

WINCHESTER NEWS

MARCH 2026



Tom, our caretaker, retired at the end of January (See p.5)

Winchester Road Methodist Church

Winchester Road, Highams Park London, E4 9JP

Minister: Rev Stephanie Njeru

Email: Stephanie.njeru@methodist.org.uk

Tel: Church 020 8531 8663

Mobile: 07458 050833 / Landline: 020 8279 2380

www.winchesterroadchurch.org.uk



Group: Winchester Road Methodist Church

Letter from our Minister

Dear friends,

March is a beautiful time of year where we can watch the spring colours start to peer through the cold soil. But this year has been a bit wetter than normal. For a few years now we may have noticed confusion in the natural world where seasonal weather has not been what we, or nature, would expect it to be. It has caused confusion for wildlife, fires and floods and disruption to all forms of life.

A few months ago, I was leading a young church session for the teenage group in one of my other churches and the theme that week was on chaos and peace. To start the session, I asked them to spin around as much as they could and stop just before they thought they may bump into something or fall over. By spinning they experienced chaos and uncertainty. When they returned to their seats, vision returned and the chaos reduced. When the vision returned, we were able to read some passages in the Bible that spoke of the peace of God, that God was the calm in the storm. As Jesus stepped onto the water and walked out to the boat the disciples were in, so we can experience the calmness that Christ brings in our lives.

In the Christian calendar we have the journey of Lent during the whole of March this year. It is an opportunity to think of the things in our life that may need to change in order that we understand God's peace and forgiveness in a new or more holistic way. The journey through Lent is a contemplative walk, a personal discovery between us and the God who created us.

Lent culminates in Holy Week which is the first week in April. In Holy week we journey with Christ in full humanity until Good Friday when his full divinity is seen. Easter Sunday is a celebration of God's love for us.

This month, I encourage you to think about how you can get closer to God in your hearts and live out a life-giving peace and hope to others through your words, prayers and actions.

May God bless you and keep you close.

Rev Stephanie

Rev Stephanie Njeru has pastoral oversight of Leyton Trinity, Lighthouse and Winchester Road Methodist Churches Forest Circuit (35/33)

Normal rest day Friday

Weekly Zoom Prayer Meeting - Mondays 12:30pm

Weekly Zoom Bible Study - Wednesdays 7:30pm

(<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8345484534?pwd=UTBwdWFBaG1qK0k3Yys2a0xjUEY1QT09>)

Both on: **Meeting ID: 834 548 4534 Passcode: 158039**

Services

Sun. 1st March: 10.30 -Led by Kath Leckey

Sun. 8th March: 10.30 All Age Worship- Uniformed Organisations Anniversary- Led by Rev. Stephanie Njeru

Sun. 15th March: Mothering Sunday 10.30 -Local Arrangement

Sun. 22nd: March 10.30 Palm Sunday -Led by Cynthia Bonds

Sun. 29th March 10.30 Communion Led by Rev. Stephanie Njeru

Sun. 5th April: Easter Sunday- 9am Communion

Led by Rev. Stephanie Njeru
-10.30 -Led by Janet Tweedale

Church Flowers:

March 1st - in loving memory of Alan Burgoine

March 15th - in loving memory of Elsie Child (Shirley's Mum)

March 22nd - in loving memory of Phyllis Foster (Christine's Mum)



Church Council

Church council met on Tuesday 10th February.

Circuit Matters: Rev Stephanie Njeru will remain in post until September 2027. Rev. Armstrong Fummey will retire in Summer 2026. The Circuit Leadership team will be meeting to discuss the circuit profile.

Concerns have been raised that there is a disproportionate number of ministers preaching only in their own churches leaving some with more Local Arrangements. There will be further discussion by the CLT to write a 'Fall Back Plan' where a minister was unavailable.

A Finance Officer has been appointed to the Circuit.

Pastoral Report: There are currently 67 Members and 46 Associates. At least one new Pastoral Leader is needed as some groups are quite large.

Christmas Inn: Someone was employed in October to oversee this event. There had been some problems. It is hoped that this year that there should be a full handover in good time for Christmas Inn 2026.

Safety Issues: A parent had been knocked over by children running round the building. Groups have reminded parents that children should not be allowed to run around and go into other rooms. New notices have been placed in the Hub to enforce this.

First Aid boxes to be checked to ensure plasters were 'latex free'.

Stewards: We currently have 5 stewards but Janet Dawe (senior steward) and Pat Ovenden will both be standing down this year. New stewards are urgently needed.

Finance: Church funds are still low with projects that we need/would like to be done.

Under Discussion: Changes to the area at the front of the church for both creche and wheelchair users.

World Day of Prayer



This annual service takes place across the world over 24 hours, starting in Samoa. It is prepared by women in different countries each year. This year the service 'I Will Give You Rest, Come!' was prepared by women from Nigeria. The service will be held at Winchester on Friday 6th March

at 10.30, supported by members of All Saints Church and Cavendish Baptist Church in Highams Park.



Tom, our caretaker since September 2020, retired at the end of January. We are very grateful for all his work in preparing rooms for many groups and helping with the maintenance of the building.

On his last day people gathered to say goodbye and share a cake, made by Janice.
(See front cover).

Stephanie presented him with cards and a gift from the members of the church.

Enjoy your retirement.

We will miss you, Tom!

ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENT

Like many of you I try to keep life in order with the aid of a diary, by keeping a note about things I must do in the space for the appropriate date. Near the front the publisher prints a list of the year's notable dates starting with New Year's Day and then listing the Christian holy days, Saints Days or National Bank Holidays with a scattering of historical dates and the key dates when we move the clock forward or back.

For many of us the first Christian season of the year is **Lent** which simply means 'Spring Season' a period during which we remember when Jesus was taken into the desert deprived of food for forty days and nights and was tempted by the devil. This year Lent begins on February 17th with Shrove Tuesday, (though these days Shrove Tuesday is more usually called Pancake Day), and ends on April 2nd called Maundy Thursday. The Devil's first temptation to Jesus was to satisfy his hunger by turning stones into bread but Jesus answered, "the scripture says man cannot live on bread alone." For the second temptation Jesus was taken to the highest point in the Temple in Jerusalem and was tempted to throw himself down onto the stones and yet be unhurt as God would save him. Jesus responded by saying "Do not put God to the test." Finally, the Devil took Jesus to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world which would be his if he worshipped the Devil. (Matthew verses 1-11).

The three activities which should be practised during Lent are **fasting, prayer and almsgiving**. The Old Testament guidance on fasting can be found in the Book of Daniel, '*I did not eat any rich food or any meat, drink or wine or comb my hair (GNB Daniel 10 v3 GNB)*'. It became the habit to use up basic foods before starting on the Lenten Famine, hence Pancake Day. Over time the list has become wider by giving up chocolate or alcohol or to deny oneself popular pastimes during Lent such as media or playing football which demonstrates the strength of our personal resolve.

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent in some traditions when the Palm Crosses, which were given to the congregation on Palm Sunday last year are burnt to form ashes and used to mark a black smudge on the forehead. A starting

point for Lenten prayer can be the collect from the Methodist Prayer Book (p534) on Ash Wednesday

*“Almighty God, whose son Jesus Christ
Fasted forty days in the wilderness
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin :
give us grace to discipline ourselves
in obedience to your spirit.”*

A time should be set aside each day for prayer to consider needs of the community within which we live and also in the wider world by making gifts to ‘good causes’. Thanks to Dr. Leo Cheng and Hilary, from whom we learned about the Mercy Ships, this would seem to be a worthwhile cause which we could help. This would satisfy the Lenten almsgiving requirement. I have also found setting aside time to read about Jesus’ mission as recorded in the Gospels to be a worthwhile Lenten activity. I would suggest these additional positive resolutions be included alongside the negative actions.

I cannot leave this topic without mentioning the rarely sung Lenten hymn **Forty Days and Forty nights** written in 1859 by George Hunt Smyttan(1822-1870) and Francis Potts, for which Smyttan gets the credit. His father was a Scottish born doctor who served the East India Company as head of the Bombay Medical Board. George Smyttan studied at Cambridge and was ordained as an Anglican priest serving as Rector of Hawksworth in Nottinghamshire. He resigned his parish and died whilst travelling through Frankfurt-am-Main. As he was alone, and a stranger in the town, he was buried in a pauper’s grave. Biographies are unhelpful and some authors in their writing confuse father and son as they shared the same Christian names. In Singing the Faith the hymn is number 236.

*‘Forty days and forty nights, you were fasting in the wild.
Forty days and forty nights, tempted and yet undefiled, shall not we your
trials share.
Learn your discipline of will; and with you, by fast and prayer, wrestle with the
powers of hell.’*

Allen Steel March 2026.

Shoebboxes

Last year we sent 163 boxes from church and 42 from the uniformed organisations. I have received information



from the Beaumonts from Loughton Church who went with the lorries to Ukraine and Romania and found their report very moving. We also send a few boxes for older and elderly people and from their report these go to homeless and people in stressful situations. Last year each box cost £3.50 to send, this may go up so money towards this would be great.



As last year we will fill shoeboxes for three age groups - 3 to 5 yrs; 6 to 11 yrs; and 12 plus, boys and girls. In all the age groups, boys and girls, we put hats, gloves scarves, socks, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and flannels. Colouring books for the youngest and exercise books or notebooks for the others. Felt pens, crayons, coloured pencils, rubbers, pencil sharpeners, biro and lead pencils. For the girls pretty hairclips and bands, and suitable bracelets and necklaces etc. and, for the younger ones, dolls. For the boys, 3 cars or trucks in each box. Cuddly toys for all, (older ones a small one that will go in a pocket). I also put a ball in each, but I am given several hundreds of those, so I don't need any more. Puzzles, small musical instruments, games, cards etc. (Not anything showing tanks or guns or soldiers). I do put sweets in, but I buy them much later as they must be in date by the following March. Also, I put a Christmas card in each which does not show the nativity as they will be going to Muslims and others, but I do sign each card with the names of people who give from outside the church and people in the congregation. I have already started covering the shoeboxes in Christmas paper, but I need lots more. Please give items and boxes to me or put them in the tub at the back of the church. Thank you. Sylvia

Chris and Fiona were able to give out the boxes in several schools and nurseries as well as about 30 homeless people who had gathered at the 'Friend's Hope for Humanity' Centre. Sylvia has copies of the letter and there is one on the board in the Hub



Dear Friends

An enormous thank you for your very generous donation to my school - the Brook Special Primary School (£225) - from the Christmas cards posted in the box in church and displayed in the hub. We are very blessed to have your support, and the money will allow us to buy a trampoline that all of our kids will

benefit from as well as snacks for every class for a month. You will all be aware that schools are in crisis because of lack of money and special schools are particularly affected because of unfunded pay rises. Our deficit would make your eyes water, and the future looks pretty dismal. However, my staff and kids are amazing despite all of these difficulties, and they join me in thanking you all for thinking of us and supporting us in such a generous way. Maureen Duncan.

(The school website is www.thebrook.haringey.sch.uk should you wish to know a little more about the school)

All the Kingdoms of the World

*'So, here's the deal and this is what you get:
The penthouse suite with world-commanding views,
The banker's bonus and the private jet.
Control and ownership of all the news.
An 'in' to that exclusive one percent,
who know the score, who really run the show.
With interest on every penny lent
And sweeteners for cronies in the know.
A straight arrangement between me and you
No hell below or heaven high above
You just admit it, and give me my due
And wake up from this foolish dream of love...'
But Jesus laughed, 'You are not what you seem.'
Love is the waking life you are the dream.'*

(Malcolm Guite)

What's On

Circuit Groups for Youth (13-18) and Young Adults (18 – 35)

For information contact Zak Njeru – 0745802244

Friday Coffee Mornings 10 – 12 am Tea, coffee and biscuits in the Hub. (Term time only). These coffee mornings raise money for various charities. The charity for last term was Haven House and a total of £265 was sent to Haven House. This term donations will be collected for the RNLI.



Saturday Lunches

These raise money for the church and other groups. On 31st Jan. £868.51 was raised for Church funds and on 7th Feb. £607 towards the new Brownie House at Chigwell. They are also

appreciated by the dancers and their families who are often there all day. These lunches involve a lot of work, especially for Maureen, Janice and Roger. They would be pleased to hear from anyone who can help by making cakes or helping on the Day, even if only for an hour or two, especially on March 14th.

The next will be on: 14th March for Bazaar contingency funds

25th April for 2nd Guides towards their centenary celebrations later this year

13th June for JMA

18th July for church funds



Let me hold fast to You, beautiful Lord, whom the angels themselves yearn to look upon. Wherever You go, I will follow You. If You pass through fire, I will not flinch, I fear no evil when You are with me. You carry my griefs, because You grieve for my sake. You passed through the narrow doorway from death to life, to make it wide enough for all to follow. Nothing can ever now separate me from Your love.

By Bernard of Clairvaux 1090 -1153

Our Young Church



Our Young Church (Cookie Club 3-14) meet every Sunday during the morning service. The oldest group, (Biscuit Club), meet by arrangement. We start in church at 10.30.

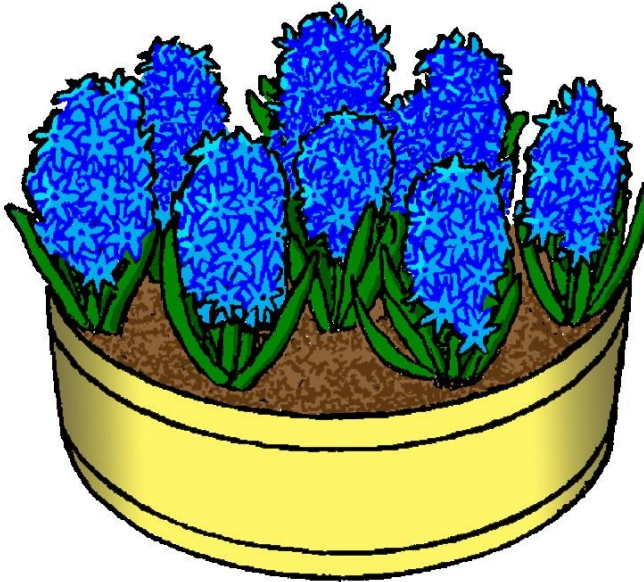
look at bible stories. We then enjoy activities including playing games, doing crafts, cooking, and singing.

In our sessions we have biscuits, share news, and

During Lent our Young Church Families will be starting each service with the Liturgy. Items relating to the weeks leading up to Easter will be placed on the cross. On Easter Sunday these will be removed and the cross transformed with flowers by the congregation.

On Mother's Day the Young Church will prepare bunches of daffodils for their mothers and all those in church.





OUR MISSION

We are a church at the heart of Highams Park which seeks to discern and follow God's direction. Our aim is to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour through the life of the church and outreach to the community. We promote worship and fellowship enabling us to grow towards God. We are an inclusive church where all are welcome.

OUR STEWARDS: Senior Steward: Janet Dawe
Stewards: Pat Ovenden and Hazel Mathews Carol & Dumisami Moyo

OUR SAFEGUARDING TEAM: - led by Jean Norton

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE APRIL NEWSLETTER

by **Monday 16th March -jdent7@gmail.com or 07751603883**

Printed copies of the newsletter, in black and white, are available in church. Should you wish to make a donation towards the printing costs please put your donation, in an envelope, in one of the boxes at the doors of the church.

This newsletter is available to download as a PDF from our website. It can also be emailed to you in full colour. Contact Jan Dent, as above.