

Littlehampton United Church

December 2023

Newsletter



Christmas is coming

Is it true that Christmas starts earlier every year, or does it just feel that way? Certainly, the television advertising or the Christmas displays in local garden centres encourage us to prepare earlier every year. Throw into the mix the relatively new phenomenon of Black Friday and one could wonder if Christmas was about anything other than spending a large amount of money. Such an assumption would be very wrong, however. For most families the central part of Christmas is the family gathering. A time when relatives and friends spend time together for the few days when the demands of work are relaxed.

Christians have strived for years to tell the greatest story ever told and explain what Christmas is really about. Sometimes getting a reputation of being kill-joys. In fact during the time of Oliver Cromwell, starting in 1644, Christmas celebrations were forbidden. Even churches could be fined for holding special services on Christmas day, and shops were ordered to stay open. Historians appear to agree that these measures were pretty unpopular and, with no national police force, were not widely enforced. In 1660, Charles II, who enjoyed a good celebration, took the throne and such laws were repealed. (Some would say the Merry Monarch, enjoyed celebrating just a little too much!).

If we wish to change the emphasis from commercialism to spiritual appreciation there are some ways that will work and others that don't. Perhaps we should think of all the commercial advertising as free publicity for celebrating the season of Christ's birth. Presenting the Nativity in the High Street when the town Christmas lights were turned on was a great example of what can be done.

So, when does the church think Christmas should begin. For centuries the fifth Sunday before Christmas has been known as "Stir Up Sunday", from the opening phrase of the prayer for the day: "Stir up, O Lord the loins of your faithful people...." A tradition emerged that this was the day to stir up the Christmas pudding, giving it the correct time to mature before it was eaten on Christmas Day.

The four Sundays in Advent progressively raise the stakes as Christmas Day gets closer. We light our advent candles each Sunday and the journey to Christmas Day is well underway. But, if journeys are worth taking, the destination has to be good. One local school asked students to write a sentence that one of the traditional characters in a nativity scene might have said to the baby Jesus. The one that stuck out for me, simply said, "A difficult journey, but what a great ending".

Wishing you a very happy Christmas.

Chris

Christmas Tree and Crib Festival



Thank you to everyone
who visited or helped at
the Festival



Front page:

Crib lent by Broadwater

Baptist Church

Some of the displays from the "Cribbs and Trees in 23"

Top right: Children from River Beach School who came to set up their tree and crib.

Over £500 was raised for our work at Unity School, Mombasa

Preachers and services in December and January

Sunday 17th December

Chris Azzaro

Carols and Readings

Sunday 24th December 10.30am and Christmas Day 25th December 10.00am

Joint services at St Andrew's Church, Holmes Lane, Rustington, led by Revd. Norman Croft.

Sunday 31st December

Chris Azzaro

Sunday 7th January

Chris Azzaro

Sunday 14th January

Nigel Stapley

Covenant Service/ Communion

Friday services are mainly be taken by Chris Azzaro or Revd Norman Croft

On Friday mornings the church is open from 10.15am until 12.00 The short service is at 11.00am. Tea/ Coffee is available before and after the service. Donations for the refreshments support the Feeding programme at Unity School, Mombasa.