



Newcastle City Temple Connected

Reimagining Church Together

Greetings Friends!

During press conferences over recent days, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said he is “confident” that Britons will “be able to have as normal a Christmas as possible”, despite the raft of coronavirus restrictions currently in place across the UK. However, as wonderful as that may sound - Ministers are facing a backlash from their own scientific advisers, with warnings that different generations of families gathering together will have a “tragic cost”.

As I mulled over these thoughts this week - I began to wonder what constituted the definition of ‘a normal Christmas’. I guess it’s a question that will attract lots of different answers. Many of us will have our own distinct family traditions - on top of the things which traditionally we might have done together as a corps; and certainly as far as traditional corps activities go, Christmas is going to be far from normal this year. There will be no public carol services, it’s highly unlikely that the band will be able to go carolling—or at least not on the scale that has been enjoyed previously; the children won’t be able to get together to rehearse a nativity, nor the band and songsters to rehearse those wonderful festive pieces. The ladies fellowship have already had to forgo their annual Christmas meal—and so the list goes on.

In many ways Christmas will need to be a lot more simple this year, a stripping back of many of the things which have caused us to celebrate this season in a particular way; and it was whilst mulling these things over that I stumbled upon this helpful image...



The first Christmas was
really simple.
It's okay if yours is too.

Next Sunday sees the start of Advent, that wonderful season of Expectation, Preparation, Promise and Celebration - and as we journey together over the next few weeks - I pray that for those who are struggling to find the wonder and joy in Christmas this year—that they will be drawn to look afresh at the miracle of Jesus, and be filled with awe that the tiny baby - born in a manger one starry night - continues to transform the lives of many throughout the world. O Come Let Us Adore HIM, Christ the LORD.

On the subject of simplicity—heres’ a reminder of how to support this years’ Christmas Appeal in the most simple and Covid secure way...

Amazon Wish List: https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/2Z8EV2DG7PN9Y?ref_=wl_share

JustGiving <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/newcastle-city-temple-salvation-army>

Cash/Cheques we will be pleased to receive cash or cheque donations which will then be used to Purchase gifts for the appeal. Donations can be given to either CT Iain Murray or Major Liz Hancock

Bank Transfer A/C no. 00178500 **Sort Code** 60-01-73 **Reference:** NE10/C1CM00002/CHRISTMAS

VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS CARD...

Don’t forget too that in lieu of Christmas Cards, we are planning to produce a simple Virtual Christmas Card Presentation, interspersed with Christmas Carols by video link, in addition to a typed List of Christmas Greetings which will go out weekly with the worship bulletin (Similar to the Prayer list).

Thank you to those who have already submitted their donation and simple greeting. Your donation can be sent by cash or cheque (made payable to The Salvation Army); if paying by cash it is probably safer to hold on to this until it can be safely collected from you. Please do not use the Just Giving Page or bank transfer for these donations.

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VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS FAYRE

To keep faith with those who have purchased and produced 'festive' items for our Virtual Christmas Fayre / Sale of Work - I am still hoping that we will still be able to offer some items for sale/delivery in time for Christmas - and therefore I hope to produce, for circulation early next week, a simple Catalogue (on and off line) to enable people to 'Pre-order' items. Arrangements will then be made for prepared goods to be collected and delivered, just as soon as we see the easing of the lockdown restrictions. Thank you once again for your patience with regards to this matter.

A VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS - WITH NEWCASTLE CITY TEMPLE

Sunday 29th November: Advent Windows 1. *A Season of Expectation*
Zoom Worship at 10:00

Sunday 6th December: Advent Windows 2. *A Season of Preparation*
Zoom Worship at 10:00

Sunday 13th December: Advent Windows 3. *A Season of Promise*
Zoom Worship at 10:00

Zoom Sunday School at 14:00

Simply Jesus - Pre-recorded Worship available from 3pm: Contemporary Lessons & Carols

Sunday 20th December: Advent Windows 4. *A Season of Celebration*
Christmas Joy! - Pre-recorded Carol Service available from 3pm

Friday 25th December: Christmas Day

Manger Scene - A simple pre-recorded service available for viewing from midnight on Christmas Eve

The NCT SA Connected Weekly Worship bulletin, as always, will be produced and issued to compliment the Zoom Worship and Virtual Carol Services. This will be especially helpful for those unable to access on line worship. If possible, we will also endeavour to produce DVD's of the pre-recorded worship which some may also find helpful. Major Liz Hancock is looking for volunteers who would be willing to be part of the pre-recorded virtual carol services by doing a reading, introducing a carol, band or songster piece (or similar), by video. Please speak to Liz as soon as possible . Thank you.

CHRISTMAS AT HOME WITH THE SALVATION ARMY

In place of the usual 'live' carol service held annually at The Royal Albert Hall - our Territorial Headquarters have put together a virtual Carol Concert. The concert will be available via you tube from Wednesday 2nd December 2020 at 8pm.

You can watch the concert via the following link:

www.youtube.com/user/salvationarmyvideo



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ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

Today - **22nd November** — '**Stir up Sunday**' **Sunday Morning Worship** on ZOOM at 10:00am
<https://zoom.us/j/98563486482?pwd=MGFXMmhmZkVwMWZOTTTaS2t3UjkrUT09>

Meeting ID: 985 6348 6482

Passcode: 865412

TUESDAY 24th November **Virtual Coffee Morning and Catch Up** 11am via ZOOM

<https://zoom.us/j/91349683764?pwd=WVZYMUdrUW02eUdIMUM5WTJVOTk0QT09>

Meeting ID: 913 4968 3764

Passcode: 603486

THURSDAY 26th November **BM Bob Dare's LYFE Housegroup** at 7pm via Zoom, Session 4

Bob will be in touch this week with members re the Meeting ID and Passcode

SATURDAY 28th NOVEMBER - Weekly Youth Quiz at 6pm via ZOOM

Details and ZOOM access code from David Bone

SUNDAY 29th November: Advent Windows 1. *A Season of Expectation*
Zoom Worship at 10:00

Meeting ID: 985 6348 6482

Passcode: 865412

Follow Newcastle City Temple on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/7925570038/>

[Newcastle City Temple Virtual Christmas Fayre | Facebook](#)



To access the Web Page please copy and paste the following link into your web browser;

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/newcastle-city-temple>

This week I received a letter from Judy Walker which included this short poem which she has written and asked me to share.

LOCKDOWN

Lockdown looks here to stay

The virus won't go away

Let us pray, that it will go away.

People dying

People crying

Don't be sad

They have gone to a better place

Where there will see an angels face

God has let them in his place. (JW)



"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works"

Hebrews 10:24 (ESV)

With every blessing

Major Liz

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Reimagining Church - Let's Worship Together



SUNDAY: 22nd November 2020

Theme: Stir up our hearts Lord... to thanksgiving

Key Text: Hebrews 10; 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Psalm 100 - A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his[a];
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Stir it up!

A few years ago, prompted by a telephone call received one Saturday morning, from my Mum, I started a new tradition in my Christmas Calendar to observe what is known as 'Stir Up Sunday'. I was just about finishing off my Sunday prep, though struggling to know what to do for the 'YP slot' - when in a flash of inspiration my mum suggested that we could 'Stir Up' a Christmas Pudding together during morning worship.

In actual fact breaking slightly with tradition—I chose for us to 'Stir Up' a Christmas Cake instead - that way on Christmas Day, (having taken the mix home to bake and 'feed' before finally decorating) we could enjoy a slice of Christmas Cake together with a piece of Wensleydale, after the close of our morning worship... and so commenced a much anticipated annual tradition. Instead of making wishes, each member of the congregation back in Chester le Street, were invited to make a silent prayer as they stirred up the rich offering.

In the heyday of the Book of Common Prayer in the Church of England, the last Sunday before Advent was an exciting day in many homes, for people of all ages. It was the day to make Christmas puddings. This was because the words of the collect for that day were these:

'Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people; that richly bearing the fruit of good works, they may by you be richly rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

The following elements were included in The Stir-up tradition...

- The recipe would traditionally contain 13 ingredients to represent Jesus and his disciples;

For my Cake recipe I use...

- 1lb,12oz Mixed Vine Fruit (currants, sultanas, raisins)
- 4oz Glace cherries
- The Zest of 1 Orange
- The Zest of 1 Lemon
- 3 tbsp Orange Juice
- 8oz Unsalted butter
- 4 Large Free Range Eggs
- 8oz Dark Muscavado sugar
- 8oz Plain flour
- 1/2 tsp Mixed Spices
- 1/4 tsp Ground Nutmeg
- 2oz Chopped Almonds
- 1tbsp Black treacle

Suggested songs for this week

Thank you God for your gift beyond words (SASB 60)

I will enter His gates (SASB 337)

Thank you for every new good morning (SASB 394)

Give thanks (SASB 364)

Band Piece: Psalm of Thanksgiving - Paul Sharman

<https://youtu.be/puhJ0zykso>

Songster Piece: Count your blessings

https://youtu.be/1LmTGcx_NgM



- The pudding is traditionally stirred (while making a wish) by each member of the family from East to West, to remember the Wise Men that visited Jesus in the Nativity story.
- It was customary to garnish the pudding with a sprig of holly to represent the crown of thorns
- The adding of coins , originally charms, to the pudding was said to bring the finder good fortune when found in their portion of the pudding on Christmas day.

Reflection: Stir up our hearts Lord... to thanksgiving

On Thursday - throughout America people will be celebrating Thanksgiving .

It's a celebration that began as a day of giving thanks for the blessing of the harvest and of the preceding year. The earliest thanksgiving celebrations can be traced back to the early part of the 16th century, and as President of the United States, George Washington proclaimed the first nationwide thanksgiving celebration in America marking November 26, 1789, "as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the many and signal favours of Almighty God"

Today I invite you to join with me in inviting God to **'Stir up our hearts to thanksgiving'**. To all who read this message—my prayer today is that God would stir up your heart and mine, so that we would develop and nurture an attitude of thankfulness.

1st Chronicles 16:34 says; ***Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.***

In Ephesians 5:18-20 we read;

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's good to give thanks to God.

In James 1:17 we read;

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows'

When we begin to recognize and embrace this truth, it helps facilitate a greater relationship with God; and there are disciplines and habits we can develop that help us create hearts that are thankful:

Giving thanks requires practice. We need to regularly give thanks for the good things in our lives. We need thankfulness and not criticism to be our default position. When we recognise something good in our lives, we should make a mental note of it and give thanks to God for it.

I have a friend who used to be one of the most pessimistic people you could ever meet – she would always find something to moan about or be critical of, but for the last twelve months or so she started posting on Facebook... 'three good things' each evening and the difference in her whole outlook truly is amazing; and when people spend time with her, this new found positivity starts to brush off.

I recall a time when she had to have her elderly dog put to sleep; she was devastated - but that evening this is what she posted;

'Lovely vets, caring neighbours, a good five miler', There are times when the things she offers thanks for are things which we might consider 'significant' but more times than not it's the little things, the things which we might so easily overlook - which she offers thanks to God for. 'Clean Bed Sheets, Great Tasting Coffee, An unexpected phone call '

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We all complain occasionally, but when we practice responding to our own complaints by finding things to be thankful for, this helps to rewire our brains to be proficient at recognizing the good in our lives, as much as we are at identifying the bad.

In 1 Thess. 5:18, Paul says **'Give thanks in all circumstances... and then he explains why, he tells us, 'for this is God's will for you'**

Often we lack perspective in our lives. We don't have the clarity to look at any situation and say with any certainty why it's happening, but what we should know is that God is in the midst of it, and that He is working to bring good out of it. No matter what we are going through, we can give thanks that God is there. He is redeeming the situation and sustaining us through it. Left to our own devices, we focus on what's going on around us – but we can transcend our experience when we're able to lift our eyes above it and see God's handiwork in the middle of it. A.W. Tozer says, **"Perhaps it takes a purer faith to praise God for unrealized blessings than for those we once enjoyed or those we enjoy now."**

We need to **Give thanks to God when things are going well.** It might seem strange to offer this advice, but it is important. Our default position is to expect that things will and should go well for us. When life is running smoothly, it's easy for us to forget that this is a gift from God. We don't see the ways that He protects and guides us along the way towards those 'Green pastures' and Still Waters' – which the Psalmist David wrote about.

We also need to **Recognise the good that has come from bad experiences.** It's good to spend some time reflecting on the difficulties we've already been through. With enough distance, we can begin to recognize the good that came out of those experiences. Maybe it gave birth to a new blessing or it built our stamina and endurance. Either way, learning to see past trials through eternity's perspective enables us to be more thankful during times of struggle.

Finally, we need to **Understand the power of giving thanks.** I'm sure we all know someone who has come through some kind of horrendous experience, but it always seems to be the case that those who are most thankful, and have learnt to recognise God's hand, are the ones who have the most courage and strength. It's as though thankfulness builds resilience – these are the people who having come through great suffering or trial will boldly declare – "I don't know people cope without faith".

You see, thanksgiving is a kind of superpower that enables us to see past our experiences and embrace the way that God is moving, and not only are thankful people able to draw strength from gratitude, but they are also able to empower others with their perspective as well.

So, **what are you thankful for...** let us pray for God to ***Stir up our hearts, so that with thankfulness we will declare the praise of His name in all circumstances, bringing glory and honour to Him,*** and that we will begin to enrich the lives of those around us – as our positivity impacts others for good.

Rick Warren says; ***"God smiles when we praise and thank Him continually. Few things feel better than receiving heartfelt praise and appreciation from someone else. God loves it, too... An amazing thing happens when we offer praise and thanksgiving to God. When we give God enjoyment, our own hearts are filled with joy."***

Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with thankfulness by the power of the Holy Spirit. AMEN