



Redditch Baptist Church

December 2025

♪ "It's the most wonderful time of the year..." ♪

Is it, though? The days are just getting shorter and shorter, it's cold but there's no snow, people worry themselves crazy about what to buy each other, and if you live on your own it might be the most lonely time of the year...

Still, I have to confess that I like Christmas. I like our culturally mixed family traditions (peculiar as they may seem to outsiders), I like the cosiness of candles and the special food, and I like the fact that we get to celebrate the coming of Jesus into the world.

Obviously, there is a lot of strangeness around in December as well, not least the rotund men in red garments pretending to be a certain seasonally generous elf (not to mention that this elf originated as a Christian saint from Asia Minor), or the regular attempts by atheists to disprove our faith by claiming the whole thing has been borrowed (stolen?) from the pagans...

So yes, it's a most weird time of the year... but let's try and focus more on the positive things:

For one thing, it's one of the few times of year when non-Christians happily say (or at least sing) the name Jesus as a real, proper name – they may not know who it is they're singing about, but the truth is still being proclaimed – and it might just make them a little bit curious!

And if it makes them curious, let's pray that they decide to come along to one of the many events organised by different churches – otherwise the curiosity may quickly fade away when the credit card bills start arriving in January...

December is also the time of year when we're inescapably reminded of the great mystery of our faith: God Almighty, our Creator and Judge, steps into time and space and becomes a frail human being, a baby in a manger, in order to become our Saviour.

This is clearly something we should celebrate all year round, as long as we don't forget the second part of the story: how Jesus died on the cross and rose again on the third day. Christmas is pointless without Easter, and Easter is impossible without Christmas.

In case you were wondering, no – I don't wish it could be Christmas every day. It wouldn't be anywhere near as exciting if it was!

But I do hope we will live all year round in the awareness of what Jesus has done for us by coming here as one of us, taking our sin and our mortality on himself and giving us the greatest gift we could have wished for: full and free access to God the Father, both here on earth and in eternity. That's what I call a Christmas present!

***Happy Christmas!***



|                          |         |   |
|--------------------------|---------|---|
|                          |         |   |
| Sat 13 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 11.00am | CTiR Carol singing in Kingfisher Centre     |
| Sat 13 Dec               | 5.30pm  | Carol Café – fun, interactive, Christmassy! |
| Sun 14 <sup>th</sup> Dec |         | Carol Service at Oasis                      |
| Sun 14 Dec               | 11.00am | “Be a Star!” Pop up Nativity                |
| Sat 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec | 11.00am | CTiR Carol Singing in Kingfisher Centre     |
| Sun 21 Dec               | 6.30pm  | Carols by Candlelight                       |
| Thurs 25 Dec             | 10.30am | Christmas Morning Service                   |

### **New research into how communities think about the Bible**

Insights into how people across the world engage with and relate to the Bible have been released by Bible Society, who says that the results can be useful to local churches with intercultural congregations.

The Patmos Typology Report, created in partnership with United Bible Societies, offers exclusive data for each of the 85 countries and territories surveyed, exploring their relationship with the Bible and religion.

Bible Society says it is “excited about this new report”, as it “can inform Bible engagement approaches that lead to real lives being transformed by the Bible.”

Bible Society stresses that: “More churches than ever before have intercultural congregations or are reaching out to diaspora communities. We hope they can use this report to see how those communities might think about the Bible, and use the data to help people in their communities encounter the Bible for themselves.”

For more visit: [patmos.bfbs.org/Patmos-the-report](https://patmos.bfbs.org/Patmos-the-report)

### **One-liners to fill a gap...**

What did the raspberry say to the blueberry? Breathe, breathe!!!  
 When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I.  
 Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.  
 A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.  
 A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

*Canon Paul Hardingham considers the Christmas story.*

## **Christmas Unwrapped!**

All of us have received unwanted gifts at Christmas. For Joseph the gift of a child, as recorded in Matthew chapter 1, was not something he really wanted. Although he was engaged to Mary, her pregnancy would be grounds for divorce. Not surprisingly, with the associated social disgrace, Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly (Matthew 1:19). However, God intervened in a dream: *'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means, God with us.'* (1:23). In a scary and uncertain world, what does the message of **Immanuel** say to us today?

### ***God is present with us***

God assured Joseph that He was working in all that Joseph was going through. The eternal and creator God entered time and space as a baby. This baby is both uniquely divine but also fully human. This means that we can know God personally, not just know about Him. The Holy Spirit is committed to making Jesus' life and character real in us, and bringing meaning to our circumstances, just as He worked in Mary's life.

### ***God is on our side***

Christmas touches some raw nerves in our lives, including stress, family rows, loneliness and financial pressures. However, God does not remain aloof from our experiences. In Jesus He enters our world of hopes and fears, joys and disappointments. He understands what we are going through, as He is alongside us. By the cross and resurrection, He gave His life that we might know His love, joy, peace and forgiveness.

For Joseph, as well as us, the Christmas message is one of hope in an uncertain world. It is a time to re-consider the claims of **Immanuel** ('God with us') as we entrust ourselves to Him for the coming year.

This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,  
A Baby in an ox's stall.  
*From John Betjeman 'Christmas'*

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:13-14 (March 2011) (July 14) April 16)

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then our reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.  
Luke 6:35-36 (May 12) May 16



### **Love Your Enemies** (Matt 5:43-47)

All the pagans love each other  
Everybody loves their brother  
So don't just for your nearest pray;  
But do as Jesus came to tell  
And pray for all your foes as well  
And do that each and every day.

*By Nigel Beeton*

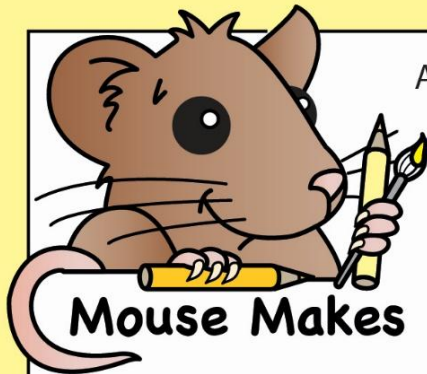
*With New Year's Resolutions in mind, here is John Wesley's rule of conduct:*

Do all the good you can  
By all the means you can  
In all the ways you can  
In all the places you can  
At all the times you can  
To all the people you can  
As long as ever you can.

Tiny thimbles of hope  
We all have a tiny space in our hearts  
Which is filled with anxiety or needs.  
Sometimes it's rampant, sometimes it's quiet  
Disrupting our everyday deeds.  
God can fill that tiny space  
With oceans of love and rivers of grace.  
We just have to pray with Him face to face  
And turn sinking sorrows into pathways of peace.  
Like a child we can kneel by the bed and pray  
Lord keep us safe this coming day.  
Like the flowers of the field which swing and sway.  
Our Lord keeps them strong till the end of the day.  
Like squirrels and lions and elephants and whales  
He keeps them fed and never fails  
To watch over them in the storms and gales.  
So look and pray to the God who cares  
He'll keep us safe from all life's snares,  
He'll fill us with His love and care,  
He'll help us to focus on what is good  
And teach us to follow Him as we should.  
Sometimes battles tie us down and  
We live each day with a permanent frown.  
Make way for Christ, He'll dispel all gloom  
Let Him into your heart there's plenty of room.  
Troubles may come, troubles may go  
But one thing we really should know is  
That Jesus can always overthrow  
The kiss of the devil from down below.  
So do not worry do not fret,  
Empty words and yet  
All is calm in God's embrace,  
Look and watch His loving face.  
Tiny thimbles of hope in a broken world.  
Tiny spaces to fill with God's own word.  
Fill your life with Jesus and do not forget  
He has covered us with His safety net.

From Rosie





At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus,  
God's Son and our Saviour  
coming into the world as a baby,  
and we look forward to the time  
when Jesus will come again,  
not as a baby but as the  
King of kings and Lord of lords!

**read**  
John 14:3

A baby needs clothes  
to keep warm like  
a snugly sleep suit  
or a vest and nappy.

*What were you dressed in?*

Jesus was wrapped in

**read** Luke 2:7

A baby needs somewhere  
to be born like at home  
or in a hospital.

*Where were you born?*

Jesus was born  
in a stable in

**read** Luke 2:1-6

A baby needs  
somewhere  
to sleep like  
a crib or a cot.  
*What did you  
sleep in?*

Jesus slept in a

**read** Luke 2:7

A baby needs  
a name.

*What name were  
you called?*

Jesus was given  
a special name  
that had a  
special meaning.

**read**  
Matthew 1:21-23

# HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

NADOLIG LLAWEN ★ NOLLAIG CHRÌDHEIL ★ NOLLAG SHONA

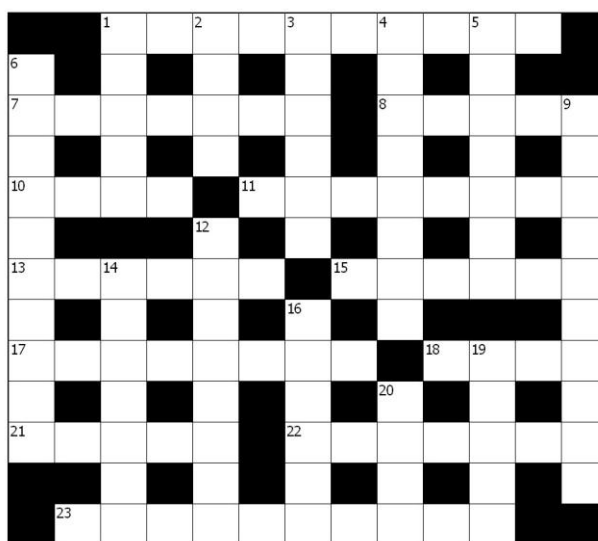
JOYEUX NOËL • FELIZ NAVIDAD • BUON NATALE • GOD JUL • FROHE WEIHNACHTEN

## December Crossword

### Across

- 1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)  
 7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14,15) (7)  
 8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)  
 10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)  
 11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)  
 13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)  
 15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith .... (6)  
 17 Stormy (8)  
 18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone unclean (Numbers 9:11) (4)  
 21 Arson (anag.) (5)  
 22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)  
 23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)

- 1 .... and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) (5)  
 2 The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as ... as a lion (Proverbs 28:1) (4)  
 3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)  
 4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19,20) (8)  
 5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)  
 6 Offer your bodies as living .... , holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1) (10)  
 9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)  
 12 One who accepts government by God (8)  
 14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)  
 16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)  
 19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)  
 20 You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will ... his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) (4)





*by Tim Lenton*

## **The many journeys of the Stone of Scone**

Some 75 years ago, on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1950, the Stone of Scone, the coronation stone of British monarchs, was taken from Westminster Abbey in London by four Scottish students as a home rule gesture. They transported it to Scotland but broke it accidentally. It was later left by them in the ruined Arbroath Abbey, repaired and returned to London to be used in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

From 1996 it was kept in Edinburgh Castle, but last year it was moved to a new museum at Perth – two or three miles down the River Tay from Scone Abbey, where it had been used in the crowning of Scottish kings.

The Stone, also known as the Stone of Destiny, is a block of red sandstone that was taken by Edward I “Longshanks” of England in 1296 and used in the crowning of English monarchs since then. It is still used to crown UK kings and queens – most recently King Charles III in May 2023 – but it has returned to Perthshire for the first time in 700 years, and is now freely available to view there.

An old symbol of Scottish monarchy, the Stone was first recorded as being used in 1249 for the inauguration of the boy-king, Alexander III. It was taken by the English as war loot – a symbol of Edward’s perceived right to rule.

There are various stories about the origins and history of the Stone. One goes back to biblical times, naming it as the Stone of Jacob, taken by Jacob from Bethel as described in Genesis 28 and then removed to ancient Ireland by the prophet Jeremiah. There are also claims that the Stone at Perth is not the original, and many stories of the intricate measures taken to ensure its safety during the war years.



## December Crossword Solution:

**ACROSS:** 1, Tabernacle. 7, Absalom. 8, Incas. 10, Roes. 11, Captured. 13, Fright. 15, Cavell. 17, Cyclonic. 18, Herb. 21, Sonar. 22, Amazing. 23, Settlement.

**DOWN:** 1, Taste. 2, Bold. 3, Ramiah. 4, Abiathar. 5, Lucerne. 6, Sacrifices. 9, Saddlebags. 12, Theocrat. 14, Incense. 16, Pilate. 19, Exist. 20, Save.



Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2



Spiritual Hunger:

Eternal Trinity, You are like a deep sea, in which the more I seek, the more I find; and the more I find, the more I seek You. ...You so fill the soul that it ever continues to hunger and thirst for You, desiring You, eager in Your Light, to see You are THE LIGHT.

St Catherine of Siena