

Dear friends,

The Advent Carol service at St. Peter's was a triumph with the quality top-notch. We've had some big well attended evening services recently and I hope this will continue to next Sunday when we hold our regular Choral evensong service.

There was a great turnout at all Saints and a very happy atmosphere in the morning and in the afternoon we visited the Christmas tree festival at Salem chapel where groups from All Saints were well represented. The contribution from the "square circle" knitting group with a knitted nativity scene will be transferred to the church to sit alongside the tree we get every year as a gift from Clinton Devon estates.

It was good to hear yesterday that the Advent fair in the Peter Hall made well over £900 with more to follow – a great effort and well done to everyone involved.

Sunday 8th November – Advent 2

Rev. Chris Cant will preside at the 8am and Rev. Ken Parry will preside at the 10am and I will preside at choral evensong at 6pm at St. Peter's. I will also preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively. The second Advent candle commemorates the Prophets.

Malachi 3: 1-4. In Hebrew Malachi means "My messenger" or "an Angel" (the word means the same) so is not the name of a person. Jewish tradition attributes the book to the prophet Ezra. The coming of the messenger will be painful and he will come to the Temple first and then to the social sphere to purify both.

Philippians 1: 3-11. We are living between the first day (when we receive the gospel) and the last day (The day of Jesus Christ) and in-between there are many ambiguities. But these are actions of God. What God has started He will finish. It is not our responsibility to achieve the end but to prepare ourselves – becoming more Christ-like – between those two poles.

Luke 3: 1-6. The messenger prophesied by Malachi we see in the word of the Lord coming to John in the wilderness. After mentioning all the people in official Imperial and religious power – the word comes to John presented as a traditional prophet standing very distant from the accepted power structures. John's role is very much like the church ever since – to make the path straight for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dementia talk

Just to underline that my wife Louise, Professor of Geriatric medicine, will be giving a talk next Wednesday 11th at 6.30 in the Peter hall on new treatments in Dementia. The talk will be followed by Mulled wine and mince pies

Thought for Today

Prophets and prophesy face a dilemma in the traditional understanding of the word. You only know if they have true prophetic vision in hindsight. Indeed, prophesy has been so discredited in Biblical history, because false prophets only said what they were paid to say, that true prophets like Amos for example didn't want to be associated with them. "I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son" (Amos 7:14) though ironically Amos is now recognised as one of the very first prophets we have in the Bible. But prophesy is far more than foretelling like a seer. True prophesy is speaking powerfully into the present social and political situation. That is always tricky because you have to be very sure of yourself and have a certain pig-headed confidence. I have not been blessed with those virtues except that I do feel that I should speak about the current "assisted dying" bill that is moving through parliament. Working from first principles I believe that human life is sacred. This means in practice that I am also against abortion because I believe that conception is the start of a new life. The state moving rapidly towards a position where it officially sanctions the killing of life both at the beginning and the end of life is I believe, a natural consequence of seeing life as a utilitarian commodity where convenience trumps nearly everything else. That naturally puts me in the catholic camp than C. of E. but Anglicanism is such a broad church that probably any view is permissible. I feel inclined to underline Amos's line that I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son and because I hold the view that I hold doesn't invalidate anyone else's position obviously, but I'm sure that in a community as aged as ourselves I thought it best to state my position as sensitively as possible.

The Prayer for Today is a lovely prayer from the mother's union.

Lord Jesus Christ

You are the same yesterday today and forever and have promised to be with us all our days.

We pray for all elderly people, especially those who are ill or housebound.

In their weakness may they find your strength, and in their loneliness know the joy of your presence.

Be to them a sure and certain hope of the life you have prepared for them in heaven.