

THE MESSENGER

The magazine of Petts Wood Methodist Church



THE LOVE, JOY AND PEACE OF THE SEASON

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The Church in Queensway

Minister: Revd. Duncan MacBean

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THE MESSENGER

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QUOTE

Christmas means not just hope for the world, despite all its unending problems, but hope for you and me, despite all our unending failings.

Timothy Keller

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OUR MINISTER'S LETTER:

by Revd. Duncan MacBean



A different Christmas

It's not going to be like it has been for so many years. We're not going to be able to be in our Church, singing lustily. We'll have to rely on other choirs for that celebration. We're not going to be able to feast together. We'll have to eat apart from one another. Even families may not be able to meet under the rule of 6 ... 6 ... 6.

There is going to be a shock to the system this year. Christmas is not going to happen the way we might like, but for me the real question is "What can we get out of the season?" We might miss the mass choirs, but Joseph, Mary and Jesus did quite well with the massed angelic choirs. We may miss the family meals and celebrations with old friends, but we could have a joy similar to that of the Holy family who met with God in the presence of the shepherds and wise people.

I think that we can have a Christmas that allows us to meet with Jesus in a different way than usual, if only our eyes and hearts are open to the opportunities afforded to us. If we spend our time bemoaning what we can't do (or, worse yet, breaking rules so we can have what we want) we may well miss an opportunity to meet with God in a new way. What will this be? I have no idea! All I know is, every time I cast myself upon the seas of God's will, I find myself often thrown upon a strange shore, struggling to understand the language of the locals, but ultimately knowing the presence of God - however that presence may manifest itself. The journey to a new understanding is not easy because it requires us to both acknowledge and ignore our expectations. How can we do a new thing if all we ever do is the same old thing?

Trite as this may sound, maybe this Christmas we should 'Let go and let God'. Perhaps in waiting on the 'new thing' this season, we will both discover and rediscover something about God-and-us, some new way of speaking and living the Jesus story

May God be real to each of us during this journey into the new things.

Shalom,

Duncan

WE GATHER TO OFFER WORSHIP TO THE GLORY & PRAISE OF GOD

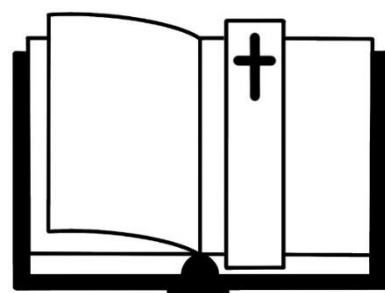
Due to a lockdown being imposed again until early December, there will be no services at church until further notice.

Video and printed services will be available for the foreseeable future.

Video links (via Vimeo) for Sunday services are available on the PWMC website:

<http://www.pwmc.org.uk/home-service-videos/>

The church is open for private prayer on Saturdays from 10-12 noon.
Please enter through the front glass doors.



MESSENGER PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

Vol.	No.	Deadline for submitting items: Thurs	Publish: Sunday	Covering
64	3	04-Mar-21	21-Mar-21	Apr-June
64	4	03-Jun-21	20-Jun-21	Jul-Aug
65	1	29-Jul-21	15-Aug-21	Sep-Nov
65	2	04-Nov-21	21-Nov-21	Dec-Mar

FAMILY NEWS:

- **Congratulations to Edward and Angela**

Congratulations to David and Angela Wilks who celebrated their Diamond wedding anniversary on 29th October 2020.

We pray that the Good Lord grants you many more years of love, good health and happiness together.



- **Condolences to the Gloins**

Condolences to the Gloins on the death of David's Mum (Dilys aged 98) in September.

Our thoughts and prayers are with David, Elizabeth, Janet and the rest of the family during this difficult time.

THANK YOU – DONATIONS

- **Thanks from Edward and Angela**

Edward and Angela Wilks want to say thank you to the Stewards who arranged for a lovely bunch of flowers to be sent to us on behalf of everyone for our Diamond wedding anniversary. They are beautiful.

Also thank you to everyone who sent their love and congratulations - we had a memorable day.

- **Thanks from Janet, Elizabeth and David**

Janet, Elizabeth and David Gloin thanks all those who send cards, letters etc. and offered and gave support on the death of David's Mum (Dilys aged 98) in September.

There is a tribute site at: <https://dilysgloin.muchloved.com>. which you can visit. Thanks to the Revd Jenifer Potter who conducted the funeral.

- **Thank you from Jessica**

Many thanks for all the good wishes, cards and flowers that I received on my 90th Birthday from my friends at the Church. We could not have the celebrations that were planned, but Ken and I spent a happy day together and enjoyed ourselves. My best wishes to you all, God Bless and keep safe. Jessica Fletcher.



Flowers Jessica received from PWMC on her 90th Birthday.
Praying for many more years of good health, peace and happiness.

- **Thanks from the Whitechapel Mission**

Dear John,

We gratefully acknowledge your generous donation of £770.00.

Please pass our grateful thanks to the members of Petts Wood Methodist Church for their generous donation which will be used for the Mission's work of providing the daily support for those sleeping rough in London or rely upon support.

We are closely monitoring the coronavirus (COVID-19), as well as proactively seeking and following the latest guidance from the Government and other community partners. And we are thankful for our supporters who help make it possible to continue our work.

We continue to offer our essential services (over 168,000 free meals served since the start of the year). Our response balances the consideration that our guests are highly vulnerable to many challenges. Organisations like ours have a duty to care and not prematurely suspend potentially life-saving services. We are seeing new faces, with new worries — people who are desperately in need of the food, shelter, advice and hope offered at The Whitechapel Mission. People in need continue to be welcomed at our Whitechapel Centre.

On behalf of everybody here at The Whitechapel Mission, thank you for your support. With your support we are able to continue delivering life changing services to vulnerable people of London, drawing on our many years of experience.

With grateful thanks,

Chandrani Rakshit
On behalf of Whitechapel Mission

A Year of Time

Though even thinking on the subject of time may prove discomforting, it is not a bad idea- especially at the beginning of a new year.

As we look into 2021 we look at a block of time. We see 12 months, 52 weeks, 365 days, 8,760 hours, 525,600 minutes, 31,536,000 seconds. And all is a gift from God. We have done nothing to deserve it, earn it, or purchased it. Like the air we breathe, time comes to us as a part of life.

The gift of time is not ours alone. It is given equally to each person. Rich and poor, educated and ignorant, strong and weak- every man, woman and child has the same twenty-four hours every day.

Another important thing about time is that you cannot stop it. There is no way to slow it down, turn it off, or adjust it. Time marches on.

And you cannot bring back time. Once it is gone, it is gone. Yesterday is lost forever. If yesterday is lost, tomorrow is uncertain. We may look ahead at a full year's block of time, but we really have no guarantee that we will experience any of it.

Obviously, time is one of our most precious possessions. We can waste it. We can worry over it. We can spend it on ourselves. Or, as good stewards, we can invest it in the kingdom of God.

The New Year is full of time. As the seconds tick away, will you be tossing time out the window, or will you make every minute count?

Steven B. Cloud

Watching & Waiting
ADVENT
course

Hosted by Maureen & Deborah Spinks
via Zoom

Monday Evenings

30th November,
7th, 14th, 21st, December

7:45pm

Thursday Afternoons

26th November
3rd, 10th, 17th December

2pm

To register your interest email Maureen,
mdospinks@gmail.com specifying the day you would
like to book, a zoom link will be sent nearer the time.

You can download digital material at:
<https://www.methodistlondon.org.uk/adventcourse2020>

Alternatively, paper copies can be
ordered by emailing:
orpingtonchislehurst@gmail.com
by Friday 13th November

FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART:

Nativity Colouring Sheet



Christmas Quiz

- (1) What gifts did the three kings take to baby Jesus?
- (2) What was the name of the star above the stable where Jesus was born?
- (3) What is the name of the popular play that Children act out at Christmas?
- (4) Where was Jesus born?
- (5) What type of calendar do kids across the world use to countdown to December 25th?
- (6) Can you unscramble the following word to create to reveal a Christmas decoration: LESNIT?

Answers:

Frankincense, Gold and Myrrh, The Star of David, Nativity Play, Bethlehem, Advent calendar, TINSEL
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52 ORIGINAL WISDOM STORIES

Author: Penelope Wilcock

Publisher: Monarch Books an imprint of Lion Hudson plc (published 2015)

ISBN: 9780857216021

Wisdom Stories and folk tales are entertaining and thought provoking. They cross all boundaries. Which minister occasionally recounted a tale from the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin? The Exploits and The Pleasantries were published by Idries Shah and maybe some of you are fortunate to have his “World Tales” with those wonderful illustrations. That book shows how similar tales occur across the globe but with no known connection.

Margaret Silf published a collection of 100 wisdom stories from around the world – Hans Christian Anderson, Arab, Tolstoy, de Mello, Northumbria and Chinese. However, the book lockdown drew me back to was “*52 Original Wisdom Stories*” written by Penelope Wilcock. Described as short lively pieces for the Christian year they feature husband and wife Sid and Rosie and are a real delight and you will learn of the Celtic Calendar. Each one concludes with a few questions to allow a story to be used as a starting point for groups and then a prayer.

The book confirms my opening words that wisdom stories can be entertaining and thought provoking.

David Gloin

A Different Perspective on the Garden of Eden,

Contributed by Roger May

One of the lessons I learned from the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is that our first ancestor chose to be human rather than live forever. They chose a sense of morality, a 'knowledge of good and evil' rather than immortality.

They spurned the Tree of Life, which would have given them eternal life, in favour of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which gave them a conscience. As compensation, God gave humans, who now shared with Him the ability to know good from evil, the gift of his own divine power to create new life."

This from a meditation on Psalm 23 by Rabbi Harold S. Kushner "The Lord is My Shepherd" (commended by Archbishop Rowan Williams).



Old Age

Contributed by Roger May

A TIME TO BE STILL, TO BE QUIET AND TO PRAY,
TO PONDER, REFLECT AND REVERE,
A TIME TO LET GO AND TO SAY, I FORGIVE.

A TIME TO ACCEPT, TO GRIEVE AND TO HEAL,
TO SEEK ANCIENT WISDOM AND TRUTH,
A TIME TO BE HUMBLE AND TO FEEL AT PEACE.

A TIME TO VIEW ART, READ POEMS AND STARE,
TO ENJOY NATURE, THE SKY AND THE SEA,
A TIME TO BE GENTLE AND TO SHARE YOUR LOVE.

A TIME TO INSPIRE, ADVISE AND BE KIND,
TO ENCOURAGE AND URGE OTHERS ON
A TIME TO BE HOLY AND TO FIND YOUR GOD.

Sweet Symbol

Author Unknown

A significant symbol of Christmas
is the simple candy cane.

Its shape is the crook of the shepherd
One of the first who came.

The lively peppermint flavour is
the regal gift of spice.

The white is Jesus' purity.
The red is sacrifice.

The narrow stripes are friendship.
And the nearness of his love.
Eternal, sweet compassion
a gift from God above.

The candy cane reminds us all
of how much God cared.
And like His Christmas gift to use
it's meant to be broken and shared.



MISCELLANEOUS:

- **Private prayer**

The church is open for private prayer on Saturdays from 10-12 noon. Please enter through the front glass doors.

- **Christmas Anthem**

Contributed by David Gloin

Stephen Cleobury commissioned the composer Judith Wier to compose a choral work for the 2018 Service of Lessons and Carols from the chapel at Kings College, Cambridge. She needed some words, so turned to Charles Wesley and his hymn:

O mercy Divine

How couldst Thou incline

My GOD to become such an infant as mine!

This is the first verse of number 16 in both the 1745 and 1788 editions of Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord. I suspect Judith Wier selected verses from the 15!

- **A message from the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler to the Methodist people following a further lockdown in England and continued restrictions in Wales and Scotland.**

I don't want to exaggerate our current situation by suggesting any similarity between our position and his, but I have turned to ***Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison*** as I think about the 'lockdown' that began at midnight today. Even 'lockdown' can seem to be an exaggeration as for many life will not be so very different. Unlike in the Spring, schools and other educational establishments are still open; there is no restriction on the number of times per day that someone can leave their home; churches can be open for individual prayer, funerals, and the live streaming of acts of worship (as always, up-to-date guidance for ministers and managing trustees is available on the Methodist Church website). Our liberty has been restricted for the sake of others; it is going too far (I think) to claim that our liberties have been infringed.

None of that makes lockdown easy; there is a number of reasons why this feels so hard. One is the divergence with which we have to live in the Connexion. As

activities in England become more confined, there is soon to be an easing of the restrictions in Wales. Scotland (at the time of writing) continues to operate a policy of regional tiers. The Isle of Man and the Channel Islands have had a very different experience in some respects and may feel more isolated than before from the rest of the British Isles. Remembering that we are one Connexion has never seemed so important.

Another reason that this feels hard is the time of year. Bonhoeffer wrote to his parents on 9 November 1943, 'Now the dismal autumn days have begun and one has to try to get light from within.' I was talking to a friend last week about some practical arrangements which involved meeting outdoors and said that I supposed it was harder than in the Spring because November seems grimmer than April. 'That's because,' he replied, 'November **is** grimmer than April.' This might be one year when we do not complain about preparations for Christmas beginning too early; the Christian message is that it is when the darkness is deepest the light of Christ shines most brightly.

Bonhoeffer continued that letter in November 1943, 'Your letters always help with this.' The discovery of pandemic for me and many others has been the range of communication technology available to us and the simple importance of keeping in touch. One of the principal tasks of ministry (for the whole community not just the ordained) is to maintain the links; that many church buildings had not reopened for worship before governments ordered their closure again was testament to the imaginative ways of sustaining fellowship that had been adopted. Of course, meeting online is not the same as gathering around a table but neither is it simply 'better than nothing' and we shall continue to reflect and to explore what it means to be a church that is drawn together in physical and non-physical ways.

A third reason that this is hard, however, is the (temporary) loss of a church service in those buildings where public worship had resumed. Bonhoeffer wrote in April 1943 of the ringing of the prison chapel bell being the best time to write home. 'It's remarkable what power church bells have over human beings and how deeply they can affect us. So many of life's experiences gather around them.' Meeting in a church building has a similar resonance. It is not simply about being in a particular place for a particular purpose on a particular day but about somewhere that has resonance with a host of memories, both communal and individual. 'I think,' Bonhoeffer went on, 'of all the different parishes I have worked in, then of all the family occasions.... I really cannot count all the memories that come alive to me, and they all inspire peace, thankfulness, and confidence.' At a time when we are anxious about when the restrictions will be lifted, reminding ourselves not of what we are missing but of what has blessed us in the past can be a gateway to peace, thankfulness, and confidence, and not only for us but for one another as, confined to our homes though we might be, we make sure that we keep in touch. 'I don't expect a long letter from you' wrote Bonhoeffer to one of his friends, 'but let's promise to remain faithful in interceding for each other.'

Jonathan Hustler, 5 November 2020



The open baptism policy worked, up to a point...

DIARY DATES SELECTION:

November 2020

Thursday 26th

Online Advent course commences

March 2021

Thursday 4th

Deadline for contributions for Apr-Jun Messenger

TAILPIECE

The priceless lesson in the New Year is that endings birth beginnings and beginnings birth endings. And in this elegantly choreographed dance of life, neither ever find an end in the other.

Craig D. Lounsborough

