

TIDINGS



Merry Christmas

Banstead United Reformed Church
Winter 2023



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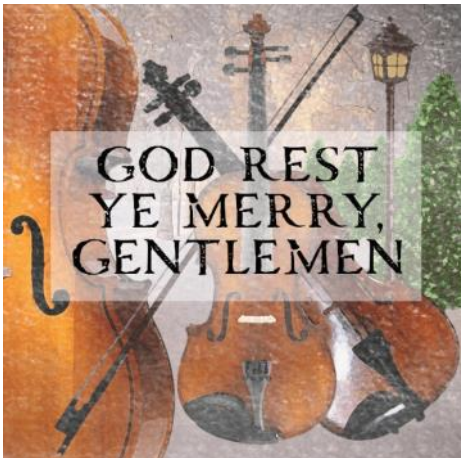
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Message - Merry Christmas

Many of us will receive Christmas cards this year with the traditional greeting '*Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*'. Indeed, '*A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You*' was the inscription in the first commercially available Christmas card in 1843. But have you ever wondered why we tend to wish each other a 'Merry Christmas' rather than a 'Happy Christmas' and what it actually means?

The dictionary definition of merry is 'cheerful and lively.' So taken on its own, the word may conjure up images of partying and revelry. But this was not the original meaning of Merry Christmas. The first use of the phrase 'Merry Christmas' as a greeting at Christmastime is thought to date back to 1534 when John Fisher, a Catholic bishop after whom The John Fisher school in Purley is named, used it in a letter to Thomas Cromwell who at the time was Henry VIII's chief minister. In the letter John Fisher wrote '*And this our Lord God send you a mery Christmas, and a comfortable, to your heart's desire*.' At that time, merry had the somewhat different

meaning of 'pleasant and peaceful'.



This is exemplified in the Christmas carol 'God rest ye merry, gentlemen'. Note the comma comes after the word merry, indicating that that merry is not an adjective applied to the 'gentlemen' but rather an adverb applied to the word 'rest'.

Therefore, the true meaning of this opening line of the carol is '*stay peacefully content*'.

The reference to gentlemen is because the carol is addressed to the shepherds in Luke's account of the nativity.

Charles Dickens did much to popularise the use of Merry

Christmas as a Christmastime greeting, with the phrase appearing 21 times in his novel 'A Christmas Carol', and 'Merry Christmas' is now the universal term to greet people during the Christmas season, conveying thoughts of well-wishing, joy and friendship.

2023 has been anything but a peaceful year, with the continuing war in Ukraine and the outbreak of war in the Middle East. But peace is at the heart of the Christmas message. The message of the angels to the shepherds was 'Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those who he favours'. Later, Jesus told his disciples 'peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you'.

So, this Christmas, when we wish each other a Merry Christmas, let us remember that we are expressing the wish that we will remain peacefully content. And let us hope that the message of Christmas will filter through to the leaders of the nations and we can look forward to a more peaceful new year.

Cliff Houghton

FROM THE EDITORS

Following on from our Merry Christmas message, we have been looking into Christmas traditions and the results of our research are included throughout this issue of *Tidings*.

We include accounts of the lives of Peter Baikie and Evelyn Horden whose deaths were announced in the previous issue.

2023 marks the 250th anniversary of the writing of John Newton's hymn 'Amazing Grace'. Roy Jordan has written a very interesting article about the hymn writer and the writing of the hymn.

It is Glenda Chadburn's turn to reveal all in our Know Your Elder feature.

Finally, we were delighted to receive a contribution from Eric Riley in response to a previous article about Sir Christopher Wren. Who knew that Eric is such a talented artist?

Fiona, Diana and Cliff

Christmas traditions—Christmas Day



Christmas Day is when Christians celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus. It is a familiar story which we are reminded of each year through our Christmas services. Most of us will have participated in a nativity play in our younger days and will certainly have seen one more recently.

The story is recounted in two of the gospels with St. Luke telling us about the journey to Bethlehem, the birth of the baby in a manger and the visit of the angels to the shepherds, and St. Matthew telling of the wise men with gifts following a star to find the newborn baby.

The early Christian Church did not have a set date for remembering the birth and it was not until the 4th century that the 25th of December was selected. Historians differ on whether it was the Emperor Constantine who died in 337 or Pope Julius the First who died in 352 who decided the date. However, there are certainly records of the Christian festival by the year 354. For some it made sense, as it was nine months after the presumed conception of Jesus at the spring solstice. The Eastern Orthodox Church, which follows the Julian calendar, celebrates Christmas on January the 7th. The point here is that the Christian religious celebration was merged with the ancient celebrations of the winter solstice.

Christmas was a bit late in coming to England, but it was established by 877 AD, when Alfred the Great declared the 12 days of Christmas as a holiday. This was a welcome break for spinners and the many land workers, who restarted work on Plough

Monday, the first Monday after 12th Night. The 12 days start on the 25th or 26th in different traditions and are intended to last until the eve of 12th night. This is the time of Epiphany when the three wise men or kings offered their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus.

The Flower Rota

The new Flower Rota for 2024 will be going up on the board in the vestibule very soon. A big thank you to everyone who has arranged the flowers for the front of the church this year, and for all who have made a contribution to the flower fund.



A simple bunch of flowers is all that is needed and there are vases in the flower room, so please have a go if you haven't done them before. You can, of course, let your floral skills run riot if you wish! A flowering plant is also very acceptable. I will be extremely grateful for your help.

Fiona Gayner

QUIZ

What is the safest way to eat dangerous cheese? What does a careless driver do to cars? These were two of the cryptic clues to British towns and cities that teams were asked to solve at the quiz held in our Church on 14 October. Seven teams did battle over 8 rounds answering questions on subjects as diverse as cheese, times of day and world geography. Of course, there was the connection round where answers such as The French Connection and the Berlin Wall were designed to lead teams to the answer of comedians (Dawn French/Max Wall). The final music round was themed around autumn and winter and featured a wide range of music including Nat King Cole, the Kinks and David Essex. The evening included a delicious fish and chip supper. Scoring was good with no team getting less than 50%. The eventual winners were the Old Friends, a team loosely connected to Banstead Downs Golf Club.

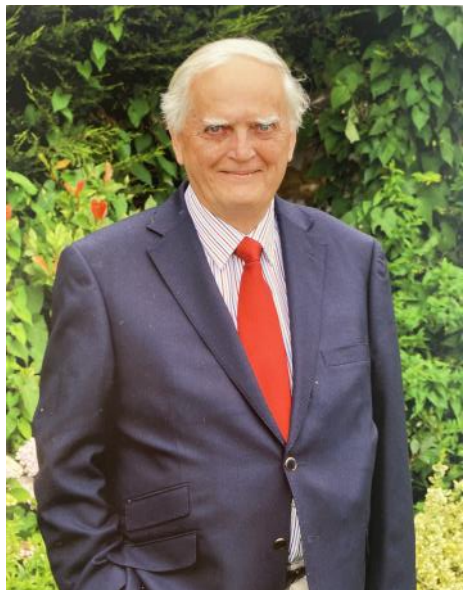
Thanks to Madeline Cranfield and the Impact committee for organising the evening and Cliff Houghton for compiling and presenting the quiz. The evening raised a total of £330 for the Tanzania Development Trust, a charity that works to tackle poverty in Tanzania by working in three development areas – education, access to clean water and community empowerment. The sum raised was matched by our Church's charitable giving fund and therefore the sum of £660 has been sent to the charity.

(The answers to the cryptic clues above are Caerphilly and Wrexham).

Church Family News

In memoriam

Peter Baikie



Peter was born into a close, caring family in South Africa, in 1936. His father was a station manager for South African railways and the family moved many times – for 3 years the 3 oldest children were cared for by their granny, seeing their parents and baby brother only at weekends after a long drive through the bush. Peter was close to his sister Linda as they were both mischievous and adventurous, escaping their chores to build swings in the garden or swim in the sea.

Peter enjoyed being a drummer in a marching band, was a crack shot in school rifle teams, a great chess player and a very motivated student. His success in mathematics led him to an accountancy apprenticeship. Working full time and studying at weekends he achieved first prize for Natal in his chartered accountancy exams. Through a relative he was introduced to the skill of magic, a passion he shared with others throughout his life, often raising money for charity.

Once qualified, Peter set off for London, armed with his optimistic and adventurous spirit, a bowler hat and virtually no money. He found a job with an audit firm, travelling to Switzerland, Libya and Nigeria. Intrepid travel adventure was a passion he shared with his wife Elizabeth. Peter eventually returned to South Africa. He held a key position with Anglo American, the government backed

Industrial Development Corporation, arranging finance for many significant infrastructure investments, such as an aluminium processing plant in Richards Bay. He later worked as Chief Executive for Hunslet Taylor who built over 2,000 locomotives for the South African gold mines.

With the political changes brought about by apartheid, Peter and Elizabeth decided to leave South Africa with their four children. They arrived in the UK at a challenging time of strikes, unemployment, high inflation and the 3-day week. With determination and courage Peter restarted his career. His last job was as Finance Director of the National Autistic Society, working there for many years until retirement and then supporting them long after his retirement.

Peter and Elizabeth were married for 61 years, building a secure, loving family for their children and grandchildren. Peter loved taking his children ice-skating, swimming, teaching them to ride bikes and play rugby. He showed his children how to face challenges and through his wisdom supported them to find their own paths in life. The family enjoyed beach holidays, trips around Zimbabwe and to South African game reserves. Later, trips followed touring in the UK and Europe, towing a battered old trailer tent, with no Satnav and many missed turnings and late-night arrivals in campsites. One epic journey was by numerous trains from Sutton to Aviemore, arriving past midnight in the pitch black and with heavy snow – all courtesy of Kellogg's cereal tokens giving return travel anywhere in the UK for £1!

Peter was a Christian and a committed member of the United Reformed Church. He was a faithful member and elder at Banstead URC, playing a key role as fundraiser and finance lead for the church extension. He and Elizabeth, who is a Catholic, respected each other's denominations and gave their family a great example of religious tolerance. His family is proud and grateful to have had such a wonderful man as a husband and father.

Evelyn Horden



Evelyn was born in 1937 to William and Ada Tindale in her grandparent's house in Shiney Row, County Durham. Although her parents had moved south to Thornton Heath some years previously, her mother was insistent that both her children should be born in County Durham. This was not so that they could play cricket for the county, although it should be added that their grandfather did just that!

After the war broke out, the family were evacuated back to her grandparent's home, a little two up, two down terraced house. There were five adults plus Evelyn and her older sister Win living there, so things were a bit cramped. Nevertheless, Evelyn had happy memories of her childhood there and always thought of County Durham as her home. Her father, who was a Metropolitan Police Officer, remained in London during the war and when the war was over the whole family was reunited in Thornton Heath. Evelyn's grandmother was apparently quite pleased to get her house back to normal!

Evelyn first went to school in Thornton Heath and then moved on to an all-girl convent grammar school in Croydon. Although the school gave her a good education and some lifelong friends, it gave no encouragement to girls to enter university and provided little in the way of careers advice.

She left school at 16 to start working at the BBC. In her early twenties, Evelyn moved out of home to a bedsit in Muswell Hill to

be close to her then boyfriend (much to the displeasure of her parents!). The two of them set up a business doing spring cleaning and decorating. The business and the relationship initially flourished but, unfortunately, they subsequently both fell apart.

Moving on, she obtained a job working in the accounts department for British Nylon Spinners. After the company was taken over by ICI in 1964, Evelyn was promoted to the Marketing Department and spent many happy years working there dealing with the fashion trade including travelling to fashion shows in Paris and Florence. It meant she was able to buy her own house in Barnes, West London.

By 1982, Evelyn was working in sales for a fashion retailer and needed a bigger house to carry her stock and be more centrally located for her sales region. In that year she moved to 8 Grange Meadow, Banstead. She found that she had a lovely neighbour, and they used to meet up for regular coffees and meals in his house at number 10. The lovely neighbour was Vic Horden who was widowed following the death of his wife Mary. Evelyn and Vic found they had much in common and by the end of 1992 they were married. Evelyn moved from no. 8 to no. 10 and retired early, aged 55, to enjoy her new life.

For Evelyn, the following four years were wonderful. She and Vic travelled a lot. One of Vic's three sons, Iain, lived in Australia, so they travelled out there and stayed for a couple of months. They visited many other beautiful places around the world and in this country. Evelyn had learned to play the electric organ and enjoyed playing music with Vic. Sadly, in 1996 Vic was diagnosed with cancer and he died at the end of that year. She lived the rest of her life at no.10 Grange Meadow and made sure she kept in regular contact with Vic's sons and their families although, sadly, Vic's eldest son Iain died recently.

Evelyn was very interested in family history and often travelled up to the Durham/Sunderland area to work on her family tree and her family's history in farming and mining. She also helped the Horden family fill in some of the gaps in their family tree.

She has of course been a much-loved member of our Church here in Banstead and she made a number of firm friends through that connection. She was a member of the Monday Club and for a time was its chairman. She did a lot of wonderful work over the years arranging Church flowers. She also took on the role of minutes secretary for Church meetings and elders' meetings.

As her niece, Barbara, said at Evelyn's funeral, Evelyn will remain in all of our memories – family, friends, neighbours and carers - and we will strive to live our lives as beautifully as she did.

Ken Phillips

Ken Phillips, a non-serving elder and long-time member of our Church, died on 24 October 2023. We send our condolences to Margaret, Kate and all his family. We will include more details of Ken's life in the next edition of *Tidings*.

New arrival



After a long wait, Amber entered the world on 16 September at 8.57 am weighing 9lb 7oz. Her proud parents Rosanna and Joe Cranfield are delighted to have a daughter (a surprise) and loving their new role as parents! She is delightful and perfect in every way, so say her totally unbiased Grammy and Bampi (aka Nanny and Grandad) Madeline and Richard Cranfield. She is a first grandchild for them and a first niece for Eleanor.

Revd Kim Plumpton's Induction as Moderator of Northern Synod



On Saturday 23rd September I had the pleasure of attending Kim's induction at St. Columba's URC, North Shields, which was a joyful experience. The service was led by Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, Moderator of General Assembly (who is due to preach at our church on 9 June 2024 when we will be joined by the other three churches in the North Downs Surrey Pastorate). The service was also attended by the URC General Secretary, Revd Dr John Bradbury, the Bishop of Durham and members of Kim's family. Revd Bridget Banks preached an inspiring address via a pre-recorded video.

Following the service there was a splendid tea, when I spoke to the Bishop of Durham who told me that he had previously lived in Stoneleigh. I also spoke to Revd David Gray formally minister of St Andrews, Cheam who has also been our Interim Moderator.

Kim is now living in Durham and we wish her every blessing in her new role which I know she will carry out with her usual sensitivity and good humour.

Alan Kirby

Know your elder– Glenda Chadburn



How does Glenda manage to look so young and fit, even though she has now retired from work? The answer appears to be that she continues to be an active golfer and badminton player and, of course, for the last 42 years she has enjoyed a happy marriage with Paul.

But to start at the beginning. Glenda was born in South Croydon, where she lived until she was eight. She was a shy girl and was not very

happy at her school, where she suffered from some bullying. Her teacher used to prowl around with a cane! Glenda was, therefore, very happy when her parents moved to Banstead and she discovered that school life could be enjoyable, initially at Banstead Junior School.

Glenda's father was a Pensions Manager at Legal & General and when she left school at eighteen after her A Levels, Glenda went to work there temporarily while she waited the result of her application to join the Civil Service. However, Glenda so enjoyed her work at Legal & General, firstly in life sales and then in financial consultancy, that she stayed there instead for the next ten years (the Civil Service's loss) until she became a mother, first with Stefanie, then Nicki and finally Rosalyn. When she returned to work, it was in the Tattenham Health Centre surgery, where she split her week between secretarial and

receptionist activities. When advanced technology resulted in a computer performing her secretarial tasks, Glenda became a receptionist full time, and she spent a total of thirteen years there until she retired.

Glenda is no stranger to true romance. Both she and Paul moved through school together in different classes of the same year. However, Glenda says that she doesn't really remember Paul until they met in the Lower Sixth, studying geography together. They were initially together for some four years in which time they were Venture Scout leaders in the newly formed 138 mixed unit and enjoyed many trips to the Lake District, Peak District, Wales and North Yorkshire, where Glenda did not enjoy potholing! Then Paul moved to New York to pursue his computing work. One day whilst he was there, Paul telephoned Glenda and asked, 'will you marry me?' The rest is history!

So how did Glenda become involved with the church? She remembers being involved as a youngster in Nativity plays at an Anglican church in Croydon, but her parents were not a particularly religious couple. Her first contact with the Banstead church was through joining our swimming group, which Mr and Mrs Tickner led at Epsom Baths. Glenda then started to attend church on Sunday mornings, firstly in Junior Church led by John Jackson and then the Adventurers, led Roy Jordan. At the appropriate age, she moved on to Unity Youth, who met after the evening service, where she remembers Cliff Houghton used to lead the music. She particularly remembers him playing 'The Streets of London' on his guitar. Her subsequent leaders were Roy Beard and Michael Palmer. From the age of eighteen she drifted away from church, but she and Paul were married here by the Revd Ian Stewart and their children were baptised by the Revd Phillip Jones. Phillip insisted that he should baptise Rosalyn before he left Banstead, so the date (one week before he moved) was arranged even before the birth! Glenda then became involved with Holiday Fun Week, serving on the committee and in charge of arranging it in 2002. Glenda was ordained as an Elder in 2022.

Outside the church Glenda has been very involved with Guiding: Rainbows and Rangers. She was District Commissioner for Banstead for three years, during which time she strengthened the group by adding Nork. She was also very involved with the negotiations with Wessex Doors which resulted in the gift of land for the Guides' HQ. She also used her talent for leadership in 2015 when she became captain of the ladies' section of Chipstead Golf Club. Other interests have included, in the past, singing (in the school choir) and being front of house manager for school plays and in the present attending Jules Holland concerts with Paul. Her sporting activities have given Glenda and Paul a wide circle of friends, who together comprise a big part of their social life. They have also maintained contacts with a group of school friends with whom they meet once a month and, on occasion, go to events such as the Goodwood Races. In 2018, they celebrated their 60th Birthdays on a road trip around Europe.

Glenda and Paul like to travel and for their 30th wedding anniversary they visited Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong. More recently, they have been to South Africa, Canada, Mauritius and the Caribbean, where they enjoyed the thrill of sailing on a tall ship. In January they have a holiday planned in the Maldives where they will spend time snorkelling and kayaking. They would like to visit New Zealand, but family commitments do not allow this at present.

Glenda is very proud of her mother, who still lives in her house at Great Ellshams and remains very independent. She has now reached the age of 98 without accepting any of the traditional medical treatments or support! Glenda and Paul also look after their grandchildren, Ava and Mae, one day each week.

Is there anything about Glenda that might surprise the reader? Well, her latest venture is learning to play bridge at the Purley Bridge Club, which is proving challenging but good for the memory.

Christmas traditions—Father Christmas



Both Father Christmas and Santa Claus are believed to be inspired by St. Nicholas. Father Christmas is more associated with the UK whereas Santa Claus is an American name said to be derived from the Dutch nickname Sinter Klaas. St. Nicholas was born in Turkey in around 280 AD. He gave away his inherited wealth and travelled round helping the sick and poor. This giving of gifts is reminiscent for Christians of the three wise men. St. Nicholas later became the patron saint of children. There are many legends associated with him with perhaps the most

familiar being that he gave a gold coin to each of three sisters in a very poor family so that their father would not have to sell them. He threw one gold coin down the chimney where it landed in a stocking which was hanging up to dry and another gold coin arrived through a window and landed in a shoe. And so today in the UK and the USA children hang up their stocking by the chimney or on their bed and in Scandinavia they tend to leave shoes in the hearth to receive their presents.

The image of Santa that we have today of a rotund elderly man with a white beard and dressed in red with white trimmings can be traced back to a series of drawings created by the American cartoonist Thomas Nast in the 1860s. He in turn based his drawings in the description of St. Nicholas in Clement Moore's 1823 poem 'T'was the night before Christmas'.

By the 1880s, the English Father Christmas had almost completely merged with Santa Claus. Whatever we call him, he continues to play a pivotal role in Christmas culture around the world, with his home at the North Pole where he spends the year making toys, with the help of his elves, for delivery on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Ice Cream

This recipe does not need stirring halfway through freezing and is easy to serve straight from the freezer.

225g (8oz) mixed dried fruit
4 tbls rum, brandy or sherry
Juice and grated rind of 1 orange
1 pint (575ml) double cream
4 standard egg yolks
350g (12oz) caster sugar

Mix fruit, alcohol and orange juice and rind in a bowl.

Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Next day cream egg yolks and sugar together until light.

Add fruit mixture and stir well.

Beat cream until slightly stiff. Add to fruit mixture and combine well.

Pour into a 2 litre container and freeze.

Madeline Cranfield (who served the ice cream to members of Time Out last Christmas – they all pronounced it delicious!)

Angels

On 31st October around 100 people sped eagerly to Reigate Park URC to hear Dr Katy Brown answer the burning question: What do angels do all day? Dr Katy is an accomplished historian, turned art historian, and she gave us an insightful presentation, with much enthusiasm and humour, showing how artists through the centuries have answered this question. We saw on the screens many beautiful and colourful paintings, mostly by Italian, Spanish, Dutch and British artists such as Titian, Rembrandt, Caravaggio and Rosetti, and by several others who were not so familiar. There were also slides of an urn dated to 400 BC and some stained-glass windows.

We were reminded that the inspiration for most of the artists is



the Bible, in which an angel is represented as a messenger from God to humans on earth. We saw pictures of Hagar, Sarah, Elizabeth and Mary receiving news about their imminent pregnancy. Also, an angel stopping Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. There were many nativity scenes and the famous Wilton Diptych showing Richard II kneeling before Mary and the baby Jesus

surrounded by 11 angels. Another unexpected picture showed angels accompanying Jesus to heaven after the crucifixion. Each angel carried a small red cross, representing Jesus' blood.

Dr Katy demonstrated that a main occupation of angels in heaven is singing God's praises, for eternity, although she expressed some concern that they might suffer from boredom. Some angels apparently play a musical instrument and those depicted included a tambourine, trombone, lute, guitar, trumpet, violin and a mandolin. Dr Katy was surprised that one angel was having to read sheet music! Another aspect of interest, apart from who wears a halo, was the size and design of the angels' wings. It appears that for most, the wings painted would not be capable of lifting the angel into the air. It was, perhaps, not surprising that the most aero-dynamically designed wings were painted by Leonardo Da Vinci. There is a hierarchy of angels, with cherubims, seraphims and thrones in tier one and ordinary angels and archangels only in tier three. Nevertheless, there were paintings of Gabriel delivering God's message and of Michael in military attire and another of him killing the devil as he protected heaven from evil. The retiring collection was for 'Conquest Art', a charity running painting groups for adults with physical and other disabilities. It was started locally in 1978 by Ursula Hulme MBE, and her daughter was present at the talk.

Our thanks to Diana Parsk and the Revd David Skitt for arranging this talk, the second and final one of the Autumn series. We also thank Reigate Park URC for their hospitality.

John Newton



The Revd John Newton is a supreme example of how Christianity can completely transform the character of an individual who finally responds to what he considers are the promptings and Grace of God.

There were several extenuating circumstances for his unpleasant behaviour in his early life. Newton was born in Wapping, alongside the Thames, in 1725. His mother was a religious non-conformist, who taught him to read and hoped that he would become a Church minister. Sadly, she

died of tuberculosis a few days before his seventh birthday. His father quickly remarried and had more children, leaving Newton feeling excluded. He spent two years somewhat unhappily at boarding school in Essex. Then, at the age of eleven, Newton's father called him to join the crew of a vessel of which he was captain. These were hardly the most suitable surroundings for a young boy, but he became an apprentice seaman for a while on his father's vessel. He sailed on several voyages with his father until he was 17. Newton respected his father but was not emotionally close to him.

It seems that there were two underlying constants in his free-wheeling early life: First was his hope that he would marry Mary 'Polly' Catlett, the daughter of one of his mother's relatives. He met her when she was twelve and he was already a young seaman. Because of his affection for Mary, he wanted to spend time with her. As a result, Newton missed several work opportunities his father had arranged. He was press-ganged into the Navy, deserted to try to see Mary, was arrested, imprisoned, stripped, given a public whipping and demoted. He was through these early years

rebellious and profane and did not respond well to authority on any vessel on which he served.

When Newton was twenty, he was in West Africa and became an employee of Amos Chow, a plantation owner and slave trader. His objective was to make money so that he could ask Mary to marry him. Unfortunately, his relations with Chow soured and he was treated as a slave, especially by the owner's African mistress. He survived partly because of his interest in mathematics. He had managed to keep a book with him on Euclid and drew geometrical pictures on the sand (Aitken quotes lines about this from Wordsworth's poem 'The Prelude'). Newton then flourished a little, becoming a trusted employee of another local plantation owner and slave trader. So, he was somewhat reluctant to leave when, through his father's efforts, a vessel came to rescue him.

He finally received his father's blessing and married Mary in 1750. The happy and devoted marriage lasted for forty years until, in 1790, Mary died from breast cancer after many years of bouts of ill-health. During the marriage, they adopted two daughters, Betsy and Eliza. Newton was sixty-five when he became a widower, and he died seventeen years later in 1807.

The second underlying constant to Newton's early life was his on/off relationship with God. At times he would read the Bible, pray and fast. At other times, he would publicly deny the existence of God and even try to persuade others to think and behave likewise. The turning point in his life came in 1748, when Newton almost perished in a violent storm at sea. The vessel was sinking, and Newton prayed for God's mercy. He helped the crew to stabilise the vessel and managed to steer the vessel to safety in Ireland. Newton resumed going to church and offered his life to God.

Newton taught himself Latin and Greek, with some Hebrew as well, to help him study the Bible. He sought out the best preachers of sermons, discussed faith with many clergymen and read books by prominent Christians. Eventually, in 1758 aged thirty-two, he wrote a self-examination entitled 'Miscellaneous Thoughts and Enquiries On An Important Subject' to assess whether he was

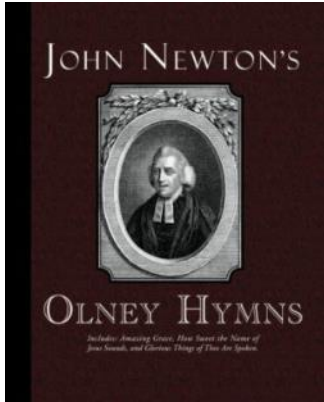
competent and ready to become an ordained minister. Jonathan Aitken, in his well-researched biography of Newton, suggests that prospective ministers today could benefit from reading this document.

Newton's conversion did not take him out of the slave trade. A friend of Newton's father, who was a successful ship owner and business financier, including the slave trade, appointed Newton as first mate on one of his vessels on a voyage to West Africa and subsequently appointed him captain for three more slave trade voyages. Newton must have been strong-willed because he had to quell and punish a mutiny at times by both some slaves and some crew members. Newton was just about to join his vessel for a fourth slave trade voyage as captain, when he had a fit and was diagnosed as unfit for any further voyages. Through some unexpected circumstances, Newton was then appointed as Surveyor of the Tides in Liverpool. He was responsible for sixty employees, who collected customs' dues from the vessels there. This period was one of the happiest in Newton's life as he and Mary were mutually deeply in love. In fact, Newton was at one stage concerned that his love for Mary might detract from his love for God. They had a comfortable life in Liverpool society, although Newton's income was reduced significantly when, for religious reasons, he stopped after some time taking extra money on top of the customs' money from the vessels in Liverpool.

In 1758, Newton decided to seek ordination in the Anglican Church. His first application was rejected by the Archbishop of York, ostensibly because he did not have a degree from Oxford or Cambridge. Aitken suggests it may have really been because of Newton's many contacts with the 'Methodists', including George Whitefield and John and Charles Wesley. With the help of the Revd Thomas Haweis and a recommendation from the Earl of Dartmouth, Newton was finally accepted by the Bishop of Lincoln and ordained in 1764 at the age of thirty-nine. His first appointment was to Olney in Buckinghamshire.

Amazing Grace

Newton's Anglican Ministry was well received and appreciated by his parishioners in Olney, of whom the majority were relatively poor lacemakers and tradesmen. Through his sermons and pastoral care, Newton increased the size of both his congregation and church building. Newton, with his writer/poet friend and



neighbour William Cowper, also increased the number of regular prayer meetings for the congregation. The pair began to write hymns and Newton subsequently published a selection in 1779 under the title 'Olney Hymns'. Newton wrote 280 of these and one was headed 'Faith's Review and Expectation', with the first line 'Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)'.

Newton had introduced this hymn to his congregation as an illustration for his sermon on New Year's Day in 1773. The

words reflected Newton's testimonial style of drawing on his personal experiences to bring his messages from the Bible to his poorly educated parishioners. Newton's initial inspiration was from 1 Chronicles 17: v 16-17, because he drew a parallel between himself and King David, as both felt themselves to be unworthy recipients of God's Grace. Commentators have identified as added sources the parable of Jesus about the Prodigal Son in Luke 5: v 24 ('was lost, and is found'), the story of the blind man in John's Gospel 9: v 25 ('I was blind, now I see'), and Hebrews 6: v 19 ('within the veil'). Newton intentionally wrote with simplicity for his parishioners and Jonathan Aitken has pointed out that most of the words in Amazing Grace are of one syllable.

The hymn made little impression in Britain, but it very much resonated in America with the pioneers who were surging westward and with the African/American slaves. It also coincided there with a religious revival and the spread of communal singing.

Until the turn of the 19th century, the words of Amazing Grace had been published in three different hymn books, each time with a different tune. In 1835 William Walker published Amazing Grace in his 'Southern Harmony' hymn book, and this appears to be the first time that it was put to the tune 'New Britain', which was popular in the American Southern States and is believed to have its earlier origins in British folk music. In 1910, the evangelical Edwin Excell published a version in his 'Coronation Hymns' which consisted of Newton's first three verses plus an added verse taken from the hymn 'Jerusalem My Happy Home', first published in 1790:

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

This now tends to be the popular version.

More recently, 'Amazing Grace' has become a favourite with the American Civil Rights Movement. It has been described as America's spiritual national anthem and was sung at the memorial service for the astronauts lost in the Challenger space shuttle disaster and for the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. One memorable live rendition was when the then President Barak Obama started spontaneously to sing solo the first verse at a televised memorial service for Clementa Pinckney (a victim of a church shooting in Charleston in 2015) with the organist, choir and then the congregation progressively hurrying to join in.

Newton's hymn originally had six verses, but has since had verses omitted or added (I have seen a version with 13 verses). Rejoice and Sing (92) has the first five verses, omitting verse six. Harriet Beecher Stowe draws on it in her epic anti-slavery novel 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', published in 1852. Harriet places her hero Tom at a rock bottom moment in his life, but he sees the face of Jesus on the Cross and he feels his troubles have been taken away. She writes that Tom then sings 'the triumphant words of a hymn, which he had sung often in happier days, but never with such feeling as

now'. This hymn consisted of Newton's verses 6 and 5 (in that order) from Amazing Grace plus the added verse mentioned above, starting 'When we've been there ten thousand years.'

Different versions have been recorded by thousands of artists and the words have inspired millions of people since it was written. Whenever I hear the blind tenor, Andrea Bocelli, sing the line 'was blind but now I see', I feel a surge of hope.

(Acknowledgements: Jonathan Aitken, John Newton, Vincent McNerney)
Roy Jordan

Christmas traditions—Christmas cards



The tradition of sending Christmas cards as we know them today dates back to Victorian times. It was started by Sir Henry Cole, a civil servant who had worked with Sir Rowland Hill in introducing the penny post in 1840. In 1843, Sir Henry conceived the idea of a Christmas card as a means of

sending Christmas greetings and turned to an artist friend of his, John Horsley, to turn his idea into reality. The initial print run was for 1,000 cards with those cards that Sir Henry did not use for his own purposes being sold for one shilling. As printing processes improved through the nineteenth century so the sending of Christmas cards became more popular, and the introduction of the halfpenny post in 1870, which meant that cards could be posted in an unsealed envelope for one halfpenny, gave a further boost to their popularity. The first cards usually had pictures of the nativity scene on them but in late Victorian times, robins and snow-scenes became popular. Today, Britons are estimated to send one billion Christmas cards each year, with cards continuing to be an important means of sending our Christmas greetings and keeping in touch with friends and family.

Dame Cally Palmer



On 19 October, more than 80 people gathered in the church to hear a presentation by Dame Cally Palmer, who is Chief Executive of the Royal Marsden Hospital and is also the National Cancer Director for NHS England.

Dame Cally presented an overview of some of the work that is taking place nationally to support patients when it is suspected that they have cancer. She emphasised that one key objective is to catch cancers early and she outlined some of the methods by which treatments are becoming less invasive and kinder for the patient. Two facts which she mentioned illustrate how much progress is being made: the first is that some treatments, which used to be spread over many weeks, can now be applied over five days; the other fact is the use of robots, which are so sensitive that they can peel a grape. This is very useful in treating brain tumours. Action is being taken to try to persuade people to come forward earlier when they suspect something is wrong with their body. An example of this is the sustained campaign to increase the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer, which is proving to be successful.

Dame Cally also outlined the latest developments at the Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton. The hospital is one of the leading cancer research centres in the world and she said it has an international reputation for ground-breaking research and for pioneering the very latest cancer treatments and technologies. Earlier this year, Prince William opened a new state of the art treatment and research facility at the hospital in Sutton, which is

architecturally attractive and advanced. This multi-million pound building was funded by the Royal Marsden Cancer Charity. A feature which Dame Cally highlighted is that the design means research staff are in close contact with patients and this is a constant reminder to staff of why their research is so vital. She mentioned the co-operation which takes place with other hospitals in the region and also said that the hospital is able to attract and recruit high quality international staff.

At the same time as the new building work was under way, Dame Cally said the hospital also upgraded its electronic patient record system, which had been causing some problems from time to time. This new record system incorporates a patient portal called MyMarsden, which allows each patient to see their own medical record and to contact their clinical team.

Dame Cally answered several questions at the end of her presentation and many of the audience then stayed to enjoy a cup of coffee or tea, with biscuits and cake. Dame Cally was thanked for her leadership in this cancer research and for her presentation. We also thank Diane Forzani for facilitating the talk and Diana Parsk and David Skitt for arranging the meeting. Thanks also to the team who helped them to ensure that everything went smoothly on the night.

Outwards and Onwards

I am not sure that I expected it to be this way, but my experience on Thursday 19th October in our church of the visit of Dame Cally Palmer and of greeting all who came (and there were lots both from our church and, wonderfully, across our community) left me with so many positive thoughts.

Firstly, there was the excellent talk itself about the progress being made in the treatment of cancer and about new developments at the Royal Marsden Hospital. This left me in awe of the medical teams and others involved in this work and in awe of the patients

and their families, both wonders that I came across so often in my ministry.

Then there were the questions from the floor which were tremendous. Each one pertinent and beautifully composed and each one superbly answered. What a wealth of experience and expertise present in our audience that evening and in our congregation always!

Then there was the fellowship lingering long afterwards over refreshments, including homemade cakes.

Finally, I went away wondering how the impetus and momentum of this marvellous evening could be taken outwards and onwards. For example, does Revd Kevin O'Brien need support in his chaplaincy through prayer, with a forum for raising issues, or in practical ways? Just a thought!

David Skitt

Christmas traditions—Christmas presents



The giving of gifts at the end of the year predates Christianity. In pre-Roman times, the winter solstice was an important time and people are thought to have got together for feasting and gift giving to celebrate the end of one year and the start of a new year. During the Roman empire, Saturnalia was an

important feast that took place around the winter solstice, and it is known that small gifts such as figurines, dice cups and combs were given. As Christianity spread through the Roman empire, the custom of gift-giving at New Year continued, tying in as it does with the story of the wise men giving their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Whilst the giving of gifts at new year was primarily an adult activity, the giving of gifts to children was originally associated with St Nicholas Day on 6 December, since St Nicholas is the

patron saint of children. With the Reformation in Western Europe in the 16th century, there was a move away from having so many feast days and so gift giving started to move more towards Christmas. This was cemented more recently in North America with St Nicholas becoming Santa Claus and his giving of presents moving from 6 December to Christmas Eve.

The hanging out of stockings was a tradition originally associated with St Nicholas Day but since the 19th century has moved to Christmas Eve. The practice of wrapping presents in colourful gift wrap dates to the early 20th century when it started to be sold in North America by Hallmark Cards. The Victorians started the practice of placing presents on or around the Christmas tree. At that time gifts were quite modest such as fruit, nuts, sweets and small handmade trinkets. More recently, retailers have seen that there is a commercial advantage in encouraging the purchase of Christmas gifts and this has helped to increase the magnitude of Christmas giving. But this doesn't alter the fact that the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas is rooted in history.

Christmas traditions—Christmas trees



Evergreen trees were decorated during celebrations of the winter solstice. The association with the Christian Christmas is believed to have started in Germany in the 17th century and the custom of having them at Christmas spread when the author Goethe visited Strasbourg in 1771 and then included a tree in one of his novels. The triangular shape of the fir tree was believed by some to be symbolic of the Christian Trinity – God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is recorded that

Charlotte, the German wife of George the Third, had a Christmas Tree in Windsor Castle in December 1800. Prince Albert is believed to have done most to introduce the Christmas Tree to Victorian England.

North Downs Cluster

My 18-month term as Chair/Convenor of the North Downs Cluster finishes at the end of this year and Caterham URC will then take over. It is of interest to see how this Cluster of United Reformed churches has evolved over time and continues to adapt to the changing environment.

For anyone who is not familiar with the Cluster system I should, perhaps, explain that its purpose is for the churches in the area to join in giving mutual support to each other, publicise events in a particular church around the other churches, foster friendships through arranging congregation exchanges and joint social events and holding an annual walk, tea and service. A committee comprising representatives from each church holds regular meetings to discuss current issues.

Historically, the North Downs Cluster was initiated in 2007 by six churches – Caterham, Marsh Green, Oxted, Redhill, Reigate Park and Walton-on-the-Hill. The Revd John Joseph was the first Chairman. At the time, Banstead URC was in the South London Synod with churches such as Cheam, Sutton and Wallington but Banstead joined the North Downs Cluster in 2010. Subsequently, East Grinstead and Crawley joined in 2020 and Dorking in 2022.

In 2023 following the formation of the joint Pastorate between Banstead, Dorking, Redhill and Reigate Park, which will be called the North Downs Pastorate, the churches decided to change the name of the Cluster to the Surrey and Sussex Border Cluster to avoid any confusion. The closure of Walton-on-the-Hill URC has left it with nine member churches.

I hope that you will continue to support and participate in the events which the churches in the Cluster arrange. I should like to put on the record my thanks to my extremely efficient and supportive Cluster secretary - Elizabeth Richmond of Marsh Green URC.

Diana Parsk

North Downs Cluster Supper

On 15 September about 40 people from the North Downs Cluster churches (now renamed the Surrey and Sussex Border Cluster) met at Redhill URC to hear a talk by Catharine Adjei who is a

representative of the Welcare charity.



welcare
strengthening families since 1894

Historically, Welcare has evolved from the Diocesan Association for the Care of Friendless Girls, which was founded in 1894 by the Bishop of Rochester and his wife.

Catharine was an engaging and informative speaker and explained that

Welcare is still a Christian charity, under the supportive wing of the Southwark Diocese. Welcare supports with practical and emotional help families of all Faiths and none with children aged up to 13 and who are in the area covering south London and east Surrey. The charity's work has changed over time and its focus is now much more preventative and is also aimed at helping the children to develop life skills. Examples of its work among families include developing parenting skills, domestic abuse recovery, the Caring Dads Programme and partnerships with schools. Its vision is to build long-term resilience for when the children of today become the parents of tomorrow. There is a Welcare centre in Warwick Road, Redhill.

This talk was followed by an opportunity to mingle, greet old friends and make new ones before we sat down to enjoy an excellent supper provided by members of Redhill URC.

Morden College



Reading Roy Jordan's article about Sir Christopher Wren in the summer 2023 edition of *Tidings* reminded me of Morden College, Blackheath where my grandfather Albert Riley and his brother George were members of the staff. They both served in the London Irish Regiment in the Boer and 1st World wars. I remember visiting them with my parents and sister before WWII as a child and being shown around. The architect for the college was Sir Christopher Wren, a friend of Sir John Morden who founded the college

This college was a home for 'decayed merchants' and was founded by Sir John Morden in 1695. He made the decision to build a charitable college for two reasons: firstly that he had no children and secondly because during his career three ships in which he had large investments were believed to have been lost at sea. Having lost hope of recovery, he was left in poverty. Months later much to his amazement the ships sailed into port with their cargoes intact, so Sir John became determined to found a college for 'poor merchants' who had lost their estate by accident, dangers, and perils at sea. This led to him founding Morden College. Originally the college was only for men who were merchants, but since then has expanded to cater for men and women in business or the professions who are in need of help. To cater for this, new buildings have been added including a nursing home. It now has over 400 places.

The trustees of the college are serving aldermen of the City of London, most of whom have been Lord Mayor. Originally, the rules of the college for the members were very strict. They had to attend



Eric's painting of Morden College

Eric Riley

service in the chapel every Sunday and on special days. Getting drunk was forbidden and could lead to expulsion. The chaplain lived in college and had to preach at least twice every Sunday and on every special day.

My sister and I visited the College more recently and were given a tour and information.

Christmas traditions—Boxing Day



It is generally recognised that Boxing Day takes its name from the Victorian practice of the wealthy boxing up food and clothes for their servants, who were given a holiday on the 26th December and would travel back to their families with gifts. This day is also St Stephen's Day in the church calendar and many churches had a wooden box on the premises for collecting money through the year and this was opened on Christmas Day and the money given to the poor on Boxing Day.

Christmas traditions—food and drink



Mince Pies were originally savoury and cooked in rectangular pastry shaped like a manger. Early on, they had 13 ingredients symbolising Jesus and his 12 disciples but later the number 13 was considered unlucky so another ingredient was added. Some of the contents were raisins, prunes

figs, lamb to represent the shepherds and spices such as cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg to represent the wise men. They often had a pastry baby Jesus on the lid. Post Reformation, the pie took on a round shape. The first recorded name 'mince pie' was in a recipe in 1624. By the 18th century, tongue or tripe had replaced lamb and veal. In the 19th century minced beef became a popular ingredient. Finally, by the end of the 1800's fruit replaced meat.

Turkey was introduced in 1523 by Henry VIII as part of his Christmas feast. However, it was not until Victorian times that turkey became the standard centrepiece of the Christmas meal in the UK. Prior to the development of the railways, turkeys were a luxury item since they had to be walked from farm to city.

Christmas Pudding (Figgy or Plum Pudding) became popular in England during the Middle Ages. The ingredients included suet, flour, sugar, raisins, nuts and spices. These were tied into a cloth and boiled until they coagulated to fill the cloth. The pudding was then unwrapped, sliced and eaten with cream.

Wassailing celebrations date back to Anglo-Saxon times and generally took place on Twelfth Night. A large wassail bowl was filled with warmed ale, wine or cider, blended with spices and honey and passed from one person to the next as they wished each other good health and drank a toast. Later wassailing involved groups of merry-makers going from house to house, wassail bowl in hand, singing and spreading good wishes. The wassailing tradition has evolved into what we now recognise as carolling, where groups of people go from door-to-door singing Christmas carols.



Service Details

Our morning worship at 10:30am on Sundays is held in the Church building and on Zoom.

The Zoom link for services is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9922047878?pwd=SmxXY0lKckkvcFhJdFM1UTFHYjR0Zz09>

Meeting ID: 992 204 7878

Passcode: 126600

Recordings of the services are available on our website
www.bansteadurc.org.uk

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We are happy to receive your contributions, ideas and suggestions for *Tidings* at any time but copy for the Spring 2024 edition should be with us by

Sunday, 10 March 2024 at the latest.





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