

Becoming One of Us

I'm writing this the day before Remembrance Sunday but it will be read as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus at Christmas. That juxtaposition seems to point both to some hard truths about the most popular festival of the Church and to the wonderful mystery at the heart of it.

In a particularly cynical poem, "Christmas :1924", Thomas Hardy wrote, 'After two thousand years of mass / We've got as far as poison gas.' Christianity has not made us perfect; religion can seem

powerless, or worse.

The advancement of our capacity offers ingenious new technologies of death.

The obtrusive folk festivities and commercialism feeding on Christmas itself undoubtedly put many sensitive people off our faith; the solitary and the

unhappy (who are not, of course, synonymous) can find themselves especially isolated at this time. As we grow older, perhaps all of us have to make a greater effort to join in the fun.

None of this, however, should detract from our celebration of the Incarnation of Our Lord, the Christmas event of God's joining us, his people in the form of a helpless baby; indeed with thoughtful Advent preparation our joy can be all the greater, and more enduring. Christmas is no self-indulgent party, indifferent to the needs and failings of the world: it exists precisely because of God's recognition of our needs and his determination to

share in our suffering and experience our wrongdoing.

Christmas shows us that God is not an abstract concept, majestically aloof, but rather in the Person of Christ present and engaged in our world, asking every single one of all the billions of humans to recognise our common face in him. The eternal and saving power of our God of Love chooses to work not by stamping 'perfection' on us from above: instead, in becoming one with us, he helps us grow with him through our weakness towards that perfection

which will be truly his and ours.

At Christmas we shall celebrate the fact that God is with us in the dark days as well as the bright, in our families and in our individual lives. We shall adore him in his vulnerability as well as his strength. We

shall give thanks that our judgement is delivered with the mercy of one who became like us. And perhaps we can encourage newcomers to worship with us, so that, at the least, they might sense, in the words of Thomas Hardy in another poem, "Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew / And I was unaware"; and best come to know with John Betjeman, in his poem "Christmas":

*That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.*



CHRISTMAS

Full details of all our Christmas Services

December 2004

Ministry of Healing

Healing Services:

Tuesday 14th December
7.30 pm

St James Church

Tuesday 4th January
7.30 pm St Francis

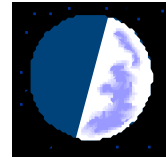
Church

The ministry of healing is available at St James' Church every Sunday during the 10 o'clock service. Please go to St Luke's Chapel after you have received Communion where members of the Healing Team will be available to listen and to pray in complete confidence.



MOONLESS DARKNESS

Moonless darkness
stands between.
Past, the Past, no more be seen!
But the Bethlehem star
may lead me
To the sight of him
who freed me
From the self that I have been.
Make me pure, Lord:
thou art holy;
Make me meek, Lord:
thou were
lowly;
Now beginning,
and always:
Now begin, on
Christmas day.



Gerard Manley Hopkins

TWELVE CHRISTMAS SECRETS

What do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree, have to do with Christmas?

Queen Mary, a practising Roman Catholic, died in 1558, Her younger half sister Elizabeth succeeded the throne and to settle the faith. Until the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 (possibly to avert rebellion in Catholic Ireland), Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practise openly. Someone during that long interval wrote the Christmas favourite "*The Twelve Days of Christmas*" as a catechism song. It has two levels of meaning: the jingly surface, and a hidden meaning. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality, hopefully to make it not only easy to remember, but untraceable by the lawmaker:

The One partridge in a pear tree
was Jesus Christ.

Two turtle doves

were the Old and New Testament,

Three French hens stood for
faith, hope and love.

Four calling birds

were the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.
The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law,
the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying
stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming
represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit:
Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation,
Contribution, Leadership and Mercy.

The Eight maids a-milking
were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the
Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness,
Goodness, Faithfulness,
Gentleness,
and Self control.

The ten lords a-leaping
were the Ten
Commandments.

The eleven pipers piping
stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolised the
twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

The 1829 Act granted full political and civil
liberties to Roman Catholics in Britain and
Ireland.



HYMNS FOR THE ROAD

If you MUST speed on the road during this Christmas season, at least sing these hymns loudly as you go:

at 45 mph....
"God Will Take Care of Me"

at 55 mph....
"Guide me, O Great Jehovah"

at 65 mph....
"Nearer My God to Thee"

at 75 mph....
"Nearer Still Nearer"

at 85 mph....
"This World is Not My Home"

at 95 mph....
"Lord, I'm Coming Home"

at 100 mph.... "Precious Memories"



To mark the International Year of the Family, Cowley Mothers' Union have clubbed together to buy the parish six rose bushes named 'Family Life'. Two have been planted in the garden of remembrance in St James' churchyard, two by the wall in St Luke's garden of rest and two will soon be planted in the small garden at the back of St Francis. The roses are bright yellow, so watch out for them next summer.

mothers union  Christian care for families worldwide

Christmas at Saint James

Sunday 19th December

6.30 pm Service of Lessons and Carols
followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies

Christmas Eve

4.00 pm Crib Service
11.00 pm The Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Family Eucharist



St Stephen's Day - Sunday December 26th

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Sung Eucharist

St John the Evangelist - Monday December 27th

9.30 am Eucharist

Holy Innocents - Tuesday December 28th

9.30 am Eucharist

New Year's Day - The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus

9.30 am Eucharist

Sunday 2nd January - The Epiphany

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Sung Eucharist
6.00 pm Evensong for the Feast of the Epiphany
followed by Wine and Nibbles

Stephen will be available to hear Confessions and take Holy Communion to the housebound and the sick by appointment

Christingle Service

Sunday 12th December

4 o'clock

St James and St Francis



This is the Children's Society's major annual fundraising event. All proceeds to the Society

Two snowmen were standing next to each other. One said to the other: "Can you smell carrots?"





Rosanne interviews Lorne Denny

The first time I saw Lorne he was sitting in St Francis church a few Saturdays ago, surrounded by children. He was telling them about the life of St Francis during the children's celebration of light which the Friends of St Francis and the Mother's Union held as an alternative to the spooks and witches of Halloween. My first impression of Lorne was 'Here is a good teller of tales and, I guess, a jolly good teacher'. Conversely his impression of me must have been a bit disconcerting, accosted as he was by a pushy grey-haired woman, who within two minutes of introducing herself was trying to fix a time and place to interview him for *The Chronicle*. To his enormous credit he agreed.

To journey through his early life reminds me of a visit I made two years ago to the lost gardens of Heligan. It is a magical place with quiet, secret pathways that occasionally open up to green lawns, with seats on which to rest. There are summer houses with fountains and flowers, vistas across beautiful hills, productive gardens with fruit and vegetables, an Italian garden full of life and colour and still huge shrubberies and shady woodland waiting to be 'found'. Lorne took me through a great many pathways from his birth in Rushden, Northants, to

Norfolk, to Wells in Somerset and then to a small Gloucestershire village, Meysey Hampton and all this before he was five years old. During those years his sister was born. The moves were due to his father's job in agricultural sales with the well-known firm Silcox. After a very brief pause at the village school he was sent to a little prep school in Cirencester where he spent five happy years. By then a baby brother had arrived and his father had taken a post with ICI in Bedford. His mother worked from home as his father's PA coping with all his paper work and later she trained to teach.

After one year at a local primary school in Bedford Lorne gained a scholarship to Bedford Modern School (founded in 1566), a minor public school, where he attended as a day boy. A family move to Macclesfield when he was twelve meant a further interruption to his education. He was a student at The King's School there until he was sixteen when he returned to spend his sixth form years back at Bedford Modern. Halfway through his secondary schooling he lost interest in the sciences and found a lifelong attachment to the greats of literature, including Shakespeare and Jane Austen. He studied French, German and English in the sixth form and was very involved in

school drama. He went on to read English Literature at Pembroke College, Oxford. His time at university he describes as 'three wonderful years'. At Oxford he became involved in debating, politics and journalism. He was made chair of the Fabian Society and Steward of the college dining club. All this and he still managed to get a respectable degree.

Although there was the option for further study he decided he needed a wider view, so together with five other graduates he moved to the City to be groomed at the Nat West to join their board. Just a brief 'rest in the sun' (to continue my analogy) this proved to be for Lorne as he found himself bored and lacking in motivation. So his next move was to a nine-month job selling legal text books in Foyle's Bookshop. After that he stayed in London and trained to teach English as a foreign language to adults. Throughout this time he had always been a church goer, from the little village church with his parents in Meysey Hampton, to a Methodist/Anglican Cub-Scout pack in Bedford. In his late teens he helped run a church youth group and at university he came to love the liturgy of college chapel services as well as doing a spot of 'church hopping' as he describes it. This continued during his time

in London even when he decided that teaching was the wider view for him. He did his post-graduate training at the Bloomsbury Institute of Education.

After qualification he taught for a year at a state comprehensive school in Bedfordshire, which filled him with serious misgivings about the comprehensive system so he left. In 1986 he applied for and secured a post at Magdalen College School as Head of Drama and English. He is still there and at last seems to have put down some fairly firm roots. One demanding aspect of his present post has been the production of many school plays. However since the majority of them have involved interpreting his beloved Shakespeare, he takes great pleasure from this.

One of his non-church friends jokingly asked, 'Why don't you become a parson?' The seed was sown even though it took several years before Lorne knew that his future lay as a priest. Whilst worshipping at St Barnabas, Jericho, he began a three year St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course. Subsequently he was ordained Deacon. Earlier this year he was pleased to be offered the opportunity to come to Cowley as our team curate. His time with us will, he says, broaden his experience and I thought '... And how!' He told me (unprompted) that he is already feeling at home at St Francis and is enjoying the challenge of getting to know everyone there. However I do feel that after spending time in a 'sunny glade' he will someday

be off to explore the woods that lay beyond.

How would you describe yourself as a small child?
More shy than outgoing- quite bookish-quite mischievous.

Have you any never-to-be-forgotten childhood memories?
Maybe two things - bedtime prayers with my mother and deep serious discussions on walks with my father.

Has God been part of your life since childhood?
In a roundabout way. I have very early memories of standing in the village church at Meysey Hampton correcting the grammar of the Lord's Prayer- 'who art in heaven' (not 'which') and 'on earth as it is in heaven' (not 'in').

RB- I remember doing that as a small child too!

What do you consider the best part of modern life?
In Britain affordable wine and the wonderful independence afforded by the motorcar.

What disappoints you about life in the 21st Century?
The excessive use and over dependence of the motorcar.

If you could make one sweeping change what would it be?
I suppose I would revive the parish church as the centre of the community.

How do you spend your leisure time?

Visiting friends in other countries whilst on holiday. Reading of course-I'm working through the novels of P G Woodhouse - I've rediscovered him.

What makes you laugh?
I love puns, the absurd and self-depreciation.

Do you have a hero or heroine, past or present?
I agree with the Radio 4 poll that the man of the millennium was William Shakespeare, also that the greatest Briton ever was Winston Churchill. Shakespeare shaped our modern national consciousness and Churchill preserved it.

Do you have ambitions for the future; say in ten years' time?
I don't think I can guess that. I am enjoying what I'm doing now, though one day I hope to be in full-time ministry.



Christmas

An azure sky,
All star bestrewn.
A lowly crib,
A hushed room.
An open door,
A hill afar,
Where little lambs
And shepherds are.
To such a world,
On such a night,
Came Jesus –
Little Lord of Light.
Queen Mary I

Christmas at Saint Francis

Sunday 19th December

10.30 am Parish Eucharist
& Junior Church Presentation

6.00 pm Service of Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve

4.00 pm Crib Service - *later time*

11.00 pm The Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

8.00 am Holy Eucharist

10.30 am Family Eucharist

St Stephen's Day - Sunday December 26th

8.00 am Holy Eucharist

10.30 am Sung Eucharist

Sunday January 2nd

8.00 am Holy Eucharist

10.30 am Sung Eucharist



Christmas - Good News!

We could all do with some good news, I imagine. Certainly the 'official' news on television and radio and in the papers is almost uniformly black. If it's not wars and terrorism it's murder and mayhem, and if it's not murder and mayhem then it's the latest health or dietary scare. It's a wonder we dare venture out of our houses sometimes.

Christmas, however, is absolutely meant to celebrate good news. I suppose the birth of most babies is just that for parents, families and friends. A midwife told me that there was no moment in her working life to equal the joy on the face of two young parents when they first hold their newborn son or daughter. Perhaps because we have to wait nine months for the arrival, perhaps because a birth is still a slightly risky and certainly painful experience, the actual moment of the infant's arrival is always special. Jesus made the point that even the pain of labour is forgotten by the mother in the joy of the birth of her child (John 16:21).

If all births are moments of celebration, then the one we mark at Christmas is doubly so. After all, it was an angel of the Lord who described the event as 'good news', and not just for the parents and family. This would be good news for everybody - 'all the people' (Luke 2:10). No one is outside the circle of celebration, because the birth of Jesus has changed history, changed the world, changed our lives.

The reason for this was also given by the same angelic messenger - the baby to be born would be the long-promised 'Messiah', God's chosen one, and, best of all, a 'Saviour'. Of course, only people in some kind of need or peril require a rescuer, a 'saviour'. But

Christmas Cards

There is a list of folks I know, all written in a book,
And every year at Christmas I go and take a look.
And that is when I realise that those names are a part
Not of the book they're written in but of my very heart.

Each name stands for someone
who has touched my life sometime.
And in that meeting they've become the 'rhythm of the
rhyme'.

I feel I am composed of each remembered name.
And while you may not be aware of feeling the same,
My life is so much better than it was before you came.

For once you have known someone the years cannot erase
The memory of a pleasant word or a friendly face.
So never think my Christmas cards are just a mere routine
Or names upon a list, forgotten in between.
For when I send a Christmas card that is addressed to you.
It is because I've known you for many years or a few.
In some way you had a part in shaping things I do.
So every year when Christmas comes, I realise anew,
One of the biggest gifts God can give is knowing folks like you.

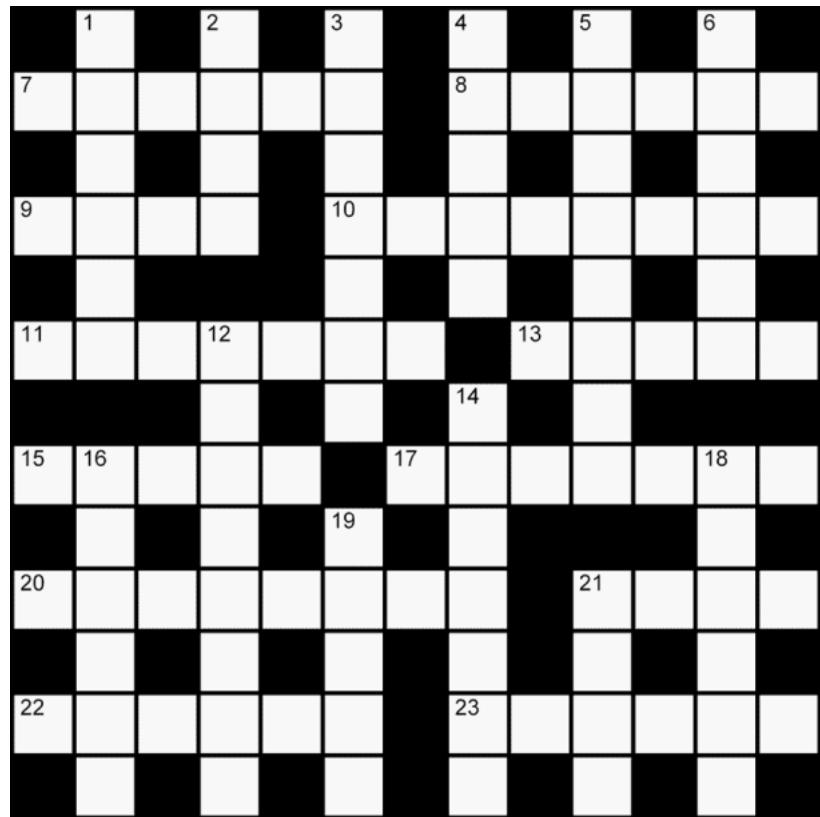
when they are, the saviour is very welcome!

A friend of mine fell off her horse and broke her leg in two places. She was lying by a gate in a field, half a mile from any road. A fellow-horse rider phoned for help, and within minutes the helicopter was landing beside her and the paramedics were strapping her leg and giving her a pain-killer before whisking her off to hospital. She certainly understood the significance of a saviour in a new way!

At Christmas, so can we. The world we live in and its residents need a saviour, someone to offer not endless questions and problems and challenges but some answers. At Bethlehem God's 'answer' was born. 'You are to call him "Jesus",' the angel told Joseph, 'for he will save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). Through this baby, and what he would bring about through his life, death and resurrection, the dire consequences of human sin would be reversed. That is the 'good news' of Christmas, which makes it truly an occasion to celebrate - whatever kind of news the world around is thrusting at us.

David Winter

December's Crossword



- Across
- 7 Outward or token appearance (6)
 - 8 The basic unit of money in Israel (6)
 - 9 A youthful attendant at official functions or ceremonies (4)
 - 10 A member of an ancient Jewish sect noted for strict obedience to traditions (8)
 - 11 100 years (7)
 - 13 The loose soft material that makes up a large part of the land surface (5)
 - 15 A prominent mountain, 11 miles west of the Sea of Galilee (5)
 - 17 Number of disciples sent forth by Jesus (7)
 - 20 An ancient seaport in north-western Israel (8)
 - 21 Address God (4)
 - 22 To separate grain from chaff (6)
 - 23 The fruit of an evergreen tree cultivated in the Mediterranean region (6)
- Down
- 1 A journey (6)
 - 2 Capital city of Italy (4)
 - 3 Make ready (7)
 - 4 Commonly encountered (5)
 - 5 Give entirely to a specific person (8)
 - 6 An arid region with little or no vegetation (6)
 - 12 Another name for family or clan (8)
 - 14 Northern boundary of the land of Canaan (7)
 - 16 Arid, an extensive region in the south-west of Asia (6)
 - 18 To go from one place to another (6)
 - 19 Dull orange (5)
 - 21 Two items of the same kind (4)

November's Solution



Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Sung Eucharist (<i>exc 2nd Sunday</i>) All Age Eucharist (<i>2nd Sunday</i>)
1.00 pm	Cowley Asian Christian Fellowship

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

10.30 am	Parish Eucharist <i>[Family Eucharist - 2nd Sunday of the month]</i>
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Mid-Week Services & Meetings

Monday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Tuesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	8.00 pm	St Francis Discussion Group – <i>4 Long Close</i>
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.10 am	Mothers and Toddlers – <i>St Francis</i>
	12.00 pm	St James Prayer Group – <i>13 Clive Road</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Thursday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	9.30 am	Eucharist - followed by coffee – <i>St James</i>
	11.00 am	St Francis Prayer Group
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Friday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	7.00 pm	Friday Club – <i>alt Fridays at St Francis</i>

Arrangements for Baptisms, Banns of Marriage, Weddings, Confessions and Home Communion can be made with any of the clergy.

Day Off

Stephen has Friday off; Except in emergency, please try and respect this day of rest. Lorne can be contacted in the evenings and at weekends.

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