

December 2023

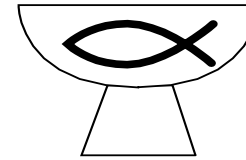
30p

Upton-cum-Chalvey Parish News

St Mary St Laurence St Peter



Luke 2:14



Parish of Upton-cum-Chalvey

The Anglican parish of Upton-cum-Chalvey includes St Mary's, St Laurence's and St Peter's churches.

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The Rector Writes:

Dear Friends,

On Sunday 3rd December, our churches will change. Nothing unexpected, but the white and gold of Christ the King will be packed away and sombre purple will be the order of the day. Flowers will be removed, and the Gloria will cease. It is Advent, and another Christian year begins. At such a moment it may be helpful to remind ourselves of why we keep the Christian year at all. Essentially, the church has its seasons to map the life of Jesus onto our lives. Through the church seasons we can enter more fully into his life and his life can touch and transform ours. In the northern hemisphere we have the additional benefit that the Christian year has been fitted to nature's seasons too.

So, in Advent, we express our longing for God in the darkest days of the year. Desires answered so wonderfully in the birth of the Light of the World. In Lent our 40 days follow Jesus's 40 days in the wilderness. Fully aware of our sins, we can then walk with Jesus in the last Holy Week of his life. The camera focus zooming in on the details of events as Good Friday and Easter draw nearer. Then on Easter Day all is new life in our festival of resurrection, new birth, and springtime. The other days we keep complete the story and the lesser feasts add more detail to the pattern. So, through the annual cycle the whole of the Christian message can touch the whole of our lives.

In some parts of the world, this pattern of celebration and restraint still shapes everyday life. Shops shut, street festivals enliven towns and menus change, weaving faith into every day living. The cookery writer Patience Gray spent long periods in Greece collecting recipes. She recounts how the diets of ordinary folk altered with the church year naturally and unselfconsciously. Her book is titled *Honey from a weed: feasting and fasting*.

Can we resolve to keep the Christian year with more care so that its pattern can be woven into our lives? Advent is the time to start. We can have a real Advent Calander, an Advent candle or wreath. Why not say a prayer at the Christmas Tree to make it more than a decoration or make switching on the lights an event, calling on God's light to be born. And above all, can we retain an element of waiting in our Advent? If we can let some Christmas actually happen at Christmas, it will be to our long-term gain.

Fr Scott

DECEMBER SERVICES & EVENTS

Regular services at the three churches are listed on the back page

Sun 3rd	11.00am	Advent Sunday: St Laurence's Dedication Festival and Gift Day, followed by Christmas Lunch (book in church or call 01753 532425 by 29th November) (SL)
Tue 5th	1.00pm	"Mulling It Over": Christmas Celebration (SL) - Note the time.
Sun 10th	11.00am	Christingle Family Eucharist (collection in support of the Children's Society) (SL)
	12.30pm	Carols in Herschel Park (outside, near kiosk), followed by tea and mince pies.
Mon 11th	9.30am	St Mary's CE Primary School Nursery at SL.
Tue 12th	2.00pm	St Mary's CE Primary School Nursery at SL.
Sun 17th	4.00pm	Town Carol Service, with donkey (SM)
Wed 20th	1.30pm	Carols for Christmas, including the Herschel Stars and Ukes (SL)
Sun 24th	4.00pm	Christmas Eve: Parish Crib Service (collection in support of Crisis) (SL)
	11.30pm	Midnight Mass (SP)
Mon 25th	9.30am	Christmas Day Family Eucharist (SM) (No services at SL or SP)
Sun 31st	10.00am	Joint Parish Eucharist (SM) (No services at SL or SP)

St Mary's News

The last week has seen the church full on two occasions. The first was when we welcomed Slough Music Service who hosted a singing day for Slough Schools. Over 200 Children arrived by coach from all over Slough and the place was soon filled with chatter, laughing and amazing singing. We look forward to welcoming the Music Service back for their Carol Concert on Tuesday 5th December. This promises to be a joyful occasion so please come and join us.

Remembrance Day saw the church full again with the Mayor, Town Council, local organisations, as well as members of the uniformed organisations together with members of the public wishing to join in the act of Remembrance. After the service, wreaths were laid at the War Memorial. Work has been carried out over the last few months to re-cut many of the names on the Memorial which had deteriorated with wear and tear over the last 100 years. Thank you to Segro who funded this work and also the stone mason who has worked in all weathers in the last few weeks to complete the work before 11th November. Thank you also to Gogym for their continued support in keeping the churchyard litter free.

Long Close School will be holding their Carol Service on Thursday 7th December at 3.15 pm and everyone is welcome to join them for another chance to sing and hear your favourite carol with the children and parents from Long Close School.

Obviously please do not forget the annual visit of Sally, the donkey, for the Town Carol Concert on Sunday, 17th December at 4.00pm. Come and join us with family, friends and neighbours.

Plenty of opportunity this year to join in singing Christmas Carols.

Jean

"Yvonne's Art Classes"

These art classes are held in St Mary's, every Thursday from 12.30pm to 3.30pm and are open to all.

St Laurence's News

Our Santa's Special FUNdraising event held in church on 18th November contributed £1,809 to our funds, the highest in the last four years, which makes this Treasurer very happy. Thanks to the organisers and Santa's little helpers.

Don't forget that our **Dedication and Gift Day** will be on **Sunday 3rd December** and will be followed by **Christmas Lunch** (book in church or call 01753 532425).

Christmas services around the parish are listed on page 4. These differ from the usual pattern now that Fr Alistair has left us, but will be as enjoyable as usual and focus on the true meaning of Christmas, the antidote to the rather tatty materialistic version we see elsewhere. We hope we will see many visitors, some of whom may join our church family.

Dave

NEXT MONTH'S MAGAZINE

Please let me have articles for the January 2024 issue by **Sunday 3rd December** at the latest!

Dave

Children's version of the Christmas story

- When the three wise guys from the east side arrived, they found Jesus in the manger.
- When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta
- Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.

St Peter's News

Our memorial service Sunday, 12th November, was a great success having restored the corpus to its rightful place on the memorial column the previous week. The congregation duly paid its respect to the fallen heroes. You may recall the corpus was removed and by some miraculous intervention returned by someone still unknown.

The Team vicar/School Chaplain vacancy went live on the 3rd November in the Diocese of Oxford eNews and the Church Times. Application closes 23rd November and interviews will begin 14th December. Fr Scott reported that he had received a couple of enquiries so far. Please continue to pray that we may find the right person.

The Vacancy prayer, compiled by Barry Marsden (LLM):

Dear Lord, call to our Parish and School a true shepherd and pastor, a servant of God, a minister of Christ, and make us, with your chosen servant, a parish joyful in worship and united in witness, working, nurturing, caring, praising, loving, to the glory of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

It is already over a month since we started to share our building with the Romanian Orthodox Church and the partnership seems to be going as well as could be expected with no major issues to date.

Christmas Fayre 25th November, 1-3pm: help is needed to set up in the morning, to help look after the stalls, as well as clear up after the event. Donations for the Tombola also very welcome.

Carolyn, our gardener, has planted some daffodils which will be supplemented with snowdrops and crocuses in coming days. All in time for a spring/summer blooming emanating in a lighter, brighter, tranquil Church surrounding. We are still in need of more plants and shrubs for anyone willing to donate.

Libby Watts, the architect presented four options to incorporate a kitchenette or Vestry/ kitchenette within the Church. We now need to confirm with Libby which option and direction the church wishes to pursue.

All members of the Local Management Committee who require to complete a safeguarding course have now completed the minimum requirement.

Eddie

Israel-Gaza Conflict – UK faith leaders condemn antisemitism and call for solidarity

The Archbishop of Canterbury was recently joined by Muslim and Jewish leaders at Lambeth Palace to condemn the sharp rise in antisemitic incidents since the start of the war in Israel and Hamas. They called for unity between British faith communities, against the backdrop of the war.

Archbishop Justin Welby, Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg stood together outside Lambeth Palace and delivered statements calling for solidarity and unity between communities in the UK, and rejecting any form of hatred or discrimination.

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra is a scholar and imam from Leicester, and a former Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain. Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg is the Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism UK, and Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue.

Prospect of winter energy bills causing anxiety for millions, says Archbishop of York

Millions are looking ahead to this winter with ‘fear and anxiety’ about the cost of heating their homes, the Archbishop of York has said as he backed the recent launch of a campaign to provide a network of warm spaces for people who struggle to pay their energy bills.

Archbishop Stephen Cottrell is encouraging churches to consider getting involved in the Warm Welcome campaign, a network of venues from community centres to churches providing warm spaces over the winter for people struggling to heat their homes.

Archbishop Stephen said: “Sadly, what began as a cost-of-living crisis has simply become the new normal for many.

“Millions of people will look ahead to this winter with fear and anxiety, wondering how they are going to cope with high living costs. That is why I am proud to endorse the Warm Welcome campaign this winter.

“But a warm welcome isn’t only about the temperature. It is about kindness and community, giving people the chance to be seen and known, to belong and to be part of something. It is about celebrating the God-given value and dignity of every single person, finding hope and community together. But of course, none of that will happen if people are cold.”

The Warm Welcome campaign is led by a coalition of over 50 charitable organisations who joined together in response to the cost of living crisis to provide emergency support to communities struggling to pay for rising food costs and to heat their homes.

Church of England launches initiative to help schools reach Net Zero

The Church of England has launched an ambitious initiative to help its network of schools reach net zero, as part of the first phase of its multi-million pound Net Zero Carbon Programme.

The initiative involves the establishment of a National Framework to help schools reduce carbon emissions, save money by improving their energy efficiency, and switch to cheaper, more reliable, renewable energy sources. Funding will initially focus on analysing the option of replacing inefficient, polluting fossil-fuel heating systems.

“Church schools produce almost half of the Church’s carbon emissions and are therefore a fundamental part of the Church’s ambition to reach net zero carbon across the whole estate,” said Nigel Genders, Chief Executive of the National Society.

Synod meeting to focus on implementation of Prayers of Love and Faith

The General Synod of the Church of England met last month (November) to discuss the steps being taken to implement texts known as *Prayers of Love and Faith*, which ask for God’s blessing for same-sex couples.

In February of this year, Synod agreed a motion welcoming the texts and calling on The House of Bishops to further refine and commend them for use in the Church of England, together with new pastoral guidance and proposals for pastoral reassurance.

Earlier this autumn, the House of Bishops agreed in principle that the Prayers of Love and Faith should be commended for use. They also concluded that special services for same-sex couples, based on the Prayers, should go forward for consideration to be formally authorised under canon law. Synod also voted for no change to the doctrine of the Church of England around marriage and sexual intimacy.

In November, Synod members was presented with the work that the House of Bishops has carried out on the *Prayers of Love and Faith* since February. They the draft pastoral guidance, specifically supporting the Prayers, which

has been shared for the first time.

The Bishop of London, Dame Sarah Mullally, who has co-chaired the Living in Love and Faith steering group, said: “This twin-track approach means that prayers asking for God’s blessing for same-sex couples will be available for use in church very soon, as Synod has asked. A means of offering special, standalone services for same-sex couples will go forward to be considered for formal authorisation at a later stage.

“While we do not all agree about questions of marriage and sexual intimacy, a long period of discernment has shown that a majority of people would like to see a change in the Church of England’s approach to same-sex relationships. Based on what the Church has told us, no change is not an option.

“There are those who would like to see us go much further, and those who believe we are going too far. Yet we have expressed our heartfelt wish to remain together as one Church. The pastoral provision must protect and value both those who struggle so much with this that they need reassurance, and those who wish to place same-sex relationships before God in prayer.

“In other words, it will be ‘both and’, not ‘either or’. We are implementing what Synod asked us to, prayerfully and with the hope of God’s Grace.”



"For the next part of our carol-service, Nigel, the verger's nephew will play his interpretation of Silent Night..."

24th December: Christmas Eve

How do you celebrate Christmas Eve? It has its own customs, the most popular of which is going to Midnight Mass, or the Christ-Mass. This is the only Mass of the year that is allowed to start after sunset. In Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy and Poland, Midnight Mass is in fact the most important church service of the entire Christmas season, and many people traditionally fast beforehand. In other countries, such as Belgium and Denmark, people dine during the evening, and then go on to the Midnight Service.

The British are behind some countries when it comes to exchanging presents: in Germany, Sweden and Portugal the custom is to exchange on Christmas Eve. But the British are ahead of Serbia and Slovakia, where the Christmas tree is not even brought into the house and decorated until Christmas Eve.

Yule logs are not so popular since the decline of the fireplace, but traditionally it was lit on Christmas Eve from a bit of the previous year's log, and then would be burned non-stop until 12th Night (6th January). Tradition also decreed that any greenery such as holly, ivy or mistletoe must wait until Christmas Eve until being brought into the house.

25th December: Where did Christmas cards come from?

Christmas cards have a history which may surprise you: their origins are not of the Church, but of the Post Office and railways.

Of course, very early 'Christmas cards' had been around for hundreds of years, in the form of a simple exchange of Christmas greetings in private letters. The earliest such letter on record was written in England in 1534.

In 1611 a HUGE Christmas card made a one-off appearance. It measured a whopping 33" by 24", and was given to King James I of England (who was also King James VI of Scotland). It featured an illustration of a rose, four poems, a song, and a Christmas message for the king and his son.

Then in 1843 came the creation of Christmas cards as we know them today. One enterprising man was responsible for this: Sir Henry Cole, a senior civil servant who had helped launch the 'Public Record Office', now called the Post Office.

Sir Henry Cole helped to introduce the Penny Post, as it was called. Until then, only rich people could afford the Post, but with the building of the railways, which carried far more packages than a horse and cart (and went much faster), suddenly the Penny Post became possible.

Sir Henry wanted to encourage 'ordinary' people to use the new service. So he came up with the bright idea of a creating a simple card that people could send each other for Christmas. His friend, John Horsley, was an artist, who designed a three-panel card. Two panels depicted people caring for the poor, and the middle panel showed a family enjoying a large Christmas dinner.

They printed about 1000 cards that first year, and advertised under the slogan: 'Just published, a Christmas Congratulations Card; or picture emblematical of old English festivity to perpetuate kind recollections between dear friends!'

The cards sold for one shilling each and could be posted to friends and family for a Penny. There was an immediate, warm response from the public.

Printing methods improved, and by 1860 Christmas cards were produced in large quantities. By 1870 the cost of posting one had dropped to half a penny, and the custom was rapidly gaining popularity. By the early 1900s, the custom had spread across Europe.

The first cards usually included a Nativity scene, and in late Victorian times, robins and snow-scenes. Robins were chosen because the postmen in those days were nick-named 'Robin Postmen', because of their red uniforms.

Christmas cards appeared in the USA in the late 1840s. They were mass produced from 1875, and in 1915 John C Hall and two of his brothers created Hallmark Cards, which today offers 2,000 different designs of Christmas card.

Charity Christmas cards began in Denmark in the early 1900s. They spread to Sweden and Norway, and then on throughout Europe and America.

Last year the Royal Mail estimated that it had delivered 150 million cards during the Christmas period.

What would you like for Christmas?

A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas.

The little girl gasped and stared up at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

Bessie the Carlisle Cathedral Cat

Bessie is the Carlisle Cathedral cat. She likes Christmas best of all there and is always curled up in the straw crib when they put out the Nativity story models!

One Christmas Eve during a live television broadcast, Canon Jenkins was confronted by a distraught TV producer. A cat was wandering in and out of the shot and he wanted it removed immediately. A few minutes later, the same producer rushed up to the Canon and contritely explained as they were having so many phone calls from the viewers expressing their delight at Bessie's presence, so could she please be readmitted! They now want Bessie present each and every time!

Alice Sanders



We've got online carol-singers again!

Follow the Star

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

Dr Ruth M Bancewicz

Little donkey, little donkey

You are bound to sing about donkeys this Christmas, especially the little one that carried Mary to Bethlehem! But how much do you know about donkeys? They are really rather special.

Here are some fun facts:

- There are more than 44 million donkeys in the world, of all shapes and sizes.
- There are more than 186 breeds of donkey.
- Donkeys have good memories. They can remember places and other donkeys even 25 years after they last saw them.
- Donkeys are not stubborn, they are cautious. If they are fearful about something, they will do their best to avoid it.
- Donkeys are naturally clean. Given the chance, they are always grooming themselves and each other.
- Donkeys like to be warm and dry. They come from deserts and savannahs.
- Donkeys are social. They make deep bonds with their family and herd and get very upset if someone they love is taken from them.
- Donkeys have big ears for a good reason – it means they can hear each other at a great distance. They communicate by braying, grunting, whiffling, squealing and snorting.
- Donkeys help the ecology of their desert homes by digging into the ground to access water. This provides little creatures such as birds and chipmunks with life-saving water.
- Donkeys need your help. Millions round the world are being mistreated, and you can take action to help them.

<https://www.peta.org.uk/blog/world-donkey-day/>

Church rules

Six-year-old Angie and her four-year-old brother Joel sat together for the Christmas concert in church. Joel kept giggling and whispering until his big sister had had enough. “Be quiet in church!”

“Why?” Joel demanded. “Who is going to make me?” Angie pointed to the back of the church and said: “See those two big men standing at the door? They’re hushers.”



On how to make the most of carol singing

The Rectory
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

Carol singing is not what it used to be. My fond memories of a group of choristers, muffled in scarves and overcoats, carrying lanterns, and walking from door to door in the snow, as they sang ‘While shepherds watched ...’ had to be suddenly revised when I saw your own music group, in T-shirts inscribed with ‘Jesus loves You’, singing ‘Little donkey’, in your shopping centre. I suspect any money you raised would just about have paid for the electricity used to power your banks of electronic equipment. Singing in the main square of the Centre next to the fountain may have looked good, but it seemed to mean that the choir men were obliged to make constant trips to the lavatory.

Here at St James the Least of All, carol singing is regarded as a staff perk for the choir; the year when the Boys’ Brigade tried to break their monopoly was suppressed with a ruthlessness that would have impressed Genghis Kahn.

Our annual carol-singing route involves months of meticulous planning. We find that a transparent collection box is vital, so that donors can see what earlier patrons have given. This means that those who are bound to put in notes must be visited first – *‘pour encourager les autres’*. It also needs a detachable base, so that if coppers are given, they can be removed from sight before the next call.

Those homes that contain several children are visited just after bedtime, so that parents will give generously simply to get the choir to go somewhere else. Veiled threats to stay and sing more carols (unless they give generously) are usually very effective. Getting whoever looks the most innocent and photogenic to ring the bell and ask for money is a far more subtle way of ensuring a donation than planting any number of mafia lookalikes (such as our church treasurer) on the doorstep.

The choir always finishes its evening at the local pub – but again, the timing must be carefully managed. Too early and there will only be the landlord, his wife, and their Labrador to listen; too late and people will be so full of Christmas cheer that any carols will be hi-jacked and become the equivalent of back-of-the-bus rugby songs.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace



R&N

Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves

The Big Bash!



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

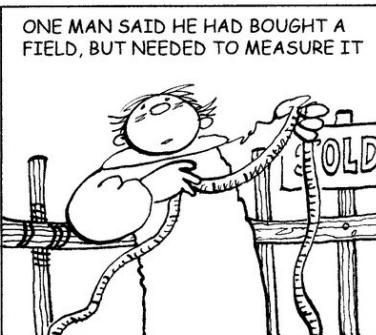


HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS



OH! NO!!

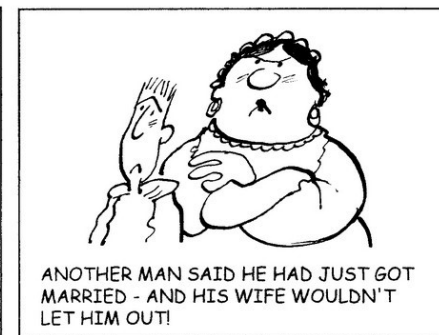
BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES



ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT



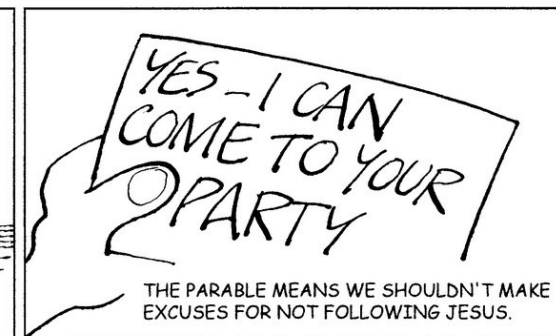
ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!

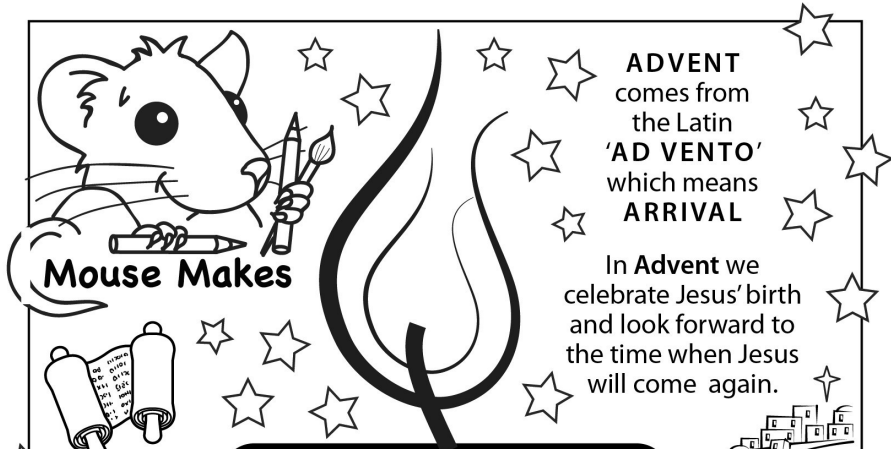


SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.



THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.

CHILDREN'S PAGE



Mouse Makes

GOD'S PROMISE
Isaiah 9:6-7
CHILD • BORN • SON
GIVEN • WONDERFUL
COUNCELLOR
MIGHTY • GOD
EVERLASTING
FATHER • PRINCE
PEACE • LORD

AN ANGEL MESSENGER
Luke 1:26-38
ANGEL • GABRIEL
JOSEPH • MARY
FAVOUR • SON
JESUS • GREAT
THRONE • REIGN
FOREVER • HOLY
SERVANT • WORD

ADVENT comes from the Latin 'AD VENTO' which means **ARRIVAL**

In Advent we celebrate Jesus' birth and look forward to the time when Jesus will come again.

A LONG JOURNEY
Luke 2:1-20
BETHLEHEM
REGISTER • BIRTH
MANGER • INN
SHEPHERDS • FLOCK
ANGELS • JOY
GOOD NEWS • PRAISE
SAVIOUR • CHRIST

THE BEST GIFT OF ALL
John 3:16
GOD • SO • LOVED
WORLD • HE • GAVE
ONLY • SON
WHOEVER • BELIEVES
ETERNAL • LIFE

V	R	P	R	I	N	C	E	L	R	O	D
W	O	R	D	C	F	A	T	H	E	R	E
J	A	G	M	A	N	G	E	R	G	E	B
O	W	H	O	E	V	E	R	W	I	I	J
S	J	O	Y	B	O	R	N	O	S	G	E
E	S	L	S	E	R	V	A	N	T	N	S
P	P	Y	J	C	H	I	L	D	E	P	U
H	R	O	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S
F	A	V	O	U	R	E	F	R	W	S	O
B	I	R	T	H	S	W	O	F	O	D	L
I	S	A	V	I	O	U	R	U	R	L	O
F	E	C	O	U	N	C	E	L	L	O	R
A	N	G	E	L	B	J	V	K	D	V	D
B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M	G	E	S
L	A	N	G	E	L	S	R	G	O	D	V
I	G	A	B	R	I	E	L	T	D	S	M
F	P	G	I	V	E	N	A	H	U	O	A
E	E	H	G	A	V	E	S	R	W	N	R
S	A	E	G	R	E	A	T	O	N	L	Y
O	C	H	R	I	S	T	I	N	N	J	O
N	E	O	G	O	O	D	N	E	W	S	N
F	L	O	C	K	M	I	G	H	T	Y	B

Colour in one star each day until Christmas

Dec23 © deborah noble • parishpump.co.uk

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke 1:26-56 & Matthew 1:18-25

In Israel, about 2000 years ago, a young woman, Mary, was going to marry Joseph. The weddings were in two stages.



In one year we will complete our wedding

Then God's messenger angel came to see Mary.

You will have God's baby, and call him Jesus, 'god saves,' because he will save people from what they do wrong.

How can this happen?

Your cousin Elizabeth, who couldn't have children, is now 6 months pregnant.

Mary visited Elizabeth.

With God, nothing is impossible.

When Joseph heard that Mary was pregnant, he was very upset

This will bring shame on me and my family.

He always did what was right so he decided to end their marriage, but quietly.

CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE

But the angel came to him in a dream.

Don't be afraid to marry Mary. The baby is God's, and you will call him Jesus.

So Joseph and Mary completed their marriage.

Mother in a storm

One cold winter night, during a violent storm, a mother was tucking her small, frightened little boy into bed. She was about to turn off the light when he said with a tremor in his voice: “Mummy, will you stay with me tonight?”

Mummy smiled and gave him a reassuring hug. “I can’t, dear,” she said, “I have to sleep with Daddy.” A long silence – and then came his shaky reply: “The big coward!”

Father Christmas

Of course, I had expected that by the age of seven it was inevitable that my son would begin to have serious thoughts about Father Christmas. Sure enough, one day near Christmas he suddenly said: “Mum, I know something about Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy.” Taking a deep breath, I asked him what that might be. “Easy,” he said, “They are all nocturnal.”

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