Southam & Bishop's Itchington Congregational Church



The Messenger

2024 tebi /ec 2023



SOUTHAM AND BISHOPS ITCHINGTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH WOOD STREET, SOUTHAM

This Church is: A family of Christians meeting together to worship God and to find fellowship with one another in prayer and learning. We aim to spread the Good News and to encourage others to discover His love and His purpose for their lives.

Minister: Revd Neil Chappell Tel No. 01926 258685

Church Secretary: Mr David Hudson Tel. No. 01926 812695

WORSHIP - SUNDAY SERVICES IN CHURCH 10:30am - Family Worship

We usually share **Communion** on the 3rd Sunday each month.

<u>Preachers and arrangements during the coming weeks</u>

Sunday 3rd December - Rev Neil Chappell - Children's Church
Sunday 10th December - Advent Service
Sunday 10th December - Christmas Carols @ Tithe Lodge 6.30pm
Sunday 17th December - Rev Neil Chappell
Sunday 17th December - 6pm Candelight Carol Service
Sunday 24th December - Rev Neil Chappell
Sunday 24th December - 4pm Christmas Eve Family Service
Monday 25th December - 10am Christmas Day Worship
Sunday 31st December - Debbie Wilson

2024

Sunday 7th January - Rev Neil Chappell - Children's Church Sunday 14th January - Rev Neil Chappell Sunday 21st January - TBC Sunday 28th January - Rev Neil Chappell

-- PASTORAL LETTER --

Dear Friends,

Well, what a weekend that was. For a last minute winter weekend getaway Debby and I decided to go and see the Christmas Lights and Markets in the Polish City of Warsaw. We chose Warsaw for its ease of getting to – there are three flights a day from London Luton Airport – and because we read so many positive things about this ancient capital city. And it didn't disappoint.

Actually, it did. But that was our fault, not Warsaw's. The Christmas Lights don't go on till December! But there was plenty more to discover about this City than just the Christmas Lights!

Warsaw is a vibrant and dynamic city with a rich history and culture. It's a place where old and new blend seamlessly, with historic landmarks like the Royal Castle and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier set against modern skyscrapers and trendy cafes. One of the more sobering facts about Warsaw is that it was virtually raised to the ground at the end of the Second World War, hardly a brick left standing upon a brick. And yet looking at it today you would never believe that. One of the first things that Debby and I did was to walk down part of the Royal Route into the Old Town, going past the Presidential Palace, The Culture



Ministry, the Church of the Holy Cross, the grand Bristol Hotel, Adam Mickiewicz Square (he was a famous poet and political activist) and on to King Sigismund's Column and the Royal Palace. All of it had been rebuilt, restored and renewed. It was quite amazing to discover.

We spent a very enjoyable morning touring the Royal Palace. I have to admit that I knew virtually nothing of Polish history, so it was good to be immersed in this rich historical setting.

We had a very handy audio guide to listen to as we toured through all the rooms. We visited the Great Apartments, grand halls and chambers that were once at the heart of the royal court, and now adorned with lavish furnishings, original paintings, and sculptures. A real highlight was the Canaletto Room, hung with 22 paintings by Bernardo Bellotto, a renowned Italian painter who captured Warsaw's 18th-century splendour. The tour continued into the King's Apartments, private chambers used by the Polish

kings. Notable rooms include the King's Bedchamber, the King's Study, and the Royal Chapel, a beautiful space with intricate Baroque architecture and gilded furnishings.

At the end of the tour we stopped for a wonderful coffee and cake in the café, it seemed rude not to!



From there we visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The monument, located at Piłsudski Square, is the only surviving part of the Saxon Palace that occupied the spot until the Second World War. The Tomb was inaugurated in 1925 and is the unidentified body of a young soldier who fell during the Defence of Lwów. Since then, earth from numerous battlefields where Polish soldiers

have fought has been added to the urns housed in the surviving pillars of the

Saxon Palace. The Tomb is constantly lit by an eternal flame and assisted by a guard post provided by the three companies of the 1st Guards Battalion.

Another fascinating place to visit was the Church of the Holy Cross. There were other more historical and ornate places of worship to visit in Warsaw – St John's Cathedral and St Anne's Basilica just to name two – but there was a specific reason why I wanted to visit the Church of the Holy Cross. It is there that the heart of Frédéric Chopin is interred



in one of the columns. Chopin was born in Poland and grew up in Warsaw, where his prodigious talent was nurtured. At the age of 20 he moved to Paris, where he composed virtually all his famous music, gave occasional recitals and offered piano lessons. He was never a well man, suffering extended periods of illness, and he died at the age of 39. His dying wish was that his heart was interred in Warsaw, whilst his body was buried in the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris – also home to the graves of Jim Morrison, Edith Piaf, Oscar Wilde and Georges Bizet! Also in Warsaw there is the Chopin Institute, the Chopin Museum, the airport is named after him, and a concert of one of his works takes place very day at 7pm!

There was so much more to our wonderful weekend, including walking down the Royal Route in freezing temperatures as snowflakes gently fell, but that will have to wait for another time.

Now we move on to our focus for Advent and Christmas, reflecting in the deep love that God has for his world in sending his precious Son to be born among us. Our thoughts this year will continue to be shaped by events in Ukraine and Gaza and Israel, and other troubled parts of our world, as we hear the words of Luke 2: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.'

May God's favour rests with the whole of humankind this Christmas.

Debby, Jacob, Charlotte and Chris, Kris and Gemma and all the family join me in wishing you a most wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With every blessing,

Neil

COFFEE POT is open every **Tuesday morning** from **10.00am** until **12 noon** in **Church**. Everyone is very welcome to drop in for a cuppa and a chat. We're always looking for helpers too.

Contact: Sue Hudson Tel: 812695

** STOP PRESS ** DON'T MISS COFFEE 'N' CAROLS
ON TUESDAY 19TH DECEMBER **

TUESDAY CLUB

meets in the Church Lounge on **Tuesdays** at **2.15pm**.

Details of meetings will be included in 'Storyboard' available in Church.

The Club is open to everyone -Visitors will receive a warm welcome.

Contact: David Hudson, Tel No 812695

2024 Church Meetings

will be in the Church Lounge on
Tuesday 23rd January at 7.45pm
Tuesday 20th February at 7.45pm
(Annual Meeting)

Please put these dates in your diary and make every effort to attend. Thank you.



Weekends in London

Last time I wrote about my trips to London with my friend and that eventually our husbands decided to join us for a weekend. We caught the train from Banbury to Marylebone. Decided to take a taxi to our hotel with the unusual name of The Officers Club not



far from St Paul's Cathedral. We checked in and dropped our luggage off. Then we went exploring.

We wandered around St Paul's square and stopped in a cafe where I had hot chocolate. It was just like drinking liquid chocolate. Then we decided to venture over the Millenium Bridge. Not long before we went on our trip the bridge had to be closed for repairs because of the sway. Luckily they had righted the problem and we managed to walk over without feeling sea sick! We explored the other side of the bridge and walked towards Borough Market. All I can remember about the market is the sights and sounds and the smell of the spices of the different street foods. Of course we had to have a taster. I can't remember much more about our first weekend. It was a long time ago but from then on we did one weekend a year, sometimes two-one summer, one winter.



Because Christmas is on its way I've been thinking about the shops we went into at that time of year. Harrods comes to mind. We were taken on the tube to a rather expensive looking area of London. Very expensive looking houses then into

a street with shops. From the outside it didn't look that impressive, but wow, you walked through the doors and the decor was wonderful. The prices were ridiculous. We venture up the stairs into a Christmas wonderland all glittery and shiny. We wandered around. Col bought a small replica Harrods delivery van, my friend bought a Christmas bauble. Just so we had a bag with Harrods on it. We explored all the other floors. The assistants were immaculately dressed and friendly.

Then there is Hamleys. Always a must at Christmas. Every toy you can think of, people on stilts, people demonstrating the toys – it was all there. We didn't stay long, it was too busy.

The other place I liked at Christmas was the ice rink at Somerset House. We'd stand and watch the skaters, some very good, others hanging on to the barrier unable to let go, the children with their penguins. I think I would have had to have had a penguin to cling onto, or the barrier.



I must admit London is magical at Christmas.

On two of our winter trips we stayed near Tower Bridge. That's a great area to explore. The first time we stayed in a hotel called The Grange. We drove down, put the car in an all-night car park not far from the Tower. We found a Weatherspoon not far from the hotel for our evening meal. We explored St Katherines Dock, lots of eating places and shops. We went to the very end and found an old Victorian Pub called The Dickens Inn — it could well have been built earlier. It was a busy pub but we managed to find a quiet corner for a drink and a natter.



On a couple of occasions we went on a city walk. The first one was a Dickens tour. We got on the tube and got off at another tube station, we would just follow and our friends would lead. We never knew where we were. We stood and waited with other people then a gentleman asked if we were waiting for the walk. We paid our money and followed the man. He told us all about the Guilds that were in that area. We passed the Gherkin building, an area with a mixture of modern buildings and very old

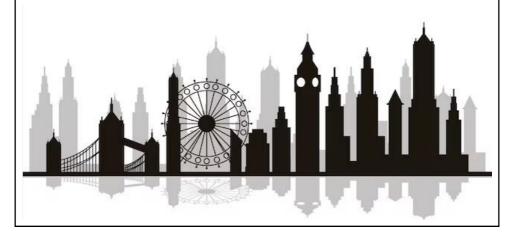
buildings. He was telling us about different places mentioned in books. We ended up in a graveyard just over the road from the Museum of London, so we popped in there for a look around and a warming cup of tea.

The other walk we went on was The Ripper Walk. We were staying at Tower Hill so we made our way to the tube station and waited for our guide to turn up. We started off into the dark streets of Whitechapel and our guide - who had been an actor at one time - took us through the gory details of what happened in that area all those years ago. Of course, a lot of the East End was bombed during the war, so many of the buildings weren't there. Our Guide nonetheless made it very interesting and we saw places in the

East End that we wouldn't normally have seen. Our tour ended at Liverpool Street Station. We were glad our friends were with us because we wouldn't have known what to do to get back to our hotel.

We had many lovely weekends exploring London. One thing we did learn was that sometimes it's easier to forget the tube and walk. You see so much more. Sometimes the stops are within walking distance of one other.

Val Giles





Christian Aid

Christian Aid is devastated by the latest violence being faced by people in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Your prayers for a peaceful resolution are needed now more than ever.

Christian Aid has always been committed to supporting all those in need, of all faiths and none. We and our partners have been working in the Middle East since the early 1950s. We ask our supporters to keep all those facing this crisis in your prayers. We are monitoring the situation, with our Palestinian and Israeli partners, and we pray for a swift end to this conflict.

A prayer for peace in the Middle East

O God of all justice and peace we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.

Be with those who need you in these days of suffering; we pray for people of all faiths - Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land.

While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples.

Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

This prayer was written by The Very Revd Canon Richard Swell, Dean of St George's College Jerusalem.





Evie's Corner

Hello gentle readers, welcome to this edition of Evie's Corner. As I write, December is on the horizon and the Christmas card production line begins. For those who know me, you might be familiar with my two chickens, Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Ruth Bader Ginsberg. The latter named by myself, with the hope that she would prove to be an independent and intelligent hen. However, she has proven to be

the antithesis of her namesake, as sometimes she mistakenly confuses backwards and forwards walking. Oh, Ruth.

For three years now, I have made and designed my own 'chicken' Christmas cards, with costumes and backdrops! Hopefully Ruth and Catherine will be on board with this year's ones, as I'm tad behind on production!



Enough about the chickens, let's get down to biblical business (superb alliterative device right there).

Amusing anecdote from Southam College to start with, concerning recent 'Christian thought' essays my friend and I wrote on the subject of feminism in the bible. (Another very interesting topic I must address another time.) Upon receiving our essays back, my friend was alarmed to see a much lower result than she had expected. When our teacher came over to ask if we had any questions, my friend asked, "Miss, I just don't understand how I've done so badly on my essay!" Our teacher read it over quickly then responded, "I'm afraid I just cannot give you a higher mark when you incorrectly wrote that Mary was a widow." I looked over in disbelief! My friend rather sheepishly admitted she'd thought Joseph had died after Jesus was born, a quick Google search from me quickly



confirmed he lived until the age of 110, as a matter of fact. We all had a good laugh about it, then shortly after realised she had also confused Mary and Martha in an example she gave. Perhaps a cheeky bible study might be in order for the year 13 philosophers and I!

On the topic of Mary and Joseph, you might think I'm here to talk about the nativity, well my

gentle reader, I'm afraid you're incorrect. At least, I'm not here to talk about the nativity in a conventional sense, I'm here to talk about the Book of Revelation. You've heard the Christmas story from Luke and Matthew, I'm sure. Matthew's version offers wise men, a star and puts the baby Jesus in a house; Luke prefers shepherds and a manger. Both place the

birth in Bethlehem, but they disagree totally about how it came to be there! However, essentially, they follow the same gist, a virgin birth and the arrival of the Messiah. You've heard it all before, so I want to talk about the nativity, according to Revelation. I know what you're thinking, "Evie! Revelation! That's all about the apocalypse, how does it relate to Christmas!?"

Well, gentle reader, bear with me. If you love this story as much I do, I think we can get it off the ground for a nativity play next year. This is the Revelation Christmas



Story. I can't put it all here, but please do dig out the old bible and have a gander at the full passage.

"Then I witnessed in heaven an event of great significance. I saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant, and she cried out because of her labour pains and the agony of giving birth. Then I witnessed in heaven another significant event. I saw a large red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, with seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept away one-third of the stars in the sky, and he threw them to the earth. He stood in front of the woman as she was about to give birth, ready to devour her baby as soon as it was born." Revelation 12:1-4

In this (biblically verified) Christmas story, there is no baby in a manger, shepherds rejoicing or wise men bringing gifts and worshipping. There are angels, but they are not singing. Rather, they are engaged in a heavenly war of apocalyptic proportions. We have the ultimate tale of good and bad, the light side and the dark, between God and the Devil. (Star Wars

anyone?) In this Christmas story there is a divine woman, a son about to be born and a great fiery and seven headed red dragon who waits to devour the son, "who is going to shepherd all nations." (sound familiar??)

Once upon a time, in a little town called Bethlehem...

Except the story of Christmas does not begin in a city called Bethlehem. It begins in a garden called Eden. All the way back in Genesis 3:15, where God delivered the first gospel to Adam, Eve and Satan. There, immediately following the Fall, God made a promise to send a Saviour that would be the forgiveness of humanity's sin. Revelation 12:1-17 deals with the

deliverance of this promise from a heavenly perspective, offering a whole



new understanding of the Nativity story. The identity of the pregnant woman in this reading has been variously misinterpreted. The Catholic Church has identified her as Mary (of course they would.) Others have said it is Israel, the Church, or she's even representative of humanity as a whole. John writes using some visceral and emotive imagery here, one can feel the pain of the mother giving birth, just as the Jews had suffered, agonized, throughout the centuries as they longed for the Messiah to come. God promised them, us, he would send a rescuer and a Saviour. Revelations shows us we can trust Him to keep His word.

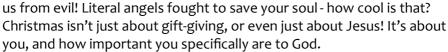
This woman, clothed with the sun, we can consider her, us. We are humanity, we delivered Jesus into this world with the inevitable event of his crucifixion known. Her crown of twelve stars, the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve apostles, maybe both? The red dragon, our second character, the devil, waiting to take Jesus from humanity as soon as he could be born.

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Revelations 12:7-9

Here lies our battle, a Christmas story that isn't a tableau or a dressing up of children. This is violence and warfare. It's easy in the modern day to dismiss such fantastical images, but entertain me here, and try and comprehend this as real. Christmas represents more than the birth of Jesus; it is the battle between good and evil. It's a reminder to Christians all around the world that we weren't the ones who had to pay for our freedom, we weren't the ones who died on the cross. We may be chased

and tempted by the red dragon, the devil, throughout our earthly lives, yet is this anything to the sacrifice of Jesus? This is a war that was fought, and we are still fighting to rid the world of evil. Christmas is a time to remember, whilst presents are brilliant and all, Jesus came for us. That's why we celebrate. God so loved the world that he gave his only son, as I'm sure you've heard many a time before.

So, to round up, if I could leave you with one thing from this edition of The Messenger, how AMAZING Christmas is. It's amazing! God in human form literally came to earth, to forgive our sins. Angels went to battle to save



Have an amazing Christmas my lovely readers, I will look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

Love, Evie x



Unbelievably easy mince pies

Prep:30-40 mins * Cook:20 mins * Makes 18 pies * Not suitable for freezing

No rolling required! Press the raw, crumbly pastry directly into your tin for a short, biscuity finish. An easy mince pie recipe and great fun to make with kids.

Ingredients

225g cold butter, diced 100g golden caster sugar 1 small egg, beaten 350g plain flour 280g mincemeat icing sugar, to dust



Method

STEP 1

To make the pastry, rub the butter into the flour, then mix in the golden caster sugar and a pinch of salt.

STEP 2

Combine the pastry into a ball – don't add liquid – and knead it briefly. The dough will be fairly firm, like shortbread dough. You can use the dough immediately, or chill for later.

STEP 3

Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Line 18 holes of two 12-hole tins, by pressing small walnut-sized balls of pastry into each hole.

STEP 4

Spoon the mincemeat into the pies. Take slightly smaller balls of pastry than before and pat them out between your hands to make round lids, big enough to cover the pies.

STEP 5

Top the pies with their lids, pressing the edges gently together to seal – you don't need to seal them with milk or egg as they will stick on their own.

STEP 6

Brush the tops of the pies with the beaten egg. Bake for 20 mins until golden. Leave to cool in the tin for 5 mins, then remove to a wire rack. To serve, lightly dust with the icing sugar. Will keep for three to four days in an airtight container.

Christmas Charities

Every Christmas at Southam & Bishop's Itchington Congregational Church we like to support others through our giving. Through our Christmas Post box, Coffee Pot Carols, Candlelight Carol Service and other special collections we raise funds. Usually, we choose two charities, one a local cause and the other that is working in a global setting. This year we are hoping to support three good causes. Following the wonderful example of Scarlett Forgan and her cake sale we would like to support the two causes that Southam College is championing this year, along with an international appeal.

Len's Light

Len's Light is a legacy for Len Eadon, shining a light on mental health issues in the rural community and raising funds to support charities tackling these issues.

Teenage Cancer Trust

Teenage Cancer Trust offers unique care and support, designed for and with young people. We fund specialised nurses, youth workers and hospital units in the NHS, so young people have dedicated staff and facilities to support them throughout treatment.

Christian Aid Middle East Crisis Appeal

Thousands of people have been killed and over a million displaced after the escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. In Gaza, a humanitarian crisis is unfolding.

Established partners of Christian Aid in Gaza are responding as best they can, under intense pressure, with medical relief and community-led initiatives such as food, shelter, sanitation and cash. However, it is extremely dangerous to move around, and supplies of essentials are running perilously low.

In southern Gaza, our partner is responding to those most recently displaced to south Gaza as a result of the war. They're providing mattresses, medicines (e.g. for people with chronic illnesses) and emergency food from a community kitchen. They are actively exploring ways in which they might also support Israeli civilians who've been directly impacted by the violence.

This Christmas please give as generously as you can. Thank you.

Christmas Word Search star angel Santa candy cane holly mistletoe elf HUNC RQGDV bell reindeer stocking KOAELF ERCXHH M N W Z Ε fireplace candle gift wreath

www.eslgamesplus.com

Paintpot Adventures

On the 16th of October we experienced a new first for Paintpot - we went on tour! We all headed off to Galanos House where we were joined by residents and staff for what turned out to be a wonderful morning.

We had no idea if anyone would turn up and at 10.15am when we had just one parent and child we were a little concerned. But we spotted a few parents walking to the door, rounded up a few more who were in the Hub, and then people kept coming - we had to make the circle bigger several times! We had over 25 children, nearly as many parents and carers, and lots of residents.



Paintpot happened just as it always does – singing, toys, a story, craft and of course finished off with drinks and snacks. It was a lovely (if chaotic!) morning enjoyed by staff, residents and Paintpot families alike. The residents loved joining in with the songs, helping the children do some sticking, and just watching them enjoying themselves. We all loved it so much we are going back on the 11th December for a Christmas outing!

From Paintpot parents:



- We had such a wonderful time with Paintpot at Galanos singing, playing instruments and doing craft with some of the residents and staff! Seeing the pure joy on the faces of the residents and children as they interacted with one another was so special. A fabulous and uplifting community event... we can't wait for the next one!
- My daughter and I both thoroughly enjoyed Paintpot at Galanos. It was thoughtfully organised, as always, by the Paintpot team and it was a joy to see my daughter interact with the residents, whom

she went on to tell everyone about for the rest of the week! We can't wait to go again.

• Was one of my favourite Paint Pots so far!! Such a lovely morning!

From Galanos Activties Team:

The Paintpot group visited Galanos House recently. The visit was lovely to witness as our residents interacted with the children, they got so much out of that visit. They did crafts, chatted and listened to the children sing. Eileen 93, got to hold a baby and the joy on her face will stay with me forever, just wonderful! A huge thank you to the Paintpot team and all the parents for coming along, we can't wait for the next visit.



Sally Forgan

Come and join us at Jackpot

Every third Thursday 6.30pm-8pm at Church

Games | Challenges | Crafts | The Quiet Spot | Tuck Shop | Refreshments

Dates for 2024

18th January 15th February

14TH MARCH 18TH APRIL

16TH MAY 20TH JUNE

18TH JULY 15TH AUGUST

19TH SEPTEMBER 17TH OCTOBER

21ST NOVEMBER 19TH DECEMBER







Expect the unexpected.

As Sammy Davis Jr sings, Life has rhythm. Ok, I will go along with that. After all, we are blest with four seasons: spring, summer autumn and winter. They present themselves regularly with the appropriate weather - or not - so we can organise our days in clement or inclement weather.



As we grow up we expect to depend on a certain level of dependable lifebusy, interesting, happy. School gets in the way, of course, as do illness, fear of the unexpected - as in hospital admission, which terrified me and remained to torment me my entire life! Until the unexpected occurred and I was left to face my terror alone.

And it was ok. I found that I did believe in angels. They did not have wingstrue but blue uniforms and kind smiles and reassurance. This was more like it. Furthermore, I realised the company of the Holy Spirit at my side, like it says in the Bible.

My last foray into the unexpected was when strangers approached me to enquire about Jesus. It is our duty to go out and welcome them to a life with God and find people for Christ. So I discovered I did not need a fishing net but simply be alert to possibilities in my life and grab them.

Valerie Nicholson

Children's Church 2024

Please keep the following dates in your diary - to share with others and to help out on the day!

Sunday 7th January Sunday 4th February

Sunday 3rd March Sunday 7th April

Sunday 5th May Sunday 2nd June

Sunday 7th July Sunday 4th August

Sunday 1st September Sunday 6th October

Sunday 3rd November Sunday 1st December

Tel. No.

Minister Revd Neil Chappell 258685

Officers of the church

Secretary	David Hudson	812695
Treasurer	Debbie Wilson	811649
Deacons	David Hudson	812695
	Philip Clarke	811113
	Chris King	812926
	Caroline Johnson	817776

Booking of rooms David Hudson 812695

Group Contacts

Coffee Pot	Sue Hudson	812695
Graham Adams Centre	Centre Office	811519
Junior Church & Crèche	Cathryn Clarke	811113
Missions Group	Philip Clarke	811113
One Accord	Alison Biddle	812767
Paintpot	Sally Forgan	07941188063
Traidcraft	Philip Clarke	811113
Tuesday Club	David Hudson	812695

Transport

If you would like a lift to Sunday services or any meetings during the week, please contact one of the Deacons or the Contact person for the Group in which you are interested.