



Newcastle City Temple Connected

Reimagining Church Together

Dear Friends

The countdown to Christmas has commenced - today being the first Sunday in Advent, and Pope Benedict XVI has this to say;

'It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope'.

This four-week period leading up to Christmas Day, can be a time during which God prepares our hearts to receive Jesus anew - the one who not only came to bring hope — but the One in whom all hope is found. Though our Christmas celebrations will be different this year, especially given the confirmation that we come out of national lockdown on Wednesday and into Tier Three Restrictions, the reason for our celebrations remains the same - may we not lose sight of that! Perhaps it is more meaningful than ever to remember, Emmanuel, God is with us - He never has, and he never will abandon us. So Come, Let Us Adore HIM, Christ the LORD.

Come Thou long expected Jesus

Born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in Thee

All Thy people's consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

*Sweet chiming bells Oh! How they ring
To welcome Christ, the new born King
Sweet chiming bells Oh! How they ring
To welcome Christ, the King*

SASB 104

<https://youtu.be/UJDbk5Fu3jI>

VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS CARD...

Starting next week - I hope to start sharing the Christmas Greetings which corps members wish to share with one another in lieu of sending Christmas Cards. I plan to do this in two ways;

- A simple pre recorded virtual Christmas Card presentation of Videoed Messages interspersed with Christmas Carols.
- 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. 80% of donations in lieu of cards will go to the Building Fund and 20% to the YP Corps.

WEBSITE

For those with internet access you will find lots of helpful links on our Corps Website. Including links to past editions of this weekly worship bulletin & links to the Christmas Appeal (Just Giving Page and Amazon Wish List). We will also be posting any pre-recorded Worship Services there, To access the webpage please copy and paste the following link into your web browser.

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

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VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Details of the Virtual Christmas Fayre can be found in the Product Catalogue included with this bulletin or via the following link.

<https://www.facebook.com/Newcastle-City-Temple-Virtual-Christmas-Fayre-108568724364306/>

We went 'live' with the sale on Friday 28th November and by the end of the day the pre-order sales value stood at £87.75. Thank you to all who are supporting this initiative (makers, bakers and buyers) and a big thank you to Denise who is coordinating all orders, sales and deliveries. **Total Sales (including pre sales) as of the end of Saturday £235.25.**

BBC THE ONE SHOW

On Thursday evening The Salvation Army's Christmas Present Appeal was featured on The One Show. Thursdays screening was the first in a series of films, and over four weeks, viewers are being told about the importance of the Appeal for struggling families and encouraged to donate a present, if they are able. Up to five million people watch each episode and this has already proven to be an amazing way for corps to reach out to new supporters. Whilst the show was still airing - I received a phone call from a prospective volunteer; moments later a notification that an anonymous donor had donated £20 (+£5 Gift Aid) via our Christmas Just Giving Page and I spotted a few additional purchases appear on our Amazon Christmas Wish List. Further phone calls from people offering toys followed on Friday - the result of viewers being directed to The One Show website, which then linked to the Christmas Present Appeal page on The Salvation Army website, where people can then search for their nearest participating corps.

CHRISTMAS AT HOME WITH THE SALVATION ARMY

For those with internet access - we are invited to celebrate Christmas at Home on The Salvation Army's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/salvationarmyvideo>) on Wednesday 2nd December at 8pm. This will be a not-to-be-missed evening including highlights from the Royal Albert Hall with Christmas music, carol singing, messages and readings from celebrities and contributions from the ISB and ISS. The concert will be available via the following link <https://youtu.be/wNLpgWdK4is>

You can also watch "Christmas at home with The Salvation Army Trailer" on YouTube <https://youtu.be/wRniz2tTPL4>



THE SALVATION ARMY SONGBOOK DEVOTIONAL SERIES

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WWW.USAMUSICWEST.ORG/SA-DEVOTIONALS

From Dec 1st through to Dec 25th 2020, Kevin John Larrson will be sharing daily advent devotionals via Facebook and Youtube.

Kevin writes; "For those of you who have been following this page for some time, you will know that we have done these devotionals for two Advent seasons so far and we have exhausted our repertoire of public domain carols. So this year, we have 25 brand new songs by composers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the 4 USA Territories. As always, each new song will also include a devotional thought.

I don't know about you, but I'm incredibly excited about this! We have so much talent within The Salvation Army and I'm so honoured to be able to offer this platform to give our song-writers an opportunity to express themselves.

More information is to follow but I can tell you that each video will be available as a direct download, to allow Corps and other ministries to use them as part of their online ministry during these unprecedented times. Stay tuned - more to come.

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/TSASONGBOOKSERIES

WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/C/THE SALVATION ARMY SONGBOOK DEVOTIONAL SERIES

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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

SATURDAY 5th December - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED On Saturday we are hoping to have access to Brunswick Methodist Church to enable us to record some items for the pre recorded Christmas Services. This would need to be carefully managed, and people would be invited to attend at a given time. If you would like to take part in these recordings and could be free to meet at Brunswick, please speak to either Major Liz or David Richardson. We are looking for Soloists, Readers, Musicians (subject to guidance from HQ).

If you would like to take part - but feel more comfortable producing your own recording in your own home - then again please make this known to us. Thank You.

ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

TUESDAY 1st December *Virtual Coffee Morning and Catch Up* 11am via ZOOM
<https://zoom.us/j/91349683764?pwd=WVZYMUdrUW02eUdIMUM5WTJVOTk0QT09>

Meeting ID: 913 4968 3764
Passcode: 603486

TUESDAY 1st December *Major Liz's LYFE Housegroup* at 7pm via Zoom
<https://zoom.us/j/93852306712?pwd=MIRmL3pDV3diNWg2OEcyT2VzNXdwZz09>

Meeting ID: 938 5230 6712
Passcode: 241604

WEDNESDAY 2nd December *Territorial Carol Service* (details on previous page) 8pm

THURSDAY 3rd December *RS Heather Stubbs' LYFE Housegroup* at 7pm via Zoom

FRIDAY 4th December *Collecting Day at Morrison's Cowgate* 0900-1800
VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED. Please speak to Major Liz (One person, one bucket per hr required)

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Reimagining Church - Let's Worship Together

SUNDAY: 29th November 2020

Theme: Advent Windows 1. *A Season of Expectation*

Key Text: Isaiah 2:1-5



'May I ask what you were expecting to see out of a Torquay hotel bedroom window? Sydney opera House perhaps? The hanging Gardens of Babylon? Herds of wildebeest sweeping majestically across the plains of Africa?'

If you are a fan of the classic comedy series Fawlty Towers then you may have recognised those words, as the words spoken by John Cleese (alias Basil Fawlty) to an elderly guest who dared to complain that the view from her room was not quite what she had in mind.

The question, of course, is deliberately taken to ludicrous extremes, but its thrust takes us to the heart of Advent for this is a season that asks each one of us "What are you expecting?"

In secular terms, we can probably agree that there are three common expectations of Christmas;

Emotional Expectations - We hope that somehow, someday, something will happen that will allow us to feel the warmth of the "Christmas Spirit". People decorate their houses, go to parties, listen to Christmas music that they have heard hundreds of times before, and watch films like "It's a wonderful life" or "A Muppets Christmas Carol" over and over. Many people believe that there ought to be an 'up' feeling associated with this season, and if they don't get it - well this year wasn't as good as previous years! In a nut shell, that's the **emotional expectation of Christmas**.

Material Expectations - at Christmastime most people expect to give and receive gifts - and for some, particularly children (though not exclusively), the emphasis is placed on the hope of receiving. The retail industry thrives on the fact that that giving and getting is a big part of what Christmas has become; and so there is certainly **a material expectation associated with this season**.

Relational Expectations - the strong desire to experience the love of family and friends at a deeper level during this season. The relational expectation is one of the reasons why so many people travel at Christmas, where are they going? In many cases it is to be with family and friends - and that's great, but sadly for some people, Christmas can be a dreadfully lonely time, and for some an extremely painful time too.

One of my warmest, and perhaps most heart wrenching, recollections of Christmas day, spent at one appointment having served Christmas Lunch to those who would otherwise be on their own, was in receiving thanks from a young mum, who with her children was a guest from the local women's refuge. With tear-filled eyes she said 'this is the best Christmas me and my children have ever experienced', and then went on to tell me that it was the first Christmas meal she had ever eaten - where a row had not broken out across the table. The first Christmas which would not end with bruises and tears of anguish!

Similarly, I can recall the mixed tears of both joy and sorrow, from elderly guests as they shared how they couldn't remember the last time that someone had given them a gift - I tell you, it really tugs on your heart strings, and whether I found myself driving to York or Exeter later that day, ready to celebrate with my own family, I was always grateful for those couple of hours of solitude when with an open road in front of me - I was able to give thanks in my heart to God for his reminder once again as to just how blessed I was.

So as well as there being relational expectations at this time of year, there are emotional ones too; and this is especially true of course for those who have experienced a bereavement or other loss of a loved one; and it's especially poignant this year - as Covid restrictions prevent families meeting together in ways they might otherwise have hoped.

By large, there is nothing wrong in emotional, material and relational expectations - Who doesn't want that warm fuzziness of Christmas that brings tears of joy to our eyes, or the delight of giving and receiving lavishly wrapped gifts, and who in their right mind wouldn't want to add to their treasured memories of happy family times?

The concern comes, however, when we make these expectations, our only expectations or even our primary expectation.

It's the most wonderful time of the year...

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Reimagining Church - Let's Worship Together

Continued...

You see, if Christmas is only about emotions, material goods and relationships - then what happens the moment the TV breaks down, or the CD gets scratched and were unable to watch the right films or listen to the right songs? Or someone's facial expression suggests that we chose the wrong gift, and we end up with yet another box of cheap bath salts or nylon socks! What if our travel plans get messed up by appalling weather conditions, excessive motorway jams, or Covid Restrictions?

What happens when tempers begin to fray? Can't you just see how heavily dependent these expectations are on ideal circumstances, and how they are all too easily frustrated when things don't turn out the way that we had hoped and planned!

So what's the alternative?

Read for yourself, in your Bible, what the prophet Isaiah spoke of in **Isaiah 2:1-5**.

Advent is a time of great expectations, and this passage from Isaiah chapter 2 proclaims great expectations indeed! But Isaiah recorded his prophecies seven centuries before Jesus' birth and for most of those centuries Israel did not follow God.

Threatened, then overwhelmed, by a succession of superpowers, experiencing defeat in war and the humiliations of exile and captivity - why would other nations beat a path to Jerusalem in order to live in peace and worship the Jewish God there? The Jews were tired of waiting. During the last four hundred years before Christ's birth, even the prophets turned silent.

By the time the Messiah appeared in Bethlehem, only a few people - like the shepherds, Herod and the wise men - took any notice of the momentous event. This baby wasn't much for angel choirs to sing about - conceived out of wedlock, born to a poor couple from unfashionable occupied Galilee. Not the one, surely, to bring peace on earth, goodwill to all people. How could Isaiah's prophecy be fulfilled in him? **Read Isaiah 9:1-7;**

There was to be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past God had humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future God would honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, for...

² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned...

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

As we read these verses through, we cannot help but recognise the incredibly high expectations placed upon Jesus Christ, even before he was born.

In the midst of some awful prophecies about Judah and the fate of Jerusalem, we find this jewel of hope.

God loves his people so much that he will not let them go. **Unto us** (to you and to me) **a child is born, unto us** (to you and to me) **a son is given! His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.**

It is within these titles, these *unusual titles* for Jesus, that we find all the evidence we need for believing that he is able to live up to these expectations.

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Continued...

The title **WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR**; suggests an expectation of wisdom. "Wonderful" refers to the acts of God as being incomprehensible, marvellous or miraculous; and "Counsellor" carries with it the ideas of one who determines upon a plan of action and carries it out, and so Isaiah is saying that Judah's only hope was this "Wonderful Counsellor" whose plans, purposes, designs and decrees for his people would be marvellous. And thus worthy of trust.

There are times in each of our lives when we all need a counsellor - when we face any and every decision, this prophecy tells us that Jesus is there to advise us and give us direction.

The second title is **MIGHTY GOD** Here we find an expectation of power.

The word "mighty" was commonly associated with warfare and has to do with the strength and vitality of a successful warrior. Calling this child "God" is a prophecy regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ. He will be the all-powerful God himself! Christ is our victorious king who has already triumphed over the evil powers of this world, and because of this - we too can expect Jesus to continually give us victory over our struggles. As a "Mighty Warrior" he will deliver us safely from the wars we wage against, for He is our Mighty God!

The third title is: **EVERLASTING FATHER**. Here we find the expectation of care.

"Everlasting" points to a promise of a kingdom that will never end. But, "Father" is not to be confused with God the Father, instead it's a title which refers to the enduring, compassionate, fatherly care of the Messiah to His people.

Jesus provides the care we need and promises to be the protector of our lives. And so, we can count on Him to be our "Provider Forever," the Everlasting Father

There is one last title given in this verse: and that is **PRINCE OF PEACE**. This is an expectation of wholeness.

A "Prince" is a leader, and can be either a military commander or a noble prince.

"Peace" is the word "shalom" which means the absence of strife, completion, fulfilment or wholeness resulting in unimpaired relationships, and thus, we can expect Jesus to be our "Life Calmer."

He has brought peace to a once broken relationship with God.

Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This kind of peace, is life's greatest gift. A completely unimpaired relationship with God. What once was broken by sin, and impossible to restore, has been completed by Jesus Christ. - on the cross he cried, "It is finished!" But, he also provides "peace on earth," at least that's what the angels announced to the shepherds on the night Christ was born. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Peace on earth! Including the space of it that you occupy! Peace for you and me, in the midst of the most chaotic times.

So this advent - instead putting all our hope and trust merely in those common expectations we thought about earlier - Emotional Expectations, Material Expectations, Relational Expectations - which can be so easily affected by the waves of time and circumstance - let us put our hope and trust in the one who truly is our "Top Advisor" - Jesus the Wonderful Counsellor; our "Victorious Warrior" - Jesus the Mighty God; the one who is our "Provider Forever" - Jesus the Everlasting Father and our "Life Calmer" - Jesus the Prince of Peace, - for The Word, coupled with experience, tells us - that Jesus truly lives up to the expectations placed upon him, and He will never fold under pressure.

May the God of all hope fill you with joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. AMEN (Rom. 15:13)

Suggested worship links for this week

Band Piece - Advent Hymn
<https://youtu.be/XZ3PCsyVRw0>

Song: Come thou long expected Jesus (SASB 104)
<https://youtu.be/UJDbk5Fu3jI>

Songster & Singing Co. Piece - This little light
<https://youtu.be/xfWkIxaaptE>

Song: The Candle Song
<https://youtu.be/teZaQUKjx24>

THE LIGHT HAS COME!

