

MINISTER'S LETTER



Christmas is a time when images of darkness and light come to the fore: perhaps because of the writings of Isaiah – *the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light*; perhaps because of the writings of John – *the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it*.

We know all about darkness and light: they're part of our common human experience. They don't need to be explained: we all know what they are and how they make us feel. The contrast between light and darkness is striking and its imagery powerful.

The story of Jesus was set in and told in dark times – against a backdrop of occupation and oppression. It was no accident that images of darkness and light were used to tell this story. If we're in darkness, we're going to accept the offer of some light aren't we? So the early Church began to speak of Jesus as light for the world because the contrast between light and darkness is striking, because its imagery is powerful and because Jesus' message of life and love and hope is indeed a message for those living in dark times.

We know all about dark times. Think tidal waves and floods. Think famines and earthquakes. Think bombings and shootings. Think Government cuts and mass unemployment. It is precisely into dark times such as these that the light of Christ shines offering life and love and hope. But we have to be prepared to look for it – even in the most unexpected of places – and recognize it for what it is.

Whenever something lifts our spirits and/or renews our faith in humanity or God; whenever we find a message of life and love and hope – there we'll find the light of Christ shining.

May you find light for your darkness this Christmas.

With every blessing

Paul



SIGMA CHRISTMAS PRODUCTION

As you know SIGMA has put on a production at Christmas as part of the Seasonal Celebrations. This years Sigma Production is called 'The Greatest Show on Earth' by Derek Hobbs and Mike Kirkup.

This year there will be two performances, the first will be on Saturday 18th December at 7.00 pm, with a second performance on Sunday 19th December, also at 7.00 pm. Why not come to the Carol Service on the Sunday as well at 5.00 pm and stay for a mince pie before the SIGMA performance?

Both performances will be held in the church hall and is suitable for all ages from the youngest to the oldest!

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BIBLELAND THANKS

We offer yearly 'thank-you' to everyone who has supported our little charity whether by collecting stamps, purchasing from their Easter or Christmas catalogues or simply by donating. We thank you still on behalf of **Biblelands** and all their overseas partners of Schools, Hospitals, etc in Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt.

May God bless everyone of you who have made such a difference to the lives of so many folk less fortunate than ourselves.

Mary and Derek Heaton

Will you be breaking the law this Christmas?



If you are a British citizen, living in Britain, and you do not walk to church on Christmas Day, you are acting illegally. This may be hard to believe, but it is true.

The problem arises because Christmas Day has, over the centuries, attracted a great deal of attention from puritani-cal law-makers. Every so often they have prohibited this or banned that, for some specific reason. Their antique laws have remained on the statute book and are still in force

today, even though nobody ever takes any notice of them. The result is that approximately 50 million people break an old law in Britain every Christmas - for one trivial reason or another.

The most extraordinary law that has yet to be repealed is the Holy Days and Fasting Days Act of 1551. This demands that every citizen must attend a Christian church service on Christmas Day. This will come as a surprise to the many Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists who now hold British citizenship, not to mention the atheists, agnostics, and all the 'lazy' Christians who never bother to attend church services. Once a year they all become law-breakers.

Even for those devout Christians who do attend a Christmas service, there is a major hazard, especially if they live a long way from their local church. The same Act of 1551 insists that they shall not, under any circumstances, travel to the service in any kind of vehicle. Those Christians sufficiently criminal to break this law are in for serious trouble. The police have the power to remove their vehicles and sell them. The money raised from the disposal of these confiscated luxuries is then distributed to the poor.

The object of this curious law was presumably to render everyone equal

on the Holy Day. It prevented the rich from displaying their wealth by arriving at church in their expensive carriages. Today it would mean leaving the Ferrari at home -and, for that matter - the vicar's bicycle.

This particular aspect of the 1551 Act does not seem to have met with a great deal of success, judging by the necessity to add a further law in 1847. This allowed the police to shut off the roads around churches on Christmas Day and to re-route any vehicles seen attempting to approach a place of worship.

Taken from 'Christmas Watching' by Desmond Morris

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NOT ASHAMED DAY



Not Ashamed is about Christians living out their faith in public. Jesus is Lord of Lords, not just at home or in church, but at school and the workplace.

Unfortunately there have been cases where employees have been told they cannot demonstrate their allegiance to Christ by wearing a cross, or come under pressure due to speaking for Jesus at work.

On 1st December 2010 we will be asking Christians across the nation to wear a cross to show their support for Christ, and this campaign, and are praying that many opportunities will be created for Christians to share Jesus with their friends.

Christian Concern for the Nation.

Visit their website at www.christianconcern.com for more information about this and other issues.

Gwen Wildman

THE LARGEST STATUE OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD



Hundreds of Roman Catholics gathered in western Poland on 21st November for the consecration of the world's largest statue of Jesus Christ. The statue is just over 167 feet (almost 51 metres), including the golden crown which is over 6 feet (about 2 metres) in height, making it taller than Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer.

A Polish bishop has invited Catholics to attend the unveiling of the world's largest statue of Christ in

Swiebodzin, a town 20 miles from the German border, which will rise on its mound to 213 feet (over 65 metres) and be visible for at least 10 miles (16 km) in each direction.

“This is an act of homage, through which we seek to honour the Saviour and recognise his universal reign,” Zygmunt Regmunt, the bishop of Zielona Gora-Gorzow, told members of his western diocese. “Being full of trust in Christ, the faith cannot remain only an internal act – it should also be expressed externally, firstly through a life worthy of the Gospel. The faith also needs certain material signs to give it testimony, and this monument is just such a testimony of faith.”



The bishop circulated the pastoral letter as final work was done on the reinforced concrete statue, which will tower at least 40 feet (12 metres) above that of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. He said the edifice had been a personal project of the local parish



rector, Mgr Sylwester Zawadzki, to commemorate the town's dedication to Christ the King in 2000, adding that he wished to thank Polish Catholics at home and abroad who had donated money, as well as town and country officials who had supported it.

Andrew Fox

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A REMINDER

The Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service will be held on the 23rd January 2010 at St John Fisher at 4pm.

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WHO CALLS ME BEAUTIFUL

In November 2001, when we visited Canada to view Polar bears in the wild tundra of Churchill, Hudson Bay, we stayed 'Bed & Breakfast' at the Alliance Church Manse with the Rev David Caskey and his wife, Marion.

We have maintained contact with them ever since and last week a letter from them contained the following, which we wish to share with you now. We hope you find the words as inspiring as we have.

Mary and Derek Heaton

Who Calls Me Beautiful

by Regina Franklin

1. We must allow the words that we hear from others to be filtered through Scripture.
2. We must change the way we speak about ourselves.
3. We must learn to identify the words spoken by the one who seeks to destroy our souls. Satan is a liar.
4. We must hear what God has to say about me.

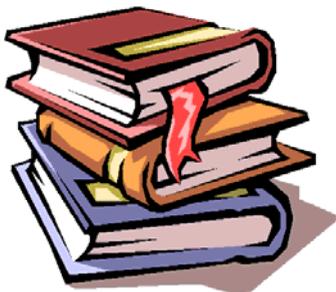
Author's adaptation from 1 John 3:2; Isa 43:1; Matt 13:46; Eph 1:4; Rev 13:8; Ps 154:4; Song of Solomon 7:10; 6:3

Before the beginning of time, I knew you. I know what colour your eyes would be, and I could hear the sound of your laughter. Like a proud father who carries a picture of his daughter, I carried the image of you in My eyes, for you were created in My image. Before the beginning of time, I chose you. I spoke your name into the heavens, and I smiled as its melody resounded off the walls of my heart.

You are Mine. My love for you extends farther than the stars in the sky and deeper than any ocean. You are My pearl of great price, the one for whom I gave everything. I cradle you in the palm of My hand. I love you even in the face of your failure. Nothing you say or do can cause Me to stop loving you. I am relentlessly in My pursuit of you. Run from Me - I will love you. Spurn Me - I will love you. Reject yourself - I will love you. You see, My love for you was slain before the foundation of the world and I have never regretted the sacrifice I made for you at Calvary. When I see every part of who you are, I marvel at the work of My hands, for I whispered words of longing, and desire and you came into existence. You are beautiful, and I take pleasure in you - heart, mind and body. You are my desire. When you turn your head in shame and despise what I have made, still I reach for you with gentle passion.

You are my beloved and I am yours.

MARTIN WAY CHURCH LIBRARY CLOSES



It has been decided to remove the Library from the Vestibule area (by entrance to hall).

To this end if you would like to take any of the books - please do so. Any remaining books will be removed in the New Year.

The Leadership Team

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WHY GO TO CHURCH?

A church-goer wrote a letter to the editor of a local newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now" he wrote "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So I think I am wasting my time and the minister's are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."



This started a real controversy in the 'Letters to the Editor' column much to the delight of the Editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher.

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me I can't recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: they all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me those meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today."

Author unknown



WINTERSHALL

CHRISTMAS NATIVITY PLAY



I am happy to invite you to our well known and ecumenical Wintershall Nativity Play and do hope that you can attend one of the ten performances, which run from Friday 17th December until Tuesday 21st December. This wonderful production takes place both inside and around the Holly Barn Theatre at Wintershall, Guildford, complete with shepherds and sheep, oxen, donkeys and the three wise men on horseback. Bookings can be made

online, by post or by phone. For more information and to book tickets phone 01483 892167 during normal working hours or visit our website at www.wintershall-estate.com.

Any surplus funds created by these performances, and if we get full houses I estimate a surplus of about £5000, will be applied towards the cost of putting on the Passion of Jesus in Trafalgar Square at Easter next year. The cost of doing such a venture is £75,000, which includes having the large video screens in the square. This year it is estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 members of the public were able to watch the performances, which of course no charge was made.

It is our aim to help strengthen the faith of those who know about Jesus, to bring faith and understanding to those not yet fortunate enough to know about him, especially children, and to refresh ourselves. I believe that this century Christian faith and influence could bring peace to the world and peace brings food, education, healing and joy.

*Peter Hutley MBE KSG
Wintershall*

Why are there Twelve Days of Christmas?

*On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love sent to me
Twelve lords a-leaping, eleven ladies dancing,
Ten pipers piping, nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking, seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying, five gold rings,
Four colly birds, three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear-tree.*

Everyone knows this verse, but why should there be *twelve* days? The answer is that, traditionally, it took the 'Three Kings' this number of days to find the baby Jesus. Their arrival on the twelfth day led - centuries later - to the creation of the Feast of Epiphany. This was first celebrated in medieval times in France and then later spread to other countries.

Long ago the Christmas season had lasted much longer, but there was a move to get the peasants back to work earlier, and the festive season was shortened so that it ended on Twelfth Night, the 6th of January. The first Monday following Epiphany was called Plough Monday, because it was the time the farm workers were expected to return to the fields.

Taken from 'Christmas Watching' by Desmond Morris

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MORDEN CAROL SINGING

It's that time of the year that we serenade the commuters of Morden. Once again we will be raising money for the National Children's Home and would welcome as many people to come along and join in the singing of carols at Morden Underground Station. We will be meeting at the Station on Monday 20th and Wednesday 22nd December and plan to start singing at 5.00pm and finish about 7.00pm both of these days.

GREENER CHURCHES IN WIMBLEDON

St Mary's has set up a committee to try and make this church's work and activities more environmentally-friendly. We are hearing about other local churches doing the same thing and wonder whether we could liaise to share ideas and expertise.

If you might be interested in what we are doing, please could you get in touch with me. If there is sufficient interest, we thought we might have an open meeting in early 2011 to see how we might make progress.

Mary Ann Turnbull

Phone: 020 8947 6550 Email: mturnbull@aol.com
or c/o Parish Office, 30 St Mary's Road, SW19 7BP

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CHRISTMAS POST BOX AND CARDS

As it has been our tradition over the years, we will again place our Christmas post box. The church Christmas post box will be outside the vestry from Sunday 5th December until Friday 17th December for those sending Christmas cards to members of the church community.

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 32p 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 Gwens!)

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 19th December.



The cards will be available for collection on
Sunday 19th December.

MARTIN WAY TOY SERVICE

5TH DECEMBER 2010

CHRISTIAN CARE ASSOCIATION



We would like presents – new or as good as new – to give to the boys and girls aged between 1 month and 11 years who attend the Christian Care Association New Year Party in January 2011.

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.

Cars, trucks, trains, Lego, games – appropriate for different ages
{Note: We cannot give toys and games with expensive batteries which have to be replaced. We cannot use jigsaws and games with small pieces that are easily lost}
War games, Monopoly and Scrabble are not suitable.

Dolls, anything from Action Man, Spider Man and Superman
{Note: We do not require soft toys}

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
{Note: Not dictionaries, encyclopaedias}

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

CHRISTMAS COLOURING TIME

The wise men arrive with presents, but Jesus' crib is missing, can you draw one and then colour the picture?



CHURCH DIARY



Weds	1	7.45 pm	Midways Group - <i>Camera in India</i> - Dr Peter Brandham
Thurs	2	8.00pm	Church Council Meeting
Sat	4	10am-1pm	Big Brunch
Sun	5	10.30 am	Toy/Gift & Parade Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	7	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Fri	10	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	12	10.30am	Morning Service led by Brenda Cannon
		6.30pm	Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	14	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		7.30pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Christmas Celebrations</i> <i>with Midways</i>
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	15	7.45pm	Midways Group - <i>Mince Pies and Carols</i>
Sat	18	7.00pm	SIGMA presents "The Greatest Show on Earth" - A Special Christmas production
Sun	19	10.30am	Nativity Service with Holy Communion led by Rev Paul Timmis
		5.00pm	Carols by Candlelight led by Rev Paul Timmis
		7.00pm	SIGMA presents "The Greatest Show on Earth" - A Special Christmas production
Mon	20	5.00pm	Carol Singing for NCH at Morden Station
Tue	21	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	22	5.00pm	Carol Singing for NCH at Morden Station
Fri	24	5.00pm	Christingle Service
		11.30pm	Midnight Communion at Wimbledon Church
Sat	25	10.30am	Christmas Day Service led by Rev Paul Timmis

CHURCH DIARY



Sun	2	10.30am	All Age Worship led by Joanna Williamson
Tue	4	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Weds	5	7.00pm	Midways Group - <i>Quiz Night</i> - Janet Laker
Fri	7	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sat	8		Big Brunch
Sun	9	10.30am	Covenant Service with Holy Communion led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	11	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	16	10.30am	Morning Service led by David Eagle
Tue	18	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
		7.30pm	Men's Supper Club - <i>Member's Evening</i>
Weds	19	7.00 pm	Midways Group - <i>Revisiting Greece</i> - Derek and Mary Heaton
Fri	21	12.30pm	Luncheon Club
Sun	23	10.30am	Morning Service led by Tony Loft
		6.30pm	Healing and Communion Service led by Rev Paul Timmis
Tue	25	10.30am-noon	Coffee and Chat
		8.00 pm	Time for Prayer
Sun	30	10.30am	Morning Service led by Rev Stuart Thomas

Please refer to the Website (www.martinway.org.uk) or Weekly Notice Sheet for any additional information



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

Zandile Sepanya on 16th December

Kutloano Sepanya on 19th December

Floyd Sepanya on 24th December

Christopher Sweby on 23rd January

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A New Face in the Circuit

Rev Dr Martine Stemerick, currently a minister in the Southend and Leigh Circuit, has accepted an appointment in the Wimbledon Circuit with effect from 1st September 2011, and will take pastoral responsibility for our Ruxley and Stoneleigh Churches, in place of Rev Margaret Adams, who will move to take pastoral responsibility for our Raynes Park and Wimbledon Churches.

Rev Faith Nyota will take up an appointment as Superintendent Minister in the Purley Circuit from the same date.

Tony Leach
Senior Church Steward

Items for the **February Newsletter** should be with Andrew Fox,
(email: roife@hotmail.co.uk) by **Sunday 16th January** at the latest