

**Pastoral Letter #11 | 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

***The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.  
The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.***

***John 1:5 & 14, The Message***

Dear «Forenames» «Surname»,

Back on March 24<sup>th</sup> I wrote the first pastoral letter to you of the pandemic, beginning with John 1:5: “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it*”. 2020 has been a challenging year, but we have journeyed through it knowing that the light of Christ is with us, always.

That verse has been in my mind often these last few weeks, partly because I've been planning for Advent and Christmas, but also because I'm *noticing* darkness more. Literally – because it's November and the November light is already beginning to dim when I do the 3pm school run. - it's dark a lot more in November than in May. But I also know I am living with a perpetual sense of tiredness from living and ministering within restrictions, uncertainty, and anxiety. Life, ministry, and now Christmas have all be interrupted. And the uncertainty and anxiety can, at times, feel like a heavy darkness.

Yet, even now the darkness cannot be put out. The Life-Light is blazing in our lives, our homes, our streets. God has moved into the neighbourhood – pitched their tent among us. The world has been interrupted - because now God is with us. This year the Methodist Church Christmas campaign is titled #GodIsWithUs. A reminder to us, and a proclamation to the world that despite the tough year we've had, God is with us – as flesh and blood, as light, love and hope.

As we as we approach Advent and Christmas I pray the interruption of the pandemic and the continuing uncertainties about what the coming weeks will look like, will be miniscule in comparison to the joy of the interruption of the Christ-child into this world, our homes and our lives.



***God is with us.  
In peace & hope,  
and with prayers for you in the  
advent season of watching and waiting,  
Rev Dan***

# News & Updates – Advent and Christmas 2020

## Buildings Re-opening

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After yesterday's (23/11) announcements from the government, we know that places of worship will be able to reopen after 2<sup>nd</sup> December, though we await further detail of what tier Arun will be placed in, and what impact that may have upon us. I will be continuing coordination with our Transition Oversight Teams (TOT) in the coming days with our aim to resume face to face worship on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Before TOT teams can confirm arrangements, there are several things we have to ensure are in place, including that we understand the latest guidance and have the necessary teams in place to safely open the buildings. It continues to be the case that we aim to keep us all feeling as safe as possible as we continue to live as disciples and Christian community, watching over one another in love.

Assuming we are able to open our buildings for face to face worship on 6<sup>th</sup> December, once again **as individuals you must make your own decision about what feels right and safe for you; emotionally, physically and spiritually**. God made each of us differently, and so we will come to different conclusions. I encourage this and want to affirm you in whatever decision you make that is right for you, this week, and in the weeks to come as things continue to change.

I hope we will be able to confirm arrangements early next week. Community connectors and pastoral visitors will be informed via our email networks, who will be asked to pass information on to those of you who do not have email access.

## Together

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The Worshipping Together booklet for Advent and Christmas is enclosed. Meetings will continue throughout December at **9am on Sundays**.

### Join Via Telephone

1. Call one of the Dial in by phone numbers from a mobile or landline.  
0203 481 5237                      0203 481 5240                      0203 051 2874  
0203 901 7895                      0131 460 1196
2. Enter the meeting ID,. For **Together** this is **878 7997 8475** and press **#**
3. (optional) You will be offered opportunity to add a participant ID, you can skip this step by pressing **#**
4. Enter the meeting password. For **Together** this is **473352**

Please Note: the cost of the call will be equivalent to your standard rate as per your telephone bill.

### Telephone Controls when in a call.

Get the attention of the host by pressing \* 9

Mute/Unmute by pressing \* 6

### Join Via Zoom

Meeting ID **878 7997 8475** Password **473352**

## Advent

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With this letter you'll also find an Advent Devotional '**Waiting Time**' that I have put together and I encourage you to use in a way that feels appropriate for you. The devotions encourage you to read and reflect on a passage from scripture and a carol in light of the advent themes of hope, peace, joy, love and light.

## December Services

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Below is a summary of planned service for December – but you won't be surprised that they are **subject to change!**

Due to being unable to gather in large numbers, or able to sing as one congregation, Christmas 2020 will not include the traditional nativity and carol services we may be used to, but I hope you can still find comfort, joy, hope and peace through the opportunities for worship we are able to offer.

	DEC	6 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>
Together	9am	Rev Dan Balsdon	Rev Dan Balsdon	Rev Dan Balsdon	Rev Dan Balsdon
Bognor Regis	10:30am	Rev Dan Balsdon	Joyce Stroud	Tony Brazier	Rev Dan <i>Communion</i>
Felpham	10:30am	Liz Bates	Rev Dan Balsdon	Lynne James	--
Westergate	10:30am	Malcolm Lindo	--	Rev Dan Balsdon	--

**Reminder:** we have to maximise natural ventilation, which may mean having a combination of doors and/or windows open in our buildings. If you feel the cold, we encourage you to wear an extra layer or bring a blanket for face to face worship.

All services at Felpham will be streamed via zoom, accessible by phone and webcam via the same access instructions for Together. All welcome.

## Circuit Advent Services

Each Sunday through Advent we are arranging circuit-wide worship at 6pm each Sunday, led by one of the circuit ministerial team. This will be hosted via zoom, and accessible via webcam and phone. Follow the same instructions for Together above, **but use the different meeting ID and password** below.

(same codes for each 6pm service)

**Meeting ID 880 1933 2697**

**Password 255238**

## **Christmas Eve and Christmas Day**

### **Christmas Eve – 4pm – Love Feast ‘Together’, led by Rev Dan**

At 4pm on Christmas Eve Dan will lead us in an opportunity for worship via webcam and phone. You can connect using the access instructions for Together.

Our worship will include some carols, and the sharing of a love feast, lasting around 30 minutes. To prepare, you may wish to prepare something – you could have a biscuit, cake, a piece of fruit, a glass of water – or even a mince pie.

*Note that no service material for this service is included in Worshipping Together.*

### **Christmas Day**

#### **9:30am @ Felpham, led by Rev Dan**

*Also available via zoom phone and webcam, use Together access instructions.*

Rev Dan will lead us all, face to face and gathered by zoom phone and webcam in Christmas morning worship.

#### **10am @ Bognor Regis, led by our Worship Leaders**

We welcome our worship leaders to lead us in a special time of face to face worship for Christmas morning.

### **Other Worshipping Opportunities**

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Free Methodist Phone lines, updated each Thursday.

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514 Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

Plus look out for the various opportunities on TV and local radio.

### **And Finally...**

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After 27<sup>th</sup> December I hope to take a week of annual leave, and I will be aiming to get January's monthly mailing out to you before I go on leave.

As we come to the end of what has been a tumultuous year, be assured I continue to be praying for you, and always at the end of the phone or email.

**As you journey through this season,  
May you be filled with unending hope,  
Be reassured with God's unwavering peace,  
Be overflowing with everlasting joy,  
And overwhelmed with unconditional love,  
As we are reminded of the light-life that blazes into this world  
And how Jesus illuminates your heart.  
God is with you. God is with us.**