

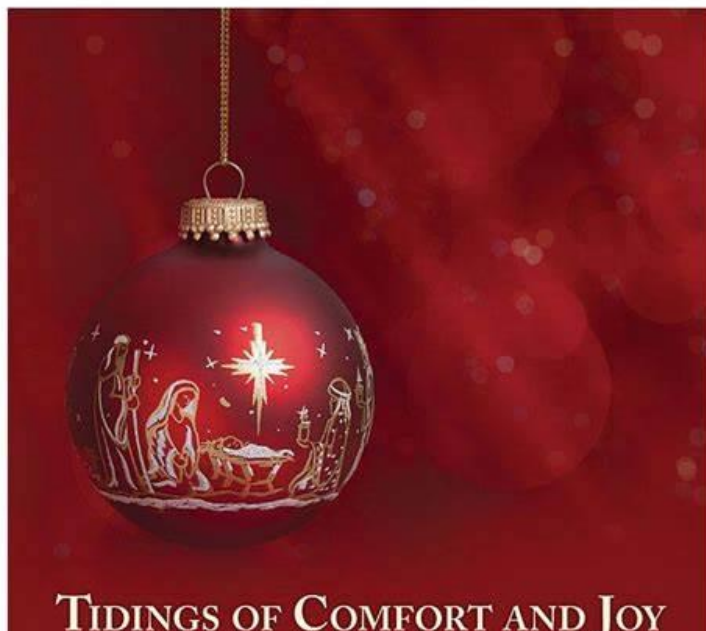
Fellowship from
Welwyn Garden City

Harpenden & Wheathampstead

URC

December 2020
&
January 2021





Dear friends,

I am writing this on a damp and chilly day that is dark and dreary as our weather often is at this time of year. The dark days mark the time when the Christian year draws to a close and Advent begins.

What a year it has been and as we lit our first Advent candles last year with hope and anticipation who could have guessed how the year would pan out?

We have acknowledged our anxiety, been careful with our social distancing, taken the precautions we were advised to take, put our hope and trust in God and looked for the positive, the good things that have come from a slower pace of life and the blessings we have received in each new day.

We have been blessed in our Church communities that the virus has not robbed us of any of our fellowship, although all too many of us will know of those whose lives it has claimed. What a year! And how we need 'Glad tidings of comfort and joy' this Christmas.

I was reflecting on those words and found they took me back to the place where the Christmas story began; to a simple home in Nazareth and a young girl visited by an angel. Gabriel's glad tidings for Mary told her she had found favour with God and, despite her unmarried state, she would conceive and give birth to a son who will be very great and called Jesus, the Son of the Most High (Luke 1 v32).

These seem rather dubious 'glad tidings' for a young woman who could be stoned to death for apparent unfaithfulness, and how was she to know if this

was true? Today you only have to wait days to take a test if you think you might be pregnant but the idea of waiting for the natural signs of pregnancy were maybe too great for Mary and she set off on a journey of around 80 miles across some very barren country to see if the 'glad tidings' about her cousin Elizabeth were true.

It is hard for us to imagine the enormity of their meeting. The Holy Spirit had been silent, no angelic visits or prophets voices had been heard for at least 400 years but in that moment when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and her awesome confirmation came bursting out in her greeting 'God has blessed you above all women and your child is blessed. Why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord should visit me?'. At that moment Elizabeth and Mary both learned of Mary's pregnancy as the words poured out of Elizabeth's mouth! Imagine a woman as a prophet?

We can only imagine the conversations that followed Elizabeth's words and the outpouring from Mary we call the Magnificat. The stories of angel visits and the promise of sons. The trust they had both placed in the heavenly messengers that spoke of, not only God's love for them, but God's love for us too.'

The awesome 'glad tidings' for us in this story are that because of that innocent child laid in a manger in Bethlehem who went on to be an innocent man on a cross, the very same Holy Spirit who filled these women with such joy is our gift too. And in Romans 15:13 we are told that we will 'overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit'. Such hope and joy! Yes please!!

Jesus is Immanuel, God with us and is with us today. The Joy of the Spirit is his gift. How wonderful this Christmas to overflow with hope and find the Spirit's fruit in our stockings, the love, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control (Galatians 5:22-23) These are gifts that bring us hope and the joy of Christ not just for ourselves but that others might see the Spirit at work in us too.

May your faith in these glad tidings this Christmas bring you hope and joy, that even in the midst of so much uncertainty the joy of the Christ child might be in us all that our joy might overflow. (John 15:11).

I wish you all a safe and joyful Christmas, whatever it might look like, however strange it feels, nothing can stop us from celebrating the real reason for the season and His own glad tidings and blessings of comfort and joy.

With love and Christmas blessings

Jane

Christmas Challenge



Here in the Luton and Dunstable Cluster of Heart Local Area Group we, like most churches, are faced with a different Christmas.

In this strange year when we are not sure how we will celebrate Christmas I have invited members to decorate a window of their house, one that can be seen from the road, with something

to cheer people as they pass by, and remind them that although things are different and we may not be able to meet together we are still celebrating the joy of Christmas.

In addition the churches that have a window clearly visible from the road are encouraged to decorate that window with pictures and a greeting and then leave lights on in the days before Christmas so that the light of Christmas shines in the community. Window decorations can be created using black silhouettes cut from card and filled with multicoloured tissue paper, or cellophane sweetie wrappers, you know the ones, to create stained glass window effects, or trace pictures onto clear acetate and colour in with permanent markers.

The more adventurous could make window gels by tracing outlines in window glass paint paste onto polythene, and then filling with a 50:50 mix of PVA/water coloured with inks. This dries clear and then can be peeled off the polythene and will stick to the window. Whatever you use it is best to clean windows thoroughly before applying decorations.

Be creative, have fun and show the world Christmas is still happening.

-Heather Whyte

December 2020 – Liz Laing

Walking through town we see the big Teddy Bear outside Sainsbury's, the colourful Penguin, the Christmas tree and the decorative lights in the town centre, all a reminder that it will soon be Christmas. We hear about people putting up their Christmas trees and shopping online for Christmas presents and soon we will be hearing Christmas songs on the radio and in the shops.

Two Christmas songs that come to mind are "All I want for Christmas....." and "Driving home for Christmas" and suddenly we find that our priorities have changed as to what is now important to us.

All I want for Christmas is for our loved ones to be safe and happy....to be able to be with our respective families at Christmas. To be able to hug someone and tell them that everything will be fine.

Perhaps the challenges we have endured the past few months will let more people reflect on what the real meaning of Christmas is – Christmas is LOVE.

John 3:16-17 says: For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. So Christmas is celebrating the true meaning of LOVE.

1 John 4:19 says; we love each other because he loved us first.

Love is not only about receiving but also about giving and that is why we help those who are in need. This year we will not only have a Gift Sunday but a Gift Weekend. Donations may be made on the 5th as well as on the 6th December at the Sunday Gift Worship Service.

WGC United Reformed Church

GIFT WEEKEND 2020

Saturday 5 December

10.30 am – 3.00pm



Together we can support our Community

While adhering to Covid-19 safety procedures

We are collecting unwrapped gifts for 4 charities
this year

Resolve Homeless Charity, Home-Start Charity,
WH Women's Refuge and YMCA

- Hats, Gloves, Thermal Socks or Scarves
 - Toiletries Male/Female
 - Chocolates/Sweets
 - Small Gifts for Male/Female
- Wrapping Paper/Gift Bags/Gift Tags
 - Toys 0-Teen

Proverbs 19:17 (NIV)

"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and
he will reward them for what they have done."

Alpha course

If you know of anyone that would be interested in exploring the Christian faith with us and discussing some of life's big questions, please contact me since we are looking at hosting an online Alpha Course during 2021.

Online Christian Book Club

We all miss being able to socially interact and a lot of people have found that they have resorted to reading more books now than pre-Covid. Although we have more time to read we miss being able to engage and discuss what we have read, with our friends. Now there is an opportunity to do so, with an online WGC United Reformed Church Book Club using either Zoom or Skype.

Perhaps there is a book that you've wanted to read and thought that others would enjoy it too, so this is your chance to do just that! You can invite your

neighbour or a friend to join and connect with other people that you may not have chatted with before.

Please contact me for more details if you are interested in joining and I will correlate the group and help with setting it up. I know that we have several avid readers in our Church family and look forward to hearing from you.

Training

Jane and I attended a Premier Radio Digital Online Conference on 14/11/20. The lectures I chose to attend were Fellowship, Pastoral Care, Instagram and Prayer.

Premier Radio Digital Online Conference

Fellowship:

Sanctuary First is a pioneer ministry that is passionate about developing new ways for people to connect with God, spirituality, and one another. Albert Bogle and Laura Digan shared their success about the Friday music jam sessions, connecting via art and their virtual coffee shop.

Pastoral Care for the Vulnerable:

Kay Morgan –Gurr confirmed that pastoral needs are on the rising and sometimes our ministers need pastoral care themselves. Even if you do ‘just one thing’ you would have achieved a lot. Zoom is great for pastoral care or WhatsApp groups, writing a letter or card if they have no access to digital. Involve the vulnerable in worship. There is also mental health first aid training that may interest to some. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England offers a range of training to empower people to spot signs of mental ill health and offer first aid support to the vulnerable.

Instagram:

Rev. Chris Lee is active on Instagram, with over 150,000 followers from around the world. His 60 second sermons there have received nationwide media attention. He suggested adding Christian memes and pictures when posting and posting at least 3 times a week.

Prayer:

Fiona Fidgin mentioned that you can either post a Prayer Online, which is prayer for the day on your website or have Online Prayer. Online Prayer is interactive where people can request prayer by email. You can add an audio version of a prayer to the website. She referred to the Church of England web pages which have advice on learning how to pray, topical prayers and being able to light an online candle to pray. They have online apps that will help people with preparing services. She told us about The Ordinary Office which is a website with widget symbols for prayers.

Outreach:

Contact is kept with most of the Community Cafe' visitors either telephonically, via Facebook or WhatsApp and Zoom and support offered as needed, whether it is prayer or with food donations.

Our Sainsbury's partnership allows us to continue to support the Zion Foodbank. They have also chosen us as their partner for their Christmas Campaign, "**Help Brighten a Million Christmases**". Sainsbury's will be fundraising from the 1st to the 14th December and CAF (Charities Aid Foundation) will be sending any donations raised on behalf of Sainsbury's to us via BACS.

WGC Centenary Service - BBC Radio 4's Advent Sunday morning service

BBC Radio 4 - Sunday 6 December. From 08:10 to 08:55 am. Celebrating the centenary of Welwyn Garden City with Rev Dr Rob Marshall Rector of Digswell, Welwyn Garden City. Reading: Revelation 21: 22 - 22:5.

For Advent BBC Radio 4's Sunday Worship will feature four gardens and use them as a theme for the act of worship which follows. Welwyn Garden City has been chosen and this will be introduced from one of the oldest parts of the garden - Digswell.

Sunday Worship: Cities of Promise - a place for nature

During this era of Covid the city seems to have been devalued as a place of human flourishing.

Instead it's become a place of fear of contamination - a place to get away from, no longer a sought-after place to live.

But the biblical view is of a redeemed city, a place where human culture is valued alongside restored relationships - a place of beauty and worship of the living God.

Such an understanding of the potential of the city might have inspired Sir Ebenezer Howard who, in 1920 founded Welwyn Garden City, a planned town that was intended to combine the benefits of city and countryside whilst avoiding the disadvantages of both.

Churches in WGC:

Most of the churches in WGC is closed but still doing online Zoom worship services.

- St. Francis is considering having their Christmas Tree Festival outdoors this year.
- Rob from St. Johns in Digswell reminded all about the Centenary Service on 6 December (information above)
- Ian Douglas from Lemsford has daily prayers on YouTube and a live Advent Calendar for children
- Father Norbert is posting Mass Services on Facebook and Father Tony has been supplying hampers to the elderly

Links Meeting

Meeting was held on 12/11/20 via Zoom.

- The visit by John Bell scheduled for 8 May 2021 will be postponed until 2022.
- Greenwood is hoping to do a Carol service in the field on 19 December. They wanted to re-open in November but that now appears to have changed to December 2020.
- Wigmore – Heather is bringing all 5 churches in the cluster together on Zoom and sending hard copies of OOS to those who are not on Zoom. A cluster Harvest service was held and Wigmore collected items for the Women's Aid in Luton.
- St Katherine's – most of the congregation is keeping in touch by telephone.
- Edward Street and St. Ninians are having services via Zoom

- Bury Park – Only half the congregation on Zoom but full service published on the website
- Trinity – Zoom worship services are held for the St Albans cluster every week, mostly led by the Revd John Hardaker. A joint Christingle Service and a joint Carol Service are being planned to include carols recorded from singers in all three churches and mixed; these will be Zoom based.
- Wheathampstead - . Progress can be followed on the Chapel Gym Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ChapelGym>

Steering Group:

I have set up a Steering group for the Mission Developer's role and the first meeting was 13.11.20. SMART goals have been finalised keeping in line with the mission objectives for the role.

Merry Christmas

Thank you for reading my article and for all your support during 2020. I feel blessed to be part of the church family and will continue to pray for you.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed 2021. May God bless you with good health – stay safe and take care.

Love Liz

Please see **The URC Community Group of Welwyn Garden City** Facebook page with regular updates for the community on support groups and services that may be of interest.

Flower Rota 2021

At present we do not know when we will be able to worship together or distribute the Sunday flowers to members of the congregation but I would like to compile the rota in hope and readiness for a return to normal.

You may not have contributed before but all are welcome to donate for the flowers in church on a Sunday which has special meaning for them. If you would like to be included on the 2021 Rota please contact me before the end of December. A choice of at least two dates is helpful and I will try to accommodate your first choice.

If we do not return to our normal worship pattern by your chosen date you can opt to donate your flower money contribution to Church funds as many opted to do in 2020.

Please do not send me any money at present.

Joyce Nicolson – 01707 326829 mob.07886392602

email joycen2@hotmail.com

(On behalf of the Flower and Décor Team)

Volunteer needed to take responsibility for the Church's Memorial Garden

The garden at the side of the church has been set aside as a memorial garden. It has a border with shrubs and perennial plants and a grassy area where spring bulbs appear and a seat under the trees. The border is in need of a refresh since some of the shrubs have grown leggy and need to be removed or replaced.

If you have an interest in gardening and would like to be responsible for the updating and ongoing maintenance of this small garden then please let me know. There will be a budget available to do the work on this space.

Looking forward to hearing from you

Helen Kaye

CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

Despite our calendar at home being completely empty since March, time still marches on and I am now looking at my birthday list for December. So here goes!

First out of the blocks is Melva on 3rd, followed by Olive and Margaret Br. Both on the 4th, Roger S. on 5th as is Melva's 60th birthday, Philip on 7th, Muriel M. (104 on 15th!) and Howell on 29th.

Moving on to January 2021, we start with Shaun C. on 6th, Rory who will be 14 on 16th, and Linda S. on 20th.

We wish all our friends a very Happy Birthday on their special days and we hope that celebrations will soon be back to how they used to be before the virus intervened.

Barbara and Joe Palacio will be celebrating their Wedding Anniversary on 14th January and Barbara has been telling me how they met when she was 15 and Joe 17 at a Smith & Nephew open day in WGC. Back then, if Joe couldn't make a date he had arranged with Barbara, he would send a friend instead!! But two year's National Service must have tamed him as 65 years later they are still together! Congratulations to you both.

I have managed to gather some more birthday and anniversary dates to add to my list but there are still a lot missing so please email me (ann@meers.org.uk) or phone (01707 327277) if you would like to be included. Don't miss out!

We continue to send our prayers and best wishes to those in particular need at this time:-

Janice as she waits for a transfer to the Lister from Addenbrookes hospital.

Linda, awaiting results following her recent operation.

Jean's daughter, Carolyn, back home from hospital but awaiting further treatment.

Please remember anyone else in need of our thoughts and prayers at this time and pass on any new concerns to Jane, one of the Elders or Pastoral friends.

Thank you

Ann Meers

Remembrance Day

This year our Remembrance Day Service was held on Sunday 8th November and was certainly very different from previous years. Due to the lockdown the service was recorded at different intervals during the week from our church in Harpenden with input from Sharon Sookrah, Phil Valle and Norman Deas which was then put together and streamed out on the Sunday.

Like all Remembrance Day services the message was very much the same with thoughts and reflections of past wars, the fallen and a reminder that conflicts still exist throughout the world with their repercussions of human misery, poverty and suffering.

We are asked to remember all this in order that we can honour our dead and in the hope that we can learn from the past that wars in themselves achieve very little and that peace can only be achieved through reconciliation and understanding between differing peoples and nations.

Prince Charles this year apart from being at the Cenotaph took part in a memorial service in Germany to commemorate their war dead which was the first time a member of the royal family had been to such a service. It reminded me of the very large German War Cemetery here in England in the Midlands which contains thousands and thousands of Germans, mainly airmen, who died while fighting over our country and is beautifully kept partly by local volunteers. If only those of the past could see what can be achieved in the future!

Several years ago some friends and I visited the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire and stood by the Great Wall with all the names of those who have given their lives during all the great wars of the past right up to the present day – quite an awesome site! Looking at the names I happened to come across a Col. H Jones who some of you may remember was killed in active duty in the Falklands War. I pointed this out to my friends and in doing so a man next to me asked if I knew him to which I said no but recognised the name. He said he'd fought alongside him and came every year to remember him. On wishing him well he became very emotional and gave each of us a hug and said "Thank you for coming and thank you for remembering!"

Leading on from this Jill and I were lucky enough to visit the Falkland Islands back in February and during a tour of Port Stanley visited the Wall of

Remembrance. There were only a few other visitors about and as people departed I held back and placed a Remembrance Day Cross with a personal message on it just beside Col. H Jones name. Walking away a local person passing stopped me, held out her hand and said the same words – “Thank you for remembering!”.

God teaches us through Jesus to love one another as he has loved us and that has to be the message for everyone on Remembrance Day to offer each other Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all People.

We will remember them!

Another virus story!

Our uneventful lives suddenly became more interesting in September with the unexpected arrival of our nephew after he decided to leave his rented room in Soho. Luckily our spare bedroom is always set up for visitors so he was able to move in the next day and will be here until the New Year when he will be moving to a spacious flat in Hampstead. The main interest for us is that he earns a living as a psychological magician and in normal times would be entertaining at weddings, corporate functions, bar mitzvahs, birthday parties, etc, which keeps him busy all year round. Obviously none of these events are possible at present but the magic of the internet has come to the rescue and our spare bedroom has now been turned into a venue for Zoom magic shows as well as a place to sleep! The enquiries and bookings are coming in daily now, particularly in the run up to Christmas and New Year with companies hoping to keep their employees entertained while they are stuck at home working on their laptops.

If you are bored and want to see what it's all about, visit www.nebmagic.com

Ann & John

FROM

Christian Christmas Messages and Verses to Write in a Card - Holidappy - Celebrations

Christian card messages communicate to others that Christianity is important. Words have the power to teach, inspire, encourage, amuse, and comfort. Use these examples to help you come up with the perfect wording for your Christian Christmas card wishes.

Example Christian Christmas Wishes

- Our hearts are filled with joy because of a special baby boy.
- Love was born on Christmas morn'.
- Happy birthday, Jesus!
- He started his life in a manger, and for us, he put himself in danger.
- Christmas is about new life!
- I'm sending my prayers and best wishes this holiday.
- Be blessed by our most precious Christmas gift, and then pass on that blessing to those you encounter.
- We get to celebrate the birthday of the most important person to ever live. He keeps giving us his *presence* every year.
- I pray that you feel loved this Christmas. Our Lord loves you, and I do too.
- Take time to thank Him for the gift we received thousands of years ago.
- I hope you find meaning and joy while going about your Christmas activities. There's never a wrong time to be grateful.
- Just think how much power and potential there was in the manger.
- The epic story that started in a stable is much more than just a childhood fable.



LOVE IN A

BOX



Mainly thanks to Carole, we were very pleased to be able to send 72 boxes off to the Mustard Seed Mission Charity despite all the restrictions this year. Mike, down at the warehouse in Eastbourne, is having to manage without the help of the large number of volunteers who usually sort

out the thousands of boxes that arrive from all over the country in November so it was up to us to seal our own boxes and send the shipping cost money separately this year. Despite the fact that many schools were not able to take part this year, a full van load was picked up from further north so the driver had to return to Eastbourne and a second volunteer driver came to us early the next day for his first pick up (we were still in our pyjamas when he arrived!!) before going on to more places in the Home Counties. As Mike wrote “we have never failed in 27 years to send gifts to the children in Eastern Europe and we will do our very best for them this year”.

We are very grateful to Carole for masterminding the project again this year and we send her our heartfelt thanks for all the effort she puts into it.

Here is Richard loading our boxes before moving on to fill the van again before returning to Eastbourne once more.

Thank you to everyone who took part, either with a donation or by preparing a box.

Ann Meers

An Attitude of Gratitude for Advent

One of the things that has been written about often during this year, as a strategy to help lift our spirits, is the idea of keeping a Gratitude journal.

This sounds rather fancy, but it could be as simple as writing in your diary or on your calendar or getting a nice journal to keep not of the things you are grateful for each day. This idea is to make a not of three things you are grateful for. Try to make them different from one day to the next and what really makes a difference, that takes it beyond a little exercise, is to take a moment to sit quietly, focus on what you are grateful for and really feel your gratitude grow in your heart. Then as Christians we can say thank you to God too for these blessings that make our days lighter.

Positive psychologists tell us that whatever focus on grows – so if we are focussed on bad news – this is what we will hear, if we are focussed on how awful things are strangely enough conversations with people will often be about – you’ve guessed it – how awful things are! On the other hand, if we focus on the things we are grateful for we will soon find that 3 things a day is not enough, because like counting your blessings, the list goes on and on.

For those of you who like the background information:

Gratitude is the expression of appreciation for what one has. It is a recognition of value independent of monetary worth. Spontaneously generated from within, it is an affirmation of goodness and warmth. This social emotion strengthens relationships Brain scans of people assigned a task that stimulates expression of gratitude show lasting changes in the prefrontal cortex that heighten sensitivity to future experiences of gratitude.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/gratitude>

Why not give it a go during Advent? There is a Gratitude Advent Calendar to follow. You could take the risk of sharing this with other people you talk to, telling them about the things you have found pleasure in and giving them the gift of a grateful heart too.



PS. This is good to do with children too.

Gratitude Advent Calendar



1	13
2	14
3	15
4	16
5	17
6	18
7	19
8	20

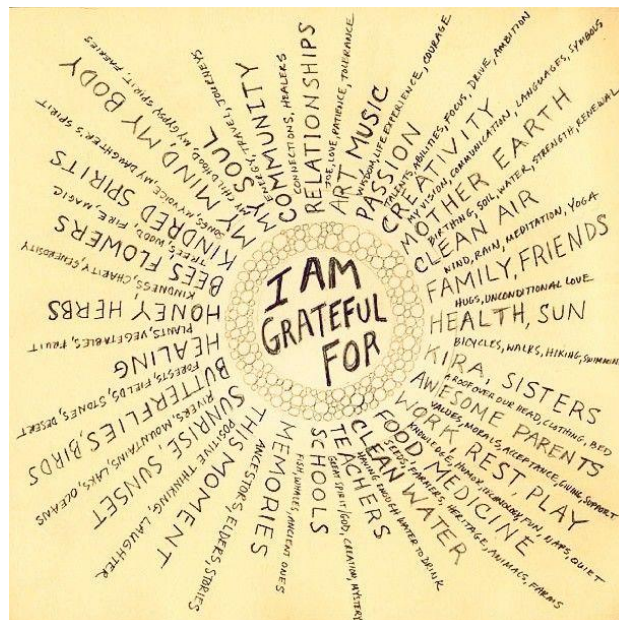
9	21
10	22
11	23
12	24

There are so many ways to use this idea: and please take photos of what you do to share with us

Get Christmas gift tags and write one each day – then put them on your Christmas tree or create your own decoration with them.

Write your gratitude on slips of paper and put them in a jar – when you are feeling a bit low take one out and recall the warmth of the memory again.

Turn your gratitude into a piece of art



Take photos of the things that lift your spirits, and that you are grateful for.
Digital cameras are so useful for looking back on our memories.

Colour or draw a picture each day and as you colour reflect on the things you are grateful for that day.

Use the idea of gratitude when you are writing your Christmas letter this year, how lovely to tell people about all the things you have been grateful for.

Write a Thank you letter to God.

I hope there is something here that encourages you to take a risk and discover the benefits of gratitude for your self.

Happy Christmas Countdown!





WOW!!

How wonderful do the newly refurbished doors of Wheathampstead Church look?

What a fabulous visible sign of the work which has been going on!

We are all very grateful to the volunteers who have given their time and supplies to all the ventures.



VILLAGE POP-UP CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Saturday 5th &
Sunday 6th December
10am to 2pm
United Reformed
Church Car Park,
Brewhouse Hill,
Wheathampstead

Saturday 12th December
11am to 5pm
Farr Brew Brewery
7, The Courtyard
Samuels Farm,
Coleman Green Lane,
Wheathampstead,
St Albans AL4 8ER

In
collaboration
with
The Chapel Gym
&
Farr Brew



For more info follow us @villagepopup on Facebook & Instagram

Harpenden Giving Away Day

Whilst we are still unsure if churches will re-open after the 2nd December we will be having our Christmas Giving Away Day for the St Albans Women's Refuge on the weekend of 12th and 13th December. For those who can't attend Church on Sunday 13th Dec. we are planning to open up the Church on the Saturday morning of the 12th between 10.00 and 12.00 to receive gifts which can be left in the front vestibule otherwise they can be brought in on the Sunday. If either of these options proves difficult for anyone then we can arrange for a home collection – ring Norman Deas on 01582 762894. As usual these gifts should be gift wrapped with a label indicating what age and whether suitable for a boy or girl. Whilst it might prove difficult this year for some of us to buy gifts donations of cash can also be given and these can either be dropped off on the Saturday/Sunday or sent directly to myself or Sarah Connor – cheques made out to United Reformed Church Harpenden.

It is also our usual practice to donate our Sunday collections for the last 2 services of the year to our local hospice – this being The Rennie Grove Hospice in St Albans. Again we would ask that any donations if not able to be given over during one of our Church services on either the 13th Dec or on Christmas Day should be sent to either Sarah Connor or myself.

Remembrance 2020

The year has whizzed by. On Sunday 8th November for Remembrance Sunday we couldn't worship in the church building as we planned, we worshipped online this year remembering the heroes of the past. Others stood on their doorsteps within the community. Outside URC Harpenden church we displayed remembrance flags, soldiers, Red Ribbons to Remember (for the community to interact and tie red ribbons on the railings) and remembrance pebbles, to enable others to remember. Remembrance Sunday is important to reflect on the freedom we have and to say thank you.



This is the link if anyone missed the service <http://bit.ly/remembrance-service> and would like to watch it)

Sharon Sookrah

BOOK REVIEW

THE MILL ON THE FLOSS, by GEORGE ELIOT

This is one of the books which has been on my reading list for many decades, and I finally got round to picking it up (one of the silver linings I have found during lock-down).

It was published in 1860 and is the semi-autobiographical story of Victorian siblings growing up in a mill. It describes them, and their extended family, from childhood through to early adulthood, and the development of their relationships through some difficult times.

It is beautifully written, and the characters, especially Maggie, are engaging. I found I wanted to read more, and it was difficult to stop when I had run out of reading time on any day! It reminded me of reading under the bedclothes with a torch when I was a teenager and wanted to finish a book!

I loved this book, and have to confess to actual tears at the ending. If you are looking for a good book, I would recommend this if you haven't already read it!

Sarah Connor

Letter from Fuerteventura

Dear friends

It has certainly been a different year for all of us and we continue to pray for all those suffering from the Corona Virus, its medical, economic, social and mental health effects. 2020 began as usual, if a little quiet on the tourist front here, due in the main to Brexit and some financial uncertainties. 29th February saw a beautiful family gathering for the marriage of Sam and Jo in Wiltshire and what a fab family they are now with daughter Willow and a new baby to be welcomed hopefully by Christmas this year. Little did we know then that it would be last time we would be able to travel and spend precious time together as a family. We were lucky enough to see Curtis and Shelley and baby Lucas at the wedding too because we haven't been able to see others of Steve's side of the family this year at all.



By mid-March we all knew about the virus, the schools here were closed on Friday 13th, a State of Alarm was issued across Spain which includes the Canary Islands, and Saturday 14th was Steve's last gig before lockdown. The police came into the bar at about 11.30pm to say everyone must leave. The bar is to close along with all the others. Initially, we thought 15 days but of course now we know this was just the start. I continued working for another couple of weeks before I was furloughed then until mid- June.

Thankfully back to working from home as before now for me.

Steve and I actually enjoyed lockdown, we are fortunate to have space at home, both indoors and in the garden and with a large dog as well, we were allowed to go out to take him for the necessities. During strict lockdown we were only allowed 50 meters from home to walk the dog and if the police were around, they would ask you where you lived and send you home if they felt you were too far away! We had armed Guardia Civil outside the supermarket making sure we kept to the rules, police at the roundabouts stopping random cars checking why you were out. We were advised to keep our receipts from the supermarket as some people tried sneaking out with a shopping bag filled with goods from their store cupboards! Essential shopping also meant not too much alcohol in your shopping trolley! Strict lockdown rules here which we soon got used to. In the main, this has paid off as we have had only 4 deaths in total on the island, all of whom were in their 80s or 90s with underlying medical conditions. I don't think we have had any British with Covid here – most have been Spanish coming across from the Mainland or immigrants arriving by boat from Africa. These are all tested on arrival and then quarantined and eventually sent over to mainland Spain. They aren't generally allowed to settle here. We still have relatively few cases, about 50 in a population of around 120,000, with only one or two hospitalised which is good because the only hospital on



Fuerteventura has only 8 ICU beds. They all seem to recover at home thankfully.

Garden centres were one of the first places to re-open and we have a large garden which got a lot of attention through April/May/June. I got into re-discovering craft activities using my sewing machine which had previously been gathering dust in the garage as well as keeping a daily Covid- diary which kept me busy and Steve did online gigs once a week from our living room. These proved to be enormous fun both for us and for those watching who joined in by commenting and requesting songs during the live streams. The garden and DIY jobs definitely were top of the list during lockdown.

Although Steve is now back to a couple of gigs a week, with a second lockdown in the UK there will be more live streams to come. No-one knows how things will develop, we all hope for the best possible outcomes of course but in reality we know there will be no quick fix. Isabelle (my



youngest) has it worst I think being on her own in albeit a nice flat in Aberdeen, keeping up with university studies via Zoom only and currently a placement in a city hospital working as a student nurse on the HDU. No normal university social life for her which has been hard and also missing out on the practical teaching she should have had. Isabelle has had a lot of support from eldest brother Freddie with her move to Scotland though and he and girlfriend Emma share time between Harpenden and Hitchin.

Heloise and Dean are still enjoying life on the Gold Coast and have been quite lucky too but still cannot travel outside the state of Queensland. My Mum is still doing very well living on her own in Bexhill but now with daily carers popping in to ensure she is safe and well. At 97 she is still very feisty and enjoying life; chatting to her daily visitors, still doing crossword puzzles and sketching most days. She has regular visits from my sister Hilary and brother in law, Nigel, who have been a lifeline taking care of both her practical and financial needs.

Christmas is going to be quiet on the island. With all the restrictions in place on travel and the need for Covid tests before you arrive here to stay in registered accommodation, many people are having flights cancelled and having to re-think their Christmas and New Year plans. We both hope to get to see our families in early 2021 if at all possible Technology is fine but it doesn't make up for missing proper hugs. We hope all our friends and family can have a peaceful and healthy Christmas and feel positive for 2021. I'm sure we can all find things to be grateful for even at this time.



I have been looking for the annual poinsettias on display in all the garden centres and supermarkets very soon. These cheerful Christmas plants are a bit of a thing here on the island, decorating streets and roundabouts as well as private windowsills and patio planters. They grow well outdoors at this time of year. Christmas decorations are going up early here as in the UK and I daresay I will dig out ours by the beginning of December. Hoping for Christmas Day on the beach this year – it's warm enough!



We look forward to meeting up with family and friends again as soon as we can. Take care, and have a Merry little Christmas as the song goes, keep safe and healthy. We made it to St. James church in Coralejo for the Remembrance Sunday service and we will go again for their Christmas services. Weird this week though as all masked up we were also told only to hum, not to sing the hymns!

Blessings to all for Christmas and the New Year.

Love and prayers,

Rose & Steve

Zoom @ 11.00

Advent

Hope · Love · Joy · Peace

and elevensies

December

Thursday 3rd

Thursday 10th

Thursday 17th

Coffee from home
& an advent chat



Christmas Quiz **Friday 11th**
December 2020
Friends & Fun!! **7.30**
URC
Join us on Zoom

T'was a Month Before Xmas 2020

T'was a month before Christmas,
 And all through the town,
 People wore masks,
 That covered their frown.
 The frown had begun
 Way back in the Spring,
 When a global pandemic
 Changed everything.
 They called it corona,
 But unlike the beer,
 It didn't bring good times,
 It didn't bring cheer.
 Contagious and deadly,
 This virus spread fast,
 Like a wildfire that starts
 When fueled by gas.



Frontline workers,
 Doctors and nurses,
 Try to save people,
 From riding in hearses.
 This virus is awful,
 This COVID-19.
 There isn't a cure.
 There is no vaccine.
 It's true that this year
 Has had sadness a plenty,
 We'll never forget
 The year 2020.
 And just 'round the corner -
 The holiday season,
 But why be merry?
 Is there even one reason?
 To decorate the house
 And put up the tree,

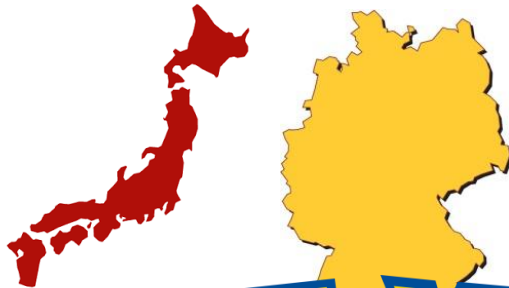
Airplanes were grounded,
Travel was banned.
Borders were closed
Across air, sea and land.
As the world entered lockdown
To flatten the curve,
The economy halted,
And folks lost their verve.
From March to July
We rode the first wave,
People stayed home,
They tried to behave.
When summer emerged
The lockdown was lifted.
But away from caution,
Many folks drifted.
Now it's November
And cases are spiking,
Wave two has arrived,
Much to our disliking.

Christmas Quiz

1. In which country do many households traditionally have a KFC as their Christmas feast?
2. Which retailer's 2014 Christmas advert featured the story of Christmas Day in 1914, when German and British soldiers called a truce and emerged from their trenches to play football and exchange gifts?
3. In which British city is The Christmas Market and Craft Fair - it's the largest such market outside Germany and Austria?
4. Which famous advertising phrase was created by Clarissa Baldwin?
5. With 'over 30 sayings', what was the must have toy for Christmas 1996?
6. Can you solve the following Christmassy anagrams: (a)Is a tin poet, (b)Drastic charms, (c)Tense aggressions, and (d)Deplored, he is the odder runner?
7. In which country were Christmas trees first used to decorate homes?
8. The American states of Georgia, Arizona, and Indiana all have towns that share which same Christmassy name?

9. Traditionally, what name was given to the Sunday when families gather together in the kitchen of their homes to mix and steam Christmas pudding?
10. Name the Christmas carol sung by Bing Crosby which is the third best-selling single of all-time?
11. Popular in Victorian England at Christmas and also appearing in the Dickens' story *A Christmas Carol*, what is 'Smoking Bishop'?
12. Which traditional Christmas carol is also known as *Tidings of Comfort and Joy*?

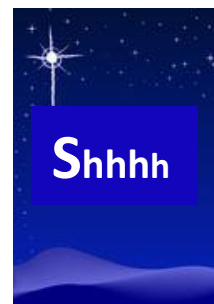
Clues(which may or may not help!!) but not for the anagrams.



Recipes from
Brandy Ice



Helen Burke
Cream



This is an easy ice-cream recipe that my late father found years ago in the Telegraph. It's very easy to make, and really cuts through the richness of the pudding.

Serves 10+

2 Large egg whites

Good pinch of salt

6 oz Demerara Sugar

6 tbs water

1 tsp Vanilla essence

3-5 table spoons brandy

$\frac{3}{4}$ pint whipping cream

Whisk egg whites in large bowl until they form stiff peaks.

Add sugar to water in saucepan and dissolve slowly over low heat until **all the** crystals have dissolved.

Increase heat and boil fiercely for 3 min's without stirring – time carefully.

Pour onto egg whites in a thin stream, whisking all the time at high speed. Gradually whisk in Brandy and Vanilla extract to taste (don't overdo the brandy it as it can separate when frozen). Continue whisking until it's really thick and looks like Meringue mixture.

In a separate bowl whisk the whipping cream but not too stiff, then gently fold into meringue mixture with metal spoon.

Pour into a container or bowl to freeze overnight.

Enjoy!



**Here are some lovely messages to everyone, in lieu of our
Christmas Card Wall**



**Greetings and love and peace to the world.
Ray Gibbins**

**To all my friends at WGC URC. Wishing you all a
Christmas and hoping we all keep safe until we
each other again. Love Margaret K**



**Happy
can see**



**Sandra and Philip send warm Christmas wishes to all our Church
friends, old and new. Hoping for a
2021!**

**With all good wishes and good health for
and 2021. Kathleen**



Christmas



**Season greetings and warm wishes for a happy new year
to all, from Barbara and Joe.**

**Lots of good wishes and blessings to everyone for
Christmas and 2001. Helen Cunningham**



**Wishing everyone in our church congregation a peaceful Christmas
and a virus free 2021. With Blessings & Love to all, Ann & John.**

**To our wonderful friends at the WGC URC.
May the joy and peace of Christmas be with you all
through the year. Wishing you a season of blessings
from heaven above. Happy Christmas. Sending love and peace
to you all, Laura, Mark, Erin and Rory F**





Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas. All the best for the New Year, hoping it's a better one. Love and best wishes, Margaret C

**With love and best wishes at this difficult
from Irene and Roger**



time



Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and hope we can meet up in the New Year. Love from Carol Tucker

**Hoping everybody is keeping happy and well
this difficult time and looking forward to singing hymns
Love and blessings from Brenda B**



**during
again!**



Thank you for everybody's prayers and we wish you a safe and Merry Christmas. Love from Melba and Janice

**To All our friends at Church. Wishing you the Joy and
of Christmas and a Happy New Year. Love and blessings
and Howell**



**Peace
Nano**



**To all our dear friends, wishing you all a happy and
healthy Christmas and every blessing for the year ahead.
John and Janet Mortimer.**

**Life may have been very different this past year, but
Christmas Story of Love and Hope remains the same.
CHRISTMAS' from Margaret and Brian.**



**the
'HAPPY**



To all my friends at Church wishing you all a happy and peaceful Christmas from Helen

To all my lovely friends at WGC URC, I wish much joy and happiness for Christmas with brighter days ahead in the New Year. Missing you all so much. Love and hugs Jean H.



Happy Christmas. Hope you are well and coping in this difficult time. Best wishes from Margaret B. Hope to see you all in better times.

To all my friends at WGC URC and in the Cluster may I take this opportunity to wish you a Happy Christmas and looking forward to when we can all meet again safely in the New Year. Keep Safe and God Bless, Joyce



"Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and good wishes for the year ahead". Norma Collie

Merry Christmas to everyone at Church and hopefully a better New Year. Eileen Tridgell-Webber



To all at Church , we wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas. Ann and Fred Robinson.

For all the Kids and young at heart, try out this scavenger hunt idea when you next go on a walk or a drive (although I don't suggest the driver ticks things off!!). Or you could make up your own.

Christmas Decoration Scavenger Hunt		
Nativity Set		
Reindeer		
Oversized candy canes		
Wreath		
Star		
Blow up Father Christmas		
'JOY' in lights		
Train		
Lights in bushes		
Snowman		
Icicle lights		
Community Christmas tree		
Penguin		
Merry Christmas in lights		
Stocking		

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. 1.Japan2.Sainsbury's3.Birmingham4.A Dog is for Life, not just for Christmas5.Buzz Light year6.(a)Poinsettia, (b)Christmas card, (c)Season's Greetings, and (d)Ruldolph the red-nosed reindeer7.Germany8.Santa Claus9.Stir-up Sunday10.Silent Night11.A type of mulled wine12.God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

THE POPPY THAT LINKS THEM ALL

Begins November the usual way,
With dark and damp and blustery day,
People with not a lot to say
When they meet.
Depressing, gloomy, dismal;
They drag their feet.

Collars turned up against the chill,
As people from their houses spill,
The cashier opens up her till
To start another day.
And all the world seems painted in
Uninteresting shades of grey.

But amongst this monochromatic scene,
A splash of colour where none had been,
No gradual toning in between -
Glorious Poppies! Scarlet and bright,
And on this dull November morn
A vibrant sight!

Standing out above the rest,
Clothes, as always, neatly pressed,
Blazer, with the regimental crest,
The British Legion man,
Still the strong, proud soldier,
But now no weapon – just a can.

In quiet moments, his sad thoughts stray,
The bloody battlefields so far away,
And on this bleak November day
A tear comes to his eye,
Remembering all the friends he knew,
But the poppy forms a link between,
Though she'll never see the things he's seen,
Or visit the places where he's been,
And wished he'd never gone,
And, thank God, he thinks, she'll never know the horror he has known.

Why so many had to die?

Wear a Poppy with Pride his poster
screams,
But no one cares, or so it seems,
Do they realise he still has terrible
dreams,
After all these years?
Things he still can't talk about
Without bitter tears.

The cashier watches from her till,
And worries that he might get ill,
And after work she sees him still,
Collecting where he can,
And she admires the determination
Of this British Legion man.

Slowly she crosses to the poppy stand,
And reaches out a friendly hand,
She doesn't really understand,
What it's all about,
But she buys a poppy anyway,
Despite her doubt.

She pays for the poppy from her wages,
And notes the difference in their ages,
Their histories will appear on different
pages,
Chapters apart.
While his adventures are almost over,
Hers are just about to start.

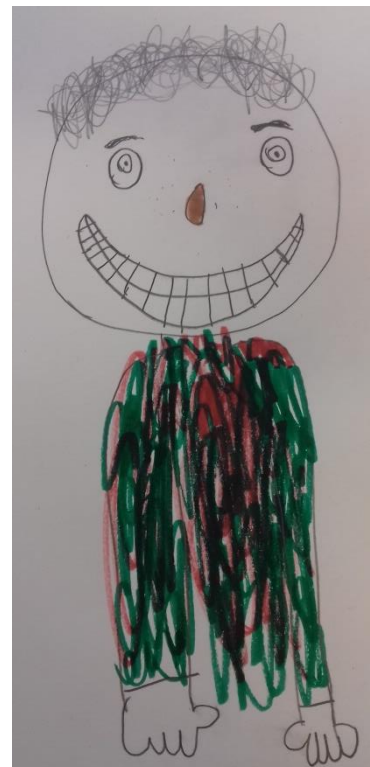


Charlotte Hughes, 18, and Cpl. Albert Ernest Shurvinton, 87, who inspired this poem.

On Nov 1st, Junior Church enjoyed their first session indoors after meeting in the church garden since August. And it was All Saints Day. God helps us all grow our character on the journey to becoming saints! Here are a few pictures the children drew of themselves:



Elliott
Thomas
Jonathan



Lucy

Reuben



Above is the logo for our interfaith group

– launched just a couple of months before lockdown.

And then we had to cancel all our planned events just like every other charity! Fortunately we were quick to adapt to meetings on-line where attendance has been good. Zoom enables folk to participate without travelling but it doesn't give the same feeling of connection. So we saw plenty of new faces on zoom, but missed a few of our regulars who don't use technology.

Unfortunately, our biggest ever event which was in planning for the WGC Centenary in June 2020 got postponed along with the rest of the Centenary programme and some of our pre-work is just lost time. This outdoor performance by Kadam Dance company, specially commissioned for performance in Howardsgate gardens will now go ahead on June 13th 2020 - put the afternoon in your diary and look out for tickets! Despite all the frustration of this, we are pleased the event is more fully absorbed into the wider centenary programme for 2021, and that through the wonderful creativity of Sanjeevini Dutta, creative director, we are about to enjoy the second of two spin-off programmes by zoom during lockdown. And thanks to our own Ivana Poku for introducing Sanjeevini in the first place!

Our challenges for the next few months are to resume as much 'normality' as possible, and to provide some on-line 'faith visits' for schools as the Whisper programme was also suspended due to lockdown.

Do contact me if you would like to consider our mailing list or be added to the mailing list

Wendy Lidgate wendy.lidgate:outlook.com 07904 517384

(Chair of Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith)

Events coming up:

The history of the Focolare Movement & its work for inter religious dialogue

Many people ask, 'What is the Focolare Movement?'

Here is an opportunity to find out

Main speakers:

Jon Dal Din & Pat Whitney

Tuesday 8th December 2020 8.00p.m

by Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85757641505?pwd=b09FSVhzTm9xTHNnbEFvTjFnTzVaUT09>

Meeting ID: 857 5764 1505

Passcode: 647113

www.whifgroup.co.uk

5 Jan		Talk by Tony Skottowe – <i>A Tale of Two garden Cities</i> (Letchworth and WGC)
Tuesday 19 January	8pm	Building strong interfaith relationships Bishop Richard Atkinson, OBE
2 Feb		Peace gardens around the county
Monday 15 February	8pm	St Albans Cathedral - the history of the Cathedral and its role today Stephen De Silva
2 March		<i>Welwyn Garden City, My Home.</i> Poetry and sharing of experiences of moving to WGC from recently moved and old inhabitants.

Monday 15 March	8pm	The daily practices in different faiths Speakers from a number of different faiths
6 April		Sanjeevini – <i>Understanding Dance and Garden Design</i>
Monday 19 April	2:30pm	Buddhism- Julian Wall
5 th May		Music and dance on the theme of springtime

Hi Folks

Well due to a bumper edition of this magazine there isn't really much room for a letter from me, so I would just like to say thank you for all your contributions which has let me off the hook!! My life is still bizarre, but I am told that is the new normal so who am I to argue. I will embrace the fact I have Abi's friends popping up on her phone whilst I am doing something inappropriate, my hubby stripping off in the hall(thank goodness for frosted glass) standing outside the vets in the cold for 30mins each week as she will not perform on the video call, Wednesdays and Saturdays are full off singing, some good some bad as Abi teaches and the weekly bingo game I play with my online shopping delivery(have I got a full house or a lot of extra surprises).

Even the mask can be a good thing.... I no longer have to remember to put lippy on, or have an excuse if I forget. I can mutter in peace and happily make that face that looks like a "cats bottom" when my son told me how much he paid for a new BBQ. Although he said the eyes gave it away!!

Anyway I would like to wish everyone a happy and laughter-filled Christmas and a peaceful New Year. Allison.xx

P.S I found this little gem on Facebook

Dates of Services

No Nativity this year because the 3 Wise Men face a travel ban. The shepherds have been furloughed. The Inn keeper has shut under tier 3 regulations and had a slump in bookings. Santa won't be working as he would break the rule of 6 with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen. As for Rudolph, with that red nose, he should be isolating and taking a test. 😂😂

Watch out for any additional news on what is happening where. Also these services may have to change in accordance with Government advice.

December 5-6th	Gift Weekend and service WGC Christmas Markets Wheathampstead
December 12-13th	Giving away day and service from Harpenden
December 20th	Service WGC
December 21st	Longest night service You Tube
December 24th	Christmas Eve service You Tube
December 25th	Services at both Harpenden and WGC 10am
December 27th	Service on You Tube
January 3rd	Service at Harpenden
January 10th	Service at WGC
January 17th	Service at Harpenden
January 24th	Service at WGC

Please remember if you are wishing to attend services in person at WGC URC, please let Allison know to book your seat. Jane will continue to send out the links needed for zoom and you tube via email. Orders of service will still be sent via post for those that need them.

New Year Prayer

Lord,

*Make me an instrument
of Your peace;*

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, let me sow love;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

- St. Francis of Assisi

www.forangelsonly.org

This last year is one many will be glad to say goodbye to. We look forward in hope to lighter, brighter days and a successful vaccine programme that will release us to be community once again. Please pray for our world in 2021 to find a new way forward where all people matter and there is mutual respect,

integrity, justice and peace, where we care for our planet and where this slower, kinder pace of life deepens relationships and is life giving for all.