

Dear siblings in Christ,

Richest Christmastide blessings to all of you today, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World.

At Queen's I was blessed to be able to study with an Anglican colleague who had been completely blind since the age of 10. His incredible dog, Zodiac, came to all the lectures. Of course we did wonder if, at ordination, Zodiac would receive a *dog collar*! (That's a cracker-type groaner for you!).

So we had to think very carefully how we preached about Jesus as light, how we thought about 'the people who walked in darkness'. I wonder how important candles, or other lights, have been to you this Advent? I've found myself thinking more and more this year about the beauty of a single flickering flame, and about how a small light may not seem to do much in the daytime, but how, when it's dark, that little light is more powerful and far-reaching. In other words, when we see those around us going through difficult times, even something small can make a huge impact. As we think again of a tiny baby in an animal's feeding trough, we are reminded of the truth of this.

There have been some wonderful light-filled experiences for me this Advent, as a new minister in the South Warwickshire Circuit. Seeing the Warwick Christmas lights switched on was brilliant, as people relished being out together again. Gathering for 'Carols by Carlight' with Graeme Russell was very special, as we sang carols with fairy lights in our cars. Being with a couple who are going through a very difficult time and having a whole discussion about Methodist attitudes to candles over the years was a huge privilege and blessing. And this also seems the right time to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has shone a light for me to find my way in these first few hectic-but-wonderful months.

Amidst the celebrations and festivities, Christmas Day is a day of mixed emotions for so many of us. Today, our thoughts and prayers go with everyone who is hurting. Let's not be afraid to give a small word of comfort, or a small deed of love – even if the situation seems overwhelming.

I'd like to share with you this beautiful reflection from Howard Thurman's *The Mood of Christmas*:

I Will Light Candles this Christmas

Candles of joy, despite all sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch.
Candles of courage for fears ever present,
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all the year long.



Image from Pixabay

May you sense the wondrous presence of the God who is always with you, around you, behind and before, above and below, this Christmas, and every day. **AMEN**

Rev Sally Jones

Reminder: Dial – a – Prayer, Methodist Church

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

Sunday Worship and Daily Prayers

There are plenty of opportunities to join in worship if you have the internet, eg Methodist Central Hall (London) streams worship each Sunday at 11:00 am (<https://mchw.live/>)

Circuit Service

The Circuit continues to provide a pre-recorded service each week, via YouTube, Facebook and our website – see below for details:

Please access the YouTube video by clicking the following link or typing it into your browser:

[tinyurl.com/SWCplaylist](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLzyDSCOYMtQvpCroUvvxjE93MqkTWQomY)

or if this doesn't work, try the long version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLzyDSCOYMtQvpCroUvvxjE93MqkTWQomY>

If you regularly watch the Circuit Service, do consider subscribing to the Channel.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SW.Methodist/>

Website: www.methodist-swc.org.uk

A full text of this service is available on the website, and is being sent by post to all those people who do not use the Internet so they can join in too. These worship opportunities will be available and sent to you every Sunday. We will be offering worship in a similar way each Sunday as the health crisis continues.

TV & radio opportunities for worship:

Radio 4, Sunday Worship, Sunday 8:10am,
Radio 4 Long Wave, Daily Service, 9.45am Mon-Fri,
Radio 3, Choral Evensong, Sunday 3pm.

BBC 1, Sunday Worship, Sunday 10.45am,
BBC 1, Songs of Praise, Sunday 1:15pm
(The times of the TV services can alter, please check the times)

Daily prayers at 10am are led by members of the circuit via zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/328494818> - all zoom meetings are now protected by password – please contact Michael Sharman (see below) for the password.

All members of the Circuit are invited to join, **you do not need a zoom account to join**. You can also join by **telephone**. Please contact Michael Sharman on 07412 401988 if you'd like help getting in.

Pastoral Support

A reminder that if you are in pastoral need of any kind please contact your own Minister direct by email or phone. We may also be able to arrange practical help with shopping and so on. Our details are below.

If in any doubt, please contact Rev Dr Iain Ballard and he will link you up with help locally to you.

Rev Dr Iain Ballard <i>(Day off – Friday)</i>	07368 875790	iain.ballard@methodist.org.uk
Rev Sally Jones <i>(Day off – Monday; Study day – Friday)</i>	01926 740846	sally.jones@methodist.org.uk
Rev. Jeongsook Kim <i>(Day off – Tuesday)</i>	01926 426084	revjeongsook@gmail.com
Rev. Audrey Simpson <i>(Day off – Friday)</i>	<i>Rev Audrey is on Sabbatical</i>	
Rev. Jemima Strain <i>(Part-time)</i>	07969 345389	jemima.strain@methodist.org.uk
Rev. Richard Wilde <i>(Part-time)</i>	07971 218356	revrichardwilde@gmail.com