



Tacket Street, Ipswich, IP4 1AU



COMMENT
DECEMBER 2025
& JANUARY 2026

The Minister Writes ...

Isaiah 2:1-5

2 *The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

²In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. ³Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. ⁴He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ⁵O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!



Dear All,

Isaiah, along with a few other Hebrew writers, are always good companions through the Advent season, as we look for Jesus to come among us. In fact, Isaiah is so important in how Christians have come to understand Jesus that it has sometimes been called 'a fifth Gospel'. As you may know, Isaiah is actually the writings of at least three Isaiahs. The first lived before the great disaster and warned people it was coming but they still could avoid it. The second was with the exiles living through the great disaster and he taught them how to hold on and hope in dark times. The third spoke to those returning about how they should learn from all they had endured and 'build back better'.

In this passage from chapter 2, the first Isaiah describes what the people should have been building towards. He goes on to say how they have been distracted and fallen short of this vision. The Temple is meant to have earned high esteem, making Jerusalem seem the most important, most impressive, highest city. All nations are meant to be learning peace from it. God's Word will teach them a way of life that means they do not have to live in constant conflict with one another. They can recycle their weapons into farm implements and completely forget about training for war.

We hear in the last sentence God's plea to his people to be like that, to work for that vision: '*walk in the light of the Lord*'. We sense that in this our time we have not arrived yet. During Advent and Christmas this year we rededicate ourselves to '*walk in the light of the Lord*'. How might we do this? Let us wholeheartedly embrace a hopeful, inclusive vision of God's peace and justice. At Christmas, and always, let us seek to make love tangible: welcoming the marginalised, promoting and pursuing all that is good and fair in community life, and always advocating for policies that protect the most vulnerable. Let us practice compassion across differences, trusting that God's light is revealed in every act that promotes dignity, inclusion and reconciliation. Let us hold a progressive and forward-looking faith, work to heal creation, confront prejudice wherever we find it and cultivate ways of generosity, humility, and joy in all we do. In walking in the light like this, we will embody Isaiah's call to help the world move closer to God's promised peace, a peace very much needed in our world this Christmastime.

Wishing you a joyful and peaceful Christmas.

With much love, *Neil*



CHURCH PASTORAL NEWS

As the year ends, we take this opportunity to thank all who give pastoral care and take flowers to friends.

We continue to remember those friends with long term health issues who are at home or in care homes.

As we come to the Christmas season, we thank God for the greatest gift of all time and ask that we may use the gifts God has given us to share his love with others.

PASTORAL CARE

Communion

It is some time since we checked to see if there was anyone requiring a rice wafer instead of bread at communion. If you have a need, please let me know so we can make provision for you.

Comment Large Print

We print a small number of large print Comments each month. If you now require a copy, please let me know so that we update the print run.

FUNDRAISING FOR HEADWAY

Two events were held recently in aid of Headway. The well-attended quiz (with a great kazoo music round) and a coffee morning raised over £300. Thank you to all who attended both or one of these events and for your generosity.

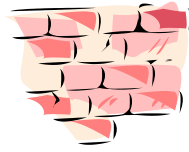
LEPROSY MISSION LUNCH

On 1st February 2026, Matt Henderson from the Leprosy Mission will be leading our morning service. This will be an informal cafe-style service with coffee being served on arrival from 10am. Following communion, taken at the tables, we will hold a fund-raising lunch in support of the Leprosy Mission. Lunch will be jacket potatoes served with a selection of toppings and salad followed by fruit crumble. Tickets, £6 for adults and £3 for children, will be available in the new year.



OVER THE GARDEN WALL

... from our neighbours at St Pancras



Last month I wrote to you about *Laudato Si'*, the most widely read papal document ever. Several weeks ago, *Dilexi te* (On love for the poor) was published. It's quite short and the only papal document I've ever read at one sitting. Maybe it's because Pope Leo is a native English speaker!

It is addressed to all Christians, stating that 'Love for the Lord....is one with love for the poor', and that 'In the poor, He continues to speak to us'. We are then taken on a journey through Scripture, starting at the burning bush, where God says he knows how his people are suffering in Egypt, showing his concern for the needs of the poor. As well as poverty which leads to people suffering from lack of food and water, it also expresses concern about growing numbers of poor people in wealthy countries, asserting that 'the poor cannot be neglected.' It reminds us that 'God himself became poor and was born in the flesh like us' becoming poor 'so that by his poverty you might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). At birth he was laid in a manger and died as an outcast. Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor and marginalised. Our faith in Christ, who became poor, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members. After looking at many examples in Scripture of generosity towards the poor, it moves on throughout history with examples of care for the poor, from St Lawrence, who, when asked to hand over the treasures of the church, pointed to the poor, saying 'These are the treasures of the church', through St Cyprian who reminded Christians of the importance of caring for the sick, leading up to more recent times with missionary foundation of clinics and hospitals, as well as education of the poor, at home and overseas. Moving to the challenge posed by contemporary migration, it summarises that in four words which he then expands on: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. The concluding sections talk of 'the preferential option for the poor, and 'almsgiving today', asserting that this 'does not eliminate the duty of government institutions to care for the poor'. There is much to think about. It is relevant to a discussion of COP 30 around climate change, including the issue of the big countries that are absent from discussions.

As well as the declaration of Newman as Doctor of the Church, there has also been the visit of our King to Rome, including the first joint worship of Pope and King for around 500 years. Sadly there was fairly limited media coverage. On a lighter note, last week Pope Leo met representatives of persons working in the film industry, and, when asked, said *The Sound of Music* was one of his favourite films. I'm sure he's not alone! As we approach once more the Christmas celebration of the birth of our Lord, laid in a manger, let us not forget that he came to proclaim good news to the poor.

Happy Christmas, from your Catholic friends.

Jean



PRAYERS FOR DECEMBER

7th December

Second Sunday in Advent: Peace. We pray for peace in the world; an absence of war, but a presence of justice too. May we do all we can in our sphere of influence to promote peace. We pray for Amnesty International, that their efforts will be successful in giving hope to political detainees, and that their pressure on those in power will bear fruit.

14th December

Third Sunday in Advent: Joy. We celebrate our Youth Parade and Gift Service and pray that the joy of our worship, and enjoyment of community, will spill over into the rest of our lives and into the lives of all those who attend our service, in person or remotely. Make us generous in our giving to FIND, Home-Start, Headway and Christian Aid this season.

21st December

Fourth Sunday in Advent: Love. As we reflect on the miracle of God's intervention in our human world, help us to mirror and shine that same idea of love and compassion. May our thoughts, communications and actions all convey that God loves every one of us, equally and eternally.

25th December

Christmas Day. May we make space for you, Lord, in our family joy, or family labour; so that we have our priorities fixed on you and your Way.

28th December

Lord, there is so much more to our faith than a baby born over 2,000 years ago. We pray that our enthusiasm and joy felt over the Christmas period will not dim, and, even though it is winter and dark, may we feel your light.

PRAYERS FOR JANUARY

4th January

We pray for PEACE at start of this New Year. Pray for all those people caught up in conflicts, made homeless, are starving, in despair and dying. These wars are not of their making in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan and so many other places of unrest in the world.

11th January

We say a thankful prayer for all the people we have met through Thursday Forum. People from Christ Church we have not had a chance to talk on a Sunday, people from other Churches, from Religious and non-Religious groups and others who come for talks and to hear the speakers who willing give their time.

18th January

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" Isaiah. We pray dear Father God that we are able to be so this week in all that we do and say. Amen

25th January

World Leprosy Day is on 25th January. There is still so much about this disease that is unknown. Please keep those affected by Leprosy in your prayers this week and also those who are working amongst them. Amen





One of the things people appreciate most about Thursday Forum talks is their variety. Even though most speakers are not professional orators, they are all passionate about their subject, and happily come, without a fee, and share some of their passion. If they are representing a charity, they get a donation, which is the retiring collection on the day. In the last month, we've been very privileged to hear about so many different topics including our historic town of Ipswich, interesting quirks about surrounding villages; and two charities including our chosen charity, Headway. This added over £64 to our church total which concludes at Christmas.

In December, we are intrigued to meet Father John Thackray, of St Mary at the Elms Church, who has chosen to ask whether the Church of England is relevant anymore. I hope he will also talk about his own faith journey and brand of Anglicanism.

The last two weeks are pure celebration; first with the Belstead Singers, the choir to which quite a few of our own church ladies belong; then a Christmas meal followed by readings and Christmas songs.

In the new year we continue, on 8th January, with a talk about Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and the speaker has promised to bring Jackie, and Fidget, her dog. Then, Activlives will inspire and entertain us. We may even have to be a bit active ourselves. The rest of the programme is not fixed yet, but will definitely include a talk on the new library system, a delve into Tudor times, and a look back to the Windrush generation and experience.

As usual each term will include something musical, a few charities, and plenty of local interest.

Thank you, everyone for your support and encouragement, and thanks in particular to the cooks for all their skills and long hours, catering for an unknown number of people - about 30 at the moment, but could be 10 more, or 10 less.

ECO CHURCH – CREATION CARE

How green is your Christmas?

This month's article consists entirely of some "eco-tips" for December and Christmas. Some are more realistic than others, maybe some will have no relevance to you at all, but perhaps there is something here that is helpful and achievable or at least makes us think!

- Turn off your Christmas lights when you're not in/overnight.
- Go green with your gift wrapping. In the UK we use 108 million rolls of wrapping paper at Christmas. Can you re-use any or replace with reusable fabric?
- Ditch the traditional Sellotape, which is plastic. Sellotape now produce Sellotape Zero, which is plastic free and biodegradable or use sticky brown paper tape.
- Make gift tags from the previous year's Christmas cards.
- Avoid paper and cards that are shiny or have glitter on as these cannot be recycled.
- Most of us have decorations which we enjoy bringing out year after year and it is good to re-use decorations for as long as we can. But if you want something new, try not to buy plastic but use natural things such as greenery, pinecones or dried orange slices.
- A scary amount of food waste is created at Christmas, equivalent to 4.2 million plates of Christmas dinner going straight into the bin! Cut food waste by planning ahead and being realistic about what you need. If you have leftovers, most can be frozen.
- Shop locally whenever you can.
- Try to avoid buying perishable food or flowers that have been flown from far away. (Difficult when supermarket labels do not give us this information!)
- Most Christmas crackers are not recyclable and the toys inside are often made of plastic that is thrown away very quickly. (Do we really need them?)



DIARY DATES FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Emmaus Groups

Mondays at 10.30am in the Lounge. (finishes 8th December, restarts 12th January)

2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 7.30pm (finishes 3rd December, restarts 14th January)

1st & 3rd Thursdays at 10.30am in the Lounge (finishes 4th December, restarts 15th January)

Tuesday 10th December Carol Service at Booth Court (2.30pm)

Friday 19th December Carol Service at Tooley's Court (10.30am)

Thursday 8th January Deacons' Meeting (7.30pm)

Tuesday 27th January Prayer Lunch (12 noon)

Sunday 1st February Comment Publication

SERVICES FOR DECEMBER

All Services will be led by our Minister, Revd Neil Coulson unless otherwise stated.

Sunday 7th December

10.45am Family Worship on the 2nd Sunday of Advent with Holy Communion
Amnesty will be present for card signing after our service

Sunday 14th December

10.45am Church Parade and Gift Service

Sunday 21st December

10.45am Family Worship on the 4th Sunday of Advent
6.30pm Readings and Carols by Candlelight followed by mince pies

Thursday 25th December

10.45am Christmas Day Family Worship
A short all-age service

Sunday 28th December

10.45am Family Worship led by Peter Dawson
Peter is a preacher and Elder at St John's URC

SERVICES FOR JANUARY / EARLY FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday 4th January

10.45am Family Worship with Holy Communion and Commissioning of Deacons

Sunday 11th January

10.45am Family Worship

Sunday 18th January

10.45am Family Worship

Sunday 25th January

10.45am Family Worship

Sunday 1st February

10.45am Leprosy Sunday Family Worship with Holy Communion
Matthew Henderson, from The Leprosy Mission will be speaking.
The service will be followed by a Church Family meal to raise money for The Leprosy Mission.

