

newt

schools community faith



Opportunities to sing or to
listen - see back cover



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Buddies, trains, nativity p.4



Good Neighbours

CHRISTMAS 2023

St John & St Stephen's Community Magazine

stjohnandststephen.org.uk

Being a good NEIGHBOUR

Welcome to NEWT 42

What makes a good neighbour?

Well, as a cat owner, the month-long spate of fireworks near our house this November did test my patience, I have to admit! So, perhaps being a good neighbour could involve something as basic as being aware of how your lifestyle might impinge on others who live very nearby.

There's an implication in the idea of neighbourliness that each individual living in a place is aware of, and even cares about, their neighbours, especially those with whom they live in close proximity. This taps into the idea in many faith traditions of looking out for 'the neighbour'.

But *who* is my neighbour? That is a very searching question and one that Jesus once faced. It was put to him by someone who had wanted to know how to receive eternal life. Maybe the questioner was expecting a more 'religious answer' from Jesus, like 'practice almsgiving; go to the synagogue each week; read the Scriptures.'

Instead, Jesus invited him to 'love God and love your neighbour'. But his questioner wanted to further justify himself (maybe he was thinking *that sounds a bit simplistic and vague*) and so he asked a further question: 'Who is my neighbour?'

In response Jesus told what has probably become the most well-known of his parables: the story of the 'Good Samaritan'. In the story it's the outsider, the one whom others shun, who shows mercy to someone in great need, while the respectable religious figures 'pass by on the other side', wanting nothing to do with that grubby little problem.

The shock factor of Jesus's story is wholly lost on us today. (Indeed, *The Samaritans*

are most people's favourite listening service!) So it can be interesting to substitute for 'Samaritan' a label that describes someone whom you personally would not expect to be a decent person, someone you'd personally avoid. In other words, we can be surprised at who pitches up to help!

At St John and St Stephen's we recently held a meeting for our neighbours called 'Have your Say', to which our local Police Community Support Officers were invited. It was a really good opportunity to share some things that concern us in the community and to put faces to people who might otherwise seem faceless.

Being a good neighbour can be about building a good neighbourhood where all the residents feel they belong and have a voice. And as we've recently seen neighbours destroying each other in the Middle East this seems even more urgent and important.

Community building continues to be a priority at St John's. On Tuesday 5th December, as this magazine was being sent to the printer, we had drop-in coffee morning and 'meet the neighbours' session (with cake!) at the St John's community café in Victoria Way, again with police officers involved and listening.

We aim to hold more of these events in the New Year, so please look out for our leaflets inviting you to join us,

Claire.



Copy date for NEWT's Easter edition will be 8th March 2024

Please send contributions to the Parish Office office@stjohnandststephen.org.uk or directly to the editor at chris@meunier.org.uk

Our **NEWTOWN** neighbours

- see more of
these short stories
on our centre pages



Charlotte

We have a WhatsApp group in our street. We especially used that to help out during Covid.



Jessica

If I run out of milk I can get some from a neighbour.

Louisa, who lives in a corner house with a big garden, keeps it looking lovely for neighbours to enjoy - with lights too.



Ilona

When my son had an accident and I needed to take him to hospital my neighbour sat with my other children 'til I got back.

Charlotte, Ilona, Jessica

The church café is where we meet our neighbours. It's warm, non judgemental and welcoming. It's where neighbours become friends.

Children, parents and carers at St John's so often liken our school to feeling like a family; one where all are loved, nurtured and cared for equally. Like every family, these values are strengthened by the supportive community and neighbourhood that surrounds us.

We feel so fortunate and proud at St John's to serve children and families from both the Newtown area and further into wider and central Reading. This creates a wealth of diversity that we celebrate. It creates such a warm, welcoming neighbourhood within the school, where children share in the abundance of rich opportunities and experiences that the School has to offer.

Trains

One of these enriching experiences was when our Year 6 children had the most incredible experience working with Maddy from *Network Rail* who taught the children in school about Railway Safety, before embarking on their own exploration of our local neighbourhood at both Reading and Wokingham Train Stations.

Year 6 learned how to navigate the numerous platforms, read departure information boards, and purchase tickets from the machines. They also learned about the 'live rail' carrying high voltage electricity, observed how level crossings work, and learned about the risks and safety measures in place to keep everyone safe near railways. Year 6 enjoyed taking in our local neighbourhood scenery while walking to and from the train station, spotting our significant landmarks along the way.

Exploring *Neighbourhood* at St John's School



Buddies

The school has also been working on finding more ways to show how to be 'good neighbours' and how we can support one another throughout our school. Our Year 5 and Reception children have begun our new 'Buddy' system where Year 5 children are matched and paired up with our Reception children, to support them in the



Nativity

One of our proudest and most exciting moments that we share with our school community is when we get to showcase our Reception and Year 6 Nativity performance, which for many parents is the highlight of their children's year in school. It is a special occasion where we join together to not only celebrate the Nativity story, but also the gathering of our families together to share in the joy of Christmas. We wish all our St John's families a joyful and peaceful Christmas holiday.



beginning of their school journey. Buddies will spend time throughout the year reading, playing and performing together to build a network of supportive pupils across the school. This means that when our Reception children leave Foundation Stage and move into Year 1, they will still have their buddies around to support them as their Year 5 buddies move into Year 6.



**Reading
Libraries**



Rhymetime at Palmer Park Library

Every Tuesday and Thursday 10.30 - 11am
FREE drop-in for children 0-5 years with parent.

Christmassy themes during December

Christmas Craft Workshop



at Jelly Broad St Mall 1st floor

Wed 22 Dec 2pm to 4pm children 7 to 11yrs
Julie will help you create a Christmas diorama.

FREE. Materials provided. Drop in with an adult

**READING
REP
THEATRE**

Kings Road next to the College

Book online at:

Tickets £5

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to £25

Potted Panto

**"a bundle-
load of
laughter
and fun for
all the
family"**



27 NOV 2023 - 31 DEC 2023

It's a Wonderful Life

**"a wonderfully
traditional
Christmas treat"**

**Age guide:
8+ to adult**



30 NOV 2023 - 30 DEC 2023

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Marvellous MUSICIANS

at New Town Primary School

At New Town all the children undertake weekly music lessons exploring a range of genres, composers and techniques. The children are able to explore music further through learning to play the glockenspiel.

We have been so impressed with the quality of music produced that our music lead challenged every class to rehearse for a whole school performance on Friday 24th November. This was a wonderful afternoon where the whole school came together to perform. We also had 3 judges including a school governor. There were awards for artistic flare, most enthusiastic performance, most synchronized and an overall winner per phase.

Music is also celebrated every week through 'Tuneful Tuesday' assemblies. This term the children have been learning 'The Climb' and 'Proud' to link to our school value of determination. Also, they have been learning Christmas songs to perform at our community Carols by Candlelight performance on Thursday 14th December.

New Town school choir has been very busy this term. They rehearse every week and have been lucky enough to perform in *Rainforest Rumble* at the Hexagon, Reading as part of the Junior Music Festival. They are also supporting our local community and neighbours by performing festive songs at Royal Berkshire Hospital and Reading Train Station. Both of these performances are raising vital funds for the Royal Berkshire Charity, showing how New Town Primary School supports and bring joy to our community.





Christmas FAIR



Our annual NTP Christmas Fair this year was cold and beautiful with a great turnout of families and community, who helped us raise over £1,000 for school funds. Many thanks to everyone involved!

Follow The Star Join the Song

Come carol-singing with us on Tuesday 19th December:

At Huntley Wharf by the riverside
- gather in the concierge lobby at **6pm**
(50 Kenavon Drive, RG1 3DH)

- or meet by 5:45pm outside St John & St Stephen's church to walk there with a group.

And then at the **Fisherman's Cottage** on Kennetside from 7pm to 8pm
(before the pub quiz night)

See more opportunities on our back cover





Marjorie & Laurence.

Some years ago we went out shopping, leaving our youngest son at home. We got a phone call saying our son had cut himself. On our way back we had a phone call to meet at the hospital, where we found out he had cut the main artery in his leg (long night).

Had it not been for our neighbours he wouldn't be here today. And they also cleaned the house of any items and scrubbed the path to try and get rid of blood, by the time we got back it was as if nothing had happened!



Our **NEWTOWN** *neighbours*



Mahmouda

My neighbour is honest. When he crashed into my wall he paid for it to be repaired.

My neighbour from Bangladesh grows her own herbs, cooks great food and invites us to share it.

Terry

I try to keep an eye on my neighbours. One struggles on benefits so if he rings or texts me, I help him out with food and if he needs a can of dog food, I'll get it for him. Another neighbour is disabled. I just check on her if her window isn't open or her blind isn't up in the morning or the hallway light is not on.

Meral

Sometimes my neighbour picks up my daughter from school.



Small acts of kindness **BIG help**

Selena

When we lived in Newtown I was locked out of our house with my son on a cold day and my neighbours welcomed us into their home until my husband came back with the keys.



Amy

Although my neighbour from Latvia is not well she is very friendly, shares food and brings gifts.



Liz Humphries

In 1983, two years after I moved into Freshwater Road, says Chris Jupp, my new wife and I had a baby boy. A baby pack, containing various creams, talcum powder, cotton wool, muslin nappies, waterproof pants and some gripe water just appeared on our doorstep.

It turned out that the person behind this gift was a woman called Liz Humphries whose family lived in Liverpool Road. Nine years previously, with a £50 grant from the council, she and some other volunteers had started an Under 5s group at St Bartholomew's. It had a noticeboard so that mums could ask for or offer things others might need, like cots, stair gates or clothes.

Liz also held monthly sales in her garden and monthly barn dances in the church hall to help raise funds to keep the toddler group going. She was on the New Town School P.T.A. for ten years as well as the Newtown Crime Prevention Unit.

Now 73, living in Gosport and supported by family members, she's still at it. After husband Dave died of cancer, the garden sales continued and she's even jumped out of a plane with a parachute to help raise money for Brain Tumour Action for children - £750,000 in the last 11 years- and during Covid, £18,000 was collected to place 18 defibrillators in local schools. We've never forgotten Liz, the baby pack and the barn dances.





Know your Newts

meeting the people in our community

The CHAMBERS family

We are sitting in the warm, cosy dining room of a typical Newtown terraced home with a cup of tea and a huge slice of home-made chocolate cake. Donald and Mary Chambers, and their lovely daughters, Charlie and Alina, are waiting to tell their story – a story which spans the globe from Australia and the Pacific islands to Africa and the Middle East, including surviving a tsunami, designing a whole new town, learning exotic languages and writing in many different forms.

Was it the Boxing Day pacific tsunami in 2005?

Mary: No. Just over a year later there was another in the Solomon Islands. An earthquake under the sea, registering 8.1 on the Richter scale, lifted the entire island 3 metres. I was in a boat. The whole sea shook like a bowlful of jelly and triggered a huge tsunami. Fortunately, villagers who had experienced the 2005 wave knew what to do. A man from another boat shouted, 'Get into deep water!' so we did. People onshore ran for higher ground as the towering wave roared past us and flattened their village!



Solomon Islands earthquake damage



Calm canoeing after the tsunami

Wow! That must have been terrifying! Why were you in the Solomon Islands?

Mary: I was born in Leeds but my mum was Australian, so six weeks after I was born, we were on a ship to Melbourne. Dad got a job as a librarian in Ballarat and we later settled near my mum's sister in Geelong on the coast.

When I was 11 we moved back to Exeter in Devon.

After my A levels and a gap year in Geelong, I returned to study Linguistics with Italian at Reading Uni, which



Australia

included a year at the University in Siena. I then went back to the Pacific, helping the Wycliffe Bible Translators turn the sounds of the villagers of an island in Papua New Guinea into a written language. While studying for an MA at SOAS (the School of Oriental and African Studies) in London, I started attending Hinde Street Methodist Church near there and met Donald! But I soon left for the Solomon Islands to live in a village for a year to study their language (one of 90 in the islands!) for my PhD.

... Designing a town?

Donald: Ah, that's me! After degrees in Geography and in Urban Planning for Lower & Middle Income Countries, I had short spells working for the charity *Plan International*, a planning company in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe, and helping one of my old professors at SOAS on a project. I then worked as a planner for Camden Council and Colin Buchanan. It was during the latter post that I met Mary at Hinde Street and we married. In 2009, I arranged to go to Zambia with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) but I couldn't get a visa. This was just as well as Mary found she was pregnant with Charlie! A year after she was born, I had a contract to work with EGIS in Kuwait so we left for the Persian Gulf. Kuwait had a brand new sea port and I was part of a team designing a new town for everyone that would work there!

Mary: We enjoyed our two years in Kuwait; it's very child-centred. One Friday we were out to lunch after church when we realised we didn't know where Charlie was. The waitress said, "Don't worry. She's playing with the manager behind the bar!"

How did you come to live in Reading?

Mary: Just before we left Kuwait in 2012, someone I knew in Gothenburg asked if I could proof-read something. Then someone in Cologne asked the same thing. So my occupation became proof-reading to which I later added indexing and copy editing. It spread by word of mouth. I'm never short of work and don't have to advertise. We didn't want to live in London so we chose Reading, partly to be close to Heathrow because Donald's work meant quite a bit of travelling. We bought a house in Wantage Road where Alina was born five years later.

Donald: Not long after moving in, we began to search for a church that would suit us. I wanted a church that didn't have easy answers for everything. Life doesn't always have neat answers. We completed an application for Charlie to join St John's Primary School and then looked at the church website and were impressed.



Newtown

Mary: When we came to St John's for the first time, we received such a warm welcome. Donald had a lovely chat with Heather Curnow while Charlie met Laura Blackburn-Finlay and her daughter Fin. After dropping

Charlie off at the school, I enjoyed the company of Laura and the other mums in the church café. Three of them, Laura, Sylvia Jamfi and Priya Herath, became Alina's godparents. Another new friend, Vicki, encouraged me to sing with her in a local choir called *Chorate*.

In 2018, we decided to move to Newtown and have never

regretted it. The street where we live is a lovely community. We have enjoyed being part of the annual Big Lunch street party.

And the area around your home became the backdrop for a book!

Mary: It was Alina, two years old at the time, who had the idea. Looking out of her bedroom window, the low moon looked as though it had got stuck inside the Gas Tower. "We must rescue it! I'll go and get my helicopter!" she said. We wrote 'Alina Saves The Moon' together as a lockdown project and shared it with our friend, Leslee Barron, who offered to illustrate it. It's sold well. (I'm now working on a novel entitled 'Fugue'. It's about the disappearance of a girl who forgets who she is - or about music, art, trauma and identity if you prefer an ingredients list!) Our vicar, Claire, had an idea before lockdown to collaborate with others to showcase the work of local artists in an exhibition - it celebrated the Gas Tower before it was dismantled. Leslee and I are currently staging our 6th show at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

You like volunteering?

Donald: I used to volunteer at *St John's' Child Contact Centre* where non-resident parents can meet their children but I had to drop out because I was travelling a lot for work, often at short notice. But now I help with the *Reading Hydro* scheme, cleaning the grill that collects rubbish from the water before it surges through the turbine. Mary used to volunteer for the *Breastfeeding Network* ...

Charlie: ... and we are part of *Borrow My Doggy*. It's a website to help owners look for people to help look after their dogs. We help look after a neighbour's Chow/Samoyed cross if the owner has to go into the office. It looks like a mix of lion, wolf and fox!

Mary: In Newtown you're always seeing people that you know. There are lots of people you can call on for help if you need it. Once somebody had dumped a table on the street. Charlie and I were trying to carry it home. She wanted a table to do her art, model-making and painting on. A man we had never met before said, 'Can I help you with that?' and he carried it all the way back to our house.

Alina: I like living near my friend Esther so I can visit her a lot. Sometimes I go home with them and sometimes she comes home with us. And my Uncle Paul has moved to Reading now!

Thank you all for sharing your stories and your lovely chocolate cake!



Enjoying the neighbourhood

A UK Election Draws Nearer



We're not sure when but sometime in 2024 there will be a general election. And we will be asked to decide - with just our one vote ...

Whom do we want to represent us in Parliament – who will be our best local MP?

What party's politics most closely align with our own – and do we know what each party stands for?

Who will make our best prime minister - to lead our country?

What is the most important to you?

8 in 10 people are concerned about climate change (Ipsos Aug 2022) and more than half are 'very concerned'. Many of us believe it is the biggest future threat to our country and its effects are already being felt around the world. 2023 is the hottest year our world has known and we have seen devastating floods, severe weather storms, forest fires and droughts.

There are some things we *can* do to show we take climate change seriously as groups, (eg our church is hoping to put up solar panels), and as individuals (using our cars less, and eating more vegetables/less meat). If we did everything it would reduce greenhouse gases by 24%; but it is at Westminster that the biggest changes can be made.

Greenpeace, a charity which describes itself as a movement of people who are passionate about

Climate

GOOD neighbours

-What can we do?

defending the natural world from destruction, and which we've mentioned before in NEWT, is launching a campaign called 'Climate Vote'. They are looking to recruit a million climate voters before the next election who commit to prioritise climate change when they decide where to cast their vote. That campaign cannot and will not, however, tell you who to vote for! It will remain your choice.

NEWT is aiming to play its part by inviting, in forthcoming editions, each of our parliamentary candidates to explain their personal priorities and approaches on the big Climate issue.

Meanwhile, to start the debate see the panel on the opposite page for some facts and ideas, given without any particular party label.

Our contributor, Dr Rosie Croft concludes:

"Most people in the UK want the same things: lower cost of living, warmer homes, better and more affordable public transport and a strong NHS. Our vision is a greener, healthier and more peaceful planet, one that can sustain life for generations to come. A general election is coming. It's time to build a climate majority."

Climate voters pledge to vote with climate in mind, and hold politicians to account on their climate policies – now, at the election and in future.

**PROJECT
CLIMATE VOTE**

If you want to sign up for more information visit:
greenpeace.org.uk/take-action/project-climate-vote/

... about the storms, floods and fires now hitting the poorest countries ...

A vote for better climate policy in the UK could also be a vote for:

Warmer homes: Rolling out a proper scheme for home insulation could reduce bills by on average £1000 per household every year.

Lower bills: Support for homegrown renewable energy, rather than big oil and gas companies, would bring down bills for homes and businesses all over the UK.

Better health: Air pollution is killing between 28,000 and 36,000 people each year, and it's the biggest risk to public health in the UK according to the government. The UK also has the most expensive public transport in Europe. According to *Citizen's Advice*, upgrading energy efficiency in homes (to EPC C standard) would prevent 670,000 children getting asthma, and prevent 6000 winter deaths per year. Tackling cold homes would save the NHS £540 million per year.

More jobs: Acting on climate change could mean big public investments into renewable energy, insulation, and services like public transport. These would also mean more jobs! Making buildings more energy efficient alone could mean 140,000 jobs by 2030, with hundreds of thousands more up for grabs in low-carbon industries.

A stronger economy: The government has recently issued new oil and gas licences. Is this the best use of our resources and of taxpayer money? The UK has world leading offshore wind power. With support for other renewables, how might our economy flourish? Who has the cleanest and most practical plans? ...

COP28 and Climate Justice

Liz Bailey writes:

As this edition of NEWT was going to print, the UN Climate Conference, COP 28, was just getting under way. *Christian Aid* and other development agencies have a specific focus for these vital talks - 'climate justice'.

Rising temperatures bring the devastating floods, hurricanes and droughts that are destroying lives and livelihoods across the Global South, in countries that have done little to cause the problem and which lack the resources to tackle it effectively. Justice demands that richer nations like ours that are the main contributors to global warming step in to help. So *Christian Aid* is calling on the UK government to make the following 4 commitments:

- ♦ Deliver the UK's existing pledges on international Climate Action finance, predominantly through grants and without further depleting the aid budget.

(Rich nations promised in 2009 to deliver finance reaching \$100billion per year by 2020 to help poor nations change and prepare. But they have actually given less, and rather than grants have made most of it as loans to be repaid.)

- ♦ Pay into the new Loss and Damage Fund agreed at COP27, to compensate poorer countries for the loss of life and damage that climate change is already causing.

(The good news from the first day of the Conference was that several rich countries *did* commit to paying into the Loss and Damage Fund. The UK said its contribution would be £60 million; however, this is apparently not a promise of *new* money...)

- ♦ Make the UK's big polluting companies (e.g. fossil fuel companies) pay so we can properly fund the UK's Loss and Damage contributions.
- ♦ End all new UK fossil fuel projects and invest in renewable, efficient energy instead.

So, it seems we need to keep up the pressure on our government to deliver what it has already promised and to do more. At St John's we wrote letters to our MP, Matt Rodda, asking him to request the Minister for Development and Africa to commit our UK government to these four pledges.

If you would like to join us, write to Matt Rodda MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA or email him at matt.rodga.mp@parliament.uk . You can find further information on the Climate Justice campaign at

christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/campaign-climate-justice

Neighbours in Islam

- explained to NEWT by Imaam Yahia of the Aisha Masjid at Suttons roundabout.

The holy Q'ran tells us to be kind and dutiful towards others – in particular, towards parents, towards other relatives, to orphans ... and to neighbours, those both near and far.

What does that mean – 'both near and far'. Well, we can interpret that physically, as meaning those who live right close to us and those who live further away. These days, through our TV screens and on the internet, we find ourselves aware of 'neighbours' in need on the far side of the world too!

But 'near and far' also applies in a spiritual sense, to those who are 'near and far' in terms of religion. As well as caring for fellow Muslims, followers of Islam are called to show neighbourly kindness to Jews, to Christians, to Sikhs ... indeed to people of all religions.

The duty towards neighbours is very important in Islam. Your neighbour shouldn't go a day or a night feeling hungry ... and the same goes for other basic needs such as clothing and a safe place of shelter. Whenever we cook it's good to share food with neighbours – even if we need to water down our own food to make it stretch for everyone.

Neighbourly duty, however, is not just a set of expectations and tasks. Kindness is what it springs from – and that is an inner attitude, a heart that is open and that reaches out to our fellow humans and their needs. Locally we see many people suffering with various domestic problems, with mental health issues, and with loneliness. Contact from neighbours, comforting the sufferer and guiding them towards sources of professional or voluntary help and support, can make all the difference.

This picture of a neighbourhood, and indeed a world, filled with kindness, understanding and support sounds like a 'heaven on earth', and it could be so. Sadly, however, when we turn on our TV sets or when we hear the neighbourhood gossip, the stories are too often about one group of neighbours being cut off from another by prejudice, anxiety and fear.



So, perhaps it's good to close by remembering what Islam teaches about neighbourliness in the context of conflict. How should I act towards my neighbour then? Here are three important principles:

Firstly, do no harm – hurting and killing innocent people is always a crime, even in war!

Secondly, always aim to return any harm you do receive with kindness.

Thirdly, If you see your neighbours causing distress and harm then it becomes our duty to stop them, i.e. to become active peacemakers and campaigners for justice.

In Islam, neighbourliness is very close to the heart of God. So, when the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) was receiving the commands to write in the Q'ran, we hear that he became astounded as the Angel Gabriel returned with message upon message emphasising the importance of kindness towards our neighbours. So much so, that he began to wonder whether even the laws of family inheritance might one day be changed to include neighbours ... (but that hasn't happened yet).



Islamic pattern from
mcalistairhood.artweb.com

BIG artist in residence
stone sculptor

Loving Your Neighbour in Occupied Paris: *Safiyyah's War* by Hiba Noor Khan

A little-known aspect of the French Resistance during WW2 is the role played by the Grand Mosque of Paris in helping Jews to escape persecution by the Nazis. Because of fears of a Muslim uprising in North Africa, Paris's Muslim community continued to live in comparative safety during the Nazi occupation of France, but it is believed that they used this freedom to save between 500 and 1,700 Jews. This is the subject of *Safiyyah's War*, a beautiful and thrilling new children's book by Hiba Noor Khan.

Safiyyah lives with her family inside the mosque and sees the world around her changing as the Nazis invade France and occupy Paris. Both she and her father feel compelled to help those in greater need, particularly the Jews of Paris, many of whom are their friends. Her father initially resists Safiyyah's desire to get involved in his mysterious night-time activities, but eventually her curiosity gets the better of him and she too becomes a vital part of the Resistance effort.

This is a gripping and moving story which builds to a suspense-filled climax as Khan brings her detailed historical research to life. Safiyyah is a courageous and compassionate heroine who reminds us that anybody can make a difference. Although Safiyyah is a fictional character, the author's note points out that everyone living in the mosque would have played a role in its Resistance activities.

The book offers a wonderful, positive portrait of Islam, and of

faith groups more generally: the mosque is presented as outward-looking and is defined by its values, in particular caring for those in need (of any faith) as well as the importance of family and prayer. And rather than focusing on the divisions sowed by the poisonous antisemitic bigotry of the Nazi regime, Khan emphasises moments of inter-faith dialogue and understanding, for instance, when Safiyyah and her Jewish schoolfriend Hana discuss the meanings of the names Maryam and Miriam. In one of the novel's most poignant scenes, Safiyyah and her family prepare a Seder meal for the Jews who are sheltering in the mosque. Indeed, the sharing and enjoyment of food is a running theme throughout the book - no reader of this book will ever take an orange for granted after seeing the lengths to which Safiyyah goes to procure one for her grandmother!

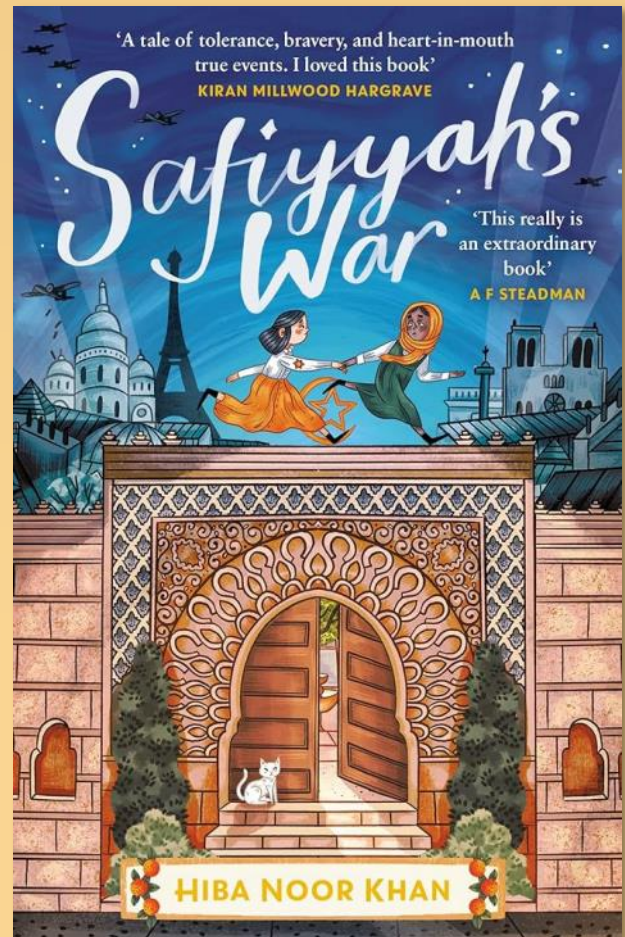
This book is aimed at children aged 9 upwards, but adults would also enjoy reading it. For those who are interested in exploring this incredible story further, there is a non-fiction picture book called *The Grand Mosque of Paris* by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix, as well as the French-language film *Les Hommes Libres*.

As Khan reminds us at the end of her author's note, both Jewish and Muslim traditions share the saying:

'For whoever saves a single life, it is as if they have saved all of humanity.'

Book Review

By Stephen Dilley:
A book for your Christmas list



*Singing can lift our spirits ...
it helps mental & physical health*



Turn over

to see opportunities ...



**Come
celebrate
Christmas
in Newtown
& St Johns village**



Church Contacts



Vicar
**Rev Claire
Alcock**



**Sunday worship 10:30 am
- everyone welcome**



Parish Centre
Administrator
Jo Laynesmith



Churchwardens
**Ian Maynard
& Sue Bruce**



Assoc. Priest
**Christine
Bainbridge**

please phone the Parish Office 0118 926 3633
or email: office@stjohnandststephen.org.uk

Thurs 14th
December

12noon-2pm Reading inter-faith **CHRISTMAS LUNCH** at the
Pakistan Community Centre, London Rd/Palmer Park
everyone welcome.

Sun 17th
December

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

10:30 am Holy Communion **St John & St Stephen's church**
6 pm Carols by Candlelight **St John & St Stephen's church**
3 pm & 6 pm International Carols **Wycliffe Church**
Wesley Church 10.30am Carol service.
2.30 pm Walking Nativity starting from **Wesley Church**

Tues 19th
December

Community Christmas carol-singing : 6pm at Huntley Wharf
and 7pm at the Fisherman's Cottage - details on page 7

CHRISTMAS EVE

10:30 am Christingle service **St John & St Stephen's church**
10:45 am Christingle service **Wycliffe Church**
Wesley Church Junior Church carols at 10.30.
Evening communion at 6.30

Sun 24th
December

11 pm Midnight Communion **St John & St Stephen's church**
11 pm Midnight service **Wycliffe Church**

Mon 25th
December

CHRISTMAS DAY

10 am Family service **Wesley Church**
10:30 am Holy Communion **St John & St Stephen's church**
10:45 am Christmas service **Wycliffe Church**

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