

The Methodist Church

Bishopston, Horfield, Shirehampton Methodist Churches & St Peter's, Pilning.

Email: martin.slocombe@methodist.org.uk

We are part of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit (www.bsgc.org.uk) a family of churches serving communities across the local area.

Sunday 3rd December 2023



Advent 2023

We are fast approaching the season of advent, and the festivities of Christmas for another year will soon be upon us. What's that I hear? Is that a collective groan at the thought of all that work which will be needed to ensure this Christmas is a success? That is often the response we make, but if that is truly how we feel, perhaps we are concentrating on the wrong part of the advent season. The stresses and strains of getting ready for Christmas are not part of a Christmas story where we celebrate the incarnation of the Prince of Peace, but are the result of the pressures we put upon ourselves to conform to the modern celebration of this festival.

The first Christmas was a very simple affair, which we may have lost sight of. If we think back to the original story, yes, there were the stresses and strains that Mary and Joseph had to overcome in travelling to Bethlehem to register for the census, but the birth of Jesus, which is the focal point of what we are celebrating, happened quietly and calmly in a simple room, and passed almost unnoticed, except for a few shepherds and some wise men.

I am not going to bemoan the increasing commercialism of Christmas, because even though this is not what Christmas is all about, it does ensure that the birth of Jesus is an event which remains at the front of everyone's mind, and for some, is the motivation to visit our churches, where they will receive a message of love and peace at this busy time. Perhaps now, more than at any other time of the year, we should be able to proclaim aloud the Good News of the birth of Christ.

Advent, is a time of preparation, a time for looking forward with excitement, not with dread, but with joy.

A - anticipation - a positive expectation of Good News

D - determination - a commitment that this Christmas will make a difference in our lives and those around us

V - valued - a reminder that Jesus came to share the love of God with everyone, and we should do the same

E - encouragement - we are surrounded by the love of God; through whose strength we can achieve more than we can imagine

N - nativity - a reminder of the birth story which we can share with family and friends

T - thanksgiving - we thank God for the incarnation of Jesus and the hope this gives us all, shown through the love and grace of God

Isaiah 9.6:

'For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

May God richly bless you, your families and those you love, this advent and Christmas season.

Revd Martin

WORSHIP DETAILS for 3 December

Horfield at 10.00 conducted by Rev Martin Slocombe with Holy Communion. At 6p.m. Advent Service at Holy Trinity, Horfield.

Bishopston at 10.30 conducted by D. Head.

Shirehampton at 11.00 conducted by B. Wallace.

St Peter's, Pilning at 10.00 conducted by the Anglican Team with Holy Communion.

OTHER WORSHIP DETAILS for 3 December and the week.

Sunday Worship. Radio 4 at 8.10.

Daily Service at 9.45. BBC Radio 4, Long Wave.

Songs of Praise. Sunday BBC1 at 1.15.

You will also find an online service of Morning Prayer to cover each day of the week, available from first thing each Monday at <https://westburyparkchurch.org.uk/worship-service>

Every Wednesday afternoon, 2.30-4.30 p.m. Drop-in for cream tea and a chat at Fulligrove House/Garden. All welcome

WORSHIP DETAILS for 10 December

Horfield at 10.00 conducted by C.Sledge.

Bishopston at 10.30 conducted by Rev. Martin Slocombe with Holy Communion.

Shirehampton at 11.00. Local Arrangement and All Age Worship.

St Peter's, Pilning at 10.00 conducted by J. Emmett

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

4 December to 10 December. Christmas Journey at Horfield

17 December 10.00, Horfield - Nativity

3pm, Shirehampton - Carol Service

6pm, Horfield - Carol Service

18 December 7.30pm, St Peter's - Carol service

23 December 11.00, Bishopston - Carols on the steps

24 December 4pm, Horfield - Messy Christmas

7pm, Shirehampton - Carols on the Green

9.30pm, St Peter's - Christmas Communion

11.30pm, Bishopston - Midnight Communion

25 December 10.00, Horfield

10.30, Bishopston

10.30, Shirehampton.

10.30, St Peter's

There will be a Christmas Trail around the car park of Horfield Baptist Church at 160A Gloucester Road from the 9th December. You will need a QR code reader from a device to take part.

GENERAL NOTICES. Please send items to Eurfron by Tuesday, eurfron@blueyonder.co.uk or 0117 969 1908

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; Chi Hui Tan, Rachel Tan, Asmin Taylor, Beryl Thompson, Hazel Thorn, June Threlfall.

Bishopston. Our special prayers and sympathy go to June Threlfall whose son Graham died last week. The funeral will be held on 8 December.



The Christmas Journey

Come and join us as we journey through a series of scenes finding out about why Christians celebrate Christmas and what God's BIG PRESENT was

Saturday 9 December
at Horfield Methodist Church
 (Entrance on Churchways Avenue)

- ☆ *For all ages*
- ☆ *Follow the Christmas Story through an interactive, multi-sensory experience*
- ☆ *The event is free - donations welcome!*
- ☆ *Refreshments available to purchase*
- ☆ *Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times*

BOOK NOW TO GUARANTEE YOUR PLACE

Only 12 spaces available to pre-book for each time slot:

Morning: 9.30, 9.45, 10.45, 11.00

Afternoon: 2.00, 2.15

Email (please state 1st & 2nd choice times):+
christmasjourney@horfieldmethodist.org.uk



Bishopston. There will be no coffee morning at Bishopston on the 2 December. We will be singing carols and serving tea, coffee and mince pies on the 23 December. Everyone is welcome to come and join in the singing. We will not be having Coffee mornings in the new year, only on special occasions.

Horfield. Church heating. Now that it is getting colder, you might have noticed that the church feels a little colder on Sundays than in past years. As part of our commitment to consider how we can be more eco-friendly as a church, the heating has been turned down half of a degree and is now set at 18.5°C.

Many people will tell you that 'in the old days' they used to just put on an extra layer or two - and this is what we're asking you to do if you feel the cold. So, please come to church prepared! Thank you.

Christians at Bristol Pride Carols and Eucharist. Sunday 10 December. It is being held at St Nicholas of Tolentino RC Church in the Bristol city centre which is at the forefront of inclusion for the Catholic LGBT+ community. Fr Richard McKay will be leading the service which will include liturgy, readings and carols plus a Catholic celebration of the Eucharist at which everyone is welcome to receive.

Before the service there will be a short (hour) meeting of the CABP co-ordinating group from 2pm. Please let Mandy at the New Room Know if you will be available to attend as a partner church representative. At present this just involves coming to say hello and becoming a person who receives and distributes info re the Pride events in the summer (although we may need some extra pairs of hands when it comes to putting the Pride events together next summer).

The Stay in Touch project with Bristol Churches Shelter, is supporting, and befriending the guests as they leave the shelter and move on to the next stage of their lives. The idea is for volunteers to provide friendship, support, and encouragement at this crucial time, so the guests can gain confidence to move forward in their lives successfully. This could be in the form of a reassuring chat over coffee, signposting to other support networks who can give specific advice or practical support completing forms and help applying for jobs. Training will be giving, and DBS checks, also help and assistance will be offered to volunteers by staff.

If you are interested in being part of this project, please get in touch with Jane at Jane.jones@inhope.uk As always, thanks so much for your support for Bristol Churches Shelter.

Want to be in a panto? The Bartholomites are looking for a cast for their April 2024 panto at Horfield Methodist Church Hall. No auditions held. Script readings start at the hall on Monday 4 December at 8pm. If you'd rather not have a speaking part but interested in being in the chorus, then rehearsals start Sunday 7 January 2024, 3pm. Any questions or to flag your interest, please contact thebartholomites@gmail.com. If you're interested in getting involved but would rather not be on-stage, then contact us as well to discuss.

Lectionary Readings from the Ipswich Circuit for 3rd December

Isaiah 64, v1-9	Rip the heavens apart!
1 Corinthians 1, v3-9	Signs of God at work.
Mark 13, v24-27	When the Son of Man appears.

Signs and blessings.

Isaiah was writing after the return of the exiles from Babylon, at a time when Jerusalem was still in ruins. The people of Judah are despondent. As a remnant of a once proud independent nation, they now find themselves living in poverty, an insignificant ethnic group, within the Persian Empire. The Persians had taken over from the Babylonians (and the Assyrians before them) as the regional 'superpower'.

Isaiah calls on God to make himself known. *"Rip the heavens apart! Make the mountains tremble"*

(v1) pleads Isaiah, who wants God to show his power over the universe to those who think that they rule the world.

Isaiah recognizes that *"We are nothing but clay, but you (God) are the potter who moulded us"*. (v8).

"Remember that all of us are your people". (v9b).

Isaiah is desperate to be given a sign of hope and a word of blessing to relay to the people of Judah.

(God responds to Isaiah in the next chapter).

At this time of Advent, we too are keen to be given a sign of hope and a word of blessing.

The gospel reading from Mark is both a sign and a blessing.

"Then the Son of Man will be seen coming in the clouds with great power and glory". (v26).

Mark and his readers are well aware that the 'Son of Man' reference is one that Jesus used to describe himself (see Mark 9 v31); and relates to the prophet Daniel's vision of *"one like a son of man"* being invited by God to sit on a throne. This chosen one of God is *"crowned king and given power and glory so that all people of every nation and race would serve him"*. (Dan 7 v13, 14).

Mark is sure that Jesus as Christ the King will rule with true justice and mercy.

The apostle Paul believed that Christ would soon return. He assures the Corinthians that *"you are not missing any blessings as you wait for him to return"*. (v7).

"God can be trusted", Paul says, *"and he chose you to be partners with his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ"*. (v9).

Paul recognized God at work in and through the Corinthians, by their understanding of the gospel, (the good news about Jesus) and their willingness to share the gospel with others. (v5).

What 'signs' (of God at work) are you looking for today, in creation, or in the community?

A rainbow in the sky? Acts of kindness, compassion, generosity, or hospitality perhaps?

As followers of Jesus, we are encouraged to acknowledge God's blessing upon us and to be Christ's partners in passing on that blessing to others. (Philippians 2 v1).

Bible quotations are taken from the Contemporary English Version.