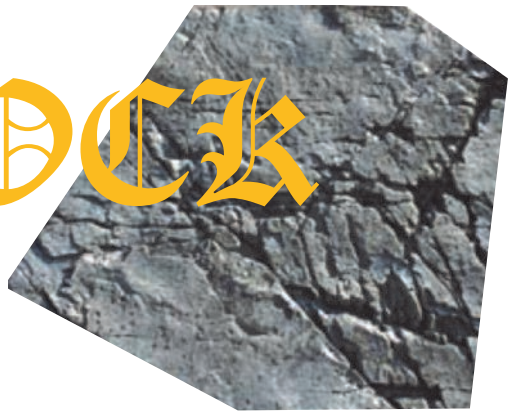
Anglican Parish of
Caversham Saint Peter,
Dunedin, New Zealand

THE ROCK



December 2025—Christmas

After listening to the king, they went their way. And behold, the star they had seen in the east went on before them, until it came to rest over the place where the Child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great gladness.

MATTHEW 2: 9-10

Merry Christmas and thank you

By The Editor

The Rock wishes you all a very Merry and Blessed Christmas.

To our advertisers and contributors, a special thankyou.

We will follow recent practice and not publish in January. Next issue will be in February 2026. The deadline for copy is Friday, 20 February.

Best wishes and a Happy New Year.

Christmas Traditions: A Reflection of Faith and Family

By The Reverend Joel Stutter, Priest in charge

Christmas is a season rich with traditions—those cherished practices which shape how we celebrate and experience this holy time. Yet, how often do we pause to consider their significance? Traditions are more than habits; they are expressions of faith, family and love.

In the life of the Church, traditions help us celebrate as the family of Christ. Advent brings a different rhythm to worship, marked by anticipation and hope. Many churches display a nativity scene in a prominent place, reminding us of the humble birth of our Saviour. Some even include a Jesse Tree, tracing the story of God's promises through Scripture. These practices root us in the story of salvation and connect us to generations of believers.

"Some even include a Jesse Tree...".

Alongside these, we have our home traditions—the ways our families mark Christmas. Years ago, during a

(Continued on page 2)

Christmas Traditions

(Continued from page 1)

theological college class, we shared childhood and adult traditions in small groups. While common threads like gift-giving and abundant food emerged, the differences were striking. These conversations revealed that traditions, though varied, often centre on love and care for those around us. They help define our Christmas experience.

"present-opening moved online...".
PHOTO.: WWW.HOPPIER.COM.

Reflecting on my own journey, I see how traditions evolve. Growing up in an English family, even after moving to New Zealand, our Christmas mirrored the northern hemisphere: spray-on snow stencils on windows, paper snowflakes on a real tree and wintery foods like steamed puddings. Later, marriage brought new customs—ham and cheese croissants for breakfast, presents around an artificial tree (thanks to allergies) and a barbecue lunch. Our church life blended too: midnight Mass one year, Christmas Day Mass the next.

As the years passed and children left home, some traditions adapted. Breakfast stayed the same, but present-opening moved online via Zoom. Living in Dunedin, I now attend both midnight and Christmas Day services. Food remains central—my mother recalled her childhood Christmases filled with so much food that extra help was hired for the kitchen!

This year brings another change: we're dining out for Christmas lunch instead of preparing the usual turkey and trimmings. It feels like a big shift and I wonder how it will shape our celebration. Yet, some traditions endure—croissants with ham, cheese and mustard for breakfast remain non-negotiable.

Traditions may change, but their heart remains the same: celebrating Christ's birth with love, gratitude and joy. As we embrace both old and new customs, may we remember that every tradition points us back to the greatest gift—Jesus Christ.

SOURCE: WWW.HOWTOGEEK.COM..

Christmas Services

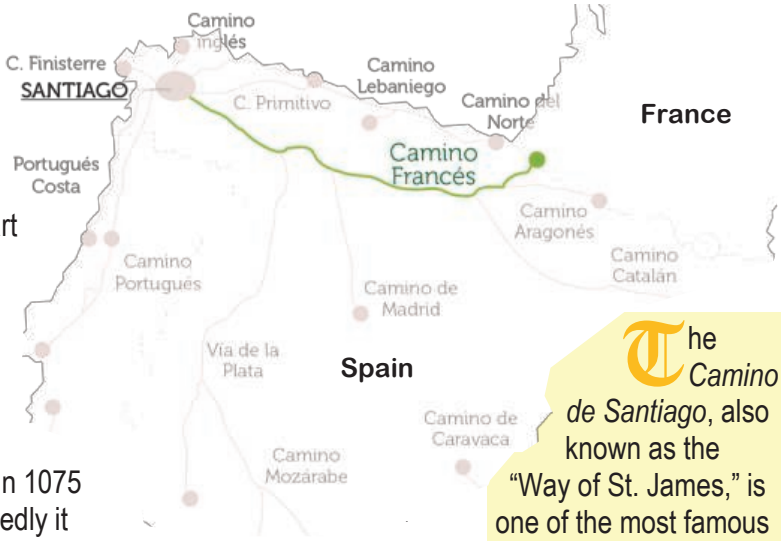
Advent 4—Sunday, 21 December
10.30am: Service of Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve—24 December
9pm: Christmas Eve Mass—a shared Service with St Martha's

Christmas Day—25 December
9am: Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer

Camino Pilgrim

By Diane Bellamy



In September this year I walked a small part of the *Camino Francés*, one of the famed Camino Walks; all up over 70km in Northern Spain ending, as all Camino Walks do, in the beautiful city of Santiago de Compostela (translation can be St James of the Stars/ a recognised burial ground), specifically at the imposing Cathedral commenced in 1075 and added to over the 15th to 18th centuries. Reputedly it is where part of the body of St James (Iago) is buried. For the purposes of this reflection, I will list the highlights and 'life learnings ':

- As a widow travelling solo for 30 days in Europe, I underestimated how independent I actually am as a person. This was clear from my seemingly easy ability to communicate well with strangers; laugh, share dinners and some life stories along The *Camino Francés*. And I was at most peace walking alone and praying often while I walked
- The "journey is much more than the distance covered" – I rebelled and elected not to earn my Pilgrim Certificate, which is granted if you walk at least the final 100 km of the Walk. I felt at peace noting that I had 'chased certificates most of my life' academically, professionally and as part of my 'proving myself' personality. It was refreshing to have my luggage (one bag) ready for pick up by 8am each morning; take my time over breakfast, write in my journal and, for the last six days, join the group at morning tea/lunch via taxi! Conclusion—it is OK to be true to yourself and 'different'
- Saying decades of the Rosary, learned in my Catholic upbringing, while I walked was soothing. Marking the words in time to my mountain poles was a lovely grounding meditative rhythm. This being present and noticing the surroundings brought me a profound inner peace. For me as a relatively unfit 60-year-old, I walked enough and had NIL blisters or walking problems!
- In Samos I met a delightful Catholic monk, Father Lorenzo, who led me on a two-hour personal tour of the 12th century beautiful monastery. Despite not speaking each other's language, we managed with gestures, guesses and laughter to understand each other well enough. At the end he insisted I take a personal rosary he had with him rather than direct me to the gift shop
- My grief mission of using a large chunk of my deceased father's estate to travel was completed with my decision to travel beyond the beautiful end point of the Cathedral city to Fisterra, then beyond that literal 'end of the world' (in ancient times), on to Muxia to a simple church. I scattered some of my beloved husband's ashes towards the

(Continued on page 4)

The *Camino de Santiago*, also known as the "Way of St. James," is one of the most famous pilgrimages in Christianity. Since the Middle Ages pilgrims have travelled the network of routes throughout western Europe leading to the purported tomb of St. James the Greater in Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain.

One of the routes ("walks") is the *Camino Francés* ("the French Way"), which winds from the French Pyrenees across northern Spain to Santiago de Compostela.

A pilgrim's pictures. Left to right: Church of Santa María la Real in Cebreiro, "the oldest church in Europe"; the Monastery of San Xulián de Samos; the Cathedral Santiago de Compostela.

PHOTO'S: SUPPLIED.

Christmassy collection

CHURCHWARDEN CORNER

By Alex Chisholm, Bishop's Warden and Raylene Ralston, People's Warden

THE RECIPE : RAYLENE'S SHORTBREAD

What you need

- 7 oz butter
- 4 oz icing sugar
- 10 oz flour

Method

- Cream butter & icing sugar until white
- Add flour, gently mix in well
- Spread icing sugar onto a board
- Form mixture into a log
- Cut into slices, place on oven tray
- Make 2 fork marks in each slice
- Bake at 300 degrees C (not fan bake) for about 20-25minutes
- Watch carefully so it doesn't brown
- Enjoy

THE POEM : *BORN IN A STABLE*

Born in a stable a long way away
A little tiny baby in a bed of hay

His mother was Mary
And the angels do sing
Glory to God for the Birth of a King

Three Kings came to see Him
From lands far away
They followed the Star
To Praise Him on this day

The Baby's name is Jesus
He is the Son of God
He came to teach us how to live
Our Saviour and our Lord.

BY AN ANONYMOUS POET.

Camino Pilgrim

(Continued from page 3)

Atlantic Ocean—so wild is that coast it is known as *Costa de la Morte*, the Coast of Death due to the many shipwrecks there over the ages. (My husband was an author of two published books on shipwrecks, so appropriate). I ended my European trip by scattering the remaining small container of ashes in the Danube River on a night cruise in Budapest

- I felt so privileged to be able to pray and light candles in small and large churches in Spain and Prague (visited the famed *Infant Jesus of Prague* in Our Lady of Victories Church) and Budapest. And a special memory is going to the famed mass in the Cathedral at Santiago de Compostela. As one of the last to receive the Eucharist in the crowded service, I was front and centre to witness and video the giant thurible, the Botifumeiro incense urn swinging across the cathedral attended by eight purple velvet-robed attendants. This is pure luck (and God favouring me?) as there is no guarantee any pilgrim will witness this expensive ritual. As real estate agents say: Location; location; location!

On my return, I find myself taking time to pray every day and feel overall more at peace. I am taking more rest, balancing work and personal life. My sense of awe and appreciation have been deepened. So no huge dramatic epiphanies—just some 'time out' and pressing pause in my ordinary life. Perhaps that is more than enough? I think so and I'd like to think my father and husband were with me and approved of this significant pilgrimage and travel. Bien Camino!

Before Christmas

By Father James Harding

Christmas means many things to many people. It remains an important time of the year even for those who no longer have a faith. Many people in our society may never have had a faith to start with, yet they are aware of Christmas and it may well be important to them for reasons of their own.

For many people, Christmas is a time of joy and celebration, a time to spend time with family or friends, to eat well and share gifts. For others, it is a time of pain and loneliness, of bitter memories and fear for the present and the future. All of these emotions are there in the stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus, but I am getting ahead of myself.

How did the earliest followers of Jesus, and Christian communities which arose shortly after His death and resurrection, know who Jesus really was?

A time of joy and celebration or a time of pain and loneliness.

The answer is that they searched the Scriptures, which in those days meant hearing the Law and the Prophets read in the synagogue—remember there were no churches then, and no New Testament—and for the more learned among them it meant studying those scriptures, and others such as the Psalms, in order to understand the will of God.

We honour this, in a way, when we pay attention to the readings from the Old Testament in Church, whether at the Eucharist or during a service of Nine Lessons and Carols, and perhaps even when we listen to Handel's Messiah, which is almost entirely woven from passages in the Old Testament, particularly the prophecies of Isaiah.

Each of the four "canonical" Gospels traces the truth about Jesus back to what we now call the Old Testament. Only two of these Gospels, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, tell the story of the birth and infancy of Jesus, and their stories are quite different from each other. Traditional nativity plays and crib scenes are based on a mixture of these two stories. What they do have in common is they tell the story of Jesus based on the Old Testament.

The Gospel of Mark alone has no story at all of the birth of Jesus. His story begins instead with the appearance of John the Baptist in the wilderness, when Jesus was already grown up. Jesus comes from Nazareth in Galilee to be baptised by John (Mark 1:9), but we know nothing of his earlier life. We do hear about His family later on (Mark 3:19–35), but in a quite different way from the other Gospels. Instead, Mark introduces His Gospel with a prophecy from the Old Testament which combines Isaiah 40:3 with Malachi 3:1, which the coming of Jesus is supposed to fulfil.

The Gospel of Matthew, instead, tells a familiar story of the birth and infancy of Jesus. Each significant moment in the story is understood to be the fulfilment of some passage from the Old Testament, sometimes with an interpretation which is different from the original meaning of the scripture Matthew quotes. The birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary fulfils words from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–25), which originally meant something quite different. Jesus is born in Bethlehem, not Nazareth, because He is descended from King David and must be born in the city from which David came, namely Bethlehem, a few short miles from Jerusalem (Micah 5:2–5; Matthew 2:1–12). Joseph takes Mary and Jesus secretly to Egypt to escape from King Herod, from where He will return after the king's death, fulfilling a passage in Hosea which originally referred to the Exodus of the people Israel from Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13–15). The murder of young children on Herod's orders, in an attempt to have the messiah killed, provokes maternal grief and trauma which the Gospel understands as a fulfilment of a passage in Jeremiah that originally predicted the return of the Jewish people from Exile (Jeremiah 31:15–16; Matthew 2:16–18). And when the Holy Family escapes from the rule of Herod's son by moving to Nazareth, that too fulfils a prophecy from the Old Testament, but one no-one has yet managed to identify (Matthew 2:19–23).

The story in the Gospel of Luke is quite different, but is nonetheless steeped in the scriptures. The annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and the birth of Jesus to Mary comes from the Archangel Gabriel, who appears in the book of Daniel. The stories of the birth of John and Jesus remind us of similar stories in the Old Testament, such as the birth of Samson to the wife of

(Continued on page 7)

Nutritious

Nuts about Christmas

By Alex Chisholm

Nuts, especially fresh and unsalted, are a healthy dietary addition for those who enjoy them and can eat them. High quality nuts are grown in New Zealand and the difference in flavour, between imported and locally grown nuts, is often quite remarkable. Nuts have a long history and tradition, especially in some European countries, around Christmas.

Nuts fitted in well with the feasting with secular, pagan, or Yule festivities but they have sometimes been given a religious significance too. The three parts of a nut—a "trinity" of shell, skin and kernel—symbolised good luck in Italy. Various historical traditions around Christmas included nuts as this extract recounts:-

> Among the various games and sports of an olden Christmas were card-playing, chess and draughts; jack-puddings in the hall; fiddlers and musicians, who were regaled with a black-jack of beer and a Christmas pie; also, singing the wassail, scrambling for nuts, cakes and apples; dancing round standards decorated with evergreens in the streets; the famous old hobby-horse; hunting owls and squirrels; the fool plough; hot cockles and the game of hoodman-blind.
>
> NOTES & QUERIES, 1861

A far cry from nuts included in a picnic on a local beach, or as part of a family meal table for Christmas Day. Don't forget though regardless of the season or occasion nuts can add fibre and just the best sorts of fatty acids to your diet. Fresh local produce also supports the New Zealand Nut Growers such as Uncle Joe's in the Nelson region.

I wish you a Blessed, Happy and Healthy Christmas.

On 4 December, at a special morning tea at St Luke's Church in Oamaru ,Archdeacon The Venerable Bernard Wilkinson celebrated the 60th anniversary of his ordination. Archdeacon Wilkinson has a long history of associations with Saint Peter's and we congratulate him on yet another milestone in a remarkable ministry. He is pictured above in January 2012 at the farewell function held when his time as "temporary interim Priest" for the duration of our interregnum concluded.

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: 1st 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 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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For your diary

Sunday, 21 December : Service of Lessons and Carols at 10.30am

Wednesday, 24 December : Christmas Eve Mass at 9pm.
A shared Service with St Martha's

Thursday, 25 December : Christmas Day
Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer at 9am.

Tuesday, 10 February : Vestry meeting at 2.30pm

Friday, 20 February : Deadline for the February Rock

No meeting or publication in January.

Christmas Fragments

Rock music

(Continued from page 8)

What can I give him
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him
give my heart.

Says it all, really.

Before Christmas

(Continued from page 5)

Manoah (Judges 13) and the song Mary sings in Luke 1:46–55, which we call the Magnificat (sung at Evensong) reminds us of the song of praise Hannah sang after the birth of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 2:1–10). The song Zechariah sings in Luke 1:67–79), which we call the Benedictus (sung at Matins), reminds us of ancient scriptural promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3) and David (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89). The story in the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke as a whole is very much like other stories told about other great figures of the ancient world, both within and outside the Bible and must have been told in this way by Luke so anyone reading the story would be in no doubt about the wondrous character of Jesus.

What about the Gospel of John? This Gospel tells us nothing about the infancy of Jesus. Instead of telling us how, when and where Jesus was born, this Gospel tells us what His birth means: "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Jesus is the very word of God Himself, made human so we may, through Him, become divine. Through Him all creation came into being. In telling us this, the author takes us back to the very first verse of the book of Genesis and rewrites it:

"In the beginning *was the word* …" (John 1:1).

Christmas Fragments

Rock music

By David Hoskins, Director of Music

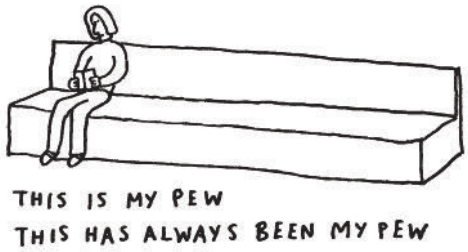
As the new Christian year commences with the expectation of Advent and the rejoicing of Christmas, one looks back over seasons past and a miscellany of bits and pieces comes to mind.

With major surgery imminent, another organist played for a recent Sunday service. The surgery was deferred and I found myself sitting 'in the pew' for the first time in years.

"…just how beautiful the worship at Saint Peter's is".

Organists are usually more off stage than on and we don't always get to be part of the worship in the manner the congregation does. It was a deeply moving experience to realise just how beautiful the worship at Saint Peter's is. We are indeed fortunate

I sat in a particular pew. It brought back the memory of my first experience of worship at Saint Peter's some twenty-four years ago. It was the 8am Book of Common Prayer communion service. I took my place in an empty pew and attended to my devotions. I sensed the look of an elderly lady as she took her place across the aisle from me. The service proceeded and at its close the lady in question moved across the aisle and stood next to me. "You're new". I replied that I was. "That explained why you sat in my pew". I did not do it again. The lady in question became a friend but I realised how important that sense of place is for people in church as it was for me on that recent Sunday.



CREDIT: CARTOONCHURCH.COM.

I was present at a Christmas meeting of a group in the Parish Lounge a few weeks ago. A fine time was had and amongst the gifts distributed were small Christmas candy canes. There was an accompanying note with each sweet. The poem went….

A significant symbol of Christmas
is the simple candy cane.
Its shape is the crook of the
shepherd – one of the first who came.

The lively peppermint flavour is
the regal gift of spice.
The white is Jesus' purity, the red is
sacrifice.

The narrow stripes are friendship
and the nearness of His love.
The 'J' stands for Jesus,
sent from God above.

The candy cane reminds us all of
just how much God cared.
And like His Christmas gift to us, it
is meant to be broken and shared.

Marion Jones.

The candy cane itself is supposed to have origins in Germany around 1670. A church choirmaster in Cologne gave sticks of hard candy with a crook at the end to the children in his choir to keep them quiet during the long Christmas services. Who knew!

Some find such things as a sentimental add-on of the season but I couldn't help but notice how many in the room read the little poem. In the same way, there are those who object to 'Northern Hemisphere' Christmas carols. At the Service of Lessons and Carols on the Sunday before Christmas, *In the Bleak Midwinter* was sung. Christina Rossetti's words are timeless, especially the final verse….

(Continued on page 7)