

Oakwood Chapel's regular meetings

Sundays

11.00 a.m. Morning service, with *Acorn Club, Twigs & Tetris*

6.30 p.m. Evening service

Tuesdays

7.00 p.m. Prayer meeting

Fridays

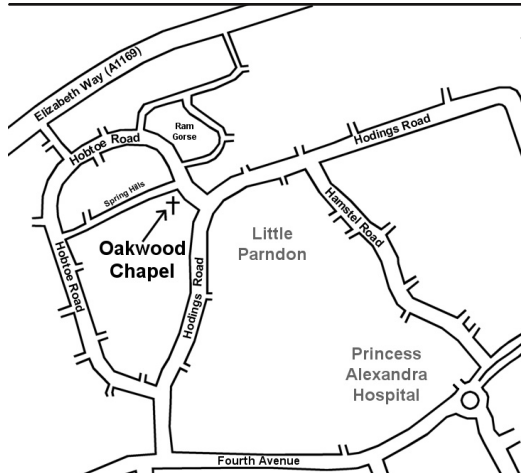
6.30 p.m. Home fellowship

Saturdays

9.00 a.m. Prayer meeting

A crèche is available for young children during the morning service. *Acorn Club, Twigs* and *Tetris* are for school-age children.

During the week, we meet regularly for Bible study, prayer and fellowship, in different members' homes. For more details, please contact us!



You can:

- e-mail us at: church@oakwood-chapel.org.uk
- visit our website at: <http://www.oakwood-chapel.org.uk/>
- find us on social media
- phone one of our elders:
Martin on 01279 725786
Sam on 07850 083724
- or, of course come along in person



Oakleaves

from

OAKWOOD CHAPEL

Issue 61

Christmas

2023

The main event

"I'm dreaming of a white Christmas" – well, actually maybe not, because we all know what happens to the roads, schools, essential services and so on if there's even a light dusting of snow on the ground!

Somehow though, the idea of snow, preferably "deep and crisp and even", a roaring log fire, sleigh-bells ringing, and red-breasted robins perched outside listening to a group of pitch-perfect carol singers with their brightly coloured scarves, bobble hats and mittens, combine to form the image of a nostalgic Christmas that we're familiar with from Christmas cards, and from "Hallmark" Christmas TV movies (that all seem to share just a couple of basic plots).

But is that actually what Christmas is all about? Are those traditions what truly define Christmas? No. Christmas isn't really about twinkling lights, inflatable Santas, cheesy films, sleigh rides, or robins in the snow. Nor is it primarily about families spending time together and the giving and receiving of gifts, though perhaps that's getting closer to the heart of it. So what *is* at the heart of Christmas? It's a celebration of the birth of the baby Jesus over 2,000 years ago, born in Bethlehem and laid in an animal's feeding trough because there was no other place for Mary and Joseph to stay. But what makes the birth of a baby so long ago, in a tiny village in a remote province of the Roman Empire, of such significance that we still remember and celebrate it today? We can find the answer

to that in the familiar Christmas story – probably one that you’ve heard many times before at Nativity plays or Carol services. In the gospel of Luke, in the Bible, we read:

*There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and **they were terrified**.*

*But the angel said to them, “**Do not be afraid**. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David **a Saviour has been born** to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

*Suddenly **a great company of the heavenly host appeared** with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”*

Luke 2:8-14, NIV

The **bold** phrases show us why the birth of Jesus was so significant.

First of all, when the angel appeared to the shepherds, **they were terrified**. These were tough men with what could be a dangerous job. They had to defend their flocks from attacks by wild animals including bears, wolves and mountain lions, and they also had to protect them from being stolen or poached. Not much scared them. So why were they terrified? It’s because of who appeared to them. This wasn’t something with fluffy wings playing a harp. In the few places where the Bible describes angels, they are unlike anything you could imagine in this world, and they radiate God’s glory and holiness in a way that overwhelms those who meet them. This is how God chose to announce the birth of Jesus.

But next, the angel told the shepherds “**Do not be afraid**” – because he had come with good news, not, as sometimes, to announce God’s

judgement of people’s wickedness.

What was the good news? It was that **a Saviour has been born**, and that Saviour was for them, and indeed for anyone who would believe the message. The Saviour’s other title was “Messiah”, which was who the Jewish people had been waiting for for centuries, and who their prophets had written about hundreds of years earlier.

After the angel had delivered the message, **a great company of the heavenly host appeared**. The solitary terrifying angel became a choir of thousands, singing and shouting praise to God for what was happening right there and then in Bethlehem. This baby’s birth had *cosmic* significance – we’re reminded of that too by the Wise Men, who had found out about Jesus’ birth by studying the stars.

Without a doubt, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was the most momentous thing that had *ever* happened from the beginning of time right up to that point. In fact, it remains one of the top three most significant events to have ever occurred – only Jesus’ death and resurrection about 33 years later are more important, and they couldn’t have happened without his birth first.

If you want to hear more about the significance of the Saviour being born in Bethlehem, come along to our Christmas services, or indeed on any Sunday. We’d love to tell you all about it.

For your diaries

Carols by Candlelight, at Oakwood Chapel, followed by mince pies:
Sunday 17th December at 6:30 p.m.

Carols in the Harvey Centre, at BB’s café:
Tuesday 19th December at 4:30 p.m.

Christmas Morning, at Oakwood Chapel:
Monday 25th December at 10:30 a.m.

