

Stockwood Free Church



SUNDAY SERVICES AT 10.45am ON SFC PREMISES AND ON FCC

<https://www.freeconferencecall.com/wall/sfcbristol/viewer>

Sunday Morning (and other) Services:

- 30th Lance Mark 6:45-55 **A question of trust** ... Those who trust Jesus are never let down by him. (Also, the first Sunday in Advent)
- 7th Lance This morning we celebrate our 62nd **Church anniversary**. During the first part of the service we will host an **all-age Communion** service and take our annual group **photo**. After the service everyone is welcome to stay on for a **fellowship lunch**, but PLEASE bring along a contribution to the puddings.
- 14th Beth All our young people will be **rehearsing** for the following week and so the adults will have the whole service on their own.
- 21st 10.45am Our Youth and Adventurers are leading our ever-popular **Nativity Service**.
6.30pm Our annual early evening "candlelight" **Carol Service**. This is a great opportunity to invite friends to join you.
- 25th Lance A short **Christmas morning celebration** (please note the early start). Younger people are invited to bring along one smallish, inexpensive present that they have received
10am
- 28th Ed We have the opportunity for a quieter **morning service**

Note that you are very welcome to invite friends and family to any of these events which we will try to make as accessible and inclusive as we can.

NEW THIS MONTH

SFC CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

(Top Estate and Craydon Road area)

These will be available for collection from the church from **Sunday 30th November**. Please take a set(s) to deliver during the week **8th-14th December**.

BOXING DAY WALK

You are invited to join us at 10.15am (for 10.30am start) for a gentle walk around the Stockwood Open Space and to stay on for a simple bread-and-soup lunch back at the church at about 12.30pm.

WORK IN LOCAL SCHOOLS

There are lots of events happening in schools this month – please pray for the teams

- 4th Open the Book assemblies in Waycroft and Woodlands
5th Lance and Carol are talking about their faith with year 6 at Woodlands
11th Lance leads an assembly for KS2 children at Waycroft
12th "Christmas in a Box" session with year 3 at Woodlands
15th & 17th "Christmas in a Box" sessions with year 3 at Waycroft

LOOKING AHEAD

NEW YEAR SERVICE

Sunday 4th January, led by Lance. Just a forewarning that we won't be holding our usual Commissioning service until later in the Spring this year. However, this will still be a Communion service.

DEEP SEA DIVERS HOLIDAY CLUB

18th & 19th February 2026 (for children 5-11)

Many thanks to those who have committed themselves to lead/help. With these, we can go ahead, though with a reduced number of groups from last year. We still really need commitment to join us from some of the working age members of the fellowship.

Practical Request:

Could we have some 2 litre drinks bottles please? (Empty, clean and dry, with caps).

ONGOING & REGULAR ITEMS

LANCE'S LABOURS

As you can guess Lance has more than enough on his plate this month!

WHERE IS LANCE?

Carol and Lance will be around all December but may escape for a few days' break sometime in January.

HOME GROUPS

Mondays: Each week at 7.45pm at the home of Trish & Mike Caswell – 16 Warman Close

Thursdays: Each week at 7.45pm – 83 Stockwood Road

Thursdays: Each week at 7.45pm on Zoom (details from Pauline Bingham)

LEADERS' MEETING

No meeting this month

PRAYER MEETING

Wednesday 10th at 4pm

MONTHLY BIBLE MEDITATION

Saturday 13th at 10am on Zoom (ask Lance for a link) – please note later start time.

PRAYER WALK

Meet outside the Church on **Sunday 14th at 4pm**, to walk around this month's prayer area.

MESSY CHURCH (any help is gladly accepted)

Tuesday 16th at 4pm

TODDLERS

Every Wednesday & Friday from 9am-11.30am

WEDNESDAY FELLOWSHIP

Each week from 2.30-4pm

PUPPETS

Alternate Wednesdays at 7pm (speak to Emily Stephens for more details/dates)

PRAYER ITEMS FOR DECEMBER

Around the Fellowship:

Jenny, Jude & Jana Stoltz, Jimmie & Naomi Tariq & family, Mark & Roz Wakefield, Max & Lara Wakefield, Colin & Linda White, Ken & Joyce Wooster

Around the Neighbourhood:

Bagnell Road, Bagnell Close, Ladman Road, Ladman Grove, Chestnut Close, Pynne Road, Pynne Close, Cottle Road, Cottle Gardens

STOP PRESS!

A huge thank you to all those who were able to join us for the November members' meeting. We were able to make one very important decision; to finance the replacement of the five exterior side panels in the main church and three of the heaters. The panels and heaters are not in a great state of repair and replacing them will enable us to improve the insulation of the building and efficiency of the heating. In addition, the building has been looking increasingly "tired" and this will make it look a lot more attractive. The work will be carried out sometime in the spring at a time yet to be agreed.

In addition, we talked about some financial support for Marius, our young friend from Moldova, who is currently in a hospital in Turkey being treated for acute leukaemia. We are sending a gift from the church as a whole but, if you would like to make a personal contribution, please label your envelope or reference your bank transfer with words like "gift for Marius". Thank you.



From the pen of J John

Awake the Wonder: Rediscovering the Meaning of Advent

Every year Christmas seems to arrive faster, like a train thundering into the station before we've even packed our bags. We rush, we shop, we scroll and then sigh, 'Did I really encounter Christ this Christmas?'

That's why we have Advent.

Advent is the church's gentle yet insistent whisper: Pause. Prepare. Pay attention.

It's not a dull countdown; it's a divine wake-up call, a reminder that Someone is coming. Advent is God's way of saying, 'Don't just rush to the cradle – prepare your heart for the King.'

1. Advent is Preparation for the Coming King

The word 'Advent' means 'coming'. It looks back to Bethlehem where Jesus came as a baby, and forward to the day he will return as King. It prepares us spiritually and emotionally to receive Christ again. John the Baptist cried, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him' (Mark 1:3 NIV). Advent is that call. It clears the clutter and tunes the heart and soul before the Christmas song begins.

Every great celebration requires preparation. You wouldn't host a wedding without planning; how much more should we prepare for the arrival of the Bridegroom, Jesus?

Advent isn't a countdown, it's a call-up.

2. Advent is Protection for the Heart of Christmas

Let's be honest, Christmas can easily lose Christ. The 'Festive Season' bulldozes its way through December until we collapse wondering what just happened.

Advent stands guard at the door of December. It slows the pace and centres the heart. It reminds us that the greatest gift isn't *under* the tree, it's the One who hung *upon* the tree.

Paul wrote, 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Romans 12:2 NIV). Advent renews us so that Christmas doesn't just happen around us, it happens within us.

The world decorates for Christmas; disciples prepare for Christ. Don't just decorate your home, dedicate your heart.

3. Advent is Proclamation – Heaven's Great Announcement

In every shopping centre there are endless announcements about sales or parking. But one announcement often goes unheard:

'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.' (Luke 2:11 NIV)

Advent is heaven's loudspeaker saying, 'Listen – the King is coming!' It reminds us that the baby in the manger was not merely born to bring peace but to bear a cross, and that he will come again.

Advent declares both comfort and challenge:

Be comforted – he came.

Be challenged – he's coming again.

The first coming was in humility; the next will be in majesty.

The first was in mercy; the next will be in glory.

The first was to save; the next will be to reign.

The manger makes sense only when we remember the throne.

4. Advent is Invitation – Heaven Knocking at Your Door

Advent is not only about Christ's coming then or soon, it's about his coming now. Jesus said:

'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.' (Revelation 3:20 NIV)

Advent is that knock, God's personal invitation. This is the season to come home, not just to family but to the Father.

Don't miss him by being too busy preparing for him.

Don't fill your diary and empty your soul.

Don't just wrap presents – receive his presence.

Awake the Wonder

Advent slows our hurried hearts and rekindles our wonder – the wonder of God stepping into human skin, heaven's light piercing earth's darkness.

As candles are lit and carols are sung, breathe and believe: Christ has come, Christ is here and Christ will come again.

Advent says he came once to save us; he's coming again to claim us.

A Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, as I wait this Advent, awaken my soul to your wonder. Prepare me for your coming, cleanse my thoughts and calm my heart. Protect me from the busyness that buries your light. Proclaim your truth through me to a world that's forgotten to listen.

And when you knock, may I open the door wide and welcome you in. Come to me, shine your light through me and come again in glory. Amen.

J. John

jjohn.com