

Hinde Street Methodist Church
Sunday 28 November 2021
11.00am Rev Peter Cornick

Signs of hope for Advent

Three explorations of hope for All Age Worship.

1. Signs of hope from 3Generate – an interview with three young people who attended a Methodist youth gathering.

- a. Describe what 3G is.
- b. How did you get there.
- c. What did you do?
- d. What did you see?
- e. What do you remember?

We lit a candle for hope and expectation in Advent. A candle reminding us that the people of God have always hoped for the future.

Jeremiah writes that a 'righteous branch' will spring up. Someone to call people to justice; fairness; Godly living.

3 Generate's goal is this:

... to create an inclusive and diverse space for the prophetic voice of children and young people to emerge and be heard.

The righteous branch perhaps?

... to become participants in advocacy, change and growth and have an impact in their local Methodist communities.

Good news indeed – if the church will allow young people to be the makers of change?

A sign of Christ's hope, this Advent.

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2. Signs of hope in a troubled world (using a picture from the Methodist Modern Art Collection: Nativity polyptych, Francis Hoyland.) [Nativity polyptych - Francis Hoyland \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)

The picture is by Francis Hoyland. 1961 and is called *Nativity*.

Whilst this is the beginning of Advent and not Christmas, the picture depicts the kind of world, into which the long expected will come – whether that be the child of Bethlehem, or the coming one of Advent.

What can you see?

1. Angel appearing to shepherds
2. Devastation of nuclear war – the killing of the innocents
3. Effects of war – Congo – the killing of the innocents
4. Three people moving through a forest – the journey to register
5. Refugees – the escape to Egypt
6. Mary and Joseph

Hoyland paints a picture, of a troubled world.

The effects of war – his image is of Congo. But of wars that have caused 10000 or more deaths in this last year, he would paint today, Afghanistan, Yemen, the war affecting Ethiopia-Sudan and Eritrea, and one which surprised me, the drug wars of Mexico. There are other conflicts: too many to list.

Hoyland paints the escape to Egypt of the holy family - an image of refugees escaping – well, where are they escaping from – it reminds us of the awful tragedy we have seen this week – 27 human lives lost in a dingy – the pram reminds us some of them were children.

Two so called responsible nations, UK and France, are today, incapable of even talking to one another about how to prevent another similar incident.

The image above – maybe Hoyland had three wise people in his mind – reminds me of migrants duped by political forces and smugglers, into walking through a forest on the Belarus – Polish border.

Mary and Joseph, look to me like so many people I see, in London, sleeping in vulnerable situations.

The images are stark reminders of a troubled world into which, we hope for Christ to come.

Jesus talks of

‘signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.’

Jesus recognises this troubled world.

But whilst the painting depicts the Nativity, Advent is actually, not about ticking off the days until Christmas. Advent is about hoping for the coming of Christ – again – into the present. And Hoyland’s picture speaks to me, more about Christ coming into this day and age.

And there you can see Christ – the light – coming into the world, at the top of the picture, in a cattle feeding trough. In amongst the trouble and suffering. A sign of hope.

‘Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory.’

And that is the hope of Advent.

So, can we find any Advent hope in a troubled world.

Given Hoyland paints a picture of nuclear destruction, did you know, in October 2020, the U.N.Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons reached fifty ratifications, and in January 2021, it became international law. Nuclear weapons are now banned. The Methodist and many other churches, have all condemned the continued use of Trident as a deterrent by

the UK government. Churches say of this deterrent: 'A threat of violence is not a non-violent act.'

[Nuclear Weapons | Joint Public Issues Team](#)

The treaty and speaking to power: a small sign of hope in a troubled world.

All We Can, the Methodist aid charity, has worked in the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh on the border of Myanmar which houses the Rohingya people – a forgotten refugee disaster which doesn't make the news. In March of this year, a fire broke out – of all places, a fire in a refugee camp is catastrophic. The fire displaced 45000 people – the death toll is un-numbered.

Since the fire, *All We Can* have built 69 sustainable and safe shelters to re-house displaced persons. And, they have delivered essential health and safety training sessions to residents to avoid future fires.

A sign of hope for refugees in a troubled world.

WLM Seymour Place will be helping rough sleepers this winter. Rather than the night shelter approach, they are supporting people into hotel rooms which are Covid safe – a big plus given last night's news – and clearly more dignified than a large room. Seymour Place itself will be used for training and advice by people called 'asset coaches.' This will help the people living temporarily in hotels, seek more permanent accommodation, and jobs.

[WLM Seymour Place | West London Mission \(WLM\)](#)

Not what Seymour Place used to do, but times change – approaches change – Seymour Place is working with homeless people this winter, but in a different way.

A sign of hope in a troubled world for people in need of safe accommodation.

Jesus said:

'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.'

Advent: a sign of hope in a troubled world.

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'A time to stop – think – pray: signs of being prepared for hope.'

I invite you to focus on the advent candle.

A single light in the darkness: a sign of hope.

A sign of Christ coming into the world.

Coming again to the world.

Already present amongst us.

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Focus again on the candle – the flame so potent; yet so vulnerable

Pray now for those signs of hope you have heard about today:

Young people – as advocates for change

peace and disarmament

people who find themselves refugees

people hoping for accommodation or work

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Look again at the candle flame: so potent, so vulnerable:

Spend a few moments pondering:

How can I bring one sign of hope to someone this Advent?

In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: The Lord is our righteousness.

Amen.
