

LINK PLUS++++

December 2021/January 2022



Dear Friends

'Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those who he favours' (Luke 1: 14)

Glory sounds such a big word, a word fit for cathedrals, choirs, and gilt-edged bibles. And perhaps that is the point of the words that the angels brought that night on the hillside outside Bethlehem. What was happening in the town below was something exceptional and sacred. Here the earth was touched by God's glory in a way that was and mystical in its majesty and beyond our understanding. The glory of the Lord lit the world as angels opened the skies with their presence. That

glory which 'shone around' the angels astounded the shepherds, filled them with awe, fear, and wonder.

What is the message that they bring? It is that the King of Glory, long worshipped and long awaited, that One mentioned in the Psalms, is born in a poor and lowly stable, in the form of an infant, tiny and vulnerable, and to an unmarried mother from the backwater of Judah. These are not things most associated with 'glory'.

Yet as this child grows people see God's glory in him, recognise him as the 'Messiah', the 'Son of Man', and they declare the glory of his kingship as he enters Jerusalem. And on the cross the gospels reveal and proclaim the greatest expression of the glory of God in sacrificial love.

This is the why angels give glory, and why we give glory and praise, both as we celebrate Jesus' birth, and as we go into 2022.

May you have a wonderful Christmas and a blessed new Year.

Steve

Happy
New
Year

Brean

<http://www.breanmethodistchurch.org.uk>

'Joy to the World' we sang. It was the last Sunday of the Church Year. All around us lay evidence of how things weren't so joyful. Covid, climate change, lack of integrity in high places, knife crime, immigration problems, threat of hostility across the world, and of course, any sort of difficulty people might have experienced in more domestic scenarios.

Jim (McKnight) had chosen the hymn for the middle of his service. His choice was right, for then we sang 'the Lord is come.' The next week would be the start of Advent, constant reminder that even in the worst of times there is still hope; and within which lies the hope inherent in Christmas. And if we really wanted reassurance, Jim's welcome presence can always be relied upon to bring that sense of anticipated wellbeing.

It was an appropriate way to prepare ourselves for the Church Council that was to follow. In particular we were grappling, as are many others, with the Conference Resolutions that focus our attention on what sort of church we will be in the years to come. If, for example, we have less than 12 members we are told that we cannot exercise the powers that come with being trustees of our church purposes. Amongst other things we would lose the overall control of our budget. Seeing things from our perspective (what happens at District and Nationals level feel so far away), we were all alarmed at the suddenness of it; the ground had been taken from us. We needed time to absorb such issues. Steve was right to now prepare for the outcome and to set up a procedure for addressing the situation. And we have agreed to continue to be part of it. We currently have 12 people who can be called members for these purposes but who knows what the future holds. We shall work with other churches for the best outcome.

We had known that the other big issue was coming because there have been presentations about it for a few years. But we still can't yet agree to the next step laid before us. Same sex marriage is a subject that is dividing the Church across all its constituent bodies. At the heart of

our debate is whether we can allow our church be used for Same-Sex Marriages. It needs further conversation and we agreed to return to the matter at our next meeting. We want to work to a resolution with which we all feel comfortable.

Audio-vision is a topic which our Council is also addressing. We have had audio equipment for several years now, and its value for hymns and worship material has been especially useful during Covid restrictions. John T and other have also used it when they have brought visual equipment to enhance worship, and all this has been largely appreciated. With the development of Zoom and other audio-visual techniques we felt that we need to become more aware of the potential such features carry, so John was asked to prepare suggestions for what could be done to the advantage of us all.

Meanwhile Morag was able to tell us about how our use of The Web has brought our presence to the notice of the outside world. 99 people now 'follow' us on the web for example. The Facebook page that Steve encouraged us to set up and which Becky developed into a two-minute video, has had over 800 'hits' both locally and from all over the country; it is also on our Website, so we thanked Becky for her efforts. Morag regularly updates our pages with features and worship items; when she advertises events with which we are involved the site can receive up to 1800 viewings.

Apart from that, our Church Council was pretty normal. We welcomed Rosemary as Circuit Steward and congratulated her on becoming fully accredited as a Local Preacher. It had been a long, hard road for her but she had stuck to her task with proper diligence; her Recognition Service had been held the previous day and was appreciated by the 40 people who attended.

We also agreed to explore Ecochurch. I am not sure we fully understood what it all means but it sounded a good idea; Morag is our church link and Rosemary is the Circuit officer.

We hope we shall be able to keep our church warm enough to hold services and other events over the winter period. We shall allow some ventilation (more important even than masks Anne reminds us) and we have got enough room to expand to keep space at a premium. This being so we invite, nay encourage, you to our special events:

Saturday December 18th: Coffee and Carols around the keyboard. 10.30 to 12 noon. Not held last year because of Covid, but attended by 30 to 40 previously. We hope that you will help us to get to those numbers again;

Christmas Eve, Friday December 24^h. 4pm. The return of our informal wake up to Christmas with our Carol Service, a mixture of Carols, readings and drama; and of course (Covid restrictions allowing) tea and cake to follow.

Please do all you can to support us at these celebrations.

We wish our fellow churches across the Link well at their Christmas Celebrations also and encourage our own people to join in too.

We are also pleased that the Covenant Service for Brean, East Brent and Brent Knoll will be a joint one, held in our church on January 23rd at 10.30am.

And you never know, we might even be able to arrange a Sausage and mash, and games evening this year. Details to follow if so.

We keep our prayers alive for a happy, contented and above all, hopeful Christmas and New Year. Take care and enjoy one another.

From us all at Brean.

Harvey Allen

Brent Knoll

Advent means 'Coming' in Latin. And the season of Advent is one where Christians throughout the World use the four Sundays and weeks of Advent to prepare for, and remember, the real meaning of Christmas. It is a time of hope and expectation.

After so many months of uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so many of us have lived with uncertainty, yet with hope for a better future. When I look back to this time last year, things looked spectacularly bleak as far as the pandemic was concerned. Yet now, at the time of writing, our churches are open, a semblance of normality has returned to our lives and, as boosters are being rolled out, it appears that we may look to the coming New Year with more optimism (albeit still with caution). I know I am not alone in expressing my heartfelt gratitude to the health care workers and scientists who have worked tirelessly and carried us through such a difficult time and have shown us light at the end of an especially long and dark tunnel.

We here at Brent Knoll Methodist Church will not be holding a service on Christmas morning, nor on Sunday 26th December. But we will begin the New Year by welcoming Rev Steve Bennett, who will be taking our service of Holy Communion on Sunday 2nd January.

In the meantime, from all of us here at Brent Knoll, we wish you all the hope of the Advent season and our prayers for a peaceful Christmas and bright blessings for 2022.

God bless you
Rosemary Krull

Burnham

To Use a well-known phrase 'It's been a funny old year'.

We have all spent the first half in a virtual lock down and slowly and gently we have been able to move around with a little more freedom and for the last couple of months we have been able to selectively meet up with friends and family.

Since the middle of October however all manner of retailers and manufacturers have been on a crusade to get everyone to buy their Christmas presents now as there is going to be a potential shortage of presents and food etc. etc.

The advertisements that we are forced to endure also carry pressure to Buy! Buy! Buy!

Nowhere have I seen or heard 'present circuit churches accepted' mention of the Birth of Jesus. This is the whole point of Christmas to celebrate the birth of our Lord. Personally I find the midnight Christmas Eve service a celebration of Christ's birth. It's so exciting yet this appears to have been completely missed by the commercial world, which I find particularly sad.

We look forward to the New Year, a little concerned about what we are going to be facing with the uncertainty over Covid, will life settle to what is going to be regarded as the 'new normal'. We can only put our faith and trust in our good Lord to guide us and on that we depend.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year on behalf of all the Burnham Stewards.

Geoff Stait

EAST BRENT

I missed the first couple of weeks here in East Brent but was back for Remembrance Sunday.

One more step towards normal as our own minister led our short worship at 10 am followed by our Remembrance service at the War Memorial. A tradition which we were pleased to return to this year. We missed our flag bearer, Bill Griffin, who has been at the service of remembrance for as long as I can remember. Due to the death of his wife and his own failing health he has moved away from the village. He will be remembered by a lot of the local community and we send him our best wishes. Our thanks go to Mr Searle who played his trumpet again this year (apologies if that should have been 'cornet'). There were a good number of people present at the memorial and we welcomed some of them back in our hall for coffee afterwards. We also appreciated the quiet afforded us when the police halted the traffic at

the appropriate time and there were, of course, no carnival floats passing by on their way to Weston this year.

Another step towards normal – our Christmas coffee morning. We were really pleased to welcome friends from other churches and most people said how much they enjoyed coming out and seeing people. There was certainly a lot of chat over coffee and biscuits and stall holders enjoyed catching up with visitors as they browsed. Many thanks to everyone for your support. So far, we have raised nearly £200 and 1 euro!! I might be the guilty party there having just come back from France. It gave everybody a laugh anyway.

And so to another couple of steps towards normal – Carols by Candlelight are back, Friday 17th December, 7pm, followed by coffee and mince pies, a warm welcome to you all.

Christmas Day, short family service at 10am and, again, we extend a warm welcome.

So, from East Brent, blessings to you all at this special time of the year and best wishes for a happier, healthier year in 2022,

Margaret

West Huntspill

Sadly, we have to report that our dear friend Gwen Slocombe passed away at the beginning of November. Gwen had a deep and sincere faith; she attended All Saints Church in East Huntspill until her move to Highbridge when she became a very active member at Highbridge Methodist. When Highbridge Church closed she joined West Huntspill. Christine would collect her and Barbara Lee every Sunday. Gwen also faithfully attended all Church Meetings where we welcomed her astute input. She celebrated her 96th birthday in August, her mental faculties were as sharp as ever, though physically she was finding things much more difficult. She was persuaded to go into The Towans Retirement Home in April for respite care, she settled in well enjoying the stimulation of the staff, other residents and the activities timetable. She died peacefully and unexpectedly in her sleep. Gwen will much missed by us all.

Kay Lloyd.

(I prefer the Salvation Army's " Promoted to Glory" ! Maureen)

Barbara Lee is poorly at the moment; we send her our good wishes for a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing her back in Church soon.

I cannot believe that it is Advent Sunday this weekend. Where does time go? At the moment we are making arrangements for Christmas celebrations but are very aware that activities may be curtailed if the virus transmission rate increases.

Carol Service

You are invited to join us on Monday 20th December at 7pm. Please wear a mask when singing.

Christmas Morning

Everyone is welcome to us join for a Christmas breakfast from 8.45am to be followed by a Celebratory Service at 9.30am.

Convent Service January 16th at 11am

PLUS +++ POEMS, PRAYERS and OTHER MESSAGES

Joyce and Stanley Pipet would like to express their thanks for all the cards, emails & phone calls, and practical help, not to mention the prayer support that they received following the death of Joyce's brother, Derek, in Guernsey recently. It was all greatly appreciated.

DECEMBER DAISIES AND DECEMBER DAYS

by H. T. Mackenzie Bell

Ah, how the sight of fair untimely flowers
Awakes a subtle sentiment, and fills
The soul with quiet pleasure. Something thrills
Our being to the core and softly showers
Strange yearning thought upon us. When the close
Of a December day is stirless, mild
As is this twilight hour, we are beguiled
By its seductive softness: and there grows
(As one by one from out the placid sky
The tranquil stars appear), the half-formed doubt
Whether the scene be real. For without
A question kindly Auster cannot try
To bring a greater boon. Joys that arise
All unexpected we most keenly prize

Submitted by Judy Allen

Mothers in Israel (Part 7)

To begin, I have received a little extra information on the details I included in the last piece I wrote on Deaconesses. I gather that the Methodist work on the Bournville estate was begun by a deaconess, and

that Revd. Beth Bridges served there before going on to the Tiger Bay area of Cardiff.

Another Deacon who may be remembered in this circuit was Grace Male. She had had to leave the Order on her marriage, but her status was later returned to her. She lived in and worshipped at Uphill, where she had quite an influence in the area there. Also, Deaconess Phyllis Maitland had connections in the circuit, but I have no other details about her.

When writing about the Diaconate it was not possible to do so without mentioning that some of their number subsequently became presbyters once that ministry was opened to women.

In the research I conducted a number of years back, I was surprised to discover how far back the concept of ordaining women as presbyters in the Methodist Church had gone during the twentieth century. The reason for researching this arose when I was following the path in the Anglican Church that led to the ordination of women as priests, and I was interested to trace the contrast between the two denominations. As those of you who have followed this series will realise, my search surprised me in taking me right back to the time of John Wesley.

However, I am now focusing on the developments that began in the late 1920's with the Wesleyan Connexion who, at the annual Conference set up a committee to report on the question of women in ministry, but I could find nothing further on this.

After various Connexions had united in 1932, a Conference vote was taken in 1933 affirming that there were no theological barriers to the ordination of women as presbyters, and this was to be discussed further. In the Representative session a year later the consensus was that there was insufficient support to take the matter further.

In 1938 that a proposal was brought to the Methodist Conference that women should be ordained to the ministry*, and the idea was that

following discussions around the Connexion a vote would be taken on the proposal in 1939.

*It has been interesting to note how the language referring to the ordination to “ministry” has changed over time. Here the word referred only to the presbyteral ministry.

The 1939 Conference appointed a committee to look at the possibility of opening such a ministry to such deaconesses who had experienced a calling to ordination. This would be extended to some of the women missionaries. The further work of the committee would be to assess how that would be implemented.

This was seen as a possible experimental stage, and I discovered the recommendations that accompanied it.

So: -

- a) A candidate must believe she is called of God to this ministry.
- b) Over a period of years, she must have made proof of her fitness in full time service of the church.
- c) Her maintenance and provision of her retiring allowances to be guaranteed by the Home Missions Committee, the Overseas Committee, the Wesley Deaconess Order, or some other department having kindred responsibilities.

And she must: -

- a) Be nominated and approved by a Quarterly Meeting.
- b) Be recommended by a Synod in accordance with procedures laid down for men candidates.
- c) Appear before the July Committee, which, in reporting to Conference, shall make recommendations as to further training and probation.

As will be appreciated nothing was to come of this because of the outbreak of the Second World War.

The next reference that I could find was in 1948, when because of talks with the Anglican Church the recommendations were shelved. Somewhere, (regrettably I did not note the source at the time,) I found

a record that indicated that Revd. Danial Niles had spoken out very plainly that women should never be ordained, and that he had a great influence on that Conference.

There are parallels in the situation when the ordination of women was next brought to the Methodist Conference in 1966. Once more there were also the possibility of talks towards a closer relationship with the Church of England. This presented a dilemma as there were those who supported this motion who were also favourably inclined towards the ordination of women as presbyters.

The Church of England General Synod in 1972 did not accept the proposals put forward to bring the two denominations closer together, and with that rejection, the Methodist Conference of the same year went ahead with the proposal to ordain women to the presbyteral ministry. This was passed the following year and in 1974 the first seventeen women were ordained. These were women such as Beth Bridges who had an extensive experience in the Deaconess Order who went straight into circuit work. It was the following year that Revd Joyce Plumb was ordained.

Revd. Beth Bridges was one of the first women to be appointed as a superintendent, while Revd. Kathleen Richardson, having been the first Chair of District, was elected as President of Conference in 1992. Since then, there have been seven more women who have graced that post. The most recent of these is the first black woman president Revd. Sonia Hicks who took office at the 2021 Conference.

As I draw this to a close, I would remember Ildi Haraszti from this circuit who is candidating for the presbyteral ministry this year, as is our daughter in law, Dorothy Pipet. Times have changed since those first women were admitted as presbyters to full Connexion, but we remember all who feel that calling in our prayers.

While this concludes the series that I hope that you have enjoyed on the changing roles of women in the church, I plan a final offering. In this I will trace from the origins the path that I hinted at when I wrote about

how the Deaconess Order was established, that of how Sisters were ordained to the work of the National Children's Home, which is now known as Action for Children.

Joyce Pipet.

Finally, please note
the deadline for
the February Link Plus is
30th January.



LINK DIARY

Date & Time	Location	Event
Weekly		
Wednesday 10.00am	Zoom	<u>Link Bible Study – Hebrews</u> Meeting ID: 842 8627 4955 Passcode: 358753
Thursday 11.00am	Zoom	<u>Link Coffee Morning</u> Meeting ID: 854 3680 5731 Passcode: 419002
December		
2 nd 7.30pm	Zoom	Circuit Meeting
8 th 7.00pm	Burnham	Weston Hospice Memorial Service
12 th 12 noon	Brean	Christmas Lunch
16 th 7.30pm	Burnham Catholic	Burnham & Highbridge Choral Society Christmas Concert
17 th 7.00pm	East Brent	Carol Service
18 th 10.30	Brean	Coffee & Carols
19 th 6.00pm	Burnham	Carol Service
20 th 7.00pm	West Huntspill	Carols
22 nd 6.00pm	Mead Fields	Carols – contact G Hoare for details
24 th 4.00pm	Brean	Carols
24 th 11.15pm	Burnham	Midnight Communion
25 th 9.30am	West Huntspill	Christmas Service (breakfast at 8.45am)
25 th 10.00am	East Brent	Christmas Service

25 th 11.00am	Burnham	Christmas Service
26 th	Please note there are no in person services on this day. Deacon Gary Hoare will be offering a Zoom service for those who would like to participate	
January 2022		
8 th 10am onwards	Burnham	Epiphany Fair
13 th 2.00pm	Brean	Link Vision Group
20 th 7.30pm	Zoom	Circuit Property Meeting
22 nd	All Day	District Candidate's Committee (please pray for Ildi Haraszti as she explores her call to be a Methodist Minister).
25 th 7.00pm	Burnham	Sabbatical Group meeting