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## *Ministers' Letter*

*Dear Friends,*

Advent is here, an opportunity to reflect and think about what Christmas means. However, we are very good at only thinking about Christmas and not about Advent in itself. Advent can be an unsettling period, there is uncertainty alongside the hope and expectation of God's promises.

Advent, we are waiting for the fulfilment of God's promises, the promised Child, the Messiah is coming. Waiting and the patience required to wait seems in short supply these days. Society wants instant responses, modern methods of communication with the ability to post/reply or tweet reinforce this inability to wait. Yet that is one of the major themes of Advent, waiting on God.

We are called to wait, wait patiently but not passively for God's promises to be fulfilled. As we wait we can work for peace and justice in our world, supporting initiatives by charities such as Christian Aid, the Refuge and many others. It may take quite some time but as we work we continue to share God's love.

As we wait we can pray for peace and justice, remembering the many conflicts around the world and all whose lives are affected by violence.

This year we look to celebrate Christ's birth when the land of his birth is being torn apart again by violence leaving thousands dead, many families separated and a terrible humanitarian crisis despite the recent cease fire. Our patient but fervent prayers are much needed as we and the world wait for peace and justice in the Middle East and other places.

As we wait it is possible to despair as little seems to change, yet the message of Christmas reminds us that change comes quietly and almost hidden in the birth of a child. I am reminded of the hymn God's surprise, the third verse of which says:

Centuries of skill and science  
Span the past from which we move,  
Yet experience questions whether,  
With such progress, we improve.  
While the human lot we ponder,  
Lest our hopes and humour fray,  
God surprises earth with heaven  
Coming here on Christmas Day.

As we journey in Advent preparing ourselves to welcome the Christ Child and celebrate his birth let us also accept the challenge of working with God so that our hopes are fulfilled.

I wish you all a good Advent, a peaceful Christmas and an Happy New Year

*Alison*



**Thank you for your help and support]  
at the Christmas Tree Festival & Christmas Market**



I would just like to say a massive thank you to everyone who helped or supported us at the Christmas Tree Festival & Christmas Market on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November.

Whatever you did whether it was helping on the day or on Friday, decorating a tree, supplying items or turning up on the Saturday and spending

your money it was very much appreciated. I need to give a massive thanks to the Western Road Ladies who did so much work beforehand getting the event organised. I really couldn't do this on my



own and without

all your help it just wouldn't

happen. An extra thanks to Zena, Jo, Margaret, Tracey, Annette and Lee for all their help and of course Father Christmas.

Where would we be without him!!

With all your work, we managed to raise £3,189.92 for our charities St. Francis Hospice and the London Air Ambulance whom I'm sure will be delighted.

It was lovely to see so many people in the church. The church was full and we've had so many compliments about how welcoming and friendly everyone was. People felt very happy to be there and thought it was a brilliant day. What better way to let the people of Romford know we are a church that is alive and full of the love of God.

People are already asking about next year's event so hopefully with the blessing of the church we will be planning another one next year. Put Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2024 in your diary and we will confirm that after the next church meeting.



*Christine Grant*

## Our Church Charity 2024



MND is the short term for motor neurone disease, which affects the nerves known as motor neurones. These nerves are found in the brain and spinal cord, and they help tell your muscles what to do. If you have MND, this means your movement will be affected and you are likely to get a wide range of symptoms. You may be worried that you or someone close has motor neurone disease (MND). As this is not a common disease, it is more likely that another condition, illness, or injury has caused the problem. In a small number of cases, a family history can be involved.

MNDA are there to help everyone living with and affected by MND access the help and support needed.



### Christmas Services and Events

#### Carol Singing

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 7pm meet at the church we will be singing in Lodge Ave/the Ridgeway.

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December 11am outside the church

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December 12 noon Town centre churches informal gathering outside M&S

#### Christmas Worship

17<sup>th</sup> December 4pm Christmas Colours Candlelit Carols and Nativity.

24<sup>th</sup> 10am all age Worship

11.30pm Midnight Communion

25<sup>th</sup> 10am Christmas day Worship

#### Advance Notice

Sunday January 21

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service at the Salvation Army Citadel 5.30 for 6.00pm



### Regular Events=

- MON** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Line Dancing 9.30am-12pm  
U3A Cultural Group (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday)10am-12pm: Parent & Toddler 1pm – 2.30pm
- TUE** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Line Dancing 9.30am-12pm:  
Havering Women's Aid 10-12.30: Coffee Time in the Foyer 11am – 12pm  
Trinovante 1.30-3.30pm: Retired Gents 2-3.30pm: Havering Women's Aid 1-3pm  
Alcoholics Anonymous 7.30 – 10pm: Yoga 7-8.30pm Badminton 8-10pm
- WEDS** Playgroup 9am -12pm: FL exercise 1.30-2.30pm: U3A Craft Group 1.30-3.30pm  
Dementia Music & Social Club 1.30-3.30pm: Rhodes Arts Drama 5-8pm
- THUR** Playgroup 9am -12pm: Rainbows & Brownies 4.30-7.20pm  
Western Road Ladies 7- 9.30pm: The Liberty Singers 7-9.30pm
- FRI** Playgroup 9am - 12pm: Crafternoon 1.30 - 3.30pm:  
Coffee Time in the Foyer 11am – 12pm  
Boys' Brigade 6pm - 10pm: Street Pastors overnight base 9pm – 1am
- SAT** Renee's Dance School 9am –1.30pm: Card Club (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday) 2-5pm  
Romford Embroiderers (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday)1- 4pm
- SUN** Morning Service 10am – 11am



*See Graham or Jim for tickets.*





National  
Trust

## Festive events and activities

### at Rainham Hall and Garden

Our events programme has something for everyone this festive season

#### Christmas Art & Craft fair



**Fri 1 Dec 3pm–8pm & Sat 2 Dec 11am–4pm**

Come along for some crafty Christmas shopping at our local art and craft fair.

#### Winter Wreath Making Workshops



**Saturday 9 Dec, 11am–1pm or 2pm–4pm**

Create your own winter wreath from scratch. Tickets £35 per person, includes all materials and a choice of hot drink. Booking essential.

#### Recital from A Christmas Carol



**Wednesday 6 December, 7pm–8pm**

Enjoy a recital of Charles Dickens classic Christmas tale by Anthony Roberts with piano by Jamie Cunliffe. Tickets £6, booking essential.

#### Rainham Reindeer Festive Trail



**14–16 & 19–23 December, 11am–3pm**

Come along with family and friends for a fun festive Reindeer trail around the Gardens. £3 per trail, booking not needed.

**To book call 0344 249 1895 or online at [nationaltrust.org.uk/rainham-hall](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/rainham-hall)**

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On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023 the Church celebrated Remembrance Sunday. We also celebrated my 100 years on this planet by planting a lovely, strong, and upstanding apple tree. I am sure the tree will flourish in the future and sincerely hope it will be a symbol of Western Road's future, in what appears today, likely to be a difficult terrain. WW2 was a ghastly, but necessary episode if we were to retain our way of life. Hard as it might have been for some in the 1930's..5 years in the R.A.F was a large loss for me at a time when one expects to be fancy free, survival was a gift. Many were less lucky.

I became a Church Member in 1956, A time of doubt and sadness for many but also of hope. The Church could boast a large congregation but was almost bankrupt. There was little for young people to do after school and the large numbers of B.B and Guides filled a big gap. The B.B could even put on displays at the Albert Hall. My offspring were all ardent members. Joy was a very able Elder and organiser in general, so we thought it best to split our activities.

I moved up the ladder of service, Elder, then the pinnacle in those times-The Trustees, where I have been since as Secretary, Property manager and Maintenance Officer. Obviously, the sands are running out but while I retain the ability, I shall continue to make as much contribution in service to the Church as possible.

Let me thank you all for the support and friendship I have received over the years and wish you all Health and Happiness.

God Bless,

*Dennis*

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### Didn't You Get My E-Mail?

As a little girl climbed onto Santa's lap, Santa asked the usual, "And what would you like for Christmas?" The child stared at him open mouthed and horrified for a minute, then gasped: "Didn't you get my E-mail?"



### Saudi Arabia

**World Watch ranking: 13**

There are an estimated 2.2 million Christians in Saudi Arabia. It's around six per cent of the country's total population of 35.8 million, the majority of whom are Muslim.

The majority of the Christians in Saudi Arabia are foreigners who temporarily live and work in the country. They can be targeted for their faith, since it's another way to abuse a worker – in an environment where foreign workers are already often subjected to horrific working and living conditions. Foreign Christians are heavily restricted from sharing their faith or gathering for worship, and any actions outside of the norm can lead to detention and deportation. No official churches are allowed, and church buildings are forbidden.

A much smaller number of Christians in the country are originally Saudi Arabian, and these are mostly converts from Islam. They are usually forced to live out their faith in secrecy. Otherwise, female converts risk physical violence and forced marriage by their families, while male converts risk being publicly shamed, beaten or imprisoned. Both men and women may also be killed to 'restore' the family honour. Nevertheless, there have been some Saudi Christians in recent years who have been bold enough to share their faith, at great risk to their lives.

#### Meet 'Adam'

Adam\* grew up a Muslim. He comes from a Yemeni background but has spent most of his life in Saudi Arabia. When Eve\*, his sister-in-law, became a Christian four years ago, her family asked Adam to convince her to return to Islam – but her faith inspired Adam to give his life to Jesus.

Since then, Adam has faced multiple charges – including inciting others away from Islam and helping Eve to flee the country because of persecution – and has spent time in prison. Last July, he sent his family abroad while he battled the accusations. A month later, Adam was convinced to join them following a brutal attack that left him severely wounded and visibly discouraged.

"I'd like to thank every brother and sister who prayed for me and contributed to getting us a place to live together," Adam shares from a safe country where Open Doors local partners are helping the family settle.

“I feel that today I can live again,” Adam says. “Your prayers have been answered. What we need in this world is to turn to God in prayer for the church and for the sake of others. God listens to the true prayers. If we pray, we will feel His presence and we will have His guidance.”

*\*Names changed for security reasons*

Saudi Arabia has dropped one place on the World Watch List, mostly due to a slight decrease in violence against Christians. While in the last year there were no reports of Christians being arrested or forced into marriage, or of Christian houses being attacked, physical violence against converts remains high, and several believers were forced to leave their homes.



**“We thank God for His gifts, and for your standing with us and helping me to safety. I feel that today I can live again.” ADAM, A BELIEVER WHO FLED SAUDI ARABIA AFTER BEING IMPRISONED FOR HIS FAITH**

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**Same Name?**

A little boy named Nicholas told the store's Santa Claus:  
"You and I have the same name." Santa says: "Well, hello Harold."



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Copy for the next issue 29<sup>th</sup> ember 2023**

