

The Open Door



Fairfield Methodist Church
in the Buxton Circuit.

Winter EDITION 2009



Church Web Site: www.fairfieldmethodistchurch.org.uk

Service 10:30am each
Sunday
plus a monthly service with
St Peter's here on the first
Sunday and at St Peter's on
the third Sunday of the
month both at 6pm.



Rev J Colin Smith.
01298 23556
Email: revjcs@aol.com

.....
Deacon Janet Heys
01298 74329
Email: janetheys@btinternet.com

Heavenly Father, we ask your blessing on our readers and our contributors to this magazine. May all our hearts be open to your holy, loving spirit.

May nothing we do or say here ever cause a stumbling block to others, but may all our thoughts, and words, and prayers, and actions, serve to build your kingdom here. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Word from the Editor.

Welcome to the Winter Edition of our magazine.

As well as looking forward to the celebration of Christmas we look to face challenges and changes within our Church. Most notably the resignation after more than 35 years of our Treasurer Mr N E Brittain challenges us to consider realistically the future. I hope you will join the debate.

Russell

E mail secretary@fairfieldmethodistchurch.org.uk

All articles in this magazine represent the views of the writer and not necessarily the views of Fairfield Methodist Church.

Items for next edition by 10th February 2010 at latest please.

Dear Friends

Second Isaiah's news was sensational. God is going to give the Jewish slaves their freedom - and their freedom will be for the sake of the whole world.

The liberated slaves will be "a light to the nations" and their task will be to:

*bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness. (Isaiah 42.7)*

What did Isaiah hope would be achieved? Probably he hoped that there would be both a spiritual and a physical change.

Spiritually, he wanted Israel and the world to know the God of mercy and new beginning, whose concern is for all people, who gives us his law to live by.

Physically, he wanted to see the unjustly imprisoned released. The coming of the light of God meant that rulers would act with justice because they, too, were under the law of God.

What does this say to us?

First, we are called to be a people of light. The Light is God's truth and grace, changing and renewing us. Through the Light of God shining into our lives we have the privilege and freedom of being God's daughters and sons.

As Christmas draws near we prepare to celebrate the coming of the light of God. Jesus is the truth and grace in human form. He accepts the challenge of Isaiah "to bring out from the prison those who sit in darkness".

We know for ourselves that the Good News of Jesus has the power to release people from the prison of fear and self. He enables us to live in the freedom of faith and hope and outgoing love. The challenge is how

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we share this Gospel - with courage, wisdom and sensitivity!

Secondly, for some, prison may be a just and appropriate punishment, a deterrent to others, and a time in which they can recognise their need for the coming of God's into their lives. For others, imprisonment is the way those with power react to other people's non-violent beliefs and actions. They lock up their "trouble-makers".

Amnesty International, founded by a Christian, continues to seek freedom for Prisoners of Conscience. This Christmas you could share with Amnesty in remembering those who are imprisoned unjustly in our world.

If you would like more information about remembering prisoners, or about our local Amnesty group, do contact me.

May Christ's Truth and Light be welcomed by you and me.

Colin

Have you seen Spot?.... Deacon Janet Heys

One of my favourite times with my children was reading stories; '*Christmas with Spot*' was one of those books where you lift a flap to find Spot in the picture.

Well, Christmas is upon us; I really quite like Christmas (well from December); lights, Christmas trees, carol singers, nativities, parties, mulled wine and mince pies, the excitement of children seeing Santa, contact with friends and family and so I could go on painting pictures of Christmas scenes, and you may picture your own.

Yet, like in that story book we may ask the question, 'Have you seen Jesus?' Yes, the Christian element is more hidden, but what a difference it makes to the picture if we find him. Perhaps we may seek him for ourselves this advent, in the midst of the festivities. One opportunity is to join us for the Advent reflections, carol service and Christmas Eve

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gathering.

There are many who, for various reasons, don't like Christmas, it reminds them of those no longer with us, the stress caused by the extra work that it brings, running up debts, homeless, the addict; yet the part of Christmas that IS for EVERYONE is JESUS; he brings light and hope for those dark moments in our lives, in the lives of others and in the world. In the midst of darkness is where we find the Christ child, offering a glimpse of light and hope to all.

The Candle Song . A Graham Kendrick Song.

Like a candle flame, flickering small, in our darkness

Uncreated light, shines through infant eyes

God is with us, Alleluia. Come to save us, Alleluia.

Stars and Angels sing, Yet the earth, sleeps in shadows

Can this tiny spark, set a world on fire?

Yet, his light shall shine, From our lives, Spirit blazing

As we touch the flame, Of His holy fire.

Wishing you all a peaceful and blessed Christmas season.

Janet

Thank You—Alison Bletcher

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the church, yet again, for their support and help for my annual pupil's concert. The concert was another success with every pupil playing so well. It was also great to see the church so full - standing room only in fact.

Due to the generosity of the audience we were able to raise the fantastic sum of £530!

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This year the donations were for the new neo-natal unit at Stepping Hill Hospital. The NHS has provided medical equipment but as usual for non-essentials (if you can class parent beds and toys as such), the unit has to rely on the generosity of the public.

Providing support for the parents is such an important part of the care in a paediatric unit, as I know from my own experience when nursing. Wards are so often short staffed and nurses hardly have time to attend to the needs of the children, never mind the parents. It is at times like this that anything we can give to the hospital can help in some small part to support the parents through such a difficult time.

Unfortunately a few days before the concert, the baby of a local family passed away. Thomas had spent many weeks in the neo-natal unit of Stepping Hill in his short life so we thought it would be nice to donate the money to the unit in his memory. At present it is being decided whether to buy five televisions for the parent's rooms, two parent's beds or cots. Whichever is bought, there will be a dedication to Thomas.

Hopefully we will all have helped very slightly to ease the pain of the parents and family of Thomas.

Editors Note: Thank you Alison for organising a brilliant night as well as for raising money for such a worthwhile cause

Apology- The Editor

In the last edition of our magazine I thanked by name a number of people who had helped me when I take bookings for our Church. Regrettably I missed some people who have helped our Church. This was unintentional but interestingly it was the only comment on the last magazine. My apologies to those concerned.

**Provisional Minutes of our Church Council Meeting Monday 26th
October**

Present

Rev. Colin Smith (JCS) (in the chair), Mrs Eirawen Wilmot (EW), Mrs. J. Lawton (JL), Mrs T Bainbridge (TB), Miss M Ford (MF) Mrs Pat Evans (PE), Mrs J Bletcher (JB), Mrs. A. Evans (AE), Mrs A Getliffe(AG), Mrs M Brittain (MB), Mr N E Brittain (NEB), Mrs A Baker (PAB), Deacon Janet Heys (JH)), Mr R. Baker (RSB) Secretary

Apologies. Mrs P O'Gara (PO'G),

Opening Devotions were led by JH

Who are members of this committee? The list kept in the minute book is correct.

Minutes of previous meeting

Were agreed without change.

Matters arising.

Deacon Janet was welcomed to her first meeting.

Christian Aid collection had again done well although down on previous year. JCS thanked JL for her organising this and thanked everyone involved in it.

Autumn Fair discussed. 30p entry.

Christmas Eve service 6pm to be taken by JH.

Christmas Flyer to be widely distributed giving details of Parish & this Church services.

Christmas Day. Janet is happy to do a Christmas Day service if this is required.

AE suggested we have a dado rail on the back wall of Church this was agreed.

Paul Dye to be asked to fix one.

BUSINESS PREPARED FOR THIS MEETING

4. Reports

4.1 Church Family

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4.1.1 Tuesday Club (AE) 2009/10 meetings began in September with a programme organised once per month until December. In the new year the programme starts again in February. Members now pay £1 per session. The Tuesday Club will have a 50p stall on the Autumn Fair and would appreciate small gifts toward

this. Funds raised up to May 09 were given to Church, the flower fund and Heart Foundation.

4.1.3 Pilgrim Group (EW) programme has been running monthly from April and ends in December with a meal at the Church Inn at Chelmorton.

4.1.4 Prayer Group has not met since Edith's death and JCS has offered time to it with JH if there is support.

4.1.5 There are currently no young people's activities.

4.1.5 (MB) Missionary previously known as Women's Work in 2008/9 raised £102.65.

4.2 Pastoral

4.2.1 Communion at the home of PO'G. Next on Thursday 5th November 2pm.

4.2.2 Cradle Roll. (AG) currently 3 children under 5. To be discussed with JH

4.2.3 October count has been done and details passed to RSB for putting on web.

4.2.4 JH has visited all members and would welcome information if visits are needed. JCS reminded that he still has pastoral charge while JH has pastoral care for Fairfield.

4.3 Worship

4.3.1 JCS said he was always happy to take positive feedback on the style of worship It was said that the preacher being in the body of the Church and not exclusively in the pulpit was welcomed.

4.3.2 Our excellent relationship with St Peter's continues and the Sunday evening service at Fairfield Methodist Church & St Peter's is faithfully supported albeit by a small number from each Church.

4.3.3 Flexibility of worship is welcomed and our Church lends itself to this. JCS thanked the three local preachers present JL, AG & JH for their continued service.

4.3.4 Members were invited to a series of talks by Pete Shepherd on faith

sharing and details will be circulated.

4.3.5 JH asked if she could:

- Do a display at the Church entrance
- Do a notice sheet on a monthly or weekly basis.
- Prepare a stewards rota.

After discussion about the current situation of Church Stewards this was agreed and JL & AG offered to help where they could.

4.4 Neighbourhood concerns

4.4.1 JH appointment in September has strengthened the Christian representation on community groups within Fairfield.

4.4.2 There are a lot of groups especially for the young although all do not want to be involved and we are looking to see if there are any gaps in other age groups which we could help fill.

4.5 World Service & Missions

4.5.1 Christian Aid collection already mentioned

4.5.2 Easter offering at Hollinsclough next year.

4.5.2 (JL) Home Missions raised £200 from Fairfield.

4.5.3 Women's Work as was already mentioned.

4.6 Finance

4.6.1 NEB produced an extensive annual report which was circulated to each person present .He also produced the Financial Schedule B. After some discussion and explanation by NEB these were agreed and accepted with thanks.

4.6.2 The Reserve Policy prepared by NEB was accepted.

4.6.2a The money shown under Benevolent Fund is available to JH for appropriate use.

4.6.2b It was agreed that the grants & donations should be as shown in the Treasurers Report dated 26th October.

4.6.3 NEB said he was resigning from the post of Treasurer with effect from February 2010. This was accepted with understanding & reluctance

and while we are not absolutely sure how long NEB has held this post, it is more than 35 years. NEB was thanked for his tremendous service as Treasurer over many years.

4.6.4 RSB thought that Fairfield were now at a cross roads and knowing of NEB's decision before tonight believed people involved with our Church knew of this to try to identify someone to take over this important job.

Unfortunately this had not identified anyone.

4.6.5 RSB using figures from 2007/8 said that with 21 members and outgoings of approx £14000 per year we needed to find £666 per member per year or £12 to £13 per member per week. RSB said that our Church was only used for a maximum of 300 hours per year for Church activities which is £47 per hour or £2.20 per member per hour. He had to ask if this expenditure could be justified keeping our Church open for 200 to 300 hours per year for Church activities.

4.6.6 RSB indicated that at least 85% of our membership was over 70 years of age, retired and on a fixed income.

4.6.7 RSB Also pointed out that many of the important roles were held by loyal devoted members present who had held the posts for many years and were tired people who would like to retire from their roles. This led to a discussion and reactions suggested there was a lot of stress felt by people present.

4.6.8 JCS agreed we need to continue this discussion led by prayer and that he would take the problem of not having a treasurer to the Circuit leadership team but he could not promise a satisfactory outcome.

4.6.9 MF agreed to take on the role involving collection envelopes.

4.7 Property

4.7.1 RSB produced Schedule A and there was a discussion on the specific items under Section 24. It is seen that this financial year there is expenditure needed on Electricity Testing, Notice Boards, maintenance of gutters, and issues in the H & S Report.

4.7.2 The Health & Safety Report still has a number of outstanding items to be done. RSB outlined the various types of jobs still outstanding which included the need for a "Fire Safety" assessment. The Accident Book is now kept in the first aid box in the kitchen.

4.7.3 There was considerable discussion about the toilets, as previously stated

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they no longer meet the standards of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). RSB had with Trevor Gilman obtained an estimate for the work which if carried out needed substantial structural work - drawing available. The cost would be about £11000. The discussion that followed did not suggest much support for getting this done but it was agreed by RSB he will reluctantly talk to others about the likelihood of grants for this. JCS believes it will be easier to get grants while community groups are using the premises.

4.7.4 Heating was discussed and we should look at the Buxton Church system and see if planned savings are actually achieved using modern computer controlled equipment.

4.7.5 The schedule A was agreed and signed.

5. Special Services.

5.1.1 CTIB was discussed and AG who had left the meeting was thanked for her work.

5.1.2 Harvest Festival 2010 26th September. JH to be invited to preach am & Richard Mottershead (RM) pm who has agreed provisionally. JCS is happy to act as substitute for RM if needed.

5.1.3 In conjunction with St Peter's a Christmas card will be widely circulated on Fairfield.

5.1.4 Special Carol Service (JL) & (EW) 17th December.

5.1.5 Christmas Eve (HC) Service. *Already discussed*

5.1.6 Service on Ash Wednesday here at 10:30am on 17th February 10.

7.1 Local preachers.

7.1.1 Ian Stubbs has been invited to be given a note to preach.

7.2 No candidates for Ministry but to pray that suitable candidates come forward.

9 to 13 Appointments

JCS expressed thanks to all who participated in the life of the Church.

C. BUSINESS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

17. What matters do we take to Circuit and Synod- NIL

D. FUTURE MEETINGS

18.1. Next meeting 7pm Monday 8th March

18.2 14 days notice will be given. ALL WELCOME

The meeting closed with prayer.

Editors note: Everyone with an interest in the life of the Church is welcome to come to our Church Council meeting.

The following questions were set in last year's GCSE examination in Swindon, Wiltshire (U.K.)

These are supposedly genuine answers (from 16 year old boys)

Q. Name the four seasons

A. Salt, pepper, mustard and vinegar

Q. Explain one of the processes by which water can be made safe to drink

A. Flirtation makes water safe to drink because it removes large pollutants like grit, sand, dead sheep and canoeists

The legend of the Robin shared with us by Mrs Thelma Bainbridge

According to legend the robin was once a dull coloured bird without a red breast that distinguishes it from the other birds.

On the night that Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, it was very cold and Mary was worried that her baby son would not be warm enough so Joseph made a fire and they laid down beside it to sleep.

A little bird was watching them through a crack in the roof and saw that the fire was beginning to die. Flying down he tried to replenish it but the wood was too heavy for him to lift. All through the night he stayed by the fire fluttering his wings to keep the flames bright.

When morning came Mary saw that the Robin's breast was reddened by being too close to the blaze.

"You brave little bird" she exclaimed "In recognition of your courage you will keep your red breast for ever and everyone will know how you risked your life for your Lord".

More Exam Answers from Swindon

Q. How is dew formed

A. The sun shines down on the leaves and makes them perspire

Q. What causes the tides in the oceans

A. The tides are a fight between the earth and the moon. All water tends to flow towards the moon, because there is no water on the moon, and nature abhors a vacuum. I forget where the sun joins the fight

Q. What guarantees may a mortgage company insist on

A. If you are buying a house they will insist that you are well endowed

Q. In a democratic society, how important are elections

A. Very important. Sex can only happen when a male gets an election

Q. What are steroids

A. Things for keeping carpets still on the stairs

Q. What happens to your body as you age

A.. When you get old, so do your bowels and you get intercontinental

Tuesday Club Audrey Evans

We take a break from after our Christmas Lunch on December 8th until Tuesday February 9th at 7:30pm when our speaker will be the Rev Colin Smith. With good wishes for a peaceful Christmas from Audrey and the members.

Pilgrim Group- Eirawen Wilmot

We have enjoyed yet another programme and have had some very good meetings whether they be talks, eats or film shows. After our Christmas Meal on Thursday December 10th we take our winter break and hope to start with a new programme in April.

Our Treasurer - by Eirawen Wilmot

On behalf of all connected with our Church I want to say a huge thank you to our Treasurer Mr N.E.Brittain. Norman has given this Church and the old Church before that a lifetime's commitment as Treasurer, sometime Secretary and general worker. Norman has decided to retire in February 2010 and he has certainly earned that.

Norman was one of the main people who were inspired to face the problem 25 years ago of having a building much loved but totally unsuitable for a smaller congregation. Norman was one of the signatories on the lease we have with Johnnie Johnson Housing Association and it was thanks to his excellent stewardship of Church finances that we now have a building suitable for our needs and no debts.

Norman thank you for all you have done.

More Exam Answers (my favourite)

Who was most upset when the Prodigal Son came home?

Answer: the fatted calf!

Autumn Fair

Saturday 14th November raised £375 for Church funds. Thanks to all who helped in any way.

Crossroads - A personal view. - Russell Baker

I believe our Church has reached an important crossroads in its history.

As you will know Mr N. E. (Norman) Brittain has announced his resignation from February 2010 as our Treasurer. Norman has been treasurer for more years than he can remember but at least 35 years. During his careful stewardship of our financial affairs we were able to leave a beloved but totally impractical

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Chapel and build our current splendid building.

Norman's part in this was immense and his negotiations with Johnnie Johnson Housing Association, the architects and the builders ensured that 25 years on we have a building to be proud of, with no debts.

Unfortunately although we have an excellent building and good people who support it, the number of members has reduced from 65 in 1991 to 21 in 2009 which explains in part why there appears to be no one in the congregation to replace Norman as Treasurer.

The tasks we are obliged to do to maintain the Church have increased and the amount of money needed each year to keep the Church financially viable has doubled since 1991. In other words on average in 1991 if each member gave £2.10p per week that would have met costs. In 2009 the figure needed weekly on average to meet costs is £12 to £13 per member.

This will be the first time to my knowledge that our Church has not been self reliant and able to fill a major role from within the congregation and for this reason I say we are at a crossroads.

A few facts about our Church:

- Our Church now has just twenty one members.
- It is used for Church purposes for between 200 and no more than 300 hours per year (300 hours is 37 working days),
- Our total Church costs are approximately £14,000 per year, which is £12 to £13 per member per week or £47 per hour of Church use based on 300 hours use.
- Our membership is mainly over 70 years old and on a fixed income.
- We have Janet our Deacon already starting to make a difference although her work is primarily working in the community bringing the love of our God to the people, not necessarily bringing the people to our building.
- We have Colin our Minister working immensely hard to support all eight Churches in his charge.
- Our building is used by Luncheon Clubs, The W.I and occasional other users

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and all are charged a modest rate but well below the actual cost. We must be aware that other buildings in Fairfield are available at even lower costs.

- Most major tasks undertaken in the Church are carried out by the same few people mostly over 70 years of age, some of who would like to "retire" and there is no one in the wings waiting to take over.

If we really want a Church in the way it is, more people must come forward now, but we have been saying this for the last 20 years.

My questions are:

- How do we remain self reliant?
- Who is prepared to take on the role of Treasurer
- What happens when one or more of the willing and loyal few is no longer able or wishes to carry out their essential tasks.
- Does the expenditure and so little Church use justify our Church's existence?

These questions cannot be ignored.

Editor's note: The views expressed in our magazine are personal ones and not necessarily the views of Fairfield Methodist Church. So what do you think?

More Exam answers

Q. How are the main parts of the body categorised (eg the abdomen)

A. The body is consisted into 3 parts - the brainium, the borax and the abdominal cavity. The brainium contains the brain, the borax contains the heart and lungs and the abdominal cavity contains the five bowels:
A,E,I,O and U

His Masters Voice. Graham Kissack

"Speak Lord, for your servant is listening..." 1 Sam 3:9

Some adverts just seem to have an enduring quality.

One of the best known is from a previous generation, and is instantly recognisable. It is the picture of a little black and white dog looking intently down the horn of a wind-up gramophone. The title is 'His Masters Voice'. The imagery is unmistakable; we believe that the record player is so good that the faithful dog is convinced his master is actually speaking through the gramophone.

Well, our Master still speaks. Through the Bible, through prayer, through the witness of the Spirit (Rom 8:16), through circumstance and through people. Many have heard. Abraham, Samuel, David and Paul most certainly did. Countless millions down the centuries since then have also heard. Is He calling *you*? His voice is unmistakable. He calls you to follow Him, to listen to Him, to love Him, to live for Him, to serve Him and yes, even if necessary, to die for him.

Through the noise, distortion and discordant clatter of the world as it screams and demands your attention, do you hear Him?

Or to put it another way, will you hear Him? Will you hear the still, quite voice of the Master as He calls you? (1Kings 19:11, 12)

Editors note: You may recall that Graham has contributed a number of articles to our magazine. Graham & his wife Ann for many years lived in South Africa but felt called to move to the UK. Graham has just accepted a post as Pastor at Peel Street Baptist Church in Accrington and he and Ann hope to start work there in early December we wish them well.

Exam Questions & answers

Q. Use the word 'judicious' in a sentence to show you understand its meaning
A. Hands that judicious can be soft as your face.....

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT? Pat Evans

At the Poetry Group I attend the chosen topic for December is 'All I hate about Christmas'. I have yet to put anything into verse, but most negative feelings start with the so-called 'run up' - that period of three months or so when Gift Sets, festive wrappings, mince pies etc begin to elbow anything useful off the shelves. Charity cards and catalogues plop endlessly through the letterbox optimistically requesting £10, £100 or other and fairy lights twinkle ever earlier with many homes and gardens resembling a small fairground even before November is out.

By December the message is at its most strident: Eat, drink, be merry and get into debt. Grandparents, mums and estranged dads must compete to provide the Most Lavish Toy, which by Boxing Day will either have flat batteries, have lost its head or mislaid some vital working part down the back of the sofa, leaving junior quite content with the felt tips and colouring book 'Santa' slipped into the stocking just in case. As the stores reopen, queues will form to exchange that most forlorn of items, the unwanted Christmas present, with special bins on hand to dump the year's cards so laboriously written by those we rarely see and anyone looking back on less than harmonious 'Yuletide Cheer' will surely agree that Charles Dickens has a lot to answer for.

Of course no-one HAS to bow to the tyranny of commercialism. Many people genuinely enjoy choosing gifts, decorating and entertaining and we should bless them for it. But any who prefer to opt out, or put a brief greeting in the local paper deserve respect too. Possibly they totted up the cost of obligation and sent it to someone for whom mere eating is luxury enough, who knows? Because the one inescapably 'hateful' aspect of Christmas is that tinsel cannot hide tears. Disasters like the terrible 2004 Tsunami, starvation, bombings, the inevitability that more young troops will die in Afghanistan, and private sadness in the lives of people close to us all serve as a reminder that

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for some there seems nothing much to celebrate.

And if the small persistent voice of secularism should succeed in stripping public celebration of anything other than sleigh bells, shopping days, gluttony and booze, then they might well be right. How fortunate then, that still even now, anyone at all is welcome to go into a church, see the Advent candles lit, hear real carols and the old familiar readings and look again on the Nativity Scene - not as something rooted out of the cupboard because custom demands it but for the message it holds embodied in the tiny figure of the infant Christ. Hope - reborn, essential, universal and eternal, the one gift we must accept with good grace and keep on sharing with each other.

With my best wishes to all,



Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia

Seasons Greetings

The following people will not be sending Christmas cards to fellow Church friends this year but instead will make a contribution to a charity of their choice.

***Seasons Greetings with love to you all.
from Joan & Alison (Bletcher)***

***A Happy & Healthy Christmas & 2010 to all
from Ann & Russ (Baker)***

***Wishing everybody a Happy Christmas & a prosperous New Year
from Margaret (Ford)***



Father God, When your precious Son became a tiny baby in a stable in Bethlehem in poverty and simplicity, you changed our world. As we imagine those surroundings, we join with the shepherds and the wise men in wonder and praise. We thank you for our material lives, praise you for our spiritual lives, and trust in you for our eternal life. Amen

Future Events

ALL WELCOME

Advent Reflections

Monday 30th November, 7th, 14th & 21st December at 7pm led by Deacon Janet Heys.

Special Carol Service 17th December at 6pm
Led by Mrs Joyce Lawton & Mrs Eirawen Wilmot

Christmas Eve (HC) Service. At 6pm
Led by Deacon Janet Heys

Ash Wednesday Service

10:30am Wednesday 17th February 2010.
Led by Rev Colin Smith



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