

Christians Awake!

Salute the Happy Morn



Christmas Greetings

from Crown Terrace Methodist Church

2015

..... from our Minister visiting Ghana

Dear friends

Christmas in Ghana is one of the most important and joyous festivals lasting for many days in all parts of the country. It is a time for beautiful music on the streets, on radio, television, and everywhere. The churches start preparing well before December 25 for the festivities. The preparations are so intense that it feels like the whole country is preparing for the birth of Jesus. It is a time when relatives and friends visit each other from village to village, town to town in all regions of the country. Many aim by Christmas Eve to visit the ancestral home. The traditional Christmas Eve meal consists of specially cooked rice and goat or chicken stew or soup and is eaten before the Christmas worship service and all friends and relatives as well as strangers are invited.

The food consumed on Christmas Day may include rice, chicken, goat, lamb, and fruits such as mangoes, pawpaw, or cashew nuts. Homes are brightly decorated with beautiful paper ornaments made especially for the occasion. A tree which may be a mango, guava, or cashew tree, is decorated by the young in the family. After the Christmas Eve service there is usually a street procession led by bands and revellers, with dancing into the early hours of Christmas morning.

On Christmas Day, everyone goes to church in their finest new clothes and the churches are generally full. There the story of the first Christmas is recounted along with traditional carol singing in a variety of ethnic languages. After the service the young people receive special gifts such as chocolate, cookies and crackers. They may also receive new clothes or shoes or a book. Meanwhile everyone is

greeted with the special Akan word 'Afehyia pa' meaning Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

That first Christmas morn, the baby Jesus brought heaven-sent gifts, gifts of light, salvation, glory. The Light of Heaven shone upon us while we sat in darkness. He was born the Saviour of the world. He came down that we might share in his eternal glory. Without a doubt his birth marks our birth. Without his incarnation, we would remain in humiliation, subject to 'power and greed and corruptible seed', ultimately to spiritual death. By his coming, Jesus has opened the one true way to happiness and glory.

The wise men bore precious gifts for Jesus. How much more did Jesus bear infinitely precious gifts for us. Let us therefore kneel before him and do him homage. Let us come and adore him, who is Christ the Lord!

Afehyia pa to one and all!

John

Stir up Sunday

Traditionally this was the Sunday before Advent and the last day for making Christmas puddings and cakes if they were to be ready for Christmas Day.

In fact the name has nothing to do with stirring the pudding but rather after the Collect for the day: "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded".

Church family news

ON NOVEMBER 1ST. We welcomed David, Meredith, Ruby, Wendy, Patrick, Nana, Ebo, and Isaac as members. May we be a blessing to them and they to us. We also welcome Nana, David, Meredith, and Joe on to the Preaching Plan.

WE REMEMBER in our prayers -

Betty Knowles, Sarah and Rebecca, as they mourn the passing of Stanley, a much loved husband and father, and a respected former minister in this circuit.

Maureen Marshall and all Howard's family, as we share in the loss of a dear friend and faithful servant of the Lord, who has given so much both to Crown Terrace and the wider church.

CONGRATULATIONS on their graduation to -

Eniola Oladimeji - *MSc in Environmental Science*

Wendy Sarpong - *MSc in Project Management*

Emmanuel Odoom - *MSc in Oil and Gas Structural Engineering*

Rev Joel Nwobodo - *MSc in Global Conflict and Peace Processes*

Kafui Baeta - *Master of Laws in Oil and Gas Law*

Some Advent Thoughts

In the Anglican church which I attended as a child we didn't start singing Christmas carols until the midnight service on Christmas Eve; the decorations in the church were put up on Christmas Eve and stayed up until Candlemas (2nd February). In contrast, at CTM, we start singing carols and the decorations go up during Advent. At this time of year various questions go through my mind.

Is the church simply taking a lead from the commercial world around it when it celebrates Christmas throughout December? Is a Nativity play an opportunity to put across the Christian message to those who don't normally attend church; or does it simply reinforce an increasingly common

view in our secular society that the biblical account of the Nativity is a fairy story on a par with the stories that we tell children about Santa Claus? In the Netherlands children leave shoes out on 5th December for St Nicholas; in Britain they leave out stockings on 24th December for Father Christmas. In Spain the corresponding tradition is even intermingled with characters from the Nativity story, as children put out shoes on 5th January and it is the three wise men who bring them their presents. Instead of a mince pie for Santa and a carrot for the reindeer, they leave out food for the kings and water for the camels. Are the details of the Nativity story important anyway? After all, only two of the four gospels give an account of the birth of Jesus and the two accounts are very different, or even contradictory, although our Nativity plays attempt to harmonise them.

To find the real reason why we celebrate Christmas we must look beyond the carols that speak of a manger and shepherds and kings to some of our other hymns. One such hymn which I have been reflecting on recently is John Henry Newman's *Praise to the Holiest in the Height*.

3. *O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail;*
4. *And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence and his very self,
And essence all-divine.*

At a recent evening service it was pointed out that some people have objected to the phrase "a higher gift than grace". However, taken together, these two verses emphasise both the humanity and the divinity of Christ. God's loving wisdom is revealed in the fact that because it was humanity that failed, our salvation also came about through a human being. The gift to which the hymn refers, and which we celebrate at Christmas, is "God's presence and his very self" in the person of Jesus, or as Charles Wesley expressed it "our God contracted to a span, incomprehensively made man".
J.M.P.

Advent should admonish us to discover
 in each brother or sister that we greet
 in each friend whose hand we shake
 in each beggar who asks for bread
 in each worker that wants the right to join a union
 in each peasant who looks for work in the coffee groves
 the face of Christ.

Then it would not be possible to rob them,
 to cheat them,
 to deny them their rights.

They are Christ,
 and whatever is done to them
 Christ will take as done to him

This is what Advent is
 Christ living among us.

Ann Bird

.....Ingrid's article is based on a much appreciated talk she gave at the Church week-end away

Whilst serving as a missionary in South Sudan, I discovered an affinity between my spiritual experiences and those of my South Sudanese brothers and sisters: the reality of the unseen spirit world and how, what Nobel Prize literary artist, Toni Morrison calls 'discredited knowledge', enhances an appreciation and understanding of an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus.

Belief in spirits or in 'powers' other than the Holy Spirit has been discredited knowledge in mainstream Western societies - even within the Church - for some time. Yet note the tension between discredited knowledge and belief: A Ghanaian minister said, "This Bible, and all we learn to live a Christian life – is what *I believe*; but that witch, and what

have to do with that life – is what *I know*.” Those of us from cultures where discredited knowledge informs our spirituality live a Christianity that whilst being admired in the West for its passionate praying, stays on the margin because the power of that passion remains discredited.

I was born in Belize and raised a Methodist; my primary and secondary education was in Wesley schools. (I was later to complete a PhD and enter academic life in the USA). I was also born with a *caul*. In our African Caribbean culture, a caul bestows a more heightened awareness of the spirit world and an ability to ‘see’ into that world. Growing up in Belize, whilst wide awake, I saw many things, that when I described them to my mother, she became concerned for my welfare; she told me to close my eyes and pray whenever I saw anything. Later, when she forcibly forbade me to see, I eventually stopped seeing and began to feel instead.

Once I began to feel the presence of spirits instead of seeing them, I became afraid, and developed a debilitating fear of the unseen. I still prayed, but fear of being in the dark and being fearful in general, took over my life, until in my late twenties, I came to know Lord Jesus personally as my constant companion and his Holy Spirit as my comforter. This same Holy Spirit of truth, prayer and power led me into a night-time encounter with a spirit, and during that wrestling-match, I was empowered to overcome the spirit of fear that had tormented me for most of my childhood and young adult life. As I grew in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus and of his Holy Spirit, I learned how to pray the bad spirits away. Even now, whenever any are present, it’s by prayer, in total submission to God our Father, who *Mothers* us so, and in the Holy Spirit praying with/in me in the power that is our Lord Jesus, that they flee.

Ingrid

Introducing....

Alex and Beryl Booth are our oldest regular worshippers at CTM. They are 96 and 94 years old and have been married for 73 years. They celebrated their platinum wedding in 2012 and received the congratulations of the Queen and the Lord Lieutenant of Aberdeen. The remarkable thing is that though both are very deaf, that does not prevent them, on a weekly basis, joining in worship with us.

Alex was enlisted into the Royal Navy at the beginning of the Second World War and was training in minesweeping at Skegness. Beryl, a Yorkshire girl, was on holiday at Skegness and they met at a dance. "That's the girl I'm going to marry" decided Alex, and although Beryl was nursing in Doncaster, whenever he got away Alex would go to the matron of the hospital and request permission for Beryl to be given time off to meet him. A year later they were married and came to live in Aberdeen.

Beryl had been born and raised in Roumarsh near Rotherham and Sheffield. Her father was a mining engineer in the local coal pit and had total responsibility for all the steel ropes and hawsers above and below ground. She left school at 14 and went to look after two old ladies in their home on the village; cooking and cleaning, 8 hours a day for the princely sum of 4/6 (22.5p) per week.

After several housekeeping jobs she moved to the hospital in Doncaster, where her sister Sylvia worked, to train as a nurse. The hospital was for disadvantaged children and so when she moved to Aberdeen she was appointed to a nursing job at Cornhill Hospital. She found it difficult there and left to work in a family fish shop in Rosemount and later in Ledinghams in Union Street.

Meanwhile Alex had been sent to India to pick up a ship. On the way back home she sprang a leak and they managed to limp into South Africa. After repairs they proceeded through the Suez Canal where Alex fell ill with smallpox. He spent several weeks in a hospital tent in Egypt. Of the 13 people in the tent 11 died. He spent a while recuperating in Egypt and managed to visit the Holy Land.

On his way home he picked up another tropical disease in Gibraltar; as Beryl says, "he was skin and bone when he returned." Finally he served in Yarmouth and Portsmouth before leaving the Navy at the end of the war and returning to his trade as a baker until his retirement.

Alex was a grade one football referee and officiated through all the leagues in Scotland and once internationally in Belgium.

The couple have four children – Bruce, Beryl Jnr, Rosemary, and David. They have lots of grandchildren and some great grandchildren. They are terribly proud of all their personalities and achievements. They are a close family and enjoy doing things together. You can always be sure of a warm welcome at Alex and Beryl's home.

.....Akanimo and Uwem Okure

Akanimo Samuel Okure the second son of late Samuel Udo Okure is currently a Research Software Engineer at the IBM CAS Trento Italy and also studying for a PhD degree in Knowledge Engineering, specialising in semantic computing and reasoning.

He told me: Growing up in Nigeria was good, very strict - everything had to be done right! On a typical day I would get up early - morning prayers were between 6 and 6:30am when all the family would gather together in the sitting room to sing praises to thank God and pray for yet another day. Afterwards, I would have to carry out morning chores like making my bed, eating breakfast and getting ready for school. I remember taking daily trips to my secondary school, either walking or riding my bike.

My life has been a wonderful experience, full of challenges. I studied hard to rise to each at the first attempt. It has always been my desire to make it to the highest educational level. Through determination, hard work, commitment and focus, I've managed to reach my academic goals so far.

How did I come to Crown Terrace Methodist Church?
Let me give you a preamble about Methodism and myself. "My grandpa was a Methodist preacher; my late father attended a Methodist boys' high school; my mum was a retired high school principal and also a Methodist preacher. My late father-in-law was a knight of John Wesley, so I don't think, as a son of these Methodist faithfuls, I could not have done other than remain a Methodist.

Arriving in Aberdeen some years ago, I searched for a place of worship. Coming from a Methodist background, my first search on Google was: **“Methodist church in Aberdeen”**; luckily Mr Google returned with Crown Terrace Methodist Church . I wrote down the address and took a taxi down to CTM.

I and my lovely wife Uwem were both born into Methodism. We were both baptised in a Methodist church, and we got married too in the same Methodist church back home. I think with these two instances we wouldn't need much motivation to keep our faith alive here in CTM.

Uwem is the second daughter of the late Sir Mfon Inam, a solicitor of the senior courts in Nigeria. She qualified as a barrister and solicitor of the supreme court of Nigeria, and has now obtained a master's degree in Oil and Gas Law from Aberdeen University . Currently, Uwem is working with NHS National Research Scotland .

When I met Uwem, I knew in my heart that she was the person I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. We spent a lot of time together and with her I found unending peace and this peace with the love of GOD amongst other things, keeps our marriage strong . The singing group is of special interest to us as we just love singing. This has been something we learned from our parents who really loved singing Methodist hymns. Sometimes when some of my dad's favourite hymns are played in CTM, it brings back the memories of his deep tenor voice.

Altogether we are comfortable at CTM. To those who have just joined I would say: Crown Terrace Methodist Church has been a home away from home for us. CTM is a wonderful place to worship in. We enjoy all the time spent here with the church family, especially the friendliness of its members.

CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
 their own familiar carols play
 and wild and sweet
 the words repeat
 of "Peace on earth, good-will to men"

Till ringing, singing on its way
 The world revolved from night to day
 a voice, a chime,
 a chant sublime
 of peace on earth, good-will to men

And in despair I bowed my head
 There is no peace on earth, I said
 for hate is strong
 and mocks the song
 of peace on earth, good-will to men

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep
 God is not dead, nor doth he sleep
 The wrong shall fail
 the right prevail
 with peace on earth, good-will to men

(H.W. Longfellow)

Christmas observed:

First reported advert for Christmas gifts – August 9th
 On sale – Christmas cakes – Best Before Dec.2nd

The day finally arrived when John, a good and simple man, died and went to heaven. He reached the Pearly Gates but they were closed so he approached St. Peter, the gatekeeper.

“Well, John”, said St. Peter, “it is certainly good to see you. We have heard a lot about you. But I must tell you, the place is filling up fast and we have been setting an entrance examination for everyone.”

“It’s sure good to be here, sir,” said John, “but no one told me about an entrance exam.”

St. Peter continued, “Yes, I know John, but the test is only 2 questions. First: What 2 days of the week begin with the letter T? Second: what is God’s first name?”

John departs to consider the questions and returns next day. “Well”, said St. Peter, “now you have had a chance to think the questions over, tell me your answers”

John replied, “Well the first – the 2 days beginning with T – that was easy – that would be Today and Tomorrow.”

The Saint’s eyes opened wide and he exclaimed, “That’s not what I was thinking but you have a point and I guess I didn’t specify so I’ll give you credit for that one. How about the next one? Can you tell me God’s first name?”

“Sure,” John replied, “it’s Andy.”

“Andy?” questioned St. Peter, “How in the world did you come up with the name ‘Andy’?”

“Well, that was the easiest” said John- “I learnt it from the song- Andy walks with me, Andy talks with me. Andy tells me I am his own.”

St Peter opened the gates.

(Stolen from the Retired Police Officers’ Association’s Grampian newsletter)

A PLACE FOR ME

I wasn't with the shepherds
nor saw the heavenly light
I heard no Angel voices
nor shivered there with fright
Yet still I hear the message
it rings out loud and clear
with peace on earth goodwill to men
who are to God most dear.

I wasn't with the wise men
who came from lands afar.
I do not know how many were guided by the star
But just to know they journeyed
to offer gifts so rare
is proof that more than magic
was in the stable bare.

I wasn't with the dear ones
who first caressed the babe
nor near the docile dumb ones
who stood there mutely grave
And now again comes Christmas
Lord give me grace to see
that kneeling round that manger
there is a place for me.

Stanley Leyland

Point to Ponder

Baptism restores a human identity that has been forgotten or overlaid. Baptism takes us to where Jesus is. It takes us therefore into closer neighbourhood with a dark and fallen world, and it takes us into closer neighbourhood with others invited there. The baptized life is characterized by solidarity with those in need, and sharing with all others who believe. And it is characterized by a prayerfulness that courageously keeps going, even when things are difficult and unpromising and unrewarding, simply because you cannot stop the urge to pray. Something keeps coming alive in you; never mind the results.

From Rowan Williams, *Being Christian* (2014), pp. 11-12.

From the Connexion

Readers of the latest issue of *In Touch*, the newsletter of the Methodist Church in Scotland (yellow: pick up a copy in the vestibule!) will have seen that the Methodist Conference has asked circuits to discuss same-sex marriage in the light of Scottish and Westminster legislation, and respond to the question: 'Should the Methodist Church revisit its understanding of Christian marriage?'

We should watch out for opportunities to respond to this question. David Easton, our District Chair, comments: 'At this stage we are not being asked to decide whether or not we are in favour of same-sex marriage, rather whether we feel that the matter should or should not be considered by the Church.'

What do you think? – talk to Paul

Good news! Ron Hughes responded to our ad for someone to take out church flowers in place of May.....but we still need people to take on the jobs below. Please think carefully about whether you could contribute to our Church life in any of these practical ways.

If you don't feel able to take responsibility alone could you join with a friend and share the job?

FOOD BANK – We are looking for someone who is willing and available during the day to take the contents of our collection box to the Aberdeen food bank, approximately once a month. If you can help please speak to David Marshall.

RECYCLING – Would anyone be willing to collect and despatch spent computer cartridges, mobiles etc.? We are also looking for someone to be responsible for the removal of paper for recycling. Joan would like to hear from you!

BRING AND SHARE LUNCHESES – After many years of organising these lunches Anne is stepping down - if you would be willing to take on this valuable work she will be happy to give advice.

The editorial Team would appreciate your feedback –what you would like more of or less of – new ideas – or maybe you would like to be involved with us in producing the next edition. We look forward to hearing from you. Anne, Joan, Paul & Samuel

Nativity Word Search

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



angels
 Christmas
 donkey
 innkeeper
 Jesus
 Joseph manger
 king Mary
 nativity
 salvation
 sheep
 shepherds
 star
 wisemen

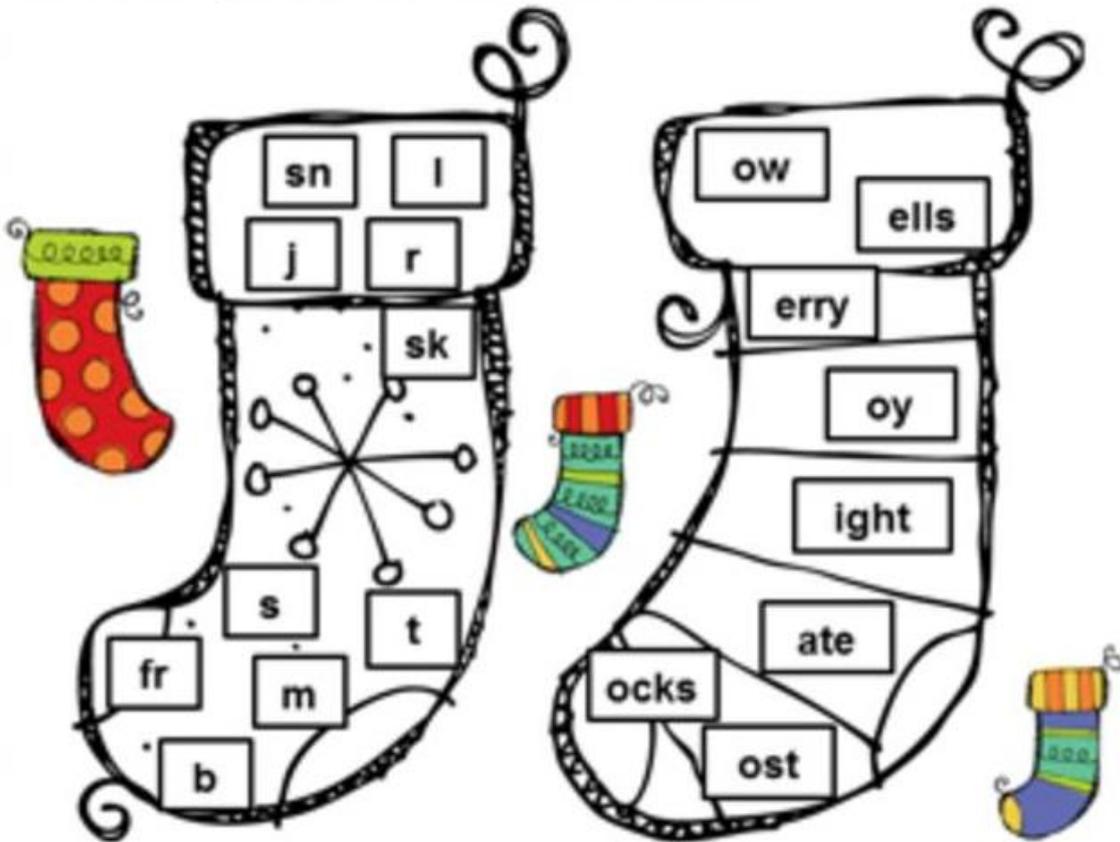


Christmas Stockings word maker



Make as many words as possible by joining the letters on the first stocking to the letters on the second stocking. How many words can you make?

Turn this into a game! - See who can make the most words.



... and a happy New Year..

A Wish

A glad New Year to all! -
Since many a tear,
do what we can, must fall,
the greater need to wish a glad New Year.

Since lovely youth is brief,
O girl and boy,
and no one can escape a share of grief,
I wish you joy;

Since hate is with us still,
I wish men love;
I wish, since hovering hawks still strike to kill,
the coming of the dove;

And since the ghouls of terror and despair
are still abroad,
I wish the world once more within the care
of those who have seen God.

Eleanor Farjeon

Mince Pies

A recipe from 1394 required one pheasant, one capon, two pigeons two rabbits, the meat minced with spices.

Up to the Reformation they were rectangular (crib shape) with a pastry child on top. When Oliver Cromwell forbade the celebration of Christmas mince pies were banned. After Charles II was restored to the throne mince pies became more like the round ones we eat today.



Rejoice, rejoice Christ our
saviour is come.

Cast off the works of
darkness,

Put on the ways of light,
And clothe yourself with
Christ.

Put on love to surround you,
Put on hope to guide you,
Put on joy to sustain you,
And clothe yourself with
Christ.

Rejoice on this dawn of
righteousness,
Rejoice for this day of justice,
Rejoice in the prince of peace,
And clothe yourself with
Christ.

Prayer ©Christine Sine
Art: Nativity by He Qi



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DATE	TIME	EVENT	PLACE
24 December	4 pm	Christingle service	CTM
24 December	11 for 11.30 pm	Christmas Eve Holy Communion	CTM
25 December	11 am	All age service	CTM
10 January	11am	Covenant Service	CTM
24 January	11am	OAK Morning Service followed by soup and sandwich lunch	CTM