

Methodist Church Circuit

IN TOUCH

December January

Some Thoughts from the Manse



Thankfully the lead-up to Christmas seems a lot shorter here in Scilly than in many places on the mainland with there being no Christmas lights until mid-December. Advent this year starts on the last Sunday of November, and then there are three

more Sundays of Advent with Christmas Day being on a Sunday this year.

For Mary and me, Christmas here in Scilly is very different to what it was before we became 'Islanders for a while'. On the mainland, Christmas was a time when the family came; the house seemed to be bursting with children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces. Now we are blessed in a different way, and enjoy a quieter Christmas with just the two of us here on St Mary's, while the wider family celebrate without us back home in Norfolk.

Blessings, like Christmas presents, seem to come in different shapes and sizes, but it seems to me that maybe the lead-up to Christmas and the events of the day are really a celebration of God's great will to bless us all by our receiving His love and provision to us in the birth of His Son Jesus. The subject of 'blessing' is at the heart of many of our Bible readings in the lead-up to Christmas. Luke tells us how the birth of Jesus was foretold by an angel telling Mary that she would be 'greatly blessed', and we read of how Mary went off to the country to tell Elizabeth about the good news of her blessing! In the opening chapter of Luke's Gospel, Elizabeth cries out 'Blessed is she who has believed! For that which the Lord has said unto her will be accomplished!'

This then is our record of how Mary 'believed' that she had been chosen and 'blessed' by God, and it is this story which maybe challenges us most of all about what it may mean for us to be blessed by God in our lives today. This unique story is beautifully written by Luke; in it Luke describes Mary as being filled with the Holy Spirit, and confirms all that the angel had said. Here Luke makes it very clear that Mary had indeed been chosen and greatly blessed by God, for she was to give birth to the Son of God, and His name would be Jesus. And so it is that Luke brings a vivid and moving picture before us. God is seen to actively intervene in the lives of two quite ordinary women; first Elizabeth and then Mary are spoken to by a messenger from God. The birth of Jesus is foretold, that which seems impossible becomes possible, and indeed, according to Luke, the very last words of the angel to Mary are 'Nothing is impossible with God'.

This then is the story of how the Sovereign Lord chose to intervene, not only in the lives of two ordinary women, but also in the lives of us all. It is the story of God sending His Son through the blessing given to Mary. It is about how she responds to this promise, and it is

how history was changed through her, for through Mary's obedience to God, Jesus came into this world to share in all that makes us human.

But, as those of us who are familiar with the Gospel know, in time this promised blessing was to make great demands on Mary. As we read on we find that she was filled not only with joy but also with sadness, with anguish, and ultimately with grief. Mary, in the days ahead, would experience the joy of seeing her Son telling vast crowds about the Kingdom of Heaven and of God's promise of hope and reconciliation, and she was also to experience the excitement of Him healing the sick and bringing new life to many. But she was also to know the pain of seeing Him rejected by the religious leaders of His day, the sadness of seeing Him betrayed by one of His disciples, and in the end, she, Mary, the one who had been so 'greatly blessed' by God, was to experience the grief of seeing her Son put to a cruel death between two criminals on the Cross of Calvary.

What then can we learn from this great story of Mary? What does her life tell us about what it may mean for us to be 'blessed by God'? Are we prepared, in the light of this story, to be blessed by God today; are we, like Mary, prepared to step out in faith and to believe that 'nothing is impossible with God'; and are we, like Mary, prepared to be 'obedient to God' even in the great turmoil of life?

In the end, for us as Christians today, being blessed by God means that we must be prepared to be open to His Holy Spirit working in our lives. We must trust that He will be there in our joys and our celebrations, but that He will also be there in our times of disappointment and despair. The story of Christmas and the Good News of the Gospel remind us that, in Jesus, God has chosen to share in all that makes us human.

God blessed Mary and He can bless each of us today. His blessings sustain us in the pain of broken promises and in the great disappointments of life. His Holy Spirit assures us of His presence and of His great promise that at the coming of His Kingdom 'all will be well' and His blessings enable us to serve Him and to honour Him even in the face of adversity and sadness.

But there is also another important lesson for us to learn from the story of Mary. For when we become open to God intervening in our lives we, like Mary, begin to realize how important it is for us to become obedient to His will. We begin to see how crucial it is for us to trust in the promises of God and in His guidance in our day-to-day lives; and we are reminded of His great promise to be with us even to the end of this age.

In the lead-up to Christmas we will each have the opportunity to acknowledge God's provision and blessings at our Church Gift Day on Friday 2^{nd} December when all are invited to give a gift to our church. The Manse will be open and I will be serving refreshments between 8am and 7.30pm. There are more details about this on page 12.

On the 16th December we will be holding our Christmas concert in the chapel – an annual event that we all look forward to. We will also be having all our usual Christmas services and activities the details of which are on page 13.

On St Martin's, Heather will be contacting the island children for our Carol Service in the Chapel at 3pm on the 18^{th} December. If St Mary's people would like to come to St Martin's for this very special service please let me know so that I can arrange the boating.

On the 8^{th} January at 10.30am we will be holding a united Covenant Service on St Mary's with our friends from the Parish Church, and on St Martin's there will be a similar service with the Anglicans at 3pm.

On the 18^{th} January the eight days of prayer for Christian Unity will start and again we will have the opportunity and the blessing of celebrating what it means to be one in Jesus.

We are truly blessed to be living on these wonderful islands. In the winter there are times when we feel very remote and cut off, but our precious Christian faith reminds us that we need never be remote or cut off from our Father God who has promised to be with us all in every season of our lives.

May His blessings be celebrated in each of our Christmas services, and may His Grace rest upon us as we seek to serve Him in the New Year to come.

I remain, by the Grace of God, the Methodist minister on these islands for a while.

Charles R. Gibbs

Help!

We are looking for people to help with cleaning the chapel. We have a rota but it is beginning to break down as several people have left. If you can spare a little time to come onto the rota and help out please contact Sue Williams. We will be having a spring clean of the chapel and hall in the New Year. Please watch out for information about this and come and lend a hand.

Also, David Pender is getting together a team of handy people who are willing to help with odd jobs around the chapel. If you are interested in helping in this way, please contact David.

We can save ourselves money and have a great time of fellowship whilst helping to keep our chapel looking lovely.

News from St. Martin's

True to the seasonal pattern, some of our members and friends have enjoyed and safely returned from their Autumn break, whilst others are now on holiday or preparing to go. In addition Chris Hensleigh and Daphne Perkins are still on the mainland for compassionate reasons. Even with all the to-ing and fro-ing the congregation numbers have been encouraging, with just one service having to be cancelled. We extend a sincere welcome to Lani Woods who has been worshipping with us recently and trust that she will find our fellowship rewarding and friendly.

The Harvest of the Sea service was well supported by St. Martin's folk and it was especially good to be joined by local fishermen. Keith Dickson's comprehensive history of the National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen was fascinating and his message challenging. A strong point was made about us all having the responsibility of mission. Following this special service, St. Martins Chapel donated the £97 collection to the work of the Newlyn Mission.

During their three day stay in Scilly, Bishop Christopher, Bishop Tim and Rev. Steve Wild spent an afternoon on St. Martin's. Valerie and Graham Thomas were able to speak of their work with the grape harvest, when they called at the vineyard. A visit with refreshments was made to the Anglican Church and prayers were said in our little Methodist Chapel. To have three Christian leaders witness together was a special time for many residents of the Islands. As might be expected, their message was one of the denominations doing as much as possible together, but at the same time recognising and respecting differences.

The United Service of Remembrance was held at Chapel this year with Rev. Charles Gibbs and Canon Peter Walker sharing leadership of the worship. Rev. Gibbs gave the address based on a text from the Beatitudes – 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God'. We were reminded that looking the other way and keeping the peace when confronted with challenging issues is not what's required to be a peacemaker. It is necessary to face up to the problem and strive to seek a just and merciful solution, which at

times sadly necessitates military conflict. On arriving at the War Memorial outside the Anglican Church it was lovely to find a poppy wreath made by the school children.

As a church, we extend our sympathy to Chris and her family following Pat's death and look forward to seeing her back home soon. Similarly, we hope Daph will be back ere long after caring for her sister. At the time of writing we are aware of some St. Martin's people who are unwell and are undergoing treatment in Cornwall. Our thoughts are with them and their families and we pray for healing.

In conclusion, St. Martin's congregation send all In Touch readers their good wishes for a happy Christmas and peaceful New Year. Once again, may everyone be touched by the love of the babe of Bethlehem.

Heather Terry



Supper and Concert for UCDF

On 15th November the handbell ringers organized a supper and concert to raise funds for UCDF (Ugandan Child Development Fund). About forty people bought tickets for the event and enjoyed a supper followed by a concert of music from the handbell ringers and their special guests, Debbie Crane and Debbie Wainwright on the violin and piano, and Canon Peter Walker who entertained us with a reading of a very amusing alternative version of Genesis chapter 2.

The evening was a great success with almost £400 being raised. This will be sent to UCDF with the hope that it can be used to help provide a much needed borehole so that they can irrigate their land and make themselves more self-sufficient in food.

Many thanks to all who supported us so generously.

Anne

A Triple Blessing

The start of the second week in October brought three very special visitors to our church fellowship here in the Isles of Scilly. For three days we were able to consider that our different ways of worship can still allow us to demonstrate the underlying unity we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, a fact often difficult to perceive, sadly so.

On October 10th, we were blessed by the arrivals of the Right Rev. Christopher Budd, Roman Catholic Bishop of Plymouth, the Right Rev. Tim Thornton, Anglican Bishop of Truro and our Methodist Chairman of the District, the Rev. Steven Wild. They came to help us look at what we may do together in mission and to offer help to the Christians in these Islands.

One of the highlights of their visit was the 'Any Questions' evening held in the Town Hall on the Monday. They provided the panel for the answers and the meeting was chaired very ably by Mrs Mary Gibbs, our Minister's wife. Many questions had been submitted, with twelve of them being tackled in the time available. In the large audience were several members of the communities in the Islands who are not regular church-goers.

A revelation in answers to one question was that both Bishop Tim and Steve Wild had received their call to Christian ministry while on retreat in Taize, in the 1970s. All strands of Christian experience and commitment can therefore be shared. It was accepted that our different ways of celebrating the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper or Communion as we may call it, can be a stumbling block. However, prayer meetings, for example, can be jointly arranged.

The meeting surely emphasized ways in which we can work together, as we already do here in Scilly, with special joint services and with our members supporting each church outreach. We thank God for a thought-provoking visit!

Gwen Clarkson



A Christmas Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the One whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

I believe in the One for whom the crowded inn could find no room; and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

I believe in the One whom the rulers of the earth ignored, and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe in the One who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible.

I believe in the One whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess my ever-lasting need of God; the need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

I believe in God who gives us the best of himself.

I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born in Bethlehem this night, for me and for the world.

Author unknown



Chapel Christmas Cards

We have had some Christmas cards made using a photograph that June took of the lace nativity scene that Anne made and gave to the Chapel last Christmas. The cards are on sale in the chapel and manse and cost £1 each; proceeds will go to church funds.

Christmas to Me

Christmas to me is nativity
And the sound of carol-singing;
But to others it is revelry
And the sound of shop tills ringing.

Christmas to me is shepherds On a hillside attending their sheep; And the sound of angelic voices Over a town bathed in sleep.

Christmas to me is the Magi Who put all their faith in a star; And in search of the little Christ child, They willingly travelled so far.

Christmas to me is worship, Giving thanks for the Saviour's birth; But to many of the folk I know Christmas has no real worth.

So what will YOU see at Christmas? Will you think of that baby so small? And recognize that the love of God Came to earth that first Christmas of all.

By Colin Hammacott

A Prayer for Christmas

God grant you.....

The light in Christmas, which is faith;
The warmth of Christmas, which is love;
The radiance of Christmas, which is purity;
The righteousness of Christmas, which is justice;
The belief in Christmas, which is truth;
The all of Christmas, which is Christ.

With thanks to Trinity Methodist Church, Royton.





I Have a Dream

'I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together'.

Martin Luther King Jnr. made his famous speech in August 1963. He could never have imagined the influence his speech would make on so many throughout the world but especially in the land of his birth.

I have just returned from a conference of Methodist Women in Britain (formerly known as Network) and was inspired by both the speakers. Mark Wakelin, who is President of Conference next year, and Steve Wild our District Chairman. Mark led us in thinking about dreaming and doing whilst Steve gave us insights into the book of Nehemiah. It was a mountain top experience for me and many other women from throughout Cornwall.

Martin Luther King chose his words from the Prophet Isaiah Chapter 40 and these same words are echoed in Chapter 1 of Mark's Gospel which tells us of John the Baptist's call to prepare the way of the Lord.

There is a time for dreaming and a time for doing. Nehemiah came back after years of enforced dreaming in exile and, with many others, rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.

I know we are called in our generation to prepare the way of the Lord. Let us all rebuild the Christian Community on these islands. It needs each one of us to stop dreaming so that we too will see the Glory of the Lord and so will everyone else. Thanks be to God.

Mary Ratcliffe



Give God what's right - not what's left.

When Jesus came to earth, it was not his Godhead he laid aside, but his glory. Anon

We three kings of Orient are... what?

'A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey, the ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in solstitio brumali, in the very dead of winter.'

It was 1622, and the Bishop of Winchester, Launcelot Andrews, was preaching a magnificent sermon to King James I. Reckoned one of the best preachers ever, Launcelot Andrews' words were later taken up by T. S. Eliot and transformed into his wonderful poem 'The Journey of the Magi'. What a vivid picture – we can see it all! The camels' breath steaming in the night air as the kings, in their gorgeous robes of silk



and cloth-of-gold and clutching their precious gifts, kneel to adore the baby in the manger.

Yet the Bible does not give us as much detail as some people think. Tradition down the centuries has added a great deal more. For instance, we know from St Matthew that the magi were 'wise', or learned men of some sort, but we do not know if they were kings or not. The Bible tells us there were several; tradition has decided upon three, and even named them: Balthassar, Melchior, and Gaspar. But the Bible does tell us that the magi gave baby Jesus three highly symbolic gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Gold stands for kingship, frankincense for worship, and myrrh for anointing anticipating his death.

There is a lovely ancient mosaic in Ravenna, Italy, that is 1,500 years old. It depicts the wise men in oriental garb of trousers and Phrygian caps, carrying their gifts past palm trees towards the star that they followed... straight to Jesus.

Wise Men?

A mother was telling her three boys the story of the Nativity and how the Wise Men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the infant Jesus. Clearly giving it a lot of thought, her six-year-old observed, 'Mum, a Wise Woman would have brought nappies'.

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This is the Circuit magazine but it needs your contributions to make sure everyone knows what is happening.

In Touch can be read on line. Just go to our Circuit website www.scillymethodists.co.uk and click on the link to the newsletter. Back numbers of In Touch can also be accessed. If you would prefer to read In Touch in this way please let us know and we can save the cost of a paper copy.

Thanks to all who donated stamps to help with postage for In Touch. Please keep them coming. Anything we can do to cut the costs of producing and distributing the magazine is very important.

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Some material in this magazine was obtained from www.parishpump.co.uk. We thank them for providing material for magazine editors to use.



A New Year's Resolution

To begin with oneself, but not to end with oneself;
To start from oneself, but not to aim at oneself;
To comprehend oneself, but not to be preoccupied with oneself.

By Martin Buber (Austrian born Jewish philosopher)

ST. MARY'S METHODIST CHURCH GIFT DAY. FRIDAY 2nd DECEMBER

It is well over a year ago since we last held a church 'Gift Day', and many have asked for the opportunity of another Gift Day to celebrate and show support by giving to the ongoing life and mission of our Methodist Church here on St Mary's.

For many generations the Methodist Church here on St Mary's has been an important part of this island community. Our minister and our members give thanks that there are still those who look to our church at important times in their lives. We offer support at our island hospital where our minister is the chaplain. We seek to show eare for the elderly by visiting the house-bound and leading acts of worship in Park House. We work with our Island School where weekly assemblies are held and support is shown by the involvement of many of our members in school activites with children. For many years we have put on a children's holiday club, and monthly Seekers afternoons for island children, and over the past year we have established a monthly Children's Church for the children of St Mary's.

Each week on a Monday we meet to pray for our Island Community. In the summer months we offer hospitality and a warm welcome to visitors. The Methodist Church each year arranges the annual Lifeboat Service to show support and raise money for our lifeboat, and by our involvement in Armed Forces Day and Remembrance Sunday the Methodist Church seeks to help our sevicemen and women and the work of the Royal British Legion. In addition to this our church has pledged to give a tenth of our weekly church offering to other good causes. All of these things and much more show our commitment to the wider community here on St Mary's and to those in need further away from these beautiful islands.

The membership of the Methodist Church on St Mary's is quite small, and each year the cost of maintaining our church and it's ministry to the community goes up and up. We will always need financial support to maintain our important work on this island, and because of this we are holding a special Gift Day on Friday 2nd of December. The Manse will be open from 8am to 7.30pm and our minister will be there to receive yourgifts and provide refreshments. Please give generously to make a real difference in this island community. If you cannot come on that day please do send your gift by post. (Cheques made payable to 'St Mary's Methodist Church'). Send donations to The Minister, The Manse, St Mary's, Isles Of Scilly, TR21 0JT.

We thank the good people of St Mary's who have shown their support of our Methodist Church over many years. Together we thank God for all that is past, and we trust Him for all that is to come. By giving to our church you will be helping us to share God's love with others.

Thankyou for your generosity, and thankyou for the love and kindness which is so crucial in this island community.

Charles R Gibbs. Methodist Superintendent Minister.

ST.MARY'S CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

Carols by Candlelight

THE MESSAGE THAT BRINGS HOPE
TO ALL WHO WILL RECEIVE
THE STORY OF THE BIRTH
OF JESUS CHRIST THE
SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.



At St Mary's Methodist Chapel Sunday 18th December In the year of our Lord 2011. At 6pm.

He came to His own, but His own received Him not. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name. He gave unto them the right to become the children of God. John chapter I vese II.

ST MARY'S METHODIST CHURCH. SPECIAL EVENTS ON ST MARY'S OVER CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT 11.30pm CHRISTMAS CAROLS AND HOLY COMMUNION Be in chapel at midnight to celebrate the birth of Christ. Led by Rev Charlie Gibbs.

CHRISTMAS DAY AT 10.30gm A CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS A JOYFUL 45 MINUTE ACT OF WORSHIP FOR ALL. Led by Rev Charlie Gibbs.

MEW YIBARS BVIB FIROM 9pto A GRAND BUFFET SERVED AT THE MANSE BY KIND INVITATION OF Rev and Mrs GIBBS. At midnight hymns will be sung and prayers of thanksgiving will be offered. ALL WILL BE MADE WELCOME!

JANUARY 8th AT 10,30am.

UNITED COVENANT SERVICE

Make a fresh start in the New Year at our traditional Methodist Covenant Service Led by Rev Charlie Gibbs & Canon Peter Walker.

DON'T MISS THE CAROL SINGING AROUND ST MARY'S WE MEET AT THE CHAPEL AT 6.30pm ON TUESDAY 20th DECEMBER. REFRESHMENTS SERVED AT MANSE AT THE END OF THE EVENING. ALL WELCOME!



Birthdays for December and January

In December we send our greetings to Louis Asten, Margaret Crane, Keith Grossett, Pauline Jackson Cocking, Margaret Jones, Steve Ottery, Gladys Perkins, Josh Smith, Merryn Smith.

In January we send greetings to Sue Bavin, Gordon Bird, Stephanie Bird, John Goody, Layla

Guy, Martin Parker, Anthea Roberts, Tony Thomas, William Thomas, Nathan Thomas, Liz Turner.

We hope they all have a wonderful day.



ST MARY'S METHODIST CHURCH.

SUNDAY 4th DECEMBER

WAITING FOR THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

MORNING WOPRSHIP

AT 11am

Led by Rev Charlie Gibbs

REFRESHMENTS SERVED

AT 12 NOON.

ST MARY'S METHODIST CHURCH.

SUNDAY 11th DECEMBER

THE PROMISES OF GOD AND
A GIRL NAMED MARY.

MORNING WORSHIP
AT 11am

Led by Rev Charlie Gibbs

WITH HOLY COMMUNION.

REFRESHMENTS SERVED
AT 12 NOON.

GETTING READY FOR THE GIFT OF JESUS.

ST MARY'S METHODIST CHURCH.

Sunday 1st January 2012.

11am MORNING WORSHIP

Led by Rev Charlie Gibbs.

START THE NEW YEAR

WITH GOD!

REFRESHMENTS SERVED AT NOON.

Our afternoon worship on New Years Day will be held at Park House Residential Home at 4pm.

All are made welcome at our Park House. Worship with your much loved hymns and a message of hope for the year ahead.

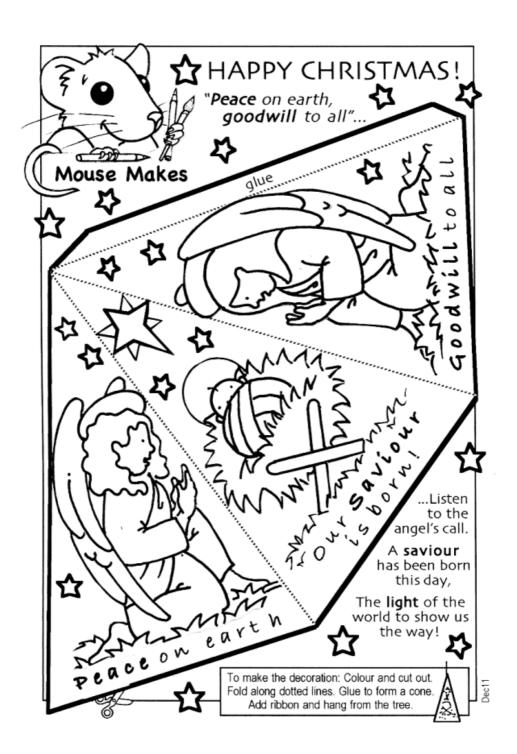
Do come and join us and share in our thanksgiving for another new year here on the beautiful island of St Mary's.

6pm AT THE MANSE HOPE IN THE CROSS OF JESUS Led by The Rev Charlie Gibbs

REFRESHMENTS SERVED AT 7pm

ALL MADE WELCOME!

ST MARY'S
METHODIST CHURCH
Sharing the love of God
in every season of
the year!



JANUARY SERVICES

ST MARY'S

1 st	10.00 am 11.00 am	Children's Church Rev Charlie Gibbs
8 th	10.30 am	United Covenant Service Rev Charlie Gibbs and Canon Peter Walker Holy Communion
	6.00 pm	Barbara Hasler
15th	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Neil Didlick and Mervyn Bird Len Michell Rev Charlie Gibbs
22 nd	9.15 am	Beryl Read and Rev Charlie Gibbs Holy Communion
	11.00 am	Barbara Hasler
	6.00 pm	Rev Charlie Gibbs Holy Communion
29 th	10.30 am 6.00 pm	Neil Didlick and Mervyn Bird Mary Ratcliffe
ST MARTIN'S		
1 st	11.00 am	Christopher Savill
8 th	3.00 pm	United Covenant Service Rev Charlie Gibbs Holy Communion
15 th	11.00 am	Rev Charlie Gibbs

PARK HOUSE

11.00 am

11.00 am

22nd

29th

Neil Didlick

Rev Charlie Gibbs

DECEMBER SERVICES

ST MARY'S

- 4th	10.00 am 11.00 am	Children's Church Rev. Charlie Gibbs
11th	9.15 am	Neil Didlick and Beryl Read
	11.00 am	Rev. Charlie Gibbs Holy Communion
	6.00 pm	Gordon Bird
18th	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Gordon Bird and Neil Didlick Len Michell Rev. Charlie Gibbs United Carol Service
25th	10.30 am	Rev. Charlie Gibbs

ST MARTIN'S

4th	11.00 am	Neil Didlick
11th	3.00 pm	Rev. Charlie Gibbs Holy Communion
18th	3.00 pm	Rev. Charlie Gibbs and Heather Terry United Carol Service

Rev. Charlie Gibbs

25th 11.00 am No Servicel

6.00 pm