

THE CHURCH OF ST URSULA BERNE



December 2023 - January 2024

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

Chaplain: Revd Helen Marshall

E-mail: office@stursula.ch

Day off: Friday

Lay Reader

Archana Jacob

archana.jacob@stursula.ch

Church Office: 031 352 85 67

Marriages, Baptisms and Funerals by arrangement with the Chaplain

Normal pattern of Sunday services:

10.00 Sung Eucharist with Junior Church and Crèche

2nd Sunday is normally All Age Eucharist

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

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

Services in Thun: usually 18.30 on two Thursdays each 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 side for details of this month's services

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



St Ursula's Church Magazine

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for the
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March 2024
magazine is

14 January 2024

Please send copy to
magazine@stursula.ch

COLLATING DATE:

**Thursday
25 January 2024**

From the Chaplain

Dear Friends in Christ,

We can sometimes feel overwhelmed when we listen to the news and read the newspapers. There is one account of violence, suffering and misery after another. For huge numbers of people, our world is a dark, painful, violent and chaotic place. It is hard to take in all that has



happened recently in Israel and Gaza, with the brutal attacks and the taking of hostages in Israel by Hamas, and the massive Israeli bombardment of Gaza resulting in widespread destruction, misery and death. Who knows how it will end? As I write this, there seems to be no hope in sight. Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine continues, as do the conflicts in Sudan, Yemen and Ethiopia and many other places. Many in our world are affected by the ever-deepening crisis of climate change, bringing unprecedented floods, fires and droughts.

These crises may seem far away from us; we are fortunate to live in a context of peace, security and prosperity. But this is the world of which we are a part.

Sometimes, as we look at our world, things can seem quite hopeless. But it is important to live with hope, for ourselves, and for our wider world.

Advent is a season of *hope*. During this season we are encouraged to look to the future with hope. Advent means 'coming' and during this time we prepare for the celebration of Christmas when we remember Christ's first coming into our world as a tiny, vulnerable baby. God does not abandon his world in its pain and suffering, darkness and destructiveness; he does not simply send messages of hope, but *comes himself* into the midst of that darkness and pain, in Christ, 'God with us.'

During Advent, as we remember Christ's first coming, we also look ahead to his second coming and the fulfilment of all things. Although we know God with us now in Christ, yet the world is still full of brokenness and pain. But we have the promise that all things will one day be put right, healed and restored in him. We are promised that 'we will see him as he is' and 'we will be like him' (1 John 3:2). There will be a new

heaven and a new earth and God himself will wipe every tear from our eyes and death, mourning, crying and pain will be no more.

To trust in this God is to have *hope*; not just a vague hope for the future but a resilient hope which sustains us in the struggles of the present. We are called to be people of hope who seek to speak and act with hope in this often hopeless world.

I pray that this Advent, we will make more time to be still before God, to bring before him the pain and darkness of our own hearts and lives, and the pain and darkness of our world, and to seek his grace and mercy.

‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.’ (Romans 15:13).

With love in Christ,

Helen

Nativity Service

Our annual Nativity Service will be on Sunday 17 December at 10.00. As always, it will be a celebration of the birth of Christ with carols. This service will include a short Nativity Play presented by the Junior Church. If you, or your children or children of your friends or family, would like to take part please get in touch with me as soon as possible. We would welcome more participants – children and adults.

In any case, please come along - and invite other people to come to this special service. We hope you will be able to join us.

- *Tricia Carrick*



Eyeless in Gaza

(This article was written before the events of and after 7 October brought the modern city next to the Mediterranean coast into sharp and painful focus. Modern history reminds us all the more that intolerance and impatience contribute less to peace than care, generosity and love.)

As the old year gives way to the new, our thoughts turn to the baby in the manger, and to thoughts of peace and of God's good will. So it seems odd to begin an article at Christmas time with a quotation from a drama written over 350 years ago, at a time when Britain was in chaos. The drama was never meant to be performed, its author held extreme opinions on justice, religion and morality, and had what we might call a massive complex about his physical disabilities. But he wrote very good poetry. His name was John Milton, and the dramatic poem was called *Samson Agonistes*. The tale of Samson in the book of Judges (13-16) is not for the weak-hearted or the sensitive, and Milton the blind poet writing in the 1660s reflects on Samson's final imprisonment – the aftermath of the atrocities and suffering which permeated his long career – and on the conflict which all too easily turns to anger in people's hearts.

So what has this near-mythical Old Testament super-hero, with a quick temper and an unforgiving desire for vengeance, with a weakness for foreign women, got in common with the Prince of Peace, the Babe of Bethlehem? To begin with, his birth, recounted in Judges 13, has similarities with parts of the tale of Mary and Joseph. His name, Samson, recalls the Sun. Not the Sun of Righteousness "with healing in his wings" foretold by the prophet Malachi (Mal. 4:2), but the sun used as a sign of power and strength rather than of gentleness. The name Jesus, on the other hand, recalls that God rescues us, saves and protects us.

Samson was keenly aware that all his strength came from God. It was not his own power that made him strong. He had been dedicated to God's service. He was a Nazirite – kept holy, kept apart from wine (or indeed grapes in general), forbidden from shaving his head or cutting his hair (and even from combing it (in case any fell out!)) by vows described in Numbers 21. Jesus was God's very self – a human being born into a family from Nazareth – a similar word, but the name of a place in Galilee. The raging superhero of ancient days and the innocent baby lying in a feeding-trough have much in common, but are worlds apart.

Our ideas about that first Christmas come to us as much or more from our memories of family gatherings, from carols we have sung (or heard



sung) from the cards we have sent and received, than from the rather sparse details in Matthew's and Luke's accounts of the Good News. Jesus' birth was not easy. Matthew tells of Joseph's difficult realization that although he was legally committed to marry Mary, their child was not in every sense "from him". Luke tells of Mary's frightening meeting with the angel, who brought puzzling news, of her three-month stay with her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John who years later would baptize Jesus at the beginning of his adult ministry, and of Joseph and Mary's long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to satisfy the need of the Roman government to raise money to run its vast empire – to accommodation so cramped that the newly-delivered baby's cot had to be improvised from a feeding-rack.

Luke tells us that the infant Jesus' first worshippers, after his parents, were shepherds, given the news by a choir of angels. Jesus' ancestor David had been a shepherd too, chosen to lead and guide God's people. And Matthew tells of the visit of magi – influential people known for their wisdom and their ability to explain the signs displayed by the natural world. David's son Solomon had also sought to lead not through force but through the gift of wisdom, more precious to Solomon than gold or precious stones.

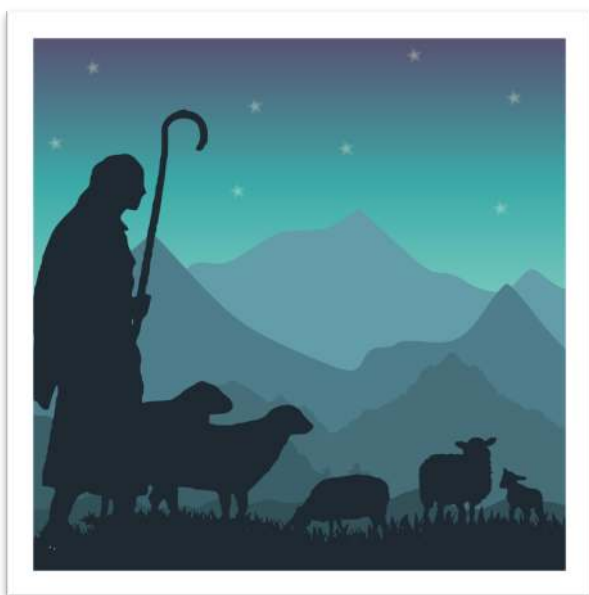
Jesus' childhood soon became less than wondrous. King Herod hated the idea of a rival to his own power, and the Holy Family had to escape as refugees to Egypt, while all the other babes of Bethlehem were mercilessly slaughtered. Alas, this was not the last time Jesus met with hatred. But he never met hatred with hatred, and people marvelled at his patience.

For the angels in heaven rejoiced at the birth of the humble baby in the manger, and the patience of this heaven-born prince of peace was not a weakness, but a strength.

-Hector Davie

From My Bedtime Folklore

When we were younger, soon after dinner, we could sit around and listen to stories told by those who were older. In our home, it was my late brother-in-law who mostly took the cue and I loved his oratory skills. As is always the case in our culture, these were not just empty stories, but they were a collection of events, sometimes just made up or imagined by our ancestors but with a deep hidden meaning. They were intended to pass on a message or a lesson, but their application can be extended to a variety of settings. Lean in and let me share with you one such bedtime folklore:



A man set off on a journey to a neighbouring village, and he took along his cockerel, his dog and his donkey. It was a long-distance walk that went through a thick forest and when night came, he was about two miles away and almost at the edge of the forest. He decided to take a night's rest in the thickets and wait for the morning to cover the rest of the journey. He made a campfire to keep him and his animals warm as he warms his food.

At around 3 a.m., it started raining heavily and the fire was put out.

Shortly after, a fox came along and took his chicken and just as he had settled to accept his chicken was no more, a hyena came along and killed his dog. He tried chasing it but it was too late. As he came back to his resting place, he was met with the groaning of his donkey as it breathed its last in the strong jaws of a leopard. It took a while for him to absorb the shock of his very quick loss and it was almost dawn when he settled to rest. He looked in the direction of the village he was going to and all he could see was the smouldering smoke of houses, but his vision was impaired by the early morning mist, and he would have to wait for dawn to understand the full picture of what had happened. He knelt down for prayer which was in reality an angry petition to God on how cruel He is to allow all his animals to die in one night.

God responded audibly to him in what sounded like a dream and the response was this: My son, at around 3 a.m., the village you are headed to was attacked by enemies, they took away all their livestock, burnt their houses and no one was left alive. I put out the fire because it would have called attention to your location, I took away your chicken

because it would have crowed at 3 a.m., your donkey would have brayed towards morning and your dog would have barked. Rise up and return home to your village.

We have made a lot of journeys in our lives, and we carry along our beloved pets which could be our health, our children, our wealth, our job, etc. I do not know where you are along the journey of life, but I have witnessed quite a number of my pets and or my friends' pets taken away. Sometimes, it has been a job loss, other times it has been all joy taken away by that doctor's call. I have no explanation why bad things happen to good people, yet I know one thing, our Lord knows it all and we shall understand it better by and by.

- *Jorum Kirundi*

A Word for the Month – Fear

It is (supposedly) human nature to avoid things that are new to us – things that are strange, things that we don't know. They make us uncomfortable. They arouse deep feelings of danger. Fear of the unknown sometimes plays a useful part in keeping us safe.

In the Old Testament, the presence of God could awaken unfamiliar feelings. The story of Adam and Eve begins in a mood of cosy familiarity in the garden, but after the couple have disobeyed God's command and eaten the forbidden fruit, the next time they hear God "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" Adam goes and hides, "because I was afraid." And this fear is not simply a sign of a guilty conscience, but of unworthiness and of awe – the kind of feeling that Moses experienced on Mount Sinai, the kind of feeling that Elijah too expected to experience in the same place during his flight from Queen Jezebel. As the Book of Proverbs stresses "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov.9:10).

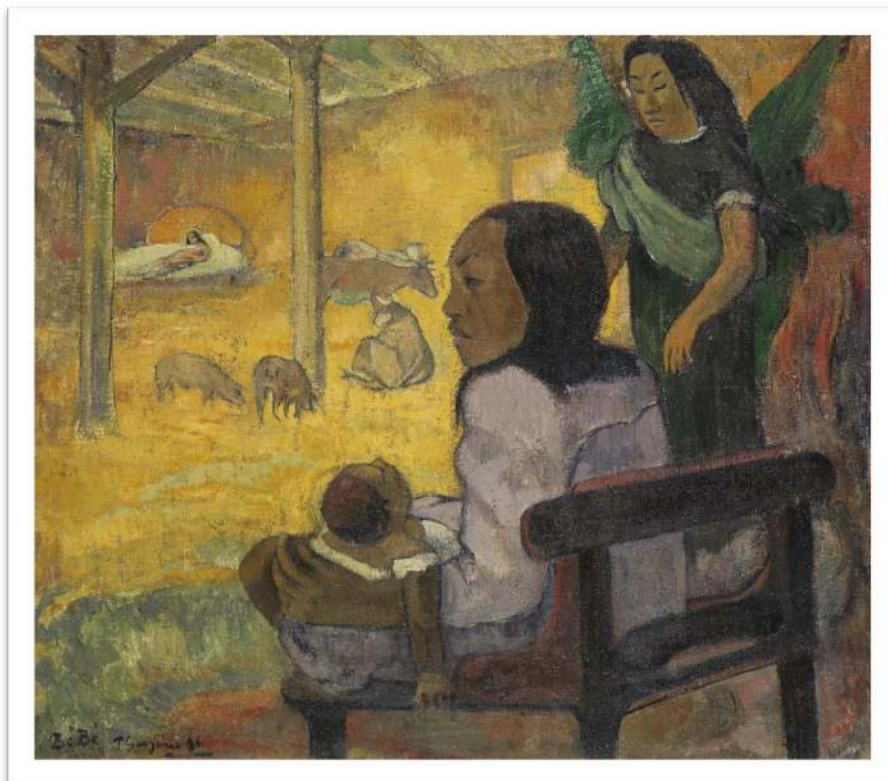
There is a bad side to fear, too. The Greek word for fear, *phobos*, has given us the word phobia, as in claustrophobia, a fear of confined spaces, but it has also given us words like xenophobia, a mistrust of strangers from other countries, and Islamophobia, dislike of followers of the Moslem religion, where the meaning goes far beyond fear, mistrust, or dislike, but stretches as far as active hatred. This is the opposite of God's commandment that we should love our neighbours as well as ourselves – an age-old commandment from the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18),

given a new sharpness by Jesus in his insistence that we love not only our friends but our enemies too.

In the stories of Jesus' conception and birth, heaven is highly active. Matthew's gospel tells of dreams and visions, and Luke's gospel reports Mary's fear at the visit of Gabriel, an angel – a messenger from God – whose first words are “Do not be afraid.” When the baby is born and laid in the manger, the angel appears to shepherds out in the fields, and they are “sore afraid” – to translate Luke's words literally, they feared with a great fear. Again, the angel calms their fears, telling them that the message is a “good message” and not a scary one, and the whole heavenly army join in a shout of praise and a reassurance of peace: “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to those of good will”, where the “good will” is God's will towards us and does not depend on our own love for our neighbours.

For God does not want us to live in fear. Worship, yes, for God is way beyond us in goodness, in ability, in knowledge. Christmas is a time to test our love on our fellow human beings, for only by loving them can we come to love God fully. And as the first letter of John reminds us (4:18), “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.”

- *Hector Davie*



***Be Be (The Nativity)* by Paul Gauguin (1848–1903)**

Ordination Training Update from James Morgan (October 2023)

Dear friends,

Several people have asked about my ordination training since my presentation back in July 2023. Here is a brief update of my *final year* of training with Eastern Region Ministry Course (ERMC). The week of summer school in Cambridge in August was intense and edifying. We focused on the mission of the Church, which included visiting churches and local ministries.

In September, I enjoyed a church placement with Revd Carolyn Cooke at La Côte Anglican Church in Gingins (Switzerland) and Divonne (France). Among the many and diverse activities, two highlights stand out. It was challenging and touching to participate in the Food Bank team, which provides food for refugees and the underprivileged in Nyon. I also helped leading an ecumenical walk and worship service with students from the Ecumenical Institute Bossey with members of the local Anglican and Reformed churches.

The ERMC school year has started well with the first of six weekends, which was held on 20-22 October at High Leigh Conference Centre, just north of London. For my 'Social-Context Placement', I'm hoping to do that with the Heilsarmee in the coming months. Then, weekly online classes recommence in January until April. During this time, I am putting together a 'Portfolio' of all these various ministry experiences, which, of course, includes serving in various ways at St Ursula's. This portfolio must be completed before my ordination as a deacon at the end of June 2024 in Brussels. Then my curacy begins at St Ursula's. So, your prayers are certainly welcome, especially since I do this training alongside my job at the University of Fribourg. Here are a few requests for intercession:

- For strength, perseverance, and an open heart to learn from God and others.
- For a robust prayer life: a Spirit-filled life with worship at the centre.
- For Lilian and me as we live out our callings *together*, she as a nurse and me as a scholar-priest in training.

Many thanks for your encouragement and prayers.

- James Morgan

Church Council Report

Council meetings were held on 3 October and 7 November. Between these two meetings, council voted on three topics by email since these had to be resolved before the next meeting. In this short report, I have presented various topics discussed by council at one or both of these meetings without specifying when they were handled.

As we want all our events and activities to be inclusive, council has set up a small *Racial Diversity* group which meets from time to time to look at this topic and report back to council. One issue is that people from different cultures rarely attend our sales and social events. It is not clear why this is and what to do to improve it. It is still being discussed – if you have any input, please speak to a council member.

As you will recall from the report in the previous magazine, council has been considering how to improve the singing in church. In the last two months various things have been tried, like printing the melody line for the songs printed on the reading sheet, playing longer introductions to give people time to find the words, and (more recently) once again projecting the words of all the hymns and songs onto the screen. The results have not yet been fully evaluated; however it seems that all of these have so far had a positive effect. The choice of hymns and songs has not yet been changed since council do not know what “people” know. If you have any thoughts on the topic, please speak to a council member.

The telephone and the television in the church house have not been providing easy and reliable use. So TCom (the *Technical Committee* of the council) have looked into this. The telephone system is rather old and needs to be replaced in the not-too-distant future. The television problems can probably be solved relatively easily. Although council does not have the technical competence to make detailed decisions, it does have the duty to ensure that our chaplain has the tools needed to do the job so is very happy to work with TCom to do this.

Various small administrative issues were handled, such as the new photocopier and deciding on the date of the next AGM (see separate notice in this magazine). As you know, Querida Long has been the editor of the magazine for many years. She is stepping down from the end of this year (see separate article in this magazine), so council is considering various options for the future of the magazine.

Council identified a number of tasks done in the church and the guidelines for these jobs have been written or revised. They are available on the website.

As mentioned in the report in the previous magazine, council is considering setting up housegroups. In order to present the idea to the congregation and get feedback, there will be an *Open Forum* after the service on Sunday 3 December.

Keeping people safe is always a priority, so *Safeguarding and Risk Assessments* are always on the council agenda. On Sunday 5 November, there was an opportunity after the service for members of the congregation to learn more and to meet our safeguarding officers – Cecily and Maxine.

The treasurer reported at both meetings. Fortunately, there were no unpleasant surprises although the church is still running a significant deficit which is not good.

As always, all past and future events were briefly reviewed with the aim of learning from the past and preparing for the future. The *Confirmation Service* followed by lunch for all made for a lovely, special day – not only for those being confirmed. We were pleased to be able to welcome bishop Robert. The *Harvest Festival* and the open meeting on *Mental Health and the Christian Faith* were also successful and appreciated by many. Unfortunately, the *Tear Fund* quiz had to be postponed as too few people signed up to attend. Council hope to hold the event early next year. Similarly, there were few people attending the *Newcomers' Supper* and the *Students' Lunch* so council is considering alternatives. Looking forward, council was mostly concerned with preparations for all the Christmas events.

-Tricia Carrick, council secretary

Pastoral Care Team

There is a small group of church members who, together with Helen, coordinate praying for, sending cards to, ringing up, and occasionally visiting (when appropriate) those in our community who request such support. We meet with Helen every two months or so. When there is an urgent need, we are connected by WhatsApp so that all of us can vigilantly pray for that individual (only with their permission). Please contact Helen if you would like us to pray for your situation. Everything is kept strictly confidential and you can share as much or as little as you like with us and we will walk with you in daily prayer.

The members of the team are below:

Members

Helen Marshall

Archana Jacob

Donna Goepfert

Patricia Schwager

Chris Sager

Cecily Klinger

Associate Members

(who pray but don't attend meetings)

Chloë Hodler

Art Funkhouser

Barbara Winfield

Lynn Morgan

Brian Morgan

- Helen Marshall on behalf of the Pastoral Care Team

New Office Hours



The Church Office is now open on Mondays 9.00-17.00,
Wednesdays 7.30-11.30 and Fridays 7.30-11.30.

Telephone: +41 31 352 85 67

Email: office@stursula.ch

Racial Diversity Group

The Racial Diversity Group is a small group, made up of members of our church from different ethnic backgrounds who meet up periodically to share concerns, to consider ways we can celebrate the international and multicultural congregation we have at St Ursula's, and to encourage people of all races and cultures to take their full part in the life of the church, in every area of church life. We are delighted that a more racially diverse range of people are now involved in reading, leading intercessions, sidesperson duties and other roles.

The annual Pentecost International Lunch is a wonderful way to celebrate our international community. We are also considering other ideas, including holding social occasions focused on a particular part of the world with food from the area, and input about the culture, music and faith of that country or region. This may help us to learn from one another and appreciate our different cultures.

If you have any ideas or suggestions, or any concerns, do feel free to contact a member of the group.

The members of the group are: Michael Agoba, Jorum Kirundi, Archana Jacob, Vinitha Jacob, Ruth Njengere, Pieter Perrett, Martin Browne and Helen Marshall.

- *Helen Marshall*

Open Forum on Housegroups

As mentioned in the previous magazine, there will be an Open Forum after the service on Sunday 3 December on the topic of **housegroups**. Council will present some ideas and proposals and there will be an opportunity for the whole congregation to ask questions and discuss the topic. Please plan to come to this meeting.



- *Tricia Carrick, Council Secretary*

For Your Diary

December 2023 and January 2024

December

Saturday 2 December	Men's Group (8.00-12.00 at St Ursula's Upper Hall)
Sunday 3 December	Open Forum: Housegroups (after the service)
Tuesday 5 December	Church Council meeting
Thursday 7 December	Thun Service
Thursday 14 December	Carol Service at Heiliggeist Church at 19.30
Sunday 17 December	Nativity Service - All Age
Tuesday 19 December	Lessons and Carols in Thun, 19.00 (followed by refreshments)
Sunday 24 December	4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve Services 10.00: Eucharist 16.00: Christingle and Crib Service 22.00: first Eucharist of Christmas
Monday 25 December	Christmas Day - All Age Eucharist, 10.00

January

Thursday 4 January	Thun Service TBC
Tuesday 16 January	Church Council meeting
Thursday 18 January	Thun Service TBC
Sunday 28 January	Ecumenical Service in the Munster, 10.00 NO SERVICE AT ST URSULA'S

Future Dates

Monday 12 February	Church Council meeting
Sunday 28 April	St Ursula's AGM

Services and Readings December 2023 and January 2024



Sunday 3 December – Advent Sunday

10.00 Eucharist
Isaiah 64:1-9
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

Sunday 10 December – Second Sunday of Advent (with baptism)

10.00 Eucharist
Isaiah 40:1-11
Mark 1:1-8

Sunday 17 December – Third Sunday of Advent - Nativity Play

10.00 Nativity Play service
Isaiah 9:2, 6-7
Luke 2:5-7

Sunday 24 December– Fourth Sunday of Advent

10.00 Eucharist
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

Sunday 24 December – Christmas Eve - Christingle and Crib Service

16.00 All Age Service
Readings to be confirmed

Sunday 24 December – Christmas Eve (First Eucharist of Christmas)

22.00 Eucharist
Isaiah 52:7-10
Hebrews 1:1-4
John 1:1-14

Sunday 25 December – Christmas Day

10.00 All Age Eucharist
Isaiah 9:2-7
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14

Sunday 31 December – First Sunday of Christmas

10.00 Eucharist
Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:15-21

Sunday 7 January – Epiphany

10.00 Eucharist
Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

Sunday 14 January- Second Sunday of Epiphany

10.00 All Age Eucharist
1 Samuel 3:1-10
John 1:43-51

Sunday 21 January – Third Sunday of Epiphany

10.00 Eucharist
Genesis 14:17-20
Revelation 19:6-10
John 2:1-11

Sunday 28 January – Fourth Sunday of Epiphany Ecumenical Service at the Munster

10.00 Eucharist
Readings to be confirmed

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The AGM will be held on

**Sunday 28 April 2024 at 11.30
in the church**

Please reserve this date and plan to come to this important church meeting where we will hear about various church topics and elect the churchwardens and representatives to the church council.

More information will be included in the next magazine.

- Tricia Carrick (on behalf of the church council)

The Future of the Magazine

Querida Long has been the editor of the St Ursula's magazine for 13½ years – since June 2010. She has decided that it is now time to step down, so this is the last magazine she will produce. We really want to thank her for her long service and for the cheerful and cooperative way she has always done this.

Council has been considering the future of the magazine. If we are to continue to produce the magazine in its current form we need a new editor. Would you like to take on this task? If you are interested in finding out more, please contact magazine@stursula.ch.

Communication methods have changed significantly in recent years, with a shift to more electronic and short-term communication. One example of this is the weekly letters that Helen currently writes and sends to a large part of the congregation. So, council is considering various options – perhaps even discontinuing the regular 2-monthly magazine and moving to a more on-going form with the chaplain's letters and more news on the website. We would really like to hear your thoughts on the subject. Please speak to any member of council – or email them to council@stursula.ch. We would like to receive your feedback by the end of December.

- Tricia Carrick, council secretary

Junior Church News

We are so excited for the lovely group of children we have in Junior Church!

We attempted to sing together and realized it would be amazing to have a special Sunday to learn new songs. Tricia had some great ideas and offered her musical talents to teach and accompany the songs. The singing was at first quiet with hesitation, but then the children learned the words and added volume and actions and it was fun. They also learned about David the song maker who danced before the Lord and then we decorated the music booklet with their favorite instruments.

Come, dress up, the best party is about to start!

On 15 October, Laetitia led the children in a special game to decorate the table and to choose clothes for a big party.



At the end of the service there was plenty of food and drinks to celebrate.

The Bible story from Matthew 22:1-14 tells us that everyone we find can come and be part of the big banquet, just get ready and come.

The activity sheet had a puzzle with an invitation from God to his kingdom.

After crossing out “NO ONE” we found the right answer: ALL IN (we are all invited to God’s kingdom)!

Nativity play

Our next big project is the nativity play. This year we would like to take the children on a journey: we plan four Sundays to get familiar with the different aspects of the story and songs. During this time we will make crafts and practise in order to know why and how they will be doing the play.

Would you like to give your child the opportunity and fun to participate in that? For our team it would be very helpful to know who will be there in order to plan better. Thank you!

- *Lilian Morgan*

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas

Writing this text on a cold rainy November morning I can't stop dreaming of Christmas.

Berne is getting ready for the most wonderful time of the year and so are we here 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...

November is one of the busiest months at St Ursula's. Organising the Christmas Bazaar has never been an easy task. Many things behind the scenes may even go unnoticed. For example, we need to move furniture around a lot, even empty the church of all the chairs in order to set up the stalls. And for this we need many helping hands. But with the much appreciated effort from all our volunteers, their passion, patience and dedication we overcome all difficulties in order to come together and spread Christmas joy all around us.



This year's Christmas Bazaar took place at St Ursula's on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 November and we were happy to have several new stalls with us along with all your already favourite ones.

All our volunteers worked really hard and dedicated lots of hours of their personal time in order to offer you a great range of delicious foods, handmade gifts and books.

So a big THANK YOU to all of them for their help, their support and generosity.

This magazine was printed just few days before our Christmas Bazaar took place so we cannot know at the time of writing if it was a financial success or not.

But we hope everyone who attended the Bazaar had a great time and that we were able to bring joy and the Christmas spirit into everyone's homes.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

- *Church Office*

Charities of the Month - The Bishop's Advent Appeal



Robert Innes, Bishop of our Diocese “in, around and for” Europe, spent part of this summer with his wife on a well-earned sabbatical visit to India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. They returned to Europe with an

even wider perspective, and in Bishop Robert’s words, “well-placed ... to think internationally.”

Each Lent and each Advent, our bishop commends a charitable cause which is close to his heart, and this year at the Advent season, he reports with delight that he has chosen to support the Anglican Communion Fund of the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose focus this year is on South Asia. It exists to make small investments across the church; in the right hands, these can have great impact.

The Bishop mentions three areas where the fund is planning particular projects. He writes:

Pakistan



Women in Pakistan regularly experience domestic violence, sexual abuse, forced marriages, kidnappings, acid attacks and more. Christian women and girls in Muslim Punjab face discrimination due to their gender, faith, and low position. They are the poorest of the poor, and often illiterate. At risk of forced conversions and false charges under

blasphemy laws, they are often unable to stand up against these offences; they often don't know their constitutional rights.

The Diocese of Sialkot, in Punjab Province, is supporting women and girls. The Bishop's wife there is leading in teaching women about their rights and protection, for them to pass on to younger women: it is all born of the insight that God has made them wonderfully and fearfully, and it hopes to erase what is often the experienced shame of being female. Sessions on the law of Pakistan educate women about domestic violence and harassment; girls are given strength and confidence to recognise the protections they need.

Young Women in South India



The Covid pandemic took its toll on the economy and the health care industry in South India. The economy is still struggling to recover from the severe lockdown measures. The cost of essential goods has increased, and unemployment is high, with young women particularly vulnerable. At the same time, the need for nursing-at-home and health care support increased further, while the pandemic meant that skilled and educated young people migrated for work opportunities elsewhere.

The Church of South India (CSI) is responding to these issues by starting a programme for young women aged 18 to 28, particularly from rural areas, to study home care nursing and health care. After completing a basic training course, some will go on to higher level training, and others will work in some of the CSI Mission hospitals. Not only will these young women gain skills and employment, bringing

benefit to themselves and their families, but the pool of nursing and health care staff will also increase.

Hpa-An Diocese, Myanmar

A rat plague hit two parishes in the Diocese of Hpa-An in 2022, destroying seed sown and causing a loss of the following year's harvest. Christians are a religious minority in Myanmar and more vulnerable to poverty. Government structures cannot be relied upon to offer a safety net to struggling families. A grant from the Fund helped the Church to purchase and distribute rice - both to Christian families and to the very poor of other faiths, feeding the hungry and serving as a witness to God's love in this area touched by conflict, natural disaster and other maladies.



Yours sincerely in Christ,
+Robert Gibraltar in Europe

What can we do?

- Look at our notice board in the Church Hall for details of how you can give, or send your gift to the Treasurer of St Ursula's Charitable Association (Postfinance account 60-666488-7, marking it "Bishop's Appeal")
- pray for help in the situation in parts of Pakistan where Christians are not allowed to worship freely, and where there is active persecution
- work and pray for the protection of women from exploitation in south Asia, in the many shapes and forms their maltreatment makes itself manifest
- bring trainers and communicators to initiate new and effective programs for health care, home nursing, and to help to respond to problems of nutrition, hunger and poverty in the way that fits the local society in each of these places.

- Hector Davie for the Charity and Missions Team

Charities of the Month – Partners

Partners, or PartnerSein, to give it its German title, was set up in 1971 by the Swiss Old Catholic Church (Christkatholische Kirche) as its “Central office for missionary work, development and emergency aid”. It took its current name in 1973 and this year celebrates its Golden Jubilee under this name. Today, it is the largest Old Catholic relief organisation at national and international level. Approximately 35 projects in Africa and Asia for a total of over Fr260,000 are supported annually. Even today, more than 95% of the monies received flow directly into these projects. On the income side, their regular partners include the Anglican parishes in Switzerland, as well as financial support from Solidarität Dritte Welt and from the collections on the Swiss Women’s World Day of Prayer.

The principle on which the charity has worked is to choose small projects. Here the goal is easy to explain and donors are easier to motivate. A few projects used to be in European countries where the Old Catholic church is involved, but increasingly the projects are in central and southern Africa, and in the Far East. Look at <https://www.partner-sein.ch/en/partners-our-projects> to find information about the 31 projects spread over seven countries in 2023. Each one is worthy of prayer and practical support.

For example in the Philippines on the island of Bohol, Partner Sein helps the Independent Philippine Church (the Iglesia Filipina Independiente) to run kindergartens in isolated villages. Children of poor families can attend kindergarten free of charge or for a small fee. This attendance is a requirement for later attending primary school. In recent years, six kindergartens with places for 250 children, have been built or renovated, and currently Partner Sein covers the running costs (salaries, uniform costs, school materials and food). Other Far Eastern projects are for training for ministers of the Independent Philippine Church, and for running refuge homes providing beds, food and legal advice for young domestic female staff in Hong Kong, where they are often exploited.

A glance through Partner Sein’s projects in Africa makes fascinating reading, and a great insight into the simpler things that can be done in the area of development - providing water, electricity, bedding, teaching staff. I urge you to read it. St Ursula’s supports Partner Sein directly, and from time to time we hold appeals specifically for this charity, which also helps several Anglican charities in central and southern Africa (including our friends in Cecily’s Fund). We may be featuring two charities this month, but the need for them is just as great as ever!

- Hector Davie for the Charity and Missions Team

Junior Church Birthdays

Junior Church Birthdays in December 2023

Leo Schnell 8 on 7 December
David Eze 15 on 12 December
Christiana Squire 10 on 12 December
Fionn Roser 1 on 12 December
Kai Lehmann 13 on 17 December
Aaron Mankai 7 on 19 December
Amilia Mankai 7 on 19 December



Junior Church Birthdays in January 2024

Aydon Kuruvilla 12 on 4 January
Adriele Jacob 9 on 9 January
Martin Probst 5 on 19 January

- Swiss Tax-declarations
- Tax-advice
- Insurance advice
- Insurance broking
- Pension advice
- Retirement planning
- Mortgage advice
- Property purchasing support

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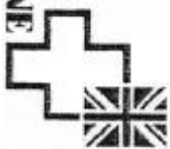
Why not join the International Club of Berne ?

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 100 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 2021 the club celebrated its 30th anniversary. We are waiting to welcome you !

President Graham Tritt,
tel. 078 684 2473, email g.tritt@gmx.net
Website www.icberne.org

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



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VESTRY

Vacant

WEBMASTER

Hector Davie 031 971 27 71

The song on our back cover was written in 1959. It was composed by Eric Boswell, a radar engineer from the north-east of England, who had become a physics lecturer. As a boy, he had studied as a pianist and an organist, and in later life composed music in his spare time.

"Little Donkey" was a recording for Christmas. Sung by Gracie Fields, it topped the 1959 hit charts that December, to be overtaken a fortnight later by a version sung by the Beverley Sisters. Other recordings were made by singers such as Vera Lynn, and choristers like Aled Jones. But it is best known as a children's carol, sung at nativity plays to accompany Mary and Joseph on their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

There is some debate as to whether this is a carol – or merely a song. It depends whether you think a carol is a type of joyful hymn, addressed to God, or merely a human expression of joy at a particular season, which is how many traditional carols began their life.

Whichever is true, the song expresses genuine rejoicing. Even if people in the Near East two thousand years ago didn't celebrate by ringing bells, there is an air of celebration and a sense that something new is underway. And even if someone has written the song to reflect the way they imagine that Mary might have travelled, and not the precise story, even so the tales of the donkey, the expectant mother and the long journey help to build up a picture that provides a foretaste of the hardships that could potentially meet the as-yet unborn child.

As far as we know, from Nazareth to Bethlehem would be a three- to four-day walk, and Mary was not a rich woman. The scenario depicted in the song is quite believable, but we know nothing either for or against this description. Only Luke's and Matthew's gospel tell us some of the story, and then only about things they are interested in – alas (or perhaps fortunately) donkeys are not among those things, and whether anyone on the way, or any beast was tired, we shall probably never know. The winter's night has been imported from the fact our churches all celebrate Christ's birth at the darkest time of the year; the star from the tale of the wise sages, and the cattle-shed from its being a likely place to find a manger with dry bedding for the newly born child.

We are not to scoff at the song's simplicity, though. Many people, large and small, have a great and simple affection for donkeys, and calling someone a silly ass originally implied that they were not stupid but blessed. Let us remember at our Nativity Play that Mark's gospel, which records no details of the events around the manger, reports with Matthew and with Luke how, years later, Jesus said "Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it. And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."

- *Hector Davie*



1 Little donkey, little donkey
On the dusty road:
Got to keep on plodding onwards
With your precious load.

Been a long time, little donkey
Through the winter's night
Don't give up now, little donkey
Bethlehem's in sight.

*Ring out those bells tonight
Bethlehem, Bethlehem
Follow that star tonight
Bethlehem, Bethlehem.*

2 Little donkey, little donkey
Had a heavy day:
Little donkey
Carry Mary safely on her way.

Do not falter, little donkey,
There's a star ahead.
It will guide you, little donkey,
To a cattle shed.

*Ring out those bells tonight
Bethlehem, Bethlehem
Follow that star tonight
Bethlehem, Bethlehem*

Little donkey, little donkey
On the dusty road:
Got to keep on plodding onwards
With your precious load.

Eric Boswell (1921-2009)