

# THE BRIDGE



## Winchmore Hill United Reformed Church January and February, 2024



Our pastoral letter was written by the Synod Moderator for the beginning of the church or liturgical year, the season of Advent before Christmas. Unfortunately it just missed the copy deadline for The Bridge but George's encouragement is important to read at the beginning of the calendar year even though it is expressed in the context of Christmas.

Dear friends,

As I write, it feels like everyone is getting ready, getting ready for Christmas. Christmas Trees going up, cards being written, presents being bought, menus being planned and food being bought. Although sadly, and increasingly, for some they are not able to prepare to celebrate and certainly not in the way they might have hoped. They have a deep concern as to how they can simply heat their homes and feed their families this winter. That is if they even have a home to live and eat in.

In the past I have had the privilege of volunteering at a winter night shelter. What struck me was that everyone's story was different as to how they found themselves homeless. It taught me not to make assumptions. Some had been estranged from their families, got behind with their rents and evicted, couldn't afford to put together a deposit despite working, experienced broken relationships and so the stories could go on.

Some churches will be hosting winter night shelters, arranging warm hubs and providing hot drinks and meals to not just those who are homeless, but also to the lonely and vulnerable. As Christians we cannot close our eyes and ears to the needs around us as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. We cannot welcome Jesus and shun our neighbour. As Jesus himself said 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

The nature of Jesus' birth highlights who these brothers and sisters are. Jesus himself was born homeless with parents who were dependent on the charity of others to give them shelter and food. The story worsens as the family had to flee and become refugees in Egypt. Yes, Jesus was a refugee! When we fail to look out for those in need, we are hurting God.

Today our hearts and the heart of God is breaking looking at what is happening in the place of Jesus' birth. The violence and suffering in Israel and Palestine make us stop and think, pray and act even as we prepare for Christmas. In our sanitised Christmas we usually miss out the story of the massacre of the innocents just after Jesus's birth which is recounted in Matthew's Gospel. But we can't turn a blind eye to the massacre of the innocents in the current conflict.

Martin Leckebusch in his variant of a popular carol, 'O West Bank town of Bethlehem', asks the question, "How violently, how violently the hope of peace is riven; can God impart to these torn hearts the blessings of God's heaven? Who now recalls God coming to this dark world of sin?" As Christians we believe that peace is possible, the hungry can be fed and the homeless find shelter. And we can work together to achieve it and thus truly remember and celebrate the God who came to earth as a baby to transform a troubled world.

I would like to wish you peace at Christmas as you celebrate and in the new year as you seek to play your part in bringing about transformation in this world.

Yours in Christ,

*George*



**SUNDAY WORSHIP in Church begins at 10.30 followed by time to chat over light refreshments.**

### **Sunday 7th January Epiphany Sunday**

United Reformed Church Digital Worship compiled by Rev Andy Braunston, URC Minister for Digital Worship. The sermon will be delivered by Andy digitally; the service will be led in Church by Rev Jim Gascoigne who will celebrate Holy Communion.

### **Sunday 14th January**

Lay Preacher Anna Erikson, a member of Palmers Green URC, will visit WH URC to lead worship for the first time.

### **The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

*You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:27)*

*During this week there will be the opportunity to pray together in each other's churches for about half an hour to forty minutes each morning, alternating start times between 08.30 and 09.30 as shown below. All are very welcome to join in, either in church or, in solidarity, wherever you are.*

**THURSDAY 18<sup>th</sup> January at 8.30am : Winchmore Hill Baptist Church**

*Compton Road (Green Lanes end), N21 3PD*

**FRIDAY 19<sup>th</sup> January at 9.30am : Winchmore Hill United Reformed Church**

*Compton Road (Hoppers Road end) N21 3NU*

**SATURDAY 20<sup>th</sup> January at 8.30am : St Monica's RC Church, Palmers Green**

*Stonard Road (Junction with Green Lanes) N13 4DJ*

**MONDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> January at 9.30 am : Palmers Green United Reformed Church**

*Junction of Fox Lane & Burford Gardens, London N13 4AL*

**TUESDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> January at 8.30am : Grange Park Methodist Church**

*Old Park Ridings*

**WEDNESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> January at 9.30am : St John's Church of England, Palmers Green**

*Parish Centre Bourne Hill Palmers Green N13 4DA*

**THURSDAY 25<sup>th</sup> January at 8:30am : St Paul's Church of England, Winchmore Hill**

*Church Hill N21 1JA (Patronal Festival)*

**Winter weather venue until 24th March, the Chaplin Parlour. In Church on Easter Day, 31st March.**

**Sunday 14th January** (in Church) Lay Preacher Anna Erikson, a member of Palmers Green URC, will visit WH URC to lead worship for the first time.

**Sunday 21st January**

URC Digital Worship compiled by Rev Andy Braunston, URC Minister for Digital Worship. The sermon will be delivered by Andy digitally; the service will be led in Church by Rev Jim Gascoigne.

**Sunday 28th January**

Dr Paul Ashitey, former Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner and Elder at Palmers Green will Lead us in worship.

**February 2024**

**4th** This service with Laura Marlow from Lancaster Road includes Holy Communion

**11th** Lisa Hamblin from Bush Hill Park

**14th Ash Wednesday services will be publicised in church**

**18th First in Lent** Evodian Fonyanga from High Cross, Tottenham

**25th Second in Lent** Tony Davis also from High Cross but lives locally.

A shared service with Palmers Green, at Winchmore Hill URC.

**March 2024**

**3rd Third Sunday in Lent** A shared service at 11.00 at Palmers Green URC

**Churches Together 'Launch Lent Event'**

Tuesday 20th February at 19.30 at Winchmore Hill URC

Themes integral to Lent will be at the heart of worshipful vignettes led by local church leaders.

**Maundy Thursday**

28th March - services will be publicised in church.

**Good Friday**

**Worship and Walk of Witness**

29th March 10.15 at WH URC Rev Jim to conduct, Rev Ebenezer to preach

11.30 Walk of Witness starts from The Green



**Praying together** for the churches and the needs of our area.  
**Palmers Green, Winchmore Hill and Grange Park**

Normally first & third Tuesdays:  
9th & 30th (note change) January, 6th & 20th February,  
10.30-11.15 (Zoom link below)

**Forum meeting** at 19.30 on **Tuesday 30th February**  
by Zoom, link available from Jim. Everyone welcome.

**Zoom Link** for prayer together (Meeting ID: 746 8020 4904 Passcode: 8zq1F7)  
<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74680204904?pwd=TjJhQnBIYVVuUzNRY3ZXQjJ6MHEzQT09>

## NEWS AND OTHER DIARY DATES

### Carols by Candlelight

This popular event is where Christmas begins for many and there were over 100 people of every age in church, a joy to behold! The candles and just the right amount of mains lighting created a cosy atmosphere but, unfortunately not enough for wide-angle photos. However, Ian 'snapped' some of our happy faces. It was good to welcome back Anton Stephans, X Factor finalist from Holy Trinity Brompton and 'Tarantino Live' at London's Riverside Studios. Accompanied by Paul Schofield, he led our singing and contributed a solo rendition of 'O Holy Night' and a duet, 'Peace on Earth'.

The story of Christmas was introduced and concluded by familiar Bible passages but the story line was unfolded by a dozen voices representing the main characters. Andrea and David had located and abridged 'God Is With Us – Everywhere!' by Fay Rowland, a script which was serious at times and very funny at times.

We took time to acknowledge the current, stark realities of the Holy Land and other places, especially because the narrative of the Holy Family is romanticised by Victorian poetry and traditions. Our hopeful prayers for peace were deeply sincere. Donations amounting to £300 were raised for Crisis as well as a contribution from the gift stall arranged by Andrea. Thanks to everyone, including the unassuming hospitality team for providing sherry and soft drinks with mince pies!



*Shepherds in the fields rehearsing*



*Hark! The herald angels*



*Lo, we saw a wondrous light*

### Elders

Thursday 8th February is the first meeting planned for this year, if needed, at 19.00 in the Chaplin Parlour. (Then on 14th March.)

### Local Area Group

The Steering Committee will meet by Zoom on Tuesday 20th February 2024 at 19.30. Everyone will be welcome if interested, Jim as Secretary and Cliff as our representative will be able to share the link on request.

### Copy Deadline

It's a hit-or-miss affair finding time to compile the Bridge ready for the first Sunday in the month but, nevertheless, the editor has the cheek to ask for news, fliers ... anything of interest by the weekend before the end of February, April, June ... please.

### Auditor required

We need urgently an 'Auditor' to examine annual accounts. Please let Cliff (or Jim) have contact details for yourself or someone you think might be willing to consider this.

## ECO-CHURCH

### Greening 2024

A Happy New Year from the Synod Green Team! We would like your help to make 2024 a Green One – in our homes, churches and communities. A Rocha (the Christian Conservation Group that runs the Eco Church Programme) has produced a downloadable easy Eco Tips Calendar. As the A Rocha Team says, it offers ‘simple yet impactful tips per month to make a positive difference in your home and community, to benefit the planet and future generations and draw you closer to God’.

Small actions can lead to significant impact; the calendar focuses on easy-to-implement tips, ensuring that everyone can contribute, regardless of their lifestyle or schedule. Download the calendar in link here: [ARUK-Eco-Tips-Calendar-2024.pdf \(arocha.org.uk\)](https://arocha.org.uk/ARUK-Eco-Tips-Calendar-2024.pdf).

**The focus for January** is making ‘enjoying nature’ our priority – after all if we enjoy nature we will want to protect and care for it. The A Rocha Team writes: Make ‘enjoying nature’ your priority. From bird watching to writing about or drawing something that inspires you in nature, growing your own fruit or vegetables, or exploring an area of outstanding natural beauty in the UK, be sure to fall in love with nature in a new way this coming year and allow it to lead your thoughts towards God our Creator. Further ideas can be found at [www.arocha.org.uk/ideas-to-enjoy-nature/](https://www.arocha.org.uk/ideas-to-enjoy-nature/)

Do put the date of the **2024 Synod Green Day** in your diaries – it is on **8 June 2024 at Vine Church Ilford**, with the theme ‘**Diversity - Celebration and Solidarity**’. If you would like to know more about the Synod’s Environmental Policy or the work of the Synod Green Team e-mail Terry Hinks on [minister.trinity.coresend@gmail.com](mailto:minister.trinity.coresend@gmail.com)

#### Church Secretary:

All enquiries should be made either by telephone to the Vestry answering service on 020 8882 4776 or by e-mail to [WHURC@btconnect.com](mailto:WHURC@btconnect.com)

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