

Stainbeck Church (United Reformed)

OUTLOOK

December 2025 January 2026



**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 2025/January 2026

Light in the Darkness

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 wars and conflicts; the destructiveness of climate change, the suffering of refugees on unsafe boats and in camps or hotels. There is also the darkness in our lives: in the midst of illness and grief; poverty, cuts in disability benefits.

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. A God who intimately understands our vulnerability because Jesus came to earth a helpless new-born baby.

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.

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

Nicola

HERE AND THERE

Looking back

.... And suddenly November came. Despite being comparatively mild at first it was certainly gardens full of leaves to be cleared and curtains drawn early against the dark nights. Now the glorious colours of Autumn appear to have faded, the branches are bare, our harvest has passed and now it truly is wintertime ...and a very wet day as I write.

At the start of the month several of us from Stainbeck and Partnership churches met at St John's church in Adel for the funeral of a much respected and good friend of Stainbeck over many years – **the Revd Robert Way**. Robert served as our Interim Moderator for two periods of vacancy over eight years when we benefited so much from his care and his wise counselling. We hold **Stella**, his wife and their family in our prayers.

Four of us enjoyed a peaceful **Quiet Day** with Partnership friends at the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield. The Ministry team had prepared thoughtful reflections for us to ponder on as we were led. Craft opportunities were provided; there were the beautiful grounds to explore and peaceful places just to 'sit and be'. We shared in the moving midday Communion service in the beautiful chapel with the members of the community in residence. Over continuing conversations, we were provided with a tasty lunch. Thanks are offered to the Team for organising the day and for the generosity of the Synod fund which made it possible.

Oswaldtwistle was the destination for travellers on **Maureen Lillywhite's latest tour!** What a good time we had browsing amongst all there was to buy. I think quite a fair bit of Christmas shopping was

completed, lots of tea or coffee stops and friendly conversations. Thank you, Maureen and her helpers, from Mears. Another successful, friendly day.



A number of the travellers to Oswaldtwistle are regular friends of **Stainbeck's Thursday Community Café**. The café has been increasingly busy over the past few weeks with new faces seeming to pop in each week and we also welcome a group who come over from Carr Croft Care Home too.

We are so fortunate to have two regular small teams who cater for everyone each week. However, there is always room for another especially when it all gets very busy. If you would be willing to offer your services to help at the café, on a rota basis as occasionally as you are able, we would be delighted to have a chat!! Please do have a word with Avril or one of our ministers when you next pop in. Thank you in optimistic advance!!

BRAVE WORDS

<https://bravewords.co.uk>

‘Brave Words’ is a Leeds based theatre company working with young people in communities across Leeds with bases in Seacroft, Beeston and Meanwood. They brought their recent touring production **‘MUTTON’** to an appreciative packed house at Stainbeck on a cold wet evening in November.

Mutton told the true story of Mary Bateman a woman described as the Yorkshire witch in Leeds in Georgian Britain. It was a dark story of a woman seeking to survive in difficult circumstances and yet there were many light moments as we appreciated her courage as she struggled to survive. A strong cast kept us engaged as we were invited into her story; their energy was compelling and inclusive and it was gripping throughout. This was an unusual, thought provoking Saturday night's entertainment.

DIARY FOR DECEMBER

Elder on Duty – Brian Bellwood

Mon	1 st	11-2pm	Lunch Club
		11.00am	Advent Course ‘God in the Manger’ at South Leeds URC
Wed	3 rd	7.30pm	‘God in the Manger’ on Zoom
Thu	4 th	12 noon	St. Andrew’s URC Christmas tree festival – continues until Saturday 6 th .
		11-1pm	Café open for tea, coffee, toasties, sandwiches, cakes and friendship. ALSO FREE Blood Pressure /vaccine clinic in lounge 11am – 1pm.
		1.30pm	‘God in the Manger’ Advent Course at Stainbeck
		7.30pm	Zoom opens for BLUE CHRISTMAS – a Partnership Service led by Revd Dr Nicola Robinson (see page 11)
Sun	7 th	10.45am	Hybrid Morning Worship for Advent 2 led by Revd Angela Hughes
		4.00pm	Partnership Advent Carol Service at St. Andrew’s Church, Roundhay.
Mon	8 th	11-2pm	Lunch Club
		11.00am	Advent Course ‘God in the Manger’ at South Leeds URC
Wed	10 th	7.30pm	‘God in the Manger’ on Zoom
Thu	11 th	11.30-2.30	Christmas Party organised by InterAct
		1.30pm	‘God in the Manger’ Advent Course at Stainbeck IN THE CABIN
		7.30pm	Thursday Prayers led by Avril and Brian Bellwood
Sun	14 th	10.45am	Hybrid Morning Worship with Holy Communion for Advent 3 led by Revd Dr Nicola Robinson

		3.30pm	Messy Church Nativity celebration – all welcome both young and old.
Mon	15th	11-2pm	Lunch Club Christmas Lunch – Lunch Club will close until Mon 5 th Jan 2026
		11.00am	Advent Course ‘God in the Manger’ at South Leeds URC
Wed	17 th	7.30pm	‘God in the Manger’ on Zoom
Thu	18 th	11-1pm	Café open for tea, coffee, toasties, sandwiches, cakes and friendship. <i>The café closes and will re-open on Thursday 8th January 2026.</i>
		1.30pm	God in the Manger’ Advent Course at Stainbeck
		6.00pm	Meet at the back door for carol singing around the Beckhills with InterACT. Mince pies afterwards.
Sun	21 st	10.45am	Hybrid Morning Worship service of Christmas readings and carols led by the Elders
		6.00pm	Carols round the firepits in the car park – All Welcome
Wed	24 th	11.30pm	Christmas Eve midnight Communion – led by Revd Angela Hughes
Thu	25 th	10.30am	Worship for Christmas Day led by Revd Angela Hughes

DIARY FOR JANUARY

Elder on Duty – Ann Coates

Sun	4 th	10.45am	Hybrid Morning Worship for Epiphany led by Ann Coates
Mon	5 th	11-2pm	Lunch Club
Thu	8 th	11-1pm	Café opens for tea, coffee, toasties, sandwiches, cakes and friendship.
		7.30pm	Zoom opens for Thursday Prayers led by Avril and Brian Bellwood

Sun	12th	10.45am	Hybrid Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Revd Dr Nicola Robinson.
Mon	13 th	11-2pm	Lunch Club
Thu	15 th	11-1pm	Café opens for tea, coffee, toasties, sandwiches, cakes and friendship.
		7.30pm	Zoom opens for Thursday Prayers led by Karen Benjamin
Sat/Sun	17/18th	tbc	Opportunity to meet candidate for Ministry Team and preach with a view. Details to follow.
Sun	18th	10.45am	Hybrid Morning Worship led by Revd Angela Hughes
Mon	19 th	11-2pm	Lunch Club
Thu	22 nd	11-1pm	Café opens for tea, coffee, toasties, sandwiches, cakes and friendship.
		7.30pm	Zoom opens for Thursday Prayers led by Revd Dr Nicola Robinson
Sun	25th	10.45am	Hybrid Morning Worship led by Revd Andy Hobbs
Mon	26 th	11-2pm	Lunch Club
Tue	27 th	7.30pm	Elders' Meeting
Thu	29th	7.30pm	Zoom opens for Thursday Prayers led by Claire Jones

A reminder of the Stainbeck link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7019277749> (Meeting ID 7019277749).

Looking forward...

There are so many things to look forward to at this time of the year aren't there - all the lists we write as we prepare for the celebrations whether with family and friends or peacefully on our own.

There are opportunities to share in our church services at Stainbeck and across the Partnership. See the diary and posters in this Outlook. Also look out for any new updates: emails, Facebook, WhatsApp, website and of course those 'proper paper flyers'.

This year the Ministry Team are again offering an **Advent course**, entitled '**God in the manger**', in three different venues. There is the opportunity to book lunch with Trinity Networks at the URC in South Leeds on the Monday; or to join Stainbeck's Community Café before the session at Stainbeck on the Thursday; or of course to share on Zoom in the peace of your own home. It is always good to reflect together in the midst of Advent busyness. (See poster page 12)

Each of the partnership churches has been asked to provide a decoration for the **Partnership tree** to be placed in St Andrew's for their **CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL**. You are warmly encouraged to visit St Andrew's to see the wonderful display and in particular to join in the **Partnership Advent Carols at 4pm on 7th December**.

CHRISTMAS CARDS 2025:

Once again a chance to use our GREETINGS BOARD in order to send our CHRISTMAS wishes to our Church Family and friends. An opportunity to share with one another and also create a great display. If you wish to make a donation in lieu of any costs saved please donate to the CHURCH CHRISTMAS CHARITY (see board in Café Room) or one of your own choosing.



Chapel Allerton Methodist Church offer an invitation to their **Christmas Concert** with the Wesley Singers on **Saturday December 6th at 2.30pm**. Tickets are £10. including afternoon tea and can be obtained from Paul Chaplin – 07891 755 328. All profits for the church charity Amaudo (A Mental Health Charity in Nigeria).

Our service on **Sunday 21st** offers YOU the opportunity to help Elders plan the **Service of Carols and Readings**. If you have a particular request for a favourite carol, poem or reading please have a word with Ann before Sunday 14th and we will do our best to include your choices in the service.

There are of course the usual opportunities across this season.

CAROL SINGING around the Beckhills: We are meeting at the back door of the church at **6.00pm Thursday 18th December** aiming to be back at the church by 7.30/45pm to sing with the **People in Action Group** and to share a hot drink and mince pie. Always an enjoyable evening – all very welcome to join us. If there are any who would like us to sing for them please give Angela a call (07752904317)



CAROLS round the FIREPITS: Another chance to lift our voices on Sunday evening 21st December at 6.00pm. As we sing we are reminded of the stories of this season. Again check the dates and invite your neighbours to come along with you. All voices welcome and as ever mince pies and a hot drink will be available to finish.



On **CHRISTMAS EVE** we celebrate the arrival of the Christ Child as we share bread and wine together. Such a peaceful space in the midst of so much activity. And then again on **CHRISTMAS MORNING** we continue to celebrate the wonder of this day. Everyone welcome and needed! If you have any unopened gifts to bring with you on Christmas morning please do so – no obligation though!



We ask you at this time to remember the **InterACT Food Pantry** and our emergency **Food Cupboard** at church. This will not be an easy time for many families. There will be a box in church for simple Christmas gifts to be placed in if you wish and are able and, of course, donations can also be made to InterACT in lieu of food. Thank you.



**Leeds URC Partnership
Blue Christmas
Service**

**Thursday 4 December
7:30pm
on Zoom**

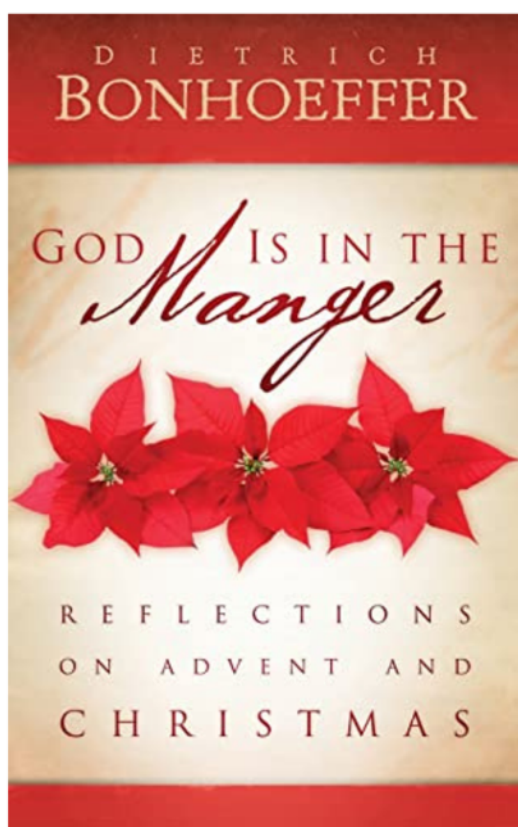
Meeting ID: 7019277749

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

PS January updates will follow – it could be busier and more exciting than you think!

Views expressed by individuals are personal and not necessarily those of Stainbeck Church.
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Avril and Brian Bellwood, Church Secretaries: 0113 293 5847

God in the Manger: Advent Gatherings



**A
time for
reflection and
discussion
over **three**
weeks,
led by the Leeds
URC Partnership
Ministry Team**

Beginning on:

Monday 1 December 11am, URC in South Leeds, LS10 3LG

Wednesday 3 December 7:30pm, on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7019277749>

Thursday 4 December 1:30pm, Stainbeck Church, LS7 2PP

**For more information,
email: revnicola.robinson@gmail.com**

