



December 2023
Minister: Rev. Hannah Chun
Mob: 07935 612 414

Dear Friends,

I don't know about you, but *I don't* feel ready for Christmas. I feel as though I *ought* to be ready to rejoice and celebrate Jesus' birth, but when I look around at our world with all that is going on, I wonder how I can rejoice and celebrate or whether I should be allowed to. There's just so much suffering and pain around us. Particularly with the weather now turning biting cold and all of us feeling the pinch when it comes to heating our homes - it's likely to be a difficult winter for a great many people.

My children nonetheless are really excited for Christmas and they keep asking me if I am too. I never quite know how to reply. I'm hoping this season of Advent before Christmas will help me be better prepared and ready when it comes, but will I ever be ready?

How might you be preparing yourself for this season? Who and what has been on your mind lately as we draw near to Christmas? Do you think you will be ready for Christmas when it comes around? What does being ready for Christmas look like anyway?

Jesus' birth is often portrayed as being peaceful and perfect, such as the ones seen on Christmas cards, but the scriptures show that Jesus came at a time when the world was plunged into deep darkness. He was born into a time of political turmoil. There was suffering, there was death, there was injustice, there was inequality, there was poverty and there was disease. Much like our world today. I personally take great comfort from this.

The world was not ready for Jesus's birth, yet the time came. There wasn't even a room available for him to be born in warmth and comfort, yet, the time came. The world was in no perfect order, yet the time came. Jesus comes to us whether ready or not, into the messiness of our lives. Even when we are least ready to receive him. Even when we don't have the energy to be happy. Even when we feel we have no room for him in our busyness.

The thing about Christmas is that Jesus' birth acknowledges the mess and realities of human pain. Christmas is about being real and not pretending that everything is ok. Christmas allows people to weep, grieve and cry. Christmas can be a time to be sad. And that's okay because Jesus came at a time when everything was not ok.

As we await Jesus' coming throughout this season, may we know it's okay not to be okay, may we hold on to the hope that Jesus Emmanuel, God-with-us brings, and may we rest in the joy that whether we feel ready or not, Jesus comes to us at the right time to be with us, to be born in our hearts and to wrap us in his peace.

*He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.
– Madeleine L'engle –*

Merry Christmas,
Hannah

NOTES FROM THE VESTRY

Our first service of the month falls on November 5th – and I know that by night time the sky will be aglow with rockets and fireworks – but my heart isn't in it this year because too many people in the world are in grave danger from real rockets and bombs. There is a dusty garland of sunflowers, and blue and yellow ribbons, on my front door which I put there in support for Ukraine when Russia first began that war – and I wonder if I will ever take it down?

On Remembrance Sunday we remembered the dead from so many wars - and despite the splendid service given by Rev. Paul Howes, it felt more painful than ever as all we hear about is the suffering going on, and cities all over the world are filled with demonstrations against the war in Gaza.

We are blessed indeed to have our wonderful Worship Leaders Christine and Graham Duthie and Joan Gomer, who returned in quick succession (after their service at the end of October) to fill our thoughts with the history of our lovely church, and take our minds off the horrors filling the news. I have recently had the great pleasure of reading Martin Broom's early history of our church, which was fascinating to me as a relative 'newbie' (I arrived in 2011).

Christmas is rushing towards us and we will decorate the church, and welcome the Boxted Silver Band as a highlight for our Joint Three Together Carol Service at 6.30 on Sunday December 17th – we would be most grateful for donations of mince pies to offer our guests (and the band) afterwards. Also please note – The Circuit Christmas Celebration – Carols, Comedy, Cakes at The Ark Tuesday 2 January 4.00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m. – all welcome! (See page 5 for more information).

But as the excitement and joy of Christmas enfolds us, let us not forget the many parts of the world suffering and at war. I leave you with a prayer for peace by Pope John 23rd. He worked as a stretcher bearer in World War 1, and during World War 2, as a papal diplomat to Bulgaria, worked with the German Ambassador there to save the lives of 24,000 Jews. Throughout his life he promoted dialogue between Catholic and Orthodox Christians as well as Jews and Muslims. He was made a Saint by Pope John Paul 2nd.

‘Lord Jesus Christ, who are called the Prince of Peace, who are Yourself our peace and reconciliation – who so often said “Peace to you”, grant us peace. Make all men and women witnesses of truth, justice, and brotherly love. Banish from their hearts whatever might endanger peace. Enlighten our rulers that they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace. May all peoples of the earth become as brothers and sisters. May longed for peace blossom forth and reign always over us all. Amen’

Debbie Floy

LETTER FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Friends,

Over the last few days I wonder what you have noticed? Looking out the window I’ve seen there’s more leaves on the ground than the trees, and whenever I think about all the leaves I’ve collected, there seems to be even more to pick up. I’ve seen the squirrel running across the driveway and the days getting colder. At the same time, I wonder about all the things I’ve missed.

Last week whilst on a District Retreat we were encouraged to go out for a walk, to notice small details and to stop and reflect on God through it. It’s easy to miss the berries hanging on the Rowan tree or the variegated leaves of a plant with each leaf having its own pattern of green and gold. Without stopping and noticing, I’d have missed this completely in the rush of daily life.

As we enter the season of Advent we are watching and waiting. We are waiting and preparing for the season of Christmas and to celebrate the birth of Jesus. In the world around us it is a time of frenetic activity, yet this is a season of contemplation. We need to hold the two together. Through the Advent Ring we often find ourselves being encouraged to reflect on the themes of peace, joy, hope and love. Where do we notice these themes in our day to day lives?

Over the coming weeks we'll hear the words of Isaiah remind us in chapter 9 that 'for to us a child is born, to us a son is given.' This passage helps us to look ahead to Jesus' birth, remembering that God was revealed to humanity in a tiny, vulnerable, and helpless baby. We will then be reminded that he will be called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father' and 'Prince of Peace.' How amazing! In a few short words we are reminded of the character of God whom we worship, who in Jesus is alive today through the Holy Spirit.

December is a month of busy-ness in many ways as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth as families, churches, and communities. There is much to do but we also need to find the time to stop and notice the work and character of God. Maybe we can spend a little time each day focusing on one of the phrases from Isaiah, looking out the window or going for a walk and thinking about where we notice God in the wider world. In the times of getting everything done, where do we see the character of Jesus revealed in the actions of others? My encouragement is that we seek to hold together the things we need to do with time to be with God.

May this Christmas be filled with the peace, joy, love, and hope of Christ for you, those you know and love, your church and community.

God bless,
Rev. Chris Preece

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Dear God,

Please be with all the homeless this Christmas and give them strength.

Please bless all the children, especially those who are in care and away from home.

Please be with all sick people in hospital this Christmas, especially the children.

Please be with all families this Christmas who are separated from each other, for whatever reason, and those who mourn.

Bless all the ministers and preachers of Your Holy Word, as they share the Good News with others.

Thank you for giving us Your Holy Son and help us to appreciate the real meaning of Christmas.

Please help us to make this Christmas special for someone less fortunate than ourselves.

Be with us and strengthen our faith so that we can share in the real meaning of Christmas.

Amen

CIRCUIT CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION at The Ark
2 January from 4 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Come when you can, leave when you must!

Plans are in hand for a circuit social event – Colchester Circuit Christmas Celebrations - on 2nd January at The Ark. The aim of the event is to help build on the friendships which have been developing across all churches in the circuit and to get together as a circuit family for food, fun and fellowship. The small planning group which is organising the event is looking for the following support:

- **Can you co-ordinate food contributions?** The event will run from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and each church in the circuit is invited to bring a contribution of finger foods (savoury and sweet). The planning group is looking for someone to co-ordinate the contributions to make sure that a wide range of food is provided. If you are willing to help in this way, please email Senior Circuit steward Tony Trevers at thearkhighwoods@gmail.com
- **Can you sing?** Would you like to join a small group on the day to help lead some carol and Christmas song singing? Please email circuit steward Judith Winward at judith.winward@talk21.com if you would like to help in this way, especially if you can sing a part to help harmonise without the need for prior rehearsal. The singing group will be given the music beforehand but current plan is for there to be a scratch choir on the day to help the harmony.
- **Can you play an instrument?** The planning group would also like to see a circuit band of musicians get together on the day to accompany the communal singing. Please tell Judith Winward at judith.winward@talk21.com what instrument you can play so that appropriate music can be planned and provided. It will not be anything too difficult!
- **Can you act, recite a poem or piece of prose or otherwise entertain?** There will be an opportunity for all who would like to contribute to the entertainment. A circuit Christmas sketch is also among the items planned, with parts being taken by volunteers from every church who will have the opportunity to practice their parts at home beforehand - but who will have no further rehearsal before the performance!

Further information will follow via church stewards

THURSDAY CIRCLE

November began with two talks especially for the season of Remembrance. Firstly a most informative talk, 'Evacuees', by Peter Mockford and then secondly Liz White told us the stories of some of those commemorated by the trees of Colchester's Avenue of Remembrance.

Next it was time for a visit by Gunni Graygoose, who provided us with a fun afternoon of seated activities, which we sang along to and shook our percussion instruments with enthusiasm.

There was an excellent turnout on 23 November, when Jie Zeng talked and gave us a PowerPoint presentation on the very colourful Chinese Spring Festival. Hopefully she might be available in the future to give us another talk about life in China!

On 30 November we had a return visit by the Concorde Singers.

Coming up:

7 December A Christmas Meal at Harpers in Boxted

14 December An afternoon of Christmas Fun – open to all at 2.30 p.m.

21 December Our Christmas Carol Service – open to all at 2.30 p.m.

After that there will be no meetings until we resume on 1 February.

Joan Gomer - Secretary

GREAT EXPECTATION

There's a change in the season and a change in me.
A feeling of great expectation nearing Christmas time you see.

Soon the Christmas decorations will hang for all to see,
but, the very best (I'm hoping) is our church's Christmas Tree!

The autumn leaves are quickly falling colours – red and bronze and gold.
The winter chills upon us now, with gusty winds so cold.

Dark green ivy leaves creep profusely along the trellises.
Bright red holly berries shine amongst their prickly leaves.

The Rose of Sharon bush still blooms – its flowers of cadmium yellow hue,
and tiny purple cyclamens emerge on the grassy lawns dew.

It is the season of 'goodwill'. Soon cards and presents we'll exchange.
Celebrations of baby Jesus' birth, when everything did change!

Pat Farrow

{**Ed:** The name 'Rose of Sharon' first appears in Hebrew in the Tanakh. In the Shir Hashirim ('Song of Songs' or 'Song of Solomon') 2:1, the speaker (the beloved) says:
"I am the rose of Sharon, a rose of the valley".}

THE BABY SLEPT

Into the stable
the shepherds came,
bursting in smiling, excited.
Rough, tough men
from the fields of sheep.
Their senses softened by the sight
of the sleeping child.
And through all this,
the baby slept.

Into the stable
the Wise Men came.
Proud, tall and dignified.
Their riches shone
in the pale lamplight
as they gave their gifts
and honoured the child.
And through all this,
the baby slept.

Both poor and rich
the visitors came
to the manger, where he laid.
While the animals
shuffled in the straw,
the angels sang in praise
of Mary's child.
And through all this,
the baby slept.

Norma Peckston

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT OF THE DAY

"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."
Charles Dickens

FOR YOUR PRAYERS:

*All those known to us who have ongoing health problems;
any who are in need of support at this time;
especially those mourning the loss of a loved family member.*

WIMPOLE ROAD CHURCH SERVICES FOR DECEMBER

Sunday mornings at 11.00 a.m.

3 December	Rev. Hannah Chun - Holy Communion
10 December	Rev. David Moody
17 December	Sally Crafer
17 December 6.30 p.m.	Three Together Carol Service - Rev. Hannah Chun and Boxted Silver Band
24 December	Jonathan Sparkes
24 December 4.00 p.m.	Crib Service/Holy Communion - Rev. Hannah Chun
31 December	Circuit Service. Rev. Chris Preece

A WARM WELCOME AWAITS

Join us after the service for coffee/tea and biscuits in the church parlour for a time of fellowship and refreshments.

DIARY DATES

Saturday 9 December at Wivenhoe. 9 a.m. – 10. a.m.
‘Serving the Present Age?’ Circuit Prayer Group, led by Sally Crafer.
To support God’s mission for our churches in Colchester. All welcome

A message from Rev. Chris Preece:

We are delighted that **Sally Crafer** and **Joe Navoka** have both completed their Local Preacher training and we are now organising their Admission Service.

The service will commence at **3 p.m. on Sunday 10 December.**

At Joe and Sally's request, for the ease and flexibility of live streaming, the service will take place at **Castle Methodist Church.**

It would be great to share with as many people as possible as we celebrate with Sally and Joe.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

To all our dear friends at Wimpole Road,

May Christ's spirit of love, joy, and peace be with you this Christmas.

Thank you for the love and welcome you have shown us
as we settled into life in Colchester.

Merry Christmas!

Love, Hannah, Yoon, Reyna, Laelle & Naythan

Pauline and Martin wish all friends a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year.

They will not be sending cards but will make a donation to a charity.

Greetings to all our friends with love from **Dave and Rev'd. Joe**

Christmas greetings to everyone at Wimpole Road from **Jeanette, Anthony and family**

Joan Tyler sends her best wishes to everyone she knows at church.

I would like to send a message of gratitude to all that have continued to pray for me and support me during a trying couple of years.

I am grateful for the friendships that I have made through church.

Wishing everyone a joyous year ahead. **Zoe**

Christmas Greetings from **Jon Bloom** in Norfolk.

Good wishes for Christmas and the New Year, to everyone from us both **Terry and Janet Canham.**

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WORKING TOGETHER



PRAYER MEETING Tuesday 10.00 - 10.30 a.m.
Meeting number: 195 594 506 password 011904

THREE TOGETHER ADVENT COURSE

We are meeting weekly on **Thursday 7 & 14 December** and concluding on **Wednesday 20 December** for our Advent Study course, 'Someone to Believe In' – based on the popular Christmas movie 'Miracle on 34th Street'.

Everybody is invited to join these meetings. Please speak to Andrew or Christine for any further information.

'THREE TOGETHER' ONLINE FACEBOOK SERVICE EVERY SUNDAY at 6.30 p.m.

Ecumenical worship led by and shared with all three churches, Wimpole Road, St. Stephen's and St. Margaret's.

LINK TO ST. STEPHEN'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

<https://ststephens-colchester.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023-11-November-2023-Newsletter-V01.00.pdf>

FUTURE NEWSROUNDS

Please don't forget, if you have stories, items or prayer requests that you would like to contribute to a future monthly Newsround - please contact me by telephone, e-mail or post.

Tel: (01206) 869505 or e-mail: alison.ablewhite@btinternet.com

KEEP UP TO DATE ON OUR WEBSITE:

www.wimpoleroadchurch.org.uk