



The Methodist Church

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

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We are part of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit (www.bsgc.org.uk)

a family of churches serving communities across the local area.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.

Sunday 18 December 2022

THERE IS ROOM
in the Christmas story for
YOU ME US ALL

Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.
(paraphrased from Luke 2:5-7)

Familiar words which remind us that God found room in our world when Jesus was born in the Bethlehem stable, 'incarnation' - God made flesh and blood in Jesus. But God isn't limited to one place and time. God wants to be born in our hearts too. There is room in the Bethlehem stable for all of us and there is room in all of us for the stable. What might it look like for you to make room for God? Take a moment right now. The divine wants to be born in your heart today. As you celebrate Christmas, can you make room for Jesus in your heart, and pray the same for those you know and you love?

Lord, the door of the inn was open for Mary and Joseph when they had nowhere to stay. Help your church to open its doors to those who need food to eat and money to heat their homes. The shepherds alone in the fields were visited by angels. May your church visit the lonely and isolated. The magi gave gifts to Jesus, may we give our lives to serve Christ and others this Christmas and forevermore. Amen

Wishing you all a joy-filled Christmas and a peaceful 2023. Rev Patrick

SERVICES from Sunday 18 December onwards including CHRISTMAS

Bishopston.

18 December, 10.30, Carol Service.

24 December, 10.30, Carols on the steps of Bishopston Church.

24 December, 11.30pm, Midnight Communion at Horfield, Rev Patrick Stonehewer.

25 December, 10.30, Christmas Day Worship, Rev Dilwyn Edwards.

Horfield.

18 December, 10.00, All Age Worship led by members of the congregation.

18 December, 12.30, Christian Believers Fellowship, led by William Carey.

18 December, 6.00, Candlelight Carol Service conducted by Rev. P. Stonehewer.

24 December, 4.00, Messy Christmas.

24 December, 11.30pm, Midnight Communion, Rev Patrick Stonehewer.

25 December, 10.00, Christmas Day Worship, Rev Mandy Briggs.

Shirehampton.

18 December, 11.00, Carol Service, Rev Patrick Stonehewer.

25 December, 10.30. Christmas Day Worship, Rev Patrick Stonehewer.

Pilning and Easter Compton.

18 December, 10.00, led by the Anglican Team

19 December, 7.30pm, Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

24 December, 9.30pm, Christmas Communion Service, Rev Patrick Stonehewer.

25 December, 10.30, Rev Dr Jonathan Pye.

Worship on Sunday 1 January and the week

Horfield with Bishopston. 10.00 at Horfield led by members of the congregation

Shirehampton. No service

St Peter's and Easter Compton at 10.00 conducted by Rev Paul Van Rossum.

Worship for Sunday 8 January 2023 and the Week

Horfield. at 10.00 conducted by D. Head. All Aged Worship

Bishopston at 10.30 conducted by Rev Patrick Stonehewer, Covenant Service with Holy Communion.

Shirehampton at 11.00. All Age Worship. 4.45pm. Joint Service at the Cotswold Centre.

St Peter's, Pilning and Easter Compton at 10.00. Conducted by A. Biddlestone.

Easter Compton on Wednesday 11 January at 3.00. Quiet, reflective Space.

GENERAL NOTICES. We are taking two weeks' break. The next edition of the Combined Notices will be on Sunday 8 January 2023. Please send items to Eurfron by Tuesday, eurfron@blueyonder.co.uk or 0117 969 1908

Horfield. Christmas Greetings. If you can't get to church and you would like to have your Christmas message and/or name written on a star on the communal Christmas card board, then just ask a member of the Eco Group - Eurfron, Monique, Margaret, Lou, Helen, David, Audrey, Bob, Asmin or Lorraine.



Horfield. Members of one of our House Groups with the Knitivity, covering a time slot collecting for St. Peter's Hospice in the Mall.

Horfield. Sheila Lomas is collecting used stamps for the Leprosy appeal. Please keep all the stamps from your Christmas mail and bring them to church.

Horfield and Bishopston. An important part of our discipleship is to pray for our community and one another. This week you are asked to pray for the following and their families: Helen Wallbridge, Amy Warren, Bob Walters, Harriet White, Christine Williams.

ALFA Christian Community. Sunday 1st January. We will meet at Fulligrove House at 2.30pm for a walk, returning for tea and cakes at 4pm and prayer at 5pm. There will be a simple meal (soup, cheese etc.) at around 6.15pm. Please let us know if you would like to join us for the walk and meal but feel free to just turn up for the tea and cakes and/or prayer. Email info@alfacc.org.uk. Drop-ins continue on Wednesday afternoons 2.30-4.30pm before Christmas and afterwards there will be a two week break returning on 11 January.

St. Peter's School, Pilning. Foundation Governor Vacancy. We are looking for one Methodist Foundation Governor and it is hoped to bring a name to the January Circuit Meeting. Experience in Education is not essential. Mike Ormond, Chair of Governors, writes. 'We are ideally after Governors with experience beyond education, our Resources Committee needs bolstering and in addition to the Foundation aspects we could really use strengths in General Business, Finance, Human Resources.' If you are interested, please contact Adam Biddlestone circuitengagement@bsgc.org.uk

Dates for your diary: January 12 at 7.30 on Zoom, Horfield, Eco Meeting; January 19 at 7.30 on Zoom, Horfield, Leadership Meeting.

Reflection on the Lectionary Sunday 18th December (Advent 4)

Psalm 80 : 1 - 7, 17 - 19; Isaiah 7 : 10 - 16; Romans 1 : 1 - 7; Matthew 1 : 18 - 25

The reflection on the Gospel Reading is by Local Preacher, Tim Lansdown (Hanham).

With Christmas almost upon us there will be a full round of carol services, crib services and nativity plays available for us to attend. At any of these, when a passage from the gospels is read, the chances are it will be the well-loved story from Luke chapter 2 v 1-7 telling of the birth of Jesus. Many of you would, I am sure, be able to recite most of it from memory.

But the lectionary has just moved us from Luke's gospel to Matthew's gospel and on the fourth Sunday of Advent we are invited to consider the alternative account of the birth of Jesus which is not so well known. Some commentators suggest that the Lucan version is Mary's story and the Matthean version is Joseph's account. Perhaps, because we prefer Luke's narrative, we see Joseph as just a shadowy figure in the background.

Yet he played a key role in the story. Twice he is instructed by God in a dream, firstly by standing by Mary in her seeming disgrace, leading her on that long journey from Nazareth down to Bethlehem and then by fleeing to safety in Egypt away from Herod's purge. Here we have a family very much under pressure for all sorts of reasons just as many families are today. But Joseph was there with his support when the other members of their family to whom they might have turned were at home, far away. Our late Queen often spoken of the support she was given by Prince Philip, quietly in the background, so we can perhaps draw a parallel here with Mary and Joseph.

There are two further reasons why we should not forget Joseph of Nazareth.

Firstly, you may have seen some of the programmes, "Who do you think you are?" where celebrities are invited to trace back their family history to see if there are any skeletons in the cupboard. Some of you may have conducted your own searches into your lineage. Matthew's gospel opens with a genealogical table leading us from Abraham down to David then onto Joseph and finally Jesus. Matthew is setting out to show us that Jesus is of royal lineage fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah 9:7. The problem though is that there are some rum characters in the line including a harlot, a slave, and a foreigner, Ruth the Moabite. Even the great King David was an adulterer and a murderer. But, strangely, this list of diverse characters gives us hope. If Jesus, who did so much good was fashioned from such dubious material, surely so can we. God can do something worthwhile with the likes of us however mixed up and worthless we might seem.

Secondly, it was Joseph's responsibility to name the baby (you are to name him Jesus v.21). Names are important: how delighted we are when someone who doesn't know us well remembers our name and how embarrassed we are when we forget someone's name. In biblical times names were important and carried meaning. Sometimes names were changed to define a person's new role. Abram became Abraham, the father of a nation and Simon became Peter the rock. The name Jesus comes from the same root as Joshua meaning 'Saviour'.

We are called to make the name of Jesus known for we are his representatives here on earth. A representative or agent is someone who acts on behalf of another. Some of us may have created a Power of Attorney to give authority to someone, maybe our children, to act on our behalf when we are no longer capable.

To act on behalf of Jesus may feel daunting but we can take heart. In verse 23, Joseph is given another name for Jesus. The messenger refers him back to the words of the prophet Isaiah "he shall be called Immanuel" meaning God with us. In all he calls us to do in his name we are assured that God is with us. At this special time of year may those words be truly ours.

*O Emmanuel, God with us,
hope of the world and Saviour of all
Come and live in us, now and forever. Amen*

Our thanks to Tim for this reflection