

St Francis Weekly News for THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 13th December 2020



This bulletin may have come to you by email or through your letterbox, if you received it on paper but are happy to receive an email in future please email deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com If you know anybody else who would like this delivered or emailed please contact Deborah or Revd Janet: revdjanetwyer@outlook.com

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT!

This week we will be lighting the third candle in our Advent Wreath – the candle of Joy.

So far the candles have reminded us of the founding mothers and fathers of our faith – people like Abraham and Sarah, who trusted in God's plan for the world and went on to play their part; and last week we recalled the Old Testament prophets who spoke God's word to those who had lost their way.

This week we light the pink candle – the candle that marks the fact that we are half way through our Advent journey, a day to be joyful and rejoice in all that we have been promised. This candle also represents the prophet John the Baptist, who preached repentance and baptised people in the river Jordan to prepare them for Jesus.

It might seem strange that such a strong character as John might be represented by a pink candle – but, given the good news of the joyful coming of Jesus it's very fitting that we lighten the sombre mood of Advent a little as we think about lifting our hearts to make them ready for the celebrations of Christ's birth that is just around the corner!

REVD WINNIE'S WINDOW DISPLAY

This week Revd Winnie has lit the Candle of Joy.



Revd Winnie says: 'Joy in the Lord is like a candle shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the joy we find in Christ.'

SPECIAL SERVICES FOR CHRISTMAS

Having waited until the very last minute to see what restrictions might be in place – we are now delighted to announce our Festive Line-up of Services.



Getting ready for the celebrations...

Very sadly we cannot host the usual array of carol services and events we have enjoyed in previous years, but we hope that what we have on offer will bring a little joy to folk of all ages.

On Sunday 20th December at 4pm we will be hosting an hour or so of candle lit Readings and Music – telling the story of the birth of Jesus and a bittersweet time of reflection on the wonder of the Incarnation accompanied by carols and music both traditional and modern.

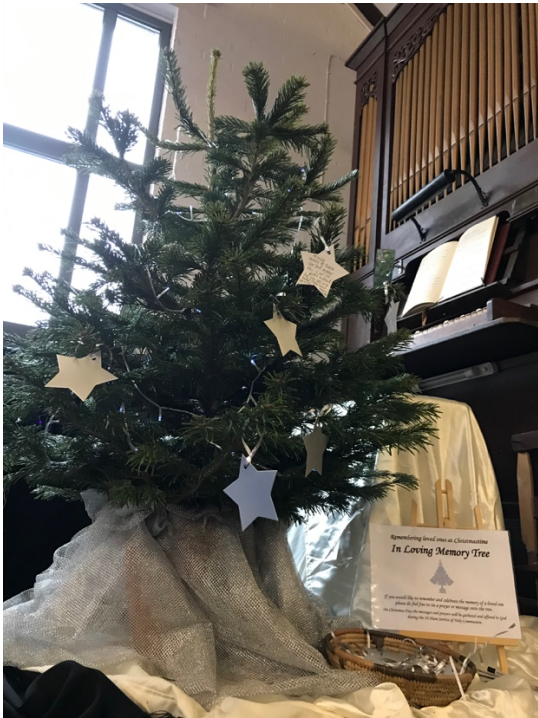
There will be three separate opportunities to celebrate on Christmas Eve – at 3pm there is to be a short time of prayer and reflection based around the beautiful Christmas Carol written by Graham Kendrick 'Thorns in the Straw.'

Later in the afternoon at 5pm we will be open for a short service called 'Light up the World – the Story of Christmas'. This will be particularly suitable for children and their families; and if you come – bring a torch or a pretty coloured light of some kind.

Midnight Mass will begin at 11.30pm – and then on Christmas morning at 10.30am there will be a traditional Book of Common Prayer service of Holy Communion.

IN LOVING MEMORY TREE

Remembering Loved Ones at Christmas



If you would like to honour and celebrate the memory of a loved one this Christmastime the 'In Loving Memory Tree' in church is there for you.

Christmas stars are available for you to write your own prayer or message or you can bring your own to tie onto the tree.

The prayers and messages will be gathered together on Christmas Day and offered to God during the prayers at the 10.30am service of Holy Communion.

Please don't forget that if you need someone to talk to about bereavement or loss of any kind – we are here to listen.

THE ADVENT TREE

The Advent tree is blossoming! With a new decoration being added every day it is a joy to see.

Thanks to the kind generosity and skill of all those who have donated a wonderful array of beautiful handmade decorations we are enjoying a lovely



reminder that even in the face of wintry times just by making the smallest gesture of love even a desolate looking place can be transformed.

If you would like to add a decoration to the tree, please either bring it to the church any weekday between 10am – 12pm, or pop it through the vicarage door: 100 Rider Haggard Road.

HEARTSEASE COMMUNITY FRIDGE



Christmas

Eve

We will be open again on **December 24th, Christmas Eve** from **7.30pm to 9pm**, but with a change of venue to make things safer for all who come.

This will be at Witard Road Baptist church on Witard Road close to the junction of Plumstead Road East. We know this has been a difficult time for some and we really want to help and support those in need this Christmas and into 2021. We hope to have a wide selection of fresh fruit, veg and salad food with a variety of other foods available, with some Christmas specials. The food will be bagged up ready to take away. If you have special dietary needs we may have gluten free products etc but this is not a certainty. Please bring a mask with you if possible.

We look forward to seeing you there.

WITH HEARTFELT THANKS...

Last week I shared the news that our dearly loved pastoral lead Eleanor Laming is planning to move on to very exciting pastures new.

Eleanor has been selected to stand as a Green Party Candidate for the Thorpe St Andrew County Council



elections in May 2021. As this will involve a great deal of work and preparation, Eleanor will be leaving her role of Parish Visiting Team Lead here at St Francis Church.

Eleanor's last Sunday with us will be Sunday 27th December and we plan to make that service a special one. Please do come along if you are able – all are welcome.

SALVATION ARMY

TOYS & TINS appeal



A Wonderful Response from St Francis!

We have received a letter of thanks from the Salvation Army for the Toys and Tins donated via St Francis Church:



Norwich Citadel

Alison Gibson
Administration Secretary
Tel: 01603 620747
Mob:
Email: alison@norwichcitadel.org.uk
Date: 9th December 2020
Ref:

St Francis Church
c/o Mrs E Lamming

Dear friends

I just wanted to thank you all for the lovely donations towards the 'Toys and Tins' Appeal. The gifts that you have brought are beautiful and will be very gratefully received.

We very much appreciate the support that St Francis Church have given. This year was always going to be a different and slightly difficult year, we have received 37% more requests for help from the appeal than last year, but the donations you have given will be a real help in fulfilling the requests and making someone's Christmas special.

God bless you

Yours sincerely

Alison Gibson

Alison Gibson
Administration Secretary.

DECEMBER TIER TWO RESTRICTIONS

St Francis Church is now open for Sunday worship.

EVERY WEEK UNTIL CHRISTMAS

10.30am - Advent Holy Communion

5.00pm – BCP Evening Prayer

As ever we will be taking every possible measure to ensure that we adhere strictly to the Covid hygiene regulations – and we ask that you bear with us in terms of asking you to sanitize your hands as you enter the church and if you are able to wear a mask at all times.

As well as rejoicing in sharing Holy Communion one with another in the church building we will continue to broadcast via the St Francis YouTube channel. Just search for 'St Francis Heartsease YouTube' !

CHURCH OPEN FOR PRAYER DURING ADVENT

St Francis Church building will be accessible for quiet individual prayer [or for people in a household bubble to pray together] in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Prayer resources are available and you will be able to light a prayer candle if that is something you would like to do.

There is also our 'In Loving Memory Tree' in church if you would like to place a prayer card on the tree to remember a loved one who is no longer with us.

The church space is open every weekday morning 10am – 11.30pm.

If you would like to arrange to come at a particular time, or would like to talk to us about guided prayer or asking for prayer support please feel free to call Revd Janet [07368 832294] or Fr Tracy [07834 845623]

FORTHCOMING SERVICES & EVENTS

GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS...

CANDLE LIT SERVICE OF READINGS & MUSIC

Sunday 20th December – 4.00pm

ST FRANCIS ZOOM ROOM HOUSEGROUP

Do you fancy an online get together to catch up with each other, share a Bible passage and pray?

Our new home zoom group meets every fortnight and the next get together is on Monday 14th December.

The group starts at 7pm and finishes around 8pm.

All are welcome – please contact Jim Green via email: jimpiecrust@gmail.com or simply zoom in:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83340751619?pwd=dnNlMV015R2l2RlE2T1R3VWhUblRzQT09>

Meeting ID: 833 4075 1619

Passcode: 460998

PASTORAL NOTICE BOARD

The Funeral Service for Yvonne Lemmon will take place at Earlham Crematorium on Wednesday 16th December at 2pm. Although all the seats are allocated if you would like to light a candle in St Francis Church or spend some time in quiet please contact Fr Tracy [07704 328319]

We continue to hold Paul and Thomas and all Yvonne's family in our prayers.

PASTORAL CARE MATTERS

With Christmas looming and the fact that we are still living with Tier Two Restrictions many of us may find ourselves struggling with all sorts of issues and encountering all kinds of difficulties both practical and emotional.

Please remember you are not alone, if you would like the opportunity to have a chat, or if you need some assistance of any kind please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. We are very happy to talk with you if that would be helpful.

We are also able to offer help if you or someone you know needs support with emergency basic food provision.

Our contact details are as follows

Revd Janet [07368 832294]

Father Tracy [07704 328319]

24/7 Answerphone: 01603 431259

Also, there is always someone available in the church building weekdays 10.00am – 12.00pm;



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Childline: 0800 1111

Samaritans: 116 123

Domestic Violence Hotline: 0808 2000 247

[If you hear a neighbour in distress please do not hesitate to call this number or 999; you could save a life]

Mind: 0300 123 3393

Age UK: 0800 169 6565

Norfolk Assistance Scheme: **01603 223392**

THE CURATE'S CORNER

This week I came across a story I'd like to share with you:

There was once a monastery that had seen much better days. It was definitely in decline; there were few monks left, the buildings were becoming derelict and hardly any people made the pilgrimage to seek advice and solace from the monks.

It was built in the middle of a large wood, and in the woods lived a rabbi, alone, in a modest log cabin. The monks never spoke to him, but would occasionally see him foraging amongst the distant trees.

The abbot was very concerned about the future of the monastery and prayed to God all the time, asking for guidance. It didn't help. The abbot wondered why he never seemed to find any inspiration.

One day the abbot happened to look through his window and saw the rabbi in the distant woodland. The abbot decided to go and ask the rabbi for his advice.

He walked out and found the rabbi. As soon as they looked at each other, they both began to weep for an unexplained reason. The abbot asked the rabbi, 'you know how it is in our monastery. What must we do?'

The rabbi replied, 'one of you is the Messiah.'

When the abbot returned, he told the monks what the rabbi had said. The monks all began to talk to each other for the first time in years. 'Who can it be? Is it me? Is it you?'

They all chattered away, wondered greatly, and began to take great notice of each other.

In time, big changes took place at the monastery. The monks were looking for the Messiah in all people, and listening attentively to what everyone had to say. Soon, younger people began to attend the monastery and became monks, and many people came from many miles away to seek their help and prayers.

Every blessing

Fr Tracy

A WORD FROM THE VICAR

Last week was for me bitterly cold, no matter how many layers of clothing I put on, I couldn't seem to get warm. The worst day of all was the one where before I could get moving I had to scrape ice off the car windscreen and pour hot water over the driver's side lock – frozen solid! I couldn't believe it – anyone would think it was winter.... And then I remembered gloomily, yes, it is winter.

As the day got murkier I felt my spirits sinking even lower [I'm definitely solar powered] and then Charlotte showed me a beautiful photo she had taken of a spider's web. "Look at this" she said "our creator was making lace long before we thought of it!" and there, on her phone was a photo of the most intricate work of beauty I had seen for a long time. That cheered me up no end.



Later that day as I passed by my driveway gates, look at what I spotted – my very own reminder that even spiders are given a part to play in God's plan for his world.

Later that same day, the frost melted and the leafless tree outside my study

window became covered in tiny drops of water that caught the sun and was suddenly transformed into a glorious rainbow bejewelled vision of joy.

I think God was definitely telling me that even in the bleakest of days his little signs of love are all around us.

May you see signs of God's love all around you too,

Revd Janet

FOR OUR PRAYERS

We pray for those who are in acute need of prayer at this time: Denise H; Christine; John P; Scott; Stephen C; Margaret T; David & Cynthia S; Maegan; Tom; Riley & his mum and family; Jeanette, David & Grace; Paula; Pete; Lauren; Fr Brian; Hazel; Ben; Frazer.

We continue to pray for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Doreen; Rosemary; Sheila; John; Joy; Shirley.

We remember with love Yvonne Lemmon; Barry S; and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends.

PRAYER FOR THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or feeling isolated. In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Church of St Francis
Heartsease**

Heavenly Father
We ask your blessing upon us.
Hold the Heartsease Community,
and all the world,
in your arms of love.
Be with us.
Give us your strength,
peace, and healing grace.
Watch over us,
protect us from harm;
and keep in safety
all those who care for the sick
and attend to our needs,
in Jesus name we pray.
Amen

PRAYERS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

O Lord Jesus Christ,
who at your first coming
sent your messenger
to prepare your way before you:
grant that the ministers and stewards

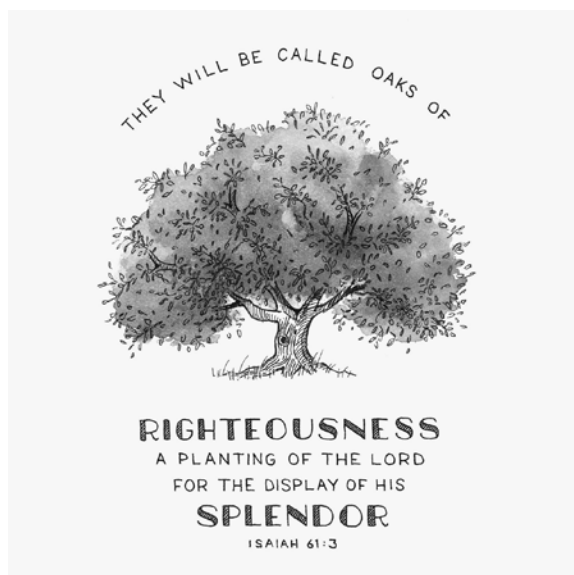
of your mysteries
 may likewise so prepare
 and make ready your way
 by turning the hearts of the disobedient
 to the wisdom of the just,
 that at your second coming
 to judge the world
 we may be found
 an acceptable people in your sight;
 for you are alive and reign with the Father
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever. Amen

God for whom we watch and wait,
 you sent John the Baptist
 to prepare the way of your Son:
 give us courage to speak the truth,
 to hunger for justice,
 and to suffer for the cause of right,
 with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

We give you thanks, O Lord,
 for all your heavenly gifts;
 kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
 that when your Christ comes again
 we may shine as lights before his face;
 who is alive and reigns now and for ever.
 Amen

READINGS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

ISAIAH 61:1-4, 8-end



The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
 because the LORD has anointed me;
 he has sent me to bring good news
 to the oppressed,
 to bind up the broken-hearted,
 to proclaim liberty to the captives,
 and release to the prisoners;
 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,

and the day of vengeance of our God;
 to comfort all who mourn;
 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
 to give them a garland instead of ashes,
 the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
 the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
 They will be called oaks of righteousness,
 the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
 They shall build up the ancient ruins,
 they shall raise up the former devastations;
 they shall repair the ruined cities,
 the devastations of many generations.

For I the LORD love justice,
 I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
 I will faithfully give them their recompense,
 and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
 Their descendants shall be known among the
 nations, and their offspring among the peoples;
 all who see them shall acknowledge
 that they are a people
 whom the LORD has blessed.
 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
 my whole being shall exult in my God;
 for he has clothed me
 with the garments of salvation,
 he has covered me
 with the robe of righteousness,
 as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
 and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
 and as a garden causes what is sown in it to
 spring up,
 so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness
 and praise to spring up before all the nations.

PSALM 126



1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, ♦
 then were we like those who dream.

- 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter ♦
and our tongue with songs of joy.
- 3 Then said they among the nations, ♦
'The Lord has done great things for them.'
- 4 The Lord has indeed done great things for us, ♦
and therefore we rejoiced.
- 5 Restore again our fortunes, O Lord, ♦
as the river beds of the desert.
- 6 Those who sow in tears ♦
shall reap with songs of joy.
- 7 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed, ♦
will come back with shouts of joy,
bearing their sheaves with them.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning
is now, and shall be for ever. Amen

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24



1 thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

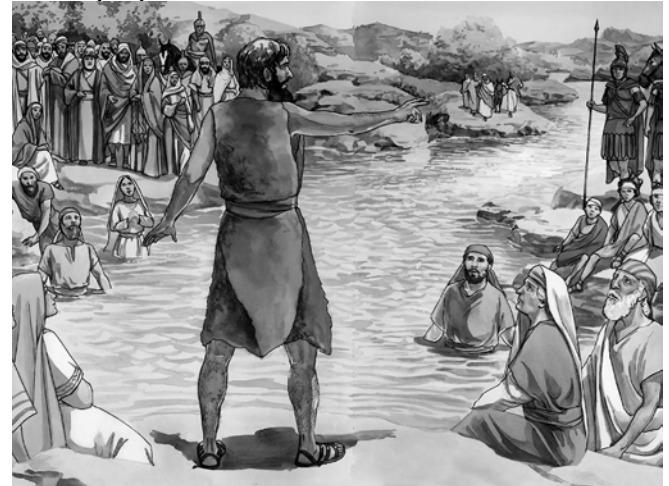
May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him,

'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said.



Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

REFLECTION FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Who are you? This is the question asked of John the Baptist by the minions sent from Jerusalem by the Pharisees.

Who are you?

Who indeed was John the Baptist? He was a man living in the desert, preaching and baptizing: a hairy man with a leather belt. He was not somebody who was going to tell the minions from Jerusalem what they needed to hear.

They ask John why he baptised if he was not Elijah, or a prophet. It's a strange question: the idea of baptism in those days was not new; in many synagogues even today, you will find a deep bath called a Mikvah. This is where ritual washing takes place in the Jewish rites. It isn't the same as our baptism, Jews can be washed more than once and it is only intended to make someone ritually clean – nevertheless, the concept of ritual washing was definitely established before John came along.

The minions had already asked the baptist straight out if he was Elijah; indeed, the way John dressed is very similar to the description we have of Elijah in 2 Kings: a hairy man in a leather belt. This was immediately denied by John, even though Jesus, in Matthew 11:14, seems to be saying that John is, a type of, Elijah.

Another interesting thing about John, is that he was almost certainly a lifelong Nazarite. A Nazarite was someone who decided to separate themselves for a period of time to sanctify themselves to God. You can read all about this in the bible in Numbers 6. Perhaps surprisingly this was something done by women as well as men. It involved abstinence from wine, or eating anything to do with the vine, like grapes, grape skins and seeds; and the hair of the head could not be cut – in fact, Samson was a not really very good Nazarite!

So in the Jewish culture of the time, it was a bit like being a monk or a nun. Some people were declared at birth, by a priest, to be a lifelong Nazarite, and this seems to be what is being referred to in Luke 1:15 when Gabriel tells Zechariah that his son, John, will be great in the sight of the Lord and will drink neither wine or strong drink (compare this announcement with the angel's message to Samson's mother in Judges 13).

To attract a visit from an archangel like this means that the future John the Baptist was likely to become important in God's eyes. But not in the eyes of the world.

Another angel came to Joseph after the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, and told him to return to Israel; he did so, and returned to Nazareth with Jesus, 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.' (Matthew 2:22). Modern bible scholars are unable to find this prophecy, but the early church father St Jerome insisted that the prophecy is contained in Isaiah 11: 'there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.'

Isaiah 11 is a very appropriate passage for Advent, and it is traditionally sung as one of the Advent Antiphons sung on December 22nd.

It seems as if there is no connection in this passage at all with a prophecy of a Nazarene. That's until you realise that the Branch referred to here is Jesus, and you find out that the Hebrew word for branch is ne-zer. So Nazarite, Nazarene, Nazareth itself even – can there be some kind of connection? I believe there is. Because the more I read the bible,

the more I see that it is full of spiritual connections, none of which are coincidental. I do believe that scripture is inspired, and I do think that one of God's strongest messages to us is that all things are connected, and connected back to Him.

Who are you?

John does not really answer the question asked of him by the minions of Jerusalem, and they are forced to go home to their masters with a very less than satisfactory report of goings on by the Jordan.

One thing about the Nazarites is that they were separated from their surroundings, set apart from the world to fulfil the purposes of God. In Acts 24, Paul is scathingly referred to as a ringleader of the cult of the Nazarenes. Nazarenes, or Christians, are often disliked, discriminated against and persecuted in many parts of the world.

We should be disliked in our part of the world too, if we are sufficiently set apart and in opposition to a society, a perceived 'normality', that would have its way of injustice and unrighteousness forced upon us.

Who are you? Who are we?

I hope that we can work on setting ourselves apart, in opposition to the world and what it would have us do, in order to follow the way of justice and mercy taught to us by the Nazarene, Jesus of Nazareth.

That way of opposition is made quite clear for us. It is contained in the prophecy of Isaiah, the prophecy of the coming of the Nazarene. 'And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them'. Because 'with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth'. This is the way of peace, of mercy and of justice.

This is a way of opposition to all those forces of darkness that seek to destroy our planet and to oppress the poor. Through greed, and the lust for power and violence, these forces would have us set against each other and ultimately destroyed. This is the path that the Nazarene calls us away from. The path that John the Baptist points us to.

I said that all things are connected to God. We can be re-connected, through a new creation, the new creation brought about by the incarnation and resurrection of our Lord, who preached the parable of the vine. The vine represents the people of God.

The vine, that the Nazarites were not allowed to defile, should represent you and me. That should be our answer when the minions ask, 'who are you'.

In Advent, we renew that connection to the new creation in Christ, as we wait, and watch, and ponder in our hearts.

The Revd Tracy Williams
Curate



There was a man sent from God and his name was John. It was John's job to tell people about the light that was coming into the world.

John was not the light, but it was his job to tell people about it.

The Jews sent men from Jerusalem to speak to John. They were important men, priests and Levites, from the Temple. 'Who are you?' the priests asked John.

John replied, 'I am not the Messiah.'

And then the priests began to guess who John might be. 'Are you Elijah, then?'

'I am not,' said John. Elijah had died a long time before.

'Are you the prophet?' the priests asked.

'No,' said John.

The priests began to get annoyed. They had come all the way from Jerusalem to the river Jordan and John would not answer their question.

'We need something to tell the people who sent us,' said the priests and Levites. 'Who are you?'

John quoted to them from the book of Isaiah: 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord".'

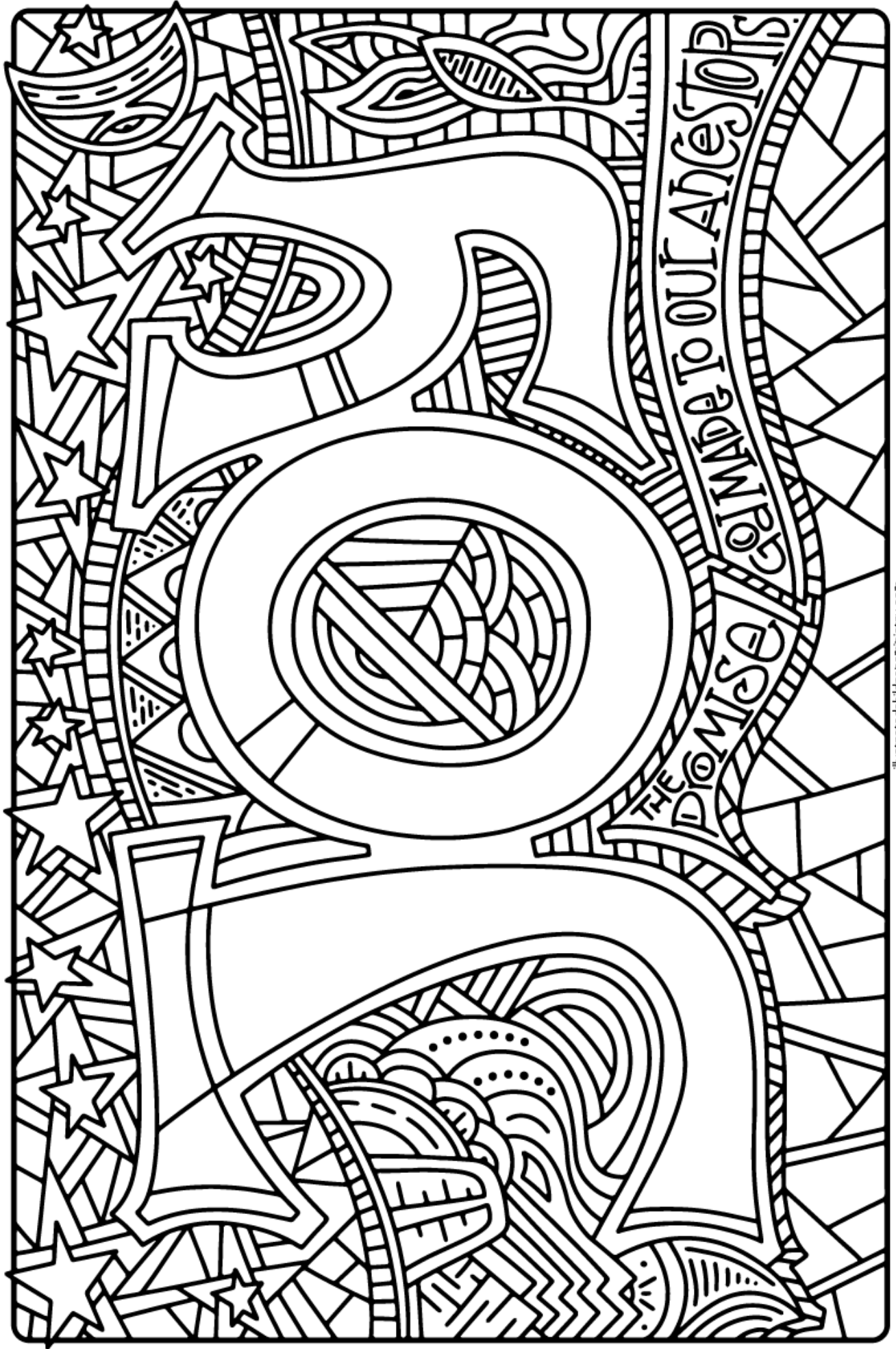
The priests, who had been sent by the Pharisees, asked the man who had been sent by God, 'Why are you baptizing people then, as you aren't the Messiah, the prophet, or Elijah?'

John said to them, 'I baptize with water, but someone else is coming. I am not important enough to unlace his sandals. He is already standing among you, but you do not know him.'

Glossary

Levites helped the priests in the Temple;

Elijah an Old Testament prophet who received messages from God to pass on to the people.



Name



John 1.6-8, 19-28

The priests and Levites come to try and find out who John the Baptist is and what he is doing.



Family time

Talk Discuss some experiences when you have really felt Jesus to be with you.

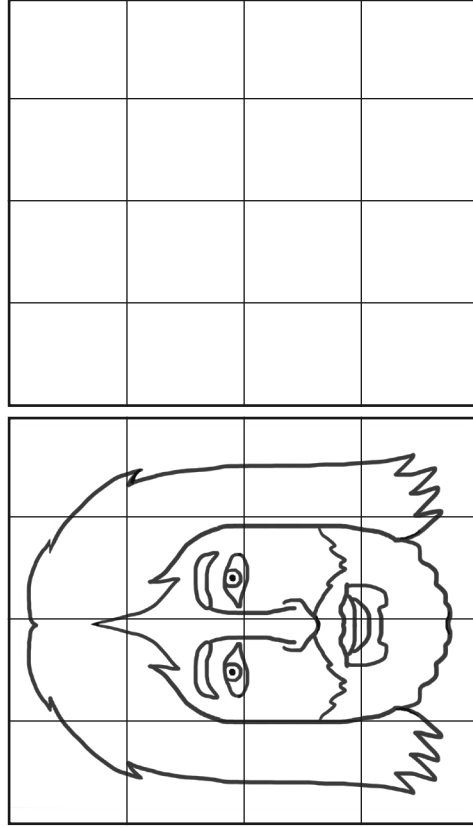
Do Make lots of paper crosses and write the word 'Messiah' on them. Stick the crosses around your house in different places and leave them there for a week to remind you that Jesus, the Messiah, is with you wherever you are.

Pray Stand together by a different paper cross every day and say a short prayer of thanks for God's presence among you.

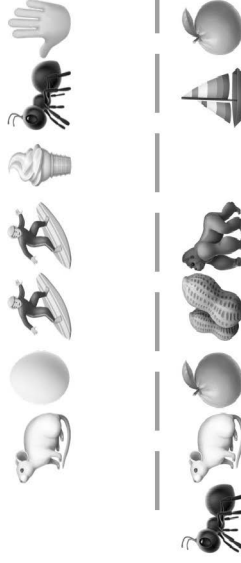
Activity time



Use the grid to draw the shapes in the correct boxes to reveal the image of Jesus.



Can you solve the code to work out the key words from today's passage? Write the letters underneath the pictures.

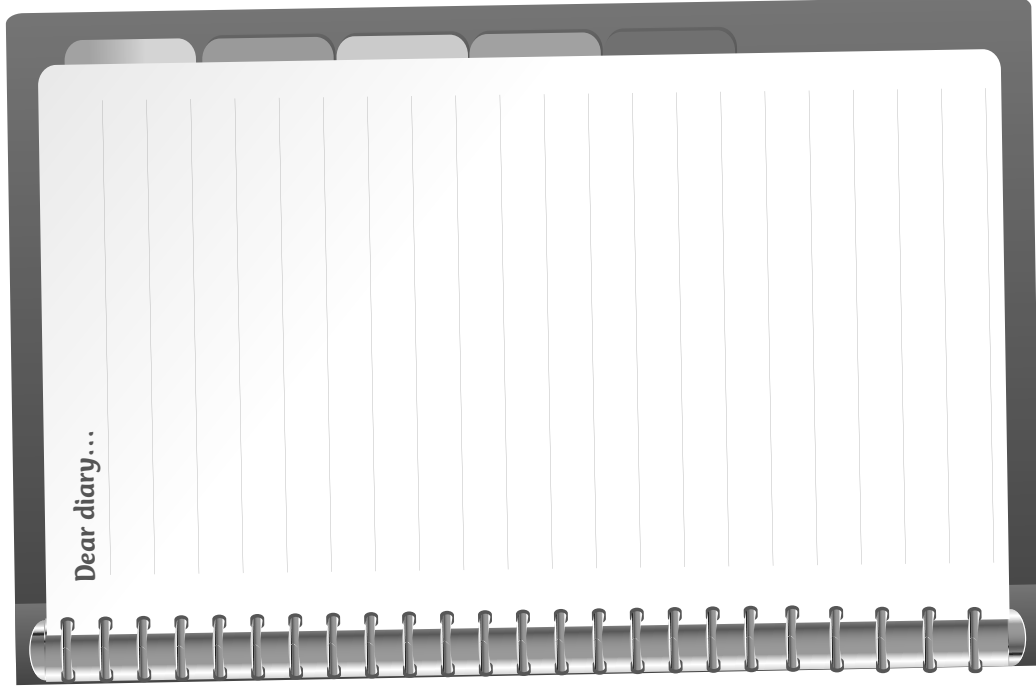


ROOTS children's Sheet

13-19 December 2020



Write a diary entry for a person standing in the crowd listening to John being questioned by the priests and Levites.



Name

13-19 December 2020

Colouring time

John explains that someone, who is already standing among the crowd, will do even more amazing things.

