

FROM THE EDITOR



Do you have a favourite Christmas carol? Last year, Classic FM's no 1 carol was "O Holy Night". O Holy Night has been recorded by both classical and pop singers. Hot on its heels, in second place, was "Silent Night".

In the lead up to Christmas we may hear carols being played in shops. They're there. In the background. How often have we found ourselves really listening to the words?

"Truly He taught us to love one another, His law is love and His gospel is peace."

"Silent night, holy night:
Son of God, O how bright."

This Christmas will we really listen, or keep Jesus in the background?

CAROLYN HALL

With thanks to this edition's contributors.



Dear friends

We enter the season of Advent and the countdown begins. For many that countdown will include tiny pieces of chocolate discovered in an Advent calendar, lighting candles in an Advent wreath, or counting the number of sleeps until Christmas day. Yet Advent is much more. Advent, derived from the Latin word meaning an arrival or coming, marks both the beginning of a new church year, a time of preparation for the celebration of the first coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and the anticipation of his second coming. We prepare well for the celebrations of his first coming as we celebrate Christmas but perhaps we can ask if we are as well prepared for his second coming.

In this magazine you will see glimpses of how God is at work among his people here in Sydenham and we are thankful for all that he is doing among us.

Enjoy the preparations, enjoy Advent! May you know the Peace of Christ as you share the preparations for Christmas with those you love.

Karen

Congratulations and best wishes to those who have recently married:

Heather Kilpatrick & Trevor Lloyd

Deaths

We give God thanks for those lives which touched ours while they lived among us:

George Burgess

Betty Gordon

Gertie Megaw

Elizabeth Carson

Roley Beckett

Arthur Morrow

Thomas Burns

Robert Cairnduff

Greta Sunerton

Rita Patrick

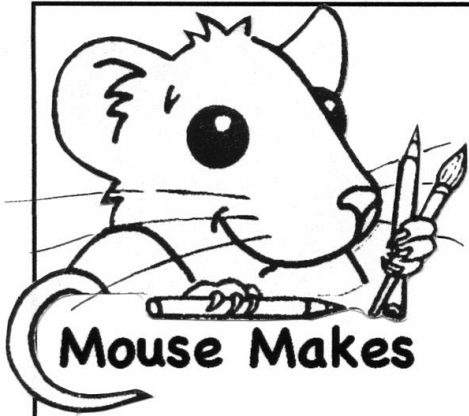
Georgina Gray

Samuel Allen

Jim Gray

Robert Montgomery

Georgina Calvert



A SAVIOUR HAS BEEN BORN!
 "Good news! - **wonderful, joyous**
 news for **all** people.
 A Saviour has been born.
 He is **Christ the Lord.**"

"Glory
 to God
 in the
 heavenly
 heights,
Peace
 to all
 men and
 women
 on earth
 who please
 him."

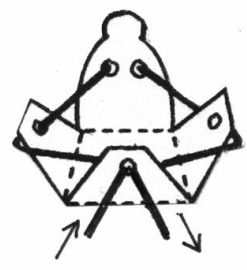
Read about the
 birth of Jesus
 in Luke
 chapters 1 and 2

- Make this
 crib box
 to hang
 from the
 Christmas
 tree.
- Glue onto
 thin card then
 carefully cut
 around the
 outside.
- Fold back
 the sides
 along the
 dotted lines.



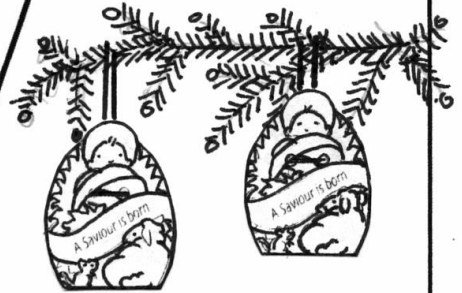
Dec13 ©deboahnoble @parishpump.co.uk

- Punch out the
 ⊗ holes then cut 30cm
 of thin ribbon and thread
 through the holes.



- Pull
 together
 and knot to
 form a box.
 Hide small
 sweets inside.

HAPPY
 CHRISTMAS!



- Photocopy this page onto card
 to make lots of crib boxes.

MY TOM TEAM EXPERIENCE

From August 2012 to August 2013 I was involved in TOM 24. In August, I started training for three weeks. The three weeks were intense, emotional, spiritually refreshing and so much fun!

After training had finished, the team and I moved into the lovely town of Bangor. While there we were to work with six of the Methodist churches in the Down town circuit; Carnalea, Christ Church Primacy, Queens Parade, Holywood, Ballyholme and Wesley Centenary.

Being in a six church circuit was really challenging at times as we were constantly changing our church every week. It did mean though that I got to meet so many extraordinary people who really had an impact on me. Our week would consist of a few assemblies a week, Girls' Brigade, Boys' Brigade, Bible study and our Youth Group STOMP. I really enjoyed everything we took part in, and those things that we led. My favourite activities in our week would have been children's work, our drop in centre and STOMP!

I had so many highlights when I was on team, I got the opportunity to go to Germany with Lisa Best, in June, which was incredible. I loved the opportunity, and I loved meeting so many amazing people and getting to see God work in Germany. Another would be leading a summer scheme with the girls of my team, I just loved hearing 4 - 5 year olds praying to God and getting so involved with the worship. It was also amazing because Peter, Faith and Dave came down and helped, so it was great having Sydenham folks there too!

I am now the Youth Intern in Carnalea Methodist. I'm really excited to have the chance to continue the relationships I built during my year on TOM! It will also give me the chance to get to know the areas, and people of Carnalea that I didn't have time to meet last year because of the other 5 churches I attended to!

Being a Youth Intern, will allow me to continue to take part in some of the organisations I've been involved in this year such as Girls' Brigade and STOMP. I can continue to invest time into them, and deepen the relationships I've built during TOM year. I'm also getting the chance to take part in the church's Youth Club and Sunday School, called pathfinders. This means I will meet the other children and young people in the church which I'm really excited about.

Please pray for me as I start this learning process! Thank you so much for all your support. I really wouldn't be the person I am today if it was not for the support from Sydenham Methodist.

Love and blessings,
Claire Stewart

SOMETHING TO PONDER: George Carlin

George Carlin's wife died early in 2008 and George followed her, dying in July 2008. It is ironic George Carlin - comedian of the 70s and 80s - could write something so very eloquent and so very appropriate.

An observation by George Carlin:

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider Freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgement, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbour.

We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast food and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes. There are the days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.

Remember to spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.

Remember to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember to say "I love you" to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again.

Give time to love, give time to speak! And give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

And always remember, life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by those moments that take our breath away.

George Carlin

(Submitted by Neville Thomson)



WNTMG Brain Nights

WNTMG is our youth group for guys and girls who are in 1st to 4th year. Our month is split into 4 weeks: one week is FOOD, where we have tea together; one is SPLIT, where the boys and girls divide up and do gender-related activities (so for our last Split, the girls did their nails and the boys ate food!); and two weeks a month are BRAIN nights. But what happens on Brain nights?

During Brain nights we teach our young people about the truth God has communicated to us through His Bible. Many people in our culture in Northern Ireland believe in God, but act as if He is irrelevant to their lives. Yet if God is real, then He is the most significant person we will ever meet in our lives. So during Brain nights, we strive to communicate with the WNTMGers why Jesus is vital and relevant to their lives today.

Two of the aims of Brain Nights are to make them fun and interactive. We don't think studying the Bible needs to be boring! We often do games during the night, but they often have a point behind them. And it's important the session is interactive, for we learn and retain much more information by discussing issues, rather than simply listening to someone tell us about them.

We often choose relevant topics such as Family, School and Self-worth, and teach the WNTMGers God's wisdom on these matters, using the Bible as our guide. What follows is an example of what we've been doing in WNTMG during the month of September, where we have been looking at what it means to be a Christian. In our country, people will either say a Christian is someone who is 'saved' or a person who is 'good living'. But a Christian is so much more than that.

When we look at the Bible, we find many different images and descriptions of what it means to be a Christian-like looking at a diamond from separate angles and seeing different surfaces sparkle in the light. So a Christian, we discovered is someone, who is free, free from being enslaved to others' opinions of them because they know that God sees them as beautiful in His eyes. A Christian is someone who is in Christ. This means that when God looks at us Christians, who often fail and let Him down, He sees the perfection of Christ in us. This frees us from feeling like failures and liberates us from having to work at making God love us: He already does, because of Christ!

A Christian is someone who imitates Jesus. To be a follower of Jesus means to live like Him. We frequently make mistakes, yet God loves us unconditionally. So, we say sorry to Him, pick ourselves up and move forwards. A Christian is someone filled with the Holy Spirit and He gives us the power to live like Jesus, if we humbly ask Him for it.

A Christian is called to a life of sacrifice. It's tempting to just tell people about the good things about being a Christian, rather than the difficulties. Yet Jesus was very honest about how hard it is to follow Him, and told people to "count the cost" before they chose to be His disciples. Christians are frequently misunderstood and are called to live a life of faith, which is by no means easy. And we are called to sacrifice to others, which goes against our natural self-centredness. In WNTMG we were reminded of God's intense passion for the poor and how He calls us to give financially to those in need.

Finally, a Christian is part of something bigger than them. There is a real emphasis in our culture of being connected to others, something which is inbuilt within us. When we become Christians we become part of God's kingdom, a movement of grace and justice in His world, a movement stretching back thousands of years. We become part of God's family, alongside millions of others of every language and skin colour. It's important to remember this, for we can easily make Christianity about 'me', rather than about 'God, then others'.

These are just some of the different ways the Bible describes those that follow Jesus. The above images all interact wonderfully with one another. Hopefully you can see how they are relevant to your life. And despite having a weird name, hopefully you have more of an idea about what happens at WNTMG! Why not chat to the leaders - Stephen, Melissa, Jenni and Sammy - to find out more? Just ask them about the Moon Ball and see where the conversation goes...

Sam Stanfield
Youth Worker

Real God in the Real World - the BRF Advent Book for 2013 By Trystan Owain Hughes, BRF, £7.99

Using cultural reflections or anecdote, Trystan Hughes encourages readers to use the festive season to recognise Christ in the world around – not only in prayer and worship, but also in the beauty of nature, in their friends and family and in their everyday activities over the Christmas period and beyond. He aims to help Christians find confidence in a real God who is very active in the realities of our world today.

“As we journey through Christmas together, we will start to open our eyes, ears, and hearts to Christ all around us, and, as we do, we will find that the Word is still becoming flesh today!” To accompany the book, Trystan is recording a short series of video trailers for individual and church use that have been filmed on location. Each video focuses on one of the readings.

Restored Lives – recovery from divorce and separation By Erik Castenskiold, Monarch, £9.99

Erik Castenskiold outlines the journey of breakdown and recovery, offering assurance that recovery is possible and revealing how to move forward as a single person. He highlights the importance of forgiveness, revealing how it is possible to let go and move on, and establishes important tools for communicating well with your ex-partner, handling conflict, setting emotional boundaries and expressing yourself clearly. He also addresses the impact of separation on family and friends and considers relevant legal and financial factors.

While based on Christian principles, the material is relevant and helpful for anyone with or without a Christian faith or church background. It was developed from the Recovery from Divorce and Separation course that Erik runs at Holy Trinity Brompton, London.

SYDENHAM EXPLORER SCOUT UNIT SUMMER CAMP – LARCH HILL

Water pistol? Check. Sleeping bag? Check. Bag of sweets? Check. As I made sure I had everything, I couldn't help but feel excited to go to Larch Hill, Dubin, for my first international camp. I was feeling optimistic knowing that if Dublin was to be true to itself, I was about to endure 5 days of drenching rain, soaking everything from our leader's shoes to Pike's endless supply of custard creams. Like the rest of our group, I wasn't going to let the rain put me off going!

Surprisingly, when I woke up on the morning of our camp, it was a bright blue day and the birds were singing. Fortunately for us, this weather would follow us to Dublin making the bus journey even better than usual. As we are Northern Irish, we are always complaining about the weather and as we were putting the tents up, the sound of grumbling and moaning about how hot it was rang out throughout the camp! Once the tents were all up, we sat down and had lunch.



The rest of this day was spent being lazy with a few on-site games and talk of the next few days. After a classic scout camp dinner of mince and potatoes, cooked by 'head chef' Andy, Sam suggested a game of Ultimate Frisbee. This would be repeated every day at camp. After being quickly shot down (not literally) someone suggested Hunt which was played until the midges ate us alive and forced us into our tents.

The next day, as we got up in dribs and drabs, someone stupidly suggested that we should go on a hike to the Hell Fire Club. At the

time this seemed like a good idea, but 5 hours and 30°C heat later, we all decided that this was not the brightest idea. After a short rest we did the on-site Fort Adventura, which consisted of; an Assault course, a human maze, a traversing wall, and a high ropes course. Even though our 6 foot + tall leader Basil could see over the walls of the maze, it was great fun. Exhausted by our day of activities, that evening was spent in the main tent (out of reach of the midges) with stupid games and talking about things that were utterly ridiculous.

On Saturday we were all up early as we were going to Dublin Zoo. This was the highlight of my trip and for many others. The penguins were my favourite; with one (who many people said was like me) face planting the water after tripping on a rock! I also liked the monkeys, with a big orangutan posing as someone doing yoga. Some of the monkeys looked scarily like members of our group, so I was very surprised that we all left without someone being 'recaptured'! After another exhausting day we had dinner out, so no cooking or washing up. That night we had a good chin wag in the main tent with Paul and Valerie (2 leaders from our group who came down to join us for the day) before they left for the long journey home.



Sunday morning was spent doing our own thing and in the afternoon we hired out grass sledges. These are plastic sledges with wheels on the bottom. All you have to do is sit on them and go down a grassy slope. This was great craic but made us very warm.

The only logical thing to do was to have a massive water fight leaving everything on our path wet. It's safe to say that my team won!

Monday was spent packing up and eating what food was left. I would never recommend having pasta and sauce for breakfast! Once the tents were all packed up, we clambered onto the bus, all worse for wear and really tired. Through our tiredness, we sang Taylor Swift (that was



until Luke's ipod died!). Back at the halls, we were presented with our Larch Hill Activity Badges, for which we had to do a number of activities including pioneering and environmental challenges.

Overall I really enjoyed my trip to Larch Hill and I would definitely recommend it to anyone who was thinking of going to Dublin.

Many thanks to all our leaders who arranged our camp.

Laura Gray

STOREHOUSE

During the summer I came across an organisation called 'Storehouse'. Storehouse was founded in 2008 by Belfast City Vineyard Church when those involved aimed to demonstrate God's unconditional love and mercy throughout the greater Belfast area. Initially this was through providing food packages to those in our city who are hungry and without food. In 2010 Storehouse was established as a standalone charity and is now working to establish a sense of unity amongst the churches of Belfast – churches working together for the same purpose.

Storehouse has continued to grow and in 2012 they opened a Storehouse Centre in Belfast City Centre. It is at this venue that guests who have been referred may meet with project workers who will spend time exploring how Storehouse can best meet the needs of individuals and their families. Support from storehouse may include receiving a food parcel, exploring an online furniture catalogue and choosing furniture and household goods, or at the venue, guests may enter the clothing boutique where they can engage in a personal shopping experience from donated clothes.

Storehouse partners with a number of churches, agencies and charitable organisations throughout Belfast and through the referrals received from such they are able to support individuals and families throughout our city who have found themselves in difficult situations.

Storehouse believes in the uniqueness of God's people, and that all were created by God with purpose and intent. Storehouse aims to provide individuals and families with choice and dignity whilst

working to prevent dependency – encouraging independent, sustainable, healthy lifestyles.

How can Sydenham Methodist help ...

Prayer – Thank God for those who are committed to the work of Storehouse and ask for His guidance as Storehouse continues to grow and serve in our community. Pray for those families and individuals involved with Storehouse and that they may come to know and grow in God's love.

Food Collection – You are challenged each week to make an extra purchase in your food shopping and to donate to Storehouse by leaving it in the trolley in the porch. Please take a gift tag to remind you of items required and to remind you to make a purchase.

Referral – If anyone is aware of families or individuals who could benefit from support from Storehouse please see Joanna to discuss a referral.

Volunteering – Storehouse have several volunteering opportunities including: reception; hospitality; project workers; clothing boutique. If you wish to become involved or find out more information please see Joanna.

I am so excited that we as a congregation have become involved in this project and I hope and pray that God continues to use Sydenham Methodist to serve within our community, reaching out to those in need, showing His love and further developing our own relationship with Him.

For further information about Storehouse you can visit www.storehouse.com.

Joanna Sloan



AN INTERVIEW WITH REV ROBERT RUSSELL, PASTORAL WORKER

Occupation: I began work in the design department of a fabric printing firm and remained there for seven years. Following this, I spent a year as an Evangelist on the Dungannon Circuit. After three years at Edgehill College, I was sent to the Killyshandra and Longford Circuit where, with my wife Kathleen, we served for three years prior to leaving for the West Indies as Mission Partners with the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas. Since our return home, we have worked in North Belfast on the Joanmount & Crumlin Road Circuit; in East Belfast in Dundonald on the Knock Circuit, in South Belfast in Ballynafeigh on the Ballynafeigh etc Circuit, and Donaghadee from where we retired four years ago. And, as you know, I have been helping Karen, in a pastoral role, for a few hours each week over the past three years.

Favourites:

Food: It would be probably easier saying what I don't like as I enjoy a whole variety of food. Let me put it this way, I am not too keen on the 'McDonalds' type of fast food. Like most people my vintage, I do enjoy going out for coffee, with my wife and friends.

Music: 'Classic FM' is my style of listening music. I have grown into enjoying choral singing over the years, I find congregational worship music and singing inspirational, devotional and generally helpful. In my opinion, there is good and not so good in both traditional and modern lyrics and music.

Hymns: I am prejudiced in that I like most of the Hymns of Charles Wesley. The words are fantastic. However, one of my favourite traditional Hymns is 'This, this is the God we adore.'

Song: My favourite modern worship song is, 'In Christ alone my hope is found.'

Bible verses:

Old Testament: I love the Psalms. My favourite is Psalm 103.

New Testament: Ephesians 3: 14-21

And another thing: I am always deeply moved by the visual beauty and wonder of God's creation. I especially love trees. I enjoy art in all its forms and if I could discipline myself, would draw and paint more.

I have three sons and two grandchildren. Two of them are married and live in England. The other is single and lives in Warsaw.

CASTLEWELLAN HOLIDAY WEEK 2013!

Despite being my 6th year, being part of the Castlewellan family this year was an entirely new experience for me. This was my first time being a leader with the Sydenham youth group. The Friday night before Castlewellan has always been a second “Christmas Eve” and this year was no different - I was excited and raring to go!

After arriving at the church bright and early on the Saturday morning, 9 young people and 4 leaders (and several helpful parents!!!) set off on the annual road trip towards the beautiful Mourne Mountains. Travelling with Sammy, we discussed our thoughts about the week ahead, talking about how we were excited to see how God would move within the young people of not just Sydenham, but all those coming to Castlewellan Holiday Week.

Upon arrival, we prepared to set up camp. We discovered someone had forgotten to lift poles for the girl’s tent, which led to much amusement among the boys as the girls couldn’t put their tent up. This was definitely a highlight for the boys, as it provided some early week laughs! However, Wade and Dave came to the rescue, collecting the forgotten poles from the church on their way to Castlewellan.

On the Sunday, the highlight of the day was undoubtedly the performance of the American Starfire Singers Group, as they took us on a musical journey through the persecution that Christians face across the world. The performance was engaging and thoroughly entertaining. A huge thanks to the Starfire Singers for travelling across the pond to entertain us.

Monday provided a personal low point during the football tournament as I missed the deciding penalty that knocked our team

out of the semi finals of the tournament. Despite this embarrassing setback, I soldiered on throughout the week, as I had to endure having the mickey taken out of me for the rest of the week!

Throughout the week we were treated to some fantastic dramas by Ross, Chris and the team. Their creativity and how they can make us all laugh despite being tired and groggy every morning is a blessing to Castlewellan Holiday Week. Also, once again Soul Purpose were fantastic, and kept us on our toes with all the early morning worship. They also kept a relaxing atmosphere where we could focus on our praise to God.

The Speakers this year, Andy and Stuart, were excellent. They kept us informed and entertained, and gave everyone plenty of food for thought as the week progressed.

For me, a highlight, was seeing the young people of Sydenham fully engaging in the worship, which as their leader was fantastic to see. Seeing a young person giving their all in a worship session is one of the most refreshing sights, and is extremely encouraging, not only as their leader, but also as their friend.

It was amazing to see the development of the youth over the week, as they discovered new things about God and themselves, and as they found a way of praising God that suits them.

Andy Gray



The Worship Architect: Crafting a Service

DATE: 9th March 2013

TIME: 9:30am - 12:30pm

VENUE: South Belfast Methodist Church (Lisburn Road Methodist)

Saturday, 9th March 2013 was one of those cold, wet, mornings but I pushed myself to go to the training session for Local Preachers. It was the title of the training session that had me thinking; The Worship Architect: Crafting a Service. It may have been cold and wet outside but there was a warm welcome inside, (along with fresh scones and coffee).

After we had our welcome cup of coffee/tea, we sat down to begin the session. This was led by Rev Dr Richard Clutterbuck, Principal of Edgehill College, and Rev Mervyn Ewing, Ministerial Local Preachers' Secretary.

There are approximately 315 Local Preachers in the Methodist Church in Ireland. Not all had gathered, but some travelled from as far as Co Tyrone, and across the border.

The two questions for the training session were;

- 1) What is Worship for?
- 2) What are your core values for Good Worship?

What is Worship for?

In this session we discussed the following:

Worship - as service to God

Worship - as the mirror of heaven

Worship - as an affirmation

Worship - as communion

Worship - as proclamation

Worship - as the arena of transcendence

What are your core values for good Worship

This was based on four walls of foundation.

The first wall of foundation was “**GATHERING**”. Gathered by God
The second wall of foundation was “**THE WORD**”. Listening to God’s voice

The third wall of foundation was “**RESPONSE**”. Prayer, act, speak out

The fourth wall of foundation was “**SEND OUT**”. Discipleship, grace, to go out and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There was a lot of brain storming and discussion in such a short space of time, but it was all very worthwhile. It was good to be among fellow Local Preachers and to keep learning about and serving our God.

I certainly came away with the challenge of the four walls of foundation.

To “**GATHER**” - to gather as God’s people

To hear “**THE WORD**” - to listen to God’s voice and what God calls each one of us to do for Him.

To “**RESPOND**” - to pray, to act upon and to speak of God’s love for all.

To “**SEND OUT**” - to be a disciple of Christ. To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My challenge to us as a Church, is to build on this foundation. To gather as God's people, to listen to His voice, to pray, act, and go our and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Watch out, we have here the basis for a four point sermon!

Paul Sunerton
Convenor of the Local Preachers' Committee



"It's either an appeal to youth culture or we can't afford to service the boiler for the Winter season"



"Never mind, let's just be happy that Baz came to church in the first place."

Editor: Many churches hold Christingle services at Christmas including our own. Christingle, of course, began with the Moravians in Germany. Here are the words of a lovely traditional Moravian carol about light:

Morning Star, O cheering sight!

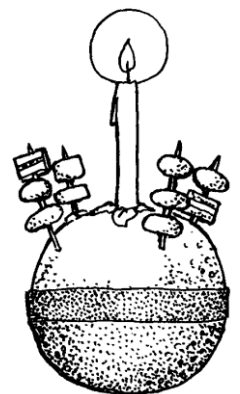
Morning Star, O cheering sight!
Ere thou cam'st how dark earth's night!
Jesus mine,
In me shine;
Fill my heart with light divine.

Morning star, thy glory bright
Far excels the sun's clear light:
Jesus be
Constantly,
More than thousand suns to me.

Thy glad beams, thou morning star,
Cheer the nations near and far;
Thee we own
Lord alone,
Man's great Saviour, God's dear Son.

Morning star, my soul's true light,
Tarry not, dispel my night;
Jesus mine,
In me shine;
Fill my heart with the light divine.

Traditional Moravian Carol



Colouring Page





Grass Sledging at Larch Hill



Arriving at campsite