



The Methodist Church
Blackheath and Crystal Palace Circuit
Circuit Newsletter

Issue 36

November/December 2020

Superintendent Minister's Letter:

Dear Friends,

We are about to enter the season of Advent which begins on Advent Sunday, 29th November this year. As we will still be in our second lockdown until at least 2nd December, it is going to be an unusual Advent. Yet perhaps the two events do have something in common. Advent is a season of patient waiting and preparation to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lockdown is also part of a period of patient preparation as we wait for the Covid 19 pandemic to be brought under control and hopefully the roll out of a successful vaccine.

Being patient and waiting is not always easy. At Advent we use Calendars to remind us how close Christmas Day is getting, and we put up decorations such as an Advent wreath as the sense of anticipation builds up. As the dark days of winter continue get shorter all the time, our impatience to celebrate gets worse. Lockdown is also a period of impatient waiting as we look forward to a day when our lives can begin to return to something close to normality. Both can be difficult times, but both encourage us to look forward with hope.

As we hear the messages of the Prophets and John the Baptist, and as we reflect upon the character of Mary and her humble obedience to serve God's purposes, so let us also reflect upon the importance of our faith at this difficult time. Faith gives us the ability to understand God's purposes. Faith informs and inspires us to make the most of adversity. Faith that very soon, our Lord is about to re-enter our world bringing, light and health and peace is the most important gift we can receive and cherish when we feel fragile and overwhelmed by the darkness of the world.

In the words of the Advent hymn:

Rejoice, rejoice, Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

May the Good Lord, bless us all this Advent season,

Richard



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



A Psalm of lament and praise in a time of coronavirus

How shall we praise you, Lord, our God?

When we are locked down,
how shall we praise you?

When the doors to your house are barred,
and your people cannot assemble?

When those desperately in need of money and work
cannot even wait in the market-place?

When we have to circle round people in the street,
and to queue for shops maintaining safe distance?

When we can only communicate
by hearing on the phone,
or seeing on the screen;
or digitally messaging,
or even just waving through a window?

When we cannot meet our parents and children,
grandparents and grandchildren,
or other family members and friends?

When we cannot touch them in their flesh and blood,
to know they are really alive?

How shall we praise you?

How, like Thomas, shall we not see yet believe
that your son is raised among us?

How shall we praise you?

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How can I praise you, Lord?

Are you plaguing us with this virus
to punish us because we have all done wrong,
or thought wrongly,
or felt wrongly,
or just been wrong?
If so, why do only some die,
and those, apparently, the ones who are the least worst or most caring
amongst us?

Or are you trying to teach us a lesson?
If so, why is it so hard to learn?
And how are we to find the answer
when we do not even know the question?
Or are you still the same loving God,
coming to us in our sufferings
and opening up the way to new life in Jesus?

Lord, I will try to praise you.
Through gritted teeth,
I will try to praise you.
I will try to remember that you have created all things,
and this virus is part of your creation.
I will try not to hate it
but seek to mitigate its harm.
I will try to keep myself and others safe.
I will work to pray for them
and seek to help in whatever way I can.

Lord, when I cannot pray or worship
help me be aware of all your people
and your saints and angels
hovering around me,
lifting me up.
When I feel alone,
let me feel you near me,
even if only for a moment that enables me to go on.
Let me hear you say
"Peace be with you".

Lord, I will praise you.
Let all the peoples praise you.

The Revd Kenneth Howcroft

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ADVENT SEASON IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Rev. Charles Ilunga

It is fascinating how life runs on expectation and hope, it scares me, I am always puzzled and I fail to understand how some men and women in our world can live their lives without hope, and take lightly this available factual story of salvation. I, for one, I find the message of advent i.e. the narrative of the coming of God through a little babe so helpful to understand what life is all about. For me, the story of incarnation makes sense, keeps me full of hope and gives me assurance to live my life meaningfully. It keeps me expectant and reminded of future spectacles and big events that are to come to our world. Advent season is a time when we Christians all over the world remember how our salvation was weaved by God the creator in the life of a fragile infant and time to keep watch.

How is advent celebrated in other parts of the world?

Few thoughts on how the Advent season treats people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, (DRC), or rather how people in the DRC particularly those in rural villages of 'Kabongo' my own territory of origin, handle the Advent season.

Each year from October to March, DRC, in the centre of Africa, welcomes a lot of downpours because of the equatorial forest, so Christmas is celebrated during a rainy season. Even though each part of the country may have their own way of celebrating Christmas, of course, depending on the size of their Christian population, and weather challenges, the fact remains that Christmas is generally held on December 25th and revered as a Christian public holiday. During Advent season, mainly during the two final weeks of November, everyone is busy preparing.

In other words, and like many Christian countries in the world, Congolese people take Christmas seriously both spiritually and socially as it stands as a special unifying event celebrated by both Christian and non-Christian communities. I think this is because 95% of the population is Christians.

Unlike in the UK, preparation for Christmas in the DRC, is often very hard, particularly with regard to affording what is needed for celebration; that is why preparation starts many months before December and at the beginning of December you hear shouts of the words, **NOELI iiiiii.....-----NOELI iiiiii.....-----NOELI iiiiii.....-----** heard from different mouths at different time of the day and night from different households. Also: **Nakutakia Krismasi na mwaka mpia njema** meaning '**Happy Christmas and Happy new year.**' Many families go out for one week or two, to hunt in preparation for what will their Christmas dinner meal be on the day.

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Going to church is usually the main focus of Christmas celebrations in my part of the world and for Christians going to church is a must at Christmas. Processions take place before the church service is held on Christmas Eve, around a big fire as we don't have electricity for light. This is a joyous occasion and a very special time of year, when everyone in the family expects something like a new cloth to wear, a bed sheet or blanket to cover themselves received on the 'Day'.

Decorating churches and homes is common throughout Christian communities in DRC. But no trees with candles, so in village Christmas trees are usually replaced by natural flowers which people go and fetch. Unlike here in the west, where we have electrical and glittering decorations, people have to go in the bush around the village to hunt for wild flowers to adorn churches and their own homes. Nativity scenes are played out, bible narrative of Jesus' birth is sung followed by praises and offering of things like...honey and foodstuff, to the rhythm of drum and musical accompaniment.

On 'Christmas day' you can see everybody hanging out outside in each village feasting, singing and having fun in dancing. After the service on Christmas Day, the celebration starts with a Christmas dinner party: roasted goat meats and chicken. The type of meal will depend on the family's possibility. Generally, families, eat together and culture wants the senior family member to host the celebration, and parents, grandparents, children grandchildren, friends and families, and people in the community be invited to spend time partying together.

There are no mince pies, no haggis nor turkey in Kabongo Territory and the most commonly prepared main dish for Christmas dinner is Ugali/ fufu [maize or cassava meal mixed with very hot water resulting in stiff kind of porridge] eaten with a rooster, goat [or chicken], and side dishes like fried robin or the kind of birds for those who can be lucky during their hunting. Beef and such meat is for families with means; the chance for a family to afford it in my own village is very, very slim.



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Giving gifts is a common tradition but the majority of people cannot afford a luxurious thing, but those who are able to, give them out to their own family members, to children, to nieces and nephews. Emphasis is more on the religious celebration of the birth of Jesus than it is on gifts giving.



The most common gift bought for people at this special time of Christmas is new clothes, usually intended to be worn on special occasions and Sundays for going to church. In my rural part of the DRC, few people can afford gifts like gadgets and toys, there are no shops to buy them, and any child who happens to get a doll will be the centre of the whole village attention, really all gifts are usually in the form of clothing, school books, soap, traditional cloth, and other practical goods. Celebration will continue until late.

If advent helps uphold our hope as we look both back at what happened in the past when Jesus came and forward at what the future will be when He comes again, we then need to cling to this vision, to keep watch anxiously lest His future return be a great shock and surprise to us.

Advent time! as a period of waiting, Matthew 24:42-4 describes a difficult part of our existence in relation to God; that is our experience of waiting.

So as Christians we are people who are waiting between Jesus first coming to this world (Christmas) and His second coming to (when Jesus will welcome to usher us in as clearly attested in 1 Thess. 4:16-17). Watch therefore for you do not know what day your Lord will come....You also must be ready.

Charles

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Advent from the Latin *Adventus*, meaning 'arrival'

Watching and Waiting

Circuit Advent Course 2020 on ZOOM

Mondays, from 23rd November to 14th December, 7.15 - 9.30pm

This year's Advent Course 2020 from the London District centres on the power of storytelling to transform and renew us in our lifelong discipleship as followers of Christ. The season of Advent is a period of watching and waiting in anticipation of the arrival of Christ. During Advent, we look back and celebrate the incarnation of the Son of God in the world; we also look forward in anticipation of His return at the end of time. John 5:4 reminds us that the people waited for an angel of the Lord to come and disturb the waters so they could experience healing. We too are watching and waiting for the One who sends the angel.

The four-week course will be led by our circuit ministers as detailed below:

Week 1: THE WATCHTOWER: STAY AWAKE - The Revd. Abe Konadu-Yiadom

Week 2: LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF GOD - The Revd. Richard Grocott

Week 3: JOHN THE BAPTIST - The Revd. Charles Ilunga

Week 4: DEVELOPING A LISTENING HEART - The Revd. Rohama Asif

You can also do some preparatory work by downloading the course from the London District website at: <https://www.methodistlondon.org.uk/adventcourse2020>

I hope and pray that you can join us and together, our stories and other people's stories, will become woven into God's story of Advent.

Zoom Link: Advent Course 2020, 7.30- 9pm.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86835350197pwd=M05CRy9HZXNLOEtaSTFiRIRkNlpmQT09>

Meeting ID: 868 3535 0197 Passcode: 961642

To join by phone, please dial one of the numbers below, following the prompts to enter the +44 203 051 2874 United Kingdom +44 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

Abe

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		6th	13th	20th	25th
Preaching Plan December 2020		Isaiah 40:1-11 Ps 85:1-2, 8-13 2 Peter 3: 8-15a Mark 1:1-8	Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11 Psalm 126 1 Thess. 5:16-24 John 1:6-8,19- 28	2 Sam. 7: 1-11,16 Ps 89:1-4, 19-26 Romans 16:25-7 Luke 1:26-38	Isaiah 52:7-10 Psalm 98 Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12) John 1:1-14
		2nd Sunday in Advent	3rd Sunday in Advent	4th Sunday in Advent	Christmas Day
AKY ANERLEY Oakfield Rd SE20 8QA	11am	A. Konadu- Yiadam GS	No service	A. Konadu- Yiadam HC CS	9.15am A. Konadu- Yiadam
	Evening zoom		A. Konadu- Yiadam		
RA BURNT ASH Burnt Ash Hill SE12 0QD	10.30am	R. North Toy	R. Asif HC	L. Ryan CS	9.30am R. Asif
RG ELTHAM PARK Westmount Rd SE9 1XX	10.30am	G. Young	R. Grocott HC X	A. Mokgohloa CS	11am R. Grocott
CI FOREST HILL Normanton St SE23 2DS	11.00am	C. Ilunga	C. Ilunga HC	C. Ilunga	C. Ilunga
RA HITHER GREEN Torrison Rd SE6 1RQ	10.30am	P. Hulme/ J. Koroma	J. Warren/ L. Murray	E. Buck CS	10.30am R. Asif
RG LEWISHAM Albion Way SE13 6BT	10.30am	R. Grocott	No service	R. Grocott CS	10am R. Grocott
RA/PH SUNFIELDS Old Dover Rd SE3 8SJ	10.30am	R. Asif HC	P. Hulme	S. Watkin CS	M. Boothe
AKY UPPER NORWOOD Westow Hill SE19 1TQ	11.00am	P. Clews	No service	D. Yeadon	11.15am A. Konadu- Yiadam
	Evening zoom		A. Konadu- Yiadam		

Please note, all services are to be conducted in line with the risk assessment completed by each church.

Methodist Church guidance states that service length be limited to 30 to 45 minutes.

References: CS – Carol Service; HC – Holy Communion; Toy – Toy Service; X - Christingle

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BLACKHEATH AND CRYSTAL PALACE CIRCUIT

'CHRISTMAS HAS BEEN CANCELLED!'



ON THE CONTRARY!

AWE – our Circuit Alternative Worship Experience is looking
forward with ANTICIPATION
to celebrate the most momentous fact of human history
God came to earth in human form.

THE PROGRAMME:

We start on **22nd November 2020**, the Sunday before Advent.
The angels announced to the shepherds - "Peace on earth to all" –
so 'Peace on Earth' is our topic of encouragement for **22nd November**. 'Let it
begin with me'

Advent Sundays we have Playlists of songs and reflections with the themes:

- **Sunday 29th November** - Emmanuel – God with us
- **Sunday 6th December** - Mary and her role in the whole of Jesus' life
- **Sunday 13th December** - Glory and Honour to our God, Christ on earth
- **Sunday 20th December** - Songs and videos which tell the story

On Christmas Day we celebrate the fact that it is Christmas Day

Sunday 27th December - have as many traditional Christmas Carols
as we can cram in!

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		Preaching Plan January 2021				
		3rd	10th	17th	24th	31st
Lectionary		Genesis 1:1-5 Psalm 29 Acts 19:1-7 Mark 1:4-11	1 Sam. 3:1-10 (11-20) Ps 139:1-6,13-8 1 Corin. 6:12-20 John 1:43-51	Jonah 3:1-5, 10 Psalm 62:5-12 1 Corin. 7:29-31 Mark 1:14-20	Deut.18:15-20 Psalm 111 1 Corin. 8:1-13 Mark 1:21-8	Isaiah 40:21-31 Ps 147:1-11, 20c 1 Corin. 9:16-23 Mark 1:29-39
		Christmas 2	1st Sunday in Ordinary Time	2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time	3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time	4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
AKY ANERLEY Oakfield Road SE20 8QA	11am	H. Waterhouse	LA	A. Konadu- Yiadom HC Cov	S. Watkin	A. Konadu- Yiadom
RA BURNT ASH Burnt Ash Hill SE12 0QD	10.30am	R. Asif HC Cov	J. Warren/ L. Murray	M. Sparkes	R. Asif	LAJA
RG ELTHAM PARK Westmount Rd SE9 1XX	10.30am	G. Young	R. Grocott HC Cov	A. Mokgohloa	R. Grocott	P. Clews
CI FOREST HILL Normanton St. SE23 2DS	11.00am	C. Ilunga HC Cov	LA (or C. Ilunga if WH closed)	C. Ilunga	J. Warren (or C. Ilunga if WH closed)	C. Ilunga
RA HITHER GREEN Torridon Rd SE6 1RQ	10.30am	LA	R. Asif Cov	P. Hulme	D. Yeadon	R. Asif
RG LEWISHAM Albion Way SE13 6BT	10.30am	R. Grocott HC Cov	LA	R. Grocott	G. Young	D. Yeadon (or R. Grocott if WH closed)
RA SUNFIELDS Old Dover Rd SE3 8SJ	10.30am	P. Hulme	S. Watkin	R. Asif	P. Hulme/ J. Koroma	M. Boothe
AKY UPPER NORWOOD Westow Hill SE19 1TQ	11.00am	N. Cowgill HC Cov	A. Konadu- Yiadom	C. Brown	A. Konadu- Yiadom	LA
CI WESLEY HALL Sydenham Rd SE26 5HF	11.00am	C. Watkins	C. Ilunga HC Cov	C. Watkins	C. Ilunga	R. Grocott

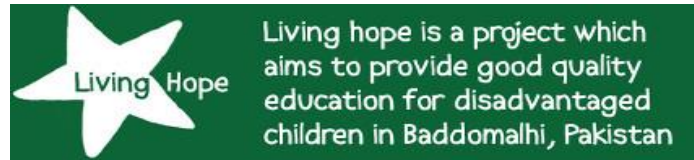
Services shown in red may be subject to change.

Services are to be conducted in line with risk assessment completed by each church.

References: Cov – Covenant; HC – Holy Communion

Methodist Church guidance states that service length be limited to 30 to 45 minutes.

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Dear Friends,

It is good to write to you again after a long period of uncertainty and not knowing what tomorrow might bring. Despite these uncertain times, I hope you and your loved ones are doing well.

After a long period of absence, our students have returned to their classrooms. Like all of us, the lockdown has not been easy for them. We have put all the measures in place to make the Living Hope School COVID Secure. As they catch up with their learning, our students' wellbeing is our priority. We have created a safe learning environment at the school. They have been provided with facemasks, hand sanitizers and seating arrangements are socially distanced.

Living Hope is extremely grateful for your continued support and prayers. As you know children grow up fast and the school furniture that we had was no longer suitable. During the lockdown, we upgraded school furniture and carried building work. We are improving school facilities regularly.

Despite all the challenges we are facing globally we are hoping and praying for an exciting future for all the children. With your support, we will continue to help and support our students and the local community. We are instilling hope and confidence in young minds and the impact of it will be greater than of our current circumstances. Please continue to pray for the work of Living Hope and its community! Thank you!

God bless,
Rev Imran Malik



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Many of you will have watched the Circuit recorded service for 15th November 2020 and been touched by the message from Richard that we are called to be **'Children of Light'**. A special message also from Rev. Canon Dr Jennifer Smith, Superintendent at Wesley's Chapel, London, <https://www.wesleyschapel.org.uk/> which assured us that **'Patience works more than miracles'**. Powerful words of grace and encouragement in these difficult times.

If you have missed any of our on-line services over the last month or so, they can still be viewed, more details on the Circuit website <https://bhcpmethodist.org.uk/> or as follows:

AWE Sunday 22 November 2020:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYb0xVe5TuDarW_18DAweyFQxLen0r07y

Recorded service for Sunday **15th November**: <https://youtu.be/Do3NM67cc54>

AWE Sunday **15 November 2020**:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYb0xVe5TuDbAEZj6nEOGDAioriYYKCoR>

Service of Remembrance for Sunday **8th** or Wednesday **11th November 2020** (play from 10.50am if wishing to coincide with 11am for two minutes silence:

<https://youtu.be/PYEy9Yuakko>

AWE Sunday **8 November 2020**:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYb0xVe5TuDbP7NGh7sQY4rQ5pk2ENiC3>

Recorded service **1 November 2020**:

part one <https://youtu.be/zfdwfcB0h-w> part two https://youtu.be/6zDAq0jr_dU

AWE Sunday **1 November 2020**:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYb0xVe5TuDbNVYNIcLHRDZSuzN2va6x1>

Recorded service **25th October 2020**: <https://youtu.be/2Uttf6cutXY>

AWE Sunday **25th October 2020**:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYb0xVe5TuDZwqiF1FxuW-HCcV95zB7OT>

Recorded service Sunday **18th October 2020**: <https://youtu.be/LkzonL1aKIs>

AWE Sunday **18th October 2020**:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYb0xVe5TuDbCvyJihayAmYqxykyyOx1t>

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