



Dear All,

*to guide our feet into the path of
peace." (Luke 1:79)*

"Peace on earth" is a phrase we see everywhere around Christmas time. Maybe, this year, we are wondering where that peace in all that chaos around us. At the moment, we struggle with the uncertainty of tomorrow and the turmoil going on in the world. We wonder if "peace on earth" is even a possibility!

With this wonder, in our second week of advent, we reflect on "peace". We will need to search for peace that accommodates our reality rather than denies it. Biblical peace is not just feeling peaceful, and tranquil; it is far deeper, broader and more elusive than this. It is travelling with God in a journey toward the state of "Shalom" (the Hebrew word of peace). A way of being gathered, united, mended and stitched again what has been scattered, separated, broken and torn apart. Peace is a relational word that to do with being reconciled to God, ourselves, others and the creation. It is the ability to be in harmony with the divine dance after a long parting.

At Christmas Story, Jesus was born to be the centre, the glue, and the dancing melody that gathers everything in harmony again. Each step in our journey to be unified with him is bringing us closer to that state of intactness. Nativity is a down to earth story (literally!). We can find the dark and lonely nights, the doubts and confusions, the fears and anxiety, and the hostility and murder; yet we can hear the angels singing "Peace on earth" without hesitancy. It is different from the modern idea of peace, where soft, soothing music is



expected; "Shalom" often requires the background noise of repairing and minding. So, for all of us who wonder, yes, we are at a difficult time. Yes, we seem more distance from each other than ever before. Yes, it looks like a Bleak Midwinter. Yet, in each step of being in solitude, prayer, worship, holding our faith in God's promises, keeping in touch with others, sharing encouraging post online, helping out in the community, giving cheerfully, sharing tears or Christmas cards with someone, forgiving and reconciling, smiling and being with the creation, we are a step further toward the promised, ultimate "Shalom" of Christ. So, remain hopeful, walk with peace and keep going.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. Isaiah 9:2

This Advent, everyone is waiting. But alongside the Christian tradition of waiting expectantly to celebrate the birth of the Saviour, the world waits to be saved from COVID-19. And, interestingly, both forms of waiting use the same language: of 'light breaking through'. Earlier this month, when the first promising signs from vaccine trials emerged, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England offered an extended metaphor of light in the distance

If this new start is described as a light dawning, is a growing brightness implied here? It's a 'great light' but, to begin with, there's a more subtle hue. Dawn light isn't the brightest, but it's a hopeful light, bringing with it the guarantee of more to come. Just as some



energy-saving light bulbs appear somewhat less bright when they are first switched on: they are bright bulbs, but we don't see the full brilliance immediately.

If the birth of Jesus represents the light dawning, his life, death, and resurrection add lumens. When Jesus returns, the brightness will be unmissable and unmistakable, and all forms of darkness will have passed away – including all crying, all mourning, and all viruses.

In the meantime, we wait, but we don't wait passively. From our vantage point, today, we've seen enough to trust, even in dark times. Whilst we wait, whilst everyone is waiting, may we brighten the places where we find ourselves. May we reflect the light of Jesus in our everyday contexts such that others might see and believe

News

With the end of lockdown, and with great delight services in the church building can resume from this Sunday with the tier 2 safety precautions in place. **The 10.30am service** will resume on a weekly basis and we plan to offer Holy Communion (both bread and wine) for the first time since the lock-down in March. The **3 pm Family Fellowship service** will be practically hard to meet at St. Luke's with tier 2 regulations. We will continue to meet online on Zoom. We look forward to seeing everyone who can join us on Sunday.

Concerning **the Holy communion** this Sunday, people expected to receive communion in their place, avoiding moving inside the church. People are welcome to receive both bread and wine or bread only if they wish. As Revd Adel will come to you, he will take a piece of wafer and briefly touches it to the surface of the wine, allowing some of the wine to



suffuse into the bread. Then he will place it in your hand. People expected to stretch all their hand to receive communion as we need to keep the distance. Also, Revd Adel will not be saying any words while he is giving the communion.

With **Christmas** approaching soon, our plan for this year is be simple yet festive by having mainly two services:

1. **Wednesday 23rd December at 4 pm:** This will be a combined Carol/Christingle and Nativity service - and will be held OUTSIDE at the church yard. All children and adults will be welcomed to come along with Nativity outfit. I am very delighted to have our choir singing gain in this service. *There are some vacant parts in our Nativity rhyme play "it begins in Bethlehem" if you want to be part of it.*
2. **Christmas Day – 10:30 am.** There will be a Communion service to celebrate Christmas together.

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and evermore. Amen*

Yours in Christ,
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