



Methodist & United Reformed Bradley Street, Wotton-under-Edge

December 2021 & January 2022

Worship in Bradley Street at 10.15am on Sundays or at any time at home

- A weekly service available from the Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit on YouTube. See https://www.gloucestershiremethodist.org.uk/ for more details and to download service sheet.
- Weekly service prepared by Revd Phil Summers, also on YouTube: search for Perfect Little Gentleman.

Note: there will be no service at the church on Boxing Day, Sunday 26 December

"Hers is different from mine!"

Through the years that I have been editing United Alive I have amassed lots of spare covers from previous Christmas editions. This year I have enough for a whole circulation's-worth, so if you receive a paper copy you may well have a different cover from your friend. Worry not; the insides are all the same.

Saving the planet, one sheet of paper at a time.

And while I have your attention, it's time I said a thank you to everyone who helps make United Alive worth producing. Anyone is welcome to contribute but without Alison Sutton, Sue, Phil, Ann and Philip and Graham there wouldn't be much to read. Thanks to Alison Jackson who every month prepares the Prayer Diary.

And thanks to you for taking the time to read it.

Ed.



The lights have been going up in the town. They will be turned on very soon. Shop windows are being decorated and Christmas Trees are on sale. The TV advertising began sometime in August (well, it feels like that anyway). But I'm in that in-between time. I'm just getting ready for Advent with only half an eye on Christmas celebrations. Although the diary has been sorted, the first thought I had when it was time to write this was 'I'm not feeling very Christmassy!'

That's not a problem. We're beginning the time of preparation not the festival itself. But from today onwards it feels like I'm on one of those airport moving floors. (If you've never been to an airport, it's like an escalator but it doesn't go up or down, just along) I've stepped on and now I'll be sped through Advent, to Christmas, past Christmas and into the New Year and before I know it, I'll be thinking about Lent! Whoah there, slow down! No wonder I'm not feeling Christmassy.

But what is 'feeling Christmassy' anyway? Every year I go through similar processes of preparation so maybe this non feeling is actually what it is to feel Christmassy. But no, that's not what we mean. It's that indescribable something that warms the heart. It's the feeling that all the salesmen (and women) across the world are trying to access. If they can hit the right note, if they can touch the Christmassy nerve then 'Bingo!'; they can make a sale.

And is that what we're also waiting for? That 'something' which we can't put into words? It comes to us in a song, in the lights, in a decoration, in a poem, in a meal, in the face of family or friends, it's there in thought and memory, it is mourned and expected; it's a certain smell, it's a gift, a taste, a visit, a touch, a drink, a prayer. And some years it doesn't come at all. And for some it has never been experienced. For others it has been destroyed and 'Christmassy' becomes hateful.

For all the joy of Christmas cannot be contained in tradition. The Christ Mass is so much bigger than the trinkets we fondly hang on a tree. It has more depth than the insatiable consumerism and more meaning than a familiar cracker joke. Wherever you find the Christmassy feeling may it be a blessing to you. But the celebration is one that can be shared by all. There are Christmassy happenings all across the world with none of the decorations, no gifts and little food. Christmas is celebrated in hiding, in fear, in refugee camps, on the streets.

For this is Christmas; that God is with us, and the presence of God saves and heals us. Feeling Christmassy is so much more than a tingly warmth as I'm visited by the ghosts of past and present. Feeling Christmassy is that moment when I become aware that I am loved by a God who knows me, and holds me, who lifts me above my distress into the light and peace of her presence. That

is why Jesus was born, to bear witness to this truth – God is with us, and we are his.

May you know that feeling of Christmas (as well as many others) in whatever ways you celebrate this year.

Happy Christmas (when it gets here) and here's to a healthy New Year (in due course)

Love,

Phil

Christmas Giving Charity

Hopefully most of you received the email asking for suggestions for the charity we should support with our Christmas giving in 2021. Several suggestions were put forward, all of them equally deserving, giving the Leadership Team a decision to make not unlike that facing the judges on Strictly Come Dancing.

So, a decision was made, and your gifts will go to the **Stroud Women's Refuge.**

If you are disappointed that your preferred charity has missed out don't despair as we have a suggestion. Why not organise a Coffee Morning?

It seems reasonable to hold one a quarter - so book your date now!

Worship at Dryleaze - Saturday 18 December, 3pm

We have been asked if we plan to continue with monthly worship at Dryleaze and also if it seems likely that the Saturday Club may restart.

There has been a big change in the Dryleaze population: younger people have moved-in, some still at work, with friends and community outside the complex. Some of the previous residents have moved on or are unable to take part. Those from the United Church who supported Dryleaze in the past find their circumstances have changed and some are less able to do so.

There will, however be a Christmas Service which will be led by Revd Phil Summers (on Saturday as he didn't have a free Sunday). The Lounge will probably hold up to 30 people so we are not suggesting that everyone from Church should attend. We are hoping to then get an idea of whether a regular service is still wanted.



I think we do Advent rather well at the United Church. We mark the beginning with a supper when we share food and laughter round the table and spend moments in reflection of the meaning of Advent and what it is we are looking forward to. Then for the four Sundays we have a short liturgy and a song followed by the lighting of one of the four candles prior to lighting the central white candle marking Christmas Day.

Growing up we did not do any of these things nor did we have the chocolate calendar (more

about that further on!); I think things involving candles were the domain of higher churches than us humble Methodists! We probably sang the good Wesley classic "Lo he comes with clouds descending" – which we rarely hear these days having given way to more modern interpretations of Advent.

But back to the chocolate! You can buy 'The real Advent calendar 'which does contain Fairtrade chocolate but also a booklet with the story of Jesus' birth at Christmas; you might be just too late to get one this year at the Ark. But with growing dismay I see adverts for 'advent calendars' – the small letters and the inverted commas intentional. These are a few of this year's offerings besides the ubiquitous chocolate in many forms: beauty products, 24 gins, craft beers, Dior products, pork crackling (?!!!), one for the dog, the cat and,wait for it.....sex toys! Where has this world gone and what, as Christians, can we do about it? If you've got any ideas please let me know!

One thing we can do is make sure our Christmas cards are Christian, by that I mean showing a nativity scene and a message proclaiming the true meaning of the season. Happy Advent and Christmas everyone and if you are reading this before Dec 1 there is still time to sign up for the supper!

Don't get me started on Christmas slogans! Seen at the supermarket who is little on price – 'A Christmas you can believe in'

Christmas Cards are now available at The Ark Coffee Shop supporting Traidcraft and Leprosy Mission. The purchase of the Christmas cards is also a great way to support The Ark and its work.

We will be displaying our own **Christmas Card Tree** on one of the notice boards in the Hall: a good way to wish everyone a Happy Christmas without sending out lots of separate cards. If you can't get to the church at all, perhaps you would like to send just one card (perhaps via your Pastoral Visitor?) which we would be pleased to display.

"The Back Row is looking a bit thin!"

Not so long ago, 'the back row' on Sunday mornings was full of lively chatter mostly ladies, though Alan Pearn would make a point of sitting with them, for whose benefit I am unsure!

Things change. You may yourselves wonder: '... whatever happened to (so-and-so)?' Just because they are unable join us, doesn't mean they are no longer part of the United Church Community, and now is a good time to think of them. We wish them and their families a happy and peaceful Christmas.

If I have omitted anyone do tell me: they can have a special mention in February.

Kay Davey Sue and Godfrey say: Our dear friend, Kay Davey is still living at Pennwood Lodge but we have not been able to see her for nearly two years due to Covid. It has been difficult enough for the family to see her. We have been in touch with Miriam a couple of times and she says that her mum is very happy in her own world and is now 96!

Dot Hill Dot has been unable to return to her home at Dryleaze House following her fall and hip surgery last year. She is now a resident at Highborder Lodge Care Home in Leonard Stanley where they tell us: 'Dorothy has settled very well here with us. She loves to join in activities'. She can receive visitors providing you book 3 days in advance by phoning on 01453 823203 then have a lateral flow test there before you see her.

Mary Reynolds Mary has now been in Henlow Lodge at Dursley for about eight weeks and is gradually coming to see it as her home. She is very comfortable and is regaining some mobility. Like Highborder Lodge, visitors are welcome but must pre-book and follow a number of rules.

Alan Smith continues to live at Pennwood Lodge in Kingswood.We send best wishes to him and to Marion who continues to see him when she is able.

Alan Pearn Alan is on Peritoneal Dialysis at home for 8 hours every night. As he is on the transplant waiting list he has been advised not to socialise indoors. Sadly he has no appetite and no energy but walks 1/3 mile round the playing field every morning! He remains positive and does appreciate the visits he has received and is grateful to those people who have supported him in any way. Thank you for your continued prayers and caring thoughts.

Mollie Tucker has not been well for some months but feels she is recovering. She hopes to be able to join in with the Dryleaze activities soon.

Mary Le Riche We hear that Mary has been in and out of hospitals and respite care but it is hoped that when a suitable care package can be put in place, she will be able to return to Dryleaze.

Gladys Heaven Gladys still lives in her bungalow just down from the church. Mobility is a problem for her, but her mind and memory are as sharp as ever and she is always a pleasure to visit.

Spirit lifter for December and January

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: love each other."

John 15, v 16 and 17

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Colossians 3, v 12-14

"To: Jesus, son of Joseph, carpenter's shop, Nazareth

From: Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem

It is our opinion that the twelve men you have picked to manage your new organisation lack the background, educational and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.

We feel it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus have racial leanings and both registered high on the manic depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, has a keen business mind and contacts in high places. He is highly motivated and ambitious. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man.

We wish you every success in your new venture."

Quoted in Readers' Digest 1990

"When you have a choice, you can afford to be choosy. All of which makes the words of Jesus in John's Gospel the more remarkable, for he is telling his disciples here that of all the thousands of people he could have chosen to be his Apostles, he chose them! Not that he was wrong to do so – history has more than vindicated his judgement – but, to put it kindly, they were not the

obvious choice; hardly those you would expect anyone to choose if they planned to start a world-changing movement.

Yet Jesus had selected these above all others, recognising qualities in them that he could take and use towards the fulfilment of his purpose. So it continues today. We do not *choose* to follow Jesus; we *respond* to his call. He is the one who takes the initiative in establishing a relationship, not us. Why does he do that? Because, once again, he sees in us something special, something that he infinitely values. The greatest wonder of all is that he leaves no-one out when choosing, no rejects at the end of the pile. Though many will reject him, he has a place for everyone who is ready to receive him. Do you sometimes question whether you have any place in his kingdom, any right to call yourself a Christian? Then remember this: before you even knew there was a choice to make, Jesus chose you."

Rev Nick Fawcett, taken from Daily Prayer



Epiphany is when wise men followed a star, a journey, a caravan travelling far,

But is that it, long, long ago?

That can't be just all we know of that star; was it brighter than most, did it overshadow all others and boast of knowing a king had been born, that its light had created a brand new dawn?

Now we talk of light bulb moments, are they brighter than that star in the firmament?

A fleeting thought, a dawning, a light, a penny dropping in a sleepless night.

An epiphany is God given to open our eyes to new hopes and dreams, a divine surprise.

Important People

Name 5 important people. Go on, give it a try. Not celebrities, not people who do important jobs: plain and simply Important People. Certainly not self-important people. Forget influencers (I'm not sure what they are exactly but I think it's people whose self-importance leads them to use social media to tell other people what nail varnish they should wear). Important People.

The Queen. No, wait – that is the role, not the person. Er – the Pope? Ditto. My Mum. Again, strictly speaking a role not a person but *my* Mum, Marian Joan Baldwin nee Sully was very important to me. To you, not important at all.

Turn this on its head. Name 5 *un*important people. You are not allowed to include yourself, however desperate you are for examples.

Some people are privileged to have important roles: doctors and nurses immediately come to mind. Important because they enrich the lives of those with whom they have contact. But with a smile or a kind word, that is something we all can do. And it still won't make us Important People.

As we approach the time of year when we hold our Covenant Service, we will again say the words: 'let me be employed for you or laid aside for you ... ' (see below) Whenever we do God's will we are doing important work.

The great thing is that to God we are all of us important. And as we speak the words of the Covenant Prayer we are asking God to show us how He would want us to care for His Important People.

Now, start again. Name 5 important people. Start with yourself.

JM

The Methodist Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you,
or laid aside for you,
exalted for you, or brought low for you;
let me be full, let me be empty,
let me have all things, let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

ROTAS FOR DECEMBER						
	5 December	12 November	19 December	19 December	25 December	26 Dec
		Holy Communion	Morning Worship	4pm Carol Service	Saturday Christmas Day	
Minister	Gareth Zimmerman	Rev Phil Summers	Neil Grecian	Rev Phil Summers	Rev Phil Summers	
Worship Steward	A Jackson	Godfrey Marsland	Philip Revill	Philip Revill?	A Jackson	
Welcome	Trish	Joy Robinson	Ann Revill	Offers?	Offers?	N O
Screens	Sue Marsland	Reg Clarke	Sue Marsland	A Jackson	A Jackson	S
Sound	Godfrey Marsland	Graham Jackson	Trevor Owen	Godfrey Marsland	Godfrey Marsland	E R
Coffee	Owen	Alison Sutton	Brenda Cary & Jacky Ling	None	None	V I C
Organ / Piano	Ros	Sue Marsland	Ros Wakefield	Sue Marsland	Sue Marsland	E
Wednesday Tea & Chat	1 Dec Judy Mills	8 Dec Janet & Alun Davies	15 Dec Graham Jackson	22 Dec Alison Jackson		
	TraidCraft table after Service					
	Games in the Hall at 7pm on Thursdays					

Any more Volunteers?

There are gaps in the above rota: can you help? (And even if there don't appear to be gaps, you could still help and relieve the pressure on those already doing it.) We need Welcomers, and it would be lovely if anyone else felt they would like to do the Tea and Chat occasionally

		AND JA	NUARY		
2 Januai	y 9 January	16 January	23 January	30 January	6 February
		Covenant Service & Communion			
Alison Jacksor	Rev Robbie Riddell	Rev Phil Summers	Chris Law	David Bennett	Colin Pascoe
Alison Jacksor	Roger Gunning	Jackson	Philip Revill	Godfrey Marsland	A Jackson
Frances Biggs	s Betty Yeoman	Alison Sutton	Joy Robinson	Pat & Richard Bayliss	Trish Davies
A Jackso	Reg Clarke	A Jackson	Sue Marsland	Reg Clarke	A Jackson
Brian Reeks	Godfrey Marsland	Graham Jackson	Trevor Owen	Brian Reeks	Godfrey Marsland
Hilary 8 Alan McDermo	Janet &	Pauline Jones	Judy Mills	Pat & Richard Bayliss	Sandra & Trevor Owen
Ros Wakefiel	Ros Wakefield	Sue Marsland	Ros Wakefield	Sue Marsland	Ros Wakefield
				26 Jan Alison Jackson	
TraidCra table afte Service	er				TraidCraft table after Service
		Games in the Hall at 7pm on Thursdays			

Coronavirus.

The government is recommending doing a Lateral Flow Test before going to crowded places and mask-wearing is still advisable. The idea is to reduce the risk that you will infect others and reduce the pressure on the NHS.

You are being asked to do this not for yourself, but for others.

From the Remembrance Book In December

1st	Sarah Dennys	2000	10th	Kath Tavinner	2005
6th	Flo Evans	2000	31st	William Allen	1969
8th	Beryl Gowers	2016	31st	Rita Carter	2009

And January

2nd	Frances Hickson	1995	11th Ethel Clarke	2007
4th	Gillian McGonnigill	1999	13th James Wood	2009
6th	Robert Tonks	2000	26th Eric Wheeler	2014
6th	Kathleen Drew	2010	27th Kathleen May	1991
9th	Jovce Smithers	1971		

We give thanks for those who have lived and died in the faith of Christ

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