

Words of Light and Hope Sunday 17th December 2023

By Helena Crockford LLM

John the Baptist cried out: I am the voice of one crying

out in the wilderness 'Make straight the way of the Lord'. John 1.22

This third Sunday of Advent is called Rose or Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday. The pink candle on the Advent Wreath is lit to mark the mid-point in this season of expectant waiting.

The priest William Vanstone wrote a classic Christian book 'The Stature of Waiting' (1982). He contrasted this stillness and hope with our human tendency for busyness and activity – perhaps never more true than in the 'run up' to Christmas! Maybe these words, describing what wonder and depth can come from waiting in stillness, can encourage us to do so more (p.112): 'To man, as he waits, the world discloses its power of meaning - discloses itself in its heights and its depths, as wonder and terror, as blessing and threat. Man becomes, so to speak, the sharer with God of a secret - the secret of the world's power of meaning. The world is for him no mere succession of images recorded and registered in the brain: it is what Blake saw in his tiger and Kant in the starry heavens - a wonderful terror or a terrifying wonder. Rarely does man rise to such intense receptivity; but even in quite ordinary moments he becomes a point at which something in the world is not only registered but understood, experienced, recognised.'

Because man is in the world there are points in the world at which things no longer merely exist but are understood, appreciated, welcomed, feared, felt. Man as he waits upon the world becomes a place where the world is received not as it is received by a camera or a tape-recorder but rather with the power of meaning with which it is received by God.'



REEPHAM & WENSUM VALLEY
TEAM CHURCHES

Pew Notes

- 18th December— 6:30pm **Carol Service**, St Andrew's, Wood Dalling
- 21st December—6pm **Carols at the Fox**, Lyng
- 22nd December—3pm **Carols by Candle light**, St Mary's, Bylaugh
- 23rd December—4pm **Dress Up Nativity**, St Mary's, Elsing
- 24th December—3pm & 5pm **Christingle**, St Mary's, Reepham
- 24th December—4pm **Christingle**, St Margaret's, Lyng
- 24th December—6pm **Village Carol Service**, St Margaret's, Swannington

Services for next week: Sunday 24th December Forth Sunday of Advent

9am	Holy Communion	St Andrew's, Thurning
9am	Matins (BCP)	St Mary's, Bylaugh
11:30pm	Midnight Mass	St Margaret's, Lyng
11:30pm	Midnight Mass	St Andrew's, Attlebridge
11:30pm	Midnight Mass	St Mary's Reepham

The Rev'd. Helen Rengert, 01603 879275 revdhelenrwv@gmail.com

The Rev'd. Keith Rengert, 01603 879275 revdkeith@gmail.com (Sunday only)

The Rev'd. Judith Sweetman, 07484862962 (Friday to Sunday)
judith.sweetman@btinternet.com

The Rev'd. Richard Turk, 07721 035009 revdrichardrwv@gmail.com

Email parishofficerwv@gmail.com to submit articles or join the mailing list.

FACEBOOK: Reepham & Wensum Valley Events

WEBSITE: www.reepham-and-wensum-valley-team-churches.org.uk

Pew Notes are available to download from the RWV website and the E-newsletter

If you have any safeguarding concerns, please contact your Parish Safeguarding Officer.
Details in the church porch or on the RWV website.

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm 126 *In convertendo*

1 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, * then were we like those who dream.
2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, * and our tongue with shouts of joy.
3 Then they said among the nations, * "The LORD has done great things for them."
4 The LORD has done great things for us, * and we are glad indeed.
5 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, * like the watercourses of the Negev.
6 Those who sowed with tears * will reap with songs of joy.
7 Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, * will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 1:6-8,19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

St Mary's Church Elsing
Children's Nativity & Carol Service
Saturday 23rd December 4pm

Festive refreshments to follow the service.
All children welcome to dress up and join in!

