



Link Up!

‘The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.’ John 10 v 2-3

What’s on in November

In a change to the previous published plan, on 26th November we have Nick Mudge, from Gateway Church in Parkstone leading our service and preaching.

Following that service, we will be holding our Church Members’ Meeting. This will take place after a brief break for lunch. Bring your own lunch and we will provide drinks. Apologies for absence from those unable to attend can be given to Janet.

Looking forward to December

We have booked Rev Derek Stringer, who visited us earlier in the year, to come and take our Advent Services from 3rd December until 17th December. On 3rd December, which will include our communion service, the theme will be ‘The Christmas Tree’, on 10th December the theme will be ‘The Christmas Blessings’, and on 17th December the theme will be ‘Invisible at Christmas’.

Then on Sunday 24th December we will hold our Carol Service which will be led by Stan & Barbara Goose. Do invite family and friends along to that service.

On Christmas Day our service will start, as usual, at 10.30am and will be led by Janet Matterface. The Title will be ‘A Very Special Gift’.

Last Sunday I heard a thought-provoking sermon on Psalm 23 which I thought I would share with you as my reflection this week.

Psalm 23 will be well known to many of us and is probably one of the best-known passages of the bible for non-Christians as well due to it’s association with the Vicar of Dibley. Our familiarity with the passage can breed, if not a contempt a sense that we already know all there is to know about the verses.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

The focus of the sermon was on the final verse;

“Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Publicity for our special Christmas Services will be available in the entrance for you to use to invite friends, family and neighbours along to join us.

The final Sunday in December (31st) we will be joining our friends at Parkstone Baptist Church for their service at 10.30am. Anyone needing a lift to get there should talk to Janet or one of the other deacons.

Christmas Cards for the Church Family

We will, as usual, have our Church post-box out in the entrance lobby of the Church from **Sunday 3rd December** for you to use to send Christmas Cards to other members of the Church Congregation. Please make sure that you only use this for people who are either members of the Church or regular attenders of the congregation. Please put both first and surnames on the envelopes (we nearly always have to open some envelopes to try and work out which person they are intended for). We will distribute the cards on Sunday 17th December so that anyone going away for Christmas gets their before they go. If you aren't going to be around either on that Sunday or the following one, please come and see John or Janet to collect yours. Likewise, if you are visiting one of our housebound folk before Christmas come and see us to get any cards for the person to take with you.

Church Cleaning

In recent months two of the people on our rota for cleaning the church have had to stand down for health reasons. This is now leaving the rota repeating every five weeks which is quite demanding for those on it. We do want to make sure, if we can, that the church is cleaned each week, particularly with COVID still lurking around. Also cleaning less frequently means the job is more demanding when it is done because there's more dust and dirt around. I know that most of you will feel that this would be beyond you, but is there anyone who feels they could help out with this? Please let Janet know.

I've always taken it to mean that the goodness and love of God will gently follow us around and be with us. However, the originally Hebrew is much more active in it's meaning and in other translations use chases after or pursues me instead. For me this revelation made me see this passage in a new light, God's goodness and love is not just following me but it's chasing after me wherever I go, even if I try to run away from Him.

It made me think of Jonah who sought to run away from God's will for him but God chased after him and showed his goodness and love to both Jonah in saving him but also the people of Ninevah. Orla has a book by the Good Book Company about the story of Jonah where near the end Jonah is complaining about God forgiving Ninevah and he says "I knew you would forgive them. You are a kind and loving God, and you're always ready to forgive people who turn back to you – however bad they've been." and God replies that he will forgive anyone who turns to Him, even very grumpy people like Jonah!

God's goodness and love is chasing after us, ready to embrace us when we turn to him. We can see the examples of this in Jesus' earthly ministry where Jesus seeks out specifically the Samaritan woman in John 4 and Zacchaeus in Luke 19. Jesus is the Good Shepherd and he seeks us out, asks us to turn to him.

Graeme Smith