

December 2017

One hundred years ago, in December 1917, the last Christmas of World War I, servicemen and women sent home embroidered postcards



**St John's Methodist Church
Whitchurch
December 2017- January 2018**

Dear Friends,

"What are you planning for Advent?" For some reason, I sometimes find that the approach of December has taken me by surprise - this year being no exception! And yet there are things stirring, and plans being put together.

So there will be a Christmas Cafe Church - this time on Wednesday 20th December. And while there may not be any specific Advent meetings, there is going to be something we can share in - something in fact that I'm going to make available to Brown Knowl and Tallarn Green as well. Some of you may remember that a couple of years ago, I produced a series of reflections for Holy Week - stories inspired by those in the Gospels, describing some of the events. Well, why not do the same for Advent? Of course, not everyone is online, so why not produce a small booklet?

So, on the Sunday before Advent (which is also when this Magazine is due out), there will be a Booklet with a series of reflections for Advent, taking us through the story and reminding us of the characters as we build up to Christmas Day itself. It's not something that needs to be bought, it's a free gift - something for us to share, and a way for us to come together spiritually to be with God, each day of Advent.

Many of us have Christmas Traditions - particular events, films, things we do - mine include watching the BBC Adaption of "The Box of Delights" from the mid 1980s. Maybe we can start another - a tradition of shared devotions, helping us feel God's presence ever closer as we prepare to celebrate once again the birth of Jesus Christ, God with us, once more.

God Bless

Rob

SERVICES AT ST JOHN'S



December 2017

3rd December Revd. Rob Weir (Hc)

10th December Revd. Rob Hilton (Super.)

17th December 10.30 am Revd. Rob Weir (Nativity)
6.30 pm Revd. Rob Weir (Carols)

24th December Local Arrangements

25th December 9.45 am Note different time
Christmas Day with Revd. Rob Weir

31st December Revd. Rob Weir

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January 2017

7th January Revd. Rob Weir (Covenant Service)

14th January Janet Lees

21st January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

28th January Dr Geoff Dickinson

29th January Revd. Rob Weir
(Covenant Service)

Steward's Letter

Dear Friends, Hazel and I celebrated our Golden Wedding at the beginning of September by having a week away on holiday. Last weekend it was the turn of the family to join us for a half-term break back in Crosby on Merseyside. It was quite amusing that the flower girl at our wedding—Hazel's cousin— who was with us is now retired and is herself a grandmother!

While there we visited nearby Formby where we spent almost nine years from 1976 to 1985 and where our two daughters grew up. We passed our old church and it made me think how important our worshipping in all the places we've lived in was to us – after all it was in church that we met over 50 years ago.

All this made me realise that the warm welcome we give to visitors is a significant part of our individual ministry. With all the new homes being built in Whitchurch let's hope our warm welcome will be needed. We can be a bright light even in the dark days of winter.

Mike

ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Would those persons who have Action for Children collecting boxes please note that I shall commencing the collection and emptying the boxes in January.

If possible please pass your box to me in January.

Many Thanks

David Whiteley

Hi everyone,

I do hope you're having a lovely day full of joy at every turn.

On the 9th of November I received some very good news which I wanted to share with you all: I have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK. After 5 years of uncertainty about whether I would or would not be allowed to stay in the UK and 5 years of not being allowed to study towards my future career, I am now free to stay here for good and to study full time. Yay!



How does all this impact on you? Well, strictly, I suppose, it doesn't but I do want to say a major major thank you. I cannot begin to tell you how many people from our lovely church have encouraged me on this, said they would be praying for me and said the kindest of things. Thank you so much to you all on all of this.

5 years since receiving my visa means over four years since my mother and I first came to St. John's. I find it quite interesting to reflect on my time at St. John's so far. I had been brought up Methodist in South Africa and had regularly attended my local Methodist church with my mother, for all but the few years immediately preceding coming to the UK. I stopped attending for those few years quite simply because I had lost my faith. When I rocked up on that first Sunday at St. John's, I was only there to help my mum meet people and then I planned never to come back again. Why then did I come back? It was due to all of you. I was completely bowled over by the incredible friendliness and kindness of all at the church.

“But St. John's is not some sort of social club,” I can almost hear many of you protesting, “it's a house of worship.” I can now say that I quite agree but then what is worship? I very much suspect that, as important as all our other forms of worship are, the most important way we worship God is through how we behave. What use is a Christian if there is no difference between how he behaves and how the rest of the world behaves? We can tell the world we are Christian as much as we

like but, if what we do (and sometimes, as importantly, what we don't do) does not mark us out as different to the world, then surely our Christianity is meaningless and we will have no impact on other people. By being so incredibly friendly and kind to my mother and me you ensured that my faith did not stay lost. Thank you.

Of course, there were major surprises to me about St. John's. My Methodist church in South Africa – like all Methodism I had ever heard about – was extremely concerned about the major societal problems that result from excessive alcohol consumption to the point that they were vocally against alcohol. I was surprised that St. John's seemed to differ with this. I had grown up hearing Ministers and local preachers give spontaneous prayers. I was surprised that St. John's seemed to differ with this too. Whilst I thought that perhaps these two issues were changes that St. John's could strive for in the future, I was delighted that St. John's was not a church which tried to argue that the findings of science were untrue – a tendency in some supposedly Christian circles which gives Christianity a bad name. I was also delighted to find that, overwhelmingly, St. John's was not a church where prayers were just for fellow Christians, they were prayers for everyone. Yes, all of us at St. John's are not perfect but, when I stop to think about it, the overwhelming tendency of people at St. John's is to treat everyone with kindness, compassion, empathy and friendliness.

My religious views are probably different to what yours are right now but I can, with great joy tell you, that my faith is now back to being as strong as it has ever been in my life. Although there are various reasons for this (which maybe only Lucy really knows – thank you Lucy), had it not been for the incredible kindness and friendliness you showed me when I first came to the church, I do not think I would ever have got my faith back in the way that I have. Thank you so much to you all. You have done something truly wonderful for me.

May we all strive at all times, by our actions and not just our words, to show everyone that the world is God's world – a world of hope, a world of caring, a world of joy.

God bless you all, *Maurice Posniak*

Steward's Letter (Part 2)

Dear Friends,

We have had a very busy autumn with so many fundraising events. Thanks to all those who organised, took part in and made up the audience, it was most enjoyable. Now we scarcely have time to draw breath before the Christmas Sale is upon us along with the many special Christmas activities we will all be part of.

We will all have memories of Christmases past. Perhaps like me, among a host of happy childhood memories, you will have one that always springs to mind when in reminiscing mode. I much enjoyed being allowed to help in making the special Christmas food and the ritual unpacking of the decorations to decorate the tree was an event in itself, but what I always return to is the time when after 'proper high tea' I was allowed to leave the table and go back to the lounge.

The house would be in darkness – anyone else remember being shouted at for leaving a light on? I would open the lounge door and there in the darkness would be the Christmas tree with the lights shining. It was quite magical. I used to sit there in the darkness soaking up the magic of it all. Inevitably an adult would come in and say, "What are you doing sitting in the dark?" Strange child!

We would soon be back to board games or more probably the new jigsaw that made its appearance each year. It was a very happy time. But it was that time of darkness and stillness and light in the darkness that I treasure most. Perhaps there's an echo of it in candlelit carol services; a sense of something beyond, an otherness that calls to something deep inside each of us. Among all the happy activities this Christmas may you find also the stillness, the mystery that lies at the heart of our celebration.

A happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you all.

Avril

TEA & COFFEE ROTA for Dec. & Jan.

December



- 3rd Ruth Dawson & Einwen Kelly
10th Christmas Party – No Coffee
17th Wendy Proffitt & Beryl Posniak
24th Nancy Millington & Chris Crowther
31st Elizabeth & Pete Shingler

January

- 7th Mary Scott, Gwen Reeves & Dorothy F.
14th Fiona Weir & Dorothy Faulkner
21st Sheila Latham & Dot Charlesworth
28th Hazel & Mike Nimmo

Readers

The Stewards are anxious to keep the list of people willing to read the lesson in church services up to date.

Please would you see Pete Shingler to make sure we have your correct details, including email address if possible.

An associate minister visited our Sunday School class one morning, and asked, "What would you like me to talk about?" One child spoke out boldly and said, "About 3 minutes"

A Sunday School teacher asked what God's name is. One small boy said "Harold". When the teacher asked why he thought that, the boy said "Our Father, which art in heaven, Harold be thy name".

Disabled Access News

Sadly, not too much to report this month.

To reflect, the situation to date. Our project is at a very advanced stage.

Our Disabled Access project will provide:

A ramp which will enable people to access our building without having to negotiate steps.

Some alterations to the entrance of the church

A new internal door to connect the church with our back rooms.

The project has been designed by our architect and has been approved by all the authorities involved, such as Shropshire County Council, English Heritage, the Historical Society, plus, of course, the Methodist Council in Manchester.

The Circuit has promised us £70, 000

The last stage is to top up our funds by applying for grants. This is being done by Sally Graham from the Circuit. She is preparing approaches to many grant awarding organisations.

Just think - this time next year, just before Christmas 2018, the Disabled Access will be complete and we will be thinking about Phase II which is the internal reorganisation of the church. Isn't it exciting?

Happy Christmas and a great New Year everyone! JRW

Flower Rota for December 2017 & January 2018

December

January

3rd Ruth Dawson

7th Sheila Walwyn

10th Beryl Posniak

14th Dorothy Faulkner

17th TBA

21st Brenda Dudley

24th CHRISTMAS

28th Sue Davies

31st NEW YEAR

Feb. 4th - Hazel Burlton



Spick and Spanners for December 2017 & January 2018

December 7th Elizabeth Shingler, Briony Miles-Hook

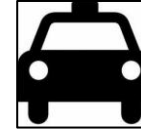
December 21st Mike Nimmo, Vic Trigg & Dorothy Faulkner

January 4th Eileen Grunner +

January 18th Jane Cliffe, Ros Rawson & Sue Davies



Taxi!



The following drivers are available during December & January to transport you to the services. Please 'phone before 9:30am.

December 2017

3rd	Sheila Latham
10th	Brian Faulkner
17th (am)	Hazel Nimmo
17th (pm) *	Brian Faulkner
24th	Brian Faulkner
31st	Jim Walwyn

January 2018

7th	Sheila Latham
14th	Hazel Nimmo
21st	Jim Walwyn
28th	Brian Faulkner

* Please ring by 5.30pm

A word in the hand, poetry by St. John's poets.

Don't forget to get your copy of the poetry book. At a suggested donation of £2.00 they make excellent stocking fillers!

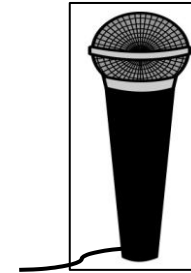
Once again, a big thank you to all those who helped to make the Art Exhibition over the weekend of 17th-18th November. It was a big success and perhaps it could be repeated some time!

Dorothy Charlesworth

Sound System Operators

December 2017

3rd	Wendy Proffitt
10th	Mike Nimmo
17th (10.30)	Gordon Davidson
17th (6.30)	Andrew Fawcett
24th	Jim Walwyn
31st	Gordon Davidson



January 2018

7th	David Whiteley
14th	Wendy Proffitt
21st	Mike Nimmo
28th	David Whiteley



Tuesday Fellowship Group

We have just finished our DVD course called ‘Sister Religions?’ which sensitively discussed the relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We have found it to be a very informative course – we hadn’t realised just how ignorant we were about Islam!

Our next course will begin in January. This time we shall be using a book by Gordon Pettie called ‘Do It Again, Lord’ and will be studying the stories of six of the greatest revivals the world has ever experienced. Some of them you may already have heard of - such as the Welsh Revival, the Hebridean Revival and the Azusa Street Revival which gave birth to the Pentecostal Movement - but did you know there was a revival in Korea, which actually began in North Korea? (Yes, North Korea!)

In the blurb on the back cover of the book, Gordon Pettie says, “There are important lessons to learn from each revival. My longing is that your life will be impacted as you learn them.” Amen to that!

We meet at 7.30pm at Elizabeth’s house (7 Queen’s Road) on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. The six sessions are self-contained units and so it is possible to attend as many or as few as you are able to.

All are most welcome – please come along and join us – maybe you will be ‘revived’ as a result, as we are all hoping to be!

Janet Lees

A friend who is a librarian drew my attention recently to a pulpit notice attached to a little chapel.

When you were christened your mother brought you here.

When you were married, your partner brought you here.

When you die, your friends will bring you here.

Why not try coming on your own sometime?

Prayer - Free and Set Prayer (Part 2)

One prayer that I noted missing from Abba's writings is the Lord's Prayer, there is no mention of this by Abba, yet this is noted within The Methodist Catechism.

C S Lewis (1958) identifies two categories of prayer - 'Free' prayer and 'Set' prayer; Bloom (1970) refers to these styles of prayer as 'spontaneous' and 'Given'. Both writers identify that free/spontaneous prayers are words that are from our heart. Bloom (1970) identifies that free prayer is usually extempore, reporting that there needs to be some response or welling up within us prompting this adoration for God; or that we need to be in a despairing situation for this spontaneous prompting. Lewis (1958) is in opposition to Bloom identifying that we don't have to be bubbling over and bursting with joy to praise God and thank him and that we don't need to be in the depths of despair to ask for help. Lewis (1958) describes 'Set prayer' as liturgy, words that have a purpose to bring people together, set prayers that have a time and place. Bloom (1970) disagrees with Lewis and suggests that Set prayers fall short of God and those who are trying to use the words.

Finding that 'middle ground' and recognising that everyday ordinary stuff is important and contributes to our prayer life. We see a lovely sunrise on the drive to work, see the early morning mist lifting and the environment changing and just want to say thank you. It is genuine heartfelt thanks, it is the normal everyday prayer. It doesn't have to be that our hearts are bubbling over and joyful all the time. This is the normal everyday conversation with God that doesn't have to be classed as set or free prayer; it's just having a conversation with God, that doesn't have to be classified as set or free prayer; it's just

having a conversation with God, giving thanks for the ordinary things in life using whatever style of prayer you are comfortable with.

There are times when we have no words to express our thoughts and converse with God; it is at these times that set prayers can be helpful.

An example of this could be a prayer I like to use, taken from St Patrick's breastplate:

Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left.'

It helps me to focus my heart and mind, it not bubbling out of me, it's just part of what I do, this can then lead further into prayers that are free and from the heart, and prayer is a conversation with God.

Prayer is about opening those channels, opening communication with God. Lewis (1958) says that Set Prayers open the channels for Free Prayer to move through, that when rains comes those set channels are already there. Praying in the Spirit and being guided by the Holy Spirit in free prayer has a time and place, whether this is in church as corporate worship, through intercessions and praying what is in your heart and mind, or through set prayer – using liturgy or Psalms that has a response. Prayer is a conversation, a conversation with God that grounds us and keeps our hearts and minds focused on God. Set prayers can be a comfort, we can fall back on them when we don't have the words to say – the Lord's Prayer is a good example of set prayer.

Fiona Weir (Part one of this article appeared in the July/August edition of the Newsletter. Thank you Fiona)

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

At this time of year, as we celebrate the momentous event of God becoming man in Jesus Christ, it seems **right that our prayers should be prayers of thanksgiving**, for all that God has done for us.

Let us thank God for St John's, for all that we share together: friendship, fellowship, meals and social occasions, and especially our life together in Jesus Christ.

Let us give thanks that God is at work in his world in marvellous ways and take encouragement from the following update from the World Prayer Centre:

An 18 year old girl in Mongolia decided to organise a prayer gathering. The government was so impressed by her that they offered her the main square in the capital city and helped pay for the cost of the event. Three thousand young people turned up to pray and worship.

In South Africa thousands of young people showed a deep concern for their nation as they prayed and worshipped Jesus at a prayer gathering in the pouring rain.

In the Philippines, the government were cautious about allowing a prayer gathering to take place, fearing protests by militants. The government agreed to the gathering going ahead if it could be surrounded by the army. So thousands prayed and worshipped with armed troops forming an outer circle. The Holy Spirit came in power and soldiers and young people were mightily blessed by the experience.

In Lebanon, a church close to the Syrian border can not keep count of the number of Muslims finding Jesus, hundreds of them through dreaming about Jesus. Former IS members are also finding Jesus and there is a remarkable move of mercy and redemption.

Give thanks that God is also at work in our nation, in spite of appearances to the contrary – for example, Capstone Church in Ilford has been experiencing revival since June!

*Lord Jesus,
you are the source of all that is good,
all that is joyful and all that is loving.*

We thank you for each and every way in which you show yourself to us; for your presence in the small things, as well as the great and magnificent; the comforting touch of a friend's hand, the warmth of genuine welcome, a human smile.

In so many ways, Lord, you reveal your love for us.

Help us to see and truly understand that you want us as your friends and that as we open our hearts and minds to you, you will always be there to welcome us into yours.

For this we are truly thankful. Amen

(Taken from The Methodist Prayer Handbook, 2016/2017)

St John's Parent and Toddler Group

We have had a very busy month at Toddler Group. We started the month by collecting items for Operation Christmas Child – we filled two shoe boxes, one for a boy and one for a girl – and Toddler Group funds paid the £10 postage fee. We hope that the children receiving these Christmas gifts will get a lot of pleasure from them.

Dorothy Charlesworth very kindly came to Toddler Group on 13th November and did an autumn craft activity with the children, who enjoyed it very much – as did their mums and grandmas! You can see some of their autumn collages on the Toddler Group notice board, as well as photos taken as the children worked. Thank you to those people who 'liked' the corresponding Facebook page!

Our parents and grandparents have generously donated items for the Toddler Group Tombola stall at St John's Christmas Fair. We have a good range of items from toys and toiletries to photo albums and chocolates.

We shall very soon be planning our Toddler Group nativity, which takes place during the Sunday morning service on 17th December. With so many very young children and babies, our nativity is going to be even more of a challenge than usual!

We shall be having our Christmas party on 18th December, which will also be the last time we meet until the new year. We are hoping for a visit from a very special person!

Janet Lees

ST. JOHN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

The St. John's Christmas Party is on **Sunday 10th December** and starts at **12 noon** after the service.

There will be lovely food, games and carols and Father Christmas will be joining us.

Come and join in the fun and fellowship.

There is a list on the table at the back of the Church for you to put your name on if you intend coming.

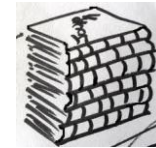
Christmas Coffee Morning - Saturday 16th December.

On Saturday 16th December we are holding a Coffee Morning at church from 10am to 12 noon. There will be several stalls - cake, bric - a - brac, Christmas items etc - and the Church will be open for people to view the Christmas decorations. On display will be the history behind our World War memorials from both St. John's and Castle Hill and the inscriptions under the stained glass windows, all researched by Vic Trigg. So, take a break from the hustle and bustle and come and relax over a coffee, a chat and a time of quiet reflection in the Church.

Book Stewards for December & January

December

3rd	Beryl Posniak
10th	May Arthan
17th	am: Nancy Millington pm: Mary Scott
24th	Gwen Reeves
25th	Jim Walwyn
31st	Sheila Walwyn



January

7th	Sue Davies
14th	May Arthan
21st	Sheila Walwyn
28th	Beryl Posniak

Three boys were bragging about the jobs their fathers had. “My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, calls it poetry and people give him £50 for it said the first.

“That’s nothing, “ said the second boy. “My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, calls it a song and gets £100.”

“I can do better than both of you,” smiled the third boy. “My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, calls it a sermon, and it takes six people to collect the money.”

**Network Christmas Carol Party-
Tuesday 5th December**

Our last meeting of the year takes place at the usual time, 2pm, but on Tuesday 5th December. We shall be singing Carols and hearing seasonal readings- (please come with a reading of your own choice, although we may not have enough time for all of them!) - as well as sharing in a Christmas Tea. Please bring along a food item you can share such as crisps, sandwiches, small cakes, mince pies etc.

Bring & Share Lunch -19th November

On Sunday the 19th of November Brian Faulkner preached his sermon based on the feeding of the 5000.

How apposite that a Bring & Share Lunch had been prepared for after the service. This was not to be a Fund Raising event - simply an opportunity to share a meal with church friends and to enjoy some fellowship time together. A lot of time and effort had gone into the preparation and there was food aplenty- certainly more than three loaves and two fishes!

Amazingly only 25 people stayed to enjoy the lunch. What a shame it was so poorly supported!

Facebook

Thank the Lord for Facebook. Otherwise I'd have to call 674 people today to tell them I just went Christmas shopping.

The fragility of life. (In praise of small things)

Today life is lived so 'up front' bold and brash. Material things matter so much and the bigger and better things are seem to be the order of the day!

The bigger car, the bigger house, the most up date gadget and the most prestigious job – all seem so competitive 'glam and glitzy'. TV shows offering the biggest prizes all bigger and better than ever before we are promised!

Think also of the smaller things in life – the insignificant day to day happenings that really make a difference.

As a child (albeit a skinny weak one) - I seemed drawn to small objects and animals. The smaller and more vulnerable seemed to attract me. I was always finding small birds,, or other animals to 'save' I tried to nurture baby birds if they were injured by putting them in a box and trying to administer to them. My efforts of course often had poor results as Mother nature always knows best, and it is the 'survival of the strongest, in the animal world I am afraid. When they finally reached their demise I would gently bury them and cover them with leaves and flowers and say a little prayer for them.

I am also fascinated by the premature babies who are born before their time. Indeed a few ladies knit tiny hats for me and I pass them on to the hospital to use in their incubators. What wonderful work the nurses and Doctors do saving these tiny scraps giving them every chance of life. With modern technology this is made so much easier today. My dear mother also loved small things – she used to look at the baby lambs in the fields and murmur 'little hearts beating' I don't think either of us would be strong minded enough to be farmers!

In life of course big things do matter to a degree, but it is in the small day to day things of living that keep our world turning....

Love should grow stronger as we mature in marriage and partnerships (sadly often it does not of course) but it is in the small everyday respect and care we give to our partners that really matters.

The first flower of the year – our tiny snowdrop is so small and fragile and yet says so much about the heralding of Spring.

Small people too sometimes carry an inner strength although lacking physically . My little Welsh grandmother managed to give birth to over 12 children . She was 4foot ten inches tall, and took a size two shoe

Although lacking in stature she was very strong minded and fought to bring her brood up despite being widowed fairly early in her life . She had very little money but she managed it as best she could, my Father said the house was always full of love if nothing else!

Big packages and parcels can look very inviting to open, but how often the smaller ones offer so much more.

A tiny posy of wild flowers given with love by a child can mean so much more than the most expensive bouquet.

So this Christmas we should try to remember the smaller things in our lives that give us so much pleasure – a very hard thing to do these days I fear for our children who are so used to modern day life.

Life is happy at times, life can be very sad too – memories are bitter-sweet

so many things for us to reflect upon.....

Most of all life is very fragile – embrace it and remember the little things..

Sheila Walwyn

Why Bethlehem?

A minister asked his Bible class: 'Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem?'
A student replied, 'Because his mother was there.'

Christmas Past.

Yes! it's nearly here! That time of year when folks look frazzled and worn, and supermarket shelves heave with the Christmas food and goodies. Whilst the inevitable Slade is played non-stop to assure us that 'Here it is merry Christmas' over and over again reminding us to spend, spend, spend!

Now, I have to admit that I am a bit of a Scrooge at this time of year, I find the season tiring really, whilst my husband is a real Christmas fan – obviously this causes a bit of bother at times!



The Christmas adverts on the TV show the 'perfect families' having the 'perfect Christmas' whereas the reality is so often not like this. Overtired children feeling the effects of early rising, and the adults either asleep or engrossed in the computer or TV screen!

I think about how Christmas was for me as a child. We were not well-off but we managed. My father made me a wonderful little dolls house and a shop out of scraps of wood – no mean feat for him as he was not gifted practically really. Second hand toys would be painted up to look new too and we never knew the difference of course!

One year we looked through the window and saw my dear Dad returning from work with a huge goose over his shoulder complete with feathers! He had walked home with it as it was many years before we owned a car. I think he had been to the poultry auction for it and had bid as much as he could afford, that was what my Dad was like – a real family man who cared so much for us.

My mother and Grandma plucked all the feathers from this great bird and when it was cooked we had copious amounts of goose fat which was kept for rubbing on our chests during the winter to keep out the cold - can you imagine doing that today – it must have smelled frightful!

Oh! the joy of peering through the half-light on Christmas morning and seeing presents on the end of our beds! Although I spent half the night with my eyes half closed awaiting the great man's visit – whereas Dad must have been longing just to go to bed!

My sister and I always found an orange and a sugar mouse amongst the gifts and a 'selection box' too.

The best gift I can remember was a doll that walked albeit stiffly - it was a very basic doll with a pretty horrid pale plaster face, but the fact that I could actually move it and make it walk was wonderful! I also had a craft set complete with scissors to make things but sadly I was not that way inclined, maybe they were trying to encourage me in this area!

On usual years our Christmas dinner consisted of a chicken which was a real treat in

those days as we never had chicken on a regular basis. We never had a 'starter' before the meal either, we were just glad of a nice big dinner! This was followed by Christmas pudding which I have never really liked, but it was tradition of course to have it! Along with the Queens speech which we all had to listen to at three pm sharp – traditions are all at Christmas!

In the evening some years my Dad's family would join us for a sing song around the piano, there was no TV in those days of course. Silly games were also played and chocolate and nuts were laid out together with 'Christmas sandwiches' too. There was much drinking and merry making to be had, but at least we all talked to each other not like today with so many other diversions! Boxing day always seemed so sad after the excitement of the big day as we wished Christmas back again – I am sure that my parents did not though! Christmas lasted just two days then - Christmas day and Boxing day not like today when it lasts for about two weeks!

Our Christmas tree came out each year from the loft and it was a sad forlorn little brush like thing, but we children thought it was wonderful, and the joy of placing the battered old fairy on the top of the tree was so exciting! We also had crepe paper streamers across the room which surely would not be allowed today due to fire hazard! Oh how different life was then.....Now sadly it is all games and gadgets and TV programmes .

At the heart of Christmas though it is surely still the same. We show our love to friends and family – those who mean the most to us. Sadly many are gone from our lives now, but have been replaced by other little ones who are a joy as the family lives on and gladdens our hearts- the next generation to come.

I am sure everyone has their own recollections of Christmas memories happy and sad, this is what makes Christmas so special - a time of love and peace in a world of such unfairness and hate.

As John Betjeman puts it in his poem 'Christmas'

'No love that in a family dwells
No carolling in frosty air
Nor all the steeple shaking bells
Can with this single truth compare
That God was man in Palestine
And lives again in bread and wine.'

A happy and peaceful Christmas to you all.

Sheila Walwyn

Regular Church Activities

Mondays 9:30-11:30am Parents & Toddlers (Term time)

1st/3rd Tuesdays: Fellowship at 7 Queen's Road

Thursdays 7pm: Music Group Practice

1st/3rd Thursdays at 7:30pm Prayer Meeting

2nd Wednesdays at 2pm: Bible Study at st. John's

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY- Dec 2017 & Jan 2018

Tuesday 5th December: 2pm Network Carols & Tea

Sunday 10th December: 12 noon Christmas Party

Monday 11th December: Worship Committee

Wednesday 13th December: Midweek Bible Study 2 pm

Saturday 16h December: 10 - 12 noon Coffee Morning

Sunday 17th December 10.30am Toddlers Nativity Service

Sunday 17th December: 6.30pm Carols by candlelight

Wednesday 20th December: Christmas Café Church at 7.30 pm

Thursday 21st December: 2.30 Hospital Crib Service

Christmas Eve: 4th Sunday in Advent Service at 10.30

Christmas Day: Morning Celebration at 9.45am (Please note different time)

Wednesday 17th January 7.30pm Refurbishment Committee

Wednesday 24th January: 7.30pm Property & Finance Committee

February 2018 Newsletter

Please let Chris Crowther have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by 21st January.

Winter Trees

Winter trees, of growth denuded
Bow their heads to wind and snow
Bow towards a lonely stable
Unto which some shepherds go.
Trees that seem so cold and lifeless
Bow toward that heavenly glow.

In that shed, a new-born infant
Bathed in golden lantern's light
Shepherds kneel in awe and wonder
At the gift of God this night.
E'en the trees so bare do whisper
Wondrous praises at that sight.

Winter trees will soon be verdant
When the winter turns to spring.
We, like them, can be as joyful
Death has lost its fatal sting.
For that babe within a manger
Brings good news of which we sing.

Glory be to God in Heaven
Glory be to God, we cry
For His gift, so freely given
His own precious Son to die.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
We can live with Him on high!

By Nigel Beeton



Happy Christmas!

All the Editors of the St John's Methodist Church Newsletter wish all the members of our congregation a very Happy Christmas. See you in 2017!

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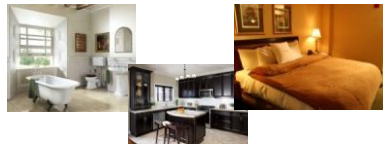
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