

Witney Congregational Church

R CROSS A D S

Witney Congregational Church is a crossroads where we:

meet God in worship

meet one another in friendship

meet our community and world with the love of Jesus



WHAT'S ON GUIDE

Witney Congregational Church offer a whole range of activities through which we seek to Worship, Work and Witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this community today.

Further information can be obtained from the Church Administrator, Minister, Church Secretary or the leaders of the particular activities who are listed at the back of this magazine.

WORSHIP

Daily Worship	9.30 am	Mon-Fri	Short time of Prayer and Reading
Saturday Praise	11.00 am	1 st Saturday of the month	
Sunday Services	10.30 am		
	6.00 pm	1 st Sunday of the month	

Communion is held twice during the month at the first Sunday evening and third Sunday morning services

PRAYER

The Church is open each morning for Prayer

STUDY & FELLOWSHIP

Thursday 2.30pm Church (2nd Thursday of each month)

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Sunday	10.30 am	Crèche, Noah's Ark & The K.I.C.K. on Sundays
Monday	10.00 am	Noah's Ark – Infant Group for babies and pre-school children
Friday	7.00 pm	Y4J – Twice a month

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Tuesday	Monthly	Deacon's Meeting
	Bi-Monthly	Church Meeting
Thursday	10.00 am	Rest & Chat (Coffee/Tea available)
Saturday	10.30 am	Coffee Morning

SUNDAY LINK

Weekly bulletin for all Christians providing stimulating thought along with news and notices concerning our Church

WITNEY ECUMENICAL YOUTH TRUST (BASE 33)

4 Welch Way (Entrance – High Street) ☎ 01993 774402
01993 864853 (Office)

St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday ☎ 01993 709429
09.00 am – 5.00 pm

CHURCH WEBSITE

For further information, please visit our website:

www.witneycongregational.org.uk



Doesn't time fly as it doesn't seem 3 months since the Autumn edition was published and as I write this we are now into Advent; a new start for the Church.

However, and as always at this time of the year, the shops have had their goods on offer, and, as has become accepted as normal, we are all subjected to the increased commercial hype putting pressure on us to decide what ultimately we ought to buy. **Taking this into account, and for those fortunate to have access to the internet, the following short video –**

Advent in 2 minutes, is well worth a look:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S02K0lw7dIA&index=2&list=RDAySe5pZnwig>

Turning now to those who have contributed to this edition; alongside the standard pages, Jo Matthews gives us a poem from her Dad's cousin; Beryl Cartwright gives an update on WaterAid & Nanna Blackman on Amnesty International – Write for Rights; Marjorie Lee has submitted a poem and there is a Christmas Quiz to name but a few.

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition by either:
E-mail:

terrypowlesland@uwclub.net
jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net

or, just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up.

The next 2-monthly edition, covering February & March is due on **Sunday 31st January**

Your Editor



1. Whose 2 faces can you see?



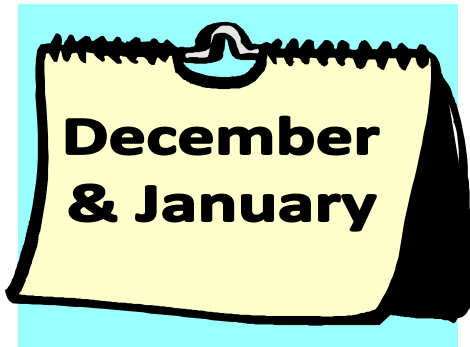
2. Whose 2 faces can you see?

Baby Jesus goes missing

After the Christmas morning service, the baby Jesus was missing from the crib. The vicar was searching for him when a little girl arrived with a doll's pram and started lifting the baby Jesus and putting him back into the crib saying: "I told you that if I got a pram for Christmas you would be the first to get a ride in it!"

Contents

1. Editorial
2. Diary
5. Pastor's Paper
7. Prayer Letter No 172
8. Christmas in a nutshell & Christmas Quiz
9. Write for Rights
10. WaterAid
11. Threefold Christmas Blessing & Thank You
12. Shades of 1984



Daily Prayer Time:

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

Services

10.30 am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month and will normally be led by Rev Jason Boyd unless advised below

Dec

6 th	am	Morning Worship	Advent 2
	pm	WICS Concert	
13 th	am	All-Age Nativity	Advent 3
20 th	am	Morning Worship	Advent 4 Communion
	pm	Carols by Candlelight	
24 th	11.15pm	Midnight Service at Congregational Church	
25 th	am	All-Age Worship	Communion
27 th	am	All-Age Worship	

Jan

3 rd	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion
9 th		Saturday Praise	11.00am
10 th	am	Morning Worship	
17 th	am	Morning Worship	Communion
24 th	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	CTiW Week of Prayer for Christian Unity United Service	High St Methodist Church
31 st	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Madley park Residential Home	

Feb

6 th		Saturday Praise	11.00am
7 th	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion

The following events are given for your particular attention:

Dec

8 th	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm	
12 th	Prayer Chain Meeting	9.15am	
	CTiW Carol Singing	10.00am	Congregational Church
15 th	Springfield School Christmas Assembly	10.30am	
17 th	Rest & Chat Christmas Sing	10.30am	
	Fellowship Group	2.30pm	Church

Jan

5 th	Lite Bite Piece of the Word	12.15pm	
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm	
16 th	Prayer Chain Meeting	9.15am	
17 th – 24 th	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity		
19 th	Church Meeting	7.30pm	
21 st	Fellowship Group	2.30pm	Church
26 th	Preaching Workshop	7.30pm	

Feb

2 nd	Lite Bite Piece of the Word	12.15pm	
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm	

ROTAS

WELCOMING TEAM

Dec	06	Viviane Boyd & Cecily Lau
	13	Pip & Beryl Cartwright
	20	Jill & Robert McBride
	27	Joan Currie & Susan Wass
Jan	03	Nanna Blackman & Theo Howells
	10	Pat Smith & Clare Woodward
	17	Lesley Barter & Irene St Clair
	24	Vivian Boyd & Cecily Lau
Feb	31	Pip & Beryl Cartwright
	07	Jill & Robert McBride



COMMUNION

Dec	06	WICS Concert	
	20 am	Judi Holloway & Lesley Barter	
		Viviane Boyd & Beryl Cartwright	
		Preparation	Irene St Clair
Jan	03 pm	Susan Wass	
		Preparation	Susan Wass
	17 am	Jacqui Powlesland & Susan Wass	
		Judi Holloway & Lesley Barter	
		Preparation	Pat Smith
Feb	07 pm	Jacqui Powlesland	
		Preparation	Jacqui Powlesland



FLOWERS

Dec	06	Judi Holloway
	13	Christmas Tree
	20	Christmas Tree
	27	Christmas Tree
Jan	03	Christmas Tree
	10	Rita Hayes
	17	Beryl Cartwright
	24	Joan Currie
Feb	31	Val Obriain
	07	Sonya Boyd



COFFEE

Dec	06	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
	13	Robert & Jill McBride
	20	Susan Wass & Judith Bungey
	27	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
Jan	03	Clare Woodward & Susan Wass
	10	Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair
	17	Robert & Jill McBride
	24	Susan Wass & Judith Bungey
Feb	31	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
	07	Clare Woodward & Susan Wass



REST & CHAT

Dec	03	Joan Currie & Iris Lindsay
	10	Pat Smith
	17	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	24	No Rest & Chat
Jan	07	Robert & Jill McBride
	14	Beryl Cartwright
	21	Joan Currie & Iris Lindsay
	28	Pat Smith
Feb	04	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair



Every effort has been made to meet individual circumstances. However, please change with someone else if the dates are not convenient for you

Dec	04	Charlotte Hayes
	06	Sue Birdseye
	07	Charlotte Hathaway
	09	Audrey Elliot
	16	Layla Holloway
	25	Preston Holloway
		Kathy Shaw
	29	Cecily Lau
	30	Jan Schunselaar



Jan	02	Benjamin Esapa
		Joseph Esapa
		Margaret Esapa
		Gwen Mee
	04	Tori St Clair
	07	Brian Bennett
	10	Cheryl Birdseye
	12	Iris Lindsay
	24	David Kinchin

Rudolph the Red

There was once a great Czar in Russia named Rudolph the Red. He stood looking out the windows of his palace one day while his wife, the Czarina Katerina, sat nearby knitting. He turned to her and said, "Look my dear, it has begun to rain!" Without even looking up from her knitting she replied, "It's too cold to rain. It must be sleeting." The Czar shook his head and said, "I am the Czar of all the Russias, and Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear!"

Notice

The Church will be closed on Boxing Day and then from 28th December to 2nd January inclusive



Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a



Pastor's Paper

As I write this, Prime Minister's Questions will be cancelled tomorrow (2 December) in order to make time for a whole day of debate over whether or not to use bomb strikes in Syria. It is hard to tell how the vote will go although the fact that it is being held at all suggests that the PM is confident that the government motion will carry the day. The violence in Paris was all that was needed to blow the political sands in the UK towards solidarity with France's declaration of war on IS.

Since the felling of the Twin Towers in New York, our world has been in the grip of a so-called War on Terror. The enemy is ill-defined, a shape-shifter that cannot be recognised. The enemy is in various guises: the Taliban, Boko Haram and Islamic State. The beheadings of aid workers and Christians together with grisly crucifixions is repulsive. We cannot understand the barbarity of it all. Islamic extremists are successfully recruiting people to their cause.

I would like to ask these questions: Will the bombs stop IS? What innocent civilians will be caught up in airstrikes and drone attacks? Will aggressive military action be fodder for the propaganda of Islamic extremists?

Perhaps I am naïve (and I do know that many people think that I am), but I wonder what would happen if western democracies flooded Afghanistan and the Middle East with peace envoys? Could the divisive rhetoric of hatred be interrupted by acts of mercy and kindness? It is true that many of these envoys would be captured and unspeakable things done to them. It is also true that soldiers and civilians die in battle too. History is populated with innumerable hosts of the war dead. So what if we were prepared to take the risk and make the sacrifice of love towards countries which regard the West as

decadent and two-faced in its standards of democracy and justice?

I recall being at an event called 'Youth Quake' in the rural location of Caronport, Saskatchewan. It is the home of Briercrest Bible College. Dr. Tony Campolo was the speaker and held 3800 young people in the palm of his hand. We laughed uproariously and wept silently as he moved us with the power of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

He challenged us too! In fact he made me downright angry. He asked us to imagine Jesus as a pilot joining in on a bombing mission! How outrageous! Of course Jesus wouldn't do such a thing! What infuriated me was the way in which Tony tried to connect Jesus' peace making ways with the way Christians live today. Tony preached that if Jesus was a peace maker then Christians today should be peace makers. I spluttered and fumed. I argued that there were times when violence was necessary. There were moments for war. But Tony had unsettled me. The seed of peace had been planted. The birth of Jesus was announced by a choir of angels: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!" (Luke 2:14) Jesus' life eschewed the sword and embraced the cross. His violent death was a call to forgiveness and reconciliation. Peace is costly business. Following Jesus is demanding. What is our lived out response to the birth announced with a song of peace? How will we embrace the One of whom the prophet spoke? "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

My prayer is that we will all live with integrity as we seek to follow Christ and embody his love, peace, and joy in our lives. May you have a blessed Christmastide and may 2016 be filled with a desire to love God

and follow Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Shalom
Jason

The following article has been submitted by Beryl Cartwright, and is a recipe that was hanging in her daughter's kitchen in Kent

RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

INGREDIENTS

1 BAG OF SMILES

2 CUPS OF SHARING

2LBS OF POSITIVITY

½ CUP OF GOOD HUMOUR

1 CUP OF SELF ESTEEM

2 SPOONFULS OF SIMPLICITY

1 DASH OF GOODWILL

4 DROPS OF EASY GOING

AND A PACKET OF LIVE LOVING

What is your recipe for Happiness?
Maybe your recipe for happiness can be submitted to the editor for the next magazine.

Minister's Musings

There are a few items I want to raise here: First, Viviane and I would like to thank you for joining in the celebration of 21 years of ministry and our collective achievement of the PhD on the 14 November. It was our pleasure to be able to host you for the service of worship and to put on a buffet for you. It was lovely to have so many of you choose to spend your Saturday afternoon with us. I am grateful that my parents, Clare and Evelyn were able to join

us for this occasion. It's time to settle down into the normal rhythm of congregational life. Let's continue to work together for the glory of God so that people in our community will come to know Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Second, I want to remind you to please, please, please attend the next Church Meeting. Suzanne Nockels will be coming to join us to help us to decide whether we wish to enter into the process of becoming a LEAF church. LEAF stands for Listening, engaging, and acting in faith. In order to increase participation at Church Meetings, I am asking the congregation to consider holding Church Meetings after worship on a Sunday. It is important that as many folk as possible are involved in the sacred task of discerning the mind of Christ together.

Third, I would like to ask you to pray as we continue to discern who God is calling to be the next Church Secretary. Please pray for the right person to sense the prompting of the Spirit to serve in this very important role.

Fourth, I am asking that each one of you prays for the Congregational Federation both in our area and nationally. We are in a time of change and this often leads to a sense of unsettlement. It is important that we are engaged in the area executive and assemblies as well as the National Assembly.

Finally, there is an excellent opportunity to participate in the life of the CF through the Congregational Conference. This is open to ALL. This is a new initiative developing out of what used to be known as the Minister's/Leader's Conference. Please prayerfully consider coming to this. The brochure is in the post and hopefully will be inside this magazine along with the booking form, but if not, will be available separately

Yours
Jason



PRAYER LETTER

No 172

Darkness and Light

Jesus is the Light of the World

December is a month of shorter hours of sunlight and longer hours of darkness. As well as looking forward to Christmas on 25th we look forward to December 21st as this is the shortest day. After that, we know the days will be getting longer and nights shorter for 6 months.

Do we really know what darkness is really like when our cities, towns and homes are over lit with various degrees of brightness. There are some villages in Oxfordshire and elsewhere where there are no street lights at all so pedestrians walk at their peril in the hours of darkness.

When I was teaching we used to take the school children to Welsh Bicknor for a week of activities. To give the children an experience of darkness and a lesson in trusting, one activity was a walk through a disused railway tunnel. The children had mixed reactions when told what we were about to do. Some were scared, fearful, others were excited. They were quite noisy going into the tunnel but as the light gradually disappeared behind us and only darkness ahead, the children were quickly subdued. The leaders did have torches but at one point the torches were switched off, everybody linking together having complete trust with the person in front in them. There was TOTAL DARKNESS in the tunnel until round a bend in the tunnel a small glimmer of light appeared in the far distance which gave light and hope to those who had no idea how long they would be in the dark tunnel. The sight of the increasing light as we walked forward lifted their spirits. There was no longer any need to hold onto the person in front as they could now see we were heading towards the end of the tunnel into the daylight. This was a relief for many of the children. They had learnt to trust in their teachers and leaders and also each other. 'There was light at the end of the tunnel.'

Jesus Christ is The Light of The World

Our World is currently in crisis, darkness of conflicts, wars, refugees fleeing, climate changes causing many environmental disasters all needing 'light at the end of the tunnel' but this may take years to achieve. As in Biblical Times it took centuries of unrest, many wars, exile for communities before God sent his Son into the World to show His Light.

Jesus Christ is The Light of The World

One may experience darkness of spirit due to problems or experiences in life. This darkness may be shortlived or take a much longer period to get through. Light needs to come into this darkness. It may start with a spark of light and hope which gradually spreads until the darkness is lifted and overcome or the darkness may be lifted by a sudden blaze of light.

Jesus Christ is The Light of The World

The phrase 'The light has dawned' means you can now see or understand whereas before you were 'in the dark'. Where are you? Are you in Darkness or Light?

Jesus Christ is The Light of the World.

As Christmas lights are turned on in our town each time you pass them during December, turn your mind to a place of darkness and distress in the world and ask God to shine light into that situation. God sent His Son Jesus Christ as the way of light and hope in this and every century.

Jesus Christ is The Light of The World

May the Light of Jesus shine in your hearts, lives and homes this Christmas and throughout 2016

Every Blessing
Beryl

Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Beryl Cartwright (703717)

The following article, written by Paul Hardingham, which unwraps Christmas, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled

Christmas in a Nutshell

We're at that time of year again! But is Christmas just about the shopping, tree or presents? In a nutshell, it's all about a God who has showed up on earth. The creator of the universe, who hands flung stars into space, cared enough to come to earth as a tiny baby. *'The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.'* (John 1:14, *The Message*).

Every year we sing carols and retell the same story of the donkey, innkeeper, stable, angels, shepherds, star, wise men, gifts and Mary and Joseph with baby! It's interesting, because when we celebrate other birthdays, we don't recall the details of the pregnancy or birth.

So why do we do all this? In a nutshell, it's about God, who has seen the mess of this world and stepped down to meet our deepest need of relationship with Himself:

'When the time came, He set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, He stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, He lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death.' (Philippians 2, *The Message*)

Reflecting on Jesus in the manger is a great place to start, but there's so much more than a cute baby lying in the bed of straw:

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator;

*If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist;
If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist;
If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer;
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Saviour.*



A Christmas quiz

1. According to the 1st chapter of Matthew, 'Immanuel' is interpreted to mean _____
2. The Moabite widow, Ruth, is mentioned by name only 12 times in the book named after her, and not again until Matt 1:5. What makes this woman's life so significant to the birth of Jesus Christ?
3. An angel of the Lord told Joseph, Mary's betrothed, 'Do not _____ to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'
4. What caused Elizabeth's unborn baby to leap for joy in her womb, when she was visited by her relative Mary?
5. What was the angel's name who visited Mary to tell her she had been chosen to be the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ?
6. What does Bethlehem mean?
7. Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
8. What did the angels say to the shepherds?
9. What did the chief priests tell Herod that worried him so much?
10. Why was 'a voice heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning?'

The following article has been submitted by Nanna Blackman, and is entitled:

Amnesty International

Perhaps my view of Amnesty International was tainted by events of long ago, but I always thought they were a bunch of interfering do-gooders; ineffective at best or more likely making things worse in politically fragile parts of the world. I guess I have grown up, and the world has become more complicated. Now, when I read the stories in the Amnesty International Magazine, I just want to put it down. I really do not want to know, to face the horrors that human society can afflict on human beings.

So it was with some trepidation I agreed to take on the 'Write for Rights' campaign that Marjorie has so gently but firmly been putting before us for the last few years. I decided I would only do so if I could get passionate about some of the cases. It is easy to get outraged and feel a helpless anger at some of the stories. So in the negative where is the positive? The hope comes from many individuals doing small things, which then creates an avalanche of action and reaction. That is what Amnesty International's 'Write for Rights' is about.

There are two small activities we can each undertake to bring about hope. One is to read about and engage with just one individual who is wrongly imprisoned, persecuted or ill treated by the society that should care for them. The other, the action, is to write a card, or an email or a tweet of solidarity. That will bring hope, but will it bring change? To bring change there is one more small activity, to send an appeal to a relevant person of authority who can make a difference. It works because each of our individual messages of support and single appeals

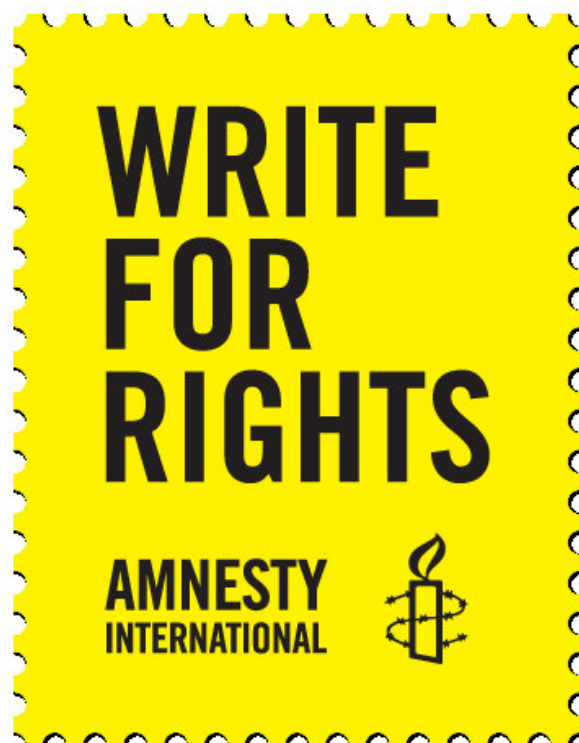
are joined by a multitude of other similar messages. Snowflakes become snowballs, become a snowdrift and eventually enough mass is created to move a mountain.

When Marjorie originally asked us to write to the people on the Amnesty International list, I worried about finding the right words. Difficult enough to find words of comfort for someone imprisoned for their vulnerability or their values, I really could not imagine finding a suitable appeal to send to a Government official in a land of persecution. To my relief I discovered the words are there for you, in the Amnesty International case sheets.

So for the internet initiated go to www.amnesty.org.uk/ and scroll down to the 'Write for Rights' link.

For pen and ink participation, there are case sheets on the Mission notice board or I am happy to discuss and assist.

Small actions really do create avalanches, be a snowflake!



The following article has been submitted by Beryl Cartwright, and is entitled:

Water Aid donations

The 1p and 2p coins collected on Sundays and put in the small watering can, go to the Charity Water Aid. Last year there was a campaign launched to build toilets in villages so women and girls did not have to use the fields and bushes for this purpose risking attacks and rape. The present campaign is for clean water for pregnant mums and mums giving birth. The following article explains the position that many women face during and after childbirth. The infant mortality rate is high for newborn babies and infection for mums is high too due to no access to clean water.

Women should have safe water when they give birth

Pregnant women in the UK know that when they give birth, their environment will be hygienic – with safe water to drink and to wash with, clean sheets and clothes for the baby. Midwives have clean water to wash their hands with. Newborn infections like tetanus and sepsis rarely cross our minds

As these birth stories reveal, conditions are very different for women in poor countries around the world. There are a million things to worry about when you are pregnant – clean water and a safe place to give birth shouldn't be one of them

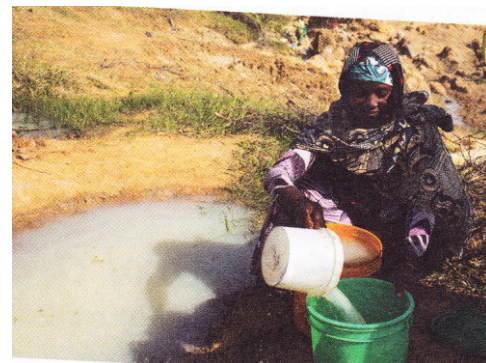
Mirembe, nine months pregnant Kiomboi hospital, Tanzania

When we met Mirembe, she was waiting to give birth at Kiomboi hospital in Tanzania. The water at the hospital is only on for one hour, so Mirembe was forced to collect dirty water to drink and wash with from the riverbed 15 minutes away.

Carrying water increases the risk of physical stress on her body and can lead to damaging medical complications, including miscarriage, early labour and uterine prolapse. Even during labour and after giving birth, women like Mirembe must collect unsafe water



I have been here for one month and one day. We really have a challenge with water. We can go to the taps and there is no water, we can go to the river and there might not be any water there. I have had to go to the river many, many times. You can see how the pregnancy is, it's very heavy and the bucket is also very heavy



Water from the river is not safewater from the river is stagnant. Water from the river is also very smelly, people just come to the river to bathe. Someone who has just given birth will come to the river to bathe, so a hand-dug hole was made 15 minutes away from the hospital where women must collect water from

In support of
WaterAid

The following poem, written by Muriel Burns, has been submitted by Marjorie Lee, and is entitled:

Threefold Christmas Blessing

Back before infinity began
Before time was
Was God
Was the Word
Was the hovering Spirit

And in the pre-creative darkness
Lit only by the glory of the Godhead
He chose us
To be His holy and His blameless ones

Creation –
By the Father
The Son at His side
With the breath of the Spirit
Burst upon the universe

Now time had begun and
Into that time
The Father broke at His chosen moment
And, by the coming of the Spirit upon
Mary
He gave the Son, to us

The Father's gift
Of the Saviour Son
Revealed by the Spirit
To us – to whom He gives the right
To become the children of God
To know Emmanuel – God with us



Thank You

I wish I could find an adequate way in which I could express my deep appreciation of the marvellous support I, and our family, received from the WCC fellowship during Alex's last illness and since his death on September 18th

As the hospitalisation was prolonged beyond prediction and Alex's condition visibly worsened, it became comfortingly clear that I did not need to be alone on the frequent journeys to Oxford to visit him. In fact I was frequently driven there by friends who Alex, if he was awake, was always glad to see. In the closing hours of his life, while I was waiting for family members to join me, I was still not alone but in the company of a trusted friend. These and other selflessly understanding acts were enormously strengthening to me and also to my family on my behalf. How blessed we were!

Thank you all so very much for your kind words, thoughtful gestures and beautiful cards. Thank you, too, to those who came to the memorial service on October 2nd and to all who had a part in preparation for that occasion which will forever be a cherished memory. I felt on that day to be totally surrounded by love and sustained by the prayers of friends and fellow-worshippers of our wonderful God

Jo Matthews

The following article has been submitted by Jo Matthews, and is entitled:

The name of the season

I have been disturbed by the news that at the school in Cambridgeshire which is attended by two of my great grand

children aged 5 and 7 is carefully keeping any hint of Christianity out of the Christmas Season. The name of the season will be changed to something like 'Winter Solstice' and there will definitely be no carols or Christmas nativity play! Such things could be offensive

The following poem, written by Donald Arthur Hodge, who was a cousin of Jo Matthews' father and one of the last veterans of the first world war and lived an influential Christian to the end (aged 100+), has been submitted by Jo Matthews, and is entitled:

Shades of 1984

(with apologies to George Orwell)

'There will be no Christmas this year!'
Big Brother wills it so
Have done with superstition
Bid myth and legend go

'This is the age of science!'
Computers hold the floor
So jettison tradition
Discard your ancient lore

For man has reached his zenith
His age is coming in;
He has no need of saviours –
There's no such thing as sin!

We have no time for shepherds
Or wise men on their knees
Or lone star brightly gleaming
Above the ancient trees

So cast away your garlands
Your cards and carols gay!

Set fire to tree and holly –
It's just another day!

But when we look around us or read the daily press
Or listen to the radio, we find the same old mess
The scourge of unemployment, the months of miners' strike
Two million plus abortions – Wrong posturing as Right
All round the world is conflict with nations and with men
We hear the cry of peoples 'Who'll bring us peace and when?'

We hear once more the story
Of how a Babe was born
Whose name was Jesus, Saviour
To heal a world forlorn

Answers to the quiz

1. God with us – Matt 1:23
2. Her child is in Christ's lineage – Matt 1:5
3. 'Be afraid/fear' Matt 1:20
4. Mary's greeting/ the Holy Spirit
5. Gabriel – Luke 1:26
6. The House of Bread. It was the city of David – Luke 2:4
7. To be registered in a Roman census Luke 2:1-5
8. 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy....' Luke 2:10
9. 'But you Bethlehem, in the land of Judea... out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.' Matt 2:6
10. Massacre of the Innocents by Herod – Matt 2:18

Answers to faces

3. The Duchess of Cambridge and Russell Brand.
4. Prince William and Liam Gallagher