



**Ramsden Bellhouse
Baptist Church**

**Welcome to the
Winter Review 23/24**



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A FEW WORDS FROM YOUR EDITOR – TED ROOK

Welcome to the Winter 2023/24 edition of the RBBC magazine. It is difficult to believe it is winter and of course the Christmas season is almost upon us. So may I start by wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

It is with both sadness and grateful thanks that we note the forthcoming retirement of our minister Jim Hamilton (and Pauline his wife) on the 31st January 2024 (for details see Jim’s comments in his article on pages 4 to 6). Jim and Pauline have been with us for over ten years and have been wonderful assets to RBBC in its ministry in Ramsden Bellhouse and the surrounding area. We shall sorely miss them and wish them the very best in their forthcoming retirement.

During the autumn 2023 period our RBBC combined church and **Zoom** on-line Sunday services have continued to be ably led by our minister Jim Hamilton, with additional preaching support given by our deacons Jenny Jacques and Daren Codd, and again by our friend Jane Wyndham.

Jim continued with his series entitled “**The Greatest Sermon**”, the final part in this series now scheduled for 3 December 2023.

My thanks, as always, to all who have contributed directly to this magazine. Once again it is great to have an article from Ray Bolton’s series ‘REFLECTIONS’, written some years ago and submitted by his daughter Margaret.

This magazine is, as before, being sent to members of our fellowship in electronic formats for reading or printing as preferred. Anyone wishing to have a hard copy of the magazine can of course take one from the table at the entrance to our church building. The previous three editions of our magazine are available on the Ramsden Bellhouse Baptist Church website.

Again, may I wish everyone very **Happy Christmas** and great **New Year**.

Ted Rook

FROM OUR PASTOR – REV JAMES HAMILTON

Dear Friends,

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under Heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3 verse 1

I’m a great believer in seasons, not just the seasons of Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring, but other seasons in life. I always look forward to the new football season resuming and, when the weather improves, to a new season for playing golf. In spite of being Scottish, I also quite like the start of the new cricket season! Of course soon we will be entering the Season of Advent when we look forward to the celebration of Christmas again (more of that later).

Every season has a beginning and an end, and as I look back on my seventy-seven years I think of special seasons in my own life. There was the season of study, from schooldays through university and theological college, the season of marriage, parenthood and grandparenthood that continues, and of course the seasons of my three pastorates as a minister in Scotland, Shoeburyness and now Ramsden Bellhouse. Each of the first two seasons had a beginning and end and in each of them I knew when it was time for that season to come to an end. My season with you all at Ramsden Bellhouse began unexpectedly just over ten years ago and it has been very different from the first two but equally joyous and fulfilling with many wonderful memories. I am sure, however, that this season is now coming to an end, and so the 28th of January will be my last Sunday with you, and this will be my last article in our church magazine.

In so many ways the end of the season will be sad as I have enjoyed every minute of being your pastor, but Pauline and I are sure that this is the right time for us, and also for the church to seek someone new to take over the reins. We will be praying that a new minister can be appointed soon and that the mission and witness of the church in the village and beyond can develop and prosper.

I want to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to so many of you for making our time at Ramsden Bellhouse so special. Your support, encouragement and willingness to try new things, adopt new ideas and

step out in faith have constantly inspired Pauline and me and made the round trip from Shoeburyness a constant pleasure for us. There are of course some regrets, I would love to have seen the church grow more, I wish we could have had more baptismal services, it would have been lovely to have been able to start a work for children and young people, and we have been so sorry that we have not been able to live in the village and identify more with the people who live here. The joys and blessings have outweighed all these things for us however, and we are so grateful that God has given us this wonderful season before allowing us to have a “Full” retirement. Thank you to all of you who have joined us and played a part in this special season, please support the leaders as they seek a new pastor and especially, please continue to attend, support and commit to this very special church made up of very special people. No-one is irreplaceable and remember that with God, when one season ends, another always begins.

Before my season ends with you we will be celebrating another Christmas season together. It is always a special season. This year we will be having our usual Carols by Candlelight service on the 17th of December at 4pm and again we will be joined by the choir from Downham School as well as our own “Little Drummer Boy” Mikey taking part. The service also includes our usual collection of toys (new) and tins for distribution to families and others in need, so we hope you will join us. There will be seasonal refreshments as usual after the service. There won’t be a service on Christmas Day which is on a Monday but there will be a service on Christmas Eve at 10.30am as usual. Christmas is always so special for us as Christians when we celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world as a tiny, vulnerable baby to an ordinary family to bring hope and peace to those who commit their lives to Him. As I write this, the war in Ukraine continues and the terrible events in Israel and Gaza still dominate every newscast. It is ironic that it is to the very heart of this place of conflict that Jesus came. In John’s Gospel chapter 1 Jesus is described like this, **“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.”** A little later John adds that **“He came to his own, but they did not receive Him.”** If only they had received Him!

As we celebrate this Christmas season at the end of my season with you, there are two things that I am praying for. The first is that you will truly receive Jesus this Christmas, either for the first time or in a new and fresh

way. John tells us that if we do, we have the right to be included in God's own family. Isn't that wonderful? My second prayer is that whatever terrible things are happening in our world, and even here at home in our country and community, you will experience peace that can only come through faith in Jesus who is "The Prince of Peace."

Whatever season you are in in your life, may this Christmas season be one of the best ever because Jesus will be at the very heart of it.

Blessings and thanks for everything,

Jim

'THE RUNAWAY' Rev Raymond Bolton

One day in 1950 or 1951 a sixteen-year-old girl knocked on the door of the manse and said she had run away from home. I knew Betty (not her real name) as she was the only member of her family who came to church. Plainly we could not turn her away, so we invited her in. She showed no sign of physical injury and the only reason for her decision that I can remember was that she slept in her parents' bed. Nowadays that would inevitably lead to suggestions of sexual abuse, but she never mentioned that, and, in those more innocent days, it wouldn't have occurred to us.

In case she had been reported as a missing person I phoned the local police station, but they were not interested. As Betty was above school age she could live wherever she liked, and she had a job working in the local laundry. No-one thought about health and safety, or child protection, then. But what were we to do, as we couldn't take her into our home? I consulted several people in the church and found an answer unexpectedly quickly.

One of our church members was a widow of about sixty who had no family of her own. She lived in a small cottage and was not in very good health, but she offered to accommodate Betty for whatever the girl could pay from her wages. I suppose that she had a need for companionship, and it certainly answered our problem.

By the time we moved on to our next church, Betty had restored relationships with her family, but she continued to live with the widow. Because of the disparity in their ages, the older woman must have died at some point. Did she leave her property to Betty? Did Betty ever get married and have her own family? I have no idea, but some years later the area was redeveloped, and the cottages are no longer there. If she is still alive, Betty would be an old lady herself now. I wonder if she ever tells anyone of the day she turned up on our door step?

HARVEST SERVICE 24TH SEPTEMBER 2023 Jenny Jacques

Our harvest service this year focused on the bounty of God reflected at harvest time. Our minister Jim's sermon talked about how we are the harvest and that we can be fruitful in reaching out to others with God's wonderful love and compassion.

As always, the church was beautifully decorated with produce that was later sent to St Luke's Hospice and Billericay FoodBank, in both cases very well received.

Each year at harvest time we also support a Christian charity with our monetary giving. This year we helped BMS World Mission, formerly known as the Baptist Missionary Society, with their appeal for the farmers of Uganda who have suffered failed harvests for many years. Support is needed to educate users of the land in the use of products and methods and in the provision of tools. We



raised £540, which BMS will use to enable poorer communities to grow their own crops and become self-sufficient.

We had a special treat during the service when we welcomed Mikey to play the drums alongside Jim on guitar and David on the keyboard for one of the songs. This was greeted with an enthusiastic round of applause. In fact, so good was the performance that we had an encore at the end of the service!

The photograph on the previous page, used with permission, shows them practicing before the service, and some of the donated harvest produce which filled the platform by the end of the service.

BILLERICAY FOODBANK - Christmas ... it's in the bag!

The work of the Billericay FoodBank continues, and we at RBBC are delighted to be able to support this much needed local community resource week by week.

With Christmas fast approaching they are asking particularly for items that can help bring some extra joy and love to our community.



These items include iced Christmas cake, Yule log, mince pies, Christmas biscuits, cheese crackers, nuts or savouries, tin or box of chocolates, Christmas pudding and custard, tinned fruit, tinned ham and salmon, tinned vegetables and potatoes, non-alcoholic drink, cat and dog treats, and Christmas 'bags for life' to hold the goodies.

You can find a list of items currently needed by the FoodBank at www.billericayfoodbank.org.uk or via Facebook.

FOR OUR YOUNGER READERS

The Big Bash!



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

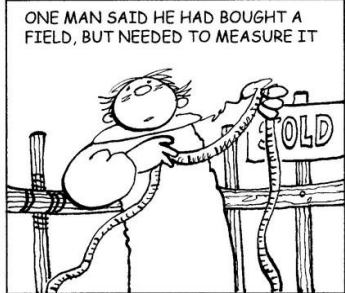


HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS

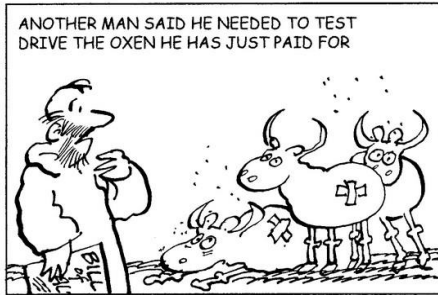


OH! NO!!

BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES



ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!



SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.



THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.

STREET PASTORS & RAIL PASTORS UPDATE

Val Rook - Street and Rail Pastor

It is great to report that on 5th November this year Billericay Street Pastors completed their first ten years of operations in Billericay. This was celebrated by a Service of Thanksgiving held at Queens Park Community Church. It was extremely well attended; both by Billericay Street Pastors and local dignitaries from the Borough and local councils, police, and church groups. During the celebration a Street Pastor commissioning ceremony was held to welcome a new member to the Street Pastor group, a young girl who was also celebrating her recent eighteenth birthday.



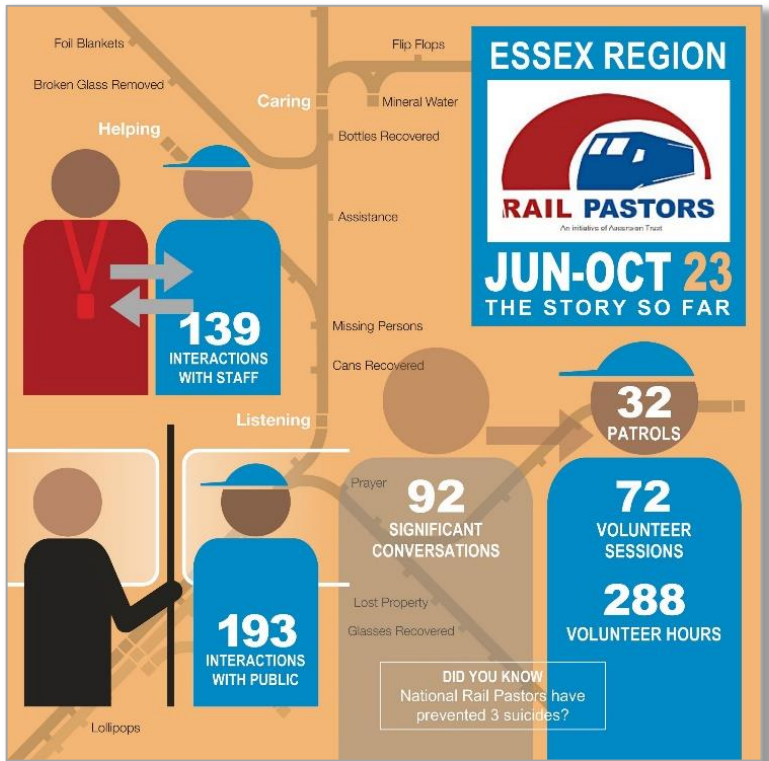
The **Street Pastor** Info-graph above (January to October 2023 operations) demonstrates the activity level and involvement with our local

community in Billericay and the various areas of community support currently given by the Billericay Street Pastors over the year to date.

A similar info-graph for the associated **Rail Pastors** (see below), shows the work and activities of this group since it recommenced operations in June of this year.



Their work is very specifically designed to provide mental and spiritual support, as well as suicide prevention specialisation, to those working on and using the local railway network.

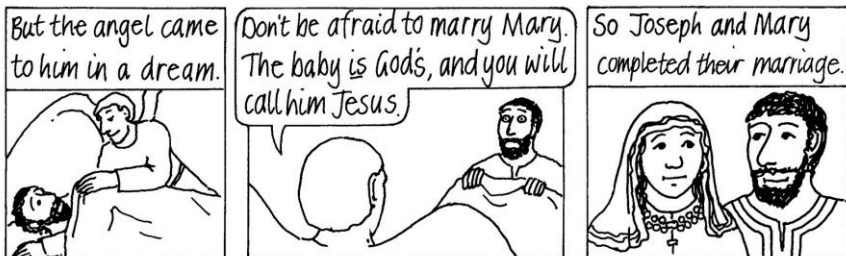


Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke 1: 26-56 & Matthew 1: 18-25

In Israel, about 2000 years ago, a young woman, Mary, was going to marry Joseph. The weddings were in two stages.



SATURDAY BREAKFAST

It has been our privilege to welcome you to our Drop-in Breakfast month by month for the past seven and a half years.



Sadly, it is now time for a change. With Jim & Pauline retiring at the end of January, and others unable to continue, we do not have enough regular helpers available to maintain the Breakfast in its current form.

We have loved serving you, and we want to thank you for your support, generosity and occasionally patience when we have lost the plot, and you did not get the breakfast you expected!

So, our last Breakfast for the time being will be on Saturday 13th January 2024.

We do not want to lose touch, we are still here on Sundays at 10.30am when you will be most welcome to join us, and of course you can contact us at any time.

We sincerely hope that we will be able to resume Breakfast in some form in the future.

But for now, have a wonderful Christmas and we'll see you in January for one more Saturday Breakfast.

From the 'Breakfast Team' at RBBC

DON'T FORGET to look at our RBBC website www.rbbc.org.uk where you can find details of upcoming special services, events, and regular church activities.



CHRISTMAS AT RBBC

We're all aware that Christmas is a time of giving. For us, as Christians, it's a time when we celebrate the greatest gift of all when God gave us his only son, Jesus, to live among us and to show us the way to a better and eternal life.

As part of our theme of giving, we will once again support Little Havens Children's Hospice with the monetary collection at our Carol Service.

We also donate to the work at the Basildon District Resource Centre. Your gifts of new toys and tinned food will benefit those in significant financial need.

The toys provide children with a present and the tins ensure that families will receive boxes of groceries and toiletries to see them through the Christmas period.

After our service, festive snacks and drinks will be served in Emmanuel Hall and all the children attending will receive a selection box to take home.

RAMSDEN BELLHOUSE
BAPTIST CHURCH

**CAROLS BY
CANDLELIGHT
WITH TOYS & TINS**

DONATED TO THE BASILDON RESOURCE CENTRE

SUNDAY 17TH DEC **4.00PM**

Stay for mulled wine and festive snacks

**SHORT CAROL SERVICE
CHRISTMAS EVE
10.30AM**

Please join us - you will be assured a warm and friendly welcome

JOY LOVE PEACE HOPE

We're already looking forward to Christmas, and hope that you can join us at one, or both of our special services. We are a friendly bunch and promise you a warm and friendly welcome.

AND SOME CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

What would you like for Christmas?

A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas.

The little girl gasped, staring at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

What do you get Dad?

December is the month when the family begins to discuss what to get Dad for Christmas. Some argue for a shirt; others hold out for a pair of socks. But the argument usually ends in a tie.

Runs over

A father gave his daughter a young puppy for Christmas. An hour later, he found her in the kitchen, looking sadly at a puddle in the centre of the floor. "Look Dad," she said, "My pup runneth over!"

Christmas in my heart

Christmas is in my heart twelve months a year and, thanks to credit cards, it's also on my Visa card statement twelve months a year.

Sums up Christmas

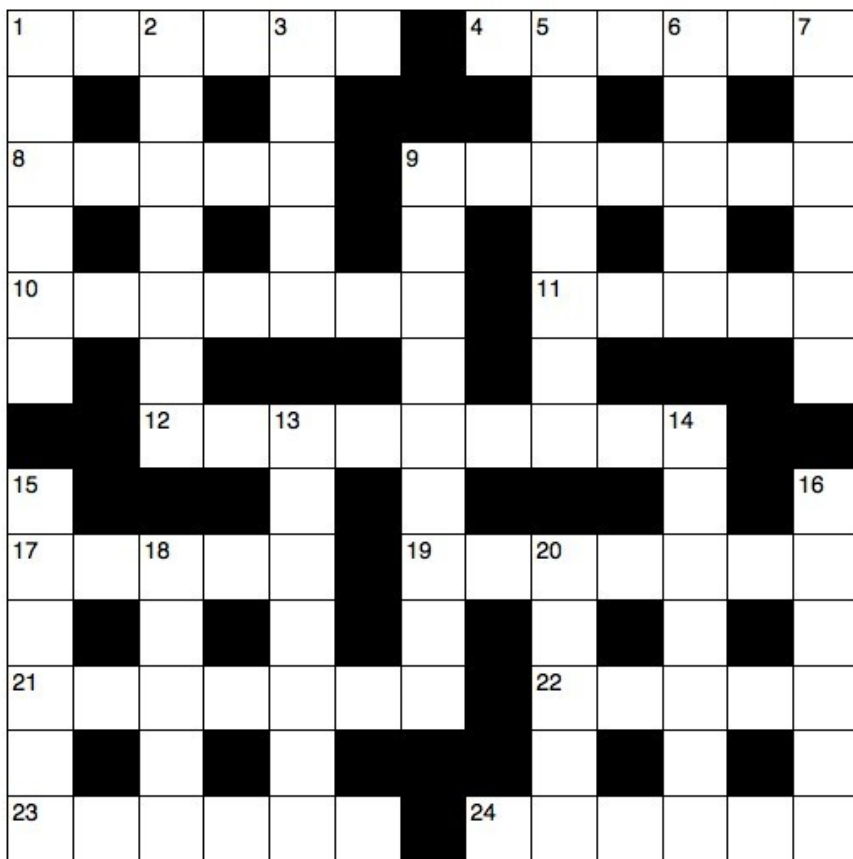
Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: 'Peace on Earth'; 'Goodwill to Men'; and 'Batteries not included'.

FROM YOUR EDITOR Articles for the **Spring 2024 Review** edition of the magazine are requested to be with the editor by **17th February 2024** at the latest to enable the magazine to be compiled, edited, and ready for electronic distribution on or about the **29th February 2024**.

Remember, as always, this magazine is written by its readers for its readers, and I remain very grateful to all those of you who contribute articles for the magazine. **KEEP FEEDING ME WITH MATERIAL** for the future! Every contribution is valuable.

A CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON A CHRISTIAN THEME

Answers will be found on page 17.



Across

- 1 'The Lord Jesus... took bread, and when he had given —, he broke it'
(1 Corinthians 11:24) (6)
- 4 'He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his — over me is love'
(Song of Songs 2:4) (6)
- 8 Surrey town that hosts the National Christian Resources Exhibition
(5)
- 9 Also known as Abednego (Daniel 1:7) (7)
- 10 Liken (Isaiah 40:18) (7)

- 11 A son of Etam, descendant of Judah (1 Chronicles 4:3) (5)
- 12 A part of the temple where the blood of a young bull was to be smeared (Ezekiel 45:19) (9)
- 17 'They make many promises, take false — and make agreements' (Hosea 10:4) (5)
- 19 Roman province to which Paul returned after evangelizing it on his first missionary journey (Acts 16:6) (7)
- 21 Material used to make baby Moses' basket (Exodus 2:3) (7)
- 22 'And feeble as — , in thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail' (5)
- 23 'The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep — to his voice' (John 10:3) (6)
- 24 Stalk carrying the sponge of wine vinegar given to Christ on the cross (John 19:29) (6)

Down

- 1 Elijah dug one round the altar he built on Mount Carmel and filled it with water (1 Kings 18:32) (6)
- 2 'I am not — of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16) (7)
- 3 Buddhist term relating to belief in reincarnation (5)
- 5 Damascus disciple who, at God's command, restored the sight of the blinded Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:12) (7)
- 6 and 16 Horses: their sound (Jeremiah 50:11) (5) and their gait (Joel 2:4) (6)
- 7 A three (anag.) (6)
- 9 Athenian council addressed memorably by Paul (Acts 17:22) (9)
- 13 Abide by (Galatians 3:5) (7)
- 14 Persian princes (Daniel 3:2) (7)
- 15 Force (Galatians 6:12) (6)
- 16 See 6 Down (6)
- 18 Paste (anag.) (5)
- 20 How the cedars of Lebanon are described (Isaiah 2:13)

BMS WORLD MISSION BIRTHDAY SCHEME

Church Fellowship and friends' birthdays for the coming period:

December	17	Rita Bywaters
	24	Barbara Taylor
	27	Chris Jacques
January	25	Judy Little
	26	Pat Le Beau
February	8	Tracy Codd
	11	Pauline Hamilton
	14	Pat Clayton



We celebrate the gift of life because it is a gift.

Celebrate the knowledge that God knows you personally and you are uniquely precious to Him. You need never travel alone; Jesus will be your constant companion every step of the way if you will ask Him for His company. Many of our Fellowship already contribute to the **BMS Birthday Scheme** and anyone of any age can join. If you would like to support BMS World Mission by giving them a donation on your birthday, please ask Elisabeth for details.

ANSWERS TO THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 16

T	H	A	N	K	S		B	A	N	N	E	R
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**Ramsden Bellhouse
Baptist Church**

Winter 2023/24