

# The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

Jesus said " I am the light of the world whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life".

Power cuts were a more frequent occurrence in years past. It was like that in Jesus' time. A candle or oil lamp would only light a small area of a room. Imagine, in a culture of candles and oil lamps, a light so great that darkness is driven away. Only the sun could do that, but here was a man claiming the same. Claiming more in fact, because the sun doesn't shine at night.

Jesus was claiming that his words and life revealed the truth about God in a way never done before. That in him, through him, light would shine, chasing away the fear and ignorance that darken life.

But in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that they are the light of the world. So which is it? Is he the light, or are they? At Christmas we have many services involving candles and candlelight and as we light one candle from another we realise it's the same light, yet different. As the light passes, the dim glow brightens, and the whole church is illuminated.

We take our light from his, and are called to stand against the dark. But shedding light isn't without cost. Someone once said "if you want to be a candle you have to suffer the burning".

So let us this Christmas shed our light and love on all whom we meet, be they family, friends or strangers.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas,

Andrew



## CHRISTMAS AT THE VICARAGE

Please come and join us for mulled wine and mincepies on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm at 14 Flaghead Road.

Donations gratefully received in aid of a defibrillator for the church and hall

# **CHRISTMAS** **SERVICES**



**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December**

**8.00 am      Holy Communion**  
**NO FAMILY SERVICE**  
**10.30 am    Parish Communion**  
**6.00 pm      CAROL SERVICE**

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December**

**10.30 am    Holy Communion at**  
**St. Nicolas**

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December**

**8.00 am      Holy Communion**  
**10.30 am    Matins**  
**6.00 pm      Evening Prayer**

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup>    CHRISTMAS EVE**

**5.00 pm      Christingle Service**  
**11.00 pm    Midnight Eucharist**

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>      CHRISTMAS DAY**

**8.00 am      Holy Communion**  
**10.30 am    Parish Communion**

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> December**

**8.00 am      Holy Communion**  
**10.30 am    Parish Communion**  
**No Evening Prayer**

## **IN PRAISE OF GOOD KING WENCESLAS**

When I was a choir boy many years ago, 'Good King Wenceslas' was a very popular carol. A man sang the King's lines, a boy sang the Page's, and the choir filled in the narrative. It was not of course technically a Christmas carol but one for which most people know as 'Boxing Day' – the 'Feast of Stephen' the first Christian martyr.

But you don't hear Good King Wenceslas these days. It fell foul of political correctness. The king was wealthy and very kindly, helped a poor man, but the last verse was the problem. It called on 'Christian men, wealth and rank possessing'. To help the poor and be blessed in doing it. All very patronising, class-conscious, and chauvinistic. So, it has simply disappeared.

I think that's a pity, and I also think it's a serious misunderstanding of the carol. It relates to the good deeds of a tenth century Duke of Bohemia, Wenceslas I, and concerns a king and his page, and a poor man freezing and potentially starving whom he saw from his window. The king didn't, as he might well have done, simply order some minion to take the man some food or fuel. He decided to do it himself assisted by his young page. Together they braved the bitter wind and snow in order to take pine logs and food to this humble dwelling. That is not patronising but true Christian grace.

Yes, the last verse does express a Victorian view of characters but that's when it was written. No one should condemn the carol and its message. Who would shrink from following its example? I'm afraid texting a token ten quid to a charity does not quite qualify.

Love requires action, if we don't see that then we have missed the point. That is the message of this lovely carol.

*The Rev'd Canon David Winter*

## **THE HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS**

The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Jesus. In the third century it was suggested that Jesus was conceived at the Spring equinox, 25th March, popularising the belief that He was born nine months later on 25th December. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, encouraged Christians worldwide to make Christmas a holy day in about 400.

In the early Middle Ages, Christians celebrated a series of midwinter holy days. Epiphany (which recalls the visit to the infant Jesus of the wise men bearing gifts) was the climax of 12 days of Christmas, beginning on 25th December. The Emperor Charlemagne chose 25th December for his coronation in 800, and the prominence of Christmas Day rose. In England, William the Conqueror also chose 25th December for his coronation in 1066, and the date became a fixture both for religious observance and feasting.

Cooking a boar was a common feature of mediaeval Christmas feasts, and singing carols accompanied it. Writers of the time lament the fact that the true significance of Christmas was being lost because of partying. They condemn the rise of 'misrule' – drunken dancing and promiscuity. The day was a public holiday, and traditions of bringing evergreen foliage into the house and the exchange of gifts (usually on Epiphany) date from this time.

In the 17th century the rise of new Protestant denominations led to a rejection of many celebrations that were associated with Catholic Christianity. Christmas was one of them. After the execution of Charles I, England's Puritan rulers made the celebration of Christmas illegal for 14 years. The restoration of Charles II ended the ban, but religious leaders continued to discourage excess, especially

in Scotland. In Western Europe (but not worldwide) the day for exchanging gifts changed from Epiphany (6th January) to Christmas Day.

By the 1820s, there was a sense that the significance of Christmas was declining. Charles Dickens was one of several writers who sought to restore it. His novel *A Christmas Carol* was significant in reviving merriment during the festival. He emphasised charity and family reunions, alongside religious observance. Christmas trees, paper chains, cards and many well-known carols date from this time. So did the tradition of Boxing Day, on 26th December, when tradesmen who had given reliable service during the year would collect 'boxes' of money or gifts from their customers.

In Europe Santa Claus is the figure associated with the bringing of gifts. Santa Claus is a shortening of the name of Saint Nicholas, who was a Christian bishop in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. He was particularly noted for his care for children and for his generosity to the poor. By the Middle Ages his appearance, in red bishop's robes and a mitre, was adored in the Netherlands and familiar across Europe.

Father Christmas dates from 17th century England, where he was a secular figure of good cheer (more associated with drunkenness than gifts). The transformation of Santa Claus into today's Father Christmas started in New York in the 1880s, where his red robes and white beard became potent advertising symbols. In some countries (such as Latin America and Eastern Europe) the tradition attempts to combine the secular and religious elements by holding that Santa Claus makes children's presents and then gives them to the baby Jesus to distribute.

*From: <https://christianity.org.uk/the-history-of-christmas/#.W9LmchNKhsM>*

## **DHCT Autumn Events**

Our final church crawl of the season took place on September 19<sup>th</sup> and unusually had a Henry Haig theme. We had marvelled at his large circular Creation Window at St Mary's, Swanage and so were looking forward to seeing more of his stained glass.

We set off towards Shaftesbury and our first visit was to St John the Baptist, Charlton on the A30 which was built in 1839 in the Romanesque style just before the Gothic revival. This church didn't have any Henry Haig windows but had two by Alan Younger, a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century artist, and one by Geoffrey Webb who set up in 1914 in East Grinstead. The former has windows in several cathedrals including the Henry VII window in Westminster Abbey. The windows here depict Elizabeth of Hungary and the Madonna and Child. Geoffrey Webb's window combines plain and stained glass.

Our next port of call was St Mary's in the village of Donhead St Mary which needless to say was hidden away and difficult to find. This 13<sup>th</sup> century stone church with pointed Romanesque style arches and a vaulted porch did have a Henry Haig window. He was based in Dorset from the 1960s onwards and his window here represents Jerusalem. He used painted, stained and acid-etched antique glass enclosed in lead calmes. This was a traditional technique of window making chosen to compliment traditional architecture. Also at this church were six windows by Clayton and Bell and another one by Geoffrey Webb so we had plenty of stained glass to take in and admire.

After a nice lunch at The Bennett Arms, Semley where we were able to sit outside on the green in the sunshine, we called at nearby St Leonard's Church which was built by Thomas Henry Wyatt, Diocesan Surveyor, in 1870 and

given to the village by the Marchioness of Westminster. Here we took in a really exquisite Henry Haig window which is a memorial to WPC Yvonne Fletcher, killed while on duty outside the Libyan Embassy in 1984, who lived in Semley. This window is notable for its flowing blues and greens depicting the natural world.

Our final visit was to the catholic church of The Most Holy Name and St Edward, King and Martyr which was built in 1910 in the Gothic style and is notable for its three altars, one with a canopy over, a reredos with sculptures of five kings, including Edward, stone wall carvings of the stations of the cross and of course another Henry Haig window dating from 1997 depicting buildings and sky and heaven which made a striking design.

For this year's Friends event we spent a most interesting and enjoyable day in Cranborne visiting Cranborne Garden Centre, where we started with a lovely lunch in the Garden Room and then walked to the nearby Church of St Mary and St Bartholomew. By now it was raining but we didn't allow that to dampen our spirits. In the church Dr Tim Connor enlightened us on its history and architecture. Built of Purbeck stone and dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century it was restored in Victorian times. The Cecil family of Cranborne Manor paid for the restoration of the nave and the chancel was rebuilt in 1869. The historic tower built in 1440 was paid for by Richard, Duke of York and bears his coat of arms. There was plenty to see in the church and the modern lighting was very effective in showing off the wall paintings depicting the seven deadly sins and the painting of Christ and the twelve apostles above the chancel arch. Also on the walls were ornate memorials to local families including the Stillingfleets. Edward Stillingfleet born in 1635 in Cranborne became Bishop of Worcester and is commemorated in the great west window. Other windows of note are the east window above the altar by the artist,

Alan Younger and a window in the south aisle in memory of John Tregonwell who retired to a farm on the coast where a small stream runs into the sea and from that small beginning grew the modern town of Bournemouth.

As is usual at these Friends events there is a musical interlude and this year Janet Coles and Laura Manning played a variety of pieces for cello and piano by among others Vivaldi and Saint-Saëns which were much enjoyed by all. Following this Sue Smith gave us an interesting talk on the stained glass after which we returned to the Garden Room for tea and a talk with slides by Tony Bates entitled The Living Churchyard Project in which he showed us how churchyards can become havens for wildlife and pollinating insects with careful planting and grass cutting. We ended the day having a look round the garden centre shop which was full of lovely things to tempt us to buy. Once again huge thanks to those who organised the day especially Sue Smith who always welcomes us so warmly and Tim Connor who never fails to entertain and amuse us.

*Nina Crane*

## CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING

Come and join us at our Christmas Coffee Morning on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30 am for coffee and nibbles. Everyone welcome. This will be our only Coffee Morning in December.

**We will restart on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January at 10.30 am.**





## CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER

Sun	1	8.00 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Parish Communion Evening Prayer
Wed	4	10.30 am  2.00 pm	Holy Communion and Patronal Festival <i>at St. Nicolas</i> Advent Group <i>in hall</i>
Thurs	5	10.00 am	Parish Art Group
Fri	6	9.30 am	Baby Group

### ADVENT 2

Sun	8	8.00 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Matins <i>(Sunday Club in hall)</i> Evening Prayer
Wed	11	10.30 am 2.00 pm	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> Advent Group <i>in hall</i>
Fri	13	10.30 am	<b><i>Christmas Coffee Morning</i></b> <b><i>(join us for coffee and nibbles)</i></b>

### ADVENT 3

Sun	15	8.00 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Parish Communion <b>Carol Service</b>
Wed	18	10.30 am 2.00 pm	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> Advent Group <i>in hall</i>
Thurs	19	10.00 am 3.30 pm	Parish Art Group Magazine collation

Fri	20	9.30 am	Baby Group
Sat	21	2.00 pm	Christmas drinks at the Vicarage

**ADVENT 4**

Sun	22	8.00 am 10.30 am  6.00 pm	Holy Communion Matins and Nativity by Baby Group Evening Prayer
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Tues 24 **Christmas Eve**

<b>5.00 pm</b> <b>11.00 pm</b>	<b>Christingle Service</b> <b>Midnight Mass</b>
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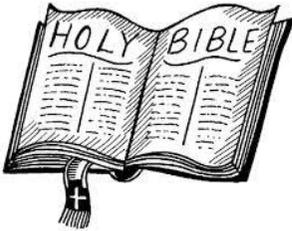
Wed 25 **Christmas Day**

<b>8.00 am</b> <b>10.30 am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> <b>Parish Communion</b>
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**CHRISTMAS 1**

Sun	29	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Parish Communion NO EVENSONG
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Wed	1	10.30 am	NO SERVICE AT ST. NICOLAS
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## **SUNDAY READINGS IN DECEMBER**

### **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December - Advent Sunday**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 2.1-5

*Isaiah has a vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem, the law and the word of the Lord. There will be peace.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Romans 13.11-end

*Paul exhorts us to wake from sleep as he believed that the second coming of Christ was near at hand.*

GOSPEL: Matthew 24.36-44

*Only the Father knows the day and the hour of the second coming – be watchful and ready.*

### **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December - Advent 2**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 11.1-10

*There will be new hope for Israel as the Spirit rests upon the Holy One with peace, faithfulness and righteousness.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 3.1-12

*John the Baptist preaches repentance. Many have come from Judea to be baptised. He admonishes priests, considering why they really have come.*

### **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December - Advent 3**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 35.1-10

*Isaiah's prophecy relates the arrival of God's salvation to the work of healing, nourishment and joy which it will bring.*

NEW TESTAMENT: James 5.7-10

*The third and last part of the letter of James commences with exhortations towards endurance. To be patient in suffering until the Lord comes.*

GOSPEL: Matthew 11.2-11

*John the Baptist is the messenger who will prepare the way for Jesus' coming; at the same time he is of little importance as his mission is completed.*

### **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December - Advent 4**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 7.10-16

*Ahaz is asked by the Lord to choose a sign. He refuses. The Lord gives him the sign of Jesus' birth, Immanuel.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 1.18-end

*Mary is betrothed to Joseph and conceives a child by the Holy Spirit. God reveals this to Jesus in a dream.*

### **Christmas Eve and Christmas Day**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 9.2-7

*For the prophet Isaiah, God comes to us as a child endowed with sovereignty and called by various names - Counsellor, mighty God, eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Titus 2. 11-14

*For Paul, in his letter to Titus, Jesus' credentials were validated by his identity as the indisputable expression of God's grace, and hence the basic source of the Christian moral life.*

GOSPEL: Luke 2. 1-14

*In his familiar birth narrative, Luke reaffirms the Davidic lineage of Jesus and, in the message of the Angels, identifies him as Messiah, Lord, and Saviour.*

### **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas 1**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 63.7-9

*Isaiah speaks of God's day of redemption and how God suffers with his people.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Hebrews 2.10-end

*Christ came in order to share with us what He has and is. Not only does God share what He is with us, but God also shares in what we are.*

GOSPEL: Matthew 2.13-end

*The holy family escape from King Herod into Egypt.*

## **FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE - Westminster Abbey, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

Twenty-five veterans of the Normandy attack were invited by the Royal British Legion to attend. Ernest Green from Wareham and I were amongst the 25. I had met Ernest on the D-Day 75 cruise and he was ex-navy, guarding the crossings of the convoys from the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, including mine on 15<sup>th</sup> June.

We both had our carers and the four of us were picked up by hire car at my home at 6.15 pm on Wednesday. Then followed an interesting drive in the dark to an up-market hotel, the Park Plaza, close to Westminster Bridge. On the way we saw London lit up especially along the river.

It was after 9.00 pm when we entered the hotel and having registered we managed a drink before occupying our apartments which were very spacious.

Breakfast was at 8.00 am as we were to board a coach at about 9.30 am to take us to the Abbey for a service at 10.30 am. We had plenty of time to look around the Abbey and fully expected the service to be in the Abbey. However, near the time, 10.00 am, the veterans were assembled, seated in two rows near the outside steps! Fortunately it was dry, but rather chilly, and the service proceeded about 100 yards away, close to some of the Remembrance

crosses. It was too far for us to hear. The outside world noise drowned out much of the ceremony and after about an hour we saw Prince Harry and his wife coming towards us. He spoke to one or two veterans in the front row and the media had focused mainly in the direction of the Fields of Remembrance.

The veterans and carers then moved off on foot via the cloisters to Church House for a light lunch at 12 noon. From here at about 1.30 pm we left by coach to Wellington Barracks, passing Buckingham Palace and then parking in the Mall. We walked to the Guards Chapel for a service which included the song "Steal Away" sung by some Fiji islanders. Thence back to the hotel to collect luggage and another journey in the dark to home.

A memorable experience.

*Geoff Hayward*

## **CHRISTINA ROSSETTI**

Christina Rossetti, British poet and hymn-writer, died of cancer 125 years ago, on 29th December 1894. She was 64.

Christina was the youngest child of poet and Dante scholar Gabriele Rossetti, who emigrated to England from Italy in 1824, and the half-Italian Frances Polidari, who he married in 1926.

Christina was also sister of the pre-Raphaelite painter-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whom she resembled in some ways: she had an innately passionate and sensuous nature and a fine sense of humour. But she was consummately religious

and put self-denial at the top of her priorities. Her brother much admired her poetry and helped to promote it.

She was a serious and devout High Church Anglican and broke engagements twice for religious reasons – to James Collinson in 1850 and to Charles Bagot Cayley in 1864. After this she led a quiet and almost saint-like life, and in 1871 she contracted Graves' Disease, a disfiguring and life-threatening thyroid disorder.

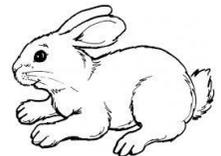
Some of her poetry was published under the pseudonym Ellen Alleyne, and she is widely regarded as one of the two best women poets of the 19th century. Her widest known hymn is possibly *In the Bleak Midwinter*, a Christmas favourite.

*Tim Lenton*



## TO MAKE YOU SMILE .....

*For rabbits young and rabbits old,  
For rabbits hot and rabbits cold,  
For rabbits tender, rabbits tough,  
We thank Thee, Lord: we've had enough.  
(attributed to Dean*



*Swift)*

### *The Angler's Prayer*

*Give me, O Lord, to catch a fish  
So large that even I,  
In boasting of it afterwards,  
Shall have no need to lie.*

*Anon*

(both of these verses are from "Prayers and Graces - a little book of extraordinary piety" collected by Allan M. Laing)

## **We three Kings of Orient are .... what?**

"A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey, in. The way's deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in *solstitio brumali*, the very dead of winter."

It was 1622, and the Bishop of Winchester, Launcelot Andrews, was preaching a magnificent sermon to King James I. Reckoned one of the best preachers ever, Launcelot Andrews' words were later taken up by T S Eliot and transformed into his wonderful poem 'The Journey of the Magi'. What a vivid picture – we can see it all! The camels' breath steaming in the night air as the kings, in their gorgeous robes of silk and cloth-of-gold, and clutching their precious gifts, kneel to adore the baby in the manger.



Yet the Bible does not give us as much detail as some people think. Tradition down the centuries has added a great deal more. For instance, we know from St Matthew that the magi were 'wise', or learned men of some sort, but we do not know if they were kings or not. The Bible tells us there were several; tradition has decided upon three, and even named them: Balthassar, Melchior, and Caspar (or Gaspar). But the Bible does tell us that the magi gave baby Jesus three highly symbolic gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Gold stands for kingship, frankincense for worship, and myrrh for anointing – anticipating His death. There is a lovely ancient mosaic in Ravenna, Italy, that is 1,500 years old. It depicts the wise men in oriental garb of trousers and Phrygian caps, carrying their gifts past palm trees towards the star that they followed... straight to Jesus.

## **TRUSTING GOD IN ALL THINGS**

For many, Christmas is a time of happiness and holiday. An opportunity for parties, concerts, pantomimes and watching children perform nativity plays. We exchange colourful cards, and presents, and prepare special meals for family and friends. We sing carols. We adorn our homes and churches with all kinds of decorations.

All our celebrations are a far cry from that first Christmas. In our festivities it is easy to forget that when Jesus came life was hard. The Romans were an occupying force in Israel. There was poverty. The Jews were a captive and oppressed people. They had numerous worries and fears and awaited their Messiah to give them freedom.

Mary was looking forward to marrying Joseph and living with him in Nazareth. Suddenly she meets an angel; told

she will be pregnant with God's Son and then her fiancé wants to divorce her! Her world is changed. Joseph too is distressed. In the turmoil, God speaks to Joseph in a dream and while this explains the miraculous pregnancy, he can't stop the hurtful gossip or the doubters.

Even if he wanted to face his critics, Joseph can't stay in Nazareth. He is compelled to take Mary with him to Bethlehem to complete a census. The long journey, possibly all on foot, must have been horrendous. Then in Bethlehem there is unsuitable accommodation for a birth.

It was likely that when the shepherds came and shared their experience of an angel messenger and the singing heavenly host, that their difficult circumstances began to make sense. Then, perhaps, sometime later when the Eastern men came with gifts that they were reassured and encouraged that God was with them in their difficulties. Also, when God told Joseph in a dream to go with Mary and the infant to Egypt to escape Herod's cruelty, they knew that in a foreign land they could trust God with their lives.

Our Christmas comes amidst life's traumas and troubles. We may have on-going difficulties. In our struggles we need to know that God can be working out His purposes. Mary and Joseph came to know that in their hardships they were in God's will. Like them, we too must trust God in life-changing events.

*"I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)*

*Lester Amann*

## **FROM THE REGISTERS**

### **Funerals**

21<sup>st</sup> November     Shirley Milligan (82)

## **ALTAR FLOWERS**

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	Advent	No flowers
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Advent	No flowers
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Advent	No flowers
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Advent	No flowers
Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup>		Flower Guild



## **MAGAZINE DEADLINE**

The deadline for the January edition of the  
Church Magazine is

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

