



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Nelmes News



December 2023



Dear Friends,

As I write to you today, I have just returned home from carolling with the Churches Together group at Upminster's Christmas Kick-off event. Like similar celebrations in many of our communities, it was a festive evening marked by bright lights, cheerful music, wonderfully-smelling food, and lots of over-excited and well-sugared young people. As the costumed characters made their rounds for photos with the kids, it was hard not to smile and be in a joyful mood.

But for many in our church families and communities, the holiday season is not necessarily a time for joy and cheer. Depending on life circumstances, Christmas may not bring the joy that it once did. And the constant barrage of joyful music and well-wishes can make some people feel left out and excluded from the celebrations others seem to enjoy so much.

It's important to remember that the very first Christmas was not all that joyful either. Mary and Joseph were miles away from their home as Mary neared the time when she was to give birth. They had no place to stay...no place to sleep...no help with the labour and delivery of the baby. They had to have been lonely, scared, frustrated and angry.

Even though we like to sing "Silent night, holy night," the reality is that it probably didn't feel like much of either of those to Mary and Joseph.

If you can relate to some of these feelings, I invite you to join me on Friday 22 December at 7 pm at Trinity URC for our first "Blue Christmas"

Service. It will be a time to meditate, to pray, to reflect, to remember, and most of all, a time to remind ourselves that it is only in times of darkness that we can most clearly see the light of the world. I hope you will join us for a time of reflective worship followed by light refreshments and camaraderie.

I have found Blue Christmas services to be among the most powerful services that I’ve led, and I look forward to sharing the evening with all of you.

Blessings on your Christmas celebrations,

Brian



News of Friends



Thank you for all the prayers and good wishes that Peter and I received during our time in Australia and Hawaii. It was lovely staying with three different friends that we hadn’t seen for a long while and undertaking activities that neither of us ever thought we’d experience in our lifetime such as snorkelling over the Great Barrier Reef and visiting the Pearl Harbour memorial. We went to a very different church service with friends that left me really appreciating worshipping at Nelmes. We were also shown round a spectacular Mormon temple completely by accident, but very interesting! I appreciate how lucky we are to continue to enjoy travel and am very aware that many of our church friends are not so fortunate.

At the time of writing, Owen remains in King Georges Hospital, recovering from his hip operation after a nasty fall. “Thank you” to those who have been to visit him. He is naturally getting fed up but is encouraged by chatting with others.

Barry has been trying to contact June A to enquire about her welfare but her landline and her daughter's mobile number are not obtainable. If anyone is aware of another phone number or e-mail address for her please let Barry know. It's a reminder to keep Keith informed if emergency contacts change.

We continue to wish May S all the very best after her move away. She kindly sent the Church a Christmas Card and we pray that a permanent move to her own property happens soon and goes smoothly.



It was good to have so many Scout Group members present on Remembrance Sunday. We thank both Barbara, for all her long and hard work with these young people, and Keith for leading such a thoughtful, emotive time of worship.

It was also lovely to see Alan Acott proudly wearing his medals on that Sunday. Please pray for Stella & Alan, who continue to contribute so much to Nelmes despite Alan suffering periods of ill health.

On 13 December, Pauline F has an appointment to discuss her proposed operation which is due to be in the New Year. Both Pauline & Keith are understandably worried about the potential outcome. Please pray for them at this worrying time.

I end with the excellent news that Brian & Karen's daughter, Anna, has been chosen for the part of the Beast in her school production of 'Beauty and the Beast'. We have a talented actress in our midst.

As always, know that even if you're not able to worship with us every week, you are not forgotten and are in our prayers.

Jill Hilton



Advent & Christmas at Nelmes

The Post Box is now in the porch to receive greetings cards for friends in the Church. Please post early and do not include cards for people who have moved away.

The Post Box will not be available after 10 December.



Advent Bible Study of the Book of Ruth continues on Tuesdays 5 & 12 December. Our Minister, Revd Brian Busckill, leads the final two session at 9.45 am in the Roope Hall of Trinity URC or you can catch up later on YouTube.



On 17 December, Brian will lead our Morning Worship and we will distribute cards from the church Post Box.

On Christmas Eve, Sunday 24 December, Brian again leads our Morning Worship which will include the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Our traditional service of Carols by Candlelight begins at 4.30 pm.



Christmas Day Worship, at 10.30 am, will be organised by the Nelmes Worship Group

We close the year on Sunday 31 December with a special Christmas Songs of Praise - favourite hymns & carols chosen by our congregation. Please let Jill Hilton know your choice - it doesn't have to be in Rejoice & Sing!

Thanks

Church Offerings



We are most grateful to all who have continued to support our Church. In November we received £? in offerings and donations.



The Editor needs items for January Nelmes News by 17 December.

Publication date: **1 January 2024.**

An Advent Message from our Moderator



Dear friends,

It feels like everyone is getting ready, getting ready for Christmas. Christmas Trees going up (even as I write!) cards being written, presents being bought, menus being planned and food being bought. Although sadly, and increasingly, for some they are not able to prepare to celebrate and certainly not in the way they might have hoped. They have a deep concern as to how they can simply heat their homes and feed their families this winter. That is if they even have a home to live and eat in.

In the past I have had the privilege of volunteering at a winter night shelter. What struck me was that everyone's story was different as to how they found themselves homeless. It taught me not to make assumptions. Some had been estranged from their families, got behind with their rents and evicted, couldn't afford to put together a deposit despite working, experienced broken relationships and so the stories could go on.

Some churches will be hosting winter night shelters, arranging warm hubs and providing hot drinks and meals to not just those who are homeless, but also to the lonely and vulnerable. As Christians we cannot close our eyes and ears to the needs around us as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. We cannot welcome Jesus and shun our neighbour. As Jesus himself said 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

The nature of Jesus' birth highlights who these brothers and sisters are. Jesus himself was born homeless with parents who were dependent on the charity of others to give them shelter and food. The story worsens as the family had to flee and become refugees in Egypt. Yes, Jesus was a refugee! When we fail to look out for those in need, we are hurting God.

Today our hearts and the heart of God is breaking looking at what is

happening in the place of Jesus’ birth. The violence and suffering in Israel and Palestine makes us stop and think, pray and act even as we prepare for Christmas. In our sanitised Christmas we usually miss out the story of the massacre of the innocents just after Jesus’s birth which is recounted in Matthew’s Gospel. But we can’t turn a blind eye to the massacre of the innocents in the current conflict.

Martin Leckebusch in his variant of a popular carol, ‘O West Bank town of Bethlehem’, asks the question:

How violently, how violently
the hope of peace is riven;
can God impart to these torn hearts
the blessings of his heaven ?
Who now recalls his coming to this dark world of sin?

As Christians we believe that peace is possible, the hungry can be fed and the homeless find shelter. And we can work together to achieve it and thus truly remember and celebrate the God who came to earth as a baby to transform a troubled world.

I would like to wish you a peaceful Christmas as you celebrate and seek to play your part in bringing about transformation in this world.

Yours in Christ,

George

*Revd George Watt
Moderator, URC Thames North Synod*



Stella Acott	1 December
Emily Marshall-Jones	4 December
Barbara Sanderson	8 December
Anna Buschkill	10 December
Michael Bottone	10 December
Steve Bottone	24 December
Terry Smith	30 December
Peter Hilton	4 January
Magdalen Smith	5 January



News from the Scouts



Remembrance Sunday is one the two Parades each year when the Scout Group should have a particularly good showing. On 12 November, the Scout Troop achieved practically full attendance at church. Some of the Cub Scouts and Beaver Scouts were unable to attend, but, in spite of this, those sections were also there in force. Scouters and Helpers wore special scarves with a poppy motif.

At the end of the service, Barbara Morgan (Group Scout Leader) presented two awards to members of the Group. Christian, a Scout, received his Jack Petchey award and Alex Galpin received his 5 Year's Service Award from the Scout Association. Alex is standing down as Chair of the Executive Committee because he is leaving the Havering area.

The three sections (Beavers, Cubs and Scouts) are continuing with a full programme of activities and it is good to report that membership is increasing with Beavers and Cubs having about 20 each and the Scout Troop numbering 12. They are all continuing with a full programme of activities. Recent highlights have included a Beavers' trip to the RAF Hornchurch Heritage Centre and the Cubs visiting an Escape Room.

Ian Sanderson



Harold Hill Foodbank



As the song goes:

Christmas is a coming.
The geese are getting fat.
Please put a penny in the old man's hat



At this time I especially ask you to think about the Foodbank and the work it does in supporting those who need help whatever the season. You can help them very easily by getting an extra item when you're shopping and putting it in the box in our Church Porch. The top 10 things they are

looking for at the moment are soup, biscuits, UHT milk, tinned fish, tinned meat, tinned fruit, tinned tomatoes, instant mashed potato, tinned vegetables and long-life fruit juice.

During October the Foodbank received 232 vouchers and supported 372 adults plus 220 children. They gave out a total of 4,195 kg of food. Additional information is displayed on the Church Noticeboard. It is obvious that the need is still very much there and our support is very much needed. Please help if you can; it is really appreciated.

Barry Smith



Look out for Wenceslas



Most of us probably know that on 26th December (the Feast of Stephen) ‘Good king Wenceslas’ looked out....’ We probably also know that the snow lay round about, ‘deep and crisp and even’. Beyond that, he’s just someone in a carol that’s not often sung nowadays.

However, Wenceslas was a real person, a duke, and effectively king of Bohemia in the 10th century. In modern terms, he was Czechoslovakian. He was known as a generous and kind monarch, deeply Christian and given to good works. So, the story in the carol by the Victorian hymn-writer J.M. Neale, while possibly fictitious, is at least in line with his recognised character. ‘Page and monarch’ braved the ‘bitter weather’ and



the ‘cruel wind’s wild lament’ to take food and fuel to a poor man living rough.

Neale’s carol was enormously popular in the 19th century, because it perfectly expressed Victorian Christian ideals of benevolence and almsgiving. Christian men of ‘wealth and rank’ are urged to help the poor, and so ‘find blessing’. Ignoring the ‘wealth and rank and men’ bit, it’s still good advice, at Christmas or any other time.

Christmas Appeal

Offerings made on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day will go towards our Christmas Appeal in support of Crisis, a national charity which has helped the homeless and campaigned for change since 1967.



Please be as generous as you can.
Thank you.

Friends may prefer to support our Appeal by making a bank transfer or writing a cheque. Donations are eligible for Gift Aid which will be forwarded to the charity at a later date. Please use one of these methods:

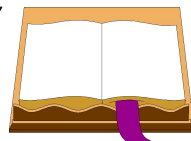
- Make an online bank transfer to "Nelmes URC", sort code 40-52-40, account number 00025856. Use "Xmas" as a reference with "+ GA" if you wish us to claim Gift Aid .
- Issue a cheque payable to "Nelmes URC" writing "Xmas" on the back with "+ GA" if you wish us to claim Gift Aid. Put your cheque in the church offertory or post it to me.

John Hawkins



Sunday Readings

3 Dec	Is 64:1-9	Mk 13:24-37	1 Cor 1:3-9
10 Dec	Is 40:1-11	Mk 1:1-8	2 Pet 3:8-15a
17 Dec	Is 61:1-4, 8-11	Jn 1:6-8, 19-28	1 Thes 5:16-24
24 Dec	2 Sam 7:1-11, 16	Lk 1:26-38	Rom 6:1-25-27
31 Dec	Is 61:10-62:8	Lk 2:22-40	Gal 4:4-7
7 Jan	Gen 1:1-2	Mk 1:4-11	Acts 19:1-7



This month's worship leaders

Claire Bottone is an Elder of our Church.

Brian Busckill is a minister within the Heath, Havering & Forest Group.

The **Nelmes Worship Group** is organised by our own Elders

Ann Woodhurst is a retired URC minister.

Make a note in your diary




December

3 11.15 am **Advent Sunday Worship: Revd Ann Woodhurst**
M 4 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays
Tu 5 9.45 am Bible Study at Upminster Trinity URC

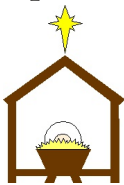
10 11.15 am **Morning Worship: Mrs Claire Bottone**
M 11 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays
Tu 12 9.45 am Bible Study at Upminster Trinity URC



17 11.15 am **Morning Worship: Revd Brian Busckill**
Distribution of greetings cards
M 18 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays
w 20 7.30 pm Elders' Meeting 
F 22 7.00 pm Blue Christmas Service at Upminster Trinity URC

24 11.15 am **Worship with Communion: Revd Brian Busckill**
4.30 pm **Christmas Eve Carols by Candlelight**
M 25 10.30 am **Christmas Day Worship: Nelmes Worship Group**

31 11.15 am **Christmas Songs of Praise**



January 2024

Tu 2 9.45 am First Tuesday Prayers 

7 11.15 am **Morning Worship: Mr Barry Smith**
M 8 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays

14 11.15 am **Morning Worship: Revd Brian Busckill**
M 15 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays
17 7.30 pm Elders' Meeting 



21 11.15 am **Morning Worship: Mr Tim Banks**
M 22 7.00 pm Blue Sky Mondays



28 11.15 am **Worship with Communion: Revd Brian Busckill**
Contact keithf2006@btinternet.com for *zoom* details



Nelmes United Reformed Church

Nelmes Road, Hornchurch RM11 3JA



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Sunday Worship

Morning Worship for all ages at 11.15 am.
Communion Service on the 4th Sunday of each month

Blue Sky Mondays

7.00 pm: A quiet hour to spend time with the Lord

Activities in the Halls

Nelmes Pre-School	School-days	08:00 - 15:00
Zumba Fitness	Tuesday	19:00 - 20:00
Nelmes Womens Institute	2 nd Wednesday	12:30 - 16:30
EP & AG Residents Association	1 st Thursday	20:00 - 22:30
Beavers, Cubs & Scouts	Friday	16:30 - 21:30
Woodcarvers' Group	2 nd Saturday	10:30 - 14:30

Nelmes URC is part of the Heath, Havering & Forest group of Churches
www.heathandhaveringurc.co.uk