

Living to love God and You



Thank you to all who have contributed to this edition of Life. If you would like to contribute something to the next edition, the deadline for submissions for the Feb/March edition will be 13th January 2023.

Please email: Editor@CCBedford.org

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VICAR'S LETTE



I remember one dark December night, at the time I was very new to the Church of England, when I said it's Christmas time! And someone (perhaps not very) graciously pointed out that we were actually in Advent! To which I replied, what's advent?! Now I know about advent calendars and they're great, but I didn't know about this season in the church's calendar called advent. Secretly hoping it meant there would be chocolate involved.

Turns out advent comes from the Latin 'adventus' which means coming. (Sidney might well correct me here, so expect to see some sort of retraction in the new year magazine!) Advent is when we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas, Which also means that Christmas doesn't actually start until quite late in December, and then the actual Christmas period goes on until Epiphany on the 6th January! Christmas carols in January?!

So here we are in advent, a season of preparation, where we purposefully remember the coming of the saviour of the world as a baby, God with us, Emmanuel!

And I wonder in the midst of the busyness of life can we find some moments to pause? To pause and wonder. Children pause and wonder all the time. They see a bush and are fascinated by the leaves, and so we end up being late for school drop off. But they have this wonder. And I wonder if we might pause and remember how amazing this miracle is, that the creator of the universe decided that they should come and be one of us. to be flesh and blood like you and I? All the risks it entailed. All the pain of childbirth. All the joy and sorrow of being a child in first century Palestine under Roman rule. This Jesus. God and man, comes to us. And invites us into this grand adventure of a life lived with God.

Too often I get a bit wrapped up (pun intended) in the presents bit of Christmas, when really the most important bit is the presence of Jesus. At Christ Church we have been thinking a lot about prayer, and myself and the PCC have been prayerfully wrestling with the idea of vision - what is God calling us here at CCB to be? It's been an enormous privilege for me personally to join you all, and to work with you as we discern where God is calling us. So as we think about advent and Christmas and what presents we need to buy, perhaps we can think and pray about what God might be saying to us both individually and collectively. What does it mean for Christ Church to exist in twenty first century Bedford? How can we be good neighbours to those we live, work and see? I am excited. Excited for the plans God has instore for us. and excited for us to share some of the love of God with Bedford this advent/Christmas time. So please join me in sharing this good news with whoever it is we meet, whether in word or deed.

Rev. David Thomas





It's a Boy! (A LOL Bear Production)



An Interactive, Comedy, Musical for Children!

Children of all ages welcome! -Adults must accompany their children

Monday 19th December at 4pm

Christ Church Halls - allow time for parking

Join us for 75 minutes of Pure Panto Joy 7

Refreshments served afterwards



Book your place via Eventbrite

(A suggested donation of £5 per family)

This is going to be a Fun, Interactive, Hilarious Comedy for Children! You do not want them to miss this! It's the Show of the Year!!!



CARBON - WHY SO MUCH NEWS?

Dr Will Rawes will be enlightening us on the reasons why Carbon is so important now. Join him for a 5 week course, 2pm - 4pm every Thursday at the Rothsay Education Centre.

Start Date: 12/01/2023

How can I book my place?

Book your place now via the REC website:

<u>https://recbedford.co.uk/courses/carbon</u>
<u>-why-so-much-news/</u>
or by contacting Will Rawes directly.

COURSE COST: £49





More about the course...

No news media is without reference to carbon these days and the weather even in the last year has been different.

This course will explore the reasons why carbon is so important now, from the science of carbon and its effects on the environment and on the weather we experience. The connections between us, carbon and our beautiful but fragile planet are covered. The significance of trees and how we can respond to the environmental challenges we face is covered.





It's now only 4 months until our Church Weekend Away and I am getting so excited, hope you are too. After such a difficult time during lockdown it will be so good to spend time together as a church family, reestablish the close friendships we had pre Covid and just have fun together. More than that, this will be an opportunity for us, as a church, to grow closer to God, worship Him wholeheartedly, experience His presence and explore His vision for Christ Church – how brilliant is that?

So, what's in store for us all? Let's start with the Children and the Youth Programmes and hear what Ruth and Ellie are planning.



Let's get fired up for chaos, anticipate the wonder of calm moments and be ready to embrace a sense of community that will be part of the children's zones at the Church Weekend Away. We want the weekend to be time that families can grow together, and as well as the session groups below, there will be afternoon time for all age activities and free time.

We will ensure the space for children is a wonderful bundle of immersive fun, but we want to emphasise that the weekend is also a time for children to connect with God in their zones, and during the all together time, then we want them to go away knowing that they can find more of God in their world at home. The children's team will be gaining their vision and basis from Psalm 78:4 as we will think about the importance of passing on Bible stories about how

great our God is, to the

next generation.

BRAVE (AGES 0-3)

BRAVE'S CWA theme is:



4 We're not keeping this to ourselves, we're passing it along to the next generation - God's fame and fortune, the marvelous things he has done.

PSALM 78:4

O vineyard churches

The resources we are using for Brave come from Vineyard kids who have developed a fun and exciting curriculum for preschoolers. Each session is specially produced for preschoolers as they experience more about God in a way that is appropriate to their age.

BRAVE'S SNEAK PEAK

What can we make with our hands? Can we make small things and big things? What are hands for? Thinking about Father God's hands we're going to imagine how Father God's hands are so big that he's made a tiny mouse and a big giraffe. God loves it when children (of God- adults too!) sing to him, so we will be doing lots of singing. Brave's special words for the weekend will be 'Our God is a Great Big God!' . We will creatively look at sea, sky, mountains and buildings as we find out that God is everywhere.

HAPPY FEET BONUS!

Our toddlers will have a top tapping time exploring worship through dance. We will boogie and bop, twist and turn expressing ourselves through movement and celebrating all the moves that God has blessed us with.

KONNECT (AGES 4-8)

KONNECT'S

CWA theme is:



Time spent in Konnect will be full of team building games and working together, learning about one another and laughing together.

KONNECT'S SNEAK PEAK

Session 1: The Church is the body - What would it be like if we were all the same? Can we find out about each other and work together in team games. In each session there will be time for small group prayer, and a catchy theme song!

Session 2: Brothers and sisters, love one another. How good are you at showing love to one another? In this session we will work out ways to love those around us and will make and create gifts to show giving to others.

GLOW IN THE DARK BONUS!

Children aged 4-8 will also get the chance to draw close to God through Biblical stories of night time and sleep with a session of sleepy time activities, based loosely on Rachel Turner's book Comfort in the Darkness. Soft toys are welcome and dressing gowns and PJs also!



Session 3: Good neighbours
What can we do to be good neighbours
to those who are outside of our church?
In the last session we will bring to life
the story of the Good Samaritan and
think about what goes on in our
community in Bedford.



GROWING CLOSER TO GOD & ONE ANOTHER

The CWA is an exciting opportunity for our youth and young people to be reminded of the wider church family to which they belong. There will be huge room for growth as a youth group, getting to know one another and their leaders better but more importantly to grow in faith.

One of the ways we hope to achieve these things is through the youth activities offered each day. There will be a wide range of activities for the youth and young people during the adult sessions and also in the day with families; ranging from dedicating sessions for the youth to 'grill their leaders', to a worship jam session with opportunities to learn and explore worshiping through new instruments.

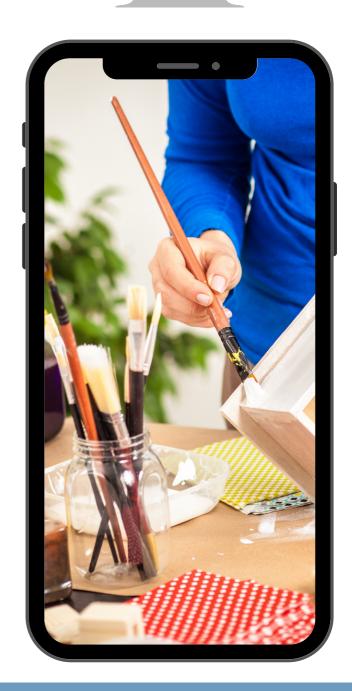
King's Park Centre offers a plethora of exciting things for groups, families and youth to do. There is a wonderful sports centre with a wide range of activities, including roller skating. In addition, just a short distance away, there are parks, a swimming pool, lovely walks and other attractions to enjoy on Saturday afternoon.

We are so excited to see our young people explore new opportunities and flourish as a result. This church weekend away is not only an opportunity to deepen our faith and interact with the church family, but it is also an opportunity for young people to establish support networks and confidence in themselves, their community, and their God. We hope to provide a place for that growth so that they may confront problems with ease as we grow closer to God and one another. We hope to see you there! LIFE MAGAZINE | 11 Well, it certainly sounds as though our children and young people will be having a great time. There's plenty for the adults too, with hopefully something for everyone.

Once people have arrived, settled in and had supper; be assured the food at King's Park is delicious and plentiful; we'll meet together for Session 1. Our theme for the weekend is based on Commandments 1 and 2, so all good stuff, plus sharing the vision for CCB. Afterwards there'll be time for reflection and to socialise or maybe to enjoy a late-night film.

Very Early Risers – If you have little ones who wake up VERY early, don't worry, the Children's room will have toys for your little ones, and Kids TV so they'll be happy while you enjoy a cuppa in your PJs. There's also a small parent's area nearby with a fridge and microwave to heat baby food etc. For grown up Early Birds there will be opportunities to keep minds and/or bodies fit with morning prayer or an early morning run - both optional activities! Then after Session 2 a range of activities will be available, all with a 'Worship/God' focus. For the creative there'll be **Workshops on: - Contemporary Christian Music,** Poetry, Creative 'Slow Sewing', Decoupage 'Light' Bottles and a 'Jam' Music Session. For those wanting to go deeper there will be: - Prayer Stations/Exploring Prayer, Introduction to New Testament Greek plus a 'Going Deeper' Seminar. This list is just a start, if you have an idea that you think people would enjoy, please do share it with us and we'll see what we can do.







Saturday afternoon is Free Time and an opportunity to explore the locality, enjoy activities in the Sport' Centre or just 'chill' with friends/family. We have booked the Sports Centre from 2-3pm on Saturday afternoon for our very own Roller-Skating Session, equipment provided and all ages/levels of ability welcome

Sports Centre – Roller Skating 2-3pm on Saturday see above, badminton, 5-a-side football, tennis, archery by arrangement. Walks, including nearby gentle strolls with a children's play park and longer walks e.g. Brixworth reservoir, Sywell country park. Visits – Abington Park and Museum, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Ashby, 78 Derngate, Northampton - the only house in

England designed by Charles Rennie Macintosh. **Praise + Session 3** is after supper, then it's an **Evening of Fun Entertainment**.

Sunday starts with optional morning prayer and/or run, then after breakfast it's Session 4 with Communion, followed by Fun for All - group games/competitions suitable for all ages. After Sunday Lunch Session 5 will sadly be our last together as we are encouraged to 'Go out into the World and share the Good News'.

All in all, a busy but fun weekend where we will grow closer to God and one another. If you've not booked already then don't miss out book today!

If you have any questions about any aspect of the CWA please do speak to Kay, Ruth or Ellie.

LADIES ELEVENSES TIME

Saturdays at 11.00am, with arrival from 10.30am.

A time to get together for refreshments and an interesting talk.

(Suggested donation of £1.50 to cover costs!)

Spring Programme of Talks

January 14th: 10.00-11.30am "Come Together!" with a combined Men's Breakfast & Ladies Elevenses for shared refreshments, fellowship and a talk from speakers Tim and Julie Robb who were with us at Christ Church from 2003-2007.

February 4th: Emma Peacock who has spoken at Spring Harvest & written a book "In Bed with Adam & Eve"

March 4th: Vikki and Carol Thomas—Mother and daughter-in-law, walking together with Jesus!

April 1st: Easter Praise Music and Thoughts for the Day with Debbie, Ellie and Helen!



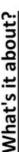
ALL LADIES
WELCOME!

ww.ccbedford.org





Men's Breakfast



Orange juice, cereal, bacon & egg bap, croissants, toast with jam and marmalade plus coffee (or tea). Vegetarian option available on request



Everyone is welcome. Please email so we know how many to cater for: mens.breakfast@ccbedford.org

When?

Saturday 09:00 - 10:30

Where?

Christ Church halls

Cost?

£3.00 (free on first visit)

ates

17th December — Alan Doughty talking on "victim support"
14th January — Joint breakfast with 'ladies elevenses'. With guest speakers Tim and Julie Robb. (Tim is a previous curate at Christ Church) Please note: This is from 10:00-11:30

25th February

25th March

1st April – social at Bedford Blues, 3pm kick off, pre-match drinks at local pub.



YOUTH UPDATE



The Youth Prayer Map

Hello, I'm Ellie, the Youth Worker for the young people between the ages of 11 and 18. I have been in this role since August and have been really enjoying what we've been able to do with the youth so far.

At the moment we have two weekly youth groups, Friday Night Youth (19:30 – 21:00), and J Team which takes place during the 10:30 Sunday Morning Service. As well as that myself and the rest of the youth team have really enjoyed taking part in youth events such as the Bedfordwide HOPE event which we took part in in late September and watching the fireworks display from Bedford Blues this November.

We are excited for the New Year as we have seen big growth in youth groups this year and look forward to seeing that progress into the New Year. As well as looking forward to catering for that group with a wider variety of activities for the youth to take part in, such as: clubs and groups over the holidays; and more opportunities to meet during the week.



Bedford Blues Fireworks



The Youth Watching The Display

ORPHAN FUND UK



SEPTEMBER VISIT - AN UPDATE

Written by <u>Gillian Li</u>ndley

In September, Alex Mnatzaganian, Phil and Ruth Janes were delighted to visit the Home of Hope in Malawi in person. They took out 7 suitcases of much needed equipment including donated laptops, mobile phones and medical equipment. They received a very warm welcome and spent time with the new leadership team discussing their hopes and visions for Home of Hope over the next 1, 3, and 7 years. They were also able to spend time with the Head Teachers of the Primary, Secondary Schools and of the Vocational Training Centre. As a result, funds were sent out to enable text books to be purchased, as most classes were being taught without. It was encouraging to see lighting and new toilet blocks that have been installed using donations given last Christmas.

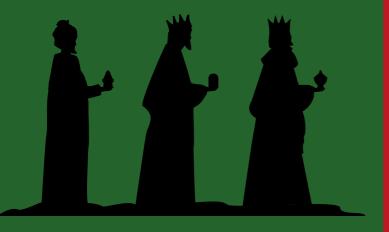
Save The Date!

We would love you to come and find out more at a Mission lunch in the Church Halls on Sunday 29th January 2023.

CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

ALAN COTTENDEN





Do you have any special Christmas memories? I imagine that most people do. Here's what a selection of Christ Church folk said when I asked them about theirs...

Matthew Payton:

My favourite Christmas carol is O Come, all ye faithful, and I especially like the David Wilcox arrangement with its wonderful descants. And if there's a choir and organ accompaniment too, that's even better! I love the way it declares the great truths of Christmas so powerfully: it's really rousing! I particularly like the chorus when we sing "O, Come let us adore him" three times, getting louder each time and finishing triumphantly with "Chr-i-st the Lord"! My favourite verse is the last one which we only sing on Christmas morning and it's special because we sing it directly to Jesus: "Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be all glory given; Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing". Then comes that wonderful chorus for the last time. I love it!





Lucy Waters:

A few Christmases ago, I hit upon a great idea for helping me not to get so caught up with preparing for Christmas as to lose sight of Jesus whose birth we're celebrating. Everybody knows about Advent calendars but there are also books available which provide a reading and some thoughts for each day of Advent and I find them really helpful. So, the arrival of Advent triggers me to choose a book and set aside a few minutes each day to read and ponder the day's message. The Christian chef, Delia Smith, has written a particularly helpful one called A Feast for Advent. In the forward to the book she says, "I would like to introduce the following pages as a help for others who, like me, find themselves battered and pressured by Christmas preparations, to escape for a few moments each day and try to find some space for God". That captures it very well, I think. It's certainly been a great blessing to me!



Clarry Bristow:

My Christmases really started when I met Eileen. As a child, my family Christmases were rather sparse: I was an only child and my parents had me quite late in life. But Eileen had four brothers so things were much livelier with her family; indeed, she sometimes teases me that I only married her for her brothers! One of the things I love about Christmas is how people are drawn to it. Friends who wouldn't come into a church ordinarily will likely accept an invitation to a Christmas service with traditional carols and mince pies, and they might just glimpse something of the Jesus whose birth we are celebrating. Some of the carols capture core Christian doctrine very well. Eileen and I experienced some wonderful open-air carols at Jaffa Orchard when we used to help there. Christmas provides so many opportunities to share the love of Christ in ways that people are open to.

Eileen Bristow:

My most memorable Christmas was the year I was 21. The day before – Christmas Eve – had been my 21st birthday and I was in King's College Hospital in London having to lie still for 13 weeks following back surgery. The ward was going to be decorated around an Elizabethan theme and, knowing I could draw, the staff set me to work producing some Elizabethan "portraits' to adorn the walls. Some paper and crayons appeared and a board was set up so I could use them lying down. The staff members were all dressed up in period costume and I remember the surgeon - who was dressed as Sir Walter Raleigh – striding down the ward with his sword, ready to carve the turkey. At one point I was taken to look in on the children's ward. What a happy place it was. Who would have thought that I could have such a happy time when I was so physically restricted? I was really grateful for how the staff found ways to include me, and even managed to celebrate my birthday amid the Christmas festivities.



Amy Hutchinson:

One of my most memorable Christmas experiences happened at a candle-lit evening service on Christmas Eve in my home church back in Northern Ireland. There was the usual mix of carols, readings and prayers but the stand-out feature was that they had chosen a young woman who was very heavily pregnant to do all the readings. As the time for each reading came, she would – with some effort - lift herself from her seat and waddle forward to the lectern, cutting a very different figure from the calm, angelic, haloed one I tend to think of when I read St Luke's account of Mary's pregnancy. Our reader laced her readings with comments of her own and I remember her saying at one point, "I'm fed up with being pregnant'. I just loved the humanity of it and the reminder that special as Mary undoubtedly was - she was probably fed up with being pregnant, too!





Ben Broughton:

I can't remember a Christmas when I haven't been to church with the family and, since the age of about 13, I've played drums in the worship band at some point over Christmas, if not on Christmas day itself. The preparations for playing with the other musicians have been a revelation and a joy to me because it involves coming to grips with the lyrics of the songs to help me work out how best to interpret them through my drumming. Varying the volume and the timing, for example, can make an amazing difference and the joy I sometimes experience as I drum and along with the rest of the band enable and encourage others to worship, is wonderful. There are some lines of some carols that send chills down my spine as I drum for them.

Aqualina Henderson (10):

On Christmas Day we usually go to my uncle's, where he cooks the most enormous roast dinner for us all. There are colourful Christmas decorations and a lovely happy atmosphere. I really enjoy being with all the family. My uncle is funny; for example, he finds sneaky, cheeky ways of smuggling chocolate to me without my Mum seeing! I love nativity plays. One year I played the star (the twinkling kind) in our church nativity play. I wore white, glittery clothes and I remember you carrying me on your shoulders so that it looked as if I was shining up in the sky. I had a great view of the whole play from up there! It was lots of fun and taking part really helped me to understand the Christmas story better.





Ellie Ryan-Johnson: I used to feel cheated at Christmas. There would just be Mum and me... and Grandma and Grandad. Everybody else seemed to be having so much more fun with their bigger families and gatherings. I felt I was "on the outside looking in". Then, one Christmas soon after my Grandad died – making our family gathering even smaller - Richard, Sarah and Emily Hibbert kindly invited us to their house (next door!) on Christmas evening to eat, drink and play board games together. It was such fun. It was the beginning - really - of my experiencing the community of the church family and feeling included. Amazing how one little act of kindness - prompted by Christmas could have such a big impact.

Julia Lawrence:

I work as a Teaching Assistant at Priory Primary School and my particular role is to work one-on-one with children who need special help. But one of the highlights of my school year is when we gather all the children together for our annual nativity play. It's magic and it's great watching the children's faces as they engage with the story and identify with the different characters. The children come from a great range of different religious backgrounds and about 30 different nations, so the Christmas story is very familiar to some of them while being completely new to others. But they all warm to it and seem to sense that they are experiencing something special. The Christmas story is wonderfully memorable and accessible to all and provides a great opportunity to highlight to the children God's love for the world he has created.



Steve Lawrence:

A few years ago at Christmas time, a work colleague and I were thumbing through a catalogue to decide which card to send to our business customers. There were lots of options and, as we came to each design, we "cast our votes' to each other - "good one'; "possible', "no good'. At one point, we came to a card with a nativity scene and he immediately declared it "no good' and turned the page. "Hold on a minute', I said, "what's wrong with it? "Well', he replied, 'What's a woman and a baby got to do with Christmas?' I couldn't believe it and called someone else in the office over. They correctly identified the woman and baby as Mary and Jesus and talked about Christmas celebrating Jesus' birth, all of which was genuinely news to him. I suppose I tend to assume that people who aren't Christians have considered our faith and rejected it, but my experience with this man reminded – and still reminds – me that some (many?) people discount our faith without knowing much about it. At Christmas time. I often think of that chat with my colleague and I'm encouraged afresh to share my faith.



Vikki to Noah and Grace: "What's

Christmas about?'

Grace: "No!" Noah: "I don't know Mummy

Vikki: "What happens at Christmas?"

Noah: "I will get a toy ship, a special toy

ship" (Vikki: we've started putting together

his Christmas list..)

Vikki: "Why might you get toys at

Christmas?'

Noah: "Because toys are useful for playing"

(Vikki: Can't argue with that logic..)

Vikki: Whose birthday is it at Christmas?'

Noah: "Everyone's because everyone gets

presents." (**Vikki:** Again, logical thinking.

We've been reading the nativity story recently at bedtime so I reminded him of

that book.)

Vikki: "Who was born at Christmas?"

Noah (thinking hard): "Was it God?'

Vikki: "Well, yes because God came to

earth as a baby. Do you remember the

baby's name?'

Noah (after thinking long and hard): "Jesus?"

(**Vikki:** Something's sinking in! David and I were then talking about last Christmas with them and what we did and we looked back at photos to try and jog our memories. We realised that we didn't go to church last

Christmas Day. As cases of Covid were

rising our church had an online service.

Noah was one when he had his last "normal"

Christmas. For Noah and Grace this

Christmas everything will seem brand

new!)





Experience Christmas



An Interactive Way to explore the Christmas Story with Children

Wednesday 7th Decembe

Hosted by Christ Church Children's Team and IMPACT

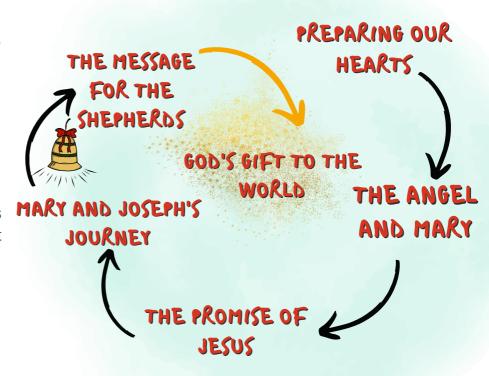
Please pray for our Experience Christmas event as we have Year 1 classes from Castle Newnham School visiting our church and exploring the stations with us! Here's a snippet of what we will be doing.

We are excited to offer the chance for children to step into the world of Mary, Joseph and the birth of Jesus, to find out the reason for the season and experience each part of the story in a reflective and interactive way.

At the beginning of the experience we will gather together to think about how we prepare for Christmas in our homes, then we will talk about how Christians prepare for Christmas in church using Advent candles.

We will then set off on a journey to Mary's house! We will find clues about who Mary was and we will find out about something extraordinary that happened!

Another of the stations will be based around ancient promises that were to do with the birth of Jesus. We'll experience the smell of incense and sweet oils together and talk about the part that the wise men had to play in the story.



Throughout the stations there will be the chance for children to reflect, think about the setting of the Nativity story, and wonder about the characters.

The gathering ends with listening to an instrumental of the carol *In The Bleak Midwinter* sitting at 'the gift' station which is a space to hear about what God's gift to the world could mean to Christians. Experience Christmas is something that can be done with groups of different and no faith, but also offers those who want to the space to be thoughtful, reflect and pray.





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Email address: info@bedford.foodbank.org.uk| Telephone Number: 01234 268569

	N	M	4		•
Tinned Vegetables	Tinned Fruit	Jars of Pasta Sauce	UHT Fruit Juice	Cup A Soup	Tinned Custard
Long Life Sponge Pudding	Washing Up Liquid	Jars of Jam	Wooden Spoon	Biscuits	Tin Openers
Size 6 Nappies	Tinned Tuna	Soap/Liquid handwash	Toothpaste	500g Rice	Deodorant
	0		S	M	S
Tinned Rice Pudding	Tea Bags (40/80)	Coffee 100g	Bar of Chocolates	UHT Milk	Tinned Meat

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Registered Charity in England & Wales 1179538

Lollow the You're very welcome at Christ Church this Christmas

Friday 16th Dec

7.30pm - Alternative Carols Service

Sunday 18th Dec

9am - Spoken Holy Communion Service

10.30am - Children's Nativity All Age Service

3pm - Screening World Cup Final

7pm - Carols by Candlelight Service

Wednesday 21st Dec

10am - Holy Communion + Carols

Saturday 24th Dec * / 4pm - Carols on the Church Lawn 11.15pm - Christmas Eve Midnight Communion

Sunday 25th Dec

9am - Christmas Day Holy Communion 10:30am - Christmas Day Family Service

...She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us'. Matthew 1:23 (From the Bible)



Sunday Services

9am & 10:30am Morning Worship
7pm Sundays@Seven
Wednesday Service
10am Holy Communion



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