



Newcastle City Temple Connected

Reimagining Church Together

Dear Friends

Over the past two weeks we have lit the first two candles on our Advent Wreath – the Candle of Hope and the Candle of Peace, and for those able to join with us live on Zoom, today we will be lighting the third Candle - a Candle which represents Joy.

It's always around this point in the Advent Season, that I start to feel a little fatigued, for it's at this stage that we usually find ourselves in the height of the Carolling Season, and as far as the Toy Appeal is concerned new gifts are often being dropped off as quickly as prepared parcels are being collected; the phone calls are almost constant, and then there are Carol Services to prepare - and the work involved in doing so, is always more than a regular Sunday service, as you try to encourage the involvement of others - and whilst there are some things which we've been unable to do, Covid has made things a lot more complicated this year, we've needed to adapt tried methods to fit within current restrictions, this has limited the number of volunteers which can be employed—adding to the burden of the few; we have also had to get to grips with new technology - whilst consciously seeking to provide for those without online access... so is it any wonder that we're starting to feel tired! Even for those who are not able to be as 'active' as they would like to be - due to the need to isolate and refrain from mixing with others, or find themselves stuck indoors with no safe place to go, made worse by the shorter days, long dark nights and 'miserable' weather - will testify to a feeling of fatigue - if not physical then certainly emotional and maybe even spiritual.

I have to tell you that I love Advent, and this year is no different - I love the busyness, but in those days when I'm feeling pretty much spent, I need to remind myself not to be so overtaken by the activity that I get so engrossed in 'doing' that I forget to simply 'be'. There is a danger that with tiredness comes an irritability which robs us of the *Joy* which this season boasts; so let us pause for a moment now... and in your minds eye, come with me to Bethlehem and see...

*How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
(As) God imparts to Human hearts, the blessings of His Heaven.
No ear may hear His coming: but in this world of sin.
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ Christ enters in.*

As you image the scene - as you ponder with awe and wonder, I encourage you to pray these words;

*O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.
(May) we hear the Christmas angels, the great **glad tidings** tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel*

Song: O little town of Bethlehem <https://youtu.be/t8cTYtFoL-s>

Having lit the Candle of Hope and the Candle Of Peace today we light and reflect upon the Candle of Joy.

The Candle of Joy reminds us of the joy that Mary felt when the angel Gabriel told her that a special child would be born to her - a child who would save and deliver his people. God wants us all to have joy. The angel who announced to the shepherds that Jesus had been born told them: "Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news of a great joy for all people - for to you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

In lighting this candle we remember that Christ brings the promise of a new life - a life in which the blind receive sight, the lame walk, and the prisoners are set free. We light it to remember that He is the bringer of true and everlasting joy.

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Simply Jesus

This afternoon at 3pm, a video of our 1st Pre-Recorded Carol Service should be available for viewing both on Facebook (Newcastle City Temple Salvation Army Church) and on You Tube via the following link; <https://youtu.be/O1quzvDLbjg>

Virtual Christmas Card

Included within this Bulletin is a list of Christmas Greetings received from members of the Corps; a virtual Christmas Card *will soon be available* for viewing via the following link, which gives access to a Google Drive File in which the Video is stored. *I'm hoping this will be available from Monday 14th December*
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sq-3SjjJ1EGsKmSaC0vkqoXIQGYBrQ1c?usp=sharing>

Thank you

Firstly thank you to those who helped collect at **Morrisons Cowgate on Friday 4th December** - I can now announce that the amount collected was **£448.98**, which in the circumstances & without a band playing carols in support of the effort, was an amazing amount. Well done.

Thank you too, to all who have supported, either by supplying or purchasing items for the '**Virtual Christmas Fayre**' - the amount raised to date is **£342.75**. There are still a few items available for sale including; **x6 Santa Soups**, **x6 Snowman Poop**, **x5 Reindeer Poop**, **x3 Sleighs with Chocolate Coins**, **x4 Green Felt Bags filled with Chocolates**, **x2 Red Felt Bags filled with Chocolates**, **x3 Gift Bags Filled with Chocolates**, **x1 Pink Sweet Wreath**, **x1 Gold Heroes Wreath**, **x4 Elf Beakers filled with Sweets** & **x3 Santa Beakers filled with Sweets**. For more details please speak to Denise.

Finally thank you to all who have donate to and assisted with this years **Toy Appeal**; Collecting, Sorting, Allocating, Bagging and Delivering the gifts. We have had an overwhelming response to the appeal in terms of toys, gifts and monetary donations received. I've been blown away by peoples generosity, which has enabled us to date to prepare **Toy Parcels for 263 children plus gifts for 14 men** who are resident in the Anti-Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery units Safe House here in Newcastle. A huge well done and thank you to everyone.

A VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS - WITH NEWCASTLE CITY TEMPLE...

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

VIRTUAL COFFEE MORNING - WITH A FESTIVE FEEL

15th December Virtual Coffee Morning and Catch Up 11am via ZOOM
CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY - out on your favourite Christmas Jumper (if you have one), Grab a Coffee, Mince Pie (or other seasonal delicacy) and join in the festive conversation.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://zoom.us/j/94036559399?](https://zoom.us/j/94036559399?pwd=S3lCVFU1QklkcWVsQnJrRUpWNDlNdz09)
[pwd=S3lCVFU1QklkcWVsQnJrRUpWNDlNdz09](https://zoom.us/j/94036559399?pwd=S3lCVFU1QklkcWVsQnJrRUpWNDlNdz09)

Meeting ID: 940 3655 9399

Passcode: 236837



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Reimagining Church - Let's Worship Together

SUNDAY: 13th December 2020

Theme: Advent Windows 3. *A Season of Promise*

Key Text: Luke 1:5-17



Two weeks ago, we commenced a four-part series entitled 'Advent Windows'. To reiterate some of the things we have spoken of thus far; Advent is a season for looking forward, anticipating the future, and preparing ourselves for the coming again of Jesus Christ. It is a season of expectation - One of the reasons we light our Advent candles is to symbolise our mood of expectation at this time - When will He come? the answer is we do not know, we cannot know, and actually we do not need to know; or at least not if prepare well...living in such a way that when he comes, we will be happy to be found by him, and ready to welcome him as our living Lord & Saviour.

In considering the idea of Advent being 'A Season of Expectation', we considered the idea of there being three main secular expectations of Christmas - the emotional, the material and the relational expectations, and we spoke about how in each case - such expectations were heavily dependent on ideal circumstances and how easily such expectations could be dashed, resulting in disappointment. Similarly, we said last week under the heading Advent - 'A Season of Preparation' that we could easily classify secular Christmas preparations in the same way, and again we spoke how easily such preparations could be spoilt by the winds of circumstance, leading to disappointed - and perhaps even resentment.

Primarily Advent is a season of Spiritual Expectation as we anticipate not only the coming of Christ as the babe born in Bethlehem, but also his second coming, and it is important that we take time to prepare ourselves spiritually.

Today - we throw open the third window on Advent - the window of Promise... and we begin by considering words found in Luke's Gospel,

Bible Reading: Luke 1:67-79 (Zechariah's Song)

Luke 1:67-79 recalls Zechariah's song of joy and delight, in response to the birth of his son, John, and the idea of 'promise' is a central theme of his song. The birth of John the Baptist shows not only that God kept His promise to Zechariah and Elizabeth, that they would have a child - even though Elizabeth was well advanced in years, but it also shows God at work, keeping a much older promise to His people.

Zechariah sang about John getting everything ready for Jesus' arrival. Zechariah was happy because God was keeping his promises and Christmas is all about promise and fulfilment.

Christmas is about the ancient promise that God, would one day send forth a redeemer, a ruler, and prince of peace; a promise which indicates the level of concern which God has for his world.

It is a promise which was so dimly perceived and so poorly understood for centuries, but nonetheless so faithfully held among God's people; and we believe that this promise *was and is* fulfilled in the one, who as the carol reminds us,

*...came, a tiny babe,
From Heav'ns eternal splendour,
And angels, shepherds, kings,
To him did homage render.
He came mankind to save,
This little one so lowly,
Within a manger stall,
They laid Heav'ns Prince most holy*

Our faith is about a profound promise, and its fantastic fulfilment. We worship today because we have heard God's promise. We have heard His promise to us. A promise that says 'I will save you'. A promise that says 'You are precious to me and I love you', a promise that offers to us - abundant life, eternal life. A promise that offers deep joy and peace that exceeds all ordinary understanding and expectation.

In Matthew 1:22-23 we find these words;

²² *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:* ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

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Reimagining Church - Let's Worship Together

Continued...

In Luke 2 v10, the angel said;

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.

In an article entitled 'The Promise of Advent', William Stacy Johnson writes;

The season is upon us when all our hopes are trained on the inexhaustibility of a particular event in time and space, the coming of Jesus Christ. It is a season in which we remember that the gospel is received in the mode of anticipating and awaiting a promise. Christ has come, but Christ is yet to come. The Word has become flesh, but the last word has not yet been spoken. Jesus Christ has preached the kingdom, but he has not yet delivered that kingdom into the hands of the one he called Father. The promised coming still unfolds inexhaustibly before us - an unfolding inexhaustible in what has already been revealed, and inexhaustible in what is still there to be revealed.

God's work on earth is not yet finished, and God is not yet finished with us. You and I are not yet what we shall be. In Genesis Chapter 17 v 7 that we find the gist of all the Promises which God has ever made with man; it is found in the Covenant promise which God made with Abraham when he said;

'I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you'.

In establishing this covenant – God was promising to be with His people forever. God will be with them, and they will be with God. And this is of course how things were in the beginning.

Way back in the Garden of Eden – God could be found walking with man. In Genesis 3:8 it says;

'Then the man heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day...'

What a beautiful image that is... or at least it would be if we were not aware of the consequence of man's disobedience, with man being banished from the garden – unable to continue that close fellowship with God! Yes that is how it was, and how God intended it to be... but all is not lost. Revelation chapter 21 provides us with an insight as to how things will be in the New Heaven and the New Earth; and in verse 3 we can read;

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. — Rev 21:3.
Man's intimacy with God will be restored.

God with the people of God - is God's plan - from beginning to end.
Remember what Isaiah said about the Messiah –

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Is 7:14)

Immanuel means "God with us"... This is God promise to us. A promise perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.
And the government will be on his shoulders.
And his name will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government
and of peace - there will be no end.
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.
And the government will be on his shoulders.
And his name will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end.

Suggested Carol: Who is he in yonder stall?

*'Tis the Lord! O wondrous story,
'Tis the Lord, the King of Glory!
At his feet we humbly fall,
Crown him, crown him Lord of all!*

<https://youtu.be/u5PXoM4qHZA>

**May the Love of God surround you,
May the Grace of God astound you,
May the Hope of God ground you.
Now and always. AMEN**

Do you believe in God? Do you trust His Promise to you?