

# MINISTER'S LETTER



Advent, that great season of waiting, preparation, and expectation, is upon us once again. We know that we must wait, that we can't rush straight to Christmas Day (we have the four candles of the Advent ring to remind us of this). We know too that we need to prepare – for our own celebrations, certainly; so that we might hear afresh the story of Jesus' birth, possibly; so that we'll be ready should Christ come to us again in some way, maybe, for this is one of Advent's big themes, whether we're comfortable with it or not.

But what should we be expecting exactly? After all, Advent and Christmas come around each year and what changes do we ever see as a result? What difference do they ultimately make to our lives or to the life of the world? In fact, shouldn't the question be, 'Do we any longer expect anything at all?'

Whenever we speak of expectation, we're suggesting that, looking forward, we have good grounds for thinking that whatever it is that we're hoping to happen (or fearing might happen) *will* happen. There'll still be the very real possibility that it won't, of course, but if we didn't think something was likely to happen, we wouldn't say that we were expecting it would we? Surely then, a time of expectation should see us all looking forward, expecting, and hoping for something. In Advent, we know that that something is the birth of Christ, but, when we use the language of expectation in relation to the birth of Christ, what are we talking about? The retelling of a story? Or something that we might reasonably expect to experience for ourselves?

Before Jesus was born, the people of Israel were expecting the Messiah to come to make things right in the world - a special person sent by God, probably a king - but they had different expectations as to the kind of messiah he'd be. The Pharisees expected a lawgiver and a law-keeper. The Sadducees expected someone who'd maintain the status quo. The Zealots expected a war leader. The quiet of the land – a peasant group that included Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Anna and Simeon – expected a bringer of love. These expectations would shape these people's very different responses to Jesus.

Advent is a time of expectation as we look forward to Christmas, so expect we must. If the message that we'll hear the angels proclaim once again holds true – namely that Christ's birth is good news of great joy for all people – and if we can dare to believe it, then surely it must still somehow be good news today. If Christ's birth signals a coming to the world of peace, then, this birth of Christ surely can't be a one-off event because peace on earth still seems a very long way off. Surely, we *must* keep believing that even today something might well happen to change people's lives - to change the world - for the better.

Not everyone's expectations can be met, of course, not everyone gets what they hope for. But if we can dare to believe that Jesus was the special person sent by God that the people had been longing for, then the Bible suggests that it's those who look for a bringer of love even in the unlikeliest of places that'll see their expectations fulfilled and indeed surpassed.

This Advent, may we discover again the good news that we can – and indeed *should* – expect God to act; that we can – and indeed *should* – expect to discover Christ in our midst. This Advent may we hone our expectations. And may we raise them.

Wishing you, and all those whom you love, a joyful and peaceful Christmas.

*Paul*

## CHRISTMAS POST BOX AND CARDS

This year the Christmas post box will be outside the vestry from **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December to Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December** for those wishing to send cards to members of the church family. Cards will be ready for collection **on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December**. Donations in lieu of postage will, as usual, go to **Methodist Homes for the Aged**.

When addressing the envelopes it is asked that *surnames are included* please. Those preferring to send a single card to the whole church family are welcome to post it in the post box and it will be displayed in the vestibule.

### New Christmas Tradition

Beginning December 1st read one chapter of the book of Luke in the Bible each evening.

There are 24 chapters.

On Christmas Eve you will have read an entire account of Jesus's Life and wake up Christmas morning knowing WHO and WHY we celebrate!!



*A Christmas Prayer—Robert Louis Stevenson*

*O God our loving Father, 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 worship of the wise men.*

*Close the door of hate and open the  
door of love all over the world.  
deliver us from evil by the blessing  
that Christ brings, and teach us  
to be merry with clear hearts.*

*May the Christmas morning make us  
happy to be your children and the  
Christmas evening bring us to our  
beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving  
and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.*

*Amen*

As some of you may recall, Derek and I went Polar Bear watching in Churchill, Hudson Bay, Manitoba, way back in 2001. (you may find more about this in some of the old copies of the Church Newsletter.)

Our hosts for that visit were the Rev David Caskey and his wife, Marian, when we stayed at their Manse, attended their Alliance Church and shared delicious local food generously provided by them.

Over all these past years, we have always kept in touch with one another, especially annual letters at Christmas time and sure enough right on cue their Christmas wishes came through our letterbox on Christmas Eve 2020, containing all their family and church news.

This ‘dead-on-time’ arrival included the “Christmas Prayer” by Robert Louis Stevenson. It was so lovely and moving and so I came to share it with many folk and am now offering it for everyone to appreciate it’s meaningfulness and beauty.

Hope you, the reader, will see it’s relevancy today, even though it was written in the 1800’s.

*Mary Heaton*

**CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH**

I	K	M	M	D	N	O	D	G	Y	M	A	S	B
J	O	S	A	A	C	L	E	I	T	A	E	N	H
A	C	A	A	E	T	N	D	M	I	N	Y	O	D
C	T	M	E	R	S	M	C	A	V	E	N	W	E
K	F	T	F	B	S	E	O	N	I	G	S	F	C
F	R	S	A	R	E	R	C	G	T	I	A	L	O
R	I	I	M	E	N	R	R	E	A	F	N	A	R
O	E	R	I	G	A	Y	A	R	N	T	T	K	A
S	N	H	L	N	C	C	C	Y	E	S	A	E	T
T	D	C	Y	I	Y	S	K	A	I	N	C	Y	I
E	S	R	N	G	D	E	E	A	A	C	L	G	O
R	G	G	K	O	N	T	R	E	E	L	A	N	N
F	J	E	N	I	A	S	S	S	O	O	U	L	S
A	N	G	E	L	C	F	M	J	N	A	S	A	I

- CANDY CANES
- TREE
- JOLLY
- JACK FROST
- GINGERBREAD
- SNOWFLAKE
- CRACKERS
- MANGER
- CHRISTMAS
- MERRY
- FRIENDS
- DECORATIONS
- NATIVITY
- SANTA CLAUS
- GIFTS
- FAMILY
- ANGEL

## ***'Oh what a year.'***

Where does one start when you look back over the past 21 months?

I will start in mid-January 2020 when Maralyn was undergoing chemotherapy for pancreatic cancer at the Royal Marsden Hospital (RMH) and we were attending twice a week every fortnight. Then on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 the whole country was put into lockdown [1] as Covid – 19 was running rife through the population.

So overnight it meant; Maralyn was having to go for her treatment on her own without me by her side (I still took her). That was a shock to her and I could see the fear in her face each time I left her at the door of RMH.

Maralyn took a considerable amount of my time in caring for her and I found that I was having to go out of the house each day for what I can only describe as for my own sanity.

I also have a great dog Hugo (only 63kgs - so only a small dog!) who also needs to walk ever morning - which would normally be around 6.30am. As for being in lockdown it was not a lot different than my normal day before lockdown.

When the lockdown was lifted, life for Maralyn and I continued much the same except Maralyn was no longer having treatment as the cancer was getting worse and the chemo was not making any difference to her wellbeing.

As the days and weeks moved on so Maralyn got weaker and weaker (not wanting to eat or drink), and following a fall while in hospital for a procedure it was found that the cancer had spread to her brain, that was on 1<sup>st</sup> August and 15 days later she passed away at home with Abby and I by her side (Brett was driving up from Horley where he lives).

At this point I would like to publicly thank Abby, Brett, Richard, Janine and my wonderful Grandson Matthew for all their help, support and love both then and now.

As I write these memories I'm finding it hard to keep the tears away (and believe me I have shed many).

I'm also aware that it may seem that all was not happy/good, but that is far from the truth, there were many happy moments for us and the rest of our family and friends.

After Maralyn's funeral (only 30 mourners allowed) I had to almost reinvent my life again thanks to Brett and Abby things were becoming easier, except they were not - that perishing Covid 19 (now starting to mutate) was again causing trouble so into lockdown [2] again but this time for a short time (I think 4 weeks!). It felt different, but more manageable this time. Then the tier system was introduced where different parts of the country had different restrictions imposed.

As Christmas was approaching the Prime Minister told everyone that ALL restrictions would be lifted for a 5 day period over Christmas. Everyone got excited and started making plans, even we at Martin Way started planning for an open air Carol Service in the car park. *[Thinking of carol singing this is now the second time in 15+ years we have not been singing at Morden Station in aid of Action for Children].*

OOOH then the reality hit as the experts had warned the PM that Covid-19 was mutating faster than ever. Therefore the Christmas 5 day break would have to be changed to just 2 days with only 6 people from 2 families able to meet.

While all this was happening, on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November I was out with Hugo for our morning walk when we came across a puppy whom Hugo approached, but when growled at by the puppy (This puppy was no bigger than Hugo's head) Hugo turned to run away and knocked me over causing some pain to my left ankle and knee, but as I could still move my toes I felt that nothing was broken, I would go home with Hugo – just half a mile away.

I later found out that I had fractured my left ankle and damaged my ligaments in the left knee. So that meant I couldn't drive or walk Hugo, it also meant I had to rely on others for taking me everywhere, that remained the case nearly 4 months, but the good news is that my ankle has healed and my knee is much better (Still have some pain) and I am now independent again.

Hugo didn't lost out on his walks as between them Abby, Brett, and Scott (Janine's brother) had been taking him out; with Scott introducing him to what is called a puppy-chino (Some sort of refreshment for dogs involving whipped cream and a dog treat) from the canteen van parked near the Rayne's Park Vale Football Club on Cannon Hill Common.

I was lucky that I could spend Christmas Day with Abby and Richard and Boxing Day with Brett, Janine and Matthew. So for me Christmas was good but different, I missed Maralyn and again there were times when the tears would flow (Thankfully when I was on my own).

Straight after Christmas the whole country went into Lockdown [3] and we stayed in lockdown for what seemed like eternity, with lots of talk of the restrictions beginning to be lifted in March, and they would be slowly removed as long as the Covid stayed in check and we played our part.

As you know we are out of lockdown and almost all restrictions have been removed. With the situation improving all be it *slowly* we as a family felt that it would be good to have a Celebration /Thanksgiving service for the life of Maralyn. Which took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> September with almost 100 people attending, and if I say myself it was a wonderful service with lots of memories shared.

They say that time is a great healer and it is true it is, but everyone has to deal with loss in their own way in their own time. Everyone has had their lives turned upside down over these past months, and it's been hard to cope at times for everyone. As for myself I'm getting there one day at a time.



So this has been an insight into the past 21 months for me. A lot has happened and I want to say that all that's happened has not shaken my faith. I would like to thank every single person whom I have spoken to; be it in person on Zoom or by phone or text for all the support and love I have received and continue to receive.

Reading these memories it's easy to think that I'm saying to you that life is not fair and I have had more than my share of rough times over the past months. That is not true I have had a year that I will not forget but I will remember it with a positive mind.

It's easy to think that you are all alone and that life is unkind to you, but nothing can be further from the truth. Over the each of the lockdown periods I have been putting different posters in my window (Way side pulpit) and this one sums up what I'm trying to say.

Life has knocked me down a few times.  
It has shown me things I never wanted to see:  
I have experienced sadness and failures.

But one thing for sure;  
With God's help I always get up.

I am thankful for my faith and all that means to me. I am sorry that I have not been there for others as I would have wished to have been.

I strongly believe that life is good and worth living / experiencing, and because of this pandemic. Together we can and will be a closer loving community / country / world.

*God Bless every one of you, love*  
*Tony Loft*

As many of you will know I organised a Christmas and Craft Fayre on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November for the Shooting Star Children's



## Shooting Star Children's Hospices

Hospice it was a great success raising just over £3k for the hospice. Here is a sample of some of the comments I received from stallholders.

*Hello Sylvia,*

*I hope today was a huge success.*

*I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the fair today. It was my first public event in 18 months and I loved every minute of it.*

*Everyone I spoke to was lovely 😊*

*I even met a mum whose son is at the hospice and we had a wonderful chat about the charity itself.*

*I would love to be involved in anymore events you might hold.*

*Dear Sylvia*

*Thank you so much for a wonderful event yesterday.*

*I had a thoroughly lovely time and really appreciate the enormous effort put in by yourself and your team.*

*You really deserve a huge round of applause not least for putting me opposite the most delicious cake stall ever !!!!*

*I very much look forward to the next event whenever it may be.*

*Merry Christmas to you all*

*Very best wishes*

*Mandie*

*Snug Studio 🎄🎄🎄*

**So please pencil in your diaries the date for 2022 which is the 26<sup>th</sup> November!!**

*Sylvia Baxter*

*SUNDAY 19TH DECEMBER*

*SUNDAY CLUB NATIVITY – CAFÉ WORSHIP –  
CHRISTIAN CARE GIFT SERVICE*



Martin Way Sunday Club proudly presents their 2021 Nativity live and in person 10.30am

It's that time of year again when we think of giving presents especially to children and so we have designated **Sunday, 19th December** for our **Gift service**. So alongside the Café Worship and Nativity you are invited to bring gifts for children of all ages to be donated to Christian CARE for their Christmas party in the New Year.



*FRIDAY 24TH DECEMBER – 5.30PM*

*CHRISTINGLE SERVICE*



## LOCKDOWN WALKS—Part 2

Following on from last month's article here are more pictures from my Lockdown Walks. At some point restrictions eased a bit so some of my walks were a little further away as we were allowed to travel a small distance by car. I wonder if you will be able to recognise some of the places? So please try to guess where I was walking and enjoy quiz number 2.

*Sylvia Baxter*

More places to visit in the next newsletter.





1. Merton and Sutton Cemetery, 2. Bug House Morden Park, 3. Swan in Richmond Park, 4. Fox in alleyway near St Mary's Avenue, 5. Wisley, 6. Banstead Woods, 7. Banstead Woods, 8. Garden Centre Morden Hall Park.



WE INVITE YOU TO A

# *Fund Raising Christmas Lunch*

In Aid of Alzheimer's Research UK  
Let's catch up and feast together

SUNDAY 12TH DEC 2021  
12.30PM ONWARDS  
AT MARTIN WAY METHODIST  
CHURCH

*Please save the date more information to come  
Abby & Richard Herring*



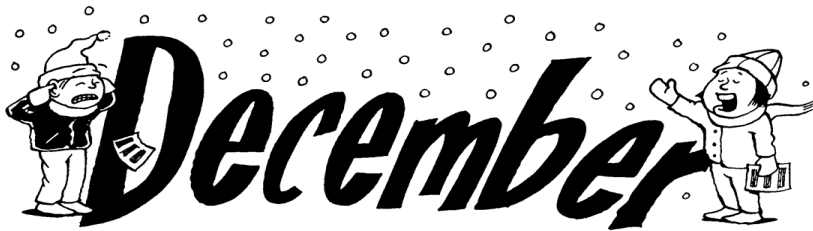
WE INVITE YOU TO A

# *Fund Raising GingerHouse Building*

In Aid of Alzheimer's Research UK  
Let's all catch up, and have fun together.

SUNDAY 12TH DECEMBER AT 3PM  
MARTIN WAY METHODIST CHURCH

*Save the date - more information to come  
Abby & Richard Herring*



## CHURCH DIARY

<a href="#">Fri</a>	3	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	5	10.30am	Holy Communion led by Revd Chris Morley – 2nd Advent Sunday
Tue	7	10.30am-Noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.00pm	Circuit Meeting – Lantern Raynes Park
Sun	12	10.30am	Morning Worship led by Brenda Cannon – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Advent Sunday
		12.30pm	Christmas Lunch – Alzheimer’s Research UK fund raiser
		3.00pm	Ginger House Building – Alzheimer’s Research fund raiser
		6.00pm	Holy Communion led by Revd Paul Timmis
Tue	14	10.30am-Noon	Coffee and Chat
Sun	19	10.00am	Café worship & Sunday Club Nativity led by Revd Paul Timmis
		6.00pm	Carol Service
Tue	21	10.30am-Noon	Coffee and Chat
Fri	24	5.30pm	Christingle
		11.30pm	Midnight Holy Communion at Worcester Park
Sat	25	10.30am	Christmas Day morning worship led by Revd Paul Timmis
Sun	26	10.30am	Online Circuit Service
Tue	28	10.30am	Coffee and Chat

Please email items for next month’s Newsletter to  
[newsletter@martinway.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@martinway.org.uk) by **Sunday 19th December**.