

CHRISTMAS 2018

WELCOME



**The
Faringdon
United
Church
Newsletter**

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Our minister, Fred Ireland, is still on sick leave so has been unable to write us a Christmas message this year. So many thanks to Pete for giving us this excellent summary of our meeting at the start of this month. We all wish Fred a full and speedy recovery, and look forward to him resuming his ministry with us.

Our Church and Mission

On Saturday 1st December seventeen of us met with Jill Marsh, Ray Stanyon and our Circuit Superintendent Rose Westwood to consider the mission of our church, the best way forward to enact this, and how this might influence plans we might have for the future development of the church buildings.

Jill Marsh is Mission Enabler for the Northampton Methodist District, - an area which extends from north of Leicester down to the Wantage and Abingdon Circuit at its southernmost. Ray Stanyon is Jill's URC counterpart, or to use his full title – Development and Support Officer for the Wessex Province which includes Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey, Hampshire, Dorset, the Isle of Wight and the Channel Isles. Thus, Faringdon is on the south-western edge of the Methodist District yet near the northern-most extent of the Wessex Province. That, together with the fact that we are on the southern-most cusp of the Witney and Faringdon Methodist Circuit has led some to observe, understandably, that we feel “out on a limb”.

We were challenged to ask ourselves why we had come; what buildings meant to us – and how much they meant to the community given the number of organisations that use them. Much discussion then followed. Being a church calls for a living commitment to Christ but also having care and concern for the community. To that end, if we offer our buildings as a service to the community, they must meet current standards. The small-hall kitchen was last given a major refit over 30 years ago, and is certainly due for upgrading.

But the church is more than buildings. It is a community of serving worshippers. The question remains as to how we might attract more folk into our fellowship. Would re-modelled buildings be enough? We are unusual in that we are a local ecumenical partnership with our own special way of doing things (when people don't seem to understand this, that can leave us feeling “out on a limb” too). We are fortunate, though, that ecumenical relations in the town are good. Should we be asking, then, what can we offer the community that no one else can?

Although many good points did emerge from the morning's conversation, I sensed that there was much more some folk wanted to say if time had allowed. Perhaps we should see this as part of an on-going discussion?

Pete Haskins

Christmas and New Year Calendar

Sunday 16th Dec	10.20 a.m.	Morning worship led by Rev. Clare Downing
Sunday 23rd Dec	4 p.m.	Carol Service
Monday 24th Dec	4 p.m.	Christingle Service
Tuesday 25th Dec	10 a.m.	Christmas Day Service
Sunday 30th Dec	10.20 a.m.	Morning worship led by Mrs Mary Blow
Sunday 6th Jan	10.20 a.m.	Morning worship led by Mr Ian Prince
Sunday 13th Jan	11 a.m.	Covenant Service (joined by Bampton)
	6 p.m.	Churches Together Taize Service (All Saints)



Bethlehem Today

If you were in the Market Square on Tuesday morning you may have seen eight Faringdon women dressed in black standing silently in front of the Christmas Tree. They were staging a vigil to draw attention to the “little town” of Bethlehem this Christmas, which is no longer the peaceful place we like to imagine and sing about as the birthplace of Jesus.

Towering walls and militarised fences now encircle Bethlehem, turning the 4,000 year old city into a virtual prison for its Palestinian Christian and Muslim citizens. It has only three gates to the outside world, all tightly controlled by Israeli occupation forces.

Israel has confiscated almost all the agricultural land for illegal settlements, making it impossible for many farmers to continue tending their land. The fields where shepherds once watched their flocks are being filled by Israeli housing blocks and roads are barred to the descendants of those shepherds.

Soon the city, home to the oldest Christian community in the world, will have little left of its Christian history but the cold stones of empty churches.

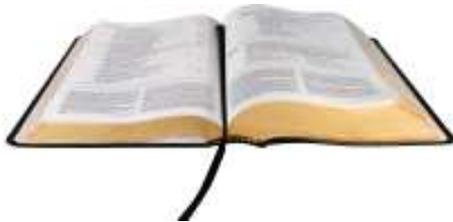
Women in Black is a world-wide network of women committed to peace with justice and actively opposed to injustice, war, militarism and other forms of violence.

Womens Fellowship

3rd Oct. - Pat Gordon said it had been two years since the Lord called time on her travels to SE Asia. At that time her husband was diagnosed with cancer, but after surgery he is now fine. Pat spoke about MIRACLES. What is a miracle? – a remarkable event or development, an exceptional product, or an outstanding example e.g. miracle of rising from the grave. The Bible definition, hard to believe only God can perform, usually supersedes natural laws, like Jesus walking on water and feeding the five thousand.

Pat remembers taking bags filled with Bibles which proved to be very heavy on a trip. She admits she and her friend prayed that they would receive help on the journey. She says they were helped all the way from taxi, plane and train. In fact they arrived at their hotel not having to have handled the bags at all. She recalled Mark 11 v24: “Therefore I tell you whatever you ask for in prayer, BELIEVE that you have received it and it will be yours.”

One time in Burma a lady with a nasty skin infection asked to pray for healing. After many prayers on the 3rd day her skin was blooming with no marks at all. God of miracles, same today as yesterday. Pat said “God has something for me later and he looks after me now.”



10th Oct. - Heather Rosser said that she and husband Adrian left England in December 1974 to travel to Nigeria, Africa. Their daughter Melinda was five and a half weeks old. They arrived about three years after the civil war had finished and settled at teacher training college 10 miles from the Cameroon border.

Friends Jill and Dave lived in the capital Maiduguri. There were Muslims to the north, Christians in the south and pagan religions in the mountain areas. Heather was back in the classroom three months after giving birth. She had employed an Igbo woman to look after Melinda. This lasted for only a term then she lost her job at Easter.

It was about eight years ago that she first started writing. Her latest book is especially for Melinda and covers the first two years of her life.

17th Oct. - We welcomed **Rev. Paul Walker**, the new curate from All Saints Church, who just happens to be mine and Joyce Odell's next door neighbour. Paul grew up in London and has a sister. His parents met their every need, he joined clubs and scouts and went on from secondary school into theatre music work in the West End. He had an amazing time and worked on some great shows. Then things changed, he developed an infection of the heart taking a month to clear, then he had an operation to replace two valves, and a further month to recover physically. Psychologically his recovery time was a struggle. He asked God that if he pulled him through he would give him his life.

In 2001 Paul became a Christian. He started to train as a teacher where he met Sheree although he had known her from school. They married and nine years later along came Charlotte then Harriet and now Alice. Paul trained at Trinity College, Bristol and is here in Faringdon for three years. He finds it a friendly place. Reading from John 6 v24-35, he spoke of The Bread of Life. The crowd following Jesus had their physical hunger satisfied with the bread and the fish. We don't see the value in food we are a "throw away" society. True spiritual nourishment is found in Jesus – he meets our every need.

Our Mission Table raised £49.23.



24th Oct. - **Rev. Fred Ireland** was unwell so I had asked some of the ladies to think about Autumn, my favourite season of the year. It is lovely to dress in comfy jeans, boots and scarf and not have to worry about the sun cream. We have celebrated our harvest, thanking God for all he provides. We enjoy seeing the amazing colours of the leaves as they change, love to kick through a pile hearing them crunch beneath our feet.

Barbara described her recent trip to Wales with her daughter in beautiful weather. Going along in the car they marvelled at the lovely trees and said how grateful they were for all the different colours of the leaves. Hilary brought along an autumn basket with pretty leaves, apples and conkers. Her great granddaughter Sophie

had given her a framed picture of leaves complete with gold glitter that she had arranged herself. We listened to the poem "The Colours of Autumn" And Diana read a selection of poems from The Friendship Book. Joy showed us a pebble found at Selsey Bill, God made, smoothed by the tides. She also read a funny poem about potatoes which she found in a free newspaper in Singleton. To conclude Margaret Broadberry taught us a new hymn which she had written and composed the music for. Thank you all for your contributions.

31st Oct. - Michael Limmer brought along Christmas cards, fridge magnets, book marks and calendars etc. the sales of which go towards his chosen charities.

The *Child and Family Aid* charity has wound up; now he gives to *Support for Romania*. This charity helps orphans that are pushed out on the streets, sometimes having to live in the sewers. Dr. Vali runs a home for these underprivileged children. There are several visits a year bringing food and clothing which has been donated here in England.



Michael also supports the *Barnabas Fund*. During the last monsoon men couldn't make bricks. They got into debt and had to get loans signing agreements that they would be sold if they couldn't pay. The Barnabas Fund paid off the debts and 1400 people were freed. 375 food parcels were made up, feeding 1800 people. The wives of the brick kiln workers were taught tailoring so that they would be able to work to earn money. Their childrens schooling was also paid for.

Starfish Asia helps underprivileged children in Pakistan to attend school. The more educated they can become the more they can help their families out. Michael closed by reading his latest short story "The Uninvited Guest" which is included in the book "Merry Christmas Everyone."

7th Nov. - Nice to welcome **Nick and Faith Langham**. We always look forward to Nick's talks and wonder where his travels have taken him. Back in March they flew to San Diego then took a cruise ship calling in at Mexico through the Panama Canal calling in at Columbia then onto Miami, then home. As an ex-geography teacher Nick always shows us a map (I might add at this point geography and me did not gel, I very rarely know where I am going).

Panama is a narrow neck of land between North and South America. The Canal cuts through and is a short cut to save going around Cape Horn. In 1848 gold was discovered in California and miners in wagon trains had to trek all across America to get there. At the end of the 19th century Colombia owned that narrow neck of land, and they decided to build the Panama Canal.

There were over 40,000 people working on it. The problem was that a proper route hadn't been planned. Panama is tropical: mosquitos, malaria and yellow fever were rife. Four out of five French nuns who were running a hospital for the sick workers died themselves. The project, after millions of dollars had been invested in it, went bankrupt. Roosevelt could see a major strategic route for the USA, so the Americans took over the project taking 14 more years (1901-1914) to build it. Apparently the Pacific Ocean is 20ft higher than the Atlantic Ocean and rivers complicated the building work. Locks had to be put in. To go through the Panama Canal is costly working out at \$300 per passenger and about \$54,000 dollars for a cruise ship.



Nick showed a great many slides, including the Pan American Highway Bridge where larger ships go under, the Electric Mule track which keeps the ships central front and back, The Miraflores Lock where the dredging machines cut back the sides, collapsing nets over metal rods that were drilled into rocks to keep them up. The Panama Canal which to build took a loss of life and money takes 8 hours to go through. Indeed a costly shortcut!

14th Nov. - A return for **Jill Jenkinson** representing “Through the Roof, Wheels for the World” which transforms the lives of disabled people in developing countries. Old and broken wheelchairs are salvaged and sent to the prison workshop at Parkhurst, to be refurbished and adapted to be suitable for rough terrain. Jill has just come back from a trip to Elburgon, Kenya. Pastor Davies and his wife Ruth run Abundant Hope of Glory Church. It has about 100 members: 75% are single women, their husbands having been killed in riots.



This trip Jill was there as an administrator and not as a therapist. She needed to take details of what the people were hoping to receive. The w/c have to be adapted and adjusted to suit the individual. Feeding programmes for the malnourished, guidance for stretches and exercises to prevent further deterioration. 60 pairs of crutches were given out at the walking clinic. Cushions cut from foam were made for the seating in the w/c. Bibles in the peoples own language were also distributed. Jill says the biggest disability of all is NOT to have Jesus as your Friend.

21st Nov. - Rev. Steve Bellamy read from Psalm 19. The 1st part speaks of God making the universe – the glory of the dark night sky. 2nd part – The Law of the Lord, commands and decrees, perfect beauty refreshing the soul. Several years ago Steve was a member of the SAS - Southport Astronomical Society. Since the age of about 11 and being given a telescope he has had an interest in astronomy. The dictionary says “science that deals with the stars and heavenly bodies.” We were shown slides of Jupiter, Venus, Mars, the Earth, Comets and eclipses. All this not to be confused with Astrology the study of zodiac signs and the position of the planets as they move. Some of us were told that we had been wrong about our birthday signs. I thought I was Sagittarius but I am in fact Scorpio 24-29 Nov. There is a sign named Ophiuchus (30 Nov -18 Dec). A very interesting talk, but I am afraid rather a lot to write down. He told us a whole lot more!

Missions Table raised £51.40. Thank you all.

28th Nov. - this week we had **Pete Haskins** as our speaker. Pete has, since being in the school sixth form, had a keen interest in photography. He still remembers Tuesday afternoon learning how to develop and print black and white photos in the “smelly” dark room. Starting work at an electrical equipment firm in Swindon he set up and ran the laboratory learning how to X-ray. Going onto RMCS Shrivenham he experimented with X-rays and colour film (which shows up more detail).

Pete says it has been a useful hobby, recording both family, church, weather and astronomy events. We saw many slides, flower arranging, model making, travel destinations, special family slides, wildlife including butterflies, and visitors to his garden, the fox and hedgehog. We were shown how different angles give rise to interesting compositions. Snow/frost were particularly pretty you could almost feel the cold. Sunsets and sun through trees, shadows of trees in woods. As long as I have known Pete, since back in the 60's, he usually has his camera at hand. It just happened he had brought it along this Wednesday. I do hope ladies you were smiling.

PS. 2nd Dec. - Pete handed me the photo he took of us all. Its really quite good. (Oh dear I must lose some weight!!)

5th Dec. – We moved into the large hall for our Christmas Tea Party. Thinking about Advent and what it means to us, we concluded our meeting with the hymn *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*. Catering for our tea was provided by Sarah Hussey, late of The Quad.

Joan and Stuart had compiled a quiz of favourite Christmas carols and songs. It was a close tie for a winner but everyone received some chocolate. Thank you Joan. All the ladies had been asked to wear something red. I thought Hilary had forgotten until I looked at her feet. Bright red elf slippers complete with bells! May I say a big thank you to all who helped in any way, from setting up, washing up, clearing away and for Joy at the piano. A great afternoon.

Jane Rimmer

Speakers for Women's Fellowship

December	5th	Tea (no speaker)
"	12th	Carols and Missions
"	19th	No meeting
"	26th	No meeting
January	2nd	No meeting
"	9th	Jim Myers
"	16th	Ruth and Philip Pepler
"	23rd	Margaret Broadberry and Missions
"	30th	Henry Richardson (Restore)

Joan Boreham

A History of Christian Music

Can you tell a *khalil* from a *khatsotsrah*? Do you know when simple polyphony developed into four-part harmony? Do you know the story of how the carol Silent Night came to be written? Did you know that the great evangelist D. L. Moody (whose musician partner was I. D. Sankey) was tone deaf? Did you know that the jazz musician Dave Brubeck, best known for *Take Five* also wrote a mass entitled *To Hope*? He also wrote a jazzy setting for the Sermon on the Mount.

(In case anyone is wondering, the *khalil* is an oboe-like instrument made from reed or bone, and the *khatsotsrah* is a trumpet made from beaten silver. Both are pre-Christian Jewish instruments. Four-part harmony appears to have begun in the late twelfth century.)

These and many other facts are to be found in Tim Dowley's **Christian Music; A Global History** [1]. The book is published by Lion Publishing, and like many of their other publications, is lavishly illustrated, high-quality production. It includes the work of eight additional academic contributors, and records this history of Christian music and its development out the Jewish religious culture, and in twenty one chapters takes the reader through the early church, the middle ages, the reformation, renaissance and romantic periods, finally to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and our own time. It also describes how Christian music is developing on an international scale.

It is very informative and comprehensively researched, covering almost every aspect of each age, and is written in a clear easy-to-follow style. Again, in common with other Lion books, there is a main body of text with side articles on particular topics. This leads to a slight unevenness in style, but this is not a serious problem. It can be dipped into at any point.

The book is provided with suggestions for further reading (though some of the titles might not be easy to obtain), suggested example recordings of Christian music and a very extensive index. It would make an ideal Christmas present for anyone wishing to study the origins and development of Christian music. Copies can be ordered from the Mustard Seed.

[1] The hardback version (reviewed here) is priced at £20-00.

TIM DOWLEY *Christian Music: A Global History*, Lion Publishing, 2011, ISBN 9780745953423

A revised paperback version priced at £9.99 has recently been published (2018) by SPCK, ISBN 9780281079261.

Pete Haskins

Beat the VATman?

This email has just come to John Taylor and is worth sharing in the light of our (or, indeed, any) church building plans. It's also worth a follow-up email to our MP, Ed Vaizey (vaizeye@parliament.uk).

Dear friends

Trinity Church Abingdon have alerted us to an online petition requesting the government to consider removing VAT for works on existing church buildings (currently only listed buildings can apply for an exemption).

You may be aware that if 100,000 signatures are found for any petition then the government have to consider the issue and make a decision.

If any in your church wish to sign such a petition it can be found at: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/225494> (alternatively, if you can't face all that typing, go to Google and enter **petitions 225494** – it will be top of the list).

You will need to enter an email address, and confirm your signature by responding to the email that will be sent to you.

Please spread the word widely.

Kind regards.

Deborah Walker

United Reformed Church Wessex Synod Office



Apologies for this edition of Focus being two weeks later than usual. This was a consequence of Dave and Jill's trip to Australia followed by family commitments as soon as they got back.

The next Focus (the first of 2019) is due out of the first Sunday in February.

Faringdon Singers Christmas Concert

in the Catholic Church
of Blessed Hugh Faringdon

FREE ENTRY
Retiring collection
in aid of
SAVE THE CHILDREN
YEMEN CRISIS
APPEAL

Sunday 16th December 3pm

A FEAST OF FESTIVE MUSIC

Programme includes:

Pergolesi 'The Magnificat'.

Eric Whitacre 'The Seal Lullaby'.

Carols for choir and audience.

Conductor: Terence Carter

Accompanist: Ian Ridgway

Hot Lunch & Christmas Stollen!

www.faringdonsingers.org.uk

For more information and for help with wheelchairs please contact Karen@Vogt.org.uk on 01367-241707