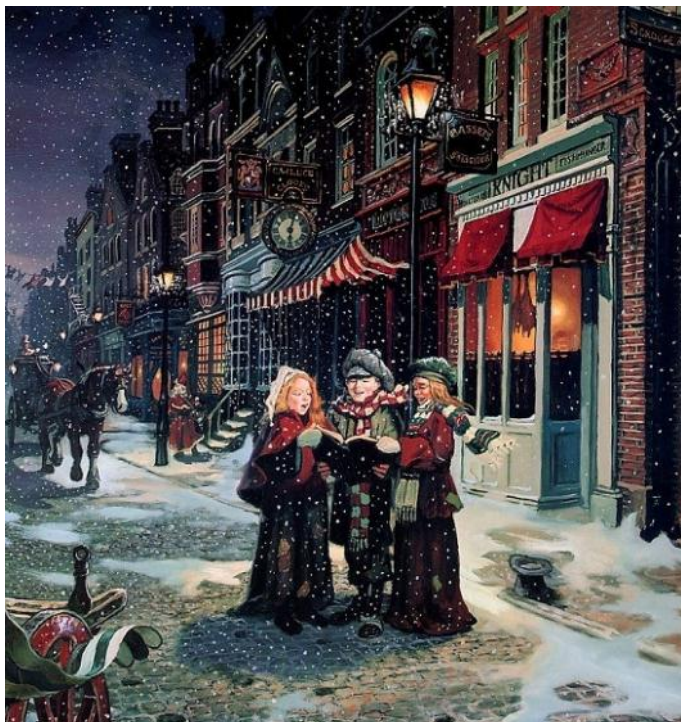


Bolton Parish Church

St Peter, Bolton-le-Moors



Parish News

December 2011 75 pence

Dear Friends,

I love Advent or more precisely, I love the idea of Advent. In fact if it happened as it is intended, then Advent would be one of my favourite times of the year, I think. A time of expectant waiting and spiritual preparation for the coming festival of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes indeed, that would be a really good plan.

We might then arrive on the Eve of Christmas feeling serene and happy, quietly joyful, even excited at the prospect of the festival to come- a time of drawing so close to God that we might know the Saviour born in our own hearts and feel for ourselves the boundless, unconditional love that God has for all living beings, even you and me. Just a thought.

Yes, Advent is a good idea. I always loved it as a child. The joy of the advent calendar and the little ritual of opening a door, wondering what the picture might be and then seeing if you were right; reading the text and piecing together the Christmas story bit by little bit.

I loved the sudden change in Church, the colours changing to austere purple and the flowers disappearing. The music becoming sombre but the hymns with their ardent longing pointing towards the joyful time to come. The advent candles being lit one by one- it all added to the wonder and the anticipation of the season.

Later I would discover the desire to use the season of Advent to deepen my own personal practice. I found there was real value in making Advent just a little more arduous: seeking to spend a little longer in my personal prayers, attending extra services of holy communion during the week, fasting, and even (scarily at first) the practice of making confession just before Christmas.

It probably all came too easily for me back then. No responsibilities other than to remember to be grateful for the wonderful Christmas which then followed due to the efforts of my parents who didn't have nearly enough time to emulate all my pious pursuits. Now in mid-life with older and younger generations within the family needing care and attention and a busy portfolio of work to keep on top of, I can appreciate something of how they perhaps felt laying everything on for others and

having precious little opportunity to sit and catch their breath, never mind thinking holy thoughts about Advent.

I wish you the Advent (and the Christmas) you hope for. The Church is very good at sounding disapproving at this time of year rather like the miserable relative in the corner who is not having a good time at your party and is determined that no one is going to enjoy themselves either. If you long for some peace and time to reflect on the deeper meaning of it all, then I pray you will find it, for God will be waiting for you in the peace. If you are just praying for the strength to do all that you have to do and keep those whom you love happy, then God give you strength.

I love Advent and I love Christmas. Beyond all the things that drive us crazy at this time of year and exhaust us, there in the heart of the world's darkness, a mother is preparing to give birth to a child in the poorest and most squalid of circumstances. We may be keeping watch for him but whether we are or not, the child is there for us. Immanuel. God with us.

With my love and prayers

Matt Thompson

Parish Records

Baptisms:

30 October	Joshua James Raymond Fishwick Luke John Percival
6 November	Amelia Jane Nader Ava Marie Trott
20 November	Willow Ann McGhee Millie Isobel Schofield Taylor James Stokes

CALENDAR for DECEMBER 2011

- 1 Thursday *Charles de Foucauld*, Hermit in the Sahara [1916]
12 Noon - Holy Communion
12.45 - Advent Reflection: Three Gifts of Wise Men **
- 3 Saturday *Francis Xavier*, Missionary & Apostle of the Indies [1552]
- 4 SUNDAY **Second Sunday of Advent**
8.00 - Holy Communion
10.30 - Parish Communion
6.30 - Evening Prayer (said)
- 5 Monday 7.30 - G.M.P. Bolton Division Carol Service
- 6 Tuesday **Nicholas**, Bishop of Myra [c.326]
12.30 - Holy Communion
12.00-3.00 - Mothers' Union Christmas Lunch (Lower Hall)
- 7 Wednesday **Ambrose**, Bishop of Milan [397]
12.30 - Prayers for Healing
- 8 Thursday **Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
12 Noon - Holy Communion
12.45 - Advent Reflection: What gifts do we bring? **
- 11 SUNDAY **Third Sunday of Advent**
8.00 - Holy Communion
10.30 - Parish Communion [with Christingle?]
6.30 - Evening Prayer (with hymns)
- 13 Tuesday **Lucy**, Martyr at Syracuse [304]
12.30 - Holy Communion
- 14 Wednesday **John of the Cross**, Poet and Teacher [1591]
12.30 - Prayers for Healing
7.00 - Bolton Hospice *Light up a Life* Service
- 15 Thursday 12 Noon - Holy Communion
12.45 - Advent Reflection: Christmas Expectations **
- 17 Saturday *O Sapientia* (start of Advent Antiphons)
- 18 SUNDAY **Fourth Sunday of Advent**
8.00 - Holy Communion
10.30 - Parish Communion
6.30 - Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
- 20 Tuesday 12.30 - Holy Communion
- 21 Wednesday 12.30 - Prayers for Healing
- 22 Thursday 12 Noon - Holy Communion
- 24 Saturday **Christmas Eve**
3.00 - Children's Crib Service
11.00 p.m. - First Communion of Christmas
- 25 SUNDAY **CHRISTMAS DAY: The Nativity of Our Lord**
8.00 - Holy Communion
10.30 - Parish Communion
- 26 Monday **St Stephen, Deacon and First Martyr**
- 27 Tuesday **St John, Apostle & Evangelist**
- 28 Wednesday **The Holy Innocents**
- 29 Thursday **Thomas Becket**, Archbishop of Canterbury, Martyr [1170]
- 31 Saturday **John Wyclif**, Reformer [1384]

** *A light lunch will be available from 12 Noon*

Church Services

Sundays	08.00	Holy Communion
	10.30	Parish Communion
	18.30	Evening Prayer
Tuesdays	12.30	Holy Communion
Wednesdays	12.30	Prayers for Healing
Thursdays	12.00 noon	Holy Communion

In addition to the times shown above, Church will be open for private prayer and visitors as follows: 12.00 noon to 1.15 pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and 11.30 am to 12.45 pm on Thursdays, and, when Stewards are available, between 11.30 am and 1.30 pm Tuesday to Saturdays.

For Baptisms and Weddings please contact the Lecturer on 01204 522226.

For Funerals please contact the Vicar on 01204 845332.

Meditation Group Meetings

Mondays 7.30 pm and Thursdays 2 pm.

Venue: The Friends' Meeting House.

Tea & coffee and biscuits served after each session.

No meetings in period 16 Dec-8 Jan., see page 21



*At Christmas,
people hope
that the past
will be
forgotten and
the present
remembered!*

It's nice he makes time to come to the service.

'In Search of Wholeness:

A Christian theology of healing and practical training for church and medical settings'

In 2012, the Pastoral Care Team – the people you see at work leading our Wednesday services of healing prayer and offering the laying on of hands and anointing for healing in the Lady Chapel on the second Sunday in each month – are going to be following a study course to help us explore Christian healing in a way that makes sense of our experience.

The topics included are: 'The Holistic Vision of Healing', 'A Theology of Healing', 'Issues in Healing Today', 'Skilled Helpers', 'Visiting the Sick', 'Open to God's Touch', 'Working in the Overlap' and 'Hard Questions'.

We will alternate between working through a topic on our own at home and meeting as a group. The dates set for meeting together are all on Wednesday evenings – 15 February, 18 April, 20 June and 5 September – in the Parish Church Hall.

We would like to invite any interested members of the congregation to join with us as we follow the course. (If you are not able to make some of the group meeting dates, it would be possible for you to do some additional work on your own.) If you are interested in taking part, please let Judie Horrocks know before Sunday 18 December so that the course workbooks can be ordered ready for January's 'homework'.

There will be a course fee of £10 per person to cover cost of the workbook but if that is an obstacle for anyone who would like to join us please see Judie as a subsidy may be available.

The Second Sunday in Advent

The Collect

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Advent Reflections

Bolton Parish Church Hall

**Thursdays 24 November
1, 8 & 15 December**

"Christmas Gifts, Christmas Offerings"

24 November Commercialisation

1 December The Three Gifts of Wise Men

8 December What Gifts do We Bring?

15 December Christmas Expectations

*Lunch 12 onwards
Reflection from 12.45pm-1.30pm*

**Christians Together
in Bolton Town Centre**

Advent 1955

The Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver pale
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather
When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound -
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is journeying to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -
For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards, And I remember
Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -
They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?

The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch
And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.

We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well
We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defence is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so
He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

John Betjeman

With permission of John Murray (Publishers) Ltd



A BRIEF ENCOUNTER IN FRANCE

On the last day of a week's holiday in France, we were accosted by two young boys by a Metro station in Lyon. I can't remember whether they were scouts or "louveteaux" (wolf cubs), but they were selling calendars for 2012 in aid of the *Scouts Unitaires de France*, so I bought a copy. *Scouts Unitaires* is a collective term which includes all branches (including Guides) and seems to be linked to parishes in the French Catholic Church. This calendar therefore shows saints days and holy days, and I was struck by the number of British saints named in the French calendar and also reminded of the number of French saints who are found in Church of England calendars. The congregation at Bradshaw may be put out that their patron saint is not listed in either BCP or Common Worship, but Maxentius (*Maxence*), abbot of Poitou, is shown in this calendar on June 26th, so I hope they keep the right date!

French saints in CofE calendars are: Lucian of Beauvais [January 8 - BCP]; Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers [January 13]; François de Sales [January 24 - CW]; Irenaeus, Bp of Lyon [June 28]; Bernard of Clairvaux [August 20 - CW]; Giles of Provence [September 1]; Remigius, Bp of Reims [October 1]; Denys, Bp of Paris [October 9]; Martin, Bp of Tours [November 11]; Britius, Bp of Tours [November 13 - BCP]; François Xavier [December 3 - CW]. (The two marked BCP are not in the 1928 and Common Worship calendars, and those shown as CW are not in the earlier calendars - the others appear in all CofE calendars.)

The French calendar includes the following British saints who appear in the BCP, 1928 or Common Worship calendars (some in all three); Bride, Abbess of Kildare [February 1]; Patrick, Patron of Ireland [March 17]; Richard, Bp of Chichester [April 3 (October 16 in CW)]; Anselm, Abp of Canterbury [21 April]; Augustine, Abp of Canterbury [May 26]; Boniface of Crediton, Bp of Mainz [June 5]; Alban, first British Martyr [June 22]; Etheldreda, Queen & Abbess of Ely [June 23 (October 17 in BCP)]; Wilfrid of Ripon, Abp of York [October 12]; Edward, King & Confessor [October 13]; Margaret, Queen of Scotland [November 16]; Edmund, King & Martyr [November 20].

The French calendar doesn't include our great missionary saints like Aidan, Columba, Cuthbert and Ninian, but on the other hand, it does include other British saints who don't appear in any CofE calendar, such as Herbert, a hermit in Cumbria [March 20]; Gwladys, Welsh princess & hermit [March 29];

Oliver Plunkett, Abp of Armagh & Martyr [July 12]; Samson, Bp of Dôl (Brittany) [July 28], and Lawrence O'Toole, Abp of Dublin [November 14]. (I should add that Samson was originally from Wales.)

It goes without saying that all the major feast days are in both French and English calendars, as well as a great many other "lesser" saints who are neither French *or* British!

In Lyon itself, where we were based, Irenaeus does not seem to be regarded as the most important local saint. That honour seems to go to St Pothin, another early bishop of Lyon, and the church nearest to our hotel was dedicated to him. The parish was currently without a senior priest, as the *Curé* had recently been appointed Rector of the hill-top Basilica of Notre Dame de la Fourvière, a very elaborate church, not quite as big as Sacré Coeur in Paris - but its very dramatic situation rather takes the glory from the cathedral which is immediately below it on the banks of the river Saône!

But back to the church of St Pothin, which we visited on the penultimate day of our holiday to play the recently rebuilt organ. The parish is obviously a thriving and lively one, and a copy of their (very glossy) parish directory for 2011-2012 shows that there are at least two other priests and two permanent deacons, as well as several other people who seem to be funded by the parish - no salaries are paid by Church Commissioners or the diocese! The directory also lists countless courses, retreats, and other activities in its 52 pages, and contact details for a vast number of parish organisations are shown, including the scouts and the Corps de Balais - can anyone work out what they do*? This was a complete contrast to the country town we visited between Dijon and Auxerre a few years ago, where two full-time priests and one half-time were struggling to maintain services at the seventeen village churches in the parish.

G.D.

* *See inside back cover*

Royal Mail puts its Stamp on Christmas

Royal Mail's Christmas stamps this year have been inspired both by the Nativity and the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible. The stamps, which will adorn millions of Christmas cards and letters, show key moments from the Christmas story, complete with Scripture references.



The First Class stamp depicts a picture of Mary and the Baby Jesus, while the Second Class stamp shows Joseph being visited by the Angel. All seven stamps in the series are inspired by verses from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and also recognise that 2011 is the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible.

Royal Mail's festive mailbag is expected to be bulging with around two billion items, and on its busiest days, some 130 million items will enter the delivery network – more than double the average daily number.

Stephen Agar from Royal Mail says: “Christmas stamps help deliver festive messages of good cheer and celebration across the UK and around the world. This year's stamps feature scenes from the Nativity, together with the Gospel references from the King James Bible which inspired them.

“As we start the Christmas countdown, we are encouraging people to check that their address lists include the full postcode and to get set to post their card, and order their presents early to help us spread the workload of handling around two billion items in the run up to Christmas.”

The First and Second Class stamps are available in two sizes: a standard version for regular letters and a ‘large letter’ version for larger cards and mail.

Three other Christmas stamps depict Baby Jesus in the manger (68p stamp), the shepherds being visited by the Angel (£1.10) and the wise men and star (£1.65).

Royal Mail is encouraging customers to post their festive greetings early, and order their online gifts and shopping well in advance, to help its postmen and women deliver the bumper festive mailbag..

Its latest recommended posting dates for mail to arrive in time for Christmas are:

Posting dates for delivery within the UK:

First Class Tuesday 20th December

Second Class Saturday 17th December

Special Delivery Thursday 22nd December

Posting dates for international mail:

Airmail to South and Central America, Caribbean, Africa, Middle East, Far East (except Japan), Asia, New Zealand and Australia: Monday 5th December

Airmail to Japan, USA, Canada and Eastern Europe: Friday 9th December

Airmail to Western Europe: Monday 12th December



Church Family Christmas Party

For ALL members of the church family

Saturday 10 December from 4.00 pm to 7.00 pm

Parish Church Hall

Christmas Carol Service

Donations of mince pies are needed for the Christmas carol Service which is at 6.00 p.m. on Sunday 18th December. Volunteers are also needed to help serve refreshments after the service. Please see Victoria Davies.



"Nice idea, Amelia, but I don't think the Angel of the Lord texting the shepherds would have the same dramatic effect."

Flower News

Donations in October: Mrs A. Smith

Donations in November: Mrs. J. Ryner

With thanks.

November Flowers

All Saints:

Altar – White and green carnations, ivy, skimmia.

Pedestal – White and green carnations, white lilies, white lisianthus, cream chrysanthemums, palm leaves, fatsia and skimmia.

Remembrance:

Pedestal (War Memorial) – Poppies, aspidistra and fatsia leaves.

Chancel steps – Cross with poppy wreath and a drift of poppies and poppy petals.

Christmas Flowers

We will be decorating the church for Christmas on Friday 23rd December. Offerings of holly and ivy from your garden will be most welcome as usual.

We would very much welcome help in decorating the church on the 23rd – or your company if you just want to pop in and share the fun whilst out shopping. Maybe the weather will be a little kinder than the snow and ice of the last two years!



Date for your Diary – 24th - 28th July 2012

There is to be another flower festival in Manchester Cathedral next July to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

The Parish Church Flower Team is very pleased to have been invited and we are already beginning to plan our exhibits. The theme for this festival is "Music through the Ages".

Orlando Gibbons (*b* Oxford in 1583; *d* Canterbury 5 June 1625)



This anthem for the second Sunday of this month (11th December) is the verse anthem ‘This is the Record of John’ – probably the best known of the verse anthems written by Orlando Gibbons. A manuscript at Christ Church contains the rubric: “This Anthem was made for Dr. Laud, President of Saint John's Oxford, for St. John Baptist's day”. The anthem is scored for alto solo, with five viols and a five-part (SAATB) choir, although Gibbons provided an alternative accompaniment for organ. It falls into three sections, each comprising an opening solo, with a chorus in which words and music from the preceding solo are developed imitatively with the choir echoing the final phrases of the soloist's text. Gibbons supports the repeated text with carefully planned counterpoint and memorable melody. The expressive solos and textured choral passages provide the piece with harmonic stability and balance. The actual text is taken from John 1:19 - 23, which is part of the Gospel reading on that Sunday: *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord...* (KJV)

Life

What do we know of Orlando Gibbons, this great composer of church music? Like many composers of his age, Orlando Gibbons came from a family of musicians. His father William was a wait (town musician) in both Oxford and Cambridge, his eldest brother Edward was Master of the Choristers at King's College, Cambridge, while another brother Ellis was a

writer of madrigals. It was not surprising that Orlando, born in Oxford in 1583, should follow in their footsteps. From February 1596 until autumn 1598, he sang in the choir at King's College, Cambridge, and in May 1599 he entered the university as a student. Around 1603 James I appointed him a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, where he rose to the position of Organist of the Chapel, retaining the post until the end of his life. Gibbons returned to Cambridge to complete his studies, and graduated in 1606. About this time he married Elizabeth Patten, the daughter of a Chapel Royal official, and settled in the parish of St Margaret's, Westminster.

There is much documentary evidence that Gibbons was in favour at the court of King James I, and on one occasion he was granted a gift of £150 '*for and in consideration of the good and faithful service done unto ourself by Orlando Gibbons our organist, and divers other good causes and considerations us thereunto moving*'.

Gibbons was also appointed to the royal post of Musician for the Virginals. On 17 May 1622 he was created Doctor of Music by the University of Oxford, and one year later he had another appointment under his illustrious belt – that of Organist of Westminster Abbey. Some idea of the regard in which Orlando Gibbons was then held, and of the musical standards at the Abbey, can be seen from an account of a visit to the Abbey by the French Ambassador and his retinue in 1624:

At their entrance the organ was touched by the best finger of that age, Mr Orlando Gibbons. The Lord Keeper presented the ambassadors and the rest of the noblest quality of their nation with [the] liturgy as it spake to them in their own language. The Lords ambassadors and their great train took up all the stalls, where they continued half an hour while the choirmen, vested in their rich copes, with their choristers, sang three anthems, with most exquisite voices before them.

In May 1625 it was Gibbons's sad duty to play at the funeral of King James I, who had died on 27 March following an attack of dysentery. After the funeral he was almost immediately involved in preparations to receive the new Queen, Henrietta Maria, whom Charles I had married by proxy in Paris. On 31 May the court set out for Canterbury, with the entire Chapel Royal in attendance. On Whitsunday, 5 June, while at Canterbury awaiting the Queen's arrival, Gibbons suddenly collapsed and died.

There was an immediate suspicion that he had died of the plague, which had already killed 41,000 people during the year. However, two physicians who had been present at his death were ordered to make a report and perform an autopsy, which concluded that Orlando had died of something akin to a brain haemorrhage.

The sudden death of Orlando Gibbons came as a shock to his contemporaries. There was particular criticism of the haste of his burial, and the decision to bury the musician in Canterbury, a place with which he had no connection, rather return the body to London. A 20-inch high white marble portrait bust, erected in the North Aisle of Canterbury Cathedral, is the work of the aptly named Nicholas Stone (1583 – 1647), a prolific and distinguished sculptor. In his Notebook he states: “In 1626 I set up a monument at Canterbury for Orlando Gibbons, the King’s organist, for which his wife paid £32”.



Orlando Gibbons died intestate. Having waited 12 months for letters of administration to be granted, Elizabeth Gibbons died in the summer of 1626, leaving Orlando’s eldest brother, Edward, to care for the children left orphans by this event. Of these children, only the eldest son, Christopher Gibbons, was musical, going on to become a composer and cathedral organist.

Gibbons left behind an array of music, all of which bears the hallmark of to his versatility, sensitivity and musical talent.

In particular, he has left us a large quantity of keyboard works, around thirty fantasias for viols and a number of consort songs and madrigals, the best known being *The Silver Swan*, published in his *First Set of Madrigals and Mottets, apt for Viols and Voyces*. The words are assumed to be Gibbons's own composition:

*The silver swan, who living had no note,
When death approached, unlocked her silent throat.
Leaning her breast upon the reedy shore,
Thus sang her first and last, and sang no more:
"Farewell, all joys; O death, come close mine eyes;
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise."*

However, Gibbons is chiefly remembered as a composer of Anglican service music. Judging from the number of surviving copies of his music, he was one of the most popular composers of sacred music in the early 17th century. He wrote two settings of Evensong – the Short Service and the Second (Verse) Service. The former includes a beautifully expressive Nunc Dimittis, while the latter is an extended composition, combining verse and full sections. However, many of the anthem texts that attracted Gibbons offered far greater scope for expressive musical treatment than the canticles. His most memorable compositions, which include Hosanna to the Son of David, Lift up your Heads and the eight-part O Clap Your Hands, are at once dramatic, and yet – as his contemporary Morley put it – ‘carrying majesty’.

With the works of Gibbons virtually confined to cathedral repertoire nowadays, it is a precious gift indeed to be able to experience this talented and devout man's music here at Bolton Parish Church.

“It is proportion that beautifies everything; the whole universe consists of it, and music is measured by it.”

Orlando Gibbons 1583 – 1625

J.P (adapted from my previous article last year)

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Email: visionaiduk@aol.com

Meditation Group Pages

The Meditation groups still flourish and we would like to share the reading we used for leading into silence on Thursday before Advent Sunday, which was given by Frank Evans, member of the Thursday Group. Members of the Group, as preparation for Advent, went to a quiet day at Katherine House Nr Prestwich, and Frank remembered the central theme:-

Breathe in the love of God - Notes for well nourished hearts.

Some of us may remember an Advent Day at Katherine House a couple of years ago. As part of the day, one of the Sisters led a meditation and invited us to 'Breathe in the love of God and breathe out all our stresses and anxieties.' Breathing, like our beating heart, is something we take for granted. We don't notice it. Yet spiritual writers often remark that God is as near to us and as close to us as the air we breathe. So when we begin our meditation by relaxing and breathing in slowly and regularly, we are doing something very important. We are breathing in the love of God. We are seeing ourselves and the world we live in with a new understanding. Daniel O'Leary writes that breathing is 'the most vital element of our lives. (It) plays 'such a central role in our transformation. If we become aware of the power of our breath, we have the ability to bring about real change, both physically and psychologically and spiritually. It is written large in our Story'. It all began when God 'fashioned man of dust from the soil' and 'breathed into his nostrils a breath of life.' Daniel O'Leary then quotes a Sufi mystic who said, 'All is contained in the Divine Breath, like the day in the morning's dawn.' He adds another observation 'We come into this world on the Breath of His Compassion, and we go out of this world on the Breath of His Mercy.' In between these two eternal breaths, all creation, human and other-than-human, share in this most wondrous 'moment' with our little breaths of air; the only element on Planet Earth that we all have so intimately in common.'

As we 'breathe in the love of God' and settle ourselves in silence and stillness, we are open to God. John Main writes that this openness is a 'state of full wakefulness to the wonder of our own being, full openness to the wonder of God.'

As we 'breathe in the love of God' and settle ourselves in silence and stillness, we are open to God. John Main writes that this openness is a 'state of full wakefulness to the wonder of our own being, full openness to the wonder of God.' Thomas Merton, monk, poet, mystic and hermit, eventually came to realise that 'in our silence and stillness we are sinking into a deeper awareness of our own life.' And what do we find? We find, he says 'that God is already there.'

Genesis: 2. vii. Daniel O'Leary: Travelling Light p. 19

John Main: Word into Silence p. 7

Meditation Group News.

Lesley Easterman, as Coordinator for Lancashire, recently attended the National Council and came back very excited at the work WCCM are doing in this country and all over the world in the field of mental health, work in prisons and work with addiction. She was particularly interested in the work that is being done to introduce children to Christian Meditation. Teachers are discovering how easily children take to it, and how giving a child the chance to be still is reaping benefits not just for the child, but teachers and the school in general. Even children can experience the connection they have with God and the resulting feeling of self-acceptance. Joy Duckett Cain, Educator, explains: *"This connection increases self-confidence, gives a sense of security and well-being and instils a belief in the goodness of others. Most of all, by having this link and knowing that they are not alone, children will be better able to handle the disappointments and hard knocks that will surely come their way"* (Essence, Dec 1971)

John Main writes of Silence: "The mystery of our relationship with God is one that embraces such a vast canvas that only by developing our capacity for awe-filled and reverential silence will we ever be able to appreciate even a fraction of its wonder. We know that God is intimately with us, and we know also that He is infinitely beyond us. It is only through deep and liberating silence that we can reconcile the polarities of this mysterious paradox. And the liberation that we experience in silent prayer is precisely liberation from the inevitably distorting effects of language when we begin to experience God's intimate and transcendent dominion within."

J Main, word into silence, page 72.

Christmas break

There will be no group meetings after Monday 12th and Thursday 15th December until Monday 9th and Thursday 12th January.

Love, Joy and Peace to all.

Sheila.

December 21, Winter Solstice

A Midwinter festival has been a part of life since pre-Christian times. When the hours of daylight are fewest, the warmth of the sun weakest, and life itself seemingly at a standstill, our ancestors, the pagan peoples of Europe and Western Asia, kept festival by lighting bonfires and decorating their buildings with evergreens. Perhaps they believed that the dying sun could be enheartened by fire, and the life of the buried seed assured by the presence of evergreen branches. With the advent of Christianity, the Spring gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World.

The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations. "Let those who have no light in themselves light candles!... You are the light of the world; you are the tree ever green....". However, by the time of St Gregory and St Augustine, four centuries later, this had changed. Pope Gregory instructed Augustine not to worry about harmless outward customs, as long as the right God was worshipped through them. And so many Anglo-Saxon customs were never discarded, but simply given new significance.

In 1598, John Stow of London wrote: "Against the feast of Christmas, every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeare afforded to be greene."

The guest of honour

" Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2)

The mayor of a small town had brought in many improvements to local life which, over several years, had transformed the town. And so the community decided it was high time to pay him tribute. The party was held at the local town hall, and all agreed it was a great celebration. The decorations were superb, the music was loud and the room was crowded and noisy. The food was delicious and the wine flowed. It was the best party the town had ever had.

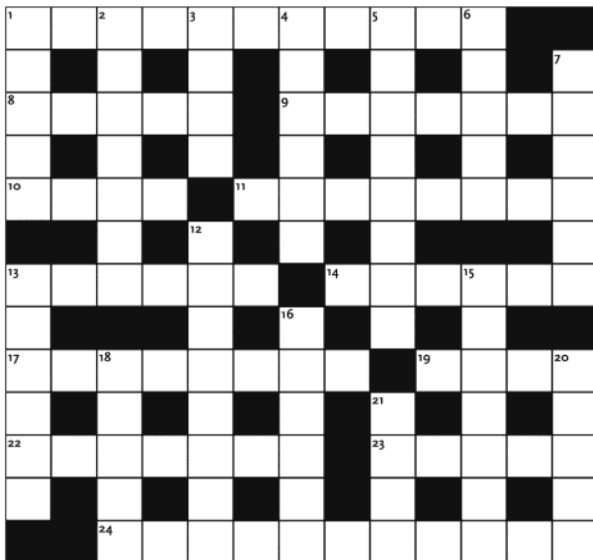
Over coffee the next morning in the local café, someone wondered aloud if the mayor had enjoyed it. No one knew. In fact, as the day wore on, people began to realise that actually, no one had even seen the mayor there that night. Later, they discovered that the mayor had been waiting at home all evening, waiting for the lift that he had been promised into town. But people had been so busy preparing for the party that no one had remembered him. He had missed the party in his honour and it appeared that no one attending it had even noticed his absence. It sounds a lot like Christmas. People get together to celebrate, the food is great, the music warms the heart - but has anyone seen the guest of honour? People sing about him, attend nativity plays about him, but essentially, the season is about them. Their menus, travel plans, presents, decorations.... At what point in the proceedings do they leave time to notice whether he is among them or not?

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- The day we celebrate, as seen by certain poor shepherds (5, 6)
- To make oneself liable (5)
- Message posted by Paul (7)
- Possess (4)
- Message often written on a Christmas present (4, 4)
- Christmas songs (6)
- Lowly, — Holy (6)
- A name of Jesus Christ (8)
- The high point — approved by Wile E. Coyote (4)
- Praise for another (7)
- American Christian sect (5)
- — we bring for you and your king, We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! (4, 7)



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DOWN

- To have — is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see (5)
- Get well (7)
- Your chance (4)
- Cry given to the person with the present (4, 2)
- Post-Christmas festival (8)
- Game (5)
- Choose your present (6)
- Praise be! (8)
- Assistant priest (6)
- A type of market or sale (7)
- Not long ago (6)
- Action (5)
- Culture (5)
- Waved by the fairy (4)



ANSWERS



ACROSS 1. First Nowell 8. Incur 9. Epistle 10. Have 11. With Love 13. Carols 14. Infant 17. Redeemer 19. Acme 22. Tribute 23. Armish 24. Glad Tidings. DOWN 1. Faith 2. Recover 3. Turn 4. Open It 5. Epiphany 6. Lotto 7. Select 12. Alitalia 13. Curate 15. Auction 16. Recent 18. Doing 20. Ethos 21. Wand.

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Smoking Bishop

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes, he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank. His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hallo!" growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I am behind my time."

"You are?" repeated Scrooge. "Yes. I think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please."

"It's only once a year, sir," pleaded Bob, appearing from the Tank. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge, "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again; "and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it, holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat.



"A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you, for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle

before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

I had often wondered what a smoking bishop was, so this year I did a little research and found it was a warm wine and port drink, made with spiced oranges.

Dickens was not the first to refer to the drink. In the 17th century, Jonathan Swift wrote the poem *Oranges*, in which a street seller cries:

*Come buy my fine oranges, sauce for your veal,
and charming, when squeezed in a pot of brown ale:
Well roasted, with sugar and wine in a cup,
They'll make a sweet Bishop when gentlefolk sup.*

In his book *Drinking with Dickens*, Cedric Dickens, great-grandson of Charles, wrote that people in the 1800s enjoyed a range of “clerical drinks.”

“Pope is *burgundy*, Cardinal is *champagne* or *rye*, Archbishop is *claret*, Bishop is *port*, and so on,” he wrote. Here is his Smoking Bishop recipe:

Take six Seville oranges and bake them in a moderate oven until pale brown. If you cannot procure any bitter Seville oranges, use four regular oranges and one large grapefruit.

Prick each of the oranges with five whole cloves, put them into a warmed ceramic or glass vessel with one-quarter pound of sugar and a bottle of red wine, cover the vessel, and leave it in a warm place for 24 hours.

Take the oranges out of the mixture, cut in half and squeeze the juice, then pour the juice back into the wine.

Pour the mixture into a saucepan through a sieve, add a bottle of port, heat (without boiling), and serve in warmed glasses.

Drink the mixture, and keep Christmas well!

A modern version:

5 unpeeled Seville oranges

1 unpeeled grapefruit

36 cloves

¼ pound of sugar

2 bottles of red wine

1 bottle of port

Wash the fruit and bake in the oven until beginning to turn golden brown (turning once).

Place in a warmed earthenware bowl and spike each fruit with six cloves.

Add the sugar and pour in the wine.

Cover and leave in a warm place for one day.

Squeeze the fruit into the wine. Strain.

Add the port and heat gently.

Bolton Parish Church Town Carol Service 2011

Sunday 18th December, 6.00 p.m.

<i>Processional</i>	Once in Royal David's City <i>BIDDING PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER</i>
<i>Choir</i>	A sound of angels – Christopher Tye
FIRST LESSON	Genesis 3: 8-15
<i>Choir</i>	Adam lay ybounden – Boris Ord
SECOND LESSON	Genesis 22: 15-18
<i>Choir</i>	Cherry tree carol – arr. Clifford Harker
<i>Hymn</i>	Ait came
THIRD LESSON	Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7
<i>Hymn</i>	See amid the winter's snow
<i>Choir</i>	In the bleak midwinter – Harold Darke
FOURTH LESSON	Micah 5: 2-4
<i>Hymn</i>	O Little town of Bethlehem (v. 3 choir)
<i>Choir</i>	Tomorrow shall be my dancing day – John Gardner
FIFTH LESSON	St. Luke 1: 26-35, 38
<i>Choir</i>	Ave Maris Stella – Edvard Grieg
SIXTH LESSON	St. Matthew 1: 18-23
<i>Choir</i>	Psallite – Michael Praetorius
<i>Hymn</i>	Of the Father's love begotten
SEVENTH LESSON	St. Luke 2: 8-16
<i>Hymn</i>	While shepherds watched their flocks by night
<i>Choir</i>	Virgin-born, we bow before thee – Stanley Vann
EIGHTH LESSON	St. Matthew 2: 1-11
<i>Choir</i>	On this day earth shall ring – Haldane C. Stewart
NINTH LESSON	St. John 1: 1-14
<i>Offertory</i>	O come, all ye faithful <i>COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS & THE BLESSING</i>
<i>Recessional</i>	Hark! The herald angels sing

Conductor: Michael Pain

Organist: Stephen Carleston

Le Corps des Balais

Nous sommes les p'tits rats d'église,
Nous formons le Corps des Balais
Nous traquons la poussière grise
Dans les recoins, sur le parquet.

Dans les bancs fleurant bon la cire,
Nous courons après les moutons
Sous le regard des saints patrons
Et de la Vierge au bon sourire.

Près des autels des bas-côtés,
Nous grattons les larmes des cierges
Des gens venus prier la Vierge,
Reprendre force à ses côtés.

Des araignées, chassons les toiles,
Un coup d'chiffon, d'aspirateur,
Nous prions ainsi le Seigneur,
Que le Tabernacle nous voile.

Lors, si l'aventure vous tente,
Venez vite nous retrouver...
Rejoignez le Corps des Balais :
Vous verrez, c'est...bonne détente !

The Broom Brigade (pehaps in Advent "Sweepers, Wake")

Church mice – that's us! A little band
Who form the Broom Brigade.
We track down all the soft grey dust
In nook – on floor arrayed.

Among wax polish wafting pews,
We chase after the sheep,
Under the gaze of patron saints
And Virgin's smile so deep.

Beneath the altars of the aisles,
We scrape the candle tears
Left by the kneeling supplicants,
Whose prayers the Virgin hears.

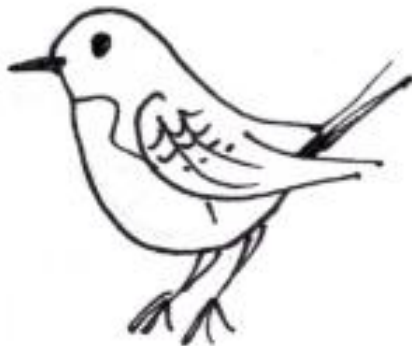
And as we hunt the spiders' webs,
With hoover, cloths and pail,
We pray to God to hide us 'neath
The Tabernacle's veil.

So, if adventure is your scene,
Just hurry here – you'll find
That when you join the Broom Brigade,
You'll soon start to unwind.

Poem from Le Corps de Balais of the church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Saint-Jean-le-Braye (Orléans). 'Loosely' translated by JP



The highlight of Christmas at the vicarage was always 'name the hymn tune' played on comb and paper.



BOLTON PARISH CHURCH CONTACTS

Parish Staff		Telephone
Vicar:	Revd Matt Thompson vicar@boltonparishchurch.co.uk	845332
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Assistant Curate:	Revd Barrie Gaskell	01942 818797
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Deputy Wardens:	Mr Ken G Jones Mr Andrew Mitchell Mr John Walsh Mr Trevor J Whillas Mr John Doyle Mr Alan Forrester Mr David Morlidge	
PCC Secretary:	Mr Graham C Burrows	01942 550404
Treasurer:	Mr Andrew J Mitchell	840633
Director of Music:	Mr Michael Pain	491827
Parish Administrator:	Lynn Cooper admin@boltonparishchurch.co.uk	522226

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Canon Slade School, Bradshaw Brow BL2 3BP

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Tel: 01204 333343

Bishop Bridgeman Primary School, Rupert Street BL3 6PY

Headteacher: Mrs Jill Pilling

Tel: 01204 333466

Bolton Parish Church Primary School, Kestor Street BL2 2AN

Headteacher: Mrs Jackie Bunyan

Tel: 01204 333433