

The December Letter

Dear Friends,

I don't know about you, but I really enjoy this time of year! For me, December is full of excitement -even if there's a lot of hard work to fit in too. Of course there is also frustration at times, and the weather can be a bit of a challenge, but overall - I think it's a good time.

When I say this in some circles of friends and acquaintances, I get strange looks - all that work, all that shopping, all that expense... they will be glad when it's all over. And, too many add, even in Christian circles, "Christmas is really for the children". As if to say that adults who enjoy Christmas are living in either Cloud Cuckoo Land, or a second childhood. My usual response is to say, "No, Christmas is for us all - and it means so much more if you spend most of December marking Advent first."

Of course we live in a time, in a society, where we are encouraged on every side to spend, to over-eat, to drink too much - if we want to make the most of the season. And the spending has crept into Advent too to some degree. Advent calendars (and candles) were at one time quite hard to get hold of other than in Christian shops; now the calendars at least are all over the place - often full of chocolate, individual gifts, or in rather expensive materials. The Advent name is there - and that is a step forward - but it's not really the time of preparation as we understand it in church.

Everyone who has grown up in a family that marks Christmas, if not Advent, has an idea of what, for them, is a "good" Christmas, and our family traditions, our ways of marking the season, vary enormously. It's good to hear how people celebrate, and it's lovely when we are invited to share. Maybe hosting other people over the season, whether family or friends, is part of your seasonal celebration.

If you've not marked Advent in a spiritual way before, can I recommend it? It's a good way to build a little time of peace into the busy days, and to remind ourselves that this time of watching and waiting, for something good to come really is a celebration for all. When Jesus came into the world as a human infant, it was for children, yes, but also for adults. It was

for families, and for those living alone, for those with many years to look back on, and those at the start of life's wondrous journey. In short, Jesus came for all mankind, and we do well to honour his coming with joy and gladness.

If you're not sure how to make Advent different this year, there are books available which can help us prepare, throughout Advent, as part of our private devotions. If that is not for you, perhaps you can open an Advent calendar window, or burn an Advent Candle, each day, and remember for a moment why we are preparing for this great celebration. So that when Christmas finally comes - and our own special marking of the day kicks in - it is as new, and fresh, and enjoyable as we can make it - for Jesus' sake.

So have a peaceful Advent, and - when it comes - a Merry Christmas!

Jean Bailey

DECEMBER PARISH DIARY

Thursday 1st	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts
	7.30 p.m.	Scouts

SUNDAY 4TH SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion & Junior Church
Tuesday 6th	11.00 a.m.	Service at Crossley House Care Home
	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 7th	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion at St. James's
	6.15 p.m.	Cub Scouts
Thursday 8th	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	3.00 p.m.	Crossley Hall School Winter Bazaar
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts
	7.30 p.m.	Scouts

SUNDAY 11TH THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion & Junior Church
Tuesday 13th	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 14th	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion

	11.30 a.m.	Ings Way Lunch Day
	6.15 p.m.	Cub Scouts
Thursday 15 th	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts
	7.30 p.m.	Scouts

SUNDAY 18TH

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

	9.30 a.m.	Nativity Service
	3.00 p.m.	Service of Readings and Carols
Monday 19 th	6.30 p.m.	Community Carol Service, Allerton Congregational Church
Tuesday 20 th	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 21 st	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion at St. James's
Thursday 22 nd	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Saturday 24 th .	11.30 p.m.	Midnight Eucharist

SUNDAY 25TH

CHRISTMAS DAY

	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion Shared lunch in hall
Wednesday 28 th	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Thursday 29 th	9.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer

In addition to the above, the following services will take place at **St. James's, Thornton:**

Thursday 15 th	6.30 p.m.	Carols by candlelight at the Bell Chapel
Sunday 18 th	11.00 a.m.	Nativity
	6.00 p.m.	Carol Service
Saturday 24 th	4.00 p.m.	Christingle Service
	11.15 p.m.	Midnight Communion
Sunday 25 th	10.30 a.m.	Family Communion

December 6th: St. Nicholas' Day - How Father Christmas got where he is today

One person you are bound to run into this Christmas season is Father Christmas. These days he seems to frequent shopping malls and garden centres. 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 life-work 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 round 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 exhausted just rushing around getting ready for Christmas, that is a sobering thought. © *Parish Pump*

The Geneva Bible (*Part 1*)

Ian Mc Alpine.

During the religious persecutions of Queen Mary I (1553 - 1558), a number of Protestant scholars fled from England to Geneva in Switzerland where there was far more tolerance of Protestant ideas. Among these scholars was William Whittingham who, in collaboration with Myles Coverdale and others, supervised a new translation of the Bible now known as the Geneva version. Whittingham was directly responsible for the New Testament, which was complete and published in 1557. Coverdale (1488 - 1568), who was born in York had been responsible for the production of the first complete printed Bible in English in 1535. From the outset the new translation was intended as a Bible for the people and to further the Protestant cause and it served its purpose extremely well for many decades.

The first full edition of this Bible, with a further revised New Testament was published at Geneva in 1560. Although the persecution of Protestants had ended in England in 1558 the new translation was not printed in England until 1575 (New Testament) and 1576 (complete Bible) by which

time Protestantism had become firmly re-established in England. The very first Bible printed in Scotland was a Geneva issued in 1575. Naturally the Geneva strongly appealed to John Knox and his followers. Some editions printed in England from 1576 onwards had a further revised version of the New Testament and a different version of Revelation with revised notes was included in some editions from 1599. Over 150 editions were issued; the last probably in 1644. Most were in cheap quarto format and in roman type but a few extremely rare de-luxe folio-sized ones were made with black letter type, mostly for use in churches. Vast quantities of 'ordinary' quarto-sized Geneva Bibles were produced and are frequently mentioned in Elizabethan wills and inventories. One branch of my mother's family in Lancashire were extreme Protestants from the late 16th century and I was pleased to find two Genevas mentioned in one of their inventories in 1592.

Although most have long since worn out and fallen to pieces surprisingly large numbers of Geneva Bibles survive today after some 400 years. Chetham's Library in Manchester where I used to work has an impressive collection of them. The Yorkshire Archaeological Society where I work now has an incomplete quarto which was rescued by a vicar in about 1850 from a shopkeeper who had been tearing out individual pages to use as wrapping paper! He bought it for a small amount and presented it to the Society in 1869. Sometimes the Geneva is called the 'Breeches Bible' because of a translation in Genesis 3:7 in which Adam and Eve are described as making breeches for themselves - the King James Version has 'aprons'.

The Geneva was perhaps the first 'study Bible' printed in English and had extensive notes in the margins together with illustrations in the form of woodcuts. The title page showed a picture of the Israelites approaching the Red Sea while an imaginative view of the Ark of the Covenant was included in Genesis. Whereas the 1611 King James Version had a forbidding, almost monolithic title page the Geneva's gave an idea of the welcoming and user-friendly nature of the new Bible. It was all in English except for the date which was in Roman numbers (MDLX, for 1560) and the place of publication was 'AT GENEVA', rather less formal than 'GENEVA' which would be more usual

(To be continued next month.)

46TH BRADFORD NORTH CUB SCOUTS

Our team of Cub Scouts were victorious at the District 5-a-side football tournament held in October at Speedball. They went on to finish fourth in the City finals.

We had a most enjoyable visit to Ringway Visitor Park at Manchester Airport. We were able to see many planes land and take off, including the world's largest passenger aircraft the luxurious A380 Emirates.

All the children were able to sit in the flight deck of a Monarch airplane and they also took part in role play as stewards, police and fire operatives and ground staff. We then went into the Concorde hanger where we learned a lot about the supersonic jet.

The Cubs have all gained their Air Activities badge and also concluded work towards their Communicator badges.

During November we had three weeks of practice cooking shepherd's pie, cheesecake, pancakes, omelettes, toffee crunch and garlic mushrooms. On the 23rd we invited several guests and parents to the *46th Cubs Bistro*. At the time of writing this I am unable to confirm the number of cases admitted to hospital with food poisoning!! Joking apart, I am sure that the evening will be a great success.

We are to hold our festive celebrations at the Girlington Conservative Club. An entertainer has been booked for our younger members; the older boys and girls will be able to join in karaoke.

Bev Howard - GROUP SCOUT LEADER

A Tale of two Memorials part 2 (*Continued from last month*)

On the day before [On October 1st], when we visited Cambridge, I made another discovery. Going up to the chancel in Great St Mary's, to photograph the superb altar piece, I discovered a display board which told me that the memorial tablet to Martin Bucer was to be found close by. I found it let into the floor, and it told me that Martin Bucer, who had been Regius Professor of Sacred Theology, had been buried there in 1551. But then it also told that his body had been exhumed in 1557 and burned publicly in the Market Place, which is just behind the Church. It was another example of Mary's vindictive turn of mind. What were thought to be the remains of Bucer from this burning were later collected together and reinterred in 1560.

Bucer was one of Cranmer's friends, and had a strong influence over him, especially in the way in which Cranmer reorganised the Communion service. (Bp Colin Buchanan has listed 14 suggestions made by Bucer, most of which were adopted by Cranmer into his 1552 service, which is the basis of the service we still refer to as "Prayer Book".)

But, how did a German theologian come to be a Regius Professor in Cambridge? (The Regius Professorship were created by Henry VIII.) The answer lies in the fact that Cambridge is in the fen-lands of East Anglia, close to ports facing across the North Sea. The trading connections between East Anglia and Holland and North Germany, quickly brought news of Luther's Reformation, and the scholars and ideas of the Reformation soon followed. Cambridge soon became a hot-bed of Reformation teaching, while Oxford, being further from the coast remained rather conservative.

But it was Cranmer, who had been discreetly corresponding with Bucer for sixteen years, who encouraged Bucer (and others) to come to England in 1547. Bucer was then given the professorial chair at Cambridge.

Bucer had been an observant Dominican friar until 1520, when he fled from his friary and in 1522 married a runaway nun! Much of his early life was spent on the run. Like many of the Reformers, Bucer found a patron who did much to shield him from his enemies, becoming a reforming preacher in Strasbourg (mainly from pressure by the Guild of Gardeners).

Bucer's great idea, developed at Strasbourg was of a Christian Community of enthusiastic believers, meeting together, disciplining each other, and educating each other under a pastor. Unfortunately this split the reformed church people at Strasbourg, and was never put into practice.

The last four years of Bucer's life must have seemed quiet, as he taught in Cambridge and engaged in discussion with Cranmer. Cranmer (and Bucer) have cast a long shadow over the Church of England which is now slowly fading after 450 years.

Richard Bailey

Stamps

As the Christmas cards start to trickle and then flood in over the next few weeks, please consider saving the used postage stamps and donating them to Leukaemia Research. It helps if you can trim them so they have a border of ¼" - but please be careful not to trim any of the stamp! There is a container in the narthex for the purpose - or please hand them to Val Muff.

Pantomime—Robinson Crusoe

We are planning to "step on board" to see Keighley Amateurs pantomime "Robinson Crusoe" on Saturday 4 February 2012 at 2.15 p.m. The venue is Victoria Hall, Keighley and transport from St. Saviour's Church will be arranged if required at a cost of £3.00. Tickets are £11 and £9 concessions.

Join Robinson Crusoe and his girlfriend Polly Perkins as they hunt for missing treasure. Helping them along the way are Robinson's Mother, Mrs Crusoe, her lodger Sammy and their new friend Man Friday. Sailing along the high seas on the Good Ship 'Adventurer' they try their best to battle against the wicked Pirate Atkins and his two blundersome helpers. So ship ahoy mate and hold tight for a swashbuckling, seafaring, laugh a minute ride along the ocean!

The 1 Corinthians 13 of Christmas

If I decorate my house with beautiful bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny baubles, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator. If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of mince pies, roasting a perfect turkey, and lay a magnificent table, but have no love for my guests, I am just another cook. If I work at the soup kitchen, sing carols in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity, but do not have compassion in my heart for those in need, I am just another social service; it profits me nothing.

If I decorate the tree with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes and attend a myriad of holiday parties but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to help one's wife with boring housework. Love puts the Christmas present shopping on hold in order to run the elderly neighbour to the doctor. Love is kind, though harried and tired. Love doesn't envy another's home that has more expensive presents, or even coordinated Christmas china and table linen. Love doesn't yell at the children to get out of the way; love is glad that they are there to be in the way. Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, even irritating relatives. It believes all things, and encourages teenagers to aim high for their future. It hopes all things, endures all things, even a spouse who is depressed about their job prospects. Love never fails other people. Computer games will crash, even cashmere jumpers will wear out, and golf clubs will get lost. But the gift of love will endure forever. Happy Christmas!

Looking Forward to Christmas

December is usually a busy month, and this year will be no exception. There are various services and events to celebrate the season of Christmas, and all are warmly welcome to join us at any or all of them.

The ball starts rolling, as it were, on **Tuesday 6th December**, when we are invited to Crossley House Care Home, 885 Thornton Road, to join the residents at an informal service of Holy Communion, followed by refreshments and a chance to chat. The monthly Ings Way Lunch Day is on **Wednesday 14th December** from 11.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. when there will be a Christmas flavour to the free lunch of homemade soup, sandwiches, tea/coffee and biscuits - and there may even be seasonal music and singing.

The children of Junior Church and the uniformed organisations will perform their version of the Nativity story during the 9.30 a.m. service on **Sunday 18th December**, with suitable readings and carols. That same afternoon, at **3.00 p.m.**, there will be the traditional service of Readings from the Bible and other sources which tell the Christmas story, further illustrated by carols and Christmas songs. To refresh the vocal cords after this exertion, mulled wine, tea, coffee and mince pies will be available in the hall afterwards.

Churches Together in Allerton and Fairweather Green then invite us to a community carol singing session at Allerton Congregational Church, Allerton Road on **Monday 19th December** at 6.30 p.m. As long as the weather is not too horrendous, this will be outside in the forecourt - so wrap up warmly!

We are most grateful to the Revd. Chris Howson for offering to officiate once again at the Midnight Eucharist on **Saturday 24th December** at 11.30 p.m. This is usually a magical service to usher in Christmas Day with the first communion of Christmas. And, on **Christmas Day** there will be a Family Communion at **10.30 a.m.** (please note later time) and a shared lunch in the hall afterwards.

Please do join us when you can.

The Way I See It – Bath Salts for the Baby

David Winter, former Head of Religious Broadcasting at the BBC.

I suppose in a way you've got to blame those 'Wise Men'. Their gifts to the infant Jesus - gold, frankincense and myrrh - have probably got something to do with the fact that we give gifts at Christmas.

We can't give them to Jesus on his birthday, because even Amazon can't deliver to heaven, so we give them to . . . well, Auntie Jo, grandson Reuben and the nice woman next door who takes in our parcels when we're not there. And then there's the nephews and nieces, brothers and sisters, friends at church and of course the beloved, who always poses the biggest dilemma. 'In as much as you do it for the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do it for me', said Jesus, but as I look at my presents list it doesn't honestly look like 'the least'. My nephew works for a merchant bank and his annual bonus would probably pay off my mortgage. What do you give to the young man who's got everything?

Which brings me back to those Wise Men, who weren't all that wise, in fact - pedlars of spells and high class fortune tellers, really. But their gifts were clever. What do you give to the child who is 'born king', as they described him (rather unwisely) to Herod? Their answer was gold (because he was royal), frankincense (because he would be our great high priest) and myrrh (because he had been born in order to die). Their gifts may seem strange at first sight - and must have completely baffled poor Mary and Joseph - but they were absolutely right for the recipient: king and priest and sacrifice, as the carol says. When it comes to getting the presents exactly right, they're top drawer.

Which probably won't help much as we try to fathom out our presents list this Christmas. Do you remember John Betjeman's list of goofy gifts - 'bath salts and inexpensive scent, and hideous tie so kindly meant'? His lines make me wince every time I read them because it sounds exactly like my last minute Christmas shopping. But his wry list of inappropriate gifts is to be found in a poem about the Nativity. And in it the pathetic presents we buy and wrap up and hand over at Christmas are contrasted with God's greatest gift - 'the Maker of the sky and sea, become a child on earth for me'.

'It isn't the gift - it's the spirit in which it's given', we say. True. True, too, of that greatest gift of all, 'the baby in the manger stall'. And true, too, for the Wise Men, who got their gifts so exactly right. I reckon they'd thought hard and long about them, which suggests a truly wise approach to choosing presents. But on the whole I'd still avoid the myrrh for great-aunt Beryl (or the inexpensive scent).

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**All Children of Primary School age are welcome to
our party!**

Where? St. Saviour's Church Hall

Time? 2.00 to 4.00 p.m.

When? Saturday 7th January 2012

We will have fun, music, games and food.

We look forward to seeing you!

For further details, contact 01274 833200

A New Children's Service

After further consideration, we have decided to try something new with the Primary age children of the area. We have had Junior Church during the service for several years now, but we need to move with the times, so we are going to try a new kids' club. This will run on Thursdays from 4.30 to 5.30 p.m. in St. Saviour's Church Hall. All children in Primary school are welcome. We will have art and craft, songs, snacks and fun.

Children will still be welcome to the Sunday morning service and will find some activity sheets to do at the back of church, if required.

Our new Kids' Club will be launched with a party on Saturday 7th January 2012, 2.00—4.00 p.m. You will be very welcome to join us.

Fiona Graham.

Prompting

The boy forgot his lines in the Christmas Sunday School drama presentation. His mother, sitting in the front row tried to prompt him, gesturing and forming the words silently with her lips, but it didn't help. Her son's memory was blank. Finally she leaned forward and whispered the cue, "I am the angel Gabriel!" The child beamed with acknowledgment and in a loud, clear voice so that everyone in the congregation could hear said, "My Mummy is the angel Gabriel!"

Christmas presents

Catching her in the act, I confronted our 3-year-old granddaughter. "Are you opening your little sister's presents?" I demanded. "No," she innocently replied, "I'm just helping her share."

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Admitted to Communion

Jessica Allen	6th November 2011
Joshua Ellis	6th November 2011
Lucy Heywood	6th November 2011

Laid to Rest

Ada Beatrice Kelsey	21st November 2011
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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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