

Good News

Lancashire West Methodist Circuit

Prayer of the Day from Methodist.org.uk

Loving God, my shield
and hiding place,
give me the courage to
come from behind the
shield,
give me the faith to leave
my hiding place,
so that I might be willing
to go into every place:
places of tears and
trauma, places of
disillusion and despair
as well as places of fun
and fulfilment.
Displace my complacency
and replace it with a spirit
of boldness.
May I serve you till in
heaven I take my place.
Until then, I place into
your hands the things I
should do, safe in the
knowledge that you are
my abiding place,
my dwelling place and my
resting place. Amen.

Inspired by Psalm 8

Paul Martin, Bolton and
Rochdale District Chair

Deadline for articles to
include in the next edition
of Good News is

Monday 10th January



And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, which He has given us. Romans 5:5.

LORD, we can't imagine living without the hope we have in You. We cling to You as we trust in You for all things forevermore.

Tis the Season

Tis the Season

When Stephen asked me to write about Christmas, I decided to do a bit of Christmas research and it was most illuminating. So, instead of getting on with the theme I had in mind, I decided instead to share some of my findings with you, even though you may already know some of the following facts, I hope you will indulge me and read on.

We as Christians are well aware that Christmas is a Christian festival that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of God and that this is celebrated on 25 December each year. In fact, that is the day that the Roman Catholic Church chose to mark Jesus' birthday. But, in fact, no one actually knows the exact date Jesus was born. It is documented that 'Christmas' originated a few decades after the birth of Jesus in the old Roman Empire.

Not all Christians celebrate Christmas on the same day.

In countries with large populations of Orthodox Christians, such as Russia, the Ukraine and Romania, Christmas Day falls on 7 January. Some Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on 7 January, too.

The term 'Christmas' comes from the old English phrase Cristes maesse, which means 'Christ's mass'. But what about 'Xmas'? Lots of people think this is just a modern-day abbreviation – but it actually dates back to the 16th century! The 'X' is said to represent the Greek letter 'Chi' – the first letter in the Greek word for Christ Χριστός (pronounced 'Christos').

Many of the festive traditions such as Christmas cards and gifts we can thank Queen Victoria and Prince Albert for as many traditions started in the middle 1800s. As for Christmas crackers they first came about in 1847 when a London sweet maker called Tom Smith visited



Paris and discovered the bon bon a sugar almond wrapped in tissue paper. By 1849 the sweet was replaced by toys, trinkets and jewellery. In 1850 when Tom heard the crackling sound of logs on the fire, he went on to develop a mechanism that created a 'pop' as the packaging was broken. This later became 'the snap' that we have in our crackers today. Tom continued developing his invention until he died in 1880 when his sons took over. They were awarded their first Royal Warrant in 1906.

Have you ever noticed that the song Jingle Bells does not have the word Christmas in it? Or Jesus or Santa Claus? That's because it wasn't originally a Christmas song! In fact, it was written in 1850, entitled One Horse Open Sleigh, for the American holiday, Thanksgiving!

What if there was no Christmas? In 1644 Christmas celebrations were made illegal in England, and soon after, in the English Colonies, America, too! At that time, members of the government felt that the religious meaning of Christmas had been forgotten, and so banned the holiday festivities. Some people still celebrated in secret, however, until Christmas was once again legal...almost 20 years later!

Now the government of the day would have been most unpopular but they did have a point. So many people have completely lost the

meaning of Christ being in Christmas but I am not sure our government would get far if it banned Christmas, it was bad enough last year when we were in lockdown.

Last year when we were asked not to visit indoors with family for Christmas, our daughter invited us to come over Christmas Eve afternoon to sit in the garden which they had decorated and set up a fire pit to keep us warm. It was different and quite magical and we really enjoyed giving our grandchildren their gifts. While I was on my own with the children we looked up into the sky and saw an image just like the picture at the top of this article. Santa and his reindeer on their travels. It was of course a cloud formation but you would really have thought it was Santa. The grandchildren could not believe they had seen 'him' but they were a little concerned as to how he was going to get around the whole world and return back to their house in time to leave their stockings.

Christmas is a magical time for children but for Christians, Christmas is a time to give thanks to God whilst reflecting on what this festival means to us and how we celebrate it. How we celebrate Christmas hopefully sends out a message to those who are not religious or regular church attenders that Christmas is about the birth of Jesus more than 2000 years ago and not all about presents, cards, food and decorations.

We know Jesus is 'the reason for the season' so let's see this Christmas as a gift from God that we can share with our family, friends and not forget those less fortunate than us who would be so happy to be visited or invited to join in our Christmas celebrations.

Blessings

Margaret Tarpey Tarleton Methodist Church



Christmas without walls - Croston Methodist

The talented knitters from Croston have been busy again, supporting the church's local community witness activities.

It was equally important to Rev. Sue and the church leadership team that the witness activities reflected our ecumenical commitment to Churches Together in Croston and Bretherton.

During lockdown the creative excellence of the online services demonstrated the significance and potent success of 'church without walls'. We have used the creative talents of our knitters to bring the love of God to hundreds of people in our local community without them having to enter a church building.



Almost four hundred Christmas tree stockings have been knitted, filled with chocolates and a Christian message of love has been attached to each one. They will be distributed in Croston Park Care Home, Marsh House Care Home, Trinity and St Michael's Primary School and Bretherton Endowed Primary School. Deliveries have already been made to Rainbow House, the Women's refuge in Leyland and St Catherine's Hospice.

Rev. Dr. Geoff Farthing in a Bible study posed a challenging question, 'how can we be leaven in the community'? He stressed that we must 'love people into the kingdom of God'.

These tangible knitted gifts of love are Christian leaven demonstrating the kingdom has no walls. We can reach out beyond our church buildings and touch the lives of people in our local communities with the love of Christ.

This is the Good News.

Croston leadership team.

**"The Great Croston Family Carol Sing Up"
IS BACK!**

**on
Sunday 19th December at 4 pm
In Croston Methodist Church.**

With Rev Sue and Mark

Come, everyone and celebrate



**Festive refreshments and a collection
for Crisis at Christmas.**



News from the Bread Church

by Lorraine Howarth Upholland Methodist and Administrator & Pastoral Assistant Somewhere Else

“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4



At this time of year, the community of Liverpool City Centre Methodist Church, where I work, begin to collect items of toiletries, and more recently facemasks and hand gel, in

readiness for the final meeting of the year. The church is non-traditional, as we do not sing hymns, have a building that looks like a church or indeed have traditional services. Our worship is based around the making and sharing of bread, the reading of the Bible and discussions in our reflective time and the lighting of individual prayer candles.

Why toiletries? Well, if you have ever walked up Bold Street in the city centre, where the church is - on the second floor of the radical women's co-operative bookshop News from Nowhere – you will see many of the homeless of the city. Imagine, if you will, sleeping and living on the street with little or no access to water. How would you keep clean, so that you have some dignity? That is where the toiletries that Somewhere Else collect come in.

At the final, Open House meeting of the church before Christmas – rather than bake bread – which Somewhere Else is known for (many people in Liverpool and across the country know us as The Bread Church from having read Rev'd Barbara Glasson's books about the community), we form a production line and pack 40 Sponge bags initially for the Homeless. These bags are then taken out by members of the community and given to the homeless of the city, not just in December but throughout the winter months. Each person holds a conversation with the homeless person and learns their name, so that we can continue to pray for them in our devotions.

During last Christmas's lockdown, unable to freely walk around the city and thankfully with many of the homeless in accommodation, we took the items that had been donated, to The Whitechapel Centre – who work with the homeless of the city. They provide a space to have a shower, see a doctor and have a meal. Our donations were then distributed to the people that they had managed to find hostel accommodation for.

However, once we were able to go back into the church in small numbers, we then began distributing them again ourselves, along with sandwiches made from the bread that we had made.



Here are the two young people that we were fortunate to have working with us from September 2020 until August 2021, Chris and Josie. Chris led our Grain. Gather. Grow. Project in which nearly a 100 of us grew winter wheat from as far afield as Belgium, Durham and Carnforth as well as more locally.

In August, 12 people at a time met together to winnow, thresh and mill our wheat until we had flour to turn into bread. Josie was our Vincentian Volunteer (VV). A VV is a young person, from around the world, who lives in community for one year and works at social projects with people who “live on the edge”.

This is the fifth year that I have been involved in this work. Many of you may think, but why do we continue to do this? Why don't the homeless live in a hostel? As one young man I spoke to called Josh said, “I feel safer on the street than in a hostel.”

It may not be the life that we would wish for people. Indeed, we have seen that more and more people are finding themselves out on the street due to the pandemic. However, if we are truly to follow our calling to work with ‘people in our communities and beyond’ then it is something we are called to do. It will be a privilege to distribute the bags on the afternoon of the 23rd of December this year.

“Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.’” Deuteronomy 15:11

Here is a photograph of all the items that were collected last year. Each pack also contained a booklet of Bible stories, a card and sweets.



Christmas preparations in Mawdesley

Already the first Advent Candle has been lit and preparations have begun for Christmas.

Within the wreath are candles that generally represent the four weeks of Advent season, as well 'the light of God coming into the world through the birth of Jesus Christ'.

Each candle can be attributed it's own significance too. In one interpretation the candles symbolise the Christian concepts of hope, peace, joy and love in that order. The central white candle is known as the Christ Candle and can be lit on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

None of us need to be reminded that last year, so many of our traditions, services and celebrations had to be cancelled. Here at Mawdesley Methodist Church, with a leap of faith, we are well into our preparations for this year's celebration.



This week's rehearsal

One highlight of our calendar is the Christmas Eve Carol Service.

The Kingsford Singers began rehearsals several weeks ago. What a joy it is to be singing together again and experiencing hope, peace, joy and love through music.

Some pieces are new to us, so they are not without a challenge. Others we are revisiting and enjoying doing that too. This event is very popular and allows everyone attending to sing favourite carols and hear selected readings. It is a highlight of the village calendar, bringing families together.

How fortunate we are to have musically talented people to lead us!

Decorating the Church is another preparation and already a 'little group of elves' have been busy.

We are also fortunate to have our own 'floral artist' to supervise the decorations.

Amidst all the bustle of this period of Advent, let us not forget the real meaning of this special time of year, the birth of Jesus Christ.

Our Carol Service starts at 7pm on Christmas Eve followed by refreshments in the Church Hall.

Christmas Day Service will be an Own Arrangement at 10.30am.

Christmas Blessings to you all from your friends at Mawdesley



Burscough Methodist Church

NATIVITY AND GIFT SERVICE

Sunday 12th December at 10.00 am

All age worship led by our own young people

Gifts Toys, good, and cash donations for Derian House Children's Hospice or Foodbank

CAROL SERVICE

Sunday 19th December 4.30 pm

come and hear once again the timeless Christmas story and sing well loved carols.

CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION

Friday 24th December 8.00 pm

A time of quiet reflection and prayer.

CHRISTMAS DAY FAMILY CELEBRATION

Saturday 25th December 10.30 am

A time for families to celebrate the birth of Christ; children, please bring along a present you have received.

Thoughts from Jenny

In the last Good News I talked about the Autumn days, but in the last week or so we have had an icy blast with snow covering the land. Trees and hedgerows have been dressed in white, ponds have frozen over, the last of the leaves have left the trees.

It all looks enchanting but it is cold. Gales have ripped through the country, depriving some places of electricity, trees and roofs have gone tumbling and fences and caravans have landed on somebody else's lawns and gardens.

But most of us have roofs over our heads, most of us have access to hot food, warmth, and warm clothing, a lot of us have access to some kind of transport, most of us have access to the NHS services. We can still turn on our taps for hot water, take a warm bath or shower, have shoes or boots on our feet, have some cash in our pockets so that we can buy our loved ones presents.

So spare a thought, a prayer, a gift for those who are living in freezing conditions with none of the facilities we have. Living in tents in freezing camps, desperately hoping to get to the UK and paying the ultimate price as they dice with death, crossing an icy ocean, in dangerous boats, just to reach our shores.

We cannot comprehend what they must be going through. It is bad enough to leave your family behind if you are emigrating to welcoming countries such as New Zealand and Australia. But imagine leaving home and your family not knowing what was going to happen to your aged parents, cousins, aunts and uncles, facing a dangerous journey and uncertain of your welcome. Spare a thought, a prayer, a gift for all those moving across borders and countries with little ones, not being made welcome and moved on to the next country.

Does it remind you of another family? Travelling miles, the lady heavily pregnant, not knowing where they were going to lay their heads, where they would bear their child and then, after the birth, having to flee to Egypt.

Christmas is a time of joyful expectations, of celebration as we welcome this amazing child into the world. It is a time of family, renewing family ties, present giving, the season of good will, celebrating with friends old and new.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us remember he too was a refugee.

Our Prince of Peace, our Saviour, the Saviour of all.
Amen

Jenny A

Loving God

Whose son Jesus was born into a family with their own practical challenges And through whose life, death and resurrection we are welcomed into God's family.

We bring families who are isolated to you today.

Would you strengthen them
Build community around them
Help them to know your love,
And to hope for a better tomorrow.

We bring children growing up without the support they need to you today.

Would you protect them.
Provide them with opportunities to grow and learn
Let them know they are loved,
And let them dream for the future.

We pray as your church today.

Would you help us to be your hands and feet
To build community that reflects your heart
To love as you first loved us,
Building your kingdom everywhere we go.



The poster features a green border with holly leaves and red berries. At the top center is a logo consisting of a white cross on a red background. The text is in various colors (red, black, green) and fonts, listing church services for December. At the bottom right is a Facebook icon.

**Emmanuel Methodist
United Reformed Church**

Sunday 5th December 6.30pm
A Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance

Sunday 12th December 10.30am
Nativity Service

Sunday 12th December 4.00pm
Christingle Service, Coffee and Mince Pies

Thursday 16th December 10.00am-3.00pm
Join us in our Community Hub
for Free Coffee/Tea and Mince Pies

Sunday 19th December 6.30pm
Carol Service

Friday 24th December 11.30pm
Christmas Eve Holy Communion

Saturday 25th December 11.00am
Christmas Day Service of Celebration

Sunday 26th December 10.30am
A Short service of Holy Communion for Boxing Day

Derby Street, Ormskirk, Lancashire
01695 573227
www.emmanuelchurchormskirk.org.uk

CHURCH SERVICES

	December			January				
	12 th	19 th	26 th	2 nd	9 th	16 th	23 rd	30 th
Burscough Orrell Lane 10.00 HP, CMP, STF, NIV	Nativity Service	Gordon Wareing Carol Service 4.30pm	No Service	Michael Tindsley	Michael Tindsley Cov S	Jonathan Richardson	Merle Farthing	Michael Tindsley S
Holmeswood Holmeswood Rd 10.30 HP, CMP, STF	Geoff Farthing S	David Allen Carol Service 6.30	Michael Tindsley	Mere Brow Cov	o/a	Abi Parr	Michael Tindsley S	o/a
Mere Brow Mere Brow Lane 10.30 MPC MHB	Michael Tindsley	Local Arrangement	No service	Michael Tindsley Cov S 11am	Malcolm Roxburgh	Pauline Johnson	Abi Parr	Julia Robinson
Holmes Park Lane 10.30 HP, MP, JP,	Merle Farthing	Jonathan Richardson	No Service	Stephen Foster Cov S	o/a	Andrew Richardson	Cliff Hill	Stephen Foster
Tarleton Church Rd 10.30 HP, MP,	Andrew Richardson	o/a	o/a	Geoff Farthing Cov S	Gordon Wareing	Michael Tindsley	Stephen Foster S	o/a
Mawdesley Four Lane 10.30 Ends HP, MP, JP, NIV	Malcolm Roxburgh	Stephen Foster	o/a	David Allen	Stephen Foster Cov S	Geoff Farthing	Lorraine Howarth [R Dowson]	o/a
Croston Westhead Rd 10.30 HP, MP, STF,	Gift Service o/a	Sue Guénault F Sue Guénault CS 4pm	No Service	Mawdesley	Janet Walton	Sue Guénault F	Geoff Farthing	Sue Guénault Cov S
Ormskirk 10.30 Derby St HP, CMP, StF 6.30	Sue Guénault Nativity Christingle 4pm	Malcolm Roxburgh Sue Guénault Carol Service	Sue Guénault HC	o/a	?	David Allen	Sue Guénault Cov S	Jenny Ashcroft
Trinity High Street 11.00 STF, GNB	Stephen Foster	Michael Tindsley	o/a	o/a	Merle Farthing	Stephen Foster Cov S	Helen Hindle	o/a
Up Holland Alma Hill 11.00 STF LP	Service of Light	Lorraine Howarth [R Dowson]	o/a	Up Holland & Dalton	Michael Tindsley Cov	Up Holland & Dalton	Malcolm Roxburgh	Up Holland & Dalton

MPC – Mission Praise Combined
 CMP – Complete Mission Praise
 HP – Hymns and Psalms
 STF – Singing the Faith
 MHB – Methodist Hymns Old and New
 JP – Junior Praise LP – Let's Praise
 NIV – New International Version GNB – Good News

Cov - Covenant Service
 o/a – Own Arrangement
 S – Holy Communion
 F – Family Service (all age)
 P – Parade Service

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