

Glastonbury Together in prayer

A news sheet for members of Glastonbury churches during the crisis caused by Covid 19



Good news for now!

The announcement that a vaccine for covid has been approved and is being distributed is good news; but is it perhaps delayed good news as it will take time before enough people can be covered that the current restrictions can be relaxed. There is still a long way to go and we wait for the approval of further vaccines and enough supplies to cover everyone. We also do not know yet if the vaccine will prevent the transmission of the virus. It is still not known if protection will be lasting or need boosters every year. So whilst this is good news for society it will take time before it takes effect.

Christians, however, know the good news of Jesus Christ which is good news for all time. We are preparing to remember and celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world and it is not far away now. The Christmas story is just the start of the good news, God sending his Son into the world was the fulfilment of an ages old promise that shows we are loved without limit. The good news transforms our lives. It does not take away the fear and the fearful time we are going through. Instead it frees us from being controlled by fear finding hope in our suffering. That God loves us allows us to love one another and as we pray in the Lord's Prayer we can forgive as we are forgiven. These aspects of the good news allow us space to grow in love and in courage. It is a love that shines in the darkness, a light that never goes out even when we seem to be in dark times. More than ever the Good News needs to be shared this year. Without some of the usual traditions the sharing may be different, but we must share it as it is a part of being Christian to share the news of Christ.

Gaudete - Rejoice

The third Sunday of Advent it know as Gaudete Sunday. Traditionally it is a short break from the fasting of Advent and is signified by a pink candle in the advent ring and by priests wearing rose vestments. Gaudete is a Latin word that translates as Rejoice and it appears in the Introit for the traditional Latin Mass giving this Sunday its name. The Introit comes from the letter of Paul to the Philippians where at 4:4-6 it says: "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" At this time with the current crisis we are in need of much rejoicing so let this Sunday be a time to do just that and Rejoice in Jesus Christ who came into the world to save us.

Plan ahead

The Christmas season often has greater attendance at church services but this year space may be limited by restrictions due to social distancing requirements. If you intend to attend a service please check with the church first to make sure there will be a place for you. It is hoped that a list of Christmas day services will be available in the next issue but that may be too late for some.

A time of light

Living in the northern hemisphere we are in a time of winter darkness which is a good time to welcome the Lord of light. Traditionally this has been achieved by the use of candles an ancient form of lighting. The advent ring, candle lit carol services and Christingle services all use candles. Another use of candles that is probably less well know is an Advent Mass, in honour of Our Lady, held by candlelight before dawn which was this year celebrated by the community at Our Lady St Mary of Glastonbury.



A Message for now?

A meditation that suits our crisis time

Writing in the 20th century Father Andrew SDC provides a meditation that could have been written for our current time.

When the Lord came to earth in what St Paul calls the “fullness of time”, it was the right psychological moment. The world was united by the great Roman empire, speaking more or less the same language and at peace so travellers could travel in comparative safety. All this made it an extraordinary good moment for the dissemination of a great gospel, but it was also the moment of world’s greatest need. The old pagan religions had altogether ceased to satisfy and the pagan morality had become extraordinarily corrupt. Just when the world was groping in darkness and stricken with wounds Christ came. The world needed him and God in the Incarnation found a way to come into the world.

As we think about the present state of the world from the point of view of an ordinary man, it is not at all a hopeful situation: but from the point of view of a Christian we know that man’s extremity is God’s opportunity, and God himself will come in his own way. We are not sufficient for the situation, but God certainly is, and he will give us power to behave in such a way as to give him glory and reveal love to our neighbour. There is no sort of guarantee that life will mechanically develop in beauty, that you and I left to ourselves will develop into sanctity. Our hope is not in ourselves but in Him. In his own hidden way

he enters into our life, in the midst of our darkness pain and temptation. Let us not doubt that he is sufficient for our situation, that he is saving us, perhaps all unknown to ourselves, as he was the world’s Saviour though the world knew him not.

Father Andrew (7 January 1869 – 31 March 1946) was an Anglican priest and cofounder of a religious order the Society of Divine Compassion in east London. He was born in India but had part of his education in Clifton college and an art school in Bristol. He was highly regarded as a confessor, spiritual guide and religious writer. He was also a talented painter.



The Candle song

Graham Kendrick is a prolific Hymn writer with more than 100 hymns and 100 tunes credited to him. “*Like a candle flame*”, known as the candle song, is a song for advent. It is often sung in harmony with the refrain sung in two parts which makes it memorable. It only has three verses and in the second and third verses we hear that angels are singing whilst the earth sleeps; The spark that is Jesus will set the world alight shining in our lives as a holy flame.

Where can we find you

From a prolific hymn writer to one who will only be known by a few. Charles Dickinson is listed in the Hymnary with just one hymn in one hymn book. Nevertheless “*Where can we find you, Lord Jesus our Master?*” speaks to how we should seek our saviour. Not in our churches but amongst the disadvantaged. The hymn has five verses with the fifth being a repeat of the questions in verse one, where are we led and what should we do to serve. Verse two answers with the hungry, out of God’s plenty what can we share. The third verse moves on to the homeless who we should offer shelter to ease their pain. We are told in the fourth verse go to those who have no one - the outcast. Jesus dined with sinners and reached out to lepers, we should do the same.

A look at the lectionary - Advent three

The old testament reading comes from Isaiah 61 proclaiming good news to the poor and a release from darkness. We learn that the Lord loves justice and hates wrongdoing. He will reward his people with an everlasting covenant. The Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. Our epistle reading this week comes from the end of first letter to the Thessalonians. The reading starts “Rejoice” in many translations so ties in the Gaudete Sunday. We are implored to pray and give thanks. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them. Hold on to the good and reject all evil. Paul asks that the God of peace sanctifies us. Last week we heard from Mark about John the Baptist, this week we hear more about him from the Gospel of John. With three lectionary years each based around a Gospel we only

hear occasionally from the Gospel of John and this is one of them. Like Mark the Gospel of John does not mention the birth of Jesus. Referring to Jesus as “the Word” the Gospel starts by saying that the Word was with God from the beginning, through which all of creation was made. A light in the darkness that the darkness could not overcome. We then hear that John the Baptist was sent by God as a witness to the light but not the light himself. In today’s reading we hear that John was questioned by the Jewish authorities to ask if he himself was the promised messiah which he firmly denied saying he was not worthy to untie the sandals of the one who was amongst them. Following the reading the Gospel goes on to say that the next day John saw Jesus approaching and declared him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.