

Welcome to the “on-line” version of our current Church Newsletter

We publish a monthly newsletter which is distributed to all our members and adherents through the pigeon holes in our church vestibule. We also send copies by post to friends of the church who now live away from Nottingham and large print versions are available to those who need them

Please note that, for this “on-line” version of the newsletter, some information from our printed magazine has been omitted. This normally includes:

- personalia
- personal "thank you" letters
- home addresses of members
- some details of events for children and young people

which we have chosen to remove for child protection, security and other privacy reasons.

We also remove material (such as that supplied by Christian Aid for inclusion in church magazines) to avoid possible difficulty with copyright issues.

Details of the venues and times are in the printed version of the newsletter or are available from the church secretary.

MINISTER'S LETTER

I would like to begin this letter with by offering a well-deserved 'Thank You' to a number of our folk. Firstly, a huge 'Thank You' to Ron K for organising, rehearsing and then conducting our Orchestra Sunday. This was Ron's "swan song", the last time he has organised this special service for us after many years of doing so. We are deeply grateful to him for his commitment and enthusiasm for this very special Sunday in our annual calendar. A huge 'Thank You' also goes to all those who gathered on the day to play for us. The music was magnificent and we were treated to a rousing rendition of Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" to finish. Especial thanks go to Billy L for a really lovely solo performance.

A huge 'Thank You' must go to Derek G, Phil H, Catherine J, Richard G and all our Junior Church leaders and young friends for a really memorable evening's performance of 'Dr Doolittle'. This had been postponed from last year because of the pandemic and had been very quickly rehearsed for a concert performance, again because of the pandemic. It is quite remarkable that our young friends were able to share with us a performance of such high quality, after so little time for rehearsal. Many thanks also go to Peter and Michael N for entertaining us as the audience gathered. Congratulations to everyone involved for a truly wonderful evening.

Lastly, but by no means least, many thanks go to Richard G and our music band for 'Carols in the Courtyard'. As with orchestra Sunday, it is quite breath-taking how the musicians involved can just turn up and play together to such a high standard. We had an excellent attendance and our singing must have resounded around the City Campus of NTU. Many thanks too to those who prepared drinks and food and served us regularly with appetising treats. Again, it was a really enjoyable evening and extra special as we had needed to postpone last year's event because of the pandemic.

I would like to offer again a very warm invitation to 'An Introductory Evening on Stepwise' to be held in the Church on Monday 31st January 2022 at 7.30pm. This will be led for us by our Minister at Stamford URC and Grantham LEP, Rev'd Dr Peter Stevenson. I am profoundly grateful to Peter for doing this for us. Please do come along and find out more, whether you intend taking up something from the programme or not. It will be a very interesting and enlightening evening.

At the beginning of October, our Elders met together for an Elder's Training Day. The morning of that day was dedicated to safeguarding and we were delighted to welcome our new Synod Safeguarding Officer, Donna G. During her presentation, Donna stressed the importance of safeguarding Pastoral Elders when they are pastorally visiting on behalf of the Church. Normally, this is done as a 'lone visitor'. Most of our pastoral visits consist of 'friends visiting friends'. However, this need not always be the case and it is important that we have safeguarding procedures in place to deal with any issues that might arise from a pastoral visit and to offer support to those undertaking 'lone visiting' on behalf of the Church. Donna stressed the importance of having a visiting protocol. Our Pastoral Group have been working on this over recent weeks and we record our profound thanks to Noel W, our Church Secretary, for undertaking the lion's share of this work. Our Elders' Council has now approved this protocol and it has been shared with all Pastoral Elders.

The making of New Year resolutions is not something many folk do these days. Those that do, often find that their new intentions have fallen by the wayside within a matter of weeks. If we want to have new content in our lives, then we have to create new structures. New relationships, a new determination to improve our lives in some way, a desire to pursue a new interest or hobby, whatever the new content is, we will not succeed at it unless we create a new structure for it. Often we end up with a deep sense of frustration that we have failed to

achieve our new desires so soon. There have to be changes: the allocation of more time, the letting go of something less important, maybe even saying no to someone else in order to say yes to ourselves and our developing newness.

As we experience more and more of God and as God reveals more and more of God's self to us, each of course in our own unique ways, so our understanding of God has to change. New experiences of God will sometimes not fit into old theological patterns. We have to rethink. As Paul Tillich has put it in his book 'The Courage to Be', there is always "a God beyond God". When something life-shattering happens to us, our understanding of God changes and we have to work out a new understanding, one that makes much more sense to us in the light of our new experience. And this is a task that is never finished. We shall continue to do this, until we see God face to face.

As we continue to battle the Covid virus, in its many variant forms, we will need to develop new ways of looking after ourselves and our loved ones, the so-called 'new normal', and try to work out a new understanding of what God is trying to share with us through creation. As we begin another New Year, whatever joys and challenges of something new that we might face in our lives, we do so in the wonderful knowledge that God walks our way with us, ever present, always forgiving and eternally loving. May God's peace and God's love be found in our hearts and in our homes.

God's richest blessings,
Chris.

A Prayer for the New Year

Almighty and Eternal God, your ways are higher than our ways and your thoughts than our thoughts. You are from everlasting to everlasting and a thousand ages in your sight are like an evening gone. Yet you have in love reached down to touch our little time with your eternity and our life with life everlasting. At the start of another New Year, we turn to you for strength and guidance.

We rejoice that we are your people, repentant and grateful, people who find strength, joy and peace in the knowledge of your love and in the fact of your grace. Help us to know that you always go with us into the future, whatever that future may hold. Please cast out our fear and fill us with faith, hope and love, that we might be strengthened by your Holy Spirit in our innermost selves. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Redeemer. Amen.

PASTORAL NEWS

We pray for all those within our Church family who are facing times of difficulty and illness. If you are aware of any specific pastoral needs, please do contact either your Elder or Rev'd Chris Ford.

ELDERS COUNCIL REPORT

The Elders Council held their monthly meeting in person on 1st December in the Small Hall. The meeting was chaired by the Minister; 6 apologies for absence were recorded and 1 member attended by Zoom. Declarations of Interest were received from 2 members.

Room Hire: The paper identifying the bases for making decisions regarding hall lettings requests was accepted. The Hall Lettings Secretary has authority to make decisions using these criteria and will bring exceptional requests to Elders' Council.

Crèche It was agreed that the Job Description should be circulated.

Book of Remembrance: A meeting has been arranged with a calligrapher to discuss taking over this task.

Stepwise: It was suggested that, in readiness for the meeting, we should have a process in hand for forming a group led by a nominated facilitator.

Duty Teams' and Elders' rotas: The "double-teams" approach will continue for the next few months. Duty Teams rotas are to be circulated to all leaders with a sign-up sheet for Duty Elders before worship on 5th December.

Pastoral Matters & Sub Group The meeting shared concerns about those members who were unwell or who were recovering their health after illness. The new Church Directory is printed and ready for distribution. Bereavement Sunday service letters have been distributed. Thanks were expressed to Isobel and Bob L for preparing the list of those to receive Christmas hyacinths. It was agreed to distribute a paper about Pastoral

Visiting to Pastoral Elders. It will be reviewed before January 2024.

Finance and Property Sub Group: It was reported that no FWO envelopes will be bought this year because very few individuals are still using them. An article has been prepared for the January Newsletter to encourage the use of Standing Orders. A paper about a request from the Pastoral Sub Group to provide a gate for the church was discussed.

Junior Church Sub Group: The arrangements for Christmas activities were discussed

Ministers Business: It was agreed that the proceeds of our charity collections over the Christmas period will be given to the Winter Shelter project organised by Emmanuel House. The Minister reported on a meeting with Trinity Lutheran Church who hold services in our church on the third Sunday of every month. Noreen H has again supplied the advent ring. The Minister will write to thank her for doing this and she has indicated that she is retiring. It was agreed that pigeon holes may be used to share Christmas Cards. It was agreed to hold supplementary Elders Council Meetings on 26th January and 23rd February.

Noel W.
Church Secretary

GIVING TO THE CHURCH

Traditionally, people gave to support the work of the church by putting cash or cheques (in envelopes or loose) into the collection bags which were passed along the pews during the service. Over the years, many members have opted to make a regular payment by bank transfer instead of using the collection bags.

Covid restrictions have meant that we can no longer pass bags along the pews. There are now 3 collection bags, one hanging on a pew end at the back of each aisle. There is also a machine to take contactless payments on the radiator shelf at the back of the aisle opposite the main front door. This machine moves to the fellowship room after the service if we are able to gather there.

Several members opted to use bank transfers at the start of Covid lockdown. Bank transfer income is regular and sustained and is a very efficient way of collecting donations as there are no charges or need to count and pay-in cash or cheques. Anyone who is not currently using direct transfer is asked to consider this method. A standing order can be set up online or by filling up the Standing order form on the back of the Bank Details information sheet and posting it to your bank.

The church greatly benefits by claiming Gift Aid on donations made by UK income tax payers who have signed a Gift Aid Declaration in the church charity's favour. The forms are attached to this newsletter email or can be found in front of the pigeonholes. If you are able to make a declaration and have not previously done so, please complete and return one to Ian Vincent, via the pigeonholes. Please contact him if you have any queries, or need to cancel a declaration you have previously made.

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N.B. Please note that Sunday 26th January is the last day for contributions for the February 2022 Newsletter.

Following the article from Phil H. in last month's newsletter Becky S. shares her view of the course.

Stepwise - a view from Becky S.

As a young person, who was also very new to the church when I joined in with Stepwise "Faith Filled Life" I wasn't really sure what to expect. I hadn't made that many connections with people in church at that point however I decided to take part during the lockdown to help keep that connection to SAWCG while living back at home with my mum.

This was the first time I had been part of a church "study group". Other than my time pre-teens attending Sunday school, I had not been part of a group to discuss my faith before. Stepwise gave me a chance to get to know some more about the people I still worship with but also to delve deeper into my journey with God. Sharing experiences and ideas with a regular group, which became quite tight knit even though we were distanced apart, was really beneficial to understanding my own faith and understanding more about the journeys we experience. Despite being the youngest I wouldn't change it as there was value in talking to people with different life experiences in their faith.

I would really encourage everyone, young and old to consider Stepwise. It was nice to have a certain period of time every few weeks to reflect on everything that had happened and discuss it, either with the group, or with a person (of your choice) as your "mentor". Mentor sounds like a scary term and that there is a right and wrong way of having a faith however it is more about having someone else away from the group to discuss your journey with and focus on yourself with faith.

Stepwise is there to get you thinking deeply, and can be emotionally challenging, however part of the beauty is you can be in control of what you wish to share, and as a group can share in each other's journey both before, through and after Stepwise.

Becky

Stepwise awareness session 31st January 2021 7.30pm in Church.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It has been good to be able to get the 'paper' copies of the Church Newsletter back in print again after the Covid pandemic caused that and so many other 'normal' things of life to be closed down.

The paper copies have a name and address on a label stuck on to the back cover and are left in the pigeonholes in the vestibule at church to be collected. However, I feel sure that there are now several people wishing to have the paper copy who are not on our list to have labelled copies and at this time may I suggest that you take an unnamed spare copy and let me know your name and address so that we can prepare labels for you.

A number of our readers have now decided to receive the Newsletter by email, so if you would prefer to have your copy sent by that method, please let me know your email address and I will arrange to add your details to that list.

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DO YOU NEED A FILING CABINET?

A reader has asked me to put a note in the newsletter to the effect that they have a two-drawer metal filing cabinet looking for a new home. Its condition is fair, but it is still serviceable and has its key.

If you are interested in this item please contact the editor.

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There have been no offers to provide the church flowers for January 2022

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THOUGHTS FOR TODAY

A Sunday School teacher asked her class why Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem.

A small child replied, "They couldn't get a baby-sitter."

Two boys were walking home from Sunday School after hearing a strong preaching on the devil.

One said to the other, "What do you think about all this Satan stuff?"

The other boy replied, "Well you know how Santa Claus turned out. It's probably just your Dad."

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DIARY FOR JANUARY 2022

- 2 Sun 11.00 Morning Worship with Holy Communion –
Led by Rev'd James Breslin.
- 5 Wed 7.30 Elders Council meeting.
- 9 Sun 11.00 Morning Worship – led by Rev'd Chris Ford.
- 11 Tue 6.00 Taizé service of Prayer and Meditation led by
Rev'd Chris Ford.
- 12 Wed 7.30 Junior Church leaders meeting.
- 16 Sun 11.00 Bereavement Service led by Rev'd. Chris Ford.
- 19 Wed 7.30 Worship and Education Group meeting.
- 23 Sun 11.00 Morning Worship led by Rev'd. Chris Ford.
- 26 Wed 7.30 Additional Elders Council meeting on Zoom.
- 29 Sat Saturday Club meeting.
- 30 Sun 11.00 Morning Worship led by Rev'd David Featonby.
- 31 Mon 7.30 Introduction to Stepwise by
Rev'd Dr Peter Stevenson.

FEBRUARY 2022

- 2 Wed 7.30 Elders Council meeting in Small Hall.
- 6 Sun 11.00 Morning Worship including Holy Communion
Led by Rev'd Chris Ford.