



Ackworth Community Church News Letter

www.ackworthcommunitychurch.co.uk

Issue 233
December 2024

Contact:
Church Leader

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*"For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given: " Isaiah
9:6:*



What's Happening This Month

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Michael's Letter



Merry Christmas!



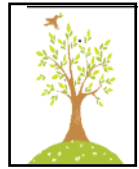
Well, its December and where has the past year gone? It is going to be a very busy month with lots to do over Christmas. But I pray for a festive season not of getting from one event to the next, but really connecting with those who join us with the real reason for the season... our Saviour Jesus.

What gets the Christmas season off to a start for you? First Sunday of Advent? Putting up the trimmings or writing the cards? Or hearing Noddy Holder screaming IIIIIITTTTSSSS CHRIIIIISSSSTMAAAASSSS! As has happened every December for over half a century!

What's notable about Slade's hit record as with many others whose Christmas songs have generated millions is that no mention of Jesus is given.

No doubt Christmas comes with many traditions, things families do every year because that's what they've always done.

What gets you in the Christmas mood (and I am listening to Christmas songs as I write this – in November!)? Mark the month with reflection on the mystery and miracle of Christmas. The greatest day in history, the day it all changed for humanity. The day God came to earth.



Keep close to your heart the true joy and wonder of Christmas and be ready to share it with others. Read the Christmas story again and ask the Lord to reveal fresh insight, prayerfully put yourself in that room with mother and baby, the sights, the sounds the smells! Then look upon Jesus lying in a feeding trough. Look into His eyes, the light of the world. Worship Him.

We've lots going on this month which I hope you will attend. But throughout keep in your heart the true joy of Christmas!

Every blessing
Michael



Prayer and Pastoral Support

Just a reminder that should a need arise; there are a couple of means of support available. Firstly, there is prayer support, so if you contact Ash or any of the elders with a prayer request then they can circulate it to people through e-mail and word of mouth.

Also, there is pastoral support, so again you could contact, Michael, Helen, Ash, Neill, Alyn or Denise and they will arrange some appropriate help where possible.



Healing Ministry Team

If you would like to receive ministry and prayer for healing, please contact Alyn or Carole who will arrange for members of the ministry team to come and wait on the Lord and pray with you. The healing ministry team are: Michael, Helen, Alyn, Carole, Brenda, Denise, Jacquie, Dot & Ash.

Birthday Celebrations

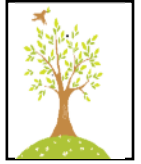
5th December - Adrian

11th December - Brian

16th December - Brenda

20th December - Denise

**A Very Happy Birthday From Everyone At
Ackworth Community Church**



Adore

You stepped down from
 Heaven
 Humbly You came
 God of all creation, here with
 us
 In a star-lit manger,
 Emmanuel
 Light of the world, here to
 save.

Chorus

Adore, come let us adore
 Oh come, let us adore Him
 The Lord, worship Christ, the
 Lord
 Let all that is within us adore.

Wise men bring their treasures
 Shepherds bow low
 Angel voices sing of peace on
 earth

What have I to offer to
 Heaven's King?

I will bring my life, my love,
 my all.

Chorus

Adore, come let us adore
 Oh come, let us adore Him
 The Lord, worship Christ, the
 Lord
 Let all that is within us adore.

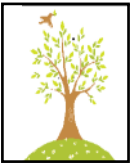
Angels sing, praises ring
 To the newborn King
 Peace on earth, here with us
 Joy awakening
 At Your feet we fall.

(Repeat)

Chorus

Adore, come let us adore
 Oh come, let us adore Him
 The Lord, worship Christ, the
 Lord
 Let all that is within us
 adore.

Martin Chalk
 Graham A. Kendrick



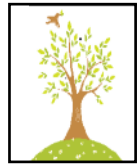
Prayer for Malawi

John Seda his wife Betha, and a team of leaders travelled to hold a conference for the churches in the South of Malawi. A journey of about 9 hours over rough roads, they had to carry the fuel that they needed to get to their destination and then buy fuel to return on the black market, as there is very little fuel available in the country, with many petrol stations closed. In the south of Malawi there is great hunger, with many people surviving by eating mangoes which they have to cross the border into Mozambique to get. Many of the men have travelled to Mozambique and South Africa to find work. John's assessment is that people will start to die of starvation unless international aid agencies can bring relief very quickly. Please pray that the aid is sent quickly.

The conference was good with people responding to the gospel on the Sunday morning. Betha and a group of women went into the local village on the Saturday afternoon, witnessing to the local people. The village group head man received Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. Please pray for him that he may grow in the LORD, and the churches that they may grow in the very difficult circumstances.

Please also pray for a leader called Josiah from the Lilongwe area who believes that the LORD is telling him and his family to relocate to the south to help the churches there. This will be a big move as he is from a different tribe to those in the south, the culture is different, the crops that they farm are different and they have the ongoing issue of food and fuel shortages. Also pray that if Josiah moves a leader can be found to replace him in the church he leads in Lilongwe.

Thanks and blessings
Alyn.



No Room

She ... placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. Luke 2:7

We can hardly go through a Christmas season without a reminder that Jesus was born in less than ideal circumstances. Christmas cards often have scenes of a stable filled with animals, while Mary and Joseph look lovingly into a manger, where the baby Jesus is lying.

While many portrayals of this scene aim for a warm, sweet, nostalgic approach, the birth of Jesus was far from a pleasant experience. Forced to travel to Bethlehem for a Roman census, Mary and Joseph found no comfortable place to stay. So Mary gave birth in a cold, dirty stable and used the animals' feedbox for Jesus' crib.

What irony! No room was available here for the Saviour who came to prepare a place for us in heaven (John 14:2-3).

Everyday life has its ironies too. For example, people were created to live in community and enjoy each other's friendship. The havoc that sin has wreaked in this world often breaks down that sense of community and friendship, leaving us feeling like there is no place where we can feel at home.

Jesus came to a place that was hostile to the presence of God. But, thankfully, he changed the world. Throughout his entire ministry here, Jesus called people to himself, where those who felt lost, lonely, and unwelcome could find a place where they experienced the warmth of being at home in the presence of the Lord.

Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to our unwelcoming world so that you could welcome us into your presence.



Michael's Report 24/25 109 days

All Members visited

I really valued visiting the members of the church and getting to know them. It was also valuable to hear what they valued about the church, something to be kept in mind as we look at the church's vision and mission. Essentially, most people said the same thing, of how friendly, caring and welcoming the church is. And how valued worship and prayer is. Part of the church's identity, which God has purposed.

Getting the hang of things ACC

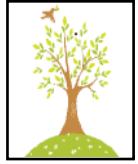
A big part of my time at present is getting to know all the things Ash took care of and how things have been done. Toddler group is a learning curve and a good form of exercise (or good chance of a hernia taking everything in and out of the cupboard)

Getting to know local leaders/community

It has been good to get to know local leaders in the church and community. I've made connections with churches in Ackworth, Hemsworth and South Elmsall and some have shown keenness to work together and others haven't [God showing the way] Ian Jackson at Oasis and David Lavery in Hemsworth.

I have been approaching local schools which initially bore little fruit and took time for meetings to take place but more recently, God has made some of the schools much more amenable and as a result made me more busy. Ackworth Howard's head is keen for me to start an after school club for the children. He has also asked (after only just meeting him) if I would like to apply for a governor role. The Quaker School have an appointed community engagement worker, who took me on a tour of the school and during that we discussed my doing a carol service for the juniors in early December and helping them do a summer event for the wider community.

Last week the head of Outwood contacted me – very keen to discuss community engagement, but unfortunately, she was unwell when I went to visit her. In addition, Eden Place Residential home have made me very welcome and really appreciate the connection I have made with them.



So the beginnings of missional engagement and seeing where God leads and where fruit is to be born.

Encouraging Spiritual Disciplines

Two of the things I highlighted when I was being interviewed for this role was spiritual discipline and more prayer opportunities. I believe spiritual disciplines are really key to our walk with God and our spiritual growth. Finding your particular rhythm is important but, there are and will be things that you can engage in, such as the Sunday evening Prayer meeting and Bible studies. Coming soon will be the power prayer meeting (most popular times to hold it have been Tues and Thurs morns). Later tonight, or at latest Monday night will be my first Examen video on the church's Facebook page. I will email round when it is available. Learning/memorising key Bible verses is of course something I have started. Make that part of your rhythm.

Looking Ahead

Being a Community Church by becoming a Missional Church

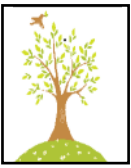
We want God to show us where we can relevantly serve the community. This will happen through making connections in the community and discerning what role God may have for us. This has already started as detailed above with local schools. I'll be looking for things we can realistically do to serve community needs.

Developing Disciple Makers

There is no doubt that churches grow from relationship far more than outreach activities. The transition into church is perhaps not as straight forward as once it was and Disciple Making Movements are becoming more prevalent on the Christian landscape and I have experience of leading a discipleship movement based on those principles. Looking ahead, I want to help everyone in the church grow confident in sharing their faith relevantly and being disciple-makers.

Everyone Making one Disciple

My vision for the church is for every member of the church to make a disciple. It is doable and with the right support and encouragement we could see it happen.



Joining 'the Higher Path'

I will be working on producing a course which I'm calling 'the higher path' after the Wesley Quote. This will be done over a number of weeks Perhaps on Zoom or in a home or even both! Each session will cover a theme related to evangelism and disciple making and based on the 3 thirds model – Looking back, Looking Up and Looking forward.

Themes discussed will form the basis of Sunday Sermons so everyone gets chance to learn and be a part of what I pray will be a move of God in making disciples.

Being Relevant and Accessible

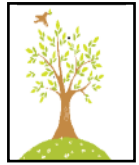
We want to be mindful of perceptions of church in our community (who might see us in a dated manner – hymns and a man in front in a frock) or have no real understanding of what church is like or why it is relevant to them.

Leadership Identity

The modern rendering of the Greek word Presbuteros is elder. There is nothing inherently wrong with that title, but I feel it is dated and yes, I know it refers to an older person in a literal sense, but I think it harks back to older, more traditional models of church and I wonder what image it projects to the unchurched – perhaps the wise old bearded man in robes from science fiction. I am generally against holding titles remembering Jesus teaching His disciples explicitly against taking titles (Matt 23:8-12) from which they might gain respect – knowing no doubt, how the human ego can act against humility.

In seeking to be relevant, accessible and understandable to our community I would prefer the title 'leader' for the leadership team. The elders have not expressed any disagreement with this potential change.

I also would like the leaders to each have an area of particular interest, which they can oversee. The areas would relate to core values of the church's mission – so one might be local mission/evangelism, worship, another might be pastoral care and their role will be to check in on those who participate particularly in these areas and see that they are supported, see how things are going. They would also report to me so that I will be able to maintain a balance of oversight and not overlook important parts of the church's vision.



The elders are presently discussing how this might look, and defining these areas as an ongoing matter of prayer and discussion over a 6 month period.

Developing the Website

Its important as we develop we update the website and Jeannie has volunteered to undertake this. This will be an ongoing project as we develop and new things emerge and particularly as we review the church vision.

Reviewing the Vision

It will be good as leaders to review the vision and prayerfully seek the Lord for any new additions or changes in momentum, or changes of wording to reflect where we are in Him as a church. That is something I hope I will begin looking at in 2025. I would like three or at most 4 core values to be front and centre on our website, ideally expressed in one word each or short phrases. But that's for another time.

ETA: early to mid 2025

I would like to see these things well underway in early 2025.

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,
1 Peter 3:15*

Every Blessing
Michael.



The Church's LGBT Statement

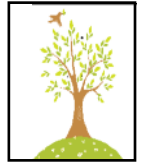
One of the biggest issues facing the church today is that of gender, sexuality, and identity many Churches and individual Christians hold differing views on this issue.

As an Eldership we hold a traditional theology and practice regarding marriage (Our Leading Elder does not officiate at same-sex weddings), and we as Elders commit to practicing and affirming a traditional sexual ethic.

However, we want ACC to be a community where everyone has a safe space for exploring the Christian faith and for following Christ. Anyone, regardless of sexual orientation or identity is welcome at ACC to participate in worship as they seek to find out more about Jesus.

Members within ACC will hold slightly or significantly different views on many issues, including on gender, sexuality, and identity and we do not expect everyone to absolutely agree on all issues. Different views are inherent to the unity and diversity that marks those who belong to Christ and the Christian Community.

We know that many people hold strong views on the issues of gender, sexuality, and identity. With this in mind, we encourage all at ACC to speak with love and humility when discussing or commenting about sexuality or gender identity recognising, that these issues might be closer to the heart of others than we know.



Verse of the month...

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."John 14:21

*If you love me you will keep my commands (Jn 14:15), Jesus tells His disciples. He then tells them that He will send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever. He goes on to say, *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them (Jn 14:21).*"*

What better motivation is there to read and follow Scripture daily – our love of Jesus and to love those He loves. As a disciple of Jesus, to read and obey His commands as an act of love for our Lord and Saviour. As always it for you to decide how to use this verse... whether to memorise or write it down and keep it close by. But above all, let us put it into practice as an essential part of our rhythm of life in Jesus, living in His love.

May God bless His word to you that you may be a blessing to others.

Much love in Him
Michael.



BRF Advent Book Embracing Humanity £8.79

Isabelle Hamley explores what it meant for God to become flesh and how this enables us to understand what it means to be human. Seeing humanity in a new light. God became flesh at Christmas. But how does God, who created all things, live within the limitations of humanity – limitations that humanity itself often resents and tries to transcend? And what does it truly mean to be human?

As contemporary society grapples with questions of identity, justice and medical ethics, *Embracing Humanity* deftly explores how different aspects of being human are both inhabited and transformed in the incarnation.

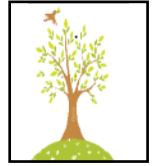
Through the lens of Advent and Christmas, Isabelle Hamley guides us through daily reflections and prayers, encouraging us to meditate on being human in the light of God's choice to reach out to us in Jesus.



Prayer and Anticipation are Now in Season: £2.49 25 Devotions for Advent

Beginning on December 1, this Once-A-Day Christmastime devotional booklet takes you through the entire Advent season with thoughts on the person of Jesus: his involvement at the creation of the world, his life in the Gospel accounts, and who he is today. Along the way you will meet and examine the lives of various individuals involved in the incarnation, and during the week of Christmas examine the response to this miraculous and gracious event, both in heaven and on earth.

Written by Dr. Kenneth Boa, president of Reflections Ministries, these 25 devotions offer select Scripture passages that allow readers to gain a fuller perspective on Jesus' presence throughout the Bible. In addition, each devotion provides thoughts and questions for meditation, along with a prayer for each day, making them perfect for your own personal, family, or small-group use.



Coming Events for December

Monday 2 nd December	Carol Service at Ackworth School.
Friday 6 th December	6.30pm Christmas Meal at The White Horse Sharlston.
Saturday 7 th December	12 noon Carol Singing at the Co-op.
Sunday 8 th December	4pm-6pm Christingle Service at The Parish Rooms. Please Note NO Morning Service.
Sunday 15 th December	3pm Village Carol Service at St Cuthberts.
Sunday 15 th December	2pm-3.30pm Carol Singing at Victoria House then to Eden Place.
Monday 16 th December	All articles for the News Letter must be received by Lisa.
Sunday 22 nd December	10.30am Carol / Nativity Service.
Sunday 22 nd December	Carol Singing at Brackenhill 4.30pm (subject to confirmation)
Tuesday 24 th December	11.30pm Midnight Reflections Online Service on ACC FaceBook Page & YouTube. (pre-recorded).
Wednesday 25 th December	10.30am Christmas Morning Celebrations Online Service on ACC FaceBook Page & YouTube. (pre-recorded).

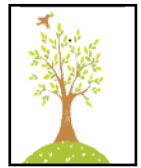


The Information Exchange

This is a place where you can request prayer for yourself or others, share your need /request for help, exchange surplus goods, or if you have some spare time, help someone with gardening, housework, shopping etc. You can use this section also if you want to say anything to the Church. Just ask Lisa to place your request.

Remember to Recycle

Please remember to recycle your empty Ink Cartridges. (HP, Cannon, Lexmark, Dell) and Stamps. Lisa is collecting them, each item donated will raise money for a Charity.



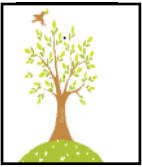
Coming Events for January

Wednesday 8th January

Toddler Group restarts

Monday 20th January

All articles for the News Letter must be received by Lisa.



Small Group Meetings

Do get involved in a mid-week group and let us know which one you're hoping to be part of.

Alpha Groups

There will be no post alpha groups during December.

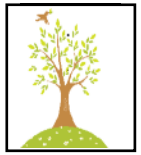
Thursday Lunch Group led by Denise

No meeting during December resumes in January.

Thursday Evening Group led by Alyn (Zoom 8pm)

No meeting during December resumes in January.

Sunday Evening Prayer Meeting at 6pm, venue to be announced.



Worship, Preaching, Projection and Children's Rota.

Date	Time	Theme	Worship	Preaching	Projection	Sunday School	Creche
1-Dec	10.30am	Simply Jesus/ Communion Faith Lk 1:26-38	Michael	Michael	Jeanie	No Sunday School	No Creche
8-Dec	4pm-6pm	Christingle Service	Ash	Michael	Lisa	No Sunday School	No Creche
15-Dec	10.30am	Hope Lk 2:25-35	Michael	Neill	Joel	Sunday School Ash	Creche Ceryws
22-Dec	10.30am	Carol Service / Nativity	Michael	Michael	Lisa	No Sunday School	No Creche
24-Dec	11.30pm	Midnight Reflections	Online Facebook	Online YouTube			
25-Dec	10.30am	Christmas Morning Celebrations	Online Facebook	Online YouTube			
29-Dec	10.30am	Open Topic	Michael	Michael	Jeanie	No Sunday School	No Creche

Prayer Diary

Please pray for each other.

If you would like to be on the prayer list please let Lisa know.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
						1 Adrian & Anne
2 Julian & Caroline	3 Stan & Moiria	4 Joan A James	5 Brenda	6 Julian & Valerie	7 Neil & Eileen	8 Alyn & Carole
9 Maryna	10 John & Lilian	11 Denise	12 Anne- Marie & Alison	13 Brian & Linda	14 Lisa	15 Matt, Cheryl, Oscar & Georgina
16 Tony, Jilly & Family's	17 Michael & Helen	18 Amanda	19 Ash, Di. & Ceryws	20 Jacquie	21 John & Pat	22 Dimytro, Natalia & Denys
23 Dot	24 Andrew, Kimberley, Hannah & Joanna	25 Neill, Sue, Grace & Hope	26 May	27 Joel & Holly	28 Kevin & Jeanie	29 Ann
30 Adrian & Anne	31 Elders					