

SUNDAY 17th December 2023



Local ...
Lively ...
Loving

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Be Near Me

We all love to see the Nativity played out by our children – and last week's family service was certainly no exception. It was absolutely superb! Although it didn't feature last week, there is one carol more than any other that I associate with the Nativity tableau – *Away in a Manger*. In my mind, I think of this being a favourite of all children and picture it being sung as the conclusion to every manger scene. But these days, it probably isn't the 'go to' carol that it once was. The children don't know all the words off by heart (and in truth, probably never have), and it is probably sung much more for the adults than any child. But for me, Christmas isn't complete without it.

As part of a Salvation Army band, it is a privilege to be able to play carols in various public spaces. Most of the time, we can only imagine people passing by singing along in their heads to the music we play. But sometimes, we stop playing and instead sing the words of the last verse of *Away in a Manger*. The words, the harmonies, the sheer unexpectedness of the singing always makes it very special. It never fails to send shivers up and down my spine – so I am absolutely certain this carol has an enormous impact on many others as well. It is a petition, a testimony, and provides meaning to all our celebrations.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay

Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray;

Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care

And fit us For Heaven to live with thee there.

[The Song Book of The Salvation Army, No. 103]

Paul Heath

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People

As we enter this final week before Christmas, we are aware that there will be those travelling to be with family and those whose families will be travelling to Bristol to visit them. It is difficult to keep track of everyone at this time of the year, but please let us know if you are poorly or need our support at this time. Please take care.

Youth on the Frontline

We have heard much about witnessing on our frontlines over recent weeks and months, so it is worth mentioning some of our youth who recently helped a friend from the division in a carol concert at St Katherine's School in Pill. Our thanks to Isobella, Emily, Jess, Aston, Natalie and Josh for making a difference (plus adult support from Helen Lyons too!).

Drivers on Christmas Day

We still need drivers to transport our guests – if you're able to help at 10am and/or 3.15pm then please speak to Nicola.

Bulletin over the Christmas Period

A weekly edition of this newsletter will continue to be published right up to Christmas this year, but the Christmas Eve edition will be the last before the New Year.

Dates for the Diary

Sunday 21 st January 2024	Messy Church
Friday 9 th – Sunday 11 th February 2024	Celebration Weekend

Enrolment of new members

It is our pleasure to welcome 5 new members this morning: Jenny Andrew, Ruth Bailey, Pauline Ewins, Patricia Kelly and Jill Whitelaw. Although they are very much a part of our church already, it's great that they want to make their membership formal. Find out a little more about a few of them from the words they have written below – and listen to what they have to say in this morning's meeting. We look forward to more enrolments that are planned in the new year, and if anyone is interested in finding out more about membership please speak to Kay (our membership secretary), Colin or Nicola.

Pauline Ewins:

“Nicola asked if those of us becoming Soldiers today might like to write a short piece about our Christian journey. Sent to Sunday School at aged three, I always loved to hear Bible stories and stories with a Christian message. It was hearing one of those stories when I was a young teenager that made me stop and really think about a more grown-up faith. It went right to the “heart” of things for me and made me realise that God truly loved me and sent his Son to die for me, and so I needed to ask him to come into my life and help me to live in his way. That I was someone who needed a life full of his love and I had to try to be a light shining for him. I’ve tried, I failed, he’s picked me up and put me on my feet so many times, I don’t know how I could have lived without his love, care and all his many gifts and I thank him especially that he led me to the Salvation Army at Staple Hill.”

Patricia Kelly:

“I just wanted to say that I grew up in church and I love and trust God. My church in Staple Hill closed down and I came to the Salvation Army and felt loved and welcomed from the moment I came in. I feel part of the church and want to be a member.”

Jill Whitelaw:

“Why I want to be a soldier? To show that I love God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – to help needy people in any way I can.”

Help Needed

Today:

Clearing main hall ready for builder to return	Sunday 17 th After meeting	The main hall will need to be cleared and equipment covered as work will be taking place on gallery all week	Just stay after the meeting and help!
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Other days:

Reception	Mon – Fri 9am – 12pm	Welcoming people who bring donations and want to ask questions	See Reception Rota
Carolling	Various times	Players & collectors	See band or collectors rotas
Cleaning building and setting up for Sunday	Friday 22 nd 4pm – 6pm	In the absence of a cleaner we will need to clean the building and set up the main hall for Sunday	See Friday Rotas
Preparing for Christmas Day	Christmas Eve After morning meeting	Laying tables and preparing vegetables for Christmas Day	See Mary White
Christmas day	Christmas day 10.30am – 3.30pm	Volunteers to host guests, wash-up etc Drivers to pick-up guests 10am & drop home 3.15pm	See Nicola
New Year Blitz	Tuesday 2 nd – Friday 5 th January	Christmas 'stuff' put away Continue to 'get the building right'	More details later

The Week Ahead

Christmas Reception will be open from 9am-12noon every week day

TODAY Sunday 17th December:

9:20am	Time of Prayer
10am	Advent Peace: Peace of Mind (Matthew 1:18-25) <i>Including enrolment of new soldiers</i>
11.45am	YP Band & Singing Company - <i>Park View</i>
11:45am	Carols on the Frontline – <i>Fishponds & Whitchurch</i>
5pm	Main Carol Service
6:30pm	Youth Fellowship

Thursday 21st December:

12.30pm	Lunch Club
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Friday 22nd December:

4pm – 6pm	Cleaning and preparing hall for Sunday - <i>Please add your name to rota</i>
6:30pm	YP Band and Singing Company – <i>St Augustine's Church</i>

Saturday 23rd December:

10am-12noon	Carolling - <i>at Tesco's</i> - <i>Collectors Required</i>
10am-12noon	Carolling - <i>at Morrison's, Fishponds</i> <i>(note: changed from Sainsbury's)</i> - <i>Collectors Required</i>

Sunday 24th December: *Christmas Eve*

9:20am	Time of Prayer
10am	Advent Peace: Spreading Peace (Luke 2: 8-10)
5pm	Carols in the Square

Monday 25th December: *Christmas Day*

10:30am	Christmas Guests arrive for a day of celebration
11am	Christmas Day Worship: Prince of Peace

Extra Slice Groups – Please check with your leader about meeting up during December