



NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2023/JANUARY 2024



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SERVICES DURING DECEMBER

**All Sunday Morning Services and Carols by Candlelight
will be live-streamed access via website
[www.castlehillurc.org.uk]**

Sunday 3rd

**10.30am. Morning Worship
with Communion**

Keith Scarff

**2.30pm Music and Readings for Advent
At St. John's URC**

Sunday 10th

10.30am. Morning Worship

Revd. David Rees

Sunday 17th

10.30am. Christmas Festival Service

Andrea Rumsby and CHAPS

6.00pm Carols by Candlelight

Revd. David Rees & Revd. Adam Earle

Sunday 24th

CHRISTMAS EVE

10.30am. Morning Worship

William Glasse

4.00pm Family Carol Service

Revd. David Rees & Revd. Adam Earle

CHRISTMAS DAY

10.30am. All-Age Christmas Service

Revd. Martin Camroux

Sunday 31st

10.30am. Morning Worship

Revd. Adam Earle



ST JOHN'S URC & CASTLE HILL URC
**MUSIC & READINGS
FOR ADVENT**

FOLLOWED BY TEA



SUNDAY 3rd DECEMBER 2023 @ 14:30
St John's United Reformed Church
1 Cowper Street, Ipswich IP4 5JD



RECREATING CHRISTMAS?

Revd. Adam Earle



“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

Luke 2:7

I remember, from childhood, the annual Christmas ritual of purchasing copies of the Radio and TV Times. Each member of the family, armed with a pen, would work through the bumper editions indicating things we would like to watch. There was then the challenge of resolving the problems if two programmes clashed - we had no way of recording things off air to watch later.

Christmas TV was a rich diet of familiar and new items. For me the “Two Ronnies Christmas Special”, the “Morecambe and Wise Christmas Special” and the Walt Disney film clips compilation were high on the list of essential viewing. Since then, part of my Christmas routine is rewatching on DVD or via “on-demand” services – such treasures as Delia Smith’s Christmas, various comedy specials and, if I want to experience a combination of horror and humorous disbelief, “Fanny Cradock’s Cooks for Christmas”. She really was breathtakingly patronising and bossy. There is a hankering for the viewing treasures of the past.

This is part of something that I have caught myself doing every year ever since I passed from the magical days of childhood into the sobering days of adulthood. Each year I get excited by the prospect of Christmas and invest considerable time and, probably, far too much money in trying to re-create the feelings of Christmas from my youth. Each year I cling to the hope that, somehow, this year I will succeed in recapturing that sense of wonder and anticipation. When the “big day” finally passes there is a sense that it wasn’t all that I had hoped. No amount of time and money invested in what Betjeman wisely identified as “fripperies”, will somehow achieve the unachievable.

Preachers, pastors, priests and ministers have, for centuries, entreated us not to become so engaged with the trappings and trimmings of the celebration that we lose sight of the reality of Christmas. This we find in the humble nature of Christ’s birth and the experience of Christmas for the majority of the world’s population today. For so many, Christmas is

worrying and stressful time when the expectations of others and those we impose on ourselves pile on the pressure and stretch already limited resources to breaking point. For many, Christmas will bring no relief from the struggle and fear or conflict, war or abuse and the day will pass unnoticed or without any distinction.

There is nothing wrong with celebration, in gathering with friends and family to share a special time especially in the dark days of winter, but it does us well to approach these things with an honest and realistic perspective. At the heart of Christmas is, or should be, the shocking, even scandalous humility of the first Christmas – it was not, on the face of it, an extraordinary day – business as usual, struggle as usual, danger as usual even for the family of Jesus. He was just as vulnerable as any newborn, just as needy as any child born into a poor family. He was born into an occupied nation and early in life joined the many refugees that continue to seek safety in other nations.

But... this child, this tiny, helpless, humble child, is the source of all hope - an expression of God's love and care beyond our wildest imaginings - salvation and life for all. True satisfaction is not found in recreating the past or investing in the fleeting pleasures of the season – true satisfaction is found in God alone, made known and available to us through Christ. Let's celebrate Christ this Christmas and do so with a prayerful eye to the reality of the world and the hope that only Jesus Christ can bring.



“ . . .this child, this tiny, helpless, humble child, is the source of all hope . . . ”

GOOD COMPANY and WARM SPACE AT CASTLE HILL CHURCH

**COFFEE, CAKE AND
CHAT**

**Tuesday 9th January
10am-12pm**

WARM SPACE

**Tuesday 16th, 23rd
30th January
10am-12pm.**

**COFFEE, CAKE AND
CHAT**

**Tuesday 5th December
10am-12pm**

WARM SPACE

**Tuesday 12 and 19th
December
10am-12pm.**



Paddy Geere Christmas Service Thursday 21st December 3.00pm

Once again we shall be leading a short Christmas Service at Paddy Geere House and would welcome a small group from Castle Hill Church to boost the singing. Due to available seating space numbers are limited so please let Len Green know if you wish to join.

IN-BETWEEN CLUB FRIDAY 1st DECEMBER 2.30pm.

The In-Between Club will meet at 2.30pm on 1st December when we will be entertained by Dennis Maisey followed by sandwiches etc from Sainsburys. Tickets from me price £5. Please note that the Club will not meet in January or February.

Chris Goldsmith

FNKD QUIZ

I would like to say a big, big thank you to all who supported the FNKD quiz to raise funds for Bucence Children' Centre in South Western Uganda. Thank you especially to Fiona and Mark for organizing it, for all the raffle prizes and everyone for coming along to share in an enjoyable evening. I am pleased to say that we raised £397 for the quiz, and raffle and craft sales raised a further £254. Thank you!

FOOD HAMPER PROGRAMME

We are now preparing our food distribution programme for December 2023, our seventh year – there is much help needed for needy families such as these in the picture. Christmas in Uganda is very different to here.

I recently asked two of our managers how it is for their children at Christmas and for children in the Children's Centre. They told me that on Christmas morning everyone is excited – it's because of their gift. Their gift is Jesus. Sometimes at Christmas, they will bring into their houses some small branches from trees or some flowers to decorate. They might have something new to wear or they might not. They hope to eat meat and rice and have a soda and maybe a few sweets. They put on their smart clothes – if they have them and go to Church and then they spend some time meeting and greeting their neighbours.



It is a joyful time and a time for thanking God. If you are a poor family, you still have the gift of Jesus but often people are ashamed to go to church with others as they don't have tidy clothes or shoes. They really do need their food hampers so I would like to say thank you once again for helping us to provide this for them. If you would still like to give a gift to help us provide food, please be in touch rachh123@hotmail.co.uk

Happy Christmas from all of us at FNKD and on behalf of our Staff and Children in Uganda Mwebare Munonga – Thank you very Much for all you have shared with us in 2023

Rachel Harris

BIBLE STUDY

Our monthly Tuesday morning Bible Studies in December and January will both be via Zoom at 10.30 am. On December 12th 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 9th when the theme will be 'Recognizing when and how God calls'. We might use both Old and New Testament passages from the lectionary, namely: 1Samuel 3:1-10, and John 1:43-51.

Elaine Thomas

BIBLE NOTES 2024

I will soon be ordering Bible Reading Notes for 2024 from Eden Books on behalf of members of the fellowship. In the past these have included:

- **Fresh from The Word**, published annually, cost £12.56
- **New Daylight** published every four months, cost £4.56
- **Upper Room** published every four months, cost £4.95
- **Day by Day with God** published every four months, cost £4.51
- **Inspiring Women Every Day**, now one year devotional, cost £9.99

If anyone would like these, or other Bible reading notes, for next year please complete the form in the church vestibule with the details of the notes you wish to order. To ensure receipt before the new year, I shall be grateful if your orders are placed with me by 11 December. Thank you.

Shirley Skinner

PRAYER HANDBOOK

'Full To The Brim' is the title of the URC Prayer Handbook for 2024. Themes of fullness and emptiness run throughout the Bible. The prayers in this handbook speak of different kinds of fullness – fullness of blessing, of being too busy - and of the need, sometimes, to empty ourselves in order to be filled afresh.

The first section of the book follows the lectionary readings for each week of the year with appropriate prayers. In the second half, people were invited to interpret the idea of 'full to the brim' in whatever way resonated with them and contribute a prayer.

The Handbook costs £5.99 plus a share of the postage and packing. If you would like a copy please sign the list at the Church or contact Elaine Thomas by December 10th. Money to be paid on receipt of the book.

Elaine Thomas

CHRISTIAN AID AT CHRISTMAS



This Christmas Christian Aid asks that we give women the chance they deserve to shine. Young women have the power to break out of poverty, they just need the chance.

As we get ready to celebrate Christmas, too many girls around the world are being denied the opportunity to control their own lives. They may be leaving school to get married in their teens, having their lives put at risk by pregnancy, or facing sexual harassment at work. Around the world, every girl has talents she'd love to pursue, but right now many never get the chance. It's time this changed, and we can help it to happen. This Christmas we can help young women to set up a business, to make clothes to sell online, to earn a living safely, to study and then train others. It's women's time to shine and become guiding lights in their communities

There will be retiring collections for Christian Aid at all our Christmas services from December 17th to 31st. Will you help a young woman to be a light in the darkness today?



CASTLE HILL AMATU PRESENT 'THE WIZ'

Over £2000 was made between the donations. A really successful year. The every night sold out!



OTHER PLAYERS {CHAPS} BOARD OF OZ' PANTO

the raffle, tuck shop, ticket sales and thanks to everyone who came along as



FIND (FAMILIES IN NEED)

Thank you again for your generous donations of goods and money to FIND during this year. You may have seen the letter to church members from Heather Cade, FIND trustee, thanking us for donations from our Harvest Festival service (on the church notice board in the vestibule) but in case you haven't I have copied it here.



'Thank you so much for your donations of food given to FIND (Families in Need) from your recent Harvest Festival. We are very grateful for those, some of which have been used for the food supplies which we supply daily and some have been set aside for the 500 or so Christmas Hampers which we shall soon be packing.

'Numbers are increasing week by week of people needing items such as food, furniture, school uniform and warm clothing, as well as to pay utility bills, for even some who are in work and are now seeking help at this difficult financial time.

'One exciting piece of news to share with you is that planning permission has now been given for us to erect a building near the food bank to store goods such as furniture, electrical goods, stairgates and bedding. This should be up and running by February when we can vacate the building at Hines Road. Although expensive initially, we shall benefit from having it on site which will save time and travel costs.'

I continue to take your donations to the depot on a regular basis and am happy for you to either bring them to my house (164 Henley Road) or put them in the boxes in the vestibule at church. If no-one is at my home when you call they will be quite safe in the porch behind the red door. I would also be very happy to collect from you if this is easier; you can contact me on 01473 217858 to arrange this. If you prefer, monetary donations can be made on line at www.findipswich.org.uk

CHRISTMAS 2023

FIND are again unable to accept toys and other gifts because of the difficulty in finding space for storage and wrapping. Next year with the erection of the new storage unit they hope to be back to their pre-covid arrangements, which will be so welcome. So for this year boxes of biscuits and sweets are again welcome as well as Lego sets for all ages, particularly for older children, and

GIFT CARDS from the following outlets.

**Sainsbury, Co-op, Aldi, Tesco, Smyths Toys, The Entertainer,
Primark, Argos,
Marks and Spencer**

Value on the gift card £10 or more, and it must have the receipt attached please. I'm sure you will appreciate how useful these will be to families who are struggling to provide even the most basic of their needs.

Thank you again for your continued support for FIND.

Shirley Skinner



FISH AND CHIPS FRIDAY

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

Organised by Headway

A time filled with activities and entertainment

**Every fourth Friday of the month
11.45 am – 3.15 pm**

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

Castle Hill URC is a Dementia-friendly Church



**CHRISTMAS SPECIAL
22nd DECEMBER**

No need to pre-book

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

JANUARY 2024



His Unfailing Presence

*Another year I enter
Its history unknown;
Oh, how my feet would tremble
To tread its paths alone!*

*But I have heard a whisper,
I know I shall be blest;
"My presence shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."*

*What will the New Year bring me?
I may not, must not know;
Will it be love and rapture,
Or loneliness and woe?*

*Hush! Hush! I hear His whisper;
I surely shall be blest;
"My presence shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."*

Unknown Author

SERVICES DURING JANUARY

All Sunday Morning Services will be live-streamed access via website [www.castlehillurc.org.uk]

Sunday 7th.

**10.30am. Morning Worship
with Communion.**
Revd. Jo Claire-Young

Sunday 14th.

10.30am. Morning Worship
Revd. David Rees

Sunday 21st.

10.30am. Morning Worship
Revd. Jenny Haggart

Sunday 28th.

10.30am. Morning Worship
Revd. David Rees

4.00pm. Sunday Afternoon Worship



16:00 SUNDAY AFTERNOON WORSHIP

FOURTH SUNDAYS - 28th JANUARY, 25th FEBRUARY & 24th MARCH



In response to a number of requests and suggestions, in the new year, we will be offering, for trial period initially, a Sunday Afternoon Service. The services will be held at Castle Hill URC and, whenever possible, live streamed on YouTube – follow the live stream link from the home page of Castle Hill's website. The services will be about 30 minutes in length and will be simple and reflective. Join us in person or watch online.

Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?



Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?
Why can't You protect the women and children?
They will suffer the most: hiding in cellars and safe rooms.
Children too afraid to go out to play or attend school.
Wives and lovers scared to death about those taken hostage.
Women crying in dark and fear whilst the men plan to wage war and seek revenge!

Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?
Those kids won't grow up to trust and make peace.
Israeli kids will be taught to fear their neighbours and look at the sky with trepidation;
Palestinian children will suffer in yet more blockades, further economic punishment, new life-limiting travel restrictions, additional educational restrictions. Children from all sides learning to hate and wage war!

Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?
Hundreds have been killed, thousands wounded,
hostages taken, people afraid to leave their homes for fear of fighting.
Political leaders will seek to maximise their importance,
using dreadful words and tools to legitimise their views,
whilst the world looks on wringing its hands!

Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?
You're Almighty aren't You?
Jew, Christian, Muslim – all agree on that don't we?
You've the power so use it!
Show some of that glory we say You have!
Don't you care for the women and the children, Lord?

**Has the Cross taught you nothing, my child?
Might is found in weakness, power in humility, glory at the tip.
I weep with the women and the children;
I rage at the violence and hatred;
I curse the hypocrisy.
I've been to Hell remember, but it's up to you to stop it.**

Source: URC - Prayers in a Time of Conflict

COMMUNION AT HOME FOR THOSE UNABLE TO GET TO CHURCH



Although illness or infirmity may prevent you from physically attending church, Communion can be brought to you in your home by one of our ministers or an authorised Church celebrant.

If you, or someone you know, who cannot get to Church would like to receive the elements at home please contact Andrea Rumsby.

A NEW CHURCH FOR A NEW WORLD

Studies of growing congregations, at a time when mainline denominations are declining numerically, consistently discover that the one characteristic that growing congregations share is not theology, ideology, or worship styles, but a sense of mission.

Growing congregations are focused on the world outside the walls of their buildings and are intentional about translating the theological affirmations they make inside into acts of compassion, love, and justice outside. When institutional survival absorbs a church's energy and imagination and resources, it simply ceases to be very interesting or compelling. When a congregation lives out its faith in and for the sake of its Lord, it is difficult to ignore .

John Buchanan

(Taken from Facebook posting by Revd. Martin Camroux)



*Times have
changed so
should adapt
to this new age by
focussing even
more on the world
outside our walls?*

Castle Hill Worship 12th November 2023



Castle Hill Worship May 4th 1997

CHURCH SECRETARY

Sandra Bragg now has a dedicated laptop for her use as the Church Secretary. This will allow her to separate personal e-mails from those directly associated with the role of Church Secretary and allow for secure storage of other 'Church' documentation.

Please either e-mail her via the 'Contacts' page on the Church Web Site or e-mail her direct on: - ch.secretary@outlook.com.

LIVE STREAMING—IS IT WORTH IT?

Every Morning Service at Castle Hill is live-streamed. That means any person, anywhere in the world with internet facilities, can view our Service as it happens. Each Sunday numbers viewing 'live' vary between a single viewer or up to eight. More usually, between one and five, So is it worth the trouble?

Regardless of the numbers viewing 'live' it is important for people to know that on any Sunday from 10.30am, if they are not physically at Church for any reason, they can still view and feel part of a Service. Just click on at 10.30am and we are there.

However, what may not be generally known is that the stream is also recorded. One version of the recorded Service remains on the Castle Hill Church YouTube site. A second version is edited with all the Castle Hill specific references to individuals, and Castle Hill announcements removed. This is uploaded to the Pastorate link and that is the basis for the following week's recorded Pastorate Service. So far, most of the recorded Services were from Castle Hill but St. John's URC now uploads one recorded Service each month and this will increase in future.

So are the recorded Services worth it? The figures may surprise you. Between January 2023 and mid-November the Castle Hill site had **1658** views. The Pastorate link had **1728** views. So apart from the 150 or so live views over this period, a total of **3386** looked at them subsequently. These figures include those who may just have a peep for a minute or two, to those who view the entire Service.

A final note. At any one time we can see how many are viewing but not who they are. So if you fancy a quick peep on a Sunday your identity is completely anonymous.

Len Green

DIARY DATES

DECEMBER 2023

- 1 - In-Between Club 2.30pm
- 5 - Coffee, Cake & Chat 10.00am
- 6 - Busy Fingers
- 7 - Elders meeting 7.00pm.
- 10 - German Church 4.00pm
- 12 -Bible study via Zoom. 10.30am
- 22 - Fish & Chip Friday 11.45am

JANUARY 2024

- 4 - Elders Meeting 7.00pm
- 7 - German Church 4.00pm
- 9 - Bible Study via Zoom 10.30am
- 10 - Busy Fingers
- 24 - Busy Fingers
- 26 - Fish 'n Chip Friday 11.45am

**STREET PRAYER
FOCUS FOR
DECEMBER AND
JANUARY
IS FOR THE
RESIDENTS OF
MACAULAY ROAD**



Deadline for February Newsletter
Submissions to Len Green by **Friday 19th January 2024**
E-mail: positivereactionltd@btinternet.com