



Trinitate 2

MINISTRY TEAM

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**For Baptisms, Confirmations, Home Communions,
Wedding Arrangements etc...**

Please contact the Vicar.

Benefice Website: www.heuristika.co.uk/lfgdiscussion/

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Parish Diary - December 2020

(1st) SUNDAY 6th - ADVENT 2

9.00am	1662 Prayer Book Communion	St. John's, Slimbridge
9.30am	Morning Prayer	St. John's, Purton
10.00am	Holy Communion	St. John's, Slimbridge
11.00am	Morning Prayer	St. Andrew's, Sharpness

(2nd) SUNDAY 13th - ADVENT 3

9.30am	Morning Prayer	St. John's, Purton
10.00am	Holy Communion	St. John's, Slimbridge
11.00am	Holy Communion	St. Andrew's, Sharpness

(3rd) SUNDAY 20th - ADVENT 4

9.30am	Holy Communion	St. John's, Purton
10.00am	Morning Prayer	St. John's, Slimbridge
11.00am	Informal Communion Service	St. Andrew's, Sharpness

THURSDAY 24th - CHRISTMAS EVE

7.30pm	1st Communion of Christmas	St. John's, Purton
7.30pm	1st Communion of Christmas	St. Andrew's, Sharpness

FRIDAY 25th - CHRISTMAS DAY

10.00am	Christmas Morning Communion	St. John's, Slimbridge
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(4th) SUNDAY 27th - *St. John the Evangelist*

9.30am	Morning Prayer	St. John's, Purton
10.00am	Holy Communion	St. John's, Slimbridge
11.00am	Holy Communion	St. Andrew's, Sharpness

JANUARY

SUNDAY 3rd - EPIPHANY

9.00am	1662 Prayer Book Communion	St. John's, Slimbridge
9.30am	Morning Prayer	St. John's, Purton
10.00am	Holy Communion	St. John's, Slimbridge
11.00am	Holy Communion	St. Andrew's, Sharpness



Households may 'bubble' for services.

Following the most recent Government announcements regarding the Covid-19 Winter Plan we can restart our Sunday worship from the 6th December. Under Tier 2 restrictions those attending services should remain in their household 'bubbles' and not interact with anyone outside of that structure. Singing is still not permitted, and will no doubt be felt as we will not be able to enjoy the singing of carols this year.

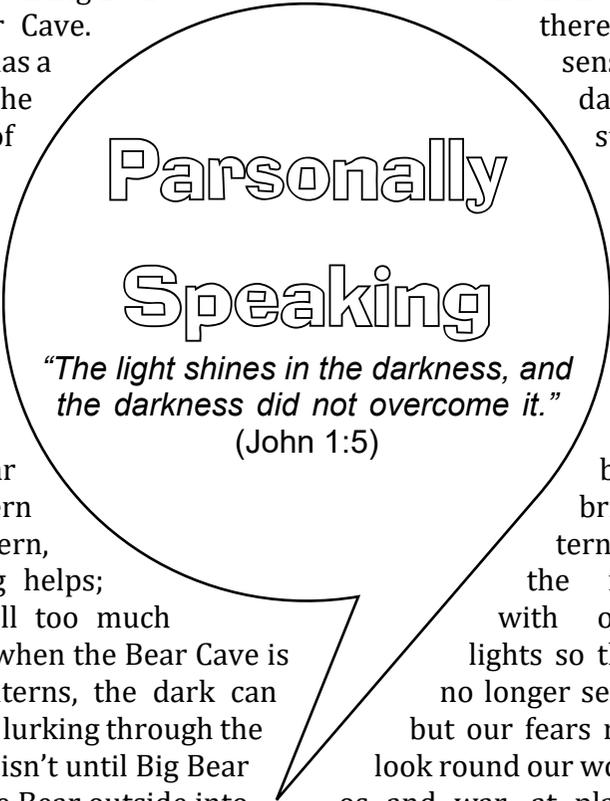
The Archbishop of Canterbury, urging people to go to church and pray this Christmas, has said the church is "one of the safest places to be". he was speaking after the government announced that small groups from up to three households would be permitted to worship together at Christmas if they formed an exclusive 'bubble'.

Other changes include the reintroduction of weddings. This time the 15-person limit at a wedding relates to guests, whereas before the figure also included the couple and the minister. Funerals remain at a maximum number of 30 attending.

For further information you can log onto the Church of England website: www.churchofengland.org

There is a lovely children's book by Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth called *Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?* Little Bear lives with Big Bear in the Bear Cave.

Little Bear has a problem – he is scared of the dark. And so he can't go to sleep, because there is too much dark all around him. Big Bear lights lantern after lantern, but nothing helps; there is still too much dark. Even when the Bear Cave is lit with lanterns, the dark can still be seen lurking through the entrance. It isn't until Big Bear carries Little Bear outside into the worst of the dark and shows him the big yellow moon and the twinkling stars that he is finally able to fall asleep.



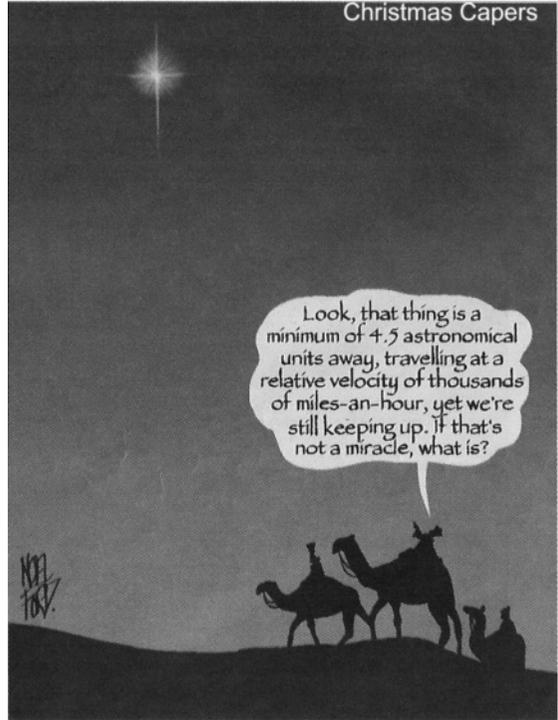
them with an answer. There is a reason why the Little Bear book is so popular. Children are - on the whole - afraid of the dark. And even when we grow up, there is still a sense that darkness stands for danger, that night is when bad things can happen. We light ever bigger and brighter lanterns, polluting the night sky with our street lights so that we can no longer see the stars, but our fears remain. We look round our world, at chaos and war, at places where people are starving and oppressed, and we think of them as places dominated by the darkness of hopelessness and death.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." The message of Christmas addresses our worst fears – we've had more than a few of those this year - and provides

St John's Gospel has the audacity to address our fears head-on. Matthew and Luke also tell us about the birth of Jesus, and we read their familiar stories each

Christmas. They tell us stories of a birth: a faithful Jew, a very young girl, journeys, stars and angels, shepherds and magi, a despotic king and a miraculous deliverance. Their stories show that God's plan will unfold whatever the problems put in its way. Miraculously, the Emmanuel child is born, and God is with us. All the signs are there, the prophecies have been fulfilled, and a new chapter in the story of our salvation begins to unfold.

The Fourth Gospel spells out for us the deeper implications of this birth after all this is no ordinary child. If we have read Matthew and Luke's stories we already know that. But here, at the beginning of John's Gospel we learn that this is no less than the Word and Wisdom of God, the founding principle of the universe, there at life's beginning and is eternal, seen among us as one of us, human. God has come to live with his people, and we have seen his glory.



And God's presence brings with it fundamental changes. The child that has been born is life and light, and the world will never be the same. Life can no longer be conquered by death, as this child will eventually demonstrate in the most dramatic way possible. Light can no longer be dispelled by darkness. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not, and will not, overcome it.

This is not an abstract statement of theology, because St John's Gospel tells us that God's promise "lived among us". We don't need to gaze in hope at the faraway stars, because God's light lived in our world, lived

our human life, and for Christians continues to illuminate every part of it.

It is very easy to be pessimistic about our world, especially in this pandemic year. The media – it would seem – has spent every bit of energy it possesses in instilling fear in folk. We are afraid that the darkness will win, that our world will burn up or freeze because of climate change, or that our weapons will make it uninhabitable. John's Gospel invites us, as followers of Jesus, to take a different view. It asks us to fix our eyes on the light, and to know that it shines on, and that no darkness can put it out.

We may not be able to meet in our usual numbers this Christmas, but it is still a time for fun, for turkey, cake and chocolates, for giving and receiving. More than that it is also a very serious celebration. It dares to assert, against the evidence, that all those centuries ago the world was changed for good when Jesus was born. It tells us to look at the moon and the stars and see their maker, who is one with the baby in the manger, and know that a greater light still shines in the world.



A picture to colour for Christmas. Colour in one star each day as you count down to Christmas!
Read the Christmas story in Luke 1:1 - 2:21

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Historical Snippets

*Taken from the Parish archives
held at St Johns Church Slimbridge;*

Our article this month is taken from the bound Copy of the archive records held in St John's Church.

This month's historical snippet is taken from Slimbridge entry in the Parish Magazine dated: December 1947

Rector; Rev. W. H. Thomas, M.A. Church Wardens; Mr. J. Wherrett and Mr. W. P. Hill.

The Rector earnestly desires to be informed in all cases of sickness and sorrow.

In December 1947 Rev Bill Thomas wrote:

My dear People. . .

Patronal Festival:

This month the Church at Slymbridge, St John the Evangelist, celebrates its 'Patronal Festival'. I trust that all who are really church people will observe this festival in the right and proper manner on Christmas Eve with the midnight Holy Communion at 11.45pm.

Christmas day:

On Christmas day the Holy Communion will be at 8am and at 10.30am. *[The Patronal festival will be kept on the 28th of December - the Festival of St. John the Evangelist - which falls within the Christmas Octave].*

Church Family Social:

Also within the octave we shall celebrate by having our 'Church Family Social' in the church hall on Wednesday 31st starting at 7-30 pm to which, you are all invited. Come but please don't come alone, bring a friend or two with you. We shall hope to have a jolly evening, finishing with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" as the church clock strikes 12 and the church bells usher the New Year in.

Other functions to note:

Christmas whist drive Wednesday 10th December;

Combined Mother Union and Young Wives Christmas party Wednesday 17th December at 2.30pm.

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Choir Boys and Girls Pantomime outing to Bristol on Saturday 27th December.

Sunday School Christmas Party, Saturday 3rd January.

On behalf of the Churchwardens and Church Council, I beg to tender our best thanks for the gift of £10* from Mrs. Allen, towards church expenses, this being the proceeds of a Party Dance, recently organised by some of our farmers and their wives.

Bereavement:

We express our sympathy with the relatives of the late Mrs. Ireland, of Cam. Mrs Ireland was at one time organist of this Church. "Rest eternal grant her, O Lord."

Our very best thanks are accorded to Mr. Oliver Hill for the gift of a new set of Psalm and Hymn Numbers and to Mrs, Thomas for the alterations to the Boards. This makes a great improvement.

Altar Flowers & Children's Corner;

December 6 th	Mrs. Whittard and Anne Lord;
December 13 th	Mrs Tudor, D Pattenden;
December 20 th	Mrs. Shipp, G. Evans;
Christmas Day	Mrs. Thomas, I Pattenden.

Brasses: Mrs. Crompton.

My best wishes to you all for a happy and blessed Christmas.

*Your friend and Rector,
W. H. Thomas.*

**The British pound experienced an average inflation rate of 5.16% per year during this period, causing the real value of a pound to decrease. In other words, £100 in 1947 is equivalent in purchasing power to about £3,938.56 in 2020, a difference of £3,838.56 over 73 years. The 1947 inflation rate was 7.04%.*

NB: Our historical magazine archive records are not complete, this may have been because they were not strictly kept month after month, (bearing mind there was a war on at that time) or sadly some have disappeared for one reason or another. Therefore, should anyone require access, it will be by supervised arrangement only. Please contact the Vicar, me or indeed, any of the PCC members when access can be arranged but not to take away. -

*David Carrington
Vicars Church Warden]*

'Sometimes Christmas can be a frustrating time. This year may be worse than most, stressful and difficult. But maybe we need to get our frustrations into perspective.'

Christmas Frustration????

I said to God, upon my knees

"O Lord, I am so cross!

"That gift I sent to Aunt Denise

"Within the post is lost!

"That tree I bought for forty pounds

"(Well, just a penny less)

"Its needles lie upon the ground

"It looks a total mess!"

"I know," said God, "I understand,

"I sent my Son, you know.

"He came to Earth, just as I'd planned

"Two thousand years ago

"Was born within a stable bare –

"The cattle heard Him cry

"He spoke of love, men didn't care

"They led Him out to die."

"No gift was given with such love

"No higher price was paid.

"He left His throne of light above

"For sin His life to trade.

"But even after all these years

"This gift you men eschew,

"So Christmas is a time of tears

"For Me, as well as you."



By Nigel Beeton

From the Registers - October 2020

	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Gift Aid</u>	<u>Envelopes</u>	<u>Cash</u>
<u>Sharpness:</u>		£208	£80	£ 25.00
Donations: <i>(General)</i>				£604.75
Bonus Ball:				£295.00
Rents:				£370.00
	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	SURPLUS (+ / -)	
For the Month:	£1,582.75	£339.64	+£1243.11	

From 1st Jan. 2020 St. Andrew's has received **£1,913.91** more than it has Spent

<u>Purton:</u>	£60	£60	£123.00
Wall Boxes:			£ 60.00
Donations: <i>(General)</i>			£ 30.00
	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	SURPLUS (+ / -)
For the Month:	£333.00	£179.75	+£153.25

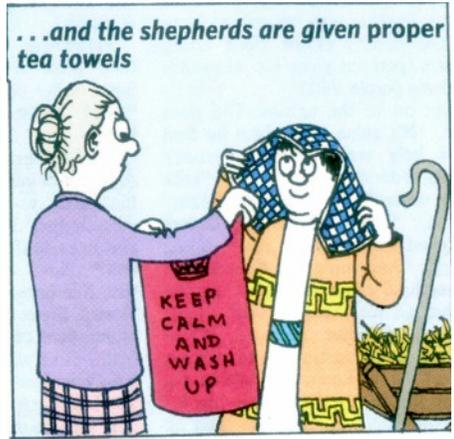
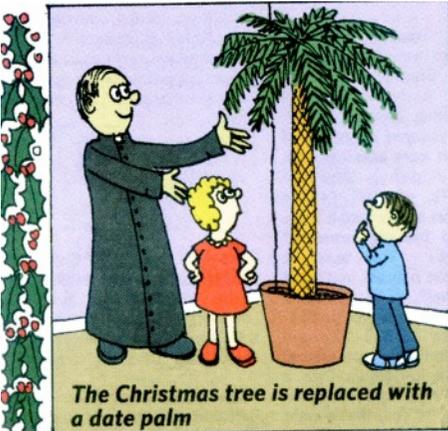
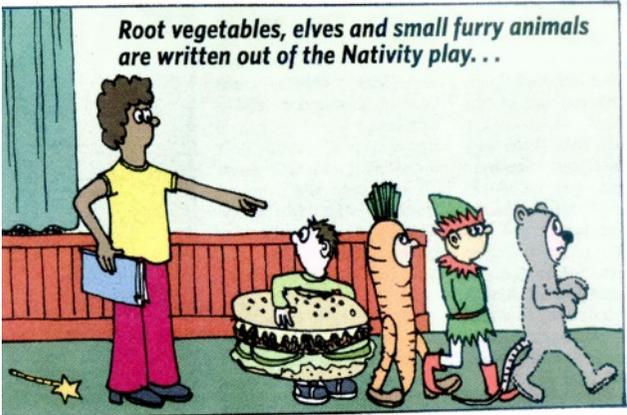
From 1st Jan. 2020 St. John's has spent **£578.54** more than it has received

<u>Slimbridge:</u>	£455	£0	£485.71
Donations: <i>(General)</i>			£100.00
	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	SURPLUS (+ / -)
For the Month:	£1,040.71	£1,418.52	-£377.81

From 1st Jan. 2020 St. John's has spent **£3,228.53** more than it has received

Thank you to all who continue to support our churches through these very difficult times.

Rediscovering the True Meaning of Christmas



Taken from 'Comfort & Joy' - Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani suggests -

All is calm, all is bright. . .

*Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace!
Sleep in heavenly peace!*

Consider:

Sometimes there's a Christmas moment of calm: before guests arrive, or perhaps after they've left!

When the Angels departed, the shepherds had their moment of calm, to pause and think, before going to Bethlehem to see the baby. In the busyness of Christmas, it's good to stop and reflect, and maybe notice something you've not seen before.

Luke 2:15-20

When the angels had left the shepherds and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Reflect:

It would be naive to think the stable scene was calm and serene. In reality it was a dirty, smelly barn where a woman had gone through the pains of labour alone and far from home.

It will have been noisy, chaotic, messy. Mary and Joseph are likely to have felt frightened and insecure. And yet, into this confusion came baby Jesus bringing the gift of God's peace.

The incarnation is a constant reminder that Jesus, who is Emmanuel (God with us), offers inner serenity and calm even in the most traumatic of our human experiences. To know that we are loved and accepted unconditionally - that we don't always have to be in control - is God's gift to each of us.

Our problems won't be solved nor our lives made perfect. But God's peace will carry us gently through the turbulence, if we just pause to recognize and feel it.

Pray

God of peace, in moments of calm and silence, you help us to pause and to see afresh. give us grace to notice both the signs of your presence under needs of others today. Amen.

*#ComfortAndJoy is the Church of England's
2020 Advent and Christmas campaign*

*Find out more and explore free online
Services, reflections and other resources at:
Churchofengland.org/ComfortAndJoy*



Red Letter Days

St Nicholas – a much-loved saint - 6th December

One account of how Father Christmas began tells of a man named Nicholas who was born in the third century in the Greek village of Patara, on what is today the southern coast of Turkey. His family were both devout and wealthy, and when his parents died in an epidemic, Nicholas decided to use his inheritance to help people. He gave to the needy, the sick, the suffering. He dedicated his whole life to God's service and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. As a bishop in later life, he joined other bishops and priests in prison under the emperor Diocletian's fierce persecution of Christians across the Roman Empire.

Finally released, Nicholas was all the more determined to shed abroad the news of God's love. He did so by giving. One story of his generosity explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. There was a poor family with three daughters who needed dowries if they were to marry, and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas heard of their plight and tossed three bags of gold into their home through an open window – thus saving the girls from a life of misery.

The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. Hence the custom of children hanging out stockings – in the hope of attracting presents of their own from St Nicholas - on Christmas Eve. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols of St Nicholas.

The example of St Nicholas has never been forgotten - in bygone years boys in Germany and Poland would dress up as bishops on 6th December, and beg alms for the poor. In the Netherlands and Belgium 'St Nicholas' would arrive on a steamship from Spain to ride a white horse on his gift-giving rounds. To this day, 6th December is still the main day for gift-giving and merry-making in much of Europe. Many people feel that simple gift-giving in early Advent helps preserve a Christmas Day focus on the Christ Child.



Smile for a While!

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!'



Present

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

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



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.

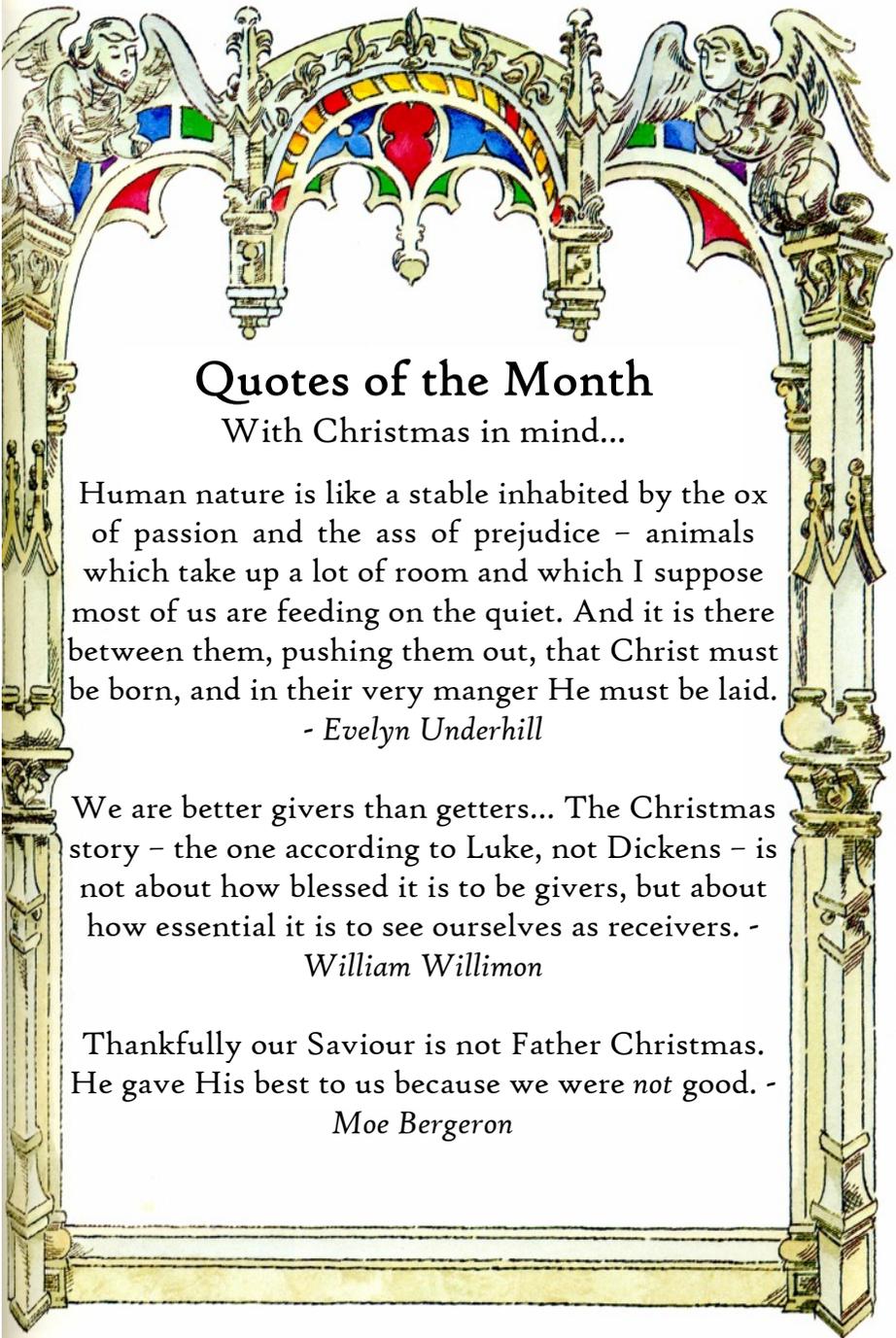
Finally, the 14 year-old said to her 8 year-old younger sister, 'Well, you just ask Mum. She'll tell you it's much harder to be a virgin than it is to be an angel.'



Some observations during the Christmas season...

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

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



Quotes of the Month

With Christmas in mind...

Human nature is like a stable inhabited by the ox of passion and the ass of prejudice – animals which take up a lot of room and which I suppose most of us are feeding on the quiet. And it is there between them, pushing them out, that Christ must be born, and in their very manger He must be laid.

- Evelyn Underhill

We are better givers than getters... The Christmas story – the one according to Luke, not Dickens – is not about how blessed it is to be givers, but about how essential it is to see ourselves as receivers. -

William Willimon

Thankfully our Saviour is not Father Christmas. He gave His best to us because we were *not* good. -

Moe Bergeron

A Story for Christmas. . .

*From a member of the American Bridger family
whose ancestor, Laurence, was once the Rector of Slimbridge*

It was Christmas Eve 1942. I was fifteen years old and feeling like the world had caved in on me because there just hadn't been enough money to buy me the rifle that I'd wanted for Christmas.

We did the chores early that night for some reason. I just figured Daddy wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible. After supper was over, I took my boots off and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Daddy to get down the old Bible.

I was still feeling sorry for myself and, to be honest, I wasn't in much of a mood to read Scriptures. But Daddy didn't get the Bible instead he bundled up again and went outside. I couldn't figure it out because we had already done all the chores. I didn't worry about it long though I was too busy wallowing in self-pity.

Soon he came back in. It was a cold clear night out and there was ice in his beard. "Come on, Matt," he said. "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight." I was really upset then. Not only wasn't I getting the rifle for Christmas, now he was dragging me out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that I could see. We'd already done all the chores, and I couldn't think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this. But I knew he was not very patient at one dragging one's feet when he'd told them to do something, so I got up and put my boots back on and got my coat. Mom-

my gave me a mysterious smile as I opened the door to leave the house. Something was up, but I didn't know what.

Outside, I became even more dismayed. There in front of the house was the work team, already hitched to the big sled. Whatever it was we were going to do wasn't going to be a short, quick, little job. I could tell. We never hitched up this sled unless we were going to haul a big load. Daddy was already up on the seat, reins in hand. I reluctantly climbed up beside him. The cold was already biting at me. I wasn't happy. When I was on, Daddy pulled the sled around the house and stopped in front of the woodshed. He got off and I followed.

"I think we'll put on the high sideboards," he said. "Here, help me." The high sideboards! It had been a bigger job than I wanted to do with just the low sideboards on, but whatever it was we were going to do would be a lot bigger with the high side boards on. Then Daddy went into the woodshed and came out with an armload of wood - the wood I'd spent all summer hauling down from the mountain, and then all Fall sawing into blocks and splitting. What was he doing? Finally, I said something. I asked, "what are you doing?" You been by the Widow Jensen's lately?" he asked. Mrs. Jensen lived about two miles down the road. Her husband had died a year or so before and left her with

three children, the oldest being eight. Sure, I'd been by, but so what?

Yeah," I said, "Why?"

"I rode by just today," he said. "Little Jakey was out digging around in the woodpile trying to find a few chips. They're out of wood, Matt." That was all he said and then he turned and went back into the woodshed for another armload of wood. I followed him. We loaded the sled so high that I began to wonder if the horses would be able to pull it. Finally, he called a halt to our loading then we went to the smoke house and he took down a big ham and a side of bacon. He handed them to me and told me to put them in the sled and wait. When he returned he was carrying a sack of flour over his right shoulder and a smaller sack of something in his left hand.

"What's in the little sack?" I asked. Shoes, they're out of shoes. Little Jakey just had gunny sacks wrapped around his feet when he was out in the woodpile this morning. I got the children a little candy too. It just wouldn't be Christmas without a little candy."

We rode the two miles to Mrs. Jensen's pretty much in silence. I tried to think through what Daddy was doing. We didn't have much by worldly standards. Of course, we did have a big woodpile, though most of what was left now was still in the form of logs that I would have to saw into blocks and split before we could use it. We also had meat and flour, so we could spare that, but I knew we didn't have any money, so why was he buying them shoes and candy? Really, why was he doing any of this? Widow

Jensen had closer neighbours than us; it shouldn't have been our concern.

We came in from the blind side of the Jensen house and unloaded the wood as quietly as possible then we took the meat and flour and shoes to the door. We knocked. The door opened a crack and a timid voice said, "Who is it?" "Lucas Miles, Ma'am, and my son, Matt, could we come in for a bit?"

Mrs. Jensen opened the door and let us in. She had a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. The children were wrapped in another and were sitting in front of the fireplace by a very small fire that hardly gave off any heat at all. Mrs. Jensen fumbled with a match and finally lit the lamp.

"We brought you a few things, Ma'am," Daddy said and set down the sack of flour. I put the meat on the table. Then he handed her the sack that had the shoes in it. She opened it hesitantly and took the shoes out one pair at a time. There was a pair for her and one for each of the children - sturdy shoes, the best, shoes that would last. I watched her carefully. She bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling and then tears filled her eyes and started running down her cheeks. She looked up at my Daddy like she wanted to say something, but it wouldn't come out.

"We brought a load of wood too, Ma'am," he said. Then turned to me and said, "Matt, go bring in enough to last awhile. Let's get that fire up to size and heat this place up." I wasn't the same person when I went back out to bring in the wood. I had a big lump in my throat and as much as I hate to admit it, there were tears in my eyes

too. In my mind I kept seeing those three kids huddled around the fireplace and their mother standing there with tears running down her cheeks with so much gratitude in her heart that she couldn't speak.

My heart swelled within me and a joy that I'd never known before filled my soul. I had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it had made so much difference. I could see we were literally saving the lives of these people.

I soon had the fire blazing and everyone's spirits soared. The kids started giggling when Daddy handed them each a piece of candy and Mrs. Jensen looked on with a smile that probably hadn't crossed her face for a long time. She finally turned to us. "God bless you," she said. "I know the Lord has sent you. The children and I have been praying that he would send one of his angels to spare us."

In spite of myself, the lump returned to my throat and the tears welled up in my eyes again. I'd never thought of my Daddy in those exact terms before, but after Widow Jensen mentioned it I could see that it was probably true. I was sure that a better man than Daddy had never walked the earth. I started remembering all the times he had gone out of his way for Mommy and me, and many others. The list seemed endless as I thought on it.

Daddy insisted that everyone try on the shoes before we left. I was amazed when they all fitted, and I wondered how he had known what sizes to get. Then I guessed that if he was on an

errand for the Lord that the Lord would make sure he got the right sizes.

Tears were running down Widow Jensen's face again when we stood up to leave. My Daddy took each of the kids in his big arms and gave them a hug. They clung to him and didn't want us to go. I could see that they missed their Daddy, and I was glad that I still had mine.

At the door he turned to Widow Jensen and said, "The Mrs. wanted me to invite you and the children over for Christmas dinner tomorrow. The turkey will be more than the three of us can eat, and a man can get cantankerous if he has to eat turkey for too many meals. We'll be by to get you about eleven. It'll be nice to have some little ones around again. Matt, here, hasn't been little for quite a spell." I was the youngest. My two brothers and two sisters had all married and had moved away.

Mrs. Jensen nodded and said, "Thank you, Brother Miles. I don't have to say, May the Lord bless you, I know for certain that He will."

Out on the sled I felt a warmth that came from deep within and I didn't even notice the cold. When we had gone a-ways, Daddy turned to me and said, "Matt, I want you to know something. Your Mother and me have been tucking a little money away here and there all year so we could buy that rifle for you, but we didn't have quite enough.

Then yesterday a man who owed me a little money from years back came by to make things square. Your Mom and me were real excited, thinking that

now we could get you that rifle, and I started into town this morning to do just that, but on the way I saw little Jakey out scratching in the woodpile with his feet wrapped in those gunny sacks and I knew what I had to do. Son, I spent the money for shoes and a little candy for those children. I hope you understand."

I understood, and my eyes became wet with tears again. I understood very well, and I was so glad Daddy had done it. Now the rifle seemed very low

on my list of priorities. He had given me a lot more. He had given me the look on Mrs. Jensen's face and the radiant smiles of her three children. For the rest of my life, Whenever I saw any of the Jensens, or split a block of wood, I remembered, and remembering brought back that same joy I felt riding home beside of my Daddy that night. He had given me much more than a rifle that night, he had given me the best Christmas of my life.

Christmas Silver Stars in Memory of Loved Ones

At St Andrew's Church, Sharpness 2020

Soon we will be thinking about Christmas, although this year will be different due to Covid-19. This year we will hopefully be putting up the Christmas Tree and lights. As in previous years, I will be doing the Silver Christmas Stars. This year I will be collating the same names as last year and if you require extra names in memory of a loved one, then please let me have the names by the start of December at the latest. By the December magazine, we will hopefully know if we can have a Carol Service or not. Everyone will have an individual star on the tree and the name of their loved one on a list in the church window sills, regardless of whether a service can take place or not. At St Andrew's Church, we will not be charging for this, but you are welcome to give a donation to help with the up keep of the church.

If you would like to remember a loved one by name, then please let myself (Katrina Bailey) know, and have the names clearly printed out on paper

Out of the Silence . . .

The monthly journal of the journey of a Priest, Contemplative and Community Chaplain.

I decided to go and dig out my journal for this time last year – forgetting for a moment what was going on then – everything has been so overshadowed by the pandemic that it’s hard to believe that, as Advent arrived in 2019, none of us had any idea what was on the way – and that, I suppose, was a blessing for, cliché or not, this saying is true,
“Sufficient to the day are the troubles thereof.”!

It also throws into sharp relief some small thing I was worrying about doing this morning. It also helped when the following prayer came up in my quiet time,

‘O God who loves us, we offer this day into your keeping;
Our plans into your providence, our concerns into your love,
Our words into your silence, our activity into your stillness.
Look upon us in your steadfast love and grant us your saving health,
That we may be instruments of your healing and all may grow into wholeness in your praise.
Amen.’

I e-mailed it to my old Mum entitled ‘a little early morning something’ and beginning with the words, ‘I like this prayer when linked to advice I was once given to ‘hold my plans lightly!’ I’m not good at that I’m afraid!’ She mailed back a favourite saying of hers,

‘If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.’

So with all that in mind here is what I found in my journal at this time last year – how could I have forgotten? And if nothing else it goes to show that even in the midst of apparent disaster we need to remember the truth of that other cliché,

‘All things must pass.’

and the fact that often, through looking back, we also see the truth of God’s promise to be ‘with us always’.

Thursday 28th November 2019

Home! Home! Home! At the moment Thursday is always the best day of the week! But even then it takes a while to switch off from ‘parental

Trinitate 23

care mode', to stop thinking and planning for the Cannock half of my life, but I am, when here, glad of the distance and the difference.

By the time I do this daytime office next (Prayer During the Day) it will be Advent so for now my last use of the daily Psalm 24. My trust (when I remember it) is well founded, it is in no piddling, human made, imaginary god but in you. Lord, creator, sustainer and saviour.

'The earth is the Lord's and all that fills it.'

and from Psalm 121 ditto . . .

'My help comes from the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.

He will not suffer your foot to stumble
he . . . shall not slumber or sleep.

. . . The Lord shall keep watch over your going out and your
coming in,

From this time forth for evermore.'

In fact all the Psalms set for today, and there are many of them, seem to have the theme of protective care, they also contain that great shout of joy used by the returning Israelite exiles which also fills my heart, mouth and soul each week as I travel home . . .

'Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
and our tongue with songs of joy . . .

The Lord has indeed done great things for us,
and therefore we rejoiced.'

Psalm 126

. . . embarrassingly I have been known to sing loudly as I drive down the M6 and M5 or crawl through the endless roadworks and, what is more, sing to whatever tune is on the radio whether it fits or not,

'I'm going home! I'm going home! I AM GO-ING HOME!'

I haven't caused a major accident yet!!!! Thank the Lord.

Sunday 1st December

Advent begins – the first day of the new Church year but a late call last night from my brother saying he can't do today's parental care as planned and Mum and Dad are fine with it, meant I didn't sleep much. I can't go any earlier I have services to do first. Why do I let myself get into such a state? I know why, it's because the changes didn't fit with my plan! You, Lord, had been warning me as I prayed and planned

Trinitate 24

that plan – you’d reminded me to ‘hold my plans lightly’ and be prepared to change. Now, in the clear light of day (or rather the pitch black of early morning) I see, tiredly, that what I read last night from Julian of Norwich about all being well and all things working for good in you is, of course, true! It is in fact (or you will make it so) a good basis on which to base my other plan (!!) the one of beginning to prepare them for a less busy but a more independent life for the near future at least** - but that is only a plan, a plan to be held lightly and changed if necessary. Forgive me Lord, and help me. I think, between now and getting to Cannock this evening (laden with my plans and preparations!) I need to bear strongly in mind one of my special Bible verses, encountered again yesterday, from Luke 21,

‘Settle it in your mind therefore, not to meditate beforehand how you will answer; for I will give you a word and wisdom’

One of the Advent Collects is a good prayer for ‘going forward’ (that awful, modern, over-used phrase),

‘Keep us, O Lord,
while we tarry on this earth,
in a serious seeking after you,
and in an affectionate walking with you,
every day of our lives. Amen.’

** Interestingly I was not very good at putting the plan of gradually withdrawing our care from the ‘oldies’ and in the end it was the first lock-down in March which finally put it into practice properly. Even COVID worked for good by God in that small way – they coped admirably and were better for using local support and being independent and we, long distance carers, were glad to be living in our own homes full time again.

*More next month
With love and many blessings
Mary Tucker*



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke 2 verses 22-38

God promised the Jews that when times were bad, He would send a Leader to save them. He told Simeon it would happen in his lifetime.

God told Simeon to go to the Temple.



He saw a couple with a baby.

Mary and Joseph had come to give their offerings for their first-born, Jesus, and for childbirth.



Simeon held Jesus and praised God.



I can now die in peace because You have kept Your promise.



I have seen the one You have sent to save Your people and all the world!



Mary and Joseph were amazed! Simeon blessed them, but said..



This child will show what people are really like inside and this will mean pain for you as well.



Anna the prophet was also in the Temple.



Her family was from the north of Israel and she was very old.



She spent every day praying in the Temple.

When she saw Jesus she praised God.



Anna spoke about Jesus to everyone who was waiting for God's Saviour.

Christmas can't come too early

Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the CofE, considers a new response to a yearly complaint.

Every year it happens. I hear Christians lamenting how 'Christmas comes earlier every year.'

Since this September (or before!) supermarkets, shops and garden centres have been selling Christmas jumpers, socks and pyjamas and all kinds of other seasonal merchandise. Should we be annoyed or exasperated? Should we have gone around reminding people that it's much too early for tinsel and mistletoe?

This year, of all years, the answer from churches and Christians of all denominations must surely be a resounding 'NO.'

As people began looking to Christmas for some light in the gloom of the pandemic – and hard-hit businesses desperately need to increase their income and chances of survival – it sounds a woefully wrong note if the Church is saying 'hold back, it's not time yet...'

Because Christmas is that time of year when increasing numbers of people want to come to church services and share in the story of the new-born King. It is when carols are played in shopping centres, and there are openings to speak of the meaning of the season.

Churches might not be able to host big indoor carol services this year, but the challenge is how we take the Christmas message out into the streets and neighbourhoods around our buildings.

This year has been one like no other for millions of people, with little prospect of better news into the New Year. So we need to be declaring the Christmas message of hope and light and joy in the darkness. And to be doing so at every opportunity.

But also, we need to be doing so with sensitivity and care, for the many who will find it hard to be celebrating this pandemic year, and with the prospect of large family gatherings in doubt because of Covid 19 regulations.

Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell wrote in his 2009 book 'Do Nothing Christmas is Coming', "Christmas is one of the most joyful times of the year. It is also one of the most stressful. It is laden with expectations. It is often overtaken with grief. It might be the season of good will, but it can feel like the last straw on an already overburdened camel." He added ruefully, "Wise men would not ride this one."

Archbishop Cottrell is right that Christmas has to be approached sensitively, that we need to take care in how we celebrate, that for many people who have lost loved ones and livelihoods during this traumatic year, Christmas will not be easy.

We come alongside people with the news that the baby born in the manger grew up to be the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, who experienced suffering and bereavement. God, born as Man, who shared our pain as well as our celebrations, ultimately died on a cross to rise again.

Our mission is to bring a message of hope, and to do so with love, humility and sensitivity to a hurting disorientated world – one that's eager for light in the gloom.



It's a Girl !



BONUS BALL SWEEPSTAKE



**November
WINNERS**



Sandra Smith 44



Lesley Yeomans-Jenkins 13



Bill Dickson 47

Phill Jenkins 32



**YOU HAVE TO BE IN IT
TO WIN IT!**

*Thousands of Pounds Won
Thousands of Pounds Raised
for Sharpness Church*



There is currently one number vacant!



THANK YOU!



LETTERS TO UNCLE EUSTACE*On the best ways for a vicar to disrupt Christmas*The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

I am sorry I was not alive during that wonderful four-year period when Oliver Cromwell abolished Christmas; no Christmas parties, no carol services, no cards to send and no frantic last-minute shopping. That man was a hero.

Planning for Christmas at St James' normally starts on 2nd January. By Easter, the flowers for church have been carefully chosen to be colour coordinated, and the seating plans and table decorations for the Christmas party have been allocated (with nominated reserves in case someone should inconveniently die in the intervening eight months). Long before Summer is over, the tree lights have been tested, music for the 9 Lessons and Carols Service has been chosen and the service sheets printed. Way before the dark nights set in, car parking attendants will have been found, those who are to light all the candles will have been rehearsed to perfection, and the brass lectern has had its annual polish.

We do not do spontaneity at St James the Least of All. If ever there was a service when time for something unexpected had to be allowed, its place would be announced in the order of service, how long the unexpected thing would happen for would have been decided by a committee, and who was to be spontaneous would have been allocated on a rota.

But the one person none of these well-meaning, efficient, committed organisers can control is the Rector. You could call it a staff perk.

Carols will (accidentally, of course) be announced in the wrong order; if verse 3 was to be omitted, I announce it will be verse 4. This keeps the organist on his toes while the choir hovers on the point of a collective nervous breakdown. At the Christmas supper, my introductory welcome speech and extensive grace make those in the kitchen wonder if the vegetables being boiled should better be served as thick soup.

I offer the helpful suggestion that the tree, having been installed and decorated in the chancel, may perhaps look better in the sanctuary and I turn all the heating off throughout the season, explaining that it will help the flowers to last. All Services will start five minutes early (was my watch rather fast?) so I can look disapprovingly at those still coming in while we are singing the first carol and making it clear that I think they had spent too long in the pub next door.

And so we all reach Christmas morning, with 12 months of planning having gone yet again slightly awry, with parishioners exhausted and I exhilarated at the chaos that has been created with such ease. Mr Cromwell, your spirit lives on.

Your loving uncle,

WORD-SEARCH

f	q	z	u	c	s	d	k	w	v	o	n	o
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Temple
praised
peace
Jesus
Anna
Israel

baby
offerings
inside
everyone
people
Saviour

Anna
prophet
couple
God
Joseph
leader

family
lifetime
Mary
praying
waiting
world



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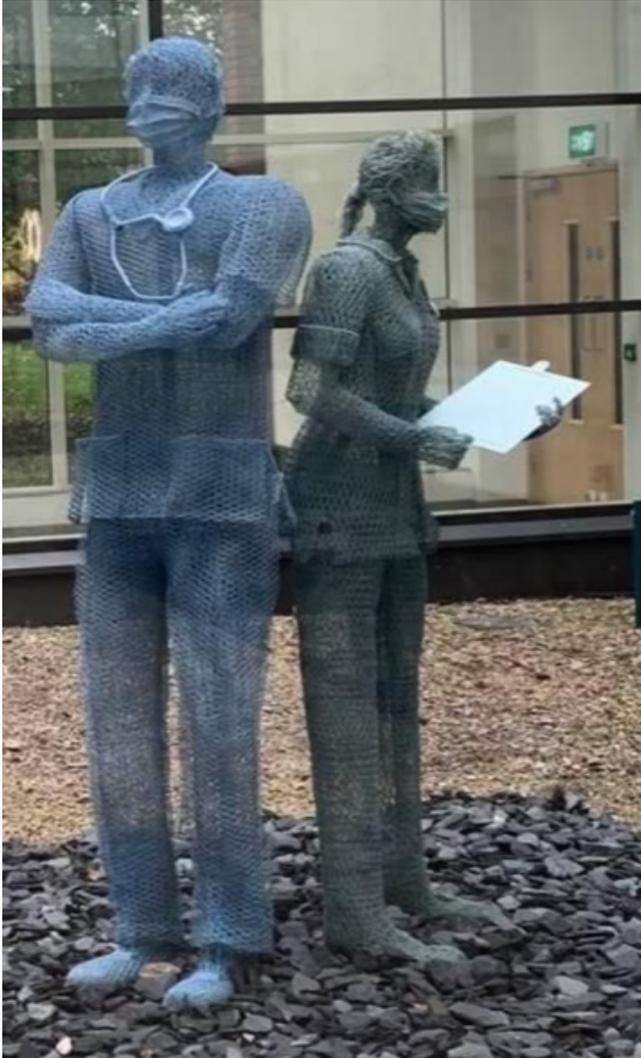
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Outpatients Department - GRH



2020 - Remembering the Work of the NHS

Jackie Lantelli & Sadie Kitchen

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A an electronic version of this magazine is available in pdf - contact Bill Boon for details.