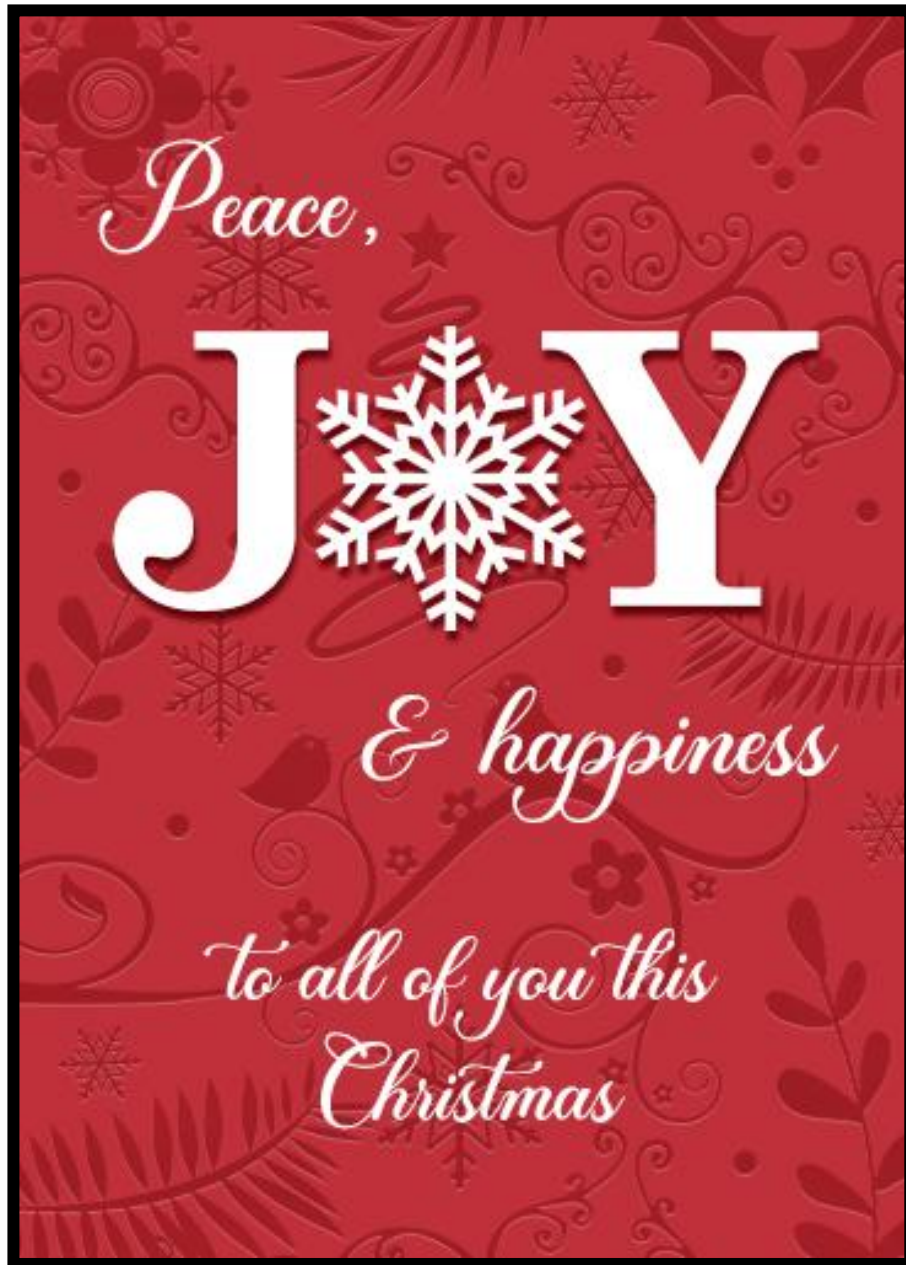


December 2020 to February 2021
WARMINSTER UNITED
CHURCH

(Methodist/URC)

George Street, Warminster BA12 8QA



Minister: Rev David Coppard Tel: 01373858805
email: david.coppard@yahoo.co.uk

Web site www.unitedchurchwarminster.org

Dear Friends

Is it my imagination or does Christmas start earlier each year? Compiling these thoughts shortly after Bonfire Night, it seems somewhat premature to be thinking about Christmas. However the night sky being spectacularly illuminated by cascading fireworks seems to create parallels when reflecting about Christmas.

One of the favourite Old Testament passages used at Christmas is from the prophet Isaiah, 9, where we find the words, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.” Indeed in the very narratives of the human birth of Jesus how often is reference made to light. Think of the shepherds on the hillside, or the magi led by the shining star. Jesus described himself as “the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” *John 8v12*

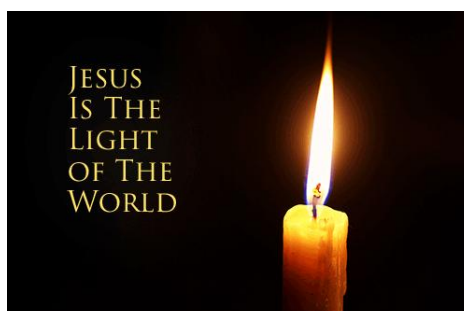
The fireworks are amazing yet transitory, after exploding their myriad designs in a kaleidoscope of colours they fade and the darkness returns. Christians believe that the events of Christmas hold significance all year, as John’s Gospel puts it, “The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out...” *John 1v5* Personally I find that deeply reassuring especially as we continue to journey through these strange times. Let us remember that into the darkness Christ came as a light, giving hope and a promise of joy both now and to come.

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birthday may God's love surround you and may we, in turn, express something of the light of his love by our little and large deeds of kindness to those we meet on life's journey especially during this time of pandemic. That smile, that comforting word of encouragement that generous act can make a difference. We don't always see the results of our caring, but in the words of an Indian Proverb, 'All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today'

May you and your families and friends have a safe, peaceful and happy time this Christmas and be richly blessed as we likewise journey through Advent and then into the New Year.

Peace

Rev David



Service Dates For December - February

Good News!

We can meet in church again and celebrate the Christmas season with our church family!

Here are the dates and times for our Services at Church for the next three months. Until we know what restrictions may be in place, we are keeping to 2nd and 4th Sundays in each month. Zoom services and Worship at Home service sheets will continue.

The same Covid-19 precautions remain in effect:

Please bring a mask or face-covering with you and wear it in the building

Give your contact details on arrival and sanitise your hands.

Wait to be shown to a seat and remain in place until the end of the service; the stewards will show you when to leave, by the back of the church.

A collection plate will be in the Cameo Room and sanitiser will be available at the back door if you wish to use it.

Thank you to everyone for observing these precautions carefully and helping to keep us all safe.

Date	Service	Leader	Time
13/12/20		Rev David	10.30am
20/12/20	Celebrating Christmas	Rev Heather	10.30am
25/12/20	Christmas Day	Rev David	10.30am
Thursday 31/12/20	New Year Service	Rev David	6.00pm
Wednesday 06/01/21	Epiphany	Rev David	10.30am
10/01/21	Covenant Service	Rev David	10.30am
24/01/21			10.30am
14/02/21			10.30am
28/02/21			10.30am

Please let John Alpin know which services you would like to attend. If you wish to change your choices later, please let John know so that we are aware of how many people to expect, and also so that we may be able to reallocate a seat if you are not coming after all.

(John:07704656200 or jaalpin@gmail.com)



Drive in Carol Service
Christmas Eve at 7pm
In the Civic Centre Car Park
entering from Sambourne Rd

Comfort and Joy

Christ Church Warminster-All Welcome-more info @ www.ccw.org no need to book

The poster features a central illustration of a baby in a manger, a red car with a Christmas tree on its roof, and a church building. The background is a soft, glowing light.

PRAYER WHEN PUTTING ON A FACE MASK

**Creator God,
as I prepare to go into the world,
help me to see the sacrament
in the wearing of this cloth -
let it be "an outward sign
of an inward grace" -
a tangible and visible way
of living love for my neighbours,
as I love myself.**

**Christ Jesus,
since my lips will be covered,
uncover my heart,
that people would see my smile
in the crinkles around my eyes.
Since my voice may be muffled,
help me to speak clearly,
not only with my words,
but with my actions.**

**Holy Spirit,
as the elastic touches my ears,
remind me to listen carefully -
and full of care -
to all those I meet.
May this simple piece of cloth
be shield and banner,
and each breath that it holds,
be filled with your love.**

**In your Name
and in that love,
I pray.**

*Written by the Right Reverend Richard Bott, current Moderator of the
United Church of Canada..... contributed by Rev David*



CHRISTMAS SHOEBOXES

Thanks to the donations from many people and to Brenda's hard work and willingness to give up a room in her house for many months, it has been possible to pack 85 shoeboxes . These were collected by Rich Parsons from Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion (FSCI) on 16th November. Rich has told us that they have now taken the decision to extend the appeal. Sorting and checking will take place in January, and distributions will move to end of Feb. He says it's a real pity they can't get the boxes out for Christmas, but they can't commit under the conditions. The boxes will arrive in Bulgaria in time for their Liberation Day celebrations (Mar 3rd), which are a big thing there. We were also able to give £100 donated by church friends to which the church added sufficient to transport all the boxes. Before the boxes were collected Rev David went to Brenda's house to say a prayer of blessing for the boxes, may it be the prayer of us all:

Loving God, we pray for your blessing on these shoeboxes and pray that each item contained in all these boxes will be blessed.

Loving God, we ask for your blessing.

We pray for the hurting children and adults who will receive these boxes and the contents we've packed with love.

Loving God, we pray for your touch of compassion.

We pray for children and families who are suffering in the desperate circumstances of poverty, sickness or war, that you will be so close to them.

Loving God, we pray for your bounty.

We pray that through these shoeboxes the hearts and minds of those who receive them may be opened to your love and the message of your grace through Jesus Christ who came amongst us as a vulnerable babe at Bethlehem.

Loving God, we pray for your love to be manifest.

We pray, also for all those who are participating in some way in the shoebox appeal and for the process of collecting, processing, transporting and delivering of the boxes to their destinations.

Loving God, we ask for your blessing. Amen.

Brenda was given flowers from the church for her dedicated work throughout the year and enabling these gifts to still be sent in this difficult time.

Thank You to everyone who has contributed to this venture in any way.

(Empty shoe boxes for next year willingly received at any time!!!)



FINANCIAL REPORT

I have completed our accounts for the last financial year and they have been accepted by our auditor.

Our monthly offerings for the last 2 months have totalled:

September: £1645.00

October: £1441.05

I WISH TO ADVISE YOU THAT I NEED TO GIVE UP THE JOB AS TREASURER. PLEASE CONTACT ME ON PHONE NUMBER 01985 300585 IF YOU CAN HELP.

Thanks to everyone for your support of the church in these difficult times.

I hope and pray that all are keeping well and that we shall be able to meet up again in a service soon.

Hilary

BIBLE STUDY VIA ZOOM

Since we started this group on Zoom the group has grown a little and we are always pleased to welcome others. We have just come to the end of the book of Acts of the Apostles. As there are 28 chapters in Acts and we did about one chapter a week I think we must have been meeting for 28 weeks! On Wednesday 18 November we will start on the book of Esther in the Old Testament. This will take us up to Christmas. If you would like to join just let me know and I will add you to the group so you can have a link to the Zoom meeting.

Marion Hornby 01985 216219 or 07791 893352

ZOOM "COFFEE MORNINGS"

Marion is also organising an informal chat time on Zoom on Monday mornings at 10.30. If you would like to join in and do not already have the joining details then please contact Marion on numbers above.

Good news that John Case had his hip replacement on 6th November and he is home and doing well.

We remember Penelope Harrison and her family in our prayers with a family member seriously ill with Covid 19.

Anita will be waving Bella off for her next steps in training to be a Guide Dog for a blind person. Sadly we have not been able to share in the joys of watching her grow this year, but we did have the very small puppy stage!

Marion B.

HANS GIESSLER

We were sad to learn of Hans' death at the end of November. He had become increasingly frail and unwell during the past few months.

Hans was drafted into the German Army, taken prisoner by the Americans and spent time in POW camps in the USA and UK. He was released in 1948, and to become a naturalised Briton he worked on the land for five years. He later trained to teach and met Barbara through teaching with her brother in Cornwall. He taught PE at Frome Selwood for many years. Their son Paul, his wife Kirstin and three grandchildren have been a great support to them. Hans and Barbara would have celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary at the end of December.

Hans will be greatly missed by his family and friends, and we hold them in our prayers.

CTW CHRISTIAN AID REPORT FOR 2020

Christian Aid week 2020 did not, of course, take place in Warminster during May as planned.

At the end of last year, it was decided to repeat last year's plan of asking each church in the Churches Together group to pledge to raise at least £600 for Christian Aid 2020.

United Church (us) is well on the way to reaching the £600 target. There will not be the usual charity collections and fund raising events this year, so if you would like to help our church reach the target Karen Woollard would be happy to receive your donations.

Of course, it is OK to pay donations direct to Christian Aid but if you do so, it will not be counted towards the Warminster total.

PEOPLE AGAINST POVERTY CHRISTMAS APPEAL

In the same way as FCSI sends Christmas shoeboxes to needy children in Eastern Europe People against poverty this year want to give a "Bag of Smiles" to all the children with whom the charity works in Romania, Haiti, Nepal, Malawi, India and Tanzania. In normal years the charity's fund raising is sufficient to send money for a Christmas party and other treats for the children and families but this year many of the usual fund raising events could not happen, They are therefore appealing for donations towards these bags. They estimate that £25 per bag is needed.

If you are able to give anything towards this then you can make your donation via this link.

<<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/8348>> <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/8348>

Or see People against Poverty's website. Thank you Joan Jones



UPDATE FOR THE AREA'S NEW SEND A COW PROJECT “Women of Migori”.

The team in Kenya started the project on 9th September, the project goal is to reduce poverty levels and build sustainable livelihoods of 9000 households! They have already identified two unprotected water springs (unclean water sources) which they plan to work on. Making sure communities have clean water is one of Send a Cow's priorities. The team have already started training the farmers and have provided follow up visits to the farms. There is a great sense of expectancy as families learn new skills and are hopeful of growing food on their own land. You are invited to the Online Christmas Celebration on: Thursday 10th December at 6.55pm. For further information and to reserve your free online seat, visit Sendacow.org/christmas-celebration.

To read more visit www.sendacow.org

MODERN SLAVERY

I was astonished to learn that slavery is happening in Wiltshire. Because we are a rural community slave masters are moving people into this area to work in debt and live in bondage.

A few members from our Churches Together in Warminster have found out (through a reputable, nationwide anti-slavery training course), that this can be combated: not through challenging slave masters! but through recognising the 'signs' and reporting the circumstances to professional investigators including Crime Stoppers and the Police.

Reporting can be done anonymously. Churches in UK are asked to be involved because of the variety of people who come through our doors. We may be able to publicise support phone numbers that will enable an endangered individual to get help, we may be able to befriend people who have escaped dire circumstances and or offer ourselves as a caring community to surround them while they take a deep breath of freedom.

In the new year I will give more information about how we can safely become involved as individuals or as a church. Meanwhile, Churches Together is supporting this endeavour. Please pray for these people: children, teenagers, women and men, the elderly, people with learning difficulties, migrants and the vulnerable who have become victims and don't yet know how to get free.

Karen Woollard