

CONTACT

MAGAZINE OF PRESTBURY AND OVER ALDERLEY METHODIST
CHURCHES MINISTER REV ANDY HALSTEAD – TEL 01625 424361



December 2010 & January 2011

MINISTER'S LETTER



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Dear All,

I don't know when your preparations for Christmas begin, whether you are one of those who has everything 'wrapped up' with a week left to spare or whether on Christmas Eve you still have everything to sort out. In recent conversations with people they have commented on how some people put their decorations up early in the winter season, or how shops seemed to have had Advent Calendars on the shelves prior to Halloween. I am mindful of Mary, her Christmas preparations began a long time before the birth. In Luke's gospel, at the birth of Jesus we read this, 'but Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart'. (Luke chapter 2 verse 19) For Mary the journey toward Christmas began 9 months before, we cannot of course be sure of the actual date, but it was a normal pregnancy. What must it have been like for this young Jewish woman, carrying that child with all the events that brought about his coming? We sometimes comment that Christmas seems to start earlier every year. Yet of course Christmas for us is not just about what happens this year in our celebrations, but a reminder that we are constantly preparing for Christ's coming again; something we looked at in the Tuesday Chew Over group. Our hymns and Christmas readings call us again and again to watch for the coming of Christ into our world, as a prayer from

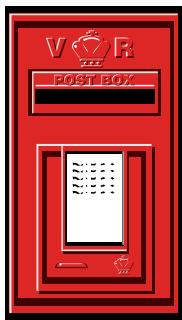
Jamie Wallace says, make us wise in the expectation of your coming at last to judge the past and finish the future and resume eternity. Mary was 'expectant' that first Christmas. May we as begin or complete our Christmas preparations be 'expectant' for Jesus to come again and complete the work of God's kingdom? To bring light into the world's darkness, joy into its sorrow and hope into that which seems hopeless.

*Hope of the world Mary's child, you're coming soon to reign;
King of the earth, Mary's child, walk in our streets again.
Geoffrey Ainger (Hymns & Psalms 95)*

May Christ be in your Christmas.

Andy

PRESTBURY NEWS



The Church Post Box This will be in place to receive your Christmas cards for other members of the congregation from **28th November** Please note the last date for posting will be Sunday 5th December and the cards will be distributed on **Sunday 12th December.**

Carol Singing Please come and join us for Carol Singing at the Beaumont at 2.00pm on Tuesday 21st December. We hold a service at the Beaumont on the last Tuesday of each month so the next one will be at 11.00am



on Tuesday 25th January. Please try to support this.

The Rambling Group meet each Thursday - 10.00 outside church. A thoroughly enjoyable morning, all walking abilities welcome. Afterwards we meet at The Admiral Rodney for a light lunch. Please join us.

The Craft Group We will be meeting on 6th December at 2.00pm (after the faith Lunch) The January meetings will be on 10th and 24th January at 2.00pm

Church Council

The next Church Council is on 16 February. Nominations for church stewards are now being sought. Please suggest names to Rev Andy.

The Annual Church Meeting has been brought forward to 27 April 2011, due to Rev Andy's sabbatical.

Beta will meet on **Wednesday 8th December** at 7:00pm for a meal followed by the final session on "Understanding Islam" led by Roger. The session is titled "Muslims finding Fellowship". In January we hope to meet on January 12th at 7:00 pm when the discussion will be "Jesus and Me".

Thank you to all who have so generously provided the church flowers on a week by week basis throughout the year. They have enhanced our worship immensely and they are much appreciated by all.



lunch together and enjoy the Fellowship. Occasionally we have entertainment. Everyone is welcome.

Resulting from the lunches we have had many Social outings to Theatres, Gardens, Markets and Places of Interest.

Thank you to the social committee for organising all the outings, and events, throughout the year. They are very much appreciated.

SOCIAL EVENTS



Trip to Arley Hall, Wednesday, December 8th for Carols by Candlelight -Leave church at 5:15pm.
Cost; £15

Faith Lunches. The Christmas lunch will be held on Monday 6th December in the Meeting Room at Church. There will be entertainment and mince pies. There will be no January meeting, and the February meeting will be at the Bridge Hotel, on Monday 2nd February Please join us, all welcome.

Our Faith Lunches have taken place for several years and are a successful Outreach from the Church. Meeting regularly on the first Monday of each month. There is time to talk, share

COFFEE MORNING & BRING and BUY



10.00am-12.00noon in the Village Hall

Saturday, 29th January

The proceeds will be for the work of
Action for Children

There will also be the usual stalls ~ home made cakes, greeting cards, raffle, bric-a-brac, books etc.

COME & BRING YOUR FRIENDS

Advent & Christmas Services

Let us again Celebrate Advent and Christmas well this year! As usual, we have several special services for you to bring other members of the family to, or to bring friends and neighbours.

Our **Advent Services** begin on **28th November** at **10.30am** when the first of our Advent candles will be lit.

A Circuit Advent Service will be held that evening at **6.30pm** at **Broken Cross Methodist Church**, preceded by Advent Workshops and a Circuit Faith Tea from 4pm



Sunday 12th December at 10:30am is our **Children's Nativity Service** acted out by our children and led by Steve Oliver. This will also be our **Toy Service** at which you are invited to bring presents of new

toys for the children at the Women's Refuge Centre and also gifts for the mothers.

That evening at **6.45pm** is our **Carol Service**. This is led by Rev David Stretton and is Carols by Candlelight. Please bring a torch.

Christmas Eve Communion at 11.30 pm is conducted by our minister, Andy. Let's celebrate Christ's Nativity in Communion together.

On Christmas Day at 10.30am we shall meet for a short all-age celebration of Jesus' birth and led by Steve Oliver.

Church Party



The Church Party this year will be held on **Saturday, 12th February**. Please put the date in your diaries, and look out for details in Pews News

Copy Date for the February edition of Contact will be January 16th .

Christmas Wrap

For some years now, in the weeks leading up to Christmas, Christians from many of our town's churches have come together to offer a rather different kind of service to our local community.

A table, festooned with balloons, wrapping paper, ribbons and bows etc are set up in the Grosvenor Centre, opposite the entrance to Argos; we have a rota of teams, each representing at least 2 different church denominations. We simply offer to wrap presents for shoppers.

It's a great way of reaching out to people and also raising the profile of Christians from different denominations being seen to be working together and offering a service to the community. It's also fun!

We are not all wonderful wrappers and we get some very strange and, sometimes, very large and challenging shapes to wrap; but, we all help each other and, as we wrap, we chat to people and they chat to us, mostly just about who their presents are for, their choice of paper, bows, tag etc Also at times, people will start to unburden themselves. Christmas can be a difficult time for a lot of people - for all sorts of reasons and, without prying or intruding, we are there to listen, as and when necessary and to offer prayer.

We also have a Christmas **Prayer** tree, anyone can write a prayer request which is put on the tree; Children, especially, love to write a prayer.

All the time we are wrapping, one



member of the team prays for all our "customers" and the prayer requests. On the final day, all the requests are gathered up and prayed over.

The one thing that puzzles everyone and which people struggle to accept is that we make no charge or ask for a donation; we offer a **free** service. It never ceases to amaze us how difficult that is for most people to understand - the same question is asked again and again: "but why are you doing it, if you don't charge? You could make a lot of money!" Our reply is that it is a gift from us to them for Christmas; as churches working together, we simply want to give something to our local community to show the real spirit of Christmas. It's also a great way of meeting and working with members of other Churches; it is non-threatening, it is **great fun** and very easy - everyone is talented one way or another, we work together and all are welcome. So why not come along and join in "**The Wrap**" - you won't regret it!



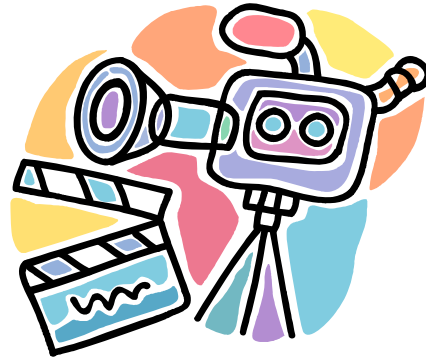
Please check Pews News for further details.

Get ready for Christmas

Many of us will go to the cinema this month - drawn by the trailers for the latest blockbuster films set for release around Christmas. Trailers never make much sense on their own; their job is to tantalise you into wanting to know the whole story.

In his wisdom, God wrote a trailer for the Christmas story. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God began to tell his people just a bit of what they had to look forward to. Throughout the Old Testament there are glimpses of a coming Messiah, of a Prince of Peace. God didn't tell the people in the Old Testament everything - they had to wait for the events to actually take place.

But slowly the sense of anticipation builds through the Old Testament. And when the Messiah finally came, there was surprise, but no anticlimax. Everything about the birth, life, death - and resurrection - of Jesus would surpasses all expectations.



Silent Night

A Christmas Carol that has stood the test of time
Silent Night is one of the world's most popular Christmas carols. Every year it is sung in many different languages across the world evoking the spirit of Christmas. Popularly it is said that the carol was composed in one night, to be accompanied by a guitar, because the mice had eaten the organ bellows! But what is the real history of this carol?

The carol '*Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht*' was first heard in St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf on Christmas Eve 1818. The congregation at Midnight Mass listened as the assistant pastor, Father Joseph Mohr, and choir director, Franz Gruber, sang to the accompaniment of Father Mohr's guitar. The priest had composed the words two years earlier in 1816 as a six verse poem.

Since then this Christmas carol has achieved world wide appeal and has been translated into over 40 languages including English. It has been sung on a variety of occasions and in some unexpected places.

On Christmas Day 1918, during the First World War, German and Allied armies faced one another in France. The song was sung simultaneously in French, English and German by the troops during a Christmas truce, as it was one of the few carols that soldiers on both sides of the front line knew.

So what is the reason for the enduring popularity of this carol? The simple words and tune communicate the heart of the Christmas message. The eternal God has made himself known, by entering time and space, in the person of Jesus Christ. The baby in the manger is not just fully divine, but he

is born as a real human being. Jesus comes as a Saviour to rescue us from the mess of our lives, so that we might share the life which Jesus has with his Father. Now there is something worth singing about!!



Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia
Christ the Saviour is born
Christ the Saviour is born



Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth

Glory to God in the High Street

Many years ago in Finchley, north London there was a local Methodist Church which would offer various inspirational messages in illuminated lights to the passers-by on the main road. Their Christmas one, very appropriately, was the song of the angels: 'Glory to God in the highest'.

Unfortunately some inclement weather or a simple technical failure put out one of the lights. Just as appropriately, however, it now read, 'Glory to God in the High st'. An electrical fault, perhaps - but how wonderfully true it was. In fact, nothing could better sum up the deep meaning of Christmas than that splendidly distorted message.

Those same angels told the shepherds in the fields that the 'sign' to identify the special baby to be born that night in Bethlehem would be that they would find him 'lying in a manger'. Well, 'manger' is a fancy word for a simple thing. The truth is that they would find the infant Son of God lying in a feeding trough.

At Bethlehem the Creator entered the Creation. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' - and the 'Word', John's Gospel tells us, 'was God'. In Jesus the divine became human. 'In him (Jesus) all the fullness of deity dwells bodily', St Paul tells us (Colossians 2:9). 'Hail the incarnate deity', we sing - but it's hard sometimes to recognise his identity in the bonny baby in the traditional crib scene.

It's a pity that the Christmas story can so easily be sentimentalised because in fact this was the most radical and revolutionary action of God since the creation itself. God, in Jesus his Son, actually came among us - not as a super-being, not even as a fully grown adult, but as a baby.

'You will find the baby lying in a feeding trough.' Exactly. Right where we are, in all the mess and muddle of ordinary life, in

the fun and tears, in the feasting and the poverty, the glory of God was seen in a tiny scrap of human flesh. In that helpless baby God showed how far he was prepared to go to bring us back to himself. When God took flesh he did it properly.

Glory to God in the high street!

Prestbury Methodists will run a **Lunchtime Alpha Course** starting **Thursday January 13th 2006 at 12:00 at the Methodist Chapel, Prestbury.** **Session 1 is a "taster".**

You will see the first DVD & have the chance to meet some people who have done the course, and discuss how they found it. If you enjoy the "Taster", we hope you will join the lunchtime course that starts the following week for 10 Thursdays.

Each session will run as follows:

- 12:00 Meet and share a sandwich lunch.
- 12:30 Video talk by Rev Nicky Gumbel
- 1:00 Opportunity to discuss with others.
- 1:30 Finish

These meetings are for those who attend church **AND** for those who don't. **Please invite your friends on Jan 13th, and come yourself!** **Everyone is very welcome!**

Lunchtime Alpha is tailored to provide a convenient opportunity in the day for those who work or find it hard to attend in an evening.



A LIGHT TO WELCOME

Just 30 years ago all people had were decorated trees and a few paper-chains at Christmas, but now we have wreaths on the front door, outdoor lights in gardens; and the most recent addition, those arched candlesticks with 7 or more electric candles to stand on windowsills.

This custom came to us from Scandinavia. The story is that in weeks before Christmas, like that first Christmas nearly 2,000 years ago, Mary and Joseph wander the world looking for a place where they will be safe. They look for a welcome light in the window. And that is why we put the lights in our window: to invite the Holy Family into our homes at the darkest and coldest part of the year. The candles say that Christ is welcome in our homes, to be born in our hearts and that we invite him to stay with us - not just for Christmas but for all time.



SKY LIGHTS

Stars are another source of light and the wise men and shepherds followed a star to the baby Jesus.

The answers to this quiz all start with the letters STAR so can you say which Star...

1. is the right-hand side of a ship?
2. is a bird?
3. is used to stiffen things?
4. is to look with wide open eyes?
5. is the US flag?
6. is someone who sets a race off?
7. is suddenly surprised?



What carol is heard in the dessert?

Camel ye faithful.



What's impossible to overtake at Christmas?

The three wide men.



Answers: 1 starboard 2 stalling 3 starch
4 stare 5 Stars & Stripes
6 starter 7 startled