



The Teesdale Worm

Magazine of the Barnard Castle and Teesdale and
Darlington Circuits

Issue 2 - December 2020

Rumours of Angels

So, what do you think about angels? If, indeed, you think about angels at all.

I was reminded recently that this time last year saw the death of a lady I visited often in my last appointment. She was a lovely lady with a deep Christian faith, a wicked sense of humour and a lively intellect. In many of our conversations she spoke about her experience of a guardian angel. He even had a name. I might have been tempted to tease her, but she was both rational and serious. It made me wonder whether I had ignored angels in my ministry.

John was another faithful man. Haunted by an elderly relative's tales of the angel of death he described being stopped, bodily, by two angels in a London street, turned around and marched into the foyer of a nearby church. There he discovered grace and his life was changed irrevocably. I was tempted to suggest that I had never come across angels being quite so forceful in their evangelism. Maybe we should give it a try. Teasing aside, this moment really did change his entire life and he could think of no other way to describe it.

Last year I remember reading an article about a troop of American Indian soldiers in Vietnam. Almost embarrassedly they described their encounters with glowing blue figures in the jungles retrieving the bodies of the dead. Had they been Christians I might have thought they were echoing our resurrection stories of angels and a tomb. They didn't wish to be identified and seemed to have no stake in this revelation other than wanting to tell this strange story.

So what do you think about angels?



Advent and Christmas see them fill our readings and imagination, not to mention our nativity plays and carols. They announce pregnancies and sing songs of praise. Not an obvious mix of skillsets. They are also profoundly subversive. The angels who hymn the shepherds turn the Roman Emperor's words inside out. Their hymns are profound and dangerous political statements. But then Bethlehem is a very subversive place! For some this is as challenging as the existence of angels. We haven't time to get into Isaiah still less the book of Revelation.

The word angel, of course, simply means messenger and yet what a message. Pregnancies, politics and praise. That would make an interesting sermon title. For the stories mentioned above, angels meant, safety and security, grace that destroyed fear and profound mystery in the face of death and destruction. So what do you think about angels?

As you sing “Hark the herald angels sing?”

As you hold your breath and wonder if the Glooooooooooooooria is ever going to come to an end?

As you hear again a strange story about a teenage girl and her antenatal angel, and the even stranger story of shepherds seeing strange lights in the sky.

This Christmastide may you entertain and encounter angels, socially distanced, obviously, but even more importantly may you discover the Sender of the message which they bring.

Have a very happy and a safe Christmas!

Tim



All the King's men

On Saturday the 12th of December at 10am you are invited to the launch of our *All the King's Men* group.

Our Men's group aims to do these 3 things:

1. Provide safer spaces for men to share their struggles and find friendship (Not all the King's men can always put things back together again)
2. Reflections and teaching on being male at this time. We will cover a wide range of topics from all spheres of life that relate to being a man. Cars, hobbies, careers, relationships you name it.
3. Share support, food and conversations and at times share practical assistance through sharing employment opportunities.

As an appetiser Steve Biddulph in his book entitled *Manhood* writes there are seven steps we as men need to embark upon:

1. Fixing it with your father
2. Finding sacredness in your sexuality
3. Meeting your partner on equal terms
4. Engaging actively with your kids
5. Learning to have real friends who are male
6. Finding your heart in your work
7. Freeing your wild spirit.

Please join, support and share the launch of this vital Men's ministry.

Rev. Brian

(It is hoped that eventually this will become a face to face meeting - but for now, will be by Zoom - details to follow)

News from Hurworth

Lighting the Advent Candles by Jan Berry

For those unable to meet in Church why not create your own Advent Candle Ring and use this text.

Give Light, Give Hope

First Sunday: Hope for all God's people

We light this candle for all God's people
struggling to become bearers of hope in a troubled world.
GOD, AS WE WAIT FOR YOUR PROMISE ,
GIVE LIGHT, GIVE HOPE

Second Sunday: The Prophets

We light this candle for all God's prophets,
confronting injustice and restoring the dream of a world of freedom and peace.
GOD, AS WE WAIT YOUR PROMISE,
GIVE LIGHT GIVE HOPE

Third Sunday of Advent: John the Baptist

We light this candle for all God's messengers,
preparing the way of change, signs pointing to a new age to come.
GOD, AS WE WAIT FOR YOUR PROMISE,
GIVE LIGHT, GIVE HOPE

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Mary

We light this candle for all God-bearers, saying "yes" to God's challenge,
accepting the pain and joy of an unknown future.
GOD, AS WE WAIT FOR YOUR PROMISE,
GIVE LIGHT, GIVE HOPE

Christmas Day: The birth of Christ

We light this candle for the newborn Christ reawakening hope and faith -
the Word embodied for our time.
GOD, AS WE RECEIVE YOUR PROMISE,
YOU ARE LIGHT, YOU ARE HOPE.

Submitted by Hazel Neasham



News from Cockerton

We opened up after the initial lockdown on 6th September. Much work had gone into the risk assessments but it was great to be able to worship together again, despite having to keep our distance, wear a mask and no singing. We had some very meaningful services and a number of people found the imposed style of worship made us look at some things in a new way, enabling us to rethink some aspects we were sometimes guilty of taking for granted. As well as Sunday Worship the building also opened for Girls Brigade and Weight Watchers - both groups were pleased to be able to meet in person again. The GB is 60 strong and the leaders put in a lot of work to enable all the members to meet. The girls were all delighted to be able to meet again and needed no encouragement at all to come back. In November all these activities have ceased again but with all the risk assessments in place we hope that as soon as restrictions allow, we will be open again.

Our Church Anniversary weekend was 14th and 15th November and this year was our 145th Anniversary. Before 'Lockdown 2' we had already asked people if they could give us some thoughts on what Cockerton Methodist Church means to them or recall some memories. When we could not meet we decided to still carry on with this. Thank you to Denise Pearson for collating all the information she was passed into a memory sheet. This was then emailed out to members, or hand delivered to those not on email. When reading these you can be sure of finding out something new about people, no matter how well you think you may know them. We may not be together in person but the connection is always there.

Alison Hunter

Two little "day dreams"

'Behind the mask I have to ask
Dear Boris, is that you?
I've just popped out for exercise
And paper for the loo!'

'Tom, Tom, Colonel Tom
You are our inspiration.
While others talked,
You just walked
Your age, and more
In laps along your garden.
Now you've been knighted
By the Queen
And applauded
By our nation
What a hero you have been!'

Margaret Day

Elm Ridge - The Mouseman Lectern



Most people are aware of the oak lectern at the front of the church, which stands to one side, and which very often has the large Bible upon it (currently opened at John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*"). The lectern (specially designed for Elm Ridge by Thompson's of Kilburn) was dedicated at Elm Ridge in February 1970 "To the glory of God and in memory of Ernest William Long and Mary Ann Long" and used by the choir conductor for the following 45 or so years. How many folk have noticed the mouse at the foot - Thompson's trademark?

So, who were Ernest William Long and Mary Ann Long? Well, they both grew up in Stanley, North Durham. Mary Ann (nee Pringle) was one of the 5 survivors of 8 children born to Joseph and Sarah Pringle. They lived in Red Row, part of the Beamish Estate, as tenants of the Eden Family. Joseph Pringle was the Chapel Steward of Causey Methodist Chapel. It was a hard life by modern standards – no mains water, their water being drawn from a well some 200 yards from the house. Mary left school at the age of 14 and became a seamstress, and by the age of 18 she was running her own business, with apprentices. Her expertise had not gone unnoticed by the Eden Family and her business was given the job of making all the aprons, and later the uniforms, for the domestic staff employed at Beamish Hall.

Meanwhile, Ernest William was born in Stanley, one of 10 survivors of the 12 children born to John and Mary Long. The whole of the Long Family, who lived in Joicey Square, were very much involved with Clifford Road Methodist Church in Stanley, and all the children were very accomplished musicians. The eldest child, also called John, became the choirmaster, 2 of the other boys were organists, and they were all good singers. Ernest in particular in this day and age would have been a very much sought-after tenor. The 1914-1918 war then intervened, and Ernest entered the Durham Light Infantry. He was much affected by all he saw in Europe over those years, which culminated in his being posted to Cologne with the Army of Occupation, where he spent his 21st birthday. On his return to England he for a short time worked at the Morrison Busty Mine, but of course returned to Clifford Road Methodist Church, where the choir by then (conducted by his brother) consisted mainly of Pringles and Longs!! And so Ernest met Mary, and they married in 1921. In the meantime Ernest had left the Mine and re-trained as a barber, working with one of his brothers. Mary continued her dressmaking business. Then along came their daughter, who also inherited their musical gifts. In 1930 Ernest's life took another turn and he trained as a Master Baker, and in 1933 the family moved to Darlington and opened Long's Bakery in Gladstone Street. They attended Greenbank Methodist Church.

In 1946 Ernest and Mary bought a house in Coniscliffe Road, and the first Sunday they were there Ernest decided "to try out the church down the road on the corner" and hence he came to Elm Ridge for the first time. That first Sunday he sat in the very back row. The final hymn that morning was "Now Thank we all our God", which has a good tenor line, and Ernest sang out, which did not go unnoticed by Harry Hayman, the Elm Ridge Choir Conductor, sitting in the front choir pews. By the time Ernest had slipped out through the porch at the end of the service, Harry Hayman had left his pew, run along the side passageway, through the side door, and round the front of the church to catch Ernest as he left down the drive – and from that Sunday evening until the week before his death in March 1969, Ernest was the lead tenor in Elm Ridge Methodist Church Choir. That choir made a record, a copy of which I still have, of "Seek Ye the Lord" – which was sent for circulation in America.

There is much more that I could add of the involvement of Ernest and Mary Long with Elm Ridge over the years – all the catering provided from the bakery, Mary's teaching of ladies to make things for the two day Bazaars which were held in those days, the mammoth cake stalls they organised, and Ernest's leading of the renowned Elm Ridge Junior Girls' Choir (who made an LP!!).

Ernest died on 8th March 1969, and the memorial lectern was commissioned by Mary, who never saw it completed, as she followed him home just eight months later in November 1969. She died before the inscription had been carved upon the lectern and it was therefore possible for her name to be added.

So, there is the history of the lectern! How do I know all this? Well, Ernest William Long was my Grandfather, Mary Ann Pringle was my grandmother, and their daughter was Nora, my late Mother, and I was born in the flat above the bakery in Gladstone Street!

Mary Everitt



The Well

Hi and welcome back to the second issue of the 'Teesdale Worm' and my first one as a fully fledged inductee into my marvellous family of 'Wellies' after my acceptance into *The Well* as a member back in August at the ceremony of membership.

Talking of welcomes, since our last publication we have had the pleasure of welcoming Brian and Lara Hutton with their children, Emily and Rachel in what is probably not the idealist way to introduce yourself into a brand new community as well as a new country, but welcome aboard and may your new journey with us be as momentous as your arrival.

Without going completely overboard and gushing like an actor during an acceptance speech on Oscar night, this completely and utterly topped off a fantastic year off for me in regards to 'My Journey' and as a person who had joined *The Well* the previous year and had been welcomed with open arms into their amazing community with a warmth that I had only felt on a previous experience. It was an absolute pleasure to get up and give my testimony and devote my life not only to God and Jesus, but to do it in front of all my friends was an emotional experience and in the words of The Carpenters, the journey I find myself on and the one I wish to follow has 'Only Just Begun.'

I just spoke of the word 'Community' and more than ever in what has been the most traumatic, torturous, unbelievable, strength sapping, cruel, challenging, I could go on and on, year in living memory, I always believed that if we can be 'One Big Community' we can get through this horrid episode in mankind's history and come out of the other side a more thankful, hopeful, giving, generous, tolerant and patient community who will welcome people from all walks of life and open the doors and say welcome. I think we do this particularly WELL (Did you see what I did there?)

Whether it's the baby bank, coffee drop in, charity shop, food parcels or someone just wanting a bit of company and a chat, that's what will always resonate with me every time I walk in there and get the same welcome I got on day one, and when I'm leaving (and every body is saying thank God he's gone) only joking, I think. Truly though, the only difference now is I have to pay for my coffee and carry heavy 'stuff' up and down stairs and occasionally put up with the odd jibe and dressing down, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

Well, here we are again. Two weeks into our short, sharp, shock (hopefully) lockdown and all I can report from *The Well* is that the only activity operating at the moment from the premises is the baby bank which is operational on a Tuesday, Wednesday morning from 10-12 and all the other activities via the likes of social media, Facebook and Zoom will be listed on *The Well* Facebook page so check it out if you can, or reach out in the way I did and even though my amazing bunch of friends, who I now class as my 'Family of Wellies' have made me feel part of their community. I still believe it was my Father in the heavens and in my heart that gave me the best community a returning lost soul could have asked for and for that I am and will be eternally grateful.

Thank you for taking the time out and giving my take on what I think *The Well* means to me, but like I said, back in August when I took membership. *'The Well is more than bricks and mortar, it is a lifeline and a place where people including myself can come along, belong not only to the family of God but also belong to you my family and also the community.'*

We are here for you, be rude not to enjoy it as much as I have and still do!

Thanks
Fred Tennant

News from the pews at Harrowgate Hill

Not much to report for Harrowgate Hill as like everyone else we have been closed for Worship and events since the last Teesdale Worm was issued. We are very grateful to those who have been putting together the online services which we have found very helpful and have made us feel less isolated and more like a community and we are looking forward to recommencing Sunday worship on 6th December and will be enjoying some Christmas services (Covid permitting). Our Carol Service (no congregational singing unless Covid rules change by then) is on 20th December at 10.30am, Christmas Eve Service at 9.15pm and Christmas Day Service at 9.30am.

If any one would like to join us at any of these services, you will be very welcome, but could I just ask that you contact Sue Case either by email sue_case@hotmail.co.uk or tel 07977 126 827 so we can keep a track of the numbers attending for social distancing purpose? Thank you.

We at Harrowgate Hill would like to wish you all a happy and safe Christmas and a Covid free New Year.

Sue Case

Haughton

Craft and Chat is a small group of ladies who meet at Haughton Chapel. As we have been unable to meet we have given the ladies a challenge, should they wish to accept it!

Each lady of the group has been given a pine cone on a wooden block representing a Christmas Tree. The challenge is to decorate the tree! Rev. Brian and family have agreed to judge the trees which will be displayed around the chapel for a short while.

C is for the Christ Child a Child of love and light
H is for the Heavens that were bright that holy night
R is for the Radiance of the star that led the way
I is for the lowly inn where the infant Jesus lay
S is for the Shepherds who beheld the Christmas star
T is for the Tidings the angels told afar
M is for Magi with their gifts of myrrh and gold
A is for the Angels who were awesome to behold
S is for the Saviour who was born to save all men

And together this spells Christmas which we celebrate again

Submitted by Ann Thubron



Before....



After...

Barnard Castle

With a concerted effort by the Covid Vision Group, on 12 July 2020 our church was open for private prayer and on 19 July 2020, Rev Harold Stuteley held the first of our short services albeit, sadly, it was his last service before taking up post in Cheshire. Our weekly services then continued, until the recent lockdown.

In July, across Darlington and Teesdale, a creative workshop, focussing on the book of Ruth, produced some wonderful work and it was truly inspirational.

Our Harvest Festival service took place with Tim Baker of *All We Can* producing a virtual service - because of restrictions on travel, he was unable to attend in person. Likewise we had a virtual Church Anniversary Service in October led by Ruth Gee as she, like Tim, was unable to attend. Technology plays a wonderful part in ensuring God's message continues to be shared.

From the beginning of September, *Influence Church* resumed worshipping in our premises. In the past they have used the Church Hall but, to ensure the building remains Covid 19 secure they now meet in our Worship area - after our morning service, a number of the Church Family sanitise the area in preparation for the Influence Church commencing their worship in the early evening. WW (formally known as Weight Watchers) also resumed their meetings - sadly this is all on hold until we get the go ahead to resume services.

We had a wonderful service on 2 September 2020 when Reverend Richard Andrew, welcomed Reverend Tim Boocock and Reverend Graham Cutler to the Circuit. We look forward to the spiritual guidance they will afford to us all.

On 1 November 2020 Graham dedicated 35 shoe boxes which had been kindly donated for the Operation Christmas Child appeal. The boxes were taken to "*The Well*" in West Auckland for collection and these are now on their way to give some children joy at Christmas and we pray they will feel the love that was given when filling the boxes.

Since the recent lockdown when communal services were curtailed, our Church has remained open on a Sunday morning from 10-12 noon for private prayer and reflection and Josie, our organist, plays the piano throughout this time thus enhancing the reverence of this time of reflection. On Remembrance Sunday at 11am we had a two minute silence when those present in Church acknowledged the sacrifice of all the lives lost so we can live in freedom.

Margaret Wills

The Monday evening 'cell' house group in Barnard Castle has continued to meet via Zoom since May. We have been looking at Images of God, using the LifeBuilder Bible study guide recently, and on Monday 16th November it was my turn to lead. I chose the image of God as Builder and included this quotation from Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis, which I had jotted down with various quotations in the back of a Bible many years ago. The reaction of others in the group was "send it to the Worm"!

'Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.'

Heather Coustick

News from the Youth Team

Assemblies:

We have not been in school this term due to COVID restrictions. Schools are using bubble methods to keep children safer and to manage the changing guidelines, so assemblies are not being held traditionally. Instead we have been making videos so we can keep up our relationship with the 10 schools we visit in the town. We have given them a taste of the Giving Garden at *The Well* for our Harvest assembly and we have just sent one about David and Goliath. The next one will be for Christmas and I am enlisting my great team to help make this happen. Please pray that even if we can't physically be in school that we are still having an impact!

Christmas Holiday Club and Make lunch bags:

Over The summer we did a virtual holiday club – this was a weekly video the families could access through YouTube and FaceBook and a bag with everything they would need for the crafts that week. We managed to do the full 6 weeks and the feedback was great. We are planning a small holiday club - Christmas style - to give families something that speaks of Jesus in the holiday madness! A video and craft bag will be offered to any families that want to join in. This can be alongside a food bag if they need support over the holidays. Our Make Lunch project has had to adapt to the times and as many of you have been donating money and food, we have been able to continue to feed families that have needed help throughout the lockdown. We hope to return to hot meals as soon as we can, but at the moment we think bags of food have been the most helpful.



Unexpected Jesus:

Many of you might be familiar with #DarlingtonRocks, this is a Facebook group that encourages people to paint rocks/pebbles that are hidden in the town. Children find the rocks and then re-hide them. You can post where you found them with a picture of the rock. We would love to hide rocks with a picture of a baby Jesus on it. Then people will be able to find Jesus unexpectedly! We will use the #unexpectedJesus – we have never done this before but we hope it will be a fun way to engage people with Jesus at Christmas!

Nativity Trail:

QR codes have been around for a while but now the nativity is catching on! We are doing a QR nativity trail over Advent for families to follow and engage with the story of our best Christmas present ever! Watch out for details!

Teddy Protest:

Last month Parliament voted to not extend free school meals provision to families in the school holidays during the pandemic. This was a decision that our own MP Peter Gibson had agreed with. After 4 years of running Make Lunch in all of our school holidays, we know that families need support in the holidays. It's especially difficult for many families when jobs are being made redundant during the pandemic. I was moved to raise my voice to say that I thought it was the wrong decision and a friend and I asked anyone who felt the same to place a teddy outside the MP's office in protest. We felt that they had been given an opportunity to be compassionate and they had refused, ensuring more children went hungry. This is a problem we have been facing for years without a pandemic! Hopefully, this Christmas holidays there will be funding to provide extra support, as the government changed its mind, although local councils are organising their own responses. However, we know that our Make Lunch kitchen will still be needed.



Baby bank:

The baby bank has stayed open for collection only 2 mornings per week to enable those needing baby items to get what they need. It's been used each week so we are glad we have been able to help! We will be back open properly when the lockdown ends and will be happy to take donations!

Online services:

If you haven't seen *The Well's* online services so far, then please check in to see what we have been up to! It's been great for those who wouldn't normally go to church to check it out. We also love having people engage with online that wouldn't normally think about going to church!

Christingle:

We have been in to Northwood this week to do a Christingle lesson. We loved getting to go in, which we haven't been able to since February! We will be doing a digital Christingle for anyone to view, we will be sharing this in early December!

Morvyn and Emma



Christmas Gifts

You will remember that in last month's magazine we wrote of our plans to give small Christmas gifts to some of our members this year. We also asked if you would like to contribute to this and to let us know of anyone you felt might appreciate such a gift.

Well this is just to let you know that you are not too late to add a name to our list or to donate or help us with deliveries.

We are not talking about an extravagant gift, just a couple of home-made goodies and a couple of little bits and pieces to let someone, who may be on their own at Christmas, know that someone has thought about them and that they are cared for and loved.



Most of us will be fortunate enough to have someone (maybe quite a few family members, restrictions permitting) to share the festivities with and that's such a blessing. But these gifts are intended for those who will be alone and have probably had quite a lonely year all together.

When you are aware that all around you are celebrating with friends and family and you are on your own - it can be very hard.

These gifts are an expression of love, nothing to do with money or whether they can afford to buy their own gift but simply to say, "You are precious and not forgotten." A bit like the principles of Holiday at Home I suppose in as much as, 'If you need a break and some company, you are welcome.'

So please get those names to us ASAP and if you can offer us any help, that will be very much appreciated. We wish you God's richest blessings as we welcome the Saviour of the World into our hearts and homes and however you are celebrating have an very happy Christmas.

Lyn and Chris

The Silence of Zechariah

There are no words
How can one speak after that?
How can one speak when glory intrudes?
Holiness shatters the very fabric of reality
Intruding
Overwhelming
Every expectation
Every lesson
Every assumption gone
Just
God
I couldn't breathe
Light
Glorious, frightening, searing light
Nothing would ever be the same
I couldn't speak
I cannot speak
I knew the prophet but
Just incandescent light
Burning
Seen
Known
Within and without
Deepest longing
Direst sin
Wonder
Fear
Collapsed face down
And Dragged into the real world
Questions dissolve
There are no words
There can be no words
There will be no words
Just waiting, wondering,
Fascinating and fearful
Transcendent and terrible,
There are no words...

Submitted by Rev. Tim Boocock



The Shepherds' Song

We were high in the hills above Bethlehem
When heaven itself broke in
An angel stood before us, we were petrified
But good news! Joy! Light! Music and Peace!
And our hearts, how they were warmed that cold night

We just had to go to find Him
And it was just as we'd been told
A baby, lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling bands
We were amazed, our socks blown off, a newborn King!
And we believed in Him that cold night

We had to spread the news 'round Bethlehem
How heaven itself had broken in
How angels gave us, rough shepherds the good news
Of our Saviour, Christ, Good Shepherd, Lord
We'd seen the Lamb of God that cold night

Now you may be far away from Bethlehem
But heaven itself has broken in
Jesus, Redeemer, yes, He's the real thing for all
He's the door for the sheep, the Way, the Light
And will you follow Him today, this cold night?

Will you follow Him today, this Glorious night?

Copyright Joy Collyer





Imagine the scene

All is quiet in the stable. Cattle are lowing, sheep are snoring, then Class five abseil in from the balcony! They are dressed as soldiers carrying hi-tech weapons. Red lights search the straw but they are too late. Shots are fired, screams are heard. A lamb bleeds. Nativity: The Final Chapter. To be fair I am not sure which carol would follow. Perhaps a solo haunting Silent Night.

I am always a little surprised that no enterprising teacher has tried it, at least to my knowledge (the scene in the film Nativity notwithstanding.) I suspect you would get lots of volunteers to play the soldiers and it is after all the end of this part of the story. At least as St Matthew tells it.

In the midst of our Christmas story there is deep darkness and pain. Death intrudes in all its brutality and destructive might. Blood flows and there is grief beyond imagining. Rachel weeping for her children. In it's mood it echoes the long emptiness of the dark winter nights. Loneliness and loss. Sometimes we are called to play Rachel and her sisters as the holy nativity unfolds. It is harder than a shepherd or a king. There are no camel jokes or grumpy sheep just yawning emptiness and endless grief. Perhaps the holy family are lucky. If fleeing for your life is lucky? If not knowing what comes next is lucky? If having nothing and being foreign constitute luck?

And yet there is a pattern. There is predictability. This is how evil responds. Lashing out in random violence, hatred and destruction. We have seen this before, we will see it again. We see it with every news bulletin. Yet we respond. The pain is real and overwhelming but they are still too late. They will always be too late. In the midst of grief there is a light shining in the darkness, fragile, threatened and flickering but there is still a light. Running for their lives. But running. The darkness has not, the darkness will not, the darkness cannot put it out. Hold on. This is just the beginning. Amen.

Daily Advent Devotions

Rev. Brian is doing a series of daily Advent devotions which can be delivered straight to your mobile phone via WhatsApp. Each devotion is 3-4 minutes long and is delivered first thing on a morning - just right to start your day in a good way!



If you have access to WhatsApp and would like to receive these and get involved during Advent - please send me your mobile phone number and I'll add you to the growing list of Circuit members all joining together with a new form of worship!
(admin@darlingtoncircuit.org.uk)

Lindy

Deadline for items for the January issue is: Friday, 1st January

Please send to admin@darlingtoncircuit.org.uk or

Circuit Office, c/o Elm Ridge Methodist Church, Carmel Road South, Darlington. DL3 8DJ

Thank you!



Letter to the Editor....

What's in a Name?

What on Earth.....or even under it.... is this Teesdale Worm? The worms of North East legends lurk in the lowlands where the rivers are deep and meander lazily from side to side, sometimes even seeming to be unsure as to where they want to be, or whether to go forward or to turn back. In Teesdale the river and the rivelets have always sparkled with creative vitality and energy as they dance, brooking no obstacles on their way to the sea. With its fairy dells and fairy cupboards on the banks of the streams and the river, I have always imagined Teesdale to be in the realm of the sprites.

The people of Teesdale have already had to bear the indignity of having their name purloined for an industrial estate on Teesside and more recently have borne six months of notoriety following the uninvited visit of a political advisor. Are we now to compound their discomfort by meddling with North East folklore and saddling them with a giant worm? The Tees is a wonderful link which runs through the heart of our circuits, but I am not so sure about the worm. I am wondering what our friends in Teesdale might have to say about this creature? But maybe my fears will turn out to be groundless and, with generous spirit, they will welcome the Worm with outstretched arms!

John Wearmouth
Darlington

CHRISTINGLE

Over the years, some of the best attended services at Elm Ridge have been our Christingle services on Christmas Eve. We usually get over 200 people, mostly non-church families, and distribute 150 Christingles.

This year things will have to be different, so we are planning on holding an “Outdoor Christingle Trail” using our grounds, with family groups booking a time slot within a 2 hour window between 4-6pm on Christmas Eve.

There will be 4 stations around the grounds, following our existing Prayer Trail and all lit by Christmas lights. Parts of the Christingle will be given out at each point so that children build their own Christingle.

At each station there will be a short explanation about what they’re adding. Rev. Tim will be at the final station to invite folk to light the candle once they get home, and to give a blessing. Christmas music will add to the special atmosphere.

All of this will only happen if we’re still allowed by Government to do so at the time and with social distancing and strict hygiene in place.

We are still at an early planning stage, and will need committed people to help with logistics and running this event. Some of us are already getting excited about this new venture.

Due to the current circumstances, we need to ask folk to book their place on the Christingle Trail, so if you would like to come along and join in - please ring Lindy to book your place.



Elm Ridge Stewards

The Lord's Prayer

I cannot pray Our, if my faith has no room for others and their need.

I cannot pray Father, if I do not demonstrate this relationship to God in my daily living.

I cannot pray in heaven, if all my interests and pursuits are in earthy things.

I cannot pray, hallowed be your name if I am not striving with God's help to be holy.

I cannot pray your kingdom come, if I am unwilling to accept God's rule in my life.

I cannot pray your will be done, if I am unwilling or resentful of having it in my life.

I cannot pray on earth as it is in heaven, unless I am truly ready to give myself to God's service here and now.

I cannot pray give us this day our daily bread, without expending honest effort for it, or if I would withhold from my neighbour the bread that I receive.

I cannot pray forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, if I continue to harbour a grudge against anyone.

I cannot pray save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil, if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.

I cannot pray for the kingdom, if I am unwilling to obey the King.

I cannot pray the power and the glory are yours, if I am seeking power for my own glory and myself first.

I cannot pray now and for ever, if I am too anxious about each day's affairs.

I cannot pray Amen, unless I honestly say “cost what it may this is my prayer”.

Submitted by Keith Lewis

Advent is here...in a bag!

In October, the Staindrop church dial in community, celebrated Harvest at home with 'Harvest in a box'. Items that we associated with Harvest including prayers and a wordsearch, were presented in a cake box. We then used the items in our worship and daily devotions.

So, when thinking about how we share in Advent as a dispersed community worshipping via telephone each Sunday, 'Advent in a bag' came to mind.

Take one shiny, sparkling carrier bag and fill it with items relating to Advent and Christmas. A set of tealights and Celtic Advent wreath to colour and use with the tealights. A book of short and varied daily devotions, an Advent study guide, chocolates, treats, a good read and of course a wordsearch and stained-glass window to colour!

We are following the devotions together at 12 noon each day. The study guide is a free one via 'Roots'. It's called '*Now and Then*'. Reflecting on Advent in the light of a pandemic. We reflect on this each week for 30 minutes via telephone. Week one was great. The good read is a copy of Mark's Gospel. The intention is to start reading it on January 1st as a reminder of the greatest story ever told.

So, if you contact someone from the group and they said, "*I'm just doing my Advent wordsearch*" don't be surprised. We are watching and waiting in different ways for the Christ Child to bring Hope to the World.

Mark Bagnall
Staindrop Methodist Church
Community Missioner

Looking Forward to Covenant & the Holy Habits We Develop...

In the New Year in the Barnard Castle and Teesdale Circuit, we'll be looking at the Covenant Prayer.

Each year we emerge from the business and celebration of the birth of the Saviour and straight into the Covenant Service in January.

It sometimes feels like a bit of a rush, however, this year we shall take some time to look at the Covenant Prayer in three parts, culminating on Part 3 with the Covenant Service. Covenant is one of the real strengths of the Methodist tradition, often adopted by other denominations, to start the calendar year in partnership with our Lord.

In the weeks which follow, we'll be looking at the area of *Holy Habits*, planned for 2020, but interrupted by a pesky virus! We'll be walking through these topics, ably guided in our reflections by the author: Andrew Roberts. This is not a means of making "Super-Christians", rather to see where our normal activities of fellowship, service, eating together, gladness, worship and Biblical teaching can work with other habits to make us fruitful followers of the Servant King.

2021 promises to be much better than this year (setting the bar low!) so why not start with a Covenant and then continue to grow in faith, hope and love.

Blessings
Graham Cutler



Darlington District Courageous Day 2021

In February 2020 we hosted Darlington District's first Courageous Day for young people aged 8 to 23 yrs. This was all about bringing together young people from across the District to have fun, worship and debate about what matters to them. We are keen that 3Generate is not the only time that young people are heard and throughout the year we have dedicated time to reach out and have space to listen and engage. We hope that this encourages a wider participation from our young people – ensuring they can have a say in the decisions the church make and where the church puts it's attention.

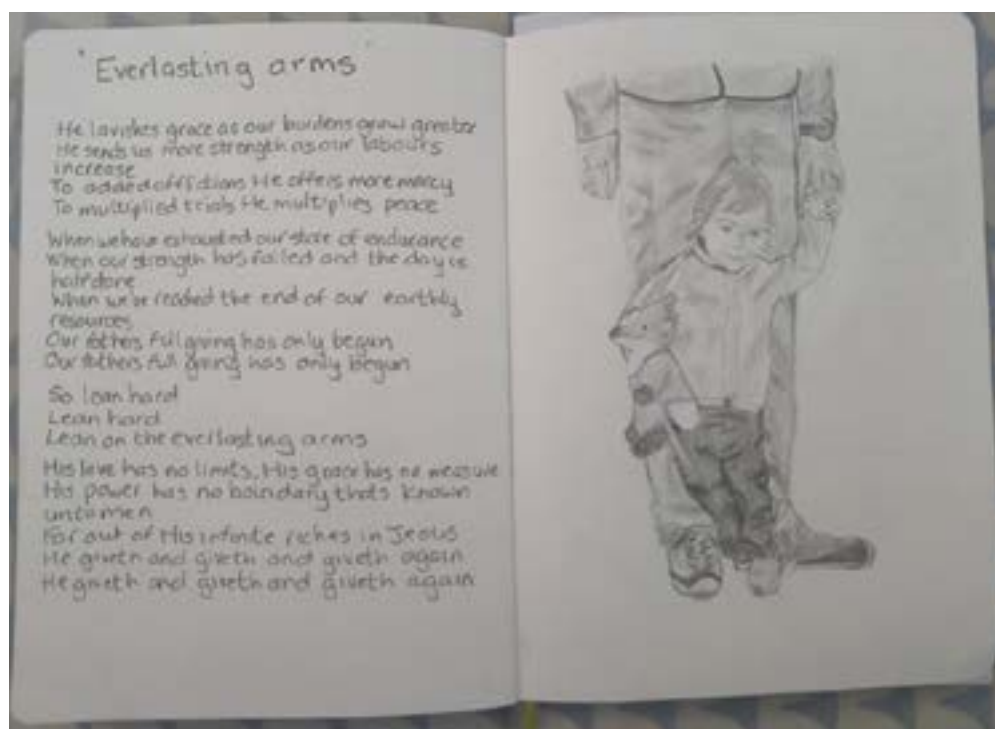
This year due to restrictions we are unlikely to be able to plan a day that would be the same. So we have thought creatively and have started an online programme that will culminate in an online day on the 27th February 2021. The first part is encouraging all Churches across the District to engage with us in this process. We have been keen to make sure that even if you don't have any children or young people at your church at the moment, you will know what is happening and still get involved in praying for the event, for the children and young people engaging and promoting that this is happening.



Your Church will be receiving seeds shortly – with an explanation as to what to do with them! Please join in with this and I am sure your Church will be blessed by participating. We need everyone to be courageous in order to grow the church and to reach out to families. If you are not sure what to do – please get in touch with me and I can support you with it!

Look out for the chive seeds heading your way!

Morvyn Sanderson



Written and illustrated by my daughter-in-law Andrea Selley. I have her permission to send it to you for publication in the Worm.. it might reach out to those at the end of their Covid lock-down tether!

Jenny Selley