

Salford Methodist Circuit



God Unmasked Himself  
and became human



Circuit Magazine

Edition 5 - Advent 2020

## **Advent Is a time of...**

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. *Isaiah 9: 2*

This will be a Christmas like no other Christmas we have ever experienced. How it will all work out in practical terms is yet to be clear. But just like any other year it will be preceded by Advent. Advent is a time of preparation, but I'm sure for most of us, it's usually one of the busiest times of the year, with so many things to cram in. It's a time full of events and expectations, routines we've been through year after year. We push ourselves to get everything done in time. Then when we reach Christmas itself we are utterly exhausted and ready for some real relaxation.

But Advent is a season of great importance, not just a time to get all our Christmas preparations in place. Here are a few thoughts on my mind, as we approach Advent 2020.

### **Advent is a time of Expectation.**

The word “expecting” immediately takes our thought to expectation of a new baby. We’ve had one of those in our family in the last few weeks. The months leading up to the birth were about buying the paraphernalia and preparing the house, thinking about how the arrival of new baby was going to change his parents’ lives, and a building of excitement. And in this year of Covid-19, it was also about how the new baby would be introduced to the various important people in his life.

Clearly, Advent is also about the expectation of the arrival of a new baby. The baby we expect came 2020 years ago, give or take. We don’t have the responsibility of buying cots and prams and changing mats and endless supplies of nappies, wet wipes, sterilisers, bottles and the rest. Nor, for that matter, did his expectant parents because they had other things on their mind. There were no antenatal classes, no books to read, no videos to watch, no internet to book accommodation ahead, and no maternity ward or midwife on stand-by. In fact the parents of this expected baby had none of the things that expectation brings in this century. But no doubt their months of expectation were filled with excitement and anticipation, a certain amount of anxiety, and some preparation too. Of course there was an added dimension to the expectation of this child, because both parents had encountered angels and received promises about their child to be born. In this expected birth, like no other, God was directly and uniquely involved.

So what expectations do we have for Advent this year? We can expect things to be very different, disappointingly different for most of us, I’m sure. But the birth we celebrate each year is full of expectation for us all, because for all of us it carries with it the promise of God coming into this world and becoming part of it. And the God we worship offers us this coming every year: every Advent, every Christmas, every single day. What can we do to prepare for the child that came long ago, who is our God, and who is with us still, not just as an endless cycle of expectancy and babyhood, but the living Christ in our midst? Let Advent be a time when you set aside some time to recognise that God is with you, some time when you invite his presence to become more real for you, and a time when you expect the touch of his hope and peace, through the turmoil of this year’s strangeness and disappointment.

## Advent is a time of Waiting

I am waiting. Just waiting and waiting.  
I'm waiting for my Zoom meeting to start.  
When will the host let me in?  
Can't they see that I'm waiting!

I am waiting. Just waiting and waiting.  
I'm waiting for the postman to arrive.  
They always used to come at the same time each day.  
But now they don't even come every day.  
And I'm waiting for a letter. When will it come?

I am waiting. Just waiting and waiting.  
I've spent so much time in the garden,  
weeding and pruning, and filling my garden waste bin, to overflowing.  
And there is so much more to do.  
So I'm waiting for the bin men. When will they come?

I am waiting. Just waiting and waiting.  
I feel so alone, and I'm waiting and waiting for someone to call me.  
Why doesn't anybody care about how it feels to be alone?  
How long must I wait to be on someone's mind?

I am waiting. Just waiting and waiting.  
Just waiting for my church to reopen.  
Why doesn't anyone get on with it? It can't be that hard.  
I just want to get back to my normal routines.

I am waiting. Just waiting and waiting.  
Waiting to feel well again. I contracted Covid-19 in April.  
I spent six weeks in hospital, and then months at home, waiting to feel well again.  
I'm glad to be alive, don't get me wrong, but how much longer must I wait?

I am waiting. Just waiting and waiting.  
He's got to come soon. My name is Simeon.  
I've been waiting all my life, to see the Messiah,  
because God promised me in a dream that I would.  
I'm now 86. And I'm still waiting, still expecting, still hoping.  
I know it. He comes soon. Please God let it be soon. It's hard, all this waiting.

I am waiting. Just waiting and waiting.  
It's got to come soon.  
I am a nation who has waited and waited through long centuries.  
Because my God has made many, many promises:-  
Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.  
You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, out of you will come one who will be ruler over Israel.  
A Virgin shall conceive and bear a son.  
The people walking darkness have seen a great light  
Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.  
How much longer must I wait?

*One day, one moment in time, all the waiting was done,  
And God slipped in,  
Into this world and made his home among us.  
The time of waiting was over.  
The new world had begun.  
It's still here!  
So what are we waiting for?*

### **Advent is a time of Hoping**

Expectation is about something happening soon.



Waiting is about peering into an unknown future, wondering when the expected time will come. So what is hope? We hope for what we expect, and we wait for it to happen. But the hope of Advent is more than expecting and waiting. Because it's a hope that is real, here and now. We have hope now, because this time of year we are preparing to celebrate an event that happened long ago. It did actually happen.

This is not some vague hope for the future - it's a hope for now. We have hope because it happened. We have hope not in an ancient as yet unborn baby, but in a living Lord, who began as a baby, lived this life, died a death, and returned with the promise of eternity. We have hope for today, as we had hope for yesterday. And we have hope for tomorrow, and our every tomorrow, because God came in long ago and never left.

We have hope that holds strong through the expecting and the waiting, through the disappointment and the fear, through the hurting and struggling, through the sadness of 2020. We have hope now and hope forever!

### **Advent is a time of Prayer**

Loving God who came to us as a living child long ago, and who is living with us still, by the power of your Spirit:

We pray for those for whom Advent and Christmas will be full of disappointment, because it won't live up to their usual expectations.

We pray for those who live in fear of what each day might bring.

We pray for those for whom loneliness will gradually intensify as they live through the days of Advent.

We pray for those who despair for this world, and live in longing for God to come again.

We pray for those who won't have enough to either eat or drink this year.

We pray for those who long for a roof over their heads and a secure future.

We pray for those who are filled with sadness throughout this season, because of those they have lost.

We pray for ourselves. Fulfil all our expectations, sustain us through this time of waiting, and be our hope for now, for tomorrow through Advent and Christmas, and for ever. Amen.

## Journeying Through Advent

One of the terms that we often use when we are beginning our time of Advent in the Christian Calendar is ‘As we journey through Advent’. This year is no different. If we want to reach a destination then we need to have a time of preparation, as Clare has said, and everyone has their own way of preparation depending on where they are going, whether it is a physical journey from one geographical area to another. It can also be that you are putting a lot of thought into something else. Preparing to set out on a new career, writing a lecture to be presented to students at school, college, university, preparing for a celebration such as a special birthday and, yes, even Christmas. Mentally it can be physically draining and often we don’t actually enjoy the moment when all our plans have come to fruition. When we arrive at the end destination after travelling a long way. When the lecture/presentation is over. When everyone is sat around a table whether a few people or a larger number of people. The person who has prepared the meal may not enjoy the actual meal even although others are full of compliments. The person having presented their lecture may feel glad that it is over. The person who has organised the journey from A to B may need to have a brew and a lie down before regaining their energy.

Preparing for something can be a sacrificial act of giving to others. We need to think about those who are on the receiving end of what we are preparing to share with them or to give to them.

After all of the preparation in the world as we set off on our journey, we can never be certain what the end will look like. Any journey may lead us down some difficult roads, even ones that we didn’t particularly like or maybe even want to go down, there will have been some that maybe we found boring and others we didn’t want to end. Our journey will continue as we follow the Advent period looking to celebrate the arrival of Christ coming into the world. Are we ready to enter into this period of Advent together?



I am, and I look forward to sharing Advent with you as we together look forward with hope and with joy to the love of Christ entering into our dark world with His light. God prepared for that moment and we are invited to follow Christ not by anyone else but God alone. God alone who knows who we are, all that we have done or experienced in life and has interwoven each of us with Christ. As we ‘journey through’ Advent 2020, and celebrate the birth of Christ, we can be reassured that not only during Advent and Christmas; we journey with God each day. This we need to believe perhaps even more than ever today. It is our faith that gives us the strength knowing that God remains with us. If we have one thing to remember in our preparations this year, it is to let God travel with you, physically, mentally and spiritually. John said in his gospel, “The true light that gives light to every person was coming into the world” (John 1 : 9). Let the ‘true light’ shine for us, lighting up our journey through Advent together. God’s blessings be with you.

Rev Kim Ratcliffe

## **Worship & Prayer during Advent and Christmas**

Like everything this year, Advent and Christmas will look slightly different in 2020.

Throughout Advent and into the new year, we will continue to **worship online** on our YouTube channel. You can watch along when it goes 'live' at 10am and the videos remain up afterwards, so you can catch up at any time and share them with friends and family. We will also have a **Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services** on YouTube, keep an eye on our website and social media for details of these.

To find the details of the Sunday Worship, visit [www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/worship](http://www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/worship), where you can also find a full transcript of the service for those who can't access the videos.

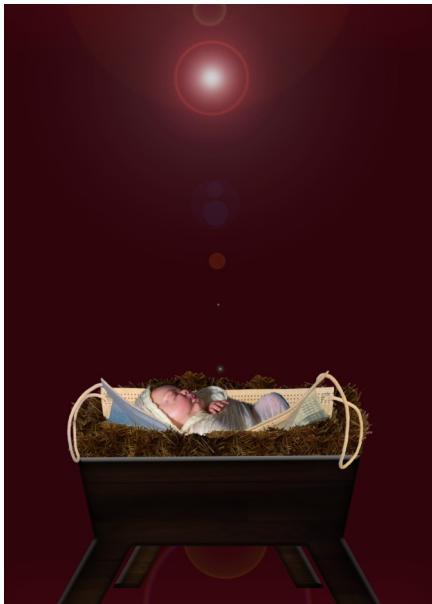
We can also provide the weekly **service video on DVD** for those unable to access it online. They are posted out the Friday before. If you would like one, please contact Matt Collins with your address. The services on the 20th, 24th, 25th and 27th will all be on one DVD and last orders for this will need to be with Matt by 17th December.

We also have a weekly **Prayer meeting** on Zoom every Tuesday at 7pm. Details of how to join are emailed out each week; sign up for our Circuit emails at [www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/mailing-signup](http://www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/mailing-signup).

If you don't have access to Zoom, you can call into the Prayer meeting from any landline or mobile phone. For the details of how to do this, contact Matt Collins or Rev Clare Stainsby.

The Methodist Church in Britain also offers a free 'Dial-a-Prayer' service, allowing you to hear a recorded prayer by calling **0808 281 2514**.

### **'God Unmasked Himself' Poster**



Our theme for Advent and Christmas this year is '**God unmasked Himself and became human**' as Advent is the time we await God being revealed in human form as a baby.

If you have received a printed copy of this magazine, you also should have received a poster. If you received this via email, there is a PDF of the poster attached, which you can print yourself, but we also have spare printed posters - if you'd like one contact Rev Clare Stainsby.

It would be great if you were able to put the poster up in your window, so we can share the good news of Christmas with those around us.

## Harvest Appeal

Thank you to everyone who supported our Harvest Appeal, supporting All We Can's 'Change starts with a Bicycle' campaign and the Irlam & Cadishead Foodbank.

The Circuit sent £210 to All We Can and 125kg of food and other items to the Foodbank, and we know that many will have also given directly to both charities.

At this difficult time, these donations will help to make life that bit easier for some of the poorest and vulnerable both in our community and around the world.



## Stationing Update

I am delighted to tell you all that we have been successfully matched with a new Superintendent minister when Clare and Kim leave us next summer.

Because of the pandemic lockdown we were unable to arrange a physical visit to the Circuit as we would normally have done. Instead we have conducted a series of Zoom meetings including one with a steward from each church. Following these meetings and very positive feedback the Circuit Invitation Committee had no hesitation in offering an invitation which has been accepted.

So our new Superintendent will be **Rev John Palmer**, currently Superintendent in the North Staffordshire Circuit, where he has been for 13 years. We were able to meet via Zoom both John and his wife Sharon. They are excited to be joining us and those of us involved in the decision making process feel likewise.

**Carole Burgess on behalf of the Invitation Committee**

**Rev Clare Stainsby** has also been successfully matched, and will be moving in the summer to become the Superintendent Minister of the Airedale Circuit in West Yorkshire. We know she will be a real blessing to them.

As many of you know, **Rev Kim Ratcliffe** will be retiring next year and will remain living in the Salford Circuit.

We pray for John, Clare and Kim as they prepare for the next steps on their journey in ministry.

# Christmas Appeal 2020

WOOD  
STREET  
MISSION



## Help save Christmas for thousands of local children

Help struggling  
families by  
donating new  
toys and gifts  
for children this  
Christmas



Call 0161 834 3140  
Visit us at 26 Wood Street, Manchester, M3 3EF  
[www.woodstreetmission.org.uk/christmas](http://www.woodstreetmission.org.uk/christmas)

# Every child deserves to have a special Christmas



This year it is more important than ever to support struggling families and help children across Manchester and Salford have a happy Christmas.

But we need your help! Here's how:



**Donate new toys, gifts or books, unwrapped** and suitable for children aged 0-14 years old. Visit our [website](#) for ideas and links to our Amazon Wish Lists, where you can choose a donation to be delivered directly to us. Chocolate and selection boxes are also much appreciated!

**Give to our Appeal securely online**

at [www.woodstreetmission.org.uk/donate](http://www.woodstreetmission.org.uk/donate) or create a fundraising page for your work, school or group on [JustGiving](#)

Spread the word – by sharing our Appeal online using  
**#WoodStreetXmas**

We will be accepting Christmas donations from now until Friday 11th December. Please try to get yours to us as early as you can, to enable us to help as many families as possible.

You can drop gifts off with us Monday-Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm at either:

- ★ Great Northern Community Room on Deansgate Mews (call 07895 375730 for directions), or
- ★ Wood Street Mission, 26 Wood Street, M3 3EF.
- ★ Jennie Smith is willing to be a collection point for the Salford Circuit. Donations will need to be with her by 9th Dec.



Thank you to Great Northern for their support



**Thank you so much for your support!**

## Nativity Sudoku

In the way that you use numbers 1–9 in a traditional Sudoku, use the letters of the words in read to fill in each grid below. Each row, column and 3x2 rectangle contains the each of the letters only once.

T	V		N
D		N E	
			V
	D N		
E			

ADVENT

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	B		A
			T S

STABLE



MANGER

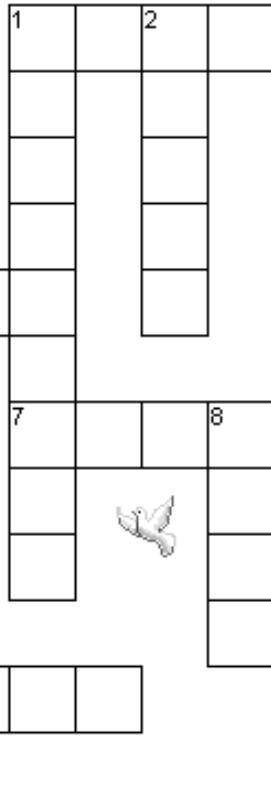
JOSEPH

		E		
			N R M	
	N			
G		A		
	R			
M		E		

H			O
S	J		
	J		E P
		E O	J

**Birth of Christ****DOWN**

- Who were tending their flocks by night
- Who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds
- The wise men bowed down to Jesus to \_\_\_\_\_ him
- Jesus was born in this town
- "The \_\_\_\_\_ of peace" - one of the titles of Jesus
- mother of Jesus
- Jesus was born in a \_\_\_\_\_
- The shepherds were in the \_\_\_\_\_ when they saw an angel

**ACROSS**

- The wise men followed a \_\_\_\_\_ that led them to Jesus
- human father of Jesus
- There was no \_\_\_\_\_ at the inn for Jesus
- one of the gifts of the three wise men
- Jesus could not stay at the \_\_\_\_\_ because it was full
- and on earth \_\_\_\_\_, goodwill toward men (Luke 2:14)

More puzzles at <http://biblewordgames.com>

Answers on the last page

# Reset The Debt: A Campaign from the Joint Public Issues Team



An estimated six million people in the UK have fallen behind on one or more household bill as a result of Covid-19, with the biggest increases in debt amongst the poorest households.

People who were previously able to keep their head above water are now in severe difficulty. Others, who had been just staying afloat, now face being overwhelmed by circumstances entirely beyond their control.

This is an urgent problem that demands a solution. It is not right that those with the fewest resources should bear the heaviest burden of the lockdown, potentially for years to come.

The Methodist Church, with others, believe people swept into debt by Covid-19 now need a Jubilee. It's time to Reset The Debt.

The Reset The Debt campaign is proposing that the Chancellor creates a Jubilee Fund. This would provide grants to pay off and cancel unavoidable debt accrued by households during the lockdown period, giving them a more stable platform from which to face the future.

## Leonie's Story

Before lockdown, Leonie was working with an agency doing shift work. But when lockdown hit, the company where she had worked for several years stopped taking on agency workers. She has fallen behind with rent, council tax and water bills.

"I'm not entitled to benefits, as I have no recourse to public funds. I have had no help from the government. I feel forgotten. I have to buy top up cards [for gas and electricity], but I am now borrowing money from friends to pay for these and will pay them back when I am able to. I find it difficult to talk to the utility company to explain my problem, but I would be happy to if I felt it made a difference. I can't pay all the bills each month, so they are carried over to the next month."

"Every day, I get letters asking for repayment and I get more stressed. The housing agency calls me to tell me I haven't paid – I have to say 'maybe next month'. Rent is my first priority to pay off and I have to decide which bills to pay off next. But I pay back what I can.

"If the debt was taken away, it would make a huge difference. I wouldn't get depressed. I would stop feeling mentally unsettled."

## What you can do

Visit [www.resetthedebt.uk](http://www.resetthedebt.uk) where you can read the full report, hear more stories of lived experience of debt, and find prayers, small group resources and ways to contact your MP.

## Tribute to Manchester Road

After Manchester Road Methodist Church ceased to meet in Spring 2019, worship continued on the site as the King's Church meet regularly. After four years, the time has come for them to move on and for the building to be sold, but in the process of leaving Russ Bennett of King's Church felt moved to write a tribute to the church. It is set to the tune of Candle in the Wind by Elton John.

"Bye 'Manchester Road';  
Though we barely knew you at all.  
You were the place we grew as one;  
Within your vaulted hall.  
  
Your witness touched three centuries;  
Standing firm through war and peace.  
A building for God's people;  
And a blessing to these streets.

And it seems to me  
You were much more  
Than a house -  
You were a home.  
We thank you for the memories,  
But we have to go.  
And though we'll no longer meet here,  
God's promise shall remain;  
This town will soon resound again -  
With praise of Jesus' name."

Russ Bennett



## A Masking Prayer

Lord, as I put on my mask, let it be a filter  
For my words to pass through as well as my breathing.  
Let through only the words which are helpful breathings of love  
And stop those things in my speech that will be harmful to others  
Protect me also, O Lord, from the harmful things others may say to me.

Help me to realise that we may be a carrier of bitterness,  
Thoughtlessness, judgement and prejudice without realising  
And that some people are more word-vulnerable than others.

Give me the grace to love those who cannot, or will not, filter to protect others.  
Help me to be prepared to adapt and be brave and transparent  
So that all may have a chance to hear.

Lord, be a mask to my mouth  
And pin our ears forward for listening.  
Amen

Rev Caroline Beckett, submitted by Molly Cooper

## **Can't Wait**

'What does Advent mean?'  
the minister asked the children in church.  
'Can't Wait', a little girl answered.  
God of promise,  
this is the time of 'Can't Wait'.

In the groaning of creation,  
in floods and rainbows,  
we long to know your promise.  
This is the time of 'Can't Wait'.

In the love and the challenging  
of the people we meet,  
we long to hear your good news.  
This is the time of 'Can't Wait'.

In the loneliness and hatred,  
In the darkness of this world,  
we long to see your light.  
This is the time of 'Can't Wait'.

In the depth of our being,  
in the forgotten corners of our heart,  
we long to feel your presence.  
God of promise and truth,  
in this time of 'Can't Wait'  
we are still  
and wait -----

Use this moment of silence  
to prepare our hearts.  
Use this moment of silence  
to make us wakeful,  
that we might recognise the signs  
of your coming and know you.

**Jennie Smith**

## **God of the Streets**

God of the streets,  
of our own street,  
of every street:  
comforting us in the pain that living  
brings,  
celebrating with us our times of joy and  
exhilaration,  
confronting us in our confusion and in our  
certainty.

God of the streets,  
of our own street,  
of every street,  
walk with us through this Advent time,  
in every street,  
in every town. Amen

**James Curry**

## **God of the Streets**

God of the years,  
come and meet us  
through the rituals  
of our preparations  
for the feast of Jesus' birth.

Help us to pass on,  
through chopped fruit and sticky fingers,  
the story of your love and sweetness  
in the living of our lives. Amen

**Ruth Burgess**

## **The Next Edition of the Circuit Magazine**

The next edition of the Circuit Magazine will be published in February, and we are always looking for items to include. It could be a prayer, a poem, a photo, a story, or news about an organisation or project you are involved with.

Please send any items for consideration to Clare or Me, our contact details are on the back page. Please include details of where you got it from. Thank you!

**Matt Collins**

# Methodist Prayer Handbook

Would you like to write a prayer for the Methodist Prayer Handbook 2021/2022?

The Methodist Prayer Handbook includes prayers for our sisters and brothers both at home and in the Global church, each day of the month.

The theme for the Methodist Prayer Handbook 2021/2022 is 'a place for all'.

## A Place for All

No one was excluded from Jesus' table and eating with him was a sign of the kingdom of heaven and an invitation to meet God and to be transformed. We recognise that we do not always offer such generous welcome or listen to the voices on the margins.

As the Church strives to be God's people in a world changed by a global pandemic, we invite prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, penitence and resolve that, with God's help, we may recognise and repent of our exclusivity, and that then we may be reconciling, open to all and ready to listen to all voices equally. Together, we pray to become a more inclusive and diverse Church, creating communities of greater respect and compassion.

In addition to prayers on the theme of the Handbook, they would welcome prayers of thanksgiving, adoration and confession and prayers on the themes of justice, times of life and times of day and the comforting presence of God for the opening pages of the Handbook.

Prayers must be **no longer than 120 words**.

Please also email **photographs** that will help to bring our theme to life. Photographs with people in are particularly welcome. Photographs should be sent in their original size. Please provide a caption and state where the photograph was taken.

The deadline for submission of prayers and photos is **11th January 2021**.

For how to submit prayers and photos, and the full submission guidelines, visit [www.methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook](http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook)

## Puzzle Answers

Across	1 Star	2 Angel	3 Worship	4 Bethlehem	5 Joseph	6 Myrrh	7 Room	8 Fine	9 Manager	10 Field
Down	1 Shepherds	2 Anngel	3 Worshiip	4 Bethelehem	5 Joseph	6 Myrrh	7 Room	8 Fine	9 Manager	10 Field
	T A V E D N	V D N A T N E	E T N D A V	E G R M N A	M A N R E	G R E M M	N M A G E	N D A V	N E T A	T E A S
	R N M E A G	A E G T A	D N E V T	E D N E T	M E A N	G R E	N R M	A M	D A V	E D S
	R N M E A G	A E G T A	D N E V T	E D N E T	M E A N	G R E	N R M	A M	D A V	E D S
	T A V E D N	V D N A T N E	E T N D A V	E G R M N A	M A N R E	G R E M M	N M A G E	N D A V	N E T A	T E A S
	R N M E A G	A E G T A	D N E V T	E D N E T	M E A N	G R E	N R M	A M	D A V	E D S
	T A V E D N	V D N A T N E	E T N D A V	E G R M N A	M A N R E	G R E M M	N M A G E	N D A V	N E T A	T E A S
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	T A V E D N	V D N A T N E	E T N D A V	E G R M N A	M A N R E	G R E M M	N M A G E	N D A V	N E T A	T E A S



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Cover & Page 6: Image: God Unmasked - Abby Watterson

Page 4 Photo: Seedling - Clare Stainsby

Page 5 Photo: Compass - Chris Lawton on Unsplash

Page 11 Wordsearch: [www.biblewordgames.com](http://www.biblewordgames.com)

Page 13 Photo: Manchester Road - Matt Collins