

# CONTACT

December 2023



Volume 64 - Issue 12  
Sawston Free Church

## Churches Services and Dates for Your Diary

### Sawston Free Church:

03-Dec	10.30am : Advent Service – Rev Mike Wilson 3.00pm : Christingle Service / Messy Church
10-Dec	10.30am : Nativity Service – Rev Phil Nevard
17-Dec	10.30am : Invitational Service; Communion; Baptismal Serv followed by Bring 'n' Share Lunch
20-Dec	06.00pm : <b>Village Carols (Outside Red Graphic)</b>
24-Dec	10.30am : Lego Carol Service – Rev Phil Nevard 05.00pm : Pyjama Service – Rev Phil Nevard 11.30pm : Midnight Service at <b>Parish Church</b>
25-Dec	10.00am : Christmas Day Service – Rev Phil Nevard
31-Dec	10.30am : Morning Worship – Rev Phil Nevard



The closing date for **January** Contact is **FRIDAY 29<sup>th</sup> December**

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# Contact

The monthly magazine of  
**Sawston Free Church United Reformed Methodist**

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Dear Friends,

The agenda of SFC Fabric Committee runs deep and wide. At the November meeting we found ourselves talking briefly about the carpet tiles in the main church and how a few of them are a bit grubby. When the weather is warmer in the Summer of 2024, we might have a scrubber's party! Anyway, the mini-discussion made me reflect further, and I started to write this in my head...

There's a stain on the carpet...

Look! There's a stain on the new carpet!

Does it still count as new?

Not sure – but there's a stain!

Ooh – and another one over there!

That one looks like playdough, that one's definitely spilled coffee.

That one's ground-in custard cream.

There's one in the shape of Madagascar!

that one sparkles – could it be glitter glue? I blame messy Church!

Is that candle wax? That'll be Phil with his candles!

That one's a footprint. Mud. Male, size 11.

Chicken poo – how on earth did that get in here?

A drop of paint, dripped down from a ceiling panel? Surely not!

You know, I'm kinda glad?

Glad?

Yeah – glad.

I'm glad that we've moved past the new carpet phase

and we've arrived at the well-used carpet stage.

It means we've welcomed people in with all their mess

with all their imperfections

with all their dripping life spillages



As Christmas approaches, we remember that Jesus is born in all the stench and mess of human life – in a stable, next to the ox-dung in a stained and battered manger. Thanks be to God who wade through the mess to embrace each one of us with love.

Every Blessing,

Phil

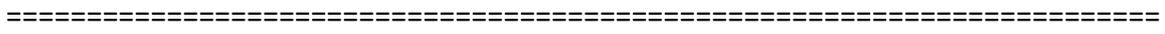
Every Blessing,

*Rev'd Phil Nevard*



Phil

P.S. None of this means you won't still be invited to a scrubber's party!



## **Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal**

Once again, we are delighted to thank everyone who contributed so generously and thoughtfully to this years Shoebox Appeal.

On Wednesday Chris and Ian came to SFC and took 58 packed and beautifully decorated Shoeboxes, back to their depot, for departure to Europe before Christmas.

We were also delighted to hand over £67 some of which was gift aided to help further the cause.

A special thanks to the Monday craft ladies who knitted and crocheted scarves, mittens, gloves and hats in gorgeous colours. These gifts will be sent to men, women, boys and girls and very vulnerable children and adults, and families, transforming lives around the world.

Pauline, Dawn, Yvonne, Rosemary and Pam also collected contributions from St. Mary's Church and we are so very grateful for all their help. The Blythswood Charity always put a simple Bible Story into each box to help spread the word and love of Jesus to all areas of the world.

***Thanks once again, Rosemary Livings***

*(Please note that the views expressed in this article are those of the author, Michael Wilson, and not in any way representative of the views of Sawston Free Church.)*

When a highly vulnerable, newly appointed Metropolitan Police Commissioner defies intense political pressure to allow a massive march of protest to take place in central London on Armistice Day, with a separate, highly emotional ceremony taking place at the Cenotaph a few hundred yards away, on the grounds that he has no evidence on which to deprive the public of its statutory right to protest, you know that something important is happening. That between 300,000 and 600,000 (1) turned out for the march, that it was possibly the largest public protest London has ever seen, and that it was virtually trouble-free (126 arrests across both occasions) is surely a triumph for democratic freedom and our beleaguered police? The protesters, drawn from all ages and ethnicities in our society, wanted our government to call for a cease-fire by Israeli forces in Gaza, after the deaths of 11,000 Palestinian civilians (half of them children) and the destruction of thousands of homes, as well as hospitals and schools, due to virtually indiscriminate Israeli shelling (2)

At the time of writing, our government declines to call for a cease-fire, as do the governments of the USA and most of the Western-oriented major powers around the world. The leader of the opposition, Kier Starmer, is prepared to stomach the resignation of eight front bench spokespersons over his refusal to call for a ceasefire and his determination to stand alongside our prime minister on the issue.

What on earth is going on?

I believe that two things are at stake – one very big, and one very small, but both seen as vital to Western interests.

The ‘big’ answer is surely provided by the BBC’s veteran correspondent Jeremy Bowen (3). The West (along with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Oil States, Jordan and Egypt) fears the Islamic challenge to Western world dominance. It fears Iran, he says, just as it feared (and still fears) ISIS. It fears Hezbollah in Lebanon. It fears the Syrians. It fears the allegiances being built up by Iran with both Russia and China. It worries about mighty India, unsure which side to back. The West, says Bowen, sees Israel as its main bulwark against catastrophe in the Middle East, and is being sucked into supporting Israel unreflectively and unconditionally. No matter how real the fears may be, it is, he suggests, as a solution, a very dangerous policy indeed.

The ‘little’ answer is Suez. When the container ship ‘Ever Given’ blocked the Suez Canal for six days in 2021, it also blocked trade worth £10 BILLION per day in oil, consumer goods, and componentry. The knock on effects lasted months, and may even yet be with us.

The big and little answers, between them, account for the West’s blind eye both over Egypt and over Israel. Israel and Egypt are collaborators in keeping Gaza and the Canal entirely separate issues, and that is how the world’s economic powers want to keep it.

But the people on the streets of London didn't see it that way! What they saw was Israel indiscriminately shelling an area the size of the Isle of Wight but home to a captive population of half a million, with horrendous consequences. And they wanted it stopped.

The preacher in me thinks of the high Priest Caiaphas advising the Sanhedrin regarding that troublesome fellow Jesus : *'You do not understand that it is better for us(4) to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed'* (Jn 11:50). He speaks of 'us'. This, surely, is how those in power too often tend to think? In the big scheme of things, little people are expendable. 'Us' (and what we stand to lose) is what matters. The Christian message is that Caiaphas was wrong. To Jesus, little people are not expendable.

Mine, of course, is a Christian observation. It is not likely to impinge upon the thinking of Benjamin Netanyahu. The Israeli thinking seems to be that (especially in the ghastly light of the 1200 Israelis inexcusably butchered by Hamas at the start of the conflict) all these Palestinian deaths are unfortunate, but they are a price worth paying. The leadership of the Western world seems to think so too. They should remember that Caiaphas and his cronies did not, for all their manoeuvring, prevent the total destruction of the nation at the hands of the Romans in AD70. It is, as Jeremy Bowen says, a dangerous game to play.

Thank God that half a million people were prepared to march peacefully through the streets of London that day to say unequivocally that they disagreed. And thank God that in our far-from-perfect society they were allowed to do it.

The preacher in me thinks of the high Priest Caiaphas advising the Sanhedrin regarding that troublesome fellow Jesus : *'You do not understand that it is better for us(4) to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed'* (Jn 11:50). He speaks of 'us'. This, surely, is how those in power too often tend to think? In the big scheme of things, little people are expendable. 'Us' (and what we stand to lose) is what matters. The Christian message is that Caiaphas was wrong. To Jesus, little people are not expendable.

(1) All figures in this piece are unverified (but broadly reliable) estimates. Maybe by the time this is read, better figures will be available.

(2) I use the expression 'virtually indiscriminate' after careful examination of President Biden's remarks on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. about Israeli shelling whilst rejecting calls for an Israeli ceasefire. He is not one to exaggerate Israeli misjudgements..

(3) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67404110> (13nov23)

(4) It matters little whether it should be 'for you' or 'for us'. It means 'for those assembled here'. Greek texts and English translations vary.

## Your Phone Can Help You Grow In Faith

In the digital age, where smartphones are an integral part of our daily lives, technology has made spiritual practices more accessible than ever before. As our lives become increasingly busy, prayer apps have emerged as invaluable tools, offering convenience and guidance in nurturing our spiritual lives. Among the multitude of prayer apps available, three standout options—Lectio 365, Pray as you Go, and ReadScripture—offer unique approaches to prayer, reflection, and scriptural engagement. I use all of these apps and can recommend them without hesitation.

Lectio 365, crafted by the team at 24-7 Prayer and CWR, is a daily devotional app that takes its users through a rhythm of prayer, combining lectio divina, or divine reading, with meditation and prayer. This app encourages users to engage deeply with scripture, providing daily readings, reflections, and prompts for prayer. The guided structure of Lectio 365 assists individuals in developing a habit of prayer and reflection, making it a fantastic aid for those seeking to deepen their spiritual connection amid their busy schedules.

Similarly, Pray as you Go, an offering from the Jesuits in Britain, is designed to facilitate a daily prayer session. This app incorporates music, scripture, and reflection to guide users through prayerful contemplation. With a blend of spoken word and music, Pray as you Go provides a serene and meditative experience, fostering a sense of tranquility and spiritual contemplation, making it an excellent choice for those seeking a more auditory approach to prayer and reflection.

ReadScripture, on the other hand, stands out by focusing on a comprehensive engagement with the Bible. Developed by The Bible Project, this app offers a systematic plan to read the Bible, combining daily readings with high-quality videos that provide context and insights into the scripture. ReadScripture encourages a structured approach to understanding the Bible's narrative, making it an ideal choice for individuals who wish to delve deeper into the Word of God and gain a more profound understanding of the scriptures.

Each of these apps caters to a specific aspect of spiritual growth and nourishment. While Lectio 365 and Pray as you Go focus on daily reflections and prayer, ReadScripture concentrates on a more extensive engagement with the Bible. All three apps provide an avenue for individuals to connect with their faith in a modern, accessible manner, fostering a deeper relationship with God in the midst of our fast-paced lives.

In conclusion, the availability of prayer apps like Lectio 365, Pray as you Go, and ReadScripture offers a meaningful and convenient way to deepen one's spiritual life. These tools serve as companions on the journey of faith, aiding in prayer, reflection, and a comprehensive understanding of scripture. Integrating these apps into daily routines can enrich our spiritual lives, offering guidance, wisdom, and a deeper connection with God. You can find them simply by searching in your phone's app-store – they are all free.

***Phil Nevard***

## Come As You Are.

One day, several years ago, an artist was in the countryside painting a beautiful landscape scene. He had been painting for many years and had an art studio nearby.

Several people passed by as he was painting without paying much attention to them but one he did notice was a homeless man in his worn out shoes and torn clothes, pushing an old pram containing all his worldly goods. The artist thought, "what a great picture this man would make!" And he came up with an idea of how he would paint him and help him at the same time. He would invite him to his studio and pay him to sit for him as he painted him.

So it was arranged that the very next day the homeless man would visit the artist at his studio.

The next day at 9:00am, there was a knock at the door and there stood the homeless man. However, because of the invitation given the previous day, he thought he should smarten himself up. He had managed to have a bath and a shave and get some new clothes. He looked like a completely different person and certainly not what the artist was expecting. 'Thank you so much for coming, 'he said, "but I wanted you to come just as you were."

That is how Jesus wants us to come to him. He doesn't want us putting on airs and graces, he wants us to come humbly and to seek his forgiveness and salvation.

We may not feel we are good enough, but the Bible says that Jesus came into the world to save sinners (see 1 Timothy 1:15). You can't make yourself good enough for Jesus, so just come as you are.

***Taken from Laxfield Newsletter*** (With thanks to Mike and Pauline Purdy)

### JANUARY WORKDAY

Please note that the January Workday will be a week earlier than usual. It will be on Saturday 6th January. **Please, put it in your 2024 diary now.**

Come and blow away your New Year cobwebs. Please let me know that you can come so I can plan who does what.

Gordon

## December Prayers



December is a very busy month, so please pray for Phil, Lythan and their family.

Please pray for all the Christmas services as listed below.

This month please give thanks for Messy Church and pray for the Christingle Service on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and remember the Nativity Service on 10<sup>th</sup> December.

Also please give thanks for Junior Church and their leaders

At this time when families are under so much financial pressure and children are bombarded by adverts and commercialism; please pray for **GenR8** who are taking the message of the true meaning of Christmas into schools. (**see article GenR8**)

Some words from Graham Kendrick ..... [ccl license 180039]

“At this time of giving; come receive the greatest gift, the gift of God’s own Son”

As we celebrate the coming of the Christ child please pray for those who find this a particularly difficult time of year.

**Anne Pegram**

## Christmas at Sawston Free Church

Advent Sunday:	Dec 3rd. 10:30am
Christingle Service	Dec 3rd. 3pm
Nativity Service	Dec 10th. 10:30am
Invitational Service	Dec 17th. 10:30am
Village Carols	Dec 20th. 6pm (outside Red Graphic)
Christmas Eve:	
Lego Carol Service	10:30am
Pyjama Service	5pm
Midnight Service	11:30pm (at Parish Church)
Christmas Day Service	10am



## Flowers for the Church in December and January

During the period of **Advent** the flower arranging team will be decorating the church in a different way from previous months. If you would like to contribute to this, the team will be happy to decorate a window sill for you.

### Advent Flowers - December -

The Flower rota for 2024 is not yet in place so if you would like to put flowers in the church in **January** to remember a special date, please talk to Vivien Ford, Rosemary Harriss or any member of the team who will be happy to arrange them for you.

7th January -

14th January -

21st January -

28th January -

**Vivien Ford** Contact number: 07796333081

**Rosemary Harriss, Dawn Haughton, Linda Moxon & Rosemary Livings**



=====

### Vision, Aims & Values

*Mission Statement:*

*opportunity for primary*

*hear about and learn from the Christian faith. GenR8 aims to provide high quality resources and activities in a creative and professional way.*



*Providing an*

*school age children to*

### Summary Statement

GenR8 is a Christian charity which has been working alongside churches and primary schools since 2001. Started by two local Christians GenR8 became a charitable trust in March 2010, with eight trustees. At the core of GenR8's work are termly assembly presentations to children in over 150 schools.



In addition GenR8 offers other activities directly to schools as well as providing support and encouragement to churches in their work with schools and primary age children.

## GenR8's Objectives

- To present the Christian faith to primary school age children in partnership with local churches and Christian volunteers.
- To work in partnership with local schools to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- To communicate Christian values and themes with integrity and sensitivity.
- To present a positive image of the Christian faith and the Bible.
- To equip, inspire and enthuse children's leaders, local Christian volunteers and churches in their work with children and schools.

## GenR8's Values

- **Creativity** – GenR8 aims to communicate creatively in a fun, lively and educational way.
- **Faith** – GenR8 members share a common faith that is central to all that GenR8 does.
- **Good Practice** – GenR8 aims to implement and communicate good practice throughout our administration, procedures and face-to-face work.
- **Hope** – GenR8 aims to bring good news through the message we give and in our relationships with others.
- **Integrity** – GenR8 aims to have integrity, striving for openness and truthfulness in every aspect of our work.
- **Partnership** – GenR8 aims to operate in partnership with schools, churches, and other relevant organisations, in order to work towards common goals.
- **Respect** – GenR8 recognises the worth and creativity of each individual, of all faiths and none. We believe in the importance of demonstrating this by caring for and valuing one another.
- **Service** – GenR8 recognises the value of giving back to God and to others through service, using each individual's gifts and talents. We strive to be good stewards of the resources that we have been given.
- **Teamwork** – GenR8 recognises the contribution of all of its staff and volunteers: there is something special about people coming together with a shared vision. Working as part of a GenR8 team brings laughter, friendship and mutual support.
- **Working Ecumenically** – GenR8 actively seeks to work ecumenically and is open to volunteers of all Christian denominations. We aim to communicate a positive message of Christians working together.

## GenR8's Motivation

GenR8 wants to bring quality, creative and dynamic input into schools and churches so that:

- Every generation has the opportunity to make an informed choice about the Christian message and not write Christianity off without looking at it.
- Children see that there is a relevance to Christianity, that it can make a difference to their lives.
- Children get a positive image of the Christian faith.
- Children who are already Christian feel supported in their faith.
- Children can come into and develop their friendship with God, and understand and experience that following Jesus is anything but dull and boring!

*From the GenR8 website*

## God Calling

### ***He Is Coming***

*Our Lord, Thou art here. Let us feel Thy nearness*

Yes! but remember the first Hail must be that of the Magi in the Bethlehem stable. Not as King and Lord in Heavenly triumph must you first hail me. But as amongst the lowliest, bereft of Earth's pomp like the Magi.

So to the humble the worship of humility-the Bethlehem Babe-must be the first Hail. Then the worship of repentance.. As earth's sinner, you stand by Me in the Jordan, baptised of John, worshipping Me the Friend and Servant of the sinners. Dwell much on My life. Step out beside Me. Share it with Me. Humility, Service, Worship, Sacrifice, Sanctification-Steps in the Christian Life.

### **Go Peaceful In Gentleness**

***'I was very moved this morning (19th Nov.) by the sung departing prayer and thought you might also like to read it again.'.....Kate Leach***

Go peaceful  
In gentleness  
Through the violence of these  
days  
Give freely  
Show tenderness  
In all your ways

Through darkness  
In troubled times  
Let holiness be. your aim  
Seek wisdom  
Let faithfulness  
Burn like a flame

God speed you  
God lead you  
And keep you wrapped around  
his heart  
May you be known by love

Be righteous  
Speak truthfully  
In a world of greed and lies  
Show kindness  
See everyone  
Through heaven's eyes

God hold you  
Enfold you  
And keep you wrapped around  
his heart  
May you be known by love

God speed you  
God lead you  
And keep you wrapped around  
his heart  
May you be known by love

***Merry Christmas to you all Kate Leach***

# What Do I Pray?

*Phil Nevard*

It seems that the news brings us fresh stories of the horrors of conflict every single day, and it is easy to feel overwhelmed and lost in the seeming hopelessness of it all. We read of horrific conflict in Gaza, Yemen, Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, Burkino Faso, Nigeria, Mexico, Mali, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Colombia (and there are probably many more I have not noticed.) Here's a guide from Tearfund about what we might pray for in these kinds of situation.

## **PRAY FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE VIOLENCE**

- That people in conflict zones will be protected from the violence; that there will be provision of essential supplies, such as food and clean water. Pray for vulnerable people who cannot flee, for example those with disabilities or the elderly.
- That refugees will find safe places to stay. Especially when refugees are being discriminated against on racial grounds – pray that there will be compassion and support for all.
- For healing for people who are wounded or have experienced trauma; and comfort for those who are grieving.

## **PRAY FOR THOSE IN POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP**

- That leaders on both sides of conflict will be filled with compassion, wisdom, calm and a desire for peace.
- That world leaders will seek ways to build bridges, de-escalate tensions, and restore global security.

## **PRAY FOR THE CHURCH**

- That the church in the wider region of conflict will be a voice for peace; and that they will have the resources they need to help people who are vulnerable.
- That the church and other organisations around the world will have the courage and conviction to speak out against aggression and injustice.
- That God's power will be revealed through the church in the situation you are praying about – bringing a message of love and hope in the midst of the darkness.

## **PRAY FOR THE GLOBAL IMPACT**

- There will be knock on effects in conflict to wider regions, and the rest of the world. Pray for the damage to be contained and stability to return.

## **PRAY FOR PEACE**

- That there will be an immediate end to the violence – that peace will come sooner than anyone could have expected or hoped for.
- That diplomatic solutions will be found that will lead to lasting peace in the region.
- That people who have fled will be able to return home, and that what has been destroyed will be rebuilt.
- For strength for individuals and organisations working for peace at local, national and regional levels.

## The War in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has led to a dramatic rise in the demand for Bibles as people ask existential questions about life and death.

The Ukrainian Bible Society reports that, in the last 15 months, some 700,000 Bibles have been distributed across the war-torn country. This is a five-fold increase on numbers handed out before the war. In 2020, some 136,767 Bibles were distributed in Ukraine.



Anatoliy Raychynets, deputy general secretary of the Ukrainian Bible Society said, 'The experience of this time is that so many people are looking for Bibles and churches.'

'We are doing everything possible to reach all the needs, but more Bibles are needed. With the help of the word of God, we can bring the love of God to those who need it.'

Bibles are distributed around the country, including to soldiers and civilian communities on the front line, and to those in hospital. 'Wherever the Bible is taken, it is very much appreciated,' said Anatoliy.

(From the Bible Society Website)

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## The Footprints Café



at

## Sawston Free Church

The **Footprints Café** is a community cafe offering a wide range of reasonably priced Snacks and Meals together with Teas & Coffees, Cold drinks, Cakes and Pastries.

We are open Monday to Friday from 8.30 am to 3.30 pm. Breakfasts are served until 11.30 am.

The **Footprints Café** is located at the back of Sawston Free Church. Car parking behind the church.

**NEW! Children's menu**

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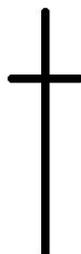
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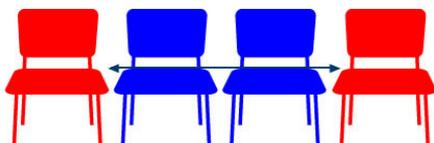
[contact@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:contact@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk)

**We're back to normal  
Every Sunday at 10.30am  
but with a difference!**

You can now join us in church,  
or from the comfort of your home using Zoom!

Email [secretary@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sawstonfreechurch.org.uk) for more details

**in person**



**online**

