

## Thoughts for the second week in Advent

This year the Christmas lights have appeared earlier in homes and in towns. We seem to be looking for the comfort of Christmas, or it is perhaps that Danish word Hygge. Hygge is about warmth and light, and comfort in staying inside with a good book and if not a roaring fire then at least candles to fill dark corners.



There is a story from the Philippines that tells of the importance of light. An elderly king was trying to decide which of his two sons should become king in his death. Recognising that wisdom was needed in ruling he set his sons a challenge. Giving them each five pieces of silver, he challenged them each to fill the whole hall by nightfall. The older son quickly left and coming across a sugar beet farm he watched as the beet was processed and noticed how much was thrown away after the pressing. He bargained with the manager, offering the five coins in exchange for all the discarded waste and arranging for it to be delivered to the hall. Long before nightfall the hall was filled, and the son felt so satisfied he told his father there was no need for his brother to try. However, the king said no they must wait until nightfall and see what the younger son brought. Not long before nightfall the younger son returned, he carried nothing but a candle stub but immediately asked for the sugar beet remains to be removed from the hall. When the hall was empty, he placed the candle in the middle and lit it, immediately the whole hall was filled with light, right into every corner. Turning to his younger son, the king smiled and congratulated him on achieving the task without spending any of the money and proclaiming him his heir. The son, he said, had filled the hall with the thing people needed most.



The world is a place of darkness and light, but the smallest glimmer of light can dispel the darkness. God has given free will and that means people are free to explore all possibilities, even those it might be wiser to leave alone, but human nature is not always wise. Discerning what is light and what is dark is a lifetime's journey with many crossroads as we discover that which we condemn in others has crept into our own lives in some small, disguised way. The challenge of the journey is to recognise and name the darkness whilst choosing the light, and it is not always easy. Darkness can overwhelm and sometimes our choices lead to hurt, hurt for ourselves or hurt for others, and in the retribution which follows guilt can add to the darkness. However, God is in the darkness for God is everywhere, and recognising the presence of God can light that candle which overwhelms the darkness. With God there is always hope and that tiny candle flame is the promise of light in the darkness. Little surprise then that this year we are searching for light more than ever. Christmas lights remind us of the joy of the Christmas message so whilst we wait in Advent let's light a candle or two, or three or four, and feel the comfort of the presence of God.

As you sit in the light why not reflect upon the things in your life that you might bring more into the light and those things that you must move to do that. We have been forced to take time out this year to stop doing some things and before we rush to fill our diaries perhaps we should reflect on whether those things are light-giving or simply sugar beet remains.

### Prayer

God of light you shine in the darkness, may we allow your light to guide us and turn our backs on the darkness. May the light of your love be in our words and actions as we journey following the way of Jesus. Amen

