



DECEMBER 2021 Newsletter

Waiting, waiting!

Advent is all about waiting – but it is also about preparing. In the same way that an athlete prepares in the months and weeks before an event, and then warms up and stretches in the minutes and seconds before competing, so we are called to prepare ourselves physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually for our coming celebration of the birth of Jesus and our continuing wait for His second coming, in glory.

Through Advent this year, we will be using the book of Isaiah to guide our thinking about who it was that came and what His purpose was. We will tie these passages into well-known parts of the gospel stories of the birth of Jesus, to see how some saw but some missed the signs that were given, showing who the baby was.



Here are signs that were given to different people in the gospel accounts:

Star for wise men

The magi were not worshippers of Yahweh, God of Israel. They believed supernatural events were revealed in the stars and interpreted what they saw as evidence that a new King was born for Israel. It was dramatic enough a sign that they set off on a long, extended journey to pay homage. Whilst the Bible does not say this, some suggest that the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh indicate Jesus was King, God and either priest or sacrifice (or both). Following the star perhaps ties in well with Isaiah 49, where God's servant is called to be a 'light to the nations.'

God's power at work for Mary
Mary knew that she was a pregnant virgin. However, she also knew that this was a work of the overshadowing Holy Spirit. Only by the power of God could life be created where there was none and we should not think it was beyond the power of God who made the whole world by His word. It ties in well with Isaiah 51, where amongst the examples given of God's power is the pregnancy of Sarah, wife of Abraham.

Angels for Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, shepherds

Angels are God's messengers and are quite heavily involved in the Christmas story. Some have visits, others have dreams. All have the message forcefully reinforced. This relates well to Isaiah 52, which speaks of the joy that comes from the arrival of the messenger with good news.

Baby in a manger for the shepherds
No one expects a baby in a feeding trough! However, that is where the shepherds are sent to find the one described as saviour and messiah. No one expected God's chosen one to have such a humble birth, but this fits well with Isaiah 53, who suggested the servant of God would not have any pomp, splendour or beauty to draw people to him.
What about Isaiah 50? That chapter starts with a description of those who miss the signs or rebel against them, just like Herod

As we go through advent, will you be looking for signs of God at work, eager to see and join in? Will you be patient and stay alert even when it feels like your waiting is in vain? Or will you be like those Israelites who grumble and moan, missing the signs because they do not match preconceptions? I hope, this Advent, you do find hope, peace, joy and love, even in your waiting. Happy Christmas and a peaceful and God-filled 2022. *Sarah*

Blue Christmas Service: December 4th

11.30 - 1:00pm . A chance to look back over the past 20 months of living with COVID 19.

**December 24th Christmas Eve 3pm–5pm,
Christmas Craft Nativity Service**



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On Sunday 17th October 2021 There was a United Church Service for Birmingham held at St Andrews Stadium, Birmingham. The Time4Change service was described as a prophetic moment in the history of our churches and city. All churches and Denominations were invited, and many attended ranging from Pentecostal, Anglican and Catholic to have a time of corporate prayer for repentance, acts of repentance and prayers of forgiveness and healing.



One of the speakers at the event M Hayles MBE shared a shocking fact in an interview with Bishop Dr D Jaddoo about the churches' history that "When our parents arrived [from the West Indies] and went to church here, they were often rejected and told not to come back next week, and so the black churches came about mainly from the rejection from white institutional churches [of the day].

A group went on behalf of Green Lane Baptist Church.

B Roberts writes about what he took away from the presentation and prayer day. "The main points were 1) it is time for change. Churches need to come together to tackle racism within the church.

2) It is time to get over real divisions caused by denominationalism.

3) It is time to face up to our past (neck irons, chains and iron shackles used to transport slaves through the middle passage were being made in Birmingham, making the city an absolute fortune). and have these uncomfortable conversations together.

Jessica K

Exploring Chaplaincy

The Second World War brought many changes to the world as Giles LeGood traces to this time as well as for Baptists "a rapid expansion of chaplaincy as a form of ministry". Chaplains often receive a warm welcome and in time some people begin to share their stories which is a privilege as Chaplains offer these conversation's to God as some pastoral guidance supporting people to explore God for themselves.

After completing a short training course, Chaplains offer a listening ear, as a faithful presence of God at work in Hospitals, Schools, Prisons, the Armed Forces, the Fire Service and Retail Chaplaincy to shops are but a few examples. All Chaplains are supported by a Team Leader and prayer with initial shadowing and regular contact during chaplaincy visits.

The Black Country Urban Industrial Mission (BCUIM) offers Christian chaplaincy in a highly diverse society, where workplaces include people of faith backgrounds, as well as many who have no religious commitment.

Walsall Churches are invited to partner with BCUIM in Chaplaincy Outreach in 2022 – visit: <http://www.bcuim.co.uk/>.

Churches and Industry Group is based in Birmingham, (CIGB), addressed by Lord Mayor Meason at their Annual General Meeting, September 2021. Various CIGB Chaplaincy and Retail updates after lockdowns in 2020 - <http://www.cigb.org.uk/.../uploads/2021/06/Annual-Review.pdf>

Gods blessings, Maxine
Retail Chaplain