

December 2017 Edition 24

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46



I wonder if you are a gardener. In a conversation this week someone was explaining to me how a gardener will approach a new garden. She said that in order to really understand a garden it is important to live with it for a whole year because each season will bring something new and different – bulbs in the spring, summer blooms, autumn colours and the evergreens that keep hope alive during the darkness of winter.

Although I am not a very good gardener, I have always loved the variety of our seasons, and that is also something I value enormously about the church year.

The new church year began on 3rd December, Advent Sunday, and we are now in the middle of a season of waiting, penitence and preparation. On Advent Sunday

itself I preached about being attentive during Advent, taking time to notice the world and people around us, spending time noticing God's presence in the world.

Sometimes, though, we find that we simply aren't in tune with the season. Advent can definitely be that kind of time – when we are so frantic with Christmas preparations that we somehow can't manage to appreciate the watching and waiting of Advent. If that's how it feels to you this year, don't lose heart.

The beauty of the church seasons is that we can value their different qualities even out of season. So if you find that you have more time for reflection when the busyness of Christmas is over, that's fine too – very often the chance to reflect comes only when the practicalities have been attended to, and we can find some peace and space in our lives.

Rev Theresa Ricketts

The origins of British Christmas Traditions

Christmas Cards

In 1843, after the setting up of the Post Office, Sir Henry Cole and the artist John Horsley created the first Christmas card to encourage people to use its services. Cards cost one shilling (£5.25 in today's money) and a stamp cost one penny (40p). By the 1860's advances in printing had brought down the cost of cards and by 1900 Christmas cards had spread throughout Europe.

Christmas Trees

Northern Europeans have had Christmas trees for around one thousand years, and some appeared in English homes from the Middle Ages onwards, but they did not catch on until Prince Albert put one up at Osborne in the 1830s.

Mince Pies

Early mince pies were inspired by Middle Eastern cuisine brought back from the Crusades. They had thirteen ingredients representing Christ and the Apostles and were made in an oval shape to represent the manger.

Christmas Carols

In pagan times carols were songs and dances of praise and joy. The practice of singing them was

carried over into the Christian era. Those most familiar to us today date from Victorian times.

Stockings

Legend has it that St Nicholas, known as the gift giver, sent bags of gold down the chimney of a poor man who had no dowry for his unmarried daughters. The gold fell into stockings hanging to dry. In the Netherlands St Nicholas is known as Sinterklaas, and became Santa Claus to English speakers in North America.

Holly and Ivy

Holly and Ivy were used in celebrations of the winter solstice in pre-Christian times and still provide a splash of colour in the darkest month of the year.

Turkey

Turkeys originated in Mexico and were brought to England by William Strickland in 1526. Henry VIII enjoyed turkey but it was not until the late 19th century that it became fashionable in high society, and the early twentieth century before it was adopted by the middle classes. In 1930 a turkey cost the equivalent of a week's wages and it remained a luxury until the 1950's.

Our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

“What sweeter music can we bring than a carol, for to sing the birth of this our heavenly King?” After many months, I have finally given in to the choir’s demands to sing more Rutter ... and I am not regretting it! John Rutter’s beautiful ‘What sweeter music’ is actually new to the choir this year and will open our **Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, Sunday 17th December 6pm.**

Alongside another new-found favourite, Graham Ellis’s ‘There is no rose’, there should be a sweet and lyrical style to the choir’s musical interludes.

I am very grateful to the choir for working so hard on their performances and for the many hours of rehearsal time they have all given.

Whilst the choir have been busy practising their harmonies at

home, I have been preparing two Christmas works by two of the most important composers for the organ: Messiaen and Bach. Bach’s improvisation on the carol ‘In dulci jubilo’ will close the service, whilst the service will begin with Messiaen’s ‘Les bergers’ - a musical description of the shepherd’s journey to the nativity.

The shepherds travel slowly through the cold wind (organ flute stops), following the guiding shimmering stars (organ mutation stops). After their journey ends, and after a few moments of bird song, the shepherds dance with joy to an eastern melody (organ clarinet stop) upon discovering the baby Jesus.

We hope to see you all there in celebration of the birth of our heavenly King!

Michael Burt, Choir Director



Happy Christmas

Happy Christmas everyone from the TLP team (Rod, Janet and me). Thank you to all who have contributed ideas, articles or photographs for The Listening Post over the last year. It is your interest and effort that keeps this newsletter going.



If you have not yet contributed do please think about doing so. We want TLP to contain what you want to read about each month. Despite often appearing to have a long 'to do' list I aim to be available in the hall after the 9.30 service so please come and share your ideas with me in 2018. Or you can send feedback, photographs and articles to me. Longhand contributions are also accepted. **Linda Charlton (Editor)**

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January Services and Events

Saturday 6	09.00	Men's Breakfast at The Queen Adelaide
Sunday 7	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
Sunday 14	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Café Church followed by Holy Communion
	18.00	Choral Evensong
Wednesday 17	20.30	PCC in the Choir Vestry
Thursday 18	14.30	Thursday Club in Cuddington Hall
Saturday 20	10.00	Women's Group at Rowe Hall
Sunday 21	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
Sunday 28	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Family Communion with Baptism

Morning Prayer is said in church every weekday morning at 9 am.

All are welcome