

Toy Service Sunday 14th December – led by Revd. David Aplin



How time flies! Toy Service 2025 brought lots of 'goodies' for the women, men, and children of our local refuge. We hope the toys and gifts will find their place in a Happy Christmas for all at the refuge.

*David shared with us the sad news that **John Cobley**, the secretary of our sister church in Hatfield had died the day before and we held him in our prayers.*

David's Address was about **Faith, Patience, and the Promise of Advent**. The reading from James 5

encouraged his audience to be patient, urging them to wait steadfastly for the coming of the Lord, just as a farmer patiently awaited the precious harvest from the earth, relying on the early and late rains. They were to strengthen their hearts, for the arrival of the Lord was near.

David had been out walking his dog, and spoken with a Romanian neighbour who had talked about the troubling state of the country. David had reassured him that things had a way of working out, highlighting that, despite disagreements and political strife, politicians would ultimately respond to the common sense of the British people – noting that, unlike the French, the British were not prone to rioting, even though they had been driving tractors for longer. In the end, right would out!

Since September, David's life had been dominated by the struggle to prevent the closure of St. Nicholas Primary School in Elstree by Herts Council. The council manager had been particularly harsh, driven more by self-interest than by logic or decency, and some councillors had acted similarly. The lead councillor, despite claiming to be an Anglican, appeared to be able to separate his faith from his political decisions, justifying his actions by stating that faith was not a statutory requirement in education. David wondered whether he was only an Anglican on Sundays.

Although the experiences had been disheartening and upsetting, they could not destroy the soul, which was guarded by the Lord. The outpouring of support from the community had been deeply fulfilling for him, giving hope that justice would ultimately prevail and that the school might be saved.

Life presented many challenges, including great sadness from the loss of loved ones, and failures that might be due to our own actions or those of others, so it could feel harsh and unyielding, like a bed of thorny branches left after the petals had fallen from a rose. Yet, just as roses would bloom again in spring, he believed that people, too, would rise from adversity into the light.



Advent was more than simply the four weeks leading up to Christmas, David told us. It also carried the promise that the Son would come again. While no one knew the exact time of this return, and early Christians had thought it might happen within their lifetimes, two millennia had passed and it had not yet occurred. And though it would probably not happen in our lifetime (*he was not holding his breath*), David was sure that our future remained secure through our faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith in Jesus Christ provided a steadfast promise: if people repented of their sins, they would be forgiven by Christ's love, freely given. Through faith in Jesus as Saviour, believers would not die but would have eternal life with the Father in the Kingdom of God. Christ Jesus had died, been raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven. Believers could follow Him through faith. This was a constant promise, available to all who came to Him, and David was sure that our friend, John Cobley, had now received this promise.

Through faith our souls were eternal and could not be destroyed.

We welcomed John Knott to our company of Bible Readers. With Maureen's 'Naughty Elf' on his shoulder, one might wonder about ventriloquists – but the readings were given in a clear voice.

