

Fareham Methodist Church

Newsletter December 2017/ January 2018

Minister: Rev Claire Simpson Tel: 01329 828706 Email: revclaire72@btinternet.com

Dear friends, The season of Advent will begin on 3rd December and Christmas is just around the corner and so another year is drawing to a close and a new year is about to begin. If we spend some time in reflecting on the events of 2017 then we might find it to be a bit of a mixed bag. We may be glad to leave it behind and start a fresh new year with impetus and opportunities. We may have found 2017 to be a good year for us and we wave it goodbye with thankful hearts and we hope that 2018 will hold the same promise. I suspect that for many of us the year will have been a mixture of the good and not-so-good.

As I reflect on some of the bigger news events of the year then there is a set of pictures that stick in my mind. A little like flicking through a photo album I see people of varying ages, nationalities and religions looking vulnerable and frightened. Bewildered refugee and starving child. The bedraggled caught up in natural disaster and the stricken in terrorist attack. The faces of those who suffer are hard to erase from our minds.

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ; God making himself small and choosing to enter our time as a vulnerable new born child. This, in some ways, is a mystery to us that an all-powerful God would choose to come in this way to a hurting world. Yet it is in the faces of the suffering and vulnerable that we can also see Jesus Christ and we are reminded again that he has come for us and all people. The first verse of one of the carols in *Singing the Faith* (222) reads:

Who would think that what was needed to transform and save the earth
might not be a plan or army, proud in purpose, proved in worth?
Who would think, despite derision, that a child would lead the way?
God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b.1958)

May we see the transforming and saving love of God in the baby in the manger and may we allow the Christchild to lead us into 2018 knowing his presence and purpose working in our lives. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a Blessed Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. With love, Claire

Vestry Jottings: It seems to me that one of the problems of our age is loneliness. Our GPs are having their time taken up by people who are lonely. It is part of the human condition, and can be found from the young child in the school playground to the elderly housebound person. As followers of Jesus, we are bidden to treat others as we would like to be treated. If we felt lonely, how would we want to be treated?

At Fareham Methodist Church we do try and fulfil our obligations in a number of ways. Mini Market and Coffee Centre are wonderful places to meet others over a cup of tea or coffee, and find someone to talk to or someone who will listen to us (you often find lonely people do a lot of talking). Our pastoral system when it works well ensures that those who are lonely are visited regularly.

But the worst times for loneliness are often after a bereavement or at the times of the year when most people are joining with others in celebration, and we are fast approaching one of these times of the year. Not only could you invite a lonely person to share Christmas dinner with you, you could bring them along to one of our special Christmas events which this year are: **Children's Nativity:** December 10th

Carol Service: December 17th at 6pm **Christingle:** Friday December 22nd at 3pm

Christmas Eve Communion: December 24th at 11.15pm **Christmas Day:** 10.30 at the URC

Being a Christian means sharing, and sharing can help people cope with their loneliness. Andrew Wilcock

Christmas Tree Festival: Thurs 30th Nov & Fri 1st Dec 10am – 5pm, Sat 2nd Dec 10am – 3:30pm with carol singing at 3pm followed by presentation of awards by the Mayor.

Admission (inc drink & mince pie) £2 Children Free

Everyone welcome - come along and vote for your favourite tree!

Volunteers to help on the door and for stewarding would be greatly appreciated. Please sign up on the

sheets in the Welcome area if you are able to help. Also, Margaret & Shirley will be pleased to receive further offers of cakes & seasonal gifts for their stalls. Thank you!

Evangelism and outreach! You are probably tired of seeing or hearing the two words above but on Tuesday, October 24th a group of us reached out and evangelised. The day trip to Australia, courtesy of the Holiday at Home Team, attracted 47 people into the church. They were treated to hot drinks and home-made biscuits on arrival and then entertained with games, a quiz and horse racing! Following a two course lunch, they watched 'Crocodile Dundee' and were served choc ices. The day concluded with a sing-song followed by tea and home-made cakes. Throughout the day, we had the opportunity to talk about the spiritual life of church and all we do in and for the community. For some, it was the first time they had come into the church and hopefully we will soon be seeing them at services and other events especially those involving food! Everyone left with smiles on their faces including the team who were exhausted by the end of the day. Garry Bagshaw

Concert: On Sunday, January 14th 2018 at the United Reformed Church at 15.00 the choirs from the URC, Holy Trinity Church and our church will be combining to bring you a concert of uplifting music. Several items will be sung by the combined choirs as well as each choir having time to sing its own choice of music. The concert is in aid of the work being undertaken by Christians Together in Fareham for the refugees in the area. There will be a retiring collection. We hope that you will come along and support your Singing Group as we sing some of your, and our, favourite pieces.

Church Website: Malcolm Groom has taken over as Website editor. He has already done a lot of work and anything for inclusion on the Website should be sent to him at malcolm@farehammethodist.org.uk He would like the website to become one of the main focuses for information about the Church both for the members and anyone else who looks us up. Please keep him up to date about your Group, and don't forget, he also needs to know if your regular activity is not taking place.

Vacancy: There is a vacancy on Church Council for someone to take over the responsibility for publicising our services and events. Please see Claire if you think you could take on this role or would like to find out more. Catherine Stephenson

Prayer Circle: We continue to meet on the 1st Thursday of each month. We hope you will be able to join us regularly or occasionally to pray for our Church Activities, our Circuit, Community issues in the Fareham Borough Council area and National and International Concerns. Please consider joining us whenever you can. Bobby Watson

Christmas Greetings: If you wish to send greetings to your friends at Church instead of individual cards, please send these to me at the email address below by 3rd December and you will be included in a communal card. Linda Press

Thanks to Tony and Pat Pickering for co-ordinating the Sunday morning refreshment rota. They have done this for a good while and have now passed on the baton to Liz Avison.

Thanks have also been received from the following:

Jill Race for your used stamps which are sent to the Bible Society and help to generate funds for Bible work worldwide. The collection box is down the corridor to the left of Church.

Ian and Garry Bagshaw for love and prayers over the last few months, as well as the cards, texts, emails and phone calls, which are much appreciated.

Eric Wheeler and **Gill Thomas** (on behalf of her Mum) for flowers and kind thoughts.

Fareham Rotary for 52 shoe boxes. The Total for Fareham Rotary Club was 1354, and there were 26,954 taken to the Area Depot at Andover.

Items for the February/March Newsletter should be sent to vicandlinda.press@btinternet.com or placed in the Newsletter Pigeonhole by 12 noon on Sunday 21st January.