

NEWSLETTER

5th December 2024



Dear Everyone

Sympathy for Naila and Kamran: We all express our sorrow to Naila on the sudden loss of her mother and her brother-in-law in Pakistan last week. It is hard to put in adequate words how she, Kamran and their family must be feeling. We all send our love and many prayers. We hope they are sustained by the sincere and many condolences they have received from us all. As so many have said, "May the Almighty God receive the soul of her dear mother and brother-in-law peacefully in his bosom and rest in perfect peace".

Advent: We celebrated the first Sunday in Advent, with the children lighting the advent candle. Advent, as the Sunday school children told us so clearly, is a season of waiting and preparation, not only for the birth of Jesus, but also for the return of his second coming. It has four common themes which are, Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, all of which we badly need at this time of war and tumult. Each candle carries a different meaning; the first, Isaiah and other prophets who predicted the coming of Jesus; the second, represents The Bible; the third, Mary the mother of Jesus and the fourth, John the Baptist, who was Jesus's cousin, who told the people to get ready for Jesus's teaching. A candle will be lit at the beginning of each service for the next three weeks.

Sunday School Family Crib Service: This will take place next **Sunday, 8th December**, to which everyone is invited. Do come and take part (*I think we may have a special visitor!!*)

Myfanwy: Please keep Myfanwy in your prayers. She is very fragile and being well taken care of by Florence.

Birthdays: How lovely to wish Happy Birthday to Thomas and Nwanneka in prayer and song. Thomas came to us as a little baby 18 years ago. Many of us will remember how he loved exploring the church and taking part in everything as he grew. Now he is a member of the PCC and sings in the choir. He has been, along with

Ruth and Elizabeth such a positive and constant asset to our church family. Nwanneka, has been away for a little while. We missed her and wished her Happy Birthday too. Welcome back.



Advent: St Paul's Cathedral send weekly bulletins about what is happening there and also some comments by specialists with areas of interest. This week we have an article on "Art in Advent" by Dr Siobhán Jolley, **who is a specialist in European Christian Art and a Lecturer in Christian Studies at the University of Manchester and Christianity and the Arts at King's College, London. She focuses on the famous "Annunciation" fresco by Fra Filippo Lippi c.1450-3. (see below).**

Christ the King - part 2: This week there is an article, written in 2021 by the Revd Dr Rebecca Aechtner and her husband, Bishop Anderson Jeremiah, called "Christ (the subversive) King". It gives an historical and theological insight into how this Festival developed; highlighting the often conflicting thinking that underpins it. An alternative view is given of how, in keeping with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, he comes to subvert the notion of Kingship into something completely different to the common view of one who has ultimate power. It is interesting, too, to see how much Kamran, Dr Aechtner and Bishop Anderson have so much in common in their analysis. The article is long, but an important one to read as it contains so much food for thought and greater understanding.

Christmas Services and Events: Please see the Christmas celebrations coming soon. They are printed below. Come and join in when you can. **Please note** help is needed **at 1.00pm on Saturday 7th December in church**, to prepare the bags for the Christmas cheer mornings.

Asian Christmas Service: Please also note that on **Sunday 14th December at 4.00p.m.** our Asian family will be holding a Christmas service with a Nativity. All are welcome to come and join in with what will be a very joyous celebration.

Annual Christmas Lunch: On **Sunday 15th December** we will be holding our Christmas lunch for church members, to which many are coming. What a Happy Festive time it will be. Special thanks must be given to Dr Jeya Keerthi, Business Development Manager at Candlewood House, who has arranged for the donation of food for us from the House. This is so very generous of her. We wish all at Candlewood House a Very Happy Christmas.

Food Bank: This is just to remind you that we contribute provisions to All Saint's Food Bank. Please put contributions on the table in church and they will be taken to All Saints during the week. With many thanks

Wednesday Morning Coffee: from 10.30am-12noon; coffee, cake and a chat. Do come and join in.

Bible Study: This session will take place on Thursday 12th December at 6.30pm.

Toddler Group: This group is in church every Tuesday from 9.30 – 11.30am. We are very grateful to all those who help and keep the group going. If anyone would like to volunteer to help during his time we would be very grateful to hear from you. Please talk to ifey or Kamran.

Love and Good Wishes – Sally

Christmas Festivities



FollowTheStar
Wishing you
**Happy Christmas
& New Year 2024**

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah:9:5

It is our prayer that may the peace of Christ reign in your lives, be a beacon of hope in our world, and inspire us to strive for harmony with one another.

Love from
from Golders Green Parish Church

You are welcome to
Join us for Christmas Services
Address: Golders Green Parish Church,
West Heath Drive, London NW11 7QG
Website: www.gg-pc.co.uk



2024 Christmas Services & Events

FAMILY CRIB SERVICE WITH SANTA VISIT
Sunday 8 December 10 am

CHRISTMAS CHEER
Tues 10 - Wed 11 December 7 am at the Tube Station

ASIAN CAROL SERVICE
Sat 14 December 4 pm

A TRADITIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL SERVICE OF 9 LESSONS AND CAROLS
Sunday 15 December – 10 am

CHRISTMAS EVE SINGING CAROLS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH
24 December at 4-4:30 pm Followed by Hot drinks.

MIDNIGHT COMMUNION SERVICE (CAROLS WITH CANDLES)
24 December 11 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY
Christmas day Communion Service 10 am

NEW YEAR EVE SERVICE
31 December 11 pm






Fra Filippo Lippi, *Annunciation*, c.1450-3 (National Gallery)

Advent by Dr Siobhán Jolley



Emily Dickinson (*the American poet*) once wrote that “hope is the thing with feathers”. As we begin our Advent reflections, I want to suggest that Fra Filippo Lippi might well agree. His **Annunciation** (c. 1450-3), painted for the Medici family places feathers at the core of his vision of the hope of incarnation and salvation.

The angel Gabriel has arrived to bring the news to Mary that she will become the **theotokos**, the God-bearer. His wings of peacock feathers dominate half of the composition, curving to fit the panel’s unusual over-door shape. They remain unfurled, evoking the immediacy and immanence of this emissary episode. Nearby, the Holy Spirit, represented as a dove, hovers before Mary’s belly. Its tiny wings, a visual echo of those of the angel, ripple with motion, drawing our eyes to the hand of God the Father, who initiates this miraculous encounter.

Lippi situates this scene not in first century Nazareth, but within the Medici Palazzo, recognisable by the feathered family emblem visible on the low wall at the centre. Embedding the incarnation in his audience’s familiar world, his message is clear: hope is not distant or abstract but alive and present among us. The feathers, tangible yet weightless, remind us that God’s promise takes flight in the here and now.

The tension between the gentle fragility of feathers and their collective strength to allow wing-bearers to take flight, is an opposite metaphor indeed for the power of hope. As we reflect on this work and begin our advent journey in these uncertain times, let us be active in seeking out that anticipatory hope in our own contexts. Like Dickinson’s metaphorical bird and Lippi’s dove, hope may be fragile, but it is resilient, always poised to take flight.

Reflection on Christ the King by the Revd Rebecca Aechtner and Bishop Anderson Jeremiah

Christ, the (Subversive)King

If Christ is King, he takes on that role in order to subvert dominant understandings of power and its exercise. Christ turns power and kingship upside down and uses them for new and much more creative and life-giving purposes. *33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” 35 Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” 36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” 37 Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” 38 Pilate asked him, “What is truth?”* John 18:33–38a (NRSV)

The Feast of Christ the King arose in the aftermath of WWI, when the Roman Catholic church was losing its institutional importance and waking up to the reality of dictatorships and unchecked political power.

In this context Pope Pius XI introduced the Feast of Christ the King in 1925, as an attempt to remind Christians across the Roman Catholic church of Christ's supreme, universal and ultimate authority over earthly powers and rulers, building on a prevalent early Christian practice captured in John's gospel. Subsequently, this feast was embraced across various denominations, including Anglican and reformed traditions. History also teaches how Christian emperors and empires across the centuries have abused this belief to inflict pain and misery on others. The image of Christ the King is one of great comfort as well as one of challenge. Some Christians take pride in the biblical imagery of Jesus Christ as the King of Kings, coming in glory with the angels and sitting upon his throne. Here is Christ the King as the rightful and just judge of all, who brings an end to earthly powers and their abuses. Now this is a marketable image of Christ far more appealing than the helpless, innocent infant soon to grace Christmas cards and carols, rather than the bloodied, tortured broken body of Jesus on the cross in the fullness of his passion. Christ the King Sunday should not be about Christian superiority or seen as associating with earthly political and economic figures, but must stand in contrast to them and question the very notion of power itself. In order to do this, the image of Christ as King must be dissociated from historical and current expressions of power, from those who abuse and misuse their status, who neglect the poor, ignore the marginalised, destroy the environment and favour protective, inward-looking nationalisms and economic interests. The gospel narratives convey the idea of the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ's own kingship. The institutional church across denominational divides still struggles with this image because it directly deals with power, authority, and triumphalism. The phrase 'Christ the king' may conjure up imagery of opulence, splendour, and magnificence, but how did Jesus engage with such manifestations of power and kingship? The 18th chapter of John's gospel is almost too dramatic, too action-packed. It begins with Judas betraying Jesus, who is then arrested, an ear is severed, Simon Peter denies Jesus three times, the cock crows, Jesus is bound and taken to the High Priest, he is slapped, and then he is delivered to Pilate. Pilate interrogates Jesus further in a remarkable exchange, following which, Pilate condemns Jesus to death after declaring a 'not guilty' verdict. The narrative around Jesus' arrest and death sentence is that of a criminal, not a king. This depiction of Jesus is very different from the opulence and majesty of 'Christ the King' imagery. Instead, John portrays Jesus standing in front of Pilate, seemingly powerless, being mocked, ridiculed, and ultimately crucified alongside criminals. Pilate represents the power of the Roman Empire, which in our modern context has become deeply embedded in Christianity as an imperial religion. At first, Pilate tries to renege on his responsibility of being both judge and jury, until he is forced to do so by the religious authorities. Later when sentencing Jesus, Pilate asks, 'Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?' Power. Pilate exercises his power reluctantly, hesitantly, but with a (seemingly) tragic finality. Pilate is deluded by imperial power. By asking Jesus, 'are you the king of Jews?', Pilate instantly politicised Jesus' work, pitting him against the Roman empire. Colonial history teaches that deluded power can be the most ferocious enemy of justice, violently perpetuating injustice and exploiting people and the environment. Following this passage is one of the most haunting lines in Scripture. Pilate responds to Jesus' assertion that he 'came into the world, to testify to the truth' and that 'everyone who belongs to the truth listens to [his] voice' by posing a question of his own: 'What is Truth?' This is a question that rings down through the ages; lingering hauntingly behind fake news, misleading information, biased social media platforms, and competing truth claims from lobbyists, politicians, family, and friends. Truth, when twisted and abused, perpetuates ignorance, and (as in the case of Jesus before Pilate) can even end in violence and death. When the Johannine Jesus speaks of truth, he does not do so in a vague, abstract, rhetorical manner like Pilate – Jesus identifies himself as the truth, to which he came to testify. In asking 'what is truth', Pilate asks the

wrong question. The question is not, 'what is truth' but 'who is truth?' Pilate, for all of his wealth, status, and power, fails to hear, to really encounter and listen to the man standing before him. Pilate fails to ask himself who Jesus is. In fact, the question of who Jesus is dominates all of Chapter 18. Jesus is asked to identify himself, to give an account of himself to Judas and the soldiers who arrest him, officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and to Pilate. He identifies himself as: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, a king who came into the world to 'testify to the truth.' It is about birthplace, ethnicity, religion, and social status (even if that status is mocked and misunderstood). Just listen to Jesus' exchange with Pilate again: 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' According to John, Pilate narrows in on the concept of truth, rather than on truth itself, embodied, incarnate, in Jesus standing before him. Pilate hears Jesus but does not listen to what he says; Pilate does not belong to the truth or the power to which Jesus testifies. In few weeks' time, on Christmas Eve, many churches throughout the world will hear the opening lines of John's Gospel and the timeless words: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....' This profession of the Incarnation includes a confession of sorts: 'He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to become the children of God...' Power, according to John, is underpinned by inclusion and freedom. People are given the power to become the children of God. Jesus through his oneness with God gives the power to all, so that they can claim inheritance from God. Jesus' exercise of power is oppositional to the way Pilate operated. Unlike the kings and powerful leaders of this world, Jesus offered himself on the cross and radically redefined and transformed the concept of kingship into love incarnate. Jesus' death and resurrection was as revolutionary as his life. He subverted the image of kingship in his birth, death, and resurrection, and invites us to be born again in him and to be raised to new life in him. This context of Jesus' passion is essential for those who wish to celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. Those obsessed with power easily ignore the God revealed in the embarrassment of the incarnation in a poor cowshed. Likewise, they overlook the instances of Christ's passion: his ridicule, humiliation, and crucifixion. The selective memorialisation of resurrection and ascension in popular Christian imagination only underlines God's glorious statement of power returned. How did such a subversive notion of kingship become lost? Jesus, the long awaited messiah, is not a king or an emperor but a powerless and despised human being. Humility personified. Even standing helplessly before Pilate, Jesus speaks of truth and in so doing, questions the limits of Pilate's power. The events leading up to crucifixion are also a subversion of 'messianic' perceptions of Christ, the King. Christ, the King, is to be found in Jesus, the victim of violence, the condemned, despised, and rejected. Christ, the King, is to be found among the victims of sexual and domestic violence, sufferers of racial and caste hatred, forsaken migrants, refugees, victims of climate change, and those limited by misogyny and homophobia. Today the task of proclaiming the subversive kingdom of God is no less important. The need to confess a belief in Christ the King, in Jesus who came to proclaim the 'truth' of God's unconditional love, not the authoritative, triumphalist, powerful, and often violent and oppressive judgement, is paramount. The Johannine Jesus subverts the Cross as a symbol of shame, oppression, and death, and makes it a symbol of glory, transforming suffering from perceived weakness into strength and life. And when Jesus meets violence, hatred, injustice, mockery, and the gross abuse of his body (just like millions of children, women and men, throughout history and in the present moment), he responds with the words 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.' It is as if in John's vision, he is able to absorb in himself all this sin and violence and hatred, and turn it into something that promises hope and redemption. He bears it and takes the full force of it, in order to disarm it, neutralise it, and open new possibilities of

forgiveness. Christians are called to emulate this sacrificial, revolutionary Christ the King of forgiveness and mercy as an antidote to the trappings of earthly power. If Christ is King, he takes on that role in order to subvert dominant understandings of power and its exercise. Christ turns power and kingship upside down and uses them for new and much more creative and life-giving purposes. He uses the image of himself as sitting on the throne of glory not for his self-aggrandisement but to be the servant of all. If he is King, it is only to better satisfy those who hunger and thirst for justice, to welcome strangers, to clothe those in need, to take care of the sick, and to visit the lonely. For John, when Jesus' disciples imitate him in his service to others, they serve and honour him. In Christ, his disciples are called to live meaningful, thoughtful, and generous lives. The Johannine passage is not a threat, but a promise. Christians, in their personal lives, may betray Jesus countless times—like Judas, like Peter—but as John frames in this narrative, there is a choice: turn away from Christ, deny Christ, or embody Christ as King and live as the body of Christ in this world. According to John, the extravagant hospitality revealed in Jesus is that as the children of God, whatever one's status, gender, race, caste, or ethnicity, all are made in the image of God. If Christ is King, it is only because he counter-intuitively challenges and rejects popular perceptions of kingship and power. In a world obsessed and deluded with power, greed and selfishness, the Feast of Christ the King offers millions of Christians an opportunity to challenge dominant perceptions of power and truth. Rather than memorialising a powerful monarch, or an institutional figurehead, Christians remember the one who was subjected to Pilate's authority, hung on a cross, and who shared in our broken humanity. John challenges his readers to see and hear the incarnate God, born into the world to testify to the truth, then crucified and resurrected, subverting the very notion of sovereignty and power. The Feast of Christ the King is perhaps best realised in confrontation with and in opposition to earthly powers, as Christ himself does before Pilate, testifying, "My kingdom is not from this world".



How We Are

We send all those who are sick our love. Please continue to pray for them that they gain in strength and good health. We continue to pray that God's healing hands may be upon them. Pray also for those who are grieving because of the loss of a loved one.

We keep in our prayers: Naila, for comfort and prayers at the sudden loss of her mother and her brother-in-law. We Pray for Kamran and their whole family at this sad time.

Pray for Ifey Onochie, Myfanwy Khan, whose health is deteriorating, for Anita and Simon Houghton, Tony Nwanodi, Chuba Agbim, Eunice Adiele, Gideon Onwutalu, Sir Edmund Onochie, Rose Ochwada, Beryl Brown, and Sheila Grodzinsky;

We hold all the above in our hearts that they may be filled with God's healing love.

Please continue to let us know of family members and friends who are sick and would welcome our prayers, either by WhatsApp, email, Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk or by phone, 020 8455 1873



Topic: Church Wardens' Personal Meeting Room

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/8585545365?pwd=em85aDF5ZmJ5ZkVlb0xDaDhY2paUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 554 5365

Passcode: J4FbKf

Reader:

Intercession:

Hospitality:

Eucharist Minister:

AV Desk:

Contact details:

Parish Priest: Revd Kamran Bhatti

Office Tel: 020 8455 1873, Website: www.gg-pc.co.uk

December 2024

Date	Bible Passage	Readers	Intercessor	Refreshments	Eucharistic Minister	AV Desk	Duty Managers	Service leader
08/12/24	Luke 1:68-79	TBC	Alexis	Silvia	TBC	Dozie	Chinwe	Sunday School
<u>Crib Service</u>	TBC	TBC						
	TBC	TBC						
15/12/24			Jenny	Cynthia /Chinwe		Tony	Tim	
<u>9 Carols & Lessons</u>	TBC	TBC						
22/12/24	Psalms 80:1-7	Nwenna ka	Kai	Sally	Sally/Tony	Oneyka	Florence	Alexis
	Hebrews 10:5-10	Sohail						
	Luke 1:39-45, 46-55							
24/12/24	Psalms 96:1-6	Elizabeth/Thomas	Nehar	TBC	Tim/Naila	Ruth	Synthia	
	Acts 13:16-26	Dozie						
	Luke 1:67-79							
25/12/24	Psalms 98:1-6	Andrew	Nwadi	Silvia	Ifeyinwe/Onyeka	Onyeka	Chinwe	
<u>Christmas Day</u>	Hebrews 1:1-4	Sim						
	John 1:1-14							
29/12/24	Psalms 148:1-5	Sam	Simon	Bilan	Daniel/Ezim	Tony	Shaniv	
	Colossians 3:12-17	Keith						
	Luke 2:41-52							