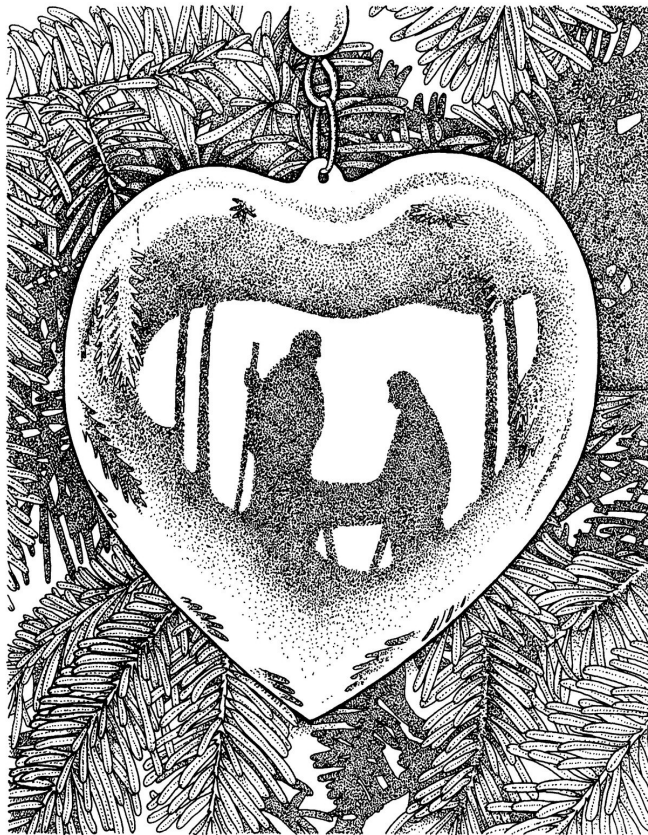


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MENSTON
PARISH CHURCH
St John the Divine



Peace on Earth



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Contact Kathryn Lindsay BSc(Hons)

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*A Very Happy Christmas
and peaceful New Year
to all our readers and
advertisers. Thank you for
your continued and valued
support.*



This month

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The Vicarage

Dear Friends

It may well feel like a tired Christmas this year. We feel the fatigue of dealing with seemingly endless changing Covid-19 restrictions. The slow reopening of our social lives has come coupled with the strain of constant personal risk management and weighing up how our own actions may bring risk to others. Nothing is simple. Even Christmas celebrations are complicated. So many of us are tired.

We're in good company. Jesus's birth involved a tired, pregnant mother forced to travel a long way for a Roman census. Then there was the tired shepherds, denied their night's sleep on a hillside, and the magi, dusty and tired after a long, long journey.

The immediate world of the newborn Jesus was weary like ours, but also complicated. The nativity is anything but simple. There is risk to the magi which they are warned about in a dream. There's risk to Mary as a girl relying on the care and support of Joseph, who may just have easily reported her to the Jewish authorities for being pregnant out of wedlock. Getting somewhere to stay in Bethlehem wasn't simple, and neither must it have been a risk-free and simple task to give birth and then play host to some shepherds in a space reserved for cattle. It must have been very wearying to the Holy family - and that's before they then have to escape to Egypt...

The great thing is, that at this first Christmas, and also for us so many years later, God comes to us, even in our weariness, our weakness and no matter how complicated our lives seem. God doesn't wait for us to have our lives in balance, or for us to be rested or 'sorted', before we are allowed to encounter him. We may never feel 'ready for God' but that doesn't mean God cannot come to us.

In the Nativity, God steps into the complexity of our world, taking on the simplicity of a new-born child. We all know the complications that come with a baby, but at the same time, we know that the simple peace that comes with the grasp of a baby's hand on our finger.

In our complex and tired Christmas celebrations this year, let us hear again the familiar story of a God who met his creation amidst its difficulty and fatigue. Let us trust that God can, and will, meet us as well. Let us ask him to bring us the same peace amidst the chaos that we picture in our Nativity scenes. Let us ask him for the gift of simple faith and Godly presence amidst the complexities of our current lives.

Happy Christmas!

Steve



FROM THE REGISTERS

HOLY BAPTISM

21 November

We welcome into the Lord's family:

Aurelia Pennells



Copy for the FEBRUARY magazine is due by **Sunday 16 January 2021**. Please email copy to both editor and Parish Office (office@stjohnmenston.org.uk) or leave copy for typing with the office.

A View from The Pews by Dominic Hall

It's that time of year already. I hope you've got your sprouts on! This year I want to think about colour. Specifically, what colour is Christmas?

If you were to ask a member of the clergy, they may tell you that white is the colour of Christmas. This I gleaned from the Church of England website, 'White is the colour of the festal periods from Christmas Day to the Presentation...' Now the website doesn't say why white is the colour used but I imagine something along the lines of a representation of purity for the one born without sin. Irving Berlin also saw 'White Christmas' as a thing though I suspect for different reasons!

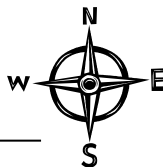
If you look at old Victorian images, Father Christmas wears green robes. We celebrate the dark frigidity of winter by bringing green into our homes in the shape of the Christmas tree and decorations of holly and ivy. The idea that even in the depths of winter there is life and therefore hope is one common to many societies and green is a colour that embodies that message.

For me, Santa Claus has always been dressed in red - though this being due to the Coca-Cola company is only partially apocryphal. The cartoonist, Thomas Nash, drew Santa wearing red for Harper's Weekly magazine in New York in 1881. Why, nobody knows for sure and the internet abounds with theories. Other colours for Santa's clothes still existed but the dominance of red did indeed come about as a marketing ploy from the makers of that sickly soft drink. Red also strikes me as a warm colour and one that brings joy. Of course, that might be due to Santa's portrayal as a jolly fellow.

It might also be fair to add gold into the mix. It is, after all the colour of kings and the gift brought by one of the wise men to symbolise Jesus as '...King for ever, ceasing never, over us all to reign.' In my lifetime there seems to have been an explosion of lights around Christmas time. Of course, they come in many colours but the predominance of gold at this time gives a warm glow to the dark streets.

Those are my thoughts, but I wonder what you think. There may be colours in your decorations unique and personal to you and your families. However you celebrate this Christmastide I hope it is full of joy, peace and hope for a world in which colours of every hue sit in harmony alongside one another. Happy Christmas.

Prayer Points



Compassionate God, we pray for all who approach this Advent season with sadness rather than joy. We pray for all who are facing the first Christmas without a loved one or whose circumstances have worsened during the year. We pray for all who feel lonely and isolated, particularly in this festive season. May they know the joy of Christ with them, giving them companionship and love.

Lord, as we prepare for the Christmas festivities with all its hustle and bustle, things to do and things to buy, help us to remember to prepare our hearts for your coming amongst us once more.

Saturday 25 December Happy Christmas everyone!

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, Saviour of the world, we pray for all who are living in poverty and fear, all who are homeless and living on the streets and all who are refugees living in damp, cold, makeshift camps. May we all learn to share our fortunes.

As we pass from one year to the next, may we all accept our responsibility to reduce our carbon footprint in order to save this God-given planet. Pray for all who are adversely affected by global warming and rising sea levels.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Saturday 1 January 2022 Happy New Year everyone!

Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the Son of peace to you.

The Iona Community

With thanks to Jane Pratt for this month's Prayer Points

IDEAS FOR A GREENER CHRISTMAS



Communal Christmas cards

In the UK, we send enough Christmas cards that if we placed them alongside each other, they'd cover the world's circumference 500 times! So not great for our use of the planet's resources. For some years prior to Covid 19, we have suggested that people who wish to send cards to fellow members of the congregation, do just one card for everyone and post it in the letter box that will be at the back of the church.

In the Sundays leading up to Christmas, the box will be emptied and the cards displayed, probably on the screen by the font. Any money you save, could be given to the Roof Appeal!

How about a LOAF Christmas?

LOAF stands for Locally grown, Organic, Animal friendly, Fairtrade and is an encouragement for us to think about how and where our food is produced and under what conditions. Christmas dinner would be a challenge - are you up for it? Maybe even one item on the menu?

Reduce, re-use and recycle

More of a challenge at Christmas but given COP 26 and the Climate Emergency code red, maybe now is the time for a re-set in how we do Christmas. So consider 2nd hand, upcycling (something new from something old) and recycle everything else!

How about letting us know how you got on in the February magazine?

If you want to be involved in encouraging our church to go greener - please get in touch.

Marilyn Banister: 874220 or marilyn@banisters.org.uk

And a few more suggestions for a Greener Christmas from Leeds Diocesan Environment Champion, Dr Jan Goodair.

Real trees are more environmentally friendly than artificial ones. If you buy one, get one that was grown as locally as possible AND make sure that it is recycled.

If you have children who like **Advent Calendars**, go for a reusable one that can come out year after year. Most of the shop sold ones can't be recycled. You could also purchase an electronic Advent Calendar. They are great fun and contain puzzles as well as boxes to open.

Gifts: buying something new should probably be the last resort! If you have to go this route, try to make sure that what you buy is Fairtrade and/or ethically produced AND that the recipient actually wants it! You may be able to find gift items in charity shops or on local 'free' sites. You might make some gifts for family and friends, using your baking or crafting skills. You might give a promise of some of your time as a gift – to babysit, walk the dog, cook somebody a meal etc.

Gift wrapping can be made SO much greener. Make reusable cloth gift bags. Wrap items in brown paper and add reusable string or ribbons. Most wrapping paper – especially the glittery stuff – can't be recycled, and neither can Sellotape.

Christmas cards Why send them to people you will see over Christmas? You can give them your Christmas wishes in person. Consider sending e-cards to people you know will enjoy them. If you are going to send 'real' cards, look for the 'FSC' mark which shows they have been sustainably produced, but from charities AND *avoid the glittery ones.*

Shared meals can be a wonderful part of Christmas celebrations. Plan meals carefully to avoid over-catering and the food waste that will inevitably follow otherwise. Food waste that goes into landfill produces large quantities of methane, that powerful global warming gas.

Try to **eat less meat** or try one of the many delicious plant based options as the centrepiece of one of your meals over the Christmas season.

Christmas Crackers: do you really need them? Most of the contents will end up in the bin by the end of the day.

Wine: if this is part of your celebration, then go for wines produced in Europe. One that are produced much further afield will have an enormous carbon footprint because of the distance they have travelled.

A GOOD READ by Dominic Hall

With an increasing number of television channels and films there seems to be little time for reading, unless you eschew the trials and tribulations of celebrity culture, police shows, public humiliation competitions and 'lifestyle' shows. If, like me, you would prefer to curl up on the sofa with a cuppa and a good book then I have a few suggestions to while away the dark winter nights.

The Passenger by Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz was written as a response to the events of Kristallnacht. There is an element of Richard Hannay in the drama and the way in which Boschwitz's hero, Otto Silbermann, is running for his life. The book details the all too real perils faced by so many Jewish people in Europe in the 1930s. The drama and tension are as palpable as the increasing frustration that Silbermann feels as all around him people seem to be unaware of the impending doom of the Nazi regime. The book was written in little more than a month as war loomed over Europe. The author, despite being Jewish, was interred in Britain and shipped to Australia. He was allowed to return in 1942 but the boat he travelled in was torpedoed by a Nazi U boat and he was among those killed. This novel stands as a worthy contemporaneous account of the daily horrors of Nazi ideology.

Now for something lighter. As an English teacher I am always intrigued by dialects and accents – though as a southerner I am sometimes confused by both here in Yorkshire! The doyen of chronicling the development of English is David Crystal. With his son, the actor Ben Crystal, he wrote, ***'You Say Potato: The Story of English Accents'***. This book is a delight for linguaphiles, chock full of anecdotes, facts and ideas about how we have come to have the accents we do and what they say about us. With chapter titles including, 'Scones, biscuits and *Star Wars*' and 'What Went Wrong With Birmingham?' this is also a

(Continued on page 11)

book packed with irreverent humour. Be careful, when I read it on the bus I laughed quite a lot and got some very dodgy looks – well, I assume that was because of the laughter!

When novels were in their infancy there was a propensity to fashion them around the writing styles of the time. Many early novels are epistolic in form – that is, written as a series of letters. *'The Appeal'* by Janice Hallett takes a classic 'whodunnit' and uses diary entries, emails, text messages, news reports and other such documents to tell the story. It keeps the reader guessing and often throws them off the scent completely – as all good whodunnits should.

Crime, and specifically murder, has always been a rich seam for writers and one I have recently discovered is Louise Penny. She sets her stories in a remote Quebec village, Three Pines, and features a noble and charming detective, Armand Gamache. There are currently seventeen (!) novels in the series. The first, *'Still Life'* introduces the characters with their quirks, secrets and foibles to great effect. I have read the first nine novels so far and the characters feel like friends who it is always good to see when I begin another story.

My final choice takes us back to the start of the twentieth century. Arnold Bennett is known more today for a particular type of omelette created in his honour, but he was a prolific writer. His novel, *'The Grand Babylon Hotel'* has gaucheness, intrigue, derring-do, drama and tension by the bucketload. It is a terrifically satisfying read for a cold night by the fire with a glass of something not unpleasant to cheer you along!

As ever, these books are readily available through the massive internet companies but small independent shops like The Grove bookshop in Ilkley (www.grovebookshop.com) or The Bookshop On The Square in Otley (www.uk.bookshop.org/thebookshoponthesquare) would certainly benefit from the trade.

Happy reading!

CHARITABLE GIVING ~ DECEMBER VOTING

Voting has now begun to determine which International charity we will support. The options are:

1. **USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel)**

USPG seeks to enable the Gospel to be lived out, on OUR behalf, in the wider world, beyond our direct reach.

They seek ways in which faith and action can go hand in hand. It supports churches worldwide in their struggles against injustices associated with climate change, migration, education, healthcare, gender, the human rights of indigenous people and interreligious living - thus deepening our discipleship as intercultural Christians and awareness of current issues.

2. **Y-Care International**

The YMCA is one of the oldest and largest voluntary youth organisations in the world, creating opportunities for disadvantaged young women and men. They work to bring social justice and peace to young people and their communities, regardless of religion, race, gender or culture.

They believe that local organisations are best placed to understand their communities and their needs. Their role is to accompany them and offer support – technical, learning, financial, networking – to increase the impact and scale of their work. Today, they are focused on building strong, sustainable partnerships to tackle the growing crisis of youth unemployment.

3. **CHRISTIAN AID**

Christian Aid seeks to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ, who commanded his followers to love their neighbour and work for a better world. They stand with the most vulnerable and excluded people of the world – both in times of crisis and for the longer term. They give people survival essentials when they are without shelter or refuge and help them find the strength and resources they need to flourish and protect themselves from shocks and disasters. They support people to stand up for their rights and to build stable, secure lives they can enjoy living.

Outreach Group



CHRISTMAS AT ST JOHN'S MENSTON

SATURDAY 18 DECEMBER
2PM - CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION AT KIRKLANDS

SUNDAY 19 DECEMBER
4PM - CAROL SERVICE

FRIDAY 24 DECEMBER
4PM - NATIVITY SERVICE
11.30PM - MIDNIGHT COMMUNION

SATURDAY 25 DECEMBER
10AM - MORNING CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION
WITH OPTIONAL COMMUNION AT THE END



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Worship this month

5 Dec The Third SUNDAY of ADVENT
Readings: Isaiah 50: 4-9; Luke 3: 1-6
Reader: *Ros Wilkinson*

9.30am Zest
11.00am Parish Eucharist
6.00pm The Junction: *Exploring Faith, Learning Together*

12 Dec The Third Sunday of ADVENT
Readings: Isaiah 52: 13 - 53: 12; Luke 3: 7-18
Reader: *Colin Alexander*

9.30am Zest
11.00am Parish Eucharist
6.00pm The Junction: *Exploring Faith, Learning Together*

19 Dec The Fourth Sunday of ADVENT
Readings: 2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16; Luke 1: 39-45
Reader: *Pat Machin*

9.30am Zest
11.00am Parish Eucharist
4.00pm Carol Service
6.00pm The Junction: *Exploring Faith, Learning Together*

24 Dec CHRISTMAS EVE ~ Reader: David Machin
11.30pm

25 Dec CHRISTMAS DAY ~ Reader: Heather Greig

10.00am See previous page for details of all Christmas services

26 Dec The First Sunday of CHRISTMAS
Readings: 1 Samuel 2: 18-20, 26: 3; Luke 2: 41-52
Reader: *Glenys Prince*

9.30am Zest
11.00am Parish Eucharist

2 Jan The Second Sunday of CHRISTMAS

9.30am Zest

10.30am Covenant Service at Menston Methodist Church

6.00pm The Junction: *Matthew 2:1-15*

9 Jan The BAPTISM of CHRIST

Readings: Isaiah 43: 1-7; Luke 3:15-22

Reader: Wendy Thornhill

9.30am Zest

11.00am Parish Eucharist

6.00pm The Junction: *Galatians 1*

16 Jan The Second Sunday after EPIPHANY

Readings: Isaiah 62: 1-5; John 2:1-11

Reader: Heather Greig

9.30am Zest

11.00am Parish Eucharist

6.00pm The Junction: *Galatians 2*

23 Jan The Third Sunday after EPIPHANY

Readings: Nehemiah 8: 1-10; Luke 4:14-21

Reader: Geoff Druett

9.30am Zest

11.00am Parish Eucharist

6.00pm The Junction: *Galatians 3*

30 Jan The Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY

Readings: Malachi 3: 1-5; Luke 2:22-40

Reader: Dominic Hall

9.30am Zest

11.00am Parish Eucharist

6.00pm The Junction: *Galatians 4*

MID-WEEK SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

Thursday December: 2 / 9 / 16 / 23 NB: there will be no

9.30am communion service on Thursday 30 December.

January: 6 / 13 / 20 / 27

KEEPING CHRISTMAS by Henry van Dyke

An American short-story writer, poet, essayist and Presbyterian minister popular in the early decades of the 20th century. As a member of the clergy, Christmas and Easter were a special holidays for Henry van Dyke. He wrote some popular Christmas Stories including; The Other Wise Men, The First Christmas Tree, and Keeping Christmas.

It is a good thing to observe Christmas Day. The mere marking of times and seasons, when men agree to stop work and make merry together, is a wise and wholesome custom. It helps one to feel the supremacy of the common life over the individual life. It reminds a man to set his own little watch, now and then, by the great clock of humanity which runs on sun time.

But there is a better thing than the observance of Christmas Day, and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you;

to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world;

to put your rights in the background, and your duties in the middle distance, and your chances to do a little more than your duty in the foreground;

to see that your fellow-men are just as real as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy;

to own that probably the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give to life;

to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe, and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness.

Are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children;

to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old;

to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough;

to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear on their hearts;

to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you;

to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you;

to make a grave for your ugly thoughts, and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open.

Are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world - stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death - and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas.

And if you keep it for a day, why not always?

But you can never keep it alone.

Submitted by Kathy Roberts

PCC Notes - 18 October

Finance

Income was matching expenditure to the end of September, but a decision would be required at the next meeting as to how the 5% commitment of general funds to Mission Giving would be financed.

Roof Appeal

We had received a grant of £7,500 from the Garfield Weston Trust, bringing the total raised to £101,083. The results of two further grant applications were awaited.

It was agreed that we should investigate the use of 'contactless giving'. Treasurers of churches already using this means of collecting donations would be asked for their opinions regarding ease of use and reporting.

Church Roof Project

Discussions were ongoing with the architect and roofing company as to how the project might be progressed, given the large rise in building costs and shortage of building materials.

Mission Giving

A paper from the Outreach Group making the case for continued financial support to USPG, in addition to the 'button voting scheme', was discussed. Pros and cons of treating USPG as a special case were vigorously debated and the PCC voted by 7 votes to 5 against the Outreach group's proposal to treat USPG differently to other Mission Giving. The group was asked to consider adding USPG to the international list of the 'button voting scheme'.

Social Events

Following discussion regarding risk assessments and personal responsibility, the PCC decided by 11 votes to 1 to allow the resumption of use of the Parish Room for social events.

Hymn Books and Service sheets

The congregation would be asked to vote between a choice of 'paper' and 'screen'. A combination of the two was not regarded as sensible as it doubled the amount of preparation required.



This month:

7 December 2.15pm Parish Room – Advent Miscellany
Followed by tea and mince pies

2022

4 January 2.15pm Parish Room – Subscription Afternoon
Talk by Mrs Glenys Prince: What is the
Rylstone Project? (*NB change of title*)
Sat 8 January 11.00am Parish Room – Annual Wave of Prayer

At our November meeting we were entertained by Mr David Machin who recited many of his entertaining (or thought-provoking) poems included in the recent booklet 'Let the Rafters Ring' which was printed for sale during the summer months to raise funds for the church Roof Appeal. After a fun afternoon, many members were inspired by his work to buy copies of the booklet to show their appreciation and support his fund-raising effort for the church.

Collection of Subscriptions 2022

At this meeting there was some confusion regarding the above matter. Whilst all MU members are now being given the option of paying their subscriptions by Direct Debit and have received information on how to do this, the treasurer has confirmed with the Diocesan Treasurer the correct procedure when members wish to pay by cash or cheque, which is to remain the same as in the past. The subscription for next year stays the same at £28. At the December meeting the treasurer will issue the usual envelopes to those not choosing to change to Direct Debit, for them to hand in at the Subscription Afternoon on 4 January.

Please note – cheques should be made payable to **Menston St John's MU**. The information given out at the November meeting about cheques being made out to Leeds Diocese refers to branch treasurers, not individual members who are paying their subs by cheque.

Our last two meetings had very good attendances of 16 members each time, which is very encouraging when looking forward to next year. Let's hope and pray this will continue.

With love and best wishes to all our members

Marjorie Boddy & Ann Dixon

ALTAR FLOWERS

2022

16 January

Jan Alexander

30 January

Judith Knaggs



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

We shall begin to decorate the church for the Christmas services on Friday 17 December - 10am. Donations of variegated holly will be gratefully accepted to decorate the windowsills. Please leave at the back of church by *Thursday 16 December*.



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NOTICE BOARD

NOSTALGIA NIGHT

A huge thank you to all who helped in any way to make this such a successful and enjoyable occasion. Many people stressed how good it was to socialise again after the dark days of lockdown.

TimeWarp also expressed their pleasure at seeing the dance floor so full once again!



A grand total of £1,391 was raised for St John's Roof Appeal. Thanks again.

Judith Knaggs

Please note that there will be NO Communion Service at St John's on Sunday 2 January 2022.

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS

for 2022 are due to be collected with delivery of the February issue. The cost of the magazine remains at 60p per copy, £6 for the year.

Please make cheques payable to **'Menston PCC'**. This is a change as the separate Magazine account is now closed. If you know someone who might like to receive the magazine please ring Charmian Thomas 873865 to arrange delivery. Please contact the Parish Office if you wish to arrange a postal delivery which includes a charge to cover postage.

Light Up St John's – Floodlight Sponsorship

Now that the dark winter nights have arrived this is a very special way to mark an anniversary or simply to give thanks. The cost is £5 per evening which helps to cover the costs of floodlighting the church from dusk until 10.30pm.



- | | |
|--------|---|
| 1 Jan | Remembering my father with love on his birthday |
| 21 Jan | Remembering our son with love |

Contact the Parish Office to make arrangements: 872433 or email office@stjohnmenston.org.uk

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Matthew 2: 1-10

Around the time of Jesus' birth, in a land far to the east of Israel, there were men who studied the stars...

When they saw a new star they believed it showed a special King had been born.



They set off to see that King.



They reached Jerusalem, the home of King Herod.



Where is the new King whose star we saw?

The Romans had made Herod king of the Jews about 30 years earlier. He was ruthless.



The Jews hated him and he was always worried that people were plotting against him.



He had them killed even if they were his wife or children...



So what the wise men said about a new King upset Herod



and that made everyone else afraid.

Herod got the teachers and priests together and asked about the King's birthplace.



That would be Little Bethlehem*



* Micah 5:2

Herod secretly met the wise men and asked when they had first seen the star.



Go to Bethlehem and look for the child. When you find him let me know so I can come and worship him.



As they left Jerusalem the wise men were elated to see the guiding star again.



Advent Calendar

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

Rowan Williams

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Contact Alyson Smith
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Contact Sarah: 01943 874018 or 07919 566352

Excellent references available.

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