

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 80

Christmas Edition 2020

'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'

Welcome

Welcome to this Christmas edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

After Christmas Cutting Edge Camelot will be taking a short break and the next edition will be in the New Year on Sunday 3rd January.

Livestreamed and Recorded Services

The Camelot Midnight service will be available in recorded form from 11.30pm on Christmas Eve.

The North Cadbury Christmas Day service is to be livestreamed for those who are not able to be there in person.

For both services please follow the link below:-

<https://www.twitch.tv/loudaudiolive>

Scripture Passage

John 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

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. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Reflection

This Christmas is, of course, like no other.

We live in a world of restrictions and limits. If we can see other people at all then we are encouraged to have a small and local Christmas.

And in this world in which we have lived for many months our main experience may just have been boredom. But for many their experience will have been loneliness, anxiety, fear and maybe devastating personal loss through the death of a loved one.

As we reflect on the realities around us, we can also remind ourselves of the kind of world that Jesus was born into.

For Jesus also lived with restrictions.

One of the names for Jesus Christ is the Word. In this passage from John's gospel, we are told, '*the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*' In

other words, Jesus Christ is none other than God Himself come to us in the form of a human being.

And as God, Jesus' power was unlimited '*All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.*' The whole of creation, the stars, the heavens and the earth, the tiniest blade of grass, all has been made through Christ.

And yet this all powerful, divine person voluntarily chooses to take on all the restrictions, all the frailty, mortality and vulnerability that is our common inheritance as human beings '*The Word became flesh and lived among us.*'

Jesus was born as a frail and vulnerable baby into a dark and dangerous world. A world in which ordinary people could be pushed around by a foreign power, the Roman Empire, for the purposes of a census. A world in which right from His birth people such as Herod were plotting to harm and destroy Him. A world in which He experienced rejection where '*He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.*' A world in which there was no room for Him or for Mary and Joseph at the inn at the end of a long, hard journey.

So how large or small is Jesus? How small or large is God?

The beginning of this passage from John's gospel shows us a God and a Jesus who is infinitely large, bigger than the whole creation. If we think of the distance to the stars which we measure in light years then we need to think bigger than that. This infinite scope and power of God is glorious, it's awe inspiring but also maybe a bit overwhelming and difficult truly to grasp.

At the end of the passage from John's gospel, Jesus and God are still glorious, '*we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son.*' But this time the glory is focussed on the life of a single human being, a life that begins in the form of a new born baby. '*And the Word became flesh and*

lived among us'. Surely this glory is on a scale that we can all grasp and relate to. We see the infinite greatness of God within the tiny, vulnerable shape of a new born baby.

We see what is large through the small. In different ways our Christmas will be a small one this year. And yet a small Christmas can be full of love and if it is full of love then it is infinitely large.

This year the funerals and weddings that I have taken have been very small in terms of numbers. And yet nevertheless they have been full of human and spiritual meaning.

Yes, we say, but what about those friends and members of the family who would have loved to have been there but were not able to come? Surely they would have loved to have been included?

Well, sometimes these very small services have been relayed to friends and families right across the world. This needs nothing more than a mobile phone. I don't pretend to understand how a microchip works but I do understand that it is very small and yet enables this kind of broadcasting to take place. So what is very small can be used to communicate across a very large space, the whole of the world.

And so with God and with Jesus. God is seen through what is very small as we celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. And yet His impact in transforming the lives of human beings, in enabling you and I to know the presence of God with us is infinitely large. It stretches across all the continents of the world and down the ages. And this is not surprising since, as John tells us, it was through Jesus that this whole universe came into being and 'without him not one thing came into being'.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, we do so against the backdrop of restrictions, of anxiety and fear. And yet as Christians these are not the last

word for us. The light which Jesus brings us is more powerful than the darkness 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' We have an infinitely great and unrestricted God. And Jesus Christ opens up a way for us all to come to know this God on a scale that we can relate to and understand.

Tristram

Carols

The carols for the recorded Midnight service are 'Once in royal David's city', 'Away in a manger', 'Joy to the world' and 'Hark the herald angels sing'.

Points for Prayers

- Keeping Jesus at the true heart of our Christmas celebrations
- Measures to be taken to slow down the spread of the new strain of the coronavirus
- Give thanks for approval of first vaccine for use in combating coronavirus
- Need for further largescale testing
- The arrangements for Christmas bubbles and minimising any resulting increase in coronavirus infections
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes
- Those suffering from coronavirus in hospitals, care homes and at home
- A fresh and imaginative approach to services and communications in the Camelot Group over the Christmas period

- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners. Tristram is taking a funeral on Thursday 31st December at St Nicholas Bratton Seymour
- Our Bishops (please see notice below)
- Prayers for those affected economically by the lockdown, for businesses and those who have become unemployed
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Tier 3 Rules in operation from Boxing Day

The Camelot Group falls within the area of South Somerset. As from Boxing Day this area will be placed in Tier 3 which is one of Very High Alert. Full guidance on what this means can be found on the government website:-

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-3-very-high-alert>

As far as places of worship are concerned they are open although there are strict restrictions on socialising there. Weddings and funerals are also permitted with numbers restricted at weddings to 15 and at funerals to 30.

Making decisions on Christmas Services

The options that were available to us in providing Christmas services were (a) indoors (b) outdoors (c) livestreamed (d) recorded. I comment on each of these various options in turn below. It is also worth mentioning that we also needed to take account of the number of officiants we had available to lead Christmas services. This meant, for instance, that it was not possible to provide a Christmas Day service for Blackford. However, Blackford and Galhampton which do not have Christmas Day services do have services on both Christmas Eve and the Sunday following Christmas, 27th December.

It is not possible to cover all eventualities but given the extraordinary circumstances under which we are operating we have tried in our process of decision making to be as inclusive as we can so that as many people as possible can enjoy church Christmas celebrations in one form or another.

(a) Indoor services

In other years, this is how we have held Christmas services.

However, in the extraordinary circumstances of this year indoor services have presented new challenges which principally relate to the reduced socially distanced capacity of the church.

It has been necessary for churchwardens and others to determine how many people may safely be accommodated in their church and to weigh this against their anticipated likely attendance. For the purpose of knowing what their likely attendance might be they may have communicated with their potential congregations by email or letter.

Another consideration for indoor services is that the congregation is not allowed to sing although an organist can play and a small socially distanced choir can sing.

(b) Outdoor services

Although some churches have decided to go ahead with indoor services on a socially distanced basis others have decided that an outdoor service represents a better alternative.

This is likely to result in an increased overall capacity although there is still the need to maintain social distancing.

It is also possible for the congregation to sing carols outside which they are not able to do inside.

The obvious downside with an outdoor service is the possibility of bad weather.

(c) Livestreaming

Because of the generosity of Dan Gruner, a parishioner in Galhampton, and his colleagues who have freely offered their professional services and expertise we have been able to consider the option of livestreaming from St Michael's North Cadbury.

We anticipated that the numbers of those who might wish to attend the Camelot Carol Service at St Michael's North Cadbury on Sunday 20th December were likely to be considerably greater than our socially distanced capacity. For this reason we decided to pursue the option of livestreaming this service with only the participants present. The alternative would have been either to adopt a strict ticketing system or to turn people away at the door and we did not wish to do this. The livestreaming will at a later point then be uploaded as a recording available for everyone to view with a link given through Cutting Edge Camelot and any other appropriate means.

(d) Recorded service

The midnight service on Christmas Eve at St Michael's North Cadbury was also likely to provide similar social distancing issues. For this service we have opted to make a recording of this Christmas Communion available from 11.30pm onwards on Christmas Eve. Again the link will be given through Cutting Edge Camelot and any other appropriate means.

In the event that the weather is so bad on Christmas Day that it makes outdoor services impractical this recorded service also provides an available back up in the event that people are not able to come to an outdoor service.

Schedule of services during Christmas period (24th to 27th December)

Chronological order

Christmas Eve

Available from 11.30 pm

North Cadbury, Midnight Communion, recorded

Christmas Day

9.30 am Yarlington, Readings and Carols, outdoors weather permitting,
indoors if not

9.30 am Compton Pauncefoot, Communion, indoors

9.30 am South Cadbury, Readings and Carols, indoors

10.00 am North Cheriton, Readings and Carols, outdoors

11.00 am North Cadbury, Communion, outdoors

11.00 am Holton, Readings and Carols, outdoors

11.00 am Maperton, Communion, indoors

Sunday 27th December

9.00 am Blackford, Communion, indoors

11.00 am Galhampton, Communion, indoors

Outdoor services - Christmas Day

Christmas Day

9.30 am Yarlington, Readings and Carols, outdoors weather
permitting, indoors if not

10.00 am North Cheriton, Readings and Carols

11.00 am North Cadbury, Communion

11.00 am Holton, Readings and Carols

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Communion services

Christmas Eve

From 11.30 pm North Cadbury, Midnight Communion, recorded

Christmas Day

9.30 am Compton Pauncefoot, Communion, indoors

11.00 am North Cadbury, Communion, outdoors

11.00 am Maperton, Communion, indoors

Please remember

Meeting inside church

Under Tier 2 restrictions we are allowed to come to church to worship but we are not allowed to socialise outside of our own household/bubble (on Christmas Day this includes 'Christmas Bubbles' of up to three households).

We need to interpret these regulations sensibly. We do not think that they are meant to exclude greeting or acknowledging the presence of other people. However, they do mean that within the church we should not engage in conversations of any length outside our household or bubble either before or after the church service. This may result in going outside the church in which case...

Meeting outside church

We may go outside church. Tier 2 regulations here are less strict although their impact is still very real. Outside it is possible to meet with friends and family we do not live with in a group of no more than six (the so called 'rule

of six'). However, the need for social distancing still applies and although such meetings are possible we have been advised to be careful in terms of the total number of meetings we have.

Christmas Bubbles

On Christmas Day there are so called 'Christmas Bubbles'. These are groups formed by up to three households but with no overall restrictions on numbers. They are able to meet in places of worship. They do not need to sit together but must not interact outside their own bubble.

Carol singing outdoors

The congregation can sing as part of a service, allowing for appropriate social distancing.

Carol singing indoors

Congregations cannot sing although a small choir, limited in size so far as possible can sing.

Let us know your plans

If you are intending to come to a Christmas service (particularly an indoor service) which you do not normally attend it would be greatly appreciated if you could let the relevant churchwarden(s) know in advance. This will very much help them in their planning for safe social distancing at these services.

Update on Bishop Peter

Bishop Peter thanks everyone for all the cards and other expressions of support which he has received. A card was sent to him on behalf of the Camelot Parishes as a whole. He says that he has been lifted on 'eagle's

wings' through the love and prayers of others. He has now received a stem cell transplant. Please pray for the new cells to 'do their bit' and for his continued healing. Please continue to pray for him and his family in this challenging time. Please pray also for Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Bishop's Staff as they take on the oversight of the diocese in his absence.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5:2)