

Christmas Services

Sunday 22nd 10:30 am

All-age service with
Children's presentation



Christmas Eve 6:30 pm

All-age Candle-lit
Carol Service



Christmas Day 10:30 am

All Age
Carol Service





Nov-Jan 2014 outlook

Newsletter of **Highgate United Reformed Church**

Two New Babies

We are delighted to announce the birth of Cicely Rose Thompson, born at home on 19th September, weighing 3.7kg (8lb 1oz). Mum, Jennifer, dad, Mark, and brother, Miles, are all delighted with this smiley new addition to their family. We are also thrilled to announce the birth of Carla Böhme on 2nd November, weighing 3.2kg (7lb 1oz).

Mum, Anke, dad, Tobias, and sister, Elise, are all delighted with this cuddly new member of their family. Many congratulations from all of us!



Cicely Rose



Carla

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The Centripetal Force of God's Love

Our lives are comprised of overlapping loyalties. We can sometimes feel that our loyalties compete and conflict, pulling us in different directions. We need something that can integrate and prioritise our various loyalties. For Paul, there is something that can achieve this: God's love. He writes: "Over all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together perfectly." (Colossians 3:14)

All energy, including energy to love, ultimately comes from God. But love is the most important energy, for love, along with praise and prayer, is ultimately directed back to its source: to God. St Augustine believed that all our desires, all our wants and needs, our desire for security, friendship, happiness, and intimacy—whether we recognise them as such or not—are earthly expressions of our ultimate desire for God and desire to be loved by God.

Without God's love our lives can become centrifugal. A centrifuge spins at high speed and forces things out from the centre to the extremity. Chemists and medical researchers use a centrifuge to separate and distinguish compounds: such as the elements in blood. From experience, we know how loyalties can have this effect: the demands of family, friends, and work can spin us centrifugally so that we lose a sense of connection with our centre in God. I've observed this in church life, where responding to increased demands from family or work or other interests results in some people worshipping less and less, and some of these stop worshipping altogether. The worship of God ceases to be the centre of their life; something else has become central, or perhaps there is no fixed centre and life becomes a perpetual race round the periphery.

But Paul believes that such a process is not inevitable, and, indeed, that there is a countervailing force. Paul writes that love can "bind everything together perfectly." Paul writes about love as a centripetal force. A centripetal force is a force by which bodies are drawn or impelled towards a point at a centre. A satellite in orbit around a planet or star is an example of a centripetal force, such as the Earth exerts on the Moon, and the Sun exerts on the Earth and other the planets of our solar system.

At Christmas we celebrate that God's love for the world found its supreme expression in the infant Jesus. Jesus had the effect of drawing the characters in

nearest. We arranged a transport rota to bring her to and from worship about twice per month. She transferred her membership and took a keen interest in the life of the church. With her warmth, humour, wisdom, and quick mind, Norah quickly made good friends in the church. Norah was what I have come to regard as a rare breed: a liberal Baptist. She sat lightly to the creeds but took very seriously her Christian commitment to follow in the way of Jesus Christ. I came to know this, along with Robert Gorrie, because the three of us met as a Companion Trio at the Mary Feilding Guild 35 times, where we discussed a Bible passage, prayed, and had afternoon tea together. I remember one Companion Trio meeting when we talked about God's judgment. Norah explained that she had had the time to think and remember and reflect upon her life—her mistakes as well as her successes—and believed that after she died 'the Almighty' and she would sit down together, and he would do an 'assessment' of her life, and there would, she expected, be 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' on her part when God brought to her attention her shortcomings. But she also hoped that her trust in Christ would mean that the Almighty would regard her benevolently. That, I believe, is all any of us can hope for; that when we come to judgment—or assessment as Norah preferred to call it—God will not be surprised at the life we have led, for he already knows us completely, but will be interested only in whether we have tried to follow in the way of Christ and if this way of grace has refined and prepared us for the eternal life of love with God and with one another.

About a week before she died, I visited Norah at the Whittington Hospital. She was evidently very tired, so I decided not to stay long but to read the words of a hymn that I knew she loved. It was a hymn by Isaac Watts: "Sweet is the work, my God, my King." As I read the hymn, she began to recite all the words with me, from memory. I will end by reading the 4th verse, which seems to me to express Norah's Christian hope:

And I shall share a glorious part
when grace has well refined my heart;
when doubts and fears no more remain
to break my inward peace again.



Norah Katharine Spence

1915 - 2013

In Memoriam

With sadness and thanksgiving, we acknowledge the death of Norah Spence at the age of 98. The following is extracted from the address given by Julian Templeton at Norah's funeral on the 3rd of October 2013.

Norah Katharine Smart was born in 1915 in Cambridge. The Smart family was very involved in St Andrew's Street Baptist Chapel, Cambridge. Norah worshipped there as a child and young adult. Although a Baptist, Norah was never baptised but was received into membership by 'the right hand of fellowship'. After studying history at Newnham College, Cambridge, and a successful career first teaching, then with the Home Office, and later as an Education Officer for Berkshire, Norah married Harry Spence, a Further Education Officer, in 1953. To them daughter, Catherine, and son, Richard, were born. The family lived, successively, in Reading, Doncaster, and then Coventry from 1963 – 1980 where they were initially members Queen's Road Baptist Church, and Norah later transferred to a United Reformed Church in Coventry where she was both a member and an Elder. Norah and Harry moved to Cromer in Norfolk in 1980. Norah described to me how she loved the sea, the big skies, the fresh breezes and the clear air. Norah was a regular worshipper at a Methodist Church in Cromer. Harry died in 1987. Then Norah moved from Cromer to the Mary Feilding Guild at Highgate in 2006 at the age of 90, to be nearer to both Catherine and Richard and families.



It was upon moving to Highgate that I came to know Norah, when she expressed an interest in finding a Free Church, and the United Reformed Church was the

the nativity story towards him with a centripetal force. The amazing thing about the celebration of Christmas is that it has the power to draw people still today: at this one time in the year people are drawn toward the 'child in the manger'. The pull Christ exerts is the power of God's holy love, even if not everyone recognises it. When Christ becomes the centre of one's existence, he fills the void within and enables us to respond to God and to other people with reprioritised loyalties: God first; others second; self third.

Julian Templeton

Visiting Ministers

We are looking after ourselves in December, with services on 1st December and 15th December led by Rev Roger Orme and Rev Robert Courtney respectively. On 29th December, the First Sunday of Christmas, Sue Chinn has agreed to lead a service of Carols we haven't managed to sing before.

Please support them – and (though out of place in this column) Julian, who is taking our Christmas Day service. So many will be away. Will the rest please try to make it to this important service?

Iveta and I are well on with planning visitors in the New Year. Those in January will be Rev Donald Macarthur on 5th January and Rev Roger Orme on 19th January. Iveta last year sent Christmas cards on your behalf to all the visitors who had led our services during the year and will be doing so again this year.

John Thompson

Carols & Christmas Reception

Wednesday 11 December

This annual festive family singalong in Pond Square is led by Highgate School Symphonic Band and Concert Choir. It is followed by a reception in the Chapel with performances by Highgate Ballet School.

Please come and enjoy the dancing as well as some mince pies and a glass of mulled wine.

Our Two Windows

We have had another visitor to view our two stained glass windows which makes me wonder if we all take them too much for granted. This one, from Huddersfield University, Christopher Marston, was able to identify the first visitor, from Lancaster University, who had come years ago in Ken Smith's day as administrator, but Ken had forgotten who he was by the time he told me. He was William Waters.

The visitors were both interested in the firm of Shrigley and Hunt who made the Whight memorial window in the recess (1906). This firm were well-known stained glass people who had a studio in St John Street, Bedford Row, and a small factory at Lancaster where the window would probably be made. Indeed, in Lancaster the firm is part of the history of the town.

Although the figures in our window are conventional, the composition of the groups and the gentle colours used, and the white foot of what may be the Cross reaching up into the arts and craft window above, even in the darkness of the recess, add a great deal to the sanctity of the Chapel, not least when we face that way when the Gallery Choir come. (It is of course our true east.)

The second visitor was also interested in the church's architect at the time, Herbert Ibberson, FRIBA. In the case of the Whight window his involvement was perhaps just professional: to commission the window, design the surround and resist the deacons' and the family's wish to demolish the recess. They wanted the window on a new wall that would be built to replace the recess.

You may think the recess is a feature of the Chapel, and as Ibberson saw, with the Whight window on its rear wall it is, but the recess is in fact an architectural



Report from the Managers

Manse - 42 Onslow Gardens

An American family with four children moved into the Manse on 18 October, initially on a 6 month contract. Minor issues which have arisen is damage to the wisteria in the storms and build up of condensation in the bathroom. The former has been rectified and we are exploring the latter with the decorators. We hope they are settling in well and look forward to welcoming them in church.

Ongoing Maintenance

New smoke and heat alarms have been installed, the front garden has been tidied up and outside lighting re-set. There was a minor panic when the oven didn't work properly on the first night of the winter shelter, but disaster was averted by use of microwave, hob and grill. The oven's heating element has now been replaced.

Website

It is now possible to post new items on the website.

Toilets

We are waiting for a specification and costings on the refurbishment of the downstairs toilets. This is seen as a priority so will be done as quickly as possible.



Christa continues to collect food and delivers it to the centre where they provide a nutritious lunch for 50p as well as providing emergency food parcels of dried and tinned goods. Please continue with your donations, there is a box provided at the church entrance.

Here is the "shopping list" for things to go in the food parcels:

Milk (UHT or powdered)
Fruit juice
Soup
Pasta sauces

Tinned tomatoes
Tinned meat/fish
Tinned beans/spaghetti
Tinned fruit
Rice/pasta

Instant mashed potato
Tea bags/instant coffee
Sugar
Jam
Cereals

No Service

What was it about today? No normal Sunday, certainly. No service was to be provided at the church. A new tactic had been employed on the fifth Sunday in the month: close our building, relocate to Muswell Hill or Crouch End.

It sounded sensible. These days few people want to attend church – they have ‘better’ things to do. Shopping, sport etc, so why have two almost empty buildings instead of one half-full one. It made sense, didn't it?

Except that nobody knew when a needy stranger might turn up – or a friend in need. The church prided itself on its democratic roots. Quarterly meetings were open to all members and adherents and everyone was listened to with respect.

This latest decision, to close local churches in turn on the occasional fifth Sunday, had been keenly argued. Most people agreed with the minister that we should give it a try. After all, there were never enough trained preachers and far too many under-used buildings.

But Should the church close? Sometimes the quietest voices carry the furthest. Conviction, true conviction, belief in doing the right thing ensured that today the building remained open.

Within minutes a young mother climbed the steps followed by an older woman carrying a child. ‘Can I come in for a few minutes’, asked the mother. ‘I need to pray.’ The child trotted about smiling at us.

Another woman slipped quietly into a chair near the back. An organist appeared, took a hymn book and seated himself at the organ. Two more women joined us. A church member whose husband was absent sat down. Eight or nine people all in need of something. All searching. All with different needs that they hoped might be satisfied in this place.

A few words of welcome. A few lines of a simple hymn. Silence for ten minutes and some organ music. This was not what we were used to. Then coffee and biscuits, talking, listening. We learnt a little about each other. About the strangers who will be friends next time we meet. So simple. No need today for spoken prayers or theological sermons. No Bible readings. Just people supporting each other. The church had provided a service after all and most of us felt we had found something important.

Bridget Harrison



device to stop the Chapel roof from sliding eastwards. It had to remain. Sit comfortably.

Ibberson's involvement with the bigger Macfadyen window (1912) was much greater and according to our second visitor the only example of his actually composing and designing a stained glass window. Although the figure of Christ is familiar, the rest is as it were an original painting by Ibberson – of Christ comforting Martha at Lazarus's tomb – itself an unusual scene in stained glass. The window was executed by an independent glass painter, Horace Wilkinson, of Upper Tollington Park. It was much praised in the art papers of the time.

We do not know who George Whight was, but John Dow, who represented the family according to church correspondence, is revealed by his brass

memorial, also in the recess, to have been a Chapel deacon for twenty years.

Olivia Macfadyen, commemorated in the other window, was the minister's wife who died unexpectedly in her forties. In Dugald Macfadyen's previous church in the potteries she had worked herself to the bone among the young women factory workers. Understandably, Martha, the one who did all the work, was her favourite of Lazarus's two sisters, according to her widowed husband, who chose the subject for Ibberson to depict.

Wilkinson and Ibberson knew one another from school as they were the same age and both attended Bishops Stortford School, a Congregational foundation. Ibberson was a member of Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church. Wilkinson's membership is unknown. An interesting example of how once one did not usually need to move beyond one's church affiliation for all one's professional needs.

Ibberson however built Anglican and Catholic churches, as well as nonconformist chapels. Our second visitor went on to see an example of the latter, Hillside Free Church, Chorleywood (1905) and thought it well worth a Pond Square Chapel field visit one day. Not very Christmassy, but I hope of interest to some.

John Thompson

Church Library

Did you know that the Church has a library from which you can borrow books free of charge? In the Lounge of our Chapel there is a small library to which we have recently added some books from the personal library of the late Norah Spence. Norah's daughter and son have given to the Church her NIV *Bible*, William Barclay's *Commentaries* on the Four Gospels, as well as two classics of spirituality: *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence. If you've never perused the library shelves before, you might be surprised at the range of works in our small collection: *St Augustine's Confession*; *The Rule of St Benedict*; *Summa Theologica* by Thomas Aquinas; *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin; *A Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan; and works by PT Forsyth, Daniel Jenkins, Christopher Driver; *Highgate Dissenters* by John Thompson; and *A Good Girl Tomorrow* and *Here comes the god-man* by Bridget Harrison.



**Christmas Sale &
Open Day**
Saturday
December 14
10:00 to 14:00

Christmas trees can be pre-ordered & collected at the sale or delivered to your home.

Contact Simon Tye
020 8341 3657 or
simontye@harington.org.uk



The Pathway team often find themselves in a unique position: to tell Bible stories to children who will be hearing them for the very first time. For some, even the Christmas story is not known. This year we will be telling the Christmas story from the perspective of 'Sam' the shepherd who fails an interview to be one of the first people to meet Jesus and decides to tell the children what happened. Please pray for us and for the thousands of children who, in the coming weeks, may be hearing this story for the first time.

Darren Chubb
Pathway Leader

Winter Shelter in Highgate 2013

The Winter Shelter project provides an evening meal, a bed for the night and breakfast during the cold winter months from the beginning of November to the end of March.

C4WS is a volunteer dependent project, resourced and managed by a partnership of churches based in the Camden Borough. C4WS provides Christian hospitality which directly addresses our guests' basic needs for food, shelter, warmth and friendship. It is the volunteers that make this possible.

Highgate United Reformed Church, in conjunction with St Michael's Church and All Saints Anglican Churches, is hosting a winter shelter for the third time this November and December on Sunday nights and Monday mornings.

Many of our volunteers are back for a second or third time at the shelter. From Highgate URC it is lovely to see some of our older "children" back in the church – Angus Gorrie and Lillian Judd have both been involved in the Sunday evening "shift", setting up beds and tables and serving supper. It is good to see volunteers coming for the first time as well as welcoming back "old hands" who provide continuity and help things run so much more smoothly than when we first started providing hospitality.

As happened last year there have been many contributions of money, food, clothing, cleaning materials and people's time and energy to make our contribution in Highgate to this project.

In winter 2012/2013 out of 273 calls received from referral agencies 82 people stayed with the project. This means that the need for this service was almost FOUR times greater than could be accommodated. Some statistics from last winter:

Over **3700 meals** were served over 5 months

37% of the guests were **under the age of 25**

82 guests had respite, enjoyed the friendship, and Christian love of volunteers and each other.

23 guests stayed over **28 nights**, the longest being **141 nights**.

The average stay of our guests was **23 nights**.

Of the guests that actively engaged with the C4WS Welfare Manager

93% were assisted in securing accommodation, returning home or moving in with friends.

Patricia Judd

Children's Work Update

Fun Sunday is doing well. The past couple of months we have focused on Autumn and Jesus being the light of the world. Numbers have been good with 5 toddlers and children coming recently.

Kidz Klub

We are focusing on Moses and his life! Numbers are quite low but that doesn't stop us having fun and learning about God!



Making Melodies

Making Melodies is doing really well. Numbers are great, between 5-8 toddlers/children are coming, ranging from 6 months to 6 years old. Since we started after the half term we have had 8 toddlers/children coming to each session.

Please keep praying for the future of the church.



The Future Church

The children are the future of the Church
They will look for the broken and the lost they will search
They will keep the church alight and pass on the flame.
They will tell the world and speak of his name
They will pray for the church and keep it alive
and tell what Jesus has done in their lives
The future ministers, worship and youth leaders.
They are the future leaders, to **make** future leaders!

Ste Rainford

The Home Group

The Home Group has continued its weekly gatherings on Wednesdays throughout the autumn. Our last meeting before Christmas will be on Wednesday, 18th. December and we shall resume on Wednesday, 8th. January 2014. However, on Wednesday, 11th. December, no meeting will take place as the Home Group will be providing refreshments at Pond Square Chapel after Carols in the Square.

Generally our meetings are held at 14, Southwood Park, Southwood Lawn Road, N6 5SG, unless notified otherwise at the previous Sunday morning's service. We start at 7.45pm and aim to finish at 9.45pm. Currently, we are using a Study Guide to read The Acts of the Apostles which gives a thrilling yet challenging account of the Spirit-filled life of the early church. No previous Bible knowledge or preparation is necessary and the atmosphere is very relaxed and friendly. Light refreshments are provided at the start and end of the evening. If you would like to join us, we shall be delighted. Lifts, door-to-door, can be arranged. Please contact **Roger Orme**: 07966956160 or 020 8458 2144.

Queens Park Charity shop

The Reverend Timothy Po has now retired as Minister of Queens Park U.R.C, following a call to ministry near his home town in Malaysia."

A new part-time Minister and his wife have been appointed in his place. The Reverend Eddy Bueno and Lilian are from Brazil but have been worshipping at Fulham U.R.C. Whilst their appointment is good news, sadly, there are insufficient experienced people in the church to run the Charity shop and a decision has been taken to close it.

Over the past two years, the proceeds have been used to provide people in the church and the wider community, living on income support, with a deposit equivalent to three months' rent which has enabled them to move into rented accommodation. This has given stability to their lives and the possibility of work.

So, upon behalf of Queens Park Charity shop, may I relay a very big thank-you to everyone at Pond Square Chapel and beyond for their generosity in providing a nearly-continuous supply of second-hand clothes, toys, books and bric-a-brack over this period. Should anyone know of another church-based charity shop nearby which we could support, please let me know.

Roger Orme

- Tuesday 17 4:00 pm Making Melodies
- Wed 18 7:45 pm Home Group, 14 Southwood Park, N6 5SG
- Sunday 22 10:30 am **Advent 4** All Age Service of Lessons and Carols with Children's Presentation led by Julian Templeton
- 6:00 pm Cold Weather Shelter
- 6:30 pm Carol Service at St John's United Reformed Church, Somerset Road, New Barnet, EN5 1RH
- Tuesday 24 6:30 pm **Christmas Eve** All Age Carols by Candlelight led by Julian Templeton and Roger Orme
- Wed 25 10:30 am **Christmas Day**, All Age Carol Service led by Julian Templeton
- Sunday 29 10:30 am **1st after Christmas** 'Carols we haven't sung' Service led by Susan Chinn



January

- Sunday 5 10:30 am **2nd after Christmas** Worship led by Donald Macarthur, with Kidz Klub
- Monday 6 2:00pm Open Door Gathering at Trees, 2-4 Broadland Road, N6 4AN
- Wed 8 7:45 pm Home Group, 14 Southwood Park, N6 5SG
- Thursday 9 8.00 pm Managers Meeting
- Friday 10 12:30 – 1 pm Christian Meditation
- Sunday 12 10:30 am **1st after Epiphany** Worship with Holy Communion led by Julian Templeton, with Kidz Klub
- Monday 13 7:30 pm Elders' Meeting
- Tuesday 14 4:00 pm Making Melodies
- Wed 15 7:45 pm Home Group, 14 Southwood Park, N6 5SG
- Friday 17 12:30 – 1 pm Christian Meditation
- Sunday 19 10:30 am Worship led by Roger Orme, with Kidz Klub

