

Thought for December 2023

By Revd. Claire Claxton

What does Christmas mean to you?

If you watch the television adverts or even Christmas films, it is easy to be fooled into thinking that it is all about parties, food, outfits, decorations and presents. We see images of beautifully decorated homes with happy families exchanging gifts – all perfect! Unfortunately, for many of us, that's not possible. The hope and joy that we are 'supposed' to feel at this time of year can seem quite hard to grasp. A friend of mine who is recently bereaved told me she is dreading Christmas and will be glad when it is over.

For me the main theme of Christmas is light, light in the darkness. The final Bible reading at our Carol Service is St. John chapter 1, 'The Word (Jesus) was the source of life, and this life brought light to people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.' It is in the darkest night we see the stars shine most brightly. In the depths of the dark nights the shepherds saw the light of the angels and the Wise Men followed the brightest star. They were guided to a new beginning and a new hope. It may feel counter-cultural in our current world to make our focus the true shining light of Christmas – Jesus the newborn, the infant, the child. I believe it is *because* of the state of the world we must look to Jesus. It is in the coming of Jesus we find a new beginning, a new life, and a renewed hope. Jesus, the brightest light in the darkest night helps us to fix our eyes on the future with an expectant hopefulness that comes with the morning light. Join us at Forest Parish Church as we celebrate the coming of the light into the darkness this Advent and Christmas.

God bless you, *CMClaxton*



St Marguerite De la Foret



December 2023

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Church flowers in December

From Dec 3rd-31st the church is decorated throughout with Christmas trees. Please clear your displays by Jan 5th

Welcoming:

Dec 3: Dorothy

Dec 10: Debbie

Dec 17: Nancy

Dec 24: Brenda

Dec 31. Dorothy



The invisible soldier who is always there on Remembrance Sunday to remind us of the men and boys from the Forest Parish who have given their lives in war.

The church was full of poppy wreaths and petals and the ringing of the muffled bells created a sad reminder of sacrifice.

Have you got a Christmas sweater?

Love them or hate them like Marmite, they do bring laughter and a sense of fun to the occasion. Since we only bring them out once a year it is always a surprise especially to see them on people you would never have thought would wear one.

I don't know if it still happens but on Christmas Day in hospital the surgeons went to all the wards helping to serve the dinners and dressed up in hilarious outfits- turkey suits, chicken hats and sometimes fancy dresses, wigs and make-up.

So get yours out, it is the one day we are all encouraged to look like an idiot, or an elf, and join in the fun.!



If you have a Christmas sweater (the louder the better!) why not wear it for the Crib service on Sunday December 24th!

Advent

A new church year beginning with Advent, "the coming," a time of anticipation and preparing for Christmas and the welcoming of God into the world. How much we prepare and welcome a new baby into our own families and lives and find them such blessing to us.

Mary and Joseph must have rejoiced in spite of the huge difficulties of a birth in an overcrowded different town. I like to think the other women nearby soon rallied round with help and comfort.

This is a good time to think about how Advent season can encourage us in our church life and once again Revd. Claire will be leading lunchtime talks and study in church, on three separate Tuesdays, **December 5th, 12th and 19th at 12.30**. Bring your sandwich or lunch, tea and coffee supplied

Did you know...?

Forest Church has a band of crafty(?) people who keep a little sales area at the back of church. There you will find second hand books, shelves of jams and marmalade, hand made crafts, gifts and cards.

During the Christmas Tree Festival this is the place to look for extra special goodies and little gifts for the tree, bring the children and the grannies to hunt for little presents for the family. They will all be intrigued with the trees decorated by Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, ideas for at home.



December Dates and News

As November slips into December so the church year begins again. Not on Jan 1st but on Dec 3rd, the first Sunday in Advent. Advent, or the coming, is a time of waiting and preparation for the coming of the child Jesus into the world. There are four Sundays in Advent when the altar colours change from green to purple until we come to the Christmas season when they change to white.

It is valuable to mark not just the seasons of nature but those of our own journeys and church life.

Saturday 2nd December, 10.30am preparing the Christingles and decorating for the opening of the Christmas Tree Festival.

Tuesday 5th, 12th and 19th December 12.30

Advent Group in church Bring your sandwich or lunch, tea and coffee supplied.

Wednesday 6th December 20th 2-4pm
Knit & Natter

Wednesday 13th December
Coffee morning 10.30-12.00 in church

Saturday 16th December 10.30am
Carol Singing at Forest Stores

GOODBYE AND THANK YOU!

We are really sorry to say goodbye to a member of our church, Suzie Pentecost. We have greatly appreciated her and our love and prayers and best wishes go with her and David as they return to England.

Welcome to Forest Parish Church Services in December 2023

Sunday 3rd December 11am Christingle and opening of Christmas Tree Festival
Family Service
Reader: tba
Prayers: Nicola Hoyland Birch

Sunday 10th December 11am Parish Communion
Reader: Tim Peet
Isaiah 40 v1-11
2 Peter 3 v8-15a
Prayers: Vivian Rees

Sunday 17th December 11am Parish Communion
Reader: Syd Bowsher
Isaiah 61 v1-4, 8-end
1 Thessalonians 5 v16-24
Prayers: Keith Bienvenu

4.30pm Candlelight Service
9 lessons & carols



Sunday 24th December 11am Christmas Eve
Crib Service for all

9pm Christmas Eve Communion
Reader: Linda Archard.
Isaiah 9 v2-7
Titus 2 v11-14
Prayers: Peter Gallienne

Monday 25th 11am Family Communion
Reader: Nancy Smith
Isaiah 52 v7-10
Hebrews 1 v1-4
Prayers: Nancy Smith

Sunday 31st December 11am Parish Communion
Reader: Debbie Dorey
Isaiah 61 v10-end, 62v1-3
Galations 4 v4-7
Prayers: Peter Gallienne