



ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
WALTON AND WEYBRIDGE



THE GRAPEVINE

DECEMBER 2025/JANUARY 2026



Volume 4 No 10



*And so this Christmas season,
may our hearts with gladness glow,
As we hear the blessed story,
That took place so long ago.*

Alpha L Buntain - 'The First Christmas'



From The Manse

December 2025/January 2026



Dear friends

Christmas is coming - the goose is getting fat!"
(with apologies to all vegetarians and gooseherds.)

I've been putting the finishing touches to the Christmas Services that I shall be taking and each year I normally find that a fresh "take", or even something just a bit different is an increasing challenge. You will be pleased to know that I've not yet resorted to exploring the Christmas Story from the perspective of an imaginary mouse hiding in the hay that the Innkeeper had put in the stable for the animals! Many people remember the Vicar of Dibley Christmas Dinner/Sprout episode but the one that struck the reality chord with many clergy was the episode in which everyone kept referring to the Christmas Midnight Mass as being "The biggest gate of the year" and kept wishing her well for it. Seeing people's expectation and anticipation, Geraldine felt her confidence in the service she had prepared draining away. Despairing, she decided that what she'd prepared was dreadful and that she would have to start again. Looking at a picture of Jesus above her desk she spoke to Jesus, saying, "Come on Birthday Boy- get me out of this!" That's a very genuine clergy prayer!

I confess that I have been known to go onto autopilot when singing the well-known Christmas Carols for what seems the millionth time that year! Over the years practically everything that could go right has gone right and practically everything that could go wrong has gone wrong too. Some classic memories go through my mind, such as the frustrated Beginners' leader in my first pastorate's Sunday School who, at the dress rehearsal for the Nativity Play, despaired when the angels went up the left aisle of the church, when they were supposed to have gone up the other one (to avoid the shepherds and the sheep!) "No!" she told them, "We don't have angels on that side of the church!"

2010 will possibly be my weirdest Christmas ever. I was in Wales and we'd had very heavy snow in the run up to Christmas. My more remote chapels were totally inaccessible. Roads in Breconshire were treacherous. It was only the main church in Brecon itself that any of us could have got to and used - but the heating system had frozen because we'd been unable to run it to stop it from freezing. Blocked roads meant oil deliveries couldn't get through and the chapel's oil tank ran dry. In the end, all services in all my chapels were cancelled. We just couldn't hold them. Many churches and chapels in Wales that year suffered the same fate, even the main URC in central Cardiff.

2020 was the year all our Christmas Services were online due to Lockdown. One year when I was in Manchester the manse burglar alarm went off during the Midnight Service. Someone had tried to break in, assuming that the house would be empty and not realising that there was an alarm. Thankfully that manse was just across the church lawn and a young Elder hurled himself over there to see the thief making off, scared by the alarm. No break-in had been effected which is just as well because Janet WAS in the manse - in bed.

The Christmas story is so well known and I know that each year, by the time the services have all been taken I will be “running on empty” but it doesn’t matter how many times we’ve heard the story being told it still is the story of love and of welcome; the kindness of strangers, the unexpected responses of an eclectic group of unlikely characters. There is waiting in the story. There is longing in the story. There are gifts in the story and there is the miracle of new life - a newborn baby, snuggling and gurgling. There are proud parents showing off their new baby and people responding to it. “Can I have a hold?” (“cwtych” in Welsh!)

A fresh take – something a bit different – yes, that can help us focus on the story but I am certain the most important thing is that we hear and take to heart the familiar story again.

I wish you all a very happy and a blessed Christmas. I wish you all every happiness in the New Year. I am so pleased that the last thing we shall do together is to hear again the wonderful story of God coming and being Emmanuel – God with us.

“Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the new-born King”

With all good wishes,



I hear the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The word repeat
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ('Christmas Bells')



Advent and Christmas Services

Sunday 30 November (Advent Sunday)

10.30am Morning Worship for Advent Sunday.

Sunday 7 December (*Advent 2*)

10.30am Morning Service

3.30pm Memorial Carol Service organised by FW Chitty and Walter G Wortt Funeral Services

Sunday 14 December Sunday (*Advent 3*)

10.30am Family Parade and Gift Service with Nativity Tableau

Thursday 18 December

12.00 for
12.30 pm Lunchtime concert by Stratus

Sunday 21 December (*Advent 4*)

1.00 for
1.30 pm Church Lunch

3.45pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols by Candlelight
(followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies)

Christmas Eve

4.00pm Christingle Service

Christmas Day

10.30am Christmas Family Service

Sunday 28 December

10.30am Morning Worship.

Sunday 4 January 2026

10.30am Morning Worship with Communion



News of the Church Family

In Memoriam

We were much saddened to learn of the death of Shirley Morley on 26th October. We send our condolences, thoughts and love to her husband, Peter and children Helena and Graham, her wider family and friends. There will be a tribute to Shirley in the February 2026 issue of The Grapevine.

Also, as we go to press, we were very sad to hear of the death on 27 November of Dr Alex Henham, a former long-serving member of Weybridge URC. As yet we have no further details, but we send our thoughts, love and prayers to his wife, Mollie, and to their family and friends.

Please remember in your prayers all those friends who are unwell or going through troubled times.

If you know of anyone who would like to be included in a prayer list, or if you wish to be included yourself, please let the Editors know

WESSEX SYNOD



Prayer Calendar for December 2025

- | | |
|----|---|
| 7 | Dorchester
Tilehurst, Reading |
| 14 | Totton
Woking |
| 21 | Michael Hodgson as he retires
St Martin's West Moors |
| 28 | Godalming United Church
Valley Park, St Francis, Chandler's Ford |

January 2026

- | | |
|----|--|
| 4 | United Church of Egham |
| 11 | High Cross, Camberley
The United Church, Winchester |
| 18 | Park, Reading
Swanage
Ryde, Isle of Wight |
| 25 | Mere
Tilehurst, Reading |

SERVICES AND OTHER KEY DATES DECEMBER 2025

*On the third Sunday of the month, the service will also be on Zoom
Coffee/Tea is served in the Hall after Services - all welcome!
No Messy Church in December*

Please also see complete list of Advent and Christmas Services (page 4)

"It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air."

W T Ellis

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ONE AND ALL!

Tuesday 2 December 7.30 pm Elders' Meeting, Hersham Room

Sunday 7 December **10.30 am** **Morning Worship with Holy Communion**
(Advent 2)



Last posting date for Christmas Box !

Friday 12 December 12.30 - 2.30 pm Festive People Who Lunch, Church Hall
Book early to avoid disappointment with Elizabeth
Scharinger by email administrator@standrewsurc.org
or Fiona Reardon 07902 485933/01932 24711 (see page 9)

Sunday 14 December **10.30 am** **Morning Worship with Church Parade,**
(Advent 3) **Family Gift Service and Nativity tableau**

! Distribution of Christmas cards !

Thursday 18 December 12.00 for
12.30 pm Concert by Stratus (see page 15)

Friday 19 December 7.30 pm Christmas Carol Concert - **The Treble Clef Choir**
St James Parish Church, Weybridge KT13 8DN
Tickets £15, including refreshments (accompanied children
under 12 free) are available at the door or from
ticketsource.co.uk/trebleclef
Retiring collection for Elmbridge Mencap (see page 9)

Sunday 21 December **1 for**
(Advent 4) **1.30 pm** **Lunch in the Church Hall**

 3.45 pm **Service of Nine Lessons and Carols by**
 Candlelight (followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies)

Wednesday 24 December **4.00 pm** **Christingle Service led by Revd Stephen Thornton**
(Christmas Eve)

CHRISTMAS DAY **10.30 am** **Christmas Family Service led by Anna Crawford**

Sunday 28 December
(First Sunday after Christmas) **10.30 am** **Morning Worship led by Anna Crawford**

SERVICES AND OTHER KEY DATES JANUARY 2026

"And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied: 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.' So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He let me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East."

Minnie Louise Haskins

A HAPPY NEW YEAR AND ALL THE VERY BEST FOR 2026!

Sunday 4 January (Epiphany)	10.30 am	Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Anna Crawford
Tuesday 6 January	7.30 pm	Elders' Meeting Hersham Room
Friday 9 January	12.30 - 2.30 pm	 People Who Lunch, Church Hall (see page 9)
Sunday 11 January (Epiphany 1)	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by the Revd Derek Wensley

COPY DATE FOR FEBRUARY 2026 ISSUE: WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY

(Due to the retirement of your Editor, this will be your last issue of The Grapevine as it stands)

*All items (provided they do not contravene copyright regulations) to the Editor or Associate Editor
(please see back page for contact details)*

Sunday 18 January (Zoom) (Epiphany 2)	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Graham Pearcey
	3.00 pm	 Messy Church
Sunday 26 January (Epiphany 3)	10.30 am	Morning Worship led by Marc Dennis

THE LEGEND OF THE CHRISTMAS ROBIN *(from Quarriers Cards)*

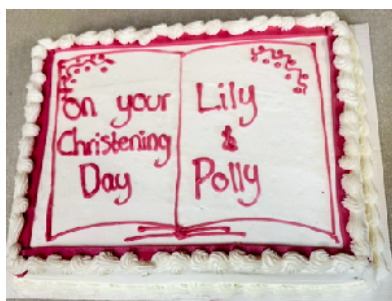
Legend tells how a robin,
On the night of the first Noel
Braved the frosty winter night
So the baby might sleep well.
Throughout the night, the small grey wings
Did flutter for all their worth
And fanned the fire that warmed the Christ
His first night here on Earth.
In the heat of stirring the lonely fire
The shepherds have it said
The Robin wears with honour
A breast of Christmas Red.

A VERY SPECIAL SUNDAY

"And Jesus said unto them, Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs. Matthew 19:14



What a very special day it was on Sunday 16 November for the Messy Church family when two of our members were baptised. Megan with Jimmy and Lily (right) had been coming each month to Messy Church for several years and we all rejoiced when baby Polly was born. She has been coming since she was only days old.



Family and guests of the baptismal party joined us for coffee after the service when Lily cut a beautiful cake and she and Daisy another member of Messy Church, handed out slices to all of us. Later in the afternoon we welcomed them back to Messy Church.

Anne Fitzgerald

A TOUCHING TALE THAT ILLUSTRATES THE TRUE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

When Jean told me this story, I said it would be perfect to include in our Christmas issue. Jean has spoken to the family who are so proud of their daughter, whose name has been changed for publication purposes. Ed

While going over for my treatment at St Luke's these last four weeks, I have met a lovely little girl called Annabel who is three years old. Every Thursday she comes over to the hospital with her grandparents as her Grandad is having cancer treatment. Annabel lights up the room and brings in a bucket of sweets to share with the patients.

Last Thursday was going to be her last day as it was Grandad's last treatment. I took in one of my Christmas cushions - the material was all different animals and in the little pocket was Santa's reindeer.

She hugged the cushion: I then made up my story.

"You will never guess who I saw last Sunday", I said, "I saw Father Christmas and I told him how I had met this little girl in hospital who was smiling and giving sweet to the patients."

Father Christmas said, "Is that Annabel? I have been watching her!"

Annabel's face lit up.

I took out one of the purses I had made with Father Christmas on the front with chocolate money inside and said, "Father Christmas asked me to give you this." Her face shone. She then proceeded to share out the chocolate money. An absolute Star, full of kindness, she went out hugging her cushion.

I will never see her again but I will never forget her.

Jean Rigden



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT A GLANCE



PEOPLE WHO LUNCH
Friday 12 December and
Friday 9 January
12.30 - 2.30 pm
Church Hall

If you are someone who enjoys having lunch with a group of friends then People Who Lunch is definitely the place for you. Everyone is welcome at this monthly get-together held on the second Friday of the month in the Church Hall. For just £5 you can have soup, a roll, dessert, cheese and biscuits and coffee/tea.

Puddings a speciality!



**Advance booking recommended
and necessary if you are coming
in a group!**

To book your place please contact Elizabeth Scharinger by email:
administrator@standrewsurc.org
or Fiona Reardon on
07902 485933 / 01932 247119

LUNCHTIME CONCERT BY STRATUS

Thursday 18 December
at 12.00 for 12.30 pm

St Andrew's Walton and Weybrige

Don't miss this rare chance to hear Stratus while Zacc and Nat are home for a Christmas break from China!

Christmas Carols with Treble Clef Choir

Friday 19 December at 7.30 pm

treble clef choir
WEYBRIDGE

Christmas Carol Concert

7.30 pm Friday 19th December 2025
St. James' Parish Church,
Weybridge KT13 8DN

Musical director: Emily Leather
Accompanist: Anna-Maria Raffa
Organist: Lindsay Bridgwater

TICKETS £15 including refreshments
Accompanied children under 12 free
From ticketsource.co.uk/trebleclef and
available at the door

There will be a retiring collection for Elmbridge Mencap

"Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Sunday 21 December at
3.45 pm
**(mulled wine and mince
pies afterwards)**





WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



Since it was the 80th anniversary of VE Day, Michael took the number 80 as his starting point. 80 years since VE day - 80 years since VJ Day - 80 years since the end of WWII - but also 80 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki - the only time nuclear weapons have been used in war - but the concern of the survivors that some leaders today could be forgetting the lesson of the past and be prepared to use them again.

The names of those church members who died were read out and lights were placed by the uniformed services under the memorial.

We saw on the screen old pictures of VE day street parties in which some of our congregation took part as children or babies, which you can see on page 15 of our June 2025 issue (Beryl Brown, Rosemary Topping and Jean Rigden feature in these photos). He then asked our over-80s if they would tell us

what they remembered and what they did to celebrate the end of the war in the hope that it made our young people see it as being more than "history" but that plenty of people were still around for whom it is part of their childhood. Finally, Michael quoted the prayer of Sir Henry Baker: '*O God of love, O King of peace, make war throughout the world to cease. The wrath of sinful man restrain - give peace, O God, give peace again.*' This prayer, written in 1861, surely can be applied to Ukraine today.

MH/NFR







Michael sends warmest greetings to everyone for Christmas and wishes you all the very best for the New Year.



Warmest wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year 2026 to all at St Andrew's Walton and Weybridge from
Ghislaine Stevenson

Wishing you peace and joy this Christmas.
Gwenda and Alistair



Valerie Dow and Fiona and Vic Reardon send their best wishes to everyone for a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year.

Seasonal Greetings to all at St Andrew's Walton and Weybridge from
Susan and Johnston



We wish you a very Happy Christmas and every blessing for the year ahead.
Rachel and Mike Snaith xx

Merry Christmas to all and many New Year blessings from Texas!
Sophia and Rob Swanson



Liz Grimsey wishes everyone a joyful Christmas and a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.

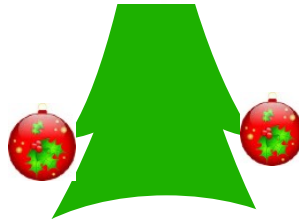
John Langdon would like to wish his friends at St Andrew's a happy Christmas and all the best for 2026.



We would like to wish the congregation at St Andrew's a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. 2025 has been a very special year for us getting married at this lovely church, thank you to everyone at St Andrew's who made our wedding so special. With our best wishes, **Katie and Tom Ward**

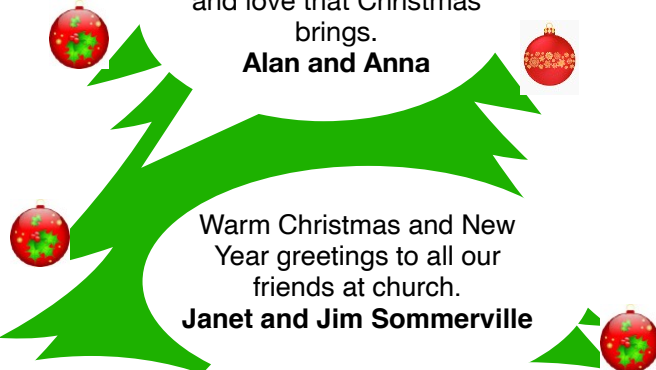


HAPPY
NEW YEAR



Wishing you all the peace
and love that Christmas
brings.

Alan and Anna



Warm Christmas and New
Year greetings to all our
friends at church.

Janet and Jim Sommerville

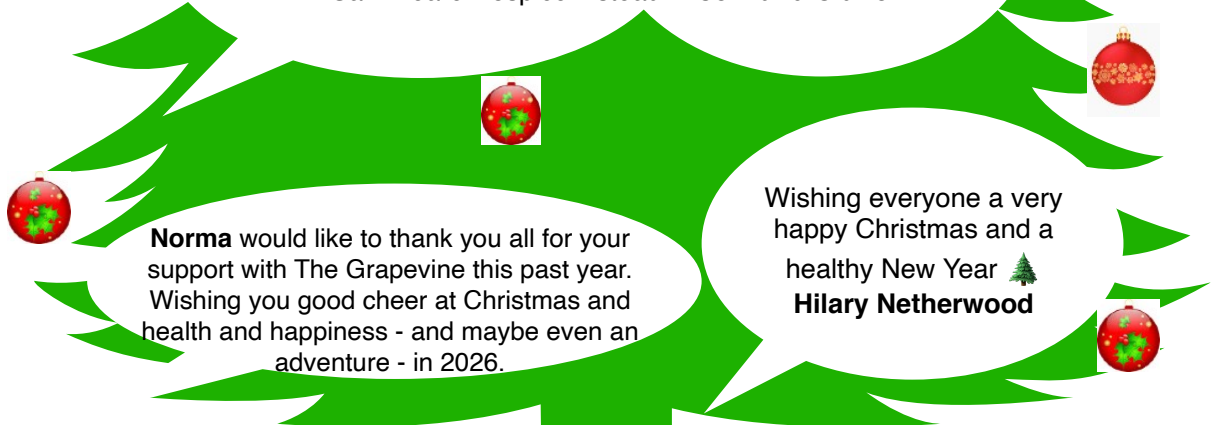
Messy Church sends good
wishes to everyone for
Christmas and for the New
Year ahead.

David and Mavis Netherwood

send greetings and good wishes
to all at St Andrew's for a
blessed Christmas and a happy
New Year.



We wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a
Peaceful New Year as we move into a new phase of
the Church's life. We are not sending cards this
year, but have made a donation to the Woking and
Sam Beare Hospice instead. **Jem and Claire**



Norma would like to thank you all for your
support with The Grapevine this past year.
Wishing you good cheer at Christmas and
health and happiness - and maybe even an
adventure - in 2026.

Wishing everyone a very
happy Christmas and a
healthy New Year 🌲
Hilary Netherwood



FLOWER POWER

God gave us memories so that we might have roses in December.

J M Barrie

Here is a selection of the lovely floral tributes that we have enjoyed over the past two months.

***If you feel you can help with distribution, please speak to Claire, Irene or Moira.
Your offer would be most welcome!***



26 October - Anne Fitzgerald



2 November - the family of Edith Pearce
In her memory



9 November - Remembrance Sunday



16 November - Christina



23 November - Michael Hodgson
For his mother



STRATUS CHRISTMAS CONCERT Thursday 18 December - 12 noon for 12.30 pm

Join us at St Andrew's for a special lunchtime concert with Stratus - the piano trio that many of you know and love. With Zacc and Nat back from China for the holidays, this is a wonderful chance to welcome the band home and enjoy an hour of uplifting music in the heart of the festive season.

You'll hear a mix of reflective favourites and winter warmers, including songs from their brand new album *Half the World Away*.

Drinks served from 12 noon

Concert begins at 12:30pm (approx one hour, no interval)

All are welcome - we'd love to see you there!

FOR SALE: Panashe Wadawareva grew up in the society of masters with his uncle Bernard Matemera, Francis Mugavazi, Brighton Sango and others. He creates sculptures of birds that are popular for their contemporary approach and expert execution. Many of his lovely sculptures are of cormorants, also known as rain birds, for their ability to predict rain. He thematically explores love, unity and peace through



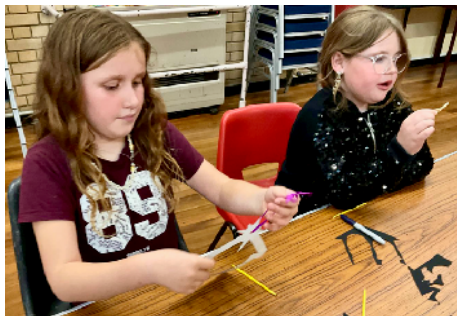
form. A smaller example of his work carved from green opaline, a prized stone found in Chiweshe, two hours north of Harare, is on display in the Gateway. In the light, the piece shimmers and looks translucent. Panashe (right), with his wife Penina, son Kupakwashe and daughter Ruvarashe, hopes to receive £125 but a fair offer would be accepted. The piece would make a superb unique Christmas present and I suspect a London gallery would charge several times this amount. Panashe said he would use sales money to grow small shrubs to sell as it is very difficult making a living from sculpting. More sculptures from ArtPeace are expected late January but if this piece remains unsold at the year end, I will take it to the Southwark Cathedral shop. **JS**





As always in November we provide Christmas-based activities, the reason being the Service of Lessons and Carols takes place on the third Sunday in December. I wasn't sure if anyone would come as our regulars had all been in church in the morning, but no, after a quick change of clothes into something more suitable for 'Messy' church we had nine children!

Activities included making candles using bees wax, painting lanterns which Margaret had put together for them, stained glass lanterns, scratch picture and Christmas tree baubles. As always, we provided cakes to ice and made Krispy cakes to provide a bed for Baby Jesus, using a jelly baby.



We watched the Chatterbox video of the Nativity, sang carols and joined together for some food.

Anne Fitzgerald

CHARITY APPEALS

The church seems to do most of its charity appeals from the autumn to the end of the year – apart from Christian Aid Week!

HARVEST FESTIVAL

A large volume of food was collected during the service and put into the Food Bank's shed for sorting out the next day. Apart from that, you have donated £72.50 to the Food Bank, including Gift Aid.

SHOEBOX SUNDAY



A number of boxes were filled and delivered that afternoon to the first stop on their journey to Eastern Europe: Woking URC. You have also donated £346.25 including Gift Aid towards the on-going work of Link to Hope.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Our chosen charity, Combat Stress, the veteran's mental health charity based just outside Leatherhead, has received £237.50 including Gift Aid from you.

GIFT SERVICE - 14 DECEMBER

The Gift Service will include gifts of new toys and clothing to be used by N/E Assessment Team Surrey Family Services (the first point of call for families in urgent need, such as a parent with children who are suddenly homeless, with little or no funds and no hand luggage) but is also an opportunity, if you wish, to donate money for on-going support. This is used by the service to buy vouchers that can be given to needy families at times of crisis over the coming year.

The chosen charity for the Christmas services is Cure International. Many of you will have heard the story of its aims and progress when Caroline Gardner's son, Rick, came to speak to us in August.

The Treasurer will be pleased to receive your donations, which can be made by:

- a) bank transfer to the church's bank account, indicating which charity it is destined for;
- b) cheque made out to "St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Walton and Weybridge";
- c) cash.

Please put your cheque/cash in an envelope marked appropriately and place it in the offertory plate back the back of the church. This can be done in advance if you are not going to be in church on a particular date. The Treasurer will then add Gift Aid to your personal donation (making it worth 25% more to the charity) and your gift will then be included in the total payment made by the church.

Jem Ward



Tribulations of a Treasurer – Chapter 6



I wrote items in 2024 for the Grapevine about my experiences in getting rid of the church's landline telephone. Here is yet another tale, related, as usual, in a rather fanciful way.

As you know, I don't write about things which go smoothly.....

The church's elders and officers continue to look for ways of cutting costs, whilst trying to maintain standards. They have been bravely trying to get a smart meter fitted for the church and hall electricity supply over the past six years..... An engineer would arrive from Firm A, suck their breath in through their teeth and declare the equivalent of "Oh, no, guvn'r, I can't fit one to this system" followed by advice that we needed to talk to the engineer from Firm B, a different firm involved in the process, because of the age of the church's system. Firm B's representative would tell us that we need to speak to Firm C's representative, who would refer us back to Firm A..... (*You will remember the meaning of the word "Kafka-esque" from my last article.....*)

This eventually culminated in a request for an assessment by an independent electrician to prove that our system could have its fuses changed from 150 amps to 100 amps strength.

We commissioned a report from our regular electrician, which said, after a comprehensive inspection, that the system needed to be left as it was. We sent this, along with a photo of the meter, to Our Electricity Supplier (henceforth "OES") at the beginning of July.

Complete radio silence ensued.

At the beginning of November, 2024, I e-mailed OES to ask to be the chief contact for the account. I explained that, not only did we not have a smart meter, we had also not had a working meter for the past twelve months and we therefore owed them an indeterminate amount of money. I asked for a contact telephone number, so that I might explain the situation.

The next day, they left three answerphone messages on the former Church Secretary's 'phone, despite the fact that she had told them several times that she was no longer the contact and hadn't been since the formation of the new church two years previously..... (*You can partly see their reasoning – I might have been anybody not associated with the church, trying to get in and breach its security.*)

The day after that, I spoke to a young lady, allegedly "somewhere in OES" – who was, I suspect, working for a smart-meter installations booking firm which we shall call "IBF", in a call centre in South Africa. I explained that the meter fitting was not a straight-forward one, so she referred to her supervisor to see what they thought, once I had sent her a photo of our meter – that same one that had been sent to OES in July. She was advised that the job could be done, so we set a date for ten days hence. (*Interestingly, the devotional tract for the day started at James 5:7 "Be patient, therefore, beloved".....*)

A mere five days later, someone else from the same organisation 'phoned to make an appointment. I said that we already had one and the conversation ended. An hour later, I had an email saying the original appointment had been cancelled.....

I therefore called them and was told that the energy supplier had cancelled the appointment, because we needed to have a CT metering system installed.

No, me neither!

A quick search on the Web told me that CT is a Current Transformer and is essential for the accurate billing of customers in commercial settings particularly of the size and **potential** power demand of the church and hall.

Meanwhile, the former Church Secretary was fending off innumerable emails from OES. She finally had to threaten them with data protection legislation, as the matter was no longer her concern and they had missed “opportunities uncounsed” to correct their own records.....

I ‘phoned OES and a very helpful lady agreed with the diagnosis, took relevant details and sent them to the specialist team who install CT meters. During the conversation, she had confirmed receipt of the independent electrician’s report, which made me wonder why I was chasing them in the middle of November when this should have been obvious to them at the beginning of July and prodded them into action.....

“Be patient, therefore, beloved”.....

Over the next few days, I was emailed by the OES team dealing with such issues. After I had sent a flurry of photos of the meter and its environs, I was advised that I should ‘phone UK Power Networks (henceforth “UKPN”). *(They look after the physical aspects of the supply system; OES look after the co-ordination of the supply and the billing. It is somewhat like Network Rail looking after train tracks and South Western Railway providing train services.)*

I ‘phoned the number I had been given and was advised that the best thing would be to put the information in an email. So, I did, with the set of photos attached and a request for a range of appointment dates included.

“Be patient, therefore, beloved”.....

The following week, I got a call from a very sensible lady at UKPN, who wondered if we could ask the electrician to run a test of the consumption of power in the church over a whole week to see what level of electricity consumption we actually had. Her argument was that a CT metering system would be expensive for us to have put in, whereas, if our power demand was at the lower level that she expected, a standard meter could be installed at no cost. *(This was my aim in the first place, as I wondered why the church would have to pay to have a replacement meter installed, just so that OES could charge us money for the power we use – surely that is their problem and not ours?)*

However, “mine not to reason why”.....

Our electrician visited again in February, 2025, set up the test to run for a week. He found that, if every single item of electrical equipment in the entire building were on at the same time – ALL the lights, ALL the electric heaters, ALL the kitchen equipment – we would need to use 200 amps fuses. *(I pause a moment to let you consider how often that actually happens, but “them’s the rules”.....)* Our general usage was about 70 amps at any one time. But, as we **might** use 200 amps, the upshot was that we would need a CT meter, which would need its own chamber.

Next question: “Where to install it?”

A flurry of emails and ‘phone calls between myself and the lady at UKPN determined that a CT chamber would be too large for the current electricity meter room – it’s the thin room behind the apse. It is entered through the blue door out in the car park near to the minister’s car parking space. We would therefore need to have a chamber built for it on the outside of the church or in the garden. The latter option was rejected as being too intrusive.

By September, 2025, this had been narrowed down to putting it on the outer wall of the church, opposite the minister’s car park space, between the two raised drain lips. This should allow easy connection through the wall to the old site of the electricity meter and the rest of the system.

So, we now had a plan for the chamber and UKPN would deal with the connection from the road outside and OES would deal with the meter – and both would organise the link between the CT meter and the system. As I write, at the end of November, I am casting round for someone to build / install the chamber to contain it.

You're beginning to think the end is in sight, aren't you?!?

Well, it is..... but it might be further away than you think.

The UKPN contract asks for payment for the work by the beginning of February, 2026 and promises to undertake it by the beginning of February, 2027.

"Be patient, therefore, beloved".....

Yes, that's right – sometime in a twelve months long period..... (*As we are a very small fish in a very large pond of demands on their teams' time.*) We must hope that myself and the Property Steward do not decide to a holiday with our respective spouses at the same time, just when UKPN stir themselves into action!

And finally, the on-going curio of the RTS signal.

RTS stands for Radio TeleSwitch. We had been told by OES that we needed to have our meter replaced because the radio frequency it uses to switch between peak and off-peak rates is being switched off. This might result in supply problems.

OES would be contacting us about getting a new meter. (*This was probably the source of the contacts in November from IBF.....*)

We received a flurry of letters from OES in the first half of 2025, advising us that our RTS signal would be switched off in June, rising to a positive frenzy of letters and emails in May.

Do any of you remember Jimmy Edwards playing the headmaster in the 1950s TV series "Whack-O!?" In one episode, he capered around the room after opening a letter, from the football pools company, shouting: "I've won the pools! I've won the pools! And do you know what the best thing about it is? I don't even DO the pools!"

The Property Steward and I suspect that the church's electricity system is so old that it doesn't even use the RTS system!

And even if it does, the meter is broken, so the signal won't be effective..... But, as usual, the left hand of the bureaucracy does not know what the right hand is doing and there is no way of getting them to talk to each other, apparently – yes, I have tried!

Offers to take over the jobs of Property Steward and Treasurer will be very gratefully accepted, so as to reduce the stress levels of the present incumbents and their long-suffering spouses.....

Jem Ward

Prayer Corner

A Meditation for Christmas

There were thousands of babies
born that day
all helpless,
dependent,
needful of love,
warmth,
and sustenance.

Some no doubt did not survive
to see another dawn
their tiny light extinguished
through lack of appropriate care.
Some would grow up to be kings,

queens,
leaders of men,
others slaves,
prostitutes,
beggars,
murderers and thieves.

Most however
would live ordinary lives
among ordinary people
and live and die
whilst the world scarce noticed
their existence.

But not you
Who rose from the ordinary
to the extraordinary,
from stable to cross
and beyond
whilst the world tried its best
to ignore you
and failed.

John Birch
faithandworship.com

After Christmas - A thank-you letter to God - 28 December

Dear God,
I am writing to thank you
For the present you sent me for Christmas.
It was so big and so generous
I shall have to think long and hard
as to how to use it.
Having so much love given to me in one go
Seems quite out of proportion
to what I deserve
but I guess that's all part of the gift.

I might not have been so pleased
If I had been the mother of a baby boy
waiting for Herod's soldiers to catch me
'Rachel weeping for her children'.
If we saw today on TV
or read in the news about
a hundred or so small boys
Slaughtered around Bethlehem
what would we feel about this Christmas present of love?

We call this Holy Innocents' Day.
May we, who are rarely wholly innocent,
be able to help young lives today
being cut short
on our street,
in sectarian slaughter,
in ordinary family homes,
in city brothels
and in bonded labour.

Let your Christmas presence
be my way of making Christmas present
in all your world
for all your people.

Faithfully yours.

(*your own name*)

Carole Elphick
URC Prayer Handbook 2008

A Prayer for the New Year

The star was there in the sky for all to see –
but not everyone saw it.
Just those men with open and enquiring minds.
A bit like the shepherds –
only a few heard the message of the angels
and came to see the baby in the crib.
The rest of the world got on with its work
unaware, blind to the immensity of what was happening.
Save us, Lord, from being so busy
that we don't see the star in the sky,
that we don't hear the angels bringing your message.
Forgive us when we miss the immensity of your incarnation.

open our eyes to the truth and reality of what your birth means,
not just as a Christmas treat, soon to be forgotten,
but as a guiding light for the months of the New Year
and as a message to lead us all the days of our life.

Amen

Brian Hudson
URC Worship Book

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

MORALE BOOSTER: For the past year, artist Charles Fundisi has been recovering from a stroke which affected one side of his body and speech. Fortunately, he is now able to walk and

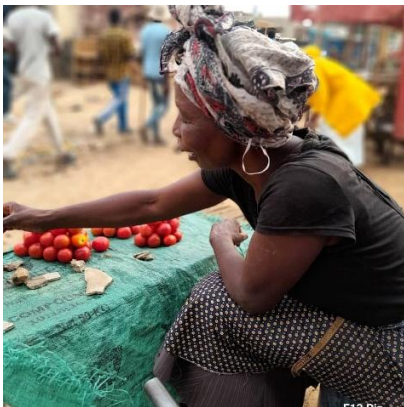


has started carving again but with difficulty - his son helps to 'finish' his work. The hassle of scraping a living depresses him and wife Irene said her husband seems to have forgotten how to smile. However, his whole mood changed when artist Lovemore James recently called to give his friend the proceeds from the



sale of one of his Nativity pieces which will help cover cost of physio. His other Nativity is likely to sell with Christmas almost upon us so Lovemore left a beaming Charles! Life is tough for the artists at the best of times but your purchases lift morale - new pieces are due late January.

SHOPPING: Many of us fill our trolleys at the local supermarket without a thought but some locals struggle - Food Banks, including our own at St Andrew's, Walton and Weybridge, bear



witness to this. I doubt poverty in the UK is anything like that of Zimbabwe. ArtPeace see many extreme cases of hardship daily and brought the following examples to my attention.

Godwin reports: 'Widowed Ellen lives in the sprawling shanty town of Epworth, surviving through vending of vegetables whose meagre proceeds help to send her children to school. Her makeshift house, one of the many thousands in the area, has numerous cracks and needs serious attention. One side has collapsed. As the rain season intensifies, water does not just simply leak - it pours in, and she has to cover herself and the children with plastic sheeting. Scooping out water has become a daily occurrence. With one side of the house gone, little stops mosquitos adding further discomfort to a nightmarish experience'.



IT'S SEED SOWING TIME! Most artists have now prepared their fields following sustainable techniques learned at the recent FFF three day course covered in my last article, and have now received their maize starter packs. Below L to R, Peter Kananji with his pack, Irene (Godfrey's sister) helping with his field and Dickson with son Dexter lending a hand. Dickson said: *'John, I am delighted the process has given me confidence and an understanding that it's all about food security for my family'*. The rains have now started and two days ago, the group received starter packs of **Sugar Beans** (what would we do without Marlow URC), a protein rich vegetable to sow early December as it has a shorter growing season. The success of this new venture depends on attention to detail and much hard work, but done correctly, with decent rainfall, should bolster food security with the bonus of any surplus perhaps realising a modest income.



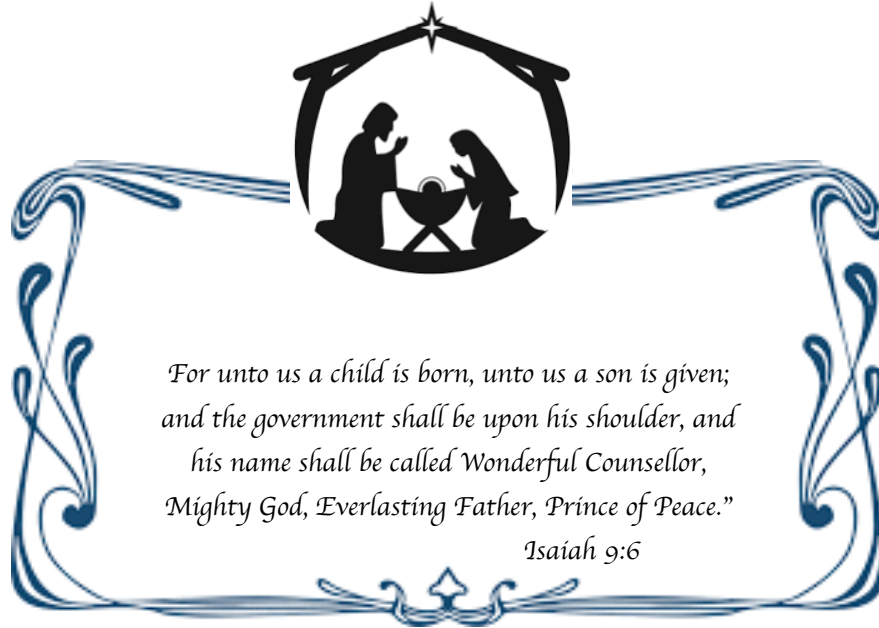
DESPERATION: Mike Masedza said: *'Many women and children resort to scavenging to survive. The woman (below left) carrying sacks is known locally as Granny Stella, who collects old plastic containers to sell to recycling companies. Most Zimbabweans can't afford to buy a bag of maize seed and fertilizer so shopkeepers now sell a cup of seed for \$1 and 2 cups of AN fertiliser for \$1'*.



MANY THANKS
to all the kind
people whose

support kept ArtPeace and friends' heads above water in 2025. They face a bleak Christmas but hopefully all their hard work in the fields plus the knowledge gleaned from the course will reap dividends so I will watch their progress with interest. Should any donations come my way, I will endeavour to share some with their ultra-poor neighbours to make their lives a tad easier over the festive period. Your support reaches many people.

Johnston Simpson



*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and
his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 9:6*

MINISTER (until 21 December)

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Services start at 10.30 am.

Services are currently accessible on Zoom on the third Sunday of the month.

Anyone who wishes to take part in the Zoom service should contact the Church Administrator, who will be able to send them a link to enable easy participation.

You are all most welcome to join us!