

God is with us

Reindeers leaping across rooftops and Santas struggling up chimneys remind us that Christmas is fast approaching. The rush to complete our present buying and card writing keeps us busy at this dark and cold time of the year. Christmas provides a welcome midwinter break. It is time to put our problems aside and to enjoy ourselves with friends and families.

This year, probably no different from any other, will find those who have little to celebrate. It is nearly a year since the devastating Tsunami hit the coastlines of south-east Asia whilst bomb blasts caused mayhem in London in July. We recall the devastating floods around the Gulf states of the US and the appalling earthquake in Kashmir.

Can Christmas offer us a brief respite from the world's woes? Can we be justified in putting the world's problems to one side for just a few days? Yet we all know - come January, we have to pick up the pieces and continue our lives.

The Christian celebration of Christmas is the very opposite of escapism. For at the heart of Christmas is the entry of God himself into a violent world. Far from turning his back upon the world, our Creator God takes on

human form and shares in the anguish and the pain of human existence. Jesus comes among us, born in a stable, recognised by shepherds and worshipped by kings.

The God whom we worship is not distant in time or space. He is among us - Emmanuel - God with us.

The suffering we have witnessed in so many places and the pain which we have felt are not things we bear alone. God suffers with us; he shares our tears, and walks beside us in our agony.

The birth of Jesus offers hope. In a creation which we know to be flawed in so many ways, we look forward to that time when all things

will be made new.

*He is Alpha and Omega,
he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are,
that have been,
and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore!*

With my best wishes
at this Christmas time.



CHRISTMAS

Ministry of Healing

note earlier time of 7.00 pm

Healing Services:

Wednesday 7th December

St James Church

Thursday 5th January

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.

CONFIRMATION SERVICE - February 26th

Bishop Richard will be presiding at a service of Confirmation on Sunday 26th February at 10 o'clock in Saint James Church.

Beth and Stephen will leading a preparation group for youngsters (aged about 9 upwards) during January and February. If anyone from St Francis or St James Church is interested in joining this group, please speak with Beth or Stephen. Similarly if there are any adults who would like to be Confirmed at this service, please have a word with Stephen or Lorne.



TUESDAY LUNCH CLUB

Every Tuesday 12.30 pm

St James Church Centre

Soup, freshly made sandwiches, homemade cakes, hot and cold drinks - all at very modest prices.

Come along and enjoy the company.



A GOOD CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR YOUR EXTENDED FAMILY

Eric Green suggests a good way of giving your extended family a Christmas present – without bankrupting yourself!

If you have a lot of relatives, and struggle each Christmas to buy presents for them all, why not try the following instead?

Agree that instead of buying each other presents, you'll set aside a day, or an evening, or whatever, and spend that time with each other. Spend some money to go on an outing – enjoy a concert or a play or even just a walk together. Enjoy the pleasure of one another's company, a shared joy, and something worthwhile to remember. Make yourselves your Christmas presents to each other.

But what can we give to our God who already has everything? The shepherds in Luke 2 must have wondered what they should take as they hurried to the Saviour's birthplace. At that time all that the Baby Jesus needed was praise, worship and company. When they saw the Holy Child, they made known that the angels had advised them to come, v17.

At Christmas time, we're invited to God's house. There, within reach of all of us, is the finest Christmas present we can share, Jesus himself.

THE CHILD OF GLORY

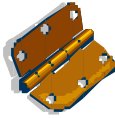
The Baby of joy,
Mary's Baby-boy,
Was born in the stall
The King of all;
To the waste he came
And suffered our blame;
Who to him are near
Are counted dear.

He saw with his eye
That in straits we lie;
Heav'n opened in love
Our head above:
Christ came to our view,
The Spirit so true,
His crown our defence

Drawing us hence.
O make our hope strong,
Make happiness long,
In might keep us here
Loyal and near,
Our Lamp thou alight,
With the virgins bright
Who sing the new song

In glory-throng.
*From Poems of the Western
Highlanders*

*The hinge of history is on
the door of a
Bethlehem
stable.*



R Sockman

The four stages of life

- 1) You believe in Santa Claus.
- 2) You don't believe in Santa Claus.
- 3) You are Santa Claus.
- 4) You look like Santa Claus.



Christmas at Saint James

Sunday 18th December

6.30 pm Service of Lessons and Carols
followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies
in the Church Centre

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 - Monday December 26th

9.30 am Eucharist

St John the Evangelist - Tuesday December 27th

12.00 pm Eucharist

Holy Innocents - Wednesday December 28th

9.30 am Eucharist

Sunday 1st January - New Year's Day

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Sung Eucharist

Sunday 8th 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
in the Church Centre

Christingle Service

Sunday 11th 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*

*Blessed are the peacemakers;
they will never be unemployed*





Rosanne interviews Maggie Giles

I suppose I'd better own up straight away that I have known Maggie for thirty-three years and count her among my friends. I first met her when I went for an interview for a teaching post at Donnington Middle School and I knew from the start that she is a 'people person'. By that I mean there is genuine warmth behind her smile and a willingness to meet people halfway. So it was a pleasure to interview her for the *Chronicle*.

A local girl who was born in a small house in Bath Street, St Clements, she like many of our readers began her education at S.S. Mary and John primary school at the age of four. She gave a shudder at the memory of some of her teachers, including Miss Seward and Miss Restell, who made no concessions for 'silly behaviour' even from the youngest infants. And Maggie was a chatterbox and a giggler – enough said! Her favourite lessons were story writing, needlework, music and country dancing but P.E. ?! Forget it!!

About this time her parents together with her grandparents moved to a house in Iffley Road, where Maggie has lived ever since. She remembers how the neighbours looked down their noses at the family from St Clements area. A person who despises snobbery, it was

almost six years before she, her brother and the rest of the family felt at home in the neighbourhood.

Meanwhile she moved on to Cowley St John secondary school where she settled down to her lessons and made many good friends some of whom she regularly meets socially. However it was during those childhood years that her close relationship with God began. She attended 8 a.m. communion every Sunday, be back in church for the 11 a.m. service, home for Sunday lunch, returning for Bible study at 2.30 p.m. and often round the day off with Evensong because her Granny loved to take her. By the way, all these journeys were on foot. Once she had joined the church choir at St Clements she and her fellow choristers would walk up to Cowley Road Hospital between communion and matins to sing hymns to the patients. Did all this church going mean any more than learning the order of services and the tunes of hundreds of hymns? Maggie soon put me right. 'I was always a religious girl', she told me 'And I have a very strong faith'

One of the delights of her young life was learning to play the piano. She loved Mrs Quarterman, her teacher, a delightful lady. It was at her house that Maggie met a number of Christian

missionaries, who lodged there when visiting Oxford for conferences, training and so on. When she was twelve Mrs Quarterman offered her the opportunity to earn extra pocket money by doing light cleaning and other household jobs. She also taught Maggie to cook.

At fourteen she left school and went to work at Mowbrays in Oxford using her sewing skills to put the finishing stitches to clerical collars. Later she moved to their hand finished greetings cards department. Still much influenced by her piano teacher she accompanied her to the Salvation Army Citadel, where the good lady was a speaker. There was a young cornet player in the band who caught our teenager's eye. Stan, for that was his name was on the Balliol Boy's Club committee and when Maggie found herself on the committee of the Holy Trinity (St Ebbes) Girls Club soon after, joint social events were organised. Their relationship began and it didn't take long for Stan to offer to walk her home, (almost the whole length of the Iffley Road and back again!). After five years of courtship, at the age of 21, Maggie was married. They lived with her mum and dad and when World War II began Stan joined the army. He was posted to Ireland, a sad parting for them as it was for so many young couples.

Just after the war Maggie contracted tuberculosis. At the outset of her illness she was only given 2 to 3 days to live. In the Osler isolation hospital she spent nine anxious months, during which time she was told that it would be too dangerous for her to have a baby. It took three years before the infection cleared and then she and Stan took the brave decision to start a family. Baby Robert was joined two years later by a daughter, Sheila. Maggie's parents were getting older by then so she cared for them at the same time as bringing up her young family in the same house in the Iffley Road.

When he was old enough Robert joined the scouts and first Stan and then Maggie became involved in supporting their local group. He took on the treasurer's job and later made scout leader. Maggie became a dab hand at jumble sales as well as cooking and generally mothering the boys at camp. It was this trait in her character which so endeared her to the children of Donnington School where she worked as a dinner lady. Her duties included patrolling the playground after lunch. Many a child's hand was pulled into hers, many a confidence told to her, many a delicate subject discussed.

Her sense of the ridiculous helped my colleagues and me through many an exhausting after schoolwork session as she swept in with her mop and dusters to clean our classrooms. To say nothing of her being the back of a horse or a robin in a wood in our school pantomimes. She misses

it all very much now that she has retired, especially the children. However she has an active life especially since she 'found' St Francis as her place of worship. She enjoys singing as much as ever and the fun she had in Thelma Telling's small choir. Both Stan and her daughter are in need of nursing care, but never one to moan she gets on with life taking an active role in the Florence Park Community Centre, enjoying her grandchildren, Adam, 21, and Sophie, 16, and keeping in touch with her many friends. Maggie wears her heart on her sleeve and I rather think that God likes it that way.

How would you describe yourself as a small child?

Very happy. We did a lot of things as a family. I loved playing the old street games.

Have you any childhood memories you'd like to share with us?

The one thing that thrilled me was when I won the donkey from the school Christmas crib. It went to the child who made up the best prayer for Christmas.

Has God been part of your life since childhood?

Yes, very much so.

What do you consider to be the best part of life today?

The freedom that modern children get.

What disappoints you about modern society?

People not trusting each other.

If you could change something in a spectacular

way what would it be?

I'd find a complete cure for cancer.

How do you spend your leisure time?

Knitting blankets for rescued dogs at Battersea Dog's Home and knitting doll's clothes for any little child who'd like some.

What makes you laugh?

People's funny ways, especially my own.

Do you have a hero or heroine past or present?

Father John (Tomlinson) because he is a lovely man, with such a great character.

Do you have any ambitions for the future?

To see my grandchildren as happily married as Stan and me and to be in reasonably good health.



At a rehearsal for a Sunday school Christmas tableau, the teacher carefully lined up four little 'cherubs'. Each carried a huge cut-out letter. As they stood side by side, the letters would spell out "STAR". A slight mix-up occurred, and those present in the church auditorium nearly fell out of their pews as the four little performers took their places – in reverse.



Christmas at Saint Francis

Sunday 18th December

10.30 am Parish Eucharist
6.00 pm Service of Lessons
and Carols

Christmas Eve

4.00 pm Crib Service
11.00 pm The Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

10.30 am Family Eucharist

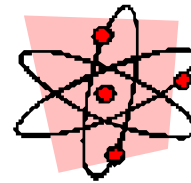
Sunday 1st January

10.30 am Sung Eucharist



A professor was lecturing his physics class. "If molecules can be split into atoms and the atoms split into electrons, can the electrons be broken down any further?"

"I'm not certain," replied one of the his pupils, "But a sure way to find out would be to mail some of them in a Christmas package marked 'fragile'"



From White House To Log Cabin - That's What Jesus Did

James A Garfield was the 20th President of the United States of America. He was born into a poor family who lived in a log cabin in Orange, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, in November 1831. His father, Abram Garfield, had an ancestry that was descended from the Pilgrim Fathers. He died at the age of thirty-three, leaving his wife Eliza with five children of whom James was the youngest. James went to school at the age of three and went on to an Academy when he was 18. He was a diligent student who went on to Williams College in 1854 and graduated with first-class honours. For the next twenty-five years he displayed outstanding talent as a college president, a senator and a major general in the army. He won the Presidential election and was inaugurated as America's 20th President on March 4 1881. On July 2 that year he was mortally wounded by an assassin's bullet and died on September 19.

That, in one short paragraph, is a summary biography of James A Garfield. The full story is told by William Thayer in his book, *From Log Cabin to White House*. It is a famous biography of the fatherless boy who went on from humble beginnings to hold the highest office in the United States of America. It began in a log cabin in the wilderness of Ohio and it ended in the White House in Washington.

At this Christmas season here is a familiar story that's entitled *From White House to Log Cabin*. It is the story of Jesus Christ. Forever with the Father in eternal glory, he left it all and entered our world in a cattle shed in Bethlehem, long, long ago. He who made the worlds was born into ours in a manger. He who shared the ineffable glory of the eternal Trinity 'laid it aside' and wrapped himself in human flesh. In Jesus, God became man and came into this world by the back door.

In the moving words of George MacDonald, the Christmas story is about 'a little baby thing that made a woman cry.' But that baby was God incarnate. He split the whole of human history with his coming so that now we speak of BC and AD. He exchanged the glory of heaven for a manger, a cross and finally an empty tomb. His biography is indeed – from White House to Log Cabin. He became poor to make many rich! He embraced death to give us life! He left heaven to take us back there with him! At this glorious Advent time, let us worship the incarnate Saviour.

Charles Wesley put it so well.

Born that man no more may die

Born to raise the sons of earth

Born to give them second birth.

*Dr Herbert McGonigle, Senior Lecturer in Historical
Theology & Church History, Nazarene Theological College,
Manchester.*

JEWISH FATHERS

A Jewish father was troubled by the way his son turned out, and went to see his Rabbi about it. "I brought him up in the faith, gave him a very expensive bar mitzvah, cost me a fortune to educate him. Then he tells me last week he has decided to be a Christian! Rabbi, where did I go wrong?"

"Funny you should come to me," said the Rabbi. "Like you I, too, brought my boy up in the faith, put him through University, cost me a fortune, then one day he, too, tells me he has decided to become a Christian."

"What did you do?" asked the father.

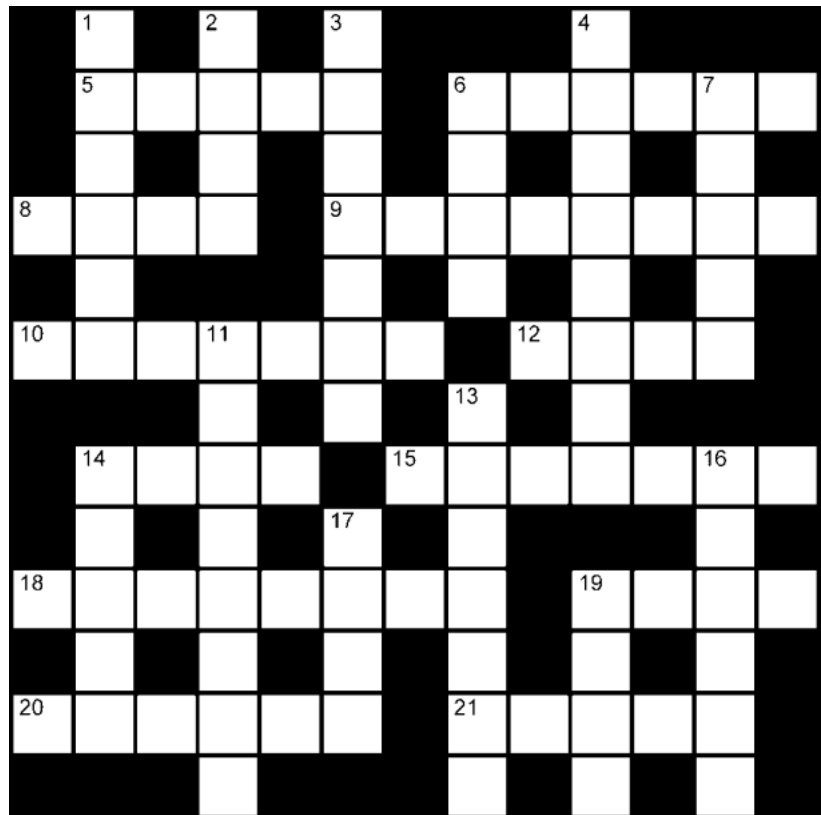
"I turned to God for the answer" replied the Rabbi.

"And what did he say?" pressed the father.

"God said, 'Funny you should come to me...'"



December's Crossword



Across

- 5 Love intensely (5)
- 6 Men's hairdresser (6)
- 8 Afforded (4)
- 9 Chief city of Mysia, in Asia Minor. One of the seven churches in Revelation (8)
- 10 Fall (7)
- 12 Metropolis (4)
- 14 Flank (4)
- 15 Trim (7)
- 18 Belief system (8)
- 19 Experienced (4)
- 20 Begrudge (6)
- 21 An empty area (5)

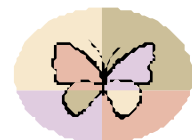
Down

- 1 Official residence of an exalted person (6)
- 2 Where you live (4)
- 3 Snake (7)
- 4 Bringing into existence (8)
- 6 Birthplace of Jesus (4)
- 7 A very dark black (5)
- 11 Think about carefully (8)
- 13 Rein (7)
- 14 What place (5)
- 16 Soft white precious metal (6)
- 17 Lean (4)
- 19 Plant fibre that is made into thread (4)

November's Solution



A man walks into a dentist's surgery and says,
 "Excuse me, can you help me. I think I'm a moth."
 Dentist: "You don't need a dentist. You need a psychiatrist."
 Man: "Yes, I know."
 Dentist: "So why did you come in here?"
 Man: "The light was on..."



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>
	10.00 am	Toddler Group – <i>St Francis</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Tuesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Service – <i>St Francis</i>
	12.00 pm	Eucharist - <i>St James</i>
	12.30 pm	Lunch Club - <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Thursday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	11.00 am	St Francis Prayer Group
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	7.00 pm	Eucharist - <i>St Francis</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>
Saturday	9.15 am	Morning Prayer & Breakfast - <i>St Francis</i>

Arrangements for Baptisms, Banns of Marriage, Weddings, Confessions and Home Communions 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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