



HAPPY CHRISTMAS



ALL SAINTS'



Christmas message from Steve our Vicar
Prayer of a New Guinea Christian

Lord, oil the hinges of our hearts' door that they swing gently and easily to welcome your coming. At the Advent season we should try the key to our heart's door. It may have gathered rust. If so, this is the time to oil it, so that the heart's door may open more easily when the Lord Jesus wants to enter at Christmas time.

As we approach Advent and Christmas 2009 we have a window of opportunity to see for ourselves how much we are valued by God, who has chosen to become part of all that it means to be human.

Young children start the countdown to Christmas far earlier than we do, anticipating the special festivities and gifts, and for them it is new every year. There is wonder and delight in their hearts as the great day draws near.

Older and more cynical hearts can take it all in their stride because many Christmases have come and gone. What can we do when our hearts, in the words of the prayer above, have become "rusted" to God? When the first wise men met Jesus they knelt before him. To what or whom will we give the gift of our lives? Christmas is all about gifts, and God has given humanity the greatest gift possible. There is only one gift God is hoping for in return from us, and the poorest can become rich by giving it. (2 Cor : 8,9).
I wish you a Happy Christmas - Steve Lees Vicar of All Saints'

Christmas Events At A Glance

NOVEMBER 29th

9.00 Holy Communion
10.30 Morning Service
18.30 Informal worship

December 6th

9.00 Holy Communion
10.30 Family service and baptism
18.30 Evening Communion

December 13th

9.00 Holy Communion
10.30 Special Family Service
18.30 Evening Communion

December 20th

9.00 Holy Communion
10.30 Morning worship
18.30 Carol Service

December 24th

22.45 Midnight Communion

December 25th

9.00 Holy Communion
10.30 Family Service



WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME



MATT MACGREGOR

Christmas is infested with consumerism, debt and despair whereas it should be a time of wonder, reflection and joy. And as a young Christian I can feel pressured to say all sorts of different things just to fit in with whatever the world is saying around me. For me, I want to go out and enjoy the time of year – for all the right and original reasons.

If you're in a good church, with people you know and love, the Christian way of celebrating Christmas is perhaps one of the most satisfying and enjoyable - the general wonderment and joy - but it is for all and not just the kids.

MARGARET GREAVES

I love Christmas, but have found the money side of it very stressful. Let me explain, as a Christian I have always celebrated this festival as the birth of Christ, an amazing gift from God to save us from our sins. However I sort of separated the celebration of Christ's birth from the family celebrations. This always caused stress both financial and organisational. However, over the years I have made it all about celebrating Christ's birth with the giving of presents and enjoying Christmas fare.

So I pray everyone will celebrate Christ's birth and accept his love and saving grace at this special time.



ABIGAIL KEMP

As much as I enjoy opening my presents, spending time with my family and eating the roast dinner (!), the true meaning of Christmas to me is the fact that Jesus was born on that day.

Another thing that means a lot to me is that I have my own Christmas tree and Nativity set. I love to decorate the tree and when I was younger, I used to act out the Christmas story with the figures.

Now that I am older, I understand the significance of Christmas and the amazing gift God gave us ... JESUS!

KEN SAWYER

Many things about Christmas have changed since I was a child 80 years ago. Christmas is now in our consumerist society often renamed Xmas. My family were not frequent churchgoers but at the age of 12 at grammar school I discovered there was much more to Christmas than just nativity plays. I came to realise that at Christmas we were celebrating that God had become a human amongst other humans. He then met with sick people, those on the margins of society and that if I chose he could also meet with me. Over the years as my faith matured I began to understand the real Christmas experience of "God with us and in us". I have lived my life in a relationship with God and it is this that brings joy, pleasure and the realisation that Christmas is for life.





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LINDA MASLEN



As a child I went with my family to church and learnt about Jesus being born in Bethlehem. I became a Christian when I was 13 but then drifted away from church. The meaning of Christmas became dim and just another story. In October last year I hit a crossroads. Although I had achieved so much in my life in raising my children and having a successful career suddenly there felt to be no purpose to my life and even my marriage was under threat.

So Christmas last year was very special as I turned back to my faith relationship with Jesus. In the run-up to Christmas I did the normal preparations, buying presents, preparing food and meeting family and friends. I wanted Jesus to be at the centre of my preparations so throughout December I looked at the Nativity story once again to see how God touched different people's lives and how they responded. The angel appeared to Mary and Mary was willing to accept what God had planned for her. Joseph listened to God and was obedient. The shepherds and Kings witnessed Jesus' miraculous birth and welcomed him. God had a relationship with each person in this story. In the person of Jesus God had come to earth. One of the names we use for Jesus is Immanuel which is a Hebrew word meaning 'God is with us'. So heaven had opened and Jesus the Son of God had been born as a baby in Bethlehem. He had come to this earth to die for me and all the things I have done wrong, and create a path back to God. God's love is without any conditions attached and like the people in that first Christmas story I welcomed him into my life.

WENDY PULLEN

The Christmas story is about the gift of a miracle baby being born, approaching Christmas this year I have my own miracle baby. We were told we couldn't have children without IVF treatment after two years of trying, and on the day of my first IVF treatment they told me I had conceived naturally. This was a gift from God, a miracle and I believe it was through many prayers from friends, family and ourselves. Christmas is a special family time for us but this year will be even more so with our wonderful baby boy!

JOANNA LEES

For my friends it's seeing the coca cola advert appear on TV for the first time that Christmas. For my mum it's having the excuse to indulge in 'It's a wonderful life' for the hundredth time. For Marks and Spencer's it's whether they can top the number of Mince Pies they sold the previous year. For me it's going to the Lincoln Christmas Market with my family for what must be nearly the 17th year running!

But why are these things so special? Why should we think this day is going to be any different to any other? Well, maybe that's what the Shepherds said on that first Christmas. However, they began to realise what a momentous day this would turn out to be. It was the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, it was the answer to the prayers of the Jews. It was my saviour leaving his father in heaven and coming down to our level. To hang out with the bottom of the pile, to heal the people no one would go near and to give hope to those who had given up trying. He turned their world upside down; he did the same to mine... what's to say he couldn't do the same to yours this





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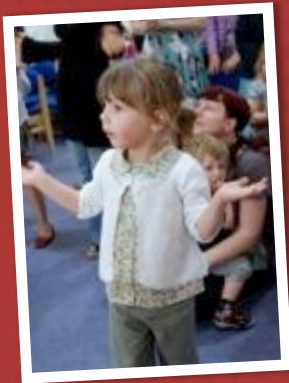
SARAH KILLINGBACK

When I attended the Alpha course last year I was quite happy with my faith. I believed in God, prayed quite a lot and enjoyed singing hymns in church. I brought my family to All Saints on Christmas Day last year but it felt like an eccentric thing to do and was a nightmare to organise with the rest of my family.

Over this last year, however, I have changed in ways I believe are evidence of the Holy Spirit working in me. I go to church now, not because I think I should, but, because I love to worship my Heavenly Father in His house. I go to my house group because I love the fellowship of other Christians and have a thirst for knowledge about His Word. Whereas previously my prayers were of an entirely thankful nature (because I didn't like to ask for anything I didn't deserve), Jesus has answered so many of my prayers in the last year that there wouldn't be room on the page for the details.

The Holy Spirit has enveloped me in a wonderful peace at times which, previously, would have been just too challenging. Whenever I get panicky, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to calm me down. This Christmas I will bring my big man and my little man to celebrate Christ's birth with my extended church family, knowing there is nowhere I would rather be, before going up to my mum's for lunch. (Again, knowing there is nowhere I would rather be).

SPECIAL EVENTS



SUNDAY 13TH DECEMBER 10:30 FAMILY SERVICE

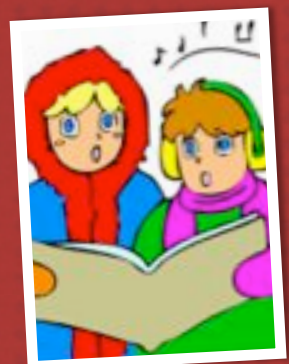
Our Christmas Family Service will be led by our children and young people. It will be lively and will include, a nativity a dance and our children talking about their experiences of meeting Jesus the worship will be led by the children. It would be great to see you whether you're a few days or over 100 years old. Come and join us for refreshments after the service.

SUNDAY 20TH DECEMBER 10:30 SUNDAY CLUB

This will be the last Sunday Club before Christmas and any children who are with us will be able to make a Christmas tree decoration, a Christmas card and to ice a bun. It will be very messy but great fun. Any children of any age are welcome to join us. Anyone who brings a child to Sunday Club will receive a warm welcome in the main church service.

18:30 Carol Service

A festive service of carols and songs, many of our congregation will be helping re-tell the Christmas message in new ways. Please come along and join us. You will be very welcome.



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