

CONNEXIONS

The magazine of

Lavington

United Reformed Church
Bideford

www.lavingtonurc.org



CHRISTMAS 2021 / NEW YEAR 2022

40p

DECEMBER DIARY

Sun.	5th	11.00am 12.30pm	Family Worship & HC – Sabrina Gröschel Lavington Family Advent Lunch
Sun.	12 th	11.00am	Family Worship – Mrs Alison Biggs
Tues.	14 th	NOON	Tuesday Café Christmas meal. Pre-Booked.
Sun.	19 th	11.00am 6.30pm	Christmas Worship – “Christmas around the World” Candlelight Service followed by mince pies and hot drinks
Sun.	26 th		NO SERVICE



The Editor would like to express her thanks to everyone who has sent in contributions for the magazine throughout another difficult year. Without your input it wouldn't be possible to fill the magazine. Let us hope and pray that 2022 will bring better news and that we all keep safe and well.

On your behalf, I would like to thank Jenny and Ricky for assembling and printing the magazine each month.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very healthy and peaceful Christmastide

Janet Palmer

Please be aware that any or all of the above planned events may be cancelled if any new Covid restrictions are introduced by government.

IF IN ANY DOUBT, PLEASE RING ALISON ON 01805 625632



Dear Friends

As we go through the season of Advent we prepare for Christmas and the celebration of Immanuel - God with us. In doing so, we should recall that God is with us throughout all the seasons, not just when we are focusing on the birth of Jesus.

God has certainly been with us over the past few years and I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to offer ministry in the community here in Bideford. Things are now developing and we have the opportunity to take things forward in 2022. Those who were able to get to the church meeting in November will know that there is an option for Lavington along with Muddiford URC to form a pastorate which will be scoped at 25% or 30%. In addition, you will know that I have expressed my willingness to serve as your Minister.

In terms of the next steps, things will progress throughout the first part of 2022. There is no need to rush to confirm my appointment as I am already confirmed until September 2022. However, the next step is that I will be invited to 'preach with a view' at Muddiford URC as they haven't had a chance to get to know me yet. Conversations will continue with Synod representatives, to discuss the finer details of the arrangements going forward. These will include the division of the scoping between the two churches and how the expenses will be divided.

In all things we will continue to seek to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is important that any appointment is in line with God's plans for the church in Bideford and Muddiford. As we go through this time of Advent let us rejoice that our God, Immanuel, is with us providing hope and encouragement for the future.

May you know the love of God surrounding you this Advent season and into the New Year!

Every blessing
Rob



LAVINGTON CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2021

This year the local branch of Action for Children has been chosen as the Charity to benefit from our Christmas Appeal. They work from the Torridge Children's Centre in Victoria Park.

The Centre provides early help to the whole family, from pregnancy through to aged eight, when families most need support, taking action to support a child, young person or their family when a problem first emerges. Service users, community resources, and a range of service providers work together to enable families to manage their own dilemma, making changes to secure the well-being of their children.

If you would like to donate to this worthy cause, envelopes will be handed out on 5 December. This can be put into the offertory bag or handed direct to Jenny anytime up until the 19 December 2021.

Thank you in anticipation of your generosity.

J C



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SINGING CAROLS

L and C W will again be singing carols on their doorstep on Christmas Eve at 6.30pm. They would welcome all friends to join with them.

Their address is – xxxxx All monies collected will again be given to the Devon Air Ambulance Trust. Last year they raised £185; lets' see if together we can beat that this Christmas!

Ed.

'The Holly and The Ivy' is a traditional folk Christmas carol, with many different versions appearing in different parts of the country over the centuries. The song in its present form can be traced only as far as the early 19th century. The version that we now sing was first recorded by Cecil Sharp, the well-known folk song collector, who heard a woman named Mary Clayton sing it in Chipping Campden in the Cotswolds in 1909. The



imagery of the holly and the ivy has featured in many folk songs and carols since medieval times. This is partly because both trees are evergreen, the holly bears its red berries at Christmas time, they are found growing together at the edges of woodland and the various parts of the holly bush can be used to symbolise the life of Christ. The idea is that the holly symbolises Christ and the ivy symbolises the Virgin Mary .

Angie Mostellar, in her book *'Christmas'* sums up the symbolism of holly neatly thus, 'Christians have identified a wealth of symbolism in its form. The sharpness of the leaves help to recall the crown of thorns worn by Jesus, the red berries serve as a reminder of the drops of blood that were shed for salvation and the shape of the leaves, which resemble flames, can serve to reveal God's burning love for his people. Combined with the fact that holly maintains its bright colours during the Christmas season, it naturally came to be associated with the Christian holiday.'

Because of their availability at Christmas time, holly and ivy are both used to decorate churches at Christmas.

Many artists have recorded the carol ranging from Petula Clark in 1958, Steeleye Span in 1972 and the choir of St John's College, Cambridge in 1986.

Chris



DECEMBER ROTAS

MINISTRY of FLOWERS

We thank those who are providing flowers for our sanctuary this month and those who arrange them if asked to do so.

5th	Christmas Flowers
12th	Christmas flowers
19th	Christmas flowers
26th	NO SERVICE

SIDESMAN DUTIES	5th	Mrs A B / Revd C B
	12th	Mrs H M / Mrs J C
	19th	Mrs E B / Mrs L C
	26th	NO SERVICE

VESTRY ELDER	5th	Mrs J C
	12th	Mrs J P
	19th	Mrs A B
	26th	NO SERVICE

COMMUNION

Preparation Servers	5th	Mrs H M / Mrs A B Mrs J P / Mrs A B
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BIBLE READERS	5th	Mrs A B
	12th	Mrs J P
	19th	Revd C B
	26th	NO SERVICE

OFFERTORY STEWARDS

Mrs A B / Miss J S

TUESDAY CAFÉ

	Kitchen	Tea / Coffee	Refreshments
7 th	Mrs J D Mrs A B	Mrs M T Mrs J W	Mrs H V

14th ONLY PRE-BOOKED CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT 12 NOON

Thank you very much to you all for your help through 2021.
WE WISH YOU A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A HEALTHY NEW
YEAR



When I was a child I was always pleased that my birthday wasn't in December – too close to Christmas to get 2 presents. It was usually 2 in one, if my friends were to be believed!

Here they are –

V H	4 th
M M	17 th
L G	22 nd
G C	22 nd

Enjoy your own special day everyone and may Santa still call on you when Christmas Day comes around! We send you all our love and good wishes.

Ed

THANK YOU

Dear friends,

Thank you all so very much for all the get well wishes, cards and the lovely posy Jill needed to leave on my doorstep as I was in isolation with Covid and a chest infection.

I'm glad to say that I am feeling much better now. What a good job I am fully vaccinated!

I hope to see you all very soon and again my grateful thanks.

Love and God bless you all.

H M

NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY

L G has naturally been very worried about her son **G** as he has been very poorly in hospital suffering from Sepsis. He has now been allowed home and is slowly recovering. Our love and prayers are with you **L** at this anxious time. Sadly **P H** has been in hospital receiving treatment but is now at home being looked after by **P**. We hope you continue to improve and feel better soon **P**.

During the past month some of our fellowship have been missing due to Covid restrictions. We remember **S and family** hoping they will soon be fully recovered. **H M** recovered from her Covid infection but has had a fall at home badly cutting her leg which now needs to be rested so it will heal properly. We send you our love and best wishes for a speedy recovery **H**. We know that other members' of **H's** family are also infected with Covid. Still on the Covid front, **H and J V's** son **M** has been diagnosed as has **M M's** son and daughter in law, **N and B**. Additionally, **M's** sister **J** is suffering from Sepsis and is quite poorly but **M** has had some good news, next Spring **M** will be welcoming a new grandchild into the family. We are also sorry to learn that **V P** needed to go into hospital briefly last week as she was unwell. **V**, you are in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

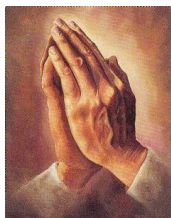
We are pleased **R Q** is feeling well enough to come to worship and Tuesday coffee. Unfortunately **M T** is suffering with sciatica, which we know can be very painful. We hope **M** you are getting some relief for the pain.

Our prayers and love go to all those mentioned above and all those not mentioned within our fellowship, especially those who are worried about family, friends or themselves at this time. We send our love to the housebound and those who don't feel able yet to return to worship at Lavington. May the God of this Christmas season bring us His peace, joy, love and hope.

Alison

J S asks me to wish you all Christmas blessings and a healthy and happy New Year.

Ed



If Jesus could give the world a present each week for Advent and Christmas, what would it be?

w/c 5th

Good News for the poor.

In Jesus' time and in our own, the poor and marginalised were and are in the majority, but in God's Kingdom, they will be placed at the head of the table, given priority over the rich and will be the first guests to sit at the messianic banquet.

w/c 12th

Release to the captives.

In the world today, there are thousands of people who have been imprisoned for crimes they did not commit, or simply for making public comments about corrupt governments. In Jesus' world, such people would be freed, given amnesty or pardoned.

w/c 19th

The recovery of sight to the blind.

Again, in Jesus's world, much healing would take place, not only for the blind, but the deaf, the maimed, the mentally ill, and all manner of ailments and infirmities would be cured. Sad to say, only the richest nations can afford the treatments for all but the most basic of conditions.

w/c 26th

The setting at liberty of those who are oppressed.

The world is full of dictatorial regimes who lock up their own citizens because they dare to speak out against their own leaders. Other countries oppress the citizens of neighbouring states, like the Tibetans and Uyghurs in China.

Let us pray then, that each of these 'gift' items from Jesus' manifesto in Luke chapter 4, may become a reality in the acceptable year of the Lord, if not immediately then in the fullness of time.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Chris



GOODLIVING - CHRISTIAN BOOKSHOP

20b Mill Street Bideford

- Large selection of Bibles, Hymnbooks & Books
- CDs & DVDs
- Large selection of Gifts
- Christmas and Greeting Cards
- Sunday School & Youth Group Material
- Alter Candles
- Communion Wine & Wafers

Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday

9.30am- 4.30pm Saturday 9.30am – 4pm.

Tel; 01237 422213 e-mail goodliving@btinternet.com

TINHAY RETREATS



9th December 2021 - Day Retreat: Advent Adventure

A day retreat from 10am until 3pm exploring Advent, the time of preparation for Christmas. Prayers and meditations on the theme, plus the usual opportunity to enjoy the quiet, inside or outside. There will be an opportunity to decorate an Advent ring too.

For those who have mislaid it our number is [01566 784 990](tel:01566784990) and our website is www.tinhayretreats.com

Rob and Suzy Weston

MINISTRY OF FLOWERS

Thank you to everyone who has given flowers this year to make our church beautiful for worship..... a visual reminder of God's glorious creation.

This year has been a very difficult one again, but you've kept the flower (money) pot topped up and we've continued to take flowers out to our folk for celebratory events and in times of illness or bereavement to show our love and support. These gestures have been all the more appreciated this year. Love from the "flower girls", A, L and J.

CHRISTMAS IS FOR THE ELDERLY

Advent and Christmas are about old people.

Shall I say that again? Advent and Christmas are about old people
But what about the children someone asks? And I have to reply that they don't feature in the story.

Advent stories begin with an elderly couple, Elizabeth and Zechariah; he is a priest helping out in his retirement years; she a childless senior citizen.

The Christmas stories end with another elderly couple. One is Simeon a God-fearing man who regularly visits the temple, the other is Anna, an 84year old widow and prophetess. They are the people who witness Jesus being dedicated to God by his parents in accordance with Jewish tradition and who recognise his uniqueness. In between we have three wise men of indeterminate age, though if Eastern tradition is to be acknowledged, wisdom should be the gift of years, not of youth.

I claim Advent and Christmas as a time for adults, not out of any dislike for children, but because I fear that viewing these seasons as if they were devoted to and for toddlers, we avoid one of the quirks of God's nature.

God expects old dogs to do new tricks,

God expects people whom the world would deem 'past it' to initiate.

The beginning of Jewish-Christian history involves an old man, Abraham. A nonagenarian and his equally aged wife Sarah, from whom God maintains a nation will spring. He could have chosen a fertile upwardly – mobile pair of newlyweds. We would have!

But God is not us. God expects old people –

to be Sowers of new seeds;

to be midwives of change;

to be the ones who name the new directions which society has to take,

to be the ones who applaud and encourage new potential.

Elizabeth and Zechariah became parents in their old age and Simeon and Anna recognise the uniqueness of Mary's tiny baby, because God will not have people marginalised or written off on account of age. And when we see the wise men worshipping Jesus and then going home by another way, we see God's belief and expectation that older folk can change and will change when they recognise the truth.

By D H and sent in by J S

JANUARY 2022 DIARY

Sun.	2 nd	11.00am	Family Worship – Mrs Alison Biggs
Sun.	9 th	11.00am	Family Worship & HC – Revd Colin Biggs
Wed.	12 th	12 til 2pm	Epiphany Event – see below
Sun.	16 th	11.00am	Memorial Service – Minister – see below
Sun.	23 rd	11.00am	Family Worship – Mrs Paula Littlewood
Sun.	30 th	11.00am	Family Worship – Sabrina Gröschel

EPIPHANY EVENT

On 12th January 2022 you are invited to an Epiphany Event at Lavington from 12 – 2pm. We hope to be joined by friends from High Street Methodist, Bideford. You are encouraged to bring your own sandwiches but drinks, soup and a roll will be provided.

This is an opportunity to continue in fellowship and deepen the links between our two congregations. The time will conclude with a short act of Epiphany worship.

All are welcome and we look forward to seeing you at this first event of the year.

Alison

MEMORIAL SERVICE

On Sunday 16th January our morning worship led by Revd Rob Weston will include a time to remember and reflect on the lives of those in our fellowship who passed away during the Covid restrictions.

Limits on numbers meant that many of Lavington's fellowship were not able to give thanks for their lives or pay their respects at that time. Friends will be remembered at this service and their families have been invited to attend. We look forward to welcoming you to Lavington for this special service.

Alison



A Happy New Year to all you boys and girls who have birthdays this month. it's almost as bad as having one in the run up to Christmas in as much as it all happens at once! I guess you are all used to it by now though.

Here they are -

J V	2 nd
C W	2 nd
C S	15 th
J D	20 th
S G	23 rd
C T	27 th
P C	31 st

No wedding anniversaries in either month which doesn't surprise me! It's too chilly, me thinks!



ECO UPDATES

The film *'Thank you for the Rain'* shown as part of Christian Aid's work to highlight the Climate Emergency has been an important Christian Aid event in highlighting the human cost of climate change. I expect many people will have felt overwhelmed by media coverage of COP26 but it's important to be reminded of the human lives impacted the most by climate change. The story of Kisulu is replicated in many countries in many continents across the globe.

Thank you to all who came to the showing of the film and all who are busy making changes in your everyday lives to reduce your environmental impact, to reduce your carbon footprint, to reduce your reliance on fossil fuels.

Thank you too, to the Bideford Christian Aid team for putting on this event.

Rob

JANUARY ROTAS

MINISTRY of FLOWERS

We thank those who are providing our flowers for our sanctuary this month and those who arrange them if asked to do so.

2nd	Christmas Flowers
9th	Vacant
16th	Mrs J D
23rd	Mr C T
30th	Mrs L G

SIDESMAN DUTIES

2nd	Mrs L C
9th	Mrs A B / Mr P J
16th	Mrs E B / Mrs H M
23rd	Revd C B / Mr C W
30th	Mrs A B / Mrs L C

VESTRY ELDER

2nd	Mrs J C
9th	Mrs J P
16th	Mrs A B
23rd	Mrs J D
30th	Mrs J C

COMMUNION

Preparation	9th	Mrs J C / Mrs L C
Servers		Mrs J C / Mrs J P

BIBLE READERS

2nd Mrs S M, **9th** Mrs A B, **16th** Mrs J D
23rd Mrs J C, **30th** Mrs J P

OFFERTORY STEWARDS Mrs J C & Mr R C

JANUARY ROTAS

TUESDAY CAFÉ

	Kitchen	Tea / Coffee	Refreshments
11 th	JD	LC	AB
	JP	JS	JC
18 th	JD	HM	JP
	JS	MT	JC
25 th	JD	AB	JS
	JP	LC	JC

PREMISES NEWS

As reported at our church meeting in November we have achieved a great deal of maintenance work over the past few months. We are just waiting to hear from our roofing contractor about the replacement of the roof over the gents' toilet and then we should be watertight for the winter. There are no further maintenance projects planned until next year. I'm delighted to report that the WiFi service is working very well and I was recently able to join a trustees meeting via Zoom using the connection at Lavington. You can find details of the WiFi login password on a poster in the hall.

To assist with the Tuesday Cafe, we have placed an order for a commercial dishwasher which should be an enormous help. It will be located next to the current washing up sinks. We still await the delivery and installation date.

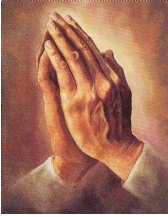
Rob



COFFEE MORNING

The Bideford Committee are holding a coffee morning at the Baptist Church Mill St, on Saturday January 15th from 10am – 12 noon. Please support this event if you can.

Chris



w/c 2nd

This is the first Sunday of the new year.

Let us pray that the coming year will be better than the year just passed. Let us resolve to do our utmost to continue in the faith by coming to Church each Sunday, or whenever we can, to play an active part in its life and work and in the wider world.

w/c 9th

Today is the first Sunday of Epiphany, commemorating the day on which the Magi from the East came with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Child born in a stable and laid in a manger, but whom the stars foretold was to be the King of Kings.

Let us likewise bring our gifts to Jesus and use them to do His work.

w/c 16th

Today our church is holding a memorial service for all those we know who have died during the time of Covid, but whose families have not had the opportunity to hold a proper funeral service for their loved ones. Let us pray for all those who have died during this period and hope that this service will bring closure to all the families and friends involved.

w/c 23rd

We are entering the coldest time of the year now. Let us pray that those who have problems with paying their fuel bills, or who suffer from health problems - particularly associated with the winter - may find the help that they need at the time that they need it.

w/c 30th

This is also a time of the year when hospitals struggle to cope with the influx of patients caused by the cold weather and Covid infections. Let us pray that they manage this year as best they can and hope that in the longer term, problems that the NHS has with bed blocking etc may be sorted out as soon as possible.

We ask all this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Chris



You will remember that in October we decided to send all the proceeds from the sale of our Harvest produce and the proceeds from the Harvest tea party to Self Help Africa. That raised over £250 and the church voted to make the amount up to a round £300.

Here is the letter of thanks from them –

To all at Lavington URC.

Thank you for helping to sow the seeds of a bountiful harvest for farming families across sus-Saharan Africa, with your generous donation of £300.

You're providing quality seed, tools and livestock – alongside training in climate-smart techniques, nutrition education and build business skills.

Because of you, farmers like Alamenesh in Ethiopia can grow more and earn more from their land, improve their nutrition and build more resilient livelihoods.

After the nutritional training, we improved our food production and our family meals. Now we grow different crops on the home market to feed our families and to sell at market, says Alamenesh. We used to boil potatoes as the main daily food, but now we include fruit and beans. We have a more balanced diet and are feeling much better and doing well.

Your Harvest prayers and offerings help to create lasting change that will improve lives for generations – we really appreciated your support and generosity once again.

I have enclosed a certificate for you to share with your congregation.

Warm regards,

Hannan Newton

Fundraising and Administration

The certificate is in the vestibule for us all to see.

TO MAKE YOU LAUGH

As some of you are aware, I am the church elder who is responsible for the hiring out of our halls/church to help raise money for the maintenance of our buildings etc. Over the years this revenue has brought in quite a lot of money to help pay for our ongoing repairs etc.

A couple of months ago now, I received an email enquiry from a lady called Esiteli Nyirarukundo asking about hiring our halls. She was enquiring on behalf of the Release Good Shepherd Church. They come from Albury Wodonga and came 'here' as refugees. She said that when they came 'here' they wanted to continue to worship in their own language as many of their parents can't speak English.

I responded to the email and explained that we don't usually hire out the halls on Sundays but, as it was for a Christian church service I had decided I would be happy to see if I could help. Yes, I could tell her name was not an English name and coming 'here' – as she kept saying -from Albury Wodonga suggested that they were refugees here from overseas.

She agreed, so I asked her to ring me of an evening when convenient to her and gave her my mobile phone number. She replied very quickly saying, *"I have just looked at your telephone number I and don't recognise it."* than she added –

"I live in Australia, are you in Australia? I was looking at a place nearby 'here' called Lavington".

Well, you could have knocked me over with a boomerang!

Her talk about being refugees, coming over 'here' from Albury Wodonga and parents not speaking English – what would you have thought?!!

I've been doing this job for 15 plus years and had been thinking it was time I passed it on. So I'm pleased to tell you that Colin Biggs is going to take it over from me at the end of the year. Talk about going out on a high!!

J P

Fun Page

Christmas carols and songs.
E.g. AIAM = Away in a manger.



1. AWGMOO
2. SR
3. JB
4. CC
5. WSWTFBN
6. OCT
7. FTS
8. TDOC
9. THATI
10. SCICTT
11. HTHAS
12. IWICBCE
13. SN
14. RTRNR
15. WC
16. MCE
17. OIRDC
18. ICUTMC
19. OCOCI
20. RATCT

Answers to November Fun: 1. Casino 2. North 3. Innocent 4. Novel 5. Minnow
6. Abnormal 7. Binoculars 8. Cannot 9. Nougat 10. Poisonous 11. Norway 12.
Monopoly 13. Economic 14. Nomad 15. Snooker 16. Notion 17. Snoopy 18. Anoint
19. NoWay 20. Innocuous

Who's who at Lavington URC

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Interim Minister

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Church Treasurer

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Church & Hall Bookings

Mrs Janet Palmer

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Enquiries for weddings and baptisms are welcomed.
Please contact Church & Hall Bookings Secretary above.

The February issue of *Connexions* is due out on
Sunday January 30th

Please give items for inclusion to Janet Palmer or send by email to
lavington.connexions@gmail.com

Before or at the latest -Sunday January 23rd

Connexions is edited by Janet Palmer
and printed by Jenny and Ricky Cawsey