

Dear all

I thought I'd start this letter with my vicar's bit from the February church magazine. If you have read the magazine, you can ignore this bit...

As I write this, we have just heard the sad news that Colonel Sir Tom Moore has died of COVID-19. Many tributes have poured in about this remarkable, yet very ordinary man. Those tributes reflected, in part, his amazing achievement. Not only was it pretty impressive that a (then) 99-year-old could complete that much regular exercise, but his initial aim to raise £1,000 for NHS charities finally resulted in almost £39 million (including Gift Aid). For this Captain Tom was awarded the rank of Knight Bachelor by the Queen, and was appointed Honorary Colonel of the Army Foundation College.

In addition, he received the BBC Sports Personality of the Year Helen Rollason Award at the 2020 ceremony, and performed in a charity cover version of the song "You'll Never Walk Alone". The single topped the UK music charts, making him the oldest person to achieve a UK number one.

One key word repeatedly came up in the tributes – that he was a 'beacon' of hope in a dark time. While the country was gripped by the virus in the first lockdown, and divided by bitter arguments about Brexit, Captain Tom became an inspirational figure that the whole country could become united around.

On Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, the church celebrated the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, or Candlemas as it is often known. It remembers the event recorded in Luke 2: 22-40, when, as per custom, Jesus' parents brought their first-born boy to the temple, to be 'redeemed' by a sacrifice. We read that *there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.*

When he sees the infant Jesus, he recognises that he is the one, and exclaims what we know as the 'Nunc Dimittis' *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people. To be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel.* (BCP version). Perhaps we could say, instead of *a light to lighten* (or enlighten), *a beacon of hope* for the nations.

But he will be a rather strange beacon of hope, for instead of unifying the nation(s), rather, *this child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.*

That light is a piercing, revealing light. A light that shows the world, and ourselves, as we really are. A light that hides nothing. Which all sounds a bit scary – not at all like that warm cosy glow that we might get from contemplating Captain Tom. But perhaps that is the kind of light that we need when we're stumbling around in the dark. The kind of light that warns of perils and dangers that could trip us up, or lead us astray... and, ultimately, leads us safely and securely to our destination.

Jesus spoke to them, saying, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."* (John 8: 12). As we approach the season of Lent, let us purposely and purposefully seek that light, and become light-bringers to the world. May the whole church be a beacon of hope for our nation.

Our Archbishops are encouraging us to pray for the nation, now that deaths from COVID have passed 100,000. They are suggesting we pray daily, preferably at 6.00pm, but any time will do. The link is [www.churchofengland.org/resources/prayer-nation](http://www.churchofengland.org/resources/prayer-nation)

Today's prayers are:

Gracious God,  
as we remember before you the thousands who have died,  
surround us and all who mourn with your strong compassion.  
Be gentle with us in our grief,  
protect us from despair,  
and give us grace to persevere  
and face the future with hope  
in Jesus Christ our risen Lord.  
Amen.

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels and saints charge over those who sleep.  
Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ.  
Rest your weary ones.  
Bless your dying ones.  
Soothe your suffering ones.  
Pity your afflicted ones.  
Shield your joyous ones, and all for your love's sake.  
Amen.

*Attributed to St. Augustine*

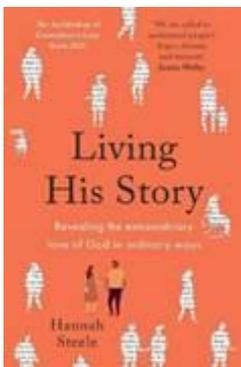
**Bible Study:** In our bible study, we will be looking at the Gospel of Mark. This week we will be looking at Mark chapter 3.

We will meet on Zoom, Thursdays 2.30-3.30ish pm. The Zoom details are:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8109399155?pwd=STVVTU44RzJxTFhTY1Mnl0bjJ2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 810 939 9155

Passcode: 1w2C9a



A reminder that, during Lent, we will change to following a Lent Course, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book this year - *Living His Story: Revealing the extraordinary love of God in ordinary ways*, written by Hannah Steele.

Books can be bought from Peterborough Christian Bookshop (currently open for collection). If you prefer online, Amazon or the Book Depository are always options. However, I would recommend Aslan Christian Books [Aslan Christian Books | Books Change Lives](#) While not matching Amazon Prime next day service, I have always found them to be very prompt, and they are often at least as cheap, if not cheaper!

Judy Stevens has asked me to inform you that the latest edition of *I'd rather be in Deeping* is online, and can be found at [https://issuu.com/zerosixdesign/docs/january\\_21\\_online](https://issuu.com/zerosixdesign/docs/january_21_online)

Terry Noble has shared a video about which he comments *It is the most amazing display of vocal virtuosity and voice control that I think I have ever heard. She really lives the part of the music. It is also worth watching the orchestral musicians as well. Could it be used as an audition piece for the church choir?*

Cecilia Bartoli has long been a favourite of mine – not only for the stunning quality of her singing, but also the joy and total commitment she brings to her performance.

[OPERA PLANET Cecilia Bartoli 'Agitata da due venti' - Vivaldi 4K ULTRA HD - YouTube](#)

In contrast I add another recording of Bartoli, this time singing a religious piece. A total contrast, but stunningly beautiful. You may be interested to know that, more than 30 years ago, I accompanied this piece on the organ of the Priory Church, at my cousin's wedding. The singer was the then fiancée (now wife) of another cousin.

[Mozart: Vesperae solennes de confessore in C, K.339 - Laudate Dominum omnes gentes - YouTube](#)

Finally, having mentioned the Nunc Dimittis earlier, I could have chosen so many. Here is a recording of the piece by Geoffrey Burgon. It was used in the BBC production of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, written by John le Carré, who died recently.

[Nunc Dimittis - BBC Young Chorister of the Year Ischia & Royal Wedding Trumpeter David Blackadder - YouTube](#)



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark