

# Contact

December 2023



**The Borough, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 1NL**

[www.hinckleyurc.org.uk](http://www.hinckleyurc.org.uk)

*Minister*

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Rev Andrew Mudharara

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## Contact Information

Please take great care when sharing these contact details with other people. This information will not appear in the version of Contact on the church website.

Church Secretary	Christine Thomas	
Treasurer	Sally Leggat	
Premises	Malcolm Hooke	
Children and Youth Work	Chris Sharrock	
Pulpit Supply	David Crick	
Music	David Crick	
Notices	Christine & Tony Thomas	
Flowers	Kathy Smith	
Catering	Carole Wallis	
Contact Magazine	Penny Randriamahavorisoa	

## Worship in December/January (10.45 am unless stated)

3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Rev Andrew Mudharara (Toy Service)
10 <sup>th</sup> December	Tim Lea ( <i>including Holy Communion</i> )
17 <sup>th</sup> December	<i>NO MORNING SERVICE</i> 4pm Carol Service
24 <sup>th</sup> December	10.45 am Rev Lesley Moseley 7pm Rev Lesley Moseley ( <i>Christmas Eve Communion</i> )
25 <sup>th</sup> December	10am Rev Andrew Mudharara
31 <sup>st</sup> December	Richard Benham
7 <sup>th</sup> January	Rev Andrew Mudharara
14 <sup>th</sup> January	Steve Ward
21 <sup>st</sup> January	Rev Andrew Mudharara ( <i>including Holy Communion</i> )
28 <sup>th</sup> January	Rae Morrall
4 <sup>th</sup> February	Rev Andrew Mudharara

## **Minister's letter December 2023**

I am writing this letter to the people of God as we look forward to a period to commemorate and celebrate the word becoming flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:1.14). I find this period very important to my life as a child of God because my becoming a child of God is connected to the birth of Jesus as God becoming flesh and living among us.

I hope we come to an understanding of what the birth of Jesus means to us or has brought to us and what we need to do to reveal the presence of God to the people among us, as Church or part of the Body of Christ.

John tells us that God loved the World and gave His Son, Jesus, to the World (John 3:16). This Jesus is described by John (1:1) as God and this God became flesh ( 1:14) in Jesus. God became like us in Jesus Christ because of His love for us. God became flesh in Jesus His Son to win us back to Himself through love. God being among us played a very huge role in us as people to understand through seeing and learning who God was like, by seeing Jesus and hearing about God's love for humanity through Jesus.

God calls us as Church or children of God to BE the Body of Christ or to embody God in this world among the peoples so that through us, the body of Christ, people who do not know God may know God through us. We need to intentionally BE among people to share God with them and coming to the level where people are and speaking their language so that we can reveal God's love and Word to them through Jesus Christ who lives in us through the Holy Spirit who resides in us (1 Corinthians 3:16) , the temple of God. Sometimes we focus too much on doing, and forget about BEING.

I would like to suggest to us that we would do our best to Be what God has called us be in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. During this Christmas let us focus on being Children through the way we conduct ourselves among people and how we are among people who do not do as we do, and be light in darkness and love where there is no love.

We wish you a happy Christmas of Being and a new year of Being God's people in this world.

Rev Andrew Mudharara

## **News of the Family**

Kathy is slowly regaining her strength.

Julie P is quite unwell with a number of issues relating to her fall down the stairs

Julie's mum who has had several more falls and broken bones.

Dennis S – hopefully by the time you read this Dennis will have had his MRI, which has been cancelled and changed several times.

Ethel F – very poorly in hospital

Malcolm C – recovering slowly from a number of health issues.

Please remember those in need of healing in our church family who are awaiting treatment and in great pain; those who find this time of year particularly difficult and those who have recently lost a loved one.

We also think of:

Ann M, Annette and Paul, Betty H, Betty L, Jan and Brian B, Jean C, Joan and Trevor L, Joyce, Joyce and Arthur, Keith G, Keith H, Lily S, Margaret and Peter G, Nessa, Muriel, Pat J, Sue T and family, Wendy and Malcolm .

Please contact me if you or someone you know is in need of prayer and would like to go on the prayer list, respecting their privacy and seeking permission first.

Contact me by email or telephone. Sue Saunders

## **Birthdays & Anniversaries**

*Congratulations to all those celebrating birthdays in December:*

*Sue T (on the 7<sup>th</sup> , Rachel C (on the 9<sup>th</sup> ), David C and Kathy S (on the 17<sup>th</sup> ), Sarah P (on the 19<sup>th</sup> ), Betty H (on the 21<sup>st</sup> ), Brian B (on the 24<sup>th</sup> ), Arthur W (on the 25<sup>th</sup> ).*

*And best wishes to those celebrating their Wedding Anniversaries:*

*Malcolm and Jane C (on the 8<sup>th</sup> )*

*Apologies to anyone we may have missed. Thanks to Kathy for maintaining these records. If we haven't got your information, please speak to Kathy.*

## REACHING OUT

Our community engagement is going well with contact into a local school, our sports ministry started in the area, the start of a partnership with one of the local voluntary support organisations and our involvement with the wellbeing ambassador program with Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.

The mission trip to the States was very fruitful as we prepare for the visit of two American missionary-coaches in June. They will be the pathfinders for further student-missionaries coming over from the States to coach sports & activities while, more importantly, sharing the Gospel message in the Hinckley area. 2024 marks an exciting year for our outreach programs, with a number of other engagement projects due to start. Though more on these as we launch them.

Our launch of the backpacks for those in desperate need has already, I am afraid, being called upon several times. This work is ongoing as we seek to be the refuge for the needy that God calls us to be. Please find below the list of items we look to stock for those needing assistance that come to our church. We urge people to search the back of their cupboards for any of these items that may be unwanted in your own house, but a necessity for some:

Large backpack/rucksack

Bible

Magnifying glass

Protein / breakfast bars (with long date)

Water bottle

Dried snacks (with long date)

Small torch (preferable wind-up)

Spare batteries (if needed for torch)

Nail clippers

Hygiene cleaning/handy wipes

Moisturising cream

Sanitary towels

Shaving cream & safety razors

Comb/brush

Toilet wipes

Deodorant

Clean socks (XLarge) LOTS

Clean underwear (Large)

Woolen gloves (Large/XLarge)

Winter hat/beanie (Large/XLarge)

Small laundry detergent  
Blow-up cushion/neck roll  
Thermal/emergency blanket  
Sleeping bag  
Raincoat/ waterproof poncho  
Pet food (sachets / snacks)  
Reusable containers  
Small first aid kit

Above all, please pray for the blessing these backpacks will be and for the welfare of those that need them. We thank you for your ongoing prayers for all the outreach work.

*Paul Wake, Outreach Worker.*

### **An important message from Postman Pat:**

Hello dear friends,

I am sure you have all noticed my Christmas Postbox in the front foyer of our church. You still have fifteen more days to post your Christmas cards, the last post being Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of December at midday!

The cards will be distributed before the Carol Service on Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> December. So let's all get writing those lovely messages to our dear friends!

With love from Postman Pat xx

### **Hope into Action**

Work on the Hope into Action house is ongoing but it is unlikely that there will be tenants in before the New Year.

I would like to clear up some confusion there seems to be regarding Hope into Action and Lawrence House. Members of the group have spoken with the manager of Lawrence House and confirmed that they are happy for us to work along side them . We will not be 'competing ' with them. As a Friend of Lawrence House I can see how this will work and am quite happy. If anyone would like to discuss this further I'll be happy to do so.

Carole

It's that time of the year when once again we hear the Christmas story.

The mystery of God was focused in a child; the hope of God's love was concentrated on to this little one. God was coming to his people not through the dreams of the prophets, but in human flesh.

The Christmas story is well known; we hear the narratives in our Church services each year, they never change, but we do. Our community and our world are different. Our memories have grown, our hopes have been tested. But no matter what changes we have undergone, the story at Christmastide speaks to us of new birth and the possibility of our own rebirth. It tells us that things can be better because of the birth of the Christ child.

The birth of a child is a gift from God. But no one knows what any child will turn out to be. But by the time the gospel is written, long after Jesus' mission has been completed, the Christian community can celebrate the true identity of Jesus. That is why the writer of Luke's Gospel begins his narrative with the celebration of the birth of the Messiah. Luke knows who this child has turned out to be, so there is no doubt about the birth story. He dates back in time what the Christian community has come to recognise in the power of the Holy Spirit; that Jesus is the long-expected Messiah.

Legend has it that Luke as well as being a doctor was also a painter. And in his gospel, there is certainly an artist at work. We are drawn into a drama that is larger than our own; we are invited to share on one hand the mood of joy and hope; and on the other we share in the darkness of the manger and behold the gift of the Christ child wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger. With the birth of the baby in a manger a new adventure in faith begins. A new approach to God is opened up for us, a new way of relating to each other is asked for us. Because this child becomes for all of us the Way, the Truth and the Life.

That is why we make the journey back to Bethlehem each year to rediscover our own roots in the gift of Jesus. For us, it is a journey home.

Rev D Cheyne

## **Notice for Christmas**

The Carol Service will be on Sunday 17th December at 4.00pm. There will be no morning service on the 17th.

On Sunday 24th December, Christmas Eve, there will be a morning service as usual at 10.45 and also a communion service at 7.00pm

Christmas Day: there will Family Worship at 10.00am

## **Encouraging words**

God's way is rarely the quickest way. It is seldom the easiest way. But always the best way.

When you can give thanks in the desert, you will grow very strong.

The desert can offer a unique opportunity to experience the depth of God's love.

Where there is tragedy, there is the possibility of redemption. Where there is tragedy there is hope.

Christian hope says we are on our way from catastrophe to tragedy to a story of Glory. We are on our way. . . .

We are heading for the one place in the world worth travelling to, and we have wonderful assurances about our ultimate arrival - but not yet!

***Thank you to Ruth for sharing these words from bookmarks of our dear friend Sue D.***

## **Monthly Church Ramble**

At the time of writing the November walk is yet to take place - however the weather forecast looks promising (although a bit on the chilly side) and we are looking forward to our walk and chat and autumn colours through Bradgate Park.

There will not be a walk in December so the next walk will be on January 16th - venue to be announced. (Please note that if this clashes with the Tuesday Event then the walk will be on 23rd January).



## Tea and Coffee in Church

First of all a big thank you to everyone who supplies tea and coffee for our various activities . Your generosity is very much appreciated.

Could I please ask you to go one step further and buy Fairtrade? We are a Fairtrade Church which means that drinks for church activities should be Fairtrade. We do this to ensure that the tea and coffee producers have good working conditions and that some of the profits made go back to them to improve life in their villages.

Fairtrade products can be bought at The Vine, the Coop and various supermarkets. Just look out for the Fairtrade logo. If you're not sure what this looks like, ask Phillip or Carole.

## News from The Vine

Once December begins, our popular festive menu will return! This is a turkey, stuffing and cranberry sauce filling for a toastie, roll or sandwich, a mince pie with cream and a glass of hot mulled punch – have any of the elements on their own or get all three for £6.00! This will be served from Friday 1<sup>st</sup> till 22<sup>nd</sup> December, which is our last day of trading before the Christmas break. We'll be playing Carols through December so it is a lovely pre-Christmas treat. If you would like to book a table then just give us a ring.

We still have plenty of Christmas cards and Christmas books in stock as well as calendars, ornaments, decorations and wrapping paper. We have also had some great new stock in recently in gifts including some lovely bracelets and key-rings from a small independent supplier called FaithStrings and some lovely wall plaques so check out our gift corner the next time you are in.

One of our longest serving volunteers is retiring at the end of December and so we are in need, once again, of more volunteer help, particularly for Wednesdays. Ideally we're after a Christian who is also able to do basic food preparation so do be in touch with us if this is you! Please also pass this on to anyone you think might be interested. You can email [thevinehinckley@btconnect.com](mailto:thevinehinckley@btconnect.com) or ring 01455 612345. We re-open after Christmas on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January so may I take this opportunity to wish you a blessed Christmas and New Year.

Jessica Harrison, Manager

## Secretary's report for 2023

Last year the United Reformed Church celebrated 50 years of its founding in 1972. Fifty years on, in 2022, Theos and the United Reformed Church entered into a partnership to undertake an in-depth study of how the URC is functioning in today's world. It is titled 'The United Reformed Church: A Paradoxical Church at a Crossroads' (by Nathan Mladin). Theos is the UK's leading religion and society think tank. It has a broad Christian basis and exists to enrich the conversation about the role of faith in society through research, events, and media commentary. The report, which has recently been made available, is the result of a denomination wide survey and we contributed to that survey. The elders have recently been given a copy of this report which gives us a picture of where we are now and an insight into how we can move forward.

The opening statement of the report acknowledges that religion in the UK is changing - and changing fast - but it is not a simple story of declining church attendance; the picture is much more complicated and the landscape of faith today is more complex and dynamic than this. The report highlights examples of flourishing in the URC, notably in the vibrant community outreach of many local congregations. It also identifies barriers to flourishing, at both the local level and within wider denominational structures. The report ends with a series of recommendations and possible pathways to flourishing in the future.

So where does our church, Hinckley URC, stand in this context? Our church is a welcoming and friendly church and is appreciated because of this – it is definitely one of our strong points. But our membership has declined in recent years, mainly because we are an ageing congregation, and a number of people have passed on in the last few years. Since the last AGM we have lost six of our folk. A number of the members of our church family are in care homes or being cared for in their own homes. Others are carers, suffering ill health or are unable to get to church easily. We have to face the fact that churches of different denominations are being forced to close and the URC is no exception. On a more positive note we have welcomed two new members during the year, and we look forward to welcoming more in 2024.

In the report church buildings are cited as a mixed blessing, especially those like ours, built in the Victorian era and listed. They can be seen in two ways; as a drain on resources and no longer fit for purpose, or as an asset, providing opportunity for community projects when suitable space elsewhere is scarce and unaffordable – also a source of vital rental to pay

for their upkeep. Much depends on discerning God's will for us and the availability of people power with the energy and skills to do the necessary work to keep things going. We are facing this kind of dilemma and we continue to seek God's will for our future in prayer.

On the positive side, we are blessed with financial resources from rents and regular offerings, gifts such as the bequest of Janet Jones, gifts of those who share their skills and their time without which we can achieve little. So, what have we been doing over the past year? Recognising our strengths and weaknesses we have stepped out in faith to improve our buildings by planning to renovate Steptoe's yard. We have recognised the need to engage in mission and have employed Paul Wake as our outreach worker. We are also blessed with the wonderful work that Rachel does as a family worker. Outreach is one of our priorities. Wanting to serve the community is part of the DNA of the URC' is a comment by one of the church leaders who contributed to the report. The Thursday drop-in group continues to flourish and support those from the community who come in. The Tuesday walk offers an opportunity for fellowship and The Tuesday Event serves those in our church fellowship whose mobility is not too good and others who welcome the opportunity to meet over a meal and maybe invite a friend or relative. The International Friendship Centre offers support to those who come into the country from abroad and need to find their way, learn some English and make new friends. Hope into Action supports homeless people and that project is almost at a point where tenants can be found for the house which has been purchased in Hinckley. We are also grateful for the skills of our organist David, for the music ministry and those who bring God's word to us every Sunday. The opportunity for our choir to go to St Albans to sing in the Free Church Choirs Festival in October was very much appreciated and was an opportunity to meet up with members of other churches "to make a joyful noise unto the Lord".

We appreciate the opportunities we have to open our church for major events in the town. This is definitely one of the benefits of being a town centre church. We served refreshments at the annual Car Rally in September and for the Christmas Lights Switch-on in November and we will do the same for Car Trail which allows those in care to see the lights. Good Friday is a wonderful opportunity for churches to witness together in the town and for people to meet afterwards in our church for hot cross buns and a drink. The Wednesday-at-One Service and the Friday Pray Group welcome members of other churches to share together in worship and prayer. Please pray for Churches Together and for a closer

relationship between different denominations so that we can witness more effectively to the community and declare God's love as one body in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The report also comments on the fact that there isn't always missional alignment between churches and the organisations they hire their venues to. I think that this is a fact that challenges us and which we would like to address if only we knew how. This has been, and will continue to be, an aim that we have been exploring since the last AGM and we look to working with Paul and Rachel to help us move towards this goal over the coming year and into the future. Finding the courage and the know-how to share our faith is key to this. Plans for an Alpha Course and for learning more about faith sharing are high on our agenda this year. Rob has been running the 'Contagious Christians Course' with this aim. We need to listen to, and be supportive of Rachel and Paul and others who work in our fellowship and in the community. Being aware of the valuable work that is going on in our church is important and we are grateful to all those who serve in whatever way they can whether their help is seen or unseen. Thank you.

I thank you then for any support that you give and can give to those who are serving the church in various ways. Please talk to Rachel and Paul about their ministry, talk to those who run different outreach groups, the Hope into Action team, those who make sure our buildings are safe spaces and we are protected, the finance team. Find out what they are involved in, the joys and sorrows, their specific prayer needs and what kind of help and support they would appreciate. Even if you are not in a position to offer practical help your prayers and concern are valuable in giving people encouragement.

Finally, I want to thank our minister Andrew for his gentle, compassionate leadership, his inspiring ministry in bringing God's word to us, his encouragement and willingness to listen and be supportive when things are not going well. Serving two churches which are a good distance apart is challenging, and that is only one of the challenges, so please continue to pray. Andrew and Candid have been with us for five years now and Tavonga for three years. That time seems to have gone by very quickly. We thank God for them and pray that, if it is His will, they will be with us for a good while longer.

May God bless us and inspire us as we move forward in faith,

Christine Thomas (Church Secretary)

Copies of the Theos report are available in church.

## **Christmas Car lights trail on Wednesday 6th December.**

Help will be required to serve refreshments to the minibuses and cars that will be bringing housebound folk into Hinckley to see the Christmas Lights. Donations of Mince Pies will be gratefully received. There is a sign up list in church.

## **Warm Space Rota**

7<sup>th</sup> December Kathy and Ann

14<sup>th</sup> December Sue and Phillip

21<sup>st</sup> December Chris and Sylvia

28<sup>th</sup> December Ruth and Ann

## **Love Came Down at Christmas**

*Christina Rossetti*

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus:  
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,  
Love shall be yours and love be mine,  
Love to God and to all men,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.

**Rotas** *If you can help on the Door Steward rota, please see Penny Randriamahavorisoa; if you can help on the Coffee rota, please see Carole Wallis. If you are unable to fulfil your duty, please arrange a swap.*

	<b><i>Duty Elder</i></b>	<b><i>Door Steward</i></b>
<b><i>Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December</i></b>	Christine Thomas	Paul Deeming Ann Martin
<b><i>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December</i></b>	Rob Cobb	Sue Saunders Julie Payne
<b><i>Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December</i></b>	Carol Service 4pm	Jacqui Brown Heather Crick
<b><i>Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December</i></b>	Sue Saunders	Richard Benham Ann Martin
<b><i>Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December</i></b>	David Crick	Kathy Smith Sue Thain
<b><i>Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January</i></b>	Christine Thomas	Sue Saunders Julie Payne
<b><i>Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January</i></b>	Rob Cobb	Jacqui Brown Heather Crick
<b><i>Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January</i></b>	Sue Saunders	Richard Benham Ann Martin
<b><i>Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January</i></b>	David Crick	Paul Deeming Sally Leggat
<b><i>Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February</i></b>	Christine Thomas	Kathy Smith Sue Thain
	<b><i>Coffee</i></b>	<b><i>Flowers</i></b>
<b><i>Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December</i></b>	Marilyn & Crawford Payne	

<b>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Sylvia Ellis Chris Sharrock	C. Sharrock
<b>Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Ruth Griffiths Karen Jones	
<b>Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Carole Wallis Jacqui Brown	K.Truslove
<b>Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December</b>	Christine Thomas Ann Martin	
<b>Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Marilyn & Crawford Payne	
<b>Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Sylvia Ellis Chris Sharrock	M. Payne
<b>Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January</b>	Ruth Griffiths Karen Jones	
<b>Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Carole Wallis Jacqui Brown	C. Mashiri
<b>Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February</b>	Christine Thomas Ann Martin	

### **Wednesday at One**

December 6 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Simon Wearn	Holy Trinity, Hinckley
December 13 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Robin Handsford	Hinckley Great Meeting
December 20 <sup>th</sup>	Music and Carols with David Crick	Hinckley URC
December 27 <sup>th</sup>	NO SERVICE	
January 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Rev Daniel Cheyne	Hinckley URC

## **Dates for your Diary**

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December – Christmas Car lights trail

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December – Carol Service, 4pm (no morning service)

### ***Advance Notice***

Organ Recital at Hinckley United Reformed Church

David Saint, Director of Music St Chad's RC Cathedral, Birmingham

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 3.00pm

## **Regular Meetings**

Every **Monday** Chat and Prayer session on Zoom - log in after 6.45pm for a 7.00pm start and ending about 8.00pm

**Tuesday** Weekly Bible Study Group – see Richard Benham for details

**Wednesday-at-One** – Wednesday 1.00pm

### **Wednesday Monthly House Group**

7.30pm at the Crick's Wednesday December 13<sup>th</sup>

**Thursday** – Prayer meeting for future of the church 11.00 Front Foyer

**Thursday 7.30** Music group practice - all welcome

**Friday** Prayer Group 10.00am (in the church).

*If you need any help using Zoom, please contact Tony Thomas.*

Please submit material for the February edition of Contact by **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January**. Articles can be emailed. The next edition of Contact will be available by Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January.