



God is with us

I went shopping at the beginning of November in one of our big supermarkets; although the words weren't used there was a very powerful message all around me- 'Buy now for Christmas!' Clare, my wife, visits a lot of schools and in one of them recently she heard one of the teachers say, 'I'm not going to bother with that Mary and baby stuff for my class this year'. I know from a childminder friend that her little ones have been singing Christmas songs at their toddler group for some time now.

In some ways these are all unconnected instances and yet they highlight some of the difficulties we face at this time of year as we prepare for and celebrate Christmas.

All around we are almost swamped by the consumerism and materialism which now surrounds the festivities; for many people in society around us there is little if any understanding of what Christmas is really about; for many of us, both in the church and beyond, the whole thing has such a long build up that, frankly, by the time Christmas actually comes we're completely fed up with it. In the face of these difficulties we too can become distracted by them; or we can be tempted either to withdraw completely from the celebration of Christmas, or to



adopt a 'holier than thou' attitude towards others whom we perceive not to be approaching it properly. In the midst of all of this it's important for us to have in our hearts, and at the heart of all we do,

what Christmas is really about. And that is the Incarnation: the coming of God personally into our troubled, broken, difficult, stress filled, materialistic and apathetic world in the presence of Jesus, born as a little, helpless, entirely dependant baby child.

And he comes to show us God's love; and he comes to show us that God is present with us and shares with us in all that this life involves - the joys and happiness as well as the frustrations, anger, pain and anguish.

He comes not to force or to impose, not to condemn, but to invite - to invite us to share his life - a life which is deeper and richer and fuller

and more meaningful than one focused only on the things of this world.

And this really is worth celebrating! May we all know God's presence with us this Christmas time, and always.

Fr. John

Christmas

Full details of all our Christmas Services

December 2002



Those Christmas Traditions



Why does it begin at midnight with Holy Communion?

The hour was first chosen at Rome in the fifth century to symbolise the idea that Christ was born at midnight - a mystical idea in no way

hindered by historical evidence! No one knows the hour of his birth.

Certainly in recent times, Holy Communion at midnight on Christmas morning has proved popular with modern families. One British writer pointed out its "domestic convenience" in 1947: "for where there are children and no servants, husband and wife may be unable to communicate at any other time."

What was in Christmas stockings?

Traditionally, children woke up at dawn with these weighing down their toes. A lit candle was brought in, and if the family were "decently traditional" the stocking contained at the toe, an orange, followed by many objects done up in foil or coloured paper, including a new silver sixpence. This was all topped off with an apple on top.

What was the Christmas log?

These huge logs burned in open fireplaces all Christmas day. Traditionally, they were of ash: ash that burned green, and was therefore sacred to the sun on whose birthday nature was reborn. One Devon-based tradition had it that burning ash had warmed the water for the Christ Child's first bath. The Scandinavians believed that ash was the wood of the world-tree, Yggdrasil, with its roots knotted in Hell and its boughs supporting Heaven.

In the late 19th century, a time of smaller fireplaces, the ashen faggot became popular in many homes. Sometimes it would be sprinkled with corn and cider, and sometimes it would be dragged in with a girl enthroned upon it, and then there would be glasses raised to her health.

In any event the log (once the girl was removed!) would be kindled with the last fragment of the previous Christmas log, kept throughout the year for this purpose - a rule that was no pretty fancy, but a profound recognition of continuity. By the time dinner was brought, the symbolic brand would be ablaze.

What about the menu for Christmas dinners?

In England rank has divided people down the centuries, but on Christmas day master and servant sat down in the great hall to banquet together in genuine though brief equality. The Romans at the Saturnalia had done the same, and the Scandinavians at Yule. St Francis of Assisi had urged that even the animals ought to share in our joy, thus introducing the custom to give extra food to the cattle and dogs on Christmas morning, and even to fix a sheaf of corn to the roof for the hungry birds.

In great houses of the past, the main dish was the boar's head, garnished with rosemary and bays for the summer returning, and still with its mouth propped open on a solar apple or orange.

At Hampton Court Christmas dinner consisted of roasted swans, peacocks or bustards.

But the dishes proved "too gross and too splendid for the century of the kitchenette" and in due course they went the way of the plum pudding and frumenty and Christmas pie.

Traditionally, it was the goose that appeared on most English tables. But the turkey, imported into England about 1542 from Mexico, gained steadily in popularity. By the end of the 18th century, Norwich alone was sending to London nearly 1,000

Christmas turkeys in a single day.

Mince pies were already popular by the time of Shakespeare's England - popular and varied. There were pies of minced chicken, of neat's tongues, and of eggs, in addition to the pies full of spiced raisins.

As for our Christmas pudding, it was originally a sort of plum porridge that finally hardened into a pudding about 1670. This was made of raisins and spices, together with breadcrumbs, wine and fruit juice. Every member of the household took a hand in the stirring and secretly wished a wish. A silver coin (once a threepenny bit), a ring and a thimble were stirred in: the coin to bring fortune to the finder, the ring a wedding, and the thimble a life of single blessedness. On the Day, a sprig of the reddest holly was stuck in the top of the pudding, and then brandy heated above a candle, and poured over it in a river of fire.



Healing Eucharist



Wednesday
18th December
7.30 p.m.
St James Church

Receive Jesus'
promise of healing

Christmas at Saint James

Sunday 22nd December

6.30 pm Service of Lessons and Carols
with the St James Singers
followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies

Christmas Eve

4.00 pm Crib Service
11.00 pm The Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Family Eucharist



St Stephen's Day - Thursday December 26th

9.30 am Eucharist

The Holy Innocents - Friday December 27th

9.30 am Eucharist at St Francis Church

St John the Evangelist - Saturday December 28th

9.30 am Eucharist

New Year's Day - The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus

9.30 am Eucharist

Stephen will be available to hear Confessions and take Holy Communion
to the housebound and the sick by appointment

Sundays @ Six at St James



The first Sunday
of the month at 6 o'clock

January 5th Celebrating Epiphany
February 2nd Reflecting on the Word
March 2nd Evening Praise
April 6th Looking to the Cross

Christingle Service

Sunday 8th December
4 o'clock

St James and St Francis



This is the Children's Society's major annual fund-
raising event. Gift Envelopes will be available in
both churches.

The Right Honourable



Kanisa la Jumo la Kenya

COMMISSIONING OF LIZZIE HARTLEY

WITHIN THE EUCHARIST OF THE CHURCH OF KENYA

prior to her flying to Kenya on January 4th

St James Church Sunday 29th December at 10 o'clock

Guest Speaker: Gill Poole Church Mission Society

Lizzie and the other volunteers will be commissioned by the Bishop of London in



Rosanne interviews Steve Barritt

Many of my interviewees have had experiences which, in the wisdom of hindsight, they can describe as “the moment it all began”. Few have had a “blinding flash” experience which has shaped their entire lives. Steve is one of the few.

It happened at a church parade in his home town of Hartlepool to give thanks for the safe return of thousands of British soldiers from the beaches of Dunkirk. The parade was led by the band of the Durham Light Infantry and the “fantastic sound” which reached the ears of ten-year-old Steve was a defining moment which he has never forgotten. Later, while in the local Boys’ Brigade, he would emerge from church to hear the resounding music of the Salvation Army Band. He often lingered to watch the bandsmen packing up their instruments. The fascination on the young lad’s face caught the attention of one Fred Peart who, one day, gave him a scribbled address and time on a scrap of paper. It was an invitation to Fred’s house where, as curator of the town band’s instruments throughout the war, he had a living room packed with cornets, trumpets etc just like an Aladdin’s cave. Steve was introduced to his first cornet and it was love at first sight. He joined Fred’s band where he learnt to read music and mix with the other lads who were all posh grammar school boys and had had music lessons at school. Soon playing trombone he not only enjoyed the band but went on to play

for dances at the local *palais*. He was still only 16.

The Second World War had a huge influence on Steve’s life. His dad was a ship builder and even before the war had taken his son to visit the ill-fated H.M.S. Hood anchored offshore from Hartlepool. In 1939 and ’40 he and his little sister, Minnie, remained at home with their parents sleeping night after night in a communal air-raid shelter. One moonlit night his dad decided that the bombers would not be over so he felt that a well-earned rest in his own bed was in order. Steve stayed with dad while Minnie and mum set off with their blankets and pillows. Within minutes the siren sounded and the lads were throwing on their clothes in order to take to the shelter. Just along the street was the high wall of a factory. An enemy plane flew over the building making straight for them. Mr Barritt pulled his son to one side just as the plane’s gunner strafed the wall where they had been crouching! This incident was enough to convince their parents that the two children should be evacuated. They were sent along the coast to Filey where began one of the most unhappy periods of their lives. They were billeted in sixteen different homes with the relevant moves to various schools. Finally they were taken in by a woman who, according to Steve, only did it for the 10/6 a week she was paid for each of them. During term time things weren’t too bad but when the summer

holidays arrived the two children were sent down to the beach to amuse themselves from breakfast time till six p.m. They were given 6d to feed themselves. Sheltering from the wind and rain under an up-tumed boat and sharing a bag of stale cakes their home-sickness was acute. Imagine the joy when in early September, Steve was called to his Headmaster’s office to be told that a family friend had come to take them home. Never mind the blitz, mum and dad were waiting. How his parents knew of their unhappiness remains a mystery.

At fourteen he left school and became an apprentice upholsterer in bespoke furniture and at eighteen he went off to do his National Service in the Third Dragoon Guards. Not surprisingly he joined up as a musician as well as a serving soldier. After two years’ National Service he did three years in the regular army stationed in Germany. Whilst still a soldier he was head-hunted to play in the highly prestigious Morris Motors’ Band and after de-mob, although officially working in the trim shop he spent many happy years appearing with the band. There was at that time a small café in Holloway and on his way back to his lodgings after band practice he often popped in for a cuppa and a bun. Serving there for a little extra pocket money after her working day in the offices at Webbers was a slim gorgeous seventeen-year-old. Steve soon learnt to call her Jasmine and she proved to be

the love of his life. In 1956 they married at Headington Quarry Church and became regular worshippers there. After a few years their first daughter Alison was born and after two more years along came baby Kay. It was a hectic time for Steve with not only a wife and family but concerts, regular broadcasts on BBC radio and from the Maida Vale Studios in London for the BBC World Service. At that time the Cold War was a real threat and strange, obviously coded messages would be included in the announcements. (Why would anyone in Russia want to know that Mary had a little lamb, for instance?)

Sadly after many happy years together Jasmine died and Steve now lives alone. He has wonderful relationships with his two married daughters and his five grandchildren and he makes regular trips back to Hartlepool to visit family and friends. Ever the musician, in recent years he has joined the Abingdon Concert Band which specialises in light classical pieces and selection from the musical theatre. He has also formed his own Dixieland Jazz Band. Music has been his life-long passion and continues to be so.

Was there one particular person who had a strong influence on your early life?
Mr Peart made a big impact on me, he pointed me in the right direction. The fact that he was a man of God was a bonus.

Can you remember an incident in your early life which holds special significance for you?

Getting on the bus to go home from Filey, seeing all the bright lights after everything had been so dark. I was going back to mum.

What sort of child were

you?

I was easy-going, went along with the discipline, never bucked the trend.

Has your faith been with you since childhood or did you find it later in life?

I would say always, yes - that incident with the aeroplane was something to do with God. I realise more about God when I married Jas, though, she had such a wonderful faith and understanding.

Which period of your adult life has given you most satisfaction?

I've got to say 1956 to '63 when I played with the Morris Motors' Band. That was when it was at its peak.

Are there any aspects of modern life you dislike?

The way we are inundated with companies who want to sell us their products or elicit money from us - they trade on fear. It's insidious.

What's best about life today?

Radio 4, Classic FM. Going over to France with my daughter and her family.

What makes you laugh?

American/Jewish humour. I loved Hancock and Benny Hill.

If you had a Holy Wand what would you change?

Change people's attitudes and get back to some standards of decency.

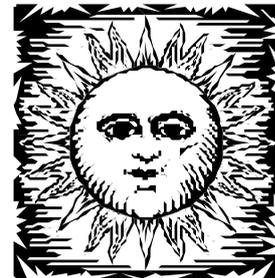


Winter Solstice December 22nd

A Midwinter festival has been a part of life since pre-Christian times. When the hours of daylight are fewest, the warmth of the sun weakest, and life itself seemingly at a standstill, our ancestors, the pagan peoples of Europe and Western Asia, kept festival by lighting bonfires and decorating their buildings with evergreens.

Perhaps they believed that the dying sun could be enheartened by fire, and the life of the buried seed assured by the presence of evergreen branches.

With the advent of Christianity, the Spring Gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World.



The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations. "Let those who have no light in themselves light candles!... You are the light of the world, you are the tree ever green...." But by the time of St Gregory and St Augustine, four centuries later, this had changed. Pope Gregory instructed Augustine not to worry about harmless outward customs, as long as the right God be worshipped through them. And so many Anglo-Saxon customs were never discarded, but simply endowed with a new significance.

By 1598 one John Stow of London wrote how: "Against the feast of Christmas, every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be greene."

Giving to Mission In 2002

The Parish has given 10% of last year's voluntary giving to charities and missions. Voluntary giving is the open plate, the envelope giving, the standing order giving and the tax back on the gift aid. The tax back is from the Gift Aid Scheme whereby a tax-paying giver can allow us to reclaim tax on gifts. The rebate is claimed every three months. Forms are available in both our churches, the treasurer and the church wardens are very willing to explain the system which is simplicity itself. The scheme is available to all charities.

The mission money is split between local, national and international charities suggested by members of our congregations. A small committee comprised of the two church wardens, the PCC secretary and treasurer and a representative from each of our churches consider all the suggestions, study all the leaflets and decide on amounts to be given. The £4,175 has been distributed, the thank you letters will be available for people to see later.

LOCAL:

Douglas House, £250; Helen House, £100; Wycliffe Hall, £200; Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, £100; Minibus Appeal - Church Housing Trust, £100; Ark T (young people and young offenders), £200; Archway (the isolated and lonely), £100; Gatehouse (homeless), £100.

NATIONAL:

St James' Church Enfield (in difficulties), £50; NSPCC, £200; Royal National Mission to Deep

Christmas at Saint Francis

Sunday 22nd December

10.30 am Parish Eucharist & Junior Church Presentation
6.00 pm Service of Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve

3.30 pm Crib Service
11.00 pm The Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

8.00 am Holy Eucharist
10.30 am Family Eucharist

St Stephen's Day - Thursday December 26th

7.00 pm Holy Eucharist

St John the Evangelist - Friday December 27th

9.30 am Holy Eucharist

The Holy Innocents - Saturday December 28th

9.15 am Morning Prayer followed by breakfast

First Sunday of Christmas (29th December)

8.00 am Holy Eucharist
10.30 am Sung Eucharist



Sea Fishermen, £250; Child Contact Centre (supervising children of divorce meeting the non-custodial parent), £100; St Botolph's Project (homeless), £200; Prisons Week, £100; Arthur Rank (for farmers), £100.

INTERNATIONAL:

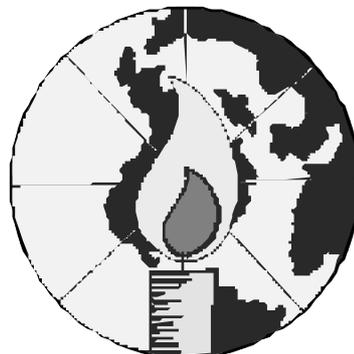
Right Hand Trust (Elizabeth Hartley's mission), £1,000; Christian Blind Mission (£2.50 provides a 10 year course for one person with river blindness), £50; United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, £250; Biblelands, £200; Mill Hill Missionary Society (for Selena Furth's work in The Cameroons), £100; Amnesty International, £100; Mercy Ships (ships rigged out as hospitals), £100; Let the Children Live (street children in Columbia), £50; Mission Aviation Fellowship ('planes to fly medics to inaccessible areas), £100;

Mothers' Union Literacy Project, £100.

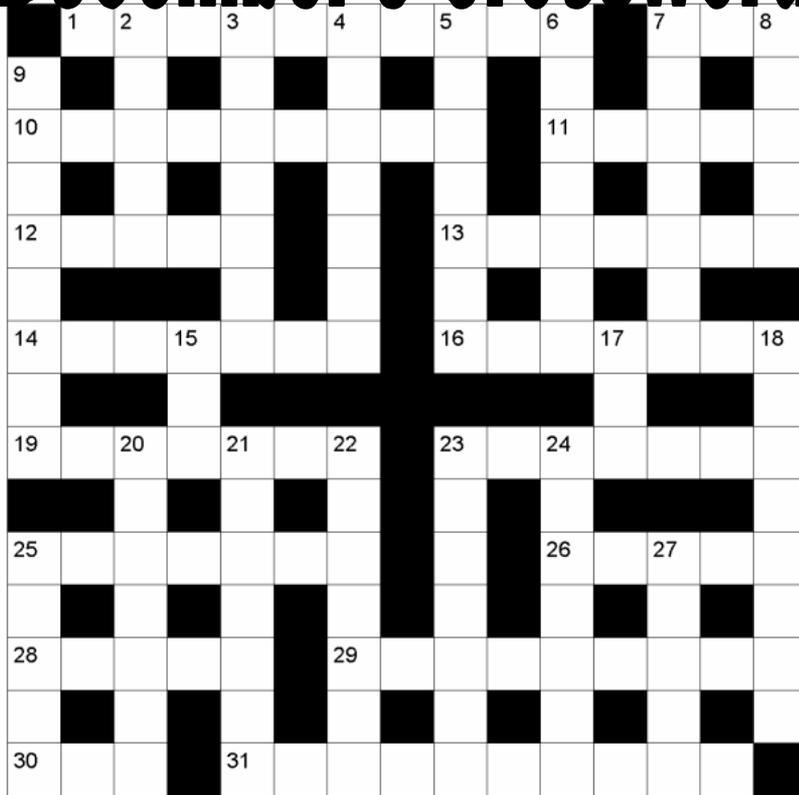
Next year we will have a similar sum to give away and we will try to organise the giving a little earlier in the year. Please let us have your suggestions, it helps to have a leaflet with the title of the charity and its address but it is not essential.

Una

Parish Treasurer



December's Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Its capital is Dushanbe (10)
- 7 Long-sleeved linen vestment (3)
- 10 Person in livery (9)
- 11 Its capital is Accra (5)
- 12 Reduce to half (5)
- 13 Hallowed (7)
- 14 Its capital is Kiev (7)
- 16 Its capital is Algiers (7)
- 19 Its capital is Asmara (7)
- 23 Recluse (7)
- 25 Its capital is Nassau (7)
- 26 Violently intense (5)
- 28 Its capital is Libreville (5)
- 29 Small farm (9)
- 30 Permit (3)
- 31 Utterly unyielding (10)

DOWN

- 2 Smith's block (5)
- 3 Native of modern Israel (7)
- 4 Vast (7)
- 5 Its capital is Tunis (7)
- 6 Shrewish (7)
- 7 One that adapts (7)

8 Facial hair (5)

- 9 Tavern (8)
- 15 Statue (3)
- 17 Tree (3)
- 18 County in NE Scotland (8)
- 20 Dwell in (7)
- 21 Its capital is Bucharest (7)
- 22 Its capital is Vienna (7)
- 23 Its capital is Tallinn (7)
- 24 Hearing distance (7)
- 25 Doughnut-shaped roll (5)
- 27 Wand (5)

November's Solution



Unto Us a Son is Given

by Alice Meynell (1847 - 1922)



Given, not lent,
 And not withdrawn - once sent,
 This Infant of mankind, this One,
 Is still the little welcome Son.
 New every year,
 New born and newly dear,
 He comes with tidings and a song,
 The ages long, the ages long;
 Even as the cold
 Keen winter grows not old,
 As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,
 And spring in the familiar green.
 Sudden as sweet
 Come the expected feet.
 All joy is young, and new all art,
 And he, too, whom we have by heart.



Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Sung Eucharist (<i>exc 2nd Sunday</i>) Family Service (<i>2nd Sunday</i>)
11.15 am	Sung Eucharist (<i>2nd Sunday</i>)
6.00 pm	Evening Service <i>[1st Sunday of the month]</i>

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

8.00 am	Holy Eucharist
10.30 am	Parish Eucharist <i>[Family Eucharist - 2nd Sunday of the month]</i>

Mid-Week Services & Meetings

Monday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Tuesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St Francis</i>
	8.00 pm	St Francis Discussion Group – <i>4 Long Close</i>
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St Francis</i>
	9.30 am	Eucharist – <i>St Francis</i>
	10.10 am	Mothers and Toddlers – <i>St Francis</i>
	12.00 pm	St James Prayer Group – <i>13 Clive Road</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Thursday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	9.30 am	Eucharist - followed by coffee – <i>St James</i>
	11.00 am	St Francis Prayer Group
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St Francis</i>
	7.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St Francis</i>
Friday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St Francis</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	7.00 pm	Friday Club – <i>alt Fridays at St Francis</i>
Saturday	9.15 am	Morning Prayer & Breakfast – <i>St Francis</i>

Arrangements for Baptisms, Banns of Marriage, Weddings, Confessions and Home Communion can be made with any of the clergy.

Days Off

Stephen has Friday off, Fr John and Mark have Monday. Except in emergency, please try and respect these days of rest. Sr Margaret Anne works within the parish on Tuesdays, Thursdays and two out of three Sundays

Parish Directory

TEAM RECTOR:

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LICENSED LAY MINISTER:

Eric Uren
Tel: 770696

CHURCHWARDENS:

Gwen Ranklin
Tel: 451417
Norah Shallow
Tel: 765199

DEPUTY WARDENS:

Rosanne Butler
Tel: 453257
Pat Chung
Tel: 767124

HALL BOOKINGS

OFFICER:
773620

weekdays only