

# Hadleigh United Reformed Church with Monks Eleigh



## Monthly Newsletter **Dec 2015**

The vision of Hadleigh URC is  
to challenge the community to respond to God's love  
as shown and taught by Jesus Christ.



[www.hadleighurc.org.uk](http://www.hadleighurc.org.uk)



Hadleigh United Reformed Church

# 2015 Newsletter No. 733

## **WORSHIP IN HADLEIGH**

Sun 6th -- Advent Worship with Communion led by Nigel Crisp

Sun 13th -- All Age Nativity Service led by Sunday Club and  
Revd Bryn Rickards

Sun 13th -- 4pm Joint Advent Service (Churches Together) at  
Elmsett Methodist

Sun 20th -- Advent Worship led by Revd Bryn Rickards

Sun 20th -- 6:30pm Candlelight Carols

Weds 25th -- Christmas Day Family Service

Sun 27th -- Morning Worship with contributions from the  
congregation

**Carol Singing in the Co-op - Sat 19 Dec 10am.**

## **WEEKDAY MEETINGS**

Tuesday 10 - 11.30 Pause for Prayer - Come in for Coffee

## **MONKS ELEIGH URC**

Dec 13th 3.30pm Carol Service led by Rev. Bryn Rickards

Jan 10th 2016 3pm Sunday service

## **Services Nursing and Care Homes and Sheltered Housing**

<b>Place</b>	<b>Link Person</b>	<b>Usual Monthly Worship</b>
Sydney Brown Court	Jean Herring (823320)	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday, 10.30am
Canterbury House	Hilary Griffin (823100)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 2.30pm
Waterfield House	Jackie Cork (823739)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, 3pm
Friars Hall	Janice White (808835)	1 <sup>st</sup> Monday, 2pm
Magdalen House	Chris Todd (827915)	last Thursday, 11am

*NB Please check these times with the link person.*

## From the Minister

Peace. Joy. Hope. We'll soon be seeing these words burst out of envelopes at us in a vision of warm and shiny colours. If over the last forty years scenes from the Christmas story have all but vanished from our 'Christmas' cards, the sentiments behind that story haven't. Such words are great connectors between the church and the non-churched at this time of year; we all long for peace, joy and hope—in the chaos of our war-torn world and in the muddle of our everyday lives. But I wonder if we, the church, are often a little shy in unpacking what those words mean from a *Christ-mas* perspective. We struggle to get from the bland generalities to the bold particulars.

So, we are happy to connect with folk as long as the words stay warm and fuzzy wishes, but we are often reticent to ask the difficult questions. Perhaps, if we're honest, we're afraid to ask the questions of ourselves. What hope can there be for the nearly mute ninety-year-old with dementia, sucking his food through a straw? What joy can there be for the Calais camp ('jungle') family who've witnessed their home torched and relatives slaughtered? What peace can there be for the mother who lost her teenager in a coach crash? And the problem is the list goes on and on. Of course, there are degrees of tragedy and brokenness, but sooner or later, one way or another, the 'darkness' touches us all.

And that's why the Christmas story matters. In the Bible we don't find a shallow, glib Q&A to all that assails us, but in the Christmas story we do find a *person*. And his birth promises to radically turn things around. This year, the lectionary draws from *Luke*: in Advent 1, we read of a hope that this 'son of man' will put all things right, perhaps sooner than we imagine (21:23-36); in Advent 2, we hear of a 'saviour' whose forgiveness and healing will bring light to those

sat in darkness (1:68-79); in Advent 3, we are told of someone chosen by God (a 'messiah'), who can change our lives with God's spirit (3:7-18); in Advent 4, we learn that Mary's child will bring a sense of justice and liberation (1:39-55); and on Christmas day we'll listen to those all-too-familiar words: "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:1-14). Do not be afraid...Good news of great joy...a Saviour...

This is how we get from the generalities to the particulars. The peace, joy and hope we are celebrating are not the hollow wishes of a 'winter festival' but the bold offer of a real person. Christmas is about Christ—the one who was misunderstood, betrayed, falsely accused, cruelly executed. Here is someone who has shared in our sense of tragedy and darkness. But here also is someone who has beaten despair, hatred and death. Christmas is about a person who is able to offer a gritty and robust kind of peace, joy and hope. So, who will you talk to this year about these words? And who will you invite to our Christmas services? Why not make a special effort to help family, friends, neighbours or colleagues to get from the generalities to the particulars by inviting them along to our 'guest' services—on 13 December (Sun morning) we have the *All Age Nativity* and on 20 December (Sun evening) we have our *Candlelit Carols*. It's a great chance to give some content to those Christmas words.

And as we celebrate and sing and feast, may we all know a real measure of peace, joy and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ—in this season and in the year to come.

With love, Bryn

Please could you let me have all items for the Jan 15 Newsletter by **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December**? Email to [phil@the-wells.net](mailto:phil@the-wells.net), post to 11 Jordayn Rise, Hadleigh. Thanks, Phil

# Notices

## Exploring Christianity

In January, I am planning on running a *Christianity Explored* Course (once a week for seven weeks). It's a great chance to think about the big questions in life and explore the life of Jesus Christ. Please be thinking and praying about who you could invite! Bryn.

## Churches Together

Encounter Advent Experience with Milly Dalglish -- Thu 3 Dec 2pm (or 12:30pm for bring-and-share lunch), St Joseph's

Joint Advent Service -- Sun 13 Dec 4pm, Elmsett Methodist

Prayer, Praise and Fellowship Evening -- Weds 16 Dec 7pm, Salvation Army Hall

## Cleaning Rota

The Church cleaning rota runs out at the end of December! We need volunteers to vacuum and dust in the Church once a month and clean the Church toilet, kitchen and Hoover the carpet once every five weeks. Most jobs usually take about an hour. It would be great to have some new recruits! Please speak to *Claire Coster* or email [clairemcoster@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:clairemcoster@yahoo.co.uk)

## Encounter group

*Encounter* warmly invite you to 'Footsteps to Bethlehem and beyond...' on *Thurs 3 Dec 2-4pm*, led by *Milly Dalglish* and the team at St Joseph's Church. Come at *12.30pm for a bring-and-share lunch* with Milly and a catch up chat! Drinks provided.

**WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2016**

**17<sup>TH</sup> – 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2016**

**“Salt of the Earth”**

SUNDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 4PM St Joseph’s Church  
United Service Speaker – Major Kevin Rand, Salvation Army

MONDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> 7PM Row Chapel  
The week’s readings “Let the stone be rolled away”

TUESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> 2PM URC  
Encounter Event “Called to be heralds of joy”

WEDNESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> 10.30AM St Joseph’s  
Fr Peter Brett “The witness of fellowship”

THURSDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> 7PM Salvation Army  
Rev Daniel Thompson  
“A priestly people called to proclaim the Gospel”

FRIDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> 10.30AM St Mary’s Café Church Communion  
“Listen to this dream” Canon David Atkins

SATURDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> 10.30AM - Elmsett Methodist Church  
Rev Andrew Sankey “Hospitality for Prayer”

SUNDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> PULPIT EXCHANGE – “Hearts burning for unity”

MONDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> 7.30 URC Community Room  
Rev Bryn Rickards “The fellowship of the Apostles”

## **Guild Report**

On Tuesday October 20<sup>th</sup> we welcomed Rev Joyce Willis to lead the Guild Devotional. Joyce talked about colour in prayer and we completed an exercise producing our own colour prayer page. Elaine accompanied the hymns and thanks are extended for this to Joyce for such a thought provoking devotional.

On Tuesday November 3<sup>rd</sup> our Devotional was led by Rev David Atkins. David referred to All Saints Day and we heard reflections, poems and Bible readings. We also enjoyed some hymns which told the story in verse. Our thanks are extended to David for such an interesting devotional and for sharing his thoughts with us

We welcomed our friend Philip Mann to the Guild on Tuesday November 10<sup>th</sup>. Philip entertained us in his usual style with word games, poems and memories of his childhood. Many thanks to Philip for such an enjoyable and entertaining afternoon.

## **December Programme**

1<sup>st</sup> Members Christmas Cheer

8<sup>th</sup> Christmas Devotional led by Philip Mann

15<sup>th</sup> Carols + Shared Tea

Meetings at 2.30pm in the Community Room unless otherwise stated.

All Welcome

## **Christmas craft activities**

On December 6<sup>th</sup> at the lighting up ceremony event, we will be offering Christmas craft activities to the children between 3-5pm. Our aim is to offer a respite from the cold (and often wet!) afternoon in the peace of our church, and to ensure that everyone takes home something that is about the 'Real' Christmas. If you can help set up, manage crafts or clear away, please contact Karen on 01473 824765. Thank you.

## Open The Book

Hello Everyone,

The Hadleigh 'Open the Book' team is growing, we have one new enthusiastic member, Chrissie, from St Mary's church & we are praying for more folk to come on board.

It is wonderful to be able to pass God's love onto the children at school. Last month's story was Jesus & The Children from Mark 10 & this month it is of course, the story of Jesus' birth. The excitement of Christmas will, without a doubt be gaining momentum in the schools, with all the children's anticipations & preparations for Christmas Day! We are very much looking forward to telling them the story of Christ, our Saviours' birth.

Christmas blessings to you all, Karen, Rachel, Michelle, Hilary & The Team

## Shoeboxes

[www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk](http://www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk)

49 colourfully Christmas wrapped shoeboxes were brought forward for blessing on Nov 1st during our church service lead by Richard Edwards. The Luncheon Club did well filling 23 boxes & 7 individuals from the local community also handed in filled boxes. Thank you all so much, for your continued support, extra gifts of items & cash enabling us to send off completed boxes to the children.

Bernadette, at The Emporium in Hadleigh is enthusiastically receiving filled shoeboxes & individual items to make up into completed boxes for Operation Christmas Child from the

local community. These boxes will also be sorted at the Bentley depot. Thank you Bernadette.

The lorry to transport the boxes should arrive at Bentley on Saturday Nov 28th. I have been told it will be a container type, last year containers went to Swaziland! Once we find out the definite destination of the boxes we will let you know.

This unfortunately will be the last year will be operating at Bentley with our enthusiastic & faithful leaders Peggy & Michael, so please keep Operation Christmas Child in your prayers & do keep your eyes & ears open to help us find different premises for future use for storage & processing.

What an amazing project Samaritan's Purse run. It is so good to be able to send love, hope, & joy to these children, promoting the important message that God loves them & they are not forgotten. Thank you for making a difference to these children's lives.

Best wishes to you all, HAPPY CHRISTMAS,

From Doreen & Hilary

*Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.*

- Galatians 6:2

*"A church that doesn't provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed – what gospel is that?"*

-Archbishop Oscar Romero

## Lunchtime Study Group

We meet at 2 Queens Row on the last Wednesday of the month. We are continuing with our study of "Walking with Old Testament Women" which has certainly given us something to think about as well as realising these women were not so downtrodden as the modern lady likes to think. We have been studying how Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah, fought for her rights.

A wedding was arranged for his two sons, Er and Onan, to marry Tamar, but sadly both had died leaving Tamar in a very precarious position – widows were certainly not treated well in those far off days. Judah had a younger son, Shelah, and promised Tamar that when he was older a marriage would be arranged. He did not honour this promise and Tamar decided to take matters into her own hands.

How did she achieve this? read Genesis Ch.38. The outcome of what happened resulted in Judah becoming a changed man and he took Tamar into his household even moving her with all the family to stay with Jacob. Just a little surprise for us in the group, Judah was the brother who had saved Joseph's life by selling him to the Ishmaelites instead of killing him.

Joseph was able to serve his family when famine occurred throughout the land and gave them all sanctuary in Egypt. The twins Tamar bore, Perez and Zerah lived in safety in Egypt and we could see God's plan for humanity through their lives. Judah and Tamar's story demonstrates God's grace for out of all Jacob's sons, it was through the line of Judah, and then Perez, that the Messiah came.

Do read about these happenings in Genesis - we are sure you will find it amazing. We will now be studying the life of Miriam – I wonder what new and exciting things we shall discover.

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"Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: You don't give up."

- Anne Lamott

## **Dear Church family,**

We'll be spending Christmas week with family in France this year. As fortunate as we are to have family to visit, as the trip approaches, we are all feeling increasingly aware of how much we will miss being with our Hadleigh Church family and friends at Christmas ...and also with the challenge for us of spending it with non Christians. Fun, tinsel and merriment no doubt....but without the mention of Jesus ( to put it simply!).

So, we'd like to take the opportunity to wish all of our Church family a very Happy Christmas and also to say how much the friendship and support we feel from our Church family year round means to us all.

We will truly miss being with you all on Christmas morning and sharing with you the celebration of Jesus' birth.

With love and best wishes to you all,

Becky, Jonas, Florence, Dominic and Samson xxxxx

## **Save us from a sentimental Christmas**

Sentiment can be dangerous. Now, let me say right off that I'm incredibly sentimental: I cry at sad, poignant movies and love feel-good stories. I want to cheer when the goodies win, the baddies get theirs and the princess gets her prince. And there's nothing wrong with that sort of sentiment.

It becomes dangerous when we prioritise fluffy feelings that leave us with a warm glow over costly, gritty engagement with things that need changing. So it's easy to be choked up with the winsome, beaming Tiny Tim saying, "God bless us, ev'ryone!" into the cinematic fadeout of *A Christmas Carol*, and forget that Dickens wrote his novel as a savage indictment of the gap between the haves and the have-nots in Victorian England. His point is that, for God's blessings to be real – to put food on the tables of the starving – the Scrooges of this world have to be converted from their addiction to their wealth.

Dickens was on to something fundamental about the meaning of Christmas: God comes among us in Jesus to change the world. John puts it this way: “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order to save it” (John 3:17). Christmas is a salvation story. And if we’re attentive to the biblical story of Exodus (the paradigmatic salvation story in the Hebrew scriptures), that should flag to us that it is going to be a story of power struggles, terror, and death, as well as rescue, liberation and new life.

Which of course is exactly what the Jesus story is. It’s a story of God’s offer of our world transformed into the Kingdom of God – a place of Life, and love, and flourishing, rather than despair and death. But that sort of transformation doesn’t come easily. It’s an Easter process: the principalities and powers that get to say how things are have first to be confronted. What we learn at Easter is that they cannot be overthrown by any human agency: it is only God who can save us.

That is why salvation is an Easter story. It costs. It costs God. We see just how much when we look up at the cross and see the Christmas baby broken, bleeding, tortured, mocked, and hear him saying, “This is for you!” The New World of Easter Sunday can only be born out of the horrifying events of Good Friday.

Luke wants to tell us that this is the Good News of Christmas: God has come in Jesus to confront the powers that hold sway. It’s a very specific challenge: God has come to change the world order so that the victims are saved from their persecutors. Instead of being the ones who are everywhere and always the losers in government policies and power plays – the “forever-expendables” – they find themselves at the front of the queue in the new world order. Listen to what Mary tells us of God’s plans in Jesus:

My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour ...  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

He has shown strength with his arm ...  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
And lifted up the lowly;  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
And sent the rich away empty.  
(Luke 1: 46ff – selected)

Matthew tells us the same thing very differently: his Christmas scene has magi – wise men from the East – worshipping Jesus as the new-born King of the Jews. They are wise because they recognise that Jesus, and not Herod, is the true king.

This is not a scene in a Junior Church nativity play for adults to coo over and wipe away a surreptitious tear. Matthew sets this up as a re-run of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. Herod recognises the challenge to his power and his world, and moves ruthlessly to wipe out the threat, just as he will wipe out his very own children to ensure that his world remains intact. God's salvation in Jesus, Matthew reminds us, comes only at the expense of the innocent victims – the infants of Bethlehem, John the Baptist later, and ultimately, Jesus (who is Immanuel – “God with us”).

So we dare not attend yet another nativity play and sing all the old carols in order to “feel like it's Christmas” again. If we do only that, we're left with the Christmas tableau in our minds – shepherds, kings and angels, gathered around a crib in a sentimental glow of dressing gowns, tea towels and warm fuzzies, with no sense of impending threat and doom.

If we don't see Christmas as a tableau that prefigures the violent, terrifying end of the old order, and the costly, astounding birth of the new, we will miss God's wake-up call to get our hands dirty and work with God to transform the world.

God bless us, everyone!

**Lawrence Moore (Director of the URC's Windermere Centre)**

## Diary Dates

Date	Day	Time	Activity
1	Tues	10-11.30	Come in for Coffee, Community Room
		10.15am	Prayer Service, Church
		2.30	Guild Christmas Cheer, Comm Room
		4.30	Silent Prayer Group, Salvation Army
2	Weds	6.30pm	Eternal in the quiet room
3	Thurs	11-3	Synergy Café. Ansell Centre
		2pm	CTiH Encounter, St Joseph's
		7.30	Vision 4 Life, 19 The Green
4	Fri	10-12	Leading Lives Coffee Morning, Ansell C
		12.15pm	Ansell Lunch Club, Ansell Centre
5	Sat	2-4pm	Scrabble, Community Room
<b>6</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>3-5</b>	<b>Christmas Craft Activities</b>
8	Tues	10-11.30	Come in for Coffee, Community Room
		10.15am	Prayer Service, Church
		2.30	Guild Christmas Devotional, Comm Rm
		4.30	Silent Prayer Group, Salvation Army
9	Wed	2.30	Ant Questions, 9 Queen Street
		6.30pm	Eternal in the quiet room
10	Thurs	11-3	Synergy Café. Ansell Centre
12	Sat	2-4pm	Scrabble, Community Room
<b>13</b>	<b>Sun</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>Carol Service, Monks Eleigh</b>
		<b>4.00</b>	<b>CTiH Joint Advent Service, Elmsett Meth</b>
15	Tues	10-11.30	Come in for Coffee, Community Room
		10.15am	Prayer Service, Church

		2.30	Guild Carols & Shared tea, Comm Rm
		4.30	Silent Prayer Group, Salvation Army
16	Wed	12.15pm	Wednesday Lunch Club, Ansell Centre
		6.30pm	Eternal in the quiet room
		7pm	CTiH Prayer and Praise, Salv Army
17	Thurs	11-3	Synergy Café. Ansell Centre
<b>19</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Carol Singing at the Co-op</b>
		2-4pm	Scrabble, Community Room
20	Sun	10.30	Advent Worship, Church
22	Tue	10-11.30	Come in for Coffee, Community Room
		10.15am	Prayer Service, Church
		4.30	Silent Prayer Group, Salvation Army
<b>23</b>	<b>Weds</b>	<b>10.30</b>	<b>Christmas Day Family Service</b>
24	Thurs	11-3	Synergy Café. Ansell Centre???
26	Sat	2-4pm	Scrabble, Community Room???
27	Sun	10.30	Morning Worship with congregational contributions
29	Tue	10-11.30	Come in for Coffee, Community Room
		10.15am	Prayer Service, Church
		4.30	Silent Prayer Group, Salvation Army
30	Wed	??	Lunchtime Study Group, 2 Queens Row

**Don't forget** Please let Phil W know about any events you would like listed in the diary, or if there are errors in the dates.

# Contacts

## Minister

*Bryn Rickards*

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## Elders

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Claire Coster	01473 822850
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George Barnes	01787 211716
Jan Dicks	01473 823413
Karen Harman (Asst. Sec)	01473 824765
Mervyn Cort	01473 822149
Pat Langley	01473 823844
Ronnie Howson	01473 310169
Sylvia Jarvis	01473 829166
Tom Gordon	07825 641154

*Please feel free to contact any of the above  
at any time of day (or night in case of emergency),  
if you have any problem that the church may  
be able to help with.*

Sylvia Roberts (Monks Eleigh) 01449 740607

## Treasurer

Ronnie Howson  
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**Newsletter editor** Phil Wells (phil@the-wells.net)