

Dear All,

Happy New Year!! Better late than never.... Indeed, this year is up and running at an alarming rate. Or am I just turning into my mother (' I don't know where the time goes??') I'm not really bothered – February is just that bit closer to spring.

With the promise of new life ahead, it is perhaps ironic that next month will see a clutch of AGM's reviewing the past. This is vital, not only to evaluate what has been achieved and to celebrate, but also to flag up our hopes and aspirations for the future. We are blessed with much talent in our churches, a lot of which is untapped. Those who are giving their all are in need of a boost from new volunteers. Please ask yourself whether you can offer your time and commitment to the vital ministry and mission of our churches.

I would like to see the URCiC doing more together. Perhaps this Lent is an ideal opportunity to get together in your own locality, to study a Lent course, to pray or simply to socialize. For five short weeks, we have a credible reason for talking to each other. Let's use it! Otherwise we will remain stand-alone churches ploughing our own furrows, blissfully ignorant of each other's needs.

I recently attended a Saturday morning workshop run by the Anglican Diocese entitled 'Values for a Missionary Church'. One of the first questions asked was, 'Can you name your values?' On a personal level, that may or may not be an easy exercise for you. But I started to think of our churches and could not honestly say that I know what our values are. What would you say?

So, just a few questions and thoughts to keep you going during these dark evenings, but don't panic, the light will shine!

God bless,
Maz

**URC in CHELTENHAM MORNING PRAYERS
11.30am – 12noon EVERY Tuesday at Warden Hill**

Date	Readings	Prayer Issues
3 February	Psalm 112 Mark 1 29-39	Winchcombe Area, Churches and Hospital Tuesday Forum Care of Historic Buildings Prayers for the world
10 February	Psalm 113 Mark 1 40-45	Bishops Cleeve Area, Churches, Schools and local businesses Pensioners' Forum & Prestbury Senior Club Prayers for the world
17 February	Psalm 114 Mark 9 3-6	Woodmancote Area Residential & Nursing Care for the Elderly Scottish Society including Pipers & Dancers Prayers for the world
24 February	Psalm 115 Mark 1 9-15	Prestbury Village, St Mary's, School, WI and village activities Preserving Community Life Prayers for the World
3 March	Psalm 116 Mark 8 31-38	Prestbury Road Area, Churches and Day Centre Special Needs Care World Council of Churches

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IN CHELTENHAM

From the church registers:

In Memoriam

It is with sadness we report that Gilbert Aldridge, husband of Nora and father to Mike and Pauline passed away in December 2008. Gilbert was a member at Prestbury URC for 56 years. He had served as an Elder and Church Treasurer. Please remember Nora and the family in your prayers.

It is with sadness we report that Catherine Higgins passed away suddenly on 7 January. Catherine became a member of St Andrew's in 1960 and has been a regular attendee since that time up until just before Christmas. Please remember Cath's children, Sharon, Debbie and Patrick and the grandchildren Emily, Alexander and Fiona in your prayers as they come to terms with their sad loss.

Our prayers: we hold in our prayers those who are ill as well as those who are or have been in hospital: George Apps, Ann Ashworth, Carol and Lorna Dewhurst, Dennis Goldring, Hylde Greening, Mary Howes, Paulette Hyde, Dorothy Lamb, Joy Marsh, Mair McIndoe, Peter Meason, Jon Morgan, Carole Pennington, Betty Price, Nick Smith, Sadie Smyth, Jean Smith, Carole Wallace and Tony White.

Thank You *From Carole Wallace*

I have been very touched with the kindness, support and love shown to me after my recent fall. To all those who have visited me with flowers and gifts, phoned, wrote and mentioned me in their prayers, I offer a "Special Thank You". Happily I am on the mend and hope to be out and about again fairly soon.

From Nora, Mike and Pauline Aldridge

We would like to thank Maz for all her kind support and leading Gilbert's memorial service. A special thank you to Joyce for playing the organ and Jon for the reading. We also like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who gave their time to come along to the service. Also a big thank you for all the sympathy cards and donations we received.

Birthday

Congratulations to George Apps who celebrated his 92nd birthday on 18 January. We wish you belated birthday greetings and a very speedy recovery from your recent spell in hospital.

Pensioners' Forum

The Pensioners' Forum will resume again on **Wednesday 4 February**. Members of the Lions Club will be giving us a talk on their campaign called 'Message in the Bottle'. The idea is to for you to keep relevant information 'in the bottle' should an emergency arise, so come along collect your bottle and find out what to put into the bottle.

Coffee Bar will open at 10am and the talk will begin at 10.30am to last about an hour. You will find the new programme further on in the magazine. Please pick up the flyers or posters and pass them on to friends and neighbours.

Qi Gong

Next session will be in the Garden Room at St Andrew's on **Wednesday 4 February** at 12.15pm. All are welcome; cost is £4 per session.

Literary Group

The Literary Group will meet on **11 February** at Prestbury URC at 7.30pm under the guidance of Mary Cummings. The book to be discussed is 'Birdsong' by Sebastian Faulks. All newcomers are welcome.

Walking Group

If you would like to take part in a five mile walk on Cleeve Hill, on **Monday 16 February**, then please sign up on the sheet on your Church notice board, where further details can be found. Start time 10am.

Roger Little

Tuesday Forum

10 February we are looking forward to a visit from Joan Winterbottom who will be speaking to us about The Hebrides. On **24 February** our regular and popular speaker Bob Alger will be telling us about his travel in Panama and more.

Both meetings will be at 2.30pm in the Garden Room at St Andrew's followed by tea and biscuits. All are welcome to join us.

Recycling

Thank you to all those who have given me their old household batteries for recycling. I have now collected 5 kg in weight approximately 150 batteries which I have duly taken to the Swindon Road Depot for recycling. In Cheltenham as a whole, the total weight collected to date is 730kgs approximately 36,000 batteries. Please keep up the good work.

In Touch Donations

Yes it's that time of the year again. You will find inside the magazine an envelope for a donation towards the cost of providing you with wonderful and informative magazine each month. We would recommend a donation of around £5 to cover the printing costs, that is 50p a magazine, we hope you think this is good value!



Thank you to all those who supported the Carol Singing for Christian Aid. At Morrisons we raised £100.72 between 9-10 and £208.40 between 11-12noon. A total of £603.32 was collected during the whole day. Royal Oak Brass played at Waitrose and raised £139.22; the total for the day was £1,287.12. Well worth all the effort.

Pensioners' Forum

at

St Andrew's United Reformed Church

(near Queen's Hotel)

Programme for 2009

Meets on the 1st Wednesday of the Month

You are invited to the following Talks 10.30am – 11.30am

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Wednesday 4 February | 'Message in the Bottle'
The Lions Club |
| Wednesday 4 March | Macular Disease Support Group
Christine Denny |
| Wednesday 1 April | Glos Arthritis Trust
Steve Morton, Secretary |
| Wednesday 6 May | 'Slim your Bin'
Mike Harrison, Recycling Co-ordinator |
| Wednesday 3 June | 'Singing for Fun'
Joan McCormick, U3A |
| Wednesday 1 July | Health & Well Being Fair for
Older People |

FREE ENTRY – ALL ARE WELCOME

Coffee Bar open from 10.00am – 12 noon

Coffee/Tea 50p

REFLECTIONS FROM THE KENYA TEAM

The Cheltenham group are safely back from our two weeks in Embu, Kenya. I could not have wished for a more hard-working team; the young people were great ambassadors for our local churches.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that money had been spent on infrastructures such as road maintenance. Far more roads are now tarmacked which cut our travelling time considerably. The whole team consisted of 36 youth and adults from all over the country. We divided into three groups and the Cheltenham group eagerly boarded our minibuses on our first full day to visit Gatondo – the site of the Health Centre for which we had raised £26000. To our dismay, all we found was the concrete base and lots of men chipping away at stones, 'dressing' one side to make them smooth. These stones were to be the walls of the Centre and all had to be prepared by hand. One week later, we returned to find the exterior and interior walls built up to the window level. What a relief that was! We left feeling confident that 'our' Health Centre will be completed. A strategic plan has also been activated by St. Stephen's Children's Home for the sustainability of the Centre.

Neither our project nor that of Chandler's Ford were able to be worked on by ourselves. Therefore we asked St. Stephen's what they would like painting. To my horror, I was given a list – paint the dining room/church, the administrative entrance and meeting room, the front gates and the playground. Sharing the news with the Team, I thought we would have a job to complete the task. But with two Teams working together, the first coat of gloss paint went on everything the next day! Yes, I did say 'gloss'. All walls etc. have to be glossed, and the paint is VERY runny! We were on a roll by this time and within five days, we had completed all our work, with numerous coats of paint to all surfaces. In the meantime, the third Team were working in another Children's Home further away and they also accomplished a great deal.

My reason for going to Kenya has always been to introduce young people from this country to the life of a developing country. They only get a glimpse of what life is really like, but that glimpse has changed the attitude of many over the years. One 19 year old woman this time was telling us how her boyfriend had spent over £200 on Christmas

presents for her and now she was wondering if she really needed such luxury. Another woman was taken to visit her sponsor-child's family home, consisting of a wooden shack with one room the size of my bathroom housing a family of five. I was told of an 8 year old boy who had been brought into St.

Stephen's because his mother had tried to kill her latest baby. The family had never lived under a roof – always living in the open. The boy, at least, can now begin to enjoy a secure environment surrounded by laughing, smiling children.

Some of our Team visited a Red Cross Home for the Disabled, also in Embu. We were touched by the dedication of the three members of staff, looking after 24 children, most of whom were in wheelchairs. The Home was shabby and lacking in funds; the wheelchairs all had flat tires and the two dormitories were drab and cramped. We took a case full of goodies, including musical instruments, which the children loved. I have decided this Home will be our next 'project' in Dec. 2010. In particular, the staff need money to give the children corrective surgery (in Nairobi Hospital) so that some may be enabled to walk again. Operations which we take for granted here are mere dreams in poor areas of Kenya.

The sponsorship programme at St. Stephen's is still needing new recruits. Our team were able to buy every child a pair of school shoes, but more sponsors would enable the staff to buy essential clothing when needed. Please see me if you would like details of sponsorship.

I was proud to be the leader of 36 people many of whom had never met before arriving at Heathrow airport. The co-operation between youth and adult was wonderful and I am delighted that so many want to revisit Embu in two years' time. Of course, we could not have been so successful without the support of our churches and local communities. Thank you SO MUCH for trusting us and enabling us to catch the vision and fulfil our ministry.

God bless,
Maz, on behalf of the Kenya Team 08/09

The total raised was £26,000. Thank you very much for your support.

C4 CHILDREN'S CHOIR

will resume on
Friday 27th February at Prestbury URC.

Please ask Maz for details.

LENT GROUPS IN MARCH

Maz is offering to run the York Course
'Faith, Hope and Love'

at the following venues throughout March:

Wednesdays 10.30am-12noon, Prestbury URC
Thursdays 7.30-9pm, Warden Hill URC
Fridays 10.30am-12noon – 51 Bournside Avenue.

Please contact her if you are interested in joining a group.

BABY JESUS VISITED ST. ANDREWS

A live-tableau at the Crib Service included a real baby
(granddaughter of Kate & Bob Alger)

Ode To Jenny's Grandchild

There is nothing like a grandchild to bring us lots of joy
The happiness is just the same for a pretty doll like girl or a chubby bouncing boy
The Mother will be relieved and proud and Dad will shout it right out loud
But Grandma is the one to hear with a happy smile from ear to ear
as she proclaims to everyone, look what my family have done
A grandchild that I can cherish, so many things that I can do
buy baby clothes brand spanking new
some tinkling toys above the bed and a lovely fluffy ted
When that new baby is fast asleep Grandma takes a little peep
And whispers with a moistened eye sleep my precious one bye bye,
When at last baby begins to grow with rosy cheeks and a healthy glow
A happy little curly top, chattering away hard to stop
Grandma is heard to say, I have had a lovely day,
As her head sinks on her pillow, She dreams of tomorrow and what is to follow
A happy smile, a little kiss, to grandma this is heavenly bliss
When a grandchild is born all pink and small, too young to speak or call
Mother not there to meet its needs. Grandma is there to give baby a loving squeeze.

God couldn't be everywhere so he made Grandmas.

Ted Davis

Prestbury News

February Coffee Morning / Giant Bric-A-Brac Clearance Sale

The February Coffee morning is on Saturday 7th February at 10.30 and will feature a 'Everything Must Go' giant bric-a-brac clearance sale. On sale will be books, toys, costume jewellery as well as a couple of silver tea services. Please come along and enjoy the Coffee, goodies and fellowship.

Family Services

At the last Church Meeting it was decided that the services on the second and fourth Sundays of the month would be Family Worship. Please do support these services; it is always great to see the younger people at church.

‘Soul Café’ Services

Please be aware that on every fourth Sunday of each month, a different style of worship takes place at 6pm at Prestbury URC. The congregation sit around tables, coffee is available throughout the service and people are encouraged to chat. All are most welcome; please come along and give it a try !

C4 Childrens’ Choir

Will resume on **Friday 27th February** at Prestbury URC. Please ask Maz for details.

In Touch – Contributions always welcomed

Please either see Ian Brooks at Church or forward all contributions to him directly via e-mail (ianbrooks444@btinternet.com). Ian can also be contacted on 01242-603467.

The World is Mine !

Today upon a bus I saw a lovely girl with golden hair. I envied her – she seemed so gay and I wished I were as fair. When suddenly she rose to leave, I saw her hobble down the aisle. She had one foot and wore a crutch but as she passed, a smile. Oh God, forgive me when I whine, I have two feet – the world is mine !

And then I stopped to buy some sweets. The lad who served them had such charm, I talked with him. He said to me ; “It’s nice to talk to folks

like you, you see he said ‘I’m blind !’” Oh God, forgive me when I whine, I have two eyes – the world is mine !

With feet to take me where I’d go, with eyes to see the sunsets’ glow. Oh God, forgive me when I whine, I’m blessed indeed – the world is mine !

Kindly submitted by Pat Gregory.

From the Mouths of Babes

A child on the way home from school decided to call in the church and have a look around. When he arrived home he told his Grandmother he had been in God’s house. “Oh” said Grandma: “And did you see God?”. “No” replied the little boy, “but I saw his wife scrubbing the floor”.

St Andrew's News

February Communion Offering

Network Crafts was started in 1983, at the time of high unemployment, to provide a workshop for unwaged persons to gain skills to occupy their time constructively. Facilities are provided for participants to work on their own projects, principally needing woodworking skills, e.g. woodturning, woodcarving and general construction. The workshop, situated at St Silas Church, is well equipped, with help and training given as needed. The workshop accommodates four people plus a supervisor and is currently used on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings. A Workshop Committee, made up of members, runs day-to-day operations and the Trustees meet twice a year to provide support and general supervision of activities. Network Crafts is supported by Churches Together in Cheltenham, and over the years has provided assistance to St Andrews in the repair of chairs, oak table, book storage, and stands for the rope diversion.

St Stephen's Children's Home, Kenya

Maz and the Group returned from Kenya with the greetings and thanks of St Stephen's Children's home, and presented a Certificate of Appreciation, addressed to the Congregation of the United Reformed Church of Cheltenham, signed by the Bishop of the Diocese of Embu and the Manager of the Home, for the support given to the Gatondo Health Clinic.

From the Elders' Meeting

Recently Filled Vacancies

We are grateful to the following people who have volunteered to take on various roles within the church:

Deputy Transport Officer – Tim and Dorothy Odell

Communion Table Duties - Tim and Dorothy Odell

Lead Concert Steward (from AGM in March) – Phil Lewis

Assistant Housekeeper – Gloria Spence

Vacancies

Anyone intending to stand down at the forthcoming AGM from any office or position in the church is requested to contact the church secretary.

Two elders are sought to cover sabbaticals during 2009. If any non-serving elder would like to volunteer to provide cover for 12mths, please contact the church secretary.

Portuguese Church

The joint service did not take place in December, due to unforeseen circumstances, so the Portuguese church has been invited to join us at the evening service on **3rd May**.

December Gift Sunday

The Salvation Army has written to express their sincere thanks to all who contributed gifts of toys, vouchers, selection packs, and other items for the Christmas Toy Appeal, which were distributed to needy families at Christmas.

Communion Offerings

Retiring collections were agreed for 2009 as follow:

January	Westminster College
February	Network Crafts
March	Everyman Club
April	Cruse
May	Samaritans
June	Retired Ministers' Housing
July	Langley House
August	Headway
September	Cheltenham Housing Aid
October	Harvest
November	Cotswold Listener
December	Cheltenham Community Projects

For your Diary

St Andrew's AGM – **Sunday 29th March**

Please note that there will be no service at St Andrew's on **Sunday 31st May**, and everyone is invited to join in the services at Prestbury or Warden Hill.

Greetings

Betty Roberts, who recently emigrated to Australia to join her family, sends her good wishes to everyone for a healthy and happy New Year. She is well settled there and enjoyed Christmas in the sun.

There is probably no God

Many may have seen reports of the advertising placed by the British Humanist Association on buses throughout England, Scotland and Wales, and the London underground, proclaiming, "There is probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life". If you are offended by this, it is possible to register a complaint with the Advertising Standards Authority by letter, or on their website at:

http://www.asa.org.uk/asa/how_to_complain/complaints_form

URCiC Directory 2009

Copies are still available and, if you would like one, please contact the church secretary.

Correspondence – placed in the Link Gallery

- Synod Saturday **March 14th** 2009 at Carrs Lane - Call for Displays on the Environment
- *Vision4life* – booklet “Celebrating the Feast”
- Barnes Close – *Community for Reconciliation* – programme and update
- Gloucestershire Churches Environmental Justice Network information
- *faithnetsouthwest* e-news December 2008 – information on courses, programmes etc in South West
- Award/Certificate in Faith Community Development - This course, developed by NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Community Education) in partnership with representatives from the faith communities, is being piloted in Birmingham in January and **February 2009**, especially for those engaged in chaplaincy.

‘JUMP FOR JOY’

**Sunday 15 February
9.30am – 10am**

Informal Short Service for all the family

Music at St Andrew’s in February

**Tuesday 3 February
Cheltenham Opera Society at 7.15am
Illustrated Talk**

**Saturday 7 February at 7.30pm
Cheltenham Chamber Orchestra**

Christmas Fair 2009

You will be very excited to learn that it is time to think about the Christmas Fair 2009. Yes really! We made just over £1,900 last year which, considering the weather, was a good result but we were somewhat short of quality items to sell. Hence it cannot be too early to think about the 2009 Fair. Please will you save items throughout the year which can be sold eg unwanted presents. Almost anything can be sold and there will certainly be the following stalls, raffle, tombola, books, bric-a-brac, toiletries, jewellery and more. If storage is a problem Lyn and Peter Ricketts will collect and keep until the event (tel 01242 571200). Don’t forget we need to start now to ensure success this year.

Warden Hill News

Used Stamps

The Guide Dog for the Blind do not take used stamps any longer so we are now sending them to 'Riding for the Disabled'.

Community Film Afternoon

Do you want to see the most watched film of 2008? Do you enjoy the songs of Abba? Well, the next community film night is on Saturday 7th February (doors opening at 2.15pm for a 2.30pm start). The film being shown is **Mama Mia** with Meryl Streep, Pierce Brosnan and Julie Walters.

Pantomime

Warden Hill Amateur Dramatic Society presents 'The Princess & the Sprout' on Friday March 13th at 7.30pm and 2.00 pm and 7.30 pm on Saturday March 14th at our church.

Make sure that you book early as last year the performances were fully booked. Tickets available from Frank Probert 01242 515010 or Terry/Val Hobbs 01242 573375. Ticket prices are £5 adults / £3 accompanied children.

Donations over the Christmas season

Clothe a child in India for a year raised £315, enough to clothe 21 children; Brilliant!

Hart – donations instead of numerous Christmas cards raised £120 plus gift aid.

Salvation Army – the gift service raised £125 towards gifts for teenagers.

The Christingle Service raised £162.87 for *The Children's Society*.

Carol Singing at Morrison for *Christian Aid* raised £208.40p.

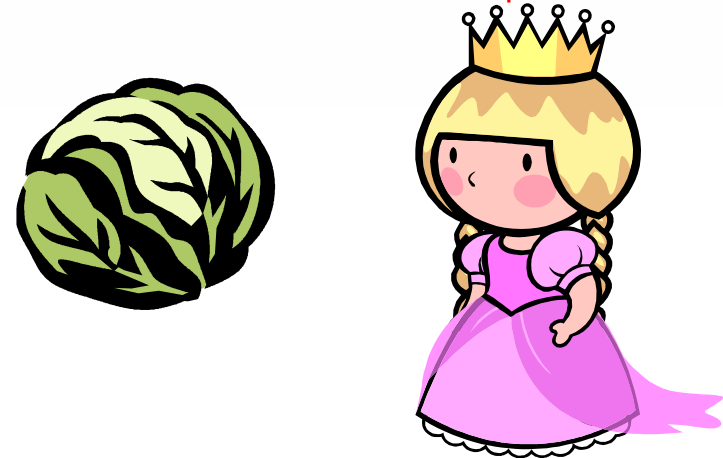
Thank you to all who gave so generously to the above good causes.

Martin Hiley



Warden Hill Amateur Dramatic Society
Presents

The Princess & the Sprout



a pantomime by Tina-Louise Holland

at the URC Hall, Salisbury Avenue, Warden Hill
7.30 pm Friday March 13th

and 2.00 pm and 7.30 pm Saturday March 14th

Director Val Hobbs

Tickets available from Frank Probert 01242 515010

Or Terry/Val Hobbs 01242 573375

Price £5 adults / £3 accompanied children

Why should I buy Traidcraft products from a Fair Trader stall ?

It appears that a number of people are asking why we should be buying Traidcraft products.

Are people asking

‘I buy Fairtrade products in the supermarket because it’s cheaper.’

- Price variation in different types of shop is normal
- Supermarkets sell high volumes so they can afford to make very little (sometimes nothing or even a loss) on each item. The four largest supermarkets (Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda & Morrisons) have 75% of the grocery market in the UK.
- Supermarkets are so large their running costs are proportionately much lower.

‘I can often buy Cafédirect cheaper in the supermarkets.’

- The price difference is because Cafédirect is not a Traidcraft product. We are a reseller and have to then deliver the product to Fair Traders.
- However, if you buy it from a Fair Trader (instead of a supermarket) it means that all of the profit goes to two dedicated fair trade organisations: Cafédirect and Traidcraft

‘I can buy Traidcraft products cheaper in supermarkets.’

- Fair Traders can offer a wider range of Traidcraft products than the supermarkets.
- We can’t control the prices that supermarkets set, especially if they have products on special offer.

‘Why should I buy Traidcraft products from a Fair Trader stall?’

- Where should the profits go? To supermarket shareholders or to a dedicated fair trade organisation that’s going the extra mile?
- Traidcraft benefits more from sales through stalls than through supermarkets and with that extra money, they can invest in changing more people’s lives.
- Traidcraft measures success on how much they buy from producers in the developing world.

- Traidcraft, as a Christian organisation, seeks to promote more ethical values within the business world.
- As an organisation dedicated to fighting poverty through trade, the money earned by Traidcraft is invested in existing fair trade producers and in continuing to pioneer new developments.

That’s why we say your money goes further when Traidcraft products are purchased through your stall.

In fact, supermarkets would not have access to fair trade products if organisations like Traidcraft did not invest and develop new areas of fair trade.

‘Then why does Traidcraft sell to supermarkets?’

- Traidcraft exists to help poor producers trade their way out of poverty and if we did not sell to supermarkets we would not be maximising the opportunities for our producers.
- Although the sales of fair trade organisations like Traidcraft have grown significantly, we are still relatively small and this limits our impact on the producers that we deal with.
- Supermarkets can access a far greater number of consumers and make it easy for their customers to buy fair trade products.

Why bother with fair trade?

John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, gave this reply:

“If you choose to buy the non-Fairtrade product, you are actively choosing to contribute to the poverty of others.”

The 3 billion people living on under \$2 a day have hope in the Traidcrafts of this world, which work to bring the benefits of trade to those who need it most. Fair trade groups would not be there at all if Traidcraft had not invested in and worked with them.

There are millions more who still need this chance.