



## *Minister's Letter*

*Dear Friends,*

Advent is upon us and then Christmas, a busy time of year for all of us with all the preparations, both practical and spiritual. Once again, we are in uncertain territory with the latest variant of Covid 19 causing concern and infections rates still high. Yet despite all this we journey through Advent, preparing ourselves, towards Christmas in hope and expectation.

In the coming weeks despite all the busyness let us all make time to prepare for the big event, Christmas the birth of Jesus, God becoming a human being.

My fear is that in all the busyness I and others will rush through Advent not making time, taking time to prepare to reflect, think about what the true meaning of Christmas is, and if we do that then another danger is that we are unable to resist societal pressure that Christmas is only an opportunity to spend money, to overeat and drink too much.

Christmas is so much more than that, and we lose sight of that so easily if we are not careful. We also need to be aware that many people do not know the Christmas story, for them this time of year is just about presents, family, friends, food, and drink. This can increase the pressure is on those who for whatever reason feel unable or are unable to share the excitement.

Our preparations for Christmas need to think about how we tell the Christmas story within our families, to our friends and our communities so that the joy and wonder of God becoming an human being is real and meaningful and can be shared by all. After all Jesus was born for all humanity.

Advent- four weeks in which we can prepare for the birth of Christ, Christmas – a day of celebration - God becoming an human being. Yet both have longer lasting effects and influences and as we prepare and celebrate, we know that Christ's birth is both an end and a beginning.

Advent gives us the chance to allow the mystery, wonder and surprise of God's action to enter our hearts and minds so that we truly celebrate Christmas welcoming God into our communities.

So may I wish you a reflective Advent, an amazing Christ-mas and an Happy New Year.

*Alison*

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**BBC**

**Children  
in Need**

Terry Ann raised £117 for Children in Need with a coffee and cake time in her complex. Well done She thanks everyone who supported her and gave donations.



### Church Security'

On the morning of Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> November the front doors of the, (the doors facing the Western Road) and they were closed but not locked!

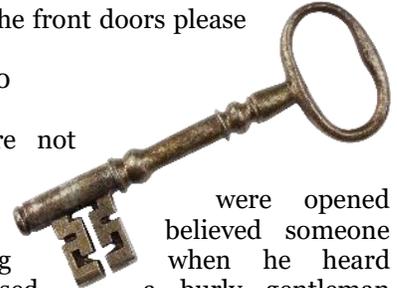
The lock is not easy to operate, but if you do access the church through the front doors please exit in the same way and ensure that the door is firmly locked behind you.

When locking these doors please check that the handle rotates through 360 degrees with total ease. This ensures the doors are locked.

If any difficulty is met when turning the door handle. They are not locked! Therefore, please try again.

A few days later on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> a man entered the church when the doors were opened for Mother and Toddlers. He took a charity collection box in which, it is believed someone had deposited a £2 coin. Fortunately, Kirk was making a tour of the building when he heard footsteps on the back stairs, he waited and stood still. As the footsteps ceased a burly gentleman appeared pretending to carry out some sort of inspection. Kirk established that this person had no right to be on the premises and escorted him out.

Opportunist sneak thieves operate during the daytime, even in Romford. Please for your own safety do not leave the doors unguarded. If you are in the building and it is necessary to leave the entrance lobby, put the doors on to **No Entry** (shown on the instruction sheet by the doors.) This will enable exit to all but no entry. Late commers can always ring the doorbell for admission!



**PLEASE STAY SAFE A D VIGILANT EVERYONE, IT IS ALWAYS BETTER T BE SAFE THAN SORRY.**

*The Trustees*



### Advent 2021

A number of people indicated that they would like an advent activity/discussion after church on Sunday morning and a discussion group on Zoom. Both groups will be about an hour in length. The groups will be based on the advent material produced by the URC for families Come and See

The meetings will be as follows

1 <sup>st</sup> Week	Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> November Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> December	Come and See with the angels Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-24
2 <sup>nd</sup> Week	Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> December Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> December	Come and See with the Wise men Matthew 2:1-12
3 <sup>rd</sup> week	Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup> December	Come and see with the animals & shepherds Luke 2:1-7 Luke 2:8-20
4 <sup>th</sup> week	Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> December	Come and see with the animals & shepherds Luke 2:1-7 Luke 2:8-20

Zoom Link for Wednesday evenings 7.30pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89293078314?pwd=VmtyanFMSFpCcWtsY1dhWEgrSzhZz09>

Meeting ID: 892 9307 8314

Passcode: 987312

## Carol Singing

Please remember to give an hour of your time to sing outside the front of the Church on 23<sup>rd</sup> December at 11.00. there might be a mince pie in it for you and those who pass by.



## Messy Church

Messy Church is on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December from 2.00 – 4.30, thank you to all who volunteered to help, all we need now is lots of children to join us. We have planned lots of activities and a Christmas tea so join us if you can.

*Gill*



Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>  
Sunday 19<sup>th</sup>

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup>  
Friday 24<sup>th</sup>

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup>  
Sunday 26<sup>th</sup>

## December

Messy Church, 2.00 to 4.30 pm  
10am All age nativity Service  
6pm Carols by candlelight  
11am Carol Singing outside the church  
6pm Christmas with Michael Mouse  
11.30pm Midnight Communion  
10am Worship (bring a present to show)  
10am Boxing Day Worship

Please also watch out for notices on WhatsApp and on the weekly service sheet as the Editor is not always given details of upcoming events as these are usually given for the Sunday leaflet and not Kindle.



The cross with poppy made by Trevor to mark Remembrance Day. On the 11th a group of us gathered at the cross at 11am to observe the 2 minutes silence, this was led by Alison.



## Here is an advent letter from the Moderator



Photo by [Dayne Topkin](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Dear friends,

At the start of 2021 we were filled with hope. Nothing could be as challenging as the previous year.... could it? The miracle of the vaccination programme was beginning to be rolled out. Life would return to normal before too long. But, of course, it wasn't until Easter that some churches re-opened and indeed many waited until much later in the year. Even then some members still feel uncomfortable about attending in person. Live streaming and Zoom services which had become very strange new phenomena for last year continue to play a central part in the life of many churches.

Last year was a wakeup call about some of the injustices in our world. Marcus Rashford used his status as a Premiership football player to highlight family food poverty. The Government very quickly, with the onset of the pandemic, ensured that some of the most vulnerable were supported through the Furlough Scheme and the additional Universal Credit top up payment of £20 – things that continued into this year. The death of George Floyd made the world stop and consider that *Black Lives Matter*. The stories of historical and contemporary discrimination and persecution opened our eyes to the reality of what it is like to be part of an ethnic minority group not just in other parts of the world but here in our own nation and local communities. Over the last 20 months we have experienced as individuals, churches, and communities some of the darkest of days and yet there have been some glorious glimmers of hope. And as 2021 comes to a close there is much to give thanks for, but the challenges continue, and the biggest frustration is that there are sometimes when it seems that we have forgotten the lessons learned.

I was excited about taking on my new role as Moderator. I came into post knowing that there would be joys and challenges....and that has certainly proven to be the case. The Spirit is at work in small and bigger ways through his people – you and me. The churches in Thames North Synod demonstrate that we are all one in Christ, whatever our background and whatever our age. But these have been, and continue to be, challenging times with Ministers under great pressure because of having to minister more widely as well as leading churches into a post pandemic world (and of course that also applies to Elders, Office Holders, and volunteers generally) and churches are anxious about what the future holds.

As we move into the Advent season (again) it is an opportunity to rediscover hope. Surely God has given seasons like a heartbeat to keep us alive. Surely that is true of Advent with its important focus on hope. No doubt at the end of 2022 there will still be challenges but in the meantime, we are called to live, share, and proclaim the message of hope which is at the heart of the Scriptures, our faith and the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Myself and my family (Linda, Nathan, Emily, Jacob, and Reuben) would like to wish you a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. Despite the frustrations of living and commuting from Surrey and searching for a new home, we can now look forward to moving to Watford in early December which will complete our new beginnings in Thames North Synod.

May the words of the prophet Isaiah encourage us all and fill us with hope as we finish 2021 and move into 2022.

A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,  
from his roots a budding Branch.



## My Friend Jacqueline

I knew Jacqueline for over forty years. We first met when Russell and Richard started at Ardleigh Green school. We both took the same route to school, Jacqueline pushing Eleanor in the pram as she was only a few months old, and I had Stephen in the push chair. The boys became friends as did Jacqueline and me. On those walks to and from school we would talk about anything and everything and we would set the world to rights.

When Russell joined Anchor Boys' he told Richard about it and of course he wanted to join, Jacqueline took us down one Friday evening and it is thanks to her that I got my first insight into Boys' Brigade and for that I will always be grateful.

We became Church members and Elders within a year of each other and at one time we were part of the secretarial team with Vera.

As the boys progressed to senior school we would catch up with the latest news and gossip after church on a Sunday morning. Later when the grandchildren came along, we would share photos and news, two proud grandmothers.

Jacqueline was a talented lady who could turn her hand to any craft, I would receive the most beautiful birthday cards as well as Christmas and Easter cards and other items in between, she truly was a very talented lady.

She had a smile that could light up a room, and sunny outlook on life.

When Alan became ill, she looked after him with such care and devotion, pushing him in the wheelchair when he could no longer walk, no mean feat. Never once did I hear her complain, she may well have done in private. When it became clear she could no longer care for Alan at home he went into a home. I spoke with Jacqueline a few days after he had been admitted, although she knew it was for the best there was a hint of regret in her voice. Just as she should have been enjoying some me time, she became seriously ill.

I am going to miss her smile and sunny outlook on life, our Sunday chats. But most of all I am going to miss my very dear friend Jacqueline.

Rest in peace dear friend



*Jean*

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*Thank you*

We have just delivered 8 boxes of Christmas Shoe Boxes to the Entertainer Shop in Romford, so a big thank you to everyone who contributed in any way.

Some of us on a Crafternoon afternoon covered all the boxes with Christmas paper so the boxes looked Christmassy, and many members gave generously to fill the boxes.

### Refuge Gifts

Please can you give as generously to the residents at the Refuge for Christmas. Gifts need to be placed on the choir stalls by December 19<sup>th</sup> so that I can deliver them in time for Christmas. Please label your gift for a girl, a boy or a mother and age appropriate.

My thanks as always.

*Gill*

## Goodbye Soup and Cheese Lunches

It was sad to hear that Soup & Cheese Lunches have finished. Serving lunches has been a part of my life for more than 40 years. I booked every Wednesday for making and serving lunches at Church - no appointments, no visiting, no callers. Wednesdays, since I can remember were Soup & Cheese days for our family and regular helpers. In recent years, and as far as Andrew & Ceri were concerned, they arranged any work commitments they had to leave Wednesdays free. Sadly, there is no longer a demand for our services. Perhaps in the future there will be another activity to absorb the skills of our family and a new band of volunteers.

People might like to know how we started. It was Anne Haley and Beryl English who set it up. One of them had been on holiday and had lunch at a Church Hall. "Why can't we do the same?" was the seed from which it all grew. It started on 19th November 1975. I was working part time so dashed off to school as soon as everything was set up. I do not remember why I became Treasurer, but I have the accounts from the first day until the first lockdown last year.

They make interesting reading. The main thing I remember of the first day was cheese. Lots, and lots of cheese - we had no idea how much to buy! We had far too much, and we all took some home leaving one lump in the fridge for the following week. Our accounts show that the piece we bought cost £4.14.

We tried to be self-sufficient and not to use the Church too much. We bought knives - plastic ones, on the first week. It took us until January to afford spoons - 96p! It was months before we bought our own saucepans. Each month we paid £2 to the Church for Gas & Electric. On the first week we took £9.75½ and were in the red by 11p. This is the first page of my accounts.

Expenditure W/E Nov. 22 <sup>nd</sup>		Income Nov. 19 <sup>th</sup>
Soup	1.60	
Cheese <sup>44.114</sup>	2.76	
Coffee	2.21	
Tea	83	
	<u>7.40</u>	7.40
Orange	.48	
Bread	.52	
Ryvita	.17	
Mac-maid	.34	
Sugar	.22	
	<u>1.73</u>	1.73
milk	19	
butter	.29	.48
	<u>.48</u>	
washing-up liquid	.09½	
Knives	.16	
	<u>.25½</u>	
		9.86½
		From sales £9.75½
		Balance - 11p

We sent our first donation to Save the Children at Christmas that year. As I had never kept records before, I asked would anyone like to check my accounts. Reg Earl accepted the challenge and I have his signature alongside his comment "checked and found correct" on the record for July 19th as you can see on the next page.

Ann

was sad to see the note on the Sunday leaflet that Soup and Cheese was to be no more. The Wednesday lunchtime meal has been part of the church activities for so long and was also a wonderful outreach into the local community. A good meeting place, and an opportunity to chat to other members of the congregation, when there was so little time on a Sunday morning. I want to give a big THANK YOU to Ann, Ceri, Andrew, and all other helpers who have looked after us all for so long - over 40 years - and raised thousands of pounds for needy children. A real marathon effort.

Betty



**Faith – Hope – Love – Since 1972**

If you have a good news story from the past 50 years that can inspire, raise hope, or show God's work in action then please let URC Communications know. For the URC's 50th anniversary, the team is seeking stories that reflect your favourite memories about the denomination. Please email the team [pressoffice@urc.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@urc.org.uk).

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**Western Road Ladies**

met on 11th November for Christmas crafts! Christine provided the resources and we all enjoyed making our wool Christmas trees with a glitter painted star!

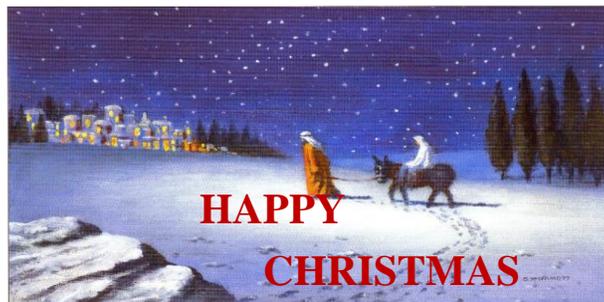
Thank you. Christine.

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Father, I pray that you will turn our hearts toward you as Christmas approaches. Let us not get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season this year and miss the chance to celebrate the gifts of hope, peace, joy, love, that you sent to us on that first Christmas.

That first Christmas, you gave us the gift of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift. In Jesus' precious name, we pray.

Amen





On Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November Trevor, with the help of Lee and Glen braved the elements to put out the Nativity figures on the flat roof at the front of the church. They also fixed the ropes with stars and baubles to the figures and then down to the cross. Thanks go to Gill for her inspiration. Thanks also to Gill and members of crafternoon for painting the stars and tying them and the baubles onto the ropes.

The church is really looking very Christmassy, as Graham and Doreen have been busy putting up and decorating the Christmas tree and Trevor has provided an Advent wreath.

Thanks to all those who have helped with any of these!  
Can you spot the extra figures in one of the photos of the nativity scene?



*Jill*



Many of you have read and enjoyed Jeff Lucas' musings so here is one for Advent/Christmas that I came across recently.

### **Christmas light – God comes close**

From a distance, God is watching us – Bette Midler made the song famous. It's quite a nice, catchy song. But it's just not true. The Christmas message is that the light of the world is not just out there somewhere, perhaps slightly to the left of Jupiter. Jesus, who has always existed as the Son of God, became a tiny speck in the Virgin Mary's womb – a mysterious baffling miracle that only God could perform.

He came close to us and was born, not as a fated prince in a palace, but in damp squalid conditions of an animal shed. He experienced the tedium and grind of life. His earthly parents were poor. On his birth he slept in a feeding trough.

His arrival attracted the attention of some for whom life was one long uphill trudge, like those shepherds in the fields. Shepherding was a dull job; there's a reason why counting sheep is a sleep remedy. Shepherds were also considered disreputable and untrustworthy; they were infamous for sheep stealing and taking the flocks on to land without permission. They were at the bottom of the social ladder. Perhaps that is why they were invited the birthday party of Jesus – right from the start, his coming meant that people on the margins were being included.

Jesus came down to our ordinary, mundane world and became a baby. The old Christmas carol is another song that got it wrong:

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes  
But the little Lord Jesus no crying he makes*

The truth is that Jesus cried, needed a nappy change, and became as vulnerable as any other tiny new-born. But it didn't end there. The baby grew up. Lived and worked as a tradesman. And he was and is the rescuer that we all need.

*(used with permission)*

*found by Ruth Mitchell*

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### **Not such a Happy Christmas**

Imagine opening a greetings card during the holiday season and finding not a message from a friend, a member of your family or some half-forgotten acquaintance, but a death threat.

Viviana Diaz Caro and Mireya Garcia of the Chilean human rights group the Association of Relatives of the Detained/Disappeared received the above threat in a Christmas card at their offices in Santiago on 15 December 1999.

The card was sent in the name of the Country and Freedom National Front, a right-wing extremist group active during General Augusto Pinochet's military government, and the publisher was given as 'Villa Grimaldi', a notorious torture centre during the same period.

The threats are the latest in a series received by human rights workers since the arrest of General Pinochet in London in October 1998, none of which have been fully investigated by the authorities.

'At a time of year when most of our thoughts turn to family, there are still thousands of people in Chile who cannot be sure whether some of their loved ones are alive or dead.'

'It is astonishing that some of the relatives of the disappeared have had added to their anguish not only death threats, but a failure by the proper authorities to fully investigate these threats against their lives.'

From Amnesty International

## Christmas Quiz

And now for a bit of fun from Linda Marriott. Answers in next edition

1. According to the poem "the Night Before Christmas," how many reindeer did Santa have to pull his sleigh?
  - a) 8
  - b) 9
  - c) 10
2. What is traditionally hidden inside a Christmas pudding?
3. What is the name of the character in Charles Dicken's Christmas Carol that gets visited by the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future?
4. A foreign city has donated a Christmas tree to the people of Britain every year since 1947, which is always displayed in Trafalgar Square. Which city?
5. How many days are there in a traditional advent calendar?
6. On the song "The 12 days of Christmas", how many gold rings are there?
7. There are 365 days in the year. What number is Christmas Day?
8. Why did Father Christmas need Rudolf to use his large glowing nose to guide his sleigh?
9. What is the last day of Christmas called?
10. Which Central American plant is associated with Christmas?
11. What is Happy Christmas in Spanish?
12. What is the name of the ballet traditionally performed around Christmas each year?
13. Stollen is a cake with fruit and marzipan traditionally eaten at and originating in which country?
14. Who introduced the Christmas tree to the UK?
15. What is a female turkey called?
16. Which unusual ingredient did Victorian cooks use in mince pies?
17. If you were born on Christmas Day what is your star sign?
18. When Santa got stuck in the chimney, his beard was black, his nose was tickling, and what did he have in his sack?
19. Because of the time difference, do the people of Australia get to celebrate Christmas Day before or after the UK?
20. What's the fun name for the sausage wrapped in bacon traditionally eaten with the Christmas dinner?



### Minister

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### Kindle

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