



**St Mark's Parish Magazine**  
**December 2023**





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### **Your Views & Contributions**

Next issue will be available from  
7 January 2024

All contributions to the editor by  
Friday 15 December 2023

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# CHRISTMAS

## LETTER FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends,

I wonder if you have ever had a moment, when you have just watched the news or read the paper and seen what's going on in Israel and Gaza, or the Ukraine or somewhere else in the world, and felt the absence of anything hopeful. It just looks like things aren't ever going to improve or get better. Yet in all that is going on, something deep down makes you feel you cannot give up on the world. I think we all as human beings have that underlying sense of the need to have hope.



As we begin our journey through Advent this year – with the prospect of Christmas fast approaching – I wonder whether we need to be reminded of the hope that God offers us through the Christmas story. Mary and Joseph, a homeless couple sheltering in dire circumstances amongst the animals and all that messiness, to find somewhere to bring their baby into the world. In that baby we see God's presence, his love and hope right there in that mess and muddle of a stable, the mess and muddle of the political turmoil of the time, and the mess and muddle of ordinary lives like ours. Yet it is also the place where we can see God's love and hope amongst us.

So in the turmoil of the world we can have hope because God was born amongst us that first Christmas. Hope for tolerance and acceptance, fairness and justice, ceasefires and the laying down of arms, because in that stable there is love and hope. Love and hope in this coming year for each one of us. Shepherds considered as outsiders found God's love and hope in that manger. The Wise Men, foreigners coming from far away to search for a King, were welcomed without question.

So let us look at our world with hope because in it, and in all we do personally, as a church and as a community, whatever lies before us, we can find God's love and his hope there.

Every blessing

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manton'.

# CHRISTMAS

## Church Notices

### Wanted! New Editor

After 5 years editing the Parish Magazine, January will be my last issue. We are still looking for a volunteer to take over the position and bring some fresh ideas. If you are able to spare the time to take over the role of Editor or even would just like an idea of what is involved, please contact the Parish Office or myself.

**Helen Starmer**

### The travelling crib



The travelling crib will be spending time with families across the parish this December. If you have signed up to welcome the crib in your family, please share your photos on Facebook (tag St Marks Church) or via email at [magazine@stmarkreigate.co.uk](mailto:magazine@stmarkreigate.co.uk). We would love to see where it has been on its adventures.

### Donations over the Christmas period



Thank you for those who donated at our Remembrance Service. That collection will be going to Combat Stress. Over Christmas donations will be made to the following causes: Christingle Service – Children’s Society; Christmas Day Services – Church funds; all other services and on-line donations between 17 December and 24 December – to be shared between Reigate Samaritans and Renewed Hope Trust. Please continue to give generously at this time.



## **News from the Church of England**

### **Synod backs trial of special services asking for God's blessing for same-sex couples**

Special services of prayer and dedication asking for God's blessing for same-sex couples should be introduced soon in the Church of England on a trial basis, General Synod has agreed.

Synod, which met in London mid-November, voted in favour of a motion containing an amendment tabled by the Bishop of Oxford, Steven Croft, to bring forward the standalone services based around texts known as Prayers of Love and Faith.

Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) is a collection of prayers, readings and other resources for praying with and for a same-sex couple who love one another and who wish to give thanks for and mark that love in faith before God.

In October, the House of Bishops agreed to commend the Prayers of Love and Faith for use in existing church services. Synod heard that that is likely to take place by mid-December.

At October's meeting the House of Bishops also agreed that structures for special standalone services based on the PLF could also go forward to be formally authorised under canon law under a process expected to take about two years.

However, the recent amended motion means that the services could be authorised for use sooner, but temporarily, under separate legislation. That would enable the first standalone Prayers of Love and Faith services to take place in churches at the same time as the process of seeking permanent authorisation is under way.

Synod also reviewed other work to implement the landmark motion agreed by Synod in February on the Church's approach to same-sex relationships. That motion called on the Church to "lament and repent" of the Church's treatment of LGBTQI+ people, and called on the House of Bishops to further refine and commend the Prayers of Love and Faith for use in the Church of England, together with new pastoral guidance and proposals for pastoral reassurance.

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, and the Bishop of Winchester, Philip Mounstephen, who have been co-chairing the Living in Love and Faith steering group, said: "During more than nine hours of debate we have heard very clearly what has been said, with passion and deep conviction, from a whole range of different perspectives.

“The truth is – and as we have seen again today – that the Church of England is not of one mind on questions of sexuality and marriage.

“Synod has agreed – narrowly – that standalone church services for same-sex couples should be authorised under Canon law on a trial basis.

“The House of Bishops will now consider how best to implement that call as we also commend the Prayers of Love and Faith for use in worship.

“Yet we must also reflect on all that we have heard from Synod – from across the whole spectrum - and redouble our efforts to find a space where we can live with our current disagreements because we believe that is what God is calling us to do.”

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: “We have heard loud and clear, through an extensive debate over two days, the depth of feeling across the Church on these hugely important questions.

“In particular, we have heard deep and heartfelt concern about the way the bishops have sought to implement Synod’s earlier decision on the Prayers of Love and Faith.”

“So while this motion was passed, narrowly, we do not underestimate the depth of feeling and will reflect on all that we have heard as we seek to move forward together.”



## **A Chat at Christmas**

“So what will you be doing for Christmas?” asked Don.

“Well, it’s going to be complicated because our new baby is due round about that time,” replied Ed. “Surely you have an approximate date?” asked Don. “Well, Leslie has many good points; you can rely on her for most things, but she has never been good on dates or even keeping time, for that matter,” answered Ed.

Don had invited Ed, his young assistant to a Christmas drink during their lunch hour. Don still had his first froth above his upper lip and was noticeably relaxing from a heavy morning.

Don replied, "I remember our third child when we were in much the same position. We went to friends for Christmas Day and everyone seemed to have the flu except us and we wondered whether it would catch us just as the baby was born. My wife normally takes things in her stride, as it were, but that time it all seemed a bit much and we had to think of the two toddlers who were entitled to fun at Christmas. We were both extremely tired. In the event we had two Christmases, one on the day and the other on 29 December. And what a second coming!"

"The sight of our new-born boy, complete and healthy, thank heaven, was more than a great relief to us as parents. The two toddlers were simply entranced and so joyful to have a new brother. They said it was the best Christmas present ever, even though Father Christmas had been late. Babies bring with them so much joy and happiness.

I remember I flew a huge ship's Blue Ensign from World War II in the front garden and that welcomed in a stream of neighbours to view the baby, congratulate Leslie and speculate on the future for the newborn. Some brought goodwill in a bottle and others just themselves. I guess it was similar for Mary and Joseph when Jesus was born: the star, shepherds and the Wise Men. New life and light into the world and the expectation of change for the better. Yes, you'll be all right, Ed."

"I hope you are right," said Ed "Already I can relate to the tired bit. There must be thousands of tired parents of new births in difficult circumstances in Africa and other poor countries. We have an organisation called SMOAT which runs a Christmas Appeal for selected projects in the developing world. This year there are two projects; a rainwater harvesting project in a rural school by Project Uganda, a small charity run by a family in the village of Winterslow, and also a solar power system at a rural learning centre in Zambia."

"I read about this SMOAT in your church magazine that you give me," said Don. "At first I thought it was some newly discovered small furry animal. I am always amazed at the amount they raise with such a small committee and limited supporters. But, in the end, isn't the aid less than a drop in the ocean?"

"Ah, but SMOAT has been going for many years and many drops make a bucket and there are lots of similar organisations such as Water Aid, formed just after SMOAT, which do similar work to support the real heroes who go and help full time," said Ed. "You have to think of the benefits to the individuals, not only solving a world problem. Joseph and Mary were not refugees but they certainly had an oppressive government, so their case was not so very different. Also, we might consider that since one small child changed the world over two thousand years ago, there is no accounting for what care for others may lead to."

"I agree," said Don. "That magazine you give me; I quite look forward to it. That chap who writes those short, cogent comments on aspects of life always gives me pause for thought. I suppose it's wisdom accumulated over ninety years. The other



one who writes about the environment is a bit of a nut, but sometimes he has a point. The editor really does a very good job putting it all together with articles of interest and colourful graphics. You are very lucky to have her."

"I could not agree more. She has been very imaginative as you say, and also encouraging to the others involved. But I am afraid she is very much under pressure," said Ed. "She has two small children and now a job; a very busy person with no longer enough time. I don't know how we shall replace her." "What a great shame it would be if the magazine were to fail," said Don. "But that's the trouble these days. People are so reluctant to volunteer and so even organisations like the Reigate Society may fold. I don't really think they are under more pressure than we were at their age. They just think they are. Even the recently retired find it too much to volunteer and run organisations."

"Too right," said Ed. "I guess that is the consequence of providing so much through the market. We pay for things to be done instead of DIY, so we lose the initiative to take on things and have a go ourselves. It's a kind of turning inwards. What are you doing for Christmas?"

"We are having two of the children with our grandchildren here and the other one will visit on Christmas Day. They will wake to find stockings filled, the Christmas Tree decorated as well as the two main rooms; a log fire in the lounge. Just as we always did. We are very old fashioned and unimaginative. There will be darts, table tennis, toad in the hole and cards throughout the Christmas holiday as people wish. Drinks are always available for those who call in, but even that's not so common these days. We also sing some silly songs with the drinks and generally tease each other. No imagination there, but all seem to enjoy it, especially the customary rabbit pie we have towards the end of the big day."

"Sounds great to me," said Ed. "It's better than watching old films from the last century – although they are generally better than the current ones. After all, Christmas is not just a time for worship or booze according to taste, but also a time for nostalgia and family as well as renewal, and the fresh start from a new life."

"Here's to the new baby then, and a happy Christmas," said Don. "Same to you," said Ed. and they raised their glasses.

**Harry Ingram**



## **Auckland**

I landed on 7 October, which would have been my New Zealand friend's 90th birthday had he survived, in Auckland with cold feet in two ways. The flight from Heathrow to Singapore and then on to New Zealand was not easy in that my feet were cold and needed extra socks and a blanket and in arriving in that lovely country I didn't know how my 26 days there would turn out. I need not have worried on either count as my feet were soon warm again and I received such a warm welcome and so much care throughout my stay. I was met in Auckland by the lovely daughter of Ross, my best friend there, who had been with me at school during the Second World War. Shayne, with her husband Greg, looked after me so well for all those 26 days.

They first drove me to their home in Auckland, a beautiful house designed by Greg, the architect, many years ago. Indeed, Jenny and I were entertained there once in 1996 when I was last in New Zealand. The wooden house is built on a hill with several floors, which seems unusual in that country as most lovely houses I saw were bungalows. Greg's garden had many trees including an avocado, and it sloped down to a stream at the end.

They showed me to a room with a shower room next door, a great blessing after my long flights which had in total lasted 24 hours.

I slept well and woke up Sunday morning. After breakfast Shayne and Greg took me in their Peugeot car to their Naval Museum at Devonport where we met in the café their ex naval friend Andrew McMillan. We enjoyed meeting him and his lovely wife Janet and talked about our two Navies over coffee and chips. I left him a copy of my book. The museum was very interesting in dealing with Pacific problems. The drive home was lovely, all the houses so fresh looking and the blossoms and flowers of spring embellishing their gardens. That evening their friendly neighbour, John, from Canada joined us for supper.

The next day Shayne took me to see the house that Ross had been living in. It was built in Cliff Avenue on a hill with superb views of Auckland harbour from every room. He used to swim in the sea there and his ashes may be buried on that beach. On to see a further lovely view from the top of that hill.

The next day Shayne was at work but Greg drove me to the harbour ferry to cross the choppy water under the harbour bridge, landing in the city where I saw architectural work by Greg. We then joined a local train for a journey to the end of

the line to see more of the countryside. Finally we enjoyed two more ferry rides around the harbour.

The next day Greg took me to a meeting with a Naval Chaplain in the Devonport Naval Centre Chapel where there was to be the funeral of a retired Senior Officer the next day. We took our Passports with us. The chapel was beautiful with a lovely pulpit which we were told was not used often and the chaplain had been born in Chiswick, had lived in South Africa and was now serving with the New Zealand Navy.

After this Greg drove me to his nearby racetrack and even helped me into his McLaren racing car and drove me at high speed round the racing track, a high point in my holiday. Especially when we came back to his garage on the site and introduced me to "Racing Ray" a New Zealand champion driver, who knelt down to chat with me at my seat so close to the ground. Greg and I then went up to the verandah of his flat above to sample a glass of lovely New Zealand wine as Porsche Cars sped round the corner of the track beneath us.

After this we were driven on to see Greg's mother Molly, her niece Angela with her three lovely young children. Returned to Shayne after rush hour only to find there was a leaking pipe needing attention.

The next day, Thursday, was quiet, waiting for a plumber to mend the leak. Meanwhile Greg. was up a ladder and on a sloping roof preparing for his visit. I could see him out the window but worried unnecessarily about his safety. By the time Shayne returned from work all was well again.

Friday we were preparing for our departure by air for Wellington. We left at 11am leaving Greg's car at Molly's house and receiving a lift to the airport by Greg's sister, Raewyn. At the airport I was wheelchaired as necessary and we took off from Auckland for Wellington at 13.40.

*Ian has kindly shared his experience of his trip to New Zealand in four parts. Next month, we can read about his stay in Wellington.*

**Ian Archer**

## CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER 2023

- Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December**    **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent (*Green Sunday*)**  
8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP) – **in the Hall**  
10.00am    Sung Eucharist – **in the Hall** and Online  
4.00pm    Confirmation Service – **in the Church**
- Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December    3.25pm    T-Time Tales  
Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December    12.45pm    Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
- Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December**    **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church  
10.00am    Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online  
1.00pm    Community Lunch  
4.00pm    Messy Church
- Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December    9.30am    Holmesdale School Nativity in Church  
11.00am    Holmesdale School Nativity in Church  
Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December    12.45pm    Holy Communion (Iona) in Church  
2.30pm    Micklefield School Carols in Church  
Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December    8.00pm    Social Ballroom and Latin Dance
- Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December**    **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church  
10.00am    Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online  
6.00pm    Carol Service – in Church and Online
- Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December    12.45pm    Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
- Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December**    **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent / Christmas Eve**  
NO 8.00am Service  
10.00am    Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online  
4.00pm    Christingle and Crib Service – in Church  
**9.00pm**    First Communion of Christmas – in Church
- Monday 25<sup>th</sup> December**    **Christmas Day**  
8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church  
10.00am    Family Holy Communion– in Church and  
Online
- Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December**    **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Christmas**  
8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church  
10.00am    Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online

**Please remember that planned services are subject to change at short notice so please check the details on our website or with the Parish Office.**

## CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2024

<b>Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January</b>	<b>Naming of Jesus</b>
Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> January	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
<b>Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> January</b>	<b>The Epiphany</b>
<b>Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January</b>	<b>Baptism of Christ (<i>Green Sunday</i>)</b>
	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – <b>in the Hall</b>
	10.00am Sung Eucharist – <b>in the Hall</b> and Online
	4.00pm Family Service – <b>in the Hall</b>
Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> January	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> January	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
<b>Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany</b>
	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
	10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online with Junior Church
	1.00pm Community Lunch
Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> January	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> January	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> January	8.00pm Social Ballroom and Latin Dance
<b>Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany</b>
	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
	10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online
	4.00pm Messy Church
Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> January	3.25pm T-Time Tales
<b>Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January</b>	<b>Conversion of St Paul</b>
	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
<b>Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January</b>	<b>Presentation of Christ in the Temple</b>
	8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
	10.00am Sung Eucharist – in Church and Online with Junior Church
	4.00pm Taizé Prayer
Wednesday 31 <sup>st</sup> January	3.25pm T-Time Tales

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# CHRISTMAS

## Talking

How wonderful it is that we can talk with each other. It can be very exciting for parents when babies start to talk. While with a young family recently it was magical to see how their two year old son could talk and understand what was said to him even if it didn't seem to him that what he was told was what he wanted to do. His parents were delighted to talk with him often, so that he could express himself and gradually portray his ideas and beliefs to others.

Animals can't talk as such but often communicate with each other in other ways. Of course, parrots and budgerigars speak but only with words taught to them by us and not knowing their meaning.

There was a time when all films were silent, as well as without colour. As soon as "talkies" started we no longer needed an accompanying organ to play but were delighted with the change to words.

Humour can be positive, especially if it is at our own expense and not that of others.

Sometimes as we get older, and perhaps on our own, it is not possible to talk with others so we must do all we can to contact people who otherwise might be lonely, by phone if necessary. Some people become desperate and might revert to the Samaritans to find someone to listen to them.

We can feel embarrassed to open a conversation with a stranger but doing so might just make their day. If they don't want to talk it need not matter to us.

We can talk to ourselves, but others hearing us might think us mad, and in one film the heroine talked to the wall when she thought no one was listening.

Once when Jenny's Alzheimer's became worse, she said she had something to tell us. We listened carefully but could not understand all she was saying. However, she was not worried, but just felt better for saying what she felt.

Of course, we can talk too much when we should spend more time listening to others instead. And what do we spend our time talking about? It should be supportive, truthful and kind, never destructive or passing on information that might be wrong.

Jesus cured the dumb so they could speak and the deaf so they could hear.

**Ian Archer**



## **Thank Dickens for Christmas as you know it!**

Ever wonder where many of our Christmas traditions come from? A surprising amount of our modern Christmas celebrations can be traced back to the well-loved story of 'A Christmas Carol', by Charles Dickens.

When you read 'A Christmas Carol', you discover almost a template of the 'ideal Christmas' which we still hold dear today. Dickens seems to have selected the best of the Christmas celebrations of his day (he ignored some of the odd excesses) and packaged them in such a way as to give us traditions that we could accommodate and treasure – more than a century later.

So, for instance, in 'A Christmas Carol', Christmas is a family day, with a family-centred feast. In a home decorated with holly and candles the characters enjoy a roast turkey, followed by Christmas pudding. They give their loved ones presents. Scrooge even gives donations to charity (!).

And all the while outside, there is snow and frost, while church bells ring, and carol singers sing, and hope for mulled wine. In 'A Christmas Carol' there is even a Father Christmas – in the shape of Christmas Present. Only the Christmas tree itself came later, when Prince Albert imported 'a pretty German toy' that won the heart of the English court, and hence the rest of Victorian society.



## **The first ever nativity scene**

This Christmas, thousands of Nativity plays will be held around the UK. Ever wondered who staged the very first one?

It was St Francis of Assisi, and it was 800 years ago, in Greccio, Italy, on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1223.

Francis had been born into a wealthy family, but abandoned his noble inheritance when he became a Christian. Instead, he had turned to a life of great simplicity, in service to Christ's church.

Francis spent many hours meditating on the stories of the life of Christ, and even travelled to the Holy Land in 1219 and 1220, to see the various holy sites of Jesus's life. The sites deeply moved him, as they brought the Bible stories to vibrant life.

Back in Italy, in November of 1223, Francis was in Rome, and he had an idea. Why not share something of the inspiration of the Holy Land with his people here in Italy?

Barely fifty miles to the north, in Greccio, he knew many people to whom he had been ministering for years. He could at least show them something of the simplicity of the birth of Jesus. And so it was that, two weeks before Christmas, Francis asked his friend, the Lord of Greccio, Giovanni Velita, to prepare a nearby cave with live animals and a hay-filled manger.

That cave, beside some rocky crags, became the venue of the very first ever Nativity scene. On Christmas 1223, when the people of Greccio attended Christmas Mass as usual, they were invited to 'come and see' the simple scene.

According to his biographer, Brother Thomas of Celano, Francis wanted people to see what Jesus had "suffered for lack of the necessities of a new-born babe, and how He lay in the manger between the ox and ass."

According to eyewitness accounts of the moment, fires lit the dark scene while crowds arrived at the spot carrying candles and torches. There were also accounts of miracles happening that night. Some people had a vision of a real infant in the empty manger, and others reported miraculous healings.



All in all, the Nativity scene was an instant success, and soon other communities were staging their own.

Today, you can still visit the cave and rocks where the first Nativity was staged. It is now a Franciscan hermitage and sanctuary. Every year at Christmas, the people of Greccio stage a live, historical re-enactment of St Francis and the first Nativity scene.

Pope Francis has visited the spot twice: in 2016 and then in 2019, when he signed an apostolic letter on the importance of Nativity scenes.

Look out for our nativity scene making its way back for this year.





## **Spiritual Disciplines: Celebration**

*'But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'* (Luke 2:10).

As we conclude our series on the spiritual disciplines, this month we look at *Celebration*, which is very appropriate for this Christmas season. We are called to rejoice in God's good gifts and celebrate his faithfulness.

Jesus modelled celebration in his first miracle at Cana, when he turned water into wine, enabling the party to continue (John 2.1-12). Celebration helps us with the other disciplines, as it enables us to keep going through times of joy and struggle: *Without a joyful spirit of festivity the Disciplines become dull, death-breathing tools in the hands of modern Pharisees.'* (Richard Foster). We celebrate crucial moments in our lives with unreserved joy and thanksgiving and this shape our lives to be more like Jesus.

Richard Foster offers a few helpful pointers to celebration in his book *Celebration of Discipline*. They may come in handy as you celebrate Christmas this year!

*Singing and dancing:* how can we rediscover what children do brilliantly, in our families or church? Is there room for singing Christmas carols together at home this year?

*Laughter:* just as Jesus brought humour into his teaching, how can we laugh more? What does it mean to take ourselves less seriously and encourage more fun with our friends?

*Imagination and creativity:* how can we invest in our own creativity, as well as other people's? – e.g. in painting, poetry, reading and other leisure activities? God gave us these things to enjoy! As we celebrate our own creativity, we are sharing in God's goodness and joy.

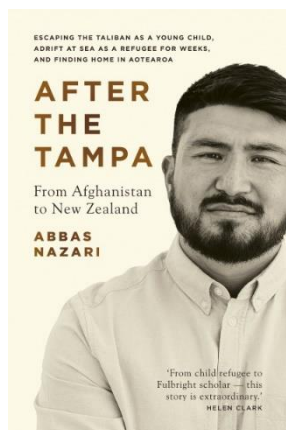
*Family events:* we can use family celebrations and with Christmas approaching, there is the opportunity of putting God at the centre of our celebration.

*'So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God'* (1 Cor 10.31)

# CHRISTMAS

## Book Review

This month: After the Tampa



While on holiday in New Zealand last month I read a marvelous book called "After the Tampa" by Abbas Nazari. When the Taliban were at the height of their power in 2001 the author's parents were faced with a choice: stay and face persecution in their homeland, or seek security for their young children elsewhere. The family's desperate search for safety took them from the mountains of Afghanistan to a small fishing boat in the Indian Ocean crammed with some 400 asylum seekers. When their boat started to sink they were rescued by a cargo ship, the "Tampa". They desperately needed to land in Australia which despite the international law of the sea they were not allowed to land but

found succour elsewhere. The book is very well written and so is easy to read. A kindle edition costs £7.99 and paperback is £18.99.

Thanks to Ian Archer for sharing his review. Have you recently read a good book? Tell us about it. Email [magazine@stmarksreigate.co.uk](mailto:magazine@stmarksreigate.co.uk) with your book review.

### Christmas 2023

The night before Christmas when all are abed,  
As reindeer and sleigh bells are heard overhead,  
Children still sleeping will early arise,  
With shouts of delights as they open each prize.

A doll for Amanda, a toy soldier for Jo?  
Ah, these are toys of long ago!  
Now it's computers, a party dress,  
Gifts so expensive they're meant to impress.

But the real joy of Christmas forever will stay,  
As church bells and carols proclaim that glad day,  
As wise man and shepherds recount what they saw,  
Of Mary, her Baby – and a bed full of straw.  
Megan Carter

# December Crossword

Biblical references are from the New International Version

## Across

- 1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)
- 4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)
- 7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)
- 8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)
- 9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)
- 13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)
- 16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)
- 17 National Association of Evangelicals the USA) (1,1,1)
- 19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, — — (4,4)
- 24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
- 25 The number of stones David chose his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)
- 26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)
- 27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

1		2			3		4		5		6	
7					8							
	9			10		11		12		13		14
15												
16												
17	18			19	20		21					
			22									23
24									25			
26							27					

(of  
Auld  
for  
for  
(4)

## Down

- 1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3)
- 2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)
- 3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)
- 4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)
- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
- 10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
- 21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)
- 22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)
- 23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)

## November Answers

**ACROSS:** 1 Thanks 4 Banner 8 Esher 9 Azariah 10 Compare 11 Ishma 12 Doorposts 17 Oaths 19 Galatia 21 Papyrus 22, Frail 23 Listen 24 Hyssop

**DOWN:** 1 Trench 2 Ashamed 3 Karma 5 Ananias 6 Neigh 7 Reheat 9 Areopagus 13 Observe 14 Satraps 15 Compel 16 Gallop 18 Tapes 20 Lofty

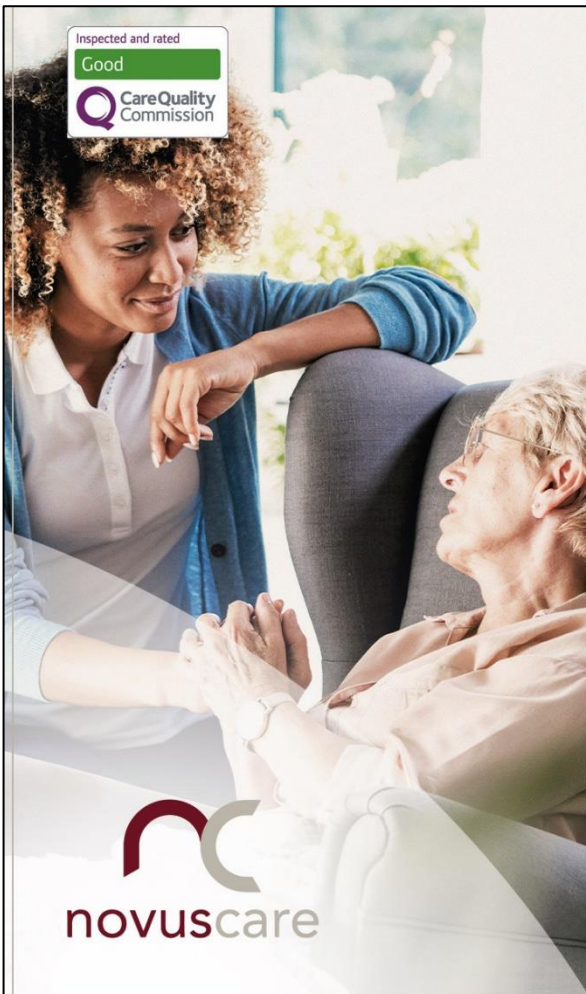
# Puzzles

## December Sudoku Puzzle

5		7				3		6
			4	9	6			
						2	1	
2		5		8	9	6		
4	8		2		7		9	5
		1	3	4		7		2
	2	8						
			7	3	8			
3		9				8		7

## November Solution

8	7	4	1	3	2	6	5	9
6	3	9	4	5	8	1	2	7
1	5	2	6	9	7	3	4	8
7	6	1	8	4	3	2	9	5
2	8	5	9	7	6	4	3	1
4	9	3	2	1	5	7	8	6
3	4	6	7	8	9	5	1	2
5	2	8	3	6	1	9	7	4
9	1	7	5	2	4	8	6	3



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