



Focus on January 2023



The **Methodist** Church



One Church. 14 Locations.

WELCOME TO WESLEY CHAPEL

We are open for Sunday Morning Worship, 10.30am, see p3 for details of our services.

The Nidd Valley Circuit presents a weekly service at 10.30am every Sunday. (See page 19 for more details). Please visit <https://www.facebook.com/NiddValley/>

Circuit Morning Prayer Live runs every morning Monday to Friday at 8am on Facebook. This is available for watching again after the live broadcast/ <https://www.facebook.com/NiddValley/>

All links (and much more) can be accessed via our website <https://www.wesleychapelharrogate.org.uk>

or if you need more information leave a message:
<https://www.wesleychapelharrogate.org.uk/contact>

Wesley Chapel Contacts

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The deadline for 'Wesley Focus on January is 23 January.
Please send any notices, news, articles, photographs to Judith Yeats: 07733064697 judithyeats0@gmail.com. Focus is also on the website. <https://www.wesleychapelharrogate.org.uk/our-focus>

WHAT'S ON AT WESLEY

SUNDAY 1 JANUARY 10.30am. Short service led by Rev. Lesley Taylor.

SUNDAY 8 JANUARY

10.30am. Covenant Service and Holy Communion led by Rev. Peter Whittaker

6pm. Wesley Sunday Share via Zoom. (Link will be sent out or contact Les or Judith).

MONDAY 9 JANUARY 1 Lunchtime Recital London Horn Duo (see page 13 for more details).

SUNDAY 15 JANUARY 10.30am Morning Worship led by Mrs A Jackson.

SUNDAY 22 JANUARY

10.30am. Morning Worship. Local Arrangement.

6pm. Wesley Sunday Share via Zoom. (Link will be sent out or contact Les or Judith).

SUNDAY 29 JANUARY 10.30am. Morning Worship led by Mr Don Rolls.

5 FEBRUARY 2023 10.30am. Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Rev. Keith Page.

TUESDAYS

10.30 to 12 noon. Wesley Wheelie Welcome Cafe. Come and join us for tea/coffee and a chat. Followed by Warm Welcome until 2pm. Soup and a roll, a warm space and a friendly welcome.

FRIDAYS 10am Online Coffee Morning. (Link will be sent out, or contact Les or Judith).

Cover Photo: Early sun on the Stray by Ian Temple

*Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in. Leonard Cohen*

LETTER FROM OUR MINSITER

Dear Friends

I'd like to start by wishing everyone a Happy New Year. The beginning of a new year is a time for looking back to the year just gone...and also forwards to the year ahead of us.

2022 saw us return to a more normal church life with Covid restrictions being lifted. Tuesday coffee mornings are now back on a regular basis. Zoom coffee morning has now moved to a Friday morning and is still valued by those unable to join us in person on a Tuesday morning. Sunday Share continues to be a blessing and a space for people to come together on a Sunday evening.

We enjoyed a lovely day out to Saltburn in the summer for afternoon tea, which featured the most amazing sausage rolls I've ever tasted. In October, we celebrated the 160th anniversary of Wesley Chapel with a service led by our Chair of District, Rev Leslie Newton.

With much to celebrate in 2022, there were also times of sadness, as we said goodbye to Molly, as she moved to Wales to be near to family. We remember with great affection Mavis Sowden, Barbara Flower and Betty Bratley who died this year. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

The Wesley Centre said goodbye to Pippa French, its manager for the last 5 years and we look forward to welcoming Andrea Walwyn as the Centre's new manager in January. Julian Smith joined the Wesley Centre team as Premises Manager and has quickly become a very valued and much loved member of the team.

So, what will 2023 hold for us? The one new thing we have planned is to offer a Warm Space on a Tuesday morning between 10.30 and 2pm for those who might need it. This will begin on 10th January. Please hold this new venture in your prayers. We can only guess what 2023 might hold. But, as the people of God we can walk in faith into the New Year, knowing that God goes with us...and with eyes open to what God has planned for us this year.

May you be richly blessed this year. Yours in Christ. **Lesley Taylor**

SENIOR STEWARD'S REFLECTION LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023 'I HOPE YOU DANCE'

I have just read Christine's 'desert island discs' piece that you will find in this 'Focus on January'. One of the chosen pieces of music is a song entitled 'I hope you dance'. In summary this is a life-affirming song with an uplifting, timeless message, it is based on the narration of a mother expressing the wish that her children will step out and embrace life, and take a chance on love and faith.

When I hear the words of the song it encourages me to take every opportunity I can to 'dance...' to flourish and seek fulfilment, to love and be loved, to seek good always and to never give up hope.

Remember, when you wonder 'where is God' in all the pain within the world, the answer is 'look for the helpers'. The helpers are the nameless thousands who offer comfort, care, compassion, food, warmth, companionship, acceptance, fellowship, hope and love.

Wesley Chapel has been a place to find 'helpers' for over 160 years and we have recently affirmed that through the Grace of God we will continue to offer 'Worship, Welcome and Witness' to all in our community throughout the coming year and beyond.

I thought you may like to see the lyrics of the song.

I hope you dance.

*I hope you never lose your sense of wonder,
You get your fill to eat but always keep that hunger,
May you never take one single breath for granted,
God forbid love ever leave you empty handed,
I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean,
Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens,
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance,
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.
I hope you dance... I hope you dance...*

Continued

I hope you dance continued.

*I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance,
Never settle for the path of least resistance,
Living might mean taking chances, but they're worth taking,
Loving might be a mistake, but it's worth making,
Don't let some Hell bent heart leave you bitter,
When you come close to selling out reconsider,
Give the heavens above more than just a passing glance,
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.
I hope you dance... I hope you dance.
I hope you dance... I hope you dance.
(Time is a wheel in constant motion always rolling us along,
Tell me who wants to look back on their years
And wonder where those years have gone.)
I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean,
Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens,
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance,
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.
Dance... I hope you dance.
I hope you dance... I hope you dance.
I hope you dance... I hope you dance.*

(written by Mark D. Sanders and Tia Sillers)

As we begin a New Year, I hope we all continue to:

- ◇ Recognise the strength of our existing church community.
- ◇ Acknowledge what we can still do and rejoice in our 'stewardship' talents, whatever our age.
- ◇ Continue to celebrate the part all of us can play.

In summary, like the song, 'our Christian life within the family that is Wesley Chapel is a life-affirming song with an uplifting, timeless message, it's based on the narration of a Creator God expressing the wish that we will continue to step out and embrace life, and take a chance on love and faith whatever our age'.

'I hope you dance'

Every blessing, now and always.

Les Sudron



WESLEY FELLOWSHIP



The last Fellowship/Guild meeting of the year was a very festive affair, led beautifully by Mike. Sadly, Lynne and Joy were unable to be there as they were attending a family funeral. We started the meeting with traditional carols and reading. Then came the Christmas quiz jointly won by Judith and Janet – they shared the prize (which you may recognize from the bric a brac stall!) without squabbling.

As always, there was some controversy over the answers to the quiz so.....just to confirm the composer of 'White Christmas WAS born in Russia.

The Fellowship/Guild doesn't meet in January or February. If no-one comes forward to take over the organising of it then sadly it will fold. Lynne has done a sterling job over the years and those who attend have a great time of fellowship. Perhaps you could consider stepping forward into this role? Please! **Maureen**

.....and a message from Les: The Fellowship group formed from the coming together of the Wesley Guild and Network (MWIB) groups and represents decades of fellowship and fulfilment. It is a very special group within the life of Wesley and if we can, we should try and enable future members to experience the friendship offered and received every month. It does not necessarily need one person to lead, if two or three felt they could offer joint leadership I am sure they would receive support from other group members to deliver a flourishing gathering of people. What do you think? **Les.**



WESLEY IN DECEMBER

In early December Yorkshire Cancer research launched its Christmas appeal on the steps of Wesley Centre supported by the Love Pop Choir who sang lots of Christmas favourites to delighted passers-by.



Wesley Chapel hosted the Ashville College Carol Service and it was a very special occasion. Nearly 200 students, teachers and family members filled the chapel and Ashville chaplain Catherine said 'what a wonderful evening and what a wonderful chapel'.

Andrew received this letter following the December lunchtime recital. .

Dear Andrew, I didn't manage to see you after the last concert, but have been meaning to email to say how absolutely wonderful it was. Elisa Tomellini's playing and programme spoke to me on both a musical and personal level, and I found it a most uplifting experience.

Janet wishes to share: 'Rosemary Green's niece Cynthia and her husband Vince send good wishes to people at Wesley and wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a good 2023'.

A message from Shelagh. 'I would like to thank everyone who helped with the shopper's carol service. It was lovely to see new people and people who we have not seen since covid, return. Thank you. Hoping and wishing everyone will be blessed this Christmas season and keep in good health'

A message from Judith. 'Thank you to all my friends at Wesley who sent cards and messages on our recent house move. Your thoughts and good wishes were much appreciated'.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



We were sad to hear the news from Peter Flower's daughter that Peter passed away very peacefully on the afternoon of Christmas eve. Please remember his family in your prayers.

.....and some good news:

Congratulations to Susanna and Mark on the birth of Felix Helmut Gregory who arrived safely on 26 November weighing 8lbs 8oz. A grandson for Ulrike and Andrew. Ulrike writes: 'Susanna and Mark and all the family are very happy and grateful to have him, and he has already given us much joy. Felix will be joined by his cousins, uncles and aunts during the week before and over Christmas so we are looking forward to some lively family get-togethers. We would like to say a big thank you for all the kind thoughts and good wishes we have received'.

***Congratulations from all
of us at Wesley***



Church family news continued

Ulrike and Andrew also sent a photo of the family when they were all together on holiday on Lake Constance in the south of Germany in August—'quite different weather from the present, and it also seems a long time ago!' (From left to right: Christoph, Anne-Laure, Esther, Ulrike, our granddaughter Juno, Andrew, Martin, Susanna and Mark) .



...and a couple of December birthdays: were celebrated with cake.



Margaret's great-grandson Benjamin celebrated his 3rd birthday .



..and a slightly older person—age no longer relevant!



DESERT ISLAND DISCS

This month Christine Sudron shares her Desert Island Discs.

'Music can change the world.' — Ludwig van Beethoven

I have really been looking forward to putting together a 'desert island' music list and like everyone else, I have found this a delightful activity, with just a hint of frustration when having to limit to just a few pieces.

Widor Toccata 5th Symphony in F. Fifty years ago this new year, Les and I chose this piece for our wedding in Wesley Chapel. I recall Mr Harold Uttley playing – what a resounding way to begin our married life together. In 2005 it was played again in Wesley Chapel this time by Graham Bunting for our son Andrew's marriage to our wonderful daughter-in-law Cate; they chose this because both their parents had walked down the aisle with it playing.

I wonder if our incredible organists ever truly appreciate just how much their playing is somehow a foundation stone for the lives of the married couples!

Le onde by Ludovico Einaudi. Also, at Andrew and Cate's wedding, Daniel played this lovely piece on the amazing grand piano and he played it so wonderfully. This was such a special contribution from one brother to another. Daniel was helped to play under the kindly instruction of Rev. Gordon Lister. Daniel was 11 when he joined Gordon for his first ever public duet. The playing of *Le onde* was Daniel's first and last major public performance. The following day we had a party in our garden with the new bride and groom and family and friends who were making a weekend of it. Suddenly, Cate shouted out 'listen Daniel's playing *Le onde* ...on the radio!'

Everyone agreed that Einaudi played it well, but not as well as Daniel did the day before. It still causes a little giggle when recalled. Interestingly our grand-children often ask Daniel to help play the piano at our home and he too 'has a kindly way'!

Elgar Cello Concerto No1. But, it has to be played by Jacqueline du Prie. I absolutely love the sound of the cello playing and I find her playing so moving, it truly 'melts my heart'.

Continued

'Everything I do, I do it for you...' written and sung by Canadian **Bryan Adams**. My eldest son Matthew and I used to watch a lot of films together. One of his favourites, was 'Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves'. This theme tune was an amazing love song and has a very special place in my heart reminding me of a very special young man in my life.

Farewell to Stromness by **Peter Maxwell Davies**. Scotland has to be my favourite place to go on holiday. There are many pieces of music that remind me of this wonderful country but this piece really does evoke incredible pictures in my mind.

Overture to Tannhauser by **Richard Wagner**. Daniel really likes Wagner's strong music and this piece was heard by Mike Greenberg at a very significant moment in the life of our family concerning Daniel and so this piece of Wagner makes it on to my list.

Gabriel's Oboe by **Ennio Morricone**. This is just a haunting piece of music which really uplifts and embraces me!

And finally:

'I hope you dance' written **Mark D. Sanders and Tia Sillers and sung by Ronan Keating**. The words speak to me to take every opportunity you can in this life (who knows what the future will bring). Continue to pray to the Lord and have courage to try new things and strength to continue with your good works.

I hope you find this rather eclectic offering of music interesting and hopefully it may touch you in some of the ways it does me.

God bless. Christine Sudron.

Thank you Christine for your lovely choices which I am sure we will all enjoy listening to. Next month Ian will share his Desert Island Discs.

Music is an agreeable harmony for the honour of God and the permissible delights of the soul. Johann Sebastian Bach

2022-23 CONCERT SEASON

We are delighted to welcome our very own Jo (daughter of Maureen and Mike) as part of the London Horn Duo, to perform at our lunchtime recital on Monday 9th January, 1pm.

The programme is as follows:

Otto Nicolai (1810-1849) Sonata in A Minor: 3 movements.

Bernhard Krol (1920-2013) Laudatio (Kerin solo).

Mozart (1756-1791) Selection from Twelve Pieces for Two Horns K487.

Catherine Likhuta (b1981) I Threw a Shoe at a Cat: Theme, Waltz, Yazz, Finale (Jo solo).

Kerry Turner (b. 1960) – Four Duets for Horn: Waltz, Malagueña, Intermezzo and Trigger

The London Horn Duo was formed in 2020 when professional French horn players Kerin Black and Jo Withers formed a lockdown bubble. Enjoying making music together more than two decades after meeting as students in the Britten-Pears Orchestra led to their first performance as a duo, live streamed on Christmas Day 2020 for family and friends around the world. The audience's enthusiasm for this performance led the duo to offer further, publicly accessible, online concerts through 2021 with audience members on at least three continents!

Kerin grew up near Washington, DC and attended high school at Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. After graduating from the Royal Academy of Music, Kerin played Principal Horn in the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra in South Africa, followed by sixteen years in Germany playing Broadway musicals alongside regular performances with such prestigious ensembles as the NDR Big Band, NDR Radiophilharmonie and Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra. She returned to London permanently in 2020, where she is a professor of Alexander Technique at the Royal Academy of Music and freelancing in The Lion King in the West End, the Oxford Philharmonic, Birmingham Royal Ballet and other ensembles around England.



Continued

Lunchtime recitals continued.



Jo was brought up in Harrogate where she was a member of Wesley Chapel and played in local and national youth orchestras. After attending the Guildhall School of Music and Drama she freelanced in London for ten years before taking an extended sabbatical to home-educate her children. Jo now plays for film and TV sessions, orchestras including the LSO, RPO and London Chamber Orchestra and is a regular Guest Principal for the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. For the past 18 years she has been a member of the orchestra of English Touring Opera, travelling round the UK with her children, Charli and Nathan and their grandparents, Maureen and Mike.

6 February at 1pm. Harmoniemusik

Programme:

Poulenc. *Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano*

Bozza. *Trois Pièces pour une musique de nuit*

Saint-Saëns. *Tarantella for flute clarinet and piano*

Arnold. *Divertimento for flute, oboe and clarinet.*

Capiet. *Allegro brillamente fro Quintet for piano and winds.*

For more information about Harmoniemusik visit
<https://wesleycentreharrogate.org.uk/harmoniemusik/>

Sarah Devonald, a member of Harmoniemusik was on Radio3's Record Review, just before Christmas, giving her views on recordings of Christmas music.

Future Concerts this season

6th March 2023 - Kitty Whately (mezzo-soprano) and Joseph Middleton

3rd April 2023 - Emma Abbate and Julian Perkins (piano/four hands)

8th May 2023- Gareth Brynmor-John (tenor/winner of the Ferrier Award 2013) and Christopher Glynn (piano)

5th June 2023 - Susan Tomes (piano)

3rd July 2023 - Jazz concert

WHAT'S ON AT OUR OTHER CHURCHES

BILTON METHODIST AMBLERS The next walk is Saturday 14 January. All walks start on the car park of Bilton Area Methodist Church where we meet to arrange transport at 9.30. Winter walks generally about 4-6 miles and normally end at a cafe or pub for food. All welcome. If interested please contact Janet Allen, T: 524634 E: janetallen09@btinternet.com

Future walks, Saturday 11 February and Saturday 11 March.

STARBECK.

Sunday 15 January 2.30pm. Daytones Harmony Chorus. A lively group of men singing barber-shop harmonies. Based in Clifford and directed by Steve West.

Sunday 12 February 2.30pm. Knot Another Choir. A large mixed community "pop, rock & gospel" choir from Knaresborough that sing popular music directed by Craig Lees.

Entry £8 on the door. Refreshments served during the interval



Mike took this photo of Wesley whilst he was riding on the ferris wheel with grandson Harry during the Christmas market. Maureen despaired, remarking that everyone else took long-distance photos towards the dales or of the Christmas market. (Though she admits that she couldn't complain as she wasn't brave enough to go up herself).

I think it is a brilliant photograph, and can't help imagining what it was like when it was the only building in the vicinity, surrounded by green fields.

2021 CENSUS

Les reflects on the 2021 census which shows that people who identify as Christian is now 46.2% of the population.

Faith leaders at the Methodist Church say they believe that while figures from the Office for National Statistics show fewer people in England and Wales describing themselves as Christian, this may not indicate a decline in those seeking answers to questions around faith and spirituality.

The Census 2021 for England and Wales revealed that the number of people who identify as Christian was now 46.2% of the population, down from 59.3% in the last census of 2011. The Methodist Church recognises the need to explore how Christianity can remain relevant in today's society and how it continues to spread the Good News in a changing world.

The President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Graham Thompson, commented; 'The figures may show a decline in the number of people identifying as Christian but experience suggests that more people are recognising that which is spiritual and are open to conversations about faith and the difference that faith can make. This is a space into which we can speak of our faith in Jesus and His call to love God and love our neighbours. The Methodist people seek to do this each day and we encourage others to try to do the same.'

Graham's comments were supported by Trey Hall, the Methodist Church's Director of Evangelism & Growth, 'It's important for the Church to be wide awake to changing demographics, cultural shifts and emerging social patterns in order to live in and serve the real world. Interestingly, as fewer people describe themselves with traditional religious identities, there seems to be an increasing interest in spirituality, especially among younger generations'.

'The Church is being challenged to discover new forms and spaces for spiritual exploration and faith discovery with new friends and partners; to listen afresh, to love learning, to start and deepen new relationships in our communities'.

Continued

'In the Methodist Church, we are committed to starting hundreds of New Places for New People, which may look very different from past spaces and forms of Christianity even as they integrate the wisdom of previous generations and explore it afresh. And that's a wonderful thing!'

I think the New Year is a great time to reflect further on these comments. I think I will have a Resolution for 2023 'To challenge myself to discover new forms and spaces for spiritual exploration and faith discovery with new friends and partners; to listen afresh, to love learning, to start and deepen new relationships in our communities'.

No doubt a real challenge, yet one that reflects hope based on the Power of God's Love for all peoples.

Les Sudron

CHRISTIAN RESEARCH

Resonate is the largest Christian online panel in the UK, with about 5,000 members. Surveys are carried out monthly into issues and trends within the Christian community and also to gain a Christian perspective and attitude on current affairs and topical issues. Here are a few statistics about Christmas that may interest you.

- ◇ Christmas cards are still popular, but over half said they send fewer out compared to five years ago.
- ◇ By far, a traditional English Christmas meal was the most popular meal to eat on Christmas Day. 80% said they liked eating Brussels sprouts.
- ◇ General feelings of stress about Christmas this year are low, forty-five per cent said they were quite excited about Christmas this year whilst 35 per cent said they were not very excited. Compared to last Christmas, almost 75 per cent said they were feeling about the same in terms of stress. Sixteen per cent said they were feeling less stressed.
- ◇ The panel was asked who they intended to spend Christmas with this year. Immediate family was the most popular, followed by extended family. Other answers mentioned spending Christmas with their church community, anyone who is lonely or isolated and refugees.

Continued.

Christmas statistics continued.

⇒ 24% planned to wear a Christmas jumper on Christmas Day

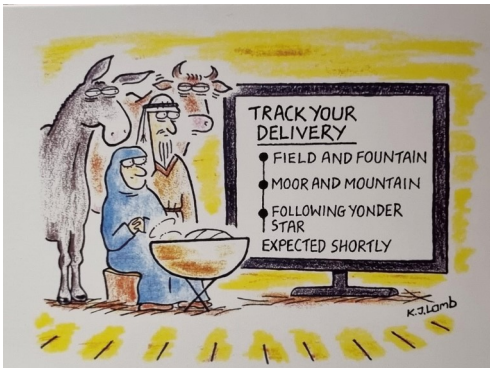
A survey in October 2022 of 3,035 adults in England and Wales asked about belief in God, and showed that 41 per cent believed there was definitely or probably a god or higher power. This represents a three percent rise from 2018.

Resonate writes '...many people of all religions and none are generally quite comfortable with the idea of a national Christian identity even if they don't claim it for themselves. One sign of that is the support expressed for Christian elements in royal events; a Bible Society survey conducted by YouGov following the Queen's funeral found that only 15 per cent of the population think state royal events such as weddings and funerals should be wholly secular in future, and that 72 per cent felt Christian language and imagery was appropriate at the funeral.

This certainly does not show a country that has turned its back on either Christianity, or faith more broadly; indeed other research suggests that churchgoing is relatively stable. Attendance at festival church is growing and indeed research conducted for the Bible Society over the last five years says that both 'belief in a God or higher power' and an interest in spirituality are growing.

Religion in general and Christianity in particular remains at the heart of our national culture and identity—though there is much work still to be done to understand precisely what this means.'

This research together with the Methodist President's message in Les's article above, show much positivity for the future of the church.



Judith Yeats

CIRCUIT AND DISTRICT ONLINE SERVICES



From now on Circuit Online Worship offering changes slightly. We're still offering live Morning Prayer Monday to Friday on Facebook at 8am. Our Sunday Worship will change slightly. From 1st January 2023 we're making our weekly pre-recorded worship to be more 'TED Talk' style. They will be shorter sessions, often without any worship music but will have 3 or 4 sessions by the same preacher on a theme. They will be listed under playlists on our YouTube channel if you want to go back and listen to them again. They will also premiere each Sunday at 9am. Our first series of three services beginning this Sunday is on the Infancy of Jesus led by Rev Ruth Parry.

The District Service will finish in February 2023



FLOURISH 23

Friday 14th—Sunday 16th April 2023

Scarborough Spa

Be inspired

Be challenged

Reflect and be renewed

Have Fun and laughter

Your heart strangely warmed

Be Equipped to FLOURISH

For more information www.yorkshirenemethodist.org/flourish 23

Emmaus House Calendars 2023

These calendars are for sale by contacting Chrissie on chrissie.medway-steel@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk They are £12 and if you email Chrissie she will either post or drop one through your door. Payment to Emmaus House can be made on Sort code 30 00 04 account number 0117804 and ref 092 Emmaus Calendar.

EPIPHANY

The Three Kings by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Three Kings came riding from far away,
Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar;
Three Wise Men out of the East were they,
And they travelled by night and they slept by day,
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear,
That all the other stars of the sky
Became a white mist in the atmosphere,
And by this they knew that the coming was near
Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy.

Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,
Three caskets of gold with golden keys;
Their robes were of crimson silk with rows
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.

And so the Three Kings rode into the West,
Through the dusk of the night, over hill and dell,
And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast,
And sometimes talked, as they paused to rest,
With the people they met at some wayside well.

“Of the child that is born,” said Baltasar,
“Good people, I pray you, tell us the news;
For we in the East have seen his star,
And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,
To find and worship the King of the Jews.”

And the people answered, “You ask in vain;
We know of no King but Herod the Great!”
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,
As they spurred their horses across the plain,
Like riders in haste, who cannot wait.

Continued

And when they came to Jerusalem,
Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,
Sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;
And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem,
And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away; and the star stood still,
The only one in the grey of morn;
Yes, it stopped—it stood still of its own free will,
Right over Bethlehem on the hill,
The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard,
Through the silent street, till their horses turned
And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;
But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred,
And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay,
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,
The little child in the manger lay,
The child, that would be king one day
Of a kingdom not human, but divine.

His mother Mary of Nazareth
Sat watching beside his place of rest,
Watching the even flow of his breath,
For the joy of life and the terror of death
Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet:
The gold was their tribute to a King,
The frankincense, with its odor sweet,
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete,
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head,
And sat as still as a statue of stone,
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,
Remembering what the Angel had said
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;
But they went not back to Herod the Great,
For they knew his malice and feared his hate,
And returned to their homes by another way.

IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR (StF205)

We are still in the Christmas season. So here is the story of my favourite carol.

It is my favourite, mainly because of the message in the third verse:
*Yet, with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not the love song which they
bring; O hush the noise, ye men of strife and hear the angels sing.*

'The Angels Song, was written by an American, Unitarian minister, Edmund Hamilton Sears in 1849. He wrote it whilst recovering from a devastating illness, and with a belief that through the centuries God sends his emissary angels to earth with a resounding message of peace. It was written the year after the Communist Manifesto was published and revolutions swept the old order from power in many European countries. America had just fought a war with Mexico that Sears believed was unjust, and he foresaw with dread the Civil War that lay just ahead. No-one seemed to be listening to angels' songs of peace.

When Reverend Sears wrote *The Angel's Song* in 1849, carols were just beginning a nineteenth century revival as famous composers began to write new and contemporary versions of their ancient forms and *It Came Upon The Midnight Clear* was one of the first of these new carols.

It was controversial. Some say that because *the Angel Song* doesn't mention Jesus it should be removed from hymn books and others have rewritten the words to include Jesus. British carol scholar Erik Routley wrote that 'in its original form the hymn is little more than an ethical song extolling the worth and splendour of peace among men. Others appreciate the original carol for its language, images, and expression of angel and human centuries old hopes of peace and consider it a message from 'Heaven's All Gracious King.'

No one knows what tune the first singers used to perform *It Came Upon The Midnight Clear*, but in 1874, in England composer Arthur Sullivan set the poem to a tune that he called *Noel*, which is the tune we are familiar with today.

Judith Yeats

<https://historybecauseitshere.weebly.com/the-angels-song---it-came-upon-the-midnight-clear.html>



Prayer Corner

Please remember Helen and Malcolm Evison in your prayers.

Earlier in December we were asked by John, a member of our congregation, to pray for his grand-daughter Poppy who was very seriously ill; this we did. John has since sent this message: 'Sending a HUGE thank you all for your prayers....Poppy was on an infusion every few hours and they were discussing sending her to the specialist unit in York. Serious. Strep A can be very dangerous. By (the) Sunday afternoon the drip was out and she was back home by (the) Monday. She is now recovering well. The power of prayer! Thank you all once again. Bless you'. John.

Let your good spirit watch over us, O Lord, your love ever rule in our heart and your mercy and forgiveness ever keep us in body, mind and soul. Amen. *John Wesley (1703–1791)*

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing,
put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you,
or laid aside for you,
exalted for you,
or brought low for you;
let me be full,
let me be empty,
let me have all things,
let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.'

The Methodist Covenant Prayer



Warm Welcome

Commencing the 10th January

12:00 - 14:00

Every Tuesday



Flasks filled, Hot water Bottles filled, Soup and a roll
Wesley Centre, Oxford Steet, Harrogate