

IPSWICH

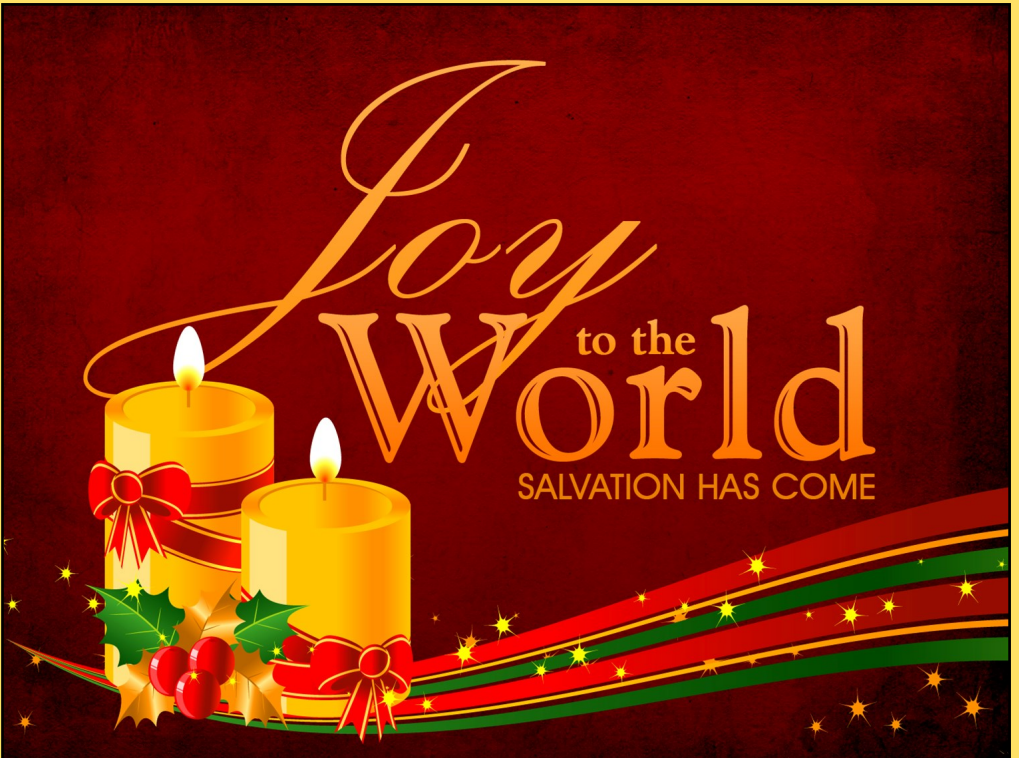


Castle Hill
CHURCH

DRYDEN ROAD, IPSWICH, IP1 6QF

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024 JANUARY 2025



Ministers:

Rev. David Rees

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**SERVICES DURING DECEMBER
ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS**

All Sunday Morning Services listed below together with those marked with 'LS' will be live-streamed.

Access is via the Church website [www.castlehillurc.org.uk]

**Sunday 1st
ADVENT SUNDAY
10.30am. Morning Worship**
Revd. Jenifer Haggar

**4.00pm. Music and Readings for Advent
with St. John's URC**
Revd. David Rees & Revd. Adam Earle
The Service will be followed by tea

**Tuesday 3rd
6.30pm District Girls' Brigade Carol Service**
All are invited to attend

**Sunday 8th.
ADVENT 2
10.30am. Morning Worship**
Revd. David Rees

**Sunday 15th
ADVENT 3
10.30am Family Christmas Festival Service**
Andrea Rumsby

**Tuesday 17th
6.30pm Carols in the Open Air**

Sunday 22nd
ADVENT 4
10.30am. Morning Worship
Rev. Martin Camroux

6.30pm Carols by Candlelight
with Choir (Ls)
Rev. David Rees & Rev. Adam Earle

Tuesday 24th
CHRISTMAS EVE
4.00pm Family Carol Service
Rev. David Rees & Rev. Adam Earle

CHRISTMAS DAY
10.30am Christmas Day Worship
Rev. David Rees

Sunday 29th December.
10.30am Morning Worship Hybrid Service
Led by members of congregation
with recorded Sermon by Rev. David Rees



SERVICES DURING JANUARY 2025

Castle Hill Morning Services below will be live-streamed.
Access is via the Church website [www.castlehillurc.org.uk]

Sunday 5th EPIPHANY

**10.30am. Morning Worship
with Communion**

Revd. Adam Earle

Sunday 12th.

10.30am. Morning Worship

Peter Dawson

4.00pm Afternoon Worship

Revd. Adam Earle

Sunday 19th

10.30am Morning Worship

Revd. Adam Earle

Church Business Meeting follows at 11.30am

Sunday 26th

10.30am Morning Worship

Nigel Crisp

David writes:

Christmas: Celebrating Jesus, the Light of the World



As the days grow shorter and the nights seem longer, Christmas arrives to fill our world with light. This season is a time when we put up twinkling lights on trees, electric candles in windows, and decorations that brighten even the coldest, darkest evenings. But for Christians, the real light of Christmas doesn't come from decorations—it comes from Jesus.

In John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." This statement, so bold and simple, carries the true meaning of Christmas. In Jesus, we find a light that guides, comforts, and sustains us. Christmas is the celebration of God stepping into our lives, bringing a light that darkness can't overcome.

If you think about it, the world into which Jesus was born wasn't all that different from ours. It was a time of division, hardship, and uncertainty. People longed for hope, for a sense of peace and justice. And in the quiet village of Bethlehem, God gave us that hope—not as a king on a throne, but as a baby, born into humility. This baby would grow up to be someone who lifted up the poor, who welcomed the outsider, and who stood up for justice. Jesus' light wasn't just a comforting glow like my Christmas tree; it was a transformative force.

For us today, Christmas is a reminder that we're invited to carry this light into the world. Jesus' light doesn't ask us to deny the darkness or pretend everything is perfect. Instead, it calls us to be people who offer compassion, kindness, and hope to others. Just as light spreads and dispels darkness, our actions, however small, can bring warmth and brightness to those around us.

So as we gather this Christmas season in numerous church services, concerts and in our homes, let's think about the ways we can share the light of Christ. Maybe it's by reaching out to someone who's struggling, standing up for someone who's overlooked, or simply being present with those we love.

This Christmas, may we let Jesus' light fill us and inspire us. And may we remember that even in the longest, darkest night, the light shines, reminding us that God is with us—Emmanuel.

BIBLE STUDY

Our monthly Monday morning Bible Studies in December and January will both be via Zoom at 10.30 am. On December 9th bring your thoughts about the joy and meaning of the Christmas story in our day and age and your choice of Bible reading, Christmas carol or poem.



It can be a favourite passage from the Old or New Testament or one that you puzzle over and would like to discuss. Or it could be a carol whose words sum up something of the meaning of Christmas for you or whose words seem strange to your thinking. Please be prepared to read the Bible passage or give the reference, or to read the carol or poem and to briefly explain your choice. It will be good to share together and expand our understanding.

Our first meeting in the New Year will be on January 13th when we shall be looking at the story of Jesus attending the wedding at Cana in Galilee and turning the water into wine. This story is recorded in John 2:1-11. It will be good to see you at one or both of the meetings and we would be delighted to welcome any who have not joined us before.

Elaine Thomas

PADDY GEERE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

This year, Paddy Geere House will be holding its Christmas Service on **Thursday 12th December at 3pm**. The Service will be led by Adam and David. As before, a small group from Castle Hill will be welcomed to boost the singing and also to chat to the residents. If you would like to join the group please speak to Len Green

IN REMEMBRANCE



Joining acts of Remembrance throughout the country, Castle Hill held a very moving and wonderful Service on Remembrance Sunday led by Peter Dawson.

Each year at this time the Remembrance poppy tapestry, embroidered and knitted by Church Member Ros Lomas is hung in the sanctuary.

Pictured right , a montage of poppies was placed on the Prayer Board. Each poppy was accompanied with a card on which a prayer or message, in Remembrance of ancestors or those known to individuals, could be written. Some photographs we also added.



Apart from our Church Service some members of our congregation took part in the Remembrance Sunday Parade in Christchurch Park.

Some of our Girls Brigade , pictured here, helped to give out the Orders of Service for the Parade.



FIND's CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Rather belatedly, we invite you to help us provide Gifts to families who will receive the FIND food boxes at Christmas. We suggest Gift Vouchers, festive Biscuits, Chocolates or Toys.

- Maureen suggests that Vouchers of £5.00 or £10.00 from the following stores would be helpful: ALDI / CO-OP /SAINSBURY/PRIMARK/ SMYTHS TOYS/THE ENTERTAINER /ARGOS. Please include the amount slip in the Gift card.
- Tins, Tubs, Boxes of festive biscuits, chocolates or Chocolate selection packs (**no individual items please**).
- Toys such as Lego (for children or adults), Games, Dolls of all ethnicity, etc.

Please do not wrap these as this makes it easier to allocate them. To distribute these in time please help your church deliver them to the Food Bank premises **by December 3rd. or very soon after.**

Any help you can give would be very much appreciated.

Shirley Skinner

NOTE FOR CASTLE HILL

There will be a box in the vestibule in which gifts can be placed. I realise that this is very short notice but hopefully we will be able to help FIND with our gifts that will bring joy this Christmas to people who are not as fortunate as many of us.

Thank you.

Shirley



CAFÉ CHURCH AND THE WORD OF GOD

In the picture above, cards raised at the Café Church Service on November 17th, are not scores on the preacher's ability but answers to a Bible Quiz. Questions such as, 'What is the last word in the Bible?' (A-men) or 'how many books are there in the Bible?'(66).

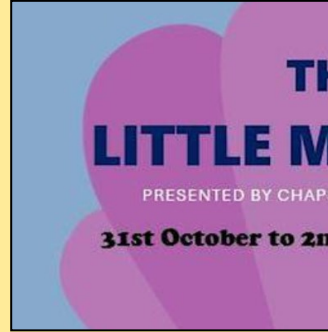
These were part of the interactive theme on 'The Word of God' which took us on a whistle stop tour of the Bible from Genesis right through to Revelation with its message of love, guidance and salvation.

To many the informality of Café Church Services led by either David or Adam is a popular alternative to more traditional Worship.

It also appears to attract more family groups.

CHAPS DELIGHTS AU

With colourful costumes, varying background scene changes, loads of laughter, and all the traditional, 'He's behind you' and similar yells from the audience this year's panto lived up to the high standards of previous performances by CHAPS. Months of rehearsals and preparation paid off with outstanding performances, the younger members deserve special mention they performed well and were completely unphased by acting in front of the large audiences on each of the three nights.



From Left

Dame Persil (Ted Heath)

Ariel (Beth Derrett)

Thermidore (Carley Grant)

AUDIENCES YET AGAIN



All profits from the three performances will go to MIND, the mental health charity. At the time of writing the accounts have yet to be finalised but the amount donated will be published in the February Newsletter.



*The wicked Octavia
Played by Bev Derrett*

*Admiral (Astra Sansiviero)
and Dame Persil*



CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

OUR CHURCH GROUNDS AS A HAVEN FOR NATURE

Our Church grounds are more than part of a place of worship—they are a sanctuary for God's creation. In our commitment to environmental stewardship, we are working to transform the land into a thriving habitat for local wildlife. From bug hotels and bird nesting boxes to a cozy hedgehog shelter, every corner of our grounds has a refuge for God's creatures.

This spring, we'll expand our efforts by planting wildflowers, aiming to create a vibrant meadow to support bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. By managing our grounds thoughtfully, we're not only enhancing biodiversity but also living out our faith by nurturing the earth entrusted to us. Our aim is to make the area around our Church a testament of care and reverence for the natural world.



Our hedgehog shelter



We plan to plant wildflower seeds in the Spring



Our Bug hotels



Nesting Box



CASTLE HILL TAKING PART IN BIG GARDEN BIRD WATCH 2025

Our Church is registering to take part in the world's largest garden wildlife survey. In 2024, over 600,000 people took part.

The survey involves devoting just one hour between January 24th and 26th to watch the birds in your garden , or in our case the Church grounds, and tell the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) what birds have been seen. If very few birds or none at all, are observed that's also really useful information. Elaine and Arthur Thomas have offered to carry out our Church's Survey.

The results are vital in tracking the welfare of our British birds. In 2024 of the almost 1.5 million birds counted the House Sparrow was the most common followed by the Blue Tit, Starling, Woodpigeon and Blackbird.

If you would like to take part from your own garden, you can log onto the RSPB website or speak to Len Green for details.

CHRISTIAN AID AT CHRISTMAS NO ROOM FOR COMFORT AND JOY

This Christmas Christian Aid is highlighting the growing humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. There is no room for comfort and joy when you've left everything behind to survive. Driven by war in Sudan to a refugee settlement in South Sudan, families like Shede's who is depicted on our poster, urgently need our support. Shede faces a daily challenge to guard her daughter and granddaughter from hunger and malnutrition.



In Sudan, just like in the UK, visitors are often welcomed with a steaming cup of shai (tea). Preparing and sharing tea is a comforting ritual that fosters togetherness. Shede would serve tea in her home in Sudan but now she has had to leave everything behind. She

says, "I did not come with anything. I only came with these clothes on. The rest of my belongings were all left behind. No table, no teapot, no chair, no bed. Nothing."

The support programme delivered by Christian Aid is a vital lifeline. For families like Shede's, it offers the means to buy food and replace the essential belongings they've lost. It's a stark reminder, among the excess of Christmas here, that many of our global neighbours have made impossible choices and are enduring unimaginable loss and trauma.

As you sip your tea, why not plan to help support families like Shede's by making a donation to our Church Christmas Christian Aid appeal. There will be retiring collections at all our Christmas services from December 15th –29th. Christian Aid envelopes will be available.

This year the **Christmas Card Board** will be hung at the back of the Church. You are invited to add a card to all your friends at Castle Hill rather than send individual ones, and to put the money saved in the Christian Aid basket on the table at the back of the Church.

A CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

As we gather in the light of this holy season, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, whose birth fills the world with hope and joy. May the celebration of His coming remind us of Your boundless love and guide our hearts toward peace and goodwill.

Lord, as the year draws to a close, we reflect on the blessings and challenges we've experienced. For every moment of joy, we give thanks. For every trial, we seek Your wisdom and grace. Fill our hearts with forgiveness for others and ourselves, so we may enter the New Year with renewed strength and clarity.

We pray for those who are lonely, grieving, or in need this Christmas. Let Your light shine in their darkness, and may they find comfort in Your unchanging presence. Inspire us to be Your hands and feet, reaching out in love and service to those around us.

As the New Year dawns, we ask for Your guidance in all we do. Teach us to walk humbly, love generously, and live faithfully. Grant us courage to face new challenges and a spirit of gratitude to cherish every blessing.

Bless our families, our communities, and our world. May the peace of Christmas and the hope of the New Year unite us in love and harmony, bringing Your kingdom closer each day.

In Jesus' name, we pray,
Amen



This serene and inspiring depiction of Christmas, emphasises hope for the future. It blends traditional elements with a forward-looking message of faith and renewal . (Image generated by artificial intelligence)



WOOL COURT

Starting January 21st and every third Wednesday we shall be meeting here at Castle Hill Church between 10.30am and 12.30pm. Come and join us for coffee, knitting and chat. Also to buy wool for your knitting needs at very reasonable prices.

Ann Wilding

MUSSBACH VISIT 2025

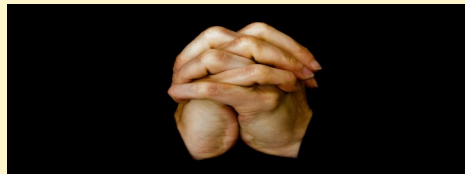
Our friends from Mussbach plan to visit next year sometime between April 30 and May 7, although exact dates have not yet been decided as much will depend on flights and costs. We look forward to being able to spend time together as two church congregations and will share further details about the visit in the New Year.

IN-BETWEEN CLUB

The In-Between Club meeting on the 6th December at 2.30pm.
for An Old Fashioned. Christmas!
Cost £5 Tickets from Barbara or Chris



OUR STREET PRAYER FOCUS FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY IS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF SHIRLEY CLOSE AND PADDY GEERE HOUSE



Grab a bargain at the Tabletop Sale

Castle Hill Church

On

Saturday 18th January

2pm—4pm

Admission Free

Sellers from 1pm.

£5 per Table



To book your
table message or
call Katie on
07787 325 536



Clothes ,Toys Games
Bric a Brac
Cafe

COFFEE CAKE AND CHAT

10am – 12pm in the Meeting Room

Every First Tuesday

(incorporates Tuesday Welcome)

Note first of the New year will be January 7th



Combined with the regular Tuesday Welcome Coffee Morning

TUESDAY WELCOME

Every Tuesday

10am-12pm





FISH AND CHIPS FRIDAY

**FOR THOSE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA
AND THEIR CARERS**

**Organised by Headway
A time filled with activities and entertainment**

**No Fish & Chips Friday in December
Re commencing on 24th January and then
every fourth Friday of the month
11.45 am – 3.15 pm**

No need to pre-book

For more information contact:
maureenhowes@headwaysuffolk.org.uk
Phone 01473 7122255

**Cost £10 (includes fish & chips,
tea, coffee biscuits and cake)**

Castle Hill URC is a Dementia-friendly Church

DIARY DATES DECEMBER 2024

- 1st** Music and Readings for Advent. 4.00pm.
- 5th** Elders' meeting 7.00pm
- 6th** In-Between Club 2.30pm.
- 8th** German Church 4.00pm
- 9th** Bible Study by Zoom 10.30am.
- 11th** Busy Fingers 2.00pm.
- 18th** Lunch Club Christmas Lunch
- 19th** Tiny Tots Christmas Party

JANUARY 2025

- 2nd** Elders' meeting 7.00pm
- 5th** German Church 4.00pm.
- 12th** Afternoon Worship 4.00pm..
- 13th** Bible Study by Zoom 10.30am
- 18th** Tabletop Sale 2.00pm.
- 19th** Church Business Meeting 12.30pm.
- 24th** Fish and Chips Friday 11.45am.

Deadline for the February Newsletter
Submissions to Len Green by **Friday 17 th January**
E-mail: editor@castlehillurc.org.uk