

Keeping in Touch K.I.T.

Our Aim: To know Christ and make him known

No 88: Winter 2016



Marvel and Move by Pastor Geert Tap.

CHRISTMAS TIME is just around the corner. The days are getting shorter, the evenings longer, and more and more living rooms start to decorate their cosy places with candles and lights. Soon it will be impossible to walk inside any shop and not be encountered by the Christmas gifts, lights, trees, music and cards!

Oh yes, the cards.... That unwritten expectation (pardon the pun), where one is expected to write cards to their relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Most of the time the words *wishing you a merry Christmas* have already been printed on the cards themselves. All one has to do is just sign one's name and send it off. One by one the cards assemble on the mantelpiece, the door of the living room, windowsill, and even the fridge.

Have you ever really taken note of the drawings on these cards? The pictures are supposedly describing the journey as Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem, or the birth of the baby boy in a manger, the shepherds in the fields, the angels appearing in the sky. In each and every artful description we find well dressed people, smiling towards each other, surrounded by well behaved animals and beautiful gifts received from those wise men.

What do we really see as we look at these cards? We see shepherds enjoying their time around the fire. As if they are on a holiday, and enjoy the campfire as we would, almost holding a stick with a marshmallow at the end. We see wise men, all dressed up as if they just came from an important gala event. We see a young couple, holding their baby boy in their arms, while animals calmly watch the scene. Too often the scene looks almost romantic, and we would love to just join them for a cup of tea.

But was this truly the situation in which Mary and Joseph found themselves? We remember that there was no place for this young and expecting couple to lay their tired bodies. No proper bed could be found in which Mary could deliver the baby. The gospel informs us in Luke 2:6-7 that **while they were there, the**

time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guestroom available for them.

The real story of Christmas, the real experience was not so romantic and cosy. Let's for a moment uncover the true story of Christmas. The real story, minus all the trimmings the parties, the cards, the decorations, the family gatherings. Just the story. The real story! Let us for a moment look at the invitation into the presence of God. ***God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man called Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.*** Luke 1:26-28

A young Jewish girl is invited into the presence of God. And the wonder of it all is that with this real Christmas story God is inviting you and me into His presence as well! He's inviting you to share His dreams...reshaping your corner of the world into a better place! Mary can hardly believe her ears. It says that ***Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered...*** Luke 1:29

I invite you this Christmas to marvel, to wonder at this majestic story. The Creator of heaven and earth comes down to this planet in the gift of a small baby. Has this Jesus captured your imagination? Have you marvelled on this miracle? And if you have, in what way were you then moved to surrender yourself to this baby boy, called Jesus? As the shepherds came and worshiped him, later followed by the wise men from the East, they all surrendered themselves to this miracle in that stable. Angels had to sing and worship to this their Master and King.

As the angel told Mary what was to happen to her life and that of the entire world, there was only one sentence she could utter. As she **marvelled** at the prospect of becoming the mother of the Saviour, she humbled herself and became the **mover**. ***I am the Lord's servant...*** Luke 1:38. Christmas is the story of a **miracle** and the story of an **invitation** into God's presence. May we, as the days shorten, the cards start flowing through our mailboxes, the Christmas songs play over the loudspeakers, the trees get decorated, and the food get stored, never forget the real story of Christmas. May you and I marvel and move! Merry Christmas!

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1; 10 NIV.

UNEXPECTED GIFTS Richard J B Willis MA MSc FRSPH

FROM A Christian perspective we all know that Christmas is more than the receiving and giving of presents however much appreciated. Three meta studies have indicated that Christmas may have hidden benefits, *unexpected gifts* we might say, beyond what we might have imagined. These include: Family traditions and rituals; The evocation of nostalgia; and, a Lowering of the general suicide rate. These *gifts* have now been examined in some detail.

A clutch of studies show that families who enact some kind of ritual tradition felt closer to their families and found time together more interesting and enjoyable. The more family rituals, the better the people involved. Recalling the feelings of Christmas past appears to improve both mood and mental health by raising our spirit and vitality. Nostalgia provided continuity for the reflectors, and increased their sense of social connectiveness. This was true particularly for American, British, and Chinese participants in the studies; It used to be thought that suicide rates increased during the Christmas period. However, new studies show that suicide rates are lowest in December and at Christmas in particular. Other major holidays see an increase, especially New Year's Day.

These gifts do not come wrapped in fancy paper, but are surely worth more than the others given and received!

NEWS, NEWS, NEWS!

SADLY we have lost three of our number since the last KIT. **Brother Anton Izasars's** funeral was on September 12. Tony, as we knew him, was born on his family's farm near Riga in Latvia. When Germany invaded his country he was forced to join the German army and went to the Russian front. He didn't want to help the Germans and he didn't want to kill any Russians. When the authorities realised that, they took him out to shoot him. However that did not happen, instead he was released. On returning to his unit, he was again condemned to be shot, but was released again at the last moment. Tony had two options. He could go back to Latvia, and this time be shot, or come to the UK as a refugee. He came here, met his wife, **Barbara**, became an Adventist and had a daughter **Linda**. Very sadly, Linda lost her mother a few months before her father. We send her our deepest sympathy. **Sister Araminta Solomon** was laid to rest on October 13. She was a very friendly lady who told me to call her Minty. Perhaps that is how you remember her? We were totally shocked in mid-October to hear of the accidental death of **Lars-Eric Andersson** who died near his family's home in Sweden. Lars was the husband of Pastor **Audrey Andersson** and was aged just 55. We send our condolences to Audrey, Lars' mother and the rest of his family, and to Audrey's own family.



KIT mirrors life in that there are reports of tragic happenings but also of joy. Three young ones have been dedicated since the last KIT. On September 24, **Leo and Sharon Thanikkel** brought their son **Sebastian** to be dedicated by **Pastor Venter**. (left).

On November 26, two baby girls were dedicated.



Pastor Venter dedicated **Leah McComb**, (right) and **Pastor Paul Cle** dedicated **Mackenzie Millie**. (left). She is the little daughter of our own **Diana and Daniel Sabatier**.



Also we have received reports of two weddings. The photo is of **Angie and Troy Menkens** who married on June 23. Troy is the son of **Terry and Jean Menkens**. **Beatrice and Peter Cooper** married on October 2. Hopefully we'll get a photo of them for the next KIT. We wish both couples every happiness.

The second photo is of the male quintet who often sing lovely old gospel songs at church. Pictured are **Pastor Philip Anderson, Byron Secoy, John Cooper, Roger Murphy and Medwin Calvert**.



Frank Blewitt took the photo off an AV recording of a service.

On September 18, **Audrey Balderstone** invited all who would to her garden for a cream tea in aid of the Peace Hospice. The cream tea was excellent and so was the garden - bathed in sunshine with a gentle breeze blowing. 119 of us attended and £1600 was raised. **June Coombs** pictured the scenes inside and outside Audrey's house.



On October 29, something very interesting happened. It was the Baptism Day for a whole family. The **Greco** family planned to move house but before they did so, they got new neighbours, an Italian family - **Massimo Molteni**, his wife **Annalisa Buraglio**, and their daughter **Beth**. As Beth was musical, the family asked their neighbours if they knew of a school where her talents could be nurtured. Of course the Grecos suggested Stanborough School. Beth is happy there and to cut a long story short, all three of her family were baptised in October with the Greco family reading their favourite Bible verses.

Autumn Days are filled with new experiences for many. Off to university for the first time are **Giovanna Gayle**, **Juliana Keshishian** and **Tiwa Adebayo**. We hope they make the most of the opportunity and enjoy every minute of it.



Something lighter

AS A LITTLE GIRL climbed onto Santa's lap, he asked the usual, *And what would you like for Christmas?* The child stared at him open mouthed and horrified for a minute, then gasped, *Didn't you get my E-mail?*

I was visiting my daughter last night when I asked if I could borrow a newspaper.

This is the 21st century she said. *We don't waste money on newspapers. Here borrow my iPad. I can tell you this....that fly never knew what hit him.*

Jokes from Pam Richardson.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas.

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