

Deadline for  
next Contact  
Magazine:  
**January 21st**  
Next issue will cover  
February and March

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**Place in**  
the labelled folder  
on the bookcase at  
the back of church

**Minister**  
Rev. Murray  
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01260 273873

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01260 273901

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The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Contact

Congleton United Reformed Church



December/January  
2013/2014

## Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends,

The Advent season is again upon us, and as the days grow shorter and colder, our minds begin to turn towards the brightness of Christmas day, when we will gather around the crib with Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men, to greet the new born babe.

While looking forward to this joyful event, we should remember that Christmas can be one of the loneliest times of the year for many people. It is a sad fact that many do not enjoy the Christmas season, finding themselves on the outside, looking in, or simply on the outside, with Christmas and its real meaning having very little impact on their lives at all.

In thinking of those who maybe cold lonely and hungry this Christmas, and indeed throughout the year, I found myself thinking of Mary and Joseph, the newly married young couple travelling from their home to Bethlehem. The road would have been long and arduous, with Mary's pregnancy far advanced, and doubt as to what the future would hold in both their minds. When they finally arrived at Bethlehem they did not find a warm welcome. We are not told, but it seems there were no relatives they could stay with and they were turned away from the inns which were already full. The only place available to them was a cave or stable at the rear of the inn, with just the animals for company.

The other residents of Bethlehem would have been going about their every day lives, other travellers were safe and warm and fed within the inn. All this would have made their lonely situation all the more apparent. But we know what happened next. The birth of Mary's son transformed their lives, that day and for ever, and the joy they felt was soon shared by the shepherds and the wise men, and announced to all creation by the angels. The world was transformed; they were no longer in the darkness looking in, they were at the heart of it all, there in a

## Regular Weekly Activities

	TIME	ACTIVITY	CONTACT PERSON
<b>Mon</b>	5.15pm	1st Congleton Rainbows	Pauline McKeown
	6.15pm	4th Congleton Brownies	Pauline McKeown
<b>Tue</b>	10-12am	Café in the Foyer	Jean Cook
	1.30pm	Keep Fit for the not-so-fit	Pauline McKeown
	7.30pm	Study Group	Cynthia Muncaster & Marion McGuinness
<b>Wed</b>	10am	Mums and Tots in the hall	Chris Astill
	2pm	Bible Study in the Foyer	Carol Booth
<b>Thur</b>	8am	Prayer Meeting	Check venue each week
	12.30-2.30	Chat and Make group in the foyer	Lisa Spencer
	7.30pm	Study Group	Bob Booth
<b>Fri</b>	10-12am	Café in the Foyer	Jean Cook
<b>Sat</b>	10-12am	Café in the Foyer	Jean Cook
	10am	Music Practice in Church	Jean Cook

## Services for December 2013

Dec 1st	First Sunday in Advent, led by the Worship group?	Joint service at URC, led by Rev. Murray George
Dec 8th	Toy service led by Rev. Murray George, 10.30am	Rev. Murray George and Worship Group, 6.30pm
Dec 15th	Communion led by Rev. Murray George, 10.30am	Carols with Rode Hall Silver Band
Dec 22nd	Songs of Praise Carol Service, 10.30am	Worship led by Rev. Bryan George, 6.30pm
Dec 24th	Crib service led by Rev. Murray George, 3pm	Communion led by Rev. Murray George, 9pm
Dec 25th	Christmas morning, Carol Booth, 9.30am	(no service)
Dec 29th	Worship led by Rev. Murray George, 10.30am	CTC service

## Services for January 2014

Jan 5th	All age worship led by Bob Booth, 10.30am	TBC
Jan 12th	Worship led by The Gideons, 10.30am	TBC
Jan 19th	Communion led by Rev. Murray George, 10.30am	TBC
Jan 26th	Worship led by Rev. Murray George, 10.30am	TBC

## Services for beginning of February 2014

Feb 2nd	All age worship led by Carol Booth, 10.30am	TBC
Feb 9th	Worship led by Rev. Murray George, 10.30am	TBC

stable in a small town in first-century Judea. The infant Jesus has the power to transform the lives of many, to bring light where there is darkness, hope where there is fear, and companionship where there is loneliness.

There will be people we know, who may find the time leading up to Christmas itself difficult, just as Mary and Joseph did. They may see everyone around them putting up Christmas trees and fairy lights, busily involved in planning for parties and buying presents, attending carol services, Christingle or Crib services, eating mince pies and sipping sherry with friends, whilst their own lives seem to contract in comparison, getting darker and colder as the Christmas season approaches. These people may live next door to us, they might sit next to us on the bus, they may be someone we know well or simply a passing acquaintance. But just as it did for Mary and Joseph, the birth of this baby can transform the darkest of lives and that transformation can begin in the waiting time before Christmas, during the time of preparation.

This advent, find an opportunity to invite a friend, a colleague or neighbour to one of the events that are taking place over the Advent / Christmas season in our churches. The joy of Christmas, and the love of Christmas, the best gift of all; is for all to share. All are invited, so invite who you can, extending the invitation God gives us. May all come and join the celebration of the truth that some two thousand years ago God demonstrated just how much he loved the world and all who live in it, by sending us a little baby who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger...

Wishing you God's peace and joy  
throughout the season of  
Advent and Christmas  
and into 2014

God Bless  
Murray



## Listening to God

Several of us spent four hours on Saturday 2nd November listening to God. We are indebted to the members of Wellspring Church and especially to Rev. Derek Balsdon and his wife Hilary, who together led the study.

This was a wonderful experience - too good to miss.

The teaching was inspiring and easy to take in. I am sure we shall feel the benefit in our prayer life.

Ruth Hughes



**It can start with just a mumble,  
Which becomes a grumble,  
Causing folk to stumble,  
Spoiling lives.**

**Let's remember to be humble,  
Ignore that petty mumble  
And build, instead of crumble!  
Blessing lives.**

Anon

## ***What is it that we want to share?***

God's love.

A warm welcome to all newcomers

Our humility and ordinariness

The feeling that people matter

An explanation of what happens at each stage of the service to all visitors.

A gentle follow up and a smile and word/copy of the church magazine.

## ***How could we develop other ways of being church?***

We could go outside of church and show our desire to love people and share the love of Jesus.

Share a meal or afternoon tea with housebound or residents from a care home

Have a service and offer cream teas in the park

Give out leaflets in the town advertising special services and inviting people to come.

Hold a pet service

These are just a few ideas to get us thinking. Please give some thought to what **you** feel are the answers in your vision for the church.

Look out for the next special meeting, hopefully it will be at a time when you can come along and share your sense of vision. It is well worth taking part in the conversation to find where God is leading us together.

Barbara Farrington.

## From the 2<sup>nd</sup> Church Vision Meeting

On Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November a group of about 20 gathered in the Church foyer to continue the conversation (which is open to the whole church family) about what we feel God's vision for our church is.

We split into 2 groups and reflected on the out come of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting (published in the church magazine for all the church family to read and reflect and pray about.)

Then we got on to the business of the night and thought about 'The way we worship and how best we can share with each other and our community'.)

The questions and answers are outlined below and we hope that you will reflect and pray and talk to Rev. Murray or any of the elders and each other about what you're personal answers would be.

### Worship.

#### ***What inspires us about our services?***

The music and singing

Challenging message.

The welcome/fellowship and general attitude to each other.

Peace and reflection.

Sharing

#### ***What can prevent us from feeling refreshed in worship?***

If we come to church with burdens and worries and need to share with someone.

If we feel excluded because of infirmity/disability.

Feeling cold

Feeling anxious or under pressure if we are to take part in the service

Not having a rapport with worship leader or visiting Minister.

# Christmas Party

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> January

4:00 – 6:00pm



## Faith Supper

Congleton URC main hall

Traditional party games for all ages

## Churches Together

### Congleton Carnival 2014



#### **Volunteers Needed**

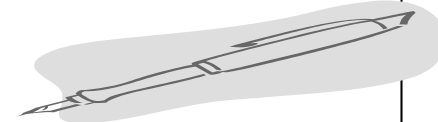
Churches Together have given Brian Hudson of New Life Church the job of project leader for participation by Congleton's churches in our Carnival on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July 2013. He has a vision for at least two floats in the procession on Saturday, plus stalls in the Park area. Does this catch your spirit? Do you have the time and the talent to put together an eye-catching (and ear-catching) witness to our town? All sorts of people will be needed - imaginative, realistic, artistic, practical, musical, outgoing or a bit shy - you can play your part.

If you are interested, please send your contact details and some idea of what you would like to do to our representative on the Carnival Committee:

Mrs Amanda Martin  
28 Hertford Close  
Congleton  
CW12 1TB  
Tel: 01260 275574 (with answer phone)  
Email [amartin678@btinternet.com](mailto:amartin678@btinternet.com)

She will pass on your details to Brian who will get in touch.

## Letters



Dear friends,

I was so thrilled to receive your gift of beautiful flowers. Thank you so much. I am going to miss you all so very much, but hopefully Joan and I will visit Sunday service when we are able to. Love and good health to you all.

Kind regards,

Anne Robinson

PS. Thank you Alan and Rae for your nice card.

I was quite overwhelmed to receive such a beautiful bouquet on my cessation of coffee duties, sadly, owing to health problems. Many thanks for the kind thought and lovely flowers so gratefully received. Perhaps lighter duties may be available!

Again, thanks for your kindness.

With love and God's blessing.

Sincerely,

Joan Kirkham

## PEACEMAKING

Making peace along the byways, in the little lanes of life.  
Smooth out the minor matters that are always making strife.

Speak nicely to a stranger and be thoughtful to a friend,  
There are many little differences a pleasant word will mend.

In every homely circle there is someone who must be . . .  
A peacemaker, a diplomat to help the rest agree.

And even if we cannot spread our wings and travel far,  
There's such a lot of quiet work to do just where we are.

So many dismal moods to cheer and sunbeams to release.  
The world has room for many more disciples of the peace.



"Somebody has said there are only two kinds of people in the world. There are those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good morning, Lord," and there are those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good Lord, its morning."

## Sponsors Needed

With the permission of the Carnival Committee Amanda has booked a Christian rock band led by Chip Kendall to perform on Hankinson's Field during the early evening of Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2013. For the past two years he has been booked by Congleton High School for their Carol Service at Astbury and is going to perform at this year's service as well. So he is well-known to at least half of Congleton's teenagers. We would like him to become well-known to the other half as well.

The Carnival Committee like Chip's clear Christian message and appreciate the quality of the band's music, which is why they have endorsed his performance, especially as it comes cost-free to the Committee. Amanda has undertaken to raise the cost of the performance (about £1000) from sponsorship. Churches Together has generously agreed to cover £250 of this cost, which makes the total sponsorship so far raised to £550. If you would like to contribute to the remaining £450, please get in touch with Amanda. You will need to pray for God to bless the performance and for it to make an impact on the town's teenagers in order to get a return on your investment!

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, ANTROBUS STREET, CONGLETON**

**Church Meeting dated 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2013 in the Church foyer.**

Rev. Murray George was Chairperson and there were 19 Members present. Apologies were received from - Pauline McKeown Bob Booth Chris Booth Ron Cook Jean Vale Muriel Fraser Margaret Stacey Ray Stacey Robin Hughes Daisy Hughes Tony Hall and Rae Bowers.

Rev Murray led the devotions from Corinthians 3: 10-17 Master builders of the Kingdom. Followed by prayer  
The minutes of the previous meeting were signed after 1 correction..  
Other business not on the Agenda none.

**Matters arising**

The decision on noticeboards was ongoing but 1 quote was awaited for a 4'x3" external board to provide more information to the community.

**Pastoralia.**

Reports were received and prayer offered for our Church family in need.

**Reports**

**Church vision**

Rev. Murray reflected on the special church meeting to begin to ascertain the future vision of the church It was agreed that the thoughts of most of the members present were based along the same lines and everyone felt strongly that when the vision was a little clearer it must be acted upon and not just left on the table. Research into the thoughts of our community as to what was needed was thought to be very important together with the church organizations. A further meeting was arranged for Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2013 at 7.30pm. Members present were asked to talk to the congregation about their views for the future.

**Ghana-aid** The possible project to build a hut for maternity services would be overseen by the charity and any money sent would be protected to ensure it reached its intended destination. The cost of the hut would be approximately £1,500. All agreed to support this outreach. Fundraising had begun and offertories at our Harvest festival would go towards this. Margaret Bourner would act as link person and further fundraising ideas were sought.

**Finance.**

£754 40p had been sent to churches together after our expenses had been taken from the Stuart Townend concert. £150 was broken down into £70 for expenses and all agreed to £50 to go to Ghana-aid

Harvest offertories for Ghana-aid amounted to £142 60p.

**Property.**

26<sup>th</sup> October is to be Tidy up day from 9-12pm.

A quote had been requested from BT. for unlimited broadband in the church. It is envisaged that extra boosters will be required costing approximately £50 each. £200 could maybe cover the setting up outlay. This project is ongoing.

2 quotes had been received for removing the front centre pew and moving a pew back and replacing the balustrade.

EDC joinery from Biddulph quoted £638. with possibly £476 for any extra joinery.

R J Whitehurst from Congleton quoted £570 plus carpentry to front area.

After discussion it was decided in view of the huge difference in the two quotes that a 3<sup>rd</sup> quote be obtained and the Fabric Group could then decide which to accept on behalf of the church.

Thanks were expressed for the replacement of the toilet seat in the disabled toilet.

**Junior Church**

Child friendly award scheme was still ongoing. A conversation had taken place with Malcolm Evans Youth and Children's Officer to date.

God Squad and The Junior Church were leading the service on the 6<sup>th</sup> October and there was a practice on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>.

8<sup>th</sup> December which is the Gift service there will be 2 baptisms.

A Fury weekend will be coming up next year.

**Social Committee**

The next meeting is to be held on the 21<sup>st</sup> October and the event of the Kingsfield singers will be discussed. Raffle prizes are needed and Marion McGuinness volunteered to ask around the shops in town for contributions. Also on the agenda will be the Christmas party and fundraising ideas for Ghana-aid.

Thanks were expressed to the social committee and all who helped to make The Stuart Townend concert a great success. Rev Murray had received favourable comments and Stuart Townend had given constructive advice should the event be held again.

Merchandise had been bought and can be loaned from the church library.

**Wider Church**

Street Pastors in Congleton will be launched at a meeting on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. Rev Murray will be there and the Moderator of Mersey Synod Rev. Howard Sharpe to represent our church. Volunteers are required and help with the financial outlay will be given by the church.

**Synod and South Cheshire.**

Diary dates

A meeting Saints in the Stadium at St Helens Rugby League Stadium on 12<sup>th</sup> October. 10-4pm.

8<sup>th</sup> February 2014 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2014 and 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 one of these dates will soon be finalized as a Fresh expressions day on the topic Church today. A South Cheshire Group event.

17/18<sup>th</sup> May, 2014 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the United Reformed Church Over Winsford.

The retirement of the Synod Moderator Rev. Howard Sharpe will take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2014 at 2pm in Hope Chapel Liverpool where he will preach.

**Correspondence**

None recorded.

**Other business.**

All souls service on the 1<sup>st</sup> November. Please encourage anyone listing names for the roll call to give full name and address. URC Alsager will join us this year.

It was agreed to hold the 2014 AGM in March and to have just 1 AGM including the financial report..

The date of the next meeting will be on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 at 7.15pm. in the Foyer.

The meeting closed with The Grace at 8.45pm.