
CONNECT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CHURCHES OF IPSWICH AND EAST



IPSWICH & EAST URC PASTORATE

WINTER EDITION

DECEMBER 2023 to FEBRUARY 2024



EDITOR'S GREETING

Revd Adam Earle

It never ceases to amaze me how quickly things come around. It has been a year since we launched "Connect" so this is the fifth edition! Christmas is again on the not-so-distant horizon and the Christmas songs are echoing around the stores.

The calendar is looking fairly full. There's an array of Advent and Christmas services and events to prepare for and enjoy; parties and Christmas meals to share and a sense of anticipation in the air. The shorter days, culminating with the shortest day on 21st December, are an inevitable part of living on a particular line of latitude in the northern hemisphere.

In this edition we have news from each of the churches, as usual. You can find details of Advent and Christmas services across the pastorate – plenty of variety including well established traditions and some new ventures. There's an interesting Advent tradition to consider in the form of the "Jesse Tree" and news and articles from other sources.

I hope you all have a joyful Advent and Christmas season.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

LEISTON UNITED CHURCH



Leiston Christians Together: In a previous edition of Connect we mentioned our ongoing

involvement with Leiston Christians Together, working alongside and supporting friends from the various churches and fellowships within the town. At the meeting of representatives, on 6th November, we agreed to increase the regularity of our community prayer meetings from quarterly to monthly (with the possible exception of August), beginning in January. We will be taking turns to host the meetings in the different church settings. The meetings are led by the different churches in their style and tradition. Our first meeting for 2024 will be on 9th January at Leiston Baptist Church.

Food Bank: Demand for the Food Bank remains high – not good news but honest; as the cost-of-living crisis is still very much with us. The financial resources of the project have been much diminished, influenced especially by higher food prices. We would welcome any



donations in support of the work, especially as Christmas approaches. We are pleased that we have been able to develop partnership with the Project 40Seven Community Pantry supporting one another in both obtaining and sharing food as needed.

Sound System: Having a functioning sound system is important to ensure that all of us can engage in worship without struggling to hear. Unfortunately, the amplifier in the church had started to play up with increasingly loud and invasive crackling noises. It has done sterling work over the years and it appears that it had not been removed nor required attention since its installation some years ago. However, it has now come to the end of its life. We are awaiting delivery of a replacement, albeit second-hand, amplifier. It's the same make but a newer model. This should be up and running shortly, once it has been delivered. We have also obtained some new microphones (in addition to our radio mic) as several of our existing ones had failed and were a little worse for wear.

Town Pastors: In the most recent edition of the combined Leiston United Church and Saxmundham URC Magazine we included an article about the Leiston Town Pastors. If you would like to read the article and find out more, you can download the latest edition from the news page of our joint website:



www.saxurcleistonuc.org.uk

We were delighted to host the Town Pastors for their annual meeting and celebration worship. The team use the United Church building as their base. At present their office is based in an upstairs room above the hall. In the not-too-distant future, as part of our

declutter, we are intending to make the downstairs vestry available as a more accessible office for the team.

SAXMUNDHAM URC



Start the Week: We have persevered with our "Start the Week" gatherings on the fourth Monday of each month, with some new and familiar faces adding to the numbers. We gather to share refreshments and to enjoy conversation, games and activities. We have been entertained with music from Revd Adam on the piano, and visits from a very friendly local cat. We have explored some new things including the wonderful word game, "Bananagrams" a board-less word game with tiles similar to Scrabble but it is faster paced as everyone plays at once. Our next meeting will be in the new year on 22nd January from 10:00 to 11:30(ish).



Also, in the new year, we are hoping to relaunch a monthly "film-night" and tea or supper. We will have more news of this in the next edition of Connect.

Harvest Sale: We held our Harvest Coffee and Sale on 23rd September. We were pleased to welcome a number of people, with the raffle and cake stalls proving particularly popular. We were delighted, after expenses, to raise £222. Thank you to everyone who contributed in any way.



Harvest Service: It has become a bit of a tradition at Saxmundham that the Elders lead our harvest celebration, this year was no exception. On Sunday 1st October we gathered for worship led by Sue, Gloria and

Ann - with a series of readings, prayers and favourite harvest hymns accompanied by Ann at the piano.

In addition to gifts of non-perishable food items we collected money for “Tools With A



Mission” (TWAM) and were able to send a gift of £50 towards their valuable

work. TWAM is a charity supported by a number of folk across the pastorate. You can find out more by visiting their website: www.twam.uk They always welcome support and donations of tools that are in useable condition (even if they require cleaning and sharpening). You can find a list of the things they are looking for on the website.

Declutter: We have started work on a bit of a declutter. It is amazing just how much stuff



we accrue in our church buildings, some of which has lain untouched and forgotten for some time.

We are gathering all the items to be disposed of in readiness for a skip which we will be sharing with Leiston United Church. Some of the equipment which we had left from years of holiday clubs and Sunday school activities went to the Girls’ Brigade at Castle Hill – we hope they find it useful.

Safeguarding Lead: We are continuing to develop our work in partnership with Leiston United Church. Sue Liddell has recently agreed to take on the role of “Safeguarding Lead” for both the churches. Sharing various tasks and responsibilities between the churches reduces the pressure on individuals.

Ride and Stride: One of elders, Ann, has been



supporting the Ride and Stride event for many years. The church took part again this year with various folk taking a turn at welcoming participants and ensuring that the church was open. Folk gathered sponsorship for the time they spent at the church welcoming visitors. We were delighted to raise £254.

CASTLE HILL URC



Castle Hill
CHURCH

Pantomime: In the last edition of

Connect we were looking forward to the Castle Hill Amateur Performers (CHAPs) production of “The Wizard of Oz”. This was not the familiar musical version which, for copyright reasons, was beyond our resources. There were some entertaining twists and turns. Well done to everyone who took part, front of house, behind the scenes or on the stage.



The shows were well supported and attended by enthusiastic audiences.

Proceeds, after covering costs, were for Myeloma UK – a charity that supports folk and families of folk suffering from this particular form of blood cancer that affects blood plasma within the bone marrow. They provide an information hub and support research. You can find out more by visiting www.myeloma.org.uk including details of the different research work being undertaken.

Warm Welcome: For some time now the



church has hosted a well-supported, monthly Coffee and Cake gathering.

Following discussion it was agreed to extend this to a weekly “Warm Welcome” during the winter months. These are offered, free of charge, each Tuesday from 10:00am to 12:00noon. There are hot drinks, snacks

(quite a selection of chocolate biscuits included), chat, games and activities.

Girls' Brigade: The GB continue to meet, during term-time, on Tuesday evenings from 18:00 to 19:30. We are particularly pleased to have



welcomed a number of new recruits to the group. The girls continue to be enthusiastic and particularly enjoy the creative activities, the games and the time together. Snack time is a much-appreciated weekly feature.

Castle Hill School: The church is situated directly opposite the Castle Hill Infant and Junior School. When the school was first established, they used the Castle Hill church building as a hall whilst various elements



Castle Hill

were still being constructed on the school site. It has been some time since the school and church have had the opportunity to undertake any activities together.

Following some encouraging meetings between the ministers and members of the school team we have put in place some plans to support the school in various ways and hopefully provide learning opportunities for the children. On Monday 13th November, as part of their Multi-faith focus, Revd David and Revd Adam were pleased to welcome the two Year 2 classes to the church building. The children were delightful and engaged in an "eye-spy" activity, searching for and thinking about different features and artefacts in the church. The children were particularly interested in the organ, demonstrated for them by Revd Adam. We are looking forward to further activities in the new year.

Eastern Synod Meeting: On Saturday 14th



October Castle Hill welcomed representatives of churches across the area of the Eastern Synod of the URC. It was an engaging and challenging day with various presentations. A huge thankyou to everyone who supported before and on the day, setting up, welcoming, providing refreshments, soup and bread, a special meal for the jubilee ministers (those celebrating particular anniversaries since their ordination), sound, IT and audio support, car park supervision and welcoming. *(If I've missed anyone I apologise – please be assured of my gratitude – Ed).*

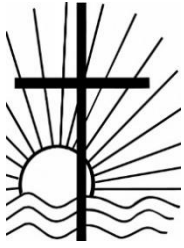
Christmas Festival Service: As part of our annual Christmas celebrations we have a Festival Service. In the past this has provided an opportunity for members of the Sunday School to join in



presenting the nativity story. In more recent years we are pleased that the children and adults associated with CHAPS have been willing to provide a joyful retelling of the Christmas story. Last year the service included Dr Who and the appearance of a Dalek and some Cybermen.

This year we are going down a somewhat more traditional route although the story, set in a card shop, will include a talking snowman, a talking Christmas tree, a talking parcel and Santa Claus. We will share in a simple retelling of the story of the first Christmas. The service takes place on Sunday 17th December at 10:30am and will be led by Andrea Rumsby.

ST JOHN'S URC



New Member: When a minister is inducted to a pastorate they automatically become a member of each of the churches in the pastorate.

However, for statistical reasons, so they, like any member, are only counted once, they are recorded and welcomed at a particular church. On the first Sunday in September, at our communion service, led by Revd David, Revd John Cook welcomed David into membership on behalf of the church.

Church Front Garden: In an earlier edition of Connect we mentioned that an ambulance had swerved to avoid a car (the fault of the car) and ploughed into the front garden of the church destroying the established but rather large bushes and plants. Mercifully the plants enabled the ambulance to come to a halt before hitting the church building.



Since then we have received an insurance payment which enabled us to purchase a number of new (but much smaller) plants which, having cleared the debris, have now been planted. Sadly in the last few days someone felt it necessary to pull up and damage many of these but we will persevere. We will, thanks to a donation, be installing a small paved area with a fixed bench made from recycled plastic material, to be located next to the bus stop in support of those waiting there or in need of a rest as they pass by.

Hymn Sing 2: On Saturday 4th November we held our latest Hymn Sing followed by tea and cake. The Master of



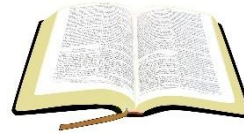
Ceremonies was Revd David, introducing each hymn, with Revd Adam on the organ and members of the church bringing the readings and reflections. Unlike the previous Hymn Sing, rather than hymns requested by church folk, we followed a theme – the “I am” statements in the Gospel according to John.

The hymns were as follows:

- At the name of Jesus
- Our Father (Caribbean Tradition)
- Lord, the light of your love is shining
- Good Christians all rejoice (In dulci jubilo)
- The Lord's my shepherd (Modern)
- Thine be the glory
- Guide me, O thou great redeemer
- You are the vine, we are the branches.

We plan to hold our next hymn sing in the new year. Next time will be hymns by request.

Bible Studies: Revd David has been leading us in a series of “in-person” Bible studies over the last couple months. Having identified discipleship as an area for development in our mission action planning, we thought this would be a good way to get to know the Bible more. Our studies have focussed on some minor characters or “One Hit Wonders” from scripture, some better known than others. We will be taking a break over Christmas and then joining in the pastorate Lent course.



Link To Hope Shoeboxes: Since 2015 St John's have supported the annual shoe box appeal for “Link to Hope” a charity which provides support to people in Eastern European countries. In the past folk have gathered and



filled the boxes themselves but now we make donations to enable boxes to be compiled and transported. This year we collected £380.

FELIXSTOWE URC



Charity Coffee Morning:

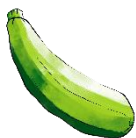
On 16th September we held another coffee morning and sale. There were



fewer charities represented than the previous

occasion but it was still a successful event and, by selling refreshments, cakes and fair trade items we raised £200 for Commitment for Life (Bangladesh). CfL is the URC charity supporting the work of “Christian Aid” and “Global Justice Now”.

Harvest Gifts: The first Sunday of October was our Harvest Festival service,



led by Revd Adam. We collected gifts of food which were donated to the “Pop-up Shop” – a

community support project run by St Peter & St Paul’s Church in Old Felixstowe. Our church was beautifully decorated with flowers and produce including a magnificent serpentine marrow, far more snake-like than the illustration here, displayed on a pedestal in front of the lectern.

New Members: Also on 1st October, as part



of our Harvest Communion service Revd John Cook welcomed Revd Adam and Gillian into membership at



Felixstowe. The members were pleased to greet them both and have them join us in membership.

As mentioned in the St John’s report, Revd Adam is a member of all the pastorate churches, for statistical purposes his membership has been recorded at Felixstowe URC.

Remembering Service: On Sunday 29th



October we held our annual service of remembering for loved ones. Our theme this year was “God has promised” and our time of worship included recorded music by boys’ choir “Libera”, reflective readings, a short address and time for lighting candles.

The service was followed by refreshments and cake. This year the service, held in the afternoon, took the place of our usual Sunday morning service.

Churches Together in Felixstowe: Working in



and developing partnerships in mission and service are important aspects for any church.

Here in Felixstowe we continue to be part of the well established and long standing “Churches Together in Felixstowe”. The group organises shared worship and events, projects and meetings to plan and lead working together. On 22nd November, Felixstowe URC were pleased to host the CTF Forum, an informal evening where the churches meet to hear about what’s going on in our town and to worship and pray together.

PASTORATE NEWS

Advent and Onwards Singers: A number of folk from St John’s URC and Castle Hill URC are currently gathering to rehearse for two forthcoming services as part of a new singers group. The aim of the group is to offer music at a number of planned joint services across

the year as well as recording some items to add to our collection of music hymns and songs for use across the pastorate. The group will be involved in the joint Advent Carol service, held at St John's on Sunday 3rd December and in the Carols by Candlelight service at Castle Hill on Sunday 17th December.

16:00 Sunday Afternoon Services: In response to a number of requests and suggestions, we will be offering, for a trial period initially, a Sunday Afternoon Service. The services will be held at **16:00**. The dates for the services planned so far will be: **28th January 2024, 25th February 2024 and 24th March 2024**. The services will be held at Castle Hill URC and live streamed on YouTube; accessible via the live stream link on the home page of the Castle Hill website. The services will be about 30 minutes in length and simple and reflective in style.



SUNDAY 3rd DECEMBER

Advent Sunday

14:30 Advent Carol Service & Tea
@ St John's URC (Ipswich)
Led by Revd David & Revd Adam

SUNDAY 10th DECEMBER

Advent 2

16:00 Family Carol Service
@ Felixstowe URC
Led by Revd David & Revd Adam

SUNDAY 17th DECEMBER

Advent 3

10:30 Christmas Festival Service
@ Castle Hill URC (Ipswich)
Led by CHAPS & Andrea Rumsby

10:45 Christmas Carol Service
@ St John's URC (Ipswich)
Led by Revd David

10:45 Christmas Carol Service
@ Saxmundham URC
Led by William Glasse

14:00 Carols & Cake Celebration
@ Leiston United
Led by Revd Adam

18:00 Christmas Carols by Candlelight
@ Castle Hill URC (Ipswich)
Led by Revd David & Revd Adam

SUNDAY 24th DECEMBER

Advent 4 Christmas Eve

10:30 Christmas Eve Worship
@ Castle Hill URC (Ipswich)
Led by William Glasse

10:30 Christmas Eve Worship
@ Felixstowe URC
Led by Revd David

10:45 Christmas Eve Worship
@ St John's URC (Ipswich)
Led by Sara Pells

10:45 Christmas Eve Worship
@ Saxmundham URC
Joint Service with Leiston United
Led by Revd Adam

16:00 Family Carol Service
@ Castle Hill URC (Ipswich)
Led by Revd David & Revd Adam

18:00 LCT Carols in the Square
@ Post Office Square Leiston
Led by Leiston Baptist Church

23:30 Midnight Communion

@ St John's URC (Ipswich)

Led by Peter Dawson

SUNDAY 25th DECEMBER

Christmas Day

10:30 Christmas Day Worship

@ Castle Hill URC (Ipswich)

Led by Revd Martin Camroux

10:30 Christmas Day Worship

@ Felixstowe URC (With Trinity Methodist)

Led by Revd Adam

10:45 Christmas Day Worship

@ St John's URC (Ipswich)

Led by Revd David

No services @ Leiston or Saxmundham

On the 3rd and 10th December all churches have their own Sunday morning worship at the usual times.

Each Sunday, during Advent, there will be a special, pre-recorded, service available to online viewers and frame users.

SYNOD NEWS

The October Synod meeting was held at Castle Hill on Saturday 14th October. The Synod representatives meet twice each year, in March and October.

Sue Liddell, Saxmundham URC, attended the meeting and shared the following thoughts on the event.

What We Learned: *There is a programme called Stepwise that runs a course "Faith-Filled Life". It is open to everyone, even those over 75! The person who runs it is Revd Jo Clare-Young. She is coming to take a service*

for us in January; and is willing to lead the course locally.

A booklet, "Leading a Whole-life Disciple-making Church" – about a course about exploring growth in our local churches was made available. You can see that there is a desire for us to be disciples all day and every day in the way we lead our lives.

What questions we are all asked as followers of Jesus? *What are your daily life places and what might God be asking of you there? What can you offer? What might your gifts be? [We had a chat with people near us and the lady next to me said her gift was making a good cup of tea.]*

Jesus said the harvest is ready but the workers are few – so what is the harvest field you could work in? What is our church known for locally? What can we do better together if we work together – with local churches, with the pastorate? Where are we in our mission partnership? As you know we are working on a Mission Action Plan and these questions might help us.

Help from other churches: *A speaker from East Midlands Synod talked about how we can offer and share ourselves in Missional Partnerships – and we all sang spontaneously most of the hymn - Take my life, my moments, my days, my hands, my feet, my voice, my lips, my silver, my gold, my intellect, my will, my heart, my love and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.*

During the afternoon session we heard various reports. The afternoon concluded with worship (with communion) led by Revd Lythan Nevard, Moderator, and included the induction of the new Eastern Synod Transitional Minister, Revd Alex Jacob. His role will be to work in specific areas to help

establish Missional Partnerships – groups of churches working together in various ways, sharing ministry.



Moderator Revd Lythan Nevard and Synod Clerk Revd Dave Coaker



Michael and Mick operating the Sound, IT and livestream



Revd Adam give feedback about the General Assembly 2023



Revd Alex Jacob's Induction



Synod members, including Revd David, listen and concentrate hard

SYNOD EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



Eastern Synod Roadshows

An informal space to raise questions, share answers, gather ideas and make connections.

Refreshments and resources will be available.

7-February
3pm - 4.30 & 7pm-9pm
Wickford URC

15- May
7.30pm - 9pm
Downing Place, Cambridge

18-September
3pm - 4.30 & 7pm-9pm
Ipswich Road, Norwich

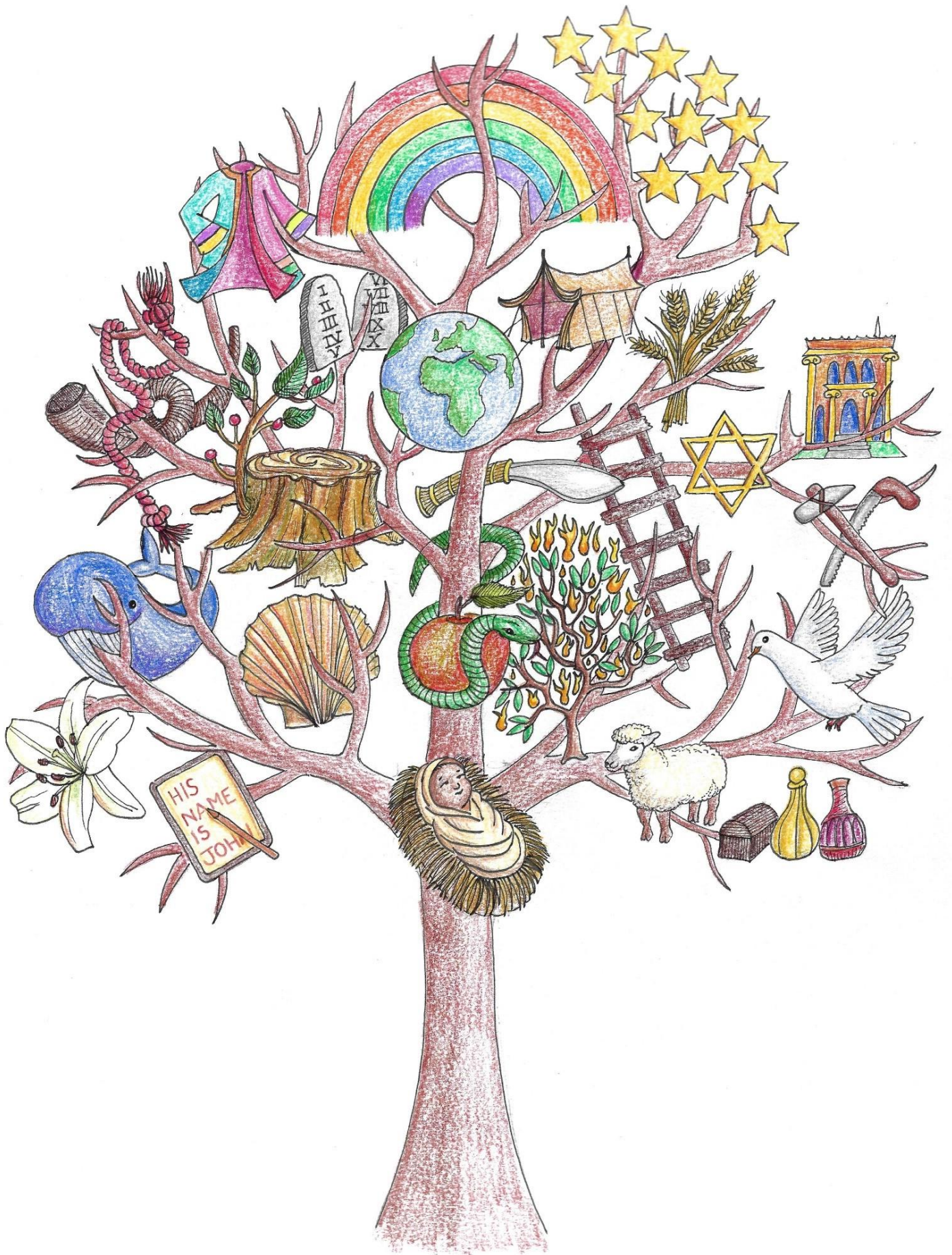
13- November
2pm - 4pm
Epping URC

Synod staff and those with various roles will be on hand to chat about anything and everything, and to offer advice and support.



THE JESSE TREE

An Advent Tradition



The Jesse Tree is an ancient tradition that first appeared in medieval times. The name relates to a prophecy in the book of Isaiah, which refers to a new shoot or branch bursting from the stump of Jesse. The tree leads us from Creation to Christmas – a sort of “Family Tree” for Jesus.

The first Jesse trees were large carvings, tapestries or even stained-glass windows that helped people to learn about the Bible. Now they are used as a kind of Advent Calendar. Each day focuses on a different symbol, associated with a Bible passage.

The readings may be used each day, during Advent, to inspire our thinking and to track the days leading up to Christmas Day.

Day 1 Creation (World)
Genesis 1

Day 2 The Fall (Apple & Snake)
Genesis 2:4 – 3:24

Day 3 The Flood (Rainbow)
Genesis 6:9 – 9:17

Day 4 Promise to Abraham (Stars)
Genesis 12:1-17

Day 5 The Promised Land (Tent)
Exodus 6:6-8

Day 6 Isaac (Knife)
Genesis 22:1-18

Day 7 Jacob’s Ladder (Ladder)
Genesis 28:10-19

Day 8 Joseph (Coat of Many Colours)
Genesis 27 & 50

Day 9 Moses (Burning Bush)
Exodus 2:1 - 4:20

Day 10 Commandments (Two Tablets)
Exodus 19:1 – 20:20

Day 11 Joshua & Rahab (Cord & Trumpet)
Joshua 2 & Joshua 6:1-20

Day 12 Ruth (Sheaf of Wheat)
Book of Ruth

Day 13 King David (Star of David)
1 Samuel 16:1-3

Day 14 King Solomon (Temple)
1 Kings 6

Day 15 Jesse Prophecy (Stump & Branch)
Isaiah 11:1-11

Day 16 Jonah (Whale)
Book of Jonah

Day 17 John The Baptist (Scallop Shell)
Matthew 3:13-17

Day 18 Mary (White Lilly)
Luke 1:26-38

Day 19 Elizabeth (Dove)
Luke 1:39-56

Day 20 Zechariah (Slate & Stylus)
Luke 1:57-80

Day 21 Joseph (Hammer & Saw)
Luke 1:19-25

Day 22 The Shepherds (Sheep)
Luke 2:8-20

Day 23 The Wise Men (Gifts)
Matthew 2:1-12

Day 24 Jesus (Baby in the Manger)
Luke 2:1-8



PLEASE PRAY FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL & GAZA

Watching the news over the past weeks has often been a disturbing and traumatic experience as we have witnessed the terror and conflict unfold between Israel and Gaza. The actions of Hamas in the terror attack on 7th October were horrific and inexcusable. We also recognise the number of people taken hostage and the major concern for their families.

Many have spoken out in support of Israel in its right to act in self defence against those who perpetrated the attack. However, as the actions of the Israel Defence Force (IDF) have proceeded, we have seen many innocent people killed, injured or displaced. Many voices, including UN agencies and the group of former leaders and states-people known as “The Elders” (www.theelders.org) have expressed great concern - especially with attacks on civilians, healthcare facilities and the severe limits to aid and support being made available – a genuine, honest and justifiable response.

At the time of writing the death toll in Gaza has passed 13,000, including over 5000 children. Caught up in all this, over 100 humanitarian and medical support workers for organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières and the World Health Organisation have been killed whilst seeking to bring relief.

We may look on with a sense of horror, combined with a sense of helplessness as we see these things rumble on, with more innocent lives and livelihoods destroyed. Our primary response must be to pray – for an end to conflict and a lasting, peaceful solution. Let us persevere in this (whilst also

remembering other areas troubled by war, conflict and terror).

Here is a prayer offered by Tear Fund that you might like to use:

Dear God, We cry out to you on behalf of the people seriously affected by the conflict in Gaza and Israel. Our hearts break at the devastation and suffering that we see, and we know it breaks yours, too. We ask that you would stretch out your mighty hand to bring an end to this war. We cry out for people who have been injured or traumatised, who have lost loved ones or their homes. Please provide everything they need and be their comfort, their hope, their healer, and their safe refuge. We pray for your peace to reign. We look to you as our Saviour and the hope of the world. Amen.

Tear fund have a page to guide us in praying further for the situation:

<https://www.tearfund.org/stories/2023/10/how-to-pray-for-gaza-and-israel>

Tear Fund also have a “Middle East Emergency Appeal” to which you might like to contribute. You can do so online here:

<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/middle-east-emergency-appeal>

You may also like to read the letter published by the Elders which can be found on their website.

The next edition of Connect will be published in March 2024. If you have any items please send them to Revd Adam on revaje@outlook.com
