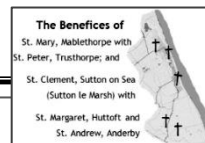




There is a **Christmas Tree Festival** at **St. Clement's Sutton on Sea** on Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th – open until 4.00pm each day and it includes a Concert with Women in Song on 6th at 7.30pm.

All are welcome to the **Carol and Crib Service** at **St. Peter's Trusthorpe** on Sunday 7th at 3.00pm followed by activities in St. Peter's Annexe



DECEMBER 7TH – SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

A REFLECTION BY CHRISTINE COLLINS (READER)

On the second Sunday of Advent we light the candle of peace. We remember the prophets who foretold the birth of Jesus. We celebrate the peace we find in Jesus.

Today's reading from Isaiah speaks of the shoot and the branch growing from the roots of what was to all intents and purposes a dead tree, which began with Jesse. Who was he? The father of David, reputedly Israel's greatest king. Yet where was Israel now? They were struggling as a nation – with idolatry, injustice and a lack of trust in God. Isaiah warns them of the judgement to come – they would be over run by greater nations, Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed and they would be taken away, captive into exile in a foreign land. BUT God would bring good out of all this. From the descendants of Jesse God would bring one on whom the spirit of the Lord would rest, bringing righteousness and peace – portrayed in the lovely picture of all the different animals living peaceably together, those who would normally be predators and victims, and of the child able to live safely amongst the usually dangerous animals.

Paul takes this theme further by telling us how we should live as Christians – people who are encouraged by God's word, who live in harmony with one another, whose lives give glory to God. Importantly, he stresses how Jesus came not just for the Jews, but for us – the Gentiles. The Jews had been waiting for the Messiah who would reinstate them as a leading nation, victorious over all their previous Gentile rulers – Babylon, Assyria, Rome. Paul quotes these various texts from Psalm 18, Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 117 and the reading from Isaiah, predicting that the Gentiles would be included in this message of peace and hope. Jesus came to fulfil the prophecies and promises God had made throughout the history of the people of Israel, "in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy".

We focus then on John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, preparing God's people, the Jews, for the coming of a very different Messiah to the one they wanted or expected! His people needed to repent, to own up to their sin, their lack of faith and trust in God. They could not claim to be exempt because they were Jews, descendants of Abraham, the father of their race. It was not their right to be God's children just because they were Jews. John's message, and that of Jesus was that all have sinned, we have all turned our backs on God and we need to repent, to admit our sin, to say sorry and accept the forgiveness Jesus' death and resurrection brings. That is the way of peace – peace with God and peace with each other. We cannot presume, like the Jews tried to, that just because we go to church and try to live a "good life" that we will be ok. The Gospel, the good news, is one of repentance and forgiveness and peace with God. Have we "lit" the candle of peace in our lives. Do we know that in God's sight we are forgiven and accepted because we have accepted the forgiveness Jesus is offering us at the cross? May we all know that deep peace that only he can give this Advent and always.

Please pray: for all young people especially those who find school or college difficult or who have problems at home; and for the clergy of the parishes.

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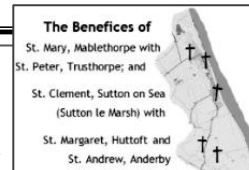
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There is a **Carol Service** at **St. Andrew's Anderby** today, **14th**, at **2.00pm** to which everyone is welcome. Please note, there is no morning service today at Anderby.

Our **Carol Service** at **St. Mary's, Mablethorpe** is on Thursday **18th** at **7.00pm** in aid of the RNLI. There is no service in the morning of 17th at Mablethorpe.



DECEMBER 14TH – THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT A REFLECTION BY JENNY HAYES (READER)

For followers of Christ, Advent is a time of hope and longing for the coming of Christ. The reading from Isaiah encourages us to be strong in our faith in a world of evil. For with God's support we can have "strong knees and hands" which will be our salvation in times of trouble. Strong, as in, powerful, fighting fit, determined, durable, compelling, marked (by God) and keen in our faith lives.

James tells us to be patient in our wait for this salvation, for the coming of Christ. He gives an example of a farmer waiting for his crops to grow and needing other factors, the rain and sun. And in the Matthew's gospel, Jesus deflects John's question, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

As Christmas comes around, less and less people associate it, and Advent, with Christ's coming, his birth! We may go to a Carol service or child's nativity play; but we have "done our duty", and can carry on with the our preparations for Christmas - getting presents, baking or partying. We may subconsciously take note of the state of the country, especially after the budget, and of the world and how these factors are affecting our own isolation in a bubble of busyness with our preparations for the 25th December.

In Isaiah's prophesy, he says, "Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense." Is humanity moving so far from the forgiving, healing, peaceful and loving nature of Christ, that God himself is starting to reap his vengeance on us all? Is this why we see a world, today, full of violence, hatred, jealousy and greed? As Jesus replied to John's question, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead raised and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me."

There is some good in this world, but it doesn't make headlines like evil happenings. It doesn't sell stories, and sadly it seems to reinforce a normality of depraved behaviour. There are many people, both religious and non-religious, who undertake a behaviour of love, caring, sharing and forgiveness; that imitate Jesus' behaviour to others. As Jesus implied to John, "look around you and you will see the shapes and patterns of healing and life and justice that come forth wherever love reigns". Rarely do we hear of them or their work.

Let us all try to follow in Christ's nature and live in the hope and belief that humanity can turn itself around and begin to think of others rather than self. Until then, let us each, in our own way, prepare for the Coming of Christ and the hope of world peace.

Please pray: for all working for peace, especially in Ukraine, or who risk their lives as peace-keeping troops; and for any who aren't looking forward to Christmas as they will be alone.

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There is a **Carol Service** at **St. Clement's Sutton on Sea** today, **21st at 3.00pm** with the Women in Song Choir - everyone is welcome. Please note, there is no morning service today at Sutton.

Our **Christmas Services** are as follows:

Christmas Eve – Wednesday 24th December

4.30pm at St. Margaret's, Huttoft: Carols and Lessons

9.00pm at St. Clement's, Sutton: First Communion of Christmas

11.30pm at St. Peter's, Trusthorpe: First Communion of Christmas

Christmas Day – Thursday 25th December

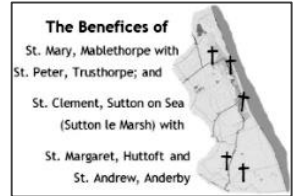
9.00am at St. Andrew's, Anderby: Holy Communion

10.30am at St. Mary's, Mablethorpe: Holy Communion (NB TIME)

First Sunday of Christmas – Sunday 28th December

10.30am at St. Margaret's, Huttoft: Holy Communion

This is a United Service – there will be no other services in the group today



DECEMBER 21ST – FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT A REFLECTION BY THE RECTOR, REV PETER LILEY

Throughout Jesus' life there was a question which surrounded him, troubled many people, and even gave him himself pause for thought: Who is he?

For some the answer is found in prophecy: centuries earlier Isaiah prophesied, to King Ahaz of Judah, that a sign that would come, a child born of a young woman ("virgin" in some translations) who would be "God with us" (Immanuel). Like many biblical prophecies this has multiple fulfilments: during the childhood of Ahaz's son Hezekiah the nations of Syria and Israel (the two nations he dreaded) were overrun by the Assyrian armies and ceased to be a threat to Judah; and then in the first-century, a child (Jesus) is born to a virgin (Mary) who will defeat two powers, Satan and his greatest weapon death, through being God with us.

To others, for example Paul in his letter to the Romans, the answer comes from Jesus' Resurrection, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, both in Jesus' own life and in the lives of believers. This is the actual point at which Satan and death are defeated, but is necessarily dependent upon Jesus being fully human as well as fully divine, which in turn can only be because of the nature of his birth to Mary at Bethlehem.

And that brings us to Matthew's gospel, which along with Luke's, tells us the wondrous story of the baby born to the humble and obedient virgin, Mary, and brought up by her and the loving and godly Joseph. This testimony, passed to the gospel writers by Mary herself (who else would have known?) confirms the truth that Jesus is Emmanuel (now spelt differently, but still meaning, "God with us") the very Son of God who came to live among us, showed us how to live, gave his life to set us free from guilt, and was raised back to life to open the way to eternity for all who believe.

What an answer to that question: Who is Jesus? The source of forgiveness and eternal life!

Have a wonderful and blessed Christmas!

Please pray: for peace in Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jerusalem and throughout Israel (both Jewish and Arab areas) and especially for the Christians who live there; and for all who are away from home and loved-ones, or who have to be at work, during the Christmas period.

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