

# New Horizons

*DECEMBER 2020/JANUARY 2021*



Come now with joy to worship and adore Him

## THE CORNERSTONE



Bournemouth Park Road,  
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[cornerstonequestions@outlook.com](mailto:cornerstonequestions@outlook.com)

## WORSHIP AND ACTION

Many of the following activities have been postponed for the time being. However, please see inside for what is currently happening.

Sunday 10.30 am **Morning Worship** and Junior Church.  
**Holy Communion** is celebrated during Worship on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday

**FAIRTRADE Coffee and tea is served after Morning Worship**  
Please stay to talk with each other in an informal atmosphere.

Tues 10.00 am **Time of prayer** together for, the Fellowship, those with special needs, our neighbours, and the world-wide Christian Family. All are welcome to join with us.

**Church Meetings** are generally held in alternate months on the third Thursday at 7.30 pm. The dates and times will be published in this magazine and announced in Church.

Tues 10.00 am Tea and Coffee in the Foyer  
11.30 am "Cornerstone Crafters"  
(1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays or as announced)  
2.30 pm Christian Forum (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays)  
4.00 pm Messy Church (1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in the month)  
19.30-21.00pm Digging Deeper (3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month)

Wed 9.30 am The Cornerstone Toddlers during Term Time  
5.45 pm Pilots. Ends at about 7.00 pm.  
6.00 pm Beaver Scouts and Cub Scouts  
7.45-9.15 Scouts

Thurs 7.30 pm Elders' Meeting (1<sup>st</sup> Thursday)

Fri 7.00-9.00 Youth Club

**We do offer Christian Marriage, Baptisms and Funerals so please talk to the Secretary or any Elder if you feel that we can help.**

*Little Turtles Pre-School* meets on Monday to Friday from 9.00 am during term time. Please see (or rather speak to!) one of the Junior Church Leaders for details.



## Letter to the Fellowship

*"Is Christmas Cancelled this year?"*

*"I don't feel like celebrating Christmas this year" Christmas is cancelled, no freedom to enjoy/celebrate Christmas", how awful; they are trying to snatch our freedom to mingle with family and friends over the festive season"*

These are the words echoing all around us by family, friends and others face to face, on the social media etc.

Christmas; traditionally is to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving and receiving gifts, having a traditional turkey roast dinner, watching the Queen's speech (or not!!) and spending time with friends and families.

Some of us spend the afternoon or evening complaining about our gifts, lack of them or not getting the ones we wanted. Sometimes not even one from the list we spent ages to put together and end up receiving a pack of 5 socks wrapped nicely in a Christmas wrapper.

When people talk about Christmas, traditional Christmas, there is hardly mentioning of Jesus or the Love of God shared with us, a precious gift to every one free to receive, hasn't and can't be ceased or cancelled.

The world's preparation for Christmas shuts Him out. Jesus, our Lord, the long-awaited Messiah, simply doesn't fit today's vision of pluralism. That's why signs and symbols of the celebration bearing His name have been censored from schools and public places.

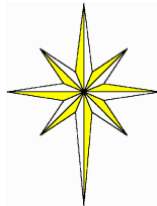
Never mind that He created the universe and has each future day written in His book. Or that He alone can fulfil our longing for genuine peace and lasting joy. His guidelines offend the world. Unless its masses can re-imagine a god more like themselves, they resent His name. His holiness violates their comfort zone, so they hide from Him (like Adam and Eve), deny His existence, or fill their days with shallow distractions and alternatives.

They pretend they don't have time or desire to hear the voice of the angels giving the good news to the world. They don't want to hear his voice either as a child or a King. When God's own beloved Son was born in a lowly stable, his only worshippers were his parents and the poor shepherds who, in the secluded stillness of the night, could hear the angels sing:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And Heaven and nature sing,  
And Heaven and nature sing,  
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

May, God help us to celebrate this Christmas as always, listening to his voice as a child and also worshipping him as our Lord and King.

“Merry Christmas to all from us all”  
God bless,  
**Sohail**



The first Christmas was pretty simple.



It's okay if yours is too

## Prayers for our Fellowship and those we know

Prayers can be for joy and sorrow, health and sickness, good news and bad in addition to those for our own needs and guidance.



Please pray for all of our fellowship at this troubling time, as we once more adhere to the tier system to keep us safe from the virus.

Sadly, if our fellowship cannot meet on the church premises for worship, as before you can follow our services or other URC churches online. Many of our friends at The Cornerstone have found this so comforting when they cannot come to our church building.

We keep in our thoughts any of our fellowship who may be in hospital, undergoing surgery/treatment or having tests and pray that these are not cancelled. We pray for their return to good health

We remember in our prayers the family and friends of loved ones who have passed away. Be with them Father God at this difficult time. Give them peace of spirit and the knowledge that God knows of all their difficulties and hears all of their prayers.

Father, hear our prayers  
**Amen**

## Keep Saying One For Me

There is a dedicated post box on the railings by the Bournemouth Park Road entrance inviting members of the neighbourhood to send us their prayer requests for our Church Prayer Group.

We pray that this scheme will help The Cornerstone be and be known as a church that cares.

## Some thoughts for prayers for all outside of our fellowship

At this time, many people throughout the world are wondering what the future holds, what they should and should not do, and are full of despair as they try to manage their lives from day to day. Sadly, many have no faith or hope and are wandering in a darkness.

Jesus the Light of the World, whose birth we are about to celebrate, came to shine and light up that darkness for all who live on this earth

So, we pray for all of those who have not yet seen His Light and for those who tell them about it. Every time you look in the mirror, remember that you are one of those He has chosen to talk about, teach about and also to carry that sacred light.

What a job for 2021!!

### From the Editors

We send you our greetings and good wishes for a very Blessed Christmas as we try to adapt in this very difficult time. As Captain Tom keeps saying “tomorrow will be a better day”.



Without you all, there would not be much point in preparing the magazine, so we thank you for reading it. However, our special thanks must go to those who let us have their news, their thoughts, their prayers and their stories. Please keep them coming in 2021.

Christmas will soon give way to Easter and then the coming of the Holy Spirit. We need to be ready to refresh ourselves once again.

Our Blessings to you all.

**Anne and Michael**

### Elders' Election 2020

I am pleased to confirm that following out first ever postal ballot both Mary Goodhew and Ann Thorp were duly elected to serve for a term of three years from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

**Ruth Dixon**

## SECRETARY'S NOTEBOOK



As I write (23<sup>rd</sup> November), we are in the third week of what is supposed to have been a mini-lockdown to try and keep down the numbers of hospital admissions for coronavirus. Our government has the unenviable task of balancing lives and livelihoods, and is running up a huge debt in the process. We must all continue to pray for those in authority to make wise decisions.

We have continued to provide a service of worship each Sunday, through the miracle of technology that is YouTube and the first service of November was led by Robert Wiseman with a small congregation, knowing it would be the last such for a few weeks. On the following Wednesday (the last permitted day) we gathered to record the special service for Remembrance Sunday, led by Sohail, which was very moving. Roger led our thoughts on 15<sup>th</sup>, broadcasting from his home and letting us into the secrets of his rope collection, a rope being a number of strands woven together for strength just as we accomplish greater things by working together. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November we opted to go with the 'minimum number' required to live stream a service and so it was that five of us, led by Sohail, praised the Kingship of Christ in the building with everyone else at home; the parable of the sheep and goats has myriad interpretations, something new every time it is preached. Special thanks to Nigel for the concluding voluntary that was a real "Wow" moment. The final Sunday in November, the first Sunday of Advent was led by our friend John Amos, and was pre-recorded. Once again thanks to our tech team who made all this happen.

I am no longer sending the URC Sunday services out as a matter of course but if you would like another service, perhaps later in the day, you can find them here <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/>

Also during the last week of the month some 140 advent calendars were, delivered to all the children connected with the church, along with Advent activity boxes which had been put together by the URC Church House staff A big thank you to Suzie, Stacey, Lauren and Sohail, who undertook deliveries on behalf of the church.

Now we know that Southend is to exit lockdown to Tier 2 restrictions, I can tell you that churches are permitted to re-open for worship but in order to do so we must ensure that no-one interacts with people outside their own household. For Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December, at least, we will live stream from the church with the minimum number of people necessary (as we did on 22<sup>nd</sup> November). Of course, just because we can does not mean we must and Elders will carefully consider the way forward; but do rest assured The Cornerstone will worship our Lord in whatever way we can, and factor some degree of flexibility into all our plans.



For example, on Christmas Eve instead of gathering all together in the church for a service, Christingle is planned as a 'walk through' event in the hall between 10.30 am and 2.30 pm with individuals and families being asked to book in at timed intervals. The URC Children and Youth Department is recording a Christingle Service for You Tube which everyone can join in from home after they have made their Christingles. However, if the regulations change at the 16<sup>th</sup> December review and it cannot happen this way, it will translate very well to "Christingle in a Bag" which can be delivered. If you would prefer to have Christingle in a Bag to do at home, do let me know now and I can arrange this. It is our custom to take up a collection for the Children's Society and I would normally be offering cash collection tubes. Might I suggest, if you are not attending in person you either

- make your donation directly into the church bank account with "Christingle" as the reference, or
- put it in an envelope similarly marked, and drop it through my door

We also continue to have twice-weekly fellowship meetings, and bi-monthly bible study, using Zoom while we cannot safely meet physically. Is it the same? No of course not, but it is what you make it and can be very useful for sharing, exchanging views and passing on information. So please do give it a try.

The government has indicated that up to three households can get together to celebrate Christmas. There have been 'rumblings' out there in the tech-o-sphere that Christians ought not to have special consideration for a religious festival, when other faiths have had to



celebrate theirs at home. In the main these ‘rumblings’ emanate from those advocating the social and commercial aspects of Christmas and while a huge family gathering and exchanging of gifts is a lovely thing, it may not be the most sensible thing to do if we want to avoid an unhealthy New Year, and we do not need it to focus on the message of Christmas. Put simply, our great God recognised that generations of humans had been getting it wrong, running round in circles in our attempts to find Him, getting thoroughly screwed up. So, He did the best thing He could do, came to find us, not in great celebration and brouhaha but in a simple birth to a human woman, raised as a human child then died and rose to life again in the greatest supernatural event ever. Believe that and we can join Him in eternal life.. Christmas 2020 will be a time like no other we have known, but without all the traditional busyness of the season, what a wonderful opportunity we have to focus on the ‘reason for the season’ the birth of the Saviour. So let us put nativity scenes/posters in our windows and declare to our neighbours that Christmas is NOT CANCELLED.



**Ruth Dixon**

URC Mission Council 20-21 November

I have the privilege of representing Eastern Synod on the URC Mission Council; this is the body that carries out the work of the church between General Assembly meetings, much of which is receiving reports from the various committees and giving them a ‘steer’ so that when a matter comes to GA almost all the ramifications have been considered.

For the second time this year MC met via Zoom, over a hundred participants and everything went really smoothly. I have already shared with members the emergency resolution regarding the government’s foreign aid budget and I do hope you took the opportunity to contact your MP. The reduction to the percentage GNP has been announced, but has yet to be voted on in the House, there is still a chance to make a difference.

Many other important issues were considered, full papers can be found here <https://urc.org.uk/about-mission-council/936-papers> but perhaps one of the most pertinent was consideration of how much we have come to rely on single use items containing plastic during the pandemic (think face masks, gloves etc). The URC has produced a briefing paper:

# How to **AVOID SINGLE-USE PLASTICS** during the pandemic

## What's the problem?

There has been a huge increase in the use of disposable items during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially single-use plastics, which is having a major environmental impact.

Plastic is a significant contributor to climate change, as it generates greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its lifecycle.

Plastic waste has an enormously detrimental effect on our rivers, oceans and wildlife. It can choke or smother fish, dolphins, seabirds and seals. No square mile of surface ocean anywhere on earth is free of plastic pollution. It takes hundreds of years to break down, and the effects of microplastics on ecosystems are only just beginning to be understood.

**"Covid will eventually go away, plastic waste won't, it's here forever."** *Dr Christian Dunn, Bangor University*

## Isn't plastic essential to protect us from the virus?

Items made of single-use plastic have undoubtedly been important in the fight against Covid-19, especially for protective equipment for frontline health and care workers.

However, in non-clinical settings, there is no evidence that disposable plastic versions of products such as gloves, facemasks or food and drink packaging give any greater protection against coronavirus than reusable equivalents.

## What can we do?

There are a wide range of alternatives to using disposable single-use plastic items – see opposite. To protect health and reduce the risk of transmission of the virus, good hygiene practices and risk management measures also continue to be vital.

**"As a body of people committed to caring for God's creation, our intent is to reduce our carbon footprint, improve recycling, minimise waste and improve efficiencies on finite natural resources in all of our operations."** *URC Environmental Policy*

Produced by the URC's Environmental Task Group, November 2020

**Facemasks:** The government recommends reusable face coverings to the general public. Research by consumer group Which? found that well-fitting two- or three-layer fabric masks are just as effective at filtering out bacterial particles as single-use surgical masks. It recommends: **NEQI Reusable Face Masks**, £15 for three, available from Boots and Ocado, and **Bags of Ethics Great British Designers Face Coverings**, £15 for three, available at John Lewis, Boots, Sainsbury's, Argos and Waitrose.

**If half of the UK's population used one disposable mask a day for a year, it would create more than 30,000 tonnes of contaminated plastic waste.** *UCL*

**Gloves:** According to Which?, disposable surgical gloves are not generally needed for the general public: "Gloves are just as likely to become contaminated when out and about, so instead of throwing away a pair of gloves each time you go out, washing your hands or using sanitiser are better options. Wearing gloves may also give the false impression of hand hygiene, while forgetting to change your gloves would be just as bad as forgetting to wash your hands."

## Reusable cups, food containers, & shopping bags:

In June 2020, a study by health experts concluded that during the pandemic "reusable systems can be used safely by employing basic hygiene".

**Disposable cups and plates:** There are various alternatives to plastic cups and tableware, such as compostable plant-based **Vegware** [vegware.com](http://vegware.com) and 'I'm a Green Cup' **Bio Cups** from [simpleecopackaging.co.uk](http://simpleecopackaging.co.uk) and other suppliers.

**Cleaning:** Current government advice is that there is no need to use additional personal protective equipment, special antibacterial wipes or other disposable products when cleaning in non-healthcare settings during the pandemic. The recommendation is to clean and launder more often, using standard products. Eco-friendly cleaning products in refillable containers are becoming available in many places.



**THE  
CORNERSTONE**

Bournemouth Park Road  
Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5JL



# CHILDREN'S ZOOM CHRISTMAS PARTY

Friday, 18th December at 6 pm

Zoom ID: 844 5548 5070

For Password: Please call Ruth or Derek

JOIN US FOR AN HOUR OF FUN, GAMES  
AND COMPETITIONS ON ZOOM

Why not dress up for the party

Make sure you have paper, pens and  
pencils for the competitions

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

To comply with Safeguarding guidelines a  
responsible adult must be in the room  
whilst a child is online.

The adult does not have to appear or take part.

If you are unfamiliar with Zoom and want some  
help setting it up please contact me on 07863  
208914 or email: [derekgoodyear@virginmedia.com](mailto:derekgoodyear@virginmedia.com)





## **Can you help the homeless through HARP?**

Had any presents that are duplicates, wrong size or not to your taste?

Then, although we asked for Christmas gifts for the people who use the services of HARP,

they will be very pleased to accept any of your unwanted ones of which you wish to dispose.

Harp likes to offer every service user a present at Christmas and this is only possible thanks to the support from organisations such as ourselves and the general public.

Here is a list of the most popular and most needed items at Christmas time but also welcome all year round:

Sweets and confectionery  
Men's pants (mainly smaller sizes)  
Deodorant - men's and women's  
Toothbrushes

Women's knickers (mainly smaller sizes)  
Bras  
Toiletries  
Earphones/earbuds

Hats, Scarves and Gloves  
Socks - men's and women's

## **Best quote for 2020**

**This is not the year to get  
everything you want.  
This is the year  
to appreciate everything you have**

Your greetings this Christmas are a little different.

We can usually meet and offer our greetings in person, by handing over our cards or placing them in the post box at church, but not this year due to the restrictions because of the virus.

So, this time we have continued to offer the use of the magazine to share our greetings to all of our readers, with the option to add a personalised message. Perhaps you might also consider a phone call to reinforce your wishes; not the same as face to face but the next best thing.

As they say on the TV competitions; in no particular order!



**Greetings from Ruth and Frank Dixon.** I so love decorating the house at Christmas and cards from friends have always been a part of that, somewhere to pause along the corridor and read a card, take in the images and give thanks for the sender. I will miss that this year. Have a Blessed Christmas.

**Pat and Eric Garrard** send their greetings and good wishes to all. They give thanks that their son, Mark, is being looked after so well in his Care Home, where all have been kept safe.



**Stella Yates** misses seeing you but is very grateful for the Sunday Worship on-line and sends Christmas greetings to you all.





**Val & Geoff Hayman** wish all our Fellowship Friends a very happy and healthy Christmas and many Blessings for 2021.

**Glynis Conway** misses you all and wishes everyone a happy Christmas and new year.

Dear Friends, with our love and best wishes for a safe and Happy Christmas and New Year. **Mary & Clive.**

Happy Christmas, with love from **Pat Goodhew.**

Christmas blessings to our fellowship at The Cornerstone love from **Anne and Shawn Clarke.**

**Joan Harvey** sends her greetings to you all and misses you.



**Janet and Les Gooding** send their love and greetings, and wish you all well at this difficult time. They have been so pleased to join in our services on YouTube and will think of all their friends in The Cornerstone this Christmas

**Monica and Vincent Aloj** send their good wishes at this special time.

**Paul Drage** sends you his good wishes and is probably using the spare time to assemble a collection of his jokes.

**Linda and Mike Mead, along with Andy Anderson,** send their greetings and wishes; until we might meet up again.



**Roger and Wendy Brett** would like to wish you all a Christ filled Christmas.



**Nigel and Val Mead** would like to send their Christmas Greetings to all the fellowship.

We wish all our friends at The Cornerstone a very happy Christmas and God's Blessing on them in the New Year. **Maureen and David Stone.**

**Brenda and Michael Wardle** send good wishes and greetings to all, with special thanks to all who have been working to keep everyone in touch during this difficult time.

**Sarah Wilson** wishes you all a very Merry Christmas! Sending lots of love, and looks forward to seeing you all again as soon as we can



**Alison, Scott and Sara** send greetings to all our friends at The Cornerstone and best wishes for a Holy and Blessed Christmas.

**Barbara and Terry Dillon** send their greetings to all at The Cornerstone and will think of you at this very different Christmas time.

Dear Children and Young People, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year with love from **The Cornerstone Junior Church xx**

Dear Friends, in this unusual year, the Junior Church and Staff would like to wish everyone a Blessed Christmas and a safe, Happy New Year. **Mary and Ruth**



As always, our treasurer will be pleased if you feel able to make a donation to church funds as the result of any savings you might make in postage and cards.

## Protocol for the Establishment of Cribs for Christmas 2020



1. A maximum of 4 shepherds will be permitted in the Crib.
2. All will have to wear a mask and observe social distancing.
3. Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus will be able to stay together as they form part of a family bubble.
4. The donkey and the ox will have to obtain a declaration of non-contamination certified by the Department of Agriculture.
5. The Three Wise Men will be subject to a 15 day quarantine, regardless of whether or not they have tested negative for Covid, as they come from a non-Schengen Area.
6. The straw, moss, palm branches and other decorations must be disinfected with alcohol.
7. The angel flying over the Crib will not be allowed due to the aerosol effect produced by the batting of his wings.
8. The choir will be restricted to one person because of the risk of contamination.
9. No shepherd shall be more than 65 years old or in a vulnerable category.
10. Pilate will explain to all authorised participants how to wash their hands.





## Peter's Piece

### LOVE

We come to the third and greatest of the three enduring things Paul gives at the end of 1 Corinthians 13 - that of LOVE. We have previously considered 'faith' and 'hope'.

The Greeks of Paul's day had 5 words, each of which are often translated in English as 'love'. If you would like to know what they are just ask me and I'll give you a paper where I have set them out. They range from desire, like or lust, wanting for one's own satisfaction, to 'agape' - a total self-sacrificing love. A rarely used Greek word in their secular life but given a distinctive spiritual meaning in our NT.

The Apostle John in an easy to remember reference - 3:16 - this time from his first letter to Christian believers, 1 John 3:16 defines 'agape - love' - *This is how we know what love (agape) is: Jesus [The] Christ laid down his life for us.* Also, Jesus himself said, *"Greater love (agape) has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."* John 15:13.

The NT writers always use this word agape when speaking of the love of God [c.f. 1 John 4:8 *God is love.* His very nature is love (agape)] and of Jesus' love. It is always used of the love Jesus seeks to see in his people. [John 13:34, 14:15; Matthew 22:37-40. & in Mark 12:28 -34] Note agape is an act of the will, then the heart; it is not an option but a command! John 15:12.

It is a challenge when we use the word 'love' in relation both to God, to Jesus and to one another, even between lovers! Do we really mean what we say or are we saying what we mean? John in his first letter 3:16 goes on *and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.* What a different place and witness the Church would be if we truly had love like that!

On one occasion Peter was put to the test by Jesus, perhaps a challenge we could all face up to! In John 21:15 & 16 Jesus twice asks *'Simon son of John, do you love me?'* Jesus uses the Greek

word 'agape' for love, each time Peter replies *'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'* Peter uses the Greek 'philo', a friend's love, you know I am your friend. How do we love Jesus, agape, he comes before everything, even our lives, or philo, is he just a very good friend?

Don't be afraid, shy, or embarrassed about a passionate love with God and Jesus that's what the OT book Song of Solomon is about, a picture of God's passionate love for and with his people. *He [God] How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!* (S. o S. 4:1) *She [God's people] My beloved is mine and I am his.* (S. o S. 2:16) and in Jesus' sacrifice God's love is fully satisfied. John 3:16.

*[For hymn buffs to consider - 'What a friend we have in Jesus,' Joseph Scriven 1819-86 CMP 746 or 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' n.b. verse 3, Charles Wesley 1707-88, CMP 372]*

## **Revised Common Lectionary**

### **December 6, 2020 Second Sunday of Advent -**

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

### **December 13, 2020 Third Sunday of Advent -**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalm 126 or Luke

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

### **December 20, 2020 Fourth Sunday of Advent**

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

### **December 27, 2020 First Sunday after Christmas Day**

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Psalm 148

Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:22-40

**January 3, 2021 Second Sunday after Christmas Day**

Jeremiah 31:7-14  
Psalm 147:12-20  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
John 1:(1-9), 10-18

**January 10, 2021 Baptism of the Lord**

Genesis 1:1-5  
Psalm 29  
Acts 19:1-7  
Mark 1:4-11

**January 17, 2021 Second Sunday after the Epiphany**

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)  
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20  
John 1:43-51

**January 24, 2021 Third Sunday after the Epiphany**

Jonah 3:1-5, 10  
Psalm 62:5-12  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31  
Mark 1:14-20

**January 31, 2021 Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany**

Deuteronomy 18:15-20  
Psalm 111  
1 Corinthians 8:1-13  
Mark 1:21-28

**February 7, 2021 Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany**

Isaiah 40:21-31  
Psalm 147:1-11, 20c  
1 Corinthians 9:16-23  
Mark 1:29-39

## Something a bit different....By Alison Shannon

In 1947 I was given a book for Christmas by my father, as was his custom to all of us every year. This continued until he died although the gift was, in later years, money or a token to choose our own book. But that year he gave me a book of short stories entitled "Why the Chimes rang" and I want to share the first of the stories with you this month, précised so that it is a reasonable length for the magazine.

High on a hill in a faraway country was a city within a high wall entered through high metal gates. In the centre of the city was a church so splendid that folk would come from miles around to see it. The walls were columnated, high and so tall you couldn't see the top standing in the large central hall. A hall so vast that from end to end was like being in a place with no finish in sight. When you had made the long walk down the centre there was a marble altar, and to the side a grand organ which when it was played at full strength, could be heard for miles around like loud thunder.

The most wonderful thing of all about the building was the ring of bells in the tower that was so high it was as though it was touching, or even beyond, the sky. At the very top were a set of bells called the Christmas Chimes and it was said that only one very old man still living had ever heard them ring. He was so sure he had heard them and told everyone who would listen to him that they were the sweetest and most musical bells ever to sound, even as though the Angels themselves were playing them.

The story he told was that on Christmas Eve when the custom was for everyone to lay on the altar their gift for the Christ Child the bells of the chime would ring when the best gift was laid.

And so it was, that everyone who could would make the journey to take part in services at the church for services each week but especially for the festivals like Christmas. On each Christmas Eve the special service took place so that all could lay their gift on the altar and secretly hope it would be their gift that set the chimes ringing.

Some miles away from the city was a small village few had heard of, certainly not visited and only a few people lived there. They were all very poor but one family had set their hearts on being able to go to the church for at least one Christmas Eve service. Pedro and his little brother decided this was the year they would try and go. Pedro told his little brother all he had heard about the church and the service. "We will see such fine things and they say that even the Christ Child sometimes comes to bless the service."

So, that year they slipped away in mid-afternoon on Christmas Eve, their gift safely in Pedro's pocket, together with food and drink for the long journey. It was snowing, and the wind was bitterly cold but they trudged on bowing their heads as they struggled in the cold.

At last, as night fell, they could see the city gates ahead of them and they knew they were nearly there. As they got to the gates though they saw a dark heap in the snow and Pedro stopped, bent over and saw that it was a very old woman, huddled in her cloak and obviously near to death. Pedro tried to lift her to move her to the shelter she had been trying to reach, but she was too heavy for him and all he could do was to rub her face with snow to wake her and then try to warm her up.

"It's not good Little Brother" he said "You will have to go on without me and I will stay and look after her. When you get there, you can get help." "I cannot go on alone" said Little Brother "You will miss the festival". "Go" said Pedro "there is no need for both of us to miss it, there will be other times for me. The Christ Child knows I want to be there and he will care for you. Take our gift and lay it on the altar for both of us. I will stay here and do what I can and try to get her to eat the bun I have in my pocket."

So Little Brother set off and Pedro had to blink hard to stop the tears as the crunching footsteps in the snow got further and further away. He continued to rub the old woman and look after her as best he could.

Everyone said the church was wonderful that night, never more beautiful, and never so many people. The organ sounded out so loud that Pedro felt the ground shake around him.

As the service was coming to an end the procession started of all the people taking their gifts for the Christ Child and laying them on the marble altar. Rich men took baskets of gold, so heavy they could scarcely lift them, a well-known writer took his book which had taken so long to write. Poorer people laid their gifts but never did the chimes ring.

Last of all came their king, and as he reached the altar he removed his crown encrusted with so many fine jewels and laid it to join all the other gifts on the altar. "Surely now the bells would ring" was the murmur around the congregation. But only the wind in the tower could be heard. The service concluded with the choir leading the last hymn and suddenly the organ stopped. The organist looked as though he had been shot, such was the surprise on his face. The people looked to their old minister standing at the altar holding his hand up for silence. Every ear was strained to listen and there in the quiet night air was a faint sweet sound of bells, far away but getting clearer all the time. The people all stood and stared at the altar to see what great gift had been laid to make the bells ring.

Only the very nearest caught sight of a small boy who had crept up the aisle when no one was looking and laid Pedro's silver piece on the altar.

### **Letter received from The Vineyard Centre - Warrior Square**

To everyone at The Cornerstone URC,

Thank you so much for your generous donation of £245 for the Storehouse which we received last month. It is really appreciated at this difficult time as we seek to care for those most in need in our town.

With kind regards.

**Kate Faulkner**  
**Accounts**  
**Southend Vineyard**

**The situation in Zimbabwe** is extremely difficult right now.

In August the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) in a pastoral letter described the situation as, "a multi-layered crisis of the convergence of economic collapse, deepening poverty, food insecurity, corruption and human rights abuses among other crises."

Government corruption, and ongoing restrictions and suffering led to protests from the Zimbabwean people. The government has responded with lamentable disregard for alternative voices. Their heavy-handed response has been characterised by arbitrary arrests and violence against activists or those related or connected to them. Journalists have been abducted and tortured as ransom for those in hiding.

The statement from the ZCBC and other faith leaders and groups in Zimbabwe caused recriminations from the government. Zimbabwe's context remains complex and precarious. The recent attacks on all who have voiced concern over injustices, corruption and violence, including the church, has simply reinforced the reality that coexistence, tolerance and accountability remains contentious issues in the country.

Christian Aid Zimbabwe works with several faith-based organisations, including the Catholic Church through a partnership with Silveira House, a Catholic Jesuit institution and stands in solidarity with the Bishops. Christian Aid Zimbabwe is supportive of statements issued by fellow church umbrella organisation that is the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) (EFZ), who are its partners. Christian Aid's CEO, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi sent a letter of solidarity.

The Christian Aid Zimbabwe team are continuing to speak out for justice and support our partners while treading a careful line as an international

NGO, mindful that our partners rely on our ability to operate within the country.

## **COVID-19 Response**

In Zimbabwe, we continue to ensure that 15,000 people have enough water to wash their hands regularly. We are also supporting communities in Mudzi and Mutoko whose livelihoods have been impacted by Covid-19.

Thanks to the support from *Commitment for Life* congregations just like yours, we are able to provide food hampers for around 5,400 people. Thank you.

### **Would you believe it?**

- ❖ I got rid of my Vacuum cleaner yesterday, well it was only collecting dust!
- ❖ The man who stole my diary died last week. My thoughts are with his family.
- ❖ I've been to Tesco this morning and as I was leaving an old man threw a Prawn Cocktail at me and hit me right on the back of the head, when I turned around, he shouted "that's just for starters!"
- ❖ I always wanted to be a train driver or at least something along those lines.
- ❖ If I had only known in March it would be my last time in a restaurant, I would have ordered desert.
- ❖ They said a mask and gloves were enough to go to the grocery store. They lied, everybody else had clothes on.
- ❖ The buttons on my jeans have started social distancing from each other.
- ❖ Until further notice, the days of the week are now called, Thisday, Thatday, Otherday, Someday, Yesterday, Today and Nextday.
- ❖ I still can't believe people's survival instincts told them to grab toilet paper!
- ❖ I'm going to stay up on New Year's Eve this year. Not to see the New Year in but to make sure that this one leaves.



## SERVICES AT THE CORNERSTONE

**Due to the current restrictions, all services are being live streamed but are subject to change. Please watch your inboxes or contact your Elder.**

### December 2020

Thu	3 <sup>rd</sup>	7.30pm	Elders' Meeting	
Sun	6 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship	Rev Celia Whitman
Sun	13 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Children & Youth Service	Staff members
Sun	20 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship	Roger Brett
Thu	24 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am to 2.30pm	Christingle	Ruth & Mary
Fri	25 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Christmas Day Worship	Our Minister
Sun	27 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship (H.C)	Our Minister

### January 2021

Sun	3 <sup>rd</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship	John Amos
Thu	7 <sup>th</sup>	7.30pm	Elders' Meeting	
Sun	10 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship	Our Minister
Sun	17 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship	Roger Brett
Sun	24 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship (H.C) (Induction of Elders)	Our Minister
Thu	28 <sup>th</sup>	7.30pm	Church Meeting	
Sun	31 <sup>st</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship	Peter Hunt

### February

Thu	4 <sup>th</sup>	7.30pm	Elders' Meeting	
Sun	7 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship	Roger Brett

The next edition of New Horizons will be published on  
**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021.**

Would our contributors remember to send the Editors their items **by the usual time of 9.00 a.m. on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January please.**

We always welcome contributions from any of our readers, wherever they are. Reports, stories, thought provoking articles and even funny stories are all very welcome.

**Wishing you all a very Happy New Year**

## Looking Back - Looking Forward

On a camp with the Scouts we cut down some trees to use during the weekend in various activities. After the camp they were taken back to our Scout HQ to use at other times.

In the summer I walked out into the forest from where I lived to see the camp site. It was easy to spot by the number of six-foot tree stumps dotted around. We had been camping on snow six feet deep and cut off the 2inch diameter trees at the snow line.

Walking out in the winter was fun. Sub-zero temperatures for several months at a time but bright and sunny. The snow pristine and white except for the tracks of the forest's animals. My Scout Leader had said that there were wolves and that one had visited our camp during the night but I never saw any. I was told that our nearest large town, Churchill Falls, had polar bears but I never saw any of those either. Given that it was about 200 miles away from me that comes as no surprise.

It snowed for most days during the winter so every time you went off the beaten track was like the first time. Your footprints were the only footprints. You broke new ground with every step.

Looking back, you would expect to see a nice straight line but this was seldom the case. Your footprints wandered and meandered as though you had no clear direction. The snow showed the time you stumbled and fell, the time you tried to create a snowball to throw but failed because it was the wrong type of snow.

The best way to walk in a forest is to decide on the direction by looking at a compass. Noting a good landmark in the distance that is easily spotted and walk towards it. If you fall or if there are obstacles that you have to walk round you can always head in the right direction without constantly looking at the compass. Your direction of travel and your goal have been set.

Once you reach the landmark out comes the trusty compass, another landmark is chosen and off you go again. Across, in this case, the pristine snow that covers all other features that might help

and assist. In the end your goal is reached and your objective secured.

We are coming to the end of 2020 and it has not been a good year. For the uninitiated that is what is known as an understatement. Looking back, we can see the mistakes, the errors, the stumbles, the drifting off course, the meanderings but we should also be able to see the good things that we have done or that have happened. The interactions, the different ways of worship with different worship leaders far and near and of different ways of meeting, the different ideas and thoughts that have appeared, having greater concern for family and friends and looking towards supporting the local rather than the national.

Our own personal look back will be different for all of us. But Joel Osteen, an American evangelist, says - "See, when you drive home today, you've got a big windshield on the front of your car. And you've got a little bitty rear-view mirror. And the reason the windshield is so large and the rear-view mirror is so small is because what's happened in your past is not nearly as important as what's in your future."

The snow in front of us is pure, clean and untrammelled. The year in front of us is pure, clean and untrammelled. Set your compass on where you want to go. Choose a landmark and set out into the New Year. It may, it will, be different to anything that you have done before. You may leave much behind you that you are sad about no longer being involved in, things that are now stopped or just that you are no longer involved, you may have different ways of being and doing but if your compass is God and your landmark is Jesus then all will be well.

Welcome to 2021 the year of the future. Welcome to 2021 the year of YOUR future. The year of coming closer to Him and His ways.

I pray we will all be together and able to touch hands again soon.

**Roger**

Amen to that Roger - Ed (Anne)

## WHO'S WHO?

<b>Minister</b>	Rev Sohail Ejaz MA (01702) 580879 <a href="mailto:tcsscp@yahoo.co.uk">tcsscp@yahoo.co.uk</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	Ruth Dixon (01702) 464186
<b>Treasurer</b>	Ann Blackwell 07753 348856
<b>Envelopes</b>	Mike Mead 07802 749912
<b>Gift Aid</b>	David Osborn (01702) 611337
<b>Preachers List</b>	Mary Goodhew (01702) 467512
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<b>Prayer Fellowship</b>	Peter & Zoy Hunt (01702) 864814
<b>Digging Deeper</b>	Peter Hunt (01702) 864814
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**Please remember that your Elders are ordained  
to serve our members and friends  
who have pastoral concerns.**