

Christmas – Thank you to everyone who sent in photos and who was part of the video message to Pastor Nihad and the congregation at Immanuel Church in Bethlehem.

We will be sending off the video and a financial gift from our two Churches over the next few days so, if you would like to make a contribution to supporting their Church during this very difficult time, you can do this either via the Online Giving Page on the Church website: www.newcreationchurches.org.uk or via contacting the Church Office in Congresbury on 01934 833126 (messages are checked every few days) or via email: SACAdmin@newcreationchurches.org.uk

Donations to the work of the Children's Society, which is our other principal charity over Christmas, and which does such great work during the year to support vulnerable children in so many different ways, can also be made in the same way via the website or via the Church Office in Congresbury.

Scan the QR Code to be taken directly to the 'Giving' page of the website where you can enter the online giving portal to donate to either of our Christmas charities, or give financial support to the churches.



On a personal note:

I would like to thank so many people for their kind thoughts and Christmas Cards and messages over the Christmas period. It really has been overwhelming. Jan and I felt very touched. Bless you all. Thank you so much.

Matt Thomson

Please continue to pray for Bishop Peter Hancock and for his family:

As Christmas now passes, please continue to keep Bishop Peter and his family in your thoughts and prayers. Bishop Peter was diagnosed with a particularly aggressive form of Leukaemia during the Pandemic and has been undergoing treatment in hospital. He has stepped back from his role as figurehead of the Diocese for some time and so please pray also for Bishop Ruth, for Howard and their family, as she continues on in this role in his stead.

You can access any of our Services by watching us **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/UCXn34qIXBeOAmO1M1KbBw/>



SUNDAY 23RD JANUARY, 2021 EPIPHANY

Happy New Year for 2021:

Happy New Year everyone and welcome to this first New Creation Pew News for 2021.

Thank you to all those who have helped put it together and also to all the Church@Home Co-ordinators who have kindly delivered it each week either by email or in person through letterboxes.



Thought for the Week: "The great message of Jesus and of Christmas is, at least in part, that you don't have to be perfect, nor be the best, you just need to be willing to engage and fall in love."

One of the things I love about the Christmas story is its impact on those around the central characters of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus: the stories of the Shepherds and the stories of the Magi (otherwise known as the Kings or the Wise Men). Each, in their own way, is a story from acceptance and engagement at a distance, to intimacy and depth of relationship, that literally changed their lives, and how they then saw the world, for ever.

For the Shepherds, it was a journey from physical and social isolation at the time, a group of people "on the edge of things," to being not only welcomed and accepted, but seen as key to the deep historical identity of who this Jesus was to be. In the case of the Magi, I personally still quite like this term as it most accurately describes who these characters were and are, although the problem is you end up having to explain it quite a lot too, they moved from their interest and understanding of a thousand miles away (physically and as a metaphor) to kneeling in wonder at the same manger, the same crib and the foot of the same Christ child: outcast and intellectually then welcomed into the same innocent, disarming, vulnerable, authentic relationship of the open arms of the little baby sent from God who simply asks us "to love Him" and discover we too are profoundly loved.

But how do we do that? How do we "travel" there again, especially if we have been a Christian many years and been part of a Church and heard so many Christmas sermons all before?

One of the things I love about the few days between Christmas and New Year is that you often get a chance to watch old films, or new, that you've been putting off watching because of "everything else that needs doing." For me, this year, it was to watch again that classic film about "Eddie the Eagle" Edwards – the British ski-jumper of the 1988 Winter Olympics, who defied just about everybody in his desire to become both an Olympian, and then also a ski-jumper.

He wasn't the best, he wasn't the most naturally gifted, he was laughed at by many, even most, at the time, especially the media – yet over time we have come to value, even to wish, we too could follow in his footsteps and bring the same passion, the same courage, the same willingness to engage fully in life and so follow a dream.



Perhaps such an innocent expression of enthusiasm and passion haunts us almost, we maybe wish we too could rediscover a deeper understanding what really life was and is meant to be about but we know, deep down, that it “costs” – it “costs” in terms of engagement – of having to put in the time of Prayer and of Bible study, of loving and of failure to love. It “costs” in terms of vulnerability and a growing awareness of one’s own limitations and imperfections. It “costs” in terms of making “me” a little bit less and “the journey” and “Him” being a little more. And yet, like “Eddie the Eagle,” like “the Shepherds,” like “the Magi” we know it’s the only way to discover and to live.

But isn’t it “Good News” we don’t need to be “the best” at Prayer or Bible Study already, we don’t need to be an individual Christian or a Church that is “the most gifted” or those who have “got it all sorted,” or who seek to be the envy of our peers. No, we just need to have the same willingness to engage, to participant, and suffer the many knocks and bruises of a Ski-jumper, a Shepherd, or a King and to trust the process that God will lead us from wherever we are, into a deeper and closer relationship with Him, despite ourselves as well as because of ourselves through this coming year.

I find it always both humbling and very inspiring that the word for “disciple” means ‘learner’ or ‘apprentice’ – not in a demeaning way, but in a way that calls us to discover that we don’t need to be, ever, anything or anyone else. All we have to do is to be willing to “fly” and to “fall in love.”

Matt Thomson

N.B. “Eddie the Eagle” the film is available on Amazon Prime to rent or buy, and is also available from Amazon and other retailers online.

What is happening “Church Wise” in January:

Following announcements that we, in North Somerset are now in Tier 3, some people have wondered if there is still going to be “physical Church” on a Sunday as well as Online Church during this time?

Whilst it is up to each person to decide what is best for them personally, the advice for the Church of England nationally, and from the Diocese, is that “Hybrid Worship” (where a Church meets for worship physically AND online) is still permissible and is within all Government Guidelines.

As both PCCs we made a commitment in the autumn to being a “Hybrid Church” for the foreseeable future and we were delighted that so many wanted to be part of this over, what has been a challenging Christmas.

So, the intention is that we will continue to offer “Hybrid Worship” on a Sunday during January services subject to either local, national or Government advice:

Sunday 3rd Jan – we will be in **Congresbury** at 10.30am for Epiphany, and also online

Sunday 10th Jan – we will be in **Banwell** at 10.30am

Sunday 17th Jan - we will be in Congresbury, and then Banwell on the 24th Jan.

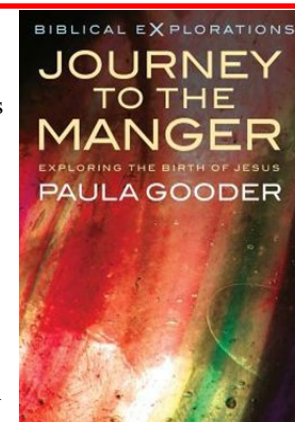
As part of our Joint (Church Council) PCC meeting in January, when we will be looking further at the year ahead, we will of course be reviewing things.

Please see the Church website: www.newcreationchurches.org.uk for further details.

Matt Thomson

Daily Blog – What’s happening this week?

This week we will be continuing to look at the Story of Christmas in greater depth by exploring a recent book by Paula Gooder called, “Journey to the Manger.” Some of you may remember Paula as someone who came and led a most successful Church weekend at Brunel Manor, in Devon a few years ago. Paula is now at St Paul’s Cathedral in London. She is a very engaging writer and speaker, and we look forward to sharing the Christmas story through her eyes and through Scripture.



If you would like to follow the Daily Blog as part of your journey of faith, you can access via the “New Creation Facebook Page”:

<https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/>, via the New Creation website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> or New Creation YouTube Channel : <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXn34qIXIXBeOAmOIMIKbBw/>

NEW for After Christmas – the “Living Faith” Group will start meeting Online on a Monday Evening (beginning Monday 11th Jan at 7.30pm for an hour) looking at “The Chosen” – the NEW STORY of Jesus for eight weeks (11th Jan to mid-March):



We will be looking at the new ‘phenomenon’ which is the world crowd funded TV adaptation of the Life of Jesus called “The Chosen.” Series 1 has already been released and funding for Series 2 is just about complete and due to be released in the next couple of months.

We will be starting with the screening of the Story of Christmas, “The Shepherds,” which is a short film the director made which started the whole Project off.

The “Living Faith” group is a great opportunity for anyone who perhaps wishes to explore faith for the first time or who would like to revisit the foundations of their faith to join in, ask questions, or who simply wants to listen as we share what this remarkable piece of Christian television can say to us about the person of Jesus at the centre of our faith.

If you would prefer to watch “The Chosen” in your own time it can be obtained for free, either via YouTube (simply type in “The Chosen”) or via an App, which can be downloaded to your Smartphone or Tablet. And, we will also be posting the discussion questions online, both at the website and on the Facebook Page, for people to ponder over throughout the week.

Its all very exciting. For details of how to join the group please visit the website and Facebook pages: website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> or our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> Or contact Kirsty Bowles (Lay Pioneer Minister) email: kirsty.bowles@newcreationchurches.org.uk or **07871 513151**.