

The Mag

January 2024



Reflections

The monthly magazine from Adeyfield Free Church

From the Editor

I can remember when January editions of the Beano or the Dandy would have a new year message accompanied by cartoons of Old Father Time for the old year and a baby in a nappy for the New Year. It's funny what you remember sometimes when you reflect on what has been in years past.



New Year is often the time we look back before we look forward. In fact, the month is named after the Roman god Janus who had one face that looked back and another that looked forward.

As we reflect on the last four years what can we see? Having been homeless for nearly two years we moved into our new church centre only weeks before the whole country ground to a halt. We had no minister and a whole new church focus to develop. We have battled with continual lockdowns and open ups, technical, auditory and logistical upheavals, warm spaces and smoke screens, floods and heatwaves, building projects, sun blinding us and electricians deserting us.

But God never left us and here we are in 2024.

We can know we have been blessed when we reflect on these facts... we have a Minister, people joining us, Alpha continuing to work well, joint services with St George's bringing us all closer together, meals together, celebrations with friends and neighbours, the promise of workers for our children and youth, a new Rainbows group, Little Fish, prayer days, praise events, a bigger creche and a new prayer room, a wonderful group of volunteers who agree to help at the drop of a hat and people who work for us and go the extra mile. And over all this we have a God who will lead us forward and uphold us every step of the way.

So, when I say '**Happy New Year**' it goes without saying that this is not just a wishful phrase but a statement of fact and faith. When we reflect on where God has led us from and remember the promises of where He will lead us to, we can be encouraged.

Happy New Year

Santa Sleigh 2023



After delivering leaflets to the Adeyfield community on a chilly Thursday morning in December some of us returned to take part in the actual Santa Sleigh collection on a damp night the following Wednesday. We were all wrapped up in multiple layers to keep out the cold and stay warm.

We started our journey at Adeyfield Square with Santa on his sleigh and Christmas music playing through speakers ably being towed by Kevin Doona. This year all the children were invited to have their photo taken with our jolly Santa on route which made the evening longer than usual but brought much happiness to a great number of little ones.

Our latest elf recruit Pat did a fantastic job, (her previous elf experience at Quality House in the 60's was evident).

I'm sure all of us would say it was a fun evening. The music helped us to get into the Christmas spirit and it was interesting to meet people from our neighbourhood.

All funds raised in cash on the night or via the app is pooled and shared out equally over the participating charities. We will be collecting a cheque for AFC very soon.

A very big thank you to all those who helped this year including Dave, Brian, Barry, Ken, Dympna, Jackie and John

If you'd like to join in the fun and help next year for a couple of hours, we'd love to hear from you.

Ian and Carol

When You Pray

Our Father..... we are in this **together**. We are not in isolation.

Who is in heaven... He **IS** and He is **established** in heaven on **His** throne

Hallowed be **your name**... revered, respected, lifted up, exalted.

Your kingdom come..... God's Kingdom rule is the best place to be

Your will be done on earth **as it is in heaven**... bring heaven down to earth and make earth heavenly

Give us today our **daily** bread..... we look to you for what we need not what we can store up for ourselves so that we are nourished and not overweight.

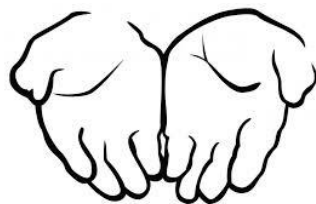
And forgive us our sins **as** we forgive those who sin against us.... it's a two-way thing.

Lead us not into temptation but **deliver us** from evil.... We will sometimes fall and need your help

For the Kingdom, the power and the glory **are yours** now and forever.
Your authority, not ours.

Amen..... **YES**

There are so many ways to reflect on the Lord's prayer and opportunities as we pray it regularly. This is just one of them. Take time to discover the others. Write them down and use them as often as you can.



A Reflection on our attitudes and how they might affect our day.....

Sometimes I think the day is not going very well and then I realise that if I took a different approach, it might just go better. My way is never the best way. As I reflected on this thought some months ago, I remembered one summer morning when I waited for a bus to take me back home from town. This poem explains what happened.....

Sonnet to a Lovely Day

As I was going home from Hemel town
I stood for ages but the bus was late.
An old man started stomping up and down
And moaned because he didn't want to wait.
I tried to cheer him up and so I smiled
And pointed out it was a lovely day
But that just seemed to make him go more wild,
He ranted as he threw his fag away.
The bus arrived and while he cursed and swore
The rest of us got on and found a seat
The driver pressed the switch and closed the door
But he was still protesting in the street!
The sunshine was a gift to be enjoyed.
A pity that he missed it by being so annoyed.



Thank You

As I reflect on all the things we have been doing over the Christmas period I can see so clearly how blessed we are to have so many lovely people in our congregation, each one a gem.

During the services in December we, naturally, do things very differently as we celebrate Jesus' birth but each time you were asked to do something out of the ordinary there were no complaints, groans or moans, you came forward and had a go.

The meal and the extra work from the kitchen with sandwiches, mince pies, loads of extra washing up, drying and reorganising was done with smiles and welcoming chat.

The teams that do the work with children and youth carried on diligently and without complaint, often missing out on the special things happening in the worship room. This is because we need more volunteers to join the team as the present team do more than one turn every month. Please see if you can help there, it would be an enormous blessing to everyone. [If you can, please speak to Beth Tutton] Parties and goodies seemed to just arrive without being asked and all done with love and smiles.

The extra work taken on by the tech team was completed with love and efficiency often having to deal with blips and gloops but with their skill and dedication they shielded the rest of us from what they were struggling with so that our experiences were happy ones.

The building was managed and furniture changed and increased according to what was needed each week and seemed to be miraculously appropriate each week as well as the Christmas decorations arriving on cue but of course we realise that behind that was a lot of hard work and dedication.

And now we are looking towards another New Year with all the glories, the joys and the challenges that will bring.

Thank You for being gems, thank you for your love and dedication, thank you for your prayers and support, thank you for having a go even when you are out of your comfort zones. This attitude is what will enable the Lord to lead us into so much deeper things with Him. So don't stop saying 'yes' to Him when he says 'How about having a go at this!!!'

And now.....

A few weeks ago, someone asked me if I had a particular photo of a member of our family from several decades ago so I dug into the pile of photos that we all have somewhere in our cupboards and indulged in looking slowly through lots of lovely memories. I came upon some from a particularly wonderful few days I spent in Rome about six or seven years ago.



I was with James and his family. It was late October so the temperature was perfect and we wandered about in T shirts and summer slacks, ate pizza, drank wine and took several trips around the city on the top of one of those hop-on-and-off tourist buses.



Ever since a child I had longed to see the Colosseum and the Sistine Chapel so, along with requests from other members of our group we put them into our schedule. I will never forget the first experience of arriving inside the Colosseum. You queue, first outside, then, after a security check, you continue to slowly walk around inside the outer covered colonnade that the original users and performers would have walked through. It's rather dark and comfortingly cool. The anticipation is lovely especially as you think you know what is coming. After all most of us have seen *Gladiator* or *Spartacus*.

As we approached the entrance to the seating, we could hear people gasping and I couldn't think why. That was until I found myself doing it too. The magnificence, the vastness, the beauty and the viciousness of what lay before us in the blinding sunlight attacked every one of my senses and I couldn't move for a few seconds.



I began to realise that this would have been the same experience for those using the building around 2,000 years ago. As I walked around the perimeter and looked down and across the performance area, I began to think about those people who, against their own will, had been sent into that vast arena to hear thousands of citizens screaming for them to get on with their fate. As I reflected on them and on the barbarity of the whole thing, I also began to realise that many of these people had bought for me the privilege of being able to worship Jesus and follow Him openly and legally. They had bought that privilege with their lives. My thoughts then went to those who still cannot do that, those who meet in secret, those who sit in prison worshipping and rewriting scraps of scripture that they hold in their memories. Those who now have no idea what has happened to their loved ones because of their faith in Jesus. Those who are still losing their lives rather than denying Him.

Walking around the seating area I came upon the site of what is believed to be the Emperor's Box, the place where Roman Emperors sat and would press their thumbs to denote death at the end of a performance at the behest of the screaming populace. At that precise place now stands a huge cross. I was reduced to tears. I took advantage of the opportunity to sit on a piece of marble for a few minutes and say to the rest of my family that they should happily leave me there while they explored other parts of the building. They could see I was finding standing difficult but they thought it was my arthritis playing up. It wasn't. I needed to be still and thank God from the bottom of my heart for what He had done.

And so now..... what should we be doing to keep that privilege secure for those coming after us? What should we be engaged in to ensure that the truth and power of what Jesus gave us on the cross and through the grave into heaven is never lost to the next generations? It is very clear that this is not just something we keep to a few hours a week nor something we can have the luxury of keeping quietly to ourselves.

Wordsearch

V	E	D	U	G	S	T	R	E	D	I	S	N	O	C	A	O	P	M	F
J	N	A	B	S	O	R	B	U	A	R	Y	B	R	N	G	I	S	T	H
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ABSORB-BELIEVE-COGITATE-CONCLUDE-CONSIDER-
 DECIDE-DECIPHER-DIGRESS-KNOW-MEDITATE-
 MINDFUL-PERUSE-PROCESS-RECALL-REFLECT-
 REMEMBER-REMIND-TAKE IN-THINK-UNDERSTAND

*O God, our help in ages past
 Our hope for years to come
 Our shelter from the stormy blast
 And our eternal home.*

Back Page

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In 2024 let us rededicate ourselves to the privilege of walking alongside the Lord as He continues to show us His plans. This will need funding. Let's have a go at some creative and fun fundraising activity. What shall we begin with? Bring your ideas and efforts. Let's see how God turns our little things into His big things.

Editing the Mag

*Who would like to take a turn at editing one of the
Mag editions this year?*

Do it your own way with your own format.

Bring fresh ideas to the AFC monthly magazine.

Contact the Editor and have a go.