

4M

January 2023

Members and Friends of St Mary's Church Comberton
not quite **M**onthly **M**issive

Thank you to all of those who packed shoeboxes this year.

All together there was 21 shoeboxes and donated items. I am sure they will bring great joy with the wow factor to all children who will receive these gifts of love.

I can tell you that your shoeboxes are already on their way.

Thanks you to all who support this project. Please continue to pray for the work of Samaritans purse, the volunteers and for the work they continue to do all over the world no matter where it could be.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Alice.



As Christmas Season comes to end with Christ's Presentation at the Temple, one final Christmas themed message...

I want to think about two simple words – for and with.

'For' is a word that often dominates our thinking. We hear Bryan Adams sing 'everything I do, I do it for you.' We talk to our friend going through a tough time and say, 'is there anything I can do for you?' The people we honour most are those who have done great things for others.

And 'for' is not a bad word. It is good to do things for each other; it is a sign of love. Jesus Christ did things for others - he healed the sick, he died on the cross for us, he rose again for us.

But there is a more fundamental way of relating than 'for'. And it is found in another tiny little word - the word 'with.'

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.'

In the beginning God was with God. God was not for God, or doing things for God, but simply with God.

As God brought time and creation into existence God also wanted to be with us... And so the Word became flesh and made his dwelling amongst us. God moved into the neighbourhood.

The whole story of God and us, from creation to the final days of redemption, are caught up in this little word with. In Genesis we hear how God walks with Adam and Eve in the garden. In Revelation we hear how in the new creation God will once more dwell with his people. In the incarnation we see most of all God's unrelenting desire to be with his people.

The whole purposes of God are found in this word 'with' - that we might dwell peacefully with ourselves, with others, with our world and with God. He has made that possible in Jesus - and that is what we celebrate at Christmas.

All our 'doing for' is okay if built on this prior with. But unfortunately too often we 'do for' to avoid having to 'be with'.

Because, if we're honest, being with can be really hard.

We might try to avoid having to have a difficult conversation with the relative by buying a bigger present for them. We might try to avoid having to actually talk to the homeless person by simply doing things for them at arm's length. We might try to do things for the church to avoid having to be with people in the church.

We can all too often avoid the difficult work of truly listening to others and being changed by them. We can all too easily replace genuine relationship with transactions that don't require much of ourselves. We can all too often avoid sitting and being with God, for fear of the uncomfortable truths that might come to the surface, and instead busy ourselves by doing lots of things for God or for the church.

'Doing things for' is all well and good, as long as it is not a way of avoiding 'being with.' 'Doing for' only makes sense if it is rooted in 'being with', because the heart of life itself and all the purposes of God are founded on the little word 'with.'

At Christmas we celebrate that, in Christ, God is unswervingly, ultimately, forever and completely committed to being with us. We celebrate that wonderful truth as we commit to being with others, in their pain and in their joy.

God with us. The beginning, the middle and the end of the story.

David Newton

Children's Ministry

We are now running 'Kids @ the Barn' more often and need some more helpers... speak to David if you think you could help (that doesn't mean leading)



News from Tim and Shireen

- a couple we have connected to for many years...

We are ministering in Leicester with a cross-cultural focus in three areas of ministry.

1. Ministering to asylum seekers and refugees. We minister to these folk with our local church which is made up of 50 % asylum seekers and refugees ! Many have been converted in their home countries and had to flee (especially Iran and Egypt). We reach out to and/or disciple them in small groups . Tim is helping a couple of Iranian men , one a believer, another who is seeking God. Shireen likewise is working with a small women's group . Currently there is a South American believer, two Iranian believers and a Lebanese 'seeker'. Many have had traumas in their lives and Shireen would love to help them deal with that as well as grow spiritually.

Please pray for breakthroughs in those who are not yet Christians and significant steps of discipleship for those who are.

2. Ministering to those who want to learn English. Currently we teach a course of English Through the Bible to mostly Muslim men and women, many of whom are Turkish. There are two courses running, one that is quite large – with ten interested students . Here Tim is also training four other teachers to learn and use the materials. In the other group Tim and Shireen teach weekly some Turkish couples, although of late numbers have fallen to just one couple, as these families leave Leicester for new opportunities !

Please pray for us to see people coming to faith and wisdom how to go forward with the remaining couple in the second group.

3. Ministering to the settled population of Leicester. Over the years we have made many Muslim friends and people of other faiths. Sometimes it is hard to have time to keep up with all these friendships or to take the next steps of outreach with people. Please pray for the right priorities in using our time. Please pray for a Hare-Krishna man ('D') , who lives in the house opposite. Recently he said he might come to a Bible study. Please also pray for our outreach through door-to-door visits and possibly a book table on the street in Leicester. Please pray for God's direction.

Finally please pray for a monthly cross-church meeting called the Bridge where 10 to 20 people of other faiths (mostly Muslim) come and listen to a talk from the Bible and then discuss it . Pray for us to share wisely God's truth and see the seed bear fruit.

Thank you !

Lent Soup Cafe

Our popular Lent Soup Cafe returns to St Mary's Church on Saturday 11 March from 12 noon to 1.30pm

Come sample the wholesome soups and homemade bread. Enjoy a cup of tea/coffee and chat with friends and make new ones!

Fairtrade week 2023 is taking place 27 February – 12 March.

What could we do to support Fairtrade? - every little does help

2022 Reith Lectures

Have you listened to the 2022 Reith Lectures? If not, let me encourage you to do so. I have listened just once and felt there was so much wisdom in them and their associated discussions that I need to listen again and glean more.

The lecturers were: author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, former Archbishop Rowan Williams, writer and campaigner Darren McGarvey and foreign affairs expert Fiona Hill. In turn, they reflected on the four freedoms vital to democracy as identified by Franklin D Roosevelt in his 1941 State of the Union Speech: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

I was riveted by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's perspective on the importance of non-conformity, challenged by Rowan William's careful unpacking of what is being expressed during worship, surprised and excited by Darren McGarvey's suggestion that appointing an ex-prisoner as a prison Governor might have beneficial results and enlightened by Fiona Hill's understanding of how fear is used to foment war.

The final discussion between all four lecturers drew together many similar but diverse threads from the lectures, for example, about the need for "moral courage" about the dangers of "tribalism", about living together and having individual agency to make decisions while also allowing others similar agency, about forms of public service, the importance of "allowing imaginations to soar" and of virtue, for which it is not possible to legislate.

What a rich seam of both intellectual thought and practical application there was in these four lectures. Well-worth a first (and second) listen I think.

The Reith Lectures can be found on BBC Sounds and are available for about a year.

Clare Crang

The Holly and the Ivy

At Christmas we sang The Holly and the Ivy...it's a beautiful Carol and one that holds so much truth, that maybe it should not be confined to just Christmas...



The following words are taken from Sharp's *English Folk-Carols* (1911), the publication that first established the current words and melody:

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the
wood,
The holly bears the crown.

*The rising of the sun
And the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a blossom,
As white as the lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
Christ,
To be our sweet Saviour.

The holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
Christ
For to do us sinners good.

The holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
Christ
On Christmas Day in the morn.

The holly bears a bark,
As bitter as any gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
Christ
For to redeem us all.

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the
wood,
The holly bears the crown.

Read it slowly, sing it if you wish - as we head towards Lent and Easter, allow the words to sink in deep as we remember the events of that first Easter and the price paid.

It has been said that the Holly in the song signifies Jesus and the Ivy, Mary ... the berries and the prickles signifying the crown of thorns and droplets of blood...

Chris Westgarth

The Ants and the Grasshopper - online screening week.

A chance to see this powerful movie ONLINE, between

13-19 Feb 2023, and to join us for faith-informed discussions in the following weeks.

Follow this link to order your free tickets or gather a group and watch together... <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-ants-and-the-grasshopper-online-screening-week-tickets-516814755847>

Contributions, Comments, ...

Please send your comments, contributions or ideas to my email or through my or David's door.

4M is currently available electronically via the church website, or in print and large print. If you, or someone you know, would prefer to receive it in some other format, such as audio, please let me or the Vicar know.

John Simpson (Editor)

Church website: www.stmaryscomberton.org