



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**

**10<sup>th</sup> December**

**10.30am** Sunfields led by Rev. Bill Tardy

**17<sup>th</sup> 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

**24<sup>th</sup> December**

**11am** Wesley Hall led by local arrangement

**Christingle Services**

**10<sup>th</sup> December**

**10.30am** Eltham Park led by Rev. Stephen Maunder

**Family Nativity Services**

**17<sup>th</sup> December**

**11am** Wesley Hall led by Rev. Dee Yeadon

**24<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup>/Fri 8<sup>th</sup> December 2017

7.45pm

Burnt Ash

Sat. 9<sup>th</sup> December 2017

1pm & 6pm

Burnt Ash

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



### Circuit Forthcoming Events

Wed. 10<sup>th</sup> Jan.

LP & WL Meeting

7.45pm

Lewisham

Thurs. 11<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Circuit Treasurers meeting

8pm

Burnt Ash

18<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> Jan.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Sun. 21<sup>st</sup> Jan.

United Service

4pm St. Stephen's Church, Lewisham

Tues 6<sup>th</sup> Feb.

Circuit Meeting

7.45pm

Hither Green

Wed. 14<sup>th</sup> Feb.

Ash Wednesday

Sat. 24<sup>th</sup> Feb.

Missions Coffee Morning

10-12am

Burnt Ash



**Circuit Website:** [bhcpmethodist.org.uk](http://bhcpmethodist.org.uk)

Deadline for information for next newsletter: **25<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

Please email details to: [office.bcp@btinternet.com](mailto:office.bcp@btinternet.com)

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