



The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

Issue 33: Sunday 6th December 2020

The Second Sunday in Advent



Dear Friends,

The season of Advent brings to our attention not only the theme of waiting and watching, but also the theme of hope. We travel through Advent waiting and watching with the Old Testament prophets, with John the Baptist and with Mary. Each of them in their own situation waited and watched for God's saving work to be revealed. Their shared hope was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

In this most unusual Advent, we join with the whole world in waiting and watching as we long for an end of the Covid pandemic, and the restrictions and suffering it brings. As the followers of Jesus, we wait and we watch with hope. This hope comes not only from the recent encouraging news from vaccine trials, but also from the knowledge that in the birth of Jesus, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1 v 5).

As we continue through December when the days are short and the evenings are dark, we are invited to turn our hearts and minds once again to focus our hope on Jesus who said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8 v 12). Jesus is our Advent hope! He is our light in times of darkness! We trust in Him as we wait and as we watch.

Yours in His service,

Chris Blake

Worship Reflection

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. (Psalm 85 v 8,9)

Hymn (StF 165 verse 2)

Prophet voices, loudly crying,
making pathways clear,
glimpsing glory, self-denying,
calling all to hear.

Through their message – challenged, shaken –
hearts awoken. God is near!

Prayer Loving God teach us that your gracious purpose goes back to the beginning of time and that it will endure until the end of time. Amen.

Bible Reading (Isaiah 40 v 1-5)

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid, that
she has received from
the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.



A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken'.

Reflection On this second Sunday of Advent, we are invited to focus our thoughts on the message of the Old Testament prophets. When we think of these prophets our initial reaction is, perhaps, to imagine a loud and angry man shouting words of rebuke and condemnation. Perhaps we compare these prophets to the present-day man (and it is usually a man) standing shouting at the crowds in a shopping centre while wearing a notice saying 'Repent, the end is nigh'.

Of course, when we look at the pages of the Old Testament, we do find that, at times, the prophets do offer a strong challenge and that often their message contains warnings of destruction and danger for those who don't repent and change their ways.

However, this is not the whole picture and, when the time was right, the Old Testament prophets offered words of hope and encouragement. One example of this is seen in our reading this week which comes from the start of Isaiah chapter 40. This chapter marks the start of a section of Isaiah which has a hopeful focus on the return of the exiles to their homeland and on words of comfort.

In these Advent days we reflect on the comforting hope seen in these words of Isaiah and we rejoice in the fulfilment of that hope in Jesus.

This theme of comfort is used by St Paul at the start of his second letter to the Corinthians where we read, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ"*. (2 Corinthians 1 v 3-5)

As Paul says – we have received the comforting love of God in Jesus – and now that message of hope is ours to share.

Prayers of Intercession

This week let us pray especially:

- For those who are deeply anxious about the future of their jobs or businesses
- For those who are lonely and afraid.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

Hymn (StF 169)

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.



Final Prayer May God bless us this Advent and may we be found ready and prepared to welcome Jesus. Amen.

The re-opening of our Church buildings

The Church Stewards at both Aldershot and North Camp are meeting this week to discuss the new Tier 2 restrictions and to agree if and when Sunday gatherings for worship can restart. They will be considering the practicalities of re-opening including the number of volunteers available to ensure that our services are 'Covid-Secure'.

Digital Christmas Cards.

We are producing 'Digital Christmas Cards' from Aldershot and from North Camp. Why don't you take a video recording of you and others in your household waving and saying, 'Happy Christmas everyone'? Please record your greeting using 'landscape' orientation and leave a few seconds before and after you speak to allow for editing. Send your greetings asap and no later than 18th December to chris.blake@methodist.org.uk



Glimpses of God's Glory

You are invited to submit a photograph or photographs that you or someone you know has taken which could be described as a 'Glimpse of God's Glory'. Please include 100 to 150 words describing what the photograph or photographs mean to you.



This week's contribution is from Frances Gawthrop from Aldershot.



Frances writes, "Psalm 19 starts 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands'. Most of us can look at the sky at night and see the expansiveness of God's glory.

I consider myself fortunate to have worked as a plant breeder and have frequently been in awe of the minuteness of God's glory. Genetics is fascinating. The DNA within each cell gives each organism, including you and me, a uniqueness. DNA is a double helix with each strand a long polymer chain of just four repeating nucleotides. A DNA molecule contains a code that can be used by a cell to express certain genes. Tremendous genetic advances have been made in the last decade and now we can sequence specific genes and we can work out the pathways in which different genes switch on and off to perform a process. Our creator God is amazing and awesome."