

An uncontainable light

Georgina Byrne *reflects on* Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12 and Matthew 2:1-12

It is difficult to contain light. Light will find a way through the smallest of cracks, gaps or hinges. Light spreads, spills out beyond itself, into the dark, transforming the darkness as it travels.

In the season of Epiphany we celebrate Christ, who is the light to the nations, the fulfilment of the

promise made in Isaiah 60. Even foreigners will, the prophet says, be drawn to the light. It is irresistible. And, even as the nations come, God's servant people will become more radiant – because seeing the delight of others will thrill them even more.

That promise made to God's people becomes real in Christ, as the magi – foreigners – come and offer gifts to him. The light of God is radiant in Jesus, drawing people in. Paul, steeped in the promise of the Old Testament and transformed by the light of Christ, goes out to the

Gentiles, to the nations, to preach the Gospel. The light of Christ floods out further, transforming the world with the radiance, warmth, and brightness of God's grace.

Jesus is God's gift to the whole world. We cannot contain, box in, or

control the light. Christ will ever find ways to touch and transform the lives of others. The Light of the World is irresistible. All we need to do is allow it to shine out from our lives. ☺

Light of the World, your brightness draws all people to you. Shine in the dark places of our hearts and fill our lives with light. Shine in the dark corners of the world and transform the lives of your children. Amen.

Methodist Covenant Day

by Lisa Tulfer

The idea of covenant is central to the Christian faith. Over and over the Hebrew scriptures refer to God's covenant: "... will be your God, and you shall be my people". It is not like a contract, with terms agreed between God and humanity. God's covenant is freely given, and invites our response, entering into

a loving relationship, sometimes likened to the idea of marriage.

This concept was central to John Wesley's thinking, and since the 1750s the Methodist Church has held an annual Covenant Service, usually on the first Sunday of the year. The Covenant Prayer begins: "I am no longer my own but yours." This service invites people to commit to God, as God made a commitment to humanity. It is both an individual re-dedication to following God in every aspect of life, and also a collective re-dedication by the whole faith community, to walk together in God's way. ☺

A new year in West Virginia

by Helen van Koevering

We're celebrating my daughter's twenty-first birthday this week as we're all together. Arriving at another milestone brings many memories. I remember writing of her six-year-old wisdom, when she connected signs of development in our Mozambican town with people being happier. Today we're walking in snow, discussing a radio programme about local homelessness. One

hundred and sixty-three people slept rough over Christmas. One interviewee named her sense of being pitied and degraded as "the violence of turning away".

Privilege and poverty live side by side in this Appalachian town, like the broken heart of a powerful nation. What does that mean for the Christmas message of love come down? God doesn't turn away, as my daughter says. God transforms. God, coming as a vulnerable baby to an obscure place, turns the shame of those who are privileged and the humiliation of those who are poorest upside down with the same hope and grace that is offered to the whole world. ☺

“Relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing had yet been done.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), British novelist and essayist

Church of Scotland: Orphir and Stenness Parish

Interim Moderator: Rev June Freeth 721449

Locum Minister Rev Martin Prentice 851139

Session Clerk: Nicol 811242

Kirk Information

There is a loop system. Adjust hearing aids to benefit. Switch off phones. They cause interference with the organ. Thank you

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to meet in the hall at the back of the church, after the service, for a cup of tea or coffee.

Intimations

Today: sales table in aid of Orkney Presbytery's 2019 Malawi Borehole Appeal.

Thursday 10am – 12noon: Community Café in the kirk hall

Readings: Matthew 2:2-23

Hymns: 623 Here in this place
326 As with gladness men of old
359 He came down that we may have love
327 Brightest and best *t Epiphany 240*

Til All, In Truth, Are Free (*t: Aurelia*)

If truth still guides our journey,
where does it lead from here?
Our world lies there before us
but nothing seems that clear.
We used to think we knew things,
that all had been revealed,
but now all truths we question,
and much is yet concealed.

Our faith in higher powers,
our confidence in love,
our hope for bright tomorrows
our trust in things above –
each must be proved and tested:
what's fantasy, what's truth?
It's while we're on this journey,
we one another soothe.

If we would share with others
the way we choose to live;
if justice and compassion
inspired us all to give,
we would not need to worry
that truths do not agree
for all could live together
in love and harmony.

So walk with me in courage
across truth's great divides.
We'll listen to each other
until the hate subsides.
Together we'll speak boldly

of what the world still needs
and speak a truth to power
'til all, in truth, are free.

Christmas is Real

(*t: Was Lebet, Was Schwebet 634 and 327*)

Christmas is real when the cost that we measure
reaches the manger and touches the skies,
shop fronts give way to divine revelation,
God is among us and selfishness dies.

Christmas is real when the gifts that are given
mirror the love of this God upon earth,
God who is known in self-giving and loving
crowning our poverty, coming to birth.

Christmas still echoed when screams of the
children,
slaughtered by Herod inflamed people's fear.
Christmas remains when the trees and the tinsel
make way for news that we'd rather not hear.

Christmas is real when we enter the squalor
mirrored in Bethlehem so long ago;
off'ring the love that was seen in the God head,
total self-giving not baubles and show. ©
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