a haircut.'

So six months pass, and the son goes to his dad and says, 'Dad, I love you. I tried to do everything you asked me to do. You asked me to improve my grades, and it took a long time and a lot of work and staying up late at night, but, Dad, here's my report card, and I want to thank you for that. Dad, you being a minister, thank you for making me read that Bible, because do you know that I read that Samson had long hair? Daddy, I continued to read that Bible even more, and even Moses had long hair. Daddy, you know what? Because of you, I read the whole Bible, and even Jesus had long hair.'

His dad looked at him and said, 'And if you noticed son, everywhere they went, they *walked!*'"

.....

No Room In The Inn?

A boy wanted to be Joseph in the Sunday School pageant. He was cast as the landlord and objected loudly, but to no avail. When the pageant was presented, Mary and Joseph knocked on the door and asked him if he had a room for them. The boy smiled and said, "Yes, sure. Lots of room. Come on in!"

Mahatma Gandhi, as you know, walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little, which made him rather frail.

Add this to the fact that he ate an odd diet, and it isn't surprising that he suffered from bad breath.

This made him a super calloused fragile mystic hexed by halitosis.

Sandra's France Visit 2024

I think many folk heard about the stress of building up to our holiday in France, not least through the Church What's App group, an excellent place to share prayers.

Eventually, borrowing Kate's car, with room for my mobility scooter and all our things in the roof rack, we set off very early (5.30am), Alice, Baby grandson and me. We both love driving, and Alice volunteered to drive in England. We had decided on using Le Shuttle to save time on an already long day. This was a new experience for us, considering all the years it has existed, and times we've been to France. And yes, it has been built in my lifetime.

Although I'd looked at photos on Google,

nothing quite prepares you for the actual size and noise, or driving



onto it. Alice had handed over to me, as it was something that made her rather anxious.



Driving in France, and other countries I enjoy very much. These days it gives me a real confidence boost, considering how few steps I can take, or spend walking with a walking frame. The day I got an automatic car, changed my life enormously. I wondered why I'd never had one before in 50+ years driving.

We drive as a team, Alice backing up the instructions on the two Sat Navs we were

using. The countryside around the area we go to is beautiful, but always a reminder of the wars and cemeteries we visited in the past. We have great memories over twenty years of going to this site,



seeing changes like a huge new supermarket in the village, but old buildings staying the same.

In brief, we had a disabled access cabin this time-much better all round. We sat outside a lot, enjoying the countryside, fresh air, food and drink. Baby had his first holiday and trip to a special place for the family. And we had a day in Disney Paris. Another

favourite place. We both got very emotional, and enjoyed the atmosphere, the parades, shops and being together. Alice drove to Disney and I drove home.

The twelve-hour day getting home left me exhausted for many days, but very happy, with many new memories.



My first job after school– Sandra

I had enough of school by the age of 16, and with no help from the careers advisor about training as a teacher, as I'd also put 'work in a bank,' on the form, I left school and started in a small Bank in the City of London, recommended by the girlfriend of the boy next door! Of course.

I became a commuter to London for two years, loving being in London, making a new friend (with 6 brothers) whose father was Maltese, later becoming the Maltese Ambassador in London, meaning I went to her wedding in Westminster Cathedral and reception in the Commonwealth Institute. But I found the job very boring. Fortunately, two male colleagues helped me apply to teacher training college and for a grant, and even though I was late applying, I was accepted and happily went off to college for the next three years in Eltham, S E London, situated in a most beautiful park.

Stories within the Story: A Shepherd's Tale

(Sent in by Ian Cornall)

This is a story based on Luke ch 2 vvs 8-20, and the gospel passages where Jesus speaks of country life.

Jesus of Nazareth? – him the Romans lifted up last Passover? – I knew him all his life, going back thirty five years to when I was a boy; my first winter with the flocks on the bare hillside. We were near Bethlehem – a village like any other, but the place David the Shepherd-king came from in the old days.

Crouched round our fire, trying to keep warm, we saw an angel. It's easy to say now, but at the time we were terrified. A great shining white figure and a voice like thunder. It took time to realise what we were being told – and, to be honest, to realise we weren't about to die. "Go to Bethlehem and find a baby, born tonight – God's gift to you and all people, a Saviour-Prince".

We went – you don't ignore that sort of visitor. We found a sleeping baby, in a farm shed, and a young couple – Mum, exhausted; Dad, unsure what he'd let himself in for. What it meant we didn't know – a new King David? or just another poverty-stricken child?

I came across the family again a few years later, while working near Nazareth. Jesus, as he was called, was a bright young lad, sunny-faced and thirsty for knowledge. Sometimes he came out among us shepherds, and – believe me – he wanted to know everything. How did the sheep know their own shepherd? How did we recognise our sheep? Why did someone sleep across the entrance of the sheep-fold? What was it like when a sheep got lost?

One day we had quite a discussion – about how our land had always been a nation of shepherds. Abraham came here across the desert leading flocks of sheep and goats. Moses kept the flocks for his father-in-law before he went to Egypt to lead the people out like a flock of souls. David – from the village where Jesus was born – was the shepherd who became king. And – this is what Jesus, fresh from synagogue-school, reminded us -

prophets had always called the nation's leaders "shepherds", sometimes good shepherds but often rotten bad, looking out only for number one.

He was a wonderful kid, into everything.

Years later I came across him again. Now it was Rabbi Jesus, the wandering teacher. Listening to him I heard echoes of that childhood time – stories of lost sheep, of the shepherd sleeping across the gate of the sheepfold; as well as anecdotes from the carpenter's workshop, or from farmers he had met in the fields as a child. When he announced, "I am the good shepherd" it should have sounded presumptuous – but actually, I thought "Yes", because Jesus really embodied the spirit of the nation, and our relationship with God – Father God, he taught us to think. The angel, all those years ago, had been right to send us to see that baby – nothing unusual of a child, but he has turned out to be the true inheritor of David the Shepherd-King. For me, "Good Shepherd" said it all.



Christmas Festive Afternoon



Date: Sunday, 15th December

Time: 2 pm

Location: Queen Street Church

It's party time! Join us for a festive family gathering filled with games, food, Christmas songs, and fun activities. This is a wonderful chance to celebrate together, meet other families, and soak in the holiday spirit. Bring friends along for an afternoon full of joy!

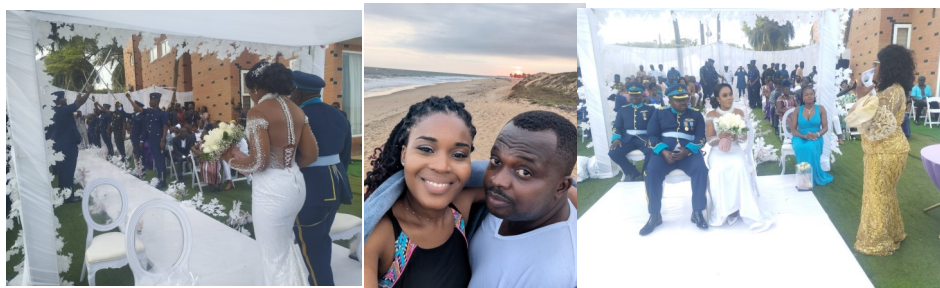
Remember Vanessa?

Do you remember **Vanessa (Ofori)** who was a regular worshipper here with us before moving, with her son Nathaniel, back to Ghana to continue her studies? Well, she is in contact with Ruth and sent the good news of her marriage to Emmanuel, a serving Ghana Air Force officer, sending her these pics. I WhatsApp'd Vanessa, receiving this reply:

"It was a military wedding so there was sword crossing. We chose a beachfront and it was a travel theme because we both enjoy going around the world. Both families were there and best of all my grandma got to see me get married.

Nathaniel is now in year 6 and is doing well. He's a character at school and most of the teachers love him. He was unwell some time with malaria which was a difficult time for us because of how different the health system is over here but he is better now and we got through it.

I'm in the 4th year of my medical studies. The grace of God prevented me from repeating 3rd year. My exams had been around the time Nathaniel was in hospital, so I would revise by the hospital bed then go into the exam hall to write my paper then return to the hospital. It was so challenging, I started to question why I had embarked on the course. But we are here now!"



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Copies of this Newsletter are placed in Vestibule. Would those **pastoral visitors** with “non email” members on their list who are unable to attend Church please ensure they receive a copy.

Do you have any items you wish to be inserted into the next (Spring) Magazine? Please email or send via social media to Tony by mid February. Grateful thanks for all contributors this time!

YOU MAY CONTACT US AS FOLLOWS:

Minister: Rev Dr Langley Mackrell-Hey

Email: revlmh@gmail.com

Secretary: Paul Abel

Email: : paul.abel124@virginmedia.com

Children's, Family & Community Worker: Tim Wong

Email: timwongwhittlesey@gmail.com

Website: Tim Wong

Contact as above

Magazine: Tony Wright

Email: tony.whittlesey.wright@gmail.com