

New Year's Eve is an important moment in the civil rather than the Christian calendar; but it provides the original occasion for the searching Covenant Renewal service of the Methodist tradition.

As strongly as Watch Night is now linked to the black community, its observance did not originate with that group, nor did it begin on 31 December 1862, the night before the Emancipation Proclamation came into effect. Watch Night began with the Moravians, a small Christian denomination whose roots lie in what is the present-day Czech Republic. The first such service is believed to have been held in 1733 on the estates of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf in Hernhut, Germany.

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, picked it up from the Moravians, incorporating a Watch Night vigil into the practices of his denomination. Methodist Watch Nights were held once a month and on full moons, with the first such service in the United States taking place in 1770 at Old St. George's Church in Philadelphia. These services survive to the present day in what the Methodist Service Book calls, the "Covenant Renewal Services."

As to what was being "watched over" in those earlier services, it was one's covenant with God. These gatherings were a time for congregants to meditate on their state of grace — were they spiritually ready to meet their maker if the call were suddenly to come?

The end-of-year Watch Night of 1862 took on special significance attaching to the impending 1 January 1863 enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation, and that night has come to be known as "Freedom's Eve." On 22 September 1862, President Lincoln issued his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which stated: "[O]n the first day of January ... all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." Lincoln subsequently issued the Emancipation Proclamation itself on 1 January 1863.

While that proclamation did not end slavery the moment it was issued, it did at least proclaim some slaves free. Knowing that this was going into effect the next day must certainly have influenced the nature of that year's Watch Night within the African-American and abolitionist communities, adding a second layer of what was being watched for (the coming of freedom at the stroke of midnight) to the more usual fare (the coming of the Christ at an unspecified future date and therefore the need to maintain a constant personal state of spiritual preparation).

Among African-American congregations, that second layer of meaning has since become permanently woven into the fabric of the original, making New Year's Eve Watch Night services as much now about remembering the end of slavery as it is upon personal reflection on the state of one's soul.

New Year's Eve is a time of deep reflection and introspection. It provides Christians the opportunity look back over the year that has passed, make confession and prepare for the year ahead. The night symbolises not only freedom, but also real hope and real change.

This service allows for reflection and release as we employ the Covenant Renewal.

Welcome to the United Benefice of Holy Innocents & St. Mark, South Norwood

Sharing God's grace and love in our community



31st December 2021

Vicar: The Revd. Canon Roxanne Eversley
Asst. Priest: Mother Susan Wheeler-Kiley
Reader: Mrs Cicelyn Hinds

Watch Night & Covenant Renewal Service

President and Preacher, Mother Roxanne

*I John 2.18-21 * Psalm 99.1, 11-13 * John 1.1-18*

Access online worship via

www.youtube.com/c/StMarksSouthNorwood

CHURCH NOTICES

Until further notice, both Parishes will continue to meet for worship at Saint Mark for the 8am & 10am Sunday Masses; and at Holy Innocents for the weekday Mass on Thursdays at 10am.

Pastoral Care: Mother Roxanne is away after tonight's Mass, back on 12th January. Should you need to, please contact the wardens of either church, Cicelyn or Mother Susan (except Fridays 07890 780572).

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We pray: for Archbishops Justin and Stephen; Bishops Christopher, Jonathan, Richard and Karowei in this Diocese; and the Bishops in our link Dioceses in Zimbabwe.

For the Families of the Clergy of our Diocese.

For the Bishops, priests & people of the Diocese of Irele - Eseeodo – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Ondo Province)

For the sick: Richard, Helen, Jennifer & Reuben, Marie-Gabrielle, Amanda, Rose, Caroline, Sigi, Anecka, Lynn, Ronald, Tommy, Ena, Adeline, Akos, Peggy, Rudolph, Stephanie, Pamela, Barry, Dennis, Linda, Greta, David, Oslene, Anthony, Adrian, Barbara, Jacqueline, Jackie.

For the bereaved: Ann and the Mulholland family.

For the recently departed: Kenny Mulholland.

Years Mind.

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We Thank God for another year, for the freedoms that have been bestowed upon us, for the marvellous things that God has done for us. As we look forward to the new year 2022 with hope and anticipation, we too say **"For all that has been, Thanks. To all that shall be, Yes"** (Dag Hammarskjöld)

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HAPPY NEW YEAR! EVERY BLESSING AND BEST WISHES FOR A NEW YEAR FILLED WITH PEACE, LOVE, HEALTH AND ALL THINGS GOOD. REMEMBER, WITH GOD EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE!

COLLECT

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose years never fail and whose mercies are new each returning day: let the radiance of your Spirit renew our lives, warming our hearts and giving light to our minds; that we may pass the coming year in joyful obedience and firm faith; through him who is the beginning and the end, your Son, Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
AMEN.

FIRST READING**I John 2.18-21***A reading from the first letter of John*

Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us. ²⁰But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge. ²¹I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and you know that no lie comes from the truth.

*This is the word of the Lord***Thanks be to God****PSALM 96.1, 11-13****Refrain:****O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Refrain

Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;

Refrain

Let the fields be joyful and all that is in them;
let all the trees of the wood shout for joy before the Lord.

Refrain

For he comes, he comes to judge the earth;
with righteousness he will judge the world
and the peoples with his truth.

Refrain**GOSPEL****John 1.1-18***Alleluia, alleluia.**I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.***Alleluia.**

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.*Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.***Glory to you, O Lord.**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the

light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ**POST COMMUNION**

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home:
help your Church to live as one family,
united in love and obedience,
and bring us all at last to our home in heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.