



CORNERSTONE MAGAZINE

December 2020

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From Amanda...



As we enter Advent, I offer you a meditation to help guide your thoughts over the coming days. Firstly, I invite you to read Jeremiah 29 : 4-14. Jeremiah encourages the exiles to pray not only for themselves but also for their enemies. A positive time of waiting, if you like. I wonder what waiting is like for us? Waiting for a bus or train, waiting for an appointment, waiting for an operation, waiting for an interview, waiting for death, waiting for birth, waiting for that special event, waiting for that special person... Are we • excited? • busy? • fraught? • tired • longing? Or something else? Advent gives us an opportunity to set aside all the business and simply be in God's presence. It's a time to catch a glimpse...

Disclosure

*Prayer is like watching for the kingfisher,
all you can do is be where he is likely to appear,
and wait.*

Often, nothing much happens.

There is space, silence and expectancy.

*No visible sign, only the knowledge that he's been there,
and may come again.*

Seeing or not seeing cease to matter.

You have been prepared.

*But sometimes,
when you've almost stopped expecting it,
a flash of brightness
gives encouragement.*

Ann Lewin

Take time now to think about what waiting is like for you. Perhaps even make two lists. On one write the negative things about waiting and on the other write the positive things. Then offer the lists over to God. Then as you pray take time to simply wait in God's presence.

You may want to use this prayer...

You keep us waiting, you, the God of all time want us to wait for the right time in which to discover who we are, where we must go, who will be with us and what we must do... So thank you for the waiting time.

Wait before Him this Advent. Thank Him for the waiting time. Take time and take heart. He is coming again!

May you all enjoy this season and draw close to the Lord of Advent,

*Christ's blessings,
Rev Amanda Roper*

IN REMEMBRANCE

George Brown	4th December 1990
Mary Crock	16th December 2009
Clifford Westcott	28th December 1986
Joan Johnstone	30th December 2002
Tom Crock	December 1997
Jean Roberts	3rd January 2015

We remember them with gratitude and give thanks to God for them – and for all those who worked and worshipped here.

From **Christian Aid**

When crisis threatens, love builds hope

"The climate changed, the rains stopped. The water disappeared." Kawite remembers the desperation of prolonged drought as the climate crisis ravaged her home in Ethiopia. She and her daughters would walk five hours a day to collect water. Her children often missed school and went hungry.

When coronavirus threatened this year, you and your church showed immense kindness to your neighbours. We learned that together we can face a global crisis.

In Ethiopia, and around the world, people living in poverty are on the frontline of another kind of crisis – the climate crisis. Another crisis that we must tackle in solidarity with our global neighbours.

As the burden of prolonged drought became unbearable for Kawite and her community, **Christian Aid's** local partner worked with this community to build their own pond which now provides a clean, reliable source of water. Thanks to the support of churches like yours, Kawite and her community were also provided with drought resistant seeds to boost the harvest, elephant grass to feed the livestock, and goats and sheep to help the women build livelihoods.

The community pond saves Kawite hours of precious time she can spend at home with her family. Working alongside our local partners has also empowered her to put food on the table and build a better future for her children and the community. "The pond is not only for me. It has changed the life of this community", says Kawite.

As we celebrate Emmanuel, the incarnation of love, we remember that love never fails. That love unites. That love brings hope. Will you join us in prayer, fundraising and action to build hope around the world this Christmas?

Kawite's words are a sign of hope for her future. Hope that has been built by love in action in the work of the community alongside **Christian Aid**. Since the climate started changing, life in this part of Ethiopia has become a real struggle for Kawite's community. But thanks to the pond, a simple water source, life has been transformed.

If we are to transform the lives of everyone living in fear of the next drought, we must also put a halt to the crisis that is causing the climate to change. To build a world where everyone can thrive, we must tackle the roots of the climate crisis.

The year of 2020 should have been an important milestone for climate justice. In November, world leaders were due to gather in Glasgow for vital international climate talks; now postponed to 2021. Yet 2020 has not been the year that any of us were expecting. The window of time available for climate action is rapidly closing just when we are grappling with coronavirus. As we build back from this pandemic, we must do so with justice for everyone – and address the climate crisis at the same time.

The coronavirus pandemic exposed and reinforced deeply entrenched inequalities. The way we choose to respond now can help us tackle these injustices and build hope.

We have the opportunity to chart a path to a world that is more equal, just, sustainable, and promotes human flourishing. Choices being taken by governments around the world at this moment will decide whether that path is taken.

Many governments in the global North have claimed that their economic recovery plans for dealing with the fallout of coronavirus will be green, and that they will also help to tackle the climate crisis. Yet these plans are mostly insufficient, and very much of the North, by the North, for the North. These plans do not address the current and historic responsibility for the climate crisis which lays firmly at the door of rich countries, while communities like Kawite's in lower income countries continue to pay the price.

There is a risk that in the short term, some countries will be forced to help their economies recover by increasing reliance on dirty coal, especially in countries in the global South where countries may lack the capacity to invest in renewable energy. This could lock the world into years of increased emissions that we cannot afford.

We can avoid this catastrophe but only if rich countries accept their responsibilities and seize this opportunity to build back with justice for everyone.

Just like Kawite's community pulled together to share their problems and their resources, we can show love and build hope by acting together.

Visit caid.org.uk/buildhope to find actions for resources for you and your church.

Coronavirus has laid bare the huge inequalities in society. We can start to close the gap in a way that also addresses the huge injustice at the heart of the climate crisis. We must act now, and stay focused in 2021 to seize this opportunity.

Shoebboxes

Blythswood Trust are very grateful for the thirteen colourfully decorated shoebboxes which they are shortly to deliver to the poorest families in Eastern Europe. In what has been a very difficult year for people the world over, a box with so many useful gifts, as well as some treats, will make a tremendous difference to all those that receive them, and assure them that they are not forgotten.

Thank you to everybody who contributed.

Teresa

Rejoice!



I was a shepherd in the hills
Minding the sheep that night.
It was a time the spirit fills,
So wondrous is the sight.
Of all the countless stars a gleam
It set my heart alight.

When suddenly as in a dream
There was a blaze of light;
An angel in his glory came
which left us all afraid,
Fear not, said he, still all aflame,
I bring great news tonight.

A Saviour has been born this day
And in a manger lying,
Who bringeth hope to all mankind
To end all human sighing.
And suddenly there was combined
Angelic voices singing

Of peace on earth, good will to man
To set the joybells ringing,
And if the starry sky above
Fills hearts of God's great glory,
This new birth now speaks of His love,
It is the greatest story.



Virtual Advent Calendar

Crowborough United Church has a "Virtual Advent Calendar" which started on 1st December. There is a page on the United Church website and each day new numbered links will be added with a variety of Advent messages, poems, songs, drama and even puppets. The following link to the page will mean that you are to enjoy what is on offer:

<http://www.unitedchurch.org.uk/advent-calendar/4595110934>

Please do explore.

A Happy Wanderer

Many readers know that in October I enjoyed a week's holiday in Cornwall. This is the story of one of those days.

Rosa and I loved to holiday in the Isles of Scilly. It was never easy to get there, but we used to think it worth the trouble. To really enjoy the islands, you have to be able to walk - public transport is almost non-existent, roads are few, and, on the Off-islands, cars are rare. I can no longer do the walking that a week's stay needs, but I reckoned I could manage a day trip, starting from Truro.

It was an early start and a bus ride up the hill to the Railway Station - unlike Uckfield, Truro's bus and rail stations are far apart. My train was on time, and we potted down the line through Cambourne and Redruth. It was good to see St Michael's Mount rising from the sea as we drew into Penzance. There is a 10-15 minute walk from Penzance station to the quay where RMS Scillonian has spent the night. Because there was not a lot of spare time before the deadline for boarding, I took a taxi. From then on, it was easy. I presented my ticket, found a seat on the top deck, and before long we were sailing. For the first hour we sail along the Cornish coast until we pass Land's End, and then we are out in the open sea. It is a delight to watch the islands begin to show up - a few rocks first, and soon the well-remembered beaches and hills. The skipper does some complicated navigation between the islands and, around noon, we moor up at St Mary's Quay.

I should like to put into words my feelings as I walked once more down that granite quay, and into Hugh Town. I cannot. My aim was to walk along the coast path to our favourite restaurant, "Juliet's Garden". There, there is a fine view across the bay. And there is fine Crab Salad to be eaten. I had time to spare, so on my way back I called in to see friends that Rosa and I made on earlier visits. Stephen was in his art studio. Anyone who knows my living room will have seen his work. Back on board Scillonian, I realised that I had left my walking-stick behind on the Island. Stupid, but it is the sort of thing that happens in Advanced Age.

Out at sea, it began to rain and I retreated down to the saloon, where it was warm and comfortable, and I fell asleep. Happily, I woke well before we arrived back in Penzance. There was some concern in my mind about a stick-less walk to the railway station, as it was dark by then, and I knew that the Penzance roads are cobbly and uneven. Someone at the end of the quay said to me "there's a free bus to the station, over there". I found it, and hopped on. A few minutes later a lady, bearing two large cases, joined the bus. She too was going to Truro. When we were settled in the train, we got into conversation, as you do. Her name is Sian, and she had been on the Island for the Summer, helping her sister run a café in Hugh Town.

When I told her how cross I was with myself for leaving my stick behind, she seemed to think it was no problem, took an electronic device from her bag and sent a message back to the Island. Sian went an extra mile and invited me to share her taxi from Truro station down to the town centre. I could not share her optimism about the stick, and the next day I went to a charity shop and bought myself another.

Back home in Uckfield, twelve days later, the postman delivered my old stick to my flat. There was nothing to say who had found it, packed it, and posted it. Its return was wonderful, in the sense that it filled me with wonder.

The stick itself has some memories. My father's brother, Uncle George, enlisted during the 1914/18 war, and, following training, was sent to France. After only a few days at the front, a shell landed unhealthily close, wounding him in both feet. Uncle was invalided back home and the doctors patched him up. For the rest of his life (he died in 1964) he needed two sticks for walking. This stick is one of them.

When I told this story to my hairdresser, she commented that "it renews your faith in human nature". I agreed with her at the time, but I don't really. I think that human nature is fundamentally selfish. But the Sermon on the Mount has been around for two millennia. Jesus' teaching has become part of our Western culture. It is yeast in the lump. We no longer think selfishly as animals do; our standards reach higher; we go out of our way to return lost sticks to their owners. There is still far to go, but we have made a start.

DJT

Zoom details for Sunday services and Prayer Meetings

The codes you will need are below:

Topic: Sunday Worship with Rev Amanda

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86096665008>

Meeting ID: 860 9666 5008

If ringing on landline: 0 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 860 9666 5008

Topic: Prayer Meeting with Rev Amanda

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/74080584026?pwd=UVEza2lVNGdvc3pRWjZtcEZKazMyUT09>

Meeting ID: 740 8058 4026

Passcode: 5GL04Y

If ringing on landline: 0 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 740 8058 4026

Appeal from Doug Scott

Dear Member/Adherent,

As many of you will know, for the past 28 years we have been singing Christmas Carols outside Tesco on three separate days to raise money for a local children's charity. During this time we have probably raised in excess of £25,000 for these good causes.

Unfortunately, this year we are not able to congregate together to continue to support these charities.

However, we are in difficult times and this has particularly affected fundraising for many, many, of these worthwhile causes and at our recent Trustees Meeting it was agreed that we should send out a letter by way of an appeal to you to support two local charities, namely East Sussex Care for the Carers and Chestnut House Children's Hospice.

There are some of us who have had some added expenditure during this pandemic who might find it difficult to be as generous as usual but, on the other hand, there are many (including myself) who have actually benefited financially with reduced outgoings during the past few months.

I do hope therefore, that you will be as generous as you can in supporting this appeal for the two named charities. Any cheques can be made payable to Cornerstone Church Uckfield and I will then arrange to send the monies received to each of the charities. If any contributions could be sent to me by 15th December I would be most grateful.

Thanking you, in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Doug

Hon. Treasurer

From Commitment for Life

COVID-19 and its aftermath has forced lockdowns and curfews in Central America. The restrictions have meant income loss for many poor families, many of who depend on informal markets. There has also been increased violence against women and children.

The governments have not put suitable mechanisms in place to test a lot of people and implement protocols to safeguard people's health and livelihoods. In many cases, hospitals have collapsed. People with COVID symptoms have decided to stay at home instead of going to the hospital. The four countries in which **Christian Aid** works in Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua) reported around 180,525 positive cases by early September. However, due to inadequate testing, cases and deaths could be much higher.

The region has lost more than one million jobs. The fear is that violence and poverty will increase significantly.

In Nicaragua, the government has not been upfront about the number of cases and the real impact on the population. The authorities have promoted business-as-usual (including public events) – contrary to international standards and protocols.

The government also threatens those who criticise the lack of preventative measures. In the case of health workers, the authorities decided to fire some specialists and nurses for expressing their concerns about the strategy used to manage the pandemic.

Christian Aid partners ORMUSA, ISD, FESPAD, OCDIH, CDH, CONGCOOP and Centro Humboldt are responding to the pandemic by providing biosecurity equipment, psycho-social support and food to the communities. However, visits to the beneficiary communities were suspended for around four months. But our partners used virtual communication to monitor the impact of the pandemic. Meanwhile, partners as ICEFI and FUNDE have denounced the government corruption which exists in the resources management of funds for medical equipment and medical stock to cope the pandemic. In many cases the resources approved via international loan or national budgets were mismanaged. This has ■ reduced the governments' capacity to provide adequate health care.

Please, pray for the people who have lost jobs and do not have enough food and medicines. Pray that our work in the region makes a difference to the most vulnerable.

From Reform magazine by Rosie Venner

How churches can change the world with their money – and not just by what goes in the offering.

Let's imagine your local congregation has £1m every year to tackle poverty and to build a fairer, more sustainable world. Last year, you enabled cocoa farmers in Tanzania to send their children to school, invested in an organic orchard, helped build a wind turbine and supported homeless young people into employment. You've got big plans for next year too. Does this scenario sound far-fetched? It doesn't have to be. Take a closer look. If we add up the total spending power of members in a church with 40 households, based on an average household income of £25,000 a year it comes to £1m a year.

It's not, of course, sitting under a metaphorical church mattress. That £1m goes back into wider society, through spending on housing costs, transport, food, gas and electricity, clothing, entertainment and other goods and services. Some of us may have enough to save money in a bank account or a pension. Some will have far in excess of that average income, others barely enough to live on. Many of us will give money away to charity, to church, to friends and family.

When we talk about money in church, we are often just talking about that last bit – the money that we give away – and those are important conversations to have. And yet, every time we use money – whether we save it, spend it, invest it or give it away – we play a part in shaping society.

In our everyday spending that money can go into the pockets of big corporations, small local businesses or Fairtrade co-operatives. In our savings accounts or pensions that money is invested in companies. How much do we know about what our money is doing? Is it enabling our neighbours to flourish, or is it deepening the inequalities that already exist? Is it nurturing God's creation, or is it fuelling the climate crisis? Jesus doesn't shy away from talking about money. In his parables, we see rich farmers storing up their wealth in barns, treasure buried in fields, a woman finding a lost coin, workers disputing wages. We learn that the kingdom of God is like treasure, but it's not the kind of treasure the world values. In Jesus' teachings there are challenges to the wealthy and there is good news for the poor and those cast aside.

As we seek to grow in faith and follow Christ, we need to talk about money. We need to ask ourselves – where is our treasure? We need to pay attention to all our resources, not just the money we give away. Are we ready to ask whether our money is really ours in the first place? What happens if we recognise that all that we have is from God, to be spent wisely, invested ethically and shared with others, for the good of all?

A little boy once stood in front of Jesus, holding up five loaves and two fish. The need was great, the crowd were hungry and far from home. The disciples had lots of questions. There was clearly not enough to feed everyone – the 5,000 men and the uncounted women and children, long forgotten – but Jesus invited everyone to sit down and take a closer look. He gave thanks and shared the food with everyone until all were fed. Where we see scarcity, God sees abundance. Where we see a few crumbs, God provides enough for all. In God's economy, nothing is wasted, even the fragments are gathered up.

We are called to participate in God's transformative work in the world. Like the disciples, we need to recognise the need of our neighbours. Like the little boy, we should recognise what we have to offer. And, like the people gathered there, we need to sit down together and take a closer look, because God is already at work and the kingdom is near. If we apply Gospel values to everything we do with money – from the coffee we buy to the pension fund we choose, we start to sow seeds for a fairer future for everyone.

Rob Hopkins, founder of the Transition Movement, which has seen communities work together to build healthy, sustainable local economies, writes about the power of asking the question 'What if?' He argues that we need to make a leap of imagination to create a more hopeful future. It's easy to feel despair in the face of a global pandemic, vast inequality and the climate crisis. Our churches may be struggling financially and trying to serve communities on limited resources. In the feeding of the Five Thousand, the disciples saw the needs of the crowd, but perhaps the little boy was the only one who asked the question: 'What if?'. What if I offered all that I have and let it be transformed? When we feel our small actions are insignificant compared to the challenges we face – locally and globally – let's draw on the same courage and imagination of the small boy who offered up his lunch. Let's examine our own 'assets' – however small or large – and pay close attention to what our money is shaping.

Remember that £1m? What if every Christian switched to an ethical bank that invested in businesses working for a better society? What if every Christian intentionally supported local social enterprises who are investing back into the community? What if every Christian who has a pension ensured it was invested in renewable energy, not fossil fuels? What if every Christian gave generously to projects tackling the root causes of poverty?

Let's start with the financial resources we have, but let's not stop there. Let's raise our voices too. What if every church campaigned for the living wage, called on businesses to pay their taxes, and lobbied their MPs on a fairer, greener economy? Imagine the difference that would make.

Good Money Week takes place every year in October (earlier this year from 24 to 30 October). It's a chance to start a conversation about money and how it can be used for good. The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility had a series of online events called 'Restoring Hope' during Good Money Week, many of which were recorded if you missed them.

Let your money be transformed.

From Commitment for Life

The situation in Zimbabwe is extremely difficult right now.

In August the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) in a pastoral letter described the situation as, "a multi-layered crisis of the convergence of economic collapse, deepening poverty, food insecurity, corruption and human rights abuses among other crises."

Government corruption, and ongoing restrictions and suffering led to protests from the Zimbabwean people. The government has responded with lamentable disregard for alternative voices. Their heavy-handed response has been characterised by arbitrary arrests and violence against activists or those related or connected to them. Journalists have been abducted and tortured as ransom for those in hiding.

The statement from the ZCBC and other faith leaders and groups in Zimbabwe caused recriminations from the government. Zimbabwe's context remains complex and precarious. The recent attacks on all who have voiced concern over injustices, corruption and violence, including the church, has simply reinforced the reality that coexistence, tolerance and accountability remains contentious issues in the country.

Christian Aid Zimbabwe works with several faith-based organisation including the Catholic Church through a partnership with Silveira House, a Catholic Jesuit institution and stands in solidarity with the Bishops.

Christian Aid Zimbabwe is supportive of statements issued by fellow church umbrella organisation that is the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) (EFZ), who are its partners. **Christian Aid's** CEO, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi sent a letter of solidarity.

The Christian Aid Zimbabwe team are continuing to speak out for justice and support our partners while treading a careful line as an international NGO, mindful that our partners rely on our ability to operate within the country.

From our son's school magazine 35 years ago, genuine quotations from 6 and 7 year old children;

Teacher: Who was the king of Judea at the time of Jesus' birth?

Pupil: King Herod

Another pupil: Oh yes, my mother goes to his London shop – Herod's!

Under discussion in Biology was the fact that snails possess the attributes of both sexes.

"Well, at least it saves them the trouble of getting married."

