

An uncontainable light

Georgina Byrne *reflects on* Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12 and Matthew 2:1-12

It is difficult to contain light. Light will find a way through the smallest of cracks, gaps or hinges. Light spreads, spills out beyond itself, into the dark, transforming the darkness as it travels.

In the season of Epiphany we celebrate Christ, who is the light to the nations, the fulfilment of the

promise made in Isaiah 60. Even foreigners will, the prophet says, be drawn to the light. It is irresistible. And, even as the nations come, God's servant people will become more radiant – because seeing the delight of others will thrill them even more.

That promise made to God's people becomes real in Christ, as the magi – foreigners – come and offer gifts to him. The light of God is radiant in Jesus, drawing people in. Paul, steeped in the promise of the Old Testament and transformed by the light of Christ, goes out to the

Gentiles, to the nations, to preach the Gospel. The light of Christ floods out further, transforming the world with the radiance, warmth, and brightness of God's grace.

Jesus is God's gift for the whole world. We cannot contain, box in, or

control the light. Christ will ever find ways to touch and transform the lives of others. The Light of the World is irresistible. All we need to do is allow it to shine out from our lives. ☺

Light of the World, your brightness draws all people to you. Shine in the dark places of our hearts and fill our lives with light. Shine in the dark corners of the world and transform the lives of your children. Amen.

Methodist Covenant Day

by Lisa Tulfer

The idea of covenant is central to the Christian faith. Over and over the Hebrew scriptures refer to God's covenant: "I... will be your God, and you shall be my people". It is not like a contract, with terms agreed between God and humanity. God's covenant is freely given, and invites our response, entering into

a loving relationship, sometimes likened to the idea of marriage.

This concept was central to John Wesley's thinking, and since the 1750s the Methodist Church has held an annual Covenant Service, usually on the first Sunday of the year. The Covenant Prayer begins: "I am no longer my own but yours." This service invites people to commit to God, as God made a commitment to humanity. It is both an individual re-dedication to following God in every aspect of life, and also a collective re-dedication by the whole faith community, to walk together in God's way. ☺

A new year in West Virginia

by Helen van Koevering

We're celebrating my daughter's twenty-first birthday this week as we're all together. Arriving at another milestone brings many memories. I remember writing of her six-year-old wisdom, when she connected signs of development in our Mozambican town with people being happier. Today we're walking in snow, discussing a radio programme about local homelessness. One

hundred and sixty-three people slept rough over Christmas. One interviewee named her sense of being pitied and degraded as "the violence of turning away".

Privilege and poverty live side by side in this Appalachian town, like the broken heart of a powerful nation. What does that mean for the Christmas message of love come down? God doesn't turn away, as my daughter says. God transforms. God, coming as a vulnerable baby to an obscure place, turns the shame of those who are privileged and the humiliation of those who are poorest upside down with the same hope and grace that is offered to the whole world. ☺

“Relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing had yet been done.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), British novelist and essayist

Bible Readings

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 60. 1-6

The Ingathering of the Dispersed
Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.
Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 2. 1-12

The Visit of the Wise Men
In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him,
'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:
"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel."'
Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Christian Scripture

Ephesians 3. 1-12

Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles
This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Psalm

Psalm 72. 10-15

May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles
render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.
May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.
For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.
Long may he live!
May gold of Sheba be given to him.
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all day long



What's On

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Happy New Year!

Praise to you, Lord, for your blessings of health, happiness and fellowship.
We pray for your Peace, Love and Joy to be abundant in our communities,
families and with our loved ones in the year ahead.

Interregnum Update

A Welcome and Licensing service will be held for our new priest, Rev Kevin Wright, on the evening of 21st March 2019.

Details of time and venue will follow shortly.

It would be lovely if we could have a full church to make it a special occasion for Kevin and his wife, Chris, as we welcome them into our church family.

Thank you all very much for the kind gift of azaleas that was given to me before Christmas.

Rev Richard Sigrist

Blessed Thought

Churches are not supposed to be museums that display perfect people, walking around looking holy.

They are called to be hospitals where the wounded, hurt, injured and broken find grace and healing.

Nicky Gumbel (Pioneer of Alpha)

We still need 2 representatives from our parish, please!

Burnham and Highbridge Churches Together

On 7th November 2018 a large group of Christians from several different churches in the wider Burnham area, including nine people from our own parish, gathered together to meet one another and explore better ways of working together.

The evening was led by Rev Sharon Crossman and some of the questions we considered were;

Who are we as Christians in this community?

Where and how might God be calling us?

How do we best work together?

There was a lot of discussion and sharing of ideas, which led to an information sheet of all the Christmas services being produced.

We now need two representatives from our parish to come forward please! If you feel this could be you, please see Mike Smith.

There is a Christian Unity service planned for **20th Jan 2019 at 6.30pm** at the Church of Our Lady & The English Martyrs in Burnham-on-Sea. More information to follow.

Unwanted Christmas gifts???

If anyone has any unwanted Christmas gifts, please bring them to the Church office for the East Brent Fete on July 6th.

Many thanks.



**Blessed are you, Lord God of all Creation; through your goodness we have this money to offer.....
to do your work in the world.**

During our worship an offering will be collected. If you wish to join with our offering there is a yellow envelope nearby for your contribution or you can, of course, simply add your donation to the bag that will be passed along the pew during our first hymn. Many of our Church Family make a regular contribution to the running and work of the Parish by Standing Order. If this is something you would like to find out more about, please see one of the Stewards or a Churchwarden.

Prayer

Prayer and Healing Ministry

As a Church Family, God calls us to “**pray without ceasing**” for one another and for our neighbourhood. With this in mind, a Calendar of Prayer covering the whole of The Parish Of Three Saints has been drawn up. Each Sunday we will be highlighting a particular road or street, plus an organisation or group of people in our Parish or Diocese and encouraging you to pray for them during the week. The Calendar of Prayer will also be available in the prayer corners of each of our church buildings.

This week please pray for...

- **Weston Road, Manor Close Lympsham and Delhorn Lane, East Brent.**
- **Bishop Peter and Bishop Ruth, all who work in the Dioceses of Bath and Wells, and Taunton, Wells Cathedral and its staff.**

Don't be afraid to ask for Prayer!

If you or a loved one are going through a difficult time and would like prayer, please contact our Prayer Group Co-ordinator Gwen Hatton 01934 750416. The Friday Prayer Group will support you in prayer for as long as you need it and everything is absolutely confidential.

Alternatively, if you or a loved one would like to be included in this public prayer list in the Sunday Link and prayed for by the whole Church Family, please contact Carole in the Church Office 01278-769082 or Ginnie Soffe 01278-769117. Please ask for the person's permission beforehand.

Please also contact us if you would like to remain on this list as we are currently looking to update it. Many thanks.

At present please continue to pray for Mervyn, Nathan, Luke, Iona, Ben, David, Carole, Kathryn, Peter, Silla, Carol, Sue, David, Pam, Di, Bob, Richard, Jodie and Marcus.

Diary

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>6th January 2019</u> 08.00 St Mary's Worship of the Word 10.00 St Mary's Parish Eucharist	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u> 10.30 Toddlers Brent Knoll Methodist Church	<u>9th</u> 08.45 Coffee Time St Mary's 14.30 Emmaus Church Office	<u>10th</u> 19.30 All Sorts Choir Meal	<u>11th</u>	<u>12th</u>
<u>13th January</u> 08.00 St Michael's Worship of the Word 10.00 St Mary's Parish Eucharist	<u>14th</u> 09.00-10.30 Emmaus Brentcombe House, East Brent 19.30 Pastoral Care Team Meeting	<u>15th</u> 10.30 Toddlers Brent Knoll Methodist Church	<u>16th</u> 08.45 Coffee Time St Mary's	<u>17th</u> 14.30 Comfort Group 19.30 All Sorts Choir	<u>18th</u> 10.00 Prayer Group 2 The Worthings, Lympsham	<u>19th</u>
<u>20th January</u> 0800 St Christopher's Worship of the Word 10.00 St Michael's Parish Eucharist	<u>21st</u> 16.00-17.30 Alzheimer's and Dementia Carers Group Brentcombe House, East Brent 19.00 PCC Meeting Brent Knoll Methodist Church	<u>22nd</u> 10.30 Toddlers Brent Knoll Methodist Church	<u>23rd</u> 08.45 Coffee Time St Mary's 14.30 Emmaus Church Office	<u>24th</u> 14.30 Bereaved Friends group 19.30 All Sorts Choir	<u>25th</u>	<u>26th</u>

Contacts

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For further contact information please see our parish website - **www.theparishofthreesaints.org.uk**

If you would like to submit anything for the Sunday Link please email it to Carole at office.tpots@gmail.com by **Thursday. Please also send anything for **The Parish of Three Saints** website to the same address.**