

## Ministers Muse

December is upon us once again and it is nearly time to celebrate Christmas 2017, although the shops have been full of Christmas gifts and cards for months. The Christian story of Jesus begins in December with Advent. Advent is a time of preparation. We prepare for lots of things in life, like holidays and weddings, but the preparation for Christmas is even more special. It is a preparing: not just to give presents to friends and family, and spending more than we have; or writing cards for people we have not been in touch with since last year or not seen for decades, although it is important to let them know you are thinking of them; or stocking up on food to last a day or two, and yet buying enough to feed an army for the duration. It is a time for preparing ourselves to once again accept the Christ child into our hearts and minds so that he makes a difference to the way we live our lives for the whole of the following year.

The birth of a baby is always a marvellous and miraculous event, and every child is very special to their mother. The Christ child, Jesus, however, was destined to be special for the whole world. This child and his birth is the beginning of a story that takes us through the whole year as we follow Jesus' life, teaching, relationships, crucifixion and death. It is all because of this baby that we have life beyond this one, eternal life, with a heavenly father whose love for us is greater than any other love we can experience.

This Christmas as you share love in times of celebration with family and friends remember the love God has for you and do your best to let others know that God's love is for them as well as for the whole world.

With best wishes for a happy Christmas and a blessed new year, your friend and minister,

*Janet.*



### Carols in The Forum

As usual, this Christmas, Wallsend Churches Working Together are holding their Carols in The Forum for Christian Aid.

It will be on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December at 10 a.m.

The Salvation Army Band will be leading the singing and we are all encouraged to go along and help to swell the numbers. You don't have to be a great singer, just enjoy singing carols and passing on the true Christian Christmas message to our neighbours in Wallsend.

All our churches are part of Wallsend Churches Working Together and we need all our members and friends to take part in this event.

Alan Barker

## Deacons Muse

Dear Friends

‘Unto us a boy is born! King of all creation’ Singing the Faith 218

I heard my first Christmas carols played by the Salvation Army on a recent visit to London. I love these familiar words that I have grown up with and a real reminder of the Advent season leading us to Christmas Day.

Every year many of us write Christmas cards to friends that we only ever correspond with at this time of the year. It gives us a chance to send them a greeting and perhaps include a note saying we are thinking about them. It’s a way we show others that we care.

As Christians this time of the year helps us to spread God’s love to others. It’s wonderful to know that we are blessing someone’s day.

But do we find the space to reflect on what it means to us that Jesus came into the world as a baby?

My prayer for all of us this Advent and Christmas season is that we try and spend time reflecting on the love, joy and grace of God and anticipate with the wonder of a child at his coming into our world.

‘And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him.’ 1 John 4: 9

Heralding in the New Year seems to be done with spectacular firework displays in many places.

As Christians our New Year means the ending of the Christmas season with Epiphany where we recognise the gifts of the Wise Men to Jesus. Gifts which were so precious and fitting for the King.

We all have gifts which we are able to use to enable God’s kingdom to grow. As a church we will be thinking and praying about our plans for growth.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary.

*Taken from ‘A Book of Blessings,’ by Nick Aiken and Alan Elkins*

May God bless you this Christmastime and may you know God’s love for you, the joy of knowing Jesus and the peace of the Holy Spirit.

In fellowship,

*Deacon Gail*



## Prayers for the world

### **Something is happening, someone is coming**

What has been will pass away and all will be changed.

### **Something is happening, someone is coming**

The lowly will be lifted up and the mighty will be brought down.

### **Something is happening, someone is coming**

Love and faith will meet; justice and peace will kiss each other

Prepare a straight road in the wilderness of our lives.

### **He is coming in the power and gentleness of the Spirit.**

*Kathy Galloway, Starters for Sunday, churchofscotland.org.uk*

God of promise, you have given us a sign of your love through the gift of Jesus Christ our Saviour, who was promised from ages past. We believe as Joseph did the message of your presence whispered by an angel, and offer our prayers for your world, confident of your care and mercy for all creation. Shepherd of Israel, may Jesus, Emmanuel and son of Mary, be more than just a dream in our hearts. With the apostles, prophets and saints, save us, restore us, and lead us in the way of grace and peace, that we may bear your promise into the world.

Amen

## A prayer of the church

*“Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.” James 5, 7-10, nrsv.*

When we are no longer children, it is hard to recall the agony it once was to wait for Christmas, the days of December that seemed as if they would never end. Now, the weeks of Advent seem to pass in a flash, filled with the frenzy of shopping and packing and a thousand other preparations, and the need to juggle all our everyday business with the special demands of the approaching celebrations. So pray to remember that this reality is a time of waiting- that, in fact, all the days of every year should be filled with the sense of waiting, and the hard work of preparing to greet our coming King.

## Prayers for Trinity

Give thanks for all the blessings of Christmas- for the people who come to our services; for the fun we have with family and friends, and the joy of sharing again the faith that the birth of Jesus really was the coming of God into our world as human flesh. Invite all your friends and neighbours to our carol service on Dec 24<sup>th</sup>. Let them know the real celebration of Christmas is not something we want to keep to ourselves!

***May the Lord bless you with his peace, sustain you with his mercy and enrich you with his presence throughout Advent and in the year ahead.***

## **"Santa's Secret Wish", poetic writing by Betty Werth.**

Christmas Eve, a young boy with light in his eyes looked deep into Santa's, to Santa's surprise

And said as he sat on Santa's broad knee, "I want your secret. Tell it to me."

He leaned up and whispered in Santa's good ear "How do you do it, year after year?"

"I want to know how, as you travel about, giving gifts here and there, You never run out.

How is it, Dear Santa, that in your pack of toys you have plenty for all of the world's girls and boys?

Stays so full, never empties, as you make your way from rooftop to rooftop, to homes large and small,

From nation to nation, reaching them all?"

And Santa smiled kindly and said to the boy, "Don't ask me hard questions. Don't you want a toy?"

But the child shook his head , and Santa could see that he needed the answer. "Now listen to me,"

He told that small boy with the light in his eyes, "My secret will make you both sadder and wise."

"The truth is that my sack is magic. Inside it holds millions of toys for my Christmas Eve ride.

But although I do visit each girl and each boy, I don't always leave them a gaily wrapped toy. Some homes are hungry, some homes are sad, some homes are desperate, some homes are bad.

Some homes are broken, and the children there grieve. Those homes I visit, but what should I leave?"

"My sleigh is filled with the happiest stuff, but for homes where despair lives, toys aren't enough.

So I tiptoe in, kiss each girl and boy, and I pray with them that they'll be given the joy Of the Spirit of Christmas, the Spirit that lives in the heart of the dear child who gets not, but Gives."

"If only God hears me and answers my prayer, when I visit next year, what I will find there Are homes filled with peace, and with giving, and love and boys and girls gifted with light from above.

It's a very hard task, my smart little brother, to give toys to some, and to give prayers to others.

But the prayers are the best gifts, the best gifts indeed, for God has a way of meeting each need."

"That's part of the answer. The rest, my dear youth, is that my sack is magic. And that is the truth.

In my sack I carry on Christmas Eve day more love than a Santa could e'er give away.

The sack never empties of love, or of joys cause inside it are prayers, and hope. Not just toys. The more that I give, the fuller it seems, because giving is my way of fulfilling dreams."

"And do you know something? You've got a sack, too. It's as magic as mine, and it's inside of you.

It never gets empty, it's full from the start. It's the centre of lights, and love. It's your heart.

And if on this Christmas you want to help me, Don't be so concerned with the gifts 'neath your tree.

Open that sack called your heart, and share your joy, your friendship, your wealth, your care."

The light in the small boy's eyes was glowing. "Thanks for your secret. I've got to be going."

"Wait, little boy," Said Santa, "Don't go. Will you share? Will you help?

Will you use what you know?" And just for a moment the small boy stood still, touched his heart

with his small hand and whispered, "I will."

*Betty Werth*

No wonder we exchange presents at Christmas. As the poem shows, it's a way of responding to all that God has given us. But the central gift from God, the most important gift of all, was the gift of a tiny baby.

It seems such a strange gift. If I was God, I'd have sent something quite different. Something fantastic. Something so amazing, so awesome, the whole world would know about it. Something huge and glittering and memorable. Something that would make people worship. Something that would make people live in peace and respect each other.

But God sent a baby! And not even a royal baby. Just a baby born to an unmarried peasant girl. Born in a dirty stable, without even the benefit of clean sheets or hot water. And what's so unusual about a baby? Babies are born every minute of every day. Many of them still, to unmarried peasant girls in filthy surroundings.

But this baby was extra special. He was a message from God, which St John refers to in a kind of shorthand as "The Word". 'In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ...In him was life, and the life was the light of human beings. ...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.'

There's no doubt that the message represented by a baby, any baby, is a message of love. You only have to look at the faces of new parents or grandparents. You only have to come to a baptism service and see how the relatives gather. The whole family joins together as one to see and to celebrate a new baby.

Babies bring out such feelings of tenderness and love and care in the most unlikely people. Any politician worth his salt will make sure he kisses plenty of babies in the run-up to the next election. Because the message that gives is: "I care."

So in fact, the gift of a baby was a brilliant way for God to send a message to his people. A message which would bring them together. A message which would bring out perhaps deeply buried feelings of love and tenderness and peace from even the most unlikely people. A message which said: "I love you. I care."

But it was more than that. Not only was this baby a message from God, but in some way, he was also God himself. 'The Word was God', says St John.

In some way, when that baby was born at Bethlehem all those years ago, God himself became human. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' And: 'The true light which enlightens everyone came into the world.' Somehow, God himself was within that baby who was born in that stable.

At the beginning of the history of the Jews, God's chosen people, God went before them, to show them the way. When they were wandering in the wilderness for forty years, God led them by appearing as a pillar of cloud by day, and fire by night.

Later, in the time of King Solomon, from being far away and inaccessible, God actually came to live with his people, in a temple built by King Solomon. So that he no longer simply appeared in order to lead them, but he made his home amongst them.

Now, at the first Christmas, he comes to live within the baby Jesus, within a human being. And ever since then, he's been within every human being who's been born.

So that we no longer have to wait around to contact God. He's always there. He's always "on tap". Because as well as being "out there" or "up there", he's within. He's that which gives us life itself. Like a kind of light within every human being. A light which can be fanned into a powerful flame. Or which can be virtually snuffed out into just a tiny spark.

What a gift! A gift which goes on and on. The gift of God himself to every individual.

This Christmas, I wonder what you'll do with God's gift, with the light within you? Will you "open that sack called your heart, and share your joy, your friendship, your wealth, and your care?"

*Rev Henry Gordon.*

## **Danger on the mission field in South Sudan**

*Yousif Deng, country leader for the Leprosy Mission in Sudan and South Sudan writes....*

It's early morning and I am on the road to visit a large leprosy community of 3000 people- it is called Luri Rokwe. The people live close to the airport just outside Juba, the capital city of South Sudan. It is hot and thundery and very still. As I drive, I pray. There is so much violence and looting here, and the roads are dangerous places. I am so thankful to God that Leprosy Mission staff working here have been protected from harm.

The community I am visiting today has suffered so much. Not only are they extremely poor, living in little more than shacks, but they have also come under fire, caught up in cross-fire between government and opposition forces. The civil war first broke out in 2013 and has a devastating effect on innocent people like this. The combination of poverty, leprosy and conflict is toxic. Back in 2013 families fled for their lives. Those disabled by leprosy struggled to keep up and out of harm's way. Many have returned to their homes and community but life is fragile and memories remain.

I know that the conflict here in South Sudan is on the news but I wonder whether people realise the knock-on effects of the fighting? Food is very expensive because it is scarce. The war means that farmers have had to leave their land, so many of them didn't grow crops last year. Food can't be brought in from Uganda and Kenya as the only road out of South Sudan to these countries is often blocked because of the conflict. People are going hungry. When people are hungry they are more susceptible to leprosy and other diseases.

Today I will be helping the community with this problem of malnutrition through teaching them how to grow their own food. We have been working with people in Luri Rokwe, training them to farm maize, ground nuts and green vegetables. Lots of the older people are very severely disabled because of leprosy but I can show them that God loves them through how I act. We are giving the young people training in work like tailoring, carpentry, car mechanics and electrical engineering so they can become the breadwinners and support their elderly relatives.

Tonight, I will pray again as I leave Luri Rokwe. The roads are poor and the threat of attack is greater at nightfall. The last time we visited a leprosy-affected community in Bor, to the

north of Juba, there was no choice but to travel by armed convoy. 28 people died on the road from Juba to Bor in May at the hand of armed robbers looting on the road. It is the same on the road from Juba to Kampala in Uganda where my family is staying.

It is hard to be apart from my wife, Awuoi, and our children. Awuoi and our four children fled to Uganda for safety in February 2014. It was a hard decision but it just isn't safe for them here. Awuoi also has 3 girls in her care who we foster because of a death in my family, so 7 children in total. Awuoi used to work as a lawyer in Juba and has made huge sacrifices to keep the family safe. I save up and fly every 3 months to visit them in Uganda. My Leprosy Mission colleague, Mary, is in the same position with her husband and children, who are living in Nairobi, Kenya, for safety.

Living in this dreadful conflict, we have learnt to trust God's grace. We wake up in the morning knowing we have been sustained by him during the night. Here, many homes are robbed at gunpoint and we must be careful and on the alert. We don't take our safety for granted. But we trust in God as we serve in his mission, to his people. If we got worried, we wouldn't show up for work, so we depend on him.

*From "New Day", the newsletter of the Leprosy Mission.*

## **Do you remember this?**

Like youngsters at Christmas they went without care,  
Not knowing what cruel fate awaited them there.  
It was January 2<sup>nd</sup>, the year 71,  
The Rangers had no goals, the Celtic had one.  
The dying few seconds, Glasgow looked green  
When up popped a young man, by the name, Colin Stein.  
He gathered the ball and went to dispatch  
A deadly, cool finish that would tie the match.  
Ibrox erupted and the fans began to sing,  
Not knowing the carnage their cheering would bring.  
The fans that were leaving returned to the stand  
To cheer for the Rangers, the team that is grand.  
All of a sudden on stairway 13  
The scene that unfolded would make you feel green.  
The stairway collapsed and the fans stood in shock  
As helpless supporters fell down the frail rock.  
66 died there and 100 were hurt,  
This fatal disaster they could not avert.  
As you go on, on this cold winter day,  
Take a few moments and join me and pray....  
In London or Belfast, or Paris or Rome,  
We'll pray for the fans who never came home.

*Author unknown.*

## Did you know???

- The Christmas pudding known today began life as frumenty, a dish made of wheat or corn boiled up in milk. As time went on, other ingredients, such as prunes, eggs and lumps of meat, were added to make it more interesting. When cooked, it was poured into a dish and called plum porridge. Later, cooks added even more meat and suet. They wrapped the mixture up in the scalded intestines of a pig or sheep and boiled it like a fat sausage. When cooked, the pudding could be cut up into slices. The traditional time for making a Christmas pudding is “Stir Up Sunday” at the beginning of Advent. A proper Christmas pudding is always stirred from east to west in honour of the wise men. Every member of the family must give the pudding a stir and make a secret wish.
- The name Boxing Day goes back to mediaeval times when alms boxes were placed at the back of every church to collect money for the poor. The alms boxes were always opened on 26<sup>th</sup> December which is why it is called Boxing Day.
- Boxing Day is also St Stephen’s day. He lived in Rome and was the first man to be killed for believing in the teachings of Jesus. But some people claim that he shares the day with another St Stephen, who came from Sweden. St Stephen of Sweden is the patron saint of horses. Boxing day has long been associated with outdoor sports, especially horse racing and hunting.
- In ancient Rome, people worshipped the god Janus at the festival of the New Year. They believed that he had two faces, one looking back at the old year and the other looking forward towards the new year. January is named after him.
- All over the world there are special traditions for “seeing in the new year”. In parts of Germany, for instance, there is a custom of dropping molten lead into cold water to see what shapes it makes. The shapes are then “read” like tea leaves, to foretell the future.
- In Scotland, the first person to put a foot across the doorstep in the New Year is said to decide the luck for that household during the coming year. The first-footer should be tall and dark. He should not be flat footed, cross-eyed, nor must his eyebrows meet in the middle, for these are all signs of bad luck.
- Wassailing was once a popular part of the Christmas celebrations, especially at New Year. On New Year’s Eve a wassail bowl was filled with hot spiced ale and passed round.
- Twelfth Night is the end of the Christmas festival when we remember the three wise men, who came to visit Jesus with their gifts of gold (a symbol of royalty), frankincense ( a symbol of God) and myrrh (a symbol of suffering). Twelfth night is still an important part of the Christmas holiday in some European countries even though this custom has died out in Britain. In Spain children leave out their shoes hoping that the wise men will fill them with presents when they pass by.



## **Bible a Month: Swaziland**

*“We have not stopped praying for you since the first day we heard about you. In fact, we always pray that God will show you everything he wants you to do and that you may have all the wisdom and understanding that his spirit gives” Colossians 1,9 (CEV)*

Swaziland is a small land-locked country in southern Africa, bordered by South Africa, and Mozambique.. It covers an area of 17.364 sq km, which is about 7% of the area of the UK. The literacy rate is 87% and languages include English, SiSwati.

Out of a population of 1.2 million, around 85% are Christian. Although most people speak English, many do not, and there is a great need for Scriptures in SiSwati.

The Bible was translated into SiSwati 20 years ago. But many people in Swaziland struggle to understand God’s word because of the lack of study materials. There are lots of study aids available in English but the SiSwati speakers do not have anything in their language.

Bible Society is committed to reaching people on the edge of society in Swaziland, whether it’s those with albinism, orphans who need to know God’s love for them, or Christians without Bible study materials in their own language.

Now, thanks to the work of Bible a Month, Bible Society is producing the first ever SiSwati study Bible. It will help pastors and church leaders to deepen their theological training, and it will help more people across Swaziland dig deeply into God’s word and discover its riches. Thank you for your support.

### **Prayer Pointers**

- Pray that the new Siswati Study Bible will help more Christians grow their relationship with God as they delve deeper into his word.
- Give thanks that the Bible Society team in Swaziland are committed to reaching the people on the edge of society; people who are overlooked and ignored. Pray for wisdom, energy and compassion in their work.
- Pray for God’s protection over the people who are receiving treatment for albinism, and pray that their families find hope and encouragement in God’s word.
- Pray for an end to the barbaric killings of people with albinism. Pray against the prevailing myths and misconceptions about the condition and ask God be with the Bible Society staff who seek to shine a light on the issue.

*Thank you so much for your support which is bringing the Bible to life at home and around the world.*

## New Magazine

I asked in the last Trinity News for a name that represented both Allen Memorial and Trinity Churches. I did get a suggestion of “faithbook” but unfortunately this is already well used and copyrighted.



A few people that I showed the basic ideas of “AT Church” to thought it was quite good. The new logo above has been designed by Mark Burdon and I think it is really good and would give a very professional image to the magazine.

Please let me know what you think.

I’m looking forward to this change bringing new life into the magazine. At present 80% of the content is supplied/sourced by Dorothy, my wife, an odd article and all the rotas by me, a fairly regular Nicaragua News from Margaret and one or two muses from Janet and Gail.

It is becoming very rare for articles to come from our members, so I’m hoping that with its rebirth as “AT Church” or whatever name we end up with we will get much more input from both our congregations.

If you have any articles or information of any type for the magazine please email me or send the old snail mail to me at the Trinity address on the back of this magazine.

alan@trinitymethodist.co.uk

Many thanks

Alan Barker

Editor



## Christmas Services

Carol Service at Allen Memorial on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 4 p.m.

Carol Service at Trinity on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December at 4 p.m.

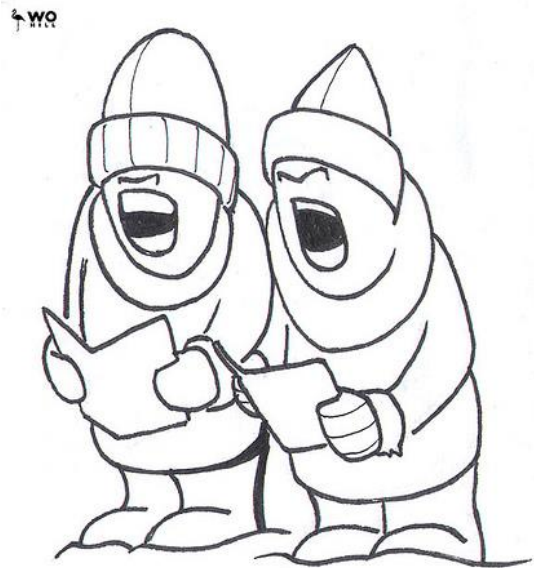
**PLEASE NOTE** there is **NO MORNING SERVICE** at Trinity on 24<sup>th</sup> December.

Christmas Morning Service is at Allen Memorial at **10 a.m.**

**Everyone is very welcome at any or all these services.**

## Name that carol! (not the usual sort of clues!) Answers later.

1. Bleached Yule
2. Castaneous-coloured Seed Vesicated in a conflagration.
3. Singular yearning for the twin anterior incisors
4. Righteous darkness
5. Arrival time 24.00 hours- weather cloudless
6. Loyal followers advance
7. Far off in a Feeder
8. Array the corridors
9. Bantam male percussionist
10. Monarchial Triad
11. Nocturnal noiselessness
12. Jehovah deactivate blithe chevaliers.
13. Red man en route to Borough
14. Frozen precipitation commence
15. Proceed and enlighten on the pinnacle
16. The quadruped with the vermillion proboscis
17. Query regarding identity of descendant
18. Delight for this planet
19. Give attention to the melodious celestial beings
20. The dozen festive 24 hour intervals arrivals



## Smile- it's Christmas Groan Time !

- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Avery. *Avery who?* Avery merry Christmas!
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Donut. *Donut who?* Donut open till Christmas!
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Rabbit. *Rabbit who?* Rabbit up carefully, it's a present!
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Centipede. *Centipede who?* Centipede on the Christmas tree.
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Snow. *Snow who?* Snow business like show business.
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Wayne. *Wayne who?* Wayne in a manger!
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Oakham. *Oakham who?* Oakham all ye faithful.
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Anna! *Anna who?* Anna partridge in a pear tree.
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Holly. *Holly who?* Holly-days are here again!
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Rudolph. *Rudolph who?* Money is the Rudolph of all evil!
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Igloo. *Igloo who?* Igloo Suzie like I knew Suzie!
- Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Mary. *Mary who?* Mary Christmas!

## In Bethlehem, with Jesus' birth

1. In Bethlehem, with Jesus' birth,  
The God of heaven came to earth;  
A babe who left us free to choose;  
A gift of love we could refuse.  
What will we do? What will we say?  
Will we welcome our God today?

2. First unknown strangers saw a star,  
And seeking, travelled from afar.  
Responding to its sign and call,  
They journeyed, searched, then gave their  
all.  
Will we, with them, both kneel and pray?  
Will we welcome our God today?

3. King Herod found this quite absurd  
Although he had the prophets' word;  
Defensive, wary, trapped by fear,  
He ordered slaughter far and near.  
Will we, like him, push you away?  
Will we welcome our God today?

4. This challenge still confronts us all:  
This Christmas will we heed your call?  
Will we be open to your care,  
Or fight against the love you share?  
God, help us now, that we may say,  
"We will welcome our God today"

Words by Rev John Campbell, a minister who has been writing new hymn words to existing tunes as part of his ongoing exploration of ways to help the Bible come alive for today's urban believers.

The above can be sung to the tune "On Christmas night, all Christians sing" (Sussex carol). It can be reproduced under a church copyright licence. (CCL)

*Read Matthew 2, verses 1-18. The song reflects on the contrasting responses of the two sets of characters in Matthew 2, who hear of Jesus' birth- whereby Matthew puts a challenge to us all.*

### Points to Ponder

- Good friends care for each other. Close friends understand each other. But True friends stay forever, beyond words, beyond distances, beyond time. *Sun-gazing.com*
- Nobody can break me, because I know who stands beside me, and that is God.
- When you love someone, you protect them from the pain. You don't become the cause of it.
- Don't hurt other people just because you are hurt.
- It's the little things that matter most.
- Love is not what you say. Love is what you do.
- Life is short. Cut out the negativity, forget gossip, say goodbye to people who don't care. Spend time with the people who are always there.
- Be strong enough to stand alone, smart enough to know when you need help, and brave enough to ask for it. *Mark Amend*

- Have the maturity to know that sometimes silence is more powerful than having the last word. *Theme Davis*
- Don't hurt anyone. It only takes a few seconds to hurt people you love, and it can take years to heal. *Nanu Thakuri*
- Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them- every day begin the task anew.
- There are some people who could hear you speak a thousand words and still not understand you. And there are those who will understand you without even speaking a word.
- As we each hold a precious memory or a fragile hope, may we know you Lord, steadying our hands and guarding our hearts.

*Finally how do you comfort a grammar fanatic? There, they're, their.*



## **Stories of hymns: Away in a Manger**

Children enjoy Christmas more than any other time of year and adults share that special joy. “Away in a Manger” is usually considered a children’s carol, yet its beauty and power are loved equally by people of all ages. All of us can pray, “I love you, Lord Jesus! Stay close to me tonight!”

For many years this hymn was attributed to Martin Luther, but Luther was probably not its author. The first two verses of the carol appeared for the first time in a Lutheran hymnal in 1885. The next publisher to pick it up called it “Luther’s Cradle hymn” assuming that since it was anonymous and in a Lutheran hymnal, it must be Luther’s. The third verse was added by a Methodist minister in the early 1900’s.

Regardless of its author, the beauty of this carol is the beauty of Christmas. It is simple. Christmas is not the gold and glitter, the wrappings and trappings. It is the story of God humbling himself to become a baby, born in crude circumstances to a young woman in ancient Palestine. It is all what Christmas is about.

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,*

*The little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head.*

*The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,*

*The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

## Whose Christmas Is It Anyway?

Spend, spend, spend. It seems that at this time of the year that's all we seem to be doing. We start with the buying of gifts for family and friends and then we stock up on food as though we are catering for the five thousand (slight exaggeration!) But we do tend to over-



cater for the Christmas holiday time - just in case. And we buy stuff that we wouldn't normally eat but feel almost obliged to indulge in all those sweet delights and 'extras' just because 'it's Christmas'. Then no sooner is the actual day over, some then go on to spend more trying to get some bargain in the after-Christmas sales. It is understandable therefore that some would say that Christmas belongs to the commercial sector and that they are the ones who gain most. Not everyone thinks like the Grinch when he ponders, 'Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store, maybe Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more.'



I can't help thinking that most people, if asked to name someone associated with Christmas, would say without thinking 'Santa Claus' rather than Jesus or any of the people from the original nativity scene. Everywhere you go, there are pictures of the man with the red and white fur-trimmed clothes and the big white beard who

always seems to be smiling. 'Tis the season to be jolly, Ho Ho Ho and all that. Cards, books, television programmes are all about Santa Claus. So some might think that Christmas belongs to Santa Claus.

On the other hand I have heard Christians say that the Christmas season belongs to Christians. This was made quite plain to some friends who decided to go to a carol service at the local church before Christmas. The church was full when they arrived there. They looked around and saw a few seats at the back of the building and were hoping to sit down when they were told that those seats were reserved for church members who were doing stewarding duties and who would be taking their seats shortly. The friends sadly left the building feeling a bit that maybe fully paid up members of the club/church group had priority when it came to seating and after all they were 'outsiders'. Having said that, I know of other Christians who spent some of their Christmas Day serving up a hot meal for those who would have otherwise been on their own this Christmas. So Christmas as some believe, belongs to the Christians.



We notice many Christians urging us not to take Christ out of Christmas. I totally agree! But what exactly do we mean by this? It's easy to keep Christ in the written word Christmas, but it's the actions that really matter. The first Christmas which is the one that as



Christians we celebrate at this time of year, was not a great gathering of religious people. It wasn't some carefully organised celebration. It was an act of God totally emptying himself of love for all of humanity. It was a sign of hope for those who were downtrodden, justice for those who were treated unfairly and a future for those who lived in fear of what tomorrow might bring. As in the words of the song, written and sung by mainly non-churchgoers; Feed the world, let them know it's Christmas time. It is not about celebrating one day; it is a way of living; it's the daily echo of God's self-emptying love lived out in our own lives. Who does Christmas belong to? Actually, from God's point of view, it belongs to everyone. Joy to the world. Peace on earth, goodwill to all people. To really 'own' Christmas, we have to live it not just one day of the year but every day and show God's love to all, whoever they are, whatever they believe and whatever are their circumstances. Emmanuel - God with us - God's love for all of his creation expressed in human form. That's the real Christmas message.

From the Blog of Mavis Andradez.

### **A New Year's Prayer**     *(anonymous)*

Dear Lord, please give me.....

A few friends who understand me and remain my friends,

A work to do which has real value, without which the world would be the poorer.

A mind unafraid to travel, even though the trail be not blazed.

An understanding heart; a sense of humour; time for quiet, silent meditation;

A feeling of the presence of God;

The patience to wait for the coming of these things,

With the wisdom to recognise them when they come. Amen

### **Name that Carol Answers**

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. White Christmas                                 | 11. Silent night                   |
| 2. Chestnuts roasting on an open fire.             | 12. God rest ye merry gentlemen    |
| 3. All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth. | 13. Santa Claus is coming to town  |
| 4. O Holy Night                                    | 14. Let it snow                    |
| 5. It came upon a midnight clear                   | 15. Go, tell it on the mountain    |
| 6. O come, all ye faithful                         | 16. Rudolph the red nosed reindeer |
| 7. Away in a manger                                | 17. What child is this?            |
| 8. Deck the hall                                   | 18. Joy to the world               |
| 9. Little drummer boy                              | 19. Hark, the herald angels sing   |
| 10. We three kings                                 | 20. The twelve days of Christmas   |



## Preachers

December

3<sup>rd</sup> 10.45 a.m. Rev Gordon Wynne.

10<sup>th</sup> 10.45 a.m. Rev Janet Jackson  
Communion Service.

17<sup>th</sup> 10.45 a.m. Miss Kate Laws.

24<sup>th</sup> **4 p.m.** Rev Janet Jackson  
Carol Service.

31<sup>st</sup> 10.45 a.m. Mrs Margaret Storey.

January

7<sup>th</sup> 10.45 a.m. Rev Glynn Lister.

14<sup>th</sup> 10.45 a.m. Rev Malcolm Newman.

21<sup>st</sup> 10.45 a.m. Rev Paul Cleever-Thorpe

28<sup>th</sup> 10.45 a.m. Rev Janet Jackson  
Communion Service.

February

4<sup>th</sup> 10.45 a.m. Mr Keith Jones.



## Door Stewards Rota

*(All 10-45 a.m. unless otherwise noted)*

December

3<sup>rd</sup> Mrs L Morgan.

10<sup>th</sup> Mrs D Kirkley

17<sup>th</sup> Mrs M Mills

24<sup>th</sup> **4 p.m.** Mrs M McCullough.

31<sup>st</sup> Mr R Falcus.

January

7<sup>th</sup> Mrs J Scott.

14<sup>th</sup> Mrs S Aston.

21<sup>st</sup> Mrs S Filmer.

28<sup>th</sup> Mrs L Morgan.

February

4<sup>th</sup> Mrs D Kirkley





## Coffee Morning Rota

December

2<sup>nd</sup> Susan Bewley &  
Lynda McQuillan

9<sup>th</sup> Maureen Mills &  
Lorna Morgan

16<sup>th</sup> Sylvia Aston &  
Janis Duff

(No Coffee Mornings on 23<sup>rd</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>)

January

6<sup>th</sup> Mick & Zoe Watson

13<sup>th</sup> Susan Bewley &  
Lynda McQuillan

20<sup>th</sup> Maureen Mills &  
Lorna Morgan

27<sup>th</sup> Sylvia Aston &  
Janis Duff

February

3<sup>rd</sup> Mick & Zoe Watson



During the last month our Communion Table Flowers have brought their beauty and our thoughts and prayers to Lynda McQuillan, Peggy McCullough, Margaret Storey and Alan Barker.

*The new flower rota for 2018 is now on the notice board in the lounge.*

*Please pick your dates for donating the flowers that bring their beauty into our services and take our prayers and good wishes to those in need.*

## Audio Visual Operators

December

3<sup>rd</sup> Susan / Lynda

10<sup>th</sup> Alan

17<sup>th</sup> Mark

24<sup>th</sup> Alan

31<sup>st</sup> Mark

January

7<sup>th</sup> Susan / Lynda

14<sup>th</sup> Alan

21<sup>st</sup> Mark

28<sup>th</sup> Susan / Lynda

February

4<sup>th</sup> Alan



## Flower Rota

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December  
Peggy McCullough

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December  
Maureen Mills

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December  
No Donor at time of print.

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December  
Ruth Young.

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December  
No Donor at time of print.

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January  
No Donor at time of print.

## Articles By ?

All articles for the February issue of our new magazine MUST be handed in by Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January.