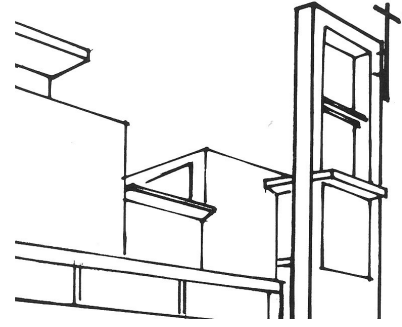


# The Octagon



BAR HILL CHURCH NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 332: DECEMBER 2009



## OUR MESSY CHRISTMAS



How do we know Christmas is coming? It doesn't take long to discover! By the end of Halloween the shops are full of lights, tinsel and shiny figures hoping to entice shoppers to start spending for the festive season. Then there are the adverts, with snow, perfect families and firesides. A lot of this is very joyful, but it can seem difficult for us to live up to. In movies Christmas day ends with warm feelings and happy faces. Real life is normally not so straightforward. We may have warm feelings and happy faces, but we may also be tired and cold! It is hard not to feel that our reality is somehow a let down.

Yet we know that God has called us into a fullness of life where he comes to be with us in our reality. There was once a bishop who wanted to emphasise the importance of reality in all its messiness in the Christmas story. He suggested that the clergy of his diocese fill the aisles of their churches with cow dung and horse manure during the Christmas season – all the better to imagine the coming of Jesus into the stable. I'm not convinced that I would find that type of reality helpful here in Bar Hill Church! However it is good to remember that human and even animal messiness have central place at Christmas. The perfect image of the movies doesn't need to seep into our religious observance. We come together to sing carols and to hear the story of a future husband distressed to find that this partner was pregnant

with a child that wasn't his and of the teenage mother who ended up giving birth in a cowshed miles from home. We come together to marvel at the courage and faithfulness of both Mary and Joseph in very taxing circumstances. And above all of God choosing to be present and working amongst all the messiness of the first century world.

It can be very hard to believe that God wants to see the reality of who we are. It is sometimes tempting to present a tinselled version of ourselves in prayer – or at least a version of ourselves in our best clothes. Christmas calls us to be reconciled with our own messy reality and to let God come and embrace us in it. As an extra challenge we are called to accept other people in their own messiness as well. We dare to sing and pray together in our imperfection, knowing that we are not yet all that we would wish to be but placing our hope on the one who was born in the stable and coming in humility before him. *"By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."* (Luke 1:79)

Rev'd Ruth Adams



***As servants of Christ we commit ourselves to worship, work and witness together in his name to establish his kingdom in our village and beyond"***

## Items from the Church Meeting, 10th November

Barry Vendy gave a report on the Small Groups, emphasizing how important they were in the life of the church, and thanking the leaders and hosts for their valuable contribution.

Richard Lewney was appointed our denominational representative to the United Reformed Church.

In her report, Ruth gave a brief update on some of the current activities. Claire Thorby gave an update on children's work and Kathy Batty from the Methodist church told us about their new circuit team; more details on these two items appear below.

The meeting concluded with quiet prayer for the different aspects of church life, as we circulated around the boards displayed in the hall.

## Update on Kidzone and Youth Zone

As some of you may be aware the numbers of children and young people attending Church on a Sunday morning is very erratic. This can be difficult for the leaders in preparing activities and can be very lonely for the children and young people!!

So in December (on the 6th and 20th) we are giving a trial to something different. All children and young people from 4 to 14 years old will meet together in the Octagon with a cafe style start from 9.55am to 10.10am (there will probably be hot chocolate and pastries!!!) which will be followed by a "story" told through drama, puppets etc. Following this the children and young people can choose the activities they wish to do - there will be a selection which might include craft, paint, modelling, word search, activity sheet, quiet space with books or prayer corner.

The session will end with a time to gather together and share what we have done and what we have learnt.

We would appreciate your prayers as working with such a wide age group brings different issues but we do want our children and young people to learn more of Jesus' love for them in a safe and comfortable environment which they are happy in. The trial weeks will be followed by a questionnaire to the children, young people and their families and a meeting of all the leaders involved. If this style of Sunday morning activity continues in January then we will be looking for some additional help with the sessions - just one Sunday every other month. If you would like to get involved or would like more information please contact Claire on 781527.

## Closer ties with the Methodists

Firstly may I say how grateful I am to be invited to be a member of your Church Council. The few meetings I have been to so far have been both exciting and deeply spiritual.

As a member of the Methodist Church I have the privilege of being one of five newly appointed Circuit Stewards and we are keen, as a group, to develop our relationships with our ecumenical partners. We are looking forward to putting together a number of events next year, both of a spiritual and social kind, where we will have the opportunity to meet one another and share our ideas for developing our partnership and furthering the work of God in our communities.

Once we have agreed our plans, I will get back to you with all the information you will need to take part in what I hope will be a wonderful and enlightening experience for us all, as we move forward together in Christ.

Blessings

Kathy Batty

Circuit Steward,

Wesley Methodist Church, Cambridge

## Small Groups

**Vision4Life** is a process which the United Reformed Church is following for 3 years from Advent 2008 through to Advent 2011. It is three years of focus on re-engaging with the Bible, Prayer and Evangelism with the purpose of bringing transformation to the URC and its partner churches.

From Advent 2009 we will be coming into the Prayer year and we will be following this in our small groups by doing a course on prayer. We will be basing our course on a book called "Ways to Pray" which was written by David Thomson, who is now the Bishop of Huntingdon. The sleeve notes of the book comment that: "Prayer is vital – but it isn't always easy! Ways to Pray offers practical help that faces the problems head on, as well as reflections on the big themes of the Lord's Prayer. Stories, quotes and action points are there to keep you on your toes, with a collection of favourite and famous prayers to round things off."

I hope that we will find this a helpful and encouraging course and that it will help us continue to deepen in both our faith and in how we live it out each day.

Ruth

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## New Church Members

*On Sunday 15th November we welcomed two new church members, Sally Page and Jenny Patton. Sally has been kind enough to write a little to introduce herself to the congregation.*

I started my own property law firm in July 2008 - Page Property Lawyers - after having been made redundant. It has grown and I now have three employees. I qualified as a lawyer in 1993 and have specialised in property ever since.

I live in Watermead with my partner Jonathan - although he prefers Jon unless it is his Mum speaking to him! Jon has a daughter - Emma - she comes to stay with us every other weekend. She is nearly sixteen. I originally moved to Bar Hill because Jon already lived here and we agreed we would live in his house until Emma finished junior school here and then we would move elsewhere. I grew to love Bar Hill and we are still here! I cannot imagine living anywhere else now. Prior to that I had been living in Ely (where my family still live). Jon and I met through work. He is also a lawyer.

I grew up in Littleport where my parents ran a Gift Shop. I was baptised and confirmed at St Georges Church, Littleport where both my Mum and Grandmother were active members. I began by going to Sunday School and my faith grew from there. I also used to read regularly at St Georges. This church was a very traditional church and worshipping at Bar Hill is a very different experience to that which I grew up with, and probably assumed was the only way to worship. I was initially intrigued by the concept of Bar Hill's church but am very pleased that I plucked up the courage to join you for a service that was not a "special" day - having only joined you at Christmas previously. From those first few Sundays I felt my faith was renewed. I had not experienced that for many years. I feel very blessed to have become a member of your church.

## For the bookshelf

### **“BE HAPPY! A 40 DAY JOURNEY TO CONTENTMENT”**

By PETER GRAYSTONE (Canterbury Press, 2009). Are Christians supposed to be happy? Peter Graystone obviously thinks so, to judge by this very personal and down to earth book. “I want you to be happy. I want the company of Jesus to make you glad to be alive.”

The 40 chapters cover a wide range of topics, among them: letting go of grievances, managing stress, letting God take control, aiming high and setting goals, being generous and pursuing peace. Each one ends with a boxed item headed ‘Be happy!’ summarising what’s in the chapter and suggesting one possible course of action. Nothing startlingly new there, but to be fair I found Peter Graystone’s suggestions invariably both helpful and practical, and have kept coming back to them.

The happiness that Graystone commends is not at all a selfish, ‘I’m all right, Jack’ brand. His suggestions include: encouraging others, being generous to a stranger, writing to your M.P. on a justice issue and being a loyal friend.

But I just wonder whether you can really learn happiness out of a book? If so, the world should be a happier place, considering how many books have been published on the subject. If only!

Barry Vendy

### **An Invitation to join Wesley Methodist Church for their Carol Services**

We would like to invite as many of you as possible, especially singers, to join us on November 29th at 6.30pm for our Advent Carol Service and December 20th at 6.30pm for our Christmas Carol Service. Everyone is welcome.

If you are a singer and would like to help the choir, you can get the music for these services by either e-mailing Geoff Batty (Choir Master) at [gandkbatty@greenbee.net](mailto:gandkbatty@greenbee.net) or telephone 01223 262921. We look forward to welcoming as many of you as possible.

## *The Risk of Birth*



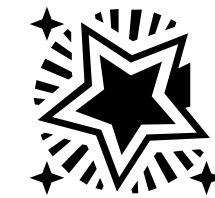
*This is no time for a child to be born,  
With the earth betrayed by war and hate  
And a nova lighting the sky to warn  
That time runs out & the sun burns late.*



*That was no time for a child to be born,  
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;  
Honour & truth were trampled by scorn -  
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.*



*When is the time for love to be born?  
The inn is full on the planet earth,  
And by greed & pride the sky is torn-  
Yet love still takes the risk of birth.*



Madeleine L'Engle

## DECEMBER CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 6th	10.00 am 6.30 pm	Holy Communion ( <i>Methodist</i> ) NEWS (Evening Worship)
Sunday 13th	8.00 am 10.00 am  3.00 pm 6.30 pm	Holy Communion Gift & Crib Service (Gifts for Jimmy's Night Shelter and Cambridge Women's Aid) Family Fun 9for children up to year 2) Evening Prayer
Sunday 20th	10.00 am 6.30 pm	Holy Communion ( <i>URC</i> ) Village Carol Service
Thursday 24th	4.00 pm 11.00 pm	All Age Worship Holy Communion <i>Christmas Eve</i>
Friday 25th	10.00 am	All Age Service with Communion <i>Christmas Day</i>
Sunday 27th	10.00 am 6.30 pm	All Age Worship Holy Communion
There is also a Roman Catholic service on Saturday evenings at 6.00 pm		
<b>People to contact:</b>	The minister: Rev Ruth Adams    Tel: 01954 789369 Church Centre Manager:                    Tel/Fax: 01954 206120 (office hours Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9.30-10.30)	

### ***There's lots happening on Saturday 12th December - join in the pre-Christmas fun***

**Community Market in the Octagon**, 10am -1pm  
Your chance to buy locally produced gifts.

**Family Activities Afternoon for Christmas and Advent** 2.30 - 4.30 pm in the Octagon

This fun afternoon is aimed at families who want to spend some time together doing Christmas crafts - the activities will include card making, cooking, table flower arrangement, tree decorations, small gifts and more.

The afternoon is free - just come along and enjoy yourselves.....for more information or if you wish to volunteer to help during the afternoon please contact Claire Thorby on 781527.

This will be followed at 5pm by '**The Big Sing**' carol singing in the village, an opportunity to fundraise for Christian Aid - why not come and join us? - more info' in the notice sheets, or from Claire.

#### **An Evening of Festive Music**

This concert will be given by the **Cambridge Concert Orchestra**, at 7.30 pm in the church. Tickets (£6 adults £3 children and seniors) are available from the church office or from Sue Kenchington, and include a buffet supper. Proceeds will go to the church's Memorial Garden Fund and the Bar Hill Scout Hut Fund.

### **Christmas Invitations**

Once again every house in Bar Hill will receive an invitation to our Christmas time services. If you delivered some last year or would like to help for the first time this year, please let Jan Hewins Know. The more helpers we have the easier the work.

Contact me at [jan.hewins@ntlworld.com](mailto:jan.hewins@ntlworld.com) or [publicity@barhillchurch.org](mailto:publicity@barhillchurch.org) tel 201495. Thank you.



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