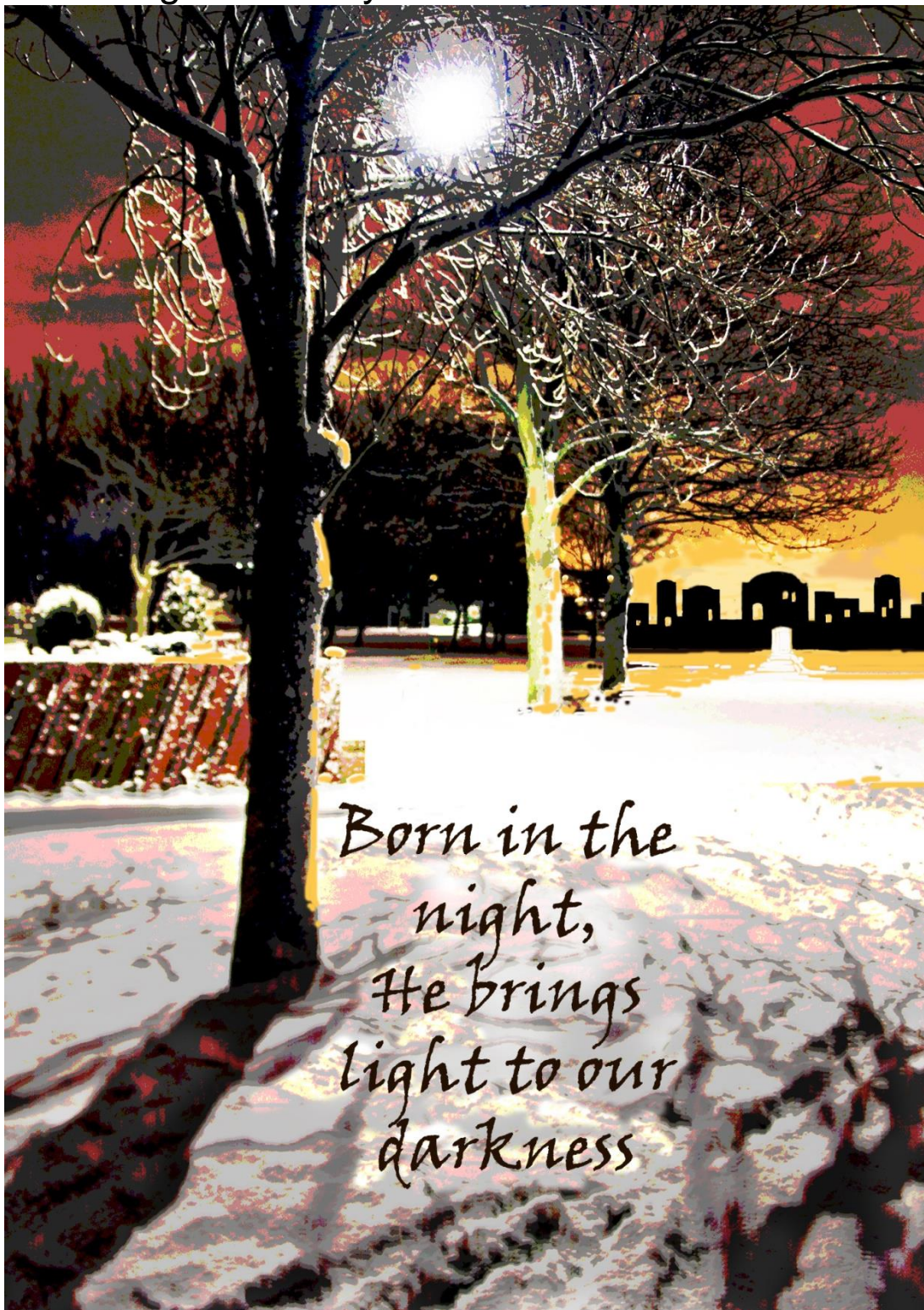


FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES

The magazine of Sydenham Methodist Church



*Born in the
night,
He brings
light to our
darkness*

December 2015

Family and Children's Worker News - page 14
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FROM THE EDITOR



Do you remember the shocking scenes from last year on “Black Friday” in the media? It was shopping mayhem. There was fighting, jostling, and mini riots. One police chief called it “appalling behaviour”.

Now, I’m sure we all love a good bargain but at what cost? These were not people fighting for their lives but for TVs! Perhaps it is appropriate that this day is called “Black Friday” - because it was indeed a dark day for humankind.

In contrast, Jesus was born to bring light and hope. As the worship song goes; “Light of the world you came down into darkness, opened my eyes, let me see”. Jesus came to give us peace and everlasting life with him.

Now that’s worth having...

CAROLYN HALL

With thanks to this edition’s contributors.

Dear Friends,

As this is my first letter to you, I want to begin by saying thank you for the warm welcome that you have given to us as a family. We have deeply appreciated the work that you have done in the manse to make it comfortable for us.

It has felt strange leaving the congregation in Knock and moving such a short distance to Sydenham, but it has given us some stability in the midst of change.

Our daughter Rachel was beginning a new school anyway (she's now in Grosvenor Grammar), but our son Nathan has been able to remain in Gilnahirk Primary. Deryn is a part-time classroom assistant in Cregagh Pre-School so she has been able to remain in her job there.

In these initial months of settling in, I have valued establishing relationships with many of you. It has been helpful for me in that I knew some people from the congregation before moving into Sydenham. It takes a while to build up healthy relationships within a church, and I look forward to getting to know more people as time goes by.

As I've said previously my role is to love you, lead you and feed you and I will do that to the best of the gifts and graces

that God has given me. It is clear that there is excellent leadership within the congregation and I'm grateful for that.

As we move towards Christmas, there will be many things that will occupy our time and energy, not least buying presents and food etc. But in the midst of the hustle and bustle may we never lose sight of all that we do at Christmas time. May we keep our eye on the fact that we are celebrating that our God came among us; that he shared our humanity; that he declared his love for his creation. Our only appropriate response is to bow in adoration of the One who is from beyond time and space and who entered our world. Jesus wasn't born into a royal palace, though he is the King of Kings; but rather he chose to be born into the muck and mire of a stable full of animals.

For some people Christmas doesn't feel like a time to celebrate, and for those who feel lonely or who are grieving I pray that you will know the peace of Christ himself.

In this season of Advent, as we prepare our hearts to worship, may we also look with anticipation to our Lord's return in glory and majesty, and serve lovingly to build for his kingdom.

Deryn, Rachel and Nathan join me in praying that you, and all whom you love, will know peace and joy this Christmas.

In Christ,
Robin

Congratulations and best wishes to those who have recently married:

Peter Morris and Faith Sunerton
Wade Aitken and Rebecca Wilson
Ian McGuffin and Adele Brown

We welcomed the following to our church family:

Baptism

Jenson Nathan John Bruton, son of Nathan and Sarah.

Dedication

Ellen Anneliese Ewart, daughter of Adam and Melanie

Deaths

We give God thanks for those lives which touched ours while they lived among us:

Evelyn McCann
Patricia Ferguson
Jim Glenn

(As of 11 November 2015)

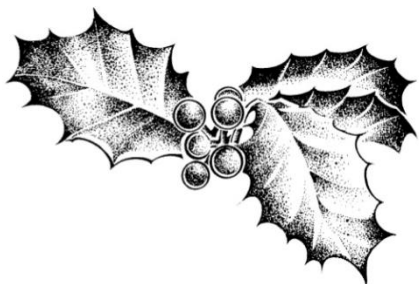


HOLLY

We sing about the 'Holly and the Ivy' and prickly green leaves and red berries are everywhere in Christmas decorations.

In Scandinavian countries the holly is even known as the 'Christ-thorn' and it seems that the name of the holly actually came from the word 'holy'.

The holly reminds us of the death of Jesus – the sharp prickles on the leaves are like the crown on thorns that Jesus was forced to wear on the cross. The red berries remind us of the drops of blood that came where the thorns hurt his head.



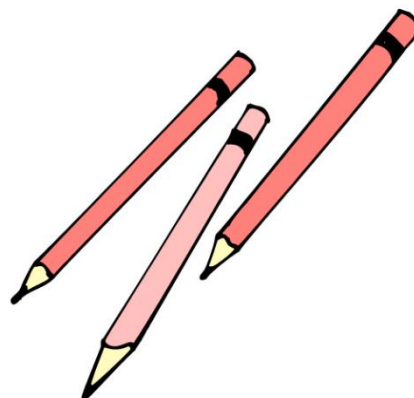
Holly is an evergreen, which means that it does not lose its leaves in the autumn, but keeps them all year round. And because its leaves are always green it is a symbol of eternal life.

SHARP PRESENTS

A quick way to make little presents for all your class and friends.

You will need nice pencils, glue (spray glue is best) and Christmas wrapping paper with a small pattern on it. Choose round pencils rather than the hexagonal type.

Cut a strip of wrapping paper wide enough to wrap around the pencil and as long as the pencil. Put glue on the back of the paper and wrap it around the pencil. When the glue has dried; trim away any excess paper with small scissors.



What did the werewolf write on his Christmas cards?

Best vicious of the season.

What do elves sing to Santa?

Freeze a Jolly Good Fellow!



THE NEW PRAYER STATION

Situated in the entrance hall of the church, the Prayer Station comprises of a real plant and a leafless tree painted on cloth. These are to help us pray in two different ways and instructions are provided for both.

Method One

There are times of worry, stress, ill health, need for guidance in a situation, that we need prayer for, whether it's for others or ourselves. As Philippians 4v6 says, **“Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need...”** For these type of prayers write them on the paper squares and peg them on the leaves of the plant. There is a dedicated prayer group who will pray for these needs on a weekly basis.

Method Two

To encourage us to pray for one another as a church family. The hope is for everyone to write their names on one of the leaves in the little bag and pin them on the cloth tree. This can include families, or church organisations using a few leaves to record names. The aim is to look at the names on our way in or out of church, and to remember a few individuals or families in prayer for that week, then pick other names the next week.

Please take a few minutes to do this so our tree will be covered in leaves!

May God Bless You.

Valerie Fullerton



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Christingle service at 6.30pm
13th December



Carols by Candlelight at 7pm
20th December



Christmas Day service
at 9.30am



The Unofficial Bible for Minecrafters – stories told block by block

By Garrett Romines and Christopher Miko, LionHudson, £12.99

This may well appeal to any young ‘gamers’ that you know. The book uses games and toys to re-create Bible stories with virtual blocks to produce vibrant, and complex 3-D worlds filled with adventure. The images have been captured and combined with text boxes and speech bubbles to explain the stories for 7-11 year olds. The text is light, but explains the events thoroughly for the age group, and the dialogue includes in-game humour.

Whatever Is Lovely – a colouring book for adults

Authentic, £10.00

Here is a relaxing, reflective colouring book for adults that inspires creativity and worship in a calm and colourful way.

In today's hectic, stress-filled, screen-weary world, women are looking for ways to return to simple pleasures and uncomplicated creativity. ‘Whatever Is Lovely’ invites women to immerse themselves in inspirational quotes from the Bible, hymns, and contemporary authors while they colour pages individually designed by a range of artists and illustrators.

AUTUMN SOUL

Autumn Soul 2015, as usual, did not disappoint. The youth event organised by IMYC, featured worship, fellowship and teaching through seminars and a key speaker.

As 2015 marked the 20th year of Autumn Soul, the theme was “Celebration”. This year, the speaker was Jon Middendorf who had flown all the way from Oklahoma City in America. His morning and evening sessions were incredibly interesting as he spoke about blurring the lines between us and God in regards to our behaviour, and the differences between a childlike and a childish faith.

The worship was a huge highlight this year as the emotional Autumn Soul band played for their last time before stepping down, and like a true celebration, they went out with a bang. Autumn Soul was also a great time to get to know young people from across Ireland who share the same love for God. The late night extras, workshops and games were all chances for banter with our youth group and new friends.

Our very own “Syds Kids” took to the court for the annual dodgeball competition, and although they closely missed out from winning, they walked away with determination to succeed next year.

What I loved this year was the opportunity to be part of the prophetic art team for the first time. Autumn Soul is always full of ways to challenge your faith and have an enjoyable weekend and I would highly recommend for all young people to attend if they get the chance.

Moya Mawhinney



Paul Hardingham reflects on Christmas

Christmas in a Nutshell

We're at that time of year again! But is Christmas just about the shopping, tree or presents? In a nutshell, it's all about a God who has showed up on earth. The creator of the universe, who hands flung stars into space, cared enough to come to earth as a tiny baby. 'The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.' (John 1:14, The Message).

Every year we sing carols and retell the same story of the donkey, innkeeper, stable, angels, shepherds, star, wise men, gifts and Mary and Joseph with baby! It's interesting, because when we celebrate other birthdays, we don't recall the details of the pregnancy or birth.

So why do we do all this? In a nutshell, it's about God, who has seen the mess of this world and stepped down to meet our deepest need of relationship with Himself:

'When the time came, He set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, He stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, He lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death.' (Philippians 2, The Message)

Reflecting on Jesus in the manger is a great place to start, but there's so much more than a cute baby lying in the bed of straw:

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator;

If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist;

If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist;

If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer;

But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Saviour.



Family and Children's work at Sydenham Methodist – At a Glance

As family and children's worker I have the pleasure of doing many things both inside the church and out in the community. But maybe you're thinking to yourself 'what does our family and children's worker actually do each week?' - so here is a brief summary of some of the things I do and plan each week.

The community work that I would be involved in comes mainly as schools' work through assemblies, R.E. lessons and Scripture Unions. I am currently involved in 4 schools in the area; Victoria Park Primary, Standtown Primary, Mitchell house and Dundela Infant school. It is a pleasure to work alongside teachers to bring the Bible alive for children. Schools' work allows me, as a family and children's worker, to build safe relationships with both parents and children as I often work with children who are involved somehow in Sydenham Methodist, be it Girls' Brigade, Scouts, Sunday school, Parents, Tots and Minders or Messy Church.

Parents, Tots and Minders is a fantastic way to interact with families in the community and also church families. Having the opportunity every Wednesday morning to chat with mothers, grandmothers (the odd father and grandfather) and minders is a privilege. For a parent to allow me to glimpse a little of their week, and to get to know the children they bring along is very special.

Each week I also have the pleasure of working alongside the Girls' Brigade, mainly serving tea and coffee to parents as they wait for their child to finish. Some weeks it gives me a great opportunity to chat with some parents, which allows relationships to be formed and allows me to connect the dots between families I would see at Messy Church or through other organisations or schools.

Hopefully by now you have heard the term 'Messy Church' floating around. So far we have had 4 messy churches and all have been great fun. Messy church in itself is a form of church where families can come to a less traditional and informal atmosphere to journey through a Bible story or theme through crafts and activities. The families then gather for a short talk, which pulls all the crafts and activities the families have created, to show the Bible story as a whole and how it can relate to us today. Messy church ends each time with dinner, which gives us a chance to serve the families in a very simple way and also a chance for conversation.

Each Messy Church has been exciting, as we have seen many families from the community come through our doors to explore the Bible who wouldn't normally appear on a Sunday morning. Each time we have had families return but also new families appear, it is a pleasure and a blessing to watch families interact with each other over simple crafts and activities. My prayer for Messy Church is that the families leave each time feeling that their local church cares and that they are simply loved by an amazing God.

Some other things I have the pleasure of being involved in are, crèche, scouts, and taking children aged 9 -13 to Soulmates, as well as having the odd coffee with parents and simply being available for families if they ever need support.

So thanks to all of Sydenham for allowing me to be a part of all that goes on and a big thanks to all those who help when I ask, I couldn't do anything without you!

Stephanie Neilands

A Christmas quiz

1. According to the 1st chapter of Matthew, 'Immanuel' is interpreted to mean _____.
_____.
2. The Moabite widow, Ruth, is mentioned by name only 12 times in the book named after her, and not again until Matthew 1:5. What makes this woman's life so significant to the birth of Jesus Christ?
3. An angel of the Lord told Joseph, Mary's betrothed, 'Do not _____ to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'
4. What caused Elizabeth's unborn baby to leap for joy in her womb, when she was visited by her relative Mary?
5. What was the angel's name who visited Mary to tell her she had been chosen to be the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ?
6. What does Bethlehem mean?
7. Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
8. What did the angels say to the shepherds?
9. What did the chief priests tell Herod that worried him so much?
10. Why was 'a voice heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning?'

Answers to the quiz

1. God with us – Matt 1:23
2. Her child is in Christ's lineage – Matt 1:5
3. 'Be afraid/fear' Matt 1:20
4. Mary's greeting/ the Holy Spirit
5. Gabriel – Luke 1:26
6. The House of Bread. It was the city of David – Luke 2:4
7. To be registered in a Roman census Luke 2:1-5
8. 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy....'
Luke 2:10
9. 'But you Bethlehem, in the land of Judea... out of you
will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people
Israel.' Matt 2:6
10. Massacre of the Innocents by Herod – Matt 2:18

CHURCH AWAY DAY

Away days do not conjure up positive associations for me. In work they have involved dreary group work with flip charts and reporting back to equally disinterested colleagues on business planning - usually a wasted day punctuated only by soggy sandwiches for lunch.

So it was with slight trepidation that I set out for Tobar Mhuire for the Church Away Day. It was compounded by a faint sense of regret having committed myself to an unknown programme and, to be honest, my head was full of alternative plans of what I could have been doing instead, especially as it turned out to be one of the first of those glorious September days we enjoyed this year, made more special by following the frankly dismal August.

First item on the agenda was freshly baked scones and tea which is always a good start in my book. One of the servers welcomed us with the Wesleyan greeting “friend to all enemy to none”. Somewhat embarrassingly he seemed more familiar with it than some of us!

In the morning sessions Brian gave a series of short talks including one on forgiveness. These were interspersed with times of silent reflection. Tobar Mhuire, being a converted stately home set in sixty acres of woodland, is a setting conducive to peaceful reflection. We had the run of the extensive grounds so there were plenty of quiet, still spots without distractions. However some of us found even 15

minutes of silence a challenge - not everyone is cut out for a contemplative life.

We shared Communion outside, at a simple makeshift table surrounded by beauty of creation. Sammy might have found part of creation a little too close for comfort as a persistent wasp kept attacking him but even this did not detract from the overall experience.

In the afternoon we studied “Life on The Frontline” DVDs. These discuss how to live as a Christian in our frontline place, that is where you spend most of your time, be it workplace, home, club or school. Unknown to Brian when he planned the day, the Bookclub had recently looked at Neil Hudson’s “Imagine Church” which accompanies the DVD’s so it was great to explore the themes in more depth.

The day flew in. It was enjoyable to get to know people better, to encourage each other and to share insights. I look forward to the next one and to you, reader, joining us.

Kathryn Montgomery

AN INTERVIEW WITH REV ROBIN WAUGH

Occupation: Methodist Minister since 1995

Length of time at Sydenham: Since July 2015

Interests/hobbies: Sport, especially football (Liverpool supporter), rugby and cricket

Favourites:

Food: Chicken en croute or chicken kiev (with roast potatoes) and strawberry pavlova & ice cream for dessert

Music: Rock/Progressive Rock - ie. Simple Minds, U2, Marillion, Genesis

Hymn: There's a number of hymns that mean a lot to me but I'll go for 'And can it be' by Charles Wesley especially when sung at Conference.

Worship Song: Again, there's several that I enjoy singing, but I really do love Robin Marks' 'You're the Lion of Judah'.

Bible verse(s): I preached my first sermon a month before I turned 18 and I felt the call of God to the ordained ministry at the tender age of 17 when I was studying for my Local Preachers' exams. So when I was starting out in ministry Jeremiah 1: 5-7 resonated with me: *'I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I*

set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations'. 'O Sovereign Lord' I said, 'I can't speak for you! I'm too young!' The Lord replied, 'Don't say, 'I'm too young', for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you.'

However, these days my favourite Bible verse and my focus for ministry is Colossians 1: 15-16: *'Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything, in the heavenly realms and on earth.'* Simply put, everything about this world and about our life revolves around Jesus.

And another thing: In 1992 I was studying in Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington D.C. as part of my training for ministry. On one particular Sunday morning I went to church with some friends (where one of our lecturers was the Senior Pastor). It was a well-known church on Pennsylvania Avenue where many senior American politicians were known to worship. However, on the morning we were there, the then President of the United States was escorted into the church and sat in the front pew. It was strange and a bit unnerving to be in church worshipping the Lord with secret service agents in the pew behind us and no doubt all over the church!

Richard Bewes considers the star that guided the Magi...

The star of Bethlehem?

What exactly was it? No scientific theory has ever gained common acceptance. Some speculate that it might have been a conjunction of Jupiter and Halley's Comet. But if the Star of Bethlehem was anything as mundane as that, while it might have excited the interest of the Gentile wise men ('the Magi') from the East, it would hardly have caused them to make a 300-mile journey to investigate further.

These Magi were not idiots. Although they would not have benefited from the privileges of Judaism or its Scriptures, it is very likely that they knew a prophecy uttered centuries earlier – by another Gentile, Balaam, from their own area near the Euphrates (Numbers 22: 4,5):

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a sceptre will rise out of Israel. (Numbers 24:17)

Further lines predicted the widespread rule of this coming Individual. So it was no wonder that when this new and miraculously unique star appeared, remembrance of the prophecy surfaced.

The Magi followed the star not because of anything to do with horoscopes or divination. They were simply responding to God-given revelation from above. And - they persisted in their search. For although Herod's religious advisors checked the prophecy of Micah 5: 2 - that Israel's future

Ruler would be from Bethlehem - none of them thought to make the seven mile journey. What identifies the Magi as The Wise Men was their supreme desire to find and worship the Child of the Manger.

So – God sent a star to mark the birth of Jesus – in a way that had never happened before and would never happen again. It was a unique star to herald the beginning of a unique life – that changed the course of world history.

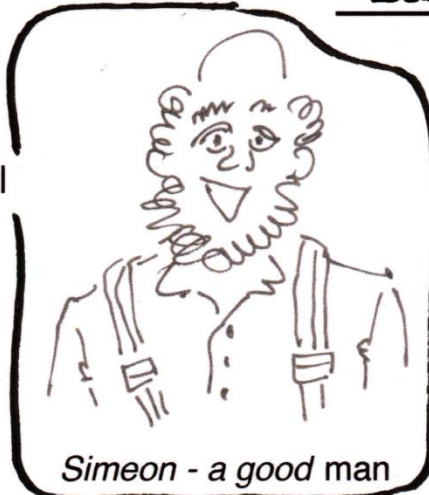
Throughout the life of Jesus, we find other God-given and miraculous phenomena. These all came at various significant stages of Jesus' saving work. As well as the angelic singing and star of Bethlehem at his birth, there was the dove at his Baptism, the transcendent light at the Transfiguration, the midday darkness and earthquake at Crucifixion, the visible angels at the Resurrection, the receiving cloud at the Ascension, and the flames and wind at the giving of the Holy Spirit.

They were amazed!

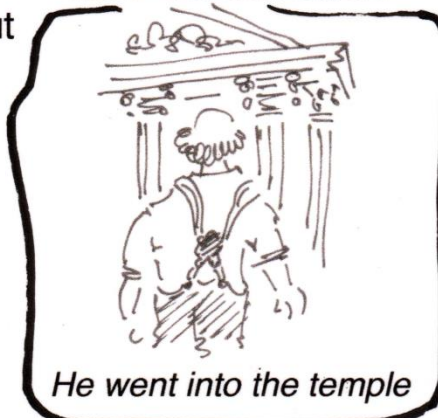
The Holy Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple. There he spotted the baby Jesus and **KNEW** God's special time to rescue the world had come! Now Simeon could die in peace! He told Mary and Joseph that Jesus was specially chosen by God to bring peace, light and glory but also destruction and sorrow.... They were amazed!

Why was Simeon so important? Read more in Luke 2: 22-35

Bible Sketchbook



Simeon - a good man



He went into the temple

KEPT
PROMISE!
GO IN
PEACE!
YOUR
SALVATION!
A LIGHT!
BRING
GLORY!
A SIGN!

*Part of what Simeon
said over Jesus*



He gave God glory for Jesus!



They were amazed!

W Mather©

With the true meaning of Christmas in mind...

Our God contracted to a span Incomprehensibly made man.
Charles Wesley

The incarnation was a necessary means to an end, and the end was the putting away of the sin of the world by the offering of the body of Christ.

Thomas Hewitt

The Christian story is precisely the story of one grand miracle. **C S Lewis**

He that made man was made man. **C H Spurgeon**

Filling the world he lies in a manger! **Augustine**

Peace rules the day when Christ rules the mind. **Anon**

Whatever we hold to ourselves is loss. Whatever we give to God is gain. **Gilbert Shaw**

The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child.... The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. **J I Packer**

All men who live with any degree of serenity live by some assurance of grace. **Reinhold Niebuhr**



"...and don't forget we're coming into Nativity Play season – make sure we have extra tea-towels in stock!"



"I'm sorry Michael – even if you HAVE changed your ring-tone to 'Away In-A-Manger', it's still ALL mobiles OFF!"

A Christmas Prayer

Loving, giving Father,
Thank you for Jesus, Emmanuel. Thank you that he came
at Christmas and is alive and just as relevant today as he
was all those years ago, and will be forever.

As many of us celebrate your coming to us, with our families,
in warm, safe homes, in a democratic country, we pray for
everyone who has left their homeland because of
persecution, for everyone who is without shelter, or food, or
family. Give us compassionate hearts, like yours, Lord.
Help us, as Christ's body here on earth, to love and serve
and make room for each other this Christmas.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

By Daphne Kitching



Colouring Page





Robin and Deryn



Rachel and Nathan