

## December Newsletter 2022

### The United Benefice of St. Giles, Killamarsh and St. Matthew, Renishaw

#### December Sunday Services

Date	Time	Church	Service
04/12/22 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent	10.00 am	St. Giles	Service of the Word
	10.00 am.	St. Matthew's	Holy Communion
11/12/22 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent	10.00 am.	St. Giles	Holy Communion
	10.00 am.	St. Matthew's	Service of the Word
18/12/22 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent	10.00 am.	St. Giles	Holy Communion
	10.00 am.	St. Matthew's	Holy Communion
25/12/22 Christmas Day	10.00 am.	St. Giles	Holy Communion
	10.00 am.	St. Matthew's	Holy Communion
01/01/23 Christmas 2	10.00 am	St. Giles	Service of the word
	10.00 am	St. Matthew's	Holy Communion

## Christmas Services St. Matthew's

18/12/22	6 pm	St. Matthew's	Carols by Candlelight
24/12/22	4 pm	St. Matthew's	Crib Service
24/12/22	8 pm	St. Matthew's	Christmas Eve Holy Communion
25/12/22	10 am	St. Matthew's	Christmas Day Holy Communion

## Christmas Services St Giles

04/12/22	4 pm	St. Giles	Festival of Trees
24/12/22	6 pm	St. Giles	Christmas Eve Holy Communion
25/12/22	10 am	St. Giles	Christmas Day Holy Communion

## Midweek Services

**St. Giles:** Holy Communion every Wednesday morning at 9.30 am

**St. Matthew's:** Holy Communion on the second Tuesday at 9.00 am

## MARY

As Jesus' mother, Mary plays a crucial part in the Christmas story. It begins with Gabriel's visit to her: *'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call Him Jesus.'* (Luke 1:30,31). This conversation takes us straight to the heart of what Christmas is all about. God was doing something unique, that had never happened before! *'God was beginning, at this divine and human point, the New Creation of all things. The whole soiled and weary universe quivered at this direct injection of essential life.'* (CS Lewis).

This child unites heaven and earth: the eternal God entered time and space and became a baby, both a real human being and fully divine. It reminds me of the sci-fi film *Fantastic Voyage* (1966) in which a team of surgeons are shrunk to the size of blood cells and injected into the veins of a patient to perform lifesaving surgery. The Christmas message affirms that God has entered the bloodstream of humanity to put things right with Him on the inside. We can know Him personally and make sense of His world.

God chose an unknown, frightened teenage girl to bring about this new beginning for the world. Her response is the pattern for us, as we welcome God's special gift into our lives this Christmas: *"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."* (Luke 1:38).

Mary gave an unqualified Yes to all that God wanted to do in her life. It was a costly decision, which risked both shame and scandal. Yet she was ready to obey God and trust His plans for her life, despite her many questions. Is the same true for us this Christmas? *Parish Pump*

### **How Father Christmas got to be where he is today.**

One person you are bound to run into this Christmas season is Father Christmas. These days he seems to frequent shopping malls and garden centres. If he looks tired, just remember that he has been around a long time and gone through a lot of transformations.

Father Christmas wasn't always the red-suited, white-bearded star of the retail trade that he is today. He began life as Nicholas, born way back about AD260 in Patara, an important port on the southern coast of what is now Turkey. When his parents died and left him a fortune, Nicholas gave it away to the poor. He became a bishop of the nearby city of Myra, where he almost certainly suffered persecution and imprisonment at the hand of the Roman Emperor Diocletian.

Nicholas was a serious theologian: he was a participant at the First Council of Nicaea, which formulated the Creed which we still say today. He even, reportedly, slapped another bishop in a squabble over the exact nature of the Trinity.

Nicholas died in Myra about AD343, but the stories of his generosity and kindness were just beginning. One enduring tale tells of the three girls whom he rescued from certain prostitution by giving them gold for their dowries. When the father confronted him to thank him, Nicholas said he should thank God alone.

In the UK, Nicholas became the basis for Father Christmas, who emerged in Victorian times as a jolly-faced bearded character. Meanwhile, Dutch and German settlers had taken him to America with them as Sinter Klaas and Sankt Nicklas.

It was in America that Nicholas received his final two great breaks into real stardom. The first was when the Rev Clement C Moore, a New York Episcopal minister, turned from his life-work of writing a Hebrew/English lexicon, to write a fun poem for his children one Christmas. His 'The Visit of St Nicholas' is now universally known by its first line: 'T'was the Night Before Christmas'.

From Clement Moore we discovered that St Nicholas is round and pink-cheeked and white-bearded, and that he travels at night with sleigh, reindeer and a sack of toys on his back. It was Clement Moore who also revealed that St Nicholas enters houses down chimneys and fills children's stockings with toys and sweets.

So how did we find out that Father Christmas wears red? That was the US Coca-Cola advertising campaign of 1931, who finally released the latest, up-to-date pictures of Father Christmas: wearing a bright red, fur-trimmed coat and a large belt.

These days, it is good that Father Christmas uses reindeer and doesn't have to pay for petrol. In order to get round all the children in the world on Christmas Eve, he will have to travel 221 million miles at an average speed of 1279 miles a second, 6,395 times the speed of sound. For all those of us who are already exhausted just rushing around getting ready for Christmas, that is a sobering thought. *Parish Pump*

## NEWS

The St. Matthew's Advent Fayre held on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> November was a terrific occasion which was well supported by the local community. There was a variety of stalls available including tombola stalls, cake stall and a raffle. Tea, coffee and light refreshments were served and people enjoyed the opportunity to sit and chat in a lovely convivial atmosphere. The wonderful sum of £657.25 pence was raised by the event and will go into church funds towards the upkeep of the church. Thanks go to Ann Morton and her team of helpers and all those who worked so hard to make this event such a success. Thanks also, to all who came along to support the Advent Fayre by their presence and generosity.



St. Giles QR Code



### QR Codes at St Matthew's Church and St Giles Church

Who uses cash these days? For most people payment for anything is now done by using either a card or via the phone, consequently very few people actually carry cash with them. This has been particularly noticeable at weddings and baptisms where people openly say they have no cash when walking passed the donations plate, consequently very little money is actually on the plate.

Whilst at a recent Deanery Synod meeting I met with Mr Steve Johnson who is the current Derby Diocese Living Generously Adviser . Steve has now visited both churches and has set up distinct and unique QR codes. There are now posters and pew cards .

All a person has to do is place their phone over the code, go to camera, look at the givealittle.co words, press on that and a giving page opens up. A person needs to select an amount , press and their monetary gift is given. It's that simple!!!!

We hope and pray that guests to our churches will use the QR Codes. Revd Helen

St. Matthew's QR Code

## **Shoe Box Appeal**

### **The annual Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal**

Thanks go to Ben and Rachel Wheelhouse for organising the collection again this year. 43 shoe boxes have been filled and collected and will soon be on their way to bring some Christmas joy into the lives of children who would otherwise not have any. Thanks to all those who have filled boxes, given items for packing or money to cover the fee for transport.

### **St Matthew's Church Community sessions**

Each session runs from 11.30am until 1pm on alternate Tuesdays. This initiative is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and is supported by Rykneld Homes and Renishaw St Matthew's WW1 Group. All sessions are free and all are welcome. Sessions have been well attended and have included a variety of crafts including card making, corn dollies and Christmas wreaths. There was also a session on bring and share items and the memories of old Renishaw they triggered.

The final session this year will be on 13<sup>th</sup> December the subject will be Heritage. The programme of crafts and memories will continue in the New Year starting on 10<sup>th</sup> January with memories of Renishaw, local history and quiz. A full list of upcoming topics will be published in the January Newsletter.

### **Warm Spaces**

Churches in Killamarsh are working together to provide spaces where people can spend an hour or so in a warm atmosphere. St. Giles Church Hall is open on a Tuesday afternoon 1pm to 3.30 pm offering a hot drink, refreshments and an opportunity to just sit and chat in a convivial atmosphere. This event is supported by Killamarsh Co-op.

In Renishaw people are invited to join us at our weekly Tuesday coffee mornings and the fortnightly crafting sessions.

### **Discover Christmas.**

Christmas Angels are due to arrive at St. Giles Church Hall on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December between 2 pm and 4 pm. Why not come along and discover what it is all about, take time to explore the various art and craft

stalls, raffle and chocolate tombola. Relax with some festive refreshments and meet with friends old and new. It's FREE

### **Killamarsh Junior School.**

What a delight to welcome classes back into St Giles Church. On the morning of Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November three classes came to St Giles Church. As well as having a teacher generated worksheet to do opportunities were offered for children to ask lots and lots of questions. Such sessions are really important as children are generally inquisitive and by asking questions their understanding of artefacts and aspects of the Christian faith can be developed.

I was very impressed by all the children and I hope that it will not be too long before they return to St Giles Church. Revd Helen

### **An icon for Advent**



The Theotokos of Tikhvin (c. 1300) – an example of the Virgin Hodegetria icon\*

When we first look at a portrait or photograph of someone we often comment on whether it is a 'true likeness' of the person. As well as suggesting that the picture resembles the person physically, this often implies that it has captured something of their essence or what they are like as a being. Looking at the religious depiction of the Virgin Mary and the Christ child above, we see what seems to be a very different, more stylised kind of representation or image and not a likeness in the conventional sense. The word 'icon' comes from the Greek word εἰκών (eikón) meaning 'image, resemblance' and the word image in turn

derives from the Latin word 'imago;' related to 'imitate'. In the tradition of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, icons are considered to be 'sacred images' which are used extensively in religious devotion. In the Orthodox Church such images are held to have existed since the beginning of Christianity and are, therefore, a fundamental and living part of the tradition and history of the church. Rather than simply pictures, they are viewed as 'words in painting'<sup>i</sup> or a visual gospel which through the centuries has made them accessible to all, regardless of the person's ability to read texts such as the Bible. It is for this reason that icons are often described as being 'written' rather than painted, and 'read' rather than viewed by the beholder.

The icon above is titled the **Theotokos** (Mother of God) **of Tikhvin** which is one of the most important Orthodox icons. It is an early example of a type known as the Virgin Hodegetria which originates from the Greek term meaning 'the One who Shows the Way' and is by tradition held to be one of the icons 'written' by St Luke the Evangelist, although some art historians attribute it to a Russian artist of around 1300. It is perhaps of special relevance during Advent as it depicts the Virgin Mary holding Jesus with her left hand and showing or presenting to us by her raised right hand, Christ as 'the Way'. Christ, in turn, has his hand raised in, what seems to be, a gesture of blessing and is looking upwards towards Mary. The Virgin inclines her head towards Christ but faces outwards with a gaze which appears to be directed out of the painting into the world and towards the returning look of the viewer. Her expression seems to prefigure the pain and sorrow she will undergo in witnessing the later suffering of her son as well as her tenderness towards him. As with many icons, the imagery depicts a relationship both between the figures in the painting and also, in this case, through Mary's gaze, with the viewer (or reader). It is a 'true likeness' in the way that it captures a sense of the being and interaction of both mother and Son. By spending time before the icon, particularly in prayer, we are gradually drawn into the layers and aspects of meaning and symbolism within the image. These layers may be difficult or sometimes impossible to express in words but have the potential to enrich and deepen our understanding and realisation of the meaning of the 'coming of Christ' as we travel through Advent and prepare to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus.

SJ Parker

\*Digital reproduction or scan of original icon. Public Domain,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=49511310>

## Pat Bone of Killamarsh Heritage Society looks at the History of the Advent Calendar



On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, children and adults alike will put up their Advent Calendar to count the days until Christmas. But do you know where they originate from?

Advent is an important season in the Christian Church calendar and is the period of time before Christmas to look ahead to the birth of Jesus. Advent comes from a Latin word which means "arrival." Traditionally Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, and is referred to as Advent Sunday.

As it is often celebrated in popular culture, Advent can also mark the beginning of the holiday season with a festive sense of joy and Christmas spirit. Advent calendars can be traced back to the 19th century when families would mark walls or doors every day in December until Christmas Eve with a chalk line.

Like many others aspects of modern Christmas practices, the Advent calendar is of German origin.

In the early twentieth century (about 1902) the first printed calendars appeared, followed by Gerhard Lang's innovation, in the 1920s, of adding small doors and he is seen as the creator of the modern calendar. From the 1930s, others added short bible verses behind the doors alongside the traditional pictures. Lang's business closed shortly before the outbreak of war; subsequently cardboard was rationed and with a Nazi ban on the printing of calendars with images, the calendars disappeared and might have gone for ever. But after the war ended Richard Sellmar of Stuttgart almost miraculously (considering paper shortages) obtained a permit from US officials to begin printing and selling them again. His company remains one of the most important producers of such calendars.

Calendars filled with chocolate began to appear from the late 1950s around the time that they also began to spread around the world. Cadbury's launched its first Advent calendar in 1971, with production the following year and again between 1978 and 1980. But it wasn't until 1993

the firm began to produce them continuously, when it became more routinely adopted as a Christmas tradition.

Advent calendars have now become a popular holiday tradition and today you can find everything from traditional religious calendars to ones with Santa or festive winter imagery, versions shaped like Christmas trees, sports or hobby-themed varieties, or even calendars featuring TV shows or cartoon characters.

Whether you're looking for a fun activity to keep the kids occupied until Santa's visit or you just want a little something to get yourself into the Christmas spirit, Advent calendars are a must-have holiday tradition and have become as central and festive a part of the holiday season as Christmas trees and decorations.

Depending on the type of calendar, you might find sweets, Bible verses, small toys or gifts, or other surprises behind each window.

The most traditional Advent calendars provide a kind of guided reflection on one's religious values in the form of Bible verses or prayers.

One of the favourite kinds of Advent calendars are the ones that reveal chocolates, or other fun snacks. There are plenty of different options to choose from including a variety of alcoholic Advent calendars. These could be liqueur-filled chocolates to small airplane-sized bottles of wine Toy Advent calendars offer a fun surprise for the kids each day of December.

While an Advent calendar is meant to help mark the days until Christmas, Advent wreaths and candles are also often incorporated into religious services. Advent wreaths include 4 candles: one for each week. Some also include a fifth, larger "Christ candle" for lighting on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Today, Advent calendars are hugely popular, but at their heart they retain the essence of counting down the days to Christmas that began with those simple chalk marks.

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**



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## To be Christ in Church and Community

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