



My Dear Friends,

Greetings in Christ!

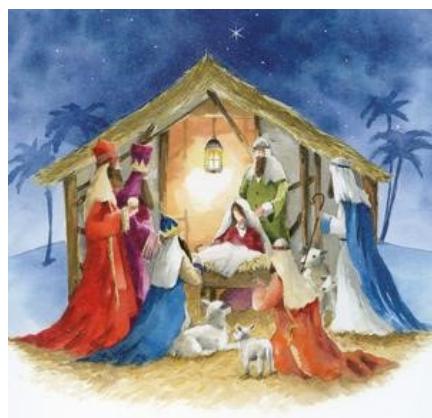
I was aware as I preached at our recent YouTube Remembrance service, that while we were praying for peace in our troubled world, I was conscious of multitudinous situations around the world where anything but peace reigns in people's lives. Wars continue in at least 20 places in the world and even where conflicts have come to an end, we need peacekeeping forces to maintain what seems to be, a fairly fragile cease-fire. Then of course, on the following Sunday, denoted as the World Day of Prayer for the persecuted Church, we were reminded of the religious conflicts in which we are reliably informed by those agencies working with the persecuted church, that 70 million Christians have been martyred for their faith since the time of Christ. At the present, 250 million Christians are facing persecution of one form or another in more than 50 countries. Is this the peace that Christ promised when He was here on earth? "**My peace I give to you**", He told His disciples, but what sort of peace was He offering them?

Peace in ordinary thinking and experience equates in most people's minds with the absence of noise, strife and conflict, thus defining it by what it isn't. But the peace of Christ is different, for it is not determined by the absence of anything. In John 16:33 Jesus says, "**In the world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world**". You **will** have trouble, but you can still have His peace. So, it is not a matter of what the world is like round about me, but what sort of person I am, or can be, in this troubled Covid world. The peace Jesus offers to us is not dependent on circumstances, but on the inner sense of tranquillity He brings to us, as we get to know Him better and live in the reality of Christ in us, the hope of glory.

The angels announcing Christ's birth at that first Christmas sang of "**peace to men on whom God's favour rests**", suggesting that we will experience God's peace when we are assured of His favour in our lives. That acceptance by God of each of us as individuals only comes by grace as we accept Christ's death on our behalf, acknowledge our need of a saviour from sin, receive His forgiveness and living in the good of what the Lord has accomplished for us. Paul tells us in Romans 5:1 "**we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**". He then goes on to exhort us to live in that peace by letting "**the peace of Christ rule in your hearts**" (Colossians 3:15). That means it is obviously possible, to live in such a way that we can fail to let God's peace rule in our hearts! We need to operate in the power of choice. We need to choose to **let** God's peace be the guiding factor in our lives in every choice and decision we have to make. We may live in the midst of lockdowns, trials and difficulty but because we are living in Christ it is possible to experience the peace He knew, despite the conflicts that raged around Him while here on earth.

The Christmas story once again reminds us that Christ came to bring His peace to a world in conflict. May His peace be your portion not only at this season of goodwill but as we move into a new year with all its unknowns. Be peacemakers bringing comfort and joy, imparting to others the life of God that will enable them to experience His peace too.

Yours in His joy,  
Clive.



### **Welcomers Rota for December**

December 6 - Brenda and Graham  
December 13 - Nic MacD and Peter J  
December 20 - Kate M and David P  
Christmas Day - Brenda and Graham  
December 27 - Nic MacD and Clive J



### **Surface Deadline**

For inclusion in the January edition of Surface Magazine - please send all copy to Kate M via email to or hard copy to my home address by **Monday 28th December**. Many thanks!

## Samaritans Purse

Despite the restrictions of Covid19, Samaritans Purse are still planning to run Operation Christmas Child and we will again be the only drop off point in the Weald.  
**The new dates are 5th to 14th of December.**

The updated plan is that the office will be open each of the usual office days that week (ie Tuesday 8th to Thursday 10th) but is of course subject to change should the government change the regulations again!

Pre-printed boxes and leaflets will be available soon but in the meantime you can find more information by clicking [here](#) and you might like to start looking out for suitable items for your box. Please remember we are no longer able to include either sweets or toothpaste due to changes in customs regulations. Thank you. Maggie



Thank you for being a part of reaching children in need through Operation Christmas Child.

I went to their South East Processing Centre in Tonbridge yesterday morning and collected our free Operation Christmas Child pre-printed shoeboxes. This year, the Lord has blessed them, with the provision of a massive modern empty warehouse, next to Screwfix on the Deacon Trading Estate, TN9 1SU.

I met their director Nick, who remembered our former pastor Ryan and he thanked us for our support, prayers and encouragement and for those of us who had helped them in the past, in processing the shoebox gifts. He said that they are well-prepared, with COVID-19 workplace risk assessments in place, to care for the volunteers, who will be checking all the shoeboxes, before they are loaded into the shipping containers.

If you are able to serve the Lord in this way and help in blessing children in need, either as individuals or as a group, please contact the centre via:  
[www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/volunteering)

They use the Eventbrite booking system for tracking and tracing purposes.

God bless,  
Bob x

Hi everyone,

We are so pleased that in these challenging times, Samaritan's Purse feel able to continue sharing God's love by distributing our Christmas shoe box gifts. So, if you have lots of goodies only awaiting a box, never fear - you will be able to pick up one from the church. Of course, feel free otherwise, to decorate and use your own!

I would commend the Samaritan's Purse website to you for more detailed information on their various initiatives. Thank you for your continued support.

Mary x

## Donations To The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

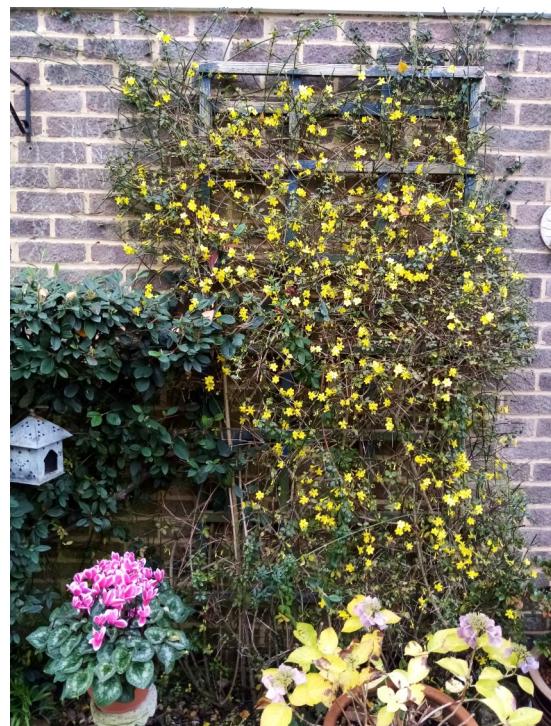
While we were blessed by the beautiful display of poppies for Remembrance Day, we are also aware that due to present COVID restrictions it's been much more difficult for the British Legion to fundraise this year.

With this in mind, it has been agreed that SFC will make a donation of £200 from the general fund to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

We also felt it appropriate to offer church members the opportunity to add to this amount.

So, should you wish to do so, you are welcome to post money in a marked envelope through Roger's door so he can progress the payment for you. Alternatively, you might prefer to make a donation by bank transfer to Staplehurst Free Church.

Many Thanks,  
Bob



**GOD STILL BLESSES US WITH  
THE BEAUTY OF HIS CREATION  
EVEN IN THE WINTER!**

Carole

## **Sunday Broadcasts Technicalities**

A few people have observed that for one of the recent Sunday morning broadcasts that only the guest speakers slides were being shown on screen and it was not possible to see the speaker on camera much of the time. Unfortunately, this is a limitation of the current system we have. On this occasion the speaker had quite a lot of slides each with multiple bullet points coming up, he was using a remote control to advance the slides and all the software controlling this is running on a single computer. It was therefore difficult to find the right moment to switch between camera and slides and there was a risk the control of the slides would have also been disrupted. We are now looking at how we can improve this in the future but thanks for your patience and feedback in the meantime which is welcomed.

The Tech Team

## **Gift Day for St Faith's Centre—11th October 2020**

Dear Church members, Please pass on our thanks to the church for your very generous gift of £1000 in response to our Gift Day, which I noticed had come into the Ringlestone Community Centre Bank Account. We are so grateful for the encouragement and affirmation of this project that we received from your gift, and thank God for this and all the other gifts given. We have been humbled and amazed that the total has already come to £114,000, more than 2/3 of the way to the target we set ourselves of £150,000 from the church members and friends and the local community, with the donations continuing to come in. We are working hard now applying to various grant-making trusts to raise the remaining funds needed to build the new church and community centre in place of the existing St Faith's Church Hall in Ringlestone, which is no longer fit for purpose, a journey that we know you will identify with! We had a trip to your church last year and were inspired by many of the features of your building. We will keep members and friends updates on our progress as we move towards making St Faith's Centre a reality. Keep an eye on the St Faith's church website and the Ringlestone Community Centre Development Group Facebook page as well if you can. With our grateful thanks, Rose Henn-Macrae and Dale Nurden - Churchwardens.

## **Thank You!**

I would like to thank the Trustees, leaders and the church fellowship for the amazing Amazon Gift Voucher and for all the lovely comments from the leaders and trustees on the card presented to me unexpectedly on the morning service on 8 November to mark my retirement as chair of the trustees.

I am very grateful for all your incredible support and thank God for His support and encouragement. I will continue as trustee in order to support the team and in particular Roy as he takes over as chair and I pray that God will bless Roy as he takes over this responsibility and the team generally.

With my love in the Lord Jesus  
Terence

## **Thank You!**

*A big shout out to all those who took the time and trouble to send Ruby a card to help her celebrate her 90th birthday on the 24th.*

*She had a lovely day – the Staff at the home did their best to make it a day to remember for her. They said they had never known a resident get so many cards! Thank you, Kate Mx*



## **Staplehurst Free Church Interim Leadership Team**

**Terence Hawgood  
Bob and Mary Howse  
Clive Jones  
Kate Henry**

**Treasurer: Roger Bashford**

**Staplehurst Free Church**

**Church Administrator - Maggie Martin**

**Email:** churchadmin@staplehurstfreechurch.org.uk **Office Tel No.:** 01580 893993  
**www.staplehurstfreechurch.org.uk**

## **Services in December**

<b>Sunday 6th</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>All Age Connections - Message on a Tablet</b> <i><b>Theme: The Angel's Message to Zechariah</b></i> <i><b>Speakers: Kate Henry and Mel Hughes</b></i>
<b>Sunday 13th</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Worship, Word and Communion</b> <i><b>Speaker: J.John Christmas Message</b></i>
<b>Sunday 20th</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Worship and Word</b> <i><b>Compassion Carol Service</b></i>
	<b>4.30pm</b>	<b>Carols in the Car Park</b>
<b>December 25th</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b><i>Christmas Day Nativity</i></b>
<b>Sunday 27th</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Worship, Testimony and Family Communion</b> <i><b>There is Hope (Service of Testimonies)</b></i>

At the time of publication (Thursday 26 November) the whole of Kent is now in Tier 3 confirmed here  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/full-list-of-local-restriction-tiers-by-area#tier-3-very-high-alert>

In tier 3 : Places of worship remain open, but you must not attend with or socialise with anyone outside of your household or support bubble while you are there, unless a legal exemption applies. - **No mingling after the service then!**

So all the services planned will be subject to review nearer the time of each service and there is also a further review by HM Government on 16 December so there may be further changes in what is planned after that including in particular whether we can hold the carols in the car park on Sunday afternoon 20 December.  
This is our current understanding and subject to further clarification as ongoing guidance emerges.

**Enabling everyone to know Jesus  
and grow in a personal relationship with Him**

**STAPLEHURST  
FREE CHURCH**