

Facebook Posts January 2023



A Thought for the Day from Deacon Jen:



Yesterday, the weather was good and I had the time and space so I took the opportunity to go and 'tidy up' the garden. We had had our hedge trimmed a little before Christmas and there were quite a few conifer clippings lying around. These were combined with dead leaves, and sadly, plants that didn't the severe frost we had a few weeks ago. So, I started off with a rake and swept up a good deal. I then came to the area where we have grasses growing. It is difficult to use a rake with the grasses so I just picked up old leaves with my hands. I started at

the top and worked my way down. Wanting to do a 'proper job' I picked up the lower section to get at any dead leaves underneath. It was there that I found an area which was completely dry with old leaves and vegetation. I realised that this was probably a very good, safe and warm place for little creatures to be during the winter. This may include mice (don't tell Jacqui!) Once I realised this, I covered it all over as it was.

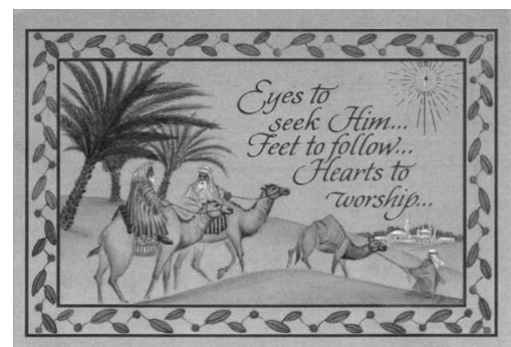
My train of thought was about our faith. I think, perhaps we may sometimes want to tidy up our faith. It helps our understanding to put it into neat piles, to know how our faith works with our life. But there are times when events in our lives, or parts of our own personalities, can't be tidied up and got rid of. They are who we are and are all part of our growth in our relationship with God. Let us celebrate the good times and the more untidy times knowing that God is always there and wanting us to be ever closer with Him.



Thought of the day from Rev Rosemary Wakelin

Time again for the Covenant Service, except for those who observe it in September. I remember my first encounter with it as a child and thinking how extreme it is. But then how could it not be. It deals with the confrontation between Love and its opposite. The last battle. God, in Christ takes on the forces that refuse to accept the Divine Plan for humanity. So to sign on as Christ's followers is deadly serious and demands total commitment. Our desire is usually to be in control - of our lives, our situation, our money, but the words of the Covenant are about relinquishing everything into other hands and I have known people who refuse to attend a Covenant service. I suppose it depends on whose hands. People say Jesus came to turn the world upside down, but suppose he came to turn it the right way up again? God made us to come into relationship with him and one another and to become real enough "to bear the beams of love" for which we are made. We turned it upside down with our power struggles and greed. The drastic decision to pit the Power of Love against our love of power took Jesus to the Cross. So following him inevitably will be tough. I suppose it depends on whether you think Jesus got it right as to whether or not you take on the Covenant.

Today we celebrate **Epiphany**! Traditionally, it's when we remember the visit of the Wise Men to baby Jesus. Epiphany emphasises seeing and recognising, being enlightened. Those wise men saw an unfamiliar star, they recognised it as meaning something important and were enlightened when they reached journeys end and found the baby! Our journeys of faith often have a series of epiphany moments.



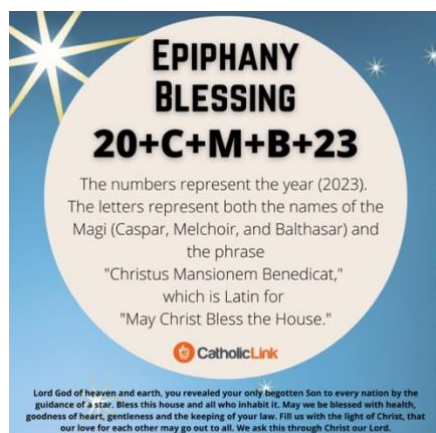
The prayer attributed to St Ambrose is apt to use on this day:

Lord, teach me to seek thee and reveal thyself to me when I seek thee.

For I cannot seek thee unless thou teach me, not find thee except thou reveal thyself.

**Let me seek thee in longing,
let me long for thee in seeking;
let me find thee in love,
and love thee in finding.**

AMEN



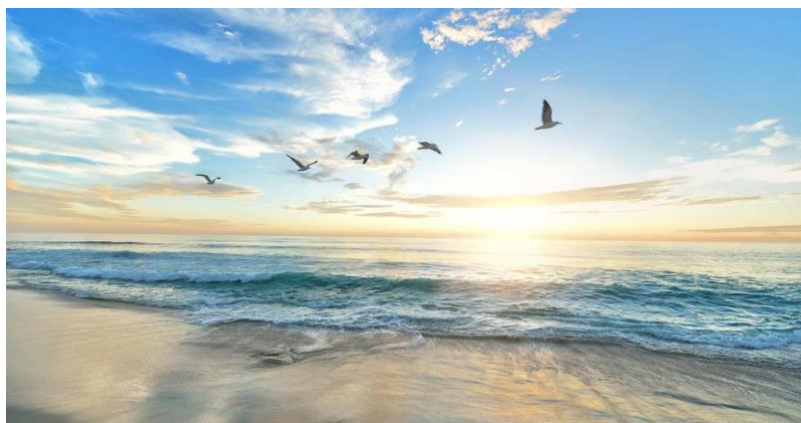
Epiphany is also a day when Christians chalk a blessing on their homes.

20+C+M+B+23

You may like to try it! Chalk it over your door as you pray for God's blessing on your home.

Have a look at the picture from Catholic Link which explains the tradition and offers a prayer service to use at home:

<https://catholic-link.org/.../epiphany-home-blessing-and.../>



Rev Jacqui writes a Thought for the Day:

The East Anglia District of the Methodist Church is having a year of prayer in 2023 - you may like to look at the website <https://pray23.org>. There is a zoom launch next Monday evening. Our Circuit is going to host a different prayer initiative for each month of the year. For January, we are praying through the Methodist Prayer Handbook on a daily basis - there are short zoom prayer times each morning at 8.45 for those who would like to do this with others (please contact us for the zoom link if you would like to join in). In February, we are going to repeat something we did 2 years ago in lockdown and post a candle-lighting each evening at 6pm. If anyone has any ideas for the rest of the year, please let us know! The thing about prayer is - it is always relevant, always necessary, always the key to living the best life we possibly can. But, we easily leave it out and so we need to focus on it from time to time. We also need creative ways of engaging with God as well as the traditional ones. I know that, when I don't pray in a day or a week, life and work can be a struggle. But, when I DO pray (even if briefly and on-the-go) suddenly I am opened up to God's guidance, God's power and God's enabling - everything looks a lot better!

A reflection from Sam Parfitt:

Some time ago I remember Rev Jacqui asking about our sense of home during a sermon. Some people answered that home was wherever their family was, for others it was about a sense of belonging to a particular place. Home can, and does mean many different things in different contexts. Having been born and raised in the Fens, I have always felt that the landscape with its big skies and wide open plains are part of my identity of home. Although I live not too far away, I have in my house a little part of Fen history, a small piece of wood from Flag Fen, which is dated to 1000BC. It looks rather ordinary, but to me, it is a reminder and a connection with my origins. Sometimes I wonder where Christ felt his home was; in Bethlehem the place of his birth, in Egypt his place of refuge as a child or Nazareth his ancestral home?

As we continue reflect on Epiphany and the theme of journeying, what journeys might we be preparing for this year and might our sense of home be an agent of change or comfort? There is a beautiful hymn written by Michael Forster about going home (we had it many years ago at my father's funeral, he was a Baker's boy in his youth and the tune is Dvorak's symphony number 9 'From the New World' used famously on the Hovis advert!) It repeats one line in particular "Christ has gone before". I think it's a wonderful reminder that whatever journeys we make this year, whether they be anticipated or unexpected, joyful or sorrowful, Christ has walked the path before us, and remains with us always.





A Thought for the Day from Deacon Jen:



At this time of year, when the days are short and it is quite cold, I am inclined to feel a little less cheerful than I would otherwise do so. So, to lift myself up, I thought I would look at some of the pictures from Iona to remember the beautiful blue skies I saw there. But the first picture I came to was not of the natural beauty of the Island but of the cloisters in the centre of the Abbey buildings. Just by seeing the picture I was struck again by the peace and tranquillity there, but also by the history that was encapsulated in these stones. There have been so many people, generation after generation after generation, who have walked along them. All there to worship and to experience the sense of connectedness to God. This has been built up over many, many centuries.

The cloisters stand there in all weathers, whether that is in the brightness of the summer, the whistling winds of autumn or the cold, darker days of winter. They remind us of the solidity and permanence of God's love. And, through that love there is always something to look forward to, as surely as Spring follows each winter. As I thought of these things, I felt a real sense of privilege of having been there and that God had led me there. By looking back at special times, perhaps we can all relive the joy of those times and then wait to see where God is leading us next.



Thought of the Day from Rev Rosemary Wakelin

I remember when I was 14 a new minister arrived and his first service in September was the Covenant Service. He made the point that I had not noticed before, of how ridiculous was the idea that the Power behind the creation of everything should even consider having a relationship let alone making a Covenant relationship with anything created - and yet that was what we were about to do. The only thing that makes any sense about this idea is that it is about Love. It happened in the Old Testament when that remarkable patriarch Abraham became aware of a presence in his life that was greater than him, Yahweh. Being an astute businessman, he decided to make an arrangement whereby Yahweh would be on his side and he and his people would honour and worship him, as a useful and powerful ally. Judaism had begun. Jesus accepted that idea but made a new Covenant, not a business arrangement but new life in Christ, our lives locked into his life of Love, so that the world would work as God intended, through the power of Love. This is radically different because it is not about the vested interests of one group but for everybody, a world family. History shows the Church has been more in sympathy with Abraham's thinking than Jesus's. We're still working on it.





Rev Anne writes: frosty weather always reminds me of the amazing natural world we have around us, which we rarely notice. Suddenly the ordinary blade of grass is transformed and the very last rose of summer receives new decoration!

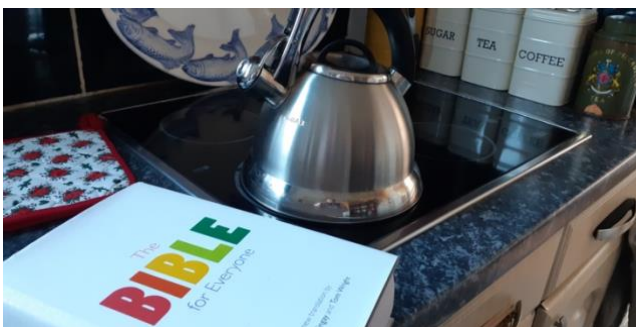
God's love is all around us too, and often we take it for granted or don't see it. May God open our eyes and help us to see!

Lamentations ch3:22-23

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness."



A thought from Sam Parfitt:



One of my carefully planned New Year's purchases has been a new kettle. Usually I wait until we need to replace such an item, so this is a rare exception! We had realised over the Christmas period that we were boiling our electric kettle far more than we needed - sometimes we would boil it and then get distracted or we would flick the switch (almost out of habit) as we walked past. Our new stovetop kettle does take a little longer to boil, but boiling water for a cuppa has

become a mindful and purposeful thing to do. It's very in keeping with what is called the slow living movement, which looks to taking more time to do things in a simpler way and being fully present while doing them. It can include things like writing a letter by hand, making butter or visiting a local market. There are some things which, admittedly, I would be hesitant to take the slower path with, like doing the laundry (I remember my Nanny having a fully functioning wash house with washboard, a dolly and a mangle, it took ages to do the laundry, mind you, she always maintained that the clothes were cleaner than using a machine!) Sometimes I think I fall into a similar state with my faith, often I am busy busy busy and will be too distracted, so will read my Bible or pray quickly without being fully present in the moment. So, I'm trying to take the slow living approach with this too, to take longer to pray, to read less passages of Scripture, but read them more deeply - perhaps while I'm waiting for the kettle to boil!



As part of the **East Anglia District's Pray 2-3** prayer initiative, our Circuit is exploring a different prayer idea each month. In February, we will be lighting a candle on Facebook each day at **6pm** - something we did in January 2021.

Each candle-lighting will take around 60 seconds and it will be an opportunity to pray for the world, for peace, and for our own concerns. Join us by praying quietly for a minute with the candle each evening - starting on Wednesday!



Thought from the Day is from **Rev Jacqui** - an extended one as she tells us about what happened this last Sunday:



When I suggested that our Circuit Big Sunday service for January should be based around the words of the annual Methodist Covenant Service, I had no idea that those words would be brought to life for me in a very real way – on the very day! In a nutshell: I lost my voice (an encounter with very fragrant flowers), I was home alone needing to host a circuit zoom, I had recordings of most of the service but not my own talks, I had 2 hours in which to sort it somehow but couldn't actually talk to anybody! I sat down, put my head in my hands, and said to God words to the effect that I freely and wholeheartedly put the whole thing at his disposal

(based on words from the Covenant service). Two messages on my mobile phone later, I had my only colleague on the zoom (Sam) prepared to provide the continuity based on my instructions and our circuit member in the midlands (Glyn) prepared to add my talks into the PowerPoint presentation he had prepared for me, before he went to take his own service in Birmingham.

The zoom service went very well – Sam livestreaming from Blakeney was brilliant – and I was able to use the recordings again in the afternoon at Great Ellingham. In both services, the Holy Spirit was powerfully at work – not just in spite of my incapacity but because of it! 'Let me have all things, let me have nothing' the Covenant liturgy says. I added yesterday 'Let me have a voice, let me have to be silent'.

I went to one more service in the evening yesterday, feeling in need of simply sitting in worship somewhere. As we reflected on the words of the actual Covenant prayer in Watton Methodist Church, what stood out for me was 'I am no longer my own but yours'. It suddenly struck me – as if for the first time! – that rather than striving all the time to give everything to God, why don't I just recognise that I simply belong to God and that he will direct all things – in the best possible way? 'Let me be full, let me be empty' – I felt very full at the end of Sunday, full of wonder at the surprising ways in which God always works.

I have led 5 covenant services so far this year (one more to go). With the 3 services yesterday, that is eight opportunities to reflect on the Covenant promise that we make ourselves and on the amazing promises that God gives us in return. However, once again, I feel that I am just at the beginning of truly understanding it all!

