



The Lion

A Monthly News Sheet for St. Mark's Church, Basford

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Christmas and New Year Edition



Christmas Carols and their Origins

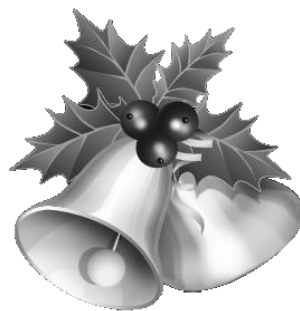
Carols were first sung in Europe thousands of years ago, but these were not Christmas Carols. They were pagan songs, sung at the Winter Solstice celebrations as people danced round stone circles. The Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year, the 21st December. The word Carol actually means dance or a song of praise and joy! Carols used to be written and sung during all four seasons, but only the tradition of singing them at Christmas has really survived.

Early Christians took over the pagan solstice celebrations for Christmas and gave people Christian songs to sing instead of pagan ones. In AD129, a Roman Bishop said that a song called "Angel's Hymn" should be sung at a Christmas service in Rome. Another famous early Christmas Hymn was written in AD760, by Comas of Jerusalem, for the Greek Orthodox Church. Soon after this many composers all over Europe started to write 'Christmas carols'.

However, not many people liked them as they were all written and sung in Latin, a language that the normal people couldn't understand. By the time of the Middle Ages (the 1200s), most people had lost interest in celebrating Christmas altogether.

This was changed by St. Francis of Assisi when, in 1223, he started his Nativity Plays in Italy. The people in the plays sang songs or 'canticles' that told the story during the plays. Sometimes, the choruses of these new carols were in Latin; but normally they were all in a language that the people watching the play could understand and join in! The new carols spread to France, Spain, Germany and other European countries.

The earliest carol, like this, was written in 1410. Sadly only a very small fragment of it still exists. The carol was about Mary and Jesus meeting different people in Bethlehem. Most Carols from this time and the Elizabethan period are untrue stories, very loosely based on the Christmas story, about the Holy Family and were seen as entertaining rather than religious songs. They



were usually sung in homes rather than in churches! Traveling singers or Minstrels started singing these carols and the words were changed for the local people wherever they were traveling. One carol that changed like this is 'I Saw Three Ships'.

When Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans came to power in England in 1647, the celebration of Christmas and singing carols was stopped. However, the carols survived as people still sang them in secret. Carols remained mainly unsung until Victorian times, when two men called William Sandys and Davis Gilbert collected lots of old Christmas music from villages in England.

Before carol singing in public became popular, there were sometimes official carol singers called 'Waits'. These were bands of people led by important local leaders (such as council leaders) who had the only power in the towns and villages to take money from the public (if others did this, they were sometimes charged as beggars!). They were called 'Waits' because they only sang on Christmas Eve (This was sometimes known as 'watchnight' or 'waitnight' because of the shepherds were watching their sheep when the angels appeared to them.), when the Christmas celebrations began.

Also, at this time, many orchestras and choirs were being set up in the cities of England and people wanted Christmas songs to sing, so carols once again became popular. Many new carols, such as 'Good King Wenceslas', were also written in the Victorian period.

New carol services were created and became popular, as did the custom of singing carols in the streets. Both of these customs are still popular today! One of the most popular types of Carols services are Carols by Candlelight services. At this service, the church is only lit by candlelight and it feels very Christmassy. Carols by Candlelight services are held in countries all over the world.

The most famous type of Carol Service might be a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, where carols and Bible readings tell the Christmas Story. The service was created and performed in 1880 by Edward Benson, who was the then newly appointed Bishop of Truro. Bishop Benson later became the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Service took place at 10.00pm on Christmas Eve in a

large wooden building that was being used as a temporary Cathedral as the main Truro Cathedral was being rebuilt.

The idea traveled around the UK and became quite a popular service to hold on Christmas Eve. However, it was made very famous by the choir from King's College, Cambridge, which was reckoned to be the best Church choir in the world at the time.

The Service was first performed at King's College in 1918 as a way of the college celebrating the end of the First World War. The new college Dean, Eric Milner-White, who had been an Army Chaplain in WWI, wanted a different and more positive way of celebrating Christmas for the choir and people in the college.

In 1919 he changed the opening hymn/carol to be 'Once in Royal David's City' and set the main order and structure of the lessons/readings as it still is today.



...to everyone at
St. Mark's:
Terry, Pat, Graham
& Patrick

Worship Services during January

1 st	Naming of Jesus	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Holy Communion (not Family!)
		4.30pm	Evensong
4 th	Wednesday	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
8 th	The Epiphany	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Holy Communion
		4.30pm	Evensong
11 th	Wednesday	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
15 th	2 nd of Epiphany	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Family Christingle Service
		4.30pm	Holy Communion
18 th	Wednesday	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
22 nd	3 rd of Epiphany	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Holy Communion
		4.30pm	Evensong
25 th	Conversion of Paul	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
29 th	Candlemas	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Holy Communion
		4.30pm	Wholeness and Healing

SANCTUS

Our monthly collection for the SANCTUS Project will focus on the usual two standard requirements, viz... (i) Size '6' nappies and (ii) sanitary towels. The third requirement is for toiletries.

Making Contact

To prevent last-minute panics and frustration, please remember that Terry generally takes Friday as his day off; this means that he's not around to take phone calls or pick up messages on Fridays. Please bear this in mind when you need an answer from him on the day you call. Patrick generally takes Monday's as his day off, so please make a note for the same reasons.

Men's Mass and Fellowship

The Stoke North and Newcastle Deanery Men's get-togethers recommence at Holy Trinity Sneyd (Hamil Road – Burslem) at 7.30pm on Wednesday, 1st February.

New Service Time!

Please remember that from New Year's Day 2017, our usual 10.00am service moves to its new time of **9.30am** and that our main service on New Year's Day won't be the usual 'Family' format but a Common Worship Holy Communion (like a usual 2nd or 4th Sunday).

Diary Dates for January

4 th	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
10 th	Tuesday	7.30pm	Baptism Team Meeting (Lady Chapel)
11 th	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
12 th	Thursday	7.30pm	Deanery Standing Committee in Vestry
14 th	Saturday	10.00am	Christingle Manufacturing
		11.00am	Emptying Garage of Rubbish into a Skip
15 th	Sunday	9.30am	CHRISTINGLE SERVICE
17 th	Tuesday	7.30pm	PCC Meeting in Vestry
18 th	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
25 th	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club

Early February...

1 st	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
		7.30pm	Men's Mass & Fellowship (Sneyd Parish)

Children's Society

If you would like to start saving loose change in a Children's Society Box, please have a word with our new CS Co-ordinator, Sue Morley who will be able to fix you up with one.

Faith Development Course

Living Faith: The Bishop's Certificate Course is a one year programme for people who would like to deepen their understanding of Christian teaching, and reflect on what it means to have living faith. The Course follows the seasons of the Christian calendar and invites reflections on the major festivals of the faith. Through the events of the Christian year, different themes are explored through studying passages from the Bible, from Christian teaching and from the contemporary world.

We intend to offer this course from sometime in January across the four parishes of Basford, Wolstanton, Porthill and Bradwell. The teaching will be shared by clergy and lay-leaders from these parishes and we're likely to use each of the parish buildings at some point. There is always richness in learning together with brothers and sisters from different parishes as they bring a different perspective and inform the whole. Please consider joining us for this venture; for those used to systematic learning through our regular Bible studies it will be the major opportunity in 2017 to continue in a similar way. Why not make a New Year's resolution to grow deeper in your understanding of the faith and join us on the journey!

Christingle Service

Please give a really big push with your families and friends for our Christingle service to be held at 9.30am on Sunday, 15th January. This is a service which captures imaginations and is always thoroughly enjoyable. As ever, a special collection for the Children's Society will be taken. If you can help manufacture the Christingles on the day before, please join us at 10.00am in the choir vestry.