

Christmas without carols would surely seem like cake without icing, or turkey without stuffing - somehow incomplete. But have you ever stopped to think what we are singing about in carols? Carols were originally dance tunes linked to all kinds of festivals throughout the year and not just Christmas. Somehow, their folk feel conveyed a sense of joy and was easily identified by people. As people recognised the dance, the music and words so they were passed on through families and they became 'traditional'. However, the danger with 'traditional' is that it gets stuck and loses its connection with our lives, for dead tradition is nothing but nostalgia.

I came across these words by Philips Brooks, the author of O Little Town of Bethlehem and Bishop of Massachusetts. At Christmas 1805 he was visiting Bethlehem and he says 'I remember standing in the old church, so close to the spot where Jesus was born and the whole church was ringing with splendid songs of praise to God . . . telling each other of the wonderful night of the saviour's birth'. So he wrote the now famous and traditional carol.

*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.*

*How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given
And God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still
The dear Christ enters in.*

The words trip easily off the tongue and their very familiarity seems to insulate us against the shock that God is taking the ultimate risk in being so identified with his creation that he is prepared to become known in human form - vulnerable, helpless and dependent.

Then I came across a re-worked version of the same carol, and the words are truly shocking. They connect with the terrible pain of the ongoing military occupation of Bethlehem today.

*O sad and troubled Bethlehem
We hear your longing cry
For peace and justice to be born
And cruel oppression die.
How deep your need for that
Great gift of love in human form.
Let Christ in you be seen again
And hearts by hope made warm.*

*While morning stars and evening stars
Shine out in your dark sky,
Despair now stalks your troubled streets
Where innocents still die.
And Jesus, child of Mary,
Whose love will never cease,
Feels even now your pain and fear,
Longs with you for your peace.*

There isn't silence in Bethlehem today, but mortar fire, weeping and the sound of sirens. Stillness in Bethlehem is only enforced by military might through curfews and

closure. Sleep is so often dreamless today because of the fear of raids and grief of bereavement and injury.

So in your mind during Advent sing these new words as a prayer for peace this Christmas. It's not that the old words need replacing, but refreshing. For the truth is the same today as always, that in the birth of the baby Jesus God walks our streets, experiences our struggles, shares our pain, weeps our tears and laughs with our joy. That is truly shocking and truly great news.

Happy Christmas - do come and share your Christmas with us. You will be very welcome at any of our services.

Brian Leathard



SERVICES FOR CHRISTMAS 2002

Sunday 22nd December

18.30 Parish Carol Service

Tuesday 24th December **Christmas Eve**

09.30 Holy Communion

16.30 Children's Crib Service

23.45 Midnight Eucharist

Wednesday 25th December **Christmas Day**

08.00 Holy Communion

09.30 Christmas Communion



SAINT NICHOLAS

The only real fact known about Saint Nicholas is that he was Bishop of Myra (on the south coast of present-day Turkey) during the fourth century. He has been one of the most popular saints of Christendom: a patron saint of countries, provinces, dioceses and cities, saint of sailors, children, merchants, pawnbrokers and more! He has been celebrated in customs and folklore and represented many times in paintings and carvings.

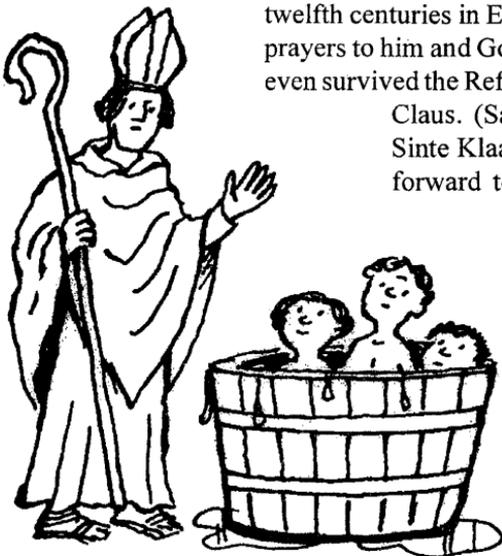
Legends of him abound, although most of them originate from the first biography of Saint Nicholas written by Methodius in the ninth century. Many of these stories revolve around the number three (the holy number), perhaps to accentuate his holiness.

It is said that Nicholas saved three girls from prostitution by throwing three bags of gold as dowry into their window at night, thus becoming patron saint of unmarried girls. This story is the origin of the three gold balls that constitute the pawnbroker's sign. He is credited with saving three men from an unjust death and he apparently also saved three drowning sailors off the coast of Turkey, making him patron saint of sailors. However, most people's favourite Saint Nicholas story is the one about the pickled boys! It is said that, in time of famine, a wicked butcher caught three little boys and immersed them in brine. Saint Nicholas found them and restored them to life, earning him the patronage as protector of children. These stories also appealed to Benjamin Britten who set them to music in 1948 to celebrate the centenary of Lancing College. The music describes brilliantly Nicholas's election to the bishopric, his journeys, his good deeds and his calm approach to his death by torture. His remains are enshrined at Bari in Apulia and he is sometimes known as Nicholas of Bari.

Saint Nicholas became quite a cult during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in England. Anselm and Godric composed prayers to him and Godric set his prayers to music. Nicholas even survived the Reformation and transmogrified into Santa

Claus. (Santa Claus is derived from the Dutch Sinte Klaas). Children in Northern Europe look forward to 6th December because it is the feast day of Saint Nicholas when, if they have been good, they get sweets and gifts.

In England there are about four hundred churches dedicated to Saint Nicholas - near here there is one in Shepperton. His emblem is three children in a tub or three balls.



FAREWELL TO FREDA EVANS

Our farewell party for Freda on the 27th October was both a sad and happy occasion. Sad because we shall lose her ministry with its cheerful friendliness, enthusiasm, hard work and dedication; happy that she will be soon starting a new ministry in her own parish. We hope the little presents we gave her, the St. James's shell christening vessel and the painting of our church, will be a reminder of a happy and fruitful three years with us. We have put together some memories from just a few of her friends . . .

"Always a welcome at her home however busy she was" (from more than one person!)

"Missing organist - Freda would play piano. Missing sound system - she made sure her voice was heard. Always ready to deal positively with a problem"

"Problems, transport . . . Freda would always be ready to help"

"Not reluctant nor slow to make amends when she trod on the occasional toe"

"Her workshops were meticulously prepared, as was every service she took"

"She had a special touch with children"

"We had fun in her workshops - and had nice sweets!"

"She seemed to cram more than 24 hours into the day"

"She made you feel she really cared about you "

"Would give me a newspaper cutting or copy which I found most helpful guidance"

"Took a special interest in people in physical need"

"We appreciated her succinct homily at the 8.00a.m. communion"

Freda was always meticulous in her preparations for worship. She was determined that it should be the best of which she is capable - forewarned is forearmed. Every hymn was marked with a post-it note numbered 1 to 5, there was always a glass of water to hand to soothe the sermon-weary throat. Vestments were beautifully laundered and there was never a hair out of place.

As Hannah Stanton taught us, we say: "Go well!", and she would reply: "Stay well!"

From the 1st December, Freda's address will be The vicarage, 51 Overgreen Drive, Kingshurst, Warwickshire B37 6EY. Tel/Fax: 012177 03972. Email: freda@fish.co.uk. Freda's induction as vicar of St. Barnabas, Kingshurst will be on Thursday 19th December at 7p.m.

AN ADVENT DAY OF REFLECTION

led by the Rev. Andrew Walker, at Champion House, Thornbury Rd., Isleworth
on **Wednesday 4th December 2002 10.30a.m. - 4.00p.m.**

Cost for the day £5. Tea and coffee available. Please bring a packed lunch.

To reserve a place contact Jan Redshaw 020 8580 2140

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

"I can say with complete conviction that a Church that does not listen for God in the Bible, and treat the Bible as the unique touchstone of truth about God and about us is losing its identity . . . ("Why I believe in the Bible", Rowan Williams, Church Times 18th October 2002).

We met for our first session of "Living the Christian Faith" on the 31st October. Leading the group, Brian asked us to consider very seriously how we should use the Bible. He challenged us with the problems we must face if we use it for guidance in more than a superficial manner.

How can we treat the Bible as the unique touchstone of truth ? And should we do so? For instance, how should we deal with some of the harsh Old Testament strictures? Or Paul's instructions to women in 1 Corinthians? Which parts of the Bible can we honestly say are not applicable to us? How should we choose? How dangerous is it to do this? What is the validity of writings of other faiths?

Like many of life's deepest problems there are no easy answers, nor can anyone give us unequivocal guidance. As with all problems, the first step to solving these is to confront them and see them as clearly as possible. It is the start of a journey without end, but with great rewards along the way.

(The last session of the four will be on 12th December. Each is complete in itself and everyone is invited.)



Christmas Day Help Request

The Churches Together in Teddington will be providing lunch again this year at Elleray Hall on Christmas Day for lonely and elderly people. We would like the following help:

- 1 Pray that we will all receive something of the peace and joy of our Saviour.
- 2 Invite guests to come along and enjoy the day.
- 3 Provide Christmas cakes and small gifts and cards for each of the guests to take home.
- 4 Help to prepare lunch – even for an hour or two - from 9.00am onwards.
- 5 Provide transport for the guests to arrive between 10.30 and 11.30am and leave at 3.30pm.
- 6 Make our guests welcome, chatting to them and waiting at tables.
- 7 Serve teas, wash up and prepare bags of food and presents for guests to take home.



If you know of any elderly people or those who are going to be on their own this Christmas, if you are able to help or would like more information, please contact Stella or Trevor King, before 9 December if possible, on 8977 8000 or 8977 3891.

VOLUNTARY CARE GROUP YOUTH CAFÉ PROJECT

The Youth Café, an exciting new venue for 13 - 19 year olds - a double-decker bus converted into a multi-purpose social, training and advice facility for young people - is scheduled to hit the roads around the end of the year.

The Youth Café Project is a partnership project between Hampton and Hampton Hill Voluntary Care Group and Richmond Conference of Voluntary Youth Organisations. The idea of a new youth café came from there being little provision for young people across the areas of Hampton, Teddington, Whitton and Twickenham. It was felt that something was needed which brought services to young people. Hence the idea of a mobile youth project was born.

We won't miss this bus!



With the help and support of Rugby Football Union and London United Busways we have purchased a double decker bus and are in the process of having it

converted into a café and activity centre for young people. The young people will have a service that comes to them rather than them having to seek it out in other parts of the borough. The bus will be up and running from January next year.

The Youth Café will have an ongoing programme of activities throughout the Hampton, Hampton Hill, Teddington, Twickenham and Whitton Areas. The lower deck will form the café area where young people can relax with their friends, enjoying a drink and a chat. The upper deck will be the centre for different activities; an internet and IT facility, a careers advice centre, an information point for health, drugs awareness, education and counselling advice, and an arena for young people to voice their views and opinions.

The bus to date has secured funding and support from South London Connexions Partnership, Help a London Child, Rugby Football Union, Richmond CVS, Hampton Philharmonic Society, Rotary Club of Teddington, Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity, and Awards for All.

Anyone wishing to be involved with the Youth Café Project or to help with financial support should contact the Project Manager, Ruth Quigley (0208 979 9662) youthcafeproject@bopenworld.com or RCVYO chair, Adrian Sumption (0208 977 3390) adrian@sumption.me.uk

MY FLUTE TRIP TO BAHRAIN

I'm lucky enough to have two weeks holiday for half-term in October and I spent most of the time away from home!

For most of the first week I was playing the flute in Bahrain and, during the second, I was with four of my school friends at a residential horse-riding school in Hampshire. You can guess which of the two weeks I preferred, but my Mum and Dad reckon you'd prefer to hear about the Bahrain trip!

Bahrain is an independent Arab state made up of 33 islands in the Persian Gulf. It has a population of around $\frac{1}{2}$ million and an area of 266 square miles. It's also very hot! From 1820 to 1971, Bahrain was under British protection and, when the British forces left, Bahrain became an independent country and joined the United Nations. Most of the country's wealth comes from oil and Bahrain is the base for the US Navy's Fifth Fleet.

In October, just after I left, the country held its first elections under universal suffrage for 30 years, with women both voting and standing for parliament. The elections are being hailed by the ruling royal family as a fundamental step towards progress and the modern world. Only one other state in the region, Kuwait, holds legislative elections, and women are excluded from the voting process there.

But how did my trip go, I hear you ask.

The trip was organised by my flute teacher, Julie Wright, as a sort of cultural exchange. We went to Bahrain because one of Julie's pupils is Bahraini and his parents were able to accommodate all of us. There were 15 of us altogether.

The trip didn't get off to a great start as the Bahraini authorities wanted to check all our flutes! It was almost 24 hours before we got them back and just an hour before our main concert. Fortunately, we still had access to five flutes and so we shared them during rehearsals in the run-up to the concert.

In the audience were the King and Prince of Bahrain, the American and Japanese ambassadors and several other dignitaries. It was quite scary but, luckily, I didn't have to play a solo in that concert.

Overall, we played in public on six occasions, including in large stores and restaurants. We also played with a group of 20 Bahraini children and, being the youngest in our group, I was asked to play the flute with them. They all spoke perfect English with American accents!

When we weren't playing in concerts, we were swimming, and on the last day we visited a market, called a souk, where I bought a silver ring for £2.

Although we didn't get to see very much of Bahrain, it all seemed very western, apart, of course, from the heat and the sand!

Frances Beaumont





Thank you to all those who bought charity Christmas cards after the service on 3rd November. A splendid total of £678 was raised for the various charities represented. A huge thank you also to the very many people who contributed in any way to the Church Bazaar.

Please remember in your prayers Maria Beaumont and Chetan de Mel, who were confirmed at All Saints on 21st November.

At the time of writing, Stuart Ward is in hospital and Peg Boarder and Les Wilder are unwell. Margaret Bramall is now home. We are glad to hear that Peter Ryan is now settled in his new home and it was good to see him looking so well recently.

Greta Rosten asks if anyone would like an au pair post with her son's family near Aix-en-Provence from January to July 2003, to help with three children aged 0 - 4. If you are interested, please contact Greta on 8979 9622 (evenings).

SHARING WORSHIP

I absolutely share the feelings of Eila and Dick about our services. While I know that music has always been a part of our worship and often enhances it, for me, too, the words (and silence as well at certain moments) are of prime importance. Lately I have often felt very disturbed by the volume and nature of the music (and other distractions). They have sometimes been so intrusive that I have felt more like weeping than worshipping. It would please me (but perhaps not everyone) if during the service we could have music that is rather less evident, softer and more harmonious.

Greta Rosten

GIVE AS YOU SHOP!

Have a look at <http://www.UshopUgive.com> It's a shopping Mall that gives you fast access to over 100 online stores (like Comet, Kays, WH Smith, Evesham computers, Amazon etc) - but it's different to other Virtual Malls in that it passes a big chunk of the commission that it makes (from introducing you to these retailers) to the charity of your choice. It doesn't cost you anything extra to 'shop and give' in this way, and the proportion passed on can typically be about 6% of what you spend - so it's not small. The 'charity of your choice' can even be your local church - as they are constituted as charities as well. If you would like to suggest them or another charity, do so with the 'suggest a charity' tab on the website and UshopUgive will contact them. Discussions are well under way with the Baptist Union group of churches, already. This would be a good way of shopping this Christmas.



St. James's Chronicles

The Hampton Hill Parish Magazine 1902 Extracts from the December Issue

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Members of the Mothers' Union and others heard an address from Mrs. Creighton, the widow of our late Bishop. There was a good attendance, and the address was of a most earnest and practical character. Mrs. Creighton spoke of the evils of "temper," "drink," gambling," and "impurity," and in a most simple and forcible way, appealed to parents to make the training of their children for God, by example and precept, one of the great aims of their life.



A Winter Entertainment is fixed for Tuesday, the 9th inst., at the Victoria Hall. More than usual care is being bestowed upon the preparation for it, and it is sure to be a good one. The "Jacobite," and a "Joint Household," are the titles of the pieces to be produced. There will be a few reserved seats at 2/-, second seats at 1/-, and also a number of seats at 6d. The object of this Entertainment is to benefit the Parish Nurse Fund, which needs considerable help. I hope this will induce many people to do their best to make it a great success.

Lists of Advent Services are printed, and speak for themselves. May I earnestly invite members of the congregation to attend the services regularly? Advent is a very solemn season, reminding us of the approaching end of all things; of the close of our earthly life; of a coming Day of Account, when "every one of us shall give an account of himself before God," and the warning voice which the season brings to us is, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."



I am, my dear friends, Yours very sincerely,

CHARLES R. JOB.

FROM THE OCTOBER REGISTERS

Baptisms

- 27 Joseph William Perry, 6 Manor Gardens, Sunbury-on-Thames
27 Francis James Perry, 6 Manor Gardens, Sunbury-on-Thames
27 Charles Robert Perry, 6 Manor Gardens, Sunbury-on-Thames
27 Frederick Henry Perry, 6 Manor Gardens, Sunbury-on-Thames

FUNERALS

- | | | |
|----|--|----|
| 8 | Gladys Long, Kingston Care Centre, Coombe Road | 86 |
| 9 | Edith Minns, Laurel Dene | 79 |
| 11 | Edith Taylor, 106 Uxbridge Road | 86 |
| 17 | Louis Reed, 4 Cardinals Walk, Hampton | 88 |
| 30 | Harold Overfield, 55 Burtons Road | 81 |

DATES TO NOTE IN DECEMBER

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|----|---------------|--|
| 1 | Advent Sunday | |
| | 09.30 | Christingle Service |
| | 18.30 | Words and Music for Advent |
| 2 | | Francis Xavier, missionary 1552 |
| 6 | | Nicholas, Bishop of Myra 326 |
| 7 | | Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, teacher 397 |
| 11 | 19.00 | Hampton Hill Junior School Carol Concert |
| 12 | 19.00 | Hampton Hill Junior School Carol Concert |
| 12 | | Lucy, Martyr 304 |
| 14 | 14.30 | Lady Eleanor Holles Junior School Carol Service |
| 16 | 19.30 | Lady Eleanor Holles Senior School Carol Service |
| 17 | | Eglantine Jebb, social reformer, founder of Save the Children Fund, 1928 |
| | 19.00 | Hampton Community College Carol Service |
| 22 | 18.30 | Parish Carol Service |
| 24 | | Christmas Eve (see box in magazine) |
| 25 | | Christmas Day (see box in magazine for full details of Christmas services) |
| 26 | | Stephen, Deacon and First Martyr, Bank Holiday |
| 27 | | John Apostle and Evangelist |
| 28 | | The Holy Innocents |
| 31 | | John Wycliffe, theologian and reformer 1384 |

