

# CONTACT

MAGAZINE OF PRESTBURY METHODIST CHURCH  
MINISTER REV ANDY HALSTEAD – TEL 01625 424361



*December 2011 & January 2012*

## MINISTER'S LETTER



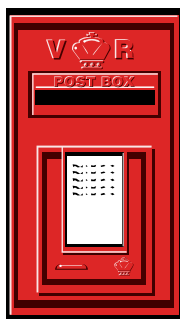
*11 Atholl Close  
Macclesfield  
SK10 3QB  
01625 424361*

Dear All,

You may know of the story already but here goes; over the period of Christmas 1914 German and allied troops had a cease fire. Some got out of their trenches, ventured into no man's land, exchanged gifts, sang Christmas Carols and even had games of football with each other. For me in that event there is something about the power the message of Christmas can have. At its heart God steps down into human flesh, born in a stable in Bethlehem and through the subsequent life of that one man, changes the whole course of human history. We live in a world where that message is needed ever more clearly. In economic struggles, which at the time of my writing, threaten the very survival of the economies of Europe. From the ever widening gap between the rich and poor, not just within our own country, but across the world and the movement of the Middle East Spring uprising which is causing a shift of the balance of power across the world. Christmas reminds us that we believe in a God who is not aloof from the world and distant, but a God who ultimately stepped down into our world, took on what it meant to be us and thereby gave each person, hope, love and peace. Archbishop

Desmond Tutu once said when he came to Leicester to receive his honorary degree "You know, we have an extraordinary God who is omnipotent. But this God extraordinarily, paradoxically, is also impotent. When someone is hungry we do not see samosas floating down from heaven. If that hungry person is to be fed this omnipotent God **waits on us** to be God's partners so that the miracle of feeding the hungry happens." You see the call of Jesus is to follow him and we as gaze in wonder at God incarnate in the child in Bethlehem we need to remember it is in us his will is done and his kingdom comes. May you as you celebrate this Christmas, know that love, hope and peace which Jesus brings and know it in abundance that you may feel empowered to share its truth with others. Every blessing & Happy Christmas  
Andy

## PRESTBURY NEWS



### Christmas Post Box

The Christmas post box will be in the foyer on 4th and 11th December for your cards to other members of the congregation. Cards will be distributed on 18th December

### Carols at Beaumont 13th

December 2.15pm

Please keep this date free and join us at the Beaumont. Everyone is welcome. This short service is enjoyed so much by both the residents and staff. The first service of the new year at the Beaumont will take place on **Tuesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January.**



### Craft Group

Each month the Craft group produces cards for sale at the coffee morning. You will appreciate that the materials for these do cost and to date we have not taken anything for materials. Can you help? Do you have any materials that we could utilise? Do you have any old greeting cards? Do you have any scraps of wallpaper with small designs on which we could use to make toppers for cards?

Do you run a group or meeting at Church, would you like the Craft Group to make available a card stall Any money raised from these sales would go to buy materials so that we can

continue to make 30 -40 cards each month for charity. The idea is that a small box of cards and a tin for the money would be placed either in the vestibule or the back hall and people could browse through and purchase as they feel appropriate.



We will next meet on **12 Dec, 9 Jan and 23 Jan at 2.00pm** - New members always welcome.

The **Rambling Group** meet each Thursday - 10.00 outside church. A thoroughly enjoyable morning, all walking abilities welcome. Afterwards we usually meet at The Admiral Rodney for a light lunch. On **8<sup>th</sup> December**, we are lunching at the Leather Smithy.

**B**eta will meet on **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 7:00 p.m.** for a meal followed by a shared meditation on "Do we still stand in wonder at the Crib?". Please try to bring a reading or prayer that expresses some of your experience of the Nativity that you can share with everyone. Please look in Pews News for details of January's meeting.

### House Groups



Both groups will be finishing the year with a **Christmas Bring 'n' Share Meeting**. This will be an opportunity to share an item about Christmas ~ a reading, meditation, piece of music, personal reflection, etc...

The evening house group will meet at 7:30pm, Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, The lunch-time group will meet at 1:00pm, Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> December, with lunch from 12:30.

In the New Year, the evening group will first meet on 5<sup>th</sup> January ~ programme yet to be confirmed. The lunch-time Group will meet on 12<sup>th</sup> January, and will be following the Lay Witness Movement material 'Exploring God's Love'.

All are very welcome to join us for any of these meetings.

**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.



### Prayer Group

The group continues to meet every other Tuesday at 2pm.

**Faith Lunches.** The Christmas lunch will be held on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December in the Meeting Room at Church. There will be no January meeting, and the February meeting will be at the Bridge Hotel. 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 lunch together and enjoy the Fellowship. Occasionally we have entertainment. Everyone is welcome.



### Church Party

The Church Party this year will be held on **Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> February**. Please put the date in your diaries; details in Pews News

Next year will be 10 years since we first worshipped in our new Chapel (Feb 24<sup>th</sup> 2002) and the grand opening (Sat 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002). We are planning some special **10<sup>th</sup> Birthday Events** for the weekend of **March 3rd/4th**, and we hope as many of our fellowship as possible will be able to attend.

### COFFEE MORNING & BRING and BUY



10.00am-12.00noon in the Village Hall

**Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> 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

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 **27<sup>th</sup> November** at **10.30am** when the first of our Advent candles will be lit.



Sunday **11<sup>th</sup> December** at **10:30am** is our **Children's Toy Service** led by Dorothy Chesterman.



That evening there is no service at church, but we will be involved in the Prestbury Street Party starting at 5pm until 7pm (the main street will be closed from 4:30 - 7:30)

On **18<sup>th</sup> December**, at **10:30am** we have the **Children's Christmas Service**, and in the evening at **6:45pm** our **Carol Service** led by Frank Bishop.

**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 Andy.

## Christmas Wrap

As for a number of years now, this will be taking place again in the Grosvenor Centre. Very simply, Christians from around the town are organised into little teams to wrap presents for passing shoppers! No charge is made, or donations sought, it is a simple witness, and a gift, to the people of Macc. The sessions are



- Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> December -11am to 4pm
- Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> December -11am to 4pm and 5pm to 8pm
- Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> December -11am to 4pm
- Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> December -11am to 4pm and 5pm to 8pm



## Holiday Reflection

On our cruise earlier this year it was Easter Sunday as we sailed into Bridgetown, Barbados. We wanted to find a Methodist Church where we could share in the Easter Celebration. After disembarking we approached a taxi driver and explained what we wanted to do. 'No problem', he said, 'I will take you to the Church in the town centre', which turned out to be St James Street Methodist Church.



We arrived at 10.15 am. to discover that the service had started at 9.00am and was well underway but was to continue for another hour and a half. Nevertheless, we were warmly welcomed by the Stewards who gave us an order of service

and hymn books, and escorted us down the aisle to two seats in the middle of a row.

I was delighted to see that we were singing from the old Methodist Hymn Book which was the one in use as I grew up in the Church and opens with the memorable words 'Methodism was born in song'.

During a short break in the service an elderly couple sitting next to us asked where we were from. 'England' we said. 'Yes, but whereabouts?' 'Prestbury a village in Cheshire south of Manchester'. 'We know Cheshire quite well,' they said, 'as we both were at University in England and for some time lived in Chester'. He was a lawyer and his wife a doctor.

As everyone was very smartly dressed we apologised for our rather casual holiday clothes on this very hot day. 'He doesn't mind how you are dressed' they replied 'it is your heart that he sees'.

We then shared in a Communion Service with over three hundred people - a most uplifting experience. It was unfortunate that we had to say goodbye and leave as the service ended as our driver had returned to collect us as promised. Nevertheless, we felt truly blessed by the service and the fellowship we had shared.

For me, two outstanding and distinguishing characteristics of the Methodist Church, which we should continue to nurture and cherish, are its hymn singing, as it was truly born in song, and the wonderful fellowship to be found. They were abundantly experienced in this unexpected holiday meeting in Barbados and made this day one of the highlights of the Cruise.

## Derek Hinchliffe's New Book

For those of you who may not know, Derek was a previous minister of our church here at Prestbury. He has followed up

his first book 'Before I Forget'.

'Ocean of Life' is available from the first Sunday in Advent and all profits from the book will be donated to the Barnsley Hospice.

# OCEAN OF LIFE

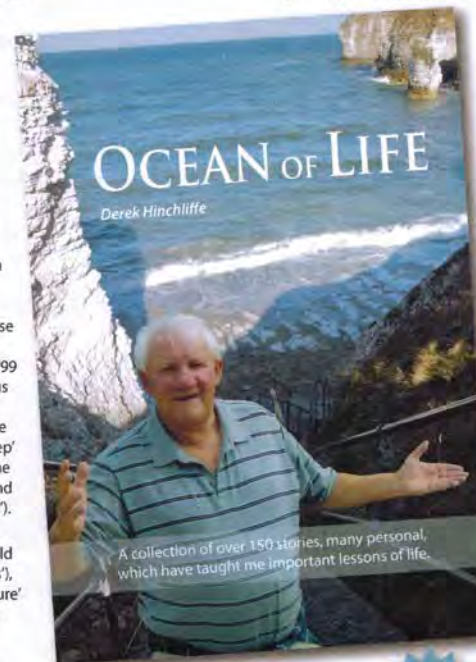
by Derek Hinchliffe

Whereas his first book, *Before I Forget*, was essentially a story about his life, Derek Hinchliffe's second book is an eclectic collection of stories from his varied life.

*Ocean of Life* gathers together 150 different stories into 60 weekly essays, five per month.

A few of the stories are a re-telling of meaningful tales with lessons to teach ('The Ugly Madonna' and 'The Snow Goose'), but most are experiential. These vary from the personal ('Dad's Miner's Lamp' and '99 Not Out!') to the humorous ('Hey Up, God' and 'Going Round in Circles'); from the puzzling ('Seventeen Sheep' and 'New Jerusalem') to the poetic ('Insular Insights' and 'Mountain Top Experience').

His love of geography ('Malham Triangle' and 'Cold Winters and Hot Summers'), history ('Antarctic Adventure' and 'Plague Village'), films ('The Queen and I' and 'The Pianist') emerge in *Ocean of Life*, a book which will be of interest to the general reader and storyteller seeking new illustrations.



only  
£8.50

Available by mail order for (£10 inc P&P) from:  
Rev Derek Hinchliffe, 4 Green Hill Grove,  
Hoylandswaine, Sheffield S36 7LT

All profits from the sale of this book will be donated to the Barnsley Hospice.

This donation has been enhanced because of the generous sponsorship of *Ocean of Life* by the Barnsley firm of Chartered Accountants and Chartered Tax Advisors, Harris & Co.

## Missing the Guest of Honour

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2)

There's a story that runs like this: there was a mayor of a small town who had brought in so many improvements to local life that over several years he had transformed the town. And so the community decided it was high time to pay him tribute.

The party was held at the local town hall, and all agreed it was a great celebration. The decorations were superb, the music was loud, the room crowded and noisy. The food was delicious, and the wine flowed. It was the best party the town had ever had.

Over coffee the next morning in the local cafe, someone wondered aloud if the mayor had enjoyed it. No one knew. In fact, as the day wore on, people began to realise that actually, no one had even seen the mayor there that night. Later they discovered that the mayor had been waiting at home all evening, waiting for the lift that he had been promised into town. But people were so busy preparing for the party, that no one had remembered him. And so he had missed the party in his honour. Apparently no one had even noticed his absence.

It sounds a lot like Christmas. People get together to celebrate, the food is great, the music warms the heart - but has anyone seen the guest of honour? We sing about him, we act out nativity plays about him, but in reality, the season has become about US. Our menus, our travel plans, our presents, our decorations. At what point in the proceedings do we give ourselves time to notice whether he is among us, or not?

*Parish Pump*

## Hope for 2012

*'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'*  
(Isaiah 9:6)

As the start of this New Year we are all aware of the uncertainties which we face, especially in terms of our finances, jobs and economic prospects. We have to face the big questions of life: *what shall I do?; who can help me?; who cares for me? and what do I say?*

The familiar words of the prophet Isaiah were also given by God in a time of political and economic uncertainty. The Assyrians had just conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, fulfilling Isaiah's warnings to the people, who had turned their back on God and his ways. However, Isaiah also brings a word of hope, *'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light'* (2). For Isaiah, it felt as if the future had already arrived! However, after 700 years the promised child was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. For us, facing a New Year, he continues to be an answer to both our needs and questions:

*Wonderful Counsellor:* he will give us the wisdom we need, when we have difficult decisions to make at work or home, or in dealing with our finances or future direction.

*Mighty God:* he will provide the help and strength to face the difficult diagnosis, the family crisis or relationships breakdown, as we trust his plan and purpose for our lives.

*Everlasting Father:* he cares for us as a father cares for his children, so we can come to him when we feel alone or we are really struggling, knowing that he hears and will answer our prayers.

*Prince of Peace:* he has secured peace by his cross and resurrection, and so we can find in him true acceptance, forgiveness and peace for our lives, relationships and future.

Therefore at the start of 2012, may 'our joy be increased' (3) as for the people in Isaiah's day. For only Jesus can truly turn our sorrow into joy and save us from the vicious spiral of sin and death. Whatever the mess and mistakes we have made over the past year, he can deal with them. With him both our present and future are secure. This is no pipe-dream, for 'the zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.' *Rev Paul Hardingham*

## The Silent Gift

The gift of God came silently, with surreptitious grace,  
To a dark, concealed, stable block in an unfamiliar place.  
No ceremonial pomp was there,  
No fanfare in the street,  
When the sacred gift from God was given -  
And creation made complete.

To no rich men were tidings given, but to shepherds in the fields.  
The angel-song, so clear for them,  
Was from other men concealed.  
The nobles of the neighbourhood saw nothing of a star;  
The heavenly sign of divine love came to Wise Men from afar!

When the Son of God came down from Heaven  
To give his life for all,  
A rough-hewn cross of wood was his outside Jerusalem's wall.  
The greatest gift that ever was, that freed us all from blame,  
Was thus wrapped up in pain and blood and ignominious shame.

So, how shall we, this Christmas time our varied gifts present?  
How shall we be mindful, then of what they represent?  
No matter what we buy, or give or what we can afford,  
However well we wrap them up,  
We can't outgive the Lord.

*By Nigel Beeton*



## CHRISTMAS BEGINS

When does Christmas start? Does it start when the shops begin playing Christmas carols and putting up decorations?

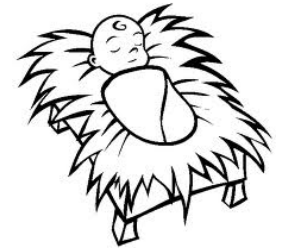
Or is it at the beginning of Advent which starts 4 weeks before the 25<sup>th</sup> December and is a special time for us to use to get ready for the birth of Jesus?

The word Advent means 'coming' and the season of Advent before Christmas, like Lent before Easter, is a time to get ready. A time to look forward and prepare, not just



by writing Christmas cards and wrapping presents, but by inviting Jesus into our hearts and lives today.

So perhaps the question isn't when does your Christmas start, but when does it finish?



## CHRISTMAS EVE

24<sup>th</sup> December is Christmas Eve and the answer to each of these questions starts with the letters EVE. Answers below.

1. What EVE is equal?
2. What EVE is a swamp in Florida?
3. What EVE is a happening?
4. What EVE is a dried flower?
5. What EVE is the end of the day?
6. What EVE is the world's highest mountain?
7. What EVE never loses its leaves?

**What goes red, white, red, white, red, white?** Santa rolling down a hill.

**What did the snowman and his wife hang over their baby's cot?**

A snow mobile.

**What's brown and sneaks round the kitchen?** Mince spies.



Answers: 1 even 2 Everglades 3 event 4 everlasting 5 evening 6 Everest  
7 evergreen