

Bridges Group News

Date: 24th December 2023

Sunday: Advent 4/Christmas Eve



News from the Pews Hosted by Stockton

We're fast approaching Christmas Day when we celebrate Jesus Christ being born to save us. But how many of us are busy with buying presents, wrapping them, waiting and sending cards, getting the food ready, preparing for guests or to go away?? It can be such a busy time of year. Did you know the 22nd December is Winter Solstice this year, a time when the sun appears to stay still and the shortest day of the year? It's a reminder to seek the stillness of God in this the season and to be still ourselves. To seek His will and remind ourselves of the true meaning of Christmas. It really has nothing to do with tinsel and wrapping paper, it's a gift that can't be wrapped, the gift of acceptance, forgiveness and love from the Creator of the universe. Have a very blessed Christmas Day!

Weekly reflection from Rev Andy

Many thanks for all your prayers and good wishes for my recovery after my knee op. I am resting up at home and looking forward to celebrating Christmas in a more relaxed fashion with my family this year. This Sunday on Christmas Eve we light the 4th advent candle that symbolises love.

Christmas reminds us that love is actually the foundation for everything we experience, indeed the world, the entire Universe depends on it. It was love that in the beginning motivated our creator God to scatter the stars and galaxies across the night sky. It was love that is at the heart of the creativity and artistry we see all around us in the wonders of nature and life. It is love which is behind the sustaining power of God which holds all of creation in existence.

We find in Jesus that God's love doesn't demand perfection of us, or even that we need to reach a certain goodness threshold before we qualify for his grace. Instead we discover that forgiveness and blessing

isn't given away sparingly but freely and indiscriminately, and that God's love is completely and thoroughly inclusive. Unlike the world we live in, it doesn't depend on where we happen to live, or who our parents happen to be, how we look or behave, what education we have received, or what we have achieved.

And as we share Communion in our Christmas services, we are also reminded that God's love for us is not only found in the manger, but also on the cross. God's son was born to live among us, to show us how to live and to love, and his Son, Jesus, died for us on the cross for our forgiveness and our salvation, for all of eternity. And then there was the resurrection, the culmination of Gods rescue plan, as the grip of evil and death was shattered forever. But that, as they say, is a story for another day.

Prayer

Father, as we gather together and enjoy each others company, we pray that our hearts may be filled with joy and love as we celebrate the birth of your son, Jesus. Help us to remember how he has transformed our world and our lives, and may his light reach out to all who are living in dark places this year.

Looking ahead

- The Gathering, 31st December, at Lower Shuckburgh. Holy Communion let by Rev Marting Saxby from Rugby

Services this Sunday: 24th December, Advent 4/Christmas Eve	Services next Sunday: 31st December, Christmas 1
4.00 pm Crib Service at Stockton 4.00pm Carol Service at Lower Shuckburgh 6.00pm Carol Service at Priors Hardwick 11.00pm Midnight Communion at Napton 11.15pm Midnight Communion in the Methodist Tradition at Stockton Bible readings for the week are: 2 Samuel 7:1-11,16, Luke 1:26-38	The Gathering at Lower Shuckburgh, Holy Communion led by Rev Martin Saxby from Rugby Bible readings for the week are: Isaiah 61:10-62:3 , Luke 2:15-21

Services on CHRISTMAS DAY

9.00am Family Service at Wormleighton
10.30am Morning Worship at Priors Marston
10.30am Family Communion at Napton

Bible readings for Christmas Day are: Isaiah 9:2-7, Luke 2:1-14

OTHER SERVICES etc



SATURDAY 23RD DECEMBER – TEA AND MINCE PIES IN THE CHURCH AT LOWER SHUCKBURGH

SUNDAY 31ST DECEMBER THE GATHERING AT LOWER SHUCKBURGH

HOLY COMMUNION LED BY REV MARTIN SAXBY FROM RUGBY

SUNDAY 7TH JANUARY 2024 – 9.00AM AT PRIORS HARDWICK - THE EPIPHANY
A SERVICE FOR EVERYONE – ESPECIALLY FAMILIES
FEATURING THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN

(For more details of events and diary dates, see our website: www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk or the parish magazines)

Next Week's Bridges Group News will be hosted by Napton.