

December 2016



# The Welcome Times

## What's the fuss about Christmas?

Every twelve months it becomes the focus for over 2 billion people. Shops base their annual turnover on its success; people decorate their homes for over a month and travel long distances to be with their family. We sing Christmas songs and spend more money on more presents for more people. We go to church and we stock up the larder as if all the supermarkets were never going to open again!

What's the fuss about Christmas?

2000 years ago God stepped out of eternity into time and things have never been the same since.

Nowadays, for many, that's the least reason for celebrating Christmas, but whether you believe or don't believe, are faithful or faithless, Christmas is important to you. Even if your religion doesn't allow it or your circumstances make all this tidings of comfort and joy stuff hard to stomach, it is the best Christmas present you'll ever get. Why? Well this gift:

*Comes free:* so you could have life, Jesus gave his life for you.

*Comes with a beyond lifetime guarantee:* it won't run down, wear out or change.

*Comes in handy everyday:* it isn't for special occasions to be brought out like your best dinner service - it's meant for

practical, everyday use.

There may be many reasons why you might not feel full of Christmas spirit. Are you lonely? Are family relationships difficult? Are you weary from all that you've gone through this year?

God cares deeply about how you are feeling. What he did to give us the reason to celebrate has importance to you, now, even as you're reading this.

You see wherever you are, supermarket, shopping centre, sitting on Santa's knee or watching telly - God is next to you!

*continued on page 5...*



## We're here...



## 'Twas the night before Christmas

- a special for children -

- ❖ Its an exciting new event
- ❖ On Christmas Eve
- ❖ In the afternoon
- ❖ Especially for children
- ❖ 30 minutes of songs and stories
- ❖ The meaning of Christmas through the eyes of a child
- ❖ Moments of calm amidst excitement
- ❖ 3.30pm at Milford Baptist
- ❖ It's our **Crib Service**



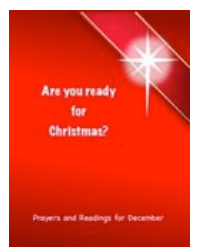
## RU Ready?

Enjoy your journey into Christmas with a reflection for each day of December.

Follow the story of the birth of Jesus through 31 daily readings related to living the Christian life from day to day. They began 1<sup>st</sup> December but you can start at any time during the month and still get the enjoyment.

## Are You Ready for Christmas?

Read them on the website -  
[www.milfordbaptist.org.uk](http://www.milfordbaptist.org.uk)



## The Gold and Ivory Tablecloth

*At Christmastime, people everywhere gather in their churches to wonder anew at the greatest miracle the world has ever known. This is a story of a lovely miracle - well a sort of miracle.*



It was late in December, a severe storm damaged a small village church—a huge chunk of plaster fell out of the inside wall just behind the altar. Sadly the pastor and his wife

swept away the mess, but they couldn't hide the ragged hole. The pastor looked at it and had to remind himself quickly, "Thy will be done!"

The damage was considerable and through her tears his wife said, "Christmas is only two days away!"

That afternoon the dispirited couple attended an auction. The auctioneer opened a box and brought out a handsome gold-and-ivory lace tablecloth. It was a magnificent item, nearly 15 feet long. But it dated from a long-vanished era. Who, today, had any use for such a thing? There were a few half-hearted bids. Then the pastor was seized with what he thought was a great idea. Even though he offered a small amount he was the highest bidder.

He carried the cloth back to the church and tacked it up on the wall behind the altar. It completely hid the hole! The extraordinary beauty of its shimmering handwork cast a fine, holiday glow over the chancel. It was a great triumph.

Just before noon on Christmas Eve, as the pastor was opening the church, he noticed a woman standing in the cold at the bus stop.

"The bus won't be here for 40 minutes!" he called, and he invited her into the church to get warm.

She told him that she had come from the city that morning to be interviewed for a job as governess to the children of one of the wealthy families in town but she had been turned down. A war refugee, she had imperfect English.

The woman sat down in a pew, warmed her hands and rested. After a while, she dropped her head and prayed. She looked up as the pastor began to adjust the great gold-and-ivory lace cloth across the hole. She rose suddenly and walked up the steps of the chancel. She looked at the tablecloth. The pastor smiled and started to tell her about the storm damage, but she didn't seem to listen. She took up a fold of the cloth and rubbed it between her fingers.

"It is mine!" she said. "It is my banquet



cloth!" She lifted up a corner and showed the surprised pastor that there were initials monogrammed on it.

"My husband had the cloth made especially for me in Brussels! There could not be another like it!"

For the next few minutes, the woman talked with such excitement. She explained that she was Viennese, that she and her husband had opposed the Nazis and decided to leave the country. They were advised to go separately. Her husband put her on a train for Switzerland. They planned that he would join her as soon as he could arrange to ship their household goods across the border.

She never saw him again. Later she heard that he had died in a concentration camp.

"I have always felt that it was my fault—to leave without him," she said. "Perhaps these years of wandering have been my punishment!"

The pastor tried to comfort her, urged her to take the cloth with her. She refused and left to go on her way.

As the church began to fill on Christmas Eve, it was clear that the cloth was going to be a great success. It had been skilfully designed to look its best by candlelight.

After the service, the pastor stood at the doorway; many people told him that the church looked beautiful. One gentle-faced, middle-aged man—he was the local clock-and-watch repairman—looked rather puzzled.

"It is strange," he said in his soft accent. "Many years ago, my wife—God rest her—and I owned such a cloth. In our home in Vienna, my wife put it on the table for special occasions!"

The pastor suddenly became very excited. He told the jeweller about the woman who had been in church earlier in the day.

The startled jeweller clutched the pastor's arm. "Can it be? Does she live?"

Together the two got in touch with the family who had interviewed her. Then, in the pastor's car, they started for the city. And as Christmas Day was born, this man and his wife—who had been separated through so many saddened Yuletides—were reunited.

To all who heard this story, the purpose of the storm that had knocked a hole in the wall of the church was now quite clear. People said it was a miracle and, I think you will agree, it was the season for it!

*"The Gold & Ivory Tablecloth" is one of 38 uplifting tales in the Reader's Digest Treasury of Joy and Inspiration. This collector's item features editors' selections of the most powerful true stories, miracles, and dramas in real life.*





## Our first Vintage Tea travelled back in time to the 1940's.

It proved to be very popular as folk packed in to remember life in 40's Britain, sing songs from the period and test their 'pub quiz' knowledge of the era.

We rolled out the barrel and had a barrel of fun.

It was an afternoon of entertainment, enjoyment and eats.



### Did you know...?

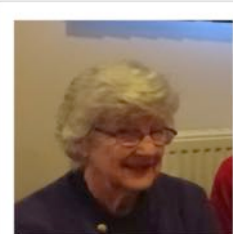
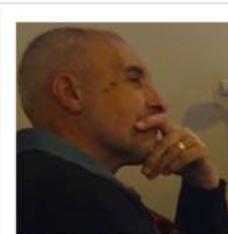
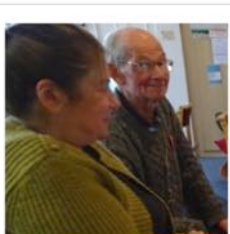
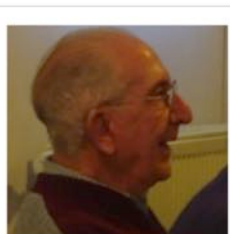
*Between 1945-1950*

Fish and Chips cost 4d

Petrol was  
1 shilling (5p)  
a gallon

a semi detached  
house - £350

There was a 3 year  
waiting list to buy a Ford  
Popular car which would  
cost a massive £80



## Stories Are Fun!



If you go down to the church today you're in for a great surprise!

Well, on a Thursday, actually when the *Open The Book Team* gets active.

Children love stories especially when they can get involved and have fun. Every week the church is filled with 5 & 6 year olds who enjoy dramatised bible stories told in a lively and enjoyable way.





# The Beautiful Valley



Ever stepped out and thought, "Wow!"



Ever stepped out from your front door and thought, "Wow!"

We live in such a beautiful area.

Walk along parts of the A6 between Milford and Belper, look to your left across the river, the railway line and the rising tree lined hills - you could be in Scotland!

We enjoy a choice of paths that allow us, unaided of any need for transport, to do a whole lot of circular walks.

Whether its the leg testing climb of Sunny Hill, along North Lane to Farnah Green and back or the climb up Dark Lane to Holbrook, back across fields and return via Duffield Bank - there are so many walks to be enjoyed.

In Britain we take our paths for granted. Which other country provides such open access?

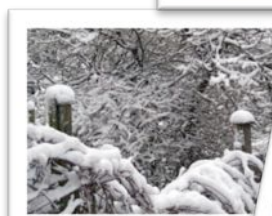
Enjoy on this page and the next, a few moments of this beautiful corner, this 'Forever England' that is our very own Amber Valley.



## Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life



Here for You





*In Britain  
we take our  
paths for  
granted*



Photos courtesy of Ron Brickman

What's the fuss about Christmas cont....

God entered human history because a great big gap had opened up between him and us and he didn't like what he saw. We are so important to him - beats me why, when you see how we behave, but we are.

He is so bothered that he's given us a second chance - that's how important you are! God loved you so much he gave his only son so that if you believe in him you get eternal life for free. John 3.16

Actually as you are reading this can you hear something? Listen. It's that knocking sound? Listen. Listen above all the other noise.

That's God knocking on the door of your life. *You* have to let him in. He won't come in unless invited. Love will never force itself. He longs for you to open the door.

Do you know such is his love for you that he will go on doing that until the very last day of human history! Knocking on your life's door waiting, patiently, lovingly, longing for you to open it and enter the joy and safety of his embrace.



At Christmas people will travel a long way to be with those they love. God travelled a long way to be with you and he's waiting for you to let him in. Are you going to turn him away?

It will be lovely to see you at any of our services through December. A warm welcome is always waiting.  
*See our website for details of the Sunday services*

Milford Baptist Church  
Chevin Road

**Crib Service**  
for children

Christmas Eve  
Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> December  
3.30 - 4pm

**Carols  
by Candlelight**

Christmas Eve  
Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> December  
6.00pm  
Milford Baptist Church

Join us for this time of Christmas worship  
as we praise  
our great God for His amazing gift

**Here for You**



## Santa and Sarah — a true Christmas miracle

Three years ago, a little boy and his grandmother came to see Santa at the Mayfair Shopping Centre in Wisconsin. The child climbed up on his lap, holding a picture of a little girl.

'Who is this?' asked Santa, smiling.

'This is my sister, Sarah, who is very sick,' said the little boy sadly.

Santa glanced over at the grandmother who was waiting nearby and saw her dabbing her eyes with a tissue.

'She wanted to come with me to see you, oh, so very much, Santa!' the child explained. 'She misses you,' he added softly.

Santa tried to be cheerful and encouraged a smile to the boy's face, asking him what he wanted Santa to bring him for Christmas.

When they finished their visit, Grandma came over to help the child off his lap. She started to say something to Santa, but stopped.

'What is it?' Santa asked warmly.

'Well, I know it's really too much to ask you, Santa, but...' the old woman began, shooing her grandson over to one of Santa's elves to collect his little gift.

'The girl in the photograph... my granddaughter well, you see ...she has leukaemia and isn't expected to make it even through the holidays,' she said through tear-filled eyes. 'Is there any way, Santa, any possible way that you could come to see Sarah? That's all she's asked for, for Christmas, is to see Santa.'

Santa blinked and swallowed hard and told the woman to leave information with his elves as to

where Sarah was, and he would see what he could do. Santa thought of little else the rest of that afternoon. He knew what he had to do. 'What if it were my child lying in that hospital bed, dying?' he thought with a sinking heart, 'This is the least I can do.'

When Santa finished that evening he retrieved, from his elf, the name of the hospital where Sarah was staying. He asked Rick, the assistant manager how to get to the children's hospital.

'Why?' Rick asked with a puzzled look on his face.

Santa relayed to him the conversation with Sarah's grandmother earlier that day. Rick drove them to the hospital and came inside with Santa. They found out which room Sarah was in. A pale-faced Rick said he would wait out in the hall.

Santa quietly peeked into the room through the half-closed door and saw little Sarah on the bed.

The room was full of what appeared to be her family; there was grandma and the girl's brother he had met earlier that day. A woman whom he guessed was Sarah's mother stood by the bed, gently pushing Sarah's thin hair off her forehead. Another woman who he discovered later was Sarah's aunt, sat in a chair near the bed with a weary, sad look on her face. They were talking quietly, and Santa could sense the warmth and closeness of the family and their love and concern for Sarah.

Taking a deep breath, and forcing a smile on his face, Santa entered the room with a hearty, 'Ho, ho, ho!'

'Santa!' shrieked little Sarah weakly, as she tried to escape her bed to run to him. Santa rushed to her side and gave her a warm hug. A child the age of his own

## Christmas At Milford Baptist

Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Carols around Milford
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>CELEBRATE</b> – An Advent Family Event 10.30am - Milford Baptist Church
Monday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Crib Service for pre-schoolers, mums and dads. 2.15pm
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve	Christmas Crib Service 3.30-4.00pm - Milford Baptist Church
	Carols by Candlelight 6.00pm - Milford Baptist Church
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> Christmas Day	Christmas Day Family Celebration 10.30-11.15am Milford Baptist Church
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan New Years Day	Family Service 10.30-11.15am



son - 9 years old - gazed up at him with wonder and excitement.

Her skin was pale and her short tresses bore tell-tale bald patches from the effects of chemotherapy. But all he saw when he looked at her was a pair of huge, blue eyes. His heart melted, and he had to force himself to choke back tears.

Though his eyes were riveted upon Sarah's face, he could hear the quiet weeping of the women in the room.

As he and Sarah began talking, the family crept quietly to the bedside one by one, squeezing Santa's shoulder or his hand gratefully, whispering 'Thank you' as they gazed sincerely at him with grateful eyes. Santa and Sarah talked and talked and she told him excitedly all the toys she wanted for Christmas, assuring him she'd been a very good girl that year.

As their time together dwindled, Santa felt led in his spirit to pray for Sarah and asked for permission from the girl's mother. She nodded and the entire family circled around Sarah's bed, holding hands. Santa looked intensely at Sarah and asked her if she believed in angels, 'Oh, yes, Santa... I do!' she exclaimed.

'Well, I'm going to ask that angels watch over you,' he said. Laying one hand on the child's head, Santa closed his eyes and prayed. He asked that God touch little Sarah and heal her body from this

disease.

He asked that angels' minister to her, watch and keep her. And when he finished praying, still with eyes closed, he started singing, softly, 'Silent Night, Holy Night, all is calm, all is bright...'

'The family joined in, still holding hands, smiling at Sarah, and crying tears of hope, tears of joy for this moment, as Sarah beamed at them all.

When the song ended, Santa sat on the side of the bed again and held Sarah's frail, small hands in his own. 'Now, Sarah,' he said authoritatively, 'you have a job to do and that is to concentrate on getting well. I want you to have fun playing with your friends this summer, and I expect to see you at my house in the Mayfair Shopping Centre this time next year!'

He knew it was risky proclaiming this to a little girl who had terminal cancer, but he *had* to. He had to give her the greatest gift he could -- not dolls or games or toys -- but the gift of HOPE.

'Yes, Santa!' Sarah exclaimed, her eyes bright. He leaned down and kissed her on the forehead and left the room.

Out in the hall, the minute Santa's eyes met Rick's, a look passed between them and they wept unashamedly.

Sarah's mother and grandmother slipped out of the room quickly and rushed to Santa's side to thank him.

'My only child is the same age as Sarah,' he explained quietly. 'This is the least I could do.' They nodded with understanding and hugged him.

One year later, Santa Mark was again back on the set for his six-week, seasonal job which he so loves to do. Several weeks went by and then one day a child came up to sit on his lap.

'Hi, Santa! Remember me?'

'Of course, I do,' Santa proclaimed (as he always does), smiling down at her. After all, the secret to being a 'good' Santa is to always make each child feel as if they are the *only* child in the world at that moment.

'You came to see me in the hospital last year!'

Santa's jaw dropped. Tears immediately sprang in his eyes, and he grabbed this little miracle and held her to his chest. 'Sarah!' he exclaimed. He scarcely recognised her, for her hair was long and silky and her cheeks were rosy - so much different from the little girl he had visited just a year before. He looked over and saw Sarah's mother and grandmother in the sidelines smiling and wiping their eyes.

That was the best Christmas ever for Santa Claus.

He had witnessed - and been blessed to be instrumental in bringing about - this miracle of hope. This precious little child was healed. She was cancer-free, alive and well.

He silently looked up to Heaven and humbly whispered, 'Thank you, Father. 'Tis a very, Merry Christmas!'

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This story took place in December 1997. Susan Leonard who wrote the story based it on a first hand account from her husband, Mark Leonard who is a professional Santa Claus.



**Christmas Day  
Family Celebration**

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> December  
10.30am-11.15am  
Milford Baptist Church**

*The best gift of all - Jesus*





## The Tale of the Two Travelling Angels

Two travelling angels stopped to spend the night in the home of a wealthy family.

The family was rude and refused to let the angels stay in the mansion's guest room. Instead, the angels were given a small space in the cold basement.

As they made their bed on the hard floor, the older angel saw a hole in the wall and repaired it. When the younger angel asked "Why?" the older angel replied, "Things aren't always what they seem."

The next night, the pair came to rest at the house of a very poor, but very hospitable, farmer and his wife. After sharing what little food they had, the couple let the angels sleep in their bed where they could have a good night's rest.

When the sun came up the next morning, the angels found the farmer and his wife in tears. Their only cow, whose milk had been their sole income, lay dead



in the field.

The younger angel was infuriated and asked the older angel, 'How could you have let this happen? The first man had everything, yet you helped him!' she accused. "The second family had little but was willing to share everything and you let the cow die."

"Things aren't always what they seem," the older angel replied. "When we stayed in the basement of the mansion, I noticed there was

gold stored in that hole in the wall. Since the owner was so obsessed with greed and unwilling to share his good fortune, I sealed the wall so he wouldn't find it."

"Then last night as we slept, the angel of death came for the farmer's wife. I gave him the cow instead. Things aren't always what they seem."

Sometimes, that is exactly what happens when things don't turn out the way it seems they should.

There are so many things in the world we don't understand. That's what faith is all about.



### The Reason for The Season

The reason we're here is because of Jesus.  
There is no other reason  
No other person because  
Nothing compares to Him.

The reality for many people nowadays means that Jesus is about as real to them as Jack Frost.  
Even so the idea of God is nice because it can provide comfort at difficult times and when the crisis is over, He has no importance in their everyday lives.

Yet 2000 years ago God stepped into time  
And gave us  
Jesus.

A real person, a real life and because of that  
nothing can ever be the same again.  
He makes the best offer you will ever get  
and in return asks for one thing –  
that you believe.

We are always here if you want to ask  
questions or to find out more about how and  
what it is to experience Him in everyday life.  
Come along to one of our Christmas  
services or get in touch and have a chat.

A warm welcome  
is waiting if you  
would like to come  
along and join us  
at any service



#### Here for You

We all go through tough times - loneliness, illness or loss.

If you would like one of us to visit, even simply to chat, then get in touch.

Contact one of our pastoral team on:  
01773 822370.