

# At the heart of Christmas



## The Better Story

**Rev Sonya Doragh**

There are so many traditions and stories that have built up around Christmas, it can be hard to hold on to the better story that is at the heart of the Christian faith.

The gift of Christmas can become over shadowed by the gifts at Christmas! Writing to Santa, making lists, making sure we find what our loved ones want, finding the right smile for opening something we are not too sure about; unwrapping stuff at Christmas distracts us from the gift that came with no wrappings.

The people in the Christmas story are set aside for the pleasing people in our Christmas busy-ness. Jesus has so many names through the Old and New Testaments, counsellor, prince of peace, light of the world, so many names as Jesus means more than we can ever understand.

If your Christmas is a whirlwind of family and friends, try to find moments of calm to spend a moment learning more of who Jesus is.

The decorations distract us from the setting and location. If you've seen the film 'Deck the Halls', you will know that Mr Hall becomes jealous as his neighbour's larger house is visible on a satellite image and his own home is not. So Mr Hall sets out to put so many Christmas decorations and lights on his house and garden that it is visible from space. Lots of competitiveness and humour ensues, until, in the end, they make up and the whole community help fix the lights and the lights are indeed visible from space. At some point the decorations and trimmings took over from what they are supposed to celebrate; shining his own light stopped Mr Hall from seeing or displaying the Christ light at the heart of Christmas.

The stories of myth and fantasy connected to Christmas make it even more important to tell our better story as often as we can. The gift of God, Jesus, love unwrapped and open for all. That is the heart of Christmas, the best, most eternal happily ever after bringing the promise of heaven and hope for us all.

Tell everyone

## Christmas Services

**12th December - 10am Fancy Dress Nativity**

**19th December - 10am Communion**

**6.30pm Carols by Candlelight**

**24th December - 4pm Crib Service**

**11.15pm Midnight Mass**

**Christmas Day - 10am at St Lukes**

**(no service at Christ Church)**

**Boxing Day - Gentle Christmas**

**10 am Team service at Christ Church**

**2nd January - Team Service at St James**

**(no service at Christ Church)**

This is your reminder, the enclosed card is an invitation so you can bring one friend.

*Rev Sonya*



Mike Horton's pick of Autumn in the churchyard - Jennie platt sent it. We can drop it in somewhere if there's space



## Remembering Lynn Sim

As many of you will be aware, on 2nd October our much-loved member, June Davies, passed away in Willowbrook Hospice aged 82.

The funeral took place at Christ Church, and below we share our tribute to June, beginning with Rev Brenda Parker's Eulogy.

"June arranged every detail of her funeral service as soon as she had received the dreadful diagnosis of terminal cancer in the spring of this year. Although of course she feared what the time remaining to her on earth might bring, she was looking forward with confidence and even joy to going to her home in heaven's glory at the end of it all.

So the service became a time to remind us all of the Christian hope, of all God's promises of eternal life to those who trust in him, especially that promise of access to an unimaginably beautiful new home in heaven through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ.

Family memories of June's life were recalled by her niece's husband Bill. Sadly June and Noel had no children of their own, but their nieces and nephews and their children were loved as much as any of their own could have been, and they all loved her and cared for her to the last. June loved her job at the Hamblett School and even took children home with her sometimes at weekends to give their parents some respite, especially a little boy called Stephen who was in a wheelchair.

I had the privilege of talking about June's life as a member of the Church family, where I have known her for about 45 years at Christ Church. Of course her Christian upbringing and experience began long before that, in a Christian home with her two older brothers. I am indebted to two of her former Salvation Army friends Jean and Derek for telling me about her earlier life in the Army.

In her teens June was a Sunday School teacher in the St Helens Corps, where she sang in the Young People's Choir and then the Singing Company and praised God with the tambourines in the Timbrel Group. As a member of the Corps Cadets she joined with other young people in annual holidays and seaside missions in North Wales and elsewhere.

Although her budding romance with Noel was supposed to be a well-kept secret, it came into the open when they were spotted hand-in-hand at a Young People's Conference at St George's Hall, and in 1966 the pair were married and became inseparable for the rest of their lives. Both loved music, especially brass bands, and in the late 1970's they came to Christ Church to liven up our music when Noel became choirmaster. Together they built up the choir with a flock of choirboys as well as adult members, encouraging the boys with days out and other celebrations. June again took up Sunday School teaching and later, with her friend Joyce Wailing, became a leader of the Tuesday Women's Fellowship. Over many years June and Noel worshipped regularly in this church and at St James, Eccleston Park, and contributed to Bible Study and Prayer Groups and all the church's many activities, especially any involving the children and young people. For a few years they led monthly Home Communion Services at the Trapwood Centre. June's 'last fling', as it were, was with the Toddler Group at Christ Church, where she adored the children and loved their parents and other carers and became famous for her toast-making and sense of fun. But perhaps her greatest contribution to the life of the church and the community was an unseen one. I know that she communicated with the Lord constantly as she read his Word, shared it with others young and old and prayed for those she loved and for all in need, here and in other lands."

Rev Brenda Parker

As Brenda mentioned, June was a dedicated volunteer at our Toddler Time group, and since the group first began seven years ago, June could be found every Friday morning in the Church kitchenette, happily buttering toast, singing and squeezing babies and toddlers at every chance she got!

"Auntie June" as she was known to many of our regulars, was always ready with a warm welcome, and was popular with both the children and their grown-ups alike - not just for her delicious hot-buttered toast! Many a little one would peer over the 'horse box' to see what June was doing - or toddle over to the kitchenette and visit her during the morning. This usually resulted in her picking them up for a snuggle - which she loved - and having a laugh and natter with their grown-up. Oh how we'll miss her!

June was very proud of Toddler Time and how it had flourished. She loved the support we were able to give to members when going through difficult times, the funds we raised, the Christmas parties and Easter Bonnet parade.

After lockdown had eased, we began an outdoor Toddler Time in the Vicarage garden, and were so pleased in July when June felt well enough to call in and see everyone. She was guest of honour and was thrilled to see how much the children had grown!

She was so loved by everyone in the group that when we announced to members that she had passed away, the messages came flooding in. Here we share some of them with you. Tribute to a lovely lady who will be much missed by us all.

Pictured, right, June with some of the Toddler Time members in July this year.

Susanne Ellis: "Such a beautiful lady, her love and support came straight from her heart. I feel privileged to have known her and so grateful to have all of you in our lives. Your group made a huge difference to our family, June was the group mum to us all."

Sue Thornley: "We have lovely memories of June always wanting to help anyone she could! Sending lots of love to her family, we will miss her so much at Tots".

Hazel Heywood: "It is very sad news even though we knew her death was imminent. June was an inspirational Christian lady, so sure of her faith and certain that she would be reunited with her lovely husband Noel. We will miss her so much in Toddlers but she has definitely left a lovely legacy behind.....we'll never forget June.



# Eccleston Team

Monday mornings at St Luke's - Teddies  
 Tuesday mornings at St Matthew's - Superstars  
 Wednesday mornings at St John's - Toddle In  
 Thursday mornings at St James - Prampushers  
 Friday mornings at Christ Church - Toddler Time  
 For further info on any of our groups, contact April  
 on bantonapril@gmail.com or 07540938900 or  
 speak to any of the Team Clergy.

# Beer & Carols

Hobby Hub .....

.... meets online each Wednesday at 7pm on the  
**Monday 6th December**  
 zoom code below, and in person at St Luke's  
 12.30pm at The Grapes  
 Community Centre next to St Luke's church at the  
 1.30pm at The Wellington, Eccleston Lane Ends  
 same time.

Come to as many as you wish!

Susan would love to welcome you - feel free to  
 contact her direct on  
**Tuesday 21st December**  
 7pm at The Black Bull, Knowsley Road  
 07805 268735 for more info

We can sing inside or outside, whatever we feel  
 comfortable with on the day. Put your Christmas  
 jumpers on and just turn up as we connect with our  
 community and sing the good news that Jesus is  
 the reason for the season!

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86465409050>  
 Meeting ID: 864 6540 9050

From Rev Helen

**Wednesday 22nd December**  
 6.30 at The Grapes  
 Tea and Toast .....

8pm at The Wellington  
 .... every Thursday morning at St John's - come  
 and make some new friends - the welcome is  
 wonderful!

Indoor bowls .....

.... meet in St Luke's community centre on  
 Thursday afternoons at 1pm for a small charge of  
 50p. Open to everyone of all ages and experience,  
 we hope you come along and give it a go. (We  
 have some spare bowls available if you do not  
 have any)

Knit and Natter .....

## Funeral of Betty Sharples

.... meets at St James each Thursday afternoon.  
**Funerals**  
 Drop in any time between 12noon to 4pm. Bring a  
 craft or just come for a chat and an brew!

Jubilate Praise ....

.... meets at St James each Thursday evening from  
**June Davies**  
 7.30pm til 9pm. If you love a good sing, pop along  
 and join in! More info from Paula on 07817  
 036695



# Special Moments

## November with Jennie Platt

God ensures that nature provides us with magic all year round. Have you ever watched a leaf spinning as it hangs from a tree on a spider's web? A mesmerising activity for children to observe, especially in the sunshine. How does the spider spin that thread and fasten it to the leaf? Close to magic! In November, I walked around Grasmere and gazed up to the Lion and the Lamb. It is more realistic from the ground and difficult to identify the lion and the lamb when you reach the top. Nevertheless, the imagination is captured as you see how nature has sculpted the image to give us great pleasure. Mike Horton captured a gorgeous picture of the churchyard autumn colours and early snow across the fields cast a spell over the world. Christmas is just around the corner and there is already an air of anticipation in the air.

Horrendous weather led to a change of plans for the outdoor Christmas Fair. It was amazing that on such a windy and cold day visitors came and supported the event. The sun came out for a while and Rev. Sonya declared that 'between COVID and the weather it was quite the miracle!' Our spirits were raised as people sampled the mulled wine and met with old friends. Profits are going towards building our new church hall and a donation to Willowbrook Hospice to show our gratitude for the care that members of our community have received. Many thanks to everyone who helped to create a lovely atmosphere at the Christmas Fair and start the wonder of Christmas.

As the New Year approaches let us hope for peace and reconciliation in war torn and unhappy countries where people have limited freedom. I am reminded of the inspiration of Gee Walker, mother of murdered Anthony Walker. Gee received a Pride of Britain Award in 2021 for her work to combat racism. Her words include 'I cannot share my space with hate' and 'it is easy to love'. Let us pray that leaders across the globe listen to these simple messages as we move into a New Year.

I wish you a peaceful Christmas and may Our God walk with you in 2022.

Jennie



A spinning leaf on a spider's web



A snowy day across Ecclesfield



## Nativity

W	I	E	O	D	E	I	E	O	S	L	S	T	I
E	H	P	E	S	O	J	D	G	M	D	E	F	S
A	E	M	N	M	I	G	E	D	H	A	G	I	H
D	B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M	I	R	G	E
Y	S	N	R	R	H	S	T	H	N	N	Y	Y	P
A	L	A	A	M	Y	R	R	H	G	J	E	S	H
Y	A	T	T	N	W	N	R	S	O	E	K	T	E
P	M	I	S	E	E	I	R	A	L	S	N	R	R
E	I	V	M	L	I	E	S	M	D	U	O	A	D
E	N	I	A	B	Y	Y	H	E	S	S	D	W	R
H	A	T	N	A	H	H	S	G	M	S	I	M	E
S	R	Y	G	T	N	N	I	O	S	E	H	S	A
N	L	N	E	S	T	I	E	D	N	A	N	P	A
A	H	M	R	T	E	L	A	E	E	T	R	B	E

- NATIVITY
- DONKEY
- BETHLEHEM
- WISE MEN
- SON
- SHEEP
- JESUS
- SHEPHERD
- MYRRH
- STAR
- MANGER
- STRAW
- ANIMALS
- MARY
- GOLD
- GIFT
- INN
- JOSEPH
- GOD
- STABLE

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/3935/>

Happy Christmas everyone! It's that special time of year when we celebrate Jesus' humble birth in a stable. Can you decorate our colouring picture - it shows Mary and Joseph taking Jesus home from Bethlehem. We've also got a Nativity word search for you - see if you can find the missing words in the grid.

