

MINISTER'S LETTER

*O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,
the silent stars go by.*



Each year we sing these words and, when we do, a picture is painted in our minds of a little town of pristine, white, flat-roofed buildings sitting peacefully under a deep, midnight blue sky lit up by stars sparkling like diamonds. It is, for us, an idyllic picture of beauty and gentleness: a picture of stillness and quietness. It is though a picture of Bethlehem that would be unrecognisable to its inhabitants today.

Life for many in and around Bethlehem is intolerable. A UN report earlier this year stated:

The movement of Palestinians within the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) is restricted by a combination of physical obstacles – including checkpoints and roadblocks – and by bureaucratic constraints, such as permits and by designating areas as closed or restricted to Palestinians. These impede access to basic services – health and education – and livelihoods of the civilian population, and the ability of local and international organizations to deliver assistance to the most vulnerable populations.

These continue to be dark days for a city that came to world prominence because of a message of hope and peace. The people of Bethlehem and the surrounding area - Palestinians and Israelis alike - desperately need some light to shine in the darkness once again. However unlikely it might seem as US Secretary of State, John Kerry, struggles to push peace talks back on track, who is to say that it will not come?

Dorothy Weaver - once of the International Centre of Bethlehem - writes:

'When God comes to be with God's people, it's not to an idyllic fairy-tale world of beauty and peace and "dreamless sleep". There

would be no need for “God with us” in that never-never world. The world that Jesus Emmanuel comes to is the real world that all of us know somewhere, somehow, at some time: the world of poverty and extortion, callous cruelty, unrelenting terror and inconsolable grief. It is this world, and none other, into which God comes to be with us in the person of Jesus, the defenceless child and crucified Messiah.

...This is a God who walks our streets, experiences our daily struggles, shares our pain, weeps our tears, suffers our humiliations and dies the most agonising of human deaths at the hand of his enemies. This is our God, the one who comforts those who mourn, claims peacemakers as children of God and grants inheritance in the kingdom of heaven to those who hunger and thirst for justice. And this is the good news of the kingdom.’

Who is to say that God’s light will not pierce the darkness once again? Surely this has to be our fervent hope and prayer this Christmas - for the people of Bethlehem and indeed for all people struggling in this beautiful but broken world of ours.

Wishing you a peaceful Christmas.

Shalom.

Paul

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Christmas is the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall and the genial flame of charity in the heart.

Washington Irving

Peace is not made at the council tables, or by treaties, but in the hearts of men.

Herbert Hoover

Jesus Christ is God's everything for man's total need.

Richard Halverson



**CHRISTIAN
SOLIDARITY
WORLDWIDE**

VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

"Remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

Hebrews 13:3

These were the words that inspired Christians across the world to remember that others in the body of Christ were suffering simply because of their faith. Today CSW exists to see an end to religious freedom violations, not only for Christians, but also those of other faiths.

Vickie Mbogo, Prayer Coordinator

CSW is an organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice. This Christmas let us remember those in prison and their families. Many are victims of violence, intimidation or harassment. As well as our prayers, they need encouragement. Using 'Connect & Encourage' (copies available at the church foyer) we can write cards and letters of encouragement to those who are persecuted for their beliefs. Receiving a personal letter reminds each person who receives them that someone, somewhere cares about their suffering.

Advent Prayer Guide

As part of your Advent prayers this year, use the world map to pray for a different region each week.

December 1st - Week 1

Pray for LOVE in Latin America

Use Romans 8:38 *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the Love of God that is in Christ Jesus our*

Lord"

On the first days of Advent, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, pray for those CSW works with in Latin America. Pray for Christians across the region, that they would know the power of God's love made known through Christ Jesus despite the challenges they are facing.

December 8th - Week 2

Pray for PEACE in Africa and the Middle East

Luke 2:14 *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."*

In this second week of Advent, pray for Africa and the Middle East. Ask God for his peace in the region over the holy advent season. Pray in particular for countries that have experienced war and civil unrest, that God's peace would be known.

December 15th - Week 3

Pray for JOY in South Asia

Luke 2:10 *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

Pray for the people CSW works for and with in South Asia. Meditate on the above scripture and ask God to take away fear and fill them with joy. In particular, pray for relationships between the different faith groups across the region.

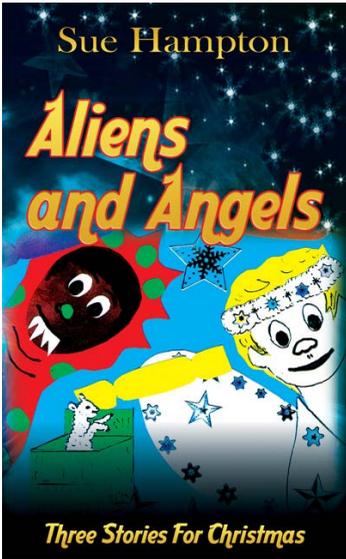
December 22nd - Week 4

Pray for HOPE in East Asia

Romans 15:13 *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him."*

In this last week of Advent, pray for those CSW works with in East Asia. Ask God to bring hope for those who have been worn with disappointment. In particular pray for Christians in the region, that they would know the reality of the hope we share in Christ.

Gwen Wildman



**Aliens and Angels:
Three Stories For Christmas
by Sue Hampton**

96 pages, paperback, RRP £5.99

Reviewed by Amélie Timmis, age 8

Aliens and Angels

Robbie wants to be the chief angel in the school play. Hannah longs to be the chief Globalob. But unfortunately their teacher has her own ideas about the parts they should play. When an angel visits Robbie one night in a dream he finds out things about himself that he didn't know before and realises that nobody can stop him from flying!

I think this story is very good because the first word makes you want to carry on reading. The story starts off in a hairdresser but from the vocabulary you would think that he is part of the royal family.

Not Without A Carrot

In this story, Trouble the donkey will not travel anywhere without a carrot! The owner keeps forgetting to buy some carrots so, obviously Trouble will not go anywhere. After a few days, she is persuaded (with carrots!) to make a journey to Nazareth where she ends up being owned by Mary and Joseph. It still seems that all she cares about is carrots until something very unexpected happens...

This book is LOL funny and I would recommend this to anyone my age and probably a bit older.

Bootee For Etta

Etta's mum is in hospital and her dad is away working. Etta has to stay with her mum's friends. In a Christmas cracker she gets Bootee - a little toy sheep. When Etta loses Bootee she not only discovers how much she cares for her new friend but also much, much more besides.

This is a sad story but one that teaches us about love. It is worth reading through the tears. I do not recommend this for children younger than me.

Thank you to Sue Hampton for inspiring me to do this review.

Amélie Timmis

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‘Aliens and Angles’ is available through Amazon or from the publisher’s own website (www.pneumasprings.co.uk/Aliensandangels) either as an eBook or Paperback.

For more ideas for Christmas books see the RE:FRESH BOOKS review pages later in the Newsletter.

Andrew Fox

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MORDEN CAROL SINGING

It’s that time of the year that we serenade the commuters of Morden. Once again we will be raising money for the National Children’s Home and would welcome as many people to come along and join in the singing of carols at Morden Underground Station.



We will be meeting at the Station on Wednesday 18th and Friday 20th December and plan to start singing at 5.00pm and finish about 7.00pm both of these days.



MARTIN WAY TOY SERVICE **8th DECEMBER 2013**

CHRISTIAN CARE ASSOCIATION

We would like presents – new or as good as new – to give to the boys and girls aged between 1 month and 11 years who attend the Christian Care Association New Year Party.

For babies and toddlers – rattles, bath toys, pull-along toys, puzzles, anything from Thomas the Tank Engine/Bob the Builder ranges, phones, baby dolls, building blocks.

Cars, trucks, trains, Lego, games – appropriate for different ages.

Dolls - including anything from Action Man, Spider Man and Superman

Outdoor Games - footballs, skittles etc.

Stationery – crayons, gel pens, pencils, pencil cases, drawing books, photo album, disposable camera.

Books – fun activity and story books for all ages, but appropriate for children where English is not their first language

Clothes etc – hats, scarves, gloves, pretty tights, backpacks, bags, umbrellas, jewellery.

Sorry but we cannot accept toys and games with batteries which have to be replaced. We cannot use jigsaws and games with small pieces that are easily lost such as Monopoly and Scrabble, nor War games or soft toys.

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Christian Care Buggy Appeal



We have 3 expectant mothers due to give birth early in the new year. It would be great to have a buggy available for each when their babies arrive.

The buggy needs to be suitable for new born baby - any make, any colour, any vintage.

For further information phone Barbara Moreland on 020 8542 3427

CHRISTMAS COLOURING TIME





Machu Picchu Charity Trek 2013

On July 26th, we arrived at Heathrow Airport around 4.30am for our 7.15am flight to Madrid. It was there we met our fellow trekkers, in total, 29 of us.

Once in Madrid we had quick turnaround before leaving at 1pm local time for our 12 hour flight to Lima, Peru. We arrived around 7pm local time (Peru is 6 hours behind the UK). We were met by a local rep and taken to a nearby hotel for a quick meal, then straight to bed as we were picked up at 5am the next morning for our 45 minute flight to Cusco.

Cusco lies at a height of 3,350m (11,400ft) and was our first exposure to



the effects of altitude for some of us. We were met by George who was our guide for the week. Our other guides were Claudia and Yilber (nicknamed, Puma). We spent the rest of the day and the following acclimatising to the altitude. We were taken for walks and ate lunch and dinners at local restaurants and stayed overnight at a 3-star hotel.

The fourth day of our time there began with an early drive (4 ½ hours) to Lares hot spring where we could swim and had lunch. After lunch we had a 4-5 hour walk to our overnight campsite in the remote village of Cuncani. Our campsite was at 3,800m and situated outside the village, close to a river where there was an original Inca bridge.

The local women all weave. The wool is sourced from the Alpacas. Wool was turned into thread, dyed and then woven into an array of hats, scarves, table linen and souvenirs. At each campsite and also along the trail they would set out a large rug and display their



products. As a group, we brought a variety of small trinkets at each stop therefore, evenly giving business to the community as we passed through on our journey. Once the sun dropped behind the mountains, the temperature dropped below zero (-10 at night) and night fell quickly!



Our meals were served in a communal dining tent and after evening meals, everyone retired to the relative warmth of their 2 man tents. We were woken each morning around 5am, so to start walking around 7am (temperature still below zero). As we

climbed out of the valleys and into the sun the temperature rose and within half an hour coats/hats were being removed.

Prior to leaving the UK, it was suggested we bring some small gifts – pens/pencils, etc. to give to the children on route and at our campsites.

On the sixth day we travelled from Huacahuasi to Ollantaytambo, which involved 8-9 hours walking through valleys to the highest pass (4600m). Views of lakes and snowy mountains were beautiful.

In Ollantaytambo, we stayed overnight at a hotel. But the following day began with the 1st train out of Ollantaytambo to Aguas Calientes – The start of the Inca Trail. (20 minutes out, train broke down, so a days schedule delayed).



The trail starts near some Inca ruins and heads sharply upwards through the tree line before coming out onto exposed mountainside. It is possibly no more than 6ft wide more often narrower with near sheer drops down in some places and wooden bridges

across streams. It is said to have 3000 steps. We climbed steadily for around 2½ hours, very exposed to the sun.

We reached a steep flight of steps which lead to the Sun Gate. This looks down onto the city of Machu Picchu. As a result of arriving late, tourists had left and we were treated to a rare privilege of seeing Machu Picchu empty. There is something spiritual, magical and mythical about seeing it like this.





We spent the night back at a Hotel and the next day, the morning was dedicated to going back to Machu Picchu to explore the Inca remains.

In the afternoon, we got a train back to Cusco and had a celebratory meal in a

local restaurant and prepared for the next days journey home.

Peru is a stunning place. It is a country of contrasts from the dusty and dry high altitude Andes to the lush densely forested mountains on the Inca Trail, from the ancient to the modern and from the remote communities to the cities. Machu Picchu is an amazing place and we had the best experience by entering it through the Sungate via the Inca Trail.

It was only by going off the tourist trail and into the mountains and having George point out local customs, and traditional ways of life that you understood the real Peru.

We would like to thank everyone who has sponsored and supported us



to complete this challenge. Between us, we have been able to raise over £11,000 so far for our charities.

Thanks again.

*Anne, Rachael,
Abby and Richard*

Bill Pollock was the Minister in the central, mountainous part of the Island of Mull from 1987 until 2002. He is a good friend of Derek and Mary Heaton and has given his permission to allow us to reproduce some of his stories from his 'Advent Anecdote - Mishaps of a Minister on Mull'. It is small booklet that he wrote in 2011 which has seven stories for Christmas week and was sold to support the church funds in Mull.

This is the first:

Mull Folk Flee Stirling

The day after Salen Church's annual Christmas Shopping trip to Stirling someone stopped me on the street. "Why did you rush so many ageing Mull folk so frantically out of Stirling yesterday?", she asked. "The police were looking for us", I candidly replied.

From their inception our Stirling coach trips has set down and picked up right in the centre of town in the broad, quiet road outside the Red Lion Hotel. One year we arrived and found the area had been pedestrianised. We had to stop in the vicinity because of the needs of our less able passengers - so we drew into the only nearest space available which could take our two large coaches - a bay for the local service buses for the main town centre. These service buses then started to double park; queuing passages could not see their destination screens and as such one woman lost her bus and lost her rag; an angry driver then left his bus in the middle of the road and came to warn me there would be big trouble if we returned - I stood uncomfortably nodding agreement which quietly telling our alighting passengers to be back at 3.15.



At the allotted time our two conspicuous (and obviously non local) red coaches were back in the same local service bay. I was hastening people aboard when I suddenly thought someone might be waiting in error at

the Red Lion Hotel. I ran round the corner and there was the sturdy figure of old Mrs Craig. She was leaning over a little traffic warden and informing her loudly that she simply had to find Bill Pollock and two red coaches going to Mull. The unfortunate traffic warden was speaking into her radio presumably asking the police to search for us (or may to send her reinforcements?). Either way they could be here very shortly and we'd be in big trouble which the angry bus driver had foretold. What should I do?

My first instinct was to abandon Mrs Craig and the traffic warden to their respective fates, turn and run, and, if possible get the coaches out of the town centre in the nick of time. But my conscience wouldn't let me be so heartless.

There was another option. If Mrs Craig could run I could fetch her and get her to the bus almost as quickly as I could get myself. So I rushed up to the flabbergasted pair, grabbing Mrs Craig by her arm and ran off. As we neared the corner I looked back. The warden was on her radio. I hoped she was calling off the search in time to stop us being found - but I feared she was reporting an abduction!

We got to the coaches, which were still blocking the bus stop. I counted the passengers as quickly as I could. I erred twice - one up on one bus and one down on the other; so I got the right total ... By chance. And we were off without being found.

Mrs Craig got her breath back; and before our next trip we booked a stance that we still use at the bus station.

The most disturbing aspect of that episode may be that I showed so much concern lest Mrs Craig miss her coach and so little concern for the local people missing buses at their bus stop. They would not have been stranded so far from home but even so ... Let's all watch this Christmas for when we care for those in our group we scarcely notice the plight of others.

Bill Pollock

Extreme Symbol

Taken from: Extreme devotion, the voice of the martyrs from the co-authors of Jesus freaks. Serious followers of Jesus pay a price, and extreme followers often pay the ultimate price. Each story is true.

After requiring many hours of hard labour and offering a near-starvation diet, the Chinese prison guards demanded that someone volunteer to clean the bathrooms daily. None of the women prisoners spoke up.

Finally, Sister Kwang stepped forward and volunteered to do the rotten task. She saw it as the ultimate opportunity to share her faith with women in the prison whom she would otherwise never see. During her time in that prison, she led hundreds of women to Christ.

Kwang's devotion was evident to all who knew her, but it came through much suffering. Before her imprisonment, she and her husband had volunteered to organise groups of evangelists who travelled around China forming small house churches.

When Communist officials discovered Kwang's activities, they beat her twelve-year-old son to death. Still, she refused to deny Christ and even continued to build the house-church movement after her release.

Finally in 1974, the Communists decided to make an example of "Mother Kwang," as her church members now knew her. She was sentenced to life in prison, put in an underground cell with a bucket for sanitary needs, and fed only dirty rice.

She was miraculously released after ten years and always looks back on her prison time as a gift -- a special opportunity to share the love of Christ with people who might never have heard otherwise.

Volunteerism is almost a professional occupation for some people. They volunteer at their children's school, help with parent/teacher nights, and help coach their children's football teams. Volunteering for the not-so-popular opportunities can be more of a challenge. Often the volunteer spirit is nowhere to be found. Nursing homes, orphanages, and shelters are the last places many people want to spend their time. The smell, depressing environment, or other discomforts drive them away. But where do you suppose Jesus would spend most of his time? Nearly any volunteer position involves necessary and admirable work, but listen carefully for the opportunities less travelled and with those less fortunate. Try being the first to volunteer the next time one comes your way.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

CHRISTMAS BOOK REVIEWS from RE:FRESH BOOKS

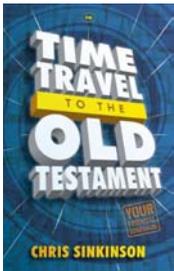
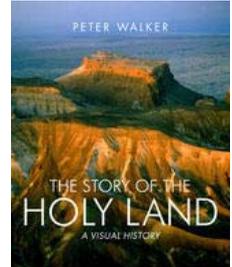
All of these books are available from Re:fresh books & Christian Resources, 23 The Broadway, Tolworth, Surbiton KT6 7DJ

***The Story of the Holy Land* - A Visual History**

by Peter Walker

176 pages, hardback, RRP £16.99

The history of the Holy Land stretches back to the dawn of time. With sites sacred to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the Holy Land and its people have had an impact on history out of all proportion to its size. Richly illustrated with superb photography and accessibly written, *The Story of the Holy Land* provides a compelling visual history.



***Time Travel to the Old Testament* by Chris Sinkinson**

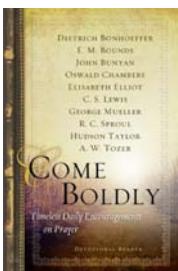
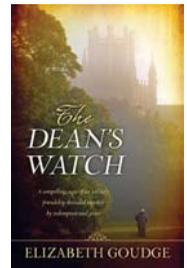
208 pages, paperback, RRP £9.99

An unusual and innovative way to increase our Bible knowledge - by stepping into a metaphorical time machine Chris Sinkinson invites his readers to see how the Old Testament fits together and applies to life today. He demonstrates in a readable style how modern archaeological discoveries throw light on Old Testament life, thought and events.

***The Dean's Watch* by Elizabeth Goudge**

360 pages, paperback, RRP £8.99

A remote nineteenth-century town in England has a grand cathedral. The cathedral Dean, holds a deep love for his parishioners and townspeople but suffers from an irrational shyness and intimidating manner. He strikes up an unlikely friendship with an obscure watchmaker who does not think he or God have anything in common.



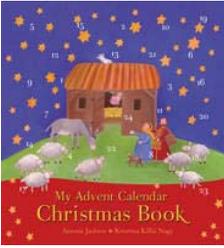
Come Boldly - Timeless Daily Encouragements in Prayer

336 pages, paperback, RRP £12.50

A year's worth of devotional thoughts from the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John Bunyan, Oswald Chambers, Elisabeth Elliott, C.S. Lewis, and many more.

Divided into 52 weekly sections, each of which progresses through preparation, confession, examination, worship and request, leading to inspiring true-life stories.

..... AND SOME FOR THE CHILDREN



My Advent Calendar Christmas book

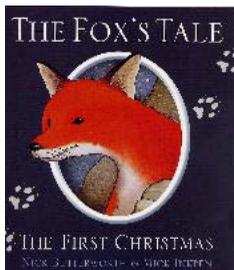
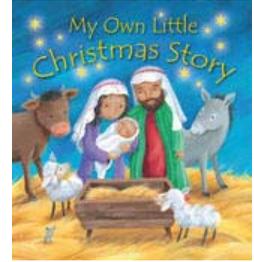
by Antonia Jackson & Krisztina Kallai Nagy
32 pages, hardback, RRP £5.99

The Christmas story told as an Advent calendar.

My Own Little Christmas Story

by Christina Goodings & Amanda Gulliver
32 pages, hardback, RRP £3.99

A simple retelling of the Christmas story for under 5s.



The Fox's Tale - The First Christmas

by Nick Butterworth & Mick Inkpen
24 pages, paperback, RRP £5.99

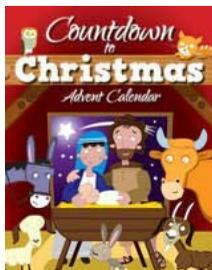
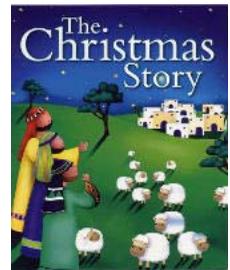
On a cold, starry night above the hills of Bethlehem, a hungry fox is looking for some supper. Suddenly the sky is full of light and there is the sound of angels singing. What on earth is happening?

Large easy-to-read text and charming illustrations

The Christmas Story by Juliet David & Jo Parry (Suitable for up to 7 or 8 year-olds)

22 pages, hardback, RRP £1.99

The Christmas story retold by Juliet David and richly illustrated by Jo Parry to help children understand the events surrounding Jesus' birth and why we celebrate this special miracle.



Countdown to Christmas

by Juliet David & Paul Nicholls
8 pages, hardback, RRP £5.99

This delightful book opens up to reveal a free-standing bright and bold Advent calendar, showing the story of the first Christmas. Behind every die-cut door there is a picture to discover each day in the run-up to Christmas. The Nativity story is also retold on the back of the flaps to help children understand the importance of the festive season.

CHURCH DIARY



Sun	1	10.30am	Morning Service led by David Eagle
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	3	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	8	10.30am	Toy/Gift Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	10	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	13	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	15	10.30am	Morning Service led by David Eagle
Tue	17	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		6.30pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Christmas Social in aid of The SW Thames Kidney Fund</i> - Ladies invited
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	18	5.00pm	Carol Singing for NCH at Morden Station
Fri	20	5.00pm	Carol Singing for NCH at Morden Station
Sun	22	10.30am	Nativity Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
		5.00pm	Carols with SIGMA
Tues	24	5.30pm	Christingle Service
		11.30pm	Midnight Communion at Martin Way including Raynes Park & Wimbledon Churches
Weds	25	10.30am	Christmas Day Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Sun	29	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Paul Timmis

*Please refer to the Website (www.martinway.org.uk) or Weekly Notice Sheet
for any additional information*

CHURCH DIARY



Sun	5	10.30am	Covenant Service with Holy Communion led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tues	7	8.00pm	Church Council Meeting
Fri	10	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	12	10.30am	Morning Service led by Valerie Ashcroft
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	14	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Sat	18	10.30am	Big Brunch
Sun	19	10.30am	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tues	21	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.30pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Member's Evening</i>
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	24	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	26	10.30am	Morning Service led by Joanna Williamson
Tue	28	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer

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RUXLEY CHRISTMAS FAIR

Ruxley Church, Ruxley Lane

Saturday 7th December

1pm-3.30pm

Refreshments - Handicrafts - Jewellery
Tombola - Raffle - Toiletries - Cakes - Toys
And much more

Admission 50p



We wish all of those who celebrate a birthday
in either December or January a very

Happy Birthday

and especially to:

Natalie Johnson on 2nd December

Kabelo Sepanya on 13th December

Zandile Sepanya on 16th December

Kutloano Sepanya on 19th December

Floyd Sepanya on 24th December

Christopher Sweby on 23rd January

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CHRISTMAS POST BOX AND CARDS



The church Christmas post box will be outside the vestry from Sunday 1st December until Friday 20th December for those sending Christmas cards to members of the church community. Cards will be ready for collection on Sunday 22nd December.

As in previous years, you are invited to make a donation which will go to Methodist Homes for the Aged. (In doing so you may wish to remember that you are saving 50p for each card posted in the church post box!)

Please address all cards clearly using surnames and initials or forenames to avoid confusion. (We have several Smiths and several Andrews!)

If you prefer, you are welcome to post a single card addressed to the whole church family. Such cards will be placed on display panels in the vestibule on Sunday 22nd December.

Items for the **February Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox,
(email: roife@hotmail.co.uk) by **Sunday 19th January** at the latest