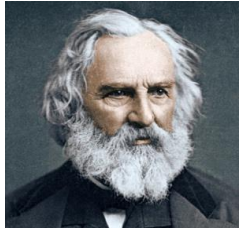


ACE AND GOODWILL



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807-1882

I wonder if you have come across Henry Wadsworth Longfellow before. Henry is someone who returns to my thoughts each year at Christmas as I reread his poem 'Christmas Bells'. The Poem is Victorian and feels very English although Longfellow was raised in Portland, Maine and went on to be professor of modern languages at Harvard university. I will admit that 'Christmas Bells' might not be his most famous poem and that he is better known for works such as 'The wreck of the Hesperus' and more famous still, 'Hiawatha'. Whilst these are well known he considered his lesser-known religious trilogy, 'Christus' to be his greatest achievement.

What is most striking in 'Christmas Bells' is the determination for peace and goodwill which is surely a universal determination and especially at Christmas time. The poem's words are unchanging year on year, but I find, as with so much other writing, I bring to this poem a year's more experience and so the yearly reading of it offers up different insights and new treasure; incidentally this is the same as reading scripture again and again or repeating the prayers of the prayer book because we bring life in its fullness to the words, to the text. And so, it is with Christmas Bells with it's refrain, 'peace on earth good will to men' as each year I ask what this means now after another year has passed.

It has been a difficult year for us all and while writing this letter I could wish for nothing more than peace for all those who will eventually read this. Peace in a world free from war and conflict, peace in the uncertainty of political wrangling, inner peace from the anxieties, stress and mental health issues raised for us human beings through

living in complex and difficult times, peace for those who are now at rest with God and for their families, peace of mind, heart and body in the face of Covid-19 and all that it has brought us and of course that peace of God which passes all understanding the shalom of God. Peace especially as we gather as best- we- can this Christmas time with family and friends, physically, virtually, prayerfully, thoughtfully.

Longfellow's determination reminds us that St. Luke first offers these words on the lips of angel's as they announce to the shepherds the good news and in an instant, we are offered both a glimpse of heaven and the promise of hope and peace as the angels both praise God and, at the same time, speak of the prince of peace, the one who is to come, Emanuel, God with us. That they spoke these words to the lowliest of people is significant, introducing as it does the priorities of the Kingdom of God and the character of Jesus' ministry.

This coming church year the gospel is Mark who carries no nativity story but rather encourages us to begin again. As we have seen heroic acts of kindness, community, goodwill and peace-making during this pandemic so we have also had time to stop and rest and think. The opening of Mark's gospel invites the story of Jesus to begin again with us. Would that this good news, beginning again in us as we read it, bring peace and goodwill to us all.

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to all'.

May I wish you all a peace -filled Christmas and a very happy and Covid-free new year.

Jeremy

WARMLEY WARBLINGS

We remember in our regular prayers, those of our church family who have been unwell, thinking in particular of Mervyn and Lil Little, Martin Pullin, Margaret Hill, Beryl Holder, John Eames, we wish them all well.

As usual, we remember all of our friends who are in residential or nursing homes especially at this time, Grace Watson, Eileen Penny and Marjorie Cox. They are in our thoughts especially at this time when visits to them are restricted or even forbidden, we hope very much that these restrictions may be lifted in the near future to bring much needed comfort to these people and their families

We were very sad to hear that the mother of Martin Pullin has passed away recently, this is difficult enough but Martin has been very unwell himself which has made this even more difficult to cope with. We send our love, sympathy and prayers to Martin, wife Wendy and all the family at this sad time.

In terms of our magazine, this has been a very difficult year as we have been unable to deliver it to people for most of the year, it does appear online on our website but I am very aware that this is not available to everyone. I do hope that when restrictions are lifted, we can resume magazine publication and delivery, clearly, there will be no costs involved for twelve months when distribution begins again. I would like to wish you all the best Christmas that you can possibly have in the circumstances we find ourselves and that 2021 will be a much less stressful year for everyone

Brian Draper



Martin received the latest Christmas coronavirus regulations from the diocesan office.

6th DECEMBER: St. NICHOLAS – PATRON SAINT OF CHILDREN

Father Christmas seems to be as old as Europe. Once he was Woden, lashing his reindeer through the darkness of northern midwinter. Then he encountered the Church, and She transformed him into a saint, the much-loved Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (in south-west Turkey) in the fourth century. St Nicholas became the patron saint of children and was given 6th December as his day.

Since the 6th century St Nicholas has been venerated in both East and West, though virtually nothing is known of his life. Some believe he may have been one of the fathers at the Council of Nicea (325), imprisoned during the Emperor Diocletian's persecution.

According to legend, Nicholas was an extremely generous man. He revived three schoolboys murdered by an innkeeper in a tub of pickles. He rescued three young women from prostitution by giving their poverty-stricken father three bags of gold. (Hence the use of three gold balls as the pawnbroker's signs.)

Over the centuries many people 'on the fringe', including children, sailors, unmarried girls, pawnbrokers and moneylenders have claimed him as their patron.

Perhaps it was on account of St. Nicholas' generosity that in recent centuries children began to write little notes sometime before 6th December, to tell him about the toys they specially wanted. These notes were then left on the windowsill at night – or else on a ledge in the chimney.

But St Nicholas Day chanced to lie in the magnetic field of a much more potent festival... and after a time his activities were moved towards Christmas. Then in Bavaria the children still left their notes on the windowsill, but they addressed them to Liebes Christkind – Krishkinkle as they knew him – and the saint's part in the matter was simply to deliver the letters in heaven.

The most popular result of the cult of St Nicholas has been the institution of Santa Claus. He is based on Nicholas' patronage of children and the custom in the Low Countries of giving presents on his feast. Santa Claus has reached his zenith in America, where the Dutch Protestants of New Amsterdam (New York) united to it Nordic folklore legends of a magician who both punished naughty children and rewarded good ones with presents.

PARISHES SERVING THEIR COMMUNITIES

Recently published Mission Statistics for 2019 show that parishes were already running or supporting 35,000 social action projects before the pandemic, serving communities across the country from lunch clubs for older people to parent and toddler groups and food banks.

More than 4,000 parent/carer toddler groups are run or supported by Church of England churches, while more than 5,000 churches run or support lunch clubs, coffee mornings or similar hospitality for older people.

The figures also show the extent of church support for people living in food poverty, with nearly 8,000 food banks run or supported by Church of England churches.

Nearly 60% of churches are involved in food bank provision, while nearly one in three reported either running, hosting or supporting a parent/toddler group. Other figures showed 2,700 churches involved in community cafes, 2,400 in night shelters and 2,300 in holiday or breakfast clubs.

The findings show Church of England churches were involved in 35,000 social action projects, compared to 33,000 recorded in 2017. These figures for social action have been released alongside statistics showing that the number of regular worshippers attending church once a month or more decreased by 1% in 2019 to 1.11 million.

On average, 854,000 people attended Church of England services and acts of worship each week in October 2019, a decline of 2.1% compared to the year before. The additional number of people attending services for schools in Church of England churches rose by 3% to 182,000. Usual Sunday attendance fell by 2% to 690,000 in 2019.

In 2019 there were nearly eight million attendances at Christmas and Advent services, and more than a million people attended Church of England church services at Easter.

IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

It was:

400 years ago, on 21st December 1620 that the first landing party from the British ship Mayflower arrived at what would become Plymouth Colony (now Plymouth Massachusetts). They began building houses there two days later.

300 years ago, on 31st December 1720 that Charles Edward Stuart, commonly known as 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' was born. Stuart claimant to the British throne and leader of the unsuccessful Jacobite rebellion of 1745-46. Grandson of King James II of England and Ireland (also known as James VII of Scotland).

250 years ago, on 16th December 1770 that Ludwig van Beethoven, German composer and pianist was born.

90 years ago, on 2nd December 1930 that in his second State of the Union address, US President Herbert Hoover announced a huge public works programme to stimulate the economy and create jobs during the Great Depression.

80 years ago, on 29th December 1940 that Germany dropped thousands of incendiary bombs on London, causing the worst fire damage since the Great Fire of London in 1666. About 200 people were killed.

75 years ago, on 27th December 1945 that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development were formally founded.

70 years ago, on 14th December 1950 that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (also known as the UN Refugee Agency) was established.

65 years ago, on 1st December 1955 that African American civil rights activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama, violating the city's racial segregation laws. This incident led to the birth of the modern American civil rights movement.

60 years ago, on 9th December 1960 that the first episode of the television soap opera Coronation Street was broadcast in the UK.

40 years ago, on 8th December 1980 that John Lennon, rock musician and peace activist and a member of the Beatles, was shot dead, aged 40, outside his New York City apartment by Mark Chapman, a deranged fan.

30 years ago, on 1st December 1990 that British and French construction workers on the Channel Tunnel broke through the last wall of rock separating the two halves, and Britain and France were linked for the first time in thousands of years.

25 years ago, on 13th December 1995 that the Brixton riot took place in south London. Hundreds of youths rioted on the streets following the death of a black man in police custody.

20 years ago, on 13th December 2000 that George W Bush finally claimed the US presidency, 36 days after the election was held, following a legal battle over disputed votes in Florida.

15 years ago, on 19th December 2005 that the Civil Partnership Act came into effect in the UK. The first civil partnership under the act was formed in Belfast, that same day. The first in England and Wales were on 21st December.

10 years ago, from 18th December 2010 to December 2012 that the Arab Spring took place in North Africa and the Middle East. The Tunisian Revolution spread and became a wave of demonstrations, protests, riots, coups, foreign interventions, and civil wars in North Africa and the Middle East. The leaders and governments of several countries were overthrown and ousted, and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was killed (October 2011).

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS

The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Jesus. In the third century it was suggested that Jesus was conceived at the Spring equinox, 25th March, popularising the belief that He was born nine months later on 25th December. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, encouraged Christians worldwide to make Christmas a holy day in about 400.

In the early Middle Ages, Christians celebrated a series of midwinter holy days. Epiphany (which recalls the visit to the infant Jesus of the wise men bearing gifts) was the climax of 12 days of Christmas, beginning on 25th December. The Emperor Charlemagne chose 25th December for his coronation in 800, and the prominence of Christmas Day rose. In England, William the Conqueror also chose 25th December for his coronation in 1066, and the date became a fixture both for religious observance and feasting.

Cooking a boar was a common feature of mediaeval Christmas feasts, and singing carols accompanied it. Writers of the time lament the fact that the true significance of Christmas was being lost because of partying. They condemn the rise of 'misrule' – drunken dancing and promiscuity. The day was a public holiday, and traditions of bringing evergreen foliage into the house and the exchange of gifts (usually on Epiphany) date from this time.

In the 17th century the rise of new Protestant denominations led to a rejection of many celebrations that were associated with Catholic Christianity. Christmas was one of them. After the execution of Charles I, England's Puritan rulers made the celebration of Christmas illegal for 14 years. The restoration of Charles II ended the ban, but religious leaders continued to discourage excess, especially in Scotland. In Western Europe (but not worldwide) the day for exchanging gifts changed from Epiphany (6th January) to Christmas Day.

By the 1820s, the significance of Christmas was declining. Charles Dickens was one of several writers who sought to restore it. His novel *A Christmas Carol* was very significant in reviving merriment

during the festival. He emphasised charity and family reunions, alongside religious observance. Christmas trees, paper chains, cards and many well-known carols date from this time. So did the tradition of Boxing Day, on 26th December, when tradesmen who had given reliable service during the year would collect 'boxes' of money or gifts from their customers.

In Europe Santa Claus is the figure associated with the bringing of gifts. Santa Claus is a shortening of the name of Saint Nicholas, who was a Christian bishop in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. He was particularly noted for his care for children and for his generosity to the poor. By the Middle Ages his appearance, in red bishop's robes and a mitre, was adored in the Netherlands and familiar across Europe.

Father Christmas dates from 17th century England, where he was a secular figure of good cheer (more associated with drunkenness than gifts). The transformation of Santa Claus into today's Father Christmas started in New York in the 1880s, where his red robes and white beard became potent advertising symbols. In some countries (such as Latin America and Eastern Europe) the tradition attempts to combine the secular and religious elements by holding that Santa Claus makes children's presents and then gives them to the baby Jesus to distribute.

LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

The Church of England's Living in Love and Faith teaching resources have been recently published. They explore questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

The resources, commissioned by the House of Bishops, include a book, a series of films and podcasts and a course. They will initiate a process of whole Church learning that will contribute to the Bishops' discernment of a way forward in relation to questions of human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

GOING TO CHURCH DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

More than 17,000 online services and events have been provided by Church of England churches since the introduction of the lockdown and restrictions on public worship earlier this year.

Figures from the Church of England's [A Church Near You](#) website, which allows people to search for church services and events, show that more than 17,000 online services or events are now listed, including Sunday Communion services, Bible studies and morning or night prayer. Many of these services take place regularly and this figure represents a snapshot of the likely total number.

The statistics do not include the Church of England's national online weekly services broadcast on Sundays and shared on Facebook and YouTube. There have been nearly three million views of the national online services and posts about the weekly broadcasts have been seen 23.6 million times. Contributors have included the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Duke of Cambridge and Pope Francis.

The national online services are being watched by a wide range of ages and around one in five people viewing go to church infrequently or not at all.

Other figures in the report show that official Church of England apps from Church House Publishing – the most popular being Daily Prayer, or the Daily Office of morning, evening and night prayer – have been used more than seven million times so far this year, up from five million in 2019. Church of England social media posts have been seen 86 million times so far, nearly double the total for last year.

The growth in online services has been helped by the Church of England stepping up its digital training programme for congregations. More than 4,200 vicars and local church leaders have taken part in remote digital training courses so far this year, four times the number as in 2019.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: “At a time when many have felt isolated and fearful, Church of England parishes and clergy have broadcast thousands of online church services and events, seeking to bring comfort and hope to their communities. We know that tens of thousands of those tuning in will never have had contact with their local Church of England parish before and may never have heard the Christian message. Their welcome presence is a sign of the great hunger we all have for spiritual meaning in our lives.

THE CHILDREN’S SOCIETY

On behalf of The Children’s Society, I would like to say thank you to all of the box holders. When the boxes were opened the total was £153.75. Thank you for your generosity especially in these difficult times,

Wendy Pullin, Children’s Society Box Co-ordinator

ST. PETERS HOSPICE

I am extremely grateful for those who contributed to the St. Peter’s Hospice appeal. They have an extreme deficit in funds which they rely on, mainly because of the closure of their Charity shops and cancellation of events during the Pandemic and Lockdowns. Despite our small congregation and infrequency of services we raised £60.00’

Thank you, Jane Brown

A LITTLE HUMOUR

Picture

The teacher asked her Sunday School class to draw a picture of a Bible story with a Christmas theme. She was puzzled by Kate's picture, which showed four people on an airplane. She asked her which story it was meant to represent. 'The Flight to Egypt,' was the reply.

Pointing at each figure, the teacher ventured: 'That must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. But who's the fourth person?'"

'Oh,' explained Kate happily, 'that's Pontius – the pilot!'

Next Christmas

The grandson had just taken a photograph of his grandmother who'd come to stay for Christmas and her 89th birthday. 'Grannie, I sure hope I'm around next year to photograph you on your 90th birthday,' he said tactfully.

'Why not?' his grandmother shrugged. 'You look healthy enough.'

Friction at Christmas

This Christmas, when your family gets together, remember: a certain friction between the generations is inevitable. After all, the young and the old have all the answers and those in between are stuck with all the questions.

Drive

He was a careful driver during the Christmas period. At the railway crossing he stopped, looked and listened. All he heard was the car behind him, smashing into his boot.

Present

First man: 'My wife doesn't know what she wants for Christmas.'

Second man: 'You're lucky. Mine does.'

Attention

With several relatives visiting, I was struggling to get my wife's attention. So, I simply sat down and looked comfortable. That did the trick.

Christmas cake

Every Christmas, composer Giacomo Puccini would have a cake baked for each of his friends. One year, having quarrelled with Arturo Toscanini just before Christmas, he tried to cancel the order for the conductor's cake. But it was too late, as the cake had already been dispatched.

The following day, Toscanini received a telegram from Puccini: "Cake sent by mistake."

He replied by return: "Cake eaten by mistake."

Angels?

Two daughters had been given parts in a Christmas pageant at their Church. At dinner that night, they got into an argument as to who had the most important role.

Finally, the 14 year-old said to her 8 year-old younger sister, 'Well, you just ask Mum. She'll tell you it's much harder to be a virgin than it is to be an angel.'

Miscellaneous observations during the Christmas season...

Putting on weight is the penalty for exceeding the feed limit.

Christmas: The time when everyone gets Santamental.

People say it's the thought that counts, not the gift, but couldn't people think a little bigger?

Christmas is the season when your neighbour keeps you awake playing 'Silent Night'.

You might as well do your Christmas hinting early this year.

Father to three-year old: "No, a reindeer is not a horse with TV antenna."

Every year, Christmas becomes less a birthday and more a Clearance Sale.

Christmas is in my heart 12 months a year, and thanks to credit cards, it's on my Visa card statement 12 months a year as well.

Some of these new toys are so creative and inventive. This year they have a Neurotic Doll. It's wound up already.

Christmas is a time when people get emotional over family ties, particularly if they have to wear one.

A POEM THAT WAS READ AT THE FUNERAL SERVICE OF RITA JONES

We have 'Two Mothers' by Joann Snow Duncanson

(for a mother with Alzheimer's from her sons and daughter)

We have two mothers, two mothers we claim,
Two different people yet with the same name.
Two separate women, diverse by design,
But we love them both dearly, they both are divine.

The first is the mother that carried us here,
Gave birth and nurtured and launched our careers.
She is the one whose features we bear, complete with the facial
expressions we wear.
She gave us deep faith that follows us yet, along with examples in life
that she set.
Then as we got older she some younger grew, and we'd laugh as just
mothers and their children do.

And then came the year that her mind clouded so,
And we sensed that the mother we'd known would soon go.
As quickly she changed and turned into the other,
A stranger who dressed in the clothes of our mother.

Oh, she looked the same, at least at 'arm's length',
But she was the child now and we were her strength.
We've come full circle, we children and she,
Our mother, the first, the second and we.
And if our own children should come to a day,
When a new parent comes and the old goes away.
We'd ask of them nothing that we didn't do,
Love both of those parents as both have loved you.

*We hope this poem will have resonance with anyone who has been
through a similar experience,*

Karen & Tim Mayo