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Oxford Schools Chaplaincy Newsletter: It's the tip of the iceberg

**A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord'
Mark 1v3 & Isaiah 40v3**

What is the most desolate wilderness on earth? Reportedly it is Antarctica – the coldest, driest, highest and windiest continent. Metaphorically, one might say however that the most desolate wilderness is the human heart devoid of God. Mark's nativity starts with a rousing rally, catapulting Isaiah's seven century old call into his present reality ushering Jesus' birth.

Two centuries later the urgency is undiminished, in particular these next weeks of advent, as we call out gospel hope and life into the wilderness of hearts throughout our schools. Will you please join with us by calling on the Lord? Do use the Advent Prayer Calendar below to fuel your daily prayers for schools this month. We have already seen wonderful answers to prayer today as we've kicked off with advent activities.

OSC



PRAYER

DIARY 2025

1 Lunchtime: TOA* Sixth-form CU, Christmas Music. 3-4pm Swan CU Advent Activity	'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' (Isaiah 9:6)	Christmas Lesson at TOA, period 3. Cheney CU Christmas Event, 1.30–2pm	Lunchtime: COC* CU and Cherwell SS* Christmas Parties, GHS* and Marlborough CU Christmas Outreach events. Christmas Lesson at GHS period 4.	'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.' (John 1:14)
2 'The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.' (John 1:9)	Give thanks for all the volunteers and OSC staff who are delivering Christmas lessons this year.	Give thanks and pray for all Christian Union students in our area—that God would continue to teach them and encourage them in Him.	Christmas Lessons at GHS periods 1,2, 4 & 5 and TOA periods 2 & 5. Lunchtime: Cherwell NSCU* Christmas party	Pray that new supporters of OSC will come forward to be regular monthly donors.
3 Cherwell North Site CU: 12.20–1pm 'I am the resurrection and the life' John 11v25 Bible discussion	10am-1pm The Leys College Wellbeing Fair Lunchtime: TOA Sixth-form CU, Christmas Music. 3-4pm Swan School CU Big Questions event.	'The time has come—the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.' Mark 1:15	18 Christmas Lesson at TOA period 5.	Give thanks and pray for all teachers in our schools—that they would find rest and refreshment over the holidays.
4 Pray that the student leaders would be greatly encouraged and equipped as they serve faithfully in their CUs.	The Marlborough School CU Christmas Party, 1.20–2pm Carols in the Canteen, City of Oxford College, 12.30–1.30pm	Pray for the future of OSC, that sufficient resources will be found to secure and increase our work.	11am-12pm: TOA Sixth-form Christmas activity. Christmas Lesson at TOA period 3.	Give thanks for Christian teachers who are able to help with CUs in their schools. Pray for their encouragement and witness.
5 Give thanks for the many outreach events held by CUs over the past term and pray for those who have heard about Christ to trust in Him.	Cherwell North Site CU Christmas Grill-a-Christian, 12.20–1pm Wheatley Park CU Christmas Event, 1.30–2pm	Christmas Lesson at TOA period 2. 3-4pm Swan CU Christmas Outreach party.	19 Give thanks for all the lessons and other events that have taken place this Christmas. Pray that the seeds of the gospel sown will come to fruition.	'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.' (Luke 2:11) 'To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!' (Revelation 5:13)

*COC: City of Oxford College
GHS: Gosford Hill School

TOA: The Oxford Academy
Cherwell North/South Site

OSC Oxford Schools Chaplaincy

If you would like to find out more about donating to OSC, or for general info, please scan this code or visit www.oxfordschoolschaplaincy.org



Print off and use as your prayer prompt, and share a copy with a prayer partner!



Advent action with prayer and Bible verses at the Swan School and the Oxford Academy.

**And the glory of the Lord will be revealed
Isaiah 40v5**

Read on for a report of a school CU event just last week – we are seeing an increasing eagerness amongst teens asking the big questions of life! May Isaiah 40v5 be their experience.

It's a Monday afternoon, school is finished for the day, students stream out of the doors with boisterous enthusiasm very particular to the teenage years. Weaving one's way through this uniformed mass exodus is not for the faint-hearted. Greeting the guest speaker at the school reception, we pick up our mandatory school lanyards and head towards the Drama studio where the CU event is to be held. The question uppermost in our minds is, 'how many teenagers will stay on after school on a Monday to hear a talk'? Doubts are rapidly dispersed as even from a distance we see a buzz of activity in the room.

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Christian Union regulars are busy putting chairs out. As students keep arriving, there are now clearly more people than chairs. A resourceful Sixth Former adeptly acquires extra chairs from the canteen. With everyone seated, the opportune moment of a natural lull in the hubbub of conversation is seized by the Christian teacher hosting the session, who launches into a fast paced Pictionary group challenge. Just one piece of paper per team keeps the game environmentally friendly. The competition however is anything but friendly as quick sketches pit rapid fire guessing, followed by the inevitable cheers as one group wins. All the while, multiple packets of biscuits are being passed around. Those arriving belatedly at the tail end of the game are greeted by crumbs.



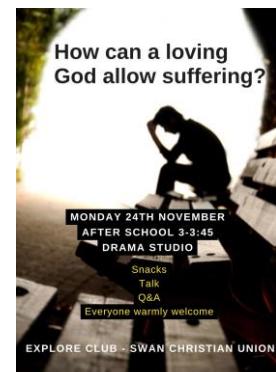
But they are just in time for the main course. We are excited to welcome our guest speaker on the topic of 'How can a loving God allow suffering?'. With care and clarity he uncovers multiple facets – cleverly interacting with his audience by means of an 'advent calendar' of possible perspectives. Each door reveals a new angle on the question through the lens of a portion of the Bible. There is a hush as students listen intently. A quick glance at the clock – there is so much more that could be said but it's time for questions.

Post-its are passed round as students turn to one another, pens come out, hasty scribbles trying to capture the essence of the lines of enquiry. The pile of post-its that find their way to the speaker will clearly demand a greater allowance than indicated by the hands on the clock face. He addresses the questions in turn, providing insight and clarification. Students are not always satisfied with the answer and press further, 'Are you saying suffering gives God glory – how then do you define glory?'.

Some sit back after pursuing a question, pensively murmuring 'I'm going to have to reflect on that.' Our time is up, students are given the option to leave. It is after all a whole forty-five minutes since the end of school, on a Monday.

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A surprising number opt to stay – they are keen to hear more and want to engage in conversation. We eventually need to call stumps, the speaker has done more than a good innings. There is chatter in the corridor as students carry on their conversations. Several of the Christian Sixth Formers are really excited and thankful that so many of their friends came. When asked, how they thought it went, the response was, 'you have no idea how many questions my friends have, this is only the tip of the iceberg'.



What a huge privilege for the Christian Union to run such events bringing Biblical truth and grace to bear on life's big questions – equipping the Christian students in how to handle tough questions and presenting the non-Christian students with food for thought. There were also several students who were clearly coming from a background of faith that they had rejected and now had cause to reconsider.

Please pray for ongoing opportunities as we seek to bring gospel hope, with heart melting grace and truth, deep into the core of that iceberg.

Giving to OSC

As you know, the work of OSC is completely reliant on financial donations from individuals and churches. If you already support our work, thank you! And if you have recently increased your gift to us, thank you so much too. If not, we would be so grateful if you would prayerfully consider a gift to allow our work to continue and grow. The need is now becoming urgent. Could you consider a fundraising activity? A sponsored bake or cycle ride? Making a donation to OSC as part of your will? Holding a coffee morning now for friends and neighbours? We would be very happy to come along and meet your neighbours and share what is happening in the local schools, to see if they would like to partner with us, or to meet with you if you have ideas to raise the profile of this important work.

As ever, donations can be made by bank transfer, to CAF Bank Ltd, Sort Code: 40-52-40 Account No: 00021506 , or follow the link to our website for details of other ways to give
at www.oxfordschoolschaplaincy.org/support

This work cannot happen without you. Thank you for your support and prayers.

Prayer points

Please do join us in giving thanks for:

- Opportunity for OSC to deliver RE lessons on 'What do Christians believe about Christmas?'
- All the volunteers who are giving of their time to support the many RE lessons and Christmas activities in these next weeks

Please pray for:

- Christian Unions as they run their Christmas outreach events
- The funding challenge - we need to attract new, regular donors who are prepared to commit to support this work, in order to see it continue, and grow into the future. Please pray for fresh contacts for us and new supporters and friends who are willing to partner in this work.

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Clearly communicating Christian beliefs, equipping young people to make informed decisions about faith and lifestyle

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If you would like to give financially to the work of OSC, please contact:
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