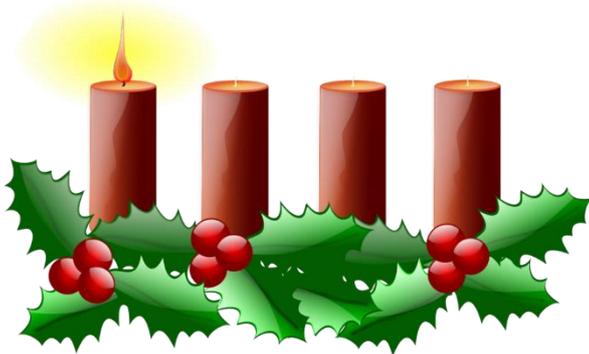




The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

Issue 32: Sunday 29th November 2020

The First Sunday in Advent



Dear Friends,

Most people have a sense of humour, but not everyone finds the same things funny. Speaking personally, I enjoy jokes which are based on puns and word play, and so I enjoy comedians such as Tim Vine and Milton Jones.

Just recently I was reading a book where I came across the use of word play which made me laugh out loud. The author was speaking about the importance of finding space in our busy lives and, to make his point the author used the phrase, "Don't just do something, stand there".

We are, of course, more used to reading those words in a different order so that they say, "Don't just stand there, do something" but, by using the two parts of the sentence the 'wrong way around', the author was making a powerful point about the need to find space and stillness in lives which can otherwise become filled with busy practicalities.

This year's celebration of Christmas will perhaps be very different from what we have known in previous years, but the phrase, "Don't just do something, stand there" still comes to us all as a helpful challenge at the start of Advent.

Although there has been plenty of speculation in the press, I'm writing this letter before we know exactly what Covid related restrictions will be in place during December and over Christmas. However, whether we are remaining in our own homes or taking the opportunity to visit others, if

it is allowed, the days of Advent invite each one of us to take time to pray and reflect on the Good News of the birth of a baby in Bethlehem.

"Don't just do something, stand there" said the author of the book I was reading. It made me laugh at the time – but it's a helpful Advent challenge for us all.

Yours in His service,

Chris Blake

Worship Reflection

Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. (Psalm 80 v 3)

Hymn (StF 165 verse 1)

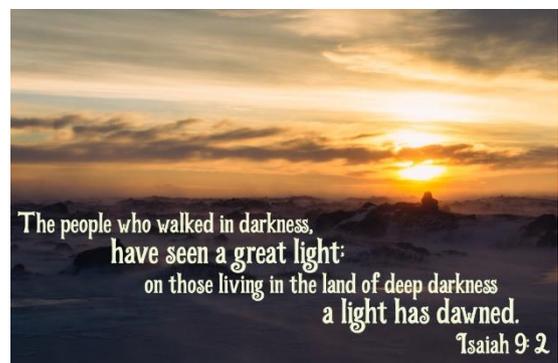
Advent candles tell their story
As we watch and pray,
Longing for the Day of Glory,
'Come, Lord, soon' we say.
Pain and sorrow, tears and sadness
Changed for gladness, On that day.

[Each week during Advent I will be including a verse from this hymn. If you want to sing it at home, the tune is also used for 'Angel voices ever singing, round thy throne of light']

Prayer

Gracious God, you came to our world in fulfilment of the words of the prophets when your message of love was seen in a child lying in a manger. Meet with us now in these Advent days and help us to truly love you and joyfully serve you this and every day. Amen.

Bible Reading (Isaiah 9 v 2,6,7)



The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his

government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Reflection

These words, from chapter nine of the book of Isaiah are perhaps the best-known prophetic words in the Old Testament. They are included in most carol services and they have found their way into numerous Christmas cards.

We can't know for certain how the people who first heard these words interpreted them in the light of the political situation of the time. Perhaps in these verses they saw the hope of the arrival of a new King like David to save them from their immediate enemies.

However, as we read these verses today, they speak to us clearly about the coming of Jesus the Messiah. Each of the titles given to this child can help us to understand more about the nature of Jesus. Jesus is the Wonderful Counsellor who will guide and lead us. Jesus is the Mighty God, the one and only divine Son. Jesus is an Everlasting Father offering eternal care to those who trust in him and Jesus is the Prince of Peace announcing the new values of God's Kingdom.

In these Advent days we rejoice because the prophetic hopes of Isaiah have been fulfilled in the baby of Bethlehem. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light and so we rejoice and give thanks.

Prayers of Intercession

This week we pray especially:

- For a peaceful and orderly transition of power in the United States
- For all who are bullied or abused in their homes or workplaces
- For individuals and families as they prepare for a most unusual Christmas

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

Hymn (StF 171)

Hark, the glad sound!
The Saviour comes,
The Saviour promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne,
And every voice a song.



Final Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, we look forward to that day when your Kingdom will come, and you are all in all. Until then, we will trust in you, secure in your love and confident in your eternal purpose. To you be praise and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

Glimpses of God's Glory

You are invited to submit a photograph or photographs that you or someone you know has taken which could be described as a 'Glimpse of God's Glory'. Please include 100 to 150 words describing what the photograph or photographs mean to you.



This week's contribution is from Carol Lander from Aldershot.



Carol writes "Over the past few weeks, I have been making a set of animal shaped skittles, that will be a Christmas present for our grandson. I knitted all the parts first, then sorted them into piles, ready to be put together. As I looked at the piles, I wondered, "Will they really look like the different animals, will they be recognisable?"

As I started to fill them with toy stuffing, they began to 'come alive'. Then, the addition of features: a beak, a snout, a pair of horns, made them recognisable as a particular animal, albeit a stylised version. Reflecting on this I thought about the millions of different species in the world, each individually recognisable. Then amongst our own species, although most of us are made up of the same body parts, we each look different and can recognise each other. God didn't download a PDF and work from a pattern, like I did for my skittles, but designed every single one, from scratch. Isn't God amazing!"

