

THIS MONTH: DECEMBER 2009



RIDGEWAY METHODIST CHURCH

Dear Friends

Advent – a season in 3-D

I don't remember observing Advent as a child – the only association I have with the season was the *Blue Peter* advent crown made with wire coat hangers and tinsel. In more recent times, Advent calendars and advent candles have become more popular. I think that for most people these are really just a countdown to Christmas but the proper celebration of Advent is more than that.

Advent literally means 'coming'. The first dimension of Advent is a time of expectant waiting for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. We live in a society where people want everything immediately (as Freddie Mercury famously sang, 'I want it all, I want it all, I want it all, And I want it now!'). Consequently, most shops and even some private houses are decorated for Christmas even before Advent begins. In church, Advent is traditionally observed for four Sundays before Christmas. Sadly, by the time that Christmas Day comes, people have finished with Christianity and carol services for another year – a strange sort of birthday celebration really, with everything more or less done and dusted before the big day comes.

The second dimension of Advent reminds us that the original waiting was done by the Hebrew people who were looking expectantly for the coming of the Messiah (O come, O come, Immanuel and ransom captive Israel). Christians believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Messiah. After its account of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the New Testament says that Jesus ascended or returned to heaven but that he promised to come again. This future Advent (sometimes called the 'second coming' in contrast with his birth at Bethlehem) will see the Lord Jesus Christ come not in humility but in glory as King and Judge. Hope and judgment are important themes in the Advent season.

The third dimension of Advent is often overlooked. We wait expectantly for our celebration of the birth of Christ. We also wait expectantly for his future coming in glory. However, we must also welcome his personal coming to our hearts and lives today. Christians believe that by faith Jesus Christ can be known and experienced in our hearts and lives today.

Heaven's arches rang
When the angels sang,
Proclaiming thy royal degree;
But of lowly birth
Cam'st thou, Lord, on earth,
And in great humility:
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!
There is room in my heart for thee.

When heaven's arches ring,
And her choirs shall sing,
At thy coming to victory,
Let thy voice call me home,
Saying, 'Yet there is room,
There is room at my side for thee!
And my heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus,
When thou comest and callest for me.

(*Emily Elliott, 1836-97*)

Bible Reading Notes

Christians believe that God speaks in a very special way through the Bible. Therefore, we encourage people to read the Bible regularly. There is no point in pretending that the Bible is not a long and difficult book. Recognising this, many Christians take Bible reading notes to help them find their way around the Bible, to read a relatively short passage each day and to share with another Bible reader some thoughts on the passage. A separate leaflet is available about Bible reading notes and although using these is not the only way of reading the Bible, the question to ask is whether it is better than the way that you have read the Bible this year.

Gift Day and Remembrance Sunday

November has been a busy month with Gift Day, Remembrance Sunday, the *Faith, Hope and Charity Concert* and the annual Memorial Service. We are not normally able to give a Gift Day total until the New Year when all gifts have been made. The news in our annual accounts that the church was losing £1,000 a month brought us up with a start and we are grateful to those people who have both reviewed their regular giving and made a special donation through our annual Gift Day appeal. If you have not yet thought seriously about this, please would you take the time to do so. It was good to see the church full to overflowing on Remembrance Sunday. Once again, the audio-visual presentation, prepared by Andrew Stead, that formed a major part of our observance was extremely helpful and the long list of those killed on operations since Remembrance Sunday 2008 was extremely moving. We were privileged to be joined by the mother of one of those named on the list – a salutary reminder that it is not a list of names for a day but a record of real people whose loss is felt every day by relatives and friends.

Memorial service weekend

Thank you to everyone who supported us for our *Faith, Hope and Charity* event at Polhawn Fort. The atmospheric venue was complemented not only by superb food (with generous donations from *Friary Manor Hotel, Little Cornish Curry Company, Purely Cornish* and *Rodda's*) but by a special blending of Christian testimony in word and song from Simon Parnall. A small group of people worked incredibly hard to make sure everything ran smoothly and, which is more, we raised over £1,500 for Children's Hospice South West. We were joined at the Memorial Service on the Sunday by the Plympton Stannator, Mrs Marilyn Crabb, Mrs Judy Pride from Children's Hospice South West and by Mr Richard Parson. Again, Simon Parnall ministered in song but most importantly we were joined by a number of bereaved families who had come to remember loved ones. The retiring collection raised £218 for Children's Hospice South West. Thank you to all who helped in every way, particularly with the practical arrangements and catering.

Invite a friend at Christmas

Recent surveys in the wider community have revealed that many people would go to church if only they were personally invited. Please use the Christmas publicity that the church produces to invite family and friends personally to join you in our celebrations.

Happy Christmas and God bless in the New Year

I hope to see you at our Christmas services. If you cannot easily get out but would appreciate my calling on you, please contact the office and I will be pleased to come and see you. My family join me in wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and God's blessing in the New Year.

God bless

John Haley

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

On 23 December we shall be holding our Christingle service in the afternoon. If you would like to help us prepare Christingles in the morning (10.00 am), please see Avril or Pat.

December Diary

Tuesday 1:	10.00 - 12.00	Patchwork Group
	3.00 pm	Cake café
	7.30 pm	Ladies' Group: Plymouth Police Choir Concert (further details are on the notice-board)
Wednesday 2:	10.00 - 12.30	Coffee followed by Lunches
	7.30 pm	The Lyfe Bible study (in the lounge)
Thursday 3:	2.45 pm	Women's Fellowship: Revd Veronica Campbell (My work as a Missionary)
	7.00 pm	Girls' Brigade Christmas Worship and Celebrations (All welcome - coffee and mince pies in the hall after)
Saturday 5:	8.30 am	Monthly prayer meeting
	10.00 - 12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Outreach (Christine and Lydia)
Sunday 6:	10.30 am	Revd Peter Pillinger (Chairman of the District) and Revd John Haley (Holy Communion)
	7.00 pm	Mrs Brenda Youngs
Monday 7:	7.30 pm	Minister's Bible study (Ephesians, 10)
Tuesday 8:	10.00 - 12.00	Patchwork Group
	3.00 pm	Cake café
	7.30 pm	Men's Fellowship at Ridgeway Methodist Church
	7.45 pm	Ladies' Group: Christmas Crafts

Wednesday 9:	10.00 - 12.30	Coffee followed by Lunches
Thursday 10:	2.45 pm 7.00 pm	Women's Fellowship: Christmas Carols (Bring and Buy) Christmas-Flower Arranging practice (in the crèche)
Saturday 12:	10.00 - 12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Local Mission (Pat & others)
Sunday 13:	10.30 am 6.00 pm	Revd John Haley Revd John Haley (Candlelit Carol Service)
Tuesday 15:	10.00 - 12.00 2.15 pm 3.00 pm 7.45 pm	Patchwork Group Carol Service at Pocklington Rise (all welcome) Cake café Ladies' Group: Revd David Youngs (Christmas Message)
Wednesday 16:	10.00 - 12.30	Coffee followed by Lunches
Thursday 17:	11.00 am 2.45 pm	Pre-school Nativity (in church - all welcome) Women's Fellowship: Revd John Haley - Carol Service
Saturday 19:	10.00 - 12.00 10.30 am 1.00 pm	Oasis Coffee Bar: Youth Outreach (Miriam Kim and Steve) Christmas Carols on Ridgeway (organised by Plympton Churches) Marriage of Sophie Shepherd and Joe Organ
Sunday 20:	10.30 am 6.00 pm	Miss Catherine Stead Revd John Haley (Candlelit Carol Service)
Tuesday 22:	8.00 pm	Sing Christmas at The George (organised by Plympton Churches)
Wednesday 23:	4.30 pm	Candlelit Christingle for all-ages
Thursday 24:	11.15 pm	Christmas Eve - Communion for Christmas (Candlelit)
Friday 25:	10.00 am	Christmas Day - Morning Service (for all - ages)
Sunday 27:	10.30 am 6.00 pm	Revd Doug Rix Mrs Alfreda Rogers (Candlelit Carol Service)

Church office hours: Tuesday-Friday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
Church telephones: 348178 (office only); 331186 (pre-school and hall)

Church Office: admin@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk
Minister: The Revd John M Haley: min@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk

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Information for January *This Month* to the office by 15 December please.