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| ALLERTONCONGREGATIONAL CHURCH |

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| **Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year** |

December 2022/January 2023 Newsletter

Dear Friends

Do you ever feel like you’re trying to reinvent the wheel? You come across a particular issue or problem, and rather than follow the well-worn advice you try to come up with a novel solution that takes lots of time and effort. There is a sense in which writing a Christmas newsletter message can feel a bit like that. All of us know the Christmas story pretty well, as it’s told each year through our church services. We have read the Scripture passages many times and heard them preached through a good number of times also. So do we just switch off and go through the motions?

I’d like to suggest that actually we need to listen to the story afresh, and respond to it with faith and thanksgiving. However, many times we hear the good news of the Gospel we should never find ourselves feeling fed up or bored, because without Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection we would be in grave danger. It is only because of what Jesus did for us that we have a future to which we can look forward. The Christmas story is simply one act of this wondrous story of salvation for humanity. God’s plan, from before He created the world, was to have a people in relationship with Him.

Sin entered the world through Adam, in the Garden of Eden, yet God’s plan of salvation was also prepared and ready to go. Throughout the Old Testament we are pointed towards our need for a Saviour, and the prophets foretold His coming. In the birth of Jesus Christ to Mary in Bethlehem this prophecy was fulfilled. This Baby was born to die for us, and without His perfect sacrifice we would be alienated from God and dead in our sin. We must not lose sight of the importance of Jesus, fully man and fully God, coming into this world to reconcile humanity to God.

There are so many aspects to the Christmas story including the fulfilment of prophecy, the discernment of faithful folk (like Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:21-38), the perfect planning of God in the minutest details and the angelic announcement of the birth to shepherds. Each of them point to God’s grace, mercy, love and salvation. How can we take this amazing true story for granted? Why do people take it for granted and somehow miss the significance of it?

Personally, I wonder whether a part of the issue is the Church’s dumbing down of the story so as to make it accessible for children. Typically, carol services and Christmas Day acts of worship are family friendly, and so we tend to read the Scriptures but not really explore what their message is in much detail. We summarise how they show that God loves us, but we often don’t go too far beyond that. Is the fact that we rarely explore the true depths of the Scriptures that tell of our Saviour’s birth the reason we don’t get excited about the nativity? Are we missing the rich treasures that are contained in this part of God’s Word?

As we approach Christmas this year perhaps we can all take the time to read afresh the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ birth and prayerfully reflect upon them. Maybe have a chat with some of your Christian friends about what they mean, and how they might have application for our lives today. Let me leave you with a challenge to read the following Bible passages between now and Christmas Day so that we might all grow in our knowledge of God and our love for Him! Luke 2:1-7 and John 1:1-18. To God be the glory this Christmas!

Yours Fred

Secretary’s Thoughts

Well, it’s time to wish each other ‘Happy Christmas’ again – where has this year gone?

Advent is almost upon us as I write. The tree and trimmings are about to go up. Are we ready? Probably not.

We do need to be ready however, to begin to prepare ourselves for the time we celebrate the time when Jesus was born in a stable all those years ago. We are so fortunate to live in a country that allows us to worship and celebrate openly – spare a thought for those who have to meet in secret and pray that they remain safe.

We need volunteers for Advent readings as well as for the readers and coffee rota (see below). Janet

Dates for your Diary

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| Friday 2nd Dec | 1.00pm | Ladies Circle Christmas Party. |
| Saturday 3rd Dec | 10.00am to 12.00 noon | Christmas Coffee Shop.  |
| Friday 16th Dec | 7.30pm | Thornton Singers Christmas Concert at Idle Baptist Church |
| Tickets available from members £8.00 or on the door see Jane or Susan |

Flower Rota – flowers provided by:

January 2023

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| 8th | Mr & Mrs B Haley |
| 15th | Mrs C North |

On Sundays not listed, silk flowers will be used.

Preaching list

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| December | January |
| 4th | Gordon Sitch | 1st | David and Janet |
| 11th | Rev Fred Rich | 8th | Rev David Muschamp |
| 18th | Trevor Hippey | 15th | Rev Fred Rich |
| 25th  | Rev Fred Rich | 22nd | Trevor Hippey |
|  |  | 29th | Rev Fred Rich |

Coffee Rota

As we have returned to having coffee after services, it would be really helpful if those on the rota could come a little earlier to set things up. You will not need to bring milk.

The coffee rota is on the notice board in the vestibule and will be on the table in the hall on Sundays.

Bible Reading Rota

If you would like to offer to read the Bible for Sunday services, the Bible reading rota is on the notice board in the vestibule and will be on the table in the hall on Sundays.

Note from the Editor

The next newsletter is due on 29th January 2023 – please let me have any items for inclusion by 22nd January 2023.

Thank you – Carole

Sundays - Services at 10.30 am.

## Website: allertoncongregationalchurch.org.uk

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