

The Bumper Christmas Bulletin **20th & 27th December 2020 &** **3rd January 2021**



'Comfort, comfort my people.... Your God is coming!'
Isaiah 40:1,9

Wow! I can't quite believe that this is the last bulletin this year.

And what a strange year it has been, hasn't it? Since March, life has been thrown upside down as a result of Coronavirus.

It has affected us all, in different ways. We have lost the company of others. Many have lost jobs, or tragically, lost loved ones. For all of us, there have been hardships, and changes, and uncertainty.

And Church has looked very different too. Unable to meet together as before, we have asked ourselves some searching questions about who we are as a church, and what God might be saying to us in the vulnerability and changing patterns of our time.

So what comfort can we get then, I wonder? What hope do we have for 2021 – either individually or as a church?

As it's almost Christmas, I want us to think for a moment about the coming of Jesus. And I want to think about it in three different tenses – past, future and present. Jesus 'came', Jesus is 'coming', and Jesus comes!

Because it is the implication of all three of those tenses that, I believe, means we really can know God's advent gifts of Hope, Joy, Love and Peace both this Christmas, and as we go into 2021

First then - Jesus 'came' – past tense.

We know this is true. There is more historical evidence for the person of Jesus than there is for Julius Caesar. *'The word was made flesh and dwelt among us'*, John's Gospel says.



God came as Jesus 2000 years ago to show us his love, by making his home right here among us. He came to reconcile us to God. *'I have come'*, Jesus himself said, *'that you might know life in all its fullness!'* Because Jesus came, hope was given. We can now know peace with God, and joy everlasting, and love beyond measure!

And then we believe that Jesus will come – future tense.

'What we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory God will reveal to us later... With eager hope, creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay' – so says Paul in Romans 8. *'I will come*

again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also', Jesus says in John 6.

In all the uncertainty of our world – whether with Coronavirus, or Brexit, or global warming, or inequality, or war, we have the hope that God will finish what God has started – God will come! This gives us a peace and a joy we can hold onto with certainty! Love will win!



But then finally, Jesus still comes – present tense!

'I will be with you always', he said in Matthew 28. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me', Jesus says in Revelation 3. And then we have that lovely discourse in John 15: 'Abide in me, and I will abide in you'.

For me – this is the best bit of all! Not only did Jesus come, and will come again, but he still comes today – right now in every minute of your life to abide with you. 'Best of all, God is with us', as John Wesley said.

Right now, we can find hope in God, and be showered with the love of God, and know the joy of God, and rest in the peace of God – because we can encounter the presence and communion of Emmanuel – God with us – every day!

So, this Christmas and every day, may you experience afresh the Hope, and the Love, and the Joy and the Peace of God; because God came; God is coming; and God comes!

Happy Christmas!



Prayer

God, we do thank you that you came as Jesus to bring us life in all its fullness.

We praise you for the hope we have that you will once more come –bringing peace and harmony for all your creation.

And we rejoice that you still come – every minute of every day. You abide in us and dwell still with us.



Thank You that I can know your hope, your love, your joy and your peace today and always.

May I receive these gifts once more from your outstretched arms.

Amen



Sunday 20th December

This will start at 6pm

Rev. Tim Cooke

**A Christmas Celebration – re-telling the Christmas story –
all ages invited.**

**This service will be streamed live on You Tube for those who have
not reserved seats.**

There will be NO morning service.

**The cash donations from our Christmas
services will be divided between the
following charities:**

**The Nourished Project (Salvation Army)
Shelter
Médecins Sans Frontières**



Cumbria's Big Carol Sing



CUMBRIA BIG CAROL SING

Hope in dark times

Special invites to join the Cumbria Big Carol Sing can now be downloaded from the God for All website.

People are being encouraged to circulate them to friends, family and neighbours. The invites are just part of a set of new Christmas resources on offer for individuals and families at home and those people you may be connecting with digitally.

Churches across the county are being encouraged to partner up with BBC Radio Cumbria as the station broadcasts a special Christmas programme on Sunday 20 December from 6pm.

As part of the programme people will be invited to take to their door steps at 6.15pm to sing *Silent Night*



Christmas Eve – Online Christingle/children’s Christmas service ~ 4pm.

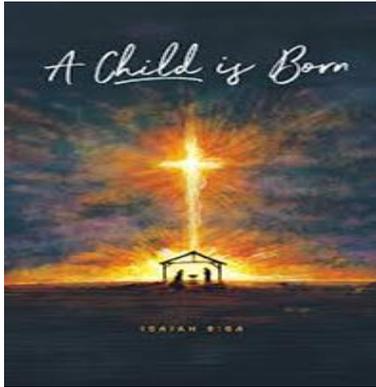


Christmas Eve - Open-air carols on the green outside St. Andrew’s Church ~ 6pm. Bring a torch or candle in a jar to light.

Midnight Communion – Joint service at St. Andrew’s Church ~ 11pm.

All services at St. Andrew’s will be live streamed to their website: www.standrewспенrith.org.uk





Christmas Day

**Family Christmas Celebration at PMC ~ 10am
Rev. Tim Cooke.**

If you are joining us online, why not participate by lighting a candle yourself and joining in with the following words as we light our final candle:

Reader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; for those who lived in a land of deep darkness, a light has shined.

Our Advent journey is now complete. The darkness is gone. The Light of the World is here!

Our hope has been met. Our peace has come. Our joy has been made perfect. The love of God has come to live among us. And so, today, we light the candle of Christ.

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. The long-awaited Christ has come!

All: Together, we proclaim to the world that God is with us and for us.

(light Advent candle as we say....)

*So as we light our advent candle
Light of the world, shine on us.
In this world of pain and darkness,
Light of the world, shine through us.
And as we meet here with you today
Light of the world, light the way.*



Sunday 27th December at 10.30am

This service will now be on You Tube rather than Zoom.

It will be led by Rev. Tim with a message from our District Chair, James, too.

You will be able to upload the service on You Tube, as you would do for any other Sunday service, using the familiar link: www.bit.ly/LivePMC



Sunday 3rd January at 10.30am

Covenant Service led by Rev. Tim Cooke

The words for this will be emailed out as an attachment to the notices, but it will also be on the website.

Midweek Service
Starts Thursday 7th January at 10am



Sunday 10th January at 10.30am
Healing Service led by
Rev. Gillian Belford

Please pray for all those who are involved in this service and for those who take this opportunity for prayer.

The services will be live-streamed on YouTube for anyone wanting to follow from home, or to catch up later, on the following link: www.bit.ly/LivePMC

The weekly podcast is available to download from our website: www.penrithmethodist.co.uk or by dialling 01768 800793.



Family Outdoor Based Advent Reflections Resource

Thanks for the Presents!



1.

Nature is really generous.
It gives us so much!
What examples can you think of?

Have a search in this area and see what examples you can find.



2. We often think of presents at Christmas. The wise men in the Christmas story are remembered for the presents that they gave to the baby Jesus. The story says they brought presents fit for a king and that they gave them to demonstrate how special they believed Jesus was.

3. An important part of getting presents is saying thank you – it reminds us how fortunate we are, lets others know that we don't take them for granted and can help us to not become greedy.

Go and find any 3 of the nature gifts again. Each time you find one, picture the real thing in your imagination, maybe try and imagine life without it and then whisper the words thank you into the wind.

Venue: Prepare in advance by hiding/hanging up the laminated presents, maybe near fruit trees/bushes



The following story is by Walter Wangerin Jr. from his wonderful book 'Ragman and other cries of faith'. It's a great one for Christmas! Some may read the story and identify the woman as the mother of Jesus, but I prefer to think of her as symbolic of all of us.



Enjoy !

Tim

"I love that child. And yet she is afraid of me. I want to help this child, so terribly in need of my help.

She is hungry; her cheeks have sunk into her bones. She knows little of food, and even less of nutrition.

I know these things. She is cold, and she is dirty.

She lives at the end of the tattered hallway, up three flights of stairs in a block of flats. The landlord had forgotten a long time ago about those who harboured in that place.

But I know how to light a fire, and I know how to wash a face.

She has desperate needs of course, and yet she is aware of her state and is embarrassed by who she is.

But here I am – well travelled throughout the universe. And I'm wise and loving, and want to help her.

She is lonely all day long. She sits in a chair with her back to the door. Her knees are tucked up to her chin, and her arms hang down, her head drops to her chest.

I cannot see her face. She is hiding. But if I could but see her face, and gently kiss it, then I know I could draw the loneliness out of her.

She sings a sort of song to pass the time – a childish melody. Her body is that of a woman – yet there is no pride in that body. She wears a swelling in her belly.

She has long forgotten what love is. How I long to show her love.

Yes, I love this child – yet she is afraid of me. How can I come to her, to feed her and heal her and love her?

I might knock on her door. That would be the common way. But she would hold her breath and pretend to not be at home. She would feel unworthy of guests.

And if I were to bang loudly it would only send her into shivering tears – for those who have knocked loudly in the past have only brought trouble.

Should I break down the door? Or show my face at her window? No. What terrors I would cause then. These have happened before. They have heralded the abuse of men.

And so she just sits there, singing that woeful lullaby.

I am none of those who have come before. But if I came she would not know me any different. She could not receive my love.

I've called from the hall. I've sung her name through cracks in the plaster. But she covered her ears and wept. She thought each word an accusation.

I could, of course, ignore her walls and doors and windows, and just simply appear before her as I am. I can do that. But she wouldn't have the strength to take it, and she might die.

She is, you see, her own deepest hiding place, and her fear and her death would be the true doors blocking me.

So, what then, is left? How can I come to her? How can I love her? Where will that entrance be that won't frighten her or kill her? By what door can my love arrive to truly nurture her, and take her loneliness away, and make her beautiful – as lovely as my moon at night or my sun at morning?

I know what I will do. She herself will be my door – and her body will be the entrance into her life.

Ah, I like that! How could she fear her own body – of something lowly under her ribs.

I'll be the baby waking in her womb. She'll know my coming before I even come.

Time to get ready; to touch her tummy, touching the promise, as it were.

Whenever she hangs her head, she'll be looking at me – thinking of me – loving me while I gather in the deepest place of her being. It is indeed an excellent plan!

And then, when I come, my voice shall be so dear to her. It shall call the tenderness out of her soul and loveliness into her face. And when she holds me, she will sigh and sing another song - a sweet Magnificat – for she shall feel important then – and worthy - seeing that another life depends on hers. My need shall make her rich.

And then what of her loneliness? Gone. Gone in the bond between us, though as yet I shall not have said a word. And for my sake she will wash her face, for she will have reason then.

And the sins that she suffered, the hurts at the hands of others, shall be transformed by my being. I will make good come out of evil. I am the good come out of evil.

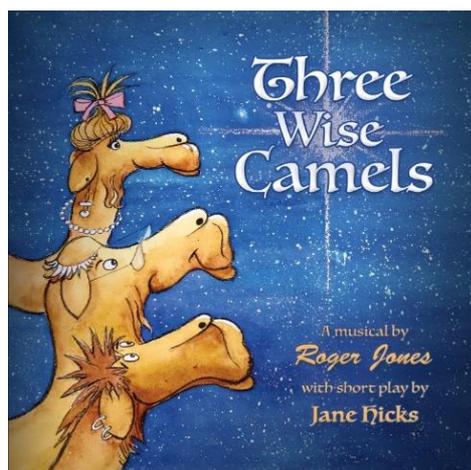
I am her Lord, who loves this woman.

And for a while I'll let her mother me. But then I'll grow. And I will take her into my arms, and out of her past. I will bear my mother, my child, alive forever.

I love this child.

She will not fear me for long now. Look. It's almost happening. I am doing a new thing, and do you not perceive it? I am coming among you, a baby. And my name shall be called Emmanuel”.





Roger Jones' new musical 'Three Wise Camels' was premiered last Friday (11th) on YouTube. Anyone interested in tuning in to the premier can access this on the link:

<https://youtu.be/EignGsqkcDc>

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who has continued to purchase cards this year and raise much needed funds for our church projects. Despite a lack of coffee mornings, Christmas fair, and teas out at Cottage Wood, we've still managed to raise £654.50.

I hope you will continue your support in the coming year and remember that every penny you spend will go towards church funds.
Christine Milner.



Thank you to all our supporters for raising donations for us by shopping online via #easyfundraising. It's been a difficult year and you are helping to make a difference. So far, we've raised £54.31! If you are buying any last-minute gifts, shopping the sales or planning any 2021 getaways, please remember to keep using easyfundraising so we don't miss out. <http://efraising.org/LTLGBHFx4F>

The Way

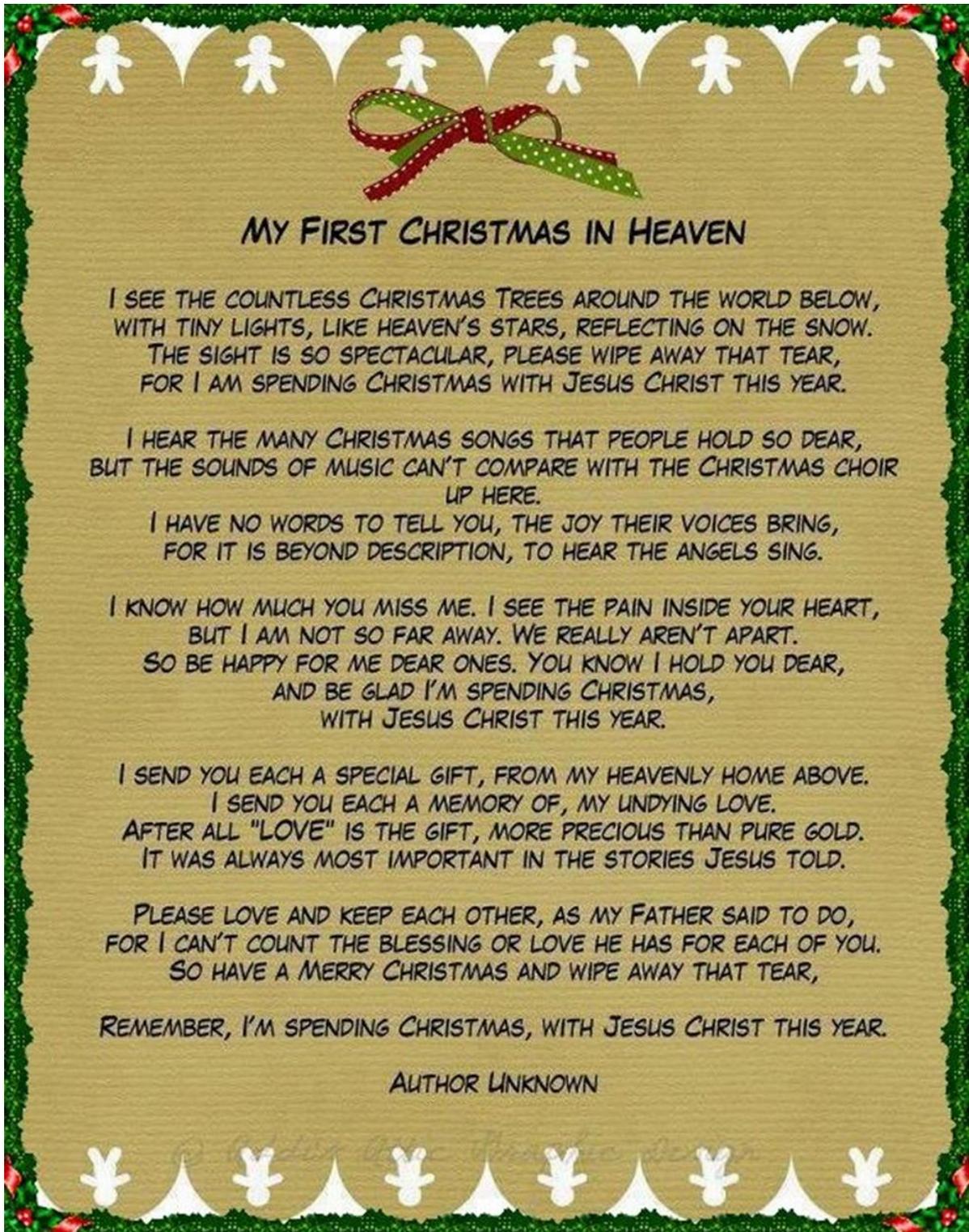
The situation around the COVID-19 pandemic dictates that we have taken the decision not to print the Christmas edition of The Way. I am sure you will understand the reasons taken behind this decision.

However, I'm glad to say that a shorter version of the paper is now available online on the following website page: <https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/way/>

CAP Thanks

Many thanks for your generous donations towards the CAP Christmas Hampers. An amazing £2186.00 has been raised.

This is for those who have lost loved ones this year....



Update

Many of you will know that Rev. David Milner has been unwell. He is home from hospital and we are pleased to report that his temperature is now under control.

He has some pain where the Pleurisy is located and is understandably very tired, so is sleeping quite a bit. He will be on sick leave until at least the new year.

David and Christine wish to thank everyone for all the concern and good wishes sent to them, as well as offers of practical help.



A BIG THANK YOU to everyone who has volunteered in any way during this difficult year.

The Circuit Office is closed from 18th December until 4th January.

Contact Details:

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PMC Website: www.penrithmethodist.co.uk

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