

*Rev. Adam Payne*

Friends of the Wey Valley Circuit,

At this point, my daughters are practically counting down the hours until Christmas. Do you remember being this excited about the holiday? I vaguely do, back before it became a hassle rather than a celebration.

I remember trying to stay awake all night, not on Christmas Eve, but the night before. My theory was that I would then be exhausted by bedtime on the 24th, allowing me to fall asleep quickly and quietly rather than anxiously waiting and listening for a sound on the rooftop.

I remember waking up at what my parents considered an ungodly hour on Christmas morning, quietly waking up my brothers so we could creep to the top of the stairs and look down, to see if Santa had really been there. I remember then giving up the stealth to slam into our parents' room like a hurricane, screaming "It's Christmas Day! Wake up!" I remember waiting impatiently for our parents to make coffee before we could open gifts (oh, those drip coffee machines seemed to take forever!).

I remember finally getting to tear into the presents, yelling excitedly over the GI Joes and Transformers, the books and the board games, making carefully separated piles of stuff that was "mine" as opposed to my brothers.

I also remember the childlike joy of giving. Watching my mom and dad open whatever small present we had picked out, ridiculously proud of the Isotoner gloves we got Mom or the tub of Planter's Honey Roasted Peanuts we'd chosen for Dad.

What I don't remember is when all of that excitement began to wear off. Was it after I discovered the truth about Santa Claus? Was it after I got married and we began to have to travel for Christmas morning? Or was it after having kids when I realised just how EXPENSIVE all those toys really are?

At some point, though, as I said, Christmas became more of a hassle than a celebration. Each year, I'm determined to recapture some of that meaning and magic. Some years are more successful than others.

I think, though, that the tradition that most helps me with this is the annual Carol Service that we've discovered since moving to the UK. Seeing the church lit by large

candelabras. Having a full house (can you imagine that? A full church in 2023?!) of people just singing and praising. The warm fellowship of mince pies and tea afterwards. I leave this service with a glow that reminds me of childhood and the magic of Christmas mornings past.

Maybe for you, it's a different service or tradition. Maybe it's the Christmas Morning service of celebration. Maybe it's a quiet tittle with your family on Christmas night. Whatever it is, I hope you have something that reminds you of childhood and magic this Christmas. Something that makes you stop and realise that this day isn't like any other day. That this is the day we celebrate something truly spectacular: the day our Lord was born.

*"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."*  
- Luke 2:11

Happy Christmas.

Adam Payne

## **Resources/Good News**

### **President and Vice-President Christmas Message 2023**

This year, the Methodist Church has chosen the carol O Little Town of Bethlehem as part of the Out of the Ordinary Christmas campaign. You can find more details about the resources available on the Methodist Church website, including reflections and resources for churches welcoming people in during Advent and over the Christmas period. With this carol in mind, this year's Christmas message from the President and Vice-President invites us to think more deeply about the words of the carol and reflect on how we might use them this Christmas.

[Christmas Message 2023](#)

