



outlook

Newsletter of **Pond Square Chapel** | Highgate United Reformed Church | **December 2024 - February 2025**



Christmas Services

Sunday 1st Dec

10.30 am Morning Worship

Sunday 8th

10.30 am Morning Worship
Including communion

Sunday 15th

10.30 am Morning Worship
Nativity Service (led by Sunday's Cool)

Sunday 22nd

10.30 am Morning Worship
Service of Carols & Lessons

Christmas Eve

6 pm - Candlelit family service

Christmas Day

10.30 am Family Service

Why not join us...

All Welcome

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• Minister's Reflection

As a minister, Christmas can be a busy time of year, and one of the delights of the season is leading people in worship and helping to curate a space where the sacredness of the time of year can be experienced in the midst of the mundane. However, during a recent visit by my mum, we both had the opportunity to simply 'attend' a carol service hosted by The Salvation Army at The Royal Albert Hall (the last time my mum had been in that same venue was during her honeymoon in 1984).

The evening was presented as an evening of carols and readings, and the hall itself was completely packed. During one of the readings, a celebratory reader read, 'While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger.' Almost on cue, a young baby in the audience began to cry, the cry being amplified by the superb acoustics of such a wonderful venue. The reading was disrupted as the cry made the reader lose their place.... And maybe their composure.

This got me thinking, as in some ways, being distracted by life is exactly where Advent is supposed to begin. In the Christmas story, we find different characters at different points in their lives. Mary opens her heart and mind to God completely as a visit from an angel dictates the course of her life. Joseph, at first, seeks to divorce Mary quietly because of her pregnancy outside of marriage but then commits to God's will. Elizabeth, pregnant in her old age, meets her relative Mary, joyful about the miracle that God has wrought for her and her husband. Three Wise Men look up to the sky and see an astronomical sign that compels them to follow it through the desert.

Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, and the Three Wise Men weren't planning for God to interrupt their lives as much as God did, yet God emerged from within their busy lives to draw them back towards love and humility in the face of life's everyday challenges.

Advent is the time for preparation and waiting. It's a time when God hopes to emerge in our lives, especially in those times when we are distracted. These stories are an invitation to consider the mystery of God's love and its incarnation within the ordinary lives that we lead. The response to this invitation does not need to be perfect or exact. However, the challenge is to open our hearts and minds towards this invitation.

I hope that however you spend the season, you might be open to having your life and plans disrupted by 'the moment all heaven broke loose.'

• We Can Do More Together Than Apart

We are blessed to live in a community with several faith expressions on the doorstep, and working in partnership allows us to achieve so much more together than we can individually. It was encouraging for us as a congregation to send Jessica to Taize in partnership with Heath Street Baptist Church (I am sure that you will enjoy reading more about her experience in this edition of the church magazine).

It was of equal joy to see the return of 'Beer & Hymns.' Last year, this was hosted at the Winchester pub, and this year, we met in The Crown (beside Gail's).

Members from all the churches joined together, led by Rev Robert Eaton (chaplain at Highgate School) and were accompanied by Paul Dean on the pub's piano. We sang all the classics from 'O Come All Ye Faithful' to 'Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer.' It would be fair to say that the 'congregation' made up of church members and regular Crown punters were in fine voice, raised the roof and fully entered into the festive cheer.

Churches Together in Highgate has returned to having regular clergy meetings (at present, we aim to meet once a month). By continuing to foster relationships, we will be able to build on existing relationships and look at new and creative ways to work in partnership and serve the wider community.



• Visit to Madame Tussaud's



Madame Tussaud's

Mischa said:
My favourite was the movie!



Sunday's COOL
at Pond Square Chapel

Elsa said:

- We went to a delicious restaurant with really good wraps, then we went to Madame Tussaud's; the queue was pretty long but it was worth it - there were lots of different celebrities and models there and they were really realistic and cool!
- There was Taylor Swift, the King, Mo Salah... we all had a lot of fun.

Nina said:

We went to a Palestinian restaurant with amazing halloumi, pita bread and hummus. Then, we walked to Madame Tussaud's and saw lots of waxworks of famous people.

They were so realistic that it was hard to tell real humans to fake! We saw popstars, sportswomen and even the Queen! There was a taxi ride, an Imax movie, marshmallows & strawberries covered in chocolate and even a jacket signed by Dua herself!

Evelyn said:

- We went to Madame Tussaud's and it was so cool to see all these famous people.
- I enjoyed the 4D movie most.
- Noah thought Drake was very cool.
- Thank you Sunday's cool and the church for taking us there!

• Jessica's Trip to Taizé

From October 26th to November 3rd, I had the incredible opportunity to visit Taizé, an ecumenical monastery in Burgundy, France. I traveled with Frida and Wilf from Heath Street Baptist Church, beginning our journey in the minister's (Ewan's) car to Paris, followed by a train and bus to Taizé. The moment I arrived, I was welcomed into a dorm with four other girls, two from Germany and two from the Netherlands, and I was assigned my work: (since staying in Taize is very cheap, everyone who stays there does a small service) helping to run the shop, Oyok. My task was selling food and drinks and things people had forgotten to pack like toothpaste, and Frida's was to clean the church in the evenings and Wilf's was to make lunch.

Each day in Taizé followed a peaceful rhythm. Morning prayer in the vast church began at 8.15am, with thousands of people singing the meditative Taizé chants. It was amazing to be singing with so many people from around the world! After a delicious breakfast, I had some free time before going for a short shift in the shop, followed by midday prayer, lunch, optional song practice and then the Bible introduction. It was led by one of the approximately 100 brothers who live in Taizé (they wear



white robes during the prayers and sit in the middle of the church) and we discussed a different passage and message from the bible every day with him. After the bible introduction, we would go off into group discussions with smaller groups. I loved making friends with my bible group and we had some very thought-provoking discussion. My favourite activity was when we created a recreation of the last supper but since we didn't have enough people, we used the panorama feature on someone's phone - you can see the picture below.

After my afternoon bible discussions there was free time until dinner. On some days I explored Taize with my friends, going to the lake and walking around the village and the gardens. On most days there were workshops in the evenings that people could go to if they wanted. I went to a reflective collaging in silence workshop and a film on the life of Brother Roger (Taizé's founder), and a workshop exploring how christians and muslims could work together. One day I went to the nearby market with my friends for dinner which was a lovely experience and the Frenchness of the market was quite cool. Then it was dinner at 7pm and after dinner, the evening prayer to end the day. After the evening prayer, people could stay in the church for as long as they wanted or go to their dorms or go to Oyok where you're allowed to be noisy. On one of the evenings after the evening prayer, I went to a meeting with Brother Matthew (the prior), where people who wanted to could go and ask questions.

So that was the basic schedule for each day. To summarise: 3 prayers a day, 3 meals, bible study every day, about 1 hour of running the shop every day, and lots of time making friends and talking to new people.



Since we were one of very few groups from the UK, a brother called Jean-Baptiste (in charge of UK visitors), invited us to have lunch with the brothers on one of the days. The brothers all ate in one room in their house and during the first course, everyone ate in silence with classical music playing in the background and then after that we were allowed to talk. It was one of the brothers' birthdays so there was cake! After the meal, Jean-Baptiste took us to see the pottery workshop of the brothers. The brothers make beautifully glazed pottery from scratch, such as bowls, cups and oil lamps, and they sell it in the shop at extremely cheap prices.



I was sad to leave on the final day but as we flew back to London by plane, I knew I wanted to someday go back. Taizé was a life-changing journey. Its atmosphere of prayer, simplicity, and community left me feeling peaceful and inspired. I'm really grateful to the church for supporting this trip and wholeheartedly recommend anyone in the congregation to go—you won't regret it!

Note: when I went, most of the people there were under 18, but most of the time in Taize, most people are over 18 and it was because I went during the school holidays. If you want to find out more, every Saturday evening the Taize prayer is live streamed and you can watch it on youtube. Overall, it was really fun and I loved the whole experience!



• Dates for the diary

DECEMBER 2024

Wed 11th 6.30 pm
 Carols In The Square 6.30 pm
 followed by Mulled Wine, mince pies
 & performance by
 Highgate Ballet School in the Chapel.

Thur 12th 11.00 am
 Informal Bible Study
12-1:30pm Community Lunch

Fri 13th 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom

Sun 15th 10.30 am
 Morning worship

(Children-led Nativity service)
 Evening Winter Shelter

Thur 19th 12-1:30pm
 Christmas Community Lunc
 (we will take a break until Thur 9th Jan).

Fri 20th 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom
 (Meditation will take a break
 until Fri 10th Jan).

Sun 22nd 10.30 am
 Morning Worship
 Evening Winter Shelter

Tue 24nd 6.00 pm
 Christmas Eve Candle Lit Family Worship

Wed 25th 10.30 am
 Christmas Day Family Worship

Sun 29th 10.30 am
 Morning Worship

JANUARY 2025

Sun 5th 10.30 am
 Morning worship
 Evening Winter Shelter

Thur 9th 11.00 am
 Informal Bible Study
12-1:30pm Community Lunch

Fri 10th 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom

Sun 12th 10.30 am
 Morning Worship
 This service will include communion
 Evening Winter Shelter

Thur 16th 11.00 am
 Informal Bible Study
12-1:30pm Community Lunch

Fri 17th 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom

Sun 19th 10.30 am
 Morning Worship
 Evening Winter Shelter

Thur 23rd 11.00 am
 Informal Bible Study
12-1:30pm Community Lunch

Fri 24th 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom

Sun 26th 10.30 am
 Morning Worship
 Evening Winter Shelter

Thur 30th 11.00 am
 Informal Bible Study
12-1:30pm Community Lunch

Fri 31st 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom

FEBRUARY 2025

Sun 2nd 10.30 am
 Morning worship.

Thur 6th 10am -1 pm
 Little Village Donation Drive
11.00 am Informal Bible Study
12-1:30 pm Community Lunch

Fri 7th 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom

Sun 9th 10.30 am
 Morning Worship
 This service will include communion

Thur 13th 11.00 am
 Informal Bible Study
12-1:30pm Community Lunch

Fri 14th 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom

Sun 16th 10.30 am
 Morning Worship

Thur 20th 11.00 am
 Informal Bible Study
12-1:30pm Community Lunch

Fri 21st 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom

Sun 23rd 10.30 am
 Morning Worship

Thur 27th 11.00 am
 Informal Bible Study
12-1:30pm Community Lunch

Fri 28th 12.30 pm
 Meditation via Zoom



• Poems

What Matters

This, is what matters:

Watching the World wake up,
in early-morning light.
And late-night silence.

Looking, unobserved, at a blackbird in the garden.
A friend at my table sharing a meal.

Questions from my grandchildren,
and being shown a special box containing their treasures.

Singing with friends.
Listening to the sick and bewildered.

Gardening in the depth of Winter,
wrapped against the cold.
(I used to think that neighbours thought me silly)

Weeping; moved by the plight
of the dispossessed and suffering.

Sitting in my favourite café drinking coffee,
watching the World go by.

Talking to babies.
Sharing my experience with young people.
Joking with friends.
Being taken to a place that words cannot describe
when listening to the Egmont overture.

And hearing a poem in my head
that wants to be written.

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• St Paul and his visit to Philippi

In late September I had a week's holiday in Kavala, Greece, 2 hours' bus ride from Greece's second city Thessaloniki. The city was founded in the late 7th century BC by settlers from the island of Thassos. It was one of several Thassian colonies along the coastline, all founded in order to take advantage of rich gold and silver mines, especially those located in the nearby Pangaion mountain (which were eventually exploited by Phillip II of Macedonia). Today it is an important economic centre of Northern Greece, focussing on commerce, tourism and fishing. We visited nearby Philippi, named after Philip of Macedonia who ruled from 356BC. The archaeological site was classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016 because of its exceptional Roman architecture, its urban layout as a smaller reflection of Rome itself, and its importance in early Christianity.

Located on the major Roman road known as the Via Egnatia, Philippi was "a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony" (Acts 16:12). Because of its strategic location, Philippi became a strategic location for trade. Philippi was a typical first-century city in that there were a large number of gods worshipped. The Apostle Paul visited Philippi for the first time on his second missionary journey in AD 49/50. Paul is believed to have preached for the first time on European soil in Philippi,[8] leading to the conversion and baptism of the purple merchant, Lydia of Thyatira. According to the New Testament, Paul visited the city on two other occasions, in 56 and 57. He was accompanied by Silas. One day, while Paul, Luke and Silas were on their way to prayer, they were harassed by a slave girl possessed with the "spirit of divination". From the Bible we read that Paul cast the demon out of the girl (Acts 16:16–18; cf. Lk 4:31–37).

The owners of the slave girl seized Paul and Silas and brought them before the magistrates at the forum. Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison. At midnight an earthquake struck and the Philippian jailer thought all the prisoners escaped. The jailer decided to commit suicide. Paul stopped him when he informed the jailer that nobody had escaped. The jailer, realizing that there was something different about Paul and Silas, asked them "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" In unison, they responded, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:25–31).

The first church described in the city is a small building that was probably originally a small prayer-house. This Basilica of Paul, identified by a mosaic inscription on the pavement, is dated around 343 from a mention by the bishop Porphyrios, who attended the Council of Serdica that year. Seven different churches were built in Philippi between the mid-4th century and the end of the 6th. Over the centuries Philippi was battered by Slavic invasions, plague and earthquakes and was finally abandoned around the 16th century. Archaeological excavations were carried out in the early 20th century by the French School of Athens and continued in the second half of the 20th century by the Greek Archaeological Service.



Patricia Judd

• Winter Shelter



Since 10 November the shelter at Highgate URC in Pond Square has been running on Sunday evenings providing a hot 2-course meal, followed by tea/coffee, chat, Scrabble, chess and a friendly warm environment, then an overnight bed and breakfast.

There is a good atmosphere amongst the guests and the many volunteers who come from all the churches around Highgate and also people who are not necessarily “church-goers” but have found us through our website. C4WS runs a jobs club and a weekly lunch and drop-in advice centre throughout the year as well as the winter shelter from November to March. Demand for their services continues to increase.

For those unable to volunteer in person contributions of tea, coffee, sugar, breakfast cereal, and small containers of toiletries will be gratefully received. Donations of warm clothing and coats are also welcome as are new men’s underpants and socks.

