

Dear Friends

This month we say goodbye to one of our church members, Jane Rowley, as she moves home to be nearer family. Jane is very much part and parcel of church life but her main roles have been as a faithful and much appreciated Pastoral Visitor, the manager of the Traidcraft stall and one of the small group of people who keep the gardens and flower beds at the church in such good order. We will miss Jane and hope that she soon feels at home in her new setting.

Recently those who run church Traidcraft stalls received a letter to say that the company is likely to cease trading at the end of the year. Traidcraft, a Gateshead-based company has been trading since 1979 and has been the nation's trailblazer in fair trade. The company employs 68 people and generates £10m each year. Over their 40 years of trading they have helped turn around the lives of millions of subsistence farmers and craftsmen by giving them a fair price for their products enabling them to break out of poverty.

In commenting on the reasons for Traidcraft's closure their Chief Executive, Robin Roth, said "We are the sort of business that pays up front – that's in our nature as an ethical business. So when the pound fell after the Brexit referendum, we took a hit. We also stand by our published prices, so unlike other retailers we stood by our customers, absorbed a lot of the additional cost, and kept price rises to a minimum."

The company has called out to the mainstream Churches leaders to see if a rescue plan can be put in place during October. Hopefully something will come of their discussions.

I think it not only admirable the work that Traidcraft have done over the years but that even under tremendous pressure they have adhered to their Christian business ethics. There are many companies that run way beyond the time when they should have stopped trading leaving their debts to be carried by customers and suppliers. We hear a repeated story of employees learning of the closure of a business on the same day as they are laid off. Traidcraft have acted differently from what seems to be common practice by choosing to act justly towards all parties.

This year we are having a Narnia theme to Advent and Christmas. The Chronicles of Narnia is a series of seven fantasy novels by C. S. Lewis. Many have seen deeply Christian themes running through the novels. We will focus particularly on the first book 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.' in which four children stumble into the hidden world of Narnia which has been in the icy grip of the wicked White Witch for 100 years. She believes she has the victory over the Christ-like figure Aslan who is prepared to lay down his life for the creatures of Narnia. The children join the good forces of Aslan and..... well you'll have to read the book or watch the film to find out what happens next.

There will be a Narnia grotto at the Bazaar on 24 November. The theme will be extended at the Christmas Festival on 30 November and 1st December with prayer and contemplation stations in the church. These will focus on the Advent themes that are found in the story. On Friday 30 November there will be a Narnia styled Pasta Tea for young people from 4-6pm. Hope you will travel with us through Narnia this Advent as you prepare for Christmas.



Every blessing

Audrey