



stjohn's
welling
transforming life through Jesus Christ

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GRAPEVINE

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Greetings

Dear Friends

This is a 'bonus edition' largely the brainchild of Natasha- so well done!

Christmases seem to come along like the 89 bus – it only seems 10 minutes ago that we were singing 'Once in Royal David's City', and on Wednesday we will be once again at the TOFFS Carols. Familiarity can breed contempt, and I confess to a dulling of my excitement, particularly after one of the toughest years of my life (and I know it has been tough for many of you).

But that is missing the entire point of Christmas. It is about Good News – the good news that into our world of trouble, pain, isolation or whatever else ails **Christ broke through.**

Chris Tomlin wrote the lovely song 'Our God':

*'Into the darkness You shine
Out of the ashes we rise
There`s No one like you
None like you'*

And that is the amazing truth. In spite of our feelings Christ shines – and the darker the darkness the brighter the light.

I need to focus more on the Christ of Christmas and less on the Hype of Christmas, maybe we all do.

*'For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His
shoulder. And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'*
Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)

God bless you and bring you His peace and Joy this Christmas.

Adam Foot

KEY DATES

Tue 11th Dec 18.30 Cub, Beaver & Scout Carol Service

Sun 16th Dec 17.00 Christingle Service

Thurs 20th Dec 15.45 Messy Church

Sun 23rd Dec 10.30 Nativity Service

18.30 Carols by Candlelight

Mon 24th Dec 18.00 Crib Service

23.30 Midnight Holy Comm

25th Dec 10.30 Christmas Day Service

11.45 Short Holy Comm

Mon 31st Dec 23.30 Watchnight Service

Further details in regards to these services are available on the back page



Stuck in on your own this Christmas?

Single parent – children away?

Elderly and alone?

Young family but stressed on your own?

Friends and family all away?

No need to feel alone – come and get stuck in with us as we celebrate Christmas together

Community

Free Christmas lunch

Come and be part of our family

Join us from 12.30pm on Christmas Day at Bexleyheath Community Church

Please book your places by either: Phone John on 07462 877202

or online: www.mybcc.co.uk/community facebook: @bexcomchurch

Lyndhurst Chapel, Lyndhurst Road Barnehurst DA7 6DL

Transport available on request Please call us for details



The Christmas Cracker



Do you know that a cracker can tell us a lot about the Christmas story and the hope that Christmas brings us?

Usually crackers contain three items.

The first item is a joke.

When we read jokes or riddles quite often they will make us laugh, jokes can bring us great joy and happiness. Jesus came to earth as a tiny baby to bring us great joy. In a sometimes very dark world joy can seem far away, but the joy that comes from knowing Jesus can bring us great hope for a brighter future.

Most crackers contain a gift.

Sometimes the gift can be really useful, perhaps a big paper clip or a cookie cutter. If you are lucky enough to have luxury crackers you may even find some cufflinks or earrings inside. Many of us will spend hours traipsing round the shops looking for presents, probably spending more money than we actually have, we then spend ages wrapping the



presents for them to be ripped open and after a while the present may be put away or sometimes even discarded.

The gift reminds us that God sent his only son to us as the greatest gift of all. As a human race we had messed up and got things wrong and today we continue to mess things up. Jesus came to give us hope for the future.

The third thing we find in a cracker is a crown.

We all love wearing crowns at the Christmas dinner table! The crown reminds us that Jesus came to be our King. A small baby born in the stable was not the king that the people had imagined, but he came to be our King. We may not be able to see him and he may not sit on an earthly throne, like kings and queens through history but he is with us and in us through his Holy Spirit.

This Christmas let's look at our crackers differently.

Let's see them as a message of hope, Jesus came to bring us joy in a dark and difficult world, He came as the most precious gift and He came to be our King, the King of our heart and our lives. But most of all Jesus came to bring us hope, hope of a future with him.

God bless,

Danielle Pearson-Smith



Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist

Shortly after Christmas on the 27th of December, is the day we recognise St John the Apostle and Evangelist.

Being a significant figure to our Church, St John the Evangelist, Welling I thought I'd use 'Google' to see what I could find out about him.

So, my search revealed that John was the son of Zebedee. He was born in Bethsaida which is understood to be on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. He was a fisherman and was called to follow Jesus when he was tending his nets.

John was one of the twelve apostles as was his older brother James. Prior to following Jesus it has been suggested that both James and John were followers of John the Baptist.

He may have been the youngest of the disciples of Jesus and is referred to as 'the Disciple whom Jesus loved'.

John was the only disciple at the foot of the cross. Jesus entrusted his mother Mary to John's care.

In art, John is either depicted as a young beardless man (following on from the youngest disciple theme) or a very old man. It is thought that although John was prepared to be a martyr, it was his brother James who was the first apostle to die a martyr's death. John outlived all the other apostles and was the only one to die of natural causes.

John was banished to the Island of Patmos by Roman authorities. He spent his later years in Ephesus, where he established a Church and his tomb is thought to be in the vicinity of the city.

Finally, John is accredited for writing the fourth Gospel. Depending on the source, he may (or may not) be the author of three Epistles and the book of Revelation.

Natasha Cook



Go Let it Snow!

If things are going wrong?
Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.

Someone you're upset with?
Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.

Bad memories following you?
Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.

Hang on, I've got it wrong,
"Let it go, let it go, let it go."

Peter Ainsworth



As December approaches I look forward to the special traditions that it brings. This year a beautiful set of Advent Candles was brought into the Church office which roused my curiosity. So, I thought I'd find out some more about them.

Have you ever noticed the circular shape of Advent candle holders or Advent wreaths? This is symbolic of infinite love and eternal life.

There are four candles placed around an Advent Candle ring. They represent the four Sundays of Advent.

Often three of these candles are purple and one is rose coloured.

A fifth white candle that may be of greater width than the other candles, sits in the centre.

The Symbolism of the Advent



Interestingly, there are a few variations on what the Advent Candles symbolise, the following being just one of them:

The purple candle that is lit on the first Sunday of Advent symbolises HOPE.

The next purple candle lit on the second Sunday of Advent symbolises PEACE.

On the third Sunday of Advent a rose coloured candle is lit that symbolises JOY.

Next, on the fourth Sunday of Advent the final purple candle is lit that symbolises LOVE.

Lastly on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day a white candle known as the 'Christ Candle' is lit. It symbolises the birth of Jesus Christ, the light of the world.



Details of St John's Welling Services over

Christingle Service

A family service where all receive a 'Christingle' which means 'Christ Light' that is made up of four elements:

- An orange, representing the world.
- A candle representing Jesus Christ as the Light of the World,
- A red ribbon wrapped around the orange representing the blood of Christ,
- Sweets skewered on cocktail sticks pushed into the orange, representing the fruits of the earth and the four seasons.

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Nativity Service

Where young and old are invited to dress up as the characters of the Nativity as together we tell and act out the Nativity event.

Carols by Candlelight

A popular family event featuring a candle lit church and our favourite Christmas Carols.

Crib Service

A family oriented service themed around the birth of Jesus and his crib.

Christmas Day Service

All welcome to celebrate the birth of Christ.