

# Celebrating Christ at Christmas

Is it me, or has Christmas started early this year? I remember noticing mince pies in the supermarket in October and thinking 'Folk will be sick of those before we even get to December!' As I write we're only halfway through November and the adverts and shops are full of Christmas. I even saw the Co-op doing a pre-Christmas sale on Christmas puddings!

I assume it is a response to the economic situation we are in that businesses are encouraging us to spend early. I must admit that it has worked as after a trip to the Fair trade market at Longton, an order from Traidcraft, and a toyshop in Carnforth I'm just about there, which is 3-4 weeks before I usually am. But it does feel wrong to be prepared for Christmas before even Advent has arrived.

Christmas is important, so we should make the most of our anticipation of it. I do try my best to hold out from selecting carols for as long as I can. Advent hymns help that anticipation build as we prepare to celebrate the fact that Jesus was born. Too often it can seem to get lost in the festivities. Amid the nativities, parties, decorations and presents we have to hold tight to that fact. Jesus was born, lived and taught a way that draws us closer to God, and died a brutal death at the hands of humanity. His life, and the Resurrection, inspired the writers of Matthew and Luke to share with us stories of his birth, and the 25<sup>th</sup> of December is the day we set apart to celebrate it. We set that day aside to celebrate Christ and we use the weeks of Advent running up to it to prepare.

So I would encourage you in this Christmas season to make the time to see through it all to the Christ who is at the

centre of it all. Christ who calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves, to look for God in every situation, and to live following his example.

At Christmas we celebrate Christ's mass, the festival service of Christ. That celebration is surrounded by trappings of tradition and culture, but as Christians we need to hold tight to the central message of this season and declare it to the world. Yes it is a time to enjoy, but we shouldn't let its importance be lost to the sentimentality and excesses of the season.

**With every blessing, Rev'd David R. Coaker**

As St Ambrose Open Gardens 2013 was such a successful event in raising funds, your Elders have decided to try something similar, as we have done in the past, to hopefully raise some much needed money for our church. We do need the help of some of our members and friends, who are prepared to open their gardens to the congregation and friends for about 3 hours on a consecutive Saturday and Sunday afternoons, sometime between mid June and the end of July 2014. We already have one volunteer and 2 possible. If you love your garden and would like to show it, whether it be very small or large, or would like to discuss it, please contact Neil Fow on 01772 434166 or by email to [fow.neil@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:fow.neil@yahoo.co.uk)

# Loved towards perfection

All of us are unique. We all have different personalities, preferences, appearances, haircuts, and clothing. These, and a variety of other aspects of our external and internal lives, are that make us who we are. All of us are unique. All of us are made in the image of God. The whole of who we are is held within the heart of God, and God's first response is always one of love.

There are parts of our lives that everyone knows. Sometimes a stranger just needs to see us and they know something about us; if we always wear a certain badge, have a particular bearing, or speak in a certain way. Of course these superficial impressions can be wrong, and at best are only part of our story, but it is these first impressions that we all respond to and they can either attract or not attract us to each other. There are also parts of our lives that only we, or one special person, or only a few people know. Our dreams, hopes and secrets; which we often keep close to our hearts for fear of embarrassment, ridicule or estrangement. It is these that fully express who we are. It is a shame that such crucial aspects of our humanity are kept hidden. They are known to us, God, and by those closest to us; but we keep our true humanity hidden under a bushel.

One of the reasons for us hiding such things is the historic Church teaching that humanity is fundamentally flawed. The doctrine of Original Sin has made us afraid of expressing who we truly are for fear of damnation and exclusion. I personally reject that view. We are not perfect as human beings. know that this is so.

But for me the echo through the opening chapter of *Genesis*, that glorious poetic vision, is that 'God saw that it was good'. This, the declaration in verse 27 that we are made in *God's* image, and the theme throughout the New Testament that we are children of *God*, speak louder to me about our humanity and our relationship with *God* than one particular interpretation of the Adam and Eve story. All of us are unique. All of us are made in the image of *God*. The whole of who we are is held within the heart of *God*, and *God's* first response is always one of love.

But we need to clarify what we mean by *God's* love. Too often we romanticize it and make it a nice warm glow. We limit *God's* love to being all about affirmation, unconditional acceptance, or being happy and jolly. We know the word 'love' has a much wider definition, but we concentrate on its positive aspects and downplay the personally negative ones.

*God* loves us, and the least imperfect model we have for that love is of a parent. Out of love a parent will direct, teach, constrain, discipline, and make choices that in the moment a child rebels against, but in the light of a lifetime they may benefit from. In each moment a parent is taking a step of faith that their decision will tend toward the good for their child. When we expand from the individual parent and child to *God*, we see a universe reflecting *God's* glory and history, tradition, scripture and people of faith which can all point us towards life in all its fullness that is seen in the light of eternity. It is through our humanity that *God* is revealed. It is through our opening ourselves up to the life of *God* within, around and beyond us, that we discover *God's* meaning for our life.

It is by sharing our true humanity, by sharing our dreams, hopes and secrets, with our fellow brothers and sisters, fellow children of God, that we can become more in tune with the life of God. As Church we are family, and it is as a family that we seek to be together.

Families survive because the bonds of blood are stronger than that of friendship. The default position for true family life is togetherness, the desire to simply be together, which overwhelms individual preferences and grumbles. Families struggle with this and so do churches as we seek to create family by converting strangers into brothers and sisters.

We are not perfect. It is very unlikely that we will achieve perfection this side of eternity. A few saints have come close, and the example we have is Christ Jesus. For me what Jesus taught and how he lived have ultimate importance. I see the challenge to seek to live as Christ did as the true test of my faith.

We gather as Church, as family, as brothers and sisters, children of God, created in God's image. We are loved by a Parent who dreams the good for us and the universe, and holds the example of Christ before us as we seek to live together. Thanks be to God!

**With every blessing, *Rev'd David R. Coaker***

## UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS NEWS

James Bamber attended a RYA Sailing course at Tower Wood in September via West Lancashire Scouts partnership with the LSSA (Lancashire Schools Sailing Association) and successfully passed his RYA Youth Stage Level 2. This involved him sailing a variety of sailing dinghy's from small Toppers and Lasers to larger Wayfarers and Omega's in some quite challenging winds. He also needed to learn quite a bit of sailing theory and be tested on this as well as his knotting skills. Most of all he enjoyed capsizing the boat and righting it again and attempting successfully to do a dry capsize - which means jumping over the edge of the boat as it inverts without falling in the lake, then righting it again and jumping back in before getting wet, which he did several times successfully. He was presented with his certificate on the shore of Lake Windermere alongside his friend Eddie also in Leyland URC Scouts - both also have since received their scouts sailing badge. Well done boys.

On a separate note two of Atlantis Explorer Scouts who also sail with the LSSA and West Lancs Scouts, Tom Astley & Anthony Gayther entered a sailing competition at Jumbles Reservoir and got awards for being new to racing and also received certificates for taking part. Well done, both you! In fact Tom is now at the age of 17 a dinghy instructor and was James & Eddies personal instructor every Tuesday evening through the summer. Thanks Tom!

Also congratulations to one of our ex-Explorers, [Megan Sumner](#) (Nadine's daughter) who is still a leader within the

Guide Association who has been chosen to go on a Girl Guiding GOLD project to Sri Lanka next year.

This is fabulous news Megan, so pleased for you and we look forward to hearing all about it. GOLD = Guiding Overseas Linked with Development, so basically Megan will be working with the Sri Lankan guide association to develop their programme and teaching some English too. We wish you all the best in this venture.

10 Explorer Scouts from Atlantis attended a County Awards Presentation Evening to officially receive their Chief Scout Platinum Awards - well done to you all, many of whom have also achieved their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. And of course a **huge congratulations** to Rosie Horrobin on achieving her Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and getting to meet the Duke himself at an awards day. Rosie works very hard as a leader within Leyland URC Scout Group and this is well deserved!

Alison Bamber

**ITEMS FOR NEXT MAGAZINE**

FEBRUARY/MARCH TO LINDA KAY BY 19TH JANUARY **AT THE LATEST** PLEASE

Email: [lindakay@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:lindakay@blueyonder.co.uk)

## RECENT FUNDRAISING EVENTS

The Autumn Ellis Quiz was an enjoyable and profitable affair as usual with perhaps more teams taking part than usual. £ 260 was raised and we thank Ellis for masterminding the whole affair and also the members of the Fund Raising Committee who did the catering (Hotpot and Apple Pie) - Linda Crump, Linda Barnes, Mollie Ward. and Jackie Cochrane.

The Autumn fair was different as the usual church stalls were located in the church itself while the church hall, apart from the traditional Tombola and Raffle tables, was where a number of 'outside' craft stalls were set up. The cakes and preserves were on sale in the porch and the TFSR stall was in the front garden, both as usual.

The event raised some £610 and we thank all who assisted in any way.

Though not for our church funds we also thank and congratulate Mollie Ward for organising, starring in, and (with help from several members of the Guild) providing excellent food for a good number of friends who supported her Derian House Tea Party, held in our church hall, which raised over £250 for the Children's Hospice Funds. The entertainment was provided by the Derianaire singers, of which Mollie has become a recent member. They are an 'All Ladies' troupe so, gentlemen, be warned to expect that little mercy will be shown to your self-respect and dignity when "If you were the only boy in the world" is on the programme. The writer speaks from experience!

Churches Together in Leyland recently organised a visit by a South African Children's choir which drew a large audience to their concert in St Mary's church on October 4<sup>th</sup>. The enthusiasm and talents of the children made it a wonderful show and raised £2700 for their South African organisation.

Churches Together in Leyland also organised a concert by the Leyland and Penwortham 'One Voice' Choir (not to be confused with the One Voice Community Choir from Preston which recently did so well in the BBC 'Songs of Praise' Gospel Choir competition.) This was to raise money to help to carry out essential repairs to the Furniture Scheme van which, though based at St Marys, is a C.T.L project.



## CHRISTMAS IN LEYLAND

*Christmas Trail*  
*Saturday 30th November 2013*  
*between 2pm & 5pm*  
*around the shops on Hough Lane, Leyland*

**Leyland Town Team together with South Ribble Borough Council have organised a 'Christmas Trail'.**

**This hunt is open to all primary school children and all they have to do is answer 10 Christmas questions (children must be accompanied by an adult )**

**Collect your question sheets from 'Peek-a-Brew', Hough Lane, Leyland between 2pm and 5pm and when finished pick up a sweet treat!  
All correct entries will be entered into a prize draw.**



## CHURCH AND WORSHIP DIARY FOR DECEMBER

Sun 1 <sup>st</sup>	Worship led by Ernest Wrennall	10.30am
Tues 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Amnesty International	7.30pm
Thur 5 <sup>th</sup>	Elders Meeting	7.30pm
Sat 7 <sup>th</sup>	Amnesty International greeting card signing	
Sun 8 <sup>th</sup>	Worship led by the minister	10.30am
	Communion	
	Church Christmas lunch following the service (*1)	
Mon 9 <sup>th</sup>	Talking Reform recording	12 noon
	Fabric committee	7.30pm
Sun 15 <sup>th</sup>	Uniformed groups Christmas service	10.30am
	International Aid shoe boxes to be received	
Sun 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Worship led by the minister	10.30am
	Junior Church Christmas Festival	
Tues 24 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Eve Carols	6.30pm
Wed 25 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Day service at Penwortham URC	10.30am
	This is a joint service for both congregations	
Sun 29 <sup>th</sup>	Worship led by Henry and Carol Rose	10.30am

(\*1) A full three course Christmas meal for £10. You will need to book your place in advance so see Lorna, or any other member of the Fund Raising Group

We invite you to send just one collective Christmas greetings card to all your church friends rather than have the trouble and expense of sending individual cards . Let Marjorie have that card for display in church together with a donation to church funds to represent the money you have saved in postage etc.



## CHURCH AND WORSHIP DIARY FOR JANUARY 2014

Wed 1 <sup>st</sup>	Mollie's Meander Ramble	1.30 pm
	followed by refreshments for all at Greenbank Farm.	
Sun 5 <sup>th</sup>	Worship led by Ernest Wrennall	10.30am
Tues 7 <sup>th</sup>	Amnesty International	7.30pm
Sun 12 <sup>th</sup>	Worship led by the minister	10.30am
	Communion	
	Ramble planning meeting	7.30pm
	at 125 Church Road	
Mon 13 <sup>th</sup>	Fabric Committee	7.30pm
Thur 16 <sup>th</sup>	Elders meeting	7.30pm
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup>	Ramble	
	Week of prayer for Christian Unity begins (*1)	
Sun 19 <sup>th</sup>	Worship led by Revd. Geoff Tolley	10.30am
Sun 26 <sup>th</sup>	Worship led by George Grime	10.30am
	Parade	

(\*1) There will be a series of services in different churches in Leyland, probably at lunch time during this week with possibly one evening event. Details of the full programme will be available and we invite you all to attend one, or more, or all so that you get a flavour of the different styles of worship (and soup) in our C.T L neighbours.

**LINDA BARNES IS COLLECTING POSTAGE STAMPS IN AID  
OF THE HEART FOUNDATION**

## SYNOD

Our church is one of the (about)140 United reformed Churches in our North Western Synod Province which includes all Cumbria, Lancashire and the Greater Manchester area (but not Merseyside which is a separate Synod in its own right).

Twice each year all churches are invited to send their minister and a lay delegate to a full meeting so Dave and I represented Leyland at the October meeting of Synod in the very modern premises of the Oasis Academy in Media City, Salford Quays. As well as being an educational establishment there is a church there and it was the chaplain of the centre who did all the welcoming while the catering staff saw to our needs.

One feature of this Synod was that, as well as the usual opening worship, which included Bible Study led by the new principal of Northern College there was worship based on the Walk to Emmaus story led by the Synod Silence and Retreats Group at regular intervals through the day.

In the business that followed I noticed among the various comings, goings and commemorations section that our old friend Glyn Eatock had passed the milestone of 50 years in the ministry since his ordination.

There was a lengthy session led by the Moderator to 'audit' the way we had engaged with the three Mission 2020 priorities we had selected as our major concerns back in 2010. From the ten suggested topics we had selected Spirituality, Community and Evangelism and, with 30% of the time gone, it was time to take stock.

Spirituality; - The Silence and Retreats group, the Emmaus prayer Community, the use of the Lindisfarne Retreat Centre, the Big Day Out programme and the added Bible study elements at Synod were encouraging signs

Community;- Some good local examples , some CRCW placements and some Synod grant aid to local programmes

Evangelism;-The Radical Welcome programme, the first Mission Intern (at Chorley), some Special Category Minister appointments, Manse Policy making housing in 'new areas' possible and the new Finance Policy (see later business) will make local mission grants possible.

*In discussion with others sitting near me I was able to comment on the way Leyland has been active in the Community aspect but did not feel able to say much about the vitality of our spiritual or evangelistic involvement. If you disagree then I rejoice - perhaps we are doing more than I realised.*

There was some routine business to deal with. Appointments were made with Lesley Husselbee becoming Convenor of the Learning and Ministers Committee and Shirley Farrier as Co-ordinator for Ministerial Self-Appraisal.

Then came lunch with, for the first time in years, full meals were available using the academy canteen facilities. (I had my sandwiches!)

After lunch we had separate Area meetings with Dave much involved in the Pastoral concerns. We will need a new District Secretary from next summer - Volunteers anyone? - but we have a new Treasurer. The Minister from Christ Church, Morecambe gave a most inspiring account of the way his church tackled a TRIO (The Responsibility Is Ours) campaign which we might do well to follow up.

When Synod re-assembled we had a detailed finance report including the way that each church's individual share to cover the total Synod budget would be calculated (membership plus capital.)

It was all very technical but it seems that in the last year income (mainly from Investments and donations with Church stakes being only about 30% of the total, was about £100k less than expenditure, which was roughly half for Administration and half for Training and Grants to local churches.

*If you are really interested, Ernest has a copy of the Synod booklet with all the account and budget details which you can borrow. And the best of luck!))*

There were other reports including a presentation about C.R C W work and word of a forthcoming Elders Training Course but the final item was a very encouraging presentation about the way the ecumenical partnership in Cumbria is progressing.

After thanks to the Oasis organisers we had worship led by the Oasis chaplain and members of the Oasis community.

They had done a splendid job and it was a good Synod

Synod meets next at Bramhall, Cheshire on 8<sup>th</sup> March and later on 11<sup>th</sup> October in Cumbria. - with several Area meetings between.

Ernest Wrennall

# GARDENING

At the time of writing we have had three frosty nights which finished off the tender plants like bedding begonias and dahlias. The tubers and corms can now be lifted and stored over winter in a frost free place which is cool so that they don't dry out and shrivel. If they can be brought through the winter it will save money next spring buying new ones.

While tidying up the garden I found that one of my shrubs (a weigela) is sporting different colours of leaves on one of the branches. The leaves are showing prominent red area instead of the usual green and yellow variegations. This same branch has a number of seed capsules which I intend to save till spring. I will also cut part of the branch off and try and root it, it would be good to establish a new variety.

If annual bedding plants have been removed to the compost bin any vacant land can be dug over and left in a rough state for winter frosts to break down. Keep garden tools clean and oiled particularly the mower and if it needs sharpening and servicing now is the time to do it.

Garden centres still have a number of spring bulbs left so do make the most of planting up tubs. I managed to find wall flower plants to plant with the bulbs, the scent from them in spring is delightful.

Do remove any moss and algae from shady wet pathways as it can become quite slippery and dangerous. Remember you can always find something to do in a garden whatever the time of year.

Enjoy your garden.



*Eddie*



# FAMILY NEWS

Congratulations to

Anne Marie Wilde and John Stewart McNevin on their marriage in our church on September 27<sup>th</sup>, Our minister conducted this service.

Christine and David Holmes on the birth of a grandson, Austin Philip, a baby son for Philip and Lizzie.

Dianne and Greg Bolan on the birth of a grandson, Hugo Arthur, a baby son for Nick and Genevieve.

Linda and Alan Kay on the birth of a grand-daughter Isabelle Evelyn McLaren, a baby daughter for Donna and Stephen.

Rosie Horrabin on winning the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award which she received in a presentation ceremony in London at which the Duke himself was present.

We welcomed the following babies into our church fellowship.

Henry James Armstrong, baby son of Simon and Michelle on September 29<sup>th</sup>

Olivia Rose Bentham, baby daughter of Paul and Joanne on October 13<sup>th</sup>

Various members of the church family have been dealing with health problems and would welcome our support and prayers. Mary Taylor has gone to stay with her daughter as she recovers from a fall; Connie Finnigan, Eddie Reynolds, Malcolm Birrell and Paul Martin have had hospital treatment, June Kay is waiting for the results of hospital tests, Neil Fow has respiratory problems while Les North is finding life rather difficult at the moment.

Though it seems an age since Mollie's Garden Party you may remember that there was a paper Quiz with every answer being the name of a day of the week. After much delay, we congratulate Anna Seale for submitting the winning entry which was not only all correct but was judged to have the best original tie break answer.

## PLODS AND RAMBLES

The September Ramble was led by Mike Chapman in the Ribble Valley between Mitton, where we assembled, and Clitheroe. The weather was superb for this expedition and the route, which we had followed in reverse about ten years ago, was interesting and firm footed. There was a reasonable turn out as we followed the Ribble Way upstream on the south bank of the river to Edisford Bridge where we had our brew stop before returning on the somewhat less easy to follow paths on the north bank. One late section, along what the map laughably called 'Malkin LANE', was about a mile through a narrow corridor of overgrown jungle. Apart from that it was a lovely walk in glorious sunshine and we thank Mike for his planning and leadership.

We believe that Mike (and Jan!) know this area well. Mike pointed out the 'Three Fishes' hostelry in Mitton as a place they had visited together before - and that Jan has an engagement ring to prove it!

The October Ramble led by Chris Baines was in the sand dune, red squirrel country between Southport and Formby and promised, for once, a walk on which the 'uppity' bits would be missing. However a late enforced change of date caused some regulars to be unavailable while the promised distance of seven miles may have helped to keep numbers down. However the actual walk was nothing like this in length because very heavy rain set in and the walk was halted before half way was reached. But we thank Chris for trying.

The November Ramble was the by-now traditional local walk followed by tea laid on at their home by Karen and Malcolm Birrell. Only five brave souls did the Hall Lane/Farington Moss walk led by Ernest but a full dozen were there for the sausage hotpot meal that followed. We thank Karen and Malcolm for their hospitality.

The October Plod was based on the hospitality of the newly opened 'Jack's' restaurant in Whittle le Woods with a relatively gentle and not too stressful walk through the southern part of Cuerden Valley Country Park. It was a good walk one of the few sunny days in a generally wet period and the meal was excellent too. Ernest led this plod.

There will be no more plods until next spring.

## FLOWER LIST FOR DEC/JAN 14

- 1 DEC Ann Gill—Memories of Russell  
Jan Chapman—Memories of mum
- 8 Dec Frank McGuire and family—  
Memories of Ella  
Joyce Gwilliams and family  
Memories of Horace and John
- 15 Dec Linda Barnes—Memories of parents
- 22 Dec Smalley family—Memories of parentsd
- 28 Dec Melling family—Birthday memories
- 5 Jan Joan, Lesley, David and family  
In loving memory
- 12 Jan Molly and Peter Ward—Memories of loved ones
- 19 Jan Irene Entwistle—Memories of mum
- 26 Jan Vacancy



### **FOOD BANK**

**We are collecting items of food to donate to St Mary's food bank.**

**Lists of appropriate food items are available in church and it is hoped that this will become a regular weekly activity.**

**The food box is located in the left hand side porch.**

**Please look out for details in church and try to support this worthwhile initiative.**

## ROTAS FOR DECEMBER

	Steward	Lessons	Flower Distribution
1ST	Linda Crump	Stephen Crump Ann Gill	Alison Dempsey Linda Crump
8th	Frank McHugh	Jan Chapman Linda Barnes	Sylvia Bairstow Mollie Ward
15th	Sylvia Bairstow	Uniformed Organisations	Jan Chapman Jackie Cochrane
22nd	Mollie Ward	Mollie Ward Linda Kay	Barbara McHugh Linda Crump
29th	Julie Key Rhys Pownall	Ian Dempsey Stella Eccleston	Lois Porter Linda Barnes

**If you need to change your place on the Lessons rota please arrange you own swap and then let Stella Eccleston know**

## SUNDAY REFRESHMENTS FOR DECEMBER

1st	Linda Barnes	Ann Gill
8th	Christmas meal	
15th	Linda Crump	Barbara McHugh
22nd	Mollie ward	Sylvia Bairstow
29th	Brenda Farrer	Irene Entwistle

## SATURDAY CAFÉ DECEMBER

7TH	Ernest Wrennall	Linda Barnes
14th	Sylvia Bairstow	Mollie Ward
21st	Brenda Farrer	Irene Entwistle
28th	No cafe	

## ROTAS FOR JAN 14

	Stewards	Lessons	Flower distribution
5TH	Irene Entwistle	Arnold Rayton Jackie Cochrane	Jan Chapman Jackie Cochrane
12th	Linda Crump	Sarah Goldson David Holmes	Barbara McHugh Linda Crump
19th	Sylvia Bairstow	Ann Gill Jan Chapman	Lois Porter Linda Barnes
26th	Mollie Ward	Uniformed Organisations	Sylvia Bairstow Mollie Ward
(Feb 2nd)	Marjorie Wrennall	Linda Kay Linda Barnes	Alison Dempsey Marjorie Wrennall

## SUNDAY REFRESHMENTS FOR JAN 14

5TH	Linda Crump	Barbara McHugh
12th	Brenda Farrer	Irene Entwistle
19th	Sylvia Bairstow	Mollie Ward
26th	Uniformed Organisations	
(Feb 2nd)	Linda Barnes	Glynis Bury

## SATURDAY CAFÉ JAN 14

4TH	Lois Porter	Ann Gill
11th	Jackie Cochrane	Linda Barnes
18th	Sylvia Bairstow	Mollie Ward
25th	Brenda Farrer	Irene Entwistle
(Feb 1st)	Ernest Wrennall	Linda Barnes