



Dear Friends,

The onset of darkness in the late afternoon at this time of year, reminds me of delivering the Christmas post as a teenager, when the second delivery would involve cycling around my Oxfordshire village until early evening. I recall the difficulty in trying to read house-names in the gloom, and hoping that there wouldn't be any letters for a particularly long and unlit country lane!

Celebrations which bring light into darkness are present within many communities and different faiths. Such festivals serve as a reminder that the darkness will not last, and that spring will soon be on its way. For Christians, the seasons of Advent and Christmas speak of light in the human form of Jesus - 'the true light...coming into the world' as John puts it in his Gospel.

Too often darkness seems to be the prevalent force in this world, and yet I believe that the human spirit is essentially one of hope and optimism. It is this spirit which has inspired women and men throughout the centuries to look for better ways of living - not only for themselves, but also for others.

In the narrative of Jesus' birth, we discover one born in humble surroundings, and we recall that his way of living was not based on the force of might, but upon the illuminating conviction of love.

When the darkness of this season, or the world, or our own private experiences, seems to be too much to bear, may we recall that God's light continues to present amongst us through those who seek good, and supremely through the coming of Jesus.

May we know God's blessing as we prepare in the season of Advent, and rejoice when Christmas arrives.

Stephen

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AROUND THE CIRCUIT

Carol Services

10th December

10.30am Sunfields led by Rev. Bill Tardy

17th December

10.30am Hither Green led by Jeannette Warren

4pm Eltham Park led by Rev. Stephen Maunder

4.30pm Upper Norwood led by Rev Abe Konadu-Yiadom

5pm Forest Hill led by Rev. Dee Yeadon

6pm Burnt Ash led by Linda Ryan

Refreshments plus carol singing in the hall afterwards in aid of Action for Children

6.30pm Anerley led by Rev Abe Konadu-Yiadom

6.30pm Lewisham led by Rev. Stephen Maunder

24th December

11am Wesley Hall led by local arrangement

Christingle Services

10th December

10.30am Eltham Park led by Rev. Stephen Maunder

Family Nativity Services

17th December

11am Wesley Hall led by Rev. Dee Yeadon

24th December

10.30am Burnt Ash led by Jenny Hamill

4pm Eltham Park led by Rev. Stephen Maunder



Watchnight Services

In many different Christian traditions, watchnight services are held late on New Year's Eve, and end after midnight. This provides the opportunity for Christians to review the year that has passed and make confession, and then prepare for the year ahead by praying and resolving.

Following the lead of a small Christian denomination called the Moravians, who began having 'watch' services in 1733, the founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley, originated watch night services in 1740. The services provided Methodist Christians with a godly alternative to times of drunken revelry, such as Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.



Watchnight Services within the Circuit: Sunday 31st December 2017

Forest Hill 11.15pm

Lewisham 11.15pm

All are welcome

Covenant Services

John Wesley believed that Methodists should reaffirm their covenant with God annually. Drawing much of his material for the service from seventh-century Puritans, he created a service in which an individual renews his/her covenant with God, and in 1755 held his first covenant service. Wesley published this service in a pamphlet in 1780, and this form was used without alteration for nearly a century in England.

The Wesleyan Conference revised the service twice during the nineteenth century. Now included in The Methodist Worship Book, the emphasis of the service is on God's readiness to enfold us in generous love, not dependent on our deserving. Our response, also in love, springs with penitent joy from thankful recognition of God's grace.

**Anerley Burnt Ash Eltham Park Forest Hill Hither Green
Lewisham Sunfields Upper Norwood Wesley Hall**

The covenant is not just a one-to-one transaction between individuals and God, but the act of the whole faith community. The service leads us, by a path both similar to, and differing from, that of normal Sunday worship, to that commitment which all worship seeks, that is, both to inspire and to strengthen.



Forthcoming Events

College Park Players present: 'Aladdin'

Thurs 7th/Fri 8th December 2017

7.45pm

Burnt Ash

Sat. 9th December 2017

1pm & 6pm

Burnt Ash

Tickets £7 (£6 concessions): booking rynld@aol.com



Circuit Forthcoming Events

Wed. 10th Jan.

LP & WL Meeting

7.45pm

Lewisham

Thurs. 11th Jan.

Circuit Treasurers meeting

8pm

Burnt Ash

18th – 25th Jan.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Sun. 21st Jan.

United Service

4pm St. Stephen's Church, Lewisham

Tues 6th Feb.

Circuit Meeting

7.45pm

Hither Green

Wed. 14th Feb.

Ash Wednesday

Sat. 24th Feb.

Missions Coffee Morning

10-12am

Burnt Ash



Circuit Website: bhcpmethodist.org.uk

Deadline for information for next newsletter: **25th February 2018**

Please email details to: office.bcp@btinternet.com

**Anerley Burnt Ash Eltham Park Forest Hill Hither Green
Lewisham Sunfields Upper Norwood Wesley Hall**