

Letter from the Vicar

Once again we arrive at the time of year when some of the most intensive bargaining goes on. No, not the bargaining that goes on in our shops, or the Government desperately trying to get the Doctors on board to keep the NHS functioning fairly well over the winter, or the Prime Minister trying to get a half acceptable deal for England out of the EEC. I am talking about all the ordinary homes all over the country in which children are writing their Christmas wish-list. With imaginations fuelled by advertisements on posters, television and playground chatter the children come up with ever more elaborate ideas each day. Parents battle to try and manage their expectations and scale down their ambitions. You get warnings of “Santa will be too busy to get all of those things for you” or bribes such as: “you’d have to be very, very good to get one of those” (and praying they won’t be).

We too often scale down our hopes. We would like to see less poverty and hardship in the world, less suffering and starvation, less wars and violence, friendlier communities, safer streets and happier families. Then we shrug and accept life as it is. The result is it is easier to do nothing to make the world around us fairer and better. But looking at the Christmas story in Luke’s Gospel we meet four people who have huge hopes for the coming of Jesus. First is Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb”. She adds words about hoping for better things: “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord”. Second is Mary who in response to Elizabeth sings a song praising God for the great things he has done: his mercy to those who fear him, for lifting up the lowly and feeding the hungry.

After John’s birth his father Zechariah praises God for his mercy for saving the people from their enemies, for providing salvation and the forgiveness of sins and guiding all to peace. Finally Simeon on seeing baby Jesus realises his work is done because God has sent his salvation as a light to guide us. The words of all four people are repeated in our regular prayers as the Hail Mary, the Magnificat, Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis.

They were not the trivial wishes of children, but people of vision hoping

for better things and believing God could bring them about. As we know God did not bring about change suddenly and powerfully, but by giving the world a little child – his only Son –to teach us to live differently. The cost was great as his Son was doomed to suffer and die for our sins.

As we approach Christmas and especially in the wake of worldly horrors, let us do so with faith and hope that God can do great things. But remember that the great things happen through small things – the small acts of kindness, caring, reconciliation and self-giving by which we can change the world.

With love and prayers for Advent and the Christmas season.

Dorothy

DECEMBER PARISH DIARY

Tuesday 1st	10.45 a.m.	Service at Crossley House Care Home
	12.30 p.m.	Knit and Natter
	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 2nd	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion at St. James's
	2.00 p.m.	Advent Talk
	6.15 p.m.	Cub Scouts
Thursday 3rd	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts
	7.30 p.m.	Scouts

SUNDAY 6TH SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion
Tuesday 8th	12.30 p.m.	Knit and Natter
	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 9th	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
	11.30 a.m.	Ing's Way Lunch Day
	2.00 p.m.	Advent Talk
	6.15 p.m.	Cub Scouts
Thursday 10th	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts

7.30 p.m. Scouts

SUNDAY 13TH THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

10.00 a.m. Holy Communion

Tuesday 15th 11.00 a.m. Carol singing at Crossley House

12.30 p.m. Knit and Natter

7.30 p.m. Adult tap dancing

Wednesday 16th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion at St. James's

2.00 p.m. Advent Talk

6.15 p.m. Cub Scouts

Thursday 17th 9.30 a.m. Morning prayer

6.00 p.m. Beaver Scouts

7.30 p.m. Scouts

Saturday 19th 5.00 p.m. Carol singing at Morrison's

SUNDAY 20TH FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

10.00 a.m. Nativity Parade Service & Holy Communion

3.00 p.m. Service of Readings and Carols

Tuesday 22nd 12.30 p.m. Knit and Natter

7.30 p.m. Adult tap dancing

Wednesday 23rd 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion

Thursday 24th 11.00 p.m. Midnight Eucharist

Friday 25th 10.00 a.m. Family Communion

SUNDAY 27TH ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

10.00 a.m. Holy Communion

Wednesday 30th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion at St. James's

NOT in a Stable, Rude and Bare

In Advent 1223 the people of Greccio woke up to find something strange and new – a Nativity Scene. Francis of Assisi had organised it using live animals, in imitation of things he had seen in the Holy Land. From that day the Nativity Scenes we now have in churches and public places have developed. Some can be hugely elaborate. Shopping in the Getreidegasse, in Salzburg, some years ago, we went into a wood carver's shop, and were amazed at what we saw. Some of the Nativity scenes were set in whole Bavarian or Austrian villages with up to 70 characters present. (They cost several hundred euros – we didn't buy one!) We contented ourselves by buying a simple carving of Joseph standing protectively over Mary as she holds the infant Jesus.

Yet very little of this can be found in the Gospels. Francisco Sanchez de las Brozas pointed this out in 1584, and was given a good kicking by the authorities for doing so.

But recently (in both 2013 and 2014) the theologian Ian Paul has raised this problem in a blog. His argument centres on the Greek word *kataluma* (Lk.2:7). This is often translated “inn”, but can also mean a “guestroom”. This same word is used later on in Luke's Gospel when Jesus sends his disciples to prepare the Passover. The message he sends is “Where is the guestroom (*kataluma*)..?” (Lk.22:11).

Ian Paul continues his argument by drawing our attention to the typical Palestinian house, which he says can still be found. In this arrangement the animals would be brought in at night and kept in the lower part of the room, while the family used a raised platform. Behind the family area was a guestroom where visiting family members would be accommodated. Ian Paul suggests that this is where Joseph and Mary would have been, along with other visiting members of the family. He is suggesting that Jesus may well have been born in a crowded room (with, no doubt, the older women helping Mary in her labour).

The only thing that may suggest a stable is the manger (Greek *phatne*) which was simply a wooden trough for animal feed, probably the most handy resting place for the new born child. There is no other suggestion of a stable, the Greek words for “stable” appear nowhere at all in the

New Testament.

So far, we have been considering Luke's birth story. Matthew also has a birth story, but it is radically different. Where Luke tells the story from Mary's point of view (and suggests that Mary herself was his source), Matthew gives us Joseph's point of view without any indication of the source. The most important thing is that Matthew uses the Greek word *oikian* (which is a regular word for "house") when he tells us that the Magi meet Jesus "in the house" (Mt.2:11).

The birth stories of Matthew and Luke are not, in fact, integral to the Gospel. Paul, the first Christian writer, never mentions them. Mark, the first Gospel writer, knows nothing of them. John, the writer of the final Gospel, ignores them. The purpose of the birth stories is to explain why Jesus who, if he was the Messiah, should have come from Bethlehem, *actually* came from Nazareth. They do this using two different examples of mental gymnastics.

Does this really matter? I would like to make three suggestions.

First, we need the **visual aid**. The crowded scene reminds us that Jesus was born in very poor, crowded circumstances. Joseph may well have been of the lineage of David, but he was not a very important one. He was a village carpenter.

The presence of animals in the scene reminds us that the whole of creation is included in salvation. The salvation of humanity, let alone of particular individuals, is not the full story of God's plan. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth....and God saw that it was good." (The Hebrew word is *tov* which means "good" and is spoken by God at every stage of creation.)

Second, we need **the story**. The story is that God comes among us in a recognisable form. We can no longer think that God is remote, and we can't say to God, "You don't know what it is like to be me!" God's answer is, "I've been there, and even more so." The story is: here is God in human form, experiencing everything we experience, accepting everything we can throw at him, and surviving and forgiving and redeeming.

Third, while the visual aid and the story are the places where most people stop, we need to move on to **the meaning**. This is spelled out for us by St John: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory.” The creative word of God, the prophetic word of God are now embodied in Jesus. This is the message *we* need to take from the Nativity scene.

R.W. Bailey

Confirmation Day

On Sunday the 15th of November, Lauren Ogier, Rohan Ogier, Oliver Rhodes and I were confirmed at St Saviours Church by Bishop Toby Howarth.

We had been meeting up once a week (and sometimes even twice a week) for an hour with our Vicar, Dorothy. Here we discussed and studied the Bible and various topics from it.

We had all chosen, by ourselves, to be confirmed. We had looked into how we would be confirmed and even had a run through a few days before. However, on the day, we were all a bit nervous. Although everyone was very supportive, it was quite daunting as there were so many people there, including the congregation and many family members.

Afterwards, we received a confirmation candle each and a very interesting Youth Bible including research of some frequently asked questions about the bible. We also were given many lovely cards from the congregation, along with lots of congratulations. Then, in the hall, we all had a nice bring-and-share buffet, to which everyone had contributed. It was, overall, an amazing day.

Lucy Heywood

Christmas is Coming!

As we enter December, we start our programme of events leading up to Christmas. There should be something for everyone to enjoy, so please come along to as many as you can.

Advent Talks: Dorothy will give a series of talks on **Wednesdays 2nd, 9th and 16th December** from 2.00 to 3.00 p.m. in church

Carols at Crossley House Care Home: In addition to the regular service on the 1st Tuesday of the month, we will be visiting the residents of Crossley House to sing carols with them from **11.00 a.m. on Tuesday 15th December**. It would be good to have enough people to make a really joyful festive noise.

Christmas Lunch Day: Come along for a free lunch on **Wednesday 9th December from 11.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.** There will be home-made soup, sandwiches, tea, coffee or fruit juice, and possibly the odd mince pie!

Carols at Morrison's: We have been invited to join in a day-long session of carol singing at Morrison's Supermarket, Victoria Shopping Centre, Girdlington on **Saturday 19th December**. Churches throughout the Airedale Deanery have been invited to cover a slot during the day singing carols for the shoppers to raise funds for the Diocese's Sudan Appeal. We will be there from **5.00 p.m.** Anyone who would like to come and join us will be most welcome.

Parade Service and Christmas Play: Our wonderful Scout Group will be with us on **Sunday 20th December for the 10.00 a.m.** service when they will present their version of the Christmas story - with, no doubt, plenty of carols and festive songs.

Service of Readings and Carols: At **3.00 p.m. on Sunday 20th December**, we will hold our traditional service which tells the Christmas story through Bible readings and (more) carols. Refreshments will be served in the hall afterwards.

Midnight Communion: Thursday 24th December 11.00 p.m. Come along to welcome in Christmas Day at our candle-lit Communion service where we receive Baby Jesus and place him in the crib.

Family Communion: Friday 25th December 10.00 a.m. Come to share the joy of Christmas at our family service on Christmas morning.

Going out with joy!

Bradford Diocesan Mothers' Union celebrated the End of the Triennium in Christ Church Skipton with a service of thanksgiving for its past, and hope for our shared future within West Yorkshire & the Dales Mothers' Union.

Specially produced for the occasion, the service combined prayer, Bible readings, singing, poetry and liturgical dance. Our preacher – and it was her first sermon in Bradford – was Revd. Henriette Howarth. Preaching from passages from Jeremiah and the Letter to the Hebrews, Henriette reminded us of the need to trust in God as we go through times of change, and to learn to live positively in the present, rather than looking to what has gone, and what might be different in the future. Drawing on Mothers' Union's worldwide presence, its Wave of Prayer, and its range of projects supporting families in many different communities, she offered encouragement and a shared acknowledgment that we continue working closely to meet people's needs where they were.

Bishop Toby gave us his words of blessing as the service drew to a close, presentations were made to some leaving office, and we did indeed sing with gusto as we “went out with joy” – and shared a generous spread of refreshments as old friends met up.

Jean Bailey

The Pope and the Bible

Pope Francis has described his love for his Bible “If you could see my Bible, you would not be particularly impressed,” he says. But “it has been with me in my times of joy and times of tears. It is my most precious treasure. I live out of it, and I wouldn't give anything in the world for it.” He was writing in the recent prologue of the German edition of the Youcat Bible.

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Posada

Traditional Posada (meaning “inn” or “shelter”) began in Mexico where young people, dressed as Mary and Joseph, travelled from house to house seeking shelter for the night and telling people about the imminent arrival of Jesus.

Our Posada uses the nativity figures of Mary and Joseph, (and the donkey!) who travel around our community looking for a place to stay with each of us. They will come to spend a night or two with you before moving on to somewhere else. Some Posada prayers and a book for your comments will accompany them on their visits, so you may wish to invite friends round for that evening, perhaps to sing carols and talk about the meaning of Christmas.

If you would like to be a part of this, there is a rota of times in church, or ring me to make arrangements.

Kaaren Raistrick.

Knit and Natter

As mentioned in last month's magazine, we have decided to start Knit and Natter sessions on **Tuesdays from 12.30 to 2.30 p.m.**, starting on 1st December in the hall. Drinks will be available - please feel free to bring along your sandwiches or other goodies for lunch if you so wish. It will be an informal time where you can do your knitting, or any other craft project, and have a good natter at the same time. Do come and give it a try.

Stamps and Cards

It's always good to make use of things we have finished with, so if you could save both your Christmas cards and the stamps from the envelopes, we should be most grateful. The cards will be used to send Christmas greetings to the recipients of the OCC shoeboxes next year and the stamps will go for leukaemia research. Please cut them from their envelopes and leave a ¼ inch margin round the edge. There will be containers in the narthex for both things at the appropriate time.

46TH Bradford North Scout Group

BLACKHILLS BONFIRE AND FIREWORKS DISPLAY

A very successful evening when even the weather was good! A friendly atmosphere, plenty of food, a massive bonfire and splendid fireworks all ensured everyone had a brilliant time.

REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

On the evening of the 11th November we once again held a service here at St. Saviour's. Over 120 people attended and we received many positive comments and thanks. Just a few grumbles - always the way! You know who you are - the stage is yours next year!

CONFIRMATION

Congratulations to our Scouts: Lucy, Lauren and Oliver and one Cub: Rohan, who were confirmed by Bishop Toby on Sunday 15th November. We are all very proud of them.

WINTER WONDERLAND CAMP AND CHRISTMAS BONANZA

From the 4th to 6th December Scouts and Explorers from across the District and county will be camping at Blackhills. On Saturday afternoon 120 Beavers and Cubs will descend on the campsite for an afternoon full of Christmas activities including the *Marshmallow Trail*, creative crafts in the *Elves Workshop*, *Snowman* the movie, *Snowman Beetle* game, *storytime* in Mother Christmas's cottage and I am sure the highlight will be visiting Santa in his grotto.

Bev Howard, GROUP SCOUT LEADER

Santa is a Yorkshireman

Santa is a Yorkshireman, of this I'm fairly sure.
I heard him tiptoe in my room at roughly ten to four.

"I 'ope tha's fast asleep" he said, "Or tha'll get nowt, my lad".
He smelled of Hai Karate (must av pinched it from my dad).

Just down stairs I'd left a treat—Santa loves a beer;
He loves pork pies and single malt. That was Dad's idea.

When I woke next morning I ran down stairs to see
If Santa had been kind enough to leave gifts under t'tree.

He got our mam a Nightie and a pair of china pigs.
Our dad got socks and undies and 200 park lane cigs

My sister got a Barbie, sat on a plastic horse;
A One Direction annual, which she loved of course.

When I unwrapped my parcels my Yorkshire heart did sing.
Each gift that Santa gave me, a truly wondrous thing.

A flat cap for my noggin, a vest of finest string;
The ferret keepers handbook. each gift fit for a king.

So thank you, Santa, thank you. You surely are a tyke,
But can you please remember: next year I'd like a bike!

Could you be our New Treasurer?

James Muff has been our Treasurer since 2008 and has done a wonderful job keeping track of our finances and ensuring all is recorded, accounted for and we get the best deals he can find for us. At the next APCM in April he will step down, so we need someone to fill his (very large!) shoes. If you feel it is something you could tackle, or know of someone who might be able to fill the bill, please have a word with Dorothy or the wardens (or email admin@stsavioursfwg.org.uk). James will be happy to give some training and ensure all is explained fully before handing over. Please pray we find the right person for this important role.

THE WAY I SEE IT : The pivotal importance of the Middle East

Canon David Winter, Former Head of Religious Broadcasting, BBC

It's astonishing how the epicentre of world news has always seemed to be the 'Middle East'. Ever since history was first recorded, this area has been its backdrop: great civilisations and powers, Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, and Persia occupied the world's centre stage, sometimes for centuries.

The world's two greatest religions, Christianity and Islam, were born here, offspring of a smaller but even older one, Judaism. These very lands were the site of the Garden of Eden, the poetic source and beginning of the whole human story. Sadly, these lands have also been marked out as battle-fields – and the apocalyptic message warns that they will be the site of the final great conflict, Armageddon. Today we see images of devastated towns and cities, destroyed by bombing and shelling. Is this not only the history but also the fate of the Middle East?

But now comes Christmas, and we hear a different message echoing from the same region. It was first heard in a field outside Bethlehem: 'Peace, goodwill among people'. The child who was born in the Middle East nearly 2000 years ago was to be known as the 'Prince of Peace'. He came, the Bible says, to 'preach peace to those who are near, and peace to those who are far off'. This is the great paradox. In the midst of conflict, in a land that had suffered enemy occupation for 300 years, there came a message of peace. Hard to hear over the noise of battle, but insistent, it will surely prove in the end to be the greatest gift that these much-abused lands have offered to the world.

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Keep it a surprise

Three-year-old Lily was helping her mother wrap a present for her father. While wrapping, her mother told Lily about keeping the present a secret so it would be a surprise. After the present was wrapped, Lily proudly put it under the tree.

When her father asked her if he could shake it and guess what's inside, she said, very seriously, "No, T-shirts don't rattle."

How to get more presents....

Joe: Did you get many Christmas presents?

Jack: I sure did. A lot more than my four brothers.

Joe: Why was that?

Jack: On Christmas morning I got up two hours before them.

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In praise of the Food Bank

2015 has been the year of the Food Bank. Suddenly, up and down the country, in cities, towns and even villages, people have realised that some of their neighbours are really struggling to feed themselves or their families. So all over Britain there are now 'food banks', often largely supported by local churches, and under the sponsorship of a splendid charity, the Trussell Trust.

What an excellent name - 'Food Bank'. It is much less patronising than the old 'soup kitchen' where what were once called 'down-and-outs' could get a steaming bowl of broth. These are 'banks'. And the customers of banks are entitled to draw on what they or others have put into them. A bank is not a place where anyone need feel humiliated, but an essential service. It's sad that we have a situation in which food banks are necessary, but it's good they're there to meet a real need.

At our Harvest Festival in October, we supported the Bradford Metropolitan Food Bank (not run by the Trussell Trust) with our donations of food and money. In a letter of thanks they wrote: "*Your contributions reflect so well the spirit of the Harvest Festival and I cannot but just say again thank you for this, on behalf of all of us at the Food Bank. It is thanks to people such as you at St. Saviour's that we manage to continue to offer our services.*" We are glad to be able to help!

Notes from the PCC

It will be no surprise that the continuing saga of the Heritage Lottery Grant featured prominently in our discussions at the meeting on Tuesday 17th November. The good news is that we have now received the first part of the money and can actually begin to make plans for getting the work done. Discussions will take place with the firm carrying out the work to formulate a plan and we will then know more about how things will proceed. As much of the work is external, however, it is likely we will have to wait for the better weather before a start can be made. A small group of us will also get together to work out how we can showcase how the money has been spent.

The Christmas Fair at the beginning of November was a great success, with lots of visitors and a happy, festive atmosphere throughout. We raised around of £1100, which was a wonderful effort. We are grateful to all who helped, came, donated or supported in any way - especially to local firms, Keelham Farm Shop, The Ring o'Bells and Stephen Smith's Garden Centre, for kindly donating prizes for our raffle to add to those donated by church members.

As it was the last meeting of the year, we decided on our charitable giving, which we see as a key part of our ministry, and chose the charities HemiHelp, Bradford and Airedale Kidney Patients' Association and the Archbishop of York's Feed the Minds Project. During the year we have made several other contributions to charities, both monetary and in kind - The Children's Society, Save the Children, Candlelighters, Christian Aid, Bradford Metropolitan Food Bank, the Shoebox appeal and the Bishop's Special Fund. During Advent, the Christmas Pillar Box will be out at the back of church and any donations from that will go to the Candlelighters and the Manorlands Hospice at Oxenhope.

Plans continue for the church to be open one afternoon a month so people can to come in and look round, pray quietly, chat to someone, or just sit. We will need a rota of people to cover this - the more people the fewer times each will have to attend. Please pray we can carry this forward.

Hilary Davis, PCC Secretary.

Laid to Rest

William Stewart Gillespie

13th November 2015

John Stanley Brooksbank

26th November 2015

December Roll of Remembrance

3rd	Florence Baker	(1983)
4th	Ellen Ainsworth	(1937)
6th	Ellen Perkins	(1949)
7th	Sara Story	(1978)
	Emily Holmes	(1984)
	Edith Wilkinson	(1988)
9th	Doris Quin	(1993)
	George Boynton Smith	(1993)
12th	Gordon Waterworth	(1988)
14th	Alice Maud Barrett	(1961)
	Dorothy Cooper	(1974)
17th	Stuart Raistrick	(2010)
20th	Annie Jones	(1975)
21st	Jack Renton Newsome	(1941)
	Arthur Jackson	(1960)
	George Arthur Whiteley	(1974)
24th	Bernard Wigglesworth	(1972)
	Charlotte Harrison	(1981)
25th	Arthur Hind	(1982)
26th	Arthur Holmes	(1984)
27th	Frank Tonge	(1953)
29th	Leslie Redshaw	(2000)
30th	Irene Peck	(1993)

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