

By the Way



BETHESDA BAPTIST CHURCH FELIXSTOWE
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CHRISTMAS 2016

ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?

So much to do, so little time: lists to write, presents to buy, food to plan, cards to send, decorations to put up – and what if those old Christmas lights don't work this year? The list seems endless.

But even if you manage to get all those things done, the question still remains: **Are you ready for Christmas?**

Are you ready to celebrate the coming into the world of Jesus Christ? Or, as you shop and prepare, will God's Son be relegated to the side-lines again this Christmas? If so, please pause for a couple of minutes to consider some questions about this Jesus:

Are you ready to think about Him?

The Bible tells us just who Jesus is: **"Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord."** (Luke 2:11)

This baby was the long-promised Messiah whose birth has divided up history: we date our calendars from His birth, or as a gospel song says, "That baby drew the line between BC and AD." Without doubt, Jesus has made a greater impact on the world than anybody else who ever lived.



"Jesus was God and man in one person, so that God and man might be happy together again." (George Whitefield)

Are you ready for why He came?

If you've made up your mind that the Christmas story is just a nice fable for children, then take a moment to read this: **"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."** (1 Timothy 1:15)

A lot of things that we read and hear today are forgettable, but not this. Jesus Christ really did live in this world and He did so for one incredible reason: to save us all. (For, whether we think so or not, **"There is no one righteous, not even one ... (We) all fall short of the glory of God."** (Romans 3:10, 23))

Are you ready for what He did?

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

The staggering truth is that God's love brought His only Son Jesus from heaven to take the punishment we deserve. Because of that, we can be forgiven and can receive the greatest gift of all – eternal life. (Cont'd...)



Nativity – see page 4



Welcome to 'By the Way'

**John Bale, De-Anna Hayward
& Giles Meehan**

Happy Christmas to you! As we enjoy all the festivities of this wonderful season, may we take a moment to remind you of – or perhaps introduce you to – the real 'Christmas Story'.

It begins of course with the birth of a baby; but no ordinary baby, and no ordinary birth. The long-awaited and promised Messiah – born to a virgin in a stable surrounded by farm animals! Nor was it a high-profile celebrity birth either; no palace with a team of doctors and midwives. Jesus' birth plunges us into the real world of poverty, uncertainty and fear. Jesus became one of us, "Immanuel". Jesus – King, Messiah, Chosen One, Saviour, Lord, fully God and fully man – really is for everyone. The Nativity story is not just a sentimental message urging us to be kind to everyone and singing carols about peace and goodwill. No; **through Jesus, God is offering us His peace and goodwill.**

As one writer, J. I. Packer said: "The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless, human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught like any other child. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the incarnation."

So if you're jaded by all the commercialism of the season, then let us help to draw you into the gospel ("good news") story, and set your hearts on Christ this Christmas. Receive the gifts of peace and joy which come from knowing Him, as your Lord and Saviour.

Are you ready for Christmas? (from page 1)

Are you ready for what He can do?



"Therefore He (Jesus) is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them." (Hebrews 7:25) Jesus is, then, only a prayer away!

Are you ready for Him to come again?

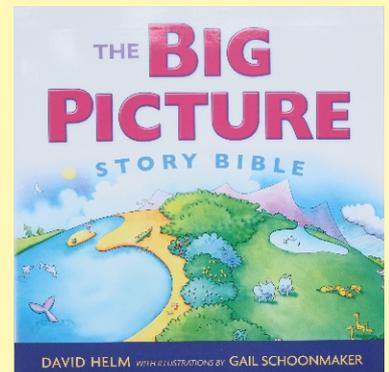
The first time Jesus came to the world, He came as a baby. The next time – and the Bible contains many references to this promise – He will come as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But **"You must be ready, because (He) will come at an hour when you do not expect Him."** (Matthew 24:44)

Are you ready for Christmas? Are you ready for Christ? At this time of year, we try our best to keep right with our family and friends, but what's even more important is to get right with God. Through Jesus, we can do that. Are you ready to do that? It's more urgent than anything on your Christmas list.

Books at Bethesda

As well as offering a wide range of free Christian booklets and magazines to help answer questions about the Christian faith, we also have a selection of good Christian books to buy.

The Big Picture Story Bible, by David Helm with illustrations by Gail Schoonmaker, is a beautifully presented book of over 450 pages, ideal for children, and indeed



the whole family. "The Bible is a big book about a big God who keeps a big promise!"

This book takes you through the stories of the Bible with colourful illustrations so you will see the big picture of God's love for you. Priced at £11, it's the perfect family gift this Christmas.



God with us

André Beck, Pastor

Jesus Christ didn't simply claim to be a good man or a wise teacher or a brilliant revolutionary or even a prophet. These are all tame in comparison to His real message.

No, Jesus proclaimed Himself to be "Immanuel" – God with us. A fairly impressive claim, I'm sure you'll agree.

Perhaps even more amazing is the fact that He was so persuasive that the religious and political leaders of His day had to conspire to have Him executed in order to prevent His influence from spreading; an attempt which failed miserably.

There was something so compelling about Jesus that His disciples were willing to endure all manner of hardship and persecution in order to spread the message that Jesus Christ is God with us. And it all began with His birth.

I'm aware that many who read this magazine may be tempted to dismiss these ideas as fiction, or as fanaticism. But this Christmas, why not consider afresh

the extraordinary event of Jesus' birth? Thousands of people were convinced a little over 2,000 years ago that God came to dwell with His people as a human being. Millions of people from all walks of life and countries still believe it today.

I urge you to consider with an open mind that at its core, Christmas is far more than a cultural tradition or a religious myth. Christmas is the celebration of the extraordinary and unique moment when God became a human being.



Not good enough for God?



I know from experience that some people think they are too much of a sinner for God to forgive them. When we think this way, it is easy to put God on the back-burner, rather than face our sins and confess. It is easy to see how we can believe that our many and varied sins make us unworthy of God's love and forgiveness. However, Jesus did not come to save the righteous, He came so **"that you may be saved"** (John 5:34). This very important message is repeated in *Luke 5:31-32* – **"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,"** said Jesus.

Some of the most well-known people in the Bible committed many sins, but they eventually turned to God and He used them in mighty ways. King David was an adulterer and murderer. However, once David admitted his sins and repented, he was forgiven (*2 Samuel 12:13-14*) and went on to become one of the most famous kings in the world. The apostle Paul (formerly Saul) was a persecutor of Christians. Saul's conversion is explained in the book of Acts (*chapter 9*). After his conversion to Christianity, Paul went on to write a lot of the New Testament. Rahab was a prostitute who went on to demonstrate great faith and helped God's people. She is listed in both the 'hall of faith' (*Hebrews 11:31*) and in the direct lineage of Jesus (*Matthew 1:5*).

It is important for all of us to know and understand that we are all sinners (*Romans 3:23*); yet when we confess our sins and follow Christ, God forgives us and our sin is wiped out (*Isaiah 1:18*).

"Nothing is impossible with God" (*Luke 1:37*), and we should not focus on how big our sin is, but on how big our God is.

Before I was baptized, I too was doubtful that I was good enough for God. It took me a while to understand that God loves us in spite of our sin. Once we confess and repent, then **"God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** (*1 John 1:9*)

We at Bethesda welcome sinners (like us) in the hope of getting to know Jesus and God.

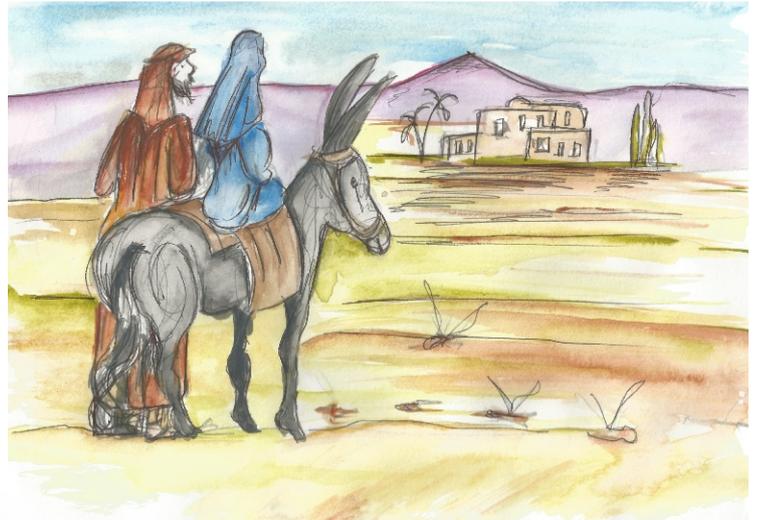
Nativity – the birth of the Son of God



Two thousand years ago, in Nazareth in Galilee, young Mary was shocked to see an angel sent from God.

The angel said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus."

He was to be called Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins.



Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to register in the census. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born.



There was no room at the inn ...



... So when she had given birth to her firstborn, she wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger.



*My eyes have seen
your salvation,
Which you have prepared
in the sight of all people;
A light for revelation
to the Gentiles,
And for glory
to your people Israel.*



There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord."

Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared, praising God: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests."

The shepherds hurried off to Bethlehem and found Joseph and Mary and Jesus. They praised and glorified God for all the things they had seen, which were just as they had been told.



Wise men from the East saw the star, and followed it to find the One who was born the King of the Jews.

The wise men worshipped Jesus and gave Him gifts of gold, incense and myrrh.



King Herod wanted to kill Jesus, but the wise men did not go back to tell him where they found Him.



"Jesus will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; His kingdom will never end," the Angel told Mary.



To read the Nativity story in the Bible, see the first two chapters of Luke's gospel, and the first two chapters of Matthew's gospel.

Paintings by young Felixstowe artist Emily Weston.

Meet David and Mary Forshaw

We have been married for 53 years and the Lord has blessed us in giving us three lovely children and ten lovely grandchildren. Although we had known each other as children, it took a meeting on Westminster Bridge in London to spark off the love affair! We were just 20 when we were married and earned a total of £8 per week so it was not easy. Throughout the 53 years we have had very difficult times, very sad times, financial struggles, but also lots of joy. We have always known that God would bring us through our difficult times and He has, despite our doubts and sometimes wondering why He allowed bad things to happen to us. Now, as we look back we can see that God has been with us and guided us, and brought us to where we are today – in Felixstowe.

We were both brought up by Christian parents who took us to church, taught us the Christian faith, read the Bible to us and prayed with us. As we grew older we realised that just because our parents were Christians and we belonged to a Christian family it did not make us a Christian. We needed to have our own personal relationship with the Lord Jesus; to admit that, "I am a sinner and I need to repent of my sins and ask God's forgiveness and to ask the Lord Jesus to come into my life and take control, to be my Lord and Saviour." David accepted Jesus when he was in his early teens, but it took Mary several years to completely surrender her life to Jesus Christ.

We have had a very exciting life and travelled to many different countries. David was often sent abroad with his job as a civil engineer, the longest stint of nearly 4 years in Singapore. For many years we visited Romania regularly and other Eastern Europe countries to meet Christians struggling after the Revolution. We took goods and financial help and also sought to encourage and befriend them. Today we have many very good friends in Eastern Europe, especially in Romania. We also spent 2 weeks living in a tribe in Papua New Guinea with some missionary friends. The tribe is in a very remote location in the jungle, and the only way in or out was by a little 4-seater plane which had to land on grass. As Mary was a nurse she was able to help with the medical care of the tribe's people with very little, and very basic medicine and dressings, but did the best she could.

We love travelling and now we are retired we have more opportunity to visit other parts of the world and marvel at God's wonderful creation, both the scenery, the animal kingdom and meeting the local people. This year we had a trip to Canada and the following is a little part of the story of our trip. How God heard our cries for help and answered our prayers.

We were travelling to Banff and planned to take a walk on a glacier on the way. We

stopped to take photos at a viewpoint, and then continued our journey. A message appeared on the dashboard saying the trunk was open. Stopping the car to close the boot, David discovered his bag was gone. It contained all our money, air tickets, hotel vouchers, travel insurance papers and emergency contact details. Everything we needed for our trip! First reaction – PANIC big time! David said to Mary, "You pray and I will drive back to our last stop." So Mary prayed while David drove back, but we found nothing, and no one there had seen anything. All we had was our glacier walk voucher, so we continued on to the National Park Centre. The rangers there were so helpful; contacted the police for us and offered to go and look for the bag down over the precipice into bear territory. We did the glacier walk then continued on to Banff; thankfully we remembered the name of the hotel, despite our lack of a voucher. David explained our plight to the receptionist who asked us to contact a gentleman who had phoned to say he had our bag. Phew! What a relief! David phoned him and he said, "I am a Christian and I would not be able to face my Lord when I get to heaven if I did not return the bag and all the contents to its rightful owner." He had picked it up in the middle of the road while travelling in the opposite direction to us and was now 4 hours' drive away. They would be visiting Banff in a couple of days! On the Sunday, after going to a local church, we wandered back to our hotel and found this lovely couple, Mike and Jackie, waiting for us; they already knew our names! We discovered they were also visiting Canada and so we had a lovely chat with them. Since then we have kept in touch and even received an invitation to visit them in the USA.

God had answered our prayers and we thanked Him and praised Him for his goodness to us. He had looked after our bag, sending a Christian couple to find it and return it intact. The story could have had a very different ending, but we really felt the Lord was looking after us. Even if the bag had not been found we still would have believed that for some reason God allowed this to happen and trusted that He would look after us. The Bible says: ***"The Lord is good, a refuge in time of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him."*** We may not know why the Lord allows testing times in our lives, but through it all He wants us to trust in Him, and one day, if not now, when we meet the Lord Jesus in heaven we will understand.



Lonely this Christmas?

Christmas is a time when families and friends come together; but if you are one of the thousands of people who have no one to celebrate with, Christmas can be a particularly lonely time. It is a difficult time of year for those who have no family or who cannot get out. This time of year has become a commercial exercise with the real meaning often forgotten. The true meaning of Christmas and the reason we should be celebrating is that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, was born. Once we come to understand this, there also comes a peace from knowing that God is always with us.

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

These words are given to us from God, and when we give our life to Him, He will not leave us.

There are several instances in the Bible where God gives us information and reassurance when we feel lonely. One of my ‘go to’ verses when I am

feeling low, defeated or lonely is *Philippians 4:6* – ***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”***

Maybe you are lonely and want to get to know God, but are afraid of rejection? I felt this way as I walked for the first time into Bethesda church, but I needn’t have worried. Everyone welcomed me as if I was a friend, and I am so grateful that God gave me the courage to take that step. I have made some good friends, but more importantly, I have begun my journey to salvation. As true Christians, we at Bethesda welcome everyone. Getting to know Jesus and the Word of God has been a lifeline to me and I no longer feel lonely.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Get in touch with us this Christmas, or come along; we promise you a warm welcome. Details are on the back page.

An extraordinary gift

If all the food and drink, presents and parties were taken away from Christmas, what would be left? Nothing!? Everything? What do you think? It depends on whether you think that God sent His Son to earth that first Christmas to supply what we **want**, or to meet what we **need**.

It is written that mankind is hopelessly lost, ruled by sin and evil, out of touch with our Creator, without hope, and ***“without God in the world.”*** (*Ephesians 2:12*) What we need, then, is a Saviour to rescue us. Jesus came ***“to search for and to save the lost.”*** (*Luke 19:10*)

He said to one such person, ***“If you knew the gift of God ...”*** (*John 4:10*) ***“The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.”*** (*Romans 6:23*)

You see, this is no ordinary gift; but like all gifts, it needs to be personally received, and not rejected. So how do you receive this gift?

Recognise – that you are lost and away from God;

Confess – your sins to Jesus, and cry out to the One who came to seek and to save, to save you now;

Accept – that the Lord Jesus Christ is now your Saviour, since ***“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*** (*Acts 2:21*);

Receive – God’s gift through Jesus, the gift of life.

Presents and parties will soon fade from memory, but this is a gift that lasts forever. It is the greatest gift of all!



“You can never truly enjoy Christmas until you can look up into the Father’s face and tell Him you have received His Christmas gift.”
(John R Rice)



Are you ready for Christmas?

Children's holiday club

Saturday 10th December, 9:15 am - 12 noon

Carol service

Sunday 18th December, 5:30 pm

Christmas day

Sunday 25th December, 10:30 am

Look out for 'Solid Food'
Bible teaching evenings...
Christianity Explored...
And more in January! See
bethesdafelixstowe.com



BETHESDA
BAPTIST CHURCH

WHAT'S ON



We are a friendly evangelical church; a 'family' of ordinary people from all walks of life who follow the extra-ordinary Jesus of the Bible. You are very welcome to our Sunday services, our informal Friday coffee mornings at church, and other activities.

* During school holidays and half-terms, children's and women's groups do not meet regularly. Other meetings may occasionally change; please check with us for details.

Bible verses are taken from the New International Version and King James Version.

Bethesda is a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. There are more than 550 F.I.E.C. churches in the UK.

Reg. Charity no. 1129260

Sunday – Morning Service – 10:30 am

*Crèche is available, and Mini-Zone for ages 3-8
Communion after the 3rd Sunday of the month*

Sunday – Evening Service – 6:30 pm

Communion after the 1st Sunday of the month

Sunday – Connect for 20s & 30s – 8:00 pm

Every other week, at the Pastor's house

"Monday Madness" – Children's Groups *

Fun & Games, Crafts & Quizzes, Bible Talks & Discussions, Refreshments and more ...

1:30 pm - 3:00 pm – Jelly Tots

(Babies & Toddlers with Parents & Carers)

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm – Smarties (Reception – Year 4)

6:00 pm - 7:30 pm – All Sorts (Year 5 – 8)

7:30 pm - 9:00 pm – After 8s (Year 9 – 13)

Tuesday – Women's Groups *

10:00 am Women of the Word (WOW) (Weekly)

2:30 pm Bethesda Women's Fellowship

1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month

Thursday Meetings – 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Prayer Meeting at the church

1st, 3rd & 5th Thursdays of the month

Home Group Bible Studies at members' homes

2nd & 4th Thursdays of the month

Friday – Coffee Morning – 10:30 am - 12

Everyone always very welcome! At the church.

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