

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SUNDAY 11TH JANUARY AT 10.30am at the URC: Christingle service- come along and invite your friends and let us worship together whilst we also raise awareness of the children's society and funds for their work.

The Children's Society adopted the Christingle over 40 years ago and since then, the number of Christingle celebrations has grown to more than 6000 a year. The Children's Society works with those in darkness – children on the streets – in dark places, not just lack of light, but lack of hope, safety, a future. The custom of the Christingle began in the Moravian Church and was first used as part of a Christmas Children's Festival in the Marienborn Congregation in Germany on the 24th December 1747, this service was conducted by Bishop John de Watteville. Nowadays Christingle services take place before and after Christmas and whilst telling the story of Jesus, the Light of the world, they make a huge difference to the work of the Children's Society, too.

THURSDAY, 15TH JANUARY: Note that CTNP Forum has been cancelled.

SATURDAY, 17TH JANUARY, 10am – 12.00: 'Praying in the streets

SUNDAY, 25TH JANUARY: preaching swap at morning service for each church

WEDNESDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 7.30pm: Annual quiz at the Methodist Church

FRIDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY – FRIDAY, 27TH MARCH: Weekly Lent lunches at the URC Hall

FRIDAY, 6TH MARCH, 7.30pm at Lovat Hall: Service to mark Women's World Day of Prayer (more details in February edition).

CTNP President: Vacancy
Secretary: Vacancy
Treasurer: Paul Tolley, PTMERCEDES@aol.com Tel. 01908 615729

CTNP website: - www.ctnp.org.uk



CONNECTIONS JANUARY 2015

Grant me the courage to move beyond my little certainties, knowing that wherever I go, you are there, ahead of me.

Eddie Askew

REQUEST FOR HELP FOR LENT LUNCHESES 2015

Lent Lunches 2015 to raise money for Christian Aid will take place at the URC Hall for six weeks from **Friday 20th February – Friday 27th March**. Offers of help for this CTNP annual event are requested from all the churches in Newport Pagnell and from anyone in our community who has two hours to spare on a Friday, even if it is only for one Friday during the six weeks.

Time involved will be from 11.30am – 1.45pm. Tasks include, setting up and laying tables, stirring soup, making tea/coffee, serving tables, washing up, and tidying the hall at the end of the session. This may sound like hard work, but working together as a team is enjoyable, and it is for such a good cause!

If you would like to help this year, please contact Jennifer Mazzone on 01908 613088 to let her know when you are able to give your time, and/or contribute homemade soup on one or more Friday lunchtimes.

Thank you for your support.

Jennifer Mazzone

Articles to the Editor, Beth MacKay
Preferably by e-mail to beth.mackay@yahoo.co.uk 01908 612475
Copy Deadline - 20th of each month

LETTER FROM A MINISTER

I have never been a great one for New Year celebrations - this year I will be working 9-5 on New Year's Eve and will be doing the same again on 2nd January so I don't think too much midnight oil will be burnt in our house on New Year's Eve. I often wonder just what it is that people celebrate: is it that one year is over or that another has begun?

For me, 2014 was a year of partings. In January I attended the funeral of a former neighbour, in August, my Father-in-law died and later in the same month, our parish priest – Fr James Evans – was moved to another parish. But this is not to say that 2014 was a year that I am glad to be able to consign to history – there were moments of great happiness and when I look back on it there is much for which I must be thankful. Even when I think of my father-in-law's passing, I am reminded of the tremendous care he received from all at Westbury Grange.

Perhaps like me you have had ups and downs in 2014 and maybe you are wondering what 2015 has in store for you. Will the coming year bring changes in your life or will it bring more of the same routine? As you look forward to the new year do you look forward in hope or with trepidation or even fear?

As I am writing this, a phrase keeps coming to mind – *Do not be afraid*. It has been said that this phrase occurs 365 times in The Bible and to me that suggests the message is meant for each and every day. Those four words form a message of hope for the new year, a message that whatever may come in the new year, there is someone to whom we can turn, whatever the situation, because the giver of the message – Jesus – is with us as he promised:

Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid, I am with you.

I am with you always, yes to the end of time.

I wish you all a blessed and a happy new year.

Deacon Jon Walls, St Bede's

FOOD FOR CHANGE UPDATE ON FUNDRAISING

As mentioned in previous editions of Connections, CTNP has made a commitment to raise £5000 over the next two years to help poor families trying to eke out a living on the edge of the Sahara Desert. If we reach our target, the EU will match fund it by 5:1 which means that our £5000 becomes a staggering **£30,000** for this project!

The good news is that in November and December alone, we have raised our first £1037 towards our target. There was a special collection at the Songs of Praise service on 23rd November at which £408 was donated and a further £629 has been raised at the coffee and mince pie mornings held throughout Advent in Paul and Nita Tolley's lovely winterhouse cabin. Thanks to all who came along and special thanks to Paul and Nita for hosting.



Thanks to all who have donated so generously. Look out for more fundraising activities throughout the year. Suggestions and help always welcomed!

PREACHING SWAP

The ministers of the churches of Newport Pagnell, who meet every Tuesday for prayer, are arranging a preaching swap as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. At the time of writing, the final arrangements have not yet been made, but it is hoped that a minister from another denomination will preach in every church on **Sunday 25th January**.

This is a great opportunity to meet and listen to a minister from a different Christian tradition. In this way everybody who attends a church service in Newport Pagnell that day will be reached and not just the people who go to special events of Churches Together. The ministers hope that this will strengthen the bonds between Christians of the town.

The traditional events of Christian Unity Week (i.e. the united service and prayer vigil) will not take place this year.

PRAYING IN THE STREETS



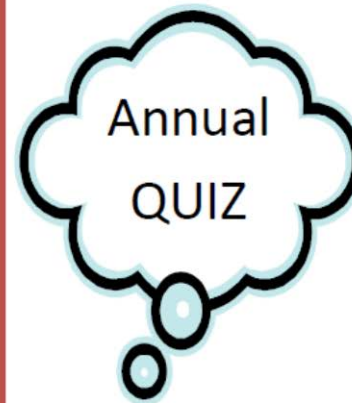
As part of the outreach of the churches to the people of Newport Pagnell, there will be another time of praying in the streets. Passers-by will be gently approached and asked if they would like to request a prayer. If they do, the prayer can either be said there and then with the person or, alternatively, it can be written on a small piece of paper and stuck on a prayer tree.

'Praying in the streets' will take place on **Saturday 17 January from 10.00 to 12.00** in the High Street outside the Methodist Church and on the other side of the road outside the Rectory. Anyone who wants to take part for some or all of this time, will be very welcome.

Deacon Klaus Reidel
St Bede's



BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS 1815–2015



7.30pm on
Wednesday 11 February
Teams of 4–6 players

£5 pp entry fee

Includes soup & bread

Raffle

Profits to Willen &

Karibuni Trust



Please confirm Team entries by emailing David Jones
on davronjones@yahoo.co.uk by 1 February

NEWPORT PAGNELL METHODIST CHURCH
HIGH STREET MK16 8AQ

Just a reminder that the Forum scheduled for Thursday, 15th January has been cancelled. The next Forum/AGM will be in June (date yet to be fixed).

Note that we are also still in need of a Chair and Secretary for CTNP. Please get in touch if you think you may be able to help. You'll find more information about these roles and about the work of CTNP on our website at www.ctnp.org.uk.

NEW YEAR'S DAY WALK AND WORSHIP

On New Year's Day morning about 60 people braved the cold to take part in all or part of our annual walk around the churches. The theme this year was 'vision' and we heard some very varied and inspiring reflections in each of the churches on what our vision as Christians might be for 2015. We heard about blind Bartimaeus receiving his sight, and about Helen Keller (blind and deaf) who maintained that 'worse than being blind is having sight and no vision'. We were reminded of some well-known verses from Matthew's Gospel e.g. 'One does not live by bread alone' (chpt4' v4) and we prayed that our vision for our town this year would be that we would all live not just for material things but that we would embody the higher values of love, compassion and friendship. We were asked to consider what our legacy will be as a generation and what our vision is as God's people. We were told about Walt Disney's vision where the seemingly impossible was made to happen reminding us that with God's help we too can make the impossible happen in our town. We heard the 'parable of the waddling ducks' (not one you'll find in the Gospels!) which made us all smile but which had a deep message for us all as I think most of us are guilty of being like those waddling ducks a lot of the time. (I know I am!) May God help us all to 'fly' this year!

Finally, our thanks to all the worship leaders and to the team at St Bede's for the lovely refreshments after our walk. What a great way to start the year!

Beth MacKay

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MEAD CENTRE UPDATE

As you are most probably aware, after a consultation period that has taken a few years and lots of thinking and discussion and prayer, we have decided to demolish the existing church hall and replace it with a new, multi-purpose, flexible building which will be available not only for church use but also to extend the community use for which it is already extremely popular. We submitted a pre-planning application to Milton Keynes Council earlier this year and, although there were a small number of areas to be addressed, the overall feedback was very positive. Since then we have refined the plans and our final proposals are now able to be viewed and have been on display on a number of occasions.

Our aim is to submit a full planning application early in 2015 once we have reviewed all feedback. This will be a very challenging project – not least the cost of demolition and rebuilding – for which we have a budget cost of £650,000. This seems a daunting prospect but we already have the experience of the Church building redevelopment, where the final expenditure was £310,000. This was raised by the church and the local community, with some charitable donations.

Against that background we are ready for the financial challenge because we are convinced of the value of the work that we are doing and the need amongst the town community for such a facility. It is also very exciting as already people are inspired by the idea of the new space and keen to get involved. We are particularly encouraged by the fact that some of the new activities started in the reshaped church building have already outgrown the space available.

Please do not hesitate to contact us via our website if you require further information or would like to see the plans on display in the church. Our website address is: www.urcnewportpagnell.org

Revd Jenny Mills
United Reformed Church