

**Stainbeck Church (United Reformed)**

# **OUTLOOK**

**December 2023**

**January 2024**



**Please worship with us:  
Sunday Morning at 10.45am  
Thursday Prayers on Zoom  
at 7.30pm**

<https://stainbeckurc.org.uk>

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**DECEMBER 2023**

Dear Friends,



### **Longing for light**

I'm writing this letter just before 4 o'clock and it's getting dark already! At this time of the year in the UK, we often only have 7 or 8 hours of daylight every day. Oh, how it makes me crave the long, light nights of summer.

However, this darkness pales in comparison when we acknowledge the darkness of the news: where we see and hear the ongoing war in Israel/Palestine, Ukraine and beyond; the destructiveness of climate change, the suffering of refugees on unsafe boats and camps. There is also the darkness in our lives: in the midst of illness and grief; the cost of living crisis.

And yet in our darkness, God will meet us there. In our darkness, God is present. A God of faith, hope and love. A God revealed in Jesus.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus was born into a world characterised by the occupation and oppression of the Roman Empire. An Empire which impacted on so many parts of a person's life and must have felt like it could last forever,

We talk about Jesus' coming into the world, as light shining in darkness. The light of Jesus reveals how darkness in our lives and world can be overcome. To quote one of the Gospel writers, John: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it".

Christmas is about Jesus Christ entering the pain and darkness of every time and place, including ours, to bring light. A light of faith, hope and love that each and every one of us can share with our families, our communities, our world.

This Advent, churches across the Leeds URC Partnership, including our own, will be singing the chorus of the hymn: *“Longing for light, we wait in darkness”* by Bernadette Farrell, to accompany our Advent candle lighting. The chorus is:

Christ be our light  
Shine in our hearts  
Shine in the darkness  
Christ be our light  
Shine in your world waiting today.

So, my hope and prayer is that Jesus’ light can provide each and every one of us with peace and hope this Christmas.

Nicola





## FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Where there is tender care and love, God is present

We hold in our prayers **Ann Coates** and her family as they mourn the death of **John** at the end of November. We remember John's daughters **Rosalind** and **Suzanne** and their wider families. John has been a part of our Church community for many years, and we will miss him. A **Service of Thanksgiving** for his life will be held at Stainbeck on **Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December**.

There are those within our Church Family who have been unwell over the last few weeks; if you are one of those, please be assured that you are remembered and spoken of at the Elders' meeting and Thursday prayers.

Please remember all our Lunch Club members who meet on Mondays between 11-2pm. They are a happy bunch of people who love to chat and enjoy a meal together, which is prepared by **Helen Inglis**. A big thank you to Helen and **Pam McFetridge** for their wonderful puddings.

We continue to hold in prayer all those within our local community who are experiencing difficulties – it is good that we can support one another – and never forget **GOD IS WITH US**.

Please let your Elder, Revd Nicola, or Revd Angela know if there are others who need our prayers, or a visit, and they will be included in our Thursday Prayers. Or you may wish to join us via Zoom – the link is as on Sunday and found on the website, or [click here](#). All are very welcome. We also have a **WhatsApp Prayer Group** – details from Hilary or other Elders. Also, the Partnership Advent Course continues for the first three weeks of December. Stand-alone sessions. Again, talk to Elders or Ministers and find the details on the website [here](#).

## HERE AND THERE

### Looking back .....

**After 8's November Meeting** – It is 4 years since the last After 8's 'Big Quiz' with the famous After 8's Supper. The quiz for our November meeting was a much scaled down contrast. There were 31 of us in the



Café Room for the quiz, set by Ann Coates and Jackie Watt. A big thank you to both Ann and Jackie.

It was a good quiz kept nice and simple. There was much banter and laughter. The winners were Adrian's Team. Everyone enjoyed the nibbles, thank you Avril and Sylvia for your help and indeed to anyone who helped in any way. A successful evening – and finally as always, 'My' thanks to everyone who came.

Our December meeting is a Christmas Lunch. Details from me.

*Sandra Smith*

## Looking forward.....



## STAINBECK CHURCH CHRISTMAS CARD NOTICE BOARD DECEMBER 2023

In recent years we have provided an opportunity for individuals to put one Christmas card to everyone in the Stainbeck Church Family on a notice board in the Café. Some people find this a good way of being “greener” as it saves trees and postage costs.

We would like to offer this again this year and suggest that people make a donation to **Martin House** or a charity of your choice. Stainbeck's charity for November and December is **Martin House**, so your donation can be put in the Sunday offering (marked for Martin House) or handed to me or Avril/Brian. Many thanks,

*Hilary Wilson*

Hopefully you are all looking forward to our Christmas and New Year Services during the coming weeks. Please remember all those who will be leading worship, especially Revd Dr Nicola Robinson; Revd Angela Hughes; Revd Samantha Sheehan; Revd Geoff Ellis; Ann Coates; and our Bible readers. Also, those who welcome, provide flowers, make coffee, and so on. Dates and details in the diary and flyers below. Look out for updates. Keep an eye on the website or Facebook page.



## Blue Christmas Service

Thursday 14 December

7:30pm

on Zoom

Meeting ID: 7019277749

A gentle, reflective service for anyone who finds this time of year difficult, who misses someone, or who wants to spend some time remembering.

## THIS MONTH'S BLOG (December 2023)

As you know **Network Leeds** offers a weekly blog with a wide variety of contributors. This week I share one from **Helen Reid, Director of Leeds Church Institute** which pertains to the current distressing conflict in Israel and Gaza.

*Angela*

‘As we hear even more distressing news from Gaza and Israel, how do we locate our responses as Leeds Christians? I thought I would share my attempts to learn, reflect and act. I have turned to groups and individuals who send me regular email newsletters throughout the year as a way to gain both balance and hope from trusted sources when media coverage is so overwhelming. I am drawing on:

**Sabeel – the Ecumenical Palestinian Liberation Theology Centre** – has described the situation as, *‘Terrible violence between Israeli forces and armed Palestinian resistance groups’* and contextualised this by reminding readers that Palestinian people have suffered in various ways for over the 75 years since the Nakba. They held an online international Ecumenical Service of Lament.

**Joel Meyer – Licensed Tour Guide and Educator in Israel** – has written about his personal and traumatic experience of living with his family of young children in Israel at present. He has hosted a series of online international meetings to keep people up to date with events and share concerns.

**Council of Christians and Jews** – the national forum for Christian / Jewish engagement – who wrote, *‘Our hearts are broken [by the] news of horrific violence in Israel and Gaza.’* They have hosted a vigil for peace outside 10 Downing Street and offered opportunities for shared mourning. They advise Christian members to please check in on Jewish friends who may be mourning or have local security concerns.

**The Anglican Diocese of Leeds** - their website foregrounds a message from the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, the Most Revd Hosam Naoum, urging the Communion to *‘pray without ceasing for justice,*



*reconciliation, peace, and an end to hatred and war'* and, with other Archbishops of Jerusalem, declared Tuesday 17th a day of prayer and fasting.

I am encouraged by the way these organisations and people seek peace, justice and unity, and want to be in alignment with them. And so I pray, inspired by a prayer shared by the President and Vice President of the Methodist Conference, that the God of peace and compassion enables each of us to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering, in Gaza, Israel and also here in Leeds through personal and community connections.

May God's Spirit bring peace and healing to our troubled world.

***Helen Reid***

**The United Reformed Church** also responds – I attach the link for those of you receiving this online.

[Click here:](#)

I share the final words of the URC Prayer for Peace this year:

God of love, may your true peace be planted anew in us.

May your love fall gently upon our communities like morning dew on thirsting crops.

May your peace surround and bless our neighbours, Muslim, Jewish, Christian or of no faith, filling every one of us with compassion, patience, and understanding.

Finally, help us all to remember that nothing in creation:

Neither heights nor depths, nor Powers, nor Principalities, can separate us from the indescribable love of the God of never-ending Peace.

**AMEN**

# DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2023

## Elder on Duty – Sandra Smith

<b>Sun</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	10.45am	Advent 1 Hybrid Worship and <i>Gift Service</i> led by Revd Samantha Sheehan – the University Chaplain and Minister to Young Adults. This will be followed by a <i>Church Meeting</i> at 12.15pm
Mon	4 <sup>th</sup>	11-2pm	Lunch Club
<b>Thu</b>	7 <sup>th</sup>	12-2pm	<b>Special Café open for a CHRISTMAS PARTY.</b> The Café is being run by <b>InterACT</b> (that's all of us), a <b>Festive Event</b> open to everyone, with help from the <i>Children from Meanwood C of E Primary School</i> - a chance for school and community and Church Family to get to know their area and one another. Please call in to meet the children, enjoy the company and share some good food.
		7.15pm	<b>Zoom opens for Partnership Prayers led by Revd Angela Hughes</b>
Sat	9 <sup>th</sup>	12 noon	Churches Together sing carols at <i>Meanwood Valley Urban Farm</i> – all welcome.
<b>Sun</b>	10 <sup>th</sup>	10.45am	<b>Advent 2 Hybrid Worship</b> <i>with Holy Communion</i> led by Revd Angela Hughes
Mon	11 <sup>th</sup>	11-2pm	Lunch Club
Thu	14 <sup>th</sup>	11-1pm	Café open for coffee, toasties and toasted tea cakes. All welcome.
		7.30pm	<b>Worship for a 'Blue Christmas' on Zoom</b>
Fri	15 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	After 8's Christmas Lunch at the <i>Beck and Call</i> on Stainbeck Road.
<b>Sun</b>	17 <sup>th</sup>	10.45am	<b>Advent 3 Hybrid Worship</b> led by Revd Geoff Ellis
		3.30pm	Messy Church <i>Family Nativity Service</i> – all welcome.
		6.00pm	<i>Carol singing</i> outside around the <b>Fire pits</b> – all welcome.

Mon	18 <sup>th</sup>	11-2pm	Lunch Club Christmas Lunch – <i>Lunch Club will close after this and reopen on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024.</i>
Thu	21 <sup>st</sup>	11-1pm	Café open for coffee, toasties and toasted tea cakes. All welcome. <i>Café will close and reopen on Thurs 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024.</i>
		6.30pm	<b>Meet at the back door of the Church for Carol singing around the Beckhills with InterACT. Mince pies afterwards.</b>
<b>Sun</b>	24 <sup>th</sup>	10.45am	<b>Advent 4: Café-Style Worship for <i>Christmas</i> Hybrid Worship led by Revd Dr Nicola Robinson</b>
<b>Sun</b>	24 <sup>th</sup>	11.30pm	<b>Christmas Eve Midnight Communion led by Revd Dr Nicola Robinson and Revd Angela Hughes.</b>
<b>Mon</b>	25 <sup>th</sup>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Worship for <i>Christmas Day</i> led by Revd Angela Hughes.</b>
Thu	28 <sup>th</sup>	7.15pm	Zoom opens for Thursday Prayers led by Ann Coates.
<b>Sun</b>	31 <sup>st</sup>	10.45am	<b>Hybrid Worship for New Year's Eve with carols, poems and prayers led by Ann Coates</b>

## DIARY FOR JANUARY 2024

### Elder on Duty Avril Bellwood

Thu	4 <sup>th</sup>	7.15pm	<b>Zoom opens for Thursday Partnership Prayers led by Revd Dr Nicola Robinson.</b>
<b>Sun</b>	7 <sup>th</sup>	10.45am	<b>Hybrid Worship led by Revd Angela Hughes</b>
Mon	8 <sup>th</sup>	11.2pm	Lunch Club
Thu	11 <sup>th</sup>	11-1pm	Café open for coffee, toasties and toasted tea cakes. All welcome
		7.15pm	<b>Zoom opens for Thursday Prayers led by Avril and Brian Bellwood</b>



<b>Sun</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>10.45am</b>	<b>Hybrid Worship with Holy Communion led by Revd Dr Nicola Robinson.</b>
Mon	15 <sup>th</sup>	11-2pm	Lunch Club
Thu	18 <sup>th</sup>	11-1pm	Café open for coffee, toasties and toasted tea cakes. All welcome.
		7.15pm	<b>Zoom opens for Thursday Prayers led by Karen Benjamin.</b>
<b>Sun</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>10.45am</b>	<b><i>Unity Sunday</i> – led by Revd Angela Hughes, Preacher Prof Haddon Willmer</b>
Thu	25 <sup>th</sup>	11-1pm	Café open for coffee, toasties and toasted tea cakes. All welcome.
		7.15pm	Zoom opens for Thursday Prayers led by Hilary Wilson
<b>Sun</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>10.45am</b>	<b>Hybrid Worship led by Ann Coates, preacher Revd Dr Steve Dixon</b>
Mon	29 <sup>th</sup>	11-2pm	Lunch Club

*Views expressed by individuals are personal and not necessarily those of Stainbeck Church.*

***Revd Dr Nicola Robinson, Minister: [revnicola.robinson@gmail.com](mailto:revnicola.robinson@gmail.com)***

***Avril and Brian Bellwood, Church Secretaries: 0113 293 5847***



Sunday 17 December	3:30pm Messy Church Nativity
	6:00pm Carols round the fire pits
Thursday 21 December	6:30pm Carol singing in the community
Sunday 24 December	10:45am Café church
	11:30pm Midnight communion
Christmas Day	10:30am Worship for All Service

**STAINBECK CHURCH**  
**Wish you peace and joy at Christmas**

for more information, visit: <https://stainbeckurc.org.uk/>  
 call: 07752 904 317