



HOLY TRINITY PRESTWOOD

MONTHLY HERALD DECEMBER 2018/JANUARY 2019

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Thought from Deiniol

Will you be listening to the Queen on Christmas Day? She is as much a part of Christmas as turkey and crackers. In an ever-changing world we hold on to the things that seem unchangeable. Perhaps that's why people still go to church at Christmas, when they don't at other times of year.

In a spirit of festive optimism may I commend a book to you that Teresia gave to me? I am slowly making my way through it, and I am finding it very heartening reading. It is called "Factfulness", by Hans Rosling. The strap line is "Ten reasons we're wrong about the world—and why things are better than you think." It's a book that seeks to counter the overwhelming pessimism that would greet the casual observer of a world in crisis.

"Not so!" says Mr Rosling. Look at the percentage of people living in poverty—it is much lower than it used to be. Look at rates of infant mortality—in the 1800s the average family had six children, of which two survived to adulthood. Now, the average family has two children and both survive to be adults. This is cause for great rejoicing, and there are many other facts about the world that give us cause for optimism.

So why do we feel so bad? Well, yes, things are bad. There is still poverty, there is still untimely death, many societies are cruel, and suffering still abounds. War has not ceased, despite our great remembrance this year. So, yes, things are bad—but they are also *better than they were*, and still getting better. It's not much of a headline, is it, "Things are getting better!—Slowly! Incrementally!?" But it is worth remembering.

There are two sides to the Kingdom of God, of which Christ's coming into the world at Christmas is a great sign and inaugural event. One is the dramatic end-of-the-world show, the wrapping up of history in

Christ's Kingly (and direct) rule. The kind of thing the Book of Revelation is about. The other side is about how the Kingdom of God creeps into the world, and has been doing so for 2000 years, through the faith and actions of people like you and me. This is what theologians call the 'now and not yet' of the kingdom. God's kingdom isn't always obvious.

"Know this," says Jesus, "the Kingdom of God has come near to you." This is for the people who needed to be told because they hadn't noticed it for themselves. It's not surprising that God's Kingdom can pass unnoticed when you think about how its King was born. Not in a palace, or a great hall. Not with a burden of expectation and a heavy robe. But in the ordinary way for most babies born throughout world history—in a back room, dirty, unkempt, ill-prepared despite the inevitability of birth. The Magi, travelling from the East and looking for a King, didn't get it either.

But this birth was actually the best news for a world in crisis. Things are getting better—slowly, incrementally, as a baby grows up to be a wandering teacher who attracts disciples, starts a movement and does something amazing and incredible when he is put to death on a cross. The Now of the kingdom is the reality of Jesus, and what he has accomplished for us. Our forgiveness and salvation. The Not-Yet is our understanding, and our confidence as humanity, to live confidently in this new way. Christmas is the time it starts—the truly unchanging event in an ever-changing world. So things are getting better, no matter what they say. All Kingdoms and Empires pass away, except this one which is still coming into being. Celebrate it's birth this Christmas.

December/January Services

Sunday 2nd

Advent Sunday

Jeremiah 33.14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3.9-end; Luke 21.25-36

8.00am

BCP Holy Communion

9.30am

Parish Eucharist

Ministry team – Mesopotamians

6.00pm

Advent Carol Service

On a journey from Darkness to Light, join us for carols and readings to mark Advent: the season of watching and waiting for Jesus' arrival

Sunday 9th

2nd Sunday of Advent

Baruch 5; Philippians 1.3-11; Luke 3.1-6

8.00am

BCP Holy Communion

9.30am

Parish Eucharist

Ministry team –Pontians

Thursday 13th

9.30-11.30am

Toddler Thursday's Christmas Praise!

Toddlers and carers gather round the crib for a short and special service during Toddler Thursday with refreshments afterwards

Saturday 15th

4.00pm

Prestwood Christmas Carol Service

Come and sing your favourite carols, with mince pies and mulled wine afterwards

Sunday 16th

3rd Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3.14-end; Philippians 4.4-7; Luke 3.7-18

8.00am

BCP Holy Communion

9.30am

Parish Eucharist and Nativity Play

Traditional children's Nativity play. Children can join in as sheep or stable animals on the day – just come in costume!

Ministry team – Pamphylans

6.00pm

Great Hampden Christmas Carol Service

Beautiful Christmas music and carols from the Hampden Quartet and guest musicians at this special service at

St Mary Magdalene, Great Hampden, HP16 9RD

Sunday 23rd

4th Sunday of Advent

Micah 5.2-5a; Hebrews 10.5-10; Luke 1.39-45

8.00am

BCP Holy Communion

9.30am

Parish Eucharist

Ministry team – Parthians

Christmas Eve

3.00pm/4.30pm/6.00pm **Children's Christingle and Crib Services**

For free tickets for the 3.00pm and 4.30pm services call: 01494 863805 or email: secretary@htprestwood.org.uk.

For 6.00pm service no tickets required – just turn up!

11.00pm

Midnight Mass

Isaiah 62.6 – end; Titus 3.4-7; Luke 2. 1-20

Christmas Day

9.30am

Family Eucharist fir Christmas

Isaiah 52.7-10; Hebrews 1.1-4; John 1.1-14

Sunday 30th **1st Sunday of Christmas**
1 Samuel 2.18-20, 26; Colossians 3.12-17; John 1.1-18

8.00am **BCP Holy Communion**

9.30am **Parish Eucharist**

Ministry team – Medes

Sunday 6th **Epiphany**
Isaiah 60.1-6; Ephesians 3.1-12; John 1. 10-1

8.00am **BCP Holy Communion**

9.30am **Family Eucharist and Procession of the Magi**

Ministry team – Elamites

3.00pm **Trefoil Carol Service**

Sunday 13th **Plough Sunday**
Isaiah 43.1-7; Acts 8.14-17; Luke 3.15-17,21-22

8.00am **BCP Holy Communion**

9.30am **Parish Eucharist**

Ministry team – Mesopotamians

Sunday 20th **3rd Sunday of Epiphany**
Isaiah 62.1-5; 1 Corinthians 12.1-11; John 2.1-11

8.00am **BCP Holy Communion**

9.30am **Parish Eucharist**

Ministry team –Pontians

Sunday 27th **4th Sunday of Epiphany**
Nehemiah 8.1-3, 5-6, 8-10; 1 Corrinthinas 12.12-31a; Luke 4.14-21

8.00am **BCP Holy Communion**

9.30am **Parish Eucharist**

Ministry team – Pamphylans

Midweek services

Mondays at 11.45am	Monday Prayers
Tuesdays at 9.30am	Informal Holy Communion & coffee
Wednesdays at 10.00am	BCP Holy Communion & coffee
Thursdays at 9.30-11.30am	Toddler Thursdays! (during term time)

Dates for your diary

Mondays	4.00-7.00pm	The Rock Project
	7.30pm	Table Tennis – Church Hall
Sunday 9th Dec	3.00pm-5.00pm	Advent Crafts Workshop
Saturday 22nd Dec	10.00am-12.00pm	Christingle Making
Workshop		
Friday 7th Dec	1.15pm	Pot Luck Lunch
Friday 4th Jan	1.15pm	Pot Luck Lunch

Floral Wreath Making

The first week in December sees a wonderful week of wreath making classes run by two amazing local florists, Daisy's Flowers and Rachael Ashton from Wild Rose Floral Design. Daisy's Flowers' workshops will be taking place in the evenings of Monday 3rd and Wednesday 5th December in the church and Wild Rose's will be held on Thursday 6th and Friday 7th December, also in the church. Both workshops are £45 per person and will cover all you need to know about making your own beautiful wreath and will include all your materials and a glass of fizz. Please book quickly to avoid disappointment as both workshops were very successful last year and limited places are available! For more information or to book your space, please contact Daisy's Flowers on 01494 865444 or email Wild Rose Floral Design on rachael@wildroseflorist.co.uk.

Waiting For Christmas - Advent?

Wait! - We don't do wait anymore.

Anyway Christmas has been going for weeks in the supermarket.

The children will have their Chocolate Advent Calendar on 1st December and we all know the story of the baby Jesus - it happens every year just the same. We hear it with the tinsel and lovely Nativity Plays. It has to be perfect! What's waiting got to do with it?.....

Are you telling me that the first Christmas wasn't perfect?

The lovely stable where Mary gave birth to Jesus was the only place available to Mary and Joseph at the end of a long journey on a donkey at 9 months pregnant. They were all exhausted and not really wanted - pushed out into the cold. Mary had waited through her pregnancy, Joseph waited with her knowing disapproval from family and friends. Easy birth? No pain?

The angels waited for God's time to sing their welcome to Jesus.

The shepherds waited in the field for night to end and were surprised by the angel song.

The Magi watched and waited for the star and went on a long journey to find Jesus and were surprised not to find him in a palace.

The people of Israel had been waiting for a very long time for their Messiah and most of them missed the event.

What might I discover if I waited and asked God to show me my special part of the story?

December Prayer Pointers

For everyone who will pass through Holy Trinity this season. That they will know God's blessing and peace even if they do not attribute it to God.

For health and strength of our clergy and those involved in all services.

For those amongst us who are unwell.

For ourselves that we will welcoming to all we meet.
That we might share the love of God in practical ways and invite others to our services.

For those who find this time of year difficult whatever the reason.

Jesus was not wanted in all the hustle and bustle in Bethlehem. Pray for those who we do not want in our busyness.

Ask for God's blessing and joy to be in your life in a new way this Christmas and share that with someone else in the congregation for your and their encouragement.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS?

How long do your New Year Resolutions last? If I'm lucky a couple of days and do I really expect to achieve them? Why not experiment with something different in your spiritual rhythm to take care of your soul? Our soul is the part of us that seeks harmony, connection and integration of our will, mind and body, according to Dallas Willard - so why wouldn't you want to take care of it?

God rested on the 7th day after he made man on day 6. He declared we were good. How much rest do I make room for in my life?

Do I have a sacred space in my life where I am closer to God by just being there? It may be a particular chair - Susannah Wesley put an apron over her head.

Keep a journal - like the Israelites mark places where you met God. Use photos or pictures if you don't want to write.

Create space to hear what God might say through Scripture, friends or your own inner voice. Where 2 or 3 gather Jesus is there not just in church.

Laugh more - A happy heart makes the face cheerful Proverbs 15.13

God is a mystery. He loves you - yes you and wants the best for you.

Ideas taken from 'A Little Book on Soul Care' Paul Francis.

January Prayer Pointers

Pray that God's presence in our individual and congregational lives would shine out to all we meet.

Pray that our staff team Deiniol, Teresia, Nigel and Fran together with the wardens and PCC would lead us in God's way in 2019.

Pray for the PMC steering committee under Jean Green's leadership.

Pray for our government and the decisions they have to make.

Pray for those in our community who are sick sad or lonely.

Pray for children whose lives have been affected by war.

Pray for the mothers receiving Mama bags that we have provided through African Village Support.

Exploring the Beatitudes Tuesdays 15th/22nd/29th Jan 5-6.00pm

As part of the Bishop of Oxford's invitation to everyone in the diocese to explore the Beatitudes, Bishop Steven has written a three-session course. It is a 32 page booklet and is suitable for small groups. Bishop Steven said: 'I'm hoping churches will use this specially written resource to help them study and understand the Beatitudes. For me the Beatitudes have eight beautiful qualities, but eight is quite a lot to remember so I've been keen to capture what they mean in three words: contemplative, compassionate and courageous. 'I want people to be asking what do these words teach us and tell us about Jesus, what do they tell us about being human in the 21st century and what do they tell us about what kind of Church we're called to be.'

PMC – Partnership for Missional Church

Rowan Williams is quoted as saying that mission is “finding out what God is doing and joining in”. PMC is a 3-year process we have embarked upon to try to find Holy Trinity’s future within a renewed engagement with a God who is “active and present and working for good in the world”. It is about relationships – with God, with our community and with each other. The first year is a year of Listening – to scripture, to the congregation and to the community. We are part of a “cluster” - a group of 12 - 15 churches from Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. There are about 3 cluster sessions a year. Deiniol, as spiritual leader, and I as steering team leader attend on a Friday, going into an evening session to which the steering team come if they can. The steering team and I then attend on the Saturday. Others are invited to attend at different times. Our Listening team (that intrepid band of people who conducted the interviews) were invited to attend Cluster 1 in June. There they were given help and guidance in how to conduct the interviews at the same time as we were given information on how to run the timeline. Those who could came back to Cluster 2 in October along with the steering team, where we were told what to do with the 3 reports, and information on how to organise the next congregational event we have to run. The PCC will be invited to Cluster 3 in March next year. After our year of Discovery, we will have 2 years of Experimenting and Embedding. The prayer we have before Dwelling in the Word begins with “Though our destination is not yet clear”. The journey we have embarked upon is one that we hope will lead us to having a greater sense of God’s activity in both our congregation and our community. At the end of 3 years we hope to have a vision for HTP’s mission and a practical plan of action to achieve it. It is a journey on which we hope all members of the congregation will join in and help to find our destination together. In these early

stages the journey we have embarked upon includes ancient spiritual practices, bringing a new attentiveness to God in scripture, as well as practical exercises and engagement with communities. The spiritual practice used is now commonly called Dwelling in the Word. The text for the first year is Luke 10. 1-12. It is a story of mission, of being sent out with the most basic of instructions, dependent on the hospitality of the receivers.

Our next congregational event will be in the New Year where we will have a chance to corporately discuss the findings of the 3 studies done so far: the statistical demographic data, the interviews and the timeline. Please put the date in your diary and join us for lunch.

Jean Green

Dwelling in the word

As part of the PMC process we “Dwell in the Word”. The instructions for doing this are very precise:

- Listen – Notice where your attention lingers – Listen again –
- Find a reasonably friendly looking stranger – Listen to them –
- Take turns – Share what your partner said with others

Sounds simple enough but many people are finding this activity offensive, frightening, pointless, boring, uplifting, liberating.

Dwelling in the Word is outside of the norm. It puts many of us outside of our comfort zone. But why is this?

We are used to reading the bible following a lectionary where the one passage is read every 3 years or so, not the same passage time and time again over a year.

We are used to reading for information.

We are used to being taught what the passage is actually about by someone in authority.

We are not told what leads up to this passage – nor what happens later.

We are not reading the whole passage but are being asked to see where our attention lingers.

We are not looking for the deeper meaning of the text.

We are being asked to go and talk to a reasonably friendly looking stranger!

We worry that what we want to say is not worthy of being listened to.

There is a vulnerability in listening to what we have said being reported back by someone else.

So, why do we do it?

With Dwelling in the Word restraints are being removed to allow you to listen to what God what wants you to do or to what He is saying.

It reduces the hierarchy of those who know and those who think they don't.

It allows for an equality of experience

You are not summarizing the text to a single sentence but sharing an experience.

Over the 7 months I have been doing this it never fails to amaze me that I can come up with different observations. I am not deliberately thinking about what I have said before and that I must find something different and profound to say this time. (That could be quite difficult – we went through the process 4 times in 3 sessions during the last Cluster weekend!). There was the time shortly after a meeting with Deiniol at Ambar's Coffee Shop. He was late! Why – because he had walked and although he had timed his leaving the house to perfection had not counted on the number of people he had met along the way who all wanted to stop and talk to him. Consequently, my attention that time lingered on the part of the passage that says the 70 must not greet anyone on the road, and how difficult that is for some people (it's definitely true of me). Should Deiniol have been so totally focussed on the task of getting to his meeting on time that he completely ignore

people who wanted to say hello? Surely that might have come across as rudeness? Or is the focussed task more important than being side-tracked? Then there was the timeline event. Being a coward, I had not planned to lead Dwelling in the Word myself that day – I could feel negative vibes coming from different people – all those who, for whatever reason, do not like Dwelling in the Word. Those negative vibes were not aimed at me – but my attention well and truly lingered on the lamb amongst the wolves! It got me thinking about the 70 – how did they feel when they visited those towns? Were they anxious about their reception? It's OK for Jesus to tell them to offer peace, and to take it back if they were not welcomed – but how would they themselves feel finding themselves in that situation? Questions, questions! And we will never know the answers. This same phrase was reported to me by my opposite number at the last cluster – she works for a Bible translation company and the phrase caused her to stop and consider those colleagues who are working in countries where being Christian is liable to result in persecution. She compared them to the 70 - they were going into the unknown whereas her colleagues are going where they know the majority of people do not want that gift of the peace.

There are some people who find the idea of talking to a reasonably friendly looking stranger difficult. You may be shy. Talking to people you do not know might cause some anxiety. Maybe you feel there are no strangers in our church family – only friends you do not know quite so well. There is an alternative – you can always go and talk to a reasonably strange looking friend. Probably best not to tell them which category they fall into though!

Jean.

Contacts

PCC members:

Churchwarden: Dick Rivett 01494 863350

Assistant Churchwardens: Diane Goford; Doreen Clarke

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– for all PCC enquiries

David Wickham; John Wiles; Daniel Everitt; Yvonne Wilding; Bettina Gothard;

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PLEASE SEND COPY FOR FEBRUARY MONTHLY HERALD

to Judith McBride

(judithmcb@btinternet.com) by 9am Monday 21st January
