

Bringing in the sheaves: Psalm 126, 1 Tim 1.1-17 — and St Cedd



Today's TFTD comes from Christopher Graham, Reader at St Peter's Hale.

Ps 126.5-7

6 Those who sow in tears ♦
shall reap with songs of joy.

7 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed, ♦
will come back with shouts of joy,
bearing their sheaves with them.

Bringing in the sheaves: TFTD 26 October

Difficult times ahead. Tier 2. Tier 3. Advent this year is going to feel more than usually penitential.

[Today, the Church of England commemorates King Alfred the Great, King of Wessex, who died on this day in AD 899. A good Christian monarch and champion of education in the mother tongue, not just in Latin, Alfred, was born in Wantage and buried in Winchester. Pretty much a southerner, content to consign much of the north to Viking suzerainty under the so-called Danelaw. But then, perhaps he didn't](#)

have much choice.

One of today's psalms, Ps 126, prays 'Turn our captivity O Lord: as the rivers in the south'. Well, in one respect at least, life under our northern lockdowns probably isn't that different from southern social-distancing. The question for everybody, north or south, is how are we going to respond to the challenges — and the opportunities, even — of our Covid captivity.

Paul's letter to Timothy urges a positive, faithful approach - not just the Don'ts, but the Do's. God's training has a positive aim: "love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith" (1 Tim 1.5). Don't kill Granny, certainly. But Do something to help others. As the words of the old Prayer Book Catechism put it 'my duty to my Neighbour ... to do unto others as I would they should do unto me'. Showing the love of God in action, day by day. And thereby proclaiming the Gospel.

As well as King Alfred, today's lectionary commemorates St Cedd, a 7th century Anglo-Saxon monk and bishop in the Kingdom of Northumbria – and an evangelist to the Middle Angles and East Saxons. Cedd had been a protégé of St Aidan himself on Lindisfarne, the Holy Island off the North Northumberland coast. Cedd died on this day in AD 664, six months after the great Synod of Whitby at which differences of custom and practice between the Celtic and Roman churches were sorted out.

One of Cedd's younger brothers was another bishop saint, Chad of Lichfield and York — the original missionary bishop to Cheshire, as part of a huge diocese that ran from Staffordshire to Carlisle.

Meanwhile, it turns out that yet another four-letter saint from Lindisfarne is also commemorated today. Eata was Abbot of Melrose,

then Abbot of Lindisfarne, and finally Bishop of Hexham.

All this is written up in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* which we had to study years ago in the first year of my History degree at Liverpool.

What a wonderful centre of Christian spirituality and mission

Lindisfarne was - and is. Many people are finding Celtic Daily Prayer from the Northumbrian Community a rich resource and inspiration in these testing times. And the St Cuthbert's Way from Melrose to Lindisfarne is an increasingly popular pilgrimage route.

Fifty years ago this summer, the Marygate House retreat centre on Holy Island opened its doors. As it happens, my aunt, Joan Harris, was one of the founders and the first co-warden. Of course, Marygate is closed for the moment and the 50th anniversary celebrations have had to be postponed. Marygate has been favoured in recent years by Archbishop Sentamu and, I believe, by our own Bishop Mark. Its foundation stands as an example of positive thinking and Christian initiative.

Closer to home, our own diocesan Retreat Centre at Foxhill, while closed for residential stays, is offering a programme of day retreats under the banner Refresh Restore Renew.

See www.foxhillchester.co.uk.

Psalm 126 encourages us through these testing times:

*6 Those who sow in tears ♦
shall reap with songs of joy.*

*7 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed, ♦
will come back with shouts of joy,
bearing their sheaves with them.*

But first we have to sow. Let's make good use of this time of enforced slowdown to think ahead about how we might do things differently (and better) in the months and years ahead. And let's watch out for what we

should be doing here and now to make a difference wherever we can.
Let our sowing in Tiers 2 and 3 (and 1 even) yield a rich and joyful
harvest when all this horrid Covid is behind us.

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