

Connections



Ashbourne Methodist Circuit

December 2023 – January 2024

Letter from the Minister

The Manse, 16 Booth Drive
Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 1SZ

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Dear Friends,

I am already starting to see the signs of Christmas as I journey around the Circuit. A number of gardens already have sparkly lights to cheer us in the gloomy evenings. Perhaps like me you have also spotted the festive treats in the supermarkets and perhaps like me you have already had your first mince pie of the 2023/24 Christmas season.


We will soon be entering Advent and will once again hear the familiar stories that some of us will have grown up with. There will be the voices of the prophets reminding us of the promise of a Messiah, angels bringing all sorts of news to all sorts of people, John the Baptist coming to prepare the way so that on Christmas Day we can celebrate again the precious truth of Jesus, Immanuel – God with us.

Despite what the commercial world teaches us, Christmas does not finish on 25th December, it is just the beginning of us being able to share with the world the good news that Jesus has been born, the Saviour of all people. As we look at our world, our communities, our families we know that there are lots of people who still need to know that God has sent his only Son to be our Saviour. He does this because each of us is so special that even if we were the only human on planet earth Jesus would still be our Saviour.

As I write this article the news is full of awfulness from the Holy Land. The place where Jesus was born as Prince of Peace is anything other than peaceful. This Advent and Christmas I don't think any one of us can solve the problems of the Middle East. What we can do is be a peace-bearer in our little corner of the world. It has been proven through research that stress levels rise at this time of the year, which means that our own lives have the potential to be anything other than peaceful. I would suggest that if each of us did all we could to bring peace to bear in our families, in our workplaces and in our communities, it would have a knock on effect. Through our actions of peace we can introduce people to the Prince of Peace, especially if our past behaviour has been anything other than peaceful – those around us will see that it is the Prince of Peace changing us.

I pray that as we journey through Advent and Christmas into Epiphany it would not just be about twinkly lights and sweet treats but more importantly that we can all share a God filled, hope-filled and peace filled time together.

Blessings

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicola Briggs". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nicola

Mince Pies at The Manse on Friday 15th December 2023

A warm invitation to join Nicola and Chris Briggs on the above date at their home, 16 Booth Drive, Ashbourne, DE6 1SZ.

Drop in for as long or short as you wish between 2.30 and 5.00pm or 6.30-9.30pm.

There is no charge but if you wish to make a donation it will be shared between Derby City Mission and the Scoliosis Association of the United Kingdom.

Afternoon Tea Service

Starting on 7th January 2024 there will be an Afternoon Tea Service in the Century Hall at Ashbourne on the first Sunday afternoon of each month. Hymns and prayers, with a short message, accompanied by tea and cake starting at 4.30pm. All are welcome at this relaxed, around tables worship. Nicola

Thanks to our editorial team

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank John and Daphne Dyster and Fiona Green for being the Connections editorial team during my time in the Ashbourne Circuit. They have been exceedingly gracious when I stretch the deadline for submissions (as I have done again this month!). They have also given helpful guidance (you may not agree) on what people are looking for through the magazine.

Producing Connections does not happen by chance, it needs an editor or editorial team to encourage, nag or even, if necessary, twist arms of people to submit articles. John, Daphne and Fiona have all done this, in my experience gently and there has been little evidence of broken bones in the process. Thank you for all that you each have done to keep us all in the Ashbourne Circuit connected. Nicola xx

Ashbourne Circuit Family News

As a Circuit we are updating our Church Directory and Prayer Diary. Hopefully you will have received a form, along with membership tickets, to update any information you wish to be included. Please return these as soon as possible. When it is published, it offers us a way of praying for every one of us within the Ashbourne Circuit.

We ask you to continue to pray for Cliff, Andrew, Rae and their families following the passing of Sandra. Many of us were able to attend the very fitting Thanksgiving Service, where we able to celebrate her life and all the wonderful ways Sandra shared her faith in the Church and with the wider community.

Our love and prayers also go to those in our fellowship who are suffering or recovering from ill health including David and Rosalind, Sigrid, Jean and Anne. Please let us know if there are people who are ill and need a visit or prayers. Elizabeth Spencer, part of the hospital chaplaincy team, is always happy to visit anyone in Royal Derby Hospital.

We also have several special birthdays being celebrated in the next two months. Birthday greetings go to Christian Mallard (who will be 21 on December 16th), David Popham (who will be 70 on December 26th) and Bryn Evans (who will be 90 on January 18th).

Christmas is just around the corner, and we are looking forward to celebrating the birth of Christ. But Christmas can also be a very lonely time for some, and we ask you to keep in mind any people who will be alone this Christmas. Our church in Ashbourne will be holding a Christmas lunch on the day, so please share this with anyone you feel would like to attend.

Looking ahead to January 2024, there is new type of service being held at our church in Ashbourne on the first Sunday of each month. This will be held at 4.30pm and take the form of Afternoon Tea Worship, including familiar hymns and prayers and will be dementia friendly.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to John and Daphne Dyster, and latterly Fiona Green, for their dedicated work in editing our church magazine each month.

Wendy Haslam Pastoral Secretary (15.12.23)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15 v13)

Sandra Lewer

Cliff's eulogy on 14th November

Born in Rossendale General Hospital in Lancashire, the eldest of three children, Sandra lived behind the family corner shop for several years, then moved just down the street in Haslingden.

Educated at Haslingden County Primary and County Secondary, she left school at 16 to train as a Nursery Nurse via day release classes, and was placed at Staghills Nursery in Rawtenstall, after sessions in Great Harwood.

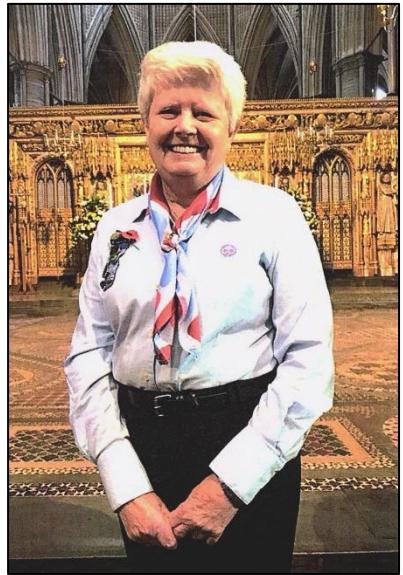
When qualified, the headmistress persuaded Sandra to apply for Teacher Training, and she gained entry to Saffron Walden Teacher Training College, just at the point we met via a Scout and Guide Adventure Day on the hills above the Rossendale Valley.

After college, we were married and moved to live in Burnley. Sandra got a job as reception class teacher in nearby Colne - 44 children aged four and five, no teaching assistants and 50% from broken homes. This was followed by a teaching post in a Nursery in Burnley until Andrew was born.

Moving briefly to Clitheroe, where Rachael joined the family, then Leominster in Herefordshire, an area she loved, before coming to Derbyshire in 1977.

Teaching on short term contracts, job shares and relief days allowed her to care for a growing family. She taught in Hulland, Ashbourne Primary, St Oswald's, Hilltop, Osmaston, Clifton and Marston Montgomery. Then, in retirement, she went into school to read to young people and, as part of an Open the Book team, took the stories of the Bible into schools,

Sandra's Mum was a guide leader, famously taking a party of Guides to Paris in 1935 - a streak of adventure which Sandra inherited, by her learning to ski aged 53. Becoming a Brownie illegally (aged 6) Sandra has remained in the Guide movement ever since, leading and sometimes founding Brownie Packs, Guide Companies and Ranger Units wherever she has lived - latterly the 2nd Ashbourne Guides, now led by Rae. Until



recently, they met at the Ashbourne Methodist Church - an association which has now ceased after more than 50 years.

Adventures have included: mountain walking in snow in Switzerland and Austria, taking Rangers overland in a Minibus when Andrew was aged one to stay in Switzerland, leading sub camp, organising trading activities, heading up finance at the Derbyshire Scout and Guide Peak Camps, District and Division Commissioner, and latterly committee member at two of the activity centres in the County.

As I was a member of Round Table, Sandra joined the Ladies Circle whilst in Rossendale, going on to membership in Clitheroe, Leominster and Ashbourne, where she was Chair, then Area Chair for the East Midlands, which took her to India for an International conference in the mid 80's.

Methodist Women in Britain (previously called Network) represents all Methodist women and Sandra was the President here in Ashbourne, District President for Nottingham and Derby, then National President - a position which took her all over Great Britain, leading days and weekend meets. She represented the Methodist Church at the Conference of the Caribbean in Antigua, and also on a delegation to Argentina.

Involvement here at Ashbourne Methodist Church since 1977 has been mainly involved with children and young people via Sunday School, Powersource as it became, and latterly Welly Club and Muddy Church, acting as a member of the Leadership Team for the Church and as a member of the Fundraising Committee for The Link project. Sandra has also served as a District Executive member, organising Synod and sitting on various committees, including the County Council SACRE committee.

For 40 years she has been Cradle Roll Secretary, caring for baptisms and early year contact, and has been the Steward of our little chapel on the hill in Milldale. Most will remember, over the past several years, the Advent Displays in Church where Sandra would organise the artists in the Church, plus friends who were artists, to create displays on a theme of the Christmas story. Over 150 pre-school children visit each year to hear the story of Jesus' birth. I am delighted that Sandra had already begun to plan this year's displays on the theme of the 'Faces of Christmas' and more delighted that a team of members are progressing for that to take place.

Outside these organisations and work, travel has been a large feature of Sandra's life, visiting at least 58 counties in most parts of the world, including China, Russia, Japan, South Africa, USA, Canada, Australia, NZ

and the majority of Europe - always photographing ideas to use in Guiding or Church.

She has been very proud of her three grandsons, William, Daniel and Philip, and delighted to see them grow and develop. Her love is fully returned, and their participation in her Thanksgiving Service would have delighted her. We were married for 55 years - active and sometimes hectic years - and Sandra has lived her life to the full.

Cliff Lewer

A tribute from Clare Sales

I have had the privilege of sharing in some of Sandra's ministries over the years, particularly her inspirational organisation of the annual (Women's) World Day of Prayer, when people from across the town came to share with others around the country and the world, and in the summer displays in church when we benefitted from her many resources and ideas. In fact we told her we were "channelling our inner Sandra" when working out how to create our own displays.

In the last 10 years it has been a joy to work with Sandra at the toddler group. Despite her busy schedule she volunteered at kids@cornerstone from the start and any of her ex-guides who came along with their own children were delighted to find her there. Sandra's storytelling entertained us all, and this continued through kids@cornerstone online videos and at Welly Club post pandemic when we would sometimes bring out Sandra's story chair so that the children could listen to longer stories. Her renditions of the ones involving "Hefty Hugh and Lanky Len" (imagine the Lancashire accent here) and "Stick Man" became legendary amongst the leaders!

Sandra was great fun to be around, and the families who came to Welly Club were amazed to find her chasing around the field on windy days with children running after her, just as Muddy Church children were delighted to dance with her in a barn at Christmas time. Muddy Church was introduced to us by Sandra and championed by her. And what a great ministry that is proving to be.

It was a testament to Sandra's impact on the young families who have joined our toddler group over the years that seven of the mums whose children are now at school joined us in Church to celebrate her life. One contacted me before hand to say she was "so sorry to hear about your lovely Sandra", but we agreed that she was really "everyone's lovely Sandra" and we'd remember her with a grateful smile.

A tribute from Helen Walker

Sandra was a great friend to me and to many others . When we first moved to the area and to the church she was so welcoming and gently encouraged me to take part in events. We were on the Open the Book team together and shared a love of dressing up and working with children. She was always interested in our family and often asked about them. What a great example for us all of service to others. We will miss her.

A tribute from Tim and Becky Dutton

Putting aside the Yorkshire-Lancashire divide, Sandra and I always got on well! We had plenty of common ground, especially when it came to young people. She was my 'go to' supply teacher at Osmaston School. Always thoroughly prepared, often at short notice, she would arrive with a variety of different bags with activities for all occasions. She was always looking for an opportunity to encourage the children to develop their creativity. This extended to her work with the Brownies and Guides, Explorers and Powersource, and more recently with Muddy Church, Welly Club and 'Open the Book.'

So many hours spent buying, making, copying resources, all safely housed in plastic boxes on numerous shelves in the barns at Roston. If you ever wanted some materials for a display, Sandra was your woman.

So we come to Advent, Sandra's favourite time of the year. As soon as the calendar year was done, Sandra would be thinking ahead to the following November, with ideas for a new theme which she jotted in her notebook and then wrote by hand on her flipchart. Next she would share ideas with her loyal group of fellow creatives to shape a visual treat for all those attending our church buildings. That included Cliff and John Dakin sawing and sanding structures which were adorned with hessian and Sandra's never-ending supply of coloured drapes.

We can all recall many years of paintings, drawings, banners, flower arrangements and lights (especially those with her remote controls!) produced by our own members, all sparked by Sandra's inspirational ideas. And it was her idea to include the children as well as the adults, to involve them in the displays. It meant that the displays were not just beautiful to look at but became alive as the children interacted with them. At a time when we are considering how inclusive a church we are, our Advent displays in recent years have made the Christmas message accessible and relevant to all ages and stages. Similar to her instigation of 'Take Out Church' bags during lockdown, Sandra believed that children and their families could learn and share experiences about the Christian faith together.

In everything she did, Sandra did it with enthusiasm, fun, pride, reflection, and a great load of planning. In all the groups she led or took part in, we were always guaranteed a twinkle in her eyes and lots of laughter. We will truly miss this inspirational lady, but what a tremendous legacy she has left us with. And more importantly, we remember her empowerment of others to take hold of the baton she has given us to continue her ideas well into the future.

Milldale Chapel

Service of preparation for the birth of our Lord in the wonderful, peaceful and secluded setting of Milldale. Christmas Eve 4.00 p.m. *Cliff Lewer*

“The Faces of Christmas” Advent Displays 2023

In the past few years, we have decorated Ashbourne Church with displays during Advent and invited local schools and settings to come into the church. Last year, we had over 250 children and staff who attended. Some brought their parents around later too, which was great.

We plan to repeat these sessions again in 2023, during the week beginning Monday 4th December, hosting eight schools and over 200 children. There will be a chance to walk around the Christmas trail in the church, carry out activities in the Century Hall and hear the Christmas story from the ‘Open the Book’ team. Every child will get a special bag to take home, with a book and a Christmas card inviting them to our Christmas services.

This year, our theme is ‘The Faces of Christmas’, which was originally instigated by Sandra Lewer before she passed away.

There will be explicit links to all our services from Advent Sunday on 3rd December to Epiphany Sunday on 7th January. This will include an all age Christingle service on Sunday 24th December.

Please pray for all those who are part of the Advent Displays team, for ministers, local preachers, worship leaders and Century Hall leaders, readers, singers and musicians who are leading worship; and for all those children and adults who might be coming into the church during the Advent and Christmas season.

And do come and visit the church yourself to see the displays and follow the trail.

Tim and Becky Dutton

The First Christmas

The bells ring out at Christmas,
as we spread the Christmas
cheer,
And as all Christians know,
it's a special time of year.

As Jesus was born in a manger,
the Holy Christ Child's birth,
With angels singing in the sky,
bringing peace to all on earth.

The shepherds and the wise men
three,
spread gifts before the babe,
Then getting up from bended knee,
they departed another way,

So only through the Holy Child,
can we be born again,
As God sent the baby Jesus,
to be Saviour of all. Amen

by Liz Spencer

REFLECTIONS

The line in the seasonal song goes: "Tis the season to be jolly" - which, for many, it is. The meeting and greeting of friends over the Christmas/New Year period will be a source of joy, happiness and thanksgiving.

In one household of my family, my nephew and his wife, Matt and Laura, will celebrate a first Christmas with their son, Arthur, born in May this year, and I am sure that "Granny" will be celebrating with them, and her new grandchild, is a guaranteed event in due course over the holiday period!

There is also the joy and happiness of the Christian celebrating, with, as scripture says, that "great cloud of unseen witnesses" proclaiming above all else, the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, with services and carols announcing to all the birth of our Saviour!

Yet, for some, this isn't a happy time, many are sad, alone, and we are often reminded of this by the very moving advertisements by the Salvation Army, and other charities for the homeless, on the run up to the Christmas season.

Others, I believe, are terrified, some due to the pressure and the stress of the expense of this season, no doubt, moved by the latest, "must have item". To this, I wonder too, as one advertisement for a "famous" company selling hair care products, for three of its items worked out at £1,200 no less!

For myself, I have mixed emotions, as mentioned before, the celebrations of the birth of our Lord, tempered with those memories of those who are no longer with us. And, as the cards come through the door, I wonder what name will be missing from a card this year.

For all the above, at this time of year, my prayers are at the forefront of my thoughts.

Whatever your thoughts, whatever your celebrations this year, I do pray that God will bless you this Christmas season, in 2024, and for many years to come.

Tom Parkinson

Ashbourne Methodist Church – Christmas angels

Join us on Friday 15th December at 10.30 for our Angels Blessing Service followed by refreshments. Before being put out in the town for people to take home as a gift of God's love, the angels are blessed at a short service. You will be very welcome, and you don't need to have made any angels to come!

Other important dates:

Mondays 4th & 11th December: Angel Tagging

at Craft & Chat at Cornerstone from 2pm-4pm.

Each angel needs a gift tag to allow it to find a new owner.

Thursday 14th December: Angel Deadline Day

All Angels (tagged & untagged) to Cornerstone, or to Clare by today please.



Clare Sales 07814 192924

Ashbourne Methodist Church – Worship Consultation

Thank you to everyone who attended our recent worship consultation on 23 October. Over 20 church members attended to share their ideas about how we can achieve our ambition to deliver 'inclusive, inspiring and energetic worship that enables everyone to encounter God every day of the week.'

There was a general consensus that in the short and medium term, we should build on our existing pattern of worship, looking for opportunities that are easy to adapt from what we already do well.

We have collated all of the responses which were completed on the night and grouped them under a number of sub-headings:

- Further consultation/research
- Accessibility and visibility
- Prayer and encouragement
- Young people and young adults
- Older people
- Worship events and services

There was quite a lot of crossover with outreach activities, so we have passed on all the feedback to the new Link Future Group so that they can consider how these can be incorporated when the new building is completed. In the meantime, the worship consultation team will be looking at the suggestions that have been made and incorporating those that are practical during the transitional period.

Tim Dutton

Ashbourne Circuit Church Services

Please check the website for the most current information,

<https://www.ashbournemethodist.org.uk/news>

Sunday 3rd December

Ashbourne 10:30 Allan Shaw
Brailsford 10:30 Rev David Leese
16:00 Rev Nicola Briggs

Parwich 14:30 Lorraine Hawkins
Rev Nicola McNally

Advent week 1

All Age
United Christingle
service at All Saints
United service

Sunday 10th December

10:00 Muddy Church
Ashbourne 10:30 Rev Nicola Briggs
Brailsford 10:45 At All Saints
Kirk Ireton 18:30 Rev Nicola Briggs
Kniveton 14:30 Rev Mark Broadhurst

Advent week 2

Carol service
Carol service

Saturday 16th December

Tissington 19:00 United Carol service at St Mary's

Sunday 17th December

Ashbourne 10:30 Robert Sales
18:30 Rev Nicola Briggs
Tim Dutton
Brailsford 10:30 Ruth Barratt

Advent week 3

Carol service

Wednesday 20th December

Ashbourne 18:30 Rev Nicola Briggs Memorial service

Thursday 21st December

Brailsford 18:30 Rev Nicola Briggs Carol service

Sunday 24th December

Ashbourne 10:30 Tim Dutton All Age
23:15 Rev Nicola Briggs Christmas Eve
Rev Chris Briggs Communion
Brailsford 10:45 At All Saints

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve service

Monday 25th December

Ashbourne 10:00 Rev Nicola Briggs All Age Circuit service

Christmas Day

Ashbourne Circuit Church Services

Please check the website for the most current information,

<https://www.ashbournemethodist.org.uk/news>

Sunday 31st December

Ashbourne 10:30 Diana Whitmill

Sunday 7th January

Ashbourne 10:30 Lorraine Hawkins

16:30 Rev Nicola Briggs

Brailsford 10:30 Rev Nicola Briggs

Parwich 14:30 Rev Nicola Briggs

Sunday 14th January

10:00 Muddy Church

Ashbourne 10:30 Peter Dawson

Brailsford 10:45 At All Saints

Kniveton 14:30 Tracy Dawson

Sunday 21st January

Ashbourne 10:30 Pulpit Swap

18:30 Peter Dawson

Brailsford 10:30 Steve Haines

Tissington 10:30 Rev Mark Broadhurst

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

PRAISE

Sunday 28th January

Ashbourne 10:30 Rev Nicola Briggs

18:30 WPCU service

Covenant service

ACT United at Elim

Pentecostal Church

Brailsford 10:45 At All Saints

Kirk Ireton 18:30 Ann Parkinson

Kniveton 11:00 Tom Parkinson

Sunday 4th February

Ashbourne 10:30 Fiona Green

16:30 Rev David Leese

Brailsford 10:30 Rev Andy Fyall

Parwich 14:30 Allan Shaw

Afternoon Tea Service

All Age Communion

Changes to normal service are in bold

Dates for your diary and your prayers

DECEMBER

Sun 3rd	14:30	Turn of the Tide Christmas Concert, Ashbourne
Wed 6th	19:30	Local Preachers and Worship Leaders meeting
Fri 8th	18:00	Ashbourne Lantern Parade
Sun 10th	18:30	Kirk Ireton Carol service
Sun 10th	14:30	Kniveton Carol service
Fri 15th	10:30	Blessing of the knitted angels, Ashbourne
Sat 16th	19:00	Tissington United Carol service at St Mary's
Wed 20th	18:30	Memorial service at Ashbourne
Thu 21st	18:30	Brailsford Carol service
Sun 24th	16:00	Milldale Christmas Eve service
Sun 24th	23:15	Ashbourne Christmas Eve Communion
Mon 25th	10:00	Christmas Day All Age Circuit service
Sun 31st	10:30	All Age Circuit service at Ashbourne

JANUARY

Sun 7th	16:30	Afternoon Tea Service
Tue 16th	19:30	Ashbourne Church Council
Mon 22nd - Fri 26th	12:00	Noon Prayers for Week for Christian Unity
Wed 24th	19:30	Brailsford Church Council
Sun 28th	18:30	ACT United Service at Elim Pentecostal Church

FEBRUARY

Wed 21st	19:30	Circuit Meeting at Ashbourne
Tue 27th	14:00	Rural Churches meeting at Tissington

APRIL

Fri 12th–Sun 14th		Circuit Weekend Away at Swanwick
Sat 27th	10:00	District Synod

From the editors

Many thanks to those who have sent contributions for this issue, and to all those whose contributions over the last five and a half years have made this magazine possible.

The future of Connections

In April 2022, Daphne and I gave notice to the Circuit Stewards that we wished to retire as editors and that our last issue would be July/August 2023. A month later, in May 2022, Daphne suffered a heart attack, followed by two spells in hospital, open heart surgery and a lengthy convalescence. She remained actively involved in editorship throughout, but died very suddenly whilst we were working on the May 2023 edition.

Nevertheless, with help from Fiona, in addition to editing the two subsequent issues which had been promised, I have been able to complete four extra issues including this one. However this is the last.

Daphne and I always worked in partnership. I was essentially the technician - sorting out the various contributions we received, which arrived in different layouts, formats and fonts, modifying them to be more consistent, amending the grammar, spelling or punctuation if necessary, and fitting them together in a number of pages divisible by four (in order to print them in an A5 booklet). Photos often needed editing to make them the right size, shape and level of brightness.

Daphne was more of a commissioning editor – thinking ahead about what should be in the magazine, who might write it and asking them to do so. She also helped check the draft copies – on one occasion whilst lying in her hospital bed!

I believe there is much to be said for more than one person being involved with the magazine (they don't have to be married to one another!) However, before Daphne and I took over, Arthur Watts was the sole editor and made an excellent job of it for more than 12 years.

The Circuit Stewards are still seeking a new editor (or editors). If you might be able to help, or would like further information about it, please contact Gareth Rutledge: 01335 418519 or gareth_rut@lineone.net.

I would be happy to talk to anyone about the magazine and will assist in the handover as far as I am able.

If a new editor is appointed, the next issue will be February 2024. Please send your contributions by Wednesday 17th January to: connections@ashbournmethodist.org.uk

John Dyster: 01335 344086 or dysters@tiscali.co.uk

Christmas Angels 2018

