



January 2024 2023
Minister: Rev. Hannah Chun
Mob: 07935 612 414

Dear Friends,

On Boxing Day morning, my family and I experienced the West Mersea Boxing Day Dip. No, we weren't brave enough to take part but rather enjoyed watching many make the brave dive into the cold sea waters. I must say, what a significant way to end the year and welcome another new year. As I watched, I wondered whether there was something about going in with the old and coming out with the new.

I wonder too whether as we say goodbye to one year and welcome a new year there might be this sense of diving in with the old and emerging with the new. Something we do in the new year that is distinctive as Methodists is to observe Covenant Sunday. It is a service where we recognise God's commitment to us and we in turn renew our commitment to God for the coming year. It marks a continued but also a fresh, new beginning.

The renewing of our covenant with God is not like a New Year's resolution where we may make promises that are hard to keep and then end up caught in the never-ending pressure of keeping them. It is not something that should pressure us to be someone we are not or place high expectations on us. Rather, it is a **GIFT** where we are invited to live within the loving relationship that God has already offered to us as ourselves from where we are.

How has the year 2023 been for you? What news of sadness and joy has it brought for you? What struggles and achievements? Any new beginnings or endings? Whatever the past

year has brought for you, may you look back not with regret at all that wasn't achieved but with a celebration at all that you managed, survived and achieved with God's help.

I survived my first Christmas in ministry feeling rather 'carolled' out, but I have enjoyed it so much. It is thanks to all of you for your constant support and encouragement as I continue to navigate my way through this mind-boggling calling called ministry. One carol I never seem to get tired of singing is the English poet Christina Georgina Rossetti's '*In the Bleak Midwinter*'. The last verse in particular speaks to me about this covenant relationship with God. God does not require us to give anything except our hearts. It is our very selves as we are that God yearns to connect with. May this new year be a time when you can once again give God your heart and renew and accept God's gift of this covenant relationship that he has already offered to you.

*What can I give him, poor as I am? —
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man I would do my part, —
Yet what I can I give him, —
Give my heart.*

Christina Georgina Rossetti

Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing how God's love is made manifest through Wimpole Road in 2024!

God bless,
Hannah

NOTES FROM THE VESTRY

By the time this is read all traces of the festive season will have disappeared from our church building, apart from those stray pine needles that will continue to be found until at least June!

We will however share the memories of a very busy month that led us through Advent to the celebration of the birth of our Lord. The thoughtful Advent meditations led by Christine, Graham and Joan are much appreciated as are the detailed PowerPoint presentations meticulously created by Debbie to enhance each act of worship.

A full church for the Carol Service was so encouraging as we sang favourite carols, listened to the familiar scripture readings and pondered over the question '*Is there room for me?*', which was very apt for those squashed together in a pew! It was good to see friends from near and far, lovely to welcome new faces and wonderful to share with our neighbours from St. Stephen's and St. Margaret's. Our thanks to all those who read, prayed and sang, Boxted Band and Peter for the music and to Rev. Hannah for leading her first Carol Service with us - what a blessing for us all! Thanks also to those who provided refreshments afterwards enabling fellowship to continue in the warm spirit of friendship.

What a joy to welcome so many to the family Holy Communion on Christmas Eve. I can't remember the last time we had to add extra glasses for that service! Shy children meant that the scratch nativity was mainly represented by the young at heart, with the exception of the Angel and the Star and the late arrival of the Donkey who were magnificent! Thank you Hannah for the meaningful way we prepared for the 'Big Day'. We left happy and expectant, confident for the coming of Jesus once again to enter our hearts.

On Christmas Day we were made very welcome as we shared and celebrated Jesus' birth at St. Stephen's. Another joyful act of worship led by Rev.'s Belinda and Dan and assisted by Rev. Hannah - an excellent way to begin the day.

To close the year, the Circuit Service on New Year's Eve gave us an opportunity to worship together as a circuit and examine what God has done for us individually and collectively over the past year. Rev. Chris and Jonathan skilfully guided our thoughts from past to future and invited us to think and pray about where and how God will lead through the coming year.

I finish with a verse from scripture as we prepare to renew our commitment to God in the Covenant Service on 21st and look forward to what He has for us here in 2024.

'But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings of eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint.'

{Isaiah 40:31}

On behalf of the Stewards, I wish you All a peaceful and positive New Year and pray that together we can extend the spirit of friendship and faith to All who enter here.

God Bless,

Christine Firmin

LETTER FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Friends,

The beginning of a new year is often a time to look back and then to look ahead. In looking back, it tends to be the highlights and the low points we immediately turn to as these were the times when normal life was interrupted for some reason. In trying to summarise the year, we look for the themes that have characterised it in some way. Looking forward inevitably means that we cannot use the same yardstick as we don't yet know what the high and low points will be. We may be able to begin to sense what some of the themes might be, even though the past is no indicator of the future.

Through the Christmas period we have been reflecting on the coming of Jesus Christ to the world as the Saviour. He is Emmanuel, which means 'God with us'. Whether we are looking back or stepping into the future, God is always with us, walking alongside us in Jesus and guiding us through the Holy Spirit. God is the constant person in the whole of

our lives and the world. The final words attributed to John Wesley are ***'The best of all is, God is with us!'*** I don't know what your final words of 2023 were, but these would be good ones to quote in many circumstances. They don't need to be the final words in a particular situation, but could be the words we use now, and in the days and weeks to come.

During January we will be celebrating our Covenant Service. This is an annual service where we commit ourselves to God once again recognising the power and presence of God in all things and for all times. There are many powerful words in the Covenant prayer, some of which will resonate more in some years than others. My invitation is that prior to the service we sit with the prayer ahead of praying it. The line ***'You are mine and I am yours'*** emphasises the presence and assurance of Christ in our lives.

Recognising and living that assurance of God's presence should give us confidence to share this message with others. The Covenant prayer is one where we offer ourselves to God to serve God in Christ wherever we are placed. As we continue to find our God-given ways and times of serving in the present and in the times ahead, all we do is for the glory of God. We continue to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us in the ways of service and mission.

Whilst things change and we all need to get used to writing 2024, we do so with the constancy of God, who is with us. Whatever we have faced or whatever might lie ahead we do with God who is with us in Jesus Christ. We can dwell in this and live in the assurance that we will never be on our own. Inevitably, there will be highlights and low points in the coming year, just as there have been in previous years. But in it all, let's remember that ***'The best of all is, God is with us'*** today and in every day to come.

God bless,

Rev. Chris Preece

THURSDAY CIRCLE

Our afternoons this time have all been on a Christmas theme.

November ended with a return visit by the Concorde Singers, who delighted us with an hour long programme of Christmas music. Some pieces were familiar, some we had not heard before and some required audience participation.

Our first meeting in December was a Festive Meal at Harpers in Boxted. Doug, the proprietor, and his staff provided us with a good meal at a reasonable price and everyone present enjoyed it. Thank you to Pauline for organising this event.

The following week was an afternoon of Christmas Fun, including music, readings and jokes, which were enjoyed by everyone.

Our final meeting for December was our Christmas Carol Service, which was well attended. It took the form of the traditional Bible readings of the Christmas story and singing the old familiar carols we all love.

There will be no meetings in January and we resume on 1st February, when Rev. Hannah will be the speaker. As ever, anyone is welcome at our meetings.

P.S. We have a heavy case of long playing gramophone records to dispose of. If anyone would like to have it or some of the records in return for a small donation to Thursday Circle funds, please see me if you are interested.

Joan Gomer - Secretary

GOING FOR SILVER

Dear friends,

As a church we must continue to demonstrate that we are caring for our environment in these difficult times of Climate Change.

A small working group has been looking at our progress as we work towards the required standard for going for Silver A Rocha UK award.

We need to do more with our property that we own and manage in order to achieve a Silver award.

It is very easy to go straight to big changes that are required to reduce the church carbon footprint such as changing all lighting to LED, fitting air source heat pumps, generating our own energy by purchasing and using solar panels but there are changes we can make now, such as:

- Providing recycled toilet paper on our church premises
- Ensuring that all the cleaning products around the church premises are environmentally friendly.
- Using recycled paper for office use
- Providing cycle racks on our church premises
- Provide rainwater facilities are installed and use on our church premises

Perhaps we can discuss the above changes at our next Church Council meeting?

Love Sally and members of the Eco Team at Wimpole Road.

CHRISTIAN BOOKSHOP IN EXETER

If you are looking for a book that you are having difficulty in obtaining we can certainly recommend Bridge Books in Exeter.

Their logo is the 'Sign of the Fish' with the words 'connecting people to God'.

The contact details are as follows:

Tel: 01392 427171

Postal address: 3 Okehampton Street, Exe Bridges, Exeter, Devon EX4 1DW

E-mail : sales@bridgebookshop.co.uk Website : www.bridgebookshop.co.uk

Please take a look. An independent Christian bookshop in need of support.
Thank you.

Christine and Graham

BELLA THE CAT

Tina (my daughter) has a young cat. She's a very dark tabby and cute.
I've taken many photos of her – Bella clearly is very astute.

She loved the blanket I knitted, the small furry bunny as well.
The antics she did playing with it! She liked it so much, I could tell.

She ventures now into the garden, whether it's sunshine or rain.
But, when she gets frightened or hungry she pops through the cat-flap again!

She kept us amused over Christmas – often jumping on somebody's lap. Loved hiding
amongst the wrapping paper – especially the clear bubble wrap.

I'd love to have a cat of my own, but I live on a traffic-fumed street.
So I'll just enjoy Bella round Tina's – she will always give me a treat.

(A purr-fect Christmas)

Pat Farrow

I DIDN'T NOTICE

Whilst away with Christmas merriment,
I didn't notice the buds on my magnolia tree
or the Canna lily growing tall against the fence.
Now back home, they're plain to see.

I didn't see the snowdrops
or the winter pansies bloom –
the autumn leaves still piled up
where the strong north wind had blown.

There's buds on the clematis
as if it's nearly spring!
Now I'm home awandering
I will not miss a thing!

Pat Farrow

REMEMBERING NORMAN

Recently on Wednesday 29 November we were informed by our bowls captain, Graham that our dear friend Norman Hurry had passed away peacefully that morning.

We were all sad, although it came as no great shock – Norman was in his late eighties I believe and very frail. He'd suffered with cancer and had many rounds in hospital care. His late wife had been a nurse and his two daughters are also nurses, so they kept their eye on him.

He was a member of the Salvation Army – they often gave him a lift to their meetings when he was well enough to attend. His daughter Stella used to drive him to our bowls at Wimpole Road each Wednesday afternoon. Graham and Christine drove him home afterwards.

He was a proper gentleman, always looked smartly dressed and he looked forward to his Wednesday bowls!

He also liked his 'hug' that I gave him before the match – he said that it helped him play!

When he lost his dear wife he was sad and lonely. Of course his family looked after him well, but things were never the same – as many of us now know what it's like to live alone.

God bless you Norman – you are greatly missed!

Pat Farrow

WISDOM

What would have happened
if there had been Three Wise Women
instead of Three Wise Men?

They would have asked directions,
arrived in Bethlehem on time,
cleaned the stable from floor to rafters,
helped deliver the baby,
brought practical gifts,
and there would have been peace on earth.

Amen

{Taken from Called to Praise}

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

Ken Young wishes to thank friends at Wimpole Road for the very kind Christmas gift.

Dear Wimpole Road Methodist Church,

As my time in the U.K. ends and the anniversary of my arrival in the U.K. and this church has passed, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the people of this church. Your kindness and warmth truly made me feel like a part of this community. From the moment I walked through your doors, I was greeted with open arms and a genuine sense of welcome by everyone.

My time at the church was a blessing during my stay in the U.K. As I left, I felt a sense of sadness at the thought of leaving this wonderful community behind. I'll miss the fellowship and support I have found here.

Thank you from the other side of the Pond,

Joshua Byrd

FOR YOUR PRAYERS:

*All those known to us who have ongoing health problems
and any who are in need of support at this time.*

*Especially the friends and families of these church friends who have died recently:
Andy Hewitt, Edith Plane, Joy Smith and Rachel Allen.*

WIMPOLE ROAD CHURCH SERVICES FOR JANUARY

Sunday mornings at 11.00 a.m.

7 January	Eddie Lansdown
14 January	Rev. Amy Walters
21 January	Covenant/Holy Communion - Rev. Hannah Chun
28 January	Alan Beesley

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 13 January at The Ark. 9 a.m. – 10. a.m.

‘Serving the Present Age?’ Circuit Prayer Group, led by Andrew Topple.

To support God’s mission for our churches in Colchester. All welcome

Wednesday 24 January 7.30 p.m. Vision for the Future.

An open meeting for everyone who has an interest in furthering our life and worship here at Wimpole Road.

An informal discussion – all welcome.

A SHORT NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

Eternal God, you gave us the greatest gift:
the gift of life.

In the coming year, help us use it wisely.

May we grow in generosity,
kindness and forgiveness, hope, faith, and love.

Amen.

Rabbi Evan Moffic

THE METHODIST COVENANT PRAYER

I am no longer my own but yours.

Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;

put me to doing,

put me to suffering;

let me be employed for you,

or laid aside for you,

exalted for you,

or brought low for you;

let me be full,

let me be empty,

let me have all things,

let me have nothing:

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

you are mine and I am yours. So be it.

And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.



WORKING TOGETHER



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

**‘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>

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