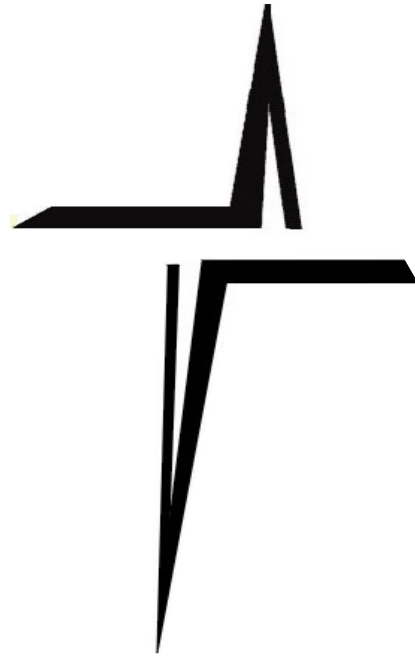


United Church Dorchester



Vision

Where is
Journey to
the stable ?

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From your Bridport based minister

"Some believe it is only great power that can hold evil in check. But that is not what I have found. I have found that it is in the small, everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love." (Gandalf in the film of The Hobbit)



Dear Friends,

So I am sitting in the Departures of Dubai Airport and my iPhone pings with a reminder, saying, "Pastoral Letter this week." As if I needed a reminder that after three weeks of holiday in Australia and Dubai, visiting family (ok and having other fun too!) that I will be back at work within a day or two.

And my mind starts to reflect, as it does, particularly on the experience in Dubai. Our son-in-law had asked me on our last night what I thought of the place and I, as diplomatically as possible, replied, "It is a place that demonstrates both the best and the worst of human endeavour." A sentiment that he agreed with, but one, as I sit here, I want to unpack a little.

Dubai is a surreal place full of new, brash and dramatic skyscrapers but it is a city that only exists because of oil. Nevertheless the leaders had the vision to build, develop and diversify and transformed itself into a holiday destination, awash with luxury hotels, beaches, swimming pools and exciting experiences such as desert safaris, sky-diving and even an indoor ski centre with 'real' snow. So successful has been this transformation that apparently it obtains the overwhelming majority of its income from tourism. And the

process continues. Everywhere one looks there are cranes and new buildings and more developments. Indeed we were told there are more tower cranes erected in situ than anywhere else in the world, and I can believe it! On the coast there is an island in the shape of a palm that is so huge it is visible from space with its hundreds of apartments, villas and hotels on it, and it has been completely created by humans.



The tallest building in the world, the Burj Khalifa, towers over one area and took only six years to build. Neighbouring Saudi Arabia plans a taller building, so the Emirati plan to build an even taller one once the Saudis have trumped them! Thoughts of Babel Towers come to mind!

It is impressive and an amazing example of the power of human building and engineering abilities ... and yet there is an unreality about it all. For all its flashiness and glitz, it just seems somehow ersatz and, I don't know, as faux as the snow in the snow dome. One resident we met remarked that it is a place that lacks any sense of identity as a community, and I can understand that. And I am mindful of the image during the climate change section of the Rio Olympics Opening Ceremony, showing predicted sea level rises obliterating the whole of Dubai, right back to the desert margins that border this unreal and, in the long term, unsustainable habitat.

In the face of the massive accomplishments of big buildings and huge sky-size activities, I have also been reminded of the line that the wizard Gandalf says in the second Hobbit film justifying his choice of a Hobbit to accompany the quest. Humans like to develop and build and do on the grand, power-obsessed scale, whilst God seems to do things (the seven days of Creation perhaps excepted!) in a rather more circumspect way?



Which finally leads me to realise that as I arrive we will be running straight into the run up to Advent and Christmas, a season that shows how diametrically different God works from our human ways. Not big, not huge, not massive. Not noisy, not disruptive but, rather, almost unnoticed, as a baby was born to two soon-to-be refugees. Not flashy, not glitzy and almost the antithesis of the dramatic. And yet the arrival of that tiny baby turned the world upside down, changed all history in a way that the ambitious Emirati could only dream of.



Peter

only

From your Dorchester based minister:

Dear friends,

King George VI in his Christmas speech in 1939 used the words of the Minnie Louise Haskins poem:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way." So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East."



And we all know what happened in 1939 – it was the first few months of what turned out to be an awful 6 years of war.

We are not at war, but 2016 has been a very difficult year for

us collectively as well as for many individually. The year began with a spate of well-established celebrities dying, Terry Wogan, David Bowie, Alan Rickman, Victoria Wood to name but a few. Then we voted and Brexit started and the country was divided and hate became visible and audible; refugees fleeing war and hate were and are rejected, abandoned and drowned; and we wore safety pins, once the preserve of punks, to show that we weren't like that. Politics went into meltdown in the UK and, as I write this, the USA election is about to potentially bring about the biggest event in world politics for many years.



So 2017 feels like a big step into the unknown, can things get better, can we feel better about ourselves as human beings, as community? We can put our hand in the Hand of God, but we also have to take responsibility for ourselves and make

ourselves the change we want to see in the world.

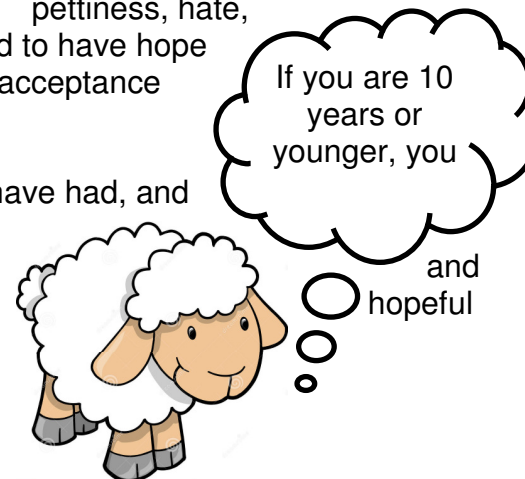


Christmas is a time of celebration, but also a time of hope for the future, and we need to have hope in the things that rise above politics, pettiness, hate,

death and sadness; we need to have hope in kindness, love, patience, acceptance and our community of faith.

Whatever type of year you have had, and it may have been a good one, we wish you a happy peaceful Christmas, and a New Year.

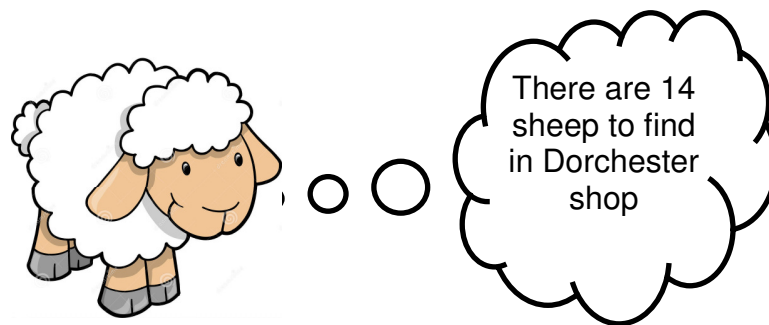
With every blessing



Getting to know you

Not included in the Web version





What a great weekend

First a cracking Last night of the Proms, then a terrific late night view of the Moon through my 125mm telescope. Still not satisfied by an even later cup of refreshing tea, I retired to bed, ready to rise early for Sunday communion at 09.00am. Two events of significance then occurred. Getting the car out into the road was made more difficult than usual by a wall of signs indicating the presence in our midst of a lot of eager cyclists, swimmers and marathon runners, recognisable to those in the know as triathletes. This meant that we had to take a “country bus” route up to Dorchester followed on our journey back by hair raising, and not without illicit turns to left and right.

Sandwiched between these movements was a communion service of rare value, namely, a virtual presentation of the elements of sacrifice and redemption. It is normal at this service not to have any music. This morning the physical gifts of bread and wine were also absent. We were focussed on the reality of Jesus and his teaching by reading and prayer and a strong homily by the Minister, Rev Peter Clark. The whole service was an unexpected but enlightening, albeit accidental “one off”.

I feel that we few felt the power of the argument for God, expressed so wonderfully in Exodus and the Psalms. Where else is the case for our existential state as humans better addressed? Anyone who has the confidence based on a realistic assessment of our worth and value is capable of meeting those who dismiss belief in God as myth. The truth about our condition is out there and was out there three thousand years ago.

We need to read our bible more and come to early morning communion!



Outreach slot

The main thing we have been working on is how to develop Radical Welcome. So many people come on to our premises during any one week. Apart from worship we have the Coffee Shop and Church Shop, our own groups and outside groups who use our rooms. Clearly we all have the opportunity to bid welcome to people we meet when at church. Of course both our active ministers - Steph and Peter - can be seen sometimes sitting with visitors in the Coffee Shop, but this can never be regular due to their many other responsibilities.



We are therefore working on a plan to have someone available on a more regular basis. The relationship with external groups will be similar to the way our Retail Chaplains work though a negotiated arrangement where acceptable. Clearly contact in Coffee Shop and Church Shop and with our groups can be less formal.

Hopefully by the time you read this we should have a plan.

In addition the next Church Meeting should have the opportunity to see a new remit for the Outreach Group which has already been agreed by the Council of Stewards.

NOTE: Retail Chaplaincy work on Brewery Square is going really well with all outlets to date wanting visits to continue.

Further the Chaplaincy Management Group has agreed a vision for development which will be shared soon.

Chris Warren



“Synod calling”

...the second of a series



As a Synod, we try to support one another in many ways. Our Development and Support Officers, Children and Youth Work Development Officers, Property Officers and Employment Adviser all support the work of local churches. But we also rely on volunteers to enable us to plan together, work together and share our resources with one another.

For Example:

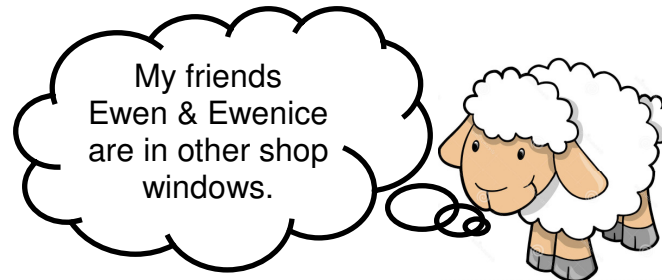
- ❖ At the time of writing this we are looking forward to a visit from Bishop Chomba from Zambia, and exploring exciting possibilities for closer working with the United Church of Zambia. This would not have happened without the work of our World Church Group.
- ❖ Mission Development Group is looking at how God may be calling us to serve the new housing developments that are planned for parts of the Synod.

You can find out more about the work we do by looking at the Synod website <http://wessexsynodurc.org.uk/>

When we meet as a Synod next March, we will have a list of Nominations to approve; volunteers who give their time and talents to serve us all.

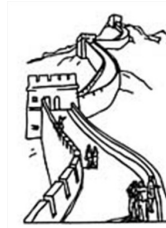
But we still have gaps in the list. In particular, some of our working groups are looking for a volunteer to take the minutes of their meetings.

If you are interested in serving God in this way, or know someone else who might find this a rewarding thing to do, **please contact Sue Brown to find out more.**



An amazing achievement

Ray Harris has just returned from his sponsored walk of part of the Great Wall of China for the Weldmar Hospice. He has already raised **£4,500** and hopes to reach **£5,000** by Christmas. He is still receiving donations from those who did not sponsor him.



Some Random Acts of Kindness for Advent

- ❖ Be empathetic – *Really try* to put yourself in the other person's shoes
- ❖ Be thoughtful – Did your friend/colleague have a bad day ?
- ❖ Hold the door open for someone
- ❖ Be thankful
- ❖ Be encouraging
- ❖ Let people merge-in during traffic
- ❖ Say "Thank you", a lot
- ❖ Send your friend a letter
- ❖ Reach out to a person who has made a difference in your life
- ❖ Listen when no one else wants to
- ❖ Be patient
- ❖ Try to find goodness in the person you don't like
- ❖ Be kind to yourself – Make peace with your past mistakes. Use that knowledge to help others who might be going through the same thing.
- ❖ Do nice things and don't tell anyone about it
- ❖ Notice a child being well-behaved? – Tell their parents how good they are while the child is standing there. It will encourage the child to continue being good, and will make the parents feel good.
- ❖ Compliment people in front of others – For some reason compliments hold more weight when they're done in front of others.
- ❖ Recognize the good in others
- ❖ Look for the best in the situation
- ❖ Smile easily and laugh – Even at the so-so jokes
- ❖ Share – Even if you don't really want to



Presents with a difference

Toilet Twinning is a simple, quirky way to solve a serious problem and save lives.



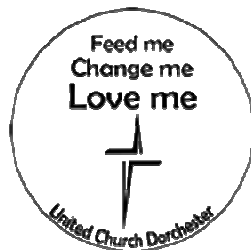
2.4 billion people don't have somewhere safe, clean and hygienic to go to the loo. That's more than a third of the people on the planet

For just £60, you can twin your loo with a latrine halfway around the world, in a country of your choosing. For £240, you can twin with a school block or toilets in a displacement camp.

Your smallest room becomes the proud owner of a certificate, complete with a photo and GPS coordinates so you can look up your twin on online Maps.

Toilet Twinning funds the work of international relief and development agency Tearfund. Your donation will be used to provide clean water, basic sanitation, and hygiene education. This vital combination works together to prevent the spread of disease. Children are healthier, and able to go to school; parents are well enough to work their land and grow enough food to feed their family. With better health, and more ability to earn a living, men and women discover the potential that lies within them to bring transformation.

Family by family, community by community, nation by nation, we are flushing away poverty. **www.toilettwinning.org**



A Christmas welcome and help for busy families. Baby Changing and Feeding Facilities in the week before Christmas

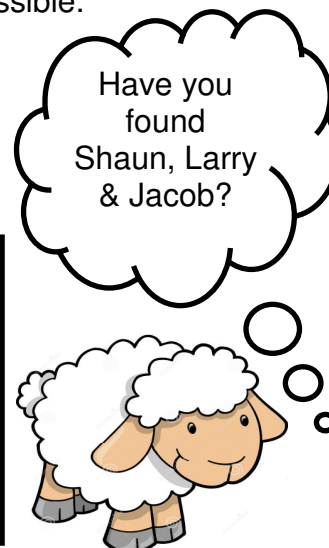
We know that Christmas is a very busy and stressful time of year for all, especially families with young children. Following on from our success at the Dorset County Show in September we are planning to repeat, in the week before Christmas Day, what we offered then.

From Monday 19th December to Friday 23rd December from 10am to 2pm (except Wednesday which will be after the market day service 11 -2pm) our Church Foyer will look slightly different as we provide a welcoming but private space. The back of the church which will have the sofas in and changing tables as we had at the Show. Toys will be available for children to play with while Mums or Dads are attending to their baby. This is yet another great Outreach opportunity and we will be needing people to help with this. If you can help by volunteering to be on a rota (9.45am – 12 noon & 12 noon – 2.15 pm) please speak to either Heather Reed, Lynne Antell or Peter Jenner as soon as possible.

We want to provide a true experience of the love that we have for the Christ Child born in a manger. **Love that is for everyone.**

Quiet Christmas

Fri 9th Dec at 3pm (30 minute service) followed by refreshments. Ideal for those with dementia, their carers and those recently bereaved, who want to celebrate Christmas quietly
Everyone welcome



How many people in the UK are asylum seekers?



There are an estimated 60 million people throughout the world who have been forced to flee their homes. The numbers of protracted conflicts have increased. This has created more than 15 million refugees worldwide - but developing countries host over 80 per cent of people.

There are an estimated **117,234 refugees** living in the UK. That's just **0.18 per cent of the total population** (64.1 million people).

How many asylum seekers came to the UK in 2015?

The UK received 38,878 asylum applications (including dependents). This was less than Germany (431,000), Sweden (163,000), and Hungary (163,000). Just 45 per cent of cases were granted asylum and allowed to stay once their cases had been fully concluded. Many are initially refused because it is difficult to provide the evidence needed to meet the strict criteria of a refugee.

Which countries do asylum seekers come from?

60 per cent of refugees came from just five countries:

Syria: 4.2 million **Afghanistan:** 2.6 million **Somalia:** 1.1 million
Sudan: 744,000 **South Sudan:** 641,000

What do the terms mean?

In the eyes of much of the UK public, the terms 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'migrant' have almost blurred into one. This is far from the truth (and far from helpful).

Here's a handy guide to some of the different terms:

Asylum seeker

flees their homeland and arrives in another country, makes themselves known to the authorities, submits an asylum application and then has a legal right to stay in the country while awaiting a decision.

Refugee

has proven to the authorities that they would be at risk if returned to their home country and has had their claim for asylum accepted by the government so can now stay here either long-term or indefinitely.

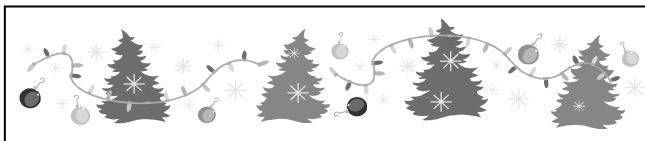
Economic migrant

has moved to another country to work, could be legally or illegally resident, depending on how they entered the country and may or may not have a legal work permit.

Why are refugees entitled to bring their families to the UK?

Refugees have a legal right, under UK and international law, to bring their families over to the UK to join them. Our figures show that at least 580 Syrian refugees came to the UK under a family reunion visa between January and September 2016, including 280 children. Many arrived directly from areas of conflict, including Aleppo.

During the same period at least 487 refugee children from other countries, including Iraq and Sudan, arrived in the UK after being



19th BRIDPORT ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL
6th—18th DECEMBER
65 TREES ON DISPLAY
ADMISSION FREE
Daily prayers at Noon

Tuesday 6th December at 7.00 pm

Dedication service led by our Minister Revd Peter Clark
Switching on of lights by Town Mayor Cllr Ros Kayes

Wednesday 7th open 10.00 am to 9.00 pm

Bridport Shopping Festival

2.00 pm Mountjoy School Handbell Ringers

4.00– 5.00pm Children's Choir in the Gallery

6.30 pm Church Choir - Come and sing carols with the choir

Thursday & Friday 8th/9th December open 10.00 am to 5.30 pm

Saturday 10th open 10.00 am to 4.30 pm

10.00 am to Noon coffee morning for Action for Children

7.30pm Bridport Choral Society Christmas Concert (ticketed)

Sunday 11th open 2.00 pm to 4.30 pm

10.30 am Advent Toy Service

Gifts of new unwrapped toys and board games appreciated to be distributed to local needy families by the Salvation Army.

Monday 12th to Friday 16th open 10.00 am to 5.30 pm

Monday 12th 11am — Stepping Stones Nativity

Tuesday 13th 3.30pm — Taize

Thurs 15th 4.30 pm Messy Church Noisy Nativity

Saturday 17^h open 10.00 am to 4.30 pm

Sunday 18^h FINAL DAY open 2.00 pm to 4.30 pm

10.30 am Morning worship

4.30 pm Annual Carol Service followed by refreshments.


All Are Welcome

News from Traidcraft

By the time you read this the Traidcraft decaf instant coffee will finally be in stock. Hurrah!! Renewed apologies from us to all our customers who have waited patiently for several months for it. I still have NO idea why it took so long to arrive, but Traidcraft is promising us an explanatory video "soon." Watch this space ...

Christmas card sales are going well, so well, in fact, that some designs are already sold out. If you have not already made your cake, why not make a Fairtrade one this year, using Traidcraft dried fruit and muscovado sugar? We also have sixpacks of Christmas wrap with 12 matching tags for £3.50, single Christmas cards at 40p and lots of gifts for those last-minute presents.

The last Traidcraft order before Christmas will be done on **Friday December 2**, so please contact me before then if you would like buy anything from the catalogue. Thank you to everyone who has supported us this year, and have a very Happy and



Some of my
relatives are on the
Traidcraft
Christmas cards.



Don't forget
you can buy
your Christmas
stamps in the
shop

Dorchester Poverty Action Group (part of Churches together in Dorchester)

The group are looking for a new **treasurer**. This is not an onerous job. It involves paying out cheques (only a few a month) to those agencies referring clients, receiving donations mainly from local churches, producing quarterly reports, attending quarterly meetings of the charity, and completing and submitting the end of year accounts to the Charity Commission. If you would like more details please see Wendy Hilton.



We have found the stable.
Everyone is waiting for the
very special baby to be
born on Christmas Day.
Place your sheep trail
at the stable and there will
be a special gift for you.

The true meaning of Christmas

Journey to the stable is an interactive experience helping to explain the true meaning of Christmas. This is ideal for adults and children alike. The journey takes 20 – 30 minutes. There are seven stations focusing on a person or a part of the Christmas story with readings and reflections. At each there is a small activity or object for you to take away, so you leave with a bag of reflections and goodies.

Open at the United Church Sat 3rd Dec and Thurs 8th – Sat 10th Dec 11am – 3pm. (except Fri 9th closing 2pm)

Family News

We give thanks for the lives of Revd Keith Fisher and Bill Young.



Keith trained at New College, London, His Ministries were at Feltham, Palmers Green, Kingston upon Thames, Bridport, Stoke Abbott & Venn. In 1990 he and Barbara retired to Litton Cheney with their membership transferred to United Church Dorchester

Bill worked for the church most of his life, being caretaker at Methodist Central Hall, Birmingham, Queens theological college in Birmingham and then at a Quaker Centre.

We also remember several others in our church family who have lost family members recently. We remember them all and their families in our prayers.

In October we welcomed Beatrice (Bea) Thomas and her family, granddaughter of Kath and Lloyd for a service of thanksgiving.

Congratulations to Laurie Skinner who celebrated his 90th birthday in October.

Finally we send our very best wishes to John and Pam Pope

THE MAGAZINE TEAM

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MINISTERS

Rev Peter Clark

Bridport
01308 425978

SERVICES

Holy Communion (2nd Sunday in the month)	Sunday	9.00am
Morning Worship (Junior Church, Crèche, Coffee)	Sunday	10.30am
Evening Worship	Sunday	6.30pm
Shoppers Service	Wednesday	10.30 - 10.45am

NUMBER FIFTY ONE

Church shop	Mon to Sat	10 - 12.30pm
Coffee Shop / Hall	Tues to Sat	10 - 12.30pm
Quiet Room	"	"

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

Worship Groups: Church Choir, Instrumental Group, Informal Singing Group, Brass Ensemble, Drama Group, Dance group

Bible Study/Discussion Groups: Fellowship Groups.

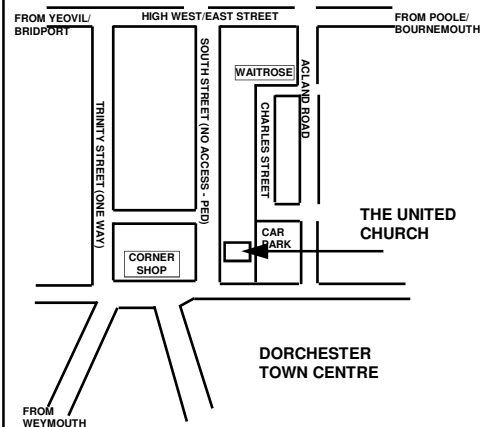
Prayer Groups: Prayer Chain, Prayer & Meditation Meetings.

Children's/ Youth Groups: Junior Church and Crèche, Antics youth group, Storytots

Social Groups: Thursday Night Out, Picnic People, Solos, Knit and Natter, Coffee Mornings, Art Group, Badminton Club, Country Dancing, Book Circle, Solos, Men's Group

Christian Activity Groups: Overseas and Home Missions, Methodist Homes for the Aged, Christian Aid, Bible Society, NCH Action for Children, Dorchester Poverty Action Group, Churches Together in Dorchester

How To Find Us



For more information about the Church or any of its activities please contact either Minister or the Senior Steward, Penny Fennell pennymf65@gmail.com

Your Pastoral Visitor:

**United Church
Dorchester,
South Street**

Methodist and United Reform

Reg Ch No 1137996