

Furrough Cross
United Reformed Church

December 2025 /
January 2026



Website: furroughcross.org

Find us on Facebook: facebook.com/furroughcross

Email: furroughx@gmail.com



Minister: Vacant

Church Secretary: Vacant

Church Treasurer: Mrs Jenny Marshall

Email: jmarshall686@outlook.com

Hall Steward: Mrs Ann Close (for hall bookings only)

(01803) 324080 Email: annclose49@gmail.com

Messy Church Leader: Miss Shirley Leaman

Magazine Editor: Mariana Wilson

Email: marianawilson@btinternet.com

REGULAR CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Sunday Services: Sundays at 10.30 am. Communion on the first Sunday of each month.

Midweek Worship: Wednesdays at 2.30 pm.

Messy Church: 2nd Friday of each month (not August) 4 to 6 pm.

Opinions and views expressed in this magazine may be personal and not necessarily accord with those of the Minister and Elders of Furrough Cross United Reformed Church. Care is taken over the accuracy of the information presented but the Church and Elders cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions. The Editor reserves the right to edit or omit material submitted.

Who would have thought that God would choose a young woman in an obscure village to carry the Saviour of the world? Someone with no status, no wealth, no voice in the corridors of power. A virgin.

Who would have thought that something as mundane and bureaucratic as a census would become an instrument in fulfilling God's promise? A decree from Caesar Augustus. Just another piece of administrative governance. Yet beneath the surface, heaven was moving. Prophecy was unfolding.

Who would have thought that the King of Kings would enter the world not with trumpets, but with the soft cry of a newborn baby, wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger? No palace welcomed Him. No royal guards stood watch. He came into this world surrounded not by glory and fame, but by humble straw and the quiet breath of animals.

Who would have thought that the first to hear of His birth would not be scholars or priests, but shepherds, people with no social standing, who spent their nights beneath the open sky? They were the ones visited by angels. They were the ones entrusted with the news that hope had come. The message of salvation did not begin in the courts of kings, but in the fields of the forgotten.

Who would have thought that a story that began over two thousand years ago would echo through time and still change hearts today? Empires have risen and fallen, languages and cultures have shifted, but



the child born in Bethlehem is spoken of still. The world remembers Him, argues about Him, worships Him, rejects Him, wonders about Him. The impact of His birth has not faded into history; it has grown. There is no other king whose arrival continues to shape lives long after kings and kingdoms have turned to dust.

The birth of Christ reminds us that God's ways are not what we would imagine. He upends expectations. He turns the world's hierarchies upside down. He brings strength through weakness, glory through humility, salvation through love.

And here we are, at the end of another year—still singing, still hoping, still being changed by the child born in Bethlehem.

Praise the Lord and Merry Christmas everyone!



A CHRISTMAS WISH

Clare Smith

This Christmas, let us welcome the baby born in Bethlehem. Let's welcome Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, born into our world at the crossway of history to change it - and us - forever.

Peter and I wish everyone at Furrough Cross a very peaceful Christmas. Let us spread and share the good news, not only through our words and actions, but also through our thoughts, attitudes and feelings, through our whole being.

HARVEST FESTIVAL AT FURROUGH CROSS CHURCH

On Harvest SUNDAY 5TH OCTOBER 12 boxes of generously donated items of food and personal care from the church and 3 boxes from the Pre-school went to the Food Bank at Home Church in Torwood Street.



Also, £65 in cash from the Community Larder collection canister were taken down to the Community Larder located at the Salvation Army in Market Street.

Both Food Banks were very grateful for all the donations!

MONEY BOXES FOR MESSY CHURCH



Here are just a few of the money boxes we use in Messy Church, which our lovely Carol Sandford so kindly donated to us.

A big thank you to Carol and to all who have used them for their donations, we are very grateful!

A PIECE OF TRIVIA: Piggy banks began in medieval Europe, where people saved coins in jars made of a cheap clay called pygg. Over time, “pygg jar” was misheard, and potters started shaping the jars like pigs, giving us the modern piggy bank.





December: Jaime Navarro; Janet Dart; Betty Spragg; Carole Doney; Paul Madge; Jesus

January: Linda Hall; Christine Powell; Joyce Peters

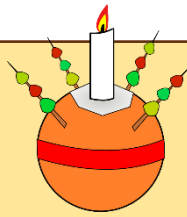


UPCOMING EVENTS

- ✓ **Christmas Messy Church and Christingle** – Friday 12th December, 3:45pm
- ✓ **Next Church Meeting** – Sunday 14th December, after the service
- ✓ **Wednesday Worship Christmas Special** – Wednesday 17th December, 2:30pm
- ✓ **Furrough Cross Pre-School Nativity** – Thursday, 18th December, 9am
- ✓ **Candlelit Service** – Sunday, 21st December, 6:30pm
- ✓ **Christmas Day Service** – Thursday 25th December, 10:30am

SUNDAY SERVICES

Date	Preacher	Reader
07 December	Rev Dick Gray	Mariana Wilson
14 December	The SW Moderator	Isabelle Taggart
21 December (AM)	Fr Paul Jones (Nativity)	Clare Smith
21 December (PM)	Rev Valerie Price	TBC
28 December	Jim Collins	Janet Dart
04 January	Monty Wills	TBC
11 January	Monty Wills	TBC
18 January	Fr Paul Jones	TBC
25 January	Rev Dick Gray	TBC



CHRISTMAS MESSY CHURCH AND CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

Join us for an afternoon of crafts, stories and activities, followed by a magical, candlelit celebration for all ages.

Furrough Cross Church
Friday 12th December 3:34pm-6pm

Come build your Christingle and share in the wonder and hope.

"EMMANUEL – GOD WITH US"

Wednesday Worship Christmas Special

Furrough Cross Church
Wednesday 17th December 2:30pm

All are welcome to this special Christmas celebration afternoon.

Festive refreshments to follow.

Please note there will be no Wednesday Worship on 24th December or 31st December. We shall recommence on 7th January 2026.

FURROUGH CROSS PRE-SCHOOL NATIVITY



Join us for a joyful morning as the children present their nativity play.

*Furrough Cross Church
Thursday 18th December*

*Refreshments: 9:00–10:00
Nativity Play: starts at 10:00*

Everyone is warmly welcome — bring friends, family, and anyone who would love to share in the Christmas spirit.



CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Please join us for a special candlelit service.
Everyone is welcome.
Let's share the light and hope of Christmas together.

Furrough Cross Church
Sunday 21st December at 6:30pm

Led by Rev. Val Price
Followed by seasonal refreshments

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

Join us as we celebrate the birth of Christ with joy, hope, and
thanksgiving on this special morning.

Furrough Cross Church
Thursday 25th December at 10:30am

Led by Andrew and Margaret Burton



CHOIR  86

Here comes Christmas!

7th December - 19:00hrs

**The Courtenay Centre,
Newton Abbot TQ12 2QA**

12th December - 19:00hrs

**Kingskerswell Parish Church
Church End Road, Kingskerswell
TQ12 5LD**

Tickets available from:
www.ticketsource.co.uk/Choir86



Follow us on Facebook

contact@choir86.co.uk

Advance Ticket Price:

Adults £8.00

Concessions £7.00

On the Door Price:

Adults £11.00

Concessions £10.00

Website: choir86.co.uk



ALICE 103TH BIRTHDAY



We all know and love Alice and recently she celebrated her 103rd birthday. At her celebration at the Livermead Cliff Hotel there was a lovely decorated box saying that she didn't want any gifts but if anyone wanted to make a donation it would be given to Furrough Cross Messy Church.

So a huge thank you from us all, Alice, for your amazing donation of £90. Through many years Alice has always supported the work with children at Furrough Cross. Slipping money into my hand, donating to our annual visit to the pantomime, asking if there was anything we needed. She has been an absolute treasure.

God bless you dear Alice and here's to your 104th birthday!

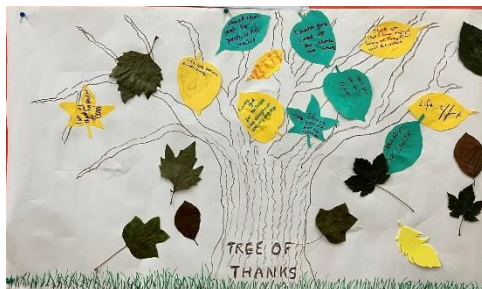
Shirley and the Messy Church team





Oh my goodness, what an amazing Messy Church we had in October! Sooo many lovely families, so many children and such a great time.

Our theme was harvest and being grateful to God for all the many gifts He gives to us. So often we're intent on asking God for things and forget to say thank you for all that we have.



We started the afternoon by watching a video of Jesus feeding 5,000 people with just five loaves and two small fish. Amazing. Then our lovely American visitor, Tanya, introduced her puppet Wazoo. The children (and adults too!) were fascinated as the puppet told us how we all had to behave. Then Tanya showed us a jar of marshmallows and all the children had to try and guess how many there were, write down their guess on a post-it and pop it in a basket.

Moving on to the activities, the children could choose from: planting a hyacinth bulb (with full instructions on how to care for it!); making a scarecrow magnet, creating fruits from marzipan, colouring in and filling a fruit basket, creating a harvest picture and saying what they were thankful for, writing it on a leaf and sticking it on to a "thankful tree".



Our worship time was led by Tanya who asked the children to try and imagine 5,000 people sitting on the ground eating the bread and fish that Jesus had miraculously provided for them all. Five of the children read the

story from the Bible. Then the children were asked questions and if someone gave the right answer they were given some bread to eat or a fish for the bath tub! Such a blessed worship time, with the children interacting so beautifully with Tanya.

Supper was jacket potatoes with beans or tuna or cheese - seconds and thirds were devoured by the children. Equally ice cream wafers were loved judging by the chocolatey mouths all around us!

God truly blessed us!

(Oh and Joby won the “guess how many marshmallows in the jar”!)





NOVEMBER MESSY CHURCH

Shirley Leaman

"Love your neighbour", that was our theme for November's Messy Church. And what a noisy, messy, chatty and fun filled afternoon it was. Who knew we could watch a Lego video of the story of the Good Samaritan - Jesus looks great in Lego!



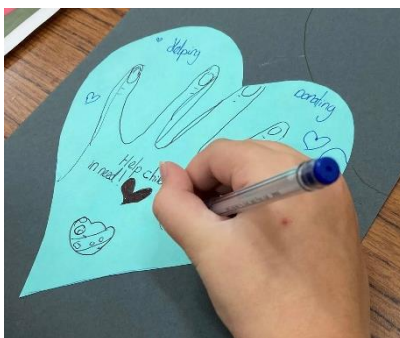
Our activities reflected our theme: a gingerbread man with a white icing bandage covered in red icing blood dripping down his body. Kids sure do love a bit of gore. Bandit masks to make and decorate, and



water pistols to use to knock down plastic bottles. A lovely red heart to make with a helping hand showing how we can do things for others, a long paper friendship chain and a big painting of the Good Samaritan, together with a picture of everyone

we should try and love - if they're lonely or disabled, young or old, black or white, unfriendly or nice. A tough instruction from Jesus for us all.

Our lovely American visitor, Tanya, led the worship time. She had two children in competition to see who could wrap their parent the quickest in a toilet roll. Don't ever think you can't join in at Messy Church! Then she had the children dramatising the story.





Never have robbers so enthusiastically attacked the poor man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. The Priest and the Levi wouldn't help but the Samaritan bundled him on to our life sized donkey, took him to an inn and paid for him to be looked after. The RSC

had nothing on the Messy Church dramatic team!

Our lovely supper of lasagne, crispy garlic bread and salad, followed by cake and custard was delish. How our catering team manage to prepare a meal for such numbers when they've no idea how many people there will be is nothing short of amazing.

Our Christmas Messy Church and Christingle will be on Friday 12th December from 3.45 pm to 6 pm.



A 'TEENAGE' BIRTHDAY IN BRUSSELS!

Bill Becher

Our grandson Mateusz who lives in Brussels was 13 years old on Saturday 18th October, so Maralyn and I went over to help him celebrate becoming a teenager and also help the family over the half term period.

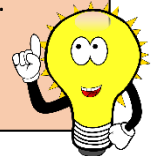
He had a special party with 12 of his school friends on Saturday 11th October at an attraction



called 'Bombsquad Brussels'. The children were divided into two teams and they had to dress in full protective clothing to solve a number of escape room type challenges and puzzles against the clock. If they didn't succeed in the time they were sprayed with an assortment of coloured paints coming from all angles! That age group would be very disappointed not to get sprayed even if they won the challenge (and we don't know if they did!) - but they certainly got well sprayed at the end!!

(Mateusz is smiling in the middle of the group with another boy's hand on his head)

Escape rooms began in the early 2000s, inspired by point-and-click computer puzzle games where players solved clues to “escape” a virtual space. The first real-life version opened in Japan in 2007, turning that digital idea into a physical, immersive challenge. The concept quickly spread worldwide, evolving from simple puzzle rooms into elaborate themed experiences with storytelling, actors, and high-tech effects. Today, escape rooms blend logic, teamwork, and theatre—modern descendants of classic puzzles brought to life.



HERBIE'S POETRY CORNER



LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Christmas is such a joyous time with all the fun
and laughter
Having parties
Meeting friends

Those things that give such pleasure!
But there are those who are so lonely
The hungry and outcast who will not enjoy this
Christmas with the sad time that they'll have
Love came down at Christmas
He came to save mankind
Teaching all folk how to live
and those with broken lives!

Written by Herbert J B Doney.



HE CAME TO SAVE

O little baby Jesus we think of you today
Within a lowly manger sleeping on the hay
You came into this sinful world. You taught men how to pray
You gave the world a brand new start upon that Christmas Day
O little baby Jesus we see you are asleep
Your little head there laying will one day bow in grief
Those tiny arms so helpless now will stretch out on a cross
You proved that you were born a King!

You gave true love to all!
O little baby Jesus you came to save the world
Today you walk beside us your word will never fail
People still reach out to you with all their fears and trials
And when they find you they'll be blessed with a love that lights
their world!

Written by Herbert J B Doney.



SO NEAR

There's one who stands beside you
who can make your darkness light
He knows your every problem
although he's out of sight
For however far you wander or
wherever you may roam
He'll always be there for you
He will guide you home!

Written by Herbert J B Doney.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT

by Margaret Burton

In Bethlehem so long, long ago,
Jesus our Lord was born:
Born of a virgin chosen by God,
On that first Christmas morn.

The shepherds heard the angels' song,
"Peace and Goodwill on Earth".
They left their sheep and went to find
The place of the Saviour's birth.

The wise men too had seen a star
Telling them of the King:
So to the Christ-child lowly and pure
Gifts and homage they did bring.

Come to the Saviour, bring Him your gift;
Give Him your life to-day:
Say, "Dear Lord Jesus, be my King,
Come and take my sins away".



HAPPY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE!

With love from Andrew and Margaret



What do you call an elf who sings?

A wrapper!

What was the snowman doing in the supermarket?

Picking his nose!

What do you get when you eat Christmas decorations?

Tinselitis!



I had a dear friend called Janet with whom I shared a love of poetry. We liked to go for a walk near a wood on the shortest day of the year and recite out loud a poem by Robert Frost called 'Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening'. It is a lovely memory of my time with Janet.

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

By Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
to watch his woods fill up with snow.
My little horse must think it queer
to stop without a farmhouse near
between the woods and frozen lake,
the darkest evening of the year.
He gives a harness bells a shake
to see if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
of easy wind and downy flake.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
but I have promises to keep,
and miles to go before I sleep,
and miles to go before I sleep.



I am very grateful for all kindness and encouragement to me throughout the year. I wish my church family in Furrough Cross many blessings in the Christmas Season and in our Christian journey together.

With love from Val Elms



A QUIET MOMENT IN GOD'S HOUSE

Ann Close

A few days ago, one of our children was having a bad day in pre-school. I took him for a walk around the church. On the way back he spotted the back door of the church, and started pointing at it. "Shall we go in?" I said. He nodded.

In the church he was so happy; he ran around, saying wow to everything he could see. Then he sat down, and patted the chair next to him for me to join him. We sat there quietly for a few minutes. "Shall we say a prayer?" He immediately put his hands together.

We said a little prayer, and returned to pre-school.

Dear Lord, let our church always be a welcoming, calming place for anyone who needs it, even a little three-year-old.



ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUIZ

1. C) Eve
2. C) Sarah
3. B) Rahab
4. A) Hannah
5. B) Esther
6. D) Mary of Bethany
7. C) Lydia
8. A) Lot's wife
9. D) Mary of Bethany
10. C) Ruth



Women in the Bible

FROM POSTMEN TO CHRISTMAS CARDS: THE ROBIN'S JOURNEY



Robins feel inseparable from a British Christmas, their bright red chests glowing against winter grey. But their place in our festive imagery has a surprisingly practical origin.

In Victorian times, postmen wore red uniforms and were nicknamed “robins” or “redbreasts.” When Christmas cards became popular, designers played on the joke by drawing actual robins delivering letters—standing in for the cheerful postmen who brought Christmas greetings to people’s doors. The image caught on, and the robin quickly became a festive favourite.

Later, people added gentle Christian symbolism, imagining the robin warming the fire in the stable where Jesus lay, its chest singed red in the process. These legends came after the fact, but they deepened the robin’s association with hope and warmth.

Today, the robin endures as a small, bright reminder of joy, companionship, and messages of goodwill during the darkest days of winter.

STAR OF BETHLEHEM

by Mariana Wilson

*Can you see the star of Betlehem tonight,
Can you hear the angels singing in the light?
Can you feel the stirrings in the shepherds' breast
As they're brought good tidings of a child so blessed.
Can you see the tear in a mother's eye,
As she holds her baby in her arms so tight.
Can you hear the crying of a new born babe
Cutting through the silence of a lonely cave.
Can you see the magi on their arduous road,
Led by ancient wisdom to a king's abode,
Can you feel the heartbeat of a love sublime
Echoing through the ages to the end of time.
Can you feel the promise of a spirit fresh,
Pouring living waters into hearts of flesh
Turning tears to laughter, winter into spring,
God dwelling among us, peace and joy to bring.
Can you hear the prayers of the saints of old,
Begging God Almighty to restore our world,
Can you feel their yearning, taste their bitter tears
As they lift their voices to the One who hears.
Can you see the answer being born today
In a humble manger, on a bed of hay,
Can you hear the stories waiting to unfold,
As God heeds the prayers of the saints of old.
Stories of redemption, wisdom, power and grace,
Stories of forgiveness, of God's sweet embrace,
Miracles of healing born of pain and loss,
Songs of life eternal streaming from the cross.
Two thousand years later, can you still behold,
The greatest love story ever to be told?
Can you hear the angels singing in the light,
Can you see the star of Betlehem tonight?*



This poem is part of of my Christmas album "Star of Bethlehem", which contains 12 original songs. To listen on YouTube, please scan QR code below.

A very Happy Christmas to you all! 🎄

Mariana





CHRISTMAS QUIZ (ANSWERS IN NEXT EDITION)

1. Which book first popularised the character of Scrooge?
A) The Bible; B) A Christmas Carol; C) Little Women; D) The Tempest
2. What does the word "Emmanuel" mean?
A) God is with us; B) Prince of Peace; C) Light of the World; D) Redeemer
3. Which country first introduced the tradition of the Christmas tree?
A) Norway; B) Germany; C) Austria; D) Denmark
4. In the Nativity story, who was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt?
A) John; B) Joseph; C) Herod; D) Zechariah
5. What animal is associated with the legend of St. Nicholas?
A) Reindeer; B) Camel; C) Donkey; D) Horse
6. Which of these is NOT one of the gifts brought by the Magi?
A) Frankincense; B) Myrrh; C) Silver; D) Gold
7. "Good King Wenceslas" was actually a ruler of which region?
A) Bohemia; B) Bavaria; C) Burgundy; D) Brittany
8. What was the colour of Father Christmas's original robes?
A) Red; B) Blue; C) Green; D) White
9. Which gospel describes the shepherds' visit to the manger?
A) Matthew; B) Mark; C) Luke; D) John
10. What plant is known as the "Flower of the Holy Night" in Mexico?
A) Holly; B) Poinsettia; C) Ivy; D) Mistletoe

YOUR MAGAZINE NEEDS YOU



Got a story to share? A poem? A testimony? A word of encouragement? A funny moment that made you laugh?

We'd love to hear from you!

*Our church magazine is a reflection of **you**—your faith, your journey, your voice.*

Your contribution can bless and inspire others in ways you may never imagine.

No professional writing skills needed—just a willing heart and a few words (or pictures!) from the soul.

**Please share your contribution for the next magazine
by Sunday, 25th January 2026**

👉 In person to Mariana Wilson

👉 By email to furroughx@gmail.com

👉 By Facebook Messenger to
<https://www.facebook.com/furroughcross>