

St Mark's Parish Magazine

December 2021

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In this month's issue

Letter from the Vicar	Page 2
What do you think?	Page 3
How Father Christmas got where he is today	Page 4
News from the Church of England	Page 5
Advent	Page 6
Funerals	Page 7
Calendars	Page 10
Life can be puzzling	Page 12
Environment News	Page 14
Christmas Rush	Page 19
Book Review	Page 20
Reader Recipes	Page 21
Puzzles	Page 22

Your Views & Contributions

Next issue will be available from Sunday 2 January 2022
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LETTER FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends,

As we enter December you may be breathing a sigh of relief that this year is nearly over and looking forward to Christmas with a little more certainty than last year, although the news of the Omicron variant has reintroduced some uncertainty. It has certainly been a year of ups and downs, feeling at times like a game of Snakes and Ladders. Some form of normality is reached and then – just like with one roll of the dice – you are sliding back down and you have to start all over again and change plans. All the uncertainty we've had puts a new perspective on the Christmas story itself, because you realise how disrupting the events of the first Christmas were for those involved.

Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married; they no doubt had their plans for what their lives would look like, until the angel Gabriel turned up and sent all their plans out the window. Then, just as they were getting used to the idea that they would have a baby, the emperor ordered a census, so they had to set off away from home on the long journey to Bethlehem. Not what they had planned at all.

Or what about the shepherds, sat in their fields just doing their job until the angels appeared and sent them running into the village to find the new-born Jesus. Then there were the wise men, sent on a perilous journey to a far-off land because of the appearance of a new star in the sky. None of these people could have predicted or planned what would happen to them, but when the disruption came they went with it and in doing so they met God face to face.

We all approach Christmas with our own sets of expectations and hopes, rituals and traditions, and after all we've been through this year it may feel we want to be able to celebrate in the ways that we usually do. Whatever happens this Christmas, let it give us an opportunity to learn anew from Mary and Joseph, the wise men and the shepherds, and to allow the strange turns our lives have taken this year to lead us closer to the God who is always with us.

With my best wishes for a peaceful and blessed Christmas.



What do you think?

I have often heard people state "I always say what I think." If that is what they do they are being very honest and this should be applauded. However one might reply "But do you always think what you say?" One's thoughts, if not considered carefully, could offend or upset the person we are talking to. Also they can be misinterpreted or seen quite differently by our hearer.

It is possible that the things we think initially may even be wrong and could lead our listener along the wrong path.

I think I am sometimes tempted to speak out without thinking carefully whether this thought is good enough to share and thinking what effect my saying might have on the listener.

We all have different lives, different pressures, different faiths, different tragedies and different pleasures of one sort or another. Before being honest in sharing our thoughts, perhaps we should first be listening to what they have to say so that our honest thoughts don't give offence in their particular situation.

Also if we listen carefully to others first, our thoughts might even change or even become more forceful. Our main aim should be to be kind and love that neighbour even if he or she might think differently from us. Having said all this we should not avoid speaking out against something we see as wrong or evil.

Hopefully, like the three wise monkeys, we should see no evil, hear no evil and, perhaps above all, speak no evil.

Ian Archer

How Father Christmas got where he is today

One person you are bound to run into this Christmas season is Father Christmas. If he looks tired, just remember that he has been around a long time.

Father Christmas wasn't always red-suited and white-bearded. He began life as Nicholas, born way back about AD260 in Patara, an important port on the southern coast of what is now Turkey. When his parents died and left him a fortune, Nicholas gave it away to the poor. He became a bishop of the nearby city of Myra.

Nicholas was a serious theologian: he was a participant at the First Council of Nicaea, which formulated the Creed which we still say today. Nicholas died in Myra about AD343, but the stories of his generosity and kindness were just beginning. One enduring tale tells of the three girls whom he rescued from certain prostitution by giving them gold for their dowries. When the father confronted him to thank him, Nicholas said he should thank God alone.

In the UK, Nicholas became the basis for Father Christmas, who emerged in Victorian times as a jolly-faced bearded character. Meanwhile, Dutch and German settlers had taken him to America with them as Santer Klaas and Sankt Nicklas. It was in America that Nicholas received his final two great breaks into real stardom. The first was when the Rev Clement C Moore, a New York Episcopal minister, turned from his life-work of writing a Hebrew/English lexicon, to write a fun poem for his children one Christmas. His 'The Visit of St Nicholas' is now universally known by its first line: 'Twas the Night Before Christmas'.

From Clement Moore we discovered that St Nicholas is round and pink-cheeked and white-bearded, and that he travels at night with sleigh, reindeer and a sack of toys on his back. It was Clement Moore who also revealed that St Nicholas enters houses down chimneys and fills children's stockings with toys and sweets.



So how did we find out that Father Christmas wears red? That was the US Coca-Cola advertising campaign of 1931, who finally released the latest, up-to-date pictures of Father Christmas: wearing a bright red, fur-trimmed coat and a large belt.

These days, it is good that Father Christmas uses reindeer in order to get round all the children in the world on Christmas Eve, he will have to travel 221 million miles at an average speed of 1279 miles a second, 6,395 times the speed of sound. For all those of us who are already exhausted just rushing around getting ready for Christmas that is a sobering thought.

News from the Church of England

Synod calls on politicians to reduce wealth gap between the rich and the poor

The General Synod has called for the Government to reduce the gap between rich and poor after members heard of the 'scandal' of inequality.

The Church of England's national assembly approved a Leeds Diocesan Motion calling on all political parties to adopt an 'explicit policy' of reducing the gap between rich and poor.

Synod members further voted to redouble efforts by the Church of England both at national and local level to respond to need through social action and to tackle 'unjust structures' that contribute to the wealth gap.



Speaking to the General Synod, Father Paul Cartwright, from the Diocese of Leeds, said living costs were rising and real terms disposable income decreasing for the poorest families.

"We make no apology for having a big vision of the worth of every human being."

"We cannot expect to be able to write social or fiscal policy on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, or even eradicate the wealth gap," he said.

"But what we can be is that genuine voice which speaks about the injustice of such a gap, a gap that leads to reduced opportunity for so many in our country."

"We can hold up the mirror to those who maybe can't see what's staring them in the face."

Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, told the Synod: "We make no apology for having a big vision of the worth of every human being."

"We make no apology for holding ourselves and others to account for this scandal which I now see so clearly in the communities I am privileged to serve."

The full story is available at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/synod-calls-politicians-reduce-wealth-gap-between-rich-and-poor>

Advent

Waiting is not popular in our culture, when so much can be obtained simply at the press of a button! Advent, when we wait for the coming of Christmas, is also an opportunity to learn what it means to be waiting for the promised return of Jesus. He says: ***'It's like a man going away: he leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore, keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back'*** (Mark 13:34-35).

We live between Jesus' first and second comings and this parable reminds us of the need to watch and wait, as disciples living faithfully for Him. It reminds us of two kinds of waiting: *passive* and *active*. Imagine you're at the railway station, awaiting the arrival of a train. On the platform a man is asleep, as he thinks there is plenty of time before the train arrives. He is *passively waiting*. There is also a small boy on the platform who is excited about the train coming. He can't sit still and constantly looks down the track to see if the train is coming. He is *actively waiting*, for he expects the train to arrive at any moment.

Advent gives us a choice: *how will we wait for Jesus' coming?* Passive waiting doesn't require much attention on our part. We can live our Christian life pre-occupied with our own concerns, rather than looking to God. However, active waiting involves an eager expectation, as we await Jesus' return or simply look to him coming to us today. All we want is to be found faithful as His disciples. There is nothing more important than being ready to meet our Master!



Funerals

These are not only sad and distressing occasions but are also a chance of celebrating the life of the person who has died and sometimes of meeting people we have not seen for years. Of course I have attended many funerals and as a Reader I have conducted the services themselves on about 10 occasions. A Petty Officer in the Sea Cadets asked me if I would marry him to the girl he was in love with, but I had to explain for that he needed a priest but I could bury him when he was ready as I had trained to do that.

My first burial was of a remarkable man who had served in the Royal Navy including ships that were on Arctic Patrols. Because of this on Remembrance Day he wore a white beret. Since the war he built his own house and looked after building works at Reigate Sea Cadet headquarters. His wife specially asked me to take the service. The burial was at Redhill Cemetery and I had 2 young buglers from the Sea Cadets band to play the Last Post as his coffin went into the grave.

The only other funeral I led that had buglers for the Last Post was of our superb Commanding Officer who had been a larger than life character with an excellent sense of humour and a loud voice. Sadly he died at the age of 54 and his widow asked me to take the service at the crematorium. I did not take this on lightly but I felt I had to help the family in whatever way I could. The large Chapel was packed including the aisle and because an estimated 400 were there, including many cadets in uniform, some people had to listen to the service outside in the rain. At the end of the service, as the curtains were closed round the coffin the Last Post was sounded by 2 Royal Marine buglers who in their time had been Bandmasters in Reigate Sea Cadets. Unfortunately I had thought I had heard the Reveille and continued with the last prayers, the closing music started, and I looked round to see the Petty Officer with the Standard flag on the floor waiting for the Reveille which had not been played. We hailed back the buglers to play it and then proceeded out into the rain. I think and hope Simon would have laughed at what had happened.

I was asked by my sister to say some prayers in the Crematorium in the South of France at the funeral of her dear husband. The appointment was at 12 Noon when we thought we could start the service. However when we arrived at 11.50 am we were told that was the time of the actual cremation and the coffin would be removed for this. We therefore quickly gathered up the copies of the hymn we had planned and although everyone had not arrived I started the prayers quickly, only to find that the coffin was still there so we were able to sing the hymn after all.

At one funeral of a fond friend with a great sense of humour I was asked to give the eulogy in the church after his earlier cremation that morning. As soon as I finished, with the congregation in silence, his nephew came forward and imitated his uncle superbly well in a speech he made, reducing us all to tears of laughter.

One funeral I presided at was of a friend who was a former Wren who specially asked me to take the service. Her husband, a former consultant cardiologist at East Surrey Hospital, and who had cared for my mother in her latter days, also asked me to take his funeral service and unusually he died within a week of his wife and so I was able to conduct a service for them both at the same time.

A former colleague of mine who was an architect at the Church Commissioners died of cancer after a long illness. He had always been bright and cheerful when we were in touch with him. He was a Roman Catholic and Jenny and I went to his funeral in a country church. At the point in the service which said "Eulogy" nothing was said and we followed each other to the burial site in the churchyard.

Once the body had been interred a young lady barrister with a strong voice stepped forward saying she was his daughter. "He rang me up a fortnight ago saying 'I want to tell you what to say at my funeral.'" She had replied to him "I will say what I want to say." And he answered that with "Just take a few notes." And so round the graveside she kept us entertained for some time.

This makes me think it would be good to have a rehearsal for our funerals so that we can know what people really think of us. Also it is so sad that often we don't always know much about a friend's life until we hear it at his funeral.

The most painful funeral I have had to attend was that of my dear wife Jenny. We were limited because of Covid to 30 persons which were almost all close family. However it was positive, too, and the sermon was given by my Spiritual Director, the Reverend Henry Morgan. We each had small candles made by my daughter, Jane, and we lit these and were told to think what we would say to Jenny in our thoughts and what she might say to each of us. We took those small candles home to light them to include her in our prayers which I do each day and find that helpful.

As I said, funerals are sad occasions but also ones in which we can celebrate the life of the person we loved with happy memories and often with humour, too.

Ian Archer

A Memorial Concert

to celebrate the lives of

Rosemary Few and Paul Riley

will be given by the members of the

Band of the Surrey Yeomanry

in which they played the clarinet for many years

Saturday, 11th December at 7:30

**St Mark's Church
Alma Road, Reigate RH2 0DA**

The programme will include:

Gershwin:	Rhapsody in Blue
Max Bruch:	Kol Nidrie - cello solo Jonathan Few
Beethoven:	Egmont Overture
Cole Porter:	Selection of his best tunes
Shostakovitch:	March from his Jazz Suite
Frank Sinatra:	New York, My Way and The Lady is a Tramp
Bernstein:	Candide Overture

There will be an opportunity during the interval and at the end of the performance to donate to the charities nominated by their families

CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER 2021

Now that more services are taking place again in Church, this is our plan for December 2021 and January 2022 – subject to change at short notice so please check the details on our website or with the Parish Office.

Wednesday 1st December 3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 2nd December 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Sunday 5th December 2nd Sunday of Advent

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church

10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online

4.00pm Family Service

Wednesday 8th December 3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 9th December 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Sunday 12th December 3rd Sunday of Advent

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church

10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online

4.00pm Messy Church

Thursday 16th December 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Sunday 19th December 4th Sunday of Advent

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church

10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online

6.00pm Carol Service – in Church and Online

Thursday 23rd December 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Friday 24th December Christmas Eve

4.00pm Christingle and Crib Service

11.30pm Midnight Mass

Saturday 25th December Christmas Day

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church

10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online

**Sunday 26th December St Stephen, first Martyr
10.00am Worship Online ONLY**

Monday 27th December St John the Evangelist

Tuesday 28th December The Holy Innocents

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2022

Sunday 2nd January	2nd Sunday of Christmas 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online 4.00pm Family Service
Thursday 6 th January	The Epiphany of Christ 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 9th January	The Baptism of Christ 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online
Wednesday 12 th January	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 13 th January	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 16th January	2nd Sunday of Epiphany 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online 4.00pm Messy Church
Tuesday 18 th January	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins
Wednesday 19 th January	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 20 th January	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 23rd January	3rd Sunday of Epiphany 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online
Tuesday 25 th January	The Conversion of St Paul
Wednesday 26 th January	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 27 th January	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 30th January	Presentation of Christ in the Temple 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online

Please remember that planned services are subject to change at short notice so please check the details on our website or with the Parish Office.

Life can be puzzling

It had been a long dark, wet drive from Bromley to Beeston Nottingham. In my A35 converted van, it had taken nearly two hours of the Friday rush hour to reach the end of the M1, and three hours beyond. The M1 stopped at Lutterworth and again we crawled through Leicester before arriving at the house at 2, Dovecote Lane Beeston, exhausted. The children exploded from the A35 van and rang the bell to be greeted by those vibrant girls, June and Leslie, smart in clean white socks and shirts.

Have they been to a party," I asked. "No, they thought they would dress up to greet you all," said Ruby. After a good meal in the best of company, we were glad of the welcome of a comfortable bed and a good night's rest.

After breakfast Henry and I went to the village and called on our friendly Guardia. That morning he was uncharacteristically critical of the rainy weather. "I get wet every day on my duties. But Henry, last evening it was still raining; I opened the door to a young English family who asked if they could camp in my field. The wife's face dropped when I said, 'you may certainly not. Tonight that field will be under water and you will be swimming in your tent. You will make do with our second bedroom and the children can bunk up with our kids. The wife's face turned into a shining sun. That evening we had a drink and a good crack. Sheila (his wife) said it was fortunate that she had been baking that afternoon, so the pies and jam scones were fresh"

The party in aid of "The Wheelchair Association" was in Henry's garden that afternoon. The sun was out, clouds scudding across a blue sky and everywhere was fresh but dry. Long trestle tables with sharp, white tablecloths were groaning with heaps of home-made thick sandwiches and other goodies. The cakes were in the kitchen out of the way of predatory children. They would come later and crown the afternoon. On this fine summer's day, the three large gardens were soon full of chattering, smiling neighbours some of whom had come from several miles across the rolling countryside of Southern Ireland. Many were keen gardeners themselves.

"How much do you charge for entry?" I asked Ruby. "Ah sure now, we don't have an entry charge." "Then what do you charge for the tea?" I asked. "Now would we charge our neighbours for a cup of tea, sandwich and cake?" was her reply. "So how do you raise the funds?" "Well, see those wooden bowls around the place? They are for donations and by the end of the day they will be filled. Last year we had about 2,500 Euros and I hope this year will be better."

Most of those present were well dressed and strangers to me but some I knew. A few seemed to have come straight from the fields but no one seemed to mind that. There on one of the lawns was the ninety-two-year-old, now frail, Mick Ryan talking animatedly to his friend. Since both were somewhat deaf it was no secret that the subject was the workings of the City of London. Chris and I helped with the giant brown tea pots loaned from the church hall and circulated. The crowd admired the many flowery borders, the big fishpond; the home-made "sculptures" of ancient painted farm machinery and other of Henry's creations; the croquet lawn and many other features. It was at the same time vibrant and placid; a very happy afternoon full of goodwill.

Sometimes I felt intimately engaged; at others somewhat abstracted. No alcohol had been served, yet I seemed to float. Something was not quite right.

I was talking with a man who made the hurling sticks for most big Irish hurling teams. How they get that curve is certainly an art. He also knows many of the Irish rugby team, and their "training and drinking habits if you can separate them", he said. At the end of our conversation I heard myself ask what year was it. My companion showed some surprise. "Well, here in Ireland it is 1982. I was always led to believe it would be the same in England," he said.

At first I thought he was joking about the date. Then I thought, why did we leave the M1 at Lutterworth when it goes on past Nottingham? The A35 Austin is long gone, so how was I on that journey anyway? How is it that I am now in Ireland?

I drifted over to Chris. "They say it's 1982 I whispered, but it's 2021 (or 2020 if you are watching the Olympics)." "Yes," she said, "I've worked it out. This is that party that Ruby told us of which we missed." "But 1982" I said? " Well you are here now so make the most of it," was her reply.

I turned away, but the living reality was gone and I awoke to the early morning sun shining through the window. Later I told Chris of my dream: how we had started out for Beeston and ended up in Ireland at an event we never attended, travelling across the intervening years. "Life is but a jigsaw puzzle," she said. I felt she was right.

Do you sometimes have dreams?

Harry Ingram

Environmental News

COP 'Out' or the dawn of a new world?

Areas Agreed at COP

The limitation of temperature increase to 1.5 degrees celsius by 2050 which is still possible.

The phasing down of coal.

The reduction in Methane emissions.

The use of investment to drive on change.

The provision of finance for those countries already suffering severe climate change.

A ban on deforestation

A review in 2022 of increases in targets for fossil fuel reduction by members; far more have committed to targets this time.

There are also many other areas of part agreement contained in the working papers. Let me quickly take each of the above in turn.

Temperature projections: We are now at 1.1 degrees celsius increase from the relevant "start" point. Currently the projection is that if present targets were reached, temperatures will rise by 1.8 degrees by 2050 and by 2.5 degrees by the end of the millennium. Both spell disaster.

Coal: It is right to "phase out" the use of coal asap. But the resolution only plans to "phase down" the use of coal. Against performance to date phasing down is somewhat meaningless.

Methane emissions are serious and this aim is laudable, but why are oil and gas not dealt with? The answer seems to be that methane is being used as a diversion from those more serious areas.

Investment: No doubt banks and other investment vehicles will be pleased to support profitable green initiatives. However, at this stage profitability will often involve some risk. Will the investment world respond positively to this against their traditional coy attitude towards taking risk on themselves? More important is it crystal clear that they will no longer support the use of fossil fuels? I have seen no undertakings on that. If there are constraints, what are they?

Compensation: In principle, islands and the worst affected areas victims of carbon emissions elsewhere, need compensation to allow them to adjust to changed positions.

Deforestation: Good news is the proposal to ban deforestation, but one wonders how this is to be monitored.

A review of target levels will no doubt be undertaken in 2022 but the heat on target setters will be less than at COP. Furthermore, targets are not much use without

strategies for reduction and in turn that requires monitoring results in terms of numbers showing reductions. Mark Carney's' idea of having reports with annual accounts is a step in the right direction but for countries to report progress they need actual returns of reductions. This can be managed by the use of computers.

A Worm's High View of the working of COP

Perhaps the most important thing to come out of COP26 for me has been the huge amount of focus and the amount of information to come into the public sphere. I expect like me you were appalled by the plight of the island communities and Sub-Saharan Africa as demonstrated by those appearing in the BBC News. Or are we made immune by the daily sight of starving children? But these representatives were pleading for the very lives of their people, as sea levels rise and floods and drought become more severe. "They" may be "us" tomorrow.

Not so with the special pleading by the Indian PM. As he stressed, India undoubtedly has many poor people, (though in fact, not as serious as Africa), but it is also a rich country which has progressed economically over recent decades so that it is the fourth largest economy and owns many of the companies here. It may not have benefited from the 19th-century Industrial Revolution but it has certainly benefited from fossil fuels over the last three decades, during which pollution has more than doubled. It is a country of considerable sun and wind. Yet he wants to be subsidised for the disuse of coal and is prepared to join with China in insisting on a longer period of use.

Special pleading seems to have taken up a large part of the COP time instead of concentrating on co-operation on ways of change.

For me, the huge scope and amount of actions required to meet the agreed target of no more than a 1.5 degree increase in world temperature by 2050, has been staggering. These actions cover not only the physical requirements but the ways and means. If all countries were united and co-operative in seeking to change the world, the target would still take time and still be very difficult to achieve.

It is instructive to read the detailed "Mission Statements" which came out from COP. I would like to include a list as an appendix, but that would take far too much space. They represent decisions taken by small numbers of countries which do not attract the agreement of all. They cover a wide range of activities and also the ways and means required if we are to move forward. But they are very much permissive with no form of incentives or sanctions.

Common Ground

Even those who see this COP 26 as a sea change approach which can still deliver success, acknowledge that the targets offered do not enable the aim of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees and that we are on course to reach 1'8 degrees which would have disastrous consequences throughout the world. By the end of the century we could reach 2.5 degrees.

Present Approach

There are unfortunate parallels between the experience of the United Nations and COPs. If the UN has a success in peace keeping or humanitarian aid we hear little about it. If proposals do not suit the great powers they are vetoed. If a great power is determined on some course of action it takes it in defiance of the UN. On the other hand if the UN makes a mistake its usefulness is immediately called into question. Similarly with COP.

Business agreements between companies are enshrined in detailed legal documents as are trade agreements between countries but in COP actual action from resolutions is purely voluntary. There are no sanctions if resolutions are ignored or targets not achieved. Prior to this COP many countries had no strategy to meet their targets. It should be no surprise then that past COP agreements have failed.

It is widely agreed that through ineffectual action in the past we are now in an emergency situation. Countries have passed resolutions to that effect. COP has acknowledged the value of campaigning by Greta Thunberg and the world's young as necessary pressure on authorities and has passed resolutions calling for more education on the environment. Yet what has emerged from COP26 looks much more like a tentative beginning. In effect the absence of any enforcement means that the dates of 2030 and 2050 are basically without substance.

The agreement made separately between China and the US to co-operate on climate matters could be very welcome though as yet no details are available. However, it smacks of the substitution of bilateral agreement for the wider world context of COP. That is not very encouraging when you consider the fragility of US politics. The great powers will go their own way and the rest of us must follow. That may signal the downgrading of COP as a means of actual climate action

Requirements

It is quite clear by now that the threat to the world from the use of carbon fuels is now universally understood by all nations. Unless this is solved all other actions will be wasted. This has been well understood by world governments and commercial leaders for many years. We also need to keep two important considerations to the fore. Firstly, released carbon dioxide and in practice, methane, stay in the atmosphere for the foreseeable future. Therefore, emissions from now on (as in the past) including these in the planned intervals whilst some emission is still accepted, will accumulate in the atmosphere. Secondly, we need to keep to the fore the fact that after critical world temperatures are reached then release of methane through natural processes will take place whatever mankind tries to do about it. Time is short.

But the critical sticking points seem not so much related to the undoubted difficulty of transfer from fossil fuels but the attitudes of world governments and in particular vested interests in fossil fuels.

Agreements between two companies and similarly trade agreements between countries are always enshrined in legal documents with sanctions for non-compliance. That is very difficult for COP agreements, but unless some way of enforcement is found then past performance suggests voluntary compliance is unlikely. The change in the agreement to “faze out” coal to “faze down” and the absence of any agreement on oil and gas are indicative of the determination of some countries to go on as before, or at the very least, drag their heels.

It is established that in the past oil and gas interests have undermined the work of climate scientists just as the tobacco lobby for so many years denied the connection between smoking and lung cancer, though they knew that to be the case. Oil, coal and gas interests understand the dire threats from climate change but their self-interests trump that. At Cop there were 503 delegates representing fossil fuel interests. That is slightly more than the highest number of delegates from any individual country (which was Brazil with about 490 reps). This fifth column is skilled in intervention and the real difficulties of managing change provide fertile soil for them to postulate why the use of coal, gas and oil should continue, not for a minimum of time but for their foreseeable future. No such representation should be allowed at Cop and more to the point the UN should pursue a policy of publicising the covert nature and reasons for any action by fossil fuel interests.

What now?

I suspect the prevailing mood is one of tiredness with all things to do with COP. That is very understandable. However, the need for speedy change means that we have to continue to put out effort. Those at COP understood this hence the need for all countries to upgrade their targets next year.

For the rest of us the lesson has to be that this problem is too important to be left to the short termism of politics. To date that has failed. Cop itself, in its closing statements, recognised the need for pressure on governments and praised the efforts of Greta Thunberg and other activists. So we must not be diverted by other pressing but far less serious problems, but concentrate on climate change. A good start would be for governments to acknowledge this and, instead of finding new laws to repress demonstrations, encourage them as a means of raising public expectations of action. That would make their task easier rather than more difficult and project a united front to sceptics and those vocal on what they call freedom and individualism but in practice is no more than simply self-seeking.

So we have to do what we can. The first requirement is for a great increase in raising the production of green power by means already known, mainly wind farms and solar energy. They will certainly be required.

Next, is the need to advance invention and innovation to replace the use of fossil fuels. A piece of good news is that BA hopes to replace oil with a mixture of oil and liquid green power from waste food and other non-food materials. It then has plans for the sole use of green fuel very soon. This calls for the government to signal

support by removing all present subsidies on oil and imposing taxes instead. If this is not done, the "cheapies" will continue their ways and BA will go to the wall. It is a good example of how best intentions can only succeed if governments act supportively.

Inventions do not lend themselves to forecasts and risk is usually inherent. But as Bill Gates has amply demonstrated they are necessary to success. Without them we cannot produce enough green energy or replace the use of concrete and steel which use high volumes of fossil fuels. So, nuclear power too needs re-examination. Apparently there is the possibility of small local reactors cheaper and less risky than the mammoths of yesterday. Such possibilities need to be advanced and their economic possibilities evaluated.

But invention is complex and nuclear is a good example. I understand that the possibility of replacing fission with fusion is quite close. That would render fission plants redundant and the safer fusion ones much more effective and possibly meet much of our total demand for power. This may now only be a few years away. That is uncertain and not a reason for delay in the wind and sun alternatives. But fusion possibilities are a great boost to our much-needed optimism.

If governments are to help finance invention then they have a duty to vet projects to ensure they are plausible and not impractical or simply a way of transferring money from the public to the private purse. The introduction of computers initially often resulted in decisions made by top dogs who were not equipped to make such judgments. This will require new skills in public service.

But it does seem that the main obstacle to progress is the self-interest and competitive nature of the COP members: not competitive in terms of who can contribute the most, but in who can benefit the most. This needs to change. Cooperation and the sharing of progress is essential

So, as Bill Gates understands, there is an important role for the electorate in every country. That means still convincing many that climate change requires countervailing action and is critical to the future of their children and grandchildren. We have to maintain our stamina and continue to press governments and oppositions to pass effective climate change legislation. The Environment Act 21 is very good as far as it goes but it fails to deal with fossil fuels!! Was this deliberate? It does appear to be an example of side stepping the vital issue because (to quote Al Gore), the use of fossil fuels is an "Inconvenient Truth."

No decisions by Parliament should be taken without considering what effect they may have on the climate in the future.

Harry Ingram

Christmas Rush

That time again, my trolley's full
Buying all the Christmas fare,
A turkey crown, a rib of beef,
Crisps and nibbles, lots to spare.

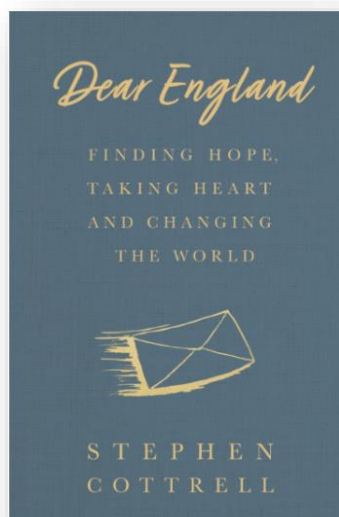
Christmas crackers and serviettes,
Paper for wrapping and cards to send,
Nuts and oranges, figs and dates
The list goes on, there seems no end.

In all this rush it's good to pause
And think about that special Day,
When shepherds watched and angels sang
As a Baby lay in a bed of hay.

By Megan Carter

Book Review

This month: Dear England



By Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York The sub-heading for the title is: "Finding hope, Taking heart and Changing the world". I was introduced to this by a recommendation in "Transforming Ministry", the magazine sent to us by the Central Readers Board.

"What made you become a priest?" was the question put to Stephen Cottrell by a stranger in a railway station and he did not have the time then to give a proper longer reply so he just gave the short answer "God". This book is his longer answer which was what he wanted, to change the world. It is written without resorting to individual experience or religious jargon.

I bought it on Kindle and found it so good I bought 3 hard-backs of it to give to other members of my family. It does not read as many theological books do but is easy for those of us not wanting a book that seems too technical. I recommend it for good reading at Christmas time.

Thank you to Ian Archer for his recommendation of Dear England. If you have a book you would like to review, please email magazine@stmarksreigate.co.uk



Reader recipes

With Christmas coming, this month there is something to help get you super organised for the big day.

Jamie Oliver's Make Ahead Gravy

Ingredients:-

- 2 onions
- 2 carrots
- 2 celery sticks
- 2 rashers of streaky bacon
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 sprigs of fresh sage
- 2 star anise
- 10 free range chicken wings
- Olive oil
- 60 ml of sherry or port
- 4 tablespoons of plain flour
- 2 tablespoons of cranberry sauce



Method:-

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4.
2. Peel the onions, wash the carrots, then roughly chop with the celery and bacon. Put the veg, bay leaves, sage, rosemary and star anise into a sturdy high-sided roasting tray, then scatter the, then add to the tray.
3. Drizzle with oil, season with salt and pepper, toss, then cook for 1 hour.
4. Remove the tray from the oven and transfer to a low heat on the hob. Really grind and mash everything with a potato masher, scraping up all the goodness from the base of the tray (the longer you let it fry, the darker your gravy will be). If you want to add sherry or port, now's the time to do so; just leave it to cook away for a few minutes.
5. Gradually stir in the flour, then pour in 2 litres of boiling kettle water. Simmer for 30 minutes, or until thickened and reduced, stirring occasionally.
6. When the gravy is the consistency of your liking, pour it through a coarse sieve into a large bowl. Taste and season to perfection, cool to room and freeze ready for Christmas Day.

On the day – heat it in the tray where the turkey was cooked and add the cranberry sauce before serving.

Puzzles

December Sudoku Puzzle

2		1		8		7		
8	4	7	2			6		
				7	5	2		
7	3			2	6	4	5	
			5		8			
	6	4	1	3			2	9
		6	7	5				
		2			1	5	3	6
		5		6		1		2

November Solution

9	4	8	5	7	6	3	1	2
1	2	5	4	8	3	9	7	6
6	3	7	2	9	1	8	4	5
7	5	9	8	6	4	1	2	3
3	8	2	1	5	7	6	9	4
4	6	1	3	2	9	5	8	7
5	9	6	7	4	8	2	3	1
8	7	3	6	1	2	4	5	9
2	1	4	9	3	5	7	6	8

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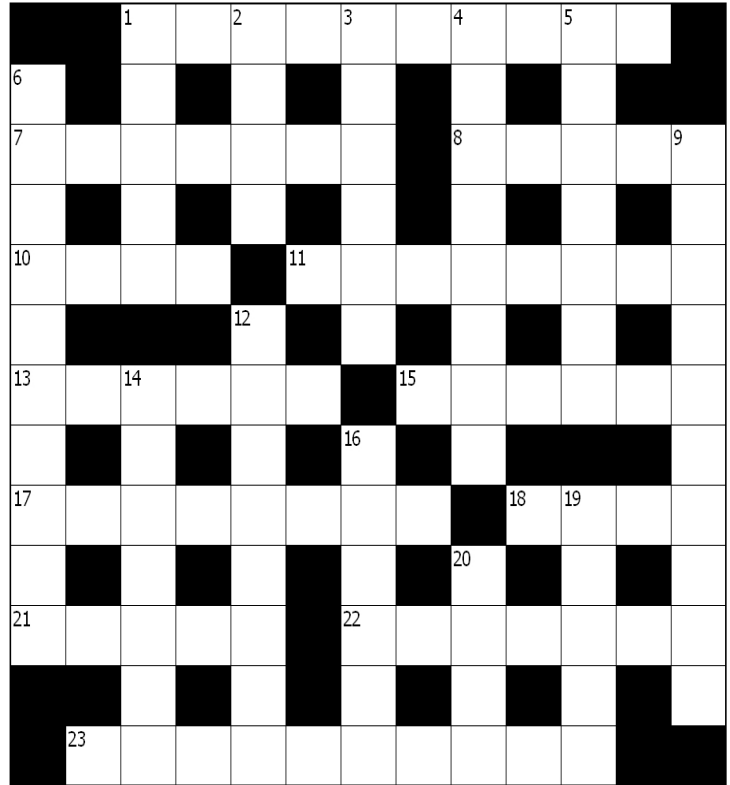
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December Crossword

Biblical references are from the New International Version

Across

- 1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)
 7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14,15) (7)
 8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)
 10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)
 11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)
 13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)
 15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith ____ (6)
 17 Stormy (8)
 18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone 'unclean' (Numbers 9:11) (4)
 21 Arson (anag.) (5)
 22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)
 23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)



Down

- 1 '___ and see that the Lord is good' (Psalm 34:8) (5)
 2 'The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as ___ as a lion' (Proverbs 28:1) (4)
 3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)
 4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19, 20) (8)
 5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)
 6 'Offer your bodies as living ___, holy and pleasing to God' (Romans 12:1) (10)
 9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)
 12 One who accepts government by God (8)
 14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)
 16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)
 19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)
 20 'You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will ___ his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21) (4)

November Solution

ACROSS: 1 Charioteers 9 Immoral 10 Cairo 11 SAE 13 Inns 16 Firm 17 Accuse 18 East 20 Ogam 21 Judith 22 Seba 23 Msgr 25 Den 28 Inane 29 Entreat 30 Chrysoprase

DOWN: 2 Human 3 Rare 4 Oils 5 Ecce 6 Raising 7 Citizenship 8 Commemorate 12 Assail 14 Sat 15 Scouse 19 Sabbath 20 Ohm 24 Seeds 25 Deny 26 Nero 27 Star



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