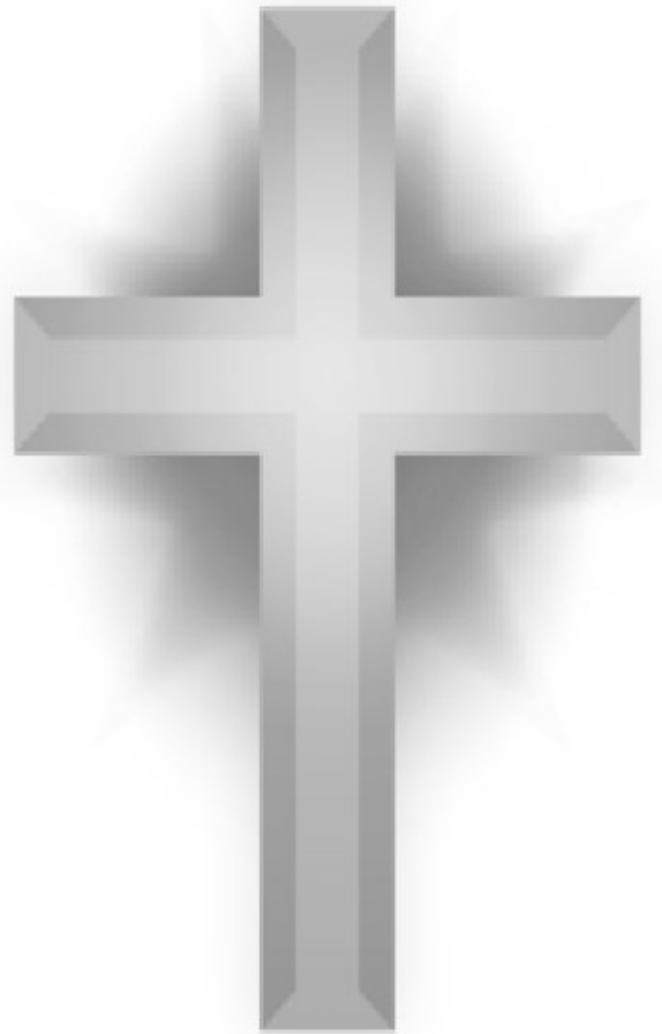
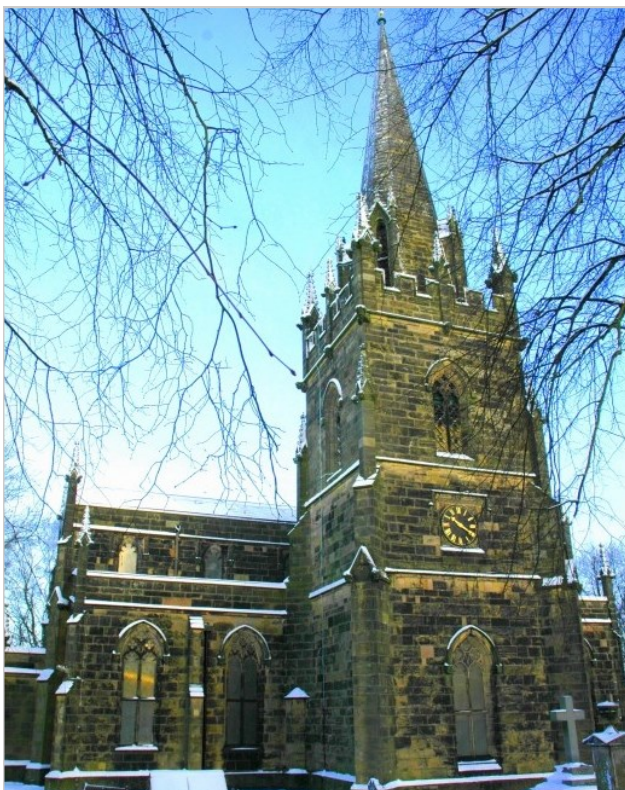


THE BEACON

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS, SEDGLEY
& ST.ANDREW'S THE STRAITS



50p

DECEMBER AND JANUARY

WHO's WHO

Team Rector	Revd Guy Hewlett	01902 295164
Team Vicar	Revd Catherine Mitchell	01902 677897
Licensed Lay Minister	Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Pastoral Care	Tracey Bate	01902 680727
Worship Leader	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
Youth Leader	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
PCC Secretary	Chris Williams	01902 672880
Parish Office information baptisms, weddings, funerals and hall bookings.	Gail Griffiths	01902 540289
Parish Wardens	Keith Tomlinson John Anderson	01902 673366 01902 677666
Treasurer	John Anderson	01902 677666
Caretaker	Dave Bell	07933 204132
Server / Verger	Len Millard	01902 676339
Junior Church	Barbara Price	01902 676591
Brownies	Heather Churm	01902 674709
Ladies' Society	Geraldine Baker	01902 674608
Men's Society	Roger Berry	01902 881374
Mothers' Union	Liz Williams	01902 672880
Noah's Ark Parent & Toddler Group	Linda Edwards	01902 672556
Rainbows	Liz Naylor	07827 629648
Web Editor	Martin Jones	01902 884461
Youth Group	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
Bell Ringer	Keith Williams	01902 672585
Organist	Martin Platts	07941 173252

DIARY DATES FOR DECEMBER 2017

Dates for Diary

Mens Society - January 15th AGM

Joyce Withers - a Christmas Concert on the 7th December in the church hall, tickets £5.00 available from Joyce or Freda Taylor.

Baptisms

26th November - Luanna Mae Bates and Raife William Stuart Hodgetts

Funerals

6th November - Ronald Ash - Age 84 - Gornal Wood

6th November - Leonard Bowater - Gornal Wood

8th November - Dorothy Winifred Turton - Age 89 - All Saints'

15th November - Juanita Mary Anderson - Age 84 - 15th November

21st November - Christine Anne Stephenson - Age 64 - Gornal Wood

27th November - Alice Fisher - Age 88 - Gornal Wood

High Days & Holy Days for December

- 1 December Eloi - a patron saint for the euro?
- 3 December Francis Xavier - the seasick missionary
- 3 December Birinus – an apostle to the English
- 4 December Osmond – an immigrant before Brexit
- 6 December St Nicholas – patron saint of children
- 7 December Lazarus of Bethany – back from the tomb
- 11 December Daniel the Stylite 409-93
- 21 December Winter Solstice
- 24 December Christmas Eve
- 25 December Christmas: The story of the Christingle
- 25 Christingle: a generous present from the Moravians to the Churches.
Christmas
- 26 December St Stephen – the first martyr (died c 35 AD)
- 26 December On the Feast of Stephen
- 26 December Look out for Wenceslas
- 28 December Holy Innocents

THE BEACON

If you are interested in having the magazine delivered to your home on a regular basis please contact:

Keith Tomlinson : tel. 01902 673366.

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Articles for the November magazine need to be sent to:

admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

by

Friday 26th January 2018

and needs to be in Arial typeface, size 18.

WEBSITE: www.gornalandsedgley.org.uk

CHURCH OPENING



**Friday mornings from
10.30am to 12.30pm**

The church is open for quiet prayer
& coffee and a chat.

Letter from Archdeacon of Worcester

By Robert Jones

It seems that Christmas has been coming for several months now. I saw a Christmas tree lurking in my local pub at the beginning of September – surely a record! And yet it doesn't feel very 'Christmassy' as we look at world affairs, politics and what goes on in the lives of so many people. It doesn't feel very Christmassy, of course, because we've made Christmas in our own image, rather than in the image and likeness of the very first Christmas. The very first Christmas was a tale of a birth – always a joyful event – in the midst of considerable human turmoil. It was not at all different from what so many of us are experiencing today; a real life born in the real circumstances of the day.

We tend to dress things up, and maybe there's no real harm in that. For example, Christmas trees came quite late to the party – introduced by Victorians. Many years later they appear in my local pub as the symbol of the season!

We do this in so many ways. Let's take Advent. No doubt inspired by those Blue Peter candle stands made out of metal coat-hangers (I'm showing my age, but do you remember them?), we tend to think of the wonderful season of Advent as a countdown to Christmas. But it has a far wider reach than that; it is a countdown to the time when God's will is done here on earth as it is in heaven.

We dress up holy seasons, and we dress up holy places. One of the great excitements of today's church is the way we are opening up the buildings to much more community activity. We have holy space and community space, and they rub along well together, which should not surprise us as Christmas people believing in the God who came to be among us. Maybe we do it for ourselves too. I sometimes wonder whether we simply need to re-learn wonder and awe at God's beautiful creation and re-creation. At the feast of Epiphany the Magi come without commentary or explanation simply to worship and bring their gifts.

Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, these festivals give us a wonderful excuse to celebrate the God who shows us in Jesus just how much He loves us and reminds us just how valuable human beings really are. And if I was nudged to think about that a couple of months back in my local perhaps that was really no bad thing. Seasons' greetings!

Confirmation Service 29th April 10:30 All Saints

We are pleased to announce that the confirmation service for the parish will be on 29th April 10:30 at All Saints Church.

If you would like to be confirmed please let Guy and Catherine know your name and contact details. As preparation for confirmation we will be organising preparation courses, details will be announced soon.

Blessings

Catherine

Men's Society Defibrillator Appeal Update

The Appeal launched in Sept now stands at £610 with the initial sum of £250 from the Men's Society.

This has now been supplemented by donations from individuals ranging from £10 to £50 and also two wonderful gifts of £100 each from the Coffee Club and the Yoga class.

Thank you all so much and may it continue to enable us to reach our target.

God bless you thank you again.

Roger Berry

Somebody recently said ‘Why was Jesus born at such a busy time of year?’ They were worried after speaking that they had spoken out of turn – were they being sacrilegious?

There is a fictional character called Puddleglum who appears in the children's fantasy series *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis. Puddleglum appears in *The Silver Chair*, and briefly at the end of *The Last Battle*. Puddleglum is an uncommonly cheerful ‘marsh-wiggle’; however, as marsh-wiggles are best known for their pessimism, he is still rather exceptionally gloomy, described by other characters as a “wet blanket”. So for instance on a lovely sunny day he might say ‘We shall all get sun burn, I shouldn’t wonder’.

I admit to having a been a bit like Puddleglum about Christmas a few years ago. All the money being spent on so many things that no one really needed; too much food and drink when there are people starving – look at Colette below. Many people getting into debt and huge numbers of people not even thinking about Jesus and His birth, let alone worshipping Him!

Many world faiths have pilgrimage and festivals. That is true of Christianity. Festivals pretty well always include a party and celebration. I found reflecting on this really helpful - and I have come back to enjoying the ‘festival’ side of Christmas.

At Christmas, many of us do come together to celebrate the birth of Jesus both in church and at home. Food is found at many celebrations in the Bible, so it feels entirely appropriate that it is at the heart of our festivities when we celebrate God’s only son coming into the world. But not everyone can celebrate.

Colette, someone supported through the work of Christian Aid, lives in Burkina Faso, West Africa, with her husband, young daughter and baby. Colette’s Christmas is not dissimilar to ours. It starts with cooking delicious food and then getting her children ready for church.

She prays for her children, and asks that God will give them health and everything they need. When Colette gets home, she greets her neighbours and they share food. They gather together and show their joy by dancing and singing. Like us, they eat special food on Christmas Day. For Colette and her neighbours, this will be rice, goat and spaghetti! But life has been hard for Colette. She was forced to work at a gold mine every day to earn money to feed her family. Colette spent days at the mining site without finding any gold to sell. She made so little money that she was not able to buy nutritious food. Her daughter Eulalie was very ill and weak, and was diagnosed with malnutrition.

However, Colette found hope through a market garden project supported by Christian Aid. She and her husband were trained in how to grow crops and were provided with tools and seeds. She produces nutritious food to eat and sell, and can work with her children close by. Eulalie is now four years old and has recovered, and her little sister Ornella has, thankfully, never been malnourished. Colette sells some of her vegetables to pay for healthcare and clothes for her girls. She plans to extend her garden to pay for her children to go to school.

We could all join thousands of others helping to ensure there is enough for everyone this Christmas. You can make a donation by visiting christianaid.org.uk/christmas or calling 020 7523 2269. Or think about a 'present' to another cause which will help others in need, perhaps more local.

Was the person who said 'Why was Jesus born at such a busy time of year?' being sacrilegious? I do not think they were at all; they made me smile!

However I am convinced that keeping Jesus at the centre of our celebrations is what makes Christmas.

Happy Christmas and a blessed New Year!

From Guy and Jackie

Vicars Ponderings – Dec 2017 !

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
.....and the poem continues!!

When I was a child, this was one of my favourite poems, in the days leading up to Christmas, but especially when it was read on Christmas eve!!!....The anticipation of the surprises that would greet me on Christmas morning could be hardly contained!

As a child, Christmas, for me, was full of surprises of what gifts I would receive, seeing the presents all brightly wrapped under the Christmas tree early on Christmas morning, with my dad following at a safe distance with cine camera in hand to record scene and mine and my sister's faces as we opened the presents.

As you read this, I'm sure the Christmas preparations are in full swing.....

The actual date of Jesus' birth is unknown; liturgical evidence from the early church circa 354 AD seems to point to Pope Julius I officially declaring that the birth of Jesus would be celebrated on the 25th December. Other parts of the early church celebrated on 6th January. Prior to and through the early Christian centuries, winter festivals, especially those centred on the winter solstice, were popular in many European pagan cultures.

There are moves in many towns and cities around the country to revert back to a winter festival and to take Christ out of the celebrations; to make it a more secular festival or to be more politically correct.

There is great joy in giving and receiving gifts at this time, whoever we are or whatever belief system we hold; but the greatest gift the world has been given is from God, the gift of Jesus to the world.

At Christmas time we celebrate Jesus' birth, when God came into the world, Emmanuel, God with us; God in the person of Jesus became real in the world.

It's Jesus' birthday!!!!

Let's celebrate this Christmas the joy of knowing God's greatest gift and sharing him with our families and friends.

With Christmas blessings to you all.

Catherine

200 CLUB

A reminder that the annual subscription of £20.00 is due in Jan 2018. Cash may be given to either Jenny, Jean or myself, cheques made payable to All Saints Church 200 Club.

Our annual dinner will be on Mar 10th 2018, commencing at 7.30pm, members will be asked to contribute £5.00 towards food costs as previous years.

Non members, who are most welcome will be asked to contribute £16.00 each, and who perhaps might consider joining us on a permanent basis!

Menus will be circulated nearer the date must be returned by the advised date, also bring your own drinks and glasses.

Thank you on behalf of the Trustees, Roger Berry

What about the first Christmas?

How did the early Christians celebrate Christmas? The simple answer is: they didn't!

Christmas was first celebrated as late as 336, during the reign of Emperor Constantine. The first Christians didn't celebrate Jesus' birth or any other birthdays, regarding them as pagan customs to be avoided. However, the resurrection was central to their faith and they celebrated this event every Sunday.

By the 4th century however, many Christian groups observed Christ's birthday, although on different days. So, in 345, Pope Julius I officially fixed the date of Christmas as 25th December. Why was this date chosen?

Early Christian tradition said that the Jesus' birth was announced to Mary on 25th March (the Annunciation), nine months before 25th December. As time went on, the Annunciation became more associated with Mary than Jesus' birth. It was also believed to be the day on which Jesus died (14th Nisan in the Jewish calendar).

In the setting of Passover, as Jews from all over the Empire travelled to Jerusalem for the Festival, it would make sense for the Romans to take a census. Also at Passover, many lambs would be sacrificed at the Temple in Jerusalem. 'He is believed to have been conceived on the 25th March, upon which day also He suffered.' (Augustine).

The date of Christmas may also have been chosen because the Roman winter solstice and midwinter festivals took place at this time. 'Saturnalia' honoured the god Saturn and 'Dies Natalis Solis Invicti' ('birthday of the unconquered sun') celebrated the sun god Mithra.

Here we also see the Christian church 'redeeming' a pagan festival, by investing it with new Christian meaning.

This Christmas, let's not forget that we celebrate a real gift in real time for everyone: 'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!' (2 Cor 9:15).

Osmond – an immigrant before Brexit

Osmond is the saint for you if you regret Brexit, and believe that immigrants can bring good to Britain. Osmond came to England from France back in the days before EU regulations. It was shortly after 1066, and he was a Norman, following William the Conqueror.

Osmond himself was no soldier, but a gifted and godly man, with a great gift of administration. He became royal chaplain, and then chancellor in 1072, producing numerous royal letters and charters for the king. In 1078 he was made bishop of Salisbury. As such, he completed and consecrated the cathedral, and formed such an outstanding chapter and constitution that it later became a model for other English cathedrals.

Osmond took part in the preparation of the Domesday Book, and was present when it was presented to William in April 1086. He died in 1099, well respected for his purity and learning, and his lack of avarice and ambition.

Thanks

To all of you who have donated to the Black Country Foodbank during 2017, from all of us at 'Springs'.

You have made a tremendous difference to the lives of those who come to us for help, lives made worse recently by the introduction of the Universal Credit.

Please pray for the work of the Foodbank during 2018.

Ladies Society – from engineering to a dog collar!

At our November meeting we were delighted to welcome the Revd Catherine Mitchell who delighted us with a talk about her life in engineering and her personal journey into ministry.

Although Catherine began her talk by saying that she had never spoken to a society before and was unsure of our expectations, she provided an entertaining and informative description of her life as an engineer at Jaguar where she spent 26 years. Catherine explained that she had been with the company through its many different periods of ownership: Jaguar, Ford, Tata and Land Rover to name a few until it became the Jaguar Land Rover we know today. She was very much a member of the Jaguar team and “if you cut me in half you would see Jaguar printed in British Racing Green”.

Catherine initially worked in the chassis department in Coventry and eventually moved to work on fuel systems, fitting components onto the cars. She then became part of the launch team for a new model, intending to stay for 12 months and staying 12 years as the company felt very much like a family and she loved working within the team environment.

She then showed us a fuel cap that she had designed, not on a drawing board but using the new (at that time) CAD programmes. She joked that she always felt a little jealous of people who designed bridges as everyone saw the results of their work whereas her designs were hidden in the car.

Life at Jaguar also seemed a lot of fun with juggling club at lunchtime and Catherine borrowing a prototype car worth £250,000 to drive on a visit to see family in the North-East. She also took part in many visits by famous people such as HM The Queen, The Queen Mother, Prince Charles and Princess Diana, Michael Owen and John Major. She joked that these visits required careful preparation with the company renaming the “stuff up area” (where parts were pushed up into cars) as the “Chassis Body Marriage System” for the purpose of The Queen’s visit.

Catherine then explained how she became a minister by telling us that she went to church regularly as a child and particularly liked Sunday School for its stories and opportunity for “colouring in”. However, she was put off attending when she was 10 and her sister was confirmed. The prospect of wearing a white frilly dress did not appeal!

When her parents passed away within 5 months of each other Catherine started to question life and its meaning. Her sister invited her to attend an Alpha course at the church she attended and they went along together. Catherine experienced a warm welcome and became increasingly involved in church life, joining the worship band (she is a drummer), becoming a church warden and visiting the Holy Land. Her message here was “never underestimate personal invitations as you don’t know god’s plans for you”.

Catherine increasingly felt that she was being called by god and it was suggested that she attend a “vocations weekend”. She enjoyed this and signed up for a two-year extension studies course and when a friend suggested that she was being called to full-time ministry she realised that this was the route that she was meant to follow.

Our many thanks to Catherine for a truly interesting talk about her life. Our next meeting is on Monday 4th December at 7.30pm when we will be enjoying a Bring and Share supper together with poetry performed by Ken Gilks. In a busy week we will also be enjoying a Christmas meal at Café Casita on Wednesday 6th December at 7pm. I hope to see you there.

Karen Evans

Ladies' Society Theatre Visit

Recently a number of ladies enjoyed a memorable performance of the musical "South Pacific", at the Dormston Theatre by the W.B.O.S. A simply designed stage setting of palm trees and sandy beach provided a backdrop for excellent dance and song to portray the story of "South Pacific", a love story on a paradise island.

In fact two love stories are threatened by the dangers of war and prejudice. Despite this sadness there is much comedy provided by a crew of U.S. Navy sailors.

The lead roles, and indeed all cast members and orchestra delivered fantastic performances!

Well done to all!

Memorable songs enjoyed and recalled included, "Some enchanted evening", and "There's nothing like a dame".

An amateur company maybe, but what talent there is in the W.B.O.S. I personally look forward to experiencing future productions.

Anne Wakefield

Our Children's Society Fayre held on October 14th raised the magnificent sum of £1523.17p.

Thanks to everyone who supported us in any way. Special thanks to Clare and The Singing Angels who performed so lovely for us.

Anne Hart.

MOTHERS' UNION

Pauline Turner gave the first instalment of her and Alan's 'World Tour' to our afternoon meeting last month. They sailed on the Queen Mary II and after being shown to their luxurious cabin, with balcony, they settled into life on the ship as it made its way to New York. The many activities and entertainments, gave them plenty to occupy their voyage. The view of the Statue of Liberty heralded their arrival to New York where they purchased a five day bus pass to see as much of the city as possible.

Times Square, the Empire State Building were musts to see, as was the site of 9/11. Pauline told us how the water in the pools at 9/11 runs away into the ground, symbolising how the Twin Towers disappeared on that fateful day. Everyone who lost their life in the terror attack is named around the pools, a lasting memorial to the past and a place of hope for the future. From New York they went by train to Chicago, the 'city of architects', and then to San Francisco with its landmark Golden Gate Bridge and in its bay the island of Alcatraz. From America our intrepid travellers flew to Japan and Pauline told us about the tea houses and the thick, bright green tea! We saw photos of pagodas and temples and our couple in traditional Japanese dress. We ended the afternoon at Hongkong and await the rest of the journey next year.

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Dorothy Turton. Dorothy was a dedicated member of the Mothers' Union and on moving to Wombrook Court, and unable to attend meetings any longer, became an Indoor Member. She was also, for many years, a member of the Mothers' Union Choir. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her. We remember Jane and Richard and the family at this sad time and pray that treasured memories of Dorothy will sustain them in the days to come. Our Christmas project is to provide small, filled gift bags for the women and children at New Beginnings, as we did last year. These are intended as a small gift for families when they arrive at the Refuge throughout the year. We have the bags and there will be a box in the narthex for your gifts.

Ideas for gift bags – Not Christmas items & No sweets
(sure you can think of many more)

crayons, felt pens, pencils, rubbers, etc hair slides, small colouring books
scrunchies, cars, children's DVD's, combs, brushes, jigsaws, make up
brushes, card games, emery boards, gloves, socks, hand cream

I wish to take this opportunity to wish all members a Happy
and Peaceful Christmas.

Dates

5th Dec 12.30pm Christmas Meal at The Lodge
9th Jan 2.15pm Communion followed by social &
paying of subscriptions

Liz Williams

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL



All Saints' Church, Sedgley will be holding a Christmas Tree Festival from Friday 1st December to Sunday 3rd December and Friday 8th December to Sunday 10th December. The theme this year is 'Rhymes & Verses' and each tree will be decorated to depict a different Nursery Rhyme or poem. There will be a Blessing of the Trees at 10.00am on Friday 1st December followed by singing from local school choirs. Admission will be free, light refreshments will be available and any donations during the weekends will be for Dementia UK & The Salvation Army.

We look forward to seeing you and your family and friends

St James the Least of All for Dec On keeping warm in church

Happily, the Church of England still retains some singular parish clergy. Take the parish of St James-the-Least in the county of C- for example. Here the elderly Anglo-Catholic vicar, Eustace, continues his correspondence to Darren, his nephew, a low-church curate recently ordained...

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

It was delightful to have a family from your church visiting ours last week, but perhaps if it happens again, you may suggest a certain dress code to them. That the man arrived without wearing a tie was probably forgivable, but I do think you should have warned them about the temperature. Your church building may be warmer than a nursing home, but the only time that hot air is blown over the heads of our congregation, is when the archdeacon preaches.

Thus, by early December, our congregation knows to come to church equipped with overcoats, scarves, gloves and thermal socks. And the Verger's regular disappearance into the side chapel during Services isn't on urgent ecclesiastical business, but to warm himself up with copious swigs from his hip flask.

So, your poor visitors suffered from the cold. In fact, by the time of the sermon, were they to have been laid horizontally, they would have been indistinguishable from the marble effigies of the Earls of Stowe lying in state in the north aisle. As they limped out at the end of the Service, totally numb, my offer of a sherry at the Rectory was more medicinal than social.

December is almost always the month when I gracefully concede defeat regarding the church boiler. True, the congregation has been dropping hints to me since Harvest about the autumnal nip in the air, or of the flowers keeping well in church because it is cool there, or even the slightly more pointed remark that it will soon be time for the heating to be turned on. But all are studiously ignored. I live in an arctic 17th century Rectory, and am hardened to it.

But when members of the congregation start arriving bearing travelling rugs and flasks of hot tea, I begin to realise that the time approaches to fire the boilers up. Then on the Sunday when Colonel Richards lights up his primus stove next to him on the pew, I know it is appropriate to announce that next Sunday the church will be heated – although ‘heated’ is rather more an aspiration than a reality.

Should any of our congregation be tempted to pay a visit to your own church, I will tell them to dress for a Mediterranean August – although the men will certainly wear a tie. One does have standards to maintain.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

The name of God....

A little boy arrived at the gate of heaven. There he met an angel. ‘Before you come in, can you tell me God’s name?’ said the angel. ‘Oh, that’s easy,’ the little boy replied, ‘His name is Harold.’ ‘What make you think His name is Harold?’ the angel asked incredulously. The little boy explained: ‘Because at Christmas we sing “Hark while Harold’s angels sing...” and also, when we pray, we say: “Our Father in Heaven, Harold be Thy Name...”’

Jesus' birth

There are four accounts of Jesus' life in the Bible, but only two of them describe events before He was 30. They are called the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke, and they were written about 30 to 40 years after Jesus' death. It may have been that the eyewitnesses were dying out, and it became important to record how Jesus was born. The authors researched the recollections of those who knew and followed Jesus.

The writers also knew the Jewish scriptures (known to Christians as the Old Testament). The scriptures had led the Jews to expect a unique leader called the Messiah or Christ (the words mean the same – 'The Anointed One'). The writings foresaw that this Christ would be associated with the ancestral line of the greatest king in Israel's history, David; with David's birthplace, Bethlehem; and with a virgin whose first child would be named Emmanuel (which means 'God is with us'). Jesus' family home, however, was Nazareth, which was 70 miles away, and his parents were known to be named Joseph and Mary.

By bringing these facts together, Luke created an account in which the young Mary, engaged to Joseph but not yet married, was visited in Nazareth by Gabriel, an angel. Gabriel told her that she had been chosen by God to give birth to a son. The baby would be conceived through a unique act of God. Through this child, God would live among His people in an unprecedented way. She was to call Him Jesus (which means, 'God saves us'). Mary was spared the disgrace associated with being pregnant and unmarried at that time because Joseph acted in a compassionate way. She gave birth in Bethlehem because that was where Joseph's ancestors lived, and he needed to register there in a census.

Matthew's version of this story stresses the fact that Jesus' mission had no national boundaries. He records a visit by foreign academics ('wise men'), who were drawn to the place through their study of sciences and astrology. Luke's gospel continually stresses Jesus' care for marginalised people, and it is appropriate that he records Jesus being visited by local riff-raff (shepherds, guided to Jesus' birthplace by a vision of angels).

In Matthew's version, tragedy overshadowed these events. Herod the Great had been installed in Jerusalem as 'King of the Jews' by the governing Roman authorities. He heard rumours of the birth of a rival, and tried to eliminate the threat by having male children in Bethlehem murdered. However, his soldiers arrived too late to harm Jesus, whose family had fled to Egypt.

Christians remember these events with great celebration at Christmas. Many fables and traditions have accumulated around the bare facts known about Jesus' birth.

You can find answers to questions about Christianity at www.christianity.org.uk. Christianity.org.uk is the website of the Christian Enquiry Agency, an agency of Churches Together in England

The sound of music

Got demanding work to do? Put on some classical music. Listening to upbeat classical music may well enhance your brain power, and is better than working in silence.

Such are the findings of a study at Radboud University in Holland. It found that a person's ability to come up with creative answers to complex problems is boosted by upbeat, happy classical music. On the other hand, avoid downbeat or anxious compositions, which will not inspire you to solve anything very much.



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*A Christmas Afternoon
Carol Concert*

*At
All Saints' Church Hall*

*On
Thursday 7th December 2017
At 2:30pm*

Followed by afternoon Tea

With

*All Saints' Singers and
Singing for Pleasure*

21 December Winter Solstice

A Midwinter festival has been a part of life since pre-Christian times. When the hours of daylight are fewest, the warmth of the sun weakest, and life itself seemingly at a standstill, our ancestors, the pagan peoples of Europe and Western Asia, kept festival by lighting bonfires and decorating their buildings with evergreens.

Perhaps they believed that the dying sun could be enheartened by fire, and the life of the buried seed assured by the presence of evergreen branches.

With the advent of Christianity, the Spring gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World.

The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations. "Let those who have no light in themselves light candles!... You are the light of the world, you are the tree ever green...." But by the time of St Gregory and St Augustine, four centuries later, this had changed. Pope Gregory instructed Augustine not to worry about harmless outward customs, as long as the right God be worshipped through them. And so many Anglo-Saxon customs were never discarded, but simply endowed with a new significance.

By 1598 one John Stow of London wrote how: 'Against the feast of Christmas, every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeare afforded to be greene.'

Castle & Blinds & AWNINGS



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Silence for Her Majesty

Exactly 60 years ago the Queen's Christmas message was broadcast for the first time on television. Finally, the newcomer had put radio in its place! Families all over Britain delayed their Christmas pudding to hear, and for the first time to watch their monarch delivering it.

By modern broadcast standards, it was rather odd. One could feel the Queen's anxiety about it, the content, as most royal messages had always been, predictable and platitudinous and the accent a strange and unique 'royal speak' in which 'I' was always 'One' and 'house' was pronounced 'hice'. Nobody worried. She was a popular monarch and she had embraced the new 'medium of the people' to talk to us.

Somewhere in the next 60 years the whole style and feel of the Christmas message changed. For one thing, the Queen's accent is now simply a bit posh, but completely recognisable and normal. 'One' has gone, and Her Majesty is very happy to talk freely about her own feelings and faith – quite remarkably so in the last few years. There are very few platitudes, but a great deal of hard-earned wisdom in her words. At 91, she has mastered the great television art of talking to rather than at the audience. Long live the Queen!

Paying for it

By the time we pay off this year's Christmas presents, it will be time to pay for next summer's holiday

When Allenby took back Jerusalem

Jerusalem was occupied by the British 100 years ago, on 11 Dec 1917, after the Ottoman Empire surrendered it two days previously. The British General Edmund Allenby entered the city on foot as a mark of respect, becoming the first Christian to control the city in 500 years.

British Prime Minister David Lloyd George described the capture as 'a Christmas present for the British people'. It was seen as a huge blow to the Ottoman Empire, which had lost another Muslim holy place after Mecca and Baghdad.

Allenby's plan had been to avoid fighting in or near Jerusalem, but to cut all road access to the city and force the Ottoman Army to evacuate it. This worked well: sporadic fighting continued in the hills surrounding Jerusalem (itself at an altitude of nearly 2500 feet), but the one major counter-attack, on December 26, was repulsed.

Allenby was sensitive to the feelings of those within the city. He deployed Muslim troops from India to guard the Muslim holy places and issued a proclamation guaranteeing the security of the holy sites and freedom of worship for all.

Such magnanimity failed because of political mistakes. A couple of weeks earlier the British had issued the Balfour Declaration, promising the Jews a homeland in Palestine. But local British officers, including Lawrence of Arabia, had promised the Arab peoples self-rule. The frustration of Zionist and Arab nationalism has shaped the history of the region ever since.

Britain would hold Jerusalem until the end of Mandatory Palestine in 1948.

Christmas Fair – Saturday 2nd December
10.00am to 1.00pm
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**The magazine is distributed to 350 households in
the Gornal and Sedgley area**

In praise of The Nutcracker – a Christmas favourite

Tchaikovsky's ballet The Nutcracker was performed for the first time 125 years ago, on 18 December 1892 at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, Russia.

It was not well received. The choreography was dismissed as 'confusing' in some scenes, and the libretto was described as 'lopsided'. But today it is extraordinarily popular – perhaps partly because Walt Disney used Tchaikovsky's entire score in Fantasia in 1940, making the music instantly recognisable.

But it is also popular as a ballet because it portrays children, is for children and makes use of children, providing the ideal showcase for ballet schools.

Today more people have seen it, and more companies have performed it, than any other ballet. It has the unusual distinction of being classical Christmas music that has nothing to do with Christianity.

The ballet is based on The Nutcracker and the King of Mice, written by E T A Hoffman and revised by Alexander Dumas. The story is of a young German girl who dreams of a Nutcracker Prince and a fierce battle against a Mouse King with seven heads.

The first complete performance outside Russia took place in London on 30th January 1934, at the Sadler's Wells Theatre

Camels

In a little girl's Christmas drawing, two of the camels were approaching the inn, over which was pictured a huge star. The third camel and its rider were going directly away from it. 'Why is the third man going in a different direction?' her mother asked. She replied, 'Oh, he's looking for a place to park.'

Jesus through the Old Testament - transform your Bible understanding

By Graeme Goldsworthy, BRF, £7.99

An outstanding new work from a renowned Old Testament scholar, this book will appeal to anyone who wants to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Bible and increase their confidence in interpreting the text with wisdom and integrity.

‘The purpose of this book,’ says the writer, ‘is to help Bible readers to appreciate the structure of God’s revelation so that the New Testament’s way of linking Jesus to the Old Testament is not a mystery.’

The writing is crisp and clear, the insights sophisticated but accessible and the illustrations illuminating. Goldsworthy takes the reader on a profound and knowledgeable journey through every part of the Old Testament, showing how the New Testament should guide our interpretation of the Old at every turn, and demonstrating Jesus’ role as ‘the fulfiller of all God’s promises’.

A good way to fight depression

Do you often feel low? Well, how often do you exercise? In a recent study, it was found that people who do not exercise are 44 per cent more likely to suffer with depression. It seems that even just one hour a week can help lift your mood.

The research was done by the Australia-based Black Dog Institute. One scientist concluded: ‘If we can find ways to increase the population’s level of physical activity even by a small amount, then this is likely to bring substantial physical and mental health benefits.’

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The sound of music

Got demanding work to do? Put on some classical music. Listening to upbeat classical music may well enhance your brain power, and is better than working in silence.

Such are the findings of a study at Radboud University in Holland. It found that a person's ability to come up with creative answers to complex problems is boosted by upbeat, happy classical music. On the other hand, avoid downbeat or anxious compositions, which will not inspire you to solve anything very much.

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Application for grants are invited from individuals or organisations resident in the area of benefit. Application forms are available from the incumbent of any of the parishes mentioned above, or alternatively from:

**The Secretary to the Trustees: 12 Larkswood Drive,
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SERVICES FOR THE MONTH

DECEMBER 2017

3rd December 2017

All Saints' - 8am - The Revd Catherine Mitchell

St Andrew's - 9.30am - Team Service - The Rev Catherine Mitchell and
The Revd Guy Hewlett

All Saints' - Church Open from 6.00pm to 8.00pm, come and see the
Christmas tree festival and enjoy a FREE Tea or coffee.

10th December

All Saints' - 8am - The Revd Catherine Mitchell

St Andrew's 9.30am - Family Service - Canon Jan

St Peter's - 10.30am - The Revd Catherine Mitchell

All Saints' - 10.30am - The Revd Guy Hewlett

All Saints' - 6.30pm - Evensong - The Revd Guy Hewlett

17th December

All Saints' - 8am - Communion - The Revd Catherine Mitchell

St Andrew's - 9.30am - Worship For All - Canon Jan

St Peter's - 10.30am - Communion - The Revd Catherine Mitchell

All Saints' - 10.30am - Communion - The Revd Guy Hewlett

St Andrew's - 3.00pm - Carol Service - Canon Jan and Claire Cox

St Peter's - 6.00pm - Carol Service - Suzanne Bradley and The Revd
Catherine Mitchell

All Saints' - 6.30pm - Carol Service - The Revd Guy Hewlett

SERVICES FOR THE MONTH
DECEMBER 2017
CONTINUED

24th December

- All Saints' - 8am - Communion - The Revd Guy Hewlett
St Andrew's - 9.30am - Communion - The Revd Guy Hewlett
St Peter's - 10.30am - Worship For All - Suzanne Bradley
All Saints' - 10.30am - Communion - The Revd Catherine Mitchell
St Andrew's - 4.00pm - Christingle - Canon Jan
St Andrew's - 5.30pm - Christingle - Canon Jan
All Saints' - 5.30pm - Christingle - The Revd Guy Hewlett
St Peter's - 6.00pm - The Revd Catherine Mitchell
St Andrew's - 11.15pm - Midnight Mass - The Revd Catherine Mitchell
All Saints' - 11.30pm - Midnight Mass - The Revd Guy Hewlett

25th December

- All Saints' - 9.30am - The Revd Guy Hewlett
St Peter's - 10.00am - Communion - The Revd Catherine Mitchell

31st December

- All Saints' - 8.00am - Communion - The Revd Guy Hewlett
St Andrews' - 9.30am - Worship For All - Canon Jan
St Peters' - 10.30am - Worship For All - Suzanne Bradley
All Saints' - 10.30am - Communion - The Revd Guy Hewlett
All Saints' - 6.30pm - NO SERVICE