



Holy Trinity



St.
Gabriel

The Parish of The Good Shepherd, Ashton-under-Lyne



St. James



St. Peter



St. Michael and All Angels

DECEMBER 2020

Price 50p

Editorial

‘Christmas may look different, but the story is still the same!’ Coronavirus will make our celebrations this year look very different from usual. However, the message of the baby born in Bethlehem is still relevant!

In one nativity play, the highlight was to illuminate Jesus, with a light in the manger, when all the other lights were turned off. At the appropriate time, all the lights went out, including the manger one. The silence was broken when one of the shepherds loudly whispered: ‘Hey, you turned off Jesus.’ Of course, nobody can turn off Jesus this Christmas!

The angels announced, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.’ (Luke 2: 10,11). The birth of this baby brings great joy and good news for everyone! As the king of the universe, He has come as our Saviour. In an uncertain world, He offers joy and hope, because He holds this pandemic in His hands. This is a real cause for joy!

‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests.’ (Luke 2:14). We may feel anything but peace amid the anxieties over our current circumstances. How can a Jewish infant born to a peasant family in first century Palestine bring peace to our lives today? But Jesus established peace with God through His death on the cross. Trusting the Prince of Peace for our lives brings God’s peace amid the huge uncertainties we face. As the carol says, ‘Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her King.’

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The views expressed in articles in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Parish of The Good Shepherd. The editor reserves the right to amend articles as appropriate, for editorial purposes. Please consider writing something for the magazine yourself! And, if you have any comments to make on the Magazine you can contact the editor, Roger Farnworth on 0161 330 2771 or talk to a member of your DCC or PCC who will pass on any comments that are made.

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The Parish Prayer

Father God, whose Son came to bring love and peace to the world, help us to grow in faith and share our hope and joy with all whom we meet, so that we can work together to build your kingdom in Ashton, welcome new people into our churches, and be relevant to those around us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Making Comfort and Finding Joy

It may surprise some of you, but I am a big fan of rules and regulations. I can hear myself coming across as pedantic and I think if I saved £1 every time I started a sentence with “actually...” I would have a handsome savings account! As I write this, I’m still in November, but curious things have already been happening - people are putting up their Christmas decorations! Shock horror! In comes Mr Ben “Actually” Brady!

I raised my concerns/grumpiness with Bekah and pointed out that Advent is a reflective time of looking forward to Christmas, the arrival of God in human flesh as Jesus. The Liturgical colour is Purple - as it is during Lent - so maybe we should be sombre like in Lent. Our conversation revealed how my love of rules can actually harden my heart to people’s expression of comfort and joy in the very community around me.

I’ve been reassessing! The thing is, Christmas is so much more than just the 25th December (“actually” it lasts for 12 days!), the joy around Christmas is found in the anticipation and preparation. Whether it’s when we put up the tree, hang up a wreath, order a



turkey, dig out favourite decorations or stud oranges with cloves (I like this one). All these acts transform our environment – engaging our different senses and setting the season apart as a special time in our homes. The smell of pine, the lights flickering in our room, the special food we eat at this time and the anticipation of seeing loved ones. All of these elements combined makes Christmas.

The Church of England’s Advent resource is called “Comfort & Joy”. I love the image on the front of the booklet - a house next to a church. If you look at the house, you will see a cosy fireside, a decorated Christmas tree in the windows. Both the house and the church have a shining star on them. For me, this symbol points to the dwelling of Jesus. This means Jesus is to be found in our homes as well as in church - places where comfort is made and joy is found. I’d like to share with you my

personal interpretation what this looks like for me.

To me comfort is something that can be made. It is a bit like the time of 'nesting' when people feel the urge to clean and tidy their homes in readiness for the arrival of a new baby. I certainly found myself doing this before Stanley came along and when I think back to it, I wanted to make the house comfortable and cosy for the whole family.

I will be doing the same this Christmas, preparing the space I spend so much time in for the celebration of Jesus in as many sights, sounds, smells and tastes as I can think of. I will try and make it a place where joy I can be found - even if this year I have struggled to find much.

I know I can find joy in reminiscing about previous Christmases and appreciating all the little personal traditions that have grown up around this time of year. I do love leaving out a mince pie, glass of sherry and carrot (for Rudolph) on Christmas Eve - especially now I'm allowed to stay up and see where the sherry goes!

This year I will be taking extra relish in these little things and trying to

make each one a part of a bigger prayer. I will use this time of preparation like prayer in action, a time to contemplate. After all, Jesus is with us all the time and the decorations won't put themselves up!

I'd really like to encourage you all to share this with me - really relishing in your own little traditions and using them as a time to make comfort and find joy in your home. Obviously, this year some of these will feel a little bitter-sweet. We might not be able to share our Christmas habits like we normally would, but this can be a part of the prayer, sharing with God our happiness and our sadness all at once - whilst making mince pies!

My prayer for all of us is to remember that we can make comfort and find joy during this festive time. I pray that we remember God is never too far away or deaf to our prayers and that we are surrounded by his peace that transcends all understanding.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Rev. Ben



Coronavirus Pandemic



You are welcome to public worship services/private prayer in our churches when government restrictions allow.

Risk assessments have been carried out and we have put procedures in place to ensure that people follow all relevant public health advice, including social distancing guidelines and hand and respiratory hygiene measures.

Please note that those who are extremely clinically vulnerable/shielding, or who have symptoms of a continuous cough or a high temperature or loss of or change to sense of smell or taste, should not attend church.

Please note that, at the time of publication, we hope that the following services will go ahead. However, Covid-19 restrictions could change during December so we may need to alter our services.

We are not yet able to confirm full information for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day – please check the weekly prayer sheets, which will have updated information.

Sunday Services for 6th, 13th and 20th December

9.30am St James Holy Communion or Morning Prayer

9.30am St Gabriel Holy Communion or Morning Prayer

11.00am St Peter Holy Communion or Morning Prayer

11.00am St Michael Holy Communion or Morning Prayer

St James on Sunday Afternoon - 4.00pm on 13th December
Sunday 27th December – to be confirmed

Weekday Services

Thursday 3rd*, 10th, 17th December 3.30pm Holy Trinity Evening Prayer

Christmas Eve 8.30pm Holy Trinity Holy Communion

Christmas Day – to be confirmed

No weekday services between 26th December to 6th January inclusive

(*There will hopefully be a Eucharist Service on the 3rd December)



Little

7 year-old, about to be scolded for peeking at her Christmas presents:

"I didn't look much - I've only got little eyes!"



St Peter's CE Primary School

Reception 2021 -2022

As a Tameside resident, you should apply using the online application form which is available on the School Admissions pages of Tameside's website at the following address from 1st November 2020.

www.tameside.gov.uk/admissions

the closing date for application forms is 15th January 2021

We have invested in our EYFS and have well-resourced indoor and outdoor learning spaces. We pride ourselves on our strong Christian Ethos, engaging learning environment, exciting book-led curriculum and close parental links.

All Reception children have weekly baking, music and PE sessions (with specialist teachers). We also employ our own Artist in Residence and Speech and Language Therapist.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 we are unable to host our usual tours. We'd still love to tell you all about our wonderful school via a virtual 'Meet and Greet' session with our EYFS team.

If you have any further questions or wish to book yourself on a 'Meet and Greet' Session, please phone the School Office on: 0161 330 1691 or email: help@st-peters-ashton.tameside.sch.uk.

'Growing and Learning together' so we can become strong and dependable, just like the Mustard Seed.

Matthew 13:32

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## We are forgiven

Will there ever be a war to end all wars? Sadly it's unlikely. War, death, destruction are nothing new, but now we have more powerful weapons for our inhumanity to others. We can now actually destroy our home planet, earth, and the only reason this has not happened, and hopefully never will, is survival. Anyone angry and foolish enough to press the red button will also die.

Some people are obsessed with power, control and the master race and, all too often, the peace makers are casualties of such evil and there are always consequences for our negative behaviour. So many lost lives for peace, freedom, love, including Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Yet God forgives – God does see the hearts we don't.

By God's love, grace and mercy we are forgiven, despite not being worthy.

We will remember them

God bless us all.

Barry Bowden

## Reverse Advent Boxes

St Gabriel's make Reverse Advent Boxes for Infinity Initiatives. The idea is to put an item in the box each day for Advent for people struggling in our communities.

If you would like to do a box or just donate some items to Infinity Initiatives, all would be appreciated. Here is a list of ideas from the team:

- Long life milk
- Cereal
- Pot noodles or similar
- Tinned meat
- Tinned fish
- We would appreciate gifts for male adults so perhaps chocolate / biscuit boxes. Scarf. Toiletries. Playing Cards etc or similar for teenage boys or £5 vouchers or small donations so we can buy vouchers
- Coffee
- Tea
- Pasta sauce
- Halal cooked meats

I'll be taking St Gabriel's boxes on Monday 21st December. If you are able to, please leave items at your churches, I can collect them if you are unable to take them yourselves. Just let me know.

Thank you,

Rev. Ben



## **Children's Christmas Carols**

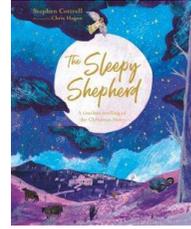


We three kings of porridge and tar  
On the first day of Christmas my tulip gave to me  
Later on we'll perspire, as we dream by the fire.  
He's makin a list, chicken and rice.  
Noel, Noel, Barney's the king of Israel.  
With the jelly toast proclaim  
Olive, the other reindeer  
Frosty the Snowman is a ferret elf, I say  
In the meadow we can build a snowman, then pretend  
that he is sparse and brown

## Book Reviews

**The Sleepy Shepherd – a magical Christmas tale for children**

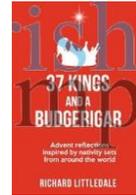
**By Stephen Cottrell, SPCK, £5.24**



The Sleepy Shepherd is so dozy that he completely misses the visit of the angels and the chance to greet the Christ-child in Bethlehem. But one crucial night, years later, he makes an important decision – to be a real shepherd to a man whose friends have all fallen asleep. Children will enjoy this heart-warming, timeless story.

**37 Kings and a Budgerigar**

**By Richard Littledale, Authentic, £7.99**



For many of us, putting out a crib set is one of our treasured Christmas traditions. But what do these scenes really tell us about the original Christmas story?

Richard Littledale, a regular contributor to Daily Service and Sunday Worship on BBC Radio 4, shares reflections, Bible readings and prayers for each day of Advent, based on his own personal collection of nativity sets from around the world. Just like unexpectedly finding a figure of a budgerigar in one of his nativity sets, this accessible devotional will surprise you anew as you see the familiar nativity story with fresh eyes.



## Cathedrals are battered by the Pandemic

Cathedrals have struggled this year, as Covid-19 drastically cut visitor numbers, and thus income has plummeted. Numbers of lay staff in cathedrals across the country have been facing possible redundancy, as the financial impact of the pandemic continues to hit.

Westminster Abbey alone is losing 20 per cent of its staff as it faces a “breath-taking” loss of up to £12million next year.

Now 20 other cathedrals have been handed a lifeline by the Government’s £1.57billion Culture Recovery Fund. They include Canterbury, Chichester, Coventry, Derby, Ely, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Leicester, Lincoln, Liverpool, Portsmouth, Salisbury, Southwell Minster, St Albans, Sheffield, Truro, Wells, Winchester and Worcester.

## God in the Arts

*Editor: The Revd Michael Burgess considers a 13<sup>th</sup> century painting by Gerald of Wales.*

### **He gave us eyes to see them: St Kevin of Glendalough and the blackbird**

During this year we have explored the beauty and wonder of our world in the rich variety of all creatures great and small. In the months of lockdown and restrictions, many of us have used the time to look afresh at the world of Nature and have learnt to value it once again.

When we look at the life of the 6th century Irish hermit saint, Kevin of Glendalough, we see someone who had that special relationship with the birds and animals. An otter, the wolf and a wild boar were his co-hermits. We are told that during Lent as he was kneeling in prayer in his cell, he held his arm out of the window. A blackbird mistook the arm for the branch of a tree and built its nest in the saint's hand. The saint waited until the eggs were laid and hatched and the fledglings had flown.

One of the earliest depictions of this story is a marginal drawing in *The History of Ireland* by Gerald of Wales in the early 13th century and now in the British Library. He visited Ireland several times and was entranced by the marvels he saw and the tales he heard. To accompany the story of St



Kevin, an unknown artist drew the saint sat in his cell, cradling the blackbird gently in his left hand. Seamus Heaney captured the story in a poem in which he wondered if the saint was self-forgetful in all those months or perhaps in agony. The poet praises St Kevin because he sought no reward, but offered time and patience to care for this sign of new life.

So much has happened to us during this year for good and ill, and we wonder what the new year will bring. Perhaps St Kevin can inspire us to journey with faith and hope, and to travel through the months ahead with a renewed concern for the created order around. The Gaelic name Kevin means loved. Like him, we pray that we will love and cherish this planet, and care for the wonder and beauty of birds like the blackbird and all the animals. Then we can rejoice with him in the wonder of Creation that displays the handiwork of God the Creator.

# Parish Notices

From the November registers:

## Funerals:

*We pray for the families and friends of:*

Barbara Bennet

Beryl Procter

Ruth Chadwick

There were no baptisms or weddings in November

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## Free national phoneline bringing worship and prayer



Government figures show that 2.5 million people aged 75 and above have never used the internet. And so, to help them, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, recently launched a free national phoneline to bring worship and prayer into the homes of those without access to the internet.

Daily Hope, which is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044 – offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England.

## CONTACT DETAILS

**CLERGY:** (\*usual day off)

Revd Roger Farnworth, Team Rector (\*Tues.)  
The Vicarage, Westbury Street, Ashton OL6 9NL 330 2771

Revd Ben Brady, Team Curate (\*Fri) 400 1556

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is a Fair Trade Parish. Our churches have promised to serve only  
Fairly Traded Tea and Coffee and to work for justice for the world's poor

