

CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA - DIOCESE OF MEDAK

Church of St John the Baptist

EAST MARREDPALLY, SECUNDERABAD



The Parish Messenger

Christmas Special

2017

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Editorial

Christmas is a perfect gift wrapped beautifully in many layers – while the fringes are about goodies, decoration, carols and the like, at the core is the remarkable hope in the birth of Christ. This year, St John's has added yet another layer by bringing out the 'Christmas Special' of *The Parish Messenger*. Newsletter is a great platform for the parishioners to share their understanding of the Word of God and for collectively strengthening our faith. Besides, it mirrors the spiritual health and life of the church round the year, which helps us to assess, introspect and be better partakers in the Ministry.

The Parish Messenger gratefully acknowledges the Bishop and Presbyter in-charge Rt Rev Dr A C Solomon Raj for bringing the Season's Greetings, the Presbyter Rev K M Charles Wesley for sharing the Christmas Message and Dr M Udaia Kumar for the Secretarial Report.

In this issue, we are honoured to introduce our beloved pastor Rev K M Charles Wesley to the congregation, albeit a belated exercise since *The Parish Messenger* was dormant for a while. Toeing the tradition of bringing out the Christmas Special, articles relevant to the season were invited from the members. There was an influx of articles and the vantage point varied from a reflection on Christmas carols, favourite Christmas poems, stories and movies to the timeless traditions of the season. Coupled with these were articles on the spiritual inquiry into the significance of the very name of Christ-'Emmanuel,' and an understanding of the true meaning of Christmas. These insights into the variegated aspects of Christmas culminated in an engaging article on the Advent V2- which indeed is the true essence of the birth of Christ.

The 'Little Voices' captured the naive understanding of the kiddos' idea of Christmas. The canvas on which they expressed although varied, the fact remains that children never stop surprising us and hope you will cherish their innocence. Not to forget, this Christmas Special is also interlaced with a kaleidoscopic view of the snapshots depicting various church events of the season – the Carol Rounds, Festival of Nine lessons, Sunday School Christmas and Christmas Social Fellowship.

May the joy of Christmas fill our hearts and homes throughout the coming year.

Dr Grace Sunder



CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA - DIOCESE OF MEDAK



Rt Rev Dr A C SOLOMON RAJ

B.Com., B.D., M.Th.

Bishop in Medak Diocese



Greetings from the Bishop

Greetings to you all in His matchless Name! Once again we are in advent, celebrating God becoming one with us, the Emmanuel and reconciling everything with Him.

Christmas is a celebration of God's Salvation, God's Love, God's Humility and God's Righteousness.

Celebration of God's Salvation: By God becoming one with us, God in Jesus blessed us with salvation which is also understood as great deliverance from the penalty of sin leading to eternal death (Rom. 6:23). The very purpose of His coming is 'to seek and save the lost' (Luke 19:10). In order to save us, Jesus gave His life. Therefore, our salvation comes from celebrating His life which is the Gospel. Gospel is His birth, death, resurrection, ascension and even His parusia. It is by shedding of His blood the ransom is paid and by accepting that sacrifice, the salvation is made possible. Our responsibility as we celebrate Christmas once again is to seek the Lord afresh by calling upon Him while He is near, forsaking...and returning to the Lord (Is. 55:6-7).

Celebration of God's Love: Love is one of the attributes of God. God is Love and is the source of human love (1 John 4:7-11). God's love is not self-serving but sacrificial. Love comes at a high cost: one who loves is the one who willingly pays the price (John 3:16) because it's not we who loved God but it is God who loved us and expressed that love by sending His Son to be our propitiation for our sins. Yes, the sacrificial love of God is the cause, basis and standard that we are expected to demonstrate while we are still weak and in curse of sin (Rom. 5:6-9). Therefore, Christmas is re-experiencing and reliving this great act of sacrificial love of God in our lives.

Celebration of God's Humility: Humility is not seeing oneself as worthless; this cannot be attributed to God the Creator, the source of all. God in Jesus revealed His humility in emptying Himself (Phil. 2:5-11). Humility has to be seen as a matter of how we see our virtues and rights and how the same can be used in relation to others and for their benefit. In Jesus, humility is not clinging on to that which is ours by right but using and sharing it for the benefit of others. "Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. 20:28). This reflects the servitude in humility. He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death - "It's not as I will but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). By washing the feet of His disciples, Jesus institutes an everlasting example of humility in the context of disciples fighting among themselves as to who was great. "I set the pattern for you, that, just as I did to you, you should do also" (John 13:15).

Celebration of His Righteousness: His righteousness is His justice. His justice is His actions which are always right and fair and in conformity with His holiness. In Christmas, God expressed His nature in consistency with His character: fulfilling His promises and revealing His righteousness in the saving act on the cross in Jesus. His righteousness portrays His compassion and mercy in giving a new norm of righteousness - "poor in spirit", those who "mourn", the "gentle", those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness", the "merciful", the "pure in heart", the "peacemakers" and those who are "persecuted" on account of their relationship with Jesus (Matt. 5:3-12) - shifting from external to internal standards of life. God looked at the heart (Luke 16:15) and admonished the Pharisees and Scribes for their hypocrisy and self-righteousness (Matt. 23:28-35). Further, Cross portrays His action in Jesus for forgiveness and justification of a sinner. Hence, Christmas is also a celebration of the Cross, the embodiment of His righteousness experienced in His sacrificial Love, forgiveness, obedience and hope.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

The Rt Rev Dr A C Solomon Raj

Bishop in Medak Diocese & Presbyter in-charge

From the Presbyter's Desk



I greet you all in the matchless name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The wonderful festival of Christmas is here again, bringing with it lots of happy moments and good wishes from family and friends.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Matt. 4:16).

The entire narrative of Christmas that we hear or ever will hear brings us to our knees. The text is a great turning point in history. The world sat in sin, fear and darkness. The glory and peace of God appeared in person, Jesus Christ: the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, the True and Living God.

Christmas reminds us that God's love for the whole human race and for every single one of us is so intense and powerful that He was willing to break all the rules of time and space to come and be with us in person. We need to hear how much we are loved. We spend most of our lives knowing or looking for someone to love. We seek love in all the wrong places and in all the wrong ways and at last we come to the manger and finally learn on bended knees what it means to love and be loved.

Year after year, no matter what our age is, this is an occasion that excites our imagination, calms our fears and fills our hearts with hope. Christmas is usually a time of Joy for all ages and once more brings us to a heart of thanksgiving, quiet and all filled with wonder. The narration of Christmas is a vivid picture of God's love for us transcending time and space, so that we might seek Him, know Him and be with Him and He in us, God the Emmanuel.

Christ Jesus did not come as a spirit - one that we can only wonder or marvel at and worship from afar - but rather He dwelt among us and chose to be just like us. In Christ Jesus, we hear God telling us how much we are loved and we all need to hear these words. Don't we?

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who lived in deep darkness on them light shone."

Christmas draws us to the Light of the world, who stepped down into darkness.

The original condition of the world was darkness. The first creative act of God was sending light. The Word of God was the source of this light and life. This Word became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus came as the light of the world and still continues to illuminate our darkness with warmth and a healing and loving light. He is the power for Christian faith and Godly living. The light cannot be extinguished, though it may be rejected. There are people in homes, in families and in the congregation, experiencing sickness and sadness, tragedies and trials, disappointments and deaths, fear and failures. We are in the midst of trying and troubled times as some of you are facing right now. But let me remind you through the Word of God that the light of Christ is never exhausted but continues to shine every moment through His body, the Church, and its individual members. The practical application of this for the Christian lies in the imperative of Eph. 5:8 "...walk as children of light." Through the birth of Jesus, the light has come to the world.

As we fall on our knees in prayer year after year, we are truly changed by our encounter with Christ's manger and His light works upon us. We are not only privileged to experience the light of Christ but by the Grace of Heavenly Father, we are empowered to reflect that light of Christ in this darkened world.

We are commissioned to always honor and bear the light of Christ and tell the broken world that the birth of Jesus is not just wonderful and good but indeed a great message of Hope and Salvation for the entire humanity. Only those fully prepared for Christ's second coming can fully take pleasure in the celebration of Christmas.

I wish you all a Meaningful and Merry Christmas and a great New Year ahead, filled with more of HIS Grace, Love, and Blessing. God bless us all.

Rev K M Charles Wesley
Resident Presbyter

Secretary's Report



Dear Members,

Greetings and grace in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

With the dawn of Advent and with joyful events planned for this season, the revival of *The Parish Messenger* is yet another opportunity to celebrate the deepening of our relationship with one another in Christ. This Newsletter would be a way of keeping our members updated and further connected. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Editorial team - Dr Grace Sunder, Prof Paul Gunashekar, Mrs Rhena Roberts and Mrs Chandrika Samuel. I am confident that *The Parish Messenger* will be an effective means of strengthening our fellowship with one another in Christ.

Paul says in Eph. 2:19-22: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The Church of St John the Baptist has grown upon a firm foundation of faith, with Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone. As we reflect on the Ministry of the days gone by, we can see the fruit of the labor of many.

A few highlights of the past year 2017:

1. The year has seen active participation and growth in our vibrant fellowships (Women, Men and Youth) who meet regularly.
2. Our Sunday School has seen a steady growth in participation and learning of children and currently nurtures the spiritual needs of about hundred children.

3. Regular Bible studies have been conducted under the guidance of Pastoramma, Mrs Shebah Wesley.
4. The Church Choir has glorified our Lord through their regular performances, especially during this festive season.
5. The Church of St John the Baptist has financially supported the construction of St Mark's Church Building, a rural church in Pitlam Pastorate and Safilguda Church, Secunderabad.
6. Church repair and maintenance works were successfully completed.
7. Church cooling was undertaken.
8. The problem of acute scarcity of water supply for the Church Campus needs has been overcome by constructing a water sump behind the Parsonage.
9. Since the capacity of the current transformer was inadequate for the Church needs, a 50 KV transformer has been installed.

With the New Year around the corner, the Church plans to continue its support to other churches by providing financial support to ten more churches. Church improvement plans for the next year include PA system upgradation and lighting enhancement.

I would like to thank our Bishop and Presbyter in-charge Rt Rev Dr A C Solomon Raj for leading, guiding, and encouraging us. I would also like to thank our Resident Pastor Rev Charles Wesley for successfully completing one year in St John's Church.

May the good Lord bless our Church and our families.

Dr M Udaia Kumar
Secretary

Rev K M Charles Wesley: Called to Minister

D J S Sekhar

St John's is replete with great traditions which are time-honoured. One of them is to introduce their new Pastor to the congregation and the ideal way is through the columns of *The Parish Messenger*.

It was a mid-November morning that Grace and I chose to meet the Pastor's family at the parsonage. It was a cool day perfectly matching a calm and composed couple set to answer all our questions with consummate ease.

Rev Charles Wesley comes from a lineage of clergymen -- his father Rev KC Martin served the Medak Diocese and his grandfather Rev KY Charles, the Dornakal Diocese. He has great admiration for his father who was a man of mark - a competent musician and composer. Asked what motivated him to be inducted into the Ministry, his quick response was, "My father." Elaborating on it, he said it was the premature death of his father which triggered the transition in his life. God works through people and in his case two pastors were the catalysts. It was at this juncture that Pastor Wesley left a 'cushy job' at an MNC and responded to His calling for the Ministry.

Rev Wesley graduated from Wesley Boys' Degree College, Secunderabad. Thereafter, he was trained at CMC to be a software professional. He completed his Bachelor of Divinity at the reputed United Theological College, Bangalore.

It is a little over a year since Pastor Wesley has been with us as the Resident Presbyterian. He has great admiration for St John's which in his opinion is one of the glorious churches in the Medak Diocese. He feels it's a rare privilege and honour to serve an ancient church like St John's with its great heritage and legacy.

Rev Wesley comes to us with a rich pastoral experience of over a decade - a mix of rural and urban Ministry. He inherited an enviable library from his father which has a large collection of books on spiritual themes. He is an avid reader and

his wife vouches for him that he spends a lot of time in prayer, at times fasting. Even today, members of his erstwhile congregations seek his prayers, especially for healing. Sharing his personal testimony the Pastor says, "When I look up, peace comes to my Ministry; but when I look down, the opposite results." He also speaks of the conflict he notices between his Ministry and the congregation. "As long as I retract from the world there is peace," he avowed.

Martin Luther says, "There is no more lovely, friendly, and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage." The Wesleys affirm this view when they agree that they are complementary to each other. Rev Wesley acknowledges that his Ministry has been greatly blessed after Shebah came into his life. She graduated from the School of Biblical Studies, University of Nations and is presently pursuing Bachelor of Christian Studies from Serampore University. She is widely travelled, teaching theology and preaching besides

gaining administrative experience in the Episcopacy of the Karimnagar Diocese.

As we were interacting, a young girl dashed in like a missile not missing her target by landing on the lap of her mother. She brought in a whiff of fresh air to the animated conversation. No prizes for guessing! She is Chasney Esperanza, the cute 4½ year old daughter of the Wesleys, who is working hard on her UKG Class. Little Chasy and her father love gardening, but can't escape the eagle-eyed supervision of Shebah!

In the short period of his association with us, Rev Wesley has endeared himself to one and all with his commitment, steadfastness and affability. He is endowed with a mellifluous voice and impeccable English. Above all, his profound insights into the Word of God have been a great source of blessing to his congregation. St John's wishes the Pastor God's continued blessings on his Ministry and his family!



Christmas Carols - Then and Now

TMJ Champion

The other day, our morning newspaper brought with it an extra pullout, advertising 'Christmas in Singapore.' Appearing all over the paper were features on food, festivities, shopping, sightseeing and the like, which have become synonymous with Christmas. To add to that list, some more traditional things that come to mind, when one thinks of Christmas are carols, Christmas tree, midnight service, the yule log, cakes, gifts and cards not forgetting our Santa Claus. In short, this season is usually associated with a host of merry-making, fun and frolic to both Christians and non-Christians alike. Truth is, many of the traditional things we do at Christmas have come to us from non-Christian sources, having originated mainly from ancient Roman and North European customs and traditions. That raises an inquisitive question in the

minds of church musicians and choristers - Are Christmas Carols too from non-Christian origins? Yes indeed! Read on to know more about these carols: what they were, what they are today and what they would be in the years to come.

Christmas Carols - when it all started

Carols were first sung in Europe thousands of years ago, but these were not

Christmas Carols, as we know them today. Early Christians took over the pagan songs sung at Winter Solstice celebrations (which was around 22 Dec), and gave people Christian songs to sing instead, while they danced around in circles. The word 'carol' actually means circle dance or song of praise and joy!

They were sung during all four seasons, but only the tradition of singing them at Christmas has really survived. However, not many people liked them as they were written and sung in Latin, a language that the common folk couldn't understand. All this changed in 1223, when St Francis of Assisi started his Nativity Plays in Italy. As part of the play, they sang songs or 'canticles' that narrated the story. This encouragement to rejoice in the good news of Christmas in their own language, gave rise to

today's Christmas carols.

Before 'carol rounds' to people's homes or carol singing in public became popular, there were sometimes official carol singers called 'Waits.' These were bands of people led by important local leaders (such as council leaders) who alone had the power in the towns and villages to take money from the public (if others did, they were sometimes charged as



beggars!). In England, the word wassail means 'be well, and in good health' - it came to mean the wishing of good fortune on your neighbors. That gave us the song, 'Here We Come-A-Wassailing'- sung as carolers wished good cheer to their neighbors in hopes of getting a gift in return - its last verse, 'Bring us some figgy pudding' stems from the wassailers' original intent. 'A Wassailing' also evolved into the popular 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas.'

Christmas Carols - as it is today

As for the traditional ones, the most famous kind of Carol Service is the 'Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols,' which originated from King's College, Cambridge, UK in 1918. It is conducted in churches all across the world today. Here, the carols interspersed with nine readings from the Bible tell the Christmas Story. In the emerging cultural trend, there is certainly a mix of traditional and contemporary carols with a clear tilt towards contemporary music. Everyone knows that Christmas time is different from all the other seasons. No matter what style of music a person may choose to enjoy the rest of the year, the traditional Christmas Carols break through the musical preferences and barriers, to be universally recognized as the most beloved music of all people and of all times. However, those who think they have heard, played and sung enough of traditional Christmas music (the likes of Caleb Simper and the other Victorian composers of that vintage which sound very churchy) are looking for something very chirpy and new. So, today we hear carols such as 'Oh Mary rock, rock, rock your baby,' 'Little donkey on the dusty road,' etc. in a typical rock and pop style.

Today, Christmas concerts across the globe have all the glamour of a variety of music

- from the most classical style to the 'jazzed up' version of carols. What's more, modern Christmas carols are not confined only to churches but also performed in auditoriums and other social gatherings. A plethora of Christmas carols are being churned out by the publishers from the US and the UK, which may not have an iota of scriptural connotation. Yet, they have become very popular with choral groups.

Christmas Carols - emerging future trends

In the not-so-distant future, Christmas Carols may be full of new vocabulary and themes (not necessarily scriptural) as against traditional shepherds and the Magi. Even today, Songwriters and composers vie with each other in bringing out Christmas pieces with newer and syncopated rhythms. There is a voracious appetite for this, from the music-loving community. It is, therefore, no surprise that such text and music is here to stay while the traditional ones slowly sink into oblivion.

Even if we wanted to, I think it would be difficult to separate the embedded non-Christian traditions from those of the clearer Biblical and spiritually significant ones. We have to resign ourselves to the fact that the pagan customs, together with the commercialism of our modern-day Christmas will continue. It is impossible to change the way of the world, but it is very important that we see beyond the 'trimmings' of Christmas to its central message, that we don't let its secular customs, with all its commercial overtones, overshadow God's purpose in sending His Son into the world to be the Saviour of the world (John 3:17).

HE is the real reason for all our celebrations.

Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols



*Junior
Choir*



Remarkable Rendition



Church Choir

'Twas the Night Before Christmas

Sunita David

The miracle of Christmas is, heaven and earth join in worship of the Saviour of the world. The Saviour, not as the world knows Him. Salvator Mundi or translated Christ the Saviour, a painting by Leonardo da Vinci sold for \$450,000,000! The highest price ever for a painting! But there is no price that can be placed on the gift of salvation, the joy and peace surpasses all understanding.

The shepherds, the wise men and the angels' song rang through that dark night lighting up hope in human hearts. The Nativity story is so heartwarming that it remains the inspiration for numerous Christmas stories, hymns, cantatas, movies and albums that usher in the season. My list of top ten favourite Christmas stories and movies can never be accommodated, so I will stick to a couple of them.

"'Twas the night before Christmas,' an 18th century poem by Clement Clarke Moore, was the presentation we the Sunday School students of St John's Church were putting up

that year. Miriam Comfort, our Sunday School superintendent was directing it, with Ruth her sister at the piano. The same piano that sits sadly and uncomfortably in the corner actually led all our singing those days. Practice followed and we met at the parish hall. Ruthie would be doubled over with laughter watching the action unfold and would be promptly told to get back to the music by elder sister Miriam.

With all seriousness, Miriam got us children ready, giving the part of narration to me knowing my stage-fright. Happily behind the curtain, I proceeded to read. The end was a happy ending for me but I heard later, the narration raced ahead of all action!! But the picture of Ruthie doubled with laughter, and the words....

*'Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring,
not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung
by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St Nicholas
soon would be there.*



...remained with me the rest of my Christmases. It still puts a smile on my face, I wonder why?

My favourite Christmas story is Charles Dickens' 'Christmas Carol.' It is only Dickens who can make those glow-in-the-dark-moments.

Who else is capable of his kind of magic? He gave us the unforgettable Uncle Scrooge with his line "Bah! Humbug!" and the shy Tiny Tim wins our hearts. Ebenezer Scrooge has seen the Spirits of 3 Christmases -- Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future, showing him what Christmas means to him and the keeping of the festive spirit. The change of heart is seen to be believed -- people who were

victims of his sharp tongue and stingy ways became round-eyed with wonder. That's what Christmas does. It changes hearts and gives us a second chance to mend our ways. Nothing like good ole moralizing and Dickens is the writer for that! His fun and preaching never part ways.


My last recommendation for the festive season is to watch 'Polar Express.' If you wanted to see Santa and his elves at the North Pole then this is the movie to recreate the Winter Wonderland. It comes tied up with a story of riches bursting out into a sad, tired and careworn world. Children learn to value people and pleasure is, to put smiles on another's face.

If these wise men from Orient far could undertake that journey to see the Christ child; If shepherds out on a cold night were witness to an angel choir sing; if a star shining bright stood still over Bethlehem keeping watch that night ...then we can make a journey of discovery like the wisemen did, or run to worship the King of kings like the shepherds, or tune our hearts to sing out the miracle of the Saviour's birth as the angels did. The wise and the humble made a brave decision of resting their faith in the Saviour of the world. Shall we too? even as fellow Christians all over the world are risking their lives to follow Christ today. We in our turn will also follow the Star of Bethlehem and continue our journey of Faith.

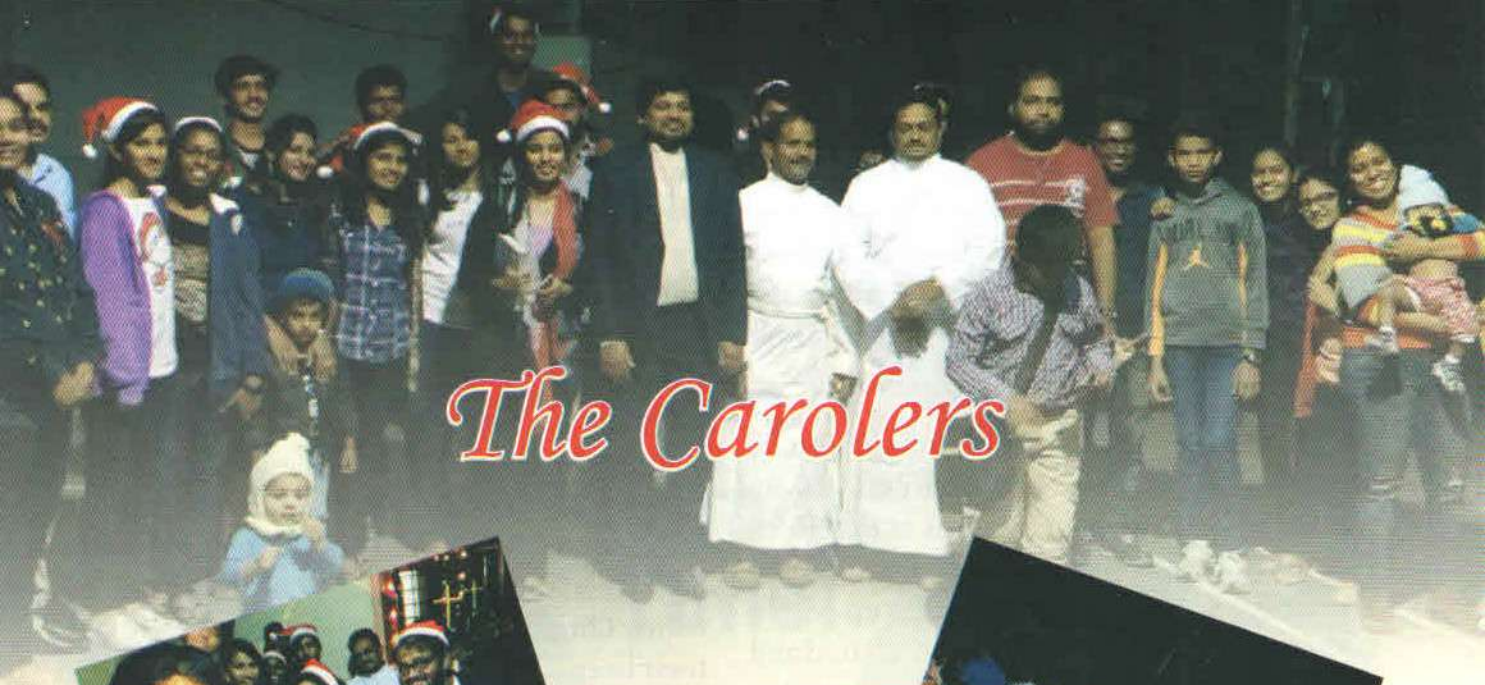
Do you know...

The origin of the carol Silent Night, Holy Night (German: *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*) dates back to 1818. It was composed by Franz Xaver Gruber to lyrics by Joseph Mohr in the small town of Oberndorf bei Salzburg, Austria. History states that, "on the 24th of December of the year 1818, the then assistant priest Joseph Mohr at the newly established parish of St Nicholas in Oberndorf handed over to the organist represented by Franz Gruber a poem, with the request to write a fitting melody for 2 solo voices together with choir and for accompaniment by guitar. This song was included in the Christmas mass that evening. Mohr sang the tenor part and provided accompaniment with guitar, while Gruber sang bass. Composed during troubled times in the region, this meaningful hymn was approved by the congregation that evening predominantly comprising of shipping labourers and boat builders."

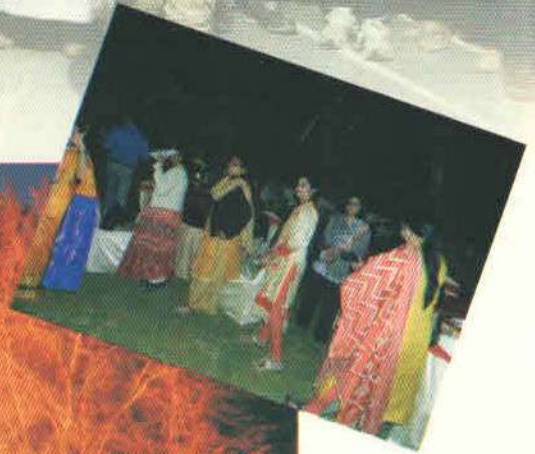
This carol is now translated into 140 languages with the version sung by Bing Crosby grossing up more than \$30mn.



Si- lent night, ho- ly night! All is calm, All is bright.



The Carolers



THE WARMTH OF CHRISTMAS



A Wreath and Five Candles

Maneesha Esther Mohanty



It is a tradition in several churches, across denominations, to place an Advent wreath and light the Advent candles. Four Advent candles are lighted on the four Advent Sundays. On the first Advent Sunday, only one candle is lit. On the second Advent Sunday the second candle is also lit, so we have two lighted candles. The third and fourth candles are added similarly on the third and fourth Advent Sundays.

Some churches also light a fifth candle, or the Christ candle on Christmas eve.

The wreath is circular representing God's never ending love for us. It is made of evergreen leaves symbolising hope of eternal life given to us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The candles are placed on or around the wreath. Lighting of the Advent candles reminds us of the light of God coming into the world through the birth of Jesus. Each Advent candle has its own significance and they symbolize four important Christian concepts.

The first Advent candle

The first Advent candle represents hope. Jesus is truly the center of our hope. He is our only hope. As believers we do not necessarily hope for God to bless us with earthly riches.

Our hope rests in the promise of an everlasting life with God when Christ comes again. As 1Pet. 1: 3-4 says: "Praise be to God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade." This inheritance is kept for you in heaven.

"Thanks be to God He gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain. We always have hope in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Cor. 15: 57-58).

The second Advent candle

The second Advent candle represents peace. Jesus of Nazareth, the Prince of Peace, is the only one who can give us peace in this world full of turmoil. He provides us with peace of mind. As our sovereign, loving, all-powerful God is always in control, we have nothing to fear. Jesus gives us peace with God through the forgiveness of all our sins. Jesus gives us peace in this world by teaching us how to love, serve and forgive others.



Tragedy, heartache and sorrow will come into our life, but Christ, the Prince of Peace, gives us His peace....peace that passeth all understanding.

The third Advent candle

The third Advent candle represents joy. Jesus said rejoice that your names are written in heaven. This is possible only because infant Jesus came into this world to save us from our sins and give us eternal life. Our faith will bring joy to our hearts. "Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1Pet. 1:8). There may be trials and tribulations, but all we need to do is have faith. James 1: 2-3 says: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kind because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

The fourth Advent candle

The fourth candle stands for love. God demonstrated His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Jesus, the son of God died for us. The love of Christ is a central element of Christian belief. It refers to the love of Jesus Christ for humanity. His love also teaches us to love Christ for it is written, "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The love of Christ asserts that we should love other people as Jesus commanded that he who loves God loves his brother also (1John 4: 21) and we need to love one another, as Christ has loved us (John 13:34). The phrase 'love of Christ' is used three times in the New Testament. Rom. 8:35 asserts: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Cor. 5:14-15 reads: "For the love of Christ controls us, because

we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died," and Eph. 3:17 says: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Christ candle

The fifth candle is usually white and is placed in the centre of the Advent wreath surrounded by the Advent candles. It is lighted on Christmas Eve. Lighting the Christ candle symbolises the light of Christ coming into the world. It represents Christ, as a symbol of light or eternal life, dispelling darkness or death. As the word of God says in 2 Tim. 1:10: "it is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

The Advent wreath reminds us that the birth of Jesus gave us the gift of hope, peace, joy and love. May we accept the light of life in our lives this Christmas season and forever.

Christmas greetings around the world – wish someone and impress them!!

- Feliz Navidad – *Spanish*
- Joyeux Noël – *French*
- Frohe Weihnachten - *German*
- Chag Molad Sameach -*Hebrew*
- Meri Kurisumasu -*Japanese*

Emmanuel - Jehovah Shammah

Yashodhra Desappa



"The Name of the Lord, is a Strong Tower, the Righteous run into it and are safe" (Prov. 18:10). Jesus had many Names and every name He wears is a blessing that He shares. The better we understand the Names of Jesus, the better we will know Him: what He has done for us and what He can do for us. The name Emmanuel appears in Isa.7:14 and the prophecy is fulfilled in Matt. 1:23. As Emmanuel, when we are saved, He is born in our hearts and He is with us.

JESUS IS GOD: John 1:1 reads: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

Worshipping any created being other than God was considered as idolatry. As Matt. 4:10 says: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." There are several references in the New Testament which proclaim that Jesus was worshipped: Jesus received worship from the Magi (Matt. 2:11); When Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples bowed and worshipped Him. The blind man (John 9:38) whom Jesus healed worshipped Him (Matt. 14:22). All these prove that Jesus is God as He said in John 10:30: "I and my Father are One."

EMMANUEL MEANS GOD WITH US: He is not a God who is far away, not concerned about us. God gave the promise to Moses and Joshua, "I am with you." He gave the same promise to us in Matt. 1:23 and ends the book on the same note- "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 20). The Lord Jesus is with us in every area of our lives as He says: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

EMMANUEL IN TRIALS: Is. 41:10 assures us saying: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; Be not dismayed for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee; I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Rom. 8:31

declares: "If God can be for us, who can be against us?"

EMMANUEL IN OUR SERVICE FOR HIM: Our Emmanuel is always by our side in our Ministry. As Mark 16:20 says: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them." When Paul was getting the church started in Corinth (Acts 18: 9-10), he was ready to quit. Then the Lord appeared to him and said: "Do not be afraid ... for I am with you." He was with him till the end of his Ministry, even though some friends forsook him. He is with us too, as we do His Ministry. So, let us not be weary in doing well.

EMMANUEL IN ETERNITY : No matter what the circumstances are JEHOVAH SHAMMAH would always be with us. As Ps. 23 assures: "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." In Rev. 21, John saw the heavenly Jerusalem coming down from heaven, and he heard a voice saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be with them and be their God."

EMMANUEL IN SALVATION: Rev. 3:20 says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Vs. 21 goes on to say: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me, in My throne."

Whatever others may say, Jesus is God our Emmanuel and if we trust and surrender ourselves to Him, we can live forever and ever with Him.

Are we ready to sing O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL, and ransom captive Israel?

PRAYER-O Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, Savior of all, come and dwell among us. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Christmas Social



A Solemn Procession



The Vanguard. Dr Maneesha Mohanty



In Unison. Sunday School Kids rendering the medley



Enchanting Ensemble. The Church Youth in action



The vibrant Women's Fellowship



A Joyful Singing
by the Men's Fellowship



The Bunyans



The Thompsons

It's Family Time!



The Mesas



The Bhavanasis



Evening Fellowship



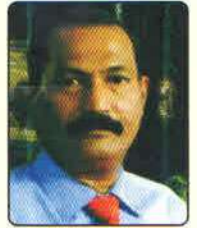
Little Flock



Christmas Fellowship Dinner

What does Christmas Mean to us?

Morris Wilson



If someone asks you who Jesus is, what would you say? You would probably say: 'He is the saviour of the world; He is the Lord; He is my personal saviour; He is with me every day, and He heals my sickness and answers my prayers; He is in Heaven seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for me and you.'

However, if someone aggressively confronts you and questions Jesus' identity and relevance, you will need to stand firm and say: 'Jesus is the only saviour; He is king of kings; He lived even before He was conceived in His mother's womb.' In Gen. 1:26, God says: "Let us make man in our image..." Who is us? It refers to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – the Holy Trinity. John 1: 1-2 says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." This is a clear reference to Jesus. In Matt. 2: 1-12 the three distinguished wise men, who knew the prophecies, followed the star from the East and travelled a long distance to reach Bethlehem to worship the 'king of the Jews.' As we know, they carried gold, incense, and myrrh as presents. These had a strong symbolic value: there was no metal as precious and pure as gold, frankincense was used at the altar, and myrrh was used as an ointment to heal and embalm. The Magi 'bowed down and worshipped' baby Jesus, presented the gifts, and returned home without meeting Herod. Clearly, it was God's timely intervention that influenced their decision.

Jesus was born of an earthly mother through a divine act: it was imperative that He should be born of a virgin since He had to be a person without blemish in a milieu that was badly scarred and overtly sinful. This is what is unique about Christmas: the Incarnation or the act of God coming to earth in human form in order to eventually save us with His perfect sacrifice made once and for all.

Christmas then is the celebration of God incarnate and the glorification of a truly extraordinary life, a life without parallel.

Jesus, a 'present' from God

Tradition states that one of the main reasons we have the custom of giving and receiving presents at Christmas, is to remind us of the presents given to Jesus by the Wise Men. Christmas itself is really about a big present that God gave the world about 2000 years ago - Jesus! All over the world, families and friends give presents to each other. Most children around the world believe in a Christmas gift bringer. It's often St Nicholas, Santa Claus or Father Christmas, but in parts of Germany they believe that it is the Christkind, in Spain it is the Wise Men and in parts of Italy it is an old lady called Befana.



Advent v2

M Anthony David



Sudhir bundled his laptop, breakfast and lunch into his totem bag and got into his car. Reaching his friend's home, he honked the horn twice. Daniel scurried out. He opened the gate to let Sudhir park his car in the front yard. Then he hurried and opened his car door for Sudhir.

As they coasted along the highway for the long commute they did every day, it seemed like any other day. They talked about their work and the weather. Sudhir took a sandwich from his bag and started munching. "Care for a bite Dan?" he asked his friend. Busily negotiating the traffic on the highway, Daniel mumbled, "No thanks. I've had my breakfast at home."

They passed the usual tollgates and proceeded closer to their office. It would take just about 15 minutes now for them to reach. Suddenly the car lurched. It veered off the road. Sudhir was flabbergasted. Quickly wiping off the breadcrumbs from his lips, he turned to look at Daniel. It was then that he got the shock of his life. Where on earth was Daniel? Daniel has disappeared. Or so it seemed! Dan's clothes were still on the driver's seat but he was nowhere to be seen! By a miracle Sudhir managed to get the control of the car and brought it to a stop before it crashed onto the road divider.

"What? What could have happened? Where is Dan?" stammered Sudhir. Foolishly he realized that he was talking to himself. He

opened the car door and found that there were some other near accidents on the highway. Just ahead of him an airplane had crashed and caught fire. "My God! What is happening?" he wondered.

His immediate concern was for Sunitha, his wife. Fishing his mobile out he called her number. She was not responding. Anxiety growing by the minute, he tried again and again. Still no response. "The number you called is not responding," intoned an unearthly female voice. Sweating profusely though it was a cold morning, he called his mother. No response from her too. He mused, "What on earth could have happened to my wife and mum?"

As a last resort, he called his friend Naresh who was a news reporter. After a while Naresh responded, "Hi Sudhir, what's happening man?"

"You tell me, Naresh," he mumbled. "No one knows Sudhir," declared Naresh, "there have been reports from all over the world that some people have disappeared suddenly a few minutes ago."

"What... How can it be?"

"BBC says that they sighted some UFOs. They are under the impression that some extraterrestrials arrived and are teleporting some of us earthlings to their own planet."

"Really! I just can't believe it Naresh," said Sudhir as he gingerly entered Daniel's car.

He opened the glove compartment to find a booklet Daniel had placed there. The title glared at him, "If you have been left behind." Sudhir grabbed the booklet and read it from cover to cover.

The book was concise and clear. In the event of the rapture or the part A of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, many believers would disappear suddenly, in one moment. If you are left behind, get hold of a Bible and read. Accept that you are a sinner. Believe in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Confess your sins. Turn back from them. Invite the Lord to enter in to your heart and cleanse it. And pray.

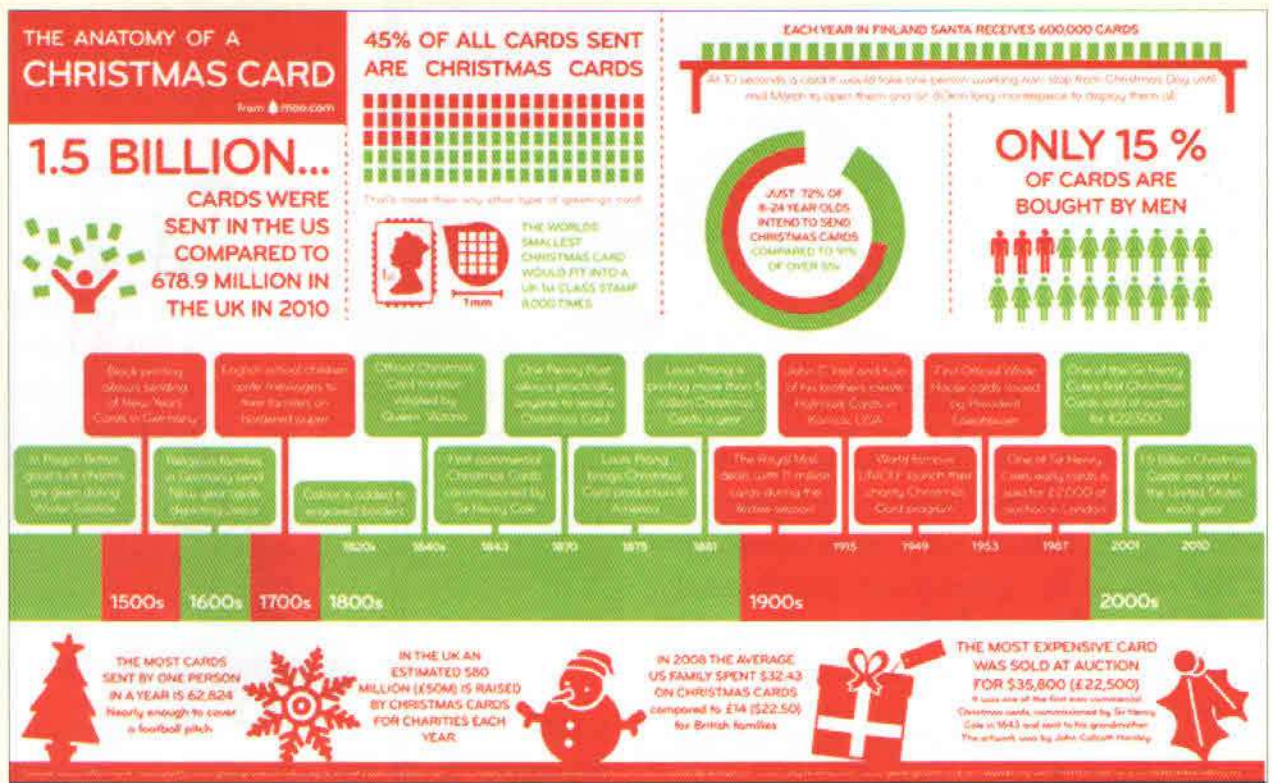
Sudhir couldn't stop trembling. "Am I left behind?" He wondered. He remembered how last Christmas in the office party, Daniel

had clearly outlined all this in a lovingly designed presentation he shared with all of them. Is this it then? He thought, "Have I been left behind?"

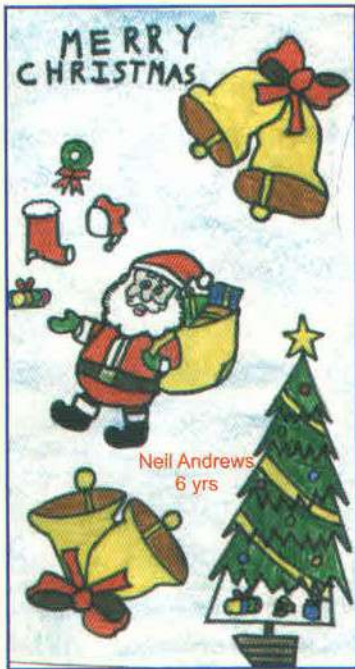
Right there in Daniel's parked car in the by lane, he prayed. Admitting his sins and believing that the Lord Jesus was the only Saviour, he asked Him to come into his heart and cleanse him of all his sins.

Dear reader, yes, the Lord Jesus Christ, the birthday baby of this Christmas is scheduled to make his v2 advent soon. Very soon. He will come in a surprise visit. The dead in Him will go up first to meet Him, and then those of us alive and believing in Him will be raptured. It will be all over in a jiffy, in the twinkling of an eye, as it were!

While we don't receive or send as many Christmas cards as before, it is interesting to read the journey of the cards...



Little Voices...



Neil Andrews
6 yrs

Christmas is a season, they became
this is the time we get to meet our whole
family and exchange gifts. We can enjoy the
holidays with brother and sister. But we cannot
feel the season with out our god. Jesus. Because
in the season and he is the reason.

Joanne Aliza
10 yrs

What Christmas means to me!
Christmas means celebrating the birth of
our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a time
when we share the good news of Jesus
with others, especially those who are in need. The good children
will share happily as food, love and
cheerful gifts to love to share my love
and chocolate during Christmas.

Carine Benjamin
10 yrs

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------|----------------------------|---|
| 1) Christmas | means | Love of our family | ♥ |
| 2) Christmas | means | helping poor people | ♥ |
| 3) Christmas | means | helping poor people | ♥ |
| 4) Christmas | means | joy and happiness to us | |
| 5) Christmas | means | celebrating the birth of | |
| 6) Christmas | means | giving gifts to each other | |
- M MURA TEENA
Mura Teena
6 yrs

MY IDEA OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas means my Gods
Kings Birthday. I love Christmas this
is the season to be jolly with New clothes
Christmas tree, bells. I love my
God because he died for me.
From M. Jeffrey Mathew.

Jeffrey Mathew
8 yrs

Christmas means:

- * Meeting our relatives and friends *
- * Making cakes and sweets *
- * putting many lights and Christmas trees *
- * playing in snow and having fun *
- * giving gifts to others *
- * giving thanks to god, god giving wisdom and blessing *

Amen

Riya Sharon
9 yrs



Ashton
5 yrs

WHAT CHRISTMAS MEANS TO ME

* Christmas means having fun with parents and sharing gifts and with others and gettogether etc.

* We will have gift and celebrate with everyone.

Richard
11 yrs



Nateleno
11 years

On Christmas God gave us the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ.

Therefore we celebrate Christmas by giving gifts to each other.

It is a time of fun & Joy!

Rhea Abraham
12 years

- Rhea

What does Christmas mean?

Some believe Christmas to mean spending time with family and friends

Decorating the Christmas tree while the scent of cookies baking wafts about the air

Presents are brought in the mad rush and

Wrapped up tight and placed under that Tree shining bright with lights

But what does Christmas mean?

Some believe in Santa Claus

Dressed in red and white

He flies once a year in his sleigh

Bringing toys and goodies to every house

Some believe that Christmas is about a little

Boy born in a manger who was sent to

Earth to bring hope and joy, but most of all love

Jesus is our only hope to save us from our sins

On that cross thirty three years later did He die

To take away our sins

His love for us is unwavering

He never let us down

So why do we let Him down?

What is Christmas?

Christmas is love

We can spread love, joy, and hope

We can be the best we can be

We can celebrate with family and friends

We can bake cookies and give presents

But let us not forget that Jesus is

What Christmas really means

Because Jesus is love!

Sharon Priyadarshini
17 yrs

1. Christmas means helps poor people and poor children
2. and also poor family
3. Christmas means also of the birth of Jesus Christ and also happiness to us.
4. and also give us gifts. on Christmas Day
5. on Christmas they give each other gifts

Shimona
7 yrs

Sunday School Christmas



*The Nativity Play.
An Enthralling
Performance
by Children*



Silent Night
Holy Night...



The Magic
of Santa Claus



CHRISTMAS TRIVIA

- 1) *What does the word Emmanuel mean?*
- 2) *The angel said to Mary that Jesus would reign over the house of which Old Testament character?*
- 3) *Who succeeded Herod after his death?*
- 4) *Traditions of Christmas around the world will tell you that Santa Claus is known by many names. What is the French name for Santa Claus?*
- 5) *Which Christmas song's second verse begins with, "See the blazing Yule before us?"*
- 6) *Which is the most popular ornament used to place at the top of the Christmas tree?*
- 7) *In the song 'Twelve days of Christmas,' what is given on the 7th day?*
- 8) *When was the first Christmas card sent? Who designed it?*
- 9) *Which is the largest selling Christmas single of all time?*
- 10) *Which department store created "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer?"*

Answers

10) Montgomery-Ward	single in the United States, but also the best-selling single of all time, with estimated sales in excess of 50 million copies worldwide.
9) According to the Guinness Book of World Records, "White Christmas" by Bing Crosby is not only the best-selling Christmas/holiday	
8) The first Christmas card was sent in 1843 and was designed by John Horsley.	
7) Swans-a-swimming	
6) Angel	
5) Deck the halls	
4) Pere Noel	
Matt 2:22 - son of Herod the Great.	
3) Archelaus	
Luke 1:32-33 - Jesus would be given the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob.	
2) Jacob	
1) God is with us	



Merry Christmas
&
A Blessed New Year

