

Wonder Women Then and Now!  
Psalm 27 - A Prayer of Praise v 4 and 5

What is your family routine on Christmas Eve? (Maybe this year will be different). I'm sure we all have differing ways in which we prepare for the 'big day'. Some years ago I had a routine of spending Christmas Eve afternoon making mince pies and listening to Carols from Kings on the radio. I also remember watching a Mary Berry programme in which Mary told her viewers how she always made an enormous fish pie for the whole family as they descended on her home from various parts of the country. One of my friends usually went to the local garden centre, with all the family, to buy their Christmas Tree and spent the evening nibbling nuts, crisps and sweets whilst decorating their centre piece. Each routine held a warm feeling of cosy familiarity for those involved.

Some of you will know Bishop Kay Ward, the first female Bishop in the Moravian Unity. In her book 'Park Benches' she shares her experience of Christmas Eve 2013. The family had come together at their holiday lodge in the woods. Christmas Eve arrived as a lovely snowy day. They set their evening meal slowly cooking and soon the turkey and preparations for the next day had been completed. The big event of the day was to trek into the woods to find their preferred Christmas tree so off they all trudged through the deep snow to choose, cut down, drag home and decorate their prize. Everything was ready for Christmas day and they all hunkered down for a cosy meal together before going to the local church service. Suddenly an alarm shrieked through the house. It was telling them that the septic tank system had failed. They rang the plumbing company but there was no reply so plan B had to be put in place. Some of the family were already staying at the nearby small hotel so extra rooms were booked and everyone moved, presents included! After the Christmas Eve church service they watched movies in hotels rooms – snug and warm. They had everything they needed – they were together cosy and comfortable and with toilets that flushed!

Bishop Kay hesitates to connect this experience with another Christmas Eve long ago – a cold night with no room in the Inn, but maybe there are similarities! Our Christmas this year may not be what we expected or would want but hopefully we will have all we really need. It is humbling to think of those for whom this holy night offers no safe, warm place. We are rich indeed and have much to be thankful for. Covid has made us stop, think and be grateful. Our important routine has been disrupted – or is it really important? Jesus came to break routines, to show us what is really important and to make us realise what we really need. Christmas 2013 was 'kind of fun' for the Ward family in the words of Kay's oldest granddaughter. Let us try to make Christmas 2020 special and memorable for us whatever we do.

Those who have met Bishop Kay, I am sure would agree that she is an amazing woman. She can draw parallels from the scriptures and make them live today. I have no hesitation in calling her a 'Wonder Woman' in her time. I pray that each and every one of us has all that we really need this Christmas.

Action - Let us try to ensure no-one is left entirely alone this Christmas.

Oh Lord, our best laid plans seem so important to us. Help us to remember that you are always with us and that we are safe in the shelter of your loving care. Let us see what is really important and be ready to change course with a smile. Amen