



# Pivot

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## EDITORIAL

As the familiar sights and sounds of Christmas return to our lives – twinkling lights adorning windows, the echo of carols in the air, and the joyful hustle and bustle on our streets – it's easy to get swept away by the season's excitement. Yet amid the festivities, we are called to pause and reflect on the deeper meaning of this celebration and the enduring message it brings to our faith community.

Christmas is, at its heart, a story of presence – not just presents. The birth of Christ reminds us of God's profound gift: Emmanuel, "God with us." In our busy lives, it can be tempting to focus on material preparations, but the true joy of Christmas lies in our ability to be present with one another. Whether gathering with loved ones around the dinner table, reaching out to those who are lonely, or sharing a quiet prayer, we are invited to emulate God's love through simple acts of kindness and compassion.

4 This past year has brought its share of challenges for many in our church and wider community. Yet, the Christmas story shines as a beacon of hope. The humble birth in a stable reminds us that even in uncertain circumstances, love can flourish and light can break through the darkness. Let us hold onto this hope, and carry it forward into the new year, supporting one another through prayer, encouragement, and practical help.

6 The articles in this Christmas edition of Pivot illustrate the great variety of Christmas traditions across different parts of the world yet they all possess a common thread – the joy of sharing and celebrating the good news of Christ's birth. But in that joy let us not forget it is also a time of renewal of our faith and trust in God. May his love fill your homes and our church, guiding us into the new year with faith, compassion, and unity.

10 Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed and merry Christmas.

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# He is Coming!

Rev Karen James



Dear Friends,

Most of the major shops and supermarkets have released their new adverts...it must be Christmas! The TV ad campaign has become quite a tradition in the lead up to Christmas over the last few years, and they really know how to reach their audience. Ranging through funny, emotive, meaningful, every day, imaginative even rom-com, there are no limits to the genres and styles that have been used. Yet all convey in some way the traditional expectations of Christmas time; of generosity, hospitality and good will towards everyone.

We will all have our traditions and rituals in this season. My family still gift each other Christmas pyjamas to be opened and worn on Christmas Eve. We no longer have the traditional balloon fight after Christmas Dinner, which only stopped when someone started crying or all the balloons had burst whichever came first. I have very fond memories of my Christmases as a child, and I still enjoy them today. They are different but we have created new traditions alongside the old ones.



I am also aware that this time of year is, and will be, difficult for some of us, finding space between the jocular and festivities that are the expectation for the season. The Methodist Church's chapel is open at the same time as the coffee lounge, and it is available for anyone who wishes to step away from the bustle of Christmas just for a moment. There will also be other spaces and times in the other churches in Broadstone for this too.

One of the church's big traditions is the observance of Advent, held in the four weeks before Christmas. Advent is about preparation, but not the buying presents and food kind, rather preparing ourselves spiritually for the arrival of Jesus. It is where we step back and take in the bigger picture of God's son being gifted to the world and recognise that this is a story that spans across the ages as well as a specific time in history. Where we intentionally make room in our lives to welcome God. Where we anticipate the hope, joy, peace and love that God will bring, and reflect it to others around us.



Another great tradition is the telling of the nativity story, in all sorts of forms and expressions, I suspect that many of us will remember having to wear either a tea towel or a ring of tinsel on our heads at some point in our school years. Whether it is a live action production with real animals or using simple images and words, at its core the story remains the same: God's own son, born into an everyday family as a vulnerable baby in extraordinary circumstances, to live and work in and alongside humanity. Observing and highlighting the traditions and routines of the time as well as breathing in new life. Turning upside down our expectations of how things should be. 'God with us' or 'Emmanuel'.

Whatever your traditions, however you observe this time of year, may we all know God's blessing of joy, peace, hope and love this Christmas and beyond.

*Rev Karen*

# Christmas Past Memories of Malta

Lynda Hurrell

In the 1960's, my brother-in-law Hugh and his family were stationed on the island of Malta (HMS Bulwark, Fleet Air Arm), in fact our nephew Paul was born there in 1963. My husband Handel, as a teenager visited to stay with his much older brother (in fact 10 years older), during the summer holidays and loved the islands. When we met, Handel was very keen to introduce me to the islands and Malta became our first overseas holiday destination in 1978, then followed many later visits after my brother-in-law and his then wife Susan decided to emigrate to Malta in December 1990 taking his parents and mother-in-law too, although his parents returned to live in the UK in 1996.

One of the most memorable occasions we visited Malta was for Christmas 1994. Handel and I took our family (Owen 15 years and Laura 11 years and my mum Betty because it was her 70th birthday on 2 January 1995); and a few select Christmas presents to open on Christmas Day.

Attractions in the preparations for Christmas are organised by each village, with a display of lights hung in the streets and competition between the

*A public garden crib scene*



*A Village Crib Scene*  
with a busy Bethlehem hillside made by children  
(stable bottom left)

villages to 'out do' each other and be 'the best'. A coach trip was booked to make a three hours circuit of the 'best' lights that year, which we joined, visiting Valletta, a major hub for Christmas lights, with festive decorations along Republic Street and a Christmas market in Triton Square. Other key spots for light displays which we saw include the historic streets of Mdina, and modern areas like Sliema, St. Julian's, Kircop and Qormi.

On Gozo, where Susan now lives, the capital, Victoria, is beautifully lit, and the famous living nativity village of Bethlehem f'Għajnsielem is a major attraction.

The Christmas attraction our children most enjoyed were the village nativity cribs and public garden cribs. All differed in size from a full size representation of the nativity stable to some not much bigger than a tea tray and everything in between. We didn't manage to join any of the English language Christmas services, most were in Valletta and we were staying in the north of the Island. We enjoyed Christmas dinner, games and dancing at the hotel, with the family, all 10 of us! It was a wonderful experience.

# Christmas Present and so to Denmark

Lynda Hurrell

My daughter Laura has a Danish partner and stepson and since 2018 they have spent the Christmas time together alternating between Lynge, Denmark and Poole, UK. In Poole they have followed UK traditions with our family, opening Christmas presents on Christmas day with Christmas Dinner early afternoon and more presents afterwards from the wider family. For Christmas 2024 in Poole, Laura asked Søren if he could make their traditional Danish Christmas dessert of Risalamande with cherry sauce, and a hidden whole almond as a prize. We all approved, it was delicious. For us it was a posh but light rice pudding with lots of plant based cream, almonds and vanilla, served cold and topped with warm cherry sauce! In Denmark this pudding is also left out on Christmas Eve for the elves. There were also walks and visits between Christmas and New Year. On New Year's Eve at midnight we all held hands as a



family and on the stroke of 12 we all jumped forward a step into the New Year. Then we enjoyed our traditional walk exploring the area for New Year's Day with our friends and family.

This year Laura and Søren have asked me to join them in Denmark. Although I shall miss sharing Christmas with Owen, Helen and Ioan, I am really looking forward to learning more of their Danish traditions, some of which Laura has already experienced and has described for me. For Laura and Søren their main Christmas meal is dinner on Christmas Eve, and consists of Roast Pork with ready salted crisps, red cabbage and boiled and caramelised potatoes, plus of course the already mentioned Risalamande with cherry sauce for dessert. Other festive foods include gløgg (mulled wine), æbleskiver (pancake puffs), pebernødder (peppernuts are hard small cookies) and Christmas gingerbread cookies like brunkager. Gift-giving also happens on 24 December often after dinner and it's a tradition in Danish homes to dance around the Christmas tree, holding hands as a family while you sing Christmas songs, before you start opening your presents. In Denmark, Santa Claus is known as Julemanden (literally "the Yule Man"), who travels on a sleigh drawn by reindeer/horses, with presents for the children. His helpers are elves known as julenisser (or simply nisser), who are traditionally believed to live in attics, barns or similar places. Children leave hay, carrots and saucers of milk or rice pudding for the nisser on the afternoon of the 24th as a thank you for all their hard work and so they will not play pranks (such as hiding keys) or cause trouble in the household. Some households place little wooden nisser doors (like fairy doors), above the skirting board and decorate them to make them feel welcome at Christmas.

Many Danes have a second, more casual Christmas lunch with family or friends on 25 or 26 December, which may include open sandwiches (smørrebrød) and akvavit (a strong spirit). These days are for chilling after all the hard work and preparations of Christmas.

I am very excited to be joining my Danish family for Christmas and look forward to having fun.

# Father Christmas or Santa Claus?

Christine Maguire

Belgian children are so lucky, children in this country must think – they get two lots of presents. First of all, on 6 December, St Nicholas Day, and then on 25 December as well. If 6 December falls on a weekday, as a teacher, you can forget anything constructive going on in the classroom. Since my 15 years' experience of teaching in a primary school in Belgium, I would say that 6 December was the highlight of the autumn term for many of my pupils. As St Nicholas went from classroom to classroom, you never knew exactly when he would arrive. Then suddenly there would be a knock on the classroom door and in would come St Nicholas, in full bishop's regalia – flowing red robes and a very distinctive mitre as a reminder that he was originally a bishop. The interesting addition to this spectacle in Wallonia was Père Fouettard. As the name implies, he was there to punish any naughty children with a few lashes from his whip, although I never actually saw a whip. It was my job to assure Père Fouettard that all my pupils had been well-behaved so no-one deserved a whipping. On receiving this assurance, St Nicholas would then throw handfuls of sweets towards the children. Inevitably this led to a mad scramble for sweets and subsequent boasting about how many they had managed to collect.

The Flemish equivalent of Père Fouettard has recently caused quite a bit of controversy in Flanders and the Netherlands where St Nicholas' assistant is (or perhaps now 'was') known as Zwarde Piet – Black Peter. Although this character possibly



predates Dutch colonialism, it has recently come to be regarded as racist to have a black person in this role. I've heard that there is a suggestion to rename him Roetveegpiet (Sooty Peter) referring to the fact that he got smudges of soot on his face on his way down the chimney!

Another interesting aspect of the Christmas story is that for the English-speaking world, Father Christmas and Santa Claus are synonymous, whereas the name Santa Claus is a corruption of the Dutch Sinterklaas (St Nicholas) which the Dutch settlers took over to the USA and which somehow morphed into Santa Claus, who now brings his sackfuls of presents on Christmas Eve and not on the eve of St Nicholas' Day.

## Back in 1975

Hilary Morgan

I am the youngest of four, pictured in 1975, when Dad invented photobombing! Note the Christmas tablecloth, which we still use today.

I remember Christmas at Ashley Road Methodist Church, where Mum – Barbara Morgan –

was leader of the sizeable Sunday school primary department. I recall fondly our nativity plays, Christingle services and Christmas morning, when I would choose my favourite stocking present to take and show in the service. Family presents remained underneath the Christmas tree until after Christmas dinner, the Queen's speech and sometimes a brisk afternoon walk – we had to be very patient!



# Christmas Memories

Terry Millard

As I sit by my mum's bedside at the end stage of her life, it is easy to reflect on the Christmases of my childhood.

With my mum, dad, two brothers and sister, we were tight for space in our small three bedrooned terraced house in Walthamstow, London. On Christmas Eve I was usually despatched to the launderette to do the washing and get it all dried – much to my annoyance!

On returning home my nan, whose birthday it was on Christmas Eve, and uncle Ernie would have arrived and sat waiting for my mum and dad to return from work to cook tea for the eight of us. We, the children, would then be packed off to bed after getting dressed downstairs in front of the fire and hanging up our stockings.

My nan would share my bedroom, with her box hearing aids on the bedside table along with her teeth in a glass. She would also bring a hot cup of tea to bed, to be drunk cold in the morning from the saucer.

On Christmas morning we were not allowed downstairs until mum or dad announced 'he's been'. As my brother was scared of Father Christmas, he wasn't allowed in our house, but left the stockings on the door step.



Oh the excitement of opening our stockings! Usually we had an apple, orange, some nuts, some shiny new pennies, some chocolate money, a whistle, a paper Christmas hat and a comic. After breakfast and church, my other nan and auntie Doris would arrive to join in the festivities. By then my uncle would have placed the rota on the back of the kitchen door of who was doing washing up and tea making etc with everyone joining in.

We would all sit down to dinner in the kitchen, with the adults around the table and the children around a paste board table, propped up underneath with the ironing board to stop it collapsing. We would always exchange our gifts after the Queen's speech. As children, we would either make our gifts or save our pocket money to buy small items from 'Woolies', usually a pocket diary or bath cubes.

This has jogged another memory of taking pocket money to school in a small matchbox each week to buy a Princess Anne stamp, to put into our post office savings book. I, along with many children at the time, also belonged to the 'Tufty Club'.

The rest of Christmas was spent with all ten of us playing parlour games, like charades or hunt the thimble, along with playing darts or cards.

As I look back I know I was blessed to live in a family that, although didn't have much, was filled with love and joy.



# Christmas in Ukraine

## A Cultural Celebration Amidst Turbulent Times

Mike Brooke

Christmas holds a special place in Ukrainian culture, marked by vibrant traditions, deep-rooted faith, and family gatherings. However, the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict has cast a shadow over these cherished celebrations. So, how was Christmas celebrated and what changes have occurred since the Russian invasion? Is Christmas still a time to celebrate?

Traditionally, Ukrainians celebrated Christmas on 7 January, according to the Julian calendar. The festivities begin with *Sviat Vechir* (Holy Evening), where families gather for a twelve-dish meatless supper, symbolising the twelve apostles. *Kutia*, a sweet grain pudding, is the centrepiece of the meal, and carollers, known as '*Koliadnyky*', visit homes singing joyful songs and bringing well wishes for the new year.

Religious services, the decoration of homes with *didukh* (sheaves of wheat), and the lighting of candles are integral to the celebrations. In many regions, traditional plays called '*Vertep*' depict the nativity scene, blending Christian and folk motifs.

Since the Russian invasion countless aspects of daily life, including the celebration of Christmas, have been badly affected. One of the main changes relates to the date of Christmas Day itself. It is now generally celebrated on 25 December in line with most west European countries. This represents a deliberate attempt to distance the country and its people from Russian influences. However, any celebrations are difficult. Many families have been displaced, churches damaged, and communities torn apart. In areas affected by fighting, it has become difficult, if not impossible, to gather freely for religious services or family reunions. The simple joy of carolling from house to house is now fraught with safety concerns, and curfews often limit festive activities.

For those who have sought refuge abroad or in other parts of Ukraine, Christmas has taken on new significance, offering a sense of continuity and hope. Exiled communities strive to uphold their traditions, sometimes adapting rituals to suit their new environments, while using the holiday to pray for peace and remember loved ones lost or separated by the conflict.

Despite the hardships, Ukrainians continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience. Christmas has become a time not only for celebration but also for solidarity and reflection. Volunteer groups organise gatherings for displaced persons, bringing together people from different regions and generations. Churches and community centres provide safe spaces for worship and communal meals, while online platforms allow families to connect virtually when physical reunions are not possible.

Some new traditions have emerged, such as lighting candles in windows to honour those serving on the front lines. Prayers for peace and national unity have become more prominent in Christmas services. These acts highlight both the enduring spirit of the Ukrainian people and the hope of victory and freedom. For many, Christmas serves as a reminder of the values and identity that unite Ukrainians in the face of adversity.

Ukrainian Christmas traditions are a testament to the country's rich cultural heritage and enduring faith. While the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has altered the way many experience the holiday, it has also underscored the importance of family, community, and hope. Through adaptation and resilience, Ukrainians continue to celebrate Christmas, keeping their traditions alive and their spirits unbroken in the face of adversity.



# Christmas Cribs

Joan Jackson

I was wondering how many people include a Christmas Crib in their home decorations.

I know that at home we always have a lovely wooden crib as the centrepiece over the fireplace – I think for the last thirty two years!

Before that, I have fond memories of making figures out of toilet rolls and bits of material when the children were small, with a stable made out of a wooden crate. This had to come out every year and was even the centre of a Christmas service when I wrote a sketch where the children assembled the crib but managed to forget the baby Jesus! I'm sure you get the idea of the message behind that – many people today have little idea of what the celebration is all about!!

*The Crib scene in the Coffee Lounge*



Many years ago one of our members donated the lovely wooden figures which we place on the communion table each year giving a focus for our thoughts. Terry created a wonderful Christmas tree with the figures telling the story of the first Christmas. Every year we have our super crib scene in the Coffee Lounge which is always lit at night so everyone is able to come and see.

From the internet I discovered that the first Christmas Crib is said to have been organised by St Francis of Assisi in Italy after his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Christmas 1223 he had the idea of representing the Nativity to include all the people who were unable to make a pilgrimage.

It would become an indispensable tradition, a symbol of Christmas and a joy for children and adults as well.

# Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Singing the Faith No 202

Ray Cornick

Written in 1739 originally in ten verses, now we sing three, Charles Wesley's hymn has been my favourite Christmas carol for many years. I suppose it began in the school choir when we sang a Christmas Carol Service each year, the highlight being at Christchurch Priory. We always ended with Wesley's hymn.

In this little piece I want to look at some of the important words in the carol and discuss their relevance.

## GLORY

Glory is the most important word in the first verse. We use glory and its adjective so lightly today, talking of an election outcome, or a football match result or a young man admiring a pretty girl. But glory in the carol refers back to the cloud that covered the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament Wilderness days, known as the shekinah.

Thus, Christ is the glory of God made visible to those who have eyes to see it. But there is more. The entire Passion of Jesus is presented in his glorification. He goes to the cross as a king to his coronation. It can be said that in Christ's Passion and Resurrection the whole glory of God is revealed. The cloud is lifted and we see God's glory.

## CHRIST

Charles Wesley sings 'Adored by Heaven' and we may well have that sentiment as Advent comes to a close and Christmas beckons. He comes *late in time*, hundreds of years after the first prophecies of the Messiah. We may well ask how late in time will his second coming, promised long, be in coming.

*Peace on earth* has scarcely come except for the peace that passes all understanding, that found in Christian hearts.

*Mercy mild* has seen great strides over the years and for that we must so often thank Christians in high places and low.

*Veiled in flesh*, Jesus reveals the God of the Shekinah.

What of these words God? Christ and Messiah. Messiah and Christ are the same person, muddled in translation from Hebrew to Greek and then to English. St John tells us that the Word (Jesus Christ) was with God and was God.



This marvellous hymn shows the thoughts of the Wesleys in interpreting the work and being of Christ.

## HARK!

Here is the instruction that marked the brother's preaching ministry. Listen to the good News. Not (you will be glad to know) a theological word, but a message to do.

Listen to the Angels!  
Act as did the shepherds!  
Listen to what the Man has to say!

Only then will the aspirations of Wesley and the Angels come to fruition in our lives.

Hark! This Christmas. In the midst of traffic chaos, long queues at the supermarket tills, the sound of the carols over the Tannoy drowned by the ping of credit cards presented at the card reader, Hark! To the angels. Behold the Christ has come.

Hark the herald Angels sing, Glory to the newborn King.

The Messiah, The Christ, The anointed one as in King of the earth.

Hail the incarnate deity, born that man no more may die.

# Christmas Celebrations

**Friday 19 December**  
10.30am

**Carols and Cakes**  
in the coffee lounge

**Sunday 21 December**  
10.30am

**Celebration Worship**  
led by Joan Jackson

6.30pm

**Carol Service**  
led by Rev Karen James

**Christmas Eve**  
**Wednesday 24 December**  
11.30pm

**Midnight Communion**  
at the United Reformed Church

**Christmas Day**  
**Thursday 25 December**  
10.30am

**Christmas Worship**  
led by Rev Karen James

**Sunday 28 December**  
10.30am

**Worship**  
led by Ann Beasley

# The Wendy House

## Jacky Tewkesbury

Hello everyone, we are the Wendy House Toddler Team. We are Lynda, Sylvia, myself (Jacky), and a lovely lady called Louise who has recently joined us, and who is proving to be a wonderful help to the group. We also have the help of the Wednesday Brownie and Guide Leaders who put out the equipment and toys, books, puzzles etc the evening before our group is held on Thursday mornings.

Putting the equipment away at the end of the session was beginning to prove difficult for us, as we like everyone else are getting older! We prayed for assistance and our prayers were answered. Sylvia's husband, Steve, who now comes along every week to put everything away in the cupboard. We are so thankful for his help.

### *This is how our session begins:*

The children, aged from birth to about four years old, come along with their mums, some dads, grandmas and carers, into our large room at 10.00am, and the children play alongside each other happily and peacefully. The adults enjoy a sociable time together too which we feel is essential for busy mums and all the adults. There is coffee, tea and snacks for adults – biscuits for all.

At 11.00am, we push the toys aside and form a semi-circle of large chairs and small chairs. We sing songs, nursery rhymes, and always have a story. We encourage children to come and sing on their own to encourage their confidence and self-esteem. We have a band which is thoroughly enjoyed and which certainly has a 'big band' sound! We are considering



entering the band into the 'Young Musicians of the Year'!

At the end of the morning we always have a shower of bubbles into the air to the tune of 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'. At approximately 11.40am, its time to go home!

We asked all the adults for their comments about the group and we were so happy to find how much they and their children enjoy coming each week. They spoke about the community feeling, safe play area, all children being treated respectfully, mindful of their individuality, and how well planned the session was. Also the main thing, how much they enjoy coming each week.

So we are pleased to say that the Wendy House is still thriving after many, many years. The future is in the hands of the young, and hopefully we will, with God's help, continue to be a happy port for these children to grow up and enjoy life.



### *The parents and carers say: -*

"The children have so much fun, and all the parents and grandparents are so close, it's wonderful,"

"A welcoming group for children, parents and grandparents. The children enjoy playing, and learn sharing. There is always a smile and a biscuit!!"

"A lovely group; very friendly; well organised. An amazing facility for just £2.50."

# The Cross

Mike Brooke

Many of you would have noticed that we were without our outside cross for a time during late summer and early autumn. Sadly, the original cross had become a victim of the elements after almost 23 years acting as a witness to our faith and a pointer to our role within the community. It was, therefore, important that it be replaced as quickly as possible. A task that proved to be a little more challenging than any of us imagined.

With the risk of part of the cross falling away from the main upright and the impossibility of a repair being successful there was only one solution – to dismantle it, and as quickly as possible to avoid a serious accident. It was imperative that the whole structure be dismantled. This was done with no real idea of what to do with the various bits or how to acquire a replacement.

As an eco-church we have started a small wood pile from previous Christmas trees, so it seemed a logical solution to add the cross's rotting wood to the pile thus enhancing what is becoming a home for a myriad of organisms, beetles and other creatures. A new purpose for the old cross and a win for our eco-church credentials.

While we were still thinking about which company could possibly supply a new cross, the issue was resolved when a local resident and occasional user of the coffee lounge offered his services and provided us



with the name of a company that could supply the necessary timber.

While awaiting delivery of the timber the metal components that enabled the cross to be securely fixed in position were restored and protected against further deterioration. Finally, the day came when we could collect the cross from where it had been assembled – but how do you transport an exceptionally heavy construction that is over three metres in length and has arms stretching for more than two and a half metres? Whilst a 'walk of witness' would have attracted a lot of attention it was not a feasible solution to the problem. Fortunately, we were provided with access to a small trailer and with a little bit of Heath Robinson ingenuity and nearly an hour of hard work the cross was safely secured and ready for its one-mile journey to church. Every pothole was carefully avoided or at least driven over at a very slow speed. On arrival it took less than five minutes to unload and a further thirty to raise and fix it in position, a position that will continue to remind everyone of our faith and role in the community.

Very many thanks are due to the team of volunteers who made this happen: Dave, Tony, Matt, Phil, Paul and Mike and equally, very many thanks to our anonymous donor for being so generous.



# Singing in the School Choir

Lynda Hurrell

The Lighthouse – Poole School Music Association is a group that works with many local schools to promote music. The PSMA holds an annual Christmas concert at Lighthouse Poole, which has been run for over 20 years, bringing together hundreds of schoolchildren from various local schools, ranging from primary to secondary, to participate in the concert and perform for their families and the community.

The concert features children performing in choirs and orchestras, singing and playing a variety of music. The event serves as the main fundraiser for the association, which helps promote music in Poole's schools throughout the year.

Last December 2024 both Serena and Ioan participated, each with their own school but singing the same songs, in a presentation of music from Africa. Ioan said, "I liked the song Toto best." Serena said she was overwhelmed with excitement and felt so proud to be singing on stage.

This year's PSMA Christmas Concert is on 11 December in Poole Lighthouse Concert Hall. Tickets are available to the general public. Serena says she is thrilled to be part of the Christmas Choir this year! She says she absolutely loves the team spirit that comes with being in a choir. Serena loves singing all the time – morning, noon and night – and can't wait to share the joy during the Christmas Concert.



In 2024, Ioan also had the opportunity to join with his school choir for Young Voices at the O2 Arena.

Again this year, they are joining the event for the Choir of 26 celebrating 30 years of Young Voices, in January. They are learning many songs, one set is a medley of songs from 'Wicked'. Ioan's favourites are 'Star Gazing', 'Whatever' and 'Wellerman' from the Sea Shanty medley. Ioan says "Singing with my school choir gives me opportunities with my friends, and singing at the O2 is amazing, there are hundreds and hundreds of children taking part. I enjoy being part of something much bigger and singing makes me happy!"

## Christmas Quiz

A prize of one of Mike Brooke's photographs, mounted and signed on the back, to the first correct answers received at the church by the end of December.

- 1 In which word are none of the letters used twice?  
*A: Mistletoe      B: Christmas  
C: Ornament      D: Stocking*
- 2 Which Christmas Carol is this code for?  
*The Valance and the Poison*

- 3 If 1=A, 2 = B, 3 = C etc, what is spelt by the sum:  
 $18 + 15 + 2 + 9 + 14 ?$
- 4 What same two letters fill in the gaps to make three Christmas Words:  
*T\_ \_ sel      Re\_ \_ deer      Tid\_ \_ gs ?*
- 5 There are seven Christmas trees in a row on Fir Avenue. They were each planted seven metres apart.  
In metres, what is the distance between the first and last tree?



## Marilyn Greenaway

As Homelessness Sunday falls during October we decided that our theme for the October Café Church would be the work done in our community to support the homeless and vulnerably housed and those suffering from food insecurity.

We invited two guests, one from Routes to Roots and the other from Corfe Mullen Food Bank. They each gave us an insight into the work they do with people who do not enjoy the material stability most of us enjoy.

Routes to Roots, based in the Genesis Centre (a former church) in Hill Street, Poole, works on Christian principles to support rough sleepers, the vulnerably housed (sofa surfers and those in B&B accommodation) and the newly housed who were formerly homeless. They are able to provide hot meals on 5 days a week, showers, laundry facilities, clothing, sleeping bags, support groups and access to computers which enable some professional help in the areas of housing, health and well-being. It is also at the centre where rough sleepers are housed when temperatures fall below acceptable levels. As an organisation Route to Roots is able to advocate for the vulnerable and engage with other similar agencies across the BCP conurbation.

The support offered is positive and aims to improve the lives of those who for whatever reason have no real place to call home.

The Corfe Mullen Food Bank is based in St Nicholas Church and is run by a charity

independent of the Trussell Trust, giving it the opportunity to develop its own guidelines and characteristics. The centre is open usually on two mornings weekly and seeks to distribute food parcels intended to last a few days to those in immediate food poverty. Quite often this is to families who are faced with a large, unexpected bill such as a vital car repair which depletes their limited financial resources too far. Support is also provided in the form of "recipe bags" to encourage families to cook healthy, affordable food.

During the school summer holiday activity packs are prepared for children as low-cost entertainment. Donations of food come from many local sources, including our own Harvest Festival collection of suitable tins and packets. These are very welcome alongside financial contributions which enable the ever increasing demand for food bank services to be met.

*Our next Café Church will be held on 25 January 2026 when at the invitation of Churches Together in Broadstone we host an event during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We plan to meet again in March and would really welcome any ideas as to what form this might take. It would be good also to have another person (or two) to join the team in planning future Café Church events. You do not have to lead the afternoon, your ideas will be more than welcome.*

- 6 How many letters appear more than once in the following:  
*HAPPY CHRISTMAS ?*
- 7 Decipher the Common Christmas Phrase:  
GOOD DAY SPRING, HI THERE SUMMER,  
HEY AUTUMN, HELLO WINTER
- 8 If SANTA has 2, a REINDEER has 4 and a SNOWMAN has 2.  
Which of the following has none?  
*A GOLD B FRANKINCENSE C MYRRH*
- 9 If TQSPVUT is the code for SPROUTS,  
what food is UVSLFZ code for?

- 10 What do the end of Christmas and the beginning of Summer have in Common?
- 11 The name of which book and film character is written below with all the letters in alphabetical order?  
*BCEEEEGNOORRSZ*
- 12 What pattern is shared by the other words that makes Candy the odd one out in this list?  
*A: Primary B: Hosanna  
C: Disgrace D: Candy*

# Memories of Tuscany

John Hartigan

Each year my dear late wife Sue and I always looked forward to our annual holiday after a year of hard work in our stressful jobs. And for us both, there was only one place to go. The beautiful region of Tuscany in Italy. Long a favourite destination of British tourists over the last 250 years or so, when one arrives in Tuscany, it's not hard to see why. The region is characterised by gently rolling hills, green fields, vineyards and characterful buildings.

We always travelled there in September, just at a time when most tourists have gone home, workers have gone back to work in the cities and children are back at school. We therefore had the freedom of the open roads with little traffic, the sun was shining (usually!) and temperatures were a balmy 26° or so.

Our secret bolthole was located deep in the Tuscan countryside. Now I must say this. If you come here and you're looking for nightlife, lots of activity and noise (such as you get in Ibiza) then this is most definitely NOT the place for you. The place we found was essentially a refuge of peace and quiet, a very remote spacious estate situated amongst rolling ancient undulating vistas stretching forth and overlooking ancient hilltop towns in the distance. Located within the estate was a converted

monastery comprising six refurbished apartments in the old Tuscan style. A large swimming pool was about 100m away. With no one usually around, there was of course none of the unseemly and quite honestly classless squabbling (usually with Germans!) that happens when one is looking to procure a lounger by a hotel pool. Not for us thank you!

Riccardo, who owned the estate, always looked forward to us coming. He was ready at the entrance with his jeep when we arrived. After a cursory handshake with me, he then whisked Sue away for a long chat. He was clearly in love with my wife – romance was in the air between them! But I didn't mind.

Now, ladies and gentlemen of the church, you're probably reading this assuming that I'm somewhat blinkered in my love of Tuscany and all things Italian. Let me straight away disabuse you of such a baseless delusion. Of course I'm aware of many other places one could spend a holiday (Outer Mongolia must have its attractions!) But we were happy here in Tuscany so why change? .

A typical day for us started after a restful night's sleep with a leisurely breakfast sitting outside the apartment. This usually consisted of fresh bread,



ham, cheese, olives, tomatoes and the smell of tea or coffee (tea is not easily obtainable in Italy so I smuggled in my own supply). A warm gentle wind was blowing. The coming day beckoned!

After breakfast, there followed a leisurely and very pleasant drive into our beloved Pienza, about 8km away. Built by Pope Pius II in C14 as his summer residence, this intimate little gem of a walled town, set about 1100m above sea level, features little squares, verandahs, gardens, cafes, restaurants and of course little churches with cloisters and towers. Church bells ring out regularly. It is undoubtedly a masterpiece of early renaissance town planning and is recognised as such as a UNESCO world heritage site. The smell of Pine trees from the surrounding countryside outside the walls pervades the air. Each Wednesday is market



day and the place is alive with the excited chatter of the locals catching up on their news. The stalls, beautifully set out, exhibited local produce like cheeses, hams, various meats, olives, soft drinks beers and wines. Fresh bread is available from the baker in the town square. The smell of fresh coffee is everywhere. Italians like their 'espresso' in the mornings. And ladies, there are small intimate boutiques set into the ancient walls. If you like leather goods such as handbags, purses, bags, shoes, designer clothes and jewellery, then this is definitely the place for you! Tuscany is known for the quality of its jewellery and leather goods. Italian designs of clothes and shoes are among the very best in the world.

After a morning's shopping and wandering around the market we might just settle at a restaurant within the town for a light leisurely lunch. The tables were always set out properly with linen,



followed by lovely food, usually pasta, pizza or a meat dish with wine and/or coffee and maybe a beer or a soft drink too. After lunch, if we weren't going exploring somewhere else, it was time to head back to base for a strenuous afternoon's lounging by the pool – perfect!

I recall one day sitting there in the lazy afternoon sun perched under an umbrella with a sun hat, shorts, sunglasses, a beer in hand, a good book, a gentle breeze, perfect stillness, the gentle lapping of the water in the pool alongside, looking out over the ancient vista towards Pienza. There was no one else around. I used to say to myself that if the Good Lord had licked His finger and asked Himself "Where shall I put a little piece of heaven on earth?" My friends, I believe he would most definitely have put it in Tuscany.

And so, at the end of a leisurely and relaxing day, the evening sun sets in the distance over the beautiful ancient vista, displaying the glories of a Tuscan sunset. The street lights of Pienza are gently twinkling against the dark sky in the distance. Having enjoyed a lovely evening meal with a nice glass of Chianti in a local restaurant, it was the end of a perfect day. We might sit around outside listening to favourite music before retiring. No internet or WiFi here.

And we wondered in awe at the peace, the quiet, the stillness and the tranquillity. In those moments we both quietly in prayer thanked the Good Lord for allowing us the privilege of discovering and enjoying this beautiful place.

When it was time to come home we always had lumps in our throats, like we were saying goodbye to a dear friend, but solemnly promising ourselves to return the next year. This we did for 10 years running.

Dear old Tuscany. Lovely old Pienza. I shall always love you and I hope to meet with you again some day. And if I don't, it is my hope that future generations of travellers will discover this beautiful region of Tuscany...and within it this gem called Pienza...for the next 250 years and beyond, just as Sue and I had done.

*I dedicate this piece with love to the memory of my late wife Sue.*

# ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



## JUNIOR CHURCH



Children are welcome to our Sunday morning services.

They join in the first part of the service and then go out to their own sessions where they take part in activities related to a Bible passage.

## WENDY HOUSE

Our popular Wendy House toddler group (for babies and toddlers up to 3+ and their parent or carer) meets every Thursday in term time from 10.00 to 11.30am



Story Time

## THIRSTY THURSDAY

Currently, this activity is not meeting



Meets once during each school holiday  
All ages welcome with an accompanying parent or carer

The next are on **Thursday 19 February 2026**  
and **Thursday 9 April 2026**

**10.00am to 12.30pm** *Light lunch included*

Do come and join us at the Church for crafts and related activities

For Wendy House, Thirsty Thursday, and Messy Church, please enter by the back entrance of the Church from the car park. For the other events please use either entrance.

# SUNDAY WORSHIP

Weekly at 10.30am

(Holy Communion as announced)

with Junior Church and Crèche at the same time

All are welcome

Tea and Coffee served after the Service

We also offer  
Evening Worship

on Zoom

or a

Written and  
Recorded Service

each week

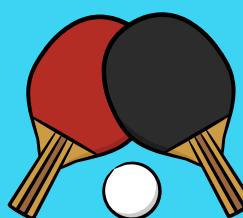
Contact the Church Office for details

Tel: 01202 600696

Email: methodistchurch1@btinternet.com



**Sunday  
25 January 2026  
4.00pm**



**TABLE  
TENNIS**  
Tuesdays  
8.15 – 10.00pm

## Badminton Group

Mondays from 7.30–9.30pm  
in the Bradbury Hall

## STEPPING STONES DROP-IN

Second Friday of every month  
2.30 – 4pm  
in the Coffee Lounge

## CARERS' GROUP

Second Thursday of every month  
2.00 – 4pm  
in the Coffee Lounge

## Knit & Natter

Mondays 10.00am – 12 noon  
in the Sanctuary

The next issue of



is planned to be published on  
**Sunday 22 March 2026**

Articles, photographs and other contributions  
should be submitted to the editors by

**Sunday 22 February 2026**

