



St John's News

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Registered Charity No 1130633

December
2020 &
January
2021

Christmas is not cancelled!



The prospect of a Christmas without large-scale celebrations is preying on minds. After the widespread cancellation of pantomimes, festive light "switch-ons" and other community activities, it seems likely that 2020s festivities will be much more intimate affairs, potentially with households banned from mixing indoors. Headlines in tabloid newspapers have indicated whether or not they think the Government is going to cancel Christmas.

Yes, things will be very different this year. But Christmas is not cancelled!

In 1647, Parliament had won the civil war in England, Scotland and Ireland and King Charles was held in captivity at Hampton Court. The Church of England had been abolished and replaced by a Presbyterian system, and holy days, Christmas included, were abolished. The usual festivities were deemed unacceptable, shops had to stay open (including on Christmas Day), decorations were banned, and feasting and the consumption of alcohol were restricted. Church Services on Christmas Day were banned.

The reasons for the restrictions are very different this year – this year the restrictions are not about an ideology but about a pandemic and about keeping us all safe and well.

In 1647 many people broke the rules and were arrested. But the true Christmas was not cancelled in 1647 and nor is it in 2020! The government can stop us travelling and having large intergenerational gatherings but they cannot cancel Christmas.

The Christmas season, especially in the West, is a mix of pre-Christian, Christian, and secular traditions. 'Christmas' literally means Christian Mass. It's a shortened form of Christ's Mass. Christmas is a time of spiritual reflection on the important foundations of the Christian faith. It's also a celebration. It's when we

celebrate God's love for the world through the birth of the Christ child: Jesus.

We need perhaps to look at Christmas differently this year but Christmas is not cancelled!

Most of you reading this article will have had lockdown birthdays – celebrations were not as you would have wished – but your birthday still happened. So for us as Christians, the Birth of Christ is a fact of history and we can still celebrate the message of the incarnation. As Charles Wesley put it (StF 208):

***Let earth and heaven combine,
Angels and all agree
To praise in songs divine, the incarnate Deity,
Our God contracted to a span,
incomprehensibly made man.***

This is what we are celebrating and remembering and no pandemic and no government can take that away from any Christian in the world. We are just going to have to find different ways to celebrate our faith this year! And remember :

***When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with
their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost, to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.***

Now the Work of Christmas Begins by Howard Thurman

This is our vocation as Christians because of the first Christmas Day. Christmas is not cancelled! With all good wishes for Christmas and for the year that is to come.

Rosemary Fletcher

Welcome to our packed edition covering Christmas and the New Year. Despite COVID-19, there is a lot going on in our church community! Our next edition will come out for February. **Details of our services for December and January (lockdown restrictions permitting) are on page 2.**

Carol singing

Unfortunately, one of the many casualties of the COVID-19 pandemic will be the carol singing that we usually enjoy both in the streets around St John's, and at Sainsbury's. We hope that normal service will be resumed in 2021!

Christmas cards at St John's

This year due to COVID we will not be having our normal card rack at the back of the church. Instead we are inviting you to drop your cards for St John's folk into our big collection box which will only be available at the services on the **6th and 13th December**. They will then be safely sorted and given out after the following Sunday's service. Alternatively you could use one of the many charity sites and send your greetings electronically (some require or request a donation to be made - to a good cause!), for example: [Shelter](#), [Macmillan](#), or [Friends of the Earth](#).

DECEMBER SERVICES

Sunday 6th December

10.30am **Christingle Service**
led by Graham Phillips
Duty steward: Helen Jeckells

Sunday 13th December

10.30am Morning Worship
led by Rev Rosemary Fletcher
Duty steward: Myra Sloper

Sunday 20th December

10.30am **Christmas Celebration**
led by Rev Ali Facey
Duty steward: Dave Best

Friday 25th December

CHRISTMAS DAY

10.30am Morning worship with
Holy Communion
led by Rev Ali Facey
Duty steward: Chris Humphreys

Sunday 27th December

NO SERVICE

JANUARY SERVICES

Sunday 3rd January

10.30am Morning Worship led by
Deacon Linda Kinchenton
Duty steward: Robin Burns

Sunday 10th January

COVENANT SERVICE

10.30am Morning Worship
with Holy Communion
led by Rev Ali Facey
Duty steward: Helen Jeckells

Sunday 17th January

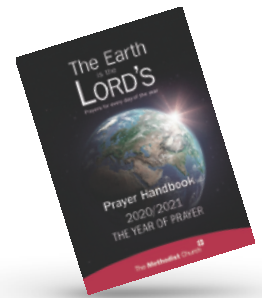
10.30am Morning Worship
led by Rev Ali Facey
Duty steward: Myra Sloper

Sunday 24th January

10.30am Morning Worship led by
Rev Stephen Poxon
Duty steward: Chris Humphreys

Sunday 31st January

10.30am Morning Worship
led by Rev Ali Facey
Duty steward: Dave Best



Methodist Prayer Handbook 2021/22

Would you like to write a prayer for the next prayer handbook? The theme is 'a place for all'.

No one was excluded from Jesus' table and eating with him was a sign of the kingdom of heaven and an invitation to meet God and to be transformed. We recognise that we do not always offer such generous welcome or listen to the voices on the margins.

As the Church strives to be God's people in a world changed by a global pandemic, we invite prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, penitence and resolve that, with God's help, we may recognise and repent of our exclusivity, and that then we may be reconciling, open to all and ready to listen to all voices equally. Together, we pray to become a more inclusive and diverse Church, creating communities of greater respect and compassion.

In addition to prayers on the theme of the Handbook, we invite prayers of thanksgiving, adoration and confession and prayers on the themes of justice, times of life and times of day and the comforting presence of God for the opening pages of the Handbook.

Prayers must be no longer than 120 words. Photographs are also welcomed that will help to bring our theme to life. Full submission guidelines are available at: www.methodist.org.uk/prayerhandbook

The deadline for submission of prayers and photos is 11 January 2021.

Best laid plans...

At the time of writing it appears that all of the services listed above will be possible! There is obviously a risk that any further unexpected COVID-19 restrictions in our area might cause last minute cancellations or changes. Keep an eye on the St John's website (faithfully and regularly kept up to date by Chris Humphreys - to whom many thanks!) for updates:

www.stjohnspb.org.uk

Scout Quiz 2020

Quiz sheets are now available, in return for a donation of £1 (or more if you wish!) for Scout Funds. Why not buy extra copies to send to friends and relatives to keep them entertained at Christmas? Without our usual fund-raising Jumble Sales and Christmas Market this year, your support would greatly be appreciated. Please contact Liz Bekooy on 01707 659597 to obtain your copy (or copies) either in paper form or online. Thank you.

Families are welcome to all our 10.30am services.

Covenant Service, 10 January

This service celebrates all that God has done for us and recommits our lives and choices to God. The Covenant Prayer - the focal point - is like a set of New Year resolutions that emphasise the importance of doing and being, as much as believing. Moreover, the prayer commits us to being disciples and putting God first in our lives: in what we do, what we say and who we are.

Christmas greetings!

Ali writes: Chris, Luke, Bethan and I would like to wish you this Christmas and New Year the light, peace and hope that Jesus Christ brings. I would like to thank Rev Rosemary Fletcher for having pastoral oversight of St John's during my absence and period of recuperation. From 1st January I will be taking back pastoral charge of St John's.

Christmas charity 2020



“Running was never something I saw myself doing. A few 'light jogs' at university in a bid to try and stay healthy was about as far as it went. But that all changed last year when I found out I had got a place in the London Marathon. Why would I enter if I wasn't a runner? Very good question. For me it wasn't about running or myself. I wanted to do it for my Mum. For my marathon place wasn't in the usual public ballot, but a charity place that was very close to my heart – Kidney Care UK.

My mother, Sue Finch, was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD) in her mid-20s. The same disease that sadly saw her lose her own father when she was just 9 years old. PKD is an incurable and unpredictable disease, causing multiple cysts to develop on the surface of the kidneys with symptoms including high blood pressure, extreme pain due to cysts



bursting or expanding, kidney stones and eventually renal failure.

And that was exactly what happened to Mum and why I'm here telling this story. In the early 2010s her condition worsened rapidly with her kidney function dropping to dangerous levels with multiple hospital stays and her eventually having to give up work. The only thing that would keep her alive would be to have a transplant but with extremely long donor waiting lists and her condition getting worse every day, we weren't hopeful.

In November 2012 we were truly blessed, a close family friend had stepped in and offered to be a donor for her. They were a successful match and he saved her life and became our hero.

In families with PKD, there is a 50% chance that a parent with PKD will pass it on to their child. In 2018, this was confirmed when I was also diagnosed.

Kidney Care is the UK's leading patient support charity, providing practical, financial and emotional support for kidney patients and their families whilst campaigning to improve care services across the UK. Their support has been invaluable to me while I adjust to my diagnosis and what living with PKD as a young adult will be like.

Over the last year I have put my body (and high blood pressure) through the ultimate test and taken part in several half marathons as part of my training.

As with so many other things this year – the London Marathon was cancelled but I took part in the virtual London Marathon on 4th October (in the pouring rain!) through the streets of Potters Bar and look forward to running it for real in 2021. I am pledging to raise over £2000 for this amazing charity and cannot thank St John's enough for choosing it as their Christmas charity this year and look forward to sharing my London Marathon experience with you!

Holly Finch

We are delighted that Holly will be coming to St John's on Sunday 6th December to introduce the charity to us.

It is fair to say we're all a bit uncertain about what Christmas is going to be like this year – and perhaps we're feeling a bit anxious about this. It's also fair to say that this year as much as ever it is critical we reach out to people who aren't part of our churches. The Christmas message of Emmanuel – the good news that God is with us – feels perhaps more pertinent than ever before in this extraordinary year.

The Methodist Church Christmas campaign for 2020 **#GodIsWithUs** seeks to share this good news through twenty-four stories of individuals and their experiences of this extraordinary year. Each day of Advent will focus on a testimony from somebody connected to the Methodist Church reflecting on what hope has looked like for them this year and how they have experienced God with them.

GOD IS WITH US

The individuals whose stories the campaign tells include those who have felt the painful effects of isolation this year, who have experienced extreme poverty, who have struggled with poor mental health, who have lost loved ones – like so many millions of others. But ultimately, incredibly, God's loving presence radiates from each of them in beams of powerful hope. Hope that is so necessary for such a time as this.

The campaign name, which ties in with our Presidential theme for the year, of course comes from John Wesley's purported words on his death bed: *'the best of all is, God is with us'* which reminds us that, even in the times which feel most uncertain, we can be certain of God.

Who do you know who needs to hear this message over the coming months?

Further details and resources available from the Methodist Church website [here](#).

Minister: Rev Ali Facey 01707 652978 (day off Friday)(minister@stjohnspb.org.uk)

Senior Steward: Chris Humphreys 01707 851320 (seniorsteward@stjohnspb.org.uk)

Treasurer: Rob Ward (treasurer@stjohnspb.org.uk)

Lettings: Chris and Lesley Humphreys 01707 851320 (bookings@stjohnspb.org.uk)

Nursery Playgroup: Celia Mills 07969 924482

Copy deadline for next issue is Sunday 24th January

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News of the church family

Congratulations to **Alan and Odette Cotterell** on the birth of Violet Amber. A new grandchild for Sue and Trevor.

Doris Lavigne has just celebrated her 99th birthday quietly at home. **Eric Long** also celebrated a very special birthday in November. Birthday wishes too for Barbara **Biaggini** who will be 94 years young in January.

John and Margaret Bland have recently moved to a new home slightly closer to church. We hope you will both settle quickly into your new surroundings.

June Parks is now home from hospital and is continuing to make steady progress.

With great sadness we announce that **Reg Merrill** died on 5th November at the age of 90 years. Reg had been a faithful, stalwart member of St Johns for very many years, where he had given much service to the maintenance of the building and in particular to the heating systems and we are indebted to him. He was skilled at carrying out repairs and improvements at minimum cost with maximum recycling. He had also helped many of our members with their own heating. We pray for his wife, Pat, who is also frail, and for his three children, Lesley, Raymond and David.



Sheila Osborn has died after a short illness whilst in UCH. Sheila was a member at St John's, was a welcoming steward and regularly attended Friday morning coffee with her friends. Sheila was an enthusiastic member of many clubs including U3A, the bowling club, horticultural society, photographic club and she also took part in the Hertfordshire Health walks around Potters Bar.



If you would like to include any future news, please contact Helen Barlow (Pastoral Secretary) on 01707 662254 or foodtech16@hotmail.co.uk



Over 50 people came together virtually on Saturday 14th November to take part in the Tearfund Big Quiz night at St John's. It was a really good evening and everyone had a great time. We used Zoom to switch between a single presentation of the questions and breaking into team groups to discuss their answers. In the middle we showed a video from Tearfund about their work. **We raised £885 plus £216.25 in Gift Aid which was fantastic.**

Overall, the Big Quiz has raised (at the time of writing) £196,624, with over 450 churches taking part.

Robin Burns

Tearfund write:

Every pound raised will transform the lives of people in need. People just like Alaya.

Alaya lives in Malawi with her husband, Bazwell, and their three young children. Frequent flooding washes away the little food they have, and brings diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea. Her crops fail, again and again.

This means that, for 11 months of the year, Alaya and her family are hungry surviving on just one meal a day.

With help from our local partner, Alaya and Bazwell are learning new ways to work the land under these tough conditions. Training like this is saving lives. Its giving people, like Alaya, a way to lift their families out of poverty for the long haul. Its more than just making sure they have enough food to survive.

For millions of people around the world, including Alaya, poverty is a huge barrier that stops them from enjoying life in its fullness. But, thanks to the funds raised through the Big Quiz Night, The local partner can continue to do all they can to help people like Alaya and her family get back on their feet. And flourish.

Christingle

Graham Phillips will be leading the All Age Christingle Service on **Sunday 6th December**, but what are the origins of the Christingle Service?

On 20th December, 1747, John de Watteville led a children's service in his Moravian church in Marienborn, Germany. He read out verses written by the children to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and explained that happiness comes through knowing Jesus, who "has kindled in each little heart a flame which keeps burning to their joy and our happiness". He went on to illustrate that 'flame', giving each child a little lighted wax candle, tied around with a red ribbon.

The visual aid was a great success with the children, and the candle and red ribbon came to be remembered every year. As the Moravians began to travel beyond Germany, so they took the custom with them.

In Moravian churches, the Christingle Service is usually held on the Sunday before Christmas or on Christmas Eve. The website for the Moravian Church says: "We are glad that the Moravian Church has been able to make this contribution to the wider Christian world."

CHURCH GROUPS AND REGULAR ACTIVITIES

Most of our groups and activities are still not operating as normal. If you are in any doubt, or need to contact those leading our regular groups and activities, please go to our website stjohnspb.org.uk to find the contact details for the relevant people.