



# Skinner Street United Reformed Church Poole      December 2025

Guided by the Holy Spirit we aim to show the love of God the Father for everyone by sharing the work of his Son, Jesus Christ, among our neighbours in Poole and the wider world.



**Dear Friends,**

We are once more approaching one of the most popular festivals in the Christian and Church calendar. Once more ministers are trying to think of some new way of telling the Christmas story to their congregations and to share it with those who don't come to church all that often.

The familiar Christmas story is mentioned in just two of the Gospels – Matthew and Luke. The Bible reader will be hard pressed to find any similar references to this remarkable event. Granted Jesus' birth is recorded in the Koran and there are theological texts. But nothing quite like the style of storytelling found in the Gospels.

Yet it is the story telling style which has captured the imagination of millions of people, since it was first told right through to the present day. Where would Christmas be without Bethlehem, the Inn, the Shepherds, the Magi, Mary and Joseph, the donkey and the sheep, oh yes, and the baby?

I sometimes wonder whether the story telling styles of Matthew and Luke may have hindered our spiritual progress. There is a danger the story is so good we miss the point, fail to understand the message, allow ourselves to be emotionally moved by the earthly scene, rather than grasp the spiritual significance.

For me, one of the greatest Christmas Biblical texts, about the coming of Jesus, is not found in Matthew or Luke and it certainly isn't found in their style of storytelling. I find the incarnation story found in John's gospel to be far more telling. There we read ... "and the Word became flesh". Allow me to tell you why.

**In the beginning was the Word".** With these words, John identifies himself with the sacred writing of the Old Testament. The first words we read in the Bible are: "**In the beginning God ...**". John is emphasising this point when he begins, "**In the beginning was the Word ...**".

“A glance at the early texts states the creation came into being at the command of God’s word. We are in danger of missing an important point if we limit the coming of Christ to a stable in Bethlehem. Christ is one with God at the beginning of creation.

**“The Word became flesh”**. Yes, the Word did become flesh in the person of Jesus. We miss the point again though if we ask the question, ‘**How** did the Word become flesh?’ there is a danger we get into storytelling and make the ‘**how**’ more important than the ‘**why**’. In contrast to Matthew and Luke, John asks; ‘Why the Word was made flesh?’

**“The glory of God”**. Think for a moment of the way we use words. There is the *written* word (Scripture) and the *spoken* word (proclamation). But John offers us another dimension, the *seen* word - “**we have seen His glory; he who has seen me has seen the Father.**”

Within our Reformed tradition we emphasise the importance of the Bible while at the same time recognising the importance of the proclaimed word especially through preaching. I would venture to suggest both methods on their own have their limitations. The authority of Scripture can be used to support arguments of opposing views. It depends on the interpretation you wish to use.

Preaching also has its limitations, especially through the human frailty of the preacher and the hearer. John provides us with a third dimension, the ability to **see** God’s glory through the grace and truth in Jesus Christ. It is not enough to read the Word or even proclaim it, we must see the Word which is fully revealed in the light and presence of Jesus.

So back to Christmas, what do we want to see? Do we just want to see a simple nativity scene recalling a moment in time? Yes, of course we do. But is that all? Don’t you also want to see Jesus, the Word made flesh full of grace and truth?

Jackie joins me in wishing you all a joyful and peaceful Christmas.

Your friend in Christ,  
Dave Harkison

# Worship and Prayer in December



## **SERVICES Sundays at 10.30am**

7<sup>th</sup> Mrs Maggie Larkin

14<sup>th</sup> Mrs Linda Pain

21<sup>st</sup> No morning Service

21<sup>st</sup> *4pm Candlelight Carols & followed by festive refreshments*

25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day short service of Reflection and Prayer

28<sup>th</sup> Café Communion

***There will be Coffee and Fellowship after the services on 7<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>***

## **DUTY ELDER and VESTRY PRAYER**

7<sup>th</sup> Chris Proudley

14<sup>th</sup> Janice Williams

21<sup>st</sup> Janice Williams

25<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> No Elder needed

## **DOOR STEWARDS**

7<sup>th</sup> Vera

14<sup>th</sup> Ross

21<sup>st</sup> Ross

25<sup>th</sup> Alan

28<sup>th</sup> Ross

## **THURSDAY PRAYERS 10.15am (Followed by coffee and fellowship)**

4<sup>th</sup> Mrs Vera Brown

11<sup>th</sup> Revd. Sally Taylor

18<sup>th</sup> Mrs Patricia Arnold

**NB.** 25<sup>th</sup> is Christmas Day and there will also be no prayers on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026

**January 4<sup>th</sup>** worship will be led by Revd Sally Taylor

Vestry Duty – Chris Proudley

Door Steward - Vera

## NOTES FROM THE TREASURER for DECEMBER 2025

Hello for the last months' chat about Skinner Street finances for, yet another, year. Do we all feel that time is moving faster than in the past? Skinner Street is trying to keep up and we are doing well. We have to change and adapt to the world of today whilst trying to keep the past in mind. Not always easy with many outside pressures requiring this document to be completed or that information to be sent! But our former members and friends must have made changes and adaptations as we are still very active, approaching, 250 years on!

Plans to ensure that in 2027 (only 2 years to go!) Skinner Street will be ready to share it's positive history of 250 years in this building, the actual church of course is older, with not only our members and friends but with the far wider audience. We will be holding a meeting to progress plans and anyone with ideas or who would like to be involved with this project is welcome to join, just let me know so we can give you dates.

First a quick update on the financial position. I was able to send £684.00 to Dorset Historic Churches Trust for our Ride and Stride effort, thank you all, 50% is returned to us in due course.

All other income and expenditure has been as normal but now winter is really with us, the cost for the gas and electricity will increase.

Thankfully, the income from the car park and hall use still make a big contribution.

Now we are into the run up to Christmas 2025, the church will be decorated and various activities have been planned which do include our popular annual Carols with Candlelight on Sunday 21 December at 4.00pm.

This will be followed by fellowship of tea and mince pies!



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It seems that our replaced boiler is working well and the Sanctuary is warm but it is the people in it who make it seem really cosy.

Thank you from me to all who help me keep my job under control, it is teamwork that gets things done!

*Gail Nuttall*

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### **Pastoral Notes**

Welcome to those who are relatively new to our congregation, we hope you do feel truly welcome. To those who have been worshipping with us over many years but circumstances now make that difficult, you are still in our hearts and prayers.

Those who are going through unexpected situations are also very much in our prayers.

We think of the family of Margaret Jones, who sadly passed away on November 18<sup>th</sup>. Margaret who in the past was a loyal member but due to age and infirmity had to move away to be closer to her daughter. Her daughter has requested that Margaret return to Poole and Skinner Street for her final service.

Everyone has a story to tell and all our different. We hope that at Skinner Street our 'differences' are not noticed, but that just the love of us all, is shown to all.

Please do let us know if you would like to speak to an Elder as we are all here to listen.



## *A carolling we will go!*

Christmas wouldn't be complete without singing a carol or two. Whether it's going to a carol service in person (ours is on 21<sup>st</sup> December at 4pm) or listening to the radio, TV or by any of the other means we have today. These songs bring joy as they have over the centuries and we hope for years to come.

So here are some fun facts you might or might not know.

**Bah Humbug!** Christmas carols nearly didn't survive after Oliver Cromwell banned them in 1647. It wasn't until the Victorian era they became popular again.

**Making Money** Before singing carols in public became popular there were official carollers called 'waits' - people sanctioned by local officials to sing carols on Christmas Eve and collect money for the poor.

**Carols created a battle of the sexes** It's thought that in some villages men and women held a singing battle. While the men sang in praise of holly for its masculine properties, women sang to celebrate the ivy's feminine traits and belittle the holly.

**Secret code hidden in the Twelve Days** the popular carol 12 Days of Christmas was written at a time when Catholics faced persecution in England includes code words for religious realities. For example, the True Love in the song is not a smitten boy or girlfriend but Jesus Christ, because truly Love was born on Christmas Day. On a different note there's an Australian version, where the birds are replaced by animals of the outback, including five kangaroos, four koalas cuddling and an emu up a gum tree!



**Carols outside the Spire** is on 20<sup>th</sup> December 10am to 1pm. Musicians and singers are needed as well as volunteers to speak to people and to hand out details of churches in Poole Christmas services.



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### **A Christmas Prayer for the Middle East**

God of peace, in the land where You came to dwell among us,  
let your light shine again.

Bless all who work for healing and hope,  
those who teach, comfort and serve.

Protect children, strengthen families,  
and guide Your Church to be a light of love

May Your peace be known on earth,  
and every heart this Christmas. **Amen**

*Deadline for January newsletter Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> December*

*NB: distributed Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026*

*Contributions to Tricia: 07873133316*

For church matters or to discuss arrangements for a Baptism, Wedding or Funeral: Shirley Marden: 07980 923217

For Hall Lets and Carpark: Gail Nuttall 07774 283179

