

# London Road Congregational Church

## *The Envoy*



# Church Directory



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*If you have any articles or photographs you think may be suitable for our magazine, we would love to receive them. Please email them to the editor.*

*Back Cover: Step Into Christmas Carol Service*

***The deadline for submissions to the Spring 2025 edition of the magazine is  
1st February 2025***

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**Website: [newarkcongregational.com](http://newarkcongregational.com)**

**Facebook: London Road Congregational Church Newark**

# What is a Congregational Church?

A Congregational Church is one that believes in the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Congregationalists share and respect each other's gifts, and worship, serve and decide things together as guided by the Holy Spirit at church meetings.

There are three principles:

- A church where Christ is the head, with no external hierarchy
- A church based on a covenant relationship with God and with one another, where seeking the mind of Christ is the basis of all that is done
- A church where all members are considered equal before God, and all skills and giftings are valued and recognised

## London Road Congregational Church Services

Services are now taking place in the church building for those who wish to attend in person, and are live on Zoom at the same time for those who are unable to attend in person.

To receive links to join the services, please contact  
[newarkcongregational@virginmedia.com](mailto:newarkcongregational@virginmedia.com)  
or scan the QR code.



Please keep an eye on our social media or website for information about services in the church building. Alternatively, please contact the above email address to be added to our mailing list. Your email address will not be shared.

# London Road Congregational Church

## Services

01-Dec-24	Church Service with Communion	Victoria Bunn
08-Dec-24	Service with a Difference	Mark Taylor
15-Dec-24	Church Service	Julia Gascoyne
16-Dec-24	'Step Into Christmas' Carol Service at 7pm	
22-Dec-24	Cafe Service*	Mark Taylor
25-Dec-24	Christmas Day Service at 10am	Mark Taylor
29-Dec-24	Church Service	Julie Hill
05-Jan-25	Church Service with Communion	Victoria Bunn
12-Jan-25	Service with a Difference	Mark Taylor
19-Jan-25	Church Service	Deborah Taylor
26-Jan-25	Cafe Service*	Mark Taylor
02-Feb-25	Church Service with Communion	Irum Anjum
09-Feb-25	Service with a Difference	Mark Taylor
16-Feb-25	Church Service	Preacher TBC
23-Feb-25	Cafe Service*	Mark Taylor

*All Services start at 11am unless otherwise stated.*

*\*Cafe Service is held in the Church Hall from 10.30am. Bacon baps, sausage baps, croissants, tea, coffee (cost - cash donation).*





## Mark's Meanderings

Every autumn the Deacons and I meet to discuss how things are going with my ministry. It gives the Deacons the chance to decide whether they want me to carry on for another year: so far I'm pleased to say the answer has always been 'Yes'.

My 2024 appraisal has just taken place and I thought I'd take the opportunity to share with you some of the things we discussed and a couple of my plans for the near future:

- On a purely practical level we've agreed that we need to get our problems with technology sorted out. It's frustrating when the microphones don't work and when things don't quite go according to plan with Zoom. By the time you read this the first steps will have been taken to identify all the things we need to do with the help of Steve Caddy;
- We are delighted to have welcomed six new people into membership in the last few months, with another person expressing an interest in joining us;
- We have started to think about what happens when I reach my planned retirement date. It's not until my birthday in 2028 but we've committed to drawing up a plan for this eventuality by this time next year. The plan will take account of the great blessing we have in Irum and Victoria being on the integrated training course;
- I also floated the idea of the church going back to paying for a 25% ministry role in the future rather than just 12.5% as at present. This is what we had when Ken Hague was minister and when Martin and I took on the joint ministry. We could do so much more with more ministry leadership.

While I am still minister though I want to do a couple of important things:

- I'm really keen to draw up a document – a booklet – which spells out what being a Christian in our church is like. This will go beyond our manifesto and look at things like:
  - o How we understand the Bible;
  - o What we mean by 'God';
  - o What the significance is of Jesus dying on the cross.
- And lots of other things too. As important as what we believe in these areas is what we don't believe about them too.
- In order for me to have time to move this on the Deacons have said I can go on a 5 day 'retreat' in Leicester in early 2025 when I will have time to get my thoughts clear and to make a good start on putting this booklet together. The retreat is going to be paid for largely by a grant from the Congregational Federation.
- Following on from this booklet I want to develop an 'Introduction to Christianity' course based on these ideas. This will be similar in intent to the 'Alpha' course that many of you may have heard of, but with a very different emphasis and content to reflect a modern understanding of Christianity for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I'm really excited by these two projects and very hopeful that they will provide a way of making Christianity understandable in a modern context for people who may be put off by some of the outmoded ideas that some churches cling to.

I'll keep you posted regarding the progress we make in all these areas.

Yours, in His service

*Mark*

# Pub Theology

## *Last Thursday of the Month*



Pub Theology continues to be well supported with usually around ten to twelve of us meeting to discuss various topics of interest. They aren't all strictly theological questions (questions about how we understand God) but our responses to all of them will be informed by our religious position.

Following a month away from home – we had to go to *The Fox and Crown* in September as our normal venue at *The Prince Rupert* was closed for refurbishment – we had our latest meeting on 31st October.

The topics for discussion at that meeting were:

1. Halloween – harmless fun or dangerous meddling with the spirit world?
2. The state of Louisiana has passed a law which allows paedophiles to be subject to surgical castration. In what circumstances might this be justified?
3. A law to permit euthanasia is to be debated in parliament. What should the criteria be, or why should it never be allowed?
4. What arguments might there be for and against the legalisation of sex work?
5. Is it right that human remains can be displayed as objects of curiosity in museums?



Before reading on why not stop for a few minutes and think about what your views are on these subjects.

Some meaty topics, and a variety of views on all of them. For example on the euthanasia question one person was very much in favour of a relaxation of the law to allow euthanasia because of an experience with a close relative, whilst another person was categorically against it on religious grounds. We never discuss questions where there are Right and Wrong answers.

If you are interested in discussing topics similar to this all you need to do is turn up at The Prince Rupert at 7.30pm on the last Thursday of every month (except December). Go up the stairs and you'll find us in the Rupert Room. There's no charge – except for the fine range of drinks that The Prince Rupert provides.

Alternatively, if you want to find out more information, send an email to [newarkpubtheology@virginmedia.com](mailto:newarkpubtheology@virginmedia.com)

**Mark**

## Plumhall 2025

London Road Congregational Church is delighted to once again welcome international singer/songwriters Plumhall to Newark.

After Michel and Nick's performance in spring 2024 there were many requests to have them return, and the husband and wife duo are very pleased to come and play for us again on Saturday 15th March 2025, much to delight of themselves and fans. This time they will be supported by local singer/songwriter Mark Spruce. Tickets will be on sale in 2025, and we anticipate they will again sell the church hall out.

Further information is available from Richard Gascoyne via [ricthevic53@gmail.com](mailto:ricthevic53@gmail.com)

*Right: Plumhall at London Road Congregational Church in 2024 from Neil Martin.*



# Credo Article

*In case you didn't see this when it appeared in the Newark Advertiser earlier in the year – here's one of my Credo articles.*

**Mark**

Richard Dawkins is probably the best known atheist in the country. A few years ago he wrote a book, 'The God Delusion' which gave his view of why believers are wrong to have faith.

One of the main things he bases his arguments on is that, as he puts it:

"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."

Surely he's got a point there hasn't he? Some of the stories in the Old Testament are bloodthirsty and seem to paint God in a most unfavourable light. Take this passage from the first book of Samuel where God is reported to have commanded the Israelites:

*'Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'*

Just as Mr Dawkins said.

The problem is that Dawkins doesn't understand the nature of the Bible. The Bible was written down by people. It contains many very valuable insights regarding the nature of God. But the people who wrote the books of the Bible weren't taking down God's dictation. Undoubtedly, on many occasions they were genuinely inspired by God, but sometimes they got it wrong.

Now you may be asking how can I possibly say that? Well what needs to be taken into account is the single thing that has changed people's views about God the most in all of history; the life of Jesus Christ.

Christians believe that ever since Jesus was here on earth we have had

the huge advantage of having seen God's own likeness, here. And we have a record from those who were around at the time of the important things that happened, some of what he did and what he said. It's very clear from the Gospels that there is a strong underlying theme in Jesus' message – it's about love, loving one another, caring for each other. And if Jesus is the exact likeness of God's own being, then what he said and did must matter to us, as we struggle to understand what God is like, far, far more than anything else.

Now Jesus would never have said what God is supposed to have said in that extract from Samuel. So if Jesus is God's own likeness it follows that God couldn't have said that either. The person who wrote that down simply got it wrong.

The American theologian Marcus Borg said this:

*“When the Bible and what we see in Jesus conflict, as they sometimes do, Jesus trumps the Bible. This is what it means to say Jesus is the Word become flesh. In him Christians see clearer than anywhere else the character and passion of God.”*

So no Mr Dawkins – God isn't like you say at all.

God is like Jesus.

## **Step Into Christmas**

Back by popular demand, London Road Congregational Church will hold its Christmas Carol Service on Monday 16th December starting at 7pm.

As in previous years we will be singing many of your favourite carols as well as hearing the wonderful story of that first Christmas. The Just Sing Community Choir will once again be joining us, and they will sing along with us as well as entertaining us with Christmas songs.

After the service mince pies, tea, coffee and juice will be available in the hall. So take an hour out of your busy preparations for the big day and enjoy the true meaning of Christmas.

Everyone is welcome.

# Bible Book Club

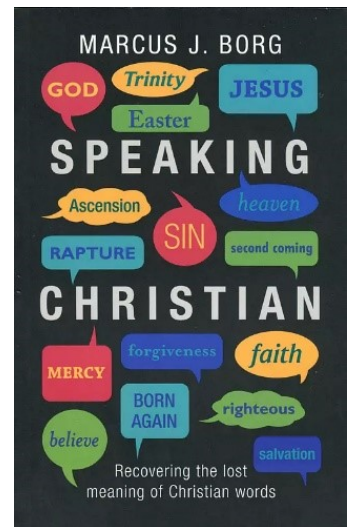
*Online, Fourth Wednesday of the Month*

Having completed our reading of the interesting book of reflections and poems based on walking the Camino pilgrimage route to Santiago di Compostela in Spain – ‘*Striking Out*’ by Stephen Cottrell we have selected the next book to read and talk about together.

It’s by one of my favourite writers and theologians, the late Marcus Borg.

‘*Speaking Christian*’ is a fascinating look at how the meanings of some of the key Christian concepts have changed and become misunderstood (in Borg’s view – and mine for what little that’s worth.)

In looking at words and concepts like *Salvation*, *Sin*, *Redemption*, *God*, *Jesus*, *The Bible* and many others in 25 chapters we’ll be picking apart what we understand being a Christian is really all about.



I am expecting that we will find this book challenging but fascinating. The members of our group are all open to considering new thoughts about their faith, rather than thinking they have to stick with ideas that they may now feel are unrealistic. This book will certainly help us to think things through.

Both ‘*Striking Out*’ and ‘*Speaking Christian*’ are available to borrow, free of charge, from the Church Library in the bookcase in the hall.

We do have some really interesting discussions (and the occasional laugh) while learning a lot at Bible Book Club. If you want to find out more, or are interested in joining us if you email me at [newarkcongregational@virginmedia.com](mailto:newarkcongregational@virginmedia.com) I’ll add you to my mailing list and keep you informed.

**Mark**

# Poppy Hedge of Remembrance and Peace

On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> November, London Road Congregational Church unveiled their Poppy Hedge of Remembrance and Peace.

The members of London Road Congregational Church wanted to make a simple but effective display to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D Day as well as to contribute to the annual Remembrance Sunday reflections here in Newark.

Thanks to an idea by Coddington Cubs and Scouts, the members of LRCC collected the bases of plastic bottles which were all painted poppy red and then displayed as a hedge outside of the church building. When it was unveiled, Minister Mark Taylor said “That it is right that we all should remember those who died to give our country the freedoms it enjoys today. But we also needed to do more and to make a symbolic gesture for ***All those who have died as a result of war.***”

In his remarks, Mark spoke to the church members that WW1 was supposed to be the war that ended all wars, yet here we are, 106 years on and wars are still tearing our world apart. Everyone who dies in war is somebody's son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister. Every day we hear about the horror that is on going in the Ukraine, in the Middle East, Central Africa and many other parts of the world and the death toll is sickening.

We hope that everyone who passes our church throughout this month, will take a moment to reflect on the human cost and misery that is affecting so many, from babies to grandparents, civilians to members of all the armed forces. If nothing else, we hope that the people of Newark will take a little time to pray for peace and for an end to the suffering that war causes.

It is a simple gesture, but one that is very much heart felt by all the members of our church. The photo shows the members of the church at the unveiling of the Hedge of Remembrance and Peace.





# Men's Group

The Men's Group is open to all men of any age. It is there for Christians, those of other faiths, and those of no faith. It is a safe space to have time with other men, to chat, to listen and sometimes to be entertained. It does not try to convert, nor does it try to change any view that you hold dear. Most meetings start with a prayer, but if that is not where you are, then it is easy to just sit it out, we only take a few moments.

On 14th September we decided to have a morning out, visiting the International Bomber Command Museum in Lincoln. Not really knowing what to expect, I was very impressed with the trip as a whole, and equally indebted to our guide who was able to explain the complexities of the part Bomber Command played in the WWII, without being "Gung-ho". Eighty years on, it is not easy to describe the horror of flying on missions that saw 55,573 aircrew killed, a 44.4% death rate, but he told the story in a way that we could all relate to. A story I may add, that made us all realise just how lucky we are, never to have had to face such terrifying times.

Our October meeting was so different with a presentation by Mr Glyn Hughes, the Museum Curator for Newark and Sherwood Council. He related how his life choices led him to love history and into the lucky position to have a job he so loves. It is our hope that he will come back next year to tell us about some of his favourite objects.

On 23rd November we had Johnny Jupp, a retired RAF Fighter Pilot, tell us about his career flying both Phantoms and Tornados.

On 21st December we are having, what is becoming a Christmas tradition, a quiz set by Mark Taylor.

Events for winter and spring have now been arranged. You are welcome to come along to any of them. Please let us know if you are coming and have any food allergies or if you are vegetarian or vegan, so we can cater to your needs. There is a dish for donations towards the cost of the food.

Last year the surplus from our breakfasts meant we were able to send money to "Lend with Care" a charity that gives loans to women in the Third World for self-help and business opportunities.

Our Calendar for the next few months is:

- December 21st — Quiz with Mark Taylor
- January 18th



- February 15th — TBC but hopefully this will be with Dave Thomlinson, Author of *How to be a Bad Christian* and *The Bad Christian's Manifesto*. Our Church manifesto is based on these books.
- March 29th — Anniversary of the Battle of Towton with possible guest speaker.
- 26th April
- 24th May

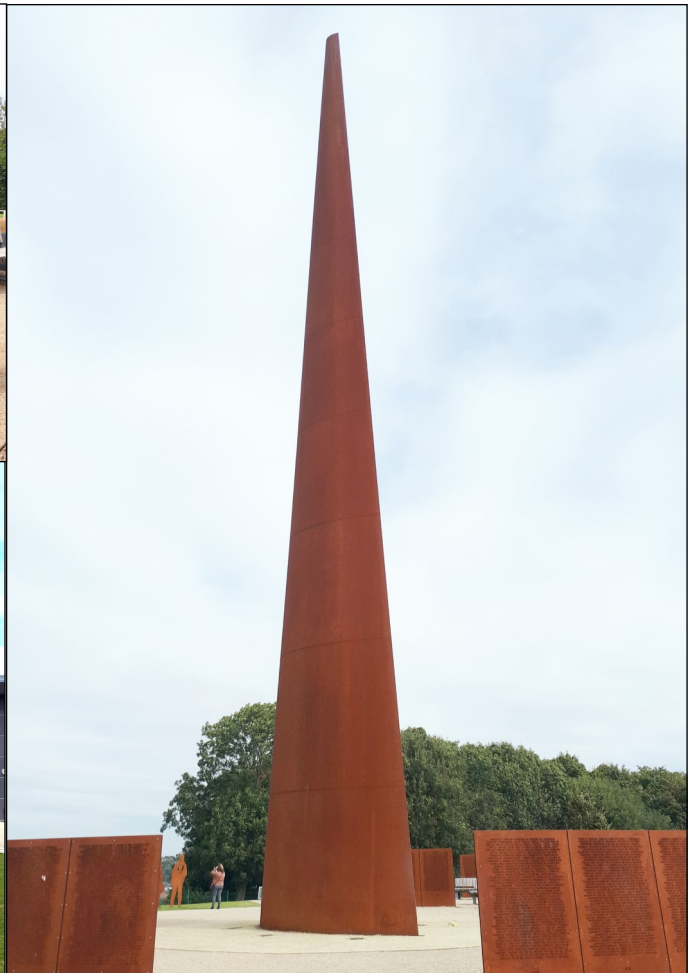
We meet in the Hall of London Road Congregational Church for breakfast at 9am. We usually finish around 10.30am.

If you would like to come along to a meeting, please do get in touch. I can be reached by phone on 07507560614 or by email on [ricthevic53@gmail.com](mailto:ricthevic53@gmail.com). You are all welcome.

God Bless you.

**Rich Gascoyne**

*Below Left: Men's Group members at IBCC; Below Right: the monument at IBCC  
Bottom Left: Lancaster Bomber Statue at IBCC  
Photos credited to Neil Martin*



# London Road Congregational Church

## Experiences

I became involved in LRCC during Covid lockdown. Each week a Zoom meeting was organised so people could take part in a Sunday service from home. I found this hour once a week helpful and refreshing, the service was partly interactive and people were encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas. It became a safe and supportive group.

As the Covid era ended Sunday meetings resumed in the church building and I continued to attend. I knew nothing about Congregationalism. I thought it was another denomination much like a Baptist or Methodist Church. I have since learned that this is not the case.

In the Congregational tradition the church IS the people and each person is accepted for who they are. There is freedom to question. There are no rules or creeds, no one is expected to believe certain things or follow certain rules.

There are many outside activities linked to our church — a choir, a book club, a film club and a discussion group that meets in a local pub, and several more. Everything is on offer to all and everyone is welcome. We are not interested in filling the pews! it isn't a numbers game. We are simply offering in our local Congregational Church an invitation for people to join us on a journey, seeking answers on how to live honestly to the best of our ability in a loving and caring way and supporting each other on the way.

**Chris Howe**

*To find out more about London Road Congregational Church and our activities, visit the church website at <https://newarkcongregational.com> or get in touch with us at [newarkcongregational@virginmedia.com](mailto:newarkcongregational@virginmedia.com)*

# Action Aid Sponsor Update

Dear sponsor,

Warmest greetings to you and your family.

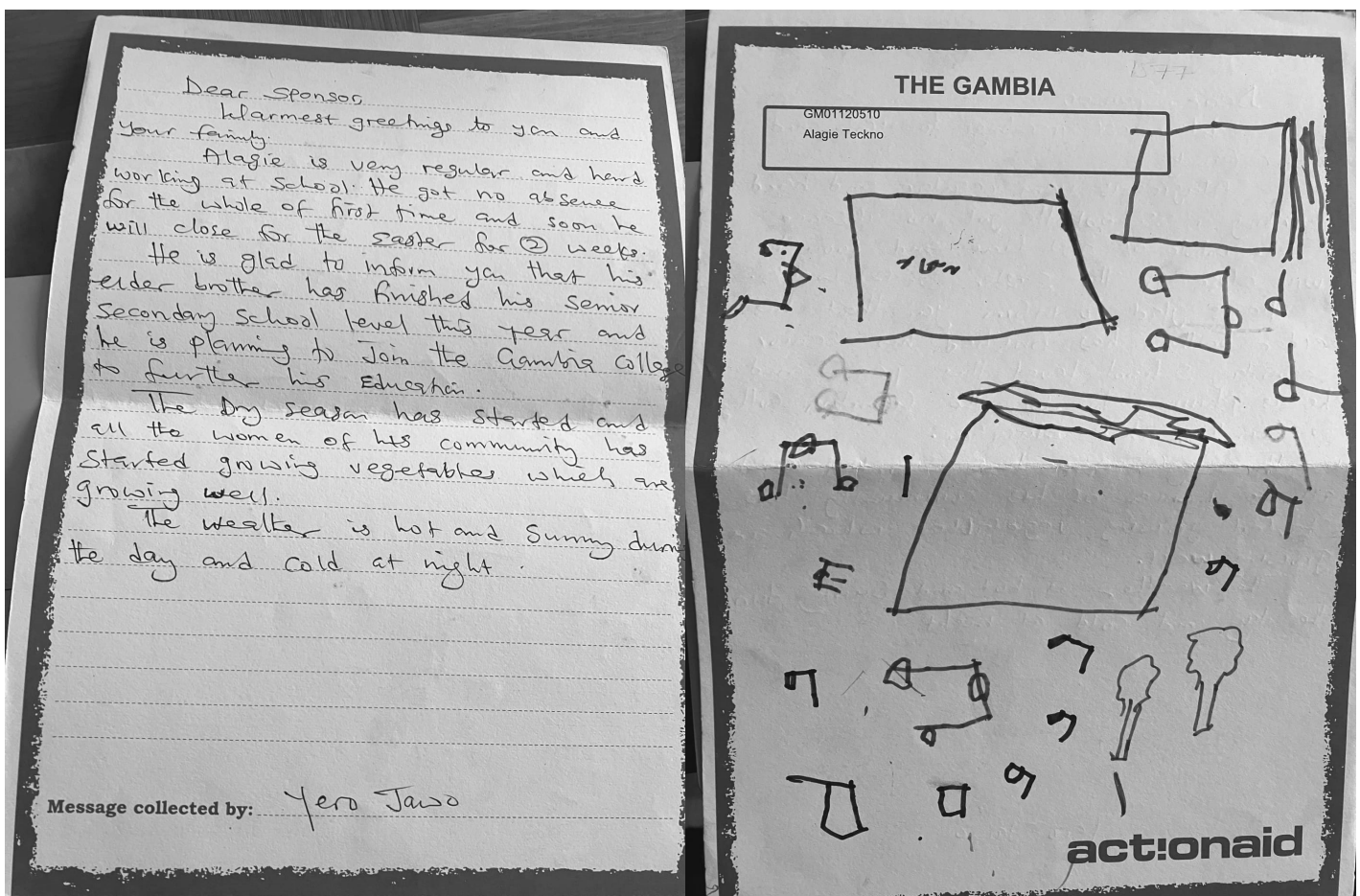
Alagie is very regular and hard working at school. He got no absence for the whole of first time and soon he will close for the Easter for 2 weeks.

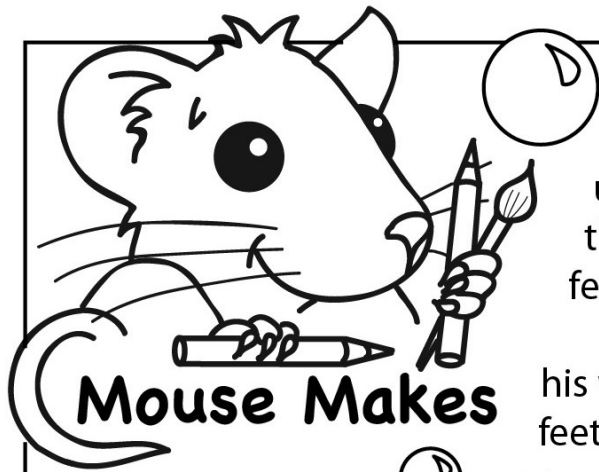
He is glad to inform you that his elder brother has finished his senior secondary school level this year and he is planning to join The Gambia College to further his education.

The dry season has started and all the women of his community has started growing vegetables which are growing well.

The weather is hot and sunny during the day and cold at night.

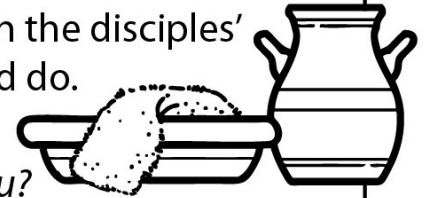
Message collected by Yero Jawo





## "DO AS I HAVE DONE FOR YOU."

The disciples had met with Jesus in an upper room to share a meal together, but there were no servants to wash their dusty feet. Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer clothing, wrapped a towel around his waist and began to wash the disciples' feet just like a servant would do.



### READ

the story in  
**John 13:1-17**

Then Jesus said:

*"Do you understand what I have done for you?  
Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have washed  
your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.  
I have set you an example, that you should  
do as I have done for you."*

By washing  
his disciples' feet, Jesus  
showed that as God's people  
we are never too important  
to serve and care for  
others.

S C L O T H I N G S  
N U N D E R S T A N D T  
G S W I P E T E R E W R  
W D A U A S E R V A N T A E H M  
A O R P S C L E A N X O T X O A  
I U M P H I J E S U S W E A T S  
S F E E T P A S S O V E R M H T  
T E N R B L E S S E D L L P E E  
K E T X T E A C H E R O O L R R  
B A S I N S C R I P T U R E S P  
C D A N M E A L O V E D E W  
C H O S E N F S  
F E A S T

JESUS  
DISCIPLES  
PASSOVER  
FEAST • SUPPER • MEAL

GARMENTS • CLOTHING • TOWEL • WAIST • WATER • BASIN • WASH • FEET • WIPE  
CLEAN • UNDERSTAND • OTHERS • EXAMPLE • DO • LOVED • CHOSEN • BLESSED

PETER  
SCRIPTURES  
LORD • TEACHER  
SERVANT • MASTER

# Newark Foodbank Update



## FOODBANK SHOPPING LIST

November 2024

**PLEASE DO NOT DONATE ITEMS  
CONTAINING ALCOHOL – THANK YOU**

### Shortfall Items

Also check our website for other items we need

#### Food

- Long Life Fruit Juice
- Tinned Meat
- Tinned Potatoes
- Instant Mash
- Tinned Carrots
- Tinned Fruit

#### Other Items

- Toiletries
  - Shower Gel
  - Deodorant
  - Toilet Roll
- Washing tabs

### PLEASE!

**Do not donate fresh food items without checking with us first.**

**Check that your donation is well inside its use-by date.  
It takes time for us to process donations and too often they pass the use-by date before  
we can distribute the food to our clients.**

**We cannot distribute out of date food.**

Items of which we have a plentiful supply:

- Tinned Chickpeas
- Tinned/Dry Spaghetti
- Pasta
- Tins of mixed beans
- Pet Food
- Our warehouse stock is being depleted due to high demand. We appreciate any donations we receive.
- Please take your donation to one of our many collection points in supermarkets. See our website for a complete list.
- To donate money, which we can use to purchase stock, please see our website.



<https://newark.foodbank.org.uk/>



**STEP INTO CHRISTMAS**  
**LONDON ROAD CONGREGATIONAL**  
**CHURCH**  
**WITH THE**  
**JUST SING COMMUNITY CHOIR**  
**MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER AT 7pm**  
**EVERYONE WELCOME**



**CAROLS**

**FESTIVE SONGS**

**MINCE PIES**

**TEA & COFFEE**