

Deane St Mary's

December 2009/January 2010

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The next edition of St Mary's magazine will be published on January 16th and will cover the second half of January and February. Please let the Editor or any member of the magazine team know of any matters for inclusion or suggestions as to content.

Team Anne Roberts (Ed)
 Margaret Howard
 Elizabeth Plant
 Barbara Winder
 Charles Winder

St Mary's Info: Dec 2009/Jan 2010

	9.00	10.30	6.00
Dec 6	Holy Communion	All Age/Parade	Holy Communion
	Mal 3:1-4; Lk 3:1-6	Luke 3:1-6	
Dec 13	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Evening Service
	Zephaniah 3:14-20; Luke 3:7-18		
Dec 20	Holy Communion	Family Nativity	Carols by Candlelight
	Mic 5:2-5a; Lk 1:39-45	John 1:1-14	
Dec 25	Holy Communion	All Age/Communion	
	Heb 1:1-4; Jn 1:1-4		
Dec 27	Holy Communion	S o W	Evening Service
	Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:25-35		Old Year - New Year
Jan 3	Holy Communion	All Age	Worship and Prayer
	Jeremiah 31:7-14; John 1:1-18	Ephesians 1	
Jan 10	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Evening Service
	Isaiah 43:1-7; Luke 3:15-17, 21, 22		
Jan 17	Holy Communion	Baptism	Evening Service
	1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:22-40		

There will be NO late evening Communion on Christmas Eve at St Mary's. However, there will be a service of Holy Communion at St Andrew's (time: tba—watch notice sheet).

A Warden Writes

The Season of Advent

The word **Advent** means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God.



In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolises the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power.

That acknowledgment provides a basis for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. It also highlights our responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbour as yourself."

Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing. There is a yearning for deliverance from the evils of the world, first expressed by Israelite slaves in Egypt as they cried out from their bitter oppression. It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet who have hope of deliverance by a God who has heard the cries of oppressed slaves and brought deliverance!

It is that hope, however faint at times, and that God, however distant He sometimes seems, which brings to the world the anticipation of a King who will rule with truth and justice and

righteousness over His people and in His creation. It is that hope that once anticipated, and now anticipates anew, the reign of an Anointed One, a Messiah, who will bring peace and justice and righteousness to the world.

How should we at Deane respond?

It has been a difficult year economically and some members of our congregation have faced unemployment, and others reduced incomes; others have faced illnesses and bereavement, but it is indeed now a time of expectation, anticipation, and preparation.

In this time of interregnum the church family has pulled together to fill some of the gaps that we inevitably have in the parish without a Rector.

The PCC and its sub committees have worked hard to keep the business and the spiritual life of the church going. We are very fortunate that Archdeacon David was supportive from the start in our quest to find a new Rector.

We have now appointed a new Rector (*details elsewhere in the Magazine*) and his induction service will be on the 1st of February 2010. Can I encourage you all to attend this service of welcome and celebration, which will be presided over by Bishop Chris the Bishop of Bolton.

We are also looking forward with anticipation to the new hall (Deane Church Hall) which will provide us with an excellent facility for all our church groups and provide a resource that can be used by the community.

Please remember in your prayers our new Rector as he prepares to join us and the PCC and the sub committees as we all look forward in anticipation in this season of Advent.

Craig C. Mochrie

Are you looking for Christmas presents?

Why not visit Deane Church Shop at 292 Wigan Road?

Opening hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 10-4

Wednesday 10-1

Christmas Poems

By U A Fanthorpe

BC - AD

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeeper presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect
Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven.

THE SHEEPDOG

After the very bright light
And the talking bird,
And the singing,
And the sky filled up wi' wings,
And then the silence,

Our lads sez,
'We'd better go, then.
Stay, Shep, Good dog, stay.'
So I stayed wi' t' sheep.

After they cum back,
It sounded grand, what they'd

From UA
Fanthorpe's
Christmas Poems,
published by
Enitharmon Press,
www.enitharmon.co.uk, 020 7482
5967 by kind
permission.



seen:

Camels, and kings, and such,
Wi' presents—human sort,
Not the kind you eat—
And a baby. Presents wes for him.
Our lads took a lamb.

I had to stay behind wi' sheep.
Pity they didn't tek me along, too.
I'm good wi' sheep,
And the baby might have liked a
dog
After all that myrrh and such.

From the prospective rector

20th October 2009

To all at St Andrew's Church and St Mary's Church, Deane.

I'm thrilled to have been appointed as the next Team Rector of Deane Parish and am very much looking forward to moving to the parish in January and to starting work with and for you on 1st February.



My licensing service will be at St Mary's at 7.30pm on Monday 1st February and I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to be there.

I have been appointed to lead the parish and clergy team, and to have particular responsibility for St Mary's, just as John will continue to have particular responsibility for St Andrew's.

For the past nine years, I have been on the staff here in Whitfield Parish Glossop. I came to Glossop straight from Wycliffe Hall where I trained for ordained ministry, and over the past five years have been the minister of St Luke's Church, one of the two churches in our parish.

For those of you who are interested in biographies, I was born in Wolverhampton in 1962, and grew up a few miles from there, attending the local comprehensive school, then 6th form college before going off to Leeds University to study Plant Biology. After that I moved to Oxford University and worked on the biology of mahogany trees in the rain forests of the Far East, which included four months field work, mainly on Borneo.

I had been attending church since my late teens but only really got going as a Christian in my late twenties through attending a church in Oxford called St Ebbe's and being struck by the gospel of grace that was being preached there. I think

that up until then I had thought that you had to earn salvation somehow.

I worked for St Andrew's Christian Bookshops in Oxford for a while, helping churches and student unions develop their book ministries. Then I went back up to Leeds to do teacher training, staying up there to teach at Woodkirk High School. During those five years, I was a member of St Peter's Church in Shipley, the vicar of which was Chris Edmondson, now a bishop in a diocese near you! So, blame Bishop Chris for me being your new Team Rector since it was he who put me forward for ordination 12 years ago!

I am passionate about introducing people to Jesus Christ and seeing them find their best identity in him. I am passionate about helping Christ-followers grow towards Christian maturity. I am passionate about preaching. I am passionate about small groups where Christians can help each other to walk the Christian walk.

There is a bit more about me on my website (www.clark.cc) and, if you have trouble sleeping, there are lots of my sermons on there also which you can listen to!

Looking forward to meeting you personally. Please pray for me, and for St Luke's Glossop, as I prepare to leave here. And be assured of my ongoing prayers for you. God bless you.

Terry Clark

A Touch of Humour

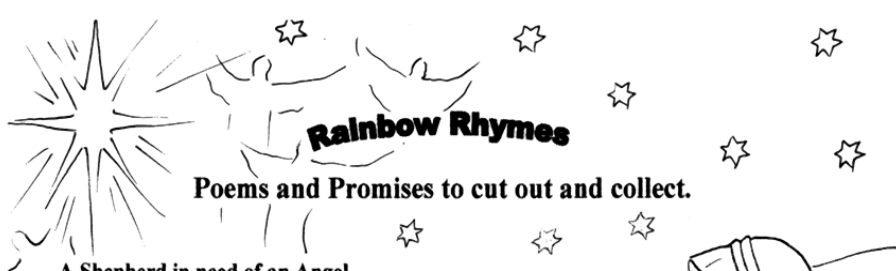
'Keep away from children' - on bottle of baby lotion

'No walking, sitting or playing on the grass'

- In London pleasure park

Emergency telephone 174 km ahead

- on US highway



Rainbow Rhymes

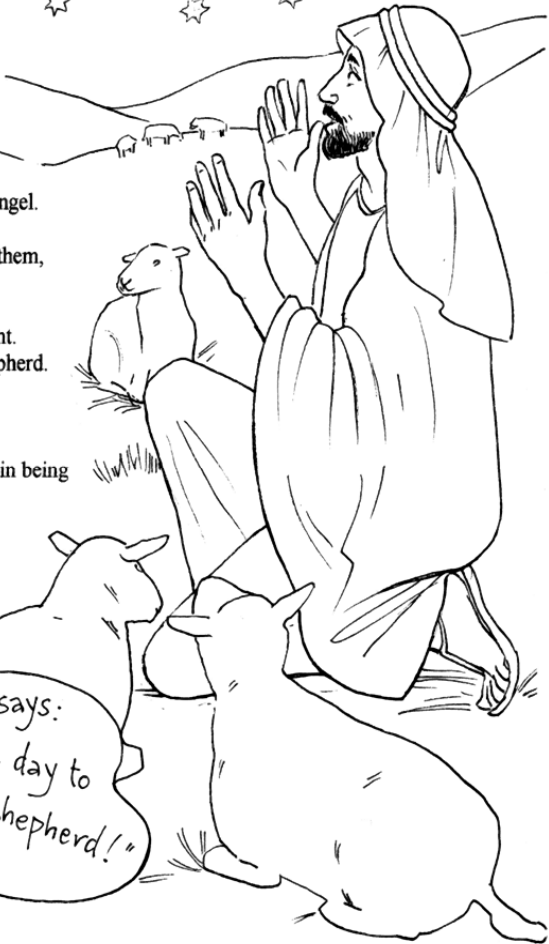
Poems and Promises to cut out and collect.

A Shepherd in need of an Angel

He didn't want to be there,
He was cold and lonely and sad,
He hadn't chosen shepherding,
It was just the job he had.
He was a shepherd in need of an angel.

But because he was there, he saw them,
In a sky full of songs and of light,
Angels, who needed a listener
To share the good news of the night.
They were angels in need of a shepherd.

And after he'd been to the stable,
The reflection of love in his face,
There was peace and contentment in being
A shepherd and in the right place.
A shepherd so glad of the angels.



Sol says:
"What a day to
be a shepherd!"

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard...
(Luke 2:20 NIV)

Poem by Daphne Kitching, Picture by Elaine Hill, Coloured by

The messenger God sent

This letter, written to a man named Diognetus in the second century AD, explains that the one who was sent by God to earth was not an angel or servant or prince, but the being through whom all creation was created. The gospel of John begins with a similar reflection.

The Almighty himself, Creator of the universe, the God whom no eye can discern, has sent down from heaven his very own Truth, his holy Word, to be planted in the heart of the human race.

To do this, one might have imagined he would send some servant, some angel, some prince. But no. He has sent the very Artificer and Constructor of the universe, through whom the heavens were made, and the seas set within their bounds, whose word is obeyed by the very elements of creation, who assigns the sun the limits of its course by day, and commands the moon to unveil its beams by night, and orders the obedient stars to circle the heavens.

He is the Ordainer, Disposer and ruler of all things, of all that is in heaven and earth, of all the seas and all that they contain, of fire, and air, and the deep, of all that is above and below and in between. Such is the messenger God sent to the human race.

One might have imagined that his coming would be in power, terror and awesomeness. But no. His coming was in gentleness and humility. God sent him as a king might send his own son, and he came among us as a fellow human being. For God would save us by persuasion, not by compulsion, (there is no compulsion to be found in God) and he sent him not to judge, but out of love.

Anonymous epistle to Diognetus (second century)
translated by H J Richards

THE DEANE CANDELABRA

As far as we can gather from church records, this candelabra, now used most at Christmas time but always sited above the main aisle, was once used for general lighting and was an eighteenth century addition to the church at the time of Vicar JAMES ROTHWELL.

Vicar Rothwell was appointed on January 13th 1712 by order of Queen Anne, and was already a vicar of a Parish near Wigan, which he continued to oversee as well! Deane at that time was a parish of nine miles by ten miles, so already a considerable size to cover on foot or horseback.

He was the first vicar of Deane to start clear parish records and accounts, so we know far more about him than earlier vicars. His period in office was also a long one, from 1712 to 1766, so a number of changes occurred in his time there.

We know, for example, that he initiated a new hanging of bells for £40 in 1723, and that the fifth bell needed a new clapper which cost six shillings. In 1729 Anne Kenyon gave a new platter for communion inscribed with the information that she was the widow of George Kenyon of Peel Hall. And a copper weather vane was hung on the tower roof for six shillings.

The parish was large and contained only one graveyard at Deane so Vicar Rothwell ordered that the first hearse be built in 1725. It was made by Samuel Ridyar, Thomas Markland, Thomas Marsh, Thomas Craven and Nathan Monks. After a parish meeting of 1727, it was decided to give the hearse `a house` to keep it in.

A new Act of Parliament in 1734 required banns of marriage to be read, and considerable expense was required for the repair of the church roof, which had been initially thatched!. However the



problem of lighting such a large church was a significant one.

At a parish meeting of June 16th 1737 the wardens were authorised to purchase ` a decent brass candlestick to be hung up in ye parish church`. They bought the same candelabra we see today, though whether this was the same candlestick the meeting had in mind is open to question. We are not told how much it cost!

It is an 18 branch candle holder and it remained to light the church for all services until gas was introduced into the church in the nineteenth century, and of course electricity in the twentieth. When Vicar Rothwell died in 1766, he had been a vicar at Deane for longer than any of his predecessors, for 54 years.

Barbara Winder

Notice Board

Ladies' Guild

December/January

December 1	Christmas meal out
December 15	Carols and readings
January 5	AGM/White Elephant

*Ladies'
Dinner
29
January
Deane
Golf
Club
details
later
Make a note
in your
new diary!*

*10.30 readers and pray-ers
Anyone willing to read the lessons or
lead the intercessions at the 10.30
service, please contact David Dewhurst
asap. Help with intercessions is
particularly needed as the number of
volunteers has become depleted. The
more volunteers, the less frequently the
duty comes round. Please help if you
can. If you are currently serving in ei-
ther of these roles David will assume
you are willing to continue unless he
hears otherwise.*

Books4U

Recommended by the Parish Pump website

Five Impossible Things to Believe Before Christmas

By Kevin Scully, BRF, £4.99

Are you looking for a fresh look at things that we sometimes take for granted, skirt around or ignore completely - a dip-in book for Advent that sharpens our appreciation of and wonder at the season?

From the angel appearing to a teenage girl to give her the shocking news of an unexpected pregnancy, to the sudden appearance of mysterious 'wise men' following a star in search of a king, the Christmas story can feel so familiar that we can forget just how outrageous - and, humanly speaking, impossible - its many twists and turns really are.

Five Impossible Things to Believe Before Christmas provokes Christians to consider afresh the shock of what we are asking people to believe. Each chapter concludes with questions for personal reflection, exercises for group use and a prayer.

Silent Night

By Vicki Howie, Krisztina Kallai Nagy BRF, £7.99

Long ago, in the Church of St Nicholas in Oberndorf in Austria, Joseph Mohr wrote the words to the Christmas carol, 'Silent Night'. The music was composed by his friend Franz Gruber, to be played on a guitar... because mice had eaten through the organ bellows! This is the beautiful story of the mice that inspired the writing and singing of the famous song,

Silent Night is ideal for Children ages 5-7. It also makes an ideal gift from parents, grandparents or godparents, or as a gift or prize from church or Sunday School.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

I am the Chaplain at Bolton Hospice and as part of my post I am also the Bereavement Support Coordinator and I was asked to share through this article some of what this means.

Mission statements are all too common now, in coffee shops, factories, garden centres and churches, I wonder sometimes if they tell us anything but sometimes they do encapsulate the service, commodity or Gospel on offer, here is mine for the Bereavement Support Service:

"Allowing the bereaved the space, time and opportunity to tell their story as many times as they need to without advice, without preconceptions. An opportunity to be heard"

Many people get through the difficult process with the support of family, friends, church or religious community, others struggle for various reasons. Death has once again become the great taboo in society, the word is hardly used and we have euphemisms to make it easier, people are sometimes embarrassed and do not know what to say if they meet some one who is bereaved. Society sweeps death under the carpet and would rather the bereaved remain quiet, kept away from others and pulled themselves together. Of course, I am generalising and over simplifying but there is some truth in it. At one time when a woman gave birth it was very private and the pregnancy was hardly spoken of whilst death was very open. The dead person was taken home and the people visited to pay their respects, the family and friends wore mourning for sometime after the death and people understood the state they were in. Today we see babies born on television and nobody turns away but death is a bit embarrassing, people now "pass" they don't die.

Bolton Hospice is committed to supporting the family and friends throughout their contact with the Hospice, and this includes support after a patient has died. We take a multi-disciplinary approach to bereavement and every department is committed to listening and supporting patients, families and friends with their needs and the

Bereavement Support Service is very much a part of the team. The link with the Chaplaincy means that I often know the person and their family and friends through the day unit and the wards, which gives me a seamless move into the next situation. The service offers support and not counselling which is important to stress and important to me. Being bereaved puts people in a dreadful situation, their lives are changed, often drastically, much is different and the sadness, sorrow and loneliness, often accompanied by physical pain, is a natural, a right response to what has happened. We offer support not counselling to allow the bereaved a space to let out how they feel, to explore possibilities, just to be heard. Sometimes the bereavement becomes more complicated because of other circumstances such as previous bereavements, ill health, employment and financial situations and if we feel that the client needs more than support we would discuss referring into counselling outside our organisation.

Following a terminal diagnosis we can help patients, families and friends talk about issues raised. I may help a patient in planning their funeral. We look together at appropriate music, readings, family and friends who might want to take part, things that want to be said. This may sound morbid but in my experience the patient always feels a sense of achievement having done it and the family does not have to be too concerned about the actual funeral at a very difficult time. If that has not been done I will offer help to the bereaved about funeral arrangements or bring in the appropriate chaplain if needed. When a patient dies within the Hospice we issue a booklet to the relatives and/or friends with some advice and help.

If a patient dies in hospital or at home, but has any connection with the Hospice a card will be sent to their family or next of kin to reassure them that we are thinking of them and offering support if needed.

The bereaved who might be feeling vulnerable or in need of a chat can ring the Hospice at any time and will be able to talk to someone. The Bereavement Support is made up of the Coordinator, Bereavement Link Nurses and trained Volunteer Supporters. We offer

telephone advice, group sessions and one to one sessions at the Hospice. The sessions are usually an hour long and the supporter and the supported discuss the number of the sessions offered and at all times

the bereaved person has a voice and a say in the support offered. Informal group sessions occur monthly at the Hospice, where small groups meet to share their experiences and support one another, one session is in the afternoon, two in the evening. Our volunteers help at these sessions, not just with refreshments, but also by taking part in the discussions. We encourage those who feel they might like to support to come in and have a chat first to discuss which help might be most useful.

Three times a year we invite friends and family of the deceased to a service held at The United Reformed Church of St Andrew and St George in Bolton, A Time for Remembrance. The service consists of readings, music, quiet and the lighting of candles in memory of the lost loved ones, it is followed by refreshments and an opportunity to talk to Hospice Staff and Volunteers.

The names of those who have died are written in the Books of Remembrance, on the date of their deaths. These books are kept in the Prayer and Reflection Room of Bolton Hospice and relatives and friends are always welcome to come in and see them.

As Chaplain I am involved in the Light Up a Life services held in December at Bolton Parish Church and at the Hospice. These are well supported by the bereaved.

Finally I would like to share my ideas of Living with Grief and also share with you that I love my job.

Living with Grief

These suggestions may or may not be helpful but they are worth considering, remembering that there is no right or wrong.

Take things one at a time, bite size chunks. A day, a task, sometimes an hour, at a time.

Don't be afraid of tears; allow them to flow in public or private. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Some people choose a private place in which to cry, to think, to let themselves go. Allow yourself to do

what feels right for you. There is a Jewish proverb: What soap is for the body, tears are for the soul.

Forget any ideas of what is normal. Normal is a setting on a washing machine. Normal goes out of the window.

Everything in your life is changing. Expect other losses, as things are no longer the same.

Don't be afraid to ask for help and support, from friends, from professionals, from people you trust and will listen. Look after yourself. **Sleep when you can,** sometimes you might feel exhausted, don't wait for bedtime, sleep when you need to.

Don't forget to eat, it is easily done but it takes its toll on you body. If cooking is difficult buy meals that just need to be reheated, buy take-aways, eat in cafes or restaurants and take a newspaper, book or magazine to look at while you are eating.

Be kind to yourself; do things that you enjoy, do not push yourself to do things that you feel you ought to, you will know when you should or can do them.

Make no big changes in your life for a while. You are coping with enough change, don't add to it.

Don't be pushed into doing things you don't want to do. Holidays, weekends away, day trips, social evenings will happen when you want them to.

Always be honest with friends and family, if you are still upset, or do not fancy a big get together explain to them how you are feeling. Go out a little at a time, always know that you can go home at any time and know how you will do that and make it known that you may need to do that.

Trust your feelings about doing things, being with people and living through this tremendous change.

Trust those who are there for you. Don't worry about burdening them. If they are there for you they will remain.

Do not apologise. There is nothing to say "sorry" for.

Treasure your memories and honour them; they are your memories and they are special.

Mark Brackley.

The 12 Days of Christmas (possibly...)

When most people hear 'The 12 days of Christmas' they think of the song of the same name. It is believed by many that this song had its origins as a teaching tool to instruct young people in the meaning and content of the Christian faith. From 1558 to 1829 Roman Catholics in England were not able to practice their faith openly, so they had to find other ways to pass on their beliefs. The song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' is one example of how many people believe that they did it.

The song goes, "On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me..."

The 'true love' represents God and the 'me' who receives these presents is the Christian.

The 'partridge in a pear tree' was Jesus Christ who died on a tree as a gift from God.

The 'two turtle doves' were the Old and New Testaments.

The 'three French hens' were faith, hope and love - the three gifts of the Spirit that abide (1Corinthians 13).

The 'four calling birds' were the four Gospels, which sing the song of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The 'five golden rings' were the first five books of the Bible, also called the 'Book of Moses'.

The 'six geese a-laying' were the six days of creation.

The 'seven swans a swimming' were 'seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.'

The 'eight maids a milking' were the eight beatitudes.

The 'nine ladies dancing' were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

The 'ten lords a-leaping' were the Ten Commandments.

The 'eleven pipers piping' were the eleven faithful disciples.

The 'twelve drummers drumming' were the twelve points of the Apostles' Creed.

So the next time you hear 'The 12 Days of Christmas' you can make up your own mind: could this non-religious sounding song really have had its origins in the Christian Faith, or not? (see note on later page)

Share the Message of Christmas with Wesley Owen

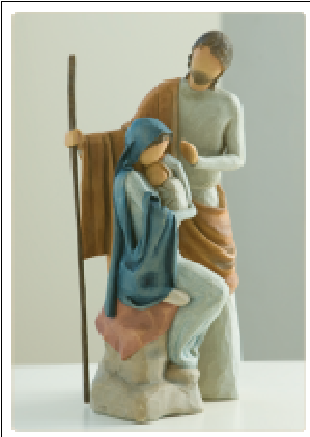
The Wesley Owen Bookshop, the only local Christian Bookshop, is sited at 129 Deansgate in Bolton, directly opposite the main Post Office. It is one of a chain of over 40 shops spread across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The vision of the company is to see lives transformed by God's Word. Last year over 100,000 Bibles were sold and the equivalent of over 3000 books a day went out of the stores.

Wesley Owen is a registered Charity - a non profit making organisation and as such has no shareholders. Each year any surplus from trading is given to a nominated charity. This year, from trading and donations we are hoping to raise £35,000 (£1 for every verse in the Bible) to support the printing and launching of a bible in Cebuano - so that 20 million people in the Philippines can have a bible in their own language. COMPASSION and TEAR Fund are charities who have benefited in recent years.

Trading has been difficult during the financial recession with cash flow sometimes limiting the renewing of stock. However none of our shops have had to close but to ensure continuing business all paid staff (of which we have four in Bolton - two full time & two part time) throughout the company have taken a wage cut. We do depend heavily on the help we receive from our volunteer staff and we rely too on the support of local churches and their congregations.

Whilst books and music (CD's and DVD's) are the main items of sale this is supplemented by cards and gifts throughout the year but especially in the run-up to Christmas. 10% of the cost of the packs of cards goes to our charity, to Tear Fund or to the Leprosy Mission, and there is a very wide selection of individual cards for relatives together with a selection of over 40 calendars for 2010.

With possibly the widest selection of Willow Tree figurines in Bolton these are very popular gifts all year and their Nativity scene, whilst expensive, is well worth collecting over the years. Less costly nativity scenes are also available. Other gifts include jewellery, cuff-links, pictures, photo frames, and ceramic mugs with a Christian



message, paperweights, leatherwork, insulated lidded beakers and many stocking filler items.

There is, of course, a very wide range of Bibles and books, both for adults and children, and a special offer of 3 books for the price of 2 is available on many books from now until Christmas making these very useful presents. At the season of Advent, as in Lent, many Christians try to make a special discipline of setting aside a time each day for reading a

book which focuses on the coming festival. Suggested reading, apart from "The Real Godsend" reviewed in this magazine, could be "Shock and Awe" by Ian Coffey published by BRF; and "The purpose of Christmas" by Rick Warren is worth reading. Other suggestions are- "Advent Readings from Iona"; "A prayer a day from Advent to Epiphany" or "5 impossible things to believe before Christmas". Details of these and many more can be found on the web site WesleyOwen.com. If the item you want is not in stock every effort is made to get it from the warehouse in Carlisle within 48 hours and often less.

A new introduction this year is the Loyalty card which is stamped whenever a customer spends £15 and having collected 6 stamps allows £10 off their next purchase. Reductions are made for registered clergy and also university students and for churches which make bulk purchases on Bible reading notes/Sunday school materials...

Finally - what better welcome for the new Rector than cards to welcome him to his New Parish or on his Induction? I hope to see sales of these cards increase next month!!

STOP PRESS

Since this article was written the situation has changed dramatically. On Monday 16th November a press release announced that the entire business has been put on sale. Your urgent prayers that a buyer will soon come forward would be appreciated. Custom from churches and individuals is needed more than ever as business continues.

Nativity Scenes

How many nativity scenes do you have? Size doesn't matter!

If you were in church last Christmas when I gave the talk at one of the all age services, you will know that I have over forty nativity scenes, all of which I put out every year! Some are large, some small, some old, some new, but I value them all.



This compulsion to collect cribs is a family habit, It began back in the late 1950s when a stable and figures arrived from my aunt who was living in Germany at the time as my uncle was stationed there with the British army. For perhaps ten years this was our only nativity, but then the collection started to grow. Many, but not all, have been bought while travelling.



One of the first was from Israel, said to be from olive wood from the Mount of Olives. There is another from Mexico, yet another from Peru and still another from Denmark. Under the tree goes a wooden crib from the Czech Republic.

In Canada I acquired one in coloured glass.

In Provence in France they sell santons as well as nativity figures, Santons go back to the time when Napoleon tried to abolish all religion and people were not allowed to put out Christmas figures. Instead they displayed figures of wood cutters, washerwomen, bakers, lace-makers, butchers, the list is endless. As a result today in Provence many nativity scenes are surrounded by all sorts of characters, as well as the usual shepherds and kings. So in Provence my mother bought santons and, as she looked for a suitable nativity to put them with, lo and behold, there in Marks and Spencers was one with figures which exactly matched those from Provence!

In recent years, I have tried to think small. Last year the crib I got in Chile was the size and shape of a hen's egg with tiny figures inside! This year my Armenian nativity is a wooden hand-made one: a simple figure of Mary with the infant Jesus.



But perhaps my favourite was made for me by my mother in hessian. She made an identical one for Bolton School. She even went to evening wood-work classes to learn how to make a stable!

So if you are near my home over the festive season, do call and see my collection. I do not think you will be disappointed!

Elizabeth Plant

Note concerning The Twelve Days of Christmas from the Editor of Parish Pump.

You may have heard this story before, and you may have heard that the Christian meaning behind it does not really exist. Who knows for sure? Parish Pump has tried to find out either way, but without any success. Certainly this interpretation has been found in many places (including the BBC website), and it is an interesting story.

My pilgrimage to Armenia

Elizabeth Plant

In November I wrote a little about Armenia explaining that, in 301AD, it was the first country to embrace Christianity and that its history has at times been violent and unhappy. In 1915 1,500,000 Armenians died as a result of genocide. In the 1990s thousands were killed in the war with neighbouring Azerbaijan, a war which was largely ignored by the international community.



One person who did a great deal to help the Armenians throughout the 1990s war was Baroness Caroline Cox whom many of you will have met when she came to speak in church in 2005. She has made 69 separate visits to Armenia, some during the most intense fighting. She herself came under fire many times. She is now regarded as a national hero by the Armenians. She was one of the leaders of our pilgrimage and everywhere we went she was warmly welcomed, often with a bouquet.

Many of our visits were to ancient monasteries, some dating back to the 7th century. One was to Khor Virap, the place where St Gregory was imprisoned underground for 13 years before being pulled out in 301AD and asked to heal the King's wife. It was because Gregory succeeded in curing her that the King declared that he and all his people would be Christians. We were able to go down into Gregory's dungeon. A church is now built above it where we held a communion service. To British eyes an Armenian church seems strange. There are no seats. Everyone stands. The altar is always on a platform five feet or more above the main part of the church and the steps up to this platform are often steep and narrow! From Khor Virap we could see Mt Ararat where Noah's Ark came to rest.

Another place we visited was Echmiadzin, the equivalent for

Anglicans of Canterbury. There we attended a service (two and a half hours long!) for Holy Cross Day which is a national holiday in Armenia. Because Lady Cox was our leader, we were granted an audience with the Catholicos of all Armenians who gave us a message to bring back to our churches. (see next month's magazine)

One poignant visit was to the Armenian enclave of Nagorno Karabakh. This is geographically inside Azerbaijan, but there is now a corridor several miles wide to enable travellers from Armenia to pass through in safety. Nagorno Karabakh bore the brunt of the 1990s war. We visited the war museum, the walls of which are covered with photographs of the thousands of young men who died. In one display case are wedding clothes which will now never be worn. We also went to the rehabilitation centre named after Lady Cox. There those disabled in the war and others who are physically or mentally challenged are given therapies and training to enable them to lead a fulfilling life. We met one deaf and mute young man who has become a skilled arts and crafts teacher. Work done by him and his students is now sold around the area.

The last visit was to a working seminary, looking much like a modern university hall of residence. There 78 men (women are not allowed to be priests) between the ages of 17 and 21 are being trained for ordination. One part of their training which did not feature in mine was singing, Almost all of an Armenian service is sung (in ancient Armenian) and so priests have to be powerful and fine singers. We were given a concert by the seminary choir. Afterwards we were able to chat with the seminarians and ask questions. They have a free choice whether they marry or not, but if they wish to marry they must do so before they are ordained. Once ordained they cannot marry. As ordination generally takes place when a man is in his early twenties, this is not quite as free a choice as it appears! Married men become and remain parish priests; they cannot move up the church hierarchy.

I thoroughly enjoyed my pilgrimage to Armenia, even though I went by myself. I would thoroughly recommend Pax Travel, the company with whom I travelled. Ask me for details!

This Month's Profile

Brenda Dixon

Brenda was born on the 4th of April 1933 in Townleys, now the Royal Bolton Hospital. She is the older of two sisters, Irene is three years younger than she is, and the family lived in Westhoughton. Aged four years, Brenda went to the Parochial School in Westhoughton and in the following year, when the family moved to Great Sutton on the Wirral, she began to attend the local primary school there. Her secondary education was completed at The St John's Street Secondary Modern School in Ellesmere Port.



During the War years in Great Sutton—the family had moved there as a result of Brenda's father's work, he was employed at the Shell Mex Oil Refinery—they were obliged to move twice because of bomb damage to their home. However, in 1948 they were able to return to Westhoughton when Brenda was 15 years old and ready to begin work.

While she was at school, Brenda was always more interested in sport, drama, dancing, sewing and cookery than she was in the three Rs. While she was in Bolton, at the age of 4 years, a pupil of the Francis Bleasedale School or Dancing, Brenda appeared at the Bolton Grand Theatre. In Great Sutton, she began reading the Bible in school assemblies and was confirmed in the local church.

When the family returned to Westhoughton, Brenda took a temporary job at the Co-op Pharmacy and stayed for 10 years! Meanwhile she studied at Night School in order to become a tailoress. It was time well spent as Brenda has always made her own clothes.

In her leisure time Brenda was very busy. She was involved with amateur dramatics, girl guides, and tennis and taught country dancing to members of the Westhoughton Towns Women's Guild.

Brenda met Bill when she was 17 years old. Bill was a choir member in Westhoughton and they both were members of the local youth club. They had the same interests—amateur dramatics, sport and ballroom dancing—and they were married at St Bartholomew's church Westhoughton in 1954. (Brenda's most treasured possession is Bill's wedding ring) Subsequently two sons, Peter and John were born and Brenda now has five grandchildren, three boys and two girls. Brenda and Bill began married life in Westhoughton but later took and moved to a small grocery shop on Tonge Moor.

In 1974, the shop was changed to a lock up dress agency where Brenda still continued to work, and Bill and Brenda came to live in Deane where they were nearer to Brenda's mother who was still in Westhoughton. Bill then worked at British Aerospace.

Brenda soon joined, and became active, in St Mary's Deane. She has served for a long period on the PCC, has been the Chairperson of the Social Committee and leader of the Ladies' Guild. She is now also involved in the Bereavement and Counselling Group, in visiting care homes and in the Deane Church shop.

When she is not busy doing things for other people, Brenda enjoys trips to the ballet and the theatre, beach holidays with the children and travelling, especially to the Lakes. She likes to eat out (her first menu choices being fish and desserts), to swim, to go for short walks and yoga. She also likes to read. Books that she has enjoyed include "Of Mice and Men" and "All my Sons"

Brenda feels that her mother and life have taught her several important things—to keep promises, honesty, to be non judgemental and to care for others.

Her hopes for Deane Church are that more young families will become involved in the spiritual development of the church and that the new hall will help the growth of the church within the community.

Bible Reading Notes

A new year approaching—an opportunity to get down to looking at God's word on a regular basis. Here are just a few suggestions. They can all be ordered or browsed at Wesley-Owen. Some give notes for all the year, some for a few months at a time. There's something for everyone!

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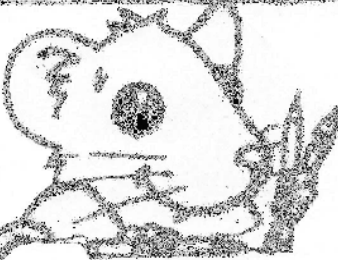
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[Day by Day with God](#)—daily Bible readings, comments and prayers from a regular team of women writers.

Ask at Wesley-Owen for undated guides to reading the Bible.



Winn-Dixie

Away in a manger,
 no crib for a bed,
 The little Lord Jesus
 laid down his sweet head.
 The stars in the bright sky
 looked down where he lay
 The little Lord Jesus
 asleep on the hay.

When the angels
 of the night
 saw the baby
 in the manger
 they were
 so glad
 that they
 sang
 a song
 of praise
 to the
 Father
 in
 heaven

and the shepherds
 came to
 adore
 the
 baby
 in
 the
 manger



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