

Together as One

Newsletter of the Methodist Churches in Hungerford, Lambourn,
Newbury and Thatcham during Coronavirus Pandemic

Verses for the week

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart I know that everything God does will endure for ever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him. (Ecclesiastes 3: 11a and 14)

Falling leaves



Image by
MrGajowy3
from Pixabay

Taking a short break from sweeping up leaves recently I began to wonder about those leaves. I noticed that a lot of them had not grown on trees in our garden. I was sweeping up someone else's leaves! This meant that someone else, downwind of us, must have some of ours. The preponderance of oak leaves in our garden alerted me to this, for the nearest oak trees must be at least 200 metres away and yet desiccated leaves carried by the wind had found their way here. The other

thing I noted as my reverie continued, any excuse is a good one to postpone manual labour, was the few leaves still remaining on the hazel tree beside our garage. A few tenacious hangers-on clung to the branches – so few I could now count them – just 36 in total. These survivors, some still tinged with green, held out against the inevitable. Who, I wonder, watches for the last leaf to fall, conjecturing as to which it would be? Well me apparently! We may eagerly look for the first leaf to appear but what interest is there in the last to fall? Yet with the falling of the leaves on the hazel tree it is now possible to see the catkins, far too many to count, the source of fruit for the next season. In this is hope, continuity and the hint of the eternity that marks out this world as his. Even as I write these thoughts Chris lets me know that her uncle reached the end of his life early this morning after a short illness and that her nephew's wife is in hospital awaiting the birth of a much-longed-for baby. In this there is hope, continuity and a pointer to God who is eternal.

The writer of that fascinating book which we call Ecclesiastes contemplated the never ending cycle of growth and decay, of birth and death, of new leaves and falling leaves and felt the meaninglessness of it all that sadly many can feel too. Without God it would be so. With him everything changes as the writer of Ecclesiastes notes in our verses this week. Another Advent, another Christmas, albeit unlike any in our lifetime, yet what they celebrate is the eternity that God has set in every human heart. Can we see this as we move through Advent, with its challenging themes, to Christmas and see the eternal hope of peace and joy in a child anew and afresh this year, when we need him more than ever? May God help us to do so.

With love and prayers, Peter.

Alternative Christmas Gifts

As it is more difficult to get out to buy presents this Christmas perhaps there is no better time to consider sending an alternative gift in the form of a charity donation which will provide vital practical support to individuals in the poorest parts of the world. For example both All We Can (the Methodist Relief and Development Charity) and Christian Aid have a variety of gifts available to suit your budget. You can buy chickens, bees or pigs; you can buy bicycles, tools or safe, fuel efficient stoves and you can help provide safe washing facilities at a time when, as we are very aware, hand hygiene is life-saving. For All We Can's Extraordinary gifts [Click Here](#) and to see the Christian Aid Christmas gifts [Click Here](#)

Tiny Advent Poems from Engage Worship

Here are some tiny poems inspired by the theme of Worship in the Waiting that we are following this Advent. See what you think. Perhaps you will be inspired to write a tiny poem, or a longer one, that expresses what Advent means to you. If so please send it in. You can see more examples here [Click Here](#)



Image by Danielle MacInnes on Unsplash

Advent:

Jigsaw pieces
still scattered,
but you've pieced together
the frame, ground and sky.



Image by Jonathan Ybema on Unsplash

Advent:

Holding the final book in the series
for the first time.
Creak open the cover.
Smell the pages.
Read slowly.

Advent:

You wake to the smell of coffee
and cooked breakfast.
Someone is singing
in the kitchen.

Advent:

Waking in a cold house
to hear the heating tick
and hum into life.
Warmth is on its way.

Advent:

Unseen bulbs asleep in frozen earth.
Handwritten markers
hold promises
of spring colours.

Two public issues that have gained my attention this week

Last week we heard the announcement of an intended cut in the Overseas Aid Budget from 0.7 to 0.5% of GDP (a measure of the size of the economy).

Alongside this the Methodist Church is involved in a campaign highlighting the significant increase in household debt caused by the pandemic and its

disproportionate effect on low income households. Citizens Advice estimates that, between March and July 2020, 6 million people fell behind on rent, council tax and other household bills because of coronavirus. Councils are reporting that there are at least 1.3 million more families in council tax arrears since lockdown started. These are political issues and you may feel they are related. If you want to find out more or feel moved to contact your MP there is a lot of information available - on Overseas Aid [Click Here](#) and for the Reset the Debt Campaign [Click Here](#)



And finally

I bought a dog from my local blacksmith. When I got it home it made a bolt for the door.