 URCGrays  
[www.graysurc.org.uk](http://www.graysurc.org.uk)

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# Silent Visitor



**December 2022/January 2023**

## Time to reflect passing of the Seasons

One of my favourite bible readings is from Ecclesiastes 3.1-8. It sums up the passing of time as we journey through life – as we say goodbye to people we have met and journey into new adventures.

*Anon.*

### A Time for Everything:

1. There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens.
2. A time to be born and a time to die  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3. A time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,
4. A time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6. A time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7. A time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8. A time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

Bible NIV



## Grays United Reformed Church - Worship Plan

<b>Date</b>	<b>Led by</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Notes</b>
04.12.22	Denise Beckley	9.30	Young Families Service
04.12.22	David Coaker	10.30	Christmas Parade/ Gift Service
07.12.22	David Coaker	11.00	Dementia Friendly
11.12.22	George Semain	10.30	Family Service includes Holy Communion
18.12.22	David Coaker	10.30 15.00	Christingle Tilbury Band
24.12.22	Denise Beckley	10.30	All Age Service
01.01.23	Kathryn Taylor	10.30	Family Service includes Holy Communion
04.01.23	David Coaker	11.00	Dementia Friendly
08.01.23	Alf Pryer	10.30	Family Service
15.01.23	David Coaker	10.30	Family Service
22.01.23	George Semain	10.30	Family Service
29.01.23	David Coaker	10.30	Family Service
01.02.23	David Coaker	11.00	Dementia Friendly
05.02.23	David Coaker	9.30	Young Families Service Supported by Denise Beckley
05.02.23	David Coaker	10.30	Holy Communion

## Olive Picking Trip – A Reflection

The last time I visited Israel/Palestine was over twenty years ago as I waited to hear whether I would be accepted into preparation for URC ministry. We visited the holy sites and Christian Aid projects, which gave me a sense of the Palestinian context, but my abiding memory is a sense of peace and affirmation sitting on the shore of Galilee after a boat trip across the lake.

After my visit this October, as part of an Embrace (<https://embraceme.org/> group from across the UK to pick olives with the East Jerusalem YMCA, I'm left with different memories. There was joy there is the shared experience and the welcome we received from Palestinian families to assist with their harvest. We carried stepladders, tarpaulins and buckets up and down valleys. We heard the satisfying patter of olives falling onto the ground, and then filling sacks to the brim. We celebrated communion together in the olive groves. And we shared stories with farmers, their families, Palestinian teenagers and each other. There was light in those moments of solidarity and shared effort.

There were also shadows, as walls and fences were noticed, armed patrols passed by and to our eyes the unassuming apartment blocks on the surrounding hills were pointed out as Israeli settlements. Over twenty years ago the situation was tense – it was shortly after the Oslo accords – but now what seemed temporary checkpoints are transformed into military outposts, the separation barrier looms around and through communities, settlements (better described as new towns) seem to be everywhere, new Israeli-only roads cut through the West Bank, and the more than seventy year occupation to me, and more importantly: Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and B'Tselem among others, is more accurately described as apartheid.

We had talks from various organisations including Kairos Palestine, the Palestinian Museum of Natural History, and the YMCA's Rehabilitation Programme. We visited Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Hebron, visiting settlements and seized Palestinian homes, taking in the holy and tourist sites and enjoyed a farewell dinner with folk dancing.

After this visit my abiding memories are different. On my previous visit we also visited the al-Aqsa Mosque / Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. Then there was the expected security at the bottom of the slope before we entered, but that was all. This time armed Israeli security was also at the top of the slope within the Mosque compound, they were also patrolling the grounds and escorting settlers around it. I was lost for words. Imagine police patrolling around a cathedral and escorting people around it who contest its sacredness?

We visited Hebron, in which the tourist traps of the glass and keffiyeh factories were in sharp contrast to the city centre where the main street lies abandoned, its former Palestinian occupants forced out, with shop doors welded shut, as a security precaution for the settlers who have made their homes there. It was incredibly eerie and unsettling to walk the deserted street with only teenage soldiers for company.

Yet within all this the Palestinians we met still had hope. There were diverse opinions about whether that hope lies in a one or two-state solution or by challenging the status quo as apartheid. There was pain in the stories of routine harassment, night-time arrests, imprisonment, loss of land and inequality. There was also compassion for their oppressors, wondering how they cope being fed a constant diet of fear. There was also joy in celebrating the everyday things of life.

Apart from a general sense of the Palestinian plight the only lasting legacy from my previous trip had been to always include prayers for Israel / Palestine in the intercessions I led.

This time I made a list of things to do, questions to ask, times to share my experiences, a commitment to support Embrace, and an abiding affection for olive trees – especially when they are in need of picking!

This trip to pick olives was delayed by lockdowns, but before the pandemic I did put together an Advent Candle Liturgy to promote congregations purchasing olive trees. I offer it to you to encourage the same, and share the opening verse of the hymn:-

The olive tree against the sky  
strong and healthy as time goes by.  
The olive tree means life and health  
to those who tend and till the earth.  
They connect us to ages gone,  
And keep watch over ages to come.

(Sussex Carol, LM Irregular – *On Christmas night all Christians sing*)

**Rev'd David Coaker, Minister Grays URC**



## Financial Update November 2022

As at the 31<sup>st</sup> October the back balance stood at £24,000, comfortably above my preferred minimum balance, and getting ready for those hefty winter heating bills!

Talking of which, I have negotiated the gas contract for 2023 for both the church and annexe, which will result in a 40% rise in gas costs. We are eligible for help with our gas costs, as announced by the government.

This help will be available as from the start date of our new contract on 23 December 2022, and continue for a period as announced by the government. At the moment I cannot find out how much this will be.

Also a grant is available from URC Eastern Synod, and I have started to prepare some figures which I will submit to Synod in due course. The maximum grant available is £3,000 per church.

When I have a clearer idea on the actual heating costs for both annexe and church, I will meet with Charlotte to discuss the hirers rent reviews for 2023. Obviously, we as a church do not wish to increase our premises hire charges any more than absolutely necessary, but we also need to be aware of the ever increasing energy costs. Watch this space!

Otherwise, not much to report at the moment. The above work has taken up rather a lot of my time

The usual thanks go to those who contribute so generously to Church funds each month, to Alf and Bob for any help required, Charlotte for organising the lettings and Elaine for the invoicing..

If anyone has any queries regarding Church finances please contact me and I will do my best to help.

*Alan Beckley*

# **The Snowman**

*by Nanny Gina*

The snowman stood happily there

With a top hat on and straw for his hair.

The snowman was happy, I tell you no lies

He had two big, black stones for his eyes.

The snowman thought he could smell a rose

He had a large orange carrot for a nose.

The snowman liked his bright red scarf

The colour made him want to laugh

The snowman grinned with his large twig mouth

When he saw the children run back to the house

The snowman was feeling great

Standing there unaware of his fate.

The snowman woke from his slumber

He thought he could hear a clap of thunder

Suddenly down the rain came

Poor snowman, he would never be the same.

The snowman's nose fell off which was a worry

And when he looked he was losing his tummy.



The Snowman's hat and scarf were the next to  
go

And he felt he was getting nearer to the ground  
below

The snowman cried "What's happening to me?"

But his eyes had gone and he could not see.

The snowman was sad at the way he felt

Such a shame he didn't know he would melt.



**Editor's note:** Gina's poem reminded me of going to the Thameside Theatre, to see Richard Digance, some years ago.

We used to enjoy going to his shows as they always made the audience laugh and it was a very happy atmosphere. It appeared to be unscripted and he would gauge his evening as to how the audience reacted with his first words or so. During the performance he always sung one or two of his own songs and Gina's poem reminded me of his song "Snowmen only live until the sun comes out". A simple sort of song but he said it was one of his Mum's favourites!

## **Cathedral Church of St. Peter, St. Paul and St. Andrew** otherwise known as **Peterborough Cathedral**

On our visit last year we entered the City of Peterborough from the A1. We picked up the direction signs and dutifully followed them. They led to what seemed to be a run down part of the city which surrounded the cathedral. But where could we park? The answer to this question took some time to resolve and led us down various one way streets, most of which were under repair and which we visited two or three times in our search. Eventually we spotted a busy Traffic Warden who directed us to a small private car park consisting of little more than an empty building site enclosed by a wall. (more of that later – see appendix)

We entered the cathedral by the main west entrance and were immediately impressed by its architecture. It comprised three magnificent arches about which much has been written. They were flanked by buttresses headed by mini spires or spirelets. These were completed within 120 years following 1118 which followed a fire caused by Hereford the Wake when in battle. Inserted into the central arch is a Perpendicular porch, 'little Galilee porch', completed in about 1380 and which now houses the cathedral treasury. The building retains an original painted ceiling of 1220, apparently unique in England. Next to Durham this is England's finest unspoilt Norman Romanesque interior.

The cathedral houses a number of relics, the most important of which is 'the uncorrupted arm of King Oswald of Northumbria', collected by Benedictine monks. The relic lies in a chapel, St. Oswald's Chapel, with a watching loft to overlook and guard the relic.

Other major points of interest include the tomb of Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife, buried there in 1539. In the south aisle, immediately opposite, is the burial place of Mary Queen of Scots, buried after her execution in 1587 at Fotheringay, about ten miles away. But when her son became King James I, he had her body moved to Westminster abbey. John Wastell, later builder of Kings College, Cambridge, built some superb fan vaulting in that part of the cathedral known as 'the new building' in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

As with all cathedrals this mother church is well worth a visit but do check first where the best car parks are situated!



## Appendix:

I referred earlier to Peterborough's parking problems. The private car park I referred to, pointed out by the Traffic Warden, was little more than a small plot of wasteland, entirely deserted and which we entered with some misgivings. A notice displayed the method of authorising and paying for our parking. I held the car whilst the intrepid Janet, with undisguised mystery, began the process outlined in the notice. Her armoury was a purse full of change and a mobile 'phone.

After some research it transpired we were not allowed to pay cash. The notice advised that we could download an 'app' which would connect us to the parking payment system. Unfortunately the 'app' would not download. In frustration we consulted one another and came to the same conclusion, "Let's not bother." This had taken about six minutes. So we abandoned our efforts and drove out, fortunately finding excellent parking at a not too distant major shopping centre.

The incident lay forgotten until the morning post brought us a letter from private car park managers, informing us that for the privilege of that six minutes we owed them £100, but generously reducing this to £60 if we paid up pronto. This we did but at the same time appealed against the charge as advised in the letter. Despite our protestations and the fact we only stayed whilst trying to pay the charge, the response was, to put it into the vernacular, "We photographed you coming in and going out without payment. So you will have to pay up. If you don't like it you may write to the DVLC." This was a protracted procedure and, deciding life was too short, we left the matter there, congratulating the parking managers for steadfastly upholding the reputation of private car park managers.

A subsequent magazine article described the problem of an elderly man who arrived at Birmingham Greek Cathedral for a memorial service. Like us he attempted to pay by a digital process, not being allowed to pay cash. He was nonplussed and telephoned his digitally expert son for advice. The son telephoned the parking company which did not listen and the distressed man received a fine for non-payment. But he did not have to pay it because in the meantime the unfortunate gentleman died.

A view has been expressed that society is now discriminating against people, particularly the elderly, for not being in a position to download 'apps', for example those who do not have a smart phone. Former Pensions Minister, Baroness Altmann, has asked the government to appoint a Minister for Older People to tackle what she calls digital discrimination. Apparently some ten per cent of people who have mobile phones use models which cannot download 'apps'. A large number of councils in England and Wales have now made their car parks totally cashless, leaving people without such phones unable to pay. The idea of a Minister for Older people was promoted by David Cameron but was rejected by the Department for Works and Pensions. Needless to say, we found that article very interesting!

*George Semain*




## Christmas Messages

<p>We wish you all a joyful Christmas and a New Year bringing Peace, Health and Happiness! God Jul!</p> <p><b>Inger and Alan Collier</b></p> <p><i>Donating to Crisis</i></p>	<p>Christmas Blessings from <b>Gina and Ray Nottage</b></p> <p>Donating to Cancer Research</p>
<p><b>Beryl Clarke</b> wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year 2023</p>	<p>Heartfelt Blessings and Peace for this Christmas period and New Year.</p> <p><b>Kathryn Taylor</b></p> <p><i>Supporting Multiple Sclerosis</i></p>
<p>We wish all at Grays URC a very Happy Christmas.</p> <p>With love &amp; Best Wishes,</p> <p><b>Alf &amp; Margaret Pryer</b></p>	<p>We wish you all a very happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.</p> <p><b>Tony &amp; Jean Olly</b></p>
<p><b>Ruth and Roger Hunwick</b> wish everyone a very Happy and Joyful Christmas and a peaceful and healthy 2023</p>	<p><b>Robert &amp; Margaret Datlen</b>, wish all our friends at Grays URC a lovely peaceful Christmas and New Year.</p> <p><i>Supporting Water Aid</i></p>



## Christmas Messages Continued

<p><b>Richard Wade and family</b> send warmest Christmas greetings to all friends at the Church.</p> <p>(Meningitis Now in continuing memory of Andrew)</p>	<p><b>Pat and Bill Boag</b> wish everyone at the Church a Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year</p>
<p><b>Jill Keane</b> wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.</p>	<p><b>Elaine &amp; Berne Barcz</b> send fond greetings to our church family for a peaceful and happy Christmas season, with best wishes for 2023</p>
<p><b>Janet and George Semain</b> wish everyone a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year.</p> <p>(Various charities)</p>	



## **A Message From Margaret Datlen:**



"I would like to thank everyone who held me in their prayers whilst I was very poorly and thank you God for answering all the prayers.

I told my surgeon it was a miracle, he said "I don't believe in miracles", but I did and I was one of his lucky patients.

I did feel very low some days and then Denise Beckley telephoned me to suggest taking my grandson to Playden. When we went to Playden I noticed the leaflet about the Tilbury Band concert and Denise encouraged me to think about it. I felt that it was a good way to go out where there would be people as I'd been indoors shielding and isolating and my confidence needed to gradually come back.

The Tilbury Band Concert was great and they played lots of music from West End musicals. It lifted both Bob and I, after taking nearly two years of getting well again.

Thank you Denise for helping me."

*Margaret D.*

## **Memory of Childhood Christmas Expectations**

My sister and I are excited because Christmas is nearly here at last. My sister is three and I am ten. It is now school holiday time. We had a nativity play at school, we'd been to the Sunday School party, and will go to the Church Carol Service on Christmas Eve afternoon.

Tomorrow is Christmas Eve and when mum and dad shut the shop tonight they will hold a party for their friends. The party is usually great fun but at 9 o'clock my sister and I will have to go to bed. It's great because we usually have to go at 7 o'clock.

On Christmas morning after Santa has visited, we will go to Nanny Ann's and Grandad Walt's (Dad's parents), driving up



the A127 to West Ham. Nanny and Grandad have an Off Licence next door to Uncle Albert and Aunt Joyce who have a Post Office at the back of the shop with sweets, books, toys and all sorts of things at the front.

Last year was great fun. Uncle Albert took us into his stock room and let us pick a present. My sister chose a doll and I chose a railway set. We went back into Nanny's & Grandad's, and Uncle Albert and Dad set out the track. The little clockwork engine and carriages ran from the kitchen up the hall and through to the Off Licence then back again. Uncle Albert kept saying "Joyce, we need more track," and she ran next door and got them.

Nanny and Grandad always close the Off Licence on Christmas night. We have a lovely family time then in the big "best room", Aunt Nell, Uncle Jack and Cousin Peter (he's ten like me) will be with us by then. We will all do our party pieces.

Aunt Nell will play the "joanna", Mum and then me will recite a poem, Grandad will sing a music hall song and Uncle Jack plays the spoons. One year Uncle Albert got out his violin but we all booed and he put it away. What a lovely day it will be.

On Boxing Day, we will be off to Nanny Lily and Grandad Tom (Mum's parents). All the relatives will be there. Uncle Tom is in the dramatics and usually dresses up as Santa and his fiancé, Eve, is a dancer and was in a Royal Command performance. Mum's relatives will be there and we will have a lovely time doing it all again.

Oh! I nearly forgot, last year it was great fun when we went to Aunt Rose's firm's Christmas Dinner. The Chef came out with a big Christmas Pudding happily ablaze and suddenly tripped and the pudding on its silver tray slid majestically (I learnt that word at school recently) over the wooden dance floor

managing to come to no harm. All the guests clapped and some patted the Chef on the back.



**Happy Christmas, *Gina Nottage***

## **Jersey Facts**



Mark and I went to Jersey over half-term with my Mum and Dad while David was in Israel. We had a great time and were fortunate with the weather. We'd never been before and did a fair bit of exploring.

Here are some of the interesting facts we came across on our trip – some courtesy of my Dad's cousin and her husband who are island residents – some from the internet! Some of the facts may even be true .....

1. A third of Jersey's land area (however defined) is used for growing the famous spuds, Jersey Royals, which are fertilised with seaweed.
2. Milk from Jersey cows is higher in fat, protein and calcium than typical milk – eg 4.3% fat v 3.7% for whole milk. The milk in the shops is in cardboard cartons and labelled with its percentage fat content. I noticed that 2.5% milk was creamier than the semi-skimmed I'm used to at home (1.8%).
3. Jersey Ice cream is delicious.

4. The Jersey Zoo was founded by Gerald Durrell and there's a dodo skeleton in the front window.
5. Low and high tide are key to whether you can reach islands just off the coast – including the Elizabeth Tower near the capital St Helier (closed due to gales when we went but didn't stop a trip to the beach. for some to paddle and enjoy the waves and brief drizzle). Also the island with the lighthouse at La Corbiere (see picture). We timed our second visit there to low tide so we could walk across and see the rocks covered in limpets and barnacles.
6. Financial services is a key employer. The corporation tax is zero %, but with some greater transparency it is now not officially a tax haven according to some definitions. Other definitions suggest a tax rate below 9% constitutes a tax haven. There are now strict rules which make avoidance of VAT when re-importing to the UK, which significantly increased VAT revenues when implemented.
7. In Jersey there is no VAT, but a 5% goods and sales tax.
8. Jersey is a crown dependency, and part of the British Isles rather than the United Kingdom.
9. Jersey was the only part of the British Isles under German occupation during WWII, between 1940 – 1945. It was heavily fortified by the Germans, perhaps beyond the significance of . its location. Some say because the Germans stationed here did not wish to counteract the view of its importance for fear of being sent to the Russian Front.
10. King Charles III is known there as the Duke of Normandy.
11. Electricity is cheap and low-carbon – thanks to sewage gas, waste incineration and an interconnector to France

bringing predominantly wind and nuclear power. Electricity is cheaper than in the UK.

12. Per head of population. Jersey is well served by electric vehicle charging points. Though we didn't see many from our bus trips.

13. The bus drivers are skilled – and bus trips are a great way to get around the island, see the magnificent varied coastline and deal with some steep inclines.

14. Drivers are very courteous and happy to stop for pedestrians to cross.

15. However, in general, living in Jersey is more expensive than the UK. Lots of food and other items are imported. Morrison's, Co-op and Waitrose are the main small supermarkets stocking the same products as the mainland.

16. Apart from milk and potatoes, we spotted Jersey produces apples (turned into jam called black butter), its own cider and beer (Liberation brewery), tomatoes, mushrooms and there is lots of good local fish (sea bass and crab in particular).

17. Jersey airport has flights to Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester and many other places. But when the fog descends, it can be a day or two before the airport re-opens.



*Rita Coaker*

## A thought for the Church Family



Some of our members and their families are unwell. This has meant their being in hospital. We ask that you remember those who are feeling frail, in pain or confused, in your prayers.

We ask you Lord to give them comfort and support while they go down the road to recovery. Please give us strength in the knowledge that you are there with your love, beside us, as we struggle through.

Amen

## Prayer

What can I write about prayer? Within our congregation we span many years. Although age may bring frailty, it also brings experience and wisdom. I feel sure each of us could give a testimony to prayer. I logged on to a URC online event called Praying with those who wait. A 3-day event of morning prayer, lunch time study, and evening discussion. I was pleased to achieve two of the days which Kathryn had also joined in. Much discussion was had on waiting for an answer to prayer. Should we get on with life, whilst waiting, or should all be focused on the request. A particularly relevant topic for Grays URC at present as we pause and trust God will lead. As we pause let us pray. A phrase used was let us run towards God, God delights in us all.

I believe praying together is powerful. During lockdown our Friday prayers continued, separate in location, together in spirit. I have also experienced zoom prayer groups. We experienced positive answers to prayers. Some we may never know, and sometimes the answer may be no.

The Friday Prayer Group has run its course. Let us explore ways to pray together in a less formal way than we do in our worship time together. Please give prayer and thought to our prayers together.

Suggestions have been to meet before church, or as a group in an extended church worship time. Let us together support one another in prayer.

*Denise Beckley*

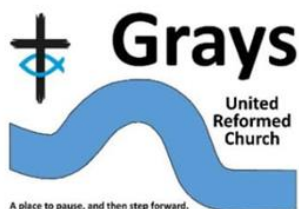


# Christmas at Grays United Reformed Church

## All are welcome



Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup>	9.30am Service for young families 10:30am Christmas parade service Gifts for Women Refuge
Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am Dementia Friendly worship
Friday 9 <sup>th</sup>	From 3.30pm After school Christmas craft, fun and instant nativity. Includes afterschool snack
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am Family Service includes Holy Communion
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am Christingle Service Will include Christingle making from 10am
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup>	3.00pm Carols with the Tilbury band, followed by refreshments and a concert by the band
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am The noisy nativity, followed by an early party lunch. An event for those aged 0-90+



31 Bradleigh Avenue, Grays.



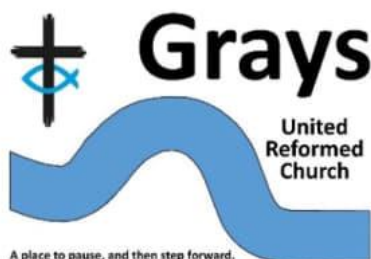
# The Noisy Nativity

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> December 2022

10.30am

Grays United Reformed Church

Bradleigh Avenue RM17 5XD



Followed by an early party lunch  
An event for those aged from 0-90Plus  
All are welcome to come along  
join in the fun





## Save the Date

# Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2023

This is our URC Area Partnership Re-imagine Church Day

Come and learn a new way of growing church by living out your faith  
in the places you are already in

**Led by Steve Rouse, Church Team Director for LICC**

at Cornerstone URC from 10 am – 3 pm

with fish “n” chip lunch and a lively vibe – why spend your Saturday anywhere else?

**Add this date to your 2023 diary today!**

If you need further information at this stage, contact Revd Gillian Thomson, 01702 203557

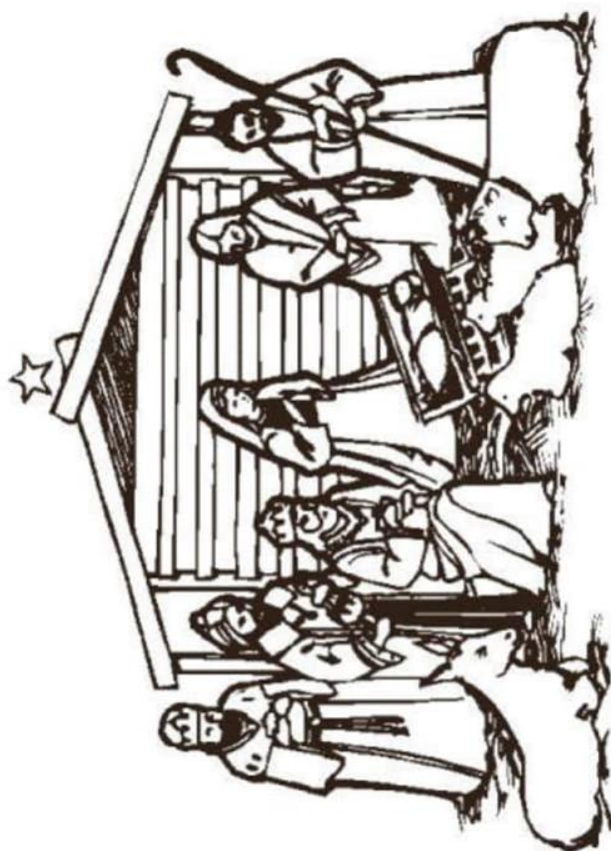


**The three wise men  
brought three gifts:  
gold, frankincense,  
and myrrh.**





Joy  
to the  
WORLD



# Who's Who at Bradleigh Avenue

Minister: Rev'd David Coaker  
07378 348191  
drcoaker@gmail.com

Treasurer: Mr Alan Beckley

Elders: Mr George Semain, Mrs Janet Semain,  
Mr Alf Pryer & Mrs Denise Beckley.  
Co-opted: Mrs Elaine Barcz,  
Mrs Margaret Pryer

Church Contact: Mrs Elaine Barcz  
graysurcsecretary@outlook.com

Organist: Mr Richard Wade

Facilities Manager: Mrs Charlotte Webb  
0784 3559011  
graysurc@gmail.com

Silent Visitor: Mrs Janet Semain  
01375 373532  
[geojan321@sky.com](mailto:geojan321@sky.com)

Assisted by Mr Kee Cheung