

December 2016

The Season of Giving and Receiving: some thoughts from Father Charles

'A Very Victorian Affair....'

At the start of the 19th century Christmas was hardly celebrated – most businesses of the time would not have considered a holiday requirement. The low fuss Christmas of 200 years ago has undergone an astonishing transformation.

If 'blame' is the right word, then who are we to blame for this transformation? There are probably quite a few contenders and all originate in Victorian Britain. There is no doubt that the *Illustrated London News* is one contender. In 1848 it published a drawing of the royal family celebrating beside a decorated Christmas tree; this being a tradition imported from Germany by Prince Albert. It was not long before most British homes contained fir trees bedecked with all sorts of decoration.

Perhaps we can also look toward the post service, or more specifically the Royal Mail. The combination of the new halfpenny post and the first Christmas card created an initial step toward commercialization of Christmas. As a footnote, I mention that Henry Cole (who commissioned and sold the first cards in 1843) went to the same school as me – though in a previous century!

There's also the Christmas cracker – a creation of the confectioner Tom Smith, inspired by a trip to Paris and the temptation of the 'bon-bon'. First produced in 1848, crackers became an essential part of the 'modern Christmas'.

To ensure that everyone knew what a 'modern Christmas' was, the hugely popular *Cassell's Family Magazine* provided the 'lady of the house' with very clear instructions. This ensured that 'her' home could be properly decorated, and Christmas properly celebrated. From 1881 these instructions were dutifully followed. Consequently we benefit from all the above, as well as mince pies and roast turkey.

With these Victorian interventions the focus of Christmas became increasingly centred on the family. The Christmas season became a family time of feasting, decorating, entertaining and parlour games. It also became a time for the giving of gifts.

The 'Dickens' of a Christmas – A Christmas Carol

Whilst Charles Dickens didn't 'invent' Christmas, he certainly popularised the 'modern' traditions, with the publication of *'A Christmas Carol'*. Within the story there are some key themes that were believed to sit at the heart of the Victorian Christmas: the themes of family, charity, goodwill, peace and happiness – all part of the spirit of Christmas that we hope all can share today, in 2016

However, we remind ourselves that this is not the case for everyone. Around our world, and here in Bristol, regardless of faith, there are many who during this festive season will be very far from feeling festive. For many, not one of the themes that we might identify as those that contribute to the spirit of Christmas will be recognisable in their own lives.

Into the Office of Marley and Scrooge

Two portly gentlemen enter the office of Marley (deceased) and Scrooge and offer the thought of the 'hundreds of thousands who are in want of common comforts' and the 'poor and destitute who suffer greatly at the present time of year'. Scrooge reminds the gentlemen of the purposes of prisons and workhouses! Undaunted, they continue:

"What shall we put you down for?"

"Nothing!" answers Scrooge.

"You wish to remain anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone!"

The Season of Giving and Receiving

Scrooge may not be considered a great steward; his intention is to hoard what he is given in time, talent and treasure. His gifts are buried deep within himself, he cannot give, he cannot share, and he even hides his hurts and resentments. There seems to be nothing which gives him peace or happiness.

We know the story; how Jacob Marley, through the visiting spirits, gives Scrooge another chance to review his life and what's important within it. And whilst this takes place at the Christmas season, Scrooge realises that the actual season of giving and receiving is the whole of his life. Scrooge takes his opportunity - and makes a donation. The 'portly gentlemen' to whom he makes the donation is surprised! In his astonishment he says "Are you serious?"

Scrooge's response is "Not a farthing less!"

Our Own Stewardship

Each of us gives our time, talent and treasure – in many and various ways. In this traditional season of giving, and over the coming year, we have an opportunity to reflect on our use of time, talent and treasure. There may be areas and acts in which we would like to make changes to better equip our church to fulfil its purpose as a place of worship and prayer, open to all; to improve our support of other churches in this diocese and further afield in their work and mission; and to increase ~~in~~ our acts of out-reach to those around us and support of those in need.

May peace, goodwill, charity and joy fill you this Christmas; and may we find ways to extend these 'themes' to others through our good stewardship of time, talent and treasure.



All Saints, Clifton

**OUT OF THE SILENCE
COME THE WORD**

**A Meditative
Pilgrimage for Advent**

**Sunday 11 December at
6pm**

**(Gather in the atrium at
5.55pm)**

Sermon Preached On Sunday 30 October 2016

For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost.

Yesterday the Church remembered James Hannington, Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa who was martyred in Uganda in 1885.

Among the new nations of Africa, Uganda is the most predominantly Christian. Mission work began there in the 1870's with the favor of King Mutesa, who died in 1884. However, his son and successor, King Mwanga, opposed all foreign presence, including the missions.

James Hannington, born 1847, was sent out from England in 1884 by the Anglican Church as the missionary Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa. As he was travelling toward Uganda, he was apprehended by emissaries of King Mwanga. He and his companions were brutally treated and, a week later, 29 October 1885, most of them were put to death. Hannington's last words were: "Go tell your master that I have purchased the road to Uganda with my blood."

In the nineteenth century missionaries pushed through African jungles and deserts, learned local languages, and braved pestilential climates to create schools, hospitals, and churches. Some were killed, others contracted debilitating diseases, but by the century's end a global missionary presence was in place. Disease and martyrdom claimed great numbers.

This martyrdom did not stop and ^{Janani} Luwum, archbishop of Uganda, was murdered on 17 Feb 1977. Until very recently gay Christians in Uganda were facing the death penalty for being gay. The martyrdom goes on.

In spite of this, The Revd Jane Too-Dera told of hundreds, in the refugee camps in Uganda who came for baptism, who wanted to 'embrace the love of the Lord Jesus'. On one day around 800 people came forward for Baptism.

It is 62 years since the 1954 Harringay Crusade, which Christians look back on as the closest we came to mass revival in 20th century Britain. Organised by Billy Graham and the Evangelical Alliance, the events, officially entitled the Greater London Crusade, took place in North London in the Harringay Arena and saw an aggregate attendance of two million people - the biggest Christian event of its kind in UK history. Again hundreds came forward and committed themselves to Jesus. In the years following there were crusades throughout the UK and in 1958, aged 13, I came forward at a Youth For Christ Rally in Hereford.

Zaccheus wanted to see who Jesus was. He was small, he was disliked because of his profession – that of collecting taxes for the Romans – and for this he was marginalized. Jesus could identify with marginalized and needy people and so called Zaccheus down and invited himself back to Zaccheus's house. This made the crowds even more resentful of Zaccheus, but because of Jesus calling him forward, he offered to reimburse anyone he had defrauded four times over and would give half of all he owned to the poor. For this he received salvation.

These people came forward and still do come forward to meet with and embrace the love of the Lord Jesus and to seek salvation.

When I think of this I am reminded of the Gospel accounts of the multitudes, and the individuals, who sought Jesus out and followed him around listening to his teachings and the many who followed and committed themselves to his Way, His Truth and allowed His Light

to illuminate their lives. I am reminded of the first converts after Pentecost where we are told in the Acts of the Apostles, that about three thousand came forward for baptism. And we are told that they,

Devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

These first Christians believed that The Second Coming would be in their lifetime and in our Epistle reading this morning we hear the writer of the Epistle commending the Christians of Thessalonika for their faithfulness in spite of persecutions and afflictions, for their conviction that God is faithful. The Christians of Thessalonika were being persecuted by the Jewish Diaspora at this time.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the writings of the Early Fathers, we continue to hear of large numbers of people coming forward and we hear of the martyrdom of some of those who were bringing the Good News to all, even to 'the ends of the earth', which would be Spain to the west in the Pauline Church.

There was a raw excitement, a freshness about this mission to spread the Good News as far as possible and as fast as possible. They embraced the love of the Lord Jesus and they sought healing and salvation.

But the way of Salvation is not easy, at Baptism, Confirmation, we are filled with the joy of the gift of the Holy Spirit; we are delivered from our sins of the past, but also from our continuing sins. We take on Our Lord's sufferings in order to bring about the Kingdom of God., we do not willingly ask for martyrdom, but for some it pushed on us.

Our Pilgrimage can be very stormy and rocky at times, often more The Cloud of Unknowing than the Burning Fire of Love.

We need to have a sense of what Jesus is about, we need to follow that vision of what Jesus is about right to the end, in order to live the Kingdom.

We are the Church and the Church is the new humanity, the Adam recreated in Christ. There is no salvation for humankind outside Christ, so that all who form part of the new humanity must in some way be vitally related to Him. The Church is no less than the Body of Christ and that makes us the new humanity. The new humanity is a given state and it exists through the will of God and does not depend upon our awareness of it.

Rowan Williams says,

For St Paul, the Church as The Body is a system of interdependence: no one part can be reduced to a function of another and no part can claim to subsist in its own right.

So in simple terms an example might be that if one part of the Body is hurting, the whole Body shares that hurt, and we must do all we can to heal that hurt.

Our hope is for a shared and reciprocal *empowering* for growth towards the Kingdom.

At Mass, after the Ministry of the Word, and before the Ministry of the Sacrament we make our Peace with our neighbor, with Christ and with the whole Church when the priest says,

We are the body of Christ. In the one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body.

Let us then pursue all that makes for Peace and builds up our common life.

As we receive the Sacrament we are swept up into the whole company of Heaven and so bring the Kingdom of God into the here and now as we take Christ within us out into our daily lives.

As we approach the Festivals of All Saints and All Souls let us give thanks for the Saints and martyrs who have gone before us, both those recognised and those unknown, who have through their lives and example and through their teachings have shown us the way to Salvation and so to bring about the Kingdom of God now and forever.

AMEN

Liz Badman

Downsizing

As part of my library I have an extensive collection of scholarly theological books which I would like to go to those who will appreciate them.

Please ring 9249203 to arrange to come and take your pick!

Ken Smith

IN THIS MONTH.....DECEMBER 1936

Canon Gillson celebrated 25 years as Vicar of All Saints' at the Patronal Festival in 1936. It is recorded in the Magazine as "one of, if not the most, striking that has ever been celebrated...beautiful services and music, large congregations, eloquent sermons, a great array of Prelates and a wonderful spiritual atmosphere". Messages were received from both the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, and the Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington- Ingram, respectively as follows:

"I am much interested to hear that this year Canon Gillson reaches the 25th of his ministry at All Saints' Clifton. As an old friend of Canon Gillson, who knew him when he was Chaplain to the Bishop of London, and as one who has always had a very real admiration for his personality, his faithful care of souls, his width of sympathy and his enthusiasm for the work

of the Church overseas, I would like to be associated with his people at this time. I should be grateful if you would convey to him on November 2nd, or ask the Bishop of the Diocese to convey to him on my behalf, a message of my cordial remembrance, good wishes and blessing.”

“I am very glad you are marking my dear old friend’s Silver Jubilee. I am afraid I cannot get down there myself but hope you will say that we have the happiest recollections of his time here and I had a small part in saying that he should take All Saints’ out of the three livings offered to him.”

Canon Gillson responded to the tribute paid him thus:

“My very kind and long suffering Friends,

As many of you were unable to be in the Parish Hall on November 2nd, when our Bishop handed me your presents, I must ask you to accept such expression of my gratitude as I can convey through the medium of our Magazine, which I hope may reach you in due course. On the evening itself, I was too overwhelmed by surprise and bewilderment at the large company who had so kindly assembled to celebrate the occasion, and the great generosity of your presents, to be able to say anything coherent. I had done my best to keep the dreadful secret of my long sojourn at All Saints’ to myself and how it got about I don’t know. Having discovered it the natural course would have been to for you to have invited the Bishop to such a gathering, and then revealed the situation asking what he proposed to do about it and what hope of relief he could hold out. Instead of that you call it a Silver Jubilee, as though it were a matter for rejoicing, and load me with presents. As to these I should like to assure you that the wireless is one of super-excellence. My old one had done good service for some eight years but never enabled me to draw upon Continental stations and never reached the fulness and excellence of tone that has now been reached. It is a real companion and source of enjoyment. The clock, which was also mentioned, did not as a matter of fact materialise at the date of the gathering: so I took the opportunity of being in London to visit Mr Dent’s well-known shop and there chose for myself the one that attracted me most. It will stand on my study chimney-piece, complete with inscription, and I hope may spur me on to “work while it is yet day,” as well as being a constant visible reminder of your very real kindness, and of an event in my life which your great goodness to me made indeed a red-letter day. There are some events in life which one can enjoy most in retrospect, the memories of which do not fade away.”

PARISH RETREAT 2017

Friday 3 – Sunday 5 February

**Conductor: The Rt Revd John Armes,
Bishop of Edinburgh**

The Retreat would start from 5pm on Friday 3 February and would finish with tea at 4pm on Sunday 5 February. This will give us time for reflection after lunch on Sunday. Silence would start at 8pm on Friday and finish after lunch on Sunday.

There is also the availability for some of us to arrive on the Thursday evening and stay until 10am on the Monday. This would have to be paid for separately and if anyone is interested I will get forms for you to fill in.

This is advance notice and later I will put a notice up in the porch for people to sign, when I have more details.

Liz Badman

LEGACIES

During this year All Saints have received 3 welcome legacies.

Peter Thompson, a true Christian gentleman who many of us remember with affection, left a gift of £10,000.00 to All Saints

The Reverend Canon Raymond Ross served his first curacy at All Saints from 1954 – 1958. Several of the congregation remember him. He spent most of his ministry in the diocese of Derby and was an Honorary Canon of Derby Cathedral from 1986 – 1995 and retired 1996.

The training, welcome and friendship he discovered at All Saints remained with him during his ministry and he generously bequeathed £50,000 to All Saints.

Tony Goodfield who died in a care home in January was unknown at All Saints, however All Saints was not unknown to him. Tony had never attended a service at All Saints, was a very private person and had few friends. In the late 1950s early 1960s he was experiencing personal difficulties and found himself sitting on a wall outside of the church when he was joined by one of the clergy who sat with him and listened, advised and spent quiet time with him. Tony and the unknown priest met on occasions, always outside of the church where Tony was able to spend time to talk and reflect.

Throughout his life Tony never forgot the care, comfort and compassion he received from the unknown priest at All Saints Clifton and left All Saints a 'thank you' of £75,000.00.

These legacies are hugely appreciated at a time when the PCC are looking ahead and planning some major capital repairs and improvements alongside the everyday upkeep and maintenance of All Saints.

We say thank you to Peter, Canon Raymond and Tony for their generosity to All Saints.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

The Rt Revd Lee Rayfield, Bishop of Swindon, on the seismic events of recent elections and the realities they express

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” These words came to mind as I woke up to the news we had voted to leave the EU. Spoken by Jesus in a very different context, they resonated deeply with where so many countries now find themselves. The divisions being revealed in the USA and UK are considerably less destructive than those in Syria and Iraq, but they are nevertheless dangerous.

Speaking about societal tensions in America, Bishop TD Jakes said people had not been included in his nation's strategy for success. He spoke of anarchy erupting when someone in power forgot somebody who wasn't. The issue which Bishop Jakes identified was inequality of opportunity and its parent or sibling, economic inequality.

Of developed nations, the gap between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% in society is greatest in the USA. A study published in 2011 entitled *The Spirit Level* found a clear and worrying association between the degree of economic inequality and the prevalence of a wide range of social and health related issues: rates of divorce, mental illness, alcohol and drug addiction, life expectancy, and crime. These issues impact the most affluent as well as the least.

The worrying news is that the UK was the third most unequal developed nation in that study. We now have levels of inequality of wealth not experienced for 100 years and the gap has widened over the last four decades. Paradoxically, the bad news that inequality affects everyone – is a blessing in disguise as it can bring us together to address it. The causes of inequality are deep and complex but this does not mean we are impotent to act.

An atheist friend of mine is convinced churches have a key role to play and describes the Church of England as the conscience of the nation. Brexit and the US elections have surfaced deep divisions for which there will be no quick fix. In this climate, signs of God's Kingdom and witness to our King may find greater traction. This is not about adding to our agendas, but how we might put flesh on our Diocesan vision of Creating connections and better embody a way in which nobody is ignored or forgotten.

Read Bishop Lee's full article at www.bristol.anglican.org

ALL SAINTS, CLIFTON

Pembroke Road



SUNDAY: ADVENT 3 & CHRISTINGLE

11th December

9.30 am CHRISTINGLE
11.00 am PARISH MASS

CAROL SERVICE & SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

18th December

8.00 am SAID MASS
9.30 am FAMILY MASS
11.00 am PARISH MASS
4.30 pm CAROL SERVICE (Mulled wine and Mince Pies)



CHRISTMAS EVE

Saturday, 24th December

9.30 am SAID MASS
5.00 pm FAMILY CRIB SERVICE with CAROLS
(Wine and mince pies served from 4.30 pm)
11.30 pm CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT MASS



CHRISTMAS DAY

Sunday, 25th December

9.00 am SAID MASS
10.30 am FAMILY MASS with CAROLS

SUNDAY: NEW YEAR WORSHIP

Sunday 1st January 2017

8.00 am SAID MASS
10.30 am FAMILY MASS

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

Friday 6th January

7.30 pm FESTIVAL MASS

EPIPHANY PARTY

Saturday 7th January

3.30 pm