

Dear Friends,

When I was a boy there was not such a long run up to Christmas; now though our supermarkets have had whole sections devoted to “seasonal” items for weeks and I slink by them, averting my eyes hoping to avoid the painted biscuit tins and prettily packaged puddings. There was a moment in my childhood kitchen sometime in Advent (known as stir up Sunday) when my mother would be mysteriously blending quantities of flour, fruit and exotic ingredients but they, with their intoxicating aromas disappeared onto a high shelf in a cupboard. Going to bed on Christmas Eve was like any other night - well almost - for there was an anticipation in the air, a promise of grandmother tomorrow and most of all a feeling that the next day was special.

And how, for the downstairs had been transformed. Paper chains, enormous paper balls and a chinese lantern criss crossed the ceiling, a Christmas tree filled the bay window with little wooden decorations and one notable year, in a corner behind some shifted armchairs, was discovered a clockwork train, red with a gold stripe, a coal tender and two tin carriages. All this was sprung upon me, the whole a gift and a wonderful surprise.

Surely, the first Christmas was like this, an ordinary man and woman travelling by donkey, summoned by a boring bureaucratic decree to Bethlehem, struggling with the mundane matter of a bed for the night and ending in a stable of an inn. Perhaps Mary had put Gabriel’s promise on a high shelf in a cupboard of her mind when she fell asleep amidst the warmth and stirrings of the animals.

But then a rousing chorus of angels, the tumbling voices of a flock of shepherds, a bright bright star above them and there in a shifted manger they discovered a baby. A wonderful gift and a wonderful surprise.

Wishing you all a happy Christmas, please come and join us for our celebrations

Steve

22nd December Sunday 4.00 pm Carols by candlelight at St. Mary’s Westgate

24th Christmas Eve

17.00 Crib and Christingle service at All Saints Sutton

23.30 Midnight Communion at St. Mary’s Westgate

25th Christmas Day

8.00 Holy Communion Common Worship All Saints Sutton

9.30 Holy Communion BCP at St. Margaret’s Norton

10.30 Family Service at St. Clements Overy (Said Communion in the chancel after the family service)

11.15 Family Communion at All Saints Thorpe