LEADER NOTES

Brockley Homegroup Notes
January 2025

As you can see there is home ‘homework’ so it would be helpful if you could distribute these notes to your group in advance of the event. Or point them to brockleychapel.org where thet can find the notes themselves

**Homework**
Please come with a very short written prayer that finishes these two sentences. (You don’t have to read it out yourself if you don’t want to)

And you might want to get ahead on Q2

Father God thank you . . . . . . . . . . . . . . (only one thing)

Father God, in 2025, please help me with . . . . . . . . . . . .(only one thing)

**Q1**

Here are the parts of King Charles Christmas Day speech that are ‘religious’ on nature.

*After all, the Gospels speak so vividly of conflict and teach the values with which we can overcome it.*

*The example that Jesus gave us is timeless and universal. It is to enter the world of those who suffer, to make a difference to their lives and so bring hope where there is despair.*

*As the famous Christmas Carol, ‘Once In Royal David’s City’ reminds us, ‘Our Saviour holy’ ‘came down to Earth from Heaven’, lived among ‘the poor and mean and lowly’ and transformed the lives of those he met, through God’s ‘redeeming love’.*

*That is the heart of the Nativity Story and we can hear its beat in the belief of all the great faiths in the love and mercy of God in times of joy and of suffering, calling us to bring light where there is darkness.*

*Again, listening is a recurrent theme of the Nativity story. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, listened to the Angel who revealed to her a different future full of hope for all people. The message of the Angels to the shepherds – that there should be peace on Earth – in fact echoes through all faiths and philosophies.*
**Q1**
What do you think of it? What general comments would you make? Which bits do you like best? Which bits are you less comfortable with? What impression do you get of Charles’ understanding and his personal faith? ( I think this deserves 5 - 10 minutes of discussion and I have 5 points in my notes)

**A1**
(i) I’m encouraged by how much ‘religious’ stuff there is in his speech. The whole speech was 756 words and 196 of them are broadly religious. That’s approximately 25.78%. (Thank you Bing Ai). It surely indicates that, to Charles, religion is very important – if he devotes 25% of his Christmas message to it. It is vanishingly rare that you hear anything religious from our politicians or anybody in public life. The Church of England has massively undermined itself with recent scandals and The Archbishop of Canterbury’s (whoever that is now) Christmas message would only get a 20 second snippet on the national news. 8 million people listened to King Charles live and another 3 million on catchup. I think this makes him among the most significant ‘religious’ voices in our country.

(ii)
Remember this is a political speech. Charles probably worked on it with a team of speech writers. It was probably then scrutinised by a team of advisers. Anything considered extreme, controversial, too supportive of one particular point of view, or too personal – would have been watered down or amended. Their job is to blandify it! And we need to remember that this is not necessarily what Charles would say in private.

(iii)
I like it because there are some quotable bits that I can use when preaching on national occasions (like the celebration of VE day in the summer) to show Charles general reverence for Jesus and his general support for Christian ethics and moral framework.

(iiii)
My favourite bits are him referring to Jesus as ‘holy’ (this links in my mind straight away to the conversation Jesus had with the rich young ruler when Jesus says “why do you call me good?” And I also like Charles use of the word ‘redeeming’: – it opens the door to many vital themes of the Gospel

(iv)
The bit I’m least comfortable with is Charles emphasis on Jesus as example.

*The example that Jesus gave us is timeless and universal. It is to enter the world of those who suffer, to make a difference to their lives and so bring hope where there is despair.*

It’s not wrong – but it is a palid and inadequate summary of Jesus mission. If Jesus came to give us an example, we are no better off. In fact, we are probably more condemned because none of us can live up to Jesus’ example. Nowhere in The Nativity is there any mention of Jesus as ‘example’ but again and again it is emphasised that Jesus comes to save.

(v)
The quote “*The message of the Angels to the shepherds – that there should be peace on Earth – in fact echoes through all faiths and philosophies.” Is also problematic for several reasons.*

**Q2**
Make a list of all the places that you can think of - in the Mathew and Luke where it is mentioned that Jesus will be Saviour.

**A2**
You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. Luke 1:31

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." Luke 2:11

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

"My eyes have seen your salvation." Luke 2:25

“And he gave him the name Jesus.” Matthew 2:25

he has come to his people and redeemed them. Luke 1:68

He has raised up a horn[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%201&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24963c)] of salvation for us Luke 1:69

to give his people the knowledge of salvation
    through the forgiveness of their sins, Luke 1:77

I can find 8 – and I might have missed some. This is an interesting exercise to note the emphasis of the Christmas story of Jesus as Saviour.

**Q3**
This year I discovered the story of the writer Robert Louis Stevenson. I mentioned it a couple of times in December. RLS has become very trendy again because his story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde plays well with the modern questions about identity. In his youth, RLS was very religious and it was widely thought that he would follow his grandfather and become a minister in the rather dour and strict Church of Scotland. He went off to university and made some new friends and before long declared himself to be an atheist. This deeply upset his parents. Another 10 years past and RLS thought of himself as a Theist (somebody who believes in some kind of creator / higher power – but not necessarily anything like the God of the Bible) In another 10 years RLS came back towards Christianity. He wrote Christian prayers and taught Bible class where he was now living in Samoa. But his views were far from the narrow, dour, strict outlook of The Church of Scotland. He was passionate about social justice and treasured the culture of the Polynesian Islands. He was positive, encouraging and loved being part of a close community. He died aged 44.

What shifts have you gone through in your life? Have there been times in your life when you have ‘lost’ your faith - or felt disconnected from mainstream Christianity? How differently do you think now to when you were a teenager?

Encourage everybody in turn to share something. Sharing honestly is a vital part of developing true fellowship.

**Q4**
A text that we will return to at various times through 2025 is

 ‘Do not fear what they fear; do not be afraid.’**15**But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, **16**keeping a clear conscience

Peter starts by urging Christians not to have the same fears as people in the non-Christian culture around them.

Make a ranked list of things that you think people, in the society around, fear the most. Please email your list to Simon.

Next time we will be looking for Scriptures that address these ‘fears’ and why Christians should be handling them differently.

**Sharing and Prayer and Worship**
This year we are trying to take our groups a bit deeper. Fellowship and support happens more meaningfully when we are willing to be open about our joys and sadnesses, our successes and our fails. Give everybody in the group an opportunity to share. But no pressure.

**Involving others.**
Are these other people outside your group who you could invite to join. Maybe just offer then a no strings / no commitment – come along and see taster. Are there people within your group who you could invite / persuade to lead one of the questions / or come up with creative ideas for prayer or worship.

**Review**
Here is the generalised pattern for all reviews. What are we doing? Why are we doing it? Is it working? How can we do it better? How can we involve other people? (1)to bless others and stop the group getting clicky. (2) How can the gifts and confidence of people within the group be developed as they are involved in leading.

It may or may not be the right time to do a brief review with your group