

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Christmas Day: 25th December 2020

Collect:

Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth: accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you, our Saviour and our eternal God.

Amen.

Psalm 98

¹ O sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvellous things.

His right hand and his holy arm
have gained him victory.

² The Lord has made known his victory; he has
revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

³ He has remembered his steadfast love and
faithfulness to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.

⁴ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

⁵ Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.



⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

⁷ Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.

⁸ Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy

⁹ at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming
to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah (52.7-10)

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.' Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion.

Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see

the salvation of our God.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (1.1-14)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

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

And 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.

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection: Four Candles for advent-a story for 2020

Four candles are of the items Ron had on his list when he goes shopping at his local hardware shop. Four candles for advent, as you do it.

He is glad that little hardware shop on the high street is still there. It is a quiet, old-fashioned shop, no annoying Christmas ditties playing, and other than in the popular British sketch, the shopkeeper understands Ron well, almost like a close friend.. Always up for a chat. And that is very important for Ron. For a moment Ron wonders what is the point of even buying candles this advent. Nobody ever comes around. Ron lives on his own, a widower, and this year, to make things worse, no visitors allowed. Covid19. Shopping is the only time Ron would talk to another person. Candles? Christmas decorations? Why bother?

But then Ron remembers what those candles in advent meant. They were meant to bring light into this darkness. This darkness-nightfall by mid-afternoon. Steady stream of bad news- when will the next war be, which country the next dictatorship, when will life on the planet be impossible due to Global heating...

Light as in hope on the horizon. As much as Christmas was about receiving the good news of Jesus' birth, receiving gifts, Ron kind of knows it cannot be a one-way street. But what can he give. Donate to a foodbank, a charity?

Without thinking Ron makes himself a cup of tea and steps outside in front of his door. As people did during the clapping for carers. He can hear people talking. He can see festive decorations going up. Then he walks a few steps and starts speaking to the person taking a bin out a few doors up. About the cold weather and the short days. And about Christmas. It turns out he is called Ron as well, about ten years younger than him. A single man, just with a busy working life. The younger Ron says Christmas is meaningless to him, all he ever looks forward to is catching up with work-mates at the office Christmas party, but then normally remembering nothing next morning as everyone would get wasted. Yes his parents would go to church and sing carols and do a big spread, but not this year.

After the two men chat for a while they agree that the true meaning of christmas has been forgotten, all obliterated by this madness of stuff, too much food, that nonsense of Santa claus rushing around like mad dropping off presents, enforced jollity whilst all the pain, suffering and social injustice carrying on across the world, despite of Christmas. They try to rediscover and retell the original Christmas story of Jesus' birth and to understand how it would matter to us today. It is hard for them.

The simplicity- Jesus born in a stable, the simplicity to be just yourself where you are, no fuss, no keeping appearances, then walk up to your neighbour and start a conversation.

The gift giving- both Rons appreciated that getting to know a neighbour through a spontaneous and deep conversation is a gift indeed, especially in 2020.

Shepherds and wisemen meeting each other- yes our older Ron was a man of manual work all of his life, a painter and decorator then a handyman. His younger namesake has a degree in business economics and works for a London based company I never understood in which position.

With all their differences they are trying to find common ground and wondering how they could make a difference, end all this darkness. Speak up against decisions that ruin futures. Lend a hand, even to a stranger. Not buy anything that is based on exploitation. Give to those who need. The list went on, the discussion becomes lively, even a little heated.

Other than their first name and their loneliness they have nothing in common, absolutely nothing, yet they decide that from now on they would pop outside with their cup of tea together more often. I cannot imagine how they even find common words to understand each other, but they have done somehow. Maybe because they both understand that the darkness of bad news, the social injustice, the uncertainty don't just magically stop at Christmas. Rather than that, their lives have been lit up this advent. They spontaneously invite each other to stop, listen, take in what happened around them. Advent is simple indeed and less spectacular, they know now.

- by Andrea McDonald

*Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.*

This week's hymn:

The first nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as
they lay;
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

*Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,
born is the King of Israel.*

They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.

This star drew nigh to the north-west:
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay,
right over the place where Jesus lay.

Then entered in those wise men three,
full reverently upon their knee,
and offered there, in his presence,
their gold and myrrh and frankincense.

Then let us all with one accord
sing praises to our heavenly Lord
who hath made heaven and earth of nought,
and with his blood mankind hath bought.

*May the peace and love of the
Christchild*

touch your hearts

and

fill them with peace and hope,

this Christmas and in 2021

Wishing you and your loved ones

a

Happy Christmas

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian, Jean Dominy,

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie, Vincent Lightbody, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar, Lee Grigs

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives & livelihoods, the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refuges across the world & diplomats and peace makers, working to end conflicts

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: Pearl Leggett, John Chapman RIP.

Call this number —> for free.

It's a lovely way to worship from home!



Notices:

Rev Canon Jutta's last Sunday: Jutta's last service at St Thomas will be *Sunday 3rd January*. This service will need to be booked into as usual, so we will do our best to accommodate as many people as possible while remaining safe. You will also be able to join the service on Zoom or livestreamed on facebook.

No need to book on Sunday 27th Dec - Kat Baker who runs our booking system needs a Christmas break! So on the 27th you can just turn up to church.

No Eucharist service on Wednesday 30th Dec.

No Church Opening for private prayer on Thurs 24th, Monday 28th, and Thurs 31st. Church opening will restart on Monday 4th Jan.

Alpha: Zoom Alpha starts on 7th January! It will run on Thursday evenings 7-9pm. **Please email Rev Cat to sign up.** We know the best way to get people to come is for us to invite them personally, so please, *invite your friends, family, and neighbours*, and why not give it a go yourself!

Prayer! We want our church to grow, so please join in this prayer at home: *"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."*

To book by phone for Sunday services, call **01473 742973** in the week before the service, leaving your name, how many you are booking for, and your phone number.

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation
Edith Abbott; Gareth & Theresa Andrews; Eric Baker; June Baker & family; Jenny & Andrew Barfield; Alan Banks; Michelle & Stephen Bennett, Gerald & Jenny Biggs

This Week:

Sunday, 27th December

10am Eucharist: in-person worship with Zoom

Wednesday 30th December

No Eucharist Service today

May God bless you and your loved ones in 2021, give you faith, hope, health, courage and peace.



Birthdays this week:

26th: Bradley Knight, Naomi Bloomfield

28th: Lilly Waller, **31st:** Caren Elwis

Contacts:

Priest in charge: Revd Canon Jutta Brueck m:07958 360564

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Jutta's days off are: Fridays & Saturdays

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If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

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Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>