CHRIST CHURCH

United Reformed and Methodist









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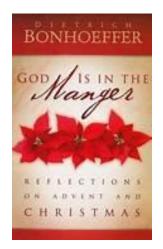
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The publication date is normally the final Sunday of the preceding month, and items for inclusion should be sent to the Secretary by the Wednesday before that date.

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"GOD IS IN THE MANAGER" – REFLECTIONS ON ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS by DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a Lutheran priest, theologian, anti-Nazi dissident and a founding member of the Confessing Church in Germany. His resistance to the Nazi regime led to imprisonment in 1943 and then execution by hanging in the final weeks of the war. His theological writings have become highly influential in the time since his death.



Among his writings is "God is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas", a devotional book which guides and inspire readers as they move thematically through the weeks of Advent and Christmas, from waiting and mystery to redemption, incarnation, and joy.

Tom Lunt referred to this book in his service in late October and it makes a moving and very profound companion to the Advent and Christmas season.

Here are some excerpts from the book:

 "Waiting is an art that our impatient age has forgotten. It wants to break open the ripe fruit when it has hardly finished planting the shoot. But all too often the greedy eyes are only deceived; the fruit that seemed so precious is still green on the inside, and disrespected hands ungratefully toss aside what has so disappointed them."



 "...And then, just when everything is bearing down on us to such an extent that we can scarcely withstand it, the Christmas message comes to tell us that all our ideas are wrong, and that what we take to be evil and dark is really good and light because it comes from God. Our eyes are at fault, that is all. God is in the manger, wealth in poverty, light in darkness, succour in abandonment. No evil can befall us; whatever men may do to us, they cannot but serve the God who is secretly revealed as love and rules the world and our lives."

- "A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent"
- "Jesus stands at the door knocking (Rev. 3:20). In total reality, he comes in the form of the beggar, of the dissolute human child in ragged clothes, asking for help. He confronts you in every person that you meet. As long as there are people, Christ will walk the earth as your neighbour, as the one through whom God calls you, speaks to you, makes demands on you. That is the great seriousness and great blessedness of the Advent message. Christ is standing at the door; he lives in the form of a human being among us."
- "God travels wonderful ways with human beings, but he does not comply with the views and opinions of people. God does not go the way that people want to prescribe for him; rather, his way is beyond all comprehension, free and self-determined beyond all proof. Where reason is indignant, where our nature rebels, where our piety anxiously keeps us away: that is precisely where God loves to be. There he confounds the reason of the reasonable: there he aggravates our nature, our piety—that is where he wants to be, and no one can keep him from it. Only the humble believe him and rejoice that God is so free and so marvellous that he does wonders where people despair, that he takes what is little and lowly and makes it marvellous. And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly.... God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings. God marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken."

FROM THE SECRETARIES

Welcome to the December 2023 and January 2024 issue of Christ Church Link. We have a very full programme of worship and other activities over the coming weeks, which are set out in detail elsewhere in this newsletter. We are also very fortunate to be having another booklet of lectionary readings for the Advent and Christmas seasons – "The Word of the Lord "- prepared by David Smith. Thank you to David for all his hard work in putting together this booklet, which takes us to the heart of the Christmas story, as God took human form through the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem two thousand years ago.

2023 seems to have gone by very quickly. Although another year has passed without a minister, the efforts of Church Council, our Lay Worker Claire, and the wider congregation have meant that we have continued to provide Christian witness in this part of Lewes, and to develop our work in the local community. We are also very grateful for the support and guidance we have received from the CSUA's Mission Enabler – Rev. Andy Melvin – as we work out our vision for the future of the church and a programme of action to carry it through

Several rounds of discussion at Church Council, and then at the Congregational Meeting in late October, have led to the following draft Vision for the future of the church:

Christ Church seeks to be a growing church with a broader age profile. We will strive to be a loving, safe, inclusive, welcoming and environmentally sustainable church, which works to meet the diverse needs of the local community and spreads the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We will work to be a vibrant part of the local community and provide an active programme to support worship, discipleship and fellowship

We are working on a statement to indicate how we will try to carry the Vision into a detailed programme of action over the coming years and this will be brought to the Congregational Meeting early in 2024

As we come to the end of the year, a special thank you is due to our very talented group of lay preachers and worship leaders who have ensured that we have maintained a varied, and very engaging, programme of worship through the year. Thank you for all you have done through the year and for the many hours of preparation that go into that special hour on a Sunday morning. We are also very grateful to our Pulpit Supply Secretary, Norman Vance and the CSUA for ensuring our pulpit is always supplied, and to the outside preachers who visit us, particularly Rev. Dr Richard Goldring, who has led worship here on several occasions through the year.

Our work in the local community goes from strength to strength. Given our limited numbers of active church members, Claire has worked hard to forge partnerships with other churches and community groups in Lewes in carrying out joint projects such as Community Food Events, Warm Space, support for Ukrainian refugees in the Lewes area, and – working with TRINITY Lewes - taking Bible stories into local schools. Whilst our partnership working is growing, it is also good to see that we can still push the boat out on our own new projects. This is exemplified by the revival of Christ Church Tots for pre-school children from September onwards: a big thank you to Alison Byrne and her team for all their hard work on Tots.

Thank you to Claire for her work over the year in providing Saturday prayer meetings and three Bible Study Courses, on the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's Epistle to the Romans and a brief look at the Book of Revelation. These have been very worthwhile and stimulating in developing our prayer life and our understanding of the Bible. Over recent weeks, we have very much enjoyed the Bible Society's course on the Romans, with videos presented by Andrew Ollerton. His accompanying book, "Romans: - the letter that makes sense of life" is well worth a look.

The Christ Church building continues to be a great asset to us in our work. It has become the venue of choice for many community groups in Lewes. The latest demonstration of this is that Churches Together in the Lewes Area (CTLA) has chosen us to host the revival of their Seniors Christmas Day Dinner after several years of covid disruption. Let us know if you would like an invitation to the dinner or whether you would like to volunteer in either preparations or "on the day". See more details on pages 18-19 in this edition.

As we move forward into 2024, we have some big issues to face in carrying forward our vision, particularly our resources for the future. It is still not clear when (or perhaps more realistically) if, we will be able to fill our ministerial vacancy. This puts the onus on our own members to deliver many of the church's activities. However, we have a small and ageing group of active members who will not be able to carry on indefinitely. Where does this mean the church will be in five or ten years' time? Further partnership work with other local churches and community organisations may well be part of the answer and Church Council have agreed we should open exploratory discussions with other churches in the town about opportunities to work together.

On the financial side, the ongoing lack of a ministerial salary to pay, a healthy programme of building lettings, and a rise in interest rates over recent months, have given us a (perhaps short) period of financial surplus. We need to consider where this surplus is best invested to deliver our vision. For example, does it give us an opportunity to better maintain or upgrade our building; to make the building more environmentally friendly; to launch new initiatives; or to give more to charitable works both home and abroad, in an increasingly fractured and needy world?

We will return to this discussion at Church Council and Congregational Meetings in the New Year. Meanwhile, enjoy the festive season with those who matter most to you.

With best wishes for Advent and the Christmas season, and health and happiness in the coming year, 2024

Neil Fisher Church Secretary

Lindsay Frost Administrative Secretary

THOUGHTS FROM THE LAY WORKER

Filled with hope!

It is appropriate at this time of year as we approach Advent to think about hope, although the events in the news may make that a bit of a challenge. I recently attended a conference at which we had speakers from Afghanistan and India who told us about the plight of individual women in those countries. Their talks were distressing as they told us how the daily life of women is often blighted by violence from their neighbours and even their own family members and how in Afghanistan women and girls are being more and more excluded from education and public life.

One of the other speakers was a well-known marine biologist who works in places around the globe where climate change is threatening the biodiversity of the planet and the livelihoods of those who live in those places. It could have been a very depressing weekend but it wasn't. I came home full of hope. The marine biologist told us we have to be good ancestors and challenge the myriad of negative messages that are bombarding our young people. He has started an initiative called Generation Sea Change which engages young people in conservation and highlights positive strides being made to combat the harm human impact makes on our coastline and sea.

When she was asked what her key message was about Afghan women, speaker Hasina Safi said 'Don't lose hope – I am hopeful', and our speaker from India told us of the bravery of individual victims of routine violence against women who want us to advocate for them because they can see their society changing for the better.

Perhaps the most humbling reason for hope that I have seen in the past few days was the Ukrainian fundraising event at All Saints in Lewes on 11 November. An inspirational group of Ukrainian women put on an amazing celebration of Ukrainian culture with food, singing and dancing for the 100 plus audience. Looking around at their smiling

faces and their many children and even a baby, I had to see hope for the future of Ukraine. As we approach Christmas when the reason for our hope, Jesus Christ, was born, I end with the blessing from Romans 15 verse 13:

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

Claire Bell

CHRISTMAS FUND RAISER FOR LEWES FOOD BANKS



CHRIST CHURCH WALKS

Our November walk was on Sunday 19th and took seven of us to Bishopstone and Tidemills in damp and very windy weather. The sea was very rough, crashing over Newhaven breakwater, and all along Seaford Beach, as we returned back to Bishopstone.

The Advent season is usually busy with special events on several Sundays in the run up to Christmas, making it difficult to fit in a church walk. This year is no exception, with the "Shepherd's Arise" concert on the afternoon of December 10; Carols on the Green on the afternoon of December 17; and then the next Sunday is Christmas Eve.

For December, I am proposing a short walk from the church on **Sunday December 10** at the earlier time of around **12.15 pm**, heading up towards Landport Bottom and then back down through the Nevill estate, so only about 2 miles /3 km, and we will be back in good time for the "Shepherd's Arise" concert. Bring a packed lunch.

As ever, on **New Year's Day**, we have the traditional walk starting at Cliffe Corner at **11.00 a.m.**, up Chapel Hill and over the Downs to Mount Caburn and back. This is always a good opportunity to clear out the cob webs at the close of the festive season.

The January walk is on **Sunday January 21.** This will be an "A to B walk" along the cliff tops and undercliff promenade at Peacehaven, so great views and lots of fresh sea air. Meet at the car park at **Fairlight Avenue in Telscombe Cliffs (BN10 7AD)**, **just off the A259, at 1.30 p.m**. Please bring your bus pass, (or £2 fare for the young 'uns), as — on completing the walk - we will return to the start using the frequent bus service along the South Coast Road. The walk distance is about 2.5 miles/4 km. This includes a steep descent down to, and climb back up from, the undercliff promenade.

All our walks are subject to weather conditions, particularly in the winter months

Lindsay Frost

NEVILL GOOD NEIGHBOURS

WHO WE ARE



The Nevill Residents Good Neighbour Scheme has been running since 2017 to provide voluntary, neighbourly help for residents of the Nevill estate. All help is free, unless expenses such as car mileage, parking, etc. have been incurred. All volunteers are DBS checked

WHAT WE DO

The kinds of assistance we can provide include:

- lifts for medical appointments, shopping, etc
- collection of prescriptions
- · small household tasks, eg. changing a light bulb, putting out the bins
- shopping
- help with letter writing, form filling, computers
- help with pets
- · occasional popping in to relieve a carer, provide company

WHAT WE DON'T DO

We are not able to provide specialist services or play any role that should be undertaken by professional, qualified people. Nor are we able to offer assistance to those living outside the Nevill estate.

HOW TO REQUEST OUR HELP

For assistance from the Nevill Residents Good Neighbour Scheme please text or call us on

07548 069063

and leave a message. We will get back to you the same day.

Or, you can email us: nevillgoodneighbours@gmail.com

Karen's Katch-up



A faith-filled journey in Kenya.

Issue 1-Nov 2023



Coming Home

n July and August, myself and Vivian travelled back home to Lewes, East Sussex for a few weeks. This gave us the opportunity to spend some quality time with family and share our journey so far, with a number of churches. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the warm welcome we received.

Work in Progress



Vivian's Victory

Vivian, graduated year 11 in July. We are delighted to say that she's now started year 12, studying BTEC Business Diploma with Hospitality at Braeside Thika International School. She's developing strong leadership skills and has been elected to various positions, including Girls' Sports Captain and Boarding Prefect. Recently, at Braeburn 2-day Sports Festival, Vivian was awarded a silver medal. We are eternally grateful to all who have supported Vivian's dreams through prayers and financial assistance.



A tmy school, we've recently been blessed with more students and a new headteacher. Currently, our candidates are preparing for national exams starting Monday 30th October, please keep them in your prayers. We are also expanding our pastoral program to further identify and attend to the pupils' spiritual and emotional needs. Majority of the pupils come from very challenging environments and home settings,

with limited financial capability, and areas infested with drug and alcohol abuse. Many of the pupils are especially vulnerable to these conditions particularly during the holidays. Expanding the pastoral program means our pupils are cared for and get the best out of their education.

Your support keeps giving hope, Thank You!

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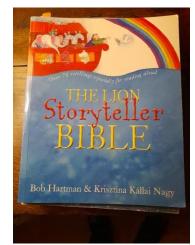


THE BIBLE SOCIETY – OPEN THE BOOK

The Bible Society is an international charity and we are

partnering with them locally, along with TRINITY church, on their **Open the**

Book programme. This brings the bible to life and takes it into local schools through storytelling, drama and costumes. Currently, we are supporting TRINITY with work in two Lewes primary schools at Southover and south Malling. There are usually around four "Open the Book "sessions at each school in each of the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms.



The Bible Society want people to be able to hear and read the Bible and find out more about God , more about themselves and more about the world . Through translating the Bible into different languages, and transporting and providing bibles worldwide, the Bible Society invites people to discover its message for themselves, even if they have not previously thought the bible was for them. The Society wants people to read it, be excited by it , and find their lives changed by it. Please pray for the "Open the Book " teams working in Southover and South



Malling, and that children and teachers there may know more of God's grace and love for our world today.

The Secret Baby – the story of Moses in the bulrushes- performed at South Malling

TWELVE TIPS FOR A GREENER CHRISTMAS

A 12 days of Christmas poem for some green inspiration, written by Jean Burrows, a member of the Eco Church team at recently awarded Bronze Eco Church, Hutton and Shenfield Union Church

Source: A Rocha Eco Church web pages



On the first day of Christmas

Buy a real Christmas tree from a sustainable source. After Christmas plant it, or take it to a local recycling centre

On the second day of Christmas

If you need some new Christmas lights or electrical goods don't bin the old ones, donate them or take them to your local recycling centre.

On the third day of Christmas

Buy recycled Christmas cards, send an e-card or make your own.

On the fourth day of Christmas

There's nothing worse than smiling a grateful thanks for a present you don't really want, so give consumable presents, buy a membership or an experience day or go for a luxury meal and/or the theatre.

On the fifth day of Christmas

Are you buying presents that use batteries? If so, why not add recycled batteries and a charger?

On the sixth day of Christmas

When shopping use your LOAF- Local -Organic - Animal Friendly

On the seventh day of Christmas

Buy eco-crackers or, in the best Blue Peter tradition, make your own. all you need is a few toilet tube rolls, newspaper and some small gifts people might actually want.

On the eighth day of Christmas

Go for a walk, decorate a tree for wildlife (suet balls etc.), but make sure it's where the birds can see the cat coming, or use twigs to create a 5 pointed star and find other natural things to decorate it with.

On the ninth day of Christmas

Use the wrapping paper recycling test: scrunch it up into a ball, if it stays in shape you can recycle it. Alternatively use magazine articles the recipient will enjoy reading and they get two presents for the price of one.

On the tenth day of Christmas

Where possible, freeze leftovers rather than binning them.

On the eleventh day of Christmas

Had time to read all those magazines you subscribe to over the festive period? Why not pass them on to a friend?

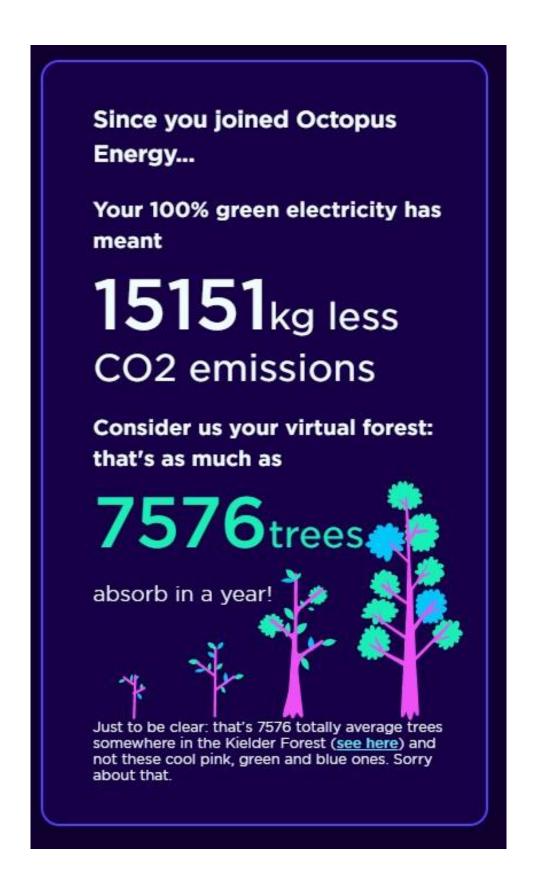
On the twelfth day of Christmas

Make a New Year's Resolution to get in touch with the seasons and/or seek out local adventures. Or simply make your own eco-resolution (and keep to it!)

JEAN BURROWS, HUTTON AND SHENFIELD UNION CHURCH



A MESSAGE TO CHRIST CHURCH FROM OUR ENERGY SUPPLIERS – OCTOPUS ENERGY





A CHRISTMAS PRAYER OF INTERCESSION FOR OUR WORLD



O God, we will say 'thank you' today in many ways, for presents kindly meant, for just what we wanted, for people we love, for good food.

But right now we say 'thank you' to you for showing us that human life is holy and that our flesh can carry your presence and your love.

We pray that you will help us to learn and live the faith that all flesh is holy, all people made in your image, all of us your beloved children.

Help us to see your image in our own families and friends.

Help us to see your image in those who are hungry in Yemen and fearful in Ukraine, Palestine and Israel. Help to see your image in those in prison today and those who are fleeing poverty.

Help us to see your image in those who are sad and depressed and those who can find no peace.

Help us to see your image wherever there are people in need or sorrow..

Give us grace, from this day on, to see every human face as made in your image and every human body as a place where you are known.

Bless our own bodies and our own lives with your holy love, So that whatever befalls us we will know our true dignity and our true worth, and that we are loved.

In the name of God, whose beloved Son came to us on Christmas Day

Source: URC Worship Notes for Christmas Day – Rev. Dr. Susan Durber



at CHRIST CHURCH
Prince Edwards Road, Lewes BN7 1BL



Monday 25 December 2023

12.00 noon – 3.30 pm

Christmas Lunch, Carol Singing, Festive Fun

Call Gretel Scott: 01273 473904 or 07712660337 or

email gretelscott@gretelscott.plus.com for details

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN THE LEWES AREA (CTLA)

SENIORS' CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH AND PARTY

CHRIST CHURCH, MONDAY DECEMBER 25 2023

Invitations

After a three year covid-related break, we are reviving the traditional Lewes Churches Together (CTLA) Seniors Lunch Party for local people who would otherwise be isolated on Christmas Day. If you would like an invitation, please let the church secretaries know and they will arrange for CTLA to send an invitation.

Volunteers needed

Volunteers have been meeting regularly to plan the event and now CTLA needs help from its member churches and congregations to make it a success. Please get in touch if you can help with any or all of the following tasks:

- Laying tables and decorating the hall at Christ Church in the afternoon on Christmas Eve
- Preparing vegetables at Christ Church in the afternoon on Christmas Eve (bring your own peeler)
- Making a fresh fruit salad at Christ Church on Christmas morning (fruit will be provided)
- Being a "table host" at lunch to chat to guests and help serve meals
- Collecting guests from their homes and driving them to Christ Church on Christmas day
- Collecting guests from the venue and driving them home in the afternoon

For further details, and to offer help, please contact:

email gretelscott.plus.com
or by phone or text 07712 660 337



THINKTANK

The next meeting will be on **17 January** at 7.30 pm, when John Culley will be speaking on

"Spirituality and Religion "

The search for spirituality is one of the most striking aspects of 21st century culture. The Christian understanding of spirituality includes deep thought about how people relate belief to the attitudes and values that they express in their lives, and how they relate to God in prayer. In secular, post-modern culture, spirituality often involves no church connection and people describe themselves as spiritual but not religious. The talk will suggest that spirituality is an area where Christians and people of other faiths, or of no specific faith, can find worthwhile insight through dialogue. After working in marine insurance for 30 years, John spent time as a volunteer hospice chaplain. During lockdown he started studying spirituality and has recently completed an MA degree in Christian Spirituality at St Mary's University, Twickenham. He is a parishioner of St Pancras in Lewes.

Church Calendar for December 2023

Fri 1	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 2	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 3	10.30 am Advent Sunday worship led by Rev Andy Melvin 3 pm HOMELINK Carol Concert at St. Thomas More, Seaford (see p15)
Wed 6	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
Fri 8	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 9	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 10	9.30 am Prayer Meeting in the Quiet Room10.30 am Second Sunday - Christingle service2:30 pm "Shepherds Arise" concert (see p20)
Wed 13	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café 1:30 pm Bible study at the church - Romans 7.30 pm Church Council
Fri 15	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 16	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 17	10.30 am Morning worship with Holy Communion led by Rev Dr Richard Goldring 2.30 pm Carols on the Green on Nevill Green
Wed 20	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café 4 pm - 7 pm Christmas Party
Sat 23	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 24	10.30 am Carol Service for Christmas Eve
Mon 25	10 am Family Service for Christmas Day led by Michael Frost and Claire Bell
Sat 30	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 31	10.30 am Morning worship led by Rev Tricia Williams

Church Calendar for January 2024

Mon 1	11 am New Years Day Walk
Wed 3	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
Sat 6	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 7	10.30 am Morning worship led by John Berryman
Tue 9	7.30 pm Mission Committee
Wed 10	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café 7.30 pm Church Council
Fri 12	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 13	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 14	9.30 am Prayer Meeting in the Quiet Room 10.30 am Second Sunday worship
Wed 17	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café 7.30 pm Thinktank (see p21)
Fri 19	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 20	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 21	10.30 am Morning worship led by Tom Lunt 1 pm Church Walk
Wed 24	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café 7.45 pm Nevill Housegroup
Fri 26	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 27	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 28	10.30 am Morning worship with Holy Communion led by Rev Dr Richard Goldring
Wed 31	10 am - 12 noon Ukraine Café
Fri 2 Feb	9.30 am - 11.30 am Christ Church Tots
Sat 3	10 am - 11 am Saturday Prayer
Sun 4	10.30 am Morning worship led by David Coleman

Rotas for December 2023

	3	10	17	24	25	31
	Advent Sunday			Christmas Eve	Christmas Day	
Door Stewards	Brenda	Andrew B	Janet	Graham Purdye	Linda B	Brenda
Vestry Steward	Andrew	Lindsay	Andrew	Andrew	Andrew	Andrew
Coffee	Rod & Aly	Pam & Jane	Glenda & Alan	Viv & Lindsay		lan & Judy
Powerpoint	Neil	Graham / Irene	Irene	Tom / Neil	Neil	Neil

Rotas for January 2024

	7	14	21	28
	Epiphany			
Door Stewards				
Vestry Steward				
Coffee	Janet and Linda B.			
Powerpoint	Graham / Irene	Irene	Tom / Neil	Neil

CHRIST CHURCH (United Reformed and Methodist) seeks to proclaim the Gospel and serve the community around it.

The Layworker and Church Council Members would appreciate information about those who need pastoral care, and will endeavour to answer the questions of those who want to know more about the Church's life and witness here in Lewes.