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CROSSWAYS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR ST PAUL'S AND WHITWORTH

A promise worth waiting for

By Revd Lee Earl


Stock photo: Unsplash

"All good things come to those who wait."

I'M sure many of you have heard that phrase before. I've said it to my children more than a few times over the years. The thing is, as we all know, waiting can be hard. Whether it's waiting for a delayed bus or train, children waiting for Christmas morning, exam results, good news from the doctor, or simply an answer to prayer, sometimes we would much rather skip ahead to the moment of arrival.

And yet, as we all know, waiting is at the heart of the Advent season, as we wait with a growing sense of longing for the birth of Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the world, and look ahead to his promised return.

However, the waiting of Advent is not merely a passive exercise in counting down the days until Christmas morning. It is a precious opportunity for us to cultivate a deeper longing for his ultimate arrival and return, and all that means for our world.

One of the ways we can do this is by becoming more prayerful and attentive to both the beauty and the brokenness of the world in which Christ came. For instance, while the beauty of creation points us towards the goodness and generosity of God's heart, the brokenness in our lives, our communities and our world reminds us just how desperately we need a Saviour: the one who is God with us, our Immanuel.

Advent gives us the opportunity to attune our hearts once again to these realities, so that we might recognise more fully the unfathomable gift of Christ Jesus, the one who "did not despise the Virgin's womb", but entered into his creation to redeem and restore it, and to make all things new.

I recently had the pleasure of going to Minsteracres on our annual clergy retreat, where we continued to reflect on what it means to be a community of missionary disciples. One of the most striking sights as you drive into the grounds is the avenue of thirty towering redwood trees lining both sides of the driveway.

These imposing trees are native to North America, but in the 1800s someone thought it would be a good idea to plant them here too. I'm so glad they did! However, for all their imposing height and beauty, I learned that their roots only go down about three

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PARISH CHURCH SERVICES

ST PAUL'S CHURCH

Sundays: 10.30am Holy Communion ('All Together' non-communion on first Sunday)
(live-streamed at www.facebook.com/stpaulsspennymoor)
Wednesdays: 9.30am Holy Communion **Fridays: 10am** Play Church (term-time only)

WHITWORTH CHURCH

Sundays: 9am Holy Communion

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A promise worth waiting for

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metres, instead spreading outwards and interlocking with one another, so that together they achieve greater stability in harsh, windy weather. Individually, they might struggle to withstand the strongest winds, but together, their interwoven roots provide a stability that none could achieve alone.

As part of our retreat, we were invited to reflect on what it means to be like those trees: rooted in God's love, not individually but together. And it struck me that Advent is one of the most marvellous moments in the Christian calendar to reflect on this.

For as we wait and look ahead to the Lord's birth, but also his return at the end of the age, we are called to allow the dual realities of the world's beauty and brokenness to push our roots deeper into him, into the soil of God's love and promises, so that we trust him more completely.

Yet, as members of his body, we are also invited to wait for Christ together, allowing the roots of our lives to spread outwards, interweaving and connecting with one another, so that we might learn to bear one another's burdens, share in one another's joys and pains, and yearn for him with one heart.

Within the waiting of the Advent season lies an opportunity to grow in intimacy with God, but also with one another as his family, the family of God. It is an opportunity to allow our hope in his promises to draw our roots deeper into him and towards one another, so that our life together becomes a reflection of his coming kingdom for which we wait. That, even when the high winds of change, suffering and uncertainty sweep over us, we can remain in him and yearn for his appearing with even greater expectation and hope.

So, as we journey together through Advent, may we remember that it is not simply the case that all good things come to those who wait, but that the greatest gift we look ahead to, has already come to us. And what's more in Christ Jesus, the best is yet to come. And ultimately, that is a promise worth waiting for. Amen.



Take a break from all the planning, buying, worrying about being ready for Christmas!



RELAX WITH TEA AND CAKES IN A PEACEFUL PLACE AND ENJOY YOUR FAVOURITE CAROLS

FREE ENTRY and you are welcome to call in for five minutes or an hour - whatever works best for you!

YOU ARE WARMLY INVITED TO

"A CHRISTMAS DROP-IN" AT WHITWORTH CHURCH

SATURDAY 12th DECEMBER
Drop in at the Church anytime between 2:00-4:30pm

'Unto us a child is born'

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Next Bishop of Jarrow announced



DOWNING Street has announced that the Reverend Dr Jitesh Patel has been appointed the next Suffragan Bishop of Jarrow.

Ordained in 2010, he brings 16 years of parish ministry experience, alongside seven years of leadership and teaching within theological education.

Jitesh said: "Since first discerning this call to be the next Bishop of Jarrow, I have been praying daily for the people and places of the diocese, asking God to bring widespread renewal, for individual lives to be radically transformed by the saving love and power of Christ, and for vocations of all types to be raised in partnership with all that the Holy Spirit is already doing. Part of my own story is of being a very unlikely would-be disciple of Jesus, yet encountering the pursuing love of Christ through the mission of the local church. Though there are challenges and opportunities facing the diocese, I believe this missional call is its most central, and I am looking forward to helping raise disciples of all types and backgrounds, especially unlikely ones, to meet this call."

From a Hindu Indian diaspora family, Jitesh became a Christian while studying Physics at Oxford University. Jitesh will be consecrated at York Minster on the 8th December.

(Words and photograph courtesy of Durham Diocese)

70th anniversary stole presented



TO mark the 70th anniversary of the re-dedication of St Paul's church after the fire, members of the embroidery group presented vicar Matt with a new pink clerical stole. It will be worn for the first time on the third Sunday in Advent. Thanks to Maureen Kirkup and Lesley Riddle for their work over recent months to make this beautiful new addition to the church vestments.

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FOR YOUR PRAYERS

For the Revd Dr Jitesh Patel as he is consecrated as a Bishop on the 8th December in York Minster.

For our clergy and all those who will be volunteering to prepare our churches for worship this Advent and Christmas.

For those for whom Christmas will be a difficult time.

PRAYER FOR DECEMBER

Advent Lord, come ever nearer. Come to rejuvenate our faith. Come to fortify our social conscience. Come to open wide our eyes of wonder. So that when the Saviour comes, he may steal into our hearts and find them ready. Even so come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Source: The Intercessions Handbook

THANK you to everyone who supported the Christmas Shoebox Appeal. Around 70 boxes from Whitworth and St Paul's churches, plus the team at Sabre Rail, are now making their way to children across the world who may otherwise not receive a Christmas present this year.

THE Sing for Life Choir presents their Winter Wonderland of festive favourites and refreshments on Saturday 5th December at 2pm in St Paul's Church. Tickets are £5 (under 16s £2) and are available to buy on the door.

THE Mothers' Union will meet for the final time this year with a Christmas lunch at the Green Tree. There will be no meeting in January and the group will reconvene on Monday 8th February at 2pm in St Paul's church for their AGM. Seasonal greetings to all!

ALONGSIDE the church carol services, there are more opportunities to sing and you're welcome to join in any (or all!) of these events!

Lothian House - 14th December, 3pm
Sycamore Lodge - 16th December, 11:15am
ASDA - 18th December, 6pm
Wetherspoons - 18th December, 7pm

Parish Registers

HOLY BAPTISM

St Paul's

8th November Phoebe Heather Turner-Eltringham

CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

St Paul's

17th November	Muriel Keirl
20th November	Susan Mary Soar



THANK you to everyone who contributes towards the production of Crossways. To Pauline Storey and Brenda Crooks who sort the copies ready for distribution, and to the distributors themselves, who deliver the newsletter. And thank you to you, the reader, for your continued support of the parish newsletter, particularly as I this year marked 25 years as editor! May I wish you a very happy Christmas and a prosperous 2027.

Christopher Luke, Editor

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