

Do you know Immanuel?

It's the season for celebrations, peace good will toward all, Father Christmas, mistletoe, reindeer, stockings, mince pies, turkey, gifts, snow, Christmas crackers, candy canes, Scrooge's Christmas Carol, and much excess. In a card shop I found it difficult to find a Christmas card that spoke of the birth of Christ. One hinted at the shepherds, another claimed "wise men still seek him," but didn't say who "he" is, most said, "seasons greetings."

In the past 2,000 years there have been least three responses to his celebrated birth. Mary and Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem to take part in the census decreed by Caesar Augustus. When they arrived in Bethlehem Mary was about to deliver the baby and Joseph asked for a room at the inn. The innkeeper was not hostile, he was busy. He wasn't opposed to them, but he had a business to run and the cares of the world kept him occupied. He needed to keep an eye on the profits.

Many people in the world today share the inn keeper's position. It's not that they don't want to make room for Jesus, it's just that they are busy. The accommodation of their heart is crowded with other interests, so that there is no room to allow Christ in. They are not atheists, they are not bad; they are quite simply busy.

Then there was Herod the King. His response was full of hostility. He wanted to find a way to kill the one who was born to be "king of the Jews." His desire to get rid of this king, grew and festered over the years and was picked up by a mob that one day shouted "crucify Him, crucify Him."

In many parts of the world this is the attitude to Jesus. People want to get rid of the King, the Messiah, the Christ. If Jesus would only remain a little baby who is powerless, wordless, he would be alright. If he was "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" he wouldn't make a difference. If he could be just a really good, kind person, or a great teacher he wouldn't be a threat. If we could keep him as a mystic from the past, or an image in a stained glass window he would be safe. The world wants to paper over the truth of Jesus with mince pies and Father Christmas. But Jesus changes lives, makes a difference. He really is God come to earth to save us and to change us and that Jesus is unacceptable to many people.

Then there was the response of Simeon. Simeon was a prayerful old man. He was a good man who loved God. When He saw the baby he took him in his arms and gave thanks to God: Lord, you have kept your promise to me and I have seen your salvation with my own eyes."

As we approach Christmas and the New Year I hope and pray that you will know the true peace, love and joy that come from enjoying a living relationship with Jesus. He really is Immanuel, God with us. May God bless you. **Howard**

Keeping in touch

I wonder if you were watching the evening news recently when an item on elderly people was broadcast? It featured, in particular, the loneliness experienced by those who are housebound. It goes without saying that if no one visits them they could go for days without someone to speak to. Coincidentally this reflects exactly a conversation I had recently with one of our housebound parishioners. She has a list of problems she has encountered since she has been immobile and so I suggested that we might highlight them for other folk in her position and also for those of us who can still get around and maybe offer some help.

Her first plea was for someone to call each week with a copy of 'The Link' and a monthly visit with 'The Chronicle', not just to push them through the letterbox but to tell, personally, what happened at church.

Another point she wanted to make was to ensure that all who qualify should receive an Attendance Allowance. A telephone call to the Benefit Office will provide a form. This, she told me, is pretty complicated but no one should be daunted by this. Another phone call to Age Concern (whose number is in the telephone directory) will prove useful as they will send a list of tips on how to fill it in.

Banking is a problem for the housebound too, it would seem that people who answer the telephone for most banks do not understand that one needs a certain amount of cash. You can't pay a window cleaner or a taxi driver with a credit card. You may ask someone to buy you a loaf or a carton of milk, and without cash to offer them it is embarrassing. So if you know someone who cannot get to a bank or a cashpoint perhaps you might offer to cash them a cheque fairly regularly, thus ensuring their independence.

There are more tips to come in future copies of 'The Chronicle' but you will see that I've called this article 'Keeping in Touch' and as good neighbours don't you think that is a useful thing to do?

Oh, and by the way forms need to be posted so why not ask, 'Any letters to post?' when you call in.

Rosanne Butler



Winter break in Torquay

'What are you going to do in Torquay in the winter?' said Michael on the Sunday before we left. 'Have a good time,' I replied and we did just that! Forty five people left Oxford on Tuesday morning, Howard wishing us all a safe journey and a good holiday. Our first stop was Haynes Motor Museum near Yeovil, many of us reminiscing over our first cars we owned. We journey on to Exeter, a welcome lunch stop before arriving at the Corbyn Head Hotel later in the afternoon. Many were surprised to see Mary Sharp, who had arrived by coach from Victoria to spend time with the many friends Mary had made during her many years living in Cowley. Our hotel lived up to its expectations, the third time we had stayed there, excellent food, accommodation and service provided by Mr Rue and his staff.

On Wednesday we journey across country via Dartington and Totnes to Buckfast Abbey, the countryside awash with Autumn colours in the sunshine. A short stop at Dartington Craft Centre before being dropped either at the hotel or Torquay town centre.

On Thursday morning we set off in glorious

sunshine to Loe, a wonderful Cornish fishing village, walking down to the pier to admire the seaside views. A lunch stop at Hernow Mill, and a chance to shop before leading to Torpoint and across on the ferry to Plymouth, some visiting the Hoe, whilst others stopped. We all enjoyed our evening entertainment, singing alone with our entertainer on the keyboard, dancing away and laughing at his numerous 'Christmas cracker' jokes.

We left the hotel on Friday morning and headed for Brixham, where it was warm and sunny, many of us enjoying sitting outside in the sunshine with our coffees. From there we headed for Clarks Village in Street, before arriving back in Oxford at tea-time.

Our thanks to Jim, our coach driver, for all he does for us; for Brian and myself it was good to be with our many friends from Cowley and see them having such a good time. God Bless you all, as we look forward to Eastbourne in March. Thank you for your kind donations. £70 will be donated to the Jigsaw Appeal at Bournemouth Hospital.

Barbara Brown

BEST and WORST

Christmas Presents

Best present

I was called up in November 1941 and joined the Royal Navy. I was in Croydon when I was told that the ship (HMS Valiant) would be returning to England. Arriving in Plymouth in late November 1945 we were told that leave had been granted and I could be home with my family in Sevenoaks for Christmas for the first time in 5 years.

Worst present

Early in December 1945 I developed diphtheria and spent that Christmas in Plymouth Isolation Hospital!

Normal Coates Alderson

In the 1930s a penny was a small fortune to a young child. It would, for instance, buy large aniseed balls which changed colour as you sucked them, liquorice ribbon, sherbert dabs and sugar cigarettes.

So my grandmother's present at Christmas was wealth indeed – a small Christmas pudding containing a hidden silver half-a-crown. She made them to send to all the grandchildren.

Thelma Telling

My parents planned to spend Christmas 1938 with cousins. The grown-ups, having experienced World War I as children, were determined to enjoy the last good Christmas before the coming war broke out. Then Auntie Ethel, my mother's sister who worked as a nursery nurse, asked to come to stay with us.

So, she came to stay in the house, with the cat for company, and my mother bought a chicken for her Christmas dinner – an expensive luxury in those days.

When we returned, mother asked her 'Did you enjoy the chicken, Ethel?'. 'Oh yes,' she said, 'it was quite nice but the cat had most of it'.

That was the Christmas that my mother made me a beautiful, warm, red dressing gown trimmed with grey wool. Sixty eight years later, I still remember it with affection.

Connie Uren

The best Christmas present ever

I remember very clearly, in December 1979, saying that my newborn son Tom was the best Christmas present ever. A week or so overdue, he had arrived after I had been hurriedly induced and he had needed resuscitation. I also had another heart-stopping moment when, during the examination by the paediatrician, Tom was said to be fine except for ... a large beauty spot on his elbow!!! We all laughed, but I wish they would not make jokes like that.



All this emotion was because just exactly a year before I had the worst Christmas when my first pregnancy resulted in a beautiful, full-term, but stillborn, daughter. Even as late as 1978, an event like this was to be forgotten and I could go on about how poorly we were served by the system at the time.

Tom is 28 this year and a father himself, of Rhianna Rose, and I did have another beautiful daughter, Polly, a couple of years later.

A Christmas in rural Staffordshire

I grew up on a small family dairy farm, which meant that every day the cows had to be milked, fed, watered and mucked-out, and the same went for the calves, heifers, sheep, hens and other poultry (although you didn't have to milk them!). Christmas or not, the animals came first.

It was sometime in the early 1960s when Christmas Eve was the day we cut a tree and decorated it and the house. I remember licking all those paper streamers! Magically, it was a Christmas Eve when it began to snow!

Dad was churchwarden and was aiming to go to the Midnight Service. He came in from milking and settling everything down for the night at around 9.00 pm, had his supper and was dozing by the fire when we had a phone call from the vicar!

Our parish comprises of a village and a hamlet three miles apart. The vicarage was up a rough drive in the hamlet up a winding country lane. The Midnight Service was at the church in the village. He was stuck and couldn't get out of the drive. Could my Dad help? Dad, one of my sisters and I got our wellies on and piled into the family van. The snow was at least four inches thick by then. Getting up to the vicarage was a slow process and so was getting a rope to the vicar's car and getting it the two miles to the main road.



By this time, it was too late to change. We went to the service in our cow-muck besplashed working clothes and wellies and even though I was a teenager at the time, I felt somehow that it was appropriate.

Joan Coleman

My worst and best Christmas present

My worst Christmas present wasn't really my worst at all. It was in fact one of my best, but I had it in my possession for such a short time that I look back upon it with great sadness. I must have been eight or nine years old at the time and living in Southfield Road just opposite the Regal cinema. I was a member of the wolf cub pack attached to SS Mary and John church. The present I was given that Christmas was a scout knife. It was beautiful and I was so proud of it. It had all the things on it that a scout knife was supposed to have and it was shiny and it felt so good I could hardly put it down.

One morning soon after Christmas, my sister and I went walking down the Cowley Road looking into the shop windows. We couldn't afford to buy anything and the shops were all closed anyway so we just looked. There was a branch of Halfords on the left-hand side down towards the Plain and we stopped to look in the window. There was a metal grille in the pavement and below it beneath the pavement there was a very dirty window which was supposed to give light to the shop cellar. I was fiddling about with my new knife when I dropped it. It fell down by my feet and through the grille and down on to the top of the rubbish that had accumulated there. I was devastated. I could see it but I couldn't reach it. I had to walk away and leave it there. I hadn't the nerve to go back and ask for it when the shop reopened so there it stayed. Who knows, it could still be there. I still get a shudder when I think of that day, even after all these years.

Frank Butler

Picture the scene: me, a young wife of 5 months' experience, sitting up in bed in one of my honeymoon nighties, all ready to open my presents on Christmas morning. First parcel ... an apron. Second parcel ... another apron. Third parcel ... yet another apron, and so it went on. Some of these aprons were pretty, but by the time I came to apron number seven I had burst into tears! What were my friends and family trying to tell me? Was it that at 23 my days of parties, fun and dashing around were over and it was high time I settled down to the kitchen sink routine? I must quickly add that my dear Frank's present was not an apron. I think if it had been I'd have been totally devastated.

As for my best present? Well, it's a toss-up between two. The first is my rainbow umbrella which Frank bought me two years ago. We'd been on holiday in France and I saw one in a shop window and fell in love with it. We did not buy that one but somehow my husband tracked one down in England and managed to smuggle it home, wrap it and put in under the Christmas tree. I love it and it makes me sing to myself 'There's a rainbow round my shoulder' on rainy days.

The other present which has been wonderful was given to me by my daughter Helen last year. It was a gift token to have my 'colours' done. I guess that won't mean much to many people so let me explain. You are analysed by a colour consultant who does your make-up and then works out the full range of shades you can wear to suit your hair and skin colour. She showed me that yellows and orange among other colours were not for me. I came home and sorted out all those clothes which were not right. The Age Concern shop did very well! Well, I tried on lots of garments tucked at the back of my wardrobe. Oh dear, I'd put on weight and some of my nicest things didn't fit any more. The answer was a serious weight loss. Maybe you haven't noticed but the weight is coming off, more things fit me

now and that's why that gift token did me a huge favour and is my best Christmas present to date.

Rosanne Butler

Christmas presents that disappointed

One year my thoughtful husband gave me a pair of tea-towels. They were nice ones (and decorated the kitchen wall for some time before being relegated to more mundane uses), but not really romantic or personal. However, they did occasion much merriment – and that, after all, is part of the Christmas spirit.

I have also been given (again in the practical spirit) a new pressure cooker, an invaluable gift for the kitchen which had provided us with many a nice soup, meal and pudding – but not really what one hopes for as a gift!

No disappointment here!

I think the best present ever was not a Christmas gift, but came when the *time* was right. We had moved into our first house 2 days before Christmas. Around Easter Alan went off on his bike and returned with a small cardboard box on the back. What a lovely surprise and what excitement! In the box was a small black and white kitten. Susan arrived in May – our family was complete for a while!

Scamp remained with us for many years, and became blind near the end of her life. She helped us bring both our girls up knowing the responsibilities, joys and sadness, of sharing their home with a pet.

Diana Pope

I usually had to tell my husband what I wanted for Christmas, or be told to get something nice. Imagine my surprise this one Christmas, when he had seemed to ignore my hints and suggestions, a beautifully wrapped present arrived on Christmas morning. Excitedly I opened it thinking to myself, a surprise at last, and what a surprise! There in the box was a foot pump and a tyre gauge. I suppose that it was a good idea really as I had recently passed my driving test and bought a car, but what a let down!

Molly Oliver

I was a Daddy's girl. I loved him very much. In 1939 he volunteered for the army and went away and I missed him so much. I was five. In 1941 my Mum said 'Dad has three days leave over Christmas, won't that be a lovely Christmas present?' I wasn't at all interested in the presents under the tree, I just wanted my Dad.

We had a fantastic three days, then the day after Boxing Day an army lorry pulled up out-

side the house and Dad all kitted out extricated me from his arms and jumped in the back of it. I remember holding his coat and sobbing 'Daddy, don't go' but he had to. As the lorry set off I started running after it still shouting 'don't go' and followed it to the end of the road and watched it out of sight.

When I went back down the road Mum was out looking for me, a bit angry but she understood. Later, she said 'wasn't that a lovely Christmas present having Daddy home?' but to me it was the best and worst rolled into one.

My Dad always said he would never, ever forget me chasing that lorry and he not being able to do anything about it.

Pat Sansom



My special Christmas day was in 1949. Ken was spending Christmas at my parents' home in Norfolk. On Christmas morning he gave me my engagement ring and we announced to family members and friends that we were engaged and were getting married in August 1950. This was not a Christmas present but a very happy memory.

I had mixed feelings one Christmas when Ken gave me an ironing board – a very useful present but I felt a little disappointed!

Gwen M. Ranklin

This is the mulled wine recipe that we use every year at the St James Christmas carol service and that so many people really enjoy.

1 bottle red wine
1/3 bottle orange squash, diluted as normal
1/3 teaspoon cinnamon
1/3 teaspoon mixed spice
1/3 teaspoon grated nutmeg
1/3 teaspoon ground ginger
4-5 tablespoons brown sugar
4 whole cloves
2 cinnamon sticks



Heat all the ingredients together gently. It is important not to allow the mixture to boil. Float slices of citrus fruit on top before serving.

This serves about ten people depending on the size of the glass! Cheers!!

Rosanne and Frank Butler

Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Sung Eucharist (<i>exc 2nd Sunday</i>)
	All Age Eucharist (<i>2nd Sunday</i>)

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

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>
	10.00 am	Toddler Group – <i>St Francis</i>
	2.30 pm	Parish Mothers' Union – <i>St James (3rd Mon)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Tuesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Seashells – <i>Church Centre</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Service – <i>St Francis</i>
	12.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St James</i>
	12.30 pm	Tuesday Lunch Club – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Friends of <i>St Francis</i> – <i>St Francis (2nd & 4th)</i>
5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>	
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Tea Break – <i>St Francis (1st Wed)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Thursday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	7.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St Francis</i>
Friday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>

Day Off

Michael can be contacted in the evenings and at weekends. Beth can be contacted during the day as well.

Parish Directory

Team Rector

Revd Howard Thornton
Cowley Rectory,
Beauchamp Lane
Tel: 747680
parishofcowley@hotmail.co.uk

Team Curates:

The Revd Beth Spence,
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Jeremy Herklots
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Deputy Wardens:

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