

New Year 2019
Letter to the Churches of Ordinance
Road, Ponders End & Goffs Oak



Dear sisters and brothers

Happy New Year to you! As I attempt to write this letter Brexit seems to be the only word on anyone's lips. It's all rather chaotic and I notice with sadness how poorly people are speaking to each other amidst the debate. I imagine for politicians and for us there are many times when we'd like to feel more in-control but life just isn't like that. It certainly wasn't for Mary and Joseph – packed off by a Roman Census to Bethlehem and an uncertain birth. Then during this season of Epiphany, with the life of their son threatened by Herod they are forced once again to become refugees as they escape Egypt.

Somehow in the midst of it all, and despite the huge pressures and uncertainties placed upon them by circumstances beyond their control, both Mary and Joseph gave thanks and put their trust in God. And so the early years of Jesus's life began...

It may seem a bit strange for me to be talking of Mary and Joseph in January but it seems to me that sometimes we seek to cram all of Christmas into the days before Christmas Day. We imagine the shepherds arriving and the Magi bumping into them as they wait in a queue to see Jesus. This isn't helped by Methodists having a tradition of Covenant service early in January such that there is rarely room to remember or celebrate Epiphany at all. And now it is January - Christmas is done and we move on?

But wait... someone asked me last week - how long is the Epiphany season? There isn't actually common agreement across Church traditions. In some it is recognised that these scenes took time to unfold and Epiphany is continued through to Candlemas on 2 February.

Epiphany means 'to reveal'... God - incarnate in Jesus Christ - is revealed to us for the first time. So in this extended Epiphany season many churches include not only the coming of the Magi but events in Christ's early life such as his baptism, where he received the Holy Spirit

and was affirmed by God and some include Christ's first miracle at the wedding in Cana where the guests didn't really see or know what Jesus had done, but to his family and the disciples this miracle confirmed his power and authority.

What does all this mean for us? What we know is that whenever God is revealed in Christ, people's lives are radically changed. Whether it's Paul on the road to Damascus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the disciples on the road to Emmaus or Nicodemus the Pharisee who sees who Jesus truly is - epiphany has come to mean a life changed because of something revealed. In fact the Jesus story is full of encounters where people met with him and experienced an epiphany!

Perhaps that is what we need with Brexit? An epiphany that reminds us that we are all interconnected...

In the end I am drawn back to the Magi where Eddie Askew writes: *we may not know exactly who they were, or where they came from but they experienced an epiphany because they were bold enough to search for something, reaching out beyond themselves and their own backyard trying to give meaning to life.* That's what Jesus offers through the whole year.

So my prayer as we enter the new-year is that we don't rush on from Christmas as soon as the decorations come down and all is put away. Instead let us together seek to discover something new of God in Christ that will change us and lead us on...

God bless you... *Rev Alan Combes*

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Events for Your Diary

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ponders Praise – 1st Sunday: Feb at 4pm, March onwards at 6.30pm● 2 March – Goffs JMA Quiz Night 7.30pm● 6 March – Ash Wednesday Circuit Service at Edmonton● Lent Bible Study – Monday, Goffs 7pm and Wednesday, Ponders 11.45am | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 14 April - Palm Sunday evening Circuit Service at BHP starting at 4.30pm● Holy Week Coffee Communion – Goffs, Tuesday 11.30am & Ponders Wed 11.30am● Good Friday – Ord 10am, Ponders 10.30am, Goffs 2pm |
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News from the Churches & Circuit

New members - I am delighted to share the news that in recent weeks and months we have welcomed new members to all three churches. To become a member of the Methodist church is important. It says I want to go beyond attending Sunday morning services – ‘I want to make this church my home’ and offer my prayers, skills and gifts in the life of the church in the world. If you are not a member and want to explore this – please talk to me...

At Ordnance Road – In the spirit of the Holy Habit of Eating Together we held our first Harvest Lunch in many years (see picture). Through Ordnance Road Churches Together a shared Advent Carol Service drew a congregation close to 200 and we enjoyed fund raising through a new venture of an Advent Concert with tea and Christmas Stalls. We are grateful to friends from the circuit who came to perform as well as be in the audience. And this week the church floor is being sanded as we continue with church refurbishment plans.

At Goffs Oak – autumn was filled with 150th Anniversary events. Previous ministers blessed us by leading special services, Noel and Trisha Richards conducted a packed concert of songs and stories of their Christian journey. Our anniversary included an evening of memories with the Rev Donald Sampson - the minister here 50 years ago - and our glorious anniversary service welcomed Rev Dr Martyn Atkins (former general secretary). Meanwhile Christmas saw over 70 attend Carols by torchlight despite driving rain. We retreated to the hall with no lights so the children could use their torches!

At Ponders End - Having established our Church Vision we have found an important community partner – the Ponders End Community Development Trust – and with support from the circuit we now have Architect’s drawings for the re-modelling and refurbishment of the ancillary rooms at the rear of the church. We are finally in a position to get proper costings which means we will soon know how much we need to raise. This is a big step forward so please pray for us on this journey. We have also started a new venture in contemporary worship called Ponders Praise on the first Sunday evening – all are welcome (4pm 27 Feb and 6.30pm from 3 March onwards).

Across the Circuit - We enjoyed an uplifting youth confirmation service – hosted by Ponders End at which Isata brought forward four of our young people to be confirmed. The whole staff team attended – **see picture!**

LENT Circuit Choir – Every Sunday from 10 March onwards

at Trinity Church – 4-5.30pm – to support Palm Sunday

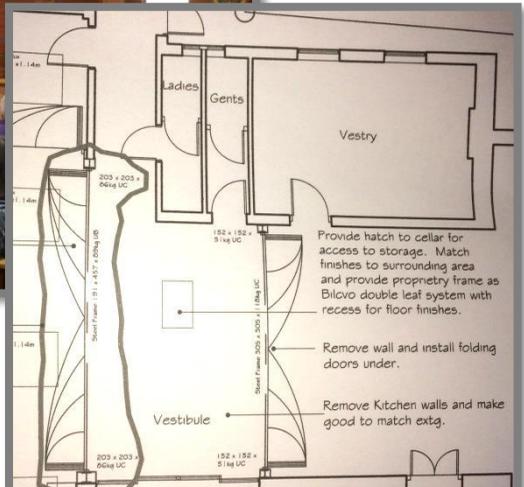
Circuit Confirmation



Goffs Anniversary



Ponders – Church Refurbishment Plans



Ordinance Harvest Lunch



