



CHEAP STREET CHURCH

To know the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit and with Jesus as our teacher to show and share our faith.

Minister:

The Revd Duncan Goldie 01935 812916

Church Secretary:

Janet Le Moignan 01935 389662 lemoignanj@yahoo.co.uk

NEWSLETTER

24th December 2020

Many thanks to all who contributed to this 6 page Christmas newsletter and to those who took the photographs. There is a Thought for the Year as well as a Thought for the Day. There are also details of radio and TV worship for those of you not into online worship.

Last week I saw a toddler jumping with great joy in a muddy puddle - a memory to treasure in a grim year.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year **George Faris**

Duncan's Message

Lectionary Readings for Sunday 27th December Christmas 1
Psalm 148, Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40.

Simeon and Anna are two of the older characters which are a part of the Christmas story, even though they rarely feature in our traditional nativity scenes. It is easy to overlook them, which in reality many people did at the time, but equally if you did not know differently it would be easy to overlook Mary and Joseph and their son Jesus as they join others to make the sacrifices necessary for purification after the birth of Jesus. To those who look on with the eyes of the world they are just one more poor couple struggling to make ends meet, who have offered the smallest sacrifices allowed by the law. It is the eyes of the faithful Simeon and Anna that the Holy Spirit opens to see beyond the outward appearances and in the infant Jesus to see God's act of salvation for Israel and beyond to the whole of God's creation. They see what shepherds have seen and praise God and seek to tell the good news to all who will listen.

Even in these times dominated by the Covid 19 pandemic it is still good news and a cause for socially distanced celebrations, something that no lockdown can change. This Christmas it is good to hear once more that there is hope for the future because in Jesus God is with us in all of life's challenges.

Hymn: *Singing the Faith* 194. Child of Joy and Peace

From the Church Secretary

Thank you to everybody who has been active in the life of the church in our present circumstances, when many others have not been able to fulfil their normal roles. And thank you to everybody who has linked up with others in the family of the church and who has done their best to help us to celebrate Christmas.



Carol singing on the church steps last Thursday was appreciated by a number of people who stopped to listen or even join in. There will be a new group singing on **Christmas Eve, starting at 10 am** and we should be pleased to see anyone who has the time to come and join us singing from the seats.

Details of Christmas services are given later in the newsletter. This year our offerings on Christmas Eve and Christmas day will be equally divided between the work of *Yeovil Street Pastors* and *Hope in Africa* which is the overseas charity we are currently supporting. We often have a number of visitors on Christmas Day but this year perhaps instead we shall have more of our regular congregation who are usually away at this time.

In Memoriam

At Christmas many of us remember particularly those who are no longer with us. The list of those connected with Cheap Street Church has been added to by the deaths this year of:

Derek Hayward, Ron Dolling, Charles Pennington, Gill Hunt, John Hooper, Hilda Clarke, John Green, Graham Penlington and Brian Crew.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4)

Fellowship of Prayer

Whenever and wherever we pray in the silence of our hearts, we are part of a rich and powerful fellowship, which serves to sustain everyone in our Church Family. Anyone can join the prayer group by just praying.

We hold in prayer Barbara and Dennis Porter and their family - Barbara is likely to be in hospital at Christmas; Eileen Higgins's son Robert and his wife Dawn; Clive and Jill Turner and Ellie and Sophie; Yve and Ken Ackroyd and all the family; Janet Baker; Martin Heal; Phyllis Batchelor; Duncan's mother; Eileen Higgins; Alex Palmer; Peter and Marjorie Kett; Christina Le Moignan.

The Prayer Ring is available for an urgent need or situation.

Call any of these numbers and the circle of prayer will begin:

Eirwen Cox 01935 815960, Penny Gardner 01935 389153, Janet Le Moignan 01935 389662.

Looking Forward to 2021

Have you heard about the exciting outreach proposals being considered for our vacant shop? Make sure you read our first newsletter of 2021 for full details about what is happening and how you might wish to be involved. In the meantime keep praying. **Martin Heal**

Thought for the Day from Christine Rogers

This year Christmas will be very different for many of us. This may prompt us to ask what it is that matters to us about Christmas. Is it the familiar carols which we are not able to sing at a Carol Service this year? Is it perhaps our popular Christmas Tree Festival, cancelled for the first time ever this year, and which usually brings so many members of our community into the church and raises so much money for charities? Is it the annual trip to a pantomime or the traditional family get together with the exchange of presents and the turkey dinner? Is it to hear the familiar story of the annunciation, the journey to Bethlehem, the birth in the manger, and the visits of the shepherds and the wise men, so much part of our Christmas experience since we were young?

It does seem that we are not alone in this desire to hear the Christmas story in readings and carols. Carol Services are also an opportunity to tell those who join us only on such occasions that Christ is not just for Christmas but for life, for every day. Jesus is not just the baby in the manger. He is involved in our everyday life, he shares in its joys and in its sadness, even in its darkest moments. Christmas is not just an opportunity to escape the problems of the world and wrap ourselves in tinsel trimmings, it is about being given the strength to face up to reality with all its suffering, in the secure knowledge that light has shone in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

At the moment we cannot help but think about the suffering and loss and fear resulting from the pandemic. Questions are being asked about where God is in such dark days: "Where is God in a Coronavirus World?" Christmas provides us with an answer. God is with us, by our side, suffering alongside us, even in a coronavirus world. The incarnation begins with lives which have their dark side - an unmarried woman is with child, a social stigma at that time, as it was here until a generation ago. A baby is born to a couple away from their home in an environment probably devoid of all comfort and safety. The miracle of Christmas is that this child is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He brings us the good news that God is with us even in the darkest and most desperate of situations, even choosing to die a criminal's death for us, offering us a chance to be rescued and restored and changed through his great love.

Here is a poem "Christmas Bells" by the American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882). The "canon thundered in the South" in the fourth verse is a reference to the American Civil War (1861 -1865). Longfellow, who was an abolitionist, i.e. opposed to slavery, worked for reconciliation between the North and the South after the war.

Placida Domingo version on YouTube: [click here](#) (there are dozens of other versions available)

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

Reading: Isaiah Chapter 2:

Verse 2: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.

Verse 6: For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests on his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Prayer:

God of light and hope,
We thank you for sending your Son into our world
to be with us and to share in all our joys and sorrows..
We lift before you all who will find Christmas a difficult time,
those who are ill or isolating, those who grieve because of a bereavement,
those who are lonely, those who feel cut off from their families,
those who are out of work, those who are short of money..
Open our hearts to your love and teach us how to share it with others.
Encourage us to be more faithful followers of our Lord,
today, this week, and in all our future days,
Amen

Thought for the Year – Muriel Martin

Recently we watched on television a repeat showing of Michael Palin's *Travels*. In that episode he had reached a rough refugee camp on the edge of the Sahara. He talked to a smiling family who had fled from their home and

country because of war and persecution. Michael asked “How do you manage to stay so cheerful?” for they were living in a makeshift tent in awful conditions. They answered – “Whatever God Sends Makes Us Happy!”

Well, I doubt the present pandemic is God’s doing – more the foolishness of humans – but we know God is with us as we struggle through it. I often become miserable and depressed. I tend to grumble and be bad tempered – being old and life being even more restricted. Then I remember that African family and feel ashamed.

Many folk in 2020 have had to face real tragedy - lost loved ones - or loss of income. For those of us who have not suffered the trauma of loss (At least not yet!) I suggest we try our hardest to smile and encourage others. Build up each other’s morale. This is my New Year resolution. Of course, we will all need God’s help – it is hard to be positive in present circumstances. We are well blessed for we know the Lord is with us. And as I read the other day if you take Christ out of Christmas all you have left is M & S! When we feel down let us try and remember that African family and those like them. Perhaps we can sing even on our own --“Joy to the world the Saviour Comes!” Despite the new variety of COVID we have hope. And the vaccine is coming.

Prayers for the persecuted church

Colombia

Although Christians make up the majority of the population, they face persecution from powerful criminal groups. Guerrilla groups regularly threaten, harass, extort and even murder church leaders who denounce corruption and violence, defend human rights or try to deter young people from joining criminal gangs. Elsewhere, in indigenous communities, there is significant opposition to Christian missionaries and indigenous converts, who face imprisonment, physical abuse and the confiscation of property, among other forms of punishment.

Let us pray with church leaders who are bravely seeking peace amid the resurgence of armed conflict; that members of guerrilla groups will turn to Christ, and for provision and hope for indigenous Christians ostracised by their communities. Amen.

Christmas Greetings

Duncan Goldie: To everyone at Cheap Street Church I wish you all a very happy Christmas, and thank everyone for all you have contributed, especially your prayers, in this past very unusual year.

John Stanfield is well settled in his new home but still takes an active interest in what our church is doing. He sends his Christmas greetings to us all.

Janet Le Moignan: Whatever you are doing on Christmas Day, and even if you cannot be in contact with people you love, you will not be alone. The real message of Christmas is, as our banner in church proclaims, Emmanuel, God with us. So let us celebrate his love. Happy Christmas to you all, from Christina as well as myself.



Eirwen Cox: The Pastoral visitors and myself wish our Cheap Street Church Family a Peaceful Christmas and hopefully a healthier New Year. Let us all continue to keep in touch with each other during the uncertain days ahead and remember we have in Cheap Street a strong bond that keeps us together with love. We pray that the new vaccine will help to control the spread of the dreadful Covid virus and that we all stay safe.

The Rendezvous: Happy Christmas! It is certainly going to be a low-key and very different event for everyone this year, but we do hope that you are able to find a way to celebrate. It is possibly the first time in over 20 years that we haven’t put up decorations, organised Christmas parties or taken part in the Cheap Street Church Christmas Tree festival. But, our thanks go to Ali Berry and her Church House Group and Sherborne Prep School for helping us spread some Christmas cheer by donating goody bags for our young parents,

learners and the other young people who are working with us. Wishing you all the best for this Christmas and New Year.



A Reflection by John Bell

If my name was Mary
(just sixteen with a child)
Forced to flee my country
(failing state turning wild)
Would you find a place for me?

If the town I came from
Once had been occupied
By your nation's soldiers
At whose hands my dad died,
Would you find a place for me?

If your nation's air force
Dropped their bombs on my street
On the wrong presumption
That was where rebels meet
Would you find a place for me?

If I'd learned your country
Saw and heard of our plight
But remained persuaded
We were wrong, you were right,
Would you find a place for me?

If the boat I paid for
was unfit to set sail
and that seeking refuge
was now certain to fail,
would you find a place for me?

If my name was Mary
(just sixteen with a child);
If his name was Jesus . . .

Text, "If", John L. Bell & Design Graham Maule, Copyright © 2015 Wild Goose Resource Group c/o Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH www.wildgoose.scot.

Thanks from Christine

I would like to thank my friends at Cheap Street Church for the lovely cards and messages (including an e-card!) they sent on my 80th birthday. The following brought a special smile to my face: "Being 80 is a piece of cake..... you just need a little more PUFF for the candles!" It is a great comfort to be part of such a warm-hearted community.

Birthdays

Happy birthday to Harriet Slogrove on Boxing Day and Denise Gould on Monday 28th.

Births

Ruth and Philip Rogerson are grandparents for a second time. Little Eva, born to Sara and Sam and a sister to Isaac. Grandparents are delighted and thankful. Some of us will remember Sara as a small child. Now she is a Mum.

George Faris is a great uncle for the fourth time. A first great niece, born to Rachel and Richard and a sister for Max. Guess the name of a baby born 9 days before Christmas, answer at the end of the newsletter.

Cheap Street Services



Duncan will be leading these services:

Thursday 24 December	Christmas Eve Service with Holy Communion	6 pm
Friday 25 December	Christmas Day Service	10.30 am
Sunday 3 January	Covenant Service with Holy Communion	10.30 am
Sunday 10 January	Sunday Worship	10.30 am

There will no service at Cheap Street on the 27th but there will be a circuit service on Zoom. Details will be circulated by email.

Christmas Worship on BBC1

Christmas Eve 11.45 pm	Midnight Mass from Clifton Cathedral
Christmas Day 10 am	Christmas worship from the Church of God of Prophecy, Birmingham, with a gospel flavour

Christmas Worship on Radio 4

Christmas Eve 3 pm	Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from the chapel of King's College Cambridge
Christmas Day 9 am	Christmas Service <i>A Draught in the Stable</i> , recorded at St Martin-in-the Field and other London locations.

Ways of worshipping on Sunday

Radio 4: 8.10 am	Sunday Worship: <i>Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?</i> The Archbishop of Canterbury marks the 850 th anniversary of the murder of his predecessor Archbishop Thomas Becket.
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Methodist resources: [click here](#). URC resources: [click here](#).

URC: [daily devotions and a Sunday service \(click here to subscribe\)](#).

Gillingham Virtual Carol Service

The Gillingham Methodist Church and Gillingham Community Church virtual carol service is available here: [Gillingham](#). It is a traditional carol service with extended music and greetings from across the world.

Yeovil Churches Nativity

The Yeovil churches nativity is available [Yeovil](#). It combines humour with traditional carols and readings. "Thoroughly enjoyed" – Yve Ackroyd.

Quiz Answer

Holly Florence Faris.

Contributions to future newsletters

Please send contributions by midday Wednesday to:
Penny Gardner pennylgardner@gmail.com 01935 389153 and
George Faris gfaris48@gmail.com 01935 420258.