



# THE ROCK



Anglican Parish of  
Cabersham Saint Peter,  
Dunedin, New Zealand

December 2023—Christmas



## A nativity story

By The Vicar

It has taken me days to set up the church Nativity. They aren't new and so the paintwork needed a bit of a touch up. They were originally painted with water colour paints. It's been a joy painting over the chips and scratches, bringing the figures closer to how they might have looked originally. It would be interesting to see what St Francis of Assisi, the originator of the Nativity scene, would think of them. I don't believe the colours or costumes are particularly accurate however the imagery is powerful.

I placed them in a black space (pictured below) because I had no idea how to replicate a stable well. The challenge was to make the scene as life like as possible. All the figures are different sizes and represent different parts of the story. Of course, Jesus and Mary are in the middle, but how

far should Joseph stand over the crib. How close should the animals be? Would Joseph be shielding his baby boy from the gaze of the donkey and the steer? Or is he so engrossed with the sight of this perfect little human he can see nothing else?

The shepherds are a mixed group and range from very big to quite small. One is even bigger than Mary. As I moved the large shepherd closer to Mary, to work with perspective, I realised that the new parents are being surrounded. This new baby had been foretold by angels and he needed to be seen. Some held back, unsure of their role and place in this event. But others just had to witness this wonderful sight. I secretly believe that the shepherd hanging back will be the last to leave and possibly witness more than the ones front and centre.

*(Continued on page 3)*



For unto us a child is born,  
unto us a son is given: and  
the government shall be  
upon his shoulder: and his  
name shall be called  
Wonderful, Counsellor,  
The mighty God, The  
everlasting Father, The  
Prince of Peace.

Thank you  
and Merry  
Christmas



Once again we have navigated a year thanks to the help and support of advertisers and contributors.

Thank you all for your efforts. The Rock will not be published in January, so Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all. We will see you in February. 📺

# Christingles a hit!

By Father John Gravestone

Leading up to Christmas the making of Christingles is a traditional activity which reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world. This year's Diocesan Christingle Service and Christmas Party was a real hit for all who took part.

This intergenerational event started with a Christingle service led by Diocesan Child, Youth and Family Educator Father John Gravestone, Vicar of Saint Peter's Reverend Natalie Milliken and the children in the congregation. The service started with the

lighting of a joint large congregation Christingle, which guided us through the service. We then continued on to the creation of the Christingle with Christmas hymns such as *Not on a snowy night*, *Hark, the herald-angels sing* and *Joy to the World* spread throughout the service. And ended with a blessing of our Christingles from Rev. Natalie;

Father of lights, from whom comes every good and perfect gift: we ask you to bless these Christingles, and may they be to us symbols of your love for all the world. Keep us in the light of Christ, to shine in your world, that all may believe in you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Together we ask that the light we search for may light our way in love, this night, this Christmas and in days to come. Amen

After the service, everybody gathered in the parish hall where Christmas Party food had been

laid out and after a bite to eat the children were led in playing pass the parcel (made up of 10 layers of wrapping paper and two cardboard boxes), rob the nest (with baubles) and bauble and spoon races. Overall a great event for all that came.

A big thank you to all those who helped make the event a success.

### Why do this?

During the weeks leading up to Christmas, many people from around the world make Christingles with their families. Making Christingles is a great way of learning about Jesus' reason for coming to earth in a fun and family-friendly way.

Christingles started in a church in Germany in 1747 when the Priest gave each child an orange and a candle wrapped in a red ribbon. Since then it has moved around the world and has become a big part of Christmas.

A Christingle service is a traditional service leading up to Christmas where we celebrate Jesus Christ as the Light of the World using oranges, sweets, and candles.



This year's Christingle Service in Saint Peter's—the congregation and party games

PHOTO'S: SUPPLIED.



See more photo's on the next page.

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# A nativity story

(Continued from page 1)



**St Francis of Assisi.**

IMAGE: WWW.CATHOLIC.ORG.

St Francis didn't include the angels in the Nativity because he wanted the people of his time to realise the poverty in which Jesus was born. The only ones with wealth were the visiting wise men. The Bible doesn't tell us how many wise men, just that they brought three particular gifts. The wise men possibly didn't travel alone either, but with their servants

and soldiers. The tradition of three wise men is another reminder of the importance of the birth of Jesus Christ.

The wise men have also been a challenge. One wise man is significantly different from the other two, but I believe that each figure has much to tell. The wise man on his knees, has beside him, a crown on a box. Is it his crown or is this the gift of gold? The tall wise man carrying a flask and seems to be a little distracted. He is not looking at Jesus face on. His gift of myrrh was expensive. Maybe the idea of anointing, not a king in a palace, but a baby in a manger made him uneasy. The smallest wise man is dressed as a Moorish knight with the box of frankincense. While a bit clumsy and dated this representation identifies that all men can recognise Jesus Christ as their Lord.

The little grey donkey looks very sad and tired. Its presence brings pathos to the whole scene, especially to those who know the full story of Jesus Christ. However, above all the figures in the Nativity, the Star of Bethlehem shines. It heralded the birth of the Son of God and the Prince of Peace. The star and Joseph's lamp bring light to the scene, but Jesus Christ ultimately brings glorious light to our lives. May the light of Christ be with you and yours. 📧

# More Christingle photo's.



**The Frolicsome Friar**




*"Shopping online keeps me in shape. I get several packages a day, so coming out here to retrieve them keeps me active."*

SOURCE: WWW.HOWTOGEEK.COM..

## Letters

The Rock welcomes letters to the Editor. Letters are subject to selection and, if selected, to editing for length and house style. Letters may be :

Posted to : The Editor of The Rock,  
c/- The Vicarage, 57 Baker Street,  
Caversham,  
Dunedin, N.Z. 9012

Emailed to: [TheRockEditor@stpeterscaversham.org.nz](mailto:TheRockEditor@stpeterscaversham.org.nz)

## Ask The Vicar

For answers to questions doctrinal, spiritual and liturgical. Write to: Ask The Vicar, c/- The Vicarage as above  
Or email: [AskTheVicar@stpeterscaversham.org.nz](mailto:AskTheVicar@stpeterscaversham.org.nz)

## ASK THE VESTRY

Questions about the secular life and fabric of the parish may be:

Posted to : Ask The Vestry, c/- The Vicarage as above  
Emailed to: [AskTheVestry@stpeterscaversham.org.nz](mailto:AskTheVestry@stpeterscaversham.org.nz)



# Nutritious



## Then and Now: of Foods and Feasting

By Alex Chisholm

**W**hile sorting out Christmas recipes and menus and thinking about the variety of different traditions both within our country and internationally, it occurred to me to wonder—what foods were eaten in Nazareth at the time of Jesus birth?

As an observant Jew Jesus would have followed the dietary Laws laid down in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Leviticus, as he conformed his life to the will of God. Under these laws clean animals included cattle, sheep, goats, fish and some fowl. Unclean or forbidden animals included pigs, camels, birds of prey, shellfish, eels and reptiles. Eating grasshoppers or locusts, as John the



“Eating grasshoppers or locusts, as John the Baptist did, was permitted...”

PHOTO: FREE BIBLE IMAGES VIA BREADFORTHEBRIDE.COM.

Baptist did, was permitted but no other insects. Bread was the essential basic food, so much so that in Hebrew “to eat bread” and “to have a meal” is the same thing.

Bread was treated with great respect it was always broken,

never cut and any crumbs of over the size of an olive were expected to be gathered, never simply discarded. The poor ate barley bread, the rich bread made of wheat.

Grains were ground between two millstones, almost always by women and done at home. The grain was mixed with water, fetched twice a day from the well, then fermented dough, kept for this purpose, was kneaded into the dough, which was left to rise. The thin, flat circles of dough were slapped onto the hot stones in the fire or placed in a bread oven if the family had one. Bread was the staple food and it was such a vital part of each meal that the Hebrew word for bread, *lehem*, also referred to food in general. The supreme importance of bread to the



A millstone in Biblical times is actually two circular stones. The lower stone remained stationary. The second stone—called the upper stone—turned on top of the base stone to grind the grain.

IMAGE: THEBIBLEANSWER.ORG.

ancient Israelites is also demonstrated by the fact Biblical Hebrew has at least a dozen words for bread and bread features in numerous Hebrew proverbs. And “Bethlehem” means “House of Bread”.

Any cheese made was from the milk of ewe lambs or goats. Since milk tended to spoil quickly, cheese making was very common. Sweetener used was Honey but only occasionally and usually by the wealthy. Cane sugar was unknown in the Holy Land.

The diet of ordinary people included a great many vegetables with beans and lentils most commonly eaten. Cucumbers were well liked and onions popular. Fish was important and bread and fish was a usual meal, while dried fish was a source of income for the people around the Sea of Galilee.

Fruits included fresh figs and melon, as well as dried pomegranates and dates—dried fruits were a staple item

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# Then and Now: of Foods and Feasting



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Pomegranates, pistachios and dates were amongst Biblical favourites.

in the Middle East. Olives were grown for oil and consumed as part of a meal. Nuts -pine-nuts, walnuts, pistachios and almonds were grown, also persimmon and carob-beans. Figs and grapes were the fruits most

commonly eaten, while dates, pomegranates and other fruits and nuts were eaten more occasionally. Wine was the most popular beverage and sometimes other fermented beverages were produced.

Contrast this with the huge array of fresh, pre-prepared and processed foods available to us when we prepare for Christmas. We even have access to imported foods so if we belong to a different culinary tradition the chances are that we can enjoy at least some of our familiar delicacies. It could be interesting to try a Holy Land meal sometime, but again we would need to get some imported foods and be able to get some partially prepared. Stone ground flour from the likes of Bin Inn -thus dispensing with the two grinding stones could be a positive move.☑



By Alex Chisholm, People's Warden

## CHURCHWARDEN CORNER

**W**hile the Christmas season with its message of Good News is a wonderful time of reflection and celebration in our church services, at Saint Peter's this Christmas we have cause for celebration on the progress of some practical matters of considerable importance.

As most of you will be aware there have been issues with the fabric of the church and the vicarage for several years and there has been considerable work needing to be done. This has now started in the Vestry. The Safe which was falling through the floor has been removed—a sterling effort by our Deacon Joel with support from his family and Dan Milliken—and the first part of the Vestry refurbishment completed. This has involved underfloor reconstruction, part of the floor being repaired, a wall reclad, cupboards / storage upgraded and that is just the start.

Reverend Natalie and Joel have been very successful in obtaining grants for other vital work including roof repairs, some completed already, and refurbishment of the hall kitchen. There has been structural work and upgrading to the healthy home standard in the vicarage. I should like to acknowledge, having seen it at close quarters the amount of hard physical work and resources that Reverend Natalie and Dan have put into the vicarage in order for it to become a main asset in our drive to be viable.

There are plans for major utilization of our assets to generate an income and put the parish on a firm financial footing. All the details of this are in the report that the Vicar has prepared.

As your People's Warden I would like to encourage your participation in the Extraordinary meeting this Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 to ask questions, clarify any issues and hopefully to lend your support to this venture, for our mission, so we are a vital presence in South Dunedin's future.☑

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# Christmas

By Father James Harding

The Christmas story is a very special part of our tradition. I can't remember when I first heard the story of the Nativity, but I would have been a very young child. When I was a child, we didn't go to church on Christmas Day and I knew nothing of that special season of preparation known as Advent. I was, however, familiar from a young age with the story of the birth of Jesus, which I knew mainly through Nativity plays at primary school.

We also went to carol services, which must be where I first became familiar with the idea that the birth of Jesus had been announced beforehand by the prophets of the Old Testament. If we start with the familiar Nativity story and the message of the Nine Lessons and Carols, or even with Handel's Messiah, it can seem as though the authors of the Old Testament had a very clear idea of the sort of king they expected would one day come and rule over Israel. At the time of Jesus, however, this was not really the case. There were many different traditions.

If we take a closer look at the Bible, it may come as a surprise to notice that most of the authors of the New Testament either knew nothing about the birth and infancy of Jesus, or were not very interested in it. Of the four canonical Gospels—leaving aside the various Gospels which are not found in our bibles, some of which do tell intriguing stories about the childhood of Jesus—Mark and John have no story of the birth and infancy of Jesus. Matthew and Luke, on the other hand, do tell the story, but in very different ways. The story of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary, for example, is only found in Luke. So is the story of the shepherds watching their flocks by night. The story of the three wise men, the Magi, is only found in Matthew. So is the story of the slaughter of the Holy Innocents. The two authors may well not have known the stories told by the other.

What Matthew and Luke do have in common is a belief that the birth of Jesus fulfilled prophecies in the scriptures

of Israel. Jesus was born to be the king of Israel, who, at least in Matthew, is portrayed as the very opposite of the cruel, jealous and vindictive Herod. Luke's story of the birth and infancy of Jesus is



saturated in language and imagery drawn not only from what we know as the Old Testament, but from a wide range of other traditions as well. When the angel Gabriel appears to Mary (Luke 1:26-35), the earliest hearers and readers might have remembered another story about an angel appearing to announce the birth of Moses, a story now known only from a text called the *Biblical Antiquities*, by an unknown author referred to as "Pseudo-Philo." Then when Mary sings the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), they would have remembered the song Hannah sang at the shrine of Shiloh in thanksgiving for the birth of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

In the case of Matthew, it is very important that the birth and infancy of Jesus fulfil specific prophecies. The birth of Jesus, according to Matthew, fulfils a prophecy in Isaiah (Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 7:14), as preserved in the Greek translation. When the Magi come to Judaea, asking where the child has been born who will be king of the Jews, Herod is told that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem of Judaea, fulfilling a prophecy in Micah (Matthew 2:1-12; Micah 5:2). When an angel tells Joseph to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt to escape from Herod, this is supposed to fulfil a prophecy in Hosea (Matthew 2:13-15; Hosea 11:1). Herod's cruel slaughter of the male infants of Bethlehem is meant to fulfil a heart-rending prophecy in Jeremiah, of the matriarch Rachel weeping for her dead children (Matthew 2:16-18; Jeremiah 31:15). Finally, when Joseph settles at Nazareth in Galilee, this is supposed to fulfil a prophecy that "[the Messiah] will be called a Nazorean" (Matthew 2:19-23), but this prophecy has never been found, though it echoes both the birth of Samson (Judges 13), and an ancient version of the birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 1), found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

These prophecies had, perhaps, never been associated with one another before. One of them is given in a version different from the original Hebrew, one cannot be identified for certain with a known passage from the Old Testament, and all of them originally meant something quite different from what they meant to Matthew. Yet Matthew wants us to understand that these prophecies are divinely inspired. They look forward to the coming of a king whose reign will expose the vanity and cruelty of worldly power for the sham that it is. .



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## Regular Services

(for variations consult *The Pebble* or our website)  
All services are held in Saint Peter's unless noted otherwise

### SUNDAY:

8am: Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer  
10.30am: Solemn Sung Eucharist  
5pm: 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month: Evensong and Benediction

### FIRST AND THIRD MONDAY OF EACH MONTH:

1pm: Holy Communion at Radius Fulton Home

### FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH:

11am: Holy Communion in the lounge of Frances Hodgkins Retirement Village, Fenton Avenue

### SECOND AND FOURTH TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH:

11am: Holy Communion  
in the chapel of the Home of St Barnabas, Ings Avenue

### WEDNESDAY:

9am: Morning Prayer  
10.30am Bishop's Companionship Programme  
- Studying the Bible, prayer and life in Christ

### THURSDAY:

10am: Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer

## Special Services

Contact The Vicar to arrange baptisms, weddings, house blessings, burials, confessions and other special services.

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## The Organist and the Congregation



(Continued from page 8)

building serves the people who gather. Saint Peter's possesses a resourceful instrument. It can be tempting at times to include some of the bell sounds into a carol or sound out praise with the tuba stop. However, it is often in the quietest moments when the organ draws those present into the worship which few other instruments can.

Whether the organ is too loud or too soft is difficult to resolve. A person's hearing is very much dependent on hearing change as it is on perception. Over the years our ears begin to interpret sounds differently. What was once rich and sonorous now becomes rather strident. It is, in some ways, like a breeze. When you are young a breeze is refreshing. One notes the passing of the years when that same breeze becomes a draft! I spent a year or two assisting a large Assembly of God congregation develop a music ministry. For those who find organs sometimes 'too loud', nothing compares to the sheer decibels of a praise band at full throttle.

The church organist may operate in the role of servant but the church is a place for people. Life as a community is seldom neat and tidy. It matters little that some people don't always sing in the dead centre of the note (or even sing the same verse as those around them). What matters is the participation where good is done and that good will always far outweighs a few bad notes. A Methodist friend once noted of Anglican 'singing' that we were the best mime artists ever: the congregation's lips moved but no sound came out! That would not be the case with hearty Methodist hymn singing. Better that we sing than mime!

We enjoy singing hymns and songs at Saint Peter's. Our Evensong canticles are sung, as parishes have for many years, to a system of 'pointing' which few really understand but it all works 'once you get the hang of it'. For the church organist it isn't about virtuoso contributions to the music. Rather, it is helping those present at worship 'get the hang of it'.

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FUNERAL SERVICES

## For your diary

**Tuesday, 9 January** : Vestry meeting.

**Sunday, 25 February** : Deadline for the February edition of *The Rock*.

# The Organist and the Congregation

**Rock** music



By David Hoskins, Director of Music

A long time ago, 1914 in fact, in a world that no longer really exists, the great English organist and writer on all things musical, Dr Harvey Grace,

wondered how one finds a balance between the congregation's desire to sing in church and their love of listening to the choir and organist. It has often been an awkward environment but some thoughts are presented here from many decades 'on the battlefield'.

Styles and tastes change over time—large parish choirs singing rather florid Victorian and Edwardian

settings of services have, by and large, gone from the weekly experience of those attending worship. Worship, as an expression of one's faith, may be private or corporate but it is a vitally important component of the life of a congregation. The church organist is a servant, the organ provides them with a tool of their craft. But much goes into the selection of music, the keys in which that

music is written, the poetry of the words and the "singability" of the tunes. Yet it is the 'whole package' which the organist strives to achieve week by week.



BY JAY SIDEBOTHAN, EPISCOPAL CHURCH MEMES.

There is a place for instrumental music but this is only guides people to a closer relationship with God. The chorale preludes of J.S. Bach set the mood and tone of the hymn tune which followed. The old Benedictine practice of *Lectio Divina* comes to mind

in this regard. The role of music in church can be conducive to reflection. If someone comments the organ was played in a masterly fashion, then, perhaps the organist has failed to provide that sense of reflection.

The church building does not serve the organ. The

(Continued on page 7)



Justin Welby  
The Archbishop of Canterbury

## Hosting the annual House of Lords debate: 'Love Matters' on 8 December, 2023.



“For as long as human beings have existed, we've formed families and households. Families were the birthplace of society itself, and states followed, they are a later creation. Families are the source of flourishing for so many. At their best they are the place of belonging and security, of growth, care, healing, and reconciliation, of training in being a citizen.”



More online :

Read the complete text at:



<https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/archbishop-justin-hosts-annual-house-lords-debate-love-matters>