NOTES FROM NORCLIFFE

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR NORCLIFFE CHAPEL, STYAL, CHESHIRE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019

‘REMEMBERING THE PAST TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD’

November is a month of remembering and remembrance. It is a time when the nights draw in and we are more aware of the shadows, where light and dark alternate in a dance of the elements. The month begins with two feasts, All Saints on the 1st, sometimes called ‘All Hallows’, hence the term Halloween, and All Souls on the 2nd. It is above all the month that since the early 20th Century has been associated with Remembrance: remembrance of the two World Wars, and conflicts since. On Remembrance Sunday, we will be honouring and remembering the brave servicemen and servicewomen and the countless civilians: land girls, miners, munitions workers, intellectual workers (including Alan Turing, the code-breaker) and so many others who gave so much, in some cases their very lives, for freedom, and for those who have lost their lives since in other conflicts, Korea, the Falklands, the Gulf and elsewhere: in all this we honour their memory and pray for peace to the God of peace.

What would have happened if those countless good people had not acted as they did, and given their all in the struggle for freedom, justice and peace? We can never know for certain but we can make a few guesses.

Two books I came across this year brought it home to me just how great a debt of gratitude we owe them. Early this spring, I read Albert Camus’ ‘The Plague’; which is an allegory of the story of the heroic French Resistance during the War. The novel ends on a note of hope but also of warning: the plague may lie dormant and come back. We must be on our guard to prevent its recurrence. Then, only a few weeks ago, a friend lent me a book by one of my favourite authors, C.J. Sansom, well known for his historical novels set in Tudor times. This one, however, I had never come across: it is an ‘alternative history’, a ‘what if’ novel: in this case, ‘what if’ Britain had made a peace treaty with Germany in 1940 and become a vassal state under the Nazis. Like his other novels, it is a gripping read but like ‘The Plague’, it calls into question some comfortable assumptions we might otherwise harbour about what might have been. Goodness and truth do not always automatically come out on top. Sometimes they require effort, even sacrifice and struggle. For this too, we honour and revere the memory of the brave ones who gave their all. We will remember them.

Then in December, we celebrate, in the darkest season, the triumph of the light: the shortest day before the turn of the year. The light of God shines in the coming of the Christ child, who brings light to the world: a light of love, compassion and peace. We will mark it with our two special Christmas services when both our collections will go to our chosen charities, Send a Child to Hucklow and the East Cheshire Hospice. Please join us if you can for our Carols by Candlelight Service on Sunday December 22nd- which is always a magical occasion -and on Christmas Day morning (Wednesday) when we celebrate the coming of the light of the world into our lives, in the life and teaching of Jesus. May the light shine in all of us. Happy Christmas!

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF CHRISTMAS

A brother and his sister were staying with their grandparents a few weeks before Christmas. As they knelt down to say their prayers, the little girl prayed in a very loud voice several times over: ‘O God, I pray for a bicycle for Christmas. Amen’ ‘Why are you shouting?’ her brother asked her, ‘God isn’t deaf!’

His sister replied, ‘No, but Grandma is’.

A THOUGHT FOR CHRISTMASTIDE

If Christ is born a thousand times in Bethlehem,

but not in your own soul,

then your soul is still left forlorn. Angelus Silesius, 17th Century German poet

Worship Services – We warmly welcome you to our Unitarian and Free Christian chapel!

Our services are at 6.00 p.m. except on the **first** Sunday of the month when they are at 10.45 a.m.

November

3 (**10.45.a.m**) Rev Alex Bradley & Chris Goddard

(Joint service with Styal Methodists)

10 (6.00 p.m.) Rev Alex Bradley – REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

17 (6.00 p.m.) Rev Anna Jarvis

24 (6.00 p.m.) Rev Alex Bradley

December

1 (**10.45.a.m**) Rev Alex Bradley & Rev Katy Thomas

(Joint service with Styal Methodists)

8 (6.00 p.m.) Ian Bradbury and Nigel Johnson

15 (6.00 p.m.) Rev Charles Vandenbroeder

22 (6.00 p.m.) Rev Alex Bradley - CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Wed 25 (**10.45.a.m**) Rev Alex Bradley -CHRISTMAS DAY MORNING SERVICE

**[29** **NO SERVICE**]

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