

Newsletter

January 2017

Each new year brings us new opportunities
to know Him more, to walk in faith,
and grow by His grace.

May your year be
blessed in the Lord.

"...Eye hath not seen, nor ear
heard, neither have entered
into the heart of man, the
things which God hath
prepared for them that love
Him." — 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 KJV

Jim Lewis

A Message from our Minister

All things to all men?

St Paul once wrote "I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some" (1 Corinthians 9.22b, NRSV). Was he talking about being something he wasn't? Surely this isn't something Christian people should do, is it?

Something that the Bible shows consistently is that God knows each of us personally and perfectly. (Psalm 139 is a great example of this. Read it often.) And God calls people into his service, as they are, enabling them to become who they really are.

God called St Paul into environments and communities that were alien to his own, and enabled him to adapt so that he could speak to those communities in ways that they could understand. He did this so that the saving message of Jesus might change lives.

St Paul didn't become something he wasn't. Through many trials and much prayer and dedication, God helped him to become who he really was, and then enabled him to share the love of Christ with very many different people and communities.

This new year, may God help us to listen to his call, maybe to reach across barriers of culture or community, to share the love of Jesus that has saved us and changed us, and continues to change us, into the people we really are.

Graham

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Church Family News

I have received no church family news this month. Please let me have anything you would like to share for this section of the newsletter.

Please remember to pray for those of our church family who you know need our prayers.

Happy New Year and God's blessings and peace to you all.

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Dates for your Diary

Women's World Day of Prayer – Friday 3rd March at 7.30 pm

The service this year is at our church and we will welcome people from the Parish Church and Sacred Heart Catholic Church. The service has been prepared by the women of the Philippines with the title 'Am I being unfair to you?'

Churches Together Lent Prayer Space at our church – 4th March.

10.00 am to 12 noon. For more details please see page 12.

Mothering Sunday All Age Service – 26th March 10.30 am

Led by Thea Lee

Holiday Club – Monday 10th to Thursday 13th April

Easter Sunday / Holiday Club service – 16th April 10.30 am

Led by Angela Brydon

Guild Service – 7th May 10.30 am Led by Rev. Kath Pawlett

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Flower Rota 2017

Thank you to all who have kindly put their names down on the Flower Rota for 2017. I have put a copy of the Rota on the Church Notice board for your information.

If you have any particular request regarding your flowers please have a word with me at the appropriate time.

Beryl

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Church Flowers in January

We thank those who have agreed to donate the flowers to enhance our worship this month.

1st January	Beryl and Roger Cooper
8th January	Maryan Pateman
15th January	Sheila Sutherland
22nd January	Francis Impey
29th January	Linda Pitts

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Advent and Christmas Offerings

Mission in Britain	£ 63.00
Prebend Day Centre	
Christmas Card Donations	£210.00
Further Donations	£ 35.00
S Club Nativity service loose cash	£ 50.00
Messy Christmas	£ 26.70
Christmas Eve Communion	£ 86.70
Christmas Morning loose cash	<u>£198.15</u>
Total	£606.55

Thank you for your contributions to Mission in Britain and the Prebend Day Centre.

Christmas Tree

Each year we have a Christmas tree in church. But this year was different and special. This year Anne Foley had the idea of inviting each church group and groups that use the church for their meetings to make decorations for the tree.



Many groups responded to that invitation and then on 3rd December at 4 o'clock the decorating of the tree took place. This was an informal gathering to which everyone was invited and while the tree was being decorated we were able to sing carols to both organ and piano accompaniment, and enjoy the refreshments while doing so.

After the tree had been decorated we went outside and the lights outside the church were switched on. As you may know the Circuit has provided each church with money to have extra lights to decorate the outside of the churches this year. So anyone who passes the church during this Christmas period will see the lights and may remember that Jesus is the Light of the World. After the lights had been switched on we sang two carols outside.

Thank you, Anne, for your idea of involving everyone in making decorations, and also for organising the tree dressing event and the refreshments. Thank you to all those who made decorations, and to the team of people who put the lights in place ready for them to be switched on.

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Christmas Luncheon Club

The Christmas Luncheon Club is always a special event, and this year's traditional Christmas meal of turkey and all the trimmings followed by Christmas pudding was, as always, very tasty and enjoyable.

The tables were attractively decorated with a cracker for everyone and with after dinner mints to follow the meal, which finished with tea or coffee.



Everyone enjoyed the meal and really appreciated the opportunity to come to this event.



We know that the Christmas Luncheon Club, as well as all the other Luncheon Clubs throughout the year involve a great amount of work and so thank you to all those involved – the organisers and cooks, those who move the furniture and lay the

tables, those who clear up and operate the dish washer, those who provide transport. Thank you to you all.

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Christian Aid News



At the end of November I went with Mary McKeand to a Christian Aid meeting at the Church of Christ the Cornerstone in Milton Keynes. The speaker, Marija Vranesevic, a young Serbian lady spoke about her work with Christian Aid Partner Philanthropy, supporting refugees in Serbia fleeing the bloodshed of Syria and Iraq. She told us individual stories of members of families who had reached the refugee camp and she was clearly moved by their plight. This is the story of one refugee from Iraq:

Story from a Kurdish Iraqi

Please, forgive me, I would not like to share my name with you... I hope you understand.

We are Kurds, from Iraq. I am travelling with my two sons, one is 16 and the other is 12. My wife, their mother, and my other two children, son and daughter, were killed in Iraq. I had to leave Iraq. I have to try and save at least the other two children I have. We left Iraq 5 months ago. We came to Turkey, terrified of what will happen to us there. My friend connected me to some people who arranged our transportation to the small island in Greece. We stayed on the island for just one day, I had to keep on moving. We then boarded a big ship that took us to Athens. It was so difficult in Athens. We had to cope with everything, every day... We met several organizations, they helped. One day, we arranged to be transported to Eidomeni (on the Greek-Macedonian border) by a van. We stayed there for months... It was horrible... Syrians and Afghanis were fighting nonstop; the

military was coming to separate them. They used water cannons and teargas... We were so scared, every time.

Our life in Greece was really difficult... We heard that Eidomeni would be evacuated, so we decided not to go to another camp in Greece, but try to continue our journey. We walked through (the Former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia. There was no food in Macedonia, we only got some biscuits from one organization. We followed the rail tracks, we were told we will reach Serbia that way, but there was a lot of police, and we had to hide, we were so scared they would send us back to Greece. We walked through Macedonia for 7 days, and then we saw the border. We walked into the woods to enter Serbia, and this is where Serbian police found us and brought us to this camp. We came here late last night; we were so tired and so exhausted... We slept the whole day, we've just woke up and learnt that we have hot meal for dinner. Thank you so much!!!!

And so, what can we, who are so far away, do to help people like this young man, one of 65 million who are on the move at this time. **Four positive actions** have been suggested by Christian Aid:

Sharing and praying

We can share the stories we have heard and use them in our church, small groups or personal devotions to direct our prayers.

Christmas/New Year Appeal

Consider holding a collection in our church for the Refugee Appeal – perhaps in the New Year. The appeals are supporting work like Marija's with displaced people around the world.

Change the Story

We also want to change the story about refugees. The stories we hear and the stories we tell are important. They help us shape our thoughts, form our opinions and set the agenda. So, when refugees are portrayed negatively their inherent dignity is challenged. We want to change the story about those who are displaced, who are escaping injustice and war, and that celebrates those who offer a welcome. Rarely told are the positive contributions that refugees

make in our communities, nor of the many communities and churches that are united in welcoming those seeking refuge.

Happy Christmas Prime Minister!

At the meeting we signed a giant Christmas card to Theresa May! Our government has a major role to play in shaping the story about refugees, both in the policies they set and the way they communicate. Let's encourage Theresa May to respond positively to refugees, ensuring that her words reflect our proud tradition as a nation that welcomes those in need and her government's policies offer hope to those looking for a safe place to call home.

The **first positive action** is one that we can all do. And if you are interested to read more stories or to make a donation to the Refugee appeal, please go to <http://www.christian-aid.org/refugees> or speak to me.

Ann B

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The New Year is a good time to remember, and to thank, all those who do various tasks in our church. Each job is important, whether it is something that everyone knows about, or whether it is one of those jobs that are done behind the scenes that many people do not know about. In some cases we would only notice if the tasks were not done! So **thank you to you all** whatever the job you do.

We thank God that he has given us all varied skills and that many of those skills are used in His service.

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Prayer Leaflet
January 2017

May the coming year be a time
when your faith in the Lord

Grows Stronger...

your love for the Lord

Grows Deeper...

and your fellowship with the Lord

Grows Sweeter!

Prayer Suggestions for January

Week beginning 1st January - New Year

- Sunday Praise God for the start of another year and ask Him to travel with us again into this year.
- Monday Pray that we will trust God for guidance for the year ahead.
- Tuesday Thank God that each day is a new beginning, a gift from God.
- Wednesday Pray that we make the most of new opportunities.
- Thursday Ask God to help us to resolve to be willing to do whatever task he has for us.
- Friday Ask God to give us confidence in His unfailing love whatever may happen.
- Saturday As we hold our Covenant Service tomorrow pray that God will help us to truly commit ourselves to Him.

Week beginning 8th January - Epiphany

- Sunday On this Epiphany Sunday when we traditionally remember the revelation of Jesus to the Magi thank God that He revealed that Jesus came for all.
- Monday Thank God that through Jesus He revealed more of His love for everyone.
- Tuesday Thank God that He reveals himself through creation and nature.
- Wednesday Thank God that He reveals Himself through the Bible.
- Thursday Thank God that He reveals Himself through the people around us.
- Friday Ask God to reveal Himself afresh to us each new day.
- Saturday Pray that God will reveal to us what He wants us to for Him.

Week beginning 15th January - Christian Unity

- Sunday Thank God for all that unifies Christians everywhere.

- Monday Pray that we will be willing to learn from Christians of other denominations.
- Tuesday Pray for church leaders nationally and locally as they seek to work together.
- Wednesday As the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins we pray for all the local churches.
- Thursday Pray that we will be willing to work with other denominations as much as possible.
- Friday Pray for the Churches Together group and all the activities they organise.
- Saturday Pray for the Christian Unity Service at Sacred Heart Church tomorrow.

Week beginning 22nd January - Homelessness

- Sunday Today is Homelessness Sunday. We pray for all homeless people.
- Monday Pray for the work of the Prebend Day Centre in Bedford.
- Tuesday Pray for all the homeless people that the Prebend Day Centre and other centres help.
- Wednesday Pray for the work of the Salvation Army with homeless people.
- Thursday Pray for those who have become homeless because of the breakup of family relationships and for the healing of those relationships.
- Friday On this Holocaust Memorial Day we pray for displaced people throughout the world who have been made homeless because of war.
- Saturday Pray for young people who are homeless and for the authorities who seek to help.

3 days beginning 29th January - Winter

- Sunday Pray for those affected by difficult winter travelling conditions.
- Monday Pray for the emergency services coping with more emergency calls.
- Tuesday Pray for hospital staff as they face greater challenges during the winter.

Monday 27th February; Monday 20th March

1st Flitwick Boys' Brigade



Over the past few months the boys have been learning about the training camp that was in Ampthill Park as part of their WWI centenary badge. Back in the summer the boys visited Ampthill Park and explored where different parts of the camp were sited and took time to look at the Duke of Bedford War memorial. They also linked up with the Tommy's Footprints project and created their own footprints in different formats. Finally they took part in the Ampthill remembrance parade that started in the park and marched past the display of footprints to remember the 707 soldiers who trained at the camp, never to return. All this culminated in 17 members of the Company receiving their WWI centenary badge at a special presentation at the beginning of December. Stephen Hartley who pulled together the Tommy's Footprints project presented the badges to the boys and complimented them on their efforts.

Also in December the Junior Section boys had a weekend of Battalion events at Priory Methodist Church in Bedford. The Saturday afternoon saw the boys win the Figure Marching Competition, for the first time ever! So a new trophy in the cabinet! Then they came 3rd in Dodgeball, which puts them 2nd in the JS Battalion Champions Cup just one point behind the first place team. Competitions over there was then a sleepover involving a number of challenges and outdoor games involving glow sticks, before a film and then time to sleep! Sunday Morning after Breakfast and the boys joined in the Junior Church Christmas Party before it was time to head home – one boy commenting that he was “missing the sleepover already” as he left!

The last BB before Christmas and the Anchor Boys and Junior Section had a Messy BB with craft, carols, cake and crisps. It was great to see so many parents come and join in on this special evening.

As we start 2017 then we are looking forward to lots of new adventures and challenges, please continue to pray for our members and leaders. And a specific prayer request for January, on 20th leaders will be visiting the Yr 7&8 assembly at Woodland to share what BB is about and hopefully gain some new Company Section members.

God Bless and Happy New Year.

Angela Brydon
Company Captain

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Churches Together Lent Prayer Spaces

On each Saturday morning during Lent one of the churches in the Churches Together in Ampthill and Flitwick group will be open for prayer. The theme will be *People Jesus encountered 'on the way' to the cross.*



The dates, churches, and themes for each week will be:

- March 4th** **Flitwick Methodist Church**
Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

- March 11th** **Sacred Heart Catholic Church**
Large crowds following Jesus (Luke 14:25-27)

- March 18th** **Ampthill Baptist Church**
Ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19)

- March 25th** **Flitwick Parish Church**
A blind man receives sight (Luke 18:35-43)

- April 1st** **Ampthill Methodist Church**
Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

- April 8th** **St. Andrews Church, Ampthill**
The triumphal entry and the crowds
(Luke 19:28-44)

You will be very welcome at any of these venues. Come at any time between 10 am and 12 noon and stay as long as you wish. Refreshments will be available.

*Christmas Message from the President of
Conference, Rev. Dr. Roger Walton and the
Vice President of Conference, Rachel Lampard*

The shabby collection of rooms was perched on the edge of a steep hill above Amman in Jordan. We were visiting a family of Syrian refugees who had just had a baby, and were being helped by funding provided by the Methodist charity, All We Can.

A woman, who we assumed was the grandmother, answered the door and invited us in. We sat on the floor, along with a local health worker. The father appeared with the baby, Yosra, and three other small children. It turned out that the woman was not the grandmother, but rather the mother of the family. She was just in her 30s, prematurely aged by the privations and stresses of recent years. They had left Syria four years ago, and now lived in a couple of basic rooms. The three children were similar ages to my own, but were tiny. As a refugee the father was banned from working and the family was reliant on support from a charity in order to be able to survive.

What an unpromising situation they were in. The family were underfed, with very little prospect of being able to improve their circumstances. They were desperate to go back to Syria, but recognised that this was unlikely any time soon. And their tiny baby, who slept in my arms, faced growing into adulthood in a foreign country, in poverty.

And yet. When we asked the father of the family what he wanted for the future, instead of talking about better housing, more food, or even a return to Syria, said "I want my children to be the best people that they can be". It was breath-taking. A family were facing immense poverty and dislocation, yet had the highest hopes for the character and contribution of their children.

A similarly unpromising set of circumstances surrounded another young family less than 50 miles away in Bethlehem two millennia ago. A young girl had given birth to a baby, far from her home and her family, in an outhouse, shared with animals. She had become pregnant outside marriage, and was only rescued from shame and rejection by her fiancé taking on a baby that wasn't his. Ahead lay real danger, as the ruler of the area would soon order his soldiers to slaughter all the baby boys. A dirty, shameful, dangerous situation. An unpromising set of circumstances. And yet. This is exactly the place the Messiah, the son of God, was born into.

But should we really be surprised? This is a God who said that the kingdom of heaven belonged, not to the rich or powerful or religious, but to little children. This is a God who chose women, tax collectors, fishermen to begin a worldwide movement for the salvation of all people. Unpromising is not a word which seems to put God off; on the contrary the Bible seems to suggest that God seeks out the unpromising, the weak, the outcast in order to build his kingdom. The apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, said "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God." (1 Corinthians 27-19)

We are living in times which might be described as unpromising, or even "interesting" according to the old Chinese proverb. We face great uncertainty in our politics, our economics, our relationships with one another. Around the planet there is apparently relentless violence, and the poorest, as ever, bear the consequences of our inability to restrain our use of resources. Our own Methodist Church is seeing a continuing decline in members and a shortage of ministers for the churches we have. The future is surely unpromising.

And yet. Our faith surely prompts us not to turn away purely because any situation looks unpromising. This doesn't mean facing it with blind and passive optimism. Instead we have a hope which is

grounded in the foolishness of God, which is wiser and stronger than wisdom and strength of the world. And God is at work in our world, and invites us to join in. As the theologian Ken Leech said: "hope isn't a state of mind; it's a piece of work". In the unpromising situations in our world, where is God inviting us to join in? Where is God asking us to see the treasure that is hidden within the clay jars? Where is God asking us, not to be optimistic, but rather to be hopeful?

We would like to suggest that you do three things over this "unpromising" Christmas season.

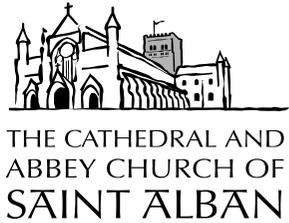
Firstly, the Methodist Church, together with the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union and the Church of Scotland, have produced a short film, "A Very British Nativity", which suggests how Mary and Joseph might have fared arriving in the UK as asylum seekers. Why not watch it, share it and perhaps show it as part of your Christmas celebrations at church - and reflect on what this unpromising small family might mean for others, asylum seekers and refugees in particular, and how we can make their future more hopeful.

Secondly, we invite you to reflect on something that initially appeared unpromising. This might be something in your own life, the life of your church, or in the wider society or world. How was the potential or transformation within each situation revealed? What was the treasure in the clay jars?

And thirdly ask yourself: what is unpromising in your life or church or community at the moment? What might God be doing there already - or what might God do if only you would join in?

In this season we pray that you will have a happy and peace-filled Christmas, and that you will know the love of God who acts through the most unpromising things and people to bring about his kingdom of holiness and justice.

**You are invited to attend a
Free Church Service in the
Lady Chapel on the dates
mentioned below:**



Wednesday 4th January 2017 at 11a.m.

Preacher: The Reverend Simon Carver

Free Church Ecumenical Chaplain, St Albans Cathedral

- The service is followed by a Fellowship Lunch.

Wednesday 1st February 2017 at 11a.m.

Preacher: The Reverend Geoff Colmer

Baptist Regional Minister, Central Baptist Association, Team Leader

- The service is followed by a Fellowship Lunch.

Wednesday 1st March 2017 at 11a.m.

Preacher: The Reverend John Steele

Minister of the United Reformed Church, Thames North Synod.

- The service is followed by a Fellowship Lunch.

All are Welcome

Free Church Ecumenical Chaplain: Reverend Simon Carver

Email:simoncarver@btinternet.com

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Circuit Prayer Meetings

You will be welcome at the Circuit Prayer Meetings on
Monday 9th January at 4.15 pm at Putnoe Heights and
Monday 23rd January at 10.30 am at Willington.

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News from Paraguay

20th November 2016

I have seen the headline about Clophill being without gas. Unfortunately I spotted this earlier today and after working fine for ages the internet has suddenly ground to a halt. It took me half an hour to find out that Arsenal had drawn yesterday! So I saw the headline about the gas but have not tried to read the story yet. I did wonder whether Flitwick was also without gas.

My last week of studying coming up and then after that I will get on with writing my book.

28th November 2016

I hope it is not too cold and shivery with you. Here there have been hot and sunny days mixed in with very wet ones. At the moment lots of clouds around outside so I think there may be some more rain during the day or if not soon after.

You may have seen from my Facebook that I had a day out in Caacupe. It was a nice and sunny on Saturday and I thought I would go over there before all the crowds turned out for the festival. And a good idea it was too.... I was able to go everywhere around the town and everything was set up for the festival that begins this week. Rather than be encumbered with my bike and crash helmet I dropped all that off at the petrol station in Piribebuy and got the bus into Caacupe, which made exploring the town much easier. Whilst there I got Evangelina a souvenir of Caacupe - a T Shirt - off one of the stalls, as I knew that would go down well.

On the subject of Evangelina I have sent you another photo of her holding a chick. She is not supposed to play with the chicks but if she does manage to catch one they are just the right size for picking up. It seems at the moment her favourite game is anything that involves water so she likes that I let her, until someone else spots what she is up to! Currently her favourite toy, as she doesn't have many, is an old beer crate which she pushes around going Vroom Vroom as fast as she can. Probably not so bad lacking in

toys as she has to be more inventive and make things into things. She is getting quite chatty and I do speak to her in English.

2nd December 2016

You remember that Ramona is studying nursing and is just finishing her second year - well it is exam time and at the beginning of the week was the end of year practical exam. Sometimes I just have to smile approvingly rather than comment on how little they actually learn out here. As you see the exam after two years of studying was putting in stitches, and what made it even more amusing was that rather than using a dummy or anything vaguely like a real person they had to put their stitches in tomatoes! By the sound of it she spent most of her time chasing her tomato round the desk as it rolled about everywhere!

11th December 2016

I have finally got a new bookcase. It is a bit of a long story but basically a bookcase never did get built and then a few months ago I noticed in the catalogue of the place that also sells TVs and such that they had a bookcase that was not only just right but also exactly the right size to fit in the space I had, but I left it until I was buying something else as I knew I would be able to get a better deal. So I went and sorted out my new television and in the end bought a big one that was only a little more expensive and enquired about the bookcase and was offered a 10% discount for paying all in cash. I told them I was paying an amount and no more so after a bit of negotiating my price was agreed rather than losing them the sale - so in the end I got a 15% discount which was quite good.

The next day the lorry turned up with all my purchases and I have a smart new dining room with a TV that only just fits into the space and a smart new bookcase, already filled with books as the others were over full. I soon got rid of the old TV - I offered it to Alicia's Dad, pointing out that it was over ten years old and that the picture was rather dark - but all the same he must have liked the idea as I had barely got home when he appeared to look at it and happily took it home with him. Just shows that people who don't have much don't

Clophill Methodist Church

Tea and Chat

Every Wednesday 10.30 am to 12 noon

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The Upper Room

at Amptill Methodist Church on alternate Thursdays

Dates in January – 5th and 19th

Coffee or tea and cakes from 10.00 am.

Light lunches from 11.30 am to 1.00 pm.

Proceeds after expenses for local charities.

All are welcome.

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The Newsletter

Thank you for reading the first newsletter of another year and thank you to those who have made contributions to it.

As always your contributions are needed if the newsletter is to be varied and interesting and something that everyone will want to read. Your contributions are always welcome.

Please let me have your items for the February newsletter by **Sunday 22nd January**. Thank you very much.

Janet Watts telephone: 717492 email: janetwatts14@btinternet.com

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