

South Cliff Methodist Church

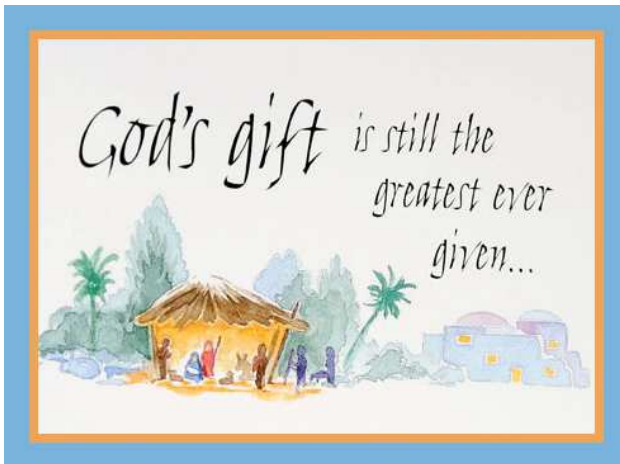
MINISTER: Rev. Peter Cross

www.southcliffmethodistchurch.co.uk

email: contact@southcliffmethodistchurch.co.uk

CONTACT

Christmas 2013 Issue 1



"This is Christmas: not the tinsel, not the giving and receiving, not even the carols, but the humble heart that receives anew the wondrous gift, the Christ."

Frank McKibben

Included in this issue:

From the Minister
Christmas Services
Calendar for January 2014
Christmas Poems
A Tasty Recipe
Christ the King in Malawi
Out of the mouth of babes
The Glorious Proclamation

From the Minister:

Welcome to the first edition of our brand new **Contact** magazine. It is hoped that you will enjoy the new format and find it interesting and informative. The old magazine was well loved and much appreciated in the church and the community, but a number of events beyond our control, not the least being the high cost of production have made it necessary to make some changes. Some will welcome the changes and others will miss the old familiar layout, but I hope that you will find that **Contact** continues to keep you “connected” to the church wherever you read it. My thanks go to all who have sent in contributions, please keep them coming.

Some years ago, I was taking a school assembly at a secondary school near to where I lived at the time. It was approaching Christmas and though I can't remember the details of how I addressed it, my theme was how God visited the world at Christmas – and stayed, and how we are strengthened and encouraged through difficult times



by his ongoing presence with us. After the assembly I was having a cup of coffee in the staff room and one of the teachers took me to one side to take me to task. He wanted me to know that he was an atheist. He didn't believe in God and he found my assertion that God is present in the world incomprehensible nonsense. “I would believe,” he said, “if there was more evidence. I look around and I see nothing to convince me of a loving God anywhere in sight.”

That man is not alone in his opinions. There are many people who look around and see suffering, want, injustice violence and disease and come to the conclusion that, because they cannot see God in any of this, it must follow that he isn't there. I can't remember how I answered the atheist teacher. I think I probably made some excuse and left. How can we be certain that our God loves us and that He is here with us in the face of all the contradictory evidence?

Every Advent I read a book. It's not the only book I read in the year of course, but it's a special discipline I undertake at this time of year to explore daily readings from the book published by the Bible Reading Fellowship for that purpose. This year the book is called “Real God in the Real World” and it's written by Trystan Owain Hughes an Anglican University chaplain and regular broadcaster on Radio 2 and Radio 4. In one of the meditations he retells an old Indian story which sheds volumes of light on the perplexing question of how we can believe God loves us when we can't see his presence very clearly, if at all.

A young boy came to his father one day and announced that he had stopped believing in God as God was not physically visible. His father was very wise. He told the boy to bring a bowl of water and some salt. Upon the boy's return, the old man told him to put the salt into the water, stir it up and leave it overnight. The next morning he sent the boy to look and see where the salt was. Of course, the salt had dissolved and the water looked pure and clean. The boy could not see the salt, but his father told him to sip the water. As you can guess, although the salt had disappeared and could not be seen, the taste of the water gave away the fact that it was still there. After this the old man told the boy to throw the water away, and so he poured it out on the hot ground. The next day they went to the place where the water had been thrown. The water had now evaporated and the salt had reappeared. "Like salt in water," said the father, "we may not be able to see God directly in our world, but he is here!"

I hope and pray that you will have a wonderful Christmas, and as you kneel at the manger once again, you will be struck by the amazing truth that **GOD IS WITH US!** Hallelujah!

With love
Peter



At Christmas, we receive gifts we often don't need or want. God offers something of far greater worth that we can't do without. All it takes is to believe and receive the Gift yourself: a personal, practical, permanent and purchased gift that is yours, for life. **J John**



A Tasty Recipe

Bored with the same old food at Christmas? Try this mouth-watering recipe from Germany for Stollen. Stollen is a fruity yeast bread which is decorated with colourful candied fruits at Christmas.

Ingredients:

- 75g sultanas
- 75g raisins
- 25g flaked almonds, toasted
- 25g glacé cherries, halved
- 50g candied lemon peel, chopped
- grated rind of 1 lemon
- 25ml fortified grape juice
- 450g plain flour
- pinch of salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground mace or grated nutmeg
- 15g dried yeast
- 50ml warm milk
- 100ml warm water
- 50g sugar
- 100g butter, softened
- approx. 40g butter, melted

For Decoration:

- mixed candied fruits,
- slices of orange,
- lemon and citron peel,
- glacé cherries
- and icing sugar, sifted
- To Glaze:
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 4 tablespoons water



Method:

Put the fruit, nuts, peel and grated lemon rind in a bowl and pour over the grape juice. Leave to soak overnight, until the liquid is absorbed. Sift the flour, salt and spice into a warm mixing bowl. Mix the yeast with the warm milk and water and a teaspoon of the sugar, sprinkle with flour and leave in a warm place until the crust cracks.

Stir the yeast mixture into the flour with the remaining sugar and mix into a dough. Beat in the softened butter. Turn the dough on to a floured board and knead for 10 minutes until smooth and no longer sticky.

Cover the dough and leave in a warm place for 30 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Knock it back, and work in the fruit, one-third at a time. Do this

quickly or the dough will discolour. Shape into an oval. Roll out to about 2.5 cm/1 inch thick. Make a dent lengthwise with the rolling pin, slightly off centre. Fold over on to the wide side so the bottom edge of the dough extends beyond the top and press down.

Place the Stollen on a greased baking sheet, cover and leave in a warm place to prove for about 20 minutes or until puffy. Brush with melted butter and bake in a preheated hot oven at 230°C / 450°F / Gas Mark 8 for 30 minutes. Reduce the heat to 200°C / 400°F / Gas Mark 6 and continue baking for a further 20 to 30 minutes. A skewer inserted will come out clean when the Stollen is cooked. Meanwhile dissolve the sugar in the water for the glaze. While the Stollen is still hot, brush with the sugar glaze. When decorating for Christmas, arrange mixed candied fruits on top of the Stollen and brush again with the sugar glaze or cover the top generously with sifted icing sugar. Stollen keeps well and can also be sliced and toasted.

PRE-CHRISTMAS

Almost the end of another year,
And very soon Christmas draws near.
Not long to wait, time to be jolly
Children hang stockings, we bring in the holly.
Temperature falls, the cold nips our noses,
We wear more layers - thermal socks for our toesies

And as we await, snow may fall,
It sets the scene for Santa to call.
Mum buys the turkey, Dad decides on the tree,
It all gets quite hectic, I'm sure you'll agree

Little eyes will sparkle, so full of glee,
As they open those presents found under the tree.
But may we remember not just on that day
The gift sent from heaven and laid in the hay.
At peace in the manger, so precious and small,
The One that God gave, with love to us all.

Carol Beamson



What's on at South Cliff Methodist Church

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Sunday 15th December

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

3:00 p.m. Christmas Carol Service

Sunday 22nd December

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

6:30 p.m. Christmas Songs of Praise

Christmas Eve 24th December

4:00 p.m. Nativity Service at St. Andrew's United Reformed Church

6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Communion

Christmas Day 25th December

11:00 a.m. Christmas Morning Worship

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday Services at 10.30am (followed by coffee) and 6.30pm

Tuesday at 2:30pm 3D

Wednesday at 9.45am Holy Communion

Thursday at 9.30am Prayer Meeting
at Flat 2, 9-11 Granville Road

Thursday at 2pm Thursday Friends

Friday at 7pm Bowls Club



Can you spot
eight differences
in these two
Christmassy
pictures?

Calendar for January 2014

Tuesday 7th January	2:30pm	3D New Year Party
Monday 13th January	7:30pm	"Monday Night is Music Night"
Tuesday 14th January	2:30pm	3D with Rev Peter Cross
Sunday 19th January	6:30pm	at Queen Street Methodist Church United service for week of prayer for Christian Unity
Monday 20th January	12noon	Short meditation service for Christian Unity Week at St Andrews URC
Tuesday 21st January	12noon	Short meditation service for Christian Unity Week at South Cliff
Tuesday 21st January	2.30pm	3D "My Childhood under Hitler" Jutta Marshall
Wednesday 22nd January	12noon	Short meditation service for Christian Unity Week venue TBA
Thursday 23rd January	12noon	Short meditation service for Christian Unity Week venue TBA
Friday 24th January	12noon	Short meditation service for Christian Unity Week venue TBA
Tuesday 28th January	2.30pm	3D "Circuit Matters" with Diane Robinson

Oh, God...

help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be your children.

Robert L. Stevenson



Out of the mouths of babes...

On going to church a few weeks before Christmas, when the ceremony of lighting the Advent candles was taking place, as a member of the congregation lit the candle a child's voice broke the silence singing "Happy Birthday to You". Not surprisingly, the congregation laughed, but perhaps that child had the right idea!

Four year old Jonathan picked up one of the family's Christmas cards depicting the infant Jesus in his crib and commented, "He was in his cradle last year! I thought he would have been walking by now!"

The Sunday School teacher was telling the story of the birth of Jesus when she came to the bit about there being no room at the inn. A hand shot up at the back, "I blame Joseph Miss! He should have booked!"

A little girl aged four was saying her prayers after a happy Christmas Day. "Thank you. God for all the lovely presents," she said, and added "And I do hope that Jesus had a very happy birthday." Perhaps we should all remember whose Birthday we celebrate at this season, and that underneath all the tinsel and trappings there is a message for the whole world: "Peace on earth, and goodwill to all.

My sister and her husband were taking their son Oliver, aged six, out for the day when they stopped at a cash machine. Oliver asked, "What are we waiting for mummy?" "We're just waiting for daddy to get some money out of the hole in the wall." She replied. Oliver's eyes widened. "Wow! You two have got money hidden all over the place haven't you!" We all had a good laugh.

submitted by Rosemary Kidd



Celebrating Christ the King in Malawi

As we celebrated the feast of Christ the King in our own church, my mind went back to a memorable visit to the Anglican Church of Christ the King in the Blantyre suburb of Soche on Palm Sunday 1993. We set off at 8.00am driving through Blantyre and past simple, single-storied brick houses to the very simple church with a steeply pitched roof and a minimum of windows but plenty of inlets for air. As we arrived, people were streaming in, and we saw the blue-robed choir gathering with real palms. We were also given palms and joined the procession right round the church and church hall, singing "Ride on, Ride on in majesty". We were most warmly welcomed and were each given an interpreter.



I was seated on the front row next to the choir, with a Mothers' Union member on my left and my interpreter on my right. The benches had no backs which at first I kept forgetting but then the vitality of the service kept me upright without effort. We had service books with English on the left. The service was very like our own. I tried to sing in Chichewa but sometimes lost the place as there was a lot of repetition. We sang a number of hymns, including "All Glory Laud and Honour". The main points of the sermon were translated for me. The preacher began with a comparison between the people of Nyasaland (now Malawi) longing for the end of colonial rule and national freedom, hoping for a messiah to ensure it, and the Jewish people expecting a messiah to free them from Rome. He drew interesting applications from the story of Palm Sunday.

1. Jesus chose a young donkey because offerings should be young and unblemished. We may often do best approaching God at the beginning of a new, unblemished day.
2. The disciples had to say to the donkey's owner, "The master has need of him." Jesus needed what the man had and has need of what we have.
3. Many of the crowd who were shouting "Hosanna" later cried "Crucify him!" We must beware of a commitment which lapses into betrayal.

The children returned from Sunday School to be blessed at communion. There were hundreds of them, and the church was already full to overflowing. The communicants handed to the stewards a card bearing their name, so that their attendance could be recorded. The choir sang with great enthusiasm several times, with tambourines, drums and an African rattle made of a pair of oblongs of thin canes or reeds lashed together sandwiching dry seeds. All singing was unaccompanied. The sense of rhythm, the swaying and sometimes clapping was characteristic, wholly appropriate, and infectious with enthusiasm.

The east end of the church has a Christ in Majesty on the Cross, flanked by a banner of Jesus hailed as king on Palm Sunday, and another with him crowned with thorns on the cross.

The taking of the offering took a considerable time, and the amount collected the previous week was announced, a record 3,000 kwacha (then 5.97 to the £1). Malawi was then the world's third poorest country of those at peace, and the sixth overall. I was deeply moved by the generosity in so many ways of people with so little.

The service began at 8.30am and ended at 11.40am but didn't seem a minute too long. After the service we were taken to the very simple parsonage, greeted by dancing, clapping, singing members of the Mothers' Union who were entertaining us for lunch. They brought round bowls of water for us to wash our hands for there were no facilities which could cope with a group of 16. Then came a buffet lunch of chicken, fish, salads, rice, potato and bananas. As we left the Mothers' Union danced and sang their farewell.

Joyce Dark

STOP PRESS

Some great news from Sierra Leone.

We have heard that we can sponsor a well in Lalehum. It will serve the school and community and can be dug traditionally and therefore cheaply. We have sent £360 to finance the project. More news next time...



Joyce Dark

The Meaning of it All

by Patience Strong

You spend your time on things that take your strength
and energy, in preparing for this season of festivity.
You do so much, but when it comes, you say you cannot spare
any of your precious time to join in praise and prayer
for the Holy Child who came to save humanity.
Without Him what is Christmas but a foolish mockery?
This is the Truth most wonderful, the thing so marvellous:
that God Himself appeared on earth to prove His love for us ...
This is the glorious news declared when bells of Christmas call.
This is the message of the day – the meaning of it all.

submitted by Rosemary Kidd

CHRISTMAS

Christmas is here once again
Shopping to do, drinks to get in.
Expensive gifts for the children
Oh, what a headache and pain.

Pushing, shoving to get the best tree
Maybe, if we went to the woods,
We could pinch one - get one free!
Drat it, Mother-in-Law is coming
That won't make for the best of
moods.

Oh, what does Christmas really mean:
The Christ child born in a manger
Love, peace on earth
To you, me and a stranger.
So pause, and think, and put Christ
Into Christmas.

Elizabeth Long





THE GLORIOUS PROCLAMATION

When Charles Wesley wrote Hark the Herald Angels Sing, he included this glorious proclamation, "God and sinners reconciled!" In those few words we are told the story of redemption. It tells us that we were lost, without God and without hope in this present world. It tells us that we were in trouble and in desperate need of a Redeemer. It tells us that Jesus didn't leave heaven and come to earth to seek out a group of nice people, but He came to seek and save that which was lost. Where would we be without the Saviour? Where would we be without the Lord? Where would we be without Jesus?

Jesus is the only true song of Christmas. Jesus Christ is the Song of songs. He has come to be the song in our hearts, the praise on our lips, and the celebration of our lives. Jesus is our heart song - He is the harmony, restoring us to a right relationship with God; He is the melody, making everything beautifully fit together by the beat of His mercy and grace; He is the lyric, the Word of God written with the pen of perfect love. Jesus is the note in every score, the quiet pause in every place of rest, and the tempo that sets the perfect pace for every life that is yielded to Him.

Roy Lessin

*Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"*



A Christmas candle is a lovely thing;
It makes no noise at all,
But softly gives itself away;
While quite unselfish, it grows small.

Eva K. Logue



A reminder from Rosemary:

Please do not throw away the used postage stamps over the Christmas period as we are collecting them at church to support the work done by the Yorkshire Air Ambulance. Used stamps can be brought or sent to church and left in the collecting box on the window sill in the hall.

