

# **ST. MICHAEL'S AND ST. WILFRID'S**

## **ARLEY**

Meeting Needs, Bringing Hope,  
Sharing Love



**Holy Night**

**December 2020 Newsletter**

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Rev John's Jottings – A Different Christmas Due to Covid19.

Christmas will be different than any we have had before. This year, there may well be more focus on relationships that matter and less on the material quest for spending, which can so easily dominate the reason for the season. More than ever, how many have been searching for 'Peace, good news and goodwill to all people on earth', which is all about the real meaning of Christmas. In actual fact, good news, good will and peace has nothing to do with material things. If you could have anything in the world, what would it be? Surprisingly most people, whether rich or poor, young or old, male or female desire such things as inner peace, contentment, making sense of personal suffering and knowing the secret of happiness. Of the many popular Christmas carols is 'Silent Night': Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright 'Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant so tender and mild, Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace. As we make rather limited plans to journey to loved ones this holiday season, think about your faith journey as well. Where has your faith been lately? And where do you want it to go? In this advent season, God still bids us to "Follow in the Saviour's footsteps." When we respond with our hearts, we might just find ourselves on the paths of calm, light, love, joy and peace. We might just hear that 'Still small voice of God' amidst the turmoil and uncertainty of Covid19. With all good wishes as you prepare for the run up to Christmas,

Rev John

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It isn't the holly, it isn't the snow,  
It isn't the tree nor the firelight's glow,  
It's the warmth that comes to the hearts of men  
When Christmas spirit returns again.

**Praying during December:** Lord turn all broken hearts to you,

1	Praying for Rev.John and Frances, keep them well and safe and uphold them in their ministry work around our Parishes Lord
2	Keep our community and church families strong in their faith
3	Bring peace and calmness into all our lives especially this year
4	Pray for those who are in need of physical and emotional healing
5	Pray you will love others with the same love that God has for you
6	Pray for anyone who feels afraid and has uncertainty in their life
7	Gracious God open our eyes to the needs of those around us
8	Thank you Lord that you understand every emotion we experience
9	Lord God, help renew our minds and listen to Your voice
10	Pray for people who are struggling with busy and stressful lives
11	Thank you God, - Your strength will sustain us when we are weak
12	Pray for any battles you may be facing in your life
13	Thank you God for all your blessings & benefits You have given us
14	Lord, bless all parents, children and babies and watch over them
15	Gracious God, comfort all experiencing grief and loss at this time
16	God,You are a place of safety when problems are overwhelming
17	I give you thanks for our wonderful friends, family & neighbours
18	In the excitement of Christmas – let's not forget You our Saviour
19	God help us to see the goodness in life, you're always displaying
20	Creator God, thank you for the beauty and wonder of this world
21	I am grateful God that I can count on You to walk alongside me
22	Compassionate God, Encourage me to help others in your name
23	Abba Father, thank you for your kindness and faithfulness always
24	Let us show our love for each other by our actions.
25	O Holy Child – Jesus - born to us on this Christmas Day
26	Bless all families at this special time-bring peace & understanding
27	Lord, Bless all who live alone and the lonely – bring them comfort
28	Praying for all in Hospital at this time and the Dr's and Nurses
29	Gracious Lord we continue to pray that covid19 will be beaten
30	Let us pray for our pets who are such good companions
31	May 2021 bring you all Good Health and Happiness to enjoy

### Aunt Betty's Way:

When I was young, whenever my doting Aunt Betty visited, it felt like Christmas. She'd bring Star Wars toys and slip me cash on the way out of the door. Whenever I stayed with her, she filled the freezer with ice-cream and never cooked vegetables. She had a few rules and let me stay up late. My aunt was marvellous, reflecting God's generosity, However, to grow up healthily, I needed more than only my Aunt Betty's way. I also needed my parents to place expectations on me and my behaviour, and hold me to them.

God asks more of me than Aunt Betty. While He floods us with relentless love, a love that never wavers even when we resist or run away, He does expect something of us. When God instructed Israel how to live, He provided Ten Commandments, not ten suggestions(Exodus 20.v1 – 17) Aware of our deception, God offers clear expectations: 'we're to love God and carry out his commands'.

(1 John:5:2)

Thankfully, 'God's commands are not burdensome'(v3) By the Holy Spirit's power, we can live them out as we experience God's love and joy. His love for us is unceasing. But the Scriptures offer a question to help us know if we love God in return: are we obeying His commands as the Spirit guides us? We can say we love God, but what we do in His strength tells the real story.

*God, I say I love You, but it's hard to love. It's hard to obey.  
Help me see the truth and to love You with my actions.*

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Long, long ago in a land far away,  
There came the dawn of the first Christmas Day,  
And each year we see the promise reborn  
That God gave the world on that first Christmas morn,  
When the angels sang - of peace on earth  
And told men of the Christ child's birth.  
For Christmas is more than a beautiful story –  
It's the promise of life and eternal glory.

## Joy to the World:

Every Christmas we decorate our home with nativity scenes from other places in the world. We have a German one, and another fashioned from olive wood from Bethlehem. Our family favourite is a whimsical entry from Africa, instead of the more traditional sheep and camels, a hippopotamus grazes contently at the baby Jesus. The unique cultural perspective brought to life in these nativity scenes warms my heart as I ponder each beautiful reminder that Jesus' birth was not just for one nation or culture. It's good news for the whole earth, a reason for people from every country and ethnicity to rejoice.

The little baby depicted in each of our nativity scenes revealed this truth of God's heart for the entire world. As John wrote in relation to Christ's conversation with an inquisitive Pharisee named Nicodemus, 'For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'.(John 3:16) The gift of Jesus is good news for everyone. No matter where on earth you call home, Jesus' birth is God's offer of love and peace to you. And all who find new life in Christ, 'from every tribe and language and people and nation' will one day celebrate God's glory forever and ever.(Revelation 5:9) *Father, thank you for providing salvation through the gift of Your Son.*

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Two thousand years ago, there were no earthly plans for celebrating Jesus' birth. Quietly and unannounced, Joseph and Mary entered Bethlehem and searched for a place to spend the night. It was a busy time in the Judean village, but the excitement had nothing to do with the upcoming birth. The crowds had gathered to take part in a census. They didn't know that Mary was about to deliver the Saviour. As the year 2000 approached the story had changed. There were serious discussions going on about how Bethlehem could get ready for the estimated 4 million tourists who would converge on the Israeli city during Christmas 2000. What a contrast to that first Christmas! We can make all the plans we want to, but the best way to celebrate Jesus' Birthday is by trusting Him as our Saviour.

(Take time to read Luke 1.26-38 and Luke 2.1 – 20. John3.1-21)

CHILDREN'S COLOURING PAGEPAGE



### Quiet Corner:

Christmas is a glorious season of the year. It is also a busy time for most of us. It is my hope and prayer that we may not become so caught up in the pressures of the season that we place our emphasis on the wrong things and miss the simple joys of commemorating the birth of the Holy One of Bethlehem. Finding the real joy of Christmas comes not in the hurrying and the scurrying to get more done. We find the real joy of Christmas when we make the Saviour the focus of the season. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, He came forth from heaven to live on earth as mortal man and to establish the kingdom of God. His glorious gospel reshaped the thinking of the world. He lived for us, and He died for us. What can we, in return, give to Him? I love the words penned by the English poet Christina Rossetti:

What can I give Him,  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd,  
I would bring a lamb.  
If I were a Wise Man,  
I would do my part,  
Yet what I can I give Him?  
Give my heart.

Our celebration of Christmas should be a reflection of the love and selflessness taught by the Saviour. Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit. We feel more kindly one to another. We reach out in love to help those less fortunate. Our hearts are softened. Enemies are forgiven, friends remembered, and God obeyed.. To catch the real meaning of the spirit of Christmas, we need only drop the last syllable, and it becomes the Spirit of Christ.

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To be glad of life because it gives you the chance to love and work, to play and look up to the stars; to be satisfied with your possessions, but not contented with yourself until you have made the best of them, to despise nothing in the world except falsehood and meanness, and to fear nothing except cowardice. Accept kindness of the heart and the gentleness of manners, try to spend as much time as you can, body and spirit, in God's out of doors – these are guideposts on the footpath to peace.

## Children 's Corner:

### **Recognising Jesus**

One of my favourite Christmas stories is about the old shoe cobbler who dreamed one Christmas Eve that Jesus would come to visit him the next day. The dream was so real that he was convinced it would come true.

So the next morning he got up and went out and cut green boughs and decorated his little cobbler shop and got it all ready for Jesus to come and visit

He was so sure that Jesus was going to come that he just sat down and waited for him.

The hours passed and Jesus didn't come. But an old man came. He came inside for a moment to get warm out of the winter cold. As the cobbler talked with him he noticed the holes in the old man's shoes, so he reached up on the shelf and got him a new pair of shoes. He made sure they fit and that his socks were dry and sent him on his way.

Still he waited. But Jesus didn't come. An old woman came. A woman who hadn't had a decent meal in two days. They sat and visited for a while, and then he prepared some food for her to eat. He gave her a nourishing meal and sent her on her way. Then he sat down again to wait for Jesus. But Jesus still didn't come.

Then he heard a little boy crying out in front of his shop. He went out and talked with the boy, and discovered that the boy had been separated from his parents and didn't know how to get home. So he put on his coat, took the boy by the hand and led him home.

When he came back to his little shoe shop it was almost dark and the streets were emptied of people. And then in a moment of despair he lifted his voice to heaven and said, "Oh Lord Jesus, why didn't you come?"

And then in a moment of silence he seemed to hear a voice saying, "Oh shoe cobbler, lift up your heart. I kept my word. Three times I knocked at your friendly door. Three times my shadow fell across your floor. I was the man with the bruised feet. I was the woman you gave to eat. I was the boy on the homeless street."

Jesus had come. The cobbler just didn't realise it.



## December 26<sup>th</sup>. St. Stephen:

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was a Greek speaking Jew, chosen by the apostles to be one of seven men who would look after the needs of widows, who tended to be neglected in the daily distribution of charity. Stephen, 'full of grace and power,' as the Acts of Apostles describes him, did many great wonders, so that his enemies amongst his former associates plotted to bring about his death. They accused him of planning to destroy the Jewish Temple.

When Stephen was called before the Jewish Council to defend himself, his speech was one of great provocation. He tried to show how always in the past the people had turned against those who sent by God, just as finally they killed Jesus. 'Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?' asked Stephen. 'They killed those who announced the coming of the 'Righteous One'.

Now you have betrayed and murdered him.' He accused his hearers of always resisting the Holy Spirit. They grew so angry against him that they threw him out of the city, especially when they heard him cry that he saw the heavens opened 'and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Then they stoned Stephen to death. Holding the coats of those who threw the stones was a man from Tarsus named Saul.

This was the future St. Paul, still at this time one of the most dangerous enemies of the Christians. As they were stoning Stephen he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'. He knelt down and said, just as he died, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them. Devout men buried Stephen and wept over him. Nearly 4 centuries later, in the year 415, his relics are said to have been found again at Paphargamala.

Christmas Carol – Good King Wenceslas – depicts St. Stephen

Christmas Film: There is one film that surfaces every year around Christmas time, in fact Christmas would not be Christmas without a showing of Charles Dickens Scrooge, it has been remade many times and rebranded as a Christmas Carol but the definitive must be the 1951 one starring Alistair Simms.

In Victorian times, when Dickens was writing, poor children would often be sent to live in workhouses. In 1861, 35,000 children under 12 lived and worked in workhouses in Britain. Living conditions there were unpleasant and the work was tough such as 'picking out' old ropes. Discipline was harsh and punishments included whipping. Food was basic and barely enough to sustain the children.

The main character in the story is Ebenezer Scrooge. At first we see his miserliness in contrast with his humble clerk, Bob Cratchit, and his cheerful nephew, Fred. In a dream he is visited by the ghost of his old business partner, Jacob Marley, who warns Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits.

The Ghost of Christmas Present, the Ghost of Christmas Past and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come all show Scrooge scenes that ultimately bring about his change of character.

What did Dickens want to change? Dickens was particularly concerned with the health, treatment and well-being of children, always among the most vulnerable members of any society. ... Ragged schools were charity institutions created to provide at least a rudimentary education for destitute children. A Christmas Carol is more than a timeless Christmas story. Its author hoped that its lessons would be remembered all through the year.

The publication of A Christmas Carol in 1843 ensured that Charles Dickens' name would forever be linked with Christmas. ... And that's why Dickens wrote it.

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay;  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

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The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes:  
I love You, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky  
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

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Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask You to stay  
close by me forever and love me I pray;  
bless all the dear children in Your tender care,  
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there

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With Love to you all from Your Church Family

## Another true story from our friend Anne about Whitacre.

Not much of the pig was wasted, we all enjoyed eating the pigs trotters which we ate boiled and drenched in vinegar. Dad made brawn with pigs cheek and stewing meat pressed into a mould. I think the bacon and ham must have tasted so much better then because it was dry salted. It didn't leave a white scum on the pan as bacon does today. I can visualise my Dad now sharpening his knives on the big steel and slicing thick slices of bacon from the side which hung from the ceiling.

I didn't like pig killing day. We children were shut in the house until the deed was done. Dad got a humane killer so that the pig was stunned before it was actually killed. The humane killer was made use of by my mum one day when Dad was overseas. She was in the kitchen, looked up and saw a German prisoner of war standing there. She was scared out of her wits and got the gun from the cupboard and placed it on the table where he could see it.

The poor fellow only wanted a light for his cigarette. Back to the pig killing. After the animal was well and truly dead it was either scaled or bux singed to get the bristles off. Pig killing was quite an occasion with three or four men involved in it. Oscar Hastley said that some people drank the pigs blood but I never saw anyone do that. What made it worse for us was that we knew the pigs by name, they were our friends, probably the same morning we had scratched their backs.

Rabbits were also a source of food – not only wild ones. I once had a large white rabbit that went missing when I went to feed it. Dad said he'd probably run away, but on Sunday we had roast rabbit, and a white rabbit skin appeared by the bed after a time.

When meat was really short Dad would kill one of the Billy goat kids. I must admit I wasn't very fond of them, they were keen on charging and butting me as I crossed the yard. The meat was just like mutton. Grandma McNair came from Barnsley for a holiday and Mum cooked her a nice dinner. She said she hadn't tasted such nice mutton chops since before the war. When she was told what she'd eaten she went outside to be sick.

When wartime foods are mentioned people always talked about dried eggs and turn their noses up. My Auntie Jean made lovely omelettes with dried eggs and they were perfectly adequate for cakes.

Auntie Mary Barber made 'mock goose', this consisted of a layer of sausage meat followed by a layer of sage and onion stuffing, then a layer of sliced apple and topped with mashed potato.

Where the 'goose' came in I can't imagine. Mum had a recipe for a type of fudge. It was made with condensed milk, cocoa powder with National Dried Milk. The mixture was shaped into balls and rolled more in dried milk. When my children were on baby milk I tried to make some of these but they didn't taste the same.

Mother also made vanilla slices with two cream crackers sandwiched together with thick custard and topped with a thin layer of icing. I've eaten bananas and custard made with mashed parsnips flavoured with banana essence.

One of our favourite puddings was a spoonful of jam with the top of the milk poured over it. Some of the women were very skilled at preserving fruit and vegetables, needless to say my mother was not one of these, but Auntie Mary bottled all sorts of fruit.

When we visited I loved to look inside her corner cupboard to see the rows of bottled plums, gooseberries and other kinds of fruit and guess which were likely to be offered with evaporated milk for our tea.

*Thank you Anne for our trip down memory lane. Maureen x*

## ARLEY: Memories by Owen Stain.

The colliery produced its own electricity for its own use and later installed in the houses. The only snag it was a 25 cycles supply not 50 cycles as it is today – so the lights were always flickering. Also this caused problems later on when washing machines etc. became available – if one could afford one. On ordering you had to state that you came from Arley and it was a 25 cycle supply because the motor had to be changed to suit the supply, mostly 50 cycles had been selected countrywide. I believe, I am right in saying that a Shilling a week was charged was charged for the electricity to the houses, this being stopped out of the mens' wages, plus so much a unit with the meter being read every 3 months. The electricity supply was eventually changed over to the grid in the late 40's and early 50's. This meant that every motor transformer overload coils etc. being changed- household appliances as well – a major operation as you can well imagine. In the pit this was done a district as a time- preparing a week a so before then all systems go for the changeover at the week end I don't think a cobble of coal was lost during these operations which was a major feat as at this time coal was such a valuable commodity. All this was after the pits were nationalised in 1947. Prior to nationalisation the Pit Head Baths were built. What a boon this was for the miners themselves but also the women folk – just imagine no need to keep copper on all day and dirty pit clothes hanging about, no tin bath to keep dragging in and out – this probably only used once a week for the family bath. Again I think I'm right in saying 8d a week was charged for the use of the baths, this again being stopped out of the mens' wages – male members of the families could use them by paying the 8d but only of course at the week ends or slack periods when the work force wasn't using them. What a job these Miners had. This was bought home and made one realise when you were asked to wash the next mans back – scarred from top to bottom – but never a moan. How pleased I am now things below ground are much easier and safer – but still no picnic. (To be continued in January edition)

## December Recipe: RIPON SPICE CAKE:

### Ingredients:

110gms (4oz) salted butter  
75gms (3oz) soft dark brown sugar  
2 teaspns mixed spice  
2 medium eggs - beaten  
200gms(7oz) plain flour  
1.1/2 teaspns baking powder  
300gms (10.1/2oz) mixed dried fruit and peel  
50gms(2oz) glace cherries – quartered  
25gms(1oz) ground almonds  
75ml(3 fl oz) milk.

### Method:

Preheat oven to 170degC./ 150C fan oven. Gasmark 3  
1lb Loaf tin, greased and bottom lined with greaseproof paper cut to fit.  
Cream together butter, sugar and spice until pale and fluffy  
add the eggs gradually;  
Toss the dried fruit and glace' cherries in the flour and stir into the mixture, followed by the ground almonds.  
Stir in the milk gradually and mix well.  
Bake for around 50 minutes to an hour or until a skewer inserted come out clean.  
Cover the cake with foil for the last 20mins or so as necessary  
Serve with Wensleydale Cheese!

Enjoy!

('Do you have a favourite wine, Amos?' 'Aye, Ah don't like Brussel sprouts'..... )

**What kind of bike does  
Santa Claus ride?**



©TheHolidaySpot.com

**A Holly Davidson.**



Christmas message means to each of us as individuals.

Christmas is for love. It is for joy, for giving and sharing, for laughter, for reuniting with family and friends, for tinsel and brightly covered packages. But, mostly Christmas is for love. I had not believed this until a small elfin like pupil with wide innocent eyes and soft rosy cheeks gave me a wondrous gift one Christmas. Matthew was a 10 year old orphan who lived with his aunt, a bitter, middle aged woman greatly annoyed with the burden of caring for her dead sister's son. She never failed to remind young Matthew, if it hadn't been for her generosity, he would be a vagrant, homeless waif. Still, with all the scolding and chilliness at home, he was a sweet and gentle child. I had not noticed Matthew particularly until he began staying after class each day [at the risk of arousing his aunt's anger so I learned later] to help me straighten up the room. We did this quietly and comfortably, not speaking much, but enjoying the solitude of that hour of the day. When we did talk, Matthew spoke mostly of his mother. Though he was quite young when she died, he remembered a kind, gentle, loving woman who always spent time with him. As Christmas drew near however, Matthew failed to stay after school each day. I looked forward to his coming, and when the days passed and he continued to scamper hurriedly from the room after class, I stopped him one afternoon and asked him why he no longer helped me in the room. I told him how I had missed him, and his large brown eyes lit up eagerly as he replied, 'Did you really miss me?' I explained how he had been my best helper, 'I was making you a surprise,' he whispered confidentially. 'It's for Christmas.' With that, he became embarrassed and dashed from the room. He didn't stay after school any more after that. Finally came the last school day before Christmas. Matthew crept slowly into the room late that afternoon with his hands concealing something behind his back. 'I have your present,' he said timidly when I looked up. 'I hope you like it.' He held out his hands, and there lying in his small palms was a tiny wooden box. 'It's beautiful, Matthew. Is there something in it?' I asked opening the top to look inside. 'Oh you can't see what's in it,' he replied, 'and you can't touch it, or taste it or feel it, but mother always said it makes you feel good all the time, warm on cold nights and safe when you're all alone.' I gazed into the empty box. 'What is it, Matthew' I asked gently, 'that will make me feel so good?' 'It's love,' he whispered softly, 'and mother always said it's best when you give it away.' He turned and quietly left the room. So now I keep a small box crudely made of scraps of wood on the piano in my living room and only smile when inquiring friends raise quizzical eyebrows when I explain to them there is love in it. Yes, Christmas is for gaiety, mirth, song, and for good and wondrous gifts. But mostly, Christmas is for love.

Little Quips:

While addressing the crowd at Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, the distinguished Methodist Minister Lord Soper was interrupted by a heckler who kept shouting: "What about flying saucers?" Finally Lord Soper turned to him and, much to the delight of his audience, silenced him with; "I cannot deal with your domestic difficulties now."

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The choir stalls in church sit below the eye level of the congregation. Running across the entire front of the church is a low, velvet draped railing. Several of the more creative members discovered after finishing the anthem they could then buy fresh buns round the corner and return to the morning service undetected. One Sunday, an elderly, distinguished – looking bass singer made a successful exit. On the return trip, however, he realised that in order to reach his seat, he would have to crawl back carrying the bag of buns between his teeth. It wasn't until he was half way across that he noticed the laughter spreading throughout the congregation. He was on the wrong side of the railing.

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There are 3 ways you can get to the top of a tree:

- 1) Sit on an acorn .2)Make friends with a bird. 3) Climb it.

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It was the day after Christmas at St Peter and St Paul's church in Borden, Kent, England. Father John, the vicar, was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures. Immediately, Father John's thoughts turned to calling in the local policeman but as he was about to do so, he saw little Nathan with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus. Father John approached Nathan and asked him, 'Well, Nathan, where did you get the little infant?' Nathan looked up, smiled and replied, 'I took him from the church.' 'And why did you take him?' With a sheepish grin, Nathan said, 'Well, Father John, about a week before Christmas I prayed to Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it.'

# Christmas Word Find

G C P M E H E F F N Y Y A S E  
V F I O G K N O C Y R R I L B  
Z H S J Z X U H E G A B Z N B  
H A T I D U R X S Z M E I P E  
R P L R S I L E N T N I G H T  
R K O Q S N E M E S I W A J H  
Y L X T Y Z S W C Z S P E P L  
M I M F H F N P N S J V E K E  
J A B T T B A R I O R S X Z H  
S A I Y L Y T E K V O F L W E  
H A Y E Y T I G N J I O E E M  
F A M K R H V N A E V U G P E  
M A A N W A I A R S A S N O E  
C I H O T C T M F U S O A H F  
D J E D K Q Y S V S W T E K Q

JESUS

MARY

JOSEPH

WISEMEN

MANGER

NATIVITY

BETHEHEM

CAMEL

DONKEY

STAR

HAY

ANGEL

FAITH

HOPE

FRANKINCENSE

MYRRH

SILENTNIGHT

LORD

SAVIOR

CHRISTMAS



## CHRISTMAS PRAYER:

Living God,

May the worship we have shared this Christmas  
lead to acts of service which transform people's lives;

May the carols we have sung this Christmas  
help others to sing, even in their sadness;

May the gifts we have exchanged this Christmas  
Deepen our spirit of giving throughout the year;

May the candles we have lit this Christmas  
remind us that you intend no-one to live in darkness;

May the new people we have met this Christmas  
remind us that we meet you in our neighbours;

May the gathering together of family and friends this  
Christmas  
make us appreciate anew the gift of loved ones;

May the stories we have told again this Christmas  
be good news of great joy to us and all people  
on our lips and in our lives;

May the ways you have come close to us this Christmas  
not be forgotten  
but, hidden in our memories  
be a rich resource  
to lift us when times are painful  
and humble us when things go well,  
for You are our life, our light and our salvation  
this season and always,  
because of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

## The Year Ahead

Don't be afraid of the year  
Don't be afraid to begin,  
Just open your mind and open your heart,  
Let Love and Hope enter in.  
Don't be afraid to let go,  
Saying 'Goodbye' to the past,  
Seek for a rainbow and search for a star  
And keep a few dreams, hold them fast.  
Don't be afraid to be glad,  
Tears are not only for sorrow,  
Welcome the future and step through the year –  
Look for the sunshine tomorrow.

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May God bless you all this Christmas.  
During this time of lockdown let us pray to our Lord  
who knows our weaknesses, tiredness and struggles  
and whose steadfast love endures forever

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## What is Christmas?

Is it just a day at the end of the year –  
A season of joy, merrymaking and cheer?  
Is it people and presents and glittering trees?  
Ah no, it is more than any of these,  
For under the tinsel and hidden from sight  
Is the promise and meaning of that first Christmas night,  
When the shepherds stood in wondered awe  
And felt transformed by what they saw.  
So let us not in our search for pleasure  
Forego our right to this precious treasure,  
For Christmas is still a God - given day,  
And let us remember to keep it that way.

## God in the Garden: December:



### Collecting Holly for a wreath:

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

Some evergreens such as holly and ivy have inevitably become associated with Christmas. When we don't understand the rich imagery of these plants we can dismiss their association with Christmas as chance, but in fact a rich tradition of metaphor has grown up around plants such as holly. When holly is twisted into a wreath, the sharp thorns remind us of the crown of thorns placed on Christ's head and the red berries represent his blood shed for us. In this way a holly wreath on our door reminds us of the whole story of Christmas. This is simply the beginning of the Christ's story, of birth, life and death. Jesus came into this world as a baby to die some years later to pay for our sins. As you think about this rich imagery of the holly wreath, as well as the stunning poetry in Ecclesiastes, consider the following: -In what ways can you be inspired by these beautiful words in Ecclesiastes? In what ways can you learn to submit to God's rhythm's in your life? How can you find ways to remember all Christ's story?

*Holy God, Thank you that Christmas is just the start of the story. Thank you that you sent your Son to earth to grow up and eventually die for our sins. Amen .*

Possible gardening tasks this week include:

- 🌿 Skaking snow off shrubs and trees- if we get a white Christmas!
- 🌿 Clearing out garden shed and checking if you need new tools for your Christmas list.
- 🌿 Feeding the Birds.
- 🌿 Making a pile of logs in a quiet corner for insects and wildlife.

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

### **What to name the Baby:**

Here's one conversation Mary didn't have with Joseph as they awaited the birth of the baby she was carrying. "Joseph, what should we name the baby?" Unlike most people awaiting a birth, they had no question about what they would call this child.

The angels who visited Mary and then Joseph told them both that the baby's name would be Jesus (Matthew 1:20 – 21)(Luke 1:30-31) The angel that appeared to Joseph explained that his name indicated that the baby would "Save his people from their sins."

He would also be called "Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14) which means

"God is with us, because he would be a God in human form – deity wrapped in swaddling clothes. The prophet Isaiah revealed additional titles of, "Wonderful Counsellor," "Mighty God," "Everlasting Father" and "Prince of Peace", because he would be all of those things.

It's always exciting to name a new baby. But, no other baby had such a powerful, exciting, world changing name as the one who was "Jesus who is called the Messiah"(Matthew1:16) What a thrill for us to be able to 'call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ'(1 Corinthians 1:2) There's no other name that saves (Acts4:12)

Let's praise Jesus and contemplate everything He means to us this Christmas season!

*Thank You, Heavenly Father, for sending us One who is our Saviour, our Counsellor, our Prince of Peace and our Messiah. I celebrate His birth because I know that His life and death and resurrection purchased for us eternal life. Amen*

## Joint Benefice Church Services for Christmas 2020

6th December - St Laurence Advent Service 10.30am

13th December - St Wilfrid's Advent Service 10.30am

20th December - St John's Carol Service 10.30am

20th December - Nine Lessons & Carols 6.30pm at St Laurence

25th December - Welcome Christmas Day 10.30am at St Wilfrid's

27th December - Final Sunday of the year at St Laurence 10.30am

No services at St Michael's at this stage due to the health - related issues of the building, especially damp and mould. Hygiene: hand sanitisers, wearing of masks, social distancing, cleaning and other issues are organised, as well as stewards to officiate. Service books and hymn books: Printed sheets will be placed on the pews at correct social distancing for attendees. These can be kept or left after each service. Communion: Not permitted at the moment. This may not happen for a while. Baptisms, weddings and funerals are strictly regulated in line with the latest guidelines. Much of what is planned is subject to change, depending on the latest government updates

The programme of church services for January 2021 onwards will be published on the respective church noticeboards, websites and monthly church magazine.



If you wish to contact us for any reason, or to offer a story

Or poem – please ring 02476.394802 for Maureen or John.

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NB. [www.arleycofechurches.org.uk/](http://www.arleycofechurches.org.uk/)