

The Good News

Winter 2022/23



North West Northants Pastorate

It is said, ‘...ill blows the wind that profits nobody’.

The mainstream media highlight ‘news’, usually the bad kind, as though it were somehow a kind of irrevocable downturn in history and making things seem as though they are just getting worse and worse.

It is almost as though we are invited, or even expected to have a sense of impending doom! No wonder our young people are stressed...

But there is more to the world than this, more to life than this!

Remember, there is nothing truly novel in existence; every new idea has some sort of precedent or echo from the past. Or as it says in an old book called Ecclesiastes,

“What has been will be again,

what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun”.

The point is this; “watch out that you are not deceived” all this difficult stuff may have to happen, as a chap called Luke once put it years ago, “...do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.”

The end that is; of the bad news. But end it will! So why not prepare a path for the a bright new future...

Better things are to come! Lets focus on the light of the world!



“A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

(Isaiah 40:3 NIV)

Inside this Winter Issue

The best laid plans of mice and man...

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Deadline for contributions to next issue: 16th February 2023

Good News welcomes contributions from readers, though publication is not guaranteed.

Editorial

Staying Cheerful

Hello,

Remember, this magazine is not aimed only at those who are converted but must also aim to spread the Good News; or it is nothing but a note to ourselves...

A conversation:

"...ill blows the wind that profits nobody" I repeated. "What are you talking about" asked Ken, my Chinese friend. "Oh, it's an old English saying" I replied...

"So, who said it?"

"Edward of Westminster, to his father."

"Well Shakespeare actually, Henry VI; '...ill blows the wind that profits nobody. This man, whom hand to hand I slew in fight, may be possessed with some store of crowns; and I, that haply take them from him now, may yet ere night yield both my life and them to some man else, as this dead man doth me.'"

"What on Earth does that mean?!" Chinese friend now confused by archaic English.

"Well, whatever the nature of the storm, someone always profits; you see we live in interesting times..." I explained.

"Ahh! Interesting times, now I understand. We have ancient Chinese saying, 'Better to be a dog in times of tranquillity than a human in times of chaos.'"

Chinese friend smiling sagely.



[Continued Over....

Editorial

Some Observations

A Quote¹:

Talking of “Interesting Times²”, in an interview Terry Pratchett explains;” I would say that one of the things I wanted to develop in the story was the strange way in which revolutions can turn into tyrannies. People struggle to over-throw tyrants, then suddenly find that they’re ruled by “The Government” once again - and popular uprisings don't stop often to ask common people what it is they need.”

From A Cold Wind Blows³:

“...’Cause some things just don't change
It's better when they stay the same
Although the whole world knows your name
So on the biggest stage they came to see you spit your game
Oh-woah, but it shouldn't be difficult to explain
Just why you came back again, you hate the fame, love the game
Cold as ice you remain...”

The World is diverse, it is eclectic, that is it strength! So, now you have heard from me, my mate Ken, the author Terry Pratchett, the rapper Eminem, Shakespeare, Isaiah, Matthew, and Luke. It seems to me, albeit from different perspectives and with different motivations we are observing the same sorts of things; and saying what we see; and this across almost 3000 years, and I’m only on page 3, how many witnesses do we need? If the 500 who saw the Risen Christ is not enough for you; look around with your own eyes, or cold as ice you remain...

¹ Republished at L-space, the Terry Pratchett wiki.

² Interesting Times, (Terry Pratchett, 1994, Victor Gollancz)

³ Eminem, track 1, from the album Recovery. 2010, produced by Just Blaze

A Message for All From Jon Heard who is a non-serving Elder at Creaton URC as well as being an Assembly Recognised Lay Preacher.

Welcome to this winter edition of our pastorate magazine.

I bring you greetings from your friends at Creaton URC.

As we glide (or is it stumble?) into a new Christian calendar year and the season of Advent, we are perhaps thankful to leave 2022 behind with all its chaos, calamity, and confusion.

Advent is when we look forward to the coming of The King. I often think that it is such a pity that the Christmas festival overshadows the real meaning of Advent.

The reasons why Jesus' birth came to be celebrated on 25th December are somewhat murky, to put it politely. Christmas, itself has not always been celebrated as a Christian festival.

The earliest non Jewish followers, who were most likely illiterate, were unaware of the traditions that have grown up around the first & second chapters of Luke's Gospel.

Furthermore, the precise date of Jesus' birth is unknown (with the best guess being sometime in March around 6 BCE).

In the fourth century, sometime in the AD 300's, during the reign of the Emperor Constantine, possibly at the time that the Council of Nicaea was held, the newly state-recognised Church of Rome selected the last day of the feast of Saturnalia, which happens to be 25 December, to be the day designated as Christ's birthday.

They did this as a means of attracting pagans to the Christian faith.



Beware the Ides of December!

A Message for All From Jon Heard who is a non-serving Elder at Creaton URC as well as being an Assembly Recognised Lay Preacher.

Of course, that day accorded to the Roman, or Julian, calendar. The equivalent day in our modern Gregorian calendar is 6th January, which is – Epiphany.

It is galling for us, as we bemoan the secularisation of Christmas in our consumer driven, materialistic society, to realise that Saturnalia, to which Christmas is historically linked, consisted of a whole week of unadulterated debauchery.

According to Lucian, the Greek poet, writer and historian, drunkenness, gluttony, rape and lewd dancing in the streets were central to the ‘celebrations’.

As Christianity spread northwards, the Christmas festival embraced another Pagan one, this time Yuletide, which was based on the Winter solstice and linked to the pantheon of Norse gods.

In medieval England, the masses joyfully indulged in the Saturnalian/Norse traditions as a way of release from daily life that was nasty brutish and short.

Perhaps it is no wonder that the Puritans banned the celebration of Christmas when they ruled the country briefly in the 17th century!

In the 19th century, Christmas was sanitised and our Victorian forebears injected it with an odd cloying sentimentality that has been ruthlessly commercially exploited throughout the 20th century and beyond.

As we now look to the challenges that lie ahead in 2023, we know that it will be tough economically, we know that there will be big calls upon our reserves of compassion towards those who are poorer than us, but above all, we know that our King, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, walks beside us, that He strengthens us in more ways than we can comprehend, and that He will ensure that we play our part in His victory over evil, cruelty, greed and selfishness so that God’s will is done.

Let us remember in prayer

This Season, Some Ideas for Remembrance and Prayer

This week:

Pray for the Advent season that has just began.

Week beginning 4th December please pray for:

Local Leaders, elders and others taking on additional responsibilities for Christmas arrangements.

Week beginning 18th December please pray for:

Carol services and outdoor singing in our town squares and outside churches. May the words and meaning of carols penetrate hardened hearts and uplift those willing to hear the good news of Jesus.

Week beginning 25th December please pray for:

The new king born today!! Pray that people will reflect in a new way on the authority of earthly kings and rulers and celebrate the birth of the king of kings and the salvation he brings to all who accept him. after the celebration of Christmas those who have been working hard to enable a great Christmas will be able to take a much-needed break with their families and friends. Pray especially for ministers and families.

Week beginning 1st January please pray for:

New Year reflections. That the Holy Spirit would bring to mind the past year and particularly Queen Elizabeth's life and faith. Pray for King Charles III that he will truly be defender of the faith.

Week beginning 19th February please pray for:

The beginning of Lent on Wednesday. May the message to the world be that we have something to celebrate, rather than uninspiring fasters.

May the joy of anticipating Easter fill our Lent preparations!

Creaton News

News from Margaret Anderson

Hello from Creaton everyone!

Our Mission Statement:

Worship God joyfully
Offer Christ faithfully
Promote growth hopefully
Serve others lovingly.

Recent times

We are glad to feel a degree of normality returning to our lives, though at the same time thinking prayerfully about the people in the village who have contracted Covid recently. We wish them a speedy recovery.

We were delighted by the wonderful Joint Service taken by the Moderator in October.

I can confirm that all gifts and food donated to our Gift Service will go to Castle Hill Food Bank.

Services

You are warmly welcome to join us for Sunday Worship. For more information, look at our website: search Creaton URC online (<http://www.creaton.org.org.uk/index.asp?pageid=319435>)

Pilots

Meets on Monday nights led by Marion Heard

Poppies Coffee Shop

Is open from 10.00am to 12 noon Wednesday and Friday.

Margaret.

Kilsby News

News from Val Janes

Hello from Kilsby everyone!

Our Mission statement:

The purpose of this church is to provide a warm welcoming place for all people, of any age, to worship and to learn about faith.

Services are on Sunday mornings at 11am

Welcoming new people into our congregation; you can find our list of Services and Preachers in the Diary of Services.

Christmas Carol Service

A Christmas Carol Service will be held at 11am on the 18th of December led by Pastor Cecil Gill

Community cafe

Our increasingly busy and popular community café; every Monday and Thursday at 9am until 12noon everyone is welcome.

Over the Christmas period the café will be closed from the 20th of December and reopen on the 6th of January

Scrabble

Every Wednesday at 1pm everyone is welcome.

Sewing

Every other Friday at 2pm until 4pm everyone is welcome.

Val.

Long Buckby News

News from Peggy Bond

Hello from Long Buckby everyone!

Our Flower Rota:

Dec 4th Gill Best
11th Andrew Bodsworth
18th Wendy Baker
Jan 1st Sian Ellison
8th Norman Chandler
15th Sian Ellison
22nd Val Cole
29th Wendy Baker
Feb 5th Rita Stowe
12th Peggy Bond
19th Diana Babb
26th Yvonne and Andrew Howes



Birthday Wishes to:

Dec: Harry Ellison

Feb: Clive Cooper, Kath Packer and Chris Berry

The Hope Centre

Please remember the collection box for the Hope Centre in Northampton. Food, coffee, tee bags, cleaning materials and laundry detergents very welcome.

Coffee mornings

Charity Coffee Morning will be held on 3rd December. We have January off, the Coffee Morning restart in February on the first Saturday every Month for the rest of the Year.

See the Notice board and <https://longbuckbyurc.org.uk> for further information.

Grand Brass Band Concert

With Daventry Brass Band

A Service of Lessons and Carols



Including all of Your Favourites
(well we can try.)

Long Buckby URC

Sunday 18th September 2022: 6pm

Refreshments Including
Mince Pies (It is alleged)

Afterward

Diary of Church Services December 2022 to February 2023

Date	Long Buckby All services at 11am unless otherwise stated	Creaton All services at 11am unless otherwise stated
04/12/2022	Andrew Howes	Rev. Geoff Townsend
11/12/2022	Rev. Nigel Adkinson with Holy Communion	Jon Heard Gift Service
18/12/2022	11am , Andrew, Lessons and Carols, then Later at 6pm Grand Brass Band Con- cert, Lessons and Carols	Rev. Geoff Townsend, then on 19/12/2022, at 7pm , Candle- light Service with Rev. Liz Adams
25/12/2022	No Christmas Day Service	Jon Heard, Christmas Day Service
01/01/2023	Andrew Bodsworth	Rev. Geoff Townsend
08/01/2023	Ian Harrison	Jon Heard
15/01/2023	Margaret Hooper	Margaret Hooper
22/01/2023	Rev. Liz Adams With Holy Communion	Rev. Geoff Hooper
29/01/2023	Rev. Geoff Townsend ,Joint Service at Long Buckby with Holy Communion	Rev. Geoff Townsend ,Joint Service at Long Buckby with Holy Communion
05/02/2023	Ian Harrison	Rev. Geoff Townsend
12/02/2023	Vaughan Greffiths	Jon Heard
19/02/2023	Rev. Tim Huc with Holy Communion	Rev. Geoff Townsend
26/02/2023	Jon Heard	Rev. Tim Huc

Diary of Church Services December 2022 to February 2023

Date	Crick All services at 11am unless otherwise stated	Kilsby All services at 11am unless otherwise stated
04/12/2022	Rev. Jay Phelps With Holy Communion	Trevor Boys
11/12/2022	Margaret Hooper	David & Pat Biddle
18/12/2022	Ian Harrison, then on 22/12/2022, at 7pm Carols by Candlelight with Andrew Howes.	Pastor Cecil Gill, Carol Service
25/12/2022	No Christmas Day Service	No Christmas Day Service
01/01/2023	Jenny Goodger	David & Pat Biddle
08/01/2023	Cecil Gill	Rev. Geoff Townsend
15/01/2023	Trevor Boys	Pastor Cecil Gill
22/01/2023	Jon Heard With Holy Communion	Rev. Tim Huc with Holy Communion
29/01/2023	Rev. Geoff Townsend ,Joint Service at Long Buckby with Holy Communion	Rev. Geoff Townsend ,Joint Service at Long Buckby with Holy Communion
05/02/2023	Wally Mullar	Rev. Craig Muir
12/02/2023	John Rogers	Andrew Howes With Holy Communion
19/02/2023	Andrew Howes With Holy Communion	John Perkins
26/02/2023	David & Pat Biddle	Pastor Cecil Gill

Crick News

News from Jenny Goodger

Hello from Crick everyone!

The purpose of this church is to provide a warm, welcoming place for people of all ages to worship God and to grow in faith.

Chapel Birthdays

Happy birthday wishes to Steve and Louise Wilkin and Jenny Goodger who will all be another year older by the end of February.

Coffee Mornings

Coffee mornings are now back as a regular feature on the first Saturday of the month, with numbers rising steadily as people become more confident about social events.

We have recently made a donation of £100 to Breast Cancer and £200 to the DEC appeal for flood victims in Pakistan.

Harvest Thanksgiving

Our gifts of dried and tinned goods were gratefully received to be distributed by the food bank in Northampton.

Christmas

For the first time in many years, we will not be holding a Christmas morning service this year, but we warmly invite you all to join us for Carols by Candlelight with Andrew Howes, at 7pm on December 22nd, followed by coffee/tea and mince pies.

The collection will be donated, as usual, to UNICEF, who do such wonderful work for children all over the world.

Jenny.

Seasonal Madness

A Seasonal Poem Request From Jenny Goodger

A few days ago, I was reminded by Jenny Goodger of a poem written by Pam Ayres.

Now I happen to think this is a very entertaining poem and is one that certainly cheers me up. It has a sense of making sense in a way that we can all realise and understand. It's just how life is sometimes...

I would love to reproduce it here but it will be subject to copyright restrictions, but I am allowed to quote a little bit of 'wot Pam wrote' so that you know what to look out for when it comes to buying yourself a Christmas present. Verse two extract from:

"Goodwill To Men - Give Us Your Money by Pam Ayres

All up and down the country,
Before the light was snuffed,
Turkeys they get murdered,
And cockerels they got stuffed,
Christmas cakes got marzipanned,
And puddin's they got steamed
Mothers they got desperate
And tired kiddies screamed. "

("Poems", Pam Ayres: Published by Witney: published by the author, 1974)

You will be able to find to full poem on the interweb thingywebob.



The Story Behind the Hymn

'In the Bleak Midwinter' — Contributed by Norman Chandler

The words to “In the bleak Midwinter” were written by Christina Georgina Rosetti in 1872 as a poem called A Christmas Carol and published in Scriber’s Monthly.



The Rossetti family by Lewis Carroll
albumen print, 7 October 1863
NPG P1273(25b) © National Portrait Gallery
London

Christina was a devout High Church Christian. She remained unmarried, rejecting two suitors because they were Roman Catholics.

She was a companion to her mother following the death of her father who was a professor of Italian at Kings College, London.

She was part of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, her brother, a well-respected painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti used her as a model many times often depicting her as the Madonna.

Consequently we have several first class images of her. She was a friend of Charles Dobson (Lewis Carroll) who wrote “Alice in Wonderland” but mainly she is known for her poems and religious texts published in several volumes during her lifetime.

The Story Behind the Hymn

'In the Bleak Midwinter' — Contributed by Norman Chandler

After Christiana's death Gustav Holst took the poem and set it to music and it then appeared in The English Hymnal in 1906, we sing the hymn in very much the same setting and words as it was written over 100 years ago.

It has been suggested that the first stanza with its reference to snow blanketing the world was to cover up the sins of the world and only show purity. Alternatively it was to create a desolate image of the world into which the infant Jesus was born, take your pick!

Scholars are agreed that the snowy image is not trying to suggest that it was snowing in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus's birth although I do have a photograph of an orange with snow on it taken by my father in Palestine during the Second World War.

Norman



Christina Rossetti - after Dante Gabriel Rossetti
photograph of drawing, albumen print, 1877
NPG P1273(1b) © National Portrait Gallery, London

In the Bleak Midwinter

Christina Rossetti, A Christmas Carrol, 1872

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak midwinter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty
Jesus Christ.



Looking Very Bleak!

Christina Rossetti
by Elliott & Fry albumen print, 1880s
NPG P1700(11c) © National Portrait
Gallery, London



Gustav Holst
by Herbert Lambert bromide print, 1921
NPG P109 © National Portrait Gallery,
London

Enough for Him, whom cherubim
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air;
But only His mother
In her maiden bliss
Worshipped the Beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give Him,
Give my heart.

Lectionary Readings

December 2022

Second Sunday of Advent December 4

Isaiah 11:1-10
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Third Sunday of Advent December 11

Isaiah 35:1-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11
Psalm 146:4-9
or Canticle 15

Fourth Sunday of Advent December 18

Isaiah 7:10-16
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25
Psalm 80: 1-7, 16-18

Christmas Day December 25

Isaiah 9:2-7
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14(15-20)
Psalm 96

Weaving Sacred and Secular December

1st World AIDS Day
6th Saint Nicholas Day
8th Christmas Jumper Day
25th Christmas Day

Lectionary Readings

January 2023

The Holy Name

January 1

Numbers 6:22-27

Galatians 4:4-7

or Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 2:15-21

Psalm 8

First Sunday after the Epiphany

January 8

Isaiah 42:1-9

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 3:13-17

Psalm 29

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 16

Isaiah 49:1-7

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

John 1:29-42

Psalm 40:1-12

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 22

Isaiah 9:1-4

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

Psalm 27:1, 5-13

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

January 29

Micah 6:1-8

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Matthew 5:1-12

Psalm 15

Weaving Sacred and Secular January

6th Epiphany 18-25th Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

27th Holocaust Memorial Day

Lectionary Readings

February 2023

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

February 5

Isaiah 58:1-9a, [9b-12]

1 Corinthians 2:1-12, [13-16]

Matthew 5:13-20

Psalm 112:1-9, (10)

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

February 12

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

or Sirach 15:15-20

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Matthew 5:21-37

Psalm 119:1-8

Last Sunday after the Epiphany

February 19

Exodus 24:12-18

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

Psalm 2

or Psalm 99

First Sunday in Lent

February 26

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

Psalm 32

Weaving Sacred and Secular February

12th Racial Justice Sunday

21st Shrove Tuesday

22nd Ash Wednesday

A Late Night Reflection: And The Page Fell Open...

Coming together, drifting apart and moving on

A Prayer of Penitence

Jesus Christ, the light of the world, came to dispel the darkness from our hearts.

Let us confess and turn to the light.

Loving Father God, you sent your Son, full of grace and truth.

Forgive us when we do not receive him.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Brother Jesus, you were born in humility and poverty.

Forgive us when we strive for treasure on earth.

Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Gentle Spirit, you filled Mary with joy in obedience.

Forgive us when we close our ears to your call.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

May the God of all grace and mercy,
cleanse and heal us from our sins,
renew and strengthen us for his service,
and flood our very beings with his light and life.

Amen.

(Extract from URC Worship notes for Christmas Eve 2023—Service by Fay Rowland.
Source: <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/prayer-and-worship/worship-notes/>)



One Christmas Carol to Another

A Victorian Christmas?

Quoting from Jon Heard earlier, "In the 19th century, Christmas was sanitised and our Victorian forebears injected it with an odd cloying sentimentality that has been ruthlessly commercially exploited throughout the 20th century and beyond."

I move on therefore, or as Jon said earlier I possibly glide from one Christmas Carol written by Christina Rossetti to another Christmas Carol written by a Victorian, Charles Dickens.

A social reformer who cared deeply about the lower classes and especially, it might be argued, about children; there were many of them in his books, not just Tiny Tim. You know who they are.

I think perhaps Dickens was pointing toward the sentimental moralising of some Victorians in juxtaposition to the brutal realities of post industrial revolution Britain for the vast majority of people; and the responsibility of those people who could help, to help!

Just as you might say today about the lives of many people in post industrial Britain. Not as bad now as then, but food banks in the twenty first century?

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge.
"Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry."

But people volunteer to work in food banks and many of us will not be left alone and do try to make others merry!

Maybe we are, and at the same time aren't, in for a traditional Victorian Christmas after all...

"and so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, Every one!"

(Quotes from "A Christmas Carol, Charles Dickens, Chapman and Hall, 1843)



Charles Dickens by Herbert Watkins
albumen print, arched top, 1858
NPG P301(19) © National Portrait Gallery,
London

Thanks, Afterthoughts and Connections

Wandering From Whence We Came, What Do We Leave Behind?

Remember; as we all head off into the Aldi of life, to search out the bargains of destiny, where the baskets of predetermination, irresistibly take a direction of their own, and crash us into the special buys of impulse, before you are overwhelmed by passive acceptance, remember, every silver lining has its cloud.

Look on the bright side of life...



The wind that was against Julius certainly profited
Augustus and he was still alive when Jesus walked
the Earth

As ever, many thanks to all Good News contributors; writers, sifters and wranglers of content, proof readers, printers and distributors; all those that collaborate across time and travels, in all sorts of ways to produce and deliver all of the wonderful resources into which we dip and find treasures to share.

Most of all, thank You, for reading this magazine.

Oh, and remember beware the Ides of March! Julius didn't listen to the Prophets and look what happened to him!

Worth mentioning: Charles Dickens A Christmas Carol is running at the RSC in Stratford Upon Avon until the 1st January 2023. But you can't go; it is sold out!