

Jan-Feb
2024

St John's
United Reformed Church

Record

Somerset & Mowbray Roads, New Barnet, Herts., EN5 1RH

Light Amid Darkness

What do *The Carol of the Bells*, the lamppost in C.S.Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the opening of John's gospel all have in common? You may well answer 'Christmas', which is true: the Bible reading from John's gospel often comes at the culmination of a service of lessons and carols, *Carol of the Bells* can be heard on the radio frequently during Advent, and C.S.Lewis's story describes the fictional country of Narnia where 'it is always winter but never Christmas'. But is there something more we can discover from these associations?

Let's start with Narnia: Lucy, youngest of the four Pevensie children sent to stay with their uncle during the war, playing hide and seek with her siblings, conceals herself in a wardrobe; but, pushing through all the fur coats, finds herself in the magical snow covered world of Narnia where, in the middle of a wood, is a lighted lamppost. Narnia is suffering the merciless tyranny of the White Witch who has made it perpetually winter. The lamppost is a living thing. No one lights it, no one extinguishes it, and it burns without fuel. The White Witch's winter hasn't snuffed it out. It is a beacon in the face of the dark, cold spell that lies on the land.



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Trusting God by:

Walking the way of Jesus
Putting faith into practice
Valuing all people equally

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

(John 1:5)

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Carol of the Bells can be heard everywhere at Christmas, whether sung or used as background music to television dramas and entertainment shows. It has an interesting history because it did not become a Christmas carol until 1936 when Peter Wilhousky, an American composer of Russian descent, wrote English lyrics to the existing melody. It has been popular in America ever since. But its origins are from Ukrainian folk music where it is known as *Shchedryk*. In 1916, the Ukrainian composer, Mykola Leontovich, made a choral arrangement which became very popular in that country. It is a song for New Year which tells of a swallow flying into a household to proclaim the plentiful year that the family will have. *Shchedryk* means 'bountiful'.

Listening to the Children's Choir of Ukraine at Grand Central Station, New York singing the *Carol of the Bells* version in December 2022, Bridget Brink, US Ambassador to Ukraine, described their beautiful performance as 'light amid darkness'.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The lamppost that guides the Pevensie children through the forest in Narnia - a light in the darkness - first appears in *The Magician's Nephew* where C.S. Lewis describes how the White Witch uses the bar of a London lamppost as a weapon to strike down a policeman. In the next chapter *The Founding of Narnia*, that bar grows into the lamppost that is so helpful to the children. Remember what the prophet Isaiah said: 'They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' (Isaiah 2:4)

The Winter Solstice has passed, although mornings and evenings will still be dark for some time to come. We may justifiably feel that not just our nation but the whole world is currently living through dark times. But the beginning of John's gospel gives us hope.

The light still shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out. (JB Phillips translation)

Editors

When the world was dark

When the world was dark and the city was quiet, you came. You crept in beside us. And no-one knew. Only the few who dared to believe that God might do something different. Will you do the same this Christmas, Lord?

Will you come into the darkness of today's world, not the friendly darkness as when sleep rescues us from tiredness, but the fearful darkness, in which people have stopped believing that war will end or that food will come or that politics will change or that anyone cares? Will you come into that darkness and do something different to save your people from death and despair? Will you come into the quietness of this community, not the friendly quietness as when lovers hold hands, but the fearful silence when the phone has not rung, the letter has not come, the friendly voice no longer speaks, the doctor's face says it all? Will you come into that darkness, and do something different, not to distract, but to embrace your people?

And will you come into the dark corners and the quiet places of our lives? We ask this not because we are guilt-ridden, but because the fullness our lives long for, depends on us being as open and vulnerable to you as you were to us, when you came naked, and trusting human hands to hold their maker. Will you come into our lives, if we open them to you and do something different? When the world was dark and the city was quiet you came. You crept in beside us.

Do the same this Christmas, Lord. Do the same this Christmas.
Amen.

(From the Iona Community. Read by Alison Bond in the Christmas Day service)



The Light of the World
Holman Hunt



THANK YOU!



A very big thank you to everyone who supported our two recent emergency appeals through Christian Aid:

- **Libyan Floods Appeal** More than 11,300 people are known to have died and many more went missing after the catastrophic Mediterranean storm burst two dams and flooded the eastern port city of Derna. Christian Aid is working with Dan Church Aid, its Act Alliance partner, that has a long-established presence in Libya, to send emergency supplies for the most pressing needs.
- **Middle East Crisis Appeal** Over 20,000 people are now known to have been killed and over 1.9 million displaced after the escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. There is a catastrophic humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. The established partners of Christian Aid are responding as best they can, under intense pressure, providing mobile bathrooms in four shelters and mattresses, and medicines and emergency food from a community kitchen, to displaced people in southern Gaza.

All your donations will have made a huge difference to the current conditions of those affected.

Christian Aid's Prayer for the Middle East

God, hear our prayers for peace in the Middle East.

May all people in the region be protected, safe from harm.

We pray that this crisis will end now, with no further loss of life.

God, may the injured and distressed know your healing presence.

May the powerful and the decision-makers follow the paths of justice, mercy and peace.

We pray for recognition of the dignity and value of every life.

May the clamour of violence cease, replaced by the beating of swords into ploughshares.

God, in your name, **Amen.**

Alison Bond



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WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

You are invited - men and women - to the New and East Barnet Branch World Day of Prayer Annual Service to be held at 2.30pm on Saturday 2nd March 2024 at Holy Trinity C of E Church, Lyonsdown Road, New Barnet.

The service is prepared this year by Palestinian women on the text 'I beg you, bear with one another in love'. The service will last about forty five minutes and be followed by a time for socialising and refreshment.

Do attend. Palestine has been working on this service for a number of years before the recent worrying and dreadful troubles. Let us hope and pray for a peaceful end to hostilities.

Marjorie O'Connor (Your WDP Representative)

Photo Gallery



The second Advent Sunday candle is often known as the 'Bethlehem Candle': it remained unlit to serve as a constant reminder that we stand in solidarity with all those who are suffering in the Holy Land.



Brenda Sandford lighting the Advent Candles.



At the Christmas Day service all the Elders were invited to light the candles as a thank you for their support during the year.



The candlelit Carol Service.



Remembrance Sunday poppy display.

Community Garden



Over the last year work has begun on a new community garden space where the nursery play area used to be. In the spring the old shed left by the nursery school was repaired and new roofing felt added. Then the rubber play surface was cleaned by willing volunteers in the rain! This was then taken away to be recycled.

In the autumn, the contractors built a new access ramp and handrail from the large hall and replaced the fence and added a new gate.

November came and some of the older fence panels along the boundary were replaced and some fruit trees and shrubs were planted. A number of volunteers helped to move four tons of topsoil and compost to the planting areas. A new pond has been dug and filled and Tony Shepherd blessed it!

A mix of pollinator friendly seed, plants and bulbs has also been added.

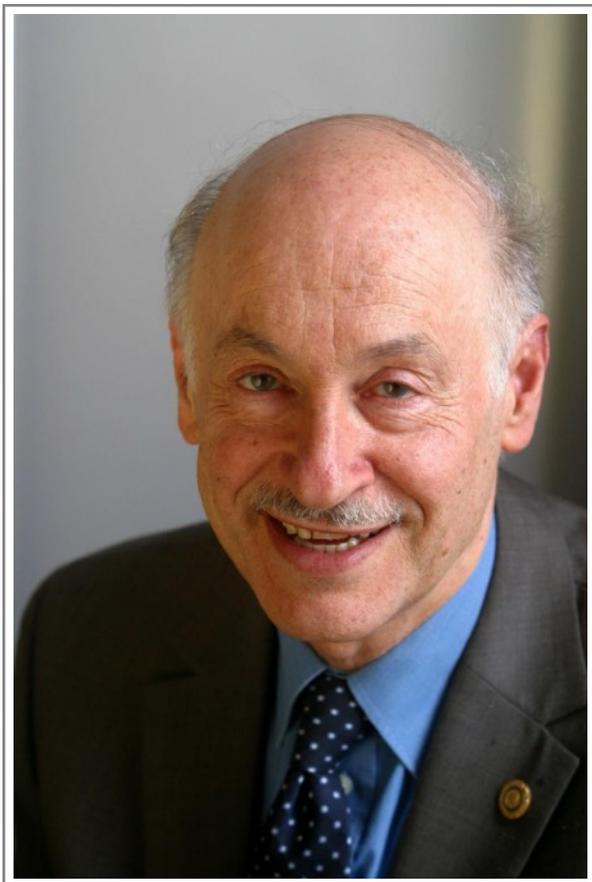
We hope this new space will be ready for the Fellowship garden party in the summer!

Heather Elsdon



Fellowship: **Lieutenancy & the Monarch**

Stuart Nagler, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire



Stuart Nagler was the speaker at the November Fellowship meeting. In April 2009 he received a letter from Lady Verulam, the then Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, inviting him to become a Deputy Lieutenant of the County. He looked into what was involved in Lieutenancy and the duties he would have to undertake. Stuart found that every county has a Lord Lieutenant, assisted by a number of deputies, who act as the Sovereign's local representative in the county. The office dates back to 1535 and was instituted by Henry VIII, to keep order in each county and later, in 1569, deputies were also engaged. Having done his research into what was required, Stuart was pleased to accept the invitation and very quickly received a letter of approval from our late Queen Elizabeth. The current Lord Lieutenant is Robert Voss, whose background was in the mining and metal industry, and is supported in his duties by forty Deputies, including Stuart Nagler. Robert has sought to modernise the Lieutenancy by giving talks to schools and, following on from the terrible events on October 7th in Israel, the Lord

Lieutenant set up an interfaith panel, contacting over fifty faith leaders to engage in dialogue and to help with community cohesion at a very difficult time. A Walk for Peace around the lake in St Albans was also planned.

The duties of the Lord Lieutenant are many and varied; the most important would be organising royal visits to Hertfordshire, escorting and supporting the royal visitor. When royals visit, they like to carry out two or three events in the county. The Lieutenants can nominate folk in the county for awards such as the BEM (British Empire Medal) and recommend people to be invited to the royal garden parties. When anyone in the county is due a 100th birthday card from the monarch, a Deputy will deliver the card to the recipient and arrangements for the holding of Citizenship Ceremonies, which are held regularly, are part of their duties. They receive no payment for these duties and they must be strictly non-political. The watchword in any circumstance is to consider what the monarch would do.

Stuart concluded by speaking very warmly of his high regard for our late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, of her dedication in serving the country and the Commonwealth for over seventy years. He would continue serving under King Charles III.

Jean Davies

Fellowship:

Crime and Punishment: Diane Burstein

There was another interesting evening for members of the Fellowship when, in December, Diane Burstein, a Blue Badge Tour Guide, delivered a virtual guided walk, from the Tower of London to Middle Temple.

The Tower, which lies just outside the City of London, is guarded by both Army and Police, and has a moat which was drained in the 19th century. When visiting, Diane said we should look out for the dungeons and the execution spot – where there is a memorial to those many who were beheaded in the Tower, amongst them Sir Thomas More in 1535.



The Guildhall

[Emperorzurg123, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons]

We then moved on to the Guildhall, whose history dates back to Roman times. From 1411 it was the centre of city government. Many trials were conducted there; one of the most high profile was that of Lady Jane Grey (Nine Days' Queen) who was accused and convicted of high treason.

Continuing our virtual walk we reached the Central Criminal Courts (the Old Bailey) built on the site of Newgate Prison at the corner of Newgate Street, and Old Bailey Street. Newgate's history dates back to 1188 and was in use until 1902. During that time, it was extended and re-built many times and in 1780 was attacked and destroyed during the Gordon Riots. Once described as a prototype of hell it was a very harsh place for prisoners, amongst who were Daniel Defoe, Oscar Wilde and Ben Johnson.

Diane's walk through the City passed so many fascinating places, including the site of the old Bridewell Prison near St Bride's Church. Bridewell was originally one of Edward VI's palaces which he gave to the City of London in 1553 for prison use. It closed in 1855. We heard about Cold Bath Fields, a house of correction in Clerkenwell - another harsh prison where prisoners exercised on a treadmill. Cold Baths closed in 1885 and in 1889 the Post Office developed the site as the mail sorting office we know as Mount Pleasant. Then to Snow Hill; in 1839 the City of London Police Force was formed, opening a police station there. This has subsequently been sold and re-developed as a hotel.

Then we came to Smithfield; in recent times a meat market but over past centuries a place of hangings and burnings of Protestant martyrs. We then looked at the two churches nearby: St Bartholomew the Great and St Bartholomew the Less, both founded over nine hundred years ago. Moving on we passed the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand, which house the most senior courts of the country and which was opened in 1882 by Queen Victoria.

Diane concluded her talk by taking us to the Inns of Middle Temple, another place with a long history dating back to 1388. Today this still serves the legal profession in providing education and accommodation for lawyers.

Diane spoke with such enthusiasm and knowledge of the history of the City of London and its buildings and events. I have tried just to give you a flavour of a very enjoyable evening.

Jean Davies

St John's URC Women's Group

The St John's women's daytime group, which started meeting in June 2023 for coffee and sometimes lunch, has been running successfully ever since. On Wednesday 29th November a joint Christmas meal was held, at the Queen's Arms, with men invited. This event included church members, St John's Fellowship members and other friends and was most enjoyable. At the end a free cup of tea or coffee and hot mince pie was provided. Thirty-four people enjoyed a good lunch, good company, and good hospitality. Rosemary Paul and John Knight both celebrated a birthday that day and were given a cake plus candle each and had 'Happy Birthday' sung to them.

Those attending the daytime group are most grateful to Marjorie for her excellent planning and organisation. If you would like to try it, do have a word with Marjorie, or just turn up - you would be most welcome. It is not necessary to attend regularly!

This is the programme of dates and venues scheduled for 2024. More details from Marjorie.

Tue 30th Jan. 11am	Open Door , Christ Church, St Albans Rd., Barnet
Mon 26th Feb. 11am	Agust Café , 1289 High Road, N20 9HS
Wed 27th Mar. 11am	Vibe Café , 6 Greenhill Parade, EN5 1ES
Tue 23rd Apr. 11am	Rise & Shine Café , 2 Exchange Buildings, High Street, EN5 5SY <u>Men also invited</u>
Mon 20th May 11am	Whetstone Café , 1367 High Rd, N20 9HH
Fri 28th Jun. 11am	Noel Café , East Barnet Road, opp. Sainsbury's and by Lord Kitchener
Wed 31st July 11am	Open Door Café , Christ Church, St Albans Rd., EN5 4LA
Tue 27th Aug. 11am	Agust Café , 1289 High Road, N20 9HS
Mon 30th Sep. 11am	Sophies , 3 Cat Hill, by East Barnet Vets & 307 bus stop
Tue 29th Oct. 11am	Rise & Shine Café , 2 Exchange Buildings, High Street, EN5 5SY
Wed 29th Nov. 12:30pm TBC	Christmas Lunch at The Queen's Arms , next to Everyman Cinema <u>Men also invited</u>
Mon 30th Dec. 11am	Agust Café , 1289 High Road, N20 9HS

Marjorie O'Connor (0208 445 6580 or 07515 910514)
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St John's URC Fellowship Programme for 2024

St John's URC Fellowship welcomes everyone, irrespective of faith or beliefs. We provide a friendly environment where people can meet and enjoy an interesting talk. Members unable to attend in person may request a Zoom link.

Our monthly talks cover a wide variety of subjects, with many being inspirational personal stories.
Meetings start at 8:00pm

Date	Talk, Subject or Activity	Speaker
January 17	7:45pm AGM - 8:00pm The Adventures of an Estate Agent	James Higgs
February 21	An illustrated talk on the City Churches of London	Joe Studman
March 20	Queen Elizabeth – A Life in Flowers	Nick Dobson
April 17	An Active Response to Climate Change	Terry Over
May 15	A Thousand Miles up the Nile: The Story of Amelia Edwards	Lorna Oakes
June 19	Outing: River Lee Boat Trip with afternoon tea	
July 17	Desert Island Discs with Roz Douglas – hosted by David Porter	
Saturday August 17	Fellowship Garden Party in St John's Community Garden Starting at 1:30pm	
September 18	The Life of Elvis Presley	Mike Noronho
October 16	Dinosaurs	Tony Hurford
November 20	Marie Curie Charity	Tracy Annunziato
Saturday December 7	Christmas Concert – returning by popular demand Art Deco Orchestra – Dance Band. <u>Starting at 7pm</u>	

Annual membership £10.00. Entrance £2.00 inc. refreshments. Visitors £5.00.
 Talks also available via Zoom for members. Invite your friends to join us.

Thanks to these people for providing flowers on the following Sundays:

Ann Bannerman — 5th November

Pauline Wishart — 12th November

Alison Bond — 3rd December



St John's Men's Group

St John's Men's Group meets at 8.30pm (8.00pm on Supper Evenings) once a month at Ye Olde Mitre Inne, Barnet High Street, Ye Olde Monken Holt on Hadley Common, or at The Railway Bell in New Barnet. It provides an opportunity for all men, with or without any local URC connections, to meet informally and in relaxing surroundings, to discuss anything topical and of interest. Four joint men's/women's evenings have also been arranged during the year.

This is the programme of dates and venues scheduled for 2024.

Wed 24th January	from 8:30pm	Ye Olde Mitre Inne
Mon 19th February	from 8:30pm	Ye Olde Mitre Inne - Joint Men/Women Evening
Mon 18th March	from 8:30pm	Olde Monken Holt
Wed 24th April	from 8:00pm	The Railway Bell - Supper Evening
Wed 29th May	from 8:30pm	Ye Olde Mitre Inne - Joint Men/Women Evening
Wed 26th June	from 8:30pm	Ye Olde Mitre Inne
Mon 22nd July	from 8:30pm	Olde Monken Holt
Wed 14th August	from 8:30pm	Ye Olde Mitre Inne - Joint Men/Women Evening
Wed 25th September	from 8:30pm	Ye Olde Mitre Inne
Thur 24th Oct.	from 8:30pm	Ye Olde Mitre Inne
Wed 4th December	from 8:30pm	Ye Olde Mitre Inne

Please note your diaries, and if you know of any anyone else who might be interested in joining us please feel free to invite them along too.

Malcolm Bond

Calendar of Events

The Together in Barnet Night Shelter is being hosted on Saturday evenings through to Sunday mornings in St John's and St Peter's halls up until 10-11 February.

JANUARY

Tuesday 9	7:45pm	Elders' Meeting
Thursday 11	9:30am	Mainly Music
Friday 12	2:00pm	Funeral service for Ron Mobbs
Sunday 14	11:00am	Worship led by Helen Snider and Andrew Summers
Wednesday 17	7:45pm	Fellowship AGM, followed at 8pm with 'The Adventures of an Estate Agent. Speaker: James Higgs
Thursday 18	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 20	11:00am	Green Christian Barnet: Taxation and the Environment (Refreshments from 10:30am)
Sunday 21	11:00am	Worship led by David Paul & Richard Harvey
Wednesday 24	from 8:30pm	Men's Group at Ye Olde Mitre Inne
Thursday 25	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 28	11:00am	Worship led by Roz Douglas
Tuesday 30	11:00am	Women's Group at Open Door, Christ Church, St Albans Rd

FEBRUARY

Thursday 1	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 3	10:00am	Community Garden
Sunday 4	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Sarah Beaumont
Thursday 8	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 11	11:00am	Worship led by Rev'd Roger Orme
Tuesday 13		Shrove Tuesday
	7:45pm	Elders' Meeting
Wednesday 14		Ash Wednesday: Start of Lent
Saturday 17	10:00am	Community Garden
	10:30am	Green Christian Barnet
Sunday 18	11:00am	Worship led by Tony Alderman
Monday 19	from 8:30pm	Joint Men/Women Evening at Ye Olde Mitre Inne

FEBRUARY contd.

Wednesday 21	8:00pm	Fellowship: An illustrated talk on the City Churches of London. Speaker: Joe Studman
Thursday 22	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 25	11:00am	Worship led by Paul Elsdon
Monday 26	11:00am	Women's Group at Agust Café, High Road, Whetstone
Thursday 29	9:30am	Mainly Music

MARCH

Saturday 2	2:30pm	World Day of Prayer at Holy Trinity Church, Lyonsdown Road
Sunday 3	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Valerie & Andrew Mills

Copy for the March/April edition of *Church Record* to be with the editors
by Friday 23 February.

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Helping God's Creation



You may have noticed that, with advice from Barnet and Islington Swift Groups, two Swift boxes have recently been erected at St John's. This is to try and help our Swift population, which has declined by 60% from 1995-2020 (BTO). Swifts are on the UK's Conservation Status Red List.

Swifts rarely touch the ground, even for a moment. They catch all their food in the air, and drink, bathe, sleep, and even mate, on the wing. They fly closer to the sun than any other bird. Swifts are up against a catastrophic loss of nesting cavities in the UK.

So next May, when the Swifts hopefully return to us from Africa, we may be blessed with seeing them in the Barnet area, and even at St John's.

Malcolm Bond