



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WANGARATTA
PAROCHIAL DISTRICT OF WANGARATTA WEST & THE WARBYS

The First Sunday after Christmass
31st December 2023

Dear Parishioners,

I trust that your Christmass Celebrations are going peacefully and joyfully.

The Season of Christmas for the Church is at the least 12 days—the Twelve Days of Christmas—ending on January 5th in time for The Feast of The Epiphany on January 6th. At the most it can be 40 days long, going until the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple—February 2nd. This year we will take the Crib down in time for Lent which begins on February 14th!

Here are some notes I found about Christmas traditions from the BBC issued many years ago.

Traditions

Christmas has always been a strange combination of Christian, Pagan and folk traditions. As far back as 389CE St. Gregory Nazianzen (one of the Four Fathers of the Greek Church) warned against 'feasting in excess, dancing and crowning the doors'. The Church was already finding it hard to bury the Pagan remnants of the mid-winter festival.

Medieval

During the medieval period (c.400CE - c.1400CE) Christmas was a time for feasting and merrymaking. It was predominantly a secular festival but contained some religious elements.

Many Pagan traditions had been brought to Britain by the invading Roman soldiers. These included covering houses in greenery and bawdy partying that had its roots in the unruly festival of Saturnalia.

The Church attempted to curb the Pagan practices and popular customs were given Christian meaning. Holly became a symbol for Jesus' crown of thorns. And during the late medieval period the tradition of singing carols - carols had started as Pagan songs for celebrations such as mid-summer and harvest - was taken up by the Church.

The medieval Christmas lasted 12 days from Christmas Eve on the 24th December, until Epiphany (Twelfth Night) on the 6th January. Epiphany comes from a Greek word that means 'to show', meaning the time when Jesus was revealed to the world. Even up until the 1800s Epiphany was at least as big a celebration as Christmas day.

17th Century ban on Christmas

From the middle of the 17th Century until the early 18th Century the Christian Puritans suppressed Christmas celebrations in Europe and America.

The Puritan movement began during the reign of Queen Elizabeth in England (1558-1603). They believed in strict moral codes, plenty of prayer and close following of New Testament scripture.



As the date of Christ's birth is not in the Gospels the Puritans thought that Christmas was too strongly linked to the Pagan Roman festival and were opposed to all celebration of it, particularly the boozy, topsy-turvy celebrations inherited from Saturnalia. In 1644 all Christmas activities were banned in England. This included decorating houses with evergreens and eating mince pies.

The crib and the nativity play

The telling of the Christmas story has been an important part of the Christianisation of Christmas. One way that the Christmas story has been told is through the crib, a model of the manger that Jesus was born in.

The tradition of crib-making dates back to at least 400 when Pope Sixtus III had one built in Rome. In many parts of Europe in the Eighteenth Century crib making was an important craft from. This was not the case in England to much later, suggesting that British Christmases were less Christian than those in other parts of Europe (*The Making of A Modern Christmas*, J.M. Golby & A.W. Purdue, Sutton Publishing, 1986).



The tradition of Nativity plays began in Churches where they were used to illustrate the Christmas story as told in the Bible.

Modern day crib outside a church

Victorian Christmas

After a lull in Christmas celebrations the festival returned with a bang in the Victorian Era (1837 - 1901). The Victorian Christmas was based on nostalgia for Christmases past. Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) inspired ideals of what Christmas should be, capturing the imagination of the British and American middle classes. This group had money to spend and made Christmas a special time for the family.

It was the Victorians who gave us the kind of Christmas we know today, reviving the tradition of carol singing, borrowing the practice of card giving from Valentines' day and popularising the Christmas tree.

Although the Victorians attempted to revive the Christmas of medieval Britain, many of the new traditions were Anglo-American inventions. From the 1950s carol singing was revived by ministers, particularly in America, who incorporated them into Christmas celebrations in the church. Christmas cards were first sent by the British but the Americans, many of whom were on the move and far from families, picked up the practice because of a cheap postal service and because it was a good way of keeping in contact with the folks at home. Christmas trees were a German tradition, brought to Britain and popularised by the royal family.



Detail from a Victorian Christmas card

An important part of today's Christmas is the myth of Santa Claus. His origins are in Christian and European tradition. But the image of Santa that we have today is the one popularised by American card-makers in the Victorian era.



WHAT'S ON & DAILY BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY, 1st January 2024.

THE NAMING AND CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS

Numbers 6. 22-27. Psalm 8. Galatians 4. 4-7. Luke 2. 15-21.

TUESDAY, 2nd

*Basil of Caesarea (d 379) and Gregory of Nazianzus (d 389) bishops & teachers
Eliza Hassall, pioneer of missionary training and CMS (Aust) (d 1917)*

1 John 2. 22-28. Psalm 98. 1-7. John 1. 19-28.

WEDNESDAY, 3rd

1 John 2. 29 — 3. 6. Psalm 98. 8-10. John 1. 29-34.

———9.30am Craft Group——St Michael's Hall.

THURSDAY, 4th

1 John 3. 7-10. Psalm 99. John 1. 35-42.

9.30am, Eucharist — St. Michael's Hall.

10.15am, morning tea and Bible Study—St Michael's Hall.

FRIDAY, 5th

1 John 3. 11-21. Psalm 100. John 1. 43-51.

SATURDAY, 6th

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

Isaiah 60. 1-6. Psalm 72. 1-7, 10-14. Ephesians 3. 1-12. Matthew 2. 1-12.

Sunday 7th January 2024, THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

8.00am, Eucharist @St George's, Taminick.

9.30am, Eucharist @St. Michael's, Wangaratta.

11.00am, Ante Communion @St Paul's, Glenrowan.

Genesis 1. 1-5, Psalm 29, Acts 19. 1-7, Mark 1.4-11.

Christmas Day

THE CHRISTMAS BOWL
SINCE
1949



Sharing God's love

Meh Reh fled Myanmar more than 29 years ago. Living in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border ever since, he hopes that one day it will be safe for he and his family to return home. Your gifts through the Christmas Bowl can help Act for Peace's local partners, like The Border Consortium on the Thai-Burma border, provide practical care so refugees and people who have been displaced can live in safety and dignity and know that they are loved and not forgotten. **Please give today.**



CALL: 1800 025 101

VISIT: christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au



Sunday 31st December 2023—Saturday 6th January 2024

- ◆ **The World:** Middle East: Egypt, Israel and Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon.
- ◆ **Australia:** Our land—all it means to us, and our part in caring for it.
- ◆ **The Church in our nation:** The Anglican Church of Australia.
Mission Organisations – Anglican Board of Mission. Anglicare. AngliCord.
Church Missionary Society. The Church Army. Bush Church Aid Society.
Also, The Bible Society. Christmas Bowl (National Council of Churches).
- ◆ **The Anglican Communion:** The Archbishop of Canterbury: Archbishop Justin Welby. Anglican Consultative Council: James Tengatenga, Chair.
- ◆ **Our Diocese:** Bishop Clarence Bester (*Michelle & family*).
- ◆ **Our Parish.** Parishioners community groups involvement.
- ◆ **Those in Need:** Robert P. Nina Colson. Mark H. Melanie. Warren G. Wayne. Vi Bussell. Kaye McKenzie. Michael Tomlinson. Josef.
- ◆ **Year's Mind: 31st December—6th January:**
[31/12] Muriel (Migs) Peacock, 1997.
[01/01] Verna Sullivan, 2019.
[02/01] Libby Pearson, 2017. Ross Smith, 2008. Jack Thomas, 2004.
Thomas Rowan, 1992.
[03/01] Evan (Mac) McDonald, 2017. Gwen Hagger, 2017.
Wilfred (Mick) Ramage, 2004.
[04/01] Barbara Turk, 2008. Andrei Filipenko, 1982.

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord.
And may light perpetual shine upon them.

Prayer of the week (*pray daily*)

Almighty God,
you have shed upon us the light of your incarnate Word:
may this light, kindled in our hearts, shine forth in our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

OUR PARISH'S VISION IS

TO STRENGTHEN AND GROW A COMMUNITY OF FAITH IN CHRIST



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