

# NEWSLINK

DECEMBER 2020 - JANUARY 2021

## CANTON UNITING CHURCH



# Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece)

Robert Campin ca. 1427-32

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Dear Friends,

December 2020

In November 2005 our family moved from the UK to Florida. November and December hold two important holidays in the US—Thanksgiving and Christmas. So within weeks of arriving in the US we made a road trip to North Carolina to share Thanksgiving with Martha's family. After the holiday we sat down together to discuss what we would do for Christmas. This would be the first opportunity in our children's memory where they could have Christmas with our extended families. Martha was very excited about the options because she missed being with family on the holidays. To our surprise the children didn't want to go anywhere on Christmas Day. They were, and apparently had always been, content to just be the four of us. Christmas wasn't less of a celebration because we had only four people at our table. Christmas was opening presents, going to church, and having a fairly simple meal together—four people.

We haven't yet sat down with our children and discussed what Christmas will hold this year. We are holding our breathe—will be even be able to see each other?

With all the talk on news of allowing families to meet for Christmas you would think that "family" is the purpose of Christmas. Christmas isn't a celebration of family—much as we love to use the holidays to gather with family near and far. "Christ-mass" is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the one we know as the Christ, God's son. It is a celebration of the Word made flesh, the incarnation, the reality of God's love for us.

If we can't see the family the way we usually do, it will be painful, but the reality of God's love breaking into the world is no less real. The opportunity to pause and remember what we believe is still available.

Christmas is about celebrating a birth—a party. Advent, on the other hand, which begins on 29 November, and runs up to Christmas, is about waiting and preparing for that birthday celebration. Perhaps waiting has a different feel for us this year. We have spent most of this year under pandemic restrictions, waiting for them to ease or be more restrictive, hoping they will keep people from becoming ill. We have spent nine months waiting—for a rebirth perhaps?

We continue to wait. As we wait, perhaps we can ask ourselves, 'Where have I seen God this week?' It's easy to focus on what we can't do, yet despite the restrictions, God is present. So we might see God in the people and programmes developed to feed people. We might see God in the laughter of children playing in a park. We might see God in the phone call of a friend reaching out to someone who has been bereaved. The incarnation—the Word made flesh—the centre of our Christmas celebrations—means God is still alive and active in the world.

After annunciation by M. L'Engle

This is the irrational season

When love blooms bright and wild.

Had Mary been filled with reason

There'd have been no room for the child.

Perhaps in this crazy time, there is more room for us to see God for God continues to be present today in people, in love, in service. If we pause our worrying about how we will celebrate Christmas, perhaps we will hear God in the voice of the one who says they are happy to have a quiet, simple gathering around manger and table—with the added bonus of a video caller miles away sharing their meal as we share our meal, opening their presents with us on the call, telling stories of years past and planning for years to come.

Yours in Christ,

Martha and David

## Gift Day cooking!

At our Gift Day social evening on November 9<sup>th</sup>, a number of us joined together and made a microwave 'cake in a mug' – here are the results!



If you want to make your own cake-in-a-mug (honestly the easiest cake you will ever make and pretty tasty too) you will need the following ingredients:

- 4 tbsp self-raising flour
- 4 tbsp caster sugar
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 medium egg
- 3 tbsp milk
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil or sunflower oil
- a few drops of vanilla essence or other essence (orange or peppermint work well)
- 2 tbsp chocolate chips, nuts, or raisins etc (optional)

### STEP 1

Add 4 tbsp self-raising flour, 4 tbsp caster sugar and 2 tbsp cocoa powder to the largest mug you have (to stop it overflowing in the [microwave](#)) and mix.

### STEP 2

Add 1 medium egg and mix in as much as you can, but don't worry if there's still dry mix left.

### STEP 3

Add the 3 tbsp milk, 3 tbsp vegetable or sunflower oil and a few drops of vanilla essence and mix until smooth, before adding 2 tbsp chocolate chips, nuts, or raisins, if using, and mix again.

### STEP 4

Centre your mug in the middle of the microwave oven and cook on High for 1½ -2 mins, or until it has stopped rising and is firm to the touch.

Here is the link to the website (BBC Good Food) where you can watch a how-to video. Enjoy!

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/microwave-mug-cake>

Fiona Harding

## Christmas Opportunities

A reminder that we are putting together a video Lessons and Carols. We would love your creative ideas. If you are inspired to send a picture or create video of for one of the lessons, please get in touch with Andrew Wilson-Dickson—agwd391@gmail.com

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## Christmas Stars

If you are willing to help deliver stars to people in the pastorate, please let me know. If you need me to collect stars you are making from you, also let me know. Thanks for all your inspiring ideas.

Martha

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## Covid19 and church:

One of greatest impacts of covid 19 on congregations has perhaps been on our use of space, how to gather in buildings that in some way we have used to tabernacle the divine and in whose shelter we have a history of coming together to offer worship. But the first thing to be declared holy is not a building, nor is it a mountain, or a well etc it is a time, the sabbath. Heschel says in Judaism - 'sabbaths are the great cathedrals' - holiness is found in how we arrange and honour time not space. So what might covid and our changing congregational lives have to say about spirituality, discipleship, mission and time. How might covid lead us to a greater understanding and practice of sabbath?

Craig Gardiner

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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. 😂😂

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Thanks to Tom for this!

‘The light shines in the darkness’

“A REAL CHRISTMAS,” Tom Arthur

We heard from Rowena that at this year’s annual URC Forum (virtual, conducted on Zoom), one of the participants told about entering a competition to tell the Nativity story in 50 words or less. The winning entry, she said, did it in only ten: “I am pregnant. So who is the father? God knows!”

Funny? Shocking? Irreverent? But there is more theology in these ten words than one might expect. To find out how, we can turn to an unlikely source, the famous Mérode Altarpiece, a three-panel oil painting on oak boards created in the late 1420s by Robert Campin. I know I have written about this work in Newlink before. It never hurts to revisit a masterpiece.

One of the immediately striking features is not just the realism of its style, but also its fifteenth-century contemporary setting. Reading right to left, we see the panel on the right shows Joseph at work in an ordinary carpenter’s shop. The centre panel depicts the annunciation in a contemporary northern European dining room. The panel on the left features the donors kneeling in their own garden, with their fifteenth-century house and an ordinary street scene in the background. Campin is saying the Annunciation to Mary wasn’t just something that happened in history. It happens today. The painting shocks its viewers to realize the story they are asked to recall is the story that grasps them in everyday life.

Historians looking closely at the first panel, depicting Joseph the carpenter, discovered that he is building a fifteenth-century version of a common mousetrap. Why a mousetrap? Because the devil, often depicted as a mouse, got trapped by the cross, which he didn’t understand. He thought it was Christ’s defeat, but he got it wrong. In a sermon from one of the early Church Fathers, we read that the Devil "rejoiced in Christ's death. . . . What he rejoiced in was then his own undoing. The cross of the Lord was the devil's mousetrap; the bait by which he was caught was the Lord's death."

What the Devil didn’t understand was the depth to which Christ embraced the reality of his own full humanity, not fearing to throw his lot in with the weakest and most despised—the ones we ordinary shun. The companionship he shared with neighbours even went so far as to share with common thieves in their condemnation to death. And therefore God exalted him, and called him “Lord” (Philippians 2). Never forget that there was not just one cross, but three. The cross is about solidarity.

The Devil never understands this. For the Devil, victory is like what is going on in the US elections as I write this—winning at all costs, neighbour be damned. The Devil, they say—that spiritual grip self-focus and fear of compromise has on our souls—thought he held humanity captive. He couldn’t fathom that the weakness we have for one another, the compassion, the empathy, was what the strength of our humanity was all about. The Devil prefers a private, otherworldly spirituality, removed from human suffering, as in Jean Paul Satres’ play *No Exit*, where “hell is other people.” But the realism Campin’s Altarpiece and its insistence that the Incarnation takes place in everyone’s contemporary life says the real world is to be embraced in all its fullness.

Boris Johnson wants to save Christmas from the pandemic. What is this “Christmas” that needs to be rescued from the business of caring for those who might die because we need to celebrate and indulge? It reminds me of the young husband I once knew who complained that his wife’s miscarriage had spoilt his Christmas. With embarrassing expense, we decorate our dark nights with light, shore up failing relationships with expensive seasonal gifts and chase away solstice gloom in an alcoholic haze. But the real Christmas asks us to embrace the darkness, as Christ did, his own darkness, in prayer, and his neighbour’s darkness, in the way he lived.

Rumours had it that the mother of Jesus was a single mother made pregnant by a Roman soldier, a story suppressed as many such stories have been suppressed over the ages by the requirements of good taste, a need to distance the sacred from real life and a merely worldly understanding of “purity”. Our purity is given

to us by a God who graciously embraces us regardless of what we are suffering, just as we are called to embrace one another.

## **AN UPDATE FROM THE DEVELOPMENT GROUP: CHRISTMAS 2020**

Christmas is one of my favourite times – I love the music and the services we have in church; I love the visits with family and friends; I love the food!

These are all ways in which we light a candle against the dark. The nights have drawn in. The weather is often cold and rainy. In the face of this, we have a candlelit carol service. We meet indoors in the warmth and put fairy lights about the house. We give each other presents as a sign of our love.

These are just some of the ways in which we live out the truth of Christmas: that Christ, the light of the world, has come into our darkness - and the darkness is never able to put that light out! 2020 has been one of the darkest years in my living memory. Centre stage has been the Coronavirus pandemic. For much of the year, we have been in various stages of lockdown. We haven't been able to meet as a church family or other friends and family as we love to do. We haven't been able to mark the deaths of our dear friends and family as we would want to. We have experienced deep anxiety. Now we are faced with a Christmas where we have to keep our nerve, and continue to protect ourselves and each other rather than celebrating it together in the way we would like to do.

Now, more than ever, we need something to lighten our darkness!

For me, during this dark year, our church development project has provided a ray of hope. At this advent time, I want to give you an update, which I hope will share some hope and light. Our progress during the year has been a sign of our commitment that we will be together again: to enjoy our church home and to find new ways to be a light for the community.

The first important step forward was that the church agreed to appoint Caroe and Partners as our design team. We passed on to them the ideas and hopes that had come out of the consultation with church members and the community. Central to this was our idea to develop our garden. Gardens are very important. They are a green lung for the city, helping to clean the air. They provide a habitat for birds and insects. They produce fruit and vegetables for us to enjoy. There is more and more evidence coming that working in the garden, especially in a community garden with other people, can help to improve our mental and physical wellbeing.

The colour most associated with a garden is green. And being more 'green' is another of the things that we are trying to achieve for our site. We want it to look significantly greener, but also to be more sustainable. Climate Change is an emergency that is facing the whole world, but is having the biggest impact on the poorest communities. This is an important part of our stewardship of earth's resources: we want to reduce our carbon footprint in the way we develop our site. Since Caroe and Partners were appointed, you probably won't have heard a lot about what has been happening, but they have been very busy!

They have been working with the small development group, which I chair, to translate our ideas into workable plans. They have been into the church and carried out a full survey so that they can develop accurate plans. They have come up with lots of exciting and interesting ideas. I have to say, that this process has also been challenging – some of the things that we might most want to do may be too expensive for us to do! We have to balance our vision with what is realistically achievable. However, I hope that we will find creative ways forward. At the moment, we

are trying to finalise some different 'models', outline plans, which we can bring to the church. These will help us to take our discussions on a stage further.

We hope to have these plans ready early in the New Year. The deacons will help us to make sure that all the church members can see a copy, either electronically or in hard copy. You will then have an opportunity to think about the plans and talk to each other in your buddy groups. Your lead deacons will want to know what you think and the development group will be setting some questions to help with these conversations.

We are all hoping that 2021 brings new hope. We hope that vaccines will soon be rolled out so that the risks of Coronavirus are minimised and we can start to gather together again. And we hope that we will be able to agree workable but exciting plans for the church site.

We will keep you updated. In the meantime, I hope that this update will help light a candle of hope in our church and in our community!

Ceri George

December 2020

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## **Anti-Racism**

### Introduction

2020 has been an eventful year. From pandemic to Brexit we seem to leap from one major event to another. The death of George Floyd, an African American man, touched many deeply. While many black men, and some women, have been killed or mistreated by the police for years, for some reason Mr. Floyd's death disturbed us. As we know, it led to world-wide protests.

While some of us in Cardiff were involved in protests, others felt we had to stay away because of the pandemic. Still, we wondered, "What can we do in response?" A few of us across the pastorate gathered online to reflect on racism and our responses. We have educated ourselves in different ways by reading, listening to podcasts, watching television programmes, and talking with each other. We have listened to stories of individuals impacted by racism, and we have wondered how we can not only change ourselves, but work to change the dominant narrative of racism.

We can only change the world as we are changed. So we decided to reflect on our journey with racism and looking into the work of being anti-racist. Several of us wrote stories which we shared with each other. As we reflect on how we might respond to racism as churches, we would like to begin by sharing some of those stories with you.

A journey begins with the first step. These stories reflect our steps and our journeys, We hope that as churches, we might take further steps on anti-racist journeys. We hope our stories will connect with you. May we all work to be anti-racists.

Martha

There are several members of Canton Uniting Church who are part of this Anti-Racism Group described by Martha and three have written their stories to illustrate their journey with racism: Ken

Woods, Marieke Arthur, and Alison Walker. We will include these stories in this and the next 2 editions of the Newslink. We start with Ken.

Ken`s racially related experiences:

(1) In the 1950s, about 300 Indians, newly arrived from Uganda, initiated a meeting in Leicester to create an Anglo-Indian association. Only one white person turned up, one of the members from our church.

(2) A Sri Lankan once told me that his lunch-time colleagues had been maligning black people. When he pointed out that he was black, they said, "Ah, but you're an honorary white!"

(3) For a short time, a young black graduate was our HR officer. She was highly extrovert, had a white husband and, having famous cousins - one in soccer and the other in athletics, she possibly benefited from 'reflected glory'. However, she had no time for black people who complained, and thought that they should just get on with their lives.

(4) I once overheard a manager bragging that he filtered out CVs of job applicants with African/Asian sounding names without even reading them.

(5) On one occasion, when my daughter and I had gone early to Tottenham for the soccer, we went into McDonalds in South Tottenham (we usually went to the one north of the Spurs Stadium). Everybody in there was black, except for the two of us. Although we were served with the smiles and friendly welcome that you expect in a McDonalds, it was hard not to feel intimidated. I certainly got to realise how it feels to be in a racial minority.

(6) A South African that I knew could not be convinced that Nelson Mandela should not be classified as a terrorist. In his book, Nelson stresses that he always advocated attacks only on property, avoiding danger to life. It may be noted that this was the policy of the suffragettes - they are not normally portrayed as terrorists nowadays.

(7) About four years ago, I heard of a young white girl and her black partner who were detained at the entrance of a restaurant, and no reason was offered when her parents arrived to join them.

Ken Wood

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## **CHRISTMAS GREETINGS CAMPAIGN**

For a number of years, Canton Uniting members have written Christmas cards to Prisoners of Conscience and victims of torture. We choose the names from a list of possibilities provided by Action by Christians Against Torture. This year we make the details available to all our sisters and brothers across the Pastorate churches.

Several individuals featured in previous campaigns have been released. Sadly, others are still in prison and it is important not to forget them.

This year of the pandemic is an important one for sustaining support to these victims of abuse and denial of human rights. The attention of the world may well be even more distracted from them than usual and their conditions will often have been worsened through the impact of the pandemic.

There are a few things to bear in mind but please don't be put off by them! Firstly, if the details given below about a prisoner advise against a religious greeting, be very careful in your choice of card. A robin or winter scene will be fine but overtly religious imagery not. Remember that a picture postcard is always welcome and cheapest to send – it doesn't have to be a Christmas card.

Second, on the cost point, consider using small cards. Postage overseas is expensive: a card weighing up to and including 10g costs £1.45 to Europe and the rest of the world, £1.70 for up to 20g.

Thirdly, write a simple greeting to the individual saying, for instance, that you are thinking of him/her and/or perhaps urging them not to lose hope (or words to that effect). Avoid political comment and do not mention ACAT.

Finally, if you feel you want and can afford to write to more than one of the prisoners listed below, that would be great but one would also be great! This year, we've included six possible prisoners for cards -two people together in the last possibility below:

Arrested without warrant by soldiers and after over 14 postponements of hearings, radio journalist Mancho Bibixy was sentenced in May 2018 by a military court in Cameroon to 15 years in prison and a huge fine for 'acts of terrorism, secession, propagation of false information, revolution,



insurrection, contempt of public bodies and officials and hostility against the fatherland'. He was considered a leader of a peaceful demonstration against the marginalization of the English-speaking minority. The authorities' response in the conflict has been very violent, including the use of live ammunition against protesters, mass arrests, torture, humiliation and intimidation. In 2019, after organizing, with four other human rights detainees, a protest against their ill-treatment, he was moved temporarily to a military camp where he was again tortured. His sentence was extended for another

three years. In poor health owing to bad and overcrowded prison conditions, he can communicate with his family only with the authorization of the prosecutor and by paying fees. According to recent reports (May 2020) his health has seriously deteriorated and at least one fellow prisoner has tested positive for coronavirus. [First featured in our Christmas Greetings Campaign 2019]

**Please send a greeting (religious or non-religious, and you can mention ACAT) to:**

Mr Mancho Bibixy  
Yaoundé Central Prison  
1000 Yaoundé  
Cameroon



In **Pakistan, Asif Pervaiz**, aged 37, was arrested in 2013 and accused of sending offensive texts about Islam, the Quran and Islam's Prophet Muhammad on a mobile phone. According to the defence, the charge was an act of revenge by Muhammad Saeed Khokhar, Asif's supervisor at a hosiery manufacturing business. In his defence Asif said the accusations were made after he decided to quit his job because he had rejected Khokhar's efforts to convert him to Islam. The Lahore court ruled that even though there was no evidence of personal implication, he had not offered sufficient evidence of innocence. He was eventually sentenced to death in 2020.

**Please send a (non-religious) greeting to the following. Do not mention ACAT:**

Asif Pervaiz  
Lahore District Jail

Ferozpur Road  
Shadman 1  
Lahore

Punjab 54000, Pakistan

**Samar Badawi** (pictured below) was targeted in 2018 in a wave of arrests directed at women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia. Between 2011 and 2017 Saudi courts had convicted at least 25 prominent activists and dissidents, sentencing them to long prison sentences under catch-all



'crimes' such as 'breaking allegiance with the ruler', 'sowing discord', 'inciting public opinion', 'setting up an unlicensed organization', and vague provisions from the 2007 cybercrime law. In 2017 a new regime under Crown Prince Mohammed Ben Salman (aka MBS) detained dozens of dissidents, including clerics, intellectuals and activists.

Held in Dhahban prison near Jeddah, Samar was tried and charged under the cybercrime law and faces up to 20 years in prison. She receives visits from relatives but is denied contact with a lawyer to organize her defence. She has reportedly suffered physical and sexual violence during interrogation. Repeatedly interrogated by the Saudi authorities, she was subjected to a travel ban in 2014, arrested in 2016, and imprisoned for seven months in 2010 after accusing her father of abusing his guardianship when she decided to leave home; she was released under international

pressure. She then lobbied for the right of women to drive and the right to vote.

**Please send a (non-religious) greeting (do not mention ACAT):**

Samar Badawi  
Dhahban Central Prison,  
Al Riyadh  
Dhahban 23851  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Co-founder of the Tianwang Center for Missing Persons (later renamed the Tianwang Human Rights Center), **Huang Qi** has documented human rights violations in China, reporting them on a Hong-Kong-based website. They include deaths in police custody and the kidnapping and sexual trafficking of girls. He also published accounts by participants of the protests in Tiananmen Square (1989) and assisted parents complaining about infrastructure failures that contributed to the collapse of schools in Sichuan Province during an earthquake (2008). Repeatedly detained and imprisoned in labour camps 2000-2005 and 2009-2011, he was most recently arrested in November 2016 and has not been seen since. In prison he has reportedly been tortured and ill-treated by police officers

and beaten by other detainees. Denied access to a lawyer and refused medical treatment in order to force a confession, he has always refused to plead guilty. Qi's relatives fear that he will not survive his conditions of detention. He underwent a secret trial in Mianyang in January 2019 for

'providing state secrets overseas'. Other human rights workers targeted by the authorities include Liu Fieyue (sentenced to five years in prison in January 2019) and Zhen Janghau (two years in December 2018).

**You can write a (non-religious) message (do not mention ACAT) to the family of Huang Qi at the following address. Messages will be scanned and passed on to his family:**

Huang Qi  
C/o ACAT-Switzerland - 'Huang Qi Action' -  
Speichergasse 29 - PO Box -  
3001 Bern  
Switzerland

**Hossam Ahmed and Eman al-Hewl** [pictured left to right] were arrested on 28 February 2019 as part of a crackdown by the Egyptian government on demonstrations over infrastructure investment



following a train accident at Ramses station in Cairo which left many dead and injured. Eman, an actress, and Hossam, a transgender man, promoted bisexual and transgender rights. They were first detained for four days at an unknown location before being brought before the State Security Prosecutor on 4 March 2019, on the grounds of supporting a terrorist organization and using Facebook accounts to commit a crime punishable by law. The detention was renewed for an additional 45 days and they were forced to undergo an

intrusive and intimate physical examination by hospital doctors without medical justification. Hossam already possessed a medical certificate describing his situation and the hormonal therapy forming part of his transition process (he has been denied the therapy during his detention). Police in Egypt routinely perform forced intrusive examinations on LGBTQ people and activists, practices recognized as 'a form of cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment which can amount to torture' according to experts and United Nations protocols. Constantly subjected to physical and psychological abuse, Eman and Hossa have been held in an underground police cell with no access to fresh air or sunlight. Because of their sexual orientation the authorities consider them unfit to mix with others and refuse to transfer them to a prison.

**Please send Hassam and Eman a (religious or non-religious) message (do not mention ACAT) c/o:**

ANKH Association  
Action Eman Al-Hewl and Hossam Ahmed  
116 avenue Paul Vaillant Couturier  
94400 Vitry-sur-Seine  
France



## Christmas Greetings

<p>Christmas Greetings to all my church family, and I pray that God will grant you his richest blessing and peace in the New Year.</p> <p>Doreen</p>	<p>Wishing you and your families much love and a blessed Christmas and New Year.</p> <p>Ken</p>
<p>Wishing everyone a peaceful Christmas, and a much happier New Year.</p> <p>Audrey (M)</p>	<p>Thinking of you all, and wishing you Every Blessing for Christmas and the New Year.</p> <p>With love from</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Joy &amp; Dave</p>
<p>To all at Canton Uniting Church I wish you peace and joy this Christmas and a happy New Year.</p> <p>Jean Hawkins</p>	<p>Wishing everyone at CUC a very blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year, and that it will not be too long before we will be able to see another again.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Audrey Takle</p>
<p>Happy and Peaceful Christmas to everyone, and a New Year filled with hope.</p> <p>Jan Richens</p>	<p>Mrs Mary Jones (Worcester) sends her love and greetings to all her friends at CUC, and hope we all have a more peaceful 2021.</p>
<p>We have missed seeing our Church family so much through the year, but our love for you remains the same! Wishing you all peace and joy at Christmas, and looking forward to new hope and seeing old friends again in 2021.</p> <p>Much love from,</p> <p>Phil and Ceri xx</p>	<p>In this lockdown winter the church itself seems like that closed inn, when we have to make do as best we can in our humble stables. Dispersed in the world, maybe this is where we need to be, to find Christ born in us in the most ordinary of circumstances.</p> <p>Happy Christmas from Marieke and Tom</p>
<p>Mrs Barbara Jones sends Christmas greetings to everyone and wishes you all a better year for 2021.</p>	<p>Seasons Greetings to you all,</p> <p>With love,</p> <p>Sylvia Neate</p>
<p>Merry Christmas and a peaceful 2021.</p> <p>Nadolig Llawen.</p> <p>Fiona, Rob, Isobel and Alistair</p>	<p>A Happy Christmas and a peaceful, kind, just and healthy New Year! My love and prayers are with you all.</p> <p>Eva xx</p>
<p>Wishing you all the chance to celebrate a very happy Christmas and New Year. It has been such a crazy year for us and I am hoping that</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Nadolig Llawen i chi gyd! Boldog karacsonyi unnepeket! A Merry Christmas to you all!</p>

<p>2021 is going to see a return to `normality` for us all.</p> <p>With love and best wishes from Alison W.</p>	<p>Hugh, Barbara and Bence xxx</p>
<p>Pagpalain nawa tayong lahat ng mapayapang Pasko at ng masaganang Bagong Taon May we all be blessed with a peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year</p> <p>Malou &amp; David Smith</p>	<p>Wishing you every blessing at Christmas and in the year ahead.</p> <p>With love from Fred and Rowena</p>

## PASTORAL NEWS

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Nancie Waterfield during October. Nancie was a very faithful member of Canton Uniting for many years. During the last few years she suffered a lot and was in and out of hospital for most of 2019/2020. She passed away in October. Our thoughts and prayers are with Simon, Mark and their families.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Catherine (Blakemore) as she continues her treatment. Take care Cath.

Sylvia Neate is still having treatment for ulcers on both ankles. We also think of Toni Edwards, they are both feeling a little fragile at the moment.

We think of Tom Arthur as he continues treatment to get back on his feet, and also Marieke as she cares for him.

We think of Mandy, Steve and Mandy's family on the sudden death of her father from Covid.

We also think of the brother of Debbie Cheshire, who has had his leg amputated.

We think of all our members and friends during this time and assure everyone that they are in our thoughts and prayers.

We hope it will not be too long before we will all be able to worship together again.

Audrey Takle.

### Message of Thanks

I would like to say a big thank you to all my lovely church family for their support over the last few months during Barbara's stay in hospital and her death. Losing my beloved sister has been painful, but all the telephone calls, cards, letters and flowers have given me great comfort. Even more important I have felt surrounded by all your prayers and this has given me strength to carry on. Thank you so much to everyone.

On the day of Barbara's funeral it was lovely to see so many who were able gathered outside Canton Uniting. You gave her a great send off, as, for the last time she passed the church she loved so much and had attended since she could toddle around the corner to get there.

At the service, my thanks are due to Martha for her sympathetic leadership and Phil who, as always, read so beautifully. A very special thank you to our wonderful music group who recorded the hymns Barbara had chosen. Lucy, Ceri and Phil sang solo verses, and the whole recording was really uplifting. A very big thank

you to you all. But the biggest thanks in this connection of course is to Andrew. I don't understand technology, but I do know this sort of thing does not just happen. It takes a tremendous amount of time and expertise and Andrew gave this in spadefuls. Thank you very, very much Andrew and my thanks to the music group for giving me a disc of this recording. I play it every day.

Finally, my family join me in thanking you all for your prayer for my great nephew's daughter as she has had major surgery on her spine. I am glad to say that the operation went really well and although she has a long hard road ahead, Isabelle is facing it bravely and with determination to get back to her active sporty self eventually.

Many thanks and God bless you all

Doreen

## **Prayer Call**

### **December**

1st Barbara, Hugh and Bence Morgans

2nd Sylvia Neate

3rd Danielle Phillips, Laura, Will, Cian and  
Ruby

4th Mandy and Steve Phillips

5th Abigail, Matt, Brooke and Toby Powell

6th Advent 2: The Bible Society

7th Julie Richards

8th Janice Richens

9th Lucy Robinson and Andrew Wilson-  
Dickson

10th Barbara Smith

11th David and Malou Smith

12th Audrey Takle

13th Advent 3: Prisoners of Conscience

14th David and Joy Thompson

15th Alison Walker

16th Liz Williams and family

17th Kenneth Woods

18th Rita, Francis, Gloria, Gabriel and  
Michael

19th Tom and Marieke Arthur

20th Advent 4: Those who hear God's Call

21st Chris and Megan Atherton

22nd Geraint Atherton

23rd Gwyn Atherton

24th Lowri and Amelia Baldwin

25th Christmas Day: The Salvation of the  
World

26th Keith Bick

27th The Homeless

28th Catherine Blakemore

29th Doreen Cassam

4th David Dean, Martha McInnes and  
family

5th Ann Dobbins

6th Marc and Alison Dummer

7th Gareth Dyer

8th Hiroko, Richard and Emily Edge

9th Toni Edwards

10th International Peace

11th Eva Elliott

12th Calum Ellis

13th Alan Farnham

14th Barbara Farnham

15th Ceri and Phil George

16th Linda Gibbs

17th Christian Unity

18th Rachel, Kate, Evan and Emily Gill

19th Bronwyn Gregory

20th Rob, Fiona, Isobel and Alistair

Harding

21st Jean Hawkins

22nd Barbara Jones

23rd Sian, Joshua and Harri Jones

24th The Economy

25th Elinor Kapp

26th Olaide, Taiwo, Ore, Korede and  
Nifemi Kassim

27th Jenny Keenor

28th Beverley, Christopher, Ioan and  
Evelyn Kibble

29th Cindy Lim, Arwyn McCabe and Nye  
Buckle

30th Ann and Tom Lloyd

31st Climate Change and the Environment

### **February**

1st Angie Luther

30th Debbie Cheshire, Paige and Lola

31st David Cooke

### **January, 2021**

1st Clive Curtis and Constantino

Dumangane

2nd Fred and Rowena Davies

3rd The New Year

2nd Millie McQuade

3rd Audrey Morgan

4th Barbara, Hugh and Bence Morgans

5th Sylvia Neate

6th Danielle Phillips, Laura, Will, Cian and

Ruby

7th Trade Unions

## **Sunday Lectionary Readings for December 2020 and January 2021**

### **29th November, 2020: First Sunday in Advent**

Isaiah 64.1-9; Psalm 80.1-7,17-19; 1 Corinthians 1.3-9; Mark 13.24-37

Mark 13.24-37: "Waiting in the Dark"

Jesus speaks of coming dark days when people will be close to losing hope. He urges them therefore to stay awake to signs that offer hope of the coming deliverance, which will certainly come, though at an unexpected time.

### **6th December, 2020: Second Sunday in Advent**

Isaiah 40.1-11; Psalm 85.1-2,8-13; 2 Peter 3.8-15a; Mark 1.1-8

Mark 1:1-8: "What Happens in the Wilderness..."

Mark introduces his story of the life of Jesus as 'good news'. But before getting to the content of that good news, he presents John, a messenger sent to prepare the way, who baptizes people in the wilderness.

### **13th December, 2020: Third Sunday in Advent**

Isaiah 61.1-4,8-11; Psalm 126; Luke 1.46b-55 (Magnificat); 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24; John 1.6-8,19-28

John 1:6-8,19-28: "The Mystery of the Messiah"

Religious leaders are dispatched to question John the Baptist as to his identity, wondering if he might be the Messiah. John repeatedly answers in the negative but leaves them with an intriguing possibility that the Messiah is among them – but they don't realise it yet.

### **20th December, 2020: Fourth Sunday in Advent**

2 Samuel 7.1-11,16; Luke 1.46b-55 (Magnificat); Psalm 89.1-4,19-26; Romans 16.25-27; Luke 1.26-38.

Luke 1:26-38: "God's Ridiculous Plan"

Mary has an encounter with a heavenly visitor who brings unsettling news. The conversation that follows launches Mary into life-changing decisions, which she accepts willingly. This we explore how the world was turned upside down by an obedient teenage girl.

### **25th December, 2020: Christmas Day**

Isaiah 9.2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2.11-14; Luke 2.1-20.

Luke 2.1-20: "The Peace of the Manager"

The whole Roman world is on the move at the behest of the Emperor who has called a census, and as a result a pregnant woman gives birth in a strange place. This birth is announced by angels and celebrated by shepherds. This week we explore the contrast between busyness and stillness in the celebration of Christmas.

### **27th December, 2020**

Isaiah 61.10-62.3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4.4-7; Luke 2.22-40

Luke 2.22-40: "Family of Faith."

Seeking to fulfil the requirements of the law after the birth of a child, Joseph and Mary go to the Temple. There they encounter two older people who have been anticipating this moment for years but share disturbing insights for what the future will bring. This week we explore listening to the wisdom and experience of older people.

### **3rd January, 2021**

Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.1-7,10-14; Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12

Matthew 2:1-12: "Go and Search"

The account of the wise men involves searching – initially by looking in the wrong place – for the new-born king. They eventually find him by following the star to Bethlehem. God's guidance in a dream warns them to take a different route home. This week we explore where to look for the direction of God in our lives.

### **10th January, 2021**

Genesis 1.1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19.1-7; Mark 1.4-11

Mark 1:4-11: "The Whole World Changed"

This passage is the first appearance of Jesus as an adult and comes at the beginning of his ministry. His baptism is a new beginning and a transformation. John the baptizer says that he is not worthy to untie Jesus' shoes. He recognises that Jesus will be able to do much greater things by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This reading is given alongside the account of the beginning of everything from the opening chapter of Genesis, and a story about the Holy Spirit and new beginnings from Acts. Our new beginnings come through the forgiveness God offers, which is not just the once in a lifetime event of our baptism, but all the forward-looking opportunities that God offers us each and every day.

### **17th January, 2021**

1 Samuel 3.1-10, (11-20); Psalm 139.1-6,13-18; 1 Corinthians 6.12-20; John 1.43-51

1 John:43-51: "Come, See, Hear"

Today we hear about two friends who have an unexpected encounter with Jesus and initially react in very different ways. Together, Philip and Nathanael help each other to understand who Jesus is and they begin a journey that will redefine who they are. Nathanael is surprised that Jesus knows not only his name, but much about him too. Jesus knows each of us as individuals but sometimes, like Nathanael, we can wonder 'Why would God be interested in me?' Some of us will be, like Philip, keen to follow straight away. Some of us will be more like Nathanael – full of questions and concerns. This story shows that wherever we are, Jesus finds us and knows us. Are we looking and listening out for him – and helping others to do so?

### **24th January, 2021**

Jonah 3.1-5,10; Psalm 62.5-12; 1 Corinthians 7.29-31; Mark 1.14-20

Mark 1: 14-20: "Do Something Different"

As Jesus begins his ministry, he asks four fishermen to come with him and immediately they say yes. For them to respond without hesitation requires a lot of courage; it is life changing. They are prepared to leave what they know behind and learn to 'fish for people' with Jesus.

Jesus offers to take their skills and use them for kingdom building. How easy would it be for us to respond to a life-changing call so quickly? Have you experienced God using the skills you have in a new way?

### **31st January, 2021**

Deuteronomy 18.15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8.1-13; Mark 1.21-28

Mark 1:21-28: "Making an Impression"

Jesus' healing of a man with an 'unclean spirit' is the first act he does in Mark's Gospel and it is dramatic. He is presenting himself from the start as someone who will be different and will make a

difference. Both Jesus' teaching and his actions reveal that he is the 'Holy One of God', and the word begins to spread about him.

### **7th February, 2021**

Isaiah 40.21-31; Psalm 147.1-11,20c; 1 Corinthians 9.16-23; Mark 1.29-39

Mark 1:29-39: "The First 100 Days"

Jesus shows us his priorities – he knows what he must do and demonstrates this by healing and proclaiming the good news. However, Jesus also takes time out to get away from the crowds and be alone in prayer – he knows what he must do to care for himself and stay true to his mission. Do we find or make enough time to rest with God? What difference does it make? This week we explore demonstrating priorities through action

CANTON UNITING CHURCH was established in 1995 when New Trinity United Reformed Church joined with Llandaff Road Baptist Church and in 2013 joined with Grand Avenue United Reformed Church Ely which in 2005 had united with Saintwell URC. We are committed to ecumenism through our links with Cytûn, the Covenanted Churches and Churches Together in Canton. Our previous minister was the Chair of the Committee of the Covenanted Baptists which, with the Church in Wales, the Presbyterian, Methodist and United Reformed Churches seeks to bring about the goal of uniting together.

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### **USUAL WEEKLY DIARY & MONTHLY EVENTS -**

The Wednesday evening prayers on Zoom have finished. Can you please note this in the upcoming church magazines?

CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

**AND FINALLY ...** Please hand in material for the next Newslink to Hugh Morgans by the end of the Morning service on **Sunday, 24th January, 2021**