



# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew      St Thomas      St George

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020 – The Second Sunday of Advent

## TODAY'S SERVICES

9:15am	Service of the Word at St. George's church	Revd Carol Pharaoh
11:00am	Holy Communion Service at St. Bartholomew's church	Revd Carol Pharaoh

### We pray for:

**Those who are ill:** Cassie Buono, Brian Cato, Christopher Davies, Revd Malcolm Edwards, Lisa Ginniff, Irene Halliwell, Jenny Harris, Keith Haworth, Mario Heaton, Edith Ibbotson, Joan James, Patricia James, Mike Johnson, Jeffrey Lyon, Eileen Marsh, Norman Sidlow, James Tonge.

**Those who have died recently:** Irene Booth,


**And on their anniversaries this week we remember:** William Ashton, Harold Bowery, Leonard Cowburn, Elizabeth Davies, Annie Forshaw, Elizabeth Fothergill, Annie Higham, Squire Greenhalgh Hulton, James Leyland, Alice Mille, Mary Newton, Doris Taziker, Herbert Woods, Alice Woodward, May Towers, Marian Twitchett.

### This week:

And we're back ... not that we've ever really been away. It's many thanks to Christine and Margaret who have been on hand to keep the Church open for Private Prayer each week, to our team of cleaners without whom we couldn't open and all who have been running and continue running our on-line services.

Welcome to our second Pewsheets Plus for Advent. In church today, we'll be lighting the second Advent Candle as we think of the Prophets who told of the Coming of Christ. We've another fine selection of daily readings, prayers and hymns for Advent with the notices at the end.

With the ending of lockdown 2 and moving into tier three, we're delighted to be allowed to hold services again. Today, we have a Service of the Word at St. George's and a Holy Communion Service at St. Bartholomew's led by Revd Carol Pharaoh. The service at St. Bartholomew's is our Toy Service with gifts collected being distributed via Bolton Lions. Many thanks to all who have donated already – we're open this Saturday and at the Sunday service for more donations.

 Many thanks to all who donated to our Christmas Cracker appeal, particularly all those who handed them over with the words "Ed, your crackers." We collected 140+ boxes here towards our Team target of 500.

**Today** we pray for Revd Ian Hepburn and his family. This evening Ian is being licensed into his new role as 'Hulme Lecturer and Public preacher' or rather more informally, Associate Priest at Bolton Parish Church (including St Philip's).

**Coming Up:** next Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December we'll have a Service of the Word at St. George's and a Holy Communion Service at St. Bartholomew's. On 20<sup>th</sup> December we'll have a Holy Communion Service at St. George's and A Sequence of Readings & Music for Christmas at St. Bartholomew's. I'm delighted to say that the choir have restarted their weekly practices for this service and although we still cannot have any congregational singing [in line with every other church] we hope this will prove a fine preparation for Christmas instead of our usual Carol Service.

**Pretoria Pit 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** will be marked at St. Bartholomew's church on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December at 10:00am [in some form to be finalised].

**Christmas Services:** there will be a Crib Service at St. George's on Christmas Eve at 6:00pm followed by the Midnight Eucharist at St. Bartholomew's at 11:30pm. We'll have our joint Christmas Day service at 10:00am at St. Bartholomew's and also a joint Communion Service on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December at 11:00am [no service at St. George's / no on-line service that day so we can have a bit of a rest].

**Please do send in items of news to list to put on the pewsheets so that we can all keep in touch with what's going on.**

While services and attendance at church is limited, these pewsheets and on-line services [this week a Taize service] will continue. Do keep any news, views and feedback coming. Please also check our Team YouTube channel for online services:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDx266HLh9ShYeBJnON8ODg>

Ed





# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

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### *The Collect:*

Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God.

**Amen.**



### *Old Testament Reading : Isaiah 40. 1 - 11*

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.  
<sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. <sup>3</sup>A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway or our God. <sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. <sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.' <sup>6</sup>A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever. <sup>9</sup>Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!' <sup>10</sup>See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. <sup>11</sup>He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

### *New Testament Reading: 2 Peter 3. 8 - 15a*

<sup>8</sup>Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about his

promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. <sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

### *Gospel Reading:*

### *Mark 1. 1 - 8*

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight"', <sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'





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## Homily – Christine Radford

*Lord, may your Spirit so enlighten our minds that we may have a better understanding of your truth and a clearer vision of your love. Amen*

John the Baptist was unconventional, and uncompromising. He told it like it is, and that made for uncomfortable hearing, but when he spoke, people took notice. They were moved by his words because they recognized that he spoke the truth. He shone a spotlight on their lives, challenging them to turn from their sinful ways and baptizing them as a symbol of their changed way of life. They responded by the hundreds.

But even as people crowded to him, John never forgot that his main role was to announce the coming of the Saviour. He was never under any illusion about himself; he knew he was not the promised Messiah, but only his herald.

John understood that God had a special purpose for his life, and he could see clearly what it was. There was no-one else capable of doing what John did, and he did it with all his heart.

God has a purpose in life for each of **us** too, though we might not always see immediately what it is. If we are willing, God can use each of us in a way he can use no one else.

Each of us is unique and God made each of us for a special purpose. He has a job for each of us to do that nobody else can do as well as we can.

Out of the billions of possible applicants, only one is qualified – you or I. Only one has the right combination of what it takes – you or I.

Just think, even if you are an identical twin, in all the world, there is no-one exactly like you. Since the beginning of time there has never been another person **exactly** like you. No-one in the universe sees things **exactly** as you do.

You are unique and so is your purpose.

John discovered **his** purpose and he used his gifts to the full. By doing so, he gave a gift to the people around him, preparing them for the coming of Jesus, opening their eyes to the things that were wrong in their lives and showing them how to change, while there was still time. But always he pointed to Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the true light. He helps us see our way to God and shows us how to walk along that way. Jesus has chosen to reflect his light through us, his followers. We are no more the light than John was, we are just mirrors that reflect His light.

Have you ever sat outside on a bright sunny day and used a mirror to reflect the sun's light? It's a simple way of amusing yourself for a few minutes when you have nothing else to do. You can reflect the light against a wall, and watch the patterns change as you change the angle of the mirror.

But you can use a mirror to direct light **with a purpose** into a new direction. You can, for example, stand on a hill and flash the sun's light to attract the attention of someone miles away, and if you both know Morse code, you can relay accurate text messages too.

If a bright light shines on me, and I hold up a mirror I can reflect the light to shine on you. I am not the light; I am just letting my mirror reflect the light to shine on you.

If I am going to reflect the light on you, there are a couple of things that are very important to remember:

- I must keep my mirror facing toward the light. If I turn away from the light, I cannot reflect the light.
- I must make sure that nothing comes between the light and me. If that happens, I cannot reflect the light.

We all need to be reflectors of light, not absorbers of light, and we must never deceive ourselves into thinking that we are ever the source of light!



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In these dark times, the world desperately needs to hear the good news of Jesus and to see his light lighten the darkness. It is up to us to reflect his light into the lives of those around us.

If we are going to reflect the light of Jesus, we must remember:

- We must keep our faces turned toward Jesus.
- We must not let anything come between us and Jesus.

*Shall we pray:*

*Lord, fill our hearts and our minds with the light, the hope and the joy that only your presence can bring. May we discern your plan for us, and in responding to it, may we become a blessing to those whom we seek to serve in your name. Amen*

### Intercessions:

In the lonely places  
The wilderness  
Where we stand forlorn  
Windswept and alone  
Your voice calls out  
**Prepare a way for the Lord**

In the dark places  
The shadows  
Where we hide our fears  
Embrace our tears  
Your voice calls out  
**Prepare a way for the Lord**

### **A circle prayer**

Circle us, Lord  
Circle us with the light of your presence, bright within  
this dark word  
Enable us to be overcomers of fear and temptation  
Enable us to be victors over sin and despair  
Enable us to become that which you would desire

Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation  
**Circle us with the light of your presence**

Circle us, Lord  
Circle our family within the shelter of your  
outstretched arms  
Protect them in each moment of their daily lives  
Protect them in the decisions that they face  
Protect their homes and relationships  
Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation  
**Circle our families with the light of your  
presence**

For the desert places in which we walk  
The streets we roam  
The paths we cross  
Guide our feet  
Take us to places  
Where you would go  
Give us words that you would use  
That in this Advent season  
Of promise and preparation  
We might point the way with John the Baptist  
To the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the  
world!

Circle us, Lord  
Circle this nation with Advent love and hope  
Create a desire to listen to the Advent message  
Create a willingness to understand and respond  
Create a need to reach out to the Christ Child

Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation  
**Circle our nation with the light of your  
presence**

Circle us, Lord  
Circle this world with the joy of your Salvation  
Where there is sickness and disease bring healing  
Where there is hunger and despair bring hope  
Where there is torture and oppression bring release

Lord of creation, Lord of Salvation  
**Circle this world with the light of your  
presence**

Lord, thou hast given us thy Word for a light to shine upon our path;  
grant us so to meditate on that Word, and to follow its teaching,  
that we may find in it the light that shines more and more until the perfect day; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
(Jerome, c 342 - 420)



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1 On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh.  
Awake and harken, for he brings  
glad tidings of the King of kings!

2 Then cleansed be every breast from sin:  
make straight the way for God within,  
prepare we in our hearts a home  
where such a mighty guest may come.

3 For thou art our salvation, Lord,  
our refuge and our great reward.  
Without thy grace we waste away  
like flowers that wither and decay.

4 To heal the sick, stretch out thy hand,  
and bid the fallen sinner stand;  
Shine forth, and let thy light restore  
earth's own true loveliness once more.

5 All praise, eternal Son, to thee  
whose advent sets thy people free,  
whom with the Father we adore,  
and Holy Ghost, for evermore.

**Words:** *Charles Coffin [1676 – 1749], not an ancient Latin hymn as is often claimed, and much altered over the years*

**Tune:** *Winchester New – first appears in a Frankfurt hymnbook in 1690 and introduced into England by John Wesley in 1742.*





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## Background: Advent

Advent (from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming") is considered to be the beginning of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, which is the Sunday nearest November 30, and ends on Christmas Eve (Dec 24). If Christmas Eve is a Sunday, it is counted as the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Christmas Eve proper beginning at sundown. Traditionally, the primary colour of Lent is purple, which reflects the Lenten-style fasting that formed part of the build-up to Christmas in earlier centuries. The colour forms a link between the birth and death of Jesus.

For most Christians it is not just a celebration of a moment in time when a baby was born, but also looks beyond to a time when the Bible tells us that Jesus will come again, not as a weak and vulnerable baby but in power and with authority. The traditional Scripture readings for this time emphasise both the First and Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and our accountability for faithfulness at His coming, judgment on sin and the hope of eternal life.

Advent is also a spiritual journey that Christians take, through the truths of Scripture that point to the birth of Messiah, to a reaffirmation that he has come, is present in the world today and will come again in glory. It mirrors the journey of faith that Christians make after that moment of realisation and acceptance of who Jesus is, in that we take that first step of faith in commitment, continue hopefully to walk the road of faith and increasing understanding, and look forward to our destination, which is to be in his presence forever!

The celebration of Christmas is not known before the end of the fourth century when, according to Duchesne it was celebrated throughout the whole Church - by some on 25 December, by others on 6 January. There are hints of a period of preparation prior to the celebration of Jesus' birth - in a ruling in 380 that no one should be allowed to absent themselves from church from the 17th December until the feast of Epiphany - but it is not until the end of the sixth century that a prescribed period of time was set aside as preparation for Christmas. This was from 11th November, being the feast day of St. Martin of Tours, (the fast became known as "St. Martin's Fast," "St. Martin's Lent" or "the forty days of St. Martin") until Christmas Day.

## Today the church also remembers St. Nicholas

Bishop of Myra c326

St Nicholas was an early Christian Bishop of Greek descent in the maritime city of Myra [modern day Turkey]. Very little is known about the historical Saint Nicholas. The earliest accounts of his life were written centuries after his death and contain many legendary elaborations. His generosity of handing out gifts led to his confusion with Santa Claus [particularly from Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam now New York] in America.

*Almighty Father, lover of souls,  
who chose your servant Nicholas  
to be a bishop in the Church,  
that he might give freely out of the treasures of your grace:  
make us mindful of the needs of others  
and, as we have received, so teach us also to give;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.*





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## Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December

Today the church remembers St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Teacher of the Faith

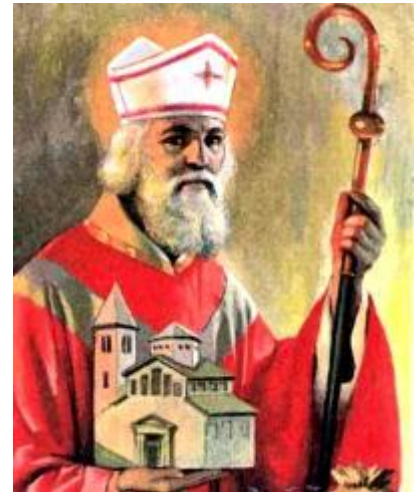
As everyone will remember, we covered him when we looked at the four great doctors of the church back on 6<sup>th</sup> September. Saint Ambrose, also known as Aurelius Ambrosius, is one of the four original doctors of the Church. He was the Bishop of Milan and became one of the most important theological figures of the 4th century.

He was centuries ahead of his time and the highlights that we have to remember are:

1. **St. Ambrose was generous to the poor.** He considered them not a group of outsiders, but rather those of the united people. To him, giving to the poor was just a repayment of God's resources, which were intended for everyone equally.
2. **He introduced reforms in the order and manner of public worship.** He was known for his "liturgical flexibility" that kept in mind that the service was a tool to serve people in worshipping God, and ought not to be rigidly fixed in every place.
3. **Keeping the church grounded with local traditions:** Ambrose is credited with advising Augustine of Hippo to follow local liturgical customs. "*When I am at Rome, I fast on a Saturday; when I am at Milan, I do not. Follow the custom of the church where you are,*" he stated. This advice remains today, and is translated in English as the saying, "***When in Rome, do as the Romans do.***"

Today's hymn for advent is one of his.

*God of hosts,  
who called Ambrose from the governor's throne  
to be a bishop in your Church  
and an intrepid champion of your faithful people:  
mercifully grant that, as he did not fear to rebuke rulers,  
so we, with like courage,  
may contend for the faith we have received;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.*



## Isaiah 35

### God Will Comfort His People

**35** The dry desert will rejoice. The desert will be glad and blossom. <sup>2</sup> It will be covered with flowers and dance with joy. It will be as beautiful as the forest of Lebanon, the hill of Carmel, and the Sharon Valley. This will happen because all people will see the Glory of the LORD. They will see the beauty of our God.

<sup>3</sup> Make the weak arms strong again. Strengthen the weak knees. <sup>4</sup> People are afraid and confused. Say to them, "Be strong! Don't be afraid!" Look, your God will come and punish your enemies. He will come and give you your reward. He will save you. <sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind will be opened so that they can see, and the ears of the deaf





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will be opened so that they can hear. <sup>6</sup> Crippled people will dance like deer, and those who cannot speak now will use their voices to sing happy songs. This will happen when springs of water begin to flow in the dry desert. <sup>7</sup> Now people see mirages that look like water, but then there will be real pools of water. There will be wells in the dry land where water flows from the ground. Tall water plants will grow where wild animals once ruled.

<sup>8</sup> There will be a road there. This highway will be called "The Holy Road." Evil people will not be allowed to walk on that road. No fools will walk on it. Only good people will walk there. <sup>9</sup> There will be no dangers on that road. There will be no lions there to hurt people or any dangerous animals on it. That road will be for the people God saves.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD will make his people free, and they will come back to him. They will come into Zion rejoicing. They will be happy forever. Their happiness will be like a crown on their heads. Gladness and joy will fill them completely. Sorrow and sadness will be far, far away.

*As a quick recap, chapters 28 – 33 of Isaiah say that it is foolish to trust other nations for safety from enemies; only God himself could really provide peace and security. Chapter 34 speaks of the fate of nations that God punished, so as an example, Edom had become a desert. Chapter 35 describes the result of God's action when he changes the desert into a beautiful garden.*

*Unlike the fate of the country called Edom, Zion's land will become beautiful at a time that God chooses. The fear that makes people weak will be replaced by the strength of knowing and trusting in God. The words represent an order to God's people to be strong and brave themselves. Then God's strong people will be able to encourage other people.*

*God's action to save shows the double purpose of his arrival - to rescue his people from all that is evil and to bring about good changes for both people and their land. Good news about new health for blind and deaf people has appeared in [Isaiah 29:18 and 32:3](#). The subject will appear again in [Isaiah 42:16-19 and 43:8 and 44:18](#).*

*There will be a special way there, but only for God's special people. It will be called the 'Holy Road' because it is only for God's special people leading to their permanent home.*

1 Come, thou Redeemer of the earth,  
and manifest thy virgin-birth:  
let every age adoring fall;  
such birth befits the God of all.

2 Begotten of no human will,  
but of the Spirit, thou art still  
the Word of God, in flesh arrayed,  
the Saviour, now to us displayed.

3 From God the Father he proceeds,  
to God the Father back he speeds,  
runs out his course to death and hell,  
returns on God's high throne to dwell.

4 O equal to thy Father, thou!  
Gird on thy fleshly mantle now,  
the weakness of our mortal state  
with deathless might invigorate.

5 Thy cradle here shall glitter bright,  
and darkness glow with new-born light,  
no more shall night extinguish day,  
where love's bright beams their power display.

6 O Jesu, virgin-born, to thee  
eternal praise and glory be,  
whom with the Father we adore  
and Holy Spirit, evermore. Amen.

**Words:** *St. Ambrose c340 – 397 translated by John Mason Neale [1818 – 1866]*

**Tune:** *Puer Nobis Nascitur – adapted by Michael Praetorius [1571 – 1621] – we'll be marking the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death and 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth next year on the same day [he died on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday].*





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St George

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December

Today the church remembers the conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Isaiah 40. 1 - 11

## Israel's Punishment Will End

**40** Your God says,

“Comfort, comfort my people.

**2** Speak kindly to Jerusalem and tell her,

‘Your time of service is finished.

You have paid the price for your sins.’

I, the LORD, have punished you twice

for every sin you committed.”

**3** Listen, there is someone shouting:

“Prepare a way in the desert for the LORD.

Make a straight road there for our God.

**4** Every valley must be filled.

Every mountain and hill should be made flat.

The crooked roads should be made straight,

and the rough ground made smooth.

**5** Then the Glory of the LORD will be shown to everyone.

Together, all people will see it.

Yes, this is what the LORD himself said!”

**6** A voice said, “Speak!”

So the man said, “What should I say?”

The voice said, “People are like grass.

Any glory they enjoy is like a wildflower.

**7** When a wind from the LORD blows on them, the grass dies and the flower falls.

Yes, all people are like grass.

**8** Grass dies and flowers fall,

but the word of our God lasts forever.”



## Salvation: God's Good News

**9** Zion, you have good news to tell.

Go up on a high mountain and shout the good news.

Jerusalem, you have good news to tell.

Don't be afraid; speak loudly.

Tell this news to all the cities of Judah:

“Look, here is your God!”

**10** The Lord GOD is coming with power.

He will use his power to rule all the people.

He will bring rewards for his people.

He will have their payment with him.

**11** Like a good shepherd, he takes care of his people.

He gathers them like lambs in his arms.

He holds them close, while their mothers walk beside him.

A different translation is given previously for Sunday's readings if you want to compare them.

Chapter 40 begins the second part of the Book of Isaiah and is likely to have been written by a different author.

In **Chapters 1 to 39**, God warns his people about judgement for sins. In these chapters, Assyria is the enemy. Isaiah himself is living during the events of this period.

In **Chapters 40 to 66**, God promises comfort to his people (the word 'comfort' appears 13 times.) In these chapters, Babylon is the enemy where God's people are prisoners. The chapters refer to the situation two centuries after Isaiah's time but unlike in chapters 1 to 39, Isaiah does not mention any actual events from the history of that period.

The Lord's words are to 'my people' who belong to him by a personal covenant ([Exodus chapter 24](#)). Enemies had ruined Jerusalem 70 years earlier but now the people will be able to build it again (see [Isaiah 44:28](#)).



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The final words of verse 2 may seem to mean 'double punishment' but this would be neither 'comfort' (v. 1) nor justice (see [Genesis 18:25](#)). The word 'double' has two meanings – either 'twice as much', but can also mean to 'fold in two' ([Exodus 26:9](#)). It's the second meaning that Isaiah is using here. The verse refers to an ancient custom. If poor people were unable to pay a debt, they could become slaves ([2 Kings 4:1](#)). But the debtor could fix the final demand for the money in a public place and hope that some generous rich person would fold the demand in two i.e. double it. Then he signed his name on the back of the demand (as with a cheque) which meant that he would kindly pay the poor person's debt and this was done in public in front of witnesses so there was no going back. In the same way, God forgives his people because of his great kindness. They could not earn their freedom; God himself acts to rescue them.

The New Testament declares John the Baptist to be the person who is shouting ([Matthew 3:3](#) and [John 1:23](#)). Of course, John's message was not about freedom from Babylon, he lived several centuries after the Jews returned from Babylon. But John's message was similar, about the arrival of the Messiah who bring about freedom from sin.

The Lord's road is to be straight and level, free from any obstacle. The Lord will arrive, travelling without difficulty or problems, to come to his people's aid. ([Judges 5:4-5](#); [Psalm 68:7-8](#)). It was an ancient custom to construct special ways for the arrival of an important visitor, much like putting out the red carpet today.

The Lord promises that all nations will see him in his great glory. This is the subject of [Psalms 95 to 100](#) in particular. The Lord is coming to Jerusalem (verses 3-5). He comes as far more powerful than any nation's king. He is bringing with him the people that he has rescued from a foreign country. Although the Lord is so powerful, he is very tender towards his special people.

The phrase 'do not be afraid' appears nine more times in the later chapters (see [Isaiah 41:10](#); [41:13](#); [41:14](#); [43:1](#); [43:5](#); [44:2](#); [44:8](#); [51:7](#); [54:4](#)). Each time the words are to encourage God's servant to do some task. The servant is not to worry whether he will be capable. God's power will help him. The Lord looks after his people like someone who looks after sheep. The Bible often uses this description, for example: [Psalm 23](#); [Zechariah 11:7](#); [John 10:11](#).

*In this season of expectation*

*We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into the bustle of our lives  
and the hard to find moments of solitude  
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into our homes and situations  
along with friends and families  
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into our hearts, and those often hidden parts of  
our lives  
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah  
For beneath the surface of your story  
is an inescapable fact*

*You entered this world*

*as vulnerable as any one of us  
in order to nail that vulnerability to the cross.  
Our fears, our insecurities and our sins  
all that can separate us from God  
exchanged by your Grace for Love.  
We cannot comprehend the reasoning  
only marvel that Salvation comes to us  
through a baby born in a stable,  
and reaches out to a world in need.*

*In this season of anticipation*

*We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah*

1. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!  
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;  
Tender to me the promise of his word;  
In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

2. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!  
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has  
done;  
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;  
His holy name, the Lord, the mighty One.

3. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!  
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;  
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,  
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

4. Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!  
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.  
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord  
To children's children and forever more!

**Words:** *Timothy Dudley Smith born Boxing Day 1926, based on the Magnificat [Mary's song], one of over 400 hymns he has written*

**Tune:** *Woodlands – Walter Greatorex [1877 – 1949] now the only piece of music for which he is remembered*



# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

*Almighty and everlasting God,  
who stooped to raise fallen humanity  
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary:  
grant that we, who have seen your glory  
revealed in our human nature  
and your love made perfect in our weakness,  
may daily be renewed in your image  
and conformed to the pattern of your Son  
Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.*



## Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December

### Isaiah 40. 25 - end

<sup>25</sup> The Holy One says, “Can you compare me to anyone?

No one is equal to me.”

<sup>26</sup> Look up to the skies.

Who created all those stars?

Who created all those “armies” in the sky?

Who knows every star by name?

He is very strong and powerful,  
so not one of these stars is lost.

<sup>27</sup> People of Jacob, this is true.

Israel, you should believe it.

So why do you say, “The LORD cannot see the way  
I live;

he will not find me and punish me”?

<sup>28</sup> Surely you know the truth.

Surely you have heard.

The LORD is the God who lives forever!

He created all the faraway places on earth.

He does not get tired and weary.

You cannot learn all he knows.

<sup>29</sup> He helps tired people be strong.

He gives power to those without it.

<sup>30</sup> Young men get tired and need to rest.

Even young boys stumble and fall.

<sup>31</sup> But those who trust in the LORD will become  
strong again.

They will be like eagles that grow new feathers.

They will run and not get weak.

They will walk and not get tired.

But they that wait upon the Lord  
shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up  
with wings as eagles;  
they shall run, and not be weary;  
and they shall walk, and not faint.

**Isaiah 40:31**



*Isaiah is saying that nothing can ever compare with God’s power (v 12); his wisdom (v 13-14); his greatness (v15-17); his control (v 22-23); his authority (v24); or his holiness (v 25).*

*To give honour to the stars in the heavens was of great importance in Babylonian life. But as God created the stars & remembers them all by name, so the God of Israel will certainly remember his own special people.*

*Sometimes God’s people suppose that he has left them and think that he does not still care about them. But it is not true. In fact, God continues to care about his people when they suffer and will bring comfort and aid. Both God’s patience and his perfect knowledge are greater than humans can ever imagine.*

*God’s own strength is without limit. He is always ready to give new energy to weak and tired people who trust him.*





# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

*Thank you Father, for your patience  
With a rebellious people  
Loving you one moment  
Forgetting you the next  
Thank you for your endless love  
Which does not give up  
But wants the best for us  
Despite our faults  
Thank you for your promise*

*To all who believe  
And put their trust in you  
Everlasting life  
And in this Advent season  
May the Baptist's call  
Resound in hearts and minds  
Drawing many to the living water  
Where they might find forgiveness  
And knowledge of your Salvation. Amen*

1. Creator of the stars of night,  
thy people's everlasting light,  
Jesus, Redeemer, save us all,  
hear thou thy servants when they call.

2. Thou, sorrowing at the helpless cry  
of all creation doomed to die,  
didst save our lost and guilty race  
by healing gifts of heavenly grace.

3. Thou cam'st, the Bridegroom of the bride,  
as drew the world to eventide;  
proceeding from a virgin shrine,  
the spotless Victim all divine.

4. At thy great Name, exalted now,  
all knees in lowly homage bow;  
all things in heaven and earth adore,  
and own thee King for evermore.

5. To thee, O Holy One, we pray,  
our Judge in that tremendous day,  
ward off, while yet we dwell below,  
the weapons of our crafty foe.

6. To God the Father, God the Son,  
and God the Spirit, Three in One,  
laud, honour, might and glory be  
from age to age eternally. Amen.

**Words:** *Latin 6<sup>th</sup> / 7<sup>th</sup> century translated by John Mason Neale [1818 – 1866]*

**Tune:** *Conditor Alme Siderum mode iv plainsong*







# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas


St George

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December

Isaiah 41. 13 - 20

<sup>13</sup> For I, the LORD your God,  
hold your right hand;  
it is I who say to you, "Do not fear,  
I will help you."  
<sup>14</sup> Do not fear, you worm Jacob,  
you insect Israel!  
I will help you, says the LORD;  
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.  
<sup>15</sup> Now, I will make of you a threshing sledge,  
sharp, new, and having teeth;  
you shall thresh the mountains and crush them,  
and you shall make the hills like chaff.  
<sup>16</sup> You shall winnow them and the wind shall carry  
them away,  
and the tempest shall scatter them.  
Then you shall rejoice in the LORD;  
in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.

<sup>17</sup> When the poor and needy seek water,  
and there is none,  
and their tongue is parched with thirst,  
I the LORD will answer them,  
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.  
<sup>18</sup> I will open rivers on the bare heights,  
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;  
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,  
and the dry land springs of water.  
<sup>19</sup> I will put in the wilderness the cedar,  
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;  
I will set in the desert the cypress,  
the plane and the pine together,  
<sup>20</sup> so that all may see and know,  
all may consider and understand,  
that the hand of the LORD has done this,  
the Holy One of Israel has created it.



For I am the Lord your God  
who takes hold of your right hand  
and says to you, Do not fear;  
I will help you.  
**Isaiah 41:13**

*Continuing the theme of yesterday's reading, God is ready to give his friends the strength that they need at any time. God's immense power is available for his people. They do not need to be afraid of anything.*

*The picture in words in v. 15 repeats the promise of Isaiah 28:27-29.*

*The Lord turns desert into garden (Psalm 84:5-7). In Isaiah 42:15, the Lord turns garden into desert.*

*The Lord will cause extraordinary changes in the world. The people in Israel know that God created everything so all things and all people are under his control.*



# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

*You challenge us this Advent time  
This season of preparation  
To put aside our pride  
And understand our need  
For repentance  
Forgiveness  
And mercy*

*Less of self  
More of you  
Preparation for our journey  
To the stable and beyond  
Purify our hearts  
Sanctify our lives  
That we might serve you  
Faithfully this day and all days. Amen*

I. Great is the darkness that covers the earth  
Oppression, injustice and pain  
Nations are slipping in hopeless despair  
Though many have come in Your name  
Watching while sanity dies  
Touched by the madness and lies

**Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus  
Pour out Your spirit we pray  
Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus  
Pour out Your spirit on us today**

2. May now Your church rise with power and love  
This glorious gospel proclaim  
In every nation salvation will come  
To those who believe in Your name  
Help us bring light to this world  
That we might speed Your return

## Chorus

3. Great celebrations on that final day  
When out of the heavens You come  
Darkness will vanish, all sorrow will end  
And rulers will bow at Your throne  
Our great commission complete  
Then face to face we shall meet

## Chorus

**Words & Music:** *Noel Richards [b.1955] & Gerald Coates [b.1944] a more modern Advent hymn, we have sung this at St. George's on occasion.*

## Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December

Isaiah 48. 17 - 19

<sup>17</sup> The LORD, the Saviour, the Holy One of Israel, says,

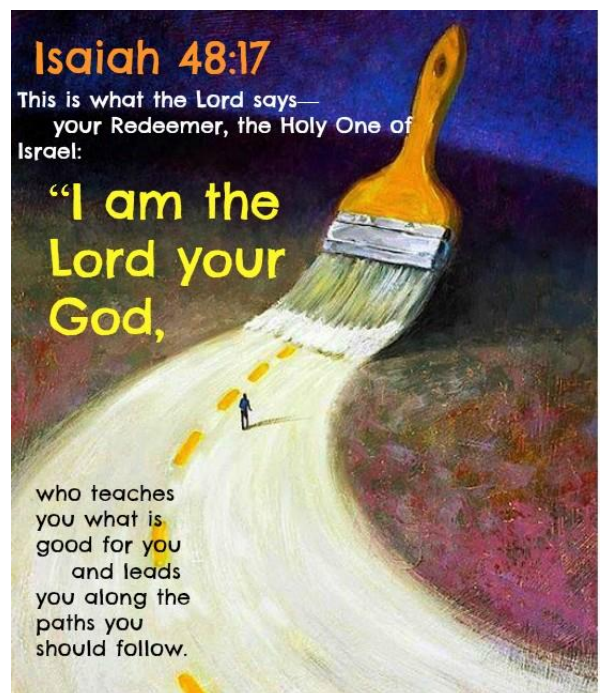
"I am the LORD your God.  
I teach you for your own good.  
I lead you in the way you should go.

<sup>18</sup> If you had obeyed me,  
then peace would have come to you  
like a full flowing river.

Good things would have come to you again and again,  
like the waves of the sea.

<sup>19</sup> If you had obeyed me,  
you would have had as many children as there are grains  
of sand.

And they would always have been mine  
and would never have been destroyed."





# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

## St Bartholomew      St Thomas      St George

Verse 17 gives some details of the help that God will provide. It will be all that they need but it is necessary for people to accept the help that God offers.

Unfortunately, the people would not obey the Lord's instructions [v.18 – 19]. The result was that the people lost a wonderful future. Instead of happiness, the people became miserable prisoners in a foreign country for many years.

*To you O Lord we bring our lives  
Troubled, broken or at ease  
A sacrificial offering  
For you to use  
Take away our selfishness  
And teach us to love as you loved  
Take away our sense of pride  
And show us the meaning of humility  
Take away our blindness  
And show us the world through your eyes*

*Take away our greed  
And teach us how to give as you gave  
Show us your ways  
Teach us your paths  
That we might walk with you more closely  
Our hand in your hand  
Our feet in your footsteps  
From the baby in a stable  
To eternity, Amen*

1. Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,  
the Saviour promised long;  
let every heart prepare a throne,  
and every voice a song.

2. He comes, the prisoners to release,  
in Satan's bondage held;  
the gates of brass before him burst,  
the iron fetters yield.

3. He comes the broken heart to bind,  
the bleeding soul to cure,  
and with the treasures of his grace  
to enrich the humble poor.

4. Our glad hosannas, Prince of peace,  
thy welcome shall proclaim,  
and Heaven's eternal arches ring  
with thy beloved Name.

**Words:** *Philip Dodderidge [1702 – 51] who wrote hymns designed to be sung at his Northampton chapel based on the bible reading on which he had just preached – this one from Isaiah 61.1-2 / Luke 4. 18-19. We tend only to sing these 4 of the 7 original verses.*

**Tune:** *Bristol form Ravenscroft's Psalter of 1621*

## Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December

2 Kings 2. 9 - 12

<sup>9</sup> After they crossed the river, Elijah said to Elisha, "What do you want me to do for you before God takes me away from you?"

Elisha said, "I ask you for a double share of your spirit on me."

<sup>10</sup> Elijah said, "You have asked a hard thing. If you see me when I am taken from you, it will happen. But if you don't see me when I am taken from you, it will not happen."

### The Lord Takes Elijah Into Heaven

<sup>11</sup> Elijah and Elisha were walking and talking together. Suddenly, some horses and a chariot came and separated Elijah from Elisha. The horses and the chariot were like fire. Then Elijah was carried up into heaven in a whirlwind.

<sup>12</sup> Elisha saw it, and shouted, "My father! My father! The chariot of Israel and his horses!"

Elisha never saw Elijah again. Elisha grabbed his own clothes and tore them in two to show his sadness.







# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew      St Thomas      St George

*Elijah had appointed Elisha as his successor. It appears that Elisha knew this departure was coming particularly from verses 2–5 which the lectionary omits; there may have been a prophesy or a vision but the bible doesn't say.*

*When Elisha is asked what he wants, he asks for a double share of the spirit that Elijah had. It's a really subtle distinction [so well done for spotting it] but he's not asking for twice as much as Elijah had so that he's twice as good as Elijah was. He's asking for the rightful inheritance of the first-born son who, when goods were shared out between the inheritors, received twice as much as the other sons [Deuteronomy 21. 17].*

*And then it happened! Most people, and artists, remember that Elijah is taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire [yes, it's from where the film title comes]. But we know better so extra marks again. He ascends to heaven in a whirlwind [v. 11]; the chariots and horsemen represent God's might and protection not only to Elijah but to all those faithful to him. Finally, Elisha picks up Elijah's cloak [mantle] and repeats the parting of the water, showing that the spirit of the Lord seen in Elijah has come to rest on him.*

*From the very beginning was  
Your Word  
Which spoke this world into being  
Your Word  
Which thunders from the skies  
Your Word  
Which flows like mountain streams  
Your Word  
Which whispers in morning breeze  
Your Word*

*Revealed through kings and prophets  
Your Word  
Revealed through Angels' praise  
Your Word  
Revealed in humble service  
Your Word  
Revealed through a tiny child  
Your Word  
Alive from the beginning of all things  
And to eternity.*

1 Hark what a sound, and too divine for hearing,  
stirs on the earth and trembles in the air!  
Is it the thunder of the Lord's appearing?  
Is it the music of his people's prayer?

2 Surely he cometh, and a thousand voices  
shout to the saints, and to the deaf are dumb;  
surely he cometh, and the earth rejoices,  
glad in his coming who hath sworn: I come!

3 This hath he done, and shall we not adore him?  
This shall he do, and can we still despair?  
Come, let us quickly fling ourselves before him,  
cast at his feet the burden of our care.

4 Through life and death, through sorrow and through sinning,  
he shall suffice me, for he hath sufficed:  
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,  
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.



**Words:** *Frederick William Henry Myers [1843 – 1901] the words are taken from his much longer poem “St. Paul” published in 1867 [if you know anything about him you'll know it's amazing that he could write a hymn]!*

**Tune:** *Richard Runciman Terry [1865 – 1938] was the first Director of Music at Westminster RC Cathedral and reintroduced much lost and forgotten Tudor music. This tune is brilliant, we're going to have to learn it.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkeMTbilzXE>





# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

**Congratulations** to Lauren, Sean and Elijah on the birth of their second son Tobias Isaac Goddard on 30th October 2020. We look forward to seeing them all again once the restrictions allow, but here's a couple of photos:



## Toy Service:

Is today **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December at St. Bartholomew's** with the toys distributed by Bolton Lions. Please bring any items to church on Sunday morning [unwrapped toys and gifts please].

## Christingle 2020

Although we're not able to run a Christingle Service as usual this year, we have set up a fundraising page so that you can donate to the Children's Society if you wish.

The fundraising page has an automatic donate feature included where donations will go directly to Westhoughton Parish Christingle this year, can be Gift Aid marked at the same time.

This is the link: <https://thyg.uk/CUS042122>





# PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

## Church of England – Christmas Campaign

### “Comfort and Joy”

Comfort  
and Joy



Christmas will be very different this year. Not only will attendance at church services be restricted in order to be Covid secure, but it is uncertain whether other national or local restrictions will also be in place. It

is unlikely there will be any congregational singing of the carols we love so much. In addition, as we know well, Christmas comes at the end of an exhausting year which has been exceptionally tough for so many of us.

And yet, never has Christmas been more important. More than ever, we need to hear the message of the angels, and to be reassured that God’s light continues to shine in the midst of darkness. It is an encouragement that faithful Christians will wish to hear once more, and also a message of hope we can give as a gift to our wider communities.

#### COMFORT AND JOY RESOURCES

Resources from the Church of England include a printed booklet containing daily reflections for use during Advent. Also a range of online services and events and an Advent activity calendar. Visit the [Church of England website](https://www.churchofengland.org/) for all the details.

#### Primary School Application Form Signing:

As you will be aware, Church of England Voluntary Aided primary schools have particular admissions criteria which means that an extra form needs to be completed **in addition to** the Local Authority form on which your preferences are recorded. This extra form should have been supplied to you with the preference form.

As we’re trying not to have face-to-face meetings to do this [tier 3 restrictions] in order to make the process as straightforward as possible:

**If your usual place of worship would have been St Thomas’ church [before lockdown]** please send an email to Angela [revawynne@gmail.com](mailto:revawynne@gmail.com) to arrange completion of the form.

**If your usual place of worship is St Bartholomew’s or St George’s** please email Carol at [carol.pharaoh@gmail.com](mailto:carol.pharaoh@gmail.com) to get the form completed.

Please contact them as soon as possible so we can get the forms completed well before the deadline.

#### Next Sunday: The Third Sunday of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 61. 1 - 4, 8 - end / 1 Thessalonians 5. 16 - 24 / John 1. 6 - 8, 19 - 28

9:15am Service of the Word at St. George’s Elaine Simkin  
11:00am Holy Communion Service at St Bartholomew’s Revd Carol Pharaoh

**Do contact us if we can offer any help or support at this time.**

Team Rector: Revd Carol Pharaoh 01942 859251 [carol.pharaoh@gmail.com](mailto:carol.pharaoh@gmail.com) [www.westhoughtonchurches.org.uk](http://www.westhoughtonchurches.org.uk)

Team Vicar: Revd Angela Wynne 01204 468150 – [revawynne@gmail.com](mailto:revawynne@gmail.com)

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Material for the news sheet should be sent to Joan Warner by Wednesday morning 01942 818821 [joan.warner35@outlook.com](mailto:joan.warner35@outlook.com)

To receive these pewsheets, newsletters or special events leaflets electronically, please e-mail [westhoughtonparish@outlook.com](mailto:westhoughtonparish@outlook.com)