

The Good News

Winter 2020/21



We welcome you to the winter edition of The Good News!

In this edition, a message from our Minister along with reflection and prayers.

Included also, news and updates from across the Pastorate; remembering John Love, the story behind the carol, an interesting read and the editors seasonal reflection.

From the season of 'mists and mellow fruitfulness' and on into 'the bleak mid winter'.

Although the nights are long and the days short, let this not be a time of darkness.

Let us remember The Light of the World.



Now is the time to give thanks and celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, perhaps especially now, we should also look forward to spring and Easter. Rebirth, resurrection and possibly a return to a more normal life. God willing.

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As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater Isaiah 55:10 NIV

A Message and News from the Minister

God never leaves us

The Bible features a fair amount of Lamenting- not only in the book of Lamentations. A formal Lament has a definite structure:

- ◆ It begins with an address to God,
- ◆ It continues by making detailed complaints - what has happened? Who is hurting and why? Whose fault, if anyone's, is it?
- ◆ The next stage expresses trust in God
- ◆ Then there's a direct appeal to God
- ◆ Finally (if the writer is ready) a vow of praise.

Perhaps you might try writing a Lament, it's a different way of focussing prayer.

What have you been missing most during Lock-down? For many of us, living alone, it has been the physical contact with another person we have missed- a hug, a handshake, a pat on the back, Passing the Peace during worship. Jesus was tactile during his ministry- he reached out to the sick, he shared hospitality with friends- he gathered with more than 6 people on a hillside... and his ministry was betrayed with a kiss, he was roughly crucified.

God came to earth as a flesh and blood human and shared the physicality of being human. Even when we cannot embrace one another we can remember that he has never left us, he embraces us in love and for that we can give thanks.



A Message and News from the Minister

Remaining steady in faith

Here is a lament written by the Rev'd *Geoffrey Clarke* during a workshop Zoomed for synod ministers, during October:

God, beyond, above, unreachable, untouchable, unfathomable, yet seen, among us, and known, in Jesus ... how could you watch and not stop this evil pandemic?

Why would you not end it in moments rather than watching it unfold with its hurt and harm, bringing its ambush of death, fear and loss?

And for that death, fear and loss to dip, with the possibility of picking up normality, to break out again with potential for more and worse than before!

**Yet in the midst of this - even this - you are there ...
Grant peace, calm and comfort ... give us patience and stamina ... hasten the day when Covid is conquered and loss is lessened.**

Make us grateful for what and whom we can reach and touch and do. Keep safe those who have little to nothing and prompt those who can do something for and with them.

For even in the midst of this we will dare to carry on trusting and praising.

(*Geoffrey Clarke*, October 2020)

We continue to hold our friends and neighbours in prayer and wish everyone a Blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with unexpected Joy.

Shalom,

Elizabeth
→



A Message and News from the Minister

A prayer

A Prayer from the Rev'd Jenny McDevitt, an American minister, on the eve of the US election 2020:

Good and Gracious God, This day especially, we are aware how you are the God of the Wait-and-See. And this day especially, we are aware that we do not wait very well.

So on this day, O God, calm us with patience where we need it, and agitate us with urgency where we need it, and speak to us with clarity about what is needed where, and when.

Forgive us our frustrated wails of how long, O Lord. Receive us in our honest vulnerability and, if you have them to spare, send your angels once again to whisper the words we are desperate to hear: "Do not be afraid." Because we are fearful, as we refresh our phones and check election returns. And we are weary, as we wonder when COVID will run its course.

And we are anxious, as we consider our finances. And we are curious, and also a bit confused, as we attempt to plan for the future.

Yet while we are all those things and even more, we are also your children, held in the palm of your hand, held in the grip of your grace.

So great God of the Wait-and-See, speak to us words of gentle yet sturdy reminder — that Christ IS Lord of heaven and earth. Speak to us words of reassurance and reconciliation — that you are making all things new, even now.

A Message and News from the Minister

A prayer

Speak to us words of direction and guidance — that we
would learn to love our neighbours in new and greater
ways. And speak to us words that will lead us home
that YOU ARE the resurrection and the life.
and YOU ARE the good shepherd.
and YOU ARE the gate.
and YOU ARE the way and the truth and the life.
and YOU ARE the light of the world,
the world that you so love,
the world that you created,
the world that you'll never, no never, no never forsake.
Great God of the Wait-and-See,
remind us, convince us again,
and convict us
that you are also the Alpha and the Omega,
the beginning and the end,
the first, and the last, and living one.
Our lives are in your hands, O God.
Help us to wait with your grace, and even more, help us to
see with your love.
Amen.



Kilsby News

Decorating the chapel windows, but no services planned

Mission Statement

The purpose of this church is to provide a warm, welcoming place for all people of any age to worship and to learn about the faith.

Hello from all at Kilsby,

Although no services are currently planned at Kilsby at least until after the vaccination program, in the approach to Christmas Val, Frank and friends will be decorating the chapel windows in order to bring cheer to passers by. Also, reassurance that the church is still alive and active.

This will of course be done in such a way as to maintain compliance and safety given the current circumstances.

Val Janes and all from Kilsby.

The following usual events and activities are currently suspended:

Community café

The purpose of the café is to provide somewhere where you can meet up with friends old and new to have a chat and enjoy refreshments together. Held every Monday and Thursday from 9.00am until midday.

Sewing Group

The sewing group meets at 2pm every other Friday, contact Val for details.

Scrabble Club

Wednesdays at 1.00pm

But we look forward to their return as soon as it is possible.

Creaton News

Some services planned

Mission Statement

Worship God joyfully
Offer Christ faithfully
Promote growth hopefully
Serve others lovingly.

Hello from Creaton,

We have planned the following services at Creaton:

Dec 13 Elizabeth Kemp Gift Service Festive Hampers for the Hope Centre.

Dec 25 10am Elizabeth Kemp, Christmas Morning Service.

Jan 10 Elizabeth Kemp, Holy Communion.

Jan 24 Geoff Townsend.

Feb 14 Jon Heard, Holy Communion.

Feb 28 Geoff Townsend.

I Hope we will be able to keep to this plan and see each other far more often than we have been able to this year.

Very best wishes and blessings for the Christmas Season to all of you and your families.

Margaret.

The following usual events and activities are currently suspended:

Poppies Coffee Shop

From 9.00 am to 12 noon Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Poppies is closed on Thursdays and Tuesdays. Everyone is very welcome.

Creaton host "Nosh and Natter" (Men's lunch)

on the 1st Thursday of every month at 12.00 noon.

'Pilots'

meets on a Monday night in term time from 7.00pm.

Details are available from the Church Secretary.

But we look forward to their return as soon as it is possible

For more information on the activities at Creaton United Reformed Church, please visit the Creaton website:

www.creaton.org.uk

Click on Churches and then click on United Reformed Church.

Creaton News Cont.

Remembering

John Love

June 3rd 1939 - September 2nd 2020

The funeral for John was held on 21st September at the Counties Crematorium.

John was born and brought up in Kingsthorpe and attended schools locally. For over 50 years John had been an integral part of village and chapel life in Creaton.

John taught in the Sunday School for over 15 years, became an Elder, led worship in many village chapels and helped to maintain the buildings and latterly served in the Coffee Shop, where he was famed for his skill in creating patterns on the top of cappuccinos.

Most of his working life revolved around plumbing, with the majority of his time being responsible for the plumbing on the Althorp Estate. His time there brought him into contact with Royalty and a host of celebrities.

He had a love hate relationship with the swimming pool, having had to rescue a sheep that had fallen in and on one occasion remove a dead peacock before the Countess found out.

About a month before he died, John received a visit at home from Earl Spencer and then later when he found out that John had died, ordered the flag to be flown at half mast.

Joining the Northampton and County Athletics Club when he was 15, John went on to have a successful career initially in Cross Country. Having later joined the Northampton Phoenix Athletics Club, John went onto compete in 7 different countries as a veteran.

Creaton News Cont.

Remembering

Later John concentrated on throwing events, became a coach and judge, last year being a judge at the Special Needs Championships in Leicester.

His services to athletics was rewarded when he won the Lifetime Contributions to Sport Award for Northamptonshire.

John was a great supporter of many charities including the RSPB and National Trust.

He visited over 35 Cathedrals to attend Evensong.

Sadly for the last few years of his life John battled cancer, but until the last few months John remained very active.

He leaves a son Tim and daughter Julie and 4 grandchildren.

On the day of his funeral many of his friends from the Athletics Club joined with villagers to line the roads in Creaton as his hearse passed on the way to the Crematorium.



The story and meaning behind "O Little Town of Bethlehem" - contributed by Norman Chandler

Phillips Brooks, the composer of this famous Christmas carol, was the minister of Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia and had visited Bethlehem in December of 1865.

The itinerary included a horseback ride from Jerusalem to Bethlehem on Christmas Eve. Back then it truly was a small village, far removed from the bustling city it would later become. By nightfall he was in the field where, according to tradition, the shepherds heard the angelic announcement. Then he attended the Christmas Eve service at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Something about the beauty and simplicity of that visit stayed with Phillips Brooks when he returned to America. Several years later, when he wanted a new song of Christmas for the children to sing at his church, he reached back in memory for inspiration from his Holy Land visit.

The poem he wrote painted in words the sights and sounds of that little town of Bethlehem he had visited. Writing to the children of his congregation, he recalled that first visit: "I remember especially on Christmas Eve, when I was standing in the old church in Bethlehem, close to the spot where Jesus was born, when the whole church was ringing hour after hour with the splendid hymns of praise to God, how again and again it seemed as if I could hear voices I knew well, telling each other of the "wonderful night" Then he asked the church organist, Lewis Redner, to compose a simple melody for the children to sing on Christmas Eve. Mr.Redner sat down at the piano to find just the right tune to carry the descriptive words. But nothing he wrote seemed to fit. On the night before the Christmas Eve service he felt defeated, so he went to bed. During his fretful sleep it seemed that he heard music. Immediately, he got up and wrote down the melody just as we sing it today. When he joyfully presented it to Rev. Brooks he said: "I think it was a gift from heaven." The children sounded like a choir of angels as they sang the new carol written just for them. "O Little of Bethlehem" quickly became a favourite after it was published in 1874.

We are blessed to continue singing it over one hundred years later. Within the beauty of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" is one of God's promises from the prophet Micah: "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the little towns of Judah, but from you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times." (Micah 5:2, GNB).

Crick News

Christmas Day service planned

Mission Statement

The purpose of this Church is to provide a warm, welcoming place for people of all ages to worship God and to grow in faith.

Greetings to you all from Crick,

So, here we are, almost half way through lockdown 2 as I write, 12 days done, 15 more to go!

I do hope you are all keeping well and busy during these difficult times. It was so good to meet most of the other elders and Elizabeth by Zoom yesterday afternoon, although it's no substitute for the real thing! And how interesting to hear of other church's activities and plans for Christmas.

We are all missing our Sunday services, coffee mornings, and lunches. However, Brenda has just sent £100 to Crisis at Christmas from money raised at coffee mornings before lockdown.

We had a short Harvest service in October, our only service before the new lockdown, where we collected tinned and packet food, which we delivered to Rugby food bank.

We are still planning to hold a Christmas Day service at 9.30am. Michael Bond is willing to lead our worship.

Birthday wishes to Steve and Louise Wilkin, and Jenny Goodger, who have birthdays in December, January and February.

All of us wish all of you a peaceful and happy Christmas and all good things for 2021, especially good health and happiness. Covid and vaccines permitting, we look forward to seeing you all before too long.

Jenny.

Crick News Cont.

An interesting read

Imagine you were born in 1900:

When you're 14, World War I begins and ends when you're 18 with 22 million dead.

Soon, after a global pandemic, the Spanish Flu appears, killing 50 million people. And you're alive and 20 years old.

When you're 29 you survive the global economic crisis that started with the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange, causing inflation, unemployment and famine.

When you're 33 years old the Nazis come to power.

When you're 39, World War II begins and ends when you're 45 years old with a 60 million dead.

In the Holocaust 6 million Jews die.

When you're 52, the Korean War begins.

When you're 64, the Vietnam War begins and ends when you're 75.

A child born in 1985 thinks his grandparents have no idea how difficult life is, but they have survived several wars and catastrophes.

Crick News Cont.

An interesting read

Today we have all the comforts in a new world, amid a new pandemic. But we complain because we need to wear masks. We complain because we must stay confined to our homes where we have food, electricity, running water, wifi, even Netflix! None of that existed back in the day.

But humanity survived those circumstances and never lost their joy of living. A small change in our perspective can generate miracles.

We should be thankful that we are alive. We should do everything we need to do to protect and help each other.

How true...

A little ditty:

Why hurry, why worry
Tomorrow is another day
Another worry may come
Stay calm, it will do no harm
Love, laugh and be kind
And peace you will find.

Many thanks to Beth Stanley, a member of Crick URC, for this contribution and her friend who wrote the poem.

Long Buckby News
Some services planned

Hello from Long Buckby,

The church is beginning to reopen for Worship.

At the moment worship is due to continue on the second and fourth Sundays of the Month.

In December instead of the 4th Sunday worship we will have a Christmas Eve service at 2.30pm

If the Church is open the Flower Rota is as follows:

13th December	Andrew Bodsworth
24th	Sian Ellison
10th January	Norman Chandler
24th	Val Cole
14th February	Rita Stow
28th	Yvonne and Andrew Howes

Birthdays

December

Len Babb
Harry Ellison
Elizabeth Kemp

January

Edna Curtis

February

Clive Cooper
Kath Packer
Chris Berry



Hope Centre

Please remember the collection box for the Hope Centre in Northampton.

For Prayer: This quarter we asked to remember

- The Hospital services in Countries suffering extreme Poverty.
- The Minister and Elders of our churches.
- The sick of body mind and spirit in our localities.
- Pray for the needs of the churches in COVID times.

Lectionary Readings

December 2020

Second Sunday of Advent - December 6, 2020

Isaiah 40:1-11

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Third Sunday of Advent - Dember 13, 2020

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8,19-28

Psalm 126

or Canticle 15 (or 3)

Fourth Sunday of Advent - Dember 20, 2020

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Canticle 3 or Canticle 15

or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

First Sunday after Christmas - December 27, 2020

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7

John 1:1-18

Psalm 147 or 147:13-21



Lectionary Readings

January 2021

Second Sunday after Christmas - January 3, 2021

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19a

Matthew 2:13-15,19-23

or Luke 2:41-52

or Matthew 2:1-12

Psalm 84 or 84:1-8

First Sunday after the Epiphany - January 10, 2021

Genesis 1:1-5

Acts 19:1-7

Mark 1:4-11

Psalm 29

Second Sunday after the Epiphany - January 17, 2021

1 Samuel 3:1-10(11-20)

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

John 1:43-51

Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17

Third Sunday after the Epiphany - January 24, 2021

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

Psalm 62:6-14

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany - January 31, 2021

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 1:21-28

Psalm 111



Lectionary Readings

February 2021

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany - February 7, 2021

Isaiah 40:21-31

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Mark 1:29-39

Psalm 147:1-12, 21c

Last Sunday after the Epiphany - February 14, 2021

2 Kings 2:1-12

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

Psalm 50:1-6

First Sunday in Lent - February 21, 2021

Genesis 9:8-17

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:9-15

Psalm 25:1-9

Second Sunday in Lent - February 28, 2021

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Romans 4:13-25

Mark 8:31-38

Psalm 22:22-30



Grandad Townsend and the Bottle of Cold Tea

A yuletide reflection

My dog (Skye) likes to go for a walk; given half a chance she will take herself on one!

When we go for "official" walks we head out across the fields. We are very lucky in this part of the country, the landscape is very beautiful.

One of Skye's favourite walks is around the fields and copses of East Haddon Hill Farm; Skye is very partial to pheasant and there are plenty to be found around there at this time of the year.

Usually I take a flask of tea and some bread and cheese, as we are sometimes out for hours.

One evening I found myself sat at the side of a field eating my bread and cheese looking at the view across the valley. I felt a tremendous sense of belonging.

My thoughts wandered; in some ways it's a small world, I know this, having set out on a ship from Southampton and heading continuously West until some months later arriving back where I started, brought this home to me.

On the other hand, I have stood in the middle of the Namib Desert and was afraid; how vast the world was and how small and insignificant am I.

But at the side of the field, that evening, I knew I was where I belong. It reminded me of Grandad Townsend who eighty years before would also have sat at the side of a field, with his dog, not so very far away from this field, eating *his* bread and cheese.

Whereas I had a thermos flask of hot tea, he had a bottle of cold tea. Whereas my dog is a Husky, his would have been a working Sheep Dog.

As the light began to fade, I looked out across the valley toward Great Brington. The flood lights of the church came on. The view of the English countryside with the picturesque village and church looked just like a Christmas card. My mind wandered back to Grandad.

Grandad Townsend and the Bottle of Cold Tea

A yuletide treat?

At this time of the year Grandad and his field hands would have been clearing the ditches, cutting the hedges and repairing the field roads.

I remember one evening Grandad was sharing his bottle of cold tea with the field hands. I wanted to stay with him in the field and help but he wouldn't let me have any of the tea and told me to go back to the house as Granny Townsend was expecting me.

Granny was preparing to go to the candlelit carol service at chapel. I complained that Grandad wouldn't give me any of his tea and asked why he hadn't put any milk in it, but she just said "never you mind!"

When we got to the Chapel it was packed with people, planks had been laid across the pews and rows of candles were set along them. There were candles on the widow ledges, there were candles everywhere!

Given the vibrations caused by the powerful church organ it's amazing the candles stayed put and the place didn't burn down!

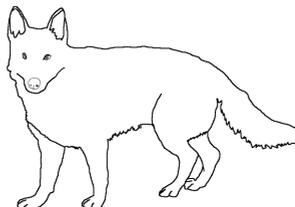
As usual grandad went to the other chapel a few doors up called 'The Bull'; he said the carols were better there! According to my uncle, while our 'merry gentlemen' were resting, their 'merry gentlemen' were rolling out barrels!

I thought our resting 'merry gentlemen' were far more sensible; rolling out barrels seemed like hard work!

Back at the side of the field with Skye I thought how lucky I was to have hot tea, I pictured Grandad with just his bottle of cold tea and began to wonder, if that was what it really was...

Sometimes a penny drops...

Andrew Bodsworth.



Dates for your Diary
And maybe a challenge...

Every Sunday:

"Sunday Service" - From the United Reformed Church website to read or listen to as a podcast; including prayers, readings, hymns and sermon.

Every Day:

"Daily Devotions" - Short Bible Reading, Reflection and Prayer available from the United Reformed Church website to read or listen to as a podcast.

Preaching Diary:

Hopefully to return for the Spring edition

Finally a challenge:

You may have noticed that in this edition of The Good News, despite having no preaching diary, the number of pages has actually increased.

I'm sure lots of you have funny, informative and or interesting stories to share. Perhaps, a lament.

It would be good to include some more of these from across the Pastorate.

Why not send something in? Email address below.

Many Thanks to all contributors!

Newsletter Editor

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Deadline for contributions to next issue: 16th February 2021

Footnote:

It was quite usual for farm workers to take bottles of cold tea into the fields as part of their packed lunch, sometimes with milk and sometimes without. Although the Thermos (Dewar) flask was invented in 1892 and commercially produced and available from the early twentieth century, many farm workers continued to use an old "pop" bottle.