

Benefice E-Newsletter
Dawlish with Holcombe and Cofton
17th December 2023

THE DILEMMA OF CHRISTMAS



Human beings have a capacity to feel two things at the same time. One old friend of mine, if you ask her how she is, will often reply “Oh, the usual. Happy and sad, happy and sad.” Christmas means so many different things to different people. Sometimes our feelings about it can conflict and we can feel several things – even contrasting things – all at the same time.

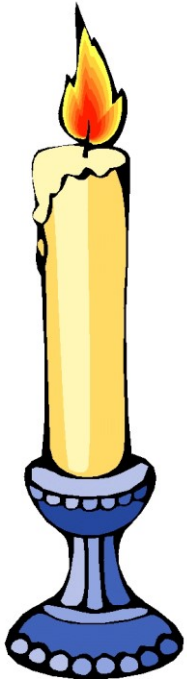
We may find cynicism jostling with sentimentality, fantasy with hard realities; joy with apprehension or even fear, hope alongside a nagging feeling of dread or despair. These emotions are all valid and real and are not perhaps as mutually exclusive as they sound.

There are many other contrasts, I’m sure. While Christmas may herald a magical family time, it may also simultaneously come as an enforced reminder of personal loss and loneliness, or of frustrations within the families we are part of.



A Latin poet, Gaius Valerius Catullus, who died 54 years before Jesus was born, wrote the famous lines “I hate and I love. And if you ask me how, I do not know, I only feel it and am torn in two.” There are many of us, perhaps, for whom Christmas conjures up a similar set of love-hate emotions.

On the one hand, the Christian message contained within the Bethlehem story is one of unrestrained joy and exuberance at the appearance of the Son of God as a little human baby. Yet this sits side by side with an astonishingly realistic account of the difficulties and even brutalities of the world into which He entered. Neither is tempered by the other. They both existed together and in collision at the time of Christ’s birth, and they continue to do so today.



We only have to look at what is happening in the Middle East, and in the Ukraine and elsewhere around the world, right now, to realise that. But the purpose is not that they should remain forever in tension. Light does not modify darkness. It dispels it and can't ultimately coexist with its antithesis. One MUST conquer the other. And the message is that THE light will prevail.

Jewish writer, Elie Wiesel, tells the story of two rabbis who met after the events of the Holocaust. One said to the other, "After all that has happened, how can you still believe?" And the other replied, "After all that has happened, how can you NOT believe?"

Yes, the narrative of faith collides with the narrative of unbelief. But the message of Christmas calls us to have faith in a God who is not far away from us or our experiences, but who entered the world to engage with the darkness.... and dispel it, forever. In this, springs hope eternal.

May the blessings of Christmas-time warm your hearts and inspire you further in your own journey of faith.

With love in the Lord,
Ceri.



Benefice Services



24th December 4th Sunday of Advent

17th December: 3rd Sunday of Advent

9.30am St George's – Holy Communion
10am St Gregory's – Greg's @ 10
11am St Mary's – Holy Communion
4pm St Mary's – Carol service
6.30pm St Gregory's – Carol service

20th December

10am St Gregory's – Midweek Holy Communion
4pm St George's – Carol Service

21st December

4pm St Mary's – Service of the Longest Night

9.30am St George's – Christmas Communion
10am St Gregory's – Said Holy Communion
4pm St George's – Crib service
4.30pm St Mary's – Crib service
5pm St Gregory's – Crib service
6pm St Mary's – Christmas Communion
11pm St Gregory's – 'Midnight' Communion



25th December – Christmas Day

10am St Gregory's – Family Communion
NO SERVICES AT ST GEORGE'S
NO SERVICES AT ST MARY'S

31st December – 1st Sunday of Christmas

10.30am St Mary's – Benefice Service Holy Communion
THERE ARE NO OTHER SERVICES IN THE BENEFICE ON THIS SUNDAY



St Gregory's Christmas Tree Festival

Grand opening by the Mayor Wednesday 13th December 6pm
followed by festive music in church
(bring a torch!)

Thursday 14th 11am-1pm & 3pm-6pm

Friday 15th 2pm-6pm

Saturday 16th 11am-3pm followed by festival concert

Sunday 17th 12 noon-3pm

Sunday 17th Carol service 6.30pm

Monday 18th 12 noon-4pm

Christmas Tree Festival Concert

**A wonderful afternoon of festive music & song featuring
some amazing groups from our local community.**

Featuring.....

**Combined choirs of St Gregory's & St George's
Gatehouse Primary Academy School**

Chordettes Acappella Chorus

Dawlish Rockwaves

The High C's

**Saturday 16th December 2023
At St Gregory's Church, Dawlish**

Concert starts: 3:00pm

Free entry but all donations will be welcomed

All proceeds go towards Christians Against Poverty (CAP) in Teignbridge, specifically to help families struggling in the current financial crisis & spread some seasonal joy around the Dawlish area.

Tuesday Prayer Meeting on Zoom

Join us on Zoom for a half hour of prayer at 9am on Tuesday. [Just click on this link](#) or go to <https://zoom.us/join> and enter Meeting ID: 415 012 5700 and Passcode: Wedlake.



Advanced notice: Men's Breakfast

The next one will be held at St Gregory's, on January 8th at 9am. (These are always the first Monday of the month – unless there's a bank holiday!) If you're a man who enjoys breakfast and would like to come along, please do contact Ray Williams directly: bevray@outlook.com

Visit or Home Communion at Christmas

If you know of anyone who is unable to get to church over Christmas and would appreciate receiving communion, please contact Will Halse on 01626 866054. We have a team who are on hand to help.

Thanks
Will

If you would like any support, or someone to talk to, or you are aware of someone else who would appreciate contact please ring one of the following:

Margaret Noel: 01626 863148
Will Halse: 01626 866054
Ceri Lee: 07739 936286
