

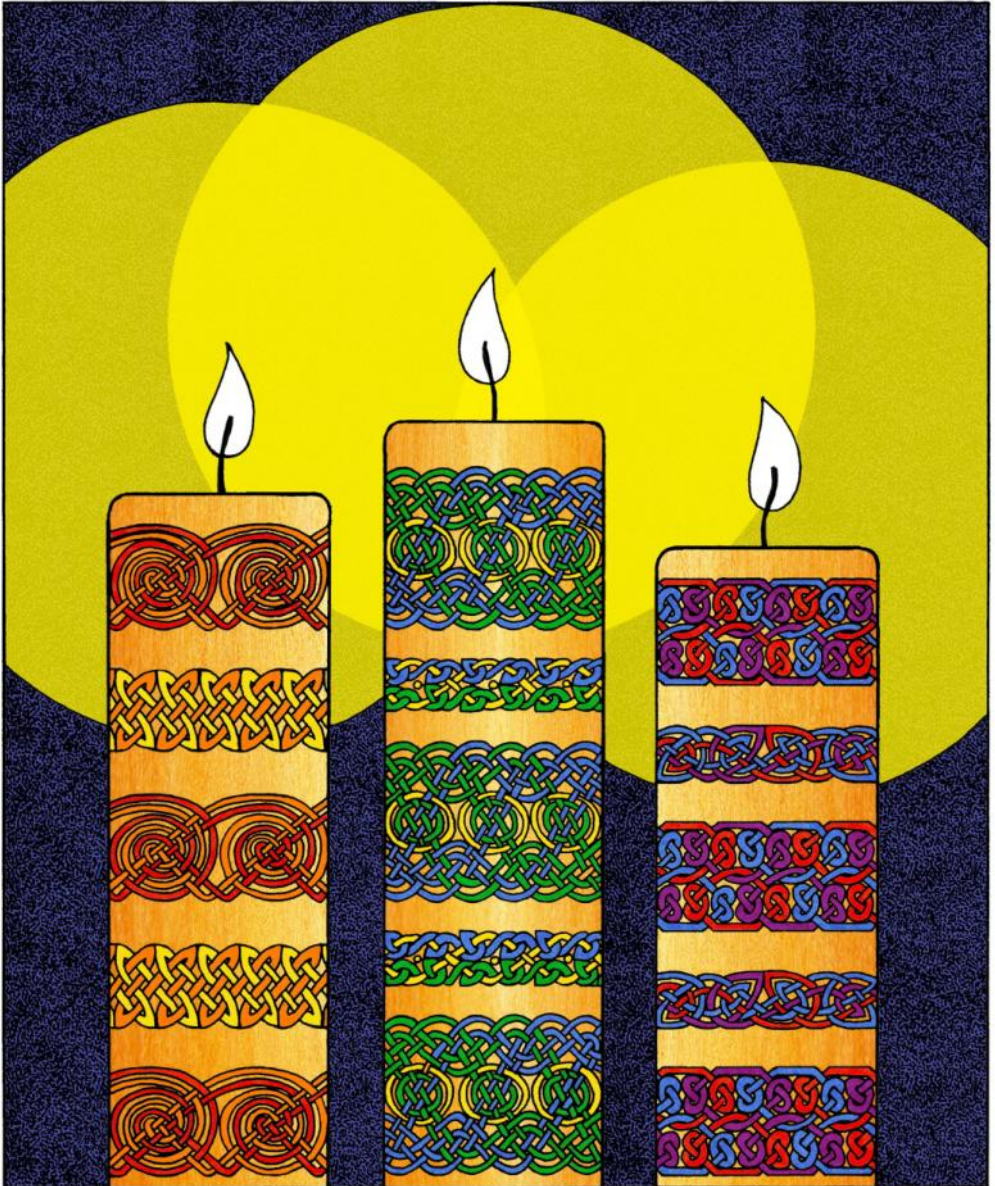


CROSSROADS

The Family Magazine of St Hilda's, Ashford, Middlesex

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Free - but donations welcome!



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Things change too quickly to
include in a monthly publica-
tion!

JOURNEYS OR LOCKDOWN THIS CHRISTMAS?

Christmas is a busy time for travel, as many of us venture a great distance to see family or friends again. But this year coronavirus has put an end to all that. Seeing all our loved ones this Christmas will be difficult, if not impossible. Soon we may not be travelling anywhere very much at all.

Have you noticed that the Christmas story is about journeys? It begins with Mary and Joseph travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem.



Then, some shepherds receive news from an angel about a special birth. They travel through the night, across dark fields and down unlit streets to search for the baby Jesus.

After this, in an eastern country some wise men see a new star, one that heralds a new king. They leave home and set out with only the star to guide them, and their faith to reassure them that Someone special is waiting at the end of their journey.



All these travellers must have wondered what really lay ahead. Nothing was fully understood, carefully planned for, or safe. They all travelled with questions and uncertainties. But God had come unexpectedly into their lives, and suddenly they were given new roles to serve Him. Despite worldly circumstances that could have crushed them, they stood firm and trusted God all the way.

These travellers' tales tell us that God may suddenly enter into our familiar, or this year, unfamiliar circumstances. He may come in surprising ways, to prompt us into new avenues of service. At first His call on us may be uncomfortable and challenging.

If our response is anything like Joseph, Mary, the shepherds and wise men – to be obedient to His call in serving, witnessing and worshipping, we shall be greatly blessed and rewarded. We are all on life's journey. If we travel with God, He will be faithful and lead us to His heavenly Home.

*Lester Aman
(from Parish Pump)*

BISHOP OF LONDON'S MESSAGE OF HOPE

The Bishop of London, Rt Revd Sarah Mullally, has said that despite this being a time of “great uncertainty and challenge” as the world struggles to “overcome a devastating pandemic that has cut short earthly lives, destroyed livelihoods, and separated us from the people and activities we enjoy,” yet still “we are not without hope.”

Speaking recently in St Paul’s Cathedral, she said: “Through word, prayer, song and symbol, we are reminded that God’s love for us can never be destroyed. God is with us in our pain and fear and will lead us to a yet more glorious day.”

Bishop Sarah also praised the ongoing work of the “real heroes and heroines at work in intensive care units, the Emergency Department, oncology and elderly care wards.”

These people have been “giving their all, and are continuing to give their all, because we are still very much in the midst of the Covid pandemic.”

“Yet,” she went on, “The hope we have in our hearts as Christians is eternal. Hope that is in Christ will not be disappointed.”

"I am looking for a Christmas Card that contains inclusive language, and yet retains the richness of 16th century English and is overtly Christian whilst being sensitive to the multi-faith patterns of our day ... any suggestions?"



MARION WARMAN – 100 on 26th November

Marion was my third form tutor at the Green School; we all loved her. She was an inspirational maths teacher and a lovely person. She had many interests, she sang with the Bach choir, an avid bird watcher and she loved to travel.

While still at the Green School she commenced training as a Deaconess.

She was licensed in 1979 and the following year retired from teaching. She joined the chaplaincy team at West Middlesex Hospital and was there for twenty four years. During her time in ministry she was part of pastoral teams at St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey. Her home base was St. Mary's, Osterley, where she conducted baptisms, weddings and funerals. She met many former pupils in the course of her duties and one remarked that she didn't expect to be married by her maths teacher!

I have kept in touch with Marion over the years, and although she is now rather frail, her mind is as sharp as ever.

Happy Birthday Marion.

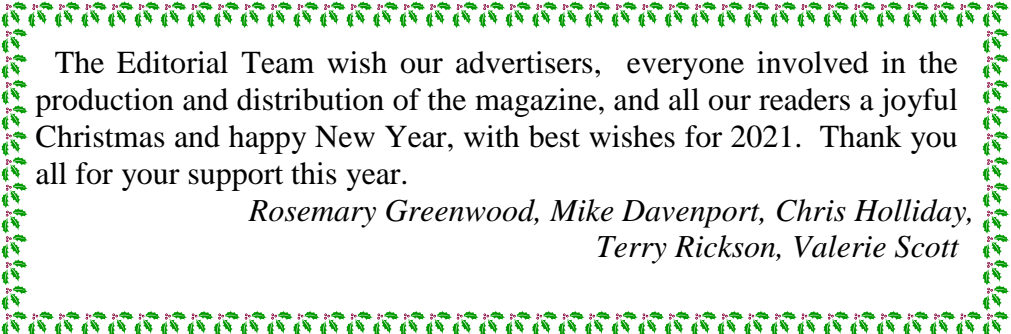
Valerie Scott

I also knew Marion: I worshipped at St. Mary's around the time she became a deaconess, and we were both members of the choir there. The Rev. John Congdon (who some of you will remember from his visits to preach at St. Hilda's) was the vicar.

At that time Marion was active in the Movement for the Ordination of Women, and I remember her telling us how distressing it was when the men who trained as deacons with her became priests but she could not. Also that one of them had congratulated her on a sermon "preached like a man" to which she replied "No, like a mathematician"! I remember her sermons as concise and challenging.

I met her a few times after I moved away - when the choirs of St. Mary's and St. Hilda's took part in the London Diocesan Choirs festivals. I add my birthday greetings to Valerie's.

Rosemary Greenwood



The Editorial Team wish our advertisers, everyone involved in the production and distribution of the magazine, and all our readers a joyful Christmas and happy New Year, with best wishes for 2021. Thank you all for your support this year.

*Rosemary Greenwood, Mike Davenport, Chris Holliday,
Terry Rickson, Valerie Scott*

BEETHOVEN: 'from the heart to the heart'

This year, 2020, is a special year for Beethoven: it marks the 250th anniversary of his birth on 16th December 1770.

And so it was very fitting that back in August, at the first Live Prom this year in the Royal Albert Hall, the BBC Symphony Orchestra played his 3rd symphony, the *Eroica*.

Beethoven composed it in 1804. A few years earlier he had noticed the first symptoms of his deafness. He wrote in a letter to his brothers that was found after his death, '*I must live like an exile.*' The deafness brought in its wake depression and thoughts of suicide, but Beethoven wrote that '*the only thing that held me back was my art.*'

He went on to compose works which expressed the tragedy this cross of deafness brought, but also conveyed the power of the human spirit which proved indomitable in the face of that struggle. '*Music,*' he wrote, '*is the electric soil in which the spirit thinks, lives and invents.*'

Beethoven was to compose six more symphonies after the *Eroica* and a wealth of other music up to his death in 1827. He spent most of his life in Vienna, but through his music his creative genius travelled far and wide.

Scholars divide his work into three stages. Up to 1800 he composed very much in the classical tradition. That year marked a second stage with works like the 5th Symphony, which opens with the famous eight-note motif of fate knocking at the door, and his opera *Fidelio*. Then in 1817 came a final stage when his compositions explored new territories of the human spirit altogether.

Although his deafness brought loneliness and isolation, he found in music the means to express those experiences: his struggle with Destiny, his love of Nature and that search for an inner peace and serenity. Weighed down by physical limitations, he found a freedom to express himself and his longing for transcendence and light.

It is there in the Prisoners' Chorus in his opera *Fidelio* as they emerge from the dungeon into the sunlight. And it is quintessentially present in his last great works: the late String Quartets, the 9th Symphony with its exultant hymn to Joy, and the *Missa Solemnis* where there is a beauty and a serenity in the *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*.

On the score of this work, Beethoven wrote above the Kyrie *It comes from the heart - may it go to the heart*. In this month which marks the 250th anniversary of his birth, we give thanks for his music which continues to speak to hearts in every age. It is music that tells us of the pain and struggle of life, but also the discovery of a courage and freedom that can help us to step out in his company and welcome the light and the joy, the peace and the beauty.

The Revd Michael Burgess

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6th December: FROM ST. NICHOLAS TO FATHER CHRISTMAS

One person you are bound to run into this Christmas season is Father Christmas. If he looks tired, just remember that he has been around a long time and gone through a lot of transformations.

Father Christmas wasn't always the red-suited, white-bearded star of the retail trade that he is today. He began life as Nicholas, born way back about AD260 in Patara, an important port on the southern coast of what is now Turkey. When his parents died and left him a fortune, Nicholas gave it away to the poor. He became a bishop of the nearby city of Myra, where he almost certainly suffered persecution and imprisonment at the hand of the Roman Emperor Diocletian.

Nicholas was a serious theologian: he was a participant at the First Council of Nicaea, which formulated the Creed which we still say today. He even, reportedly, slapped another bishop in a squabble over the exact nature of the Trinity.

Nicholas died in Myra about AD343, but the stories of his generosity and kindness were just beginning. One enduring tale tells of the three girls whom he rescued from certain prostitution by giving them gold for their dowries. When the father confronted him to thank him, Nicholas said he should thank God alone.

In the UK, Nicholas became the basis for Father Christmas, who emerged in Victorian times as a jolly-faced bearded character. Meanwhile, Dutch and German settlers had taken him to America with them as Sinter Klaas and Sankt Nicklas.

It was in America that Nicholas received his final two great breaks into real stardom. The first was when the Rev Clement C Moore, a New York Episcopal minister, turned from his lifework of writing a Hebrew/English lexicon, to write a fun poem for his children one Christmas. His 'The Visit of St Nicholas' is now universally known by its first line: 'T'was the Night Before Christmas'.

From Clement Moore we discovered that St Nicholas is round and pink-cheeked and white-bearded, and that he travels at night with sleigh, reindeer and a sack of toys on his back. It was Clement Moore who also revealed that St Nicholas enters houses down chimneys and fills children's stockings with toys and sweets.

So how did we find out that Father Christmas wears red? That was the US Coca-Cola advertising campaign of 1931, who finally released the latest, up-to-date pictures of Father Christmas: wearing a bright red, fur-trimmed coat and a large belt.

These days, it is good that Father Christmas uses reindeer and doesn't have to pay for petrol. In order to get around all the children in the world on Christmas Eve, he will have to travel 221 million miles at an average speed of 1279 miles a second, 6,395 times the speed of sound. For all those of us who are already exhausted just rushing around getting ready for Christmas, that is a sobering thought.

WAS JESUS REALLY BORN ON 25TH DECEMBER?

Almost certainly not. But the story of how that date came to be chosen as His ‘birthday’ is one that stretches back long before His birth.

It seems to have started on the Greek island of Rhodes in 283 BC. That year the solstice fell on 25th December, and it was also the year that the Ancient World’s largest Sun God statue – the 34 metre, 200 tonne Colossus of Rhodes, was consecrated.

By 46 BC, Julius Caesar had made 25th December the official winter solstice.

In AD 274, the Roman Emperor Aureilian chose the winter solstice to be the birthday of the Sun God. He also decreed that *Sol Invictus* (the unconquered sun) was ‘Lord of the Roman Empire’.

50 years after that, and Constantine had become the first pro-Christian Roman Emperor. He wanted the Church to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on 25th December. Perhaps it was that to him, Jesus was more or less the same person as the mighty Sun God. Or perhaps he felt that the ancient Sun God’s association with goodness, light, warmth and life would help ease the people’s transition from paganism to Christianity.

Whatever the reason, the Church went along with it, and chose 25th December to be the date of Christmas. And in an ancient mosaic in the crypt of St Peter’s Cathedral, Jesus is portrayed as adorned with sun rays and riding in a chariot – just like Sol Invictus.

As for the huge, bronze 200 tonne Sol Invictus? He fell over during an earthquake and was sold off for scrap metal in 654AD by an enterprising Arab scrap merchant. Meanwhile, Jesus lives on...



Drive carefully. It's not only cars that can be recalled by their maker.



FOLLOW THE STAR

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

*Dr Ruth M Bancewicz
Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion*

SOME CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

THE STORY OF THE CHRISTINGLE

The word ‘Christingle’ actually means ‘Christ Light’, and celebrates the light of Jesus coming into the world. Stories of how the Christingle began look back to the Moravian Church, which is found in the Czech Republic. The Moravians have held Christingle services for more than 200 years, and according to them, this is how the first Christingle might have been made:



Many years ago the children in a village were asked to bring a Christmas gift to put beside the crib in the church. One family was very poor, and had no money for gifts, but the three children were still determined to take something. The only nice thing they had was an orange, so they decided to give the Christ-child that.

But then they discovered the top was going green, so the eldest cut it out, and put a candle in the hole. To add some colour, one of the girls took a red ribbon from her hair and tied it around the middle of the orange. It was hard to make the ribbon stay still, so they fastened it in place with toothpicks. The toothpicks looked a bit bare, so the youngest child added some raisins to them.

The children took their decorated orange lantern to the church for the Christmas Mass. The other children sneered at their meagre gift, but the priest seized upon it with joy. He held it up as an example of the true understanding of the meaning of Christmas, for the following reasons: the orange is round, like the world; the candle gives us light in the dark, like the love of God; the red ribbon goes round the ‘world’, as a symbol of Christ’s blood, given for everyone; the four sticks point in all directions, and symbolise that God is over all: North, South, East and West; and the fruit and nuts remind us of God’s blessings.

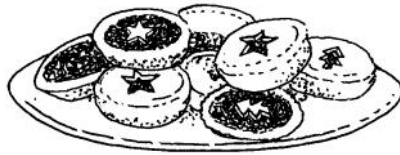
The Children’s Society first introduced the Christingle Service to The Church of England in 1968, and it has since become a popular event in the church calendar. This candlelit celebration is an ideal way to share the key messages of the Christian faith, while helping to raise vital funds to help vulnerable children across the country. Visit: www.childrenssociety.org.uk

WHERE DID CHRISTMAS TREES COME FROM?

There are two early stories that mention fir trees.

The first involves St Boniface, who went to Germany in the 8th century as a missionary and found people sacrificing a child to their god under an oak tree. Boniface was appalled, and he rescued the child. He then chopped down the oak tree and found a tiny fir tree growing nearby. He gave this to the people and said: "This is a symbol of life. Whenever you look at this tree, remember the Christ-child who is the One who will give you life, because He gave His life for you."

The second early fir tree story involves Martin Luther in the 16th century. It is said that one year he decided to drag a fir tree into his home and to decorate it with candles. He used it as a visual aid, telling people that the candles symbolised Jesus as the light of the world, and the evergreen tree symbolised the eternal life that Jesus gives to us. Many of the people who followed Luther were struck by the idea and took up the custom.



MINCE PIES

Did you know that mince pies have been traditional English Christmas fare since the Middle Ages, when meat was a key ingredient? The addition of spices, suet and alcohol to meat came about because it was an alternative to salting and smoking in order to preserve the food. Mince pies used to be a different shape - cradle-shaped with a pastry baby Jesus on top.

CHRISTMAS CAKE

Every Christmas, composer Giacomo Puccini would have a cake baked for each of his friends. One year, having quarrelled with Arturo Toscanini just before Christmas, he tried to cancel the order for the conductor's cake. But it was too late, as the cake had already been dispatched.

The following day, Toscanini received a telegram from Puccini: "Cake sent by mistake."

He replied by return: "Cake eaten by mistake."

JOSEPH AND HIS AMAZING JOURNEY

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world... And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David.

Luke 2 1-4

What a year we have had! But I suppose Joseph had had a demanding year as well. Having learning that his betrothed was pregnant due to divine intervention, he then learned of the Roman government's demand for a census.

These Bible verses show Joseph being a good citizen. Leaving home for a long journey in order to please the government would not have been welcome, but Joseph complied and obeyed the law.

This year the situation is reversed. Millions of us *want* to make a long journey, to visit our loved ones across the UK. But this year, because of coronavirus, the Government is asking us to stay at home.

The Romans had censuses for a good reason: to help them run the business of the empire. This Government has restrictions in place for a good reason: to help slow the spread of a deadly virus.

Following government rules and laws it not always easy or pleasant but as Christians we should be good citizens. This is a light-hearted guide to a complicated subject. If you are going home for Christmas, get proper advice - and have a Merry one.

*David Pickup (Solicitor)
from Parish Pump*

CHRISTMAS FRUSTRATION????

I said to God, upon my knees
"O Lord, I am so cross!
"That gift I sent to Aunt Denise
"Within the post is lost!
"That tree I bought for forty pounds
"(Well, just a penny less)
"Its needles lie upon the ground
"It looks a total mess!"

"No gift was given with such love
"No higher price was paid.
"He left His throne of light above
"For sin His life to trade.
"But even after all these years
"This gift you men eschew,
"So Christmas is a time of tears
"For Me, as well as you."

"I know," said God, "I understand,
"I sent my Son, you know.
"He came to Earth, just as I'd planned
"Two thousand years ago
"Was born within a stable bare –
"The cattle heard Him cry
"He spoke of love, men didn't care
"They led Him out to die."

By Nigel Beeton

28th December: HOLY INNOCENTS

The death of a very young child is perhaps the hardest grief of all to bear. So, the 28th December is a very poignant day in the church calendar. It is when the worldwide Church joins with bereaved parents to grieve the loss of babies and young children. For Holy Innocents day recalls the massacre of the young male children of Bethlehem by Herod the Great.

Herod had been told by the Magi, or Wise Men, that a great king had been born in Bethlehem, and he felt shaken. How could a child in unimportant little Bethlehem be so powerful that the stars in the night sky honoured His birth?! Herod took the Magi so seriously that he decided to try and kill this new young rival. He decreed that every male baby of two years and under should be killed. (Matthew 2:1-18).

Bethlehem was not a large place, and Bible commentators estimate that between six and 25 infants were slaughtered by Roman soldiers. Their mothers were inconsolable at the death of their babies, as indeed mothers have always been.

The death of these innocent baby boys of Bethlehem became a feast-day in the western Church by the 4th century. This was because the Church considered them to be martyrs because they not only died *for* Christ, *but instead of* Christ.

Down the centuries, the tragic loss of the Holy Innocents has touched the imagination and hearts of poets, preachers and artists. Though heart-broken parents still grieve today, the Church can offer them one firm assurance: that young children who die to this world will undoubtedly “this day be with Me in Paradise.” The One who eagerly said “Suffer the little children to *come unto Me*” will be the last person to turn them away.



Lines from INVOCATION OF PEACE

Deep peace, pure white of the moon to you;
Deep peace, pure green of the grass to you;
Deep peace, pure brown of the earth to you;
Deep peace, pure grey of the dew to you,
Deep peace, pure blue of the sky to you!
Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.

*By Fiona Macleod
(19th century Celtic visionary and romantic)*



MISTLETOE

This time of year you can see all sorts of traditions played out with regard to Christmas decorations. Strict adherents use holly, ivy and of course, mistletoe. While holly and ivy are to be found in gardens and hedgerows, mistletoe usually only appears in greengrocers' shops, or high in a tree well out of reach.

Mistletoe is *hemiparasitic*, meaning that although its leaves enable it to feed itself through photosynthesis, its roots invade the host tree or shrub to extract water and other nutrients. Its favourite host trees are apple, lime, hawthorn, poplar or oak and it normally hangs as a large globe, tantalisingly high and totally visible once winter arrives and it is the only green left on the tree. There are some spectacular examples in Windsor Great Park, clearly visible from the path on the opposite side of the River Thames.

We all know about the almost translucent white berries, fleshy and sticky, which form in the forks of mistletoe's many branches. While they are toxic to humans, they are attractive to birds. When birds have enjoyed the juicy flesh, they wipe the remaining seeds off their beaks onto the nearest branch [somewhat like small children wiping sticky hands on any surface close by – mummy's face or clothes?]. With luck the seed remains stuck to the bark and solves mistletoe's problem of reproduction.

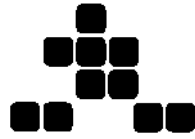
In Greek mythology, mistletoe gave access to the Underworld. Romans thought it represented Peace, Love and Understanding and perhaps that is how it has sidled into our Christmas celebrations. The earliest documentary evidence for kissing under mistletoe dates from the sixteenth century. Some people think a berry should be removed after each kiss. Given the small size of pieces generally available these days, perhaps that is a practice not to be pursued!

Kirsty Steele

And did you know that the word 'mistletoe' means dung on a tree? The Anglo-Saxons thought that mistletoe grew in trees where birds had left their droppings. Mistel means dung, and tan means twig.

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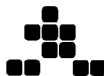
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17th December: EGLANTYNE JEBB – founder of ‘Save the Children’

Here is a modern-day saint whose compassion and determination has saved literally millions of lives.

Eglantyne did not begin as an obvious ‘mover and shaker’ of people. Born in Shropshire in 1876, she grew up in Ellesmere, studied history at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, taught at Marlborough, and then resigned as she was not physically robust.

Eglantyne moved to live with her mother in Cambridge, and it would have been so easy to settle for a life of peaceful obscurity. But she was a Christian, and at Oxford she had developed a passion for social concerns, so this compassion now drove her to take action.

She began in 1906 by publishing research on the poverty she’d found in Cambridge. Then in 1912 the Balkan Wars broke out, and Eglantyne left Cambridge for Macedonia. Her months among the refugees led her to decide that long-term constructive aid was more effective than short-term handouts.

The First World War left Eglantyne horrified by the prolonged Allied blockade on Germany and Austria-Hungary, which even after Armistice meant starvation for millions of civilians, especially children.

And so in 1919 Eglantyne and her sister Dorothy Buxton helped found the ‘Fight the Famine’ Council, which wanted to end the blockade and establish a League of Nations.

One day during a rally in Trafalgar Square, Eglantyne was arrested for distributing a leaflet showing starving children which read: “Our blockade has caused this – millions of children are starving to death.”

She ended up in court and was fined, but the judge was so impressed with Eglantyne’s commitment to children that he himself paid her fine. His money became the first donation to Save the Children, the new charity just set up by Eglantyne and Dorothy.

Save the Children was officially launched at the Albert Hall in May 1919, with the aim of helping the starving civilians of central Europe. It was a success, raising £400,000 in that first year alone.

When in the autumn of 1921 Russia was facing famine, Save the Children chartered a cargo ship, the SS Torcello, to carry 600 tons of lifesaving food and medical supplies to Russia – saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

By 1922 Save the Children had become one of Britain’s biggest charities. Eglantyne’s Declaration of the Rights of the Child, written in 1923, was adopted by the League of Nations the following year. The present-day UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is derived from it.

But ten years of running Save the Children had sapped Eglantyne’s fragile strength, and she died in Geneva in 1928, aged only 52.

BEYOND THE PARISH

ERITREA – MORE CHRISTIANS ARRESTED AS OTHERS RELEASED

Release International can confirm a total of 69 Christian prisoners of faith have now been released in Eritrea – while five more have been arrested.

Release partners say that many have been long-term prisoners. One has been behind bars for 16 years. None has ever been sent to trial.

When news of their release broke in Eritrea, many Christians took to the streets to celebrate – prompting another round of arrests. The authorities seized five women who stepped outside to pray and rejoice at the news.

‘These were mothers,’ says Release International’s Eritrean partner, Dr Berhane Asmelash. “One is a mother of five. They were cheering from the roadside – and arrested on the spot.”

Dr Berhane estimates some 300 Christian prisoners of faith remain in the country – held indefinitely without charge or ever having been sent for trial. Prisoners face hardship, illness and malnutrition. Most of the prisons don’t even have toilet facilities.

“Eritrea has been likened to the North Korea of Africa,” says Release International CEO Paul Robinson. “It began its crackdown on churches in 2002.”

BISHOP’S CALL FOR A BETTER MIGRATION POLICY

The EU needs a more “humane, tolerant and equitable migration policy.”

So says the Bishop in Europe, Dr Robert Innes, responding to news of recent deaths of migrants who have attempted to cross the English Channel in small boats.

Dr Innes spoke of the recent cases as “deeply saddening”. “Refugees, including children, have perished as desperate souls flee conflict and violence to make new lives in Europe.”

He said that the situation “underlines the urgent need for a humane, tolerant, and equitable migration policy to be applied across the EU, and for the full respect and protection of the rights of refugees under international law.”

The Bishop of Dover, the Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin said: “My heart is full of sadness. We cannot stand by while those who seek refuge and safety are dying at the hands of those who exploit them and their hope.”

The traffic in illegal migrants has quadrupled this year, from 1825 in 2019 to 7400 in 2020.

GOING TO CHURCH IN THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

More than 17,000 online services and events have been provided by Church of England churches since the introduction of the lockdown and restrictions on public worship earlier this year.

Figures from the Church of England's [A Church Near You](#) website, which allows people to search for church services and events, show that more than 17,000 online services or events are now listed, including Sunday Communion services, Bible studies and morning or night prayer. Many of these services take place regularly and this figure represents a snapshot of the likely total number.

The statistics do not include the Church of England's national online weekly services broadcast on Sundays and shared on Facebook and YouTube. There have been nearly three million views of the national online services and posts about the weekly broadcasts have been seen 23.6 million times. Contributors have included the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Duke of Cambridge and Pope Francis.

Other figures in the report show that official Church of England apps from Church House Publishing – the most popular being Daily Prayer, or the Daily Office of morning, evening and night prayer - have been used more than seven million times so far this year, up from five million in 2019. Church of England social media posts have been seen 86 million times so far, nearly double the total for last year.

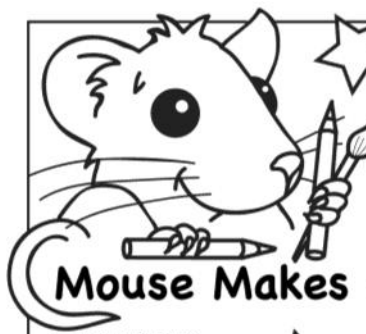
The growth in online services has been helped by the Church of England stepping up its digital training programme for congregations. More than 4,200 vicars and local church leaders have taken part in remote digital training courses so far this year, four times the number as in 2019.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: “At a time when many have felt isolated and fearful, Church of England parishes and clergy have broadcast thousands of online church services and events, seeking to bring comfort and hope to their communities. We know that tens of thousands of those tuning in will never have had contact with their local Church of England parish before and may never have heard the Christian message. Their welcome presence is a sign of the great hunger we all have for spiritual meaning in our lives.”

LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

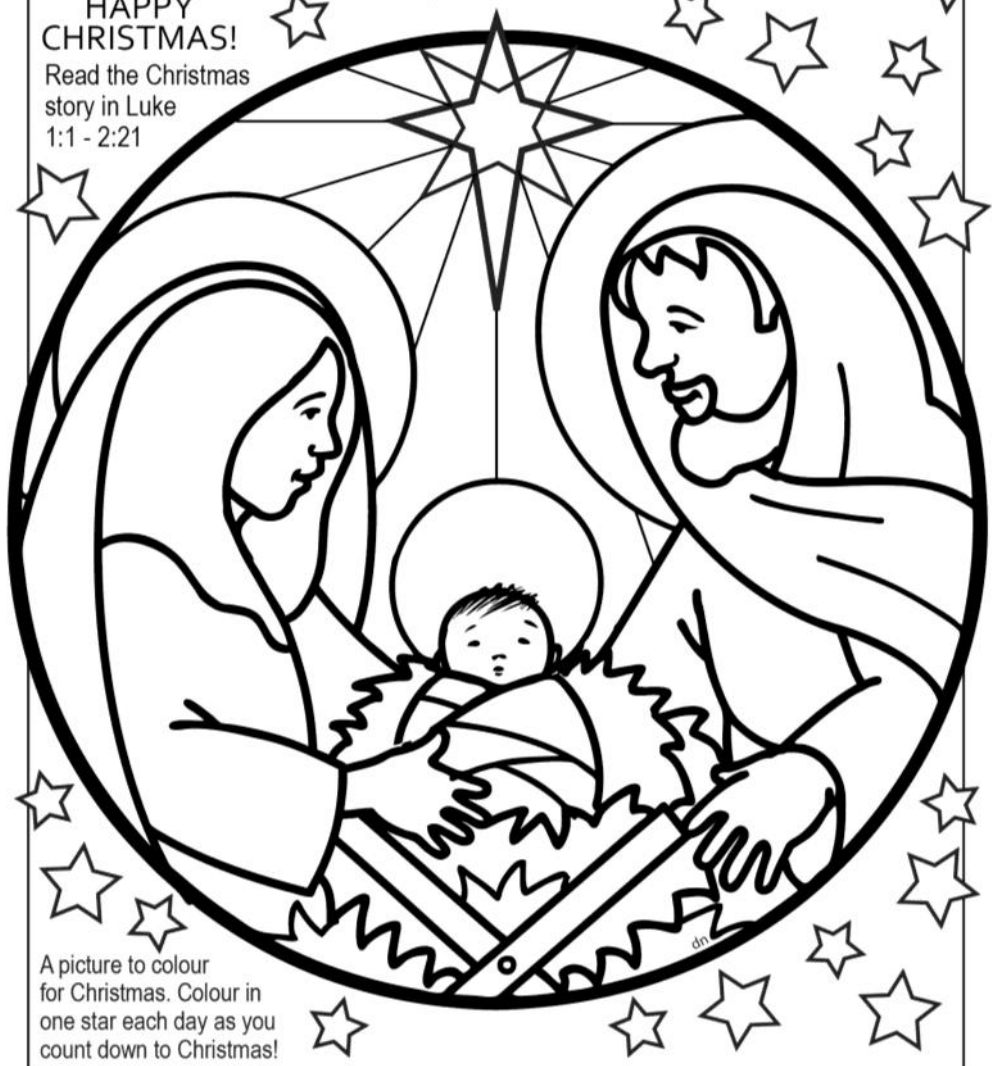
The Church of England's Living in Love and Faith teaching resources have been recently published. They explore questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

The resources, commissioned by the House of Bishops, include a book, a series of films and podcasts and a course. They will initiate a process of whole Church learning, that will contribute to the Bishops' discernment of a way forward in relation to questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.



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Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased".
from Luke 2 vs. 10,11,14

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