

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #38

2nd December 2020

Dear Church Family,

**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:

'This, to me, is like a train journey where you're standing on the station – it's wet, windy, it's horrible – and two miles down the tracks, two lights appear and it's the train. And it's a long way off. We're at that point at the moment.'

Jonathan Van-Tam's full use of the metaphor extended the illustration, but his primary message was clear: even if we currently remain in darker times, we can now see the first signs of hope and light to come.

Similarly in Isaiah 9:2, we find the prophecy of the greatest light, which will transform the lives of those walking in darkness. This verse, rightly, features prominently in Christmas readings but, as with much of Isaiah, there are layers to this future promise. Some aspects of Isaiah's words may find interim answers through human kings and rulers, but the full list of attributes described, the full brightness of Isaiah 9, is supremely fulfilled in Jesus.

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.

One way we can do this is by joining in the Ely Foodbank campaign to help people have a Merry Christmas by donating non-perishable festive treats such as sweet and savoury biscuits, chocolates and Christmas Puddings. Please drop them off in the porch **this weekend** and we'll get them to where they need to be. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

With the end of lockdown, in-church services can resume from this Sunday with the usual safety precautions in place. Both the 8.30am and 10.30am services will resume on a weekly basis and we look forward to seeing you. The 'Coffee and Chat' over Zoom will move to the later time of **12 noon** allowing both the in-church and online congregations to join in.

As with every other year, the Cottenham Churches have come together to produce a Christmas card for both villages. We'd like to get a card into every home in Cottenham and Rampton but will need some help in delivering them. Please let Matt Unwin-Riches or I know if you can help; cards can be collected from the church once they're ready.

Next weekend is the first of our Christmas services – Blue Christmas. The service is on Sunday 13th December at 4pm at All Saints', Cottenham, and is especially for those who prefer a quieter celebration. If you want to know more, please get in touch.

Please can you remember in your prayers those who are unwell: Barry Herd, Peter Tilbury, John Easterling, Janet Johnston, Phyll Greed and Bob Ward.

Do please get in touch if you need anything, or would just like to chat.

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.

Best wishes,

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