



December 2019
& January 2020

Issue 62

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



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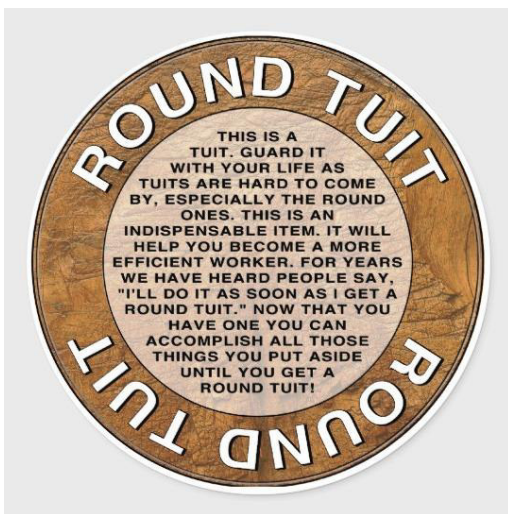
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Advent starts on 1st December, but as far as the shops are concerned does this really matter, as they already had their goods on offer for some considerable time? Is there ever going to be an end to this now well-established commercialism?



In the Autumn edition I stated that the church will be in a period of interregnum and the membership will have to take responsibility for what happens during this period and the future; and, it may even mean using gifts that we never thought we had – but it means we have to get round tuit!!



So, on that note, I now turn to some of this month's contents: Pip Cartwright continues

in the short history to our Church, which was first published in this magazine in 2006; Nanna Blackman gives us the second of the Deacon's Letter; there is the continuation of Ken Lee's Bible Study; Theo Howells gives us an article and associated hymn – His Church & Our Church, 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 2020, is due on **Sunday 2nd February**

Your Editor

Bethlehemian Rhapsody

And finally, if you enjoyed the song Bohemian Rhapsody, and would like the 'Christmas version', complete with singing puppets, do visit this on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/lxvMkSKRWOA>

Contents

1. Editorial
2. Diary
5. Deacon's Letter & Sonya Boyd
6. Prayer Letter No 192
7. Ambition
8. Bible Study
10. Christmas
11. LendWithCare
12. When will there be good news & I was there
13. History of Christmas
14. Hope
15. His Church Our Church & Gliding
16. Growth of WCC 1913 – 1938
17. Starfish Malawi
18. JumpStart
19. Love, Joy & Peace
20. What's On Guide



Daily Prayer Time:

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

Services

10.30 am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month

Dec

1 st	am	Cafe Church – Kathy Shaw	
	pm	Nanna Blackman	Communion
7 th		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
8 th	am	Rev Roger Faulkner	
15 th	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion
21 st		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
22 nd	am	Carol Service – Rev Judi Holloway	
24 th	11.15pm	Midnight Service with Communion at Congregational Church Rev Jason Cooke & David Kinchin	
25 th	am	Christmas Day All-Age Worship	Rev Elaine & David Kinchin
29 th	am	Rev Elaine & David Kinchin	

Jan

4 th		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
5 th	am	David Kinchin or Rev Elaine Kinchin	
	pm	Rev Joy Hance	Communion
12 th	am	Yvonne Campbell (CF General Secretary)	
18 th		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
19 th	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion
26 th	am	Robert Kinchin	

Feb

1 st		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
2 nd	am	Rev Dr Nick Pike	
	pm	Nanna Blackman	Communion

The following events are given for your particular attention:

Dec

3 rd	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
6 th	Look What's On – Christmas Crafts	6.00pm
7 th	WICS Christmas Rhapsody	7.30pm
8 th	WICS Christmas Rhapsody	6.30pm
9 th	Noah's Ark Christmas Party	10.30am
10 th	Springfield School Christmas Service	10.30am
12 th	Thursday Coffee – Carols & Mince Pies	10.30am – 11.30am
14 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
	Witney Book Circle	10.45am
19 th	Advent Quiet Day	10.00am – 4.30pm

Jan

7 th	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
11 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
18 th	Look What's On – Crafts & Cocoa	2.00pm – 4.00pm

24 th	World Day of Prayer Preparation meeting	10.30am
25 th	Bring & Buy Book Sale	10.00am – 12.00 noon
	Witney Book Circle	10.45am
26 th	Church meeting	12.00 noon
Feb		
4 th	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm

Rotas

WELCOMING TEAM

Dec	01	Beryl & Joan
	08	Judi & Pat B
	15	Lesley & Susan
	22	Lesley & Pat S
	24	Lesley & Beryl
	25	Lesley & Judi
	29	Lesley & Joan
Jan	05	Beryl & Pat B
	12	Beryl & Susan
	19	Nanna & Pat S
Feb	26	Lesley & Judi
	02	Beryl & Irene



COMMUNION

Dec	01 pm	Lesley Preparation	Lesley
	15am	Lesley & Beryl David Preparation	Rita
	24 pm	Lesley & Beryl 2 Methodists Preparation	Lesley
Jan	05 pm	Beryl Preparation	Beryl
	19 am	Nanna & David Lesley Preparation	Irene
Feb	02 pm	Lesley Preparation	Lesley



FLOWERS

Dec	01	Beryl
	08	Joan
	15	Rita
	22	Christmas Tree
	29	Christmas Tree
Jan	05	Christmas Tree
	12	Pat
	19	Jacqui
Feb	26	Judi
	02	Beryl



SUNDAY COFFEE

Dec	01	Cafe Church
	08	Sue & Susan
	15	Pat S
	22	Pat B
	29	Sue & Claire
Jan	05	Pat S
	12	Sue & Susan
	19	Pat B
Feb	26	Sue & Claire
	02	Pat S
		Reserve – Jacqui



THURSDAY COFFEE

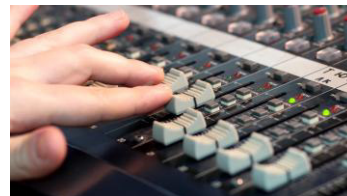
Dec	05	Beryl
	12	Beryl & Pat S Carols & Mince Pies
	19	Advent Quiet Day
Jan	09	Beryl
	16	Pat S
	23	Pat B
	30	Beryl
Feb	06	Pat S
		Reserve – Pat B



We would be extremely grateful for other people to join

SOUND SYSTEM

Dec	01	Terry
	08	Nanna
	15	Nanna
	22	Terry
	24	Terry
	25	Terry
Jan	29	Nanna
	05	Terry
	12	Nanna
	19	Terry
Feb	26	Nanna
	02	Terry
	09	Nanna



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

Dec	06	Sue
	07	Charlotte H
	16	Layla
	25	Preston
		Kathy
	29	Cecily



Feb	04	Elaine B
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Jan	02	Benjamin
		Joseph
		Margaret
		Gwen
	07	Brian
	24	Storm
	David K	



Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a



PRAYER LETTER No 192

Walking the dog

A new routine of walking our daughter's sheep dog Rufus, who is now living with us for a long period of time, has made me more observant of animals and birds and the natural world. In the last few weeks I have learnt many lessons from Rufus.

On our daily walks Rufus walks on the lead beside me. When we get to a place of safety he can be off the lead. It has been interesting watching him as when he is off the lead he doesn't charge off running everywhere, he just walks briskly ahead leaving a gap of about 15metres but leading the way, looking behind now and then to see if I am still 'with him'. If at times he does linger behind and I take the lead, he very quickly runs ahead and resumes his role of 'leading the way', taking responsibility of where we go. If friends or family accompany us on 'country walks' Rufus again takes the lead but interestingly he turns round to check where we are and if the group is straggling he runs to the rear and rounds up the group so we are 'together again' in his eyes. When he is leading the way he paves and winds through difficult routes avoiding dangers, slippery mud, uneven surfaces, surface water and floods. He finds the safest way through the tracts and footpaths. I just keep my eyes on him and through experience know he finds the best way through difficult terrain, so I follow him.

Watching Rufus on the walks reminded me of Jesus who calls us to 'follow Him'. Sometimes we fall behind and we need to catch up with Jesus. Other times Jesus is leading us through the difficult situations whether these be personal or group difficulties. There are times when Jesus is walking alongside us encouraging us to persevere with the task in hand. Don't ignore Jesus, He is there to guide, support and encourage us along the way.

Life is interdependent on people and creatures. Look out for the 'small things' around us where we can learn lessons and be more effective in our faith journey.

During a walk in October I heard the sound of honking in the sky, looking up I saw the incredible sight of a flock of geese flying over. I stood still and watched them intently to see their manoeuvres. I noticed that as a flock they fly in a triangular formation, each bird changing their position in the triangle regularly, either moving up to the front, moving sideways or retreating to the rear. What impressed me most was how they all worked together as a unit getting the best lift from the air currents and taking turns, taking responsibility as they make their long journey on their migration route.

It reminded me that we as a group of Christians need to 'fly together' each one helping and taking responsibility within the Fellowship knowing where we are going on our Christian journey.

May you feel Jesus with you as you journey through Advent into the Christmas Celebrations and through the New Year

Every Blessing,
Beryl

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

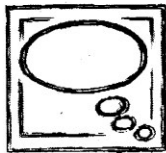
The following article, extracted from 365 Daily Bible Readings, has been submitted by Beryl Cartwright, and is entitled

November 18 Ambition



Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.

James 3.13-16



James must have known the old proverb of the Roman world: 'Divide and rule'. That strategy has characterized the actions of ambitious leaders for centuries. Set one group against another – the black against the white, the rich against the poor, the resident against the stranger – and you can have effective control over both. Do you recognize it in world politics? In corporate business? In advertising? It is the world's wisdom, indeed, but James describes it as 'devilish' and predicts that it will lead to 'disorder'. Recent years have shown disorder to be too moderate a word for what can follow when divisions of wealth, race or religion broaden.

When a leader's decisions are created from personal ambition, be it in a nation, at work, or even in a church, they will never be in tune with God's wisdom. So how can we recognize God's way? It will be distinguished by 'gentleness'. As well as a 'divide and rule' ambition, there is a 'unite and serve' ambition. This is why peacemaking is one of the strategies for reducing poverty in the work of so many Christian Aid projects.



In the margin, scribble the names of places and people whom you know not to be at peace – countries, specific groups, a workplace, even perhaps a family. For each one, think about what it is that lies behind the conflict. Is there an economic cause as well as a tribal one? Are there personal ambitions that obscure the desire to reach a settlement? If you don't know, how could you make yourself better informed?



In the presence of God, mention each situation that you have jotted down. In each case pray first for the leaders, next for those who are vulnerable to the decisions they make, then for those who actively seek peace in that place, and finally (if you can) for those whose ambitions are served by maintaining the turmoil.

Bible Study

In this edition, and with permission from Ken & Marjorie Lee's family, and in memoriam to Rev Ken Lee, a series of Bible Studies, written by Ken and first submitted back in 1999, will be re-produced and is entitled:

MEANDERING IN MARK

"Meander" means "To wander deviously or aimlessly". Perchance this is not too accurate a description of these studies; it is hoped that they are not too devious nor totally aimless. However, the term "meander" is used to indicate an approach which takes its time, stops as needful to let a thought, an idea, an insight develop - all with the purpose of seeing what the Lord has to say to his people. May He speak, and to Him be the glory.

12 Mark 4:35-41.

Mark now moves on from recounting spoken parables of Jesus to a series of what might be seen as enacted parables as he records four mighty works or acts of power by Jesus. As is Mark's custom, the change in type of story is accompanied with a change of scene, with a movement away from the place of verbal teaching into a different area for activity. The day of teaching has finished and evening is come. Mark records Jesus as saying: "Let us go across to the other side." We assume from the words that the scene is still on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, probably still at Capernaum. There is less certainty about to whom the words are addressed. Mark simply says, "He said to them." It seems unlikely that the words are spoken to the crowd but Mark's record is not clear to whether the "them" are all of his band of disciples, including the women, or the twelve named earlier as apostles, or only those whom we might describe as the "fishermen group" of disciples. It is possible that it may have been only those disciples with fishing experience who were involved with this journey since Mark's words "They took him with them in the boat, just as he was" seem to indicate that Jesus was the only passenger who was

not involved in handling the boat. We just do not know how many people were in that boat with Jesus or how many of them were experienced in seamanship on the Sea of Galilee although it is a safe assumption that some of them were very experienced.

Thus Mark sets a scene with Jesus being carried across the sea in a boat by an unknown number of disciples. Mark then adds the mysterious sentence: "Other boats were with them." No information is available as to who was in these other boats. Were there perchance more of Jesus's disciples in these boats, or had some of the crowd from the lakeside obtained the means by which to follow Jesus? We do not know; neither do we know what subsequently became of these other boats. Why then does Mark record their existence? Possibly Mark includes the other boats as a reminder to his readers that what happened to Jesus on the lake was part of the common lot of all who travel by ships. Maybe he was thinking of Psalm 107:28ff with its picture of ships on the sea whose occupants together experienced the wonder and power of God. Or the other boats may be a reminder to us that when we, who are close to Jesus, are finding life stormy, so too are others who have not got Jesus in their particular boat. It is not only those close to Jesus who experience storms in life, nor is the saving effect of his presence exclusively confined to those who are in the same boat with him. That which Jesus does for "his own" can also be a blessing for those to whom we might deny that name.

Back to the story as Mark records it. We picture the little flotilla setting sail into the fading light of evening away from the setting sun. Jesus settles down in the stern of the boat and drops off to sleep on the cushion. The word "cushion" actually describes the seat, often padded, which was the position for the helmsman to take it easy when the boat needed little strength or attention to control. When the sea got choppy, there was no opportunity to use this seat for the helmsman need to be erect and using both

hands and possibly the strength in his leg muscles to keep the boat on its course. That Jesus should be able to use this seat as a pillow right from the start of the voyage might be seen to indicate that the sea was already showing signs of getting choppy when they set off so that the steersman stood at his post: alternatively it could indicate that the sea was so calm that it proved possible to lash the tiller and leave the boat to steer itself. Mark does not record such details, he simply states where Jesus was and the fact that he had settled down to a peaceful sleep. This ability to sleep peacefully in the face of possible or real danger is seen again and again in the Old Testament as a sign of one who is right with God e.g. Prov. 3:23-24; Lev. 26:6. Perfect trust brings perfect peace. We may however recall the story of Jonah, running away from God, who was yet able to sleep in the ship until awoken by the captain of the vessel in terror at the storm which had blown up. (Jonah 1:5-6). Sleep can be a means of trying to escape the reality of events as well as a sign of total trust.

We are confident that for Jesus his sleep was that of total trust, trust not only in God but in his fishermen disciples competence in handling the boat. But then a "hurricane of wind" blew up. The Sea of Galilee is well known, now as then, for sudden wind storms but the words which Mark uses seem to indicate that this particular storm was a somewhat more violent one than the disciples had previously encountered. Without doubt the experienced seamen among the disciples did all that was necessary for the safety of the boat and its passengers but despite this they found themselves getting swamped by waves beating into the boat. We can picture them bailing out furiously but losing the battle against the encroaching water. Meanwhile Jesus sleeps peacefully until awakened by the disciples with the cry: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" How like us were those disciples to mistake supreme confidence in the care of God for indifference to their fate!

Just why did the disciples wake Jesus? What did they expect him to do? In the story of Jonah, the captain wakes Jonah with the explicit instruction to "Call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish." Everybody else on the ship was crying to their god, so Jonah had better do the same; an extra lot of supplication to a god, any god, might just do the trick. This seems to have been the thought pattern in the Jonah story. Was it something like that for the disciples? Mark records nothing about the disciples praying at this juncture although we tend to assume that they would have done so. Then as the storm got worse did they seek to call in reinforcements through Jesus's obvious deep relationship with God? Or were their thoughts along more mundane lines that an extra pair of hands might just prove enough to bail sufficient water out of the boat to keep it afloat? Mark does not even record that they asked Jesus for any help but merely that, by implication, they accused him of not caring. Yet he was in the same boat as they were; his fate was tied in with their fate, he was as likely to be drowned as any of the others in the boat for he was a man among men.

"He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!'" Did any of the disciples expect that to be the response of Jesus? Surely not! "Be still!" the word used is exactly the same word as Jesus had used in speaking to the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue. There it is translated "Be silent!"(1:27). Perchance the disciples remembered the word and the way it was uttered at that time, the first of the healing, cleansing miracles which they had experienced since becoming companions of Jesus. Now they hear the word again - the effect is even more startling to them - "the wind ceased and there was a dead calm". The same questions which they and others asked in the synagogue present themselves to them with greater force than before: "Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Perchance they recall the words

of Psalm 104:7 speaking of God rebuking the waters so that they flee. And maybe some of them thought "What a story this will be to tell other people!" And perhaps some of them even realised that they were actually participating in one of the parables of Jesus, a parable whose meaning would go on growing in their lives from that time on.

Jesus, at this time, does not press upon them the question as to whom they say he is. Rather does he say to them: "Why were you afraid? Have you still no faith?" The second of those two questions contains the answer to the first - the disciples were afraid because they lacked faith, faith in the ultimate goodness and power of God, faith in the continual presence of the Living God. They were still afraid despite the continual word ringing forth from the Scriptures, the voice of God saying "Fear not, for I am with you". (e.g. Gen.26:24; II Chr.20:17; Isa.41:10.) Yes, and they were afraid even though Jesus was with them; are we any different from them in the storms of life? Are we still not certain as to how to answer the question: "Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?" How does each of us read this living parable today? The disciples asked that question about whom Jesus is in great awe - dread mingled with veneration. Surely that attitude led them towards the answer; could it not also so lead us today?



The following article, written by Canon David Winter, considers the Christmas story, and is entitled:

Christmas - the most beautiful story ever told

On the BBC's 'Today' programme last Christmas a distinguished atheist revealed that his Christmas routine included attending

Midnight Mass. Asked why, he replied that it was the most beautiful story ever told and he didn't want it to be forgotten.

Up and down the country this month, thousands and thousands of parents will be attending school and church nativity plays. They're good fun, the children like them, and they remind us of the most lovely and memorable story of all time.

First, there was the actual birth. Excluded from the shelter of the 'inn', Mary and Joseph found themselves in a stable. Soon after, Mary gave birth to a boy, wrapped Him in His birth-robe, and laid Him in the only secure place she could find – the feeding trough.

Next came the shepherds, bursting in from the fields, eager to see the baby that the angels had told them to look for, 'lying in a manger'. They worshipped him, in wonder of all that had happened that night.

Finally, at some point came the so called 'Wise Men'. The gospel calls them 'Magi', and says they were from the East. The word 'magi' comes from the Greek 'magos' (magic) and further back, from the old Persian word 'Magupati'. The Magi could have been priests from an ancient Persian religion that watched the night sky. Today they would be called astrologers.

Whoever they were, their influence at that point in history was immense. All over the ancient world their predictions were regarded with awe, but they knelt before Jesus and offered Him gifts. They were the first Gentiles to recognise a divine and kingly power and purpose in the baby in Bethlehem.

150 years later the great bishop Clement of Rome described this as the moment when the old order of fear and fate gave way before this new era of love and grace.

What a story!

The following has been extracted from a letter to David Kinchin from **Lendwithcare**

Dear Witney Congregational Church

I'm very sorry to tell you that Munhondo Group is no longer able to repay the loan they received through lendwithcare.org. Unfortunately, this means you won't receive any more repayments on the amount you invested in this particular loan.



We wrote to you on 23rd May explaining that the devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar meaning you would get significantly less back than you were expecting on your loans. Since then the situation has deteriorated significantly with the value of the Zimbabwe Dollar going from 3:1 when we last wrote to 17:1! This has resulted in our partner, Thrive, becoming loss making and unable to make any further repayments. You can read full details here:

<https://lendwithcare.org/news/post/Xa2sDRAACAA05vw>


Please get in touch if you have any questions.

This situation does happen very, very occasionally — but just a quick [look through all our successes](#) will show you just how effective lendwithcare.org is in changing lives.

Once again, please accept our apologies and thank you for your continued support.

With kind regards,
The team at Lendwithcare

Witney Congregational Church's impact on poverty



170
Number of loans
My loans

1355
Entrepreneurs helped

4007
Family members helped

180
Jobs created

£0.00 Credit available

Add credit >

£2,400.00 Credit added	£6,120.94 Lent	£4,315.87 Repaid	£364.93 Donated Make donation	0 £0.00 total Buy a gift voucher	£230.00 Withdrawn Withdraw credit
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The following article has been submitted by Lesley Barter, and is entitled:

When will there be good news?

As 2019 draws to a close we look back on a year of disappointment and general unease. There has been political turmoil, reflecting a growing tendency amongst all of us to want our own way and an obdurate determination not to see things from anyone else's point of view. It has become depressingly clear that the Me Too society is also the Me MeMe society. This has had far reaching consequences way beyond our troubles in the now dis-United Kingdom. The environmental effects of our refusal to change our life-habits are now impossible to ignore. We are being forced to change our ways or face a dystopian future. It may already be too late.

So where is God in all this? Has he sadly turned his back on humankind after so many missed opportunities to change our ways? We have only to read the prophets of the Old Testament to hear the familiar warnings and recognise the same old failures.

On the contrary, if the Bible teaches us anything it is that God has endless patience. He always eventually forgave his errant people, the Israelites and finally he gave us his son as a permanent down payment for our mistakes. We have only to be sorry and try harder to do better.

So, as Christians, this is our vocation. It is up to us to lead the way in compromise, in seeing things from the standpoint of others, in doing all we can to appreciate and preserve God's beautiful world.

Be of Good Cheer, spread our joyful news that Jesus lives. God loves each one of us and there is Light at the end of this tunnel. We have so much for which to be grateful.

A very happy New Year everyone – it really can be if we help it along.

The following poem has been written, and submitted, by Theo Howells, and is entitled:

I was there

I was there on that mountain road
Following Peter, James and John
As they climbed beside the Lord
Little knowing what was to come

I was there on the mountain height
When Jesus, our Lord, became God
Changed, transformed in brilliant light
Too powerful for us to behold

I, like Peter, overcome, overawed,
Must speak – oh such foolish words
While others stayed silent and scared
Crouched, subdued, on the ground at his feet

I was there when, the vision blurred
Our Lord once more became man
'Come Peter, James and John' I heard –
Then my name too was called

Let us go down into the town
We have many promises to keep
From the mountain we must come down
Remember, feed my lambs, care for my sheep



The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

25th December: The history of Christmas

The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Jesus. In the third century it was suggested that Jesus was conceived at the Spring equinox, 25th March, popularising the belief that He was born nine months later on 25th December. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, encouraged Christians worldwide to make Christmas a holy day in about 400.

In the early Middle Ages, Christians celebrated a series of midwinter holy days. Epiphany (which recalls the visit to the infant Jesus of the wise men bearing gifts) was the climax of 12 days of Christmas, beginning on 25th December. The Emperor Charlemagne chose 25th December for his coronation in 800, and the prominence of Christmas Day rose. In England, William the Conqueror also chose 25th December for his coronation in 1066, and the date became a fixture both for religious observance and feasting.

Cooking a boar was a common feature of mediaeval Christmas feasts, and singing carols accompanied it. Writers of the time lament the fact that the true significance of Christmas was being lost because of partying. They condemn the rise of 'misrule' – drunken dancing and promiscuity. The day was a public holiday, and traditions of bringing evergreen foliage into the house and the exchange of gifts (usually on Epiphany) date from this time.

In the 17th century the rise of new Protestant denominations led to a rejection of many celebrations that were associated with Catholic Christianity. Christmas was one of them. After the execution of Charles I, England's Puritan rulers made the celebration of Christmas illegal for 14 years. The restoration of Charles II ended

the ban, but religious leaders continued to discourage excess, especially in Scotland. In Western Europe (but not worldwide) the day for exchanging gifts changed from Epiphany (6th January) to Christmas Day.

By the 1820s, there was a sense that the significance of Christmas was declining. Charles Dickens was one of several writers who sought to restore it. His novel *A Christmas Carol* was significant in reviving merriment during the festival. He emphasised charity and family reunions, alongside religious observance. Christmas trees, paper chains, cards and many well-known carols date from this time. So did the tradition of Boxing Day, on 26th December, when tradesmen who had given reliable service during the year would collect 'boxes' of money or gifts from their customers.

In Europe Santa Claus is the figure associated with the bringing of gifts. Santa Claus is a shortening of the name of Saint Nicholas, who was a Christian bishop in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. He was particularly noted for his care for children and for his generosity to the poor. By the Middle Ages his appearance, in red bishop's robes and a mitre, was adored in the Netherlands and familiar across Europe.

Father Christmas dates from 17th century England, where he was a secular figure of good cheer (more associated with drunkenness than gifts). The transformation of Santa Claus into today's Father Christmas started in New York in the 1880s, where his red robes and white beard became potent advertising symbols. In some countries (such as Latin America and Eastern Europe) the tradition attempts to combine the secular and religious elements by holding that Santa Claus makes children's presents and then gives them to the baby Jesus to distribute.

From: <https://christianity.org.uk/the-history-of-christmas/#.W9LmchNKhsM>

The following article has been written & submitted by Elaine Kinchin, and is entitled:

HOPE

In these days of the sound bite, I wondered how people thought about HOPE, so I asked various friends for an acrostic on H.O.P.E. giving them the clue: Help Out Poor Evangelist.

Some responded with useful but not religious options: Healthy Options Provide Energy – true, but so do unhealthy options!

Happiness Offers People Everything – not true, I'd reckon. Does happiness offer eternal life?

Hate Offends Practically Everyone – definitely true as is: Home Ownership Proves Expensive.

It was interesting that the words 'other people' featured often but what was very surprising was that the sayings were almost all positive. Is that because I mostly asked Christians or is it because HOPE itself is a positive word? Even the other non-religious sentences were positive: Holiday Outings Promise Excitement, Hugs Offer People Encouragement and Helping Other People Enthusiastically.

I really liked: **Hear Only Positive Expressions**, with its echoes from Philippians 4: "Finally, beloved, whatever is true...honourable...just...pure...pleasing...commendable, if there is any excellence and...anything worthy of praise, think about these things".

Most acrostics were Christian in nature and need no explanation: Holding On, Praying Expectantly, Help Others Pray Every-day, Helping Other People Energise and, tongue in cheek, Hopeful Octogenarians Pray(for) Eternity.

The last few deserve further examination. Hover Over People Everywhere. What a nice quick prayer to the Holy Spirit, reminding us that God cares for all humans, not just those who already pay homage to him.

Hallelujah Only Praise Emmanuel was the only suggestion to include the word Hallelujah but does it speak the truth about whom we should praise? Emmanuel usually applies to Jesus the Messiah: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." (Matthew 1.23 NRSV based on the prophecy from Isaiah 7:14). Yet "God is with us" surely applies to any or all of our trinitarian God? I shall use Hallelujah Only Praise Emmanuel to remind me to put our three-in-one God ahead of all the other idols which tempt us nowadays.

Having Observed; Perhaps Epiphany. Just read that again. It has hints of Hebrews 13:2 (KJV): Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. In case you are unsure about the muddling of angels and God, remember Abraham (Genesis 18:1-2) The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. Supernatural beings and manifestations are confusing and are rightly reported as such in our Bibles. Acts 9 tells us of Paul's epiphany on the road to Damascus; there is light and a voice which declared "I am Jesus".

Our HOPE is that God (Emmanuel) is with us at all times. Psalm 23 reminds us that in the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us, providing comfort. However you understand HOPE, may it comfort you until you are called home.

The following article & associated hymn have been written & submitted by Theo Howells, and is entitled:

His Church – Our Church

When we receive membership of a Congregational Church we say that God has called us to work for Him alongside this particular fellowship

During Jason's Induction service, the Highbury Church covenanted to be Prophetic, Inclusive, Sacrificial, Missionary and Worshipping people

Over 20 years ago I wrote this hymn based on these same five points. Perhaps it could help us now as we look at what, and who, we are as a church and seek the one who will lead us forward in our work for the Lord here in Witney

Lord may your church be a worshipping community,
Ready to give her love and adoration
To you who gave your life for our salvation.
Teach us to love, Lord

May we O Lord be an inclusive people,
Ready to care for those who come among us.

As you love us may we love one another.
Teach us to care, Lord

May we, your church, be missionary minded,
Spreading your word to neighbour and to stranger,
Ready to tell of love, joy and forgiveness.
Teach us to share, Lord

May we, O Lord, be prophetic men and women,
Ready to speak and fight against injustice
And, if we must, to suffer man's rejection
Teach us to speak, Lord

Give us the will to be sacrificial members,
Sharing our wealth of money, time & talent,
Giving our all with you as our example
Teach us to give, Lord



Guess who missed the bus and had to go by
GLIDER !!



The following article, written & submitted by Pip Cartwright, is a continuation from the last edition, and is entitled:

The Growth of WCC (1913-1938)

Towards the end of 1913 the Rev. O. F. East became the Minister. In 1913 the membership was 33, the Church Secretary was Mr Frank Berry who had been in office since 1906 to 1910 and again from 1912 onward until 1920. The Church Treasurer was Mr T. Crawley (Treasurer 1913-1931) and the Deacons were Mr Frank Collis (1906-1930), Mr Frank Lea (1906-1939) and Mr Thomas Littleton (1906-1931).

In 1915 new electric lights were installed and the exterior of the Church was painted. Little or nothing is mentioned of the First World War, except some funds were invested in some type of Government Bonds and the Rev. East asked to be released, to offer his services to Y.M.C.A. work in France for three months (October-December) and again in 1917 for four months (September-December). This request was agreed. It is recorded that Mr Frank Collis was called up for army service and his place on the diaconate was taken by Mr Cadle who unfortunately died soon after. Mr Frank Berry remained Church Secretary until 1920 when Mr Frank Collis took over.

The Rev. East moved on to a church in Guildford in 1921 and a Welshman, the Rev. Arthur Lewis B.A. accepted the pastorate in 1922. In 1924 the Chapel Keeper, Mr Baker, was considered to be getting too old and so he was pensioned off at £5 per annum. In January 1925, in recognition of their long service, Mr Frank Berry, Mr Tom Littleton and Mr Frank Collis were made Life Deacons. Membership had risen to 50 and afternoon Sunday School had 60 students. As a consequence of this success of the

Sunday School numbers, the Sunday School room at the rear of the Church was enlarged. A room was taken from the adjoining Manse to make a Vestry and the Vestry was removed and incorporated, to enlarge the Sunday School Room and Social Area.

With Rev. Lewis leaving in 1928, the pastorate was taken by the Rev. D. A. King B.A. (1929-1931). Mr Frank Collis stood down as Church Secretary and Mr G. Ling took up this office in 1930. Similarly, Mr T. Crawley resigned in 1931 and his office was taken by Mr W. Margetts. The Church organists at this time were Miss Phyllis Worley, Miss Mary Souch (late Mrs Honey) and Miss Muriel Margetts. Mr Frank Lea was made a Life Deacon in recognition of his long service. About this time Mr Crawley became Choirmaster and, assisted by Mr F. Lea, the Choir attained some reputation and, by all accounts, it flourished and every Good Friday a sacred music concert was held. The Messiah, Elijah and The Crucifixion were favourites. In fact in 1933 it is minuted that the Choir was the finest in the District.

About this time the Church debt became such an issue that in 1931 the Rev. King offered to hand back some of his stipend to the Church. The Deacons thanked the Rev. King for this gesture, but wouldn't accept. The Rev. King resigned in November 1931.

The Rev. H. Cunliffe Jones B. Litt was inducted in 1933. He wrote a "History of Witney Congregational Church 1662-1935" which was published in the Witney Gazette. It was so well received that a pamphlet was printed and I have a copy. His research has been a great aid to my research in addition to my study of the archives at Oxford Record Office. In 1934 the 100 year old plain windows in the Sanctuary were replaced by coloured ones

with proper ventilation. The Church was indebted to Mr J. H. Turner of Milton under Wychwood, who gave them as a gift to the Church. He also paid for the extension to the Sunday School Room. The cost of the masonry and scaffolding for the new windows was met by Mr Frank Berry. The windows were dedicated on June 3rd 1934. As I remember them the windows didn't have biblical scenes as often seen in Anglican Churches, but had small panes of pastel coloured shading – pink, yellow and blue. They were long fairly narrow windows but let in natural light and the Church was always well lit and bright. The Rev. Cunliffe Jones left in 1937.



The following article has been submitted by Pat Brent:

We have found a new way of getting our pennies and any other donations to Malawi. They will be used for a centre that has a nursery, a pre-school, junior school, supports older children to go to college and university.

The centre also has a clinic, supports nurses to go out to the community, and has transport to hospital.

We can also send our packs to the girls through the same route.

There is also a thriving church and Sunday school.

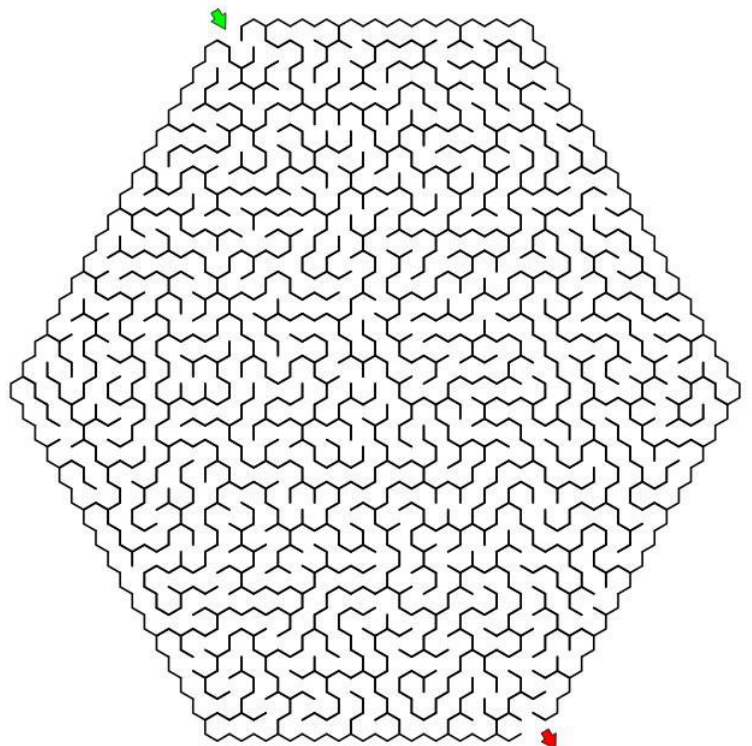
I have been supporting his centre for

about 5 years now, I know the man who started it and is still the director and a dedicated Christian.

More information can be found on www.starfishmalawi.com

The following article has been submitted by Pat Brent, and was given to her by an elderly deacon when she first became a deacon in 1986:

I am only one - BUT I AM ONE
I can't do everything - BUT I CAN DO SOMETHING
What I can do - I OUGHT TO DO
What I ought to do - by God's grace - I WILL DO.



JumpStart Forward:

You may have noticed new faces in the Congregational Church at the coffee mornings on Thursday mornings and wondered what this is all about?

The Congregational Church is kindly hosting accommodation for a new, small, local, unregistered charity seeking to mentor and support young people and working age adults in Witney; to enable them to develop the confidence, skills and resources needed to realise their full potential.

JumpStart Forward has been set up for people who fall outside the remit of statutory agencies in education, health and social care but who experience exclusion from employment, volunteering opportunities or participation in community leisure by lack of confidence, limited social skills, mental health challenges or other impairments. It is this group of people that we are seeking to help.

We have been piloting sessions offering individuals intensive individual assessment of their learning and development needs, mutually agreeing individually tailored learning materials and mentoring support until they have achieved their personal goals.

JumpStart Forward is currently in a development phase, establishing ourselves as a charity, identifying potential recipients of our services and piloting our methods with prospective participants.

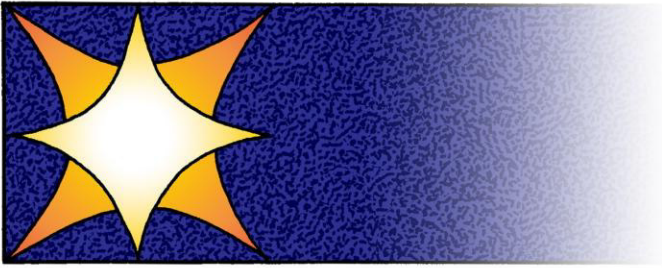
Participants benefit from a detailed initial assessment to ensure that the mentoring on offer matches the individual's needs or to signpost them to other agencies. Their feedback is pivotal to forward planning.

A volunteer training scheme will be on offer after Christmas to ensure that volunteers are fully equipped for this work.

More details will be provided in future Church newsletters and a bespoke website is being designed by an IT company staff.

If you would like more information about how to access mentoring available, or would like to apply as a volunteer, please text 07508 448047 for more details.

With thanks to the Congregational Church for the kind hospitality which is much appreciated from the JumpStart Forward team



December
2019



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

MINISTER

Vacant

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Rev Judi Holloway

WORSHIP

Daily Worship	9.30am	Mon-Fri	Short time of Prayer and Reading
Saturday Praise	11.00am	1 st & 3 rd	Saturday of the month
Sunday Services	10.30am		
	6.00pm	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

Tuesday	12.15pm	Light Bite Piece of the Word (1 st Tuesday of each month)
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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

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Tuesday	7.30pm	Monthly Deacon's Meeting
Thursday	10.00 am	Weekly Coffee Morning
Saturday	10.00 am	Weekly Coffee Morning
Sunday	12.00 noon	Bi-Monthly Church Meeting

SUNDAY LINK

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

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

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