

**Minister:** Vacancy  
**Diaconate Lead:** Mrs Janet Eastwood  
**Secretary:** Mrs Dawn Davies  
**Treasurer:** Mrs Eve Eates

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### **Deacons**

#### **Date of Retirement**

Dawn Davies	2025
Janet Eastwood	2025
Dawn Patterson	2025
Tony Ralph	2027
Eve Eates	2027

*Everyone is welcome at*  
**UNION CHURCH**  
*An evangelical family church*  
*serving God and the community*

## A Double Portion

Welcome to the bumper edition of the newsletter! December and January's news, information and Christmas and New Year messages are all here within these pages. But does this edition mean we are getting cheated out of having less under the guise of more? Or a case of two for the (non-) price of one? Or do you receive your bumper edition as a double portion of all that you enjoy in the regular monthly newsletter?

The Bible mentions the "double portion" six times: it refers to the inheritance of the first-born "...he shall acknowledge the firstborn...by giving him a **double** portion of all that he has, for he is the first fruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his." Deuteronomy 21:17

It is a sign of love as seen in 1 Samuel 1:5 "But to Hannah he gave a **double** portion, because he loved her...." 1 Samuel 1:5a

In 2 Kings 2:9 Elisha asks Elijah for a **double** portion of his spirit when he wants to be Elijah's successor - to be regarded in a sense as the firstborn but also as an act of love:

"When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a **double portion** of your spirit on me."" 2 Kings 2:9

The double portion is also a double blessing from a generous Father. Job, following the destruction and loss of everything he held dear in his life but never losing his faith in God, had all that he had lost given back twice over.

“And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job **twice** as much as he had before.” Job 42:10

A double blessing brings joy and gladness. These two words are used a lot at Christmas but have they become so much part of the Christmas “vocabulary” that we have forgotten their origins? That the double blessing of joy and gladness is God’s gift to us through His Son, Jesus; who became fully human, died, and rose again to remove our shame and all that we have forfeited through sin!

Over 700 years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah wrote powerfully about the coming Messiah:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.” Isaiah 61:1 and then in verse 7:

“Instead of shame and dishonour, you will enjoy a **double share** of honour. You will possess a **double portion** of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.”

So, my friends, let's accept with thanksgiving the Lord God's gift of a double portion of blessing wrapped up in the swaddling clothes of a very special baby as we celebrate Christmas and the birth of our Saviour. "To all who mourn....He will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair....." Isaiah 61:3a

### **This is the message of Christmas!**

Dawn Patterson



To Frances Williams who created the very thoughtful Remembrance display in church. Also, to her son Peter who helped move boxes and generally assisted. It was all very much appreciated by everyone who was fortunate enough to see it.

*Did you know that Frances regularly collects, washes, and puts away all the communion glasses after the service? Thank you, Frances, for this too.*

## **A Christmas Intercession**

Father, as we exchange gifts with family and loved ones on Christmas Day, we too are reminded of your gift to us, your son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for the joy, love and hope that he has brought to us.

Whilst Christmas brings joy and happiness to many, we bring to you those that are less fortunate and those who may be going through difficult times. We pray that those with mental and physical health issues are healed. We pray that those who are hungry are fed. Pray for wars to cease and there be calm whilst everyone rejoices in the celebration in the birth of Jesus. God, we ask for your light to illuminate those dark places in the world and in the hearts of those struggling today.

Father, we pray for our local communities. We ask that you are with the staff that work within the emergency services, who are working on Christmas Day. Bring them the joy and happiness that we will all be feeling on that special day.

One final prayer for those who will be alone on Christmas Day. Father, we ask for the holy spirit to comfort them and reassure them that they are not alone and that they too are part of the celebration. The celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Amen.

*Dan Yeoman*

## The Soul

Welcome to the third in our series about The Soul, based on Psalms, from Radio 4's Daily Service in June this year. This edition was prepared and presented by Molly Boot:

### 3. Discipleship

Welcome to today's daily service where we'll be thinking about discipleship. Discipleship is one of those 'Christianese' words that we don't often hear outside of church circles, but really discipleship is just how we live well with each other and with God. It's how we keep on learning what it is to be whole; to grasp life in all its fullness. There are few hymns that sum up the meaning of discipleship as well as our first hymn for today "Just as I am". It's a special hymn for me and I often return to it as a reminder that God loves us exactly as we are, with all our fears doubts and shortcomings. It was written by Charlotte Elliott, the 19th Century poet and hymn writer, who, struck by sorrow and self-doubt, wrote this hymn as a reminder of the foundations of her faith; the absolute certainty that she was safe and beloved in the presence of God just as she was.

1 Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

2 Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come.

3 Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict,  
many a doubt, fightings and fears within, without, O  
Lamb of God, I come.

4 Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon,  
cleanse, relieve; because thy promise I believe, O Lamb  
of God, I come.

Prayer:

Jesus, Lamb of God, whose love we cannot comprehend,  
whose love has broken every barrier down, whose love  
always welcomes us as we are, teach us to love and be  
loved this day and evermore, Amen

Our readings this week are mostly from the Psalms -  
songs of the soul in search of God's liberation and  
redemption. Today's reading is different. We hear the  
words of Jesus; weighty words reminding the disciples of  
the cost of following him.

"Then Jesus told his disciples if any want to become my  
followers let them deny themselves and take up their  
cross and follow me. For those who want to save their  
life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake  
will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the  
whole world but forfeit their life? What will they give in  
return for their life? For the son of man is to come with  
his angels in the glory of his Father and then he will  
repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you  
there are some standing here who will not taste death  
before they see the son of man coming in his Kingdom"  
(Matthew 16: 24-28)

Whenever church folk mention discipleship, you can also expect to hear them mention vocation, another Christianese word which is often constricted to refer only to those in some kind of church ministry. Really it just means 'calling' and as Charlotte Elliott reminded us earlier all of us are called by God just as we are. But what exactly are we being called into? Do we really want to follow God's call? Jesus words are daunting, the cross sounds heavy, the risk high! 'For those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

When I was 18, I went on a slightly misguided Christian gap year to Tanzania and you would think I would have worries about living alone thousands of miles away from home for the first time, or finding my way from Nairobi across the border to my destination on the edge of Lake Victoria. My biggest worry was that I wouldn't be able to take my violin. As a teenager playing the violin was the most important thing in my life. I played four hours a day and had done since the age of 6. Suddenly I was faced with having to give up something precious in order to follow God's call, to let God lead me wildly out of my comfort zone. You can imagine my surprise when soon after arriving in this little Tanzanian town, our next-door neighbours mentioned that they were hoping they could find a violin teacher for their daughter. I'd thought that God wanted me to give up my music to follow Jesus, but God wanted me to sacrifice something that I loved, that this was the cross I needed to take up. But it turns out



that god is much, much kinder than I'd anticipated. Music-making has never left me no matter where God has called me.

In taking up the cross, in laying down our lives, our souls, we do not lose ourselves. God cherishes the things that make us who we are. Nothing is lost, nothing is wasted. Quite the opposite: we are called into God story of death and resurrection in which all things are restored and renewed and made whole.

Let us pray:

For those who cannot believe that they are enough as they are; loved as they are; called as they are; who feel the pressure to make themselves smaller rather than taking up space as their glorious God-given selves; Let us pray Lord have mercy. For those who forget the generosity of God, the kindness of God, the delight of God, who have come to believe that God desires their suffering rather than their flourishing; let us pray Lord have mercy.

For those who are afraid, ill, anxious or struggling in any way, who need to hear the call of the God who calls them beloved just as they are; let us pray Lord have mercy.

Amen

The author of this series is Steve Tong, a church member.

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

*Greetings to our friends at Union. Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a healthy, peaceful and most blessed 2025. With love from Carol and Fergus.*



*Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year*

*With heartfelt thanks and love for everyone's support this year. We couldn't do it without your prayers.*

*Love and blessings*

*Janet, Dawn, Tony, Eve & Dawn*



Merry Christmas  
&

A Happy New Year

With much love and all the blessings of our Lord  
for everyone at Union Church

**Dawn & David**

Xxxxx

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

**'Jean and Allan Middleton** would like to wish all at Union Church a blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with hope'.



*Wishing all my friends at Union Church a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.*

*Frances Williams*



Jan and Tony send Christmas greetings. May the coming year be filled with God's peace and blessings.



*Greetings to all our readers of the Newsletter, particularly those we don't see in person. May your Christmas be filled with blessings, and the New Year with peace.*

# **CAROL CONCERT**

**With Hunstanton Concert  
Band**

**Saturday December 14**

**2:00pm**

**Followed by  
Refreshments**

***Come and join us for a  
traditional celebration of  
Christmas***



## A Change to our Monthly Communion Service

From January 2025 our monthly communion and family service will be extended for approximately 30 minutes. This is to allow each preacher adequate time for this very special celebration of the Lord's Supper. The service will finish no later than mid-day, and it is only on the first Sunday in the month when a communion service is held.



We welcome the following Preachers who will be leading our services in December and January

December	1 <sup>st</sup>	Joella Nash
	8 <sup>th</sup>	Steve Tong
	15 <sup>th</sup>	Steve Tong
	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Dawn Patterson
	25 <sup>th</sup>	Tony Ralph
	29 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Shared Fellowship service</b>
January	5 <sup>th</sup>	Joella Nash
	12 <sup>th</sup>	David Crispin
	19 <sup>th</sup>	Russell Wate
	27 <sup>th</sup>	Steve Tong

## [The Pope, the Environmental Crisis, and Frontline Leaders | The Letter: Laudato Si Film](#)

The Letter tells the story about the Pope's call to care for our planet. For info on translated versions and how to take action, visit <https://TheLetterFilm...>

youtube.com

The Letter. message for our earth.

On Saturday 9th November the Catholic church at Dersingham hosted a film, The Letter, a documentary on climate change, followed by a light lunch, refreshments and fellowship.

In 2015, Pope Francis wrote Laudato Si (The Letter) an encyclical letter about the environmental crisis to every single person in the world no matter their faith or none. A few years later, four voices that have gone unheard in global conversations were invited to meet the Pope. Hailing from Senegal, the Amazon, India and Hawai'i they bring perspective and solutions from the poor, the indigenous, the youth and wildlife.

This documentary follows their journey to Rome and the extraordinary experiences that took place there and is packed with powerfully moving personal stories alongside the latest information about the planetary crisis and the toll it's taking on nature and people.

To learn more and watch the film, follow links on the web.

## **'Silent Night'?**

'You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him  
Jesus.'

Luke 1:31 NIV

We have sung the words of that Christmas carol since infancy. But those words actually do not come from Scripture. 'Silent Night' was a poem written by an Austrian priest in 1816. The words conjure up a serene picture with the happy couple watching their newborn baby. It's not likely, however, that there was silence. After an exhausting journey on a donkey, Joseph and the very pregnant Mary didn't check into the master suite of the Bethlehem Grand Hotel. They begged the use of an animal shelter, complete with the clatter and scents of barnyard animals – anything but silent! Ask any mother about giving birth. Even with the help of modern pain-reducing medicines and sterilised environments, the bravest woman rarely remains silent while giving birth. For Mary, Joseph, and Jesus – this was hardly a silent night!

'Holy night': of all the nights in history, this *was* the most holy. God set in motion His eternal plan to come to earth as the Redeemer of lost people. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them' (2 Corinthians 5:19 NKJV). Jesus came to take on Himself the sins of doomed humanity, so 'that we might become the righteousness of God in Him' (v. 21 NKJV). It doesn't get any holier than that!

'All is calm, all is bright': on that holiest of nights, our spiritual and moral darkness was forever dispelled by Jesus, the Light of the World. And our fears as lost sinners were replaced by the peace and joyful assurance that we are His eternally forgiven people.

This excerpt was taken from the free devotional, The United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) Word for Today, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF. For more information please speak to Jan Groom.

UCB LISTEN.....UCB WATCH.....UCB READ.....UCB.CO.UK

## **Food For Thought!**

Why go to church?

A church-goer wrote a letter to the editor of a local newspaper and stated that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

He wrote: "I've gone for 30 years now and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time, as the preachers and ministers are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column. Much to the delight of the editor, this went on for weeks until someone wrote this:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time, my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: they have all nourished me and given me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

And that ended the debate!

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible - thank God for our physical and spiritual nourishment. If we cannot see God in all, we cannot see God at all!

(Many thanks to a friend for this)

Dawn Patterson.





## **Christmas Programme 2024**

6th - 8th December - **Christmas Tree Festival**  
Town Hall Fri 2-4pm Sat/Sun 10-4

7th December **Carol Service** 2.30pm  
@ The Way PE36 5HU

12th December **Toddlers Carols and Chaos**  
10.30 Methodist Church PE36 6AJ Info 01485 298316

14th December **Carol Concert**  
2pm @ The Union Church PE36 5BN

15th December **Carol Service**  
10.30am @ Methodist Church PE36 6AJ

### **Christmas Eve**

4.00pm Crib Service @ St Edmunds  
7.00pm Service @ St Cielias, Dersingham  
11.15pm Midnight Mass  
@ St Edmund's Church PE36 6BE

### **Christmas Day Service**

9am St Edmund's Church  
9.30am Methodist Church  
10.30am Union Church  
10.30am Catholic Church



Please check websites for further details

## JUST A REMINDER

The choice of a charity to receive donations from Sunday morning refreshments is the Fellowship's choice. Please submit the name of a local charity that you would like to receive our donations. So far, I have had to make the choice, but it is not for me alone. We will be supporting **The Bridge for Heroes** for December, January and February; it could be your favourite charity for March, April and May so please let me have some suggestions.

In 2024 we sent donations to:

The RNLI

Baby Basics

Coastal Health and Wellbeing [Wells Community Hospital]

Nelson's Journey

Eve



Some definitions of a volunteer:

- Don't talk yourself out of giving it a go. ...
- Understand why you want to get involved. ...
- Work with your group to find your best fit. ...
- Bring your enthusiasm! ...
- Make sure you feel comfortable about getting started. ...
- Be a team player. ...

Could this be you in 2025?



*Happy birthday to those members and friends who celebrate their birthdays in December and January. We hope you have a lovely day however you celebrate.*

***December***

*18<sup>th</sup> Heather Williams*

*19<sup>th</sup> Dawn Davies*

*27<sup>th</sup> Audrey Boxell*

***January***

*1<sup>st</sup> Frances Williams*

*19<sup>th</sup> Paddy Creasey*

*23<sup>rd</sup> Cheryl Lovett*

*24 Pippa Yeoman*

*28<sup>th</sup> Alison Ralph*



*Thank you to the ladies who donate and arrange flowers each week.*

*December 1<sup>st</sup> Daphne Johnson*

*8<sup>th</sup> Lucy Tristram*

*15<sup>th</sup> Heather*

*22<sup>nd</sup> Kay*

*29<sup>th</sup> Alison*

*January 5<sup>th</sup> Kay*

*12<sup>th</sup> Heather*

*19<sup>th</sup> Alison*

*26<sup>th</sup> Daphne*

*As we reach the end of another year, can we thank everyone who has contributed in any way to our monthly Newsletter. Without the first page letter to our church, or the thoughtful articles, poems, and other items, there wouldn't be a Newsletter. We are always asking for contributions, so it would be good to have these for the February issue.*

- Would you like the format changed?*
- Would you like one font to be constant throughout, or do different fonts make it more attractive?*

*You have almost two months to think about it!*



*Luke 1:14: "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth."*

*John 1:9: "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world."*

## To A Special Child

A meeting was held quite far from Earth:  
It's time again for another birth  
Said the angels to the Lord above  
This special child will need much love.

His progress may seem very slow  
Accomplishments he may not show  
And he'll require extra care  
From the folks he'll meet way down there.

He may not run or laugh or play  
His thoughts may seem so far away  
In many ways he won't adapt  
And he'll be known as handicapped.

So, let's be careful where he's sent  
We want his life to be content.  
Please Lord, find the mother who  
Will do this special job for you.

She will not realise straight away  
The leading role she's asked to play  
But with this child sent from above  
Comes stronger faith and richer love.

And soon she'll know the privilege given  
In caring for this gift from Heaven  
Her precious boy, so meek and mild,  
Is Heaven's very special child.

Anon.

# NewsLetter DEADLine

The deadline for the  
February 2025 issue is,

**January 20<sup>th</sup>**

but items can be submitted at any  
time.