

DECEMBER 2011 – JANUARY 2012

THE MESSENGER



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the magazine of
WHITSTABLE BAPTIST CHURCH
MIDDLE WALL

Minister's Letter

December 2011 – January 2012

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hope you enjoy it!

Dear Friends,

I've been really heartened by the attendance at the pre-Advent series organised and run by our town centre Free Churches and hosted at the URC. Under the heading of 'Anticipating the Messiah', we've been looking at some key chapters in the book of Isaiah: familiar passages that convey thrilling truths about Immanuel, the promised Child and the Branch. The talks have been stimulating and inspiring and the fellowship enriching. I'm responsible for the next session when I have the wonderful privilege of wrapping up this short series by looking at Isaiah 53 and the Suffering Servant.

These Tuesday morning sessions have given us valuable opportunities to step aside from the build-up to the Christmas season; to reflect before the hustle and bustle; to prepare our minds and our hearts for the sheer wonder of the Incarnation. Just this morning (15th November), Pastor Alan Mitchell was reflecting on Isaiah chapter 11 and on the surprising emergence of a tender shoot from the stump of Jesse. Isaiah prophesies that this Branch would prove of huge significance and would bring about not only the reversal of Israel's fortunes, but the establishment of an everlasting and worldwide Kingdom of righteousness, justice and peace. Alan pointed to the battlefield scene in Isaiah 11 where all the nations would eventually rally under this King's insignia and where universal rest and harmony would unfold.

Reading later, my eyes lighted on the subsequent verses where we are told that this glorious Ruler would not judge by what he simply saw or heard – rather, by implication, he would delve far deeper and listen far more intently to discover and address what was happening behind the scenes in human society and in human hearts. Over lunch with Alan and Rev Simon Tillotson, I was struck by Simon's remark that he had just been out for a delightful meal at a posh restaurant(!) and he was unable to avoid overhearing a group of businessmen and their wives concentrating on discussing various issues that were merely 'on the surface' – matters to do with maintaining an expensive lifestyle.

I immediately sensed the parallel danger that we might all be tempted to be content with simply the sights and sounds of Christmas without delving more deeply below the surface. There we would

Contd.

discover the flip side of the merely materialistic Christmas – the opposition, the rejection, the suffering Jesus so willing endured as He paid the full cost of our salvation.

I want to grasp the significance of that glorious reality in the midst of the Christmas festivities. I invite you to share the deeper and true meaning of Christmas that lies just below the surface of our comfort and indulgence.

Let us anticipate the Second Advent and its fulfilment of all the themes and dreams that were skilfully woven into the first Advent – to see with the eye of faith the Lamb who was slain crowned with all glory, honour and praise and installing His universal reign of light and love!

Your friend and pastor,



Rev Paul Wilson



Middle Wall Christmas Post

The Middle Wall Christmas Post Box will be open once again for your cards on three Sundays: November 27th, December 4th and 11th.

As in previous years, deliveries will be made to your front door throughout the week commencing 12th December.

Please give generously for this service since ALL proceeds will go 50/50 to the BMS and Home Mission fund.

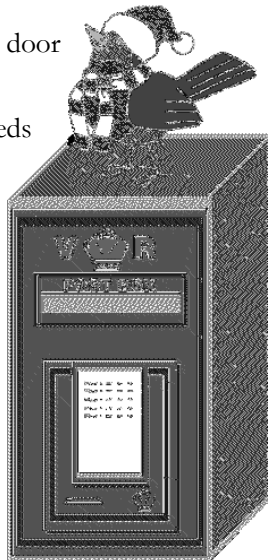
Please note deliveries can **only** be made to friends on the **Church Fellowship List** with **CT5** postcodes.

(latest copies available online and from Tony)

Please ensure you put the full name and full address, as there are a number of new friends who have come to the church since last year.

Thank you

Pam & Andy



Christmas Thanks and Wishes

Tricia and Malcolm would like to wish all the church family a contented Christmas and a peaceful 2012, and thank you all for your love and support over the past year.



Michael and Marie wish all our friends at Middle Wall a Happy Christmas and a peaceful and blessed New Year. With our thanks for all the love and prayer support we have received in 2011.



We would like to thank the Fellowship of Middle Wall for their continued support over the last few weeks when Kev has been undergoing treatment in London. He has shown signs of improvement in both his eyesight and his mobility and hopes to start getting back to normal in the New Year.

We Praise the Lord for making this treatment possible and for His continued Grace sustaining us through what at first seemed a challenge!

Some of you know that the day after Kev started his treatment I started a new job, in Herne Bay, with less hours and shorter driving time, which has made this period a lot easier. God's planning and timing is amazing and we Trust Him to see us through the next twelve months.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year in the Lord.

Jan, Kev and Family.



I would like to thank everyone for all their kind messages, prayers and cards following my operation. It is taking time but I am much better than I was.

Love Lise.



We would like to wish everyone a Joyous Christmas and a Good New Year. We will be making a donation to charity rather than sending out individual Christmas Cards.

With lots of love,

Lise, Peter, Christina & Isabelle Thomason and
Joan & Bernard Faulkner



Christmas Customs

What does Christmas mean to you? Cards and presents, good things to eat, trimmings and decorations, carols and nativity plays, crackers and pantomimes?

The word Christmas means Christ's Mass. The Mass is an ancient Christian church service at which people give praise and glory to God. Christians believe that Jesus Christ was born in a stable in Bethlehem about two thousand years ago and He is the Son of God.

Religious Customs

The story of Jesus' birth explains many of the things we see and do at Christmas time. It explains why we sing carols, and why we sometimes put a star on top of the Christmas tree, like the star the Wise Men followed. It explains why we put on nativity plays, why we make Christmas cribs and why we give presents, just as the Wise Men gave gifts to Jesus.

The Winter Festivals

Many of our Christmas customs began long before Jesus was born. In ancient times the sun was sometimes worshipped as a god. Christmas Day falls in the middle of winter when there is little sun and the days are short. Pagans lit sacred fires and held ceremonies at this time of year, hoping to give the sun back its strength.

Deck the Halls

Although Christians did not worship the sun, they continued the old Roman custom of decorating their homes with evergreens to celebrate the birthday of Jesus.

From the 'Ladybird Book of Christmas'

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the collection for the Girls' Brigade. The girls will soon be wearing their new white sashes and we won't be worrying about how to pay the annual fees to headquarters!

Also, many thanks to Doreen's 'Craft Club' for making the recent Autumn Fair such a great success – especially for our Girls' Brigade.

Stephanie Gilder, Captain



When The Frost Turns The Berries Red

When the frost turns the berries red
Just before Christmas time,
When the robin wears breast of red
In the cold mid winter time,
Then I jump up and down with joy
And I shout Hip! Hip! Hooray!
And I thank Lord Jesus Christ who came
To the earth on Christmas Day.

When the time comes to share the toys
From the Christmas tree tall,
When the Star shines on girls and boys
Heaven's here for one and all,
Then I jump up and down with joy
And I shout Hip! Hip! Hooray!
And I thank Lord Jesus Christ who came
To the earth on Christmas Day.

When we all bring our gifts to God
We will gladden His heart,
When we call other folks to God
We shall never be apart.
And we'll jump up and down with joy
And we'll shout Hip! Hip! Hooray!
And we'll thank Lord Jesus Christ who came
To the earth on Christmas Day.



Brian Milsom © 1979 Stainer & Bell Ltd



Thank You!

...to everyone who filled a shoebox for 'Operation Christmas Child' this year. Almost forty boxes were collected, which is good news for the children of more than thirty countries! Operation Christmas Child has been in operation for twenty years, bringing a little joy to millions of children. Thank You.

Tricia Price

The Twelve Days of Christmas

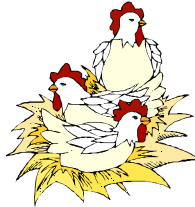
On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me,
“I’m glad we’ve bought a turkey and a proper Christmas tree.”



On the second day of Christmas much laughter could be heard
as we tucked into our turkey – a most delicious bird.



On the third day of Christmas we’d friends in from next door.
The turkey tasted just as good as on the day before.



On the fourth day of Christmas Gran came, she’s rather old.
We finished up the Christmas pud and ate the turkey cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas outside the snowflakes flurried
but we were nice and warm inside, we ate the turkey – curried.



On the sixth day of Christmas the turkey spirit died.
The children fought and bickered and we ate the turkey – fried.

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave a wince
when he sat down to dinner and was given turkey mince.



On the eighth day of Christmas the dog ran off for shelter.
I served up turkey pancakes and a glass of Alka Seltzer.

On the ninth day of Christmas poor Dad began to cry.
He said he couldn’t stand the strain of eating turkey pie.

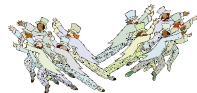


On the tenth day of Christmas the air was rather blue
and everybody grumbled at eating turkey stew.



On the eleventh day of Christmas the Christmas tree was moulting,
mince pies as hard as rock and the turkey quite revolting.

On the twelfth day of Christmas at last Dad smacked his lips.
The guests had gone, the turkey too – we dined on fish and chips!



Just Go Online

At the beginning of the year my husband and I did a little sketch at the church Cameo (*Come And Meet Each Other*) lunch; it was to illustrate “A New Beginning.” I must add that my husband is not a happy, or willing, shopper! Well, just recently, we were both suffering from very nasty colds and were forced to abandon all activities and remain housebound, so now proved to be the time to try out the theme of our sketch – food shopping on line!

With pasty white faces, coughing and spluttering we made a shopping list and trawled the Internet – all was well and sorted. We patted ourselves on the back, produced our debit card and proceeded to the ‘checkout’. Then, once the delivery date was confirmed, sat back exhausted!

Next day a cheerful man with a van delivered. All was pleasant and amiable – but where was the lovely large parsnip that I had planned to roast alongside the other vegetables? (*cooking being kept to a minimum.*) The parsnip was the size of a smallish carrot sitting alone in a large plastic bag! A child-sized portion, in fact – and a disappointment!

Jesus himself set us up ‘on-line’ with the Father when He taught us how to pray. He never underestimates our needs, even when we make mistakes. He forgives us when we say that we are sorry. We can pray in confidence and trust ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name’.

Janet Farley

JOY

Joy is prayer. Joy is strength. Joy is love. Joy is a net of love by which we can catch souls. God loves a cheerful giver. One gives most who gives with joy. The best way to show our gratitude to God and people is to accept everything with joy. A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love. Never let anything so fill you with sorrow as to make you forget the joy of Christ Risen. This I tell to my sisters. This I tell to you.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Submitted by Marie Hunnisett



Mission

The National Society

1811 – 2011

“A school in every parish”

200 Years of Pioneering Vision

The National Society was founded in 1811 to provide schools for poor children. Its original name was ‘The National Society for the Promotion of the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church’. The founders were deeply concerned about the fate of the children working in the factories, mills and mines of the newly industrialised Britain and they set up the Society to raise money to build schools and pay teachers.

These schools were to teach basic skills and also to provide for the moral and spiritual welfare of the children by teaching them the ‘National Religion’ – Christianity as represented in the Church of England and Wales.

Their aim was to found a school in every church parish and by 1851 (*still 20 years before the State took any responsibility for education*) there were 12,000 schools across England and Wales educating almost a million children and young people.

Teacher Training

As a consequence of building schools the National Society became the first organisation to train teachers, first in the Central School in London, then through its own colleges and through supporting colleges founded by dioceses.

Publishing

Later, the National Society took on the Sunday School Institute and entered the world of publishing educational resources: text books, exam syllabuses and prizes in Religious Education.

Who We Are

The National Society currently promotes and resources 4,700 Church of England and 172 Church in Wales schools. It negotiates with Government and other national agencies to maintain and develop the contribution of church schools to public education in England and Wales and it supports and

Matters

advises diocesan education teams on legal and technical, curriculum and ethos issues. The Society works closely with the Church of England Board of Education.

The Society collaborates with the Catholic Education Service and the Methodist Church, along with other Christian and faith education representatives to ensure that the role and needs of faith communities are represented.

What We Do

The National Society works in a number of areas, such as:

Engaging with National Institutions

- Working with Government, the Department for Education, Ofsted and other national educational agencies to promote distinctive church school education
- Seeking to influence educational policy from a Christian perspective as it affects church schools
- Advising the General Synod of the Church of England and the Governing Body of the Church in Wales on educational matters and promoting the churches’ policies
- Producing, with the Catholic Education Service, model documentation for church schools converting to academy status
- Briefing the speaker in the House of Lords debates on the ‘Academy Act’

Growing the Mission of the Church

- Increasing the number of church schools and academies to give more opportunity for families to choose a church school for their children (*42 new Church of England academies since 2003*)
- New Church of England primary schools in areas of new populations
- Additional facilities in church schools e.g. Children’s centres
- Supporting church schools through the inspection of their Christian foundation
- Investing in RE with policy statements and curriculum material.

For further information, contact: www.natsoc200.org.uk



Good King Wenceslas *by Rosemary*

It's all very well hearing about the good king, year in, year out, but what about his missus?

When it comes to Christmas carols, you have to go a long way, in my opinion, to beat Good King Wenceslas. It's got a rousing tune when played at the right speed. It's got a bit for the men to sing and a bit for us ladies to sing. And it's about the spirit of the season: making life a bit better for neighbours who have fallen on hard times.

But, whenever I hear it, one mischievous thought always comes to mind. When Good King Wenceslas was looking out, on the Feast of Stephen, what was Mrs Wenceslas doing? Why is there no mention of Mrs Wenceslas? Was she away at her mother's over Christmas? Had she and Good King W had a bit of a tiff? Or was she about the castle, getting on with the chores, so that the author of the carol didn't notice her? Or worse, did the author spot her, say, putting a bit of Pledge on the banqueting table, and just thought we wouldn't be interested?

If so, he's wrong. Every year, I wonder about Mrs Wenceslas. Obviously, she's on to a good thing with old King W. She's married well. Nice big castle, and as much firewood as she can gather (and she's technically a queen, of course, but far too modest to use the title).

There are drawbacks, though. The king strikes me as a bit impetuous. He is, after all, the sort of chap who goes striding out into the harsh winter weather, piled high with flesh and wine, on the say-so of a pageboy.

Anyway, I'd say the true events of the Feast of Stephen – which is Boxing Day, by the way – went something like this. Let's first set the scene. There's snow outside, obviously, but a big fire crackling in the grate. It's Boxing Day, which means everybody in the castle is at a loose end. Especially Good King Wenceslas, who is looking out when his wife comes into the room. "What are you doing, dear?" she wonders.

"I'm looking out," he says.

"Just looking out?"

"Yes, just looking. Why?"

"It's just that we're running a bit low on firewood. So, if you're not doing anything useful, I wondered if you might get some in."

"What? Good grief, woman. Have you seen what it's like out there? Just look at that snow laying round about."

"Looks all right to me," she says. "It looks quite crisp, not to mention even."

"Yes," he says, pointing at the huge drifts, "but deep, too, and the frost is cruwell."

"The frost is what?"

"Cruwell. It's the proper, royal way to pronounce it."

"Is it 'eck as like," says Mrs W, who is from humble origins. "Anyway, we're supposed to freeze to death in this refrigerator of a castle, are we? Just because you don't fancy the look of the snow?"

"There's no need to snap", says the king.

Frankly, Mrs W has not had a good Christmas. Eleven o'clock on Christmas morning is not a particularly good time for a man, good king or not, to admit that he doesn't like turkey. Or goose. Or that he can't abide figgy pudding, and he's only been pretending for the past 15 years because he didn't want to upset his mum.

Mrs Wenceslas stares out of the window and starts to count to ten, in the hope of suppressing the urge to clout her husband with the saucepan she happens to be carrying; a saucepan she has only recently confiscated from the cook, who was using it to attack the parlour maid. But, as she reaches five, she sees a figure in the distance.

"Who's that?" she says.

"Who's what?" says her husband, who's given up "looking out" and is now sitting by the fire, reading the sports pages of an old newspaper.

"Yonder peasant, who is he?"

The king sighs, throws down the paper and joins her at the window. "I can't see any peasant yonder," he says, squinting into the distance.

"He's disappeared behind a tree," she says. "But look! Surely you can see him now? What's he doing wandering about in the garden at this hour? Do you think he's poaching?"

King W does not reply, but rings the bell to summon a pageboy. "Yonder peasant", he says, when the page finally arrives after what seems an age. "Who is he?"

"Sire, he lives a good league hence," replies the page in a pleasing treble, although a little tetchily as he has been called from the servants' Boxing Day knees-up.

"A good league hence?"

"Yes, sire, underneath the mountain. Up against the forest fence. By St Agnes fountain."

"Goodness," says the king. "That fountain is named after St Agnes, is it? You live and learn. The point is – what's he doing in my garden?"

"He's a poor man, sire, collecting firewood."

"At least somebody's got the gumption to get some logs in," mutters Mrs W.

Her words seem to rouse Wenceslas into action. "Bring me flesh and bring me wine", he orders to the page. "Bring me pine logs hither. Thou and I will see him dine, when we bear him thither."

"Whatever", says the page.

With that, king and page disappear into the snowy evening leaving Mrs W behind, wishing she'd married a man who could be bothered to collect logs for his own family rather than racing off with gifts of flesh and wine at every passing peasant. "And a happy Christmas to you, too," she yells after him.

© *Woman's Weekly*



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Regular Weekly Events

| | | |
|-----------|-------|--------------------------------------|
| Monday | 09:30 | Mums (or Dads) and Toddlers |
| Tuesday | 17:00 | Girls' Brigade – Explorers |
| | 18:00 | Girls' Brigade – Juniors |
| | 19:00 | Girls' Brigade – Seniors & Brigaders |
| | 19:00 | Choral Group |
| | 20:00 | Worship Group |
| Wednesday | 09:30 | Mums (or Dads) and Toddlers |
| | 17:00 | Boys' Brigade – Anchor Boys |
| | 18:30 | Boys' Brigade – Juniors |
| | 19:30 | Boys' Brigade – Company Section |



November

| | | | |
|----|-----------|-------|--|
| 27 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson – 1 st Sunday in Advent |
| | | 18:30 | Rev Paul Wilson |
| 30 | Wednesday | 10:00 | Prayer Meeting – <i>Everyone Welcome!</i> |

December

| | | | |
|----|-----------|--------------|--|
| 1 | Thursday | 12:00 | CAMEO* – <i>Lunch & Activities</i> |
| 3 | Saturday | 09:30 | Ladies' Prayer Breakfast @ <i>The Tudor Tea Rooms</i> |
| 4 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson – 2 nd Sunday in Advent |
| | | 18:30 | Rev Paul Wilson – <i>Communion</i> |
| 5 | Monday | 10:00 | 'Women at the Well' – <i>All Ladies Welcome</i> |
| 8 | Thursday | 10:00 | Deacons' Meeting – <i>Please pray for your Diaconate</i> |
| 10 | Saturday | 10:00-14:00 | Church Open to Visitors |
| 11 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson – 3 rd Sunday in Advent, <i>All Age Service</i> |
| | | 16:00 | Rev Paul Wilson – <i>Service of Lessons & Carols (refreshments)</i> |
| 14 | Wednesday | 10:00 | Prayer Meeting – <i>Everyone Welcome!</i> |
| 16 | Friday | 18:00 | Church Christmas Party – <i>Everyone Welcome!</i> |
| 18 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson – 4 th Sunday in Advent, <i>Communion</i> |
| | | 18:30 | Rev Paul Wilson – <i>Carols by Candlelight followed by refreshments</i> |
| 25 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson – Christmas Day Service |
| | | | Note: No Evening Service |
| | | | <i>*Come And Meet Each Other</i> |

Items for the next issue of *The Messenger* must be handed, posted, or **preferably** emailed, to Beryl or Tony by **Sunday 8th January**

Thank you.

messenger@middlewall.co.uk

MORE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

January 2012

| | | | |
|----|-----------|--------------|--|
| 1 | Sunday | 10:30 | Joint Service @ URC |
| | | | Note: No Evening Service |
| 5 | Thursday | 12:00 | CAMEO* – Lunch & Activities <i>*Come And Meet Each Other</i> |
| 8 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson |
| | | 18:30 | Rev Paul Wilson – Communion |
| | | 19:30 | Messenger Deadline |
| 11 | Wednesday | 10:00 | Prayer Meeting – <i>Everyone Welcome!</i> |
| 12 | Thursday | 10:00 | Deacons' Meeting – <i>Please pray for your Diaconate</i> |
| 15 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson – Communion |
| | | 18:30 | Rev Paul Wilson |
| 16 | Monday | 10:00 | 'Women at the Well' – <i>All Ladies Welcome</i> |
| 22 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson |
| | | 18:30 | Joint Service @ TEC |
| 25 | Wednesday | 10:00 | Prayer Meeting – <i>Everyone Welcome!</i> |
| 26 | Thursday | 19:30 | Church Members' Meeting – All Members Expected! |
| 29 | Sunday | 10:45 | Rev Paul Wilson – <i>Leprosy Sunday</i> |
| | | 18:30 | 'Songs of Praise' – <i>Requests Service</i> |



Just for fun!

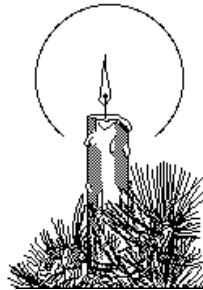
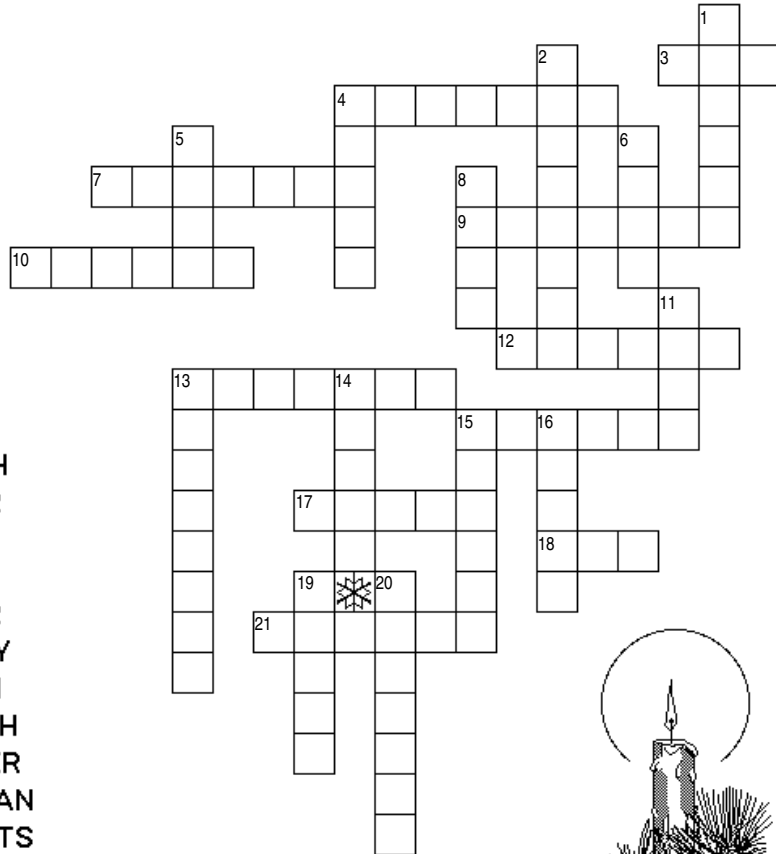
A Crossword for Christmas

Let's hope these are the only cross words you'll have during this Season of Good Will!

Make all the words fit into the grid. Each word is used only once.

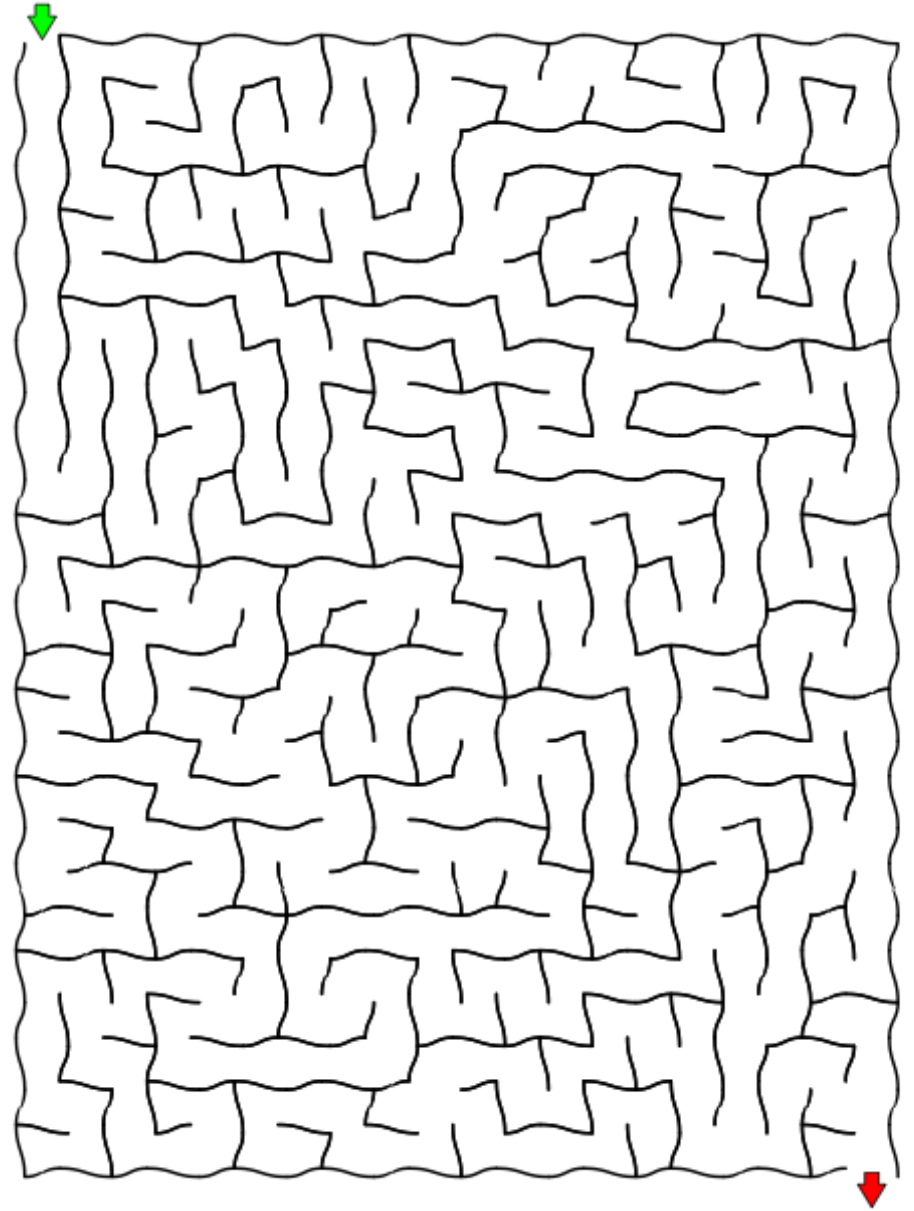


- ELF
- TOY
- GIFT
- BELL
- TREE
- STAR
- SANTA
- COMET
- CUPID
- VIXEN
- CANDY
- FROSTY
- WREATH
- DASHER
- DONNER
- SLEIGH
- DANCER
- CHIMNEY
- BLITZEN
- RUDOLPH
- PRANCER
- SNOWMAN
- PRESENTS
- REINDEER



Amazing Messenger! *(it's got a maze in, get it? Oh, never mind!)*

If word puzzles are too difficult (or too easy), try to find your way round this maze!



Things Happen for a Reason

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to reopen a church in Brooklyn, arrived early in October, excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church it was very run-down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve. They worked hard repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and, on December 18th, were ahead of their schedule and just about finished.

On December 19th a terrible tempest, a driving rainstorm, hit the area and lasted for two days.

On the 21st the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary, just behind the pulpit.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed for home. On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity so he went in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory coloured, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colours and a cross embroidered right in the centre. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall so he bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An old woman was running to catch a bus but missed it so the pastor invited her into the warm church to wait for the next bus.

The old woman sat in the pew and paid little attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc. to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered the entire problem area. Then he noticed the woman walking down the centre aisle – her face was as white as a sheet. “Pastor,” she asked, “where did you get that tablecloth?”

The pastor explained and the woman asked him to check the corner to see if the initials ‘EBO’ were embroidered into it there – they were. These were the initials of the woman and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria. The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just got the tablecloth.

The woman explained that, before the war, she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came she was forced to leave.

Her husband was going to follow the next week but he was captured and sent to prison and she never saw her husband or her home again.

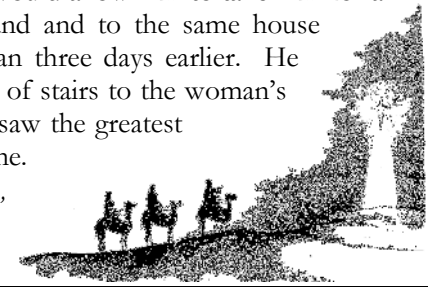
The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth but she made him keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home – that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day on a house-cleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great.

At the end of the service the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return. One older man, whom the pastor recognised from the neighbourhood, continued to sit in one of the pews and stare. The pastor wondered why he wasn’t leaving. The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war, and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike?

He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again in all the 35 years in between. The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman’s apartment, knocked on the door, and saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

*From the Portstewart Baptist ‘Church News’
Submitted by Paul Wilson*



Just a thought!

Every day is a window of opportunity; the past is dissolved in forgiveness.

Anon

Submitted by Marie Hunnisett

Boys' Brigade News

First of all, many, many thanks to everyone for their support for our Parade afternoon on the 16th October for the East Kent Battalion of the Boys' Brigade and The Isle of Thanet District of the Girls' Brigade.



The weather was extremely kind to us and around 100 boys and girls, with their leaders, enjoyed the Parade. We did not march this year, but held a more 'static' Parade on the grounds next to the church, accompanied by the joint BB/GB Band, who serenaded us with a variety of tunes, and helped attract a number of interested passers by.

The service was led by our minister, Rev. Paul Wilson, with a guest appearance by Maeve Whitchurch (SEBA Youth Officer), using the theme *Jesus our Personal Trainer and Role Model*, to link in with the 2012 Olympic Games. Our boys presented a sketch and the Bible reading for the afternoon was read by Sarah Baxendale, who received a rapturous round of applause for her excellent effort.

A collection during the service raised £138.00 which has been divided between the RNLI and 'Help for Heroes'.

We were very pleased to have the company of the Lord Mayor, Ian Thomas, who offered much valuable 'advice' to Tony when the video presentation suffered a few gremlins, and also Caroline Saunders, President of the Isle of Thanet Sunrise Rotary Club, who presented the District/Battalion with a generous donation for the purchase of four Community Tents, for camping and general purposes.

Thanks again to Marie's hard working catering team, the stewards and photographers, to those who came along to support us, and for all your prayers.

As a company, our numbers are still very low, so we value your continued prayers, that we may be able to attract more boys to our numbers.

Jim Parker, Captain

Out of the Mouths of Babes...

At a primary school Nativity play, the boy playing the Innkeeper was supposed to look into the crib and say, "Isn't it amazing that this tiny baby will be the Saviour of the world?"

He forgot his line and substituted it with, "Ooh, isn't he like His Father?"

Submitted by Ray Jones

Christmas Customs – Cards

The custom of sending Christmas cards was started in the UK in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole. He was a civil servant who was very interested in the new 'Public Post Office' and wondered how it could be used more by ordinary people.

Sir Henry and his friend John Horsley designed the first cards and sold them for one shilling (5p) each. These cards had three panels – the outer two showed people caring for the poor and the centre panel was a family having a large Christmas dinner! Some people didn't like the card because it showed a child being given a glass of wine!

The first post for ordinary people was started in 1840 when the 'Penny Post' public postal deliveries began. Before that, only very rich people could afford to send anything in the post. The Post Office was able to offer a penny stamp because new railways were being built which could carry much more post and were a lot faster than the horse and carriage that had been used before. Cards became even more popular in the UK when they could be posted in an unsealed envelope for one halfpenny – half the price of an ordinary letter.

As printing methods improved, Christmas cards became much more popular and were produced in large numbers from about 1860. An engraved card by the artist William Egley, who illustrated some of Charles Dickens' books, is on display in the British Museum. By the early 1900s, the custom had spread over Europe and had become especially popular in Germany.

The first cards usually had pictures of the Nativity scene on them. In late Victorian times, snow-scenes became popular because they reminded people of the very bad winter that happened in 1836.

In 1875, Louis Prang started mass-producing cards so more people could afford to buy them. His first cards featured flowers, plants, and children. In 1915, John C. Hall and two of his brothers created Hallmark Cards, who are still one of the biggest card makers today!

Homemade cards soon became popular. They were often unusual shapes and had things such as foil and ribbon on them. These were usually too delicate to send through the post and were given by hand.

Nowadays, cards have all sorts of pictures on them: jokes, winter pictures, Father Christmas, or romantic scenes of life in past times. Charities often raise money at Christmas by selling their own Christmas Cards and seals or stickers used to seal the card envelopes. This custom started in Denmark in the early 1900s by a postal worker who thought it would be a good way for charities to raise money, as well as making the cards more decorative. It was a great success: over four million were sold in the first year! Soon Sweden and Norway adopted the custom and then it spread all over Europe and to America.



From the 'Ladybird Book of Christmas'

Wise Men

The star was shining brightly
but it was far away,
and wise men had to travel
day after endless day.

How could they be so certain
a king was waiting there?
So confident they bore their gifts,
gold, frankincense and myrrh.

No band of holy angels
were seen their way to guide,
but that single star kept shining,
No clouds its light could hide.

Through eastern lands they travelled,
the infant king to find;
God chose them first to welcome
the Saviour of mankind.

But, if they had protested
that the sign was much too vague,
had doubted God had spoken
and in their homeland stayed,

who would have told the story
of God's incarnate Son,
the baby in the manger,
and what man could become?

All heaven rarely opens
revealing God's great plan,
a single star led wise men
to find God's precious Lamb.

Today, God's signs may differ
approaching Christmas morn,
but God still calls all wise men
to tell that 'Christ is born!'



Malcolm Westwood

From the Secretary's Desk...

Hands up if you have been to an evening service at Whitstable Baptist in the last three months, listened to one on a CD or tape (thanks to Jim), or online (thanks to Tony). Have you noticed any changes?

The Diaconate has been discussing new ways to 'do' Sunday evening church over the past six months and a small group came up with a variety of suggestions, which Paul and others have been trying out. We are currently following a pattern of four different kinds of services over the course of each month.

The first Sunday evening of each month will centre, as usual, on the celebration of communion accompanied by a short meditation. On the second Sunday there will be an opportunity for the congregation to interact in some way (this month, Paul put Onesimus on trial with the help of prosecution and defence teams!).

The third week will begin with a fellowship tea at 5:15pm, followed at 6 o'clock by a short service on a special theme. The fourth Sunday will be down to Paul, and he has begun a series of interviews with ordinary Christians. This month, Rev. Donald Lugg shared his life story, which by all accounts was truly inspiring.

The occasional fifth Sunday will be an opportunity for you to choose your favourite bible readings and hymns.

Please come along and join us in worship and let us know what you have valued! With special thanks to Paul, for his gracious willingness to try something new.

*Jean Rothery
Church Secretary*



Give Thanks With a Grateful Heart

The end of another year is a good time to give thanks with a grateful heart – especially to all those people who work so tirelessly behind the scenes and in 'front of house' to make Whitstable Baptist Church the place of warm, welcoming fellowship, that it is. Whoever you are (*you know who*) thank you for helping us to live up to our mission statement:

“As followers of Jesus we seek to be a centre of Christian Worship,
Fellowship and Service by nurturing our own Church family
and reaching out with fellow Christians to the whole community.”

Tweets from Wales

FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER



Virtually all the leaves have been blown from the trees by now.

Nearly 300 people recently made Christian commitments at 'Rock Thurrock', in Essex.

People in Wales were thrilled with their rugby team's performance in the World Cup in New Zealand.

Our kitchen resembles a bomb site – hopefully by tonight our washing machine and cooker will be usable!

Wendy is back after two weeks in Canada, visiting friends.

Hazel's son, Murray, was married to Amanda – on Remembrance Day so they should remember the date!

It turned out to be quite a day as the British Grand Prix was also 'taking off' on that day in Llandudno! People were six deep in the High Street viewing the cars and drivers. *(I thought it was at Silverstone? Ed.)*

Hazel's youngest, Ross, is currently playing for North Coast FA under-18s in the Welsh National Tournament. So far, played 2, won 2.

Zoe will be dancing in 'Robinson Crusoe' pantomime at Margate's Winter Gardens during December.

Several Bible passages have been a blessing just lately: Colossians 1, Ephesians 1&2 and Psalm 118 – look them up!

Margaret and I both wish you all a blessed, happy and peaceful Christmas.



With love from
Paul and Margaret

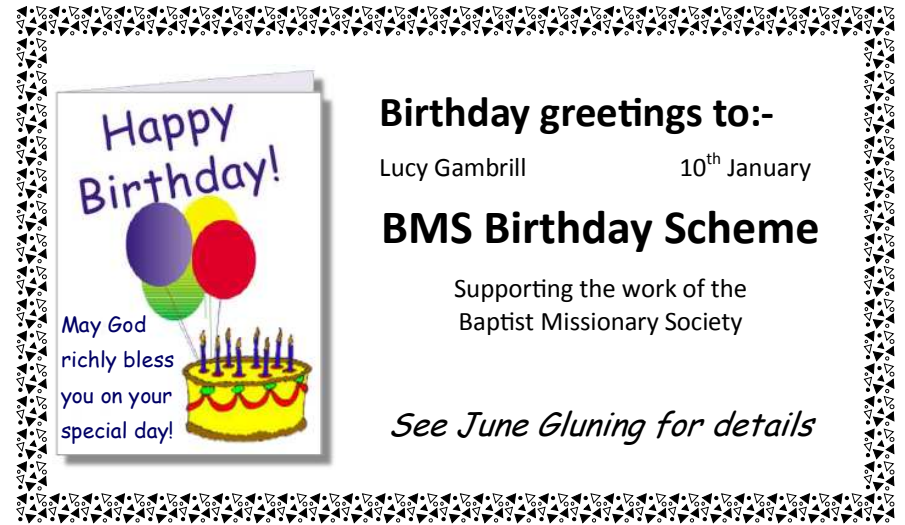
'The Messenger'

In the previous edition of this magazine we mentioned the rising costs of its production and invited readers to contribute.

I am pleased to report that, since that article, more than £250 has been received for the church funds – wow!

That is really very encouraging – thank you!

Ed.



Birthday greetings to:-

Lucy Gambrill 10th January

BMS Birthday Scheme

Supporting the work of the
Baptist Missionary Society

See June Gluning for details

Answers to puzzle (Page 14):

Christmas Crossword:

Across: 3 Elf, 4 Chimney, 7 Blitzen, 9 Rudolph, 10 Frosty, 12 Wreath, 13 Prancer, 15 Dasher, 17 Vixen, 18 Toy, 21 Donner

Down: 1 Sleigh, 2 Reindeer, 4 Candy, 5 Gift, 6 Bell, 8 Tree, 11 Star, 13 Presents, 14 Cupid, 15 Dancer, 16 Santa, 19 Comet, 20 Snowman

Do you believe in Father Christmas?

Of course, I had expected that by the age of seven it was inevitable for my son to begin to have serious thoughts about Father Christmas. Sure enough, one day he said, "Mum, I know something about Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy."

Taking a deep breath, I asked him, "And what is that?"

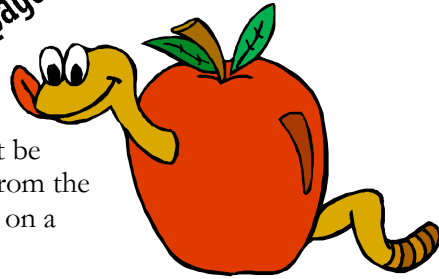
He replied, "They're all nocturnal."



Beryl's Back! ^(page!)

A Bad Apple?

I am feeling guilty. Please help me – I need an answer to my question. ‘Would it be considered stealing if I picked apples up from the ground when walking through an orchard on a recognised footpath after the harvest?’



Too late, I've done it! Tony disowned me and walked on, studying the sky, but I didn't hear him whistling so he was probably just looking for aircraft, as usual. Come to think of it, he didn't refuse to eat the resulting apple crumble that was put before him a day or two later!

If the answer to my question is ‘yes’, then I have sinned, I confess it now and will not name-drop on my companions! But it may explain why some of the church walking group went via the road – to resist temptation, obviously, nothing to do with getting their boots muddy! By the way, the instigator of this clandestine activity had suggested we bring carrier bags in which to carry our findings – or maybe to disguise our questionable gains!

However, if the answer is ‘no’, which I think... I hope... I pray, it is, then you may well accept the spiritual lesson I experienced from this activity: Some of the apples I picked up were covered in mud but were considerably improved when I washed them. However, when I saw the inside, it was obvious that they were unfit for use. They had been attacked by various forces and affected by outside influences, ruined and rendered worthless. Oh gosh, that sounds familiar.

As once again we celebrate Christ's birth, and move forward into a new year, I remind myself of Jude's words (especially vs. 24-25) – we cannot present ourselves faultless in our own strength but ‘through Christ alone’ and by the guidance of His Spirit within us.

*In Christ alone – who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless Babe!
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones he came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied,
For every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.*

Beryl Harris

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