



## The Methodist Church

Bishopston, Easter Compton, Horfield, Shirehampton Methodist Churches and St Peter' Pilning.

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We are part of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit ([www.bsgc.org.uk](http://www.bsgc.org.uk)),

a family of over forty churches serving communities across the local area.

These notices are also posted on <http://www.horfieldmethodist.org.uk>

**God says "When they call to me, I will answer them;  
when they are in trouble I will be with them." (Psalm 91).  
"The best of all – God is with us." (John Wesley).**

**Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2020.**



'And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness ..' (Mark 1: 4a).

One Bible story included in Advent is that of John the Baptist appearing in the wilderness, wearing the most basic of clothing and foraging for food, yet announcing the arrival of Jesus' ministry. Much of our experience individually and collectively since March this year has felt like a wilderness, and we have been metaphorically stripped and deprived of many distractions, forced to bear far more reality than is normally the case. As we have worked out what it means to be a community of faith, we have had to focus on some of the basic things. Things haven't always been easy, and being in this wilderness has been a challenge at times.

Near the beginning of CS Lewis' Silver Chair, Aslan meets Jill on a mountain-top and says to her, "Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind". That reminds us that places of wilderness allow us to see things more easily: for example, well away from urban areas, the lack of light pollution allows the stars to be seen more clearly. Living with the basics is not always a bad thing: we have the example of those in Christian history have chosen to live as monks or nuns in the wilderness, to 'see' God in a clearer light.

Even with some restrictions lifted, we might well be doing Christmas in different ways over the coming weeks, potentially without close family and friends with us in person alongside other things we usually link with our celebrations. However those work out, I hope and pray we will find space to see God all the more clearer in our wilderness, with you - me - us

*Rev Patrick*

PS. You will see below that some of our churches will be open over the coming weeks, but others will not. If you would like to attend worship in person: the decision to do so rests entirely with you, taking into consideration your own circumstances and health. For those who choose not to come or are unable to, we will continue to support you by means of online reflections and those in this weekly newsletter; pastoral visitors will also continue to try to keep in touch by phone. Please feel free to call your pastoral visitor or a steward for a chat. There will continue to be an informal meeting using 'Zoom' between 3.30 – 4.00pm each Sunday afternoon. If you would like support to join this by phone or your own electronic device, please get in touch.

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## LOCAL SERVICES, DEVOTIONS, ETC.

### Bishopston.

- Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30am, including Holy Communion, led by Rev Patrick Stonehewer.
- Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30am, led by members of the congregation.
- Christmas Eve, 24<sup>th</sup> December at 11.30pm, Midnight Service including Holy Communion, led by Revd Patrick Stonehewer from Horfield, relayed via Zoom.  
Christmas Day, 25<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am, Christmas Celebration **via Zoom only**.
- Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30am, led by Adam Biddlestone.

### Easter Compton.

No services currently scheduled in person.

### Horfield and Shirehampton.

- Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am \*. led by congregation members, relayed via Zoom.
- Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am \*, All Age Nativity Service, relayed via Zoom. Please dress up in your favourite character from the Christmas Story (how many Marys and Josephs can we muster?).
- Christmas Eve, 24<sup>th</sup> December at 11.30pm \*, Midnight Service including Holy Communion, led by Rev Patrick Stonehewer from Horfield, relayed via Zoom.
- Christmas Day, 25<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am, Christmas Celebration **via Zoom only**.
- Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am, led by Howard Wilson **via Zoom only**.

\* To attend Horfield in person, please reserve a place by calling 0755 278 0740. We need to do this to stay within the maximum number permitted. The steward taking the call will remind you about the COVID19 secure arrangements which will be in place. Please see the last page of this news sheet for the details for Zoom, including how to phone in.

### St Peter's Pilning.

- Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am, led by Mr John Wing.
- Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am.
- Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am, including Holy Communion, led by Rev Patrick Stonehewer.

## CHRISTMAS SERVICES.

You are all invited share a **Carol Service** at the same time as AfterZoom tea on Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> December from 3.30pm. Dress festively, and bring your own mince pie and cuppa!

**Christmas Eve**, 24<sup>th</sup> December at 11.30pm, Midnight Service including Holy Communion, led by Rev Patrick Stonehewer. This will be led from Horfield and available via Zoom too.

**Christmas Day**, 25<sup>th</sup> December at 10.00am, Christmas Celebration from your home, **via Zoom only**.

Please see the last page of this news sheet for the details for Zoom, including how to 'phone in. If you would like support with accessing these services online or via the phone, please make contact with a Church Steward or Rev Patrick.

**Sunday Worship.** BBC1 at 11.30am. Father John Dickinson leads an ecumenical service from the chapel of Royal Holloway, University of London.

**Songs of Praise.** BBC1 at 1.15pm. Revd Kate Boley visits a winter wonderland experience in Norfolk and Katie Piper joins a church delivering Christmas angel hampers, with lots of festive carols.

### BSGC Corona Virus Worship resources.

Worship resources and other resources for reflection are available on the Circuit website. There is also a daily prayer, based around the Methodist Prayer Handbook, for people to use at 12.00noon.

**Our online worship videos** will continue for the time-being. Please do continue to watch these and pray for those who lead and work in all these faith-based organisations.

**Dial-a-Prayer.** A free phone service to hear prayers and news from the Methodist Church. This is updated each Thursday evening. Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514 and Listen to news: 0808 281 2478.

**BIBLE STUDY.** The Weekly Bible Study will recommence in the New Year. More details to follow.

### Afterzoom tea.

Sundays at 3.30pm, to share news informally and see friends. Please see the last page of this news sheet for the details for Zoom, including how to phone in.

**Video reflections.** Our online worship videos will continue for the time-being, available via church websites. Thank you to those who have contributed to these.

**All Age devotions.** Free materials for younger members via [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com).

**Methodist Church prayer meeting.** 12.45pm to 1.00pm each Tuesday. Go to [www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/year-of-prayer/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/year-of-prayer/).

## CHURCH NOTICES.

### All churches.

**Singing for Wellbeing Workshop.** Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 202, 10.30am to 11.30am. Singing has many benefits to our health and wellbeing. This **free online workshop** is an opportunity to experience some of the ways in which singing can improve your physical health and lift your mood. The session is hosted by registered music therapists and New Room community choir leaders Judit and Meg. Singing is a mindful activity that demands our full concentration, taking our minds away from worry and stress. Come along and enjoy an hour of mindful singing with the aim of improving our wellbeing. To book your free place go to the New Room website and click on Events. *“Very enjoyable and uplifting, thank you”. “Made me happy!” “Fun, active and relaxing.”* Interested in improving your wellbeing, but can't make the workshop? There is The New Room Community Choir who sing together every Wednesday lunchtime during term time.

Our friends at The Noise are hiring: they are advertising for a Deputy Event Coordinator to join their small team, to help plan, organise and promote 'The Noise' event in spring 2021. Find out more at [www.thenoise.org.uk/blog/wearehiring](http://www.thenoise.org.uk/blog/wearehiring).

Please continue to pray for the work of the Winter Night Shelter over the coming weeks as the final preparations are completed. The headlines are that seven en-suite rooms will be available in a centrally located B&B with Covid-secure accommodation. There will be between 7-14 guests at any one time (allowing for any couples). The funding target has almost been met (THANK YOU!), recruitment for a Deputy Coordinator continues, and lastly volunteer churches and individuals are signing up, but there are still gaps. There are several ways in which you can support this work. Prayer support, co-ordinated by Revd Patrick Stonehewer. He will send email updates to those who are on his list.

- Toiletries will be collected by children at Horfield CVEC School. We will make sure they are delivered to the B&B.

- By thinking about being a mentor, to support the homeless guests. If you think you have some of the following skills, please talk to Rev Patrick about the possibility of offering your time in this way in January, February and March: excellent listening skills, ability to empower others, ability to ask open questions, can maintain boundaries, non-judgemental character, encouraging, ability to challenge, reliable, accountable. Training will be provided in early January.

You can also provide financial support, if you are able to,

- By transferring money to the Horfield Church bank account. Use the reference BCWNS. If you do not have the account details and would like to pay by BACS, please email [treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk).
- Sending a cheque payable to Horfield Methodist Church with a covering note to HMC Treasurer, 20 Cransley Crescent, Henleaze, Bristol, BS9 4PG.
- Donate by card by going to [horfieldmethodist.myдона.com](http://horfieldmethodist.myдона.com).

Free Hate Crime Awareness Talk, followed by a Q and A session, on Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> December (11.00am – 11.30am) <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/131071978817> and then on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> December (5.30pm – 7.00pm) <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/131072727055>. Both these are run by Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI), a specialist charity that supports victims of hate crime and discrimination against a person's protected characteristic as defined in the Equality's Act, 2010. SARI is locally based and works alongside a number of organisations including faith communities.

**Bishopston** is looking for someone to manage the financial books on a month to month basis. Some knowledge of book keeping would be an advantage. Remuneration to be negotiated. If you are interested please contact Mrs Pauline Harris on [pfharris@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:pfharris@blueyonder.co.uk). Thank you.

**Big Church Sing Christmas Special.** Join with churches all across the UK for The Big Church Sing Christmas Special on the Methodist Church's YouTube channel. Celebrate Jesus' birth by singing your favourite Christmas carols with thousands of people alongside leading Christian musicians. Also a chance to join in the festive fun with a special Extraordinary Christmas Nativity narrated by Songs of Praise and CBeebies presenter Gemma Hunt. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSeBSh2w1GQ>

## Bishopston.

It was with great sadness that we have learnt of the death of Joan Borrow who passed away on Saturday. She had been receiving palliative care at Southmead Hospital for the last couple of weeks, having battled with cancer for a number of years. Her husband Michael was present at the time she passed. Funeral details have still to be finalised. We hold Michael and Joan before God in our thoughts and prayers.

## Horfield.

**Family-fun festive fundraising quiz!** Join us for a fun time on Zoom for a 'not-too-taxing-on-the-brain' quiz for all the family, hosted by Dan Smith on Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> December, 4.30pm - 6.00pm. Christmas jumpers welcome! There will be a 10-minute interlude halfway through when you can make yourself a cuppa and have a mince pie/sandwich whilst working on the answers for one of the rounds - or just have a quick chat with some of the other quizzers! Suggested minimum donation of £2 per adult, children - free. No prize - just a big round of applause at the end for the winner! Some rounds will be visual (e.g. charades), but the rest will be fine if you are only able to join us by phone. Contact Helen (Email: [treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk) or tel 0117 9624 257) for the Zoom access details and also how to pay.

**Junior Church.** Junior Church sessions continue online every Sunday at 10:00am. Email Helen before Saturday midday, for each week's Junior Church Zoom access details ([treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@horfieldmethodist.org.uk)).

An important part of our discipleship is to pray for our community and each other. This week you are asked to pray for the following people and their families:- Rachel and John Gowin, Denise Gordon, Geoff Grady, Hayley Grady, and Colston Grady.

## NOTICE 5 (SHIREHAMPTON) ----

Local churches in and around Shire are planning to lead an Alpha Course, starting in the New Year. Alpha is ideal for anyone asking questions about faith and interested in exploring ideas. It's also good for new Christians, newcomers to church and those wanting to brush up on the basics. Further details from John Goodenough, Lawrence Weston Baptist Church: 0117 950 6755, 07773 110635 or [johnthebaptist19a@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:johnthebaptist19a@hotmail.co.uk)

## WEEKLY NOTICES, ETC.

All items to be sent to John Hopper by each Tuesday ([p.hopper1@btinternet.com](mailto:p.hopper1@btinternet.com) or 0117 951 4529). To be added to, or deleted from, the electronic circulation, please email John Hopper.

Please note that the notices for **Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> December** will be a **double** issue and will be issued on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> December. All items must be with me by **Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> December**. *John Hopper.*

The next issue after this will be that for **Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2021**. The contact will then be **Eurfron Parry** ([eurfron@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:eurfron@blueyonder.co.uk)), or 117 969 1908).

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**This week's lectionary readings for the Third Sunday in Advent are:**  
Isaiah 61: 1 – 4 and 8 - 11; 1 Thessaonians 5: 16 - 24; and John 1: 6 – 8 and 19 – 28.

## The reflection on the gospel reading is by Christine Jones (Longwell Green).

When we read straight through the prologue to John's gospel verse 6 comes as a bit of a jolt. The first 5 verses have been very poetic, about Word, God, life, light, darkness. Suddenly we are back down to earth, *"There came a man who was sent by God, his name was John"*. There came a man – not word or light – a man. A human being, like us; but a man *'who was sent by God'*; a man with a mission, a purpose, a function. *'He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all [people] might believe.'*

The writer makes a clear distinction, *"He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light"*. Then the writer reverts to poetry, until we get to verse 15. In middle of a passage about grace and truth we suddenly get, *"John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me'."* Then the poetry rises to climax with the naming of Jesus Christ. So far we have been given a statement and a riddle "There came a man who was sent by God, his name was John". *"He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me"*.

Then we get a dialogue with the religious authorities that sounds like Twenty Questions. “Are you the Christ?” “No”. “Are you Elijah?” “No”. “Are you the Prophet?” “No”. Then it changes to sound more like a TV series, “Who do you think you are?” It is hard for us in a sceptical, agnostic generation to get inside the first century mind-set whose first question was ‘Are you the Christ?’ It just would not occur to anyone to ask it today. We have totally lost that sense of expectancy. It might be about our nineteenth question, when we have exhausted all the more obvious possibilities.

“Are you Elijah?” There was a popular belief that before Christ came Elijah would return. But John is quite definite that he is not Elijah.

“Are you the Prophet?” According to Moses, God had promised “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers” [Deut 18:18]. God had raised up many prophets from among them, and still the people ask. But John is quite definite that he is not the Prophet.

So “Who do you think you are?”

Most celebrities answer this by delving into their past. John looks to the future, to one who is to come after him. Up to this point John’s confession has sounded rather negative, “*I am not*”. Now the way is clear for him to state who he is, “*I am the voice of one calling in the desert*”. He came as a witness to the light, to testify concerning that light. His message was that someone far more important was coming; so that through him all people might believe.

Giving testimony used to be something Methodists did regularly in class meetings. We have got out of practise. When did you last give yours? When did you last tell someone what Christ has done in your life? And was it up to date? Or was it your conversion experience from 50 years ago? What has Christ done in your life recently?

Here is a challenge for you. Imagine a neighbour asks what Christmas means to you. In the next ten days make yourself some notes about what Christ means to you, so that by Christmas you are ready to say how important he is.

Pray this verse of an old carol by George Stringer Rowe:

*“And to those who never listened to the message of thy birth,  
Who have winter, but no Christmas bringing them thy peace on earth,  
Send to these the joyful tidings; by all people in each home,  
Be there heard the Christmas anthem: “Praise to God, the Christ has come!”*