

Ministers:

Rev Stephen Willey  
Deacon Sheila Dawson

<http://centralhall.info/>

December 2021

Dear Members of Central Hall Church Family,

We write to you as Christmas approaches and, once more, the pandemic is in the headlines as the cases of Omicron surge. It's hard to know what the outcome of this wave of Covid will be, but it is certainly making a relaxed family Christmas, with lots of social contact, seem like a distant dream.

There are times when it feels like the unpredictability of the world works against us, threatening our stability and our security. Though threats may change, feelings of fear and uncertainty are not new, they have been familiar to people throughout the centuries. The reality of people's feelings are honestly expressed in the Bible many times. From the Hebrew Scriptures to the New Testament, psalms, prophets and disciples all express, at times, feelings of being overwhelmed by the world or the task ahead. So, if God's people are not exempt from being part of this fragile human family, what can we say? Like the generations of believers before us we are able to say – maybe just as a whisper in our hearts – that God is with us in all places and at all times and that, whoever or wherever we are, God's love surrounds us!

And, despite the fears, we remember those who, in trepidation replied, when God asked something of them, "Yes!" This is seen in Mary's "yes" to God when she was asked to carry our saviour in her womb. God's loving presence came to dwell amongst us in the birth of Jesus in a Bethlehem stable. Laid in a manger, Emmanuel, (literally God-with-us) showed how we cannot be abandoned by God, even in death, for Jesus opened up the way of life for all humanity.

In this knowledge we write to you all, aware that since we last wrote to you, Betty Heales, who had been ill for a long time, passed away (her funeral is on 23<sup>rd</sup> December at Canley Crematorium). We hold those who are grieving and those who are ill in our prayers, especially at the morning prayer each weekday at 9am. Whilst we often pray for those in need we have also thanked God, in our prayers, for some of the joys we have experienced recently. Signs of encouragement like new grandchildren and people's health improving, and some recent events in Central Hall.

Our Carol Service with the new orchestra formed by our artist in residence, Seb, was wonderful - feeling and hearing the energy of the orchestra, having our very own Laquan and Charlene sing solos accompanied by the orchestra, with prayers accompanied by "In the bleak mid-winter" from Graham and Alison. The Zimbabwean choir were in good voice too, and our spirits were lifted. The previous weekend Central Hall hosted a joyful regional

gathering of the Zimbabwean Methodist Fellowships, as well as a concert from the Heart of England Orchestra, raising funds for MHA music therapy.

Another lovely occasion was the Christmas Fayre. Local artists and creatives showed off their wares whilst singers and bands played on the lower hall stage. We were delighted to welcome a local councillor, along with the Lord Mayor and our MP who spoke with affection for the building and what our church represents for our City. She was surely picking up on the warmth and acceptance of our church environment, on a memorable day when a wide range of ages, abilities and ethnicities were meeting creatively. The creativity and the warm acceptance experienced that day reflected our Creator's love.



Creativity continues to be expressed by our artists in residence and Emily (artist) has produced work on the knife cross with everything from postcards to mugs for sale.

We were really looking forward to the Christmas Cabaret, which Central Hall's resident poet, Emilie, had been preparing for months. Sadly, this was postponed because of the impact and threat of Covid. The 300 people who had tickets were disappointed but we expect that this event will happen in the spring.

All these occasions and the worship which continues each week and is livestreamed to those who need to be physically out of the building, build up our church. So do the continuing, often hidden, acts of generosity and love seen from so many of our members. There are so many ways in which you are contributing to the life of our church, whether enabling property repairs (fixing problems with our heating system and smaller property issues), praying for members and friends in need, or, the many, many other ways you support our church.

On that note, Christine decided to step down after 10 years of continuous work as our Church Council secretary, recently and she is also stepping down as a steward. We are so grateful to her and for all she has done over the years, often hidden from view. Whilst Christine will be missed, we are delighted that Naume has responded to a request to take on the role of secretary to the Church Council by saying "yes" when asked. In addition, Perpetua and Shirina have also said, "yes" to becoming new church stewards.

Please continue to pray for our property project and the arts and community hub, and please get in touch if you would like any further information about anything in this letter.

So, one last thing to note, please remember, as always, if you feel isolated or you'd like one of us to get in touch, you can contact our pastoral secretary, Doreen, our senior steward, Elaine, Deacon Sheila, or Rev Stephen.

With our love and prayers,

*Stephen*

*Sheila*