

**Services for December 2020 All services online**

- 6<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Advent 2 & Gift service**  
Deborah Cornish, Bob Hinton & Geoff Harrington
- 13<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Advent 3**  
Andy Lowe, Mary-Anne Key & Jonathan Gravestock
- 20<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Advent 4 Extended Communion**  
Dan Woodhouse and Beulah Fletcher  
**6.30pm Candlelit Carol Service**  
Led by Andy Lowe
- 24<sup>th</sup> 11.30pm Midnight Extended Communion**  
Andy Lowe
- 25<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Christmas Day celebration**  
Deborah Cornish
- 27<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Christmas 1**  
Andy Lowe & Deeptima Massey
- January**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 10.30am Christmas 2**  
Dan Woodhouse



# Focus

Advent and Christmas 2020

Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit  
Magazine & Circuit Plan

Dear friends

This year Hope comes in the shape of a vaccine, a liquid injection to give us protection from the effects of a virus that strikes people irrelevant of their status and wealth. It is with this vaccine inside of us that we can be somewhat protected from the effects of, and possibly even from catching, the virus itself. It feels as though we have been waiting for this news for a long time. But we must wait a little longer until the expected 'all clear' comes so they can be approved for use and then a little longer still until we can all get the vaccination for ourselves and life can start settling down into the new normal.

God's people are used to waiting. Sometimes patiently and other times not so patiently. For thousands of years we waited for justice and peace, for a more equitable world, for the reign of God's kingdom. We sing of that waiting and longing in hymns like 'Longing for light we wait in darkness' (StF706)

Advent is a time of waiting but how should we wait?

We must wait patiently for the vaccination; it is on its way and will be in our blood soon. But we must wait impatiently for God's kingdom to come and by that I mean we must be forever active in working for peace and justice, for the rights of others, against the many isms which plague our institutions, our society, our nation, our world, to work for the integrity of all creation. We must be forever restless till God's kingdom is fully here on earth.

And what are we waiting for?

For me Christmas is not God's plan to save us, Christmas is not God's Son born on earth. For me Christmas is a celebration of a bigger story, it is the story of God's ongoing presence in all creation because it is the story of Incarnation and Incarnation is not a one-off event. But the story we tell at Christmas is a story that helps us to focus on that most awesome, mind blowing larger story which our minds are too small to comprehend.

In the words of Father Richard Rohr "When we speak of Advent or preparing for Christmas, we're not talking about waiting for a little baby to be born. We're in fact welcoming the universal, cosmic Christ—the Christ that is forever being born in the human soul and history."

We see the immensity of the story in the mystery of John's prologue (John 1: 1–14) and we see it focussed into narrative in the gospels of Matthew and Luke who, writing from the experiences of the early Christian communities they were part of, wanted to speak of Jesus as the magnificent and climactic completion of the hopes and fears of his people, tradition and his homeland.

At Christmas we celebrate that we, as part of God's creation, are part of the Incarnation, for we have God's imprint, the eternal

## CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH

H	F	R	E	G	N	A	M	A	N	I	Y	A	W	A
M	A	R	Y	S	B	O	Y	C	H	I	L	D	A	J
L	W	R	L	L	A	H	E	H	T	K	C	E	D	O
A	E	L	K	M	I	D	W	I	N	T	E	R	A	Y
N	T	L	I	T	T	L	E	D	O	N	K	E	Y	T
W	H	G	H	T	H	G	I	N	Y	L	O	H	O	O
O	R	O	P	H	G	E	G	N	O	W	E	L	L	T
T	E	D	L	E	I	Y	H	N	L	E	T	L	A	H
E	E	R	O	I	N	L	X	E	O	I	T	L	A	E
L	K	E	D	V	T	L	M	K	R	D	S	N	O	W
T	I	S	U	Y	N	O	A	A	L	A	G	A	L	O
T	N	T	R	A	E	H	S	C	L	A	L	N	L	R
I	G	Y	S	A	L	S	E	C	N	E	W	D	I	L
L	S	E	A	D	I	V	A	D	L	A	Y	O	R	D
O	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	T	R	E	E	!

Find these Christmas carols and words!

Away in a manger  
 Cake  
 Deck the hall  
 Ding dong  
 God rest ye  
 Hark the herald  
 Holly  
 Joy to the world

Let  
 it  
 snow  
 Little donkey  
 Mary's boy child  
 Midwinter  
 Nowell  
 O Christmas tree

O holy night  
 O little town  
 Royal David  
 Rudolph  
 Silent night  
 The ivy  
 Wenceslas  
 We three kings  
 Xmas

Can you find the hidden message?

All the letters you have not yet used spell out a secret carol when you read them from left to right, starting with the top line!

## Gift Service 6th December 2020

At this time of year, our churches think about families, especially those who struggle to provide toys and gifts for their children. The Gift/Toy services that many of our churches hold each year provide us with an opportunity to donate gifts of toys or money which are used to support families in need.

This year as a Circuit we will be supporting one of our local branches of the Salvation Army based at Brighton Congress Hall. They work closely with families who will find this Christmas even more difficult because of the pandemic.

Major Elizabeth Lloyd from Brighton Congress Hall has invited us to use their Just Giving page for their Christmas Appeal. The link to the page is: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/tsa-community-support-000423>

Simply put 'Methodist Church' in the message and they will let us know the total donated by the Circuit.

If you prefer not to use the on-line giving platform, you can make a donation by electronic bank transfer to the Circuit which we will then transfer directly to the Salvation Army fundraising account.

The Circuit Bank details are  
Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit.  
Sort Code: 20-12-75  
Acc No: 90929433

If you wish to pay by cheque please make payable to  
'SATCO General Income Central Trust' and send directly to

Salvation Army  
Congress hall  
1-6 Park Crescent Terrace  
Brighton BN2 3HD

Please do not send cheques to the Circuit Office.  
Stella Goddard

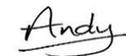
Christ, within us. There is nothing that needs to 'be born in us tonight' the Christ is already in us.

What we need now, what people around the world need now is resurrection. When that which is within us is awakened and brought to life, to the fullness of life, so that our lives display the ways of God as shown by Jesus, who most fully allowed himself to be a channel of the Christ so that he became known as the 'light of the world'.

Christmas and Easter are linked by the life of Jesus and are the framework for us of the God story. For Christians incarnation and resurrection are both of paramount importance and are interwoven and that comes through in carols such as 'Hark the herald angels sing' (StF202) just read the last four lines of the final verse.

I hope and pray, that even in these strange times, even though we may not this year be waiting and celebrating in our buildings, that we will, together, hear again the familiar stories and find new and deeper meaning in them that will guide and strengthen us to be lights in the world, today, tomorrow and for the rest of our lives and so offer hope and love to all creation.

Wishing you and yours a very special Christmastime



### **An Advent Reflection**

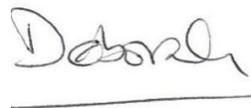
I'm a fan of Advent. Unlike Lent, it does not ask us to wear sack cloth and ashes, or to beat ourselves up over our mistakes and failings. Advent is a Hope-filled season. The Advent themes encourage us to explore the promises of God, the God who is about to do a new thing, and not just for a small group of people, but for the whole of creation.

I love the Advent hymns and get upset with the rush to sing Christmas carols, there is time enough to do that much closer to Christmas Day.

If you own a copy of Singing the Faith (StF) or Hymns & Psalms (H&P), use their Advent sections for prayers and reflection, as part of your daily devotions. This is where you need to know your way around the hymn books. Singing the Faith heads this section *The Promised Christ: Advent*, however, in H&P you have to jump between two sections *The Promise of the Messiah* (H&P 81 Come thou long expected Jesus) and *Christ's coming in Glory* (H&P 236 Hark what a sound). Both hymnbooks give us an opportunity to prepare ourselves spiritually for the promise of Christmas. Within these hymns you will find the themes that are being used by the Methodist Church connexionally: **Light, hope and peace.**

Thinking of the year we have had so far, and the fact that Advent and Christmas will be very different to any other we have celebrated, it is good to focus on the positive. Take time to remember that God is with us, has always been with us, and will continue to be with us into the future. Immerse yourself in the Advent stories of promise, hope, justice, light and peace. Then on the evening of the last Sunday before Christmas (December 20<sup>th</sup>) begin to get in to the Christmas spirit with Christmas Carols, songs and readings (radio, television, internet or your own collection of LPs, tapes and CDs) in preparation for the big day itself.

Please be assured of my prayers as you journey through Advent towards the celebration of Christ's birth



---

## A Christmas Reflection

Andy asked me to think about what Christmas means to me. So, I let my mind wonder and the first thing that came into my mind was Christmas day in church, I was about 7 years old. I remember crouching down between the old pews and pushing my new batmobile toy as hard as I could. I remember it flying down, batman aboard, past the pews and skidding to a stop before I jumped up to go and do the same thing again.

The memory made me realise just how nurturing the church can be, and how thankful I am for the church family who cared for me each week.

Looking back, lacking the imagination of a child, and having instead the 'wanna be wise' critique of an adult, I think about the many generations who had walked between those pews. The church was 100 years old before I was even born. I suspect they never imagined batmobiles flying through the aisles. However, this is another way in which church nurtures us, it changes for each new generation and challenges, sometimes a little and sometimes a lot. Caring in new ways.

Christmas is a time which lots of people struggle with, so a time where the church needs to be nurturing. We have reacted so well in many ways during covid, making sure people who are isolated know they are loved and missed. I hope we can find ways to nurture those who need it over Christmas, as well as continuing to imagine new ways of showing care even after covid and Christmas are done.

Most of all I want to say thank you parent church.

Grace and Peace

Dan