

Silent Visitor

United Reformed Church
Grays



Oh Holy Night

**Christmas 2017
& New Year
2018**

YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME DO YOU?

It started with a rainbow; who would have thought it would come to this?



After Noah and his family came safely out of the ark, God put a rainbow in the sky. God said that He would never again flood the earth in order to destroy the wickedness He saw in the human heart.

As the human race grew, God used prophets to implore people to deny evil and live a righteous life. The prophets told also of a Redeemer of all people. It is in this Advent time, as we await Christmas, we often hear Bible readings prophesying the Redeemer will make an offering of His life and bear the punishment of many.

Now, thousands of years later, we can read in the New Testament of the Bible, God so loved the world that he gave His one and only son. His son was born into a violent, messy, oppressed, mad world; a vulnerable baby thrust into the care of a family forced to take shelter in a stable.

God chose to destroy, but give each of us the choice to believe. Each of us has the choice to believe Jesus took the punishment for our sin as He hung on a wooden cross. Each of us has the choice to acknowledge we are not perfect and sin is a fact which separates us from the love of God. God asks that we choose to love Him and in doing so, invite Him to share our lives. We may feel as vulnerable as the baby Jesus but reconnected to God through Jesus, we experience the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort; we receive God's promise of heaven.

Take a voyage of discovery throughout our 2017 Advent and 2018 New Year. Discover God in our midst. We are called to raise our sights, to break free of our self-imposed boundaries, open our eyes to opportunities and our minds to adventure. Become aware as God dwells in you and you in Him, well trodden paths becoming

an awesome journey of discovery. You may discover a moment where the division between sacred and secular disappears, heaven and earth are one. Visit within yourself a sacred place in which you enter into the time that is beyond time.

From the rainbow at the beginning, to the heart of the New Testament, arriving at Revelation the last book in the Bible. (Rev:3:20) It started with a rainbow, who would have thought it would come to this?

"Look here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door I will come in and we will share a meal as friends."

God is forever faithful, forever at the door; forever ready to give His never ending love to each one of us. It is up to us to choose if we open the door.

The chorus from a 1982 pop song, the title of this Christmas message, we choose at our peril. Find and remember the Christ child in our midst, welcome Him into our lives each day.



A blessed and awesome Christmas to you and your family.

Denise Beckley

Christmas

Christmas is a time of year
That's full of fun and cheer
Sparkling lights on the Christmas tree
Little ones sitting on Santa's knee.



Christmas dinner and family visits
Pulling crackers, hugs & kisses
Exchanging Christmas wishes
And eating lots of delicious dishes.

Shrieking children having fun
Lots of love from everyone
But spend one moment of the day
Remember it hasn't always been this way.

My Grandad told me about
A time when they had nought
A lump of coal and an orange in his stocking
Don't you think that was shocking?



Let us not be forgetting
Whose birth we are celebrating
Jesus is His name
And He loves us all the same.

(Written by a learning disability student of Margaret Datlen's when she worked in Cambridge)

Merry Christmas to All



As in other years some of us have decided to express our good wishes through the pages of the Silent Visitor and will be donating the money saved on cards to our chosen charities.

<p>Ruth and Roger Hunwick wish everyone who reads this a very Happy and Joyful Christmas and a Peaceful and healthy 2018. Our charity is Action Aid</p>	<p>Jean and Tony Olley wish all at Grays URC a very Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year. We will donate to St Luke's Hospice in lieu of cards.</p>
<p>Wishing everyone at the Church a Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year. We shall be donating to UNICEF. Love and Best wishes Pat & Bill Boag</p>	<p>Richard Wade and family send warmest Christmas Greetings to friends at the Church and will donate to Meningitis Now</p>
<p>Christmas Greetings from Gina Nottage Donating to various charities</p>	<p>We wish all a Christmas with Peace and Joy and a Happy New Year. Inger and Alan Collier Donating to the British Red Cross</p>
<p>Bob and Margaret Datlen would like to wish all their Friends at Grays URC a very Happy and Peaceful New Year. Our donations this year will go to the British Heart Foundation.</p>	<p>A Very happy Christmas and peaceful New Year. With Love from Anne French</p>

And A Happy New Year!

<p>Berne and Elaine Barcz send Christmas Greetings and blessings to the Church family in Grays.</p> <p>Donating to Embrace</p>	<p>Maureen and Bryan Overland wish all readers of the Silent Visitor a very Happy Christmas and Peace in the year to come. We shall be donating to support the work of Guide Dogs for the Blind.</p>
<p>Colin & Jill wish all our friends in our Church a very Happy Christmas and will be sending a donation to St Luke's Hospice instead of Christmas Cards.</p>	<p>SEASON'S GREETINGS to all: from Isobel and Clive Beynon. A donation will be made to Parkinson's UK.</p>
<p>We wish all our friends a very Happy, Peaceful and fun filled Christmas.</p> <p>With love Frances and David Our chosen charity is Macmillan Cancer Support</p>	<p>Joyce Fraser sends her love and greetings for Christmas & the New Year to the Church family.</p>
<p>Christmas Greetings from Doreen Thomas. Thank you for all the visits to me and kind thoughts. I miss you all.</p>	<p>George and Janet Semain send their love & best wishes to everyone for a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. Our charities are Crisis & Salvation Army</p>



IS THERE A SANTA CLAUS?



This is a question which was put to "The "New York Sun" in a letter from an eight year old girl called Virginia, who, in September 1897 had been told that if she put a question to "The Sun" she could rely on their answer. And the following was "The Sun's" response:-

"We take pleasure in answering at once this communication. 'Dear Editors, I am eight years old. Some of my friends say there is no Santa Claus. Please tell me the truth.'

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the scepticism of a sceptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be adult's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished. You might get your papa to hire people to watch all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but if they did not see him coming down one what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor adults can see. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

There is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the

supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

What a wonderful piece of journalism! Indeed, if you were to change the question Virginia asked into 'Is there a Jesus?', and then read it again in that context, you might never hear a better homily. Jesus may not come at Christmas wearing a red fur-lined coat and having a long white beard. He may not be driving a sledge pulled by reindeer and calling out, "Ho, Ho, Ho," but let us rest assured, He will be there nevertheless.



Happy Christmas,
George Semain.

Postage Stamps



A reminder from Maureen Overland, that if you get lots of cards in the post this Christmas to remember to cut off the stamps and let her have them for the Leprosy Mission. However, please remember to leave a border around the stamp and not cut too close to the stamp.

There is an envelope on the notice board to put your stamps in or you can give them to Maureen but the main thing is the stamps help Leprosy Mission to raise funds and it only takes a few moments to do!

Many thanks.



SERVICES

- 10.30 am SUNDAY FAMILY SERVICE
- 10.30 am 1st SUNDAY EACH MONTH HOLY COMMUNION
- 6.30 pm 3rd SUNDAY EACH MONTH HOLY COMMUNION
- 10.30 am 3rd SUNDAY EACH MONTH PARADE SERVICE

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