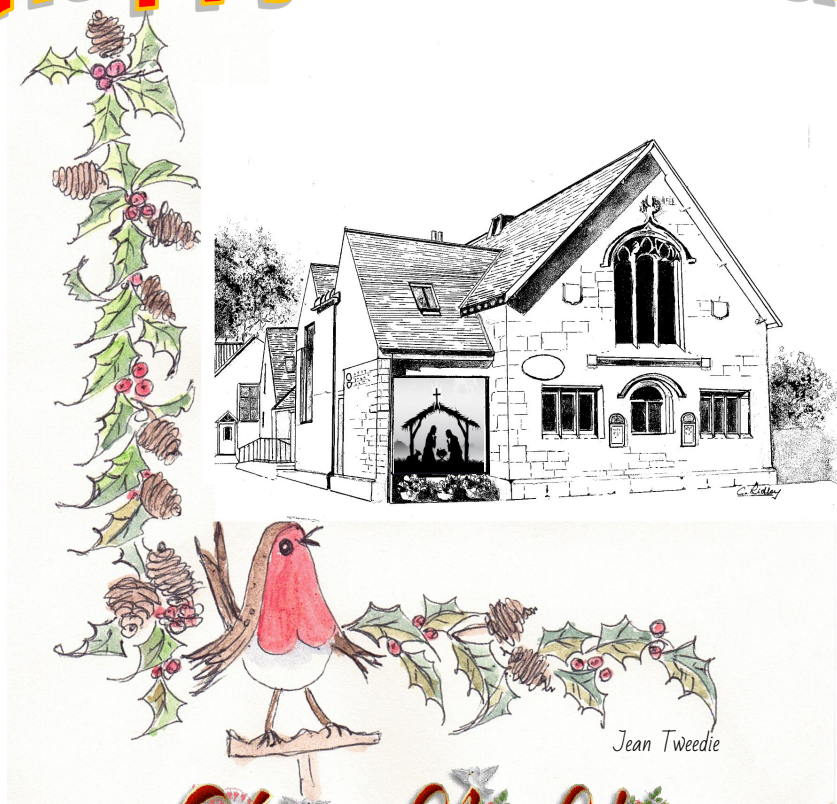


Ponteland Methodist Church

Cornerstone

Happy Christmas



Happy New Year

December 2020/ January 2021

MINISTER'S LETTER

We've reached the season of Advent: a special time of preparation for Christmas. Throughout this unusual year we've all probably tried to make preparations of one sort or another: for birthdays, for holidays, for family visits! But the uncertainty of the year has scuppered most of these.

We're not used to uncertainty. We don't like it. If our weather app predicts sun and we get rain, we're annoyed. If the internet cuts out when we're due to attend an online meeting, we're stressed. We've even introduced Video Assistant Referees to football, so we're not stressed with the uncertainty of an offside rule!

We've got used to knowing what is happening, to being in control, to making firm plans.

But for most of human history people had to live with uncertainty. Many of the Bible readings we hear during the season of Advent remind us of this. These Advent readings from the Old Testament were written by prophets who lived hundreds of years before Jesus, in times of great instability caused by conflict, injustice, famine and disease.

In these ancient times, many became overwhelmed with fear and worry. People began to doubt God's love for them; they weren't even certain that God was there. For the prophets who lived in these times, things were different. Even when the world wobbled around them, their faith in God provided stability and hope.

The prophets listened out for God's voice and looked for evidence of God's presence around them. They reminded people that, although God may not prevent disasters, He will never fail to see us through them. In a famous Advent reading, the prophet Isaiah explains what this would look like in his prediction of a saviour sent by God to lead us:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord — and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by

what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. (Isaiah 11:1-4)

Since the days of Isaiah there have been many others who have felt surrounded by fear and uncertainty, perhaps you feel that way yourself as you read this. Instead of focussing on his fear Isaiah chose to focus on the stump of Jesse which signified the birth of Jesus – the stump of Jesse referring to the ancient family from which Jesus was descended. This birth fulfilled a promise that whatever was going on in our lives, God would never leave us. That we are loved by God so much that He wants to be close to us – to be one of us – to work alongside us and with us, to reassure us, and make the world a better place by building His Kingdom together. We are not abandoned or alone, God IS with us.

In the midst of uncertainty we can be a people who look for the reassuring presence of God in everyday life, and carry hope into this world.

An Advent prayer:

God of hope, who brought love into this world, be the love that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought peace into this world, be the peace that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought joy into this world, be the joy that dwells between us.

God of hope, the rock we stand on, be the foundation of our lives. Amen.

Jana





ONLINE SERVICES

While we are not meeting for worship in our building the online and paper services will continue to be produced. The team are thankful for all of the positive feedback and encouragement that we have received as a great deal of time, energy and effort goes into the production of each video. Over the Christmas and New Year period the following services will be available:

Dec 20th – Traditional Carol Service

Christmas Eve – Christmas Celebration

Dec 27th – Christmas reflections (paper service only)

Jan 3rd – Covenant Service

Please note that our service on December 27th will only be available as a paper version.

Rev Jona Sewell

Premier.

ChristianRadio

where faith comes to life

CAROLS ON THE DOORSTEP

On December 20th at 5:30pm Premier Christian Radio will be playing four carols back to back without interruption. People are encouraged to tune in, turn the volume up a little, and sing the carols on your doorstep for your friends and neighbours to hear – a kind of doorstep carol singalong!

This initiative originally came from an idea from our District Community Engagement Enabler, Deacon Tracey Hume and is available nationally.

Carol sheets and further information can be found on the website:

<https://www.carolsonthedoortstep.co.uk/>

Or on the Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/CarolsOnTheDoorstep>

Premier Christian Radio is available on DAB and on Freeview channel 725

Rev Jona Sewell

ONLY THE LONELY

Only the lonely will understand this -
walking alone along a crowded beach,
watch this busy world out in the distance
then go home to the cold empty house.

Ever thankful for all that we once had
but doubtful now of what will come to one
who no longer feels the drifting of two lives
that streamed so successfully together.

Seeking assurance from an empty space,
laugh at mistakes that no one can see,
trying to remember the day of this week:
no structure in isolation will surely test time.

Wandering through a busy shop, search
for small packs made for one person not two
or even amounts that won't go mouldy
before the opportunity comes to eat.

Am I going mad talking to myself?
I laugh at the letter box thankfully
when someone remembers to send me
a card, invitation or even a bill.

Sat in a restaurant is not easy alone
too much wine could be a dangerous move,
carry a newspaper or even a book but
it's tricky eating and reading together.

And yet I see people managing life on their own.
I wonder do they go home to a lover
or just fend for themselves all the time?
Perhaps they prefer the gold glow of silence.

Maybe it is the loss which makes it worse
that being together once experienced,
not rightly appreciated, until it's gone,
makes loneliness feel much more poignant.

Empty silence crushes the space I'm in
with deafening isolation, until
crazy thoughts of talking to the wall
rattle and ricochet around in my head.

HELLO FROM ALISON

It feels like forever since we have been able to talk or hug or share a cuppa together. I have been on furlough for most of the year and missing all your cheerful faces, your wisdom and support for the work I have been doing in Ponteland over the past couple of years. I sincerely hope and pray that one day soon we will be able to chat over tea or coffee, share in worship together, laugh at the funny things we get ourselves into and continue to share the love of Jesus with all those around us!

It's been a strange and unsettling year this past year and one I guess we will remember for the rest of our lives. It will have changed some of us for the better and some of us will hold that little bit tighter to the loved ones we have around us. I have spent a lot of my time reading, listening (which I usually struggle to do) and doing Lego!!! Through this I have been assured of God's love and peace throughout this difficult time. (I don't do too well with a lot of free time usually.)



This is my latest project, I'm now onto building Santa's workshop to go under the tree when it is finally put up!!

I have some news to share with you; for part of October and into November Neil and I have been part of the Methodist Stationing process. It saw us spending days reading and trying hard to inwardly digest the profiles of over 100 appointments. We had to whittle it down to our top five and five critical, plus as many as we would be willing to consider. To cut a long story short and after almost four weeks of anxiety and feeling out of control of our lives, we came through the process. Subject to conference approval we have been stationed in the Grantham and Vale of Belvoir circuit in the Nottingham and Derby District, famous for

being Margaret Thatcher's and Isaac Newton's home town. Neil will have six churches but by the time we arrive there next September it will be five and maybe even four !! (Yes, Neil is that scary!!!) Seriously though Covid has pushed a lot of little churches to consider their future a little earlier than they might have otherwise done. It is exciting and scary in equal measure at the moment but God has us firmly in His hands and we trust this is where He wants us to be.

This year as we celebrate Christmas, albeit in a different smaller way, I want to wish you all the blessings of the season, that you might feel God's love and peace in your lives. That the birth of our Lord and Saviour is remembered across the globe as the reason we celebrate at this time.

Love, Joy and Peace be yours this Christmas season and every blessing for 2021.

Lotsa luv

Alison Maynard

AUTUMN SONNET

The wind is shaking dry leaves off the tree,
rosy red apples keen to cling so proud.
The carpet of colour spreads around me.
Sun clips at the heels of racing white cloud.

Enjoy this season before it's too late,
winter's foreboding will soon clamp us down.
Crunch the long path, through a rusty old gate,
where golden hours shorten and leaves turn brown.

This circle reminds us in Nature's time
to gather life's treasures before they die,
for fruit is only good when in its prime.
Make the most of this life, do not be shy.

Don't spoil today or live in such sorrow,
claim riches now, keep safe for tomorrow.

Rosemary Gray

IT'S CHURCH.....BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT...

For me, one of the blessings of a global pandemic has been “doing” church online, not just our own weekly services and the recently-established Wednesday discussion group, but also connecting with worship in other places. Don’t get me wrong, I have absolutely missed gathering together on a Sunday, but I have valued these new opportunities. Over the summer I tuned in to hear Rev Andy Murphy’s messages to his circuit in Market Harborough (he may not be quite as youthful as when he was our layworker in the noughties, but he’s matured well!). Recently I watched a celebration to mark the permanent closure of one of the churches in my home circuit. Needless to say there were lots of reflections on what it means to be church and the significance or otherwise of an actual building. Two quotes from that service really resonated with me and I will carry them with me as we move with uncertainty into 2021.

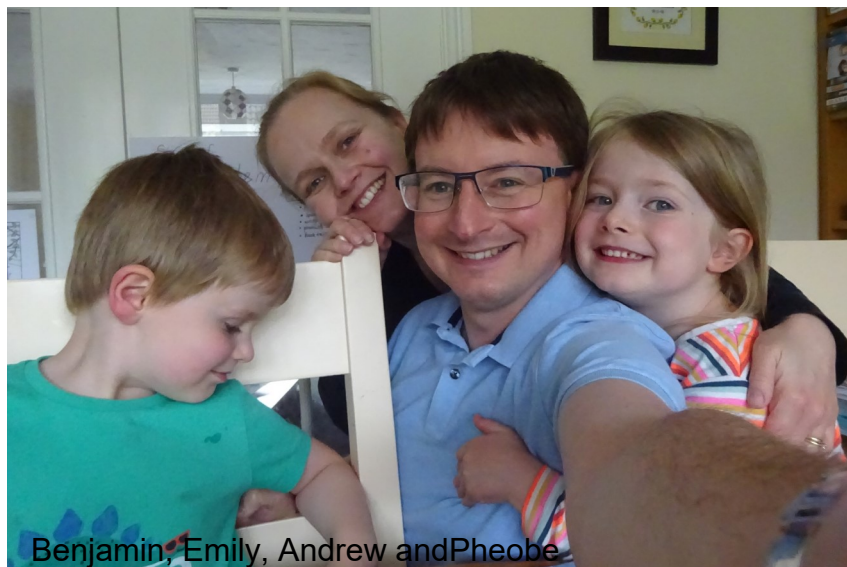
Firstly: “The church is what you have left once the building is closed.”

The second quote was reportedly on a poster seen in a church window during lockdown:

“The church hasn’t closed, it has been redeployed into the community.”

Definitely food for thought!

Bev



Benjamin, Emily, Andrew and Pheobe

NOT THIS CHRISTMAS

For two years Traidcraft Exchange has been helping people to break the chains of modern-day slavery in Bangladesh and India, but coronavirus has resulted in thousands of people falling back into unpaid slave labour.

Suresh knows all too well the suffering caused by extreme poverty. His daughter, Sabina, died in his arms. They were on their way to the hospital by rickshaw because they couldn't afford the ambulance.

The loss of his daughter made Suresh determined to take action and build a brighter future for his whole village. When he heard about The Muktee Project, run by Traidcraft Exchange, he went door to door in his community, encouraging people to join the training sessions which would teach them new ways to earn money and give them an opportunity to change things for good.

Suresh said: "My whole life as the headman of this village I dreamed to free my community from the curse of bondage... The Muktee (Freedom) Project brought us together. It united us and it has given us a great deal of knowledge and new skills." But then coronavirus struck. Lockdowns were enforced, and training halted.

"All our group activities, training and meetings were cancelled; we could not continue with our saving process. All our hopes were flattened and our dreams were suddenly shattered."

With savings running out, the coronavirus is forcing people in vulnerable communities to make impossible choices. Traidcraft Exchange is asking for donations to help stop families being forced back into slavery.

For further information and to make a donation, please go to

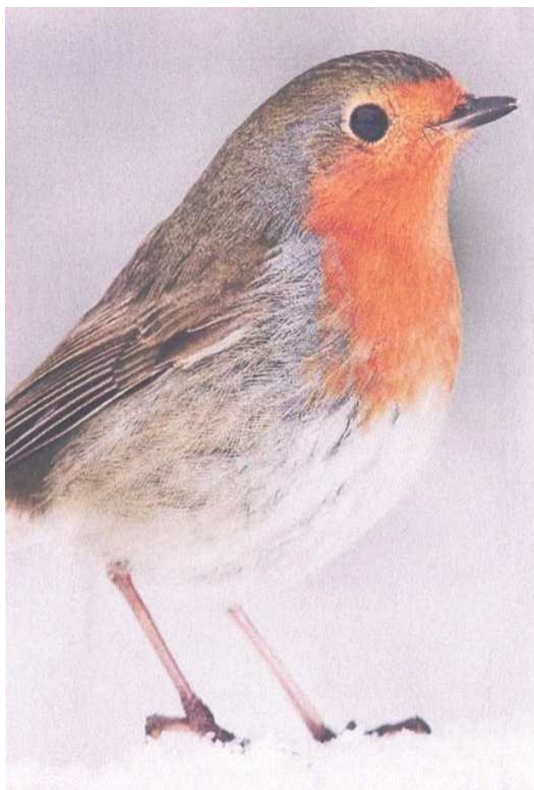
<https://traidcraftexchange.org/not-this-christmas>

Thank you.



Bev

Thank you to everyone who placed orders for Christmas cards and other Traidcraft products. The profit from these sales of £55.23 has been donated to Traidcraft Exchange.



ROBINS

The Christmas card robin –
Beautiful orange tummy
And black beady eyes,

But robins are little thugs;
In the woods they put on dark glasses
Big leather jackets - and fight.

They are the little hooligans of the hedgerows,
The graffiti artists of the garden,
The bullies by the back door.

Until Christmas comes around again,
When they puff out their tummies
And look lovely for the camera.

Kenneth Steven

LAW AND LOVE

I am still here in Ephesus, as you see, though Paul is anxious to get a ship to Antioch in Syria and visit Jerusalem where famine and poverty are troubling the church, taking the generous gift from all the churches. He has had a fruitful two years and more here, barring a quick visit back to Corinth to settle troubles there and add to the gift.

Paul had a soft spot for the first congregations that were the fruit of earlier journeys, spreading the word to the gentile world, including Galatia, even though he had got dangerously beaten up there.

Now he heard of trouble there – not so much persecution but serious danger to the Gospel he had sown there by the Holy Spirit. Some of the church leaders were urging all male converts to get circumcised, because that was part of the ancient Covenant between Abraham and God. (Probably they thought that it would reduce the opposition that always came from the local synagogues.) Paul was livid!

It was disturbing to many of his team of workers, too. After all, were the majority of us, firm believers and evangelists, second-class Christians? We were not Abraham's descendants, except perhaps spiritually. Did we lack anything, though reliant on the Holy Spirit: we, Sopeter from Beroea, Secundus from Thessaly, Gaius from Derbe, Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia, me from Philippi, Doctor Luke?

Paul made me get out the tablets and start to draft a bitter letter to the Galatian folk. It had been nearly ten years since the Council of Jerusalem had decided that gentiles had no need to obey all the Jewish Law. The grace of God was not bound up in all those laws and customs. Grace abounded for all who believed and baptism and faith was all-sufficient. We were children of grace, not law.

"I fought long and hard for that," Paul told us. "There was a time in Antioch when Peter himself, the Lord Jesus's right-hand man,



was with us when some folk came from Jesus's brother James, then leading the Jerusalem congregation. Peter who had been cheerfully eating with gentiles, then started to separate himself and eat only with Jews. I opposed him to his face, for he was manifestly in the wrong. He remembered his own revelation at Joppa and put himself right.

"What about me?" said Timothy who came from Lystra. "You had me circumcised when I was young."

"You were a special case," said Paul. "Your Mum was a Jew-ess married to a Greek. She was anxious for you to have the operation and it settled the minds of her friends and family when they converted. Maybe that was a weakness on my part, thinking it would make life easier for them – and perhaps for me. I would not do it now; one lives and learns. Love brings salvation, law does not".

Galatians; Acts ch16, ch20

John M Gill

TO MY FRIENDS AT PONTELAND METHODIST CHAPEL

So much has changed since we celebrated Christmas last year. One difference is the availability of our pigeon-hole post-box. It was such fun to "post" our greetings and in turn to receive the loving messages from our friends.

I am using this opportunity to express my gratitude to you all for the love and friendship you have extended to me and to wish you the joys and blessing of this beautiful time of year.

Whilst so much is very different, we are perhaps especially aware, that God's love is unchanging. So we thank Him as we enter the Christmas season and have joy and thanks in our hearts and experience afresh the deep and lovely meaning of Christmas Day. It is His birthday, so let's celebrate.

Happy Christmas from

Jean Tweedie

(Jean drew the design on the front cover –Ed)



OUR LUCY

This is the story of our granddaughter Lucy, aged 19, the youngest of our triplets.

Like so many young people Lucy has had her life disrupted by the pandemic. Having just started her first six-week placement for the Nursing Degree which she is studying at Southampton, Lucy was faced with a dilemma. All 10 of her housemates went home when the infection took a hold. Should she go home too?

Instead Lucy took the decision to volunteer in the ICU Unit at the local hospital. The staff were struggling because the Unit was very busy. She found the sight of such poorly patients linked to complex equipment quite scary, but with excellent support from the other staff, helped to care for and turn patients. She also spent time communicating with them, using details that the family had given the hospital, to encourage them. She said it was very upsetting that the patients were unable to see their families at such a difficult time.

For three weeks, at a very challenging time, Lucy worked three 12-hour shifts a week to help out.

Lucy's story, with that of other youngsters who had really helped in such a difficult situation, was published in the Daily Mirror. We are very proud of Lucy, and know that many other young people have also gone over and above what was expected of them during this hard time.

Here is a thank-you to you all.

John and Hazel Waddell

Christmas



Christmas blessings and love to everyone.

Remember
special

Wishing everyone blessings at Christmastime.

Ann and David Re

Albert & Margit

May the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ surround you this Christmas

Christmas greetings

Ann Green

Jean Tweedie

Geoff and Angela

Barbara Bradley

Tatiana

Sue, Bruce, Rachel & Han

Andy & Anita Anderson

Andrew and Emma G

Ann Cooper

Bryan and Margaret Ashford

Pat & Robin Brooks

David & Verma Elliott

Brenda Rutter

Rachel Wood

Howard Knowles

David and Chris Cogan

Lesley and Susan

Angie and Steve Helm

Judith Orton

Rosemary Gray

Bev

Viv Whyte

Pat & Maurice

Thank you to everyone who contributed over £1.100 raised for A

as Greetings

Remembering you all
specially at Christmas.

Christmas blessings to all our readers.

thead

Jona, Helle and Aidan

Warmest wishes to all

Val and Peter Michell

Lilian Smith

Happy Christmas

Joan Turner

Joan Harrison

Christmas greetings

Syd and Margaret

Happy Christmas everyone.

Mike Wren

Joan Arrowsmith

pat Turner

Joyce Davis

Action for Children.

There is still time to donate!



THE OPEN DOOR

A gorgeous deep red-coloured soup with a rich flavour.

Vegetarians can leave out the chorizo.

Judith

Red Pepper and Chorizo Soup

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 med sized potato, diced
- ½ carrot, diced
- ½ onion, diced
- 1 stick of celery, diced
- 1 clove of garlic, crushed
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 400g tin of chopped tomatoes
- 25g tomato puree
- 500ml vegetable stock
- 1 sprig of basil, chopped
- 75g chorizo sausage cut into small pieces and fried until crisp.



Heat the oil in a pan and add the potato, onion, carrot, celery, garlic and red pepper.

Cook for three or four minutes.

Add the tomatoes, stock, puree and basil.

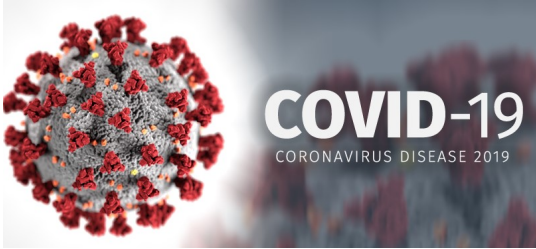
Bring to the boil then simmer for twenty minutes.

Season to taste.

Blend until smooth.

Serve sprinkled with the fried chorizo.

FIGHTING THE CORONAVIRUS



It was exciting to hear earlier this month that there had been produced a vaccine which was now reaching its final stage of trials before it is available in the World.

Last month we saw an advert for volunteers in our age group to join the trials for the Oxford /AstraZeneca trials. We put our name forward to the RVI where we had been involved in other medical trials.

We duly went along for a medical the following week and this was followed by our going to receive a Vaccine and a routine blood test. As far as the Vaccine is concerned it may be an effective vaccine against the Virus or simply a placebo. We will be informed when the NHS is able to roll out a vaccination programme as to whether we need to move on to that particular vaccine or find that we have had it already.

We are monitored on a weekly basis by self-testing and getting notification of the result of these tests on the following day (via Scotland!). During this month we will also receive a booster of whichever vaccine we have already received.

It is exciting as we feel that we are part of the good news which we have all longed for. But:

Wash your hands.

Keep your distance.

Save the NHS.

Why did we decide to take part? We felt that this was one of the rare opportunities we have in life to serve our neighbour and in this case there are no boundaries but our World needs this Vaccine so that we can be safe once more. Incidentally, we did get approval from our family and they are following us as we keep them fully informed.

















Best of All. God is with us.

Iain and Kathleen Farquhar

TIER 3

VERY HIGH ALERT

FROM 2 DEC

MEETING FRIENDS AND FAMILY  <p>No mixing of households indoors, or most outdoor places, apart from support bubbles. Maximum of six in some outdoor public spaces (e.g. parks, public gardens).</p>	BARS, PUBS AND RESTAURANTS  <p>Hospitality is closed, with the exception of sales by takeaway, drive-through or delivery.</p>	RETAIL  <p>Open.</p>	WORK AND BUSINESS  <p>Everyone who can work from home should do so.</p>
EDUCATION  <p>Early years settings, schools, colleges and universities open. Childcare, other supervised activities for children, and childcare bubbles permitted.</p>	INDOOR LEISURE  <p>Open. Group activities and classes should not take place.</p>	ACCOMMODATION  <p>Closed (with limited exceptions)</p>	PERSONAL CARE  <p>Open.</p>
OVERNIGHT STAYS  <p>We advise against overnight stays other than with household or support bubble.</p>	WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS  <p>15 guests for weddings, civil partnerships and wakes; 30 for funerals. Wedding receptions not permitted.</p>	ENTERTAINMENT  <p>Indoor venues closed.</p>	PLACES OF WORSHIP  <p>Open, but cannot interact with anyone outside household or support bubble.</p>
TRAVELLING  <p>Avoid travelling outside your area, other than where necessary such as for work or education. Further exemptions apply. Reduce the number of journeys where possible. Plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport. Avoid car sharing with those outside of your household or support bubble.</p>	EXERCISE  <p>Classes and organised adult sport can take place outdoors, but people should avoid higher-risk contact activity. Group exercise activities and sports indoors should not take place, unless with your household or bubble. Organised activities for elite athletes, under-18s and disabled people can continue.</p>	RESIDENTIAL CARE  <p>COVID-secure arrangements such as substantial screens, visiting pods, and window visits. Outdoor/airtight visits only (rollout of rapid testing will enable indoor visits including contact).</p>	LARGE EVENTS  <p>Events should not take place. Drive-in events permitted.</p>

Find out what support you can get

For example, if you're out of work, need to get food, or want to take care of your mental health.

gov.uk/coronavirus

If you have any coronavirus symptoms:

A high temperature + A new, continuous cough
A loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

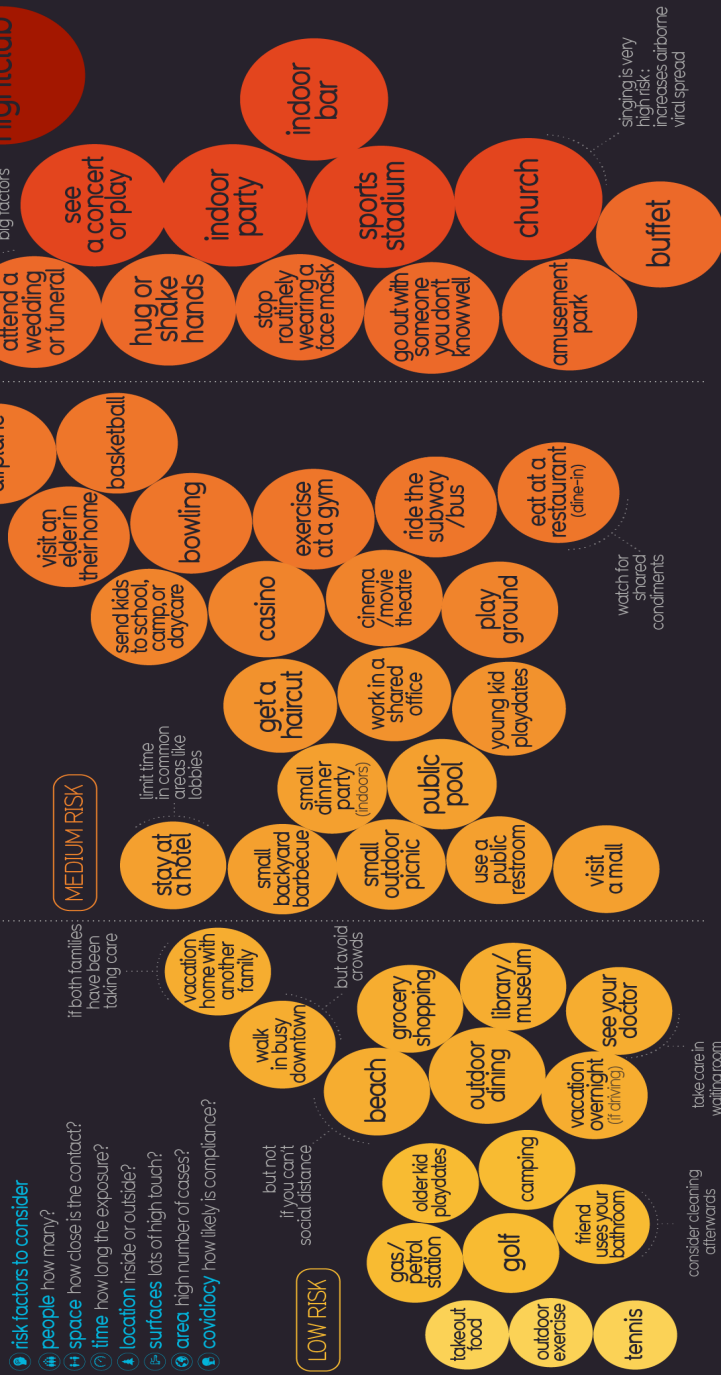
Get a test and stay at home

For more information and detailed guidance visit:
gov.uk/coronavirus



Coronavirus Riskiest Activities

According to 500+ epidemiologists & health professionals



Risk reduced by wearing a mask, social distancing & washing hands

information is beautiful

sources: New York Times, Reuters, NPR, SF Gate & others

INCREASING RISK →

A LETTER FROM A SOLDIER IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The noise is horrendous. The mud so deep.
When will we get some decent sleep?
My eyes are tired, almost closed
Underwear damp, right down to my toes.
Soon, the whistle will go for “over the top”
We’re told to give them all we’ve got
But I can’t help thinking they have families too
Just the same, Lizzie, as me and you.
I wish I was home dear, my darling girl
I miss you so much and the children too
Tell them I’ll soon be home to you
Then will begin our lives again
Peace, back to work, not in this living hell
This is not living, it’s beastly, it’s cruel
Just thinking of you keeps me cool
Some of my friends have gone forever
Not through war—but this ghastly weather
We need a bit of sun and a time for fun
All will be well when this war is over and done
Get the fire lit, the table spread
Then we’ll cuddle up in our comfy bed.
So much to look forward to
When I come home darling girl, to you.



Noreen Green

THE INJUSTICE ADVENT CALENDAR



Traidcraft Exchange is offering us an alternative advent calendar online; no chocolate, beauty samples,

teabags or small portions of cheese here...

They have partnered with a hand-picked selection of organisations and every day in Advent they will email you an opportunity to stand up for justice in a simple way. This could be by signing petitions, sending short emails, maybe even texting a friend. The task will always be free and will take less than five minutes to complete.

Please join me by signing up at

<https://traidcraftexchange.org/injustice-advent-calendar>



CHRISTMAS CAROL QUIZ

Each carol is identified on the list below by the initial letters of the words in the **first line**, which is not necessarily the title:

Example:

AIAMNCFAB - Away in a manger, no crib for a bed

THATI	
OIRDC	
AFTROG	
WSWTFBN	
OCAYF	
HTHAS	
SNHN	
OLTOB	
GKWLO	
JTTW	

Answers on page 25.

GARDENING FOR DECEMBER 2020

May I wish everyone who reads my column "The Compliments of the Season". We will be staying in Ponteland this year and continuing to shield until at least after vaccination. We have "made it so far" so will not be taking any risks. We thank everyone for the continued contact by telephone and email and especially for the wonderful services each Sunday and Zoom for meetings and the new discussion group each Wednesday night. We are in regular contact with our family through Facetime and Zoom.

To many, December and January can be "resting" months as far as the garden is concerned but I continue to find tasks to be undertaken. I have just boxed up all the begonias that have dried out in the greenhouse. Also separated the new gladioli corms from the old ones after drying them off. I store gladioli in just-moist compost in trays frost free in the garage (as with the begonias). This year I have started some annual poppies but they are growing too fast. I am also experimenting with spinach in pots. The vine has shed its leaves and has been pruned. I look forward to receiving seed and plant catalogues to choose varieties to grow each year. I buy many of the vegetable seeds from Medwyns of Anglesey – we are eating wonderful leeks and Brussels sprouts grown from their seed. Our most successful cauliflowers in 2020 were a variety called "Boris" from Medwyns.



There is interest in winter in house plants so I am offering a list of popular and not so common house plants that you might consult when you go to garden centres to choose. Here it is: Christmas Cactus, Fishbone cactus, Bunny ear cactus, mistletoe cactus, Blue Star Fern, Velvet Calathea, String of Hearts (trailing), Happy Bean plant, Chinese Money Plant, Mother-in-Law's Tongue (Snake plant) African Milk Tree, Spider plant (trailing), Anthurium, Aracuria Heterophylla, Sanseveria and orchids.

Most of these plants will thrive best in warm conditions, often advised on the plant label when you buy them. Most of them dislike continuous direct sunlight but I am sure you will be able to find suitable locations for them. Often house plants can be overwatered and need to be kept reasonably dry in the winter. I prefer to water most from the bottom with water that has been at room temperature for at least a day (most of the chloride in tap water

will have evaporated). You can, of course, filter rain water and keep it in a large plastic bottle for watering. If the water you have supplied to the saucer has not been absorbed by the roots in 20 – 30 minutes tip it out.



There was an article in The Times about Giant sequoias - considered to be the world's largest tree by volume. It is a native of California and can grow to 260 to 270 feet tall. Sequoias were first planted in the UK by wealthy Victorians to adorn their estates.

Some are now more than 160 feet tall and a 10 foot diameter base – a long way to go to catch General Sherman, a 2000 year old sequoia in California's Sequoia National Park which is 275 feet tall with a base diameter of 36.5 feet. The latest project is to plant in Hampshire, Buckinghamshire and Brecon (where we lived for 12 years). They are being sponsored by more than 400 people who have paid £400 each for a great sequoia to be planted in their name. The Brecon plantation will be Europe's largest sequoia grove made of 500 trees. They will be grown from seed or imported cuttings. I look forward to following the progress.

This month we will reach the shortest day on 21st December and then day lengths will gradually lengthen. I dislike the four dark months of winter (November to the end of February) and have a special light to give me rays resembling daylight. I have also started taking (today) a vitamin D tablet (10 micrograms) for the next three months to supplement natural vitamin D generation when skin is exposed to sunlight.

I said I would report back on the globe artichokes I grew from seed, started in April. The plants have grown to about six feet high when flowering. We have not gone for the limited edible content of the flower but have cut and dried them for decorative purposes. All the plants are now growing new shoots at the base, I hope, indicating that they are a perennial plant. I am not sure how winter hardy they are, but I will soon find out!!

I hope you will continue to enjoy your gardening. It has been a wonderful place for us to relax all year.

Finally you can get the result of the virtual Flower Show at

www.pontelandflowershow.com

Good gardening through the winter.

Syd Cowan



FOODBANK (West Road)

32,038 3-day emergency food supplies given out in 2019. 26,228 in first 6 months of 2020.

Christmas can be a stressful time for many – what presents to buy, how to keep safe going to the shops, what size of turkey to buy, who to have visit on Christmas Day! For many in our area these are not the problems they have. If you would like to see the real problems of many in Newcastle you can follow this link:-

<https://newcastlewestend.foodbank.org.uk/about/real-stories>



The folk having to visit the Foodbank often go without their own food to let their children eat, and certainly don't have enough to buy presents. This time of year, many charities are competing for our money, so this is a gentle reminder that Peter Michell (Church Treasurer) is still available to receive any donations. December to February is the most testing time for those running the Foodbank so please don't 'get weary in well doing'. Maybe you would like to set up a monthly Direct Debit?

Peter's contact details are 01661 871885, 18 Pinegarth, Ponteland NE20 9LF or peter_michell@hotmail.com.

Andrew Pay

VILLAGE NEWS

Dobbies Garden Centre—Sainsbury's

Some of you may know that the foodhall in Dobbies is now run by Sainsbury's.

Remembrance Sunday

Two brothers, Owen and Lewis Miller, who are members of the Boys' Brigade were able to lay a wreath at our Ponteland Memorial.

Belsay Hall and Gardens

Work on a major project was due to start in the spring of 2020 but has been delayed for a year. Work will be done to rejuvenate the gardens, conservation work to the roof of the hall, the coach house and parts of the castle. 8,000 plants were delivered in March before lockdown was announced, so the head gardener and two colleagues had to tackle the mass planting.

New Schools and Leisure Centre and Library

The new secondary, primary and nursery schools are now open. The opening of the leisure centre will be postponed until lockdown restrictions are eased.

Jennifer Hardy

ANSWERS

AIAMNCFAB Away in a manger, no crib for a bed
THATI The Holly and the Ivy
OIRDC Once in Royal David's City
AFTROG Angels from the realms of Glory
WSWTFBN While shepherds watched their flocks by night
OCAYF Oh come all ye faithful
HTHAS Hark the Herald angels sing
SNHN Silent night, holy night
OLTOB Oh little town of Bethlehem
GKWLO Good King Wenceslas looked out
JTTW Joy to the world

MILLER BROTHERS, ARMISTICE DAY MEMORIAL



Owen and Lewis Miller have been in Boys' Brigade for quite a number of years; between them 19 years in total. The boys attend regular Boys' Brigade meetings at Ponteland Methodist Church where they have both grown through the sections of improvement.

During 2020, meetings have been cancelled, and whilst the boys have been disappointed they have fully understood the reason behind the cancellations. All other official services have also been cancelled as a result of Covid 19 including the ceremony commemorating Armistice day.

This year both boys were asked by the Boys' Brigade Captain if they could attend Ponteland Memorial in uniform on Sunday 8 November at 2.00pm to lay a wreath in memory of all those who have lost their lives in uniform services.

Owen, who is in year 10 at Ponteland High School said, "Although I was nervous about being given such an important role, I was so proud to be asked to lay the wreath on behalf of the Boys' Brigade. This is something that I will remember for many years as it was such an honour."

Lewis, who is in year 11 commented, "Being the oldest boy in the Brigade, I have previously laid wreaths, but this year was such an honour. It was a moving and proud moment for me, especially as I was asked to do it with my brother."

Carol Wilson, Ponteland High School

FAMILY NEWS

Doug and Barbara Hogg have really appreciated the contacts they are receiving from Church friends. Please keep them coming!

We all wish **Val Michell** a smooth and speedy recovery after her long-awaited surgery.

Viv Whyte is making a good recovery from recent cataract surgery.

Please pray for **Lilian Smith** who has had a fall.

We also remember **Alison Fairbairn** in our prayers.

Pat and Maurice Milburn wish to thank everyone for the lovely cars and flowers. We received when Pat fell and broke her shoulder and was in hospital for 11 days. We want to thank our friends for the kind offers to do some shopping for us.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE PRODUCE

I am selling my home produce of jams, chutneys etc. for **Care and Share Funds** just in time for Christmas. You can order them by telephone on **01666 824459**. You will need to collect **with payment from 30 Calverton Court, NE20 9EN** which can be arranged when you make your order. If there is nothing on my list that takes your fancy, you can still help Care and Share Funds by making a donation to our Church Treasurer, **Peter Michell** (Gift Aided if applicable). Here is the list and prices:-

Jams priced at £1.60 - Blackcurrant (24 jars), Redcurrant (2), Blueberry (8), Blackberry (2), Rhubarb and Ginger (2).

Marmalade (8) at £1.70.

Chutneys at £1.70 - Apple (4), Beetroot (7), Red Tomato-hot (2).

Pickled red cabbage (3) at £1.30.

2019 Ginger Wine (9) at £2.50 (This had a preservative added at bottling last year).

Syd Cowan

Church Services
Look for YouTube on the
internet and search for
"Newcastle West Circuit".



HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you need any practical help of any kind (e.g. shopping, collecting prescriptions etc.) then please contact Pete Cowey. If you wish to volunteer to run errands for others then please pass your details on to Pete. Email:

mrpetecowey@btinternet.com

Tel: 07771 857574



JESUS LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Our Carol Service will be
available on YouTube from
December 20th.

Search 'Newcastle West Circuit'
to find us.

Happy Christmas to all our
friends and neighbours.



From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the February edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 29th January 2021**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com . The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*