

Discipleship and Journeying with God:

For our **Daily Blog** series, we will be continuing our **'Journey to the Manger'** this week, based on the book by Paula Gooder.

We are also looking at **'The Chosen'** film series on a Monday evening and **'The Rule of Life'** for lockdown on a Tuesday evening over Zoom. For more information on how to join any of our Zoom home groups, please contact Kirsty by emailing kirsty.bowles@newcreationchurches.org.uk or call 07871 513 151.

Discipleship and Faith during Lent (Ash Wednesday 17th Feb):



Lent is fast approaching and it is often a time for taking a bit of time reflecting and allowing God to deepen our faith.

Two, what seem, really good and positive books to emerge over these last months come from the Pope, Pope Francis and from our retired Archbishop, Rowan Williams.

Rowan Williams' book, "Candles in the Dark" are a collection of twenty six short talks he has shared with his small church community during this time now that he has returned to being part of a parish ministry team in Wales.

We will be using his work as part of the next chapter in the life of the Daily Blog leading up to Holy Week (so look out for that if you are online – a 'thought' for the day for five minutes each day.

(See details of how to access 'the Daily Blog' from the website and Facebook details above)

The second book comes from Pope Francis and are some of his thoughts and reflections as we look to what God is trying to achieve through taking all the hurt and pain of the pandemic to give birth to a new world and a new Church. An honest and very inspiring read, Pope Francis has a wonderful way of communicating big ideas and thoughts in a simple and a down to earth way.

The two Church Councils have both decided to read this material during Lent and Easter as we begin to work and reflect upon what the two Churches and New Creation will look like after we emerge from the Pandemic.

Both books are available from all good booksellers physically and online and electronically (via Kindle). Details of 'Online' Homegroups will be coming out next week.

Matt Thomson.

LET US
DREAM

THE PATH TO
A BETTER FUTURE

POPE
FRANCIS

ROWAN
WILLIAMS

Candles in
the Dark
Faith, hope and
love in a time
of pandemic

One of today's most brilliant
and profound thinkers
Jonathan Sacks

SUNDAY 7TH FEBRUARY, 2021 2ND BEFORE LENT

Thought for the week: "What difference can I make?"

On Tuesday (2nd Feb) the news reported that sadly Capt. Sir Tom Moore, who had done so much to help raise much needed funds for the NHS, had died in Bedford Hospital with his family at his bedside.



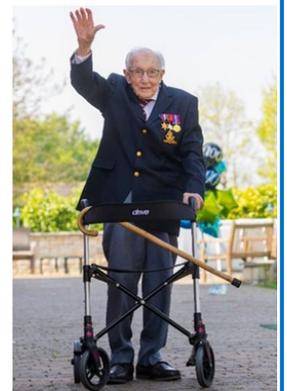
Capt. Sir Tom captured much of the nation's attention and hearts back last summer when he set out to achieve his goal of '100 walks before his 100 birthday' and to raise awareness and funds for the NHS charities. As the media got more and more excited about his challenge Capt. Sir Tom was asked to give endless TV, radio and newspaper interviews.

In amongst all the hype, the TV cameras, photojournalists snapping away, and having to listen tirelessly to interviewer after interviewer asking the same inane questions what came across to me even more strongly than his incredible achievement was Capt. Sir Tom's generous grace, patience, humility and good spirit. By nature he was and is a self-less 'encourager.'

I am reminded of a similar lady I met some years ago now, when helping out in a Hospice. Joan had only weeks to live but she got into her head that she wanted to knit squares for a blanket to be auctioned off at the Hospice Fete, which was then two months away. She set about her task with determination. As word got around, others began to capture Joan's simple purpose and good natured spirit. Nurses joined in at home or in their coffee break, as did consultants, doctors, administrators and even volunteers like me who had never knitted in their lives before. As the day of the fete drew closer pretty much everyone connected with the Hospice was willing and hoping not just to complete the blanket but that Joan would be able to make it to see the fruit of her achievement.

The good news, was that with a day to go, the blanket was finished, the fete happened, and Joan was able to pull out the winning number from the draw which won the prize she had so wonderfully inspired and created. But perhaps the lasting prize, as precious if not more precious than the physical blanket itself, was the release of goodness, love and 'can-do' spirit that 'Joan's blanket' and Joan herself symbolised for the Hospice and many of its staff and community to the point that many year's later I, and I hope others, draw upon that experience at other moments in our lives.

This is the beauty and gift of those who are by nature 'encouragers.' And they are totally unaware of the profound goodness they release into the world. They come in all shapes and sizes, all ages and backgrounds, young and old. But perhaps, it is a gift that the elderly or those in greatest frailty often demonstrate the brightest as they shine against the backdrop of their particular circumstance.



A self-less act, a word of encouragement or gratitude, a smile of appreciation or understanding of human frailty rather than a criticism, 'comment' or judgement, all can go to make the 'atmosphere' in the room not only a kindler but a more life-fulfilling and life-giving place.

When I reflect upon Joan, and Capt. Sir Tom, and many others I have had the privilege to know, both in the past and in the present, I think God's light shines particularly bright in such people and towards a way of being we can all aspire to if we but give ourselves the opportunity to get ourselves out of the way and allow a little bit of God's grace to flow.

We may not ourselves be able to complete a hundred walks, or knit a blanket for that matter, but we can each choose to give the other the benefit of the doubt, to see the possibility in the other rather than their limitations, and to hope, and to dream, of a better world.

For Capt. Sir Tom and for Joan, like Moses they were, and are like sentinels and signposts pointing us to greater things and to be greater people than we perhaps believe we can be as we look to a new 'Promised Land – new people, with new spirit, for a new world.

Words from Moses' great speech at the end of Deuteronomy, and the song on his heart that followed, come to mind (Deut. 31 and 32):

“Moses again spoke to the whole nation of Israel: ²I am a hundred twenty years old, and I am no longer able to be your leader... ³⁻⁵But the LORD has promised that He and Joshua will lead you across the Jordan... Don't be afraid... The LORD your God will always be at your side, and He will never abandon you...

³⁰ Moses then called a meeting of all the people of Israel, so he could teach them the words to the song that the LORD had given him. And here are the words:

Earth and Sky,
listen to what I say!
² Israel, I will teach you.
My words will be like gentle rain
on tender young plants,
or like dew on the grass.
³ Join with me in praising
the wonderful name
of the LORD our God...”

May all words of encouragement continue to fall like 'gentle rain on tender young plants' and may they in turn soften our hearts to produce blossom and much fruit in the days and years to come for such is God's good pleasure and a means by which He often seems to seek to renew the world.

Matt Thomson

WE NEED YOUR HELP:

Particularly in Congresbury over the last few weeks the collection for Foodbank has diminished. Sadly, this is at a time where the need, particularly from the school to help vulnerable families has also increased. So, if you have any spare food or wish to contribute in any way please can we give the Foodbank extra consideration at this time.

At the same time, we really want to say a very big 'thank you' for every item that is already given because it comes, as we know, with such much thought and love.

Thank you.



What is happening “Worship wise” in February - “CHURCH IS ONLINE during this month:”

I appreciate this is difficult for some people especially for those who don't have or want to use technology. That is why there is both this Pew News Sheet, with its “Thought for the Week,” usually based on the Bible Reading for the Sunday and the Prayer Diary.

I am also very grateful to all the Church@Home co-ordinators who keep in touch each week and some of whom provide other material.

If you are able to join us “online” you can access the weekly service by watching **LIVE** via the “New Creation Facebook Page” : <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> or catch up later on Facebook, via the New Creation website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> or New Creation YouTube Channel : <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXn34qIXIXBeOAmOIMIKBw/>



“Thank you” – from Pastor Nihad, Immanuel Church in Bethlehem.



Over the Christmas period we managed to collect £400 in extra donations to support the work of “Immanuel Church” in the ‘down-town’ area of Bethlehem. Nihad writes in an email, “Thank you so much for the blessing that the church of New Creation is showing us here. Your love and care to help with what means you have is very much appreciated. The need is enormous here but the Lord is good.”

Please continue to pray for these good people as they seek to share God's love in the very place of Jesus' birth amongst the Arabic community there. They are amazing people, and we send them all our love. Thank you again to Beth Ashton-Hilton and to Bob (our Treasurers) for putting all this together.

Matt Thomson

#ClapForHeroes - Thursdays at 8pm

As we are now well into another National Lockdown, we remember all of our critical workers by joining with the Nation in the ‘Clap for Heroes’ each Thursday evening at 8pm. The banners that have kindly been made for to show our support to those working are now proudly displayed outside both of our churches so please spare a thought and a prayer for all those working in essential jobs on the front lines to keep us all safe during these difficult times.



We could not do this without you!
Doctors NHS Nurses Teachers Paramedics Shop workers
Care Workers Cleaners Refuse & Recycling Collectors Volunteers
Vets Police Bus Drivers Delivery Drivers Good friends Nursery Staff
Postal Workers Delivery Drivers kind Neighbours
+ all other amazing essential workers! ♥

