

*Prince of Peace*

**DECEMBER 2015**

**WARMINSTER UNITED CHURCH** (Methodist/URC)

George Street, Warminster BA12 8QA

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Dear Friends

Compiling these thoughts in November it might seem somewhat unusual to say that I am currently reading two Lent Books! Both are by the same author Tom Wright, former Bishop of Durham and are respective studies in Luke and Matthew's Gospel. Both begin not with the Baptism of Jesus, or his experiences in the wilderness, but rather right at the start – so you read about Mary being visited by Gabriel, of the coming of the shepherds and so on. It might seem rather strange to be thinking of Christmas at the start of Lent but of course the two are deeply intertwined. Let us not forget that you cannot celebrate Christmas without Easter, for if there had been no Good Friday or Easter Day then our faith would simply not exist.

I find it interesting that at Christmas amidst the mince pies, puddings and cakes you can find Hot Cross Buns. Do retailers realise what they are doing is of deep theological significance? My first appointment in full-time ministry at the end of the 1980's was in Saltash. One of the church members used to keep his Christmas decorations up all year round because he said that Christ's coming among us should be celebrated every day. I can understand what he meant and it is highly important that we keep in mind the concept of the God who stoops to this planet coming amongst us not in power and might but in squalor and vulnerability. However Christianity does not conclude with an infant babe in a manger indeed how many Christmas carols lead us onwards. Think of Geoffrey Ainger's words from the carol, "Born in the night", verse three states "Truth of our life, Mary's child, You tell us God is good; Prove it is true, Mary's child, God to your cross of wood."

This edition of the magazine begins in Advent and concludes in Lent, whatever the day or month you read these thoughts may you personally experience the love that God has for you as a unique person within this world. A love that not only brought Christ to the manger, but also Christ to the cross.

Peace

Rev David.





**Come and joint the Celebration....  
There's a new King born today!**



### **AN EXHIBITION OF NATIVITY SCENES**

3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> December

Nativity Scenes from around the World, traditional and unusual  
Children's craft activities & light refreshments

Thurs to Sat 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday : worship 10.30. Exhibition 12noon to 4 p.m.

Opportunity to donate towards cost or to Cancer Research UK

Further info Tel 01985212200 email: [ashling1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ashling1@hotmail.co.uk)

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Warminster churches join together for

### **CAROLS IN THE MALL**

12<sup>TH</sup> December 10.30 for about half an hour

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### **CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT**

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2015

3.30 p. m.

Followed by Hot drinks & mince pies

Collection for Médecins Sans Frontières

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### **CHRISTMAS COMMUNION**

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 10.15 a.m

(Christmas Eve 24<sup>th</sup> Communion at Westbury URC 4 p.m.)

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### **CHRISTMAS DAY WORSHIP**

at Warminster United Church

10 a.m.



## **What is Our Response to the Refugee Crisis?**

An article from Churches Together in Warminster

**Mr Colin Brady, Social Justice Officer for the Church of England Diocese of Salisbury talked about 3 things: a) Recognising that each of us has a history of being a migrant, being a stranger, moving away from home, b) the Bible is clear about our responsibility to strangers, c) practical things we should be doing now.** Here is a précis of his talk last Tuesday:

Is there a way forward for Churches Together in Warminster to co-ordinate any appropriate action to the Refugee Crisis?

We have all know stories of personal experiences of family migration and needing to be welcomed because of forced evictions. As a white European, Colin, due to his Irish accent, has been told to “Go back to where you came from” so what is happening to others? Colin’s family would have been famine survivors and moved on, became part of the community. One million Irish people had died, one and half million emigrated. In our garrison town many of the people here will be economic migrants in that they came here for a job.

There is an ordinary-ness about migration. We should contradict the lies and myths in the media about the people on the move.

Vienna is currently a migrant centre and lots of support is being offered but the migrants particularly want to be spoken to, to be listened to. Church members went there to welcome them, pray for them, to embrace them as individual people not just a number in a queue. People don’t always want stuff – they want to be befriended and to walk beside someone.

There are Incredible guidelines in the bible: about migration/refugees/leaving home and our duty of response. Deuteronomy 24, second half of the chapter – issues of justice in the community where we are urged to support “the alien in our midst”.

The Gospels encourage us Matthew 25 – I was hungry you gave me food....and what if Jesus **really** meant that? What should our response be?

Christian Aid has some really good resources on their website on welcoming the Last, the Least and the Lost.

### **Practical stuff in the local area.**

When Christian Aid launched an appeal some of newspapers printed lies and vitriolic responses about the needs of these people. A Churches joint letter asking for more help to the refugees resulted in more than 500 negative comments. We should be contradicting the negative comments and being

positive influences for the immigrants. Our conversations with friends must plant the seeds of generous welcome to people who might come here by reminding people of our common migration backgrounds.

We have a diverse population because of the army.

We need to work together regardless of our backgrounds. We do not always know who our allies are going to be: people from different experiences to us may have the right word and the right attitude to help.

We know the government has agreed to welcome 20,000 people. It is likely that some people will be placed here. It is many years since we had refugees here. What can we do? We can be in contact with our Local Authority to say we are ready to welcome. Wiltshire Council is being very positive about welcoming refugees and we should expect to support them.

What can we positively do? Alabare currently work with people on the streets and is used to managing housing stock and have made an offer to help us place people.

Volunteers will be needed to help engage in welcoming people here (through Alabare).

A larger number of younger people will be coming because we will be taking people from camps so foster carers will be needed, school places, and language classes.

Website Diocese of Canterbury has an excellent list of resources about migrants.

Of course if we are helping other people, why aren't we helping our own people? We always need foster carers and volunteers – this will be a reminder to all of us to be more active in our own communities.

We must challenge hate crimes generally and not wait for new visitors to remind us that 'different' sometimes is distrusted and needs bridges and relationships to be built up.

Colin is on Facebook under SJP Salisbury and this is a good place to continue the discussion.

**Shelter**

The housing and homelessness charity

## **CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO OUR CHURCH FRIENDS**

**As in previous years there will be a large**

**Christmas Card in the Foyer in which you are**

**all invited to write your Christmas Greetings to your friends at Church. There will also be a collection box in which you can put a donation to Shelter.**

**Writing your Christmas greeting to all your church friends in this card saves you the cost of separate cards – this money can instead be given to Shelter to help Homeless people over Christmas so they may know they too are important to God and to us,**

## The First Friday Fellowship

is held as the title says, on the 1st Friday of each month. We enjoy a two course lunch followed by a time of fellowship. Our 1st meeting in October was enjoyed by 16 members of our church with a lunch of chicken casserole and apple crumble (thank you Heather for the apples!). 24 booked up for November's meeting when we had an invited guest speaker, Linette Tedman, who told how God had called her to work overseas with children. She lived and worked as a missionary in Paraguay for fifteen years. Our December meeting will be a Christmas lunch and is already completely booked up! January's meeting will fall on New Year's Day and after lunch sharing 'Hopes & Dreams' for 2016. (there are still places).

For more information contact  
Penelope



“ Puddings Poetry & Lots of Custard” – fund raising event is still in the pipeline but not sure when! Watch out for announcements!

## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Daily Service

Weekday Services will include a light lunch starting at 12 noon

Day 1 - Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> January:	St John's Church
Day 2 -Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> January:	Christ Church
Day 3 - Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> January :	Foundation Christian Fellowship
Day 4 -Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> January:	The Baptist Church
Day 5 - Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January:	St Georges R.C.
Day 6 - Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January:	The Minister

**JOINT SERVICE OF WORSHIP with us - UNITED CHURCH 3PM**  
**Followed by refreshments**

## Saturday Charity Coffee Mornings 10 a.m. to 12 noon

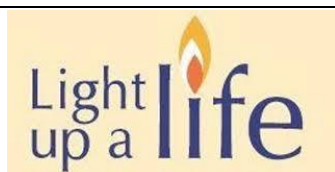
<b>January 10<sup>th</sup> 2015</b>	<b>Medicins Sans Frontieres</b>	<b>£175</b>
<b>February 7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>People Against Poverty</b>	<b>£163</b>
<b>March 14<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Foodbank</b>	<b>£100</b>
<b>April 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>MEDAIR</b>	<b>£75</b>
<b>May 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Tools for Self Reliance</b>	<b>£160</b>
<b>June 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>The Hope Centre</b>	<b>£228</b>
<b>July 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Zimbabwe Victims Support Fund</b>	<b>£155</b>
<b>August 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Action for Children</b>	<b>£150</b>
<b>September 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Rwanda Education</b>	<b>£135</b>
<b>October 10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Wessex Heartbeat</b>	<b>£155</b>
<b>November 14<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Christmas Shoeboxes</b>	<b>£194</b>
<b>December 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Beach within Reach</b>	

The charity coffee morning on **January 9<sup>th</sup> 2016** will be raising funds for a **Pre-school centre in Sierra Leone** for young children orphaned by the ebola outbreak. The family of Joan Jones' daughter-in-law, Helen, are involved in this project ; her sister lives and teaches in Sierra Leone and her parents help run the Olney-Newton Link which is working to fund this and other projects there.

**February 13<sup>th</sup> will be for Alzheimer's Society**

**March 12<sup>th</sup> for Zimbabwe Victims Support.**

No charity has yet been allocated for several months in 2016. The list of dates is on the foyer notice board, if you would be willing to run one of the coffee mornings for your chosen charity then please fill in details. If you have never done this before but would like to nominate a charity please have a word with Joan Jones.



A service of Light - A way to remember the life of a loved one and to join with others in the community who want to share a special message with someone they love.

All are Welcome.

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 6 p.m.  
at our Church ( Warminster United)

**WARMINSTER BRASS BAND  
CHRISTMAS CONCERT  
Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December 3 p.m.  
At our Church  
( Warminster United Church)  
Donations to 'Louie's Smile'  
Raffle and Refreshments**



SUNDAY SERVICES 10.30 a.m.( unless otherwise stated)

DECEMBER

6 <sup>th</sup>	John Williams	
13 <sup>th</sup>	Rev David Coppard	HOLY COMMUNION
<b>3.30 p.m.</b>	Revs David Coppard & Heather Morgan	CAROL SERVICE
20 <sup>th</sup>	Daphne Goodwin	
27 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Mary Teed	

JANUARY

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Rev Heather Morgan	SONGS OF PRAISE
10 <sup>th</sup>	Douglas Colborne	
17 <sup>th</sup>	Rev David Coppard	COVENANT SERVICE/HOLY COMMUNION
24 <sup>th</sup>	John Saunders	
31 <sup>st</sup>	Isabel Smears	

FEBRUARY

7 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Mike Burrell	
14 <sup>th</sup>	Rev David Coppard	
21 <sup>st</sup>	Rev Heather Morgan	HOLY COMMUNION
28 <sup>th</sup>	Rev David Coppard	ALL AGE WORSHIP

**HAPPY  
NEW YEAR  
2016**

**NEW YEAR'S PARTY**

Sat 16<sup>th</sup> January 3 to 6 p.m.

Fun and Games

Please bring food to share. David will bring quizzes and "Potted Panto". Ideas for extra party games needed! Penelope Harrison will be in charge of catering and will make the agenda of games

Feel free to bring family and friends



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY – look out for more information later:

Christ Church is hosting  
**The World Day of Prayer**  
prepared by the women of Cuba  
on **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March** 2016 at 2pm  
followed by tea and cakes.

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Fair trade fortnight 29<sup>th</sup> February to 13<sup>th</sup> March

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March**

Warminster Fair trade group are hosting a  
**BRUNCH**

Theme: "Sit down for breakfast – Stand up for Farmers"

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**The Committee who organise the World Day of Prayer is made up of representatives from all churches in the town. At the moment our church is not represented. Is there someone who would be willing to be our representative?**

### **JUNE LAIRD**

We were sad to hear that June died on 20<sup>th</sup> October. Although she had not been able to attend church for many months she was still very much in our thoughts and prayers.

June was active in the church as long as she was able. She was a very dedicated Church pastoral visitor, regularly going to visit people. She often walked up to Henford House on visits, even after walking had begun to be a challenge. (Not many years ago she was a member of Warminster Walking group but gradually her mobility deteriorated) When the church needed a new elder June went home and prayed and decided to offer her services. No one had thought to ask her because she was too modest to speak or read the Bible during services, but her simple act of service was deeply appreciated. She was Christian Aid organiser for our church for two years, arranging a cheese lunch, coffee mornings and house to house collections.

June may have appeared to many of us as a quiet, timid person so the story we heard at her funeral of her travels- hitch hiking across Europe - in her younger days came as rather a surprise!

June was a member of the friendship club, Margaret Edwards used to pick her up and Margaret says a great deal in these words, "She was always ready for me, always cheerful and smiling, never moaning about her problems. She loved coming and sharing with us, and we miss her."

## Reports from church meeting

### **PROPERTY REPORT**

The work required to achieve the Certificate for the Electrical Installation has been carried out. The central heating radiators in the Foyer are working effectively so the fan heater is seldom used so need not be changed, saving unnecessary expense. Suitable lighting has been sourced and will be installed shortly.

**The Shepherd Window** - closer inspection has shown that the wooden bead fixing can be unscrewed and the stained glass taken out , leaving the wooden frame in place and enabling the lights to be repaired. When the scaffolding is up for the Project in the rear room a working platform will be erected over the organ to allow this work to be carried out.

**Lettings** We have lost one weekly Slimmers' Group and gained a monthly U3A group. At present the annual income from lettings, including the Sewing Group is £2500. Let's hope all groups continue and we look forward to welcoming more when we have the facilities.

**"School room" Development Project** The necessary permissions are nearing completion. The general contractor has confirmed that the quotation given in April is still valid. Pauline is in discussion with electricians, the scaffolder is booked.

*Pauline Howell*



Some of us still call it "the School room" – others just say the room out the back! When the work on this room is finished and we have a fine new space ready to use for all sorts of activities – we need to have a suitable name for it!

**What do YOU think it should be called?**

**Please share your ideas!**

### **FRIENDSHIP CLUB & TEA TIME**

We Continue to meet once a month enjoying our games of Rummikubs along with cups of tea and lots of chatting. We would welcome anyone who would like to join us on the **1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month, 2.30** in the foyer. Apart from Rummikubs we can offer games of Scrabble, cribbage and several board games and , of course , friendship.

Tea time is a similar gathering **on 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday each month 2.30 p.m.**

All welcome

*Margaret Edwards & Jenny Sanderson*

## CHOIR



**Joy to the World!**

We are busy practising for the Carol Service on Sunday, 13th December at 3.30pm. Once again, the Choir contains ladies & men & a couple of new faces (or should that be voices)

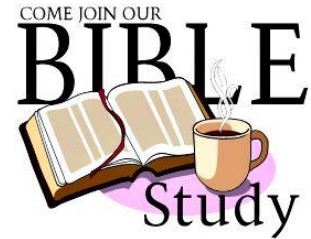
appreciated

Please tell your friends & neighbours about this service

## Bible Study Groups

### COOPER GROUP

The current membership is 7 but for various reasons we have been unable to hold as many meetings as we may have planned. We usually meet on the third Monday of each month at one of the member's homes. Our meeting time is 7.30pm. This year we have continued studying an Old Testament Overview entitled "Full of Promise" and it has given us an opportunity to learn more of Israel and Judea's response to God's covenant promise given to Abraham. It traces the promise through from Genesis to Nehemiah. At the end of each study there are both the usual standard questions but also implication questions for us in the present day. There are 8 studies but we have found that it is more beneficial to divide each study into two sessions so that we may consider the implication questions separately. Each session is lead by one member of the group. As our membership is no longer as many as in the past we would welcome any person who would like to join us. If anyone is interested please contact either Pam or Derrik Copeland Tel.01985 213987.



### WENDY HOUSE GROUP

Our group is now 5 members but two members from the church also follow the bible studies in their own home due to family commitments. We meet on Mondays once a month and have been using the Anglican Pilgrims series for some time. We have studied The Lord's Prayer, The Beatitudes, and are now looking at The Commandments. This course starts and ends in prayer and has two or three discussion activities based on bible passages and each title in the series covers 6 months. We meet in one another's homes at 7pm and would welcome any member or adherent to join us. See Karen Woollard.

### FRIDAY PRAYERS

prayers are said in the church foyer on the Friday before the Coffee Morning – all members are welcome to join.



**THE SEWING GROUP** is still meeting twice a month and we have several new members, currently our membership stands at 19. Various crafts are undertaken, delicate cross stitch, beading (including Christmas tree decorations and jewellery for the Christmas boxes), knitting, with garments made from wool spun by two of our members. Other members make knitted toys and baby clothes for the shoe boxes at the end of the year with one member making and dressing a number of beautiful dolls for the boxes. Embroidery, stitched cards and quilting are also undertaken. Scarves are made for another coffee morning. A very successful Christmas tea took place in Crockerton Garden Centre last year where Denise's cakes were very much enjoyed by all, but this year we have decided to have our tea party in the church (warmer!) on 7<sup>th</sup> December, and a few of us will make cakes etc. We welcome any new members who would like to join our group – we always have a break for tea and biscuits and there's plenty of lively chat as well.

### **PASTORAL REPORT**

This past year has been very emotional for us all; with sickness and losing some of our faithful friends from the congregation. We remember Ruth Dodge, John Hornby and June Laird whilst recalling the old friends who can no longer visit us at Church but remain on pastoral carers list for us to call upon and share our news. We think of Audrey and Howard Spurr, Tony Reade, Bernard Cooper, Sally Petrie and Janet Titt, all unable to attend church. Other members have left us for pastures new but we've also gained new members who have recently moved into the town and joined us – to them we say a huge welcome. All the pastoral carers strive to speak and visit those in their care regularly; knowing that for some it is an essential link with their spiritual life. We gain as much as those we visit and hope that by sharing in fellowship we all grow stronger and closer to God. Thank you to our retiring pastoral visitors, Betty Fielding and Yvonne Syrett for their service to our church and also to those who have offered to take on new duties

Pastoral carers met on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November to undertake Safeguarding training with Jan Murphy. It is likely that we shall be initiating checks under the legislation to ensure the safety of the entire congregation. The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) previously known as a CRB Check can help to protect everyone.

As Jan stated: "Having safeguards in place: protects and promotes the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, enhances the confidence of trustees, staff, volunteers, parents/carers and the general public, Protects the Church and denominational reputation, helps to effectively meet its objectives, and protects its finances and that of its trustees. Safeguards should include a safeguarding policy and procedures for dealing with issues of concern or abuse."

We will be looking to do further training in the new year to consolidate our knowledge and learn more. I thank everyone for giving their time so generously. *Marion Barton*



### Rotas for Sunday Worship

<b>Jan to March</b>	Vestry (V)/ Opening(O)	Books/Welcome	Coffee	Flowers
Jan 3rd	Barry O/V	Roger Miller and Andy Simmons	Marion Barton / Karen Woollard	Pat Mills
Jan 10th	John A. O/V Or Marion	Joan Stephens and Margaret Edwards	Mary and Barry Treadwell	Margaret Mc Donald
Jan 17 <sup>th</sup>	Karen O/V	Joan and Evan Jones	Pam and Derrick Copeland	Marion Hornby
Jan 24th	Helen O/V	Dennis and Sylvia	Diana and Wendy	Pam Copeland
Jan 31st	Diana O. Karen V.	Sandra Matthews/ Margaret Edwards	Jenny Sanderson/ Hilda Hanks	Wendy Wormersly
<b>Feb</b> 7 <sup>th</sup>	Pauline O/V.	John and Stella Case	Penelope and Jack Harrison	Joan Agnew
Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>	Brenda O. Marion V.	Dennis and Pat Mills	Brenda and Ron	Helen Dawson
Feb 21st	Joan S. O. Hilda V.	Karen Woollard and Mike Evans	Helen and Kevin Dawson	Hilda Hanks
Feb 28th	Marion O/V.	Sue Hewitt and Christina Walton	Pam and Derrick Copeland	Joan Jones
<b>March</b> 6 <sup>th</sup>	Karen O/V	Margaret Edwards Jenny Sanderson	Diana and Wendy	Mary Treadwell
13th	Barry O/V	Roger Miller and Andy Simmons	Mary and Barry Treadwell	Sandra Mathews
20th	Joan J. O Pauline V.	John and Stella Case	Joan & Evan Jones	Pauline Howell
27th	Helen O/V	Penelope and Jack Harrison	Brenda and Ron	EASTER

### Ministers Matters

Same Sex Marriage documents have been discussed by URC in individual churches and Methodists will be looking at this discussion via the Area. David Coppard is aware that a couple might request a service of blessing to take place in our church. Methodist Church does not give permission for the marriage ceremony to take place in a Methodist building, URC does give permission for Civil Partnerships. Both denominations give permission for Church Blessings to take place. We did not vote on this but there is a general assent from our members today.



Hello all,

I am writing to tell you about **Warminster's Christian Aid fund raiser** for 2016. We have decided to do something a little different from the dinner which we held last year and in 2013. We plan to have an afternoon tea party on Sunday 1st May 2016 in the Civic Centre. The Civic Centre is booked and we intend to provide, between us, scones, jam and cakes. **Plans are in the very early stages and we would very much welcome additional people to our committee to help with this. It would be especially good to have people from different churches as we are nearly all Anglicans at present.**

Do please, let me know if you could help us.

*Sheelagh Wurr ( St John's Church)*

### **A Message from Hilary**

I have decided to stay on as Treasurer for the time being. I have received several offers of help which were very welcome. If anyone would like more information about the job of Treasurer I will be happy to talk to them.

The Offerings for the last quarter are as follows:

August	£1863.15
September	£1890.15
October	£ 1813.50

Thank you to everyone for your giving. This Helps to cover our quarterly Assessment payment of £5814.00.

Since taking over the task of finding readers each Sunday I would like to thank all those who take part each week. If anyone feels they would like me to ask them to read, please have a word with me or contact me. When I came to this church the words used at the end of a reading were new to me - at the end of an Old Testament reading or an Epistle the words "This is the word of the Lord" and after a Gospel reading "This is the gospel of Christ". That being said, sometimes all that is needed is "Amen". Anyway, thank you and God bless you all. *Marion Hornby*

[marionhornby@gmail.com](mailto:marionhornby@gmail.com) 01985 216219



**Someone is making 50 on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016...Rev David will be running the Bath Half Marathon to celebrate his birthday.**

## Reflections on a Hindu ceremony – by Roger Miller

Recently I was invited to a Hindu "Last Rites " ceremony by my Indian friend, Asesh, it being for his long standing relation Sukamal Basu. The occasion was held in the front room of Sukamal's house in Woodford Green with his family and friends present. I found that I was being aware of the strong expectation by those present that Sukamal's soul was about to set off on the next stage of his eternal journey. The "Rites" are given ten days after a person's death and a cremation takes place as soon as possible after death. The cremation releases the soul from the body. I understand that for Hindus life is cyclical; they may have seven lives and then they may ,if they have achieved sufficient enlightenment and righteousness, be released from Samsara, the cycle of lives, and be liberated ,Moksha. The last Rites are given to wish the Soul the best chance of entering Heaven and have a favourable opportunity in the next Life.

Asesh is an Architect /Planner in Delhi and he is also recognised in the Hindu Church as a suitable person to perform a Priest's services if one is not available. He conducted the service by reading and passing on Holy words to Soumyagit, Sukamal's son, and his sister for them to repeat. They were making the petition to Heaven for their father.

Asesh lived here for ten years and when we were both at the Leeds Town Planning School he was certainly made aware of the equality of women ,by the three in our year. He has two daughters and to demonstrate equality on this occasion he departed from the usual procedure by having both of Sukamal's children kneel together.

I felt it a considerable privilege to be present, as a friend of Asesh and the family. The proceedings were conducted in Bengali that being where they all originated but those around me kindly helped to keep me aware of what was happening. I have been present at a very few Hindu ceremonies ,here and in India, one being the wedding of Asesh's daughter, Raka, and Soumyagit and have come to realise that these have an inevitable length. Attending these occasions has shown me how some of our Christian practices are much the same in effect to Hindu's and how they are different. They also believe in one and only God and one that is indivisible, everywhere, living and non living. I gather that Hindus can also feel free to choose other 'gods' ,in spite of this and so they also make supplication to perhaps a creature such as an Elephant who can represent aspects of the God's character. Some Christians pray to Saints. I may not understand the character of the Hindu prayers but a difference appears to be that we have a personal relation to our God.The Old Testament Prophets spoke directly and were replied to by God. Christ was with us on Earth. We can think of the all encompassing Love of god in the Family context. Hinduism has no founder, central authority or hierarchy and it is not proselytising religion. It simply IS. That may relate them more easily to the Eternal character of Life. All those gathered in that room expressed a confidence in the eternal nature of life. It was also very evident that with their warm friendly nature they were living their lives to respect awe inspiring, enlightened, eternal beliefs.

They are all involved in professions and activities that aim to improve and support life; I lost count of the number of doctors present

## CHRISTMAS SHOEBOXES FOR BULGARIA

This year we have sent 83 Christmas shoe-boxes, filled with presents, from our church to some of the poorest people in Bulgaria. People of all ages receive boxes, ranging from Roma people living in freezing conditions and struggling to survive, to abandoned and orphaned children living in state care. Last year Trussell Trust hand-delivered thousands of shoeboxes to orphanages, Roma communities, women's refuges, prisoner's children, housebound elderly people, rural schools and refugee centres. Christmas boxes show people who have been rejected or are living in absolute poverty that they are loved. For many, a Christmas shoebox will be the only gift they receive this year. These small boxes are received with smiles, laughter and even tears of joy. Trussell Trust say that Christmas boxes help them to build trusting relationships with recipients so that they can continue to help with longer term projects in future. Thank you to everyone who has been collecting items to go in the shoeboxes and those who have been busy knitting hats, gloves, scarves, baby jackets, puppets and sewing pencil cases. Also to those who covered the boxes and did the packing.

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**Newsletter editor email: [iantojo@virginmedia.com](mailto:iantojo@virginmedia.com)**

(A copy of the newsletter in colour can be seen on the website)