

MOTTINGHAM METHODIST CHURCH MESSENGER

December 2020



The light shines in
the darkness, and
the darkness has
not overcome it.
(John 1 verse 5)



THE CHURCH
IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE VILLAGE!



CHRISTMAS 2020 - DIFFERENT! THE STORY - THE SAME!

'Christmas may look different, but the story is still the same!' That's the message for Christmas in 2020. Coronavirus will make our celebrations this year look very different from usual. However, the message of the baby born in Bethlehem is still relevant!

In one nativity play, the highlight was to illuminate Jesus, with a light in the manger, when all the other lights were turned off. At the appropriate time, all the lights went out, including the manger one. The silence was broken when one of the shepherds loudly whispered: 'Hey, you turned off Jesus.' Of course, nobody can turn off Jesus this Christmas!

The angels announced, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.' (Luke 2: 10,11). The birth of this baby brings great joy and good news for everyone! As the king of the universe, He has come as our Saviour. In an uncertain world, He offers joy and hope, because He holds this pandemic in His hands. This is a real cause for joy!

'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests.' (Luke 2:14). We may feel anything but peace amid the anxieties over our current circumstances. How can a Jewish infant born to a peasant family in first century Palestine bring peace to our lives today? Jesus established peace with God through His death on the cross. Trusting the Prince of Peace for our lives brings God's peace amid the huge uncertainties we face. As the carol says, 'Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her King.'

Paul Hardingham



HOPE AMID UNCERTAINTY

'Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call Him Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7

verse 14)

This promise to King Ahaz in 8th century Judah is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus at the first Christmas: 'God with Us' (Matthew 1 verse 23). Ahaz faced the military threat of Syria invading Israel, but Isaiah tells him not to panic. He can trust God, who is in control of the nation.

For us, Coronavirus brings deep uncertainty as we come to another New Year. We live with the threat from the virus, economic uncertainty, separation from family and friends, the loss of loved ones and the anxiety that isolation brings. Yet the message of Immanuel brings hope, as it did for Ahaz! Christmas changes everything forever! God has declared in Christ that He is with us and for us, not absent from or against us. His love is larger than our sin, fears or guilt: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8 verse 31).

As we prepare for the most unusual Christmas ever, let's not forget:

God with us means:

He is on my side and by my side. In the uncertainties of life I am never alone.

Everything will work out according to His plan. My life isn't just a series of meaningless occasions or mistakes.

Even when others show they are not there for me, God is.

When circumstances change, He will give me the strength I need.

God is with me: He isn't far away, but has made the journey into my world. Once we get past the trees, gifts, turkey stuffing and pudding **here is the hope for the future.**

Paul Hardingham



WHEN WILL OUR CHURCH BE OPEN AGAIN FOR WORSHIP? ...NOT YET!

We are currently unable to open our church for worship as we do not have the capacity to steward the safety requirements. But please join the 500 who meet together on line for worship each week on <http://www.orpchiscircuit.org.uk/> (Videos), or access the printable Sunday worship service from the Orpington and Chislehurst Circuit website.

And Join Maureen and Deborah Spinks' Zoom Advent Course at 7.45 pm on Mondays by phone or internet! Phone 01689 821956 or E-mail mdospinks@gmail.com and Maureen will set you up.



PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

We may not be open, but all the people who are part of our church, churches and community families are still out there. They will have various needs and problems and need our prayers. Below is guidance for our prayers based on our normal activities and links.

Sunday: Worship and Messy Church - pray for ourselves our members and visitors.

Monday: Pray for our ministers - Duncan, Terry and Maureen.

Tuesday: Pray for the Good Companions and All Sorts Craft Group

Wednesday: Pray for those who normally go to the Community Lunch

Thursday: Pray for Churches Together in Mottingham - St Andrews, St Albans, St Edwards and Our Lady Help of Christians

Friday: Pray for the shop owners, library, Councilors and neighbours.

Saturday: Pray for those who normally go to The Youth Club



WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR CIRCUIT

All the churches in the circuit have Worship Services at 10.30am each Sunday in December. You are asked to contact the church you want to attend beforehand.

Holy Communion will be celebrated in Bromley Common, Chelsfield, Emanuel and Orpington on the December 13th.

Christmas day services are at 10.30 in Chislehurst, Bromley Common, New Eltham and Emanuel.



WORSHIP AND PRAYER OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR MOTTINGHAM CHURCHES TOGETHER

St Andrews and St Albans

Sunday worship - From 13th December alternately at St Andrew's and St Alban's

St Andrews

Wednesday - opening for private prayer 6-7pm

Thursday and Friday - opening for private prayer 10am to noon

St Albans

Thursdays - opening for private prayer Noon-1 pm

St Edwards

Monday to Saturday - open for Morning Prayer at 8am,
- open for private prayer from 10am to 1pm

Wednesday - service of night prayer at 7pm

Sunday Worship - 10.30am morning service.

Sunday 20th - Candlelit Carols & Bells on the green 6pm



CRISIS CAROLS ON THE GREEN

SATURDAY 12th December at 10.30am. Churches Together in Mottingham Covid safe Crisis for Christmas Carols
Venue: the green outside St Edwards



FOLLOW THE STAR

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

Ruth M Bancewicz



IN AND AROUND MOTTINGHAM AND BROMLEY

Monday 10:00 - 13:00 & 14:00 - 17:00

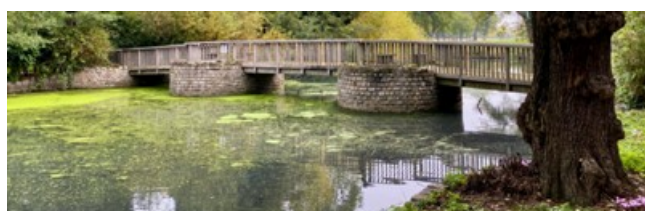
Wed 10:00 - 13:00 14:00 - 17:00

Fri - Sat 10:00 - 13:00 14:00 - 17:00

Tel: 020 8857 5406

Armchair Talks this month are on Facebook on Sat 19th Dec (Land of Milk & Honey - an exploration between the Guildhall & Cheapside) & Sat 2nd Jan (The Inner Circle - a walk in Regent's Park) - both broadcast at 4pm, but accessible any time after that... <https://www.facebook.com/BromleyLibraries>

You can continue to explore all that Bromley Libraries offer.



'KEEP CONNECTED! - serving the community'

This publication prepared by Bob Lawrie broadly covers all aspects of life in Mottingham.

E-mail Bob on bob@standrewandstalban.org.uk



'THE GREAT CIRCUIT BAKE OFF'!

We are inviting everyone to grab their wooden spoons and mixing bowls and get festive in the kitchen. Bake and decorate your festive showstopper and send us a photo with a few words about why this bake is special to you.

Photos should be sent to orpingtonchislehurst@gmail.com or messaged to us via the circuit Facebook page. The photos of your bakes will then be judged by "Master Baker" April from April's Kitchen and a winner named who will be our star baker. There are two categories, child and adult.

Please send me your pictures by **Sunday 20th December** and the winners will be named in the Christmas Circuit video service. Have fun in the kitchen and we can't wait to see your creations!

Joanne Cummins, Circuit Administrator

We Remembered them



Sunday 8th November

