

## **MINISTER'S LETTER**



As Christmas approaches once again, we look forward to the retelling of that most beloved of stories, complete as it is with angels and stars, shepherds and magi and, of course, those pictures of a warm, glowing stable. All these things undoubtedly add to the symbolism and mystery of this wonder-full story.

It is though the darker side of the Christmas story that perhaps speaks most powerfully to our times, for this is a story that sees a young couple embarking upon the risky business of childbirth in temporary accommodation fit only for animals, and a story that sees a young family, in the face of real and great danger, fleeing across the border in a desperate bid to seek sanctuary in a foreign land.

2015 has been a year dominated, in this part of the world, by the refugee crisis in Europe which has seen millions of displaced people desperately seeking a safe haven far away from the war and/or persecution of home. It is a crisis that world leaders are still struggling to get any kind of control of. More recently, thoughts have turned to atrocities carried out on a Friday night in Paris. Perhaps because of its closeness to home, this particular 'massacring of the innocents' has touched us especially deeply but, of course, the pain of loss is felt just as acutely in Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Turkey, Beirut, Russia and elsewhere. The refugee issue and the attacks in Paris have been conflated by the question as to whether some of the perpetrators of those crimes used the mass exodus of people across Europe as cover for their own journeys. This has led to the call for tighter border controls and has seen a change in public opinion. Of the 20,000 Syrian refugees that the UK Government pledged to resettle by 2020, so far only about 100 have been granted entry. A couple of months ago, the Government was being roundly criticised for the inadequacy of its response. Worryingly, a recent poll has indicated that public support for even this resettlement programme has fallen away in the aftermath of the Paris attacks.

Whilst it's obvious that better systems need to be put in place, it needs to

be remembered that the overwhelming reason why so many people are crossing borders is because they are wanting to escape the likes of those who would do them and us harm.

As a Church we are delighted to have such a close connection with *Christian Care Association*, a charity that is based here and that helps anyone in need in the London Borough of Merton. As many here will know, not least those who give generously of their time to its work, *Christian Care* increasingly finds itself helping those with no recourse to public funds (an immigration condition that means that those subject to it face homelessness and destitution because they cannot access mainstream housing, welfare benefits or employment).

Our hope is that in the year ahead we will create more opportunities to hear what *Christian Care* is doing. It has powerful stories to share as its recent AGM highlighted. Sadly I was unable to be present at that meeting but in one subsequent brief conversation with Gillian Thick, Chair of the charity, I heard of houses of multi-occupancy in which each room has up to five living in it; of people living in dirty, squalid, cockroach and mould infested dwellings; of people within five miles of here living in garages. And people leave the countries of their birth, their homes and wider families for this?

It's in stories such as this that we encounter the Christmas story afresh - in the life of a young mother who is grateful for any kind of roof above her head, in the desperation of those mothers and fathers who are prepared to walk mile after mile after mile, cross borders and risk their lives to find a place that will be "safe" for them and their children to live in. In such stories Christ is present. May he find us welcoming.

Wishing you a joyful and peaceful Christmas

*Paul*

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Christmas is the day that holds all time together.

*Alexander Smith*

## **Christian Solidarity Worldwide From the Prayer Diary of CSW**



**CHRISTIAN  
SOLIDARITY  
WORLDWIDE**  
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

### **1<sup>st</sup> week of Advent – Pray for Peace**

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6*

Peace is a constant theme at Christmas: the promise of peace between man and God that was fulfilled in Jesus' death and resurrection. The angels at Jesus' birth promised 'Peace on Earth', a foretaste of the heavenly kingdom. Unfortunately, peace on Earth is still a distant promise for Christians in many parts of the world. At the beginning of Advent, let's draw alongside those who are praying for peace.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> week of Advent - Justice**

*But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! Amos 5:24*

In the week of International Human Rights Day, on 10 December, we're focusing on justice. Justice can seem pretty far away for many Christians living around the world. In many situations, Christians are living in countries where their government is either indifferent or actively hostile to them. For example, in Indonesia, the government routinely closes or demolishes churches, and in China, many human rights defenders have been imprisoned or harassed by the police.

This week, let's remember those for whom justice is not a privilege taken for granted but a deeply-felt need, and thank God for delivering his justice in many of the cases we've been working on.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> week of Advent - Righteousness**

*The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. Psalm 33:5*

Righteousness may seem like an odd theme at Christmas, but Jesus'

righteousness was evident in the way his birth was celebrated! He was hailed as a king and a righteous deliverer of his people. However, this righteous deliverer also started life as a refugee, as his family fled Herod's persecution. This week, let's remember that 'no one is righteous, not even one' (Romans 3:10), by praying for those that the world often looks down on and considers 'unrighteous': the refugees, the persecuted, and the dispossessed.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> week of Advent - Christmas Gift**

*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.* Psalm 107:8-10

It's nearly time for presents! For many people – especially children – this is their favourite part of Christmas, and it's hard not to get caught up in the excitement of giving and receiving presents. This is just a small reflection of the joy God feels at giving good things to his people – but the presents God gives can often be something a bit less material and a lot more spectacular. This year, God has delivered people from prison, raised the profile of religious freedom, and empowered us to work at the very highest political levels.

As we head towards the home stretch to Christmas, let's thank God for the gift of his grace in the cause of religious freedom this year.

#### **The New Year**

*Because of the Lords great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* Lamentations 3:22-23

2016 has arrived! At the start of a new year, we can come before our God with confidence knowing there are new mercies for us today. As we celebrate all that is new, let's also pray for a renewal in strength, vigour and courage for all our CSW staff and supporters. We have much to thank God for with what he has done in 2015, but we also know there is a long way to go when it comes to protecting the right of freedom of religion throughout the world.



## **CAROL SINGING IN MORDEN**

Last month we reported that we were still unsure if we could sing carols at Morden Underground Station as we do each year on the run up to Christmas to support the Action for Children. This was due to London Transport have changing their way of dealing with such things.

We have now been given permission to sing carols at the underground station. So please come and lend your voice or musical talent as we once again serenade the commuters of Morden.

We will be meeting at Morden Underground Station on Friday 18th and Monday 21st December and plan to start singing at 5.00pm and finish about 7.00pm both of these days.

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## **CHRISTMAS POST BOX AND CARDS**

The church Christmas post box will be outside the vestry from Tuesday 1st December until Friday 18th December for those sending Christmas cards to members of the church community. Cards will be ready for collection on Sunday 20th December.

As in previous years, you are invited to make a donation which will go to Methodist Homes for the Aged. (In doing so you may wish to remember that you are saving 50p for each card posted in the church post box!)



Please address all cards clearly using surnames and initials or forenames to avoid confusion. (We have several Smiths and several Andrews!)

If you prefer, you are welcome to post a single card addressed to the whole church family. Such cards will be placed on display panels in the vestibule on Sunday 20th December.

# MARTIN WAY GIFT SERVICE 13th DECEMBER



## CHRISTIAN CARE ASSOCIATION TOYS FOR 2016 PARTY



We would like presents – new or as good as new – to give to the boys and girls aged between 6 months and 11 years who attend the Christian Care Association New Year Party on Saturday 30th January 2016. They do not need to be wrapped.

**For babies and toddlers** – rattles, bath toys, pull-along toys, puzzles, anything from Thomas the Tank Engine/Bob the Builder ranges, phones, baby dolls, building blocks etc

**Cars, trucks, trains, Lego, games** – appropriate for different ages.

**Dolls** - including anything from Action Man, Spider Man and Superman ranges as well as doll buggies and tea sets

**Outdoor Games** - footballs, skittles etc.

**Stationery** – crayons, gel pens, pencils, pencil cases, drawing books, photo album, disposable camera.

**Books** – fun activity and story books for all ages, but appropriate for children where English is not their first language

**Clothes etc** – hats, scarves, gloves, pretty tights, backpacks, bags, umbrellas, jewellery.

*Sorry but we cannot accept toys and games with batteries which have to be replaced. We cannot use jigsaws and games with small pieces that are easily lost such as Monopoly and Scrabble, nor War games or soft toys.*

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## Operation Christmas Child



Many thanks to every one who helped with Operation Christmas Child - Platform 10¾ were able to deliver 44 shoeboxes this year!

*Abby Herring*

# CHRISTMAS COLOURING TIME





# WINTERSHALL

## **Wintershall Nativity play**

For the past twenty-two years the Wintershall Nativity play has been an excellent way of celebrating the Christmas story.

Imagine you are in Bethlehem watching Mary and Joseph arrive by donkey in stunning costumes. Stand with the shepherds and their sheep and hear the angels sing. The Kings arrive on horseback following the Star. Let us all come to the crib and see the baby Jesus.



The 'Inn' opens for hot snacks and drinks 45 minutes before each performance and there will also be a stall selling seasonal merchandise. As the play takes place both outside and inside Holly Barn, please come warmly dressed with suitable footwear. Holly Barn is a few minutes steep walk from the car park. Disabled access is only available by prior arrangement. Seating is not allocated and is on plain wooden benches.

The performances at Holly Barn at Wintershall will be at:

4.45 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 16th to Friday 18th

2.30 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. on Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th December.

The cost of tickets are - Adults £16.50, Children £8.50

For further information or to book tickets, visit our website at [www.wintershall-estate.com](http://www.wintershall-estate.com) or contact the box office via email at [boxoffice@Biblesociety.org.uk](mailto:boxoffice@Biblesociety.org.uk) or by phone on 01793 418299 during office hours.

# Seven reasons to ban the Lord's Prayer

*by Steven Croft—Bishop of Sheffield*



Britain woke up on 22<sup>nd</sup> November to the news that the Lord's Prayer has been banned from cinemas.

The Church of England has produced a sixty second commercial. The only words are the words of the Lord's Prayer, said by children, the bereaved, people at work and so on. It's a beautiful film, Certificate U. The ad is to promote a new website, Just Pray.uk. The plan was to show the film before Christmas at screenings of the new Star Wars film to help everyone think about prayer and to pray. What could be more simple?

The distributors have declared the Lord's Prayer unsuitable for screening. They believe it carries the risk of upsetting or offending audiences.

Cue indignation from the press, fury from the Archbishop (according to the Mail anyway) debates about free speech, a possible challenge in the courts and a storm on social media.

But wait just a moment. Suppose the cinema chains got this one right?

I disagree with their decision and I disagree with the reasons they have given. I hope it's reversed. I don't believe the film will offend or upset audiences, in the way they mean, and I don't believe it creates a new precedent.

But from the point of view of global corporations and consumer culture, from the perspective of the gods and spirits of the age, there are very good reasons indeed to ban the Lord's Prayer from cinemas and from culture and from public life.

This is a prayer said by billions of people every day in every language on the planet. In every single moment in time, someone is praying these words. They are the first words of prayer we learn as children and the last words we say at the moment of death.

The Lord's Prayer is powerful for a reason. These words shape lives and

families and communities and whole societies.

There are real reasons why the Lord's Prayer has been banned by the demigods of consumer culture, in the boardrooms of the cinema chains. Here are seven, one for every line.

First, this prayer gives to those who pray it an identity and a place in the world and a countercultural community. **“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name”**. It opposes the myth that we are random specks of matter floating through space and time. It opposes the myth that our lives do not matter. It opposes the myth of fragmented humanity.

We are created and loved and called into friendship with God who is our father and into community with our fellow human beings who are therefore our sisters and brothers. Only someone who has found this new identity can stand against the advertising culture which night and day seduces us to define who we are by what we spend.

Second this prayer gives us the courage to live in an imperfect world. **“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”**.

The world is not as it was meant to be. It is distorted from its true purpose. But God is at work to redeem and transform this world, to establish his kingdom. The Lord's Prayer invites us not to retreat from the world in fear and pain, to anaesthetise or indulge ourselves. The Lord's Prayer invites us to join the struggle to see justice and peace prevail.

Third, and most powerfully, the Lord's Prayer teaches us to live with just enough. This is the most dangerous reason why it cannot be shown with the adverts at the cinema. It teaches us not to want more. It teaches contentment, the most subversive virtue of them all.

**“Give us this day our daily bread”**. This is not a prayer for more. This is a prayer only for what we need. Every other advert in the cinema is there to encourage us to spend money in pursuit of happiness. This one restrains our greed.

Fourth, the Lord's Prayer teaches me to live with my imperfections and the imperfections of others. There is a way to deal with the rubbish in our

lives. **“Forgive us our sins”**.

Consumer culture holds before us the image of perfection. We cannot be happy until we look like this person, live like that one. Each image is a lie.

The Lord’s Prayer acknowledges human imperfection and sin, daily. The Lord’s Prayer offers a pathway to forgiveness, daily. The way of forgiveness cannot be bought. It is a gift. Grace. Grace subverts the whole culture of advertising.

Fifth the Lord’s Prayer offers a way of reconciliation. **“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”**. We are not meant to feud or live in hostility or rivalry. We are meant to forgive and be forgiven, to be reconciled to each other. That reconciliation happens without expensive presents, without going into debt, without credit. People are not made happy by more things, another consumer lie. The greatest happiness comes from relationships. The key to great relationships is reconciliation and forgiveness.

Sixth, the Lord’s Prayer builds resilience in the human spirit. When you say this prayer each day you are prepared for the bad days. **“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”**

When we say this prayer we remind ourselves that we are not living in a Disney fairy tale, a saccharine creation of film makers where every story has a happy ending.

We are living in a real world of cancer and violence and difficulty, where we are tested, where bad things happen for no clear reason. We live in that world confident in God’s love and goodness and help even in the midst of the most challenging moments of our lives. Faith is for the deep valleys as much as the green pastures. We may not have the answers but we know that God dwells with us and in us.

And seventh the Lord’s Prayer tells us how the story ends, how this life is to be lived and lived well. **“For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen”**.

The prayer returns as it begins to the praise and glory of the living God. Our hearts return to their origin and source, the one who created

us. Life is to be lived to God’s praise and glory, not to satisfy our own small desires. We are beings with a higher calling and a greater purpose.

There are only 63 words in the Lord’s Prayer. It takes less than a minute to say them.

Yet these words shape our identity, give purpose to our lives, check our greed, remind us of our imperfections, offer a way of reconciliation, build resilience in our spirits and call us to live to the glory of our creator.

No wonder they have been banned in the boardrooms of consumer culture!

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*In previous December/January Newsletters we featured a story from Bill Pollock. He was the Minister in the central, mountainous part of the Island of Mull from 1987 until 2002 and was a good friend of Derek and Mary Heaton. We are delighted to feature another story from his ‘Advent Anecdote - Mishaps of a Minister on Mull’.*

### **The Hat in the Pillar Box**

It was almost bedtime when Bob the Dog and I took our Christmas cards to the pillar box. I don’t know which of us first spotted the object lying in the rain in the grocer’s car park. I wondered if it was a seriously misguided hedgehog but Bob knew it wasn’t animate. I picked it up and realised it was a woolly hat. It was a good hat but what was I to do with it? I couldn’t lay it back down - it would soak up oily water all night and then be flattened by a car in the morning. I would normally have handed it into Nan in the Post Office to await a claimant but that would mean my coming back in the morning which I would be reluctant to do. Then I had a brainwave - I’d put the hat in the pillar box. Whoever cleared the box for the early bus would find the hat and leave it in the office for Nan.

So I took the hat and dropped in the pillar box.



It was only after doing so that I thought I saw the consequences. The water from the hat would spend the night gradually sogging down through the Christmas mail. Firstly the ink would run and addresses would become illegible. Then the envelopes would soften and gradually disintegrate. The Christmas mail would soon be undeliverable. I simply had to retrieve the hat.

I returned to the pillar box and put my hand in through the slot. I groped around and felt nothing - so I pushed and twisted and got my forearm in, right up to the elbow - but still nothing. I was making my final heaves to get fully in when I realised I was stuck - stuck in the pouring rain in the middle of Salen with most of my arm inside the pillar box. What if people came along? They certainly wouldn't be able to post their letters, for I was in the slot. And what would they think I was doing? Interfering with Her Majesty's mail? They might send for the constable to take me to the cell - but he couldn't simply drag me off for I was anchored to this great red box.

Maybe the council squad would have to come with their lorry to dig the box up and take it to the blacksmith (with me still attached). And what would he do? I was starting to imagine him wielding serious saws and very hot flames like a failed circus act ... when I realised I had come free.

But my original problem wasn't solved—the hat was still in the box, sogging through the mail.

Bedtime or not, I saw no option but to go to Nan's house, make a din to rouse her and ask her to go round in the rain and open the pillar box. She went: but I don't think she was glad. And do you know what? The hat had not harmed the mail.

There may be lessons in this tale for us all - we might even read this as an allegory. How about this:

When we find ourselves holding a problem which we really don't want, lets not rush to get rid of it in the mail that night - for it may ruin things. Let's find the time and the courage to resolve it face to face the next day and avoid a mess relationship or mess.

*Bill Pollock*



## St Raphael's 'Seven Days of Cake'

On 11th November the 1st Merton Park Rainbows supported the St Raphael's 'Seven Days of Cake' campaign by icing cakes and gingerbread men. We managed to raise £80 from our cake sale when we sold the cakes we had decorated during the meeting - a somewhat messy meeting but great fun!



*Geraldine Ellis*

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## **The Good Shepherd**

We learn in church stories of shepherds, in their caring and doing good work. We have many good shepherds in our congregation. But did you know we have one special one? The big difference is he is authorised to lead real four legged sheep over London Bridge in the City of London.

He, along with another, was thanked in one of the recent Newsletters for the work they do around our church premises other than normal Sunday duties, such as the Big Clean Up—by getting rid of rubbish left by others.

This shepherd, in his working days, finished up as the Director in charge of London's famous Black Cabs. In his early days they came under the

Metropolitan Police Authority, but he saw and was involved in the change from Police Authorisation to there own Black Cab Company.

What made him a good shepherd was the care he gave to his flock; he was well respected by the Black Cab drivers. One of his loves was the charitable work Cabbies did for poor and disabled children throughout the year. A great excitement was to travel with the cabs bedecked with flags, balloons and streamers, all carrying excited youngsters and being escorted by Police Motorcycles with their flashing lights, to one of our Channel ports. Crossing the Channel to the



French side to be met and then escorted by French Gendarmes to Disneyland Paris for the day.

Because of his love for this charity work and the drivers respect for him, the Cabbies Livery Company put him forward to receive the freedom of the City of London. Around August this year our good shepherd received this honour.



Congratulations, Roy Ellis, on this great achievement for ‘herding’ your cabs so wonderfully and giving pleasure to hundreds of youngsters each year.

I expect we all would love to see you herding 5 or 6 real sheep over London Bridge, but perhaps it may be easier just to do that kind extra work that you do for our and your church flock.

*Derek Heaton*

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### **Street Pastors**

Congratulations to Tony Loft on completion of his Street pastor training. He is now a fully accredited Street Pastor.



There will be a Street Pastor team, including Tony, patrolling the streets of Wimbledon and Mitcham over the next few weeks. Please pray for them.

## **Churches Together in Merton Park November Update**

Members of the Churches Together in Merton Park meet as a committee four times throughout the past year.

The main events of the past year have been:

### **Autumn Event -**

The Autumn event focused on the Christian CARE Annual General meeting which took place on the 11th November at Morden Baptist Church. Following the business session there was an in-house presentation by volunteers and former clients of Christian CARE on the theme "Home, sweet home?". Director of Commonsides Community Development Trust Naomi Martin spoke about the lack of suitable housing in Merton to meet the demands. She answered many questions from those present.

### **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18-25th January)**

This year's Unity Service was held later in the year on the 10th May, 4pm at St John's Fisher Church. Canon O'Toole, the Roman Catholic Ecumenical officer spoke on the theme 'The Well is Deep' . During the service there was a generous offering for the work of Christian Aid at the start of Christian Aid week.

### **The Seder meal, 2016**

The proposed date for the Lent Seder meal is between 1st and 17th March 2016 led by a member of the Synagogue in Richmond. It will be a symbolic meal and probable venue will be at Martin Way Methodist Church

### **Easter Sunrise Service**

It has been a tradition since 2005 to celebrate Easter with a Sunrise service on Cannon Hill common. Despite the cold weather the small group met at 6 30am on 5th April to celebrate the start of Easter Day, and give thanks for the most important Christian event. Rev Keith Mitchell from Merton Park Baptist Church shared communion and an Easter message.

### **Christmas Leaflets**

As in previous years the CTiMP have produced leaflets with a Christmas message and including a list of Christmas services held in each church. The leaflets will be distributed to about 8,000 homes in Merton Park. The committee are extremely grateful to the many volunteers from each church who have given of their time to distribute these in the past.

## **Christian CARE**

Christian CARE have had a very busy year with more referrals made than in previous years. Gillian gives an updated report to the committee at each meeting. 'Housing for Women' is now managing the 'Refuge in Merton' and is looking to Christian CARE for short-term support as new families arrive without benefits and have to settle into an unfamiliar area. More volunteers are needed to meet the demand especially families in crisis. A family support organiser is still required and someone to coordinate and organise the camps. The furniture project and the distribution of baby and children's clothing have been exceptionally busy. One family had a wonderful holiday in Butlins and over 26 children went to Falcon camps this summer. The churches represented all made significant donations of foods during the year which has been greatly appreciated.

### **Future plans and dates for your diaries:**

Taize Autumn meetings; Monday 14 December, shared Advent meal at 22 Aylward Road, Spring dates; 11 January, 8 February and 21 March 2016 at St John Fisher RC Church 8pm

Rev. Canon Dr Jim Rosenthal will be licensed as the new Priest in Charge at St James' Church, Merton on January 6th 2016 (Feast of the Epiphany) at 8pm. There will be a reception to follow and all are welcomed.

Christian CARE New Year Party will be held on the 30th January 2016 at Martin Way Methodist Church

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service will be held at St James' Church. Date to be confirmed.

The Women's World Day of Prayer services on Friday 4th March 2016 will be held at Merton Park Baptist Church, Botsford Road at 11am and the evening service at Holy Trinity, Wimbledon Broadway at 8pm

Easter Sunrise service 27th March 2016 at Cannon Hill Common

The next meeting of CTiMP is on Thursday 19th November 2014 and 7th January 2016 at 104 Grand Drive, SW20 at 8pm.

Martin Way Methodist church do not have a Churches Together representative at present. Please prayerfully consider if this worthwhile role is for you.

*Gwen Wildman*



**BACK AFTER OVERWHELMING POPULAR DEMAND! NEW AND IMPROVED!**

Theatre503 present a Sleeping Trees production of

## **Cinderella and the Beanstalk**

**The Three Man Family Pantomime**

**25 November - 2 January £15/£12**

**(Pay What You Can on Sundays at 7pm)**

**Family Offer.** We want to make you and your family feel extra special this Christmas. See *Cinderella and Beanstalk* as a group of 2 Adults and 2 Children for **just £40**.

Suitable for ages 6+ (babes in arms under 24 months also welcome)

### **Cinderella and the Beanstalk**

**A festive treat for those who like their Christmas pantos with a twist!**

Josh, John and James (Smith) have written a pantomime. It's a riotous adventure with a whole host of exciting characters. They have fashioned the props, hired the costumes, booked the venue and rigged the lights; the stage is set. But on arriving at the theatre they realise they have forgotten one vital component: a cast.

A glorious cocktail of your favourite pantomimes! Follow Cinderella on a perilous adventure as the scheming Rumpel Stiltskin blackmails the would-be princess into retrieving the coveted golden eggs from the top of the beanstalk.

Cinderella must complete her quest in order to recover her glass slipper, but with Prince Charming, the Fairy Godmother and Jack's pregnant cow all doing their best to get in the way, these delicious, oversized eggs may not be so easily sought out...

Join these three performers as they recreate every character you'd expect to find in a Pantomime, as well as some you might not... whilst still doing their best to sing, dance and fight their way through ninety minutes of panto pandemonium.

For more information speak to Karen Smith or visit Theatre503 website at [www.theatre503.com](http://www.theatre503.com) where you can also book tickets.

## **Extreme Teenager**

*Taken from: Extreme devotion, the voice of the martyrs from the co-authors of Jesus freaks. Serious followers of Jesus pay a price, and extreme followers often pay the ultimate price. Each story is true.*

### **PAKISTAN : TARA**

Tara was a seventh grader in Pakistan when she secretly enrolled in a Bible correspondence course to learn more about God. Her strict Muslim family would never answer her questions about Jesus, and she was determined to find out the truth on her own.

But when her parents found her in her room reading Christian books, they became enraged. In November of 1992, they beat her so severely that she lay unconscious in a room for almost a week. She believes an angel finally woke her and helped her to get to a hospital.

Tara continued to grow in faith and in 1995 was secretly baptised. Then her parents arranged for her to be married to a Muslim man. When Tara refused to comply, she was again beaten. She was also made to stand for several days without sleep. During this time, Tara had three visions in which she heard a voice telling her, "I am with you, I am your Father."

After more beatings, she fell into a coma. She woke after three days and found herself in a pool of blood. She again heard the same encouraging voice saying, "I am your Father, I will protect you."

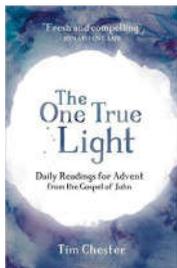
Tara was able to escape and today lives in a safe house in another country where she serves the Lord full-time with the promise of God's protection.

*Is Christianity a losing proposition? Those in restricted nations know what it is like to lose because of their faith in Christ. They know how they can lose their families in a number of ways. A Muslim family might completely reject converted family members as infidels. They are outcasts. A Christian family fares no better, though under different terms. Extremists wipe out entire Christian families because of their faith. The loss is horrendous. However, we have Christ's promise. Whatever we may lose for his sake will be recouped one hundred times over in our eternal life in heaven. It is not a gamble. It is a calculated risk based on the infallible word of God. Either you trust it, or you do not.*

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29)

## CHRISTMAS BOOK REVIEWS from RE:FRESH BOOKS

*These books are available from Re:fresh books & Christian Resources, 23 The Broadway, Tolworth, Surbiton KT6 7DJ or online at <http://www.eden.co.uk/clc/>*

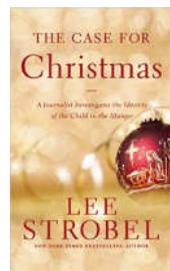


***The One True Light*** by Tim Chester  
96pages, paperback, RRP £4.99

We may be familiar with the baby in the manger, but have you met the Word who was in the beginning with God? Join Tim Chester as he guides us through the opening verses of the Gospel of John, and enjoy a Christmas infused with new meaning and light. With ideas for reflection, prayer and application, these short, meditative readings in the busyness of the run up to Christmas Day.

***The Case for Christmas*** by Lee Strobel  
96 pages, paperback, RRP £1.99

Who was in the manger that first Christmas morning? Some say he would become a great moral leader. Others, a social critic. Still others view Jesus as a profound philosopher, a rabbi, a feminist, a prophet, and more. Many are convinced he was the divine Son of God. Consulting experts on the Bible, archaeology, and messianic prophecy, award-winning legal journalist Lee Strobel searches out the true identity of the child in the manger



***Bake through the Bible at Christmas***  
by Susie Bentley-Taylor and Bekah Moore  
48 pages, hardback, RRP £6.99

Bake through the Bible at Christmas helps parents to explore the Christmas story with their child while having lots of fun cooking. This book contains 12 Bible stories, told in a simple, engaging style, that take a child through the events of the first Christmas. Each story is supported by a cooking activity.

***Tidings of Comfort and Joy*** by Pam Rhodes  
256 pages, hardback, RRP £14.99

Pam Rhodes is best known as the familiar face of the BBC's Songs of Praise, and here she brings together her personal selection of carols, poems, Bible readings and other inspirational passages from a wide range of sources with excerpts from Gervase Phinn's memoirs and funny poems by modern writers.



## ..... AND SOME FOR THE CHILDREN

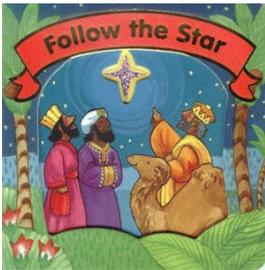
### *The First Christmas*

by Lois Rock

16 pages, paperback, RRP £1.00

(suitable for Children aged 3-5)

The First Christmas is an extremely popular mini storybook. The book follows the Christmas narrative found in Matthew with accuracy using simple language and colourful, inviting illustrations.



### *Follow the Star*

by Jesslyn DeBoer

12 pages, board book, RRP £1.99

(suitable for Children aged 2-5)

Travel with the wise men in this stand up book that is also a palace. Clear, strong pictures with interactive 'peek windows' help children remember the stories and help grown-ups voice the story even for the youngest (2 years up). Simple words and sentences support those early 'read for myself years' of 4 and 5.

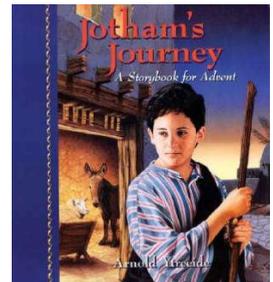
### *Jotham's Journey*

by Arnold Ytreeide

167 pages, paperback, RRP £9.99

(suitable for Children aged 8-13)

An exciting story for the advent season, readers follow ten-year-old Jotham across Israel as he searches for his family. Though he faces thieves, robbers, and kidnapers, Jotham also encounters the wise men, shepherds, and innkeepers until at last he finds his way to the Saviour born in Bethlehem.



### *Christmas Activity Fun Book*

by Tim Dowley

64 pages, paperback, RRP £1.99

(suitable for Children aged 5-11)

The Christmas Activity Fun Book is full of engaging and exciting activities. Inside you'll find mind puzzles, fun pictures, dot-to-dots, hidden objects and colouring pages all inspired by the Christmas story.

# CHURCH DIARY



Tue	1	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	6	10.30am	Morning Service led by David Eagle
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	8	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	11	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	13	10.30am	Gift Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	15	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.00pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Member's Evening</i>
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	18	5.00pm	Carol Singing for Action for Children at Morden Underground Station
Sun	20	10.30am	Nativity, Café Service and Parade led by Rev Paul Timmis
		6.30pm	Carols with SIGMA
Mon	21	5.00pm	Carol Singing for Action for Children at Morden Underground Station
Thu	24	5.30pm	Christingle Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
		11.30pm	Midnight Communion at Martin Way including Communion led by Rev Paul Timmis
Fri	25	10.30am	Christmas Day Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Sun	27	10.30am	Morning Service

*Please refer to the Website ([www.martinway.org.uk](http://www.martinway.org.uk)) or Weekly Notice Sheet for any additional information*



**CHURCH  
DIARY**



Sun	3	10.30am	Morning Service led by David Eagle
Fri	8	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	10	10.30am	Covenant Service with Holy Communion led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	12	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
		8.00pm	Leadership Meeting
Sat	16	10.30am	Big Brunch
Sun	17	10.30am	Communion Service led by Rev Chris Morley
Tues	19	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.30pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>New Year Social</i> - Music with Colin Smith and friends
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	22	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	24	10.30am	Morning Service led by Tony Loft
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	26	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	31	10.30am	Café Worship led by Rev Paul Timmis

We wish all of those who celebrate a birthday  
in either December or January a very

## *Happy Birthday*

and especially to:

**Natalie Johnson on 2nd December**  
**Kabelo Sepanya on 13th December**  
**Zandile Sepanya on 16th December**

**Kutloano Sepanya on 19th December**

**Floyd Sepanya on 24th December**

**Christopher Sweby on 23rd January**



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### **Dates for your Diaries**

The Flush Fund Girls have two dates in the future for you to put in your diaries to help us fund raise for the new loos.

On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2016 we shall be holding a Valentine's Lunch the lunch will consist of 3 courses. The price will be £7.00 for adults and £3.00 for under 12's. Plus we shall be holding a raffle and who knows you might be a lucky winner. Tickets will go on sale in January, when you purchase your ticket please do not forget to say if you are a vegetarian.



The other date is Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2016 when we will be holding a Spring Craft Fayre there will be refreshments served throughout the day, so please come along and enjoy a lunch or afternoon tea or both if you want! Browse among the stalls, and enjoy yourself.

*Sylvia Baxter*

Items for the **February Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox,  
(email: [roife@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:roife@hotmail.co.uk)) by **Sunday 17th January** at the latest