

Vol:61 No 1 January 2021 Online Edition

ST PETER'S CHURCH BRACKLEY

"Loving God, loving each other, loving Brackley"

2021
HAPPY NEW YEAR!



In the Bleak Midwinter

The Revd. Sylvia Lafford writes.....



Dear Friends,

I do hope you have managed to celebrate Christmas in whatever way has been safe but still joyous for you. It is always strange to be writing the magazine letter a month, nearly, in advance, let alone one that begins the start of a new year. It is always good to look back, although, there has been much during these past twelve months that we would really wish to put behind us. For all of us, it has been a year like no other, we have had to deal with a Pandemic, which has brought suffering and loss. For many, this last year has brought difficulties of various kinds.

Looking back though, does give an opportunity to reflect upon some of the good things, during a time of uncertainty and change, and give thanks. We have the hope that the development and distribution of the new vaccine will bring in the coming months, not only to us here, but throughout the world. What has been achieved in record time when scientists have worked together has been truly amazing. We have been able to express our thanks to the NHS and key workers, to acknowledge the achievements of people like Sir Tom and others who are an inspiration.

Here in Brackley, there have been several major developments which are of great benefit to our town.

The new Brackley Medical Centre, incorporating exceptional facilities and the Community Hospital. This will make such a difference to our growing town. Something else to be thankful for. We also have a new care home. Something to be thankful for. We also have the new supermarket. Something to be thankful for. These will benefit those at the north end of our town where there are many new houses, with new families who have settled in Brackley. We also have reason to give thanks for the way our community has pulled together and taken care of each other both personally and through various agencies. Another reason to be thankful.

We have just celebrated the coming of Jesus into the world, an event that changed lives over 2,000 years ago. Our mission and hope for Brackley, indeed for others throughout the world, is that event continues to change lives. As Christians we are called to give thanks to God in prayer and worship and come together as a community to do this. How wonderful it will be when we can do this fully again. We are called to pray for those in need. As people of faith we are also called to 'action'. What can we do to help others, and are we able to continue with some of the worthwhile ventures started during this difficult year?

The New Year is a time for new resolutions, not the kind that start off well and then dwindle away, but lasting plans that may make a difference to others. Jesus calls us to love our neighbour, when asked which of the commandments were the greatest, He said, "to love God and love our neighbour".

At St Peters, along with many other churches, we have had the benefit of online streaming of services for those who cannot attend in person along with lots of other details of helpful aids for those isolated or struggling. Perhaps our church could be full if those joining on line were able to join us when it is safe. I suspect our church could well be full. We would then be a stronger church community, able to reach out with the love of God so all may experience that one constant in our lives. We have a God who knows us by name and cares for each one of us. Surely that is the greatest gift we can have and one for which we can be continually thankful.

Happy New Year and may it be for you, one full of love, hope and peace, good health, and a desire to draw closer to God.

With love and every blessing,
From, Sylvia

Eglantyne Jebb – founder of ‘Save the Children’



Here is a modern-day saint whose compassion and determination has saved literally millions of lives.

Eglantyne did not begin as an obvious ‘mover and shaker’ of people. Born in Shropshire in 1876, she grew up in Ellesmere, studied history at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, taught at Marlborough, and then resigned as she was not physically robust.

Eglantyne moved to live with her mother in Cambridge, and it would have been so easy to settle for a life of peaceful obscurity. But she was a Christian, and at Oxford she had developed a passion for social concerns, so this compassion now drove her to take action.

She began in 1906 by publishing research on the poverty she’d found in Cambridge.

Then in 1912 the Balkan Wars broke out, and Eglantyne left Cambridge for Macedonia. Her months among the refugees led her to decide that long-term constructive aid was more effective than short-term handouts.

The First World War left Eglantyne horrified by the prolonged Allied blockade on Germany and Austria-Hungary, which even after Armistice meant starvation for millions of civilians, especially children.

And so in 1919 Eglantyne and her sister Dorothy Buxton helped found the ‘Fight the Famine’ Council, which wanted to end the blockade and establish a League of Nations.

One day during a rally in Trafalgar Square, Eglantyne was arrested for distributing a leaflet showing starving children which read: “Our blockade has caused this – millions of children are starving to death.”

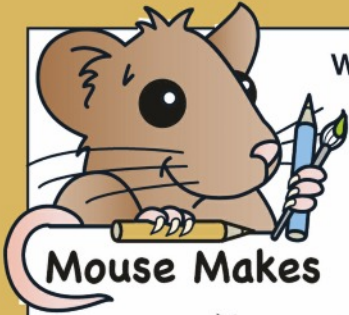
She ended up in court and was fined, but the judge was so impressed with Eglantyne’s commitment to children that he himself paid her fine. His money became the first donation to Save the Children, the new charity just set up by Eglantyne and Dorothy.

Save the Children was officially launched at the Albert Hall in May 1919, with the aim of helping the starving civilians of central Europe. It was a success, raising £400,000 in that first year alone.

When in the autumn of 1921 Russia was facing famine, Save the Children chartered a cargo ship, the SS Torcello, to carry 600 tons of lifesaving food and medical supplies to Russia – saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

By 1922 Save the Children had become one of Britain’s biggest charities. Eglantyne’s Declaration of the Rights of the Child, written in 1923, was adopted by the League of Nations the following year. The present-day UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is derived from it.

But ten years of running Save the Children had sapped Eglantyne’s fragile strength, and she died in Geneva in 1928, aged only 52.



What happened after Jesus had been born in Bethlehem?

READ Matthew 2:1-12

Who came from the East?

Why had they come?

What were they following?

Who was alarmed by their arrival?

Who had the prophet written about?

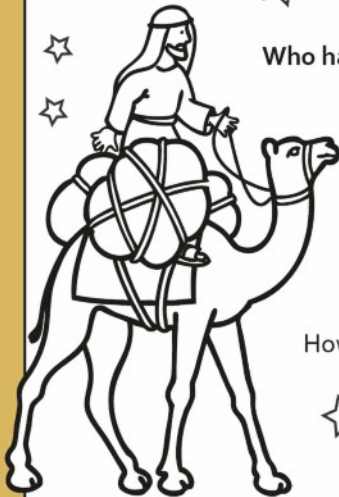
Where were they then sent?

What were they to look for?
..... and why?

Where did the star lead them?

Who did they see? What did they do?

How were they warned to go home another way?



READ Matthew 2:13-23

Who appeared to Joseph?

What was he told? Why? What did he do?

Who then became angry? and why? What horrible thing did he then do?

When Herod died where was Joseph told to take his family?

Where did Jesus finally grow up?



The first man to get stopped for speeding...

It was 125 years ago, on 28th January 1896, that Walter Arnold of Kent became the first person in the world to be convicted of speeding. The speed limit was 2mph at the time, and a man carrying a red flag had to walk in front of the vehicle. But one day Mr Arnold took off at 8mph, without a flag bearer. He was chased by a policeman on a bicycle for five miles, arrested, and fined one shilling

Mr Arnold was four times over the rather modest 2mph limit in the

streets of Paddock Wood, near Tunbridge Wells in Kent. To achieve this feat today, a driver in most towns or cities would have to be travelling at over 100mph, which is probably a bit excessive.



The speed limit was changed later that same year to 14mph, but there is no record of Mr Arnold getting his money back. Nor is there any evidence that he was endangering life and limb, which used to be the criterion: the 1832 Stage Carriage Act introduced the offence of endanger-

ing someone's safety by "furious driving".

Just over 100 years later, the road safety charity Brake reports that male motorists are more than three times as likely as women to having driven at more than 100mph, because 'boy racers' believe they have more talent than the average driver. Police have caught one driver doing 120mph in a 20mph zone, another doing 152mph in a 30mph zone, and one doing an astonishing 180mph on a motorway. As Edmund King, AA president, points out: "Generally men have riskier attitudes towards driving than their female counterparts."

Overcoming disappointment

'We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.' (Martin Luther King, Jr).

During this current pandemic, one of the dominant emotions is disappointment. It comes out of our expectations of life, even as people of faith. The life story that we adopt for ourselves is that life should be long and healthy; we can become anything we want, and we have perfect families, homes, holidays and retirement! No wonder we're disappointed when things don't work out like this, especially during the pandemic.

Jesus tells the story of a wealthy farmer, living the good life (Luke: 12:13-21), when God says: 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' It's a very modern story, as this farmer's expectations of the future took no account of death or God. Like death, there are unexpected moments that interrupt our life story, including illness, redundancy, divorce, or the pandemic.

If we pay more attention to how Covid upsets us, we can discern where we have set our hearts. What life story are we really living for? What are our expectations for work, family and friends, health, God or church?

At the end of His parable, Jesus offers this challenge: 'This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.' (21). At the beginning of a New Year, are we ready to align our story more to God's story for us? Reflect on Jesus' parable, asking how God can be at the heart of our life story.

What words would we like to see written on our gravestone when we die, describing the way that we've lived our life? With God's help, those words can reflect our life today!

Winter

by Christina Georgina Rossetti



Sweet blackbird is silenced with chaffinch and thrush,
Only waistcoated robin still chirps in the bush:
Soft sun-loving swallows have mustered in force,
And winged to the spice-teeming southlands their course.

Plump housekeeper dormouse has tucked himself neat,
Just a brown ball in moss with a morsel to eat:
Armed hedgehog has huddled him into the hedge,
While frogs scarce miss freezing deep down in the sedge.



Soft swallows have left us alone in the lurch,
But robin sits whistling to us from his perch:
If I were red robin, I'd pipe you a tune,
Would make you despise all the beauties of June.

But, since that cannot be, let us draw round the fire,
Munch chestnuts, tell stories, and stir the blaze higher:
We'll comfort pinched robin with crumbs, little man,
Till he'll sing us the very best song that he can.





Brackley Food Bank End of Year Report.

By the time you read this, Brackley Food Bank will have given out over 1400 food packs in 2020, most of which were delivered by teams of drivers. In 2019, we handed out 523 packs. None of this would have been possible without the determination of three elderly men, willing teams of collectors and drivers, and the astonishing generosity of the people of Brackley. The elderly men are on their knees from exhaustion, and with gratitude to all who made this possible.

Alan Perkins, Coordinator, Brackley Food Bank, and Third Old Man.”

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