

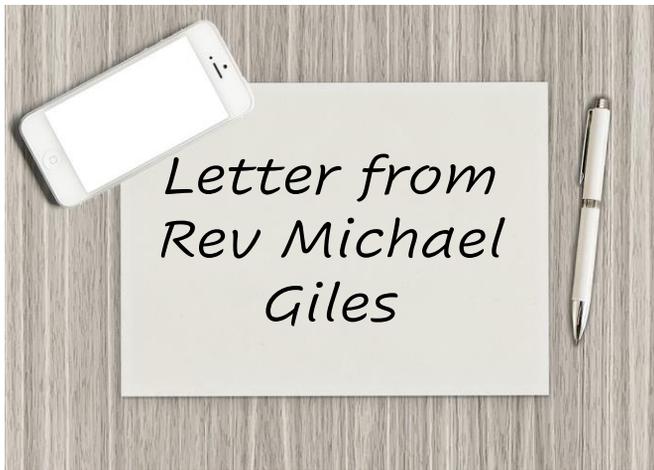


**Kempston East
Methodist
Church
Newsletter
Issue 90
January 9th
2022**

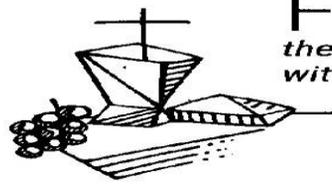
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The Baptism of Jesus



The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.



For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.

Psalm 107:9 (NRSV)

The Membership ticket (www.methodist.org.uk)

A Happy and Hopeful New Year to the Kempston East Methodist community

'To move forwards sometimes you have to look backwards'

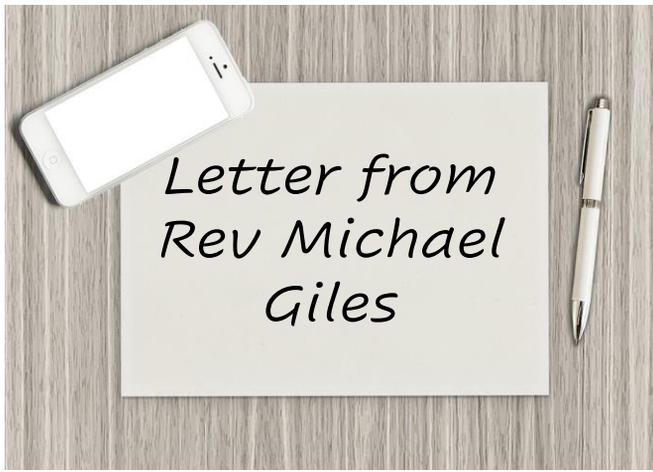
The New Year is the time when Methodist Churches normally hold their '**Annual Covenant Service**'. It's an opportunity for recommitment to following God through the Methodist Way of Life. To move forward into 2022, Methodists **look backwards**. The original covenant service was begun by its founder, Rev John Wesley, in 1755 at Spitalfields, London. A signed Membership Ticket with their name is given to each member as a reminder of their calling and commitment. The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

We look back to the birth of Christ at Christmas but we also **move on to Jesus, the man** who calls us to follow. The **6th of January is the Feast of Epiphany**, a Greek word meaning manifestation, God becoming man. The Greek Orthodox Priest will go around blessing people's homes with Holy Water. In Cyprus they will throw a cross into the sea and the young people jump in trying to be the first one to find it.

The Iona community has this reflection on the season of Epiphany

*'To read the signs of the times, to see the way society is shaping,
To be able to reflect on the past, in order to understand the future;
To identify the worth of something new.... that is no easy thing
That requires wise women and wise men.
But the world seems to have no place for the wise,
or maybe our time is yet to come'*

God is concerned with the journey the wise men take in Matthew 2v1-12. These studious men from the east had studied the stars and their studies told them that the birth of Jesus was going to be a momentous and significant event in history.



As a member of the Methodist Church I am called to:

worship within the local church, including regular sharing in Holy Communion, and through personal prayer

learning and caring, through Bible study and meeting for fellowship, so that I may grow in faith and support others in their discipleship

service, by being a good neighbour in the community, challenging injustice and using my resources to support the Church in its mission in the world

evangelism, through working out my faith in daily life and sharing Christ with others.

But rather than just sit and study the stars they wanted to make sure it was true. There is a **hiddenness of Life**; this looking is crucial because there is hiddenness that runs through the Bethlehem story and beyond. The anonymous Jesus coming in the crowds to be baptised, the carpenter's son unrecognized in Nazareth, the one who seeks to keep his gift of healing a secret, and who enters Jerusalem not on a war horse but a donkey.

We need to have this same inquisitive attitude as well. Where is God at work in the world, our communities and Church today? George Carey said that '**many people today are spiritual refugees, who have lost their moral and spiritual roots**'. '**Jesus was not born in a refugee camp but it was next thing to it**'.

We are all beginning a journey of discovery during this New Year. Covenant Sunday is about discovering Joy which comes from God himself; joy because we are not alone. Jesus as young boy was seeking truth and sharing truth at the temple. John Wesley who had breathed the air of the Church the whole of his life still sought a deeper experience of Christ. When it happened not only his life was changed but society was to be transformed.

2021 Reflect back on the events and learn

2022 Look forward as we travel through this New Year

Isaiah 40v31 'but those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint'.

Methodist COVENANT SUNDAY is a call for a new beginning, a transformation through the renewal of heart, mind and soul.

May we all see 2022 an opportunity for a new beginning.

Blessings

Rev Michael Giles

Ethical Buying Guide for churches

LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOUR THROUGH OUR PURCHASING DECISIONS

Not all of us make purchases on behalf of the church but this new Ethical Buying Guide helps those who do. Purchasing decisions churches make have an impact on the world but what do we know about where and how those items were made? What do we know about the companies we buy from? The resource addresses a range of ethical issues, including caring for creation, which is particularly topical following the United Nations COP26 climate summit which recently took place in Glasgow.

You can download the resource from the [ECCR website](#). It is a large document with lots of colour so in the interests of not unnecessarily using ink and paper I would recommend reading it online and not printing out a copy!

Examples of suggestions it makes are:

- Books – support local independent bookshops. If you are buying online, World of Books, Better World Books and Bookshop are all B Corps (businesses that create positive social and environmental impacts).
- Cleaning Products - Look at the Good Shopping Guide for environmentally friendly cleaning products. Reduce your single-use plastic waste by looking for concentrated cleaning products, larger containers or refillable options. If you have to buy in bottles, look for recycled plastic.
- Paper products - Reducing your paper use is the first place to start, but if you need to buy paper for printing, photocopying and craft projects there are lots of ethical options.
 - Buy 100% recycled paper. The most eco-friendly recycled paper is made from 'postconsumer' waste and is chlorine-free.
 - Don't be fooled by the label 'recyclable'. This doesn't guarantee that the paper you are buying is recycled, just that you can recycle it!
- Toilet Rolls - There are two issues to consider here - how the toilet roll is made and how it is packaged.
 - Look for 100% recycled, chlorine-free paper.
 - Avoid products wrapped in single-use plastic. You may be able to order in bulk from a wholesaler or zero-waste shop to avoid excess packaging.

Although the guide is aimed at church purchases, we all make purchases and so the guidelines are equally applicable to us personally. I will put more in later newsletters.

SHOW YOUR HEART



A Response to the Nationality and Borders Bill



You may have seen on the news this week that there were about three times as many migrants and refugees made the dangerous Channel crossing from France to the UK in 2021 as came across in the previous year.

A new campaign from the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is calling on churches and local groups to take action, to **Show Your Heart** for **refugees and asylum seekers** in the UK. It is in response to the **Nationality and Borders Bill** which has been introduced to Parliament by the UK Government and, among other measures, seeks to differentiate between the way asylum seekers are treated depending on how they reach the UK, including making it a criminal offence to knowingly arrive in the UK without permission.

Many Church leaders and Christian organisations have expressed concern about these proposals because many of the measures in the bill risk creating more injustices in the system, which will increase the trauma and pain experienced by asylum seekers attempting to reach safety in the UK.

A **campaign pack** is available to download, which aims to equip you to:

- **Prepare:** Learn about the Bill and its consequences.
- **Pray:** Make the safety of refugees part of your prayer life.
- **Participate:** Publicly engage with the Bill.
- **Persuade:** Start to change the wider narrative.

For more information and to obtain the pack, please see the [JPIT website](#).



Our Church Family



Please remember in your prayers:

- Rosemary H
- Brian F
- Jean B
- Joyce and Peter

This Week at Kempston East

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Monday January 10 th | 3.00pm | Hillgrounds Housegroup meets at 1 Slater Close |
| Tuesday January 11 th | 2.00pm 7.30pm | Tibbs Dementia meet in the New School Hall 'Talking Jesus' course session 3 on Zoom |
| Wednesday January 12 th | 10.30am | 'Talking Jesus' course session 3 <u>on Zoom</u> |
| Thursday January 13 th | 12.30pm | Lunch Club meets in the New School Hall |
| Friday January 14 th | 9.30am | Parents and Toddlers meet in the Halls |

Thank you for the lovely surprise of receiving the church flowers on Sunday. Many of you know that 2021 was very up and down health-wise for me. Having had Covid in early January I've got many of the symptoms of Long Covid. There are good days and not so good days. I urge everyone to make sure they are vaccinated. I know not everyone feels happy being jabbed, but as a Christian I feel it to be part of our responsibility towards caring for one another.

Margaret T



WORSHIP AT EAST

This Sunday, our Covenant Sunday service at 10.30am will be led by Rev Michael Giles. It will also include the service of Holy Communion. The Stewards have decided that, for the time being, we will revert to 'hybrid' services. This means that, as well as the services being 'live' in church they will also be available on both Zoom and YouTube for those of you who prefer to stay in your own home and yet join with those in church. Details of how to join are in Richard's email. Dom will put recordings of the service on the church website later on Sunday and an audio recording on CD will be available to those who normally receive these.

Forthcoming Services at Kempston East

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Sunday Jan 16 th | Richard Crane |
| Sunday Jan 23 rd | Paul Vallance |
| Sunday Jan 30 th | Janet Watts |

Unless advised otherwise, all services will take place at 10.30am both in church at Kempston East (following the current Covid guidelines summarised below) and online on both Zoom and YouTube as outlined in Richard's covering email.

Current Guidelines for Covid-safe Services at Kempston East

- **You must wear a face covering at all times when you're in the church and halls** – unless you have an official exemption. You are also strongly advised to keep your mask on while singing.
- **Alternate rows of seats will be closed off to help with social distancing.** You are also requested to leave at least one or two free seats between yourselves and other people outside your group.
- **There will be no after-service refreshments** until further notice. You are asked to leave the church immediately after the services and, if you want to chat, do this outside.

We would also strongly encourage you to:

- **Take a lateral flow test at home** before you come to ensure that you are free from the virus. These are, or should soon again be, available from pharmacies and Kempston Library.
- **Get your booster jab** if you are eligible but haven't done so yet.



The 'Talking Jesus' course re-commences next week after its December break. Next week will take us through session 3 of the course and there will be a slight change to the Wednesday morning session. Due to the latest Covid-19 situation the

will MOVE ON-LINE to ZOOM. Michael has already sent an email to those who come on Wednesday mornings with the Zoom login. To make things simple the Zoom logins for both Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning will be the same.

Weekly COVID-19 Cases in Bedford Borough

The local Bedford Borough data in Covid-19 cases do not make for good reading at all. In fact, those of you who have been following the daily cases etc on the national news will not find this in the least surprising. In week ending December 26th, there were 2243 new cases in the Borough. This was equivalent to 1284.0 cases per 100,000 population. In the seven days since then, to week ending January 2nd, there have been 3,017 new Covid-19 cases in the Borough, equivalent to 1727.1 cases per 100,000 population. This is an increase of almost 35% on the previous week!

Perhaps a more worrying trend (if you're in the elderly, more vulnerable group) is that, two weeks ago, there were only a few new cases among the over-60s. Now there are significant new cases in the 60-69 age group and quite a few among the over-70s.

Locally, Kempston Rural continues to top the numbers with 161 new cases (up from 109 last week). Wootton had 139 new cases (up from 108 last week). Kempston Central and East increased to 116 new cases, Kempston West increased to 105 new cases, Kempston South increased to 66 new cases, and Kempston North increased to 61 new cases. The total in the four 'non-Rural' Kempston wards was 348 (up from 222 last week).

If there is a bright side to all these numbers it's that the total number of deaths reported in week ending December 24th was just three, but even that had increased from 1 the previous week.

If you haven't yet had it, please get your booster jab as soon as you're eligible and protect both yourself and those around you!

If you have any prayer requests, thanks, how you're passing the time, feelgood items and, indeed, any other items and news that you would like to go into this newsletter then please email these to geofftal@btinternet.com, ideally by Wednesday each week, but we can usually slot short, last minute things in up till Friday morning.

If you know of someone who would like to receive this emailed newsletter could you please send their email address to richard.ward4@btinternet.com. Equally, if you would like to be removed from the distribution list, please let Richard Ward know.