



# Chester Cursillo

## Winter Newsletter 2023



*winter now my soul. Make good of the cold. There is no use clinging on - let yourself go; settle into deep sighs under thick blankets, the candles summoning dulcet shadows on the walls.*

*Empty is not devoid; it is the space to breathe, the hollow for the seed, the sanctuary in which you can slowly regather yourself. Gideon Heugh*

*'Winter your soul' is a phrase that spoke to me; taking care of it in the darkness that December brings; treating it with gentleness and kindness and feeding it with warmth. How? Enter Advent...a season that asks us to mark the days and make them count, to take on a gentler pace of life in a world that talks of consumerism; the must haves to make 'the best Christmas'. We take care of it in the knowledge that God loves us, that He sent His only Son as a gift of that love and in the knowledge that Jesus will come again. Mark 13.33 : Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.*

*Make this Advent your invitation to make much of Jesus in your heart, in your home, with your church, and in our world.*



## Bev's Blog

As part of my Apostolic Action, I have joined a local Open the Book group (OTB). OTB is part of the Bible Society and consists of volunteers who go into schools on a regular basis to tell stories from the Bible to children. We often dress up and have props which have been crafted by long suffering, but very capable, husbands!

Things don't always go to plan but that is half the fun of doing it, and we have become very adept at 'winging it' when necessary. We always get a warm welcome from staff and pupils alike, regardless of whether it is a church school or a secular one.



Dressed as Goliath for one of our OTB stories!

This led me on to thinking. Often, we are reticent to share our Christian faith, and the good news of Christ, because we are wary of the reaction we will receive. But in my experience, there are a lot of people out there who really want to hear about God and experience something of Christianity, particularly at this time of the year.

Advent gives us lots of opportunities to be a Christian Community in action!

At St Paul's Macclesfield, where I worship, we have an annual Community Carols in the Churchyard. This year it will be on December 22nd at 7pm. (All welcome!)

It is a special occasion which is well attended by the local community. Many of these people don't usually attend worship at St Paul's on a regular basis but our annual Carol service gives us an opportunity to extend Christian hospitality to them all, in the form of mulled wine and mince pies. They enjoy a festive community event, and we get to share with them the real reason for the season.

I hope that this Advent brings you Hope and Peace, culminating in the joyous celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas.

Every blessing, Bev



## Advent Reflection

Welcome to Advent - a season of waiting and yearning.

In the University of Michigan stands the Global Doomsday Clock. This is not a normal clock, which ticks steadily onwards; no, this is a stationary clock, whose time is fixed by a committee of the top American scientists. Sometimes they move it backwards, but more often forwards. It tells us how long it will likely be before a global, man-made catastrophe ends human life on Earth. In 2023 (before nuclear-armed Israel came to blows with its neighbours) they moved it forward - to 90 seconds to Midnight (the Doomsday hour). 90 seconds!!

So, how come Christians remain stubbornly and defiantly optimistic about the future? Do we not know the dangers? I hope we do! And yet....and yet. Do we not believe in a Creator God, who so loved the world that he gave his only Son? Did not Jesus believe in - and die for - a coming Kingdom of God? Does not the Bible give us a picture of the New Jerusalem coming down to Earth, and the river of life flowing from the throne of God, bringing an end to the reign of mourning and death, pain and crying?

But never mind the Bible! Let's go back to that science. The probability of the Big Bang giving birth to any durable universe; the probability of this solar system giving birth to our fertile planet; the probability of blind, evolutionary chance giving birth to us - these probabilities are mind-bogglingly low, approximating to zero. But here we are!

And did you know that all the millions of heavenly bodies in our galaxy - the Milky Way - rotate in the same direction - EXCEPT for Triton, one of Neptune's moons? And why should that be? Well, I don't know, but it's difficult to assemble an answer which doesn't include the word 'God'.

In the first book of the Bible, God made a promise - a covenant - not to destroy the Earth; and the rainbow was its sign. In the last book of the Bible, there is a rainbow in the throne room, round God and the wounded Lamb.

So, we live in a dangerous world, where the terrible quartet of mourning, death, crying & pain still hold sway. But we dare to sing: "I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain that morn shall tearless be." And to persevere in prayer & love.

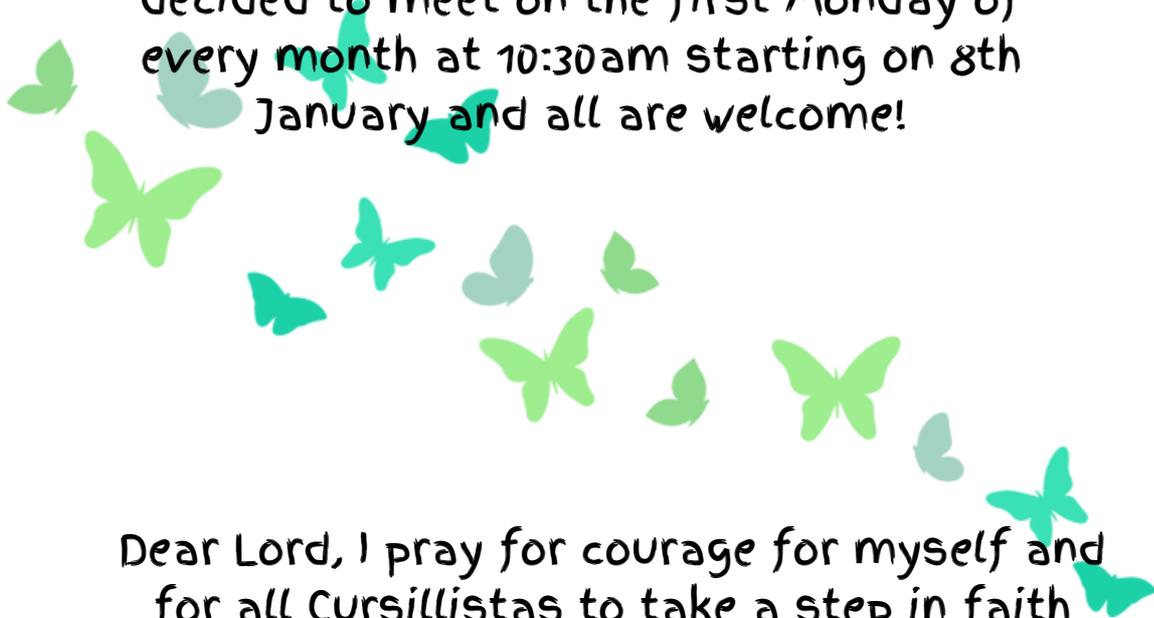
Tony, Chester Spiritual Director



# Focus on 4th Day Communities...

Ruth Arthur wrote...

Stockport Group Reunion met to welcome Home Sue Cordingley after weekend #64. How blessed we are to have her with us as a Cursillista - Sue had attended Group Reunion prior to being a participant of #64. Sue Burt has been on team and of course we are so fortunate to have our SD Tony in our group. Moving forward into 2024, we have decided to meet on the first Monday of every month at 10:30am starting on 8th January and all are welcome!



Dear Lord, I pray for courage for myself and for all Cursillistas to take a step in faith and so take an active part of the discipling movement of Cursillo, safe in the knowledge that you are always with us in all we do, equipping and guiding us. And I pray that through Cursillo, and in your strength, more people will be called to serve you.



# A funpage from Nick Hutt and Ruth Arthur...

Nick writes...I wrote these fine examples of thought provoking and insightful poetry for the Nantwich Christmas Ulteya during lockdown and held by zoom. Apologies to the Nantwich folk who have already been subjected, I mean, enjoyed them but since it was a couple of years ago no doubt the scars will have healed and faith been restored by now.

There was a young virgin called Mary  
who met an angel and was wary  
He said "Don't be afraid  
You are God's favorite maid"  
Even so, it was all pretty scary.



There were 3 wise men in Advent  
who were called by a star that God sent  
"We'll have to go far  
We've not got a car"  
Still, they packed up the camels and went.



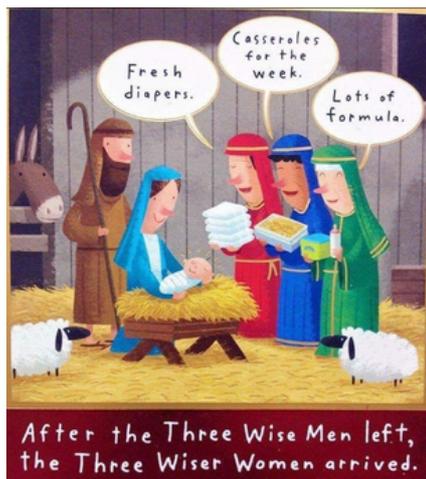
There were shepherds in a field counting sheep  
And, of course, they were nearly asleep  
when from out of the sky  
They heard a great cry  
"Get up, find God's son and greet"



A donkey taxi driver felt really done  
when his passenger gave birth to God's son  
He said "I shouldn't care  
But it's really not fair  
Now there are two; but they paid for one"



My favourite!  
Thanks Ruth



Ruth Arthur and Joan Clare have shared their thoughts on some  
Advent readings...

The first is from Ruth...

Stephen Cottrell (now Archbishop of York) dedicates this book 'for  
all those who thought they knew the story well'



The book begins by seeing through the eyes of Anna who comes  
face to face with the dazzling light of the glory of God. We then  
find Rachel weeping for her tiny son slaughtered by King Herod.  
And so we are led in reverse order through the angel's message,  
the awestruck shepherds, the Innkeeper's wife, the dreams of  
fearful but dependable Joseph, the joy of Elisabeth to the faithful  
young Mary (before she is pregnant) who muses 'I believe in God. I  
have this tremendous sense of the presence of God. Sometimes it  
frightens me because I don't know what to do with it. I know that  
other people don't see it or feel it quite like me. It's not that they  
don't believe, but belief does not seem to infuse them and inspire  
them like it does me. It is a belief that propels me deeper into the  
world and gives me a joyful longing to embrace the world and try  
to make it how God wants it. I simply believe in God like I believe in  
flowers and trees and birds and seasons. God is there with me and  
for me'

We then enter the dark, calamitous world of Isaiah who 'sees all  
sorts of things he does not understand but faithfully tells them  
knowing that it is from God' And we end with Moses in the  
wilderness. It is here through the voice from the burning bush that  
the great revelation comes - darkness will be scattered, and light  
will blaze forever.

This book is not designed as an Advent study but rather a  
refreshing way to look again and a new at the meaning of the  
Christmas story - I always enjoy reading this as I approach  
Christmas.



I "googled" Advent readings and up popped Amazon. My computer now knows how much I order from them and will probably put them on my Christmas card list for me! However, there was so much choice there that it was difficult for me to decide, especially as you can download most of them on Kindle [if you have one]. Also they had good reviews and comments, 4/5 stars.

There's the Archbishop of York's choice "Stick with Love" by Arun Arora. It has daily readings with themes of racial injustice, hospitality and welcome. Or perhaps you might prefer "Walking with Jesus". Here each week is centred on a specific theme that holds deep significance: hope, peace joy and love. Then there's "The Little book of Advent", a collection of readings from spiritual writers like Henri Nouwen, Rowan Williams, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Justin Welby and more. Although very tempting I was also drawn to "Advent for Everyone" by Tom Wright. I enjoyed his commentaries on the New Testament books and here he's exploring New Testament themes of thankfulness, patience, humility and joy. There's also questions for personal reflection or group discussion so that's the one my bible study group have gone with.

For those who love the music and singing during this period there's "Carols at Christmas" by Alan Vermilye. There is the history of the carol followed by six daily devotionals. There's even a volume two I've just discovered! For something completely different, how about "All is Bright Colouring Book" by Nancy Guthrie. As the 'blurb' says colour your way to Christmas. Or how about the "Advent Devotional Word Search Puzzle Book". It includes 26 readings which are written out in full.

Or you could try the Church of England's 'Follow the Star'. It starts on Christmas Eve and goes through to Epiphany.

My own choice? I decided on Stephen Cottrell's "Walking Backwards to Christmas". Who could resist a title like that!

Of course, you may have already made your choice, but, whatever you decide on the lead up to that special day, have a peaceful, joyous and loving time.

Joan

# St Paul's Macclesfield would like to share...

Parish Office/Centre: Glegg Street | Macclesfield | Sk11 7AJ 01625 501773

Find us on social media for up-to-date news and videos:

**Website:** [www.stpaulsmacc.org](http://www.stpaulsmacc.org)

**Facebook:** [stpaulsmacclesfield](https://www.facebook.com/stpaulsmacclesfield)

**Twitter:** @StPaulsMacc

**Instagram:** @stpaulsmacclesfield

**YouTube:** search St Paul's Macclesfield

This is *your* church and *you* are very welcome!

## Welcome to Advent and Christmas



"Living, loving, serving and growing together with God."

**ST PAUL'S CAFE** - Our pledge to provide a **FREE** warm space for the community.

**Saturdays 9.30am-12noon.FREE OF CHARGE.** Do come and join us,

In our Parish Centre, providing drinks & a hot cooked breakfast along with fellowship.

Could you help us by volunteering on a rota? please phone/email us on the numbers above.

Saturday 25 Nov  
10.30am - 12.30pm

### Christmas Fair

Refreshments, raffle, cake stall, games,  
brass band, Father Christmas, stalls

Friday 22 Dec  
7.00pm | **Community Carols  
in the Churchyard**

with Macc Youth Brass Band, fire pits, mulled wine & mince pies

Sunday 3 Dec

First Sunday of Advent

10.30am | **Parish Communion**

**Christmas Eve**  
10.30am | **Morning Prayer**



4.00pm | **Christingle Service**

Supporting The Children's Society Charity

Sunday 10 Dec

Second Sunday of Advent

10.30am | **All Age Service**

**Christmas Celebration with**

**St Paul's Uniformed Groups**

11.30pm | **Midnight Mass**

Sunday 17 Dec

Third Sunday of Advent

10.30am | **Parish Communion**

6.30pm | **Service of Lessons and Carols**

**Christmas Day**  
10.00am  
**Short Christmas Communion**

Sunday 31 Dec

10.30am | **Parish Communion**

Wed 6 Dec - Morning Prayer | Wed 20 Dec - Holy Communion, 11am in the Parish Centre.

## My new home

Vicki has shared these beautiful pictures of life in Stone...

I'm now living in Stone, Staffordshire. My morning dog walk is along the beautiful Trent and Mersey Canal. There are four locks going through the town. Here is the second one with a narrow boat at the top about to come down.



Some of the narrow boats have wood burners. Quite a sight on a cold morning.



There are always swans around. Here is an older cygnet.



Every happiness wished for you in your new home.  
Love and prayers always.



Thanks to all who contributed.