



# Link Up!

**‘Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.’  
Isaiah 7 v 14**

## Looking forward to January

Don't forget that we will not be holding a morning service on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> January

So, our New Year services start on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January, when our good friend Stephen Ashby will be leading our service including communion. He will be starting our series in Luke's gospel from chapter 2: 22 – 40

On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January Andrew Williams will be continuing the series from chapter 2: 41 – 52

Then on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January another friend of Longfleet, Martin Poole will be leading and preaching from Luke 3: 1 – 23

On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January we will once again be worshipping with our friends from Parkstone Baptist Church at their church on Ashley Road in Parkstone. Anyone needing a lift to get there should talk to Janet Matterface about that. Their service starts at 10.30am

## Christmas Traditions

For the last couple of weeks the lines of a hymn I learnt as a child have been somewhat circling around my head. Just the one line though!

“I see the sights that dazzle,  
The tempting sounds I hear”

It seems to sum up some aspects of the run up to Christmas. And it's had me wondering about the “development” of all the traditions.

An orange in a sock... I think it started simply... and presents to loved ones, stockings hung in expectation, Santa and his reindeer and Christmas movies (including the annual debate at work as to whether ‘Die Hard’ is really a Christmas movie!) Here come the shining trees, the tinsel, those dazzling lights... and now the whole street has lights in the front garden as neighbours outdo each other with the “fun of the season”. Oh... now Elf on the Shelf... when he's not spying on children to report them for bad behaviour to Santa, he's progressing to causing acts of hilarious mischief to show on social media. Christmas parties, “festive” food and drink, Christmas jumper day, Christmas themed clothes, Christmas cards (ouch the postage!), choirs everywhere, the salvation army band, forecasters ruminating on the prospect of snow, Christmas songs in the supermarkets and boxes of sweets piled up at the doors. Children in nativity, present wrapping to be done, advent calendars of all kinds, and the big shop for the big day....

Many of these things are good. Are beautiful even, in their way. But wow do we get busy, tired, distracted... and simply overwhelmed by it all. And in many, many ways... it feels like it's all a big distraction; wasn't Christmas supposed to mean more than this?

Going back to that song, it took me a few days to recall which hymn those words are from.

If you don't already know, it's the classic

‘Oh Jesus I have promised’

#### The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

This annual event usually held at the end of January takes place this year from 18<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> January.

We would encourage you to support the following events: -

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January we will be holding a combined service with our friends from St George's Anglican Church in Oakdale and St Mary's RC Church in Wimborne Road which starts at 4pm. The service has been planned by representatives from the three churches adapting material from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and has a theme of Justice.

Then on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January, Churches Together in Poole have organised an event at St Edward's School in Dale Valley Road at 7pm. This event will have a keynote speaker, David Wells, and also other contributions from local Christian Organisations such as International Care Network, Poole Foodbank and others. There will be an opportunity to learn about their work, the challenges they face and then to pray with other Christians from churches in Poole.

Written by John Ernest Bode and he lived 1816-1874 apparently (yes I decided to look it up!) So I guess the dazzle and temptations of the world and the devil are not unique to our generation in any way.

In fact, it feels like the enemy re-uses his tactics over the years... cunning, he knows this is a sacred time, where we might start to ponder and in true awe, worship the Almighty God, who for our sakes, became poor. Became human. Gave himself to us as a helpless baby. He came - both the gift of Christmas but also the Sacrifice that bears away the sins of the whole world.

So the devil is prowling and trying to distract us saying "eat, drink and tire yourselves out in pursuit of a 'Perfect' Christmas" and to those who can't afford to join in he entreats "it's hopeless"...

But that DARKNESS and DESPAIR is HIS true reality, not ours! He is the defeated foe; thanks be to God!

We - along with all humanity - have always, forever, and eternally will be, loved beyond measure. We are certain because HE CAME! Hallelujah and Amen! God with us! Knowing each one of us by name. Having His own unique relationship with us as individuals.... He is Here.

So, as we prepare our hearts for Christmas yes, and also for the days before us that our Lord Jesus will give, the Christ Child, now our glorious resurrected King whispers...

Come away for just a little while... close the door to the world, to the lights, to the tempting sounds... And whisper or sing to Me...

Oh Jesus, I have promised  
To serve thee to the end  
Be thou forever with me  
My Master and my friend!  
I shall not fear the battle  
If Thou art by my side  
Nor wander from the pathway  
If thou wilt be my guide

Have a wonderful Christmas everyone,

*Kim Chaloner*



How did Mary and Joseph get their Groceries delivered?  
On a lidl donkey.