

St Thomas à Becket, Ramsey
e-Bulletin 240 22 December 2024



Dear Friends,

Have you had a lot of cards this year that have nothing to do with the real meaning of Christmas? You know the ones with Santa, elves, snowmen and so on. But perhaps the ones with those nativity scenes have sentimentalised the real story and removed the 'uncomfortable bits'. Let us consider....

The stable, or more likely a cave, never has any manure – perhaps the animals were toilet trained, and a team of cleaners had been in before Mary and Joseph arrived? The animals on the cards look as though they have been groomed for best in show. The shepherds, despite living rough, are clean and tidy and the Magi have been dressed by a first century Ralph Lauren.

From the moment he was conceived, Jesus identified with the underclass of society. His parents lived in brutal and repressive Roman occupied territory. Mary was a teenage mum who could have been stoned to death if God had not appeared to Joseph in a dream. In effect, Joseph adopts Jesus as his own, but the community knew....

Mary and Joseph are a poor couple who are forced to make this arduous journey against their will. Despite hospitality being legendary in the Middle East, they find Bethlehem distinctly inhospitable. Mary gives birth in the most unhygienic of conditions and her baby is placed in a feeding trough. Jesus is born into a world of oppression, dirt and filth, poverty, violence, evil and apathy not the pristine cute world of the Christmas card. Yet well-wishers arrive – not family but strangers. The shepherds were considered some of the lowest in society – untrustworthy and unclean – yet God sends homeless strangers to welcome his son.

The Magi have social standing and gifts: They are strangers from the East,

whom the Jews look on with suspicion. They certainly didn't arrive the night Jesus was born, just after the shepherds, but several months later. However, their innocent mistake results in Herod's hit squad exterminating all baby boys under the age of 2 making little Jesus an enemy of the state!

The Christmas Story sort of rounds off with Mary, Joseph and Jesus fleeing for their lives as homeless refugees, not exactly 'happy ever after' stuff. So, the Son of God was an asylum seeker who from his very birth identified with the persecuted, illegitimate, homeless and marginalised and reminds us of how much changes as history rolls on and how little changes as history rolls on. Families are still fleeing as refugees, and innocent children are still dying on the orders of a ruthless tyrant.

Even though people will continue to debate the facts, this much we do know: Once upon a time in a small, poor place, a young woman gave birth to a baby boy. And changed the world.

Wishing you a Christmas blessed with God's love and grace.

Shân

Services:

22 December	10am Nativity service
23 December	7.30pm Carols by Candlelight
24 December	6.00pm Carols on the Green 11.30pm Holy Communion with carols from the choir at 11pm
25 December	10am Crib Service
29 December	10am Benefice Holy Communion

We would love to see you at our Christmas services this year – please see list above.

[Online service 22 December](#)

Nativity “All is Calm”: Sunday 22 December 10am. Children are welcome to come and dress up on the day and take part in the tableau. We have plenty of costumes – the more the merrier!

ALPHA 2025: Wednesdays from 7-9pm. Starting Wednesday 15th January. Venue TBC

Alpha is an 11 week programme that explores life's biggest questions. From why Jesus died, to whether pineapple belongs on pizza, come with your questions and explore with us!

We're encouraging anyone connected to church to consider coming to Alpha, whether you're a regular or you find church a challenge, Alpha is for you!

Numbers may be limited, so if you're interested, please get in touch with Joe by text or email: 07414612791 or joe@ramseysandupwood.org
Want to help make Alpha happen? We'd love to hear from you too!

Christmas Cards: Now that Advent is here, thoughts turn to sending greetings in a card to friends. The cost of a Christmas card here is the equivalent of approx. 10000 Ugandan shillings, For this in Uganda, you can buy a bar of soap or toothpaste. The price of a loaf of bread is 6000 shillings.

The Uganda Mission Committee is asking if you would consider writing just one card to all your friends here and donating the money you would have spent on cards to the charity. The cards will be hung on ribbons at either side of the back of church.

We have been gifted small wooden crosses on a chain engraved with the name of our church. If you would like to buy one, they are just £1 each. See Cathy Moulton if you wish to purchase one (or more!!).

Holy Socks: after each Sunday morning service, there will be a sale of Holy Socks from the company www.holysocks.co.uk . They are beautifully

designed and quality socks, with an attached Bible story or reading explained. They make great stocking fillers(or rather sock fillers!) and are available in adult's and children's sizes. Costs are £5.50 for children and £6.50 for adults, which is cheaper than on the company website, Come and take a look on Sunday and see for yourself. 😊

Tinsel and Brass: Once again, many thanks for the wonderful support last Saturday night at Tinsel & Brass. It was a record-breaking T & B all due to your magnificent input. Nett result after expenses £ 1232.02. We can be well pleased & blessed for the attendance and sponsorship. T & B received. HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Richard

Hampers for Uganda: a heartfelt thankyou to our congregation for supporting our hamper appeal. We supplied 34 hampers which is tremendous.

Martin

Servers wanted: we are seeking volunteers from the congregation who might like to become a server at some of our services of Holy Communion. If you are interested, please talk to Joe or Maggie.

Pastoral Needs: if you have any pastoral needs or would like someone to pray with you, please contact Val Molloy: 01487 710583 or email valmolloy@hotmail.com

Mobile porch/outdoor noticeboard: if you wish to place anything in the noticeboard, or think you might need to, please could you talk to Jackie? The plastic coverings need to be put in a certain way otherwise they snap and then it loses its waterproof quality.

Carer needed urgently: to help with personal care for a lady for one hour in the mornings plus possible cleaning duties. Could be one person or suit two people sharing. Please contact Kay: 01487 815528 for more information regarding exact timings.

Please share with anyone you think might be interested.

Bulletin items: please send all items for the Bulletin to jackie@ramseysandupwood.org by noon Wednesday.

Please note there will be **no Bulletin on Sunday 29 December.**

Prayer list. Please pray for: Dilys; Doug and Maureen; Julie; Tamara; Ian; Kay; Barbara; Juliet and Philip; Fay; Janet; Vicki; Chris and Andy; Oonagh and her parents Matthew and Jade; Elizabeth; and Nancy and John

Names can be added to the list by notifying Jan Bowd 01487 822418.

CALM and BRIGHT