Yesterday the second Advent candle was lit in churches across the country.  Traditionally on the second Sunday of Advent we focus on the prophets.  We often quote the words of Isaiah chapter 9: ‘A child is born to us!  A son is given to us!  And he will be our ruler.  He will be called “Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace”.   Isaiah didn’t see the fulfilment of his prophecy – It was over 700 years before Jesus was born – but he clearly rejoiced in what was to come.

In more recent times Charles Wesley picked up Isaiah’s theme in his hymn – ‘Come thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free’.  What is he saying?  That the key message of the Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Christ, and now he is here!  He has come to set us free, from sin, from the flaws in our human nature, from our illnesses and limitations, from death itself.  Who will he set free?  His gift is for all who put their trust in Him.  Praise God!

Do we still have prophets today?  Yes!  They *foretell* the future, often by *forth-telling* the consequences of what is happening now.  One of the most famous is David Attenborough, making clear the consequences of global warming and pollution.  Chris Packham is another, looking at the impact on plant and animal life of modern industry and life styles.  For years their words have fallen on largely deaf ears – are Governments and people now ready to hear?

Can you think of other prophets?  Who is pointing out the consequences of the decline of faith in Christ in Britain today?  Most churches have preachers or ordinary members who feel keenly our need for deeper faith and more active discipleship.  Do we listen?  Part of our response is this journey in Holy Habits we are taking together.

**May the wonder of the coming of Christ, born to set us free, fill us with gladness and generosity to others as never before this Christmas!**

*Produced by Daphne and John Wilkins on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*