

Dear friends,

And so Advent begins and we enter into a time of waiting and reflection so that we are ready to receive the Christchild again this Christmas. I feel that it has already been a reflective time at Fareham recently as we are mourning the loss of faithful church members and holding their families and friends in our prayers in the weeks that lie ahead. I would like to offer my grateful thanks to all those in our church community who have helped with funerals, services of thanksgiving and the hospitality involved with this, in recent weeks. It has been good to welcome many into our church who have come to remember their loved ones. I know that the warmth and love shown to them by so many has helped them in their bereavements.

As we look ahead to the coming weeks there are a few things I want to draw to your attention:

Firstly, this coming weekend is our **Advent Gift Weekend** at Fareham Methodist Church. There are different ways to give - I trust that folk have seen some of the publicity, but just to emphasise that on the Saturday between 10am-12noon you are invited to come down to church to enjoy some light refreshments; sing a carol or two if you wish; and also to bring **gifts for the Toy Service** which follows on the Sunday (new, unwrapped gifts please); **gifts for the food bank** (non-perishable and non-Christmassy if possible please); and a **financial gift for church funds** if you are able. Having given your gifts you might even have an empty bag or two to buy and take away some cakes from the cake stall or gifts for Christmas that will also be on sale!

Secondly, on **Sunday 12th December** it will be our **Christingle service at 10.30am**. Our church will be set up café-style so that we can make Christingles during the service. The Singing Group will also be taking part (but not as you might expect!) in this service. If you are intending to join the service online and would like a Christingle kit delivering to your home then please let me or Maggie know asap - you will need to provide your own orange.

Sunday 19th December is our carol service at 10.30am.

The Christmas Eve service of Holy Communion will be at **7pm this year** and friends from the URC will be joining us.

On Christmas Day we join our friends **at the URC for a Christmas celebration at 10.30am**.

There is still much uncertainty around the pandemic. Please do take care and stay safe and well. My role means that I am mixing with folk from different communities much of the time so to that end I will be **wearing a mask at all times in our church building** (unless I am leading worship) and rather than shake hands with folk I'm bumping elbows – with plenty of good wishes attached! I invite you to do the same as we continue to have a care and concern for **everyone** in our community.

Blessings,

Claire