

A vibrant, festive illustration of a nativity scene. The scene is set within a circular frame, surrounded by a dense field of golden stars of various sizes against a dark background. The central focus is the infant Jesus lying in a manger, with Mary kneeling in prayer to the left and Joseph standing to the right. Several other figures, including the three wise men and shepherds, are depicted in traditional attire. The overall atmosphere is warm and celebratory, with a bright yellow and orange glow emanating from behind the central text.

the
BETHANY
magazine

Christmas 2025

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Bethany Evangelical Church
Regular services and events

Sunday:

10.30am - Family Service, including the Breaking of Bread

Tuesday:

7.30pm - Zoom Prayer Meeting

(For details of how to attend this on-line meeting
please contact Stephen Crago)

Thursday:

10:30am - Ladies' coffee and chat - alternate weeks

Note that not all meetings are held at Bethany
(sometimes the group will have a morning out)

Articles for inclusion in future magazines welcome.

Please contact the Editor (e-mail at: philtedwards@outlook.com)

From the Editor

Merry Christmas everyone!

Yes, Christmas has come around again (already!) and we have a new issue of the Bethany Evangelical Church magazine for you. We hope that you enjoy reading it. As well as details of what will be going on at Bethany around Christmas, we have included a quiz, two poems written by members of the congregation, a message from Phil Harris on the wonder of the true meaning of Christmas – and much more!

Christmas is a time when we can remember that God sent His Son into the world, to bring us light, to give us hope, and to be our teacher, our example and our Saviour.

“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” the Bible tells us (in John 1:4).

Amen!

And so I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed articles for this magazine, and also those who have worked hard on putting this magazine together: John, Helen and Robert, and Steve who helped out with the actual printing of the paper copies. (Electronic, pdf file copies of the magazine are available on request - and on the Bethany website).

And finally, if you've ever wondered about the true origins of the recipes for some of the festive food that we enjoy during this season ... then I suspect that reading this magazine will leave you no wiser.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas.

Phil Edwards and the Bethany Magazine team

The Light Still Shines



As we gather to celebrate the birth of our Saviour this Christmas, we are reminded once again of the powerful truth that *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (John 1:5).

In a world that offers uncertainty, misinformation, tyranny and hate, and is wearied by lies and untruths, the story of Christmas brings with it a fresh wave of hope. It's not a fleeting hope based on the uncontrolled circumstance of world politics or improbable events that may happen by chance. This hope is a living hope anchored in Jesus Christ.

Two thousand years ago, God stepped into human history in the most humble of ways: He sent His Son, a baby born in a manger, wrapped not in royal robes but in love. That same love still reaches out to us today, reminding us that God is not distant. He is Emmanuel, He is God with us, walking beside us through every challenge, every joy, every season and every change in our lives.

This Christmas, let's pause to marvel anew at the wonder of God's grace.

The child in the manger who grew to be the man on the cross - and through His death and resurrection He gave us the greatest gift of all: eternal life and peace with God. What a reason to hope, what a reason to rejoice!

As we gather with family, friends, and our church community, may we carry the light of Christ into our homes, workplaces, and neighbourhoods. Let our words and actions reflect the one we serve. Let the hope and joy of salvation, provide strength, encouragement, and a focus beyond worldly circumstances.

May this season renew our faith, strengthen our hope, and fill our heart with the peace that only Jesus can give.

Have a blessed and joy-filled Christmas.

The Saviour has come, and His light still shines!

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14, ESV)

Phil Harris

Bible Quiz

Here's a Christmas themed quiz for you. See how many you can get right. (The answers are on page 19)

1. In which gospel do the shepherds hear the news of Christ's birth?
 - a. Matthew,
 - b. Mark,
 - c. Luke,
 - d. John.

2. Which Roman Emperor first decreed that Christmas would be celebrated on 25th December?
 - a. Julius Caesar,
 - b. Vespasian,
 - c. Constantine.

3. In Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Be shelters two children in his robes. What are their names?
 - a. Justice & Mercy,
 - b. Ignorance & Want,
 - c. Hunger & Poverty.

4. In Isaiah 9 what comes next after "He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God..."
 - a. Everlasting Father,
 - b. Prince of Peace,
 - c. King of Kings.

5. Which country since 1947 has supplied the Trafalgar Square Tree?
 - a. Norway,
 - b. Denmark,
 - c. Sweden.

6. Who prophesied to “Bethlehem Ephrathah ...out of you will come for me one who will rule over Israel”?
- Zechariah,
 - Micah,
 - Malachi.
7. The Carol “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” is based on a traditional song from which country?
- Poland,
 - Germany,
 - France.
8. What was special about Christmas in 1647?
- It was white,
 - It was abolished,
 - There was an eclipse.
9. Where did the legend of Father Christmas originate?
- Germany,
 - Turkey,
 - USA.
10. Who is the only person recorded in Matthew’s gospel to receive an angelic visitor before Christ’s birth?
- Mary,
 - Elizabeth.
 - Joseph.

Sharon Bollen

My Dream

I long to live a life of love
In a sad and war-torn world,
My emblem would be a turtle dove
With flags of peace unfurled.

I would save the birds and bees,
All other creatures, too,
All creeds and races across our earth,
And of course, there's me and you!

I long to live in a world of plenty
Where instead of taking, we give.
This has been my lifelong dream
For as long as we hope to live.

Although my Lord's been kind to me,
And hard to me it seems,
It cannot be impossible
To grant me all my dreams.

I pray that it is not too late,
Though I'm still young at eighty-eight!

Alan Brett 21/08/2025



A Tale of Two Slippers

With the years passing by rapidly, I decided to buy some sensible slippers, as the petite ones were now making life difficult. I saw some nice ones with Velcro closings, so I bought them – and they were very comfortable.

One evening, whilst comfortably settled on the couch watching television (my favourite *Strictly Come Dancing*) an interval came up and I decided it was time to have a cup of tea. So, I jumped up (well, that was an exaggeration – I actually staggered up) – and suddenly fell flat on the ground.

Startled, I lay there thinking, “What on earth am I doing here? Is this the end? Or is there something worse to come?”

I then looked down to my feet – only to discover that a piece of Velcro from one slipper had stuck to the other one!

Relieved, I managed to pull them apart – but then came the problem of how to get up? I managed to raise myself up after a time (it was very unladylike), but by then the tea was somewhat forgotten – and something much stronger than tea came to mind (but that’s another story).

Oh, the joys of growing old without much dignity.

Irene Morley
(*Phil Edwards’ aunt*)

Christmas events at Bethany

We LIKE Christmas at Bethany. Please join in with us for our special Christmas events:

Wednesday 17th December. Meeting at 6:15pm for a 6.30 start from Bethany: **carol singing around the town.** Hot drinks and mince pies afterwards in the side hall.

Sunday 21st December at 10.30am: Christmas family service – morning worship with a Christmas theme. This service will include the Breaking of Bread (Holy Communion). There will be refreshments afterwards.

Sunday 21st December at 6.30pm: Candle-lit carol service. The Christmas story told using well-known carols and readings. There will be refreshments (including mince pies) afterwards.

CHRISTMAS DAY at 10am: Christmas Day Celebrations. Come and join with us to celebrate the real reason for Christmas Day. Led by Steve Crago.

(The service will last about 45 minutes).



Two Cycling Holidays

I wished I had discovered and taken part in organised cycle rides earlier. Making up for lost time I attempted two this year.

The first one was five days cycling starting in Norwich, Norfolk. I nearly cancelled this one in early May, but sunshine, longer days and prayer did the trick. We stopped at one town where outdoor scenes for Dad's Army were filmed. The hotel there had serious issues with the plumbing. The churches were huge; I guess at one time it was a wealthy area. Norfolk wasn't flat but I did enjoy it even though some of it was challenging. I try to avoid at all costs gravel and farm tracks, so I will set my sights lower next time! Fifty miles for two days was a bit tough, but the bike was better than mine at home, so now I want a new bike!



The second one was from Vienna to Budapest. This route was flat, but that does mean that you are cycling all the time. The electric bike was the right size for me but so heavy I could hardly lift it up the kerb let alone carry it upstairs in the railway station. We went through Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. En route we had glimpses of the River Danube and its tributaries. We rode alongside fields of black sunflowers and forests. The paths were funded by the EU, and most were really good.

Continued on page 12

Two Cycling Holidays *(continued)*

Some paths were high because of flooding. It was a struggle to find a cafe so when we did, we stopped!

The most horrendous stretch was a very long bridge; the narrow cycle lane was next to a busy road and miles below us was a river. The towns were really interesting. The architecture was amazing, also the old town walls and buildings.

In Bratislava we went on a guided walk around the city. Hotels were good but very difficult to find. We were given an App and a map for the route. For the evening meals we went out which gave us a good variety with plenty of meat or fish. Breakfast was fun, there were so many different things to choose from including cake. In one place we enjoyed the thermal baths. There was not much wildlife about, but we did see a water rat and deer.



Budapest

On our last cycling day crossing the river by boat was an experience especially one where the floorboards were rotten. We finished at Budapest, saw the line of shoes on the east bank of the Danube River placed there as a memorial to honour thousands of people (many of them Jews) shot there by militia during the Second World War. I got the distinct impression of a guilty conscience here regarding the Jews being killed and deported.



Budapest was an interesting city which I would like to go back to.

All in all, we cycled about 175 miles, and fortunately for us it was dry and warm!

Lois Cooper

Mystifying Trinity



Thou art one, and thou art three:
Coalescing unity;
Three in one profundity;
Mystifying mystery.

I, by faith, believe in thee,
Three in one, and one in three;
Though beyond my mind to 'see,'
I truly, believe in Thee.

Thou, the Word that madest me,
God the Godhead, mystery;
Three in one, the Trinity:
Tantalising unity.

Incarnate Lord in wee baby,
Came to die on Calvary:
Died for sinners, died for me,
Propitiatory mystery.

Holy Spirit, Holy thee,
Came thou Counsellor to me;
Came thou Lord to comfort me,
Holy, holy one in three.

Jesus, God's humanity;
Holy Spirit Counsellor, three:
Mystifying unity—
Forgive my incredulity.

Two prime numbers mystery;
Indivisibility.
Thou who *died* yet *rose* in three!
Died for whom? *You died for me!*

Made *man* one and made *man* three:
Body-mind-and-spirit, we;
Made us image Lord of thee:*
Fascinating trinity..
Lord you make most wonderf'ly!

Howard Hawes, December 28, 2019

* God made man in His own image. Gen. 1:27

Cake in Middle Earth

Author's note: I apologise to readers who aren't familiar with J.R.R.Tolkien's "Middle Earth". If you haven't read Lord of the Rings or even seen the films, some of the places and ideas mentioned won't be recognisable. As far as food goes, though, I could mention that Hobbits appreciate good food in good quantity, and dwarves also like food but will eat anything.

There was a pleasant air of festive anticipation in the upstairs room we had hired in the Prancing Pony. I don't like to boast, but I, Brrokk Barrowbane, am well known in Bree as a Master Dwarf Cook, and my friends had persuaded me to make a range of interesting sweet pastries to enliven the midwinter celebrations. My kinsman Calvi had had a major part in the organisation. Ottar was also present. Of course Hamble was present since food was involved, as well as several other young hobbits. Nob, Barliman's assistant in the Pony, was among them.

I had ranged several delicious-looking examples on a trestle table set up in our exhibition room. There were puzzled looks as well as expressions of anticipation, because I had taken care to research and produce little-known examples of the bakers' art.

"Let us begin with this one", I said.

"Chocolate!", interrupted a hobbit-voice from the back.

"Yes", I agreed, "with cream filling! Now, the basic cake mixture is an ancient one. It was originally used aboard the ships of the Numenoreans on their voyages to Middle Earth, for it can easily be baked in large flat trays in great quantity to feed an entire ship's crew. The basic cake would therefore be in flat slices and was considered a welcome change from ship's biscuit on high days. But for the captain

and his officers a better version was naturally devised. Here I have rolled the flat cake with chocolate cream filling, into the shape of a winter log.”

“Enough history; cut slices!”, interrupted Hamble.

“But what’s it called?”, asked Calvi.

“It doesn’t have an actual name...”, I began, but Ottar came to my rescue; “Clearly we must call it ‘The Captain’s Log’”.

“Very well...”. I left the cutting of the Log to some hobbits and moved on. “Now here is an example of an ancient dwarvish recipe, originating from the halls of Nogrod. It is a pudding, containing every available kind of winter dried fruit and nuts as well as fats and spices. Its round shape is formed by being boiled in a sack; a typical ancient dwarvish cooking method.”

“Ah, traditional dwarvish cooking!”, sighed Calvi. “I remember in my youth; we had sugar-coated mice at the midwinter celebrations. You haven’t done those today?”

“But the pudding is burnt!”, interrupted Nob.

“No, the dark colour results from the ingredients and the cooking method”, I replied. “You will find it pleasant to the taste, if a little heavy and sticky.”

There were no immediate takers for the pudding since Captain’s Log was still being distributed, so I moved along the table.

Continued on page 18

Cake in Middle Earth (*continued*)

“Now here is something rather more distant from my own traditions”, I said. “In fact, it is of elvish origin. This spiced fruit bread is dusted with sugar on top and baked with almond paste in the centre. It is from a recipe I obtained during a visit to Rivendell. The elves like to keep such lore secret, but I copied it from an ancient book in Elrond’s library when no-one was watching.”

“Ah, it is Stolen?”, observed Calvi with a wink.

“You could say that”, I allowed.

Then I heard hobbit voices from a corner table, where a hobbit lad and lass had carried away the pudding:

“...only boiled. Let’s see what it’s like when it’s really burned!” To my surprise I saw that they had added a small leafy twig and were trying to set fire to it with a tinder box.

“Wait...”, I began. But: ‘click – FOOM’. Blue flames shot up and the hobbits recoiled, overturning their chairs. They had not realised how much brandy I had used in the mixture! Well, let that be a lesson to them not to play with their food. I turned back to the last item on the table.

I didn’t have time to explain that the small pastries originated from Dale and contained a spiced fruit preserve. All the talk of ingredients and recipes had made Calvi hungry. He grabbed one and, thinking it was just a cake or biscuit, bit into it. Fragments of sticky fruit and pastry scattered and he was left frantically trying to brush them out of his beard. Oh the ignominy for a dwarf!

Ottar was beside himself with glee at Calvi's discomfiture. In the general laughter I still couldn't explain the recipe, but it was now fairly clear to everyone.

"Bah!", exclaimed Calvi, "I must learn to beware of your trick recipes. I see this one now. The cake is a pie!"

Robert Wills

Answers to the Bible Quiz:

1. *c) Luke Chapter 2.*
2. *c) Constantine, after 313 AD.*
3. *b) Ignorance & Want.*
4. *a) Everlasting Father.*
5. *a) Norway, as a thank you for Britain's aid during the Second World War.*
6. *b) Micah (Micah 5:2).*
7. *a) Poland.*
8. *b) It was abolished by Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth and continued to be banned until 1660.*
There have been Christmas Day eclipses, the last two were in 2000 and 1954. The next is in 2038.
9. *a) Turkey. The first Saint Nicholas, was Bishop of Myra who used to slip anonymously into poor people's homes and leave gifts in their shoes and stockings.*
10. *c) Joseph in a dream in Matthew 1 verse 20.*

(All answers correct at the time of going to press).

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and
have it to the full."

(John 10:10)



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