



Together as One

Newsletter of the Methodist Churches in Hungerford, Lambourn, Newbury and Thatcham during Coronavirus Pandemic

Verses for the week

‘Jesus who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!’ Philippians 2: 6-8

Seeing it another way

I like to challenge myself with cryptic crosswords. If you have ever read any cryptic crossword clues in a newspaper, unless you are familiar with them, they have probably made no sense to you. There are secrets and codes embedded in apparently random phrases which, with practice, you can learn to decode. Here, for anyone who enjoys such brainteasers, is one of my recent favourites.



A wicked burner. 6 letters and begins with ‘C’. The thing about such clues is often you have to find a way to read them from a different direction and that is why sometimes it is better to leave a clue you can’t solve and come back to it afresh later. Then (sometimes) by doing this a new understanding dawns. You have to stop thinking I know what this clue means, and be prepared to be surprised by the compiler. Thinking along tramlines doesn’t work if you are on the wrong track!

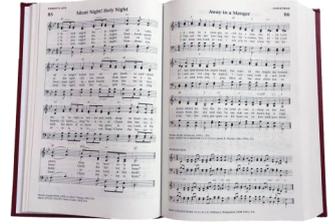
Christmas consists of many events that are not as might be expected. Some people can’t accept or appreciate them because they are thinking along fixed tramlines and seeing them from the wrong direction. These familiar events are full of surprises, surprises not to deceive or mislead like the crossword compiler does, but surprises because God’s ways and thoughts are not like ours. It takes humility to see things another way, to see things God’s way. We humans are generally not good at humility. If this year teaches us anything it should be to learn a little more humility. Our plans and expectations about 2020 as they were in January look rather foolish in December. It is humbling to know there are things we can’t predict, fully plan for or easily overcome. It is humbling to know we are not in control or at the centre of the universe. Ultimately we need to face the fact that humanity, we, cannot save ourselves.

Christmas gives us a supreme example of humility - God in Jesus leaving the glory of the heavenly realm to be born in such a place, in such a state and such a time. Jesus’ birth, His human life and very real human death are an act of selfless humility. They put us to shame and should puncture our puffed up pride. What else can we do but adopt the humble attitude of worship, bow our heads and hearts before such love, and kneel at the manger.

With love and prayers, Peter.

Words of Carols

For those who are able to attend services in church this Christmas we will be hearing carols played or sung by others but will not be able to join in. This will be a unique event in our lifetimes and may be unique in the long history of the church in this country. Sadly it is necessary, particularly as cases of Covid-19 are on the rise in this area. This loss may however give us the opportunity to focus on the words of carols which are often in the form of poetry and contain a lot of deep truth and Biblical references. Apart from expanding our vocabulary, I don't know when such words as oblations, begotten, chieftain, cloven, to touch (as in pluck a stringed instrument), strain (as in a song) and pitifully (as with an attitude of pity) can be used in our ordinary conversations today. Among the words of familiar carols you will also find names of Jesus that convey important truth worth thinking about e.g. the Sun of Righteousness, Prince of Peace, Immanuel, God the King, incarnate Deity, Love Divine, Word of the Father, Light of Light eternal and our God contracted to a span.



Christmas Worship in church unless indicated

Newbury - Sunday 20th December 10.30am Carol Service. A service of readings and carols led by Peter.

Sunday 20th December YouTube Carol Service available from 7.30am led by Peter and Chris.

Christmas Eve 3.30pm - A service of preparation for Christmas with Communion in quiet and candlelight, led by Peter.

Christmas Day 10.30am - A celebration of Christmas, led by Peter.

Christmas Day 10am - A Zoom connect and celebration of Christmas, led by Doris.

Hungerford - Sunday 20th December 10.30am Advent Service led by Helen Watson.

Christmas Day 10.30am - A celebration of Christmas led by Richard in the church.

Thattham - Christmas Day 10am - Karen will be hosting Zoom Coffee and Christmas Worship. It will be very informal, with coffee and chat first, then at 10.15am we will share our Christmas worship for 15 minutes. We will use the usual Zoom Coffee and Catch Up log in details. If you need the log in details, please contact a Steward. Come and join us.

Circuit - Sunday 27th December YouTube Service led by Circuit staff and stewards.

And finally an extra dose of festive fun!

Father Christmas had to have his sleigh checked for airworthiness by an official from the Civil Aviation Authority. The official carried out checks on the ground and then sat beside Father Christmas for a test flight. Suddenly Father Christmas noticed the official had a revolver in his pocket. 'What's that for?' he asked. 'You're not a hijacker are you?' 'No,' replied the official, 'but we have to see how your sleigh responds when you lose an engine on take-off.'

Topical cracker jokes.

Why did Mary and Joseph miss their video conference call?

Because there was no Zoom at the inn.

Why did the pirates have to go into lockdown? Because the "Arrrr!" number had risen.

Quote of the week from Elon Musk describing the crash landing of his SpaceX rocket as 'Rapidly unscheduled disassembly.'

Answer to crossword clue is Candle.