

# Connexion

The magazine of the family of Independent Methodist Churches

November /  
December  
2023



Christmas is a season of joy however, most people would gauge this joyfulness on circumstantial things. How

was the visit with the in-laws? How was the food? How many gifts did I get? Did I get all the things I wanted? But when our joy is based on circumstances, it isn't joy at all, it's temporary happiness. To experience joy at its best is to experience joy that transcends all the Christmas-hype. The season of Advent announces the coming arrival of the Saviour who rescues us from sin and gives us real life. This is the very reason we can experience joy this Christmas that is not based on material circumstances, but instead is based on Jesus' presence in our lives. Deep, abiding, resilient joy is found in Christ alone. Joy is a gift! Of the many fruits described in Galatians 5, joy immediately follows love. Maybe it's just coincidence but see what the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 1:8 - for Peter, love of Christ and belief in Christ precede joy. Even when we cannot see, walk with, or eat with Him like the first disciples did, we can experience a deep and abiding joy in our love for Him.

Christmas is the season that reminds us of who Christ is and why He came for us. Inexpressible joy is not something that can be placed under the tree. Abiding joy doesn't come from Argos, Amazon, or eBay. Our joy is found in something that we can't even see. But as Christians, even though we don't see Jesus, we love Him, and place our faith in Him. And through our relationship with and understanding of Jesus we receive

the gift of deep, abiding, and resilient joy.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians Paul says, "Rejoice always." (5:16), and the word rejoice means - feel or show great joy or delight. Even in adversity, trial, and tribulation we are encouraged to rejoice! "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds..." is the encouragement of James 1. In fact, the apostles rejoiced in Acts 5, "...because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." How can these people rejoice in suffering? How can they stare into the face of adversity and consider it pure joy? The answer of course is Jesus. And Jesus understands suffering. He understands the times and seasons in your life when it's difficult to rejoice. This is part of being human. During the darkest part of his life King David wrote Psalm 51. Let his plea resonate with you today from verses 10 to 12.



It's okay to need God's help. In fact, if someone like King David needed it then we will too. Joy is available to all of us. Sometimes it's more accessible than others but remember the life of faith is a marathon not a sprint. There will be seasons where the journey is difficult and there will also be stretches of indescribable joy and excitement. Our encouragement today is to rejoice always, and to count everything as joy. Even the seasons when it's difficult, even

when adversity finds its way to our doorstep. There is no amount of difficulty or trouble that can steal Christ from us - we are His and He is ours.

Christmas is cause for great joy! If material possessions could give deep and abiding joy, then why aren't all the millionaires the most happy and positive bunch on planet earth? If joy could be purchased from Argos or Amazon and delivered to your front door, then why doesn't everyone have it? We all know the answer - and yet, many keep looking in the same old places for joy. And that is why the Christmas season is such a special one. Of course, the presents are great, but we know the most wonderful and amazing part of Christmas is the opportunity to refocus our energy on what matters most - who Christ is and why He came for us.

We have eternal hope in the promises of God made alive in Christ. We have unshakable peace in Christ who will return for His church. We have the gift of deep, abiding, and resilient joy through our love for and understanding of Christ. He is the same yesterday, today and forever; our great high priest; the prince of peace - wonderful counsellor. He is the friend of sinners; Immanuel, God with us. And He knows what it means to suffer. There are many of us who, like King David, need to ask for help this year. And it's okay - Jesus already knows and is willing to provide that deep, lasting joy that we all need.



## In this issue

Page 3 : Let Us Introduce You To

Page 4 : Shine Your Light

Page 6 : Let's Celebrate

Page 8 : Encountering Jesus

Page 9 : Be Wise 4

Page 11 : Advent Reading Plan

## YOUNG PEOPLE FROM YORKSHIRE AT HIGH LEGH

Teenagers from **Morley** in West Yorkshire participated in an evangelistic camp at High Legh for a week in the summer holidays.



A party of 19 youngsters enjoyed a week at the Northwood Christian Centre at High Legh in the middle of the rolling Cheshire countryside.

The venture saw the youngsters from the West Yorkshire mill town participating in an action-packed week which included, games, hikes, swimming, bible studies, a day trip to Rhyl in North Wales and a visit to the Crocky Trail Theme Park.



Coordinator Andy Dalton explained that this was the twenty third occasion

the camp had used the Northwood Centre. Virtually all the youngsters came from non-church backgrounds. Each evening they listened intently during the evening meeting to guest



speakers Mark Yeadon (Teen Challenge, Leeds) and Nick Donnelly (Dunkinfield Congregational Church) who faithfully shared the gospel message by word, video clips and an interactive programme. The youngsters were bubbling with questions – often stopping the speaker and asking him to explain things they didn't understand – or disagreed with! The sessions were remarkable times of listening to the claims of Jesus on their lives by the young people.

Andy Dalton is known to many in IM circles. He has preached in IM churches on the Yorkshire plan over several decades and organises the *Living Word* Calendar project each year throughout the Connexion.

A total of 14 adult volunteers ran the camp. They came from Morley Community (Congregational) Church assisted by others from another five churches who responded to the call to provide support and leaders to supervise activities. Grants were secured. This kept the cost of the camp to a minimum enabling teenager from poor families to attend.

Andy Dalton said that they were so



grateful to the Connexion for all their help and support in so many ways in making the camp a success. He concluded "Northwood Christian Centre is perfect for a youth camp. It is ideally located with superb facilities. The motorways are very accessible, and the magnificent countryside is breathtaking. It is also affordable - and that is an important factor for small churches working in poor communities. We believe God has spoken to many of these young people and we are praying that there will be life-long commit-



ments to Jesus as a result of this week".

**Andy Dalton**

## TOO LONG ON THIS MOUNTAIN

We have been here before. I think it's safe to say as believers, we've all experienced that. Stalemate. An inability to move on. The comfort – and the encouragement, is that many people in Scripture found themselves in the same position.

Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 1 was concerned that the Israelites hadn't moved very far (spiritually or actually). One affects the other. So he says in verse 6- "The Lord our God said to us at Horeb 'You have stayed too long at this mountain. The solution? Verse 7- Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites: go to all

the neighbouring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates.

In verse 8, he repeats a promise given long years before: "See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the Lord swore he would give to your fathers – to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to their descendants after them." God had not changed his mind! His promises still stand! He was just waiting for his people to take it up.

At Annual Meeting this year we considered a document for change, because of the current situation. A document which many, including us at Tyldesley Independent Methodist Church, think is flawed, and has also so been acknowledged by many. A move in the right direction, but? Perhaps further work is needed? Are we in stalemate?

As stated on the Annual Meeting Handbook cover, the theme for this year is "God of the Breakthrough". The verse quoted is Isaiah chapter 28 v 21: "The Lord will rise up as he did at Mount Perazim, he will rouse himself



as in the valley of Gibeon – to do his work, his strange work, and perform his task, his alien task.”

The reference is to 2 Samuel chapter 5 v 20, where David won a significant battle against the Philistines. The difference was, David prayed before the action. In Isaiah 28, the people weren't listening – verse 12b “but they would not listen.”

But listen to that verse from the Amplified Bible:- “For the Lord will rise up as at Mount Perazim. He will be stirred up as in the Valley of Gibeon, to do his work, His unusual and incredible work, and to accomplish His work, His extraordinary work. “

He wants to do an incredible work through us. Be assured of His promises. But we have stayed too long on this mountain.

“Break camp and advance,” (Deuteronomy chapter 1 v 7). Moses said to the people. Turn and make the journey in faith. We have to do the same.

The danger is – we might stay on the mountain.

**Ian Hunter, Tyldesley**

## LET US INTRODUCE TO YOU...

### Family & Faith

I am an only child yet have brothers and sisters – confused? Let me explain. Technically I'm an only child, however my parents were foster parents, and hence I have foster brothers and sisters. They are all grown up and many have families of their own, which means I have nieces and nephews as well as great nieces and nephews who all bring so much happiness to me. Born to Christian parents I was taken to church (Maghull Baptist Church) from when I was born. I have lived in Maghull all my life, and currently live at home with my dad.

I have gone to church all my life and gave my life to Christ at the age of 9 when attending a kids crusade. Thus the majority of my life including my questioning, struggles, difficulties, along with my joys, hopes, and experiences, have taken place since becoming a Christian.

Over the years I have been involved in many ministries at various churches – children & youth work, care teams, audio visual, church leadership, outreach, and I also studied and attained an honours degree in Christian Ministry.

Before going to university, I worked for Barclays Bank, and after university I got a job as an Intensive Support Worker which involved looking after young people with various emotional and behavioural difficulties who were living in Children's Homes. I worked for the company for 15 years and worked my way up to managing two of the Children's Homes. I left this job at the end of July 2018, not knowing what was to come, but believing it was what God wanted me to do.

October 2018 began the most heart-breaking year I have experienced, with the sudden passing of my sister (October), my mum (in February 2019), and my dad having a heart attack and then undergoing a triple heart by-pass (March /April 2019). Thankfully he is now doing well.

It is in looking back over that year that I can see God's provision for me in it by me not having a job to undertake at the same time as all this happened. In September 2019, I began working for Bryn Independent Methodist, and have only recently left my paid role there. However, I continue to fellowship there, and am part of the church leadership team.



### Fun & Future

#### My Top 3

Colours:- Royal Blue, Navy Blue, Green,

Board Games:- Ticket to Ride, Cluedo, Catan,

Foods:- Mature Cheddar Cheese, hard boiled potatoes, Chocolate,

Drinks:- Sugar free pop, Blackcurrant & Lemonade, Tea,

TV Programmes:- Casualty, Match of the day, any good crime drama,

Animals:- Dolphins, Dogs, Cats,

Hobbies:- Watching Football (support Everton but will watch all teams), Lego, Computers/Audio Visual, (and to sneak in a fourth – Jigsaws)

Hymns:- My song is love unknown, And can it be, Oh to see the dawn (This the Power of the Cross),

Christian Books:- Through Gates of Splendour, Just Give me Jesus, The Shack,

Bible Chapters:- Revelation 21, Psalm 23, Romans 5,

Books of the Bible:- Genesis, Romans, Revelation (and to again add a fourth – Luke)

Well, I hope that gives you a brief introduction to me.

It is my hope and prayer that in the months to follow I can get to know each of your church fellowships, and look forward to serving alongside you in the ministries God has for us. I am always excited about what God can do within us, among us, and through us.

Blessings

Joy Higham

# SHINE YOUR LIGHT



**Pastor Leke Sanusi**  
Chairman of the Redeemed  
Christian Church of God



“Our Lord Jesus Christ wasn't born in silence but **surrounded by the noise** of the stable. This Christmas, we want to see the whole church coming out together to share in song and dance **the amazing news** as we celebrate the birth of Emmanuel, God with us!”

[shineyourlight.org.uk](http://shineyourlight.org.uk)



A nationwide Christmas campaign ‘Shine Your Light’ is being launched this week to call hundreds of thousands to unite in towns, villages and cities this Christmas to take the message outdoors. The initiative is led by the National Day of Prayer and Worship in collaboration with many denominations and key ministries; including HOPE Together, Myriad, Premier Christian Radio, Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Evangelical Alliance.

The vision for Shine Your Light is that the whole church across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic stands united to share the Gospel to the whole of society this Christmas. Every local church and believer is being encouraged to be a Light to shine to brighten up the whole country like a Christmas tree.

Shine Your Light will run on the weekend of Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th December, but with an

emphasis on community events and activities, including Nativities and family focused opportunities taking place on the Saturday. These events will take place around town halls, high streets, town and shopping centres as well as other public places.

To link the national and local church together, we will be providing an online map highlighting all the events we know that are taking place over that weekend, with website signposting.



**Lynn Green**  
General Secretary  
of the Baptist Union



“Christmas is a great time of year for Christians to be **sharing and celebrating** their faith. I'm encouraged to hear of plans this year to take that message out of their buildings. I would love to **encourage all churches**, including Baptist Churches, to prayerfully consider where they might **shine their light** this Christmas!”

[shineyourlight.org.uk](http://shineyourlight.org.uk)



A specific website, [www.shineyourlight.org.uk](http://www.shineyourlight.org.uk) has been created with a social media campaign to run alongside. All our partners will be sharing resources via our digital resources section for use by local churches.

There will be a number of things which churches can order, including artificial candles, bespoke booklets and sound files with the official music for the weekend.

Churches will be able to sign up and say ‘I'm In’ via the website from Sunday 15th October 2023.

To sign up your local church in Shine Your Light, please visit: [www.shineyourlight.org.uk](http://www.shineyourlight.org.uk)



**Gavin Calver**  
CEO of the  
Evangelical Alliance



“Every year, we celebrate Christmas in our churches and with our families. I believe we can be **bolder and more confident** in taking this out into public places too. Let's take the amazing message of Christmas out into our villages, towns and cities. **Let's share hope** with those around us this Christmas and I'm cheering you on!”

[shineyourlight.org.uk](http://shineyourlight.org.uk)



The vision for Shine Your Light is that the whole church across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic stand united to share the Gospel to the whole of society this Christmas. Every local church and believer is being encouraged to be a Light to shine to brighten up the whole country like a Christmas tree.

*Denominations and partners represented, so far: Church of God of Prophecy, Baptist Union, London Mission Collective, Ichthus, Evangelical Alliance, the Methodist Church, Hope Together, Catholic Charismatic National Forum, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Four-square GB, Elim Pentecostal Churches, AOG, New Covenant, World Prayer Centre, The Apostolic Church, United Reformed Church, London City Mission, i61m, Premier Christian Radio, Myriad and the New Testament Church of God.*



**Dr Jonathan Oloyede**  
Convenor of the  
National Day of Prayer & Worship



“We are inviting Christians from the North, East, South and West of these Isles to **join us in Shining Their Light** in their communities this Christmas. Imagine the **impact of hundreds of thousands** of Christians taking the **message of Jesus** into all public places and spaces...”

[shineyourlight.org.uk](http://shineyourlight.org.uk)



**Anthony Cotterill**  
Territorial Commander  
The Salvation Army,  
United Kingdom and Ireland Territory



“**Carols, Community and Christmas;** three words which go together. I was excited to hear of plans to see these **unite as churches** across the Isles to take the message of ‘**God with us**’ onto the streets. I'm in!”

[shineyourlight.org.uk](http://shineyourlight.org.uk)



This Christmas...

Shine  
Your  
Light  
org.uk

[shineyourlight.org.uk](http://shineyourlight.org.uk)



# Let's Celebrate

## Brandon Celebrates New Members



Brandon welcomed in Robert Harbisher, Roy Yalop and Tanya Curtis.

## Beryl Harbisher

## Ken and Sue McDermott



Ken and Sue celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary on the 20<sup>th</sup> August with family and friends for a surprise "Faith Lunch" at Friars Green. It was Friar's pleasure to put this surprise on for them and we gave them a gift and talk about the 5 loaves and two fishes! The tables almost broke under the vast array of food provided by the church members. Yet at the end



there were enough cupcakes for the Hong Kong Sunday School to have one each which made the children's faces light up. People took a "Buttie Bag" home with them and cake, yet there were 5 buns left and two prawn

cocktails! Our God is a great God and worthy of our praise and honour.

## Gillian Jack, Friars Green

## Golden Wedding Anniversary

Congratulations and best wishes from Members and Friends to Les and Margaret Laycock who celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary on 6 September 2023.



Les and Margaret were married at Thatto Heath by W.G. Burrows. They have been blessed with one daughter Helen, and one granddaughter Cleo Amelia. Margaret served as Church Secretary 1978-2005 and 2008-2017 and Les has served as Church Treasurer 1977-current.

We here, at Thatto Heath would like to thank Les and Margaret for their dedication to our Church Fellowship and we pray that God will continue to pour His richest blessings upon them both.

## Fay Williams, Thatto Heath

## Celebration in September for South Hetton

Following a flood at the rear of the Church building earlier in the year, extensive repairs have been undertaken to the floors of the rear entrance and the hall.



South Hetton started the September celebrations on 9<sup>th</sup> when Mr Daniel Alcock conducted the service for the 137<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary. A delicious tea was served to members and friends in the newly refurbished hall. On the same day our President Emerita Sister Eva Richardson celebrated her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday quietly at home. Eva is



huge miss at our services but we know she is with us in Spirit. Sister Lena Fawcett celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 13<sup>th</sup> sharing an afternoon tea with family and friends.

We praise God that we are able to meet in our hall again for fellowship and social activities.

## Deborah Klincke, South Hetton



## Golden Wedding Anniversary

Congratulations and best wishes from Members and Friends to Dennis and Jean Roughley who celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary on 15 September 2023.

Dennis and Jean were married at Thatto Heath by W.G. Burrows. They





have been blessed with two children Neil and Claire, and four grandchildren Luke, Joshua, Jessica, and Thomas.

Dennis has been an I.M. Minister for 48 years and has been Church President twice and Jean is the Church Finance Secretary. Both Dennis and Jean were Sunday School Teachers over many years. Jean is one of the 'knitters' for our church prayer shawl group, and Dennis helps out at one of the town centre food-banks twice per week.

We here, at Thatto Heath would like to thank Dennis and Jean for their dedication and service to our Church Fellowship, and we pray that God will continue to pour His richest blessings upon them both.

**Fay Williams, Thatto Heath**

**Happy Wedding Anniversary**

Our congratulations go to June and Les Howarth who recently celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary. They married at Friars Green.

**Gillian Jacks, Friars Green**

**Celebrations from Kent Street**

We would like to share news of a Christian couple who are part of Kent Street Community Church and were married there in August 2022.

In June this year Cristian and Susie Nichifor were blessed with twins,



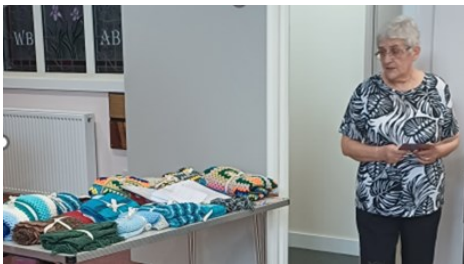
Isaiah and Leah, and asked if they could have a dedication service of for them.

So we were blessed when in September the twins were brought to us for a service of dedication. It was a blessed time with the church overflowing with family, friends and church members for that beautiful service. A day that will be remembered by their own family and their church family.

**Esther Prescott**

**Harvest Thanksgiving Service – Thatto Heath**

On Sunday 24 September Thatto Heath held their Harvest Thanksgiving Service, led by Ruth Williams from our Sutton Village Church. There was something for everyone!



Denise Helsby opened the Service thanking the ladies of our Prayer Shawl Group who knit/crochet shawls that we pass on to those who we know who are sick, grieving or feel the need for comfort, just to let them know that we here at Thatto Heath are thinking about them. This is an amazing ministry, which was started 10 years ago by Joan Mather, a truly faithful member of our Church. Joan had visited her daughter-in-law Rose who was in the local Hospice, and she had a shawl across her which had been given by another Church. The shawls are folded up and tied with a ribbon with the words 'Knitted With Love' on it. Hundreds of shawls have been distributed over the 10 years, even to other countries!! We thank the ladies for their dedication and the love that goes into the making of each shawl.

Ruth spoke on 'When Will There Be a Harvest for the World – Physical and Spiritual.' Her message included a special message and activity for the children in our congregation.



Our Harvest Gifts were being donated to The Foodbank at the Hope Centre in St. Helens and Sally Britch from the Foodbank joined with us and accepted the gifts on their behalf. A lovely uplifting Service – thanks to our God for all His gifts!

**Fay Williams, Thatto Heath**

**Rita Prescott 90th Birthday**

Rita's birthday began early on Sunday morning September 10<sup>th</sup> Rita had a pleasant surprise when Pam Rhodes on her programme 'Hearts and Hymns' on Premier Radio spoke of Rita's 90th birthday her fellowship at Lamberhead Green and played 'What A Friend We Have in Jesus' for her.



A celebratory service was held at Lamberhead Green with the fellowship, members of her family and friends with worship. During the service Rita spoke of her commitment and said thank you to God for her 90 years. She had chosen the hymns for the service, Norman Prescott (minister at Lamberhead Green) led the service and spoke of the theme 'Time'. A substantial buffet lunch was enjoyed in the school-room after.

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September, Rita's birthday was a day of cards, telephone calls, and visits from friends. Rita would like to thank all for her cards flowers and wishes from so many friends.

Her birthday concluded a week later as members her family and friends enjoyed a meal at a local restaurant arranged by her son.

**Norman Prescott**



# Be Wise 4 - True Friendship



Inspired by the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity Course, 'Be Wise', thoughts on Whole life Christian Discipleship. A series of articles of what it means to be a disciple of

Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 24/7.

This month the Connexion magazine has for its theme 'Joy'. As Christians we should aim to bring joy into the lives of those around us. This can be done by being a true friend to those who are in desperate need of friendship. In this the fourth article in the 'Be Wise' series we look at Friendship and how true friendship can make a real difference in today's world.

**How would you define a friend? How many people do you count as your friends?**

I will always remember a former Vice - President and Preacher of my church, saying, "In this life you can count on one hand the number of true friends you have whilst you will have many acquaintances".

Those sentiments are very much echoed by Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the former American President when she said, 'Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart'.

**Love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12-15)**

In John's Gospel, Jesus talks about himself being our friend, a friend to everyone. To confirm that friendship he said that he would die for everyone. He then goes on to encourage us all to follow his example and offer that kind of love to all our friends.

By following the example of Jesus, we must ask ourselves who are our friends. By Jesus' definition we should treat everyone as a friend regardless of how

they respond to our friendship. It should not depend on where they live or where they come from, it should not depend on their role or position in society, or whether we like them or not. That is what Jesus expects of his followers however hard and difficult that may seem.

We are unlikely to have to ever give up our lives for our friends, but we should be prepared to stick with those who Jesus calls us to be our friends whatever the situation, in both good times and bad, through times of difficulties and troubles or joy and happiness.

**Remember, a true friend stays and helps when everybody else walks away.**

**As you get older you begin to realise how short this life is.** You begin to sharpen your focus on the things that matter and the things that don't. Peter's thoughts were not so much on the end of this life but on the end of all things when he emphasised the need for us to love one another deeply and place it at the top of our priorities (1 Peter 4:7-9).

In doing so, we need to become hospitality experts because hospitality gives expression to that love. It's about making room in our lives for others. And Peter doesn't just ask us to be hospitable; he tells us to accommodate others without grumbling. That's what true friendship and love looks like.

**Becoming a good friend**

For followers of Christ, friendship is critical. Practising forgiveness and hospitality enables us to offer the love of Jesus in our relationships. The relationships you develop with others will have a tremendous impact on the way those who don't have a Christian faith become open and responsive to your faith in particular and Christianity in general.

**The story of Ruth is one of true friendship.** Just to recap the situation. We are in the time of the Judges about 1100 BC. The promised land has been settled by the twelve tribes but there is no structure among God's people, no ruler, no king. Whenever a crisis arose, and there were many, God would raise up an individual to lead the people through the crisis, leaders such as Gideon and Deborah. So that is the general backdrop, but we now focus on a fami-

ly living in Bethlehem, Elimelek married to Naomi with their two sons Mahlon and Kilion.

The crops had failed and there was famine in the area around Bethlehem. To the east was the Kingdom of Moab and here we must presume there was adequate food because Elimelek and his family decided to move there – a familiar story right to our present time. People moving to seek a better life elsewhere – today we might call them economic migrants. Anyway, the move must have been successful for the family settled and the sons married two local Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth. All must have been happy but then tragedy struck, Elimelek died. As the head of the family Elimelek would have been a great loss. Naomi still had her two sons to provide for the family, but further disasters awaited with the deaths of both Mahlon and Kilion. In a society that was very much dependent on men, the loss of them all would have been a disaster.

Without no means of support, Naomi has only one course of action left to her, to return to her own people in Bethlehem. The two daughters-in-law connected by marriage must have felt obliged to accompany their widowed and destitute mother-in-law out of a sense of obligation. Naomi, however, does not see that this is in the best interests of Orpah and Ruth. Naomi could not offer them anything, but if they returned to Moab, they could find new husbands. Naomi tells them to go back and eventually Orpah through many tears, does. However, Ruth remains determined. She protests to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go, and where you will stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." (Ruth 1:16-17).

Despite Naomi's protestations, Ruth is determined to stay with her mother-in-law for better or for worse and so the two return to Bethlehem impoverished. In Bethlehem, Naomi and Ruth had to find food and fortunately it was harvest time. It was common practice for those in need of food to go around harvested fields to pick up the scraps of



the harvest that the harvesters have left behind.

We must remember that Ruth was a Moabitess and there was history between the Moabitess and the nation of Israel stretching back to Moab, the son of Lot and one of his daughters! The kingdom of Moab lay to the east of the Dead Sea and was frequently in conflict with the twelve tribes of, particularly the tribe of Benjamin.

In an effort to feed herself and Naomi, Ruth went to a local field which was being harvested. The owner of the field was Boaz, and he not only noticed the Moabitess Ruth gleaning his field but entrusted his workers to deliberately leave some of the crop behind so Ruth could find and collect it. Later in the story we read that Ruth and Boaz would marry.

Ruth's story recalls two acts of friendship and love that epitomises the type of friendship and love that God wants us to offer to others. Ruth's friendship and commitment to Naomi, and Boaz's kindness and friendship towards Ruth.

Later Ruth is recorded as saying, "Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me – a foreigner?"

However, I'd like to tell you of a more contemporary example of God's love and kindness and the type of love that we should be extending to all our friends.

### Mihal's Story

When I participated in the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity Course, 'Be Wise' in the autumn of 2022 we would during the evening go into breakout groups which would consist of pairs, triplets or sometimes foursomes.

During the third week we were considering 'friendship' and how such relationships can result in people coming to faith. We went to our groups to discuss, this week I was paired with Mihal from Croatia.

Mihal, is a Baptist church leader who lives in the capital of Zagreb. Baptists are a very small Christian community in Croatia, they number about 2000 in a country where most people are Roman Catholic. During the wars that engulfed the countries that were born out of the former Yugoslavia, countries such as Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia, Mihal recalls an act of friendship.

His daughter attended a school where because of her Baptist faith she was something of an outsider. A new family moved into the area and one of their daughters was admitted to the same class as Mihal's daughter. The new girl was both a Muslim and a refugee and sat in the vacant seat next to Mihal's daughter. They became firm friends sharing the common bond of being rejected by their peers because of their families' respective faiths. The girl's

family had fled the fighting in Bosnia and had sought sanctuary in Croatia. The girl's father was a Muslim, and her mother was a Croatian Christian. When they arrived in Croatia, they sought help from the mother's Croatian family, but none was forthcoming, in fact the Croatian relatives wanted nothing to do with the family.

As the friendship between the two girls grew stronger the two families became closer and eventually firm friends; Mihal employed the Muslim father in his own company. The Muslim father became aware of Mihal's Christian faith and learnt about how he and his fellow Baptist would come together to share the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper. The Muslim father asked as a friend of Mihal, why he was not invited to this Christian act.

Today that family live in the United States who granted admission to the country of families from mixed faith as a way of keeping such families together. The mother and the two daughters became Christians though the father still retains his Muslim identity.

Real friendship in action. The friendship that God requires all his followers to offer to all those with whom they engage.

Next Time – Being an Encourager

**Rob Brooks**



**L. and P.** spent two months in France over the summer seeing family and friends there, as well as visiting a good number of P's supporting churches. They very much appreciated the opportunity to worship God in person along with other brothers and sisters. While they were there, they met a young woman who is preparing to serve God among the Berbers in their previous country and were able to have a great time of sharing with her, as well as meeting up with previous contacts who had shown an interest in the Gospel. They were pleased to learn that in August there had been an answer to prayers for much-needed rain in their area of North Africa. At the time of writing this update they have only been back there for a few days, so

are just settling back into their life and ministry there.

**Gail and Daniel Castro** have appreciated working in cooler weather this summer than they were used to in Spain. Gail has begun supporting several vulnerable and needy families in the Salford area. As relationships and trust are built, pray for opportunities to share the love and truth of Jesus with them. Daniel's first few months working as a part-time assistant pastor at Elmwood church have been positive and encouraging, as he has been involved with different programmes and activities, including a Christianity Explored course and a discipleship programme. They are also involved in different capacities with OMS and are helping in a local IM church sometimes during the week. They ask for prayer regarding their current housing situation.

**Liz Greenhalgh** praises the Lord for answers to prayer concerning the after-school programme. She herself felt led to fast and pray about it and has seen the Lord answer in many ways. Two new people came forward to help with the teaching. Liz has also managed to develop a good relationship with the school and the children's parents. She has become close to one of the teachers who is now going to come to the church. Meanwhile Liz began the new season with the young people by holding a barbecue and games night at her home. The following week they helped an elderly man from the church by doing some gardening and spending time with him, singing some of his favourite hymns and praying with him. Many of these teenagers are really growing in their faith. Please continue to support Liz in prayer for all the different areas of her ministry.

**Anne Fambely**

# HOW ARE YOU BRINGING JOY INTO YOUR COMMUNITY THIS CHRISTMAS?

1. [HTTPS://RAINYDAYMUM.CO.UK/DIY-NATIVITY-STORY-STONES/](https://rainydaymum.co.uk/diy-nativity-story-stones/)
2. RESOURCES AVAILABLE ONLINE FROM VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS OR FROM THE RESOURCE CENTRE & CHURCH SUPPORT.
3. HOPE TOGETHER HAVE PRODUCED THEIR CHRISTMAS MAGAZINE AVAILABLE TO ORDER AT 20P A COPY FROM THEIR WEBSITE.
4. A SANCTIFIED ART HAVE PRODUCED THEIR ADVENT TO EPIPHANY RESOURCES UNDER THEME “HOW DOES A WEARY WORLD REJOICE?”
5. GET YOUR KNITTING CLUB TO MAKE SHEEP OR STARS ETC. AND HAND OUT TO CHILDREN/SCHOOLS WITH A BIBLE VERSE OR CHRISTMAS BOOK.
6. THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND FOLLOW THE STAR HAS A RANGE OF RESOURCES INCLUDING NATIVITY STORY STONES FROM RAINY DAY MUM.
7. GOD VENTURE IS A COMPANY THAT PRODUCES ADVENT STICKERS, MAGAZINES AND SO MUCH MORE FOR FAITH AT HOME AND FAMILIES.
8. THE SCRIPTURE UNION PRODUCED AN ADVENT TRAIL IN LOCKDOWN WITH QR CODES LINKING EACH CHARACTER FROM THE NATIVITY TO THEIR STORY – PUT THEM UP AROUND YOUR VILLAGE OR TOWN.
9. CHRISTMAS IN A BOX IS A GREAT RESOURCE TO HAND OUT TO FAMILIES AND PARENTS AT YOUR GROUPS OR EVENTS.
10. MAKE YOUR OWN WITH WOODEN PEOPLE, BATTERY CANDLES AND CHOCOLATE COINS OR YOU CAN BUY THE BIBLE SOCIETY’S FAMILY ADVENT BOX AMONGST OTHERS.
11. YOUR CHURCH COULD HAVE A NATIVITY SCENE IN THE WINDOW FOR ALL TO SEE OR OUTSIDE OR EVEN A LIVE ONE! OR MAYBE YOUR CHURCH MEMBERS HAVE A NATIVITY DISPLAYED IN THEIR WINDOWS OR GARDENS AS ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS – THERE ARE ALSO CHRISTMAS LIGHT BINGO TRAILS!
12. THE HAPPYLAND NATIVITY IS ON YOUTUBE AND THE BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE TO BUY IN BULK FROM HOPE TOGETHER OR CPO.
13. FREE NATIVITY SCRIPT FROM THE BIBLE SOCIETY WHICH ALSO COMES WITH A POWER POINT.

PLEASE CONTACT THE RESOURCE CENTRE FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE AND MANY MORE.





# ADVENT READING PLAN

Day 1: Isaiah 9: 2-7	Day 13: Matthew 1: 1-17
Day 2: Isaiah 11: 1-5	Day 14: Romans 6: 20-23
Day 3: Isaiah 7: 10-14	Day 15: Galatians 4: 1-7
Day 4: Micah 5: 1-5	Day 16: 1 Timothy 1: 15-17
Day 5: 2 Samuel 7: 12-16	Day 17: Titus 3: 3-7
Day 6: Luke 1:26-33	Day 18: Philippians 2: 6-8
Day 7: Luke 1: 34-38	Day 19: John 14: 1-6
Day 8: Luke 1: 46-55	Day 20: Daniel 7: 13-14
Day 9: Matthew 1:18-25	Day 21: Revelation 1: 4-7
Day 10: Luke 2: 1-7	Day 22: Revelation 3: 20-22
Day 11: Luke 2: 8-12	Day 23: Revelation 22: 12-13
Day 12: Luke 2:13-20	Day 24: Revelation 22: 16-17
Day 25: Revelation 22: 20	

The Resource Centre can provide copies of this plan and plan booklets with readings included.



## Connexional Addresses

**Connexional President**  
**Dorothy Kendrick**  
 37 Holts Lane, Pitsies,  
 Oldham, OL4 5NJ  
 0161 624 7503  
 president@imchurches.org.uk

**General Secretary**  
**Brian Rowney**  
 17 Humber Road, Astley,  
 Manchester M29 7HL  
 01942 879642  
 general.secretary@imchurches.org.uk

**Financial Administrator**  
**Alan Britton**  
 32 Massey Brook Lane,  
 Lymm, Cheshire WA13 0PN  
 07764 923705  
 financial.officer@imchurches.org.uk

**Safeguarding Acting Safeguarding Officer**  
**Marilyn Riding**  
 114 Wigan Road, Ashton in  
 Makerfield, Wigan WN4 9SU  
 01942 722562  
 cs.organiser@imchurches.org.uk

## Business Department

**Registered Office and Resource Centre**  
 Fleet Street, Pemberton,  
 Wigan WN5 0DS  
 01942 223526  
 resource.centre@imchurches.org.uk

**Connexional Services Manager**  
 01942 223526  
 resource.centre@imchurches.org.uk

**All Officers' Addresses**  
 can be found in the Directory  
 which is obtainable from the  
 Resource Centre.

All articles for the magazine  
 should be sent to the  
 Resource Centre postal  
 address or via email to  
 magazine@imchurches.org.uk

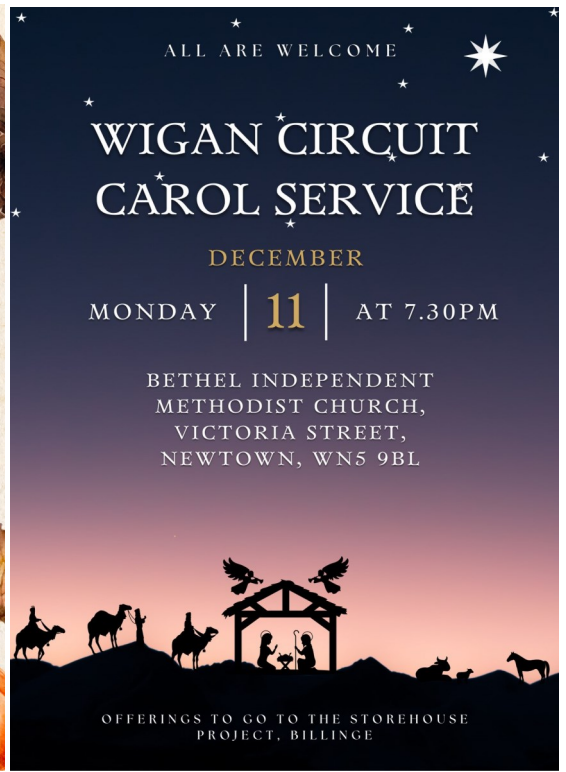
**Connexion Magazine**  
 ISSN 0141 - 4372  
**Independent Methodist Churches**  
 www.imchurches.org.uk



*Friars Green*  
**AUTUMN FAIR**  
 AT  
 Friars Green Independent Methodist Church  
 Cairo Street, Warrington, WA1 1EH  
**SAT 11 NOV**  
**10am to 12pm**  
*All are welcome to join*



FRIARS GREEN INVITE YOU TO THEIR  
**Candlelight Carol Service**  
 4.30PM  
 SUNDAY 17TH DECEMBER  
 FRIARS GREEN INDEPENDENT CHURCH  
 CAIRO STREET, WARRINGTON, WA1 1EH



ALL ARE WELCOME  
**WIGAN CIRCUIT CAROL SERVICE**  
 DECEMBER  
 MONDAY | **11** | AT 7.30PM  
 BETHEL INDEPENDENT METHODIST CHURCH,  
 VICTORIA STREET,  
 NEWTOWN, WN5 9BL  
 OFFERINGS TO GO TO THE STOREHOUSE PROJECT, BILLINGE




**Who's got time to worry about mental health, when you're worried about paying the bills**

Having so much to deal with can affect your mental health. Mind can't fix the cost of living crisis, but we can help you feel more able to cope.

If this speaks to you, speak to us.  
 Visit [mind.org.uk/cost-of-living](https://www.mind.org.uk/cost-of-living)

 Mind is a registered charity in England (no. 298801)



**LivingWord 2024**  
 The Scripture Text Calendar  
 from DayOne Christian Ministries



## Living World Calander Project

Available from the Resource Centre now, please contact Laura Pendlebury on 01942 223526 or resource.centre@imchurches.org.uk if your church would like to order.