

## Church Newsround – December 2009

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St Oswald's Church Blankney Carol Service  
Sunday 20th December at 4.30 pm  
Followed by Tea, Coffee, Very Tasty Mince Pies and Mulled wine.

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## DECEMBER 25<sup>th</sup> Happy Birthday Jesus

### Christian and proud of it !

“It doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you believe it doesn't matter”. That is one way of summarising current attitudes to strongly held beliefs and opinions. They are treated with a great deal of suspicion, because these days one person's point of view is as good as any other.

However, it is perfectly possible to have strong convictions without becoming aggressively dogmatic or lacking in tolerance.

As a Christian, I am convinced that God in Christ has changed how we can make sense of the way the world is, and what it means to be human. Love is God's meaning, and life in all its fullness is God's will for all creation. Christmas marks a critical turning point in the evolution of God's human project. The hinge of history is on a stable door in Bethlehem.

So let us be bold in our sharing of God's good news with an increasingly credulous world. We can do it using words, but St. Augustine was right to urge us to do that only if absolutely necessary. Most important are our attitudes and actions which tell others more about what really matters to us and motivates us than words ever can.

And this Christmas let us make a special effort to use the power of symbols to let people know what we believe – and that what we believe really matters. Wearing a Cross prominently, displaying a Christmas poster in our front window, making sure our Christmas decorations convey clear Christian messages – all these and other ways can counter attempts to reduce Christmas to a lowest common denominator festival of feasting with no real sense of what we are feasting for.

A fish symbol on your lapel or on your car can prompt a question about what it means (the Greek word for fish is ichthus which is made up of the initial letters of the Greek for Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour). A Christmas Card which actually conveys a Christian message can provide a gentle reminder of what this season is really all about.

Symbols will be clashing all around us this Christmas, so let us make sure that the symbols of our faith are clearly to the fore.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very blessed Christmas, as the Christ Child is once again born into our lives and the lives of those we love.

+ John Lincoln

### Cards for Good Causes

The Christmas card shop is now open until 17th December at St Mary le Wigford Church by the railway station in Lincoln. At least 75p in every £1 goes to different Charities. And they have good cards at reasonable prices. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10 until 4pm.

**THE MAGAZINE** – Next month the annual subscriptions will be due so please help your delivery boys & girls by having your money ready. Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year from the Editorial Staff.

### Dunston News

#### **Nativities Display at Dunston Chapel.**

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> 10 – 4pm, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> 12 – 4pm.

(if you would like your Nativity Scene included contact Mary on 320303).

**St Peter's Cristingle Service** Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January with Glow Sticks ! All children are welcome.

### **Christmas Tree Festival –‘light a light’**

For yourself; or in memory of a loved one; to give thanks for the birth of a baby; to celebrate an anniversary; wedding; exam success; gift for someone abroad; whatever you like. Donate £5 for a Christmas tree light. Dedications will be recorded and displayed in church all Advent. Lighting of the tree in St Peter's churchyard on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December during the Christmas Celebration which starts at 6pm. Seasonal refreshments, carols and the Silver Sounds Band. Do join us.

NAME .....

ADDRESS.....

NAME OF PERSON/EVENT TO BE REMEMBERED AND IF YOU WISH A BRIEF EXPLANATION:

.....

*Gift aid: I am a UK taxpayer and I would like tax to be reclaimed on the enclosed donation. I have paid an amount of tax that at least equals the tax claimed on this donation.*

Signature.....

Date.....

Please return to Kay Howat, Phyll Sands, Ann Higginbottom or leave in church by Dec 1<sup>st</sup> if possible.

### **St Peter's School**

Since my last article, we have held our Harvest Service in St. Peter's which was very successful. The church was full and the parents supported us, as always, wonderfully with loads of produce which was taken to the Lincoln Larder.

The children enjoyed our annual Cluster Day on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October. This year's theme was sport and our children had the chance to do dance, football and multi skills activities alongside children from Digby, Nocton and Potterhanworth Primary Schools. On the subject of sport, the football team won the Branston Tournament on November 6<sup>th</sup>. They didn't lose a match all

morning, including against some much larger schools, and are now the proud owners of a magnificent trophy and a shield.  
 Finally, some dates for your diary. The school Christmas Fayre will be held on Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at school from 3.00pm. We will be holding the school Carol Service at St. Peter's on Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 1.45pm. Everyone is welcome to join us. I hope to see you there.  
 Graham Boyall Headteacher

### SERVICES FOR DECEMBER IN THE THREE PARISHES

Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> (and each Thursday)	
9.15am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
Friday 4 <sup>th</sup>	Carol Celebration 6.00pm St. Peter's
Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup>	Messy Church/Saturday Take Away - Advent theme.
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup>	Second Sunday of Advent
8.00am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Peter's
10.30am	United Service St. Wilfrid's
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Third Sunday of Advent
9.00am	Morning Worship – St. Peter's
9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Oswald's
10.30am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Dunston School Christmas Concert
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Blankney Hunt Carol Service 7.00pm St. Oswald's
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup>	Fourth Sunday of Advent
9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Peter's
10.30am	Morning Worship – St. Wilfrid's
4.30pm	Candlelight Service of Nine Lessons and Carols St. Oswald's
Thursday 24 <sup>th</sup>	Children's Service 6.00pm - St. Wilfrid's
11.30pm	Midnight Mass - St. Wilfrid's
11.30pm	Midnight Mass - Dunston Methodist Chapel
Christmas Day	
9.00am	Holy Communion - St. Peter's
10.30am	Holy Communion - St. Oswald's
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup>	No Services
January 2010	
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	The Second Sunday of Christmas
8.00am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Peter's

10.30am

United Service – Metheringham Methodist Chapel

### **WI Report**

Two meetings to report in this months magazine.

On Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October there was a craft evening taken by some of our members. We could choose from four activities.

Sewing Bookmarks, making Christmas crackers, painting Christmas cards or folding to make boxes.

There was a quiz for non crafty members.

On 18<sup>th</sup> November there was a Family History Research talk by Lesley Walker.

This is one of the most popular growing activities. All helped by access to Archives, Parish Records, The Census and collections of family photos and newspaper cuttings and the Internet. It could become a very time consuming hobby as the speaker testified !

The Tombola at the Fair & Feast was a sell out and another sell out was the tables for the Table Top Sale held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>.

The WI ladies like to keep actively both mentally and physically, hence the 2 darts teams, 1 table tennis team have been entered into the WI leagues along with 2 Quiz Teams to compete in the WI Quiz evenings.

An outing is planned for Chatsworth on November 26<sup>th</sup>.

The next meeting will be on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> – The Christmas Social.

JS

### **Everything we need to know about life, we can learn from Noah's Ark !**

Don't miss the boat.

Remember that we are all in the same boat.

Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.

Invest your savings in Gopher Wood futures.

Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.

Don't listen to critics, just get on with the job that needs to be done.

Build your future on high ground.

For safety's sake, travel in pairs.

Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.

When you're stressed, float a while.

Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs, the Titanic by professionals.

No matter the storm, when you're with God, there's always a rainbow ending.

RT

### **Interesting Fact No.1**

Largest study of showering habits reveals over 55s shower for less time than other age groups even those who have very new showers !

The older generation takes around 5 minutes less in the shower than

youngsters aged 18 to 24, research launched by Waterwise today reveals.

Two recent surveys, with a total sample size of 4000, conducted online by ICM on behalf of Shower power, a campaign supported by 12 UK water companies, show people aged 55 to 64 only take around eight and a half

minutes to shower. Young men on average spend 13 mins 30 secs in the shower while young women of the same age take 14 mins 52 secs.

'Big respect to the over 55s,' said Jacob Tompkins, managing director of Waterwise, the water efficiency body co-ordinating the campaign on behalf of the water companies. 'People might expect the older generation to take longer but quite clearly when it comes to showering they're showing the younger generation a clean, er, pair of heels....which is good news for the environment.' 'The shower is a big contributor to a home's carbon emissions and a big user of hot water. Less time spent in the shower means less water and less energy, leading to saving money on energy and metered water bills, and resulting in less carbon emissions to heat the water, which helps prevent global warming.' Not all young people hang around in the shower, though. More than half (58 per cent) young men take 10 minutes or less, while 46 per cent of young women take 10 minutes or less. Apart from welcoming their commitment to saving time in the shower, people have been telling us what they would do with the extra time they will save," said Jacob. "It's like gaining a fly-on-the-wall view of Britain's households in the morning.' By far the most popular thing people intend to do with the saved time is to stay in bed longer.  
CH

### **Blood minerals from Congo.... to you?**

From the latest flashy phone to an endless choice of PCs and DVD players, we're all pretty obsessed with the fast-moving world of new technology these days. But have you ever wondered about the real story behind the seductive TV ads, or how those 'must have' gadgets actually end up on the shop shelves?

Often dubbed 'Africa's First World War', the long and bitter conflict between government forces, rebel militia, and neighbouring armies in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has resulted in the deaths of a staggering five million people in the last decade alone.

But while simmering internal and external political tensions continue to devastate lives, there is another crucial catalyst for the bloody conflict - namely the highly lucrative illegal mining trade.

Fuelled by an insatiable global demand for minerals such as cassiterite (tin oxide) and coltan - vital in the manufacture of our DVD players, mobile phones and computers - the illegitimate mining industry in the DRC is booming like never before.

However, while local people and the economy reap - at best - negligible rewards from the DRC's vast wealth of natural mineral reserves, the only real winners are the corrupt mine owners and multinational export companies.

Christian Aid met two women miners in Congo. Here are their stories:

AIMEE BAGALWA, 29 "Before the war it was only the men who worked in the mines but now I am a miner myself and my husband takes care of children," mother-of-four Aimee explains. Aimee works in the tiny settlement of Szbira, 90 kilometres from Bukavu in South Kivu province. "I have been here for one year now, often doing 24-hour shifts, and I think that working in the mines is a form of slavery because people are kept in a state of real dependency. We are in deep misery and I only do this work to feed my family."

TUMAINI MUNGUAKONKWA, 25 “I have to work everyday, seven days a week, just to feed my family and even then we struggle,” says Tumaini, who is married and has four young children to support. “I don’t know any of those people who get rich from cassiterite, like the mine owners and dealers, and I cannot imagine how anyone like me could ever make any money from this work, it feels like slavery.” PP

### **Christmas: Why does it begin at midnight with Holy Communion?**

The hour was first chosen at Rome in the fifth century to symbolise the idea that Christ was born at midnight – a mystical idea in no way hindered by historical evidence! No one knows the hour of his birth.

Certainly in recent times, Holy Communion at midnight on Christmas morning has proved popular with modern families. One British writer pointed out its “domestic convenience” in 1947: “for where there are children and no servants, husband and wife may be unable to communicate at any other time.” (So things don’t change, then!) PP

### **Where did Christmas trees come from?**

There are two early stories that mention fir trees. The first involves St Boniface, who went to Germany in the 8th century as a missionary and found people sacrificing a child to their god under an oak tree. Boniface was appalled, and rescued the child. He then chopped down the oak tree and found a tiny fir tree growing nearby. He gave this to the people and said: “This is a symbol of life. Whenever you look at this tree, remember the Christ-child who is the one who will give you life, because he gave his life for you.” The second early fir tree story involves Martin Luther in the 16th century. It is said that one year he decided to drag a fir tree into his home and to decorate it with candles. He used it as a visual aid, telling people that the candles symbolised Jesus as the light of the world, and the evergreen tree symbolised the eternal life that Jesus gives to us. Many of the people who followed Luther were struck by the idea, and took up the custom. PP

### **Where did Christmas stockings come from?**

No one is really sure, but a story is told of St Nicholas, a bishop who lived in the 4th century, who may have started the custom by accident. St Nicholas was of a wealthy family, and of a generous heart. As Christmas approached one year, he wanted to help a poor family whom he knew, but he did not want them to know it was him. So he climbed up on their roof on Christmas Eve and dropped some coins down the chimney.

The next morning the coins, to the great surprise of the family, were found in the stockings of the ladies, who had hung them to dry by the fire the night before. Every year after that they put their stockings out, in the hope that some more money would fall into them. They told the story of this amazing appearance to their friends and neighbours, and the custom caught on. PP

### **Christmas and St Luke’s Gospel**

It is to St Luke’s wonderful gospel that many Christians turn as the year draws to a close and Christmas approaches, for it is to St Luke that we owe the fullest account of the nativity.

Luke alone tells us the story of Mary and the angel's visit to her, and has thus given the Church the wonderful Magnificat of Mary.

Luke alone tells us the story of Simeon's hymn of praise, thus giving us the wonderful Nunc Dimmittis. Imagine an Anglican evensong without the Nunc Dimmittis.

Luke alone tells us the story of how the angels appeared to the shepherds and how the shepherds then visited the infant Jesus. So – imagine Christmas cards and nativity scenes every year without the shepherds arriving to visit baby Jesus. Imagine school nativity plays without our children dressed as shepherds or sheep. So – thank you, Luke!

What makes it so amazing is that Luke was not a Jew! The man who wrote the fullest nativity story, and indeed more of the New Testament than any other single person, was a Gentile! PP

### **12 Days of Christmas**

When most people hear 'The 12 days of Christmas' they think of the song of the same name. It is believed by many that this song had its origins as a teaching tool to instruct young people in the meaning and content of the Christian faith. From 1558 to 1829 Roman Catholics in England were not able to practice their faith openly, so they had to find other ways to pass on their beliefs. The song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' is one example of how many people believe that they did it.

The song goes, "On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me..."

The 'true love' represents God and the 'me' who receives these presents is the Christian.

The 'partridge in a pear tree' was Jesus Christ who died on a tree as a gift from God.

The 'two turtle doves' were the Old and New Testaments - another gift from God.

The 'three French hens' were faith, hope and love - the three gifts of the Spirit that abide (1Corinthians 13).

The 'four calling birds' were the four Gospels, which sing the song of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The 'five golden rings' were the first five books of the Bible, also called the 'Book of Moses'.

The 'six geese a-laying' were the six days of creation.

The 'seven swans a swimming' were 'seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.' (1Corinthians 12:9-11, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1Peter 4:10-11.)

The 'eight maids a milking' were the eight beatitudes.

The 'nine ladies dancing' were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

The 'ten lords a-leaping' were the Ten Commandments.

The 'eleven pipers piping' were the eleven faithful disciples.

The 'twelve drummers drumming' were the twelve points of the Apostles' Creed.

So the next time you hear 'The 12 Days of Christmas' you can make up your own mind: could this non-religious sounding song really have had its origins in the Christian Faith, or not? PP

## **St James the Least of All**

On how to survive Christmas in the parish

The Rectory, St. James the Least. My dear Nephew Darren

I am sorry you will have to take your Christmas Services sporting a black eye, but I have no sympathy. It doesn't matter what competition you are asked to judge - biggest marrow, best decorated shower cap, most beautiful goldfish – the winner should always be the muscular entrant with the steely glint in their eye. The meek may well be destined to inherit the earth, but they will never win the best decorated Christmas cake competition. You should have known that a lady who works at the "Rose and Crown" pulling pints and throwing clients out at closing time is not one to be awarded second prize.

Lady Bartle has won ours every year for the last 50 years – even though we all know that her French pastry chef will have spent the previous month laboriously decorating the thing. Someone once rashly asked her how she came up with such novel ideas every year. Lady B. promptly started to talk about grouse shooting with a look that made it quite clear how she would have dealt with her interrogator had she herself been feathered.

As you are now well on your way to learning, the Christmas Fair presents a minefield of potential disasters. I treasure the look on our Health and Safety officer's face each year, as he sits in a corner, surrounded by fire extinguishers for every possible contingency, concentrating on the one plug in our church hall providing power for two tea urns, Christmas tree lights, amplifying equipment and mince pie warmer.

You must also make sure you spend absolutely the same sum at every stall. Five pence more on Admiral Thornton's coconut shy than on Mrs Eccles' roll-a-penny will never be forgotten – or forgiven. I sometimes think that Lord Cleethorpe's practice of arriving, dashing round every stall, showering a £5 note at each, with not the slightest interest in what he's buying or entering, then bolting back to his castle for a restorative scotch is the best policy.

The arrival of Father Christmas is always a highlight, although I do feel that your new child protection policy, requiring Father Christmas to be in a locked room at one end of the building and the children communicating with him from one at the other end by internal telephone and video link a little over-cautious. Our poor verger has played Father Christmas for as long as anyone can remember – until last year, when he executed his escape. He promised every child that they would receive all the gifts they wanted and encouraged them to let their imaginations rip. We had a village of tearful children on Christmas morning when they discovered they had not received private jet planes, main line railway station or a major football team. The look of joy on the dear man's face when he was told he'd been sacked was quite touching.

So, as you carol your way through the Services, may I suggest you hold them all by candlelight, so your shiner may be a little less obtrusive.

Your loving uncle, Eustace

## **The little round button**

At a clearance sale, the wife of a senior judge found the perfect green tie to match one of her husband's sport jackets. Soon after, while the couple was relaxing at a resort to get his mind off a complicated cocaine-conspiracy case,

he noticed a small, round disc sewn into the tie. The judge showed it to the police, who were equally suspicious that it might be a 'bug', planted by the conspiracy defendants.

The police took the tie away for some serious analysis. Two weeks later, the judge phoned Scotland Yard to find out the results of their tests. "Well, we're not really sure where the disc came from," the police told him. "But we did discover that if you press it, it plays Jingle Bells."

### **Namely...**

The vicar had a standard liturgy for funerals. To personalize each service, he used the Find and Replace command on his computer to replace the name of the deceased from the previous funeral with the new name.

One morning at a funeral, all was going smoothly until the congregation reached the Apostle's Creed. "Jesus Christ," the congregation intoned, reading from the programme, "born of the Virgin Ethel..."

### **Wisdom for everyone with relatives coming to stay this Christmas...**

The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right time, but also to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment. - Anon

When we are out of sympathy with the young, then I think our work in this world is over. - George MacDonald

Suffering with truth decay? Brush up on your Bible. - Anon

Age doesn't always bring wisdom. Sometimes age comes alone. - Anon

Long-suffering is a grace of silence. - William Bagshawe

Nothing is often a good thing to say. – Will Durant

Worry is interest paid on trouble before it is due.

Better to understand a little than to misunderstand a lot.

To some people, religious freedom means a choice of churches to stay home from

Never put both feet in your mouth at the same time, because then you don't have a leg to stand on.

Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened.

### **Observations for anyone travelling over Christmas and New Year...**

How does the chap who drives the snowplough get to work?

Why are there flotation devices in the seats of planes instead of parachutes?

A camel is a horse designed by a committee.

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