

# Christmas '24

*Follow me to Bethlehem*



## The Mag

December 2024

The monthly magazine from Adeyfield Free Church

## **From the Editor.....**



When I was teaching in Primary Schools the last half term before Christmas was my favourite. While many other teachers were moaning about all the extra stuff, they had to do I would be writing those things into my planning so that there was not a last-minute rush to get the cards done and the decorations finished and the stories read and completed. Because I was the music co-ordinator in several schools, I was responsible for writing and organising nativity plays and concerts. It was such fun.



One year I wrote a repetitive song called 'Follow me to Bethlehem.' It was a song I taught to several infant classes and we would use it as a singing game. We would begin with a leader who would walk around the ring of children as they sang. When the song says 'will you follow me' if the leader was passing by, then those children would join on the end and follow the leader. The children would love to play it and longed for it to be their turn to join in and follow. By the end of the song everyone would be walking around and singing.



It got me thinking about our Bethlehem experiences. Not the actual Bethlehem but the place in our hearts where Jesus is born again and again, and begins a fresh understanding of who He really is. Do we long to get in the line to go to that Bethlehem place this Christmas? It is a very simple thing to do. Just join the Saviour as He leads us to His new birth in our ordinary lives. We'll be using the song in our Nativity service this year. I will be singing it with a fresh longing to follow Him.



**What falls at the North Pole but never gets hurt?  
Snow!**

# *When you pray .....*



Dear Lord, don't let us miss You this Christmas season. Help us to simplify our activities and traditions so we can focus our celebration on Your birth. Thank You for being the Prince of Peace, and I ask You for that supernatural peace to reign in our hearts. Thank You for the simple but life-changing message of Your love for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



Prince of Peace, at this holy time, we lift our prayers for peace in our hearts, in our homes, and in the world. May the message of Christmas be a beacon of hope, guiding us to strive for harmony and understanding with one another. Let your peace reign in our lives as we seek to live in the light of your love. Amen.



## **Calling all Small Groups [and other people as well]**

Why not make 2025 the year you book a month to hold a fundraiser for AFC. Choose a month and check no one else has got there first. Make it simple. Work together so that the task is easier. Advertise throughout the church communications. Let your friends and neighbours know. Decide which part of the church expenditure you'd like to support. Do it. Give the funds to Shirley with a note to say what it will be for. Thank the Lord for His help. He has said if we do the little things He will do the big things. If we don't, He won't.



## A Surprise Scripture Lesson

*From Christine and Derek*

In October we went to visit our daughter in Yorkshire. She had arranged for us to go to the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield to see a captioned performance of “A Doll’s House” by Ibsen. Three of us out of five were hard-of-hearing and wear hearing aids. We returned home on the Sunday morning down the M1 and



took a short detour to Hardwick Hall, a National Trust property, feeling vaguely guilty for not going to church. The display in the main hall was of tapestries returned this year from

being conserved. There was an explanation and video of the process that took over 24 years. There are 13 tapestries altogether, each approximately 7 metres by 6 metres, telling the story of Gideon from Judges chapter 6 and following. Gideon himself is depicted as wearing Tudor garments, looking the same on every tapestry.

The one I am remembering is the one where Gideon takes the men down to the water where God chooses just 300 men (Judges chapter 7 verse 6) from the original 32,000 (Judges chapter 7 verse 3). So, I remember this when I am sometimes concerned about the low numbers in the congregation. The tapestries



were commissioned in 1578 by Sir Christopher Hatton, an Elizabethan courtier, and bought by Elizabeth of Hardwick in 1592. *To see more search online for “Gideon Tapestries”.*

**Why was the snowman looking through the carrots?  
He was picking his nose**

## Follow me to Bethlehem

Follow me to Bethlehem, brayed the trusty donkey  
Follow me to Bethlehem, begged the recent groom  
Follow me to Bethlehem, sighed the pregnant maiden  
Follow me to Bethlehem; we hope we'll find a room



Follow me to Bethlehem, commanded the herald angel  
Follow me to Bethlehem; it's safe to leave your sheep  
Follow me to Bethlehem, the shepherds came running  
Follow me to Bethlehem, to find a babe asleep



Follow me to Bethlehem, decreed the Roman emperor  
Follow me to Bethlehem, it is the census year  
Follow me to Bethlehem, Herod ordered his soldiers  
Follow me to Bethlehem, there shall only be one king here



Follow me to Bethlehem, grumbled the hump backed camel  
Follow me to Bethlehem, with wise men from afar  
Follow me to Bethlehem, with presents for a young king  
Follow me to Bethlehem, follow the bright star



Follow me to Bethlehem, with shepherds and wise men  
Follow me to Bethlehem, with kings and everyone  
Follow me to Bethlehem, to see the only true king  
Follow me to Bethlehem, to worship God's holy Son

*Brian Jackson*



**O little town of Bethlehem  
How still we see thee lie.  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the Everlasting Light  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**



Dear Amos

I'm sorry this is such short notice but I need to ask a favour. Could I borrow your donkey. I have a rather long journey to make and Mary insists on coming along. We shouldn't be too long and be back before you know it.

Thanks, Shalom, Joseph.



Dear Joseph

Of course, that will be fine. Just pop round tomorrow before you go and I'll have him saddled up. If you get back while I'm in the field next Friday, just put him back in the shed and give him some oats. Have a good trip. See you soon

Shalom, Amos.

Sometimes it's best that God doesn't reveal all his plans to us at the same time!!!!!!



**O holy child of Bethlehem descend to us we pray.  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell.  
O come to us, abide with us our Lord Emmanuel.**



## Lift up lightly the Stable Bar



The title of this piece comes from a Christmas song that we used to teach our infants to sing and they would sound like little angels as they presented their nativity play to their parents. There would not be a dry eye in the house and the children would always seem proud of what they had achieved. I wish I could remember all the words but it was a long time

ago. It talks of the wise men arriving and being asked to come in very softly because the little King may be sleeping.

Taking young children into the real story of Christmas was always a joy to me when I was teaching. One year we took a group of 5 and 6 year olds to an adult nativity presentation at Whipsnade Zoo. The zoo created a Nativity play within a stable



setting so the children were sitting in the stable in Bethlehem watching as Mary and Joseph arrived. Jesus was put in the manger. Shepherds and magi visitors came to worship Jesus bringing their sheep and camels with them. The donkey munched on hay in the stall at the side of the stable and the children were asked if they would like to be included in the play. As you can imagine many of them jumped at the opportunity and were given costumes and led down the steps of the seating towards the manger. They stood in awe as if they were actually present in Bethlehem. It was wonderful.

I am hoping it was an experience that they will always have in the storage of memory down through the years. Those children will be well in their 40s by now but I pray they revisit Bethlehem every Christmas in their rememberings.

*Pam*

*Lift up lightly the stable bar,  
Weary wise men come from afar  
Led by a little king's bright new star –  
Is the little king sleeping?*

## To you in David's town this day

I wonder how big Bethlehem was at the time of Jesus' birth. The wise men are shown exactly where to find Jesus because the star shone right over the stable but the shepherds are told to go and search for Him, they are given a few clues..... stable, manger, swaddling clothes etc but there must have been more than one stable in Bethlehem that night. Maybe the stables were all in the same area of town and they just went along until they found the family. The fact that they found Him means they were really searching.

I suppose they knew Bethlehem quite well as it was the town they were nearest to up in the hills. They were probably from Bethlehem or at least had lived there for a while so they had a bit of an idea where to look. I also wonder if there was a leader who organised the search or whether they



all decided what to do. The fact that they left their sheep and raced down to Bethlehem seems to indicate that this was something they had longed for and dared not think they would ever see. [A bit like England winning the World Cup in 1966 but far more important!!!!] When they got back, I wonder who they told first. When the Samaritan woman returned to her village after meeting with Jesus, she told everyone she met. Did the shepherds tell all their friends and suggest they go and see the Messiah? Of course, Jesus didn't stay in Bethlehem, it was the place where He first arrived. But that was where everything changed forever. It's a place to rejoice about.

**To you in David's town this day is born of David's line  
The Saviour who is Christ the Lord and this shall be the sign  
The heavenly babe you there shall find to human view displayed  
All meanly wrapped in swaddling bands and in a manger laid.**



**What is every parent's favourite Christmas carol? Silent Night!**



## Who was Herod the Great?

The last book of the Old Testament is Malachi. After that, the Bible falls silent until the time of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. However, we know something of the history of Judea between the time of Malachi and the Gospels. For about one hundred years, the Persians controlled Judea but the Jews were allowed to carry on their religious observances and were not interfered with. During this time Judea was ruled by the high priests who were responsible for Jewish government.



In 333BC the Persian armies stationed in Macedonia were defeated by Alexander the Great. Although Alexander permitted the Jews to observe their own laws, he believed that Greek culture should be adopted by everyone. As a consequence, in about 250BC, the Old Testament was translated into Greek. This was known as the Septuagint and became the version used by most Jews outside of Judea. After Alexander's death, Judea was first ruled by the Ptolemies in a benevolent manner. When this gave way to the rule of the Seleucids, the Jews were greatly oppressed. Led by Judas the Maccabee, the Jews revolted and took control of Judea.



In the year 63BC Pompey, the Roman general, captured Jerusalem and the provinces of Palestine became subject to Rome. The taking of Jerusalem began with a three-month siege of the temple area, massacring priests in the performance of their duties and entering the most holy place. This sacrilege began Roman rule in a way that Jews could not forgive nor forget.



The local government of Palestine was entrusted partly to princes and the rest of the time to procurators appointed by the emperors. Herod I, also known as Herod the Great, was appointed by the Romans as king of Palestine in 37BC. He is the Herod described in the Bible as king at the time of Jesus' birth. Herod had been born in 72BC in Edom and, although an Arab, had been raised as a Jew. Although he wanted to be known as King of the Jews, the Jews would never accept him as such.



A lot of what modern people know regarding the birth of Jesus has been gleaned from watching children's nativities. As a result, Herod is often

viewed merely as a pantomime villain. He ruled Palestine for a long time, was a survivor in the often-turbulent world of Roman politics and was a complex character mixing many achievements with paranoia resulting in great cruelty.



Only two of the Gospels give any details of Jesus' birth and these are like two parts which construct the whole story. Luke tells us about Mary, the Roman census, the angels, the shepherds and the presentation of the baby Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. Matthew concentrates on Joseph, the Magi and Herod. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?" Herod sends them to find the child and report to him. When Herod realises that he has been outwitted by the Magi, he gives orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who are two years old and under.



There are historians who dispute the authenticity of this. This may be because the historian Josephus does not mention the massacre of the innocents. Josephus does however record many of Herod's misdeeds including the execution of three of his own sons, two wives and his mother-in-law when he suspects them of conspiracy. It seems certain that a man capable of killing members of his own family would have no qualms about killing other people's children to prevent a threat to his power.



So, there we have Herod the Great; achiever, paranoid, survivor, murderer. As complex a character to ever appear in Greek myth, Roman politics or Shakespearian tragedy.

*Brian Jackson*

**What did the wise men say after they offered up their gifts of gold and frankincense?**

**Wait, there's myrrh.**

When the world and his wife were asleep  
As the stars were beginning to peep  
In a tiny barn behind an inn  
The most Wonderful One ever known  
Was making the world His home  
And the only ones to know  
Were the ones the Father had chosen to show  
Of His mind and His mystery no one knows  
But His grace is enough for us all.



As the sheep were all lying so still  
There appeared at the back of the hill  
A most wonderous sight that made day from night  
And the music the shepherds could hear  
Seemed to take away all their fear  
And the only ones to know  
Were the ones the Father had chosen to show  
Of His mind and His mystery no one knows  
But His grace is enough for us all.



So, the shepherds all left their sheep  
And while everyone else was asleep  
They saw, that night a wonderful sight  
And they knew what the Father had done.  
The Lord, the Messiah had come.  
And the only ones to know  
Were the ones the Father had chosen to show  
Of His mind and His mystery no one knows  
But His grace is enough for us all.



How special does this make you feel when you realise that you are one of the ones the Father has chosen to show?



**Christmas at  
Adeyfield Free Church**

**You are invited to join us**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Sunday 1st    | 10am Advent Service                            |
| Sunday 8th    | 10am Advent Service                            |
| Sunday 15th   | 10am Nativity service                          |
| Sunday 22nd   | 10am Christingle<br>6pm Candles & Carols       |
| Christmas Day | 10am Family service at<br>St George's, HP1 2HX |

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## Thank You

It has been ten years since I took over as editor of the church magazine.

We changed the name from New Life to The Mag and other changes meant that we were able to read more about what worshippers at AFC were doing, thinking and enjoying.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Mag over the past ten years since I have been editor.

I hope that, for those of you who thought you couldn't write, you had your perceptions about your skills changed because everything you sent to me was lovely





# Christmas Wordsearch

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ANGELS-ANNA-BALTHAZZAR-BETHLEHEM-CASPAR-  
 ELIZABETH-FRANKINSENCE-GABRIEL-GLORY-GOLD-  
 HEROD-HOLY-INN-ISIAIAH-JERUSALEM-JESUS-JOSEPH-  
 LUKE-MAGI-MANGER-MARY-MATTHEW-MELCHIOR-  
 MESSIAH-MYRRH-NAZARETH-SHEPHERDS-SIMEON-  
 SPIRIT-TAX-ZACHARIAH



How did Mary and Joseph know Jesus' weight when he was born? They had a weigh in a manger...

How do sheep say Merry Christmas to each other?  
 Fleece Navidad.

# Colouring Page





**From Paul Bradford.....**

### **Quiz..**

#### **How much do you know about the world?**

Do you know how the number of people living in rural areas has changed in the last 70 years, or how many countries have signed up to the UN climate charter. Or even how many girls complete secondary education worldwide?

I hope it astonishes you that 70% of people across the world do not know the answers, even when given 3 options to choose from. And that 70% include politicians and CEOs.

These and many other basic facts about our world can be found at [www.gapminder.org](http://www.gapminder.org)

Gapminder is an independent Swedish foundation with no political, religious, or economic affiliations.

Gapminder identifies systematic misconceptions about important global trends and proportions and uses reliable data to develop easy to understand teaching materials to rid people of their misconceptions.

You can do a simple quiz, only 18 questions, to find out how much you know. Find the quiz at [www.gapminder.org](http://www.gapminder.org)

It is important we have a clear understanding of the facts about our world, far too much misinformation or outright lies give us a false view of the problems faced by our leaders, and more importantly what we can do to make a difference.

If you get hooked and want to learn more about population, poverty, education, food or health there are further quizzes to entertain and enlighten. Be warned there are over 1000 follow up questions you can try! I have done 4 of these, very enlightening as there are links to where the data comes from so that you can check the sources of the data used. I would encourage you to give the quiz a go - only takes 10 minutes (unless you get hooked and start following the background to the question or start doing some of the follow up quizzes)



**What's the most popular Christmas carol in the desert? O camel ye faithful.**

***From Brian.....***

**Quiz Questions**     [Answers on the next page]

1. Which book of the Bible tells us about the Magi?
2. Did the Magi visit Jesus in a) an inn b) a house c) a stable?
3. Who was the mother of John the Baptist?
4. Traditionally, what day is 'Stir-up Sunday' when Christmas puddings are made?
5. Traditionally, how many ingredients are there in a Christmas pudding?
6. How many ghosts appear in Dickens' 'Christmas Carol'?
7. Which reindeer does not feature in the poem 'Was the night before Christmas' a) Rudolph b) Comet c) Blitzen d) Donner?
8. The film 'Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street' is based on which real life department store?
9. In the film 'Home Alone', where are the family going on holiday when they leave Kevin behind?
10. In which modern-day country was St Nicholas born?
11. In the song 'Winter Wonderland', what do we call the snowman?
12. How do you say 'Merry Christmas' in Spanish?
13. What Christmas themed ballet premiered in St Petersburg, Russia, in 1892?
14. Who played Scrooge in 'The Muppets' Christmas Carol'?
15. What well known Christmas carol became the first song ever broadcast from space in 1965?
16. When was the Christmas cracker invented a) 1747 b) 1847 c) 1907?
17. Sir Henry Cole invented which British Christmas tradition in 1843?
18. In what year was the penny post introduced a) 1810 b) 1840 c) 1870?
19. Which Christmas single has sold the most copies worldwide a) *Do they know it's Christmas?* by Band Aid b) *White Christmas* by Bing Crosby c) *Last Christmas* by Wham?
20. According to tradition, how many mince pies are you supposed to eat over Christmas to bring good luck?
21. Which member of the Royal Family made Christmas trees a popular tradition in the UK?
22. Which festive plant was once believed to aid fertility?
23. Who plays Sister Julienne in the Christmas Day TV favourite 'Call the Midwife'?
24. What was the traditional festive meat before turkey?
25. What do some Japanese families tuck into on 25<sup>th</sup> December?



**When Frosty's wife was angry, what did she give him?  
The cold shoulder.**

**Answers to Quiz.....**

- 1) Matthew
- 2) A house
- 3) Elizabeth
- 4) The last Sunday before Advent
- 5) 13 representing Jesus and the twelve apostles
- 6) 4
- 7) Rudolph
- 8) Macy's
- 9) Paris
- 10) Turkey
- 11) Parson Brown
- 12) Feliz Navidad
- 13) The Nutcracker
- 14) Michael Caine
- 15) Jingle Bells
- 16) 1847 by Tom Smith of London
- 17) The Christmas card
- 18) 1840
- 19) *White Christmas* with around 50 million copies sold
- 20) Twelve – one for each of the 12 days of Christmas
- 21) Queen Victoria's husband Prince Albert
- 22) Mistletoe
- 23) Jenny Agutter
- 24) Most people ate goose
- 25) KFC. Thanks to clever marketing, more than 3.5 million Japanese families eat the fast food over the Christmas period

**Join us singing carols at 4pm on December 5<sup>th</sup> in the church Reception area. We have been asked to do this by Hightown as they bring their annual presentation to the community.**





# Back Page

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## Sunday Services in December.....



1<sup>st</sup>... First Sunday in Advent... speaker, Moderator George Watt



8<sup>th</sup> .... Second Sunday in Advent ..... speaker, Pastor Paul,  
Communion. Service followed by Christmas Dinner



15<sup>th</sup>.... Third Sunday in Advent.....All Age Nativity service



22<sup>nd</sup> .... Fourth Sunday in Advent....10 AM All Age  
Christingle.....

6 PM Candlelit meditations, readings prayers and carols around the  
manger.



29<sup>th</sup>.... Joint service at St George's

Timings and further details will appear in the weekly Newsletter.

**What do gingerbread men use when they need a little support? Candy canes.**