

London Street United Reformed Church

Basingstoke, Hants, RG21 7NU

Tadley (Old Meeting) United Reformed Church

Malthouse Ln, Hants, RG26 3NY

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

This month, Jean Young explores the origins of our celebrations of the Nativity and what it's all about.



So here we are in December with another year drawing to a close. Everyone is hurrying to post Christmas cards with pictures of the Nativity on the front, and looking forward to Christmas. But what is it really about?

The early *Church did not celebrate the birth of Jesus; the date was unknown. With the growth of the calendar, events in Jesus' life could be observed and a gradual series of stories developed about birth, Magi and baptism.

In Rome, the 6th of January was already set aside for the Magi; wise men who studied the stars and their meaning. By the 4th century CE, the Church designated 25th December as the appropriate date for celebrating The Nativity, because it had been the pagan festival of Sol Invictus when the unconquerable sun triumphed over the darkness of winter and the days grew longer once more. "But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall " (Malachi 4 v2).

The inauguration of a huge sun-god statue 'The Colossus of Rhodes' took place around sunrise on December 25th circa 283 BCE, with a new temple in honour of the sun-god consecrated in Rome on 25th December 274 CE. Under the emperor Constantine (who died 337 CE), Christ was venerated as the Sun of Righteousness. There is a mosaic in the crypt of St. Peter's in the Vatican, where Christ is portrayed and adorned with sunrays, riding in a chariot.

The next stage unfolds with an important political development: "In those days, a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered" (Luke 2 v1). The purpose of the census was to establish a detailed inventory of individual owners and their property in areas under Roman control.

The **Roman Empire had grown at an astonishing rate resulting in the need to improve the infra-structure. New roads and the construction of barracks for the Roman Army were needed to house the legions of

between 4,000 and 6,000 soldiers. To raise the money to pay for it, Rome forced the occupied population to register in order to pay for the costs of the occupation themselves.

So, this is the background to the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, which we call the Nativity. The Roman census compelled Mary and Joseph to travel from Galilee to the village of Bethlehem in Judea, to register at the time when Mary was due to give birth to her first child. When they arrived, there were no lodgings available. Luckily, Joseph found shelter in a cave or a stable. Once they were sorted, they went to be registered and "...the time came for her to deliver her first son and she wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger" (Luke 2 v7).

They were soon visited by shepherds who "...were living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night" (Luke 2 v 8). An angel appeared and said "...to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2 v11).

The significance of this scene would have impressed Luke's Jewish audience, for David himself had been a shepherd before he was anointed. "...but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem" (First Samuel 17 v15).

The shepherds were not the only visitors!

Magi from the east also came to pay homage to the infant King (Matthew 2 v1-18).

Christmas then is not about decorations, Santa Claus, or parties (as enjoyable as they are); but about a unique, special gift to all of us from our eternal Father: the gift of life and hope. What can we give in return?



National Geographic, 2022

"The Nativity of Christ" a painting from India circa 1800.

PRAYER

Loving Father, we can only say "thank you" and continue telling this story of hope. We pray that you give us strength, wisdom and compassionate hearts to remember those living in war zones, the homeless, the lonely, the ill, and all who are having a tough time. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

* *The Oxford Dictionary of the Bible.*

** *National Geographic, 2022 " Jesus an Illustrated Life".*

THE NOTICEBOARD

Information, updates, tips, and more.



FOCUS: Next Issue



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Focus magazine. If you would like to contribute to the January magazine, please contact the editor by **16th of December**.



Church Flowers

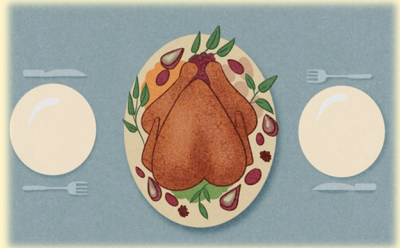
The Flower Committee would like to thank Liz Foster for donating the December Church Flowers in memory of her Mother. The flowers will be arranged by Liz Lindsay.

If you would like to celebrate a birthday or anniversary by donating the flowers in 2025, please contact either Liz Lindsay, Alison Jamieson, Elspeth Anthony, or Joyce Cook. Thank you.

Alone at Christmas?



If you are going to be alone on Christmas Day and would appreciate company, then please have a word with me. Equally if you are at home at Christmas and wouldn't mind welcoming a member of the congregation to share the day with you, then please also have a word with me.



Thank you. Owen.

Tea and Coffee Rota



We all enjoy our time of fellowship after worship, when we share a cup of tea or coffee.

This is a great time for the members of the church family to catch up on news and share information. But it is an even more invaluable time in which we can welcome visitors as they join us after worship.

We are therefore grateful to everyone who takes part in the tea and coffee rota which makes our welcome possible.

Have you ever thought of volunteering to be part of this important team? If this would be your first time you would share the work with somebody who is more experienced until you are confident in using the equipment.

Please have a word with Jenny early in December, if you are interested, so that the rota for the new year can be drawn up.

If you are already on the rota, please confirm to Jenny that you wish to continue in this service in 2025.

Blessings

Jenny



Can you help to make sure that no one in our local community goes hungry?



Items **urgently** needed: Coffee, Loo Roll, Powdered Milk, Shampoo & Conditioner, Small Packs of Tea, Tinned Fruit, Tinned Meat (e.g. Chilli, Stewing Steak, Ham), Tinned Soup.

Items needed: UHT Milk, Cooking Sauces, Custard, Deodorant, Hot/Cold Desserts (e.g. Jelly, Sponge Pudding, Angel Delight), Nappies (Size 5 & Above), Rice Pudding, Savoury Snacks/Crisps, Squash, Sweet Snacks/Kids treats, Sweet Spreads (Jam, Marmalade etc.), Tinned Spaghetti/Ravioli, Tinned Tomatoes, Tinned Veg, Washing Up Liquid.

Please **do not** give Baby Food, Hot/Cold Cereal, Nappies (Size 4 & Below), Non-Dairy Milk, Pasta, Pulses, Rice, Sanitary Pads, Tinned Beans, as these are already in surplus.

Donations can be left at London Street URC in the container provided. For up to date lists, or to find other donation points, go to:

<https://basingstoke.foodbank.org.uk/givehelp/food/>

Or download the BankTheFood app from the Apple App/Google Play store and select Basingstoke Foodbank.



Decorate the Church

The Church will be open on

Saturday 7th Dec'24

from 10.30 – 12.30

and we invite you to come and decorate a window sill.



Annual Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

On Saturday 14th December the Sounds of Hope Singers will be hosting their last ever Christmas Carols Service here at London Street starting at 7:30pm. Please come along with your family and friends to a relaxed service where the Christmas story will be unveiled through readings and singing some of your favourite carols. The choir will be singing a collection of more contemporary carols. Free admission as normal and, after the service, join us in some refreshments as we extend our time of fellowship.



Calling All Bakers!

Memory Tree needs you!

Our guests at Memory Tree love having cake on a Wednesday morning.

If you could help by joining the rota to provide cake on a regular basis please let Jenny know.

And while you're thinking about it, see the poem on the next page...





Baking Cakes... Again!!



Do I have to, Lord?

Not ANOTHER cake!

Yes, I know I like baking—

And I find it therapeutic,

And it's very satisfying to see people admiring my handiwork.

But I don't feel like it today—

And I haven't time

And I'm on a diet,

And...



Where does cake baking come in the Bible, Lord?

I never heard Jesus or Paul talk about it.

I never knew it was part of the Christian life—

It isn't in the membership promises,

Or the eldership service,

So why are we expected to produce cakes so fruitfully?

I'm sorry, Lord, I'm giving in to ungenerous thoughts,

Please help me,

I do want to be generous,

I want to see people come together in your name as they eat—

In imitation of the meal, you had with your disciples.

It may not be bread and wine,

And I may not be ordained,

But I am part of the priesthood of all believers,

Please use my offering

To bless your people.

Amen





Tadley Christmas Day Event (Poster on next page)

You are warmly invited to spend Christmas Day with us this year. Enjoy good food, good company, music, fun and celebration, in the Christmas spirit, on this special day together.

There is no cost for this day. Just come along and be with friends.

If you can make it we would love to hear from you (ideally as soon as possible so we can organize food and catering!)

Places are limited so please do book early to avoid disappointment.

To book your place or for more information contact Mark and Julie on 07471 848 508 or email: tadleychristmasday@gmail.com

Love in Christ

Mark Ward



Join us on
Christmas Day

25 DEC | STARTS AT **11.30AM**
FUN * FOOD * GAMES

THE AMBROSE ALLEN CENTRE, TADLEY

TO BOOK OR FOR MORE
INFORMATION

07471 848 508

TADLEYCHRISTMASDAY@GMAIL.COM

THIS IS A FREE EVENT



ADONAI UPDATE

Penny O'Bee shares more pictures from Adonai Family Uganda, following on from her article last month.

The children here are doing their washing, normal for anyone from about 7 years. They are staying to help with the harvest at the 19 acre farm about 2-3 hours drive from the school.



The children here are preparing sweet potatoes from the harvest. Amazing how rarely they cut themselves.



Christmas Trees



Norway sent a Christmas tree
It marks the Saviour's birth,
The incarnation manifest
As God came down to earth

A babe born to a virgin
Would grow up as a man,
Yet still divine, such mystery,
To implement God's plan.

Another tree was put in place
A sacrifice was made,
As on that cross He gave His life
That all men could be saved.

So celebrate that wondrous day
When Jesus left His home,
To bring salvation down to man,
And claim us as His own.

By Megan Carter

GOODBYE OWEN, HELLO GILL!

As Owen stands down as Church Secretary, he looks back on his time in the role.

A little over ten years ago when I was asked to consider taking on the role of Church Secretary from Joy, in addition to prayer I had a couple of meetings with Kay before accepting the call to serve. I felt called to focus on the 'church' aspects of the job, in many ways a continuation of the work that Joy had done. However, I was well aware that no two people will work in the same way. Six months into the job I began to feel more at ease with my responsibilities in serving the Lord within the community, the wider church and of course London Street as I slipped into my 'secretarial' role.

That being said, I never really had a clearly defined role and certainly was never given a job specification. After lockdown, Kay was called to a new pastorate and my focus changed. I found myself taking on much more of a 'secretarial' role - as church administrator, pulpit supply officer, and anything really that needed to be done. It ended up being virtually a full time job!

When taking on the role ten years ago, I brought together my life skills as a career Civil Servant, school governor, Justice of the Peace, chair of Pages Charity, father, grandfather and husband. And of course I had learnt a lot from my late wife Ann, in her role as a Non-Stipendiary Minister here in Basingstoke. In doing so I trust that over the last ten years, as a congregation you have found this beneficial in supporting London Street.

Normally a church secretary will work alongside the Minister. For the last 4 years, maybe more if you consider the periods we were in lockdown, that hasn't happened, and I have very much been the primary contact here at London Street. As the primary contact I have often dealt with matters that would have normally been dealt with by the Minister. Having said that it has been a joy and blessing to have the support of Revd Josh Thomas as our Interim Minister for the last two years. Thank you, Josh.

Yes, I have been frustrated and challenged on a number of occasions. And yes, I have made mistakes. But looking back, prayer and a desire

to do what is right for this Church have supported me. Overall, I have enjoyed my time as Church Secretary, and despite the heavy burden at times, I will miss it.

So, what has Gill got to look forward to? In addition to overseeing the many aspects of church life I have mentioned, at some point in the future we will declare a vacancy. We will then draw up a pastorate profile and meetings will commence with prospective ministers. An exciting and challenging time awaits us all. However Gill decides to undertake her role as Church Secretary, one of the key components in getting the job done, is the practical and prayerful support of the congregation as a whole. It is important to bear that in mind.

Thank you Gill for accepting the call to take on this important role. You will at times feel overwhelmed by some of the things you have to do. Don't panic. Help is always at hand and if I can help in anyway, please just ask. Finally, my thanks to Tony Patterson. Tony found himself at church a lot as we came out of lockdown and with Kay moving on, Tony took on a lot of my admin tasks as assistant to the Church Secretary, so thank you Tony.

Blessings,

Owen

A Quiet Thought...



Troubles are often the tools by which God fashions us for better things.

Henry Ward Beecher

Scam Awareness

Emails and social media messaging are the main form of communication in this day and age however they are open to misuse by hackers. We automatically trust the recipient if it comes from a known source but should we?

STOP AND THINK!

Has this person sent us an impersonal message with no name asking to confirm our details?

Is the message just a link saying “Check this out”?

Has it been sent from a valid email address or mobile number?
(i.e. Would Facebook use a random personal email or would Apple use a Gmail account?)

Would this person really ask me for help or money?

Action fraud advocates the term “Take 5”. Walk away, think it over and check the originator before responding to the message. Where possible, contact them on a number you hold for them and TALK with them. Don’t just trust whoever has access to their social media.



Stay Protected

THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Please remember the following people in your prayers...

Nicola Hamilton

Beryl Wootton

Revd. Josh, Hannah, Isla, and Joel Thomas

Liz Lindsay and family

Maggie & Richard Morgans

Louise & David Waller

David & Julie Bath

Mrs Noorie Khatkur

Dick & Anne Davey

Christine & Eric Clucas

Carys Haywood

Barbara Banbury and David Corfield

Joan Musselwhite

Ian & Carol Scott

Marguerite Hurford and her son Michael

Chris, Leng and their families

Christine Robertson

Bev Harris and Dom

Claire Macro

Stan & Sandra Marut

Hyacinth Ridguard

Betty Shipway

Owen Collins and family

The Patterson family

Chris Jones' grandson, Archie

Brian & Liz Foster

Alison and David

Morteza

Maxine Perkins

David Bennett

Seb and Dorcas in Uganda

Elaine and Brian's granddaughter Rebecca

David and Gill Vickery



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

This month's assigned readings.



	Psalm	New Testament		Psalm	New Testament
1st	135: 15-21	2 Peter 3	17th	143: 7-12	Revelation 8
2nd	136: 1-9	1 John 1: 1– 1 John 2: 2	18th	144: 1-8	Revelation 9
3rd	136: 10-15	1 John 2: 3-29	19th	144: 9-15	Revelation 10
4th	136: 16-26	1 John 3	20th	145: 1-7	Revelation 11
5th	137	1 John 4	21st	145: 8-13a	Revelation 12
6th	138	1 John 5	22nd	145: 13b-21	Revelation 13
7th	139: 1-6	2 John	23rd	146: 1-5	Revelation 14
8th	139: 7-12	3 John	24th	146: 6-10	Revelation 15
9th	139: 13-18	Jude	25th	147: 1-6	Revelation 16
10th	139: 19-24	Revelation 1	26th	147: 7-11	Revelation 17
11th	140: 1-5	Revelation 2	27th	147: 12-20	Revelation 18
12th	140: 6-13	Revelation 3	28th	148: 1-6	Revelation 19
13th	141: 1-5	Revelation 4	29th	148: 7-14	Revelation 20
14th	141: 6-10	Revelation 5	30th	149	Revelation 21
15th	142	Revelation 6	31st	150	Revelation 22
16th	143: 1-6	Revelation 7			

EVENT DIARIES



What's on this month at London St. & Old Meeting URCs.

At London Street URC (unless otherwise specified):

Regular Events

Sunday Worship 10:30am			
Mondays	10:15am	Craft Group	
Tuesdays	2:30pm	Take Time Meditation (Exploring Luke's Gospel)	On Zoom. Contact Church Secretary for password.
	5:45-6:45pm	Beavers	In Term Time.
	7-8:30pm	Cubs	All in the Den except Scouts who meet in the Wessex Hall.
	7-9pm	Scouts	
Wednesdays	10:15am	Memory Tree Social Club	
	12:15pm	Lunchtime Prayers	
Thursdays	7:15-9:15pm	Explorers	In Term Time. In the Den.

December Worship Diary

1st	Service includes Holy Communion. Led by Revd. Josh Thomas; Musician: Alex Macro.
8th	Gift Service. Led by Gill Craft and 8th Basingstoke Scouts; Musician: Mark Best.
15th	Led by Peter Bentall; Musician: Mark Best.

22nd	Service includes Holy Communion. Led by Revd. Josh Thomas; Musician: Denis Smith.
25th	Christmas Day Service. Led by Karen Bell; Duty Elder: Tony Patterson.
29th	No Service at London Street.

Duty Elder for the month (unless otherwise stated): Liz Lindsay

December Events

7th (Saturday) 10:30am-12:30pm	Decorate the Church The Church will be open and we invite you to come and decorate a window sill.
8th (Sunday) 10:30am-11:30am	Gift Service For The Women's Refuge Church members are once again invited to support the Women's Refuge by donating gifts. Leng Ayland has ascertained that the staff want to put together a Christmas box for each family (toiletries, pyjamas, books, and appropriate small toys). There are 17 adults and 19 children. Of the 19 children, 9 are girls and 10 boys. They range in age from 1 to 14. Girls: Age 2 x3; age 4 x1; age 5 x1; age 7x1; age 13 x2; age 14 x1 Boys: Age 1 x1; Age 2 x1; age 6 x1; age 7x2; age 9 x1; age 10 x1; age 12 x2; age 13 x1.
13th (Friday) 6:30pm	Carol Service Followed by mince pies and mulled wine.

Next Church Meeting:

26th January (Sunday)

Follows morning worship.

At Tadley (Old Meeting) URC (unless otherwise specified):

Regular Events

Sunday Worship 10:30am		
Monday Afternoons	Ladies' Cell Group	Contact Penny O'Bee.
Monday Evenings	Cell Group	Contact Mark Ward or Paul Gross.
Tuesday Evenings	Joint Prayer Time with St Paul's	Contact Penny O'Bee.
Wednesday Evenings	Prayer via Zoom	Contact Mark Ward.
Friday Afternoon	Men's Shed	2pm, once a fortnight. Contact Paul Gross.

December Worship Diary

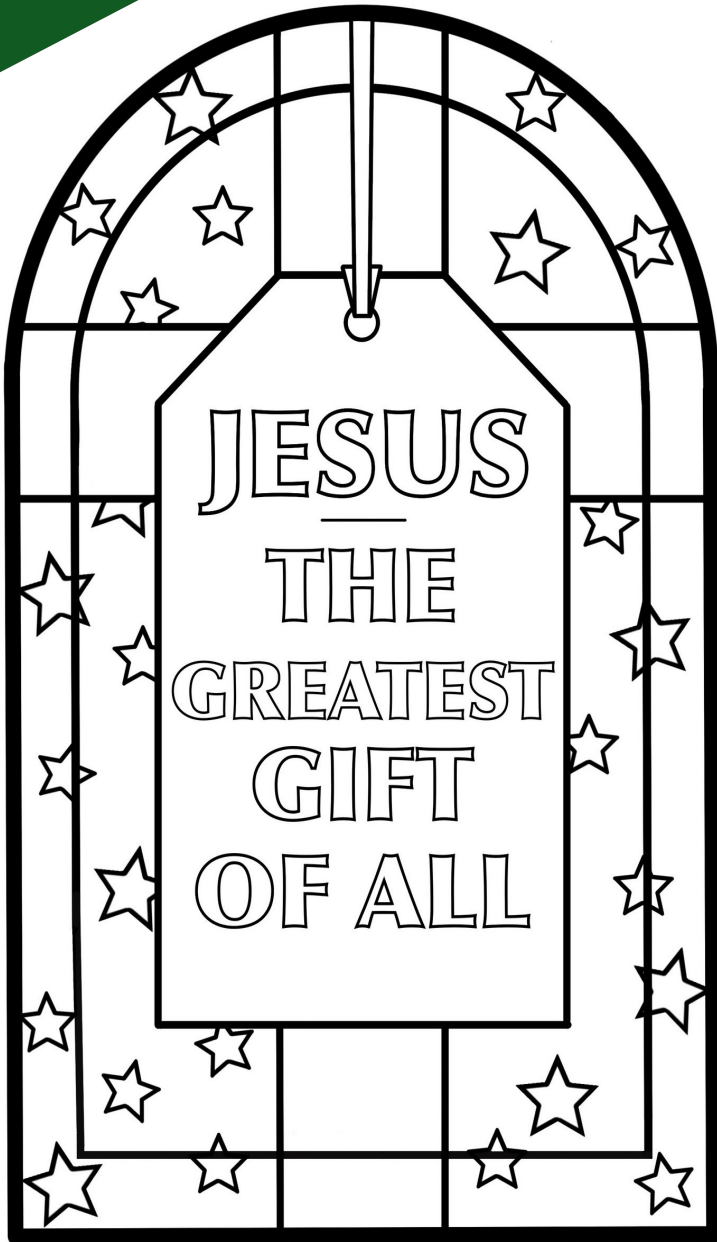
1st	Christmas Craft. 10:30am at the Immanuel Centre. Led by Karen Jones.
8th	Led by Philip Jones.
15th	No service at Old Meeting.
22th	Led by Mark Ward.
29th	No service at Old Meeting.

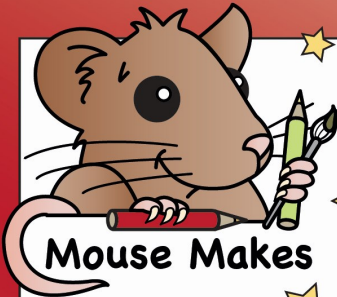
December Events

20th (Friday) 6pm	Candlelit Carol Service at Old Meeting Followed by mince pies and coffee.
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Colour In!





Mouse Makes

★ "Jesus said,
I am the ___ Y
and the ___ U ___
and the ___ I ___.
No one comes to the Father
except through me."
John 14:6

"The child to be born
will be called
H ___ , the
___ of ___"
Luke 1:35

"For unto you is born
this day a
S ___ who is
___ R ___
the ___ R ___"
Luke 2:11

THE GREATEST GIFT

"She will bear a son,
and shall call his name

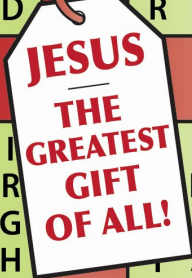
for he will save his
people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21

"Jesus said,
I am the

and the life."
John 11:25

B L I G H T L O
R A Y W O J J R
E M M A N U E L
A B Y J E S O
D S A V I O U R
S A V R J S D

O H O L Y O R C R T U
S O N O F M A N H A R T
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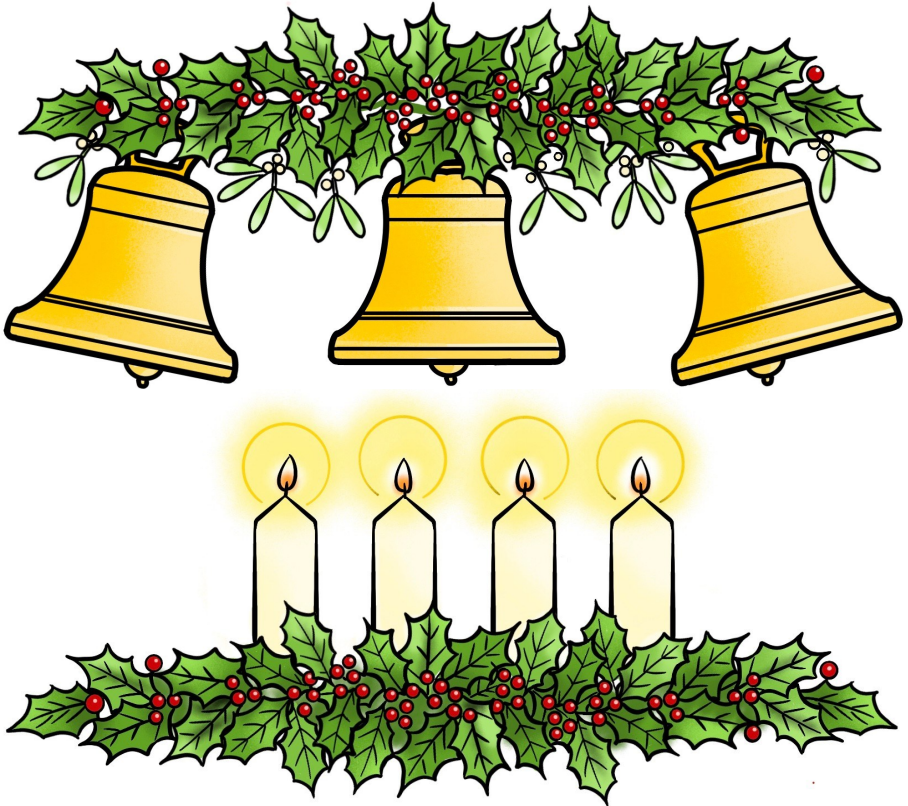
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I N K I G W F D O U
S E S O N O F G O D D
S E W O C O U W O R D
C O U N S E L L O R U

- EMMANUEL • MESSIAH
- REDEEMER • KING OF KINGS • WORD
- SON OF MAN • EVERLASTING • SHEPHERD • PRIEST • PROPHET • TEACHER
- LIGHT • BREAD • VINE • DOOR • LAMB • COUNSELLOR • CHRISTMAS • GIFT

Find the words from the Bible verses too!

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London Street United Reformed Church

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London Street United Reformed Church is a working name of Registered Charity London Street (Basingstoke) United Reformed Church Charity [reg. no. 1130801]