

St. John's, Lindow

IN TOUCH

Winter 2015

The Word became flesh

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."

Colossians 1:15



SIMON'S SCRAWL

Simon Gales

Welcome to the Christmas edition of our church magazine, appropriately enough on the theme of the Incarnation – the truth that Jesus, God the Son, took on human flesh ('carnis' is the Latin for meat!) I hope this magazine will help you rejoice in this great news. Let me give you a taster:

The incarnation means we have **dignity**. The atheist must say you and I are nothing more than a collection of atoms, gathered together for a blink of time, soon to disperse – a meaningless speck! Are you anything more than your economic usefulness? Yes – because there is a God, who has visited his world as a human being. We each have an intrinsic value. You are precious, however you feel, whatever you do, however useful you are. Nobody is a nobody to God.

The incarnation means that we can have **clarity**. Is there a God, or gods, or nothing? If so, what is he/she/it like? Left to ourselves, your guess is as good as mine. No one can know for sure. We have to base our lives on a guess. Then a baby was born, of whom an angel said 'what is conceived is from the Holy Spirit'. He grew up to prove by what he did that he really is God in human flesh. And so the guessing games can stop. God came into a world of guessers and said 'Here I am'. If he hadn't done so, to say we can't be clear about God would be humble. Since God has revealed himself, to say we can't be clear about God is hugely arrogant.

The incarnation means we know that we are **loved**. I heard of a bloke who used all his savings to fly to Australia for a weekend. By the time he got through airport security he only had 5 hours before his return check-in. Why did he do it? To see his girlfriend. What did it say? 'I love you. I care about you'. God the Son gave up far more, and travelled far further. Why make the journey? Because he loves us. He cares about us.



I've only scratched the surface. Read on. Join us for our Christmas services to rejoice in great news to a world where we hear so much bad news.

Yours as ever,
Simon

CHRISTMAS AT ST. JOHN'S

Sun 20th Dec	10am	Nativity Presentation
	6.30pm	Traditional Carol Service
Christmas Eve	4pm	Kid's Carols
	11pm	Midnight Communion
Christmas Day	10am	Family Carols



Ben Hollinshead

VIEW FROM THE PEW

Harry & Barbara Toulman

Marc Hollinshead: Hi Harry and Barbara, you've been a part of our church family for a couple of years now, but some of us might not know you well, so tell us your journey into faith in Jesus and what brought you to St. John's.

Barbara: Well, I only went to church occasionally when I was young. I didn't like it much, though I loved the nativity services and the carols, in fact one of my very earliest memories is of church at Christmas.

Harry: I went more regularly to the local church as a child because I was in the choir; I remember singing "There is a green hill far away."

B: I stopped going altogether in my teen age years, but since our grandchildren came along things started to change. Olivia, one of our granddaughters, would often ask "Why don't you come to church, nan?" as she goes to St. John's Knutsford with her mum (our daughter), Anne (and in fact our other daughter, Adelle).

One day we were driving back from a Jehovah's witness meeting (which we'd gone to because our son, Alan had asked us) we saw a church sign for an Alpha Course at St. Mark's church in Stockport and we decided to give it a go.

Marc: And what happened then?

H: Well, we got involved a lot there and even did a 7 day week/24 hour open church event for prayer.

B: And we also did scripture reading and started a group for 10-14s called "Rock Solid." Eventually, though, we left and went to a Methodist church.

Marc: So what brought you to St John's in Wilmslow?

B: Well, when living in Stockport we were looking for a church near where we live now, here in Mobberley; we found St John's and haven't looked back, we love it here.

Marc: Thinking more about Christmas as we approach it now, what has that time of year been like throughout your lives?

H: Ah, well, before the war, we had no radio or TV. We stood round the piano, played cards, went to church on Christmas day and sometimes had presents and games.



Marc: How did that change when the war started?

H: Well in some ways not a lot because although there was rationing, we never really had much before the war anyway so we didn't notice much difference. We did have to be evacuated though.

B: I was evacuated to Lancaster and the family I was with did their best to accommodate me by knitting ragdolls, and the dad even made a pram for the dolls.

Marc: What is Christmas like for you now?

H: We always spend it in some ways with our daughters. Sometimes they come to us and come to St. John's in Wilmslow, but this time we'll be in Knutsford on Christmas day.

B: But December is also an emotional time of year as our first grandson died at aged 19 on the 7th December some years ago; that's hard for all of us, including Alan.

Marc: With church being more at the centre of Christmas for you now, what does the nativity story mean to you both?

H: Well as we get closer to death, it matters more because with Jesus' birth comes his death and resurrection, so it definitely sits at the centre of Christmas now.

CHRISTMAS IN THAILAND

The McClean Family



The McClean Family

Joshua: It's a great family time. The weather is perfect and there's no school. December is our cool season (25 degrees) so we can eat our Christmas dinner outside! We also enjoy playing basketball with our friends. No ice in our shoes or blue fingers here! Once school closes, on December 11, then we start to get ready for all our Christmas activities at church and in the universities.

Matthew: Carolling with our church is great fun. We visit neighbours and friends and pray for each house we visit. We start around 5pm and finish about midnight. Our house is usually the final house and all our Thai friends from church hang out late into the night, singing carols and eating mum's Christmas biscuits.



Bethan: I love advent, we light a candle on our advent wreath at home each Sunday before Christmas and sing a carol. Mum cooks a special Sunday evening meal too. It's lovely to sing carols in English and to have special time together as a family. There is also a big church party in the week before Christmas, which 100s of neighbours and friends come to. It's amazing to see so many people who have never been to church before all crammed into our tiny little church building.

Johnny: Every year we are able to talk about the true meaning of Christmas in schools, universities and church activities. Every year we find at least one person who has never heard the Christmas story before. It's really special to see their faces light up as we tell the story and to realize that something which is so old and familiar to us is new and full of wonder for them.



Ann: The run up to Christmas is full of cooking and baking – gifts for teachers and friends, a traditional roast dinner for 50 or more students, a 'family' dinner when we welcome all of our adopted brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles into our home. But, unlike the UK, our actual Christmas Day is a quiet family celebration with a few gifts. There's no 'Christmas rush' or push to spend money as most people around us are not celebrating the season. The slower pace of Christmas in Thailand is something we all really appreciate.

BOOK REVIEW

Pleased To Dwell - A Biblical Introduction to the Incarnation - Peter Mead

Alison Walsh

I read this book in early November, not a time of year when I am usually thinking about Christmas much at all. However, it was just the book to get me excited about the coming season as it gives a richer understanding of the birth of the King, and is a biblical introduction to Christmas.

The first section of the book is a great overview of the Old Testament. It shows God's steadfast love and faithfulness, but also man's rebellion and sin. The anticipation of the Messiah to come had me reaching for my bible to read alongside the verses referred to. It gave fresh insights to familiar parts of the story.

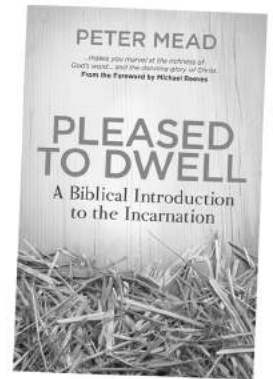
One of the big themes of the book is God's promises - and we are reminded that to believe in His promises we must get to know the One who promises (God). The promises point to God's faithfulness, not to human striving. And ultimately the promises point towards Jesus.

The second section moves on to the New Testament, specifically the Gospel of Matthew. In

this Mead explores the experiences and reactions of Mary and Joseph, the Magi, Herod and others, weaving in the history and all the while highlighting the links with the Old Testament, and the links with what will happen later - Jesus, Immanuel, God with us.

The final section reflects on why God became man - so that we can know the Father, revealed to us by the Son. God's people are invited not to the work of trusting but to the privilege of trusting in response to a personal God and that invitation remains the same today. Life is not about independence and achievement, but about our connection with God through our relationship with Jesus.

This book would be great to read in the weeks leading up to Christmas, to prepare us to celebrate the birth of God's son. We are reminded not to forget that at the centre of Christmas is Christ.



BOOK REVIEW

Four Kinds of Christmas - Glen Scrivenor

Rachel Hollinshead

Christmas is coming, love it or hate it; you better have wrapped all your presents, baked that Christmas cake and be thinking about New Years already!

At least that's what the world tells us. Thank goodness then for this nifty little book. Glen Scrivenor invites non Christians and Christians alike to consider our responses to Christmas. It can bring us joy and love but also highlight our darkest worries and concerns. How do we respond? Scrivenor explores four ways we embrace Christmas, but are they all the best way? I know which way is best, but I must admit I do see a lot of the secular ways in my own thoughts as Christmas approaches.

If you're looking for a small book to give to a friend and discuss, I can highly recommend this. Or if you just want re-evaluate and refresh your own ideas about Christmas, pick up a copy. Scrivenor asks highly candid questions which really got me thinking.

Jesus is our gift and our light this Christmas, and this book certainly didn't leave me in the dark about what matters most.

There are free copies of the book at the back of church to collect and give away to a friend!



WHAT DOES THE NATIVITY STORY MEAN TO YOU?

We asked members of the St John's church family to share their thoughts on what the incarnation of Jesus means to them.

God's Son Occupies Feeding Trough:

He who simultaneously upholds the universe, from quarks to quasars, as a new-born man child slept peacefully in a manger. But later vulnerable to a jealous tyrant. Unimaginable, yet true. You couldn't make it up. And star-led Magi arrive to adore His sacred face. O come, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker!

David Watts

It means a nice jolly fat fellow in a red coca cola tunic delivering presents to all the kiddies and everyone loves everyone else for a day.

Well maybe, but to me it means that God takes on human form and makes himself so accessible. John can say, "I heard, saw and touched God's fullest revelation of Himself, The word made flesh - Jesus". Thank you God.

George Perrin

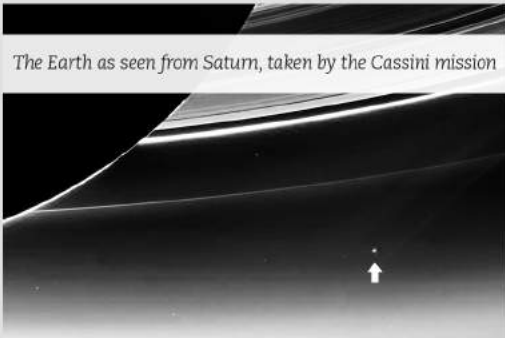
Family time - especially the service on Christmas Day morning.

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. How? A virgin giving birth in a stable and being visited by shepherds?! Who else could think of that way but God?

Karen Prestidge

WHAT DOES THE NATIVITY STORY MEAN TO YOU?

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The Earth as seen from Saturn, taken by the Cassini mission

How tiny and alone the Earth looks, from not even the backyard of our solar system! And yet, this is the place that the God of the Universe chose to make habitable for us, chose to call us into being, and chose to send his Son - to cancel out our sin and bring us joyfully before him as our beloved Father. This is where it all happened; this is

where Jesus came to be 'God with us'. To me the Incarnation means that we are so loved, despite our insignificance and waywardness - God came to be with us, in the only way he could without frightening us to death, as a tiny baby!

Althea Wilkinson

The Nativity to me means realising the reality of God's love for us all: how would it feel if we had to return to being a vulnerable baby, totally dependent on other people for everything we need, unable to say we are hungry or uncomfortable or frightened? Yet the Lord of all was prepared to do this for us.

Elaine Walker

When I think of the nativity, I think about the nativity from scratch and the challenge of writing something which will be helpful to both those in the church family and visitors. It's such a well-known story and yet there are so many aspects & meanings wrapped up in it. In past year's we've considered how the nativity fulfils the promises in the Old Testament, part of God's plan for the world, how it's true, not a fairy tale, and how the different characters were all waiting for something but they got so much more than they were expecting. This year I've been thinking simply how the nativity is good news, when there is so little good news around in our world.

Sarah Crispin

Christmas is coming and we all know the drill. Halls decked with boughs of holly, fairy lights twinkling away on the tree, light up reindeer on the front lawn; it's a familiar picture. All that's left to do is to sing some carols and to watch at least one chaotic (but endearing) nativity performance. Which got me thinking - how much of the Christmas story that we know and love is actually historical, and how much has been added over the years? I decided to set out on a fact finding, mythbusting mission to get to the bottom of things.



1. *We Three Kings*

Starting with an iconic part of the nativity scene, I've got some bad news for fans of Balthazar, Caspar, and Melchior. The Bible makes no reference to kings; indeed, Matthew refers to an undefined number of Magi visiting Jesus. The shepherds visited baby Jesus whilst he was still in the manger, but the Magi likely visited Jesus as a young infant up to a couple of years later. Interestingly, the Eastern church traditionally depicts twelve Magi visiting Jesus (I should note - there is no more evidence for twelve than there is for three wise men)!

Speaking of baby Jesus in the manger...

2. *"The little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes"*

A favourite carol for many, the second verse of *Away in a Manger* tells us that Jesus did not cry as a baby. But is that accurate? Would Jesus not have cried like a normal baby? It seems that the writer of the carol thought that Jesus' divine nature precluded him from crying as a baby. However, the

very nature of the incarnation of Christ is that he became fully man whilst at the same time being fully God. A non-crying baby Jesus is a not-fully-human baby Jesus.

3. *Little Donkey on the dusty road*

Not only is there no mention of Mary riding a donkey to Bethlehem in the Bible (we only know that she travelled with Joseph), there is also no mention of Mary and Joseph sharing their room with other animals in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth. That's bad news for the lowing cattle as well as the little donkey, along with the menagerie of other Christmas animals (cats; mice; spiders; octopi...) that crowd onto the stage.

4. *The stable and the innkeeper*

"No room at the inn!" is the familiar cry of many nativity plays. Whilst Jesus certainly was laid in a manger (Luke 2:7) because there was no room in a guest house available, there is no mention of a stable, a cave or a barn - the manger is the only identifying characteristic of where they were. As for the innkeeper, he's never mentioned in the Biblical accounts. So whilst he might have existed, we have no record of him.



Don't worry, this article isn't all bad news - in fact, there's some really, really good news - Jesus *was* born in Bethlehem around 2000 years ago.

Whether it was in a stable or not, and whether or not there was a donkey and an ox standing by, God entered into our world by becoming a human baby - tears and all - in order to save the world.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

Photos from recent events at St. John's



11-14's Weekend in Edale



Sports Quiz



11-18's Weekend Away



International Students Visit



Wedding of Lauren Kidd
and Matt McCabe

NEW FACES AT ST. JOHN'S

We say hello to some of the newer members of the St. John's Church family



Simon & Rebekah

Simon and Rebekah moved to Wilmslow in October, they are engaged and are to be married on the 12th of December this year! They met at an outdoor activity centre in Scotland. They left Scotland at the end of their contracts to move closer to family and for Rebekah's new job in a local primary school. Rebekah grew up in Worksop and went to university in Walsall. She has volunteered on the Keswick Kids team for the last 5 years. Simon grew up in Mali, West Africa where his parents worked as missionaries for the Navigators.

Daniel Kenyon

After a religious background through school years, Daniel decided to start coming to St Johns during this past year. He is a season ticket holder at Stockport County, and a member of the Radio Society of Great Britain (you might have seen the aerials on the roof of his house on Knutsford Road!



Pat Grange

I live in Wilmslow, and have a daughter, son in law and 3 gorgeous grandchildren living nearby. I also have a son and daughter in law in Connecticut, USA. I have found a wonderful fellowship with the people I have met at St. John's, who inspire me to grow in my faith daily. This church has been a rock in times of distress which has helped me along my spiritual path.

Mark, Kate, James, Thomas and George Irwin

Hi there, we're the Irwin Family. Both Mark and I have lived in the area for some time. Mark moved to Wilmslow as a child, and went to Gorsey Bank School. Kate lived in Macclesfield, before meeting Mark and moving to Handforth. The arrival of Thomas and George, led us to move to Springfield Drive just over two years ago. We have had an amazing reception into St John's and look forward to being part of the community!



Peter, Fiona, Amy and Jacob Bunyard

We moved to Wilmslow in July from Royston in Hertfordshire for Pete to take up a new job at the Biohub on Alderley Park. Pete grew up in Wilmslow and his parents and sister are still nearby. Amy is 4 and started at Lindow in September. She loves meeting new people and telling them how they should be doing things. Jacob is 2 and is at home with me most of the time keeping me busy. He is a bundle of energy and you've probably seen him sprinting from crèche to the front of the biscuit queue on a Sunday morning!

THE INCARNATION - A REFLECTION

We are naturally relational beings forming friendships, loving and being loved. Such capacities are aspect of being 'made in the image of God', who is love. The three persons of the trinity have eternally been in mutual fellowship. They have complete knowledge of one another and have chosen to appropriately reveal to mankind the nature of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the image of the invisible God and in him dwells the fullness of God in bodily form (Col 1.15-19). We know from Jesus' summary that our primary duty and privilege is to love God with all our heart. To worship and love something less than God, a creature or an object or a false understanding of God would be a grave insult to him!

But how are we to know what God is like - except that he reveals himself to mankind? No better introduction could be provided than that he himself should visit us personally one on one. No better accommodation to our limited understanding could he make than to appear in human form.

He did not come as one shielded from the troubles of life. He came initially as a helpless infant born to a poor family far from home in an occupied land. He and his family were refugees fleeing certain death. His childhood was in the context of the manual labour of a carpenter. He was tempted in

everyway like we are yet without yielding, for he lived to please and honour his heavenly Father. He was characterised by compassion for the downcast, the sick and oppressed. He was not deflected by social convention or the presence of occupation soldiers. He opened the minds of his hearers to what the Scriptures taught of God's nature and purposes often in surprising ways.

As we might expect he spoke with an authority that no man before or since has had. Every founder of other faiths and ideologies has been limited to human reason and imagination to grasp at what God might be like or at what man's purpose in the world is. But the Christian can look with confidence to Jesus who has revealed God to us, and is now our true representative, both God and man in one person, exalted to the Father's right hand where he intercedes for his people.

Recognising God as he came among us and has since been reported through the gospels and the rest of the New Testament is the essential starting point for needy mankind. Not surprisingly the glorious truth of the incarnation, that God's eternal Son took on a human nature, became an essential element of the earliest Christian creeds.

CHRISTMAS AT ST. JOHN'S

Sun 20th Dec	10am	Nativity Presentation
	6.30pm	Traditional Carol Service
Christmas Eve	4pm	Kid's Carols
	11pm	Midnight Communion
Christmas Day	10am	Family Carols

WINTER/SPRING PROGRAMME

Sundays 10am

6.30pm

Homegroups

Jan 3	Motto Verse - All Age	Motto Verse
Jan 10	The Promise of God Joshua 1, 2	Trials and Troubles James 1:1-12
Jan 17	Crossing Over Joshua 3, 4	Battling with Temptation James 1:13-18
Jan 24	The battle belongs to..? Joshua 5, 6	Listening & Living James 1:19-27
Jan 31	When God gets angry Joshua 7, 8	Love & Action James 2:1-13
Feb 7	The trouble with common sense All Age - Joshua 9	Faith that Works James 2:14-26
Feb 14	Confirmation Service Rt. Revd. Keith Sinclair	The uncontrolled tongue James 3:1-12
Feb 21	Posessing the Land Joshua 13-21	Two Wisdoms James 3:13 - 4:3
Feb 28	Staying Faithful Joshua 23, 24	Drawing Near to God James 4:4-12
Mar 6	Church Weekend at Home	No evening gathering
Mar 13	A scent that speaks - All Age John 12:1-11	Wealth & Poverty James 4:13 - 5:12
Mar 20	Palm Sunday An Unlikely Glory John 12:12-50	The Power of Prayer James 5:13-18
Mar 25	Good Friday All Age Service	2pm - An Hour at the Cross
Mar 27	Easter All Age Praise	Easter Praise
Lord's Supper on third Sunday		Lord's Supper on first Sunday

Meeting in various homes, on Thursday & Fridays, afternoons and evenings, to study God's Word and encourage one another.

ACTS:
MISSION UNSTOPPABLE

January 14th
Acts 13:1-52

January 28th
Acts 14:1-28

February 11th
Acts 15:1 - 16:5

February 25th
Acts 16:6-40

March 10th
Acts 17:1-34

Dates given are for Thursdays. In addition, a women's Bible study meets at 9.45am on Wednesdays and a men's Bible study meets at 6.30am on Fridays.

Special Events

Jan 16	Who Let The Dads Out? Church Rooms, 10-11.30am
Jan 17	Evergreens Lunch Church Rooms
Jan 23	Men's Breakfast Alderley Edge Golf Club, 8.15am
Jan 29-30	NWP Annual Conference St Andrew's Leyland
Feb 27	Who Let The Dads Out? Church Rooms, 10-11.30am
Mar 5-6	Church Weekend at Home Peter Rowan, National Director, OMF

Mar 19	Ladies' Breakfast Baroness Caroline Cox, Alderley Edge Golf Club, 8.30am
Mar 20	Evergreens Lunch Church Rooms

Monthly prayer breakfasts:

Jan 9th, Feb 13th, and March 12th.
Saturday mornings, 8.30-9.45am, Church Rooms.
Drop by for prayer, coffee and croissants.