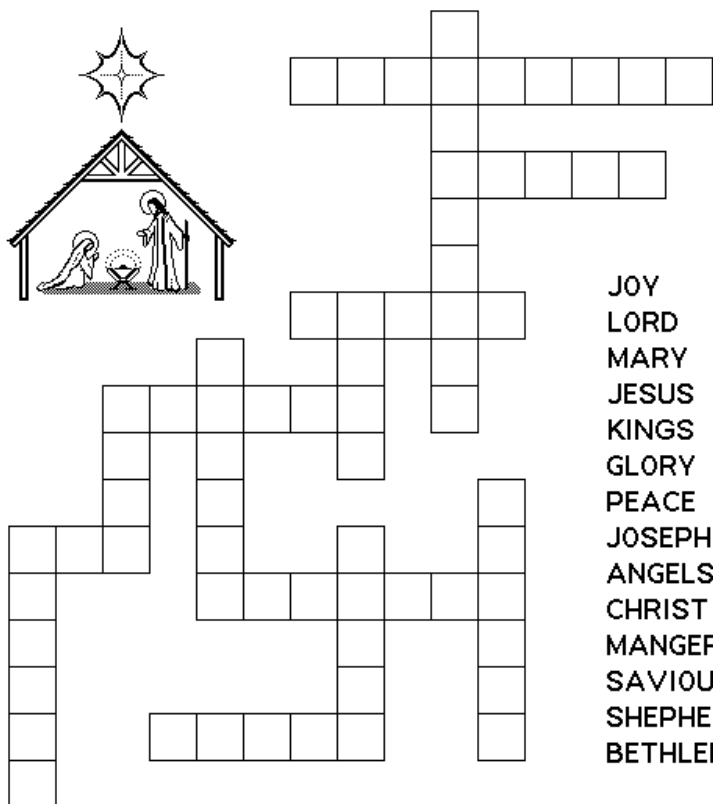


CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

Can you fit the words into the boxes—each word is only used once.



JOY
LORD
MARY
JESUS
KINGS
GLORY
PEACE
JOSEPH
ANGELS
CHRIST
MANGER
SAVIOUR
SHEPHERDS
BETHLEHEM



TAMWORTH AND LICHFIELD CIRCUIT

TALENT NEWSLETTER
December 2021



WORSHIP

All our churches are open for worship, please see local notices for special services over the Christmas period.

Look out for our online Advent Reflections—each Sunday throughout Advent we are producing an online short act of worship following the theme “All I want for Christmas is” These can be found on the circuit website or on the Lichfield Methodist Church Youtube channel or Facebook page. Please encourage friends and family to watch these short services.

www.tamworthandlichfieldmethodsit.org.uk

Ministerial Team

Rev'd Roger Baker (Superintendent) Tel: 01543 262368
rabaker1110@btinternet.com

Rev'd Joanna Thornton MA MA MPhil Tel: 01543 253744
revjo@hotmail.co.uk

Deacon Joy Sykes Tel: 01827 62456
joy.sykes@methodist.org.uk

Circuit Office

Churchoffice.tamlich@gmail.com
Tel: 01543 256333

www.tamworthandlichfieldmethodsit.org.uk

From the Super

Here we are fast approaching Christmas. We might feel for Mary on the Donkey on that bumpy road from Nazareth. We've had a very bumpy road through our journey this year even though things have returned to a little more like normal, still the threat of Covid is still around and I expect we have all known someone who has been touched by it. If we liken the journey to a bumpy road we hope that the double and triple jabs will be the shock absorbers that will make the ongoing journey a little more resilient to the bumps.

One of our Advent lectionary texts is Isaiah 40 where the prophet encourages the people to know that the rough places they have been in will be smoothed as they prepare for the Lord to act *Isa 40*
*Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the **rough places** a plain.* And of course John the Baptist takes up a similar message from that same chapter of Isaiah when he warns people to make ready for the coming Saviour in these well known words. *Luke 3:4 "Prepare the way of the Lord, **make his paths straight**."*

What bumpy road are you on? There have been many other incidents in our lives besides covid, things in church life, family life, and the crises around the world and our own country. It all adds up to what is a very bumpy ride at times. Life and our response to it can be hard to bear. Yet as we journey through this advent with all it's warnings to get ready, there are also many words that encourage. I am always encouraged by the words at the end of Isaiah chapter 40 which points us to the God who is creator of the universe yet is interested in each one of us. (From the Message Bible)

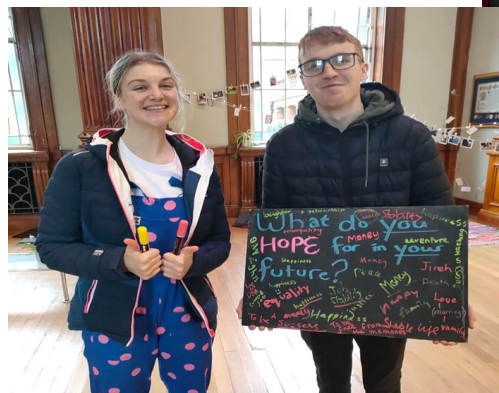
He energizes those who get tired,
gives fresh strength to dropouts.
For even young people tire and drop out,
young folk in their prime stumble and fall.
But those who wait upon God get fresh strength.
They spread their wings and soar like eagles,
They run and don't get tired,
they walk and don't lag behind.

So whilst the road is still going to be bumpy (so don't run too fast – and look out for the potholes)... He will renew us as we journey with hope as we prepare to welcome Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

May you be blessed this Advent and Christmas. Roger



What do you hope for?



CHRISTMAS ANGELS

Thank you to all our faithful knitters! We have a collection of angels to be distributed amongst the community—flying in with Christmas love, hope and joy.

You might even see one!



News from Beth Eales, member at Lichfield Methodist Church

After graduating in the summer, I am spending a year working with UCCF as a Relay worker. UCCF is a charity that resources Christian Unions (CUs), who are student-led mission teams on campus. My role as a Relay worker involves supporting the CUs at Edge Hill University and University of Cumbria – Lancaster Campus by helping plan events and encouraging and equipping Christian students in their faith and evangelism, as well as being trained and discipled in my own faith through an in-depth study programme into biblical doctrine and practical training in evangelism.

Students at the University of Cumbria tend to do degrees with lots of placements like teaching so it can be hard to form a community and do evangelism together, but the Lord makes a way! We have a core group of about six who come to regular Bible studies which is so encouraging, it is so wonderful to hear about their friends who they are telling about Jesus. They are planning a couple of Christmas events including a Christmas meal which I am so excited for as evangelistic events have been a struggle for them in the past. I am praying they will be excited to invite their friends to the meal and everyone who attends will be open to hearing the gospel.

Edge Hill University has a much larger CU of 30-40, which includes so many excited freshers. They are a wonderful community who are so eager to tell everyone about their faith, there are so many people doing seeker Bible studies with their friends. A big encouragement is their recent missions week, a week of events dedicated to sharing the gospel, this involved a pop-up café giving out free hot drinks throughout the day, and evening events involving food and a talk which this year all revolved around the theme of hope and the hope we can find in Jesus. Watching the students growth throughout the week was incredible, seeing them come back from flyering for an event saying 'I just spoke to 50 strangers!'. It was also so encouraging to see the same guests coming back everyday wanting to know more about who Jesus is, I'm praying they can get connected in regular CU.

My time so far has been so encouraging, I have seen the CUs become united communities who are ready to share the love of Christ with their friends and campuses. It is such a joy to be on the frontline of sharing the gospel on campuses where people need to hear it!

If you would like to know more or sign up to my regular updates please get in touch at betheales12@gmail.com or go to www.uccf.org.uk/our-team/beth-eales.

Sabbatical journeys.

In late spring and early summer I had a sabbatical. A time for a minister to refresh, and recharge the batteries with some study and reflection. I chose to do some reading on the Early English Saints, ie those who brought to, or at least those who grew Christianity in the British Isles.

I took a particular interest in St Cuthbert (7thC), who was just an ordinary monk based in the North. He and his community journeyed miles, mostly on foot, to communities that were often remote, tribal, and oftentimes hostile. But Cuthbert and his companions would follow a similar pattern in each community. They would talk first with the chief or head of the community, share the gospel of Christ with him and when he accepted Christ, the same message was shared with the people. Gradually more became Christian, The monks would set up a church where people could pray, they built infirmaries where the sick could be tended, and began to provide education opportunity. Once that work was established they would move on to another community and start again. Then Cuthbert and others would visit those communities from time to time to preach and encourage them further.

Cuthbert and his contemporaries were committed to a life of prayer observing a pattern of night and day prayer. In order to be focussed and in tune with God Cuthbert is said to have even gone into the sea up to his neck and spent a time in prayer. The prayer sustained them for what was a rigorous life of service and giving themselves to others in order to spread the gospel of God's love in practice and prayer.

Having read about Cuthbert and his contemporaries in the first half of sabbatical I visited a number of places throughout the country where these ancient Christians lived and worked. I found myself being inspired as I reflected on the tough lives they led, with none of the comforts we know. Yet they proclaimed the gospel and were faithful to the gospel sometimes in the face of persecution. The latter was true at St Albans Cathedral where the shrine and remains of Alban (the first Martyr of the British Isles) are. Alban was converted by a priest he'd given shelter to at a time of Roman persecution. In order that the priest could escape and continue his journey he swapped clothes with the priest and Alban was caught and martyred for his new found faith.

All these early Christians paid a high price to spread the gospel and make inroads into pagan Britain. They lived a life of prayer and service.

In visiting the sites, Lindisfarne, Durham Cathedral, St Albans, Winchester, Chester, and Cornwall (St Piran)... I was moved and inspired at the journeys these faithful Christians had made. If it were not for their faith, their faithfulness and sheer grit and determination we probably would not be here as Christians today. Thank God then for those who have gone before us on the journey and let us remind ourselves that we are still on our journey of faith and let us be faithful in our calling and work as the church.

Roger

Parkrun, anyone?

Since starting my journey into full time ministry there have been many times I’ve heard myself saying things I thought and I’d never say, one of them being ‘I’m just nipping out for a run’.

I was challenged to complete a short triathlon in the summer of 2015 and despite my protests of I can’t run, I took it on and in 2016 I completed my first triathlon and that’s were I thought it would stop. During 2016 I took some time off work with mental health issues and as part of my recovery routine I continued to run, swim and bike. I use physical active as a way to de-stress, helps me keeps my mental health stable and helps me think. It was during this time I started to do a parkrun on a Saturday morning and in many ways it transformed my life.

I was met with a warm non judgemental loving welcome. Despite my reservations I soon discovered parkrun is for all ages, sizes, abilities, buggy pushers, walkers and the odd dog or two. The aim is to walk, jog or crawl 3.11 miles in as long as it takes, it is about being active, looking after mental health and being part of a wider community.

I started to realise I could find connections between my running and church communities, how we all donated to food bank, how were all working towards being inclusive, how we want to talk and listen, how we wish to engender hope, joy and love.

Having had the courage to join with parkrun I finally joined a ladies only running group in which I found the same ethos of care and inclusivity, it was also at this point that I found my niche of God’s mission, I had spotted my mission opportunity in the community, my joining in mission. Over the last few years I have become the ‘person of faith’ that those particular running communities, people have to come to me with questions, for support, for a talk and for prayer.

Like so many of us when the pandemic came I wondered what I could do, how could I help my community and eventually I went back to the words of my ordination service;

‘To assist God’s people in worship and prayer and to hold before them the needs and concerns of the world.’

I was ordained to pray and uphold my communities so that is what I did. During the first lockdown everyday I asked the question on Facebook, is there anything you would like me to pray for you today? The response I had was over whelming from all quarters of my communities, from those of faith and those of none, from those that private messaged me to those that reply instantly. I had many conversations about faith over this time. One of the

biggest encouragements I received was someone who said ‘you know I don’t believe but thank you for doing this, it is so needed’.

So all this activity has enabled me to step out of the Church and take the message of Jesus to a whole new set of people. This has been a growing trend in recent years, I know of plenty of people who now purposely join in community activity groups to be the person of faith for them, from, sporting groups, to book clubs to crafting groups. (Or maybe stumble upon it, like I did) We have began to take faith out of the Church and back into our communities.

So I’m going to keep on parkrunning, swimming and biking. If anyone would like to join me for a parkrun, whether we walk, crawl, or jog it please contact me.



So here’s your challenge, parkrun anyone?

Deacon Joy <http://talesfromaparkrun.wordpress.com>

SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE CIRCUIT		
Alrewas	10.30 am	Morning Worship
Glascote	6.00 pm	Evening worship
Hopwas	10.45 am	Morning worship
Lichfield	10.00 am	Morning Worship
New Life	10.30 am	Morning Worship at Thackerary Drive
St. Martin’s	10.00 am	Morning Worship
Shenstone	10.30 am	Morning worship
You would be very welcome to come along to any service.		