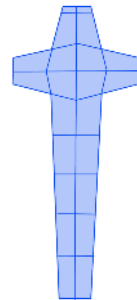
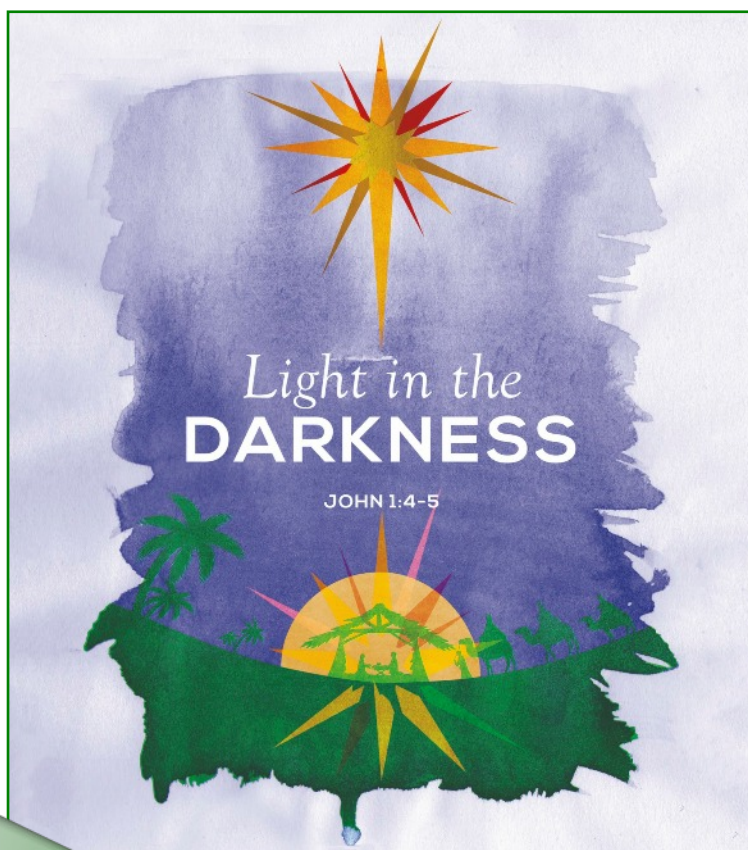


ST ANDREW'S METHODIST CHURCH

The Stow, Harlow, CM20 3AF



Minister:
Rev Blair Kirkby:
bkirkby@msn.com 01279 443400
or 07913 476934



MAGAZINE

**DECEMBER 2023
& JANUARY 2024**

MINISTERIAL TEAM LETTER

Rev Blair Kirkby

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Rev John Buxton, M A (Cantab)

15 The Drive, Harlow, CM20 3QD

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Dear Members and Friends,

As we come towards Christmas, it is a privilege for me to write this letter to introduce the December-January church newsletter. We pray God's blessing on all St Andrews members and friends this Christmas-time and as we look forward to the new year: 2024.

First of all may I express my thanks for all the prayers, good wishes and expressions of concern from so many of you. I had expected it to be a month or so out of action when I went into hospital for my new knee operation – that in itself has gone well but as can happen, other complications have so far meant seven weeks out of the last four months in hospital and I am still under three more consultants.

The consequence of all this has been time to reflect. "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform".

Growing up in a church family as a JMA collector, hearing a call to overseas service; and then the opportunities provided by getting a scholarship to a boarding school - all contributed to experiences with New Testament study in Cambridge etc for the work I was appointed to do in our ten years in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore before returning to North Wales, Harlow, Basildon and Barton. But what if anything has God for me to do after this sudden break?

"God moves in mysterious way his wonders to perform"

These words might too suggest what was happening in Palestine two thousand years ago. The words of the angel to Zechariah and Elizabeth, to Mary and Joseph, their song to the Shepherds, the studies of the wise men (the astrologers) . All this happening at the right time to enable the disciples and Paul to be able to take the resurrection message out to the Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire.

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform"

Does this help us to understand the miracle of the incarnation, not just in the amazing gospel stories of the birth of Jesus, but at a deeper level the even more amazing truth of "The God Made Flesh", "Immanuel", that the God of all creation enters our little world in the form of a human baby.

Or as Charles Wesley puts it: "Our God contracted to a span
Incomprehensibly made man"

the God Who thereby demonstrates his love and concern for his world, despite all the conflicts and suffering of the world at this time.

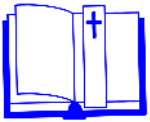
On behalf of the ministers, stewards and leadership may I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a blessed new year.

John Buxton

IN LOVING MEMORY of

Emmanuel Asiedu-Offei who died on 5th December 2019.

May God comfort all who mourn.



BIBLE READING – St Luke 2:8–14. Living Bible

Some shepherds were in the field outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly an angel appeared among them, and the landscape shone bright with the glory of the Lord. They were badly frightened, but the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' He said. 'I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Saviour - yes, the Messiah, the Lord - has been born tonight in Bethlehem! How will you recognize him? You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger!'

QUOTABLE QUOTES

We can make up our minds whether our lives in this world shall wound like thorns and nettles, or be beautiful and fragrant like the lilies of the field. – *Fr Andrew SDC*

It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. – *Samuel Johnson*

Where there is no penitence there can be no progress. – *Fr Andrew SDC*

We should spend as much time in thanking God for His benefits as we do in asking Him for them. – *St Vincent de Paul*

The times we find ourselves having to wait on others may be the perfect opportunities to train ourselves to wait on the Lord. – *Joni Eareckson Tada*

Happiness is more than a grin on one's face, it is the glory in one's heart. – *R Parlette*

He that gives his heart will not deny his money.

History repeats itself, that's one of the things that's wrong with history. – *Clarence Darrow*

Unquestionably, there is progress. The average worker now pays out twice as much in taxes as he formerly got in wages. – *Henry L Mencken*

All updates on church information are on our
CHURCH WEBSITE www.standrewsharlow.org.uk

What you see may be an old version, press the F5 key to refresh.



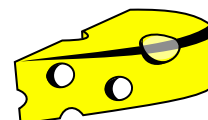
TOY SERVICE

On Sunday December 10th we will be holding our usual collection of new toys etc. and toiletries for children and Mums at the Refuge. Also we like to send new small items of clothing and toiletries for the homeless through Streets 2 Homes. I know times are tough but if you can give, however small, your gift will be much appreciated.

Thank you, Margaret T.

Vaughn Mojzes is continuing with Saturday **SPUD & PUD LUNCHES**.

From January they will be at 12 noon on the **SECOND SATURDAY** each month. £5, please book



HARLOW FOODBANK

So far this year, we have collected and sent £546.00 to Harlow Food Bank to help with the work of providing emergency food supplies to persons and families in severe need. With only one month to go to the end of the year it seems we will fall quite a lot short of our usual total donations which have been in the region of twice this amount. Please do all you can to help boost our gift to Food Bank over the Christmas period. The need is great. Donations of cash can be given to Hazel Taylor. Cheques can be made payable to Michael Roberts Charitable Trust and can either be given to Hazel or sent to me at 73, Mark Hall Moors, Harlow. CM20 2NG. Thanks, too, for your donations of food throughout the year and to Alison and Kevin Brand who look after this side of our giving.

John Hutchings



CHRISTMAS DINNER AND CAROLS Sunday 3rd December after the morning service.

Once again Cecilia and Alexis will be providing a Christmas Dinner for St Andrew's congregation. This will be a full turkey dinner and sweet plus Carol singing, and Father Christmas will visit.

There is no charge but the booking deadline is 26th November.



Here is a space Lord - what I choose to fill it with is up to me. But if I lay my burdens down for a few moments and seek the bright sunshine of your presence, then your presence in my inner being can transform the time and place, however ordinary and routine it may be.

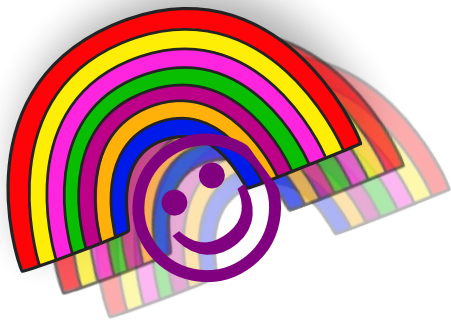


So in this winter season, as we remember Christ's birth, may we lay our burdens down before our Saviour and live in the light of his amazing love.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Adapted from a prayer in Hidden Treasures

**P
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Seen on church notice boards:

Free trip to heaven. Details Inside!

Searching for a new look? Have your faith lifted here!

Outside one church is a picture of two hands holding stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments are inscribed. A headline reads: 'For fast relief, take two tablets.'

When the restaurant next to a church put out a big sign with red letters that said, 'Open Sundays', the church reciprocated with its own message: 'We are open on Sundays, too.'

The preacher in the Dome in Brighton had given out his text: 'Paul we know and Apollos we know, but who are these?' The stewards were just showing in two late-comers, and one steward called out: "They are two businessmen staying at the Queen's Hotel."

A lady was advertising for a travelling companion, and ended with these words: 'Christian wanted, cheerful if possible.'

What's red and white, red and white, and red and white?

Father Christmas rolling down a hill.



What do you call Santa's helpers?

Subordinate Clauses.

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?

Frostbite.

One cold winter night, during a violent storm, a mother was tucking her small, frightened little boy into bed. She was about to turn off the light when he said with a tremor in his voice: "Mummy, will you stay with me tonight?"

Mummy smiled and gave him a reassuring hug. "I can't, dear," she said, "I have to sleep with Daddy." A long silence – and then came his shaky reply: "The big coward!"

Grandfather was talking to his granddaughter, "When I was a child all we got for Christmas was an apple and an orange."

The little girl clapped her hands in joy. "Brilliant! I'd love a new computer and a mobile!"

Seen it all, done it all, can't remember most of it!



Flashback

There are four fund raising activities at St. Andrew's that contribute directly to the work of the Methodist Church worldwide. The main enabler of this contribution is the World Mission Fund. The fund supports mission partners working overseas, UK nationals in mission appointments and overseas students in ministry training. It also allows the Church to make grants to Partner Churches for special projects.

We begin each calendar year with a World Mission Fund envelope collection, usually to coincide with the Annual Covenant Service. The envelopes are sometimes framed as Self-Denial Envelopes. All of the money collected goes to the World Mission Fund. In addition, collection boxes are available from the World Mission Secretary which can be used for collecting the odd pennies at home throughout the year.

Next, at Easter time, there is a MWiB (Methodist Women in Britain) Easter envelope collection. St. Andrew's Church MWiB is part of the HAEBEA section of the Beds, Herts and Essex District. The money collected is dedicated at an Easter Offering Dedication Service in May; this takes place in turn around the churches of the district. All of the money collected goes to the World Mission Fund. One of their notable activities every year is the launch a new partnership project, announced at the District Day in October.

In late September or early October, to coincide with the Harvest celebration service, there is a collection for "All We Can", which is the operating name for Methodist Relief and Development Fund. "All We Can" works through partnership alongside global communities most impacted by disasters, poverty and injustice, to enable everyone to reach their full potential through sustainable, locally-owned solutions.

Last, but not least, is the JMA (Junior Mission for All) collection which takes place all year round, with children of the church collecting money week-by-week from adult subscribers after the Sunday service. This not only brings in money for mission work, but also gives opportunities for the children to interact with the adults. The annual cycle starts in September to coincide with the start of the Methodist year, cumulating in the presentation of certificates and gifts to the children in late September or early October. 20% of the money collected is allocated to home mission and 80% to overseas mission.

We have seen from previous articles of this column how missionaries sent from Britain abroad have helped to develop churches in far-flung places, blossoming into great Christian communities, to the benefit of those countries and the home church. St. Andrew's have been most blessed with generous donations received over the years for this kind of work. All monies

donated can be Gift Aided to boost the funding by a further 25% without costing the donor a penny more. So please continue to give generously and don't forget to Gift Aid your giving if you can.

The photo is from a JMA Presentation at a Sunday service back in 1980, organised by Margaret Torkildsen, the JMA Secretary at the time. The awards on this occasion were presented by Kay Wong, and the presiding minister was Rev. John Buxton.

Andrew Wong



EDITOR'S AUTUMN GARDEN BLOG ... written Harvest weekend.

THURSDAY 28th Sept. *Genesis 1:11. Then God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them,' and it was so.*

I was tidying the garden on a sunny, windy day when I noticed that the arch was tilting towards the lawn. I remembered that a few months ago it had done the same so I'd shoved two thick bits of flower-pot shards under one leg, which had rusted away at ground level. I'd forgotten all about it but the weight of greenery had at least doubled in the mean-time. My grape vine has grown over the years and because of the weather, we have dozens of bunches of ripening fruit. And the clematis is intertwined, just to add to the glorious, floricultural muddle. The weight had broken the pot-shards and the matching leg had sheered off at ground level too. I found a bit of crazy paving and moved the bits of pot away and tried to shove it under the leg, but only having one hand to lift the heavy arch was difficult. In the end I yanked it up with both hands and heaved the stone in place with my foot. It helped, but not a lot. So later Bob held the arch upright while I tied it with string to the hanging basket bracket on the wall on the other side of the patio. It didn't look great but the string was above our heads and stopped the whole thing sinking onto the lawn!

I was going to cut some of the grapes on long enough stems to put in the big arrangement I was doing on Friday ready for Harvest Festival at church, so it was time to start pruning. I got a bowl-full of bunches for the blackbirds and some nice ones on stalks to take on Friday. By the way, the grapes don't usually ripen, so most years are quarter-inch bullets and incredibly sour. But this year some are turning black and are almost edible, although still minute!

I did my usual yearly trim of shrubs and plants ready for the half dozen vases I would be arranging at church. This included a branch of one of the greenhouse tomato plants with two nice ripe tomatoes on it. Everything went in buckets on the patio to have a deep drink overnight.

I decided it was time to get a new arch. This one cost under a tenner about ten years ago so I've had my money's worth out of it.

FRIDAY 29th *Deuteronomy 32:2. Let my teaching fall like rain, and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants."*

It rained! Everything was dripping wet when I went to empty the water from the buckets and take them to the car. More annoyingly, a rat or squirrel had gnawed almost half of one of the tomatoes. *I've ordered another arch and this one is galvanised and made of thicker metal but it's £50.

I was in the middle of clearing a space around the legs of the arch, so we could put the new one up, when we got a phone call from a niece and her husband. They were at Harlow Garden Centre so could they pop round.

I did a quick tidy-up indoors and thawed a box of home-made cakes from the freezer on the sun-bed. Well I wasn't going to get any more time on it! We were sitting indoors having drinks, cakes and raspberries from the garden when Dave said, 'There's something moving behind my legs!' Timmy (the tortoise) had wandered in the patio door and had come to see what was going on.

SATURDAY 30th. *Genesis 8:22 - "while the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."*

I'd arranged a huge pedestal with flowers fruit and veg on Friday and put all the flowers and green in buckets at church. Today Margaret and I did about fifteen arrangements while other



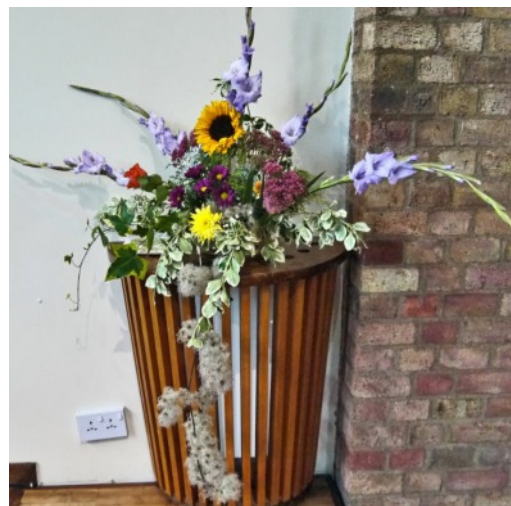
members arranged the display on the church platform. All the food goes to Harlow Foodbank and Streets2Homes and the flowers will go to friends of the church, including those too frail to get out now.

After lunch and a snooze on the sun-bed, (me, while Bob washed up!) we went round to some friends. He has had an operation recently so we'd arranged to blitz their front garden for them.

I should sleep well tonight!

MONDAY 2nd October.

It's really mild still. We are able to pick raspberries and tomatoes most days. The climbing beans have just finished and the cape gooseberries or physalis are almost ready to pick. The unusually warm weather is really helping them. I've still got a good show of Japanese anemones and the Michaelmas daisies are a picture. My tiny pink autumn cyclamen surprise me every year, flowers shooting overnight (or so it seems) from a dead-looking corm which is half visible. Just flowers, no leaves, delicate and beautiful. The last of the roses are struggling on and the new winter pansies are coming along nicely. Timmy has stopped eating but still chases after me around the garden. And the forecast is for another week of warm weather.



Thank you, God, that plants feed our bodies and their beauty nourishes our souls.

Thank you for the miracle of seed-time and harvest. Amen.

God bless you this Advent, Christmas and New Year,

Hazel Taylor.



CHARACTERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT 6 – KING AHAZ AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH

You probably know little or nothing about King Ahaz. The prophecy of Isaiah 7.14 was given to Ahaz by Isaiah. The prophecy is heard as part of the Christmas story every year, 'that the Lord himself will give you a sign, *behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel*'. What does it mean? The name Immanuel (meaning God is with us) appears only three times in the bible and there is no record of anybody called Immanuel. Matthew applies it to the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1.23), a prophecy 700 years before Jesus was born. There are many prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament.

King Ahaz was an awful King. There were many terrible Kings in Israel and Judah but Ahaz was one of the worst. Israel had split into two, Israel and Judah and each had their own Kings and there was no peace between them. King Ahaz who reigned in Judah did not walk with God, sacrificed his son as a burnt offering to the god Molech and worshiped false idols. The King of Israel together with Syria declared war on Judah. Ahaz took the silver and gold from the temple as a present for the King of Assyria. He was seeking an alliance with Assyria to protect Judah from invasion. The problem was that Ahaz was rejecting God to provide for the safety of Judah and placing trust in himself instead.

God wanted to give Ahaz a sign but Ahaz refused. Here we have God annoyed and impatient but God gave the sign of the virgin. The significance is in the meaning of Immanuel and not whether anybody was actually named Immanuel. God was telling Ahaz that he was with him protecting Judah from invasion by her enemies. The problem was that the King was an unbeliever and ignoring God. Whether he understood the meaning of the sign, we do not know. Isaiah 7.16 tells us that both Kings opposing Judah would be removed. This prophecy was fulfilled when Assyria invaded Israel the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and Syria.

Matthew tells us the Christmas story from the side of Joseph (Luke, from Mary's.) This gospel is known as the Jewish one and the purpose of the gospel is to show that Jesus is the promised Messiah, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies and that he was also a descendant of King David.

Joseph is betrothed to Mary. In biblical times being betrothed is binding. Joseph finds that Mary is already with child. Joseph decides to protect Mary from shame (the penalty for adultery being death) and decides to divorce her quietly. He has a visit from an angel during a dream (Mary also has a visit from an angel) saying that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that he should marry Mary and call the child Jesus, for he will save people from their sins.

Why did we have the miracle of the virgin birth? Jesus had to be both divine and human. If he was just divine he could not associate with us and die for our sins. If he was only human, Jesus could not be God with us. If Joseph was the biological father he would be the son of Joseph not the Son of God but he had to be the adoptive father to fulfil the prophecy that Jesus is a descendant of King David. Matthew provides a genealogy of Jesus back from Joseph to King David.

At Christmas God has given us the greatest gift we could possess by sending his Son to us. The significance of the gift is in the three names Immanuel, Jesus and Christ. Jesus means God saves, Immanuel God is with us and Christ means Messiah or anointed one. The three names together tell us that God is with us, God saves us from our sins and Jesus is our promised Messiah and future King. God is telling King Ahaz that he is with him protecting Judah but with us in the presence of the Son representing a double fulfilment of the prophecy. The virgin birth is the beginning of the bigger picture. We are not saved by the birth of Jesus but by his death and resurrection.

Finally, a very merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Remember Jesus is for life (and eternity) not just for Christmas. *Arthur Revels.*



We would appreciate
biscuit donations for our
Sunday refreshments.

SUNDAY COFFEE

Sunday Coffee - Alison Brand - 445187

week 1	Gay Brown & Barbara Baldwin
week 2	Margaret T. & Maureen Etchells
Week 3	Hazel Taylor & Andrew Proctor
week 4	Alison Brand & Louise
week 5	Margery Collier and Andrew P.

STARS

Each Tuesday in term time @ 10am

Contact: Alison Brand 445187



First Tuesday Gay Brown
Second Tuesday *CAN YOU HELP?*
Third Tuesday Gay Brown
Fourth Tuesday *CAN YOU HELP?*
Regular helper at start - Andrew Proctor

HELPERS

Flower
Rota

DECEMBER

10th Patience Asiedu-Offei
17th Margaret Mountstevens
24th Margaret Torkildsen



JANUARY

7th Beth and John Hutchings
21st Offer please

**Flowers: contact Margaret Mountstevens - 411028
or Hazel - 438905**

Please let one of the above have the money and any colour preferences
two weeks before your flower date.

DECEMBER DIARY

YOUTH CHURCH
Sunday 10.30am
Closed 24th & 31st

**WE ARE WORSHIPPING
 IN CHURCH
 and also on ZOOM**

BIBLE STUDIES NOTE: ALL CLOSED 25th - 29th

MONDAY - 12 NOON Eat your lunch as you share in a Bible discussion in Acts.

IN THE CHAPEL, led by Rev Blair.

TUESDAY 7.30pm - Led by Fred Arthur, IN THE CHAPEL. We continue in Genesis

NOTE: 19th at 7.15pm at Hazel and Bob's at 61 Ladyshot, CM20 3EN, with Refreshments.

THURSDAY 12 NOON - ON ZOOM - led by Rev Blair, studying Matthew.

THURSDAY 7.30pm - Led by Fred Arthur. ON ZOOM. Continuing in Galations.

NIOMIE CARTWRIGHT WILL BE SUPERVISING
 A CRÈCHE DURING OUR SUNDAY SERVICE
 ONCE A MONTH. This month it's the 10th

**Monday Morning Coffee Time from
 10.30 - 12 noon**
Come and help or come and share
NOTE: CLOSED Christmas Day

DECEMBER

SUNDAY	3 rd	10.30am	Morning Worip and Holy Communion on Advent 1 Rev Blair Kirkby followed by Church Christmas Lunch & Carols
Wednesday	6 th	7.30pm	Area Meeting via Zoom
SUNDAY	10 th	10.30am	Morning Worship & Toy Service & Youth Church Nativity on Advent 2 - Mr Fred Arthur Crèche this Sunday
		6.30pm	Carol Service - Rev Blair Kirkby
Saturday	16 th	11.00am	Pop-in Prayers
		12 noon	Spud and Pud - £5 - Please book with Vaughan
SUNDAY	17 th	10.30am	Morning Worship on Advent 3 - Mrs Elizabeth Stockdale
Thursday	21 st	12.30pm	Friendship Group at Ann's home in Harefield
SUNDAY	24 th	10.30am	Morning Worship on Advent 4 - Rev Blair Kirkby
CHRISTMAS DAY		10.30am	Celebration Worship - Rev Blair Kirkby
SUNDAY	31 st	10.30am	Morning Worship - Rev John Buxton
		11.15pm	Watch night Service - Mr Fred Arthur



DECEMBER

YOUTH CHURCH
Sunday 10.30am
RESUMES 7th Jan.

JANUARY **2024 DIARY**

BIBLE STUDIES

MONDAY - 12 NOON Eat your lunch as you share in a Bible discussion in Acts.

IN THE CHAPEL, led by Rev Blair. **(NOT NEW YEAR'S DAY)**

TUESDAY 7.30pm - Led by Fred Arthur, IN THE CHAPEL. We continue in Genesis.

THURSDAY 12 NOON - ON ZOOM - led by Rev Blair, studying Matthew.

THURSDAY 7.30pm - Led by Fred Arthur. ON ZOOM. Continuing in Galations.

NIOMIE CARTWRIGHT WILL BE SUPERVISING A CRÈCHE DURING OUR
 SUNDAY SERVICE ONCE A MONTH. This month it's the 28th

Monday Morning Coffee Time from 10.30 - 12 noon

Come and help or come and share.

NOTE: CLOSED New Year's Day

SUNDAY	7 th	10.30am	Morning Worship, Holy Communion and Covenant Service Rev Blair Kirkby
Saturday	13 th	12 noon	Spud and Pud - £5 - please book with Vaughan
SUNDAY	14 th	10.30am	Morning Worship - Mr Graham Watson
		2.30pm	Church Council Meeting
Thursday	18 th	12.30pm	<i>Friendship Group at Hazel's home in Ladyshot</i>
Saturday	20 th	11.00am	Pop-in Prayers
SUNDAY	21 st	10.30am	Morning Worship - Mr Fred Arthur
SUNDAY	28 th	10.30am	Morning Worship & Baptism by immersion - Winifred Kumi Rev Blair Kirkby Crèche this Sunday
		12.15pm	St Andrew's Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship

DEADLINE FOR NEXT MAGAZINE -

**Paper copy by Sunday 14th January or email copy by
 Wednesday 17th January to magazine@standrewsharlow.org.uk**