

Dear Friends,

On New Year's Day I went online, by courtesy of You Tube, to visit the morning worship that had taken place on 31st December at Wesley's Chapel & Leysian Mission: the fine church that has stood in City Road, London since it was founded by John Wesley – and where he is buried. The visiting preacher was the Revd Tom Franklin Ross, a minister of the New Zealand Methodist Church and representative of the World Methodist Council. It was a fine sermon, marking the feast of the Epiphany. My ears pricked up at one phrase. It was almost a throwaway line, and if I had blown my nose at that moment I might have missed it. Tom was speaking of the coming of the Magi, or Wise Men, to Bethlehem. It was, like the experience of the shepherds, 'an epiphany, an 'Aha!' moment.'

An 'Aha!' moment. What a lovely way to describe what an epiphany is. A moment of wonder, of new understanding, of seeing things afresh, of truth revealed. There are more technical definitions, of course: to the (Concise) Oxford Dictionary, it describes either a 'manifestation of Christ to the gentiles, as represented by the magi' or 'a moment of sudden and great revelation'. It comes from a Greek word meaning 'to show'. It, or its derivatives can be found in the New Testament: in Luke 1.79, in the song of Zechariah after the birth of John the Baptist: '...TO GIVE LIGHT to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.' In Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus it is translated as the Lord's APPEARING.

Epiphany as we know it began in the eastern churches, before spreading to the West. As the Oxford Dictionary states, in the west it has become associated with the coming of the magi in particular, but it's more than that. Eastern churches see Epiphany – God revealed, if you like – in the Incarnation, when Angels brought good news to shepherds; in the coming of the Magi, led by a star; above all in the Baptism of Jesus, which some of us may revisit on 7 January; and – I bet you didn't know this – the wedding in Cana of Galilee when Jesus turned water into wine. Aha! Moments indeed.

But the Bible is full of Aha! Moments throughout: from poets, story-tellers, visionaries, preachers, song-writers, the people we call prophets, historians, witnesses and, always, lovers. For that Kaleidoscope of writings is, from beginning to end, as I never tire of saying, a love story. But the greatest Aha! Moments are the birth of the Son of God in a humble stable ('Our God, contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man') and the utter self-giving of the abandoned, bruised, forgiving man on the cross ('never was love, dear King, never was grief like thine'). A birth and a death in a world as dark, as damaged, as war-prone, as oppressive, as full of doubt and fear and hopelessness as ours is today. And a resurrection which gives the lie to death. For God, who loves us, and SHOWS (another epiphany word) his love in Jesus, and REVEALS his truth to us through the Holy Spirit, is ever present, and every day is an epiphany.

We, earth's children now rejoice,
The Prince of Peace proclaim;
With heaven's host lift up our voice,

And shout Immanuel's name;
Knees and hearts to him we bow;
Of our flesh and of our bone,
Jesus is our brother now,
And God is all our own.

Happy new year!

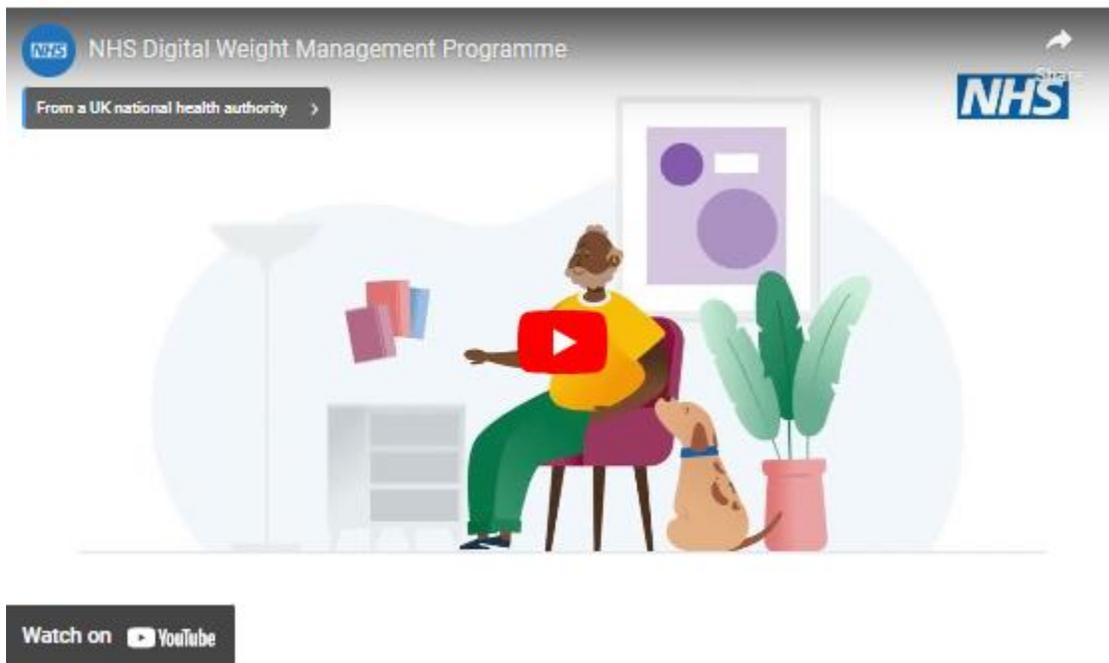
Peter

Resources/Good News

NHS Digital Weight Management Programme

The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme could help you if you or someone you know is living with obesity and also has diabetes, high blood pressure, or both. If this is you, you could benefit from this 12-week programme. It's free and easily available via a smartphone, tablet, or computer. To start your journey to a healthier lifestyle, you need to speak to your GP or a local pharmacist who can refer you to the programme.

The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme supports adults living with obesity who have a diagnosis of diabetes, hypertension or both to manage their weight and improve their health. This animated video provides details on who is eligible for the programme and how to access it.



To find out more about the programme please follow this link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-weight-management/how-to-access-the-programme/>