

Let it Shine!

John Ch 1 v 1-5

“Oh no, we won't have to sing Shine Jesus Shine will we!” cried one of our sisters in dismay when it was finally decided that the new theme would be Let It Shine.

“Oh yes, we will!” I replied in true pantomime fashion.

Of course many of us enjoy the jaunty tune and lustily sing that hymn, even if it has become a little over used during the last few decades. The sentiments are, however, strong and true and I'm sure they are echoed by us all as we face our daily lives. We do pray that the love of Jesus will 'fill this land' and that God's glory will 'blaze out and flow through every nation'. Oh that all may be filled with God's 'grace and mercy'! Maybe fighting would cease, maybe wars would end and then maybe we would all display and mirror more of the likeness of God day by day.

Graham Kendrick, who wrote that hymn, was born in Northamptonshire in 1950. He is the son of a Baptist minister and has become well known as a prolific singer/song writer having written 'The Servant King' and 'Make way, Make Way' among many others. In 1987 the album which included 'Shine Jesus Shine' sold over 80,000 copies.

During the next twelve months we will think about light in all its many forms – from merely striking a match and holding a tiny candle to the wonderful truths of God written about in the Bible. We will also think about darkness in all its many forms. But remember, light always triumphs over darkness, giving hope to all.

John, the writer of the fourth Gospel, is in no doubt that God existed before all things. Through Him the world came into being and His word was the source of all life and light – the light that darkness had never extinguished. I'm sure most of us are familiar with the small candles that can be bought which, however hard we try, cannot be blown out. At first the flame appears to die then within seconds it flickers and returns to full strength. Children enjoy the fun these bring at party times and it even brings a smile to adult faces. John would have loved this concept which is a wonderful modern example of his words in v 5 'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out'.

At the age of 8 I was a member of the Brownie Pack that met in Lower Wyke Sunday School building and I remember singing 'This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine'. Simple, meaningful words in subsequent verses are 'Take my little light round the world' and 'Hide it under a bush, Oh no!' The word **light** is used 21 times throughout John's Gospel – John the Baptist came to point people to 'Christ the light', Jesus refers to himself as 'the light of the world' (Ch 8 v 12) and he also says this same light can be in people so they can become children of the light (12 v 36). Maybe the last verse was the inspiration for the song quoted above. Our theme title this year surely means that we should let God's light shine in the world today. As we learn more of the nature of God's light in future papers, hopefully we can let that light shine through us showing God's presence in the twenty first century.

1. If someone in your group has a birthday, buy some inextinguishable candles and have fun!!

2. There are many paintings and hymns inspired by light. As last year make a collection if you would like to.

Diane Thornton