



Monthly Newsletter
markyate
baptist church

December 2023

The Christmas You Love.

Christmas adverts: love them or loathe them, we are now well and truly in *that* season.

I have seen a few articles criticising this year's M&S Christmas advert, with one person expressing strong disappointment that its portrayal of celebrities 'doing away' with Christmas traditions does not embody the spirit of the season's values.

People get passionate about Christmas adverts. The bar is raised higher each year on companies to think creatively and stand out, whilst simultaneously still reflecting the commercial expectations of portraying the signature festive scenes which 'sell' an image of the ideal Christmas. Having been drawn into the debate through this disapproving view of the M&S Christmas advert, my reflections are that it advocates for leaning away from cultural or corporate expectations, family or societal traditions, and into what is meaningful for you in this season.

Jesus' entry into our world was a humble event: one which was far from the assumptions of an environment that should be fit for a King – both by historic and contemporary standards. Jesus, born in a stable, animals around, with Mary, having travelled heavily pregnant to attend a census – I'd suggest these were far from ideal conditions, and not how a mother might envisage their transition into parenthood.

Over the years we have had many a Christmas that hasn't quite looked the

way we thought it might. The turkey being too dry; plans changing last minute; illness infiltrating get-togethers; and of course, it's still only recently that COVID forced unexpected shifts in plans, hopes and traditions of the season across the globe.

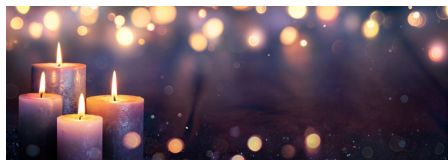
What is 'in the spirit' of Christmas values? As we light each advent candle across our services at MBC this December, we'll reflect on the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. It's ok that these things may look different for each of us during this season. It's ok that for some of us, love is experienced quietly in contemplation, while for others it's expressed through vibrancy, laughter, and togetherness, or perhaps through the grace and endurance of navigating trickier family dynamics. It's ok that, for some, these themes may not immediately come to mind when considering their own experience or anticipation of this festive period.

Advent symbolises a period of preparation for what – or who – is to come. When Christmas Day arrives, we light a final candle and celebrate Immanuel: 'God with us'. That is, God with us: wherever we are, whoever we are with, whatever our circumstances – expected or unexpected; ideal or imperfect; traditional or unconventional.

Inhale a breath of fresh winter air and breathe a sigh of relief; for at Christmas as we look to Jesus, he invites us, always, to come as we are.

May you experience heavenly peace, and gentle permission to participate in the season in a way that resonates between you and God, this Christmas time.

Grace and Peace, *Hannah*



What's On—December 2023

Friday 1st

MBC Community Café

All welcome—10am—12pm

Saturday 2nd

9.30am Prayer Meeting

In Church followed by...

Christmas decorations up

helpers needed

Sunday 3rd

10.30am Communion Service

Advent 1 on **Hope**—Nick Drury

Monday 4th

MBC Community Café

All welcome—9am—12pm

Friday 8th

Jack & Jills baby & toddlers

10am—11.30am

Saturday 9th

9.30am Zoom Prayer Meeting

Ask for login details

Sunday 10th

10.30am Morning Service

Advent 2 on **Peace**—Nick Drury

Monday 11th

MBC Community Café

All welcome—**9am**—12pm

Thursday 14th

H@H Christmas event

Ask Alan & Lesley for more details

Friday 15th

MBC Community Café

All welcome—10am—12pm

Saturday 16th

9.30am Zoom Prayer Meeting

Ask for login details

Sunday 17th

3pm Carol Service Advent 3 on

Joy With Nick Drury

Monday 18th

MBC Community Café

All welcome—**9am**—12pm

Tuesday 19th

7pm Blue Christmas service

for those who find Christmas difficult

Friday 22nd

Carols at the Fire Station

6pm joint with St Johns

Saturday 23rd

9.30am Zoom Prayer Meeting

Ask for login details

Sunday 24th

Christmas Eve Service

Advent 4 on **Love** with Nick Drury

Monday 25th

10am Christmas Day Service

All age service —Nick Drury

Sunday 31st

10.30am Morning Service

With Mark Buckley