

CONTACT



Magazine of Erdington Methodist Church
Station Road - December 23 / January 24

GROWING GOD'S KINGDOM IN ERDINGTON, THROUGH WORSHIP,
PRAYER, ACTION AND FRIENDSHIP

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The heart of Christmas

We're at that time of year again! But is Christmas just about the shopping, tree or presents? At its heart, Christmas is all about a God who has showed up on earth. The Creator of the universe, whose hands flung stars into space, cared enough to come to earth as a tiny baby.

'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.' (John 1:14)

Every year we sing carols and retell the same story of the donkey, innkeeper, stable, angels, shepherds, star, wise men, gifts and Mary and Joseph with baby! Why do we do all this? It's to remind us that God deals with the mess of our world by sending His Son to die in our place. This makes it possible for us to have a relationship with Himself:

When the time came, He "did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8)

Reflecting on Jesus in the manger is a great place to start understanding the heart of the Christmas message. However, it's so much more than simply a cute baby lying in the bed of straw:

*If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent us an educator;
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist;*

*If our greatest need had been money,
God would have sent us an economist;
If our greatest need had been pleasure,
God would have sent us an entertainer;
But our greatest need was forgiveness,
so God sent us a Saviour.*

by Canon Paul Hardingham - Parish Pump

Tuesday Club

At Tuesday Club on 12th December Nick Riley will be entertaining us with Christmas songs & we will be having a bring & share Festive Buffet.

Please come and join us in the foyer at 2.00 pm.

Christingle Service

Sunday 3rd December at 4.00 pm. Come along and learn all about what a Christingle is, what they represent and which bits are edible.

This year starring our very own BROC singers to add extra musical flavour.



Holy Land

I have written articles for a church magazine for over 20 years and I have studiously avoided topics which are topical or political/ contentious. In reality a bit like 'In Our Time' on Radio 4, where the experts, under forensic examination by Melvin Bragg, can talk about anything as long as it has no relevance to life today. But on Sunday the 5th November our minister treated us to "the most difficult words that I have ever tried to deliver". It was at the height of the Israeli bombardment of Gaza and the protest marches were growing in size in cities around the UK. How to make a Christian sense of the inhumanity that was visible to all, perpetrated by both sides in this unbelievably brutal conflict".

The Old Testament reading was, coincidentally, from Micah Ch. 3 verses 5-12 which are headed 'Leaders and Prophets rebuked', which talked about "the prophets who lead my people astray". I have no intentions of trying to compress a very powerful sermon into the 500 or so words of my contributions to Contact. Sufficient to say that the current situation is not God's way because humanity only achieves its best when it is inclusive to all.

Then we sang these famous words, which no doubt contributed to Dylan's Nobel Prize.

*How many years can some people exist?
before they're allowed to be free?
And how many times can a man turn his head,
pretending he just doesn't see?
And how many times must the cannonballs fly
before they're forever banned?*

*The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
the answer is blowin' in the wind.*

Bob Dylan 1962

As is inevitable with politics and the modern news cycle since then we have moved on. The Home Secretary has tried to put down a marker suggesting that all of those who protest at the treatment of Palestinian refugees are somehow condoning the violence. And at the same time the Chief Medical Officer has warned of looming crisis with the health of older people. That the wonders of their lengthening life will be overshadowed by the problems of premature aging and infirmity especially in rural and seaside communities. In truth just different bad news stories, which have contributed to, for the first time in my life an avoidance of the news cycle, because I just feel overwhelmed.

When I was a teenager, I had a predilection for science fiction stories. I remember very few of them in detail, with one or two notable exceptions, Arthur C Clarke, *Rendezvous with Rama*, 2001 a space Odyssey and Isaac Asimov who wrote the 'I Robot' stories. But for some reason I do remember the outline of a short story about a man who was detained in a secure hospital because he believed he was the ruler of the world. The set out a short period of this man's life, but went into great detail about how those who looked after him really only had one aim, how to support him in his delusions. When the senior nurse was asked, at the end of the story, why the patient was supported in this way the reply was "how can we not do this, because how civilised we are is judged by the way we treat such people".

Jesus teaches us that humanity is at its best when it believes that the greatest of us must be humble and approach life through the eyes of a child. That he came that we might have life in all its fullness. That he loves us in the way we must love one another.

Because when love goes, hope fails. Hope is amongst all of the current bad news and we hope and pray that somehow, one day, peace will come.

Peter Farley

Getting ready for Christmas...

In this season of endless parties, socialising and constant hospitality, please remember:

- No woman ever yet shot her husband while he was washing the dishes.
- Light travels faster than sound. That's why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
- Everyone has a photographic memory. But sadly, some don't have film.
- Blessed are those who can laugh at themselves, for they will never cease to be amused.
- Many people's ambition: to be weighed and found wanting.
- Seen it all, done it all, can't remember most of it.

Nativity Quiz in 20 Questions

We get to watch nativities each year but how well do we actually know the Christmas story?

1. Where did Mary and Joseph live before Jesus was born?
a) Nazareth b) Bethlehem c) Jerusalem
2. What was the name of the angel who told Mary she would have a child?
3. What did Joseph do for a living?
4. Who was the Roman ruler when Jesus was born?
5. Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?
6. How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
7. Why couldn't Mary and Joseph find a place to stay?
8. Where does the Bible say Jesus was born?
a) In a stable b) In hay c) In a manger
9. According to the Bible, which animals were specifically mentioned as being present in the stable when Jesus was born?
a) sheep and a donkey b) cattle and a donkey c) donkey, sheep and cattle d) None
10. What does the angel say to the shepherds when they tell them to go to Bethlehem?

11. The wise men travelled to Jerusalem.
a) northward b) southward c) eastward d) westward
12. What did the Wise Men follow to find Jesus?
13. How many Wise Men visited baby Jesus?
14. What gifts did the wise men bring for Jesus?
15. Who spread the news about baby Jesus throughout Bethlehem?
16. What is the City of David also known as in the bible?
17. Which of the gospels tell the story of the Nativity?
18. What does Jesus' other name, "Immanuel", mean?
a) God with us b) Son of God c) He who is God d) Chosen One
19. How many days after the birth of Christ did Joseph and Mary give him the name Jesus?
20. Jesus was born on the 25th of December. True or false?

What would you like for Christmas?

A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas.

The little girl gasped and stared up at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

The story behind 'The Night Before Christmas'

It was 200 years ago this Christmas, on 23rd December 1823, that the famous poem 'The Night Before Christmas' was first published (anonymously) in the Sentinel newspapers in Troy, New York.

It was light-hearted and full of fun, and not at all what you might have expected from its author, Clement Clarke Moore.

For Moore had been born in 1779 into a prominent New York family. His father, Benjamin Moore, the Episcopal bishop of New York, had even taken part in the inauguration of George Washington as the nation's first president.

As for Clement Moore, he was a scholar of Hebrew and a professor of Oriental and Greek literature at the General Theological Seminary in Manhattan.

But on 24th December 1822, the night that Moore composed the poem, he was traveling home from Greenwich Village. He had gone there to buy a turkey, in order to fill the last of a number of baskets that his family donated to the poor during the Christmas season.

Perhaps Moore was inspired by the plump, bearded Dutchman who took him by 'taxi' sleigh on his mercy errand through the snow-covered streets of New York City that night. But whatever it was, Moore scribbled down 'A Visit from St. Nicholas' for the amusement of his own six children, to whom he read the poem when he got home that evening. His description of St Nicholas

drew upon the Dutch-American and Norwegian traditions of a magical, gift-giving figure who appears at Christmas time.

The following year, Christmas 1823, the poem was made public, without his permission. Moore was said to have been at first embarrassed to be named as the author of such a light-hearted verse, and then astonished by its quick rise to popularity. He finally published it under his own name in 1844.

...But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

Father Christmas

Of course, I had expected that by the age of seven it was inevitable that my son would begin to have serious thoughts about Father Christmas.

Sure enough, one day near Christmas he suddenly said: "Mum, I know something about Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy."

Taking a deep breath, I asked him what that might be.

"Easy," he said, "They are all nocturnal."

Little Donkey

You are bound to sing about donkeys this Christmas, especially the little one that carried Mary to Bethlehem! But how much do you know about donkeys? They are really rather special.

Here are some fun facts:



There are more than 44 million donkeys in the world, of all shapes and sizes.

There are more than 186 breeds of donkey.

Donkeys have good memories. They can remember places and other donkeys even 25 years after they last saw them.

Donkeys are not stubborn, they are cautious. If they are fearful about something, they will do their best to avoid it.

Donkeys are naturally clean. Given the chance, they are always grooming themselves and each other.

Donkeys like to be warm and dry. They come from deserts and savannahs.

Donkeys are social. They make deep bonds with their family and herd and get very upset if someone they love is taken from them.

Donkeys have big ears for a good reason – it means they can hear each other at a great distance. They communicate by braying, grunting, whiffling, squealing and snorting.

Donkeys help the ecology of their desert homes by digging into the ground to access water. This provides little creatures such as birds and chipmunks with life-saving water.

From the Parish Pump Website

Sums up Christmas

Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: 'Peace on Earth'; 'Goodwill to All'; and 'Batteries not included'!



Sutton Park Circuit Christmas Services December 2023

Sunday 3rd December

Erdington	4pm Christingle Rev Emily Young
Four Oaks	10.30am Toy Service Angela & Glyn Constantine
South Parade	10.30am Toy Service Rev Alan Smithson
Witton	11am Toy Service & Witton Worship Fitzroy Storrod

Tuesday 5th December

Falcon Lodge	5.30pm Community Christmas Fair
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Friday 15th December

Erdington	6pm Scout Carol Service
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Saturday 16th December

Four Oaks	4pm Carols Around the Firepit. With mulled drinks and jacket potatoes. 6pm The talented Vincent Family hold their musical Christmas Concert. Tickets on the door £5. To include refreshments and mince pies.
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Sunday 17th December

Blackwood	No Morning Service 4pm Carol Service Deacon Marilyn Slowe
Boldmere	10am Local Arrangement 4pm Carol Service Rev Emily Young
Erdington	10.30am Carols/Local Arrangement
Falcon Lodge	10.30am Christmas Communion
Four Oaks	10.30am Carol Service Deacon Marilyn Slowe
Kingsbury	10.30am Diana Bosman
Kingstanding	11.00am Angela Constantine 6pm Carol Service Rev Emily Young
Nechells	11am Carols/Communion Rev Emily Young
South Parade	No Morning Service 6.30pm Candle-lit Carol Service – Rev Alan Smithson
St Chads	No Morning Service 4pm Carol Service Rev Jean & Rev Stephen Fletcher
Stockland Green	10.45am Glyn Constantine
Streetly	10.30am Toy Service, Carols & Nativity – Major Susan Stubbings
Witton	No Morning Service 4pm Carol Service Rev Nick Jones

Monday 18th December

Falcon Lodge	6.30pm Community Carol Service
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Sutton Park Circuit Christmas Services December 2023 continued

Wednesday 20th December

Kingstanding 6.00pm Circuit Kids and Brigades plus invite to Circuit Young people.
Christingle and celebrating Christmas, all are welcome to join.

Thursday 21st December

Kingstanding 2pm Midweek Carols and Communion

Sunday 24th December

Blackwood 10.30am Joining at Four Oaks
Boldmere No Morning Service
4pm Christingle Chris Blake
11.30pm Mid-night Communion Rev Emily Young
Erdington 10.30am HC Rev Emily Young
Falcon Lodge 10.30am Joining at Kingsbury
Four Oaks 10.30am Christmas Eve Combined Ext Communion, Blackwood joining Deacon
Marilyn Slowe
Kingsbury 10.30am Carol Service Rev Alan Smithson
Kingstanding 11am John Rutherford
Nechells 11am Peter Cashmore
South Parade 10.30am HC Rev Edwin Boddington
St Chads 10.30am Christine Hibbert
Stockland Green 10.45am Local Arrangement
Streetly 10.30am Local Arrangement
4pm Christingle – Jean Youdell
Witton 11am Local Arrangement

Christmas Day Monday 25th December

Blackwood 10.30am Joining at Streetly
Boldmere 10:00 Rev Emily Young / Chris Blake
Erdington No Service
Falcon Lodge 10.30am Joining at South Parade
Four Oaks 10.00am AAW Jack McGinnigle, plus we have the preparation of Christmas Day
lunches
Kingsbury 10.30am Local Arrangement
Kingstanding No Service
Nechells 11:00 Rev Emily Young
South Parade 10.30 Rev Alan Smithson shortened family service, Falcon Lodge joining
St Chads 10.30 am Rev Jean and Rev Stephen Fletcher
Stockland Green 10.45am Local Arrangement
Streetly 10.30am Joint service with Blackwood joining – Kirsten Newman & Clive Thursfield
Witton No Service

Carols Around the Fire Pit

Four Oaks Methodist Church

Saturday 16th December 4pm

Outdoor carol singing around the fire with mulled hot drinks
and baked potatoes.

All Welcome!



Merry
Christmas



Stronger

Statistics prove we're all getting stronger. Fifty years ago, you needed an estate car to hold £50 worth of Christmas presents. Twenty-five years ago, it took two people to carry £30 worth of Christmas groceries – now a five-year-old can do it.

A Christmas Blessing

With

B Natural Choir

Directed and conducted by
Richard Jeffries

*...and special guests
SCC's Ensemble Voices
And selected soloists*

Tickets £6 (children free)
Proceeds to SHELTER



Sunday 10th December 2023 4pm

*South Parade Methodist Church
Sutton Coldfield, B72 1QY*

Everyday Christmas

(Mal 4:2, Mt 1:23)

Light a candle,
Look into the light,
Pray.

*Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings
As the flame rises,
Smooth, bright,
Know the comfort of Christ
In the carol speaking
Afresh.
Bringing Jesus*

Into heart and prayer.
Emmanuel, God with us.
Light of the world,
Out of the stable
Into our situations.
Because of Jesus
Christmas is everyday.
The Lord is here.
Hallelujah.



By Daphne Kitching

An Invitation to Stand with Palestinian Christians this Advent and Christmas

Our Christian colleagues in Bethlehem tell us that this Advent and Christmas in Bethlehem the lights that normally adorn the birthplace of Jesus will remain unlit in memory of those who have been killed in the current conflict. The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem have noted that the traditional festive services in the Holy Land will be somber in nature due to the ongoing war.

The second candle on the Advent Ring represents peace, and in some traditions is known as the 'Bethlehem candle'. This Advent, we invite Methodist churches across the United Kingdom to do something 'out of the ordinary' and not to light the Advent Candle on the second Sunday in Advent (10 December) and on subsequent Sundays.

The Old Testament lectionary reading for 10 December starts with the words "Comfort, comfort my people says your God" (Isaiah 40:1). As such, it seems appropriate that we take this opportunity to think about Bethlehem and those who have been killed and those who are seeking comfort as they mourn. This unlit candle will serve as a constant reminder that we stand in solidarity with all who are suffering in the Holy Land.

The Stewards have agreed that this would be a good idea and we will observe this practise during our lighting of the advent candles - ed

Silent Night

It was the night before Christmas 1818, in the little village of Oberndorf, Austria. Joseph Mohr, the vicar, had just read the Christmas passage from Luke chapter 2, when a few verses inspired by the reading came into his mind. It would be pleasant, he thought, if they could be used at the Christmas Eve service, and so he called on the organist and handed him the verses.

Franz Gruber, the organist, thereupon composed a tune to which the verses could be sung and that was how one of the greatest Christmas carols - Silent Night - was created.

That evening, the organ broke down but, not to be outdone, the vicar and the organist sang the hymn as a duet. There the story might have ended had it not been for the organ. When the instrument had been repaired, the organist sat down to test it and played the tune composed by Gruber. He liked it and asked for a copy, which he took back to his home town. There a ladies' choir added it to their repertoire and it was included when they sang in other towns as well.

Gradually it became known by more and more people and it increased in popularity until today it must surely be the most frequently sung Christmas carol. Moreover, it is sung, not only in the language in which it was first written, but it has been translated into others too, so that, all over the world, people are united at Christmas in singing Silent Night in their own language.

Nativity Quiz Answers:

1. Nazareth
2. Gabriel
3. Carpenter
4. Caesar Augustus
5. To register for the census
6. We are not told in the Bible
7. There was no room at the inn
8. c) In a manger
9. d) None
10. 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to all people'
11. d) westward
12. A star
13. The Bible doesn't say
14. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh
15. The shepherds
16. Bethlehem
17. Matthew and Luke
18. a) God with us
19. 8, according to the law
20. False; we don't know the date





"For the next part of our carol-service, Nigel, the verger's nephew will play his interpretation of Silent Night..."

Children's Christmas Crafts

Saturday 9th December

From 10 – 11

At Erdington Methodist Church

For 0-7s

Crafts are free, drinks and toast available from the coffee morning for a donation.

Biscuit decorating,

Christmas Tree painting

Angels

Lanterns

Sheep

Christmas story time.



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves

Worship - December 2023

All worship at 10.30 am unless indicated otherwise

3rd - Kirsten Newman

- Christingle Service - 4.00 pm

9th - Children's Christmas Crafts at 10.00 am

10th - LOCAL ARRANGEMENT

17th - LOCAL ARRANGEMENT - CAROL SERVICE

24th - HOLY COMMUNION - Rev Emily Young

31st - Rev Sue Smith

Worship - January 2024

All worship at 10.30 am unless indicated otherwise

7th - Glyn Constantine

14th - COVENANT SERVICE - Rev Emily Young

21st - Dianna Bosman

28th - Local Arrangement

Xseed Service - 4.30 pm

Please hand any items for the February CONTACT to me - Nick Riley by 21st January 2023 at the latest please, or alternatively email me: spligosh@icloud.com with the words 'CONTACT MAG' in the title.