





**Coronavirus Email only Edition 9** 



#### What we believe

We believe that in obedience to Christ's command, we must proclaim the Gospel to the world in the power and at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

We are called out of darkness to live as children of light, reflecting God's glory all around.

We recognise that as a Church, the bride of Christ, we are commanded to love and encourage one another and ensure that no root of bitterness divides us.

We acknowledge our absolute dependence on Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father made us, Jesus has redeemed us and the Spirit sustains and provides all we need on our pilgrimage.

We acknowledge our commitment to the Bible, as the authoritative word of God able to teach us, guide us and inspire us as we discover God's perfect will for our lives.

This ninth e-mail is instead of our usual magazine (production and printing suspended for the immediate future) I'm trying to put together pages that give up to date Church news and uplifting contributions.

So if you have any news or contributions please e-mail –

smedleybigal@aol.com

Blessings Alan

COPY FOR JANUARY MAGAZINE BY 23rd DECEMBER

Our Vision:
"To know Jesus Christ;
to make Him known."

#### Dear Friends,

Having gone through the 'roller-coaster' of re-opening (in a limited way with precautions) and having to close again, we are still not sure what the future holds. I realise that this is particularly hard for those who can't connect through Zoom.

We hope to be back to gathered morning worship – and as soon as we can, some kind of parent & toddlers or family-focused gathered activity. But our Advent Bible Studies (Monday mornings @10.30) will be Zoom only.

In the midst of all this ongoing uncertainty God's faithfulness is the one thing we **can** rely on. We have recently been using a very moving new worship song: "Sovereign Over Us". It has themes about God meeting us in our sorrow, teaching us to trust... The Chorus (singing to God) is:

Your plans are still to prosper You have not forgotten us You're with us in the fire and the flood You're faithful forever Perfect in love You are sovereign over us

You can find it on Youtube at: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vw5osFG4WZk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vw5osFG4WZk</a>

I believe we also have a growing prayer call to bring the Nation before God, specifically repenting - on behalf of ourselves and the whole community – for the ways we live, speak and act as if God is not real or not relevant. (See Jeremiah 2:13 for a sense of where our Nation is at).

We are praying that the experience of Covid, which has shaken all our 'certainties' will lead many to re-assess and seek relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Whether or not we manage to gather for worship in the Advent and at Christmas, may the Lord bless you and be close to you:

"Happy Christmas!"

Blessings Jon



#### Dear friends

At the time of writing, there is little more news on Jonathan Coules (who is in All Hallows Care Home, for 'end of life care'). I have been unable to keep visiting during 'lockdown 2'. Thankfully, however, he still sometimes manages to join the Zoom worship or prayer meetings. Please hold him in prayer.

Eileen McAllister had her hip replacement operation on 12 November. Please keep her in prayer during her ongoing recovery, especially that the 'unexpected' knock-on effects of the surgery will resolve.

Please also pray for Sarah Baker who is in hospital, Chris Buttle, Chris Dominic, Paul & Kathryn Bones and Margaret Newson.

And Agnes Thurston – at the time of writing still in hospital. Pray for her healing & recovery and her family. David has been staying at her flat and taking stuff in but, because of Covid restrictions, unable to see her.

And let's celebrate with Peter Wagg, who has a 'special' birthday on 5<sup>th</sup> December
Jon



### A resource for equipping the church, the Dunamis Project has come to East Anglia!

The 1<sup>st</sup> of 6 events over 3 years, "Gateways to Empowered Ministry" was held at Belsey Bridge Conference Centre, Ditchingham, Bungay, in March 2020.

That was the week that led into lockdown and all that has followed!

The continuation with session 2 "In the Spirit's Power" would have been September, but was put off to March, and again to May 2021. Places can be booked now.

With the whole of society 'shaken' by what we are going through, I believe we – the church – will need more than ever to be empowered by the Holy Spirit for what will be ahead. We need to be ready to help those journeying through re-discovering God's relevance in real everyday life. A society that has largely ignored God and promoted self-sufficiency may well be full of those needing to encounter God through the church.

So, might engaging with this event be an ideal way for many of us to prepare?

To book a place or find out more go to <a href="www.dunamis.org.uk">www.dunamis.org.uk</a> or contact Ada Fidder-Boutkan 07940 823135 <a href="mailto:ada@dunamis.org.uk">ada@dunamis.org.uk</a> or me.

Not knowing the level of take up, the leadership team have only booked a modest capacity at Belsey Bridge. But we can add – and the sooner we know the better, to be able to secure increased capacity. Do let us know!

(In the event of a further postponement, all deposits will be returned or put to a future event as you wish, so there is no financial risk in booking now).

Jon

## DATES FOR THE DIARY DECEMBER 2020

We hope to have **gathered worship again every Sunday** @ **11.00** after lockdown ends. Be we are also continuing online: Services on Zoom remain available. With the gathered elements still subject to confirmation, here is what is coming:

Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup> 6.30p	m Elders' meeting <b>Zoom only</b>
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Wednesday 2nd 7.30pm "Life in the Spirit" discipleship course

Session 5

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> 4.00pm **Messy Church** (by invitation on Zoom &

on Youtube)

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> 9.45 am Prayer Meeting **Zoom only** 

Sunday 6th 11 am Morning worship **Gathered & Zoom** 

6.30 pm Evening Worship **Zoom only** 

Monday 7th 10.30 am Advent Bible Study Session 2 **Zoom only** 

Tuesday 8th 12.30 pm Lunchtime Service **Zoom only** 

Wednesday 9th 7.30pm "Life in the Spirit" discipleship course

Session 6

Thursday 10th 4.00pm **Messy Church** (by invitation on Zoom &

on Youtube)

Friday 11th 9.45 am Prayer Meeting **Zoom only** 

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> 11 am Morning Worship **Gathered & Zoom** 

6.30 pm Evening Worship **Zoom only** 

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> 10.30 am Advent Bible Study Session 3 **Zoom only** 

6

Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup>	12.30 pm Lunchtime Service <b>Zoom only</b>
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup>	5.00pm <b>Messy Church</b> (by invitation on Zoom & on Youtube) 7.30pm "Emmanuel" special Christmas event from Dunamis Fellowship Britain & Ireland. Register @ www.dunamis.org.uk
Friday 18 <sup>th</sup>	9.45 am Prayer Meeting <b>Zoom only</b>
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup>	11 am Morning Worship <b>Gathered &amp; Zoom</b> 6.30 pm Evening Worship <b>Zoom only with Communion</b>
Monday 21st	10.30 am Advent Bible Study Session 4 <b>Zoom only</b>
Tuesday 22nd	12.30 pm Lunchtime Service <b>Zoom only</b>
Friday 25 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 Christmas Day Celebration <b>Gathered &amp; Zoom</b>
Sunday 27th	11 am Morning Worship <b>tbc Zoom only There will be no 6.30 pm Evening Worship</b>

#### All Zoom events - Come in up to 30 minutes ahead

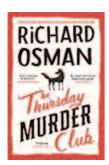
Please also note that in line with current regulations the Church Doors can only be open 15 minutes before the commencement of the service. We hope this does not cause too much inconvenience.



#### **Jolabokaflod**

Have you heard of *Jolabokaflod* (literally Yule, or Christmas, Book Flood)? One of Iceland's winter traditions sees everyone give their family a 'flood' of books on Christmas Eve. Introducing the tradition over here would have many benefits I'm sure (not that I'm biased, or anything!) – and what is nicer than curling up with a good book in those days between Christmas and New Year. To help you on your way to establishing your own tradition here are a few suggestions.

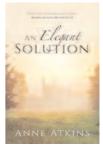
Is it only we old 'uns who remember the catchphrase "a Christie for Christmas"? Television has embraced it although it's several decades since a new book has been a possibility, but a good mystery is always welcome.



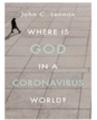
**The Thursday Murder Club** Only published in September, this is already a runaway bestseller and my favourite read of the year. Reviewers have given it glowing reviews 'Such a beacon of pleasure' (Kate Atkinson); 'So smart and funny. Deplorably good'(lan Rankin). Four energetic and intelligent pensioners living in a rather posh 21<sup>st</sup> century retirement village have kept their minds active by trying to solve photocopied "cold cases" contributed (illegally) by one of their number, a retired police officer. (The others were a spy, a psychiatrist and a Trade Union leader with a dodgy family.) When a real murder affects their

community, they enthusiastically deploy their freshly honed skills to keep one step ahead of the police to solve the crime. The characters and plot are multi-layered, the resolution surprising. Meanwhile we all learn a bit more of love and loyalty in trying circumstances.

An Elegant Solution Theo, who is autistic, is a Junior Research Fellow in Number Theory at Cambridge. Prompted by an academic supervisor to demonstrate how to trace the provenance of bitcoins he happens across a shocking revelation, with embarrassing ramifications for the whole University. Being unable to dissemble due to both his Christian faith and his autism Theo places himself in some danger, escalated by a terrorist plot engineered by a childhood acquaintance, a ruthless plot to rock the seat of power, murder the innocent and change the face of Cambridge forever. How all these threats are resolved makes for a gripping read, ending with the 'elegant solution' of the title.



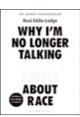
And now for some 'useful' books. We are probably fed up with hearing these are unprecedented times, but to help us navigate the challenges could be:



Where is God in a coronavirus world? Is a question that troubles many, and many have felt their faith shaken. John Lennox is both Emeritus Professor of Mathematics and a lecturer in Christian apologetics, his writings are intellectually rigorous and faith and Bible informed, and in this case accessible and comforting. It is also a tiny book of just 60 pages, ideal to pop in all your loved ones' Christmas stockings.



**Saying YES to life.** For everyone who hopes we can "reset" the world, slow down and respect the environment, and for those who wonder "how?" Using the 6 days of creation as a framework, this study and meditation relates resurrection hope to matters of environmental, ethical and social concerns, and shows what it means to be human and a Christian in this context.



In September I introduced *We need to talk about Race* (in the church), in my own reading I followed this with *Why I'm no longer talking(to white people) about Race*, by Reni Eddo-Lodge, which is most illuminating ( and very well written). The writer explains that however sympathetic, supportive and non-racist we are we just don't "get" black experience how it is lived: this goes a good way to putting that right. This book sparked a national conversation and won many awards

## Val Jennings

For Sign of the Fish Wishing you all the Joy of Christmas

Good news. God willing and lockdown rules permitting Sign of the Fish will open on Wednesday mornings during December from 10.00 to 12.00 for the sale of books cards and Christmas gifts: sadly it is not possible to offer refreshments under the new rules. Please phone ahead on 07770 465 785 to check the shop is actually open.



During November Messy Church has continued in the book of Genesis. Looking at the stories of Noah, Abraham and Joseph, we have been thinking about how God always keeps his promises.

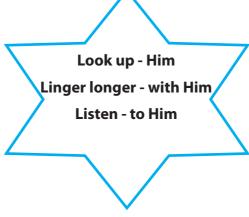
Making animals with a mini roll, 5 cocktail sticks and a marshmallow, was certainly a highlight as the children were much more creative than me. We had giraffes, cows, hedgehog, octopus and even a stegosaurus!

The verse this month, sung to the tune of "The bear went over the mountain!

The LORD always keeps his promises
The LORD always keeps his promises
The LORD always keeps his promises
Psalm 145:13

(hint: one, four, five, thirteen, fits better than one hundred and forty-five verse thirteen!)

Those of you who joined the Zoom Sunday morning service on the 22nd November, will hopefully remember that I talked about these same three men and how when God made his promises to them, he directed them to look at, and he spoke to them through, creation. Like these men God want us to:

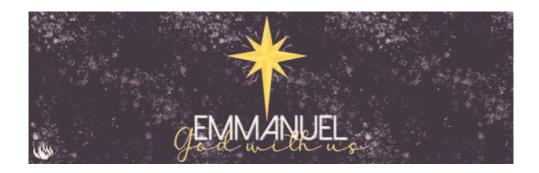


Due to the lockdown in November I did not start the sessions for parents. Please pray with me for guidance and wisdom to know what support groups to start and when. Hopefully we can start something in the New Year.

Please pray for: The Messy Church sessions as we think about the Christmas story through December and then start some New Testament stories in January. Preparations for the sessions in the church building.

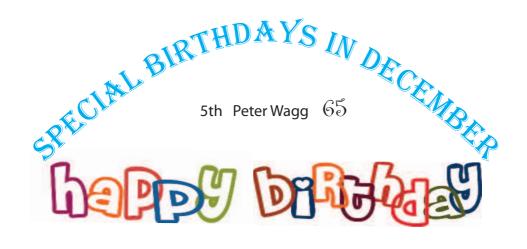
Jo Moreira - Children and Families Worker.





The Dunamis Fellowship Britain & Ireland are offering this as a special Christmas event. It will be a 90-minute Zoom event, including worship, prayer, Bible readings, and some short teaching about how the Holy Spirit has always been present from Genesis to Revelation, in particular through the Christmas Story. Thursday 17 December @ 7.30pm.

You need to register to receive your personal access link to the Zoom calls (80 spaces available). Go to www.dunamis.org.uk



#### **Dear Friends,**

Although the Church has been 'out of bounds' for the best part of six months, there has not been a great variation in the level of expenses which have been running at approximately £4000.00 per month. I would therefore like to give a big 'THANK YOU' to everyone who have been maintaining their usual weekly/monthly offerings without which the bank balance would have been looking a bit sad. We are very close now to the end of the year when I will be producing the annual accounts and I am wondering if some of you have been putting your offerings aside but have not had a chance to get them to me. I will be very happy to come and collect them and will tell Boris it was an essential journey. Just give me a ring - 01986 874760.

Thank you and I wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

David Moreton.







As of Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October Moira's new address will be:
Stonecott
St Michael's Way
Wenhaston
IP 19 9EH

New email address to follow Blessings Moira

From 5th November Dorothy Courtis's new temporary address is:

16 Granville Crescent

Thurso

Caithness

**KW147NP** 

Mobile phone number stays the same

Landline may have to change: she will be off line for a couple of weeks.

The restrictions, constraints and, yes, even dangers of travelling hundreds of miles alone, to an isolated Somerset cottage, in midwinter during lockdown, were too great, so temporarily she has moved into the house the local URC used as a manse when they had a minister, an arrangement that suits everyone.

Blessing

Val

Welcome Dr. Luke! John tells me that you are writing an orderly account of Jesus' life for the new, gentile believers?...well, I think the best I can do is tell you some of the things that have been treasured up in my heart, through all those years.

It all started one very ordinary afternoon, when I was sitting in my favourite "thinking" place: a grove of olive trees near my parent's home. Even in the shade, I was hot and feeling drowsy. It was the time of year when poppies were flowering in the grove and, despite the dry ground, in some places there were great clusters of them. As I pondered on how the sumptuous red of their blossom could flourish in such a dry and hostile environment, there seemed to be an unexpected movement of light. It was hard to put my finger on it. I looked around me to see if there was anyone near, perhaps someone had passed by, but there was no-one to be seen. Even the local wild-life was all curled up in shady places, asleep and out of the sun. I returned to my reverie. It was an exciting time; Joseph and I had been betrothed very recently and we were each preparing for our marriage ceremony. he was building a house, when he had spare time and I was making household linen....as well as my special tunic and a pretty stole, for the ceremony of course!

#### "Greetings Mary"

The voice was soft and kind, but I almost jumped out of my skin with fear. I couldn't see anyone. Who was this? Why was a man addressing me, on my own? How did he know my name? I swiftly turned to the place from whence the voice had come, every nerve in my body on edge. Under the shade of an olive tree, practically invisible, was a young man; indeed, the shade there was so dark that he seemed almost to be part of the tree itself. He didn't move any closer to me, but he continued, "Mary, you are highly favoured, the Almighty One is with you!" I caught my breath and, worryingly, continued to find it hard to breath. Truly, he was calling me by name, but he must have mistaken me for someone else. I am just an ordinary person, certainly not the kind of person that the LORD would be welcoming in His company. As I thought this, the young man smiled, as if someone had told him something amusing. Then it looked as though

there was a wind moving the leaves on the tree because, suddenly, bright light began dappling and playing around the man, but I knew that there was no wind. My concern and confusion became worse.

"Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

I began to pinch myself. I wondered: 'How can God see me, a nobody? Anyway, I've only just been betrothed! There can be no baby yet! What is this man saying? I don't understand!.. and I'm frightened about all this, he must be talking to the wrong person!' I decided to make it clear that he should be talking with some-one else, someone more important, more holy: **but**, this was not an easy thing to do. Although this mystery man seemed to be pleasant and ordinary, I could powerfully feel an air of authority about him, I really felt that this person was much grander than he appeared. Frankly, I was afraid to anger him.

"How will this be," I asked, "since I am a virgin?" The young man nodded, indicating that he understood, but then he astonished me as he answered:

"The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age. She who was said to be unable to conceive, is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

So he knew Elizabeth and Zechariah!...and all about their years of grief and "disgrace" in the eyes of the people around. I was totally confused, I really didn't understand at all what was happening, but I was beginning to be aware of a solemnity, almost as though the air was filled with an expectancy which was focused on me.

I became aware that an important decision was being put before me, more important than anything I could ever understand. I remembered what the

man had said about Elizabeth and my eyes were drawn again to those magnificent poppies, flourishing against the odds. Astonishingly, I really believed that the man knew what he was talking about. In that moment, in my mind and heart, the decision was made and I felt a great sense of relief.

# "I am the Lord's servant," I answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."

As soon as these words were out of my mouth I experienced an overwhelming feeling of joy and excitement, but most amazingly, I felt completely, awesomely **honoured and LOVED**!

I looked to the young man, but he had gone. I have no memory of him leaving, or even moving. It is as though he simply melted into the Olive tree. I knew that, come whatever, I must visit Elizabeth as soon as possible.

But now, my dear doctor, let me offer you some food. If you wish to hear more, we can continue when you are refreshed.....

\*Lorraine\*



#### **Virtual Church**

Whilst we have started some gathered worship, Virtual Church continues. I know this primarily helps those who have a computer: But if you do, you can come from home



Download & run zoom.us (its free) to have the facility. Then join a 'meeting' by using the link: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/7760441926">https://zoom.us/j/7760441926</a>

Or you can open the zoom app and:

- Click on 'join a meeting'
- When prompted, enter the meeting number **776 044 1926**
- When prompted, enter the password: 811885.

(You can try this anytime and you'll get a message 'waiting for host to start the meeting'. That confirms you have succeeded).



#### You can also Join by phone

- 1. Dial the number (0203 051 2874, 0203 481 5237 or 0203 481 5240)
- 2. the voice asks you to enter the Meeting ID followed by # (776 044 1926#)
- 3. The voice asks "enter your participant ID followed by #. Otherwise just press # to continue" **Press #**
- 4. It then asks you to enter the password followed by # (811885#)

**Events** 

**Sundays**: 11.00 (join from 10.30) & 6.30pm (join from 6)

Mondays: Advent Bible Studies 10.30 am

**Tuesdays**: 11.30 for coffee, or join just before 12.30 for short Lunchtime

Service

This month - Friday 25th Christmas Day see pp7

Fridays: Prayer meeting 09.45 (join from 9.30). Stay/join for coffee 10.30

Messy Church. By invitation. Also, on YouTube

#### The Stars Are Singing!

So,

The stars are singing!

I can hear them To a stable,

Pouring praise To a Cattle stall,

From Heaven's bright halls Away from sight and sound

To starlit Earth, Of that thunderous, cosmic revelry,

Where few will care to listen. Came stumbling,

These bewildered men,

Once upon an eastern hillside, To find....?

Such harmonies burst full Eternity: Enrobed in time and space,

Upon the ears of mortal men Infinity: Now clothed in infant form

Crystal chimes, And thunder tones, And Boundless Love,

Like fearsome roars of many winds, Life's Song (and her Composer)

Or else a sigh, Like merest breath, Singing...
Or silver, set to ringing.

A baby's cry.

These sparkling sounds

Caused shepherds' hearts to burst The stars are singing,

With the awesome sweetness Listen!

And the mighty power of angel song. Will you hear? Lorraine





May the joy, the wonder and the life changing message of Christmas bless you (and all your loved ones) this Christmas,

Much love, Alan and Lorraine





Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and New Year Douglas & Vivienne x



We pray for a peaceful Christmas and a peaceful and safe new year to you all love from Anne Tony Anthony & Stephen xx





"With our best wishes for a happy and peaceful Christmas, and our thanks for your continued friendship.

God Bless

Audrey and Bob Dyson."









fove and best wishes to you all for Christmas and 2021

<u>f</u>ove form Margaret Newson



# A Very Blessed and Happy Christmas

Thank you to all my friends at Halesworth United Reformed Church for your cards and prayers. It really helps to know that you are praying for me. May the New Year bring good news and all of us together once more.

Love from Jean Denmark

Alan and Sheila would like to send you all best wishes for a happy and healthy Christmastime. I would also like to thank everyone from my heart for all the prayers said for Alan's health during very uncertain times.

Take care. God bless you all. X Sheila Dunce



Despite the strange times in which we live....

.. We wish all our friends in the HURC Fellowship: God's gifts of Peace and Joy, as we celebrate the coming of Jesus, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD...

With our love,
Julie and Chris



# Wishing you all blessings of peace and joy this Christmas With Joyo from



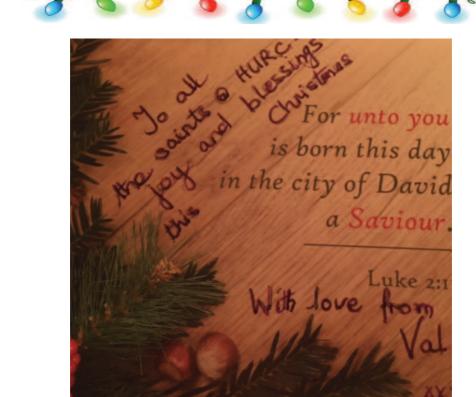


Xmas and New Year Greetings to all our HURC family, wherever you go or whatever you do PLEASE STAY SAFE'

With love, best wishes and God's blessing John Royce





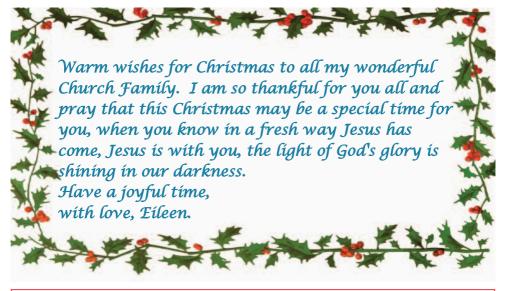


#### UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN. UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN.

Thinking of you all and sending warmest greetings for Christmas and every blessing for 2021. With my love and happy memories of worshipping with you in beautiful Halesworth.

Norma Thwaites Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex











"Andrew and Esther and all the family send love and peace at Christmas to all our friends at HURC. God's presence is always with us in happy times and troubled times!

## Dear Blessed Readers

This is the 39<sup>th</sup> edition of the Church newsletter / magazine I have produced. The first was October 2017 and a lot has happened over that time (including Lorraine and I not only celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, but also our 53<sup>rd</sup>!)

We have had two companies printing the magazine (a few went out via email.) Then March 2020 saw the start of *lockdown*, so from April 2020 the magazine has been distributed via email, first by Don (he had he most comprehensive address list), then by Jon. Dear Judy has also printed off some copies for postal distribution.

So in the last magazine of 2020 I wish to thank all who have contributed so wonderfully to the content over the year and wish all readers:





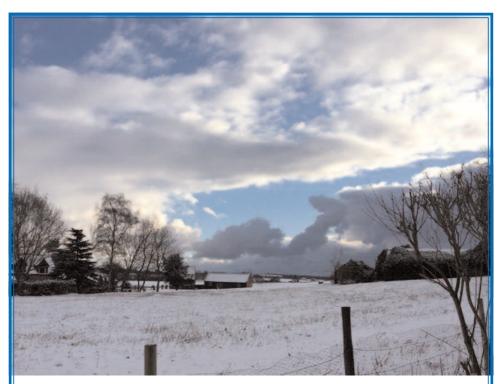
PS this has happend a few times (thank you Val for the image) Alan

I want to say a huge 'Thank You' to all of you, my church family, for your amazing support and help and kindness and prayer for me before and after my hip operation. It has been quite overwhelming and very humbling to receive so many offers of help and cards and calls and even gifts. I have felt a great wave of love which has sprung from the heart of God and been channelled through you. But perhaps most of all, I have felt that supernatural sense of uplift which comes from your prayers. God has ministered to my soul; my mind, my feelings, my will; and even when my body is sluggish and feeble, my innards not working properly, my head full of cotton wool, my outlook is positive and full of hope. Prayer is powerful! Thank you.





Eileen.



Wishing everyone at Halesworth URC a very Happy and Blessed Christmas and a healthy 2021 when, God willing, we can once again meet together in fellowship and praise our amazing God.

With love from Jo.



