

Knightrider Street News



DECEMBER 2024

MAIDSTONE
BAPTIST CHURCH

Taking the Good News of Jesus into our lives and into God's World
www.maidstonebaptist.net

Maidstone Baptist Church
Knightrider Street, Maidstone, Kent. ME15 6LU
Registered in England as a charity, no. 1128948

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
John 13:35

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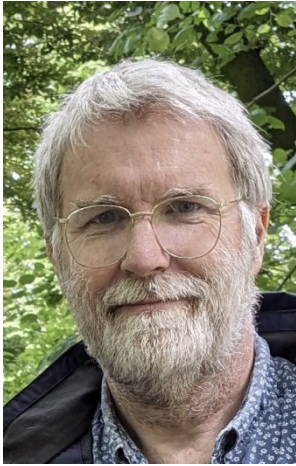
*Views and opinions expressed in KSN articles are those of individual contributors,
and are not necessarily those of the Church leadership or editor.*

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**Pastoral Visits:**

At Maidstone Baptist Church we are happy to offer pastoral visits - for prayer, communion, or simply a chat. We can meet at church, in your home, or elsewhere, such as in a park or coffee shop.

If you feel this would be helpful, please speak to Nigel or Al, or to your Pastoral Leader.



Many of you will be familiar with the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* - it's the story of a Jewish community in Russia in the early 1900s. A theme that runs through it is how they try to keep their community together through life's uncertainties and constant changes, oppression and conflicts. That struggle is still a sadly familiar story for many across our world today. One of the best-known songs from *Fiddler on the Roof* is the opening number *Tradition*.

For many of us Christmas is full of traditions. We may look back to our own childhoods with fondness, remembering time spent with grandparents and wider family. Sometimes families come together for Christmas even though they barely speak to each other for the rest of the year. Why? Because it's what they've always done. It's tradition.

Christmas in the UK can be a busy time. There's lots of hustle and bustle, Christmas lights everywhere, tinny music in the shops blasting out Mariah Carey, stalls selling mulled wine and gingerbread. There's so much to overload our senses. It's easy to get caught up in it all. Unless....

Unless you're a long way from home. Unless you have no home. Unless you have no family and few friends. Unless you've an empty seat at your table this year. Traditions are great - unless you're outside them.

The first Christmas was stripped back and bare. It was about refugees on a long journey - a homeless couple seeking shelter wherever they could. It was about people who were scared and lonely. It was smelly, it was dirty, it was simple. And yet...

And yet it was full of joy. A time that speaks of the comfort of strangers. Of the heavens rejoicing. Of the whole world changing. It told the story of Jesus - Immanuel. God with us.

The great Christian hymn writer Timothy Dudley-Smith wrote these words:

*A song was heard at Christmas  
To wake the midnight sky,  
A Saviour's birth, and peace on earth,  
And praise to God on high.*

*The angels sing at Christmas  
With all the hosts above,  
And still we sing the newborn King,  
His glory and His love.*

This year remember the tradition set at that first Christmas. Remember the simplicity, but celebrate and sing with the angels. Christ on Earth. Born for you and for me

**May the joy of the new-born Christ-child be with you all this Christmas.**

*Nigel*

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# Christmas



**C** is for the Child born that night to be our light  
**H** is for Holy is His name  
**R** is Rejoice with gladness and joy  
**I** is for Immanuel, God with us  
**S** is for the Star to mark the way  
**T** is for Truth and Grace that was sent to us  
**M** is for Mary laying baby Jesus in the manger  
**A** is for Angels singing songs of joy  
**S** is for Salvation for all people



## News and Christmas greetings

*A happy Christmas to all our friends at Knightrider St.*

Thank you for your prayers for Philip. Unfortunately the last treatment was not successful and the cancer has returned, so he has now started a new course of chemo which will finish about Easter time. He is very tired but thankfully in no pain.

Every blessing

*Jane and Philip Webb*

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### Christmas Cards

Boxes for Christmas cards will be available in the church vestibule from Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December until Christmas day. If you wish to use these to send Christmas cards to others who regularly attend Sunday services in person, please place them in the box with the letter corresponding to the recipients surname. Then please give a donation for the postage you have saved in the offering box at the back of the church.

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### A Time to Reflect.

There comes a time when many of us find ourselves in a situation that was neither expected nor indeed planned for. And so it was, that after having met with friends of mine who had left South Africa many years before and were now settled in Victoria on Vancouver Island, Canada, I was persuaded that I should do the same.

And so it was that I set my plans in motion. To my utter surprise, my two son's and their wives in their early twenties, and my 18 year old daughter wanted to join me in emigrating from Cape Town to Victoria on Vancouver Island, British Columbia in early April of 1994.

This was an exciting adventure, flying into Boston, USA, and then driving for five days across the northern states of the USA to Seattle, and then by ferry across to Victoria on Vancouver Island.

Their mother Dawn and my ex-wife of four years, did not accompany us. It was, I suppose, an escape from an unpleasant time for me to one which I had hoped would lift my spirits and would become a new future for us all.

A few months later, our future together had unknowingly started to unravel as my second eldest son and his wife returned to Cape Town because the stress of leaving her family behind was too much for her.

In December of that year, Dawn flew over to spend Christmas with us. It was a lovely Christmas together, but then our eldest son and his wife learned that their visa applications were not going to be successful, and soon after in January they left for England.

When the time came for Dawn to return to Cape Town, we had agreed that our daughter should return with her because as an international student, the university costs were just too much for me to afford.

And so it came to be that I was alone again, but this time experiencing a loneliness I had never experienced before when some four years earlier Dawn and I were divorced.

A few weeks later, a wonderful couple I had befriended from the church I attended in Victoria, called round one evening to see how I was getting along.

As can be expected, I was not in a good place because there was an emptiness that could not be fulfilled. It was then they presented me with a small card on which a very thought-provoking prayer had been typed. And so it was in many respects, an answer to my prayers, and I was able move forward and continue living in Victoria for another four years before finally rejoining my family who had settled in England.

# Slow Me Down, Lord.

*A prayer by Wilfred Peterson*

Slow me down, Lord.

Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind.  
Steady my harried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time.  
Give me, amidst the confusions of my day, a calmness of the  
everlasting hills.

Break the tensions of my nerves with the soothing music of the  
sighing streams that live in my memory.

Help me to know the magical, restoring power of sleep.

Teach me the art of taking minute vacations of slowing down to look  
at a flower, to chat with an old friend or to make new one.

To pat a stray dog; to watch a spider build a web; to smile at a child;  
or to read a few lines from a good book.

Remind me each day that the race is not always to the swift;  
that there is more to life than increasing its speed.

Let me look upward into the branches of the towering oak  
and know that it grew slowly and well.

Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me to send my roots deep into  
the soil of life's enduring values that I may grow towards the stars  
of my greater destiny.

God Bless you all,

*Robin Hood.*



## Persecuted Church

*No child should have to be alone at Christmas.*

Every morning, Rumana starts her day like many other nine-year-olds around the world. She washes her face and eats her breakfast. She prays about her day and asks God to bless her and her family. She packs pens, pencils and schoolbooks in her backpack, and she sets off for school. But she walks the mile to school on her own. And when she gets to school, no one says hello or sits near Rumana in class. She's surrounded by people at school, but she's also completely alone. All because she's a Christian.

### **“I’M JUST ALONE”**

In Rumana's village in north west Bangladesh, almost everyone is Muslim. When her family decided to follow Jesus, the community turned against them. Even people who don't hate Christians are reluctant to associate with the family, because it could mean they are also rejected by the other villagers. This ostracism doesn't just happen between adults. Children see how their parents behave, and they treat Rumana the same way. “I don't have any friends in school because I'm a Christian and my parents are also Christian,” she says. “If I sit with them, their parents scold them saying, ‘She is a Christian. You can't mingle with them because Christians are bad.’ When the children say something unkind, I just keep smiling. But I cry when I'm alone.” You might think that Rumana's teachers stick up for her, but sadly the opposite is true. She explains, “My teachers scold children if they sit with me, saying, ‘Don't mingle with the Christian. If you mingle with her, you might also become a Christian.’” Rumana sums up her daily experience with heartbreaking simplicity: “I'm just alone.”

### **YOUNG AND VULNERABLE**

“Christian children and youth endure considerable levels of violence as their parents choose to follow Jesus – including verbal, physical,



psychological and sexual violence,” explains Sister Hadassah, an Open Doors partner in Bangladesh who supports Rumana and her parents, as well as many other persecuted children and their families. She continues: “There are hundreds of young children of Christian converts facing similar issues. Bangladesh has a strong community based culture, so when the community cuts off the converts and isolates them, that brings huge emotional damage to the Christian children.”

## **REMARKABLE FAITH**

This isolation is a daily sadness for Rumana. When students have breaks at school, they are allowed to run around in a field nearby. But other children refuse to let Rumana join in as they play. “I play alone with my toys,” she says. “I also made up a game. I draw a circle in my notebook and put some numbers inside. Then I close my eyes and try to randomly place my pen on one of the numbers. Then I award myself a gift based on the number I land on.” Rumana has also faced persecution from the village children while walking to church. They mock her, throw stones at her and slap her. But Rumana shows a remarkable generosity and forgiveness to the children who torment her. She says, “I told God everything so I feel better. Why should I be angry at them? I forgive them. I pray to God every day for them.” At just nine years old, Rumana’s faith is so strong. Her favourite Bible verse is Joshua 1:9: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” As she says, “It relates to my life story. I will not be fearful of my classmates. I will be courageous.”

## **ISOLATION AND RESILIENCE**

Sister Hadassah sees the same resilient faith in other young, persecuted Christians: “Even at this young age, parents taught them that these pressures or persecutions cannot separate them from the love of Jesus. They teach them to love and pray for those who persecute or push them down.” But it’s clear that Rumana is very affected by the bullying she faces every

day. And it comes from adults, too. One day, when Rumana's mother was away working, neighbours came to their house and started shouting at Rumana. "“They started verbally abusing me and then they began pushing against the iron wall of our house,” she says. “It felt like they were trying to break it down. They were abusing me by shouting insults at me! They said, ‘Come here, I’ll kill you today.’” It’s hard to believe that people could treat a nine year-old girl like this, simply because she and her family love Jesus. But the hardest day was yet to come.

## **BURNED TO ASHES**

Rumana was walking home from school when she saw something was seriously wrong. There was a thick cloud of smoke in the sky – and she realised it was coming from her home. It was on fire. “The fire was massive. There was nothing left from our house.” she remembers with sorrow. “No one from our village offered to help. All of them were just watching.” Rumana’s father was so overcome by trauma that he collapsed. The family asked if he could rest in a neighbour’s home, but they refused – saying they’d be targeted by the community if they helped Rumana’s family. Even her dad’s cousin refused to help. “No one allowed us to stay,” Rumana says. “With nothing to wear and no food, we were utterly helpless. We were all crying.” Eventually, one neighbour took pity and let them stay while Rumana’s dad recovered. An old friend of his, a Muslim man, paid for initial medical treatment. After a short while, the neighbour asked them to leave: she, like others, feared being rejected by the community for helping the Christian family. Rumana’s parents built a shed in the grounds of their destroyed house and had to live there until Open Doors partners came to help rebuild their home.

## **A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS**

This brutal rejection, bullying and ostracism is hard every day for Rumana, but the isolation can feel worst of all at Christmas. Rumana knows it’s a special time for Christians to remember the birth of Jesus, and she loves

spending it with other Christian children. With the help and prayers of people like you, Open Doors partners can host a special, three day Christmas celebration for Christians from a Muslim background from across Bangladesh – like Rumana.

## **RUMANA’S JOY**

It’s not just a time when children like Rumana can celebrate the birth of Christ safely and joyfully, though that is so important – it’s also a time when she can meet and play with lots of other young believers who understand what her life is like. Open Doors provides a regular Sunday school that she can travel to, meeting children from across her region – but this Christmas celebration is something even more special, with a much wider community. “I love to celebrate Christmas because all the Christians gather around together singing songs and reading from the Bible,” says Rumana. “Sometimes we read from a storybook. We recite the Bible verses we learned from Sunday school.” Rumana knows the Christmas story from the Christian storybooks provided by Open Doors partners. “I like the part when they named him Jesus Christ,” she says. “Also, on the day Jesus was born, there was a big star. I saw it in the Bible storybook you gave me!” They share a birthday cake for Jesus and have a special meal. At the end of the time together, each family gets a Christmas gift from Open Doors partners. These partners help in many practical ways – but the greatest gifts that children like Rumana receive are community, encouragement and love.

## **“JESUS LOVES ME”**

No matter how alone she feels when she goes to school each day, Christmas reminds Rumana that she belongs to the body of Christ. It’s why she can continue to walk with Him, even as she knows the path will be dangerous. “Jesus loves me,” she says. “I’m very valuable to Jesus. It’s only because of Jesus’ love that I have survived until now, despite all the persecution. His love has guided me this far, and I know I am on the right path through His love.” Sister Hadassah sees how important it is that children like Rumana are shown this love and support: “These children are

the future Christian leaders,” she says. “If Christian persecutors can damage or destroy them, they can destroy the next generation of Christians. “Please give your urgent attention to the Christian brothers and sisters in Bangladesh who are paying a huge cost to follow Jesus. “Without your help, the persecuted church in Bangladesh would die. Without support from the global church, building resilience and sustainability of the persecuted church in Bangladesh is virtually impossible.”

**PLEASE PRAY**

- For Rumana to know that she is not alone this Christmas, but part of a loving, global body of Christ
- For vulnerable Christian children in Bangladesh and elsewhere to be protected, joyful and strengthened to be the future of the church
- For gentle wisdom for Open Doors partners as they follow their ministry with persecuted children.

*Open Doors Magazine November/December 2024*

If you wish to donate to Open Doors work in supporting ostracised persecuted children, Open Doors contact details are:

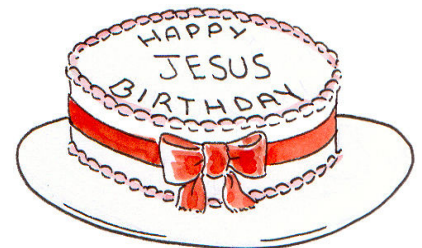
PO Box 6,  
Witney,  
Oxon,  
OX29 6WG  
01993 460015

Website: [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org)

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**BMS Birthday Scheme.**

26<sup>th</sup> December      Jen Townsend



**Happy Birthday to you!**

**Application for parking permit(s) 2025 (please detach from notes)**

Name: .....

Home Address: .....

.....Postcode: .....

Telephone ..... Mobile Number .....

E-mail: .....

Car Registration Number(s):.....

Do you need a permit for the church car park? Yes / No

Is your mobility restricted and you wish to be considered for a Gold Pass  
Yes / No

If so, do you hold a Blue Badge for Disabled Parking? Yes / No  
(**Note:** Blue Badge Holders still need a permit)

I enclose my contribution of £..... (cash / cheque)\* with this application  
*Please do NOT send cash by post. \* delete as applicable*

**OR**

I have made payment by Credit Transfer to the account of Maidstone Baptist Church in the amount of £..... using the reference **CP25**.

*Please make cheques payable to **Maidstone Baptist Church** or by Credit Transfer to account of Maidstone Baptist Church **00023750 40-52-40** CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ.*

The church will allocate this contribution to the work of B.U. Home Mission.

Gift aid no..... (If registered by the church for Gift Aid\*)

\*If you are not registered with the Church for Gift Aid but would like to be please tick the box overleaf. You can also use the envelopes in the vestibule for a 'one-off' gift aid donation.

Signature:.....

**TO APPLY:** Please detach and keep the notes, giving the completed application to the Administrator, by leaving in the Office letterbox (in the Office Door), or posting c/o Maidstone Baptist Church Office, Knightrider Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6LU

Information provided on this form will be kept in church databases on computer and otherwise for the purpose of church activities, it will not be disclosed to third parties except where required by law.

Please tick the box to acknowledge your consent

Registered Charity No. 1128948

*Completing this enquiry page does not commit you to anything!*

**I would like to receive details of the following publications (*please tick*):**

- Daily Bible Reading Notes
- News from Ann Bothamley, BMS
- Persecuted Church related literature

**I would like to receive details of (*please tick*):**

- Activities for Young People and Children
- Joining a Connect Group
- Playing Badminton (in the hall) on Friday afternoons
- Joining Ladies Prayer Breakfast
- Joining Key Men – 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of month
- Providing flowers on Sundays
- Flower arranging activities
- Regular Giving by Gift Aid
- One-off Gifts under Gift Aid rules
- Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter
- Volunteering to help with Children’s work on Sunday mornings
- Volunteering to help with Make Lunch in half term
- Other.....

If you tick one or more boxes, the Organiser(s) concerned will make early contact with you to discuss what is involved and for publications, prices, if any, and method of distribution.

**Application for Car Park Pass**

Please fill in the form for a 2025 permit valid for the Church Car Park.

Vehicle permits will have restricted availability for the church car park on Sundays: Between 9.30 am and 12.30 pm the church car park is restricted to those folk with mobility issues who have applied for a Gold pass or are Blue Badge holders. At other times on Sundays, those with permits may use the car park however, when there is a Service, priority must be given to Gold permit holders.

(This may mean other users will have to move their vehicles if necessary).

**There is no automatic roll-over renewal.** To avoid a last minute rush, it would be helpful if applicants could complete and return forms asap. First come, first served.

Gold passes expire on 31<sup>st</sup> December and will be reissued at the discretion of the Church. Gold passes are intended for people with limited mobility who would find the walk from public car parks restricted their ability to attend church. These passes relate to the person and may be used in any vehicle in which they travel. Note: Gold Passes also allow parking during the week in the Church Car Park. If you use your own car, please let us have the registration number.

Please notify the Administrator of any change of car registration number.

Whilst there is no charge for a permit, in suggesting that a contribution is made with the application, which suits most people, it is recognised that some folk prefer to top up other payments being made to the Church under Gift Aid rules.

Please amend the wording to indicate the amount for Car Parking contribution (all of which is given to Home Mission) included in any such gross payment.

***Skills Resource audit - your church needs you.***

If you have abilities which can be of service to the wider Church community and you are willing to make such skills available to us when needed, it would be very helpful to have a brief note of what you can do. Skills may be professional or trade based or perhaps derived from a hobby. Please provide brief details below or contact the Church Administrator by emailing [office@maidstonebaptist.net](mailto:office@maidstonebaptist.net)

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## Maidstone Baptist Church Car Parking 2025 Notes

### Church Car Park

1. Permits are available to **active Members** of the Church. Issue of permits is without charge, but it is suggested that applicants consider making a gift for the work of Home Mission in line with expected use over twelve months. If you have a gift aid number please put it on the application form
2. **Please show your permit in the windscreen at all times.** Issue of a permit does not guarantee a space, parking is on a first come, first served basis. Occasionally the Church Officers may close the car park for maintenance, or for an activity at the premises - weddings, funerals, special days, but usually warning of this will be given on the preceding Sunday.
3. Always park squarely within the white lines - there are 12 spaces against the east wall and one alongside the chapel which is designated as 'disabled user preferred' but is available to other users if this is the only space left.
4. The space nearest the road is reserved for the Minister/Officer-on-duty at all times.
5. **SUNDAYS** – Between 9.30 am and 12.30 pm the church car park is restricted to those folk with mobility issues who have applied for a Gold pass. At other times on Sundays, those with permits may use the car park however, when there is a Service, priority must be given to Gold permit holders. (This may mean other users will have to move their vehicles if necessary)
6. Please be aware that regular hirers of, and other folk (tradesmen) working in, the premises may be allowed conditional permits.
7. **IMPORTANT:** If your car is not standing in a white lined space with a valid permit do not leave the premises without taking the car as well.

Occasionally we have to ask drivers to move cars even if properly parked. Please accept any such request graciously.

### Maidstone Baptist Church - Data Protection Policy Statement

Maidstone Baptist Church is committed to complying with data protection law and data subjects' rights under it, in relation to their personal information, whilst it is under our control. The data subject is the person that the personal information identifies or relates to. Our Church is committed to handling and processing personal information in line with our Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statement, a copy of which is available from the Church Office.

Our commitment applies to our handling of personal information throughout its time under our control. It applies to our obtaining, collection, storage, processing and destruction of personal information, and when we transmit it or make it available to third parties.





# Prayer Points

## December 2024

Sun 1<sup>st</sup> As we come to the final month of the year we look back over the past year and all that has happened; the ups and downs, the laughter and the tears, the questions and the answers, the pain and the sorrows. Pray today that whatever has happened we will continue in the strength of the Lord.

Mon 2<sup>nd</sup> May we remember in prayer today all world leaders particularly Sir Kier Starmer, Donald Trump the US president elect, and all the European leaders as talks continue to find a solution to the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Tue 3<sup>rd</sup> Let us pray today for the bereaved families who have lost family and loved ones in Gaza and the flooding in Valencia.

Wed 4<sup>th</sup> Pray for the relationship between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland at this time of political differences within our shores.

Thur 5<sup>th</sup> Pray for our members here in Maidstone who are going through their own crisis and turmoil; some in pain, anxious, bereaved, fearful, isolated, spiritually discouraged, dispondent about their destiny.

Fri 6<sup>th</sup> Pray today for our youth and youth Pastor as they work together here, preparing for the christmas period upon us



once again, including the brigades lunch this Sunday.

Sat 7<sup>th</sup> May we pray for the Winter Night Shelter organisers who are planning again this year, that those homeless people will still get help they need from local government bodies.

Sun 8<sup>th</sup> Pray for the Street Pastors as they go out to support the night time community in town, through contact and any means they can.

Mon 9<sup>th</sup> Let us pray for connect groups as they meet regularly for support, upliftment and encouragement.

Tue 10<sup>th</sup> Pray for a speedy recovery for all those in church who are waiting for surgery or hospital treatment. Also pray for those in 24 hour care in homes and care centres.



Wed 11<sup>th</sup> May we pray for our emergency services as they prepare for another winter period responding to peoples needs.

Thur 12<sup>th</sup> Pray for our elderly members who are weak and frail and are at risk as they go about their daily activities as the weather worsens, that they will be safe at this dangerous time of year.

Fri 13<sup>th</sup> Pray for all those who are sleeping rough in Maidstone and surrounding districts and those who have no regular place of abode. Pray they will benefit from the service of local charities.

Sat 14<sup>th</sup> Remember in prayer the needs of this church under the leadership of Pastor Nigel. Pray for the deacons and the whole leadership team.

Sun 15<sup>th</sup> Pray for our youth club and those who organise it, for wisdom,

tact and discernment in their work as these are challenging times for our youth and young people in the light of so much crime in the town.

Mon 16<sup>th</sup> May we pray for our government leaders and those in senior positions of authority as they deal with every kind of social or economic issues.

Tue 17<sup>th</sup> Pray for those who organise Sunday School services that their spirits will be uplifted.

Wed 18<sup>th</sup> Pray for Jane as she was so instrumental in continuing the Make lunch project and the success it has seen over the summer period.



Thur 19<sup>th</sup> Let us pray for all those who are suffering in the workplace for whatever reason – bullying, harassment, abuse etc.

Fri 20<sup>th</sup> Pray for the supermarket and shop staff who are working hard up to Christmas, that as they do so in the quietness of their thoughts, they will be reminded of the saving King born in a manger.

Sat 21<sup>st</sup> Pray for all those who are going through terrible times at the moment through personal and worrying situations that only God can deal with.

Sun 22<sup>nd</sup> Remember those in church who need special support, especially those who are struggling with certain weaknesses and shortfalls, that Jesus knows all about because he made us.

Mon 23<sup>rd</sup> Pray for the situation around world leaders trying to deal with the aim of reducing carbon emissions in the future.

Tue 24<sup>th</sup> Pray for our Boys' and Girls' brigade as they reflect on their past years events and prepare for a new season ahead.

**Christmas Day** “Unto us a child is born and he will be called ‘Wonderful Councillor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace’”. Pray that each of us will take a portion of these words into our lives today.

Thur 26<sup>th</sup> May we pray that even as the days are shorter and darker, the light of heaven will be reflected in our lives, words and deeds.

Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Pray for all those who are persecuted in this country and abroad because of their Christian faith particularly those in the care services.



Sat 28<sup>th</sup> Pray for wisdom as we speak and grace as we act in front of each other today either in the workplace, school, or at leisure.

Sun 29<sup>th</sup> Pray for all those who are just about to go into a nursing home due to personal circumstances and worsening disabilities.

Mon 30<sup>th</sup> May we pray today for our town here in Maidstone and the county and borough council and all the leaders who are instrumental in the planning and organisation of the town and districts.

Tue 31<sup>st</sup> As we come to the final day of 2024 pray that we will go in confidence, resting on the promises of God, pressing towards the high calling, leaving the past behind because we cannot change it. Remember Jesus knows what lies ahead: He can already see what is going to happen. He holds time and eternity in his hands.

## This stinks...

*(A story about no toilets)*



**3.5 billion people don't have a safe toilet!**

**Twin your toilet and change the lives of people with no safe place to go.**

Well that's a bit offensive, isn't it? Not the thought of a bad smell, but the fact that right now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with gadgets galore, an app for everything and the ability to put people into space, 3.5 billion people still don't have a safe, clean toilet. That really stinks...

There's more: 2.2 billion people don't have clean water close to home; one child under five dies of disease linked to dirty water and poor sanitation every two minutes; and diarrhoea kills more children in war zones than war itself.

### **Personal space**

Meet Bawili and her daughter in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for a more personal look at the situation.

*The conversation one evening went a bit like this:*

Ebinda (14): Mum, I need the toilet.

Bawili: I'm trying to cook dinner! Never mind, it's still quite light. You can go on your own.

Well, why wouldn't a 14-year-old be able to go to the toilet on her own?

Why would she even need to ask?

But, for Ebinda and Bawali, the 'toilet' was not a convenient enclosure with safe walls, a door to shut and protection for privacy. It was just an unsafe space in the bush.

Ebinda returned from her short, simple trip to use the toilet bruised, battered and pregnant. She dropped out of school and lost the rest of her own childhood.

Ebinda's father had been killed many years earlier during a civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

So Bawili had taken her children and fled to Tanzania where they spent ten years in a refugee camp. When they were forcibly returned to DRC, where this incident took place, they had no home, no clean water and no toilet. They had to walk for 90 minutes, three times a day, to collect water from Lake Tanganyika, but the water was dirty and many people fell sick with cholera. Using the conveniences was nothing like convenient.

When in lieu of a loo you're forced to use a secluded area of nature, the natural possibilities include snake bites, darkness, fear, indignity... and rape.

'I felt so sad at what had happened,' says Bawili. 'I remember thinking that if my husband was still alive, maybe we would have had a toilet and a bathroom.'

### **Safe walls**

What Bawili was missing was support. Someone to step in and stand alongside her in the face of difficult circumstances. We can't replace her husband, but we can help build some safe walls around her – physically and metaphorically.

Bawili was able to join a community health club set up through an initiative called Toilet Twinning. These clubs provide people with training about hygiene and encourage them to build toilets. And as villagers construct toilets together, they are also building community and learning to support one another. Health club members helped build Bawili and her family a toilet too. 'We're learning to work together... to love each other,' says Bawili. 'If there is no love, we cannot build a good society. We used to be ashamed when people shouted abuse as we walked to the bush. I'm so happy to have a toilet.'

Bawili is now the president of her community health club.

### **The bottom line**

Everyone needs a loo to keep them safe from disease and indignity. Girls, especially, are placed at risk by not having access to a safe toilet. Not having a toilet in the safety of their home makes them vulnerable to attack;

at school, if there are no facilities, life gets particularly difficult when they have their period. It causes many girls to miss school for that week each month. Some get so frustrated that they give up altogether. The lack of education keeps them trapped in a cycle of poverty. Instead of the things that should be, it's young people's futures that are going down the toilet. Thanks to the resulting increased productivity and lower health care costs, giving people access to toilets is a hugely cost-effective way to improve people's lives.

### **Are you sitting down?**

Back in 2008, Sian Atterton taped the picture of a latrine onto the loo seat at her home with a sticky note bearing the words: 'I've twinned your loo.' She had sponsored a toilet in Burundi as a Christmas present for her husband Mark. Mark was a manager at Cord, an NGO involved in peace and reconciliation work, and he was inspired!

Together, Tearfund and Cord came up with Toilet Twinning. It's now a Tearfund campaign that raises funds to support our water and sanitation work around the world. Specifically, it helps provide clean water, proper toilets and hygiene training to some of the world's poorest communities. For a one-off £60 donation, you make it possible for a family somewhere to have a toilet. They become your 'toilet twin' and you receive a certificate with the GPS coordinates of the latrine and a photo to hang in your own privy with pride. You can even choose which country your toilet has its twin in. Currently the options are:

- Nepal
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Tanzania
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- South Sudan
- Côte D'Ivoire

- Zambia
- Uganda
- Democratic Republic of Congo

Since 2010, more than 140,000 toilets have been twinned, giving about 840,000 people in 45 countries access to safe sanitation. And we estimate that around 1 million people receive hygiene education each year thanks to the programmes that Toilet Twinning helps fund.

That leaves only 3.5 billion more people in need of a toilet!

**Pray with us**

- Praise God for his creation. Thank him for natural resources like water. Pray that all people will have access to lifesaving, clean water and good sanitation.
- Thank God that he gives us ways to keep ourselves safe from many illnesses. Pray that people will be able to receive information about the things that can save lives.
- Pray for all those people who still don't have a toilet. Ask God that he will keep them safe and make a way for them to get the information and resources they need in order to have one.

*Written by Tearfund's Tarryn Pegna | 17 Nov 2023*

If you wish to twin your toilet in support of this vital work, Tearfund's contact details are as follows:

Tearfund 100 Church Road Teddington TW11 8QE

Tel 020 3906 3906 Website: <https://www.tearfund.org/>

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| <p><b><u>Deadline for January Knightrider Street News:</u></b><br/> <b><u>Sunday December 8<sup>th</sup></u></b><br/>         Please e-mail contributions to the address on inside front cover<br/> <i>No later than 20.00hrs on this date</i></p> |
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## Ready for Christmas?

Christmas time is getting very close now,  
The boys are excited and having a pow-wow,  
“We need decorations” they demand “Right away”  
Mum’s not so certain and says “Not today.”

The decorations are kept right up in the loft  
They said “We can get them as we are not soft”  
So they pull down the ladder to go up and look  
Keeping things quiet as Mum goes to cook.

They have a good laugh pulling things all about,  
Just then from downstairs comes a deafening shout,  
Mum is quite mad at what they have done  
But all they wanted was to have some good fun.

Decorations, lights and the tree are all found  
So they throw them all down with a loud crushing sound.  
With baubles and lights and the tree heaped about  
The boys look and laugh and have a good shout.

So out from the loft the boys start to come  
Calling out “Don’t worry, we’re alright Mum”  
Then decide to jump off when almost right down  
One lands on the decs – Oh what a prize clown!

The tree now looking rather broken and torn,  
There’s nothing to laugh about – the boys all forlorn,  
Mother appears and the air was quite blue  
The boys now contrite and apologies due.

So they now set to and clear up the mess,  
The baubles all crushed but the lights somewhat less,  
But one thing was still looking shiny like new  
The star had survived, all silver and blue.

Mum looks all around and the star she did see  
Said, “I’m glad we’ve still got that – although there’s no tree,  
For the star is important in our Christmas story  
And we must believe it, and give God the Glory.” *Roger Fleckney.*



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Maidstone Girls' Brigade & 1<sup>st</sup> Maidstone Boys' Brigade



Our weekly meetings are going well, busy and fun with lots of different things going on in each of the groups. Recently the younger groups sessions have been based on Jesus Light of the World and Remembrance and the older groups have looked at resources about polio as part of the 'End Polio now' campaign and enjoyed a construction challenge.

On Remembrance Sunday we took a small group of the young people up to London. It was interesting and moving to be around the national Remembrance Day commemorations and see the Parade. We enjoyed seeing some of the London landmarks and then visited the Cenotaph to see the wreaths that had been laid earlier. Our walk back to the station took us past the Westminster Abbey Field of Remembrance which was interesting to see. Overall we had a great, but tiring day out.

Don't forget our fellowship and fund raising **Festive Lunch** following morning worship on **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December**. All are welcome. This is one of our regular events bringing the church family and Brigade families together to share a meal and fellowship, and, where we can in what we understand are difficult times, to raise some funds for our Brigades. If you would like to attend please **sign up** on the form at the rear of the Church or use the electronic booking system **no later than Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December**, or speak to one of the Brigade staff or drop me an email.

We would love to welcome new members into any of our sections – do get in touch with Al or myself if you know of anyone who would like to join us or just want to find out a little more about what we do.

Please continue to remember the Brigade staff and young people in your prayers as they meet week by week – we do appreciate your support and interest.



*Jane Haslam*  
*[mbc-415@highg.net](mailto:mbc-415@highg.net) / 01622 744546*

**Regular Sunday Meetings.**

Every Sunday: 10.30hrs In-person Worship at Knightrider Street

Services also streamed via Zoom and YouTube when possible.

