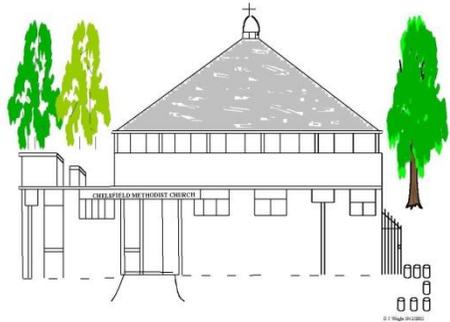


Chelsfield Methodist Church
Windsor Drive, Chelsfield
BR6 6HD
Tel: 01689 856290
Minister: Revd Terry Wright
The Manse, 20 Tower Road,
Orpington BR6 0BQ
Tel: 01689 822518



DECEMBER 2018 AND JANUARY 2019

A Letter from The Manse

Dear Friends,

Advent is the season to get ready for the coming of Jesus, or in other words, the coming of God's solution to the problem that the world faces. Advent is the season in the Christian calendar that calls on us to reflect on our lives, to make adjustments, to ask are we ready if the King returns, and if needs be adjust our lives accordingly.

In the past some have scoffed isn't this just pie in the sky when you die, or, in other words, a waste of time to focus on the future instead of living today? That same preparedness has a positive effect in the here and now.

Imagine two people living in two houses next door to each other. The news has just reported a storm is coming. There may be transport disruption, electricity and service failures. One house holder buys candles, stocks up on tinned goods, a gas stove and visits the library for a few books in-case the power goes. The other householder does nothing but sits

biting his fingernails as the storm approaches. Preparation enables us to relax a little to face whatever comes with peace of mind that we are ready for what comes.

It seems that every time we turn on the tv or open a paper that things are getting worse whether its environmental issues, fires raging, or refugees in crisis. And we don't have to go abroad do we? Local news reports increases in knife crime on our streets among our young people, or the saga of Brexit, which are enough to leave us wondering where the future lies.

I hope Advent comes to us as a blessing and a refreshing of our spirits, and when Christmas comes may we feel too the blessing and assurance that we are loved by a God who keeps his promises.

Yours in Christ,

Terry

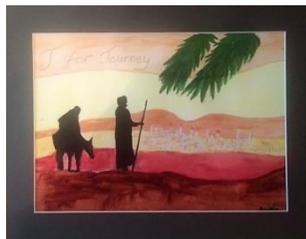


SERVICES IN DECEMBER 2018

Sunday 2 nd	10.30am	Mr. David Ball Stewards: Rodney & Shirley Carder
Sunday 9 th	10.30am	Revd. Terry Wright & The Acafellas Carols and Readings Stewards: Audrey Lancaster & John Crowther
Sunday 16 th	10.30am	Deborah Spinks Stewards: Gordon & Gladys Handley
Sunday 23 rd	10.30am	Revd. David Graham HC Stewards: Rodney & Shirley Carder
CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE at OMC but CHURCH OPEN for reflection		
Sunday 30 th	10.30am	Revd. David Graham HC Stewards: Audrey Lancaster & John Crowther

SERVICES IN JANUARY 2019

Sunday 6 th	10.30am	Mrs Kate Kwafoakoto Stewards: Gordon & Gladys Handley
Sunday 13 th	10.30am	Revd. Terry Wright HC Stewards: Rodney & Shirley Carder
Sunday 20 th	10.30am	Songs of Praise Stewards: Audrey Lancaster & John Crowther
Sunday 27 th	10.30am	Revd. David Graham Stewards: Gordon & Gladys Handley



By Angela

A Christmas Message

A little fellow aged just four
Was taken to a well known store.
Holding tightly to father's hand
He was led to a Christmas wonderland.
In awesome wonder he espied,
Exciting items shewn inside.
Father Christmas, snowmen too,
Games galore and things to do.
As he gazed around the store
At the toys and gifts galore
Something missing he felt sure.
For a child, his voice was sad
As he whispered to his dad.
"Where's the baby Jesus"?
The little boy remembered well
Stories he'd heard mother tell.
From the bible she knew so well.
Tales of Jesus' humble birth.
How he lived His life on earth.
Of His love for every child,
Jesus powerful, meek and mild.
We who think we are so wise
Miss things seen through childrens eyes.
So, as for Christmas we prepare
Make sure a special guest is there
He'll bring peace and joy, no doubt
So please, please, don't leave Jesus out.

Put Christ back into Christmas

OUR PRAYER DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2018 / JANUARY 2019

2nd December: The First Sunday in Advent

Prayer. Heavenly Father we thank you that after sending patriarchs and prophets, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reveal your love for us. We thank you for his birth, ministry, death and resurrection without which we would not have known your true likeness.

His birth brought new light into the world and as we prepare to celebrate again his glorious coming, help us to cast off the works of darkness that mar our relationship with you. Pardon and strengthen us we pray to live up to our calling.

We pray that the message which Jesus brought will bring hope into the lives of all suffering people, the bereaved, the oppressed, and victims of warfare and natural disasters. May we all, inspired by the vision of your kingdom of joy and peace, commit ourselves to spreading the good news in whatever way we can. **Amen**

9 December, Advent 2, Matthew 3:1-12 : The Forerunner

Some modern biblical scholars believe that John the Baptist was the son of a distinguished priestly family but he became dissatisfied with the corrupt practices and ritual of Temple life. He set up a community of fellow reformers away from Jerusalem where they could follow a purer way of observing their religion. It would appear that this reformation became so popular that people began to think he was the promised Messiah until he protested that he was only the forerunner come to prepare the way for the Messiah.

Prayer. Loving God as we begin to make preparations to celebrate the coming of your Son into the world, help us to prepare ourselves. Help us to keep alive the real reason why we celebrate Christmas. Help us to remember why he came in human form to share the things we endure and enjoy in our daily life. Help us not to be distracted by the glitter and false make-believe of commercialism. Help us to use what time we have to share true love with everybody we meet **Amen.**

16 December, Advent 3, Matthew 11:2-11: Jesus' Testimony of John

Jesus confirmed that John was an outspoken courageous prophet, whose popularity had not tempted him into wearing fine clothes and living in a palace. He was truly the herald preparing the way for the Messiah and his outspokenness eventually cost him his life. (Jesus didn't admit to being the Messiah possibly because he knew that the people were seeking to make him a political freedom-fighting Messiah).

Prayer: Gracious God we pray for Christians bravely practising their faith in countries where they are in a minority. Forgive us if in our comparable safety we hesitate to take the opportunity of witnessing for you. Help us to remember that your Spirit is ever present to strengthen us no matter what problems or temptation we have to face. **Amen**

23 December, Advent 4, Matthew 1:18-25: Jesus' Conception

As always, Matthew was anxious to show (1:22) this occurrence was one of a number of fulfilment prophecies taken from the Old Testament (Isaiah 7:14). Let's not forget that there are mothers in some parts of the world who still have to face similar hardships.

Prayer: Holy Father may we always remember that Jesus was born in a bare unhygienic world. We pray for mothers in a similar situation to Mary, especially today's homeless mothers with starving children. Bless those who dedicate their lives to helping them, may they receive support to carry out their life-saving work. **Amen**

25 December, Christmas Day, Luke 2:1-14

'Today there has been born to you in the city of David a deliverer – the Messiah, the Lord.' (v11).

Prayer: Generous God, at last the day we have been preparing for has arrived. Thank you for your gift; the gift of your Son sent all those centuries ago. In the excitement of this day may we not forget the homeless and the destitute. May the joy of this day be shared by all. May hostilities cease and love spread throughout the world. **Amen**

30th December, John 1:1-5& 9-14: 'The Word was made flesh'

The beginning of a new year. What will it bring? Some will look back on the old year and wonder whether this new one will be better than the last.

Feelings will vary; trepidation, hopeful anticipation, lethargy ? No matter, God's Spirit is with us already in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.

Prayer: Eternal God we thank you that you have been with us over the past year even if there were times when we thought we were left alone. At the beginning of this New Year I trust in your unfailing love and pray that I may serve you with a grateful and obedient heart. Through Jesus' Name. **Amen**

5 January, Thanksgiving, 1Corinthians 1:4-9

In spite of all the difficulties, hardships and privations Paul had to put up with, he never stopped thanking God whether on behalf of others or for himself.

Prayer. Listening God there is so much for which we should be thankful. We can't begin to count the times when we should have thanked you. Forgive us for those times when we have forgotten, or deliberately ignored you. Help us to see your goodness in everything and to be ready to thank you. **Amen.**

12 January, Christian Unity, 1Corinthians 1:10-16

Things weren't always easy for Paul. There was rivalry between the leaders of some early groups of Christians and he had difficulty keeping them together. Some converts included in their worship bits of Jewish ritual which they used to use before their conversion; others hankered after including what they had learned when they had worshipped various Greek gods. In those days there were no Gospels to guide them. Paul tried to unite them telling them that the preaching of Christ crucified was the mainspring of their existence.

Prayer: We thank you God that the past antagonism between the various denominations within the Church have almost gone and that your reconciling love is bringing the church closer together. On this Sunday for Christian Unity we pray especially for all preachers who will be conducting services in churches of different denominations from their own. **Amen**

19 January, The World's Wisdom, 1Corinthians 1:17-25

Jews wanted miracles, Gentiles wanted philosophy but Paul made it clear that their real object should be to preach Christ crucified. Over the centuries the early churches became bogged down with rules and rituals not unlike the ones Jesus came to free the Jews from. 'Love God and love your neighbour', was Jesus' message. Paul realised that it had cost Jesus his life to spread that message; such was his love for God and his 'neighbours'. For Paul, everything else was superfluous.

Prayer: Almighty God, we pray for people whose 'wisdom' is something which developed through contact with school, friends, relatives, neighbours and work colleagues. We pray that we may be included in that contact and by your Holy Spirit be able to help them know something about Jesus and your saving Grace. **Amen**

26 January, Our Wisdom, 1 Corinthians 2:1-12

Paul didn't try to convince people by philosophical oratory. His 'knowledge' was what he had learned from his personal contact with God's Spirit through prayer.

Prayer: 'Immortal invisible, God only wise', a hymn we used to sing which expressed so much in that first line.

We cannot see you but we come to know that your Spirit is ever with us.

Amen

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Having recently retired after five years as a Circuit Steward, I offer the following observations for your consideration. Roger May

It was a privilege to serve Christ and his church in this way. It was hard work at times but nearly always enjoyable. I made a lot of friends and took part in some interesting meetings and projects. I was able to exercise some of my skills and I had a lot of help from the rest of the team in those many areas in which I am not competent.

I worked with hugely dedicated people. The Ministers particularly put in extraordinary efforts to keep all the balls in the air. Time and again I was reminded of their deep faith and commitment. Further, in every one of our churches I met lay person after lay person who are living out their faith in many hours of service both there and in their communities. I quickly learned that particularly those called to be church stewards, property stewards and church treasurers are an amazing bunch of faithful Christian soldiers who are often under-appreciated.

I was greatly encouraged by the new initiatives and ventures that several of our churches have established. Mother and baby groups, film clubs, messy churches, services with a difference, linking events and schemes with other churches, lunch clubs and more. Clearly many have grasped the value of 'doing church' church in different ways.

I take absolutely no credit for it but IT gradually developed in and across our churches during my time. Workshops were well attended and it was pleasing to see improvements in communication and websites. There are certainly even more benefits to be gained in this area if we can harness the expertise.

Similarly the practice of reflection, review and appraisal were encouraged with some success but, not yet, sufficient energy to reap as many of the benefits as could be gained. As a team we tried hard to encourage more strategic thinking across the circuit and within our churches. We were partially successful. Planning ahead, especially in respect of developing our mission, is not yet as fully developed as it needs to be but some of our churches seem to me to be certainly on the right lines.

The overwhelming issue which stood like a dark cloud over my five years was the declining numbers of our membership and adherents locally, across Methodism, and, indeed, across the large majority of British churches. Some, perhaps most of us, feel that there is an accompanying loss of ethical and moral standards in Britain to such an extent that nothing short of a revival of historic proportions will save the country from disaster. Even if that is not the case it is certainly true that we Christians are charged with improving the effectiveness of our mission. I believe that a lot of the things I have mentioned above, strategic thinking, planning, new initiatives, and, by inference, thinking out of the box and taking risks, are essential. If we simply sit back believing that 'it will all come out alright in the end' we shall see churches closing with the consequent loss of witness in several of parts of our circuit. We have made a start but there are huge challenges ahead.

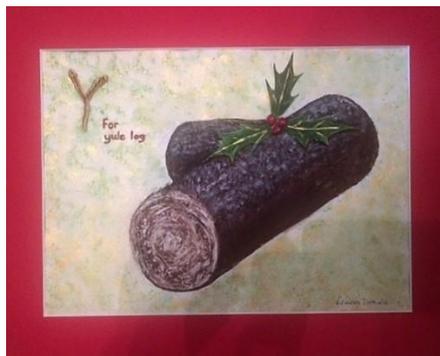
An important piece of learning for me has been the necessity to go back to our traditional Methodist methods. Structured daily devotion, brave witness, vigorous preaching, much more lay involvement in leadership, lots of small group meetings and a refreshment of our class meetings. I am not advocating that we revert to over-emotional displays of passion in the pulpit or that we all become over-enthusiastic happy clappers. We need to move with the times. The well educated and thoughtful people we need to attract deserve something better thought through than that. The resources are out there and we have sufficient talent among our congregations to support our Ministers more effectively in this work.

Increasingly I have become convinced that the pattern of church life and of Sunday worship with which I grew up are outmoded and very much less effective. We need new beginnings and new ways but the needs to be met have not changed. People still need to worship, to learn, to develop their spiritual life. People still need forgiveness and good fellowship. People still have emotional needs that the church can supply- to feel secure, to be loved, to be given responsibility, challenges and opportunities to try out new things. People still need encouragement, support and appreciation. People still need to meet their loving, caring, God. We Christians must prepare ourselves in study, prayer and deep thought, roll our sleeves up and go to it.

God bless you all. RM

Art Club Wishes Everyone A Happy Christmas

Art club has been racking their brains to think of a Christmas picture for each letter of the alphabet to display in the church. We have managed to produce a picture for most letters, but, even with help from Layla (Angela's niece), twenty six letters was just too many for us to complete pictures for all of them by the beginning of December. So we are leaving you with the challenge to spot which letters are missing. Answers in the next edition!



24 December

Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.....

So begins “The Night Before Christmas”, probably the best known children’s Christmas poem, an evocative picture of children snug in bed awaiting the visit of St Nicholas.

The writer, perhaps surprisingly, was a professor of oriental languages named Clement Clarke Moore. In New York just before Christmas in 1822, one of Professor Moore’s small sons had been hurt in a riding accident. His had not been a serious injury, but sadly, the pony had died afterwards. The boy was inconsolable, and so the serious-minded professor sat at his desk and penned a poem in an attempt to make his unhappy little son smile again.

It did the trick, for the youngster’s cheerful spirits returned. A year later, the poem was published anonymously and children and adults all over the world were captivated by its sentiments. Perhaps Professor Moore would give a wry smile to know that he is remembered today, not for academic work, but as the writer of a simple poem.



What's on during the week?

(Regular Clubs and Classes – term times)

Mondays:

9.30 – 11.00am Yoga
4.15 – 8.00pm Ballet & Dance (Zena)

Tuesdays:

10.00am – noon AcaFellas (every other Tuesday)
1.30 – 4.30pm Art Club (every other Tuesday)
5.00 – 7.00pm Kumon Class

Wednesdays:

2.00 – 2.45pm Ballet (Colleen)
6.50 – 7.50pm Pilates
8.00 – 9.00pm Pilates
7.30 – 10.00pm Freedom in Christ (every other week)

Thursdays:

9.30 – 11.00am Yoga
2.00 – 2.45pm Ballet (Colleen)
4.00 – 6.00pm Ballet (Colleen)
8.20 – 9.20pm Pilates

Fridays:

9.35 – 10.35am Pilates
10.45 – 11.45am Pilates
Noon – 1pm Pilates
4.15 – 5.45pm Dance (Zena)

Saturdays:

4.00 – 6.00pm Kumon Class





Headgear Quiz

Answers!

1. A cricket player.....**Bowler**
2. Tablet container.....**Pillbox**
3. Canal.....**Panama**
4. The Barrett family lived here.....**Wimpole ie Wimple**
5. Opposite of bottom.....**Top (hat)**
6. Nude.....**Bearskin**
7. A snack.....**Pork Pie**
8. A gale.....**Sou'wester**
9. 1854 battle.....**Balaclava**
10. Bob the builder wears one.....**Hard Hat**

More Headgear for You!

1. King Farouk had one.....
2. Jack broke his.....
3. Elk chaser.....
4. Indian headgear.....
5. Queen Elizabeth has one.....
6. The Queen's holiday home.....
7. Skeleton's hat.....
8. Food for horses and cattle.....

Answers in February

Tradition of Christmas cakes and puddings

The origins of Christmas are found in festivities with an abundance of meals. In the earlier years, as soon as the weather got cold, pigs, calves and poultry were carved up into different cuts of meat. Fillets, cutlets, hams and pigs' knuckles and trotters, together with cheeses, were buried in the snow or stored in the root cellar, a sort of cold room. Some meats were pickled in stoneware jars, some were smoked. This was not only for winter, this was early preparation for the Christmas festivities.

One of the oldest Christmas dishes known is mince pie, which originated in the Middle Ages. The original recipe contained a mixture of finely chopped poultry, pheasant, partridge and rabbit. Later, sugar, apples, raisins and candied oranges and lemons were added. Over time, the meats were eliminated leaving only the sweet ingredients, introducing the "traditional" Christmas pudding.

Fruit cake, stollen and log cake are part of the Christmas tradition, served on Christmas eve or offered as gifts.

The famous, typically English Christmas pudding was called a "hackin" from its many ingredients. By the 17th Century, when more sweets were added, it became the plum pudding, often prepared on Christmas morning, and sprinkled with brandy and flamed when served.

The traditional Christmas fruit cake is a derivative of the Christmas pudding. It includes raisins, dates, nuts and candied fruit, also forgetting the generous helping of brandy or rum.

In some countries, families gather around Christmas lunches, in other countries, around Christmas dinners. Traditional Christmas meals usually consist of a variety of cooked meats and vegetables. Father Christmas (Santa Claus) enjoys a glass of milk and cookies the night before.



Milk and cookies for Santa

CHURCH CARE

A reminder of our rota for Church and vestry cleaning prior to:

December

2 nd	Brenda
9 th	Paul
16 th	Rodney and Shirley
23 rd	Gordon and Gladys
30 th	Brenda

January

6 th	Gordon and Gladys
13 th	Brenda
20 th	Paul
27 th	Rodney and Shirley

February

3 rd	Gordon and Gladys
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By Rita

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES IN DECEMBER & JANUARY

December

Tuesday 4 th	1.30pm – 4.00pm	Art Club Christmas Nibbles
Wednesday 5 th	9.45am	Bible study at OMC
	7.00pm	Film Night New Eltham MC <i>It's a Wonderful Life</i>

January

Thursday 3 rd	2.30pm	Long Acre House Group
Tuesday 8 th	1.30pm – 4.00pm	Art Club
Tuesday 22 nd	1.30pm – 4.00pm	Art Club

Thought for the Month

Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.

Love is not self- seeking, is not easily angered
it keeps no record of wrongs.

1 Corinthians 13:5



"The service is over, Ed.
You have to wake them up."

The secret of a good sermon is to
have a good beginning and a good
ending; and to have the two as close
together as possible!

George Burns

If you wish to contribute to the February Newsletter, may I have your items by Sunday, 13th January please.

Jane Lowing: 01689 851906

literacyjane51@hotmail.co.uk

Have a lovely Christmas!