

ADVENT 2020



Like snowflakes that fly
in a sugarplum sky
are the wishes for joy
that are coming to you!

Have a Very Merry Christmas



Hello and Welcome to our Winter Newsletter I hope it finds you well and in good spirits?

I am writing this note the weekend before Advent when today we celebrate Christ the King, the last Sunday in the church's year. A day also named 'Stir Up' Sunday when we often have that beautiful collect with the words 'Stir up O Lord the wills of thy faithful people.' It is a day when we are meant to encourage each other, when we remind ourselves that Christ is our King! It is a day when we draw close to Advent, the season in which we prepare ourselves for the coming of King Jesus at Christmas.

I like many of you am looking forward to the season of Advent and the coming of Light. How we need the Light of Christ to burn brightly amid all that is happening at this current time in our world. Amongst all that is going on around us, the clocks have changed and we now have dark mornings and evenings and the onset of winter; and if you haven't seen or spoken to anyone all day because of Lock-down, it is easy to become gloomy.

Acknowledging 2020 has been a very difficult year let us challenge and encourage each other to finish the year in a hopeful mood. We have the wonderful news that several vaccines are in the process of final testing and manufacture and will hopefully be available to combat the Covid 19 Pandemic in the New Year. As Christian women during this season of Advent can we shine a light for Christ? Are we willing to share Hope, Peace, Joy and Love with our neighbours?

Last year, when I visited my daughter many houses in her village were displaying Advent Windows. Just think how many windows we have across the Darlington District where we could shine a light for Christ with our own homemade window displays for Advent. Perhaps this is something you do already? But if not I know how creative you all are, might you prepare a display in your own window for others to view?

My next job is to stir up that Christmas pudding and after that design my Advent window. Will you join me in preparing for the coming of our King?

With love and blessings, Debs.

MWiB Advent Celebration

When we planned our Programme we had hoped to be together at the Barnard Castle Methodist Church for our MWiB Advent Service. Covid restrictions made that impossible, but we are delighted to say that we still have an Advent Service from Barnard Castle and express our thanks to all from Barnard Castle & Teasdale Circuit who made this possible. You can watch this service on You Tube by following this link <https://youtu.be/tqPutjXJ66M>

Nativity

Do Joseph and Mary have a valid reason to travel all the way from Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, with a donkey? When they arrive at their destination, they find that all the hotel rooms are reserved for legitimate business-travellers only; many of the small inns have closed due to lack of customers; establishments are prohibited from selling food and drink indoors - only takeaways are permitted. Yet still there is a stable made available for them, thanks to the kindness of one inn-keeper. Temperature checks enable Joseph and Mary to stay the night. Mary gives birth to her firstborn, a son; she wraps him in swaddling cloths and places him in a manger.

On the surrounding hillsides, most of the local shepherds are at home on furlough with just a few designated key-workers remaining to tend the flocks. They're the lucky ones who witness a visiting angel lighting up the darkness and saying: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appears with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests." (Luke 2 vv 10-14) The shepherds hurry off to the stable; other visitors also arrive, all wearing face masks and keeping their social-distance from one another around the entrance. In spite of shortages of everyday necessities, due to inappropriate panic-buying in the town, the new-born baby receives many gifts. His parents name him Jesus. However, the Wise Men are prevented from travelling internationally due to quarantine restrictions because of the ongoing pandemic. Their journey must wait until a Covid-19 vaccine is widely available. The Temple is open for private prayer only; the stall-holders are banned and there are no crowds of worshippers allowed. Some Priests are self-isolating. Children are being home-schooled, by fraught parents who are also trying to work from home. Yet still into our broken, fragile and divided world a baby boy brings hope and love and peace to all hearts that will accept Him as their Saviour – Emmanuel, God is with us, now and for all time.

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COCO update from Lesley Morland

We work closely with the CEO and team running the COCO charity. In the summer we were informed that the charity had lost £130,000, due Covid-19. They launched an emergency appeal "Never More Needed". We responded by forwarding the money in the project fund, thinking it would be £1000. However, in no time, gathering in funds raised before the pandemic, along with other donations, we were able to send £2000. They were very grateful for our contribution. In October, the head of Mercy Primary school informed COCO that the government was allowing schools to re-open, whilst observing strict guidelines in Covid safety. Bernard Kasuku was looking for funds to purchase 100 desk and chairs (to achieve social distancing), hand washing stations, liquid soap and washable masks. The total amount to cover this expense was £2,200. The COCO team were very aware it had been our intention to support Mercy Primary school and they approached us to ask if we would like our earlier donation to help meet this budget. We happily agreed to this proposal, and trusting we would raise the £200 with "Count Your Blessings", sent a further cheque, which has so far raised £912 and other donations of £403 have been received. The Darlington District has secured a stall at the Swanwick conference and will use this to fundraise for and promote awareness of COCO. After discussion it was agreed that we would ask people to buy items that will be used by Mercy School. We are waiting for Lucy from COCO to come back to us with a list of items that the school need from £1 to £30, This fundraising requires no outlay and there is nothing to transport. Should Covid restrictions mean that Swanwick is unable to proceed the fund raising could be used in a virtual conference. Well ladies, you have exceeded all expectations with this challenging, fun exercise. To date I have banked £1430 and money continues to trickle in. Sincere thanks to all who have taken part and contributed.

An Envelope

A plain ordinary envelope – that's all you are, a folded piece of paper with a little glue. I hold you in my hand, I notice how flimsy you are, how you are shaped. And I wonder about you. You are empty, you are waiting. You are waiting to carry a message to someone, to be a link between people. That's your only purpose. You yourself aren't the message, you're only the vehicle. Yet without you the message might not be sent at all, the communication might never be.

What a lot of question I could ask you! What will you carry? A note of encouragement and friendship? An appeal for help? A business letter? A demand for money? A love letter? Or one of those family letters filled with tiny events and half utterances that can mean so much? And will your letter be met with gladness, with indifference, or with apprehension?

I could multiply my questions and I'd never guess the answers. But I know one certain thing about you. Once you are addressed and stamped and sent on your way, you become more than a mere piece of paper; you get a new dimension and dignity. And you get this through the stamp. So now you will be cared for on the railway, the roads, or in the air until you finally fall through someone's letterbox.

After that you may be discarded, torn up and crushed. Or you may be lovingly preserved till you are dogeared and grubby. Either way you will have achieved your purpose.

Here I am Lord, often feeling as empty and useless as this envelope. But you created me for a purpose; you want me to carry a message in my life, to be a channel of your love, to be a bond of communication between people.

I ask myself, what sort of message do I take to others, how genuine is it, how disinterested is it? I ask myself if I really am a bond of communication, or if I see only my emptiness and not the potential you have given me.

This envelope is passive, it can only wait. But you have called me to cooperate with you, you have stamped me with a new dignity with my baptism. I am committed to carry your message, to use mind and heart, spirit and body in your service. Lord, fill my emptiness with your love and strength so that I can communicate it to others.

June and Lesley

A Challenge or a Dream ?

This year when we were hit by Covid19 and Lockdown bringing so much anxiety and fear the angel idea came back to me. How wonderful would it be if we could cover the whole town with angels, bringing some light and hope this Christmas. Hence, "A Challenge or a Dream?" was launched in April, giving us about 200 knitting days to the end of November. We needed approximately 2,500 ! The "Angelknitathon" was a talking point, on the telephone and on Zoom, with over 20 people taking part. We have encouraged each other along the way, helping out with wool and needles knowing that we were all working towards the same goal, as a team. Attached to each angel is a small cross. I am delighted to tell you that we reached our target in the middle of October, 6 weeks ahead of time there were 2600 angels all tucked up in boxes in our spare bedroom. . This was to be followed by a service on December 6th when they would all be in church to be blessed before being delivered to door knobs or gate posts nearer to Christmas. As I write this, in the middle of planning the delivery, making labels and carol sheets, counting them out into the number of "kits" for each street to be packed at home, it could have become more of a nightmare than a dream if it had not been for our wonderful team of helpers, not only from church but others from the community too. Some quotes: "This came at just the right time." "It has been wonderful." "I'm so glad you persuaded me to help." "I knit one most mornings before I get up!" The finished angels will be put into cellophane bags with labels and include a sheet with the words to "Away in a manger" and "Hark the Herald Angels sing" with an invitation to sing them on their doorstep, in the garden or in their home at 3pm on Christmas Eve. Can you imagine the sound if everyone responds!!!!

Happy Christmas Everyone Helen Weighell

An Invitation to Join Carols on the Doorstep

On **Sunday 20th December at 5:30pm** the whole country has the chance to join in Carols on your Doorstep. All you need to do is have a radio at hand. That can be a DAB radio, Freeview on your TV (725) or the Premier Radio phone app.

Premier Radio will play 3 or 4 carols for everyone to sing along to. A carol sheet will be posted through your door nearer the time. This is a good chance to dust off that festive jumper or your most festive headwear if you like. It will be family-friendly so children welcome to bring something to shake or rattle along too. At this challenging time for all of us let's try and bring a little joy to our community this Christmas.

Advent Service.

Barnard Castle have agreed to do a You Tube Advent service that will be filmed in the Barnard Castle Church. They are hoping that with the support of Lindy to have it ready for 10th December. Information will be circulated as soon as possible. And discs made available for members who need them.

Tenth Anniversary Celebration Events

We are planning lots of activities and events throughout 2021 to celebrate our tenth anniversary.

So far there include March—October 2021

For women, for justice, for Christ – Exhibition at Epworth Old Rectory—Saturday 14th May

Creativity day in Sheffield 24th June

1st July Methodist Conference, including MWIB Fringe event

August (date tbc) Garden Party event at Epworth Old Rectory

Note the dates and join us as we celebrate together.



"WE'RE TIER 2 SO WE
CAN MEET OUTSIDE BUT
WE CAN'T GO INTO
THE STABLE "

T'was a month before Christmas,
 And all through the town,
 People wore masks,
 That covered their frown.
 The frown had begun
 Way back in the Spring,
 When a global pandemic
 Changed everything.
 They called it corona,
 But unlike the beer,
 It didn't bring good times,
 It didn't bring cheer.
 Contagious and deadly,
 This virus spread fast,
 Like a wildfire that starts
 When fueled by gas.
 Airplanes were grounded,
 Travel was banned.
 Borders were closed
 Across air, sea and land.
 As the world entered lockdown
 To flatten the curve,
 The economy halted,

And folks lost their nerve.
 From March to July
 We rode the first wave,
 People stayed home,
 They tried to behave.
 When summer emerged
 The lockdown was lifted.
 But away from caution,
 Many folks drifted.
 Now it's November
 And cases are spiking,
 Wave two has arrived,
 Much to our disliking.
 Frontline workers,
 Doctors and nurses,
 Try to save people,
 From riding in hearses.
 This virus is awful,
 This COVID-19.
 There isn't a cure.
 There is no vaccine.
 It's true that this year
 Has had sadness a plenty,

We'll never forget
 The year 2020.
 And just 'round the corner -
 The holiday season,
 But why be merry?
 Is there even one reason?
 To decorate the house
 And put up the tree,
 When no one will see it,
 No-one but me.
 But outside my window
 The snow gently falls,
 And I think to myself,
 Let's deck the halls!
 So, I gather the ribbon,
 The garland and bows,
 As I play those old carols,
 My happiness grows.
 Christmas ain't cancelled
 And neither is Hope!
 If we lean on each other,
 I know we can cope.

From Celia

Late News

On a beautiful September day Linda Turton & Debs Coggrave completed 13 miles of the Walk the Wall Challenge set along Hadrian's Wall, which even took in Sycamore Gap. A small group (of which we were the eldest) enjoyed the stunning scenery & great banter getting to know each other, when one could speak, some of the climbs took your breath away in more ways than one! All felt a personal achievement and more importantly the sponsored walk raised £7,500 for COCO.

Attached are two photographs from the day, the first shows us with the COCO Logo as we are about to set off, the second shows Linda's Walk the Wall T shirt – proving we did it!!



News, News

As we move through Advent so different to what we expected or hoped for there is some Good News. Darlington District Methodist Women in Britain have been hoping for someone to accept the invitation to be their Vice President.

It is a great delight to introduce to you Pamela Stenson who will be known to many of you and lives in Guisborough. Pam [as I know her] has worked with the Women's movement of our church over a number of years her experience and insight that she will bring to the role will help us all as we follow our calling in the years to come. Welcome Pam, and we thank you we look forward to getting to know you [cue for a song!] God Bless you. Happy Christmas everyone,

June

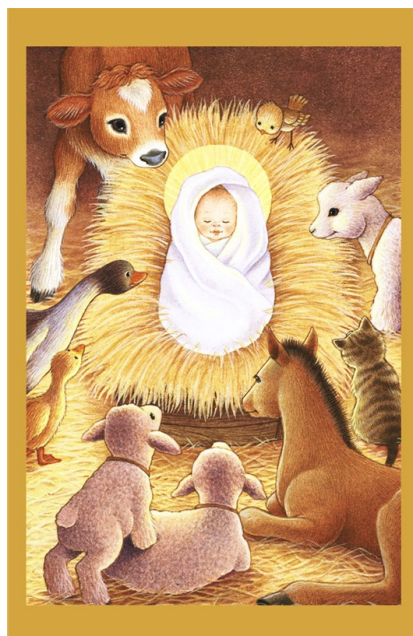
ANGELS

Angels are the guardians of hope and wonder, the keepers of magic and dreams.

Angels watch over you wherever you go, keeping each day perfect, and promising a bright, new tomorrow. The motto of all angels is "It's a wonderful life." Wherever there is love; an angel is flying by.

Your guardian angel knows you inside and out, and loves you just the way you are. Angels keep it simple and always travel light. Angels love whispering secrets and whistling in the dark. Whenever you hear music, an angel is speaking to you. Remember to leave space in your relationships so the angels have room to play. Your guardian angel helps you find a place when you feel there's no place to go.

Angels carry high-beam lights to help you through the darkest hours. Whenever you feel lonely, a special angel drops in for tea. Angels know that love is the only four lettered word. We are always 'Angels on Call' for a friend. Angels are with you every step of the way-you soar with amazing grace. After all, we are angels in training; all we have to do is spread our wings and fly. You will never know when you will meet one. The angel that appeared to Mary said, "Peace be with you."



wishing you peace, love, and joy at
this season of remembering
God's greatest Gift.

