Contact

Christmas begins with Christ

December & January News Letter for St Thomas & Alphington Methodists Churches
‘I’ve Started, So I’ll Finish’

Consider it pure joy, my friends, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. James 1: 1-2

Friends, As the clock ticks on, the questions come thick and fast. They are interspersed with answers and with the words ‘correct’ and ‘pass’. Then, mid-question, the buzzer goes and we hear: “I’ve started, so I’ll finish.”

I hope you have identified that as a description of ‘MASTERMIND’.

Those well-known phases of ‘pass’ and ‘I’ve started, so I’ll finish have become very much part of our everyday vocabulary.

During the last few weeks my attention was drawn to an old song by Simon and Garfunkel, a song of the 1960s, a song about a poor boy who went to New York on a dream and fell victim to the harsh life of the city.

Penniless, with only strangers as friends, he spent his days lying low. It is easy to picture this young lad, dirty face and worn clothes, looking for work and finding none. He trudges the streets, battles with the cold and dreams of being in a better place. He then entertains the thought of giving up, going home, going back, something he thought he would never do.

Then he encounters a boxer, not necessarily a good one, but one who does not give up, who gets up again when he is knocked down, who remains as a boxer. He sticks to it. The Boxer seems to go against a basic human tendency, that of giving up easily.
We see this tendency in our lives in the smallest of things; a half read book, an abandoned diet, a half-dug garden, letters begun but never completed, the DIY project not quite complete. We also see it in some of the more distressing situations in our society. Broken relationships: problems with commitment: refusing to accept responsibilities: etc, etc.

We can be challenged also in our Christian experience of faith and tempted to give up, there are those who start the journey but don’t quite finish. There are those who remain, but no longer as fighters, because they have given up in the salvation battle.

Hebrews 12, is a very positive and a fine summary of the Christian Life. It speaks of the possibilities of sin and other obstacles getting in the way and halting our progress. It stresses the importance of looking to Jesus as we travel. It shows to us the example that Jesus set. He endured the Cross on His way.

We need perseverance, staying power is what we need when the going gets tough! The Word of God doesn’t suggest that the Christian way will be easy. In James we read of ‘trials on many kinds’. These trials are not to make us fall, to defeat us or to make us weaker. In Hebrews 12, the Christian life is pictured as a long-distance race rather than a short sprint. The more an athlete trains, the fitter they become. We are assured that if we persevere, if we endure, if we stand the test, we shall experience a new abundant life and a new kind of living. The finisher, the one who reaches the end, like the Boxer in the song, may not have won every battle, not succeeded in everything, may not have been successful but...

*He who stands firm to the end will be saved.... or The Land of Promise awaits those who endure*

(Matthew 10:22)

Call upon the Lord, be a victorious Christian, saying, I’ve started, so I’ll finish. As we approach Advent and Christmas once again it is important to remind ourselves that the liturgy and festivals are not merely memorial
celebrations of past events, but an actual participation in a 
continual truth…Our Church calendar is an eternal journey that 
we walk through again and again with Jesus Christ. It is always
an opportunity to progress in our faith and to discover anew and 
afresh the Hope of Faith. Constantly we rediscover some of the
signposts of hope given by the prophets in terms of pointing to
God’s kingdom values and the commitments to justice and
wholeness and the promise of the gift of a birth of a child.

‘THEN ISAIAH SAID:
‘HEAR THEN , O HOUSE OF DAVID!
IS IT TOO LITTLE FOR YOU TO
WEARY MORTALS, THAT YOU
WEARY MY GOD ALSO?
THEREFORE THE LORD HIMSELF
WILL GIVE YOU A SIGN, LOOK,
THE YOUNG WOMAN IS WITH CHILD
AND SHALL BEAR A SON
AND SHALL NAME HIM IMMANUEL.
HE SHALL EAT CURDS AND HONEY
BY THE TIME HE KNOWS HOW TO
REFUSE THE EVIL AND CHOOSE
THE GOOD’.

This passage comes from the prophet Isaiah who is trying to give
confidence to King Ahaz, the king of Judah, who is under attack
from Syria and Israel. We learn from 2 Kings, that King Ahaz is
terrified and indeed sacrifices his son to the gods and prepares
for armed conflict. He has been condemned by the author of
2 Kings, so Isaiah’s task has been to try and get Ahaz to put his
trust in Yahweh (Almighty God) and not in war and violence.
To this end Isaiah encourages Ahaz to seek a sign.
The nature of this sign he has been given is the gift of a child
called ‘God with us’. It’s perhaps a reminder of the value of a son
sacrificed as well as a reminder that there is no need to despair
and panic, God is beside us. Ahaz for all his weakness is very
much seen as the ‘House of David’ and even though he lacks
confidence he is still given this sign. A woman will bear a son
and shall name him Immanuel ‘God with us’. This child will seem
to have a discipline of hardship, i.e. the curds and honey, that will
teach him how to reject evil and choose good. In Matthews Gospel, this passage is picked as one of the first ten occasions where Matthew talks of scripture being fulfilled, or the words of the prophets being fulfilled.

Matthew 1: 22-23.

This is contained in the dream that Joseph has, about whether he should break off his relationship with Mary because she is pregnant. In this dream, Joseph is informed that Mary is the fulfilment of prophecy and so too her son, Emmanuel, is a sign that ‘God is with us’. This is a theme that goes right through Matthew until his last words, when the disciples are with Jesus and he commissions them to ‘go and make disciples to all nations.’ Jesus adds, ‘Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age’ a final echo of ‘God with us’.

Our Advent journey is a reflection of our entire faith journey, a time of waiting and watching, of praying ‘Come, Lord Jesus’ to different situations- yet with the ultimate knowledge that God is with us, in our lives, in our struggles, in our hopes and in our fears, and this is the incredible Good News of the Christmas message. Faith can be used to exclude and oppress and dehumanize, or it can be used to allow people to capture the vision of their full worth and to find their humanity and their dignity. After all God is one with broken people. God suffers when his people suffer. God weeps when his people weep, God laughs when his people laugh. God dies when his people die, And God rises again in God’s resurrection.
God is with us.
John Betjeman’s poem called ‘Christmas’ says this most powerfully.

And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window’s hue,
A baby in an ox’s stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child of earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissued fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent,
And hideous ties so kindly meant.

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare-
That God was Man in Palestine,
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

Betjeman puts his finger on the key truth: that if this story is true, nothing can compare with the fact that God was with humanity in Palestine of old, and is with us today in bread and wine, in our daily encounters, and on the journey beside us.

This is the message.

God is not a distant God, cut off from humanity, but is ‘God with us’!
So as we encounter Advent and Christmas once again, I pray we will be encouraged to say, “I've started, so I will finish,” and recommit ourselves to His service.

God Bless Julian.
Marlene and Keith would like to say thank you for the gift of the beautiful display of flowers, received following the harvest services, a lovely rich display in real autumnal colours. Thank you also for all the messages of support and concern from so many members and friends at St Thomas.

Marlene and Keith Ellis

Hilda Kellaway will be celebrating her 90th Birthday on Thursday, 28th December. We are planning a small get-together at Amberwood Nursing Home and would be pleased if friends from Church and Women's Fellowship could join us for 'Cake and a Cuppa' between 3pm & 4pm.

It would be helpful if anyone planning to visit could let me know, so that we can, perhaps, try to organise for 'staggered arrival times', rather than everyone arriving at once! If you would like to send Mum a greeting I will happily 'play postman'.

Janet Lee
New Church & Family Members

We have welcomed three new members into our Church Family since the last Contact. They are:

Sarah & Steve Spaull and their son Matthew & Josie James.

We look forward to getting to know them better over the coming months.

We have also welcomed, at her ‘Thanksgiving Service’
Esme Joy Elizabeth Knight
Daughter of Becci & Carl Knight and a sister for Darcey.

COVENANT SERVICE.
Sunday, 7th January.

We will be joined for this very special service by our friends from Alphington and St Thomas Parish Church.

It is a time to renew our relationship with God, to commit ourselves to His service, and to seek His will as we start the New Year.
I hope you will be able to join us on this occasion.

God Bless Julian

All We Can Quiz Night

Unfortunately the Quiz Night had to be cancelled, but a big thank you to those who were willing to support the quiz and All You Can.
Hopefully there will be another social event, supporting this charity after Christmas.
Thank You

Pat Lemon
A Very Warm Welcome Awaits To Everyone At All Of Our Christmas Celebrations and Service

Christingle
A Celebration for All

Saturday 9th December
5.00pm

An informal service for everyone to start the Christmas celebrations. Come and join us for tea and mince pies at 4.30pm

Festival of Light for Special Memories

Wednesday 20th December
This is an opportunity for you to come, light a candle and spend a few quiet moments remembering someone that you love and miss. The Church is open between 10.00am-12.30pm & 6.00pm -7.30pm
Christmas Celebrations at
St Thomas Methodist Church

Carols by Candlelight

His Birth was a Miracle
His Love is a Gift

6.30pm Sunday
17th December

Come and enjoy a mince pie at our from 4.30pm

Christmas Eve
Crib Service

5.00pm Sunday
24th December

Christmas Eve
Holy Communion

11.15pm Sunday
24th December

Christmas Day Worship
for All
10.00am
Bring along a favourite or silly present to show to your friends.
Many thanks to everyone who supported our 'pre-Christmas Coffee Morning' on the 11th November. Refreshments, cakes and Traidcraft sales totalled a **WONDERFUL £203.00** The donation we will be able to make to Traidcraft Exchange will enable their development work to continue and the proceeds from sales will make a HUGE difference to the families and communities who are able to trade through Traidcraft plc.

By the time this CONTACT reaches you there will be just TWO Traidcraft Shopping Days until Christmas. We look forward to seeing you on Sunday 3rd December after morning worship and Saturday 16th December during the coffee morning. Orders may be placed from the Autumn or Winter catalogues until Sunday 10th December - please past these to Janet Lee.

Traidcraft @ St Thomas
Post-Christmas Coffee Morning and NEW YEAR SALE
Saturday 20th January 2018. Your chance to pick up a bargain (perhaps one ready for Christmas next year?!?!) 

Diary dates:
Sunday 3rd December
   Traidcraft SHOP open after morning worship.
Saturday 16th December
   Traidcraft SHOP open during the coffee morning.
Sunday 7th January
   Traidcraft SHOP open after morning worship.
Saturday 20th January
   Traidcraft 'post-Christmas Coffee Morning and New Year Sale'.
Many thanks to everyone who has donated items for distribution at Exeter Foodbank. It was fantastic to receive a bumper crop of tins and packets at Harvest. All food donations are weighed and our Harvest contribution of 55kg was over three times that of our usual monthly amount!

Please continue to donate or consider doing so if you feel able to help. The current list of priority items is situated above our Foodbank box in the foyer but any non-perishable, in date food items and toiletries are all very welcome.

With Christmas approaching you may wish to donate some festive produce, sweets or toiletries which will enable the Foodbank distribution teams to give some Christmas extras to those struggling to feed themselves at this time of year when some of the rest of us tend to overindulge!

Many thanks for your continued support for those in crisis in Exeter.

Mary Bews

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Action for Children

I am pleased to tell you that our Step Out walk in October raised £711.00.

I would like to thank everyone who supported us with their generous donations. This was much appreciated and I think everyone who took part enjoyed the walk and getting to know new people. I must say, that I was disappointed that so few people walked, as it was well publicised across the local churches.

With Christmas fast approaching I would like to encourage everyone to use our Christmas Card sorting service which will be taking place very shortly and with donations in lieu of postage being made to our charity. Many thanks to the team who will be organising this event.

All that remains is for me to wish everyone a very Happy Festive Season and thank you all for your continued support for our charity. Monies donated to this cause are used to support some of the most vulnerable children, young people and their families in our country today and are much appreciated.

Kind regards. Jill Lee
Saturday Coffee Mornings

Saturday 2nd December
Coffee Morning in aid of Church Funds.

Saturday 9th December
Coffee Morning in aid of The Guides.

Saturday 16th December
Coffee Morning in aid of action for children

Saturday 23rd December
Coffee Morning in aid of Church Funds.

Saturday 30th December
Coffee Morning in aid of Peace Garden.

Saturday 13th January
Coffee Morning in aid of Church Funds.

Saturday 20th January
Coffee Morning in aid of Traidcraft.

Saturday 27th January
Coffee Morning in aid of Church Funds.

Lectionary Readings for December 2017

3rd December
First Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 64: 1-9
Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1: 3-9
Mark 13: 24-37

10th December
Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 40: 1-11
Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3: 8-15
Mark 1: 1-8

17th December
Third Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126
1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24
John 1: 6-8, 19-28

24th December
Fourth Sunday of Advent
2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16
Canticle, Magnificat
Luke 1 46-55 or
Psalm 89: 1-4, 19-26
Romans 16: 25-27
Luke 1: 26-38

25th December
Christmas Day
Isaiah 52: 7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1: 1-12
John 1: 1-14

31st December
Isaiah 61: 10-62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4: 4-7
Luke 2: 22-40
**Lectionary Readings for January 2018**

**7th January**  
Isaiah 42: 1–7  
Psalm 29  
Acts 8: 14-17  
Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

**14th January**  
Isaiah 62: 1-5  
Psalm 36: 5-10  
1 Corinthians 12: 1-11  
John 2: 1-11

**21st January**  
Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10  
Psalm 19  
1 Corinthians 12: 12-31  
Luke 4: 14-21

**28th January**  
Jeremiah 1: 4-10  
Psalm 138  
1 Corinthians 15: 1-11  

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**Flower Rota for December & January**

**Sunday 3rd December**  
Flowers provided by the Flower Fund for Hospiccare  
‘Light Up A Light’

**Sunday 10th December**  
Flowers provided by Linda & Brian Nesmith and arranged by Jean Bennett.

**17th December to 7th January**  
Christmas Flower arrangements and decoration.

**Sunday 14th January**  
Flowers provided by Mary Gardner and arranged by Caroline White.

**Sunday 21st January**  
Flowers for Covenant and arranged by Jean Bennett & Jill Lee.

**Sunday 28th January**  
Flowers provided by Pam Street & Bobby and arranged by Pat Lemon.
### St Thomas Methodist Church Christmas Diary of Activities
### Nativities & Services December & January

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 2nd Dec</td>
<td>10.00am Coffee Morning in aid of Church Funds.</td>
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| Sunday 3rd Dec | **First Sunday of Advent**  
8.00am: Early Morning Communion led by Rev Julian Albrow.  
10.30am: Morning Worship led by Miss Denise Lawrence.  
*Tradecraft SHOP open after morning worship.*  
(No Evening Service at St Thomas) |
| Monday 4th Dec | 6.30pm Hospicecare Tree of Light Service.                               |
| Wednesday 6th Dec | 7.30pm Wives Group Trefoil Craft evening.                              |
| Thursday 7th Dec | 9.15am to 3.30pm Bowhill Primary School Christingle Rehearsals.          |
| Friday 8th Dec | 9.00am to 12 noon St Thomas Pre School Nativity.  
3.00pm to evening SAND’s Service.                                   |
| Saturday 9th Dec | 10.00am Coffee Morning in aid of the Guides.  
4.30pm Messy Church Christingle Service.                             |
| Sunday 10th Dec | **Second Sunday of Advent**  
10.30am: Morning Worship and Holy Communion led by Rev Julian Albrow.  
5.00pm: Live Nativity in the Park                                      |
| Monday 11th Dec | 9.15am to 3.30pm Bowhill Primary School Christingle Rehearsals and Service.  
7.00pm Alphington Primary School Carol Service.                      |
| Tuesday 12th Dec | 9.15am to 3.30pm Bowhill Primary School Christingle Rehearsals and service.  
7.00pm Alphington Primary School Carol Service.                      |
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>9.15am to 3.30pm Bowhill Primary School Christingle Rehearsals and Service.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>10.00am &amp; 1.30pm St Thomas Primary Carol Services</td>
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<td>10.00am Coffee Morning in aid of Action for Children. Traidcraft SHOP will be open during the coffee morning.</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<td><strong>Third Sunday of Advent</strong>&lt;br&gt;10.30am: Morning Worship led by Rev Yangsun Yi.&lt;br&gt;6.30pm: Carols by Candle Light Service.</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td><strong>Festival of Light &amp; Special Memories</strong>&lt;br&gt;An Opportunity to light a Candle and spend a Quite Moment remembering a loved one. The Church will be open 10.00 to 12.00noon &amp; 6.00pm to 7.30pm</td>
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<td><strong>CHRISTMAS EVE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Forth Sunday of Advent&lt;br&gt;10.30am: Morning Worship led by Mrs Janet Lee.&lt;br&gt;5.00pm: Crib Service led by Rev Julian Albrow.&lt;br&gt;11.30pm: Christmas Eve Communion led by Rev Julian Albrow.</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>25th Dec</td>
<td><strong>10.00am Family Christmas Day Worship.</strong></td>
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Wanted - Christmas Trees!!

Exminster Methodist Church are holding their annual Christmas Tree Festival this year from Friday 1st to Monday 4th December.

Would you be willing to display a tree? Anyone can display a tree and help support the Festival. Entry is free and you can choose your own style of decoration and colour. Trees (artificial or real) can be of any size up to 2 metres tall.

In 2016 there were an amazing forty trees kindly displayed by various children and youth organisations, schools, businesses, charities, churches from around the area, clubs, families and individuals. All money raised over the weekend will go to Action for Children and for Bramble Children’s Ward, RD&E Hospital. In 2016 nearly £1,200 was raised.

To display a tree or find out more, please contact Jeny on 01392 832553 for an entry form or you can email us at exminstermethodists@yahoo.co.uk We hope you can take part.

Please make a note to visit the Festival over the weekend. Opening times are:

Friday 1st December - 3 pm till 7 pm
Saturday 2nd December - 10 am till 7 pm
  (with Coffee Morning and a display of toy Santa's plus stalls from 10.00 am till 12 noon)
Sunday 3rd December - 3 pm till 5.30 pm
Monday 4th December - group visits by arrangement

Admission is free
**Church Address**  
St Thomas Methodist Church  
Cowick Street, St Thomas,  
Exeter  
EX41JE

**Church Web Site Address**  
stthomasmethodist.co.uk

**Minister:** Rev. Julian Albrow  
for St Thomas Methodist Church  
Alphington Methodist Church & Exminster Methodist Church  
Tel: 01392 255791  
Email: julian.albrow@btinternet.com

**Sunday Stewards**  
Rota Co-ordinator:  
Mary Bews. Tel: 01392 256927  
Email: bmjayb@gmail.com

**Church Weekly Notices**  
Lesley Albrow  
Email: lalbrow@btinternet.com  
(all items by Thursday of each week)

**Contact Editor**  
& Audio Visual Team  
Kelvin Cude. Tel: 01392 662738  
Email: kpcude@blueyonder.co.uk

**Regular Church Activities**

**Monday**  
Morning: St Thomas Pre-School  
(weekdays, during term time)  
Young Families Group.  
(during term time)

6.00pm: 50th Exeter Brownies  
7.30pm: 45th Exeter Guides

**Tuesday**  
Morning: Young Families Group  
(during term time)  
2.30pm: Women’s Fellowship  
(meetings fortnightly)

4.45pm: 2nd Exwick Rainbows  
6.15pm: 45th Exeter Brownies

**Wednesday**  
7.30pm: Wives Group  
(first Wednesday each month)  
7.30pm: Gospel Choir

**Thursday**  
5th Exeter Boys' Brigade  
6.00pm: Anchor Boys  
6.15pm: Junior Section  
7.30pm: Company Section  
7.30pm: Craft4Others  
(meet fortnightly)

**Friday**  
9.30am: Friday Café in Church Hall  
2.00pm Ladies Who Move  
(weekly exercise session)

**Saturday**  
10.00am: Coffee Morning  
Traidcraft: Third Saturday in the monthly.  
3.00pm: Messy Church  
(meets monthly)

**Sundays**  
Traidcraft Shop: Open after the morning worship on the first Sunday in the month.