



West Bergholt Methodist Church

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THE LINK

FEBRUARY 2017

SUNDAY SERVICES

WORSHIP at 11 am will be led by

Feb. 5th Mr Brian Dack
Feb. 12th Mr Mike Abbs
Feb. 19th Rev Paul Howes with communion
Feb. 26th Mr Jonathan Sparkes

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If you would like to come to any of our services, or any other church activities, but would need a lift, please phone 01206 242511 or 241969.

All children are very welcome. Crèche facilities will be provided when necessary. For further information please contact:- Mrs Susan Windscheffel

OTHER MEETINGS

Please feel free to join us at any of these – you will be made most welcome...

Shared weekday communion with St. Mary's in St Mary's Church on

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 14th at 11am

There will be no Joint **Bible Study** in February. Lent courses at St. Mary's will start on March 7th.

SUNDAY 5th March Annual Church Meeting– approx. 1.00pm

After lunch following the morning service. Please stay/come if you can and bring your own lunch – we will provide hot drinks– 12:30pm.
Please circulate reports before the meeting.

FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Our next meeting will be at 2.30 on **Wednesday 15th February.**

There will be a change to the programme as our planned speaker from the Garrison is unavailable. Instead we will bring forward the members meeting, scheduled for April, so members are invited to come prepared to share “memories”.



Action for Children (NCH) Carol Singing, donations and the collection at the Candlelight Carol Service raised £100-90.

Also £52-18 sent to **Beacon House** to support the homeless. Many thanks to all who supported for these results

'AN UNPROMISING NEW YEAR'

The President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Dr Roger Walton and Rachel Lampard MBE, speak about Syria, the Nativity and unpromising situations in this year's Message.

The shabby collection of rooms was perched on the edge of a steep hill above Amman in Jordan. We were visiting a family of Syrian refugees who had just had a baby, and were being helped by funding provided by the Methodist charity, All We Can.

A woman, who we assumed was the grandmother, answered the door and invited us in. We sat on the floor, along with a local health worker. The father appeared with the baby, Yosra, and three other small children. It turned out that the woman was not the grandmother, but rather the mother of the family. She was just in her 30s, prematurely aged by the privations and stresses of recent years. They had left Syria four years ago, and now lived in a couple of basic rooms. The three children were similar ages to my own, but were tiny. As a refugee the father was banned from working and the family was reliant on support from a charity in order to be able to survive.

What an unpromising situation they were in. The family were underfed, with very little prospect of being able to improve their circumstances. They were desperate to go back to Syria, but recognised that this was unlikely any time soon. And their tiny baby, who slept in my arms, faced growing into adulthood in a foreign country, in poverty.

And yet. When we asked the father of the family what he wanted for the future, instead of talking about better housing, more food, or even a return to Syria, said "I want my children to be the best people that they can be". It was breath-taking. A family were facing immense poverty and dislocation, yet had the highest hopes for the character and contribution of their children.

A similarly unpromising set of circumstances surrounded another young family less than 50 miles away in Bethlehem two millennia ago. A young girl had given birth to a baby, far from her home and her family, in an outhouse, shared with animals. She had become pregnant outside marriage, and was only rescued from shame and rejection by her fiancé taking on a baby that wasn't his. Ahead lay real danger, as the ruler of the area would soon order his soldiers to slaughter all the baby boys. A dirty, shameful, dangerous situation. An unpromising set of circumstances. And yet. This is exactly the place the Messiah, the son of God, was born into.

But should we really be surprised? This is a God who said that the kingdom of heaven belonged, not to the rich or powerful or religious, but to little children. This is a God who chose women, tax collectors, fishermen to begin a

worldwide movement for the salvation of all people. Unpromising is not a word which seems to put God off; on the contrary the Bible seems to suggest that God seeks out the unpromising, the weak, the outcast in order to build his kingdom. The apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, said "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God." (1 Corinthians 27-19)

We are living in times which might be described as unpromising, or even "interesting" according to the old Chinese proverb. We face great uncertainty in our politics, our economics, our relationships with one another. Around the planet there is apparently relentless violence, and the poorest, as ever, bear the consequences of our inability to restrain our use of resources. Our own Methodist Church is seeing a continuing decline in members and a shortage of ministers for the churches we have. The future is surely unpromising.

And yet. Our faith surely prompts us not to turn away purely because any situation looks unpromising. This doesn't mean facing it with blind and passive optimism. Instead we have a hope which is grounded in the foolishness of God, which is wiser and stronger than wisdom and strength of the world. And God is at work in our world, and invites us to join in. As the theologian Ken Leech said: "hope isn't a state of mind; it's a piece of work". In the unpromising situations in our world, where is God inviting us to join in? Where is God asking us to see the treasure that is hidden within the clay jars? Where is God asking us, not to be optimistic, but rather to be hopeful?

We would like to suggest that you do three things over this "unpromising" season.

Firstly, the Methodist Church, together with the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union and the Church of Scotland, have produced a short film, "A Very British Nativity", which suggests how Mary and Joseph might have fared arriving in the UK as asylum seekers. Why not reflect on what this unpromising small family might mean for others, asylum seekers and refugees in particular, and how we can make their future more hopeful.

Secondly, we invite you to reflect on something that initially appeared unpromising. This might be something in your own life, the life of your church, or in the wider society or world. How was the potential or transformation within each situation revealed? What was the treasure in the clay jars?

And thirdly ask yourself: what is unpromising in your life or church or community at the moment? What might God be doing there already - or what might God do if only you would join in?

In this season we pray that you will have a happy and peace-filled New Year, and that you will know the love of God who acts through the most unpromising things and people to bring about his kingdom of holiness and justice.

Half term Activities

We will be providing fun activities for young families (children please bring an adult along) at our **Coffee and Craft** morning during half term. This will take place in the West Bergholt Methodist Church Hall, Chapel Lane from 10.30 – 12.00 on **Monday February 13th**. For further details phone Andrew (242511) - ALL WELCOME.

THE WOMENS WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
Will take place on FRIDAY 3rd MARCH at
Methodist Church

Written by the women of Philippines, the theme will be
"Am I being unfair to you?"

Soup'n Snack Lunch at 12.30pm in Methodist Hall,
Chapel Lane; Service at 1.30pm
ALL ARE WELCOME - Children & gentlemen
welcome!

"Our Story"

A series of meetings led by Rev Ken Chalmers will start on Wednesday morning March 22 at 10.30 in our Church hall. There will be two further meetings before Easter on March 29 and April 5. We will continue after Easter on May 17, 24, 31 and June 7. **Please note the dates.** All meetings will be on Wednesday mornings starting at 10.30 with coffee and will close by 12.00. We would love you to come to all the meetings but realise this may not be possible, so come along to as many as you can make. All involved with and concerned for our Church are welcome.

The next **COFFEE MORNING** will be on
Weds. 8th FEBRUARY 10 - 11.30am
BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU
Coffee or Tea and Biscuits - 50p
Gifts for Cake and General Stalls
will be appreciated.



Greetings Cards will be on sale

Thank you for your support,

Results – Dec. Result £45-06, Jan. Result £26-90
Total result for 2016 was £574-64 (2015 £625-05)

Many thanks to everyone who helped to raise this splendid amount for our Church Funds.

Wednesday March 1st at 8pm

Ash Wednesday Service with Communion at
St. John's, Great Horkesley
Led by Rev. Mandy Elmes – All welcome

LINK MAGAZINE

To all our readers - if you would like to make an annual donation to help with the cost of production, any donation will be gratefully received.

Debt Worries?

Following on from the article in last month's Link about the work of Christians Against Poverty if you have a debt that worries you there are two free charities that you can contact:-

National Debtline, www.nationaldebtline.org, 0808 808 4000.

Step Change, www.stepchange.org, 0800 138 1111.

DAFFODIL DAY 2017

March 6th at Central Hall Westminster. Theme – Life Changing Prayer. The Circuit has booked a coach for this - approx £17 each. Please note the day and further details will follow.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Mon. Feb. 13th Coffee and Craft in Hall.

Wed. Mar. 1st Ash Wednesday service 8.00pm at Great Horkesley.

Fri. Mar. 3rd Women's World day of Prayer, lunch and service at Methodist Church 12-30.

Sun. Mar. 5th AGM – Lunch after service at 12.30pm.

Mon. Mar 6th Daffodil Day

Tue. Mar. 7th Start of Lent Courses at St. Mary's.

Sun. Mar 12th Afternoon Tea in Hall.

Sun. Mar 26th Mothering Sunday.

Mon. Apr. 10th Coffee and Craft in Hall.

Sat. Apr. 22nd Quiz evening in the Hall 7.00pm.

Copy for the March edition should be with Andrew Wilks by the third Sunday in February – Feb. 19th please.