



The HEATH



News, Views & Comment from the
United Reformed Church, Chadwell Heath
50p
December 2020/ January 2021

*'At Advent we should try the key to our heart's door.
It may have gathered rust.
If so, this is the time to oil it,
in order that the heart's door may open more easily
when the Lord Jesus wants to enter
at Christmas time!'*

(A New Guinea Christian)

Dear Friends,

Advent, is celebrated by the Christian Church during the four weeks before Christmas Day.

It reminds us of three different 'comings' of Jesus. The first is in the past. It happened long ago at the first Christmas. Jesus, God's Son, the one who made the world, came to live on earth as a human baby, Immanuel, God with us. He grew through boyhood, into manhood. A man who gave His life in order to bring us close to God. The second 'coming' belongs in the present because Jesus is waiting to come now to every person who invites him into their heart and life. His Spirit is with us now and God's love is spread everywhere in the world. The third 'coming' of Jesus is still in the future. Christians believe that one day He will come back to our world, not as a helpless baby, but as a King and a Judge of all.

So Advent is the season for getting ready – ready to understand the true meaning of Christmas, ready to ask Him into our lives and ready for the day when He will come again.

Of all the seasons in the year, it is Christmas which evokes the strongest feelings in people of all ages – whether that be the excitement of the young child on Christmas Eve, the stress of entertaining (this year within the permitted regulations) or the apprehension of those for whom Christmas Day will be a difficult or lonely time. In many of our churches, we will be giving thanks for, and celebrating, the lives of those, who during this time of 'self-isolation and restriction' have been called to be with their God...May they rest in peace.

Let us look forward to enjoying all the good things of Christmas, especially if these have to do with a closer involvement of family and friends. At the same time we should not forget the need of the outsider and the stranger, because Jesus came to Bethlehem as child of homeless parents; He was soon to flee the town as a child of refugee asylum - seekers as they fled to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath.

Wherever you experience God this Advent and Christmas Season may you know of His love for you.

In our churches, Trinity, Nelmes and Chadwell Heath, as we approach 2021, our waiting for the Ministerial vacancy continues. Let us be confident that God will provide for us, in His time.

We might remind ourselves that Christmas is followed by Epiphany, when God showed Himself in unexpected places.

I cannot let this opportunity go without saying how incredibly grateful I am to so many of you who have used your gifts and talents to strengthen and deepen our fellowships; and to express your love and concern for others in a mirade of ways.

May I wish you all a Happy and Blessed Christmas and may 2021 bring Good Health and Prosperity to us all.

Yours in Christ,

Ann

(Revd. Ann Woodhurst)



“God is with us in our pain and fear” – Bishop of London’s message of hope

The Bishop of London, Rt Revd Sarah Mullally, has said that despite this being a time of “great uncertainty and challenge” as the world struggles to “overcome a devastating pandemic that has cut short earthly lives, destroyed livelihoods, and separated us from the people and activities we enjoy,” yet still “we are not without hope.”

Speaking recently in St Paul’s Cathedral, she said: “Through word, prayer, song and symbol, we are reminded that God’s love for us can never be destroyed. God is with us in our pain and fear and will lead us to a yet more glorious day.”

Bishop Sarah also praised the ongoing work of the “real heroes and heroines at work in intensive care units, the Emergency Department, oncology and elderly care wards.”

These people have been “giving their all, and are continuing to give their all, because we are still very much in the midst of the Covid pandemic.”

“Yet,” she went on, ‘The hope we have in our hearts as Christians is eternal. Hope that is in Christ will not be disappointed.’

‘Do you write articles for the church magazine? Would you like them to feature on the Heath and Havering URC website/blog? If so, email them to handhurc@gmail.com

Heath and Havering Website Administrator

<http://www.heathandhaveringurc.co.uk>

Thank You

Hazel



Journeys or lockdown this Christmas?

'Christmas may look different, but the story is still the same!' Coronavirus will make our celebrations this year look very different from usual. However, the message of the baby born in Bethlehem is still relevant!

In one nativity play, the highlight was to illuminate Jesus, with a light in the manger, when all the other lights were turned off. At the appropriate time, all the lights went out, including the manger one. The silence was broken when one of the shepherds loudly whispered: 'Hey, you turned off Jesus.' Of course, nobody can turn off Jesus this Christmas!

The angels announced, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.' (Luke 2: 10,11). The birth of this baby brings great joy and good news for everyone! As the king of the universe, He has come as our Saviour. In an uncertain world, He offers joy and hope, because He holds this pandemic in His hands. This is a real cause for joy!

'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests.' (Luke 2:14). We may feel anything but peace amid the anxieties over our current circumstances. How can a Jewish infant born to a peasant family in first century Palestine bring peace to our lives today? But Jesus established peace with God through His death on the cross. Trusting the Prince of Peace for our lives brings God's peace amid the huge uncertainties we face.

As the carol says, 'Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her King.'



Mince Pies & Christmas Eve

Did you know that mince pies have been traditional English Christmas fare since the Middle Ages, when meat was a key ingredient? The addition of spices, suet and alcohol to meat came about because it was an alternative to salting and smoking in order to preserve the food. Mince pies used to be a different shape – cradle-shaped with a pastry baby Jesus on top.

How do you celebrate Christmas Eve? It has its own customs, the most popular of which is going to Midnight Mass, or the Christ-Mas. This is the only Mass of the year that is allowed to start after sunset. In Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy and Poland, Midnight Mass is in fact the most important church service of the entire Christmas season, and many people traditionally fast beforehand. In other countries, such as Belgium and Denmark, people dine during the evening, and then go on to the Midnight Service.

The British are behind some countries when it comes to exchanging presents: in Germany, Sweden and Portugal the custom is to exchange on Christmas Eve. But the British are ahead of Serbia and Slovakia, where the Christmas tree is not even brought into the house and decorated until Christmas Eve.

Yule logs are not so popular since the decline of the fireplace, but traditionally it was lit on Christmas Eve from a bit of the previous year's log, and then would be burned non-stop until 12th Night (6th January). Tradition also decreed that any greenery such as holly, ivy or mistletoe must wait until Christmas Eve until being brought into the house.



**This is one of the best posts I've seen on Facebook in a while.
It says something helpful about prayer. And about God.**

Me: Okay, God, here's the thing. I'm scared. I'm trying not to be, but I am.

God: I know. Want to talk about it?

Me: Do we need to? I mean, you already know.

God: Let's talk about it anyway... We've done this before.

Me: I know, I just feel like I should be bigger or stronger or something by now.

God: *waiting patiently, unhurried, undistracted, never annoyed.

Me: Okay. So, I'm afraid I'll do everything I can to protect my family and it won't be enough. I'm afraid of someone I love dying. I'm afraid the world won't go back to what it was before. I'm afraid my life is always going to feel a little bit unsettled.

God: Anything else?

Me: EVERYTHING ELSE.

God: Remember how your child woke up one night and came rushing to your bedroom?

Me: Yes.

God: You were still awake, so when you heard them running, you started calling out to them before they even got to you... remember? Do you remember what you called out to them?

Me: I said, "You're okay! You're okay! You're okay! I'm here."

God: Why did you call to them? Why didn't you just wait for them to get to your room?

Me: Because I wanted them to know that I was awake, and I heard them, and they didn't have to be afraid until they got to me.

God: Exactly. I hear you, my child. I hear your thoughts racing like feet down a dark hallway. There's another side to all of this. I'm there already. I've seen the end of it. And I want you to know right here as you walk through it all, you're okay. I haven't gone to sleep, and I won't.

Me: *crying. Can we sit together awhile? Can we just sit here a minute before I go back to facing it all?

God: There's nothing I'd love more....

CHURCH DIARY DECEMBER/ JANUARY

Here is the preaching calendar which, subject to government instructions, should be going ahead for the next two months.

6 Dec	11.30am	Holy Communion	Revd Ann Woodhurst
13 Dec	4.30pm	Nativity Service	Emily Catlin
20 Dec	4.30pm	Carols by Candlelight	Diana & Cassie Baker
25 Dec	10.00am	Christmas Morning	Cassie Baker
27 Dec	11.30am	Favourite Hymns & Remembering Loved Ones	The Elders
3 Jan	11.30am	Holy Communion & Re-dedication	Revd Ann Woodhurst
10 Jan	11.30am	Morning Worship	Revd Ann Woodhurst
17 Jan	11.30am	Morning Worship	Tim Marshall
24 Jan	11.30am	Morning Worship	Revd Christine Harding
31 Jan	11.30am	Morning Worship	Revd Ann Woodhurst

Worship Themes DECEMBER/JANUARY

The Church are using the themes listed below which are based on the Lectionary and will possibly be used by those leading our worship.

December 6, 2020	Isaiah 40:1-11	2 Peter 3:8-15a	Mark 1:1-8
December 13, 2020	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24	John 1:6-8, 19-28
December 20, 2020	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	Romans 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38
January 6, 2021	Isaiah 60:1-6	Ephesians 3:1-12	Matthew 2:1-12
January 10, 2021	Genesis 1:1-5	Acts 19:1-7	Mark 1:4-11
January 17, 2021	1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)	1 Corinthians 6:12-20	John 1:43-51
January 24, 2021	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	1 Corinthians 7:29-31	Mark 1:14-20
January 31, 2021	Deuteronomy 18:15-20	1 Corinthians 8:1-13	Mark 1:21-28

What do your family call him, that cheerful old man in a red robe and floppy hat who pops up everywhere at Christmas? Sometimes he's Father Christmas, sometimes Santa Claus, and in parts of Europe he's Saint Nicholas. That's his real name, abbreviated to 'Santa Claus' by Brits and Americans who don't like to follow the Europeans, and then turned into a more homely, cuddly kind of name for the children. Whatever he's called, his function is the same – delivering presents to children at Christmas.

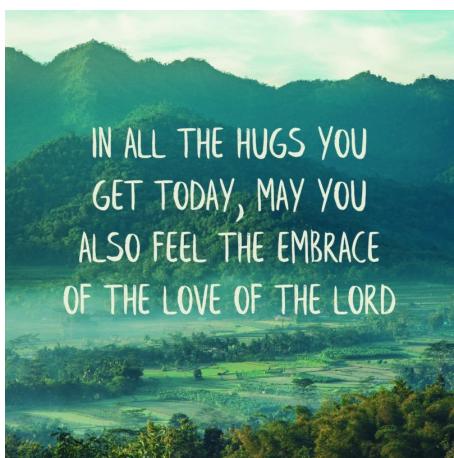
The first St Nicholas was bishop of Myra, in the country we now call Turkey, in the fourth century. He was known as the friend of the poor, and especially poor or abused children. At (or just before) Christmas he went around handing out presents to them, as well as rescuing some from dreadful circumstances. The red robe our modern Santa Claus wears may be a vague representation of a bishop's garment, and the floppy hat is his mitre!

The original good bishop from 1600 years ago is remembered by the Church on December 6th, and the lucky children in Belgium and the Netherlands get their presents then.



Happy Birthday's in December

Karen Bailey 6th, Margaret Rose 8th, TJ Mayo 10th,
Ray Weiner 11th, Ron Smith 16th, Terry Mayo 19th, Samantha
Bailey 21st, Emily Catlin 25th.



Happy Birthday's in January

Benjamin Campbell 1st,
Pauline Clarkson 9th, Jeanet
Zarrate 12th,
Neil Crisp 17th.



Let's hear it for the Christmas card!

A folded piece of Christmas cheer
Came through the post today!
I love it when those cards appear
I love the things they say!

And at this busy Christmas time
I'm always glad to see
The Christmas scene or Christmas rhyme
That you have sent to me.

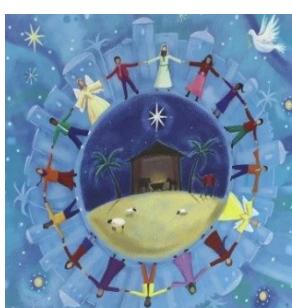
The trouble that good people take
Is really, really kind –
Some people even sit and make
A card for me to find!

And in our virtual world of text
And pictures on a screen
These bits and bytes leave me perplexed
If you know what I mean?

And so I think that it is fine
To see your kind regard
I can admire this Christmas time

Your real Christmas card!

By Nigel Beeton



Everyday Christmas (Mal 4:2, Mt 1:23)

Light a candle,
Look into the light,
Pray.

*Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings*

As the flame rises,
Smooth, bright,
Know the comfort of Christ
In the carol speaking Afresh.
Bringing Jesus
Into heart and prayer.

Emmanuel, God with us.
Light of the world,
Out of the stable
Into our situations.

Because of Jesus
Christmas is everyday.

The Lord is here.
Hallelujah.

By Daphne Kitching

God in Sciences— Follow the Star

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event.



He gave us eyes to see them: St Kevin of Glendalough and the blackbird

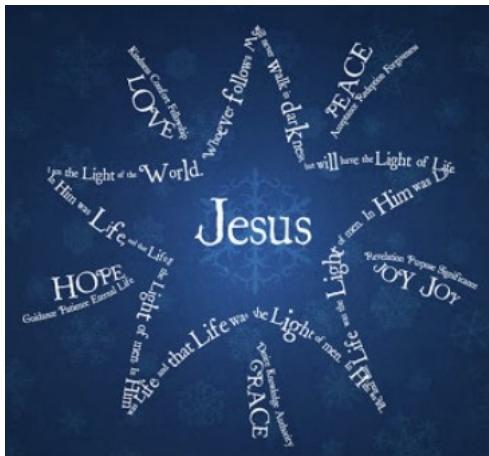
During this year we have explored the beauty and wonder of our world in the rich variety of all creatures great and small. In the months of lockdown and restrictions, many of us have used the time to look afresh at the world of Nature and have learnt to value it once again. When we look at the life of the 6th century Irish hermit saint, Kevin of Glendalough, we see someone who had that special relationship with the birds and animals. An otter, the wolf and a wild boar were his co-hermits. We are told that during Lent as he was kneeling in prayer in his cell, he held his arm out of the window. A blackbird mistook the arm for the branch of a tree and built its nest in the saint's hand. The saint waited until the eggs were laid and hatched and the fledglings had flown.



One of the earliest depictions of this story is a marginal drawing in *The History of Ireland* by Gerald of Wales in the early 13th century and now in the British Library. He visited Ireland several times and was entranced by the marvels he saw and the tales he heard. To accompany the story of St Kevin, an unknown artist drew the saint sat in his cell, cradling the blackbird gently in his left hand. Seamus Heaney captured the story in a poem in which he wondered if the saint was self-forgetful in all those months or perhaps in agony. The poet praises St Kevin because he sought no reward, but offered time and patience to care for this sign of new life.

So much has happened to us during this year for good and ill, and we wonder what the new year will bring. Perhaps St Kevin can inspire us to journey with faith and hope, and to travel through the months ahead with a renewed concern for the created order around. The Gaelic name Kevin means loved. Like him, we pray that we will love and cherish this planet, and care for the wonder and beauty of birds like the blackbird and all the animals. Then we can rejoice with him in the wonder of Creation that displays the handiwork of God the Creator.

12 ways to avoid stress this Christmas



Change your expectations this Christmas. Don't waste time lamenting what should have been. Instead, try and enjoy whatever is possible this year.

Make a list. Include sending cards, buying presents and organising food for the big day. Having a lists helps keep you in control of your life.

Set a reduced budget this year. With a pandemic raging, this no time to take on Christmas debt. If you can't pay for it this month, probably best not to buy it.

Exercise each day – it releases happiness-inducing serotonin. That will help you to keep calm and positive over the festive period.

Don't overindulge. Too much alcohol and rich food won't improve your life.

Keep calm and keep kind – urge your family members to try and avoid any flare up of family tensions. If you need to cry, cry, but then, keep on keeping on.

Remember those everyday essentials: batteries for new toys, toilet paper, milk, paper towel. Those things you never think about – until they are gone.

Entertain the kids: plan ahead various films, games and whatever it takes to give them a memorable Christmas.

Make the most of Zoom this year with far-flung relatives and friends.

Most of all, include God in your Christmas! This is His Son's birthday – include Bible readings and carols in your family routine over the festive period.

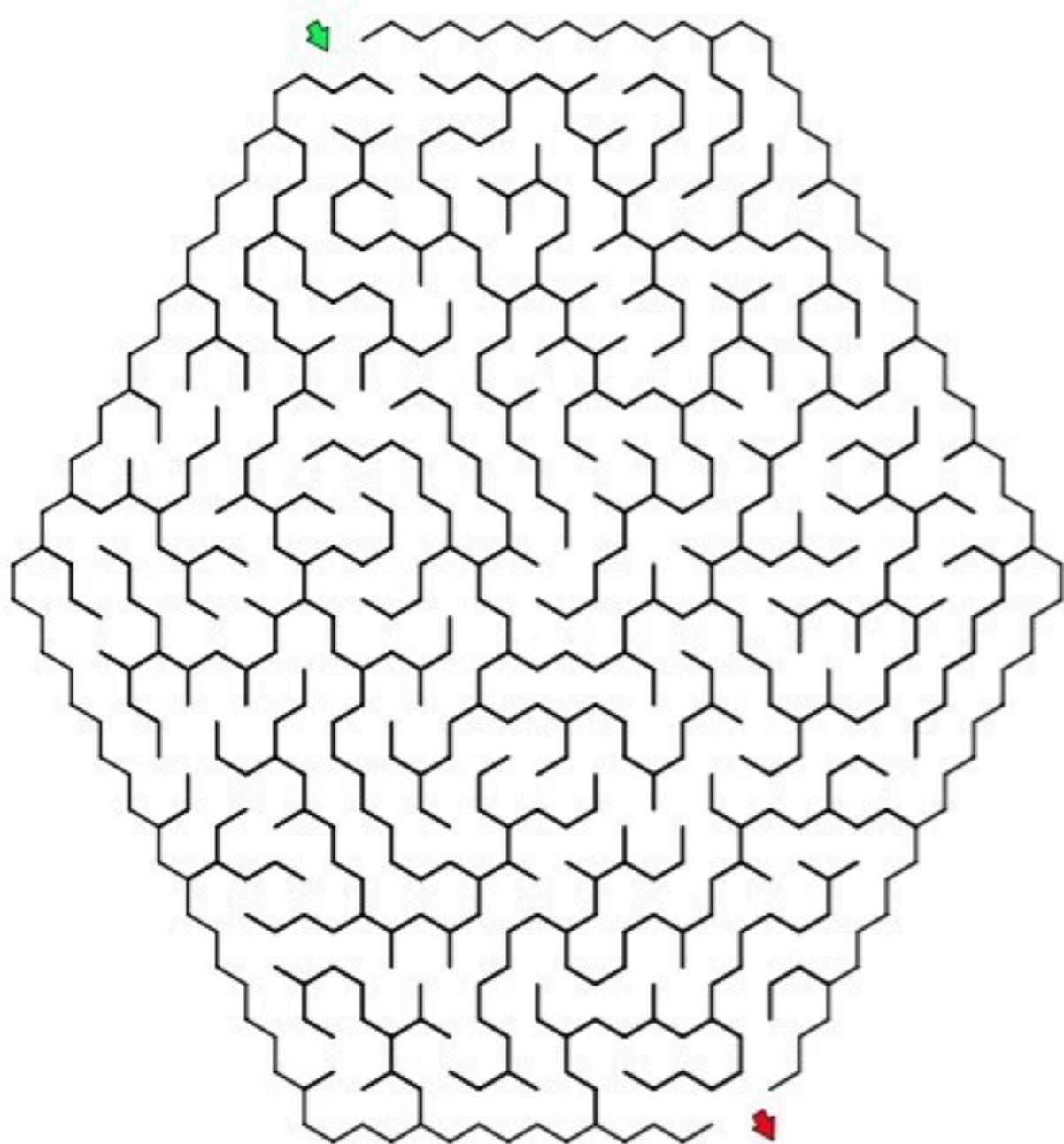
Diary/Noticeboard:

Chadwell Heath + Heath & Havering Group of Churches

Foodbank: Thank you for your continued support. We are short of cereals, milk, tinned fruit, sweets, ketchup & pet food. We are very grateful to receive any non-perishable food items, as well as general items e.g. washing powder/liquid, washing up liquid, tin openers – plus all important personal/ female/ toiletries including soap, toothbrushes & toothpaste/toilet rolls & baby nappies, sizes 5/6.



Maze Dec 2020



A Saviour is Born



A picture to colour for Christmas. Colour in one star each day as you count down to Christmas!

Read the Christmas story in Luke 1:1 - 2:21

It's a Wonderful World

In spite of the fact we complain and lament
And view this old world with much discontent,
Deploring conditions and grumbling because There's so much injustice and so many
flaws, It's a wonderful world, and it's people like you Who make it that way by the things
that they do..For a warm, ready smile or a kind, thoughtful deed,
Or a hand outstretched in an hour of need Can change our whole outlook and make the
world bright Where a minute before just nothing seemed right...

It's a *Wonderful World* and it always will be if we keep our eyes open and focussed to see
The *Wonderful Things* man is capable of When he opens his heart to *God and His Love*.

By Helen Steiner Rice

New Year Thoughts

Fear not, do not be afraid, when all around is darkness and destruction.
The enemy seeks to destroy my children. His aim is to shatter their
trust and security in their Heavenly Father.

Draw near to me at such times. There is no other God. I am your only
protection from storm and tempest, from buffeting and shaking. Be still
– feel the peace that only I can give. For darkness has never over-
come the light, and *I am the Light of the World* – your world.

Feel my arms wrapped around you. Do not struggle, but relax. The fear
that grips at such times is also the plan of the enemy. He enjoys to
see you frightened and unable to move, gripped by the darkness and
closed in on every side.

I am closer than the darkness. Nearer than your shadow. I dwell in you –
can I get closer than that? My Spirit fills you and you will stand. Many
are the wiles of the evil one, but my power is unmatchable. Rest then
in my ability to save to the uttermost. Walk through your fear – you
and I. You in me and I in you.

John 1: verses 4-5

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not
overcome it.*



By Patricia Garratt



WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES
Foodbank, Tuesday &
Thursday 10:00am - 12
noon.



Web site: [http://www.heathandhaveringurc.co.uk/
chadwellheath.html](http://www.heathandhaveringurc.co.uk/chadwellheath.html)

Chadwell Heath URC is part of the Heath and
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Please send any news, information or an article
for the Heath to Dianne Crisp.

Email Dianne.crisp@ntlworld.com The deadline is
Friday 24th January 2021 for the February 2021
Issue.