

THE CHURCH OF ST URSULA BERNE



December 2020 - January 2021

St Ursula's Church Jubiläumsplatz 2, 3005 Berne, Switzerland

Chaplain: Revd Helen Marshall

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031 351 03 43

Day off: Friday

Lay Reader

Archana Jacob

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Church Office: 031 352 85 67

Marriages, Baptisms and Funerals by arrangement with the Chaplain

Normal pattern of Sunday services:

8.30 Said Eucharist (2nd and 4th Sundays)

10.00 Sung Eucharist with Junior Church and Crèche

Our services follow the Church of England's Common Worship Order One (2000)

On the 2nd Sunday of the month, the 10.00 service is more informal.

See Calendar of Services inside for details of the next few weeks.

Services in Thun: 18.30 on the first and third Thursdays of the month at Chapelle

Romande, Frutigenstrasse 22: Eucharist and Bible study.

Contact: Church Office 031 352 85 67

ST URSULA'S BERNE

The church is one of the nine Swiss chaplaincies that have a resident chaplain (minister) and together form the Archdeaconry of Switzerland. This is part of the Anglican Diocese of Europe which stretches from the Canary Islands to Ankara, from Moscow to Morocco.

The church was built in 1906 on a site that had been given to the community by the British-Berne Land Co. An American lady, Mrs Castleman from St Louis, provided the bulk of the money for the building as a thank offering for the near miraculous recovery of her adopted daughter, who was treated at the clinic of the famous Professor Kocher.

The hall and the house were added in 1959. An English Missionary Society, the USPG, helped to support the church from its earliest days. Since 1977, however, the chaplaincy has been fully self-supporting, relying solely on its members and well-wishers for its financial support.

St Ursula's has a long tradition of ministry to all English-speaking people in the Canton of Berne and beyond. It also provides a home for Christians from many different denominations and cultural backgrounds. Regular worshippers are encouraged to add their names to the Electoral Roll and so play a full part in the life of the church. Details from the Churchwardens or any member of the Church Council.

See Calendar inside for details of this month's services

St Ursula's Church website: www.stursula.ch

E-mail: berne@anglican.ch



St Ursula's Church Magazine

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NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

During the current pandemic, some of the events scheduled here may be postponed or cancelled. Please check with the Church Office (031 352 85 67) or on the Church website (www.stursula.ch) for recent information.

COPY DATE

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From the Chaplain

Dear Friends,

It is easy to get discouraged at the moment with the ongoing threat of the Covid virus and the necessary restrictions that brings to our daily lives. Sometimes we may be overwhelmed when we think about all the pain and suffering, misery and hardship faced by so many across our world from a whole range of acute problems, of which Covid is just one.

As the days begin to get shorter and darker, we may perhaps feel the darkness of our world, and even the dreariness of our own lives, more sharply. But in this dark period of time, it is good to be reminded that the Christian seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany are all associated with *light*.

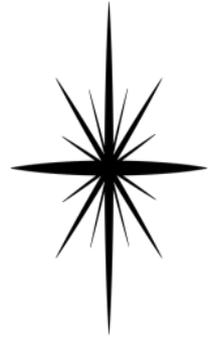
In Advent, we light the Advent candles each Sunday as we prepare for the coming of the light of Christ into our world. We look back to the prophets of the Old Testament who longed for the coming of the Messiah, the true King, the One who would bring the light of God's justice and peace. As Isaiah says 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.' (Isaiah 9.2). We remember John the Baptist, 'who was not the light but came to testify to the light', (John 1.8), and Mary, the one who would bear the holy child who will 'give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace'. (Luke 1.79).

At Christmas, we celebrate the longed-for light that has come into the world: 'The true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world.' (John 1.9). Many of our carols rejoice in the light of God we see in Christ:

*O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by:
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.*

*

*Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace:
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*



In Epiphanytide, we remember the revelation of God's light in Christ to the wider world, reflecting particularly on the story of the Magi from the East who follow the star to find the Christ child. The light of Christ is not just for the people of Israel but for the whole world and we pray that we, and all people everywhere, will come to see his glory. As one of our Epiphany prayers puts it:

*O God, who by the leading of a star
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth;
mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith,
may at last behold your glory face to face,
through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. Amen.*

The light has come in Christ, but we do not yet see his full glory. We are still painfully aware of the presence of darkness, and sometimes that darkness can seem overwhelming. But we are promised that 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' (John 1.5). We yearn for the day when all darkness will be destroyed and we will live forever in the light of God's love.

This yearning takes us back to Advent again. For during the Advent season, we do not only look forward to Christ's coming into our world as a vulnerable baby, to share our human existence, but we long also for his coming again as the glorious Lord. Then, in the new Jerusalem, the peoples of the earth will be drawn together to worship God and the Lamb and 'there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.' (Revelation 22.5).

In the meantime, we are called to turn away from darkness and seek to live in the light, here and now, in our ordinary daily lives. So let us pray:

*Heavenly Father,
you have created a universe of light:
forgive us when we return to darkness,
Lord, have mercy.*

*Lord Jesus,
you are the light of the world:
cleanse and heal our blinded sight.
Christ, have mercy.*

*Holy Spirit,
you give us light in our hearts:
renew us in faith and love.
Lord, have mercy*

*

*Lord Jesus, Light of light,
you have come among us.
Help us to live by your light
to shine as lights in your world.
Glory to God in the highest.
Amen*

With my love in Christ,
Helen



Are you human?

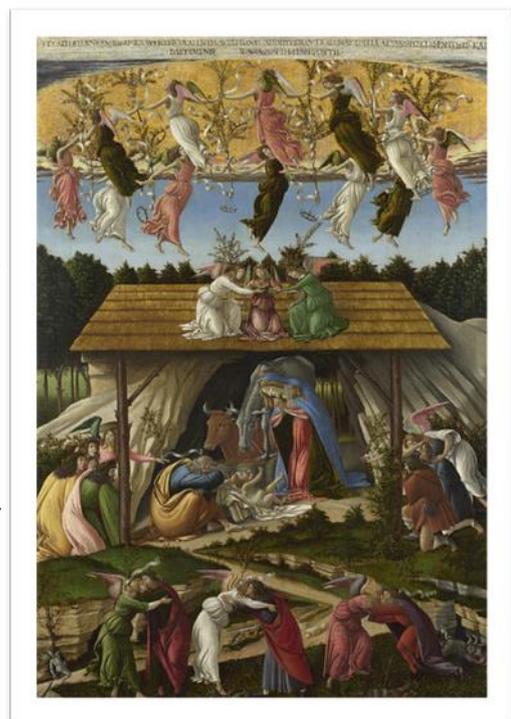
God is coming. God is living among us. God is manifest, for all to see. These three sentences form the focus of our thoughts for these three seasons – Advent, Christmas, Epiphany. A Latin word, an English word and a Greek word cushion the stark fact that ever since “the Word became flesh” our world has not been the same.

When the baby grew up whom the shepherds had found lying in a manger, he would often speak of himself as “Son of Man”. In these days of political correctness, it is important to realize that in the language Jesus spoke, the words meant no more than “human being”. It was the custom to refer to people as members of a tribe or nation – sons of Levi, sons of Benjamin, sons of Israel, sons of Abraham, sons of Moab. Sons of darkness were people who belonged to darkness, the places where God’s light did not shine. Jesus’ tribe was Adam – the whole of humanity.

In the Old Testament, God is almost outside human reach. God appears in clouds, in fires, on mountain tops, and woe to those who do not veil their faces! “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” to quote the 1611 translation of Psalm 8:4.

In Jesus, “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), but also whoever has seen Jesus has seen themselves, stripped of their mask of respectability, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Jesus was not against the powerful and the respectable. Luke 7:8 pictures him as amazed by the centurion who says to one of his soldiers “Go” – “and he goes”. But he favours the poor and the outcast, the unclean leper and the destitute widow. He is opposed to the hypocrites, the people who boast of doing good when they are doing harm. This is the message of Mary’s hymn, the Magnificat – in Jesus, God has “brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.”

If we too are “in Jesus”, if we too are “of the tribe of Adam”, then we too share our humanity with all our fellow human beings – the rich and the wretched, the influential and the powerless, the honourable and the disreputable. The world around us is in a mess – we can



The Mystical Nativity, Sandro Botticelli, 1500

all name countries riddled with corruption, societies in chaos because of Covid, or Brexit, the results of elections, extremism. We have problems striking a balance between economic growth and environmental disaster. God called people to “care for the widow, the orphan and the stranger” (Deuteronomy 10:19), and today the news still shows refugees crammed into overcrowded camps, drowning in overloaded boats hired to them by gangsters. Can this be the glad tidings of great joy that the angel brought to the shepherds? We are Christ’s body now, we are the baby in the manger, the tortured body on the Cross, the glorious body bursting from the tomb. And so is everyone around us – great or lowly. We should love them all. This is what Christmas is all about.

- *Hector Davie*

Charities in Corona times

As some of you may know, I am the Swiss Anglican synod representative on the board of “Partner sein”, the charity of our sister church, the Swiss Old Catholic church. This work has given me an insight into the financial problems currently being faced by most charities.

Although individual contributions to charities have held up reasonably well, as a result of the Corona lockdowns and related restrictions many fund raising events have not taken place. Charities which specialise in immediate catastrophe relief work usually have large reserves so that they can react quickly and rebuild their reserves later.

Many other charities, such as “Partner sein”, are engaged in longer-term projects, with commitments often extending over a number of years and, particularly in education, affecting young people’s futures. In the short term, 1-2 years, these charities will be able to call on their limited reserves. Should the funding shortfall continue longer, many charities will have to reduce their aid projects.

I do understand that for some people times are harder than usual, and the current situation creates uncertainty, financial and otherwise. If you are in a position to do so, please continue to support your favourite charities so that they can continue their good work.

- *Robert Amstutz*

A Word for the Month – Tradition

“Every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.” Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* knew the traditions of the season, but it took three ghostly visions to convince him they were not “Humbug!”

Christmas is a time for traditions. Whether it is Aunt Maud’s annual gift of a badly-knitted hat, the stocking at the foot of the bed, the pulling of crackers or gathering around the fire for the Queen’s speech (or whatever *your* custom is), we do it this way because this is how we’ve always done it – even if we haven’t.

The word comes from a Latin word meaning to hand over – the same root that underlies the word “trade” – particularly to pass down from one generation to another. Traditions can be good or bad, harmless or dangerous, grandiose or trivial.

In Bible times, tradition was very important. In the words of Deuteronomy 11: “Put these words of mine in your heart and soul... Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” The Passover meal, the great festivals, how one



Illustration by Charles Edmund Brock

dressed or behaved were reminders of what God had done – and what God could do.

This was just as important in New Testament times. The Gospel itself was a message – something to hand over. “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,” Paul tells the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:3). “I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you.” (1 Cor. 11:2)

But traditions can change with time. And traditions that served a useful purpose can continue long after the purpose is no more – just look at the bits and bumps on your own clothing, not to mention Helen’s in church! Jesus was alive to this. In Mark 7 the Pharisees complain to him “Your disciples do not live according to the tradition of the elders”, and he replies “You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.” Tradition can easily obscure or distort the right thing to do, or the real truth.

This became an issue at the time of the Reformation, when many of the reformers accused the church of valuing tradition more than scripture, or more than logical reason. It became even more of an issue at the time of the Enlightenment, for the Reformers had unconsciously adopted many of the old traditions of how scripture should be interpreted. Who knows the authors of the Gospels? Where do we get our picture of the ox and the ass in the stable from? Or the apple that Eve picked?

Tradition fills in the gaps in the picture – and often successfully. We have neither the patience nor the ability to design the world again from first principles. It is better to follow and learn from the ways of those who have gone before us than to start anew by making our ancestors’ mistakes. We need to accept God’s world as God has made it and not try to create a more perfect world of our own – for we will fail. We need to take what have been passed on to us, but with an open eye, and to use it to live in harmony with our neighbours. For we are Christ’s body now.

- Hector Davie

Treasurer's report

Pledge Sunday was in October although unfortunately I could not be present. I was waiting for a Covid test result, and I am sorry to have missed you. I also apologise if those who receive their magazine electronically missed out on a pledge mailing. This is rather embarrassing, and we will not let this happen next year. We are very grateful to all those who pledge their giving. It really does help. Please contact me if you have any questions about pledging or about your pledge.

Our Church is currently closed again for services which impacts collections and hall rental, plus our Christmas bazaar had to move online. At the time of writing this seems to be getting several orders, and a good level of support. Thank you. I will put the result on the website.

We are very grateful that we could have our sale in September. We had strict rules in place regarding masks and distancing etc, but it worked and all who attended had a good time. We really used our outdoor space to increase the distancing.



We also made around Fr4,000 which is in line with a regular non-Covid year. Our online quiz night was also a great success, and thanks to all who joined in. We raised Fr840 that evening. The bazaar of course was always our main fundraiser, and normally it would clear any deficit on the Church side, but these are not normal times, and so this year we will end up with a deficit in the Church. We have reserves though, and times like these are the reason we have them. I am not worried. We are so fortunate and blessed in so many ways.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
(Philippians 4:6)*

- Sue Higson

Church Garden News

The team met again on 24 July to finish trying to dig out all the roots of the Rose of Sharon firmly growing on the west side of the Church. This was quite a job and we were very grateful to all those who did the digging. The bed on the right side of the steps up to the Church has been planted with endemic species (might look like weeds ... but please leave them be) and on the left border with plants donated to the garden plus a small purchased Chaste Tree.

A team of volunteers took care of watering the garden to encourage our new plants all through the summer.

On 4 August, Sue, Agnes, Alison and Cecily were grateful to be able to visit Brigit Baumberger in her garden in order to understand “Verein Natur” better and their quest for more biodiversity in our environment. On 26 August and again on 3 September a ‘*tolles team*’ joined forces to collect fallen leaves and put them into our new leaf-only compost bin, weeded the gravel and flower beds and Hans fixed some benches all in preparation for the upcoming Autumn Church Sale, where everyone who came enjoyed the new look and feel of the garden. We could really use it to the fore at the sale.

Saturday, 24 October was a busy day as Art, Mary, Beat, Donna, Sue, Agnes, Graeme, Johannes, Marc, Gerhard and Alison all together tackled the hedges, and many hands do make the job a lot easier. We did a little weeding, raking and quite a few bulbs were planted around the garden in many different locations. Also a hedgehog hideaway was ‘hidden’ and a second leaf compost bin erected. The Church House back garden was also treated to a selection of meadow seeds. We hope



they grow. The team is trying to follow the Verein Natur strict rules of only endemic plants in this hidden garden. On 12 November, Agnes and Alison tidied up a little, planted a few bits and bobs and emptied terracotta pots in preparation for the winter.

Thanks to Agnes and her research, we now have one new green bench and one new red bench in the garden. Sometimes things just seem to be right, and with the benches, it really felt like they were meant for us. We are very grateful to Ledermann AG in Kirchberg for their great service. Do take a moment to sit, relax and breathe the wonderful tranquility of the garden in the coming months. Maybe you will see the first crocus, snowdrop, narcissus or tulip poke its way through the earth.

The wooden benches are still with us, and will be renovated in the fullness of time, so that in 2021 you will have even more space to sit and contemplate.

A big thank you to all who have helped in the garden this year. We believe everyone had a rewarding time in so many different ways and look forward to gardening together again in 2021.

- Alison Beindorff with photos by Agnes Derory

A poem inspired by the Garden benches

*A garden is a place to be with God,
Where birds do sing, and insects buzz,
& all around us we feel his presence.
His love is shown in every bloom.
His power is shown in the wind that blows,
and waves the leaves upon the trees.*

*To sit and wait upon a bench,
Is a small luxury we can give ourselves.
It costs us nothing, but some time,
a patient heart, and a quiet mind.
To sit and wait, and try to hear,
the still small voice of God in our ear.*

*We feel so blessed to sit and wait,
to feel his presence; it lifts our soul,
it gives us strength, to face the world
and know that with him, all will be well.*

- Sue Higson



For Your Diary December 2020 and January 2021

Our Regular Weekly Events are not taking place until further notice

Other Events

December

Thursday 3 December	18.30	Thun Service
Tuesday 8 December	19.00	Church Council Meeting
Sunday 13 December	10.00	Nativity Play
Thursday 24 December	16.00	Online Christingle and Crib Service
	21.00	Christmas Eve Eucharist
Friday 25 December	10.00	Christmas Day Eucharist

January

Tuesday 12 January	19.00	Church Council Meeting
Sunday 17 January		COPY DATE



Services and Readings December 2020 and January 2021



Sunday 6 December – Second Sunday of Advent

10:00 Eucharist
Isaiah 40.1-11
2 Peter 3.8-15a
Mark 1.1-8

Sunday 13 December – Third Sunday of Advent

10:00 Nativity Play Service
A variety of short readings throughout the play

Sunday 20 December – Fourth Sunday of Advent

10:00 Eucharist
2 Samuel 7.1-11,16
Romans 16.25-27
Luke 1.26-38

Thursday 24 December – Christmas Eve

16:00 Christingle Service, online
21:00 First Eucharist of Christmas
Isaiah 52.7-10
Hebrews 1.1-12
John 1.1-14

Friday 25 December – Christmas Day

10:00 Eucharist
Isaiah 52.7-10
Hebrews 1.1-12
John 1.1-14

Sunday 27 December – First Sunday of Christmas

10:00 Eucharist
Isaiah 61.10 - 62.3
Galatians 4.4-7
Luke 2.15-21

Sunday 3 January – Epiphany

10:00 Eucharist
Isaiah 60.1-6
Ephesians 3.1-12
Matthew 2.1-12

Sunday 10 January – Baptism of Christ

10:00 Eucharist
Genesis 1.1-5
Acts 19.1-7
Mark 1.4-11

Sunday 17 January – Second Sunday after Epiphany

10:00 Eucharist
1 Samuel 3.1-10
Revelation 5.1-10
John 1.43-51

Sunday 24 January – Third Sunday after Epiphany

10:00 Eucharist
Genesis 14.17-20
Revelation 19.6-10
John 2.1-11

Sunday 31 January – Candlemas

10:00 Eucharist
Malachi 3.1-5
Hebrews 2.14-18
Luke 2.22-40

Sunday 7 February – Mission Sunday (Second Sunday before Lent)

10:00 Eucharist
Proverbs 8.1,22-31
Colossians 1.15-20
John 1.1-14

Eco-Notes



The pandemic has pushed many of our concerns into the background. Recently, the environmental officers of the churches in Switzerland met (by Zoom, of course) and agreed to pool ideas. It may not be a good time for community lunches or for getting our Junior Church to do wildlife surveys. Our thoughts on food packaging and hygiene currently take second place to thoughts of avoiding infection by the coronavirus. Our attitude to public transport has been coloured by our attitude to social distancing in public places.

Yet the possibilities remain vast. A recent campaign has sought to recycle old electrical items (look at www.erecycling.ch). My stock of tips keeps flowing in faster than I can process it. (Did you know that supermarkets throw away single bananas left in their fresh food section at the end of the day if you don't buy them?) There is something you can do today to reduce waste, promote biodiversity and to save energy. Do it!

- *Hector Davie*

Youth Confirmation Class

The Youth Confirmation Class continues to meet approximately twice a month via Zoom. Our current topic is "Being a Christian". As well as keeping in touch with one another, we do a short Bible study, based on the early church – so from Acts or one of the letters. Then someone from our congregation talks about some aspect of their Christian life.



We hope to continue meeting in 2021. Please continue to pray for these young people – and for all those who have volunteered to come and talk to them. And, if you would like to come along, just get in touch with me.

-*Tricia Carrick*

Online Christmas Bazaar

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in St Ursula's

The smell of the delicious Christmas cakes, the jolly Christmas decorations, the warm smiles of our volunteers going up and down in order to have everything ready on time... It sure feels like Christmas here at St Ursula's.

Our Christmas Bazaar was supposed to take place on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 November. Having already had a successful sale in September we were all looking forward to our next big event. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to cancel this sale.

We were, however, able to organise an online Bazaar, aiming to bring the spirit and fun of a real Christmas Market into everyone's homes. So, with the much appreciated effort and hard work from the British Food Corner Team, the Flower Team, the Catering Team, the Books Team and all our wonderful and generous volunteers we managed to offer an amazing range of British foods, Christmas cakes, pies, scones, Christmas turkey lunches, second hand books and patchwork items as well as cloth masks available for ordering, with pickup or delivery.

At the moment this article is being written, we cannot know if it was a financial success or not. What we know is that all our volunteers worked really hard and dedicated lots of hours of their personal time for it. So a big THANK YOU to all of them for their help.

Stay healthy and take care of yourselves!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

- *Maria Avdikou, Church Office*



PS: A full report of the online Bazaar with photographs will be in our next February/March magazine.

Junior Church News



We were lucky to be able to meet on Sunday 4 October – there were eight children. We met in the same room as the crèche where there were two children. This meant that three adults were sufficient. It was a good group with lots of participation. We did not go into church, but Helen came down and blessed the children during the communion time which was special.

As we have so few teachers, it had been decided to meet only once a month – on the first Sunday of each month. However, unfortunately, more restrictions came into force and so we have not been able to meet again. So, at the moment, the Junior Church is not meeting – until further notice.

Nonetheless, we are trying to keep in touch with our Junior Church families (by email and by phone) and together we are working on a “virtual” Nativity Service for 13 December. This will simply be a powerpoint presentation with Bible readings and carols, some of which are being prepared by our Junior Church children – including lots of pictures they have created. If the regulations are relaxed by then we will show this in church (perhaps with the children in the hall). In any case it will be available on-line and we hope it will keep you in touch with our families and be part of our usual start to the Christmas celebrations.



Please continue to pray for the children, their families and the teachers during this difficult time.

- *Tricia Carrick*

Spring 1979 : The birth of the patchwork group

In the March 1979 magazine I found an encouraging notice: "Let's start a Patchwork group, no experience necessary, only the ability to thread a needle."

So about eight ladies started to get busy and within a short time we had finished our first quilt, mainly made of scraps of materials. A beautiful joint effort.

The group grew and grew and the output of quilts and small items was quite considerable. Over time we staged various exhibitions, some in the Church Hall and in 1986 a big five-day event at the

Wittigkofenzentrum. There we had about 50 quilts on show and for sale, various stalls with

small items, workshops, Ploughman's lunches, tea and cakes, a visit from Bishop Satterthwaite (as he happened to be in Berne) and of course the barn dance. With the help of many people it was a great church event. The display at the Patchwork Group's stall at the annual church bazaars regularly attracted many people; the proceeds of the sold items have always been a very welcome contribution to the church's finances.

We have been a very mixed group of ladies, up to over 20 at one time. There was a stable core, but many came and went again, according to their situation. We helped and supported each other in many ways, laughed together and also wiped tears away - a very caring group.

Now I am the last one of the original group at St Ursula's. It is time for me to retire after 41 years. I am very grateful for many friendships started through the group's activities, and I am happy to say I am still in touch with a number of friends in various corners of the world.

- Elisabeth Pfyffer





CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2020

In one of our best-loved carols, Christina Rossetti situates the birth of Jesus ‘in the bleak midwinter’. She paints a severe and freezing manger scene, with howling wind and deep snow. She represents the frosted earth and water with iron and stone.

From the biblical narrative, it seems unlikely that Jesus was born in the bleak mid-winter, as the shepherds would not be putting their sheep out to pasture in freezing conditions. But that does not stop us gladly enjoying Rossetti’s romantic poetic licence and reminding ourselves that the conditions of the first Christmas were hard, extraordinarily hard by modern standards.

Mary was a young girl giving birth a long way from home. The town of Bethlehem was crowded with strangers registering with the tax authorities of the occupying powers. Mary laid her new-born baby in an animal’s stone feeding trough. And the first visitors were not close family but rough men from the fields.

It is extremely difficult to recover this first Christmas. The festival has become overlaid with medieval nativity scenes and Romantic or Dickensian winter scenes. In the twentieth century, Christmas became the setting of the perfect family gathering. Most significantly, the run up to the commercial Christmas – the ‘golden quarter’ – is now a vital part of the retail industry’s overall wellbeing so that vast sums are expended on advertising to persuade us to acquire more goods and more debt.

But not in 2020. This year it will be very different. Travel bans, lockdowns and quarantines mean it will be harder and perhaps impossible to get together with our loved ones. People are poorer. High streets, at least at the time of writing, are closed in many countries. And even when they re-open, shopping isn’t quite the same when you have to physically distance and wear a mask.

Christmas will be simpler this year. And for many it will be sadder. As Covid-19 has progressed, more and more families have been affected by the virus and its frightening and sometimes long-term symptoms. Some of us have a relative who has been in intensive care, struggling to breathe. Many of us know

someone who has very sadly lost their life, and some of us face the first Christmas without someone close to us. This year, perhaps we more intuitively sense the harshness of the manger scene, the cruelty of death, the pain of a bleak mid-winter.

Another well-known – and much older – carol speaks to us about ‘tidings of comfort and joy’. In 2020 we need to hear these tidings. For Christmas is at heart the story of a God who draws near to us in Jesus, sharing the sorrows and joys of human experience. In the mystery of the incarnation, the eternal God wonderfully condescends to be born as a human baby, in the roughest conditions. He is ‘Immanuel’ – the God who is with us.

Whatever conditions you face this Christmas, I hope you will be able to reach out and find the God who is with us. I hope you will take comfort from the presence of God with you, and perhaps also find opportunity to comfort others.

‘God rest you merry’ in modern English means ‘may God grant you peace and happiness’. The unknown author continued:

‘Let nothing you dismay

for Jesus Christ our Saviour was born on Christmas Day.

To save us all from Satan’s power

when we had gone astray

Which brings tidings of comfort and joy.’

I wish each of you and your families comfort and joy as we approach this Christmas season.

+Robert Gibraltar in Europe

+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe



Charity of the Month – The Bishop’s Advent Appeal

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all our lives, but in other parts of the world it has been much harder to cope with. Countries with few resources, a weak infrastructure, already struggling with poor sanitation, with other diseases – malaria, tuberculosis, have been overwhelmed by the new Coronavirus. How do you wash your hands thoroughly if the nearest running water is two miles away? How do you keep your distance when you live in a crowded shanty town?

In our own diocese, Morocco has been hard hit. Further away, South Africa has had one of the strongest lockdowns in the world, but cases are over 685,000. In Switzerland we have been preparing for a second wave. In Africa, a spokesperson has said, “I don’t think we are over the first wave yet, we have not yet hit the bottom at all.” The poorest people are the ones who suffer worst.

With this in mind, the Bishop has decided that this year’s Advent Appeal will go to the Anglican Communion Fund. This fund has been actively responding to the needs of poorer communities. It has allocated over £180,000 across 21 of the church’s provinces. The ACF supports the Church in its ministry, provides food relief to the vulnerable, shares information about staying safe from the virus, and provides hand-washing facilities and personal protective equipment.

In the South Sudanese Diocese of Maridi, an ACF grant provided food items, soaps and seeds to over 200 pastors and lay readers and provided bicycles and hand microphones for pastors to carry prevention messages into remote areas. Speaking of the support, Bishop Moses Zungo said, “You held our hand during our most trying moments.”



And thanks to a grant from the ACF, the Anglican Church of Mexico has been able to take more active steps to provide food, drinking water, hygiene equipment and medicines where these have been most needed. With our help, these stories can be repeated round the world.



Bishop Robert sums up his appeal: "I hope we in our diocese can help with an outstretched hand to brothers and sisters in the Anglican Communion who are suffering so deeply right now from the impact of Covid-19, by

supporting the work on the ground by the ACF."



Our own charity committee have agreed to contribute to this appeal. Please give as generously as you can too. A donation to St Ursula's Charitable Association (Postfinance 60-666488-7) marked "Advent Appeal" qualifies for tax relief in Switzerland. But more importantly, it enables the church to help the neediest people overcome the worst effects of the Covid crisis.

- Hector Davie for the Charity and Missions Team

Cecily's Fund

SWISS FRIENDS OF



Dear All,

Truly for Cecily's Fund this year has proved a challenging time. Due to the current corona situation we unfortunately had to cancel our traditional Pumpkin Soup Dinner and Benefit Concert recently, which we regret very much.



Cecily's Fund helps thousands of vulnerable children every year get an opportunity to receive a quality education. On behalf of the children in Zambia we would like to express our sincere thanks to all our supporters for funding us over the years in all our endeavours.

We wish all of you that you can enjoy the coming Advent Season in good health and look forward to welcoming you again next year.

Your Swiss Friends of Cecily's Fund Team wish you a Happy & Blessed Advent Season

Prayer: Tender God, grant me your peace in this Advent Season. Calm my anxious thoughts, soothe my heart when troubled. Help me to bear your peace into the world, working for the safety and protection of children and all who are vulnerable. Amen.

- *Yvonne Bomonti, Berne Representative SFCF*

Letter from the Chairman



Dear Swiss Friends of Cecily's Fund,

I hope you are all keeping well in these extraordinary times.

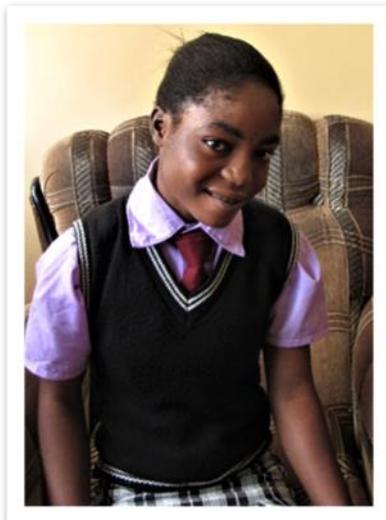
Every autumn I enjoy a trip to Switzerland to renew old friendships, make new ones and tell you all about the progress of Cecily's Fund in Zambia. Alas, the pandemic has cancelled my trip (as well as a wonderful concert in Berne). As you can imagine 2020 has been a year of upheaval for Cecily's Fund, and we would have had a great deal to talk about. You may therefore welcome a short update and the possibility of joining an online Question and Answer session on 10 December (see below).

In Zambia the reported death toll from the pandemic is only 350, but Covid-19 has caused massive disruption and a major economic shock which comes on top of an already serious economic crisis: the Zambian Government is unable to service its debt obligations; the mines are laying off workers; inflation is increasing rapidly. Zambia has one of the highest levels of inequality in the world. The young people you are supporting are the poorest of the poor and have been hard hit.



Their schools have been closed for much of the year. So how has Cecily's Fund responded?

We have had to suspend our school-based activities, but our network of little savings and loan clubs for orphans' caregivers has continued to flourish, and your response to our emergency appeal has enabled us to provide emergency food aid to orphan-headed households. This has been enormously appreciated, and we will be appealing to you shortly for one last food distribution. We have linked this with health advice and we are also helping these households to establish backyard vegetable plots, because, though food distribution is essential for them now, we do not see this as sustainable in the longer term.



Zambian schools are now reopening, and from the beginning of next year we restart our core business – improving these children’s life chances through education. All the activities outlined in our recent annual reports will resume to

*Enable these children to go to school,
Help them to succeed at school,
Prepare them for life after school and
Bolster community support for their education.*

In January we also start an ambitious new programme. We will set up micro social enterprises run by mothers and carers of vulnerable girls. These caregivers will be trained in the making and selling of low-cost, re-usable, menstrual hygiene towels, and to provide vital information and support on HIV and sexual reproductive health. The project will enable the poorest and most vulnerable girls to complete their education and not drop-out due to menstruation and their caregivers’ inability to meet school costs. It will also reduce child pregnancy and early marriage by giving girls the confidence to make informed decisions. The programme will also involve deaf children and their caregivers and thus encourage inclusion and behaviour change towards those with disabilities. I am delighted to report that UKAID and a leading Swiss foundation are amongst those who have pledged support for this programme.

Next year will also see the start of a multi-year programme to reduce the number of our partner schools and deepen our relationships with them. At the start of this year we were supporting destitute children in 42 different schools in the Copperbelt. Over the years we have had innumerable success stories of talented young people who have seized the opportunities we have given them, but we believe that many of those schools could have done much more to enable many more such children to overcome their many disadvantages. We have now identified eight schools where, over the next few years, we will gradually concentrate more of our resources and work with the staff to achieve even better educational outcomes for ‘our’ children.

So, despite the current lockdown, Cecily’s Fund is working very hard to improve the lot of some of the most disadvantaged children in this world.

In this letter I have only been able to give a very brief account of some of our activities. If you would like to know more, I will gladly send you the technical details to enable you to join me and many of our UK and international friends for an online Question and Answer session on the

evening of 10 December. The panel will consist of the CF Director, the CF Programmes Manager, the Directors of our two main Zambian partner organisations and two or three of our alumni. The session should only last for about an hour. I am sure that it will be extremely interesting. Email me at basil.eastwood@gmail.com for instructions how to take part.



Whether you can join us for this or not, I very much hope that you will continue to support our work to educate destitute vulnerable children in Zambia through your SFCF organisation – and of course I also very much hope to meet many of you again in Switzerland again before too long!

With my very best wishes to you all,

*Your sincerely
Basil Eastwood*

Happy Birthday

Congratulations to our Junior Church children with birthdays in December and January:

Elena Scherer 7 on 6 December

Annalise Patton 14 on 9 December

Giorgio Pagano 13 on 10 December

David Eze 12 on 12 December

Lionel Hemming 7 on 12 December

Kai Lehmann 10 on 17 December

Tabea Aeberli 15 on 17 December

Amelie Coatalen-Hodgson 7 on
19 December

Johann Underwood 7 on
31 December

Aydon Kuruvilla 9 on 4 January

Adriele Jacob 6 on 9 January

Alyssa Buschang 9 on 13 January



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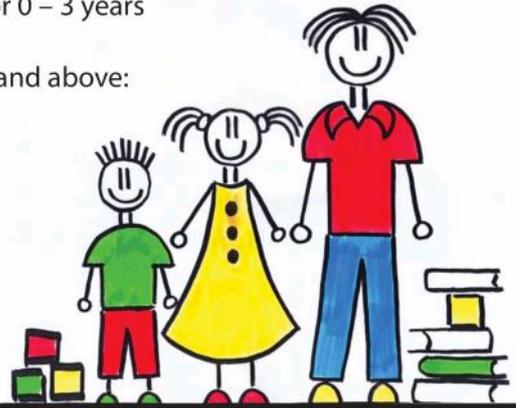


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*Enviably student to teacher ratio

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We are looking forward to meeting you

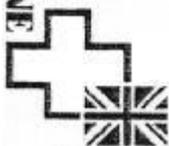
Mittelstrasse 55, 3012 Bern | Open every Thursday & Friday from 8pm | www.englishclub.ch

Why not join the International Club of Berne ?

The club was formed in 1991 as a non-political, non-religious organization open to all men, women and their families, interested in meeting for social and cultural activities. Our aim is to facilitate a better understanding of - and integration into - Switzerland, through a variety of services, programmes and joint explorations of this country and its people. We welcome members from all over the world, and currently count 140 members (including families) from some 30 nations. Our common language is English, but among our members many other languages can be heard. We hold a monthly meeting with guest speakers and presentations on a wide range of topics, and publish a monthly Newsletter. In 2016 the club celebrated its 25th anniversary with several special events. We are waiting to welcome you !

Nazanin Kupferschmid, President
Tel. 078 905 5743, email nkschmid@gmx.net
International Club of Berne, 3000 Berne, [www: icberne.ch](http://www.icberne.ch)
Annual membership: CHF 50 for singles, CHF 60 for families.

SWISS-BRITISH
SOCIETY BERNE



The Swiss British Society, Berne organises a number of cultural events including visits to exhibitions, concerts, a Christmas dinner, Burns supper and musical evenings. We also invite guest speakers to address our members on a range of literary, musical or political topics. Usually our events have a social element - we try to combine dinner or lunch together with our lectures and outings, or at least a chat and a cup of tea! New members are always welcome. Our website (and circular) is hosted by the Federation of Anglo Swiss clubs at www.angloswissclubs.ch

Contact: President: Chris Warren

Email: cuwarren@zapp.ch

Andy Prior

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Andy Prior is retiring at the end of this year, and we are grateful to him for the many years he has supported this magazine. We wish him and Ursula all the best in the future.

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Johannes Hewel (secretary)	078 949 39 86
Sue Higson	076 690 50 88
Lynn Morgan	031 971 13 36
Belle Täuber	079 369 94 26
Ruby Wildhaber	078 808 75 15

Lay Representatives to Archdeaconry Synod:

Hector Davie (vice chair)	031 971 27 71
Maxine Wildhaber	076 349 40 42

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Elisabeth Pfyffer 026 492 03 26

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Adorée Weibel 031 879 01 31

Servers:

Ruth Freiburghaus 031 992 56 15

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vacant

Audio and Video:

Hans Goepfert 031 931 27 42

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Cecily Klingler 031 302 48 59

Deputy: Maxine Wildhaber 076 349 40 42

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Hans Goepfert 077 472 20 60

THUN CONTACT

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VESTRY

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WEBMASTER

Hector Davie 031 971 27 71

Christina Rossetti came from a talented family. Her father, an Italian nobleman from the Abruzzo, was a poet with revolutionary views, who had been exiled to Malta by King Ferdinand of Sicily in 1821, and was sent from there to Britain, where he became Professor of Italian at King's College London. He was a rather unconventional Roman Catholic. Her mother, the daughter of another Italian revolutionary and exile had been born in London and grew up in literary circles. She was a convinced Anglican. The parents agreed that their two boys should be brought up as Roman Catholics, the two girls as Anglicans.

Christina's brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, became a talented painter and illustrator. Christina herself, like all her siblings, wrote poetry. Throughout her life, she suffered from depression, and later from goitre. (She died from breast cancer.) However, her poetry shows a quiet confidence and a cheerful faith.

This month's hymn is a poem she published in a literary magazine at the beginning of 1872, at a time when she was suffering from quite serious pain. The opening verse paints a picture of a cold and wintry Bethlehem, in stark contrast to the world-changing events which took place there. Then for three verses, she contrasts the heavenly significance of the Incarnation with the earthly simplicity of the young girl and her baby.

And what a contrast. The God whom Heaven cannot contain (1 Kings 8:27) is born in a cold stable. The one whom even the cherubim in heaven worship is sustained by a mother's milk and the warmth of a manger's hay. The heavenly beings "thronging the air" are starkly contrasted with the very human and physical affection of a mother's kiss.

In the final verse, the poet writes of the response she can give to this world-shattering event. The shepherds and the magi in the Bible stories are pictured as bringing simple gifts – all they had to offer. What more can the believer bring but "my whole heart"?

The poem was an appealing contribution to Christmas gatherings, but its unusual and irregular metre meant that it was a challenge to set to music.

In 1906, the composer Gustav Holst created a setting which fitted the words well. He named the tune Cranham, after the Gloucestershire village where his grandparents lived. The tune was first published in the *English Hymnal*. Three years later, another graduate of the Royal College of Music, the organist Harold Darke, produced a similar but more complicated setting for choirs to sing – the carol service from Kings College Cambridge often uses it.

The combination of a haunting tune and evocative words always give *In the Bleak Midwinter* a place at or near the top of the BBC's list of Britain's most popular carols. We too would do well to bear its message in mind: God came to us to share our lives – and to win our hearts.

- Hector Davie

A Christmas Poem

¹In the bleak mid-winter
frosty wind made moan;
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow
on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak mid-winter
long ago.

²Our God, heaven
cannot hold him
nor earth sustain,
heaven and earth shall
flee away
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak mid-winter
a stable-place sufficed
the Lord God Almighty
—
Jesus Christ.

³Enough for him, whom
cherubim
worship night and day,
a breastful of milk
and a mangerful of hay;
enough for him, whom
Angels
fall down before,
the ox and ass and
camel
which adore.

⁴Angels and Archangels
may have gathered
there,
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air;
but only His Mother
in her maiden bliss
worshipped the Beloved
with a kiss.

⁵What can I give Him,
poor as I am? —
if I were a Shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a Wise Man
I would do my part, —
yet what I can I give Him
—
give my heart.



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