



St. John's World

Issue 107 January/February 2020

Newsletter of St. John's Methodist Church, Amersham

Carol singing thank you

Thank you to all the singers and collectors who supported carol singing in December, and to our wonderful hosts Judy and Gordon, Terry and Hazel, and Jeremy and Eileen.

St John's has continued the tradition of street carol singing every year since the early 1970s, in support of **Action for Children (or the National Children's Home as it used to be known then)**.



I thought we might struggle this year with the weather, and also numbers with so many bugs going around before Christmas – but I should never underestimate our enthusiastic and hardy core of people who turn up year after year, in rain, wind and even snow!

This year we managed to go out two of the three planned evenings, with 14 people one evening and 12 on the other, including members of Amersham High Street church, friends of Teresa's from a local choir and Liz Harris who travelled all the way from near Bicester to be there! Even on the third night,

when we were beaten by the weather, we still sang a carol at the host house and made our own donations, which helped to boost the total!

It was a great turnout, and we had lots of fun. We had lovely comments from people – saying about the quality of the singing and how special it is to have real singers at their doors.

Most importantly, we raised nearly £300 for the good work of Action for Children, which we heard more about during the gift service at the beginning of December.

Thanks again to all those who supported this festive tradition, to help bring the spirit of Christmas to the people of Amersham and Chesham Bois.

Helen



Lent Fasting

Lent 2020
Wednesday 26th February to
Thursday 9th April

Editor: The Rev Paul Hardingham considers self-discipline during Lent.

February sees the start of Lent, the season of penitence, self-examination and fasting running up to Easter.

Fasting can be a neglected discipline, but it plays an important part in the Christian life. Jesus began His earthly ministry by fasting in the wilderness for 40 days and He taught His disciples to fast (i.e. not if but *'when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen.'* (Matthew 6:17,18).

Why Fast? Firstly, giving up something in my life underlines my desire to put God first in my life.

Secondly, fasting shows me how much I depend on things other than God in my life, so I can surrender my idols to Him.

Thirdly, fasting encourages me to have a deeper hunger and dependency for God in my life. Therefore, fasting gives me space to humbly focus on God

for His strength, provision, and wisdom and results in a more intimate relationship with Christ.

It also enables the Holy Spirit to reveal my true spiritual condition, leading to brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life, with a heart more attentive to God.

How can I fast?

Usually fasting involves missing one or two meals during the day, although some can't abstain from food for medical reasons. It might also include abstaining or limiting the time I give to television, alcohol or social media. However, Lent can also be a time to embrace new spiritual disciplines e.g. joining a study group, 'random acts of kindness', or giving more time to prayer and Bible study. Whatever you do, make Lent count this year!

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.' (Matthew 5:6).





St. John's Methodist Church

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'Our halls and rooms are also used by other groups - please contact Hall Bookings for availability'

Through the week at St. John's

Sun 11.00 am Morning Worship

Mon	4.45 - 5.45pm 7.00 - 8.30pm	Rainbows Guides
Tues	5.30 - 7.00pm 7.00 - 8.30pm	Brownies Guides
Fri	5.30 - 6.45pm 6.30 - 8.00pm 7.30 - 9.30pm 8.00 - 10.00pm	Beavers Cubs Scouts Explorers
Sat	3.00 - 4.30pm	Messy Church (Monthly except August)

St. John's World

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Church Action on Poverty Sunday – 23rd February

by Canon David Winter

Church Action on Poverty Sunday takes place later in February. Many of us want to help the poor, but the challenges are huge.

'Good News for the poor' - that was what Jesus promised – and the crowd flocked to hear it. But He didn't promise to abolish poverty. 'The poor you always have with you', He said, and everything we have seen since has proved that He was right.

Two thousand years, many political promises and different regimes, and we still have poor people, often living alongside the conspicuously rich. 'Good news for the poor'? Not, it appears, in any political or social revolution. Sadly, we have yet to abolish poverty.

But followers of Jesus have been in the forefront of those who have tried to mitigate its consequences. Churches and various individual Christians have been prime movers in the amazing development of Food Banks. The Bradford-based charity 'Christians against Poverty' has helped literally tens of thousands of people out of debt. Night shelters for the homeless, schools in the world's poorest lands and support for drug addicts these are on the agenda of every Church and that is good news for the poor.

There is so much more to be done, of course, if poverty is ever to be eliminated. But not being able to do it all mustn't stop us doing what we can.

So this year, why not do something to support Church Action on Poverty?

Details at:

<http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/>

As a starting point, the [End Hunger UK](http://www.endhunger.org.uk) campaign calls for a commitment to halving food poverty.

The Government and all parties should commit to that goal, as a vital step towards ending hunger altogether. That commitment will ensure the country makes progress early, tackling the underlying causes of hunger, redesigning the parts of the economy that aren't working properly, and building on the success of people and projects up and down the country who are achieving results on a small scale.

Policy-makers should start by talking to people like **Penny and Heather**, a mother and daughter in Byker, Newcastle. They have experienced poverty first-hand and seen it all around them among their friends and neighbours. Now they are tackling it head-on, working on new projects that will prevent countless others being swept into hunger.

DENISE – our beautiful, funny friend.



The sudden death of Denise Philip on 29th November has left an enormous void both in the life at St. Johns and in the hearts of those who loved her, especially her close family. Denise brought light and warmth to our church and no where more so than to our Messy Church. Her love for the children and their families shown through in everything she undertook. When Denise stepped into St Johns six years ago, we were all truly blessed.

Denise was talented in many ways, she was creative, generous, loving, and funny. It was that sense of humour that lifted us on so many occasions and even in the darker days of her illness Denise was always able to raise a laugh, usually at herself. What a talent this is, one not given to many of us!

The love shown for Denise by so many was illustrated fully when nearly 200 people gathered at St. Johns for her funeral service. People from so many parts of her life, her fellow work colleges, friends from Ireland and Trinidad, as well as most of the St. John's congregation.

Tributes from her family, her dad, David, and her wonderful son, Kane, showed us all, if we ever had any doubt, that Denise was so popular, loved so much by so many.

For the Messy Church Team and the families, it has been a time of disbelief, a time when we have felt that we will wake up from this bad dream and we will hear Denise say 'Well, we could do it this way.....' Or we will see one of her Messy Creations gracing our craft tables, or we will see her dressed as a Christingle, a WWI soldier, a lollipop lady, or Great Grandma Anna. Acting was another of Denise's wonderful gifts.

We wonder how we can move on without her, but we know that she would have wished us to pick up the pieces and get on with the job in hand. Encourage our families to enjoy their time at Messy Church and above all to laugh again, just as she did. This is the hardest part of all, because even as I write, I cannot think of Messy Church without Denise, I cannot think of those Planning Meetings without Denise's input, without her finding everything we needed on her phone at the touch of a button, or from Borough Market the very next day. However, we know that God will lead us into the future, and we ask for prayers from you all, because it will not be easy.

On behalf of us all, all our Messy Church families past and present, I thank you Denise from the bottom of my heart for EVERYTHING – but especially for just being YOU – the YOU that we will love and cherish for ever.

God bless you Denise – Forever in our hearts.

Pam - Helen and Judy

14 February - Valentine's Day

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples. So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day -14 February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

Editor: Nigel Beeton writes: Sometimes we can be terribly careless with our family and our loved ones. On Valentine's Day, it is worth reflecting upon the trust placed in us by both God and our partner when we are entrusted with the priceless gift of another person's love:

A Treasured Heart

A pearl beyond all human measure
Your heart is such a golden treasure
Too valuable to tell!
Through times of toil and of leisure
Times of sorrow and of pleasure
I shall guard it well!

Love and trust, once they are woken
Are more than just a heart-shaped token
This gift from God above
Not a treasure to be broken
By careless deeds or phrases spoken
This precious gift of love!

Love is patient, love is kind
Love leaves selfishness behind
Forgiving from the start
Truthful, trusting, never blind
Such are the beauties I can find
If I just guard your heart!

By careless deeds or phrases spoken
This precious gift of love!

By Nigel Beeton

All in the month of JANUARY

It was:

200 years ago, on 27th and 30th Jan 1820 that Antarctica was discovered.

A Russian expedition sighted the Fimbul Ice Shelf, but not land. Three days later a captain in the British Royal Navy sighted the Trinity Peninsula.

175 years ago, on 29th Jan 1845 that Edgar Allen Poe's poem *The Raven* was first published, in the New York Evening Mirror.

125 years ago, on 12th Jan 1895 that the National Trust was founded (as the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty).

100 years ago, on 16th Jan 1920 that Prohibition began in the USA, as the 18th Amendment went into effect.

80 years ago, on 8th Jan 1940 that food rationing began in Britain (bacon, butter and sugar).

75 years ago, on 2nd Jan 1945 that the British RAF and US Army Air Force bombed the city of Nuremberg, destroying 90% of its medieval centre within one hour.

Also 75 years ago, on 16th Jan 1945 that Adolf Hitler took up residence in the Fuhrerbunker, a subterranean bunker complex in the garden of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. It became the headquarters of the Nazi regime until Hitler committed suicide there in April.

Also 75 years ago, on 26th – 27th Jan 1945 that the Soviet Red Army liberated Auschwitz concentration camp in southern Poland. It was the largest Nazi

concentration camp, and at least 1.1 million prisoners died there.

70 years ago, on 23rd Jan 1950 that the Israeli Knesset declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel.

Also 70 years ago, on 26th Jan 1950 that India became an independent republic. President Rajendra Prasad replaced King George VI as head of state. This day is now marked as Republic Day in India.

65 years ago, on 25th Jan 1955 that the world's first atomic clock was unveiled by scientists at the National Physical Laboratory in the UK. It measured time by counting the vibrations of cesium-133 atoms. It was accurate to one second every 300 years.

50 years ago, on 11th Jan 1970 that Richmal Crompton, best known for her *Just William* stories, died.

Also 50 years ago, on 22nd Jan 1970 that the Boeing 747 'Jumbo Jet' went into service on its first regularly scheduled commercial flight, from New York to London.

Also 50 years ago, on 26th Jan 1970 that the album *Bridge Over Troubled Water* by Simon and Garfunkel was released.

30 years ago, on 31st Jan 1990 that Russia's first McDonald's fast-food restaurant opened in Moscow. It is said that 30,000 hamburgers were sold the first morning.

25 years ago, on 3rd Jan 1995 that the World Health Organisation reported that the cumulative total of reported AIDS cases had passed the one million mark, with cases reported in 192 countries.

With unreported cases included, the total was estimated to be approximately 4.5 million.

20 years ago, on 1st Jan 2000, the calendar switched over to the year 2000, with no major computer problems from the so-called Y2K 'Millennium Bug'.

Also 20 years ago, on 31st Jan 2000, British family doctor Harold Shipman was jailed for life for murdering 15 of his patients. He is thought to have killed at least 215 patients, making him Britain's worst-ever serial killer.

10 years ago, on 4th Jan 2010 the Burj Khalifa in Dubai opened. It is the world's tallest structure, at 2,722 feet (829.8 metres).

Also 10 years ago, on 12th Jan 2010 that the Haiti earthquake killed at least 100,000 people, and devastated the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Anxious and lonely? Come to church!

Young people who go to church are less likely to struggle with anxiety than those who do not go to church (22% compared to 33%.) Fewer church goers are also lonely and isolated (16% compared to 31 %)

In a survey almost one third of all young people reported feeling sad or depressed; this was compared with 18 per cent among young practising Christians.

The survey is published in *The Connected Generation*, commissioned by the Barna Group in partnership with World Vision. The full report can be seen at theconnectedgeneration.com.

The Grace of God

May the great God give His grace
And may it lie on thee,
And MacMary Virgin grace
And mayest thou it see,
And the perfect Spirit grace
And may it with thee be,
Gently and gen'rously.

From Poems of the Western Highlanders

Your dog and the postman

Here's a New Year Resolution for your dog: don't eat the postman (or woman).

The Royal Mail's recent request, that dog owners distract their pets by feeding them before the postman comes, follows a surge of dog attacks on postmen and women, averaging out at 47 a week for the past year. In all, nearly 25,000 separate attacks took place, some of them leaving life-changing injuries.

As 35 per cent of attacks happen at the front door or in the garden, dog owners are also being asked to keep their pets shut away while the post is being delivered.

Dates for your Diary

January 2020

Sunday 5th

11.00 am Annual Covenant Service/Holy Communion. Led by Revd Nigel Wright.

Sunday 26th

10.30 am COTHA United Service at St. Michael's.